

**Brilliant Classic Cello Concerto Box (5 CDs) - MusicWeb review link**

**[http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2004/jan04/cello\\_brilliant.htm](http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2004/jan04/cello_brilliant.htm)**

**BOCCHERINI Complete Cello Concertos** • Enrico Bronzi, cond, vc; Accademia I Filarmonici di Verona. • BRILLIANT CLASSICS 92618 (3 CDs: 202:42)

It's one of the many ironies of classical music that Luigi Boccherini, a virtuosi cellist who wrote at least a dozen concertos (12 have survived, at any rate) on his native instrument, was known throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century for only two works—one of them, an ersatz cello concerto compiled from four of his originals. Griltzmacher's "edition" has been retired, fortunately, after those same originals were dusted off and recognized for the fine and experimental works they are. Complete editions are still rare, however, so this budget collection is welcome on that score alone.

The performances are good. Bronzi, a first-prize winner at the Pablo Casals in Helsinki, has an excellent (though not note-perfect) technique. He can summon forth a singing legato phrase, accents convincingly, and manages the rapid passagework of the finales with ease. There are a few momentary finger slips that could have been repaired with additional takes, but given the hair-raising tempos the cellist prefers in a few of the faster movements, that's a relatively minor matter when listening to such musical virtuosity.

Unfortunately, it's difficult to discuss the sound Bronzi makes with his cello, because sound is problematic on this release. The orchestra at times seems dry and lacking in resonance. The engineers miked Bronzi tightly, but with a larger space in the background, presumably to reinforce the richness of the instrument. It doesn't do that, and the results have backfired: we get to hear fingerings and some bow movements, with a long decay rate that turns figurations into a semihaze. Adding insult to injury are the electrical sounds of the hall, noticeable whenever the instruments aren't playing.

If the performances weren't that impressive, this release wouldn't be quite so frustrating. As it is, there are less masochistic ways to enjoy Boccherini's fine cello concertos, such as Naxos's series. Take a pass on this.

**Barry Brenesal**

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## **Boccherini Cello Concerti - Gramophone**

The discovery of a twelfth Boccherini cello concerto in Naples spurred David Geringas on Claves and now Julius Berger to record the entire set (if indeed they may be thought of as such). Berger had the advantage of working with the Boccherini scholar Christian Speck, who carefully prepared the scores and, in particular, the cadenzas; he was also lucky to be able to record on Boccherini's own Strad, albeit not set up in original condition. These are modern performances and, particularly in the case of Berger, informed modern performances. Anner Bylsma (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi)—the thoroughly modern 'period' player—and Steven Isserlis on Virgin Classics—who eschews steel strings and prima-donna antics—have recently recorded pairs of Boccherini concertos (each including the Concerto in G major, G480), but most remain little known.

Among the dozen, several stand out. The Concerto in D major, G479 with string orchestra gives particularly rich opportunities for beautiful solo timbres in the hauntingly high writing of the first movement and the richness of the alto-range theme in the second. The C major, G573, with oboes, trumpets and strings, dating from his period in Genoa (1766-7), incorporates a true cello solo, unaccompanied, of 30 bars, framed by the orchestra, as the Largo cantabile. There are, too, some lovely flautando phrases among Boccherini's usual array of virtuoso tricks in the Allegro comodo finale. For the A major, G475 we possess two Boccherini cadenzas; a third exists for the Andante lentarello of the Concerto in D major, G483, one of the better-known concertos which is memorable for the exquisite way in which Boccherini pairs the soloist with the oboes in the first and second movements.

The recently discovered Concerto in E flat (not in Gerard's catalogue), scored with oboes and horns, should become a favourite because of its vitality, its sustained melodious writing, its high tessitura and its quintessential wizardry. The stately C minor Largo will be familiar to those already acquainted with Boccherini's String Trio, G95 and Cello Sonata, G17, for he—like a number of other well-known eighteenth-century composers—was a compulsive self-borrower. Interestingly, there are also thematic connections between the first movement and that of the much loved Concerto in B flat, G482.

Although several of Boccherini's concertos were published as early as 1770, only the B flat has until now been widely known, and then not in its original version. Since the appearance of the Zanibon edition, edited by Aldo Pais, cellists and their students have had good reason to part with their nineteenth-century Grutzmacher editions of the B flat Concerto, confident of being able to play Boccherini's own version, if in a variety of works: the outer movements of G482 (like those of the Sonata, G565) are recognizably the same, though delightfully different in detail, while the Adagio that Grutzmacher borrowed has been returned to the Concerto in G major, G480 and the original Andantino grazioso restored, giving the Concerto in B flat a well-deserved freshness.

Julius Berger's recording of the complete extant Boccherini concertos is in many

ways a landmark. The behind-the-scenes efforts of his colleague Dr Speck (whose accompanying booklet contains a wealth of information in a series of essays and lively programme-notes) have imbued these performances with an important new kind of credibility, so necessary in what seems to be the post-period instruments era. He is a fine player, though his tempos are never virtuosic (in some movements decidedly too bound to the pulse) and his emotional range is carefully defined; but the opportunity to hear Boccherini's instrument—its angelic top and earthier middle registers in particular (as the bottom strings are almost never heard except in the often superbly idiomatic music).

Geringas, an accomplished and perhaps wider-ranging player, doesn't project the same command of Boccherinian style, nor, more emphatically, does the Orchestra da Camera di Padova e del Veneto under Bruno Giuranna. The South-West German Chamber Orchestra under Vladislav Czarnecki accompany Berger with meticulous attention to details of articulation and dynamics.'

**NY Times - John Rockwell (March 1990) - check link for a MUCH longer review**

**<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/11/arts/recordings-boccherini-up-front.html?pagewanted=all>**

There are still a fairly limited number of all-Boccherini compact disks currently available in the United States. Starting with the cello concertos of this master cellist, two complete three-CD sets of the 12 canonical Boccherini concertos have been recently released.

Of the two, that by David Geringas with the Orchestra da Camera di Padova e del Veneto conducted by Bruno Giuranna (Claves 50-8814/6) is distinctly superior to that by Julius Berger with the Sudwestdeutsches Kammerorchester of Pforzheim conducted by Vladislav Czarnecki (EBS 6055/7). Mr. Geringas et al. are fleet, delicate and full of subtly sensuous life; Mr. Berger and friends are, in the words of an early Who rock album, "meaty, beaty, big and bouncy," a true relic of the 1950's Baroque revivalist style.

### **MusicWeb - Reviewer & Link below**

If I know you, you've already looked at the bottom to see how many Ludwigs this one gets, and you're probably startled to see a three CD set by some people you've hardly ever heard of designated a must-have. But, that's Boccherini! Of course you've heard 'The Boccherini Cello Concerto' as arranged by Friedrich Grützmacher from G 481 and 482, and published in 1895 (track 3/1). Every famous cellist has recorded it. Well, that one sounds better here in its original form than you've ever heard it, and there are eleven more equally delectable to go with it (track 1/10, 3/5). Get ready to be overwhelmed.

The performers are not exactly household names, but their credentials are stupendous. Conductor Bruno Giuranna was a co-founder of *I Musici* and played viola and viola d'amore solo with them during their many tours. This would account for the "I Musici sound" of this recording. Lithuanian cellist Geringas studied with Rostropovich at the Moscow Conservatory and won the Gold Medal at the 1970 Tchaikovsky competition. He plays with a slightly 'white' sound in the upper register which is appropriate and authentic for this repertoire.

Boccherini was probably the greatest and most popular cello virtuoso of his time and was in great demand. Like Domenico Scarlatti, he settled in Spain; his guitar quintets are also among his finest compositions. Unaccountably his music was almost completely forgotten after his death and his compositions have until recently been sought after and treasured only by connoisseurs. These concerti are all in three movements and are accompanied by string orchestra with occasional horns and winds added. Besides a variety of orchestral sounds, the concerti display a variety of moods from a slightly Vivaldian late baroque style through the Rococo, Classic, to early Romantic styles. I have to find something to complain about, so I'll say I'd have preferred a very slightly closer sound with a little more bass (a "Solisti di Zagreb sound"). The soloist, however, is just as closely recorded as anyone could want, and his technique easily stands up to the revelation. His rapport with the orchestra is flawless.

I suppose if you listen to nothing but Palestrina, or Wagner, or Webern, you might not like this CD. But then you wouldn't be reading this review in the first place.

***Paul Shoemaker***

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