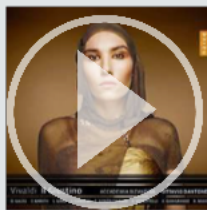


OPERA CHOICE



Dantone's Vivaldi is an enticing carnival of colour

Nicholas Anderson enjoys a cast in very fine voice and a score positively bejewelled in splendour



Vivaldi

Il Giustino

Delphine Galou, Emöke Baráth, Silke Gäng, Ana Maria Labin, Ariana Vendittelli, Emiliano Gonzalez Toro, Alessandro Giangrande, Verónica Cangemi, Rahel Maas; Accademia Bizantina/Ottavio Dantone
Naïve OP 30571 187:00 mins

Reinhard Strohm, whose edition of Vivaldi's mid-period opera is used here, describes *Il Giustino* as exuberant. The composer wrote it, not for his native Venice, but for Rome where it was premiered during the 1724 carnival season. Niccolò Beregan's 1683 libretto, set in the sixth century AD at the time of Emperor Justin I, alludes metaphorically to the defence of the Holy Roman Empire against the Ottomans. It was revised by Pietro Pariati, set by Albinoni in 1711, then by Vivaldi with adjustments, and finally, in 1737 by Handel, who clearly knew Vivaldi's score. The *opera seria* ingredients of rebellion, intrigue, crossed love, jealousy and the supernatural feature in a colourful score with felicitous self-borrowings.

Ottavio Dantone's fine cast of singers includes Veronica Cangemi (Leocasta), who will be familiar

from previous appearances in Naïve's ground-breaking series. Delphine Galou, in the title role, declaims with even-toned clarity. Exceptionally, Vivaldi provided her in Act I with an *ottava rima* or eight-line stanza, but without any music. Presumably, the singer was expected to improvise, but here Dantone himself has supplied the music. Exceptional, too, is an *obbligato* psalter which accompanies

Giustino's 'Ho nel petto un cor si forte' (Act II).

Arias which especially captured my fancy are Anastasia's 'Sento in seno' (Act II), and Leocasta's lyrical and beautifully ornamented A

major 'Senti l'aura che leggiera' (Act II), which Vivaldi parodied in *Farnace* (1727), and in the *pasticcio* opera *Tamerlano, or Bajazet* (1735). It also provided material for the finale of a violin concerto, RV 349. Altogether, a splendid achievement.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★★

**Delphine Galou
 declaims with
 even-toned clarity**

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