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**The Power of Love – Apollo's Fire/Jeanette Sorrell with Sandrine Piau –
Vivaldi, Rameau and Handel
Richard Landau | Thursday, May 08, 2014**

Vivaldi

Concerto in D, RV511 – Allegro [arr. Jeanette Sorrell]

Rameau

Anacreon – Règne amour
Les Indes galantes – Viens, hymen

Vivaldi

Concerto in G minor for Two Cellos, RV531
Tito Manlio – Sonno, se pur sei sonno

Handel

Ariodante – Il primo Ardor

Vivaldi

La Folia [arr. Sorrell, after Sonata XII]

Handel

Alcina – Ah mio cor! Schernito sei

Vivaldi

Concerto in A minor for Two Violins, Op.3/8
[RV522]

Handel

Giulio Cesare – Piangerò, la sorta mia; Da tempeste

Sandrine Piau (soprano)

Renée Schiffer & Stuart Pincombe (cellos)

Olivier Brault & Johanna Novom (violins) [RV522]

Olivier Brault & Julie Andrijeski (violins) [La Folia]

Apollo's Fire (The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra)

Jeanette Sorrell (harpsichord)

St John's, Smith Square, London



The ever-growing reputation of Apollo's Fire – an ensemble based in Cleveland, Ohio – ensured a substantial and very appreciative audience for its concert at St John's. Sandwiched between appearances in Birmingham the previous day and Austria the next, this well-planned programme demonstrated to perfection the players' high artistry – both on their own account and as ideal partners to Sandrine Piau, the evening's magnificent soloist.

The opening movement of Vivaldi's Concerto in D, arranged here as a Concerto Grosso, served as a lively opener in

which all of the musicians' stylishness and virtuosity were on display. One immediately sensed the intense rapport between the players, and between them and Jeanette Sorrell who provided discreet

and satisfying harpsichord accompaniment throughout the programme.

Enter Sandrine Piau to sing two arias by Rameau. In 'Règne amour' she exhibited not only striking vocal agility but also great beauty of line – Apollo's Fire providing vibrant support – and there was great tenderness in her account of 'Viens, Hymen', graced with noteworthy contributions from the string sections and Kathie Stewart on traverse flute.

Vivaldi's G minor Two-Cello Concerto was given a truly infectious outing, not least by the soloists – ensemble principals – who would certainly have made an even greater impact in a more intimate acoustic than that of St John's. Piau sang the aria from Tito Manlio superbly, its opening phrases floated ideally above a wondrously iridescent accompaniment. And the instrumental and vocal fireworks of Handel's 'Il primo Ardor' were projected with aplomb.

The most stunning orchestral item was Sorrell's arrangement – as another concerto grosso – of Vivaldi's trio-sonata setting of 'La Folia' (Madness). As the music progressed the playing became evermore abandoned until, with tapped cellos adding to the riot of sound, the piece whirled towards a boisterously exhilarating climax. After a sensitive reading of Vivaldi's A minor Concerto, in which violinists Olivier Brault and Johanna Novom shone, Piau gave us arias from Handel's Alcina and Giulio Cesare, and – as an encore, to a caressing accompaniment – 'Lascia, ch'io pianga' from Rinaldo, one of the most moving numbers penned by this composer. This was a supremely satisfying concert on every level. A further appearance in London by Apollo's Fire would be very welcome.

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