MICHAEL ELPHINSTONE

BOISMORTIER AND THE TRIO SONATA

BOISMORTIER AND THE TRIO SONATA

French musician Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (1689–1755) was probably the only composer in the first half of the eighteenth century to make a living (and a fortune) entirely from the sales of his own compositions. He was born in Thionville (Lorraine), but moved to Metz with his family at two years of age. It was in Metz that he received his earliest musical education from Joseph Valette de Montigny, a respected composer of sacred music. In 1713, Boismortier followed his teacher to Perpignan. He there continued his studies and wrote his first compositions, working all the while as a tax collector for the Régie Royale des Tabacs. In 1720, he married one Marie Valette, the daughter of a wealthy goldsmith (and also a relative of de Montigny). Boismortier remained in Perpignan until 1723, when, acting upon the recommendation of influential friends, he moved with his wife and daughter to Paris (after a brief sojourn at the court of the Duchess of Maine at Sceaux). Soon after his arrival in Paris, in 1724 he was granted a Royal Privilege to print his music; this marked the beginning of an extremely successful and lucrative career that saw the publication of well over 100 opus numbers, most of these being collections or sets of compositions. With music publishing then a thriving trade, and amateur music-making becoming more and more widespread, Boismortier shrewdly took advantage of both the growing market and the demand for melodious, technically-accessible music, and he produced an abundance of compositions for a wide range of vocal and instrumental combinations. And yet quantity never took precedence over quality, and his invention never waned; some of his last works, for example the *6 Sonates pour flûte et clavecin,* Op. 91 (1741-2), the ballet-comique *Don Quichotte* Op. 97 (1743) and the pastorale *Daphnis et Chloé* Op. 102 (1747) are among his finest and most skilfully-crafted compositions.

Partly on account of his prolificacy, and partly because many of his works were written either for performance by amateurs or to cater to popular taste, Boismortier has by and large been regarded as a facile composer, and his music has not received the scrutiny it deserves. Such neglect is compounded by the fact that several of his most ambitious compositions, such as the *Six Concerto en 7 Parties* Op. 53 (c.1734), the *Six Sonates de Chambre en Quatuor* for flute, violin, violoncello or viola da gamba and continuo Op. 55 (c.1734), the *Six Concerto en 4 Livres d'un Nouveau Genre* Op. 74, for oboes, flutes, bassoons, horns, violins, violas, organ and other instruments (c.1739), and the motets *Fugit nox* (1741) and *Cantate Domino* (1743), are now lost. Nevertheless, examination of Boismortier's extant compositions reveals a sure command of the rules of harmony, counterpoint and part-writing combined with an irrefutable gift for melody. Indeed, La Borde's oft-quoted remark, to the effect that anyone taking the trouble to excavate Boismortier's 'abandoned mine' could come across enough gold dust to form an ingot, is certainly a valid one.[1]

Boismortier was a born innovator and experimentalist, whose most noteworthy accomplishment was that of promoting and diffusing Italian instrumental genres within France by means of his own compositions. The impact of Corelli on the works of French composers (particularly Couperin) around the turn of the century is well noted. But it was also the compositions of Albinoni, Vivaldi and their Italian contemporaries that provided the stimulus for Boismortier's works. The strikingly original *VI Concertos pour 5 Flûtes-Traversieres ou autres Instrumens sans Baße* Op. 15 (1727), for example, undoubtedly took their inspiration from the north Italian 'concerto a cinque', while the concluding work from Boismortier's *Cinq Sonates pour le Violoncelle, Viole ou Baßon avec la Baße chifrée suivies d'un Concerto pour 1'un ou l'autre de ces Instrumens* Op. 26 (1729) — the first solo concerto to appear in print in France — was likewise a response to similar concertos by the Venetians. In view of Boismortier's fascination with Italian music, it is hardly surprising to find that the trio sonata also figures prominently on the list of his published compositions.

The 'sonate en trio' was in essence the French incarnation of the Corellian trio sonata (prevalently the 'da chiesa' variety) towards the end of the seventeenth century. Notwithstanding Corelli's influence and popularity, however, several decades were to pass before the genre was accepted without reserve by French composers, most of whom, in the meantime, continued to write 'suittes en trio', 'concerts en trio', 'pièces en trio', 'livres de trio' etc. — all of these being collections of decidedly French dances or descriptively-titled movements. The earliest French 'sonates

en trio', on the other hand, were attempts at amalgamating French and Italian musical styles; Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre and Sébastien de Brossard both composed trio sonatas for two violins and continuo in 1695, and four works by François Couperin also date from that year, if not before. Such **'**amalgamation**'** was taken a step further in 1705 with the publication of Jean-François Dandrieu**'**s *Livre de Sonates en trio*, Op. 1 but, with the exception of a small number of compositions, it was not until the mid 1720s that French composers seriously turned their attention to the trio sonata. It was once again Couperin, who had long nurtured a desire to bring together the respective virtues of Italian and French music, who produced the next important exemplars. Beginning in 1724, he published a succession of trio sonatas: *Le Parnasse, ou L'apothéose de Corelli* (in *Les goûts-réunis, ou Nouveaux concerts*, 1724), the 'sonate en trio' *La Paix du Parnasse* (in the *Concert Instrumental sous le titre d'apothéose composé à la mémoire de l'incomparable Monsieur de Lully*, 1725), and *La Françoise, L'Espagnole, L'Impériale* and *La Piemontoise* (in *Les Nations*, 1726), all of which bear testimony to how he was "charmed by the sonatas of Signor Corelli, whose works I shall love as long as I live".[2]

In exactly the same period, Boismortier began composing his own 'sonates en trio', some of which constitute his most accomplished, and at times most progressive music. During the course of his long and productive career, he was to publish nine separate sets or collections of 'sonates en trio' — Opp. 4, 7, 12, 18, 28, 37, 41, 78 and 96; he was the most prolific French composer of such works in the period until 1741.[3] The earliest two sets, namely the [*XII*] *Petites Sonates en Trio pour deux Flûtes Traverierès avec la Baße*, Op. 4 (1724), and the [*VI*] *Sonates en Trio pour Trois Flûtes-Traversieres sans Baße* Op. 7 (1725), were experimental in nature; Boismortier was the first to compose 'miniature' trio sonatas characterised by four, very brief (generally bipartite) movements, and then trio sonatas in which the customary continuo line is replaced by a third treble part. They were closely followed by the [*VI*] *Sonates en Trio pour les Flûtes-Traversieres, Violons ou Haubois avec la Baße*, Op. 12 (1726). All three of these collections are ostensibly 'French' as regards their scoring for '1^{ere} dessus' '2^{d} dessus' and 'basse',[4] their use of the first-line G (French violin) clef for the two treble parts, their typically French movement designations (e.g., 'Lentement', 'Rondeau', 'Gracieusement', 'Légèrement etc.) and the French terminology used to denote tempi and dynamics etc. And yet their musical language, albeit intrinsically French, is heavily influenced by Italian instrumental writing in accordance with the origins and 'nationality' of the trio sonata itself.

In 1727, not long after the appearance of Couperin's *Les Nations*, Boismortier published his [*VI*] *Sonates en Trio pour deux Violons avec la Baße* Op. 18 which, in retrospect, mark a turning point in the evolution of the 'sonate en trio' in France. These works, along with Boismortier's four successive sets of trio sonatas, are deliberately and unashamedly Italian, not only in terms of style, but also as regards their formal organisation. Boismortier is therefore much more overt than Couperin in his imitation of Italian models. Ironically, however, he seems to have been more interested in differentiating French and Italian musical genres rather than in uniting national styles. On the whole, there is a clear dichotomy between 'French' and 'Italian' compositions in Boismortier's oeuvre, dictated by their scoring (his chamber works for the musette, hurdy-gurdy, viola da gamba, recorder, and voice, for example, are generally French, while those for violin, for the violoncello and, after 1727, for the transverse flute are normally Italian) and/or their specific musical genre (Boismortier's concertos, 'nuits saltimbanques', trio sonatas and the majority of his solo sonatas are Italian in style, while the suites, 'divertissemens', 'sérénades', 'fragmens mélodiques', 'pièces', and works for the stage are unquestionably French).

The Italianisation of the formal aspects of Boismortier's later trio sonatas sets these works apart from the same composer's earlier examples of the genre, and from the majority of the (relatively few) 'sonates en trio' written in the preceding decades by other French composers such as Jacques Hotteterre (*Sonates en trio,* Livre I, Op. 3, 1712), Louis Antoine Dornel (*Sonates en trio pour les flûtes allemandes, violons, hautbois* Op. 3, 1713) and Jacques-Cristophe Naudot (*Sonates en trio pour deux flûtes traversières avec la basse* Op. 2, 1726). By the same token, the 'innovations' Boismortier introduced in his Op. 18 were to set the general pattern for a large number of the French trio sonatas that appeared thereafter, including works by Jean-Daniel Braun, Michel Corrette, Jean-Baptiste Quentin, Charles Henri de Blainville, and Jean-Marie Leclair:

- Boismortier's 'Italian' trio sonatas totally dispense with programmatic content and descriptive movement titles, and they completely abandon French terminology. All instrument names, dynamics, dance titles and tempo indications etc. are given in Italian (only the title pages appear in French). The first-line G (French violin) clef is replaced with the second-line G clef, while the Italian time signatures 2/2 and 3/4 are substituted for the French 2 and 3 respectively.[5]

- Boismortier models his 'Italian' trio sonatas on both the 'sonata da chiesa' and the 'sonata da camera', and combines elements of the two genres in his works. He follows Corelli's lead in casting the sonatas of Opp. 18, 28, 41 and 78 in four or five movements, but at least one of these is normally a dance movement in binary form: allemanda, corrente, sarabanda, gavotta, minuetto, Sicigliana [sic] or giga (the Op. 37 trio sonatas, on the other hand, represent something of a novelty in that each contains three movements in the fast-slow-fast scheme of the north Italian solo concerto, a scheme rarely adopted at that time for trio sonatas[6]). Typical French forms such as the branle, the rigaudon and the entrée are conspicuously absent.[7]

- Following the example set by various Italian composers — most notably Corelli in his 'sonate da chiesa' of Opp. 1 and 3, Albinoni in his 'sonate da chiesa' of Op. 1, and Vivaldi in his 'sonate da camera' of Op. 1 — Boismortier specifies an 'organo' for the realization of the basso continuo in his sets of 'Italian' trio sonatas, presumably to be employed with the support of a cello/viola da gamba and a theorbo or archlute. However, his continuo parts consist of a single, figured bass line, and he provides no independent melodic bass parts, unlike, for example, Corelli in his 'sonate da chiesa', Couperin in his trio sonatas, and Dandrieu in most of his Op. 1 sonatas.

- Boismortier generally alternates works in minor tonalities with ones in major tonalities, a practice frequently espoused by the Italians, and traceable to Corelli's Op. 1, if not earlier.[8]

- Boismortier is specific with regard to instrumentation. In contrast to earlier 'French' trio sonatas that rarely stipulated the exact instruments to be employed, each set of Boismortier's 'Italian' trio sonatas was conceived for particular instruments and is differently scored from the others;[9] Boismortier was in fact the first French composer to publish sets of trio sonatas written expressly for two violins and continuo ([*VI*] *Sonate en Trio pour deux Violons avec la Baße* Op. 18, 1727),[10] for two oboes and continuo (*Six Sonates en Trio pour deux Hautbois, Flûtes-Traversieres ou Violons avec la Baße* [...] Op. 28, 1730), and for flute, violin and continuo (*VI sonates en trio pour une Flûte traversiere et un Violon avec la Baße* Op. 41, 1732), just as he was the first Frenchman to publish 'Italian' trio sonatas for a treble and bass instrument with basso continuo (*V Sonates en Trio pour un Deſsus et deux Baßes* […], Op. 37, 1732). Even though the title pages of these collections may propose more than one possible instrumental combination — a marketing strategy common amongst music publishers throughout Europe in the 1720s and 1730s, and one at times validated by Boismortier's seemingly generic writing for treble instruments —the instruments actually specified on the printed parts, together with the range of the parts and characteristics of the writing, plainly reveal the composer's original intention.[11]

The fact that Boismortier intentionally wrote his Opp. 18, 28, 37, 41, 78 and 96 (and many other works) in the Italian style raises an important question for musicians, one that has been the subject of frequent, heated debate amongst scholars from the 1960s onwards: the notes inégales that characterized the performance of French music for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Would Boismortier have wished his Italian trio sonatas to be played in the French manner with a rigid adherence to the practice of notes inégales, or was he expecting them to be performed as Italian musicians might perform them, that is, observing the length of the notes as they were actually notated? In his *Methode pour apprendre aisément à joüer de la flute traversiere*, Boismortier's contemporary and fellow countryman Michel Corrette defines in some detail the use of *notes inégales* in both French and Italian music. On the basis of his discussion, one may infer that *notes inégales* generally typified the performance of dance movements, and that the convention had become, by the 1730s, much more arbitrary when

performing Italian sonatas and concertos, particularly those movements in C, 𝄵 or 2/4 metre not based upon dance forms.[12]

The relatively sparse ornamentation indicated by Boismortier in his 'Italian' trio sonatas also suggests a closer affinity with Italian performance practice, particularly when compared with the meticulous ornamentation stipulated by Couperin in his own trio sonatas. Whereas in French baroque music ornaments were an intrinsic part of the melody and for this reason were notated, Italian composers rarely specified their *abbellimenti*, preferring to leave the elaboration of melodic material to the discretion of the performer. In his trio sonatas, Boismortier indicates only the *tremblement appuyé* (a prepared trill with appoggiatura, designated by the symbol +) at cadences (and occasionally elsewhere), and the *coulé* (passing appoggiatura), which however, being a typically French ornament, is generally used sparingly.[13] Until early 1727, the composer also specified the *tremblement subit* (short trill, designated by the symbol) in all of his compositions, but he thereafter used the one symbol, +, for both prepared and unprepared trills, at least in his 'Italian' works.[14] Significantly, no real difference in the manner of indication and the frequency of *agréments* exists between Boismortier's earliest 'French' trio sonatas and his later 'Italian' trio sonatas.

Boismortier's Opp. 4, 7, 12, 18, 28, 37 and 41 were all published by Parisian publisher François Boivin (parts only). After Boivin's death in 1733, the family printing business was taken over by his widow, who published Boismortier's Opp. 78 and 96. All of the trio sonatas, with the exception of the Op. 78 sonatas (and almost certainly those of the missing Op. 96), were engraved by a certain Marin. Like the vast majority of printed French music from the early 18th century, Boivin's editions are notable for their remarkable accuracy and their elegant workmanship.

Two notational 'peculiarities' in the original Boivin editions of Boismortier's 'Italian' trio sonatas should be pointed out. Firstly, the sonatas in C minor, G minor and D minor have one flat fewer in their key signatures; this convention is not infrequently encountered in music composed before the late eighteenth century, and normally concerns works in those minor keys having flats in their key signatures. Secondly, Boismortier follows contemporaneous French practice in his continuo figuring by employing specific, single symbols for the chord of the 'fausse quinte' (5), and that of the 'triton' (4+), both of which are inversions of the chord of the seventh. The former symbol is generally found over leading notes or chromatically-raised notes in the bass, and the chord in question should be realised by playing the third and sixth together with the fifth. Rather than indicating that the fifth is to be lowered a semitone, the symbol indicates the nature of the chord to be played; usually (but not invariably) the note in the bass already forms a diminished interval with the fifth. The 'triton', on the other hand, is a chord comprising the second, the fourth and the sixth. Once again the symbol indicates the nature of the chord and does not always necessitate the raising of the fourth by a semitone since the interval of the augmented fourth frequently occurs with the bass as a by-product of the key signature.[15] Much use is also made of the 4–3 figuring at cadences. This reflects the practice of performing cadential trills with an initial appoggiatura on the note above the main note.

THE SIX TRIO SONATAS, OP. 18

Although Boismortier had by the end of his life [unjustly] acquired a reputation as something of a 'hack' composer, he must have emerged as a significant new presence on the Parisian musical scene not long after his arrival in the French capital. His first published compositions were relatively conventional (French-style cantatas, sonatas for two viols without basso continuo, sonatas for two transverse flutes without basso continuo etc.), but then in 1727 he published a series of compositions in the 'Italian style' that were groundbreaking: the aforementioned *VI Concertos pour 5 Flûtes-Traversieres ou autres Instrumens sans Baße* Op. 15, the [*VI*] *Sonates en Trio pour deux Violons avec la Baße* Op. 18, the [*VI*] *Sonates Pour la Flute-Traversiere avec la Baße* Op. 19

and the [*VI*] *Sonates a Violon Seul avec la Baße* Op. 20, all publications by means of which he either presented a new instrumental genre to the public, or set out to 'Italianise' even further a genre that had already been taken up by the French. It is hardly surprising that these early works in 'le goût italien' assume salient characteristics of the models they emulate, predominantly as concerns their formal structure and organisation.

The Op. 18 sonatas are particularly indebted to Corelli and his followers, partly on account of their instrumentation. They are cast in four movements (although Sonata III has five), the three works in minor keys (Sonatas I, III and V) alternating with the those in major keys (Sonatas II, IV and VI). All of the sonatas include a fast movement that is fugal or based on imitative entries, while the majority of the slow movements feature the familiar Corellian 'walking bass' and sequential chains of suspensions. In Op. 18, one also finds various dance forms: the allemanda (Sonata IV), the corrente (Sonatas III and VI), the sarabanda (Sonata III), the giga (Sonatas II and VI), and the gavotta (Sonatas I and III), in addition to two 'unacknowledged' dances: another giga (Sonata V), and a pair of alternating minuetti (Sonata I).

In spite of their striving to imitate Italian models, the Op. 18 trio sonatas do display certain French elements, along with characteristics of Boismortier's individual style. Like most of his compatriots, Boismortier uses a particularly rich harmonic language; the Op. 18 sonatas show a marked predilection for chords of the seventh. The subjects of the fugues and fugato passages are invariably rather short, while Sonatas II and IV feature the composer's own particular version of a (loosely constructed) double fugue; the second voice, rather than entering with an answer, introduces a new subject (usually still in the tonic), after which the two subjects are treated independently throughout the movement, rarely if ever occurring together. Also typical of Boismortier — even though the device was certainly not original — is the sudden change from major to minor found at the end of the first movements of Sonatas II and VI.[16]

If Boismortier has on occasion been criticised for the generic nature of the treble parts in his compositions, Op. 18 was clearly conceived for two violins and continuo. Not only does the range of the two upper parts frequently descend below *d′*, but certain aspects of the writing unquestionably privilege the violin; the rapid, unrelenting flow of uninterrupted semiquavers given the first violin in the 'Presto' of Sonata V, for example, would literally be unplayable on a wind instrument.[17] In actual fact, the writing for the violin in Boismortier's Op. 18 trio sonatas is entirely comparable to that of Corelli's trio sonatas; the violin parts in Corelli's Opp. 1–4 are similarly characterised by a limited upper extension and the absence of double and triple stopping.

Of particular interest in Op. 18 are Sonatas IV and V. In terms of its structure and elements of its melodic and harmonic language, the former work seems surprisingly progressive for 1727. At times it abandons the Corellian model for a much more *galant* style. This can be seen, for example, in the opening 'Vivace' (where the melody is constructed of three-bar phrases in which arpeggios are methodically passed from one instrument to another), and in the closing bars of the final 'Allegro'. The diminished chord that serves as the anacrusis for the 'Grave' is also aberrantly adventurous. Sonata V on the other hand opens with two 'moto perpetuo'-type movements characterized by almost incessant semiquaver passages. In the first of these, the continuo has the moving part, whereas in the ensuing 'Presto' the semiquavers are allotted to the first violin: The final 'Allegro' (Giga) is also worthy of note for its rhythmic idiosyncrasies: crotchets (and at times quavers) in what are essentially 3/4 groupings are set against dotted crotchets in 6/8 time.

Boismortier was not a string player, and before long his Op. 18 was superseded by other French trio sonatas for two violins and continuo that were more 'violinistically' conceived and more technically interesting. Nevertheless, this collection of works was to have a noticeable influence on the trio sonatas of various other composers, including Jean-Baptiste Quentin (Op. 4, 1729), Jean-Marie Leclair (Op. 4, 1730), Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville (Op. 2, 1734), Charles Dollé (Op. 1, 1737), and André-Joseph Exaudet (Op. 2, 1752).

THE SIX TRIO SONATAS OP. 41

Boismortier's *VI Sonates en Trio pour une Flûte traverſiere et un Violon avec la Baße* Op. 41 were published towards the end of 1732.[18] Boivin's title page plainly states that "Ces Sonates se peuvent jouer egalment sur deux Flûtes-traversieres, ou sur deux Violons et la Basse", but the instruments specified on the individual parts — 'flauto' and 'violino' respectively — together with various aspects of the writing and the low extension of the second part in several movements of the sonatas, leave no doubt as to the instrumentation effectively intended by the composer.[19]

Prior to 1732, relatively little music had been written expressly for transverse flute, violin and continuo, and even less had actually been published; the few works in circulation had virtually all been penned by German composers. Boismortier, who was constantly exploiting the novelty of new or unfamiliar instrumental combinations, would have been well aware of this situation; his Op. 41 in fact represents one of the very first sets of its kind to appear in print.[20] It would appear that François Boivin was also especially interested in promoting works for this particular scoring. In the same period (i.e., 1731-33), he issued an anonymous, unauthorised edition of 6 trio sonatas by Telemann scored for the same instruments (notwithstanding the composer, in his autobiography, claims that these sonatas were originally for two transverse flutes and continuo[21]). Boivin's title page describes the Telemann works as *Six Sonates en Trio dans le goust* [sic] *Italien*, while the parts bear the indication "Si l'on veut suivre l'intention de L'Auteur, l'on jouera le premier dessus sur la Flûte, et le second sur le Violon." Whether the success of Boismortier's sonatas prompted the preparation of this 'pirated' Telemann set, or vice versa, is not known, but the appearance of two similar collections of trio sonatas for flute, violin and continuo, in 'le gout Italien', from the same publisher and in the same period, is more than a simple coincidence. The two sets, however, are quite different. Recent research has established that several of these Telemann sonatas date back to the late 1710s, if not earlier, which partly explains why they contain such a large quantity of strict contrapuntal writing; in terms of style they are actually more German than Italian.[22] Boismortier's Op. 41 sonatas are in fact stylistically closer to Telemann's *Six Sonates Corellisantes* for 2 violins or flutes and continuo, which were self-published in Hamburg in 1735, and then reprinted by Le Clerc in Paris in 1737.

While Op. 41 is markedly less 'Corellian' than the same composer's Op. 18, it nonetheless pays homage to the Italian master and his disciples. The opening' Grave' of Sonata II, for example, with its 'walking bass' and sequential chains of suspensions, clearly betrays its debt to Corelli, as do the violin-like figurations (entrusted to the flute) that close the following 'Allegro.' On the other hand, the 'Allegro' and the 'Presto' of Sonata III, the 'Allegro' and the 'Presto' of Sonata IV, and the 'Presto' of Sonata VI all exhibit Vivaldi-style concertante writing for the two treble instruments. These particular movements would appear to have been inspired by Vivaldi's chamber concertos; such writing is highly unusual in other Baroque trio sonatas for the same instrumental combination.

For his Op. 41 trio sonatas, Boismortier has chosen tonalities particularly suited to the transverse flute: E minor (Sonata I), D major (Sonatas II and V), G major (Sonatas III and VI) and G minor (Sonata IV). Unlike his earlier collections of 'Italian' trio sonatas, in Op. 41 there is no minor/major pairing of the individual works, nevertheless there is a clear structural organisation; the sonatas are divided into two groups of three, each of which begins with a work in a minor key, followed by a sonata in D major and then a sonata in G major. The Op. 41 sonatas are in five movements, with the exception of the two G major sonatas, both of which have 4. This also differentiates them from Boismortier's earlier collections in which the works were generally in four movements (Opp. 18 and 28), or in three movements (Op. 37).

As with Opp. 18 and 28, the six trio sonatas of Op .41 collectively include all the dance movements of the standard baroque suite: allemanda (Sonatas I and V), corrente (Sonata VI), sarabanda (Sonata IV) and giga (Sonata V), in addition to the gavotta (Sonata II) and the minuetto (Sonata IV). Several other bipartite movements are also dances, even if not actually described as such. There are, for example, additional minuetti in Sonatas I and II respectively, another gavotta in Sonata I, and a French musette in Sonata III. The sporadic appearance of French

dances in Boismortier's Italian trio sonatas is in itself interesting; rather than insinuating that his works are not quite as 'Italian' as might be supposed, it reflects the growing tendency amongst French composers to embrace the '*goûts réunis*,' a trend that by the late 1720s was already beginning to permeate music throughout Europe. It also shows how Boismortier, in spite of his blatant imitation of Italian models, never strayed excessively far from his musical roots.

While Op. 41 perhaps lacks the freshness and invention of Op. 18, it nonetheless displays a refinement of the skills evident in Boismortier's earlier three sets of 'Italian' trios, and can probably be regarded as the summit of the composer's trio sonata writing in the Italian style.[23] The Op. 41 sonatas, moreover, are equally distinguished by their individuality; outwardly Italian in style, at times French in character, and all the while eschewing German influence, they are quite unlike other trio sonatas from the High Baroque for the same instrumental combination.

THE SIX TRIO SONATAS FROM OP. 28

Notwithstanding France's pivotal role in the development of the early oboe, French composers were remarkably slow in creating a repertory of chamber music dedicated specifically to the instrument. As noted above, for example, the vast majority of French 'sonates en trio' composed before 1727, the year in which Boismortier unofficially introduced his innovations to the genre, were scored simply for a '1^{ere} dessus', a 2^{d} dessus' and a 'basse', albeit with title pages indicating a variety of treble instruments suitable for playing the two upper parts. The earliest trios that expressly called for oboes were written by German, Bohemian and Italian composers, namely Zelenka, Bodinus, Heinichen, Dall'Abaco, Handel, Vivaldi and Telemann. Even so, few of these works were actually conceived for two oboes and basso continuo *per se*. Three of Zelenka's six celebrated trios ZWV 181 are in fact quartets with separate parts for the bassoon and the basso continuo, while another features a violin instead of a second oboe. Similarly, the second part in Handel's youthful trio sonatas HWV 380–5 was evidently intended for the violin and not an oboe as was widely believed for many years, just as both treble parts in Dall'Abaco's *Sonate da camera à tre, per due Violini, Violoncello é Clavecembalo ò vero due Haubois* [sic] *con il fagotto, Opera terza, libro secondo*, at times descend below the range of the baroque oboe.

While Boismortier was clearly not the first to write trio sonatas that included parts for oboes, his Op. 28, published in early 1730 and containing *Six Sonates en Trio pour deux Hautbois, Flûtes-Traversieres ou Violons avec la Baße*, *suiviez de deux Concerto*, was nonetheless one of the earliest sets of works indubitably conceived for two oboes and continuo to appear in print.[24] In spite of the comprehensive title, Boismortier's intention as regards instrumentation is evident from several details:

- not only are the words *POUR DEUX HAUTBOIS* on the title page positioned above *Flûtes-Traversieres ou Violons avec la Baße*, but they are in upper-case letters and written in much larger characters
- the individual parts are designated simply 'oboe 1' and 'oboe 2'
- catalogues of compositions by Boismortier appearing in various Boivin editions of the composer's works (e.g., the *IV Balets de Village en Trio,* Op. 52, and *Daphnis et Chloé* Op. 102) describe the Op. 28 sonatas merely as 'Trio de Hautbois'
- the uppermost limit of the two treble parts, in accordance with Boismortier's writing elsewhere for the oboe, never exceeds c^{3}, whereas Boismortier's flute and violin parts always extend as far as d^{3}, and occasionally beyond, the violin parts also extending below d^{1}.

It can furthermore be assumed that the composer envisaged a bassoon doubling the continuo line in these sonatas; since the time of Lully, it was customary in France for the bassoon to provide the bass accompaniment for a pair of oboes — the so-called *trio des hautbois*.[25]

These sonatas accordingly provide further evidence (as do many of Boismortier's other 'Italian' works) of the composer's creative acumen in producing music for instrumental combinations that had until then been largely ignored or not contemplated by other composers. Since Boismortier was a shrewd businessman, it is likely that he

deliberately set out to corner the market with such innovative compositions; as the holder of a Royal Privilege since 1724, he was in the enviable position of being able to publish virtually all that he wrote.

If the reference to flutes and violins on the Op. 28 title page was a ploy to increase sales of the trio sonatas, then the 'bonus' inclusion of two concertos in the same publication was also an astute marketing strategy.[26] These concertos are short, three-movement works in the style of Vivaldi's miniature chamber concertos. They basically employ the same scoring as the sonatas, although the Op. 28 title page states that "le premiere [concerto] se joue sur la Musettte, la Viele, ou la Flûte à bec";[27] the designation 'oboe 1' on the first of the two treble parts is in fact replaced by 'zampogna' for Concerto I. Boismortier's call for peculiarly French instruments in his Italian concertos presages his eventual recourse to the same instruments in the (now missing) Op. 96 trio sonatas, an interesting particular given that the composer generally differentiated between French and Italian styles on the basis of scoring and/or musical genre. Such an expedient was no doubt adopted to cater for the demand from amateur recorder, hurdy-gurdy and bagpipe players for the most popular (Italian) musical forms of the day, namely the sonata (particularly the trio sonata) and the concerto.

Op. 28 understandably adopts and consolidates the innovations Boismortier had introduced three years previously in his Op. 18 trio sonatas. Hence we find the 'organo' specified for the realisation of the basso continuo, the alternation of sonatas in major keys with sonatas in minor keys, and the combining of the 'da chiesa' and 'da camera' genres. And yet Op. 28 features more dance movements and fewer through-composed fugal or fugato movements than does Op. 18.[28] Besides the prevalence of titled dance movements, Op. 28 moreover includes an untitled passepied (final movement Sonata II), and three 'French' rondeaux, here conveniently labelled 'Affettuoso' or 'Aria (affettuoso)'. Also present in Op. 28 are several movements that are undeniably French in style (for example the 'Gavotta' from Sonata V), along with a greater presence of French ornamentation as manifested in the not infrequent notation of the *coulé*. Op. 28 is therefore the most 'French' of Boismortier's sets of 'Italian' trio sonatas; this is partly attributable to the particular scoring of the works since the *trio des hautbois* was at that time still associated with the *Musique de la Grande Ecurie* and the *12 Grands Hautbois du Roi* and, as a consequence, with a markedly French repertory.

All of the Op. 28 sonatas are in four movements. Each work in a major tonality is followed by a work in the tonic minor, with the exception of Sonata V which, being in the key of F major, is followed by a sonata not in the technically difficult key of F minor, but in the more accessible E minor. The major-minor pairing is extended to the two appended concertos (the first of which is in C major and the second in A minor).[29]

As with Opp. 18 and 41, the six Op. 28 sonatas have been largely forgotten since their original publication. And yet this is symptomatic of the situation regarding most of Boismortier's music; as mentioned above, the unfavourable reputation attributed to Boismortier since the late eighteenth century has, until recently, led to a general disregard for both the composer and his works on the part of musicians and musicologists. Boismortier's compositions, however, are well worth resurrecting. Quite apart from their obvious musical merits, they document the prevailing tastes and trends among amateur musicians in early eighteenth-century Paris more closely than do those of any other composer (with the possible exception of Corrette). Through their fusion of Italian and French elements, their inventiveness and individuality, the sheer variety of their instrumentation and the array of musical genres they encompass, they offer a particularly rich account of French music (particularly chamber music) in the 1720s and 1730s.

Michael Elphinstone

[1] Jean-Benjamin (-François) de La Borde, *Essai sur la musique ancienne et moderne*, Paris 1780, Tome III, p. 394.

[2] Françiois Couperin, 'Preface' to *Les Nations* (1726).

[3] Boismortier's final trio sonatas, the [*VI*] *Sonates en Trio pour tous les Instruments & principalment pour une Vièle, ou Musette, avec un Violon, et la Basse* Op. 96 (1741) are unfortunately amongst the composer's missing music and therefore currently impossible to assess.

[4] In spite of the instrumentation indicated on the title pages of Opp. 4 and 12 , the individual parts are labelled simply '1ere dessus' '2d dessus' and 'Basse'. In Boismortier's Op. 7 trio sonatas, there is no bass, but a '3e dessus'.

[5] An isolated example of the French time signature 3 is to be found in the third movement (Adagio) of the trio sonata in D minor Op. 18 No.5.

[6] With the notable exceptions of the six trio sonatas for flute, violin and continuo that constitute Part II of Sebastian Bodinus' *Musicalischen Divertissements* (published by Johann Friedrich Leopold, Augsburg 1726), and J.S. Bach's six trio sonatas for organ or pedal harpsichord BWV 525-530 (1727-1730). Various musicians, including Fasch, Tartini, Somis, and composers attached to the court of Frederick the Great, would soon thereafter adopt a three-movement structure for their trio (and solo) sonatas, but generally in the slow-fast-fast scheme.

[7] Interestingly, Boismortier does continue to employ the French 'rondeau' in his Op. 28 sonatas, but the movements in question are labelled 'Affettuoso' or 'Aria (affettuoso)'.

[8] Boismortier was to employ such major/minor pairing in virtually all of his sets of 'Italian' compositions, whether concertos, [solo] sonatas or trio sonatas. It is curious to note that he had already resorted to this practice in his 'French' trio sonatas Opp. 4, 7 and 12.

[9] In most early French trio sonatas (including Boismortier's own Opp. 4, 7 and 12), the two upper parts are designated simply '1ere dessus' and 2d dessus' and the continuo part is marked 'Basse'. See Note 4

[10] It is true that Boismortier's Op. 18 was preceded by Dandrieu's *Livre de Sonates en Trio* Op. 1 (1705), but Sonatas I-IV of Dandrieu's collection, along with the first two movements of Sonata V, feature an independent part for a violoncello, and are therefore practically quartets.

[11] It is highly likely that the title pages of Boismortier's instrumental collections were prepared once the actual music had already been printed, and that Boismortier then occasionally specified additional instruments suitable for performing the works in question on the basis of market trends at that moment.
Only the parts for the Op. 37 trio sonatas do not specify precise instruments; that for the treble instrument bears the heading 'Oboe, Violino o Flauto', and the second voice is simply labelled 'Basso I'. A note on the title page, however, offers three alternative scorings — oboe, bassoon and continuo; violin, cello and continuo; or [transverse] flute, viola da gamba and continuo.

[12] Michel Corrette, *Methode pour apprendre aisément à joüer de la flute traversiere.* [Paris 1735] pp. 4–6.

[13] The coulé is indicated more frequently in the Op. 28 trio sonatas, but these are the most 'French' of Boismortier's 'Italian' trio sonatas.

[14] An isolated symbol for the *tremblement subit* is to be found in bar 14 of the opening 'Grave' of the trio sonata in G major, Op. 18 No. 2.

[15] Corrette is one of several musicians who make mention of these peculiarly French figurings and give details regarding their realization. He explains that Corelli 'and his disciples' (Vivaldi, Geminiani, Veracini, Locatelli and 'all foreigners') do not utilize the symbols of the 'fausse quinte' and the 'triton', but normally figure the chords 6/5 and 4/2 or #4/2, respectively (Michel Corrette, *Le Maitre du Clavecin* [Paris 1753], p. 80).

[16] One can find the same effect in several works by Vivaldi: for example, the ending of the first movement of the *Concerto alla rustica*, RV 151.

[17] In addition, at least two of the keys chosen for the Op. 18 trios — C minor (Sonata I) and B flat major (Sonata IV) — are rarely employed by Boismortier in music written expressly for flute, recorder and/or oboe.

[18] Opp.36-42 were all published by Boivin that same year; the *Troisieme recueil d'air a chanter* Op. 43, now lost, dates from either the very end of 1732 or from early 1733.

[19] As in all of his 'Italian' works featuring the transverse flute, in Op. 41 Boismortier labels the instrument 'flauto' on the actual printed parts but 'flute traversiere' on the title page (this practice has led to confusion regarding the instrument intended by Boismortier in his *Concerto a Cinque Parties*, published together with the *V Sonates en Trio pour un Dessus et deux Baßes* […] Op. 37). He appears to have been unaware that in Italy in the 1730s the designation 'flauto' still referred to the recorder (flauto dolce, flauto diritto or flauto a becco), and that the transverse flute was generally named 'flauto traverso', 'flauto traversier', 'traversiere' or 'traverso' etc. Michel Corrette seems to have been similarly ill-informed:
'La Flute Traversiere nommée par quelques uns, Flute Allemande, et par les Italiens Flauto [...]' (*Methode pour apprendre aisément à joüer de la flute traversiere*. [Paris 1735] p. 7).
Notwithstanding its limited upper range and the absence of double and triple stopping, the violin part of the Op. 41 trio sonatas is similar to that encountered in other works by Boismortier (for example the Op. 18 trio sonatas for two violins and continuo). Only in the *Six Sonates pour une Flûte traverſière et un Violon par accords, sans Baße*, Op. 51, can one find particularly idiomatic writing for the violin.

[20] The only previously published 'collection' written expressly for this instrumental combination was Part II of Bodinus' aforementioned *Musicalischen Divertissements*. Boismortier may well have been familiar with, and have drawn inspiration from Bodinus' work; it is significant that the diverse scorings utilized in the sonatas of Boismortier's Opp.18, 28 and 41 had already appeared in Parts I, IV and II respectively of the *Musicalischen Divertissements.*

[21]Georg Philipp Telemann, in Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg, 1740), p.369.

[22] Steven Zohn, *Music for a MixedTaste: Style; Genre, and Meaning in Telemann's Instrumental Works* (New York, 2008), p.266

[23] Boismortier's subsequent collection of 'sonates en trio', Op. 78, seems to reflect a slight falling off of interest in the genre on the part of the composer (it contains only four sonatas instead of the usual six and is scored for two transverse flutes and continuo, an instrumental combination already employed in Opp. 4 and 12). Similarly, the fact that the missing [*VI*] *Sonates en Trio pour tous les Instruments & principalement pour une Vièle, ou Musette, avec un Violon, et la Baße* Op. 96 (1741) are scored for violin and continuo plus either the hurdy gurdy or the musette — both of which were 'popular' instruments virtually peculiar to France — suggests a breaking away from the noble and lofty Italian conception of the trio sonata (promoted by Corelli *et al*) that had inspired Boismortier's earliest experiments in the genre. At the same time, however, it demonstrates how Boismortier wished to extend Italian instrumental genres to as wide a range of instruments as possible, including those not widely adopted in Italy.

[24] Boismortier's Op 28 was preceded only by Part IV of Sebastian Bodinus' *Musicalischen Divertissements*, published in 1726. The Bodinus trio sonatas are, admittedly, scored for either two violins or two oboes and continuo, but the while individual parts are labelled 'Violino ô Oboe', the compass of the instruments and the absence of double or triple stopping seem to favour the oboe as the intended instrument.

[25] That this role was attributed to the bassoon also outside of France is confirmed by Mattheson in his *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* (Hamburg, 1713), p.269: "Der stolze Basson [...] ist der ordinaire Baſs, das Fundament oder Accompagnement der Hautbois"

[26] Two other collections of sonatas by Boismortier (*Cinq Sonates pour le Violoncelle, Viole ou Baßon avec la Baße chifrée suivies d'un Concerto pour 1'un ou l'autre de ces Instrumens* Op. 26 [1729], and the *V Sonates en Trio pour un Deſsus et deux Baßes*, *suivez d'un Concerto a Cinq Parties, pour une Flute, un Violon, un Haubois, un Baßon, & la Baße* Op. 37 [1732]) include concertos as an 'appendix' to the volume.

[27] In actual fact Boismortier, unlike Vivaldi, did not exclude the eventual doubling of the 'ripieno' parts in his chamber concertos. The title page of his *Six Concerto pour les Flutes-traver.[es], Violons ou Hautbois avec la Baße*, Op. 30 (1730) explains that "on peut doubler toutes les parties de ces Concerto, ainsi que de mes précédents: pourvu que l'on s'abstienne de jouer dans les endroits qui sont marqués solo".

[28] There are 11 titled dances in Op. 28 as compared to 8 in Op. 18, whereas only 2, and not all of the Op. 28 trio sonatas contain fugues or fugato movements.

[29] The Italian composers who instigated and employed such major-minor pairing generally did so for sets of twelve sonatas or concertos. For a question of balance and order, they were wont to begin and end their sets with works in a major tonality, and they accomplished this by either inverting the order of the final major-minor pair, or by placing two major-key works together at the end of a set. Boismortier, who ordinarily composed sets of only 6 sonatas or concertos, did not rigidly observe this practice in his sets of 'Italian' trio sonatas, nor was he consistent. At times he opens a set with a work in a minor key and concludes it with one in a major key (e.g., Op. 18), whereas in other sets he begins with a work in a major key and concludes with one in a minor key (e.g., Opp. 28 and 37, both of which end with concertos that are included in the major-minor pairing). The six Op. 41sonatas are organized not in pairs, but in groups of three with a minor-major-major scheme, and in Op. 78, the four sonatas follow a major-minor-major-major scheme.