



*Stephen
Schultz*

Boismortier Concertos
for Five Flutes



Stephen Schultz, called “among the most flawless artists on the baroque flute” by the *San Jose Mercury News*, and “flute extraordinaire” by the *New Jersey Star-Ledger*, is solo and Principal flutist with the *Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra* and *Musica Angelica* and performs with other leading early music groups such as *Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra*, *Chatham Baroque*, and *American Bach Soloists*. Concert tours have taken him throughout Europe and North America with featured appearances at the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York, the Musikverein in Vienna, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Carnegie Hall, Royal Albert Hall in London, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Göttingen International Handel Festival, Library of Congress in Washington D.C., Tage Alter Musik Festival, Regensburg, Berkeley Early Music Festival, Monadnock Music, J. Paul Getty Museum Summer Series, San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival, San Jose Chamber Music Society, and the Nakamichi Early Music Festival.

A graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Holland, Schultz also holds several degrees from the California Institute of the Arts and the California State University of San Francisco. Currently he is an Associate Teaching Professor in Music History and Flute at Carnegie Mellon University and director of the Carnegie Mellon Baroque Orchestra. Schultz’s engaging teaching style has left its mark at California State University at Long Beach and Sacramento, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Holy Names College, the University of Southern California, and the University of California at Davis and Los

Angeles. Mr. Schultz is also a featured faculty member of the Jeanne Baxtresser International Flute Master Class at Carnegie Mellon University and at the International Baroque Institute at Longy School of Music.

In 1986, Mr. Schultz founded the original instrument ensemble, *American Baroque*. This unique group brings together some of America’s most accomplished and exciting baroque instrumentalists, with the purpose of defining a new, modern genre for historical instruments. The group’s adventurous programs combine 18th-century music with new works, composed for the group through collaborations and commissions from American composers. Collaborations with such artists and composers as Rudy Rucker, Jonathan Berger, Carl Stone, and the Common Sense Composers Collective yielded an unprecedented number of commissioned works written specifically for the group’s instruments. The ensemble remains the only U.S. chamber ensemble committed to performing both new music and 18th-century works on historical instruments, while continuing to explore the issues raised by both genres, old and new.

As solo, chamber, and orchestral player, Schultz appears on nearly fifty recordings for such labels as Dorian, Naxos, Harmonia Mundi USA, New Albion, Amon Ra, and Koch International Classics. Schultz has produced and edited forty CDs for his colleagues and has also performed and recorded with world music groups such as *D’CuCKOO* and *Haunted By Waters*, using his electronically processed Baroque flute to develop alternative sounds that are

unique to his instrument. In 2006, the Pittsburgh composer Nancy Galbraith wrote *Traverso Mistico* for Mr. Schultz. It is scored for electric Baroque flute, solo cello, and chamber orchestra and was given its world premiere at Carnegie Mellon University in April 2006.



Boismortier

Few could have anticipated the impact Joseph Bodin de Boismortier would have on Parisian musical life when he settled in the city around 1723. Having spent his childhood in Thionville before moving to Metz and Perpignan (where he held a non-musical administrative position), the composer took out a royal privilege to publish his works in September 1724. Most musicians who were granted such privileges brought out a trickle of publications over a few decades, but Boismortier issued an astonishing 102 opuses through the mid-1740s (seven more publications are lost or cannot be dated precisely). Profits from all this music allowed him to live comfortably without holding regular employment. Even in Paris, which rivaled London and Amsterdam as the capital of music publishing in early eighteenth-century Europe, such productivity was unheard of. It must have seemed, as Jean-Benjamin de la Borde wrote in his 1780 *Essai sur la musique ancienne et moderne* (Essay on ancient and modern music), that Boismortier’s “fertile pen” could “painlessly give birth to a new publication of music every month.”

Most of Boismortier’s opuses consist of sonatas, suites, concertos, cantatas, and fashionable “airs” in one to three parts, usually involving the most popular instruments in Paris: flute, oboe, violin, viola da gamba, and musette (a sort of domesticated bagpipe often featured in pastoral paintings by Jean-Antoine Watteau and other French artists of the period). The flute seems to have been his favorite, for more than half of the opuses specify it as a primary or optional instrument, and he published a treatise on flute playing (unfortunately lost). Boismortier also wrote several ballets, operas, and sacred vocal works, only some of which found their way into print.

Within this impressively large and varied mass of music, the Op. 15 VI *Concertos pour 5 flûtes-traversieres ou autres instrumens, sans basse* (1727) stand out as some of Boismortier’s most original compositions. Their unconventional scoring notwithstanding, they are the first concertos published by a native French composer. As such, they heralded the French fascination during the 1730s and 1740s with Antonio Vivaldi’s solo concertos. Native composers such as Jacques Aubert, Boismortier, Michel Corrette, Jean-Marie Leclair, Jacques-Christophe Naudot all tried their hand at putting a Gallic spin on the genre. But Boismortier’s Op. 15 concertos do not feature one or more soloists pitted against a larger ensemble; rather, they are “group” concertos in which each of the five flutes continually moves in and out of the spotlight.

Throughout the concertos, Boismortier meets the compositional challenge of writing for five like instruments within a two-octave range through

gracious melodic writing and pleasing shifts of musical texture. As noted on the collection's title page, "one may also play [the concertos] with a bass," meaning that the fifth flute could be doubled or replaced by continuo. To facilitate this optional scoring, Boismortier provided the lowest part with figured bass symbols (a harpsichord, cello, or other bass instrument would simply play the part two octaves lower than notated). In fact, the fifth flute already provides an accompanimental "bass" line, and is frequently reinforced by the fourth flute.

Although the scoring of Op. 15 was unprecedented, there was a modest tradition of French works scored for three treble instruments without bass: Antoine Dornel's *Sonates en trio* (1713) and *Concerts de simphonies* (1723) both contain one sonata for three "dessus" without continuo; Boismortier himself published six such works in his Op. 7 *Sonate en trio pour trois flûtes traversieres sans basse* (1725) and returned to the medium with his Op. 64 *Six concerto* (1737); and Georg Philipp Telemann's *Sonates en trio* (published at Paris around 1739) include three sonatas "for flutes, violins, and other instruments" without bass (TWV 40:150-52). Boismortier may have known the Op. 19 concertos for four recorders and continuo (Amsterdam, ca. 1713-15) by Johann Christian Schickhardt (ca. 1682-1762), a similarly prolific publisher of chamber music. Not unlike these works are three "concertos" for four to six treble instruments and continuo by Telemann (TWV 44:41-43) and the Op. 8 "concerts" for two recorders, two flutes (or oboes or violins), and continuo (Amsterdam, 1718) by Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667-1752).

No doubt in imitation of Italian concertos, Boismortier casts each of his works in three movements—either fast-slow-fast (Nos. 2, 3, and 5) or slow-fast-fast (Nos. 1, 4, and 6), the latter sequence being rather unusual among orchestral works. Fast movements allude to the concerto through a recurring ritornello that usually includes a passage in which the flutes, playing in unison, are meant to simulate a massed string sound. A clear-cut alternation of solo and tutti textures follows, with the solo passages typically involving groups of flutes treated as alternating blocks of sound. As in Vivaldi's concertos, ritornellos are constructed from contrasting phrases that may be quoted individually or collectively during the course of a movement.

That Boismortier knew the music of Vivaldi well is suggested by the finale to Concerto 1, where a sudden turn to the parallel minor key refers to a common effect in the Venetian's concertos. Notable for its richly varied ritornello is the finale to Concerto 4, one of the most expansive movements in the collection. Several other movements in which the ritornello is always presented complete and in the tonic key—the middle movements of Concertos 4 and 6, and the finale to Concerto 5—are reminiscent of the rondeau structures so common in French dances. Dances themselves are rare in the collection, though the finales to Concertos 2 and 6 are two-part gigas, a dance type found in numerous Italian concertos of the period.

More French in style are the slow movements, many of which adopt the rhythmic characteristics of the sarabande. In the first movement of Concerto

4, Boismortier withholds the full five-part texture until the midway point; most of the movement is actually in two or three parts. An almost minimalistic effect is created by the opening of Concerto 6, which references a type of Italian concerto movement featuring bare chords that outline a pungent harmonic progression. By contrast, the prelude-like character of the middle movement of Concerto 3 evokes the introductions to many French suites. Yet categorizing individual movements as Italian or French only obscures the larger significance of Boismortier's collection as a whole: that a foreign transplant (the concerto) could grow, and even flourish, in native soil.

– *Steven Zohn*