

VIVALDI

Bassoon Concertos • 5

Tamás Benkócs, Bassoon

Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia • Béla Drahos



Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

Complete Bassoon Concertos, Vol. 5: RV 466, 469, 473, 491, 496, 497

Known in his native Venice as the red priest, from the inherited colour of his hair, Antonio Vivaldi was born in 1678, the son of a barber who later served as a violinist at the great Basilica of St Mark. Vivaldi studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1703. At the same time he won a reputation for himself as a violinist of phenomenal ability and was appointed violin-master at the Ospedale della Pietà. This last was one of four such charitable institutions, established for the education of orphan, indigent or illegitimate girls and boasting a particularly fine musical tradition. Here the girls were trained in music, some of the more talented continuing to serve there as assistant teachers, earning the dowry necessary for marriage. Vivaldi's association with the Pietà continued intermittently throughout his life, from 1723 under a contract that provided for the composition of two new concertos every month. At the same time he enjoyed a connection with the theatre, as the composer of some fifty operas, director and manager. He finally left Venice in 1741, travelling to Vienna, where there seemed some possibility of furthering his career under imperial patronage, or perhaps with the idea of travelling on to the court at Dresden, where his pupil Pissendel was working. He died in Vienna a few weeks after his arrival in the city, in relative poverty. At one time he had been worth 50,000 ducats a year, it seemed, but now had little to show for it, as he arranged for the sale of some of the music he had brought with him.

Visitors to Venice had borne witness to Vivaldi's prowess as a violinist, although some found his performance more remarkable than pleasurable. He certainly explored the full possibilities of the instrument, while perfecting the newly developing form of the Italian solo concerto. He left nearly five hundred concertos. Many of these were for the violin, but there were others for a variety of solo instruments or for groups of instruments. He claimed to be able to compose a new work quicker than a copyist could write it out, and he clearly coupled immense facility with a remarkable capacity for variety within the confines of the three-movement form, with its

faster outer movements framing a central slow movement.

The girls at the Pietà had a wide variety of instruments available to them, in addition to the usual strings and keyboard instruments of the basic orchestra. These included the bassoon, for which Vivaldi wrote 39 concertos, two of which are seemingly incomplete. The reason for such a number of concertos for a relatively unusual solo instrument is not known, and the fact that one concerto is inscribed to Count Morzin, a patron of Vivaldi from Bohemia and a cousin of Haydn's early patron, and another to a musician in Venice, Gioseppino Biancardi, reveals little, although it has been suggested that Biancardi represented an earlier tradition of bassoon playing, as a master of its predecessor, the *dulcian*, in view of the range required of the bassoon in the concerto that carries his name. The bassoon was in general an essential element in the characteristic German court orchestra of the eighteenth century, doubling the bass line and found in proportionately greater numbers than is now usual, not least in military bands. The orchestral bassoon part was not written out, unless it differed, as it very occasionally did, from the bass line played by the cello, double bass and continuo. The fact that bassoons are specifically mentioned as being among the instruments played by the girls of the Pietà seems to indicate that they were used there for this purpose at least. There had been solo works written for the instrument during the seventeenth century and technical changes led to a number of solo concertos by the middle of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless the quantity of bassoon concertos written by Vivaldi remains unusual.

Ten of Vivaldi's bassoon concertos are in minor keys. One of four in this key, the *Concerto in A minor, RV 497*, opens with a vigorous *ritornello*, continuing, after a pause, in a gentler mood with violins and viola, before the initial impetus is restored. The virtuoso solo part starts with figuration based on the tonic chord, before adding rapid runs, its later entries varied by the inclusion of elements drawn from the second part of the opening *ritornello*. The E minor *Andante molto* is introduced by the orchestra,

with imitative entries, before the bassoon embarks on its own aria, replete with demisemiquaver triplet figuration. The third movement duly starts with the orchestral *ritornello*, framing solo episodes that include characteristically wide leaps for the solo bassoon.

Fourteen of the concertos are in C major, and the *Concerto in C major, RV 473*, dated by Ryom in his Vivaldi *Werkverzeichnis* to 1730/31, the autograph on paper of Bohemian origin, starts with a *ritornello* in which the violins, at first together and then in thirds, add an answering semiquaver figure to the regular tread of the bass. The solo bassoon enters with the repeated notes of an ascending tonic *arpeggio*, with a second solo entry in triplet semiquavers and a third ornamented with trills. The A minor *Largo* is introduced solemnly by the orchestra, before the solo aria, with its ornamentation. The final *Minuetto* is announced by the orchestra, its two sections repeated. The bassoon, with continuo accompaniment, offers material derived from the Minuet, with four sections, each repeated, before the music of the opening is heard again. The following four repeated sections for the bassoon, again derived from the opening, bring more elaborate figuration, before the Minuet returns once more, to be followed by two repeated passages for the soloist and continuo, with wide leaps in the quaver triplet solo part. The movement ends with the return of the Minuet, each of the two sections repeated *pianissimo*.

One of seven bassoon concertos in this key, the *Concerto in F major, RV 491*, bases its opening orchestral *ritornello* on a descending sequence, with succeeding solo entries of increasing virtuosity. The G minor *Largo* is based initially on a sequence of chords found elsewhere in Vivaldi's work, notably in the *Concerto madrigalesco, RV 129*, the *Kyrie, RV 587* and in parts of the *Magnificat, RV 610* (Naxos 8.570445). With the accompaniment of the orchestra, the soloist offers an aria entirely in semiquavers. The energetic last movement again calls for wide leaps in some of the solo sections, a continuing feature of Vivaldi's writing for the bassoon.

The opening of the first movement of the *Concerto in C major, RV 466*, is virtually identical with the aria *Quegli occhi luminosi* from the second act of the opera *Semiramide*, staged in Mantua in 1732. The first solo episode is in rapid triplet semiquavers, the second based on a sequence and including wide leaps. The slow movement, in the same key, introduces a pattern of accompaniment that is continued after the solo entry, and the concerto ends with a movement that again treats with endless variety the restricted form in which it is set.

The *Concerto in C major, RV 469*, is characterized again by wide leaps, suggested first in the opening *ritornello*, echoed by the bassoon in its first solo entry. The second solo episode, modulating from G major to A minor, uses a wide range of the instrument, and the third starts with triplet quavers, moving to E minor, with the opening motif in C returning to start the fourth solo passage. The *Largo*, accompanied only by continuo, suggests an aria, with each of its two sections repeated. The final movement offers a *ritornello* starting with a descending octave leap, the opening figure taken up by the bassoon in the first solo episode, followed by solo passages in which wide leaps are a continuing feature.

The agility of the solo bassoon is demonstrated once more in the *Concerto in G minor, RV 496*, with its dedication to Ma: dè Morzin, the Bohemian nobleman Count Wenzel von Morzin, to whom Vivaldi dedicated his *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione* (The Contest of Harmony and Invention), the collection of concertos that includes the *Four Seasons*, works already familiar to the dedicatee. The solo episodes in the first movement explore the wide range of the bassoon and its potential agility. The slow movement, for bassoon and continuo, with repeated sections, suggests a pastoral aria. The last movement, in the same key, shared by only one other of the concertos, makes much of a figure derived from the tonic *arpeggio* in both *ritornello* and solo episodes.

Keith Anderson

Tamás Benkócs

Tamás Benkócs completed his studies in 1995 at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, where he worked with László Hara, József Vajda and Tibor Fülemlé. Later he had lessons with Brian Pollard and Milan Turkovic and Dag Jensen. At the age of twenty he was appointed principal bassoonist with the Budapest Festival Orchestra. From 1998 to 2003 he served as principal bassoonist of the newly founded Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2004 he returned to Hungary, working once again with the Budapest Festival Orchestra. He has made many appearances as a soloist in Germany, and in Hungary, as well as in Japan, Malaysia and Singapore.

Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia

The Hungarian-based Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia was formed in 1992 by Ibolya Tóth, recording producer of the Hungarian Phoenix Studio, initially as a recording orchestra for Naxos. Under its permanent conductor, Béla Drahos, the Sinfonia also undertakes public concerts. The orchestra consists of the leading players in Budapest, including string and wind principals of the major Hungarian orchestras, many of whom have already recorded concertos for Naxos. The Sinfonia ranges in size from a Baroque string orchestra to an ensemble suitable for Haydn or Mozart, or, augmented, for performance of Beethoven. Recordings of the symphonies of Haydn and Beethoven and of Beethoven's *Fidelio* (8.660070-71) have met with particularly warm critical acclaim and its recording of Vanhal's Symphonies (8.554341) was awarded a Cannes Classical Award at Midem in 2000.

Béla Drahos

Béla Drahos was born in Hungary in 1955. He started his career as a flautist, winning prizes in international competitions from the age of seventeen, including, among many others, the Bartók-Pásztory Prize in 1988. In 1978 he graduated with distinction from the Franz Liszt Academy of Music. His concert career has included performances throughout Europe and as far afield as New Zealand. He has embarked on a parallel career as a conductor, completing his studies in Vienna under Karl Österreicher in 1991. Since then he has conducted and recorded for Naxos a broad symphonic repertoire, including some of the Haydn and all the Beethoven Symphonies.

Get this free download from Classicsonline!

Boismortier: *Bassoon Concerto, Allegro*

Copy this Promotion Code **NaxZ3m8Ahd50** and go to http://www.classicsonline.com/mpkey/boi14_main.

Downloading Instructions

- 1 Log on to Classicsonline. If you do not have a Classicsonline account yet, please register at <http://www.classicsonline.com/UserLogIn/SignUp.aspx>.
- 2 Enter the Promotion Code mentioned above.
- 3 On the next screen, click on "Add to My Downloads".

Also Available



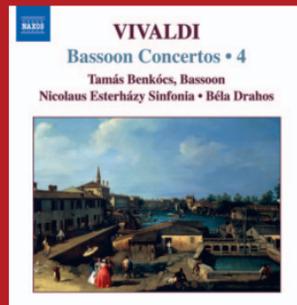
8.555937



8.555938



8.557556



8.557829



8.570798

DDD

Playing Time
65:04© & © 2008
Naxos Rights International Ltd.
Booklet notes in English
Disc Made in Canada
Printed & Assembled in USA
www.naxos.com

In perfecting the newly developing form of the Italian solo concerto, Vivaldi wrote nearly five hundred concertos, of which 39 are for bassoon with strings and continuo. In these, Vivaldi exploits the full expressive and tonal range of the solo instrument, often making considerable demands on the soloist's virtuosity to thrilling effect. Acclaimed as a splendid advocate of these graceful and imaginative works, bassoonist Tamás Benkócs also features on Volumes 1 to 4 (Naxos 8.555937, 8.555938, 8.557556 & 8.557829).

Antonio
VIVALDI
(1678–1741)

Complete Bassoon Concertos • 5

Concerto in A minor, RV 497	10:01	Concerto in C major, RV 466	9:47
1 Allegro molto	3:40	10 Allegro	3:42
2 Andante molto	3:23	11 Largo	2:52
3 Allegro	2:55	12 Allegro	3:10
Concerto in C major, RV 473	14:53	Concerto in C major, RV 469	11:18
4 Allegro	3:32	13 Allegro	3:48
5 Largo	3:26	14 Largo	3:52
6 Minuetto	7:48	15 (Allegro)	3:36
Concerto in F major, RV 491	8:07	Concerto in G minor, RV 496	10:37
7 Allegro molto	3:38	16 Allegro	3:26
8 Largo	1:40	17 Largo	3:56
9 (Allegro)	2:48	18 (Allegro)	3:10

Tamás Benkócs, Bassoon
Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia • Béla Drahos

Includes free downloadable bonus track from the Naxos catalogue available
at www.classiconline.com. Please see booklet for full details.

Recorded at the Phoenix Studio, Budapest, Hungary, 4–5 May 2007 (tracks 10–19) and 2–4 June 2007 (1–9)
Producer: Ibolya Tóth • Engineer: János Bohus • Editor: Mária Falvay • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson
Cover painting: *The Riva Degli Schiavoni* by Canaletto (1697–1768) (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria / The Bridgeman Art Library, London)

NAXOS

VIVALDI: Complete Bassoon Concertos • 5

8.570798

NAXOS

VIVALDI: Complete Bassoon Concertos • 5

8.570798