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NAXOS

# VIVALDI

Concertos for  
Two Cellos

Julian and Jiaxin Lloyd Webber

European Union Chamber Orchestra • Hans-Peter Hofmann



Antonio  
**VIVALDI**  
(1678-1741)

**Concertos for Two Cellos**

	<b>Concerto in G major, RV 532</b>	<b>11:22</b>
1	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>3:59</b>
2	<b>Andante</b>	<b>4:10</b>
3	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>3:13</b>
	<b>Concerto in G minor, RV 531</b>	<b>10:24</b>
4	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>3:35</b>
5	<b>Largo</b>	<b>3:38</b>
6	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>3:11</b>
	<b>Concerto in E minor, RV 409*</b>	<b>6:53</b>
7	<b>Adagio-Allegro</b>	<b>3:39</b>
8	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>1:01</b>
9	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>2:13</b>
	<b>Concerto in G major, RV 545</b>	<b>9:10</b>
10	<b>Andante molto</b>	<b>3:35</b>
11	<b>Largo</b>	<b>1:59</b>
12	<b>Allegro molto</b>	<b>3:36</b>
	<b>Concerto in F major, RV 539</b>	<b>7:27</b>
13	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>3:01</b>
14	<b>Larghetto</b>	<b>2:09</b>
15	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>2:17</b>
	<b>Concerto in G minor, RV 812</b>	<b>10:49</b>
16	<b>Allegro</b>	<b>3:05</b>
17	<b>Largo cantabile</b>	<b>4:44</b>
18	<b>Allegro cantabile</b>	<b>3:00</b>
19	<b>Astor Piazzolla (1921-92): Milonga from Concerto for Bandoneon and Guitar</b>	<b>6:27</b>

All arrangements by Julian Lloyd Webber with the exception of *RV531*

All tracks Julian Lloyd Webber, Cello 1, Jiaxin Lloyd Webber, Cello 2  
except \*Jiaxin Lloyd Webber, Cello 1, Julian Lloyd Webber, Cello 2

Publishers: 1-18 Phyllosopus Publications; 19 Editions Henry Lemoine

**Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)**

**Concertos for Two Cellos**

The first arranger of Vivaldi concertos was Vivaldi himself. Even though he is rightly famed for his sensitivity to instrumental tone colour and for his feeling for the essential character of each of the multitude of instruments for which he wrote, he knew when a solo part written for one instrument would also suit another. When he made a substitution for the solo instrument, he sometimes altered nothing at all in the musical text and merely wrote into the score the name of the new or alternative instrument. This is the case with his published oboe concertos, where solo violin can be used instead, and with two unpublished concertos for two violins, which at a stroke of the pen became concertos for violin and organ. A high register can even be exchanged for a low register, as in the triple concerto RV 554/554a, where solo organ and violin may be partnered either by oboe or by cello. There is even one amusing instance (RV 312) where Vivaldi began a concerto as one for sopranino recorder (*flautino*) but changed his mind in mid-course and turned it into a violin concerto. Vivaldi's attitude was ultra-pragmatic: if a new instrumentation called for the modification, here or there, of an instrumental line, he would make all the necessary changes; otherwise, he was quite willing to retain his original text.

The present recording aims to recapture something of the Protean nature of Vivaldi's zest for experiment by performing a variety of concertos with two like or unlike solo instruments as ones for two cellos. Naturally, instruments cannot be exchanged indiscriminately, and every care has been taken to select concertos that "work" in the new medium and, moreover, are of a kind that could plausibly have been rescored in similar fashion by the composer himself.

The empathy that Vivaldi felt for the cello and the bassoon, the two principal "low" instruments, is shown not only by the unexpectedly large quantity of music he composed for each of them but also by his understanding of their mercurial moods, by turns soulful and playful, agitated and serene. He may have played the cello

himself, although if he did, this is quite likely to have been the *viola da spalla*, a short-lived species of cello played like an outsize viola and supported by the shoulder. Many of his parts for solo cello were written for the girls and women of the Pietà, that celebrated Venetian home for foundlings whose all-female orchestra dazzled Venetian society and the foreign visitors who flocked to the lagoon city during the eighteenth century. He also supplied many patrons and orchestras outside Venice with music featuring the solo cello – especially during the 1720s, which was the decade of peak production for Vivaldi's concertos.

To this decade and almost certainly to the Pietà belongs RV 532, the popular concerto originally scored for two mandolins, strings and continuo. At first sight, it might seem an impossible task to transport the evanescent, delicate sound of the mandolin to the sound-world of the cello, but with a feathery, detached style of playing, the perfect translation is easily achieved. This concerto reveals like few others the secret lying at the core of Vivaldi's art: how to be simple without becoming banal.

From the same period and place comes RV 531, Vivaldi's only concerto originally for two cellos. Its outer movements express pure dynamism, while the central slow movement forms the emotional heart of the work. It was Vivaldi who pioneered the idea of stripping away the orchestra from the slow movement, leaving the soloists to play together in intimate, chamber-music fashion, as if in a sonata. The concertos RV 532, 545 and 812 in this recording do likewise. This radical new formula soon won adherents: we find J.S. Bach doing the same in his *Second Brandenburg Concerto*.

The concerto RV 409 is, strictly speaking, a concerto for one cello, but a novelty in its instrumentation makes it readily convertible into one for two cellos: in its solos a bassoon without continuo reinforcement provides its bass. A further novelty is introduced in its first two movements, both of which are composite structures in which slow and fast tempos alternate. In the first movement it is the solos

that are slow, while the orchestral punctuations are quick. In the second movement this pattern is reversed. The finale, at least, is a more conventional, "pure" *Allegro*, marked by the joyous syncopations that are one of Vivaldi's hallmarks.

The performance of RV 545 features a double conversion – of register as well as of timbre – since Vivaldi conceived its solo parts for oboe and bassoon. Strangely enough, the autograph score, today in Turin, betrays that the opening theme of the first movement was originally intended to open an instrumentally accompanied cantata. Like Prokofiev two centuries later, Vivaldi did not like to throw away his discarded ideas, and sometimes found unexpected new uses for them. The jig-like movement that ends this sparkling work has all the playfulness of the *commedia dell'arte*.

That two cellos can successfully stand in for two horns in RV 539 seems less extraordinary when one remembers that there was a long tradition of violins mimicking the idiom of the trumpet. The horn calls in the outer movements succeed because there is no pretence that the cellos are speaking here in their own voice: they are clearly simulating hunting calls. As for the slow movement, here Vivaldi's horns are clearly imitating the lyrical style of strings, so the cellos repossess, so to speak, what was rightly theirs.

RV 812 owes its high catalogue number to the fact that its existence came to general knowledge less than ten years ago. It survives only in a manuscript in the private collection of the castle of Rohrau (Haydn's birthplace) in Austria, seat of the noble Harrach family. Vivaldi's music was popular among the central European nobility in the 1720s, and it seems possible that the concerto was written especially for a member of that family. In its original form, it was written for solo violin (or oboe) and cello, a scoring that translates effortlessly into the two-cello format. How exciting that after almost a century of intensive searching for lost works by Vivaldi such a beautiful and characteristic work should suddenly turn up out of the blue!

**Michael Talbot**

## **Astor Piazzolla (1921-92)**

### **Milonga for two cellos from Concerto for Bandoneon and Guitar (arr. Julian Lloyd Webber)**

As the early years of the twenty-first century unfolded it was fascinating to watch the rise and rise of Astor Piazzolla amongst the pantheon of the previous century's composers. Especially as the three ingredients – melody, rhythm and harmony – so fundamental to his music were almost taboo during the 1950s when Piazzolla was studying in Paris with the legendary French teacher, Nadia Boulanger.

This *Milonga* displays all Piazzolla's most distinctive hallmarks. A typically poignant – yet urgent – melody plays to a pulsating bass line, followed by an even more plaintive theme which alternates between the two solo instruments. A complete change of mood finds the soloists almost whistling a jaunty duet until an abrupt return of the 'plaintive' theme builds to a dramatic climax before dissolving into moody closing harmonics. The listener is left with the distinct impression that an awful lot has happened in a very short space of time.

**Julian Lloyd Webber**

## **European Union Chamber Orchestra**

**Continuo: David Wright, Harpsichord and Chamber Organ • Giacomo Grava, Cello**



The EUCO gave its first concerts in 1981 and soon gained a worldwide reputation as a musical ambassador for the European Union. From 1992 to 2004 assistance from the European Commission enabled EUCO to make intercontinental tours covering South and East Asia, North, South and Central America, North Africa and the Middle East as well as Europe. Since 2005 EUCO has devoted more time to performing across Europe. The 2012 schedule took in a live broadcast on BBC Radio 3 from Llandudno with Julian Lloyd Webber, the Bath Festival with Alison Balsom, concerts at the Ravello Festival in Italy and Luxembourg and a tour of Christmas concerti with Nicola Benedetti.

## **Hans-Peter Hofmann**



Hans-Peter Hofmann has toured as a soloist and chamber music player in England, France, Holland, Spain and Austria where he has performed in both the Vienna Musikverein and the Vienna Konzerthaus. In 1999 he founded the Ensemble Plus and in 2006 joined the Ensemble Les Dissonances in Paris. He has broadcast on Berlin Radio, Süddeutscher Rundfunk and Südwestfunk in Germany and on Swiss and Austrian Radio and has made seventeen recordings of repertoire ranging from Baroque to Jazz.

## Julian Lloyd Webber

Julian Lloyd Webber is one of today's leading musicians. He has given the premières of more than fifty new works for cello and has inspired new compositions from composers as diverse as Malcolm Arnold and Joaquín Rodrigo to Philip Glass and Eric Whitacre. His many recordings include his Brit Award-winning Elgar *Concerto* conducted by Yehudi Menuhin (chosen as the finest ever version by *BBC Music Magazine*), the Delius *Concerto* with Vernon Handley and the Philharmonia, the Dvořák *Concerto* with Václav Neumann and the Czech Philharmonic, Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* with the London Symphony under Maxim Shostakovich and a coupling of Britten's *Cello Symphony* and Walton's *Concerto* with Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, which was described by *Gramophone* magazine as "beyond any rival". As founder of the British Government's In Harmony programme and the Chair of Sistema England, he continues to promote personal and community development in some of England's most deprived areas. Julian Lloyd Webber plays the 'Barjansky' Stradivarius cello of c. 1690.



## Jiaxin Lloyd Webber

Jiaxin Lloyd Webber graduated from Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China, in 1997. She was already giving performances with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra but left China for further studies in New Zealand where she received her Master's Degree at the University of Auckland in 2001. While in New Zealand she was principal cello of the Auckland Chamber Orchestra and played regularly with both the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. With the Auckland Symphony Orchestra she performed cello concertos by Dvořák, Elgar and Lalo. Jiaxin Lloyd Webber was also a founding member of the Aroha String Quartet. Since moving to London in 2007 she has performed as a soloist at the Royal Festival Hall and broadcast for BBC Radio 3. Jiaxin is married to fellow cellist Julian Lloyd Webber.

The first arranger of Vivaldi's concertos was Vivaldi himself, and Julian Lloyd Webber's new versions on this recording reflect the composer's pragmatic attitude and zest for experiment. Vivaldi's *Concerto in G minor RV 531* is his only original concerto for two cellos. Alongside this appear works both popular and recently discovered, the mercurial moods of the cellos representing instruments from mandolins to hunting horns. Piazzolla's *Milonga* displays all of his most distinctive hallmarks. Julian and Jiaxin Lloyd Webber's acclaimed album *A Tale of Two Cellos* can be heard on Naxos 8.573251.

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**VIVALDI**  
(1678-1741)

DACbeachcroft

## Concertos for Two Cellos

Arrangements by Julian Lloyd Webber†

<b>1-3</b>	<b>Concerto in G major, RV 532†*</b>	<b>11:22</b>
<b>4-6</b>	<b>Concerto in G minor, RV 531</b>	<b>10:24</b>
<b>7-9</b>	<b>Concerto in E minor, RV 409†*</b>	<b>6:53</b>
<b>10-12</b>	<b>Concerto in G major, RV 545†*</b>	<b>9:10</b>
<b>13-15</b>	<b>Concerto in F major, RV 539†*</b>	<b>7:27</b>
<b>16-18</b>	<b>Concerto in G minor, RV 812†*</b>	<b>10:49</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>Astor Piazzolla (1912-92): Milonga†*</b> <b>from Concerto for Bandoneon and Guitar</b>	<b>6:27</b>

**\*WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS**

## Julian and Jiaxin Lloyd Webber, Cellos

**European Union Chamber Orchestra**  
**directed by Hans-Peter Hofmann, Violin**  
**David Wright, Harpsichord and Chamber Organ**

With thanks to DAC Beachcroft

A detailed track list and publishers' information can be found inside the booklet

Recorded at St George's, Brandon Hill, Bristol, England, in July 2013

Producer: Raphaël Mouterde • Engineer: Mike Hatch • Booklet notes: Michael Talbot  
and Julian Lloyd Webber • Cover photograph by Simon Fowler