

Wikiscore meets *I'Abate* *Portoghese*

JN Oliveira

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Musicology Days, UM,
Braga



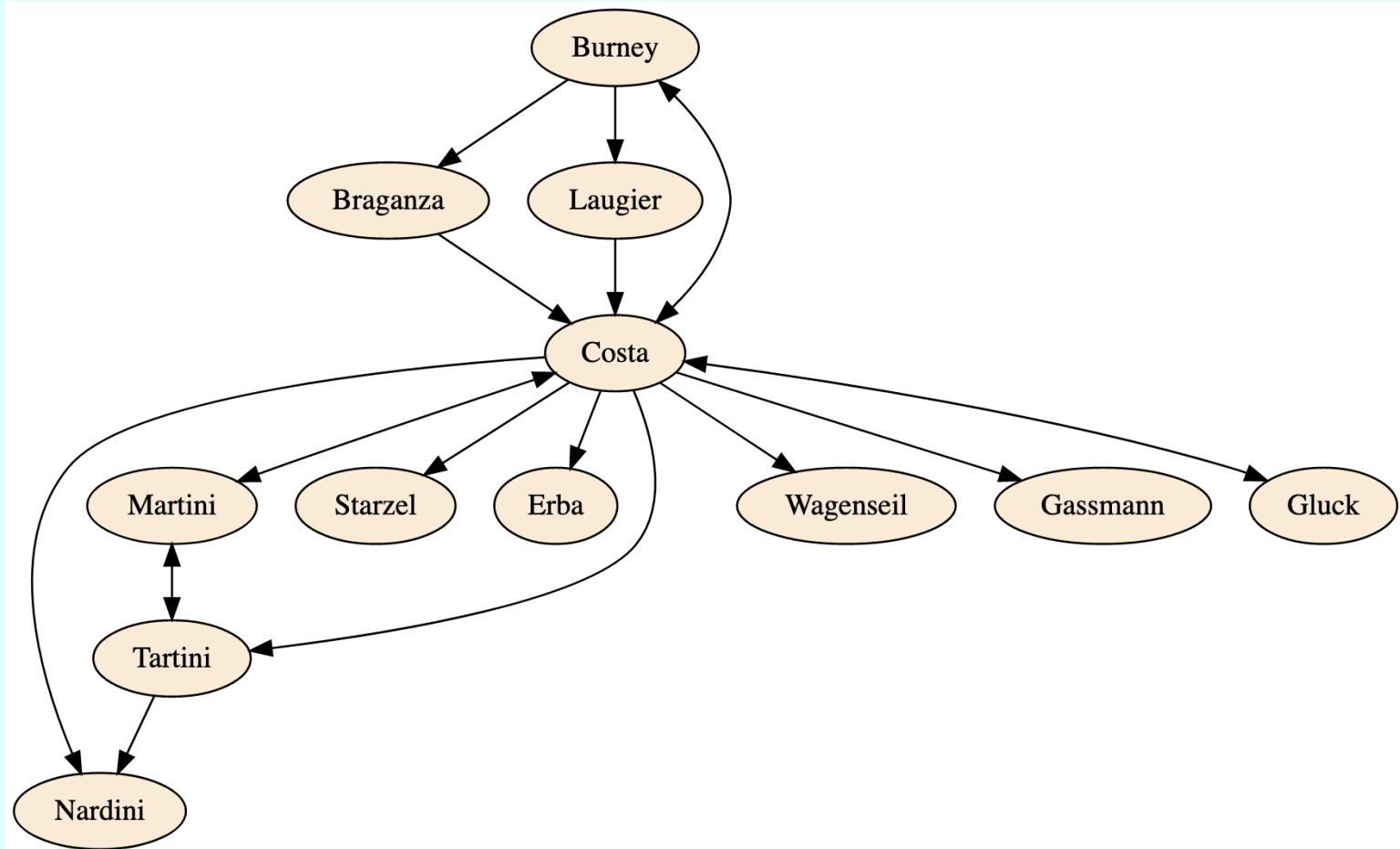
L'Abate Portoghese

- Abbott António da Costa (1714-1780?) was a Portuguese musician who, born in the Porto region, left the country in 1749 for Rome.
- Travelling to Venice and Paris, he eventually settled in Vienna, where he is thought to have died around 1780.
- Misanthrope, he despised the positions offered to him, living most of his life in poverty.
- His intelligence and idiosyncratic behaviour attracted the attention of the high nobility, in whose salons he sometimes played his compositions for violin or guitar.



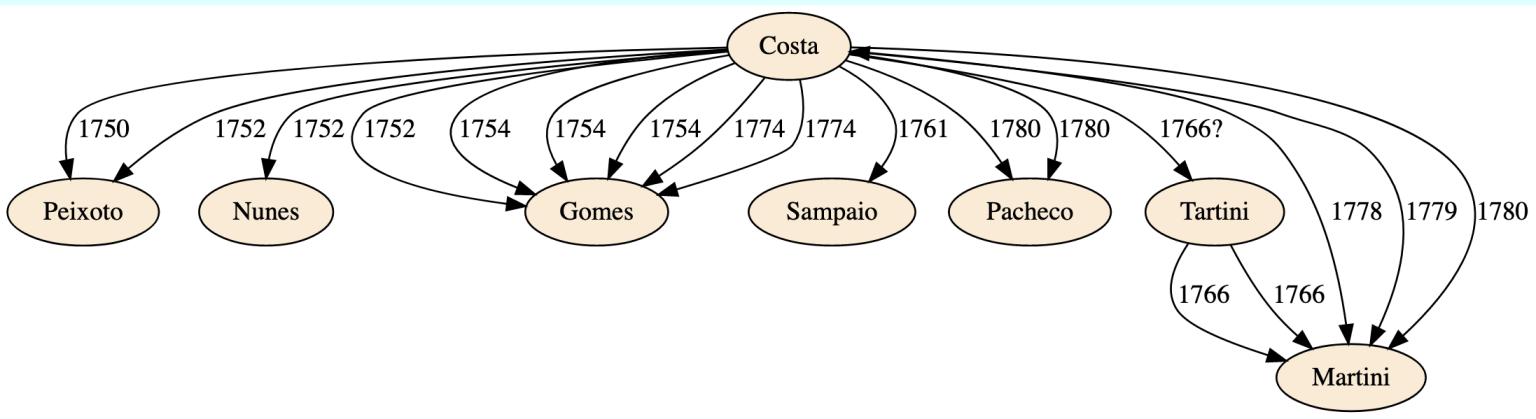
L'Abate Portoghese

Documented musical
connections.



Sources

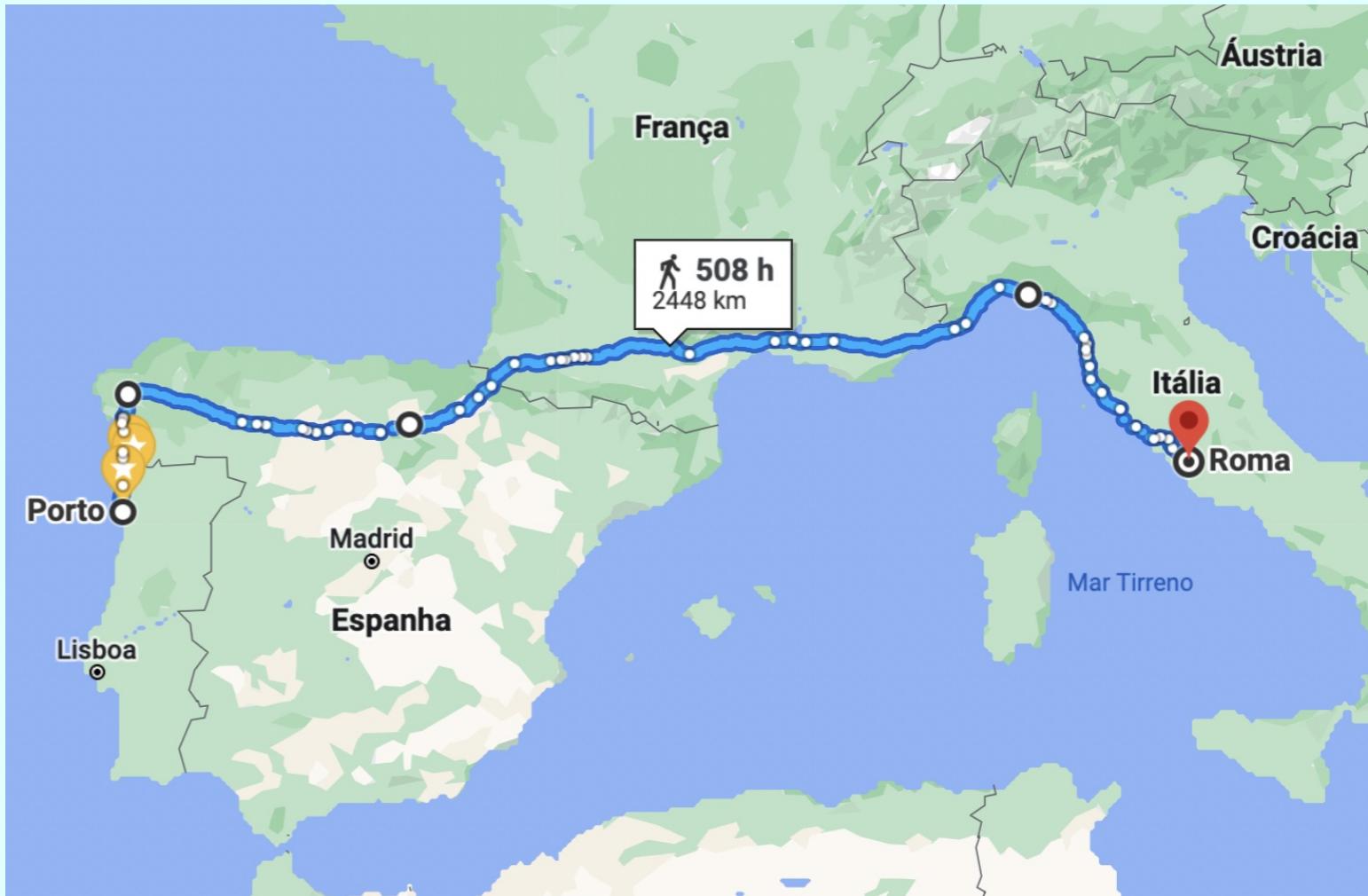
- 13 Letters (1750-1780) published by J. Vasconcelos (1879)
- Charles Burney travel diary (1772)
- 5 Letters exchanged between Costa, Martini and Tartini (1766-1780)



1749-1750

*"Pedi um passaporte
em Santiago e não mo-
deram (...) e duas
vezes estive preso (...)
não posso dizer n'uma
carta o que passei em
quatro mezes (...) de
vida de novellas (...)"*

(Letter I, 1750)

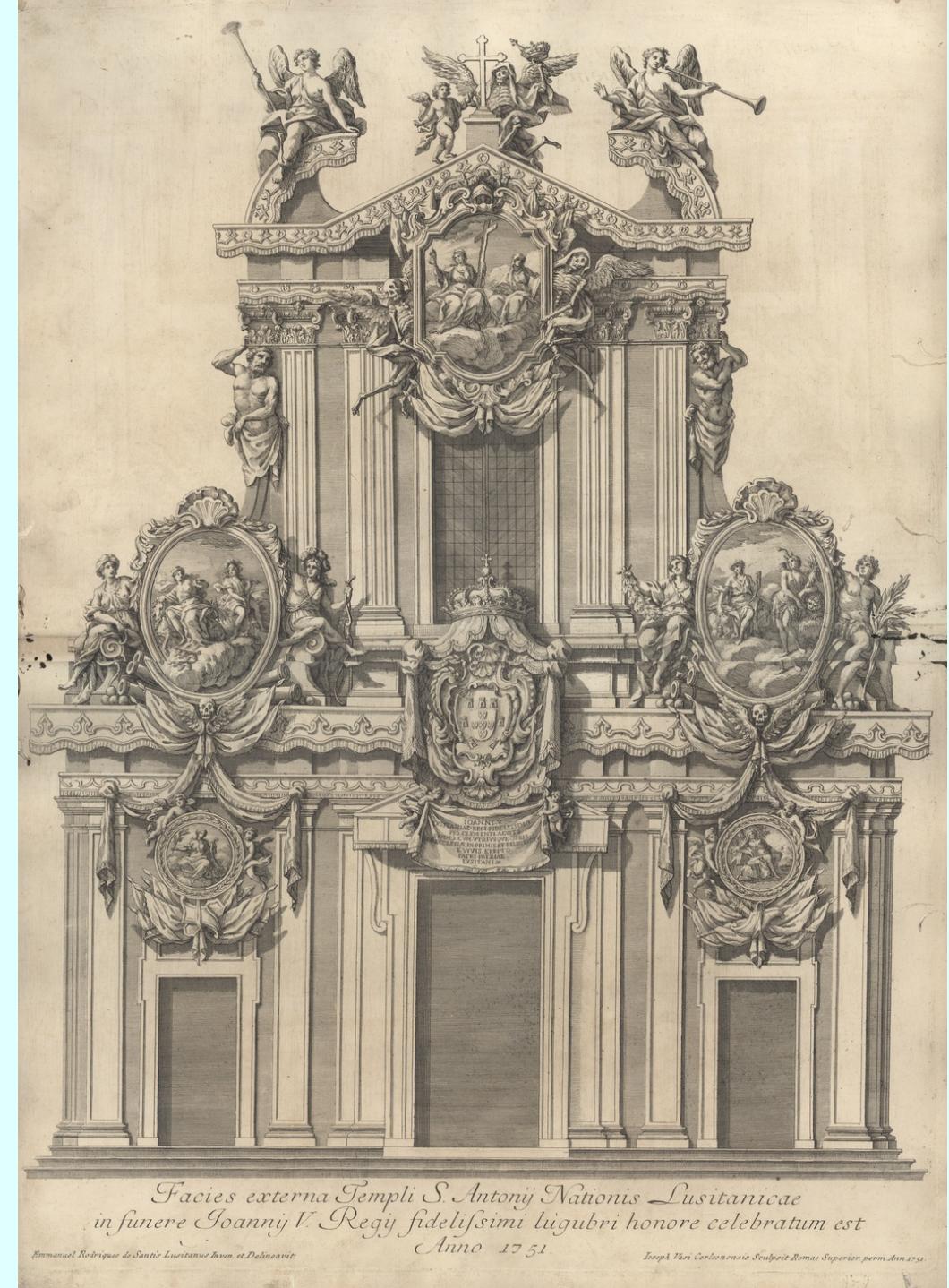


Rome (1749-1754)

At *Sant'Antonio dei Portoghesi*

"(...) estou conego com casa e
cama, e cozinha de casa, e três
mil réis cada mez pela cantarola
(...)"

(Letter VII, 1754)



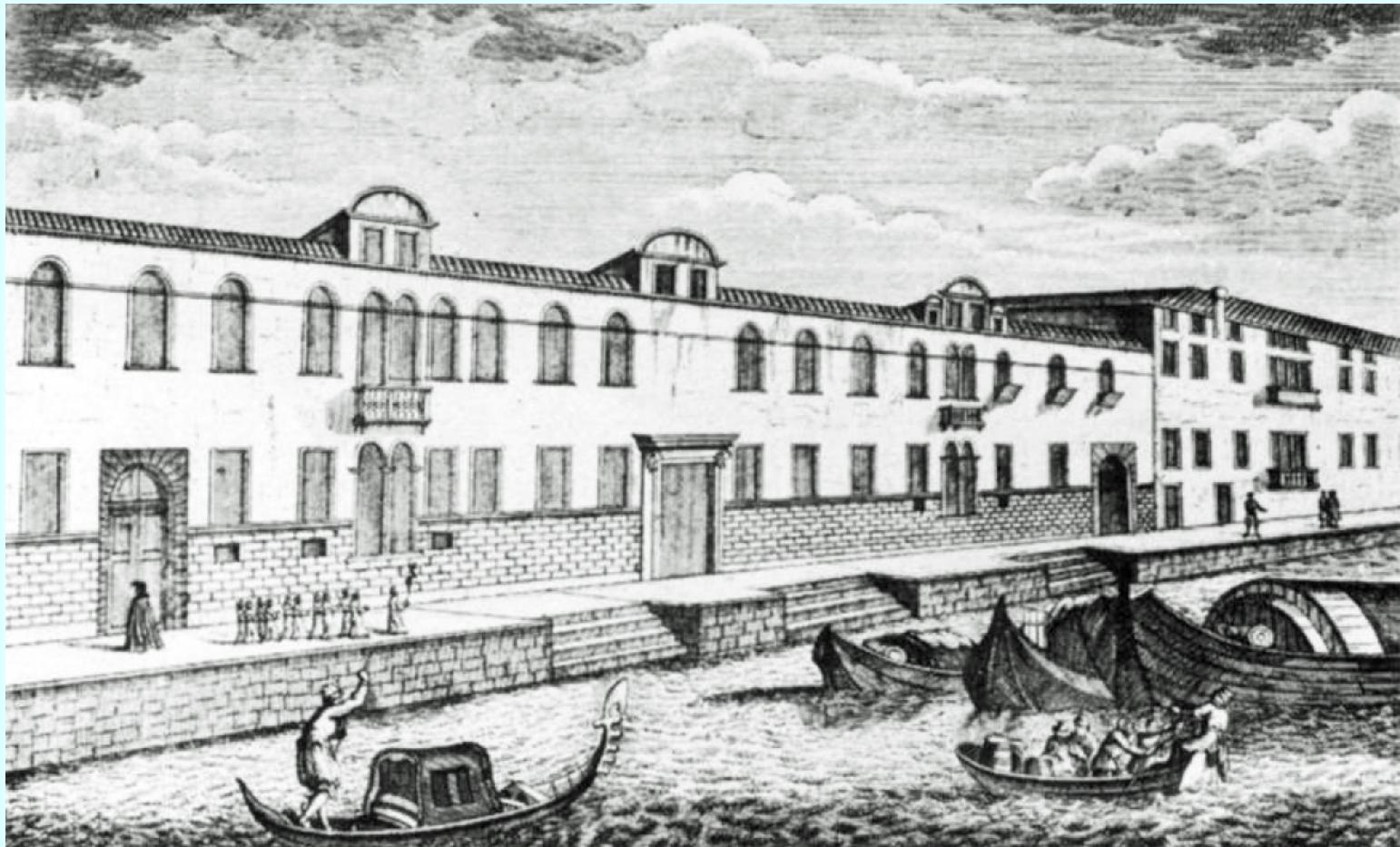
Rome (1749-1754)

"O Bravo de Leorne chama-se o Senhor **Nardini**; acompanhei-lhe quatro sonatas a solo em casa do Cardeal Spinelli que está aqui vezinho (...)"

(Letter III, 1752)



Venice (1761-1766)

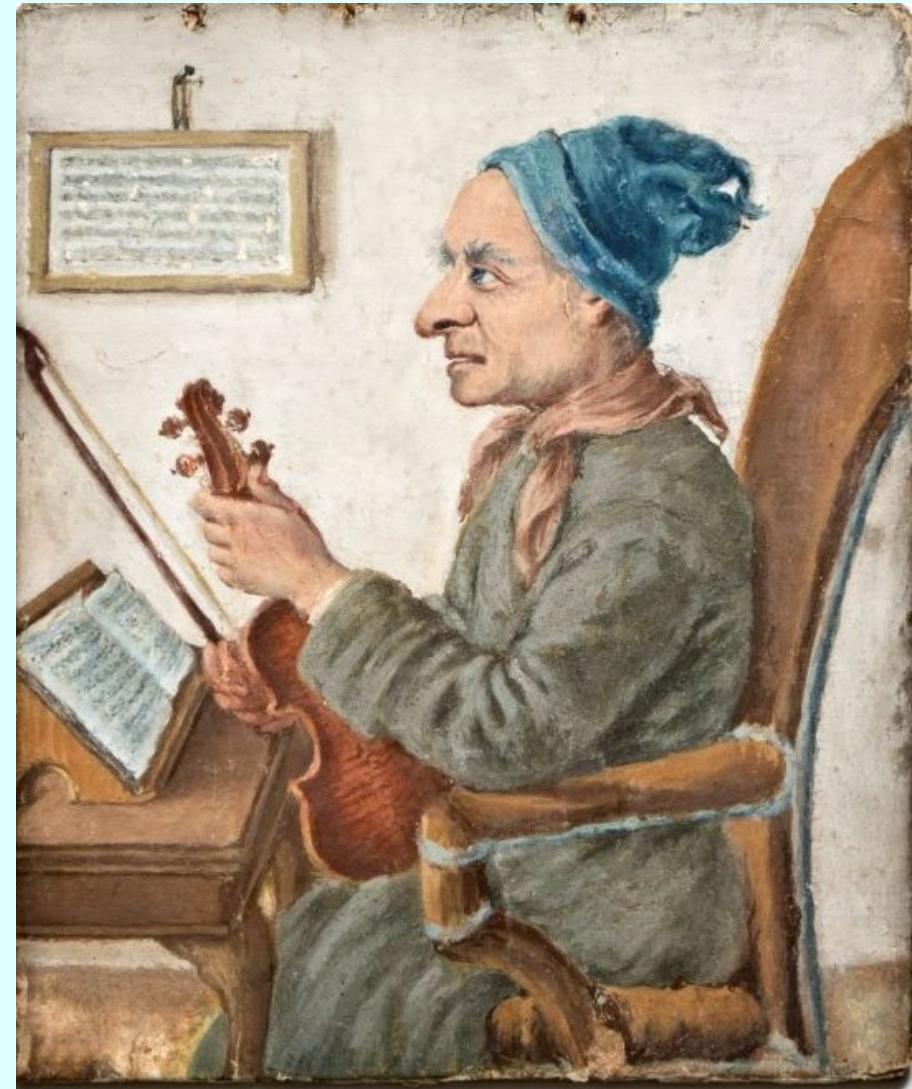


Tartini to Martini

"What Your Reverence now writes to me about Signor Don Antonio Costa (this is his surname) does not surprise me; for you can imagine that the initial impact of such a novelty, namely this attempt at a music always in inversion, we have received here with much greater force from his guitar, where the effect is truly unique (...)"

"He is a patron and friend of mine"

Letter 162. Padua, 20 Sep. 1766



Tartini to Martini

"From Signor Dottor Antonio Costa I have received, as per your order, three compositions of him: a solo, a duet and a trio. I ask Your Reverence to instruct me on how to send them to you, and you shall be obeyed. He has had the pleasure and honour of serving you, and is full of esteem and admiration for Your Reverence (...)"

"He is a patron and friend of mine"

Letter 165. Padua, 17 Oct. 1766

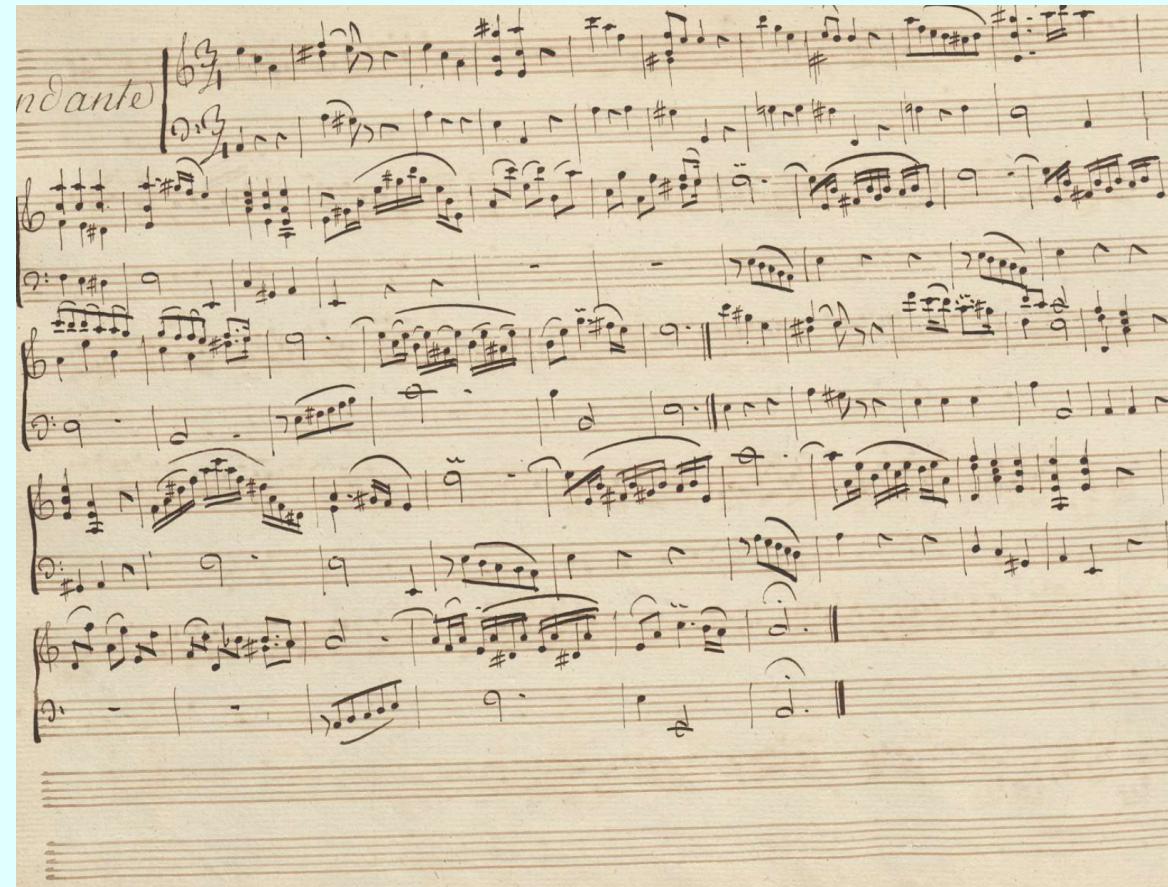


Tartini: Sonate B.A4 "Chitarra portoghese"

Inscription in [Berkeley](#)'s manuscript copy:

"Sonata à Violino, e Basso / Del / Sig.r
Giuseppe Tartini / Composta dal
Medes.mo / Sopra lo stile che suona /
il Prette dalla Chitarra / Portoghese")
["in the style sounding like the guitar
of the Portuguese priest"]

(Berlin's copy aside, Andante).



Vienna (1772-1780)



Charles Burney (Vienna, 1772)

From his travel diary (pag. 287):

"This Abate is the extraordinary musician that I mentioned before who disdaining to follow the steps of others has struck out a new road both as composer and performer which it is wholly impossible to describe (...)"



Vienna (1772)

Burney (page 261):

"(...) he is a professed enemy to the system of Rameau, and thinks the *Basse Fondamentale* the most absurd of all inventions (...)"

He is a professed enemy to the system of Rameau, and thinks the *Basse Fondamentale* the most absurd of all inventions ; as it destroys all fancy, connection, and continuity, by perpetually tending to a *final close* and termination of whatever is begun ; falling a fifth, or rising a fourth, cuts every thing off short, or makes the ear, which is accustomed to a fundamental base, uneasy till a passage is finished.

Vienna (1772-09-04)

Burney (pag. 287):

"The musical party which dined today at lord Stormont's was select and in the highest degree entertaining and pleasing. It consisted of the Prince Poniatowski, duke of Braganza, the Portuguese minister, count and countess Thun, M. L'Augier, the chevalier madame and mademoiselle Gluck, the Abate Costa &c."



Vienna (1772-09-04)

Burney (pag. 282):

"(...) all I can say of his productions is that in them melody is less attended to than harmony and uncommon modulation; and that the time is always difficult to make out from the great number of ligatures and fractions. (...)"

"He played two movements on his guitar before dinner the subjects of which as nearly as I can remember were these:"



Vienna (1779-80)

Letters exchanged with Martini



Vienna (1780)

Leonor de Almeida (countess of Alorna):

"(...) Falei já com a fidalga três vezes e bastante mas não tanto quanto é necessário para formar conceito dela com acerto; (...) ; faz bem versos; sabe francês italiano inglês latim e já principia a entender alemão".

(Letter XIII, 1780)



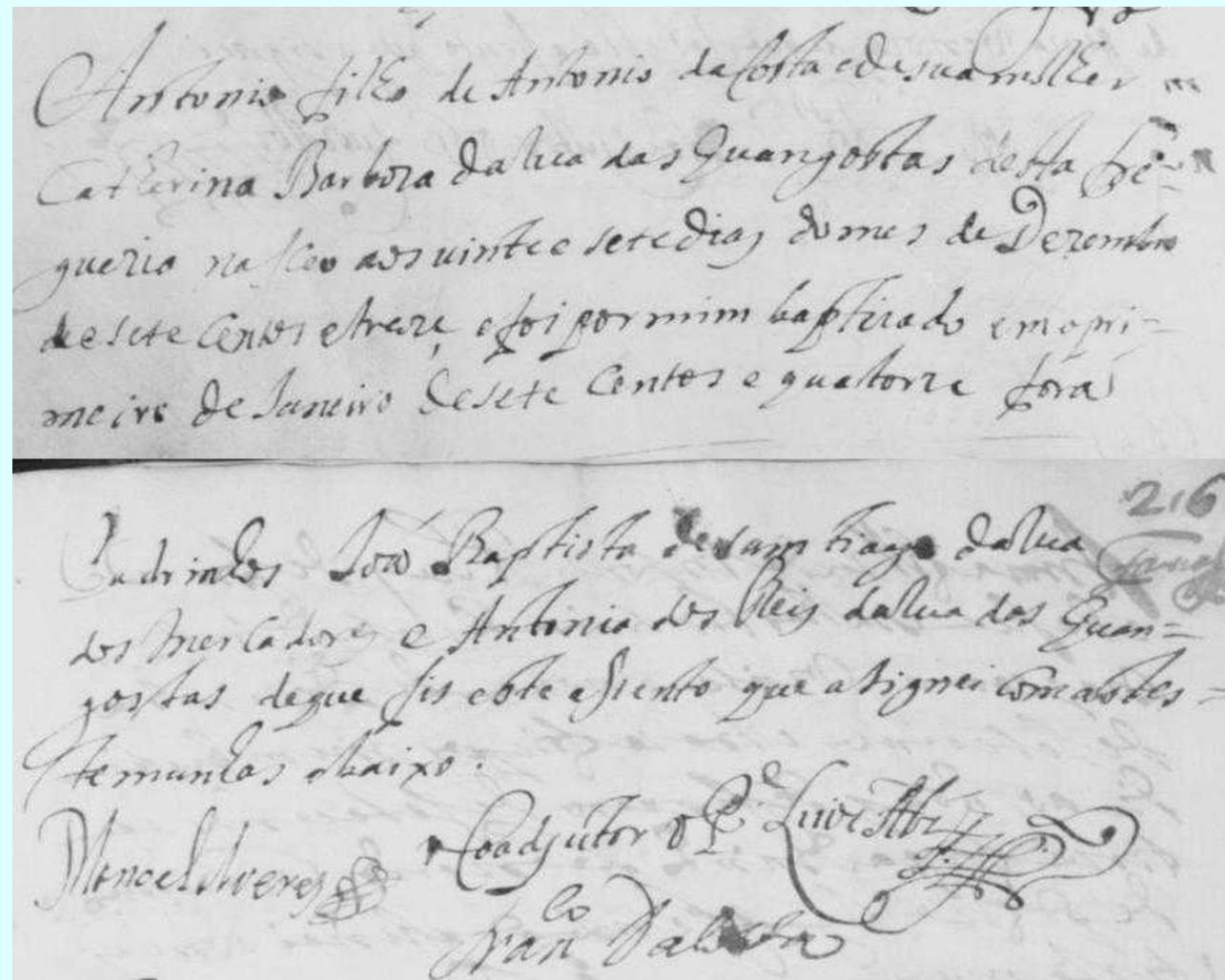
Current research

Possible birth record:

Porto, parish of Sé, 1713-12-27;
baptized: 1714-01-01

Other alternatives exist but less likely.

Needs further research.



Current research

Death?

(Other alternatives less likely)

Known works



![image.j./canoni.jpg)

- Same register (*G*-clef)
 - Free imitative style
 - "Stereophonic" effect?
 - Continuous flow
- Dissonances beyond what was tolerated
- Ties and spicatto (x....) .y.z.... style
- Difficult fractions (rythm)

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