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**THE 'ITALIAN' ENSEMBLE SONATAS
OF JOSEPH BODIN DE BOISMORTIER**

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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 the French capital, 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 (1742), 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 chiffrée suivies d'un Concerto pour l'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 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

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

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 scored for two treble instruments and continuo. As might be expected, the earliest French ‘sonates en trio’ 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 Française, L’Espagnole, L’Impériale* and *La Piémontoise* (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 precisely 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 short yet extremely productive career, he was to publish at least ten separate sets or collections of ‘sonates en trio’ — Opp. 4, 7, 12, 18, 28, 37, 41, 75, 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 Traverrières avec la Basse*, Op. 4 (1724), and the [VI] *Sonates en Trio pour Trois Flûtes-Traversières 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 bass line is replaced by a third treble part. They were closely followed by the [VI] *Sonates en Trio pour les Flûtes-Traversières, 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 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 was undeniably influenced by Italian instrumental writing, probably in deference to 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 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

² François Couperin, ‘Preface’ to *Les Nations* (1726).

³ In addition to the ten acknowledged sets of trio sonatas, the concluding work of Boismortier’s Op. 50, *VI Sonates dont la dernière est en Trio pour les Violoncelles, Bassons ou Violes*, is a trio sonata scored for violin, violoncello and basso continuo. Unfortunately, two of Boismortier’s last sets of trio sonatas are lost, and information regarding them is fragmentary. The first of these, Op. 75 (c.1739), is listed in catalogues of the composer’s works simply as *Trio pour une Viole et une Fl. avec la Basse*, while it appears in the 1742 Le Clerc catalogue as *75e Livre pour flute et basse de viole*. One can assume that it consisted of six trio sonatas for transverse flute, viola da gamba and basso continuo. Reference to the second set, namely the [VI] *Sonates en Trio pour tous les Instruments & principalement pour une Vièle, ou Musette, avec un Violon, et la Basse* Op. 96 (1741), is to be found in Nicolas Selhof’s *Catalogue d’une très belle bibliothèque ainsi qu’une collection de toutes sortes d’instruments...* (The Hague 1759/R), 138. Somewhat curiously, catalogues of Boismortier’s compositions describe the same collection as being *Pour une Fl. et un Violon avec la Basse*. Mention should also be made of Op. 86; described in catalogues of Boismortier’s works simply as *Six Trio*, it was very likely yet another set of trio sonatas. No details exist as to the scoring.

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

scoring (his chamber works featuring 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', and the majority of his trio and 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, &c.*, Op. 3, 1713) and Jacques-Cristophe Naudot (*Sonates en Trio pour 2 Flûtes-Traverfières 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, Siciliana or giga.⁶ Typical French forms such as the branle, the rigaudon and the entrée are conspicuously absent.⁷
- Following the example set by various Italians — most notably Corelli in his 'sonate da chiesa' Opp. 1 and 3, Albinoni in his 'sonate da chiesa' Op. 1, and Vivaldi in his 'sonate da camera' Op. 1 — Boismortier employs the label 'organo' for the figured bass part in his sets of 'Italian' trio sonatas.⁸ However, unlike other composers (for example, Corelli in his 'sonate da chiesa', Couperin in his trio sonatas, and Dandrieu in most of his Op. 1 sonatas), Boismortier supplies his continuo with a single, figured bass line, and provides no independent melodic bass part.
- Boismortier generally alternates works in minor tonalities with ones in major tonalities, a practice frequently espoused by the Italians in their sets of sonatas and concertos, and traceable to Corelli's Op. 1, if not earlier.⁹
- 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

⁵ An isolated (probably unintentionally overlooked) 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 The *V Sonates en Trio per un Defbus & deux Bafes; suivies d'un Concerto a Cinq Parties* Op. 37, on the other hand, represent something of a novelty in that each contains three movements.

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 This label was a somewhat generic term for basso continuo, and did not necessarily imply realisation of the figured bass on an organ; Boismortier reserves it for his ensemble works in the 'Italian' style. Sebastien de Brossard, in his *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris, Christophe Ballard, 1703), states that "Les Italiens se servent ordinairement du mot Organo pour marquer la Basse-Continuë chiffrée".

⁹ 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.

conceived for particular instruments and is differently scored from the others;¹⁰ 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),¹¹ for two oboes and continuo (*Six Sonates en Trio pour deux Haubois, 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 Defsus et deux Basses* [...], Op. 37, 1732).¹²

The fact that Boismortier intentionally wrote his Opp. 18, 28, 37, 41, 75, 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' compositions 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 jouer 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, but that the convention had become, by the 1730s, much more arbitrary when performing Italian sonatas and concertos, particularly those movements in \mathbf{C} , \mathbf{C} or 2/4 metre not based upon dance forms.¹³

The relatively sparse ornamentation indicated by Boismortier in his 'Italian' trio sonatas also suggests a close affinity with Italian performance practice, particularly when compared with the meticulous ornamentation stipulated by Couperin in his own trio sonatas; in French baroque music ornaments were an intrinsic part of the melody and for this reason were notated, whereas Italian composers rarely specified their *abbellimenti*, preferring to leave the elaboration of melodic material to the discretion of the performer. In point of fact, however, no significant difference in the manner of indication and the frequency of *agrément*s exists between Boismortier's 'French' and 'Italian' trio sonatas. In the former works, Boismortier prescribes comparatively few ornaments: the *tremblement appuyé* (a prepared trill with appoggiatura, designated by the symbol +) at cadences (and occasionally elsewhere), the *tremblement subit* (short trill, designated by the symbol \rightsquigarrow) and the *coulé* (passing appoggiatura). In the 'Italian' trio sonatas, the + symbol is used both for prepared and unprepared trills, while the *coulé*, being a typically French ornament, is adopted somewhat sparingly.¹⁴

Like all of Boismortier's printed editions, his 'sonates en trio' were self-published in association with the Parisian firm of François Boivin (Opp. 4, 7, 12 and 18) and, from October 1728, also with that of Jean-Pantaléon Le Clerc (Opp. 28, 37, 41, 75, 78, and 96).¹⁵ The music (parts only) was engraved at the composer's own expense, and since

¹⁰ See note 4.

¹¹ It is true that Boismortier's Op. 18 was preceded by Dandrieu's *Livre de Sonates en Trio* Op. 1 (1705), but Sonatas I-III 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.

¹² Rather than stipulating particular treble and bass instruments on the individual parts of the Op. 37 trio sonatas, Boismortier offers three specific, alternative scorings for these works on the title page — oboe, bassoon and continuo; violin, cello and continuo; or transverse flute, viola da gamba and continuo. The figured bass part is labelled 'organo'.

¹³ Michel Corrette, *Methode pour apprendre aisément à jouer de la flute traversiere* (Paris 1735), 4–6.

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

¹⁵ After Boivin's death in November 1733, the family business was taken over by his widow, Elisabeth Catherine, née Ballard. All music issued by the firm from 1734 onwards bears the appellation 'la Veuve Boivin' or 'Madame Boivin' etc. It is at times (erroneously) stated that the Le Clerc whose name appears on editions of Boismortier's music was Charles-Nicolas. In actual fact Charles-Nicolas began publishing music only in March 1736 after being granted a royal privilege, and his business was

the businesses of Boivin and Le Clerc acted merely as commission agents, the points of sale indicated on the various title pages accordingly include Boismortier's home address, which changed several times throughout the course of his career. The engraver for Opp. 4, 7, 12, 18, 28, 37, 41 and probably 75 was a certain Marin, while Opp. 78 and 96 were in all likelihood engraved by 'le S^r. Hue'.¹⁶

Two notational 'peculiarities' in the original editions of Boismortier's compositions should be pointed out. Firstly, works in C minor, G minor and D minor usually 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' (§) 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.¹⁷ 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 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 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 ground breaking: the aforementioned *VI Concertos pour 5 Flûtes-Traversières 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-Traversière 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

located in rue Saint Honoré. His older brother Jean-Pantaléon was not, strictly speaking, a publisher but a music commission agent with premises in rue du Roule à la Croix d'Or.

¹⁶ Although virtually nothing is known of Marin, who was the principal engraver of Boismortier's music until at least 1737, his name is also associated with leading French cartographer Guillaume Delisle (1675-1726) whose maps he engraved in the period 1723-1725. Marin's work is notable for its remarkable accuracy and elegant craftsmanship.

Louis-Hector Hue (1699-1768) was the engraver of volumes IV, V, VI, and VII of Boismortier's *Recueils d'airs à boire et sérieux* (Opp. 48, 54, 58 and 62 respectively), and he almost certainly engraved volumes I, II, III and VIII (Opp. 16, 36, 43 and 70 respectively), even if these do not bear his name. It can furthermore be assumed that he was the engraver of volumes IX-XIV (Opp. 76, 82, 89, 93, 95 and 98 respectively) of the same series, which are now lost. Besides the *Recueils d'airs*, Hue engraved *Les voyages de l'Amour*, Op. 60, the second book of the *Cantates françaises*, Op. 67 (although *Les Titans* had been published separately in 1726 in an edition engraved by Marin), and the *Noels en concerto à 4 parties*, Op. 68.

No engraver's name appears on the title page of the Op. 78 trio sonatas, and the Opp. 75 and 96 works are now missing. Nevertheless, it would appear that from c.1738 onwards, Hue was entrusted with engraving Boismortier's new publications. (Apart from Marin and Hue, the only other engraver known to have prepared editions for Boismortier is François Du Plessy [fl. 1709-1740], who was responsible for the first book of the *Cantates françaises* ['Les 4 saisons'], Op. 5).

¹⁷ 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 Maître du Clavecin* [Paris 1753], 80).

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 six 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.¹⁸

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; the title page accordingly offers no alternative instrumentation (see Figure I). Not only does the range of the two upper parts frequently descend below d^1 , 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.¹⁹ 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

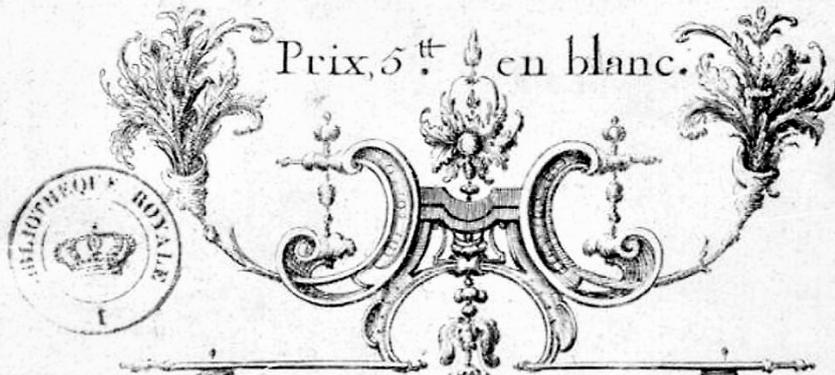
¹⁸ One can find the same effect in several works by Vivaldi: for example, the ending of the first movement of the *Concerto alla rustica*, RV 151.

¹⁹ 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 instrumental music written expressly for flute, recorder and/or oboe.

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Le S^r. Boivin m^e rue S^t. Honoré, à la regle d'or.
Et S^r. Le Clerc m^e rue du roule, à la Croix d'or.

Avec Privilège du Roy. 1727.

Maria Sculptoit.

Figure I – Title page Op. 18 (presumably a reprint from 1728 or later, since Le Clerc's address is given together with those of Boivin and Boismortier)

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 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^{re} 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 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 Haubois, 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.²⁰ In spite of the comprehensive title, Boismortier's intention as regards instrumentation is evident from several details:

- not only are the words *POUR DEUX HAUBOIS* 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 (see Figure II)
- the individual parts are designated simply 'oboe 1' and 'oboe 2'
- several catalogues of compositions by Boismortier that appear in printed editions of the composer's works (e.g., those featured in the *IV Balets de Village en Trio*, Op. 52, and *Daphnis et Chloé* Op. 102) describe the Op. 28 sonatas merely as 'Trio de Haubois'
- the uppermost limit of the two treble parts, in accordance with Boismortier's writing elsewhere for the oboe, never exceeds c³, whereas Boismortier's flute and violin parts always extend as far as d³, and occasionally beyond, the violin parts also extending below d¹.

It can furthermore be assumed that the composer envisaged a bassoon doubling the continuo line in these sonatas; since the time of Lully, it had been customary in France for the bassoon to provide the bass accompaniment for a pair of oboes — the so-called *trio des haubois*.²¹

²⁰ Boismortier's Op 28 was probably preceded only by Part IV of Sebastian Bodinus' *Musicalischen Divertissements*, published by Joseph Friedrich Leopold in Augsburg, 1726. The Bodinus trio sonatas are, admittedly, scored for either two violins or two oboes and continuo, but while the individual parts are labelled 'Violino ò Oboe', the compass of the instruments employed and the absence of double and/or triple stopping seem to indicate that the oboe was the intended instrument.

²¹ 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".

VINGT-HUIT^{ième} ŒUVRE
de M^R. Boismortier.

Coutume

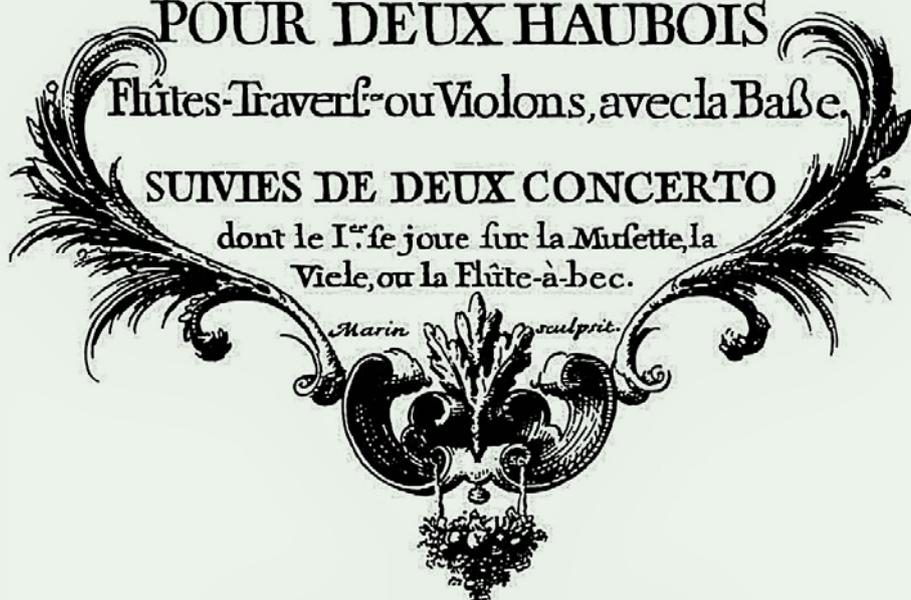
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avec Privilège du Roi. 1730.

Figure II – Title page Op. 28

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.²² These concertos are short, three-movement 'Sonaten auf Concertenart' in the style of Vivaldi's miniature chamber concertos. They employ the same scoring as the sonatas, although the Op. 28 title page states that "le premiere [concerto] se joue sur la Musette, la Viele, ou la Flûte à bec",²³ and Boismortier, unlike Vivaldi, did not exclude an eventual doubling of the parts when they were not given 'solos'.²⁴ 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 term 'organo' specified for the figured bass, 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. 18.²⁵ Besides the prevalence of titled dance movements, Op. 28 moreover includes 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 haubois* was at that time still associated with the *Musique de la Grande Ecurie* and the *12 Grands Haubois 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

²² Two other collections of sonatas by Boismortier (*Cinq Sonates pour le Violoncelle, Viole ou Baßon avec la Baße chiffrée suivies d'un Concerto pour l'un ou l'autre de ces Instrumens* Op. 26 [1729], and the *V Sonates en Trio pour un Deßsus et deux Baßes, suivez d'un Concerto a Cinq Parties, pour une Flute, un Violon, un Haubois, un Baßon, & la Baße* Op. 37 [1732]) also conclude with a concerto.

²³ The designation 'oboe 1' on the first of the two treble parts is in fact replaced by the Italian term 'zampogna' for Concerto I. It should be noted, however, that the French 'musette' and the Italian 'zampogna' are not the same instrument. The musette was a small sophisticated bagpipe, the air supply for which came from a small bellows strapped under the arm. It was particularly popular at the French court in the 17th and early 18th centuries; the bag was often made of rich silks featuring expensive and highly elaborate embroidery, and the chanters and drones were frequently made of ivory. The zampogna, on the other hand, was/is a rustic folk bagpipe of southern and central Italy, inflated by means of a blow pipe, and associated with itinerant shepherds.

²⁴ The title page of Boismortier's *Six Concerto pour les Flutes-traver.^{es}, Violons ou Haubois 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". Presumably this did not apply to the *VI Concerto pour 5 Flûtes-Traversieres ou autres Instrumens sans Baße* Op. 15, just as it would not have applied to the *Concerto a Cinq Parties* included in Op. 37, the *Six Concerto pour 2 Flutes-traversieres ou autres Instrumens sans Baße* Op. 38, or the (missing) *Six Concerto pour 3 Flûtes-traversieres* Op. 64.

²⁵ There are eleven titled dances in Op. 28 as compared to eight in Op. 18, whereas only two, and not all of the Op. 28 trio sonatas contain fugues or fugato movements.

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).²⁶



THE QUARTET SONATAS OP. 34

In addition to his trio sonatas, Boismortier also composed two sets of quartet sonatas — known as the ‘sonata a quattro’ (Italy), ‘sonate en quatuor’ (France) and ‘quadro’ (Germany). Sonatas in four parts were not common in the late baroque period, and a scant number were actually published. Italian composers produced very few such works in the first decades of the eighteenth century; these appear to be limited to a handful of compositions collectively by Alessandro Scarlatti, Gian Carlo Cailò and Vivaldi.²⁷ In France, Boismortier’s quartet sonatas were probably preceded only by the ‘sonates en quatuor’ of Louis Antoine Dornel, just one of which now survives.²⁸ In Germany, however, a small number of composers cultivated the ‘quadro’ with zeal, in the process experimenting with various instrumental combinations. Frequently, but not invariably, the third of the three parts above the figured bass line was assigned to another bass instrument (violoncello, viola da gamba, bassoon or violone), which was largely independent of the main bass part. Those composers of ‘quadri’ associated with the Dresden Hofkapelle (including Zelenka, Heinichen, Hasse, Lotti and Califano) tended to favour the combination of two oboes, bassoon and continuo, while other composers, including Fasch, Graupner, Stulyck, Stölzel, Bodinus, Quantz and Molter devised more original instrumental groupings.

Without doubt, the most important composer of the ‘quadro’ was Telemann. His best-known examples were those that appeared in print, but others circulated in manuscript copies for many years. In Telemann’s hands, the ‘quadro’ was redefined—it was no longer a ‘sonata’ as such, but a heterogeneously-scored quartet that could also take the form of a chamber concerto (‘Sonaten auf Concertenart’) or even a suite, and the number of movements ranged from three to seven accordingly.

Compositions by Telemann undoubtedly provided the inspiration for Boismortier’s *VI Sonates de Chambre en Quatuor, pour une Flûte traversiere, un Violon, un Violoncelle ou Virole, avec la Basse, dont la dernière se joue préférentiellement sur le Haubois, le Violon, le Basson et la Basse*, Op. 55 (1735). Unfortunately, no copy of this set is known to have survived, but the instrumentation of Sonatas I-V immediately brings to mind that of Telemann’s two sets of so-called ‘Paris Quartets’. The first of these sets, the [VI] *Quadri a violino, flauto traversiere, viola da gamba o violoncello, e fondamento: ripartiti in 2 concerti, 2 balletti, 2 suonate* (1730), was well known in France in the early 1730s, and it allegedly prompted local virtuosi Michel Blavet (flute), Jean-Pierre Guignon (violin) and Jean-Baptiste Forqueray (viola da gamba) to invite Telemann to Paris. In October 1737, the composer did in fact visit the French capital where he soon thereafter published a second set of quartets, the *Nouveaux quatuors en six suites*, for the same instruments. Telemann’s innovative scoring evidently made an impression on Boismortier who, in 1735, would have had access only to the original Hamburg publication (or a handwritten copy) of the *Quadri*, since the unauthorised Parisian edition prepared by Charles-Nicolas Le Clerc did not appear until 1736, while the *Nouveaux*

²⁶ 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 the set. Boismortier, who ordinarily composed sets of only six works, 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 sonata in a minor key and concludes it with one in a major key (e.g., Opp. 18 and 41), whereas in other sets he begins with a sonata 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).

²⁷ While there was no dearth of ‘sonate a quattro’ by seventeenth-century Italian composers, including Giovanni Gabrieli, Marco Uccellini, Giovanni Battista Buonamente, Giuseppe Iacchini, Giovanni Battista Vitali, Biagio Marini, Giovanni Maria Bononcini, Giovanni Paolo Cima, Maurizio Cazzati and Giovanni Legrenzi, these works display innumerable structural differences, and cannot be regarded as constituting a precisely-defined genre; indeed, the term ‘sonata’ was then still being used with considerable flexibility.

²⁸ Dornel composed eleven four-part sonatas. His Op. 1, *Livre de Symphonies contenant six Suites en trio* (1709), concludes with a single ‘sonate en quatuor’, while his Op. 4 (1715) contains ten such works. The latter collection is unfortunately lost.

quatuors were published in 1738. Telemann's *Quadri* may have also served as models for structural and stylistic elements of Boismortier's Op. 55.

The *Six Sonates à quatre parties différentes et également travaillées* Op. 34, on the other hand, are almost certainly *sui generis*, representing yet another example of Boismortier's ingenuity in adapting existing genres to the demands of the amateur market while demonstrating his own inventiveness. They were published in early 1731, four years before the Op. 55 quartets, and so were presumably written before Boismortier had come into contact with Telemann's *Quadri*. Since their elaborate title suggests that Boismortier was marketing them as something of a novelty, it would follow that the composer was largely unfamiliar with the eleven 'sonates en quatuor' composed by Louis Antoine Dornel; these had been published back in 1709 and 1715, long before Boismortier's arrival in Paris. Even if Boismortier had come across Dornel's sonatas, it is doubtful that they served as models for his own quartet sonatas. Op. 34 more likely represents an extension of Boismortier's prior experiments in sonata composition, which had in turn been influenced by the works of Italian composers.

From a stylistic viewpoint, the Op. 34 sonatas do in fact exhibit several of the overtly Italian features that characterise Boismortier's other collections of sonatas (most notably the trio sonatas), including the familiar Corellian 'walking bass', sequential chains of suspensions, the employment of Italian clefs and terminology, and even the alternation of the works in minor tonalities with those in major tonalities. Be that as it may, the composer clearly wished to diversify his *Sonates à quatre parties* from his previous sets of sonatas in two and three parts. Op. 34 displays a rigid adherence to four, through-composed movements, with no combination of 'da chiesa' and 'da camera' elements, and therefore no dance movements in binary form; this is most atypical of Boismortier's sonatas. Furthermore, there is little variation in the external structure of the individual works. The second of the four movements, marked either 'presto' (Sonatas I, III, IV and V) or 'allegro' (Sonatas II and VI) is always the longest and most fully worked out. The brief third movement is either an 'adagio' (Sonatas I, III and V) or a 'largo' (Sonatas II, IV and VI), usually conceived harmonically rather than melodically and set in 3/2 or common time, while the final movement is a short 'allegro' (Sonatas I, II, III, V and VI) or 'presto' (Sonata IV). Only the tempos for the first movements are more diverse, ranging from 'adagio' (Sonatas I and VI) to 'andante' (Sonatas III and V) and even 'vivace' (Sonatas II and IV). Such structural rigidity was not part of the German 'quadro' tradition.

Even in their scoring, the Op. 34 sonatas are somewhat removed from German models. The 'quadro' was, ideally, written for four contrasting instruments — each treated idiomatically — while Boismortier's sonatas are scored for three identical, interchangeable 'concertante' instruments plus basso continuo.²⁹ French musical style of the day tended to favour a generic kind of writing that imposed no restrictions on the choice of instruments, a practice reflected in title pages offering a variety of performance options, and parts labelled simply '1^{ere} dessus', '2^d dessus', 'basse' etc. Boismortier, however, largely abandoned this convention with his 'Italian' works, and from 1727 onwards would stipulate particular instruments — these being his first or preferred choice — on the individual parts of his sonatas and concertos, even when an assortment of instruments was proposed on the title pages.³⁰ In the case of Op. 34, the title page prescribes '3 Flutes-trav.res, Violōs ou autres Instrumens avec la Basse' (a note in small print states that "Le I.^{er} Dessus peut se jouer sur la Flute à bec, en cas de besoin"), whereas the single parts are labelled Violino I, Violino II, Violino III and Organo (see Figure III). In writing these works, Boismortier probably had in mind the timbre of the string sonatas, sinfonias and concertos composed in Italy in the opening decades of the

²⁹ Johann Adolph Scheibe, in 1740, wrote that the sonata for three instruments and basso continuo (i.e., quadro) is "[...] generally better if one uses four different instruments. In particular, a flute, a violin, a viola da gamba, and a bass sound best together." (*Critischer Musikus*, "Vier und siebenzigstes Stück. Dienstags, den 20 Jenner, 1740," 679). One wonders if he may have been referring to Boismortier's Op.55 as well as to Telemann's quartets.

³⁰ Boismortier's 'Italian' sonatas for one instrument and continuo or for two instruments without continuo, however, were published in score form with unlabelled staves, the title pages alone specifying the instrumentation. When more than one instrument is given, the first of these represents the composer's original choice. For example, Opp. 26 and 50 both feature sonatas for the 'violoncelle, basson ou viole', but much of the writing for the upper part is impracticable on the bassoon on account of the double and triple (and at times quadruple) stopping, while the range never extends below C₁ thus ignoring the seventh string, tuned to A₁, which was frequently found on the viola da gamba in France at that time (and which Boismortier calls for in his *Sonates a Deux Violes*, Op. 10). Similarly, the *Six Sonates pour deux Bassons, Violoncelles ou Violes* Op. 40 were intended for the bassoon, as is apparent from the style of writing and the absence of two- and three-part chords.

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avec Privilège du Roi. 1731.

Marin sculpteur

Figure III – Title page Op. 34

century; his *Sonates à quatre parties* were clearly intended for violins and continuo, although the three treble parts can be performed on other instruments.

In accordance with the description given on the title page, all four parts of the Op. 34 sonatas are treated equally; there is a proportionate division of thematic material, and imitative writing predominates throughout. Indeed, the subjects of practically all of the movements are treated imitatively (even though there are no true four-part fugal expositions). In this regard, these sonatas satisfy most of the requisites listed by Quantz in 1752 for the composition of a successful ‘quadro’, including “subjects that are appropriate for treatment in four parts; good, harmonious melody; short and correct imitations; a fundamental part with a true bass quality; ideas that can be exchanged with one another so that the composer can build both above and below them, and middle parts that are ‘passable’ and not unpleasing”.³¹ Besides revealing Boismortier’s skill as a contrapuntist, the sonatas display a wealth of melodic material and an interesting harmonic vocabulary that features an abundance of seventh and ninth chords. Sonatas II and V are particularly fine works; the second movement of the former is a joyous ‘allegro’ that juxtaposes its subject with descending semiquaver runs, while the final ‘allegro’ of the same sonata must rank as one of the shortest, through-composed sonata movements ever composed, being just 44 bars in length and lasting a mere 45 seconds. Sonata V is notable for the angular melody and chromaticism of its second movement, along with the syncopated subject of the final ‘allegro’.



THE TRIO SONATAS FROM OP. 37

Of all Boismortier’s sets of Italian ‘ensemble sonatas’, the *V Sonates en Trio per un Deßus & deux Baßes; suivies d’un Concerto a Cinq Parties* Op. 37, which was composed and published in early 1732, is without doubt the most original, in terms of both its structure and its organisation. As mentioned previously, the Op. 37 works were the first ‘Italian’ trio sonatas by a Frenchman to be scored for a treble instrument, a bass instrument and basso continuo.

Although the title of Op. 37 is vague as regards instrumentation, the part for the treble instrument (dessus) is labelled ‘Oboe, Violino o Flauto’, and a note on the title page specifies three alternative scorings for the sonatas — oboe, bassoon and continuo; violin, cello and continuo; or transverse flute, viola da gamba and continuo.³² It therefore follows that the first of the two bass parts (labelled simply ‘basso I’) is intended for the bassoon, the cello or the viola da gamba, depending on the instrument chosen for the treble voice. As with all of Boismortier’s ‘Italian’ trio sonatas, the figured bass part is marked ‘organo’. Alternative instrumental combinations can of course be envisaged for these works, which explains why they are more frequently performed and better known than Boismortier’s other trio sonatas.

The main innovation of Op. 37 regards the number and type of its movements. Boismortier has broken away from the Corellian prototype, and each trio sonata contains three movements, generally through-composed, in the fast-slow-fast scheme of the north Italian solo concerto.³³ This scheme was rarely adopted for trio sonatas in the 1720s

³¹ J. J. Quantz, *Essai d’une methode pour apprendre à jouer de la Flute Traversiere* (Berlin, 1752), 305

³² Boismortier would once again specify two of these particular instrumental combinations for future trio sonatas. As mentioned previously, the work that concludes his Op. 50 is scored for violin, cello and continuo, while Op. 75 (now lost) was scored for transverse flute, viola da gamba and continuo.

³³ The only movements that are not through-composed are the final ‘allegros’ of Sonatas Nos. 4 and 5 respectively; the former is in binary form, while the latter has a ‘Da Capo’ repeat. As mentioned above, Boismortier had already partially abandoned the Corellian model in his *Six Sonates à quatre parties différentes et également travaillées* Op. 34 (1731), but while those works feature through-composed movements, they nonetheless maintain a four-movement scheme.

and 1730s,³⁴ and even Boismortier's use of it can be regarded as experimental given that his subsequent sets of trio sonatas would see a return to four or more movements derived from the 'sonata da chiesa' and the 'sonata da camera'.

One is tempted to seek out compositions that may have served as models for the movement scheme of Op. 37, since it is possible that the Boismortier had come into contact with trios, if not actual trio sonatas, featuring three movements. Possible contenders include the six trio sonatas for flute, violin and continuo that constitute Part II of Sebastian Bodinus' *Musicalischen Divertissements*, published in 1726, and, even more plausibly, the *III Trietti Metodichi e III Scherzi* by Telemann, which had presumably appeared in Paris not long after their publication in 1731 before resurfacing in a 'Nouvelle Édition' prepared by Charles-Nicolas Le Clerc around 1735.

It is more probable, however, that Op. 37 simply represents a particular phase of Boismortier's experimentation with instrumental forms and genres. Just as several Italian and German composers, most notably Vivaldi and Telemann, were producing works that were essentially 'Sonaten auf Concertenart', so too was Boismortier breaking down the distinction between the [trio] sonata and the concerto. His three collections of *Six concertos pour les Flûtes-Traversières, Violons ou Haubois avec la Basse*, Opp. 21, 24 and 30 respectively, are basically intended for two treble instruments and continuo; the illusion of full 'tutti' passages and 'solo' episodes is achieved by means of an optional 'ripieno' instrument that doubles the first treble instrument when indicated to do so ('solo' and 'tutti' markings appear in the parts). Performed without the 'ripieno' part (the Op. 21 title page states that "on peut les jouer en Trio en obmettant le ripieno"), these concertos are fundamentally trios in three movements which, notwithstanding their greater technical demands and the fact that they are scored for two treble instruments and continuo rather than a treble and bass instrument with continuo, are predecessors, as it were, to the five Op. 37 trio sonatas.³⁵

Perhaps in an attempt to highlight the structural affinity between his three-movement trio sonatas and the concerto, Boismortier concludes Op. 37 with a 'concerto a 5' scored for virtually all of the instruments that are stipulated on the title page and the instrumental parts of the sonatas — transverse flute, oboe, violin and bassoon, plus harpsichord/organ and cello/viola da gamba for the continuo. In this sense, the concerto is not so much an appendix to the trio sonatas in the manner of the two concertos that were published together with Op. 28, but rather the culminating work of the set (hence the irregular number of sonatas).³⁶

The label "Concerto a Cinq Parties pour une Flute, un Violon, un Haubois, un Baßon & la Basse" on the Op. 37 title page has inadvertently created confusion regarding the type of flute intended by the composer for the concerto; the word 'traversière' is missing, whereas Boismortier's other 'Italian' works for the transverse flute all refer to the instrument as 'flute traversière' on their title pages, and 'flauto' on the individual parts.³⁷ Close examination of the Op. 37 title page, however, suggests that most of written text, aside from the opus number, the composer's name, and the title of the work, was necessarily compressed so as to fit within and around Marin's elaborate design (see Figure IV). Not only has the word 'traversière' been omitted from the description of the solo instruments for which the concerto is written, but the words 'traversière' and 'Basse' found in the paragraph that stipulates the possible

³⁴ The best-known examples are 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.

³⁵ Paradoxically, the title page for the Op. 30 concertos, which feature the same scoring as the Opp. 21 and 24 concertos, states that all the instrumental parts can be doubled, except for those sections marked 'solo'. See note 24.

³⁶ Boismortier's Op. 26, *Cinq Sonates pour le Violoncelle, Viole ou Baßon avec la Basse chiffrée suivies d'un Concerto pour l'un ou l'autre de ces Instrumens* (1729) similarly features five sonatas and a concerto. Also in this case, the concerto takes the place of the expected sixth sonata in the set, but in his Op. 26 the composer places emphasis on the solo instrument rather than on compositional genres.

³⁷ See note 40.

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Le S^r BOIVIN m^d rue Saint Honoré, à la règle d'or.

LE S^r LE CLERC, m^d rue du roule, à la Croix d'or.

avec Privilège du Roi. 1732.

Figure IV – Title page Op. 37

scorings for the five trio sonatas have been abbreviated to ‘travers.^{re}’ and ‘Ba.^s’ respectively.³⁸ It is also significant that with the exception of Boismortier’s now missing Op. 56, *VIII Sonates pour Flutes a Bec, ou Flutes Traversieres, dont le 6 premieres font a 2 parties egales, & les 2 fuivantes a Dessus & Basse*, the composer never stipulates the recorder as the first choice of instrument in his ‘Italian’ chamber compositions, and only twice does he entrust it with a solo part (albeit as an alternative to the musette) in his concertos (namely Op. 21, Concerto No. 3 and Op. 28, Concerto No. 1).

As in his earlier sets of trio sonatas, Boismortier basically adopts major-minor pairing for the Op. 37 works, and the ‘concerto a 5’ is included in this tonal organisation. However, Sonata V is unexpectedly in a minor key rather than a major one. Thus Sonata I is in G major, Sonata II in E minor, Sonata III in D major, Sonata IV in G minor, Sonata V in A minor and the concerto in E minor.



THE TRIO SONATAS OP. 41

Following on from Op. 37, Boismortier once again combined two dissimilar instruments in his Op. 41, *VI Sonates en Trio pour une Flûte traversiere et un Violon avec la Basse*, which was also published in 1732.³⁹ The title page plainly states that “Ces Sonates se peuvent jouer egalment sur deux Flûtes-traversieres, ou sur deux Violons et la Basse” (see Figure V), 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.⁴⁰

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 were virtually all 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

³⁸ In all likelihood, Marin prepared his designs for Boismortier’s title pages once the music had been engraved, but before the composer had decided on the exact wording and format of the title and/or provided any additional information. Various title pages, including those of Opp. 11, 17, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 30, 34, 35, 41 59 and 66, suggest that the engraver was often obliged to abbreviate instrument names, substitute numerals for ordinal numbers written as words, and take other measures in order to accommodate the written text into his designs.

³⁹ Opp. 36-42 were all published that same year, in addition to two collections of works without opus number (*Recueil de menuets avec la basse* and *Diverses pieces* for 2 horns, trumpets, flutes or oboes); Boismortier’s *Troisieme recueil d’air a chanter* Op. 43, now lost, dates from either the very end of 1732 or from early 1733.

⁴⁰ On the separate parts of his ‘Italian’ compositions, Boismortier always refers to the transverse flute as ‘flauto’; he was evidently 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’, ‘traversa’ 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 [...]’
(*Methodes pour apprendre aisément à jouer de la flute traversiere*. [Paris 1735], 7).

This origin of this misunderstanding can probably be traced back to the *Dictionnaire* of Sebastien de Brossard (*op. cit.*). 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 traversiere et un Violon par accords, sans Basse*, Op. 51, can one find particularly idiomatic writing for the violin.

QUARANTE ET UN.^{ème}

ŒUVRE
de M^r. Boismortier,
Contrebande

VI SONATES EN TRIO

Pour une Flûte-traversiere,
et un Violon avec la Basse.



prix, 5^{tt} en blanc.

*Ces Sonates
se peuvent jouer
également sur deux
Flûtes-traversieres,
ou sur deux Violons,
et la Basse.*



A PARIS, CHEZ
L'AUTEUR, rue des Sables Saint
Germain l'Auxerois, au coin de la
rue du roule, au Chasseur.

LE S^r BOIVIN m^d rue Saint Honoré à la règle d'or.
& LE S^r LECLERC m^d rue du roule, à la Croix d'or.

Avec Privilège du Roi.

1732.

Martin, sculp.

Figure V – Title page Op. 41

print.⁴¹ It would appear that Boivin and Le Clerc were also especially interested in promoting works for this particular scoring. In the same period (i.e., 1731-33), they conjointly issued an anonymous, unauthorised edition of six 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 continuo⁴²). The title page of the Parisian edition describes the Telemann works as *Six Sonates en Trio dans le gout [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’, distributed by the same commission agents 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 more German than Italian.⁴³ Boismortier’s Op. 41 sonatas are in fact stylistically closer to Telemann’s *Six Sonates Corellisantes* for two violins or flutes and continuo, which were self-published in Hamburg in 1735, and then reprinted by Charles-Nicolas Le Clerc in Paris in 1737.

While Op. 41 is markedly less ‘Corellian’ than the same composer’s Op. 18, it nonetheless does pay homage to the Italian master. 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 concertante writing for the two treble instruments. These particular movements are typical of the ‘Sonate auf Concertenart’, and would appear to have been inspired by the chamber concertos of Vivaldi, or Telemann’s *Quadri*; 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 four. 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.

⁴¹ 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*.

⁴² Georg Philipp Telemann, in Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg, 1740), 369.

⁴³ Steven Zohn, *Music for a Mixed Taste: Style; Genre, and Meaning in Telemann’s Instrumental Works* (New York, 2008), 266.

While Op. 41 perhaps lacks the freshness and invention of Op. 18, it nonetheless displays a refinement of the skills evident in Boismortier's previous three sets of 'Italian' trios, and can probably be regarded as the summit of the composer's trio sonata writing in the Italian style. 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 TRIO SONATAS OP. 78

In July 1738, Boismortier was granted a further *Privilège du Roi* that allowed him to continue publishing his own music.⁴⁴ Ironically, by that stage of his career he was making inroads into other areas of musical activity, the ultimate result of which was a reduction in the number of compositions he actually published. He had recently embarked upon the composition of large-scale works for the theatre, beginning with the four-act ballet *Les voyages de l'Amour* Op. 60 (produced at the Opéra in April 1736), and not long thereafter he was involved in the preparation of treatises dedicated to instrumental technique, namely the *Principes de flûte* (Op.90) and *Principes de pardessus* (Op. 92), both of which are unfortunately lost. Over the following years Boismortier would also be employed as the chef d'orchestre at the two largest Parisian fairs of the time, the Foire Saint-Laurent and the Foire Saint-Germain. And so although his creativity was undiminished, his engagement in various new pursuits meant that his prolificacy abated slightly. It also seems that fewer copies of his compositions were being printed; regrettably, almost 80 percent of his last 30 published works are now lost. To this group belong two, if not three collections of trio sonatas.⁴⁵

The last surviving set of Boismortier's 'Italian' trio sonatas is his Op. 78, which was published in late 1739 or early 1740. It represents his third set of trio sonatas for two transverse flutes and basso continuo. The title page describes the works not as 'sonates en trio', but simply as *Sonates pour deux Flûtes Traversieres ou autres Instrumens avec la Basse*;⁴⁶ like Boismortier's earlier sets of trio sonatas (with the exception of Opp. 4, 7 and 18), these works are deemed playable also on other instruments, nonetheless the separate parts are clearly labelled 'Flauto I', 'Flauto II' and 'Organo' (see Figure VI). Op. 78 contains only four sonatas instead of the customary six found in most of the other collections,⁴⁷ and all four sonatas have but four movements. Such economy does not necessarily indicate a falling-off of interest in the trio sonata on the part of Boismortier, but it is curious that this set is not more substantial, particularly given the composer's predilection for the flute.

Notwithstanding the previous sets of trio sonatas for two flutes and continuo, Opp. 4 and 12, had been composed more than a decade earlier, in terms of style and musical language the Op. 78 sonatas are remarkably similar to their predecessors. The principal differences, as mentioned above, involve formal characteristics, namely the adoption of Italian terminology for instrument names, dynamics, dance titles and tempo indications, and use of the second-line G clef and the Italian time signatures 2/2 and 3/4. But the Op. 78 sonatas also make fewer technical demands of flautists than the earlier works. This is partly because the four sonatas are set in the most comfortable tonalities for

⁴⁴ This particular *Privilège du Roi*, probably Boismortier's third, was issued on 30 July 1738, and was of 12 years' duration; the first *privilège*, valid for 8 years, had been issued on 29 February 1732. It can be assumed that a 6-year *privilège* covered the interval from late 1732 to mid-1738, however, none of the composer's extant compositions dating from that period contain a copy of a second *privilège*.

⁴⁵ Namely Opp. 75, 86 and 96. See note 3.

⁴⁶ In catalogues of Boismortier's works, Op. 78 is described only as *Trio*.

⁴⁷ Throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was common for composers to write/publish instrumental works in collections of six (or multiples of six), and Boismortier generally followed this convention. In the case of the 'sonates en trio', Op. 37 contains five works (followed by a 'concerto' that constitutes the sixth work), and Op. 78 contains four, but Opp. 7, 12, 18, 28, 41 and the missing Op. 96 all contain six individual trio sonatas, and Op. 4 contains twelve. The missing Op. 75 presumably contained six.

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MUS D'ENS

SONATES

Pour deux Flûtes traversieres
ou autres Instrumens,

Avec la Basse;

PAR M^R. BOISMORTIER.

ŒUVRE LXXVIII^e



Se vend 3^{tes} en blanc

A. Poot 1740

A PARIS CHEZ L'AUTEUR,

Rue du jour, vis-à-vis le grand portail de S^t. Eustache,
au Cigne de la Croix.

M^r. BOIVIN m^{re} rue S^t. Honoré, à la regle d'or, et
M^r. LE CLERC m^{re} rue du roule, à la Croix d'or.

AVEC PRIVILEGE DU ROI.

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Figure VI – Title page Op. 78

the baroque transverse flute — D major (Sonatas I and IV), E minor (Sonata II) and G major (Sonata III), the same tonalities as those adopted in the Op. 41 trio sonatas — whereas Opp. 4 and 12 include works in an ampler range of keys, some of which present particular problems as regards fingering and intonation, for example C minor and E major. The major/minor alternation involving the first three sonatas of Op. 78 was undoubtedly intentional.

In comparison with Boismortier's other sets of 'Italian' trio sonatas (excluding Op. 37), Op. 78 features relatively few titled dance movements, and all of them, with one exception, are to be found in the same sonata; these are the 'allemanda' (Sonata III), the 'Sicigliana' (Sonata IV), the 'gavotta' (Sonata IV) and the 'minuetto' (Sonata IV).⁴⁸ However the set also includes movements that are 'unacknowledged' dances, namely two additional minuetti (in Sonatas I and III respectively) and a French rondeau (Sonata II).

Eleven of the sixteen individual movements of the sonatas are in binary form, the other five being through-composed. Of these five, only two are organised contrapuntally— the final movements (presto) of Sonatas I and III respectively — but both of them are particularly fine three-part fugues, and the most worked out of all such movements in Boismortier's 'Italian' trio sonatas. Other movements worthy of note are the beautiful 'allemanda' of Sonata III, and the untitled rondeau that concludes Sonata II; the two flute parts, which are mainly treated antiphonally in the A section, are both provided with written-out ornamentation in the final reprise.

The most unconventional (and the shortest) of the Op. 78 trio sonatas is undoubtedly the fourth. All of its movements are in binary form, three of them dances. The sonata opens uncharacteristically with a Siciliana followed by a gavotta.⁴⁹ The ensuing movement is an extremely brief (8 bars) andante which, unlike many of the third movements found in Boismortier's other sets of trio sonatas, was not conceived harmonically and does not pass through a variety of related keys, nor end on the dominant. Finally, the first of the two minuetti sees both flutes playing in unison throughout; while this scoring serves to highlight the harmony of the second minuet, the reprise of the first results in the sonata ending with what amounts to a single treble voice above the bass.

Boismortier's sets of trio sonatas up to and including Op. 41 had all been engraved by Marin, but Op. 78 is probably the work of Louis-Hector Hue; the cover page is much more austere and the actual music notation slightly less elegant, even if the volume displays the same level of precision and clarity.⁵⁰ One notable difference regards horizontal prolongation lines in the figured bass, which are completely absent in the Op. 78 sonatas, but rather profuse in the earlier trio sonata editions prepared by Marin. This variance is not attributable to the engravers themselves, but rather indicates a progressive change in practice by Boismortier, one already noticeable in his published works from 1732 onwards.



⁴⁸ The alternative spellings of 'Siciliana' (Sicigliana) and 'minuetto' (minoetto) are interesting, especially since Boismortier had already employed the standard Italian spellings in previous works; a 'Siciliana' is included in his Op. 44 No. 1, while 'minuetti' are found in Op. 19 No. 6, Op. 28 No. 4, Op. 29 No. 6 and Op. 41 No. 4. By the same token, the spelling 'Sicigliana' had previously been used in Op. 51 No. 1, and other 'minoetti' appear in Op. 26 No. 3, Op. 50 No. 3 and Op. 51 No. 6. The noun 'Sicigliana' was probably coined by Boismortier, as it appears in no other texts of that time. The variant 'minoetto', however, was also adopted by Michel Blavet in his Op. 3 No. 2, and it can be found in Lodovico Antonio Muratori, *Annali d'Italia dal principio dell'era volgare sino all'anno 500, Tomo I* (Milan, 1744), 168.

⁴⁹ In his Op. 91, *6 Sonates pour flûte et clavecin* (1742), Boismortier would once again open a work (Sonata No. 1) with a Siciliana (Sicilienne).

⁵⁰ See note 16. That Marin was still working as an engraver in 1740 is evident from the cover pages of Blavet's *Troisième Livre de Sonates* Op. 3 and Naudot's *Quinzième Oeuvre contenant Six Sonates en Trio* Op. 15. It is therefore possible that he also engraved Boismortier's missing 'sonates en trio' for flute, viola da gamba and basso continuo Op. 75 (c.1739), even if Hue would seem more likely to have done so.

With the exception of some of the Opp. 34 and 37 compositions, Boismortier's ensemble sonatas have been largely forgotten since their original publication. And yet this is symptomatic of the situation regarding most of his music; as mentioned above, the poor 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 alike. 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