'Show Yourself More Human...':

An Exploration of Agency in the *Essercizi per Gravicembalo* by Domenico Scarlatti

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Abstract

Discussions of Domenico Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas are scaturient with agential metaphors; scholars invoke crowds, instrumentalists, street-performers, and live improvisation. Indeed, the sonatas are described as if they possess a personality, which is sometimes superimposed onto the composer himself, or are alive with human activity. Whilst scholars are conscious of the vivid imagery so often used, few tackle the subject from the perspective of intra-musical agency or consider why the sonatas seem so human.

Drawing on theories of agency and music cognition I set out how the sonatas evoke human activity through musical topics and how musical gestures can replicate physical movement. To this end I propose that certain motivic figures can be conceived of as schema of acrobatic motion, capturing a physical phenomenon within music. I also investigate how the structure of individual sonatas can evoke a musical agent navigating a virtual world, and how musical tension can replicate human emotion.

To explore why the sonatas seem *alive,* I examine how figures within the sonata seem to be spontaneous, and suggest that we perceive the unpredictable musical gestures to be the actions of a musical agent. Ultimately, however, music is brought into existence by a performer, and so I consider the role of the performer and how they embody the tensions implied within the musical work. I conclude with a historical overview of the sonatas and consider the significance of their physicality.

List of Contents

List of Contents

List of Contents

List of Examples and Figures

Acknowledgements & Author's Declaration

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Unless otherwise stated, all musical examples are from Emilia Fadini and Marco Moiraghi's complete edition of Scarlatti's sonatas, published by Ricordi. Please also note that all mention of the sonatas shall simply reference their Kirkpatrick, or K., number, despite the flaws of the system.[1] Happily, Kirkpatrick's system aligns the sonatas of the *Essercizi per Gravicembalo* (*Essercizi*) with the order they appear in the volume (K.1 is Sonata 1 of the *Essercizi*, and so on).

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and that I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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[1] See: Christopher Hail, S*carlatti Domenico,* ed. Michael D. O'Connor, (Massachusetts: Protean Press, 2017)*,* p.44; Joel Sheveloff, 'Domenico Scarlatti: Tercentenary Frustrations', *Musical Quarterly* 71, 4 (1985), p.405, 420, *passim*; W. Dean Sutcliffe, *The Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti and Eighteenth-Century Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.vii

1 Introduction

> 'Reader,
>
> Whether you be Dilettante or Professor, in these Compositions do not expect any profound Learning, but rather an ingenious Jesting with Art, to accommodate you to the Mastery of the Harpsichord. Neither Considerations of Interest, nor Visions of Ambition, but only Obedience moved me to publish them. Perhaps they will be agreeable to you; then all the more gladly will I obey other Commands to please you in an easier and more varied Style. Show yourself then more human than critical, and thereby increase your own Delight. To designate to you the Position of the Hands, be advised that by D is indicated the Right, and by M the left:
>
> Fare well.'
>
> - Preface to the *Essercizi per Gravicembalo* Domenico Scarlatti[1]

Domenico Scarlatti is shrouded in mystery. Much of the Neapolitan's biography remains a bare-boned sketch, populated only by three extant written artefacts which come from the composer: a single letter to the Duke of Huéscar (1752), and the dedication and preface, quoted above, found in his sole music publication the *Essercizi per Gravicembalo* (1738). This preface is often not engaged with beyond the recognition of its rarity; when it is, much is made of Scarlatti staging of himself as a kind of musical comic or entertainer producing works that are an 'ingenious Jesting with art'.[2] The composer demonstrates a degree of self-awareness as he acknowledges that the sonatas are an unusual, even humorous, biome in the world of eighteenth-century music. We are warned that the volume is not 'profound' but will lead to 'mastery' of the harpsichord; the volume prioritises, Scarlatti implies, technical proficiency over compositional cerebralism. Few, if any, authors have commented on Scarlatti's request for purchasers of the volume to 'show [themselves] more *human* than critical'; Scarlatti seemingly makes a distinction between the heart and mind, between musical technicality and musical emotion. But the statement raises many issues, most crucially: how can we receive the sonatas in a human way? What does it mean to be human?

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[1] Translation: Ralph Kirkpatrick, *Domenico Scarlatti* (USA: Princeton University Press, 1953), *Scarlatti*, p.102-103

[2] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.76; Joel Sheveloff, 'Domenico Scarlatti: Tercentenary Frustrations (Part II)', *The Musical Quarterly* 72, 1 (1986), p.115; Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.114

Why Agency?

Scarlatti occupies an unusual position in the Western canon, or rather, as Dean Sutcliffe succinctly puts it: the composer 'does not belong' and can only be categorised along with other misfits as an 'Interesting Historical Figure'.[3] At a fundamental level his keyboard sonatas are incredibly simple; barring a few lonesome exceptions, they are underpinned by a binary form structure which harmonically progresses from the tonic to a closely related key (usually the dominant or relative) during the first section, and vice versa in the second section. But, as both Sutcliffe and Ralph Kirkpatrick bemoan, 'the composer... continues to elude any attempt to schematise his approach' as 'no sonata... may be considered completely typical'.[4] Despite the complications posed by individual sonatas, the simplicity of the surface-level structure belies the acute experience of listening to, witnessing, or performing this music. It is not usually explicitly acknowledged, but, as we shall see, much of the literature discussing Scarlatti has a central unifying thread: that when we listen to a sonata we are hearing, witnessing, and thus *experiencing* the real-time actions of living people or snapshots of real places. Indeed, the composer is often imagined to have been inspired by his walks along Spanish streets or through merely opening his window and hearing the noises of the world surrounding him. In this sense, Scarlatti's sonatas can be viewed as a musical equivalent to picture postcards, providing sonic snapshots of exotic people and places.

Scholars write about the sonatas as if they *are* the sights and sounds of Scarlatti's world, as if they possess agency: an ability to act in a domain beyond that of real physical beings, namely the composer and performer. The phenomenon of musical agency is not a concept unique to Scarlatti's music and has long been discussed, initially spurred by Edward Cone's seminal book *The Composer's Voice.*[5] Whilst the relevance of musical agency to Scarlatti has been touched upon recently by Chris Willis, the scholarly coalface on agency in Scarlatti's music has only been lightly scratched and discussion of the expressive consequences of hearing his music as possessing humanlike agency remains largely unmined.[6] In short, this thesis is the result of asking two related questions: first, why do we write about the sonatas as if they have

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[3] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.1

[4] Ibid., p.25; Kirkpatrick, *Domenico Scarlatti*, p.252

[5] Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, 1st ed. (California: University of California Press, 1974) https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.2430687

[6] Chris T. Willis. 'Performance, Narrativity, Improvisation and Theatricality in the Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti'. (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2007). https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/283830

capacity for agency, and second, what does it look like if we follow the agential suggestions of scholars through to their exploratory limits?

There are, I suggest, motivic and structural gambits found in the sonatas which might naturally lead a listener to perceive the music as a kind of spontaneous narrative acted out by intra-musical agential actors. I test the efficacy of these gambits through in-depth interpretive analysis of sonatas found in the *Essercizi per Gravicembalo*: choosing to focus on this subset of 'the 555' limits the scope of this essay, but in return allows for a higher level of analytical detail. Admittedly, Scarlatti was at least somewhat conscious of the potential reservedness of his market and so was not cavalier with his selection for the publication: many of the more 'extreme' instances of Spanish influence, for instance, lie outside the volume.

Most analyses of Scarlatti begin in the same way: acknowledging a frustration at the lack of sources.[7] We know little of the composer's biography and, despite various attempts, cannot dissect his life into stages of musical styles; indeed, of his half-millennium of keyboard sonatas, only a small handful, the *Essercizi,* can be conclusively dated – even then, this is only to a disappointingly imprecise 'sometime before 1738'. Nor have the sonatas themselves revealed any clues as to their conception, stubbornly refusing any attempt to age them according to style or organological development.[8] Whilst Joel Sheveloff castigates Ralph Kirkpatrick for his imagination in constructing his biography of the composer, he concedes that 'Scarlatti's corpulence in his old age, his excessive shyness, his alleged passion for gambling—whether true or not—are a way of humanising him'.[9] Some authors have turned to the music to fill in the biographical gaps; the *personality* of the music is seen to vicariously embody Scarlatti's own character. Sutcliffe postulates that 'were we to speculate on Scarlatti's character from the evidence of the music, we might imagine it to have been unstable or even schizophrenic. Some have in fact hinted at such a possibility'.[10]

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[7] Janet Schmalfeldt, 'Domenico Scarlatti, Escape-Artist: Sightings of His "Mixed Style" towards the End of the Eighteenth Century'. *Music Analysis* 38, 3 (2019); Sheveloff, 'Domenico Scarlatti: Tercentenary Frustrations, *The Musical Quarterly* 71, 4 (1985); Sutcliffe, *Keyboard Sonatas*

[8] Attempts have been made by Kirkpatrick, who deliberately confuses date of composition and date of manuscript copy; Hail, who acknowledges his instinctive approach lacks rigour (p.932); John Henry van der Meer, who assumes that any expansion of compositional range was permitted by innovation in harpsichord manufacture. He relies on Kirkpatrick's unfounded belief in the sonata 'pair theory'; Sutcliffe comments, of van der Meer, that 'these remarkable claims rest on shaky methodological foundation... it is also surely dangerous to base a chronology purely on range' (p.48)

[9] Sheveloff, 'Tercentenary Frustrations', p.402, 400; tales of his corpulence at least do originate from a reasonably contemporaneous account.

[10] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.35

1 Introduction

The suggestion that the sonatas could represent a mental Illness such as schizophrenia seemingly began with proto-music-historian Charles Burney, who commented on the 'happy freaks' of Scarlatti's keyboard works.[11] The word 'freaks' certainly had negative connotations for the Englishman as he also uses the word to describe violinist Lolli alongside: 'madman... wild, difficult, grotesque, and even ridiculous'.[12] Yet, there is a delightful oxymoron in the historian's turn of phrase: the sonatas are freaks, somehow deformed or unnatural, but despite this *they* remain happy. Whilst this psychological analysis is often projected onto Scarlatti, Sutcliffe's statement hints at the possibility that the music possesses a conscious mind: the *music* is schizophrenic. Chris Willis is more explicit, writing that 'Domenico Scarlatti's keyboard music seems alive with human activity. It appears to live and breathe, to be crowded with inhabitants'.[13] Hearing music as living implies an active agent that actually *is* alive, or that we imagine to be alive, possessing the same capabilities as ourselves, and limited by a world like our own.

It Is notable that when a sonata largely escapes agential description, such analysis arguably fails to capture its most significant features. K.159, for example, is a sonata that has excited numerous scholars as it appears to anticipate the sonata form that dominated the mid-eighteenth century and is so familiar to us today. Yet, for most intents and purposes, K.159 is no different to any other sonata and most casual listeners would not be aware of the technicalities of its form: the binary form would be the most striking element of its structure, not pretence of a more complicated form. Sutcliffe omits any mention of this sonata in his monograph, perhaps shying away from passing judgement on its form, but as Malcolm Boyd notes: 'it does seem that [Scarlatti] regarded the [structural] possibilities of K.159, in so far as he considered them, to be irrelevant to the kind of sonata he wanted to write'.[14]

For Scarlatti then, it was not a sonata's structure which was the most important conduit for expression; Boyd continues, arguing that Scarlatti's music is better understood through 'the balance and imbalance of phrases, and the manipulation of motifs' rather than the 'statement, counter-statement and restatement' of themes.[15] Indeed, what is striking about K.159 is the ceaseless and contagious energy on display. During his 1975 performance of the sonata, Wilhelm Kempff's hands bounce about the keyboard in a happy-go-lucky manner; the then eighty-year-old pianist conveys a sense of theatricality, particularly in the left hand leaps, as

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[11] Burney, *A General History of Music, vol. iv* (London, 1789), p.266

[12] Ibid., p.681

[13] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.vii

[14] Malcolm Boyd, *Domenico Scarlatti: Master of Music*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), p.174

[15] Ibid.

his hands seem to dance.[16] But, if you shut your eyes, the sounds alone seem energetic: the ♩♪ rhythm seems to skip, the opening evokes hunting horns, the speed of the ornamentation contributes to a sense of liveliness, the parallel modal shift at the start of the second section shocks, and you can *hear* leaps. Janet Schmalfeldt gives the game away when she notes the '"Spanish" flamboyancy' and 'flashy arrogance' at the end of the development (bb.37-42) as well as the 'brutal' acciaccatura chords during her discussion of the sonata's structure.[17] The sonata is flamboyant, arrogant, and brutal; yet Schmalfeldt does not argue that the structure contributes to these inferences. Instead, these *human* characteristics have been inferred from the sonic qualities and assigned to the music; the music is treated as if it has agency.

Through this introduction I have laid out why an explicit agential analysis of Scarlatti's sonatas is necessary but have tiptoed around defining what is actually meant by musical agency; in Chapter 2, I define the concept of musical agency and, drawing on the work of Seth Monahan and Robert Hatten, set out the theoretical framework upon which my agential analysis is based. I note that the fundamental root of musical agency is the inference of human activity from musical happenings. This leads into Chapter 3, which explores how musical topics can evoke human activity through a listener's learned associations between a topic and real events; the chapter concludes by noting that aspects of the Brilliant style evoke a sense of actual, rather than representative, movement. Chapter 4 investigates the cognitive processes which fundamentally link music and motion within our brains, and notes that hearing music as progressing through gestures implies an agential gesturer. Chapter 5 investigates the practicality of hearing motion in music and proposes acrobatic schemas which categorise musical figures which generate a particularly strong perception of physical movement; it lays out how these schemas can be used to analyse music through discussion of sonatas K.24 & K.29. This chapter concludes with an Interlude which discusses Charles Avison's orchestral transcriptions of the sonatas to demonstrate the efficacy of Scarlatti's compositional style in creating a vivid world.

Chapter 6 begins looking at structural elements within the sonatas that encourage agential inferences; it challenges the abandonment theory, whereby musical motifs that are not developed are seen as somehow wasteful, and instead proposes that the opening of a sonata can be seen as a framing gesture which establishes a virtual context. The efficacy of this concept is investigated with interpretive analysis of sonatas K.3 & K.6 whereby I suggest the openings imply intra-musical actors; the topical tensions within K.1 are also investigated,

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[16] Wilhelm Kempff, 'Wilhelm Kempff plays Scarlatti's Sonata in C major K.159 at his house in 1975', YouTube video 1:44, posted by 'The Piano Experience', May 12, 2020, accessed October 12, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ja9BfDbn3Lc

[17] Schmalfeldt, 'Escape Artist', p.284

concluding that this can be perceived as embodying a virtual subjectivity. Chapter 7 continues the structural focus and investigates how modal oppositions can encourage listener engagement with a virtual subjectivity; it analyses the harmonic tensions at work in sonatas K.2 & K.7.

The penultimate chapter ties some of these concepts together and considers how the sonatas seem to be alive and acting spontaneously. Scarlatti's techniques of thematic development are discussed, and the composer's idiosyncratic use of repetition is proposed as the embodiment of a spontaneous emotional outburst from an intra-musical agent. The final Chapter considers the role of the performer and their embodiment of these musical agents; it proposes that the body can be intertwined with the emotional tensions the sonata implies. The thesis concludes by positioning the sonatas within their historical context and discusses why these bodily movements are significant in the eighteenth-century.

2 What is Musical Agency?

Agency is usually defined as the ability for an individual to think, feel, *experience* and *act* independently; musical agency 'involves hearing music's motives, rhythms, melodies, textures and so on unfolding with an inner urgency or an act of will rather than some mechanistic or determinate compositional process'.[1] Whilst agential references are common in musical discourse generally, Scarlattian scholarship seems to have an almost uniquely universal reliance within analyses of such humanisation of the music. For example, Sutcliffe's analysis of K.402 begins matter-of-fact, noting the learned style of the opening and the shift in idiom from bar 9; without mentioning Scarlatti directly, he implies the interference of the composer saying that 'shapes are now treated insistently'.[2] Yet, in the third paragraph of his analysis, the source of action changes from Scarlatti to the music: 'the opening *tries* to reassert *itself*... the *composure* of the opening... the strict topic *survives*... chain of *falling steps*... replaced by *falling leaps*'.[3] On occasion, there is a simultaneous duality of agential actors, real and virtual, within Sutcliffe's description: 'minor-modal is replaced by the *sociable* major' – Scarlatti replaces, the musical tonality is sociable.

Through implication, Sutcliffe grants the music capacity to act, think, and feel. Michael Talbot would likely consider Sutcliffe's description of the sonata to count amongst the 'wealth of pithy and memorable *aperçus*' which feature in his book; however, I contend that such description goes beyond a reader's 'pleasure', as Talbot finds them, as it details how a listener perceives the progression of the music.[4] The absence of the composer in Sutcliffe's description is conspicuous, the *music* tries (it makes a *wilful* attempt) to reassert (implying *awareness* of previous dominance) *itself* – notably, Sutcliffe here grants the music a 'self', a personage. Through the course of this essay, I draw upon various aspects of agential theories as they become relevant, but it is worth outlining some of the concepts here at the outset.

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[1] Michael L. Klein, 'Musical Story', in *Music and Narrative Since 1900*, eds. Michael L. Klein, & Nicholas Reyland, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), p.10

[2] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.127, emphasis mine; see also p.124-132 for his complete analysis.

[3] Ibid., p.127-128

[4] Michael Talbot, 'Review: the Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti', *Echo* 6, 1 (2004): para.10, accessed Aug. 10, 2023, http://www.echo.ucla.edu/Volume6-issue1/reviews/talbot.html

Anthropomorphisation to Virtual Agency

Humans naturally anthropomorphise and have done so for eons. We see faces in clouds and burnt toast, and anthropomorphic animals and objects are common in popular media (think of films such as Toy Story (1995) and Cars (2006), indeed *every* animated film relies on this process to some extent). As Deniz Tahiroglu and Marjorie Taylor note, 'adults readily anthropomorphise non-human animals, plants, technological devices, and even simple geometric shapes'.[5] It should not come as a surprise that we also anthropomorphise music. The listener is often conceived of as sedentary and passive, their only wilful involvement being to stay and listen; however, the listener is crucial to music's existence – if a tree falls in the forest and someone hears it, the rhythmic (and potentially pitch if the wood stretches as creaks) qualities of the sound mean it may reasonably be conceived of as music, or at least musical in some way; without a human present to interpret the noise, the sound is limited to merely being a disturbance of air pressure and does not become musical. Indeed, it is the individual agential ability of a person to direct their attention which enables a conscious experience, although not all experience is conscious.[6] Humans are emotional creatures and we have developed complicated language models in order to communicate our emotions to others; however, our emotions are a conscious experience which result from the uncontrollable activation of the autonomic nervous system.[7]

Musical agents are anthropomorphic figures inferred from the progression of a musical passage. In his investigation into the *mœurs* of agential language in musical discourse, Seth Monahan proposes a hierarchy of four agential classes: individuated elements, work-persona, fictional composer, and analyst.[8] For Monahan, the analyst, who interprets a musico-analytical text, sits at the top of the hierarchic tree of agencies; their interpretation is a reflection of their own agential subjectivity which is subsequently imposed on the music.[9] The fictional composer results from any engagement with a musical work which considers an external controlling author and ascribes motivation or deliberation to that author; it is separate from the actual composer, although self-evidently closely related, and is a conscious distinction between the historical figure (the actual composer) and the interpretive construct

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[5] Deniz Tahiroglu, & Marjorie Taylor, 'Anthropomorphism, social understanding, and imaginary companions', *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 37, 2 (2019), p.284-285

[6] Carolyn D. Jennings, 'Attention and Perceptual Organization', *Philosophical Studies* 172, 5 (2015), p.1269, *passim*

[7] Michael Mendl, Vikki Nevile, & Elizabeth Paul, 'Bridging the Gap: Human emotions and Animal Emotions. *Affective Science* 3, (2022); Tuomas Eerola, 'Music and Emotions', in *Springer Handbook of Systematic Musicology*, ed. Rolf Bader, (Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2018), p.540

[8] Seth Monahan, 'Action and Agency Revisited', *Journal of Music Theory* 57, 2 (2013)

[9] Ibid., p.332

created by an analyst. This rather neatly accounts for how two analysts can come to irreconcilable conclusions about a composer's intentions or methods; although, Monahan warns, 'fictional composers inevitably serve as mouthpieces for our own views and values, [though] we often strive simultaneously to bring them into alignment with what their historical cousins might have thought or intended'.[10] Indeed, whilst the processes I describe in this thesis may have had an unconscious impact in the eighteenth century, it would be irresponsible to claim that Scarlatti would have envisioned such an analysis when creating his sonatas.

Both of these agential classes are extra-musical; they arise in discussion about music, but the music does not usually reference them. This thesis, however, is primarily concerned with intra-musical agencies whose 'efficiency lies in [their] capacity to simulate the actions, emotions, and reactions of a human agent' within musical happenings.[11] Robert Hatten's theory of virtual agency centres on a listener's experience as they perceive and understand musical events. Virtual agents are distinct from *actual* agents, such as the performer or composer whose actions originate the music, and are generated by and exist in the minds of listeners: they are 'inferred from the implied actions of... sounds [created by actual agents] as they move and reveal tendencies with music-stylistic contexts'.[12] Monahan identifies individuated elements as being any aspect of a musical passage that 'can be construed as having autonomy and volition... any element that can be understood as a kind of dramatic "character"'.[13] Hatten latches on to music's capacity to embody motion, and sees Monahan's individuated elements as resulting from the action of a virtual actant; the actant being the source of the motion that we perceive.[14] When the actions of a virtual actant are sustained and interpreted as wilful, Hatten suggests that listeners perceive those actions to be undertaken by a virtual *human* agent.

Musical agents can produce a series of gestures which generates a musical narrative; the actions of an agent are traced through what Hatten has termed *melos*, the 'ongoing thread of musical discourse'.[15] Melody is the most conspicuous 'thread' which listeners readily follow as it closely emulates the human voice, but any number of elements can exhibit a gestural nature

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[10] Ibid., p.331
[11] Robert Hatten, *A Theory of Virtual Agency for Western Art Music*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), p.1
[12] Ibid., p.8
[13] Monahan, 'Action and Agency Revisited', p.327
[14] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.65
[15] Ibid., p.85

which can then be interpreted as an emotion being '*expressed* by a virtual agent' in real time.[16] I explore gesture more specifically in Chapter 4. Indeed, once a virtual human is identified it becomes natural to associate the emotional implications of a musical passage with that agent who can, therefore, be conceived as possessing subjectivity, a self-reflexive consciousness.

Whilst interpretation of music through virtual agencies does not presuppose active engagement from a listener, as there are subconscious processes at play, the individual subjectivity is directly linked with a listener's contributions and interactions in their construction of the virtual happenings; in other words, listener interactivity shapes their experience and enables them to perceive a musical narrative as a virtual subjectivity. This virtual subjectivity replaces Monahan's work persona, 'the work itself-personified', as the characterisation of a particular piece is projected onto a subjectivity.[17]

Hatten proposes that there are three agential stages to a listener's musical inferences, of which they may be entirely unaware, which lead to the perception of virtual agents. First, virtualisation, which involves 'hearing actions and emotions as arising from sources within the music as virtual actions by virtual agents'; second comes embodiment, which results from hearing these virtual actions and emotions as 'possessing human-like agency'; and, finally, fictionalising, which places embodied agents within a narrative.[18] Fundamentally, the inference of a musical agent derives from a listener perceiving a musical happening as having some human quality, be it motion or emotion; the next chapter explores how music can create a sense of human activity through association.

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[16] Ibid., p.98, 37

[17] Monahan, 'Action and Agency Revisited', p.328; Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.133

[18] Ibid., p.84

Interlude: Musical Narrative

Before embarking on an exploration of music's ability to evoke human activity, it is necessary to explore one further theoretical nodule: that of narrative. For Hatten, it is axiomatic that the actions of virtual human agents can be interpreted as taking place in, or constructing a, musical narrative of some kind; however, whilst many musicologists are warm to the idea that music is capable of progressing a narrative independent of external references such as language, it is important to define what is actually meant by musical narrative. Indeed, as Richard Walsh notes, 'stories are representational, necessarily – no narration without representation – whereas music, fundamentally is not', but that, even without pretext from the music itself, listeners who project a story onto music do not do so 'arbitrarily and without cause'.[19] Language enables such semantic specificity, but neither conversation or literature describes all characters, objects, or actions in intimate detail anyway: a 'writer uses summary *not* because more specific description is impossible, but because she does not deem it necessary to provide more details ... [if it succeeds] in fulfilling the mimetic and the thematic design'.[20] Music certainly lacks the semantic specificity of literature or visual representation (for instance music has no means of representing colour, or static events or objects), and, therefore, whilst music may invite a particular narrative interpretation, a musical narrative exists as the result of a listener interpreting a series of sounds as possessing meaning.

For Byron Almén, a musical narrative 'articulat[es] the dynamics and possible outcomes or interaction between elements, rendering meaningful the temporal succession of events, and coordinating these events into an interpretive whole'.[21] Almén further notes that:

> 'Pitch combinations and pitch successions, like linguistic phonemes, possess no inherent significant value, but when we, as members of a particular cultural group, organise sounds according to various spoken or unspoken rules, we create a system of relationships among those sounds that itself gives rise to what we call meaning'.[22]

In other words, sound has *no inherent meaning*; a listener's embodiment and internalisation of sound creates music from which meaning can be inferred. Music is a medium of tension and relief (a physical allegory central to this thesis and to the idea of musical gesture as a whole; this is discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters); the temporal connectedness of these

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[19] Richard Walsh, 'The Common Basis of Narrative and Music: Somatic, Social, and Affective Foundations', *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3, (2011), p.49
[20] Dan Shen, 'Defense and Challenge: Reflections on the Relation between Story and Discourse', *Narrative* 10, no. 3 (2002), p.226
[21] Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), p.13, 14
[22] Ibid., p.41-42

tensions and releases allows listeners to follow the changing sounds along a single timeline, the *melos*. In seeking to determine meaning of a large-scale musical progression, listeners may infer a narrative of some kind.

Literary narratives have a focus on hierarchy and conflict and the eventual resolution, partial-, or non-resolution of those relationships and conflicts; narrative interpretation 'can be concretised within any environment where these characteristics are present – and this includes almost any significant area of human interest. ... narrative acts as a potent link to important aspects of human experience'.[23] Music's lack of semantic specificity means that it requires an interpretive response for a narrative to be conceived, 'the function of which is to flesh out the semiotic structure of the music, realising the potential of its emotional contours in a specific form'.[24] Walsh notes that:

> 'In general, behaviour that constitutes an act in itself shades into behaviour for communicative purposes, or ostensive behaviour, to the extent that such communicative intention is manifest... that is, any behaviour may be communicative if it allows other to infer that it was intended for their attention, rather than merely serving its purposes as an action. For such behaviour to have a specifically narrative dimension, however, it must invite attention to its qualities as action (rather than, say, drawing attention to some object)'.[25]

However, hearing music as gestural actions or movements of virtual agents can invite more specific narrative interpretations; indeed, 'narrative organisation, thus employed, isomorphically suggests processes of human action, social dynamics, and psychological development, revealing typical patterns of conflict, negotiation, struggle, and interaction'.[26]

A Listener's Narrative

Music does not so much as represent physical actions or gestures, but more so embodies them, opening up a vast array of interpretive possibilities – some of which I explore in the music of Scarlatti. This centres the listener within their own individual experience; musical tension can represent physicality alone, or be an emotional allegory, or reference a cultural conflict. Such 'meanings are contingent... and are constituted critically by historically informed individuals

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[23] Ibid., p.39, p.41
[24] Walsh, 'The Common Basis of Narrative and Music', p.52
[25] Ibid., p.55
[26] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, p.41

in specific cultural situations'.[27] In writing about musical meaning and narratives, musicologists, including myself, frequently assume the guise of what we might term an idealised engaged listener, one who is aware of all relevant cultural details from different historical settings and possess an ability to focus on both large-scale and local musical events. This listener can synthesise these elements into a single narrative both in real-time as a musical work progresses, and through reflection once a work is complete.

The importance of the cultural awareness of a listener becomes apparent in the following chapter which discusses musical topics. The ability of a listener to recognise extra-musical references within a musical work can significantly impact the narrative constructed; having said this, topics are 'by their very nature... culturally coded so that those familiar with the contemporary or stylistic use of musical language will be likely to recognise them'.[28] Certain musical correlations have been so strongly reinforced over time as to be nearly universal: major modality as euphoric, minor modality as dysphoric, of register and direction, or of rhythm with motion.[29] As Hatten notes, 'a competent listener will grasp the thematic and rhetorical functions of certain gestures within a given musical style'.[30]

Fundamentally, narrative in music is the distillation of series of oppositions, conflicts, and actions heard to operate through a single connected stream. Music cannot represent an object or character with any specificity, but a listener's internalisation of these conflicts can evoke and emotional response; music represents not objects or characters, but how we as individuals experience the world. As a linguist, Walsh opines that:

> 'There seems to be a misplaced emphasis in the attempts of musicologists to analyse the meaning of music by adopting the tools of narrative theory: it isn't that music has meaning; rather it's that narrative has affect. In other words, much of the power of narratives, even very simple ones, to move and persuade is not specific to whatever those narratives are about; it is the affective potential intrinsic in the permutations of narrative form itself'.[31]

Storytelling is a uniquely human development; it is how we account for the absence of stasis in our world and situate ourselves within it. It provides a commonality between individuals and allows a shared existence.

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[27] V. Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse - Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.4
[28] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, p.77
[29] Ibid.
[30] Robert Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), p.2
[31] Walsh, 'The Common Basis of Narrative and Music', p.63

3 Representations of Humanness: Musical Postcards

> '[Scarlatti's] music is as inhabited as a drawing by George Cruikshank. ... The poetry of Alexander Pope is alive with figures. *The Rape of the Lock* is the instant breath of contemporary time. The incredible delicacy of its texture is not torn by the admission of figures into that gossamer world. Nor have those inhabitants any shame of the moment in which they are living: they appear perfectly contented and at ease with their environment. There is nothing of nostalgia or discontentment in them. In Keats and Shelley the age of the complaint has already begun. ... It is not, perhaps, invidious to see a similarity between Alexander Pope and Scarlatti.'
>
> - Sacheverell Sitwell[1]

Sacheverell Sitwell sees the sonatas as being 'inhabited' with figures; a contended buzz of activity carrying with it the optimism of the Enlightenment, and thus reflecting the characteristics of his surrounding era. For him, Scarlatti presents an idealised world of wonder and spectacle without the Romantic notions of anguish and pain; the world of these figures is innocent, almost primitive, the Spanish scenes come 'in snatches like the singing of... muleteers', he opines that 'sometimes the strumming is but an idle prelude to a classical portico and progresses in Italian architecture, or it is a whole scene in the native idiom'.[2] This chapter begins to explore how Scarlatti's music both creates these visually stimulating scenes and seems inhabited through the use of musical topics; I begin with an overview of scholarship which notes the topical evocation at play, moving on to discuss how topical quotations within the sonatas can evoke human activity.

Unlike some of his French contemporaries, such as François Couperin and Jean-Philippe Rameau, Scarlatti's keyboard pieces are not specifically prescribed programmatic works (thereby invoking narrative through text); however, I am inclined to agree with Christopher Hail that, despite the common assertion to the contrary, there are programmatic ideas and narratives at play in the sonatas.[3] Indeed, Chris Willis comments that he 'cannot think of another composer who has, without making any overt invitation, prompted such colourful descriptive language from commentators... as Domenico Scarlatti. Within this strongly

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[1] Sitwell, *A Background for Domenico Scarlatti*, p.135-6

[2] Ibid., p.121

[3] Hail, S*carlatti Domenico*, p.28

flavoured language, intense evocations of real-world events figure highly'.[4] The catch-all title 'sonata' is unimaginative but permits a listener to exercise their own agency through fictionalising a narrative that the music itself suggests.

The Music 'Itself'

Kirkpatrick suggests that 'nearly all of Scarlatti's music has some root in the experiences and impressions of real life or in the fantasies of the dream world, but in a fashion that can only be stated in music'.[5] But despite his claim that 'there is no limit to the imaginary sounds evoked by Scarlatti's harpsichord', he insists that the only place for describing such sounds is in a keyboard lesson for a pupil; 'after they have served their purpose they must be forgotten in favour of the music itself. When perpetuated on paper they become sad and dangerously misleading caricatures'.[6] Kirkpatrick is somewhat trapped in a paradox wherein describing the sonatas with reference to non-musical events clearly has a distinct benefit in communicating the ideas at play, but those non-musical elements are simultaneously extraneous to a sonata's meaning.

The mid-twentieth century, the era in which Kirkpatrick was writing, had a musicological ethos which prioritised the notion of 'the music itself'. Music was placed within a *cordon sanitaire* and operated within 'a cultural and historical vacuum' as it was seen as explainable through its own technical merits.[7] Richard Taruskin outlines the analytical process thus: 'method is inferred from "structure" and then attributed to the composer, whose work is thus rationalised and rendered abstract'.[8] Yet K.159, which I briefly mentioned in the introduction, demonstrates that analysis of structure is not the crux in understanding how we perceive a sonata.

Despite his protestations, however, Kirkpatrick's writing takes its place in the rich heritage of florid discussion of Scarlatti's sonatas which begins with Charles Burney, who notes that 'there are many passages in Scarlatti's pieces in which he imitated the melody of tunes sung by carriers, muleteers, and common people'.[9] Scholars long searched in vain to find authentic

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[4] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality,' p.171

[5] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.160

[6] Ibid. p.160-161

[7] Richard Taruskin, 'A Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rite of Spring, the Tradition of the New, and "The Music Itself"', *Modernism/modernity* 2, 1 (1995), p.6-7

[8] Ibid., p.10

[9] Charles Burney, *The present state of music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces* (London, T. Becket and Co., 1773). Retrieved from: https://archive.org/details/presentstateofmu00burn/page/248/mode/2up p.249

Iberian sources for these folk tunes before accepting that Scarlatti himself may well have been the origin for them; we hear a folk tune not because there is an actual folk tune, but because Scarlatti imports the style of Spanish folk music into his keyboard pieces.[10] As Jane Clark notes, it is 'easy for anyone with some knowledge of Spanish folk music to feel the spirit of this music in Scarlatti, but to try and define [it] is more difficult'.[11]

Luisa Morales has recently provided evidence which suggests that Scarlatti was influenced by the dances and music of the *entr'actes* (in the form of *entremés* and *sainetes*) staged in Madrid's theatres during the period 1720-1760.[12] French Opera of this period was the core of Spanish stage productions, and makes various representations of exotic, *foreign*, materials; there was little appetite for authentic Spanish art at this time, as both Elisabeth Farnese and María Bárbara, the powerful consorts to the Bourbon Spanish Kings Philip V and Ferdinand VI, often granted royal favour to Italian artists, much to the chagrin of the populace.[13] Nevertheless, Spanish dances such as the *seguidilla*, *fandango*, *jota*, and *bolero*, were codified by dance-masters in the 1730s, and quickly gained popularity at court.[14] Morales suggests that Scarlatti transferred these dance styles into his keyboard pieces.

Musical Topics

As listeners we recognise the exotic Spanish evocations in the sonatas; this requires cultural awareness and recognises that the music refers beyond its own boundaries. The importation of a musical, or indeed non-musical, style into a new context has, since the publication of Leonard Ratner's seminal monograph *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, become more widely appreciated through topic theory.[15] Hatten neatly defines a musical topic as 'a *familiar style type with easily recognisable musical features*, ranging in complexity from a simple figure (fanfare, horn call), to a texture (learned style as polyphonic and/or imitative; chorale or hymn

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[10] For a detailed overview please see: Donna O'Steen Edwards, 'Iberian Elements in the Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti. A Lecture Recital'. (PhD Thesis, North Texas State University, 1980)

[11] Jane Clark, 'Domenico Scarlatti and Spanish Folk Music: A Performer's Re-appraisal'. *Early Music* 1, no,4 (1976): p.19

[12] Barry Ife, 'Communications: Festival Internacional de Música de Tecla Española: Symposiuk on Domenico Scarlatti', *Eighteenth Century Music* 17, 1 (2020): p.154

[13] Charles Noel, "Bárbara Suceeds Elisabeth...': the Feminisation and Domestication of Politics in the Spanish Monarchy, 1701-1759', in *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815: the Role of the Consort*, ed. Clarissa Orr, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

[14] Luisa Morales. (2016). 'Understanding Domenico Scarlatti's 'Spanish style': a new perspective from contemporary practices in Madrid's theatre entr'actes', in *The Early Keyboard Sonata in Italy and Beyond,* ed. Rohan. H. Stewart-Macdonald (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016)

[15] Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980)

style as homophonic), a complete genre (various dance and March types; French overture), a style (*ombra, tempesta, Empfindsamkeit*), or some overlap of these categories'.[16]

Whilst Morales can point to an origin for the Spanish 'feel' of the sonatas, Scarlatti's topical importation of the *exotic* draws descriptions beyond identifying specific dances from the stage; scholars evoke explicit vistas of Iberia. This being said, in the *entr'actes* we can find characteristics often assigned to Scarlatti beyond dance styles: 'the onomatopoeic notation of sounds; balanced musical phrases [of irregular length], often based on poems (*seguidillas*); segmentation of the music into short motives corresponding to the text-repetitions'.[17] Indeed, in their performances, the actors and actresses played castanets to accompany their dancing, some also played guitar – again, these are elements often heard in the sonatas. The evocations of the sonatas seem to evoke human activity.

Topics Convey Activity

Topics are by definition a synecdoche.[18] This, therefore, requires a listener to both infer and imagine a whole from a limited snapshot: there are no dance steps which accompany the sonatas, but many scholars recognise Spanish dance or a whole Spanish scene. Donna Edwards, for example, writes that in K.345: 'the listener almost can sense the rhythmical puffing of the village women as they blow on their water jugs'.[19] Scarlatti cannot explicitly recreate the sound of blowing on water jugs, but the rhythmic patterns of this sonata become, for Edwards, the complete experience. Similarly, in his much-quoted passage on K.24, Kirkpatrick enthusiastically abandons his analytical inhibitions to describe the vivid evocations of the sonata:

> '*Essercizi* 24 (K. 24) is a veritable orgy of brilliant sound. This is Scarlatti at his most abandoned, at his coarsest, and at an undeniable perfection, despite the *puerility* of this sonata, by comparison with the measured and expressive later sonatas. In the light of harpsichord music up to 1738 this sonata is a miracle of unparalleled sound effect. The harpsichord, while remaining superbly and supremely itself, is made to *imitate the whole orchestra of a Spanish popular fair.* It is no longer a solo instrument; *it is a crowd.*'[20] (emphasis mine)

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[16] Robert Hatten, 'The Troping of Topics in Mozart's Instrumental Works', in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.514 (Italics Original)

[17] Morales, 'Spanish Style', p.302

[18] Hatten, 'Troping of Topics', p.514

[19] Edwards, 'Iberian Elements', p.3-4

[20] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.160

This verges on tautology, but Kirkpatrick certainly seems to suggest that the sonata goes beyond frivolous musico-onomatopoeic 'crowd noise' effects. His statement that the harpsichord remains 'superbly and supremely itself' seems ostensively redundant as it can manifestly do nothing else; yet he evidently felt such a qualification to be necessary. Kirkpatrick first opts for simile to describe that the harpsichord is 'made to *imitate*… a Spanish popular fair', before then moving to a more robust metaphor: 'it is a crowd'.

Kirkpatrick has here identified evidence of human activity; the mental image was so intense that he is not content merely to recognise a musical topic – in this case a Spanish fair – but describes the bustling scene as if it were alive. The energy, noises, and people of a carnival are reified into musical gestures and brought to life by the performer. Indeed, he continues, 'there is no limit to the imaginary sounds evoked by Scarlatti's harpsichord… extend[ing]… into an impressionistic transcription of the sounds of daily life, of street cries, church bells, tapping of dancing feet, fireworks, artillery, in such varied and fluid form that any attempt to describe them precisely in words results in colourful and embarrassing nonsense'.[21] Kirkpatrick admittedly remains somewhat distanced in calling the sonatas 'impressions', but in describing the sonata as 'puerile' he imbues it with a human, and agential, characteristic.

An artistic impression requires some familiarity with the extra-musical source for it to be recognised, as well as an imagination prepared to engage with the composer's musical suggestions; listeners are therefore capable of perceiving music as a complex arrangement of layered activity. With K.24, we are objectively aware of the instrumental source with which a human agent interacts to produce sound, but we can also recognise that the musical textures, harmonies, and motives combine to create this detailed scene. Within this aesthetic layer the harpsichord and its player effectively cease to exist; we are transported in our imaginations to the crowded Spanish fair Kirkpatrick recognises.

Donald Tovey also detects a metaphorical crowd in his summary of K.85: this sonata 'consists of fireworks in binary form; a perfunctory opening, a crowd of pregnant ideas in a complementary key, and after the double bar reproducing these ideas as soon as possible in the tonic'.[22] It is perhaps telling that both writers reach for this 'crowd' metaphor in their accounts, albeit for different purposes: Tovey emphasises the sheer number of ideas, whilst

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Qtd. In Kathleen Dale, 'Domenico Scarlatti: His Unique Contribution to Keyboard Literature'. *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 74 (1947) https://doi.org/10.1093/jrma/74.1.33. p.42

Kirkpatrick refers to the sound effects generated, as if a Foley artist were given a harpsichord and instructed to recreate Madrid. The imported musical elements evoke human activity.

Topics and Image Schema

Topics have learned image-schematic associations which reinforce the vividness of their evocations. Image schema are recurrent patterns learned from our perceptual and bodily experiences which we automatically apply as we seek to understand and communicate other, potentially abstract, concepts; musical topics are an example of part-whole, or metonymy, image schema.[23] With musical topics we observe the stylistic flavour of a topic as a substitution for recognition of the entire style. The opening of K.159 (Ex.1), for example, first calls to mind a new instrumental origin, that of horns rather than harpsichord; hearing the opening as horns encourages us to imagine a scenario where such a horn-call is autochthonous, such as a hunt, festival, or similar. This opening can thus convey a sense of human activity from importing the musical characteristics of another instrument: the original location of the topics has human involvement and so in recognising a topic in music, we also recognise the human origins of the topic.

This phenomenon has also been observed by Willis, who writes that the identification of musical topics 'might encourage us to imagine a human scenario onto which [a] sonata could map...: [a 'grand march'] could be a royal or military procession, for instance... [which] makes maximally explicit the possibility of hearing this music in terms of vivid space and time'.[24]

Example 1: K.159, bars 1-10

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[23] Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: the Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.2, 29, 126

[24] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality,' p.225

Generally, for musical topics to be effective, a listener must have some concept of a topic's origin for the image-schematic connection to be made. Knowledge of some kind is fundamental to the music listening experience: 'enhanced responsiveness to familiar structure begins in utero and continues throughout life'.[25] Musical learning begins early; seven-month old children, for example, exhibit a preference for music in a metre which matches that which they are bounced to.[26] Learned cues are ingrained in music at a fundamental level; the sonic profile of a particular musical sound has meta-data encoded into it.[27] From a sound we can identify a source, the materials involved, and how the sound was created, attributing an instrument (or instrument type); we can thus infer context from a sound, which may result in the identification of a musical topic or other import from learned culture. For example, the sound profile of a drum being struck tells us the materials used (of the skin and striking object), and the physical and positional characteristics of those materials, and from this we can determine a social event which matches these characteristics, for example a military funeral.[28] A sound can evoke a topic, which in turn evokes human activity.

Topical Diversity

Compatibility

Whilst musical topics evoke human activity through image-schematic associations, Scarlatti also uses eclecticism and contrast of topics to generate a three-dimensional, almost touchable, virtual world which seems populated. In other words, this composer does not just evoke a single activity, but a range of contrasting and interacting ones. Sonatas K.24 & K.29 appear perennially throughout this thesis as they, in many ways, represent the apotheosis of Scarlatti's compositional style, combining acrobatics – a subject to which I shall turn shortly – and topical exoticism in a thrilling manner.

The opening gestures of both these sonatas are soundly grounded in the conventions of Baroque toccata, although the flowing semi-quavers simultaneously evoke the Brilliant style (the lack of figuration-based development would preclude *fortspinnung*). K.29 (Ex.2) also adds

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[25] Gaye Soley, Erin E. Hannon, 'Infants Prefer the Musical Meter of Their Own Culture: A Cross-Cultural Comparison', *Developmental Psychology* 46, 1 (2010), p.286

[26] Jessica Phillips-Silver, & Laurel J. Trainor, 'Feeling the Beat: Movement Influences Infant Rhythm Perception', *Science* 305, 5727 (2005)

[27] Eric F. Clarke, 'Subject-Position and the Specification of Invariants in Music by Frank Zappa and P. J. Harvey', *Music Analysis* 18, 3 (1999), p.350

[28] Ibid.

a touch of heraldic pomp through troping fanfare, bb.3-5: the 'natural' (harmonic series) intervals imply a brass instrument, the slower rhythmic pace is declamatory, and the high register allows it 'cut-through' over the semi-quavers. Intriguingly, the overall effect of this fanfare is somewhat undercut by phrase-structural instability: the twisting scalic descent does not align with the underlying shift from tonic to dominant; the resulting absence of root harmonies on the downbeats creates a sense that the fanfare itself is slightly off-balance. The vast, and expanding, registral space in between the fanfare and the Brilliant scalic descent means that both topics seem to operate wholly independently of each other until they converge for the cadence in bar 5.

The topics are complementary but seem to be undertaken by two separate actants, creating two individuals who interact within the same sonic world; in Hatten's terms, this world is part of an all-encompassing virtual subjectivity or other higher agency. The two topical actants are distinct, but are not working in opposition; instead, the combination is an example of *ratio facilis*, where a 'tropological interpretation is easily forthcoming', as the two topics mutually evoke a singular experience of energetic excitement.[29] Moreover, the troped fanfare is discarded in bar 5, but because the following passage heightens the energetic intensity through new Brilliant figures, and a hypermetrical accelerando the overall sense of a dynamic world remains; a listener's learned associations with the fanfare invites simulation of an event where fanfare is used.

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[29] Robert Hatten, 'The Troping of Topics in Mozart's Instrumental Works', in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), p.516

Example 2: Topical analysis of K.29, bars 1-25 (cont. next page)

Syntactic Incompatibility

The Brilliant style often appears within a semantic field that allows it to become marked.[30] Markedness is defined by Hatten as 'the asymmetrical valuation of an opposition ... marked entities have a greater (relative) specificity of meaning than do unmarked entities'.[31] In other words, for something to be recognised as virtuosic it ought to be contrasted with non-virtuosic material. Almén notes that 'determination of markedness values [is] based on what the signifying culture considers valuable and important'.[32] Indeed, the markedness of a gesture determines, to a large extent, its meaningfulness; indistinct gestures will naturally draw less attention than distinct gestures which, therefore, become more significant.[33] In these sonatas the excessiveness of the physicality, as executed by the performer and implied by the musical gestures, marks it out both within the Western canon and the composer's œuvre; however, Spanish exoticism is used to disrupt the established style and thus trigger *ratio difficilis*, where 'the interpretive process is more challenging and the uniqueness of the [topical] combination may require hypotheses that go beyond established stylistic conventions'.[34]

This facilitates a greater possibility for depth of expression through the emergence of topical friction and integration. The conflict and resolution of these topical events implicates social structures; Almén notes that 'while tracking the effect of a musical disruption ... we recognise psychodynamic, historical, or interpersonal situations that have a similar shape'.[35] He continues, commenting that: 'rules in a musical system mirror those in human psychology and society. Indeed, this is one powerful motivating impulse in music – the articulation of meaningful dynamic relations not adequately expressed through historical or personal events'.[36]

In K.29 exoticism initially provides a topical foil to the Brilliant toccata, but the boundaries between the two break down over the course of the sonata creating a more complex narrative that integrates supposedly incompatible material. The exotic twist, bb.15-20, is sudden and combines a number of compatible topical evocations: the terse melody is in the Singing style, the suspensions and *pianto* suggest a lament but, combined with jarring acciaccaturas and ♫ ♩

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[30] Ibid., p.514
[31] Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.291
[32] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, p.48
[33] Ibid., p.41
[34] Hatten, 'The Troping of Topics in Mozart's Instrumental Works'*,* p.516
[35] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, p.45
[36] Ibid.

downbeat figures, specifically evokes Spanish folk-song; the acciaccatura chords are characteristic of Spanish guitar; and, the pulsing quaver ostinato is percussive, suggesting castanets or hand-clapping. Whilst this passage marks the athleticism of the Brilliant style, the discordant harmonic tension and ascending sequence implies a wholly new emotional context (the disruption of this sequence in bar 19 to leap up an octave is a particularly affecting moment); indeed, the Brilliant style becomes almost shallow in its simple joyousness. The syntactic friction between the topics enables an emotional narrative of these tensions to emerge.

Hatten notes that topical oppositionality aids the 'general expressive interpretation by the listener' and cautions that 'a familiar style only becomes topical when it is *imported,* without losing its identity, into different contexts'.[37] However, whilst this is certainly true, it is also true that, once established, topical polarities may be unpredictably combined to create new meanings. Scarlatti amalgamates the toccata-Brilliant style with the Iberian exotic by combining the Vickers-machine-gun semi-quavers with exotic chromaticism, culminating in a Spanish trill gesture; the effect of the passage is redolent of a Shepard tone as the contrary motion expansion seems to rise upward with a mysterious quality. To be clear, chromaticism is not alien to Baroque aesthetics, but it is notable here as a hangover from the exotic harmony of bars 16-20. Sutcliffe comments that, despite the initial separation, K.29 exhibits 'a dissolving rather than contrasting of topical categories'; he argues that 'the genre [of toccata] undergoes expressive renewal through this mixture'.[38] I would be inclined to agree with this assessment; indeed, passages such as bars 33-42 seem to trope exotic Spanish dance within the overarching toccata aesthetic.

Exploration

Pianist Carlo Grante comments that 'Scarlatti's "Spanish blues" appear frequently like clouds passing across the sun to reveal its festive, optimistic potential'.[39] Indeed, Scarlatti's sometimes morose exotic topical contrasts can certainly make their surroundings all the more joyful; however, its integration as part of a seemingly endless conveyor-belt of motivic ideas means the topical contrasts are fused to create a multi-faceted *world*. I turn now to K.24 (Ex.3);

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[37] Hatten, 'The Troping of Topics in Mozart's Instrumental Works', p.514

[38] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.140

[39] Carlo Grante, 'the constantly shifting moods of Scarlatti's dancelike Sonata in E major K.26', *International Piano,* May/June 2020, https://www.carlogrante.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/International-Piano-Scarlatti-masterclass.pdf, p.39

this sonata uses topical evocation and multiplicity of motives to such an effect – for Kirkpatrick, a 'Spanish Fair'.

Example 3: Topical analysis of K.24, bars 1-36 (cont. next page)

For me, this sonata evokes a narrative of live exploration: the opening begins with exciting acrobatics, bar 1, shortly followed by an energetic horn-call, bb.2-3, returning to acrobatics, bb.4-6. Yet this effervescent Brilliant style is upended in bar 7 by an initially tentative exotic passage. The juxtaposition is stark and particularly marked by a modal shift to the minor dominant; the exotic is evoked through acciaccatura, light mandolin-like accompaniment, and a harmonic sequence Emilia Fadini cites as Iberian.[40] The textural change is explicit, with the melody and accompaniment squashed close together in the high and mid-high register of the harpsichord; the timbre of this tessitura is thin and metallic. The melody tropes the *pianto* through a sequence of descending minor seconds: this is a motif that 'has represented a lament since the sixteenth century', although during 'the eighteenth century the related idea of the *sigh* replaced that of weeping'.[41] However, from bar 11 the tentativeness dissipates, intensifying the lament: dense acciaccatura chords alternate with bare open fifths, now evoking not a light mandolin but a Spanish guitar; the melody is reinforced in thirds; the additional density creates a busier and louder sound; the repetition of the motif during bars 12-13 evokes passionate sadness; the imperfect cadence in bar 13 finishes the passage, but leaves it harmonically incomplete, the suspension a final crushing *pianto*.

Already in the first 13 bars this sonata has evoked several human activities, events, and emotions, but the exploration narrative continues; the passage in bars 14-19 integrates three topics: toccata, Brilliant, and exotic. It inverts the opening bar but does not replicate the stable assuredness of the adamantine primary harmony as it is perverted with exotic diminished harmony; the upwards gesture contained within the descending sequence seems speculative, unsure of which chords to land on. This topical combination continues through the energetic stand on the dominant, bb.20-21, until Andalusian singing style bursts out, bb.25-30: minor tonality crashes in, the widening register increasing the tension. The increasing density of the accompanying chords results in a crescendo, further increasing the intensity, which finally bursts out in an explosive passage of virtuosity in bar 31. Kirkpatrick characterises this passage as a 'raucous cantabile, which resembles flamenco singing, [and] seems to require a passionate reinforcement of everything, including the chords of the accompaniment'.[42]

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[40] The mandolin was an instrument well known in Italy; Scarlatti's native Naples developed the standard four-course mandolin in the 1740s, but the 'mandola' was referred to in sources from the 1580s. See James Tyler and Paul Sparks. 'Mandolin.' *Grove Music Online.* 2001; Accessed 20 Jul. 2023. https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.libproxy.york.ac.uk/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000046239.
Emilia Fadini, 'Integrazione tra lo stile Andaluso e lo stile Italiano', in *Domenico Scarlatti Adventures*, ed. Massimiliano Sala, & W. Dean Sutcliffe (Bologna: UT Orpheus Edizioni, 2008)

[41] Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.17

[42] Kirkpatrick, *Domenico Scarlatti*, p.286

The gradual assimilation of one topic into the other helps to integrate the contrasting elements into a singular subjectivity, as if we are exploring a vibrant world full of inhabitants. The Brilliant style can often seem merely to be built from *passaggi* figuration 'whose purpose seems to be the demonstration of dexterity alone'.[43] Yet the vocal style of the Spanish folk-song is arguably just as virtuosic as the toccata; its effect, however, is to emotionally charge a sonata, making the scenes we virtualise vivid and populated not just by moving beings, but by people. Scholars have been so totally absorbed by the dynamism of topical evocations that they begin to imagine singers and guitarists, but the virtuosity seems also to evoke physical movement. The next chapter explores how music can be perceived as motion and how our experience of music is shaped through our own bodily understanding.

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[43] Roman Ivanovitch, 'The Brilliant Style', in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), p.335

4 Physicality, Motion, & Gesture

Musical topics are an important staging point in explaining why the sonatas draw evocative descriptions and also why listeners can, through image-schematic association, imagine human scenarios and activity from musical implications – even if, for listeners like Sitwell, those human scenarios are romanticised idylls. The sonatas become musical postcards: for Kirkpatrick and others, the sonatas seem to provide auditory snapshots of the peoples of rural and urban Iberia through folksong and dance. Unlike postcards, which are moments frozen in time, music inescapably *progresses* through time; music is less precise in capturing specific details that may exist in a written or photographic record but can capture ultimately indefinable elements of an immediate experience such as emotion. Emotions become apparent in music through a series of conflicting events experienced in real-time, unlike a picture, where the viewer must imagine the preceding and subsequent stages.

The sonatas are often described by scholars in terms of moving and performing agencies. Janet Schmalfeldt recently imagined Scarlatti as an escape-artist, both musically and biographically, striving 'to capture the theatrical, even circus-like atmosphere of so many of the sonatas' along with the composer's ability to disappear from the historic record.[1] Giorgio Pestelli also envisages human acrobats in these works: a 'sonata becomes the floor of a stage where the various actors, just like the themes of the sonata with their different characters, may perform unforeseeable and unpredictable actions. It is truly a new mode of thinking in music that makes its way for the first time'.[2] Schmalfeldt and Pestelli both describe the music in terms of a physical analogue.

These descriptions rationalise the sonatas and relate them to aspects of our human reality in order to conceptualise and understand them, but the forcefulness of the language also gives some indication of how the sonatas are experienced by listeners: the music embodies these virtuosic physical feats. Theorists like Hatten argue that (almost) all music evokes movement, a theory that is supported by evidence from the field of music cognition, but scholarly descriptions of movement in Scarlatti's music exceed that of writings on other composers. In this chapter I explore the metaphorical and cognitive links between musical gestures and motion and consider how an intra-musical agent can be evoked through musical gesture.

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[1] Schmalfeldt, 'Escape-Artist', p.262, 255, & *passim*.
[2] Giorgio Pesteli, Qtd. in Schmalfeldt, 'Escape Artist', p.255

The Brilliant Style: *Physical* Virtuosity

The Brilliant style is inextricably tied to the concept of virtuosity, and by extension the virtuoso; by its nature, virtuosity tends to encompass a physical feat on the part of the performer. Scarlatti has long cultivated the mystique of a virtuoso. The Irish composer and organist Thomas Roseingrave, who in 1739 re-engraved the *Essercizi* and a further eleven sonatas in Britain, commented to Charles Burney that Scarlatti's performance at the harpsichord was like 'ten hundred [devils] had been at the instrument; [as] he never had heard such passages of execution and effect before... [it] surpassed... every degree of perfection'.[3] Roseingrave would have removed his own fingers after the display were a knife at hand, but instead vowed not to touch a harpsichord for month. His characterisation of Scarlatti as a grave young man dressed in black and in a black wig is, Boyd notes, the only known description of the composer in his early adulthood, and further embellishes the composer as a mystical demoniac figure: 'Scarlatti appears here as a virtuoso of the Paganini type, with a demeanour calculated to suggest a familiarity with the arts of black magic'.[4]

The shameless excess of virtuosity baked into the sonatas has proved a somewhat embarrassing wart for some Scarlatti apologists; Sutcliffe argues that Kirkpatrick's chronology enabled him to construct 'a narrative in which the composer... gradually moved beyond the "crassness" of his early "flamboyant" works'.[5] Indeed, Kirkpatrick sees maturity as synonymous with greater restraint and identifies a trajectory in the sonatas of ever-greater understatement: 'Never again does Scarlatti return to the reckless flamboyance of his earlier pieces. He retains his virtuosity and all the colours of his instrumental palette, but he handles them with a sobriety and concentration that have always been the attributes of the mature artist in his old age'.[6] Sutcliffe notes the importance of *Spielfreude* (the simple joy of playing), and comments that 'the sheer thrill of "letting go"' can create a rupturing force within a sonata; however, he proposes that the publication of the *Essercizi* and the 'wide subsequent promulgation establish[ed] the image of a composer who is neat, fleet, dry, sparkling but without passion'.[7] Indeed, for Massimo Bogianckino, the 'histrionic approach felt in some of

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[3] Burney, *General History* vol.IV, p.263

[4] Boyd, *Master of Music*, p.21; David Sutherland, 'Domenico Scarlatti and the Florentine Piano', *Early Music*, 23, 2 (1995), p.255n.

[5] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.279

[6] Kirkpatrick, *Domenico Scarlatti*, p.169

[7] Sutcliffe, *Keyboard Sonatas,* p.316

Domenico Scarlatti's crossing of hands and acrobatic feats, as well as a sense of gesture and dance, are reminiscent of the *commedia dell'arte*'.[8]

Virtuosity in the Sonatas

Perhaps the most conspicuous manifestation of virtuosity in Scarlatti's music is the technique of hand-crossing. Hand-crossing was reportedly a popular fad around 1730, although there are only a few published works which survive to demonstrate its popularity.[9] The appeal is primarily visual; indeed, 'for the Scarlatti persona as acrobat, these [movements] should want to be seen'.[10] Supposedly, the player is performing a choreographed routine rather than progressing through a mere practical necessity. David Yearsley writes thus:

> 'in some cases [Scarlatti] introduced it as a purely arbitrary feat of virtuosity rather than for any musical considerations... the famous, or perhaps infamous, parallel 3rds of the penultimate number of the *Essercizi* (K.29), a passage which Scarlatti specifically demands should be played with the hands crossed; thus the easy is made onerous, the difficulties remaining imperceptible – it is hoped – to any listener unable to see the player's hands.'[11]

Such moments of hidden hand-crossing create the effect that non-acrobatic music becomes *visually* acrobatic. K.120 (Ex.4) is a sonata which is exemplary in decoupling the performer's acrobatics from the sonic result; during bars 6-11, Scarlatti's hand-crossing instructions can be seen to interrupt the linear phrases, yet a virtuoso performance can render this aurally undetectable. Perhaps this is the ultimate proof a Faustian bargain: to play this seamlessly requires a performer to have sold their soul.

Hearing music as virtuosic, or as something that *moves*, results from two components of our musical perceptions: first, our knowledge of sound production frames how we perceive sounds; second, humans use sensorimotor cognition as a primary tool in understanding and communicating. The opposite of hidden virtuosity – that which sounds virtuosic but is not – is a musical *rara avis*: almost all virtuosic feats seem to *sound* virtuosic. An arpeggiator is a setting on some synthesisers that generates an arpeggio based on a note held by a player. The player is not producing a virtuosic feat, but the arpeggio *sounds* virtuosic; it sounds like *something or somebody* is moving extremely rapidly. Ditto should an arpeggio of several octaves be shared

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[8] Qtd. In Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.286
[9] David Yearsley, 'Hand-Crossing and the European Keyboard Scene around 1730', *Early Music* 30, 2 (2002), p.229
[10] Schmalfeldt, 'Escape Artist', p.262
[11] Yearsley, 'Hand-Crossing', p.225

Example 4: Visual but inaudible hand-crossing in K.120, bars 3-11

amongst multiple performers, no performer is individually virtuosic, but the resulting musical gesture *is*. The implication of this is that there is a cognitive link between our aural and motor processing: we hear a musical gesture as implying physical phenomena such as exertion.

Music as Metaphor

Fred Maus comments on music's capacity to create a 'dramatic structure' akin to staged drama and, like Hatten, notes that musical agents are 'indeterminate' as characters; their efficacy lies in a capacity to imitate '*action*'.[12] This capability is rooted in our fundamental human understanding and perception of music; we hear music as completing movements or actions because there is a fundamental relationship between our understanding of abstract concepts, such as music, and interactions with our environment which we elucidate through conceptual metaphors.[13] Pitch, for example, is phenomenon of vibration, measured in Hertz, which may

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[12] Fred E. Maus, 'Music as Drama', *Music Theory Spectrum* 10, (1988), p.71-72

[13] George Lakoff, & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980)

increase or decrease in frequency, but this delta is described as rising or falling, up or down. Numbers are themselves conceived vertically, as larger numbers are often described as higher than smaller, or lower numbers.[14]

Humans process pitch and numbers as if they are observable in a spatial environment. Keyboard instruments operate on a horizontal axis, the black keys are raised slightly to provide greater tactile distinction, but there is essentially no up or down; yet we talk about going 'up' or 'down' the keyboard. Roger Shepard has suggested a more complex, helical spatial model which combines the phenomenon of vertical, height-based, pitch and the circularity of pitch chroma (Fig.1).[15] The origin of this 'pitch is height' metaphor may lie in the singing voice, with lower frequencies vibrating the lower chest more than higher frequencies. Western culture is not unique in utilising metaphor to comprehend pitch, indeed 'language plays a *causal* role in the design of non-linguistic representations of pitch': all cultures seem to have metaphors relating to pitch, although not all use height: for example, mass is used by the Kpelle people of Liberia, whilst the Suya people of the Amazon basin use age.[16]
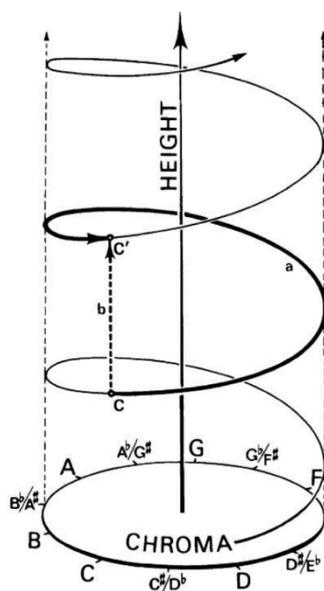
Figure 1: Roger Shepard's helical model of pitch space, taken from 'Structural Representations of Musical Pitch', p.353

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[14] Large and small is also an image-schematic association through size.

[15] Roger Shepard, 'Structural Representations of Musical Pitch', in *Psychology of Music*, ed. Diana Deutsch, (London: Academic Press, Inc., 1982), p.353

[16] Simon Schaerlaeken, Donald Glowinski, & Didier Grandjean. 'Linking musical metaphors and emotions evoked by the sound of classical music', *Psychology of Music* 50, 1 (2022), p.246 (emphasis mine).
Notably, there are definite similarities between mass and age, and height as a metaphor: heavier objects are harder to lift, whereas light objects can be lifted to a great height very easily; lightness means easier manoeuvrability, and heaviness means greater inertia and stability; heavier objects are normally larger and resonate at a lower frequency to smaller, lighter objects; a similar comparison could be made for age though experience and pubertal changes.

We often conceive of a musical narrative as being a 'journey'; such a metaphor is entirely dependent on spatial and temporal concepts. A journey requires movement through a multitude of different sensory experiences, a setting-off and an ending. The necessity of metaphor to explain music reveals an obvious truth: music is an entirely human construct created by the brain as it processes its experiences of sound.[17] The brain is thus the source of all musical meaning; music cannot exist outside of it.[18] Consequently, the context with which we listen to music can have a significant effect on our perceptions of it: listening to the same musical work is a comparatively different experience if we hear it in a concert hall or in the kitchen whilst washing up, when sat in a comfy chair or out shopping. Performing music is another experience entirely.

Is Listening a Conscious Experience?

The ability to hear is an evolutionary advantage and we are constantly aware of sound, even whilst sleeping, although we only become conscious of sound when a biological, and adaptable, arousal threshold is passed. There is, therefore, an important distinction between hearing and listening: the former 'can be regarded as a somewhat passive ability that seems to work with or without much conscious effort, listening implies an active role'.[19] In the introduction I noted that the scholarly obsession with K.159's potential sonata form structure failed to capture the essence of the music; here I go a step further and claim that no matter whether a listener conceives of its structure as sonata form or merely within Scarlatti's standard binary operations, the actual listening experience is the same. Indeed, Robin Wallace found that undergraduate students tasked with recognising form whilst listening would struggle to do so even if they could describe it in academic terms.[20]

Mark Reybrouck notes that our 'involvement with music is *experienced* rather than being solely reasoned and interpreted: in other words, it is *drastic* rather than *gnostic*'.[21] The listening experience of Wallace's students may well have been detrimentally impacted by directing focus solely onto form as they will have lost awareness of other aspects of the musical narrative. Music is not a naturally occurring element waiting to be found, it is created in our brains as they seek to understand and find meaning in the world, specifically sound. Musical

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Humans may not be the only animals capable of appreciating music; it may be unknowable, but Michael Spitzer argues that birds sing 'ultimately because they enjoy it'. *The Musical Human,* p.296.

[19] Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication 1st ed.,* (New Jersey: Ablec Pub. Corp., 1984), p.16

[20] Robin Wallace, 'In favour of a Skills-Based Approach to Music Appreciation: Pedagogy and Personal History', *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 4, 1 (2013), p.167

[21] Mark Reybrouck, 'Music as Epistemic Construct', *Leonardo Music Journal* 30, (2020), p.59

structure is an abstract construct which we use to understand how the organisation of sounds can create a unified work; it is less useful in analysing the actual experience of listening to that work.

Carolyn Abbate's seminal essay, 'Music-Drastic or Gnostic?', was the result of her questioning the value of analytical narratives during a performance. Her flow-state of playing contained practical thoughts about the playing experience (enjoying playing, or reading ahead and preparing for jumps); whereas questions of musical semantics actually proved 'distracting' and 'bizarre' whilst attempting to play.[22] Abbate also notes that musical hermeneutics is inherently contradictory: analysts make claims of embedded signification within a work, arguing that said signification contributes to musical efficacy, but music's ineffability is, however, itself key to its efficacy.[23] Indeed, 'the declarative precision of academic prose seems designed to minimise ambiguity and rule out "interpretation" altogether'.[24]

The analyst sits at the top of Monahan's hierarchy of agency, able to identify aspects of a work and prescribe meaning to it; yet the mere possibility of other interpretations gives greater agential freedom to listeners. Furthermore, our human brains process sound in such a way that it enables a seemingly shared experience across unique individuals; indeed at least some musical ideas communicate emotions effectively across cultures despite the different musical styles and uses.[25] For many, music is part of communal dance or ritual, tied into the religious fabric of their lives; indeed, the separation of daily life into sacred and secular originates in Western thought from Christian philosophy.[26] The implication of cross-cultural and cross-individual musical recognition is that learned aspects are only part of the picture, and that the conscious listening experience is not exclusively organised by an individual's agential direction: the subconscious is always listening.[27]

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[22] Carolyn Abbate, 'Music -Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry* 30, 3 (2004), p.511, 510

[23] Ibid., p.521

[24] Monahan, 'Action and Agency Revisited', p.332

[25] Michael Spitzer, *Musical Human*, p.14.

[26] Tom Holland, *Dominion,* (London: Abacus, 2020), *passim*; p.411

[27] Jennings, 'Attention and Perceptual Organization', p.1274

Musical Gestures

The lament passage in K.24, bb.7-13, has a descending profile; the slowness of that descent through stepwise *piano* figures contributes to a pained expressivity. In the previous sentence I twice referred to the melodic profile as descending; the concept of melodic contour is an extension of the 'pitch is height' metaphor, as a tracing of the up-down pitch arc through time. This type of metaphorical understanding turns sound into motion understood as a, in this case descending, physical *gesture*. Gestures, suggests Robert Hatten, are 'any energetic shaping through time that may be interpreted as significant'.[28] We conceive of music in a physical and gestural manner: it can be forceful, quick, delicate, or slow; it climbs and falls, soars and churns, etc.. For most musicians such descriptions are part of common parlance; however, there is substantial evidence which suggests that the link between musical gesture and physical motion goes beyond metaphor, that we (as humans) unconsciously perceive sound in part *as* physical gestures.[29]

The perception of gestures in music is grounded both on intra-musical elements (such as contour, dynamic, topic, tessitura, and timbre) and our extra-musical knowledge of sound production. Passages in the Brilliant style, for example, sound virtuosic because we are aware of the difficulty of producing them. This sensorimotor processing happens autonomously without conscious input from a listener; hearing music as a series of gestures 'result[s] from the reactivation of modality-specific areas such as motor and sensory areas... in the context of conceptual tasks'.[30] Consequently, a musical gesture 'is formed through the embodier, and does not lie fully formed in the score'.[31] Gesture is, however, *implicated* within a score and does not need to be actualised by a player to be inferred by an analyst.

I discuss this cognitive process in more detail shortly, but it is crucial to point out that identifying gestures within music implies the existence of a virtual agential gesturer.[32] The sonic profile of a gesture can thus 'convey the sense of an agent striving toward a perceived

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[28] Robert Hatten, 'A Theory of Musical Gesture and its Application to Beethoven and Schubert', in *Music and Gesture*, eds. Anthony Gritten, & Elaine King, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2006), p.1

[29] Rolf Godøy, 'Coarticulated Gestural-sonic Objects in Music', in *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture*, eds. Anthony Gritten, & Elaine King, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011)

[30] Simon Schaerlaeken, Donald Glowinski, & Didier Grandjean, 'Linking musical metaphors and emotions evoked by the sound of classical music', *Psychology of Music* 50, 1 (2022), p.246

[31] Hamish Robb, 'Imagined, Supplemental Sound in Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Towards a Fuller Understanding of Musical Embodiment', *Music Theory Online* 21, 3 (2015), pa.1.9, https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.15.21.3/mto.15.21.3.robb.html

[32] Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes*, p.224

goal'.[33] As listeners we can infer emotional motivations from such goals and an agent's actions towards them. Simon Schaerlaeken, et al., note that 'it has been argued that the ability of music to evoke emotions... is one of the main reasons why people engage with it... and its primary purpose'.[34] Listeners' empathy with the travails of a virtual agent is one potential source for this ability. Perception of musical gestures, thus movement, is understood through spatial image-schema (such as pitch rising and falling), and general muscular tension and relaxation. Reference to specific muscular groups, such as the face, is rare: music can seemingly be sad, but it cannot frown. Indeed, Patrik Juslin, et al., comment that '*happiness, calm, love, sadness, excitement,* and *nostalgia* are frequent emotions to music whereas *fear, shame,* and *jealousy* are not'.[35]

The difficulty with interpreting musical expression is that expression itself is not well understood in cognitive science and so sources of musical emotion remain theoretical.[36] What is understood is that a link exists between emotion and bodily movements, which is likely influenced by the motor patterns involved in producing an emotion; visual imagery can also generate emotions, but this is also believed to be achieved through embodied, physical processes.[37] Theorists such as Hatten suggest that music evokes emotions because a listener's subjective engagement with a work gives rise to an empathetic response to the fictionalised narrative that the listener constructs:

> 'a listener may indeed become entranced by subjective identifications with music that are so strong as to cause weeping or profound emotional reaction, but the same listener may also engage with the very same piece in a more distanced manner – appreciating, evaluating, and even critiquing the constructions of virtuality that she recognises or is able to construct. A listener may even alternate among these modes of engagement during a single listening experience of a work'.[38]

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[33] Rebecca Thumpston, 'The 'Feel' of Musical Ascent', in *Music, Analysis, and the Body*, ed. Nicholas Reyland & Rebecca Thumpston, (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2018), p.80

[34] Schaerlaeken, Glowinksi, & Grandjean, 'musical metaphors and emotion', p.247

[35] Patrik Juslin, et al., 'How Does Music Evoke Emotions? Exploring the Underlying Mechanisms', in *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, eds. Patrik Juslin & John Sloboda, p.609

[36] Marc Leman, et al., 'What is Embodied Music Cognition?', in *Springer Handbook of Systematic Musicology*, ed. Rolf Bader, (Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2018), p.752

[37] Eerola, 'Music and Emotions', p.544-45

[38] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.196

Motor Mimetic Imagery

Descriptions of bodily movement are common when discussing Scarlatti's sonatas; for many, the music sounds acrobatic. It is, therefore, worth exploring the cognitive process which enables music to be heard as motion, within which the importance of the human body cannot be overstated. Indeed, Thomas Clifton argues that 'the most central and universal characteristics of music (patterns of tension and release, the gestural, the sensuous) are meaningful only because they are known by the body. Music does not arise from an objective examination of syntactical or formal functions, but from bodily complicity with sounds'.[39] Music is 'the result of human action and therefore can be usefully construed in terms of those actions... [for instance] dynamic level certainly reflects the amount of energy being expended to create a sound'; in other words, the qualities of a particular sound provide cues as to its production.[40] The question that the subconscious constantly and autonomously seeks to answer is: how would I feel if my body were to undertake these gestures?

Furthermore, as Arnie Cox explains, when we see others act, we simulate their actions within our own motor imagery system; so-called mirror neurons are fired within the mirror system both when we act ourselves and when we observe others act.[41] Our awareness, and subsequent projection, of how sounds are produced can affect how the mirror system processes them; 'movements and their ensuing effects are intrinsically coupled in the human brain and cognition... a representation of a perceptual effect can trigger the movement necessary to produce the effect itself, particularly in musicians'.[42] Rebecca Thumpston notes that when playing a scale, 'visually (or imaginatively) the listener knows [a] cellist is ascending the fingerboard, striving to reach the cello's highest peaks'; as the shortening of the string reduces its resonance, thus changing its timbre, 'the listener gains an awareness of the registral heights reached'.[43] Cox terms this effect motor mimetic imagery, noting that 'we can imagine initiating an observed action without [actually] executing the imagined action'.[44] This imitation can be activated independently by sound or sight, and in some cases it can spill over into mimetic motor *action* (e.g. singing-along, dancing, head-bobbing/foot-tapping; pianists,

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[39] Thomas Clifton, *Music as Heard: a Study in Applied Phenomenology,* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), p.279

[40] Anderew Mead, 'Bodily Hearing: Physiological Metaphors and Musical Understanding', *Journal of Music Theory* 43, 1 (1999), p.4

[41] Arnie Cox, *Music & Embodied Cognition*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016), p.23

[42] Giacomo Novembre & Peter Keller, 'Music and Action', in *Springer Handbook of Systematic Musicology*, ed. Rolf Bader, (Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2018), p.524

[43] Thumpston, 'The 'Feel' of Musical Ascent', p.86: please note that I refer to this scale as an abstract phenomenon, whereas Thumpston considers it within the context of Elgar's cello concerto.

[44] Arnie Cox, 'On the Subjects and Objects of Music Analysis', in *Music, Analysis, and the Body',* ed. Nicholas Reyland & Rebecca Thumpston, (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2018) p.17

for instance, have reported involuntary finger movements when listening to well-performed piano music).

Our mimetic engagement with music establishes virtualised connections between learned image-schematic physical actions and musical gestures. This centres the listener's own body in the processing of musical sound and provides a cognitive explanation for the metaphor 'music is kinetic'. Moreover, exertion and movement have an affective dimension because of learned emotional associations with the movements we mimetically enact: we know what it feels like to actually execute them. Music can sound virtuosic because listeners have internalised models of the bodily motions necessary for the sound production; effort, duration, complexity, success, and community all become 'part of the musical experience for mimetically engaged listeners, who feel something of the same aspects of performative exertions'.[45]

Moving Beyond the Performer

The opening to K.29 sounds virtuosic because we mimetically enact the huge physical effort of the performer as they navigate the keyboard. For Cox, the internal discrepancy between our mimetic exertion and the lack of actual movement is resolved by the projection of this exertion onto a musical agent.[46] Thumpston summarises thus: 'the enaction, so to speak, of a listener's bodily agency can thereby act as the catalyst for the projection of figurative, agential bodies into music'.[47] When a listener projects their mimetic enactment, the virtual agency that they imagine is a physically active and emotionally capable entity; the listener can reflect on the this agency through a quasi-third person perspective giving them an exterior perspective on the actions of the agent.[48] The physical actions of the agent can be interiorised as being emotional representations of the virtual subjectivity of a virtual agent, but we can also be simultaneously aware of, and overcome by, the acute physicality. However, the relationship between production and product is not always linear; Cox warns about potential paradoxes where reality and the mimetic image may not align, particularly where the technically difficult sounds simple or calm.[49]

The hand-crossing passage in K.7 (Ex.5), bb.9-30, provides a constructive example of such a contradiction; the difficulty can be seen but not heard. Sutcliffe comments that this sonata, as

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[45] Cox, *Music & Embodied Cognition*, p.178

[46] Cox, 'Subjects and Objects of Music Analysis', p.23, 25

[47] Thumpston, 'The 'Feel' of Musical Ascent', p.91

[48] Cox, *Music & Embodied Cognition,* p.158

[49] Cox, 'Subjects and Objects of Music Analysis', p.52

well as similar passages in K.29, inflicts 'sheer cruelty on the player, [is] digitally and mentally confusing, and without the consolation of having a dashing display value' of the rapid hand flitting present in sonatas such as K.120.[50] The awkwardness of playing this passage conflicts with the stylistic aesthetic it inhabits: integrating the topics of Singing style (simple melody with arpeggiated accompaniment), *Empfindsamkeit* (harmonic tensions through modulation and resolution, including the parallel modal shift from C major to minor, bb.14-15), and Musical Clock (high register producing a chime-like timbre), which transitions, bb.24-30, into Hunting horns (through what Shaymukhametova refers to as the 'golden motion of the horns' – in this case a succession of 6ths).[51] I discuss the effect of the performer's body on listener's perceptions of musical gestures towards the end of this thesis, but this mismatch for a spectator between performer and music suggests that musical gestures are embodied through a process which goes beyond that of simply internalising the direct means of sound production.

Consider Thumpston's cellist whose scale gains 'height'; the player's arm extends and *reaches* along the fingerboard. But this motion is inversely related to the perceived direction of the musical gesture – the music goes up, the cellist down – suggesting that our mimetic imitation of sound production through a performer is only partially responsible for a listener's embodiment of musical gestures. Indeed, the progression of the harmonic modulations through the passage in K.7 seems directed by more than the player alone; the exact harmony is irrelevant to the physical gesture of the performer, but, nevertheless, the V⁷b chords feel as if they *need* to resolve to their tonic. Marc Leman, et al., comment that:

> 'What we call music can in fact be seen as the result of such a reconstruction. During the act of listening, for example, we construct models of a condition (or state) that could have generated these sonic patterns. For example, in listening to a simple tonal piece, the chord progression appears as being driven by a compelling tonal force that explains why and how the chord sequence progresses the way it does. Clearly, this assumption of force is the result of a predictive model that emerges from, at least, (i) the available sonic patterns, and their physical-acoustical arrangement, (ii) the auditory mediator and its innate way of rearranging acoustical information, and (iii) previous encounters with music that provide knowledge about the repertoire'.[52]

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[50] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.284
[51] Liudmila Shaymukhametova, 'Semantic Transformations in the Musical Themes of Domenico Scarlatti's Clavier Sonatas', *Music Scholarship* 2 (2019), p.89
[52] Leman, et al., 'What is Embodied Music Cognition?', p.749

Example 5: Scarlatti's instructions in K.7 result in inaudible hand-crossing, bars 7-36

Intra-Musical Forces

The perceived *need* for these harmonies to resolve implies some kind of theoretical force to compel the passage to do so. Indeed, musical gestures seem to be governed by forces controlling harmony, metre, and melodic direction. These forces are image-schema with roots in our own physical reality and help to structure the spatial model within which we perceive music: gesture implies motion and the theory of musical forces proposes that 'musical motion is shaped by forces analogous to those that shape physical motion'.[53] Steve Larson was the first to propose that 'not only [do we] *speak* about music as if it were shaped by musical analogues of physical gravity, magnetism, and inertia, but we also actually *experience* it in terms of [these] "musical forces"'.[54]

Virtual forces, as they are not 'real' forces, provide a universal space within which we hear music as operating. Gravity is inferred from our perception that lower pitches sound more stable than higher ones; pitches are thus heard to be drawn to a lower stable state which is harmonically consonant.[55] As a scale descends, as with the opening of K.29, each lower tonic sounds more stable than the previous one. Unlike gravity in reality, musical gravity does not usually have the implication of acceleration; acceleration is more likely to be heard as a consequence of musical magnetism. Musical gravity, Larson proposes, also has a rhythmic component as 'if we hear a musical gesture as "falling in to a downbeat," then we experience rhythmic gravity as a force which pulls that musical gesture "down" (regardless of whether the pitch ascends or descends as it does'.[56]

Magnetic forces relate primarily to harmonic function, where as a pitch approaches a centre of harmonic stability the attracting force becomes more intense, although the harmonic centre itself need not actually be sounded.[57] K.7's modulatory passage demonstrates the magnetic force in action: the *need* of the dominant harmony to resolve is perceived as the consequence of the magnetic force compelling it to resolve. Magnetism also implies the potential reciprocal repulsion of two independent voices (or agents) around a harmonic centre – as in the case of a suspension.

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[53] Steve Larson, 'Musical Gestures and Musical Forces: Evidence from Music-Theoretical Misunderstandings', in *Music and Gesture,* ed. Anthony Gritten & Elaine King, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), p.61

[54] Steve Larson, *Musical Forces*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), p.29

[55] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, pp.55-56

[56] Larson, *Musical Forces*, p.149

[57] Hatten, *Virtual Agency,* p.54

Inertia or momentum is not a force in itself but an observation that the energy contained within gestures does not dissipate into the æther and remains unless affected by another force: it is the result of observing that patterns have a tendency to continue or repeat unless otherwise affected.[58] In other words, once a gesture begins it requires another force – gravitational, magnetic, or agential – to act upon it to disrupt the pattern. Larson notes that the common assertion that musical gestures proceed towards a goal does not account for instances where momentum carries a melody *beyond* the goal, to which magnetism then draws it.[59]

These musical forces provide the bedrock in a listener constructing a virtual world; a virtual agent can be perceived as acting within this governed virtual space. Of course, these forces do not *actually* exist, and, as Monahan notes, 'our interest in them will mainly be as enabling conceits and not as primary explanatory tools'.[60] Hearing musical phrases as being subject to music forces creates a further physical parallel beyond movement, from which wilfulness can be inferred when these forces are resisted or overpowered, or even submitted to; the spatially orientating capacity of musical forces help to define the actions of an agent and to establish musical goals, motivations, and thus emotions. Hatten opines that 'traces of humanlike agency may appear whenever we interpret sequences of *pitches as wilful movements* overcoming the constraints of those environmental forces associated with tonality and metre'.[61] We identify a human agency when a musical happening is imbued with energy such that it aspires to free itself from its 'physical' limitation; this also in-part enables listeners to experience empathy for an agent.

Embodiment of musical gestures turns abstract sounds into the perceived movement of a virtual agent. Musical physicality is a central feature of Scarlatti's style, going beyond that of eighteenth-century norms; in the next chapter I build on the cognitive processes outlined and investigate specific figures which seem to *explicitly* evoke human movement.

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[58] Larson, *Musical Forces,* p.23
[59] Larson, 'Musical Gestures and Musical Forces', p.61
[60] Monahan, 'Action and Agency Revisited', p.236
[61] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.65

5 Virtualising Acrobatics: Acrobatic Schemas

Scholars often qualify Scarlatti's sonatas through movement-based metaphors, with the virtuosity evoking images redolent of street carnivals. Schmalfeldt's polymorphic 'escape-artist' transforms into an acrobat, whilst Oskar Bie explicitly calls the sonatas 'athletes, simply rejoicing in their physical strength, and raising gymnastics to a high, self-sufficient art'.[1] This universal imagery, both in the sense of its application to sonatas as a whole and of its widespread use within scholarship as whole, is highly unusual. I propose that there are three agential schemas, or patterns of motion, which induce acrobatic embodiment in a listener: sprint, leap, and scamper. These schemas can also present in non-normative ways to create secondary embodied effects. I noted earlier that the process of embodiment seems to have the subconscious constantly asking 'how would I feel if my body were to undertake these gestures?'. Subtly different, but perhaps more immediately significant for understanding the acrobatic schema in Scarlatti, is the question: 'how could my body undertake these gestures?'. I suggest that these schema capture elements of the sonatas which specifically seem to evoke physicality over all else; the intense and energetic movement that these figures embody can be a significant aspect of a sonata's excitement and thrills. They help to explain why a sonata can sound acrobatic.

Leap

The first schema to which I turn is the 'leap'. The general concept of musical leaps is one that most analysts have accepted; indeed, the term 'leap' is often used in instrumental lessons across the country, as many instruments require the player to move their hands and arms a significant distance to execute large intervallic shifts. Leaping usually involves a gesture containing two or more consecutive pitches which are of a significant distance apart, normally of a fifth or more. Leaps can also be compounded out of several smaller leaps, to create a composite gesture: arpeggios are an example of this procedure.

K.17 (Ex.6[2]) utilises the leap schema in several places, most notably the opening, bb.1-3, and the passage bb.12-20. The opening three bars are dense with various leaps: from the first note

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[2] Note: for these first few bars of this example, I have included a full diagrammatic breakdown of the leaps involved; however, the schema is usually fairly obvious and further examples are bracketed more simply. I have also shown the other schema featured in the sonata.

Example 6: Acrobatic schema featured in K.17, bars 1-25

to the last, from beginning to end of each bar, and between each note. The result is an immediate sense of actoral movement; in mimetically enacting the leaps, the listener is immediately thrust into a scenario of highly energetic motion and excitement. The leaps of the passage from bar 12 include a small preparatory figure; the upper auxiliary emphasises the lower pitches and, by rapidly creating and resolving a dissonance, contributes to a sense of

playfulness. The leaps in both passages are unmistakable, but the direction of travel is different; the opening descends, whereas the second passage ascends, then descends. The opening, while energetic, also has connotations of inevitability once it is initiated because we perceive, through musical gravity, lower pitches as inherently more stable. The upward leaps in the second passage go from a stable position to a less stable position; this implies agential intentionality, by opposing the gravitational tendency towards stability. The upwards motion also imbues the gesture with a sense of puerile joy.

K.14 (Ex.7) utilises several leap schemas and also illustrates the pitfall of not distinguishing between intra- and extra-musical leaps: the player will have to pivot their body, and leap, to execute the three-octave jump between the two G's in first bar. However, these G's are part of separate gestures, not a singular gesture or movement as a leap would imply; the low G is a stable plateau with implications of finality. The opening to this sonata also shows how a composite of intervals, in this case a descending arpeggio, can create a leap schema: this arpeggio involves a multitude of intervals, but few of them are actually important, the overall descent of three octaves is effectively punctuated by several bounces. In K.9 (Ex.8), the leap schema, bb.5-7, is combined with appoggiatura and a ♩ ♪ rhythmic tic within a descending sequence to create a skipping effect. The sequence is essential for this effect as it provides a sense of *ongoing* directed motion between pitch points, whereas the leaps in K.17, bb.12-20, are identical replications – the leaps occur between the *same* two points.

K.18 (Ex.9) likewise opens with a leap schema, although the *presto* semi-quavers imbue this with a sense of frantic rather than excitable motion. However, during bars 6-8 the sonata presents an uncommon manifestation of the leap schema; whilst a leap is usually only between two pitches, here the leap occurs between a whole motif as it alternates between starting on $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{1}$ within F major. The accompaniment also leaps between tenor and alto register, highlighting the contrast by contracting the sonic space. The repetitive oscillation of this leap contributes to a sense of intensification, implying an actant that is seemingly incapable of escaping the harmonic loop which moves from tonic to dominant and back again. This shows how acrobatic schema can be integrated with other musical techniques (such as harmony) to create a narrative beyond physical movement alone.

Sprint

A sprint is similar to a leap in that it involves rapid motion between two pitches; however, this gesture is usually composed of stepwise movement, rather than the larger intervals seen in the leap schema. The common metaphor 'stepwise' is instructive here: we can hear every

Example 7: Acrobatic schema Featured in K.14, bars 1-6

Example 8: Skipping motif and subsequent sprints in K.9, bars 4-11

Example 9: Motivic leap in K.18, bars 1-8

imagined physical 'step' in the sprint. However, the mere presence of a scale by itself does not signify a sprint, as a sprint requires explosive and extreme motion. Sprints can occur over many distances: K.14 has a short sprint in its anacrusis, which imbues the opening with an immediate acrobatic actoriality, as well as slightly longer sprints in subsequent bars. Short sprints, as in K.14, are frequently elided with a leap schema. The intensity of the sprint in the sprint»leap combination in bars 2-3 has the effect of reducing the energy of the leaps; the arpeggios of the leap cover a narrower range then the sprint and seem redolent of falling debris.

The sprint schema can present with or without an accelerative component. The thirds passage in K.9 (see Ex.32, p.111), bb.8-11, contains four sprints; the first three do not have an acceleration, and seem to build momentum for the final thrust, which does have an accelerative component, to the top. Ascending sprints are moments of high excitement and are often used to embellish cadential closure, such as in bar 24, creating a celebratory atmosphere through a sense that gravity is being defied. Descending sprints, because they move towards rather than away from stability, are less speculative than ascents, and are frequently used at

dramatic junctures to vent musical pressures: the sprint in bar 20 of K.9 (Ex.32), for example, seems to result from the tension of the interrupted cadence. Extended sprints can be exhausting for a motor-mimetically engaged listener, but this heightens the sense of wonder at the musical agent executing the sprints: the extended sprint just prior to the finish of K.20 (Ex.10), seems to pointlessly go in circles three times. However, the agential motion of this passage continues the acrobatic excitement generated by the preceding leap schema; this sprint delays, and creates expectations for, the final cadence. It is motion simply for the joy of motion.

Example 10: Circling sprints which close K.20, bars 92-102

Scamper

Of the three schema that I am proposing, the scamper is the most subjective and hardest to define. It is, in some ways, a variant of the leap and sprint schemas, but creates an effect of quick, light-footed movement through a more complex internal structure; in its basic form, the schema breaks up the uniformity of larger gestures through the addition of inversely directional smaller intervals. K.1 presents two archetypal examples of the scamper schema: the first, during bars 7-8 (Ex.11), is essentially a product of *fortspinnung* elaboration of a scale,

Example 11: Scalic scamper in K.1, bars 1-9

incorporating a descending third into the ascending gesture. It creates an effect where the lower third seems to chase the upper upwards, which being semi-quavers imbue the gesture with a sense of liveliness. The schema can transform scalic gestures which would otherwise be too limp to be sprints into acrobatic motion. The efficacy of this schema to create acrobatic motion can be seen when it is compared with the straightforward ascending scale in the left hand; the slower quaver pace and adamantine ascent is steady and purposeful but not so exciting. It does, however, provide an antagonistic actant from which the upper part scampers away. What sets the scamper apart from a standard *fortspinnung* elaboration is its overall extremity of movement; the gesture in K.1, for example, extends well beyond an octave. By contrast, the descending figure in the upper part in bar 1 of K.18 also incorporates the use of inversely directional intervals to break up the descending third; however, the overall movement is limited, and the figure does not create a sense of quick, light-footed motion.

Example 12: Arpeggio based scamper in K.1, bars 18-23

The second scamper schema in K.1, bb.19-22 (Ex.12), is a variant of the leap schema; it breaks up an otherwise simple series of arpeggios which progress through the circle of fifths. The more complex intervallic relationships create a more energetic gesture that, combined with the *figura suspirans*, develops a sense of ongoing urgency. The scamper schema can also feature as a motive being broken by repeated or overlapping pitches; this figure creates a more explicit chasing effect than the broken thirds figure in K.1 as it strongly suggests two actants – one chasing the other in an energetic burst. This schema opens K.24 and can be seen several times in K.17 (Ex.13). The chasing effect of the scamper schema can be highly effective in creating instances of exciting *physical* movement. In K.6 (Ex.14), for example, the scamper is a sudden energetic outburst following a topical importation of Spanish folk-song; the texture moves from melody-accompaniment to imitative, but the lower part seems to actively chase the upper part up the keyboard. Combined with the hemiola, this gesture clearly embodies highly energetic motion.

Example 13: Scamper schema which opens K.17's second section, bars 56-66

Example 14: Chasing Scamper in K.6, bars 10-17

Unnecessary Anthropomorphism?

Scarlattian scholarship suggests we are drawn to the theatre and spectacle of the pieces, but these acrobatic schemas provide a framework to suggest that this is sonically encoded and not just visual. Admittedly, these schemas are ostensibly anthropomorphic labels for common musical events such as scales and arpeggios. Certainly, the basic gestures form part of stock Western classical phrases; however, the acrobatic schemas are made topically exotic through extremity. To describe Scarlatti's sonatas merely in terms of scales and arpeggios belies the acute effect of these gestures, which convey an extreme sense of motion; this movement in turn implies a human actor navigating a virtual world with vigour. Furthermore, the composer is clever in the way that he integrates acrobatics into his music to avoid acclimatisation; whilst repetition is a vital component of Scarlatti's *lingua franca*, it is nevertheless the case that endless acrobatic gestures would dull one's sense of wonder. Acrobatic schemas usually occur at key junctures in a sonata's structure, such as the opening or closing sections, or are integrated together to form a section that is contrasted with non-acrobatic motion creating a narrative of conflict between disparate elements; the sudden presentation of physical motion through an acrobatic schema can lead the sense that the narrative of a sonata is comprised of spontaneous actions.

Not all scales and leaps are acrobatic; an acrobatic schema captures an instance of extreme, unpredictable, or even unnecessary motion. A few examples of similar stock materials in the work of other Baroque and Classical composers will illustrate this distinction more clearly.

The transition in the first movement of Mozart's piano sonata K.545 (Ex.15[3]), for example, uses scale figures, bb.5-10, as part of a reference to the Brilliant style which follows the Singing style opening. However, these scales do not feel acrobatic à la Scarlatti; instead, they sound refined, elegant, and *galant.* This is because Mozart's passage has a clear harmonic progression supported by a chordal accompaniment, regular downbeat pauses between the scales, and a clear structural identity following the melodic opening. This is not a passage where the speed of the gesture is primary, and neither is there a hint that the scales might suddenly veer off; all is under control and measured. In K.1, Scarlatti uses a similar *galant* passage of scales, bb.3-6, to return to the tonic from the dominant; as with Mozart's transition, the descending sequence and harmonic progression reduce the sense of urgency that an acrobatic sprint would heighten. The scamper in K.1 provides a useful example of how acrobatic schemas are

Example 15: Scalic transition in Mozart's sonata in C major K.545, bars 11-14

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[3] Wolfgang A. Mozart, *Sonate in C, KV 545*, (Salzburg: International Mozarteum Foundation, 2006)

used to energise a narrative: the descending third is heard sequentially twelve times as part of an ascent that constitutes the longest single gesture in the sonata. Listeners anticipate the figure to finish at any moment, but it continues, denying magnetic forces which would draw it to a tonal close.

Bach's keyboard Fantasia BWV 906 (Ex.16[4]) opens with a vast descending arpeggio; a perfect example, one might assume, of the leap schema; however, as with the Mozart's scales, this arpeggio is less physical than Scarlatti's. It is certainly a striking opening, the four-octave range was pushing the limit of Bach's instruments, and the immediate use of such extreme pitches creates a vast registral vacuum which is filled by a descending arpeggio. At the core of this passage, however, are balanced phrases, whereby outbursts of energy are met with equal and opposite moments of stasis; the descent of the arpeggio is immediately balanced by the chordal cadence which returns to the original height. Furthermore, the arpeggios highlight the *passus duriusculus*, or descending chromatic fourth; the leaps in this fantasia are subservient filler in aid of a greater musical happening and are always balanced by a returning movement; by contrast, the leaps in Scarlatti frequently serve naught but themselves as raw physicality in sound.

Example 16: Opening arpeggios in Bach's keyboard fantasia, BWV 906, bars 1-4

K.17 (Ex.17) presents a scamper schema that could almost have been lifted from a Mozart sonata; however, the extreme four-octave descent and monophonic texture go beyond conventional norms and into the realm of parody. The monophonic texture exposes the leaps involved, but whilst the rate of descent is a, far-from-sluggish, octave per bar, this feels slow when contextualised by the preceding sprints (bb.20; 24; 36; 40; 44). Moreover, unlike Bach

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[4] Johann S. Bach, *Fantaisie et Fugue en ut mineur, BWV906*, (Leipzig: Peeters, ca.1920)

and Mozart, whose instances of virtuosity are balanced by or result in a cadential closure, Scarlatti launches up three-octaves in a single bar (b.49); the suddenness and speed of this gesture overwhelms any sense that it is using any momentum gained from the descent (turning potential energy into kinetic); this, therefore, implies a wilful actor commencing this new movement. In other words, we hear human agency when we are presented with metaphorical musical motions that go beyond what the metaphorical 'forces' of the virtual environment would account for by themselves.

Example 17: Acrobatic schema in K.17, bars 36-49

Acrobatic gestures are exciting because they exist in the grey area of human possibilities; indeed, whilst a listener may find that the acrobatic schemas present in the sonatas elicit an emotional response of joy, their extremity may also lead to awe, shock, fear, and wonder, amongst other potential responses. Furthermore, just as when we observe a real-life acrobat, when we hear Scarlatti's acrobatics our mimetic enactment and simulation of the actions makes clear the seeming impossibilities and risks. The tight-rope walker may tease their audience by slightly wobbling at some point, but whilst she is at little risk of falling due to her skills, an observer would not share this capability and feels the danger. Simulating the act, the observer is already in a state of heightened tension; his mimetic enactment has already pushed him beyond his expected limits, and for him the wobbles mean simulating a potential fall, and subsequent injury or death. Our mimetic enactment of an acrobatic schema can therefore lead to novel emotional engagement with a musical work. Cox notes that anticipation is 'not only

the objective anticipation of what will occur *out there*, "in the music," it is also anticipation of what one will vicariously do'; being pushed to one's limits can be an exhilarating experience and the sonatas create constant anticipation as the listener awaits to see what death-defying act they will be required to mimetically enact next.[5]

From Acrobatics to Virtual Acrobats

Acrobatic schemas feature in almost all the *Essercizi* as well as Scarlatti's wider catalogue. They often inject a sense of spontaneous movement and excitement but are quite often featured *within* a broader musical narrative as a trope of physicality; they can also be used to establish a virtual world within which another agent is heard to act – a concept I turn to in the following chapter. In this sense, acrobatic gestures do not always necessarily evoke acrobats, but rather intense physical motion: Hatten comments that 'actorality in music is not simply a matter of assigning a role; it begins with the establishment of a clear agential identity... once a virtual human agency is embodied (perhaps by a musical gesture, perhaps by a characteristic theme), its identity must somehow be sustained in order to fulfil any kind of role'.[6] However in some sonatas, such as K.14, K.24, & K.29, acrobatic schemas are integrated into a complete style of extreme movement which creates a *bona fide* acrobat, which occupies a narrative alongside evocations of the exotic – as discussed in Chapter 3 – to create an inhabited and vivid world.

I shall offer an interpretive analysis of K.24 and K.29 shortly, but it is notable that all three of these sonatas give the impression that they have begun *in media res*; indeed, the sudden onset of *presto* semi-quavers is so startling that it makes mimetically enacting the openings difficult. Most anacruses serve to emphasise a downbeat by 'falling', à la Larson through rhythmic gravity, onto it (for example, K.13 or, more famously, the opening to Beethoven's fifth symphony); however, Scarlatti's immediate use of an ascending sprint schema overpowers this metrical gravity to create an overwhelming sense of actoral movement.

From the outset these sonatas are ceaseless in their physical exertions which go beyond normative musical bounds; the gestures exhibit acrobatic qualities and are sustained to create a coherent acrobatic agent. The physical experience may be associated with childlike joy, but in projecting it onto a virtual agent a listener may also feel slightly awed; other listeners may find the physicality excessive and unpleasant, but nevertheless recognise the riskiness of the movements. Indeed, mimetic participation means that listeners share in this experience. As we have seen previously, K.24 & K.29 construct a dramatic narrative through topical contrast;

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[5] Cox, *Music & Embodied Cognition,* p.157

[6] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.86-7

however, just as the exotic topic evokes guitarists, dancers, and singers, the Brilliant style can evoke acrobats performing on the Spanish streets. Sitwell comments that 'no one who has passed his life in the country could have written the music of Scarlatti. He has no time to waste, and makes his points… sharply and rapidly'.[7] The acrobatic schema capture some sense of the vibrancy of the city.

K.24

The scamper schema which opens K.24 (Ex.18) is highly percussive as the repetition pulsates; whilst the arpeggiated descent implies a move towards stability, the chasing aspect of the gesture imbues it with intentionality rather than gravitational inevitability. The gesture is highly energetic, traversing a significant area of sonic space and implying equally significant and explosive muscular movement; chasing is an intuitively recognisable motion, and this musical representation imbues the opening with child-like cheekiness – the sonata begins as if it is a game. The chasing ends but is almost immediately by a sprint schema variant (akin to running on the spot), b.2-3, which tropes hunting horns as part of a cadential (IV-V-I) mini-vamp; the quaver upbeat provides a momentary rest, meaning that listeners can anticipate and mimetically prepare. Given the highly energetic nature of the opening bar, this can create a sense of anticipatory excitement; however, non-cooperative listeners may feel a sense of dread as they may be invited to mimetically enact unappealing movements.[8]

The descending scamper in bar 4 initially appears to dissipate the pent-up energy towards a dominant cadence; however, halfway through the bar there is a truly explosive outburst in the form of a sprint-schema which rises from the bowels of the keyboard. The chasing component from the scamper schema is adopted, and the two hands chase up the keyboard with a slight pause on each beat which enables the listener to seamlessly switch between mimetically engaging each actant. This chasing-sprint motif is used in both its normal and an inverted form to close the half (Ex.19), bb.32-34, creating 'a series of rainbow spirals' which 'encourages us to hear the passage as a musical idea, a particular disposition of sound, rather than just in terms of some technical-pedagogical framework'.[9] To this, I would add that perceiving this as the physical action of acrobatic agencies turns the passage from keyboard practice, or irreverent virtuosity, into a virtualised reality of acrobatic motion.

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[7] Sitwell, *A Background for Domenico Scarlatti*, p.137

[8] Cox, *Music & Embodied Cognition*, p.180

[9] Cesare Valbrega (1937), qtd. In Sutcliffe, *Keyboard Sonatas,* p.297; Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.297

Example 18: Acrobatic schema in K.24, bars 1-6

Example 19: 'Rainbow spiral' sprints, K.24, bars 31-36

K.29

K.29 (Ex.20) does not exploit anticipation in quite the same way as K.24: its ceaseless élan provides only limited opportunities for a listener to take stock and reflect on the actions they have mimetically enacted – they are simply too busy with the ongoing narrative. A dry description of the opening, which simply notes the scalic gestures and fanfare, would be accurate but pedantically superficial and missing the physicality which listeners will mimetically enact. The sonata begins with a sprint schema that 'runs' past the tonic and is ostensibly drawn up an octave to the dominant, but this is reached on an unstressed beat and immediately descends two octaves. This gesture is an archetypal example of the sprint schema as its most important characteristics are its speed and wide registral displacement. The twisting and turning of the gesture implies a degree of nonchalance, that the final destination is less important than the motion, and thus removes a sense of directionality. This is an agent moving for the joy of moving, not necessarily in search of any particular goal. Cox notes that 'composers most often create the mimetic intention', whether intentional or not; for me at least, there is an inescapable sense of hearing some kind of energetic, and physical, movement in this opening.[10]

The constant semiquavers convey an electric excitement, and the relaunch of the gesture in bar 2 implies an energetic intentionality against the combined virtual forces of gravity (pulling the gesture ever downwards towards a stable platform) and momentum (the tendency of an established pattern to continue without intervention). Because the tonic is so quickly bypassed, the gesture is metrically ambiguous, and the apex could be easily interpreted as being either the downbeat or penultimate beat of a $\frac{3}{4}$ bar; Hatten notes that 'tonic stability is typically correlated with a metric downbeat', and this lack of a clear downbeat creates a sense of tonal instability and disorientation. Whilst the energetic physicality of the gesture is unimpeachable, the lack of metrical reference means that mimetically involved listeners may perceive the repetition of the dominant as a ricochet from hitting an impermeable surface. It is perhaps worth noting that Scarlatti was well aware of the drawbacks of metrical rigidity: Burney interviewed the physician to the Imperial court in Vienna, Alexander L'Augier, who 'in Spain... was intimately acquainted with Domenico Scarlatti, who, at seventy-three, composed for him a great number of harpsichord lessons... M. L'Augier sung to me several fragments of Bohemian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish music, in which the peculiar expression

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[10] Cox, *Music & Embodied Cognition*, p.47

Example 20: Acrobatic schema in K.29, bars 1-15

depended on the *contre tems*, or breach of strict time; beat the measure, and keep it as exactly as is necessary, in more refined and modern music, and it wholly loses its effect'.[11]

The passage from bar 5-15 is a complex interweaving of all three acrobatic schema integrated into a hypermetric acceleration; the ever-increasing energy leads to a structural rupture and Spanish exoticism. If not for its rapid tempo, the passage could be construed as dialogic, but its physicality is inescapable as two actants weave in-and-around each other in a semi-competitive manner: what you can do, I can do better – Scarlatti identifies an actant with each hand of the keyboardist. The hypermetric acceleration results from the ever-shortening length of each figure and greatly intensifies the implied energy of the gestures despite the consistent semi-quavers. As the climax at bar 14 draws nearer listeners will likely become more mimetically involved and exhausted; the short crotchet groupings and steady ascent of bars 12-13 convey a determined breathlessness and create an implied scamper as the slow scale and surrounding leaps interact. The culminating scale in bar 14 functions as a reward and a release; the hypermetric acceleration subsides, and by descending towards gravitational stability, this scale dissipates the high intensity. Whilst semi-quavers are maintained, meaning that there is still a high level of mimetic exertion, a *ritardando* is implied in bar 14 as the actant is drawn back upwards to the dominant via the magnetic force.

Interlude: Topical Vividness

The integration of acrobatic schemas and topical evocations into a musical narrative creates a virtual world that seems alive with human activity; Charles Avison's orchestral transcriptions can provide an instructive comparison to demonstrate the efficacy of Scarlatti's topical writing in creating a populated world in his sonatas as the Englishman bowdlerises the music in a way that loses some of the core qualities of the originals. Second only to Thomas Roseingrave who published, and thus spurred, the spreading of the *Essercizi* in England, Avison was arguably one of the most important 'priests' of the English 'Scarlatti sect', a niche group of amateur and professional enthusiasts in the mid-to-late eighteenth century who coalesced around sonatas that had made it across the channel. Members of the sect were well aware of Scarlatti's idiosyncrasies, and yet for them the exotic seemed to only be covered by a thin veneer of civilisation, and were, therefore, uncomfortable with its presence. In the 1780s, Ambrose Pittman produced an edition of sonatas (all from the Roseingrave publication), and in the

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[11] Burney, *Present State of Music,* p.247, 249-50; Given Scarlatti died aged 71, there is a discrepancy in this account.

forward writes that the dissemination of the sonatas was 'greatly retarded by the many superfluous and studied difficulties with which they abound'. He thus decided to 'divest them of their pedantic difficulties' including the 'unnatural and cramp positions of the hands [so] the fingering might *be* rendered easy and grateful'.[12] Mark Kroll notes, however, that despite Pittman's intentions he makes few actual alterations, though his complaints relate more to the difficulty than the musical content of the sonatas. Avison is more scathing, and writes, in the preference to his 1743 *concerto grossi* arrangement of K.21 & K.29, that:

> 'THESE LESSONS for the HARPSICHORD being extremely difficult, and many delightful passages entirely disguised, either with capricious Divisions, or an unnecessary Repetition in many Places, few Performers are able to execute them with that Taste and Correctness they require: therefore, the forming them into Parts, and taking off the Mask which concealed their natural beauty and Excellency, will not only more effectually express that pleasing Air, and sweet Succession of Harmony, so peculiar to the Compositions of this Author, but render them more easy and familiar to the Instrument for which they were first intended'.[13]

K.29, *concerto vi/ii*, is marked '*con furia*' rather than *presto*: altered tempi are a common change alongside 'significant harmonic alterations... sometimes even changing the mode from major to minor'.[14] Kroll comments that this tempo change is 'interesting' as *con furia* is 'assumedly more colourful and energetic'. Moreover, prior to the proliferation of the metronome in the nineteenth century, tempo markings denoted moods more than actual performance speeds, thus changing the marking can have profound effects on interpretation. Indeed, whilst *presto* and *con furia* may result in similar speeds, the implication is that Avison detects an anger or spite in K.29 that he wishes to be brought to the fore. Whilst it is plausible that the opening scalic gestures could be held to contain connotations of anger due to the speed and whirlwind-like descent, such characterisation is harder to justify for the fanfare motif, with its highly consonant leaps. Nor, indeed, do the semi-quaver passages in general seem to exude fury; the image-schematic associations of the physical schema on display in this sonata, are in many ways rooted in childhood experience in the playground (despite skipping along being incredibly fun, adult society frowns upon it, for example!), and are typically a blithe and

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[12] Ambrose Pittman, *The Beauties of Domenico Scarlatti, vol. I*, (n.d., circa-1785). https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/8/84/IMSLP59390-PMLP121828-Scarlatti_-_Pitman_1785.pdf

[13] Charles Avison, qtd. In Mark Kroll, 'Con furia: Charles Avison and the Scarlatti Sect in Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Early Keyboard Sonata in Italy and Beyond,* ed. Rohan. H. Stewart-Macdonald (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016) p.256

[14] Mark Kroll, 'Con furia: Charles Avison and the Scarlatti Sect in Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Early Keyboard Sonata in Italy and Beyond,* ed. Rohan. H. Stewart-Macdonald (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016) p.261

Example 21: Charles Avison's transcription of the Spanish folk-song, bars 12-24

enjoyable experience. The twisting and turning creates a whimsicality at odds with the directed zeal implied by Avison. Pittman also updates the tempo marking of K.29 to '*Brillante*'; this is more conducive to my notion of acrobatic physicality and acknowledges the topical influence at work in the toccata. It is certainly more evocative than the rather limited pool of tempo markings Scarlatti himself drew from.

More significant is that Avison's transcription all but washes away the ostentiferous peculiarities which so lucidly evoke Spanishness.[15] Instead of encouraging the density and dissonance of Scarlatti's original harmonies Avison reduces to a minimal *concertino* orchestration of only solo instruments, creating a delicate and intimate interlude within the excitement of the toccata: the accompaniment is encouraged to be *pianissimo,* and the melody is marked *dolce*. Significantly, Avision limits himself to triads and simplification for his harmony (see Ex. 21[16]); Scarlatti did not immure himself and creates wonderfully piquant dissonances through an unstinting use of suspensions, the ever-thickening chords having a tiered crescendo effect. Scarlatti creates volume through density; the exotic evocations are far more vivid as a result.

Avison's arrangements of the sonatas were popular in eighteenth century England; his pilot concerto transcription handsomely exceeded his subscriber goal, and whilst not in regular performance repertoire the concertos have been recorded multiple times in the modern era. Yet Scarlatti's idiosyncrasies have been polished away, 'the mask' lifted off the disguised beauty. Some musical exoticism survives Avison's expurgation, and a holistic sense of the sonata remains - certainly the physicality remains - but, nevertheless, the topical vividity is translucent and sun-faded when compared to Scarlatti's original. Scarlatti can seemingly create a living Spanish enclave in our living rooms. Avison's Spain is translucent; he allows the exotic to become intimate and contained and whilst this has certain emotional implications, these emotions feel planned, not alive and raw. The scenarios which reproduce Avison's concertos is more populated than Scarlatti intended, being an ensemble and not an individual, but perhaps this reflects the bustling reality of his music.

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[15] Ostentiferous: that which brings strange sights.

[16] Charles Avison, *Concerto iv, movt. ii*, from *12 Concertos in Seven Parts arranged from Harpsichord Sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti vol.2*, edited by Simon Heyerick and Mihoko Kimura, (Offenburg: Edition Offenburg, 2019).

6 Framing Gesture

'And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep'.[1]

The openings of Scarlatti's sonatas can present a paradoxical phenomenon: on one hand they are memorable *events,* and on the other they are often tossed to the wayside within a few bars seemingly either shunned or forgotten by the composer. Yet, I contend that such openings can have a lingering impact over the narrative of a sonata; they establish a virtualised environment within which subsequent gestures can be interpreted as actions of a virtual agent reacting. Opening gestures are a vital component of musical rhetoric, they are our portal into the auditory musical world from the reality we inhabit. From the nothingness of silence comes everything. Perceiving a musical agent is the logical step after identifying intentionality in a musical happening. For musical happenings to be heard as intentional, listeners need to develop a predictive model; this is based partly on familiarisation with virtual environmental forces.[2] Listeners can quickly become acclimatised to the implications of a musical gesture, and whilst resistance to environmental forces is the fundamental source of musical agency, 'giving in' to virtual forces is also as a wilful act.[3]

In Chapter 4 I investigated the acrobatic schema which open K.17 (Ex.6), but the tonic-dominant-tonic broken chords in bars 1-3 of this sonata could arguably be omitted with little overall *structural* impact as bars 3-6 also outline the same basic tonic/dominant harmonies. However, the descending leap schema imbues the opening with a rhetorical confidence. Moreover, whilst the subsequent gesture (scamper+sprint schemas, bb.4-6) outlines the same fundamental harmony, the quasi-monophonic texture which solely inhabits the upper-middle register sounds exposed and slightly precarious because the lower register heard in the opening is conspicuously absent. The opening of this sonata is generic but aids the listener in fictionalising virtual actors within a world: in particular the scampering material abounds with an energetic fizz absent in the dour arpeggio. In this chapter I propose that the openings of sonatas can function as framing gestures which imbue the subsequent material with a greater sense of agency through establishing an environmental context.

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[1] Genesis 1:2 (KJV)

[2] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.65

[3] Ibid., p.59

Rhetorical Imagery

Although there are two primary opening types, there is no standard opening salvo in the sonatas, and from a purely functional perspective the openings can only universally be said to establish the tonality of a piece. Many openings are a theatrical attention grab, a sudden onset of energetic movement which hits a dead end. K.14 (Ex.8), for instance, commences with a visually impressive and auditory captivating three-octave descending arpeggio; the whole body of the player is committed to this singular monophonic gesture - the gaze of the player follows the hands down the keyboard. Other sonatas initiate in a technocratic manner using imitation to engage the hands as faux partners, but the illusion of two equal voices disappears rapidly as the imitation quickly subsides. Most of such sonatas only have a single cycle of imitation; K.1 (Ex.11), for example, maintains an imitative texture for one-and-a-half bars before blatantly transitioning to a melody-accompaniment texture.

Sutcliffe labels these two opening types diffident and hyperactive: 'the first may be routine, conventional, low-key, often involving the use of imitation between the hands that is then abandoned... the hyperactive beginning on the other hand seems to present a celebration of the tonic, the sheer excitement of being in motion'.[4] The striking nature of the hyperactive openings poses a particular problem as the sudden onset of energy disturbs our understanding of a musical narrative which progresses towards a climax that represents the culmination of the energy invested thus far in that narrative; Sutcliffe muses that 'it is difficult for us to deal with this except by evocation' of imagery such as a 'stampede' as 'we are used to energy... being more latent and channelled towards possible growth'.[5]

Kirkpatrick, on the other hand, conceives of Scarlatti's openings through rhetoric rather than physical imagery, likening them to calls from salesmen, shopkeepers, or circus ringmasters: "'Oyez, oyez," to "Ladies and gentlemen," or merely to "As we are about to say"'.[6] This notably places the opening as something that happens *prior* to an event rather than as part of the event itself: it is the curtain lift before the drama on stage occurs. K.20 (Ex.22) achieves this kind of rhetorical introduction through topical association. In this sonata, the hunt is evoked through highly consonant intervalic relationships and ornamentation; simultaneously, the bass provides 'structural' reinforcement which, along with the motivic repetition and topic, creates a sense of occasion.[7]

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[4] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.180
[5] Ibid.
[6] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.261
[7] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.195

In many sonatas, new material, often unhindered by any motivic connection to the opening, becomes focal once an opening ceases. The implication of Kirkpatrick's rhetorical statements is that the opening is of little merit, existing more to silence idle chatter than contribute to the narrative. Admittedly Kirkpatrick is correct in noting that 'from the character of an opening theme it is almost impossible to predict what role it will play in subsequent portions of the sonata', but this is representative of an unfortunate scholarly premium attached to the idea that material gains permanence through recurrence.[8] Sutcliffe, for instance, bemoans the prominence diffident openings are granted, questioning why 'if the opening material and texture is abandoned... the composer decided to begin with them in the first place, to place them in such a rhetorically and formally privileged position'.[9]

Example 22: Horn calls which open K.20, bars 1-11

Challenging the Abandonment Theory

This train of thought views the abandonment of openings as somehow neglectful or bizarre as it goes against the 'unwritten law of all Western composition... that the most characteristic feature, that which stands out most clearly against a background of the familiar, should be reiterated, investigated or developed'.[10] For Willis too, the abandonment of the opening represents a musical inefficiency:

> 'the opening material in a Scarlatti sonata rarely exerts the kind of overt control over the rest of the piece which would be the norm in most early eighteenth-century genres. The majority of musical forms, in fact (most obviously ritornello forms and fugues, but not only these) are structured around a series of returns to the opening music.

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[8] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti.* p.262
[9] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.180
[10] Ibid., p.148

> Scarlatti, on the other hand, almost always moves away from the opening and may not return to it explicitly at all'.[11]

Moreover, Sutcliffe suggests listeners are posed a challenge 'when faced, not... with unexpected repetition, but with the unexpected absence of repetition', indeed, 'the failure of [K.554's] opening to simply return projects the unexpected absence onto a larger syntactical unit - the entire piece'.[12]

Similarly, the grand opening of K.20 does not directly reappear, though the horn-calls are referenced several times, in such a captivating form. The second half of the sonata opens with a vague recollection of the first through harmonic consonance, but the imaginative horn calls which topically evoke the hunt are absent; instead, the block chords, bb.65-70, are veritably blunt and without the grace of the first half opening. Nevertheless, the opening is key to K.20's narrative; admittedly, the incipient motivic materials are manipulated and adapted rather obviously through the sonata, so it is not wholly abandoned per se. Indeed, Channan Willner argues that the opening is fundamental in creating a series of 'argumentative' passages.[13]

The concept that an opening gesture, even once jettisoned, may have a perceived long-term effect on a sonata is somewhat overlooked. Music analysts tend to view musical events through a prism of structural form, where musical events become objects on an architect's sketchpad, and the relative positioning of motivic objects is more important than the actual gestural qualities and implications of the events. Motivic objects belong in specific places as positioning determines significance and creates expectations of recurrence and development: we see this obsession particularly in discussion of sonata form. In this style of music analysis, musical events are affixed in a space, the score, which is navigated by the analyst as they identify events. However, this prioritisation of structure simultaneously overestimates listeners' interest in, and ability to hear, musical form, dogmatically assuming that 'incorrect' musical grammar becomes a distraction.

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[11] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.124

[12] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.148

[13] Channan Willner, 'Domenico Scarlatti and the Hidden Voice Exchange', *Channon Willner*, 2010, accessed Aug. 22, 2023. http://www.channanwillner.com/pdf/scarlatti.pdf. Willner argues that this introduction forms the *Vodersatz* in the first of three dovetailing ritornello cycles of *Vodersatz, Fortspinnung,* and *Epilog.*

Example 23: 'Arresting' falling 3rds opening of K.554, bars 1-8

When listening to music we do not hear an architectural blueprint, but rather something that seems to move moment to moment. I confess that, unlike Sutcliffe, as K.554 (Ex.23) progresses I do not find myself pining for the falling thirds featured in the opening; whilst completing this circle of thirds is certainly an 'arresting' musical novelty, for me it is the overall gestural contour which is significant – an accelerating, thanks to rhythmic diminution, *fall* downwards which latches onto a more stable locale through a cadence. Sutcliffe highlights two aspects of this gesture: throwing and sinking. Both of these are justifiable metaphors, but one cannot escape the feeling that Sutcliffe chooses them more to capture the loss of the motif than to describe the motif itself: 'throw[n] away', 'sink without a trace'.[14] Whilst the gesture does 'sink', it emphatically leads into a cadence which is elided with the subsequent material; far from leaving no trace, this opening gesture transforms an out-of-control fall into a dramatic rhetorical flourish. Furthermore, whilst Sutcliffe argues that the absence of the figure calls attention to the sonata's structure, would a listener conscious of the absence not be feeling increasingly anxious as Scarlatti continues to disregard their anticipation, rather than beginning to analyse the sonata's form simply because this figure disappears?

To briefly return to K.14 (Ex.8), the short upbeat sprint helps to situate the arpeggio tonally and physically: despite this upbeat coming out of silence - the player, of course, primes themselves and thus provides a visual indication of initiation - its short energetic sparkle provides a boost to the arpeggio so that it does not just seem to fall from the æther. In Lucas Debargue's barnstorming performance of this sonata he particularly emphasises this arrival at the tonic through an agogic accent; the arpeggio thus seems to descend through toppling,

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[14] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.147

coincidentally removing any sense of intentionality.[15] The manoeuvre takes under four seconds to complete and is marked as extreme due to the energetic and rapid traversal of register; yet according to the 'abandonment' theory, this markedness is ultimately irrelevant to the narrative. I would challenge this view: despite descending, the sequence of bars 2-3 is a rebuke to the virtual gravitation force represented by the acquiescence of the arpeggio. The upwards accelerating sprint schema in the upper register implies a degree of cockiness: the gesture seems to embody a nonchalant attitude by abandoning the registral stability that the arpeggio closes on.

These kinds of dramatic openings cast a shadow over the rest of the music from the perspective of embodiment; this feature is something that scholars fail to note when they suggest that an opening disappears without a trace. Sutcliffe draws attention to the strong evocations that can accompany some openings, but his 'stampede' imagery only persists for as long as the musical action itself. Witnessing a real stampede will persist in the mind, potentially through fear, shock, or awe. It implies an uncontrollable wildness; raw physical power; overwhelmingness. To stretch Sutcliffe's metaphor past its breaking point, evoking a stampede is *almost* to imply that the listener will have reflexively released a shot of adrenaline as an acute stress response. This is, of course, somewhat unrealistic for a musical exercise but it is plausible that the sudden onset of intense musical activity could result in an increased heart-rate; the performer's heart rate will certainly have increased. Moreover, the potential for the gesture to return sustains a simmering tension, as we shall see shortly. The discussion of K.14 outlined that the opening gesture of a sonata can generate ripples which shape a listener's perception of the musical happenings that follow. Thus, the opening can act as a framing gesture which establishes a virtual environment; moreover, the subversion of predicted musical expectations may imply the intervention of a virtual agent. Therefore, despite being motivically abandoned, a framing gesture can be a significant component in the listener's process of fictionalising a musical narrative.

A Treacherous World: K.3

To explore the capacity of framing gestures to evoke agential movement I turn now to K.3 (Ex.24). The opening to this sonata could quite adequately be described in Sutcliffe's terms as a stampede; however, the high energetic state of this gesture is syntactically juxtaposed with austere material which implies an actant reacting to the virtual world they inhabit. The

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[15] Lucas Debargue, 'Lucas Debargue - Scarlatti: Sonata in G Major, K. 14', YouTube video, 2:38, posted by 'Lucas Debargue' Sept. 20 2019, accessed Aug. 22 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDr0wPTjcWY

Example 24: The treacherous world of K.3, bars 1-47 (cont. next page)

opening begins from on high and crashes down three octaves; the *presto* semi-quavers generate a state of high energy, but the gesture tumbles entirely unprepared from the æther with neither context nor trigger. For all intents and purposes, it is a classic hyperactive opening with the material only returning at the closing of each half of the sonata: after the opening is completed it plays no active role in the narrative as it not restated or manipulated.

In this standard reading, the sonata does not 'look back' over its material; however, the intense physicality of this opening gesture creates a virtual environment. The subsequent crotchet-based material seems to *struggle* upwards; because of the opening gesture, we can interpret this material as being the movement of a virtual human agent. The opening gesture is conspicuous in its absence throughout this sonata; and thus creates a constant source of tension and unease. The inconsistent phrase lengths of the subsequent material further enhance the sense of an anxious actor, as does the consecutive generation of new ideas, none of which replicate the emphatic energy of the opening.

The combination of leap and sprint schema in the opening creates a gesture which evokes three core elements: strength, power, and speed. The thrice downbeat emphases afforded to the tonic creates three distinct pitch *impacts* and the sense that the gesture is crashing downwards, embodying a complete submission to gravity – there is no implication of resistance through *ritardando* or *diminuendo*, for example. These three impacts are significant in imbuing the gesture with violent overtones, and only on the final tonic does the cascade hit the ground and stop with a hard 'splat', to use Hatten's imagery.[16]

The physicality of this gesture suggests an actant, but the immediate violence as part of the dramatic descent evokes, for me, the embodiment of a naturally occurring and uncontrollable event such as an avalanche. Indeed, Hatten notes that 'it is possible to personify even such a diffuse force as the wind and thus to impute human agency'.[17] The keyboardist embodies this physicality in rapid movement across the keyboard (albeit that the axes of motion are reoriented, right for up, and left for down), creating an immersive experience for the listener. In such an interpretation, one could view this gesture as a negactant lurking in the background, prepared to overpower the protagonist at any moment.

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[16] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.55

[17] Ibid., p.246

The Protagonist: K.3 continued

The second motif (bb.2-9) is characteristically antipodal to the opening, replacing the violent brashness with timidness. The coordination of stylistic and gestural components implies an actant moving in a world following a macroseism, which simultaneously embodyies a sense of anxiety: the motive rises slowly in two-part imitation through an imperfect ascending sequence of steady crotchets, which each time seem to fail to complete their intended trajectory. The imitation and suspensions hint towards *stile antico*, but it is as if the style was only half-remembered: the incomplete voice-leading creates a stuttering effect, whilst the syncopation destabilises the metre and each sequential unit fails to reach its goal.

The lack of any motivic link with the opening gesture heightens the impact of the juxtaposition as the energy differential between gestures is palpable. In my discussion of acrobatic schemas in Chapter 4, I noted that the arpeggios in J.S. Bach's opening to the keyboard *Fantasia in C minor* (BWV.906) are not as evocative of acrobatic motion as we see in Scarlatti's sonatas; the descent is fast and dramatic, but the energy of the descent is balanced by a return to the upper register and moments of relative stasis. The registral return converts the kinetic energy of the descent into potential energy as the listener is aware of the draw to stability of the lower register; in K.3, however, the energy implied by the descent is allowed to explosively dissipate upon impact. Therefore, the ascending gesture in K.3 is implied to be the action of a new independent actant, who appears to be reacting to their virtual environment. This musical *reaction* embodies a human response to risk.

The actions of this agent can be traced throughout the sonata, as they purposefully seem to avoid anything that may trigger another dramatic descent. The descending gesture in bars 10-14 is constructed to imply strong agential resistance leading to a bizarre slow-motion tumble: the lower part descends through chromatic crotchets, whilst the upper part becomes syncopated through minims descending in an aeolian scale. The framing gesture provides a context and *motivation* for this resistance. Furthermore, we can perceive character development as the agent appears to grow in confidence as the sonata progresses: in particular, there is an increase in the propensity for ascending gestures and intervals (particularly during bars 27-31). Indeed, whilst the diminished harmony, bb.15-26, is discordant, its integration with monophonically exposed ascending arpeggios lends the gestures a tentative quality; moreover, despite each of the three arpeggios peaking and resulting in a descent, this descent is tonal and supported by an ascending gesture in the lower part which counteracts any sense of the descent gaining momentum. The parallel modal shift

in bar 27 swerves to major tonality and encapsulates the developing confidence; whilst there is a momentary lapse as chromatic uncertainty briefly returns in an exposed treble register in bars 35-38 it is quickly reversed.

The final twist, in the first half of the sonata at least, is the return of the framing gesture in bar 43; the major tonality and ornamented cadence in bar 42 could imply intentionality on the part of the protagonist, or perhaps the negactant returns for a moment to reassert control. The post-closing cadence, bb.45-47, breaks the continuity and provides finality; but, for me at least, it gives the impression of an external narrator turning the page. This interpretation is not unwarranted; Hatten has suggested that such discontinuity in a works 'flow' can function as staging the role of a narrator within music through shifts in discourse, such as: 'extreme contrasts in style or topic (especially those involving a change of stylistic register), cueing of recitative as a topic, direct quotation, disruptions of the temporal norm, or even negation'.[18]

The second half of the sonata continues with the narrative of a protagonist; this passage, bb.47-58, is quasi-responsorial between negactant and protagonist. The violence of the descending framing gesture returning creates a turbulent passage which modulates through the circle-of-fifths. Intriguingly, in Charles Avison's ensemble transcription of this sonata, Concerto 4, ii, *Allegro*, the second half opens with the framing gesture in the minor mode; Scarlatti holds off this modal development until after the negactants descent. The result for Scarlatti is that the move to the minor mode is integrated into the reaction of the protagonist and contributes to the projected sense of anxiety.

Aside from the bastardised *stile antico*, K.3 does not rely on topical connotations to imply human activity; instead, the highly physical nature of its opening gesture frames the sonata in such a way that it allows listeners to construct a fictional narrative, as I have done here. The sudden and violent nature of the framing gesture lingers as a dark shadow over proceedings, creating a virtual world that seems treacherous to navigate. As listeners we can sympathise with the agent as it travails almost fearfully; we can find elation, possibly even pride, as it grows in confidence; and doubt as the chromatic mystery fleetingly returns. The framing gesture establishes a virtual environment which facilitates a deeper engagement with a sonata, allowing the potential identification of virtual agents operating within them.

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[18] Robert Hatten, 'On Narrativity in Music: Expressive Genres and Levels of Discourse in Beethoven', *Indiana Theory Review,* 12, (1991): p.95

Intentionality and Shifts of Narrative: K.6

At least as far as the *Essercizi* is concerned, the opening to K.3 is rather extreme due to its violent connotations. Only a few of the other sonatas within the set display such musical zeal in their openings, and none have such a defined rhythmic differentiation between the first two motivic ideas. However, stylistic shifts between motifs can also create a strong sense of narrative and imply intentionality within the intra-musical domain as listeners seek to assign a motivation for the shifts. The framing gesture can establish a distinct musical environment, as with K.3, but it can also establish musical norms which, if subverted, can lead to more expressive musical meaning. Hatten notes that 'levels of discourse are created in literature by shifting from direct to indirect discourse or narration', but that 'music may signal analogous shifts, although not necessarily narrative ones, by means of certain extreme contrasts of style or stylistic register: successively (in which case the latter music seems to "comment" upon the former), or interruptively (in which case an entity appropriate to a context is displaced by an inappropriate one)'.[19] K.3 represents a case of the former, whereby the gestural material seems to react or 'comment' to the opening gesture. In other words, a shift in the level of discourse represents a significant change in the expected progression of a narrative; the connectedness of the elements ties them into a singular narrative, but the manner in which the 'story' is told has changed.

 I turn now to K.6 (Ex.25). This sonata opens with a generic arpeggio gesture which sets expectations that the sonata will continue to exhibit a normative eighteenth-century aesthetic; expectations which are ultimately subverted. The opening to this sonata comes in three stages (bb.1-4, 5-8, 9-12), where each stage alters the aesthetic markedly, in a case of interrupting stages of discourse. Yet despite the clear shifts, the first two stages are grouped together as a single theme by scholars such as Hail.[20] In some ways, this grouping makes sense as it forms a neat antecedent-consequent phrase of two four-bar units, after which the second theme, beginning in bar 9, speaks in the Iberian vernacular; here, Kirkpatrick notes, 'in its derivation from dance, the phrase often deserts the usually regular periods of Western decorum… [with an] asymmetrical juxtaposition of irregular phrases'.[21] However, whilst viewing the first two phrases as linked is academically neat, it downplays the significance of the topical change in bar 5; conceiving the opening as taking place in distinct stages can imply the existence of an agent who is responsible for these narrative shifts.

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[19] Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, p.174

[20] Christopher Hail, S*carlatti Domenico,* p.87

[21] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti,* p.157-158

Example 25: Stages of narrative in K.6, bars 1-12

Unlike K.3, where the opening exerts an ongoing influence over the character of the rest of the

sonata, the opening in K.6 does not leave an imprint against which an agent seems to

physically react. Instead, the narrative shifts hint at a comic subjectivity and enable inference

of greater expressivity on the part of a virtual agent. The first stage is an arpeggio grounded in

galant aesthetics. There are three rather measured sets of ♫'s which, alongside the $\frac{3}{8}$ time

signature, imply the courtly French *passepied*. The strong triadic emphasis leads to mild

overtones of fanfare: the repetition involved in the inverted tonic pedal through bars 3-4

generates intensity and a sense of arrival, both of which are relieved by the trill and rhythmic

augmentation in bar 4. Furthermore, whereas K.3 gives the impression of an uncontrollable

act of nature, the contour of K.6's opening arpeggio suggests a more involved actant moving

through a virtual space: initially in octaves, the two parts diverge in the second bar as the

upper leaps a fifth before descending and settling on the tonic whilst the lower part continues

up its arpeggio. The ascending then descending contour of the upper part creates a balanced

phrase, as well as a sense of controlled movement. The convergence of the hands contracts the sonic space, creating tension through the absence of the bass register. Moreover, the first inversion termination is somewhat inconclusive, but in so doing sets expectations for a balanced response to return to a rooted point of stability. However, this arpeggio opening is not answered in a similar style; instead, the *galantian* dance is overthrown with a flash of virtuosity and supplanted by a sprint schema.

This is a dramatic moment, and the rather sudden tripling of the base rhythmic unit in bar 5, from ♫ to ♬, is surprising and implies significant exertion, much more so than the opening arpeggio even though the second was assisted by musical gravity and its downward pull to stability. Indeed, the unprecedented speed of the gesture and enthusiastic liquidation through a trill implies an actant wholly in control and relishing the descent. It is interesting that Scarlatti permits this descending scale to merge with the tonic ostinato in bar 8, as he earlier denies any overlap of the two parts: the lower part is forced to fall to the A in bar 4 even though expectations of voice-leading and momentum would suggest the arpeggio continue to the tonic. More significant, however, is Scarlatti's modification of the musical topic at hand, as the *galant* dance is usurped by a Spanish one, *zapateado*, cobbler's dance, or *jotas castellanas*: the ostinato pedal In the left hand is percussive and the ♫'s evoke castanets.[22] The material from bar 9 onwards is more overtly Spanish, incorporating guitar-like strumming and an off-balance melody, incorporating the singing style, which emphasises beat 2. But despite this being an obvious topical development, the foreshadowing of the Spanish style during bars 5-8 reduces the markedness of this more explicit iteration, thus diminishing the impact of the semantic opposition.

Despite the three distinct stages of narrative there is a strong sense of continuity throughout the sonata. The Spanish descent, bb.5-8, is not a rhetorical continuation of the opening arpeggio but a foil; the composer takes advantage of the unstable first inversion and the desertion of the lower register to provide impetus for change. However, the descent fills the registral void and solidifies the harmony resolutely through the tonic pedal. It therefore 'answers' the inconclusive elements of the opening gesture, succumbing to the gravitational and magnetic forces which were left in the air by the arpeggio, whilst simultaneously subverting the rhetorical and stylistic expectations. The material from bar 9 onwards is in many ways a rhetorical anathema to the opening, troping a singing style very different to the preceding large-scale gestures, but the Spanish dance provides a common link. The arpeggio

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[22] Sitwell & Prozhiguin, qtd. In Hail, *Scarlatti Domenico*, p.87

functions as a framing gesture which provides a musical context and establishes expectations. It fulfils a rhetorical role as a rather grand exordium, capturing listeners' attention, but the narrative staging integrates it into a seamless *melos*. The marked contrasts within this singular *melos* imply an agential actor making intentional alterations to change the resultant meaning through gradual topical shifts.

Diffidence & Deeper Meaning

So-called hyperactive openings are typically highly physical, using acrobatic schemas, and evoke a sense of movement through rapid traversal of register and rhythmic intensity. Diffident openings, as Sutcliffe calls them, are more reserved and are arguably more generic, being based on two-part imitation (akin to a Bachian keyboard invention) which immediately disintegrates. The process of this disintegration does not, however, involve a singular moment where musical motion ceases – unlike the hyperactive framing gesture which involves clear points at which the music appears to react or respond, even if a strong sense of continuity is implied. The imitative opening gambit is almost exclusively elided with the subsequent material; the two-part texture is usually maintained which largely disguises the breakdown of imitation even though the lower voice inevitably becomes subservient.

Some imitative openings come under the hyperactive umbrella rather than diffident: K.13, for instance, has an opening motif which initially skips down through an arpeggio before transforming into a jogging scale. The imitation lasts only for a single bar, although the motif is taken up as a litany by the lower part. However, most imitative openings are not nearly as physically evocative, but instead can be more emotionally complex. The 'subject' of K.12 ascends gradually, with a descending interval made prominent through downbeat accentuation. This ascent is awkward and effortful; the motif just about seems to grasp the octave peak but is unable to get a functional grip and falls. The physical embodiment of this upwards reaching implies a virtual subjectivity, emotionally reaching for something but is ultimately unsuccessful. Some imitative openings topically import hunting calls or fanfare. This can imply a significant energetic exertion, such as K.2 where the fanfare comprises of an octave leap, trill and scamper, which convey fast movement through acrobatic schemas; or can be more graceful, as with K.21 where the hunting call imitation dissolves within two bars. Indeed, the imitative opening can reach an administrative extreme in note efficiency: K.16's opening motif consists only of three notes, a brief hunting call that is not treated thematically.

From Diffidence to Narrative: K.1

Despite its rapid disintegration, the imitative opening gambit can lay fertile ground for a coherent narrative. Whilst not creating a vivid virtual environment in the same way as a hyperactive opening, imitation is, by its nature, a part of the learned style and is thus topically evocative for its brief existence. This topical world creates expectations and imposes a civilisation of rules inherited from the past. In K.1 (Ex.26), the *moto perpetuo*, toccata-like, character of learned counterpoint provides a source of tension from which a topical shift to the *galant* creates a release and a sense of freedom.

Whilst several sonatas of the *Essercizi* have lodged themselves into the core repertoire, this sonata is second only to K.9 as being the most popular sonata from the first two-thirds of the volume – the final third arguably forms a *Top of the Pops* hit list! Yet its opening motif is, in many ways, entirely generic or diffident: rising from tonic to dominant and returning. Despite this, Scarlatti uses the simple motif as a cell from which he generates the entire sonata (see Fig.2). This cell is the connective tissue of the sonata and through developing different elements of it, the composer is able to generate different affects.

The first two phrases almost function almost as an antecedent-consequent pair, with the imitation being answered by a *galantian* Prinner riposte.[23] The inequality of phrase length largely precludes this interpretation, as does the sequential modulatory Prinner; the-back-and-forth dialogue such a phrase structure would imply is further denied by the elision of phrases. Although the leap, in the *galant* motif, of a sixth in bar 2 is rather sudden and implies an injection of energy, the elision instead ensures that the phrases are heard as a singular continuous movement. The effect of the *galant* is like a breath of fresh air even though the imitation only existed for two bars: the supplanting of implied *moto perpetuo* counterpoint with an elegant descending sequence provides respite even though the musical processes do not stop. The *galant* material is somewhat ensemble-like: the lower part's repeated dominant at the end of bar 2 is a linchpin in the topical shift, as the insistent pedal is transformed into a light chumming of chaperoning thirds. Ksenia Repina has highlighted orchestral aspects of the sonatas and, to use his labelling model, this sonata moves from solo/solo (two independent voices) to solo/continuo (an independent voice supported by an ensemble).[24] Whilst the texture in the *galant* section is by no means dense, the contrast with the more clinical

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[23] See Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch.3, p.45-60

[24] Ksenia N. Repina, 'The Orchestral Score Attributes of the Text of Keyboard Sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti', *Problemy muzykal'noj nauki/Music Scholarship*. 2010. no. 2, 7, pp. 194–203. (In Russ.)

Example 26: Learned and galant tensions within K.1, bars 1-31 (cont. next page)

imitation is marked; drawing on its ensemble vibes, the *galant* is more communal, warm and inviting.

As part of his opening imitation, Scarlatti amalgamates the compositional techniques of rhythmic augmentation and *fortspinnung* to create an acceleration, the latter offsetting the slowing of pace that the former usually entails; the combined efforts of the upper and lower

parts maintain constant semi-quaver motion up until the second half of bar 2. Whilst the *galant* material uses semiquavers, its gestures are longer and more directionally focussed – two beats constant descent as opposed to a beat each of ascent *and* descent – which are thus leisurely. The suspension of the high note over the bar line and celebratory trill imbues the gesture with a staying power, as if the virtual force of gravity were irrelevant; indeed, it is the

6 Framing Gesture

1. The core cell
2. Augmentation and new cellular units derived from merger of a & b
3. Retrograde
4. Extension of the a-b merger
5. Units are stacked consecutively
6. Augmentation turned into a tonic-dominant progression
7. Inversion of the a-b merger
8. Distortion
9. Repetition of c
10. Arpeggiation of b

Figure 2: Cellular transformation of K.1

changing accompaniment in bar 3 which creates a harmonic instability forcing a descent, but this descent is measured and graceful. Whilst the imitative opening can seem to be very much in line with one of Kirkpatrick's rhetorical similes, simply saying 'off we go, then' as a formality before the musical grist, the troping of the learned style can seem stifling and the density of layering voices is intense; its dissolution can imbue the following material with a greater purpose. Although it is integrated seamlessly into a single line of discourse, the imitative opening of K.1 acts as a framing gesture which allows the sonata to evoke feelings of intensity and freedom.

Indeed, in the second half of the sonata, Scarlatti exploits the *galant's* capacity to diffuse tension by postponing the topic until bar 23 after the dramatic harmonic developments – the composer uses a, for him rare, circle of fifths sequence to quickly modulate and create a period of harmonic flux during bars 20-22. It relieves the tension of the rapid harmonic movement and *moto perpetuo* semi-quavers which characterise the first nine bars of the second half: the hyper focus on a small fragment of the cell (b) as a part of an ascending sequence; rapid expansion and contraction through contrary motion generates an ever-increasing intensity; the *figura suspirans* creates a sense of endless pleading. But whilst this opposition of topic creates an opposition of affect, the composer does not position them as opposition in debate but interweaves them into a single thread. Through eliding motivic lines and unifying the material through the use of a generative cell, the topics instead highlight different possibilities of the material, and we perceive the musical gestures as being symbiotic actions undertaken by a single musical source. The process of tension and release tells an emotional story beyond the individual capacity of each topic.

World-Building

To conclude this discussion on framing gestures, I shall briefly outline one more sonata, K.22, where the opening establishes agential independence in a novel manner. The sonata (Ex.27) opens with a large arpeggio which loops in circular repetition for three bars; there is an enforced gap between each iteration because Scarlatti specifically, and unnecessarily, requests

Example 27: Orbital opening to K.22, bars 1-8

the left hand execute the lower half of the arpeggio, before jumping down two octaves onto a note that chimes like a tolling bell. But despite this, the gesture establishes momentum and by the third – and, as it happens, final – repetition feels as if it will continue *ad infinitum* in a planetary orbit. The inertia created by its repetition is an 'acknowledgement that momentum from a virtual agent will tend to continue unless impeded by other forces'.[25] But the gesture is interrupted by a pseudo rest (expanding the tolling tonic from a ♪ to a ♩) and a scalic motif in bar 4; it falls from a similar height and continues the semi-quaver movement and seems to be a minor evolutionary step. Notably absent, however, is the tolling bell and the bass register. This, and the largely monophonic texture, creates an airy and mysterious aesthetic. A journey into the unknown made by a virtual agent – vicariously accompanied by us as listeners.

The framing gesture is ultimately any musical gesture which imparts greater musical meaning onto subsequent gestures through a contrast of some kind. It can create a virtual environment and establish expectations of tonality and style, the subversion of which can imply the existence of a musical agency. I particularly focused on the openings as this structural zone has a significant impact on the narrative trajectory of a sonata. Sutcliffe's concept of hyperactive and diffident characterises the physicality of the gestures, but for him the furious activity of an opening can ultimately be irrelevant; unfortunately, the lasting effect of these openings is too often forgotten by scholars because the material is abandoned.

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[25] Hatten, *Virtual Agency,* p.56

7 Modality and Virtual Subjectivity: *Chiaroscuro*

Modal Opposition

In his 1889 history of the piano and its players, Oskar Bie opines that 'In Scarlatti we seek in vain for any inner motive, nor do we feel any need of an emotional rendering on the part of the performer'.[1] Whilst this statement is of its time, topics, acrobatic schemas, and the framing gesture provide a clear source of motivation and agential potential, as well as implying a virtual subjectivity. The framing gesture is ultimately one of motivic and gestural contrast; however, Scarlatti also uses modality to provide contrast in a manner which embodies a virtual subjectivity through pathos. Direct modal opposition, which I refer to as *Chiaroscuro*, seems to peel back a foregrounded halcyonian layer to reveal a veiled dysphoria; it encourages listeners to re-experience familiarised gestures within an uncomfortable emotional tenor which suggests a complex virtual subjectivity.

Modal contrasts are at work in many of the sonatas, but tonality is often a subsidiary of another gesture and 'often coincides with a pronounced opposition of topical types'.[2] In K.1, for instance, the first two phrases are modally contrasting, but whilst the change in harmonic language is rather sudden and noticeable – particularly the piquant C♯»C♮ – it is primarily a component of the learned/*galant* axis. Furthermore, the elision of phrases creates a sense of continuity as opposed to a syntactic opposition; the topical shift is heard as a *developing* narrative rather than a juxtaposition of affect. Jane Clark notes that modal oppositions were a feature of Spanish folk music, and we see this in effect in sonatas like K.24 & K.29 where the Spanish folk-song segments take place in the minor mode; this serves to immerse listeners in the new topical landscape. However, a modal shift can simultaneously be a component within a topical evocation and an emotional signifier in its own right.

In K.159, for example, the warping of familiar material in bar 26 (Ex.28), first heard in bars 6-8, contributes to the novel exotic topic (marked by acciaccatura and guitar-like chords) but also uncovers a sense of anguish in a sonata that previously showed no signs of discontent. By using the same material Scarlatti enforces a distinct sense of continuity, but the minor gesture frames its surroundings; what Schmalfeldt identifies as the sonata's 'recapitulation' in bar 42, does not merely tick an academic box, the returning material relieves the open-ended

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[1] Bie, *Pianoforte,* p.70

[2] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.341

Example 28: Modal tensions in K.158, bars 25-45

intensity generated by the development, bb.25-41.[3] In such an interpretation, the scale of bar 41 becomes not 'a stunning cadenza-like flourish... with flashy arrogance', as Schmalfeldt depicts it, but a physical (sprint schema) manifestation of the emotional tension implied in the vamp-like passage of bars 37-40 which is unable to resolve; the gesture is an escape from the harmonic and motivic alternation, but its dominant harmony betrays an exhausted lack of finality. To contribute my own gambling analogy to a composer who admittedly needs no more, this gesture is a final throw of the dice to escape the unresolving alternations of bars 37-40 and to release the tension generated by the modal distortion. In this sense, the return of major tonality and the 'first subject' in bar 42 represents more than its original topical evocation of the hunt, as it becomes a safe and reliable haven – a known quantity.

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[3] Schmalfeldt, 'Escape-Artist', p.280-285

Chiaroscuro

The darkness of the minor tonality frames the light major: it accentuates the fragility of the major tonality, and by twisting the familiar encourages listeners to engage with the music in a new way. Christopher Hail labels these modal oppositions *chiaroscuro* effects.[4] Hail's definition limits the effect to passages where the *same motif* alternates between parallel major and minor modes; however, my use of the term will refer to any passage which alternates between parallel major and minor modes and where this modal shift is the primary source of affect. *Chiaroscuro* is an Italian term, literally meaning 'light-dark', and originates in art criticism where it describes the use of colour contrasts between elements in an artwork. In his 1673 publication *Dialogues sur le coloris,* Roger de Piles summarised the French *clair-obscur* as 'the art of distributing light and shade... across the whole canvass... [it] is the most powerful means of foregrounding areas of colour'.[5] Reference to *chiaroscuro* in music goes back to the eighteenth century, although it generally refers to larger structures of movements within operatic works: librettist Carlo Goldoni wrote in his *Mémoires* that 'the librettist needs to supply the composer with the different nuances which constitute musical *chiaroscuro*, and ensure that two arias of [a similar emotion or type] do not immediately follow one another'.[6]

Benjamin Pintiaux summarises the eighteenth-century view of *chiaroscuro* as: 'a combinatory and structural principle central to opera and instrumental music in the Baroque and classical periods, which consists of alternating aria types, interludes, orchestration or affect, in order to avoid any uniformity'.[7] This is notably broader than either Hail's definition or mine and would classify any syntactic or structural opposition which generates different affects as being *chiaroscuro*. Moreover, whilst it is important to recognise that Scarlatti may have had some awareness of musical *chiaroscuro*, its application to gestures within a single keyboard sonata is an anachronism. However, as we shall see, *chiaroscuro* through modal shifts provides a harmonic shading which draws attention to a gesture, providing contrast and emotional depth, but maintaining continuity. Charles Rosen asserts that 'striking modulations in Scarlatti are generally more colouristic than expressive; [by contrast] in C.P.E. Bach, they have a remarkable and sometimes incoherent passion which is reflected in the intense and idiosyncratic character of his themes'.[8] Through the course of this chapter I challenge Rosen's

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[4] Hail, *Scarlatti Domenico, p.83*
[5] Roger de Piles, Qtd. & translated by Benjamin Pintiaux, 'Musical *Chiaroscuro* in French Baroque Opera: The Case of Abbé Pellegrin's *Tragédies en Musique, Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 37, 4 (2014): p.443
[6] Carlo Goldoni, Qtd. & translated by Benjamin Pintiaux, *Ibid*., p.444
[7] Ibid*.,* p.443
[8] Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms (Revised Edition)*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1988), p.143

assertion that Scarlatti's harmonic language is not expressive and suggest that musical *chiaroscuro* has the potential to suggest an emotionally complex virtual subjectivity.

Modality and Virtual Subjectivity: K.2

Setting the Stage

The *chiaroscuro* in K.2 (Ex.29) is brief but significant, creating a novel affect by drawing attention to a gesture in a way that direct repetition would not: repetition has a tendency to intensify, whereas *chiaroscuro* is more reflective and draws listeners into a state of more intimate reflection. The brevity of the *chiaroscuro* in K.2 – lasting only for four bars in each half (bb.25-28; 66-69) – aids its efficacy: if the harmonic change were to last a significant time the new modality would become settled. Longer disruptions can, though not always, present listeners with a *fait accompli* to which they invariably adjust, particularly when combined with a topical opposition. The *chiaroscuro* effect encourages listeners to subjectively interact with a sonata to virtualise a complex musical agent. It does this partly due to learned associations with minor tonality, such as *serioso*, lament, etc., but the abrupt transformation of a familiar musical unit also creates a sense of dysphoria. Furthermore, the harmonic shading encourages a listener to hear the gesture as a musical reflection which effects not only the momentary experience of listening to the sonata, but also the holistic impression one may have of the musical character.

The *chiaroscuro* is the most significant element of contrast in the first half of this sonata and disrupts the established aesthetic whilst maintaining continuity. There are two thematic ideas which are both characterised by a cheerful liveliness, and progress mostly through repetitive perfect cadences: the first, bb.1-12, accounts for the opening and draws upon fanfare through a leap schema motif which is answered by a *galantian* scamper which creates a ricochet effect. The high energy of the gestures in combination with the exaggerated tonal consonance is optimistic; the imitation tropes the learned style, but this is this is secondary to the general build-up of sonic density – the layered two-part texture is uncluttered, but the canon provides constant motion and excitement. The second thematic idea (bb.13-34) transitions to the secondary key through a sequence; the fanfare leap from the opening is abandoned, although the scamper schema remains pivotal, and *galantian* four-bar motives are adopted within an

Example 29: Modal disruption in K.2, bars 1-37

antecedent-consequent structure. The absence of the bass register is conspicuous, but Scarlatti carefully manages the two-part texture so that it becomes neither empty or overly busy: the parallel sixths provide harmonic depth to the melody and the constant semiquavers ensure no let-up in the perceived energy of the gesture. The motif evolves somewhat in bar 21

by incorporating a *fortspinnung* leap, though the lower part maintains the characteristic descending sixth figurations.

Disruption

The *chiaroscuro* thus interrupts an established musical pattern which alternates figures on the tonic and dominant; in immediately repeating the motif from bars 21-24 in the parallel minor mode, Scarlatti, in a single stroke, disrupts the cheerful – consonant – aesthetic. By using the parallel mode, the gesture occurs within the same sonic space as the original, but the modal shift seems to exist in another world – it is as if we are seeing a parallel dimension through murky glass. The major figure evokes a sense of fun and liveliness through the combination of tonality, excessive consonance, and acrobatic schema; the minor figure is built using the same physical schema and thus implies a similar level of exertion. This creates a pensive effect, as if the physical movement is undertaken automatically whilst the thought processes of a virtual subjectivity drift off. The modal shift is gone in a flash, but it offers insight into a virtual subjectivity behind the physical movements, adding an emotional complication to an otherwise simple sonata.

Paradoxically, the *chiaroscuro* is a disruptive continuation. By using a familiar motif Scarlatti ensures continuity, but that very familiarisation makes the disruption more affecting as it distorts the mental models we have constructed. Hatten comments that:

> 'we as listeners are predisposed to engage with a kind of subjective identification whenever we listen to music – both by our human nature and by sedimented habits of listening entrained over the history of music. Listening in this way, we are immediately rewarded not only by the expansion of our own subjectivity as the music lends its temporal shaping to our subjective imagination, but also by the grounding in our own experience of all that music is capable of expressing'.[9]

The tonal enantiodromia of this sonata invites listeners to perceive the otherwise simple gestures as expressing an intimate moment of reflection whilst simultaneously creating a sense of general unease. The *chiaroscuro* is a dramatic development, but it also encourages us to identify ourselves with the music: tensing and then relaxing as the minor abruptly arrives and then vanishes; moreover, the darkness of the minor illuminates the major, imbuing it with an assuredness it would otherwise not develop.

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[9] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.170

Writing about Scarlatti's predilection for modal shifts Michael Talbot comments that:

> 'what is particularly relevant to Domenico Scarlatti's case... is that after c. 1710 the Italians began to introduce short minor-key passages as «pathetic» enclaves within a section in the parallel major key. This occurred less often in binary form than in the ritornellos of concertos and sinfonias. Such enclaves in the parallel minor key had the virtue of adding a new dimension to the expression of a ritornello without subverting its primary function of emphasising a single tonal area defined by the keynote'.[10]

What is clear with K.2, however, is that the minor-key passage is not an independent enclave but a spontaneous manifestation of dysphoria. By distorting a familiar gesture, Scarlatti creates an invitation for it to be perceived not only as a harmonic tension but as a subjective insight; because the tonal centre remains the same, the passage cannot be implicated into a larger gestural movement say as an ascending or descending sequence. It hints at a latent unease that exists at a sub-terranean level underneath the general buoyant style.

Interpreting *Chiaroscuro*

The disruptive effect generated by the *chiaroscuro* is often emphasised in performance: David Louie utilises rubato and dislocation, and Carlo Grante pauses momentarily between bars 24 and 25.[11] Alternatively, Scott Ross and David Clark Little do not mark the modal shift at all, instead continuing a pattern of two-bar echo effects, by legato-staccato alternations and manual switching respectively, throughout bars 13-28.[12] Maintaining this echo pattern integrates the *chiaroscuro* subtly into the ongoing narrative by not differentiating it from its surroundings, though this perhaps negatively effects the impact of the affect. Scholarly opinion is certainly split on the use of echo effects with Scarlatti's music. For Eva Badura-Skoda, echoes are so strongly implied within the music that it suggests that the pieces were composed for a hammer-harpsichord as such an instrument would make actualising echo effects child's-play.[13] Frederick Hammond, meanwhile, lambasts keyboardists who 'chop up

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[10] Michael Talbot, 'Modal Shifts in the Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti', in *Domenico Scarlatti e il suo tempo*. (*Chigiana* 40). Proceedings of conference in Siena on 2–4 September 1985, sponsored by the Accademia Musicale Chigiana Musicologia and the Università degli Studi in conjunction with the Società Italiana di Napoli. Florence: Olschki, 1990. p.31

[11] David Louie, 'Scarlatti | Sonata in G major, K. 2', YouTube Video, 2:41, posted by 'David Louie', Sept. 3rd 2020, accessed Sept. 18th 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTawPQ3J-y0, 00:23; Carlo Grante, 'Keyboard Sonata in G Major, K.2/L388/P.58', *Scarlatti: The Complete Keyboard Sonatas, Vol. 1.* (Music and Arts Programs of America: 2011), CD, 00:20

[12] Scott Ross, 'Keyboard Sonata in G Major, Kk. 2', *Scarlatti the Complete Keyboard Works, Vol.1,* (Parlophone Records: 2019 [Original release, 1988]), CD.; David Clark Little, 'D. Scarlatti: Sonata K 2', YouTube Video, 3.03, posted by 'David Clark Little', Feb 20th 2015, accessed Sept. 18th 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5hXNw99-Cg

[13] Eva Badura-Skoda, *The Eighteenth-Century Fortepiano Grand and its Patrons*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017), p.98

Scarlatti's groups of repeated phrases into banal echo effects'; Sutcliffe agrees, commenting that 'it goes against the grain of Scarlatti's style'.[14] Scarlatti's *chiaroscuro* do not necessarily imply a dynamic contrast; rather, the impact on the narrative comes from the shift to the minor mode and the implication of reflection. This being said, I find Louie and Grante's interpretations more convincing, as they provide time for a listener to cognitively recognise the modal change; they allow the modality to be expressive.

A Form of Expression

Michael Talbot responds to Rosen's assertion that Scarlatti's modulations are colouristic rather than expressive by calling it 'uncharitable' and riposting 'is not colour a means to expression in any case?'.[15] Scarlatti was working within, and often exceeding, Western norms of harmony, and tonality in his music certainly has topical associations: minor-mode with exotic, learned style, or Baroque more generally; and, major-mode with modernity, the *galant*, and the comic.[16] Certainly, following Italian practice post circa 1710, the *chiaroscuro* tends only to be a punctuation of minor-mode within major: 'whereas the relationship between parallel major and minor keys is fully reversible in the case of separate movements or of sections within a single movement, enclaves are nearly always minor within major'.[17] In K.2 this harmonic *chiaroscuro* takes place in both halves of the sonata as a pensive insight into a virtual subjectivity. *Chiaroscuro* can also be more localised, in K.446, for example, the modal shift occurs only at the start of the second section.[18] This is a dramatic disruption of the *pastorale* pastiche, and the harmonic storm clouds of the minor-mode provides a source of tension to relieve. This is an idiomatic operation for binary *pastorales*: the first half, or A section, is artful and naive, whereas the B section is artless and almost realistic.[19]

For a final example demonstrating Scarlatti's use of *chiaroscuro* to create insight into an agential subjectivity, I turn to K.7 (Ex.30); in this sonata, there are two modal shifts (bb.15-31, & 47-55) which create tension as they subvert the harmonic expectations the narrative has

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[14] Frederick Hammond, 'Domenico Scarlatti', in *Eighteenth-Century Keyboard Music*, ed. Robert Marshall, (London: Routledge, 2003), p.159; Sutcliffe, *Keyboard Sonatas,* p.146

[15] Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, p.143; Talbot, 'Modal Shifts', p.35

[16] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.341

[17] Talbot, 'Modal Shifts', p.31

[18] This is one of only a few sonatas by Scarlatti with an explicitly programmatic title - the Siciliana ♪ ♩. ♫ rhythm makes the pastoral idyll evident.

[19] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.136

Example 30: Modal tension in K.7, bars 1-73 (cont. next page)

developed. Talbot highlights the chromatic aspects of bars 15-20, noting that despite the flattened third the sixth remains unaltered, and positions the passage as part of an intermediary zone between major and minor tonalities.[20] For me, however, this underplays the abrupt effect of the chromatic semitone between the e♮ and e♭ in bars 14 & 15. The descending sequence in bars 9-14 twice closes in the minor mode, with the third unit completing a modulation to the relative major. Over the course of this sequence there is a gradual increase of major-mode sonority: the first unit consists wholly of the minor-mode, whereas the final unit is the inverse consisting wholly of major-mode harmony. The major-mode here is significant as the opening eight bars are layered with circular imitation that almost overwhelms with dogmatic A-minor tonality. This opening is a framing gesture which establishes a tonal context from which this modulation to the relative marks an achievement. Therefore, the teasing and subsequent denial of major-mode tonality makes the passage from bar 15 particularly arresting; the retreat of the major-mode seems almost to represent a loss of hope and agential surrender to inevitability.

The inaudible hand-crossing, bb.9-30, visually indicates some discomfort for a spectator, perhaps foreshadowing the tension of the chromaticism. The major-mode makes a dramatic return in bar 31 after a significant absence; the motif, and its associated learned imitation, are lifted from the opening but supplemented by dense chords which exaggerate the major sonority through a circular pattern of perfect cadences – the excess of the gesture releases the tense antagonism from the harmonic shading. Structurally, the secondary key has finally been reached, and Scarlatti thus encourages us to presume that this is the vanguard of the closing section. Scarlatti, and other composers of the early-to-mid eighteenth century, often use a post cadential closing gesture and so the new falling sixths motif in bar 39 does not come as a surprise. However, the modal shift in bar 47 is brutal in the suddenness of its harmonic realignment: in its major-mode guise during bars 39-46 the motif is triumphant noise; the *chiaroscuro* dramatically exposes a rawness, tarnishing the triumphalism and making the left-hand motivic quotation of the opening become clearer. Enthusiastic semi-quaver *fortspinnung* figures over an extended tonic pedal signal a return to major tonality in bar 55; whilst this passage has a cleansing effect, the darkness of the *chiaroscuro* lingers, constantly threatening to return. This pedal seems not to be a celebration of the tonic, but a façade of confidence which hides internalised tension.

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[20] Talbot, 'Modal Shifts', p.38

8 Spontaneity & Expression

Unpredictability is an undercurrent which flows through Scarlatti's style. To some extent all the elements I have thus far discussed occur as unpredictable events within a narrative. I have positioned the sonatas as evocations of physical gestures, movement embodied through sound, and of topical landscapes, worlds inhabited by crowds captured in a sonic postcard. Acrobatic schemas vividly evoke extraordinary *human* motion, and the strangeness of the Spanishisms captures an exotic experience. I have explored how an opening can frame a sonata, creating an environment which is interacted with physically, and how, through *chiaroscuro*, layers of operational subjectivity spontaneously can be revealed. These latter interpretations of musical meaning rely on moments of contrast; through these contrasts we can perceive a virtual agent operating and subjectively engaging with a musical world in real time. At the core of such contrasts is unpredictability, and the most human characteristic: spontaneity.

Abrupt changes in style or affect often subvert listeners' expectations as our mimetic engagement with music is partially rooted in our capacity to anticipate the ongoing direction of a gesture. This ability is grounded in our embodied experience of Larson's environmental forces. We *feel* the magnetism of a tonic and consonant harmony, as well as the stability of lower pitch; likewise, we can extrapolate from a gesture's properties and predict future movements. Scarlatti is a composer renowned for his lack of loyalty to his musical motifs and capacity to evoke a sense of spontaneity: Boyd notes the 'freshness of Scarlatti's invention - the way that every device, every gesture is employed in his sonatas as if for the first time. The ability to surprise, and yet at the same time to convince, was something that Scarlatti possessed to a degree unparalleled among eighteenth-century composers, except by Haydn'.[1]

Whose Spontaneity?

Conceiving the sonatas as spontaneous is not a novel idea and many scholars recognise that the sonatas seem improvised, some even imagining Scarlatti at the keyboard.[2] The prevalence of *partimenti* in the long eighteenth century suggests wholly different attitudes both to improvisation and composition. Primarily a pedagogical tool, *partimenti* exercises, a single stave bass-line annotated with figured bass from which a student composes or more commonly improvises a piece, helped to teach students stock musical phrases which could be

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[1] Boyd, *Master of Music*, p.190
[2] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.230

used to compose rapidly and effectively.[3] Yet, as Robert Gjerdingen's seminal book *Music in the Galant Style* reveals, these stock phrases or schema – which are rooted in improvisation – were largely hidden in plain sight for well over a century; most keyboard pieces which utilise the schema do not sound, to a layman, as improvised or spontaneous, whereas Scarlatti's pieces often do. The act of improvisation itself does not mean that the music sounds spontaneous or alive. Whilst there are undoubtedly instances of *galant* schema in the sonatas, for example the Prinner in K.1, this sense of spontaneity is grounded not in any *actual* improvisation but in fundamental, and oftentimes idiosyncratic, aspects of the composer's style; indeed, Willis argues that the composer deliberately avoids many of the typical aspects expected in improvised works.[4]

Scarlatti's use of repetition, novel motifs, acrobatic schema, and contrasts combine to create music that *lives* in the moment. *Chiaroscuro* shading, for example, is a particularly effective technique because a modulation to the parallel minor mode is almost impossible to signpost, whereas other modulations and transitory passages can develop a predictable inevitability. In K.28, the *chiaroscuro* passages, bb.33-41 & 102-108, function to delay the closing of the sonata's two sections after the final tonality has been reached, but the volatile effect of the modal shift strikes a mysterious and uneasy tone. The obsessive repetition of the narrow gesture compounds this. It is not that motivic repetition is new in this sonata, but previous repetitious passages, for instance between bb.10-28 & 80-85, are structured around two-bar units; being one-bar units of constant semi-quaver motion, the *chiaroscuro* passages are comparatively breathless. The syncopated ascending arpeggio is the singular changing element, slowing reaching upwards, searching. This combination of minor tonality, slow arpeggiated ascent, *figura suspirans*, and incessant repetition imbues the gesture with an intense urgency; repetition, as it does earlier in the sonata, often implies a degree of confidence, but here the repetition is incessant and, deserting the bass register, is concentrated in a narrow registral band, such that it seems jittery. Yet this *chiaroscuro* is only part of 'long series of syntactical surprises' which 'constructs a persona from the psychological implications of its processes'.[5] Willis notes that from bar 29, 'the listener has no reason not to think that the ending of the first half is just a few bars of repetitions away… since almost every bar contains, or leads to, a plausible cadence on the tonic with the melody arriving on 1̂'.[6]

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[3] Robert Gjerdingen, 'An Introduction to the History of Partimenti', *Partimenti,* n.d.. accessed Sept 28, 2023, https://partimenti.org/partimenti/about_parti/hist_overview.html; see also Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, introduction pp.3-24

[4] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.37

[5] Ibid., p.249

[6] Ibid., p.247

For Willis, this creates a 'performing persona that lives in the moment' that is fundamentally a 'a caricature of spontaneity' enforced upon the 'living breathing performer who attempts to make the fiction seem real'.[7] Willis suggests the performer embodies a secondary extra-musical agent: the performer is not improvising, but is following a musical script which turns them into an embodied avatar of the composer, to a spectator they appear to be acting spontaneously. Hatten argues against identifying 'personas' in music, much as Monahan's notion of the 'fictional composer' lays bare the tendency of analysts to confuse the actual historical composer and our own projections of a work, when constructing a fictional persona.[8] The idea of a persona attaches implications of a complete 'character' and precludes a work from undergoing emotional development; instead, I would propose that what Willis identifies as improvisation is the embodiment of an intra-musical agent moving within a virtual world at whim.

Certainly, Scarlatti's syntax often betrays a sense of restlessness insofar as a single or pair of distinct motifs do not usually come to dominate a sonatas' narrative (as a fugal subject, or primary/secondary themes in sonata form might); transitional material can prove significant both in the moment of its realisation and in the recounting of motifs in the second half. There is often a sense of continual generation with seemingly novel material taking hold at any one moment. K.5, for example, is a sonata in which the first half continually presents new material in a constant, elided stream. This sonata is cellular, and the motifs used largely extrapolate on features seen in the first four bars: a weak-beat trill, a scalic gesture, and three descending quavers with downbeat ornament. Yet despite this core motivic heritage, each motif is sufficiently unique, and after being enunciated once or twice is seemingly forgotten only to return almost verbatim in the second half.

Scarlatti's perfidious relationship with motivic material 'creates a high level of instability and linear change... [and] also creates uncertainty about the status of the various musical units in play, and about how, or whether, they will be dealt with in the future'.[9] The dominant pedal scale passage in K.5 (Ex.31), for instance, lasts for eleven bars and by its finish is proportionally more than half of the sonata. For a spectator these scales are a celebration of virtuosity which is debauched through the structural imbalance, and a celebration of the unnecessarily crossed hands. There is certainly a base pleasure in the elongation of the dominant seventh harmony, but the scalic gestures seem endless and establish a sense of momentum, of irrepressible motion. The cadence initiated in bar 20 signals the awaited submission to the magnetic pull of

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[7] Ibid., p.247, 237, 231

[8] Hatten, *Virtual Agency*, p.11; Monahan, 'Action and Agency', p.329-332

[9] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.115

Example 31: Sprinting scales in K.5, bars 10-21

the tonic, but what is much more interesting is the explosive sprint schema in bar 21: this comes completely out of nowhere as we anticipate a tonic arrival on the downbeat to satisfy the magnetic force. The acceleration, through rhythmic diminution, is a repudiation to musical gravity and contributes to the gesture being perceived as an act of excited spontaneity; the high-octane energy of this gesture implies an intra-musical source.

In assigning such spontaneity to an extra-musical actor, Willis ostensibly occupies a different semantic space to this analysis of intra-musical agency. He argues that 'if a musical passage sounds like an improvisation, then it is sensible to say that someone must seem to be improvising', meaning that the performer embodies a character who 'gives the impression of being responsible for its own actions, which it creates on the spot, in real time, as the spectator perceives them'.[10] Yet, Willis also concludes that on some occasions the parody of improvisation becomes so outlandish that 'the performer becomes isolated, a spectacle, really now observed by, rather than communicating with, the listening audience'; thus the fiction

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[10] Ibid., p.231

breaks down and the 'improviser' is revealed to have no agency but is instead a pawn in a plot created by a 'more shadowy "implied author" in the background'.[11] Seth Monahan may propose that this is a secondary avatar of the fictional composer, forming a complication of layers: the performer acts as the fictional composer, but the exaggerations make the 'script' obvious. Taking Willis's turn of phrase, is it not sensible to say that if a sonata sounds as if it is alive and acting spontaneously, then we perceive these musical sounds as a form of life, as agentially active? Shifting the focus from origin, which may well be improvised, to a listener's interpretation of the sounds leads to the conclusion that we perceive the sonata itself as agentially spontaneous.

Creating the Illusion of Spontaneity

Evolution

Many of the agential concepts I have explored thus far rely to some extent on explicit contrast; the use of contrasting sections of concentrated thematic material, such as we saw in K.24 & K.29, falls under what Kirkpatrick calls the 'second tradition' of thematic treatment – the first tradition is uncommon and 'is allied with the tradition of decorated thoroughbass realisation'.[12] A sonata like K.5, however, is linear and continuous with a cellular core; this makes the sprint schema all the more exciting, but the novelty of constantly changing motivic material also creates a sense of agential activity. These sonatas are part of Kirkpatrick's 'third tradition, which is 'the free unfolding of melodic material, in which one theme spontaneously suggests another'.[13] Barbara Foster builds on Kirkpatrick's concept describing the process as 'associative', and notes that 'although the material eventually evolves into something distinct from what appeared earlier, this process takes place gradually, almost imperceptibly, and without any sharp contrasts and few, if any, interior cadences or pauses in the rhythmic motion'.[14]

In some ways, the associative process Foster describes runs counter to the very idea of spontaneity, which suggests a mercurial unsubtle process rather than gradual evolution.

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[11] Ibid., p.259

[12] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.277. In many ways, this thesis challenges Kirkpatrick's notion that the second tradition uses disunity to create independent sections, arguing instead that the integration of these separate elements creates a complex virtual subjectivity.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Barbara R. Foster, 'Dramatic Contrast in the Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti to 1746', (PhD Thesis, University of Illinois, 1970), p.26

However, whilst Kirkpatrick's use of 'spontaneous' unintentionally suggests that the melodies themselves are exhibiting their own thought process, I would suggest that this is closer to the effect the sonatas create than Foster's use of 'evolution', which reduces agential capacity to one bound within a natural process. The associative process in Scarlatti takes place phrase-to-phrase, and quite often seems distractable as each new phrase tends to exaggerate a particular feature of a previous one; the process enables an undisrupted *melos* as the motivic unfolding does not disturb listeners' ability to trace a singular agency. The motivic developments thus seem to be the result of a single agency acting spontaneously.

Fictionalising through the Associative Process

In K.9 (Ex.32), Scarlatti integrates a plethora of disparate components to weave a single virtual agent heard to act spontaneously; *Pastorale*, the singing style, acrobatic schemas, and fanfare all feature but are elided together to form a singular thread. In maintaining this sense of continuity across multiple gestures, Scarlatti encourages us to hear this sonata as the action of an individual agent. Despite occupying different topical worlds, the gestures in this sonata all have motivic roots in the opening four bars: the fanfare in bar 12 integrates the ornamentation and natural-horn intervals of bars 1-2 into a new topical landscape. This fanfare is ostensibly an overt contrast to the *Pastorale* of the opening, but the topic appears as the culmination of agential effort rather than a syntactic juxtaposition.

Despite characterising this sonata as having a 'limpid idealised quality', Sutcliffe warns that imagining the sonata as a nostalgic *Pastorale*, as is commonly done, is a nineteenth-century anachronism; he points to Avison's tempo marking of *Giga Allegro* as evidence that the sonata should not be overly romanticised. Indeed, Kirkpatrick notes that the expected Italian *zampognari* and *pifferari* are absent in this sonata, unlike sonatas designated *Pastorale* by the composer himself.[15] The sonata can certainly be seen to be constructed in eighteenth-century *galant* terms: the opening uses two of the schemas that Gjerdingen rediscovered, a *do-re-mi,* bb.1-2, answered by a *Meyer,* bb.3-4. However, the associative process at play in this sonata creates a constant motivic unfolding: Foster writes that 'this [sonata] is basically a continuous spinning out in which the melodic line experiences frequent changes, but there are no stops in the rhythmic flow and no interior cadences'.[16] This unfolding seems spontaneous: the passage

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[15] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.203

[16] Foster, 'Dramatic Contrast', p.49; Foster's word-choice is unfortunately ambiguous here. My interpretation is that 'no interior cadences' refers to the cadential elisions not generating moments of dramatic contrast.

Example 32: Spontaneous motion in K.9, bars 1-26

in bars 5-7 is a descending sequence built from a foreshortening of the two cadential appoggiatura in the opening (b.2, 4). I noted in Chapter 4 that the combination of leap schema and ♩ ♪ rhythm seems to embody 'skipping'; this physical aesthetic is totally different to the pictorial *Pastorale*-Singing style opening, but through the elision and motivic link feels like a

continuation, not a repudiation. The descent during this passage is rather placid until it extends beyond the gravitational and magnetic pull to the tonic in bar 7; this wilful overpowering of musical forces implying a virtual human agent.

Sudden Acrobatics

For me at least, it is difficult not to perceive the scalic ascent in bars 8-11 as spontaneous; this is particularly so for the accelerating surge in bar 11. This passage is significantly more energetic than the preceding material, and turns the idyllic, lyrical *fioritura* of bar 3 into a fully-fledged instance of the sprint schema. Once again, however, this passage is elided with the previous appoggiatura sequence: although the lower part, in Repina's terms, transforms from accompanimental to secondary solo, the parallel thirds continue from the previous passage, and, whilst this passage is more energetic, the transition from 'skip' to 'run' smudges the gestural contrast. The fanfare which follows, bb.12-26, is less physically active, although it incorporates the leap schema, but retains the intensity through topical associations: this fanfare also combines the ornamented appoggiatura, b.2, and horn-like leap, b.1, from the opening. Whilst this sonata is constructed through the continual associative process, the generated materials embody a sense of spontaneity rather than a predictable or slow evolution: the phrase divisions in the first half are wholly *erratic*[17]; the scalic descent, b.20, and ascent, b.24, are sudden importations of the sprint schema within the fanfare topic. Yet these developments are not syntactic contrasts but are integrated within the ongoing narrative; each unexpected twist aiding the impression of spontaneity.

The sudden application or exaggeration of an acrobatic schema is a common occurrence in the sonatas: bars 11, 20, & 24, of K.9 are all examples of this phenomenon, as are bars 21 & 68 of K.5. In both sonatas, the acrobatic gestures are highly energetic but emerge from the associative process; in other sonatas, sudden acrobatic outbursts can create dramatic moments that cause ruptures in the narrative. For example, acrobatic sprints punctuate much of K.10 from bar 22 onwards; these outbursts are so fast that they verge on being impossible and create a sheer wall of noise – particularly on the harpsichord. However, whilst these are violent interjections, they are integrated as harmonic reinforcement of cadential figures; the contrast between cadential figure and scalic outburst is dramatic, but the elision between the two invites us to perceive the gestures as being the same virtual agent, possibly embodying some sort of internal subjective conflict. The second half of this sonata (Ex.33) compounds the

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[17] Phrase lengths are: 4 bars, 3 bars, 4 bars, 9 bars, 6 bars.

sense of spontaneity that the outbursts generate, by structurally positioning the motif within irregular phrases: the unpredictability leads to the sense that the sonata is a virtual agent living in the spur of the moment.

Whilst some sonatas are characterised by sudden and dramatic narrative shifts, others follow a more linear path; yet, as I demonstrated through K.9, even though the motifs Scarlatti creates for a sonata may have a universal genetic heritage, his process of thematic development creates the opportunity to perceive the sonata as a virtual human acting spontaneously. The process can be overt, as with K.10, or can be subtle: in K.6, for instance, the imitation during bars 13-14 is sudden, but springs from material in the previous few bars, the main change is textural rather than motivic. The resultant hemiola disrupts the metre, but more significant is the shift from a solo/continuo to a solo/solo texture: this creates a chasing effect utilising the acrobatic scamper schema, suddenly introducing a temporary secondary actant who participates in the chase.

Example 33: Spontaneous scalic outbursts in K.10, bars 45-75 (cont. next page)

113

Willis contends that we can attribute such spontaneity to a fictional improviser, but this does not account for the physical nature of the musical gestures. Indeed, Cox has observed that physical 'exertions always serve some function or purpose, whether trivial or momentous, and they always have an affective dimension', and Willis concedes that in certain moments the 'improviser is not the ultimate source of meaning... but a kind of protagonist whose physical and mental highs and lows create a kind of plot, constructed and controlled by a more shadowy 'implied author' in the background'.[18] Instead, I propose that this protagonist is a result of the gestural properties of the music and is imagined into existence by the listener as they construct a fictional narrative to explain the perception of physical movement that they experience. Regarding K.470, Willis writes that 'changes to the different musical discourses on display, and to the way they interrelate, sharpens... a sense of continuous agency or animacy'.[19] This animacy that Willis recognises creates the perception of physical movement undertaken by a virtual agent.

Repetition

> When the Christian soul finds no new words in distress to implore God's mercy, it repeats the same invocation over and over again with vehement faith. Reason reaches its limit. Faith alone continues its ascent.
>
> *- Jehan Alain, subheading to the organ work Litanies*[20]

Scarlatti's propensity for both motivic contrast and a constant unfolding of ideas in his sonatas creates a sense of spontaneity through novelty; the extremity and rapidity of his style sets him apart from other composers who similarly use contrast and development but in a more sedate way. However, this composer also has a penchant for immediate and incessant repetition, such that some authors suggest that passages of the music are heard as static.[21] Repetition is a fundamental component of the human concept of music – musical repetition is found in all known human cultures – but the sheer quantity of Scarlatti's repetition stands outside normative eighteenth century manners, and has garnered the composer a reputation

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[18] Cox, *Music and Embodied Cognition*, p.178; Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.37
[19] Ibid., p.207
[20] Quand l'âme chrétienne ne trouve plus de mots nouveaux dans la détresse pour implorer la miséricorde de Dieu, elle répète sans cesse la même invocation avec une foi véhémente. La raison atteint sa limite. Seule la foi poursuit son ascension. Jehan Alain. *Trois Pièces pour Grand Orgue*, (Paris: Éditions Musicales Alphonse Leduc, 1971), p.10
[21] E.g. Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.37; Sutcliffe, *Keyboard Sonatas,* p.154

that has not always been positive: removing repetitions was one of the frequent 'corrections' made by Charles Avison. The regularity of excessive passages of repetition has sparked the adoption by Scarlatti scholars, such as Sutcliffe and Sheveloff, of terms outside the Classical mainstream such as 'vamp'. In my opinion, this term carries unwelcome baggage as these passages in Scarlatti are moments of emotional turmoil, whereas in jazz are a figure looped during or in preparation for a solo extemporisation.

Nineteenth-century Wagner scholar Ferdinand Preager, Elizabeth Margulis notes, finds that 'repetitiveness links music with nonsense and even insanity'.[22] It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that Scarlatti's music has more than once been linked with mental disorders such as schizophrenia; indeed, Scarlatti's repetition can at times 'seem antisocial, if not living on the edge of sanity', outstaying its welcome and becoming embarrassing for performer and listener.[23] Cox provides an alternative view, commenting that 'repetition fosters mimetic participation in connection with anticipation' as the 'repetition of individual exertions and patterns of exertions generates an emergent feeling that integrates successful anticipation with repetitive exertions'.[24] In other words, successfully anticipating a repetition is satisfying for a listener.

In this section I argue that repetition plays an important role in our perceptions of a narrative and propose that excessive repetitions can be perceived as the result of an emotional tension on the part of a virtual agent. The confines of eighteenth-century motivic structure are insufficient to convey the emotional turmoil of the virtual subjectivities evoked in some of the Scarlatti sonatas; in this I am reminded of the words of Jehan Alain, quoted above, who comments that the inability to find new ways to express emotional distress manifests in repetition without reason. Even though such repetition is supposedly the antithesis of spontaneity, being a wholly known quantity, its onset can mark the spontaneous outburst of virtual emotionality. Indeed, motivic repetition implies human intentionality.[25]

Repetition within Normal Musical Discourse

Repetition is central to music's coherence and its capacity to evoke expression. If we briefly turn back to K.9, we can see that in the opening of the second half, bb.27-32, Scarlatti uses repetition to create a yearning effect: the *do-re-mi* singing motif is repeated as part of an

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[22] Elizabeth Margulis, *On Repeat* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), *On Repeat*, p.4
[23] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.157
[24] Cox, *Music & Embodied Cognition*, p.179
[25] Margulis, *On Repeat,* p.59

ascending sequence, but is extended to finish on a dissonant pitch which expects to fall a tone, but in fact falls a sixth all but the last time, b.33-34. This technique, where a phrase is transposed wholesale upwards thrice, is so common in Scarlatti's compositions that Sutcliffe christened it the 'three-card trick'; it combines the mutual capacities of repetition and ascent to generate intensity.[26] Repetition is also used as part of thematic development as it has as acclimatising function: such motivic repetition can be seen at a glance in K.2, as almost all the motifs are repeated a second time. In this sonata, and others, repetition serves as a means of clarifying and establishing motivic identity given its brevity, frequently as a *figura epizeuxis* or more rarely as an echo. However, whilst repetition is a practical method of establishing a figure as distinct material, it also imbues that material with gestural intent. The repetition of the climax in K.1, bb.8-9, for instance, reinforces the exotic harmonic twist, delays the resolution, and increases the intensity through a process of: delay» expectation increase» perceived intensity increase. In other words, intensity increases as listeners await an anticipated event.

The quirk of repetition in music has long caused discussion: Praeger rhetorically asked whether a poet would ever 'think of repeating half of his poem; a dramatist a whole act; a novelist a whole chapter?', and goes on to say that repetition is 'the emanation of a disordered brain'.[27] Yet this is exactly what happens in Scarlatti's sonatas: Kirkpatrick opines that 'the Scarlatti sonatas tell no story, at least not in a narrative sense; if they did, they would always have to tell it twice, once in each half'.[28] The subject of narrative is somewhat debatable. Agential readings tend to necessitate some kind of coherent narrative as we trace the gestural movements of a virtual actant and I am inclined to agree with Willis who comments that the lack of a central thematic thesis results in 'every real idea in the music [being] a restless move forward, imbued with uncertainty or anticipation'; 'if this suggests the opposite of lucidity, the sense of being slightly out of control, then it also implies the unstoppable impetus of a plot'.[29]

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[26] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.141

[27] Qtd. In Elizabeth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.4

[28] Kirkpatrick, *Domenico Scarlatti*, p.161

[29] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.151

Repetition in Excess

K.12 (Ex.34) is a sonata characterised by an extreme level of repetition: the opening imitation, itself a manifestation of repetition, gives way in bar 4 to a sequence of two-beat motives (within a *moto perpetuo* texture), each of which repeats at least three times, and is itself composed of smaller motivic cells that also repeat. Each set of repetitions builds intensity, but relieves the tension generated by the previous set: the overall pattern is a series of energetic build-up and redirection. The immediate effect of the onset of repetition in bar 4 is startling as it coincides with a topical shift from learned (imitative counterpoint) to Spanish exoticism (acciaccatura and short castanet figures). The repetition forces listeners to relocate their expectations for the topical narrative; the sudden emphasis on smaller figures, rather than the sprawling endless figures of the *stile antico*, induces a breathless, urgent quality in the new material.

For a spectator, the passage during bars 9-12 is a sight to behold, as the player's hands interlace manically. Todd Decker is of the opinion that in this passage 'Scarlatti shows his sensitivity to the physics of leaping... [and] suspends activity in the right hand while the left hand leaps. For a moment – the crucial moment – the player can concentrate on the difficult move at hand'.[30] Decker's wider thesis, that repetition in the *Essercizi* has a pedagogical bent (effectively as built in practice), overlooks the gestural impact of this repetition which is more important on a narrative level.[31] The two-beat motif features the acrobatic leap schema, and is heard within a simple, essentially monophonic, texture a total of seven times in just over three bars. Hidden within this sequential figuration is a resultant motif (F'-E'-D') which has the potential to be heard melodically; however, the incessant repetition of the leap foregrounds the physicality in a way that earlier leaps (for example, those of bars 4-6) do not. Whilst we are conscious of the sixth and octave leaps in this earlier passage, they are a subsidiary component of the exotic topic and help to create a dance-like effect; in the passage beginning in bar 9, the excessiveness of the repetition numbs the sense of narrative as the context becomes a distant memory. This has the effect of temporarily foregrounding the physicality of the leap, enabling listeners to gain a new perspective on the ongoing proceedings; the simple texture and static harmony may make coordinating the leap easier for the player, but it also makes the leap the marked feature of the passage.

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[30] Decker, 'The *Essercizi* and the Editors', p.316

[31] Whilst I would not preclude the possibility outright that Scarlatti wrote-in repetition as practice, this passage in K.6 is not overly difficult; moreover, some of the most difficult instances of cross-hand passagework in the *Essercizi,* such as in K.29 are not repeated.

Example 34: Excessive repetition in K.12, bars 1-13

Leaps are normative in Scarlatti's compositions and feature throughout this sonata, but the trance-like repetition during bars 9-11 makes this familiar gesture strange through semantic satiation – defined as 'the subjective and temporary loss of meaning after high repetition of a prime word', as the sound and concept of the word, or in this case musical gesture, are

separated.[32] For mimetically engaged listeners, the constant enaction of the same leap may be off-putting as it goes beyond most people's experience, seeming to embody an obsessive or compulsive emotional state. Furthermore, the endlessness of the repetition turns the leap from a real-time musical action into an abstract concept. Indeed, 'repetition tends to reify a passage – to set it apart from the surrounding context as a "thing" to be mused on'; it 'enables us to "look" at a passage as a whole, even while it's progressing moment by moment'.[33] The material that constitutes this passage is not unusual or unexpected as it is a development of the original leaps in bar 4, but the circling repetition nullifies this context and makes the passage become past, present, and future. This passage has a structural role as a dominant lock, forming what Kirkpatrick refers to as the 'Crux', but fundamentally creates a dramatic fissure in the sonata as the flavour of repetition changes afterwards: from bar 12, the sonata shifts the melody to the bass and adopts a quasi-homophonic texture, with chords used as a blunt instrument to hammer home the repeating cadences.[34]

Stasis?

Passages such as seen in K.12, where a small motif is repeated obsessively, have become known as vamps. This is a term originally imported by Joel Sheveloff which is primarily used in reference to jazz and theatre rather than to discussion of eighteenth-century music. In Scarlatti scholarship it is used as a label for the idiosyncratic repetitions of a single motif which extends for several bars; any original melodic function of the motif breaks in such a way that it cannot be understood simply in terms of phrase-structural symmetries as it results in disrupted and lopsided structures. As we saw, the vamp in K.12, bb.9-11, was a significant structural moment, creating a fissure of pre- and post-vamp; the cycle of seven repetitions goes well beyond the norms the sonata established in the preceding bars. Sutcliffe comments thus:

> 'the vamp may also be conceived of as an effort to overcome the sectionalised syntax of the work, with all its repeated units, either sequential or at pitch. The passage does consist of course of endless repetitions of the one cell, but precisely because of this we may also listen beyond the surface, to one large phrase that will seemingly last forever... [although] to emphasise only its functionality and compatibility on the large scale would be to swallow up what makes it so strange along the way'.[35]

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[32] Kim Ströberg, Lau M. Andersen, & Stefan Wiens, 'Electrocortical N400 Effects of Semantic Satiation', *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017), p.1
[33] Margulis, *On Repeat*, p.43; 7
[34] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.253. There is also a parallel with this dominant lock and later eighteenth-century sonata conventions.
[35] Sutcliffe*, Sonatas,* p.23-24

In other words, the most important effect of the vamp comes from how it makes us feel and think during these moments where our sense of temporality is dulled, rather than how it is integrated within a sonata. The vamp in K.12 invited us to conceive of the leap as a gesture in itself rather than a motion towards a particular musical goal; 'repetition of a unit can endow it with a kind of permanence which very roughly equates to that of a physical object'.[36] In K.12, the repetition that constitutes the vamp offers listeners the time and capacity to inspect the material as if it were an object. In some ways it forces the listener to become an analyst to merely understand what is being presented to them.

Conceiving the vamp as transforming a musical gesture into an object or thing implies a sense of stasis. In a vamp, we may encounter a musical stasis where the narrative appears to be paused; however, as Lerdahl and Jackendoff point out, 'it is impossible to hear absolute stasis, if only because events take place in time and hence form rhythmic relationships that produce tensing or relaxing events'.[37] Instead of narrative 'stasis', I propose that the vamp can function as the embodiment of emotional tension: the repetition can evoke a sense of overwhelming and uncontrollable emotions. When discussing K.12, I noted that mimetically enacting these leaps may prove uncomfortable to some listeners, yet it is worth expanding briefly here on the perceived origin for this discomfort. The motif of the vamp is made of quick semi-quavers and uses the acrobatic leap schema, which, therefore, implies a constant stream of effort, but which in the broader narrative appears to 'go' nowhere, hence static. There is a tendency to correlate this stasis simply with a pause in the narrative, but whilst the repetition allows for introspection, the tension that exists between the effort of the vamp and the lack of holistic movement evokes a sense of mental distress.

David Lidov posits that whilst the pulsation of metre 'is like an affective state of affairs, felt as continuing, not repeating..., regular repetition... tends to blunt the emotive quality of gesture'.[38] However, whilst physical stasis in humans can of course result from an 'empty' unemotional mind, it can also correlate with certain extreme mental states such as panic, obsession, or uncertainty which may result in catatonia. The vamp can be uncomfortable because it may represent a musical agent stuck in a loop which they desperately try to escape. Jeff Pressing comments that 'systematic repetition of patterns can dull time perception, stretch or even eliminate... the apparent time, eliminate the effects of transitions, beginnings,

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[36] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.25

[37] Fred Lerdahl & Ray S. Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), p.184

[38] David Lidov 'The Emotive Gesture in Music' in *Music and Gesture* ed. Anthony Gritten & Elaine King, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p.31

and endings, or force attention to focus on certain temporal details or scales'.[39] In losing track of time, listeners are themselves caught in the stream of confused distress - emotions they project onto a virtual agent. I turn now to K.27 to illustrate this.

Embodying Emotional Tension through Repetition: K.27

The vamp in K.27 (Ex.35) is the result of the culmination of multiple elements which are coordinated to produce a significant expressive moment: the tension of a topical fissure; melancholic motivic contours; the harmonic relief of a sustained major haven; the textural evocation of a guitar; spiralling arpeggios; a lamenting sub-gesture; registral expansiveness – all of which are physically embodied by the player who transitions from small, controlled finger movements to dancing with their whole body. Indeed, bars 11-17 of K.27 represent 'a stunning instance of Scarlatti's notorious penchant for immediate, relentless repetition', yet for Sutcliffe the passage is slightly disconcerting as the question 'Is this really music?' hovers over it.[40] He further comments that this 'repetition feels static rather than kinetic'; however, I would contend that the repetition here is anything but static as it represents the distress of a virtual agency.[41]

Tension – Topical Contrast

The syntactic contrast of topics in the opening bars (learned, bb.1-3, & exotic/Spanish/toccata, bb.4-6) underpins the emotional tensions at play in this sonata; the learned style opening functions as a framing gesture which allows a complex virtual subjectivity to emerge. The learned style here is emotionally evocative, particularly through its use of suspensions, incomplete voice-leading, and descending gestural contour. It begins very exposed in the upper register of the harpsichord, the upwards sixth leap in bar 1 is a gesture that reaches hopefully upwards: the lower voice in bar 2 simply drops out, failing to reach the tonic implied by the descending scale, leading to a sense of emptiness and loss, both because of the lack of harmonic reinforcement and of the implication of failure. The top B is left isolated and alone. During the opening the theme is presented thrice, first on the tonic and then the subdominant; each iteration becomes more harmonically complex, although the broader harmonic motion is cyclical with a perfect cadence in each bar. This, and the inward motion of the final repetition,

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[39] Jeff Pressing, 'Relations Between Musical and Scientific Properties of Time'. *Contemporary Music Review* 7, 2 (1993), p.109

[40] Schmalfeldt, 'Escape Artist', p.262; Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.154

[41] Ibid.

Example 35: Emotional outburst in K.27, bars 1-22

promotes a feeling of contraction and tension; the minor tonality and suspensions implying a degree of pathos.

These emotional tensions burst out in a Spanish-toccata which descends through the Phrygian (lament) tetrachord (bb.4-6); the guitar-like texture and parallel movement infuses the passage with exoticism, whilst the slower harmonic pace (one chord per bar) implies a deliberate pensiveness. Sutcliffe comments that the blatant parallel octaves 'could be understood as colouristic doubling… but the ear is so sensitised by the [learned] idiom of the first three bars that the parallels really do register as such'.[42] Schmalfeldt agrees, writing that 'Scarlatti's parallel octaves sound *foreign'*.[43] However, for me, the leap schema and hand-crossing are more significant than the impropriety of the parallels. The contrast between the brutally expansive texture and the delicate learned suspensions is stark, but Scarlatti cleverly integrates them through an elided cadence in bar 3 which functions as a musical dovetail joint. Instead of a relying on juxtaposition for *effect*, this binds the separate topics into a singular *melos* creating an *affect* of emotional dysphoria. The melancholic tension generated though the learned opening is unable to be contained and explodes in dramatic fashion. The leap schema and hand-crossing involve the whole of the performer's torso; the explosion in sound is paralleled by the physical extremity, but these physical gestures force the player to embody the emotional implications of the music. Through this, the emotional dimension becomes deeply intertwined with the physical, and encourages the performer to emotionally resonate with the stresses, tensions, and outbursts that occur within the musical narrative. Furthermore, there is something to be said for the immersion of these 'foreign' parallels being accompanied by bodily gestures foreign to most players. The strangeness is intensified.

The Vamp

It is within this context of topical tension that the vamp bursts out in bar 11, following the reversal to the learned style during bars 7-9. Giorgio Pestilli's animadversion that the arpeggiated figuration of the passage is 'insignificant' seems unsympathetic to its actual effect: much as the first appearance of the exotic toccata in bar 4 bursts from the tension created by the learned counterpoint, so does the second.[44] Indeed, the descending scale in bar 10 actually seems to dissipate some of the tension generated in the previous three bars, but the sonic wave of the toccata exudes freedom through its expansiveness. This vamp is the first period of extended major harmony in the sonata, looping between V^7 and Ic sandwiched in a

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Schmalfeldt, 'Escape-Artist', p.261

[44] Pestelli, Qtd. In Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.153

dominant pedal; this mechanical harmonic cycle has a strangely reassuring quality, as the gesture seems to partially, but never fully, resolve. Indeed, Willis contends that dominant pedals 'can to some extent accommodate a paradox: we want it to be resolved, but the lack of resolution is itself part of the music's effect and thus its pleasure'.[45] The circular waves of arpeggiation are truly 'mesmerising', as Schmalfeldt puts it; indeed, listeners can become absorbed by the constant movement, losing all sense of time.[46] This phenomenon is not limited to listeners; as a player I have often become 'lost' in this passage. Moreover, whilst repetition often serves to intensify, it achieves this by inducing anticipation in a listener as they await the achievement of a musical goal; however, because the vamp in this sonata dulls time perception, we become overwhelmed by the gestures constant failure to fully resolve, rather than anticipating its eventual resolution.

Repetition, Margulis comments 'can drive attention down toward levels of nuance, microstructure, and expressive timing'.[47] Indeed, the vamp in K.27 reveals micro-gestures within the cell, in particular the falling third (G'-F♯'- E') which echoes the linear motion of the learned material.[48] This falling third, heard initially in bar 1, has a melancholic quality which is maintained in the escape sequence (bb.17-21) through suspensions; repetition in the vamp allows this bastardisation of learned material to be clearly observed in the toccata. Margulis also notes that her research found that repetition can communicate human intentionality, it 'works to draw out the signature of the individual'.[49] The vamp of K.27 is an insight into an emotionally writhing virtual human subjectivity; the mania it embodies is representative of the tensions within the sonata, with the same motivic material recurring in passages of a very different emotional tenor. For Sheveloff, vamps are 'apparently non-thematic, obsessively repetitive passages', but this obsession isn't clear in bar 11 when the vamp begins; this *human* obsession develops through the repetition, clinging on to the comfort the mechanistic cycling provides, but struggling to achieve the final goal of resolution.[50] Sutcliffe comments that the vamp is 'the most upsetting and seemingly inorganic feature of Scarlatti's style'.[51] His reasons for this description hinge on a vamp's disruptive impact on a sonata's structure; it defies eighteenth century compositional norms. In so doing, however, I would argue that it is

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[45] Willis, 'Performance, narrativity, improvisation, & theatricality', p.192

[46] Schmalfeldt, 'Escape Artist', p.264

[47] Margulis, *On Repeat,* p.59

[48] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.154

[49] Margulis, *On Repeat,* p.59

[50] Sutlcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.23

[51] Ibid., p.197

inherently *organic*, rather than inorganic, as it implies a virtual subjectivity, a human agent in distress.

Whilst I suggest that this vamp can be *affecting* due to the emotional outburst it embodies, for some it may produce an effect of emotional distancing through semantic satiation, thus breaking listeners' immersion in the narrative of the music; however, this may grant a listener a greater sense of perspective, allowing them to be aware of context rather than being absorbed by the hypnotic spirals. The vamp, Sutcliffe writes, is 'integral yet separate – to emphasise only its functionality and compatibility on the large scale would be to swallow up what makes it so strange along the way'.[52] It is a consuming moment that stands by itself, but can also be seen as a deliberate reaction to the constraints and tensions of the learned material: a pulsating and harmonically static passage to counterbalance the knotted and harmonically fluid texture of the earlier passage. Both the beginning and the end of the vamp are spontaneous events; whilst the end of the vamp is arrived at via a smooth transition, the moment of transition is unknowable. The interior of the vamp is itself a spontaneous insight into a virtual subjectivity as it repeats the only gesture it seems able to. As a player, I often become lost in this vamp – if I don't deliberately count the bars, I quickly lose track; the large motions, despite their difficulty, feel free and are intoxicating. The physical gesture is certainly visually stunning and the pendulum-like motion of the hands visually demonstrates the circularity of the musical gestures: Sutcliffe comments that 'the hands swap roles twice, relieving the monotony technically and visually, but not syntactically', and that 'excessive repetition is embarrassing - for the performer and possibly for the listener too'.[53] The hand-crossing of the gesture means the performer is compelled to physically embody the emotional outbursts and topical fracturing.

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[52] Ibid., p.24

[53] Ibid., p.154, 157; Scott Ross is one of the very few players to have performed this as written, most performers ignore Scarlatti's instruction.

9 Breaking Through to Reality

This thesis has presented agential schemas and structural gambits which underpin a sense of agency within the sonatas. Topical importations have agential implications because we are aware of the human interactions in the original sources; the music evokes an agential awareness by activating memories of real events. Musical acrobatics, often acting simultaneously with topical connotations, directly imply extreme human motion. Scarlatti's use of framing gestures evokes a virtual world through which an agent navigates; his use of material, such as *chiaroscuro*, invites listeners to engage with the agent as a virtual subjectivity, as well as perceive the narrative as being the spontaneous actions of an agent. However, whilst there have been odd mentions of the performer throughout, the role of the player is perforce crucial both in shaping perceptions of the music for the listener and in how the player themself is made to act and feel.

One of the few critiques I have with Hatten's theory of agency is the distance with which performers are considered; of course, performers are invisible on recordings and can become a distant blur in large performance venues. However, it ought to be remembered that these sonatas were composed for an individual to experience in a relatively intimate chamber environment, not for a concert platform. The *Essercizi* would have been primarily purchased by middle-class enthusiasts, as most professional musicians were gainfully employed by the church or by aristocrat sponsors. Moreover, unlike orchestral works, where multiple instruments and timbres are integrated to form single gestures, the keyboard is limited to one player and, by-and-large, one timbre. This final chapter considers the performer and the historical positioning of the sonatas. I consider how performers who change the physicality can impart an adverse effect on the overall experience and explore further how physicality can seem to represent the emotional tensions of the intra-musical world bursting into reality.

Hand-Crossing

The acrobatic schema that I have proposed are sonically encoded, but their execution often requires acrobatics on the part of the performer; this symbiosis of simultaneous real and virtual acrobatics creates an incredibly immersive experience for performers and listeners. Indeed, Todd Decker comments that 'the most striking quality of the 'English' sonatas is their overt physicality'.[1] The performer's movements can be difficult and carry, especially for

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[1] Todd Decker, 'Scarlattino the Wonder of his Time', *Eighteenth Century Music* 2, 2 (2005), p.280

amateur musicians, a large amount of risk. Failing to execute a difficult physical gesture simultaneously causes the musical gesture to fail, causing a blip in the musical fiction by snapping listeners out of the mimetic engagement and back into the 'real world'. Sutcliffe accurately observes that:

> 'even current players censor the most extravagant works of this kind - by a great extent avoiding them in live or recorded performance. The taste for danger and gambling that is often read into such features was neither congenial to the old virtuoso tradition, nor does it fit the streamlined smoothness of today's concert world. Many performers might indeed wish to make use of stunt doubles on such occasions'.[2]

The tradition of physical bowdlerisation has its roots in the eighteenth century and Ambrose Pittman's edition of the sonatas. Here I would quibble somewhat with Kroll's conclusion that 'despite... dramatically stated intentions... Pittman's edition contained very few alterations of the originals, none of them significant', as whilst Pittman's changes may make little to no difference to the auditory result, they make a serious difference to the experience of the performer and to listeners able to witness a performance. [3]

Pittman's edition of K.29 (Ex.36), so-called *Lesson IV,* is illustrative in this regard: the Englishman is very careful in mapping out the responsibilities of the performer's hands so that they never cross or intertwine, aside from a few very brief moments where it would be impossible not to.[4] The result is that Scarlatti's clear identification of independent voices in each hand is muddied, and so the physical gestures are broken between the hands whilst the musical gestures are continuous. Because of the broadly responsorial monophonic texture this is only mildly disruptive to the visual continuity of gestures, and, nevertheless, 'the overwhelming majority of the sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti contain phrases coordinated between the hands'.[5] Pittman does make other changes, but, *mutatis mutandis,* the auditory effect is largely the same. Perhaps his most significant alteration comes in the opening bars where he eliminates the hand-crossing. This is a familiar sight in practice rooms and concert halls today: alongside a raft of amateur and professional pianists, Michelangeli, Pauletta, and Listsa all overrule Scarlatti's marked hand-crossing in the opening bars of K.29.[6] There are

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[2] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.284

[3] Kroll, 'Con furia', p.257

[4] Eg. Pittman: pg.16 bb.12-15; pg.18 bb.3-8

[5] Joel Sheveloff, 'Scarlatti's Duck-Billed Platypus: K.87' in *Domenico Scarlatti Adventures* ed. Massimiliano Sala, & W. Dean Sutcliffe (Bologna: UT Orpheus Edizioni, 2008), p.255

[6] Arturo B. Michelangeli, 'Scarlatti: sonata K. 29/L. 461, K. 11/L. 352 L. 449, - Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (1949)', YouTube video, 11:20, posted by 'Daniele Derelli', Aug 31, 2018, accessed July 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXIO8Yxox4A

only a few exceptions, notably Kenneth Weiss, who's slightly slower interpretation is delightfully clear and showcases Scarlatti's dramatic developments magnificently.[7]

Example 36: Pittman's edition of K.29

Gianandrea Pauletta, 'Domenico SCARLATTI - Sonata K 29, L. 461 - Gianandrea Pauletta (harpsichord / clavicembalo)', YouTube video, 5:46, posted by 'ALTELAUTE', Aug 17 2012, accessed July 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5qRu2dcEpA

Valentina Lisitsa, 'D.Scarlatti Sonata D Major K29 Valentina Lisitsa', YouTube video, 2.28, posted by 'Valentina Lisitsa QOR Records Official channel', Feb 24, 2017, accessed July 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MAQ5vCEjWE

[7] Kenneth Weiss, 'Scarlatti : Sonate pour clavecin K 29 (Presto), par Kenneth Weiss', YouTube video, 6:11, posted by 'France Musique concerts', Jul 2, 2020, accessed July 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Rs_CMvFx5A

More than a Technical Challenge

Whilst all performances of K.29 involve performative acrobatics just because of the speed and distances involved, what draws the eye in Weiss's interpretation, who follows Scarlatti's markings, is the displacement of the hands during this opening – at the peak they are over two octaves apart, but each is in the others' normal territory. This is a rather ridiculous position and, as Pittman proved, totally unnecessary to produce the notes; but despite being 'highly perverse and unnatural', mimetic engagement with this physical gesture causes onlookers to enact movements on the edge of human possibility.[8] Moreover, the performer's body in the opening of K.29 (bb.3-5) seems at odds with the seriousness which usually infuses the troped fanfare. The extremity of the physical topic Scarlatti uses here is alien to the eighteenth-century lexicon, though the technical act itself was not; this opens up interpretive possibilities along the line of parody. Furthermore, tales of Scarlatti's skill travelled around Europe even if it was not 'necessarily the most fascinating phenomenon all these musical tourists witnessed in Italy'.[9] Could the composer's hand-crossing instruction not be seen as postcard testament to his own skill, with players temporarily embodying the Italian as they play his work?

Decker also argues that awareness of the body changes the experience for an onlooker:

> whilst 'modern players might ruefully note that nothing is added to the *sound* of these passages by executing them in an unnatural position... cross-hand passagework is inherently visual... a striking sight. It calls attention to the player and fairly shouts 'this bit is hard to play''.[10]

Awareness of the body can also affect how we perceive gestures beyond their difficulty; in K.7, for instance, visual awareness of the body during the hand-crossing enhances the registral isolation with a sense of insecurity. The rather sizeable passage (seen in Ex.5, bb.8-31) is certainly an order of magnitude easier when played in a normal configuration; moreover, whilst the hand-crossing in the opening of K.29 intensifies the virtuosic and energetic effect, the difficulty created here seems misplaced and confused. Decker describes the playing experience, first noting that the motivic figuration lies within a single hand position, but that 'the additional challenge is executing the gesture in a descending stepwise sequence, putting previously stationary hands [the hand-crossing in K.5 bb.5-21] into cautious, consistent motion. The hands are also busier [than K.5], as the rhythmic texture heats up with mixed

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[8] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.284
[9] Yeardsley, 'Hand-Crossing', p.232
[10] Todd Decker, 'The *Essercizi* and the Editors' in *Domenico Scarlatti Adventures* ed. Massimiliano Sala, & W. Dean Sutcliffe (Bologna: UT Orpheus Edizioni, 2008), p.319

quaver and semiquaver motion in both hands'. He concludes with a question: 'What is the intent of this passage except sheer display of the player's mastery of the cross-hand position? … it either delights for its impudent charm or disgusts for a less charitably interpreted impudence'.[11]

Decker acknowledges that the sonatas 'are not technical studies, but rather pieces with keyboard challenges embedded in a musical text that otherwise functions as a whole', but the pedagogic argument he proposes is flawed by implied usefulness. [12] A student who becomes accomplished at this cross-hand playing will not find the technique useful in most music they play: it is like suggesting students improve their grammar by constructing sentences in the style of Star Wars's Yoda. Perhaps one argument in favour of the pedagogic theory is that there is no evidence of hand-crossing in Iberia prior to Scarlatti's arrival.[13] However, Decker's suggestion that K.7 takes its place in the *Essercizi* as a cog within a pedagogical machine undersells the effect of the cross-hand technique in this sonata which, in my opinion, goes beyond impudence as it reflects the change from adamantine to modulatory harmony.[14]

The left-hand octave in bar 8 provides a resonant conclusion to the weaving imitation of the opening: the use of both thumb and little finger anchors the hand into position, giving it rigidity whilst slightly stretching it. The performer's body during the opening 8 bars is in a comfortably stable position, which is sympathetic to the strong tonic harmony and resolution of the phrase; by contrast the cross-hand passage places the performer's body into a position of relative instability, the required contortion reduces the effectiveness of the arm in providing weight to the fingers, and, unlike the more raucous hand-crossing of K.24 or the opening of K.29, is a fragile positioning that is sustained. Moreover, crossing the arms draws the body closer to the keyboard as it reduces the distance the arm can extend in front of the body, this creates a feeling of greater intimacy between player and instrument.

Decker notes the conversational imitation and the rhythmic interplay of the simultaneous two- and three-beat bar division: 'the subtle rhythmic energy generated… suggests… ragtime piano music', the satisfaction of which is 'enhanced… by the sensation of making syncopated accents with the hands crossed'.[15] Crossing the hands actually serves to obfuscate the visual impact of this interplay as the right hand is obscured from view, creating an oracle-like

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[11] Ibid., p.320-321

[12] Ibid., p.317

[13] Yeardsley, 'Hand-Crossing', p.231

[14] Decker, 'Essercizi & Editors', p.329

[15] Ibid., p.320-321

mystique, but whilst the technique is undoubtedly fun to execute, in K.7 it exaggerates the registral contrast by inverting the left hand and creates a visual instability which enhances the musical instability. Yeardsley notes C.P.E. Bach's 'striking' statement that hand-crossing was a popular *trick* around 1730; whilst Scarlatti the trickster is a jovial image, the trick here makes the player assume a position that embodies the musical implications of the passage.[16]

There are also moments of intimate difficulty for the performer, where hand-crossing is invisible to any onlookers. The 'infamous' cross-hand parallel thirds in K.29 (bb.14-15, 44-46, 84-84) are a rebuke to the expansive absurdity of the opening as the hands are forced, quite literally, to be touching each other as the fingers of one hand interlocks with the other.[17] To play this as written requires significant technical proficiency; but this virtuosity is not evident to the unenlightened onlooker, and even experienced musicians would miss it unless paying particularly close attention – 'it is downright sadistic'.[18] It is largely superfluous, but for the player, this non-normative challenge means that prior experience playing thirds cannot be drawn upon. In turn this means that playing the sonata often feels slightly uncontrollable, as if the player, or at least this player, loses agency as the music directs itself. This feeling of performative observance, rather than performative involvement, on behalf of the player has been noted in other arenas: Michael Klein, for example, notes that after practising a difficult quadruple trill, it 'starts to take off' on its own.[19] Personally, I have found that when playing Bach's trio sonatas for organ it is as if I am floating; focusing on any individual limb can cause my coordination to fall apart. This is essentially 'flow experience', where 'the musical instrument becomes transparent and a natural extension of the body'.[20] If licence is given to interpret K.29 as the action of acrobatic street performers, then the bizarre body positions maintain this virtual fiction for the performer. However, it also acts as a reminder that the sonatas are not music for a stage, but a chamber room with the player forming the primary audience. The absurdity of this invisible hand-crossing is equal to that of the beginning of K.29, but this is a private joke shared between Scarlatti and performer – a joke that has lasted 250 years.

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[16] Yeardsley, 'Hand-Crossing', p.229; Schmalfeldt, 'Escape Artist', p.269

[17] This position is more common than the extreme and extended hand-crossing of the opening. Rameau's *Les Cyclopes* has a similar effect.

[18] Yeardsley, 'Hand-Crossing', p.230

[19] Michael L. Klein, 'Bodies in Motion: Musical Affect and the Pleasure of excess' in *Music, Analysis, and the Body* ed. Nicholas Reyland & Rebecca Thumpston (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), p.166

[20] Luc Nijs, 'Merging of Musician and Musical Instrument', in *The Routledge Companion to Embodied Music Interation* ed. Micheline Lesaffre, Pieter-Jan Maes, & Marc Leman (New York: Routledge, 2017), p.51

A leap for one and not the other

Leaps are naturally acrobatic; we embody the motion through pitch-space and mimetically enact the movement of the performer. However, the climax of K.4 (Ex.37) features a physical leap for the performer that is not replicated by an intra-musical agent. During bars 13-19 the left hand repeatedly leaps down to provide a tolling pedal tone which is sustained through the passage (the right-hand also leaps, but to a lesser degree). Real-life acrobatics are a secondary effect, but the leaps function as a pressure relief-valve for the player and narrative; the passage is a sustained oasis of major dominant amidst rolling dunes of counterpoint, with the leaps tied into the expressive subjectivity of the sonata, a physical manifestation of bursting emotion hidden from the sonic experience.

Sutcliffe argues that K.4 is 'impelled along at an even rate, never really strays from its opening material, [and] is not premised on surprise', but this physical outburst is anything but expected.[21] Decker sees the leaps mostly in terms of technique noting that 'in [K.4] one sort of visible virtuosity enters the lexicon on the *Essercizi,* introducing a physical topic to be developed at length in the pieces that follow and common across Scarlatti's keyboard music generally'.[22] There is an undeniable physical element of acrobatics with the left-hand little finger needing to move around 20cm in a quick motion, but they are a limited challenge for even a moderately experienced amateur keyboardist. Moreover, Decker's assertion that the repetition of this leap stems from Scarlatti's recognition of its difficulty and, therefore, builds in practice as 'learning to play it with confidence will take repetition', strikes me as a rather lacklustre summation of the passage; far more revelatory is his statement that 'the aural effect... strikes a refreshingly expansive note in this sonata where the hands mostly remain close together'.[23]

The sustained major tonality of the passage is supplemented by the rich sonority resulting from the resonance of the low A's string length and its doubling at three octaves which lends a firm purity. The registral displacement highlights the moment as significant; despite both registers having been broached previously, neither was sustained, nor did they appear simultaneously. This exposes the contradictory contours of motivic direction and phrase direction that have characterised the sonata from the opening up until bar 17: the phrases largely descend, whereas the motifs ascend. Whilst the dominant pedal is mechanically dampened quite effectively on both harpsichord and piano, I find that I perceive the note as

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[21] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.92
[22] Decker, 'Essercizi & Editors', p.315
[23] Ibid.

sustained for the one-and-a-half bar duration. The effect is similar to the reverberation of a church bell in-between strikes; the impression is that the outer parts have a glacial permanence with an icy clarity - a result of the substantial gap between the low fundamental and the fifteenth harmonic which the upper note emphasises. The inner parts, despite

Example 37: Physical leap in K.4, bars 11-21

inheriting the mantle of *moto perpetuo* semi-quavers pale in significance to this sustained dominant pedal; however, they fill the sonic chasm in between the tolling. The outer parts are, to my ear, gesturally independent but represent a singular subjectivity whose emotionality bursts out of the flailing minor-tonality counterpoint and constant failure of the sonata's two primary motifs to do anything but repeat. The major pedal represents a chink of hope in the sweeping shadow of minor, even though the repeated use of the *figura suspirans* in the inner parts is a source on ongoing tension; the physical action, on the part of the player, and harmonic action symbiotically create a fleeting sense of freedom. The final act, however, is comprised of a ♩♫ stutter upwards which progresses more out of blind hope than determination, the gesture becoming unwound and losing momentum as it progresses; only the resolutely tolling tonic pedal provides reassurance of a stable base.

Embodying Emotion

For the performer these leaps in K.4 represents a contradiction: a leap of such magnitude carries with it an inevitable risk, however, the pedal is also ripe for an agogic accent, which provides a momentary rest. Indeed, the *suspirans* sixths are an easier manoeuvre than the dense counterpoint of the preceding passages. The counterpoint requires the body to be fairly fixed in position, and the multiple simultaneous notes being played and/or held by the same hand requires a degree of tension; in comparison, the dominant pedal allows the player to be physically fluid. A listener, as I have argued, may not hear a 'leap' at all here; an observer will certainly see it though, and this will likely alter their experience. The physical change of the hands being close together and then further apart opens the core of the performer's body as the arms no longer shield the chest. At the musical climax this makes the performer appear more vulnerable, an emotional inference that will be transposed onto the virtual agent; simultaneously the action of leaping will visually accentuate the tolling pedal, the observer will become more conscious of the impact, imbuing the climax with further intensity. I would contend that Decker's assertion that 'clearly, Sonata IV is in part about playing (and learning to play) descending leaps for the left hand' minimises the actual experience of playing these leaps.[24]

Moreover, for the player, embodying the release of the musical tension has an emotional effect as the player's limbic system may begin to mirror the emotions implied in the music. Paula Niedenthal notes the following:

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[24] Decker, 'Essercizi & Editors', p.315

    i.   'When individuals adopt emotion-specific postures, they report experiencing the associated emotions'

    ii.   'When individuals adopt facial gestures or make emotional gestures, their preferences and attitudes are influenced'

    iii.   'When individuals' motor movements are inhibited, interference in the experience of emotion and processing of emotional information is inhibited.'[25]

Emotional resonance can be facilitated by in-the-moment flow-state embodiment, and through emotional induction as particular memories may be evoked in the player's mind. This is an extension of Hatten's theory and proposes that a conclusion of perceiving human agency and subjectivity in music opens up the possibility of emotionally resonating with a virtual agent through limbic mirroring.

The player *feels* an emotional release during the passage in K.4 because the musical narrative itself implies an emotional release. Whilst the physical acrobatics in sonatas like K.29 focus attention onto the body and away from the keyboard for player and spectator, the leap in K.4 becomes emotional because the player and harpsichord merge into a singular organism. Luc Nijs notes that:

> 'The merging of musician and musical instrument implies that a musician no longer experiences a boundary between herself and the instrument. The latter is no longer experienced as a separate entity but felt from within ("much like a singer seems to feel his vocal chords [sic]"). When integrated into the embodied experience of playing music to the degree that it becomes as transparent as our body in daily life activities, the musical instrument can be considered a "natural" extension of the musician... instrument-specific movements become integrated into the bodily coordination system, and thereby constituents of the dynamic structure of the body, the instrument becomes "as if" being an organic component of the body... and as such part of the somatic know-how of the musician... functional and formal features of the musical instrument no longer require to be explicitly represented and, consequently, the instrument does not interfere with the direct perception... of the musical environment... and allows the musician to respond to the musical environment without cognitive reflection and solely relying on acquired skills'.[26]

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[25] Paula Niedenthal, 'Embodying Emotion'. *Science* 314, 5827 (2007), p.1002

[26] Luc Nijs, 'The Merging of Musician and Musical Instrument', in *The Routledge Companion to Embodied Music Interaction*, (New York: Routledge, 2017), p.51

Patrik Juslin and Renee Timmers state that 'felt emotion provides no guarantee that an emotion will be successfully conveyed to listeners. ... In fact, strong emotional involvement may lead to muscle tension, with detrimental effects on performance... What counts is the *sound* that reaches the listener, not what the performer is feeling'.[27] Juslin and Timmers also quote Daniel Barenboim who claimed that 'Your task [as a performer] is to convey the emotion, not to experience it'; however, considering that most musicians are amateurs playing for their own enjoyment, that the performer may resonate emotionally with the music they are playing seems, to me at least, to be a vital part of the experience.[28]

Origins

Scarlatti's own sponsor, María Bárbara, is not known to have ever played publicly. Moreover, Bárbara and her husband, Ferdinand VI of Spain, were from 1733 to 1736/7 (only a few years before the publication of the *Essercizi*) largely confined to their apartments by Ferdinand's father, Philip V of Spain and his influential second wife Elisabeth Farnese: and 'during their years on the margins' would, along with famed castrato singer Farinelli and Scarlatti, make up a musical foursome in their apartments.[29] It is notable that 'Ferdinand and Bárbara thrived in the splendid, large, Buen Teriro palace theatre and at displays involving hundreds of performers and onlookers', as this further contextualises Morales's theory that the sonatas are inspired by the Spanish *entr'actes* performed in Madrid's theatres between 1720 and 1760: the sonatas allowed Bárbara to personally enact the shows which she enjoyed.[30]

Sara Gross Ceballos convincingly argues that the sonatas 'could arguably function as animated sculptures at the keyboard that may have served as representations of their patron-performer. An interrelated play of national styles, dances, and musical topics then endows these 'sculpted' movements with symbolic meaning. The sonatas thus seem to shape the performer's body in such evocative ways that they might be read as royal *musical* portraits of the queen... [which] embod[y] here persona and politics'.[31] Ceballos concludes, opining that:

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[27] Patrik Juslin and Renee Timmers, 'Expression and Communication of Emotion in Music Performance' in *Handbook of Music and Emotion* ed. Patrik Juslin, & John Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.478

[28] This is a sentiment charmingly captured by T. E. Carhart: 'the idea that one would want to play alone, for the sheer pleasure of getting to know the music - and its composers - from the inside is regarded as blasphemy'. *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, (London: Vintage, 2001) p.52

[29] Charles C. Noel, ''Bárbara succeeds Elizabeth . . .': the feminisation and domestication of politics in the Spanish monarchy, 1701–1759', in *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815 : the Role of the Consort, ed.* Clarissa Campbell Orr (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.175, 179

[30] Ibid., p.179; Morales, 'Scarlatti's 'Spanish Style'', p.300

[31] Sara Gross Ceballos, 'Scarlatti and María Bárbara: A Study of Musical Portraiture', in *Domenico Scarlatti Adventures* ed. Massimiliano Sala, & W. Dean Sutcliffe (Bologna: UT Orpheus Edizioni, 2008), p.199, 207. Ceballos, therefore, implies that to play the sonatas is also to evoke the likeness of María Bárbara. This arguably becomes an avatar of the work-persona, which Monahan defines as being 'the work itself, personified', which

'What makes the Scarlatti sonatas especially fascinating in this respect is that it would seem that, as the likely performer of many of the sonatas, María Bárbara could have served as the sonatas' subject and object, artist and patron, portraitist and sitter. She could thus embody the dances, musical topics and styles of the works, enact their synthesis and in a sense portray 'herself' at the keyboard'.[32]

The idea that the sonatas can be thought of as dance has deep roots, but more empirically Morales has shown that several sonatas are danceable and have Spanish dance structures at their heart.[33] The sonatas can topically import dance, but they can also make the player simultaneously dance as they play. This is a much remarked upon phenomenon: Decker sees the hand-crossing as an ongoing challenge within the *Essercizi* which 'emerge[s] as an elaborate, but orderly, dance with the instrument', whilst Sutcliffe also observes that the 'choreographic rationale... has the strength of moving (Scarlatti's) music away from a necessary reliance on literary models, or even visual analogies, towards the ontological possibilities of music as dance'.[34] To execute an acrobatic schema the performer is forced to embody them through physical movements which involve the whole of the upper body. Ceballos reflects on the likeness between the large-scale bodily movements required to play the sonatas and Spanish dance which also 'depends on a repertoire of full-body motion... Extended arpeggios, scales and wide leaps necessitate a novel use of lateral motion, with pivots from the elbow and lift in the shoulder to propel the hands across the keyboard. Hand-crossing commands a similar involvement of the body... Such shifts in body position transfer even to the torso and pelvis of the performer'.[35]

This is contrasted with French dance, which involves more reserved and less effervescent movements, but also with French keyboard etiquette. François Couperin instructs that 'Delicacy of touch depends also on holding the fingers as close to the keys as possible. ... a hand falling from a height gives a sharper blow than if it strikes from quite near, and ... the quill will produce a harder tone from the string'.[36] Moreover, Couperin specifically cautions against

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often arises through programmatic characters such as the 'Napoleon' often heard depicted in the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony. However, if we conceptualise the sonatas as containing human agency, then we may potentially construct a virtual version of Bárbara who emotionally expresses herself through the actions of these actants.

[32] Ceballos, 'Scarlatti & Bárbara', p.222

[33] Ife, 'Synopsium', p.199; See also Luisa Morales currently embargoed PhD: Domenico Scarlatti's Construction of a Spanish Style, https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/items/f70a8ef8-731f-5a1a-9958-b12398ca1e99

[34] Decker, '*Essercizi* & Editors', p.330; Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.285 - see here n.22 for further disambiguation of sources.

[35] Ceballos, 'Scarlatti & Bárbara', p.207-208

[36] François Couperin, *L'art de toucher Le Clavecin*, (1717). Edited by Anna Linde, translated into English by Mevanwy Roberts. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, nd.), p.12.

arpeggios, warning that 'there should be some slight restriction as to the quantity of these played on the harpsichord' as their origin is in violin sonatas and 'pieces written expressly for the Harpsichord will always be better suited to it than others'.[37] The arpeggio is a key building block of Scarlatti's musical language, and often features as a leap or scamper schema; these schemas regularly compel the performer to embody the acrobatics the musical gestures themselves embody. Furthermore, if one were to follow Couperin's advice to place a mirror on the music-desk to catch and eliminate 'grimaces', the results in sonatas such as K.29 may well be laughable, although merely finding a moment to look at the mirror may prove wholly impossible.[38]

Involving a performer's body in a Scarlattian manner, despite protestations from Pittman et al., has the key benefit of being fun to play. It is a truism that the sonatas of the *Essercizi* were composed for the family of João V of Portugal, primarily his daughter Bárbara, but also his brother the Infante António. Scarlatti admits as such in his foreword to the volume: 'These are Compositions born under your Majesty's Auspices'.[39] The composer also hints, however, that he would be interested in publishing further volumes, hoping that the pieces will be 'agreeable' to purchasers and that if they were he would 'all the more gladly... obey other Commands to please'. This suggests that Scarlatti curated from his archive works he thought would be well received. Mark Bonds comments that:

> 'Composers of the late eighteenth century... frequently wrote with specific performers and audiences in mind. But more often than not, they faced the challenge of writing for an undefined, abstract audience, diverse in its competencies. ... performers - which is to say, the buying public - consisted largely of non-professional musicians. Composers, in short, had to be conscious of both the aesthetic and technical limitations of consumers.'[40]

The physicality of these sonatas increases the heart rate and engages more muscles than other harpsichord music of the eighteenth century. This results in motivational salience due to chemical releases in the brain, primarily dopamine. The, sometimes, bizarre bodily positions are a challenge to curiosity, an answer not to the question 'should it be done?', but *'can* it be done?'. We can certainly conclude with some confidence that Scarlatti himself found pleasure in hand-crossing and dancing with the harpsichord. Burney's statement that Scarlatti became

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[37] Ibid., p.22

[38] Ibid., p.10

[39] Scarlatti's sycophantic dedication to João V was very typical for the century, see Emily Green, *Dedicating Music, 1785-1850*. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2019).

[40] Mark Bonds, 'Listening to listeners', in *Communication in Eighteenth-Century Music* ed. Danuta Mirka & Kofi Agawu, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.35

'too fat to cross his hands as he used to', requires some scepticism but it also hints that this was a notable development; that something was lost, both to Scarlatti and his admirers.[41] The primary market for the *Essercizi* was individuals, who in the privacy of their home may enjoy 'letting loose' and ditching musical, and potentially social, decorum. This being said, even allowing for the excesses of marketing, the final sentence of the *Essercizi's* dedication ('the mastery of singing playing and composing with which she [Bárbara], to the astonishment and admiration of the most excellent masters, delights princes and monarchs') does mean that 'one can imagine the queen performing a selection of [sonatas] to the assembled Spanish court and distinguished visitors'.[42]

Summing Up

In the eighteenth-century, the Iberian nations of Portugal and Spain were waning powers.[43] Portugal had lost control of the lucrative India trade routes to the Dutch East India Company, and Spain had grown fat on South American gold but failed to grow domestic production leading to stagnation and inflation. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) divided the country, with external powers vying for their own claimant, and resulted in the humiliation of the Spanish authorities being forced to cede control of the vital strategic rock of Gibraltar to the British, whilst the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718-1720) demonstrated the extent to which Spanish military power had declined. Timothy Walton notes that 'the kings of the new Bourbon dynasty were acutely aware of Spain's relative weakness compared to the power of Britain and France', and despite being far weaker after the end of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in comparison to the glorious decades-come-centuries following the dynastic unification of Castile and Aragon (1479), the nation remained an influential great power, particularly through its navy which was vital for France to counterbalance the British.[44]

In publishing the *Essercizi*, Scarlatti released a work that should be understood to be an Iberian cultural export. The title pages make no false pretences; the flowery dedication sycophantically genuflects to King João V of Portugal – father of his primary student and patron, María Barbara of Portugal, Queen consort of King Ferdinand VI of Spain. The technical skill required to perform the sonatas of the *Essercizi* reflects a high standard of musicianship amongst these monarchs, and its wide gestures contain within them a sense of grandeur.

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[41] Burney, *Present State of Music,* p.248; Sheveloff, 'Frustrations', p.400

[42] Boyd, *Master of Music*, p.165; see also Sutcliffe, *Sonatas*, p.32 nn.36

[43] Chrisopher Storrs, 'Eighteenth Century Spain', *State Papers Online,* 2017, accessed Oct 23, 2023, https://www.gale.com/intl/essays/christopher-storrs-eighteenth-century-spain

[44] Timothy Walton, *The Spanish Treasure Fleets* (Florida: Pineapple Press, Inc., 1994), p.163

Sutcliffe notes the great mental instability of the two Spanish monarchs Scarlatti was familiar with, Felipe V and Ferdinand VI, and suggests that the composer may well have been influenced by the atmosphere within which he worked, he asks: 'Might the compulsive, repetitive, unstable behaviour of the vamp sections not owe something to such royal example?'.[45] Perhaps, then, we could understand sonatas like K.27 as being a portrait of Spain & the Iberian Peninsula; the lamenting undertones mourning a loss of power, but still demonstrating a keen intellect, and a culturally vibrant country torn with tension.

I began this thesis by noting that Scarlatti requested purchasers of the *Essercizi* to 'show [themselves] more human'. We may never ultimately know what was meant by this, but there is an unmistakable *humanness* in his sonatas. Ralph Kirkpatrick comments that 'were Domenico Scarlatti's music entirely explainable in words, it would not be worth explaining'.[46] Much of the interpretive analysis in this thesis follows in the blow-by-blow tradition of Sutcliffe and others; the sonatas seem to resist stale academic discussion as merely identifying structural events does not capture the vibrancy of the listening experience. Humans understand our world through metaphor and naturally anthropomorphise, so perhaps to 'show ourselves human', we should recognise that the sonatas themselves are virtual humans operating in a world that we recognise and embody. For performer and audience, the involvement of the body is a visual reinforcement of the sonic phenomenon, an immersion of the senses. Perhaps to adhere to Scarlatti's instruction we should not be too taxonomical when it comes to appreciating the sonatas; instead, we should let the music become our reality, if only for a few minutes.

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[45] Sutcliffe, *Sonatas,* p.33

[46] Kirkpatrick, *Scarlatti*, p.208

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