



In short, this illuminating book is highly recommended reading for students, researchers and teachers alike, addressing the richness of Haydn's musical personality through an impressive array of fresh perspectives. For the reader this is indeed a comforting prospect, since it demonstrates that, in spite of the vast range of current musical and historical knowledge, there is still ample room for witty and unconventional analyses in Haydn scholarship.

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ELISABETH LE GUIN

BOCCHERINI'S BODY: AN ESSAY IN CARNAL MUSICOLOGY

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Any new arrival to the largely uninhabited world of Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) deserves a hero's welcome. Elisabeth Le Guin's book is a pioneer, *sine pares*, adding significantly to the literature. Since the mid-nineteenth century, French scholarship has led the way. Louis Picquot's *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Luigi Boccherini, suivie du catalogue raisonné de toutes ses œuvres, tant publiées qu'inédites* (Paris: Philipp, 1851) built the foundations of a legacy. Georges de Saint-Foix later republished Picquot's work, adding a hefty preface, *Boccherini: Notes et documents nouveaux* (Paris: R. Legoux, 1930). Only one previous monograph of the composer has appeared in English, *Luigi Boccherini: His Life and Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) by the Baronne Edouard Germaine de Rothschild, mother-in-law of the legendary cellist Piatigorski; in her Introduction she tellingly acknowledges help received from the respected Boccherini scholar Yves Gérard. The translation of Gérard from the French, by Andreas Mayor, has long since been out of print, as is Gérard's goliath companion work, the *Thematic, Bibliographical, and Critical Catalogue of the Works of Luigi Boccherini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969). Around the same time, Ellen Amsterdam produced a remarkable PhD thesis, 'The String Quintets of Luigi Boccherini' (University of California at Berkeley, 1968), but never published it. There have been some helpful Italian efforts, amounting to variations on Picquot and Rothschild/Gérard, and a study on the string quartets in German, by Christian Speck. More recently, *Luigi Boccherini: un músico italiano en la España ilustrada* (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Musicología, 2002) by Jaime Tortella adds usefully to hypotheses on biographical aspects of Boccherini's life but remains light on substantive musical and textual insight. A hands-on approach to the music itself has been lacking until now. In *Boccherini's Body*, Le Guin tackles the yin and yang of Boccherini's music, its physical (visual) nature versus its embodiment (invisible) within eighteenth-century Western culture.

The title of Le Guin's book initially made me wince, bringing unpleasant reactionary thoughts to mind. Enlightened now by the concept of a more holistic approach to musicology, I know that my first reaction said more about my own resistance to the idea that a composer such as Boccherini might be viewed and deconstructed from many angles and used as the basis for performative exploration than it did about the book itself. Impressively, Le Guin is not only an associate professor at UCLA but also a respected (baroque) cellist. Her writing has inspired me to break out of my own narrow identity as a (modern) violinist and to launch myself into the outer regions of Boccherini research. In *Boccherini's Body* Le Guin demonstrates, with staggering panache, the way forward for writing about music. Furthermore, she certainly *can* play the cello. But is it possible to excel both as an academic and performer? There is certainly a resistance within academic circles to such versatile virtuosity, and in performing circles, an intolerance of anything that might appear to clip the wings of artistic flight by means of intellectual rigour. Stick to what you do best and do not tread on my patch, would appear to be the maxim on both sides of the musical divide.



Boccherini's Body is more than just an essay, it is a versatile medium – a performance. It does not require the user to be musically literate, although there are fine musical examples in abundance. There is an accompanying CD, which I found more convenient to play on my laptop (with headphones) rather than on a CD player, since it was necessary to repeat or to stop the track of a musical example when required. For those who read music, the CD certainly adds another dimension to the experience and gives the author the opportunity to display her virtuosity as both writer and performer. Le Guin plays impressively on the tracks from the cello sonatas with harpsichordist Charles Sherman, and with her (period-instrument) Artaria String Quartet colleagues, providing examples from selected Boccherini quartets. If I have a gripe, it is with her choice of the cello sonatas and string quartets as bodies for her carnal essay. Choosing to sideline the quintets for two violins, viola and two cellos – arguably Boccherini's *opii magnii* – reveals a certain possessiveness, understandable if one accepts the Artaria Quartet as a 'body', and Le Guin a member (namely a limb) of that body. An informal interview ('derived loosely from Condillac'), between the other members of her ensemble and an interlocutor (Le Guin herself), on the psychology of interpretation becomes an uncomfortable (for me) Freudian analysis of musicians' inner thoughts. Yet as an experimental analysis it succeeds, through delving into the thought processes of performers. This much neglected form of investigation fascinatingly complements the usually dull analytical stuff: 'To talk of music-making as if it were in any way a thing, even the thinghood of an event, is no longer an option. If music-making is an interaction among persons, as such it demands direct address' (264).

Le Guin's inspired journey unravels 'the art which conceals art' of the performer and at the same time gets under the skin of a composer whom she, as performer-writer, embraces as a performer's composer, a composer's performer and a listener-observer's composer-performer. Like an onion, each chapter is peeled away revealing another skin of embodied thought, a fresh new connection between an inner and outer world, between composer and performer. Chapter Three, 'Gestures and Tableaux', examines the performer's body performing, in performance: 'As performers in search of richer understandings of this repertory, we might further experiment with configuring and understanding our own performing bodies in a range of new ways ... to be prepared to offer ourselves as (always carefully unacknowledged) erotic objects' (102). The physicality of performance is still a taboo subject. Yet, without any sensational effect, Le Guin convinces us that our bodies are integral to the music we play, but neglected in the interpretive process. In Chapter Four, 'Virtuosity, Virtuality, Virtue', she explores the nature of external show and internal process, so important to the performer. Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (*The Paradox of the Actor*) is central to Le Guin's thesis on performing. Diderot's paradox, that the most sensitive (*sensible*) actors/performers/players make the worst failures and, conversely, that the most insensitive achieve great success, is on the face of it staggering. Yet the notion contained therein, that emotion in performance restricts technique, is highly persuasive and useful. Le Guin homes in on Diderot's paradox, using it to analyse virtuosity, a concept that had seemingly turned her off Boccherini at the outset of her relationship with him. She skilfully pilots the reader through time, from the eighteenth century to the 'here-and-nowness' of such occult concepts as kinesthesia, eudaemia and proprioception, landing us safely (via idiotism!) on the exotic planet of Boccherini. Language and etymology are integral to Le Guin's work, with its instability and its *faux amis* used to defend Boccherini's music (perhaps she does protest a little too much) from accusations of being prosaic or repetitive.

Boccherini's Body is supremely scholarly and, at the same time, a book to sample, since Le Guin has resisted a historical approach that would require it to be read chronologically. Instead, 'A Melancholy Anatomy' (Chapter Five) – not coincidentally the main 'body' of her book – is used as a portal into the world of the Enlightenment, when Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772) caused such excitement. The *Encyclopédie* lists medical conditions such as consumption and syphilis, the latter as 'the familiar result and just punishment of excessive debauchery' (192). Commentators of the day posited such maladies as the cause of melancholy. Taking as a starting-point the bizarre exhumation of Boccherini's body in 1993 by doctors in Pisa, Le Guin attempts a musicological post mortem, analysing ailments from which Boccherini may have suffered. Using melancholy as a metaphor for inward and outward manifestations of illness, she grapples with the conflicting



ideas of *sensibilité*. Melancholy is certainly an apposite word to describe a certain mood prevalent in much of Boccherini's music, and Le Guin traces its etymology from Cheyne's *The English Malady* (1733) via 'Other Melancholies', and from Descartes to the Marquis de Sade. Could melancholic obsession, prevalent in Boccherini's music, be cured or worsened, Le Guin asks, by indulgence: 'As the Encyclopédie emphasized so urgently, the central difficulty, the problem around which melancholic obsession and desire both circle, is whether indulgence dissipates or intensifies the condition. Does the caress quiet or awaken pleasure? For all the quaintness of the above account of masturbation, the question is no idle one, for desire, like obsessive thought, can renew itself endlessly, and as such marks the place at which autonomous selfhood spins off into the abyss of solipsism' (194). Accusations of solipsism could more reasonably be levelled at the music of Paganini, another virtuoso who arguably took music to the abyss, through his search for a spiralling technical autonomy, or at John Cage, whose obsession could be seen as silencing the object of desire, in order to possess it. Boccherini survives the abyss by leading us to the precipice of virtuosity in order to show us, via a bipolarity of emotion, that melancholy is good for us.

As an experimental corpus to this chapter, the whole Allegro of Boccherini's string quartet Op. 9 No. 1 (G171) is carefully dissected. CD examples flow by, giving a glimpse of the rapid thought processes of a performer/explorer at work. Interwoven with literary and artistic references, packed with well researched information and illustrations not to be found elsewhere, Le Guin impresses by her writing style – in itself, a marvel. I wondered who could have been her model and was surprised, yet inspired, to discover that her formative influence on her prose was her mother, Ursula K. Le Guin, a doyenne of the science fiction world. Titles in *Boccherini's Body* such as 'Hypochondria as an Aspect of Musical Hermeneutics' have a rather childlike appeal – Harry Potteresque in their strong allure into a secret world, rich in terminology. A must-have for all Boccherini aficionados, the book is also linked to a website: <<http://epub.library.ucla.edu/leguin/boccherini/>>. Updated information and source material for scholars, researchers and blossoming Boccherini buffs can be found there.

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EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN MUSIC

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In 1801 the young singer Praskovia Kovaleva-Zhemchukova married her long-term lover, Count Nikolai Sheremetev. She was a popular star in theatrical productions on his estate, trained by the best teachers and musicians available to the Russian aristocracy in the last years of Catherine the Great's rule. Her high-profile career attests to her musical talent, and her portrait on the front cover of Marina Ritzarev's book reveals that she was also a beauty. But what makes her story unique is that Praskovia was actually the Count's serf. She was chosen by him to be his mistress from the age of thirteen, educated to the highest standards he could afford, and was one of the most valued performers in one of the wealthiest and most prestigious cultural institutions in Russia, the Sheremetev theatre. Their marriage was secret; but even so the Count had to enlist the collaboration of court archivists in the pretence that Praskovia's origins were Polish gentry. Her story is just one amid the numerous fascinating nuggets of biographical detail provided by Marina Ritzarev in this long-awaited study of eighteenth-century Russian music.

The phenomenal success of Sheremetev's theatre was certainly not unique in Russia at that time. Other wealthy aristocrats owned orchestras, choirs, theatre troupes and horn bands that performed on their private