

Mark Shephard

“One man & his ’cello”

or “Will the real Boccherini please stand up”:
tying some loose ends at the NGV

One of the most intriguing portraits in the collection of the NGV is the anonymous eighteenth century painting of a cellist, traditionally identified as the composer Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805). For many years this identification was never properly verified but in 1992 a portrait of Boccherini by Jean-Étienne Liotard came to light in a private collection in Germany. This is said to have “definitively confirmed” that the NGV portrait is indeed the composer. However, information on the Liotard portrait has yet to be published and the reasons for its identification as a painting of Boccherini remain undisclosed. In fact, an examination of the NGV files pertaining to their portrait, files which contain some fascinating correspondence from the owner of the Liotard portrait, reveals that the identity of the sitters in both works remains largely a matter of conjecture. This paper will examine the two portraits and explore the artistic milieu in which Boccherini lived and worked, shedding some much needed light on the origins of both paintings.



Monday 10 April

6.45 pm

Room 148 Elisabeth Murdoch Building

All Welcome