

Luigi Boccherini, two centuries on

Exactly 200 years after Boccherini's death in Madrid in May 1805 one might very well have the impression that studies into this composer and his work have not been particularly prolific. He has occupied a relatively marginal position in music performance, writing and scholarship throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, especially when compared with some of his contemporaries. To tell the truth, the image of Boccherini projected during most of this period has been a distorted one, essentially confined to the extremely popular minuet, in all kinds of arrangements, from approximately the 1870s, and to the particular flavour of some of his quintets based on Spanish folk music. It is surely no coincidence that both extremes—the minuet and the folk music—represented in the eyes of Romanticism something of the quintessence of late 18th-century music.

Yet the view of posterity contrasts sharply with the worldwide fame the composer enjoyed in his lifetime. He encapsulates the 'universal' dimension of late 18th-century music, both in terms of style and dissemination. From the early 1770s his works began to be published regularly by the most renowned European printing houses, who facilitated their distribution through large-scale commercial networks, reaching a high point by the turn of the century. It was then that Ignace Pleyel (1798 and later) and Janet & Cotellet (1818–22, 1824) published in Paris several collections of his works gathered by genre. Contrary to what has traditionally been believed, the fact that Boccherini remained in Spain for most of his creative life, sometimes in isolated villages such as Arenas de San Pedro—analogous in some ways to Esterháza—did not prevent his music from gaining international recognition, nor did it hinder him from being reasonably well aware of the latest ideas. In this issue of *Early music* the articles by Rupert Ridgewell and by myself aim to go beyond these general assumptions and explore how these processes of dissemination and reception took place in two particular contrasting urban settings. Ridgewell's article, which combines a close reading of administrative and musical sources, focuses on how and when Boccherini's music came to be printed and sold by Artaria in Vienna. It paves the way for future scholars to date more precisely copies from the Artaria press, thus casting light on the unsolved problem of the detailed chronology of his works. My own contribution centres on music-selling in Madrid during

Boccherini's time by reconstructing sellers' European commercial connections. The resulting picture not only shows when Boccherini imprints—arriving from France, Italy and England—were available, but also offers preliminary evidence for the wide variety of repertory accessible to the composer and his fellow citizens.

But, as Christian Speck shows in his article, Boccherini remained alive in the memories of many not so much for his compositions as for his performances. Even though his public appearances lasted for only a single decade, his image as a brilliant cellist endured for years, as his obituaries (published in France and Germany) reveal. The historical role he played in establishing this instrument in its own right—creating an idiomatic repertory and developing performing techniques—has long been recognized. For years legions of cello students have grown up playing his music. Speck's timely article brings together Boccherini as cellist and as composer of cello music in an attempt to bridge the conventional dichotomy between life and works in Boccherini studies.

It remains unclear why after the first third of the 19th century most of Boccherini's music disappeared until the recording and editorial revival that began with the early music movement of the 1970s. Surely the bias of music historians would have been quite different had his music entered the concert repertory. For decades virtually the only piece by Boccherini known to musicians and amateurs was Friedrich Grützmacher's 1895 arrangement of a cello concerto. If the premise according to which Boccherini's fame was in general terms based on aristocratic-private concerts more than bourgeois-public ones—as was seemingly the case in Madrid—is tenable, it could then be argued that the progressive decline of the former in favour of the latter during the first half of the 19th century would have repercussions for the reception of his music. But other issues might also have played their part. Perhaps Boccherini would have received more scholarly attention had he continued his journey from Paris to London—instead of Madrid—as apparently he had initially planned, where a different historiographical tradition would have probably considered him more as a 'native' than as a foreign composer. But for now we can only speculate, hoping that his anniversary will encourage scholars and performers to establish his proper place in history.

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Postscript

I have just two items to add here. First, a warm welcome to Francis Knights who has kindly shouldered the duties of Recording Reviews Editor following Eric Van Tassel's unexpected death last November (see the obituary by Richard Abram in this issue). Francis studied at Royal Holloway College, University of London, and Magdalen College, Oxford, and has subsequently worked at the Royal Northern College of Music, Somerville College, Oxford, the BBC and the British Library. A specialist early music discographer, he now works as Project Discography Manager for the CHARM research project on early recordings based at King's College, London. In addition to all this, Francis is editor of *Clavichord International*, writes for *International Record Review* and directs various ensembles including Voces Angelicae, Gradualia and the Bach Collegium Oxford. (For more on all his activities see his website at <http://www.francisknights.co.uk>.)

Second, the first part of Bradley Lehman's article on Bach's temperament has already generated a lot of interest; Correspondence on the subject will appear in the August issue, following publication of the second part of the article in May. And finally . . . Technology is, of course, a wonderful thing, most of the time. Whether this was Computer One intervening, I'm not sure, but very unfortunately an electronic gremlin worked its way into some of the music examples in the last issue, particularly regretably into those of John Milsom's article where the style of notation used was especially critical. (I should add that this was not the fault of our excellent music-setter Jeanne Fisher who had very carefully observed all the notational niceties in her settings.) We have, therefore, reprinted the entire article in this issue so that readers may follow John's superbly detailed analysis of some Lassus motets with ease in the corrected version.

TESS KNIGHTON



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