

structure, and while even Capuçon cannot make a great deal out of the first two, the lovely Third, in G, bounces along genially, and its *Adagio* is sustained right through to the ingenuity of turning its opening phrase into the final cadence. The final *Rondeau* however alerts us to a problem that will recur in Nos 4 and 5: their finales, with their frankly hilarious interludes, are delivered with po-faced exactness. Where is the humour; where are the unexpected surprises?

What I miss in Capuçon's playing here is the sheer wit and brightness of, for example, Francesca DeGo's highly praised recent accounts with Roger Norrington. The rumbustious 'Turkish' episode in the Fifth, with its creepy chromaticism, works well, but too much else lacks the down-to-earth humour that must surely have had them laughing in Salzburg. Two single movements complete the release, the *Rondo* in C (with its high top-C ending) and the beautiful *Adagio* in E, but the *Rondo* in B flat, K269 is not included.

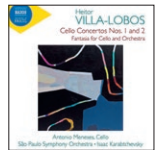
Nicholas Kenyon  
**PERFORMANCE**  
**RECORDING**

★★★★  
 ★★★★★

## Villa-Lobos

### Cello Concertos; Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra

Antonio Meneses (cello); São Paulo Symphony Orchestra/  
 Isaac Karabtchevsky  
 Naxos 8.574531 68:19 mins



After taking charge of Naxos's recordings of the 12 boisterous symphonies of Villa-Lobos, this composer's output clearly holds no terrors for the Brazilian conductor

Isaac Karabtchevsky. Cellist Antonio Meneses never flinches either, least of all in the early cello concerto of 1915, perhaps the most tangled of the three works presented on this enjoyable album. This was Villa-Lobos's first substantial orchestral work, written with gusto and plenty of forceful contributions from the brass. Any concerns over balance problems between a solo cello and a busy orchestra were breezily left to another day. Concerto No. 2 finally arrived in 1953, by which time textures and construction had become notably tidier. The soloist now has much more space for manoeuvring and there's also room for a chunky cadenza. Meneses responds to his expanded opportunities with



Vigorous Vivaldi:  
 Fabio Biondi surmounts  
 the composer's many  
 musical challenges

playing both spirited and soulful, and always of considerable lustre.

But the work that really shows the composer at his most potent is the 1945 *Fantasia*. With no concerto rules to observe or ignore, Villa-Lobos's inspiration and imagination take wing in three varied and concise movements, strikingly orchestrated with unusual use of the cello's lowest register; possibly a homage, as the booklet annotator suggests, to the double-bass expertise of conductor Serge Koussevitzky, the work's dedicatee. Yet even when the Amazon jungle seems at its most choking in this latest addition to Naxos's series 'The Music of Brazil', the composer, conductor and orchestra always ensure that listening stays engaging.

Geoff Brown

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Vivaldi

### Concerti per violino XI 'Per Anna Maria'

Fabio Biondi (violin); Europa Galante  
 Naïve OP7368 59:21 mins



This is the 11th volume of Naïve's 'Vivaldi Edition' devoted to the Red Priest's violin concertos. It is perhaps the most revealing, as it showcases six concertos written for his star student and favourite soloist, Anna Maria.

Little is known about Anna Maria, although she was a pupil of Vivaldi's at the Ospedale della Pietà orphanage in Venice from an early age and later gained fame as an instrumental player, not only of the violin, but also of the viola d'amore, theorbo, lute, harpsichord and mandolin. Vivaldi wrote at least 24 violin concertos for her. Just two (including RV 207, recorded on this album) were published during his lifetime. Those that were not intended for public performance are noticeably more experimental and technically demanding.

The six recorded concertos range from the swagger of RV 229 and the programmatic scene painting of 'The Posthorn', RV 363, to the lyricism of RV 260 and the cheerful simplicity of RV 261. The most emblematic is RV 179a, which appears in a Venetian manuscript bearing Anna Maria's name. The *Largo* from a related concerto – RV 581 – is added as a heartfelt salutation at the end of the recording. Fabio Biondi effortlessly surmounts the technical difficulties and stylistic challenges of each concerto. He also directs Europa Galante with characteristic vigour and aplomb. The recording is close and intimate – a little too intimate at times, with Biondi's sniffing a touch intrusive in RV 207.

John-Pierre Joyce

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## BACKGROUND TO...

### Villa-Lobos's Cello Concerto No. 1

Some mystery surrounds the Brazilian composer's First Cello Concerto, also his first large-scale orchestral work. He played the cello, so it was perhaps an obvious place to start, though the musical vernacular of the work is multifaceted, the young composer drawing on all manner of styles.

The work was composed for cellist Alfredo Gomes some time between 1913-15, though he didn't premiere it; in fact Villa-Lobos's concerto went unplayed until May 1919 when he himself conducted it at Rio's Teatro Municipal, with Newton Padua in the soloist's chair.



EMILIE ASHLEY, GETTY