

VIVALDI: *Cantatas & Concertos*

Tone Wik, s; Per Hannisdal, bn; Alexandra
Opsahl, rec; Barokkanerne
2L 56 [SACD] 64 minutes

The final aria in this program gives it its title, 'Bellezza Crudel', and exemplifies its excellence. The interplay between soprano and transverse flute as they interweave and decorate their florid lines is delightful and virtuosic. The dramatic and ironic expression of the text's pairs of opposites (false happiness, cruel beauty) brings to the fore the wistful reality that—in love's pitiless vocabulary—outward gaiety often masks inner torment.

This superb program of four cantatas (R 660 *La Farfalletta S'Aggira Al Lume*, R 664 *Se Ben Vivono Senz'Alma*, R 678 *All'Ombra Di Sospetto*, and R 679 *Che Giova Il Sospirar*) and two concertos (R 441 for recorder and R 484 for bassoon) brings together Norwegian artists: soprano Tone Wik and the Barokkanerne ensemble. The performances are all top-flight, with wide variety of articulation, dynamics, and color at the musicians' command. The performers have all the raw force and punch of ensembles such as Concerto Italiano, coupled with unerring musical judgement and the first-rate technique to master the music and bring it to life with effortless expertise. From shimmering warmth in the second movement of the bassoon concerto to breathtaking depictions of Cupid in full flight, Vivaldi has a model advocate.

Notes, texts, translations, bios. I praised Tone Wik's first solo CD (M/J 2004, p 218), and John Barker surveyed recordings of Vivaldi's cantatas in his review of an excellent program by countertenor Philippe Jaroussky (S/O 2005).

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