

BOCCHERINI 28 Symphonies • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: 7:17:37)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in C, op. 7, G 491; **in C**, op. 10/4, G 523; **in D**, G 490 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 1: 50:47)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in D, op. 12/1, G 503; **in E^b**, op. 12/2, G 504; **in C**, op. 12/3, G 505 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 2: 69:06)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in d, op. 12/4, G 506; **in B**, op. 12/5, G 507; **in A**, op. 12/6, G 508 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 3: 50:47)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in B^b, op. 21/1, G 493; **in E^b**, op. 21/2, G 494; **in C**, op. 21/3, G 495; **in D**, op. 21/4, G 496; **in B^b**, op. 21/5, G 497 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 4: 61:08)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in A, op. 21/6, G 498; **in D**, op. 35/1; **in E^b**, op. 35/2, G 510; **in A**, op. 35/3, G 511 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 5: 49:03)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in F, op. 35/4, G 512; **in E^b**, op. 35/5, G 513; **in B^b**, op. 34/6, G 514; **in C**, op. 37/1, G 515 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 6: 50:47)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in d, op. 37/3, G 517; **in A**, op. 37/4, G 518; **in c**, op. 41, G 519 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 7: 59:33)

BOCCHERINI Symphonies: in D, op. 42, G 520; **in D**, op. 45, G 522; **in D**, G 500 • Johannes Goritzki, cond; Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss • cpo 999 401-2 (8 CDs: Vol. 8: 46:26)

These eight discs, initially released separately over the first half decade of the 1990s, are now being made available as a boxed set, the advantage to those hardcore Boccherinians who have not yet acquired the individual CDs being that you can now acquire all eight for the price of five. Although the Boccherini symphonies have not been neglected on disc, this is, as far as I know, the first time they have received such systematic examination—part of a wider cpo presentation of Boccherini's music—and cpo's added financial inducement should help put this set on a good many shopping lists, with every reason.

The Austrian-born British writer Hans Keller, never a man to avoid a neologism that deserved to be invented, once memorably referred to Boccherini as an "instanding" composer. To some extent, of course, Keller was being fair: Boccherini was not one of the chaps who stood the history of music on its head. But though he rarely touches the depths of the soul, his music is always faultlessly crafted, and, more to the point, it usually sounds like no one else: Boccherini was

his own man. Even in the earliest of the symphonies here (Boccherini composed some 30 of them, but apparently only these 28 survive), there is a harmonic tang to the instrumental writing that is already individual; it was to become more pronounced in his later works, chamber and orchestral alike. Another feature that characterizes so much of his oeuvre is his sensitivity to orchestral color: He handles the orchestra with confidence and audacity—he is happy to experiment with new timbres and combinations, a favorite device being to pull instruments out of the texture as soloists and play them off against the rest in little microconcertos dotted throughout the works.

Though each of these discs would justify the attention of a full-length review, describing all eight in detail would try your patience. But every one is full of the incidental delights that arise from Boccherini's constant inventiveness with color, with texture, with rhythm. To choose three almost at random: The C-Major Symphony, op. 10, no. 4, on Volume 1 brings in a guitar accompaniment (appropriately enough, when one considers that 12 of Boccherini's symphonies were composed in Aranjuez); the E^b-Major, op. 12, no. 2, brings in a *concertino* of two violins, two horns, and two cellos that bring refreshing tonal contrast (the cello writing in particular is little short of exquisite); and the lusty humor of the finale of op. 35, no. 1 (Volume 5), marked *Prestissimo*, confirms Boccherini's admiration for Haydn—one of the things he seems to have learned from the Viennese master being how to make silence work for him. OK, so the music is not always deeply memorable: There is much here that, set alongside the bolder contemporary efforts of Haydn and Mozart, pales in comparison; Boccherini seems to have been a happy chap, and so he writes music that expresses his happiness (Mozart, of course, expressed joy). But music doesn't have to supply an endless parade of masterpieces; it's enough that Boccherini offers honest pleasure. And when he is in witty mood (the opening movement of the E^b-Major, op. 35, no. 2 [Volume 5], for example), he comes close to being able to look Haydn in the eye.

In short, this is music that genuinely deserves to be heard. Any of the six symphonies that make up Boccherini's op. 21 (and Volume 4 and part of Volume 5 of the cpo series), all with three movements and around the 10-15-minute mark, would make a wonderful opening to a concert instead of the endless round of the same half-dozen 19th-century overtures. The same holds for the six symphonies that make up op. 35 (likewise three movements apiece and of similar duration). Minor gems, the lot of them. Listening to the entire series end to end—not something that anyone other than reviewers and other monomaniacs are likely to do—does tend to rub home the instanding qualities Hans Keller mentioned, but take any one of these works on its own and it cannot fail to delight audiences, in the concert hall or at home before the hi-fi.

The playing of the Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss is bright and buoyant throughout, Johannes Goritzki keeping the tempos brisk and urgent—Boccherini's external allegros scamper along with exhilarating enthusiasm. His often delicate central andantes, by contrast, are handled with real sensitivity. The recordings,

made over the years 1990 to 1993, are almost all engineered and produced by Reimund Grimm, the second half of Dabringhaus und Grimm, and their quality can thus be taken as axiomatic. And Christian Speck's notes—one long exegesis on Boccherini and his life with Volume 1 and shorter, detailed notes on the music for the following seven—give evidence of a good deal of scholarly effort. All told, then, this is a set that you should seriously consider if the period is one that interests you, and it would make an ideal present for that awkward classical-music buff who already has almost everything. It has to get a very strong recommendation. I have a last question, in the hope that there might be some statisticians out there among *Fanfare* readers. Three of these eight discs have exactly the same timing (50:47)—and what are the odds against that happening? **Martin Anderson**

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ClassicalNet Review - Peter Bates

28 Symphonies

- Symphony Op. 10 #4 in C Major, G. 523 (1771)
- 6 Symphonies Op. 12, G. 503-508 (1771)
- 6 Symphonies Op. 21, G. 493-498 (1775)
- 6 Symphonies Op. 35, G. 509-514 (1782)
- 3 Symphonies Op. 37 #1, 3 & 4, G. 515, 517, 518 (1786)
- Symphony Op. 41 in C minor, G. 519 (1788)
- Symphony Op. 42 in D Major, G. 520 (1789)
- Symphony Op. 43 in D Major, G. 521 (1790)
- Symphony Op. 45 #5 in D minor, G. 522 (1792)
- Symphony in D Major, G. 490 (1775)
- Symphony in D Major, G. 500 (1781)

**Deutsche Kammerakademi Neuss/Johannes Goritzki
CPO 999401-2 DDD 8CDs**

The symphonies of Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) may sound like those of Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) on a perfunctory first hearing. Both composers create works that eloquently embody the spirit of their era: they contain dazzling forays into rhythmic variety, tight and logical structure, and bold elaboration of thematic material. Both composers admired each other and freely borrowed thematic and structural techniques. At one time, contemporary wags referred to Boccherini as "the wife of Haydn," an unfair appellation certainly, but one with a spot of truth. But Boccherini's symphonies stood well on their own and endure today because of their inherent good spirits, their charming (although timid) use of polyphony, and most of all, their intense lyricism. In fact, his lyricism is at once his greatest

strength and greatest roadblock to growth. He never did sacrifice melodies to delve deeply into drama and polyphony like Haydn. He never went through a *Sturm und Drang* period; although his symphonies contain dark moments, they are never tragic. We never sense he's creating a work of heroic proportions encompassing pre-Beethovenian struggles, like Haydn's (and later Mozart's) symphonies do. While the Andante in the Op. 45 Symphony is grave and vaguely troubling, the mood quickly dissipates with a reassuring minuet. We never sense that a war or conflict is rumbling in the background as in Haydn's Symphony #100 in G ("Military") or even his Symphony #103 in E Flat Major ("Drum Roll"). There is so much cheer and rococo ornamentation in Boccherini. He even provides a Mediterranean touch in the Symphony in C Major (Op. 10, #4) with the spirited addition of a guitar.

Johannes Goritzki and his Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss orchestra give consistent and enjoyable readings to these symphonies, never flagging their enthusiasm for his music for an instant. Throughout these twenty-eight works, they provide a picture of Boccherini as a composer of gusto and good living. Perhaps the real difference between Boccherini and Haydn is garlic.

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