

Harpichord News

by Larry Palmer

Soler's *Fandango*

An urtext edition of *Fandango* (R146) by the Spanish composer Padre Antonio Soler (1729–1783) has been published by Ut Orpheus Editions of Bologna (ÉS67). Comprising 463 measures, the obsessively repetitive work is both lengthy and mesmerizing—truly a virtuoso exercise in baroque minimalism. The beautifully printed new publication is a careful transcription of the original manuscript. In his one-page Preface, editor Aapo Häkkinen lists a few of the “dozens, if not hundreds, of textual questions” facing a potential player, illustrating some of these by citing several of the measures in which they occur: Where should one apply or disregard accidentals? How could one decide on possible errors in the source? And, perhaps most vexing of all, is the piece complete as published, since it ends abruptly on a single-beat A-major chord rather than the expected cadence in the tonic key of D?

Häkkinen, playing from this edition for his recording of the work on compact disc (Deux-Elles DXL 1083), quite naturally chose to present it exactly as he published it. So do other players such as Swiss master Andreas Staier (heard on YouTube) and the brilliant young Spanish harpsichordist Diego Ares, who included the *Fandango* in a beautifully organized disc of works by Soler: “el Diablo vestido de fraile” [“the Devil dressed as a friar”] (PanClassics PC 10201). This artist’s thoughtful notes to his recording should be required reading for those who wish to learn more about Soler and the fascinating music he wrote. The sumptuous production includes complete texts in Spanish, German, French, and English, and is replete with illustrations. It is highly recommended. Ares’s CD was honored with a prestigious *Diapason d’Or* award in 2010.

Another rousing performance by the late Rafael Puyana is preserved on his 1990 disc *Fandango* (L’Oiseau-Lyre 417 341-2), with a reading based on an edition by musicologist Samuel Rubio, who solved the problem inherent in the ending by adding a return to the opening measures, thereby fashioning a cadence



Diego Ares (photo credit: Mary Quintero)

in the work’s home tonality. Since I found Puyana’s rendition eminently satisfying, I decided to write Señor Ares to learn his rationale for concluding the piece as he did. With permission I quote from his generous and eloquent responses:

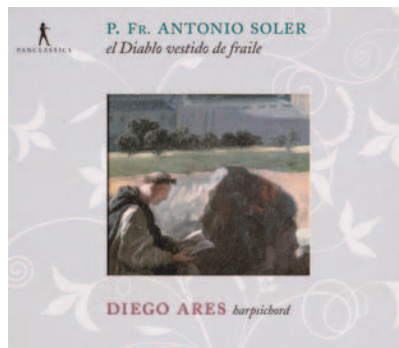
“The 18th century produced two fandangos that have become well known: the one by Soler, and another by Boccherini; unlike Soler’s, Boccherini’s ends on the tonic. Two others, less known, are by José de Nebra and Domenico Scarlatti, both of whom are prominent among Soler’s mentors. These two compositions both end on the dominant. [The work attributed to Scarlatti is included on Puyana’s disc. Both may be heard on YouTube.]

Why? Perhaps one reason could be the traditional choreography of the dance. The *New Grove* description of the dance-form *fandango* has it ending with an extreme accelerando. This gradual increase in tempo leads to an explosive climax on the final chord, leaving the dancers exhausted. The *fandango* was considered to be an extremely sensual dance.¹ Since it might be inappropriate for a monk (Soler) to compose such a thing, it might be that the ‘L.D.’ (*Laus Deo* [Praise God]) immediately following the dominant cadence in Soler’s manuscript, was meant to certify his religious vocation, even though he were momentarily to be seduced by such sensual rhythms!

The pioneering 20th-century harpsichordist Wanda Landowska probably



Ut Orpheus *Fandango* cover



Ares Soler CD box cover

would have suggested a lengthy *ralentando* for the ending of such a long piece, but if this is applied to a *fandango* it would destroy the relationship to the dancers’ movements. Ending with the dominant allows the quickening pace; ending in the tonic makes a slowing almost obligatory. But who knows? I could even imagine that she might have liked the *accelerando* effect for this particular type of piece!

When I [Ares] spoke with Puyana he told me that on his first recording he omitted some measures since he felt the piece was too long, and he played a *da capo* since it was in the Rubio transcription of the manuscript. This is not wrong! I would leave it to the taste of the player: if the person repeats the opening and cadences on the tonic I would relate this piece to the one by Boccherini; if the player ends the work



Diego Ares explains (photo credit: Susanna Drescher)



Diego Ares at harpsichord

on the dominant, it would relate more closely to the *fandangos* of de Nebra and Scarlatti.

The last chord of *Fandango* seemed to me a bit empty. So for my recording I thought some *acciaccatura* would give more color to the chord, and having in mind how Soler knew its use (for instance he uses this ‘ornament’ in his preludes and in some of his sonatas, the one in *C Minor*, SR 100, for example), and it was surely part of the Spanish keyboard tradition by his time. Some other harpsichordists repeat the final chord in a ‘polonaise rhythm’ [long-short-long] (Bob van Asperen, for one), or make free runs and *arpeggiations* (Nicolau de Figueiredo). I am thankful that there is no one “right or wrong” answer to this question!²

Editor Aapo Häkkinen espoused this same sentiment, as well, concluding his Preface with these words:

“My solution has been to provide a score entirely free of editorial emendations. Some will deem it performable as such, while many will undoubtedly adjust it to their preferences. Previous editions based on the source (. . . by Frederick Marvin 1957 and Samuel Rubio, 1971) have given fine solutions, unfortunately without revision details. With the present edition, performers will be able to judge for themselves.”

Notes

1. In the Ut Orpheus edition, the editor quotes a paragraph from the *Histoire de ma vie* by Giacomo Casanova, concerning the lascivious nature of the *fandango*. For an English translation of this French text, see www.tecla.com/extras/0001/0025/0025pref.htm, found as notes to Dionisio Aguado’s *Variations on the Fandango*, opus 16.

2. E-mail correspondence with Diego Ares received on October 21, 22, and 29, 2013.

News items and comments are always welcome. Address them to Dr. Larry Palmer, Division of Music, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas 75275; lpalmer@smu.edu.

Thousands of titles, top-tier publishers...

OneLicense.net

for SUNDAY BULLETINS, WEDDING and FUNERAL PROGRAMS, PROJECTION, SPECIAL SERVICE BOOKLETS, PRACTICE TRACKS, and PODCASTS

ANNUAL and ONE-TIME CHURCH COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

Log on and take the tour today!

800.863.1501