

Luigi Boccherini

Minuetto



Bridget Mermikides arranges and transcribes an elegant and surprisingly familiar piece of music originally composed in 1775.

ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: A	✓ Slurs and ornaments
TEMPO: 40 bpm	✓ Classical repertoire
CD: TRACK 49	✓ Playing in 6ths and 3rds

IF THERE WAS ever one most widely recognised piece of classical music written by a lesser known composer, it might have to be the 3rd movement of Boccherini's String Quintet in E major, Op. 11, No. 5.

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) may not be well known to the general public but this short piece of music written in 1771 for string quintet (two cellos, one viola and two violins) seems to represent a popular conception of music from the classical era: elegant, cultured and ornamented. It has been used in countless films and TV shows as a ready symbol when an air of culture, sophistication and refinement is required. A very short list of many examples include Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) *The Lady Killers* (1955), *The Muppet Show* (1978), Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* (1980), Ferris Bueller's *Day Off* (1986), Ren & Stimpy (1995), *Family Guy* (2007), *Skins* (2008) and *Quartet* (2012). You might even recognise it in *This is Spinal Tap* (1984), where Nigel Tufnell plays it at the end of the tune *Heavy Duty* in a parody of heavy metal's classical pretensions.

The third of a five-movement work this one piece (variously referred to as simply Minuet,


Minuetto or The Celebrated Minuet) is often played in isolation and follows a standard structure from the classical era known as a minuet and trio. A minuet is a dance form of French origin in 3/4 time and you should aim to replicate its elegant lilting rhythm. The trio is essentially a short theme played at a faster tempo embedded in the middle of the structure, which aims to contrast and balance the theme of the minuet. The form here is very measured and balanced with its use of

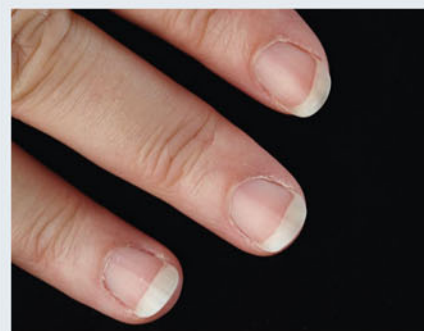
“I've kept the original key of A major and the arrangement as faithful as possible, given that we are going from 20 strings down to six, and 10 hands down to two.”

repeats; note that the DC al Fine (no repeats) instruction means that you start again from the beginning (DC= Da Capo = from the head or top) until the Fine ('end') symbol, but ignoring all repeats. So the overall form is essentially A1A1BA2BA2CCDDA1BA2.

I've kept the original key of A major which happens to be guitar friendly, and I've managed to keep the arrangement as faithful as possible given we're going from 20 strings to six, and 10 hands down to two!

In order to give this piece its required elegance and dance-like evenness of rhythm, you'll want to secure your technique so take your time and use the tab captions to

negotiate the trickier sections. Incidentally, this is an excellent piece for learning about classical harmony, so come back to it after reading the classical harmony lesson in this issue (p32) and look out for the diatonic chords, inversions, secondary dominants, half-cadences and perfect authentic cadences, they're all here! 



TECHNIQUE FOCUS

Use your nails

All professional classical guitarists pluck the strings using the fingernails. These need to be kept the right length and shaped correctly so that they create a good plucking action and extract the best possible tone. Every serious player keeps a variety of nails files, buffers and a big favourite is very fine wet or dry sanding paper. This is used to smooth off the edges of the nails and keep them buffed to a fine polish. The better the nails the better the tone!



TRACK RECORD A great introduction to Boccherini's music can be found on the *Best Of Boccherini* 2-CD set (Decca 1993). This includes the Minuet as well as some lovely music written for guitar and strings, although purists might prefer the recording of these on period instruments by Jakob Lindberg and the DBA (*Guitar Quintets* 1993 BIS). The non-purists will of course want to get hold of the (none more) *Black Album* by Spinal Tap (Universal 1984) to hear the Minuet as Boccherini surely intended it!

Luigi Boccherini's Minuet became a surprise 'big hit'



Luigi Boccherini
 Né à Lucques le 14 Janvier 1740, Mort à Madrid.

TERZETTI
 QUARTETTI
 QUINTETTI

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 49

[Bars 1-16] The Minuetto begins with ornamented semiquavers. These grace notes need to be played lightly and clearly - a good opportunity to examine your second to fourth finger hammer-on and pull-off! The first phrase includes some fretting hand fingering ideas to aid smoothness. The second phrase begins with the same embellishment; again aim to play it crisply and clearly. The final semiquaver of bar 4 should be played with a hinge barre at the 2nd fret to prepare for the next two bars, both of which

require a five-string barre - this is also needed on the last beat of bar 7 to support the trill. The next section starting upbeat into bar 18 is reasonably easy fingering-wise, but will sound really tidy if you mute the bass notes in the correct places; mute the A (with the thumb) from beat 3 of bar 17 after you play the low E on beat 1 of bar 18. Then mute the E after playing the A on beat 3 of bar 18 and so on. This may sound fiddly but without it you get both the A and E bass notes ringing at the same time and that bugs me!

♩ = 72 approx

E7

A

B7

E

A

B7

E

Am

E7

Am

E7

Am

E7

A

rit

a tempo

21. 34. 108

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 49

[Bar 19 to end] On bar 28 use a four-string barre at the 2nd fret for the first two beats, getting your fretting hand nicely in second position for the D chord on beat 2. Then come back to first position with the second finger for the trill to end the section.

[Bar 43] The Trio starts suddenly and is played at a faster tempo – follow the fretting hand fingering on the 6ths to keep it neat and play the semiquavers nice and lightly. Bar 49 is played in fourth position to help prepare for the

fingering in the following bar. There are repeats on every section of this piece so work on some contrasting tone colours and dynamics to keep it musical and interesting. In bar 76 at the end of the trio you need a full barre on beats 1 and 2 (second then third position) then on beat 3 I use a hinge barre for a half beat before sliding the second finger back to the C# and then back up to the D. Now play the Minuetto again but without repeats and don't forget to revert back to the original slower tempo!

24, 37, 111

27, 40, 114

TRIO
♩ = 92 approx

44, 53

47, 56

50, 59

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 49

62, 79

66, 83

69, 86

72, 89

75, 92