

**Luigi Boccherini**

*String Quartet , Op. 2, No. 2 (G.160),  
pg. 62 in the Classical Anthology*

Naxos (CD #999123-2):  
Sonare Quartet

1. A little about **Luigi Boccherini**...

- a. b. Lucca, 19 Feb 1743, d. Madrid, 28 May 1805
- b. “Italian composer and cellist. A prolific composer, particularly of chamber music, with a distinctive and highly wrought style, he is the chief representative of Latin instrumental music during the Viennese Classical period.”<sup>1</sup>
- c. Total Compositional Output:<sup>2</sup>
  - i. *G. 1-561: Chamber Works*
    1. *G. 1-24: Works for 1 Instrument*
    2. *G. 25-76: Works for 2 Instruments*
    3. *G. 77-158: Works for 3 Instruments*
    4. *G. 159-264: Works for 4 Instruments*
    5. *G. 265-453: Works for 5 Instruments*
    6. *G. 454-473: Works for 6 Instruments*
  - ii. *G. 474-489: Concerti for Solo Instrument and Orchestra*
  - iii. *G. 490-502: Works for Small Orchestra*
  - iv. *G. 503-523: Works for Large Orchestra*
  - v. *G. 524-527: Ballets and Works for Stage and Dance*
  - vi. *G. 528-561: Vocal Works*
    1. *G. 528-539: Religious*
    2. *G. 540-561: Secular*
  - vii. *G. 562-580: Recently Discovered Works (Sonatas, Trios, Concertos, and a Symphony)*
  - viii. (What does “G.” stand for anyway?)
    1. Gérard, as in Yves Gérard.
      - a. b. 6 Jan 1932
      - b. French musicologist...took the *premiers prix* in music history, musicology, and aesthetics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Speck: 'Boccherini, (Ridolfo) Luigi', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 24 Feb 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

<sup>2</sup> List taken from the Table of Contents in Yves Gérard's book, *Thematic, bibliographical, and critical catalogue of the works of Luigi Boccherini*, trans. by Andreas Mayor (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Christiane Spieth-Weissenbacher, Jean Gribenski: Gérard, Yves(-René-Jean)', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 24 Feb 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

- c. “Gérard specializes in Boccherini, chamber music of Italy, Spain, Austria and France during the second half of the 18th century, Saint-Saëns and French music of the 19th and early 20th centuries. His most important work, however, is devoted to Berlioz: he co-edited the fourth volume of Berlioz’s *Correspondance générale* and *La critique musicale*, 1823–1863, a collection of Berlioz’s writings.”<sup>4</sup>
- d. “...[He] has a more comprehensive and thorough knowledge of Boccherini sources than anyone else alive...”<sup>5</sup>

## 2. String Quartet, op. 2, no. 2 – General thoughts

- a. Milan, 1765 – “first professional string quartet of which we have any record” was formed with foremost violinist Filippo Manfredi, virtuoso violinist Pietro Nardini, violist Giuseppe Cambini, and Boccherini on cello.
  - i. “The quartets by Boccherini himself are the only repertory that we can solidly identify with that 1765 meeting of masters: these would have been op. 2, Boccherini’s first six string quartets, written, according to the composer, between 1760 and 1762, and first published in Paris in 1767.”<sup>6</sup>
- b. Earliest trios and quartets are in a standard Italian chamber music idiom, apart from their frequent use of the cello in its tenor register (natural in a virtuoso cellist) and an unusually ornate melodic style.<sup>7</sup>
- c. Other features of rhythm and texture later to become significant characteristics are seen only in embryo.<sup>8</sup>
- d. Christian Speck “gives Op. 2 solitary pride of place as an extraordinary youthful effort...”<sup>9</sup>
  - i. “[The quartets] are indeed remarkably similar to one another in style [as Boccherini himself had said]...The stylistic developments that Speck describes in the quartets are certainly verifiable; but they are, I think, much less interesting than the remarkable sameness.”<sup>10</sup>
- e. “It is further in Boccherini’s nature that his engagements with the quartet genre...are only rarely what we would call...innovative. One can scarcely

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 39.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Sadie: ‘Boccherini, (Ridolfo) Luigi: 4. Chamber Music’, Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 24 Feb 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body*, 208.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 209.

imagine Boccherini as the founder of a 'school' of composition, and he had no imitators."<sup>11</sup>

- f. "And yet neither could we deny that he is original, often profoundly so; certainly he was acknowledged to be so in his own day. Few composers so aptly demonstrate the gulf between originality and innovation."<sup>12</sup>
- g. Repetitiveness within individual works<sup>13</sup>
  - i. He had a "penchant for exploding a singable melodic line in favor of a kind of textural, textile-like approach to ensemble sound. This is beyond doubt one of Boccherini's most consistent preoccupations in the quartets...and it is often allied to a marked degree of repetitiveness..."<sup>14</sup>
  - ii. Repetition of melodic ideas passed between the four instruments becomes more a realization of dialogue.<sup>15</sup>
    1. However, *quartuor dialogué* is hardly in evidence in this quartet, Op. 2. "Boccherini's writing is far more closely related to the...*symphonie concertante*."<sup>16</sup>
- h. "It seems possible that Boccherini developed this distinctive kind of writing out of his notably soloistic use of the cello in the earliest opus of quartets, op. 2. There the SSAB registral roles of the conventional *sonata a quattro* were periodically disrupted by the virtuosity of the cello part; what had been 'the bass' could abruptly assume any one of the four roles in the ensemble...If the sheer number of instances is indicative, such part-mixing was a stronger inspiration than the urge to write solos for his own instrument."<sup>17</sup>
  - i. Boccherini writes only one prominent cello solo in Op. 2, compared to none at all in Op. 9 and 15, in which the melodic lines are, more conventionally, given to the violin parts. "Thus Boccherini seems to be moving *away* from any *concertante* identity for his own instrument within the quartet medium [author's italics]...deliberately forgoing his own virtuosity in his chamber music, even as he developed some of its sonic implications."<sup>18</sup>
  - i. Early influences on Boccherini's style are hard to specify.<sup>19</sup> (Footnote refers to points i.-iv. below) *Bear in mind that Boccherini traveled from Lucca, to Vienna (1757-63), Paris (1768), and settled in Spain (1769).*
    - i. Italian composers such as Giovanni Battista Sammartini and Nardini

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 209-10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 210.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 212.

<sup>16</sup> Philip G. Downs, *Classical Music: The Era of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 148.

<sup>17</sup> Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 210.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 210-11.

<sup>19</sup> Sadie, '4. Chamber Music'.

- ii. Wagenseil and M.G. Monn in Vienna
  - iii. In Paris, music by both the Mannheim composers and local composers such as Gossec and Schobert.
    - 1. *Mannheim style*: “A style found in instrumental works, primarily symphonies, by composers active at the electoral court of Mannheim from about 1740 to 1778. A principal feature of the style is its tendency to exploit dynamic effects. On the small scale, this may take the form of either an abrupt or a graduated change in dynamic level within a short span of time, adding to the expressive and dramatic character of the work.”<sup>20</sup>
  - iv. “But it would be hard to pinpoint the influence of such men on Boccherini's music, his chamber music in particular.”
3. Editions:<sup>21</sup>
- a. Op. 2 no. 2 of 1761 (‘opere grande’) in Boccherini’s autograph catalogue.
    - i. “In his own catalogue, Boccherini adopted a conventional numbering system in which (with a few exceptions) six works of like kind were assigned to each opus. Each opus was ‘grande’ or ‘piccola’ according to whether the works were full-length (usually four movements) or short (usually two movements, sometimes called ‘quartettinos’ or ‘quintettinos’). Unfortunately, Boccherini's publishers used totally different numbering systems; and in some cases his publishers, notably Pleyel, confusingly regrouped his sets and later publishers used new numberings of their own, so that some works can be found under three or more numbers; and occasionally (as in the Berlin manuscripts) yet further opus numbers are appended to manuscript copies.”<sup>22</sup>
  - b. **Autograph Manuscript**: Lucca, Istituto Musicale Boccherini, D.I.33 “Sonata a quattro no. 3...”
    - i. “Probably a copy, but extremely interesting on account of the detailed accuracy with which the text, the slurs and the expression-marks are recorded. Is it possible that these details are in the hand of Boccherini? In any case, the MS appears to have been copied from Boccherini’s original MS.”
  - c. **MS Copy (score)**: Lucca, Istituto Musicale Boccherini, B.I.114, “Sonata a quattro no. 3...”
  - d. **MS Copies (separate parts)**:
    - i. Burgos, Archivo Catedral, Car. 74.
    - ii. Florence, Conservatorio, B. 1550.
    - iii. Marburg, Westdeutschebibliothek, Mus. MSS. 2005/3, “Quartetto no. 3...”

<sup>20</sup> Eugene K. Wolf: 'Mannheim style', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 28 Feb 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

<sup>21</sup> Gérard, *Catalogue*, 173-6.

<sup>22</sup> Speck, ‘2. Sources’.

- iv. Montecatini, Venturi private collection, A.9, “Quartetto no. 3...”
- v. Paris, Conservatoire, D.10757.
- vi. Prague, Národní Muzeum, XLI.C.104.
- vii. Stockholm, Kungl. Musik Akad. Bibl., W4-R.
- viii. Vienna, Bibl. Nat., S.m. 2908.
- e. **First Edition:** April, 1767, Paris, Vénier: Op. 1 no. 2 of *Sei quartetti per due violoni, alto e violoncello obbligati...*
- f. **Later Editions:**
  - i. (c. 1775), London, Welcker: Op. 1 no. 2 of *Six quartets for two violins, a tenor and violoncello obbligato...*
  - ii. (c. 1780?), Amsterdam, Hummel: Op. 1 no 2 of *Six quatuors...*
  - iii. (c. 1785?), Paris, Boyer-Naderman: Op. 1 no. 2 of *Sei quartetti...*
  - iv. (c. 1785?), London, Preston: Op. 1 no. 2 of *Six quartettos...*
- g. **Modern Arrangements:**
  - i. Of the first and third movements, as a sonata for harpsichord (or pianoforte or harp) and violin, perhaps by Naderman, c. 1778.
  - ii. Of the whole quartet, as a quartet for flute, clarinet, horn and bassoon, by O. Van den Broek, c. 1820.

#### 4. Form and Analysis of Work:

- a. Written 1761, first published in Paris in 1767.
- b. Genre: String Quartet
  - i. “Closely contemporary with Haydn’s first quartets, this set by Boccherini is among the earliest examples of the genre.”<sup>23</sup>
- c. “Opere grande” – Boccherini’s term in labeling Op. 2.
  - i. “Quartettini” or “opere piccole” were shorter pieces, often in two movements; “opere grandi” were in the more conventional three or four movements.
  - ii. “The only feature of the *opere grandi* that is somewhat rarer in the *quartettini* is the fully developed slow movement.”<sup>24</sup>
- d. Form:
  - i. “The structure of the quartet is perhaps of less interest than the disposition of material among the instruments...”<sup>25</sup>
  - ii. Three movements:
    - 1. Allegro non tanto
      - a. Key: B♭
      - b. “The first movement, the most complex of all, is cast in a sonata-binary form with a complete recapitulation which includes a radical modification of the transitional material.”<sup>26</sup>
        - i. A – m. 1-10 (B♭), B – m. 11-28 (Dominant, F)

<sup>23</sup> Downs, *Classical Music*, 148.

<sup>24</sup> Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body*, 208.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

- ii. Re-voicing of A, m. 29-31 with a half-cadence at m. 32.
      - iii. Development of ideas (G min.), m. 33-48; cello feature m. 46-48.
      - iv. Return to B, m. 49-66 (in the home key).
    - c. Points of interest:
      - i. m. 1-4: duet with vln. 1 and 2
      - ii. m. 5-8: duet with vln. 1 and cello
      - iii. Imitation in m. 8-10
      - iv. Rapid 32<sup>nd</sup>-note phrase in vln. 1 in m. 13-17, repeated in vln. 2 in m. 18-23
  - 2. Largo
    - a. Key: subdominant, E $\flat$
    - b. Structure:
      - i. A – m.1-5a (E $\flat$ ), B – m. 5b-11 (B $\flat$ )
      - ii. Development of ideas, m. 12-20 (beginning with restatement/re-voicing of first intro, now in B $\flat$ ).
      - iii. Coda, m. 20-22 (restatement of ending at m. 10-12, now in E $\flat$ ).
    - c. Points of interest:
      - i. Imitative entrances, m. 1-2, again m. 12-13.
  - 3. Fuga con spirito
    - a. Key: return to B $\flat$
    - b. (not focused on in the Anthology)
5. Some Terms in the Anthology Score<sup>27</sup>:
- a. All.<sup>o</sup> non tanto = *fast but not too much so*
  - b. P. = *piano*
  - c. F. = *forte*
  - d. R. (Anthology, pg. 62, m. 2) = *rinforzando*
  - e. The Direct (“Du Guidon”) – “squiggles” at the end of lines = *the “squiggles” are placed on the line or space where the next note (on the coming line) will occur.*
  - f. Dol. (Anthology, pg. 12, m. 15) = *dolce*
  - g. F.P. = *fortepiano*
  - h. m.P = *mezzo piano*
  - i. F.F. = *fortissimo*
  - j. Smorz. (Anthology, pg. 76, m. 21) = *smorzando – fading away*
6. Articulations
- a. (example: pg. 69, m. 46-48, cello part:)
    - i. Boccherini makes a distinction between staccato and martelé.

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<sup>27</sup> All terms and their abbreviations matching those in the score (except v.) are found in Christine Ammer, *The A to Z of Foreign Musical Terms* (Boston: ECS Publishing, 1989).

1. What bow was in use would make a difference in the precision, execution, and style of the articulations (refer to bow discussion in Instrumentation and Performance Practice: b. below).
2. “The real difficulty comes in interpreting dots and [arrowhead-shaped] strokes...A hard and fast distinction between dots and strokes simply cannot be drawn because it does not always exist...”<sup>28</sup>
  - a. A stroke placed over a note usually indicates an accented vigorous stroke.<sup>29</sup>
  - b. Staccato indicates playing the notes short and taking the bow somewhat off the string, where tempo permits.<sup>30</sup>
  - c. But where both dots and strokes occur together, the explanation is more difficult.<sup>31</sup>

## 7. Instrumentation and Performance Practice

- a. String quartet: 2 violins, 1 viola, and 1 cello
- b. Bows and bowing styles:
  - i. (refer to Figure 1.)
    1. *Portrait*'s evidence of slightly earlier, “Tartini” or “long” bow, a bow commonly in use from 1720-1780.<sup>32</sup>
      - a. Straight stick, with either a swan-bill head or elevated pike head.
    2. “The long bow persisted until the end of the 18th century, overlapping with the transitional/classical bows.”<sup>33</sup>
  - ii. Or...use of the “Cramer” (after violinist Wilhelm Cramer, who lived in Mannheim and, after 1772, in London) or “transitional” bow, which “generally prevailed between the gradual demise of the Corelli-Tartini model and the birth of the Tourte – that is, roughly 1750-85...the Cramer bow represents a decisive step towards the modern bow.”<sup>34</sup>
    1. “...exhibits a natural softness of articulation ...but being capable also of the precise attacks of the modern bow.”<sup>35</sup>
    2. More significant is the concave curvature, creating less give in the hair, and quicker response.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> David D. Boyden, “The Violin and Its Technique in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century”, *The Musical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1950), 30+33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Robert E. Seletsky: ‘Bow, §I: History of the bow: 3. c1625–c1800’, Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 4 March 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> David D. Boyden, “The Violin Bow in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Early Music* 8, no. 2 (April 1980), 206.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

- iii. By 1750, playing on the open strings was avoided whenever possible, to create a unity of tone within a passage.<sup>37</sup>
- c. Who might perform this quartet?
  - i. “In the second half of the eighteenth century, the printing of music and its distribution to a swelling middle-class amateur market was redefining what a composer was...To whom was any given performance properly directed?”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Boyden, “Violin and Its Technique”, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body*, 42.



Figure 1. Italian school, eighteenth century, *Portrait of Luigi Boccherini*, c. 1764-67. Oil on canvas, 133.8 x 90.7 cm. Everard Studley Miller Bequest, 1962. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Available from <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/collection/international/painting/i/ipa00050.html>.

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**Boccherini:**

Stuff I Should Have Said –

*The History Behind Notating a Sharp with a Double-Sharp Sign*

(See cello part, m. 36, on page 67 in Anthology, for example.)

1. First instances of accidentals in general, and the sharp in particular:
  - a. “The flat, sharp, and natural have a common origin, and this origin is the small letter *b*.”<sup>39</sup>
    - i. Medieval names for these signs:<sup>40</sup>
      1. *b rotundum* – round *b* – flat.
      2. *b quadrum* or *quadratum* – square *b* – natural.
      3. *b cancellatum* – cross-barred *b* – sharp.
    - ii. Guido of Arezzo (c. 995-1050), in the eighth chapter of “Micrologus”, first introduces the idea of two different shapes for *b*.
      1. “The round *b*...forms a concord with F, for which reason it has been added, as F cannot form a concord with the fourth note above it, the [square *b*], on account of the discrepant tritone. But the *b* and [square *b*] should not be joined in one and the same phrase.”<sup>41</sup>
    - iii. At first, both sharp and natural signs were used with the same meaning, to raise a pitch. It wasn’t until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that these signs were “thoroughly differentiated”.<sup>42</sup>
  - b. In using these symbols to raise and lower pitches by a semitone, the square *b* [natural] is found as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the cross-barred *b* [sharp] is found in the 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>43</sup>
2. Use of the double-sharp sign (X) in place of the cross-barred *b*:
  - a. The *b iacente* sign, or “recumbent *b*” [the double-sharp sign: X]... “gained ascendancy in the second half of the 15th century, the [sharp, or cross-barred *b*] regaining supremacy in the 18th, by which time the [natural, or square *b*] was restricted to a cancelling function.”<sup>44</sup>
  - b. “A composition of the thirteenth century...by Adam de la Halle, is interesting for the form of the sharps it contains. Ambros says in his History that the sharp had here this form [double-lined X]. But that

<sup>39</sup> Frederick Niecks, “The Flat, Sharp, and Natural. A Historical Sketch”, *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 16th Sess. (1889 - 1890), 79.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 80. Taken from *Micrologus de disciplina artis musicae*, in Vol. II. of Martin Gerbert’s “Scriptores ecclesiastici.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 81-2.

<sup>43</sup> David Hiley, 'Accidental: 1. Early use', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 20 March 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

statement is not borne out by Coussemaker's fac-simile, where the sign presents itself thus [very much like our modern sharp]...The old form of the cross-barred *b*, the one that is identical with our sharp, was subsequently supplanted by the double St. Andrew's [X – like Adam de la Halle's], I suppose because the latter stood out more boldly from the stave.

**In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and a great part of the eighteenth centuries, this form of the sharp was the one commonly used.**<sup>45</sup>

- i. “An exceptional form of the sharp [XX] is to be found in Palestrina's ‘Hymni totius anni,’ printed in Rome in 1589. In Henry Purcell's ‘Sonata of three parts,’ printed in 1683, a sharp like ours is used, but with larger and more slanting cross-bars...”<sup>46</sup>
- ii. The era of transition: “In the matter of flats, sharps, and naturals, the seventeenth century was...in an unsettled state and no serious attempts were made to settle them.”<sup>47</sup> This goes for everything, from the nature of the symbols used, to how many sharps or flats were to occur in a key signature.
- c. “The modern forms of double flat and double sharp were...accepted generally by the 18th century.”<sup>48</sup>
  - i. How to notate these?
    1. Mattheson indicates double sharp with two sharps side-by-side (only because he did not have the correct type to print the single St. Andrew's cross X, which “he had already proposed for the purpose”).<sup>49</sup>
    2. Composer Marcello opposed the use of X for double sharp, because the cross already had another signification – the enharmonic diesis; Leopold Mozart gives in 1756 two forms of the double sharp: † and X. “In 1758 we learn that its convenience had already made the latter the most fashionable form, and thus it remained.”<sup>50</sup>

### 3. Conclusion:

- a. Boccherini's String Quartet Op.2, No. 2, written in 1761.
- b. According to Niecks and Groves, the double sharp and its symbol (X) was already accepted; however, only just so. Perhaps, Boccherini's use of symbols was still in transition at this point. Or, as in Mattheson's case (Point 2.c.), could it simply be a matter of the printer not having the correct type for the single sharp sign?

<sup>45</sup> Niecks, “The Flat, Sharp, and Natural”, 88.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Hiley, “Accidental: 3. Use from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”

<sup>49</sup> Niecks, “The Flat, Sharp, and Natural”, 94-5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 95.

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