



The Vivaldi Collection



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VIVALDI

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Cello Concerti Vol. 4

RV 405, 411, 414, 416, 417, 420 & 421

Raphael Wallfisch, Cello
City of London Sinfonia

Nicholas Kraemer, Director & Harpsichord



Antonio Vivaldi (1678 - 1741)

Cello Concerti Vol. 4

Concerto in G Minor, RV 416

Concerto in F Major, RV 411

Concerto in D Minor, RV 405

Concerto in A Minor, RV 420

Concerto in G Major, RV 414

Concerto in G Minor, RV 417

Concerto in A Minor, RV 421

(directed from the keyboards by Nicholas Kraemer)

Once virtually forgotten, Antonio Vivaldi now enjoys a reputation that equals the international fame he enjoyed in his heyday. Born in Venice in 1678, the son of a barber who was himself to win distinction as a violinist in the service of the great basilica of San Marco, where the Gabriellis and Monteverdi had presided, he studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1703. At the same time he established himself as a violinist of remarkable ability. A later visitor to Venice described his playing in the opera-house in 1715, his use of high positions so that his fingers almost touched the bridge of the violin, leaving little room for the bow, and his contrapuntal cadenza, a fugue played at great speed. The experience, the observer added, was too artificial to be enjoyable. Nevertheless Vivaldi was among the most famous virtuosi of the day, as well as being a prolific composer of music that won wide favour at home and abroad and exercised a far-reaching influence on the music of others.

For much of his life Vivaldi was intermittently associated with the Ospedale della Pietà, one of the four famous foundations in Venice for the education of orphan, illegitimate or indigent girls, a select group of whom were trained as musicians. Venice attracted, then as now, many foreign tourists, and the Pietà and its music long remained a centre of cultural pilgrimage. In 1703, the year of his ordination, Vivaldi, known as *il prete rosso*, the red priest, from the

inherited colour of his hair, was appointed violin-master of the pupils of the Pietà. The position was subject to annual renewal by the board of governors, whose voting was not invariably in Vivaldi's favour, particularly as his reputation and consequent obligations outside the orphanage increased. In 1709 he briefly left the Pietà, to be reinstated in 1711. In 1716 he was again removed, to be given, a month later, the title Maestro de' Concerti, director of instrumental music. A year later he left the Pietà for a period of three years spent in Mantua as Maestro di Cappella da Camera to Prince Philip of Hesse-Darmstadt, the German nobleman appointed by the Emperor in Vienna to govern the city.

By 1720 Vivaldi was again in Venice and in 1723 the relationship with the Pietà was officially resumed, apparently on a less formal basis. Vivaldi was commissioned to write two new concertos a month, and to rehearse and direct the performance of some of them. The arrangement allowed him to travel and he spent some time in Rome, and indirectly sought possible appointment in Paris through dedicating compositions to Louis XV, although there was no practical result. Vienna seemed to offer more, with the good will of Charles VI, whose inopportune death, when Vivaldi attempted in old age to find employment there, must have proved a very considerable disappointment.

In 1730 Vivaldi visited Bohemia; in 1735 he was appointed again to the position of Maestro de' Concerti at the Pietà and in 1738 he appeared in Amsterdam, where he led the orchestra at the centenary of the Schouwburg Theatre. By 1740, however, Venice had begun to grow tired of Vivaldi, and shortly after the performance of concertos specially written as part of a serenata for the entertainment of the young Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony his impending departure was announced to the governors of the Pietà, who were asked, and at first refused, to buy some of his concertos.

The following year Vivaldi travelled to Vienna, where he arrived in June, and had time to sell some of the scores he had brought with him, before succumbing to some form of stomach inflammation. He died a month to the day after his arrival and was buried the same day with as little expense as possible. As was remarked in Venice, he had once been worth 50,000 ducats a year, but through his extravagance he died in poverty.

Much of Vivaldi's expenditure was presumably in the opera-house. He was associated from 1714 with the management of the San Angelo Theatre, a second-rate house which nevertheless began to win a name for decent performances, whatever its economies in quality and spectacle. Vivaldi is known to have written some 46 operas, and possible some 40 more than this; he was also involved as composer and entrepreneur in their production in other houses in Italy. It was his work in the opera-house that led to Benedetto Marcello's satirical attack on him in 1720 in *Il teatro alla moda*, on the frontispiece of which Aldaviva, alias Vivaldi, is seen as an angel with a fiddle, wearing a priest's hat, standing on the tiller with one foot raised, as if to beat time. It has been suggested that "on the fiddle" had similar connotations in Italian to those it retains in English. Vivaldi had his enemies.

Vivaldi left twenty-seven concertos for cello, string orchestra and basso continuo. Seven of these, three of them in the earliest datable manuscript versions, were preserved in the library of an amateur cellist, Count Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn, at Wiesentheid. Three of the concertos were copied by Johann Philipp Horneck, in the service of the brother of Count Rudolf and in Venice during the winter of 1708 - 1709. Other music was bought from Venice through the agency of Regaznig, representative of the Elector of Mainz, uncle of the Schönborns, in Venice, between 1708 and 1713. Other concertos are in the collection of the Turin Biblioteca Nazionale, with one, *RV 404*, from Schwerin in the Mecklenburgische Landesbibliothek.

Three of the concertos surviving in the Schönborn library at Wiesentheid are included on the present compact disc. The first of these, the *Concerto in G minor, RV 416*, starts with a ritornello based on the ascending and descending scale, used to frame the more varied solo entries. The slow movement *Adagio*, in the same key, is an aria for cello and basso continuo and is followed by a final *Allegro* in triple metre, with a series of solo entries that start with semiquaver (sixteenth note) figuration, going on to triplet quavers (eighth notes) and to a third solo entry with wide spaced intervals.

The *Concerto in F major, RV 411*, has an opening ritornello punctuated by a short rhythmic figure in the bass that continues in accompaniment of the first solo entry, with its more varied rhythms. There is similar rhythmic variety in the D minor *Largo* for cello and basso continuo, followed by the imitative entries that start the final *Allegro* and recur in the ritornello passages that frame the solo entries.

The *Concerto in D minor, RV 405*, from the Wiesentheid library, allows the solo cello to explore a wide range of the instrument in its first movement. There is an A minor *Adagio* in which the strings of the orchestra have some part to play and this is followed by a concluding *Allegro* in which the soloist again has widely spaced intervals that provide an element of contrast.

In the *Concerto in A minor, RV 420*, the solo cello starts the first movement, accompanied by harpsichord and cello, in a passage of twelve bars that precedes the entry of the orchestra, when the violins enter in dialogue. Dotted rhythms and widely spaced intervals lead to the solo entry in the C major *Adagio* and the concerto ends with an *Allegro* in which dotted violin rhythms again predominate.

There is continued dynamic contrast, after the initial echoed opening phrase of the *Concerto in G major, RV 414*, which goes on to an orchestral opening to the E minor *Largo* in dotted rhythm, in contrast to the rhythm of the solo cello. The third movement has a strongly marked opening tutti and characteristic figuration in the solo entries.

In the *Concerto in G minor, RV 417*, the cello takes up the theme of the opening ritornello, which frames the following solo passages. The slow movement is a B flat major aria for cello and basso continuo, while the material of the orchestral ritornello and solo passages in the last movement are closely related.

The *Concerto in A minor, RV 421*, is a further demonstration of the variety that Vivaldi was able to secure within the limitations of the chosen form. The first violin, with its triplet rhythms, is answered by a dotted and syncopated second violin line, and this rhythmic variety is perpetuated in the solo entries. The E minor slow movement is for soloist and basso continuo and leads to a final *Allegro* in which the bass line adds rhythmic character to the material, with syncopation for the violins that is initially taken up by the soloist.

Raphael Wallfisch

Raphael Wallfisch was born in London into a distinguished musical family and studied with Amaryllis Fleming, Amadeo Baldovino, Derek Simpson and Gregor Piatigorsky. While studying with Piatigorsky he was honoured to play chamber music with the great Jascha Heifetz.

Since winning the Gaspar Cassado International Cello Competition in Florence at the age of 24, Raphael Wallfisch has given concerts across the world. In Europe he has performed in Austria, East and West Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark. He regularly plays in Australia and in 1990 undertook a four-week tour for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation before going on to make his *début* in Hong Kong. He also makes frequent visits to the USA and Canada.

Raphael Wallfisch is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music and Professor and Fellow of the Guildhall School of Music.

City of London Sinfonia

The City of London Sinfonia was founded in 1971 by the conductor Richard Hickox and has been acclaimed as one of Britain's most distinguished orchestras. With Hickox as artistic director and Andrew Watkinson as leader and director, the City of London Sinfonia appears at many of the leading English festivals and concert venues, makes regular broadcasts on radio and television and has an enviable recording repertoire. The Sinfonia also promotes its own series of autumn and spring concerts in London at the Barbican and South Bank Centres and has a significant reputation in the recording studio with many successful titles recorded for Chandos, EMI, Decca, Hyperion, Virgin Classics and Naxos.

Nicholas Kraemer

Nicholas Kraemer began his career as a harpsichordist, playing with such groups as the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and the English Baroque Soloists, extending his activities to conducting from the harpsichord, notably with the English Chamber Orchestra in the 1970s, and a subsequent career as a conductor. He was Associate Conductor from 1983 to 1985 with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and from 1986 to 1992 Artistic Director of the Irish Chamber Orchestra and is currently Artistic Director of the English Bach Orchestra and Principal Conductor of the Manchester Camerata. Nicholas Kraemer conducted at Glyndebourne from 1980 to 1983 and was the first musical director of Opera 80, now English Touring Opera. Guest engagements have brought appearances in Germany and in Vienna and his work in Handel opera includes recent performances of *Belshazzar* with the Raglan Baroque Players, an ensemble he established in 1978, at the 1994 Bath Festival, for which he was programme director. He has conducted the operas of Handel and of Monteverdi in Paris, Lisbon, Amsterdam and Marseilles and in 1994 made his English National Opera debut with *The Magic Flute*.

Harpichord after Blanchet (c. 1750) by David Rubio.
Chamber Organ in 18th century tradition by Peter Collins.
Pitch A=442hz
Keyboard adviser: Maurice Cochrane



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STEREO

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VIVALDI

Cello Concerti • Vol. 4

Raphael Wallfisch, Cello

City of London Sinfonia

(Andrew Watkinson, Leader)

Nicholas Kraemer, Director & Harpsichord

DDD

 Playing
Time:
61'20''

Concerto in G Minor, RV 416		Concerto in G Major, RV 414	
1 Allegro	(3:30)	13 Allegro molto	(3:38)
2 Largo	(2:39)	14 Largo	(3:28)
3 Allegro	(3:03)	15 Allegro	(3:15)
Concerto in F Major, RV 411		Concerto in G Minor, RV 417	
4 Allegro	(2:59)	16 Allegro	(2:49)
5 Largo	(1:09)	17 Andante	(2:49)
6 Allegro molto	(2:12)	18 Allegro	(3:15)
Concerto in D Minor, RV 405		Concerto in A Minor, RV 421	
7 Allegro	(3:06)	19 Allegro non troppo	(3:21)
8 Adagio	(2:23)	20 Largo	(1:55)
9 Allegro	(2:29)	21 Allegro	(2:32)
Concerto in A Minor, RV 420		Continuo section: Nicholas Kraemer, Harpsichord and Organ Shuna Wilson, Cello • Robin Jeffrey, Lute	
10 Andante	(3:57)		
11 Adagio	(2:43)		
12 Allegro	(3:42)		

Recorded at All Saints Church, East Finchley & Conway Hall, London
in April, May and September 1994.
Producer / Engineer: Chris Craker
Music Notes: Keith Anderson

Cover Painting: Rio dei Mendicanti:
looking South (c. 1723) by Canaletto



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