



# BOCCHERINI

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## Cello Sonatas (Volume 1)

**Christian Benda, Cello • Sebastian Benda, Fortepiano**



## Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805): Cello Sonatas, Volume 1

The Italian cellist and composer Luigi Boccherini was born in Lucca in 1743, the son of a double-bass player. His family was distinguished not only in music but also boasted poets and dancers among its members. His elder brother Giovanni Gastone, born in 1742, was both dancer and poet, the author of the text of Haydn's *Il ritorno di Tobia* and of the libretti of some earlier stage works of the Vienna court composer, Antonio Salieri. He later became official poet of the Coliseo de los Caños del Peral in Madrid, a theatre to the concerts in which Boccherini had contributed music. His sister Maria Ester was a dancer and married Onorato Viganò, a distinguished dancer and choreographer. Her son, Salvatore Viganò, who studied composition with Boccherini, occupies a position of considerable importance in the history of ballet.

By the age of thirteen Boccherini was appearing in concerts as a cellist. In 1757 he went with his father to Vienna, where they were both invited to join the orchestra of the court theatre. Boccherini returned two years later to Lucca, but there were further visits to Vienna before he found a position in 1764 at home. In 1766, however, he set out with his fellow-townsmen, the violinist Manfredi, a pupil of Nardini, for Paris, having performed with both violinists and with Cambini in chamber music in Milan the previous year.

In France Boccherini and Manfredi won considerable success and Boccherini himself also continued his work as a composer, in addition to his performances as a virtuoso. In 1768 the pair left for Spain, where Boccherini seems to have lived until his death in 1805. In Madrid he was appointed composer and *virtuoso di camera* to the Infante Don Luis, younger brother of King Carlos III. Part of the following period he spent in Madrid and part at the Palace of Las Arenas in the province of Avila, where the Infante retired after an unacceptable marriage. Members of the Font family were employed by the Prince as a string quartet, for which Boccherini wrote quartets and with whom he performed his own string quintets. He renewed his association with Francisco Font in later years. After the

death of Don Luis in 1785, Boccherini entered the service of the Benavente-Osuna family in Madrid, directing the orchestra of the Countess-Duchess and providing music for her salon. Here he was one of a distinguished international company that included his friend, the painter Goya. At the same time he was appointed court composer to Friedrich Wilhelm, nephew of Frederick the Great, who succeeded his uncle as King of Prussia in 1787. In this latter position he provided the cello-paying king with new compositions under the same kind of exclusive arrangement as that which he had earlier enjoyed with Don Luis. There is, however, no evidence that Boccherini ever spent any time in Prussia. After the death of Friedrich Wilhelm II and the departure of other patrons from Madrid, Boccherini received support from Lucien Bonaparte, the French ambassador, and remained busy to the end of his life, although visitors reported that he lived in all the appearance of poverty, now without any substantial patronage after Lucien Bonaparte's return to Paris.

Boccherini's style is completely characteristic of the period in which he lived, the period, that is, of Haydn, rather than that of Mozart or Beethoven. He enjoyed a reputation for his facility as a composer, leaving some 460 or so compositions. A great deal of his music is designed to exploit the technical resources of the cello, in concertos, sonatas and, particularly, in chamber music for various numbers of instruments, including a remarkable series of works for string quintet with two cellos, the first of which is given a concertante part.

There are problems in dating the sonatas that Boccherini wrote for cello and *basso continuo*, 34 of which survive. Mention is made in the *Mercure de France* of his performance of such a sonata in the Salle des Suisses of the Tuileries in Paris in 1768 and works published in his lifetime include a set of six sonatas issued in London about the year 1770. His style, however, does not appear to have changed vastly during his creative life.

The *Sonata in A major*, listed in the catalogue by the French musicologist Yves Gérard as *G4*, opens with a

movement marked *Allegro moderato*, to which there is also an alternative version. Boccherini's sonata movements show some flexibility and variety in form. This sonata, which, like its companions, makes some demands on the cellist, offers an opening theme that includes a characteristic broken-chord passage for the cello. The thematic material is further developed, now with triplet rhythms, with secondary material in the dominant key, the whole section then repeated. The second part of the movement makes reference to what has gone before, as it makes its way back to the original key, offering the earlier material now in a varied form. The decorated *Adagio* that follows, in the same key, moves forward through expected modulation to a final virtuosic cadenza. The sonata ends with a movement marked, typically, *Affettuoso*. This movement is again in two repeated sections, the second of which refers to the material of the first, offering, as before, a fuller return to the secondary material, now in the home key.

Boccherini's *Sonata in F minor* was among a group of cello sonatas that were rediscovered in 1987. The first movement starts boldly, making full use of double-stopping in the principal theme, leading later to an accompanying syncopated pattern of chords. The final returns of the main theme are ushered in by a brief recitative. The slow movement, marked *Cantabile*, offers an effective singing melody, followed by a lively fugue subject in a contrapuntal final *Allegro* that has elements of the Baroque in its musical idiom.

The *Sonata in G major, G5*, opens with cello chords that reflect the direction at the head of the movement, *Allegro militare*. The first section, interspersed with military elements in its primary and secondary material, is followed by a section that touches on the key of

G minor, before the return of the second theme, duly transposed to the key of the movement. The slow movement, with its varied rhythmic patterns and melodic elaboration, leads to a final *Tempo di Minuetto* in which the two repeated sections follow a similar pattern to that of the first movement.

There is an alternative slow movement to the *Sonata in C minor, G2*, which starts with forthright chords from the cello. The first theme leads to a second thematic element, ending the first section of the movement in the key of E flat major. After a repetition of the first section, the cello continues with a transposed version of the opening, developed before the return of the secondary theme. The slow movement follows a pattern similar to other Boccherini *Adagios*. It is in two sections, the second initially echoing the first, but in the key of E flat major, leading to a final C minor and a solo cadenza. The first repeated section of the closing *Allegretto* starts with a double-stopped theme that is heard again at the end of a second section that opens with contrasted sustained chords.

The *Sonata in C major, G17*, again using principally the higher register of the cello, soon moves forward to a modulating passage of double-stopping. The second of the two repeated sections, using a wider range of the cello, moves through C minor to E flat major for a return to the opening theme, returning to the home key for the secondary thematic material and closing section. The C minor slow movement, with its cadenza, leads directly to an exciting final *Rondò allegro*, its opening theme calling for a rapid alternation of strings and providing the framework for a series of contrasting episodes, including an excursion into the key of C minor.

## Christian Benda

Christian Benda comes from an old family of Czech musicians and composers. With the support of Pierre Fournier he developed his career as a soloist and also as a conductor. He now frequently combines the rôles of soloist and conductor, directing orchestras from the cello, appearing at international festivals such as the Prague Spring, Nikolaus Harnoncourt's Styriarte, the Steirischer Herbst, La Roque d'Anthéron, Schwetzingen, Luxemburg and Hong Kong Arts festivals and performing with musicians such as Lazar Berman, Michel Béroff, Michail Rudy, Cristina Ortiz, Paul Tortelier, Boris Pergamenschikow, Josef Suk, Jean-Jacques Kantorow, and Simon Estes. His collaboration with Barbara Hendricks began in 1995 with a concert in Prague Castle for President Vaclav Havel. He has since toured extensively with Barbara Hendricks in Latin-America, Asia and Europe. Christian Benda's many recordings include orchestral works of Malipiero and Casella, J. S. Bach's *Musical Offering*, C. Ph. E. Bach's *Hamburg Symphonies*, Haydn's complete *Violin Concertos* with Jean-Jacques Kantorow, cello works by Schumann, Stamitz and Martinů and a variety of works by his ancestors.

## Sebastian Benda

Composer, pianist, harpsichordist, Sebastian Benda attracted, as a child prodigy, the attention of Frank Martin, Arthur Honegger, Hermann Scherchen and Edwin Fischer. He was awarded the "Bach Medal" by the Harriet Cohen Foundation, London. Sebastian Benda has appeared in recital and as a soloist in more than forty countries all over the world and was Professor and then Rector of the Graz Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst. He continues to give master classes at the Royal Academy of Music in London, the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris and the Conservatoire Royal in Brussels, as well as in Copenhagen, Jerusalem and Tokyo.

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## Luigi Boccherini: Cello Sonatas, Volume 1

Sonata in A major, G4 (first version)	14:28	Sonata in C minor, G2 (first version)	15:46
<b>1</b> Allegro moderato	5:39	<b>10</b> Allegro	6:21
<b>2</b> Adagio	4:35	<b>11</b> Largo	6:12
<b>3</b> Affettuoso	4:14	<b>12</b> Allegretto	3:14
Sonata in F minor	12:48	Sonata in C major, G17	15:29
<b>4</b> Allegro	7:07	<b>13</b> Allegro	8:45
<b>5</b> Cantabile	3:04	<b>14</b> Largo assai	3:14
<b>6</b> Allegro	2:37	<b>15</b> Rondò allegro	3:30
Sonata in G major, G5	12:41		
<b>7</b> Allegro militare	5:52		
<b>8</b> Largo	3:34		
<b>9</b> Tempo di minuetto	3:15		

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STEREO

A co-production with  
Süddeutscher  
Rundfunk Stuttgart



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Luigi  
**BOCCHERINI**

(1743-1805)

Cello Sonatas Vol. 1

Christian Benda, Cello  
Sebastian Benda, Fortepiano

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Playing  
Time  
71:12

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|--------------|---|--------------|
| <b>1-3</b>   | <b>Sonata in A major, G4</b><br>(first version) | <b>14:28</b> |
| <b>4-6</b>   | <b>Sonata in F minor</b>                        | <b>12:48</b> |
| <b>7-9</b>   | <b>Sonata in G major, G5</b>                    | <b>12:41</b> |
| <b>10-12</b> | <b>Sonata in C minor, G2</b><br>(first version) | <b>15:46</b> |
| <b>13-15</b> | <b>Sonata in C major, G17</b>                   | <b>15:29</b> |

All cadenzas and basso continuo parts  
realised by Sebastian Benda.

### The Composer

Italian cellist and composer Luigi Boccherini was born into a family distinguished not only in music but which also boasted poets and dancers among its members. He travelled widely, holding prestigious posts in the Royal courts of Madrid and Prussia, as well as enjoying considerable success as a virtuoso cellist.

### The Works

Boccherini's style is completely characteristic of the period in which he lived, the period, that is, of Haydn, rather than that of Mozart or Beethoven. 34 of his sonatas for cello and *basso continuo* survive today, spectacular showcases for the technical resources of the cello.

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from 10th to 12th June, 1996.

Producer: Guido Barth-Purrmann Engineers: Michael Sandner, Wolfgang Reiner  
Editing: Irmgard Bauer, Sabine Neumann Music Notes: Keith Anderson  
Violoncello by Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume, 1863  
Fortepiano by Anton Walter, Vienna c. 1790,  
reconstructed by Monika May, Marburg 1983

Cover Painting: Luigi Boccherini attributed  
to Pompeo Girolamo Batoni (AKG, Berlin)

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