

Harpsichord & fortepiano

Vol. 26, No. 1 Autumn, 2021

© Peacock Press.

Licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

You are free to share and adapt the content for non-commercial purposes, provided you give appropriate credit to Peacock Press and indicate if changes were made. Commercial use, redistribution for profit, or uses beyond this license require prior written permission from Peacock Press.

Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

Portuguese keyboard music from the second half of the 18th century

Mafalda Nejmeddine

Portuguese music from the 18th century for solo keyboard instruments is now known primarily by the sonatas and minuets composed by Carlos Seixas (1704-1742), who was organist at Coimbra Cathedral, and later at the Royal Chapel and Patriarchal Church in Lisbon. Seixas's keyboard music has survived in manuscripts datable to the second half of the 18th century and was disseminated early in the 1930s by Macario Santiago Kastner. Research on this composer and his work has resulted in a total of 94 authentic sonatas being ascribed to him, in from one to five movements, a number that rises to 107 if we consider the second movements that appear as separate pieces in some sources. Additionally, another 27 keyboard pieces, comprising 19 sonatas and eight minuets, are attributed to him in modern editions.¹



Illus.1: Alberto José Gomes da Silva, *Sei sonate per cembalo*. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, C.I.C. 87 V., title page

As far as we know, Seixas's sonatas and minuets are the only surviving music for solo keyboard instrument composed in Portugal during the reign of King João V (1707-1750). However, other pieces that may have been composed in this period or around 1750 have been preserved: these include three sonatas by Fr. Jacinto do Sacramento (c.1712-?), 20 verses by Fr. Jerónimo da Madre de Deus (c.1715-?) and 19 minuets by José António de Oliveira (1696-1779).² Musical sources from this period are limited, with the Lisbon earthquake of 1 November 1755 perhaps having contributed to this.

Composers and musical genres

The latter half of the 18th century presents a different picture with a variety of composers, and the survival of musical material, including printed music.³ Today, two collections of sonatas printed in Lisbon during this period have been preserved: the *Sei sonate per cembalo* composed by Alberto José Gomes da Silva (fl.1758-d.1793), published during the 1760s or in the first years of the following decade (illus.1), and the *Dodeci sonate, variazioni, minuetti per cembalo* composed by Francisco Xavier Baptista (1741-1797), published between 1765 and 1777.

Recent research on the Portuguese keyboard repertoire and its composers has shown Francisco Xavier Baptista, also known as Francisco Xavier Baxixa (or Bachixa), as the most important composer of the period, with 16 sonatas and seven minuets being preserved.⁴ 12 sonatas were edited by Gerhard Doderer in 1981 for *Portugaliae Musica*;⁵ they usually have two movements, the first being fast and composed in a sonata form, and the second a minuet, although a rondeau or a theme and variations were occasionally used as the final movement of the cycle.

Gomes da Silva's *Sei sonate per cembalo* highlight this preference: four of the six sonatas have two movements, starting with a sonata form movement and ending with a minuet. A modern edition of this collection appeared in 2003, edited by Gerhard Doderer and Mafalda Nejmeddine as *Alberto José Gomes da Silva (†1795): Sei sonate per cembalo, Lisboa, ca. 1770*.⁶ The collection has a distinctive feature, unique in the entire Portuguese repertoire of this period, namely the ascription of a title to the minuet of Sonata IV – *Nell stile della chitára Portughesse* ('In the style of the Portuguese guitar') – the style of which represents the interpretative freedom of this Portuguese instrument (Ex.1).

Also in the 1760s-70s, a Portuguese sonata was printed in London, namely *A Favourite Lesson for the Harpsichord* composed by Pedro António Avondano (1714?-1782).⁷ Avondano was a violinist who organized balls and concerts in his house, especially designed to receive the foreign community residing in Lisbon. For these events he composed several pieces, between them three



Ex.1: Alberto José Gomes da Silva, Sonata IV, second movement, bars 1-13



Ex.2: Francisco Xavier Baptista, Sonata II of the *Dodeci sonate, variazioni, minuetti per cembalo*, first movement, b.1-7. Beginning of the exposition section



Ex.3: Francisco Xavier Baptista, Sonata II of the *Dodeci sonate, variazioni, minuetti per cembalo*, first movement, b.21-32. Development section and beginning of the recapitulation section

collections of minuets which were printed in London, two by the same printing house at which his keyboard sonata was printed.⁸ Today, eight more sonatas and a minuet by Avondano are preserved in manuscripts, most of them in Portugal, but also in France, Germany

and the United States. A few of Avondano's sonatas are innovative in formal aspects, such as the use of an introduction before sonata form, but they are also in the usual style, combining characteristics of the Galant style with the *Empfindsamer stil*.⁹

Baptista, Gomes da Silva and Avondano are the only Portuguese composers whose keyboard music was printed at the time and who have a greatest number of preserved sonatas, including those in manuscripts. Besides them, other composers should be mentioned. These are José Joaquim dos Santos (c.1747-1801) who composed five sonatas; Fr. Manuel de Santo Elias (fl.1767-d.1805/6) with four sonatas, a minuet and a piece for three or more organs, today incomplete; and João Cordeiro da Silva (1735?-after 1807), who composed four sonatas and 14 minuets.¹⁰ Although the Portuguese sonata model is a cycle of two movements, these composers used only one movement for most of their sonatas, showing the Portuguese preference of the late 18th century.¹¹

Sonata and minuets were the musical genres most used by Portuguese composers. One of the most beautiful manuscripts containing both genres is preserved at the National Library of Portugal (M.M. 4329), bringing together pieces by Portuguese authors (illus.2).



Illus.2: *Sinque sonatte, et uno minuete da diversi autore. D. M. R. S. A.* Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, M.M. 4329, title page

Forms of the repertoire

During the reign of King José I (1750-1777), most composers preferred to begin a sonata with a movement written in a Type 3 sonata form, which is the more elaborate sonata form.¹² It comprises three sections, namely the exposition, the development and the recapitulation. The exposition presents the musical material moving from the tonic key to another key; the development begins in a different key, explores (totally or partially) the material of the exposition and can also introduce new material; finally, the recapitulation presents the material of the exposition (complete or almost), usually in the tonic key (Exx.2-3).

Other composers, in less expressive works, chose sonata forms such as the Type 2 sonata or the Type 3 sonata converted into the Type 2 sonata, which presents two rotations of the musical material: firstly, the material is presented in the exposition and secondly, it is shared between the development and tonal resolution sections. The development section usually explores the initial material of the exposition and the tonal resolution presents the final material in the tonic key.

In the last quarter of the century, the Type 3 sonata form continued to be used in the first movement of a sonata but another preference emerges: the Type 1 sonata. This sonata form is the simplest one, presenting only an exposition and a recapitulation, with little or no link between these two sections. It has two rotations of the material, the second (the recapitulation) beginning in the tonic key.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, forms such as the rondeau or theme & variations, which were used by Francisco Xavier Baptista in some sonatas, appeared more frequently as separate pieces. Small pieces in rondeau form composed by José Agostinho de Mesquita (fl.1752-1801), Marcos Portugal (1762-1830) and Fr. José da [Graça] Assunção (fl.1769-after 1827) are preserved in manuscripts, either without a title or titled 'rondo'. Others, longer, in the form of theme and variations were composed by João José Baldi (1770-1816), Fr. Francisco da Boa Morte (fl.1805), Joaquim Pereira Cardote (c.1752-1812), Gregório Franchi (fl.1790), Marcos Portugal and his brother, Simão Victorino Portugal (1774-c.1842). Only the latter saw his piece printed, in 1804, as *Variations de la Danse d'Hutin Pour le Clavecin ou Forte Piano*.

Instruments and performing context

After the 1755 Lisbon earthquake new forms of social interaction arose, such as balls and concerts in assemblies, as organised by Avondano, or private concerts in the salons of aristocratic and bourgeois families. This situation demanded new repertoire for professionals, but also for amateurs, who began to develop skills on domestic instruments, especially keyboard instruments. For this purpose, several pieces were composed and collections of pieces by different authors were prepared, mostly intended for female players. An earlier example of a piece dedicated to the ladies is the Sonata in F major by Francisco Xavier Baptista, copied in 1765 under the title *Tocata per cemballo* (illus.3).



Illus.3: Francisco Xavier Baptista, Tocata per cemballo. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, M.M. 337, f.29

Manuscript M.M. 4530 from the National Library of Portugal is another good example of keyboard music for ladies, in this case a collection of pieces by Portuguese and foreign composers with an indication of personal use, as specified in the title: *Sonatas del Sig.^{ra} Mathias Vento, Bocquarimni, Hayden, Cordeiro, Mesquita, E outros autores da primr.^a classe Para uso de C.^{ma} Illobranda*. In these, as well as in many manuscripts, the keyboard instrument intended for performing the pieces was not indicated. Whenever an instrument was indicated,

the Portuguese word *cravo* or its Italian translation (*cembalo*) – as mentioned in the printed collections – were the most frequent ones used to refer to a stringed keyboard instrument, which could be a stringed keyboard instrument with plectra (harpsichord) or one with hammers (fortepiano).¹³ Currently, there are 14 instruments of these types by Portuguese manufacture surviving from the 18th century, including harpsichords converted into fortепianos.¹⁴ The fortепiano was known in the Lisbon court some years after the construction of the first instrument of this type by Bartolomeo Cristofori. By 1732, Cristofori's fortепianos had already been ordered by the Lisbon court. Moreover, the first works composed for this instrument – the *Sonate da cimbalo di piano e forte, detto volgarmente di martelletti* (1732) by Lodovico Giustini di Pistoia – were dedicated to D. António de Bragança, brother of King João V of Portugal, and were probably disseminated from Lisbon.¹⁵

Although it is rarely mentioned in the keyboard manuscripts preserved from the following decades, ‘it seems that the fortепiano – or, as it was called, the harpsichord with hammers – had a stronger impact already from the second quarter of the century onwards’.¹⁶ In the beginning of the 19th century, the harpsichord and the fortепiano were indicated as possible instruments for performance of a few keyboard works, such as the

aforementioned *Variations de la Danse d'Hutin* by Simão Victorino Portugal. The interest of Portuguese society in the fortепiano increased, and the instrument continued to be built in Portugal until at least 1854.¹⁷

In addition to the repertoire for domestic salons, a few organ pieces have survived, such as two sonatas and a minuet composed by Fr. Francisco de São Boaventura (fl.1770-1802), probably written to be played at his convent of the Order of the Carmelites in Oporto. All pieces are preserved in the National Library of Portugal, including a third sonata whose manuscript (M.M. 4503) has no instrument information. However, the dedication to a lady on the title page suggests that it was composed to be performed on a stringed keyboard in a domestic context.¹⁸

Other composers of the time, such as Marcos Portugal and António Leal Moreira (1758-1819), also wrote organ pieces. The former composed an organ sonata, and is probably the author of a transcription of his opera’s overture *L’Oro non compra amore* to be performed in the six organs of the Basilica of the National Palace of Mafra.¹⁹ The latter composed an original *Sinfonia* in one movement, written in sonata form, for this remarkable ensemble of organs. These compositions were performed from 1806, when the last organ of the basilica was restored as part of the remodelling project of the six organs that took place between 1792 and 1807.²⁰ Today, after a recently restoration of the organs, music from that time can be heard again in the Basilica.

Conclusion

Despite the work of Portuguese institutions and researchers in the preservation and dissemination of this musical heritage, a large part of Portuguese keyboard music from the latter half of the 18th century is found only in libraries, in manuscripts. The few recordings and modern editions of existing scores already reveal a diversity of composers and writing. However, more scientific and artistic works on the subject are needed in order to demonstrate the real value of this repertoire and bring it closer to the public.

Mafalda Nejmeddine is a harpsichordist and researcher with a doctorate from the University of Évora in Music and Musicology, and is a specialist in Portuguese early music, namely in the Portuguese sonata for keyboard instruments. She developed a series of projects which involved the investigation and dissemination of the Portuguese repertoire for keyboard from the 18th century, among them the world premiere recording of the collection Sei Sonate per Cembalo by Alberto José Gomes da Silva.

Notes

- 1 João Pedro d'Alvarenga, 'Some Preliminaries in Approaching Carlos Seixas' Keyboard Sonatas', *Ad Parnassum*, vii/13 (2009), pp.95-128; here a catalogue of Seixas's keyboard sonatas and a list of modern editions can be found. The author points out that one of the attributed sonatas was partially composed by Francesco Geminiani. Subsequent research confirms the exclusion of Seixas' authorship for a sonata previously considered authentic, and an attributed sonata: see João Pedro d'Alvarenga, 'Portugal', in Mark Kroll (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Harpsichord* (Cambridge, 2019), pp.165-84 at 171 and n53.
- 2 Modern editions of these works can be found in Macario Santiago Kastner et al. (eds), *Sonatas para tecla do século XVIII*, *Portugaliae Musica XXXVIII* (Lisbon, 1982), pp.4-15; João Vaz (ed), *Frei Jerónimo da Madre de Deus: Versos de 5º Tom - Para Órgão* (Lisbon, 2013); José Carlos Travassos Cortez (ed), *José António de Oliveira: Obras musicais*, Offprint of Arquivo Coimbrão XXIX (Coimbra, 1981) respectively.
- 3 Mafalda Nejmeddine, 'The Sonata in Portuguese Keyboard Repertory of the Period *circa* 1750 to 1807', in Luisa Morales and Michael Latcham (eds), *Nuevas Perspectivas sobre la Música para Tecla de Antonio Soler / New Perspectives on the Keyboard Works of Antonio Soler* (Almería, 2016), pp.247-259.
- 4 Mafalda Nejmeddine, *O género sonata em Portugal: subsídios para o estudo do repertório português para tecla de 1750 a 1807*, PhD thesis, 2 vols (University of Évora, 2015), <http://hdl.handle.net/10174/19170>. For a biography of the composer, see Mafalda Nejmeddine, 'Accompanied Keyboard Music in Portugal: The case of Francisco Xavier Baptista's *Sonata Prima*', *Early Music Performer* 47 (2020), pp.3-13.
- 5 See Gerhard Doderer (ed), *Francisco Xavier Baptista († 1797): 12 Sonatas para cravo (Lisboa, ca. 1770)*, *Portugaliae Musica XXXVI* (Lisbon, 1981). Most sonatas of this collection were recorded by Cremilde Rosado Fernandes on a fortepiano on *Francisco Xavier Baptista: Sonatas* (Vinyl Portugalsom - Secretaria de Estado da Cultura, 1986; Reissue, CD Strauss SP 4062, 1995).
- 6 Gerhard Doderer and Mafalda Nejmeddine (eds), *Alberto José Gomes da Silva (†1795): Sei sonate per cembalo, Lisboa, ca. 1770*, *Musica Lusitana* 2D (Mollerussa, 2003). The world premiere recording of this collection was made by Mafalda Nejmeddine on the historical 1780 harpsichord by José Calisto at the National Music Museum: *Alberto José Gomes da Silva: Sei sonate per cembalo* (CD, M. Nejmeddine, 2018).
- 7 Modern edition by J. Lourenço (ed), *Pedro António Avondano: Toccatta* (Lisbon, 2015).
- 8 About these collections see Vanda de Sá, 'Avondano's Lisbon Minuets, the Establishment of a Cosmopolitan Model', *Ad Parnassum*, viii/15 (2010), pp.79-92.
- 9 A CD recording of Pedro António Avondano's sonatas by Rosana Lanzelotte is available at *Pedro António Avondano: Sonatas*, Portugaler 2014-2 (2005).
- 10 The sonatas by Fr. Manuel de Santo Elias can be found in Kastner (1982), pp.22-45, and the minuet was edited by Gerhard Doderer in *Portugiesische Sonaten, Toccaten und Menuette des 18. Jahrhunderts*, *Organa Hispanica - Iberische Musik des 16., 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts für Tasteninstrumente* II (Heidelberg, 1972), pp.38-39. All the keyboard music by João Cordeiro da Silva was recently published in Márcio Páscoa et al (eds), *José Palomino e João Cordeiro da Silva: obra completa para tecla* (Manaus, 2020), pp.110-150, <http://repositorioinstitucional.uea.edu.br//handle/riuea/3372>.
- 11 See the inventory of Portuguese keyboard music from this period and the characteristics of the late sonatas in Nejmeddine (2015), i, pp.217-34 and 162-70 respectively.
- 12 For a detailed description of this classification of sonata forms, see James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York, 2006).
- 13 About the use of these instruments in the 18th century, see Michael Latcham, 'Pianos and Harpsichords for Their Majesties', *Early Music* xxxvi/3 (2008), pp.359-396.
- 14 Gerhard Doderer and John Henry Van der Meer, *Cordofones de tecla portugueses do século XVIII: clavicórdios, cravos, pianofortes e espinetas / Portuguese String Keyboard Instruments of the 18th Century: Clavichords, Harpsichords, Fortepianos and Spinets* (Lisbon, 2005), pp.389ff and 447ff.
- 15 Daniel E. Freeman, 'Lodovico Giustini and the Emergence of the Keyboard Sonata in Italy', *Anuario Musical* lviii (2003), pp.111-38.
- 16 Doderer and Van der Meer (2005), pp.312-313.
- 17 See Ana Paula Tudela, *Os Antunes, mestres portugueses de fazer cravos, pianofortes e pianos - séculos XVIII e XIX* (Lisbon, 2019), pp.89-90.
- 18 The sonatas of Fr. Francisco de São Boaventura were edited by João Vaz in *Sonatas Portuguesas para Órgano del Siglo XVIII Tardío / Late-Eighteenth-Century Portuguese Organ Sonatas*, Cuadernos de Daroca IV (Zaragoza, 2013), pp.28-41.
- 19 The sonata for one organ by Marcos Portugal is in Vaz (2013), pp.21-27.
- 20 For the history of these instruments, see Gerhard Doderer, 'Subsídios novos para a história dos órgãos da Basílica de Mafra', *Revista Portuguesa de Musicologia* xii (2002), pp.87-127.