

DLA Doctoral Dissertation Thesis

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II. Frederick William, the Cellist King
and the String Quartets Dedicated to Him Written
by Boccherini

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I. Antecedents of the Research

Boccherini holds touted by the posterity as one of the greatest cello virtuosos of all time. His brilliant instrument technology was praised in many contemporary writing, but today few people know about him that he won even greater acclaim among his contemporaries as a composer.

As a cello and chamber music teacher I got in touch with many of his works. As a composer Boccherini created in a number of genres, but beside his cello pieces my attention was attracted by his very rich quartet literature. I was fascinated by the lightness of mood portrayal and piercing clarity of his music. In teaching Boccherini's quartets it appeared to me that in some of the composer's works the cello part is highlighted to the other parts. These items technically and musically require higher skills from the cellist. After a little research, it was revealed that these string quartets were dedicated to II. Frederick William, the cellist king, by the author. It also became clear to me that II. Frederick William is not remembered correctly by music history. His name is mentioned in literature almost as a footnote, however his enthusiasm for music, especially chamber music, encouraged a number of excellent composers, including Boccherini, to write some great works. Summing up these thoughts, I came to a decision that the center of gravity in my dissertation will be put on two problems; on the one hand I present II. Frederick William, the amateur

musician's and Boccherini's very interesting working relationship, pointing to test out what inspiration was the king's musical knowledge for the composer, on the other hand it has seemed an exciting task to analyze the string quartets written to the king from performing aspects.

II. Sources

The exploring, collecting and analyzing of the literature was a very difficult task. In the topic I have defined there have been no researches made in Hungarian language yet, although the subject's international literature is quite big.

II. Frederick William was not a major player in the German-Prussian history, but as a generous patron, he made an enormous and important service to the history of music. I have summarized II. Frederick William of Prussia's short biography and his relation to music from German-Prussian history and biographical writings, as well as from several music history materials.

There has not been made an overall study of Boccherini's 91 quartets. With the help of comparing and summing various documents and studies, I have tried to develop a general idea of his string quartets, into which I placed the four- movement quartets, which were written to the king.

During the study of the quartets in the Berlin State Library (*Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*) I took as a basis Boccherini's original manuscripts and their copies. For the analysis of the quartets I used the scores published by

Pleyel in 1798. This edition was supervised by Boccherini himself, and therefore contains valuable information. For the understanding and studying of his works, I tried to use resources as a basis, which I found to be valuable in terms of my work. In this work I used as special literature the following studies:

Christian Speck: *Boccherinis Streichquartette. Und Studien zur Kompositionweise zur gattungsgeschichtlichen Stellung.* München: Wilhelm Fink, 1987

Germaine de Rothschild: *Luigi Boccherini. His Life and Work.* London: Oxford University Press, 1965

Mara Parker: *Soloistic Chamber Music at the Court of Friedrich Wilhelm II, 1786-1797* PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1994 (Manuscript).

Babette Kaiser Kern: *Luigi Boccherini. Leben und Werk. Musica Amorosa* Weimar: Verlagsgesellschaft in der Weimarer Verlagshaus Römerweg GmbH, 2014

Elisabeth Le Guin: *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006

Winifried Pape - Wolfgang Boettcher: *Das Violoncello. Geschichte, Bau, Technik, Repertoire.* Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1996

Lena van der Hoven: *Musikalische Repräsentationspolitik in Preußen (1688-1797).* Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015

III. Method

My dissertation is divided into two parts. In the first part, which the first, second and third chapters fall, I tried to provide a comprehensive overview of II. Frederick William ruler of Prussia. About the King, who brilliantly played the cello as an amateur and as a generous patron he inspired a number of excellent composers to write great works. I highlighted the important moments of his life and tried to give a general picture of his role in Prussian culture. I collected all the literature that was available to me and I have summarized and compared them. I examined the interesting questions of Boccherini's relationship with the king, which contributed substantially to the birth of these quartets. I tried to clear up misconceptions regarding Boccherini's stay in Prussia by summing up the latest research results. I contacted the Berlin State Library (*Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*) where the original manuscripts of Boccherini are preserved within the framework of the Berlin Cultural Heritage (*Preußischer Kulturbesitz*). I was able to study the part of the collection, which is available in digital form too, and through this facility, along with the use of other studies made interesting observations.

In the second part, I studied the string quartets dedicated to the king by performance based criteria. First of all, I studied the relationship of parts of a quartet, especially highlighting those in which Boccherini delivered an important role to the cello. I reviewed the

score of the 29 string quartet, some of which I got from the Berlin State Library's archives. My work was made more difficult by the fact that 14 of the quartets have not yet appeared in print and audio materials have not been made from either. Choosing the works in which the cello plays a key role, and the management of other instruments is interesting too, I asked some of my musician friends to play these works. Finally, I concluded that Boccherini's four- movement string quartets are those in which the cello most presents its unparalleled opportunities. Further narrowing the circle I dealt with those items during my work, which technically are a challenge for the cello. In addition to analyzing the items I examined the key changes and fingerings context as well that appear in the cello part.

IV. Results

In my work I presented II. Frederick William, the generous patron and a great musician. I discussed in detail the stages of his life that are somehow connected to music. His name is known among music historians as a patron, but as a cellist we know very little about him. That is why I tried to chart the king's instrumental skills on the basis of available writings and documents in my work. In my intention my results serve not only as further additions to the cellist, but manages to put a new light on II. Frederick William for the wider profession.

In my study I presented the king's and Boccherini's working relationship, and I was looking for answers to how this relationship based on mutual respect influenced Boccherini's works. This type of interconnection of facts and relevance of their interrelation puts a new light on the musician and the monarch.

I have studied with a new approach to Boccherini's four-movement string quartets, which were offered to the king. I formulated the character traits and relationship of the four musical voices in his quartets.

I studied the autonomy of parts and the hierarchy between the musical instruments in Boccherini's quartets, the mood and the character representation connected to the parts, and the establishment of a single tonality and the musical toolbox for this. I also highlighted some interesting technical problems arising in cello part and the realization of its solution. I studied in the cello parts the relation of the use of keys and fingerings. By reviewing and analyzing these I supported Christian Orth's observations. To my knowledge, the analysis of these works based on these aspects has not happened yet.

Of course, I am aware that I cannot make up sufficiently the complete lack of literature on the topic in Hungarian language with my dissertation, because the research of Boccherini's string quartets is an extremely difficult and complex task, but I am convinced that the public interested in this theme will find reliable and useful information in my work.

V. Documentation of the Activity Concerning the Domain of the Argument

I came into contact with Boccherini's works mainly during my studies and teaching. The understanding of the composer's chamber works is a very large and difficult task, since the number of works written for string musical instruments is very high. As a young student I played numerous of his chamber works already, but later as a teacher and performer I have been consciously trying to learn and play more of his works. I tried to share this knowledge with the students during chamber lessons and master classes I held, and to arise their interest in Boccherini's works. Like this, the composer's Trios and quartets were played on many exams and concerts. I hope that my thesis will contribute to learning and popularizing these great works.