

## **Fanfare - Raphael Wallfisch - modern cello**

**VIVALDI Concertos for Cello, Strings, and Continuo: In F, RV. 412; in A Minor, RV. 419; in D, RV. 404; in C, RV. 399; in D Minor, RV. 406; in C, RV. 398; in F, RV. 410.** • Raphael Wallfisch, cello; Nicholas Kraemer, harpsichord, organ, conductor; City of London Sinfonia. • NAXOS 8.550907 [DDD]; 57:09. Produced by Chris Craker.

**VIVALDI Concertos for Cello, Strings, and Continuo: in E<sup>b</sup>, RV. 408; in G, RV. 413; in C Minor, RV. 401; in A Minor, RV. 422; in C, RV. 400. Concerto in G Minor for Two Cellos, Strings, and Continuo, RV. 531.** • Raphael Wallfisch, Keith Harvey<sup>1</sup>, cellos, Nicholas Kraemer, harpsichord, organ, conductor; City of London Sinfonia. • NAXOS 8.550908 [DDD]; 57:20. Produced by Chris Craker.

**VIVALDI Concertos for Cello, Strings, and Continuo: in B<sup>b</sup>, RV. 423; in C Minor, RV. 402; in A Minor, RV. 418; in D, RV. 403; in B Minor, RV. 424; in D Minor, RV. 407; in E Minor, RV. 409.** • Raphael Wallfisch, cello; Nicholas Kraemer, harpsichord, organ, conductor; City of London Sinfonia. • NAXOS 8.550909 [DDD]; 62:13. Produced by Chris Craker.

**VIVALDI Concertos for Cello, Strings, and Continuo: in G Minor, RV. 416; in F, RV. 411; in D Minor, RV. 405; in A Minor, RV. 420; in G, RV. 414; in G Minor, RV. 417; in A Minor, RV. 421.** • Raphael Wallfisch, cello; Nicholas Kraemer, harpsichord, organ, conductor; City of London Sinfonia. • NAXOS 8.550910 [DDD]; 61:23. Produced by Chris Craker.

It's possible that Vivaldi didn't write the first cello concerto, but he was one of the first, and he wrote more than any other composer, including Boccherini whose instrument was the cello. Up until that time it was mostly considered a continuo instrument, but now it was allowed to sing solo. What are offered here are the complete cello concertos of the Red Priest, although I find the omission of RV. 415 inexplicable. (The only other recording I can find of it was by the Collegium Aureum in the 1960s.) Otherwise, despite the scarcity of Vivaldi cello concertos on disc, the only debut I can find here is RV. 419.

The only real competition here is from Ofra Harnoy on RCA who seems close to completing a similar series herself. Both are modern-instrument performances and are on par, which is to say very good. I first became aware of Nicholas Kraemer via his two marvelous recordings of the complete opus 8 and opus 9 collections by Vivaldi with the Raglan Baroque Players (an original-instrument ensemble) and was quite impressed. Raphael Wallfisch is a name new to me, but he seems to be more than equal to the task before him.

Naxos deserves a round of applause for this project, but this is not the whole story. According to a phone conversation, this is part of what is called "The Vivaldi Collection," which, if I understand correctly, will include all 600-plus works, a

concept of monumental proportions I hope and pray they complete. Meanwhile, the sound here is excellent, and the set of individual discs is heartily recommended. For Vivaldians, it is a must.

**Nils Anderson**

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### **Classical Music (BBC) - Rating 5\*/5\***

#### **Vivaldi: Complete Cello Concertos, Vols 1-4**

COMPOSERS: Vivaldi

LABELS: Naxos

WORKS: Complete Cello Concertos, Vols 1-4

PERFORMER: Raphael Wallfisch (cello); City of London Sinfonia/Nicholas Kraemer

CATALOGUE NO: 8.550907/8/9/10 DDD

Naxos intend to record Vivaldi's entire orchestral corpus, and Raphael Wallfisch's integral four-disc survey of the 27 cello concertos inaugurates this visionary, though plainly Herculean undertaking. Soloist and orchestra employ modern instruments; director Nicholas Kraemer contends that authentic protocols can be ably met by contemporary ensembles and, in articulation, style and ornamentation, these pristine, engaging readings have little to fear from period practitioners.

Wallfisch's pointed, erudite and spirited playing is supported with enlightened restraint by the CLS, directed from either harpsichord or chamber organ by Kraemer, whose sensitive continuo team merits high praise throughout.

Without exception, these Concertos adopt an orthodox fast-slow-fast three-movement format. Wallfisch, dutifully observant in matters of textual fidelity, plays outer movements with verve, energy and lucidity, such that high-register passagework, an omnipresent feature of these works, is enunciated with the pin-sharp focus of Canaletto's images of 18th-century Venice, which adorn the covers of these issues. Slow movements have suitable gravity.

Wallfisch's athletic, commendably intelligent accounts claim unqualified recommendation, though an additional Naxos release, devoted to six of Vivaldi's Wind Concertos, and the orchestral Sinfonia in D, RV 122, is hardly less captivating. Solo contributions are uniformly admirable, and the recordings themselves are superlative. With performances of this calibre, and in demonstration quality sound, one marvels that Naxos can offer so much for so little! A triumphant debut for what seems destined to become one of the legendary recording projects of the decade. Michael Jameson