

A photograph of a bald man with a focused expression, wearing a black shirt and a dark red tie, seated at a grand piano. His right hand is positioned over the keys. The background is a blurred interior with a large window showing a blue sky. The piano's black frame and a wooden pillar are also visible.

DOMENICO SCARLATTI
12 SONATAS
VIV McLEAN

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1. Keyboard Sonata K466 in F minor	11:36
2. Keyboard Sonata K322 in A major	3:00
3. Keyboard Sonata K32 in D minor	3:26
4. Keyboard Sonata K213 in D minor	13:22
5. Keyboard Sonata K8 in G minor	5:09
6. Keyboard Sonata K239 in F minor	3:22
7. Keyboard Sonata K208 in A major	6:15
8. Keyboard Sonata K64 in D minor	1:58
9. Keyboard Sonata K426 in G minor	12:26
10. Keyboard Sonata K9 in D minor	3:45
11. Keyboard Sonata K11 in C minor	3:40
12. Keyboard Sonata K487 in C major	3:47

TOTAL TIME: 71:49

Although Scarlatti wrote a large number of vocal works including operas, oratorios and cantatas, they have largely been overshadowed by the huge variety, originality and outstanding quality of his keyboard music.

The son of the composer Alessandro Scarlatti, he was born in Naples, but by September 1720 he had moved to Lisbon, where his duties included teaching Princess Maria Barbara and Don Antonio, the daughter and younger brother of King John V. He relocated to Madrid, when Maria Barbara married the Spanish Prince Ferdinando in 1729. It was for her that he wrote the keyboard works which he called 'sonatas', although they bear little resemblance to the form of instrumental sonatas by his contemporaries such as J.S. Bach and Handel. The vast majority, including all the sonatas on this CD, are single-movement works in so-called 'binary' form – that is, in two distinct halves, each half repeated.

Scarlatti's original manuscripts appear not to have survived, and only six volumes of his sonatas were published in his lifetime, two in London at the end of the 1730s, and four in Paris during the following decade. Consequently, it is virtually impossible to establish precise dates for many of the individual sonatas with any degree of certainty. Manuscript copies circulated in a fairly haphazard way at first, but two important collections, now in Parma and Venice respectively, were compiled between, mainly, 1752 and 1757, and these are regarded as the most important sources for most of the sonatas.

Some 550 or so sonatas by Scarlatti are known, though some of these may not have been originally conceived for solo keyboard. Many appear to have been designed to be played in pairs, or at least are grouped in pairs in the surviving copies.

Scarlatti's keyboard style in many of the sonatas owes much of its remarkable originality to the impact of the traditional music he encountered in Portugal and Spain. The often pungent harmonies, vigorous rhythms, percussiveness and brilliant virtuosity suggest the influence particularly of the Andalusian music which contained the roots of what later emerged as flamenco, though the traditional music he would have heard during his Naples childhood may well also have played a part. The American scholar Ralph Kirkpatrick suggested that Scarlatti's tempo markings were intended more as guides to each sonata's character, than indicating how fast or slow to play it.

The 'K' numbers, which have long superseded other means of identifying individual sonatas, derive from the catalogue Kirkpatrick compiled and published in 1953.

K466 in F minor (Andante moderato)

This has an intriguing emotional ambiguity, proud and wistful at the same time, which is partly due to the way Scarlatti plays off rhythmic groups of three notes in the right hand against groups of two in the left.

K322 in A major (Allegro)

This takes the form of a simple melody and bass line, and moves at a stately but gentle pace.

K32 in D minor

This sonata appeared in an unauthorised edition by the Irish composer and organist Thomas Roseingrave, published in London in 1739. Roseingrave met Scarlatti on a trip to Venice in 1709, and later told the music historian Charles Burney that Scarlatti's virtuosity as a harpsichord player made him think that "ten hundred devils had been at the instrument."

Headed 'Aria' in Roseingrave's publication, with no other marking, this is one of Scarlatti's relatively few slow sonatas, and is particularly short, making its point quietly and succinctly in an elegant minuet-like style.

K213 in D minor (Andante)

As well as virtuosic brilliance, Scarlatti could also express tenderness and poignancy. Opinion seems to be divided as to whether Italian or Spanish characteristics are uppermost here.

K8 in G minor (Allegro)

This is in the style of a gracious but wistful minuet. The end of each half is marked by low-pitched guitar-like strumming figures in the left hand.

K239 in F minor (Allegro)

In complete contrast, this is a virtuoso work-out, each half ending with torrents of fast notes, switching from one hand to the other and back.

K208 in A major (Adagio e cantabile)

A slow, stately sonata, with the left hand providing harmonic support for the flowing right-hand part.

K64 in D minor (Gavota. Allegro)

Though described as a gavotte, this is brisk and full of pungent sonorities, placing it in a very different context from that of an elegant society ball.

K426 in G minor (Andante)

Moderately paced and thoughtful, this is one of Scarlatti's longer sonatas. Both halves begin and end with short passages of simple two-part counterpoint (a single line of notes in each hand). From time to time, brief silences interrupt the music's flow, adding to the introspective mood.

K9 in D minor (Allegro)

K11 in C minor (Allegro)

These two sonatas are among the thirty that make up the collection *Essercizi per Gravicembalo* (Exercises for Harpsichord) published in London in 1738 or 1739 (and which is not the same as Thomas Roseingrave's publication – see Sonata K32, above). K9 is one of Scarlatti's best-known sonatas. Its stately poise and elegance has a somewhat wistful undercurrent. K11 has an even more introspective quality.

K487 in C major (Allegro)

This is a brisk three-in-a-bar piece, with some artful syncopations in the right hand. The end of the second half is marked by a flamboyant upward rush, also in the right hand.

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Described by Le Monde as "possessing the genius one finds in those who know how to forget themselves", since winning First Prize at the Maria Canals Piano Competition in Barcelona, British pianist **Viv McLean** has performed in all the major venues in the UK as well as throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the USA. Viv's concerto work includes appearances with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Sinfonia Viva, Orchestra of the Swan, Orchestra of St John's, Northern Chamber Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of such conductors as Daniel Harding, John Wilson, Wayne Marshall, John Lubbock, Philip Hesketh, Christopher Warren-Green, Owain Arwell Hughes, Carl Davis, Rebecca Miller, Chloe Van Soeterstede and Marvin Hamlisch.

Viv plays regularly with the Adderbury Ensemble and has also performed with other leading chamber groups including the Ysaye String Quartet, the Sacconi String Quartet, the London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble, Onyx

Brass, members of the Elias, Allegri, Carducci & Tippett String Quartets, the Bristol Ensemble, Ensemble 360, the Echor Ensemble and the Leopold String Trio. He has collaborated with musicians Natalie Clein, Alice Neary, Marianne Thorsen, Daniel Hope, Adrian Brendel, Lawrence Power, Mary Bevan, David Le Page, Guy Johnston, Fenella Humphreys, Mathilde Milwidsky, Jack Liebeck and many others. He has performed at numerous festivals including the Cheltenham International Festival, Three Choirs Festival, Buxton Festival, Music in the Round Festival, Glossop Festival and Harrogate International Festival in the UK, the International Beethoven Festival, the Mecklenburg Festival and the Kultur Kreis Festival in Germany, the Festival International de Musique Classique d'Aigues-Mortes, the Melle Festival and Festival de Saintes in France, the Vinterfestspill i Bergstaden in Norway and the Musik vid Kattegatt Festival in Sweden.

Viv studied from an early age with Ruth Nye and, after attending Chetham's School of Music, he went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music with Hamish Milne. Whilst studying at the Academy he was the winner of the piano competition at the Royal Over-Seas-League Music Competition, was selected as one of the winners of the National Federation of Music Societies' Young Artists Competition and made his Wigmore Hall debut through winning the RAM Wigmore Award.

Viv made his BBC Radio 3 recital debut through the BBC Radio 3 Young Artists Forum scheme and has also recorded for Classic FM, WDR Radio in Germany, Radio France, ABC Radio in Australia, NRK Radio in Norway and for the Sky Arts television channel. His commercial releases have included recordings for Sony, Chandos, Signum Classics, Naxos, Nimbus, Lyrita, RPO Records, ICSM Records, Stone Records and is now delighted to be releasing his first album on Willowhayne Records.