

**ANTONIO: Lotti – Caldara – Vivaldi**

aud 97.809

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Gramophone (2023.08.01)

GRAMOPHONE

Three Antonios – Vivaldi, Caldara and Lotti, all close contemporaries, all pupils of Legrenzi – supply a snapshot of 18th-century Venice in this uneventful recital from British countertenor Alex Potter and German baroque ensemble la festa musicale.

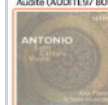
The centrepiece is Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus*, and the recording is also bookended by two concertos by the composer. Commercially it makes sense, but with no shortage of top-notch recordings of psalm-setting, it seems a shame to retreat musical ground when (as Potter shows us in tantalizingly small mouthfuls) there's so much else to uncover.

Potter's Vivaldi is nicely sung, coloratura tidy if a little querulous at times. But it's all fairly undifferentiated. Tempos, mood and articulation are mellow to a fault – even though something like the explosive opening to 'Surgite' – and *la festa musicale* find less of the detailed textural shading and characterisation here than we hear in the concertos and stand-alone instrumental movements. There's little bite anywhere from the band (who match Potter's rounded, warm tone), but there is a lovely fragile sheen to the *Largo* of the Concerto in G minor, as well as an attractive glow in the *Introduzione* from Caldara's *Gionata* (even if battle-inspired rhythms and fanfares seem to ask for something more forceful).

The *Gionata* movement is one of a variety of recording premieres, including two further instrumental sinfonias and instrumental episodes by Caldara (notably the melting, bittersweet opening from *Le gelosie d'un amore utilmente crudele*) and – most substantial – two sacred cantatas by Lotti: *Sacri amoris aurate amate* and *Auræ lenes quæ prata foveitis*. The slow second aria from the latter, 'Quærit bene', is a highlight, its graceful, languishing lines suiting both Potter and ensemble well. As a contemplation of martyrdom, however, it could have invited a less controlled performance.

There's nothing less than attractive here, but equally little that compels with any urgency.

Caldara · Lotti · Vivaldi
Caldara Ave regina caelorum. Le gelosie d'un amore utilmente crudele. Gionata - Introduzione. Le protezioni evangeliche di Isala Lotti Auræ lenes quæ prata foveitis. Averte faciem tuam. Sacri amoris aurate amate Vivaldi Concertos - RV155, RV157 Nisi Dominus, RV508 Alex Potter countertenor La Festa Musicale Audite (AUDITE 97 809 - 74 - T)



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Caldara • Lotti • Vivaldi

Caldara Ave regina caelorum. Le gelosie d'un amore utilmente crudele. Gionata - Introduzione. Le profezie evangeliche di Isaia
Lotti Aurae lenes quae prata fovetis. Averte faciem tuam. Sacri amoris aurae amate
Vivaldi Concertos - RV155, RV157. Nisi Dominus, RV608

Alex Potter counter-tenor La Festa Musicale
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