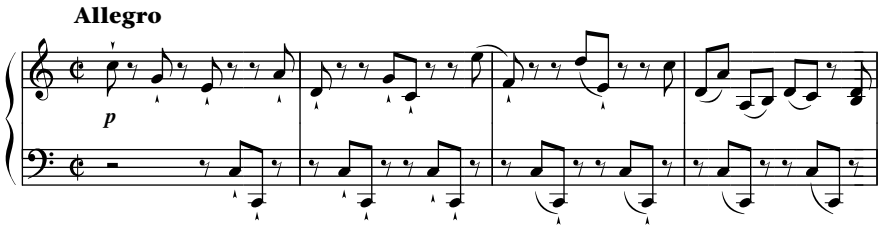

Ex. 5: Haydn: Sonata Hob. XVI/50, bars 1–4

Although the notation is different, one perfectly satisfactory performing style for the Scarlatti (albeit a simplistic one) is to conceive the desired articulation — that is, the general length to which the written notes should be held in performance — to be about the same as in the Haydn. So when we find a Baroque score with relatively long note values but largely devoid of rests, we may face an important choice: did composers intend an execution of such a piece with note-lengths largely played as written, or were they writing notes to a fuller value than later composers might have done, for reasons of economy and common practice? If this was so, short notes might in many cases be notated exactly the same as long notes. Performers would then have freedom to change note-lengths according to personal taste; but in addition, in certain types of music which were known to sound a certain way, they might be under an unstated obligation to do so. Where a choice is replaced by an implicit obligation, we can say that a more specific convention is at work.

But here are *lots* of rests!

The number of rests to be found in most Baroque music is small. The rests which do occur are rarely expressive, but are most frequently those required to take up space in the measure before a musical entry, or to otherwise provide clarification of the structure — a crucial role in contrapuntal music. To remove any doubts about the 18th century use of rests, let us examine some passages of Baroque music where rests occur in plenty, and which might appear at first sight to contradict the basic premise outlined above: