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Classical Music Reviews by John J. Puccio



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The Basic Classical Collection on

Vivaldi: Pan Flute Concertos (CD review)

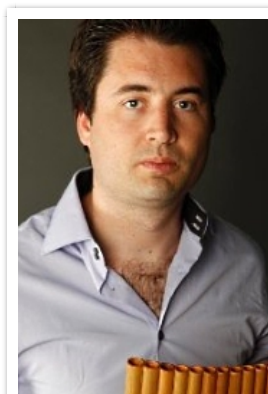
Hanspeter Oggier, pan flute; Ensemble Fratres. Brilliant Classics 95078.

We all know that Italian composer, violinist, teacher, and priest Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) wrote hundreds of concertos for various instruments, along with almost countless other compositions. What's more, in the twentieth century, especially, people began transcribing many of his works for other instruments. As a result, you can find Vivaldi's music played on practically every instrument imaginable. Not that there wasn't precedence for this kind of thing in Vivaldi's own Baroque era, where composers themselves would often rewrite their own works for other instruments. I mention all this in preface to the present disc in which pan flutist Hanspeter Oggier performs eight of Vivaldi's concertos (most of them originally written for flute) on the pan flute, with able support from the period-instrument Ensemble Fratres. It makes for unusual and fairly interesting listening.



The pan flute--sometimes referred to as the panflute, the panpipe, panpipes, or Pan's pipes--consists of a row of hollow, closed tubes of varying length, which produce tones by being blown across their upper ends. The pan flute has been around seemingly forever and shows up in one form or another in almost every culture.

According to his bio, "Hanspeter Oggier began studying the panpipes in his home town and in 1996 commenced taking lessons from master panflutist Simion Stanciu 'Syrinx' in Geneva. From 2002, Hanspeter Oggier continued his education in Geneva and Zurich at the Society Suisse de Pedagogie Musicale, and obtained a teaching degree in 2006. A laureate of the Kiefer Hablitzel Foundation in 2007, he acquired an Artist Diploma in Music Performance the following year, and released his first record with Musica nobilis, entitled Arpeggione, in collaboration with Marielle Oggier (flute) and Mathias Clausen (piano). He completed his musical training at the Hochschule Luzern-Musik with a Master of Arts mit Major Performance Klassik Panflote (2010) with flautist Janne Thomsen." Since then he has built a career as a chamber musician and soloist, participating in concerts all over the world.



Hanspeter Oggier

A fascinating part of his bio informs us that "Like the Ensemble Fratres, Hanspeter Oggier is dedicated to integrating as much as possible the characteristics of the common language into the musical language. He derives his inspiration from the commitment of the musicians of the Renaissance and Baroque era to imitate the human voice."

Mr. Oggier's program consists of the *Concerto La notte in G minor* Op. 10/2 for flute, strings and basso continuo; the *Concerto in A minor* Op. 3/8 for two violins, strings and basso continuo; the *Concerto in G major* Op. 10/4 for flute, strings and basso continuo; the *Concerto in D minor* Op. 3/11 for two violins, cello, strings and basso continue; the *Concerto Il gardellino in D major* Op. 10/3 for flute, strings

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Alphabetical Index

[Abel,Mark](#) (2)

[Abels](#) (1)

[Acustica](#) (1)

[Adam](#) (5)

[Adams](#) (2)

[Adams,John](#) (2)

[Aga](#) (1)

[Albeniz](#) (7)

[Albinoni](#) (2)

[Alexander](#) (1)

[Alwyn](#) (1)

[American Civil War](#) (1)

[Anderson](#) (2)

[Antheil](#) (1)

and basso continuo; the *Concerto in A minor* for flute, strings and basso continuo; the *Sinfonia al Santo Sepolcro* for strings; and an extract from *Nisi Dominus*, the *Andante* for flute, strings and basso continuo.

Yes, much of it sounds alike. That's what you get from Vivaldi; anybody who produced the prodigious body of work he did is bound to include some repetition. If you're not fond of Vivaldi, you might not appreciate so much of his work in one place. However, if you do like Vivaldi, Oggier's handling of it on the pan flute makes for an intriguing diversion, particularly as the panpipe sounds breathier and more open than a conventional flute.

The performances are lively, spirited, without sounding too rushed or frenetic. There's a nice, even flow to the music, a comfortable if somewhat varied rubato, and a sweet spirit all the way around. These may be historical performances, yet neither Oggier nor Ensemble Fratres sound in any way stiff or scholarly. The performers are virtuosic in the animation of their playing and, in essence, create a good deal of fun, which no doubt Vivaldi intended.

My only hesitation in fully liking the album is the sound of the pan flute itself. Its breathiness doesn't project the warmth or richness of either a Baroque or modern flute. It is, in fact, a rather coarse sound in comparison to the flute. Still, the ear adjusts, and, besides, pipes do not feature prominently in all of the music, so we do get a couple of breaks in the agenda, which gives the program variety. Then, too, the place in the proceedings the pan flute probably works best is in the concerto *Il gardellino*, where the instrument delightfully mimics the sound of a goldfinch. It's quite charming and worth the price of the entire album.

For the Vivaldi fan who has everything, Oggier's disc should provide a pleasant diversion from the usual fare. And there isn't a *Season* in sight.

Recording engineer Jean-Daniel Noir made the album at the Academia Montis Regalis Onlus, Oratorio di Santa, Croce, Mondovi, Italy in August 2015. The recordist has certainly captured a wide dynamic range, with good impact and a quick transient response. Along with an airy, modestly resonant acoustic that never interferes with the reproduction's transparency, the results sound, if fairly close, impressively realistic.

JJP

To listen to a brief excerpt from this album, click here:



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