

Antonio Vivaldi – Viola da Gamba In Concerto (Savall) [2003]

Written by bluesever

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Le Concert des Nations Manfredo Kraemer, Pablo Valetti - violons Bruno Cocset - violoncelle Imke David - viole de gambe Jordi Savall - viole de gambe & direction Concerto Con Violino Principale E Viola Da Gamba Obbligata, Archi E Continuo (La Maggiore RV 546) 8:26 1 *Allegro* 3:12 2 *Andante* 2:11 3 *Allegro* 3:03

Concerto Con 2 Violini E Viola Da Gamba Obbligati, Archi E Continuo (Re Minore RV 565) 8:46

4 *Allegro, Adagio E Spiccato* 1:19 5 *Allegro* 2:39 6 *Largo E Spiccato* 2:10 7 *Allegro* 2:34

"Concerto Funebre" – Con Hautbois Sordini E Salmoè, Violino Principale E Viole All'Inglese (Viola Da Gamba Soprano) (Si Bem. Maggiore RV 579) 7:44

8 *Largo* 1:39 9 *Allegro Poco Poco* 3:30 10 *Allegro* 2:35

Concerto "Il Proteo O Sia Il Mondo Al Rovescio" – Con Violino E Violoncello Obbligati, Archi E Continuo (Fa Maggiore RV 544) 9:40

11 *Allegro* 3:30 12 *Largo* 2:36 13 [*Allegro*] 3:28

Concerto Con 2 Violini E Viola Da Gamba Obbligati, Archi E Continuo (Sol Minore RV 578) 9:13

14 *Adagio E Spiccato* 3:51 15 *Larghetto* 2:49 16 [*Allegro*] 2:33

Concerto Con 4 Violini E Violoncello Obbligati, Archi E Continuo (Si Minore RV 580) 9:26

17 *Allegro* 3:33 18 *Largo* 0:59 19 *Larghetto (Adagio – Largo)* 1:20 20 *Allegro* 3:34

Concerto Con Molti Istromenti – 2 Flauti, Hautbois, Salmoè, Violino Principale, 2 "Violette All'Inglese", 2 Trombe, 2 Clavicembali, Archi E Continuo (Do Maggiore RV 555) 8:03

21 *Allegro* 3:26 22 *Largo E Spiccato* 1:22 23 *Allegro* 3:15

Manfreda Kraemer, Pablo Valetti – violin Bruno Cocset – cello Le Concert des Nations Jordi Savall – viola da gamba, conductor

Alia Vox's booklet notes make it clear that Jordi Savall's collection of Vivaldi's works featuring the viola da gamba (referred to variously in the scores as the viola or violoncello "all'Inglese") results in part from a new, revolutionary understanding of the gamba's role south of the Alps in the early 18th century. Contrary to the previously held view, according to Talbot, these instruments did appear in collections; in fact, Vivaldi's father probably kept one in his household. Antonio taught the instrument at the Pietà, taking advantage of a loan of viols from the widow of

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a collector—a loan coinciding with the composition of RV 546, RV 579, and RV 555, which specify the instrument by name. Savall has also included four other concertos, three drawn from Vivaldi's celebrated op. 3 (RV 565, RV 578, and RV 580) and "Il Proteo," RV 544, in these, substituting gamba for cello. As might be expected, Vivaldi's timbral imagination showcased the less frequently heard sonorities of the gamba with as stunning an effect as those of the salmoè or the tromba marina (the parts of which in RV 555 have, incidentally, been taken by actual trumpets). The violas appear in diverse combinations with the other solo instruments, varying from homophony, although with strongly contrasting tonal characteristics in RV 546 to full fugal partnership in RV 565. *Le Concert des Nations*, directed by Jordi Savall (who plays the bass viola da gamba in RV 546, RV 565, and RV 578 and the soprano I viola da gamba in RV 579 and RV 555), appears to be a small ensemble, with Manfredo Kraemer serving as its concertmaster and solo violinist; but it unleashes a maelstrom in the reverberant ambiance in the Collégiale du Château de Cardona, where Alia Vox recorded the concertos in September 2003; and the rich but clear recorded sound preserves the wide range of tone colors. (Of course, the reverberation makes musical sense of sharp staccato chords such as those in the transitional Adagio e spiccato in RV 565.) Whether the gamba's nasal twang will ingratiate itself with audiences accustomed to cello—even Baroque cello—in op. 3, the performances of those concertos evince so infectious an energy as to render timbral considerations almost secondary. Manfredo Kraemer sounds occasionally pinched in the upper registers, notably in the Concertos RV 546 and RV 555, but his collaboration with Savall sounds for the most part congenial. While the three concertos of op. 3 may be special cases, comparison of the ensemble's reading of the riotously colorful Concerto RV 555 with the performance by Fabio Biondi and Europa Galante (Virgin 7243 5 45527 2 4, 26:5) reveals Biondi's brighter tints and sharper articulation (just as Biondi's greater sense of playfulness had set his performance of the concerto apart from that by Robert King and The King's Consort on Hyperion CDA 67073, which I had earlier praised in 22:5 for its buoyancy and lift).

Collectors of Vivaldiana will hardly pause to consider the merits of these performances: Talbot's lucid notes, the attractive packaging, and the warm recorded sound will confirm the headnote's automatic recommendation. Others may not wish to hear concertos not written for gambas played by them. Recommended, therefore, primarily to specialists. ---Robert Maxham, FANFARE

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