



COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

**DOMÉNICO SCARLATTI**

BORN: October 26, 1685

ERA/STYLE: Baroque/early Classical

DIED: July 23, 1757

HOMETOWN: Naples, Italy

Giuseppe Doménico Scarlatti was an Italian composer, organist, and harpsichordist. He was born in 1685, the same year as J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel, two other important composers of the Baroque era. Scarlatti is best known for his 555 keyboard sonatas. These sonatas were originally written for the harpsichord, the more popular keyboard instrument during his lifetime.

Scarlatti's father, Alessandro Scarlatti, was a famous composer of vocal music, so Doménico's musical education began right away. By age 15, he had secured a position as an organist in his hometown of Naples. In 1705, his father sent him to Venice to study composition and give concerts. It is said that Scarlatti met fellow young composer G. F. Handel in Venice and found other admirers among the audiences of his skillful harpsichord performances.

Doménico went to Rome in 1709 to take over his father's position as composer for the court of Maria Casimira, an exiled Polish queen living in the city. Over the next five years, he composed operas and smaller works for her court before she returned to Poland. During that time, Scarlatti made friends in Vatican City and took a position at the famous St. Peter's Basilica after her departure, where he composed music for the church.

By the end of 1720, Scarlatti was in Lisbon working as court composer and teacher for the king of Portugal and his family. Eventually, when the king's daughter, Princess Maria Bárbara, married the crown prince of Spain, Scarlatti traveled to Spain with the couple, where he would live the rest of his life. He was influenced by the Spanish music he heard and began writing his famous keyboard sonatas, which were mostly intended to be played by the princess, who would later become queen, and were not heard by many outside the court. His sonatas wouldn't be heard by the general public until 1906, when an Italian pianist published a set of 545 of the sonatas arranged for piano.