

## Boccherini, *Quartet Opus 39 No. 1*

Luigi Rodolfo Boccherini (1743 - 1805) is the most modern of the composers on today's program. He was born a few years later than the rest and was the only one to live into the 19th century, but he was also a forward-looking musician and an innovator, a cellist who brought a new independence and virtuosity to the ensemble parts for his instrument, and the first musician to present string quartet concerts. Though Haydn is often credited with writing the first string quartets, it was actually Boccherini who wrote for string quartet before anyone else did!

He had a successful early career, with a start playing in the Imperial Theatre Orchestra in Vienna with his father, and ending up in a very comfortable position under royal patronage in Spain. Boccherini may have suffered from a typical modern musician's lack of patience with amateurs and resistance to authority; he lost his position in the Spanish court with a passive/aggressive response when the King recommended he remove a section of one of his compositions - instead, Boccherini doubled that section.

One of Boccherini's biographers, Elisabeth Le Guin, described his music rather unflatteringly as having, "an astonishing repetitiveness, an affection for extended passages with fascinating textures but virtually no melodic line, an obsession with soft dynamics, a unique ear for sonority, and an unusually rich palette of introverted and mournful affects." Today the Strathcona String Quartet performs Boccherini's *Quartet Opus 39 No. 1*, a four movement exciting master work and the peak of this program, suffering from none of those defects!

Program Notes by Ken Read

## STRATHCONA STRING QUARTET

*The Strathcona String Quartet is Edmonton's most outstanding and versatile professional chamber music ensemble. Performing together since 1987, they appear weekly at diverse venues from the major concert and recital stages of Alberta and beyond to playing for weddings, conventions, and garden parties. They have released two highly praised CDs which are frequently heard on radio stations across North America including CBC radio and Edmonton's own CKUA and CJSR.*



*The Strathcona String Quartet is well known for their numerous world premiere performances, the Strathcona String Quartet has been an Edmonton cultural treasure since 1987. They have released two highly praised CDs which are frequently heard on radio stations across North America including CBC radio and Edmonton's own CKUA and CJSR. In addition to performing new works, they enjoy performing Classical and Romantic repertoire as well as historically informed early music on period instruments.*

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 8:00PM

# THE ITALIANS

## STRATHCONA STRING QUARTET

TESSARINI, LOCATELLI, BOCCHERINI, GEMINIANI, VIVALDI

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF EDMONTON - 10804 - 119 ST, EDMONTON

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## PROGRAM

**Carlo Tessarini** (1690 – 1766)

La Stravaganza

Overtur

*Largo Sempre Piano*

*Presto*

**Pietro Antonio Locatelli** (1695-1764)

12 Concerti grossi à 4 e à 5

Concerto Grosso No 2 in C minor

*Adagio*

*Allegro*

*Largo*

*Allegro*

*Allegro*

**Antonio Lucio Vivaldi** (1678 - 1741)

Concerto Grosso XI in d minor, L'estro Armonico op 3 #11  
for two violins, cello and strings, RV 565

*Allegro - Adagio e spiccato - Allegro*

*Largo e spiccato*

*Allegro*

**Francesco Geminiani** (1690-1766)

Concerto Grosso

*La Follia*

I N T E R M I S S I O N

**Luigi Rodolfo Boccherini** (1743 - 1805)

String Quartet Opus 39 No. 1

*Allegro con moto*

*Minuetto*

*Adagio*

*Finale: Allegro giusto*

## PROGRAM NOTES

Tessarini, *Overtur*

Carlo Tessarini (1690 - 1766) was a famous and prolific composer, violinist, and teacher in his day but somehow managed to slip through the cracks of history. We have very little historical record of him and much of what we do know is contextual conjecture. We have his music - lots of it. He wrote at least 70 symphonies, 90 concertos, and 140 chamber pieces. Since he was born in Italy it is suspected that he studied with Corelli and the style of his writing suggests perhaps also Vivaldi, but there is almost no direct record of him. We know he was well-known at the time - his treatise on the violin was published in three languages - and we can follow his concertizing from Paris to London from concert advertising and payment registers. Scholars believe he died in the Netherlands but there is no record of it.

The Strathcona String Quartet is playing Tessarini's Overtur, a short, bright piece in three movements.

Locatelli, *Concerto Grosso No. 2 in C Minor*

Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695 - 1764) was born in Bergamo and studied violin and played in a church orchestra there until he moved to Rome at the tender age of 16. In Rome he may have been one of Corelli's last students (Corelli died in 1713).

After a short career performing around Europe as a virtuoso violinist and composer, he settled in Amsterdam where he seems to have mastered the art of making a living as a musician. He continued to write and publish beautiful pieces, including study pieces which inspired later virtuosos, most notably Paganini. He sold violin strings from his home. And he set up concerts, primarily for patrons - no professional musicians allowed who might steal his virtuoso violin secrets! It seemed to work for him: the record shows he made more money than any other Amsterdam musician of his day.

Vivaldi, *Concerto Grosso XI in d minor, L'estro Armonico op 3 #11 for two violins, cello and strings, RV 565*

Antonio Lucio Vivaldi (1678 - 1741) is easily the most famous and oft-performed of the Italian Baroque composers. It is no small miracle that the vitality and freshness of Vivaldi's music not only survives the time that has passed since he wrote it, but also its frequent performance. This concerto is one of the L'Estro Armonico (Harmonic Inspiration), Op. 3 which is a collection of twelve concertos for one, two and four violins written by Vivaldi in 1711. These concerti are often called concerti grossi due to their use of a concertino-style ensemble (solo cello is often used).

This Concerto is one of his best, with characteristic high rhythmic energy and startling originality.

Geminiani, *La Follia*

Joining the long list of fantastic artists you may have never heard of, Francesco Saverio Geminiani (1687 - 1762) studied with Scarlatti and Corelli and distinguished himself as a violin teacher (teaching, among many others, Charles Avison whose music you heard the quartet perform last year, and writing *The Art of Playing the Violin*, still a valuable resource for early music aficionados and famously contradicting on many points Leopold Mozart's book on the same subject), a church musician (at the Cappella Palatina of Lucca), an orchestra leader (leading the opera orchestra at Naples), and as a virtuoso violinist and composer, performing his own violin concerti for George I with Handel at the keyboard. A genuine firebrand, his Italian students called him "Il Furibondo," the Madman. In his spare time, Geminiani wrote a compendium on composition that included over 2,000 examples of basso continuo patterns.

La Follia is a melodic and harmonic fragment that has fascinated composers for generations. More than 150 composers over three centuries have written pieces based on this odd little progression, and Geminiani's is one of the best.

