

Antonio Vivaldi – Concerti ‘Alla Rustica’ (Pinnock) [2008]

Written by bluesever

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01. *Concerto alla rustica, for strings & continuo in G major, RV 151* 02. *Double Concerto, for violin & oboe, strings & continuo in B flat major, RV 548* 03. *Concerto in tromba marina, for 2 violins, 2 recorders, 2 mandolins, 2 chalumeaux, 2 theorbos, cello, strings & continuo in C, RV 558* 04. *Double Violin Concerto, for 2 violins, strings & continuo in G major, RV 516* 05. *Oboe Concerto, for oboe, strings & continuo in A minor, RV 461* 06. *Double Mandolin Concerto, for 2 mandolins, strings & continuo in G major, RV 532* Elizabeth Wilcock – Violin Simon Standage – Violin David Reichenberg – Oboe Robin Jeffrey – Mandolin James Tyler – Mandolin The English Concert Trevor Pinnock - Director, Harpsichord

The French traveller who remarked that the orphaned girls at the Pieta in Venice could play the violin, recorder, organ, oboe, cello and bassoon evidently was not overstepping the bounds of strict veracity; for in this new release from The English Concert we have concertos requiring all of those instruments at one time or another, and many more besides. The most colourful work here in respect of instrumentation is the Concerto in C major, RV558, a performance of which took place at the Pieta in 1740. Well known and well loved by Vivaldi enthusiasts it has suffered more than most from indifferent performances on record. Part of the problem lies in the obscure nature of certain of the concertino instruments. Chalumeaux or, at any rate, players of them, were much harder to find before the renewed interest in period instruments; and we may, perhaps, be forgiven for wondering what exactly Vivaldi had in mind when he called for violins in tromba marina. Pairs of recorders, mandolins, theorbos and a cello comprise the remainder of the concertino.

The remaining five concertos in this album show off various aspects of Vivaldi's style. Three of them are works for two solo instruments with strings, of which the Concerto in G major for two violins, RV516, is the most impressive. This is only its third appearance on an LP, so far as I know, but collectors in the UK may remember it on a recital by the Virtuosi di Roma released by HMV during the mid-1950s. Simon Standage and Elizabeth Wilcock give a crisp account of the outer movements but it is the brief B minor Andante which allows us to hear more in the way of

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lyrical playing. The soloist in the Oboe Concerto in A minor, RV461, is David Reichenberg; his phrasing and shading of dynamics in the beautiful Larghetto is admirable though he sounds less comfortable at times in the opening movement which is a little too fast for me. His partner in the Oboe and Violin Concerto in B flat, RV548, is Simon Standage. It's a delightful work whose markedly pastoral flavour in the outer movements is pleasingly contrasted with an oboe cantilena and lightly arpeggiated violin accompaniment in the 'Arcadian' Largo.

The incisive playing of James Tyler and Robin Jeffrey (mandolins) makes for a lively performance of the Concerto in G major, RV532. Pinnock sensibly uses an organ rather than a harpsichord as keyboard continuo thus providing stronger contrast with the plucked strings of the solo instruments. Repeats of the slow movement—a slight piece—are not observed. The remaining work is the little Concerto alla rustica in G major, RV151. There are no solo parts here but, although predominantly a piece for ripieno strings, oboes (and on this recording a bassoon) appear in the finale. Pinnock and The English Concert treat it with a vigour which I found exciting. The little 'drone' figures in the finale are effectively highlighted and I welcome the brief solo violin ad libs in the Adagio.

To sum up, a well-balanced programme imaginatively presented, affectionately performed and very well recorded. Strongly recommended. -- Nicholas Anderson, Gramophone [9/1986]

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