

## OBOE CONCERTOS

### LINER NOTES

#### CD1-3

##### Vivaldi: Oboe Concertos

It is more than likely that Vivaldi's earliest concertos for wind instruments were those he composed for the oboe. The Pietà documents reveal a specific interest on his part for the instrument, mentioning the names of a succession of master oboists: Ignazio Rion, Ludwig Erdmann and Ignazio Sieber, as well as Onofrio Penati, who had previously been a member of the San Marco orchestra. However, it was probably not one of these musicians who inspired Vivaldi to write for the oboe, but instead the German soloist Johann Christian Richter, who was in Venice along with his colleagues Pisandel and Zelenka in 1716-1717, in the entourage of Prince Frederick Augustus of Saxony. As C. Fertonani has suggested, Vivaldi probably dedicated the Concerto RV455 'Saxony' and the Sonata RV53 to Richter, who may well have been the designated oboist for the Concerto RV447 as well, since this work also called for remarkable virtuoso skill.

There is no doubt that the earliest published oboe concertos in the Venice area were Albinoni's Op.7 (1715).<sup>1</sup> As for Vivaldi's published works, the two oboe concertos included in his Op.7, written around 1716-1717, can be considered his earliest datable compositions. As M. Talbot has pointed out, they are stylistically-speaking highly reminiscent of the Telemann concertos, and arguably have more in common with the concertos 'with' oboe, à la Albinoni, than they do with the concertos 'for' oboe that were later to become the focus of his attention. It is thus probable, claims A. Borin, that the publisher Roger was so keen to repeat the success he had enjoyed with the Albinoni compositions that he was unwilling to wait for Vivaldi to hand in his original compositions, and instead compiled a number of pieces that he could already lay his hands on. This would mean that the concertos included in the later Op.8 were the first original works by Vivaldi to appear in the coeval printed edition.

All the critical editions used for this new complete recording were made by P.L. Fabretti, on the basis of meticulous comparisons with period manuscripts, printed scores and parts. Ten of the 21 oboe concertos attributed to Vivaldi once belonged to the composer's own personal archive and are now kept at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Turin. They comprise the concertos RV 447, 448, 450, 451, 453, 454, 455, 457, 461 and 463. Five of these were printed for publication in Amsterdam by the famous printers Roger and Le Cène – two in Op.7 (RV 464 and 465), two in Op.8 (RV 449 and 454) and one in Op.11 (RV460) – along with another (RV456) that belonged to the Harmonia Mundi collection printed in London in 1726 by the publisher Walsh. Four other concertos have come down to us in manuscript form, all of them currently kept in Sweden: three in Lund (RV 446, 458, 462) and one in Uppsala (RV452). Finally, there are two more concertos kept in German archives – one in Dresden (RV184) and the RV459 fragment in Wiesentheid.

The Turin manuscripts are universally recognised as being authentic, whereas Italian Vivaldi specialists agree that the two concertos published in Op.7 and the RV459 fragment are spurious. Doubts have also been expressed concerning the Lund concertos as well as Concerto RV456, although no convincing arguments regarding who might have composed these works instead have so far come to the fore. Our decision to include the questionable compositions in this CD derives from the

desire to provide the first recording of Vivaldi's complete oboe works. All things considered, even the concertos whose authenticity cannot be entirely ascertained reveal Vivaldi's remarkable popularity throughout Europe during the early years of the 1700s, from Venice to Sweden, including Germany, Holland and England. If a contemporary publisher or composer used the composer's name in vain, perhaps attempting to emulate his style, clearly he did so in the hope of improving his chances of success, since Vivaldi was one of the most famous and widely admired composers of his time. Indeed, in this sense imitation bears witness to the eminence of the original.

Various problems regarding interpretation of text came to the fore during the preparation of the manuscripts' critical edition, with one possible source of ambiguity being Vivaldi's use of the expression *da capo* at the end of a movement (which was used so as to save him having to write out the previous tutti's parts in full). Indeed, this has potential repercussions on performance, for example when the last notes of the solo and the first of the tutti do not coincide – a problem that existing modern editions fail to address satisfactorily. In other cases, such as in the adaptations for bassoon, there are deletions and corrections that are difficult to interpret. We have therefore chosen to adopt the solutions that made the best sense musically, without applying fixed rules. Moreover, in a few other cases we have modified certain notes that appeared to be evident slips of the pen in composing or transcribing.

In recent times, Concerto RV184, which had previously been considered a work for the violin, has been persuasively attributed to the oboe. As B. Haynes has pointed out, on account of both the pitch and range of the solo part, which is curiously limited for the violin but suits the oboe perfectly, this would appear to make perfect sense. Moreover, the score itself, kept in Dresden, lacks any specific indication of the solo instrument. Concerto RV458 has come down to us in two different copies; in one of them, the slow movement in the separate oboe part includes ornamentation written almost in full, in the form of smaller notes placed between the main notes of the melody. We thus decided to use this version for the recording. Concerto RV459 also calls for some explanation: the extant manuscript contains only the first two movements, and reveals so many errors and omissions that the score itself is practically useless from a performance point of view. With the help of R. Loreggian, we have made the necessary corrections and additions. Nevertheless, the piece is unquestionably somewhat weak, and evidently spurious, to the extent that we have included it in a 'complete works' recording solely on account of the fact that it constitutes an added degree of documentation. To make up for the lack of a third movement, and to re-establish symmetry, we decided to structure it as an *Aria con da capo*, returning to the first movement with a series of ornamentations.

The 21 concertos have been divided into three respectively homogeneous CDs: CD1 contains all the works that were printed, with or without the composer's authorisation, during his lifetime; CD2 is devoted to the concertos deriving from the hand-written scores kept in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Turin; and CD3 features the concertos belonging to the German and Swedish archives, along with Concertos RV 455 and 447 (from the Foà Foundation in Turin) on account of the fact that they

were explicitly or probably dedicated to the German oboist mentioned above.

To record Vivaldi's complete oboe concertos on original instruments has been a wonderful challenge. Unlike other composers of the same period, Vivaldi used the oboe in an open-minded and occasionally unconventional manner, composing a number of extremely demanding passages that are only just within the technical limits of the instrument. In this sense, the brilliant virtuoso arias followed by heart-rending cantabile episodes typical of his operas have provided us with an essential stylistic model. For Vivaldi's musical genius is distinctly theatrical – a fact that today's soloist has to take into account – and, in a certain sense, each movement in a concerto is like the aria in an opera in which the characters typical of the *Commedia dell'Arte* encounter one another, express love and disagreement, and on occasions even quarrel...

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*1 It is likely, however, that both Telemann and Handel had already composed oboe concertos prior to this date.*

#### CD4-6

##### Albinoni: Oboe Concertos

When Tomaso Albinoni was born in June 1671, his home town of Venice already boasted a long and splendid musical heritage. Sacred music had been cultivated there since time immemorial, and had achieved the artistic excellence that is still revered today, through the work of such composers as Adrian Willaert and the Gabrieli brothers at St. Mark's Basilica. Secular music has been documented in the "floating city" since the eleventh century. It was first performed in the palaces of the nobility and the patrician merchant class, before the first opera house in the world was founded in 1637 and all the citizens of Venice were able to pursue their love for music. Giovanni Antonio Albinoni, father of the future composer, may well have been among the audience in one of the many opera houses that were subsequently built in Venice. He had come to Venice as a young man, and had risen to considerable eminence having obtained the rights to manufacture paper and playing cards. The family lived in a wealthy part of the city near St. Mark's, and in addition to the education befitting his social status, young Tomaso took music lessons, initially including violin and singing, and subsequently composition. He was not, however, destined for a career in music, because social convention in the early modern age dictated that firstborn sons such as Tomaso would take over their father's business.

Thus, Tomaso Albinoni was initially obliged to lead a dual existence as merchant and composer. He was already established as a composer by 1694, when his first opera *Zenobia, regina de' Palmireni* was performed to great acclaim during the most important of Venice's four annual opera seasons, the *Carnevale*. In addition to working on his compositions, which included operas and some early instrumental works, he joined the family's business at an early age, and correctly described himself on his compositions as a *Dilettante* – which at the time referred to people who devoted their lives to art and often practised it at a very high level, "without making it their main occupation" (H. C. Koch). Albinoni did not shed this label until 1709, when he left the family business upon the death of his father, passed his inheritance to his younger brothers and devoted himself entirely to music from then on.

At this point, he was already known beyond the borders of his hometown as a composer of operas, and could count on being able to live on the proceeds of the many performances of his works – for the new public opera houses were not only temples to the muses, but also tremendous business ventures, in which a composer could earn more money in an evening than in an entire year of service at a renowned church such as St. Mark's.

Besides composing operas, Tomaso Albinoni concentrated on instrumental music. Thus, in 1694, he not only published his first opera, but also his first collection of instrumental works, the chamberlike *Suonate a tre*, Op.1. It was in 1700 when Albinoni first devoted his attention to the rather recent style of the concerto, which he applied to the string instruments in the *Sinfonie e concerti a cinque*, Op.2, and the collection *Concerti a cinque*, Op.5 (1707). His oboe concertos did not appear until several years later, in the *Concerti a cinque* collections, Opp. 7 (1717) and 9 (1722). They are among the earliest representatives of the genre, and were the first oboe concertos not only to be circulated amongst musicians as manuscript copies, but also to appear in printed form and be available for purchase by anyone – a circumstance which facilitated their circulation in the musical world. The background to the composition of these pieces has not as yet been completely researched, but what is known provides a fascinating glimpse into the musical life of the early 18th century. Beyond the traditional homes of musical performance, court and church, a lively secular music scene was developing, bolstered by professional musicians and a growing number of amateurs. Insatiable demand for new music fostered the development of new genres, amongst them the symphony and the instrumental concerto. Even the concept of the ideal sound was in a state of flux: medieval-sounding instruments were being replaced by more modern instruments – for example, the shawm was replaced by the hautboy, the baroque oboe.

A new era was also beginning for the music publishing world. Publishers from Italy, France, England, and the Netherlands were in competition over the steadily growing market, and were constantly seeking innovations. Estienne Roger, a publisher in Amsterdam, was particularly zealous. In engraving, he made use of a printing technique that was aesthetically superior to those available in Albinoni's hometown, and he was not afraid to publish promising works in pirated editions. Already in 1702, shortly after the Venetian first editions of Albinoni's early instrumental collection (Opp. 1, 2, 3 & 5) appeared, Roger published pirated editions of the same. In those days before copyright law, Albinoni had no recourse against such acts. However, he also benefited from them, as Roger's distribution network reached far and wide: as a result Albinoni's music became known and valued well beyond Italy's borders, even as far afield as England. The formerly very successful Venetian publishers could not offer such prospects; therefore it is not surprising that Albinoni had his subsequent instrumental music collections directly published by Roger in Amsterdam. Other Venetian composers independently proceeded likewise, including Antonio Vivaldi with his famous collection of concertos, *L'estro armonico*, which appeared in 1711.

Albinoni's *Trattenimenti armonici per camera*, Op.6, were the first result of his new collaboration with Roger. Like their predecessors, the works were scored for strings alone; however, the more limited space for improvisation in the slow movements indicates an effort on Albinoni's part to accommodate new customers beyond the Alps. Whereas the art of improvisation was well developed among professional Italian violinists, giving them a particular chance to shine during the slow movements with extended ornamented passages and melodic alterations, northern European violinists (especially the amateurs among them) were hardly familiar with the practice of improvisation at all, so Albinoni transcribed the notes more elaborately than in his earlier works.

Albinoni's next collection, the 1715 *Concerti a cinque*, Op.7 contained another innovation: concertante works for the oboe. Following the success of Albinoni's previous six collections for strings, there was no question that his concertante style appealed to the European audience. It seems plausible that the enterprising Roger encouraged Albinoni to turn his talents toward the oboe as well. This instrument had gained many enthusiasts, especially north of the Alps, since its invention

around 1650, but solo concertos were not available – a circumstance reversed by the *Concerti a cinque*, Op.7.

In addition to four string works in concerto grosso style (Nos. 1, 4, 7 & 10), the collection contained four solo concertos and four double concertos for oboe (Nos. 3, 6, 9 & 12 and Nos. 2, 5, 8 & 11). Since Albinoni had no immediate precedent for these oboe concertos, the question of their formal structure merits especial attention. Judging by the development of instrumental solo concertos up to that point, it might have been expected that Albinoni would have based the structure of his oboe concertos on that of violin concertos, the predominant model at the time. That would have meant, for example, that the oboe would have doubled the first violins on the melody in tutti sections, and contrasted with them in a technically elaborate fashion during the solo sections.

Tomaso Albinoni developed his own way forward, however, drawing from his rich experience as a composer of operas. He shaped the melody of the oboe line similar to the one of the vocal aria, thus exploiting the lyrically expressive capabilities of the instrument. Like other Venetian oboe composers of the time, he avoided the instrument's low register, and set the line in a tessitura above that of the violins. For the formal structure, Albinoni used the same division of the concertos, practised by Vivaldi and other contemporaries, namely a division into three movements according to the succession fast-slow-fast, and thus contributed to the establishment of this form as the standard. When constructing the individual movements in terms of the order of tutti and solo passages, Albinoni once again reached into his operatic style, especially by using patterns established in vocal arias. This manifests itself particularly in the opening bars of the fast outer movements: like the solo voice in the operatic aria, the solo oboe is silent during the opening orchestral ritornello, and then, in the following section of the movement, leads in with mostly short solo phrases, which are answered by the strings. Solo and tutti passages then alternate in various keys. As the movement continues, the contrasts between the tutti sections and the solo instrument, which now provides an occasional countermelody, increases, until the movement concludes with a coda for the entire orchestra. In the slow movement, Albinoni reverts once more to established patterns. He treats the ensemble writing in a fashion similar to his earlier trio sonatas, devoting it entirely to the accompaniment of the oboe line, which often resembles a through-composed cantilena.

In his concertos for two oboes, Albinoni initially faced the question of how to treat the relationship between the two solo instruments. Instead of establishing a dialogue between the two soloists, as Vivaldi had done, Albinoni usually chose homophonic voice-leading, in which the lines generally run in parallel thirds, with only very occasional contrapuntal figures. In these works, both the choice of key (C major and D major) and the voice-leading of the oboe lines are strongly reminiscent of trumpet concertos of the time, particularly during strongly triadic passages.

After the publication in 1715 of the *Concerti a cinque*, Op.7, Albinoni published a further collection of instrumental concertos in 1722, Op.9, also entitled *Concerti a cinque*. The most ambitious of his instrumental projects comprises four concertante works for strings, which had evolved into real violin concertos (Nos. 1, 4, 7 & 10), and, again, four solo concertos and four double concertos for oboe (Nos. 2, 5, 8 & 11 and Nos. 3, 6, 9 & 12). While composing these works, Albinoni was able on the one hand to draw on his experience from Op.7, and on the other hand was aware of the best possibilities for performance. The *Concerti a cinque*, Op.9, are dedicated to Maximilian II Emanuel, prince elector of Bavaria, a great lover of the arts, who was "in addition to the serious duties of state, not disinclined toward the sounds of the lyre", according to Albinoni's dedication. Maximilian Emanuel kept a first-rate orchestra, which included no fewer than five French oboists, whom he had engaged after his exile in France. Albinoni's

increased technical demands are evident in several places, not least in the length of the new pieces, which are on average a quarter to a third longer than the pieces in Op.7. In addition, the internal structure of the musical setting, such as the interplay of the musical lines, was now worked out much more elaborately than even only a few years previously, particularly in the inner lines. In view of the dedicatee's extensive musical knowledge and the highly international nature of the ensemble led by the Italian concertmaster Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco, Albinoni introduced characteristics of the various European national music styles of the time into his concertos as well as musical allegories. The many repeated notes in the unison string sections in the first movement of the double oboe concerto Op.9, No.6 in G major are reminiscent of the bass drums in military music of the time, a tribute to Maximilian's military pursuits. By contrast, the fast final movement of that double concerto is rhythmically based on the minuet, a courtly dance of French origin. Another musical rendering of courtly life is evident in concerto No.3 in F major. For the first time in his instrumental music, Albinoni composes in the "alla caccia" ("hunting") style, and lets the pair of oboes sound in the style of natural horns, the traditional hunting instrument of the nobility.

Op.9 concluded Albinoni's contribution to the history of the oboe concerto. Until his death in 1751, he devoted himself primarily to opera. Albinoni's contemporary, the flautist and music theoretician Johann Joachim Quantz, honoured his contributions to the concerto genre in his monograph "On playing the Flute", declaring Albinoni one of the most significant promoters of the instrumental concerto along with Antonio Vivaldi. Further proof of how highly esteemed Albinoni's works were by his contemporaries is evident in Bach's adaptations of his works.

Further recommended reading on Albinoni's life and works includes the writings of the Albinoni scholar Michael Talbot: "Albinoni - Leben und Werk" (Edition Kunzelmann, 1980, in German) and "Tomaso Albinoni - The Venetian Composer and His World" (Clarendon Press, 1990, in English).

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## CD7

### J.S. Bach: Oboe Concertos

The numerous parts for oboe solo in Bach's cantatas, oratorios, masses and concertos clearly indicate that he admired the instrument. Of the 200 or so cantatas that have survived, most feature a recitative, aria or sinfonia with magnificent soli for oboe, oboe d'amore or oboe da caccia.

J.S. Bach's brother, Johann Jacob Bach (1682–1722) was himself an oboist. When their father died in 1695, both musicians came to live with their elder brother Johann Christoph (1671–1721) – a pupil of Johann Pachelbel – and it is possible that some of the oboe solos Johann Sebastian composed were specifically written for Johann Jacob. Furthermore, this instrument was developed in Leipzig, where Bach served as Kapellmeister from 1723 onwards. He was therefore in regular contact with talented oboists, such as Caspar Gleditsch, who performed in his weekly church cantatas. In the early 18th century, the oboe d'amore, which Bach used in his cantata *Du wahrer Gott und Davids Sohn BWV23*, appeared in this very town.

Keen to develop secular German music, Prince Leopold may have commissioned from Bach concertos for various melodic instruments, hiring him to serve as Kapellmeister of the Köthen court in 1717. Even though these works – which no doubt included a series of oboe concertos – have since disappeared, the composer supposedly adapted some of them for the students of the Collegium Musicum, transforming the original compositions into harpsichord concertos (from which the oboe concertos are now performed on a reconstructed or arranged basis). Indeed, it should be noted here that Bach was in the habit of transcribing his own concertos, also recycling their

material for use in his cantatas. In 1729 he had taken over the directorship of the Collegium Musicum, started by Telemann and which required instrumental music for its regular performances. Thus it is probable that the original manuscripts of the harpsichord concertos date back to the late 1730s.

#### **Concerto in F major BWV1053**

This work is based on Harpsichord Concerto No.2 in E major BWV1053, itself descended from an older score.

The first movement's theme has been integrated into the cantata *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* BWV169 (1726) as a *sinfonia* for obbligato organ and orchestra (No.1). All oboe concerto scores hitherto edited are based on this work rather than the harpsichord version; through our wish to highlight both variants of this movement, we used the score of the more ornamented harpsichord version for the *da capo*.

The second movement has been reworked as an aria for alto, obbligato organ and orchestra in the same cantata (No.5: 'Stirb in mir, Welt'). The oboe is better suited to playing the organ part (right hand) than the concerto's solo harpsichord part, whose virtuosity only fits this instrument.

The *Sinfonia* (No.1) for obbligato organ and orchestra from the cantata *Ich geh' und suche mit Verlangen* BWV49 (1726) is based on the third movement. In our recording, we use the *Sinfonia*'s score until the *da capo* (thus following the first movement's pattern), at which point we switch to a variant inspired by the harpsichord concerto.

#### **Concerto in A major BWV1055**

The original manuscript of the harpsichord concerto is the only one left intact. Its tessitura, tonality and ornamental style, however, would seem to indicate that Bach originally composed it for oboe d'amore – its starting note, for example, is an 'a', the lowest note on the oboe d'amore at that time. Nowadays the concerto is performed more frequently on this instrument.

With regard to the many descending arpeggios played by the solo instrument in the first movement of the harpsichord concerto, we decided not to carry these over to the oboe d'amore part in the arrangement, but to instead entrust these sequences to the first violin rather than to the harpsichord (*basso continuo*) in order to draw even more attention to them. Indeed, these patterns are important because they envelop the basic musical line of the violins along the entire movement. The left-hand part of the solo harpsichord has also been somewhat adapted in various passages, so that it is better suited to the string writing.

#### **Concerto in G minor BWV1056**

This concerto is based on Harpsichord Concerto No.5 in F minor BWV1056. The original version, now lost, was most certainly intended for the violin. It has been reconstructed many times and easily adapts to the oboe.

The *Adagio* of the harpsichord concerto can be found – transposed into F major – in the *Sinfonia* for oboe solo (No.1) from the cantata *Ich steh mit einem Fuß im Grabe* BWV156 (1729), a movement that draws particular attention to the lyricism of the oboe. For the first movement we have been faithful to the harpsichord version, refusing to omit two very brilliant passages that are often left out in other adaptations or in published scores.

**Concerto in G major:** arrangement based on three arias taken from the Cantatas BWV100, 170 and 30

The bass aria 'Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan, er ist mein Licht und Leben' (What God does, that is done well, he is my light and life), taken from the cantata *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* BWV100 (1732–35), provides the score for the first movement. The second movement is a transcription of the alto aria 'Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust' (Blitheful rest, pleasing delight of the soul), taken from the cantata of the same name: BWV170 (1726). The bass aria 'Gelobet sei Gott, gelobet sein

Name' (Praise the Lord, praise His name), excerpted from the cantata *Freue dich, erlöste Schar* BWV30 (1738) (Rejoice, redeemed throng), has been rearranged for the third movement. Because of the oboe's natural vocal qualities, no melodic line modification was required during the transcription.

#### **Concerto in C minor BWV1060**

Even though the manuscript copies that have come down to us only pertain to the version for two harpsichords, the original version was undoubtedly intended for oboe and violin, all the more so since the *Breitkopf* catalogue of 1764 mentions a lost concerto for oboe and violin. Unlike the Concerto in D minor for two violins BWV1043, composed between 1717 and 1723 and which Bach later transformed into a concerto for two harpsichords, this reconstructed concerto features different writing as regards the two solo parts. While the first is naturally suited to the oboe in terms of tessitura, melodic pattern and breathing, the second solo part features an ornamental style characteristic of the violin, and it does not go beyond the 'g', the lowest possible note on this instrument.

Adapting concertos for harpsichord or other instruments, or taking arias from cantatas and transforming them into concertos for oboe or oboe d'amore, enables us to compensate for the loss of original works written for this instrument and contributes to the expansion of its solo repertoire. The huge musical legacy of J.S. Bach augurs a land of almost endless possibilities that one can explore in order to appreciate the composer's genius even more.

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Translation: Aline Ferber

#### **CD8**

##### **Telemann: Oboe Concertos**

Largely self-taught, and despite opposition on the part of his family, Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) proved to be prolific as a composer, writing around 6000 works that have earned him recognition as the most important musician of his time in Germany by his contemporaries, in his lifetime. He was a man of considerable learning and independence of spirit who chose to address a range of national styles (German, Polish, French, Italian) and all musical genres, leaving his own mark on the period not only on account of his many compositions, whose publication brought him international fame, especially in Paris, but also in view of his correspondence and writings on the subject of musical theory and aesthetics, which were to influence Johann Mattheson, J.G. Walther, J.A. Scheibe, J.J. Quantz, J.F. Agricola and F.W. Marpurg. Moreover, he also maintained an epistolary exchange with J.S. Bach, C.P.E. Bach (his godson), Handel and J.C. Bach.

Among his 600 or so instrumental compositions, about 100 consist of concertos, and of these half are for a single instrument (around twenty for the violin), a quarter for two solo instruments and the rest for three or more. Twelve of Telemann's concertos for oboe, strings and *basso continuo* have come down to us, which is an exceptional number. According to the list he included in his autobiography, published by Mattheson in 1740, not one of these works actually appeared in a printed edition.

For the concertos, Telemann largely kept to the form in four movements typical of the *concerto da chiesa* (church concerto), adopting the Italianate style based on contrast between the virtuoso solo instrument and the orchestra. In general terms, the slow movements consist of a melodious subject in the solo instrument, accompanied by the orchestra. Telemann defended this modern concept of accompanied melody against the theories of chapel master W.C. Printz, a champion of traditional counterpoint. The fast movements often adopt the usual *ritornello* form, which was a section played by the whole orchestra featuring the main subject,

either all together or in fragments, and in different keys, alternating with modulating solo episodes.

#### **Oboe Concerto in G TWV51:G2**

This concerto belongs to the highly productive period Telemann spent in Hamburg around 1720-22. The only known manuscript version of the concerto is a copy of the scores of separate parts of each instrument, that had long been kept in the university library in Rostock. It was discovered in a wretched state of conservation on account of the corrosive nature of the ink used at the time, a problem that is common to many 18th century manuscripts. Moreover the paper was full of holes that impaired the legibility of the text, the bass and harpsichord scores were torn, and there were parts missing in the 2nd and 4th movements. Thanks to Arn Aske, who took on the formidable task of reconstructing the missing and illegible passages, and completing the work in Telemann's style, we now have an edition of the concerto published by aka musikverlag in Karlsruhe.

Although the frontispiece of the manuscript describes the solo instrument as the 'Traversière', the wooden flute of the period, on the separate solo score the wording is Hautbois vel Traversière. So the concerto could thus also be played on the oboe, which was common practice during the baroque age, when the solo instrument was often changed in response to particular conditions, without fundamentally altering the work in question. The range of the solo part is actually quite low for both the flute and the oboe, thereby drawing out their velvety mellowness of sound.

The four movements begin directly with the oboe solo, without a preliminary orchestral introduction. Both the Vivace and the Allegro, with its binary form and recapitulation, develop imitations. Despite some unconventional harmonies in the central part of the Adagio, for instance, and in the parallel fifths of the second bar of the Andante, Telemann forges ahead with an aplomb that was not always shared by J.S. Bach.

#### **Oboe Concerto in E minor TWV51:e1**

In this work the oboe only plays the subject first presented by the orchestra at the end of the Andante, as though it finally concurs with the ensemble. In the middle of the second movement the mood of joyful excitement, with its fickle changes and continuous semiquavers (quavers in the basso), suddenly gives way to a meditative Poco Andante, a sort of timeless melody accompanied by chords in the orchestra, which in its turn yields to an even more jubilant passage. Contrasts and abrupt changes of mood are typical of Telemann's style.

All four movements begin with the tonic E in bass on the first beat of the first bar. That gives momentum to the melody which begins offbeat. This technique is also to be found in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th movements of Concerto TWV51:d2, in the 1st movement of Concerto TWV51:A2 and in the 2nd movement of Concerto TWV51:G2.

#### **Oboe d'amore Concerto in A TWV51:A2**

Telemann often used the oboe d'amore as a solo instrument on account of its sweetness of timbre, thereby contributing to the instrument's success, especially in Germany, during the first half of the 18th century.

A manuscript copy of "12 Concertos de G. Ph. Telemann" comprising this work is kept in the Mecklenburg public library in Schwerin, in Germany. It features particular prominence on the part of the basso continuo, which largely acts as the sole accompaniment for the wind instrument in the Allegro. The Vivace is shaped like an aria da capo with ritornello sections, and in the central part the oboe is also only accompanied by the basso continuo. The same is true for the entire oboe cantilena in the Largo, with occasional parallels in the sixth between the oboe and the basso that produce a somewhat harsh effect. Suspended chords in the orchestra introduce and conclude the

movement, and we have chosen to embellish them with some melodic figurations in the solo violin.

#### **Oboe Concerto in E flat TWV51:Es1**

The manuscript score of this highly Italianate concerto is kept in the Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek in Darmstadt. The work comprises three movements, and both the compositional style and time signature are reminiscent of Albinoni. The accompaniment to the solo passages is light, which underlines the virtuoso qualities of the oboe: the basses and the violas are often removed, they only punctuate the sentences, or else there is only the continuo (which accompanies the oboe). There is a short cadenza at the end of the Largo, and the second Allegro is structured as an aria da capo with ritornello sections, reminiscent of a dance.

#### **Oboe d'amore Concerto in E minor TWV51:e2**

This concerto was written around 1720, which could have been towards the end of the Frankfurt period, or at the beginning of Telemann's time in Hamburg. It also comprises three movements, and features a marked degree of thematic unity. The start of the subject of the last movement is a sort of melodic variant of the start of the subject of the first movement (a return to the three repeated E notes, without the ornamentation), moreover with the same harmony and a similar basso part. The solo part includes figurations in semiquavers that are characteristic of the violin and were widespread in Italian music of the age.

#### **Oboe Concerto in D minor TWV51:d2**

The documentary sources for this concerto are fragmentary, but Wolfgang Hirschmann has written a plausible version of the missing first violin part, published by Carus Verlag. Italianate in style, the work was probably written towards the end of the period between 1716 and 1721, when Telemann was living in Frankfurt.

In the third movement, the repeated semiquavers in the orchestra suggest the movement of a clock, while the highly lyrical melody entrusted to the oboe encompasses some dissonant chromatic passages featuring augmented seconds, as 6 in the Largo. This is typical of Telemann, and so are the surprising key changes in the Vivace. The Allegro, which has a binary form with reprises, is a dance that gains breadth and scope from the oboe thanks to the long bariolage passages.

Telemann's oboe concertos vary considerably in musical terms, yet they are always natural and pleasant to play. The individuality of the composer's style is evident to the ear: although it certainly belongs to the baroque age, it also contains hints of the classical style, and in particular the style galant.

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*Translated by Kate Singleton*

#### **CD9**

##### **Handel: Oboe Concertos**

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, the son of a well-established barber surgeon by his second wife. After matriculation in 1702 at Halle University and a brief period as organist at the Calvinist Church in the city, he moved to Hamburg in order to further a career in music, on which he was now decided. Employment at the opera, at first as a violinist and then as harpsichordist and composer was followed, in 1706, by travel to Italy, the source of the form his music had taken. Here, in Florence, Venice and Rome he made a name for himself, writing music in a number of genres, church music, opera, Italian oratorio, cantatas and instrumental works, while, in a keyboard contest with his contemporary Domenico Scarlatti, he was declared the better organist, with Scarlatti allowed to be a better harpsichordist.

A meeting in Venice with members of the court of the Elector of Hanover led to Handel's appointment in 1710 as

Kapellmeister to the Elector, while contact with the English ambassador was presumably instrumental in an immediate invitation to London for the newly established Italian opera. His return to Hanover the following year, after a short stay in Düsseldorf at the court of the Elector Palatine, lasted for some fifteen months, before a definitive return to London, where he now settled, occupied very largely with the Italian opera. It was when the commercial success of the opera began to decline, particularly with the establishment of two rival houses, that Handel turned his attention to a new form, English oratorio. This had an obvious appeal to a Protestant audience, avoiding, as it did, the problems of performance in a foreign language and the incongruities of plot that had become an inevitable concomitant of Italian opera seria. His last opera, *Deidamia*, was staged in London in 1741 and his last English oratorio, *The Triumph of Time and Truth*, an adaptation of a work he had written in Rome fifty years before, was given at Covent Garden in 1757 and 1758. Handel died in 1759, but his musical influence continued to dominate popular taste, doing much to eclipse the work of native composers.

As a practical musician, Handel borrowed extensively from his own earlier compositions and, as need arose, from the work of others, following the standard practice of the time. His three Oboe Concerti have been variously designated. The third of the series, the Concerto in G minor was first published, it seems, in Leipzig in 1863, when it was attributed to Handel and described as a work of 1703, although no other source is now known. In four movements, the concerto opens with a slow movement of characteristically dotted rhythm, a touch of that French style that the aging Corelli, working with Handel in Rome, had claimed to be beyond his comprehension. The second movement *Allegro* is followed by a *Sarabande* and a final dance movement thematically derived from the first movement.

Concerto No. 2 in B flat major was published with the first in London in 1740 by Walsh in the fourth volume of his *Select Harmony*. Whatever the original date of composition, the concerto certainly borrows extensively from overtures to two of the *Chandos Anthems*, written in 1717 and 1718 for James Brydges, created Duke of Chandos in the following year. The material from *O come let us sing unto the Lord and I will magnify thee*, *O God* is transposed and re-arranged to make what is, to all intents and purposes, a *sonata da chiesa*, following the established form of such church concertos with an emphatic opening slow movement, a second fugal *Allegro*, a third slower movement leading directly to a final *Allegro* in triple time. It has been suggested that the concerto was arranged by Handel for the Dutch oboist Jean Christian Kytch, who was employed by the Duke of Chandos in 1719 and 1720. It was the sight of Kytch's children begging, after the death of their father that in 1738 inspired the establishment of the Fund for the Support of Decayed Musicians and their Families, a charity to which Handel contributed generously.

Concerto No. 1 in B flat major is similar in form to the third and is generally thought to belong to the earlier period of Handel's life, written either in Hamburg or in Italy. It opens with an *Adagio*, leading to an *Allegro*, followed by a *Siciliana* and a final short *Vivace*, in the rhythm of a minuet, suggesting immediate kinship with the Concerto in G minor.

The *Air* and *Rondo* are arranged for oboe by the English oboist Evelyn Rothwell, and orchestrated by Anthony Camden. The *Air* uses the descending *arpeggio* figure, common, in one form or another, in Handel's instrumental music. It is followed by a lively *Rondo*, in which the principal theme frames contrasting episodes.

The *Suite* in G minor, attributed to Handel, has no certain source in its present form, derived, as it is, from an anonymous manuscript in the library of the Fürstenberg family and here adapted by Anthony Camden. A solemn and very Handelian French Overture, framing the traditional livelier dance section, leads to a *Gavotte* and a pair of *Bourrees* played in alternation. A slow *Sarabande* offers the chance of a fine solo oboe aria and

this is followed by a contrasting *Rigaudon*. The *Passacaille* follows the traditional Baroque dance-variation form and the *Suite* ends with a rapid *Passepied*.

The opera *Ottone, Re di Gennalzia* (*Otho, King of Germany*) was first staged at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, London, in 1723 and underwent various revisions and changes during the next ten years. There is some doubt as to the original form of the overture to the opera and it seems that the present three-movement work, with its opening French overture, fugal *Allegro* with the interplay of two oboes and final *Gavotte* may have had an earlier, independent existence. The *Gavotte* in particular enjoyed considerable contemporary popularity, described by Dr Burney as 'the delight of all who could play, or hear it played, on every kind of instrument, from the organ to the salt-box'.  
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## CD10

### C.P.E. Bach: Oboe Concertos

The ultimate purpose of music is well known: the man that touches my heart, arouses and calms my passions and also pleases me by employing my wit, fulfils that purpose completely. It does not require a thousand-fold of varieties of singing: one needs to strike the right tone of any passion, and it will be aroused. To touch even more effectively, also by means of surprise, and to please and employ the wit, one needs to have thorough knowledge of the harmonies. The attainment of these aims which, it seems to me, have their source in nature and have long since been recognised by every just and subtle feeling, is the character of Berlin's music.

And what man can reach the originality, the richness of the most noble and beautiful thoughts and the surprising novelty in singing [melody] and harmony of our [C.P.E.] Bach? – His mind is an inexhaustible ocean of thoughts, and as the vast ocean spans the globe and thousands of streams saturate it, Bach spans and saturates the whole range and depth of art. Johann Friedrich Reichardt (*Schreiben über die Berlinische Musik*, Hamburg 1775)

With very little documented music for solo oboe by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, the two concertos for oboe and strings and one solo sonata for oboe and basso continuo are all we currently have. In the records of Bach's estate, published in 1790 in Hamburg (which were based on the composer's own records), both of the concertos are dated 1765 (the end of Bach's time in Berlin).

The sonata is recorded as the 'first solo [sonata] for any instrument other than the clavier' and listed before a group of flute sonatas dated from the second half of the 1730s, suggesting that it was composed before 1735 and therefore before Bach's time in Berlin.

It is under some dispute as to who composed the *Pastorale* for oboe, bassoon and basso continuo; while some scholars believe it is a work by C.P.E. Bach, I personally think that it could have been written by his brother Wilhelm Friedemann. In the interests of completeness, however, we have included it in this programme.

The *Sonata* for Oboe follows the form described by Johann Adolph Scheibe in his *Critischer Musicus* (Hamburg, 1740):

*A solo in general begins with a slow movement. [...] This movement is followed by a fast one. [...] In a solo for the violin the composer can go as far as the instrument allows. However, a solo for the oboe must be more song-like because this instrument bears a close resemblance to the voice [...]. The solo ends with a fast or minuet-type movement, or even with a minuet itself. [...] If it is a minuet with variations, the bass notes must remain unchanged throughout all the variations in the melody. The variations themselves involve only the upper part and must always demonstrate the strength of the instrument.*

In the Adagio, the oboe appears to switch from one affect to the other. It seems to tell a tragic story: first plaintive and then full of hope, it is also tormented by self-doubts before interrupting itself and becoming brave again. The movement is a beautiful example of the 'Empfindsamer' style of Carl Philipp Emanuel, which was described by Johann Peter Abraham Schulz in Sulzer's *Allgemeinen Theorie der Künste* (1779) as 'so speaking that one believes to hear no tones but an understandable language which moves our imagination and feelings'. A brave Allegro follows the first movement, and the sonata is concluded with a variation-based finale. This last movement begins quite modestly but soon increases its range of expression: from a playful first variation followed by a second with sighing motifs, it eventually concludes with a dramatic third variation enriched by dissonant harmonies.

As with some of the concertos for cello or flute, both oboe concertos are arrangements of harpsichord concertos (Wq. 39 and 40). It is not known if Bach had a specific player in mind when he made these arrangements, but it could be that they were meant to be performed by Johann Christian Fischer, who resided in Potsdam in the mid 1760s. Both concertos are written in the common concerto form: a noble quick first movement is followed by a slow middle movement and concluded with another quick movement which has to be different in character from the first – 'As serious as the first movement is, the last movement has to be humorous and cheerful' (Johann Joachim Quantz: *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, Berlin, 1752). Indeed, the musical material is presented by the orchestra in the introductory *ripieno* (or *tutti*) sections and thereupon executed, sometimes in a very playful manner, by the oboe in the solo sections. In the first movement of the B flat concerto and the last movement of the E flat concerto, for instance, the oboe begins the theme and then suddenly stops in the middle of the phrase to allow the orchestra to complete the idea.

The highlights of both concertos are the slow middle movements. In the *Largo e mesto* from the B flat concerto, Bach requests the musicians to use mutes, helping to reinforce the melancholic affect of the piece; while on string instruments this refers to a device attached to the bridge of the instrument, the oboist must plug a piece of sheep wool into the bell of the instrument to mute the sound. In the solemn Adagio *ma non troppo* of the E flat concerto, long chromatic lines are twisted into each other so that the listener almost feels a sympathetic physical pain upon hearing it.

As with his father, Carl Philipp Emanuel was known for writing up to and beyond the contemporary limits of the instruments. His colleagues and admirers, however, could forgive this of the 'Originalgenie', as the results were often seen to outweigh the difficulties for the musicians. When Gottfried van Swieten – Austrian ambassador in Berlin and friend of Mozart – ordered six string symphonies from Bach, for example, he stressed that the composer should allow free play to its compositional artistry 'without being considerate of the difficulties which may occur for the performance'. In the oboe concertos, too, Bach writes passage-work and ornamentation that is extremely difficult to execute on the oboes of his time. However, as Johann Friedrich Reichardt notes in his *Briefe eines aufmerksamen Reisenden die Musik betreffend* (Vol. I, Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1774):

*What are difficulties, but something we are not used to because it does not occur every day?*

*Of course some notes could have been avoided because they are not good in the hand; but do you want to demand that Mr [C.P.E.] Bach knows all the instruments as thoroughly as his clavier? [...] since he lacks nothing than that, allow him to pay homage to humanity in this way.*

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#### CD11

Our aim has been to compile a recording of four concertos for oboe and oboe d'amore that represent the classic Viennese style. Because they were composed in the same years, it is not immediately evident to the ear which concerto was composed by whom, although Mozart's is effectively the most clearly recognizable. With the exception of Mozart, in fact, the composers are relatively unknown, which is why the concertos presented here are rarely played and only recorded within the context of original works for oboe and oboe d'amore. From around 1750, the oboe, an instrument hitherto largely used in chamber and church music, began to make its way into concert halls, and to be played by virtuoso soloists. At the same time, its construction also evolved, with the conic section becoming narrower so as to increase the high register. If at this point the soloist's melody line appears to be simpler than that of violin concertos, for example, it is because in Mozart's day the oboe comprised only two keys, which meant that its technical range was still fairly limited. Playing these concertos must have been a real challenge!

#### Ferlendis: Oboe Concerto in F No.1

There are about one hundred classical oboe concertos, most of which were composed by oboists hoping to promote appreciation of their own skills. One of them was Giuseppe Ferlendis, who was born in Bergamo (Italy) in 1755 and died in 1802 or 1810 in Lisbon (Portugal). Written around 1777, the work is delightful to play, with a lyrical first movement, and a distinctly humorous third movement. The son of a music teacher who had made a name for himself as a virtuoso oboe and cor anglais player, at the age of twenty-two Ferlendis was appointed first oboe in the orchestra of the Court Chapel in Salzburg, where he became acquainted with the Mozarts (Leopold, deputy Kappelmeister, and Wolfgang Amadeus, Konzertmeister and composer), earning 540 Florins for his efforts, which was better than Wolfgang's 500! It was for Ferlendis that Mozart wrote the Oboe Concerto in C major KV314 included in this recording.

Ferlendis only maintained this post for slightly over a year, from April 1777 to June 1778, by which time he had become what Leopold Mozart described as "the favourite among musicians". At all events, during this period he also introduced improvements to the cor anglais, since those he found at the Salzburg court were unplayable. Thereafter he travelled a great deal, to Brescia, Venice, London and Lisbon. His last oboe concerto was composed in 1795 in London and dedicated to Joseph Haydn, who mentioned in his notebook that the oboist he heard in London on 4 May 1795 "blew averagely". Ferlendis also composed other works for oboe and cor anglais, including sonatas, duets, trios, quartets, two other oboe concertos in C major, recently identified, and twelve *divertimenti* for two clarinets.

#### Hofmann: Oboe Concerto in C (Badley C2)

Leopold Hofmann (1738-1793) was born, lived his whole life and died in Vienna, a city with an intense cultural life. His teacher for counterpoint and the harpsichord was Georg Christoph Wagenseil, who enjoyed a great reputation in Vienna. Hofmann also studied the violin, possibly with Giuseppe Trani, who had also taught Dittersdorf. By profession a church musician, Hofmann also wrote a great deal of instrumental music, bringing him fame that spread well beyond the confines of Austria. On 9 May 1791, Mozart became his unpaid deputy as chorus master at Saint-Etienne Cathedral in Vienna, a post held by Hofmann since 1774.

Between the end of the 1750s and the mid 1770s, Hofmann composed around sixty concertos for various solo instruments. Some of them were probably written for himself or his pupils, in particular those for piano and violin; others may have been the fruit of commissions on the part of enthusiastic amateur

musicians. The musicologist Allan Badley has argued that the C2 Concerto was originally written for the oboe because three copies of it have survived, and no version for flute has come to light. It was composed in the 1770s, no later than 1780, which marked the death of one of the owners of the manuscripts, Hofmusik Franz Xaver Fürall, oboist at the Oettingen-Wallerstein court.

#### **Dittersdorf: Oboe d'amore Concerto in A**

Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, who was born in Vienna in 1739 and died in Bohemia in 1799, also wrote his Concerto for oboe d'amore around 1770. It is one of the very few concertos for this instrument of the classical period, and the only one composed by Dittersdorf, because during those years the demand for the gentle, sweet sonority of the oboe d'amore was declining. By contrast, the composers of the first half of the 18th century, especially those working in Germany (J.S. Bach, Telemann, Graupner, Graun, Heinchen), had written masterpieces for the instrument.

A highly talented, precocious violinist, Dittersdorf remains an important composer of the classical period. His oeuvre includes various concertos, of which 5 for oboe, 2 for double bass and 1 for viola, at least 120 symphonies, chamber music and vocal music that comprises cantatas, oratorios and sacred music, as well as the comic operas that established the Singspiel as a genre. He travelled throughout Germany, and was later influenced by Gluck and the Italian musical scene thanks to his journey with this latter to Bologna in 1763. He was appointed chapel master in Breslau in 1769. Around 1785 he played with Haydn, Mozart and Vanhal, his foremost pupil, in a string quartet.

#### **Mozart: Oboe Concerto in C KV271k (KV314)**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Salzburg 1756-Vienna 1791) was a prolific correspondent, and it is thanks to his letters that we know that he probably wrote the KV314 oboe concerto between 1 April 1777, which was when Ferlendis took up the appointment in Salzburg, and his departure for Munich on 23 September of that same year. Even if the work was composed with Ferlendis in mind, however, it would seem that this latter never played it, since he gave up his post in Salzburg in June 1778. On 2 November 1777, while in Mannheim Mozart made the acquaintance of Friedrich Ramm (1744-1811), considered an excellent oboist, even by Mozart: he "plays extremely well and with a very pure sound" (Letter from Mozart to his father, 4 November 1777, II, 104). He offered Ramm the concerto, and it became the oboist's hobbyhorse.

For a long time this concerto was thought to be lost. Then in 1920, in the archives of the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Bernhard Paumgartner discovered manuscript orchestral and oboe scores dating back to the 18th century, and realized that the music tallied with that of the flute concerto in D major K314, but transposed one tone lower. Later, studies of the scores and Mozart's letters proved the flute concerto to be an arrangement of the oboe concerto, written in haste to honour a commission received from De Jean, a rich Dutch patron who was also a good amateur flautist. Perusal of the original manuscript version would help resolve all questions pertaining to the oboe score and the Salzburg copy. Alas, this for the present is impossible because the composer's hand-written score has still not been found.

The timbre of the oboe, which is fine, brilliant and shrill, and yet at the same time sweet, is well suited to the classical Viennese style, and in particular to the gallant style typical of these concertos, where the soloist tends to predominate over the orchestra, giving voice to his skill, and to the ornamental variation, the contrasts and the seductively joyous spirit of the works. Apart from the passages without the soloists (tutti: exposition, recapitulation, coda), for the most part the orchestra is relegated to the role of accompaniment and harmonisation. By almost systematically removing the viola part

and sometimes the bass line as well, this reduction helps set off the soloist. On other occasions all that remains is the bass line, as in Hofmann. Mozart alone had all the strings play, even with the soloist, or just the 1st and 2nd violins. But then he particularly appreciated the viola for its harmony and timbre, as the quartets and the Sinfonia concertante K364 clearly reveal.

Generally speaking, the two horns add a touch of colour, always (with the exception of Mozart) in the tutti sections without the soloist, though Dittersdorf and Hofmann did not maintain them in the slow movement. The one exception is the first movement of Ferlendis's concerto, where the horns alone accompany the oboe for four bars (182 to 185). Mozart was the only composer to add two oboes to the two horns. The wind instruments accentuate certain passages in his concerto, even with the soloist, heralding developments within the third movement.

The harpsichord realising the basso continuo (also at Ferlendis and Mozart in this CD) adds an element of variety of the orchestral textures. The actual composition of the bass line varies from one composer to the next. For instance, Ferlendis lightens it by using short notes and punctuation, whereas Dittersdorf makes it omnipresent and marked, with long notes and repeated short notes. Apart from repeated notes, Hofmann relies on short melodic passages that accompany the oboe (1st movement), while Mozart often uses the pedal in repeated notes, or brief bass chords in syncopation with other parts.

The soloists enjoy a degree of freedom of interpretation in the cadenzas, a tradition established in the baroque period that allowed for the exhibition of virtuoso skill. Andrius wrote the cadenzas himself, on the basis of melodic and harmonic elements in each movement that he perceived as important.

Our interpretation of such refined, elegant and well-defined music hopes to bring out its delightfully theatrical character, which we hope that you will enjoy!

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Translation: Kate Singleton

#### **CD12**

##### **Fiorillo: Sinfonia Concertante No. 1 in F for 2 oboes & strings**

Fiorillo encountered the Sinfonia concertante form when he moved in 1784 to Paris, where he worked for three years before sailing over the Channel to settle in London for a time. It was here that he wrote the Sinfonia concertante for two oboes, published by Sieber in Paris in 1790. In all three of the symphonies concertantes presented on this recording, Fiorillo eliminated a full slow movement. The opening theme of this F major work is an arpeggiated gesture shared between the soloists in a game of call and response which lies at the heart of the genre. The second theme is presented in the dominant of C major, before a development which opens with an inversion of the first theme and moves into the relative minor key to explore the second theme. The arpeggiated theme returns in the bass, passed back to the first oboe, then sustained and doubled by the horns. The coda is again extensive. The rondo-finale is operatic in character as befits the scoring in which the soloists move in duet and then alternation as though they were on the stage of a *dramma giocoso* or *opera buffa*.