

Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (1689-1755)
Cello Sonatas, Op. 26 (1729) & Op. 50 (1734)

Brandywine Baroque

Douglas McNames, cello

Karen Flint, harpsichord

Vivian Barton Dozor, cello

Sonata IIa in G major, Op. 50

- | | |
|-----------------------|------|
| 1. Largo | 3:20 |
| 2. Allemanda: Allegro | 2:35 |
| 3. Largo | 2:04 |
| 4. Giga: Staccato | 2:02 |

Sonata Ia in e minor, Op. 50

- | | |
|-----------------------|------|
| 5. Andante | 0:42 |
| 6. Staccato | 0:50 |
| 7. Allemanda: Allegro | 3:23 |
| 8. Aria: Affettuoso | 2:26 |
| 9. Gavotta: Presto | 1:49 |

Sonata IVa in d minor, Op. 50

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| 10. Andante | 2:14 |
| 11. Allegro | 2:21 |
| 12. Sarabanda | 1:59 |
| 13. Giga | 1:39 |

Sonata Quarta in c minor, Op. 50

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|-------------|------|
| 14. Largo | 2:10 |
| 15. Gavotta | 1:25 |
| 16. Largo | 1:05 |
| 17. Allegro | 2:06 |

Sonata IIIa in G major, Op. 26

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|----------------------------|------|
| 18. Allegro, ma non troppo | 3:06 |
| 19. Corrente | 2:27 |
| 20. Adagio | 0:38 |
| 21. Minoetto I & II | 2:26 |

Sonata IIIa in D major, Op. 50

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|---------------------------------------|------|
| 22. Moderato | 2:14 |
| 23. Corrente | 2:14 |
| 24. Aria: Affettuoso | 2:19 |
| 25. Minoetto and
Variatione I - IV | 3:36 |

Sonata IVa in e minor, Op. 26

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|--------------------|------|
| 26. Adagio | 1:37 |
| 27. Allegro | 1:42 |
| 28. Largo | 1:01 |
| 29. Gavotta I & II | 2:00 |

Sonata Quinta in g minor, Op. 26

- | | |
|---------------------|------|
| 30. Allemanda | 1:48 |
| 31. Affettuoso | 2:09 |
| 32. Adagio | 0:45 |
| 33. Giga: Staccatto | 1:32 |

Total time 65:59

Joseph Bodin de Boismortier

Cello Sonatas

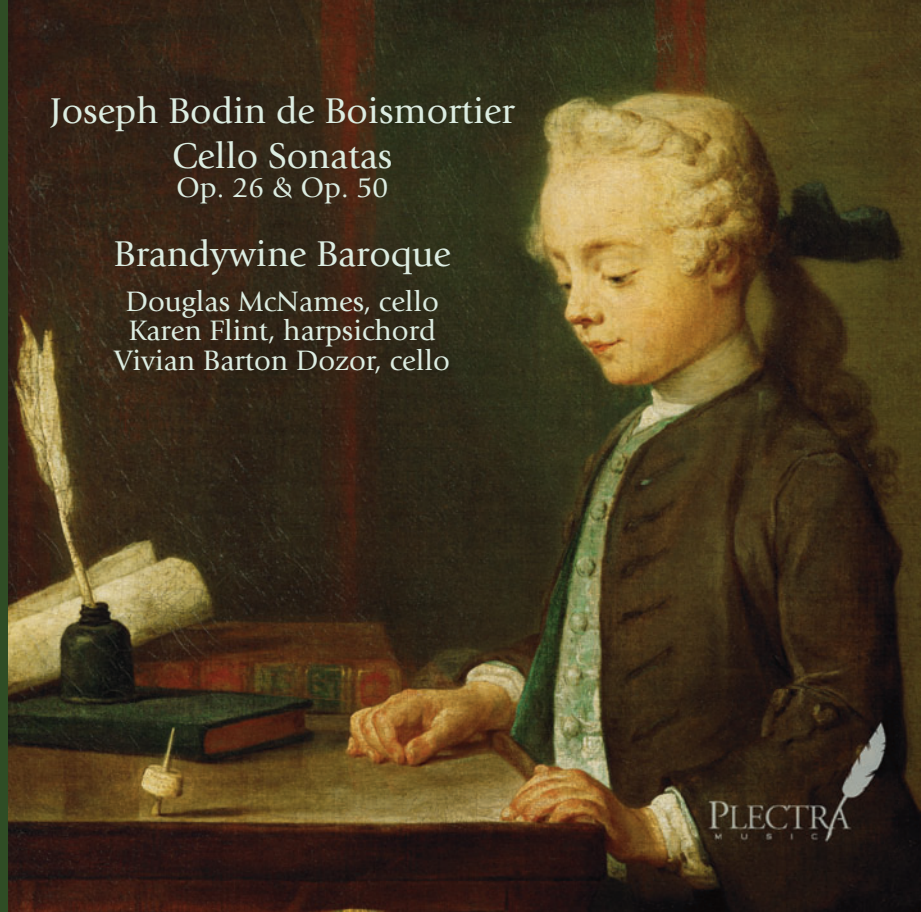
Op. 26 & Op. 50

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Joseph Bodin de Boismortier
(December 23, 1689 – October 28, 1755)

Sometimes called the “French Telemann,” Joseph Bodin de Boismortier is perhaps the most prolific French composer ever. Like Telemann he is often dismissed as a “Vielschreiber,” someone who composed too much for it all to be good. Also like Telemann, his popularity dissipated quickly after his death. But it cannot be denied that during his lifetime, Boismortier was one of the most important composers in France. His music represents the height of fashion for its day, and provides great pleasure not only for the performer, but also the listener.

Boismortier was born in the city of Thionville in the Lorraine region of France. His father, Etienne Bodin of Berry, was a merchant confectioner in that city. The Boismortier family moved to the larger city of Metz around 1700, where young Joseph received his first musical education. Thanks to documents recently discovered by musicologist Stéphan Perreau, we now know the identity of Boismortier’s first teacher. Though little-known today, Joseph Valette de Montigny was a popular composer of motets. In 1728, Boismortier prefaced a copy of his Opus 23 motets with a dedicatory epistle to Valette de Montigny, in which he declared that he owed his style of motet composition to his old teacher.

But Boismortier did not owe only his musical training to Valette de Montigny; it seems that he could also thank his mentor for his first real job and his marriage. Valette de Montigny was attached to Jean-Baptiste-Louis Picon, Vicomte d’Andrezel, a passionate amateur flute player and important official based in Perpignan. Presumably on Valette’s recommendation, in 1713 Boismortier moved to Perpignan to take up an administrative post within the Royal Tobacco Control. In Perpignan, Boismortier met and married Marie Valette, a distant relative of his teacher, who came from a wealthy family of silversmiths.

Boismortier gave up his government post in 1722 and decided to try his luck as a composer in Paris, where one of his *airs à boire* had already been published in October of 1721. On the way to Paris, he stopped in Agen, the home of the brothers Pierre-Philippe and Pierre Saint-Sévin, known as L’abbé l’aîné and L’abbé le cadet. Both were gifted cellists. Perhaps Boismortier received inspiration for his cello sonatas from them. Next, armed with d’Andrezel’s recommendations, Boismortier visited the court of the Duchess of Maine at Sceaux, where he met famous musicians and future friends like Nicolas Bernier, Thomas-Louis Bourgeois, and Jean-Joseph Mouret. These musicians of the provinces, like Boismortier, specialized in intimate chamber works, well-suited to the musical demands of the Parisian public.

By September 1724, Boismortier was in Paris and had received his first royal privilege to publish his music. Boismortier's Paris was passionate for Italian music, or anything that sounded like it. The year Boismortier arrived, François Couperin published the collection *Les goûts réunis* (The unified tastes), a monumental tribute to the unification of the French and Italian musical styles, which included the famous *Le Parnasse, ou L'apothéose de Corelli*. As Corelli was accepted among the French muses, so would Boismortier embrace the Italian as his muse.

Boismortier seemed always to have his finger on the pulse of Parisian amateur society. Much of his music, like that of his friends and contemporaries, was intended for the amateur musician, requiring only a modicum of performance ability. Averaging five collections per year, he wrote for every instrument common in his day, except the lute and the organ. He experimented with various combinations of instruments, including two bassoons and four flutes, and also wrote for such trendy instruments as the musette and hurdy-gurdy. One trendy instrument he became a particular champion of was the cello.

The Cello Sonatas, Opus 26 (1729) and Opus 50 (1734)

Because I do not play the cello well enough to judge these pieces myself, I have asked Mr. L'Abbé, who is celebrated for this instrument, to examine them. His approval has encouraged me to give them to the public, from whom I wish the same favor.

With this notice from the title page of his Opus 26, Boismortier introduced the very first book of cello sonatas in France. Perhaps he realized how unusual this was. Thus, he enlisted the approbation of Pierre-Philippe Saint-Sévin, who had by that time made quite a name for himself as a cellist in Paris. As the cello was just beginning its meteoric rise in popularity, Boismortier indicated on the title page that the five sonatas could be played by cello or viol, or even bassoon, ensuring that his sonatas would have a wider appeal.

1729 also marked the end of Jean Zewalt (Johann) Triemer's composition apprenticeship with Boismortier, begun in 1726. Triemer, a virtuoso cellist, came to Paris from Hamburg, where he had played in the opera orchestra. With such a gifted cellist in residence, it is no surprise that Boismortier's prolific pen would turn to writing for that newly popular instrument. Boismortier's cello sonatas are astoundingly idiomatic for the instrument. He

uses only those keys most germane to the cello of the time, and capitalizes on the ability of the cello to sound both long, legato lines and jumpy spiccato.

The cello sonatas of Opus 26 feature the elaborate decoration and insouciance typical of Boismortier's earlier works. Written in the style of Corelli, who was then wildly popular, the sonatas are typically in four movements, with contrasting tempi and affects. Boismortier sometimes disguises a typically French dance within his Italianate sonatas; for example, the Gavotta of Sonata Quarta, Opus 26 is nothing but a gavotte en rondeau. The Adagio of Sonata Quinta, a beautiful melding of chordal writing with attention to line, seems to have been a particular favorite—it exists in keyboard transcription in a contemporary manuscript.

Five years later, presumably having received the public's favor, Boismortier produced another collection of sonatas for low instrument(s), Opus 50. The title page proclaims that the volume includes six sonatas for cellos, bassoons, or viols, plural, even though all but the last are in fact solo sonatas. Though he provides a figured bass, Boismortier's indication of two bass instruments implies that no keyboard is necessary, thus further expanding the performance possibilities for these pieces.

Boismortier continued the practice of disguising French idioms in Italian fashions in Opus 50, where the Aria of Sonata Prima is again a rondeau, while the Largo of Sonata Secunda is the even more French musette en rondeau, typified by a drone bass. These sonatas, even more than Opus 26, seem to bespeak the galant concerns of the Parisian public, with a more varied rhythmic language and achingly sweet harmonies.

Boismortier passed away peacefully on 28 October 1755, at his comfortable home in Roissy-en-Brie. He had by then composed hundreds of very profitable works, which had amassed him a fortune. Yet he never once held an official post at a court or a church. Thus, Boismortier serves as one of the first examples of a thoroughly modern composer—one who succeeded through the power of his pen and his ability to divine the needs of the purchasing public.

-Rebekah Ahrendt



Cellist **Douglas McNames** has been a prominent figure in the musical community of the Delaware Valley for over twenty years. As a member of the award winning Delos Quartet, Mr. McNames traveled the U.S. and Europe extensively. Principal cellist with the Delaware Symphony since 2000, Mr. McNames holds the same position with the orchestras of OperaDelaware and the Reading Symphony and was Principal soloist and continuo cellist with

the Carmel Bach Festival for 15 years. A regular substitute with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Mr. McNames has performed with the leading conductors and instrumentalists of the world. Having turned to Baroque performance practice, he performs concerti of composers ranging from Vivaldi and Leo to C.P.E. Bach and Haydn. His recordings of the sonatas of Jean Baptiste Masse with Brandywine Baroque have been highly regarded by critics both in the U.S. and abroad. A respected chamber musician and soloist, Mr. McNames is a member of Brandywine Baroque, Arco Voce, and Melomanie and can be heard on the Spectrum, Etcetera, Epiphany, Dorian and Plectra Music recording labels. Mr. McNames resides in Wilmington, Delaware with his wife and daughter. His cello was made by Barak Norman in London, 1708.



Karen Flint, harpsichordist and artistic director of Brandywine Baroque since its founding, has performed as soloist at The Smithsonian Institution and with the Delaware Symphony, Newark Symphony and the University of Delaware Chamber Orchestra. With her ensemble she has made guest appearances with Coastal Concerts, Chorale Delaware, Mid-Atlantic Chamber Music Society and at the Boston Early Music Festival. Ms. Flint has degrees from

Oberlin Conservatory of Music and The University of Michigan and teaches harpsichord at the University of Delaware.

Her recordings include: *Oh! The Sweet Delights of Love: Music by Purcell, The Lass with the Delicate Air* and *C. P. E. Bach Trio Sonatas* on the Plectra label; *The Jane Austen Songbook* with Julianne Baird on the Albany label, *Masse Sonatas for Two Cellos, Books 1 & 2* on the Dorian label, *French Baroque Miniatures* on the Etcetera label; and *Digging for Buried Treasure: Music of Telemann*.

Ms. Flint's harpsichord was made by Nicolas Dumont in Paris, 1707.



Vivian Barton Dozor is music director of the American Society of Ancient Instruments in Philadelphia and performs frequently with Philomel Baroque Ensemble, Tafelmusik, Apollo's Fire, Vox Ama Deus, Brandywine Baroque, Tempesta di Mare and Pro Musica Rara. As a modern cellist, Ms. Dozor has appeared with distinguished artists such as Yehudi Menuhin, Alexander Schneider and Felix Galimir in Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center and Symphony Hall in Boston. She has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Brandenburg Ensemble, Marlboro Music Festival, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Santa Fe Opera and Orchestra 2001. A graduate of The Curtis Institute of Music, her teachers include Deborah Reeder, David Soyer, Lorne Munroe, Laurence Lesser, and Julius Levine. She won the top cello prize at the Hudson Valley International Competition. Ms. Dozer has performed in concerts internationally and has attended the International Musicians' Seminar in Prussia Cove, Cornwall, England. A faculty member of Princeton University, she has recorded on the RCA, Dorian and PolyGram labels. Ms. Dozor plays a 1785 Thomas Dodd cello.

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