

## Boccherini - Vol. 2: Sonate per il Violoncello e Basso (2018)

Written by bluesever

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Sonata in Sol Maggiore, G.5 01 I. *Largo* 02 II. *Allegro alla militare* 03 III. *Tempo di minuetto*  
Sonata in Do Minore, G.2  
04 I. *Adagio (Prima versione)* 05 II. *Allegro (Prima versione)* 06 III. *Allegretto (Prima versione)*

Sonata in Fa Maggiore, G.1  
07 I. *Allegro* 08 II. *Adagio* 09 III. *Allegretto*  
Sonata in La Maggiore, G.13  
10 I. *Allegro* 11 II. *Largo* 12 III. *Allegro*  
Sonata in Si Bemolle Maggiore, G.12  
13 I. *Allegro moderato* 14 II. *Grave* 15 III. *Minuetto*

Les Basses Réunies Bruno Cocset - cello Emmanuel Jacques - cello continuo Vaude Gratton  
- pianoforte Bertrand Cuiller - harpsichord

Shortly after Luigi Boccherini's death on 28 May 1805, two journalists in Leipzig and Paris agreed that he had been "an excellent cellist capable of bewitching audiences with the incomparable sound and expressive melody of his instrument" and "a wonderful cellist. He especially charmed us with his incomparable sonority and the very expressive song of his instrument." However, posterity in the nineteenth century was most unkind to him, allowing him to "survive" thanks to a Minuet chosen at random, transposed for and endlessly churned out by every possible instrument (and even the voice), a somewhat "doctored" concerto, and finally editions of a small batch of "sonatas for cello and piano" adorned with an improbable arsenal of technical and performance markings far removed from the Boccherinian spirit. Bruno Cocset pays tribute to one of the precursors of the Golden Age of the cello by recording five sonatas based on the manuscripts of the extensive Nosedà Collection of the Milan Conservatory. He is accompanied by his partners from Les Basses Réunies, Maude Gratton, Bertrand Cuiller (harpsichord), Emmanuel Jacques (cello continuo) and Richard Myron. ---arkivmusic.com

It's some considerable time since this team gave us Volume 1, containing Boccherini's Cello Concertos in G (G480) and A (G475) and the Cello Sonatas in B-flat (G565), C (G17) and A (G4), recorded in 2004 and released on ALPHA084. Two sonatas and one concerto from this album, G565, G480 and G17, were reissued in 2017 on a budget-price 5-CD set with book, available for around £36/\$28 (ALPHA890, Cello Stories). Tully Potter – review – singled out the three Boccherini works as the cherries on that cake (my words) and even suggested the original CD as the best option. Now the cherry-pickers have a second volume and, if anything, it's even more attractive than the first. Unfortunately, however, all that remain generally available of Volume 1 are the three pieces contained on the multi-CD set.

Most of the recent releases from Bruno Cocset and his team have been reissues on the mid-price Alpha Baroque Masterpieces label, as in the case of the Barrière Cello Sonatas on ALPHA330 in 2017 – review: NB the eclassical.com link no longer applies to this or any Alpha recordings. Cocset's 1998 recording of the Vivaldi Cello Sonatas is well worth obtaining, even despite the overlap with another reissue in the same series from Marco Ceccato and Accademia Ottoboni and a budget twofer from Hyperion.

Bruno Cocset's Boccherini, on a specially constructed 'Boccherini Bel Canto' cello (Charles Riché, 2004) remains as much in the top rank as on Volume 1, but the support from Les Basses Réunies is more varied on this second volume, with two kinds of fortepiano, each appearing in one sonata (G2, and bringing out the galant style in G12), and harpsichord in G1, while the second cello provides the rounded continuo in G1, G5, G12 and G13. Boccherini seems to have kept his cards close to his chest as to how these works were to be performed, but Cocset's solution makes ample sense.

Christian and Sebastian Benda, the latter on fortepiano, for all the quality of the playing, sound a little threadbare by comparison in Boccherini's G2 on 'Volume 1' (8.554324; Volume 2 never seems to have materialised). Subscribers to Naxos Music Library can stream both that and the new Alpha.

Normally I might have counselled against playing all five sonatas in one go, but the variety in the support compensates for an all-sonata disc which might otherwise be at a disadvantage when the predecessor had two concertos to vary the sonata theme. There was also a guitar in the mix on Volume 1 – an instrument which features in much of Boccherini's music – and I'm a little surprised that we didn't have one again, but that's my only small reservation. A more important reservation concerns the fact that one dealer is asking as much as £17.06 for this CD,

almost 50% more than others. Why?

The texts employed are those in the important collection in the Milan Music Conservatoire; though, as Cocset notes, none of these has been identified as in Boccherini's hand, they provide the best source.

The notes in the booklet by Yves Gérard, editor of the standard catalogue, hence the 'G' numbers, are very welcome; they are also decently translated into English.

The sound is OK even in the pathetic 160kb/s mp3 press preview – why do the Outhere group continue to think this acceptable for reviewers? It's much better and closer to CD quality as streamed in 320kb/s from Naxos Music Library, but it would be better still if Outhere were to give reviewers at least 16-bit sound; BIS, Linn1, Chandos and Hyperion all make 24-bit available, sometimes even in 24/192 format to allow us to give the recording its due.

I enjoyed this new release enough to regret that Volume 1 is now available only partially and in a 5-CD set; perhaps Alpha will reissue it separately in the near future in their mid-price series. Perhaps, too, we shall be treated to a third volume without having to wait so long – in another thirteen years I'm unlikely to be around and certainly not compos mentis enough to review it.

1 Now that Linn are part of the Outhere group, their new releases also reach me in 160kb/s mp3. Given their reputation in the audio field, I'm pleased that I can also obtain their 24-bit downloads. Quelle différence! ---Brian Wilson, musicweb-international.com

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