

MusicWeb Review - Thumbs UP!

Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743 - 1805)

Cello Concertos

Concerto #1 in E flat, G 474 (17.24)

Concerto #2 in A, G 475 (12.41)

Concerto #3 in D, G 476 (14.45)

Concerto #4 in C, G 477 (13.44) (pub. 1770)

Concerto #5 in D, G 478 (23.31)

Concerto #6 in D, G 479 (17.15) (pub. 1770)

Concerto #7 in G, G 480 (16.32) (pub. 1770)

Concerto #8 in C, G 481 (16.21) (pub. 1771)

Concerto #9 in B flat, G 482 (18.53)

Concerto #10 in D, G 483 (21.59) (pub. 1785)

Concerto #11 in C, G 573 (15.57)

Concerto #12 in E flat, (no G#) (13.36)

David Geringas, violoncello

Orchestra da Camera di Padova e del Veneto/Bruno Giuranna,

Recorded at Villa Congarini, Padua, Italy, June-October 1988

Liner notes in Italian, German, French, and English

CLAVES CD 50-8814/15/16 [202.38]

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

Fanfare Review - John Riser

BOCCHERINI Concertos for Cello and Orchestra. • David Geringas, cello; Bruno Giuranna, conductor; Chamber Orchestra of Padua; Veneto. • CLAVES CD 50-8814-16, three discs [DDD]; 59:07, 74:14, 70:59. (Distributed by Qualiton.)

Concertos: No. 1 in Eb, G. 474; No. 2 in A, G. 475; No. 3 in D, G. 476; No. 4 in C, G. 477; No. 5 in D, G. 478; No. 6 in D, G. 479; No. 7 in G, G. 480; No. 8 in C, G. 481; No. 9 in Bb, G. 482; No. 10 in D, G. 483; No. 11 in C, G. 573; No. 12 in Eb.

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in D Minor, op. 12, no. 4, G. 506 ("La casa del Diavolo"); in A, op. 35, no. 3, G. 511; in D, G. 490; in F, op. 35, no. 4, G. 512. • Chiara Banchini, conductor; Ensemble 415. • HARMONIA MUNDI FRANCE HMC 901291 [DDD?]; 65:34. Produced by Pere Casulleras. (Distributed by Harmonia Mundi USA.)

Whatever importance or value one may be willing to assign to the music of Luigi Boccherini, there can be no question at all but that it is successfully finding its way onto compact discs very much as Vivaldi's music did early in the LP era. My evaluation can be inferred from a willingness to hear out all twelve of his concertos for cello *seriatim*, without resorting to the artifice of chemical stimulants. Despite the composer's rich resources in musical connective tissue, the audition wasn't always trouble-free, with a second set of the twelve coming along rather quickly after Julius Berger's three-CD *integrale*.

It is quite surprising how little Geringas and Berger seem to influence their orchestral collaborators or conductors, both of whom appear to have an overriding sense of what style might be imposed upon music quite hospitable to such

impositions. In the case of the first set, my reactions will be found in *Fanfare* 12:4, unless I've completely lost track of where we are in the annual cycle. In the case of the second, Giuranna and his little band are perfectly convinced of the Italian Baroque character of all this music. Accompaniments are decidedly brisk and hard-bitten in fast movements, ceremoniously inflexible in slow-to-moderate-tempos. Geringas, a Soviet emigre to Germany who has had plenty of time to bring himself up to date, seems for the most part entirely willing to go along with the prevailing viewpoint; only a certain plummy tone and a fairly elaborate battery of dynamic and intonational shadings keep the listener aware that this is not Vivaldi or Geminiani. And I think the soloist has been influenced by the period-instrument people to moderate his use of vibrato.

Balance is good within the confines of a markedly intimate sound pickup, with no excessively reverberant ambience. Without being in itself very good, the string body is more presentable than the Pforzheimers. This, then, is no happy medium, being distinctly hard-bitten in contrast to the Pforzheimer's roll-with-the-punch indistinctness of rhythm. I hardly think anyone should need to endure the whole-dose rabbit test so often required of the reviewer; one at a time, these are surely pleasurable enough, easier to endorse positively than the EBS set.

Even more hard-bitten is the playing of Ensemble 415 led by first violinist Chiara Banchini in four increasingly familiar Boccherini symphonies. Taken against more relaxed, more expansive—and by direct comparison startlingly more imprecisely played—performances of three of the four works by Cantilena under Adrian Shepherd (Chandos CHAN 8414-15, *Fanfare* 11:5), the Italians lace into this music with a fury worthy of Haydn's *Sturm und Drang* style. Which unfortunately for the fate of this production, seems to me quite an inappropriate mode for Boccherini in general and these symphonies in particular. Only the one minor-mode symphony responds effectively; the rest are hectoring, inconsequential, pointlessly hyperactive-sounding. I'll take Cantilena's more moderate viewpoint, sloppiness and all, over this hysterical rigidity.

John Wiser

This article originally appeared in Issue 12:6 (July/Aug 1989) of *Fanfare* Magazine.

New York Times 'short' review from 1990

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.

Amazon Review - Paul Handleman - 5*/5*

I guess there are going to be some CDs that are so wonderful that they make me want to actually partake of the Amazonian jungle's hubbabaloo again. This CD is it! Most of these wonderful works were unfamiliar to me, and the playing is utterly superb. Polished, intense, and in a special way unpretentious. In other words, the readings do not freight these sometimes odd works with portentousness that might sink them. Instead they are alive, clever, and vibrant. Just wonderful. Cellist and conductor are superb!

Claves Website

BOCCHERINI: COMPLETE CELLO CONCERTOS

Luigi Boccherini achieved the paradox of clearly appearing, in the eyes of his contemporaries, as the paragon of the virtuoso, original, and modern cellist, and at the same time, of surrounding himself with mystery regarding his output for his favorite instrument when he played it as a soloist.

We are very precisely informed about Boccherini's treatment of the cello in the texture of the trio, quartet, or quintet throughout the approximately four hundred works with which he enriched the chamber music repertoire between 1760 and 1804. But when it comes to cello sonatas and concertos, despite facts, testimonies, and documents, the 20th-century historian can only ask questions without being able to provide clear answers so far.

It is as if Boccherini had sought to reserve a privileged domain for himself, which he knew how to exploit to astonish, seduce, and charm 18th-century musicians and music lovers, while ensuring the originality and brilliance of his career.

David Geringas, cello

David Geringas was born in 1946 in Wilna (Lithuania) and completed his studies at the Moscow Conservatory, where he worked for ten years with his teacher and mentor, Rostropowitsch. In 1970, Geringas won First Prize and the Gold Medal at the Tschaikovsky Competition. In 1975, after emigrating to the Federal Republic of Germany, a dazzling career began. Geringas has performed as a soloist throughout Europe, America, and the Far East with the greatest orchestras. In

addition to his activities as a soloist and professor at the Lubeck and Hamburg Conservatories, David Geringas is regularly invited to participate in major chamber music festivals. He enjoys playing the baritone, viola da gamba, and five-string piccolo cello.

David Geringas is also interested in lesser-known works by great composers, such as Boccherini's twelve cello concertos, the complete works of which he has recorded on this disc. His repertoire ranges from Baroque works to contemporary music. He plays a beautiful instrument dating from 1761; Boccherini's concertos were written during the same period.

Orchestra da Camera di Padova e del Veneto

Founded in October 1966, the Orchestra da Camera di Padova e del Veneto has risen to the rank of the finest Italian orchestras and has built an international reputation over the past twenty years. It has had a significant influence on the musical life of Padua and the Venetian province, which is why the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment granted it the official title of "Orchestra of the Venetian Province."

This orchestra is a classical chamber orchestra, with Piero Toso always serving as concertmaster. Since 1983, Bruno Giuranna has been the orchestra's artistic director and is conducting this recording. Its work with internationally renowned institutions, conductors, and soloists, and its participation in major European music festivals have marked the orchestra's cultural life.

Bruno Giuranna, Conductor

The son of a family of Milanese musicians, Bruno Giuranna studied in Rome and earned a violin diploma and a viola diploma. He co-founded the ensemble "I Musici," with which he toured extensively as a soloist (viola and viola d'amore) throughout Europe, Central, and North America.

He began his distinguished solo career in 1954 under the direction of Herbert von Karajan; on this occasion, Bruno Giuranna premiered the "Musica da concerto per viola ed orchestra d'archi," which Giorgio Ghedini dedicated to him. Since then, he has performed with the most renowned European orchestras and conductors.

Rudolf Serkin has invited him to the famous Marlboro Festival on several occasions. Bruno Giuranna is professor of viola at the Berlin Academy of Music and has been artistic director of the Orchestra da Camera di Padova e del Veneto since 1983.