

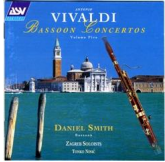
## Vivaldi – Bassoon Concertos Vol.5 (2004)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 30 October 2014 16:55 - Last Updated Thursday, 30 October 2014 22:11

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1. Bassoon Concerto in C major, RV 476: I. Allegro 2:42 2. Bassoon Concerto in C major, RV 476: II. Largo 2:31 3. Bassoon Concerto in C major, RV 476: III. Allegro molto 2:04 4. Bassoon Concerto in F major, RV 487: I. Allegro 2:44 5. Bassoon Concerto in F major, RV 487: II. Largo 3:34 6. Bassoon Concerto in F major, RV 487: III. Allegro 2:41 7. Bassoon Concerto in C major, RV 471: I. Allegro molto 4:03 8. Bassoon Concerto in C major, RV 471: II. Larghetto 2:39 9. Bassoon Concerto in C major, RV 471: III. Allegro 3:12 10. Bassoon Concerto in A minor, RV 498: I. Allegro 3:26 11. Bassoon Concerto in A minor, RV 498: II. Larghetto 3:43 12. Bassoon Concerto in A minor, RV 498: III. Allegro 2:42 13. Bassoon Concerto in C minor, RV 480: I. Allegro 3:15 14. Bassoon Concerto in C minor, RV 480: II. Andante quasi minuetto 1:50 15. Bassoon Concerto in C minor, RV 480: III. Allegro 3:13 16. Bassoon Concerto in B flat major, RV 503: I. Allegro non molto 3:45 17. Bassoon Concerto in B flat major, RV 503: II. Largo 2:56 18. Bassoon Concerto in B flat major, RV 503: III. Allegro 2:52 19. Bassoon Concerto in G major, RV 493: I. Allegro ma poco 2:45 20. Bassoon Concerto in G major, RV 493: II. Largo 2:40 21. Bassoon Concerto in G major, RV 493: III. Allegro 1:58 Daniel Smith – bassoon I Solisti di Zagreb Tonko Ninic - conductor

For anyone wishing recordings of all 37 completed bassoon concertos by the Red Priest, there is currently only one choice: Daniel Smith on five ASV CDs (552). While this is hardly a bad deal--Smith and his two conductors and orchestras present the works with great energy and dazzling virtuosity--there have always been nagging irritations. Smith is an amazing performer, but every concerto seems like an Olympic event; faster is better--faster and louder better still. If, in the process, he produced a hollow tone--made coarse when overblown, barking low notes here and there, occasional dicey intonation, intermittent fudged figurations where the tempo was set faster than the fingers could fly, it was all in the name of the race. He and the orchestra always got to the end, together, and by golly it was exciting. And yet--and yet--!As much as it seems like ungrateful nit-picking and as much as one is thrilled just to have all of these inventive works so well played, or played at all, in the end one feels that there should be something more than mere pyrotechnics, however breathtaking they might be.

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Enter the extraordinary Hungarian bassoonist Tamás Benkócs, principal of the superb Budapest Festival Orchestra. Here at last is the poetry, not the race. Here is elegance and wit and wistfulness and moments of repose to go along with the amazing technical virtuosity. Benkócs doesn't have us on the edge of our seats, wondering if he is going to make it through a passage; rather he tackles the sometimes-staggering technical challenges with deceptive ease. The tempos are generally a bit slower than are Smith's, but with that slight relaxation one starts hearing the extraordinary music instead of just the amazing rush of notes. The middle slow movements benefit the most--Benkócs plays them as if he were singing an aria--but the variety that he finds in the fast movements, not to mention the warm solid tone, impeccable intonation, seamlessly blended tenor and bass registers, and precise articulation of even the most demanding passages, is well worth a little loss in raw excitement. I like his playing as well as that of Klaus Thunemann on Philips, and that is high praise indeed. Béla Drahos and his excellent modern-instrument band provide sympathetic accompaniment: buoyant, transparent, restrained in use of vibrato, harpsichord dominated, but with attractive depth. I would have liked them a bit farther forward on the sound stage, but that is a minor quibble. Collectors who have a wider interest in this repertoire will want to sample some of the colorful period-instrument performances on Naïve 30379 and 30409, but there is still a great deal of vitality in these traditional modern-instrument performances, as well.

With this volume, Mr. Benkócs has finished five CDs and 31 concertos. Assumedly, he will complete the series in one more volume. Two other Fanfare critics have weighed in on the series; David L. Kirk warmly welcomed Volume 2 (8.555938) in 28:6; but in 30:2, Laura Rónai found Volume 3 (8.557556) too polite by half, and non-descript to boot. I certainly side with Mr. Kirk, but obviously opinions vary. The nice thing about Naxos recordings is that one can experiment for a relatively small investment. That's what I recommend. Then you can buy the other four, as I did. -- Fanfare Archive, Ronald E. Grames, May/June 2009

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