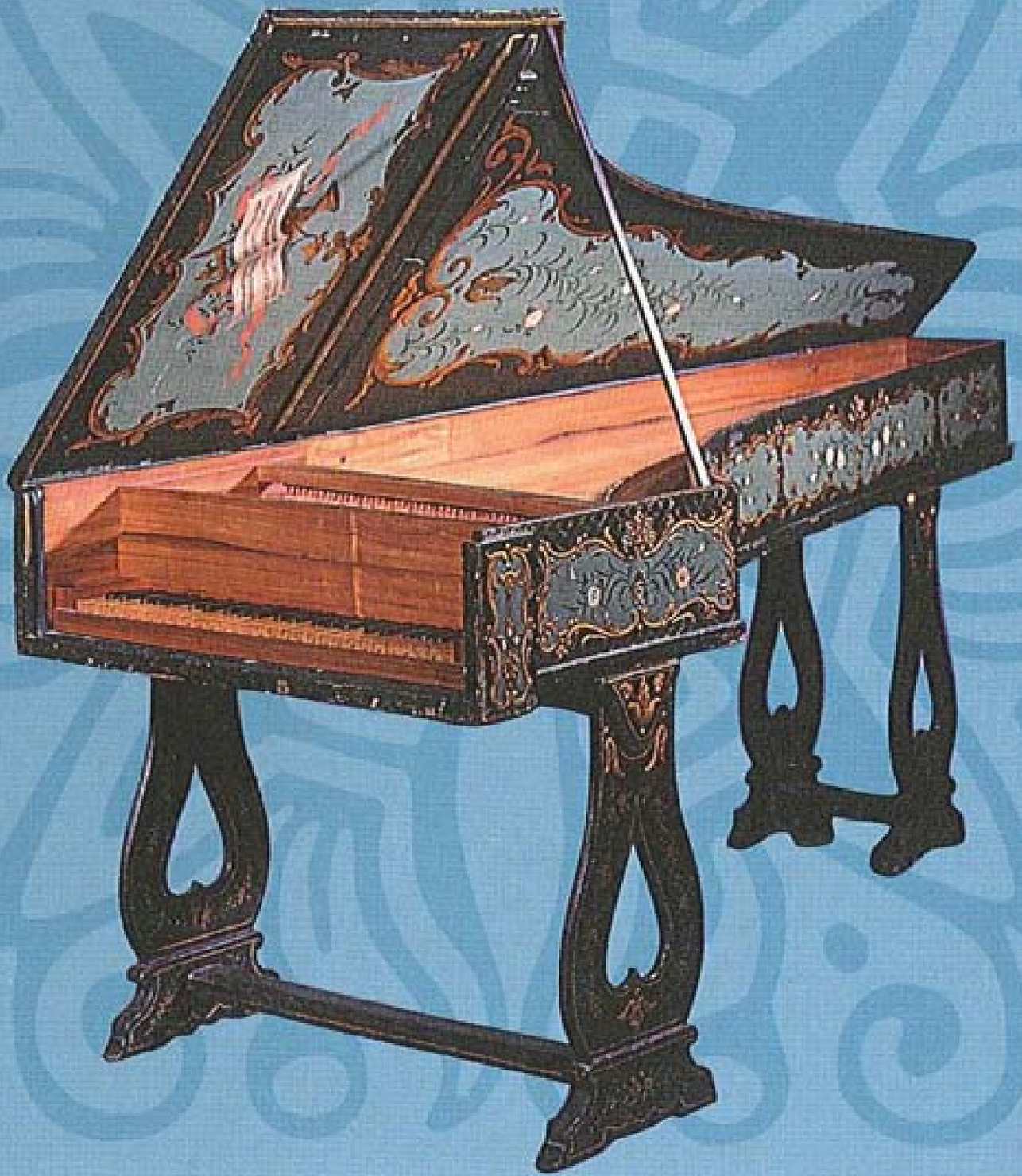
Treasures of Iberian Keyboard Music

on the Antunes Fortepiano (1767)

Susanne Skyrm, *fortepiano*



Iberian Keyboard Music

Susanne Skyrm
playing the Antunes fortepiano at
The Shrine to Music Museum
Vermillion, South Dakota

	João de Sousa Carvalho (1745-1798):	
1	Allegro in D	3:18
	Toccata in g	
2	I Allegro	5:10
3	II Andante con gran espressione	2:55
	Sebastian de Albero (1722-1756)	
4	Sonata in G	4:51
5	Sonata in g	5:16

	João Cordeiro da Silva (18th century)	
6	Allegro in C	4:24
	Carlos Seixas (1704-1742)	
7	Sonata in a	1:26
8	Sonata in D	3:06
9	Sonata in c	5:04
	Padre José Larrañaga (ca. 1730-1806)	
10	Sonata de quinto tono	4:45
	Alberto José Gomes da Silva (? - 1795)	
	Sonata in E Minor	
11	I Allegro	5:18
12	II Minuete: andante nell stille della chitarra Portughese	1:54
	Francisco Xavier Baptista (? - 1797)	
13	Sonata in g	2:42
	Padre Antonio Soler (1729-1783)	
14	Sonata in G, R. 45	4:12
15	Sonata in c, R. 100	8:46
16	Sonata in C, R. 51	3:27

Total time: 68:07

The Music

Eighteenth-century Iberian keyboard music is dominated by the Italian composer Domenico Scarlatti, who went to Portugal in 1719 to take a position at the royal court. During his ten years in Lisbon, he was music teacher to the Princess Maria Barbara and the younger brother of King João V. When Maria Barbara married Fernando, heir to the Spanish throne, Scarlatti followed in her service first to Seville and later to Madrid, where he died in 1757. Scarlatti wrote more than 500 keyboard sonatas which are distinctive in their use of Spanish folk elements, dance rhythms, and imitations of the guitar.

Lesser known are the many native Iberian composers active during this time. Most of them were influenced by Scarlatti, but they also developed uniquely personal styles, incorporating into their sonatas the harmonies and rhythms of Spanish and Portuguese folk music as well as the international compositional trends of the day. Some of these composers, such as Carlos Seixas and Padre Antonio Soler, are relatively well-known; but most, including Padre José Larrañaga and Sebastián Albero of Spain, and Francisco Xavier Baptista, João Cordeiro da Silva, and Alberto José Gomes

da Silva of Portugal, have remained obscure. The music of some of these composers has only recently been published in modern editions.

Along with the re-discovery of native Iberian keyboard repertoire, research has shown that the early piano was much more prevalent on the peninsula than was previously thought. News of the invention of the piano by Bartolomeo Cristofori would have been carried to Iberia by the many Italian musicians who were recruited to serve in the courts. There is documentary evidence that João V of Portugal purchased a piano from Cristofori, and the inventory of Maria Barbara's keyboards lists five fortepianos. The first known designation of a work for piano in Spain was Sebastian Albero's *Obras para clavicordio o piano forte*, written around 1746. Francisco Pérez Mirabal was building pianos as early as 1745 in Seville, and in 1760 Manuel Antunes was awarded exclusive rights to build pianos for ten years in Lisbon. Two composers working in Seville, Manuel Blasco de Nebra and Joaquín Montero, each published a set of six sonatas for harpsichord and piano in 1780 and 1790, respectively. Piano building in the last two decades of the century was represented in Spain by the work of Antonio Enriquez in Zaragoza (1780), Juan del Mármol in Seville (1783), and Francisco Flores in Madrid (1784-1787).

The choice of instruments for playing Iberian eighteenth-century keyboard music has been left rather vague by the composers themselves. Indications for a choice of several instruments, such as organ, harpsichord, or clavichord, are common, but often the style of a work will suggest a particular instrument. The fact that the fortepiano was rising in popularity in the rest of Europe by mid-century and the presence of the instrument in both Spain and Portugal leads to the speculation that these sonatas were played on the piano as well as on the harpsichord. Those works in the *galant* style seem particularly suited for performance on the piano. The compositions on this recording represent some of the best work of native Iberian keyboard composers and the trend away from the harpsichord towards the piano in Spain and Portugal throughout the eighteenth century.

João de Sousa Carvalho (1745-1798), whose numerous and successful operas earned him the title of "the Portuguese Mozart," was the foremost Portuguese composer of his generation. He studied in Naples on a scholarship from King José I and returned to Portugal in 1767 at the time pianos were being manufactured in Lisbon by the Antunes firm. Italian influence is evident in the *galant* Allegro in D Major and the Toccata in G Minor (the term "toccata" was used by the Portuguese to designate the binary form called

"esercizio" or "sonata" by the Spanish composers). The form of the G Minor Toccata actually resembles that of a sonatina without a development section. There is a clearly-defined second theme in the relative major key in the first half of the opening movement; it is restated in G minor in the second half. Many of Carvalho's keyboard works mark the transition from the harpsichord towards the piano. The Portuguese quality of *saudade*, or longing, so prevalent in the second movement of the G Minor Toccata, is well-served by the expressive capabilities of the early piano.

Sebastián de Albero (1722-1756) was appointed principal organist of the royal chapel shortly after Fernando VI ascended to the throne. There is no evidence that Albero studied with Scarlatti, but the two musicians must have been in contact during the eight years they were employed in the royal service. The Sonata in G Minor is number seventeen in a collection of thirty *Sonatas para Clavicordio*, one of two groups of extant works by Albero. It is a sicilienne with biting dissonances, bold modulations and pungent Spanish harmonies, but imbued with a melancholy sentimentality quite unlike anything found in Scarlatti's sonatas. It is possible that this melancholy tone appealed to King Fernando, who suffered from depression. Another work, *Obras para clavicordio o piano forte*, was dedicated by Albero to the king. Each of the six pieces in

this collection has three movements marked *recercata*, *fuga*, and *sonata*. The G Major Sonata, which is taken from this set, resembles the music of Scarlatti in its use of acciaccatura chords, hand crossings, and dance rhythms.

Little is known about João Cordeiro da Silva. He probably studied at Naples and later held the position of chapel master at the Portuguese court, where he also served as music master to the royal children. The spirited Allegro in C Major is in *galant* style, but its general cheeriness is interrupted by several changes of mood, as the music switches abruptly into the parallel minor key. The first minor section contains sighing appoggiaturas. A passionate, more extended minor passage with hand crossings appears near the end of the piece. These rapid changes of character can be effectively expressed on the piano.

Carlos Seixas (1704-1742) was a leading figure in eighteenth- century Portuguese music. He succeeded his father as organist of the Coimbra Chapel in his home town when he was only 14. Two years later he was appointed organist at the Royal Chapel, a position he held until his death. He worked side by side with Scarlatti at the court, but does not seem to have been influenced much by him. When asked by the Infante to give Seixas lessons, Scarlatti report-

edly said to the young organist, "You are the one who should give me lessons."

Seixas' music is distinguished by a diversity of style, partly influenced by Italian models, but also containing his own personal stamp. Keyboard sonatas were the most important part of Seixas' output. He wrote single- and multi-movement works, including virtuosic toccatas, sonatinas, concertos with accompanying "orchestra," and suites of dance movements. The three sonatas on this recording are all single movement works, each with a distinctive style. The A Minor sonata begins with imitation between the hands, a procedure often found in Scarlatti's sonatas, but rare with Seixas. Rising double thirds reminiscent of Iberian folk music interrupt the contrapuntal texture, which returns shortly thereafter. As a whole this sonata is much more polyphonic than most of Seixas' works. The brilliant D Major Sonata has the quality of a toccata with its rapid passage work, broken chords, and hand-crossing. The technical skill required to play this sonata suggests that Seixas possessed a formidable virtuosity at the keyboard. The C Minor Sonata is a sicilienne with delicate ornamentation. It is unusual in that the first half of the binary form is twice as long as the second half. The *una corda* device on the Antunes piano has been employed on the repeat of each section of this work.

Padre José Larrañaga (c. 1703-1806), a Franciscan monk, was chapelmaster and one of several composers active at the Basque monastery of Aranzazu during the second half of the eighteenth century. Larrañaga was equally at home writing in the style of Scarlatti or of early Haydn. The C Major Sonata, an example of his *galant* style, is of binary design, but at least two of Larrañaga's other works are in sonata-allegro form. Early Classic elements in the C Major Sonata include the rising broken-chord motive in the opening phrase, scale passages, and Alberti-type accompaniment patterns, features which make this sonata particularly suited for performance on the piano.

There is little information available about Alberto José Gomes da Silva (?-1795). He wrote a set of rules for keyboard accompaniment at Lisbon in 1758, and published six sonatas for harpsichord 20 years later. The E Minor Sonata is in two movements, both of binary construction. Sighing appoggiatura motives accompanied by a "walking" bass in broken octaves create an air of mannered pathos in the first movement. The music wanders through several different keys before arriving at the secondary key area of B minor only three bars from the end of the first half. The second half modulates to the relative G major and returns to the opening material in E minor at the end of the movement. The second

movement, a Minuet to be played "in the style of the Portuguese guitar," has a theatrical quality, conjuring up images of a scene from the *commedia dell'arte* with a Portuguese accent. The double thirds in alternating hands which close both sections resemble the plucking of a guitar.

Francisco Xavier Baptista (?-1797) was harpsichordist and first organist at the Cathedral of Santa Maria in Lisbon. He published *Dodeci Sonate, Variazioni, Minuetti per Cembalo* around 1760. Along with Gomes da Silva's six sonatas, these were the only harpsichord pieces to be published in Portugal during the eighteenth century. Driving triplet figures in the G Minor Sonata create a relentless, passionate energy, which is abruptly interrupted twice by diminished seventh chords towards the end of the first half. This sonata also features Scarlattian hand-crossings.

Padre Antonio Soler (1729-1783) was Spain's most important native composer of the eighteenth century. A Hieronymite monk, he spent the greatest part of his career at the monastery of San Lorenzo el Real at El Escorial where he probably studied with Scarlatti. When the latter died, Soler took over his duties as music master to the royal family. The keyboard sonatas were likely written for Soler's talented pupil, Prince Gabriel of Bourbon. It is pos-

sible that Soler came into contact with the piano at El Escorial, as the royal family may have brought their Florentine instruments with them when they were in residence there.

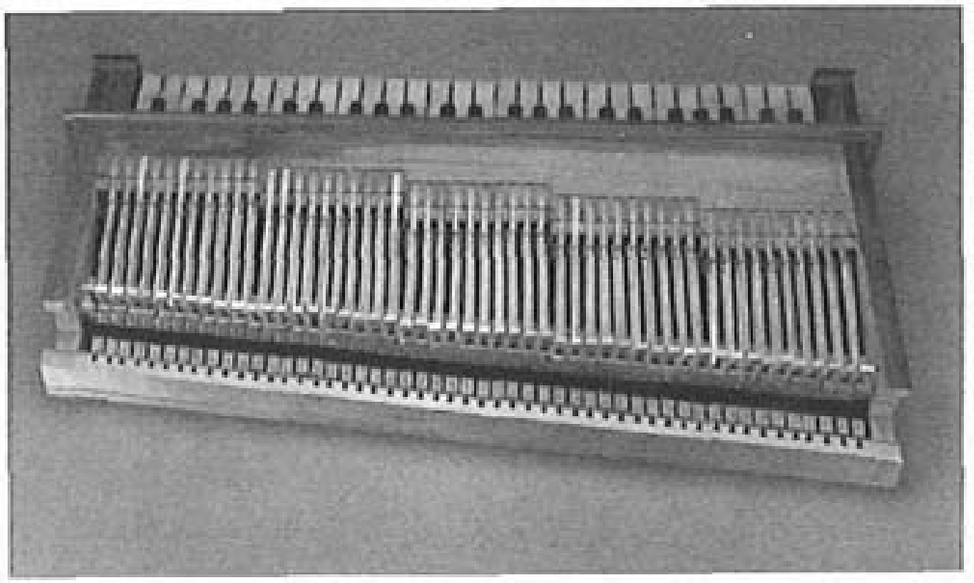
Soler wrote approximately 150 sonatas, most in a single-movement bipartite form, although in his later works he seemed to prefer paired and multi-movement sonatas. His work shows the influence of Scarlatti, but is also highly original. Soler at times tended towards a more *galant* style than Scarlatti: traces of this can be seen in the Sonata in G Major, R. 45. Soler wrote a theoretical treatise, L*lave de la modulación*, which gave rules for rapid modulation from any key to any other, and many of his keyboard sonatas contain modulations that were considered quite daring in his day. The opening of the second half of the Sonata in C Minor, R. 100, proceeds quickly from Eb major to a clear cadence in F minor—only abruptly to start over in Ab major. The majority of Soler's sonatas reflect his Spanish heritage in their use of dance rhythms, guitar effects, and harmonic-melodic characteristics of native popular music. The Sonata in G Major and the Sonata in C Major, R. 51, are both spirited dance movements; the Sonata in C Minor is a proud, tragic Spanish procession piece.

The Instrument

The piano heard in this recording (no. 5055, The Shrine to Music Museum) is signed on the top key lever "Antunes 1767." This was presumably Manuel Antunes of Lisbon, who in 1760 had obtained the exclusive right to make "harpsichords with hammers" in Portugal for a period of ten years. In design and construction, the 1767 piano strongly resembles harpsichords made by members of the Antunes family, while the action is nearly identical to that in the earliest extant pianos, made by Bartolomeo Cristofori in Florence in the 1720s.

The Antunes piano is a direct result of the earliest period of the Cristofori piano-making tradition's diffusion from Italy to other countries — in one direction to Portugal, then to Spain; later, in the late 1720s or 1730s, in another direction to Germany, then to France; still later, in the 1740s, to England. Indeed, Florentine pianos might well have been present in Lisbon as early as 1719, when Domenico Scarlatti became royal Portuguese music director.

Being among the dozen earliest extant grand pianos, the Antunes



instrument, which is in an almost miraculous state of preservation, is one of the most precious documents of the first stages of historical piano making. The robustly constructed instrument, which in every detail displays its maker's uncommonly fine craftsmanship, is scaled for brass strings throughout its compass of C to d3 (51 notes). As in Cristofori's pianos, the hammers are covered with a soft, thick leather that elicits a comparatively soft, mellow timbre quite unlike that of quill-plucked harpsichord strings. There are no pedals, knee levers, or stops, but the una corda effect is available by shoving the entire keyboard and action to the left by hand. Superbly veneered with Brazilian tulipwood on the interior and painted dark green on the exterior (with some additional floral and foliate decoration of later date), the piano rests on typical Iberian trestles with inverted-heart cutouts.

The Performer

Susanne Skyrm holds degrees in piano performance from Albertson College of Idaho, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Colorado. She studied piano in Milan with Ilonka Deckers-Kuszler for a number of years. Other teachers include Larry Graham, Robert Spillman, Enrica Cavallo-Gulli, Ray Dudley, and Fern Nolte Davidson. She has studied fortepiano with Malcolm Bilson and participated in master classes with Gyorgy Sebok and Menahem Pressler.

The music of Spain, Portugal, and Latin America from the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries has occupied a central part in Ms. Skyrm's repertoire, but it was the music of eighteenth-century Spain that led to her interest in playing the early piano. She gave the modern day debut performance of the Antunes fortepiano, when it was added to the collections at the University of South Dakota's Shrine to Music Museum in 1992.

Ms. Skyrm has appeared in recital throughout the United States and in Europe playing the modern piano and the fortepiano. She maintains a active concert schedule as a soloist and collaborative artist. She plays fortepiano with The Dakota Baroque & Classic Company, a touring group which performs on authentic, commissioned copies of period instruments from The Shrine to Music Museum's extensive collections. She is currently on the faculty of the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

Credits

This recording was made possible by a grant from the Mary Chilton Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution through the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Additional funding was obtained from the University of South Dakota Research Fund and The Shrine to Music Museum.

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Thanks to the Shrine to Music Museum, Vermillion, South Dakota, for use of the fortepiano and the cover picture.

The Shrine to Music Museum

The Shrine to Music Museum & Center for Study of the History of Musical Instruments is one of the great institutions of its kind. Its ever-growing collections of American, European, and non-Western musical instruments are among the most comprehensive anywhere. The keyboard instrument collection includes dozens of harpsichords, clavichords, fortepianos, and organs, from the sixteenth century onwards. In conjunction with the University of South Dakota, the Center for Study of the History of Musical Instruments offers a unique accredited graduate program in the history of musical instruments.

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Iberian Keyboard Music on the Antunes Fortepiano

Susanne Skyrm, fortepiano

***playing the instrument constructed by* Manuel Antunes, Lisbon, 1767**

João de Sousa Carvalho (1745-1798): *Allegro in* D *and Toccata in g*

Sebastian de Albero (1722-1756): *Sonata in* G *and Sonata in g*

João Cordeiro da Silva (18th century): *Allegro in* C

Carlos Seixas (1704-1742): *Sonata in a, Sonata in* D, *and Sonata in c*

Padre José Larrañaga (ca. 1730-1806): *Sonata de quinto tono*

Alberto José Gomes da Silva (? - 1795): *Sonata in* E Minor

Francisco Xavier Baptista (? - 1797): *Sonata in g*

Padre Antonio Soler (1729-1784): *Sonata in* G, R. 45, *Sonata in c*, R. 100, and *Sonata in* C, R. 51

Total time: 68:07

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