

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ITALIAN CELLO SONATAS BY
CELLIST/COMPOSERS IN THE BAROQUE AND CLASSICAL ERAS

BY

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ABSTRACT

The solo cello sonata begins with the appearance of the violoncello in the second half of the seventeenth century. There is a correlative relationship between composers, performers, and the development of the cello as a solo instrument, which becomes evident by examination of the instrument and bow, stylistic and performance practices, and innovations in cello technique. These factors are explored in the works of four cellist/composers of the Baroque and Classical era: Domenico Gabrielli (1659-1690), Sonata #1 in G major; Giovanni Benedetto Platti (1692-1763), Sonata #1 in D major, Series II; Giovanni Battista Cirri (1724-1808), Sonata #3 in G minor, Op. 5; and Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805), Sonata #2, in C major, G6.

This paper includes biographical information concerning these composers and historical information on the development of the cello, bow, and instrument's technique, and the sonata during the centuries under discussion. Each of the abovementioned sonatas is analyzed and described in terms of the changes in the equipment each of the composers might have used, the development of technique, and the compositional evolution of the solo sonata as exemplified in the abovementioned works.

By examining the relationship between certain musical events occurring in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, composers who were also cellists, the evolution of the design and construction of the violoncello and bow, the advance in performance techniques, and the development of the solo sonata, it is possible to trace how the different discoveries of that time were interrelated, and to create a clearer picture of what those revolutionary times might have been like.

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INTRODUCTION

The solo cello sonata begins with the appearance of the violoncello. There is a correlative relationship between composers, performers, and the development of the cello as a solo instrument, which becomes evident by examination of the instrument and bow, stylistic and performance practices, and innovations in cello technique. These factors will be explored in the works of four cellist/composers of the Baroque and Classical era: Domenico Gabrielli (1659-1690), Sonata #1 in G major; Giovanni Benedetto Platti (1692-1763), Sonata #1 in D major, Series II; Giovanni Battista Cirri (1724-1808), Sonata #3 in G minor, Op. 5; and Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805), Sonata #2, in C major, G6. Because all of the composers were cello virtuosos, this research will provide a unique perspective.

Scholars have approached each of these composers individually, the cello repertory in general overviews, the instrument's development, the growth of cello technique, and the cello sonata in general. Eugene Enrico provides an interesting study of the orchestra in San Petronio where the violoncello first appears;¹ Elizabeth Cowling provides information on the selected composers as well as an excellent literature list of Baroque cello sonatas;² numerous dissertations and articles contain information on the selected composers and their works;³ there are several extensive histories of cello design,

¹ Eugene Enrico, *The Orchestra at San Petronio in the Baroque Era* (Washington: Smithsonian Studies, 1976).

² Elizabeth Cowling, *The Cello* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1975, 2/1983).

³ Poppea Anne Dorsam, "*Giovanni Battista Cirri: Analyses of his Sei Sonate a violoncello o violino e basso op. XVI, 1780 with a guide to performance practice and a history of the composer and his music*" (DMA document, Boston University, 2006). Consulted through Proquest; Christian Speck, "Boccherini as Cellist and His Music for Cello," *Early Music* 33/2 (May 2005): 191-210; Whitney Griggs, "Giovanni Benedetto Platti: 12 cello concerti: A stylistic study of features" (DMA document, University of Cincinnati, 1996). Consulted through Proquest.

makers, and development, including works by Paul Laird⁴ and William Monical;⁵ and William Newman's series on the sonata contains in-depth information about the evolution of the form.⁶ However, a study of works exclusively by cellist/composers from this period, which places the composers and works in the contexts mentioned above, has not been undertaken.

⁴ Paul Laird, *The Baroque Cello Revival* (Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004).

⁵ William L Monical, *Shapes of the Baroque* (New York: American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers, 1989).

⁶ William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1983); William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Baroque Era*, Fourth Edition (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1983).

THE CELLIST/COMPOSERS

All of the selected four cellist/composers—Gabrielli, Platti, Cirri, and Boccherini—were excellent performers on the instrument as well as composers. Two were affiliated with San Petronio in Bologna. San Petronio was a major center for instrumental music at the end of the seventeenth century; Stephen Bonta argues convincingly that it was the birthplace of the violoncello.⁷ It is not surprising then that the earliest cellists and composers of cello sonatas were there.

Domenico Gabrielli (1659-1690) was born in Bologna, studied composition with Giovanni Legrenzi in Venice, and cello and composition with Petronio Franceschini in Bologna. In 1680 he succeeded Franceschini as the primary cellist at San Petronio, was elected to the Accademia Filarmonica in 1676, and became its president in 1683.⁸ His main historical significance is as cello virtuoso and as one of the first composers to write extant works for solo cello. He was in Bologna at San Petronio at the time when the first cellos were making their appearance.⁹ Robin Stowell notes:

Giuseppe Jacchini's *Sonata.....per camera* Op.1 (Bologna, c. 1695) and *Concerti per camera* Op. 3 (Modena, 1697) include the first known published continuo sonatas for cello, two appearing in each publication; but Domenico Gabrielli probably wrote his two *Sonate a Violoncello solo con B.C.* in the late 1680s, and it is generally conceded that the composition of cello continuo sonatas starts unequivocally with Gabrielli's last four *Ricercars* in a manuscript of 1689.¹⁰

⁷ Stephen Bonta, "From Violone to Violoncello: A Question of Strings?" *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 3 (1977): 64-99.

⁸ John G. Suess and Marc Vanscheeuwijck, "Gabrielli, Domenico ('Minghino dal violoncello')." *Grove Music Online*, accessed 15 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

⁹ Enrico, in *The Orchestra at San Petronio*, 16, states, "The violoncello was given a special prominence at San Petronio. Domenico Gabrielli, who was associated with the orchestra before his death in 1690, is usually acknowledged as the first composer of solo pieces for the cello, which was tuned: C G d a, as it is today."

¹⁰ Robin Stowell, "The Sonata." In *Cambridge Companion to the Cello*, Robin Stowell, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 116-17.

Perhaps the least known and most under-appreciated of the four composers included here is Giovanni Benedetto Platti (1697-1763). He studied in Venice, probably with Francesco Gasparini, and in 1722, went to Würzburg where he worked at the court of the Prince-Archbishop of Bamberg and Würzburg. He was employed there until his death in 1763. A brother of the prince bishop's, Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn, became Platti's private patron. Schönborn, an amateur cellist, commissioned him to compose 12 cello sonatas and 28 cello concertos between 1725 and 1743.¹¹ Platti was an accomplished musician: he was a singer and played a variety of instruments, including the cello, violin, oboe, harpsichord, and flute. There is some debate as to whether Platti wrote in the Baroque or pre-Classical style. Torre Franca lists him in a group of pre-Classical composers whose publications influenced the keyboard sonata around 1740, and regards Platti as a forerunner of Mozart and Beethoven. Cowling states that although this may be true of the harpsichord sonatas, the cello sonatas are strictly Baroque. Newman offers a possible solution postulating that the "controversial harpsichord sonatas" appear to have been by one of Platti's sons.¹² Griggs suggests that he was a transitional composer, his cello sonatas in the Baroque style, and his cello concerti exhibiting traits of the *style galant*.¹³ Alberto Iesùè, in his article in *Grove Music Online* states: "Platti's placement among minor composers such as Vento, G.M. Rutini and Domenico Alberti deserves to be reviewed. Analysis of much of his music has revealed a composer who can be placed among the more important figures of his time."¹⁴ A great deal of music by

¹¹ Griggs, *Platti*, 3-4.

¹² Newman, *The Baroque Era*, 265.

¹³ Griggs, *Platti*, 116.

¹⁴ Alberto Iesùè, "Platti, Giovanni Benedetto." *Grove Music Online*, accessed 10 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

Platti was discovered in the library of Schönborn, in the middle of the twentieth century,¹⁵ and Cowling, a champion of Platti, notes “that of the Italian sonatas from the Schönborn library, Platti’s are the best.”¹⁶ As Ilesuè suggests, further investigation of his works would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Giovanni Battista Cirri (1724-1808) was born in Forli where he began his musical studies with his brother Ignazio, and continued with the organist Giovanni Balzani. Later, in Padua, he might have studied cello with Antonio Vandini and composition with Francesco Antonio Vallotti. In 1739, he took his holy orders in Forli, but then moved to Bologna where he chose to pursue a career as a musician rather than that of a priest. He was employed as a cellist and composer at San Petronio and became a member of the Accademia Filarmonica in 1759. He most likely studied with the composer Padre Martini during this time. Cirri stayed in Bologna for 21 years until moving to Paris in 1760 and finally settling in London in 1764, his meeting of the Duke of York in Forli in 1759 possibly motivating these moves. The Duke eventually employed him in 1764 as a “chamber musician” and later, in 1768, the Duke of Gloucester hired him as “director of music.”¹⁷ Cirri was a celebrated cellist who performed extensively in London. Perhaps his most famous concerts were with the young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1764-65. He also performed on the Johann Christian Bach-Carl Friedrich Abel concerts in London. The majority of Cirri’s compositional activity took place during his years in London. In 1780, he returned to Forli to care for his ailing brother, whom he replaced as *maestro di*

¹⁵ In the appendix A of Grigg’s dissertation, she identifies 72 sonatas for various instruments other than the cello, four solo ricercares for violin and violoncello, 4 concertos for harpsichord, 1 for oboe, and the 12 sonatas and 28 concertos for cello as the known works of Platti.

¹⁶ Cowling, *The Cello*, 84.

¹⁷ Dorsam, *Cirri*, 23-31.

cappella at Forlì Cathedral in 1780.¹⁸ Margaret Campbell writes: “His cello compositions show an unusual harmonic and formal control with virtuoso parts high in the upper register; they also possess a melodic freshness which accounts for their popularity.”¹⁹ An engraving of Giovanni Battista Cirri is by Francesco Bartolozzi (1727-1815), engraver to King George III can be viewed at in the digital collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.²⁰

The most renowned cellist of the eighteenth century was Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805).²¹ He was born in Lucca into an artistic family. His father was a contrabass and violoncello player; his brother a dancer, violist, and librettist; two of his sisters were dancers; and a third sister was an opera singer. He began studying the cello at the age of five with his father; from 1751-53, he was a student of Domenico Francesco Vannucci at San Martino in Lucca, and in 1753, went to Rome and studied with Giovanni Battista Constanzi. In 1756, Boccherini returned to Lucca, where he made his debut in a solo cello concerto performance. This so impressed Giacomo Puccini that he arranged future engagements for him; judging from the fees Boccherini obtained it appears he was already one of the top musicians in the area.²² In 1757, he and his father obtained positions in the court theater in Vienna where, to demonstrate his proficiency, he

¹⁸ Owain Edwards and Valerie Walden, “Cirri, Giovanni Battista.” *Grove Music Online*, accessed 15 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

¹⁹ Margaret Campbell, “Masters of the Baroque and Classical eras.” In *Cambridge Companion to the Cello*, Robin Stowell, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

²⁰ From the digital collection of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts / Music Division, Digital ID: 1121317.
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=358064&imageID=1121317&word=cirri&s=1¬word=&d=pm&c=&f=&k=1&lWord=&lField=&sScope=Library%20Division&sLevel=&sLabel=Music%20Division&sort=&total=2&num=0&imgs=20&pNum=&pos=2>
 (Accessed 2 February 2014).

²¹ Valerie Walden, *One Hundred Years of Violoncello* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10.

²² Christian Speck and Stanley Sadie, “Boccherini, (Ridolfo) Luigi.” *Grove Music Online*, accessed 15 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

performed his own cello sonatas with his father playing the continuo part. He continued to travel between Lucca and Vienna until 1764.²³ In 1760, he began composing in earnest, including 18 works for strings, among them duos, trios, and quartets. In 1764, he obtained a position as a cellist in the Cappella Palatino of Lucca, where he remained until the death of his father in 1766. At this point, he began touring France, Spain, and Italy with the violinist Filippo Manfredi, eventually arriving in Paris, where the ambassador to Spain heard them perform, and offered them positions in Madrid. There was some confusion in obtaining the promised posts, but in 1770 Boccherini secured the patronage of the Infante Don Luis, who appointed him chapelmaster. The next fifteen years were prosperous and comfortable for Boccherini: he married and had six children, composed prolifically, with his compositions receiving quick publication, and was venerated as one of the most gifted cellists of the time. In 1785, both Don Luis and Boccherini's wife died and his position as chapelmaster ended. In 1786 Friedrich Wilhelm II, the King of Prussia, and an amateur cellist who was aware of Boccherini's compositions, appointed Boccherini as *compositeur de notre chambre*. Although it appears Boccherini never visited Prussia, continuing to live near Madrid for the rest of his life, he did send 12 instrumental works a year to Friedrich, continuing in this position until Friedrich's unexpected death in 1796.²⁴ The years from 1796 until his death in 1805 were difficult for Boccherini. His health was poor, due to having contracted tuberculosis in 1765, his second wife and four of his children died during this period, and Friedrich's predecessor declined to continue employing Boccherini, creating severe financial hardships for him. In addition, he entered into a frustrating, unsatisfactory publication contract with Ignaz

²³ Walden, *One Hundred Years*, 10.

²⁴ Speck and Sadie, "Boccherini."

Joseph Pleyel. Boccherini died in poverty and anonymity of tuberculosis in 1805, living with his remaining family in a one-room apartment.²⁵ Although the majority of his works fell into obscurity after his death, there was a revival of interest in the second half of the twentieth century. Germaine De Rothschild wrote a biography of Boccherini in 1965 and Yves Gérard compiled a definitive catalogue of his works in 1969.²⁶ Boccherini wrote 27 symphonies, numerous concertos, over 100 string quintets, almost 100 string quartets, and approximately 100 other chamber works, much of it still not published. “Boccherini’s importance as a composer is seriously underestimated,” writes Dimitry Markevitch in *Cello Story*, “but his work (though mostly unpublished) lives on and waits to be discovered.”²⁷ An unsigned oil painting of Boccherini is extant in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia.²⁸

²⁵ Campbell, *Cambridge*, 54.

²⁶ Cowling, *The Cello*, 116.

²⁷ Markevitch, Dimitry, *Cello Story*, trans. Florence W. Seder. (Princeton, N.J.: Summy-Birchard Music, 1984), 79.

²⁸ Luigi Boccherini; oil on canvas, not signed, c. 1764-67. Everanc Studley Miller Bequest, 1962, © National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/3744> (Accessed 4 February 2014).

THE VIOLONCELLO

Stephen Bonta summarizes the complexity faced when trying to review the early history of the cello:

The violoncello's present name means, in Italian, a 'small large viol', as it employs both the superlative suffix *-one*, and a diminutive one, *-ello*. Such a bizarre name suggests that its early history is not straightforward.²⁹

Bonta lists over twenty different names referring to the bass member of the violin during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. "Bass violin" or "violone" are the terms commonly used today for the lowest sounding member of the seventeenth and eighteenth century violin family that played at 8-foot pitch. There were 16-foot sounding bass instruments in the period, sounding an octave lower than printed in the music, but they tended to be related to the viol family.³⁰ Some of the earliest pictorial representations of the bass violin exist in artwork from the first half of the sixteenth century including *The Concert of Angels* by Gaudenzio Ferrari 1534-36,³¹ and Luini's fresco in Varallo Sisia 1540-2.³² An image of the Ferrari is extant in the Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Saronno, Italy.³³

²⁹ Stephen Bonta, et al., "Violoncello (cello)." *Grove Music Online*, accessed 15 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

³⁰ Laird, *The Baroque Cello*, 1.

³¹ Bonta, "Violoncello."

³² Marc Vanscheeuwijck, "The Baroque Cello and Its Performance." *Performance Practice Review* 9/1 (Sep 1996): 78-96.

³³ "The Concert of Angels," 1534-36 (fresco) (detail) (see 175762) by Gaudenzio Ferrari; Location: Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Saronno, Italy; Medium: fresco.
http://cache2.artprintimages.com/p/LRG/15/1503/1qdbd00z/gaudenzio-ferrari-TheConcertofAngels1534-36Detail_12065402_400_300.jpg (Accessed 4 February 2014).

These early cellos were similar to modern instruments but had shorter necks and fingerboards, thinner bass bars and sound posts, lower and flatter bridges, no end pins, and perhaps of most significance, used gut strings, an important reason as to why they were larger in size. The early bass violins or violones generally had a body length of 77-80 cm., considerably larger than the modern standard of 75-76 cm. The gut strings needed to be quite long and thick in order to reach the mass necessary to produce the low C or B flat required of the instrument.³⁴ This made the instrument larger. Both the thicker strings and the larger instrument rendered it ungainly when playing involved technical passages, and until the arrival of wire-wound strings, bass violins were used almost exclusively in a basso continuo role. Wrapping strings with wire allowed the strings to be smaller in width and length, more responsive, louder, and better for technical display. This in turn allowed the cello itself to be smaller, easier to play, and inspired composers to write solo works for it. Arguably, the development of the cello is directly related to the invention of wirewound strings, *circa* 1660.³⁵ In 1665 Floriano Maria Arresti, in his *Sonate A2 & a Tre Con la parte de Violoncello a benepiacito*, Op. IV, (a collection of trio sonatas), first used the term *violoncello*, which eventually became the accepted name of the instrument.³⁶ It is commonly shortened to *cello* in English and German. Although makers continued to build some larger bass violins in the eighteenth century, Antonio Stradivari's 76 cm. *Forma B* violoncello of 1706 eventually led to the codification of dimensions.³⁷

³⁴ Laird in *The Baroque Cello*, p. 53, n 12, states violone tuning was typically Bb-F-c-g, or C-G-d-a. Cellists in Bologna in the latter part of the seventeenth century sometimes tuned to C-G-d-g.

³⁵ Bonta, "From Violone to Violoncello," 98; Laird *The Baroque Cello*, 2; Vanscheeuwijck, "The Baroque Cello and Its Performance," 83.

³⁶ Vanscheeuwijck, "The Baroque Cello and Its Performance," 83.

³⁷ An image of a *Forma B* Stradivari instrument may be viewed at:

https://www.allthingsstrings.com/var/ezwebin_site/storage/images/media/st/article-contents/203/the-

By the latter part of the eighteenth century, most cellos were built using his *Forma B* templates.³⁸ (The larger violones were often cut down to conform to Stradivari's dimensions with varying amounts of success.³⁹)

Despite the standardization of dimensions, extensive experimentation on the fittings for the cello continued. Alterations to the neck and the fingerboard occurred because of demands for increased virtuosity and greater sound production. By increasing the amount of tension on the body of the instrument, a "harder-edged more penetrating sound" was created.⁴⁰ Luthiers devised a method of mortising the neck into the shoulder, enabling it to tilt backwards. Along with the higher bridge this created greater string tension, increasing volume and enabling higher pitches to be played. The angle of fingerboard to the body increased to correspond to the bridge height, and its length increased to make higher pitches accessible. Additionally, longer thicker bass boards and larger sound posts increased the potential volume of the instrument.⁴¹

The piccolo cello (also called the *violoncello piccolo*) was another attempt by makers and performers to increase the range of the instrument. There is considerable debate as to what exactly these instruments were, but in general, they were cellos with five strings, tuned C-G-d- a-e, with bodies smaller than 76 cm.⁴² The addition of the fifth string made higher pitches available without having to shift as frequently or as far. J.S.

[countess-of-stanlein/817501-1-eng-US/The-Countess-of-Stanlein.jpg](https://www.countess-of-stanlein.com/817501-1-eng-US/The-Countess-of-Stanlein.jpg). Bernard Greenhouse's preferred cello since purchasing it, the "Paganini, Countess of Stanlein" is one of just 20 known *Forma B* cellos remaining (including three with replaced tops) and has an established provenance that attests to centuries of recognition of its significance. (Accessed 14 February 2014).

³⁸ Laird, *The Baroque Cello*, 4.

³⁹ Walden, *One Hundred Years*, 56.

⁴⁰ Nora Pyron. "An Introduction to the History of the Cello." In *Cello* by William Pleeth, 208-68. Yehudi Menuhin Music Guides. (London: Macdonald, 1982), 261.

⁴¹ Walden, *One Hundred Years*, 60.

⁴² Laird, *The Baroque Cello*, 12-13.

Bach's sixth suite and some of his cantatas were written for this instrument and there is speculation that some of Boccherini's solo cello works were also for the piccolo cello.⁴³

⁴³ Christian Speck, "Boccherini as Cellist and His Music for Cello." *Early Music* 33/2 (May 2005): 191-210.

THE BOW

In 1802, J.M. Raoul wrote, “Like the bow of the violin, the bow of the violoncello has been endlessly modified.”⁴⁴ Walden notes, “Violoncello bows of the eighteenth century demonstrate rich diversity, in keeping with regional differences in musical style, variations in bow grips, and distinctions between bows used for the orchestra and those designed for soloists.”⁴⁵ Accurate historical evidence on the evolution of the bow is scarce, as not many have survived; however, certain trends are evident. Laird notes contemporary Baroque cellists face a dilemma in their choice of bows, particularly when performing literature from the early part of the eighteenth century. At that point, there was little distinction between viola da gamba bows and bows for the violin family.⁴⁶ As the century progressed, in an effort to create a larger sound, bows were required to bear more weight, and as a result became heavier and more flexible. Important innovations producing what is known as the Baroque bow, occurred during the latter part of the seventeenth century. These included the addition of a clip-in frog, a longer and straighter stick, and a downturned tip. The screw-adjustment mechanism for the frog was introduced at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The transitional bow of the 1700s featured a “hatchet” tip and an inward curve of the stick. This gave more height to the bow, resulting in more power in the upper half of the bow. The Tourte bow of the 1780s became the basic prototype for all subsequent bows. Made of pernambuco, which was

⁴⁴ Walden, in *One Hundred Years* mentions this summary of the condition of the bow made by J.M. Raoul in 1802, 67.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 67-74.

⁴⁶ Laird, *The Baroque Cello*, 46. Laird also has an excellent section on the development of the cello bow and an extensive list of locations and descriptions of historical bows.

bent by heating the wood, it featured a slighter longer tip than the transitional bow, a frog equipped with a slide, and a ferrule, a device to spread the hair at the frog.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Judy Tarling, *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*. (St. Albans, United Kingdom: Corda Music Publications, 2000), 242.

TECHNIQUE

Markevitch outlines four stages leading to the emergence of the cello as a virtuosic solo instrument:

In the first stage, the cello took the part of the continuo and made only rare attempts to depart from the given line.

In the second, it began to take a little liberty, combining its own harmony with the basso, playing—sometimes on the octave, sometimes alone or with another instrument—a melodic line that contained some elements of counterpoint.

In the third, it became independent and no longer played conjointly with its partners. It was accompanied in its own right by a harpsichord or other continuo.

In the fourth, or final stage, it had total freedom and might play alone, as the solo instrument in a concerto, as a partner of equal importance in a duo (sonata), or as part of an ensemble with complete technical liberty. This is the role in which we see the cello functioning today.⁴⁸

A plethora of violoncello method books appeared during the eighteenth century as musicians struggled to master the new instrument.⁴⁹ Many of the technical developments were motivated by the cellist's desire to imitate the technical virtuosity displayed by violinists. Indeed, some early violin and cello literature was played either on violin or cello.⁵⁰ The first cellists used techniques borrowed from both gamba players and violinists.⁵¹ There were two methods of spacing the fingers of the left hand. The first was to use diatonic spacing as seen on the violin, and the second, chromatic spacing as used by gambists. With diatonic spacing, the hand tilted back and the thumb was positioned under the first finger. A perpendicular hand with the thumb under the second finger was

⁴⁸ Markovitch, *Cello Story*, 125-26.

⁴⁹ Bonta, "Violoncello."

⁵⁰ Dorsam, *Cirri*, 20.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

used when fingering chromatically. Michael Corrette in *Méthode théorique et pratique pour apprendre en peu de tems le violoncelle dans sa perfection. Ensemble de principes de musique avec des leçons* (1741), includes finger patterns in both styles.⁵² Eventually a hybrid diatonic-chromatic fingering system became standard and remains in use.⁵³

The first cellists probably played only notes accessible within the space of one hand position, a range of C to *d'*. The range of the instrument quickly expanded, with Gabrielli's first cello sonata reaching the pitch *g'*.⁵⁴ One of the crucial factors in the growth of technical capabilities of the cello was the development of thumb position,⁵⁵ which allowed the upper range of the instrument to expand to *f*" by 1770.⁵⁶

As with left hand technique, cellists continued to experiment with different types of bowing techniques. Two types of bow holds existed: underhand, primarily used by gamba players, and overhand, developed by violinists. Cellists throughout the eighteenth century used both types of bow holds. Players found the overhand grip to be more effective in producing a large sound, as it was easier to transfer weight into the string. As a more powerful sound became increasingly important, it became the accepted hold.

Corrette describes three different varieties of finger placement when using the overhand

⁵² Walden, pg 4. One of the first violoncello method books published.

⁵³ Vanscheeuwijck in "The Baroque Cello and Its Performance" states, "This allowed these first violoncello players to introduce frequent position shifts, double stops, chords, virtuoso ornamentation, fast scales, more passages in the high range (*e'-c*"), tremolos, *batteries*, slurs, arpeggios, and skipping over two strings, to their technique."

⁵⁴ Domenico Gabrielli, *Cello Sonata No. 1 in G major*. (Mainz: B. Schott's Sohne, 1930).

⁵⁵ "The use of thumb position, in which the thumb is placed horizontally across the strings, thereby acting as a moveable nut, is documented in compositions dating from the 1730s....Thumb position was based on the interval of a 4th between the thumb and the third finger when playing on one string, or an octave when playing on two strings. This octave spacing became the basis from which thumb position developed as a technique to expand the instrument's range and capacity for virtuoso playing....A characteristic feature in the use of the thumb was the employment of blocked hand positions across two or more strings in thumb position, from which a wide range of virtuoso devices could be executed." Feng Zhao, "The expansion of cello technique: Thumb position in the eighteenth century" (DMA document, The University of Texas at Austin, 2006). Consulted through Proquest.

⁵⁶ Walden, *One Hundred Years*, 61.

hold.⁵⁷ The first describes a position in which the second, third, and fourth fingers are placed over the frog and the thumb is under the second finger on the frog. In the second, the fingers are on the stick a few inches above the frog, with the thumb on the stick, and in the third, the fingers are over the frog and the thumb under the hair. By the mid-nineteenth century, the first method was the only one in use.

During the eighteenth century, as cellists continued to emulate violinists, they began to explore, and master, various bow strokes. These included: the slur/*detaché* combination; various patterns used for arpeggiated figures; *batteries* and *brisures*, an alteration between neighboring and non-neighboring strings; *bariolage* and *ondeggiando*, an oscillation between pitches on various strings; *piquié*, dotted rhythms on separate bows; *staccato*, a short stroke used both on separate bows and also multiple notes on one bow; and various bowings for connecting double stops and multiple stops.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., 80-81.

⁵⁸ Cowling, *The Cello*, 155-81.

THE SONATA

The term *sonata* came into use at the end of the sixteenth century and originally simply designated an instrumental piece as opposed to a vocal work.⁵⁹ The instrumental *canzona*, an Italian genre that grew out of arrangements of chansons for instruments, is widely viewed as an important precursor of the sonata.⁶⁰ Both early sonatas and canzonas were sectional works, delineated by contrasts in meter and tempo, and were generally in an imitative, contrapuntal style.⁶¹ One of the earliest composers to write in this form, and use the term *sonata*, was Giovanni Gabrieli (1554-1612) in his *Sonata pian' e forte* (1597). It was one of the first instances requiring specific instruments, and incidentally, one of the first examples of the use of dynamics.⁶² The *stile moderno* sonatas of Dario Castello (1590-1658) provide a link between the instrumental canzonas and the sonatas. These were still sectional works with the imitative texture of the *canzona*, but also incorporated virtuosic solos and duo cadenzas, leading the way to the four-movement form of the *sonata da chiesa*.⁶³ Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) is credited with standardizing the slow-fast-slow-fast, four-movement model of the sonata that emerged as the sectional parts of the *canzona* were lengthened and given independent movement status.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Sandra Mangsen, John Irving, John Rink, and Paul Griffins, "Sonata." *Grove Music Online*, accessed 10 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

⁶⁰ Newman, *The Baroque Era*, 20.

⁶¹ Mangsen, "Sonata."

⁶² Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music A Revised Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1973), 290.

⁶³ Mangsen, "Sonata."

⁶⁴ Michael Talbot, "Corelli, Arcangelo." *Grove Music Online*, accessed 20 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

Corelli was one most influential composers of the sonata during the latter part of the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth century. His works affected the development of the form, style, and instrumental technique in equal measure.⁶⁵ Corelli's and Legrenzi's style heavily influenced the first cello sonatas of Domenico Gabrielli as evident upon analysis of these works. The Baroque sonata of the early eighteenth century, as codified by Corelli, often contains four movements (slow-fast-slow-fast), the form evolving from the spinning out of motivic ideas, with some movements based on dance rhythms.⁶⁶ The cadences often follow the pattern tonic to dominant, then to the vi or iii, (less often ii or IV), or the relative major, and then back to the tonic, followed by the dominant, with a final cadence on the tonic. The cadences are important structural points where a new motivic idea is often presented and then spun out until the next cadence.⁶⁷ Gabrielli's and Platti's sonatas clearly follow this format.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the sonata mirrored the changes in the musical language. According to John Rink:

The *galant* idiom, which reached its peak during the 1750s and 60s, favoured a wholly different approach towards melody, which proceeded in short phrases of two or four bars, arranged in symmetrical patterns and closing with balancing imperfect and perfect (half and full) cadences along with a use of the 6-4 chord so extensive as to be almost a cliché.⁶⁸

Rhythmic characteristics of the style include dotted rhythms (or their inversion, the “Scotch snap”), insertions of triplet rhythms into a prevailing duple section, and the use of rests and long appoggiaturas to create emotional tension. In this time, the sonata

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Cowling *The Cello*, 63.

⁶⁷ Interview with Dr. Walter Mays. Professor of Musicology and Composition at Wichita State University. 27 February 2014.

⁶⁸ Rink, “Sonata.”

trended towards simpler textures and a marked absence of polyphony and fugal imitation.⁶⁹ The basso continuo is still in use, but the figures are simpler, and at times, the beginnings of an Alberti bass-line are evident.⁷⁰ Newman observes: “the *b.c.* [basso continuo] becomes more a slow succession of primary-chord roots than a fast line, and a lighter homophonic texture enriched by only an occasional imitation.”⁷¹ The emergence of the sonata-allegro form is also evident in works from this period⁷² as is a three-movement fast-slow-fast format.⁷³ Both Cirri and Boccherini’s sonatas are in this configuration.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Newman *The Baroque Era*, 399.

⁷¹ Ibid., 336.

⁷² James Webster, “Sonata form.” *Grove Music Online*, accessed 16 February 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

⁷³ Rink “Sonata.”

THE ANALYSES

Examination of the bow technique, changes in range, complexity of passage-work, use of thumb position, and use of double stops and chords in the solo cello sonatas of Gabrielli, Platti, Cirri, and Boccherini demonstrate an increase in virtuosic techniques. Changes in the equipment each of the composers might have used illustrates the evolution of the instrument and bow to accommodate the changing needs of players and composers. The development of the sonata and the use of increasingly virtuosic cello writing are evident in the analyses of these works.

Gabrielli wrote seven solo ricercares, one duo canon, and two continuo sonatas for the cello.⁷⁴ The solo ricercares show a marked increase in virtuosic requirement from the previous continuo lines for the violone. As Suess and Vanscheeuwijck note:

His canons, ricercares and sonatas reflect both an advanced performing technique and an acute awareness of the sonority inherent in the instrument: his ricercares for unaccompanied cello contain florid passage-work and double, triple and quadruple stops.⁷⁵

Wissick also comments on Gabrielli's apparent fascination with the new wire-wrapped C string.⁷⁶

There are two different manuscript versions of the Sonata #1 in G major, a ricercare version and a sonata version.⁷⁷ Whichever version is considered, it is an

⁷⁴ Suess and Vanscheeuwijck, "Gabrielli."

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Brent Wissick, "The Cello Music of Antonio Bononcini: Violoncello da Spalla, and the Cello 'Schools' of Bologna and Rome." *Journal of 17th Century Music* 12/1 (2006), <http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v12/no1/wissick.html> ISSN: 1089-747X. "Not surprisingly, the solo part in these pieces spends more time on the top two strings than in the unaccompanied ricercars. Still, Gabrielli often crosses below the written continuo in sections of very free idiomatic writing. He cannot stay away from that new-fangled covered C string."

advanced work for the time, including practices that were difficult on the violone.⁷⁸

Markevitch states, “(Gabrielli) made use of all the cellistic technique known at that time,” and calls him “the Corelli for the cello.”⁷⁹

The sonata has a top pitch of *g'*, an extended range from the early violone works that did not stray above *d'*, comparatively easy passage-work that resembles gamba figures rather than those written for the violin,⁸⁰ no thumb position, and limited use of chords, generally with an open string as one of the notes. The slur and *detaché* are the main bow strokes used, with no appearance of the later virtuosic bowing techniques of alternating strings and arpeggiated figures.

Gabrielli's Sonata #1 is primarily a slow-fast-slow-fast sonata da chiesa; however, the form of the first movement resembles the earlier sectional canzona, with five sections--Grave--Allegro--Grave--Presto--Adagio, each of three to four measures. (See musical example #1.) The movements are short: 15 measures, 31 measures, 32 measures, and 26 measures respectively, and there are no solid double bar lines between movements, again suggesting a lingering influence from the canzona.

⁷⁷ Wissick in “Bononcini,” explains the situation with clarity: “There are two different manuscript versions of the Sonata in G, both in Modena. The first is an accompanied ‘ricercare’ following the seven solos. Gordon Kinney states that the second version, which is titled ‘sonata,’ is in the same hand, but I do not agree. Bettina Hoffman has studied the scribal layers in the sources, and suggests that the second version (F.416) is from a later date. The cellistic differences are chiefly on the top-string side of the solo writing. The ricercare version is clearly for Bolognese tuning, the sonata probably for what we now call standard tuning (*C–G–d–a*). There are multiple stops in the first version much like those in Ricercare 6 that can be played only in G tuning. The second version is playable in either tuning, but the chords have been re-voiced for an *a* string by moving thirds around or including them where they were previously implied. In addition, the continuo is slightly different in the two versions, probably because the timbre resulting from the two different tunings invites different ways of supporting the sound.”

⁷⁸ Sera Cheon, “Scordatura Tuning in Performance and Transcription: A Guide Using Domenico Gabrielli’s Seven Ricercari for Violoncello Solo” (DMA document, University of Cincinnati, 2013). Consulted through Proquest.

⁷⁹ Markevitch, *Cello Story*, 127.

⁸⁰ E.S.J. Van der Straeten, *History of the Violoncello: The Viol Da Gamba, Their Precursors and Collateral Instruments*. (London: W. Reeves, 1915), 369.

VIOLONCELLO

PIANO

Grave

Grave

pp *mf* *p*

$\frac{4}{2}$ 6 #

m.1

Allegro

Allegro

mf *f* *sf*

allargando molto *allargando molto*

6 7 6 # #

m.4

Tempo I (Grave)

Presto (Allegro)

Tempo I (Grave)

Presto (Allegro)

mf *f* *f*

6 b

m. 8

Adagio

Adagio

mf *f* *f*

6 # 6 6 5 4 3 #

m.12

Musical Example #1: Gabrielli, Sonata #1, Grave ⁸¹

The second movement follows the typical Baroque harmonic progression.⁸² (See musical example #2.) The movement starts in G major, moves to D major in m. 4, to E

⁸¹ Domenico Gabrielli. *Cello Sonata No. 1 in G major* (Mainz: B. Schott's Sohne, 1930).

minor in m. 11, back to G major in m. 23, to D major in m. 25, and cadences in m. 28 on G major.⁸³ There is a codetta from m. 28 to the end, a repeat of the previous phrase, a device sometimes called a *Corelli Codetta*,⁸⁴ often played as an echo. After most cadences a different motive is introduced and then spun out until the next cadence, as clearly seen in the section starting beat three of m. 3. After a cadence to G major on beat three, a rhythmic figure of a sixteenth note, two thirty-second notes, and two sixteenth notes in a scalar pattern starts. This continues until the next cadence in D major on the third beat of m. 7. A *messanza* figure of a sixteenth note followed by a skip and then three neighboring tones, each four notes bowed with a *detaché* first note followed by three slurred notes, spins out until the next cadence in m. 9. (See musical example #2.) This technique of developing a short idea or motive by sequential repetition, intervallic transformation, or even simply repetition, is known as *Fortspinnung*⁸⁵ and continues throughout the movement. The third and fourth movement use similar compositional techniques.

⁸² For a discussion of this matter, see 15 above.

⁸³ Gabrielli, *Sonata # 1*.

⁸⁴ Mays, interview.

⁸⁵ William Drabkin, "Fortspinnung." *Grove Music Online*, accessed 2 March 2014. *Oxford Music Online*.

4

Allegro (non troppo)

mf

Allegro (non troppo)

mf

6 #

m.1

7 b 7

m.5

7

m.9

6 6 4 3#

m.13

m.18

m.23

m.28

Musical Example #2: Gabrielli, Sonata #1, Allegro⁸⁶

In the 1680s when Gabrielli was composing his solo cello works, the size of the cello had yet to be standardized. However, since the works are specified for violoncello, not violone or bass violin, and the writing requires facility that would be difficult to attain on the larger instruments, one can perhaps assume Gabrielli used a newer, smaller cello with wire-wrapped C and G strings when performing these works. As noted previously, some of the double stops in the ricercare version of the G major sonata seem to indicate

⁸⁶Gabrielli. *Cello Sonata No. 1.*

he tuned the instrument C-G-*d*-g, but the second version can be played with ease using a C-G-*d*-*a* tuning. Vanscheeuwijck suggests that Gabrielli may have been one of the first cellists to use the perpendicular chromatic fingering system, allowing him to have more left hand fluency and execute chords with more ease.⁸⁷ It is unknown whether he used an underhand or overhand bow hold, but the viola da gamba was not important in Italy at this point, or certainly not as important as the violin family, so in all probability he used the overhand hold, the method favored by violinists. Gabrielli was probably aware of and experimented with the innovations to the bow that occurred during the latter part of the seventeenth century. These included the addition of a clip-in frog, a longer and straighter stick, and a downturned tip. This would have helped produce a larger sound and a clearer sense of articulation.

Platti is known to have written 12 cello sonatas and 28 cello concertos. The sonatas are available in print, but only five of the concertos are published.⁸⁸ Platti's sonatas offer a welcome addition to the solo cello sonata repertoire of the Baroque period; Cowling writes of them: "They sound excellent with only two cellos – the proof of a good continuo sonata."⁸⁹

In the Sonata#1 in D major, Series II, Platti never ventures above *g*' and only utilizes the C string twice, at the end of the second and third movements, with the majority of the work comfortably on the *d* and *a* strings. Most of the passage-work is not difficult; the passages are all very manageable with a minimum of shifting involved.

There is no need for the use of thumb position. There are three instances of chords

⁸⁷ Vanscheeuwijck, "The Baroque Cello and Its Performance," 89.

⁸⁸ Giovanni Benedetto Platti and Frohmut Dangel-Hofmann. *Ausgewählte Concerti für Violoncello und Triosonaten mit obligatem Violoncello: aus der Musiksammlung der Grafen von Schönborn*, Wiesentheid, (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2011).

⁸⁹ Cowling, *The Cello*, 84.

(Adagio, m. 14 and Allegro, mm. 58-59) that involve more complex fingering patterns than Gabrielli's. Slurred and *detaché* bowings are used as well as *piquié* strokes.⁹⁰ There is some use of repeated arpeggiated figures (Adagio, m. 13-14 and m. 4 and 6 of the Presto), but they are short in duration and lie comfortably under the hand. Platti uses typical Baroque figures that are comfortable for string players to execute.

The Sonata #1 is a typical Baroque sonata. It has four movements in a slow-fast-slow-fast format. Both of the fast movements are in binary form and based on dance rhythms, the Allegro, possibly a minuet, and the Presto, a gigue. The technique of spinning out of motivic ideas, delineated by cadences, and a typical Baroque harmonic outline are apparent in the first part of the Allegro. (See musical example #3.) The movement begins with a three-measure motive that is repeated, in a condensed two-measure version, ending on the first cadence on the tonic in m. 6. Platti then introduces a two-measure, arpeggiated motive that is repeated, leading to the next cadence, still on the tonic in m. 13. Sequential development of typical Baroque figures continues until a cadence on the dominant at the end of the first section in m. 21. Motives from the first segment are developed throughout the second section that begins in the dominant, and then modulates to related key areas, eventually returning to the tonic and the original motive, in m. 43. There is a cadence to the dominant in m. 49, and the movement ends with a final cadence on the tonic. *Suspiring* (sighing) figures occur in mm. 31, 33, and 35. The movements in Platti's sonata are still relatively short, 15, 59, 24, and 22 measures, but in the binary second and fourth movements, both sections repeat, doubling the length of those movements, and making the entire work longer than the Gabrielli.

⁹⁰ For a discussion of this matter see page 17.

Allegro

Musical notation for measures 1-7. The system includes a bass line and a grand staff (treble and bass). The bass line features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The grand staff provides harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Musical notation for measures 8-14. Measure numbers 8, 15, and 7 are indicated. Fingerings 2, #6, and 7 are shown. The bass line continues with a melodic pattern, while the grand staff accompaniment features chords and rhythmic patterns.

Musical notation for measures 15-20. Measure numbers 15 and 5 are indicated. Fingerings 2, #6, and 5 are shown. The bass line has a more active melodic line with triplets. The grand staff accompaniment includes chords and moving bass lines.

Musical notation for measures 21-26. Measure numbers 21 and 2 are indicated. Fingerings 2 and #6 are shown. A repeat sign is present at the beginning of the system. The bass line features a melodic line with a repeat sign. The grand staff accompaniment includes chords and moving lines.

Musical notation for measures 27-32. Measure numbers 27 and 7 are indicated. The bass line continues with a melodic line. The grand staff accompaniment includes chords and moving lines.

33

39

45

51

56

Musical Example #3: Platti, Sonata #1, Allegro⁹¹

⁹¹ Giovanni Benedetto Platti. "Sonata Prima in D mauor." *Six Sonaten a Violoncello e Basso continuo SERIE II*, [http://imslp.org/wikki/12 Cello Sonatas \(Platti, Giovanni Benedetto\)](http://imslp.org/wikki/12_Cello_Sonatas_(Platti,_Giovanni_Benedetto)), 2011 (Accessed 4 January 2014).

It is assumed that the sonatas were written between 1725 and 1743, during Platti's tenure with Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn.⁹² He would probably have used a Baroque bow and not a transitional bow. This could account for the limited appearance of virtuosic bow strokes seen in the sonatas. Perhaps, because he composed the sonatas for Schönborn, an amateur cellist, the technical demands in the works are moderate. They are not as involved as other works from this period, or some of his other works; however, his compositions do indicate that he was investigating how to expand the technical capabilities of the instrument through extended range, more complex chords, and an increase in variety of bow strokes. Platti most likely would have been aware of Stradivari's *Forma B* cello, but whether or not that was the type and size he used is conjecture. Perhaps though, a logical assumption would be that he was playing on the most innovative equipment available.

Cirri wrote 36 solo sonatas and 8 concertos for the cello.⁹³ Edward and Walden note of his cello works, "While emphasizing tunefulness over technical display, his solo writing employs comfortable use of the upper registers, with scale, arpeggio and string-crossing figurations based on stationary, block hand positions."⁹⁴ Some of his works are written for "Violoncello or Violin Solo,"⁹⁵ demonstrating the desire of cellists to play literature comparable to that of the virtuosic violinists.

The writing in Cirri's Sonata #3 in G minor, Op.15 becomes technically more challenging, reaching *g*", and as noted above, contains passage-work including the use of arpeggiated, scalar and string crossing figures, thumb position, and extensive,

⁹² Griggs, *Platti*, 4.

⁹³ Edwards and Walden, "Cirri."

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Dorsam, "Cirri," 20.

complicated double-stops. The demands of the ornate *galant* style are apparent in Cirri's choice of bow strokes, which include slur/*detaché* combinations, various arpeggio patterns, *batteries*, *brisures*, *piquié*, and staccato.⁹⁶ The bow and left hand are free of some of the limitations posed by earlier cellos and bows, and the typical comfortable Baroque figures no longer appear in the *style galant*.

The sonata is in the pre-Classical *galant* style; there are three, fast-slow-fast movements, and one can see the use of an early sonata-allegro form in both the first and second movements.⁹⁷ Many features of the new *galant* idiom are apparent in the first movement. The first eight bars of the Allegro moderato exemplify the use of symmetrical phrases made up of short two- to four-measure groups. Mm. 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6 (repeated idea), and 7-8, create short groups that together form a long phrase. An insertion of triplet rhythms occurs in mm. 9, 11, and 17, and dotted figures in mm. 14-16, both of which are typical gestures of the *galant* style.⁹⁸ The basso continuo is still in use, but the bass melody is simpler, outlining the chords and with little imitation. The exposition is from mm. 1-19; the first theme from mm.1-8 in the tonic, there is a transition from mm. 9-14, and the second theme, in the relative major, begins on beat two of m. 14.

⁹⁶ For a discussion of this matter see page 17.

⁹⁷ Mays, interview.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

26

SONATA
V

Allegro Moderato

m.1

m.3

m.7

m.10

m.13

m.17

Musical example #4, Cirri, Sonata #1, Allegro moderato, mm. 1-20⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Giovanni Battista Cirri. "Sonata I," *Sei Sonate a Violoncello Solo and Basso Continuo*. (Paris: Chez l'Auteur, n.d).

The development starts after the repeat in m. 20 in the relative major and moves through a series of dominant-tonic progressions. The recapitulation starts in m. 30 and is in the tonic. The transition from m. 36 to m. 41 deviates from that of the exposition and presents new material. The recapitulation of the second theme begins on the second beat of m. 41 and is in the tonic.

Musical score for measures 17-20. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The key signature has one flat. The melody in the treble clef consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Measure numbers 17, 18, 19, and 20 are indicated below the notes.

m.17

Musical score for measures 21-24. The score continues from the previous section. The treble clef features a more active melody with some grace notes and slurs. The bass line continues with harmonic accompaniment. Measure numbers 21, 22, 23, and 24 are indicated below the notes.

m.21

Musical score for measures 25-28. This section is characterized by a dense, rapid sixteenth-note melody in the treble clef. The bass line has a more rhythmic, eighth-note accompaniment. Measure numbers 25, 26, 27, and 28 are indicated below the notes.

m.24

Musical score for measures 29-32. The treble clef continues with a complex, sixteenth-note melody. The bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Measure numbers 29, 30, 31, and 32 are indicated below the notes.

m.26

m.28

m.31

m.35

m.39

m.44

Musical Example #5: Cirri, Sonata #1, Allegro moderato, mm. 17-46¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Cirri wrote his cello sonatas in the 1770s¹⁰¹ and by that time, although some smaller cellos were still being constructed,¹⁰² and experimentation with the fittings and strings would continue through the mid-part of the nineteenth century, the majority of cellos were built according to Stradivari's dimensions. One might assume that was what Cirri used. With the advent of longer fingerboards and more tension in the strings, highly virtuosic playing was possible. Although Cirri took advantage of this reaching *g* in the Sonata #1, some of his more virtuosic writing involves bow strokes. It is safe to assume he was using a transitional bow during this period that would have allowed him to experiment with a variety of strokes. As Dorsam notes:

The incorporation of more complex bowings in the eighteenth century coincided with the development of the transitional bows, made by Dodd and Cramer, and the "modern" bow of Tourte. With the stronger tip, the ability to adjust the tension of the hair, and the standardized dimensions, bowings such as slurs, staccato slurs, arpeggios, and batteries were now possible.¹⁰³

Boccherini left a wealth of cello literature: 43 cello sonatas¹⁰⁴ and 12 cello concertos.¹⁰⁵ Specks writes of the sonatas: "his cello sonatas all conform to one type of sonata, which can be considered retrospective in style. They fulfill their function primarily on the level of practical considerations."¹⁰⁶ He proposes that the sonatas, which are written with an accompanying continuo part marked simply "basso," are actually cello duets, with one part clearly being the solo part. Boccherini did not include his solo

¹⁰¹ Dorsam, "Cirri," 122.

¹⁰² Laird notes that "more than a generation after Antonio Stradivari built his first 'Forma B' cello in 1707...Giovanni Battista Guadagnini (c.1711-1786) made successful instruments that were about 71 cm in length." in *The Baroque Cello*, 4-5.

¹⁰³ Dorsam, "Cirri," 141.

¹⁰⁴ Specks in "Boccherini as a Cellist," notes "of the sonatas, one of which was first rediscovered in Barcelona in 2004, there are probably ten that are dubiously or wrongly attributed." 197.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 201. Specks states, "No definite conclusion can be reached about the number of Boccherini's cello concertos, which have been significantly supplemented in the past four decades."

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

sonatas in his own catalogue of his works, possibly because they were composed primarily for his own performances and not as works he was interested in publishing.¹⁰⁷

Boccherini's cello sonatas were written at approximately the same time as Cirri's, but because their technical demands are much more rigorous than Cirri's, it seems they belong last in a discussion of the cello sonatas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As noted previously he was the most renowned cellist of the eighteenth century, and Specks and Sadie write: "For the development of the violoncello technique Boccherini did more than any of his predecessors. He developed the passage-work with the daring of a great virtuoso, freeing it from all the cramped writing and stiff conventionalities of his predecessors, which arose, of course, chiefly from their limited technique."¹⁰⁸ In the Sonata #2 in C major, G6, the cello's range extends to *a*", the passage-work is extremely complex due to many scalar and arpeggiated sections covering most of the range of the instrument, there is extensive thumb position, and numerous double-stop passages. There are examples of every type of virtuosic bow stroke of the period including: the slur/*detaché* combination; various patterns used for arpeggiated figures; *batteries* and *brisures*, *bariolage* and *ondeggiando*, *piqué*, staccato, and various bowings for connecting double stops and multiple stops.¹⁰⁹ The expanded repertoire of virtuosic devices is well suited to the highly ornamented *galant* style he employed.

That Boccherini wrote in the *galant* style is evident in the Sonata #1. It has three fast-slow-fast movements, and an early sonata-allegro form is discernable in each

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Van der Straeten, *History*, 174.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of this matter see page 14.

movement.¹¹⁰ The sonata-allegro form in the first movement is unusual.¹¹¹ The first theme is presented in the tonic in mm. 1-8. It is very symmetrical with four sets of two-bar phrases. There is a transition leading from the tonic to the dominant from mm. 8-12, where the second theme starts, in the dominant, on beat three.

Allegro

S O N A T A

II

m.1

m.3

m.7

¹¹⁰ Specks and Satie, in “Boccherini,” state; “‘Development’, however, is an uncertain word to use in referring to Boccherini’s sonata-style movements. There is little thematic development in the Viennese Classical sense. He usually repeats some of his thematic material in related keys, and sometimes includes lengthy passages where instrumental figuration occupies the foreground while a harmonic scheme slowly unfolds. His tonal patterns are not always surely handled: a development section often ends in the wrong key, necessitating a clumsy switch at the recapitulation (particularly between major and minor: for example, opp.18 no.1, 24 no.2, 25 no.6).”

¹¹¹ Mays, interview.



m.10



m.13



m.16

Musical Example #6: Boccherini, Sonata #2, Allegro, mm. 1-19¹¹²

The development starts in m. 19 in the dominant, using material from the first two bars of the exposition. Then, surprisingly, in m. 23 there is false recapitulation, exactly quoting the first two bars of the exposition. However, the development continues in m. 25 with further harmonic and motivic development leading to A minor in m.28. Beat four of m. 29 serves as a short modulation/transition to the recapitulation in the tonic in m. 30. The first theme is presented in a paraphrased form leading to the appearance of the second theme in the tonic, again slightly paraphrased, in m. 34. Typical *galant* figures are present: dotted rhythms in m. 12, numerous examples of the insertions of triplet figures

¹¹² Luigi Boccherini. "Sonata II," *Six Sonatas for the Violoncello* (London: F. Bland, n.d).

(m. 9, m. 14, mm. 16-17, mm. 34-36, and mm. 39-40), and a simple basso continuo line, in sharp contrast to the florid texture of the solo line. Boccherini's basso parts are less complicated than those found in Cirri's sonatas reflecting the changes in style occurring during this transitional period.

Musical score for measures 16-17. The upper staff (treble clef) features a highly ornate, sixteenth-note solo line with frequent trills and grace notes. The lower staff (bass clef) provides a simple, steady accompaniment of eighth notes.

m.16

Musical score for measure 20. The upper staff (treble clef) contains a complex, sixteenth-note solo line with many trills and grace notes. The lower staff (bass clef) has a simple accompaniment of eighth notes.

m.20

Musical score for measure 24. The upper staff (treble clef) features a complex, sixteenth-note solo line with many trills and grace notes. The lower staff (bass clef) has a simple accompaniment of eighth notes.

m.24

Musical score for measure 28. The upper staff (treble clef) features a complex, sixteenth-note solo line with many trills and grace notes. The lower staff (bass clef) has a simple accompaniment of eighth notes.

m.28



m.32



m.35



m.39

Musical Example #7: Boccherini, Sonata #2, Allegro, mm. 16-41¹¹³

A portrait of Boccherini from c. 1764 and 1767¹¹⁴ with his cello gives us an idea of what type of instrument and bow he used. The bow has a straight stick and a swan-bill tip, which is held above the frog. Speck summarizes that some of his works may have been written for a five-string instrument. In a notarial deed of 1768, Boccherini lists a cello by Stainer and also a “small” cello, possibly a piccolo cello.¹¹⁵ The portrait predates the arrival of the Tourte bows in 1780, but it seems logical to assume that he would have experimented with them later in his life. The body of the instrument looks similar to

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ See Plate 2 above 8.

¹¹⁵ Jamie Tortella, “The Traces of Baccherini’s Cello” *Boccherini Online*, Revista di musicologia del Centro Studi Luige Boccherini. no. 2 (2009), 2/04/2014. <http://www.boccherinonline.it/annate/n2-2009/tortella-7.php> (Accessed 10 February 2014).

a modern cello; however, there is no end pin, which did not come into common usage until the middle of the nineteenth century. Boccherini was known not only for his technical prowess, but also for his beautiful sound that was “characterized by an expressive tone and a *cantabile* style.”¹¹⁶ It is likely this was due in part to the innovations that occurred in the construction of the cello during the eighteenth century. The larger bass board and sound post, the increased tension in the strings, and the wire-wrapping of strings all must have contributed to his ability to play with such beauty and brilliance.

¹¹⁶ Specks “Boccherini,” 191.

CONCLUSION

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a period of great excitement for cellists, the composers who wrote for them, and the luthiers who created their instruments. Remarkable developments in instrument, string, and bow construction created an instrument and bow that were capable of both sonorous and virtuosic playing. The new capabilities of the instrument, along with developing compositional trends, led to a wealth of solo cello literature, with composers writing many solo sonatas for the cello. Much of this music is not available in print, and in all probability, some remains undiscovered. Although the development led toward technical brilliance and larger sound, literature that resulted as part of this process and does not display modern virtuosic elements is valid, beautiful, and artistically satisfying.

By examining the relationship between certain musical events occurring in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, composers who were also cellists, the evolution of the design and construction of the violoncello and bow, the advance in performance techniques, and the development of the solo sonata, it is possible to trace how the different discoveries of that time were interrelated, and to create a clearer picture of what those revolutionary times might have been like.

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