

CON FURIA: CHARLES AVISON AND THE SCARLATTI SECT IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Ex. 1: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 29/R13, continued.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the same piece, arranged vertically. Each system is enclosed in a large brace on the left side.

- System 1: Scarlatti Bar 10 (8-9 omitted)**
 - Instrument: Hpsd. (Harpsichord)
 - Staff 1 (Treble clef): Labeled 'LH' (Left Hand) above the staff. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
 - Staff 2 (Bass clef): Labeled 'RH' (Right Hand) below the staff. It contains a bass line with quarter and eighth notes.
- System 2: Avison 1744**
 - Instrument: VI I (Violin I)
 - Staff 1 (Treble clef): Violin I part with a melodic line.
 - Instrument: VI II (Violin II)
 - Staff 2 (Treble clef): Violin II part with a melodic line.
 - Instrument: Vla (Viola)
 - Staff 3 (Bass clef): Viola part with a melodic line.
 - Instrument: Vc (Violoncello)
 - Staff 4 (Bass clef): Cello part with a melodic line.
 - Below the Vc staff, the number '6' is written under the first, second, and third measures.
- System 3: Workbook II**
 - Instrument: VI I (Violin I)
 - Staff 1 (Treble clef): Violin I part with a melodic line.
 - Instrument: VI II (Violin II)
 - Staff 2 (Treble clef): Violin II part with a melodic line.
 - Instrument: Vla (Viola)
 - Staff 3 (Bass clef): Viola part with a melodic line.
 - Instrument: Vc (Violoncello)
 - Staff 4 (Bass clef): Cello part with a melodic line.

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This movement, moreover, also provides an opportunity to examine Avison's skills as an orchestrator, since it appears in two versions: the manuscript setting of the 1743 concerto that can be found in Avison's Workbook II, and Concerto VI of the complete set of 1744¹⁸. Returning to Ex. 1, we see in bars 8–9 (bars 10–11 in the Scarlatti sonata) that in the later setting Avison has made some subtle changes in the voicing of violins I; and 2, *concertino* and *ripieno*, has expanded the role of the viola, and has placed the bass-line an octave higher. Furthermore, the broken triads in violin 2, *concertino* and *ripieno*, and in the viola of the 1744 version, come closer to the melodic contours of the original harpsichord sonata.

Other differences in the scoring between the two settings are noticeable in bars 23–24 from this movement, which correspond to bars 27–28 in Scarlatti's sonata (see Ex. 2):

Ex. 2: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 29/R13, bars 27–28; Charles Avison, Concerto VI/ii, bars 23–24.

The image displays a musical score for comparison. The top system is titled 'Scarlatti' and shows bars 27 and 28 of Sonata K 29/R13 for Harpsichord (Hpsd.). The bottom system is titled 'Avison 1744' and shows bars 23 and 24 of Concerto VI/ii for strings. The string parts include Violin I (VI I), Violin II (VI II), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc). The 1744 setting includes fingerings (6, 7, #) and accents (y) for the strings. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

¹⁸. See *supra*, footnote 7. There is no tempo indication in the manuscript.

Here, Avison has thinned out the texture of the *tutti* orchestration in the manuscript version, creating a more transparent scoring with only *concertino* violin and *concertino* cello. In addition, Avison's replacement of Scarlatti's short semiquaver punctuations in the bass-line with crotchets in both versions raises an interesting performance-practice question: does Avison's notation indicate that long note values were typically played shorter in his orchestra, or did Avison use crotchets rather than semiquavers because they were more idiomatic to a sustained orchestral sonority? The answer to these questions remains elusive.

As the previous examples reveal, Avison removed musical material from the sonatas, perhaps to avoid the «unnecessary repetition» that he had criticized in the preface. He omitted even more of the originals in many of the other concerti. TABLE 2, which compares the number of bars in Scarlatti's sonatas with those in Avison's concerti, tells us just how far Avison pursued this practice:

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF BAR NUMBERS BETWEEN AVISON'S CONCERTOS AND THE SOURCE SCARLATTI SONATAS
(Alterations in metre, note values and tempo are indicated where necessary.)

CONCERTO	MOVEMENT	AVISON	SCARLATTI
I	i	14	15
	ii	66	66
	iii	38 (<i>Amoroso</i> 3/4)	92 (<i>Allegro</i> 3/8)
	iv	137	148
II	i	22	22
	ii	108	113
	iii	32 (<i>Andante</i> 4/4)	39 (<i>Allegro</i> <i>c</i>)
	iv	63	78
III	i	26	17
	ii	45	54
	iii	52	70
	iv	31	31
IV	i	32 (<i>Andante</i> 4/4)	49 (<i>Presto</i> <i>c</i>)
	ii	60	94
	iii	Avison	-
	iv	88 (quavers)	94 (semiquavers)
V	i	Avison	-
	ii	27	28
	iii	45	107
	iv	73	90

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CONCERTO	MOVEMENT	AVISON	SCARLATTI
VI	i	Avison	-
	ii	83	87
	iii	39 (3/4)	94 (3/8)
	iv	102	150
VII	i	18	26
	ii	89	93
	iii	28	32
	iv	113	128
VIII	i	12	15
	ii	96	101
	iii	49 (3/4)	54 (3/8)
	iv	69	112
IX	i	-	-
	ii	108	123
	iii	-	-
	iv	137	155
X	i	-	-
	ii	71	75
	iii	-	-
	iv	52 (<i>Giga allegro</i>)	60 (<i>Presto</i>)
XI	i	-	-
	ii	112	129
	iii	73 (<i>Andante moderato</i>)	87 (<i>Allegro</i>)
	iv	75	75
XII	i	-	-
	ii	55	70
	iii	Unknown (bars 1-12)	-
	iva	107	101

To cite just a few of the most notable instances, in Concerto iv/i the 94 bars of the Scarlatti sonata become 60 in the concerto; Concerto v/ii contains 45 bars, with 107 in the Scarlatti original; and Concerto viii/iv has 69 bars, Scarlatti 112.

Ex. 3, from the fourth movement of the sixth concerto, exemplifies several of the categories of alterations described above, namely a change of tempo from *Allegro* to *Vivacemete*, adjustments to the orchestration, and most significantly, the removal and re-writing of musical material:

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Ex. 3: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 21/R32, bars 83–92; Charles Avison, Concerto VI/iv, bars 67–76.

The image displays a musical score for three different pieces. The first system is for Domenico Scarlatti's Sonata K 21/R32, starting at bar 83, marked 'ALLEGRO'. It features a Harpsichord (Hpsd.) part with alternating left-hand (LH) and right-hand (RH) melodic lines. The second system is for Charles Avison's Concerto VI/iv, starting at bar 67, marked 'VIVACEMENTE'. It includes parts for Violin I (VI I), Violin II (VI II), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc). The Violin I part features a trill (tr) in bar 70. The third system is for 'Workbook II' marked '[NO TEMPO]', which appears to be a simplified or adapted version of the previous pieces, also including parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The score uses standard musical notation including treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time signature, and various rhythmic values.

Moreover, in bar 70 of the concerto (which corresponds to bar 86 in the Scarlatti) Avison has replaced Scarlatti's continuation of the melodic and rhythmic patterns in the preceding bars with a curtailed 3-note figure; and in Avison's bars 72, 74 and 76 Scarlatti's continuous semiquavers accompanied by his trademark repeated chords are arranged as two sharply accented quavers. This is, to be sure, a dramatic rhetorical gesture, but quite distinct from the sense of energy and drive that Scarlatti created with his passagework.

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Ex. 3: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 21/R32, continued.

Scarlatti
88

Hpsd.

Avison 1744
72

VI I
VI II
Vla
Vc

Workbook II

VI I
VI II
Vla
Vc

In Exs. 4a and 4b (pp. 269–271), showing three excerpts from the second movement of Concerto III, we find another instance of modified tempo marking and key.

Avison, here, has altered the tempo from *Allegro* to *Allegro spiritoso*, choosing a faster or more energetic designation that recalls his use of *con furia* in Concerto VI; he has also transposed the sonata from C minor to D minor, perhaps because his string players, many of whom were amateurs, might have found it easier to play¹⁹.

¹⁹ Avison was forced to accommodate the limited abilities of the «Gentlemen Amateurs» who played in his orchestra in Newcastle, especially because many were also his patrons.

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Ex. 4a: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 37/R25, bars 5-7, 15-23, 25-28.

5 ALLEGRO [A-----] [B-----]

15 [C-----] [D-----]

17 [E-----] [F-----] [G-----]

20 [Omitted in Avison] [H-----] [I-----]

23 [J-----] [Omitted in Avison] [K-----]

26 [L-----]

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Ex. 4b: ; Charles Avison, Concerto III/III, bars 5-7, 13-22.

ALLEGRO SPIRITOSO

5 [A-----] [B-----]

VI I

VI II

Vla

Vc

13 [C-----] [D-----]

VI I

VI II

Vla

Vc

15 [E-----] [F-----] [G-----] [H-----]

VI I

VI II

Vla

Vc

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Ex. 4b: Charles Avison, Concerto III/III, continued.

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system covers measures 18 and 19. The second system covers measures 20, 21, and 22. The staves are labeled VI I, VI II, Vla, and Vc. Brackets [I] and [J] are placed above the first two measures of the first system. Brackets [K] and [L] are placed above the first two measures of the second system. The Vc staff has fingerings 6 6 6 5, 4, and # written below it for measures 20, 21, and 22 respectively.

The other changes to Scarlatti's original text in these examples, however, are far more substantial. In a certain sense they leave the world of arrangement and enter that of re-composition. The most notable is Avison's practice of what I call 'telescoping', whereby he takes certain passages or melodic figures in the original and moves them, sometimes in a re-written form, to different positions in the bar. The bracketed and lettered figures in Exs. 4a and 4b indicate where and how this was done. For instance, Avison shifts Scarlatti's melodic figures on the second halves of bars 5 and 6 to the beginning of the corresponding bars in the concerto (brackets A and B), using a modified version of Scarlatti's bass-line to connect each bar. Brackets C-K indicate similar examples of 'telescoping' in this concerto. Avison also takes the three bars that conclude the first half of Scarlatti's sonata (bars 26-28), and combines them into two (bars 26-27), as indicated by bracket L. Similar cuts and re-writing can be found in many of Avison's concertos, some amounting to 25% or more of the total structure.

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FINDING HIS ADAGIOS

Avison was faced with another problem that was more practical than stylistic: he would need 24 slow movements for his 12 concertos, the Scarlatti sonatas he had at his disposal providing only 7. Avison acknowledged this challenge in the revised issue of the 1743 concerto, published later that year, on 23 May:

It is but too obvious that this Undertaking would have been liable to Exceptions from Want of slow Movements in the Original, which is now sufficiently remov'd, Mr AVISON having been favour'd (since the printing of this Specimen) with as many Pieces of the same Author's as will be an Addition, in general, to two to each *Concerto*; and tho' attended with an extraordinary Expence, yet shall not impede the Prosecution of this Design, there being all imaginable Hopes of succeeding in a Work which has already had the Approbation of the ablest Judges²⁰.

Avison would fulfill this requirement using three different strategies: firstly, by including the slow movements of seven sonatas to which he had access, albeit at «extraordinary Expence»; secondly, by slowing the tempos of seven fast movements, also sometimes altering the metre and including some judicious re-writing; and most radically, by composing ten slow movements of his own. TABLE 3 lists the movements in these three categories.

TABLE 3: SOURCES OF AVISON'S SLOW MOVEMENTS

SCARLATTI ORIGINALS	CHANGE OF TEMPO	NEWLY COMPOSED
I/i	I/iii	IV/iii
II/i	II/iii	V/i
III/i	IV/i	VI/i
V/iii	VI/iii	X/i and iii
VII/iii	VII/iii	IX/iii
VIII/i	VIII/i	X/i and iii
XI/iii	IX/iii	XII/i, iii and iv (bars 1-12)

Exs. 5a and 5b show how Avison transformed a fast movement into a slow one, here by changing the tempo from *Allegro* to *Amoroso*, and the metre from 3/8 to 3/4:

Ex. 5a: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 91/IV, bars 1-4.

ALLEGRO

²⁰. This statement appeared as Avison's 'P.S.' in the preface to this edition. See BOYD, Malcolm. *Op. cit.* (see note 1), pp. 225-226.

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Ex. 5b: Charles Avison, Concerto 1/iii, bars 1-4.

The third strategy, composing new slow movements, posed its own set of challenges. Avison was certainly capable of writing a slow movement; he had done so frequently for his own works. In this instance, however, he had to ensure that his new compositions would fit well into the overall Scarlatti style, and not create a jarring effect with the arrangements of the Scarlatti sonatas that preceded or followed them. Avison adopted two methods to achieve this goal. The first was to write a fully developed movement that echoed Scarlatti's harmonic and/or melodic vocabulary. Ex. 5c belongs to this category. In bar 10 of the first movement of the Concerto x in D major, Avison skillfully evokes what he had earlier described as the «*fine Fancy of the Italian*» with a slightly syncopated figure in the first violin, a Scarlattian gesture that would sound quite well on the harpsichord.

Ex. 5c: Charles Avison, Concerto x/i, bars 9-10.

The second method was to compose a short, cadential movement more typical of Corelli, Geminiani (and, of course, Avison himself) than of Scarlatti. This would function

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as a transition between the Scarlatti arrangements of the concerto. A good example of this method can be found in the third movement of the same concerto (see Ex. 5d):

Ex. 5d: Charles Avison, Concerto x/iii.

ADAGIO

VI I

VI II

Vla

Vc/
Basso

3

6

6

7

4#

CONCLUSION

Avison's Scarlatti concertos were highly popular during his lifetime. Today they are probably better known than his original compositions. Moreover, despite such extensive alterations to sonatas that were known and beloved by so many English musicians and audiences, Avison's concerto arrangements were fully accepted by most members of the Scarlatti sect. Evidence for this can be found in the large list of 151 subscribers, including music societies in Carlisle, Glasgow, Norwood, Oxford, York and «The Philharmonic». The 'Scarlatti craze' would continue in England up to the final years of the eighteenth century, or at least until Germans such as Johann Christian Bach and Carl Friedrich Abel began to supplant the English passion for anything Italian²¹. John Worgan, John Johnson and Pittman

²¹. See ROE, Stephen. 'The Keyboard Sonatas of Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782)', in the present volume.

kept the sect alive, and even Muzio Clementi (1752–1832) discovered Scarlatti, not in Italy, the native country of both men, but rather after he moved to London at the age of 14²².

The nineteenth century witnessed a waning, but not a total disappearance, of interest in Scarlatti. The virtuoso pianist Ignaz Moscheles (1794–1870) included Scarlatti's «Lessons» in many of the «Historical Soirées» that he presented in London between 1837–1846, even playing some on a Schudi harpsichord²³. Johannes Brahms, whose historicism and interest in early music is well known, chose the opening bars of Scarlatti's Sonata in D major, K 223 to begin his song *Unüberwindlich*, Op. 72 No. 5²⁴ (see Ex. 6):

Ex. 6: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 223, bars 1–4; Johannes Brahms, *Unüberwindlich*, Op. 72 No. 5, bars 1–4.



It is interesting to observe in this example that Brahms shifts the metrical position of the original Scarlatti sonata, much as Avison had done in many of his concerti.

²² Burney writes that Worgan «became a great collector of [Scarlatti's] pieces, some of which he had been honoured with from Madrid by the author himself». BURNEY, Charles. *A General History of Music* [...], *op. cit.* (see note 5), vol. II, p. 1009. John Johnson reprinted Roseingrave's edition in 1754 and 1756. For a discussion of Clementi's admiration for Scarlatti, see PLANTINGA, Leon. *Clementi: His Life and Music*, London–New York, Oxford University Press, 1977 (Oxford Books), p. 49 and pp. 140–142. Clementi's knowledge of Scarlatti is also discussed in: STEWART-MACDONALD, Rohan H. 'The Keyboard Sonatas of Baldassare Galuppi: Textures, Topics, and Structural Shapes', in the present volume.

²³ See KROLL, Mark. *Ignaz Moscheles and the Changing World of Musical Europe*, Suffolk (UK), Boydell & Brewer, 2014, ch. 7, *passim*. William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875) also included sonatas by Scarlatti in the series of 'Classical Chamber Concerts' he ran between 1843 and 1856. See STEWART-MACDONALD, Rohan H. 'The Recital in England: Sir William Sterndale Bennett's "Classical Chamber Concerts", 1843–1856', in: *Ad Parnassum. A Journal of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Instrumental Music*, XIII/25 (April 2015), pp. 115–175.

²⁴ A prime example of Brahms' interest in early music is his edition: COUPERIN, François. *Pièces de Clavecin*, edited by Johannes Brahms and Friedrich Chrysander, London, Augener, 1888; rpr. Mineola, Dover Publications, 1988. Brahms was reported to have owned more than 300 Scarlatti sonatas.

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Avison's Scarlatti concertos, however, are in many ways unique: the vast majority of arrangers in every century usually adopted the approach of reducing a large work to a smaller one, for keyboard²⁵. Examples include J. S. Bach's harpsichord and organ arrangements of Vivaldi violin concerti; Rameau's keyboard transcription of pieces from his operas, and Liszt's arrangements of just about everything, such as his solo piano transcriptions of Beethoven's nine symphonies. Avison, however, did the opposite: he took a keyboard piece and transformed it into one for orchestra.

And what of George Frideric Handel, Scarlatti's erstwhile competitor on the keyboard, and admirer? Handel admittedly used material from Scarlatti's sonatas in some of his orchestral compositions, such as the fourth movement of his Concerti grossi, Op. 6 No. 1 in G major²⁶ (see Exs. 7a and 7b):

Ex. 7a: Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata K 2/R5, bars 1-8; Charles Avison, Concerto II/iv, bars 1-8.

²⁵. It is reported that Burney made his own concerto arrangements of Scarlatti sonatas; but if he did, they no longer exist. See BOYD, Malcolm. *Op. cit.* (see note 1), pp. 230-231.

²⁶. For an excellent discussion of Handel's use of material from Scarlatti, and more examples from Handel's Concerti Op. 6, see SILBIGER, Alexander. 'Scarlatti Borrowings in Handel's Grand Concertos', in: *The Musical Times*, CXXV/1692 (February 1984), pp. 93-95.

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Ex. 7b: George Frideric Handel, Concerto grosso in G-major, Op. 6 No. 1/iv, bars 1-4.

ALLEGRO

VI I

VI II

Vla

Vc

Unlike Avison, however, who made a full arrangement of the sonata, Handel, the serial borrower, alights on the opening bars of Scarlatti's Sonata in G major, K 2 merely as a point of departure. The remainder of this movement, which is in 6/8 rather than the 3/8 metre of the original, is vintage Handel.

It was Charles Avison who not only dared to orchestrate some of the most idiomatic harpsichord music of the Baroque era, but who also attempted to take «off the Mask which concealed [the] natural Beauty and Excellency» of these works. With his arrangements, Avison disseminated Scarlatti's fame throughout Northern England and beyond, even to Scotland, and translated Scarlatti's iconic harpsichord sonatas into an idiom that was another favourite of English musicians and audiences: the Italian concerto grosso.

