

Additional information on  
Alessandro Scarlatti, Four *Sonate a Quattro*

The set of parts in the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale (BnF) is of exceptional interest, despite being incomplete. Unlike the set of parts in the Santini Collection, Münster, MÜs 3957a, the three surviving works are catalogued under separate shelf marks: No.2 D-9171; No.3 D-9172; No.4 D-8967. Santini had formerly owned both sets, as two of the title pages of the BnF pages have the inscription 'F.S. a M<sup>r</sup> Boisselot'.<sup>1</sup>

No.1 (F minor) does not form part of the extant material in BnF. The bass part of No.4 (D minor) is also missing. But the survival of complete parts of Nos. 2 and 3, and the upper 3 parts of No.4, together with 10 out of the possible total 16 title pages, makes this source of great interest and value.

In summary, the music text of the BnF is very close to that of MÜs3957a.

- Bass figuring coincides almost exactly, in density, placement, and detail.
- Readings of pitches, rhythms and tempo indications match closely those of MÜs3957a, with a few exceptions (listed below).
- The title pages of the BnF parts have unique wording not seen in any other sources, but coinciding with MÜs3957a in repeating the phrase 'senza Cimbalo' on every title page.

	BnF	MÜs 3957a	Avison	RM24.i.13
	Bass part title pages	Title page	heading on score	heading on score
No.2 C minor	Sinfonia Seconda del Sigr. Alessandro Scarlatti al Tavolino senza Cimbalo/ Liuto, Arpa ò Violoncello	Sonata 2 <sup>a</sup> à Quattro senza Cembalo del Sigr. Cav. Alessandro Scarlatti	Symph. 2	Seconda
No.3 G minor	Sinfonia à 4 senza Cimbalo al Tavolino /Liuto, Violoncello, ò Arpa	Sonata 3 <sup>a</sup> a Quattro Due Violini, Violetta, e Violoncello senza cembalo	3 Symph.3 <sup>a</sup>	Terza
No.4 D minor	Sinfonia à 4 Senza Cimbalo /al Tavolino (bass part missing)	Sonata 4 <sup>a</sup> à Quattro senza Cemb.	Symp 4th	Sinf <sup>a</sup> 4 <sup>a</sup>

Important points from the BnF title pages:

- the specific naming of continuo instruments, 'lute or harp' on the bass part title pages. No continuo instruments are suggested on the title pages of MÜs3957a, though they give 'senza cembalo' consistently.

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably a member of the family Boisselot & Fils who were active as piano makers based in Marseilles in the nineteenth century.

- the recurrent phrase ‘senza cimbalo al Tavolino’ on each of the 11 extant title pages. The phrase is most commonly associated with madrigal performance without instruments, and Scarlatti used it in this connection too, in a letter of 28 August 1706 to Ferdinando de’ Medici.<sup>2</sup>
- the absence of ‘Cavaliere’ in Scarlatti’s title (cf. MÜs 3957a), indicating the BnF parts date from before 1715. On the basis of the handwriting in comparable scores, the suggested copyist is Cosimo Serio, ca. 1705-7.
- ‘Sinfonia’ rather than ‘Sonata’ in the BnF title pages, which is also seen in English sources (implying that the source available to Avison also had ‘Sinfonia’. ‘Sonata’ also appears on two of the BnF title pages for No.3.

A century later Santini would give the works the title ‘Quartets’ in his score copied from MÜs 3957a, omitting mention of continuo and the ‘senza cembalo’ indication (except on No.3) seen consistently on the BnF and MÜs parts.

Although the contents of the BnF and MÜs parts are remarkably similar, it seems that there is a gap of about 10-12 years between the two sets of parts. Taking the BnF parts as the closest to the date of composition, the indications for ‘lute or harp’ are likely to derive from the composer.

Recommended revisions based on the BnF parts compared with Hs.3957a and Avison  
Sonata 2

			II
3	Vn2	rhythm beats 3–4 are 4 qq in Hs. 3957a. and BnF D-9171. (edition follows Avison. and RM. q cr 2 sq.)	
			Sonata 3
			II
11	Vn2	n3 d’’ Hs. 3957a, BnF – no flat flat in Avison and RM.	
20	Vn1	n3 Hs. 3957a, BnF no natural n3 b’ natural in Avison, RM.	
			Sonata 4
			II
12	Va	n2 e’ in BnF, Avison, RM, Cooke. d’ in Hs. 3957a	

V

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<sup>2</sup> Alessandro Scarlatti to Ferdinando de’ Medici, Rome 28 August 1706, in Mario Fabbri, *Alessandro Scarlatti e il Principe Ferdinando de’ Medici*, Firenze, L. S. Olschki 1961, pp.83-84.

7            Va        n3 *f'* in Hs.3957a, BnF;  
                         *g'* in Avison and RM.

[An example of a reading that might be found useful, but doesn't involve any change to the edition:

5            Vn1        mn.3,4 Hs. 3957a, BnF – e flat'', followed  
                         by natural n. 6  
                         No flat in Avison, RM, Cooke.

No. 4  
IV