


Vivaldi

The background features a detailed illustration of a violin, with its body and f-hole rendered in a reddish-brown hue. Overlaid on the lower portion of the violin is a map of Amsterdam, showing the city's characteristic canal network and street grid. The word 'AMSTERDAM' is faintly visible on the map. In the upper right corner, there are faint sketches of a violin's scroll and a pair of mallets.

Concerto di Amsterdam

Combattimento Consort Amsterdam • Jan Willem de Vriend
Gordan Nikolitch



Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Concerto di Amsterdam

Concerto Grosso à 10 Stromenti 'Concerto di Amsterdam', RV562a

for violin, 2 oboes, 2 horns, timpani, strings and basso continuo

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|---|---------|------|
| 1 | Allegro | 5'07 |
| 2 | Grave | 2'16 |
| 3 | Allegro | 5'27 |

Sinfonia nell'Opera L'Olimpiade, RV 725

for strings and basso continuo

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|---|------------------|------|
| 4 | Allegro | 2'09 |
| 5 | Andante | 2'09 |
| 6 | Allegro moderato | 1'05 |

Concerto 'in due cori' in B-flat, RV 583

for violin (scordatura), 2 string orchestras and basso continuo

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|---|--------------------------------------|------|
| 7 | Largo e spiccato - Allegro non molto | 4'53 |
| 8 | Andante | 3'33 |
| 9 | Allegro | 4'31 |

Sinfonia in b 'al Santo Sepolcro', RV 169

for strings

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------|
| 10 | Adagio molto - Allegro ma non poco | 4'15 |
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Concerto in D 'Grosso Mogul', RV 208

for violin, strings, and basso continuo

11	Allegro	5'00
12	Grave-Recitativo	2'33
13	Allegro	7'12

Concerto in d, RV 243

for violin (scordatura), strings and basso continuo

14	Allegro	3'38
15	Andante molto	2'04
16	[Allegro]	3'18

Total Time

59'11

Combattimento Consort Amsterdam
Jan Willem de Vriend, musical director
Gordan Nikolitch, violin

Instruments:

Organ built by François Delhumeau (1993)

Harpichord built by Sebastián Nuñez (1989) after Johannes Ruckers (1638)

Antonio Vivaldi: Concerto di Amsterdam

Virtuosity and agility are without a doubt hallmarks of the solo parts of Vivaldi's compositions for violin and orchestra. This approach to composition not only offered the possibility of pyrotechnics but also served to comply with the laws of progress towards artistic mastery. According to contemporary theory an artist was considered a master of his area of expertise only after he had ascended the three grades of *translatio* (the 'translation' of works by recognised masters, i.e. practising, performing, reworking; examples of this last can be found in Bach's transcriptions of Vivaldi's works, one of these being the Concert in D recorded on this CD), *imitatio* (imitating as faithfully as possible), and finally *emulatio* (the art and skill of surpassing the artists who served as a shining example).

The composer was thus considered a craftsman. In the early years of Vivaldi's career it was Corelli who set the tone; but soon Vivaldi showed that he could claim recognition for his innovative and virtuoso style, which indeed surpassed that of Corelli. This is well illustrated by the concertos on this CD.

Concerto in D 'Concerto di Amsterdam' (RV 562a)

'Pomp and circumstance' characterise the scoring of the 'Concerto di Amsterdam': solo violin, two oboes, two horns, drums and string orchestra. This festive concerto grosso in D was performed in 1738 to mark the centenary of the Amsterdamse Stadsschouwburg (municipal theatre of Amsterdam), which was then located on the Keizersgracht. Up to now we have found no incontestable proof of Vivaldi's presence at the event. Whatever the truth, we know from Vivaldi's concert diary that, had he wished to come to Amsterdam, it would have been a difficult journey that could have been undertaken only by the express coach, which would have cost a fortune.

The impressive Allegro that opens the concerto wastes no time in powerfully asserting the D tonality in all the groups of instruments. The festive character of the piece is achieved thanks to full-blooded participation of the wind and drums. In addition, an impressive part is assigned to the solo violin. The second movement, marked 'grave' to stress the slow and steady tempo, begins with the various instrumental groups playing *pianissimo*, after which the solo violin is

given free rein in a delicate, tender, song-like melody. The *pianissimo* lasts until the final movement; in this Allegro the attention is once again focused on the solo violin, which, in alternation with tutti passages, performs some dazzling virtuoso skips, concluding with an impressive cadence.

Sinfonia from the opera 'L'Olimpiade' (RV 725)

Apart from an enormous quantity of instrumental and religious works, Vivaldi also wrote a remarkable number of operas. *L'Olimpiade* was first performed in 1734 in the Teatro Sant'Angelo, Venice, and is one of Vivaldi's most accomplished operas.

The libretto, by Pietro Metastasio, narrates a complicated love story against the backdrop of a favourite historical theme, the Olympic Games in ancient Greece. King Clistene promises as first prize the hand of his daughter Princess Aristeia, who is loved by both Licida and his friend Megacle.

The three-movement sinfonia (or overture) that opens the opera already sets the tone of the opera without revealing much about the music still to come.

When the theme and characters of an opera were distinguished by grandeur, courage and noble principles, the sinfonia anticipated this by overwhelming the audience with a grand and sublime style. All these expectations are satisfied by the radiant C major with which the overture begins: in the Allegro an exuberant, powerful and glorious musical tableau unfolds, in which a substantial role is assigned to the low strings. The beautiful, reserved melody of the short second movement, in C minor, follows without a break; here one is struck by the trio rhythms in the first violin. At the end Vivaldi introduces a moment of unsurpassed serenity, before bursting into the jubilant last movement, an Allegro moderato with dance rhythms and short phrases.

Concerto in B flat 'in due cori' (RV 583)

This concert for violin solo (the soloist's strings are tuned to E - A - D - B flat) and two orchestras is based on the old, peculiarly Venetian tradition of polychorality. Around the end of the 16th century Giovanni Gabrieli revealed the musical practice of using two choirs in the basilica of San Marco. Musicians from all over Europe swarmed to Venice to study the new style. Just as Gabrieli

was a great master in exploiting the possibilities of this technique, Vivaldi also succeeds in making highly effective use of his two orchestras. Through the constant use of repetition devices, echoes and alternating dynamics, this composition acquires an astonishingly dramatic eloquence. Also striking is the accompaniment in the Andante; this lyrical approach seems to be in advance of Vivaldi's time and is a distance presage of Mozart.

Sinfonia in B-flat minor 'Al Santo Sepolcro' (RV 169)

The name ('At the Holy Sepulchre') of this two-movement church sonata for strings alone refers to the Passion season. The term 'sepolcro' could also denote a certain type of Passion oratorio. Vivaldi forgoes the usual continuo accompaniment in order to achieve the effect of a subdued and solemn composition. The Adagio molto is characterised by simplicity: already in the opening bars there is a mood of sad meditation, giving way a little later to chromaticism. The second movement, an introverted and circumspect Allegro, is a short fugue, in which Vivaldi shows he has mastered the finer points of counterpoint.

Concerto in D 'Grosso Mogul' (RV 208)

The term 'Mogul' or 'Great Mogul,' the European title for the princes of Mongolia, can denote in a figurative way any person of great power and influence. The explanation of the name of this concerto can be found in Cividale del Friuli, a town about 120 kilometres from Venice and close to the border with Slovenia. The concerto was dedicated to Count Leonardo-Giorgio Pontotti, a noble patron who played the violin. As is well known, the composer was always ready to please his patrons with elegant and flattering texts. The demanding violin part provides the occasion for this, as can be heard in the Allegro, where the soloist needs to be in command of the technical fireworks. The second movement is an astonishing 'Grave recitativo,' which evokes a remote time and distant places, away from the honeyed tones of aristocratic salons. This instrumental recitative, with its melancholy violin sounds reminiscent of steppe and tundra and its subtle accompaniment, tells of age-old traditions. In this movement Vivaldi may have proceeded in a purely associative way, evoking

Middle Europe and also Marco Polo and the Far East. The third movement is once again purely western and closes with a splendid, complex cadence.

Concerto in D minor (RV 243)

In this concerto the violin soloist plays with his strings tuned e-a-d-a, thereby imparting a dark colour to the work. It is probably the kind of work with which we most easily associate Vivaldi. This is especially true of the third movement, with sounds reminiscent of *The Four Seasons*. This is preceded by a tender Andante, which makes a surprising contrast to the vigorous Allegro with which the concerto opens. This is a remarkable movement in which, towards the end, the violinist, produces sounds that lead one to suspect that Vivaldi in a fit of exuberance had introduced a hurdygurdy into the orchestra pit. On the contrary, however, Vivaldi knew the unexpected possibilities of his instruments and enjoyed exploiting them.

Marina van Driel ©2002

Translation: James Chater

Combattimento Consort Amsterdam

Founded in 1982 by violinist Jan Willem de Vriend, the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam has developed into a close-knit ensemble specialising in music from 1600-1800. The musicians' wish not to focus solely on the standard repertoire has resulted in many interesting programmes featuring remarkable and little-known works, some of which are only available in manuscript. The performance of these compositions in conjunction with more familiar works has proved to be refreshing and inspiring to listeners and performers alike.

Over the years the ensemble has given many memorable concerts and operatic performances including Handel's *Rodelinda* – a co-production with Studio's Onafhankelijk Toneel – *Alcina*, also by Handel, and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, in collaboration with De Nationale Reisopera.

In September 2002 the ensemble will be making its debut at the Holland Festival of Early Music in Utrecht, giving two performances of Rameau's opera *Platée* in a co-production with Onafhankelijk Toneel and the Nationale Reisopera. In addition to numerous concerts in the Netherlands, the Combattimento Consort also appeared in various European countries and in venues outside of Europe.

In addition to solo performances by members of the ensemble, the Combattimento Consort has also worked with great performers such as Barbara Bonney, Andreas Scholl and Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Thomas Zehetmair and Sabine Meyer as well as joining forces with Collegium Vocale Gent and other groups.

Jan Willem de Vriend

From its foundation in 1982 the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam has been directed by Jan Willem de Vriend. After studying the violin with Davina van Wely at the conservatories in Amsterdam and The Hague he performed all over the world in various chamber music combinations. In addition to his activities as artistic leader of the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam Jan Willem de Vriend is much in demand as a conductor, having been invited by numerous ensembles and orchestras in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. He has given masterclasses in the United States and Europe and is associated with several violin competitions as a member of the jury. Furthermore, De Vriend's arrange-

ments of some operas by Monteverdi have been performed under his direction in the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States.

Gordan Nikolitch

Gordan Nikolitch was born in 1968 and began studying the violin at the age of seven. He studied with the famous violinist and conductor Jean-Jacques Kantorow, obtaining his teaching diploma in 1987 and his diploma in solo violin studies in 1990 at the Musik-Akademie in Basel, Switzerland. During this period he cultivated his interest in Baroque and contemporary music and had the opportunity of working closely with Levin, Lutoslawski and Kurtag. He won many international prizes at the Tibor Varga, the Niccolo Paganini, the Citta de Brescia and the Vaclaw Huml international competitions.

Nikolitch was appointed leader of the Orchestre de Chambre d'Auvergne in 1989. He lead and directed this orchestra regularly for 10 years, becoming in parallel leader of the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. From 1997 he is leading the London Symphony Orchestra, a position which has become his exclusive orchestral commitment. He is as well regularly directing chamber orchestras from the leaders chair, among others the LSO Strings, Orchestre National de L'Ile de France and the Manchester Camerata. In 2000 he got the title of "Prince Consort Professor" at the Royal College of Music for string ensemble.

Nikolitch is a very keen chamber music player and has appeared in many renowned festivals, such as Musique en Emperi, Edinborough Festival and la Chaise Dieu with amongst others Vladimir Mendelssohn, Pieter Wispelwey, Christophe Coin, Eric le Sage, Maria Joao Pires and Emanuel Pahud. He recently joined the Vellinger String Quartet.

As a soloist he performed with amongst others Radio de la Suisse Romande, Basel Symphony Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra. In 2001 he played the Walton Violin Concerto with the LSO under Andre Previn. Future projects include the Brahms Double Concerto with the LSO and Bernard Haitink, which will be recorded for "LSO live", Walton Violin Concerto with LSO and John Eliot Gardiner, and a series of 5 performances of the First Paganini Violin Concerto in the Netherlands.

Gordan Nikolitch plays a violin by Lorenzo Storioni made in 1776.



Gordan Nikolitch &
Jan Willem de Vriend
Photo: Dirk Buwalda

Combattimento Consort Amsterdam

Violin	Jan Willem de Vriend, Reinier Reijngoud, Jacobien Rozemond, Eva Stegeman, Saskia Bos, Chris Duindam (Sepolcro, Olimpiade, Amsterdam, Due cori), Joris van Rijn (Due cori), Melanie Jansen (Due cori), Hike Graafland (Due cori), Mirjam Oost (Due cori)
Viola	Annette Bergman, Gisella Bergman (Due cori), Jan Schoonenberg (Sepolcro, Olimpiade, Amsterdam)
Violoncello	Wouter Mijnders, Douwe Fonda (Due cori)
Double Bass	Peter Jansen, Cristian Staude (Due cori)
Harpsichord	Pieter Dirksen, Marieke Spaans (Due cori)
Organ	Pieter Dirksen
Chitarrone	Søren Leupold
Oboe	Henk Swinnen, Ron Tijhuis
Bassoon	Jos Lammerse
Horn	Paul van Zelm, Christiaan Broers
Timpani	Luuk Nagtegaal

Recording date: November 2001

Recording location: Studio of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Hilversum

Recording: NorthStar Recording Services BV

Producing, Engineering & Editing: Bert van der Wolf

Executive producer: Willemijn Mooij

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