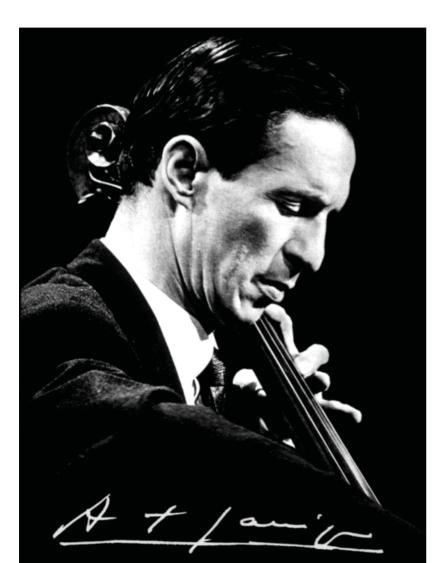
Antonio Janigro

Valter Dešpalj, Đurđa Otržan, Ivan Supek



Johann sebastian Bach Suites for Cello Antonio Janigro

⊙ Westminster XWN 18073 18349-50

It is very fascinating to listen to Bach's Cello Suites interpreted by Antonio Janigro, at the present time, when everyone is increasingly leaning on what the English nicely called 'period informed performances: When I was a "budding" cello student back in 1960s, overwhelmed by Janigro's Bach, I was not a least bit "period informed". At school nobody actually insisted on the purity of style - the sensibility of Romanticism was dominating the performance of works from all styles, often to the extent that it reminded me of a prank with Mona Lisa's moustache. Although, we were expected to show a higher degree of seriousness and depth when interpreting Bach, even his music was not spared from "romantic touch".

At that time, to grow-up on Janigro's Bach was the best thing that could happen to a young cellist striving to develop a good taste. Performances by the great master will not, however, reveal the characteristic, somewhat lighter and more dance-like articulation. This was the time when legato strokes were excessively used and tempi were generally slower, particularly affecting the sarabands, turning them sometimes into elegies. Also, neither Janigro nor the majority of his contemporaries used scordatura in the Suite No. 5, so that the characteristic timbre of the flattened A string was missing, and the chords often had to be adjusted to the capability of the standard tuned instrument. Despite of all that, his performance emanates artistic honesty and nobility -Janigro's omnipresent trademark, so familiar in his other interpretations. Plasticity of the linear polyphony is commendable, leading of voices is perfectly clear, the architecture of the work perfectly laid out, and most of all, the flawless intonation and beautiful cultivated tone. His ease and virtuosity are particularly pronounced in the Suite No. 6, where the cellists, playing on contemporary instruments, face a difficult challenge because of the missing high E string, (the suite was composed for five-stringed cello).

Nowadays listener cannot but admire and esteem Janigro's playing, and push aside any thoughts of orthodoxy of style, all the more given the fact that the recordings were made in mid 1950s. Every age brings its own way of interpretation, but what matters is that Janigro most certainly belonged to a small number of those exceptional and great artists who, at their time, knew the better way of introducing Bach to the general audience, long before the awareness of performance practices of Baroque music became a matter of major concern for all the interpreters.

Valter Despali

JOSEPH HAYDN
Die Sieben Letzten Worte
Zagreb Soloists, Antonio Janigro
O Vanguard Classics 08 5024 71

The most sacred, and to some as well as to me, the most beloved symphony of Joseph Haydn, whose spiritual dimension was recognised just in 20th century, both by exquisite interpretations and courageous attempts of various composers. such as the one of Sofia Gubaidulina. This recording is exactly one of such significant revivals of *The Seven Last Words*. dating back to 1964, the age of dominance of various soloists and virtuosi, so the same formula was reasonably chosen for I Solisti di Zagreb as well to follow the trend. Antonio Janigro was leading the Zagreb Soloists during that time, time that we perceive today as the golden age of this ensemble. This is what this fascinating recording reveals at first listening. Although somewhat dry, it should not be looked at as a sequence of dramas of each of the seven individual, elegant movements because here Janigro, with the soloists, attempted the impossible: to obtain a Beethoven-like orchestra, which he most successfully achieved in the last movements Lento alla breve, and particularly in Largo in Es-major. Mediterranean gesture of Renato Fasano or the warmth of the painful cantilena in Barenboim's interpretation of Bach are present here as well, but above all, the Mozartean uniformity of style supported by utmost fidelity to the score, resulting, thus, in an exciting insight into the tone colour, true, of a chamber orchestra, but with the power and density to be heard much later in Ludwig van Beethoven's "Seventh" or Franz Schubert's "Eight". How come that Haydn, instead of building the seven Golgothic musical images upon sacral, chamber-like musical performance, relied on the orchestral, symphonic sound. He was famous for his effort to expand and elaborate all the possibilities related to orchestral music and performance, yet, he had not achieve such a level of seriousness and polyphonic stability in any of his other one hundred symphonies. Written in 1801, eight years before his death, this mature piece is, if not summa operi of the inventor of the classical symphony, definitely a palette of extremely demanding musical studies for the cathedral service in Cadiz on the occasion of Good Friday. This may be the reason why Haydn did not care much about getting into the meaning of each individual sentence but was rather eager to spiritually articulate the words uttered by God himself in such a fateful moment for the entire mankind, to which end he employed everything he could, that is, the entire palette of the orchestra available to him at that time and in the immediate future according to his vision. As a counterpart to the "Creation", Janigro has surrendered the entire spiritual pilgrimage of the New Testament to his Soloists, which was not a mistake at all. Indeed, the Soloists sound here just like members of a symphonic orchestra, of the best one - the Vienna Symphony Orchestra

Đurđa Otržan

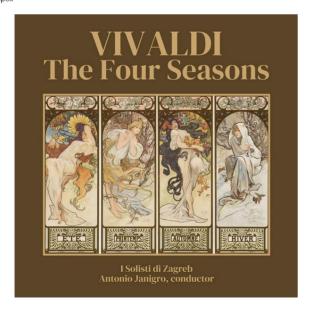
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Antonio Vivaldi Le quattro staggioni Jan Tomasow, violin, Zagreb Soloists, Antonio Janigro ⊙ Vanguard LP HM 15SD

I find it almost impossible to write an impartial review of this recording because so many memories are attached to it. Still, I will attempt to convey to you how much this performance means to me, and might mean to you, as well.

My first encounter with the records took place almost thirty years ago, when "our" Antonio revealed to me the true significance of the piece of another great Antonio, his famous namesake, whose "Le Quattro Staggioni" I could hardly listen any more because of the "grand", actually to grand, performances usual at that time, let alone enjoy them. What a change it was - a window into a new world; music is fast, precise and true to life, the intonation is correct, the continuo appropriate, and the violin of beautiful sound in fitting correlation with the Zagreb Soloists. The self-assured and fine tone of Jan Tomasow's solo violin relates perfectly with the Soloists; the entire performance is impregnated with the spirit of Janigro's perfectionism, leaving the music and its soul fully exposed. It had been for a long time the only performance I could listen. Only during last decade some new kids, playing authentic instruments, have offered to me similar pleasure and insights into the music of Antonio Vivaldi and, to my great pleasure, Janigro's performance is no longer the only choice for me. In my opinion, this also shows how Janigro's performance in co-operation with the Zagreb Soloists was far ahead its time, as corroborated by Igor Stravinski who claimed that it was the most beautiful performance of "Le Quattro Staggioni" he had ever heard, a statement which I only recently learned about. No wonder, since such "bareness" and precision of Janigro's interpretation must have appealed to him.

It was much later that I discovered the excellence of the recording as well. At that time, the Zagreb Soloists were recording for Vanguard, mostly in Vienna at various locations, and this particular recording was made in 1957 at Rotenturmstrassaal, Recording was produced by Seymour Solomon, chief producer of the entire edition, who would personally come from the USA to oversee every recording to be made by the Zagreb Soloists, whereas the Vanguard branch in Vienna "Amadeo" was in charge of the organisation. (My gratitude to one of the founders of the Zagreb Soloists, Mr. Stjepan Aranjoš, for providing me with some important insights). Janigro was a perfectionist, often rather merciless, not only in matters of music but also in terms of the sound, so he participated directly and intensely in recording process, which was quite uncommon at that time. All that great care, by all participants in the project, is amply reflected in the recording itself, resulting in an airy performance of appropriate spaciousness and extension, with only occasional "congestion" of high tones in forte sections. Ivan Supek



Antonio Jani



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GLAZBENA KNJIŽNICA MATICE HRVATSKE