

Rossini – Overtures (Norrington) [1991]

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1. "La scala di seta" 2. "Il signor Bruschino" 3. "L'Italiani in Algieri" 4. "Il barbieri di Siviglia"
5. "La gazza ladra" 6. "Semiramide" 7. "Guillaume Tell" The London Classical Players
Roger Norrington - conductor

Roger Norrington's disc of Rossini Overtures with the London Classical Players is highly entertaining, bringing performances of great energy and interest. This Virgin disc presents these well-worn favorites in a (presumably) mid-19th century orchestral setting (of course we don't really know what this music sounded like in Rossini's day). There are moments, like the passage for solo horns near the start of Semiramide and the tempestuous second episode of William Tell (wonderfully abrasive narrow-bore trombones barking out their scalic passagework!) where the unfamiliar sonorities truly capture the ear. But Norrington also invests these accounts with a high degree of wit and humor. The pompous march from La gazza ladra is especially good, its mocking baroque-style double-dotting hugely effective. There's also much witty solo playing from the LCP winds in La scala di seta, and Norrington's timing perfectly catches those bow-on-music-stand effects in Il Signor Bruschino. To cap it all, the final gallop from William Tell (taken very fast) brings this attractive reissue to an exciting close. A winner.
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