

Sonata IV

Antoine Mahaut

(Namur?, 1719? – Paris, ca. 1775)

Adagio

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Preface

Antoine Mahaut's life is difficult to describe accurately due to the lack of reliable information. What is certain is that in 1742 and 1751 he spent shorter or longer periods in Amsterdam, where he gave lessons as a "music master" to affluent amateur flautists. Moreover, we know that he gave a concert there in 1742. An advertisement states that he would perform "Concerts and solos of his own Composition." With the great virtuosity known to us through his approximately twenty flute concertos, he must certainly have made a strong impression.

He successfully published with Amsterdam publishers such as Witvogel and Olofsen his *Sonatas for flute and basso continuo, op. 1*, duets, symphonies, and a series of songs on Dutch texts, *Het Maendelyks musikaels tydverdryf*. Due to financial difficulties, he was forced to flee Amsterdam in 1752. After his departure, he reappears in Paris, where he published, among other works, two Recueils for two flutes or violins, as well as a flute method (1759) dedicated to Hébert de la Pleignière, a cavalry officer of Louis xv.

Leopold Mozart noted an encounter with the "compositeur" Mahaut in his diary in Paris in 1764. It was also there that Mahaut published symphonies that are considered important contributions to European music history. Incidentally, his *Sonatas, op. 1*, had already appeared in 1736 with Le Clerc et Boivin, before Witvogel published them in Amsterdam.

His many travels may have taken him to England, where the well-known publisher John Walsh issued two series of duets for two flutes or violins by him, and where he also composed a number of vocal works. According to a note on an Italian copy of some of his trio sonatas, he may also have worked for some time at the court of the King of Sardinia and Piedmont in Turin. To the famous flautist Gabriel Buffardin, whom he met during a

visit to Dresden, he dedicated a collection of trio sonatas published in Augsburg in 1747. Together with several symphonies and flute concertos, these trios belong to the highlights of his oeuvre.

Many aspects of Mahaut's life remain obscure, including his place and date of birth. It is possible that Antoine Mahaut was born in Namur in 1719, but curiously neither municipal nor church archives contain records of his birth or baptism. We also have no information about the place or year of his death. Since after his last publication in 1775 – six sonatas for flute, oboe or violin, published by the Parisian publisher Mme Lemarchand – no further trace of his life or work can be found, we may assume that he died around that time.

The source for this edition is a print by John Walsh, London, which must have appeared around 1758. Its title is: *Six Sonatas or Duets for two German Flutes or Violins Compos'd in a pleasing fine Taste by Sigr. Antonio Mahaut*. A few years earlier, Olofsen in Amsterdam had also published the same duets, albeit in a different order from the Walsh edition, which is followed in our publication. Both editions proved useful for establishing the musical text of these new volumes, especially with regard to articulation markings. Editorial suggestions are indicated by brackets or dotted slurs.

For a lively performance of these duets, the performers' imagination is essential. The addition of slurs and ornaments, variation between strong and weak beats, dynamics and articulation, as well as rhythmic freedom, is therefore necessary.

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For a more detailed overview of Mahaut's life, see: Rien de Reede, *The enigmatic Life of Antoine Mahaut, Flutist and Composer in Amsterdam and Paris / La vie mystérieuse d'Antoine Mahaut, flûtiste et compositeur à Amsterdam et à Paris* (Amsterdam, Broekmans & Van Poppel, 2025).