

**VIVALDI Complete Chamber Concerti** • Collegium Pro Musica • BRILLIANT  
94332 (3 CDs: 144:54)

Probably unlike most people, my exposure to Antonio Vivaldi was *not* “The Four Seasons”; instead, it was a terrific Epic LP (later reissued on Odyssey) of several of the chamber concerti and sonatas, performed by a group billing itself as “The Baroque Ensemble of Paris” and comprised of such luminaries as Jean-Pierre Rampal and Robert Veyron-Lecroix. I was entranced, and to this day they remain my favorite works by the Italian master. Frustratingly, this recording remains one of several stellar Odyssey issues relicensed from European companies (I particularly also have in mind “The Baroque Oboe” with Michel Piguet, Hansjürg Lange, and Lionel Rogg, and “Renaissance Dances” with Lionel Rogg and the Ancient Instrument Ensemble of Zurich) that has never seen the light of day on CD. Can’t *somebody* be persuaded to make these available again? (Pristine Audio and Klassic Haus Restorations, are you reading this?)

As for the present anthology, what constitutes a “complete” set of Vivaldi’s “chamber concerti” definitely seems to be in the eye of the compiler. This three-CD set contains the concerti and sonatas with RV catalog numbers 83, 84, 86-88, 91, 92, 94-96, 99, 100, 103, 105-108, and 801. A rival four-CD set with Il Giardino Armonico on Teldec contains works with RV catalog numbers 53, 63, 86-88, 91-95, 97, 99, 100, 103, 105, 106, and 108 and the flute concerti Op. 10 Nos. 1-6 (RV 428, 433-435, 437, and 439). Thus the Brilliant Classics set offers five works not included in the Teldec set, and the Teldec set contains ten works (four if the Op. 10 series is discounted) not included in the Brilliant Classics set. Other individual discs of Vivaldi’s chamber concerti I own or have looked at may sometimes include yet another piece not present in either of these sets. So, with respect to the claim of completeness, *caveat emptor*.

Where *caveat emptor* does not apply is to the performances, which are top-notch and noticeably superior to those on the Teldec set with respect to both instrumental balance and interpretations. The nine members of Collegium Pro Musica (including organist/harpsichordist Roberto Lorregian, who has also participated in distinguished multi-disc sets for Brilliant of music by Frescobaldi and de Cabezón) play with polish and dexterity. Special mention should be made of recorder player Stefano Baglino, who has the lead role in all the pieces except RV 83 and 801; he is as fine a virtuoso on his instrument as I’ve ever heard. The recorded sound is well balanced, being neither too close or distant. Anyone who shares my enthusiasm for this part of Vivaldi’s compositional output should acquire this set (easily done at its bargain price) forthwith; highly recommended. **James A. Altena**