Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805)

Complete Symphonies

Luigi Boccherini's life and work are still not as well known as the music-historical significance of this great Italian master suggests they should be. There are still many gaps in his biography, and our knowledge of whole periods of his life is limited to conjecture. Music scholarship is in part responsible for this state of affairs inasmuch as its interest in Boccherini came too late: after the destruction of the Boccherini family's private archives in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War. The archives had barely been researched, and the permanent loss of the sources they contained also meant the loss of a unique opportunity for information about our composer. Our current knowledge of Boccherini's life represents the result of a painstaking piecing together of scattered bits of information that, in recent years in particular, have begun to take on more and more of the form of a finished portrait.

Boccherini was born in Lucca on 19 February 1743 and baptized *Ridolfo Luigi* three days later (he never used the first name). His parents, Leopoldo Boccherini and Maria Santa Boccherini (née Prosperi), were both natives of Lucca. The Prosperis seem to have been among the wealthy middle-class patrons of the arts in Lucca because they, like every well-to-do family in the city, owned one of the theater loges that could be bought or rented. AIthough this suggests that Boccherini may have been influenced somewhat by the artistic interests on his mother's side of the family, he can almost be said to have inherited a musical career from his father. Leopoldo Boccherini was a double bassist in the Cappella Palatina in Lucca, the equivalent of a state orchestra, and as "*Contrabassista sopranumerario*" assisted at numerous church feasts and other festive occasions. Perhaps a certain Francesco Boccarini is also to be numbered among Luigi Boccherini's musical ancestors; an oratorio by this composer was performed in Bologna during the seventeenth century. In any case, the family seems to have inherited more than its share of artistic talent: Luigi's sisters Maria Ester and Anna Matilda were ballet dancers (Maria Ester was the wife of Onorato Viganò and the mother of the famous dancer Salvatore Viganò), and his brother Giovanni Antonio Gastone was first a violinist, then a dancer, and finally a librettist who wrote the text for Joseph Haydn's *Il ritorno di Tobia* and also worked together with Salieri.

Some biographers report that Luigi is supposed to have received his first instruction in violoncello from his father. In any case, at an early age he was sent as a day pupil to the seminary school at the Lucca Cathedral, where Domenico Francesco Vannucci (ca. 1718–75) trained him as a cellist. Abbate Vannucci was the music director at the archiepiscopal court, served as a music teacher at the seminary, composed, and played the cello. Perhaps he was the one who recommended the ten-year-old Luigi to one of the best-known Italian cellists, Giovanni Battista Costanzi of Rome. From November 1753 to May/June 1754 (not beginning in 1757, as had earlier been thought) Boccherini studied with Costanzi (1704–78), a composer and conductor at St. Peter's who was known as "*Giovanni del violoncello*" on account of his splendid playing. It was through Costanzi that the young Boccherini seems also to have become acquainted with the music of Corelli (1653–1713). In one of his cello sonatas Boccherini reworked the allegro theme from Corelli's *Trio Sonata op. 1 no. 10*, no doubt in homage to the founder of the great tradition of Italian string music.

After Luigi's studies in Rome his father Leopoldo resumed his duties in Lucca. Our sources then report nothing about Luigi until 1756, when the thirteen-year-old began his soloistic career proper on 4 August with the public performance of a cello concerto in the church of San Romano in Lucca.

Independent concert performances such as were held in London and Paris were still unknown in Italy. Soloists usually performed in churches, where it was the custom for secular instrumental music, including symphonies and concerti, to be presented during religious services. The number of instrumentalists employed depended on the importance of the particular feast. Since the above date was the feast of a patron saint, the orchestra consisted of a mere eight musicians: four violinists, Luigi on the cello, two double bassists (including Leopoldo Boccherini), and an organist. On more important feast days other instruments, notably wind instruments, supplemented the basic ensemble. From 1756 on Boccherini frequently performed at church concerts of this sort in his hometown. The increasing number of his engagements suggests that he was a success. More importantly, however, he enjoyed the good favor of Giacomo Puccini (1712–81).

Giacomo Puccini belonged to the Luccan musical dynasty that would achieve worldwide fame in the twentieth century through the opera composer of the same name. The Puccinis played a leading role in the musical life of Lucca over six generations. The Giacomo of the eighteenth century was the "*Maestro di Cappella Palatina*", organist at the San Martino Cathedral, responsible for church music in the city, and thus the chief musical authority in Lucca. It almost goes without saying that he was also active as a composer. He seems to have followed the young Boccherini's career with great interest and to have lent strong support to the full development of his talents. In September 1756 he allowed Luigi to perform at the city's main musical event, the feast of Santa Croce.

Every year on 13 September a solemn procession through the streets of Lucca at nightfall commemorated (and still commemorates) the medieval transfer of a famous wooden crucifix. Lucca had a population of a little more than 20,000 around 1760, and all the residents of the city watched the procession along with representatives from the various regions of the small aristocratic Republic of Lucca and its then some 120,000 residents. Although originally a religious event, by the eighteenth century the feast had taken on the character of a music festival. Musicians from all of Italy and from abroad came in order to offer their best, and famous vocal and instrumental artists could be admired in person. It is clear that Santa Croce exposed Boccherini to influences of decisive importance for his compositional career, and at the 1756 feast he too was one of the professional musicians. But Leopoldo Boccherini was looking for a permanent position for his highly gifted son, and nothing was available in Lucca at the time.

So during the spring of 1757 Leopoldo and Luigi set out for the northern destination of Vienna by way of Venice, the city of the great Vivaldi. At the court of the Empress Maria Theresia both were engaged in the "*Théâtre allemande*" of the Kärntnertor Theater from spring 1758 to the end of September 1758. Two further engagements in the same orchestra followed during the seasons running from 5 April 1760 to March 1761 and from April 1763 to April 1764. These years fell during one of the most important epochs in the history of the Viennese theater: Noverre's ballet was being prepared, and Gluck was reforming the opera. A new instrumental style was being heralded in the works of C.P.E. Bach, Wagenseil, and Monn. Such developments could not have escaped Boccherini's notice even though we should remember that the great opera events of those years took place in the "*Théâtre françois*" of the Burgtheater.

The Kärntnertor Theater company gave 214 performances in 1758, with slapstick "*Hanns-Wurst*" comedies dominating the repertoire. Alter every performance there were two ballets, and this was the music of decisive influence in the development of Boccherini's compositional style. Here we only have to think of his enchanting minuets, one of which would later become world famous, but he also went on to write ballets.

The Lenten concerts in the Burgtheater spanning the period without dramatic performances during the Lenten season offered Boccherini the opportunity for solo performances. We have evidence for

such performances in 1758 and 1763. The account books for the Lenten concerts of 1764 list "*Concerts, bei denen Musik Academien und 1 hierzu auf 2 Violoncelli componierter Concert*" for Boccherini. The double concerto for two violoncelli mentioned here seems to have been lost. Perhaps Boccherini also performed his virtuoso "*L'lmperatrice*" cello sonata during these Lenten concerts, a work dedicated to none other than the Empress Maria Theresia and rediscovered by the author of these lines in Austria in 1987.

Boccherini's solo performances in Vienna and those in Italy during the intervening years met with acclamation. In Florence the eighteen-year-old "*Celebre suonatore di violoncello*" received thunderous applause when he performed a concerto of his own composition on 19 March 1761. Its style of composition was regarded as a "*completely new style*". He also must have met with great success at a concert in Modena on 7 January 1763. But neither Italy nor Vienna offered opportunities for a musical career relying exclusively on public solo performances. The great period of the traveling virtuosi would not dawn until the following generation, with Paganini. In keeping with the centuries old self-understanding of the musician, Boccherini still embodied the union of *musica practica* and *musica poetica*. His dual career as a composer and a performer corresponded entirely to this convention. He was extraordinarily gifted as a composer as well and wrote his first mature compositions in 1760.

It is certain that Boccherini had composed works for his own use prior to 1760; most of them would have been sonatas, along with perhaps one or more of the concerti he had presented in the churches of Lucca. But now Boccherini began to occupy himself with other genres, started a catalogue of his works, and assigned them opus numbers. His *Opus 1* comprised *six trios for two violins and violoncello*, his *Opus 2* of 1761 *six quartets for two violins, viola*, and his *Opus 3 six violin duets*. These eighteen works written within a short period of time clearly anticipated the focal points of his œuvre as a whole: instrumental music and chamber music for strings. They also contained astonishing stylistic innovations, some of wide-ranging significance. Here the cornerstone of the "*concertante style*" of chamber music was laid. At the same time as Joseph Haydn was composing his quartet divertimenti, Boccherini, presumably independently of the Viennese master, founded the "*Romance line*" of the string quartet.

When Boccherini finally obtained a position in the Cappella Palatina in Lucca in 1764, he was already overqualified for the job. In July 1765 he participated in the festivities accompanying the tour of Leopoldo II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and performed together with his father in Pavia and Cremona for a top fee. The orchestra was conducted by Giovanni Battista Sammartini (1700–75), the great founder of the Milan symphonic school. Puccini tried to keep Boccherini in Lucca and secured a major commission for him, the composition of the cantata *La confederazione dei Sabini con Roma* G 543 for the Tasche in December 1765. This work was followed by the oratorios *Gioas G 537* and *Giuseppe riconosciuto G 538* and some liturgical music. But all of this hardly satisfied Boccherini's ambitions in the area of composition, as the works of 1760–61 and later years demonstrate.

With the death of his father on 30 August 1766 Luigi lost the driving force behind his career but at the same time was free to try to move out on his own. He began by departing for Genoa with the concertmaster of the Cappella Palatina, Filippo Manfredi. In this important trade center both friends found members of the nobility who were willing to write them letters of recommendation for a trip to London. Many Italians, including the Luccan native Francesco Geminiani (1680–1762), had managed to establish themselves in the English music metropolis. The two arrived in Nice in October 1767 and in Paris shortly thereafter.

Boccherini was already known as a composer of merit in the French capital, then with a population of about 500,000. Parisian publishers had printed his first trios and quartets in the spring of

1767, and these works had met with great resonance. Baron de Bagge (1722–91) seems to have lent his support to the two virtuosi in Paris. His salon had been famous for its musical presentations since 1760, and around 1768 he exerted a great influence on Parisian musical life in his roles as a host, concert organizer, composer, and teacher. He took up the cause of many gifted artists and gave them opportunities for public performance. According to a curious anecdote handed down about the baron, Boccherini is supposed to have been his pupil and de Bagge to have paid for the privilege of being his teacher.

When Boccherini arrived in Paris, a new style of orchestral music was emerging and leaving its mark on the musical life of the city: the symphony. The music of Johann Stamitz and other Mannheim composers was taking the city by storm, and their symphonies surely had a lasting influence on Boccherini.

The "*Concerts spirituels*" were an important Parisian musical institution of the time. The *Mercure de France* commented on Boccherini's solo performance of 20 March 1768, apparently his only such performance in this concert series, with appreciative words: "*Mr. Boccherini, already known through his trios and quartets of great effect, performed a sonata of his own composition on the violoncello with great mastery.*" Equally masterful were Boccherini's first *six sonatas for violin and piano*, his *Opus 5*. He composed them for the pianist Madame Brillon de Jolly in Paris in 1768, and they were soon in circulation and went through many printings.

Someone in Paris must have made the two Luccans a very attractive offer leading them to abandon their London plans and to turn to Madrid in 1768. It seems to have been Joaquin Atanasio Pignatelli de Aragon y Moncalvo, Count of Fuentes, the Spanish ambassador in Paris and himself of Italian ancestry. The music at the court of the Spanish king Carlos III (1716–88) was of a thoroughly Italian orientation. The numerous Italian musicians in Madrid included Carlo Broschi Farinelli, a prominent castrato who had achieved great fame and fortune, and his success no doubt influenced Boccherini's decision. Another factor may have been that the Spanish court had lost one of its best and most prized violoncellists with the death of Christiano Reynaldo in 1767. According to recent scholary findings, Boccherini and Manfredi appear to have been engaged as orchestra musicians in the Compagnia dell'Opera Italiana dei Sitios Reales, the Italian opera company of the royal residences, in 1768–70. Here Boccherini met the singer Clementina Pelliccia (or Pelicho) of Rome, whom he married in 1771. Boccherini wrote a composition in the new style of the sinfonia concertante for the autumn concert of the Madrid theater De los Caños del Peral in 1769, the *Concerto a più stromenti concertanti op. 7 G 491*, a significant testimony to his occupation with the new genre with which he had become acquainted in Paris.

For many years biographers continued to report the legend that an intrigue against Boccherini had prevented his employment in the Real Capilla, the court orchestra of King Carlos III. The man behind the intrigue was supposed to have been Boccherini's fellow Italian Gaetano Brunetti (1744–98) a violinist in the Real Capilla since 1767 and the "*music master*" of the Prince of Asturias, the later King Carlos IV. But there is no evidence for such jealous scheming.

Boccherini entered the service of Carlos III's younger brother, the Infante Don Luis Antonio Jaime de Borbón. on 8 November 1770 with the title "*Compositore e virtuoso di camera*". His yearly salary of 30,000 reales was a substantial sum corresponding to that paid to the first violoncellist in the Real Capilla. No other musician at the court earned more than Boccherini except the director of the royal orchestra, Francisco Corselli (Courcelle). Corselli was paid 38,340 reales, but the first violinist received only 17,455 reales. The palace of the Infante Don Luis was located in Aranjuez, a royal residence city famous for its gardens and situated in the Castilian plateau forty-seven kilometers south of Madrid. In Aranjuez Boccherini spent what were perhaps the happiest years of his life.

Boccherini's new position in Aranjuez brought about a remarkable increase in his compositional productivity, with the symphony and, most notably, the string quintet appearing as new genres. The string quintet instrumentation with two cellos was created by Boccherini and seems to have been occasioned by the presence of four string quartet musicians at the infante's small court with whom Boccherini could form a string quintet. This would explain the sometimes quite virtuosic first violoncello part in Boccherini's string quintets as well as the second half of his title, "*Virtuoso di camera*". He wrote the first twelve of his total of 125 *string quintets* in 1771, and the eleventh (G 275) contained his famous minuet. The popularity of the minuet, first attested to around 1874, had unfortunate consequences for the reception of Boccherini's music in that it turned him into the master of ceremonies of the old-fashioned elegance of the *ancien régime*.

Boccherini also composed twelve of his some thirty symphonies in Aranjuez, the *six symphonies* of *Opus 12* in 1771 and the *six symphonies* of *Opus 21* in 1775. The full instrumentations with winds show that Boccherini could also count on the performance of larger orchestras at the infante's court. It is certain that steady contact was maintained between Aranjuez and the musicians of the Real Capilla because Carlos III and his large retinue regularly visited the members of the royal family in their residences around Madrid and liked to take Don Luis around with him. In addition, at least some of Carlos III's court musicians had to render their services to other members of the royal family. In 1776, to put it in the words of Schiller's *Don Carlos*, "*the beautiful days in Aranjuez*" came to their end. Don Luis had decided to marry beneath his social class and for this reason was excluded from the royal circle as a *persona non grata*, sent out to the country, and degraded to the rank of count ("*Conte di Chincón*"). Boccherini followed Don Luis to Arenas de San Pedro, where a country estate was built for the count. Arenas, a mountain village situated along a torrent in the Sierra de Gredos and surrounded by conifer forests, is about 150 kilometers west of Madrid. Boccherini's compositions of the next six years reflect the one-dimensionality that had been forced on him and the isolation he shared with his patron. He wrote trios, quartets, and quintets at regular intervals. The only nonchamber work was the music for a ballet, *Cefalo e Procri*, by his brother-in-law Viganò, who had it performed in Mestre in 1778 with Boccherini's sister Maria Ester in the cast.

This six-year period of compositional uniformity came to an end in 1781 with the *Stabat mater G 532* for soprano and strings. Over the next four years Boccherini wrote a remarkably small number of compositions: nine works at the most are attested, and Boccherini had usually produced twice as much music in a single year. Eight of the nine works were for orchestra. Evidently Boccherini was no longer obliged to compose chamber music for Don Luis, but there are still a few unresolved questions about these years. Boccherini's wife Clementina died in 1785 and left behind six children, and Don Luis died soon thereafter. At Boccherini's petition Carlos III continued to pay him half of his former salary and promised to employ him as a cellist in the Real Capilla when a position became available. Boccherini moved to Madrid, but the question as to whether he was ever offered such a position and served in the royal orchestra has not yet been answered for certain.

During the five years prior to his move to the capital Boccherini seems to have been planning to give up his Arcadian existence in Aranjuez in order to rejoin the musical mainstream. In 1780 he established business contacts with Artaria, the Viennese publishing house of such great importance for the classical music associated with that imperial city. In 1782 he tried to contact Haydn, the most highly admired composer at the time in Spain, and his citation of Gluck (1714–87) in the *Violoncello Concerto op. 34* composed around 1782 and published in Vienna by Artaria was an indirect attempt to remember himself to the great opera reformer. But in 1783 someone else turned his attention to Boccherini: the Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (beginning in August 1786 Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia).

The Prussian ambassador in Madrid had reported of Boccherini to Friedrich Wilhelm, himself an enthusiastic cellist, and had sent him some of his compositions. The crown prince thereupon thanked Boccherini in an appreciative letter and with the gift of a gold box and requested new compositions. After the death of Don Luis, Boccherini was free to enter into a new contractual relationship, and on 21 January 1786 Friedrich Wilhelm named him his court composer, a position with an annual salary of about the equivalent of 19,000 reales. One of the most controversial questions about Boccherini's life continues to be whether he ever visited Prussia.

Boccherini became "*Direttore di concerto*" the leader of a sixteen-man orchestra, in the Madrid palace Puerto de la Vega of the Countess Maria Josefa of Benavente, Duchess of Osuna, in 1786. His only opera, a zarzuela with the title *La Clementina*, was performed there in the same year. In 1787 he married for the second time; his wife was Maria del Pilar Joaquina Porretti, the daughter of his colleague Domingo Porretti, the first violoncellist in the Real Capilla and a native of Naples. Boccherini continued to write one chamber work per month for the Prussian king until the monarch's death in 1797. King Friedrich Wilhelm III, his successor, did not retain Boccherini. Aside from these compositions there are no sources about or by Boccherini for the years 1789–96. At the beginning of 1789 Boccherini referred to himself, in addition to his Prussian title, as "*Professore di musica all'attual servizio di S.(ua) M.(aestà) Cattolico*", with "*His Catholic Majesty*" being Carlos IV, king since 1788. The English music historian Charles Burney wrote with great appreciation for Boccherini in his 1789 survey of European music: "*His style is at once bold, masterly, and elegant. There are movements in his works, of every style, and in the true genius of the instruments for which he writes, that place him high in the rank among the greatest masters who have ever written for the violin or violoncello.*" (*A General History of Music*. Vol. II, p. 455. 1935 ed.)

The last years of Boccherini's life were marked by increasingly poor health and worsening financial circumstances. After the Benavente-Osuna family's departure from Madrid in 1798, Boccherini seems to have lost this source of income. At the same time he saw himself forced to sell his compositions at quite low prices. Thus Ignaz Pleyel, a Haydn pupil who had just opened a publishing business in Paris, bought fifty-eight compositions by Boccherini for 7,600 reales in 1796, and in the following year Boccherini received a mere 9,600 reales for 110 compositions. In 1800 Lucien Bonaparte went to Madrid as the French ambassador and hired Boccherini to organize his concerts and to write new compositions for him. But a year later Bonaparte was recalled, and with his departure Boccherini lost his last patron. The deaths of two of Boccherini's daughters in 1802 and of a third daughter and his wife in 1804 surely hastened the composer's own death. The idea that he spent the last years of his life in extreme poverty seems to be an exaggeration of the biographical tradition. He was no worse off than other Madrid residents of his social class.

Boccherini died at the age of sixty-two in Madrid on 28 May 1805 and was buried in the crypt of the church of San Justo in the same city. He was survived by both sons from his first marriage, Luis Marcos, a priest, and José Mariano, an archivist in the employ of Count Seralbo (d. 1847). Alfredo Boccherini (1847–1907), José Mariano's grandson, published a biography of his distinguished great-grandfather and a catalogue of his works in Madrid in 1879. The mortal remains of Luigi Boccherini were transferred to his home-town of Lucca in 1927 and interred with solemn ceremony in the church of San Francesco.

Shortly after Boccherini's death the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of Leipzig paid tribute to him in an appreciative obituary article:

> *"He was truly one of the most outstanding instrumental composers of his fatherland, Italy. Contrary to the custom of his fellow countrymen, he kept up with the times and musical developments in Germany as well and let the advances of the same penetrate to the depths of his own being, especially insofar as they had*

> *been brought about or occasioned by his old friend Joseph Haydn, but without going so far as to deny his own individuality. Italy values him at least as much as Haydn with respect to the quartets and similar music by the two; Spain, where he spent most of his active life, prefers him in many of his works to the German masters, who there are sometimes regarded as overly learned; France has great respect for him without wanting to place him on the same level as Haydn; and Germany, with its current predilection for the more difficult, more artistic, and more erudite, seems still to know too little of him: those who know his work, however, and especially those who know how to appreciate and enjoy the melodic element in his works like him and hold him in honor. In addition, earlier on he was an excellent violoncellist who charmed his audiences with his unforgettable tone and the highly expressive song of his instrument. All who knew him personally praise him as a good and decent man for whom the faithful fulfillment of his duties to all was a matter of custom."*

Boccherini's cello is still extant. It was built by Antonio Stradivari in Cremona, and a note in the instrument dates it to 1709. During the middle of the nineteenth century it was in the possession of the Spanish infante Don Sebastian de Borbón and then of his nephew, the Duc d'Hernani. In our century it has passed from Gaspar Casadó Moreu (1897–1966) to Julius Berger.

A great many heroic biographies of musicians were produced during the nineteenth century, but the period had its difficulties with the music-historical classification of Boccherini. (The same was the case with Haydn, who from a perspective determined by the emergence of Beethoven the "*Titan*" could be viewed only as, "*Papa Haydn*" the doting father figure.) Today we would still find it difficult to subsume Boccherini's style under the name of an epoch. His music is to be termed "*classical*", insofar as his musical language in principle more or less employs the same syntax and the same vocabulary as the musical language of Haydn and Mozart. This is especially obvious when we compare his solo concerti for strings with those of Haydn and Mozart. And it is especially difficult to assign Boccherini without reservation to what is generally regarded as the classical period when we recall that Tartini, Viennese "*preclassicism*", and the Mannheim symphonic school all contributed to the shaping of the special character of Boccherini's compositional style. Along with this we should observe that Boccherini's style underwent no essential changes after he had entered the service of Don Luis in 1770. Although Boccherini was still active as a composer during the years when Beethoven had already published his first piano concerti and symphonies, the chief characteristics of Viennese classicism, as they appeared in Haydn's *String Quartets Op. 33* of 1781, never became determining factors for Boccherini's music. And the Italian view of musical classicism is too much oriented to Vivaldi's epoch to be able to apply to Boccherini.

The normative understanding of classicism, however, still allows us to designate Boccherini as a classical composer: he was a composer of rank, and in the concertante style of his chamber music he established a new style that brought forth great fruit, especially during the further course of French music.

Symphonies G 490, 491, 500 & 523

At the end of the 1760s Jean-Baptiste Davaux and Carl Stamitz introduced a new musical genre in the "Concerts spirituels", a Paris concert series: the sinfonia concertante or symphonie concertante. The busy itineraries of instrumental virtuosos encouraged the spread of the genre: it soon became the fashion and made its influence felt in the instrumental-music centers of the time. The symphonie concertante also enjoyed great popularity in Mannheim, where the court orchestra included a whole list of first-class instrumental virtuosos and composers among its members. The style of the symphonie concertante, like that of the solo concerto, aimed at meeting the musical expectations of the new middle-class concert public: it combined the orchestral splendor of the symphony with virtuoso sensation.

Symphony in D major (G 490)

1. Allegro
2. Andante grazioso
3. Allegro assai

The Sinfonia or Symphony in D major (G 490) also seems to have enjoyed a certain measure of popularity because Boccherini also "*recycled*" it a number of times. In this case, however, he did not change the work. He composed it as the overture to his cantata *La confederazione dei Sabini con Roma*, a work performed in Lucca in 1765. He used it as the overture to his oratorio *Il Giuseppe riconosciuto*, a work presumably performed in Genoa a year later, and as the overture to the second part of Picinni's *La buona figliola* at a summer performance in Aranjuez in 1769. Boccherini was a member of the orchestra of the Italian opera company at the time. The short work corresponds to the traditional style of the Italian opera symphony. The pretty theme of the *Andante grazioso* also appears in Boccherini's *Cello Concerto (G 478)*.

Symphony op. 7 in C major (G 491)

1. Allegro
2. Adagio
3. Allegro
(Solo: violin I, violin II, cello)

Luigi Boccherini was one of the composers who immediately turned to creative exploration of the new genre. He had arrived in Paris at the turn of the year 1767/68, journeying from Genoa by way of Nice, and had performed as a cello virtuoso at a Concert spiritual on 20 March 1768. A year later Boccherini presented himself to the Madrid public in the Lenten concerts at the Coliseo de los Caños del Peral theater with his first Symphonie Concertante op. 7 (G 491). He himself designated the work as a *Concerto grande a più stromenti obligati*, and it was published in Paris in 1770 under the title of *Concerto a più stromenti concertanti, due violini, obboe, violoncello, alto e basso obbligati, due violini, fagotti e corni di ripieno*. Two violins and the violoncello occupy the soloistic spotlight.

The opening ritornello of the C major first movement displays orchestral splendor with a great deal of tremolo and the shooting ascent of scales. The animated conclusion spreads to the renewed entry of the two solo violins introducing the first solo section. The first solo section, instead of being dominated by the violin duo alone, also allows for dialoguing between tutti and soli at brief intervals. A solo section in E flat major follows the second ritornello; here the winds move more into the foreground, and the solo violoncello is singled out for opportunities for brilliant display. The two solo violins, however, continue to be the preferred solo instruments, and the cadenza is assigned to them. The *Adagio* is in C minor, a key frequently employed by Boccherini, and his compositions manifest their own special magic in such movements. Boccherini's whole being seems to express itself in the sweetness and melancholy of the violoncello solo. A half cadence on the dominant in the second movement forms a transition to the dancy finale movement in 3/4 time. The bucolic theme is kept simple: stringed instruments and the first bassoon traverse the octave in two-voice structure and over the keynote maintained in the bass. The artificial playing of the two first violins in the solo sections contrasts with this. In the second orchestral ritornello the music modulates from C major to E flat major, an act of recourse to the first movement in the same key disposition. In both cases the horns announce the new key with a short solo.

Symphony in D major (G 500)

1. Allegro
2. Andante

3. Minuetto
4. Presto

It hardly seems possible that even the young Boccherini could have been responsible for the unimaginative development section of the first movement and the modest motivic work in the finale. As a matter of fact, this work published under the name of "*Bouqueriny*" in Paris in 1767 numbers among the least convincingly authentic works among those attributed to Boccherini. François Delange (1717–81) may have been its composer.

Symphony op. 10 no. 4 in C major with Solo Guitar (G 523)

1. Grave – Allegro e con imperio
2. Grave
3. Allegro
(Solo: violin I, violin II, guitar, cello)

The above work must have met with great resonance in Madrid because Boccherini arranged it two more times for commissioners in Spain: as his *String Quartet op. 10, no. 4 (G 268)* for his employer Don Luis de Bourbon in 1771 and as his Sinfonia with Solo Guitar (G 523), the second piece on our recording, for François Borgia, Marquis de Benavent, some three decades later. The unusual instrumentation of the latter arrangement is explained by the commissioner's musical tastes: the marquis was an ardent guitarist. It was also for the marquis that Boccherini arranged a dozen of his most popular chamber works as guitar quintets during in 1798–99. The full title of the sinfonia was *Sinfonia a grande orchestra con due violini principali, due di ripieno, oboe, chitarra, viola, corni, fagotto, violoncello obligati e bass*. Two distinct roles are assigned to the guitar in the overall instrumentation: in the tutti sections it mostly offers chordal accompaniment, and in the solo sections it is employed as a solo instrument, as are the other instruments. In the second movement the guitar is allowed to introduce the wonderfully beautiful cantabile theme before the violoncello, perhaps a chivalrous gesture on the part of the composer toward the commissioner.

Symphonies op. 12, nos. 1 – 6 (G 503 – 508)

The bulk of Luigi Boccherini's symphonic œuvre is represented by the three cycles he composed during his fifteen years of service as "*Virtuoso di camera e compositor di musica*" at the court of the Spanish Infante Don Luis: the six symphonies each of Opus 12 (G 503–8) of 1771, Opus 21 (G 493–98) of 1775, and Opus 35 (G 509–14) of 1782. A fourth group of symphonies, Opus 37 (G 515–18) of 1786–97, contains only four symphonies – such an unusual number for an eighteenth-century cycle that we almost have to view this set of symphonies as an unfinished work.

Symphony op. 12 no. 1 in D major (G 503)

1. Grave – Allegro assai
2. Andantino
3. Minué amoroso
4. Presto assai

Symphony op. 12, no. 1 begins with a slow introduction. The two oboes emerge in piano from the opening D major chord of the full orchestra out into a quietly flowing melody. The divided violas, in dialogue with the divided violoncellos, soon make their appearance over the continuous tremolo of the violins. Piano dynamics and tonal dimming or veiling persist until the music issues in a long-drawn-out dominant seventh chord signaling the imminent beginning of the *Allegro assai*. The violins then proceed through tonal space with giant strides and take the lead in a brilliant movement consisting of an endless series of motifs in the typical Italian style. The billowing dynamics correspond to the up

and down of the melody lines, both in the rapid alternation between piano and forte and in the large-scale crescendos culminating in fortissimo. The development section begins in B minor, and here again we meet with solo pairs: first the two oboes and then the two violins along with extended triplet figurations. Pedal point and harmonic proceedings charged with suspense prepare for the recapitulation. If the first theme of the *Allegro assai* was stamped by a melodic ascent, then the principal theme of the following second movement, an *Andantino* in D minor, is marked by descents. The latter theme lends the movement a delicate as well as melancholy character. The F major second theme in the tightly woven string texture yields immediately to a variation and melodic extension of the first theme. The themes are continued in the second part of the movement amid cautious modifications and occasional, passing harmonic modulations to keys related to D minor. The following *Minué amoroso* is capitivating both in the originality of the spatially oriented orchestral treatment and in the melody type resembling a ländler. The movement begins in piano and with the low strings alone, with the divided viola and violoncello parts marked "*Soli*". Then the horn pair, oboe pair, and the violins, reinforcing the conclusion, enter in succession. In the second part – beginning in fortissimo! – the first and second violins alternate measure by measure in rushing sixteenth runs. Boccherini has a surprise in store for us in the trio: the first and only appearance of a flute in the whole symphony. Since the flute solo recalls the twittering and warbling of a bird, we may well surmise that it was intended as a reminiscence of the Aranjuez aviary of Boccherini's patron Don Luis. The finale again draws on the full resources of the orchestra. The 6/8 time draws on the gigue tradition, and its racing eighth pulse pervades the entire movement.

Symphony op. 12 no. 2 in E flat major (G 504)

1. Allegro maestoso
2. Grave
3. Allegro con Moto
(Solo: violin I, violin II, cello I, cello II)

Boccherini's entry of his op. 12 symphonies in the catalogue he kept of his compositions reads *Concerto a grande orchestra*, and Symphony op. 12, no. 2, a work in the key of E flat major, demonstrates just how appropriate this title continues to be. The symphony, essentially a sinfonia concertante, offers an extraordinary as well as fascinating combination of solo instrumental groups. In addition to the violin pair, to a certain extent a standard feature of group concertos, Boccherini also employs two violoncellos and two horns. As is so often the case in his œuvre, a dignified and solemn musical character accompanies the key of E flat major, one of his favorite keys. The *Allegro maestoso* movement heading and the fourfold E flat major chord in marchlike rhythm right at the very beginning of the work serve as an explicit mention and a musical announcement of this overall character. (The beginning also reflects a topos of Boccherini's time; cf. Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante* and *The Magic Flute*.) The horns return to the E flat major chord when they open the solo round after the first tutti. The violoncellos then enter with a short solo in which the first violoncellist is assigned a short solo cadenza. Since Boccherini had just entered the Infante's employ in the high-paid dual capacity of chamber virtuoso and court composer, the natural conclusion would seem to be that he composed the first violoncello part for himself and played it when the work was performed. The two violins and then the violoncellos follow in the further course of this first solo section. The grand solo cadenza assigned to the violoncellos is one of the few cadenzas of Boccherini's composition to have come down to us in written form for the instrument he played with such great mastery. The *Grave* second movement pays homage to Boccherini's great predilection for the pathos of minor keys, such as we know it from a whole series of slow movements of his authorship in this very same key of C minor. A typical figure for the expression of grief or pain is not at all absent here: the fourth with chromatic filling (*passus duriusculus*). The orchestral sound remains subdued, flutes relieve the oboes, the horns take a rest, and

the music is heard in forte in only a few passages – almost always involving the march motif from the first movement. The violoncellos are given another opportunity to make themselves heard in the two solo cadenzas marked "*ad libitum*". The movement does not have a conclusion proper but proceeds in reserved fashion into a long-drawn-out diminished triadic chord. The chord is resolved only at the beginning of the final movement, and the gloomy atmosphere is quickly put to flight, with the cheerful rondo finale forming the sharpest contrast imaginable to the second movement. The piano theme is charming as well as witty, and the siciliano rhythm with bagpipe accompaniment (horns) underscores its bucolic character in combination with a simple five-tone melodic design. Boccherini's quiet sense of humor shines through in his toying with audience expectations: the melody chases itself around and makes its way to the long-awaited final tone only after assistance from an unexpected motif repetition and the accompanying irritation of a metrical turnabout. Of the couplets, the one in C minor deserves special mention for its beautiful oboe duo.

Symphony op. 12 no. 3 in C major (G 505)

1. Allegro con Moto
2. Andantino amoroso
3. Tempo di Minue
4. Presto ma non tanto

In Symphony op. 12, no. 3 Boccherini pays homage to the idiom of the brilliant, rushing orchestral style such as had manifested itself in hundredfold fashion ever since the Neapolitan opera symphony. At the same time, however, this work also clearly bears unmistakable traces of Boccherini's own personal signature, a signature formed in the tradition of concerto performance style. Thus in the first movement the introduction of the second theme in the violas and violoncellos makes us sit up and listen. The recapitulation demonstrates its independence from all convention. Although the appearance of the beginning of the first movement after the development section meets our formal expectations, the music proceeds directly to a solo section under the direction of two violins. The importation of concerto elements continues in the second and third movements. In the development section of the *Andante amoroso* the violoncellos come forward into the soloistic spotlight, and in the lengthy trio of the minuet the violins do the same in playful fashion. The cheerful finale has a pretty theme in the manner of a popular tune. The second violin's canonic imitation of the theme exhibits the highest degree of contrapuntal artistry, as if Boccherini did not want to make himself liable to the charge of simplicity.

Symphony op. 12 no. 4 in D minor (G 506)

1. Andante sostenuto – Allegro assai
2. Andantino con moto
3. Andante sostenuto – Allegro con molto

The Symphony op. 12, no. 4 (G 506) is doubtless the best-known of Boccherini's symphonies. It was by no means the effort of an old hand at symphonic composition but one of Boccherini's first contributions to the genre. Of course, at the time of its composition, in 1771, the twenty-eiqht-year-old Italian could already look back on at least ten years of experience as a composer, even if principally in the field of chamber music. The symphony, the fourth in the series of six symphonies forming the op. 12 cycle, was occasioned by Boccherini's appointment as court composer (exact title: "*Virtuoso di camera e compositore di musica*") to the Spanish infante Don Luis in Aranjuez on 8 November 1770. The brother of the Spanish king Carlos III, Don Luis figured importantly in the entertainments of court society in Madrid and did indeed have something special to offer to his fellow nobles and royals in the person of the well-paid Italian composer and violoncello virtuoso Boccherini.

In his Symphony op. 12, no. 4 Boccherini fulfilled his new obligation in the field of symphonic composition, for him by and large still unfamiliar terrain, with his own masterful and unique originality. The symphony is of symmetrical tripartite design, with the placement of the same slow introduction, an *Andante sostenuto*, at the beginning of the first and third movements calling special attention to this structural fact. The music assumes a dramatic quality right from the very beginning in the contrast of the concentrated energy of the orchestral unisono and the tender, sometimes solo sound of the strings. The introduction anticipates the poetic idea of the third movement not only in its dramatic quality but also in its D minor key and 3/4 time. The blustery *Allegro assai* following the slow introduction in the first movement bursts forth from the quiet, suspenseful fermata half cadence over the dominant. The expressive contrast could hardly be greater: a radiant D major, a forte bordering on the tumultuous, and a triadic chord melodic trajectory à la "*Mannheim rockets*" dispel the gloomy foreboding of the slow introduction or, more precisely, try to drown it out. For the same mood returns after the meditative slow middle movement in G minor. The slow introduction of the third movement leads into a D minor movement beginning with unsettling pianissimo tremolos. The movement seems to redeem the gloomy foreboding announced in the first movement.

Boccherini intended this third and final movement as a representation of hell in imitation of a composition by Christoph Willibald Gluck. In the movement superscription of the first edition he noted, "*Chaconne representing hell and composed in imitation of that of Mr. Gluck in 'Le festin de Pierre'*". Boccherini must have still remembered Gluck's extremely successful Don Juan ballet (premiere: 17 October 1761 in Vienna) from his years in the Austrian capital and could expect that it would be familiar to at least some members of the diplomatic corps in Madrid. The brilliant parody of Gluck is more than just a reflex of Boccherini's early years as an orchestral musician in Vienna or a homage to Gluck. It is also of great music-historical interest inasmuch as it represents an attempt to transfer the Don Juan myth from the stage to the concert hall. Boccherini's choice of the Don Juan myth almost guaranteed the favorable reception of his symphony: familiarity with the Don Juan myth was a prerequisite to "*cultural literacy*" in the eighteenth century, and the story was of Spanish origin. Unfortunately, we do not know how the symphony was received by its first audiences. A further note: Boccherini also drew on a musical source for the *Allegro assai* of the first movement. Three years prior to his composition of the symphony he had composed the same movement for his *Sonata for Violin and Piano op.5, no. 4*.

Symphony op. 12 no. 5 in B major (G 507)

1. Allegro con spirito
2. Adagio non tanto
3. Minuetto
4. Prestissimo

Symphony op. 12 no. 6 in A major (G 508)

1. Allegro assai
2. Larghetto
3. Minuetto con molto
4. Grave – Allegro assai

The Symphonies op. 12, nos. 5 and 6 exhibit a four-movement design reminiscent of the structure of the Viennese classical symphony. Of all the works in the op. 12 cycle, Symphony no. 5 most closely adheres to the Viennese style. Key, meter, and tempo come to concentrated, succinct expression in the three mighty orchestral chords at the beginning of Symphony no. 6 in A major (G 508). After a short rest the main theme begins in the strings and in complete contrast to the movement

opening: a dainty two-part design is heard in piano, and a finely structured melodic design and colorful harmonic shifts determine the overall sound picture. The staccato motif with the tone repetition, descending in thirds in the violins, however, also refers to the three opening chords, as does the echoing confirmation of the theme conclusion in the orchestra. In the second half of the movement Boccherini's elaboration of the theme in an extended unit resembling a development section demonstrates that he in no way shied away from motivic-thematic work. The A minor second movement, a song in a rocking siciliano meter, is reserved for the strings and suggests deep yearning. The minuet attains to passionate expression in an extended trio in D minor. Boccherini fashions the fourth movement from a grave modulating to the dominant and a following section identical to the second half of the first movement.

Symphonies op. 21, nos. 1 – 6 (G 493 – 498)

Boccherini composed his second orchestral cycle, the *six symphonies of Opus 21 G 493–98*, during his happy years in Aranjuez. The title on the score autograph reads, *Opera 2a. 1775. Sei Sinfonie per due violini, viola e basso, oboe o flauti e corni...* The orchestration with strings, two horns, and two oboes (or two flutes) was the standard instrumentation also known to the Viennese composers of the time. For the first time in this genre Boccherini held to the three-movement form throughout, with three of the symphonies concluding with a minuet. Another new feature not to be found in his earlier *Opus 12* cycle of symphonies is the exuberant allegro first movement as a set type.

Symphony op. 21 no. 1 in B flat major (G 493)

1. Allegro assai
2. Andantino con moto
3. Presto assai

The first movement of the first symphony in B flat major, like the first movement of the fourth symphony, is through-composed and goes without a repetition of its first half. This lends it a forward drive like that of an overture. Its swinging theme is animated by the "*Lombard rhythm*" that stamps the melodic pattern throughout. The superscription "*Andantino*" in the second movement is typical of Boccherini, and the markings "*dolce*", "*dolcissimo*", and "*con grazia*" also belong to this movement type. The cheerful *Presto assai* in 3/8 time draws on the tradition of the gigue.

Symphony op. 21 no. 2 in E flat major (G 494)

1. Allegro e con spirito
2. Andantino
3. Minuetto
(Solo: violin I, violin II, viola, cello)

The art of the symphonic presentation of the genesis of music was a speciality of the Mannheim composers that must have made a strong impression on Boccherini when he heard such music in Paris in 1768. The first movement of the second symphony of the cycle quite clearly reflects this influence. The *Allegro e con spirito* begins almost *ex nihilo*. The first violins emit an initial signal reduced to the minimum in the three tones of the descending tonic chord: tones dropped as if in passing. The first musical thought comes to quiet expression in the low ranges of the middle strings and exhibits clear rhythmic and harmonic contours. The first violins, now with the melody, venture into the upper registers, the horns enter in piano, and then the whole orchestra is heard in a short, sudden fanfare blast. These first ten measures already herald the concerns of the movement: tonal effects and the potential of the orchestral medium. Broad, loud sections and pianissimo sections stand in contrast. Restless triplets lend the second movement a quality of dreamy frolicsomeness and especially so in the

dialogue of the violins. Although the minuet finale is still greatly obliged to the regular stress system of the dance minuet, in its broad dimensions it has long since gone beyond this scheme.

Symphony op. 21 no. 3 in C major (G 495)

1. Allegro assai
2. Larghetto sostenuto
3. Tempo di minuetto
(Solo: cello I, cello II)

A triadic chord fanfare introduces the third symphony in C major amid a powerful unisono. In contrast, the following minor section appears in a subdued light. The exposition forms a self-contained unit by returning to characteristic ideas from the initial section in the closing section, where the oboes take over the beautiful horn call. The minor key dominates completely at the beginning of the second half of the movement; it has a trace of the dramatic about it, and here the music already anticipates the slow movement in C minor. The magic of the second, string movement owes to the treatment of the separate cello parts continuing in thirds for most of the movement. The grim contrast recurring in the forte inserts of the orchestral unisono also finally succumbs to the dolce song of the cellos. The dancelike concluding movement again brings together the whole orchestra.

Symphony op. 21 no. 4 in D major (G 496)

1. Allegro vivo assai
2. Andantino con moto
3. Allegro vivo assai

The fourth symphony in D major has a splendid first movement and may rightly be termed a showpiece. Boccherini was evidently very well aware of the great appeal of the first movement and thus reused it as the concluding movement of the same symphony. Here we hear resonances of the familiar tone of Mozart's opera overtures; here Boccherini formed a wonderful synthesis of esprit and charm. Echoes of the old tradition of the contrapuntal minuet are heard in the middle movement in D minor when the basses come in with an imitation of the theme presented by the violins in octaves. The F major middle section also begins with imitative entries.

Symphony op. 21 no. 5 in B flat major (G 497)

1. Allegro spiritoso
2. Andantino con moto
3. Allegro vivace assai

The *Allegro spiritoso* of the fifth symphony in B flat major draws on a whole series of typical elements from the Neapolitan opera symphony: contrasting tonal planes, double stops for added impulse, beating eighths, and a wealth of musical ideas. The music of the opening section is reserved for the beginning and remains absent from the rest of the movement. Ariose themes fitting for the expression of grief not infrequently form the basis of Boccherini's slow movements in minor keys. One such movement is the *Andantino* in G minor, the second movement of this symphony. The "*a mezza voce*" prescribed in an expressive marking yields only briefly to a "*poco forte*". The B flat major section has ascending and descending figures in runs alter the repetition of the theme and resembles an attempt to disperse gloomy thoughts.

But the theme returns at the conclusion to be stressed again in the deceptive turn of phrase followed by a general pause and to undergo a final intensification in forte. The movement ends on something of an inexorable note with a figure crashing down to the lowest tone of the violins. As was

only fitting after such a movement, the following finale is in the spirit of relaxed play. The symphony concludes in a merry caccia tone.

Symphony op. 21 no. 6 in A major (G 498)

1. Allegro assai
2. Andantino grazioso
3. Tempo di Minuetto

The Opus 21 cycle of symphonies, like the Opus 12 cycle, concludes with an A major symphony. The lively first movement of the Symphony in A major G 498 is in fast 3/4 time and has slides in the initial theme. Boccherini again selected string instrumentation and a minor key for the slow movement with the typical superscription "*Andantino gracioso*". But the music soon turns from D minor to F major and takes on a quality of quiet joy. The very pretty second theme is reminiscent of a musical clock and has a synchronous violin accompaniment. The finale, like those of the E flat major and C major symphonies of this cycle, draws on the traditional form of the Italian minuet finale without, however, including a trio proper. The special color of this movement arises from the constant reinforcement of the melodic lead, the violin, by the first oboe.

Symphonies op. 35, nos. 1 – 6 (G 509 – 514)

The six symphonies of Opus 35 G 509–14 represent the last of Boccherini's total of three opus cycles of six symphonies each. He composed them in the remote Arenas in 1782, after his *Stabat mater* and during a little-researched period of his life. After a six-year period devoted to the rather uniform and regular activity of chamber composition, Boccherini then seems to have written very little aside from the Opus 35 symphonies over a four-year period. Why did he write orchestral music? Why did he include the option of adding a bassoon (in place of the cello!) when there appears to have been no opportunity for the performance of such works in Arenas? Why did he label it "*Opera prima*", as if starting all over from the beginning? Why did this cycle remain unpublished, in contrast to his previous symphonies? One possible explanation might be that he composed Opus 35 and his *Violoncello Concerto G 483* with a view to the contacts he had made with the Viennese publishing house Artaria and thus for general distribution. When the Prussian crown prince Friedrich Wilhelm began to show an interest in Boccherini in late 1782 and early 1783, the composer then decided to withhold them from publication in order to present them to the prince. This would also explain why Boccherini describes himself as the employee of Don Luis on the title page of the autograph score in Berlin and why these Opus 35 symphonies in many a respect stand closer to the compositional style of Viennese cIassicism than his earlier symphonies. In a letter to Artaria in February 1781 Boccherini had expressed his deep admiration for Joseph Haydn.

Boccherini's composition of the six Symphonies op. 35 in 1782 followed on a series of works dating to 1781: the six *String Quartets op. 33 (G 207–12)*, six *String Trios op. 34 (G 101–6)*, and unique *Stabat mater* for solo soprano and strings (first version, G 532). His almost exclusive, extremely productive occupation with chamber music over a long period thus came to somewhat of an abrupt halt in the years following 1781. It was not until 1786, after the death of Boccherini's employer Don Luis and immediately following his appointment to the post of court composer to the Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, that he resumed his steady production of chamber works. Aside from the symphonies, Boccherini seems to have composed only one *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra (G 483)*, four *Vilancicos (G 539)*, and the six *Quintettini op. 36* (*G 331–36*; 1784) from 1782 to 1785. Attempts to explain this remarkable reduction in Boccherini's compositional output continue to remain at the level of conjecture. The standard explanation is that he must have been suffering from a serious illness.

In any event, Boccherini's composition of the six *Symphonies op. 35* came at a time when he was trying to gain his share of the expanding compositional market in the music metropolis of Vienna – this after years of isolation in Arenas, some 160 kilometers from Madrid. No less than twenty-eight of his works, sixteen as first printings and twelve as early printings, were published by the recently established Artaria publishing house in Vienna from 1781 to 1785. And Christoph Torricella, Artaria's rival, began his career as a music publisher in 1781 with Boccherini's *Sonatas for Violin and Piano op. 5*. During the same year Boccherini attempted to establish contact with Joseph Haydn by letter.

Even though Boccherini never called the main lines of his compositional thought into question, traces of his strong gravitation toward the center of Viennese Classicism do show up in his compositional style. Thus in the six *Symphonies op. 35* he continued to abide by the three-movement design that had become a binding norm for him in the six *Symphonies op. 21*. This norm was linked to the Italian and French traditions of the symphonic genre, not to Haydn's manner of symphonic composition. And Boccherini's symphonic style was still very far from assigning an independent role to the wind instruments. On the other hand, in his *Symphonies op. 35* Boccherini opened himself up to the principle of thematic-motivic work.

One of Boccherini's greatest admirers at the time was the Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. On 1 October 1783, a year after Boccherini's composition of the six *Symphonies op. 35*, the prince wrote to our composer:

> *"Nothing would bring me so much joy, Mr. Boccherini, as to receive some of your compositions from your very own hands. From the very moment when I first began to play compositions from your instrumental œuvre, no other instrumental music has truly satisfied me. Every day I delight in this pleasure and do hope that you have not lost interest in composition and that we will be able to see something new from you. I would be very grateful to you in this matter if you would be willing to grant me such an opportunity. In the meantime, Mr. Boccherini, please accept this gold box as a keepsake of me and as a token of my appreciation for your talent in an art to which l attach great importance. Trust in the great admiration linking me to you, Friedrich Wilhelm, Prince of Prussia."*

We do not know when Friedrich Wilhelm received the autograph score of *Opus 35*, today in the holdings of the German State Library in Berlin, but it seems to have been sent to him before August 1785 because on the title page Boccherini refers to himself as still being in the employ of the Infante Don Luis. The six *Symphonies op. 35* did not appear in print during Boccherini's lifetime.

Symphony op. 35 no. 1 in D major (G 509)

1. Allegro assai
2. Andantino lento
3. Prestissimo

A captivating brio at the beginning of the first symphony in D major introduces an extremely concise theme amid an orchestral unisono. The slides expounded in pianissimo over an Alberti bass accompaniment and then recurring in the violins recall the Turkish style that was the rage in Vienna. The prescribed repetition lends extra weight to the middle section beginning with the main theme, like a developmental section in Haydn, and leading into the key of the sixth degree. But there is no thematic development in the strict sense of the term. The stormy main theme is cited again in pianissimo at the conclusion. *Sotto voce e con espressione* is the superscription of the slow movement in D minor, a unit full of the expression and experience of grief. The finale is one of the few *prestissimo* movements in 3/8 time in Boccherini. Here the thematic concision in broken triadic chords also recalls Haydn, and there is a slight trace of the divertimento style.

Symphony op. 35 no. 2 in E flat major (G 510)

1. Allegro vivo
2. Andante
3. Allegro giusto

Among the noteworthy features of the second symphony in E flat major are the thematic development and the entry of the modified recapitulation anticipated by the horns in the first movement as well as the piano conclusions in the outer movements. In the middle movement Boccherini again demonstrates his special liking for minor keys in pure string sound.

Symphony op. 35 no. 3 in A major (G 511)

1. Allegro giusto
2. Andante
3. Allegro ma non presto

The third symphony in A major displays a beauty of sound typical of Boccherini. Here the element representing the fundamental basis of Boccherini's music once again comes to our attention: concert performance. Solo performance is embedded in the orchestral sound without being called for as such in the score. Two solo violins are heard after the leaps for joy of the main theme ("sciolte – al ponticello"). The thirds in the first violin part appear to allude to a solo piece from Boccherini's great years as a virtuoso cellist: the finale of the *L'lmperatrice* cello sonata. The enchanting *andante* serenade with pizzicato accompaniment forms the showpiece of the symphony. In its leading role the solo violin obtains support from the second violin only once; otherwise it is allowed to display its full brilliance. The caccia finale also provides ample room for solo performance when the violins and the viola take up a preceding musical idea in the triolike section in A minor, an idea not unlike the main theme of Boccherini's first *Opus 2 quartet G 159*. It almost seems that Boccherini, through such citations of his own works, was trying to remember himself to the musical world from which he had been isolated. The *Violoncello Concerto G 483* from the same period also contains a citation.

Symphony op. 35 no. 4 in F major (G 512)

1. Allegro assai
2. Andantino
3. Allegro vivace

The Symphony op. 35, no.4 is Boccherini's only such work in the key of F major. The opening *Allegro assai* unfolds from a tiny second-interval motif (f-f-e); the first violins repeat the motif in pianissimo without interruption and take it up the scale by degrees. The motif dominates the development section and reappears in the closing group. (Haydn employed the same second motif in the first movement of his *String Quartet op. 64, no. 3* of 1790, a work of symphonic quality.) The unexpected continuation of the theme from the second part of the exposition along with the sforzati of the whole orchestra and the shift to A flat major and C minor lend this movement a trace of the dramatic. Boccherini chose this movement for the introduction of the second version of his *Stabat mater in F minor* in 1800. An *Andantino* in B flat major with a theme of almost catchy simplicity is followed by a movement of unusual form: a small, thematically independent minuet in 3/4 time (*Tempo di Menuetto*) is incorporated into the *Allegro vivace* in alla breve. Boccherini follows the same procedure in the finale of his *Symphony op. 35, no. 6* (with the markings *Presto – Menuetto – Presto*).

Symphony op. 35 no. 5 in E flat major (G 513)

1. Allegro con moto
2. Andante
3. Tempo di Minuetto

The finale of Boccherini's Symphony op. 35, no. 5, in E flat major is also marked *Tempo di Menuetto*, an indication that he did not intend to divorce himself completely from the Italian tradition of the finale minuet. Be this as it may, the superscription seems to function merely to indicate the tempo: the movement follows the sonata form and hardly shows any traces of the minuet style. Symphony op. 35, no. 5, like *Symphony op. 35, no. 4*, begins in the pianissimo of the strings. Boccherini employed this technique a total of three times in this cycle (including once in piano) and had already tried it out in three symphonies of his *Opus 21* cycle.

Symphony op. 35 no. 6 in B major (G 514)

1. Allegro assai
2. Andante
3. Presto – Minuetto – Presto

The first movement of Symphony op. 35, no. 6 pays homage to the boisterous orchestral style of Neapolitan stamp, with the cantabile element emerging in short episodes marked *dolcissimo*. The ariose, expressive *Andante in F major* is accompanied by on underlying melancholy mood not at all atypical of Boccherini.

Symphonies op. 37, nos. 1, 3 & 4 (G 515, 517 & 518)

Symphony op. 37 no. 1 in C major (G 515)

1. Allegro con moto
2. Menuetto con un poco di moto
3. Andante
4. Allegro vivo assai
(Solo: violin I, violin II, viola, cello, double bass, oboe)

Countess Maria Josefa von Benavente, Duchess of Osuna, appointed Boccherini to head her court orchestra in Madrid in 1786. The duchess and her husband were great admirers of Boccherini's – and Haydn's – music. Boccherini's Symphony op. 37, no. 1, in C major, demonstrates that he must have been studying Haydn's symphonic style at the time. He adopts a four-movement design with a minuet and a slow movement in the middle, the winds are assigned a greater degree of independence, and the finale, *Allegro vivo assai*, is of monothematic composition – a compositional style rarely met with in Boccherini's œuvre.

Symphony op. 37 no. 3 in D minor (G 517)

1. Allegro moderato
2. Minuetto. Con moto
3. Andante amoroso
4. Finale. Allegro vivo ma non presto

Symphony op. 37, no. 3 (G 517) occupies the twenty-third position (or the twenty-forth, depending on whether one counts G 500) in the chronological list of Boccherini's symphonies and a special position of sorts in his symphonic œuvre with respect to its key: it is the second of his total of only four symphonies in a minor key.

His first symphony in a minor key, *Symphony op. 12, no. 4*, a work he composed sixteen years prior to op. 37, is one of the best known of all his works and went on to gain renown under the name of *La casa del diavolo*. Boccherini's choice of the same key, namely D minor, for both symphonies established a certain connection between the two and is all the more remarkable when we consider that there are other points of contact between the two works. The pianissimo string unisono at the very beginning of the *Andante moderato* first movement is supported only by the bassoons and recalls the famous chaconne theme from the finale of the earlier symphony, without there being an intentional resemblance. In its rhythmic repetitions and staccato phrasing the clearcut theme of gloomy coloration looks back more to Vivaldi than it looks ahead to the late Haydn. (A few years later Haydn would lend the rising fifth d-a at the beginning of his *London Symphony* an entirely different design.) The surprising shift to the radiant major key of D major already in the fifth measure heralds a distinguishing characteristic of the first movement: a dualism resulting from the alternation between major and minor, tenderness and melancholy, and light and shadow. The initial fifth theme is resumed in a polyphonic texture of accompaniment voices. The dolcissimo second theme stands out in the following extended F major section: it is a pretty dialogue between the divided violas and the solo bassoon, with the oboes also joining in. The head of the fifth theme completely dominates the development section; it is submitted to contrapuntal refinement through octave imitation and *passus duriusculus* – but of course cannot be maintained in this strict form over long musical stretches.

The fifth motif itself migrates through tonal space in fifth steps until it returns to the beginning of the F major section and with it to the recapitulation. The D minor tonic and with it the fifth theme do not reappear again until the coda. The fifth theme functions as a frame of sorts for what is otherwise a movement of major-key stamp, and this recalls the earlier D minor symphony and the return of its slow introduction before the finale. The Minuetto second movement retains the D minor key, a fact initially and intentionally concealed by the two solo horns and their f-a third. The flute and the first bassoon occupy the foreground in the D major trio. The following *Andante amoroso* in F major, an uncomplicated movement in the tradition of pastoral music (swaying 6/8 time, oboes and bassoons the only wind instruments), is entitled "*Con semplicità*", a superscription so very typical of Boccherini, and offers the proper counterweight to the energetic D minor finale. In the last movement Boccherini signals that we have come full circle: he develops the main theme from the closing group motif (d-c sharp-d) of the first movement.

Symphony op. 37 no. 4 in A major (G 518)

1. Allegro spirituoso
2. Minuetto. Allegro
3. Andante
4. Allegro ma non presto

Symphony op. 37, no. 4, a work in the key of A major, concludes its cycle of a mere four symphonies. Composed in October 1787, this symphony shows traces of the admiration for Haydn which had taken hold of the European musical world around that time and which Boccherini had expressed in very personal terms six years before in a letter to the great master of Viennese classicism. While Boccherini had still firmly adhered to a three-movement design in his op. 35 of 1782, in op. 37 he finally shifted his allegiance to the four-movement form, a development quite probably reflecting the influence of the symphonic form associated with Haydn's name. The first movement has a fresh main theme and independent wind parts in a few phrases, a special feature of Boccherini's orchestral composition. Boccherini allows some instruments to step forward into the soloistic spotlight in the minuet second movement; here the trio and its flute solo merit special mention.

Even in the symphonic genre Boccherini still owed a great deal to the concerto style, and such is in evidence in the dialogue parts of the third movement, where a trio of two violins and one viola stands over against the "*tutti*". (Here it is interesting to note that Boccherini had termed his first symphonies of 1771 *Concerti a grande orchestra*, and the designation *Sinfonia a più istromenti* on the autograph parts of Symphony op. 37, no. 4 continues to point to the concerto tradition.) The final movement is of monothematic composition and seems to have been inspired by Haydn; its theme in 2/4 time has the character of traditional song and recalls the final theme from Haydn's *Symphony no. 88*. It is not impossible that Boccherini was referring to this symphony by Haydn – especially since we know that the Duchess of Benavente saw to it that she was regularly supplied with Haydn's most recent works. Haydn's symphony was published in the same year as the composition of the op. 37 symphonies, and its final movement brought it immediate popularity.

Symphonies op. 41 (G 519)

Symphony op. 41 in C minor (G 519)

1. Allegro vivo assai
2. Pastorale. Lentarello
3. Minuetto. Allegro
4. Finale. Allegro

Like the *Symphonies op. 37, nos. 3 and 4*, Symphony op. 41 in C minor (G 519), a work dating to January 1788, was not published in printed form during Boccherini's lifetime. Its tempestuous aspect places it in the vicinity of the musical *Sturm und Drang*, a style which had reached its zenith same years before. In the expression of its last movements this symphony is thus more akin to the abovementioned *La casa del diavolo* symphony than the *Symphony op. 37, no. 3* of the previous year. The outer movements are distinguished by sharp contrasts, violent dynamic outbursts, and impassioned vehemence. In contrast, the slow second movement, a Pastorale in E flat major, radiates with the peacefulness of a country setting. The minuet displays traces of scherzo character, with Boccherini employing the accompanying bass part from the four-measure main theme of the first movement as the theme here. The low strings and bassoons present the theme. One metrical unit later it is heard as the counterpart in the first violins and the first oboe. The motif of the rising triadic chord also dominates the trio – here, however in C major. The trio is reserved exclusively for a wind sextet of two oboes, bassoons, and horns. A wild saltarello forms the rushing conclusion of the symphony.

Symphonies op. 42 (G 520) & op 45 (G 522)

Boccherini composed his Symphonies op. 42 (G 520) and op. 45 (G 522) while in the employ of the King of Prussia or, more precisely, in 1789 and 1792, respectively. (A total of 104 compositions from Boccherini's almost twelve years of service to the Prussian monarch are known to us: twelve trios, twenty-nine quartets, forty-seven quintets, five sextets, two octets, eight symphonies, and one minuet cycle). Since Friedrich Wilhelm II had obtained exclusive rights to Boccherini's compositions, all such works remained under lock and key until the king's death. This had unfortunate consequences for Boccherini: it meant absolute renunciation of the successful publishing career he had enjoyed up until that time. The rapid dissemination of his compositions in all the music-printing centers had enabled him to engage fully in such activity right up until 1786, even though he was working in the geographically remote Madrid and Las Arenas. After Friedrich Wilhelm's death Boccherini attempted a comeback by submitting for publication the works he had composed for the Prussian monarch, an attempt that did not meet with success.

Symphony op. 42 in D major (G 520)

1. Allegro
2. Andante
3. Minuetto – Trio
4. Finale. Presto

The four-movement structure of the Symphony in D major op. 42 (G 520) follows the orientation of what was then already a classical form. The main theme of sixteen measures is heard first in pianissimo, without winds and basses, before the full orchestra enters in fortissimo. The monothematicism here means that the development section beginning in D minor takes on special weight. The thematic work continues into the coda, where the two violins once again recall the main theme in the canon. The slow second movement is in D minor. Two different expressive stances are brought into contrast again and again in this movement: the orchestral tutti in fortissimo with its strongly dotted rhythm and the tender legato playing of the flute or oboes ("*dolcissimo*"). The woodwinds are again featured as soloists in the trio of the minuet third movement. The carefree *Presto* fourth and final movement dearly demonstrates the influence of Haydn's orchestral style on Boccherini.

Symphony op. 45 in D major (G 522)

1. Adagio – Allegro vivo assai
2. Andantino
3. Minuetto. Allegro
4. Adagio – Allegro vivo assai

The Symphony op. 45 (G 522) is also in the key of D major but begins in D minor and with a slow introduction. The introduction proceeds to an *Allegro vivo assai* maintained in the style of the so-called singing allegro. The *Andantino* second movement marked "*sempre sotto voce*" is also in D major. The proximity of the keys of D major and D minor comes to joint expression in the third movement, a minuet in a minor key: the oboe and bassoon intone a cantabile tune in D minor, and the tutti answers immediately in D major. The trio assigns solos to the horn and first violin. A short *adagio* section introduces the finale movement, itself a part of the first movement, as immediately becomes clear. We also meet with the practice of the resumption of the first movement in the finale movement elsewhere in Boccherini's œuvre.

Symphony op. 43 in D major (G 521)

1. Allegro con molto spirito
2. Andantino
3. Allegro come prima

Luigi Boccherini composed his Symphony in D major, G 521, at the very latest in December 1790. The overall design of the work involves what is actually a three-part overture or an opera sinfonia. Boccherini himself termed it an "Overtura" on the title page of the score for his then patron, King Frederick William II of Prussia. It may have been composed as an occasional work. We nevertheless know nothing about the employment of this overture in connection with the performance of a stage work or on the occasion of one of the musical academies that were held in the homes of Boccherini's various patrons, whether in Madrid or Berlin. The compositional style of the symphony is clear and balanced both with respect to the orchestral part (the strings and winds are skillfully mixed and alternately take on roles of equal weight) as well as in view of the melodic substance.

The first musical idea, opening the first movement, *Allegro con molto spirito*, with a "premier coup d'archet", a forte entry of the tutti, is marked by harmonically animated triadic melodic construction in the violins and a rhythmic pattern marked by syncopated fissuring. Here we have before us on allegro very much in the agitato tone of on introductory number for a comic and rather conventional opera, and the key of D major is also entirely to be situated in the domain of opera sinfonia convention of the eighteenth century. After a graduated passage suggesting echoing, further musical ideas follow in rapid sequence, led by the appearance of the oboe, which sets in motion a veritable dialogue with the strings by repeatedly eliciting a characteristic reaction: a tremolo of the violins sparkling with vitality over ascending and descending eighth runs in the low strings. The music breathes the sort of animation and mirth coupled with wit, the sort of Italian spirit that proved to be so fruitful in the history of the sinfonia/symphony from the Neapolitan opera school by way of Giovanni Battista Sammartini to Mozart. At the same time, however, a trait typical of Boccherini is also revealed in this short sinfonia: his delight in experimentation with respect to formal processes. Here this trait manifests itself very much as brilliant play, so that one might be tempted to understand the additional specification "*con molto spirito*" in the movement's superscription not as a playing instruction for the musicians but as a reference to the compositional level. The music initially moves along the path from the tonic to the dominant in order to bring about a first conclusion of the sort familiar to us from the expositional conclusion of a movement designed in sonata form and doubtless expected by Boccherini's listeners. On the harmonic level of the composition, however, the reinterpretation of the expositional conclusion as a dominant in need of resolution by means of the dominant seventh creates an expectation that, to the listener's surprise, is not realized. There is no return to the tonic, and what is heard after a rest increasing the suspense and emphasizing the function of the caesura in the manner of a "point of fracture", is not the repetition of the exposition but a new, serious theme in B minor with the effect of a deceptive cadence. If is thus that the segment corresponding to the development section continues the course of the music. During its course things come to a modulation to G major, with the music then again quickly assuming the bright tone of the overall mood of the movement, only then soon to issue in an extended, exhilarating concluding segment in A major. That the recapitulation now ensuing is heard without the opening syncopated ideas is less unusual for Italian instrumental music of the time than the design of its conclusion. The listener's attention once again is focused, only to have her or him again be surprised by an unexpected continuation. As in the analogous passage, the point-of-fracture passage, here the concluding chord (now D major) is transformed into a dominant seventh chord. But this time the transition is a twofold one: the continuation after the rest is completed according to the rules in harmonic respects (resolution to G major), but an idyllic *Andantino* in gently rocking triple time then appears, and with it we suddenly find ourselves in the second – short – movement of the symphony. Separated only by a rest, this movement goes over into the third and last movement, and then something unexpected again occurs: a return to the first movement, the *Allegro con molto spirito*. This third movement, however, commence not as at the beginning but instead with the minor theme of the point-of-fracture passage, now in E minor. It is as if with this Boccherini would like to present to us a further possibility for linkage to the first movement. In any case, by beginning with the minor theme he builds an ideal bridge from the idyll of the Andantino to the bright and boisterous tone of the Allegro. And where does the very first sparkling theme with its syncopations, now withheld, remain among this confusing formal play that might suggests associations with comedic games of mistaken identity and intrigue? Boccherini reserves it for the very end as one last surprise, thus securing the unity of the work.

Christian Speck