

Sonata in G Major and Allegro ou Presto in A Major

By Maria Teresa Agnesi (1720-1795)

Edited by Barbara Harbach

The keyboard music of eighteenth century women composers is not widely known. Their music is exciting and challenging, but often lies neglected in forgotten attics and remote storage areas of libraries. Often, specific biographical information is unknown, though certain generalizations can be made about their lives. Often coming from musical families and having started their musical training at an early age, they generally became virtuosic performers and composers while still young; their enthusiasm and determination is understandable, especially since most were expected to give up composition and performance after marriage. These women were all active keyboardists as well as vocalists, interacting with prominent musicians and composers in public concerts and private salons.

Little information is available about Maria Teresa Agnesi (1720-1795), an Italian composer, singer, harpsichordist, and librettist. She was known primarily for her operas, possibly writing the librettos for three of her seven operas. She was apparently well-known at the courts of Vienna and Dresden. Besides her extant opera compositions, she wrote arias, concertos, and a few keyboard pieces. In 1752 she married Pier Antonio Pinottini.

The two pieces in this volume are *Sonata in G Major*, and *Allegro ou Presto in A Major*. Both of these short compositions are similar in style to those of Domenico Scarlatti with rounded binary form containing one theme, technically demanding arpeggios, appoggiaturas, suspensions, no dynamic indications, a few trill signs and grace notes, some Alberti bass accompaniment, and a few diminished chords. Most of the writing occurs in the middle-range of the keyboard. Both of the pieces are in the dance meters of 3/8 and 6/8, respectively.

Sonata in G Major has written-out turns and alternate-hand arpeggios. The grace note suspensions or appoggiaturas may be executed on the beat. The *Allegro ou Presto* is virtuosic in style with many passages of hand crossings for a range of two octaves for the arpeggios. In the right hand of measures 32 and 33, the slash on the second half of beat four may be interpreted as a *tirata*, an ornamental scale-like design starting a third below the written note.

These two pieces are a fascinating addition in the study of women keyboard composers of the eighteenth century such as Elisabetta de Gambarini, Elizabeth Turner, Elizabeth Hardin, Jane Freer, Elizabeth Weichsell Billington, Anna Bon, Jane Savage, Maria Hester Park, Cecilia Barthèlèmon, Hélène Montgeroult, Marie Bigot, and Madame de Villeblanche (available from Vivace Press). Many of these women were child prodigies, singers, and often acclaimed during their lifetimes. Unfortunately, these women were forgotten and overlooked in the succeeding years by music historians. Each woman composer that is recovered and her music published and made available for the first time since the eighteenth century provides another link in the history of women composers.

A manuscript of the *Sonata in G Major* was obtained from the Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, and the *Allegro ou Presto* from the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Editor's Note: This performing edition is an Urtext in which few ornaments, phrasing, articulation, or dynamics have been added to the score that were not originally provided by the composer. Each performer may determine these details following the composer's indications. However, the editor has unified ornaments, phrasing, articulation, and dynamics within passages or in restatements except where the composer clearly wanted variety with each recurrence. Likewise, obvious harmonic uniformity was provided by the editor (for example, where chromatic alterations were not carried out consistently in the original edition within passages or chords). Unnecessary accidentals were omitted, and the notation was altered occasionally to conform to modern standards.

Sonata in G Major

MARIA TERESA AGNESI
Edited by Barbara Harbach

(♩. = 52 - 54)

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 3/8 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady bass accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 5-10. The right hand continues the melodic development with more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs. The left hand maintains a consistent accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 11-16. The right hand features a prominent sixteenth-note pattern, and the left hand uses block chords to support the melody.

Musical notation for measures 17-21. The right hand has a more active melodic line with frequent eighth notes, and the left hand continues with a rhythmic accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 22-25. The right hand concludes the section with a melodic phrase, and the left hand provides a final accompaniment.

Allegro ou Presto

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Edited by Barbara Harbach

(♩. = 52 - 54)

Musical notation for measures 1-2. The piece is in 3/8 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked 'Allegro ou Presto' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 52-54. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a treble and bass clef. The right hand starts with a quarter rest followed by a series of eighth notes, while the left hand plays a simple eighth-note accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 3-5. Measure 3 begins with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. The piece continues with eighth-note patterns in both hands, featuring some grace notes in the right hand.

Musical notation for measures 6-8. The right hand features a more complex eighth-note pattern with some accidentals. The left hand continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Musical notation for measures 9-11. The right hand continues with eighth-note runs, while the left hand has a more active role with eighth-note accompaniment and some chordal textures.

Musical notation for measures 12-14. The right hand has a dense eighth-note texture, and the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and chords.