

VIKTORIA MULLOVA



MUSIC IN MILAN:
Viktoria Mullova and
Giovanni Antonini

SLEEVENOTES

Composer Vivaldi

Works Concerto in D Major RV 208 'Grosso Mogul'; Concerto in B Minor for four violins and cello RV 580; Concerto in C Major RV 187; Concerto in D Major RV 234 'L'Inquietudine'; Concerto in E Minor RV 277 'Il Favorito'

Artists Viktoria Mullova (vln),
Il Giardino Armonico/
Giovanni Antonini

Label Onyx

Recorded Milan, Italy

Why are you only now recording Vivaldi concertos?

When I first talked to Philips about recording Mozart and Beethoven concertos, my third choice was Vivaldi. But Giovanni Antonini, the leader of Il Giardino Armonico, said that we couldn't record them just yet as we had to perform them more. We toured for another year to Spain and Germany but by then,

the Philips contract was finished. But it was my dream to record the Vivaldi, so I wanted to go ahead.

How did you choose the concertos to record?

Giovanni brought me a pile of them and I had to play through them. Some of them are really tricky – they seem very simple, but they're very difficult. Giovanni wanted to record some which I didn't and we found it difficult to agree! We played them with the group and tried them out and slowly we came to a decision. Actually, I have to say that playing with Il Giardino Armonico was a dream come true.

So were you nervous when you stepped in to the recording studio?

No, because you couldn't actually tell whether it was a studio recording or a live concert. We

were recording in a little church just outside Milan at sometimes two or three in the morning and the whole group was playing standing. It completely felt like a performance. We recorded whole movements – never bit by bit.

But how did you keep the spontaneity going at 3am?

I remember my fingers wouldn't move anymore – it was so hard at the end. So I have no idea what came out. I'm so curious to hear it. But what kept me going was that playing with this group was one of the best times of my life in musical terms. It was such fun.

More fun than recording with a symphony orchestra?

Absolutely – there's no comparison. I really felt that the whole group was breathing and moving together.

Of course, you used gut strings for this project...

Yes – and they were tuned a semi-tone down. It's a wonderful sound and it worked very well. I think my Stradivarius actually likes this tuning. I'd only played with gut strings once before, playing Mozart with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. But now I think I need a second violin – it's very hard on the instrument to change strings all the time.

Was it difficult getting used to playing with gut strings?

You have to adjust the position of the arm and your bow technique and wrist – everything is much more flexible and relaxed. Your body has to get used to it.

With the record label Onyx, you have control over your projects. Do you feel you have more freedom?

I'm free to choose how the disc looks, how many to press and how I'm going to spend my money! It's a bit of an experiment, so I don't know how it'll work out. We'll see.

Viktoria Mullova's new Vivaldi disc with Il Giardino Armonico is out 16 May on Onyx