

Nicholas Susi, pianist

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The Wholenote

2017; Critical review of debut album *Scarlatti Now* in Sept 2017 column “Keyed In”, by Alex Baran

“Nicholas Susi has just released his first recording *Scarlatti Now* (nicholas-susi.com), with a clever program that mixes eight Scarlatti Sonatas with Rossini, Ravel, Berio and Liszt. Susi claims that Italy is the country that gave birth to the piano then promptly turned its back on it, leaving us with a solid Germanic tradition to our keyboard thinking. His intention is to underscore the connections between Scarlatti’s keyboard style and later works, arguing that Scarlatti’s sonatas had invited future composers to think about the keyboard in ways he had already begun to explore. He describes the elements of Scarlatti’s keyboard style as “the wiry, the spastic, the risky” but he also admires them for their “variety, quirkiness and downright catchiness.”

Scarlatti’s runs, ubiquitous ornaments and often rapid-fire note repetitions are familiar elements of his writing. Susi finds these in the chatter of Figaro’s Cavatina from Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, the fluid writing of Ravel’s *Une barque sur l’océan* and Liszt’s transcription of Rossini’s *La danza*.

Susi is a gifted technician who executes the myriad ornaments in the sonatas with crispness and ease. The clarity of his playing is a delight to hear. His transitions to contemporary works by Berio and Sciarrino are not as difficult as they might promise in the track listing. He is an innovative musician and aggressive thinker with a gift for keyboard brilliance. With a freshly minted doctorate of music under his belt, he now needs to appear on a major label.”

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