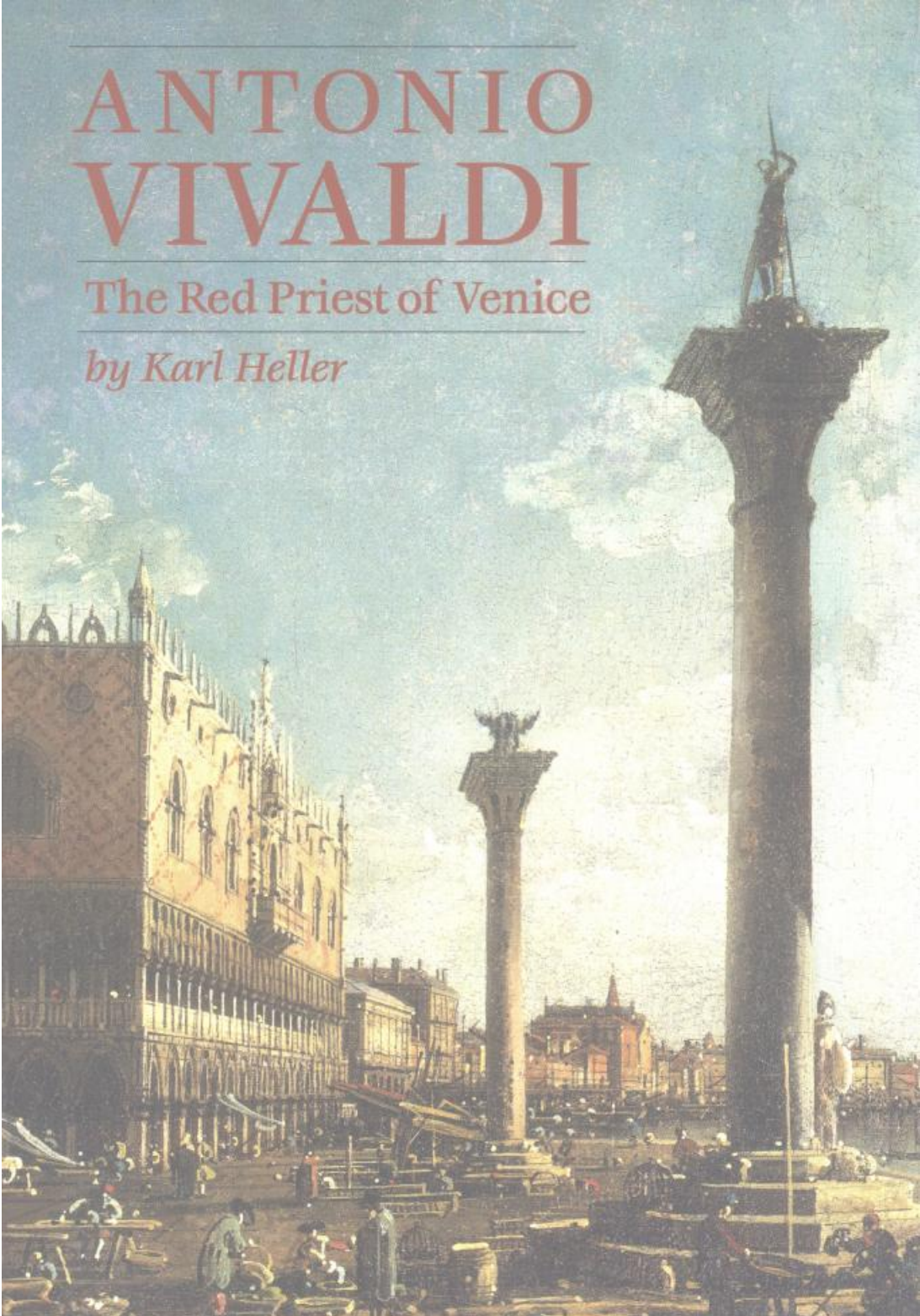


ANTONIO VIVALDI

The Red Priest of Venice

by Karl Heller



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Antonio Vivaldi from an engraving by F.M. La Cave (1725).

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Translated from the German by David Marinelli

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Giovanni Antonio Canal (called Canaletto) (1697–1768), “The Riva Degli Schiavoni towards the East,” oil on canvas, the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida.

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Preface to the English Translation

This English translation of my 1991 German edition incorporates much recent Vivaldi research, my own as well as that of others. As a result, this edition includes new factual material and fresh insights. In addition I have taken the opportunity to correct a number of errors found in the German edition.

My thanks go to both the translator of the book, Dr. David Marinelli, and to the general editor of Amadeus Press, Dr. Reinhard G. Pauly, for their interest and for the care they have devoted to the preparation of this edition.

Karl Heller
Rostock

Preface to the German Edition

A new biography of Antonio Vivaldi certainly does not require an explanation or the justification of an anniversary or some other external event. A number of years ago, Reclam, a Leipzig publisher, suggested I write a biography of Vivaldi; by coincidence, it is being issued in 1991, the year commemorating the 250th anniversary of the composer's death. I try to portray the artist in the light of the latest research and to present the most important facts of his life, of his works, and of his influence on musical history in a clear, concise form. I have written for musicians and for music students as well as for the many other lovers of Vivaldi's music; also, the book offers musicologists little-known material, new information, and new perspectives on the composer.

Even though I have devoted a considerable period of time to the study of both Vivaldi's life and works, I have found it necessary to base this biography on numerous contributions made by scholars of many countries. I feel deeply indebted to colleagues for the new biographical details and for the latest painstaking efforts – reflected in this book – at dating Vivaldi's works. The bibliography and notes testify to the vast amount of additional knowledge that has been gathered over the past decade. I feel especially indebted to scholars Michael Talbot of Liverpool, Gastone Vio of Venice, and Paul Everett of Cork.

My greatest debt of thanks, however, goes to Professor Rudolf Eller of Rostock for his continued interest and invaluable support in helping to make this book a reality. He has been assisting me in Vivaldi studies for almost thirty years, as well as having provided materials, expert advice, and critical comments on this manuscript. For this I convey to him, one of the senior scholars in international Vivaldi studies, my warmest gratitude. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Antonio Fanna, director of the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi of Venice, for procuring sources, printed scores, and literature; and to Dr. Christoph Hellmundt of Leipzig for the care taken by the publishers in preparing the final text. In conclusion, I also wish to thank all those who freed me from other tasks, both professional and private, during work on the manuscript.

Karl Heller
Rostock

Chapter One

The Rediscovery of an “Almost Entirely Forgotten Italian Composer”

Around 1950 when the name Vivaldi began to appear more frequently on concert and radio programs and in record and music publishers’ catalogs, the musical public was confronted suddenly with a composer about whom even well-informed musicians and other music lovers knew little more than his name and one or two of his concertos. Not until after the Second World War was a broad basis created for the revival of the music of Antonio Vivaldi, but he quickly became one of this century’s most popular and frequently performed early-eighteenth-century composers.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, individual Vivaldi works were still known and performed – for example, Michel Corrette’s arrangement of the “Spring” Concerto in his motet “Laudate Dominum de coelis” (1765) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s version for solo flute (1775). After that time, however, Vivaldi was not considered an interesting composer and his works declined in popularity. In those cases when he received relatively detailed critical mention and was described as an influential composer – for example, in Ernst Ludwig Gerber’s *Tonkünstlerlexikon* (Encyclopedia of Musicians, 1790–92) – it was mostly to emphasize his past fame. Special impetus was required to

rekindle serious interest in the composer and his music. In 1802 Johann Nikolaus Forkel, the Bach scholar, provided that impetus when he claimed that the Vivaldi violin concertos that were newly published at the time provided crucial “guidance” to Bach when he was learning composition.

Bach had the fortunate idea of arranging all Vivaldi’s violin concertos for *clavier* (keyboard). He studied Vivaldi’s treatment of the ideas, their relationship to one another, the pattern of modulation, and many other features. His compositional process was influenced and transformed as a result of arranging the musical ideas and figurations that were originally intended for the violin and thus were unsuited to the keyboard.¹

Until the late nineteenth century, interest in Vivaldi had been almost entirely from the historic viewpoint and largely one-sided in the sense that he was seen in relation to Johann Sebastian Bach. Early nineteenth-century musicologists’ first glimmers of interest in Vivaldi stemmed from his influence on Bach’s music, but during the 1920s and 1930s a broad-based curiosity began to make its appearance.

Despite the reservations and the controversy Forkel’s statements were later to elicit, the emphasis on the Bach—Vivaldi connection stimulated special attention on the part of Bach scholars in the German master’s Italian contemporary. As a result, German musicologists were the first and for a long time the most intensive students of Vivaldi. The connection also explains why nineteenth-century Vivaldi studies revolved around Bach. Vivaldi’s musical style was usually measured against Bach’s art, which had been raised to the universal standard for “old music”; therefore Vivaldi’s music was judged negatively. The distinctive qualities of his music, so different from those of Bach’s, were no more recognized than the specific values of, say, Telemann’s works.

Thus, well into the nineteenth century direct knowledge of Vivaldi’s music was confined to a few violin concertos, and almost nothing was known about his life and personality. A perfect case in point is the extended period of time Bach scholars spent vainly searching out the original scores on which Bach’s transcribed concertos were based. In 1851 when C. F. Peters – a Leipzig publisher – published the first edition of Bach’s sixteen concerto arrangements for keyboard

(BWV 972–987), the editors, Siegfried Wilhelm Dehn and Ferdinand August Roitzsch, were able to name the source for only one of the transcriptions, which, at the time, were all considered to have been based on Vivaldi. “Original works by Vivaldi have long been musical rarities,” Dehn wrote in his preface, “which is why it is difficult to demonstrate clearly which of his works, most of which are known only as titles, J. S. Bach used for the present arrangements”. A few years earlier, in 1844, Friedrich Konrad Griepenkerl published Bach’s organ version (BWV 596) of Vivaldi’s Concerto in D Minor, Op. 3, No. 11, as a composition attributed to Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (because he had signed his own name to his father’s manuscript). Max Schneider did not uncover and rectify the mistake in identifying the composer until 1911. In his 1873 monograph discussing Bach’s concerto arrangements, Bach biographer Philipp Spitta mentions only one original Vivaldi concerto: the Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 7, No. 8 (RV 299, belonging to the Dresden Vivaldi manuscripts). It was the source for BWV 973.

The most important Vivaldi publication of the nineteenth century was the “historic study” titled “Antonio Vivaldi und sein Einfluß auf Joh. Seb. Bach” (Antonio Vivaldi and His Influence on Johann Sebastian Bach, 1867), an essay unveiling the discovery, around 1860, of original source manuscripts “in a music cabinet of the Catholic Hofkirche in Dresden”.² The author was Julius Rühlmann, trombonist and later instrument inspector of the royal orchestra in Dresden and meritorious cofounder of the Dresden *Tonkünstler-Verein* (musicians’ association).

A wealth of music manuscripts were discovered in the Hofkirche cabinet. The works had made up the core of the instrumental repertoire of the Dresden court orchestra during the early and middle eighteenth century: the manuscripts represented the orchestral archives. They had been placed in the cabinet sometime between 1760 and 1765 and had lain undisturbed for a century. Upon discovery, the scores were assigned to the private music collection of the king of Saxony. Later they were transferred to the Royal Public Library, now known as the Saxon Land Library (Sächsische Landesbibliothek), where they have resided since 1919.

Rühlmann was less concerned with introducing the Vivaldi works (he mentioned just eighty-three violin concertos in his preface) contained in the Dresden music collection than with furnishing a general description of, in his words, an “almost entirely forgotten Italian com-

poser”, with providing an “analysis of the Vivaldi style”, and with correcting or refuting Forkel’s statements by comparing two Bach transcriptions (BWV 973 and BWV 1065) with their originals. Although his essay contains many mistakes and weaknesses – for example, he praises Bach’s “profound works” as compared with Vivaldi’s “galant style” – he supplies a wealth of information, many biographical details, and an analysis unheard of at the time, making this the first truly serious attempt at understanding Vivaldi as a man and placing him in a historical context as an artist. Not only was Rühlmann the first to succeed in enumerating important elements of Vivaldi’s concerto style, but he also, at least in rudimentary form, discovered positive aspects of the composer’s style that were unlike Bach’s style. He speaks of the “cantabile melodic element” and “great transparency and simplicity” of writing; in other words, he uses positive terms to characterize an Italian style that was independent of Bach’s music.³ This was a crucial step in getting away from labeling Vivaldi as a composer who failed to meet Bach’s absolute standards and a move toward understanding and accepting the Venetian as a completely separate and distinct artist.

Rühlmann’s attitude is a welcome change from that of Wilhelm von Wasielewski. Wasielewski describes the Vivaldi concertos, which Bach had arranged, as “the Italian composer’s thin and lifeless skeleton”. In his opinion Bach’s arrangements “transform bare turf into a pleasant flower bed ... as if by magic”.⁴ He was the first to characterize negatively Vivaldi’s enormous productivity, calling him a “scribbler in the worst sense of the word” and referring to Vivaldi as “one who constantly produces works in which he uses considerable technique and extraordinary formal skill but which are devoid of substance and meaning.” In conclusion, all that Wasielewski conceded to Vivaldi was an “enriching external means of expression”, ignoring – after examination of the Dresden manuscripts – his fecundity in experimenting with new sound combinations. Wasielewski did not place much value on such aspects: “The less imagination, intellect, and depth Vivaldi demonstrates in his compositions, the more inventive he becomes in every kind of superficiality”.

Wasielewski did not revise his assessment of Vivaldi in later editions of the book. The third edition of 1893 contained the same comments as well as a new discussion of *The Four Seasons*:

The most interesting aspect of these compositions is the possibility that they may have influenced Haydn's *Seasons*. ... The real difference between the Italian and the German composer ... is one of productive achievement. Haydn's *Seasons* is filled with very beautiful music; the same cannot be said of Vivaldi's work of the same name. As in his many other compositions, the form is insipid though generally rational. In general, Vivaldi's formal ability and variety of passage work for the violin deserve recognition.⁵

Paul Graf Waldersee's essay (Waldersee 1885) considerably expanded our knowledge of Vivaldi's concertos and their sources. Waldersee presented a summary of recent (for that time) acquisitions by what was then the Berlin Royal Library. He also provided lists of holdings in the music collections in Dresden and in Darmstadt and among the printed music in the collection of Richard Wagner in Marburg. Using these, he was able to identify another seven Vivaldi sources for Bach's concerto arrangements, thereby creating a new basis for studying Vivaldi's concertos.

Early in the twentieth century Arnold Schering took the decisive step toward a reevaluation of Vivaldi's artistic and historic importance – confined initially to his concertos (Schering 1905). Schering went beyond identifying Vivaldi as a precursor, calling him “one of the most talented minds of his century”⁶ and a great, original artistic personality. Schering possessed a surprisingly broad knowledge of Vivaldi's works. He demonstrated the composer's penchant for experimentation by presenting an abundance of examples: new thematic elements and formal structures, performance techniques, and timbres. He repeatedly emphasized the resulting musical richness. Schering cited the Dresden concerto manuscripts as revealing “formal, expressive, technical, and mimetic extravagance; a wealth of fertile imagination and of original creative power”; and a number of movements well worthy of “rescue from oblivion”.⁷ He then asked, “Does not one of our concert directors wish to see whether one of these magnificent concertos is still viable or not?”⁸

At the time Arnold Schering wrote those words, little had been done to repopularize Vivaldi's music. By the late nineteenth century, only isolated concertos and sonatas had been reprinted. Ferdinand David

had published a transcription of the Violin Sonata in A Major, Op. 2, No. 2 (RV 31), in “Die hohe Schule des Violinspiels” (The Art of Violin Playing) anthology of 1867; E. Medefind had performed the Concerto for Three Violins in F Major (RV 551, from the Dresden manuscripts) in Berlin in 1878; and Paul Graf Waldersee had published the “Il gardellino” Flute Concerto, Op. 10 (RV 428), in Leipzig in 1885. The edition of the complete works of J. S. Bach included, in the appendix of the volumes published during the 1890s, the Vivaldi originals of the concertos that had been transcribed by Bach: the first movement of the Double Concerto in A Minor, Op. 3, No. 8 (RV 522 – issue 38, 1891), the Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 7, No. 8 (RV 299 – issue 42, 1894), and the Concerto in B Minor for Four Violins, Op. 3, No. 10 (RV 580 – issue 43.1, 1894).

A clear revival in publishing and performing Vivaldi’s works – no doubt as part of the general renewed interest in so-called old music – did not begin until the 1920s and was not fully established until the 1930s. In Germany, for example, publication by such illustrious scholars and musicians as Alfred Einstein (Eulenburg edition of some of the Op. 3 concertos), Karl Straube (Breitkopf editions of the Dresden Concertos, RV 552 and RV 569), Ludwig Landshoff (Peters editions of three sinfonias and a “Dresden” Violin Concerto), and Wolfgang Fortner (Schott edition of the Flute Concertos, Op. 10) evidenced this renewed interest. The first published thematic catalogs were issued during the 1910s and 1920s, also indicating the growing interest in the Venetian’s works. Alberto Bachmann’s 1913 *Les grands violinistes du passé* (The Great Violinists of the Past) gave a thematic list of about 130 instrumental works; it was followed by Wilhelm Altmann’s catalog (Altmann 1922), which appeared as part of the *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*.⁹

Yet the most far-reaching event of the time occurred in Italy, which became the center and driving force of the Vivaldi renaissance. I refer to the rediscovery of the large collection of works now housed in the Turin National Library and familiar to scholars as the “Turin (Vivaldi) manuscripts”. This rediscovery came about under such tortuous and dramatic circumstances that I am tempted to go into them in detail, though the following outline of the most important facts will have to suffice.

In autumn 1926 the Turin National Library received a request for an expert opinion on the music collection of the San Carlo Salesian

Monastery in Monferrato, Alessandria province. The Turin musicologist Alberto Gentili, who was charged with writing the opinion, discovered that the monastery's ninety-seven-volume collection contained fourteen volumes of manuscripts, in large part autograph scores of unknown works by Vivaldi, including well over a hundred concertos, twelve operas, twenty-nine cantatas, and a complete oratorio. A direct purchase was far beyond the Turin library's means, so it began to look for a private backer. The Turin stockbroker Roberto Foà agreed to purchase the collection, which he then donated to the National Library in early 1927 (fig. 1). The collection was named the "Raccolta Mauro Foà" in memory of the sponsor's son, who had died in infancy.

Upon closer examination it soon became apparent that the manuscripts were part of what had been a much larger collection. The scholars involved began a search against truly incredible odds to find the missing portion. Fortunately, they followed the right trail. There lived in Genoa a nephew of the Marchese Marcello Durazzo. This marchese, who died in 1922, had bequeathed his own private music library to the Piedmont monastery. It turned out that the other half of the Vivaldi collection was in the nephew's possession. The entire collection had been inherited by the Durazzo family, and in 1893 had been divided up between two brothers. Following long and difficult negotiations, the elderly nephew, Giuseppe Maria Durazzo (reputed to be an eccentric) agreed to sell his jealously guarded treasures. For this transaction the patron was the textile manufacturer Filippo Giordano. As in the earlier



Figure 1.
Foà Collection
vignette in the
Turin National
Library.

case mentioned above, a young son had tragically died, and in his honor the collection was donated to the Turin National Library on 30 October 1930.

How did this extensive collection of manuscripts fall into the hands of Count Giacomo Durazzo (1717–1794), the first owner of the collection? According to recent Italian scholarship, it seems certain that the Genoese nobleman (known to those familiar with Christoph Willibald Gluck's biography as "Music Count" Durazzo, superintendent of the imperial court theater in Vienna from 1754 to 1764 and subsequently Austrian ambassador to Venice) purchased the manuscripts from the Venetian collector Jacopo Soranzo, who had possession by 1745 at the latest. It is probable that Soranzo, in turn, had purchased the collection from Vivaldi's family (rather than from the Ospedale della Pietà of Venice where Vivaldi had worked and performed for decades). The manuscripts in the collection clearly consist of Vivaldi's own music archives or working copies. This is the most likely explanation for the makeup of the collection. Virtually every genre in which Vivaldi was active is represented. There are only scores, that is, almost no performance materials, and the overwhelming majority of them are autographs.

It is difficult to evaluate fully the completely new and previously unsuspected sides of the composer that the Turin manuscripts bring to light. Not only do they contain several hundred hitherto unknown concertos but they also include over a dozen complete opera scores and a wealth of sacred and secular vocal works, some that have considerable dimensions. What a mountain of work Italian musicologists have undertaken in processing these treasures and in rediscovering the typical performance practice!

After an initially slow editing phase, the first major event for the Turin "Vivaldi Discovery" was its exposure during the *Settimana Antonio Vivaldi* (Vivaldi Week) held at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena under the artistic direction of Alfredo Casella from 16 to 21 September 1939. Organized with the specific purpose of, in Casella's words, "documenting all aspects of the towering figure of the *prete rosso*" (redheaded priest, see chap. 3), the festival included performances of a large number of concertos for various instruments, sacred and secular vocal works (including the Credo, RV 591, the Gloria, RV 589, and the Stabat Mater, RV 621), and a complete opera, *L'Olimpiade*, which was performed twice.

The real breakthrough in the resurgence of Vivaldi's music in the larger musical world did not begin until after the Second World War. Italian efforts played a crucial role in this new and important phase of the Vivaldi renaissance. Two pivotal events occurred: first, the founding in 1947 by Angelo Ephrikian and Antonio Fanna of the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, which under general editor Gian Francesco Malipiero published through Ricordi the complete edition of Vivaldi's instrumental works; and second, the founding of and performances by chamber orchestras such as La Scuola Veneziana (1947), I Virtuosi di Roma (1947), and I Musici (1952), all of which spread Vivaldi's music throughout the world with countless concerts and recordings. Of course other countries soon became involved in the process and began a wide variety of enterprises that awakened international interest in Vivaldi's music. The curse was lifted – Vivaldi's compositions, led by the concertos, resounded in the world's concert halls and over the airwaves. The Venetian's long-silent music was assured a rebirth of immense proportions when it began to be available through the medium of the long-playing record, and an average of forty new Vivaldi recordings have been issued each year over the past thirty years. There are currently well over a hundred recordings of *The Four Seasons* alone.

Scholarly interest in Vivaldi's works grew hand in hand with the public's increasing familiarity with his music. During the 1920s and 1930s study was focused on areas that had been incompletely researched in the past, and as a result at least a few gaps in the composer's biography were filled. The information did not, however, go significantly beyond what had been known during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scholars were now able to document Vivaldi's training as a priest and his employment at the Ospedale della Pietà. In 1938 the Venetian scholar Rodolfo Gallo was able to determine the year and place of the composer's death. Following Mario Rinaldi's 1943 Vivaldi biography, French musicologist Marc Pincherle, who had begun studying Vivaldi in 1913, devoted a large monograph to the composer and his instrumental works (Pincherle 1948). Pincherle's book soon became a standard work, "fundamental to a systematic study of the composer's biography, works, historic importance, and influence."¹⁰ Volume two of that work consisted of a thematic catalog (*Inventaire thématique*) of the instrumental compositions, and use of the designations *PV* or *P*, which Pincherle used in the catalog, remained

the standard form for citing Vivaldi's instrumental works for several decades.

Researchers taking Pincherle's work as their point of departure have, especially since the 1960s, discovered a large number of new sources and documents and have made an essential contribution in the form of countless publications that elucidate basic questions concerning biography and historical aspects of works and style. One of the most important of these is the thematic catalog – using *RV* for listings – compiled by the Danish Vivaldi scholar Peter Ryom, originally published in 1974 in a “small edition.” The first volume of the full catalog (Ryom 1987), containing a catalog of the composer's instrumental works, was published in 1987. Plans are for Ryom's complete catalog to encompass three volumes. It is internationally recognized as providing the valid new numbering system for Vivaldi's works.

The 1978 tercentenary tremendously stimulated Italian Vivaldi scholarship. The Venetian Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, directed by Antonio Fanna, organized several highly productive international conferences on the composer in 1978, 1981, and 1987, and, beginning in 1982, has sponsored a new critical edition of Vivaldi's works published by Ricordi of Milan. Since 1980 this institute has been publishing an annual (*Informazioni e studi Vivaldiana*, or INF) that has been a major influence on both Italian and international Vivaldi research.

The writer who sets about to describe Vivaldi's life and works today has an incomparably broader body of data and historic information at his disposal than was the case a few decades ago. Of course, there are still enough open questions to keep Vivaldi scholars busy for many years to come.

Chapter Two

“The Glorious Venetian Republic” — The Historical and Musical Setting of Vivaldi’s Venice

Vivaldi spent well over fifty of his sixty-three years in his native city of Venice. Except for a roughly two-year stay in Mantua (1718–20), his final months in Vienna (about 1740–41, though the exact dates are still unknown), and musical travels, Vivaldi lived in the *Serenissima*, the Most Serene Republic. In Venice he worked throughout his life as an artist, and from Venice his fame emanated throughout Europe. Yet Venice was more than his home city: it served as the native soil and as the vital nerve of his art. The unique atmosphere that had grown out of the interaction of many different factors – from social and general history, landscape and climate, and culture and the arts – made Vivaldi’s life work “Venetian art” in a sense far beyond the narrow or local sense of the word.

By 1700 the Republic of St. Mark was no longer a leading economic or political power. As early as the sixteenth century the Republic had lost its dominant position as the center for trade with the Orient because of both the shifting of international trade to the oceans and the colonial expansion of other European states. During the seventeenth century, and as a result of the momentous and difficult struggle with the Ottoman Empire, it not only lost important possessions in the eastern

Mediterranean – for example, the island of Crete in 1669 – but it also declined in political authority. In 1668, ten years before Vivaldi's birth, the Venetians managed to retake the Peloponnesus (formerly known as Morea) from the Turks, and in 1699 the Treaty of Karlowitz (Karlovac), which ratified a victory over the Turks in alliance with Austria, placed the *Serenissima* in a more positive position. This change of fortune did not, however, last. Following a new, protracted war with the Turks, Venice was forced in 1718 to cede its former possessions to Austria at the Peace of Passarowitz. Venice had ceased to be a major power.

Of course, the island republic's decline as the dominant maritime-mercantile power in the Levant touches only one side of a development that included Venice's economic and social structure and, not least, the life of its citizens. Most of all, it affected the city itself, which – although it had a population of 140,000, or about 50,000 fewer inhabitants in 1696 than at the end of the fifteenth century – was still almost three times larger than Hamburg (fig. 2). The leading patricians who had originally engaged in commercial shipping became increasingly involved in finance and in speculative ventures in a crisis-ridden society clearly on the decline. Venice had turned from a dynamic trading power into an El Dorado for culture- and for pleasure-hungry travelers, a metropolis of art and amusement. The Venetian Carnival attracted tens of thousands of foreigners as early as 1680, and during Carnival nights one could place unlimited bets at twenty different casinos.¹ Venice had become a city of amusement and of elegant festivities, not only for the



Figure 2. Venice in an engraving by Matthäus Merian the Elder (1638).

visitors who poured in from all over Europe but also for many of the Venetian nobility, who dissipated their ancestors' wealth (fig. 3).

Considering the contradictions resulting from this development, it must seem astonishing that the Republic, established during the Middle Ages with an elected Doge as its head, was not seriously challenged during the rest of the eighteenth century. The Venetian Republic ceased to exist as an independent state when Napoleon conquered the city in 1797. Still, the fact that Venice's form of government continued for centuries without external change should not lead us to believe that its political system was unchanged either in substance or in prestige. During the final period of the Republic, it was precisely the entrenched mechanics of a well-established governmental mechanism that preserved the existing system and maintained the balance of power with every means at its disposal. One of those means was the operation of a highly developed surveillance system by the *Inquisitori di Stato* ("The Three"), appointed and endowed with broad powers from within the Council of Ten (*Consiglio dei Dieci*), which was elected annually by the Great Council (*Maggior Consiglio*), the state's supreme judicial authority. The inquisitors' tasks extended from censorship to prosecution of cases of high treason. They maintained an army of paid agents (*sbirri*). One famous witness of the power and methods of the inquisitors was the Venetian Giacomo Casanova, who was imprisoned in the lead chambers (*piombi*) of the



Figure 3. "Masked Ball at the *Ridotta*" (detail), by Pietro Longhi.

Doges' palace in 1755 by order of the state inquisitors. He came to understand that "the Venetian Republic regards self-preservation as its first duty ... and is prepared to sacrifice everything to this duty, ... even the laws".² He also saw that "government policy prefers to tolerate dissipation as proof of purported personal freedom".³ A century earlier a chronicler had declared Carnival celebrations and the toleration of courtesans to be "objects of most exquisite policy".⁴

Johann Adam Hiller reports an incident experienced by the Dresden violinist Johann Georg Pisendel at the hands of the Venetian inquisitors' *sbirri*. Hiller's account is evidence that Vivaldi was also used to being watched. According to Hiller,

He [Pisendel] took a stroll with Vivaldi on St. Mark's Square. In the midst of their conversation, Vivaldi stopped abruptly and whispered to him that they should go straight home and that he would find out why once they got there. Pisendel did as he was told, and Vivaldi informed him that four *sbirri*, whom Pisendel had not noticed, had been closely following and observing him. Vivaldi asked him whether he had done or said something that was illegal in Venice, and since Pisendel could not remember anything of the sort, he [Vivaldi] advised him not to leave the house until he could find out more and tell him what was going on. In fact, Vivaldi went straight to the state inquisitors, where he found out that they had been looking for another man who resembled Pisendel and whose whereabouts they now knew.⁵

It is fitting that we recall such incidents since the tendency is to view Venetian life and culture of this period as consisting of nonstop festivities and untrammelled freedom. This image cannot hold up to closer examination, in spite of the fascination with Carnival, regardless of the almost proverbial cosmopolitan populace that captivated the imagination of visitors, and even with all the wealth, beauty, and gaiety that the city achieved in its final artistic blossoming.

Twilight comes to mind in describing this last golden age of Venetian art and culture. What an abundance of impressive names it evokes, what a special flair is associated with lasting artistic achievements in architecture and the plastic arts, in painting, in music and the theater. The only art missing is literature, that is, literature outside the theater.

Still, eighteenth-century legitimate Venetian theater can boast a pair of such characteristic and yet utterly different playwrights as Carlo Goldoni and Carlo Gozzi.

The architects Baldassare Longhena and Giorgio Massari stand out most among the creators of the city's impressive baroque buildings. Longhena designed the church of Santa Maria della Salute. It was built between 1631 and 1687 and became one of the city's largest religious structures: a Venetian landmark. Longhena was also responsible for some of the most beautiful palaces of the late period, such as the Palazzo Pesaro and Ca' Rezzonico. The latter was begun in 1660 and completed a century later by Massari; Venice's leading artists decorated its interior. A splendid group of painters added to the glorious tradition of Venetian painting that extended from the Bellinis to Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese. The common elements of the Venetian style of painting are affirmed in the delicate pastel portraits of Rosalba Carriera, in the precise details and enchanting atmosphere of Canaletto, in the almost impressionistic city and genre paintings of Francesco Guardi, and in the light murals and ceiling frescos of Giambattista Tiepolo. All display both a wealth of nuance and a faceted coloration reminiscent of the bright, soft atmosphere of Venice (fig. 4).



Figure 4. "The Church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice", by Francesco Guardi.

But most of all, late-seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century Venice was a city of music. No other European city could compete with the wealth of vocal and instrumental music performed in the city's churches, in its opera houses and palazzi, and in the open air. The city was a center of musical life, and its music and culture profoundly influenced European musical development.

St. Mark's Basilica enjoyed by far the richest musical tradition (fig. 5). Venice's rise as a major European musical center began toward the middle of the sixteenth century with the flourishing of church music in St. Mark's (the Doges' church adjoining the Doges' palace). The succession of choral directors and organists included Adrian Willaert, Claudio Merulo, Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, and Claudio Monteverdi, names that speak for themselves. By the time of Hans Leo Hassler and Heinrich Schütz, they had already made Venice a magnet for musicians from the north. Performances in St. Mark's were especially famous for their colorful instrumental ensembles and spatially conceived works written for and performed by multiple choruses.

After Monteverdi, who was *primo maestro di cappella* at St. Mark's from 1613 to 1643, the main musical focus shifted away from the basil-

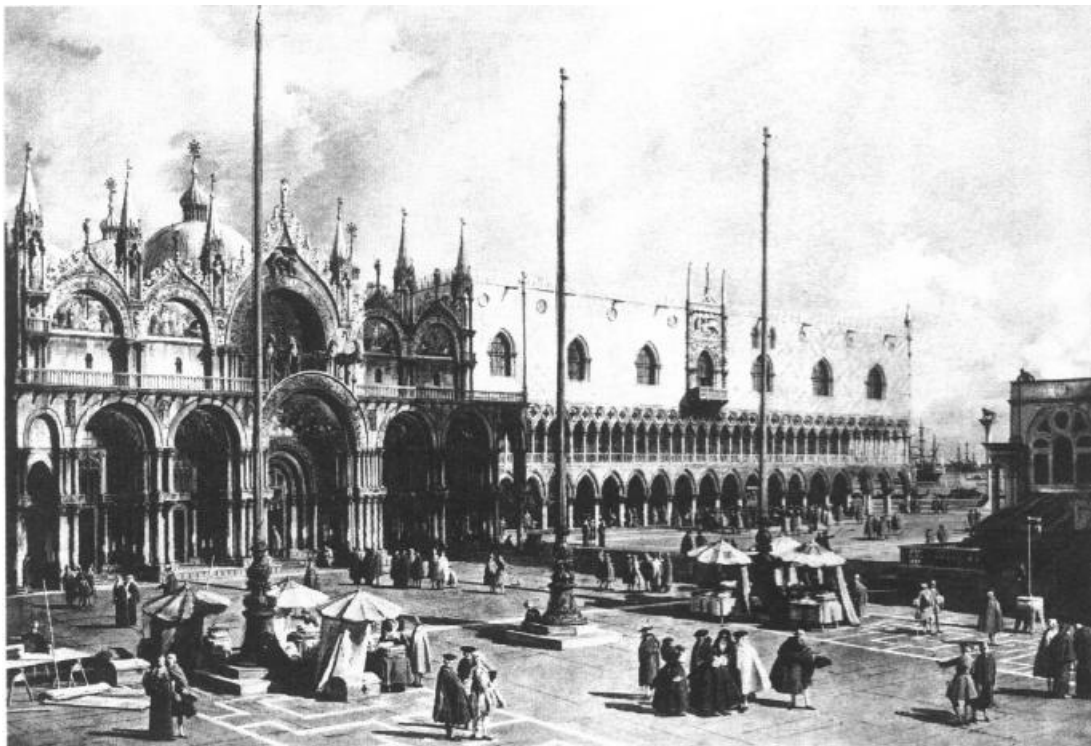


Figure 5. “St. Mark’s Square with the Basilica and Piazzetta”, by Giovanni Antonio Canal (known as Canaletto).

ica. Church music performed in the home of the city's patron saint lost its predominant position with the rise of and increased interest in other types of musical activities. After Monteverdi very few of the musicians appointed by the procurators to the office of *primo maestro di cappella* were first-rate composers. The best of his successors were Giovanni Legrenzi (*vice-maestro* from 1681, *primo maestro* from 1685 to 1690), Antonio Lotti (1736 to 1740), and Baldassare Galuppi (*vice-maestro* from 1748, *primo maestro* from 1762 to 1785). Of these three, Giovanni Legrenzi deserves special attention as he may have been one of Vivaldi's teachers. As a result of Legrenzi's reorganization and the enlargement of the St. Mark's orchestra to thirty-four instrumentalists, Vivaldi's father was employed, starting in 1685, as violinist in the Cappella Ducale. Thus young Antonio had a direct link to the highest Venetian musical institution, which in the decades around 1700 employed such renowned musicians as Carlo Francesco Pollarolo (first as organist, then as *vice-maestro* of the chapel from 1692), Antonio Lotti (at the time still a singer and an organist), and Antonio Caldara (cellist).

Beginning in the late seventeenth century, however, St. Mark's sacred music (as well as that of the city's other leading churches) was surpassed in public favor by the music of the *ospedali*. These musical institutions, which played a prominent role in the history of music, included the Ospedale della Pietà (Hospital of Mercy), Vivaldi's most important musical venue in Venice. The *ospedali* – which had as their purpose the raising of orphaned, illegitimate, and abandoned girls with government, foundation, and private funds – were so called because they were attached to hospitals. Of the city's many *ospedali*, four earned reputations in music: the Ospedale della Pietà (founded in 1346), the Ospedale dei Mendicanti (Beggars' Hospital), the Ospedale degli Incurabili (Hospital of the Incurables), and the Ospedaletto (Small Hospital).

The extensive and devoted musical training of female pupils by these charitable institutions may have been motivated initially by religious and pedagogical purposes; however, the *ospedali* were increasingly guided by monetary motives. The custom of performing music in public on Saturdays, on Sundays, and on holidays was an important early form of public concert life in Italy and, not incidentally, brought in a good deal of money for the financing of the *ospedali*. Thus, during the seventeenth century the musical training of the girls became so profes-

sional that the *ospedali* (which increasingly accepted girls who were not orphans) took on the characteristics of music schools and conservatories (fig. 6). Although subsequent music history often calls them conservatories, it must be remembered that not all pupils enjoyed special musical training – that would have been virtually impossible given the number of girls involved (the Pietà, for example, housed 400 to 500 girls in 1663 and about 1000 in 1738). Intensive musical training was reserved for the *figlie di coro* (choir girls), as distinct from the *figlie di comun* (commoners). From the ranks of the former the chorus and orchestra members as well as the vocal and instrumental soloists were selected. A considerable number of girls, some of whom (especially the unmarried ones) remained in the *ospedali* until middle age, became vocal and instrumental virtuosos whose fame extended far beyond Venice. Their names, usually followed by their voice type or instrument (“Prudenza dal contralto”, “Madalena dal violin”), appear in the journals of travelers to Venice and even in Johann Gottfried Walther’s 1732 *Musikalisches Lexikon* (Music Encyclopedia). For instance, the controller and later royal tutor and court counselor Joachim Christoph Nemeitz, a German traveler to Italy in the early eighteenth century, remembered the names of eight *Mädgen* (girls) “particularly ... famous” at the time (1721), including the violinist Anna Maria of the Pietà, about whom it was said “very few virtuosos of our sex are her equal”.⁶

The reputation for high-quality musical performances at the *ospedali* did not rest on musical offerings by a handful of virtuosos; the high



Figure 6. Girl from the *Ospedale*.
Engraving by Vincenzo Coronelli,
Venice, 1707.

standard of music-making by the full orchestra made the Pietà concerts famous. According to Nemeitz, this *ospedale* had “an orchestra so select as to be found only at a few large courts”,⁷ and only twenty years later Charles de Brosses, who later became the first president of the Dijon Parliament, placed the Pietà strings above those of the Paris Opéra. We are indebted to de Brosses for one of the most vivid descriptions of the impression made by the *ospedali* concerts.

The best music-making in Venice is to be found in the orphanages for girls, consisting entirely of orphans, of illegitimate children, or of children from families unable to pay for their education. The state educates them at its expense and has some of them trained to be good musicians. It is therefore no wonder that they sing like angels, and play violin, flute, oboe, organ, cello, and bassoon, not even stopping at the largest instruments ... ; some forty girls perform at each concert. I assure you, there is no more delightful sight than a pretty young nun wearing a white robe and a bouquet of pomegranate flowers in her hair, leading an orchestra with incomparable grace and with the proper feeling. The lightness of attack and the purity of tone of their voices is simply divine. ... Zabetta from the Incurabili has an astonishing tessitura and a quite amazing violin-like tone in her throat; I have no doubts that she swallowed a fiddle by the excellent Somis. Everyone says she is the best and anyone who claims another is as good as she runs the risk of enraging the rabble. But, hush, no one hears me gently whisper in your ear that Margarita from the Mendicanti is just as good and even, as far as I'm concerned, much better.⁸

De Brosses here captured some of the atmosphere these concerts must have generated, and this explains why they became increasingly popular. It is not at all surprising that in addition to the teachers (*maestre*) hired from the ranks of the girls (not only to give instruction and to conduct rehearsals but also and most importantly to compose new works) the city's leading male musicians were also engaged as *maestri* by the *ospedali*. These were coveted positions in Venetian musical life because they insured a fixed income while at the same time leaving enough spare time for the *maestri* to engage in artistic activities else-

where. Virtually every well-known composer active in Venice during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries held at least a temporary post in one of the *ospedali*. Starting in 1672 Giovanni Legrenzi was *maestro di musica* at the Mendicanti; from 1701 to 1713 Francesco Gasparini served as *maestro di coro* at the Pietà; Antonio Lotti, Johann Adolf Hasse (from 1727), and Niccolo Jommelli were employed by the Incurabili; and Baldassare Galuppi worked at both the Mendicanti and the Incurabili. Antonio Vivaldi was linked to the Ospedale della Pietà for almost four decades, notwithstanding a number of somewhat long interruptions.

As the finest concert-like forms of public music-making, the performances by the *ospedali* were a kind of antithesis to the indisputable main attraction of the Venetian music, theater, and amusement industry of the time: the opera. During the second half of the seventeenth century and the entire eighteenth century, Venice was the “city richest in opera”⁹ in Italy, that is, in the world. The opening in 1637 of the world’s first public opera house, the Teatro Nuovo di San Cassiano, was followed by that of several other houses, so that in the period around 1700 the city had at least six simultaneously playing opera houses. The most renowned of these theaters (which were usually named after the closest church) were the Teatro di San Giovanni e Paolo and the Teatro di San Moisè (both founded as opera houses in 1639), the San Samuele (1656), the Sant’Angelo (1676), and, the largest and most splendid, the Teatro di San Giovanni Grisostomo, which opened in 1678 (fig. 7). Operas by Vivaldi were performed at three of these theaters.

The status of these opera houses and their management policy were determined by the peculiar social structure of a city built on both tourism and commerce and dominated by a patrician upper class. The owner of the theater was a nobleman or noble family who built the house, in part at least, with money paid by wealthy families for ownership of private boxes. The nobleman deeded the theater to a director or impresario, unless he performed this function himself. The impresario then took charge of all the business and artistic matters. He signed contracts with all involved, from the librettist and composer to the stage architects and designers, from the singers and the other musicians to the stagehands, and he also bore the financial risk of the enterprise.

The principal source of revenue in an impresario-run theater was the rental of permanent boxes by both local patricians and outside aris-



Figure 7. Interior of the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo. Copper plate engraving from “Venezia festeggiante” by Vincenzo Coronelli.

ocrats. At times, families bought boxes outright and had them painted or papered according to their individual taste. All these theaters were “box theaters” with a number of tiers, each consisting of a row of small boxes separated from one another. The Teatro di San Giovanni Grisostomo – one of the three theaters owned by the Grimani family – contained five tiers of thirty-five boxes each, for a total of 175.

While the boxes in the preferred second and third tiers were rented in perpetuity to “persons of station”, places in the upper rows and in the orchestra area were for public sale, although purchasing a ticket did not entitle its holder to a seat. That “luxury” had to be paid for separately, as did the printed libretto and the small wax candle necessary for following the libretto. In Venetian operatic life, it was an important sociological fact that the orchestra section on the main floor was filled with a public that belonged neither to the ruling class nor to the cream of the crop of visitors from out of town. This was where the middle class, the many foreigners, and, especially, the characteristic group of *barcaruoli* (gondoliers) were concentrated. The last group were admitted to the theater free of charge owing to their function as a *claque*. It was to this mixed audience (representing a cross-section of almost all social classes) that Venetian opera owed its unmistakable atmosphere.

The following first-person description by Joachim Christoph Nemeitz, from his 1721 impressions of the Venetian opera, is typical.

There are a number of opera houses in Venice, yet the best are St. Chrysostomo, St. Angelo, St. Moses, and St. Cassiano. Unlike Paris, London, Hamburg, and other cities, operas [in Venice] are not performed throughout the year; they are presented regularly during Carnival and sometimes at Ascension. Their entrepreneurs are noblemen and other well-to-do persons who each season (by privilege from the Republic) select the libretto, the music, the singers, the orchestra, and everything else that goes with them. They also supply the funds for them; they receive the profit if they succeed, but should the opera not be successful they suffer losses. One of the above theaters has five rows of boxes and ten to twelve rows of connected chairs in the orchestra. Unlike other cities, there is no fixed price for the boxes: prices are lowered or raised depending on the success of the opera. One also has to rent an entire box, whereas elsewhere individual box seats are sold. The orchestra chairs, however, have a given price: at St. Chrysostomo in 1721 one pays three lire fifteen sols admission and thirty-six sols for each chair.¹⁰ At St. Angelo, on the other hand, admission costs two lire and a chair thirty sols, and at St. Moses thirty-one sols admission and twenty sols for a seat. The little book in which the opera text is printed usually costs thirty sols, at times more, depending on how thick it is. The operas, which are performed every day, begin at 7:00 in the evening and last until 11:00 at night, after which most people go to the fancy-dress ball. Foreigners should not be ashamed to go to the orchestra section at the opera. Even princes, counts, and other persons of quality occasionally take seats there because you have a better view than in the boxes. Moreover, everyone wears a mask. But whatever you do, do not do anything wrong, because the people in the boxes, especially the upper ones, are at times so insolent they will do anything – even spit – particularly when they see someone using a small candle to read the libretto. The most insolent of all are the *barcaruoli*, who are admitted gratis, and other common folk, who stand below the boxes on all sides. They clap, whistle, and yell

so loudly that they drown out the singers. They pay no attention to anyone, and they call this Venetian freedom. They applaud by stamping their feet and by shouting a loud bravo, while clapping is common elsewhere. In St. Angelo and in other lesser theaters if the audience wishes to hear an aria repeated they stamp their feet until the male or the female singer comes out again; this is not the custom at St. Chrysostomo, where arias are not repeated. The last two evenings, Shrove Monday and Tuesday, the operas are played quite carelessly because everyone is thinking about feasting. It is customary to give the fellow who shows you to your place in the opera a few sols to keep him happy.¹¹

As Nemeitz's account indicates, operas were given only "during Carnival and sometimes at Ascension". He also remarks in a note that "the Republic sometimes allows performances to begin in October or November". Here he is referring to the tradition of *stagioni*, that is, the one or more relatively short seasons during which theater was performed. Venetian opera houses were not open the year round. By far the most important season was Carnival (in winter), which lasted from 26 December (St. Stephen's Day) to Shrove Tuesday. During this *stagione* each of the leading Venetian opera houses put on between two and four operas. The other seasons during which some theaters remained closed were shorter and, in general, involved staging only one opera: the spring or Ascension seasons (*La primavera* or *L'ascensione*) and an autumn season (*L'autunno*), which, except for a period before Christmas, more or less became part of the Carnival season. In theory, the repertory was planned and prepared and the ensembles assembled for only a single season.

Today it is hard for us to appreciate the cultural and social role opera played in Venice. Opera was a form of amusement that people enjoyed as often as possible, especially during Carnival. The Frankfurt patrician Johann Friedrich Armand von Uffenbach attended the same opera three times within two weeks when he was in Venice for the 1715 Carnival. According to Reinhard Strohm,

to understand [opera] history using present-day phenomena ...
we must equate eighteenth-century Italian opera with today's

opera plus film, television, and, perhaps, soccer. Incidentally, this applies not only quantitatively but in many respects qualitatively as well, because most performed operas were new and soon forgotten after a few performances (like films today), people spent every free evening there (as many do with television today), and the operas sometimes contained the unexpected, which excited the audience so much they cheered the singers.¹²

Only by taking the prevailing view of the pleasures of opera into account can we grasp that, as reported by Taddeo Wiel, 1274 operas were performed in Venice during the eighteenth century.¹³

Many of the composers who dominated Venetian opera during the century and a half between Monteverdi and Galuppi are well known: Francesco Cavalli, Antonio Cesti, Giovanni Legrenzi, Carlo Francesco Pollaro, Francesco Gasparini, and, between 1710 and 1740, Tommaso Albinoni and Antonio Vivaldi. In addition to these masters, who were linked to Venice either permanently or for long periods, are those who worked temporarily for Venetian opera houses: Alessandro Scarlatti, Antonio Caldara, Leonardo Leo, the Germans Johann David Heinichen, George Frideric Handel (*Agrippina*, 1709), and the young Johann Adolph Hasse, who first composed an opera for Venice (*Artaserse*, 1730) following his early successes in Naples. Venice was the home of two of the most important eighteenth-century librettists: Apostolo Zeno and Carlo Goldoni. Some of the great vocal stars of the period performed on Venetian stages: Faustina Bordoni, who made her debut in her native city in 1716, the young Francesca Cuzzoni, who first sang in Venice in 1718, and the castrati Antonio Bernacchi and Farinelli. Above all, it was the great vocal art of such *prime donne* and *primi uomini* (and many others whose names are known today only by specialists) that turned each opera performance into a celebration.

Although no other musical institution could compete with the opera's and the *ospedali*'s effects on the public, there were a number of other musical venues in addition to St. Mark's with its sacred music. Various forms of musical performance, including the so-called academic concerts, were held in the palaces of the nobility, and festive concerts took place at the numerous foreign embassies in Venice, which was also a center of international diplomacy. On 29 August 1739 de Brosses

reported from Venice that even at that season – that is, not during Carnival – scarcely an evening went by without a concert, and that the populace had come in droves to the canals, where they listened as intently as if it were their first time.¹⁴

Could a musician wish for a better place to practice his craft? Did he not have every possibility to develop as an artist? We must assume that Vivaldi did in fact perceive the extraordinary opportunities his native city offered him, even if toward the end of his career he attempted to seek his fortune elsewhere. To be sure, the few surviving documents reveal nothing about his attitude toward his city or about how he felt as a Venetian. Only once, in a handwritten dedication to the *nobile* Antonio Grimani, is there a hint of his pride in the Venetian Republic. He deplores the decay of “poor Italy”, unable to free itself “from the lamentable misfortunes of a foreign yoke”, and he continues: “On the other hand, we are somewhat comforted by the glorious Venetian Republic, which has preserved our Italian liberty from its beginnings to our times; may God preserve it until the end of time”.¹⁵

Chapter Three

Vivaldi's Training as Priest and His Appointment as *Musico di Violino* *Professore Veneto*

In January 1963 the English scholar Eric Paul located the long-sought-after document that established Vivaldi's date of birth. Paul, who had done valuable research into Vivaldi's family history, discovered the record of the composer's dates of birth and christening in the baptismal register of the church of San Giovanni in Bràgora. This finding finally eliminated speculation about his year of birth. To be sure, some publications have appeared since the finding of the baptismal record that have given Vivaldi's approximate year of birth as 1675 (others have used "c. 1678"). In the same way, some recent scholars have continued the nineteenth-century practice of giving the year of his death as 1743 even though in 1938 the actual date of his burial was established as 28 July 1741.

The baptismal record found by Eric Paul indicates that Vivaldi was born 4 March 1678 in the parish of San Giovanni in Bràgora in Venice, and that he was baptized by the midwife on the same day because he was in danger of death. Antonio's church baptism took place on 6 May of the same year (fig. 8). The baptismal register contains the following entry:

6 May 1678. Antonio Lucio, son of Giovanni Battista, instrumentalist and son of the late Agostino Vivaldi, and his wife, Camilla, daughter of the late Camillo Calicchio, born this 4 March, on which day he received home baptism from midwife Margarita Veronese due to danger of death, was brought to the church this day. I, Pastor Giacomo Fornacieri, performed the exorcisms and christening, at which Antonio Gerolamo Veccelio, owner of the Doge Apothecary in our parish, was godfather.¹

This brief notice provides details of the circumstances surrounding Vivaldi's birth. Of particular interest are the *per periculo di morte* (due to danger of death) explanation for Antonio's having been baptized immediately at birth, and the biographical information about his parents. Understandably, we can only speculate what this "danger of death" might have been. Many scholars are inclined to regard it as the first symptoms of the chest condition that, according to the composer's own state-



Figure 8. San Giovanni in Bràgora, the church where Vivaldi was baptized, as it appears today.

ments, he suffered from birth.² Note, though, that Vivaldi's biographer Remo Giazotto provided an entirely different explanation when he suggested that fear following the earth tremor that took place in Venice on 4 March 1678 was the probable cause for Vivaldi's emergency christening.³ The unusually long period between his birth and his baptism suggests that his weak constitution may have been the actual cause for delay.

Although available information about the background and class of Vivaldi's parents is still rather sketchy, the details suffice to give us a general picture.⁴ The composer's father, Giovanni Battista (Giambattista) Vivaldi, was originally from Brescia, where he was born in 1655 to Agostino Vivaldi, a landlord, and Margarita Vivaldi. He moved to Venice in 1665 with his widowed mother and his elder brother Agostino. Giovanni Battista was trained as a barber, though he also received thorough training as a violinist. The record of Antonio's baptism, dated 6 May 1678, calls Vivaldi's father a *sonador* (instrumentalist), and we have proof that he was employed as a violinist by the Cappella Ducale at St. Mark's in 1685. Vivaldi's mother, Camilla Calicchio, was the daughter of the tailor Camillo Calicchio, a resident of Venice since 1650, and his wife, Giannetta (Zanetta) née Temporini. She was also born in 1655.

Giovanni Battista Vivaldi married Camilla Calicchio in the church of San Giovanni della Zuecca (Giudecca) (no longer standing) on 11 June 1676.⁵ San Giovanni in Bràgora parish, located between St. Mark's Square and the Arsenal (near Riva degli Schiavoni, where the Calicchio family lived) was also where the young wife gave birth to their first child, Antonio Lucio, on 4 March 1678. Antonio's birthplace was located on the Campo grando (the present-day Campo Bandiera e Moro), where the Vivaldis lived "at the Bràgora" (*alla Bràgora*) until November 1705.⁶

The first documents that mention Antonio date from 1693. The other information we have from this period concerns the birth of siblings and further details of Giovanni Battista Vivaldi's career.

The Vivaldis had nine children: five sons (including Antonio) and four daughters. Of these, only Antonio seems to have chosen music as a profession. One of the sons, Francesco Gaetano (1690–1752), was a barber and wigmaker in Venice and, at least for a time (in 1731), a printer; he was temporarily banished from Venice in 1721 for insulting a nobleman. Sometime between 1729 and 1730, Antonio's youngest brother, Iseppo (Giuseppe) Gaetano, born in 1697, was punished with

three years of exile from Venice for injuring a grocer's errand boy. Three of the composer's nephews, Pietro and Daniele Mauro (b. 1715 and 1717 respectively) and Carlo Vivaldi (b. 1731), became music copyists (*copisti musica*).

According to accounts from the 1680s detailing the career of Giovanni Battista Vivaldi, he was a highly regarded violinist. On 23 April 1685 when he began as a violinist in the St. Mark's orchestra, his annual salary was fifteen ducats. Beginning on 21 August 1689 he was paid a salary of twenty-five ducats, perhaps because in addition to his orchestral duties, he performed solos. On 22 July, one month before this raise, he was appointed instrument teacher (*maestro d'instrumenti*) at the Ospedale dei Mendicanti, and we have records showing that he performed during the same year at the city's leading opera house, San Giovanni Grisostomo. The most important indication of his excellent reputation as a violinist, however, is found in a guide to Venice (*Guida de' forestieri*) by Vincenzo Coronelli that lists him, together with his son "the priest", as one of the city's leading performers on the instrument. The guide, published in 1706, is the first record to mention father and son together as musicians. Incidentally, a number of these documents refer to Giovanni Battista Vivaldi as "Gio: Baptista Rossi", and others add "known as Rosetto" after "Vivaldi", clearly indicating that he had red or sandy hair, which Antonio inherited. It has been posited that the elder Vivaldi used the pseudonym "Giambattista Rossi" for the opera *La fedeltà sfortunata*, which was first performed in 1688.

Documentation of Antonio's career begins with records from the summer of 1693. He was already fifteen years old and most likely had a substantial portion of his musical education behind him. The documents of 1693 almost exclusively concern his training for the priesthood, as do most of the records from the ensuing decade. On 17 June 1693 the Curia Patriarcale di Venezia had two witnesses confirm the legitimacy of his birth, the baptismal date of 6 May 1678, and the reputation of his good character; and on 18 September the Venetian patriarch presented the fifteen-year-old with a tonsure. In place of attending a seminary for training in the priesthood, Vivaldi was apprenticed to the priest at St. Geminiani; this is indicated by the note "Ecclesiae S. Geminiani" (of St. Geminiano Church) that follows Vivaldi's name in the Registro Sacre Ordinazioni. In the following years similar entries indicate that he was subsequently associated with San Giovanni in Oleo

parish for a considerable time. Both churches were near St. Mark's Square.

Vivaldi's training for the priesthood extended over a period of ten years, and the period is documented in full. He received the four minor orders as follows: porter on 19 September 1693, lector on 21 September 1694, exorcist on 25 December 1695, and acolyte on 21 September 1696. The first two of the higher orders – subdeacon and deacon – followed on 4 April 1699 and 18 September 1700 respectively. After the relatively long period of two and a half years as deacon, Vivaldi was ordained to the priesthood on 23 March 1703. He was a member of San Giovanni Church in Oleo parish at the time.

Prior to 1703 the only indication that the aspiring cleric performed as a professional musician was the appearance of the notation “Pré [priest] Vivaldi” as violinist that occurred on the performance fees account register dated 28 February 1697, naming the performing musicians at the Cappella Ducale of St. Mark's for Christmas 1696.⁷ Even though the eighteen-year-old had just become an acolyte and was still a good way from being ordained as a priest, the reference was clearly to Antonio. He was paid one sequin for his services.

We can only conjecture about his musical training and his other activities as a child and as a young man. In any event, he must have found enough time during his training for the priesthood for intensive musical studies, because when he was ordained as a priest at age twenty-five he was already an accomplished musician. He took up his first professional position in music at the Ospedale della Pietà as *maestro di violino* in 1703 – the same year that George Frideric Handel entered the Hamburg Opera Orchestra as violinist and Johann Sebastian Bach took up the post of organist at the Neue Kirche in Arnstadt.

It is generally assumed, and rightly so, that Antonio's father, Giovanni Battista Vivaldi, was his first and probably his most important music teacher. He must have begun teaching him the violin at a very early age. In addition, his father must have introduced him to the main Venetian performance venues, where church and opera music as well as a wide range of specifically instrumental genres will have made lasting impressions on Antonio. Since Paul Everett was able to argue plausibly several years ago that Vivaldi's most important Venetian copyist was none other than Giovanni Battista Vivaldi,⁸ we can assume that Antonio's father gave indispensable help to his famous and busy grown

son. In the autumn of 1729 Giovanni Battista, then seventy-five, accompanied his son on a trip to central Europe (“Germania”). There is no indication that the young Vivaldi studied violin or composition with any of the leading Venetian teachers of the period nor that he traveled outside Venice, even briefly, to study music. Francesco Caffi’s conjecture that Vivaldi studied with Giovanni Legrenzi remains unproven.⁹ It seems likely that Antonio’s father would have brought his gifted son to his *primo maestro*, one of the leading musical authorities in Venice, but Antonio was only twelve when the master of the St. Mark’s orchestra died. Whatever the case, it seems likely that the boy began to study composition at an early age.

As with other details of Vivaldi’s musical training, uncertainty remains as to the personal reasons that motivated him to prepare for a musical career while training for the priesthood. Was it clear from the beginning that he would not perform his priestly functions? Or did he give up celebrating mass for reasons of health, as he states in a letter written in 1737? Answers to these questions abound with contradictions and inconsistencies. The fact that he took up a post as *maestro* at the Pietà in September 1703, only a few months after he had been ordained, indicates that he pursued the status and priestly title of *Don* largely to gain social prestige, while always intending to make a career in music. The title page of his first printed collection of works, the Trio Sonatas, Op. 1, bears the name “D. [Don] Antonio Vivaldi Musico di Violino Professore Veneto”, which roughly means “... violinist and professional Venetian musician”. One should remember that such combinations of careers were by no means unusual in Italy at the time; many clergymen had professional or artistic careers unrelated to their vocation. Given the several thousand priests living in Venice during Vivaldi’s lifetime, this practice must have been a virtual necessity.

In August 1703 the governors of the Ospedale della Pietà resolved to raise the level of musical training and of performance quality at the institution. This action, initiated by Francesco Gasparini, who since 1701 had held the office of *maestro di coro* or musical director of the Pietà, brought about the opportunity for Vivaldi to be appointed, immediately after his ordination, to a musical position at the Ospedale della Pietà. As a result of Gasparini’s proposal to employ new viola, violin, and oboe teachers, Vivaldi was appointed *maestro di violino*. His annual salary for the post was sixty ducats – fully four times more than

his father's beginning salary as violinist in the Cappella Ducale. Vivaldi was not hired indefinitely; the *congregazione*, the institution's governing board, had to vote annually on his appointment just as it did for the other teaching posts at the Pietà. In 1709, for the first time, Vivaldi's employment at the Ospedale della Pietà was interrupted because he had not received the two-thirds majority vote, required since 1708, for continued employment.

It was recently revealed that during his first years at the Pietà, Vivaldi also carried out priestly functions at the orphanage. When he was appointed *maestro di violino*, he was also given a curacy, or *mansioneria* (1 September 1703), which entailed celebrating mass daily for a stipend of eighty ducats per year.¹⁰ The money was provided by a private donor, not by the Pietà. The first *mansioneria* lasted two years, though Vivaldi was paid only half the twenty ducats that he should have received between June and August 1705 because he read only forty-five of the ninety stipulated masses. Vivaldi was again appointed curate of the Pietà from September 1705 to November 1706, again for eighty ducats.¹¹

Early biographical literature teems with extravagant tales telling why Vivaldi ceased to perform his priestly duties. Wasielewski relates the following anecdote:

Once, while reading daily mass, he was overcome by the urge to compose. He interrupted his priestly functions and went into the sacristy to discharge his musical thoughts and then returned to end the ceremony. Of course, the matter immediately created a stir and Vivaldi was brought before the church authorities for disciplinary action. The body in question was lenient and decided to relieve him of the duty of celebrating mass in the future, since it appeared that he was not quite right in the head.¹²

On another occasion, in a letter to Marchese Bentivoglio at Ferrara and in answer to charges by Cardinal Ruffo, Vivaldi provided a rather lengthy explanation of why he had not said mass. He contended that the difficulties caused by his congenital chest ailment, or angina pectoris (*male di petto ossia strettezza di petto*), had compelled him to leave the altar on three occasions before completing the service and that this was the sole reason why, in all twenty-five years, he had not celebrated mass.¹³

Considering the other symptoms he described, it is likely that he had asthma¹⁴ – a disease that would have made it very difficult for him to say mass every day. Doubts recur as to whether Vivaldi was telling the whole truth about his reasons for not saying mass, largely because his illness clearly did not limit his many artistic activities nor keep him from undertaking extended concert tours.

We have no way of determining exactly when Vivaldi stopped actively carrying out his priestly duties. The letter mentioned above states that he had ceased celebrating mass twenty-five years earlier, which would have been in 1712; yet a few lines further on he claims that he had said mass for one year or a little longer (*un anno o poco più*) after having been ordained a priest. Perhaps the end of the second *mansioneria* in November 1706 marked the end of his activities as a clergyman. *Il prete rosso* (the redheaded priest), as he was always called in his native city, would have been twenty-eight at the time.

An Unspectacular Debut as Composer: The Sonatas Op. 1 and Op. 2

Vivaldi's beginnings as a composer are obscure. We are unable to determine precisely when he began to compose seriously, and we know nothing about his first works. We can assume with certainty that sometime between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two (at the latest), Vivaldi began to compose more or less ambitious works; that would have been during the second half of the 1690s. It is entirely uncertain whether any of these early pieces belong to the corpus we possess today. In order to avoid speculation, we are forced to confine ourselves to what has come down to us, that is, his first printed collection: the twelve Trio Sonatas, Op. 1.

The collection was published sometime between mid-1703 and 1705 by the Venetian publisher Giuseppe Sala under the title *Suonate da camera a tre, due Violini, e Violono o Cembalo*. It was dedicated to a "Nobile Veneto", Count Annibale Gambara, originally from Brescia. The year of publication is uncertain (in spite of the fact that the only extant copy of the Sala edition – a fragment at that – bears the date 1705) because certain aspects of the title page seem to indicate that the existing copy is

a later printing. One indication for an earlier date is the reference to Vivaldi as a cleric (“D.”), but not yet as *maestro* at the Pietà, as would later be customary. This would suggest that the first edition was issued during mid-1703.¹⁵ As previously mentioned, “Musico di Violino Professore Veneto” was the only title given to Vivaldi on the page.

During the time of Monteverdi and the young Schütz, it was something of an unwritten law that composers should make their debut with a collection of printed madrigals. Beginning around 1700, at least in Italy, the virtually obligatory proof of artistic maturity was an Op. 1 of trio sonatas – proof that the sonata for two melody instruments (preferably two violins) and continuo had become the leading form of Italian instrumental music during the seventeenth century. Vivaldi followed this custom, as did Giuseppe Torelli, Antonio Caldara, Tommaso Albinoni, and Arcangelo Corelli – the composer who perfected the *sonata a tre* during the 1680s and 1690s. Corelli is also associated with the two standard sonata types that held sway during the following decades: the *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata), typically four movements – slow, fast, slow, fast – and the *sonata da camera* (chamber sonata), consisting of a prelude and a number of dance movements (suite). The church sonata was characterized by contrapuntal writing (for example, fugal in the fast movements) and a generally noble and serious style, while the more popular chamber sonata with its dance movements (invariably in two parts) largely avoided the strict contrapuntal style. Corelli published four collections of trio sonatas between 1681 and 1694. Op. 1 and Op. 3 each contain twelve church sonatas; Op. 2 and Op. 4 each consist of twelve chamber sonatas.

Vivaldi’s Trio Sonatas, Op. 1, are all *sonate da camera*. Most of them are in four movements, yet they exhibit considerable variety within this pattern. They all open with a “free”, that is, non-dance, movement usually labeled *preludio*, while virtually none of the trio sonatas share the same type and sequence of dance movements. For example, Sonata No. 7 (RV 65) contains the movements Preludio, Largo – Allemanda, Allegro – Sarabanda, Andante – Giga, and Presto, while Sonata No. 11 (RV 79) consists of a Preludio, Andante – Corrente, Allegro – Giga, Allegro – Gavotta, and Presto. Of the dance forms (allemanda, corrente, giga, gavotta, and sarabanda), the gavotta was used regularly as a final movement whereas the other forms were arranged in various orders. Vivaldi’s first work was typical of period sonatas in its blurring of the

distinction between chamber and church sonatas. In Vivaldi's case this was largely shown by use of free movements (independent of dance models) and by use of increased imitative writing in the dance movements. The process of interpenetration that became dominant around 1750 resulted in a more or less neutral sonata.

Vivaldi's Trio Sonatas, Op. 1, are not innovative since they do not add anything clearly new to the works of his immediate predecessors or contemporaries, nor do they set themselves apart through a distinct idiom of their own. These works can hold their own against the best Italian chamber sonatas of the time, yet they are still heavily dependent on their models, especially on Corelli's works, which Vivaldi certainly knew. The final piece of the Trio Sonatas is clear proof of Vivaldi's debt to his predecessor and to his tradition. As in the last of Corelli's Violin Sonatas, Op. 5 (Rome, 1700), Vivaldi's Sonata No. 12 (RV 63) consists of nineteen variations on the sarabande-like *La follia*, a theme that was very popular at the time (ex. 1). The *follia* variations are the most difficult and easily the most effective element in the complete sonata set; they are extremely inventive and vary considerably in form, in configuration, and in expression.



Example 1. Sonata in D Minor, Op. 1, No. 12 (RV 63), Follia.

The opening movements of the sonatas run the gamut from a Corellian, solemn Grave to a free, concerted, gigue-like miniature Allegro (Sonata No. 9, RV 75). A wide variety of dance movements are used – for example, the gavottes range from a very simple short movement consisting of a mere eight bars (two times four bars, Sonata No. 1, RV 73) to the tenth sonata's Gavotta, which has a high degree of stylization using tightly organized imitation and repeated sections of fourteen and twenty-eight bars (ex. 2). I could demonstrate much the same variety by using examples from other dance movements.

Presto

Example 2. Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 1, No. 10 (RV 78), Gavotta.

The tendency for the first violin to dominate is another notable compositional feature. Sonatas Nos. 7, 8, and 11 contain no fewer than six solo movements in which the second violin merely accompanies.

In general, what I have said about the Op. 1 trio sonatas applies to Vivaldi's second set of published works, the twelve Sonatas for Violin and Continuo. They were first published without an opus number in 1709 by Antonio Bortoli of Venice. Bortoli announced their publication late in 1708. The designation "Op. 2" appeared on the 1711 reprint by Estienne Roger of Amsterdam. The violin sonatas were dedicated to King Frederick IV of Denmark and Norway, who made an incognito visit to Venice between 29 December 1708 and 6 March 1709 during Carnival and attended a Pietà concert conducted by Vivaldi on 30 December.

The Violin Sonatas, Op. 2, are *sonate da camera*. Six of the works are in three movements, while the other six are in four. The four-movement works contain a second free movement in addition to the opening movement. Rather conventional movements are juxtaposed with others that are effective and distinctly individual in both language and overall character. Consider the correnti of the first and second sonatas with their abundant rhythmic surprises, or the striking Allemanda of the Sonata No. 10 in F Minor (RV 21), with its sustained dotted rhythm in the upper voice, or a movement such as the perpetual motion – like Capriccio – Presto of the Sonata No. 12 in A Minor (RV 32), in which the violin executes a single sixteenth-note figure, etude-like, reaching as high as f^4 . Movements that are similar to this Capriccio, in which the bass does nothing more than accompany the virtuosic violin part, alter-

nate with movements in which the melody and bass lines toss motifs back and forth in characteristic baroque rhetorical gesture, such as in the ninth sonata's Preludio and in the Capriccio – Allegro (a concertante movement) of the same sonata.

The thematic materials in these early sonatas show several striking resemblances to themes found in the composer's later works. For example, the opening theme of the third sonata's Preludio is identical to that of the 'Domine Deus' of the Gloria (RV 589), and the theme of the fourth sonata's Allemanda (ex. 3) is the same variation as that of the famous gavotte theme from Corelli's Sonata in F Major, Op. 5, No. 10, which Vivaldi used in one of the trio sonatas (Op. 1, No. 5, Preludio) and in one of the concertos (Op. 3, No. 7, Allegro).

Allegro



Example 3. Sonata in F Major, Op. 2, No. 4 (RV 20), Allemanda.

Of the striking and original sonatas (nos. 2, 9, 11, and 12), the twelfth is the most technically difficult. The violinist must play long passages in fourth position – a technical difficulty that surpasses any found in Corelli's writing. Like Vivaldi's other sonatas, however, the twelfth sonata contains no passages in double stops.

Vivaldi followed his sets of sonatas (Opp. 1 and 2) – both of which were reprinted outside Italy a number of times, proving their popularity – with only two other groups of sonatas of six works each: four Sonatas for Violin and Continuo, Op. 5 (RV 18, 30, 33, and 35), published with two Trio Sonatas for Two Violins and Continuo, Op. 5 (RV 72 and 76), by Jeanne Roger of Amsterdam in 1716, and six Sonatas for Cello and Basso Continuo issued in 1740 by the Parisian house of Le Clerc le Cadet. While the Op. 5 Sonatas add little stylistically to Opp. 1 and 2, the cello sonatas represent a distinct change. In the cello sonatas, the fusion process between chamber and church sonata into works of four movements (slow–fast–slow–fast) has been taken a step further; almost all the bipartite movements (and they are not given dance names) emphatically repeat the opening theme in the tonic during the second repeat.

Vivaldi's most interesting and original chamber works are probably not among his printed sets but rather among the handwritten ones, such as the violin sonatas that the composer dedicated to his German student, Johann Georg Pisendel, and some concertos for chamber ensemble.

Chapter Four

From *Maestro di Violino* to *Maestro de' Concerti*: Vivaldi's First Years at the Ospedale della Pietà (1703–1717)

Vivaldi's appointment in 1703 to the Ospedale della Pietà provided the twenty-five-year-old composer with a central workplace for his musical career, and he remained under contract to this institution for approximately thirty years (fig. 9). His duties as a *maestro della Pietà* were a permanent element of his artistic labors, and the regular salary he received was an important part of his income. His continuous appointment at the Ospedale was quite remarkable in light of the reputation Vivaldi acquired and given his many activities elsewhere. His tenure there showed a striking element of permanence and continuity in the career of an artist whose nature was strongly characterized by spontaneity, initiative, and, as someone recently put it, "existential restlessness".¹

Among the various periods of Vivaldi's involvement at the Pietà, the first – from 1703 to 1717 – can be characterized as relatively prolonged, in spite of an interruption between 1709 and 1711. It was during this period that Vivaldi was most closely linked to the institution. On the basis of the information we have, it can be said that although Vivaldi may have had some activities elsewhere, his duties at the Pietà

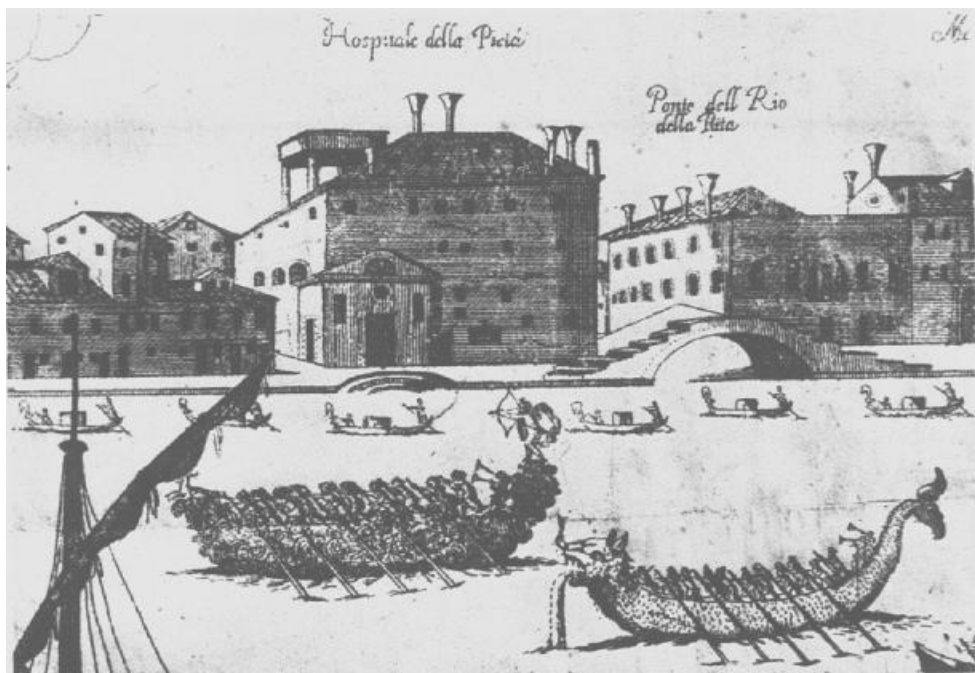


Figure 9. The Ospedale della Pietà in a 1686 engraving (detail).

absorbed the major share of his musical attention from 1703 until at least 1709, and perhaps until as late as 1711 or 1712.

Vivaldi began working at the Pietà as *maestro di violino* and was first paid on 17 March 1704. According to the Pietà account books, he was paid thirty ducats for the six-month period from September 1703 to February 1704. In August 1704 his annual salary was raised from sixty to one hundred ducats because, to quote the governors' resolution of 17 August, "Don Antonio Vivaldi is highly successful at teaching the violin to the girls and shows enthusiasm at teaching the *viola all'inglese*". The raise was intended to "encourage him in his efforts and therefore allow him to be of greater help to the girls".² At the new pay level, Vivaldi's salary was exactly half that paid to Francesco Gasparinii as *maestro di coro*.

As *maestro di violino* Vivaldi's contracted duties included violin teaching and, at times and on the basis of a special agreement, viola instruction. He was also expected to acquire stringed instruments and accessories (bows and strings). For expenses incurred in making these acquisitions, he was reimbursed from time to time by the Pietà. Probably soon thereafter, Vivaldi assumed the duties of *maestro de' concerti*, that is, he was in charge of conducting and composing instrumental works. There are a number of indications that Vivaldi unofficially performed as

maestro de' concerti long before the appearance of the first document – a resolution of the *congregazione* or governing board dated 24 May 1716 – mentioning him in that capacity. The Violin Sonatas, Op. 2 (1709), are his first printed works to bear this title. Scholars are almost certain that he had begun producing compositions for the Pietà orchestra and for individual performers before this time. As evidence we have the Dresden autograph of the Sonata for Violin, Oboe, Obbligato Organ, and Salmoè ad lib. (RV 779). This manuscript was inscribed in Vivaldi's hand with the names of four players, all of whom were at the Pietà in 1707, suggesting either the work was written for them or they first performed it. Only two of the young musicians, “Sig^{ra}: Prudenza Viol^o” and “Sig^{ra}: Candida Salmoè”, appear in subsequent documents.³

The most important sources documenting Vivaldi's affiliation with the Pietà are the minutes (*Notatori*) that record all the *congregazione*'s decisions concerning the institution. Appointed by the Senate, the approximately twelve members of this board came from among the Venetian *nobili* (noblemen) and *cittadini* (burghers). Two of the twelve were usually “Governatori deputati sopra la Chiesa e il Coro” (deputies or educators responsible for the church and the choir), who tended to church business and the Pietà's musical affairs. The *congregazione* included one or more procurators of the Venetian Republic. Besides establishing new *maestro* positions and determining sabbaticals, bonuses, and similar matters, the governing board decided annually whether to reconfirm *maestri* in their posts. Although the vote was determined primarily by economic considerations, it was also something of an evaluation of each *maestro*'s efforts at the Pietà. In Vivaldi's case these minutes clearly show that from the beginning his activities at the Pietà were not unanimously approved. Unlike, for example, Gasparini, who was always confirmed unanimously up to 1716, Vivaldi always received between one and three “no” votes and he fell short of the required two-thirds majority twice, in 1709 and in 1716. In the first vote taken on 24 February 1709, seven members were approved and six opposed his continuation, while on the second ballot the result was reversed (six approved and seven opposed). Vivaldi temporarily lost his appointment a second time on 29 March 1716 when only seven of twelve members voted in his favor. Had the young musician neglected his duties at the Pietà once his outside activities began to grow rapidly? It seems likely that this was happening by 1716.

Notwithstanding any reservations the Pietà governors might have had concerning Vivaldi's work, his good standing at large as violinist and composer clearly enhanced the institution's musical reputation. It was during this period that the Pietà earned its reputation as the best of the city's four Ospedali because of its excellent orchestra and its exciting instrumental programming, in which Vivaldi played an important part. As a result, the somewhat difficult "red priest" was reinstated more than once: two and a half years after his first dismissal on 24 February 1709 (for a term that continued until 27 September 1711),⁴ and again a little less than two months into 1716 (this term lasted until 24 May). He was reappointed unanimously in 1711; in May 1716, the result of the ballot was eleven to one in favor. In both instances his annual salary was set at sixty ducats, which demonstrates that he no longer taught the *viola all'inglese* and that the title of *maestro de' concerti*, confirmed in May 1716, did not involve increased pay.

Vivaldi's life and artistic activities scarcely varied from 1703 to about 1711 or 1712. Then he achieved a new status, becoming widely known and recognized as "the famous Vivaldi", and his activities as composer and virtuoso greatly widened his circle of artistic influence. A milestone along his road to fame was the first edition of *L'estro armonico* (The Harmonic Inspiration), Op. 3, published in 1711 at the latest. This work established his reputation as the leading master of the new instrumental genre: the concerto.

Starting in 1713 the situation at the Pietà changed. Francesco Gasparini, who had successfully held the post of *maestro di coro* for many years, took advantage of the sick leave he was granted in the spring of 1713 and left Venice for about six months. He did not return to the Ospedale once this period had expired; instead, he moved to Rome (after a brief stay in Florence), where in 1725 he became *maestro* of St. John Lateran. There he died in retirement in 1727, after a long illness. Inasmuch as no suitable replacement for Gasparini could be found for a number of years (Pietro Scarpari, alias Pietro dall'Oglio, who was hired as replacement in 1713, apparently did not meet the Pietà's standards as a composer), Vivaldi had to assume the duties of this additional office for at least a time. There is proof of this in a 2 June 1715 resolution by the governors approving a fifty ducat bonus that was to be paid to Vivaldi for special work. This amount was equivalent to the annual bonus paid to the *maestro di coro*. In addition to noting his effective pedagogical

activity, the motion mentioned the “excellent musical compositions” that Vivaldi had produced during Gasparini’s absence, including “a complete mass, a vespers, an oratorio, and over thirty motets”.⁵ The oratorio mentioned is most likely *Moyses Deus Pharaonis* (RV 643), performed at the Pietà in 1714 and of which only the libretto still exists. The composition of the oratorio *Juditha triumphans* (RV 644), performed at the Pietà in November 1716, is clearly the result of Vivaldi’s activity as *maestro di coro*.

Probably due to the friction between himself and the institution, Vivaldi was not appointed *maestro di coro* after Gasparini left the Pietà, though it is also possible that Vivaldi did not seek the appointment because he regarded himself as simply an instrumental composer and considered his work in this area to be more important than the writing of vocal music. Perhaps the governors or even Vivaldi himself did not consider the more demanding office of *maestro di coro* to be compatible with the *prete rosso*’s new field of activity, opera.

Vivaldi turned to composition for the theater sometime about 1713. For his debut as an operatic composer, he chose a theater in the provinces, the Teatro delle Grazie (or delle Garzerie) in Vicenza, located on the mainland in the Veneto. This was the proper setting for the presentation of his new opera *Ottone in Villa* (RV 729). On 30 April he was granted a one month’s leave from the Pietà to prepare the premiere, which occurred in May 1713. In June of that year Vivaldi also performed his (lost) oratorio *La vittoria navale* (RV 782) in Vicenza.

Before presenting his own *Orlando finto pazzo* (RV 727) in Venice on or around 10 November 1714, Vivaldi had already been impresario – probably for about a year – at the Teatro Sant’Angelo, a small- or at best medium-sized theater. He had been “house composer” and musical director and continued in those positions until the 1717 Carnival season. The first document that refers to Vivaldi as the impresario of this theater (which belonged to the Marcello and Cappello families) is the libretto dedication (*dedica*) dated 20 January 1714 of an opera by Michel Angelo Gasparini. Vivaldi’s work in the theater was intense. In addition to his activities as impresario and as the attendant house composer with the duties of arranging and preparing operas by other composers, he produced at least six operas of his own in Venice between autumn 1714 and Carnival 1718.

All the more astonishing were his achievements in other artistic endeavors during those years – his pedagogical duties at the Pietà, his

appearances as a virtuoso performer and his creations as a composer, including sonatas, concertos, motets, masses, and oratorios. A second set of concertos, *La stravaganza*, Op. 4, appeared in 1714 at the latest. The Op. 5 Sonatas (1716) were published by Jeanne Roger in Amsterdam, as were Op. 6 and Op. 7 (presumably in 1716–17). In addition there is much evidence that Vivaldi composed a number of instrumental works that were not published. For example, in 1715 and 1716, two German travelers to Venice, Johann Friedrich Armand von Uffenbach and Johann Georg Pisendel, returned to Germany with manuscripts of a large number of Vivaldi's sonatas and concertos. The Frankfurt nobleman Uffenbach met Vivaldi during the Carnival of 1715; the Dresden violinist, Pisendel, "took formal lessons on the violin"⁶ from Vivaldi, who dedicated five violin sonatas and six violin concertos (in manuscript) to him during the German's stay in the city in 1716.

In his diary, Uffenbach provided a particularly vivid account of the musician's varied artistic activities. The German patrician attended the Teatro Sant'Angelo four times between 4 February and 4 March, three times for performances of the pastiche *Nerone fatto Cesare* (RV 724) arranged by Vivaldi. At each of these performances "the famous Vivaldi", the theater's "entrepreneur", as Uffenbach called him,⁷ played the violin between acts. (I will go into Uffenbach's famous description of Vivaldi's violin playing later). On 6 March, after a number of invitations, "Vivaldi the famous composer and violinist" visited the German music lover's house and during the visit received from Uffenbach a commission for several "concerti grossi". He also "had several bottles of wine fetched for him because he is a cleric ... he then played his very difficult and quite inimitable fantasies on the violin". Three days later on 9 March Vivaldi took to Uffenbach "ten concerti grossi, which he claimed he had composed especially for me". Uffenbach bought "several of them, and in order for me to get a better idea of them he wanted to teach me on the spot to play them and to visit me from time to time, so that this occasion would be just a start".

Documents that capture such lifelike personal encounters with an artist, going beyond simple factual information, are rare indeed. The entries in Uffenbach's diary are really the only source we have for references of a personal nature to both the young and middle-aged Vivaldi. Very little is known about Vivaldi's private life at this time, even

though he was already famous. Only recently have facts about the composer's change of lodgings and the family circumstances come to light.

Vivaldi lived in a house on the Campo dei Santi Filippo e Giacomo (which belonged to San Provolo parish and was located a few hundred meters east of St. Mark's) from December 1705 to November 1708. We have no information about where his family lived between 1 December 1708 and 19 April 1711. On 20 April 1711 he signed a lease for an apartment on this square for himself and for his father ("al Reverendo don Antonio Vivaldi et Giovanni Battista di lui padre"). Vivaldi lived here until 1722; the annual rent was forty-two ducats. For a time Vivaldi also had a second address in a house next to the Teatro Sant'Angelo.⁸

Vivaldi was forty at the end of this period in his Venetian career. According to receipts from the second half of 1717, the Pietà's last payment of salary to Vivaldi was for this period. During Carnival in 1718 it is very likely that the Teatro San Moisè mounted two Vivaldi operas: *La costanza trionfante* ... (RV 706) in a return performance, and *Armida al campo d'Egitto* (RV 699) in a premiere.⁹ After this there is no trace of the *prete rosso* in Venice for about two years. He had taken up employment with Prince Philip of Hesse-Darmstadt in Mantua as *maestro di cappella di camera*.

L'estro armonico – Vivaldi's Breakthrough as Concerto Composer: Evolution and Works Up to Op. 7

In 1711, following the publication of two sets of sonatas, Vivaldi presented himself to the public in the genre that was to become uniquely his own: the instrumental concerto. The twelve Concertos, Op. 3, issued under the name *L'estro armonico* ("harmonic inspiration" or "harmonic fire") by the Amsterdam publisher Estienne Roger, quickly established their author as the leading Italian concerto composer. The fact that Vivaldi had these works (dedicated to Prince Ferdinand III of Tuscany) published by one of the leading non-Italian music publishers, who specialized in modern music engraving, rather than by an Italian house, testifies to his growing fame. In the dedication to *dilettanti di musica*, Vivaldi expresses his satisfaction at these works' "being engraved

by the hand of the famous Monsieur Estienne Roger” (fig. 10). The Amsterdam publishing house, which was run for several years starting in 1716 by Estienne Roger’s daughter Jeanne Roger and later by his son-in-law Michel-Charles le Cène, printed the first editions of subsequent Vivaldi works up to and including Op. 12.

When Vivaldi began writing concertos, the genre was either emerging or undergoing an early stage of development as an autonomous, clearly structured, and relatively fixed form. The term *concerto* has been used to denote a wide variety of vocal and instrumental compositions. It had a long history before it was applied to the genre under discussion, as had various practices of instrumental “concertizing” such as the alternation of choral and solo parts. Works that met all eighteenth-century criteria for concerto form, however, did not begin to appear until the late seventeenth century.

An initial, typical form of the instrumental concerto from this period has been associated mainly with Arcangelo Corelli and his twelve *Concerti Grossi*, Op. 6. First published a year after the composer’s death in 1714, some of these works had been written and circulated in manuscript long before 1700. According to the Austrian composer Georg Muffat, Corelli performed works similar to the *concerti grossi* in Rome in 1682.¹⁰ In these works, a *concertino* (a solo group of two violins and



Figure 10. Title page of *L'estro armonico*.

one cello) alternates with a four-part string ensemble that has, of course, a basso continuo as underpinning. Despite considerable variation in the number and sequence of movements, the first eight of Corelli's Op. 6 concertos are organized similarly to the *sonata da chiesa*; the last four are *concerti da camera*, that is, they consist of a preludio followed for the most part by dance movements. The concertizing, or alternation and relationship between the two ensembles, is largely independent of form: tutti and *concertino* do not have their own sets of themes or motifs. To a certain extent, the seemingly arbitrary switching from solo trio to string ensemble and vice versa is a purely sonic effect that neither determines the form of the movements nor results in a special concerto form. This "deficiency" does not detract from the aesthetic value of these concertos, and their standing "as perfect and unsurpassed masterpieces and models of their kind in the genre"¹¹ has been emphasized rightly again and again. I have pointed these features out simply to distinguish the Corellian concerto grosso from a different kind of instrumental concertizing that developed soon afterwards into another concerto type, first in Bologna, then in Venice.

I refer to the somewhat earlier solo concerto of which Giuseppe Torelli (1651–1709) of Bologna and Vivaldi's Venetian contemporary Tommaso Albinoni (1671–1750) are considered the fathers. Torelli's *Concerti musicali*, Op. 6, published in 1698, were as far as we know the first genuine solo concertos for violin and string orchestra to appear in print. Two years later, in 1700, Albinoni brought out his *Sinfonie e concerti a cinque*, Op. 2, which also included several solo violin concertos. Both works represented a new concerto form, a fact Torelli made clear in his preface to the *Concerti musicali* when he wrote, "I must point out to you that the word *solo* in a concerto means *to play the section in question with one violin*; elsewhere you may double the parts or play them with as many as three or four instruments".¹²

Between Torelli's and Corelli's concerti grossi, the main difference was not the use of a solo violin instead of a *concertino* group for contrast with the tutti, but that, at least in principle, the alternation of tutti and solo also corresponded to the musical structure of the movement: the parts played by the tutti were conceived thematically and structurally as tutti, whereas the solo violin sections were written to take full advantage of solo performance. The alternation between tutti and solo had ceased to be incidental and had assumed a structural basis, gradually be-

coming the prescription for a specific, new concerto form.¹³ It was a convincing, virtually self-evident movement structure that became an established style for concertizing. I refer to the movement structure that has come to be known as *ritornello* form, which remained the basic model for fast concerto movements, generally the first and third, for many decades. Unlike the Corellian concerto grosso, this new cyclical form of the solo concerto was soon standardized into a three-movement work with fast outer movements and a slow second movement.

Terms such as *Vivaldi concerto form* and *Vivaldi ritornello form* are often used to describe the structure of such works and movements because they were developed principally by Vivaldi, in spite of the fact that Torelli and Albinoni created the basis for this type of solo concerto. During the first decade of the eighteenth century, it was primarily Vivaldi who succeeded in creating the concept of the concerto that became a complete and universal model. Research in this area is particularly rewarding because we are able to trace his development of the form from his earliest concertos. The most important sources for tracing the evolution of the form are the twelve concertos of *L'estro armonico*. The great formal and stylistic range of these concerti is due in large part to their having been composed over a long time period. They mark, as it were, the stages in the development of Vivaldi *the concerto composer* as well as the development of the genre of the instrumental concerto from Corelli's concerto grosso and the early solo concertos of Torelli and Albinoni to the mature Vivaldi concertos.

Vivaldi's first set of concertos contain his only works in the genre that follow the example of Corelli's concerti grossi in sequence of movements, movement form, and concertante type. The only other work to use Corelli's approach is the seventh concerto of Op. 4 (RV 185). These works are among those indicating an earlier orientation because of their instrumentation, which uses two or four violins, sometimes also a cello, as a solo group; yet other concertos with the same scoring prove that the use of more than one solo instrument, that is, a solo group, is no indication of following the Corelli tradition.

The *Concerto VII con quattro violini e violoncello obligate* in F major (RV 567) is especially close to the Corelli concerto grosso, and is correctly considered the oldest work of Op. 3. The sequence of five movements (Andante – Adagio – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro) and the structure of the individual movements can be seen as stemming from

Corelli. The greatest indebtedness appears in the dance-like last movement, in which the Corelli-like *concertino* (two violins and cello) concertizes with the tutti in the manner of the Roman composer (ex. 4). The first and third movements of this work clearly go beyond Corelli's concertante style in that Vivaldi breaks up the *concertino* group to give each instrument an individual, although short, solo. The seventh concerto's character as a veritable "Hommage au maître du genre, Corelli"¹⁴ can be seen also from a musical quotation it contains – the famous gavotte theme from Corelli's Violin Sonata, Op. 5, No. 10, which appears twice in the central allegro in a variant that had been used by Vivaldi in his early set of sonatas.¹⁵



Example 4. Concerto in F Major, Op. 3, No. 7 (RV 567), last movement, bars 33 ff.

The most famous concerto of *L'estro armonico*, the Concerto No. 11 in D Minor (RV 565), which Bach arranged for organ (BWV 596), also belongs to the Corelli tradition. The *concertino* (two violins and cello), the sequence of movements, and the movement type all point to the older concerto grosso. The first half of the work consists of a short thirty-one-bar allegro introduction played by the solo instruments (twenty bars of which are played against a tonic pedal in repeated eighth notes), with three bars of adagio transition and followed by a radiant seventy-bar allegro fugue that is interrupted by two *concertino* episodes. The following Siciliana (Largo e Spiccato) points most clearly to the coming solo concerto. Enclosed by two short ritornellos, the movement is a spacious cantilena by the first solo violin and an early

example of a large solo movement as the slow second movement of a concerto.

The most interesting aspects of the concertos in which Vivaldi uses the new three-movement model in conjunction with the Torelli–Albinoni concertante style and movement arrangement are the varying degrees of development with respect to the mature Vivaldi concerto type. Significantly, the early works are distinguished by Vivaldi's treatment of the opening tutti ritornello and the artful construction of the opening solo passage. Using the ritornelli found in the composer's mature concertos as the standard (I will shortly give a description of the ritornello treatment), we note that some of those found in *L'estro armonico* are quite brief and are limited to a small group of motifs. The twice-repeated, three-bar first phrase (marked as A in ex. 5) in the unison ritornello of the Concerto in A Major for Two Solo Violins, No. 5 (RV 519), for example, is immediately followed by another three-bar group of motifs that ends the ritornello in the tonic (marked B). The first movement of the Concerto in G Major, No. 3 (RV 310), contains another kind of rudimentary ritornello. The solo violin figuration grows immediately and smoothly out of the unfinished tutti at a structural point where, in a mature Vivaldi concerto, one would expect an epilogue that returned the opening tutti in the main key, but with a cadenza. Vivaldi's treatment here lends a spontaneous, incidental quality to the beginning of the solo rather than having it appear as the start of something qualitatively new; it is a moment that stands out. To be sure, the slight intrinsic value of the still rather short solos in this movement also results from their makeup: they consist of stereotypical sixteenth-note figuration

Allegro



Example 5. Concerto in A Major, Op. 3, No. 5 (RV 519), first movement.

that lacks distinct motifs. Purely figurative solos of this type, which also characterize the fifth concerto mentioned earlier, are particularly reminiscent of Albinoni's early concertos.

The most stylistically advanced works in Op. 3 clearly reveal the direction and degree of maturity Vivaldi achieved in the concerto form. This may be seen especially in the two concertos in A minor: the sixth (RV 356) for one solo violin and the eighth (RV 522) for two solo violins (ex. 6).

Allegro



Example 6. Concerto in A Minor, Op. 3, No. 8 (RV 522), first movement.

If we begin by comparing the opening *tutti*s, we can see that the extensive *ritornello* in the first movement of the eighth concerto is the more impressive example of the new level of quality. Three chords that set the home key with its dominant, and a scale derived from them, open the dynamic first phrase (A), which propels four other groups of motifs: a short auxiliary-note motif that the violins pass back and forth (B); an initially trill-like then sequentially descending motif (C); an even, sighing figure played over a sustained seventh chord (D); and the powerful leaps of the cadential epilogue (E).

This highly articulated fifteen-and-a-half-bar *ritornello* is striking not only for its length and for its motivic wealth but also for the

nuanced expression linked to this complex, highly contrasting arrangement, especially in group D.

Logically this extended, highly articulated tutti requires a much more individual solo. The solo that follows the ritornello is no longer confined to figuration, but frequently adds thematic material of its own, at least in the beginning. In the first movement of the eighth concerto the two solo violins start with an independent, rhythmically dotted solo theme in thirds; in the sixth concerto the solo violin picks up the forceful main theme of the ritornello, its repetitions of single notes lending it new nuance.

A multi-sectioned yet self-contained opening tutti and a qualitatively different solo opening became the major features of the concerto-movement form developed by Vivaldi. The most important characteristic of the Vivaldi ritornello form is the multiple reappearance, usually in shortened form, of the opening tutti ritornello in alternation with a solo section episode, which generates the necessary thematic unity and a manifest division of the relatively large-scale movement. At least one more aspect deserves attention: the ritornelli within the movement appear on different scale steps of the home key, such as dominant, parallel tonic, and parallel dominant, thus marking the beginning and the end of the movement's overall harmonic plan. As a result, the solo episodes are also the modulatory sections of the movement. This characteristic appears to be appropriate for the sections determined by virtuoso solo figuration, and this feature also sets them apart from the thematically distinct ritornello blocks.

The general formal characteristics, outlined above, were not created solely or spontaneously by Vivaldi. (In addition to the previously noted preliminary stages of concerto-movement development, as found in works by Torelli and in early works by Albinoni, I would like to mention, at this point, one other model: the Venetian opera aria). Still, there can be no doubt that it was Vivaldi who created the valid – because it was logically constructed – model of the instrumental-concerto movement with its “fixed sequence of tutti and ritornello, and solo and episode”,¹⁶ by consistently pursuing the development of movement forms and formal processes.

The most formally advanced movements of *L'estro armonico* are constructed, in principle though not in all details, according to this model. For example, the large number of alternations between tutti and solo in

the ninety-three bars of the first movement of the eighth concerto (nine tutti and eight solo sections in which not all tutti sections use ritornello motifs) point to the experimental character typical of this set. Almost all later concertos contain from four to at most six ritornelli. Table 1, which gives a structural breakdown of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major (RV 369), a later work, illustrates this.¹⁷

Table 1

Structural breakdown of Vivaldi's Violin Concerto in B-flat Major (RV 369).

Section	Group of motifs	Key / function / modulation	Bars
T1	AABCDD'	B-flat major (tonic)	1–15.1
S1	e ... Fig.	B-flat major – F major	15.2–28.3
T2	AADD'	F major (dominant)	28.3–37.1
S2	Fig.	F major – C minor	37.1–56.1
T3	DD	C minor (parallel minor of subdominant)	56.1–60.1
S3	Fig.	C minor – G minor	60.1–78.1
T4	AAB	G minor (relative minor) / B-flat major (half cadence F major)	78.1–84.3
S4	e ... Fig.	B-flat major	84.4–101.3
T5	DD'	B-flat major	101.3–106

Abbreviations: (T) tutti ritornelli, (S) solo episode, (ABCD) group of motifs of the tutti ritornello, (e) distinct motif at beginning of solo, (Fig.) figuration without motivic character. (Fractions of bars indicate quarter bars.)

Vivaldi follows this basic model, of which the particular structure shown in Table 1 is only one variant among many, in almost all fast – that is, first and third – movements of his solo concertos. As a rule, the differences between first and third movements are ones of character – according to Quantz the former are “serious” while the latter are “playful and cheerful”.¹⁸ Thus first movements tend to be in 4/4 time, whereas last movements are usually in 2/4, 3/4, or 3/8, with simple, dance-like themes and greater virtuosity. Their form is basically the same. The central movements of Op. 3 are characteristic of the many

possibilities offered by slow movements in contrast to allegro movements. In subsequent concertos, the adagio or largo movement predominantly uses a solo instrument that performs a cantilena, which influences the natural tendencies of the formal construction and the accompaniment figures.

Vivaldi's development of the concerto structure represents only one side of his unique contribution to the genre. In addition, there is an overall new tone – a new joy in life that pulsates in his music. Who, before Vivaldi in his ritornellos, had written music with such irresistible verve that it practically leapt out at the listener? Where else could one find the expansive, self-assured development of both the virtuosic and the songful solo that emerges from the tutti, or the sense of discovery and delight in the most varied and nuanced combinations of instrumental sound? If any music seems to capture the color, fullness, and excitement of Venetian life, it is Vivaldi's concertos.

L'estro armonico is already marked by all these features: the overwhelming tuttis, for example, in the first and third movements of the Concerto in B Minor for Four Violins, No. 10 (RV 580), with their interweaving solo parts; the sensitive solo cantilenas in the fifth, seventh, and ninth concertos; and the tonal magic of the central largo movement in the Concerto in B Minor, in which each of the four solo violins breaks up the harmony with different figuration (ex. 7).¹⁹ Scholars quickly recognized the artistic quality of such tonal layers. The Bach biographer Carl Ludwig Hilgenfeldt, for example, pointed out the “extended passage consisting entirely of arpeggiated sixteenth notes”, which strongly anticipated Mendelssohn's “Dance of the Elves” in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.²⁰ Finally, in talking about the new tone of these concertos, we must mention the great solo part in the third movement of the eighth concerto (ex. 8) in which the first solo violin revels in figuration above the “emphatic cantabile melody” (according to Eller) of the second. In describing this passage, Alfred Einstein said that it sounded “as if the windows and doors of a magnificent baroque hall had been opened to welcome in the out-of-doors; a grand and splendid pathos unknown to the seventeenth century; the call of a citizen of the world”.²¹

L'estro armonico occupies a unique place among Vivaldi's printed concertos as regards the wide range of forms, of instrumentation, and of style (which he clearly chose with great care) among the works and the

Larghetto



Example 7. Concerto in B Minor, Op. 3, No. 10 (RV 580), second movement, bar 16.



Example 8. Concerto in A Minor, Op. 3, No. 8 (RV 522), third movement, bars 87 ff.

symmetrical arrangement of the concertos within the collection. The set consists of three groups of four: four concertos for four violins (Nos. 1, 4, 7, 10), each followed by four concertos for two violins (Nos. 2, 5, 8, 11) and for solo violin (Nos. 3, 6, 9, 12). Except for the last pair, each concerto in a major key is followed by one in a minor key, emphasizing the set's cyclical plan. Lastly, this is the only collection that uses instrumental part books, due to the fact that some of the works are written for four solo violins plus accompaniment and two viola parts, following older practice.

The uniqueness of *L'estro armonico* is due also to both the popularity and the historical importance of the concertos, which, as far as we can now determine, were reprinted or republished in at least fourteen editions in subsequent decades (by John Walsh of London and by Le Clerc le Cadet of Paris as well as by Roger).

In his preface to the *dilettanti di musica*, Vivaldi announced that he would shortly publish another set of works, containing *concerti a 4*. The collection in question was *La stravaganza* (Eccentricity, or Unconventionality, or Oddness), Op. 4, comprised of twelve concertos. The set was dedicated to the *nobile Veneto* Vettor Delfino and published by Estienne Roger of Amsterdam. Although we have no way of knowing the publication date, it was probably issued no later than 1714.

Although a number of common features stress the temporal and the stylistic proximity of Vivaldi's first two sets of concertos, his Op. 4 differs significantly from the previous set. Especially apparent is the departure from the wide variety of solo instruments that were called for in Op. 3, replaced with a dominant solo violin in Op. 4. With but one exception, the concertos are in three movements. It is appropriate to classify the works as solo violin concertos although some movements contain passages for an additional solo violin. In those instances, the second solo part is clearly subordinated to the first solo violin to such an extent that the initial score designates only one part as solo (the *violino di concertino*), whereas the other brief solos are printed in the second ripieno violin part. The single exception to this rule is in the seventh concerto (RV 185). It is the only work of the set to have four movements and thus still largely follows both the model and the style of the concerto grosso. The third movement (Largo) is based on the dialogue of two equal solo violins. The dance-like final Allegro employs the closed-Corellian *concertino* of two violins and a cello as well as the corresponding interplay between the *concertino* and ripieno.

The inner drive and the musical language that are found in Vivaldi's second printed set of concertos marks a new developmental stage when compared to the first set, both in the formation of Vivaldi's personal concerto style and in the expansion and stabilization of the solo concerto form. In the next few paragraphs, I would like to concentrate on three aspects that are representative of the new developments.

The first aspect concerns Vivaldi's consolidation of the concerto-movement form – the form that I referred to previously as *Vivaldi ritornello form*. Most of the fast movements in Op. 4 are already variants of this type or are very similar to it – approximately five ritornellos and four qualitatively different and relatively extended solos. Due to these elements and to the complex opening ritornello, the movement dimensions are clearly expanded. Movements reach up to 114 bars of 4/4 (the

second concerto, RV 279, first movement) and 166 and 170 bars of 3/4 (the sixth concerto, RV 316a, and the twelfth, RV 298, third movements).

Second, the solos are far more effective. This is not equally true of all twelve concertos, yet the overall change is unmistakable. The second, the sixth, and the twelfth concertos (especially the twelfth) have particularly impressive solos; the highly interesting Concerto No. 5 in A Major (RV 347) is the first published Vivaldi concerto with extensive double-stopping. As a rule, it is not the virtuosic technical demands that make the solo parts more appealing, since none of the concertos demand more than fourth position, but it is the greater variety of figuration. Some movements contain an astonishing wealth of vivid, rhythmically distinct figures with arpeggios, passages, and leaps – extended solos last up to thirty bars and attain a new plane of imagination.

Lastly, a number of the Op. 4 concertos contain an element that gives the set its title: *La stravaganza*. *Peculiar* or *odd* are in fact apt descriptions of both the quality and the style of certain movements. The beginning of the Concerto No. 8 in D Minor, a work simply brimming with one type of *stravaganza*, overflows with alterations (ex. 9). Surprising and unusual effects are created by large leaps, by rhythmic irregularities, and by abrupt contrasts, with the range of these effects extending from the disconcertingly bizarre, especially in the eighth concerto, to the sprightly and capricious, for example, in the final movement of the third concerto and the outer movements of the twelfth concerto. For the first time we encounter the striking “penchant for the extraordinary and the fantastic” in Vivaldi’s music, his “striving to push the musical means of his time to their limit”.²² It was probably this side of the Venetian’s work that his contemporaries found, to quote Uffenbach, “frightening”²³ or, to use the words of John Hawkins, “wild and irregular”.²⁴

Of the printed sets of concertos following Opp. 3 and 4, Op. 8, published in 1725, was a new milestone and enjoyed a success comparable to that of *L'estro armonico*. On the other hand, Op. 6 (containing six violin concertos) and Op. 7 (consisting of ten violin concertos and two oboe concertos) – both probably published in 1716 or somewhat later by Roger – indicate a consolidation of the achievements of Op. 4 rather than a break into new paths. The fact that these concertos are rather uneven has led scholars to assume that the Amsterdam publisher,

Allegro

The musical score is for the first movement of the Concerto in D Minor, Op. 4, No. 8 (RV 249) by Vivaldi. It is in 12/8 time and D minor. The score is written for Violin solo (Vi. solo) and Bassoon (B.C.). The Violin part features a trill (tr) in the third measure. The Bassoon part has a 6th fret marking in the first measure and a 7th fret marking in the second measure.

Example 9. Concerto in D Minor, Op. 4, No. 8 (RV 249), first movement.

and not the composer, assembled and edited the works in question. The lack of customary dedications, the many printing errors, and the seemingly haphazard arrangement of the concertos, especially in Op. 7, all indicate that the publisher put the set together from a supply of Vivaldi concertos that were available to him. It can be demonstrated that a number of the Op. 7 concertos had been circulating in manuscript years before they were published, and that they differed from the Roger's versions. For instance, Johann Sebastian Bach transcribed, probably as early as 1713 or 1714, two of these concertos (RV 299 and RV 208) from manuscripts.

Although I have chosen not to go into greater detail, I feel that I have shown that these sets contain rewarding works. Outstanding examples are, in Op. 6, the striking Concerto in E Minor, No. 5 (RV 280), and the Concerto in D Minor, No. 6 (RV 239), and from Op. 7, the Concerto in C Major, No. 2 (RV 188), with a first movement uncommonly rich in motifs and figuration, and the boldly chromatic Concerto in A Minor, No. 4 (RV 354), with its passionate final movement solos

of almost operatic intensity. In some ways, the festive and virtuosic Concerto in D Major, No. 11 (RV 208a), can also be considered part of this group. I will return to it shortly.

If I include the few works contained in several printed collections, I count slightly fewer than fifty concertos that had been published by 1717, or almost half of the concertos that appeared in print during the composer's lifetime.²⁵ Nevertheless, this figure represents only 10 percent of Vivaldi's works in this genre that we now know of. This shows that the concertos published in the sets up to and including Op. 7 represent only a fraction of the works he had written up to that time, and that the vast majority of them did not appear in printed form. There is some evidence to indicate that the number of concertos written during the decade around 1710 was greater than in subsequent periods, with many more works having been composed than published. Of course, there is as yet little concrete data that would enable us to date with precision the works that are in manuscript.

Vivaldi's vast production of concertos can largely be explained as the result of trying to meet a corresponding need. The demand for new works in this young instrumental genre must have been virtually endless, especially for solo concertos. In the writing of such works, Vivaldi quickly acquired a reputation as the leading composer. In only a few instances have scholars been able to determine who it was that purchased or commissioned these works; nonetheless, these few examples are useful in illuminating some aspects of musical practice.

First of all, Vivaldi regularly supplied concertos to the Ospedale della Pietà. For the period of his work at the Pietà up through 1717, no contracts or other proof have been found that would document the precise quantity of works he was obliged to write, yet in 1723 the terms of Vivaldi's reemployment by the Pietà provide clues as to his earlier commitments. The 2 July 1723 decision by the *congregazione* obligated the composer to provide two concertos per month for a fee of one sequin each. If we assume that he produced a similar quantity of works while employed by the Ospedale during the roughly six years from the autumn of 1711, when, he was reinstated on 27 September, to the autumn of 1717, then Vivaldi supplied the Pietà alone with some 150 concertos.

Vivaldi must have found his income from selling manuscripts – in the manner referred to previously in the quote from Uffenbach's diary – more lucrative than the commissions paid by the Pietà, as stipulated in

his contract, for newly composed works. Unfortunately, the Frankfurt patrician did not indicate the price that he had paid.²⁶ Be that as it may, in February 1733 Vivaldi told Edward Holdsworth that he had decided to stop having his concertos printed as this robbed him of the more profitable possibility of selling his works in manuscript.²⁷ Given the many musicians and other music lovers who visited Venice from throughout Europe, selling manuscripts must have provided a major channel for distributing his works.

The criteria used for including or for excluding concertos in the printed sets are anything but clear. To be sure, the factors varied from case to case and quite often chance was involved. If we were to take into account that salability was a factor in determining the makeup of collections, it would be evident that extremely difficult-to-perform works would not be suitable for publication. What point would there have been in publishing a violin concerto that only Vivaldi and a few other violinists could have performed?

Some manuscripts of Vivaldi's violin concertos from as early as 1712 or 1714 reveal that the composer wrote works, for himself and for other virtuosos that he knew, that are far more demanding technically than his published concertos from the same period. Especially striking are several of the solo cadenzas from these years.

The concerto cadenzas, which according to Quantz "became fashionable ... roughly between 1710 and 1716",²⁸ are fantasia-like, unaccompanied, improvised solos inserted before the end of a movement. The approximately fifteen Vivaldi cadenzas that appear in fast concerto movements – mostly in third movements – represent by far the most important body of notated specimens that can be found in the early written-out *cadenza*. They are found in manuscripts (about half being autographs) of Vivaldi violin concertos. The cadenzas that were copied by the Dresden virtuoso Johann Georg Pisendel are particularly important.²⁹ It has not been determined whether Vivaldi wrote out these cadenzas in order to "outfit" other performers, such as the soloists among the *Pietà* girls, or other violinists, such as Pisendel, who might have been largely unfamiliar with performing cadenzas, or whether it was his habit to write out cadenzas intended for his own use (fig. 11). The fact that a considerable portion of the extant cadenzas were included in the autograph scores – and not only in the solo parts – leads me to favor the latter interpretation. Keep in mind also that about half of Vivaldi's



Figure 11. Cadenza to the last movement of the Violin Concerto (RV 340), in Vivaldi's hand.

cadenzas are quite closely related to the rest of the movement such that they grow organically from the final solo, rather than simply being “tacked on” in the home key after the end of the ritornello and with the last ritornello bars then repeated at the end of the cadenza.

In addition to written-out cadenzas, there are notations that simply indicate where a cadenza is to be inserted: “Qui si ferma a piacimento” (stop here ad lib.).

Remarkably enough, Vivaldi's virtuosic cadenzas were not reproduced in the printed sets of concertos, but were confined to a small circle of professional virtuosos who either had direct personal contact with him or had access to this special music through manuscripts. The two known versions of the Concerto in D Major (RV 208/208a) are characteristic of this divergence. The first and third movements of the Op. 7 version of the concerto (RV 208a) – I previously mentioned the work for its virtuosity – not only lack written-out cadenzas but they also do not have indications for the inclusion of one. On the other hand, the manuscript version (RV 208, with a different second movement) exists in three manuscripts: an autograph score in the Turin National Library and a set

of parts in a north Italian library and in the Mecklenburg Landesbibliothek in Schwerin. These sources include highly virtuosic solo violin cadenzas for the first and third movements. The autograph score merely indicates where the cadenza is to begin, while the solo parts include the written-out cadenzas. Interestingly enough, the version containing the cadenzas is not a subsequent virtuosic addition, but quite likely goes back to 1713 or 1714, as proven by the fact that the Weimar court organist, Johann Sebastian Bach, transcribed RV 208 as an organ concerto (BWV 594), including an adaptation of the two large cadenzas.

The Schwerin manuscript, entitled *Grosso Mogul* and dating from before 1717, is not the only concerto with written-out or indicated cadenzas.³⁰ Other examples can be found among the violin concerto manuscripts that were probably inscribed by Vivaldi and that he gave to Pisendel, his master pupil, who was in Venice in 1716 and 1717.³¹ The concerto RV 212 with first- and third-movement cadenzas, copied by Pisendel, had been written as early as 1712 for the name day of St. Anthony of Padua.³²

The cadenzas that have been preserved are typically twenty-five to forty bars in length, though some are much longer. They differ somewhat in formal and dramatic structure, in motivic links to the rest of the movement, and in the degree of technical difficulty. They all, however, aim at displaying virtuosic solo performance, thrusting the art and personality of the soloist to the fore. The notation alone (ex. 10) of a section of the cadenza from the Concerto “per la solennità della S. Lingua di S. Antonio in Padua”, with its figuration that soars as far as a⁴, should give an idea of the effect this kind of virtuosity had in 1715.³³ It must have been this kind of cadenza that Uffenbach was describing in his Venetian diary when he referred to Vivaldi playing the violin at an opera performance on 4 February 1715.

Toward the end Vivaldi played a splendid solo accompaniment to which he appended a fantasy [cadenza] that gave me a start because no one has ever played anything like it, for his fingers were within a straw's breadth of the bridge so that there was no room for the bow. He played a fugue on all four strings at unbelievable speed, astonishing everyone; still, I cannot say that it charmed me because it was fuller in artifice than pleasing to the ear.³⁴



Example 10. Concerto in D Major (RV 212), third movement cadenza, bars 40 ff.

Clearly, such technical difficulties, which go far beyond the general standard, were as undesirable in printed collections of concertos as they were outside the norm for ensembles, which explains why the published sets contain nothing of Vivaldi's imaginative and rich cadenzas. He published no concertos for the flauto traverso until the six Concertos, Op. 10, in about 1728. With the exception of several oboe concertos in Opp. 7, 8, and 11, all other sets of concertos published after *L'estro armonico* contained only solo violin concertos. His solo concertos for bassoon, for cello, and for viola d'amore have no more place in these collections than did his many double concertos for various instruments or his concertos for a larger number of instruments that he occasionally called *Concerti con molti Istromenti*. As far as we can tell today, the concer-

tos for these ensembles were composed at a later time. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that until age forty Vivaldi wrote concertos only for the instruments shown in his published collections. Scholars are practically certain, for example, that the eight concertos for cello, contained in the Schönborn Music Library in Wiesentheid (in Lower Franconia), were written before 1714,³⁵ The information we have about the copyist of these manuscripts would suggest that three of them – RV 402, 416, and 420 – were composed as early as 1708 or 1709.

According to an anecdote in Johann Adam Hiller's 1767 biography of Pisendel,³⁶ the Dresden violinist performed one of the above *Concerti con molti Istromenti* in late 1716 or in early 1717 in Venice "between two acts" of an opera. It was the Concerto in F Major (RV 571) (of which a number of manuscripts exist in Dresden), for solo violin, two horns, two oboes, bassoon, obbligato cello, and strings. This work represents a type of Vivaldi concerto that was to have great historical importance; already fully mature by 1716 at the latest, Vivaldi had written for solo violin and concertante pairs of winds. I will write more about this genre at a later point in this book.

Early Masterpieces of Sacred Music

Undoubtedly the greatest surprise to come out of the 1930s' examination of the Turin manuscript collection was the discovery that Vivaldi was a composer of sacred vocal music. Not only were modern scholars confronted with a type of work that had not previously been associated with Vivaldi, but it also became apparent – by the time of the first performances of some of Vivaldi's church music, if not earlier – that the Venetian had created works of the highest artistic rank in this genre. Seen from this perspective, the concert given in September 1939 during the Siena Vivaldi Festival, during which some of these compositions were performed for the first time in 200 years, was nothing less than historic.

During the first phase of scholarly investigation into Vivaldi's church music there was a great deal of uncertainty about original performance venues. The works for double chorus particularly awakened thoughts of associations with St. Mark's Cathedral, where the poly-choral style was born, and suggested that at least these works were

conceived with St. Mark's in mind. We have since learned that the vast majority of Vivaldi's sacred vocal works were written for the Ospedale della Pietà (fig. 12). "The best church music is to be heard in the hospitals, the Pietà, the Incurabili, and the Mendicanti, performed entirely by girls. At the time, the Pietà was the best", recalled Quantz about his musical impressions of Venice in 1726.³⁷ Surely he was referring to the performances that the Ospedali held "Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays ... starting at about 4:00 in the afternoon".³⁸

The *maestro di coro* was responsible for the vocal compositions performed on these occasions as well as for those played at special morning services. A resolution by the Pietà governors dated 6 July 1710 enumerated the compositions he was expected to provide:

He must compose at least two new masses and two new vespers each year, for Easter and for the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, to which this church is consecrated, and in addition at least two motets per month as well as every other type of composition that he is commissioned to write for funeral rites, for Holy Week services, or other occasions of all types.³⁹



Figure 12. Girls' concert, perhaps at the Ospedale della Pietà. Anonymous painting from the second half of the eighteenth century.

Although Vivaldi was never officially appointed *maestro di coro*, he carried out the functions of this office for a time – indeed for an extended period – whenever the position was not filled or when the *maestro* in charge was unable to perform his duties for whatever reason. As far as we can determine, Vivaldi first assumed these functions in spring 1713, after Francesco Gasparini left the Pietà, and exercised them until Carlo Luigi Pietro Grua was appointed to the post in February 1719. The indications are that, from 1713 until the time when he left for Mantua, Vivaldi performed the additional duties of *maestro di coro*. A special payment to Vivaldi in July 1715 and the two oratorios performed at the Pietà, *Moyses* (1714) and *Juditha Triumphans* (1716), are confirmation for us of the composer's activities in sacred music.

Vivaldi's performance of the duties of *maestro di coro* is further documented for the interregnum between the resignation of Giovanni Porta, who held the post from May 1726 to September 1737, and the appointment of Gennaro d'Alessandro, who took up the position on 21 August 1739. It may also be assumed that he substituted as *maestro di coro* in the spring of 1726 between the time of Grua's death on 27 March and the appointment of Porta on 24 May. In addition, there were probably a number of occasions on which Vivaldi, as acting *maestro di coro*, was commissioned to compose sacred works.

The more than sixty known works of Vivaldi's church music are surprisingly varied as regards texts and their usage, musical form, and settings. The works range in scope from solo motets to large-scale choral works for soloists, double chorus, and orchestra.

When classification of these works is done according to their texts, as is done in the Ryom catalog, the first group consists of compositions having both liturgical texts and clear liturgical function. This category forms easily the largest group and includes a number of individual mass movements, a complete mass (RV 586) of dubious authenticity,⁴⁰ a Magnificat that exists in four different versions, a number of hymns and sequences including a Stabat Mater and a Salve Regina, and seventeen psalms.

The second category of compositions, written to liturgical texts but without a clear liturgical function, consists of settings of new poetic texts: twelve motets, nine motet-like *Introduzioni*, and four oratorios, only one of which, *Juditha triumphans*, has been preserved.

Since it is impossible to discuss all these works, I will take a closer look at several characteristic compositions written between 1713 and 1717. According to our current knowledge of the chronology of Vivaldi's works,⁴¹ his output during this period included some of his most famous vocal compositions: the Gloria in D Major (RV 589), the Credo in B Minor (RV 591), the Stabat Mater (RV 621), the Magnificat in G Minor (in the early version for single chorus), and *Juditha triumphans*.

According to the most recent research, the Gloria (RV 589) (composed as early as 1713) is one of at least three Vivaldi settings of this portion of the mass, one of which, RV 590, is thought to have been lost. These Glorias are not fragments from complete or partially complete masses. The Gloria (RV 589) takes the place of a complete mass setting as “the representative composition for a festive mass”, Helmut Huckle surmises.⁴² It is a *Missa lecta*, that is, a mass read silently by the priest. According to Huckle, “Individual Glorias ... seem to be a north-Italian and, in particular, Venetian specialty”.

Vivaldi followed the same structural principles in setting the Gloria as Bach did in his B Minor Mass, that is, he divided the composition into a number of independent sections, some of which were choruses and others of which were solo arias or duets. This type of mass is often referred to erroneously as a *cantata mass*, which is incorrect insofar as it contains no recitative, unlike a cantata. After Vivaldi's Gloria (RV 589) became known in our time, there was considerable speculation as to whether Bach had been familiar with Vivaldi's Gloria and had modeled his B Minor Mass after it. Though the two works share some similar passages and parallels, these similarities are due to conventions generally observed at the time in setting the mass. These similarities include not only the division of the text but also the festive key of D major, the brilliant trumpet passages in the outer movements, and the assignment of selected textual passages to conventional performance forces – for example, setting the “Laudamus” as an aria or as a duet.

Vivaldi divided the Gloria (RV 589) into twelve movements, of which the fourth, the “Gratias”, was only six bars in length. This chordal section, ending in a B major half-cadence, formed a kind of portal to the following choral fugue, “Propter magnam gloriam”, which appeared in E minor. I could quote many examples that would docu-

ment the well-thought-out, balanced structure of the work – for instance, the regularity with which he returned to the music of the opening in the “Quoniam”, the usage of a wide range of styles from tightly structured choral movements to light concerto-like arias and duets (such as in the “Laudamus”), or given passages (as in the “Qui tollis”) that intensify the text’s meaning. Instead, I will take a closer look at a single movement (No. 2), the “Et in terra pax” for chorus, to point out some characteristic stylistic and structural aspects and to indicate the work’s artistic stature.

Vivaldi devoted an entire movement to the words “Peace on earth to men of good will”. He sharply contrasted the words’ setting with the festiveness of the opening Gloria chorus. The calm Andante in B minor, accompanied by strings alone, stressed the inward and subdued thoughts and feelings linked to a prayer for peace. The eight-bar instrumental introduction (ex. 11) that opens the movement, was built on three consecutive motifs that rounded off the whole with a wonderful symmetry: (1) a minor triad in quarter notes descending an octave in bars one and two, (2) a figured chord in even eighth notes in bars three and four, and (3) a motif in sixteenth notes based largely on repetition in bars five to seven. This was accompanied by even eighth notes in both the viola and bass and by a strikingly peaceful harmony. The motifs

Andante

Example 11. Gloria in D Major (RV 589) “Et in terra pax”.

played in these introductory bars suffice for the instrumental writing of the entire piece; indeed the instrumental part existed as a substantial entity independent of the choral part.

The four-part, motet-like choral writing placed on top of the string parts was based on completely different motifs, which consisted of two chromatic forms of narrow compass (ex. 12). These are contrapuntally combined with the orchestral material to form a rich texture. Analogous to the “Et incarnatus” in Bach’s B Minor Mass, the movement’s musical events unfolded on two separate motivic levels: (1) the wide intervals and even eighth notes of the instrumental part and (2) the chromatically expressive choral motet. As uncommonly compact and intense as this movement was from the first measure, the composer further intensified the second half by condensing the previously contrapuntal chorus parts into chordal writing and by using bold harmonies that take the music into remote regions and culminate in an expressive crescendo of great urgency (ex. 13), which occurs during a transition to powerful, flowing melismas. The progression from F-sharp major to the dominant seventh chord on B (bars sixty-six and sixty-seven) has an almost romantic effect. Following another rolling crescendo, created with other means, the movement ends quietly with the descending triadic motif from the beginning.



Example 12. Gloria in D Major (RV 589) “Et in terra pax”.

Like the second preserved Gloria (RV 588) and the *Introduzione al Gloria* (RV 639/639a) that goes with it, the Credo (RV 591) also belongs to Vivaldi’s first period of sacred vocal music, although it was probably not composed until about 1717, at the end of this period. This unusually compact and expressive work for four-part chorus and string orchestra is gripping due to both its convincing interpretation of the text and its inventive structure. Most of the long Credo text is forced into one unified movement. This is true for the two allegro outer

VI. I

VI. II

Sopran

Alt bo - - nae vo-lun - ta - - - - -

Tenor

Baß

Va.

B.C. $b7$ $b3$ $b6$ $b3$ $b6$ 5

65

6 $\#4$ $b3$ $b4$ $\#2$

tis

$\#3$ 6 4 6 5 $\#3$

Example 13. Gloria in D Major (RV 589) “Et in terra pax”, bars 60 ff.

movements in as much as they have corresponding motifs and structure – beginning with “Credo” to the words “descendit in coelis” (first movement), and from “Et resurrexit” to the concluding “Amen” (fourth movement). Only the “Et incarnatus est” (second movement – Adagio) and “Crucifixus” (third movement – Largo) are treated as separate movements, indicating their central role in Vivaldi’s conception of the work. Both central movements are largely a cappella, with the strings doubling the chorus throughout, supported by the continuo. In the “Et incarnatus”, Vivaldi uses the customary doubling of the soprano by the second violins and of the alto by the first violins at the upper octave. This device makes the movement, which is entirely homophonic, even more luminous; its effect is primarily one of color and harmony. The “Crucifixus”, on the other hand, has a dense, contrapuntal structure in which color plays a minor role. The heavy pulses of the ground bass, interrupted by rests, support a movement that is severe yet controlled and that transfigures pain into a collective experience (ex. 14). In addition to the initial motif with its descending diminished fourth, the chromatic lamento motif, sinking to the lower fourth, is prominent. Vivaldi uses it with the word “passus” (suffered) in the exact center of the movement (ex. 15). Movement by chromatic fourths (the *passus duriusculus* of the doctrine of musical figures, which will appear later in its rising form), has been a favored symbol of pain and suffering since the early seventeenth century. (It provides the ostinato bass in the “Crucifixus” of Bach’s B Minor Mass).

VI. I (Largo)

VI. II

Sopran

Alt

Tenor

Baß

Va.

B.C.

Cru-ci-fi-xus e-tiam pro no-bis, Cru-ci-fi-xus e-tiam pro nobis, Cru-ci-fi-xus e-tiam pro

Example 14. Credo in E Minor (RV 591) “Crucifixus”.



Example 15. Credo in E Minor (RV 591) “Crucifixus”.

Vivaldi again follows the principle of two musical planes in the outer movements. The basic idea of the movement, a sustained rhythmic pulse with rapid repetition of the same note, dominates the orchestral writing. It is in two parts, with the first and second violins as the upper voice and the violas and basses as the lower voice. To this the composer adds purely chordal choral writing, all voices singing, almost reciting, the words in the same note values and repeating the same pitch over a number of bars (ex. 16). This choral treatment is abandoned only at the end of the work, where the words “Et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.” are set as a short fugue. The long striding notes of the “Amen” theme (ex. 17) evoke the tradition of the *stile antico*, yet this fugue is also embedded within the constant orchestral flow.

The individual movements of the musical setting of the mass play a role within the overall mass liturgy comparable to the setting of a psalm within the vespers liturgy, where the recitation of five psalms plus the singing of the closing Magnificat constitute the heart of that afternoon service. Just as it was customary for polyphonic settings to be made either of individual sections of the mass or of the entire *Ordinarium Missae*, it was the custom to set only individual sections of the vespers – antiphons, psalms, and Magnificat – or the entire vespers cycle. Considering the works we have today there can be no doubt that the vast majority of Vivaldi’s religious works – for both mass and vespers – consists of settings of individual sections. We ought to recall, however, that the previously quoted resolution by the governors of the Pietà, dated 2 June 1715, stipulated “one entire mass” and “one vespers”.

The most recent research shows some seventeen psalm settings, four versions of the Magnificat, and a number of other compositions that can be counted with vespers settings – hymns and Stabat Mater, for example. Vivaldi wrote considerably more vespers than mass settings. Though this may to some extent be coincidental, it does indicate the relatively greater musical importance of vespers for church life in Venice. Helmut Huckle rightly attributed this “to the development of

VI. I/II

Sopran

Alt

Tenor

Baß

Va. (8^{va})

B.c.

Cre - do, cre - do, cre - do in u - num

De - um, cre - do in u - num De - um

Example 16. Credo in E Minor (RV 591) bars 10 ff.

A - - - - - men

Example 17. Credo in E Minor (RV 591) “Et resurrexit”.

public musical life”, with vespers being an occasion for public musical performances at which it was quite customary to charge admission. Huckle considered vespers “the afternoon musical performance in Italian

cities complementary to the operas performed during the evening”.⁴³ It follows, therefore, that the performance of vespers psalms represented “the most characteristic genre of Italian church music around 1730”.⁴⁴

Although we are unable to find all Vivaldi’s psalm settings, studying the accessible printed scores and the available recordings can give us an idea of the wealth and the variety found in works called psalms. Not only is this diversity the primary result of such factors as intended use, performance venues, and available performing forces but it is also – and this must always be taken into account – due to the composer’s esthetic ideas.

Of the psalms known with certainty to have been written between 1713 and 1717, the settings of Psalm 116 (“*Laudate Dominum*”, RV 606), which consists of only two verses, and Psalm 121 (“*Laetatus sum*”, RV 607) are examples of relatively small forms, modest in both length and performing forces.⁴⁵ Both are written for four-part choir, strings (violins only in RV 607), and thorough bass, and are in one movement. The settings, especially the relationship between vocal and instrumental parts, follow the principles of the outer movements of the Credo (RV 591): the string orchestra plays a continuous, purely instrumental *theme* that establishes the identity of the movement while the chorus declaims the text of the psalm in chordal motifs that are entirely independent of those in the orchestra. Understandably, the music is less concerned with expressing details of the text than in representing its basic effect.

Such richly articulated compositions as the Psalm 126 (“*Nisi Dominus*”, RV 608) represent a diametrically opposed approach to structure. For this psalm, Vivaldi chose nine independent movements for solo contralto, strings, and basso continuo. The doxology that always closes the psalm is divided into three sections: “*Gloria Patri*”, “*Sicut erat*”, and “*Amen*”. The third and forth movements show especially well how individual movements differ sharply in musical invention, and they demonstrate the extent to which structure conforms to given images in the text. In the third movement, the verse “*Surgite postquam sederitis, qui manducatis panem doloris*” (It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows) serves as the basis for an opera-like, accompanied recitative in which the cry of “*Surgite*”, with agitated scale passages marked *presto*, contrasts twice with *adagio arioso* episodes accompanying the words “*postquam sederitis ...*”. In the

fourth movement the image of sleep (For so He giveth His beloved sleep) inspired Vivaldi to compose a broad, *rocking* Siciliana in 12/8 time. Surely the most surprising movement of this psalm is the “Gloria Patri”. Rather than the brilliant musical song of praise demanded by the text and by tradition, the composer wrote an inward-looking larghetto in D minor. An obbligato viola d’amore part, which leads in the extended ritornellos, accompanies the alto voice.

The opening movement of this psalm provides a particularly vivid example of the role that both formal principles and structural elements, coming from Vivaldi’s instrumental concertos, played in his sacred music. The movement, which lasts seventy bars, is largely indistinguishable from that of a concerto allegro: it displays a clear ritornello form, and the twelve-bar ritornello that opens the movement (and the work) and returns in the material of the penultimate movement, the “Sicut erat”, is a prime example of a concerto ritornello.

The last example from the psalms, Psalm 111 (“Beatus vir”, RV 598) for single chorus is intended to show the great variety with which both concerto principle and form are applied in Vivaldi’s sacred vocal works. (Another, double-chorus Vivaldi setting of this psalm, RV 597, is probably from a later period; a third, RV 599, has probably been lost.) The “Beatus vir” (RV 598) is unusual because it was conceived as a single large concerto movement consisting of 420 bars. Unlike “Nisi Dominus”, “Beatus vir” is not only for solo voice (alto) and orchestra but also for two solo sopranos (in duet) and choir. There are four solo episodes for the solo alto with the two sopranos, and the chorus acts as a structural element in three passages, closing the work with the powerful “Amen” of the doxology. The relationships among the forces in this large-scale concerto movement bring to mind in a number of ways Vivaldi’s *Concerti con molti Istromenti*.

Vivaldi’s Magnificat and Stabat Mater also belong to the group of vespers compositions. The Magnificat, the song of praise to the Virgin taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, has been the definitive high point of vespers since the early Middle Ages; the Stabat Mater, a prayer in verse originally written for private meditation during the thirteenth century by a Franciscan monk, is a sequence belonging to the Mass for the Feast of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary (officially sanctioned in 1727). Some of the stanzas, however, were also sung during the great *horae* (matins, lauds, and vespers) of this feast. Starting in the fifteenth

century, both texts were frequently set polyphonically by such great seventeenth- and eighteenth-century masters as Monteverdi, Schütz, Bach (Magnificat), Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Caldara, Agostino Steffani, and Pergolesi (Stabat Mater). Vivaldi's settings of these texts are outstanding even when compared to the best corresponding compositions by these masters.

The history of the composition of Vivaldi's Magnificat is so complicated that a number of ambiguities and misinterpretations have arisen owing to the order in which the various versions were written. In accordance with present-day knowledge, researchers are certain that the original setting of the work was for single choir, as found in the slightly different versions RV 610 (in a Turin autograph score without the later additions) and RV 610b (two copies are currently in Prague). It is probable that this setting dates from before 1717. Later – in the mid-1720s? – Vivaldi arranged RV 610 for double chorus (RV 610a), and toward the end of the 1730s he created a version for one chorus in which the three sections for solo voice – (2) “Et exsultavit”, (5) “Esurientes”, and (7) “Sicut locutus est” – were replaced by five new arias (resulting in RV 611). Because the new version expanded “Et exsultavit” from one movement into three – “Et exsultavit”, “Quia respexit”, and “Qui fecit mihi” – RV 611 has eleven movements instead of nine.

Except for rearranging the order of several movements during the late 1730s, the basic plan and musical substance of the work were unchanged by the various revisions and reworkings, so I can discuss several aspects of the music without going into the different versions. I will use for my discussion RV 610, which was written for one SATB chorus with four solo voices – two sopranos, alto, and tenor – and string orchestra with two oboes.

Vivaldi divided the work, which is in G minor, into nine sections, the vast majority of which are for chorus and orchestra. The only solo movements are “Exsultavit”, “Esurientes”, and “Sicut locutus” (nos. 2, 5, and 7). None of these sections calls for a large solo aria; movement no. 5 is written as a duet, no. 7 as a trio, and in the “Exsultavit” the soprano, alto, and tenor have textually distinct solos separated by ritornellos. The chorus enters briefly twice, with “omnes” and “omnes generationes”. The most powerful effects are in the choral movements: the powerful invocation of the opening Magnificat with its expressive harmonic line ranging over a wide arch; the “Fecit potentiam” with a terse,

vivid unison on the words “Deposuit potentes de sede” (He dethrones the mighty); but most of all, the densely contrapuntal and expressively tense harmony of “Et misericordia”, which is at the musical heart of the composition. The text “and his mercy is everlasting” elicits music of deeply moving beauty and expressive intensity. The beginning, with the leap of a minor sixth that is intensified to a major seventh in the imitating second voice, is uncommonly memorable (ex. 18).

Example 18. Magnificat in G Minor (RV 610) “Et misericordia”, bars 5 ff.

The appearance of a tenor solo in the Magnificat gives me an opportunity to touch briefly on the matter of tenor and bass parts in performances presented at an institution for girls. Contrary to the notion common in earlier literature that tenor and bass voices were performed by borrowed male singers, perhaps even by Ospedale teachers, current opinion is inclined to the belief that the performances were managed without male voices. The fact that some girls had *dal Tenor* or *dal Basso* after their name is considered plausible evidence to support this theory. It can be assumed that the girl tenors sang the part at the original pitch, while the girl basses transposed their part up an octave. The actual bass range was therefore only performed by the instrumental basses.⁴⁶

Unlike the Magnificat, the Stabat Mater (which Talbot was recently able to trace to a 1712 commission for the church of St. Maria della Pace in Brescia⁴⁷) is a work for alto solo, strings, and basso continuo. Vivaldi used only the first ten stanzas of the twenty stanza prayer, thereby producing a form utterly unlike that of other Stabat Mater settings. Stanzas one and two have been given one movement each, stanzas three and four together form another movement, and stanzas five to eight have been set to the same music. Movements one through three have been made identical to movements four through six. Stanzas nine and ten and the closing “Amen” have been set to new music. The work, which lasts over twenty minutes, is thus divided into nine movements.

Vivaldi’s Stabat Mater is particularly impressive in the way that it sustains musically the mood of mourning and lamentation that he found in the text “The mother stood filled with grieving”. The composer restricted himself to slow movements in F minor and C minor. Michael Talbot has aptly compared this aspect of the work to Haydn’s *Sieben Letzte Worte unseres Erlösers am Kreuze* (Seven Last Words from the Cross).⁴⁸ The unusually close-knit work radiates a moving warmth and depth of feeling.

It is possible that not all performances of the Stabat Mater at the Pietà were sung by the same alto throughout, yet a work with these technical demands bears witness to both the high level of vocal training and the artistic maturity of the vocal soloists at the institution. This supposition is confirmed by the composer’s greatest preserved sacred work, the oratorio *Juditha triumphans* (RV 644), first given at the Pietà in November 1716 with all performers coming from the Ospedale (fig. 13). The printed libretto for this performance contains, in handwriting, the names of the girls and young ladies who sang the five solo parts. Polonia, Silvia, Caterina, Barbara, and Giulia were the first to sing the “Alloquentes”: Judith and her maidservant, Abra, Holofernes and his servant, Vagaus, and the high priest Ozias. The parts of Judith, Holofernes, and Ozias are notated in alto clef, while those of Abra and Vagaus are in soprano clef.

As far as we know, *Juditha triumphans* was the second oratorio Vivaldi composed for the Pietà and his third work in the genre. In June 1713 at Vicenza – the same venue as his operatic debut – he mounted his first oratorio, *La vittoria navale* (The Naval Victory), in the church of Santa Corona on the occasion of the canonization of Pope Pius V.

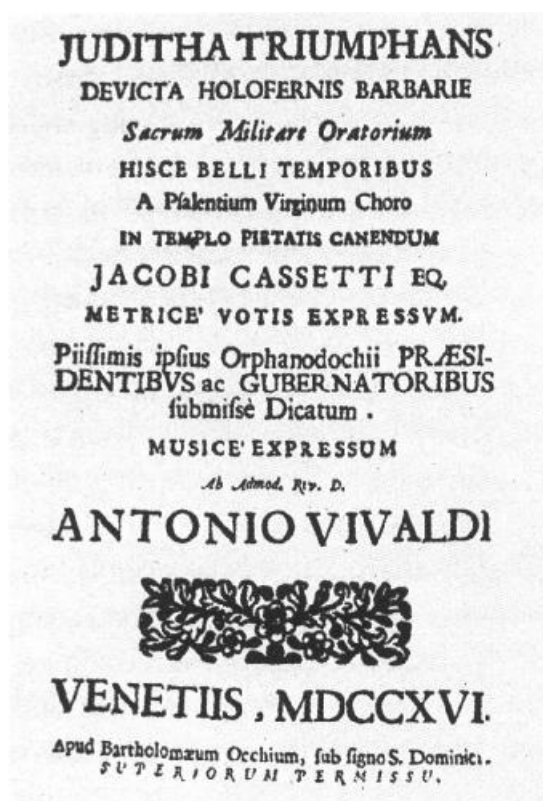


Figure 13. Title page of the libretto to the oratorio *Juditha triumphans*.

The title refers to the victory over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. The *dramatis personae* of the oratorio are St. Pius, an angel, and the allegorical figures Bravery (*Valore*) and Infidelity (*Infedeltà*).⁴⁹ The music to this work has been lost, as has the score of the oratorio *Moyses Deus Pharaonis* (RV 643), composed the following year (1714) for the Pietà, and that of the Christmas oratorio *L'adorazione delli tre re magi al Bambino Gesù* (The Adoration of the Christ Child by the Three Magi) (RV 645). Of the four known Vivaldi oratorios, only one has survived.⁵⁰

Unlike the works written for Vicenza and Milan, the two oratorios, which the composer mounted at the Pietà, are examples of *oratorio latino* (Latin oratorio) not *oratorio volgare* (Italian oratorio). In Venice, which unlike Rome or Bologna did not have an indigenous oratorio tradition, the *ospedali* competed in commissioning and in publicly performing Latin oratorios during the decades around 1700. While Francesco Pol-larolo was *maestro di coro* at the Ospedale degli Incurabili (1696–1718), for example, that institution produced at least seventeen oratorios, and the Pietà, at least during Gasparini's tenure (1701–1713), was not far behind.⁵¹

The sources of the early-eighteenth-century Latin oratorios were, however, completely different from those of the classical oratorios of the type Carissimi wrote during the seventeenth century. The new type of oratorio included neither a *testo* or *historicus* narrating the plot nor a dramatic chorus part. Instead its structure was much like that of contemporary opera in that it consisted almost entirely of recitatives that carried forward the plot, accompanied by basso continuo and interspersed with large-scale solo arias. A large number of the oratorios were also close to opera in their treatment of biblical (mostly Old Testament) subject matter – with distinct emphasis on the amorous elements.

Although some aspects of Giacomo Cassetti's libretto – the Italianizing of the Latin text of *Juditha*, for example – tend toward this direction, his real interest is in portraying the biblical tale as an allegory of the Venetian Republic's successful resistance of the Turks. The military conflict between Venice-Austria and the Turks, which began in 1714 and ended with the Peace of Passarowitz in 1718, had reached, during the summer of 1716, a critical point with the siege of Corfu and with the Battle of Peterwardein. The war was surely a timely topic for the Venetians. An allegorical poem ("Carmen allegoricum") that Casetti attached to his libretto for *Juditha*, which was completed during these weeks.⁵² again expounds the symbolic value of both characters and action, Judith is symbolic of the Adriatic (and therefore of Venice); her maid Abra stands for faith; the city of Bethulia and the high priest Ozias represent the Church, the unity of Christendom, and the honor of virgins; on the other hand, the Assyrian general, Holofernes, portrays the Turkish king and his servant Vagaus depicts the enemy commander. The poem ends with the certainty of a Venetian naval victory.

One month after the August defeat of the Turks at Peterwardein and Corfu, the performance of *Sacrum Militare Oratorium* (Sacred War Oratorio) assumed the character of a musical victory celebration.

Present-day listeners to *Juditha* are likely to be more interested in certain elements and qualities of its musical form than in the oratorio as a whole. This is due to both the static libretto, which tells without dramatic interest the story of Judith beheading the sleeping enemy commander, and the overall musical plan, a succession of almost thirty recitatives and twenty-two arias with very few choruses. Furthermore, the arias are of uneven musical interest.

Having stressed these reservations, I must emphasize that the work embodies an abundance of magnificent music. Its uniquely rich and subtle orchestration, almost unheard of at the time, never fails to grip listeners. Of the Vivaldi compositions that can be dated with certainty, *Juditha triumphans* is the earliest in which the composer's special gift for refined orchestration and his extraordinary sense of tone color make an appearance. He surely profited from the fact that the Pietà promoted not only orchestral playing as such but also performance on unusual instruments. Even though these resources might be expected or taken for granted by a *maestro de' concerti*, what is really important is that as a composer Vivaldi took advantage of them, applying color in a planned and differentiated fashion. *Juditha* is scored for an astonishing orchestra. In addition to four-part strings, which are the foundation of the orchestral complement, the score requires two recorders, two oboes, *salmoè* (chalumeau), two trumpets, two *clarenì* (clarinets), timpani, viola d'amore, five *viole all'inglese*, mandolin, four theorboes, harpsichords, and organ.⁵³ It is somewhat misleading to call this set of instruments the *Juditha* "orchestra" because no single movement employs anywhere near all the prescribed instruments. Only the D major opening and closing choruses are scored for a large ensemble of oboes, trumpets, timpani, and strings.

With the exception of one chorus, "Plena nectare" (Filled with nectar), in which the clarinets are used like trumpets, each instrument is given its entrance as a concertante partner in the arias, or rather in some of the arias. A quintet of *viole all'inglese* replaces the string orchestra at a crucial point in the work. Thus about one-third of the arias have a specific sound that sets them apart from normal practice.

Judith's six arias form the largest contingent of this group, and only the first is accompanied by the conventional string orchestra. In one aria, "Quanto magis generosa" (How much more noble is forgiveness), the mild, silvery tone of the viola d'amore can be heard supported by the muted violins. Another aria, "Transit aetas" (Life passes), brings "the quiet, almost whispering tones of the mandolin".⁵⁴ In the Siciliana aria, "Vivat in pace" (Live in peace), the muted high strings create the sonic backdrop. In what is probably the most beautiful aria in *Juditha*, the plea to Abra "Veni, veni, me sequere fide" (Come, come, follow me, beloved Abra), the discant *salmoè* rises with beguiling entreaties above the gently pulsating accompaniment of muted violins and violas, only

occasionally supported by the harpsichord. All this illustrates nicely that the composer considered a given instrumental sound or sound combination an essential part of the music.

Lastly, the heroine's final aria and its *accompagnato* recitative deserve special mention because of their sound quality. When Judith prays for strength and for forgiveness to the "Summe astrorum creator" (Highest creator of the stars) just before she performs the deed, this last moment of gathering strength is represented by a solo viola ensemble that is used alone only this once in the score. Much in the same way, the magnificent D minor larghetto aria "In somno profundo" (He who lies in deep sleep) has a unique profile in timbre.

Vagaus's two arias, written for "Sig^{ra} Barbara", a singer apparently with special qualities, create a delicate orchestral magic. The instrumental ensemble of the aria "O servi volate" (Hurry, o servants) consists of four theorboes, whereas the sleep aria, "Umbrae carae" (Dear shades), is given to a recorder duet with string orchestra. Finally, one of Holofernes's five arias has its own highly individual color: his expressively melodic and wooing "Noli o cara" (No, my beloved) is accompanied by a solo oboe and obbligato organ. On the whole, in *Juditha triumphans* "the composer was not essentially concerned with characterizing the enemies as such, instead he strove to interpret through music the emotional state of a character, the situation of humanness", so that "the *hated* foes are given some of the most beautiful arias".⁵⁵

Though I have directed my attention solely to the orchestral component, the full score of *Juditha* is certainly not devoid of either substance or inner musical structure. Alongside less inspired sections are strongly convincing movements that are impressive in their musical concentration; these qualities though can be found elsewhere in Vivaldi's work. As memorable as some of the arias are, almost all could just as easily have been written for an opera, though without their highly unusual accompaniment. They not only share the three-part da capo form with opera arias, in many cases they also employ the same aria types, such as *aria di bravura* and *aria patetica*. Nuances between these and opera arias can be seen most easily in the care taken in composition, but these slight differences represent only a general tendency in the most artistically significant arias. A good example is Holofernes's aria "Agitata infido flatu" (Driven by a perfidious wind), an overwhelming musical

portrait of restless passion portrayed by the sweeping *concitato* figures in the violins and violas by falling chromatic lines and by chains of seventh chords, all resulting in a piece with great motivic concentration.⁵⁶

The fact that the two oratorios were first performed in Vicenza and Milan proves that Vivaldi's religious music was not confined to the Pietà. Considering the reputation he achieved during his forties, it would have been highly unlikely for him not to have received commissions from elsewhere. Nevertheless, Vivaldi's first period of composing many religious works coincided with the time during which he not only held his own post of *maestro de' concerti* at the Pietà but also had major responsibilities as *maestro di coro*. Vivaldi's leaving the Pietà for Mantua thus represents a turning point in his career.

Chapter Five

“Having Composed Ninety-Four Operas” – Vivaldi as Opera Composer and Impresario (1713–1739)

On 2 January 1739 the sixty-two-year-old composer wrote a letter that was bitter and filled with disappointment to his patron Marchese Bentivoglio. It was written under the emotional influence of the crushing failure of his opera *Siroe re di Persia*, and contained the phrase “doppo 94 opere da me composte” (having composed ninety-four operas). Understandably enough, when the letter was first published in 1967 this claim to having composed ninety-four operas created some confusion since slightly fewer than fifty Vivaldi operas were known at the time.¹ Was it conceivable that the scores of almost fifty operas had disappeared without a trace, along with all mention of them? Or had Vivaldi simply exaggerated the number of works he had written? It seems unlikely that these questions will ever be answered satisfactorily. Nonetheless, the figure Vivaldi names is entirely plausible if we include all operas he produced or with which he was connected in a significant way, including *pasticci* produced by him and revivals of new versions of his own and other works. After all, when Vivaldi wrote this letter he had been working in the theater for twenty-five years, and opera and opera business had been at the center of his activities for much of his career.

The Highs and Lows of an Operatic Career

Vivaldi made his debut as an opera composer during the spring of 1713 in Vicenza, a city within the Venetian Republic. When his first opera, *Ottone in Villa*, was performed on 17 May at the small Teatro delle Garzerie, he was thirty-five years old and had for some time been renowned as a violinist and composer of instrumental works (fig. 14). Perhaps during the autumn of that year, and certainly no later than the beginning of the 1714 Carnival season, Vivaldi became involved in the Venetian operatic world, not as composer but as impresario. Presumably he became impresario of the Teatro Sant'Angelo through Francesco Santurini, an influential Venetian theater producer who had also leased (and himself been impresario of) this theater for many years. The



Figure 14. Autograph score of the opera *Ottone in Villa*, opening of act one. Vivaldi's monogram, located in the upper left-hand corner, found in many of his scores, probably means: L(aus) D(eo) B(eataeque) M(ariae) D(eiparae) A(men) (Praise be to God and Mary, the blessed Mother of God, Amen).

Sant'Angelo became *Vivaldi's* theater. Of the somewhat more than twenty of his stage works written for Venice between 1714 and 1739, eighteen were premiered at the Teatro Sant'Angelo.

The relatively small Teatro Sant'Angelo, located directly on the Grand Canal, was of modest importance in the hierarchy of the Venetian opera houses (fig. 15). It was unable to hire the most famous vocal stars, to mount lavish productions, or to charge high admission, unlike the renowned houses of San Giovanni Grisostomo and San Cassiano.² Vivaldi's debut at this small theater is proof of the difficulties faced in establishing a career in opera in Venice, an important operatic center. According to Reinhard Strohm, "the large theaters of San Giovanni Grisostomo and San Cassiano were firmly in the hands of the composers C. F. Pollaro, F. Gasparini, A. Lotti, and Albinoni",³ that is, the leading opera composers active in Venice around 1710 to 1715. I will deal at a later point with the question of why even later Vivaldi was unable to make a breakthrough in the city's leading opera houses.

In the late seventeenth century, the office and the responsibilities of an opera impresario (for houses run-for-profit but not including court-

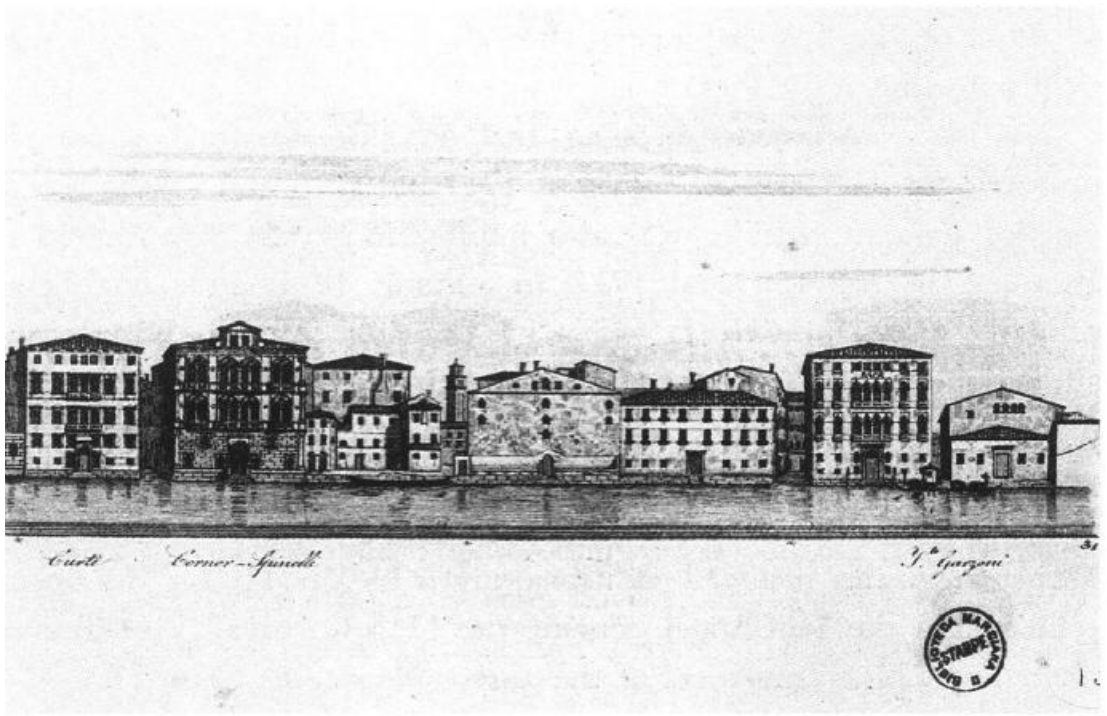


Figure 15. The left bank of the Grand Canal with the facade of the Teatro Sant'Angelo. Detail of an 1828 engraving by Antonio Quadri. The theater is the center building immediately to the right of the tower.

run houses) were more like those of today's artistic director than those of today's impresario. The impresario was responsible for running all the artistic and business matters of the theater, which he usually rented, and for negotiating and signing contracts with everyone connected with productions. He engaged singers, instrumentalists, technical staff, and other support staff either for a single production or, if the theater premiered more than one opera per season, for all operas performed during a *stagione*. Inasmuch as none of the participants in the staging of an opera other than the impresario had any financial stake (beyond their fee) in the production, all profits earned by a successful opera went to the impresario. (Of course, if a production was a failure, all losses were suffered by the impresario). Whereas the composer was paid a relatively modest sum for writing an opera – in 1736, Vivaldi claimed that the customary fee for writing an opera was one hundred sequins⁴ – the risky profession of impresario was potentially highly lucrative. If one also considers that the impresario's influence on the artistic side of an opera production enabled him to choose the libretto, the composer, and, not least of all, the cast, it becomes obvious why a man like Vivaldi found being an impresario enticing. We should not underestimate, however, the allure of the financial aspect; after all, Vivaldi had repeatedly seen that his position at the Pietà was not secure.

We have documents proving that Vivaldi was first appointed impresario for the Carnival *stagioni* of 1714 and 1715, and a great deal of evidence suggests that he was also impresario at the Sant'Angelo in autumn 1716 and Carnival 1717. In autumn 1714, after staging an unusually successful *Orlando furioso* by Giovanni Alberto Ristori and another opera by Michel Angelo Gasparini, Vivaldi produced his first opera written for Venice: *Orlando finto pazzo*. Unfortunately, Vivaldi's first setting of Ariosto's epic poem came at the worst possible time since the opera was followed only a few weeks later by a revival of Ristori's *Orlando furioso* that included additional music by Vivaldi. Of the operas performed at the Sant'Angelo during the 1715 Carnival, Vivaldi contributed only his arrangement of the *pasticcio* *Nerone fatto Cesare* (RV 724) that is mentioned in Uffenbach's diary. Uffenbach calls the opera a "bad work", though his negative criticism is mostly directed at the plot and decor. After attending the opera for the first time, he wrote on 19 February:

In the evening I saw, at the small St. Angelo opera house, an opera entitled *Agrippina*, composed entirely by and produced by Vivaldi.⁵ I did not, however, like it nearly as much as the first, for neither the subject matter nor the decor nor, especially, the costumes were bourgeois. Nero, sung by Fabri, a woman, was dressed in the French manner, while others wore Spanish attire, and still others Persian, in short, a quite absurd mishmash of things that did not belong together; and Vivaldi only played a short violin solo.

On 28 February, nevertheless, he bothered to attend a second performance and in a diary entry recorded later for that date he stated:

That is why I preferred to go to the St. Angelo, where they were still performing the aforementioned bad opera *Nerone fatto Cesare* or *Agrippina*, in which neither inventiveness, stage machinery, nor costumes were to any avail. Yet the singers were, as always, very good, and Vivaldi played a rather long solo on the violin, which I liked particularly. Following his performance an oboist attempted to make a big impression, but the result was so horrible that it was impossible to tell what he had intended, which is why I did not like it.

In autumn 1716 the Sant'Angelo performed Vivaldi's newly composed opera *Arsilda Regina di Ponto*, followed during Carnival 1717 by his *L'Incoronazione di Dario*. These performances were followed by an interruption of his collaboration with this theater. Vivaldi's next operas, *Tieteburga* (autumn 1717) and *Armida al campo d'Egitto* (Carnival 1718), were both produced at the competing San Moisè Theater, from which he had received a *scrittura* (opera commission) during the Carnival of 1716. In January 1716 *La costanza trionfante degl'Amori e dell'Odii* premiered at the San Moisè, and during Carnival 1718 it was revived at the same house. It is entirely possible that the composer had management responsibilities at the Teatro San Moisè during this time.

In spring 1718 when Vivaldi left Venice to take up the post of court music director in Mantua, he not only had composed several operas but also had managed opera houses, apparently devoting a great deal of

energy to the opera business. In any event, he must have been involved in the Mantua theater while at the same time discharging his immediate duties as court music director, as shown by documents dated 27 and 28 May 1718.⁶ Initially, he shared the duties of impresario with Pietro Ramponi, but during the following year he was the sole impresario. To be sure, the status he enjoyed there was not that of a free agent impresario because, strictly speaking, this activity was part of his “services for the court”.⁷ On the other hand, he later proudly pointed out that he was used to acting as an independent businessman (“un franco intraprenditore”).⁸

When Vivaldi returned to his native city after two years in Mantua – where he produced the three new operas *Teuzzone*, *Tito Manlio*, and *La Candace* – it at first seemed he would resume his ties with the Sant’Angelo. Surprisingly enough, in autumn 1720 he confined himself to the production of a single new opera, *La verità in cimento*, and to the composition of the third act of the *pasticcio* *Filippo Re di Macedonia*, which opened the 1721 Carnival season (acts one and two were by Giuseppe Boniventi). Five years passed until in autumn 1725 another Vivaldi opera, perhaps a *pasticcio*, *L’inganno trionfante in amore*, was performed at the Sant’Angelo. We have no adequate explanation for this long interruption in his Venetian opera productions. The conjecture that Vivaldi may have been “put for a time under a cloud”⁹ following publication of the operatic satire *Il teatro alla moda* probably overestimates the effect of this thin book. To be sure, those familiar with the Venetian opera scene were aware that the opera composer Aldiviva, who was lampooned in Benedetto Marcello’s anonymous book, was Vivaldi. At the same time, their awareness also indicated how prominent the *prete rosso* had become in Venetian theater.

During the 1721 summer season Vivaldi premiered his new opera (the *drama pastorale* *La Silvia*) at the Regio Ducal Teatro in Milan. This event was followed by a period of over a year (from autumn 1721 to December 1722) in which he seems to have ceased theater activities altogether – a rarity indeed in the composer’s life. Also, between 1723 and 1725 he wrote relatively little for the theater. Yet the *scritture* he received during 1723 and 1724 were “opera commissions of the very highest order”¹⁰ – comparable only, in Strohm’s opinion, to those he obtained from the Teatro della Pergola in Florence and from the Teatro Pubblico in Reggio Emilia. For both the 1723 and 1724 Carnival *sta-*

gioni he composed an opera for the Teatro Capranica in Rome (*Ercole sul Termodonte* and *Giustino*). He also composed the second act of the 1724 *pasticcio* *La virtù trionfante*. If we are to believe Quantz, it must have been a considerable success. According to the German composer, the so-called Lombard style took the Romans by storm. “Lombard style” refers to the use of the characteristic rhythms ♪. ♪. or ♪. ♪. that had become especially popular during the middle of the eighteenth century. “The latest I have heard”, the German musician wrote about his 1724 stay in Rome, “was that the so-called Lombard style, totally unknown to me but recently introduced to Rome by Vivaldi in his operas, has so captured the imagination of that city that they do not wish to listen to anything not in this style”.¹¹ This was one of the high points of Vivaldi’s popularity as an opera composer.

During the 1725 autumn season he returned to the Teatro Sant’Angelo and produced seven new operas (including *pasticci*) through the Carnival season of 1728: *L’inganno trionfante in amore* (autumn 1725), *Cunegonda*, *La fede tradita e vendicata* (Carnival 1726), *Dorila in Tempe* (autumn 1726), *Farnace*, *Orlando* (Carnival and autumn 1727), and *Rosilena ed Oronta* (Carnival 1728) (figs. 16 and 17). A document from



Figure 16. Title page of the libretto for *Orlando*, performed at the Teatro Sant’Angelo, Venice, in November 1727.

ATTORI.

ORLANDO innamorato d'Angelica. *La Sig. Lucia Lancetti Virtuosa di S. A. S. la Sig. Principessa Violante di Toscana.*

ANGELICA Amante poi Sposa di Medoro. *La Sign. Benedetta Serofina Virtuosa di Camera di S. A. S. l'Elektor Palatino*

ALCINA Maga innamorata di Ruggiero. *La Sig. Anna Girò.*

BRADAMANTE Sposa di Ruggiero, poi in Abito da Uomo sotto nome di **ALDARICO**. *La Sig. Maria Catterina Negri.*

MEDORO Amante poi Sposo di Angelica. *Il Sig. Casimiro Pignotti Virtuoso di S. M. il Rè di Polonia Ellett. di Sassonia.*

RUGGIERO Sposo di Bradamante. *Il Sig. Gio: Andrea Taffi.*

ASTOLFO innamorato di Alcina. *Il Sig. Gaetano Pinetti.*

La

La Musica è del Signor Don Antonio Vivaldi Maestro di Capella di S. A. Sereniss. il Signor Principe Filippo Langravio d'Hassia d'Armeftat.

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Figure 17. The cast given in the libretto to *Orlando*.

1726 shows that the composer again became the theater's impresario or at least undertook some of that post's responsibilities. On 13 October in his capacity as *direttore delle opere in musica* at the Teatro Sant'Angelo, Vivaldi engaged the singer Lucrezia Baldini for the third and last Carnival opera *Farnace*. The contract stipulated a fee for the singer of two hundred ducats and the following mode of payment: the first third before the first performance, another third after half of the performances, and the remainder on the Thursday before Lent.¹²

The 9 November 1726 premiere of *Dorilla* saw the first stage appearance of Anna Girò – only sixteen or seventeen at the time – in a Vivaldi opera. She soon became his favorite prima donna as well as a close personal friend. Recent research has shown that the singer's actual name was Teseire – Italianized to Tessieri – whereas Girò was a sobriquet her father had used.¹³ (His death certificate, dated 22 September 1737, reads: “Pietro Teseire detto [called] Girò”).

The most surprising biographical information about Anna Girò, which only became known in 1988, concerns an occurrence that followed Vivaldi's death. On 20 July 1748 the singer married a widower,

Count Antonio Maria Zanardi Landi, from Piacenza, and the age given in the marriage certificate – “about thirty-eight years” – means that Anna Girò was considerably younger than had commonly been assumed.

In response to the accusation that Vivaldi had had an affair (*amicizia*) with Anna Girò, he replied, in the previously quoted letter of 16 November 1737, with high-sounding assertions concerning Anna’s modesty and piety. Also, in a letter dated 23 November of the same year, he assured her half-sister, Paolina, who was about twenty years older, that he had never lived in the same house as the Girò sisters, though he did not answer the principal accusation that Anna Girò was his lover. He explained that the sisters accompanied him on his travels through many European cities (“in moltissime città d’Europa”) because of his need for medical care. This explanation, however, could only have applied to Paolina, who was something of a nurse to him. The *prima donna* Anna Girò could hardly have been expected to play nurse!

Anna Girò, a mezzo-soprano whose voice was apparently neither big nor brilliant, was unanimously described as a singer with both special acting talent and a strong stage presence. The following account of the *Farnace* performance at the Sant’Angelo in February 1727 is characteristic: Vivaldi’s “student” performed “wonders” in the opera “although her voice was not especially beautiful”.¹⁴ The most vivid portrait we have is by Carlo Goldoni, who depicted his encounter with the *prete rosso* and Anna Girò in 1735.¹⁵

Even during a period in which it hardly took more than a few weeks to compose an opera, the amount of music performed by Vivaldi between autumn 1726 and Carnival 1728 in opera alone was remarkable. In addition to the four new operas he produced at the Sant’Angelo between 9 November 1726 and 17 January 1728, he wrote one each for Florence and Reggio Emilia. The Teatro della Pergola in Florence, which, during the summer of 1718, had performed his *Scanderbeg*, now mounted *Ipermestra* for the 1727 Carnival. During the spring season, the Teatro Pubblico in Reggio gave his version of Metastasio’s *Siroe Re di Persia*. In December he wrote another opera, *L’Atenaide*, to open the 1729 Florence Carnival *stagione*. The Venetian patrician Abbé Conti, who attended *Ipermestra*, wrote that the opera put the Florentine theater back on its feet and earned the composer a great deal of money.¹⁶

Although some of the approximately thirty operas and *pasticci* that Vivaldi had written up to this time were performed north of the

Alps – albeit some in heavily altered form¹⁷ – he apparently did not receive many commissions from the opera houses of central and northern Europe. According to current research, there was only a single commission from this area, the one that came from the theater of Count Franz Anton Sporck in Prague for 1730 and 1731 (figs. 18 and 19).

Vivaldi's association with Sporck's theaters – the count owned an "Opera Hauss" in his Prague palace and a theater at his summer palace in Kuks – must have come about through the Venetian opera company that the music- and theater-loving Bohemian aristocrat (whom we also come across in the life of Johann Sebastian Bach) had engaged in 1724. The company produced "almost sixty operas by Venetian composers" during the following decade.¹⁸ The manager of this opera troupe was the Venetian singer and impresario Antonio Denzio, who in 1716 sang the part of Artabano at the premiere of Vivaldi's *La costanza trionfante* at the Teatro San Moisè and who was apparently in constant contact with Vivaldi. During the summer of 1724 Denzio performed the opera *Orlando furioso oder Der rasende Orland*, which consisted mostly of arias from Vivaldi's 1714 *Orlando*. The composer named in the libretto (Antonio Bioni) was probably responsible only for the recitatives and for adapting



Figure 18.
Italian title page of
the libretto to *Farnace*
for the Prague
performance
of spring 1730.

Figure 19.
German title page
to *Farnace*.



the opera. *La Tirannia gastigata* (RV Anhang 55) was also a compilation, having arias from earlier Vivaldi operas.

Between 1730 and 1732 an abundance of Vivaldi works were performed, and this during a period in which the composer was probably away for a time in Prague. I will come back to the trip Vivaldi began in autumn 1729 and to the places where he stopped during his travels, which lasted until about spring 1731. Let it suffice for now to point out that there can be little doubt that he repeatedly stayed in Prague. Perhaps Vivaldi was present, in spring 1730, when his opera *Farnace* was revived at the Sporck theater in a version probably by Denzio. It is virtually certain that in the autumn of the same year, he attended the first performance of his new opera *Argippo*. In spring 1731 at the Sporck theater, Denzio produced the Vivaldi opera *Alvilda regina dei Goti*. This was a new work for which Vivaldi had, however, written only the arias. According to the Italian libretto, he wrote “all the music except the recitatives and the buffo arias” (that is, all the intermezzos). During Carnival and spring 1732 both *La costanza trionfante* (under the title *Doriclea*) and *Dorilla in Tempe* were revived. It is rather unlikely that Vivaldi was present because he produced a new opera for both Mantua

and Verona during the 1732 Carnival *stagione*: *Semiramide* at the Teatro Arciducal in Mantua on 26 December 1731 (with Anna Girò in the title role) and *La fida ninfa* to initiate the Teatro Filarmonico on 6 January 1732.

Vivaldi's opera output during the 1730s differs in a number of ways from that of the preceding period. First, his association with the Sant'Angelo Theater became increasingly sporadic. Following one new opera in the 1733 autumn *stagione* (*Motezuma*) and one during Carnival 1734 (*L'Olimpiade*) and the revival of the *Dorilla in Tempe*, which had been enriched with arias by Hasse and Giacomelli, he did not work with the theater again until Carnival 1738. That season included performances of the new opera *L'oracolo in Messenia*; the *pasticcio* *Rosmira* (with arias by, among others, Hasse, Handel, and Pergolesi) arranged by Vivaldi; and *Armida al campo d'Egitto*, which had first been performed twenty years earlier. Anna Girò sang a leading role in all three productions. *Feraspe*, the last opera Vivaldi wrote for the Sant'Angelo, is also his last known work for the stage; it premiered on 7 November 1739.

When one considers the level of prestige among the circle of theaters outside Venice where Vivaldi worked during the last years of his life, a somewhat different picture emerges of his operatic activities. (Of the other prestigious Italian opera centers, only Florence is represented, and that by a single commission: *Ginevra Principessa di Scozia*, Carnival 1732.) All other major cities had considerably less important operatic activity. This is true of Mantua, where Vivaldi resumed working as impresario in 1732 and of Verona, where, after *La fida ninfa* and until 1737, he produced *Adelaide*, *Catone in Utica*, and the *pasticcio* *Il Tamerlano*, and where, at least for the 1735 Carnival, Vivaldi also acted as impresario (fig. 20). In particular this also applied to Pavia (for the revival of *Farnace*, May 1731), to Treviso (for the revival of *Farnace*, Carnival 1737), and to Ancona (for the revival of *Siroe*, summer 1738). I will discuss Vivaldi's Ferrara opera projects separately.

As for the number of new operas, Vivaldi's customary rapid pace continued until early 1736. The period from Carnival 1735 to Carnival 1736 displays a clear highpoint of operatic activity with the composition of four new operas: *Adelaide*, *Griselda*, *Aristide*, and *Ginevra*. During this time Vivaldi first worked for the San Samuele opera house in Venice. For this house, which Reinhard Strohm characterizes as "a small, exclusive theater with high admission prices",¹⁹ Vivaldi wrote

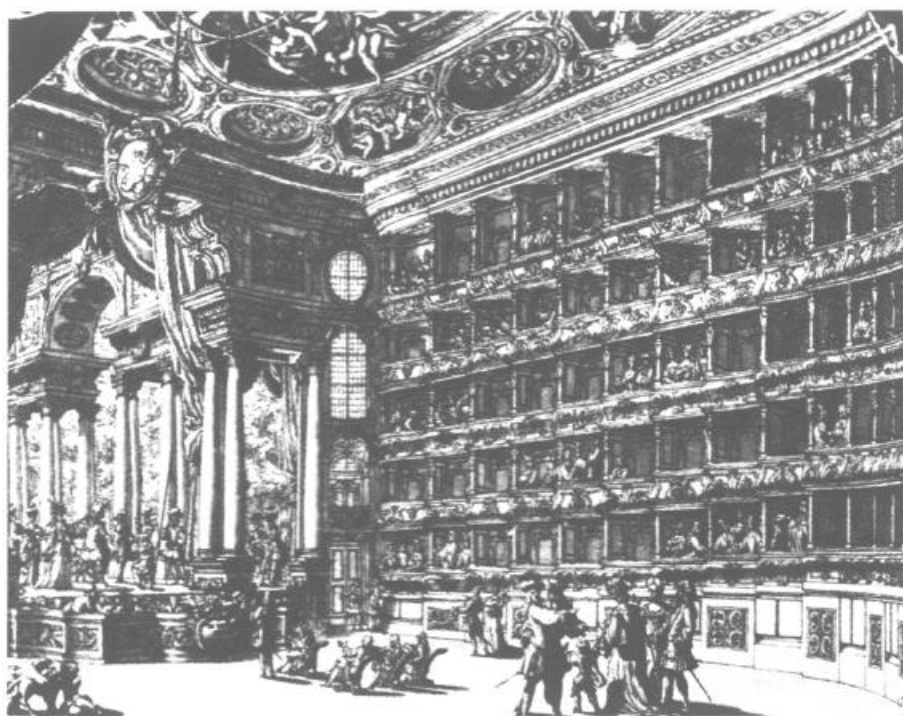


Figure 20. Interior of the Teatro Filarmonico in Verona during a rehearsal of *La fida ninfa* (1732). Drawing by Francesco Bibiena.

Griselda (for the spring *stagione*) and also composed his only musical comedy, the “dramma eroi-comico” *Aristide*. The libretto to *Aristide* was by the young Carlo Goldoni, although he used an assumed name, Calindo Grolo, and Vivaldi used the name Lotavio Vandini. The owner of the Teatro San Samuele, Michele Grimani, had commissioned Goldoni to revise Apostolo Zeno’s 1701 *Griselda* for the setting by Vivaldi. It is also possible that the two great Venetians worked together on intermezzos at this time, although we are not sure whether the *prete rosso* worked with Goldoni on several intermezzos written by the aspiring playwright between 1735 and 1736 (*La bottega da caffè*, *L’amante cabala*, *Il Filosofo*, and *Monsieur Petiton*). At any rate, the music to these farces is lost.

Following Vivaldi’s highly productive operatic period of 1735–36, the subsequent drop in output and activity was all the more dramatic. During the remainder of his life he composed only *Catone in Utica* (Verona, spring 1737), *L’oracolo in Messenia* (Sant’Angelo, Carnival 1737), *Feraspe* (Sant’Angelo, autumn 1739), and the *pasticcio* *Rosmira*. To the best of our knowledge, Vivaldi did not embark on any opera projects after December 1739. Was he tired of this enervating business by

age sixty-one? Did other activities take up all his time? The composer's intense efforts to get his foot in the door of the Ferrara opera house (between autumn 1736 and late 1738/early 1739) do not seem to validate such an inference. If anything, the events in Ferrara reinforce other suppositions.

Ferrara, which belonged to the Papal States at the time, became the hub of Vivaldi's operatic efforts because of the Marchese Guido Bentivoglio d'Aragona. He was an influential Ferrarese aristocrat whom the composer had met in Rome; also, he managed the Teatro Bonacossi with some other noblemen. Vivaldi regarded him as his patron. A 1715 petition by Vivaldi to the Marchese's father, Luigi Bentivoglio, documents a long-standing tie with the Bentivoglio family. It was through Marchese Guido Bentivoglio that Vivaldi attempted to establish himself in Ferrara as an opera composer and impresario. We have an abundance of information on his efforts owing to more than thirty letters (including fourteen of the slightly more than twenty preserved letters written by Vivaldi).²⁰

In October 1736 Vivaldi's first attempt in this direction was a partial success inasmuch as the composer received a commission to arrange two operas. To be sure, these were not, as originally planned, the two Vivaldi operas *Ginevra* and *L'Olimpiade* that were revived at the Teatro Bonacossi, but rather they were the two Hasse operas *Demetrio* and *Alessandro nelle Indie* for which he had arranged and written some new music. Vivaldi must have taken this as something of an affront against his own operas. He was told that the version of *Demetrio* that had been performed at the end of December 1736 was considered to be far too long. .

Since Vivaldi was unable to go to Ferrara for these first projects, an animated correspondence was soon flowing between Venice and Ferrara. While the letters initially dealt with both the planning and the arrangements for the two performances, following the premiere of *Demetrio* they were restricted to disputes over money between Vivaldi on the one hand and the Ferrarese impresario Abbate Bolani and his Venetian theater agent, Daniele Lanzetti, on the other. Regardless of whether Vivaldi's claim for six sequins twenty lire (as reimbursement for additional costs) was just, the *prete rosso's* conduct in the matter was not blameless. Lanzetti maintained in his letter of 12 January 1737 to Bentivoglio that Vivaldi had exaggerated his expenses and had used

threats to force him to confirm that Vivaldi's increased demands were correct.

Compared to the serious personal and artistic defeats and disappointments the composer was subsequently to suffer in Ferrara, the trouble he experienced during this first season was a bagatelle. Still, the fact that Bentivoglio requested his services again on 3 May 1737 illustrates Vivaldi's situation, what his market value was, and the demand he was in at the time.

In a letter of 5 May Bentivoglio advised Vivaldi against the performance of a new opera in Ferrara in autumn 1737, yet the correspondence from these weeks also indicates that in November at the latest, preparations had begun for the production of an opera that was scheduled to open in Ferrara at the beginning of Carnival. On 16 November, during this preparatory phase, a decree by the archbishop of Ferrara, Cardinal Tommaso Ruffo, struck like a bombshell: the apostolic nuncio to Venice informed Vivaldi that the archbishop of Ferrara had prohibited him from going to Ferrara and from putting on an opera there. The reasons given were that Vivaldi, who was a priest, had not been saying mass and, further, that he was having an *amicizia* (friendship, or affair) with the singer Anna Girò.

The letter that Vivaldi sent on that same day to Bentivoglio is the most important and revealing personal document we have from his hand. The text was rambling, full of rationalizations and self-defense. It was a letter in which the sixty-year-old composer told, as it were, his life story. That the text constantly betrayed the writer's deep agitation and that this apologetic representation of his life cannot be compared to an objective and complete biography is hardly surprising given the unexpected blow he had received; he must have considered it a great injustice.

The archbishop's severe action must have been perplexing in a country in which clergymen were granted a remarkable degree of freedom. The edict that Ruffo issued in January 1738, forbidding clerics under his jurisdiction from taking part in Carnival amusements, can be taken as an indication of the sweeping campaign that the cardinal began at that time and an indication that, as has been rightly surmised, he also wished "to set an example using Vivaldi".²¹ Despite Bentivoglio's efforts, Ruffo stuck to his decision not to allow Vivaldi to serve as impresario for the planned opera performances. "He has assured me",

Bentivoglio wrote to Vivaldi on 20 November, “that he will adhere to his decision even if the pope personally orders him to rescind, and that he would rather lose his episcopate than waver in his decision; he believes he must act that way”.²²

Being excluded from working in Ferrara placed Vivaldi in an extremely difficult situation with respect to his contractual obligations as impresario. “For this opera I am burdened with six thousand ducats in signed contracts”, he wrote to Bentivoglio on 16 November. Could another impresario be engaged? Or would the project have to be canceled? At Bentivoglio’s suggestion a certain Picchi, an impresario who lived in Ferrara, was hired to head the undertaking and he immediately came to loggerheads with Vivaldi. Picchi accused Vivaldi of charging excessive fees. In a letter dated 30 November, Vivaldi rejected Picchi’s charges as ludicrous: “If I had been able to hire musicians and dancers for less, please believe me, I would have done so from the start. I swear to Your Excellency that if someone else had to put together this company it would cost twenty-four thousand lire instead of fifteen thousand”. We do not know the outcome of this affair, but we do know that there was no opera *stagione* in Ferrara during the 1738 Carnival.

The Ferrara affair was not yet over for Vivaldi. Following Cardinal Ruffo’s sudden resignation in June 1738, Vivaldi tried to secure for himself the Ferrara Carnival season for the coming year. *Siroe re di Persia* and *Farnace* were chosen. But this third attempt also failed owing to the artistic fiasco of the first performance of *Siroe* at the beginning of the Carnival season (late December 1738). Vivaldi, who was unable to attend, blamed the failure on the performance rather than on the work itself, saying it was a faulty reading due especially to the harpsichordist’s poor playing of the recitatives. This, however, did nothing to change the outcome: the opera was a failure and *Farnace* was canceled. Was there a plot against Vivaldi? On 2 January 1739 he wrote in a letter to Bentivoglio, still shocked from the cancellation news from Ferrara, that his reputation in Ferrara was “flagellata” (scourged).

This is the last letter we have from Vivaldi to Bentivoglio, though it did not spell the end of the Ferrara affair. Two months later and as a result of *Farnace* having been canceled, a disagreement arose between the composer and the stage designer, Antonio Mauro, who had acted as impresario during the Carnival *stagione* in Ferrara. On 4 March 1739 Mauro sent Vivaldi a *scrittura extragiudiziale* (notarized letter) and in-

sisted that the composer, as the actual impresario of the Ferrara opera productions, pay all costs for all the hired singers, musicians, dancers, and other production staff. He, Mauro, had only confirmed and signed the contracts “pro forma”, whereas it was Vivaldi who had in fact concluded them. A second letter dated 16 March by Mauro and a previous letter of 12 March by Vivaldi furnish additional details and cast an unflattering light on Vivaldi’s business practices as well as on his character in general. Even if we assume that intrigues of this sort were more or less part of the proverbially scheming theater world of the time, the behavior exhibited here was anything but in the *prete rosso*’s favor.

The events associated with the Ferrara opera are perhaps the best evidence that Vivaldi’s operatic career was already on the decline. Even though he achieved some considerable operatic successes, they had never really (and certainly not for any length of time) allowed him to join the ranks of the top composers dominating the European operatic world. If Giuseppe Tartini said to Charles de Brosses that Vivaldi had “always been hissed” as an opera composer, he was probably referring to such individual flops as the Ferrara *Siroe*.²³ The real meaning of this statement is that Vivaldi’s operas did not achieve as exceptional an effect and influence as did his concertos.

Historical Significance and Evaluation of Vivaldi’s Operas

Any attempt to describe the historical position and importance of Vivaldi’s works for the musical stage within the context of the vast opera production of the early eighteenth century should perhaps begin with the admission of the possibility of bias in favor of the composer owing to his exceptional importance as a writer of instrumental concertos. Comparisons of this kind are dangerous. On the one hand, one tends to regard Vivaldi’s operas as worthy of being considered outside the mass of contemporary works in the genre, while, on the other, if one considers his eminence as a concerto composer, a genre in which he was far more influential than in opera, then he tends to be underrated. Difficult though it may be to exclude these factors entirely, we would do well to keep them in mind. It is also useful to ask whether Vivaldi’s

extraordinary reputation as a concerto composer was more helpful than harmful to the reception of his operas during his lifetime.

The number and quality of commissions (*scritture*), the frequency with which his operas were revived, and, in general, the diffusion of his operas are the crucial indicators of how much Vivaldi was in demand as an operatic composer during his day. These criteria yield a relatively unified picture. Reinhard Strohm has demonstrated that, on the whole, Vivaldi's operas were "concentrated in second- and third-rank theaters", and that he received relatively few "opera commissions of the very first rank".²⁴ Only a relatively small number of his operas can be considered "hits" in the sense that they were revived in a number of other theaters. By this standard, Vivaldi's most popular operas were *La costanza trionfante* (1716) and *Farnace* (1727); each had six revivals. Moreover, the vast majority of these repetitions were probably the result of promotion by the composer rather than of desire by the theater in question. I have not taken into account the reuse of popular arias in his own or in other operas – a very common practice at the time. Today we are unable to determine to what extent Vivaldi arias were used in opera productions outside the composer's purview; nonetheless, librettos and, what is more important, extant arias provide certain clues. For the period 1714–1737, Strohm was able to find, in performance venues ranging from Naples to Hamburg and from Prague to London, slightly fewer than twenty Vivaldi arias used in *pasticci* that were not arranged by Vivaldi. Strohm further gave "about 190" as the total number of Vivaldi arias contained in collections and manuscripts. In his opinion such a number was "a relatively low figure for a productive opera composer from this period".²⁵

Although the information we have today about how frequently Vivaldi's operas and arias were performed is rather unreliable, one central point in evaluating Vivaldi's career in opera remains valid: he never made a genuine breakthrough as an opera composer and was unable to hold the stage for any length of time in any of the leading Italian and foreign opera houses. In this regard his works for the stage not only fall considerably behind those of the leading operatic masters of his time (such as Alessandro Scarlatti, Leonardo Leo, Leonardo Vinci, Johann Adolph Hasse, and Baldassare Galuppi) but they also were not as popular as some less prominent opera composers. Was it lack of specific, elemental talent for this genre that kept him from enjoying major success? Was it difficult for him to lead or adapt to the changes in operatic fash-

ion and in audience taste? Or did he churn out operas assembly-line fashion? There is a serious, inherent difference between a relatively short violin concerto and an opera that lasts a number of hours in that a musically uninteresting violin concerto will merely be forgotten, whereas an opera that does not contain a minimum of truly inspired and electrifying numbers will be remembered as a failure.

These questions are not subject to simple answers. It is more likely that a number of complex causes brought about the specific qualities and irregularities of Vivaldi's opera career. The following brief attempt to characterize the nature, the style, and the language of Vivaldi's operas will probably touch on some of these causes, but this is not the main objective of my effort. I do not believe that trying to explain why Vivaldi was not a great success in opera is the proper point of departure when trying to grasp the specific character of his operatic art. We must instead attempt to recognize its central features and its specific qualities.

Vivaldi began to compose operas at a time when the type of opera that was to become known as *opera seria* had become established in its essential qualities. This category came about through overall form (three acts), the internal structure (the alternation between recitative, which carried forward the plot, and reflective arias, as well as the almost complete avoidance of vocal ensembles), and the dominance of the da capo aria to the virtual exclusion of other aria forms. As a rule, the chorus was restricted to the finale, whereas the indication *coro* in the libretto and score meant in fact an ensemble of soloists. To be sure, the preceding is a cursory definition of the form that was officially designated *dramma per musica* and whose principal feature was a reform of the libretto.

The platform from which the leading group of Italian librettists attempted around 1700 to reform the opera text was classical, deriving either wholly or in part from the literary academies, especially from the Accademia dell'Arcadia, which had been founded in Rome in 1692. From this academy emerged the leading reform librettist (the Venetian Apostolo Zeno, who became vice president of the Arcadians in 1698) and the central figure of eighteenth-century operatic verse (Pietro Metastasio). Influenced by the rationalism of French Classical drama, they set about pruning the earlier Venetian librettos of extraneous episodes and other additions in order to transform the *dramma per musica* into a stage work of literary value that had a unified plot. The works

for the musical stage that “at the end of the seventeenth century bore more resemblance to a conglomeration of grotesque and adventurous scenes and character types than to a drama”²⁶ were transformed into the *opera seria*. In these new operas only *serious* characters played. There were other strict and binding conventions too: limits in the number of characters and in their relation to each other (two couples, a ruler, and one or two confidants [*confidenti*]); *restriction* to a plot that was generated and advanced by intrigues and that had the obligatory happy ending (*lieto fine*); and proscription even of the scene sequence (ending, in the vast majority of cases, with an exit aria). I will omit the other rules.

All Vivaldi’s operas were written according to this scheme. Upon closer inspection, however, the librettos he set tended not to adhere strictly to the classical ideal. Vivaldi frequently used an adapted older libretto and had a typically Venetian predilection for subjects with exotic settings and fairy-tale-like plots, often in Oriental settings and with traces of the more colorful seventeenth-century libretto scene. *La verità in cimento* is set in the realm of the great sultan, *Armida* in Memphis, *La costanza trionfante* in Armenia, *L’Incoronazione di Dario* and *Feraspe* in Persia, *Semiramide* in Assyria, and *Il Teuzzone* in China, to name only a few. On the other hand, he employed relatively few librettos based on Greco-Roman history and mythology and set about as many opera texts rooted in medieval legends (*Orlando*, *Tieteburga*, *Ginevra*, and *Alvilda*).

With the exception of one libretto by Goldoni (*Aristide*), Vivaldi did not set original librettos by the great writers of his time, chiefly due to the low prestige of the opera houses with which he was associated. Vivaldi’s several settings of librettos by Apostolo Zeno, by Francesco Silvani, and by Agostino Piovene were not the first settings of those librettos; in each case they had already been set to music by others, as had the three *drammi per musica* by Metastasio. His version of *L’Olimpiade*, however, followed the original setting by Antonio Caldara (which premiered in Vienna during the summer of 1733) by a mere six months, thus assuring him a high position among the roughly fifty settings – including those of Pergolesi, Hasse, Traetta, Leo, and Jommelli – of one of the imperial laureate’s most famous librettos.

Recent opera research has somewhat revised the traditional view that the principal musical traits of this type of opera were developed by the so-called Neapolitan school. We know today that Venetian composers made a considerable contribution to the style of early-

eighteenth-century opera, even if this basically applies only to the period up to about 1720. Composers such as Carlo Francesco Pollaro and Francesco Gasparini were exponents of the older style, and Antonio Lotti, Tommaso Albinoni, Giovanni Porta, and Francesco Maria Orlandini were representatives of the middle and younger generation, developing the newer style. Antonio Vivaldi belonged to the latter group, and he seems to have been one of the composers who, in the decade between 1710 and 1720, contributed new impetus to aria style in particular. Reinhard Strohm, one of the leading scholars of the opera of this period, considers the turning to consistently homophonous orchestral writing, supported throughout by instrumental figuration, and the provision of new possibilities for expressing musical effects in opera to be some of the most original and influential accomplishments of the Venetian opera composers of the time.²⁷ Together with Orlandini (the operatic novice who was ten years Vivaldi's junior), Vivaldi, whose background was in instrumental music, was a leading exponent of this new kind of aria. "Come l'onda" (As the wave) from his first opera, *Ottone in Villa*, is an impressive example.

In addition to pieces of this type, there were many attractive arias in the galant style with simple harmony by which the composer enriched the range of aria types. In these small, charmingly melodic forms the violins usually double the voice part, while the bass part "supports the harmony and is usually non-thematic", as Hellmuth Christian Wolff put it in 1968: "The style and sound of what was previously called *Neapolitan* opera ... was fully developed, largely *before* the first operas of Leo, Vinci, and Pergolesi".²⁸ This may explain why Vivaldi became a relatively well-known opera composer within the space of a few years.

According to Strohm, Vivaldi was unable after the mid-1720s to continue and expand this rise to prominence largely because he was inept at fully absorbing certain changes in operatic taste that had begun in Naples about 1720. The grand, supple vocal line as found in the arias of Johann Adolph Hasse, which had begun to influence the bel canto ideal, went against Vivaldi's grain. His vocal style may have been too heavily colored by a purely instrumental ideal. Yet the operatic style that had been in demand since the beginning of the Hasse era was one in which the voice – with a characteristically cantabile melody – was the dominant bearer of dramatic expression. Thus Vivaldi had to accept the fact that instead of producing his two operas, as originally planned, Ferrara

wanted a pair of Hasse operas for the 1737 Carnival season. The change in taste also explains why his late *pasticci* (*Dorilla in Tempe*, *Tamerlano*, and *Rosmira*) were laced with arias by the “Neapolitans” – Leo, Giacomelli, and, most of all, Hasse. Such experiences probably led to what has been seen as his “waning ambitions as an opera composer”²⁹ and to his eventual abandonment of the genre entirely. He showed an inability to accept and to incorporate new developments into his own operatic style. The music of the operas he wrote during the 1730s – during his late fifties – was no longer modern.

The preceding point of view is of secondary importance today in our evaluation of Vivaldi’s operas. Rather than being interested in new developments in the history of the genre and in how progressive his operatic style was at that time, we are simply concerned with the quality and the effectiveness of these works. This is difficult for a number of reasons. We know only a small portion of Vivaldi’s operas and have at best a sporadic knowledge of those of his contemporaries. In order to do justice to Vivaldi as an opera composer we must accept that his operas belong entirely to the genre of *opera seria*. We regard such operas as strange and lacking in aesthetic value. Vivaldi accepted as givens the oft-cited stereotypes of *opera seria*’s unchanging group of characters and plot mechanism, its unequivocal artificiality, most clearly seen in assigning the roles of male lovers to high *castrati* or female voices, and its unvarying alternation between often endless *secco* recitatives and autonomous da capo arias. Therefore, his success or failure as an opera composer must be seen within the framework set by the rules of *opera seria*.

By far the largest portion of the libretto was intended for recitatives, which were formally contrasted with the aria texts and consisted of unrhymed seven- and eleven-syllable lines rather than rhymed shorter lines as found in the arias. As a rule, *recitative* means *recitativo semplice* accompanied by harpsichord, also known as *secco recitative*. Such recitative did not receive a great deal of attention from the composer. The fact that much of this recitative consisted of conventional turns of phrase and musical language is all the more understandable when one considers that the audience of the day often listened with less than rapt attention. A passage in one of Vivaldi’s letters indicates that the effect and effectiveness of recitative was largely dependent on how the singer *recited* and on an imaginative accompaniment. When Vivaldi learned of the criticism leveled against the performance of the recitatives in his

opera *Siroe re di Persia* for the opening of the 1737 Carnival season in Ferrara, he blamed the harpsichordist, accusing him of being incapable of accompanying them. The practical knowledge – that recitative stands or falls on lively and flexible performance – has been confirmed in modern performances of this type of opera.

Nonetheless, Vivaldi's opera recitatives reveal a widely varying degree of musical interest and emotional involvement that is largely dependent on the nature of the dramatic situation. At the culmination of a plot conflict, when the characters' inner struggles and emotions come into focus, Vivaldi was capable of infusing his recitatives with a melodically expressive power and a remarkable degree of musical concentration. One of the principal means was harmony, as illustrated by an excerpt from a recitative in act three of *Tito Manlio*. Manlio, who is awaiting his death sentence in prison, tries to hearten his lover Servilia and pours his outburst of feelings into phrases that go beyond conventional harmonic progressions (ex. 19). Monologues frequently stand out dramatically – for example, again in *Tito Manlio*, the scene in which

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a recitative from *Tito Manlio*. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a basso continuo line (bass clef). The vocal lines are in a single melodic line, while the basso continuo lines include figured bass notation. The lyrics are written below the vocal lines.

System 1:

Vocal line: *Non pianger più; l'av-ver-sa ma-lig-ni-tà degl' astri me-co sopporta, e*

Basso continuo line: *6# 4 3#*

System 2:

Vocal line: *soffri l'ingiusti-zia del fa-to che al nostro-a-mor sempre nemica fù. Deh,*

Basso continuo line: *5 7 3 4 7b b*

(Continued)

Example 19. *Tito Manlio*, act three, recitative Servilia/Manlio.



Example 19 continued.

the protagonist signs his son's death sentence, or in the moving moment in *L'Olimpiade* where Megacle, helpless, falls into despair at the sight of his beloved Aristeia, who has fainted. In this instance the composer used one of the most emphatic means of intensifying expression: the transition from *secco* to accompanied recitative, a musical device Vivaldi used sparingly. The monologues expressing Orlando's great jealousy and madness in the 1727 *Orlando* are particularly powerful. The final scene of act two, in which Orlando learns with absolute certainty that his beloved Angelica irretrievably belongs to another, changes twice from the opening *secco* recitative to arioso or *accompagnato* for the texts "Her tears well like springs and brooks" and "I hurl helmet and armor away. Fall to the ground, you chains and plates". The act culminates in a movement, which, though formally an aria, is outside any clearly discernible form (ex. 20).³⁰

Such attempts to break down the neat separation and transition between recitative and aria in favor of a continuous musical scene are rare with Vivaldi, though not with Handel. Even movements that would normally be designated *arioso* are not common in Vivaldi, though they often create a powerful effect. "Sonno, se pur sei sonno" (Sleep, if indeed you are sleep) from the prison scene in *Tito Manlio* is a good example. As a rule, there is a clear separation between the recitative and the self-contained aria, with the main interest being reserved for the aria. The vast majority of the arias are da capo, divided into parts: A A' B A A'. The aria text, most often in two stanzas, is set with stanza 1 as A, stanza 2 as B, in which A' includes a musically varied and expanded repetition of the words of A. Following B, which is distinct from A (at least in part) and in a key other than the aria's principal key, A is repeated in its entirety in a richly ornamented, virtuosic, and intensifies form.

Larghetto

VI. I/II, Va.
Orlando

Hò cento vanni al

B.c.

tergo

Hò ducent'occhi in fronte,

e nel furor ch'hò in sen m'ad-di-ro al-men al-

(Va. col Basso)

-men con mille cuo - - ri.

Sov-ra que vanni io m'ergo,

Va. 8^{va}

(Continued)

Example 20. *Orlando*, “Hò cento vanni al tergo”.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a tempo marking of *Adagio* above the first staff, with a *Va.* (Vocal) marking below the first staff. The second system has a tempo marking of *Allegro* above the first staff, and a tempo marking of *Adagio* above the third staff. The third system has a tempo marking of *Allegro* above the first staff, and a tempo marking of *Adagio* above the third staff. The score includes various musical notations such as treble and bass clefs, key signatures (one sharp and one flat), time signatures (4/4 and 3/4), and dynamic markings (p, f). The lyrics are in Italian and are written below the vocal staff.

Adagio
Va.
Quelle pu - pil - le io gi - ro. Con tutti i cuor, con tutti i cuor So - spi - - -

Allegro
il tempo à piacimento
Adagio
- ro. Occhi, vanni, furor, cuori, oh mar -

(Allegro)
- to - ro! Amantie Sposi Ange - li - ca, e Me - do - ro?

Example 20 continued.

The overall form of the da capo aria is the following (including the opening and concluding instrumental ritornellos, which round out the form):

Aria part A: introductory ritornello; vocal period A (with a modulation from the tonic key to the dominant); middle ritornello; vocal period A' (with a modulation back to the tonic); concluding ritornello.

Aria part B.

Aria part A: as in A given above, at times with a shortening of the opening ritornello.

During Vivaldi's time the da capo aria was the dominant formal model for solo vocal music and something of a counterpart to the contemporary solo concerto movement, with which it shared essential features and common historic roots. This link is most evident in the ritornello principle and, at least in Vivaldi's case, in the frequent structural similarity between concerto movement and aria ritornello. In certain groups of arias, vocal bravura comes close to being like the virtuosity that occurs in prevailing forms of solo instrumental works. The close affinity between Vivaldi's concerto movements and his arias is not only of a general nature, marked by a number of analogous formal and structural patterns, but also involves specific musical similarities and borrowings. In addition to a relatively large number of instances in which the composer employs the same motivic material for a concerto movement and for an aria, there are examples of entire arias that have been adapted from concerto movements. Walter Kolneder described in detail the best known of these: the transformation of the first movement of the *Bassoon Concerto* (RV 450) into the aria "Scocca dardi" (Her proud gaze hurls arrows) from *Griselda*.³¹ Still, Kolneder's use of the term *aria concerto* is questionable.

What is true in general about the type of opera Vivaldi wrote also holds true for its most prominent musical components: the arias. In acquainting ourselves with their particular aesthetic qualities, we must begin by accepting as givens the formal, syntactic, and expressive clichés and conventions of the *seria* aria. Most of all, we must constantly bear in mind that these arias reproduced stylized, stereotypical effects that arose from certain standard plot situations rather than from the individual feelings of a particular plot character, and that these recurred in each

opera. The jealousy and revenge arias, the laments, the slumber and victory arias were thus to a large extent interchangeable and were developed not least to allow vocal stars to use their gifts to the fullest effect. This led to the common aria types, the names of which were already known during the eighteenth century – the *aria patetica*: an expressive, slow song usually of lament; the *aria di bravura*: an allegro or presto aria expressing an effect such as jealousy, rage, revenge, or triumph; the lyrical *aria cantabile*; the *aria parlante* with its loquacious patter; the *aria di mezzo carattere*: a moderate andante type of aria; and several others.

All this must be kept in mind when discussing Vivaldi's arias. By itself, the fact that Vivaldi "recycled" many arias in later operas without the slightest change reveals his automatic observance of these principles. If one also considers that each libretto required the setting of twenty to thirty aria texts, it makes perfect sense that the majority of Vivaldi's hundreds of arias conformed to prevailing standards and patterns. These were pieces that translated words into general effects, pieces forgotten after one hearing because they lacked a genuine, original idea – the lasting element of individual form and invention. It remains to be seen whether the percentage of such arias written by Vivaldi was higher than that of other contemporary opera masters. Ultimately, this is less significant than the achievement wherein the composer managed, time and time again, to produce arias of intense beauty, unmistakable individuality, dramatic effectiveness, and spontaneous artistic conviction.

The first examples that I give come from the group of arias frequently referred to as *tempesta* (storm) arias: tonal images full of agitated passion in which unfettered nature was portrayed as representing turbulent emotions. This aria type was by no means original, and, indeed, represented an especially popular variation of the *aria di paragone* (comparison aria), which was legion in *opera seria*. Yet the results Vivaldi occasionally attained, in terms of energy and compelling imagery, are among the most exciting in this type. As previously mentioned, his first opera, *Ottone in Villa*, contains an excellent example, the presto aria, "Come l'onda", in which wildly climbing and crisscrossing scales of thirty-second and sixty-fourth notes paint a picture of storm waves crashing into each another (ex. 21). Anyone who knows the storm scenes from *The Four Seasons* or the various "sea storm" concertos, such as "La tempesta di mare", will immediately be struck by the similarities in this aria to the instrumental vocabulary he used for these storm

Presto

Ob. I

Ob. II

VI

Ob. I u. II

VI. II

Ottone

tr

a - - gi - ta - - - - -

B.c.

ta da venti, e pro-celle

Example 21. *Ottone in Villa*, 'Come l'onda', bars 66 ff.

images. Again and again, extremely rapid rising or falling scales and long arpeggios together with *concitato* effects of very quick repetition of a given note (not used, however, in the example here) played a crucial role in such programmatic pieces.

Special demands are made on the voice in this type of aria: seething passions are portrayed by sweeping runs, arpeggios, and leaps that require great virtuosity. There are many examples of these challenging

demands: in Lucio's aria "Fra le procelle del mar turbato" (In the midst of storms in the raging sea) in *Tito Manlio*, or in the magnificent aria "Sorge l'irato nembo" (The furious storm rises) from *Farnace* (also included by the composer in *Orlando*, which was composed soon afterwards). Following slowly rising thirds, the contralto must sing an ascending octave scale in thirty-second notes.

Tempest arias were not the only arias imbued with these expressive and structural means. The devices were also closely associated with most of the arias that expressed great inner agitation through a comparison to a given event in nature. Prime examples of such numbers are the great C minor aria "Gemo in un punto e fremo" (I wail and tremble) from *L'Olimpiade*, with its characteristic passage "Ho mille furie in sen" (A thousand furies reside in my breast) and Licori's grandiose E minor aria "Alma oppressa da sorte crudele" (My soul oppressed by cruel fate) from *La fida ninfa* in which the ritornello begins with a large, anguished leap of a tenth.

The slow arias, which cover many nuances from grief-stricken lament to effusive love song, achieved their effect from the beauty and expressiveness of a melodic line or the grace of their harmonic or instrumental color. What else could one say about a love aria as wonderful as Angelica's "Tu sei degli occhi miei" (You dwell in my eyes) from *Orlando*? Every Vivaldi opera known to us contains at least one aria of this type: vocal numbers borne along by the directly affecting power of unabashed lyric sentiment. Alongside pieces accompanied by strings alone, we frequently encounter arias with obbligato instruments – especially among the love arias. In *Tito Manlio* (third act, prison scene) Servilia's great *aria di bravura*, with obbligato viola d'amore and violin,³² "Tu dormi" (You sleep) is complemented by the beautiful aria "Non ti lusinghi" (Do not allow yourself to be driven to cruelty) that is accompanied by an oboe. Likewise *Orlando* has two beautiful arias, one with flute, "Sol da te mio dolce amore" (With you alone, my sweet love), and the other with viola d'amore, "Qual candido fiore" (Like a white flower). Actually, the aria with obbligato solo instrument was largely out of fashion during the time between 1720 and 1730, yet Vivaldi used it again and again with telling effect.

Vivaldi employed a special instrumental effect in Licida's exquisitely lovely larghetto sleep aria "Mentre dormi" (While you sleep) in *L'Olimpiade*. The muted strings are joined by a horn, its gentle calls,

often on sustained notes, easily blending with the strings as though from a distance. Instrumental color, as the dominant aspect of the composer's invention and musical thought, is as impressive in this aria as the sonic canvases painted in some of the *tempesta* arias. This is equally the case for the aria “Deh ti piega” (Oh, relent) from *La fida ninfa*, whose highly original, memorable contour comes from a persistent instrumental motif that permeates the entire A section.

Finally, arias that at times express indefinite and complex situations and feelings display remarkable structure and convincingly translate text into musical terms. The formal and highly original G minor aria “Se cerca, se dice” (If she searches, if she says) from *L'Olimpiade* tends toward this group. Another aria – Clistene's F minor aria “Non so donde viene quel tenero affetto” (I know not whence this tender feeling comes) – from this opera, however, is a model of another kind. Clistene sings this number when unexplainable compassion stays his hand from slaying Licida, who is in reality the son he thought was dead, but who confronts him as his killer. A strangely convoluted violin figuration appearing in an indefinite, searching line provides the musical equivalent of his mysterious, unexplainable feelings (ex. 22).



Example 22. *L'Olimpiade*, ‘Non so donde viene’, beginning of the ritornello.

The aria “Gelido in ogni vena” (Frozen in every vein) from *Siroe re di Persia* is a similar masterpiece.³³ It is an *ombra* (shade) scene, so popular in *opera seria*, here set to a Metastasio libretto. Osroe, king of Persia, thinks he sees the shade of his son, Siroe, whom he has condemned to death for presumed high treason (later his innocence is proven); he “feels the blood flowing coldly through his veins, he is filled with and oppressed by terror”.³⁴ The musical form that Vivaldi used for both stanzas created, by means of an insistent monotony (a persistent fixation on a single musical idea), an almost physically palpable feeling of paralysis and terror. From the opening ritornello of the “Winter” concerto in *The Four Seasons*, he took the evenly pulsating *paralysis*-motif, which he had labeled “frozen trembling in icy snow storms”, and employed it

here in another way as a semantically crucial figure (ex. 23), using abrupt, dynamic contrasts with sudden, sforzando-like forte segments and “descending scales in legato sixteenths” to depict the “flowing of blood”.³⁵

Example 23. *Siroe re di Persia*, ‘Gelido in ogni vena’, beginning of the ritornello.

The pleasant galant arias seem rather plain in comparison with such substantial pieces. Nonetheless, it was apparently these small, tuneful arias that Vivaldi’s contemporaries appreciated, and we must not overlook the fact that some of them contain a wealth of original and musically interesting ideas. Most of these arias are stylistically simple, indeed often plain; the first and second violins frequently have the same line as the voice, and the violas are limited to the ritornellos. The composer relies on pleasing, ingratiating melody and often on graceful dance rhythms. Triple time and certain dance patterns are especially frequent. Rosana’s appealing A major aria from *La verità in cimento* (the theme reappears in the first movement of the Concerto in A Major – RV 159) is a good example of the writing found in these pieces (ex. 24).

Example 24. *La verità in cimento*, ‘Solo quella guancia bella’, beginning of the ritornello.

The instrumental part was sometimes reduced to such an extent that the singing voice was doubled by only one instrument, as for example in

Lucio's buffo aria "Parla a me speranza amica" (Friend hope speaks to me) from *Tito Manlio*. In this aria the buffo style was restricted to the music; on the other hand, the three arias by the servant Lindo from the same opera are pure buffo arias in both text and music. The last of Lindo's arias in particular, "Brutta cosa è il far la spia" (Playing the spy is an ugly business), is from its very beginning the stuff and substance of unmistakable buffo patter (ex. 25).

Allegro

The musical score is written for two parts: Lindo (soprano) and B. c. (Basso continuo). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The lyrics are: 'Lindo Brutta co-sa, brutta, brutta, brutta, brutta è il far la spi-a, la spi-a, ma, ma far tutto ogn' ora suole ch'il pan d'altri hà da man-giar'.

Example 25. *Tito Manlio*, 'Brutta cosa è il far la spia', bars 4 ff.

The pastoral opera *La fida ninfa* contains particularly fine examples of the melodic galant style, though the tone is more bucolic and the accompaniment is, in general, richer. In Elpina's aria "Cento donzelle festose e belle" (A hundred maidens, cheerful and fair), the sound of the muted violins, dominated by light syncopations, acquires a characteristic coloration from a pair of flutes. The magical grace of Elpina's song "Aure lievi" (Light breezes) takes on an inimitable airiness and a lightness through the shifts of the Lombard rhythm. To be sure, the aria is marked *Molto andante* and is rather removed from the intentionally light or buffo-like pieces (ex. 26).

The "isolation of characters"³⁶ has been recognized as a defining element of *opera seria*. Thus vocal ensembles played a decidedly secondary role. This is regrettable in Vivaldi's operas because some of his ensembles are particularly successful. Representative of these ensembles, which attain a deeply intimate expression, are a number of love duets, such as the Manlio/Servilia duet "Non mi vuoi con te, o crudele" (You do not wish me to be with you, o cruel one) in the final act of

Elpina

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Violin I (Vi. I/II) and Cello/Bass (Va. Bc.). The tempo is marked 'Andante molto'. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/8. The lyrics are 'Au-re lie-vi che spi-ra-te'. The violin part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the cello/bass part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and rests.

Example 26. *La fida ninfa*, ‘Aure lievi che spirante’, bars 25 ff.

Tito Manlio, the G minor Megacle/Aristea duet ‘Ne’ giorni tuoi felici’ (In your happy days) from *L’Olimpiade*, or the gentle pastoral ‘Dimmi, pastore’ (Tell me, shepherd) from *La fida ninfa*. In the Manlio/Servilia duet there is a section in thirds that clearly pointed ahead to the setting of ‘Mann und Weib, und Weib und Mann’ in the Pamina/Papageno duet in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*. A special kind of “duet” is the magnificent *ombra* scene in the second act of *Ottone in Villa* in which Gaio’s lover Tullia answers him in a ghost-like echo (fig. 21). The aria that begins “L’ombre, l’aure, e ancora il rio” (The shadows, the breezes, and the brook) creates its special effect with a very free structure resulting from constant tempo changes and especially from an extremely subtle disposition of sound. In addition to the string orchestra, which occasionally features a violin solo or duet, two violins and two flutes play *in scena*.

Several of the ensembles that are larger than duos have an artfully polyphonic structure with double or multiple counterpoint. A good example is found in the trio “S’egli è ver” (If it is true) from *La fida ninfa* with its three interchangeable voices. The “Non più regina” (No longer queen) trio from *Griselda* is surprising owing to ‘the contrasting motifs and the fast repartee recalling the comic opera of the period’.³⁷ In some cases, characters are developed by means of the use of distinct themes. In conclusion, the quintet “Anima mia, mio ben” from *La verità in cimento* (based on a quartet from his preceding opera *La Candace*) and the quartet “Io crudel?” from *Farnace* deserve to be touched upon as remarkable examples of Vivaldi’s art of ensemble writing. A wide variety of forms of interaction develops among characters, from dialogue –



Figure 21. Autograph score of *Ottone in Villa*, beginning of the echo scene ‘L’ombre, l’aure’.

one character at a time – or the overlapping of single voices to voices grouped by pairs, to the chorus of all voices (ex. 27).

It should come as no surprise that a composer of such creativity and skill as Vivaldi managed to sustain the dramatic tension of a scene despite added instrumental sections, usually called *sinfonie*. The connections with his programmatic concertos are especially close, ranging from almost identical themes and figuration – for example, the “storm at sea” music in *La fida ninfa* – to the utilization in operas of complete movements or parts of movements from concertos. When Manlio is led to his execution in the final act of *Tito Manlio*, for example, a sinfonia is played in which the musical substance is identical to the first movement of the Concerto ‘Funebre’ (RV 579).

All instrumental introductions that open Vivaldi’s operas follow the standard form of the Italian sinfonia: fast – slow – fast. In principle, this *sinfonia avanti l’opera* shared no thematic material with the following

Berenice

Jo cru-del? Jo crudel? Giustori - go-re ti con-danna ò tradi - - to-re.

Pompeo

Non sei degno di mer-

B.c.
(alle Str. col Basso)

Tan-to fa-sto? Tan-to

Tamiri

Ma-dre, oh Di-o! Du-ce, oh Di-o!

Farnace

E viltà. E viltà.

cè, non sei degno di mer-cè. Tanto or - go-glio? Tanto or-

(Continued)

Example 27. *Farnace*, “Io crudel?” (quartet), bars 40 ff.

Nò nò nò Nò nò nò non è tempo di pietà

- - ce mer-cè Du-ce oh Dio! pie - - tà, quest'è troppo crudeltà

e vil-tà, e vil-tà e vil - tà, e vil - tà

Nò nò nò Nò nò nò non è tempo di pie - tà

falso? Morte attendi.

pietà, pie - tà. Ma - - dre, pie - tà, Du -

e morte voglio.

-goglio?

Example 27 continued.

opera and was, therefore, a more or less autonomous and interchangeable instrumental work. Of course, in some cases, the *sinfonia* made use of thematic material from the opera, as, for example, in *Giustino*. It is nonetheless entirely typical of the relatively neutral character of Vivaldi's works in this form (most of which are for strings alone) that he reused a number of them with later operas – that is, the *sinfonia* to *Arsilda* for *Teuzzone*, the one for *Armida* for *Ercole*, and the *Dorilla* *sinfonia* for *Farnace*. Only in the last case did he change a movement and that because the original final movement had been directly linked to the opening chorus of *Dorilla in Tempe*.

The Italian opera *sinfonia* of the period has been fittingly described as “brilliant, cheerful, festive music”,³⁸ though this actually applied only to the first movement, which characteristically was a relatively short allegro with brilliant writing for the unison strings. The main purpose of an orchestral work that was meant to open an opera was to provide an energetic call to order; Vivaldi met this requirement as well as any of his contemporaries. The very opening of such a work was typical: sound reduced to sheer motion rather than music that had the distinct melodic qualities of a theme. Whatever they were – scale-like figures and arpeggios as in the *sinfonia* to *La verità in cimento*, string tremolos as in the *sinfonia* to *Armida* and *Giustino*, wide-ranging arpeggios as in *Arsilda*, or pithy quadruple stops as in the *sinfonia* to *Griselda* – the main object of the opening was to set the home key (almost always C major) in broad strokes, while at the same time providing kinetic drive for the movement (ex. 28). Yet the *sinfonia* movement was also characterized to a large degree by contrast. Embedded between the sections, which put forward the sumptuous tutti figuration, were exquisitely delicate groups of motifs and occasionally a new kind of expressive lyricism.



Example 28. Sinfonias to *Arsilda* and *Griselda*, opening themes.

As with his opening allegros, Vivaldi developed a single, relatively fixed type of middle movement (ex. 29) – a supple, lyrical andante in which the effect derived entirely from its delicate color and from the soft, elegant flow of an upper voice played by the first and second violins. These ingratiating, serenade-like cantabile movements were usually marked *sempre piano* or *pianissimo* and *senza cembali* (without harpsichord accompaniment). These middle movements are of historic interest simply as very early examples taken from genuinely autonomous opera sinfonia. Many of the contemporary Neapolitan sinfonias “contained only a few slow bars of transition instead of an independent middle movement; these bars occasionally even grew directly from the first movement”.³⁹ Vivaldi on the other hand, and almost from the start, wrote middle movements for his sinfonia that were almost as weighty as

The image displays two musical staves for Vivaldi's middle movements. The top staff is for the 'Andante pianissimo' movement, marked in 2/4 time. It features a violin melody (VI. I/II) with trills (tr) and a simple bass line (B.c.). The bottom staff is for the 'Andante' movement, marked in 3/4 time, with the instruction 'Piano sempre tutti' and 'Senza Cembali'. It features a more complex violin melody (VI. I/II) with trills (tr) and a simple bass line (B.c.).

Example 29. Sinfonias to *Arsilda* and *Griselda*, middle movement themes.

those in his concertos. The final movements, however, were clearly less important, consisting usually of miniature two-part dance movements, either in 3/8 or 2/4.

Period sources show that Vivaldi's opera sinfonias were played during his lifetime as independent concert pieces. About half of the ten works that we currently possess and that can clearly be identified as opera sinfonias have come down to us in copies having nothing to do with opera performances. This applies, for example, to the sinfonias to *Arsilda*, *L'incoronazione di Dario*, and *La verità in cimento* of the Dresden manuscripts. No link to a particular opera has been found for several other works that are largely in the opera sinfonia style; their original purpose has yet to be explained.⁴⁰ Such questions arise primarily from the close resemblance of the opera sinfonia to another genre Vivaldi used: the concerto for string orchestra without soloists, which he occasionally called *concerto ripieno*.

As indicated in the list of operas contained in the appendix, nine of the fifteen Vivaldi operas that have come down to us complete have been performed during the past fifty years, and some of them have been recorded. *L'Olimpiade*, which led the Vivaldi opera revival in September 1939, remained a favorite for a number of years. The greatest renaissance so far of the composer's operas came around the time of the Vivaldi Year (1978); from 1977 to 1979 eight of his operas were performed or recorded.⁴¹ In light of the slight progress in the revival of baroque opera in general – with the exception of Handel – these figures are high indeed. Of course, Vivaldi has profited considerably from his reputation as an instrumental composer. Reinhard Strohm and others have pointed this out, with Strohm calling the many performances of Vivaldi operas in and around 1978 “an almost grotesque overestimation of Vivaldi's operas”.⁴² The standing of Vivaldi's operas will largely depend on the future success of pre-Mozart operas in general.

Chapter Six

“In moltissime città d’Europa” – A Diversity of Activities During the Years of Artistic Maturity (1718–1731)

Although Vivaldi achieved recognition and fame throughout Europe within just a few years (beginning about 1710 or 1712), his personal activity was initially confined mainly to Venice. We know of only a few instances during this period when he left his native city for artistic reasons. He went to Brescia in February 1711¹ for a church festival performance at St. Maria della Pace (for which in March 1712 he wrote his *Stabat Mater* RV 621), and to Vicenza in spring or early summer of 1713 for the performance of his first opera and for his oratorio *La vittoria navale*. Also, during the summer of 1708, he received a commission from Rovigo to compose a serenata.

The situation changed in 1718 when his engagement at the court of Mantua initiated a period of wide and varied travels. During his two years in Mantua, he accepted an opera commission from Florence besides those already mentioned for Venice and Mantua. The 1720s saw him premiere operas in Milan, Rome, Reggio Emilia, and, once again, Florence. Vivaldi’s first documented trip outside Italy took place from 1729 to 1730, though it is entirely possible that the composer visited musical centers north of the Alps before this time. His many contacts

with primarily Austrian and Bohemian aristocrats and his ties to the French and Austrian embassies of the Republic of Venice strongly suggest the existence of earlier travels. When in a letter dated 16 November 1737 Vivaldi boasted that he corresponded “with nine high princes” and sent letters “all over Europe”, and when in the same letter he spoke of his visits “to many European cities” (“in moltissime città d’Europa”), these statements are no doubt linked, though somewhat exaggerated.

The period in the composer’s life that began with his employment as court musical director in Mantua and ended around 1731 or 1732 also resulted in a change of activities in Venice. Following his resumption of initially informal contacts with the Pietà (with no contractual obligation), the governors passed a motion on 2 July 1723 stipulating merely that Vivaldi was to produce two concertos per month (for the stipend of one sequin each). Although the “honorable Don Antonio Vivaldi” was required, when in Venice, to conduct three to four rehearsals for each work, no mandatory presence was called for.²

This agreement deserves our attention for a number of reasons. First, it manifested the musician’s high prestige – of which the board of the Pietà was well aware – and it showed that the institution was willing to employ him under special conditions. Second, the resolution made clear that Vivaldi considered the *maestro* position at the Pietà a secondary post that did not hamper his freedom of movement for outside enterprises. Vivaldi used his increased freedom to pursue his opera projects, as well as for the fulfillment of composition commissions that came from leading public figures and institutions and from foreign or domestic aristocrats or other wealthy music lovers. These commissions are also a yardstick for the fame and market value the musician enjoyed during these years, when he was at the height of his recognition as an artist.

At the beginning of this period Vivaldi’s post as court music director in Mantua was his only court position and his only regular employment outside Venice (fig. 22). Mantua, a dukedom that was ruled until 1707 by the Gonzaga dynasty, fell to Austria during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) and was declared the dynastic possession of the imperial family. Prince Philipp of Hesse-Darmstadt, the younger brother of Landgrave Ernst Ludwig (who resided in Darmstadt), was appointed imperial governor in 1714 – the prince clearly possessed the ambition to bring back some of the glory that the Mantuan court had had during its height (fig. 23). During the two



Figure 22. Twentieth-century view of the ducal palace in Mantua.

decades of Philipp's rule – as the non-reigning son of a prince and in accordance with the Hessian custom of the day, he bore the title of Landgrave – the arts underwent a remarkable renaissance, especially those of music and of the theater, which must have enjoyed his great personal interest and understanding. It has been surmised that the prince was recalled in 1735 because Vienna considered him excessively extravagant.³

For quite some time there was a great deal of confusion in the research literature as to what Vivaldi's title of "court music director ... of Prince Philipp, Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt" (*Maestro di cappella da camera di S.A.S. il Sig. Principe Filippo langravio d'Hassia Darmistath*) really meant. It was initially supposed that Vivaldi carried out his duties as court music director in Darmstadt, yet it has been only in recent decades that the time, the duration, and the details of his post have come to light. Valuable information has been obtained from recent research into the Mantua State Archives.⁴

Vivaldi was probably appointed to his post in Mantua early in 1718; he definitely began his service there at the beginning of April of that year. The Venetian censor's permission – the so-called *faccio fede*⁵ dated



Figure 23. Prince Philipp of Hesse-Darmstadt.

12 January 1718 – for the printing of the libretto to *Armida al campo d'Egitto* refers to Vivaldi as “*al servizio di Mantova*” and is the earliest evidence we have of the composer’s position at the Mantuan court. The date is, however, in question because it may refer to the *more veneto*, which would be equivalent to 12 January 1719 not 1718.⁶ The same uncertainty applies to the performance of the opera at the Teatro San Moisè; it could have been in mid-February 1719 rather than 1718. We are absolutely certain that Vivaldi was present in Mantua during the spring of 1718 because the Mantua premiere of *Armida* at the Teatro Arciducale (also known as “Teatro detto il Comico”) took place on 24 April. According to the 29 April issue of the *Mantua Gazette*, the singers, the music, and the rich-sounding orchestra were applauded, and the opera was performed throughout May. Thus it was a successful beginning for the new music director, whose contract ran for almost precisely two years. In a letter dated 16 November 1737 Vivaldi stated that he was in the service of the Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt for three years, a statement that has not been verified to date.

The death of the Dowager Empress Eleonora Magdalena on 19 January 1720 and the subsequent national mourning, proclaimed through-

out the Habsburg Empire, made it possible for the music director in Mantua to leave the court, and he received permission to travel to Venice until further notice. After that, he never completely fulfilled his duties as court music director in Mantua.

As *maestro di cappella da camera*, Vivaldi was in charge of all secular musical performances at court, that is, he was director of vocal and instrumental chamber music and of music for court festivals and the opera. In this capacity he was also responsible for composing the lion's share of the music performed at these events. Vivaldi was not, however, responsible for any church music. The most important ensemble at his disposal was the court orchestra, which in 1720 consisted of the following twenty-three members: one director, one organist (who was also assistant director), nine singers (two sopranos, three altos, two tenors, one baritone, and one bass), two oboists, two first and two second violinists, one violist, one cellist (who was also copyist), one contrabass player, and three trumpet players. Oddly enough, no horn players were entered on the orchestra list, notwithstanding the "frequency and prominence of horn parts"⁷ in the works Vivaldi composed for Mantua.

Though we can only speculate as to why the composer accepted the post of court music director in Mantua, we can be fairly certain that the prestige brought by the court title and the prospects of improving his income played a part.⁸ Given that we lack information as to Vivaldi's combined income from Venice and Mantua, it is difficult to assess the extent to which this was the case. In either case, the money he received for his activities as court music director in Mantua was many times more than his annual salary of sixty to one hundred ducats at the Pietà. The 28 February 1720 payroll list of the Mantua chancellery would seem to indicate that Vivaldi received a monthly salary of six hundred and eighty lire as *maestro di cappella da camera*. Should this have been the case, it would mean that he had been paid an unusually high salary, especially if the profits he made in Mantua as impresario were added to that amount. According to a document dated 20 March 1719, at the end of the 1719 Carnival *stagione* the chancellery paid 5389 lire to the impresario (Vivaldi), but we have no way of knowing how much of this sum was net profit.⁹ In any event, he must have earned a considerable amount of money during the 1719 Carnival season. For this *stagione*, during which the wedding of Prince Philipp and Princess Eleonora di Guastalla would take place, Vivaldi served as *maestro di cappella*, com-

posed both Carnival operas (*Teuzzzone* and *Tito Manlio*), and acted as the sole impresario. He thus held all the responsible music positions.

The 1719 Carnival was the high point of his two years in Mantua. The opera *Merope*, the setting of a Zeno libretto that was performed during the spring *stagione*, and the first Carnival opera of the following year, *Alessandro cognominato Severo*, were *pasticci* – Vivaldi was no longer impresario during these two seasons. He also wrote the second opera performed during the 1720 Carnival: *La Candace*. Altogether, he acted as *Maestro di cappella* for four of his own operas in Mantua between spring 1718 and Carnival 1720.

After opera and instrumental music, which he was producing assiduously, the most important works Vivaldi wrote during his Mantua years were cantatas. Recent dating by Paul Everett has confirmed that the major portion of the slightly fewer than forty extant Vivaldi cantatas were composed in Mantua.¹⁰ Some of the others were probably later sent to that court. We know of the background to the composition and performance occasion of only one of them. According to a note in the score, the contralto cantata with string orchestra *O mie porpore più belle* (RV 685) was composed to celebrate the installation of Monsignor Antonio Guidi di Bagnos as bishop of Mantua on 15 April 1719.

On the basis of available facts in the few existing documents that permit such conclusions, we can assume that Vivaldi enjoyed good working conditions and got along well with Prince Philipp. Two letters of recommendation written for Vivaldi by Philipp, dated 31 May 1718 and 3 March 1720, provide evidence to this effect.¹¹ The first letter was addressed to Electress Anna Maria Luisa di Medici and concerned a performance of Vivaldi's opera *Scanderbeg* that took place at the Teatro della Pergola on 22 June 1718. We may take with a grain of salt such formulations as the "unique musical mastery of the renowned Don Antonio Vivaldi", but the facts – that Vivaldi was granted leave for an opera production in Florence and that he received the express support of his employer – show that the prince granted his court music director considerable freedom. The second letter is the document which, though not exactly an explanation of why Vivaldi left Mantua, allows us to infer some of the reasons for his departure. About six weeks after the proclaimed time of national mourning subsequent to the imperial widow's death, Prince Philipp informed the Habsburg ambassador to the Republic of Venice, Count Johann Baptist Colloredo, that Vivaldi had per-

mission to stay in “Venice, his native country”, and that he commended his court music director to the favor of the Austrian diplomat. He continued that Vivaldi would resume his duties in Mantua as soon as he, Philipp, so desired.

According to all available evidence, Vivaldi was never officially released from his employment with Philipp of Hesse-Darmstadt, rather the relationship seems to have ceased of its own accord at some later point. The Mantuan theater remained closed up to and including the Carnival of 1722, after which Vivaldi’s duties as court musical director did not require his continued presence at court. It would seem that this absence occurred with the consent of the prince, since Vivaldi maintained regular contact with Mantua well into the 1730s. During the summer of 1726, for example, Vivaldi wrote a birthday serenata (*Questa Eurilla gentil*, RV 692) that was performed in the Palazzo della Favorita in Mantua for Prince Philipp. During the 1732 Carnival at the Teatro Arciducale, he also performed his operas *Semiramide* and *Farnace* with Anna Girò as prima donna. A receipt signed by the composer for opera box keys suggests that he worked as impresario during the following Carnival *stagione* as well. Lastly, we should also recall that he bore the title of court musical director to the “Landgraf” of Hesse-Darmstadt even after Philipp left Mantua on 4 March 1735 and indeed after Philipp’s death in 1736.

Following his years as court music director in Mantua there was a period in Vivaldi’s life for which we have very little biographical information. To a certain extent this is true for the second half of 1720, though primarily for 1721 and 1722. The handful of artistic activities that can be documented for this period do not allow us to determine the thrust of his work or whether he had a fixed association that went beyond given projects. The impression is that this was a transitional phase, a time of searching and of sorting things out.

Vivaldi seems to have derived no benefit from Philipp of Hesse-Darmstadt’s letter of recommendation to the Austrian ambassador to Venice, Count Colloredo. It is possible that the commission for the serenata *Le gare della giustizia e della pace* (RV 689), presumably composed during the early 1720s for the emperor’s name day, was a result of this letter.¹² We have no proof of further contact by Vivaldi with the imperial envoy to Venice. It is conceivable that Count Colloredo was responsible for a recommendation Vivaldi had for the imperial governor

in Milan, who was a relative of the Austrian envoy in Venice and also a Colloredo (Hieronymus). In 1721 Vivaldi received the *scrittura* for a *dramma pastorale* (*La Silvia*) that was premiered on the empress's birthday (28 August). On the other hand, a second work composed for Milan, the oratorio *L'adorazione delli tre re magi al Bambino Gesù* (RV 645), which premiered at the San Fedele Jesuit college on 9 January 1722, was not a commission by the governor, at least not a direct one.

Most striking is the fact that once Vivaldi returned from Mantua he did not initially resume working in situations like those that had provided his livelihood prior to 1718. Until the summer of 1723 he had no contractually guaranteed relationship with the Pietà. His operatic activities were restricted to the autumn 1720 production of a new work for the Sant'Angelo (*La verità in cimento*) and to contributing to a *pasticcio* (*Filippo re di Macedonia*) for the same theater for Carnival 1721. Was he contemplating, at the time, taking on projects from outside his native city, or did he occupy his time and earn his livelihood with other tasks or projects that we are unaware of? In any event, some such inclinations and directions seem to have been the case.

It has been conjectured that Vivaldi may have been preparing for a trip to France.¹³ In the summer of 1722 and after a long interruption, the Republic of Venice sent two ambassadors to France. Their duties included the preparations for the festivities surrounding the consecration of young King Louis XV on 20 September. There is a good deal of evidence that the Republic of St. Mark intended to make a representative musical contribution to the event. We can dismiss with near certainty Eleanor Selfridge-Field's thought that Vivaldi's large two-part serenata, *La Sena festeggiante* (The Festive Seine), may have been written for this occasion, though this does not mean the composer did not take part in the events. If he did in fact accompany the new Venetian representatives to France, his stay there must have been a relatively short one because during late September or early October he moved with his parents (and probably with those brothers and sisters still living at home) from the house on Campo dei santi Filippo e Giacomo, where the Vivaldis had lived since 1711, to one along the small Fondamenta del Dose by the Ponte del Paradiso, near the church of Santa Maria Formosa. The rent for this house, which was also located in the Castello district, east of San Marco, came to about seventy ducats per year. This house remained the composer's Venetian domicile until the beginning of May 1730.¹⁴

Vivaldi's mother died there on 6 May 1728 at "about age seventy-three". According to the entry in the Santa Maria parish register, "Signora Camilla, the wife of Signor Giovanni Battista Vivaldi" had been ill for about two years.

In investigating where Vivaldi may have worked and earned his living during the early 1720s, we have to consider a connection with Count Morzin. The music-loving Bohemian aristocrat, to whom in 1725 Vivaldi dedicated his Op. 8 concertos, must have been his patron for some time prior to this publication (figs. 24 and 25). In any case, Vivaldi began his preface to the work with the statement that he had had the honor "of serving your majesty as music teacher in Italy" (*maestro di musica in Italia*) for many years. Venceslav von Morzin (also Marzin or Marcin), hereditary lord of Hohenelbe and imperial counselor, was a relative of Count Ferdinand Maximilian Franz and his son Karl Joseph Franz Morzin, whose service Joseph Haydn entered in 1759. In addition to his palace in Hohenelbe, located in the southern Riesengebirge, Count Morzin possessed a residence in the Kleinseite (Malá Strana) district of Prague, where he kept a capable orchestra probably consisting of ten to twelve musicians, and where Johann Friedrich Fasch was his music director from 1721 to 1722.

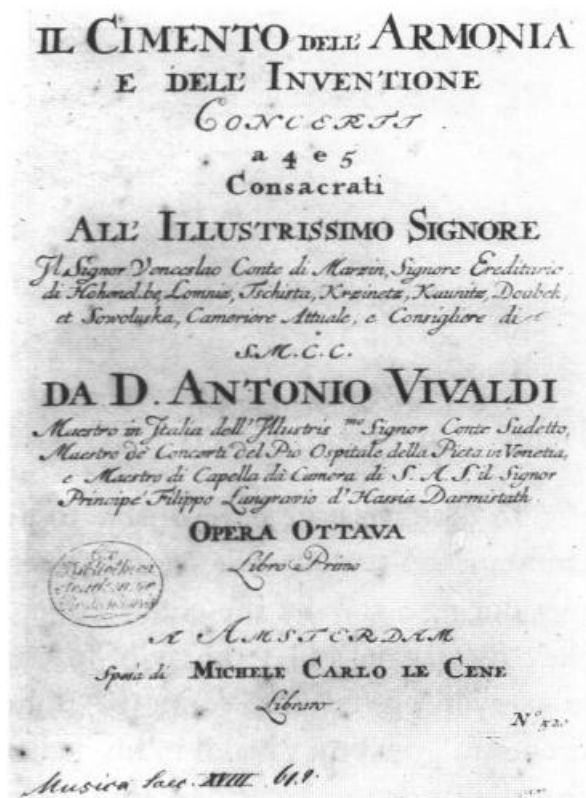


Figure 24. Title page of opus 8.

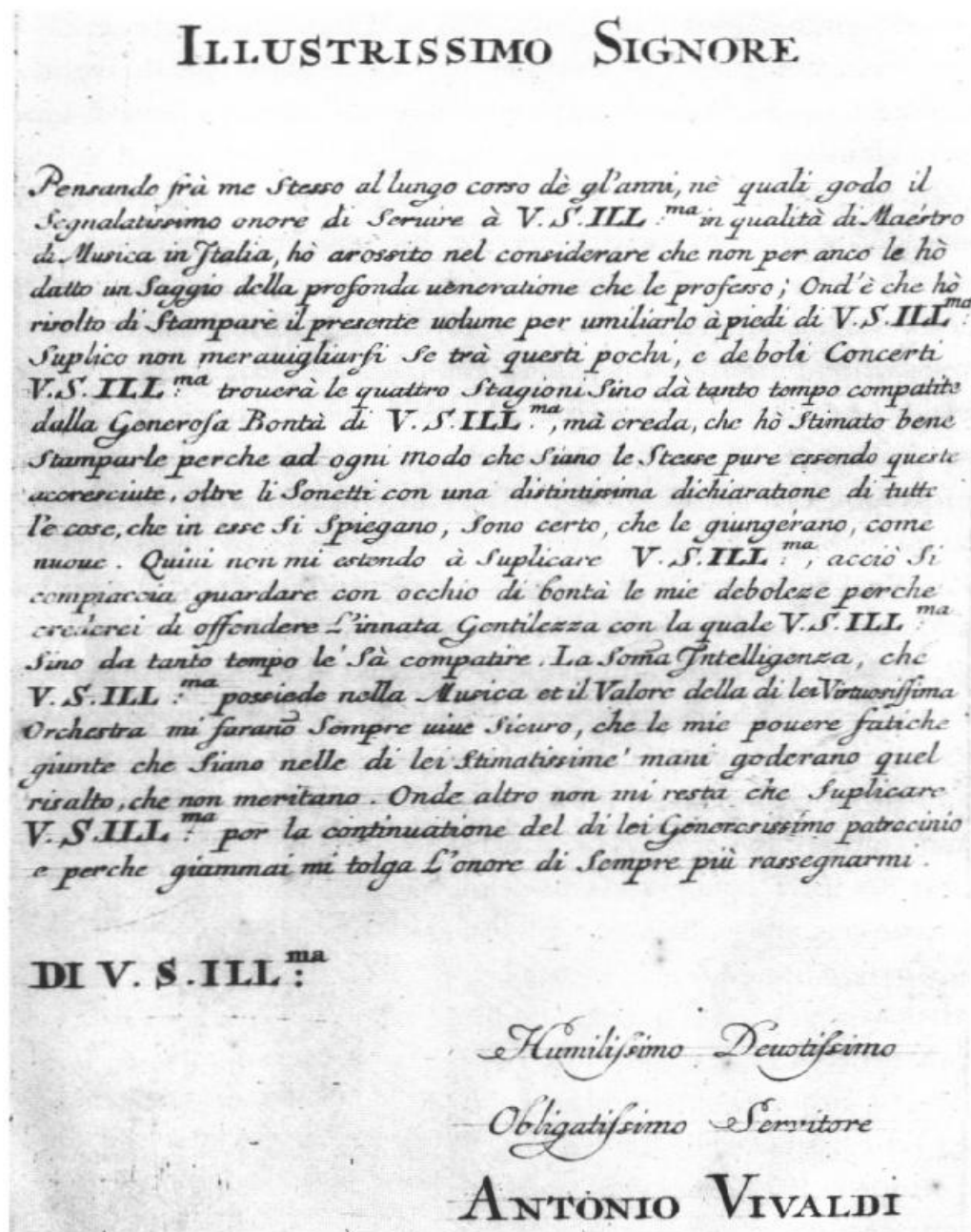


Figure 25. Dedicatory preface to opus 8.

To date we have been unable to discover when and under what circumstances Vivaldi made Morzin's acquaintance; one assumes that they met during a stay by the count in Venice. It is also not known whether they met again and – this is of particular interest – whether the *prete rosso* ever visited the count in Bohemia. The phrase “virtuosissima orchestra” used by Vivaldi in his dedicatory preface to his Op. 8 implied that the composer knew Morzin's orchestra first hand.

Though there is currently no clear answer to this question, new source material – published here for the first time – represents a welcome addition to information on the relationship between Vivaldi and Morzin. A ledger, apparently in Venceslav Morzin's own hand and covering the years 1724–1729, has been found in the Morzin family archives, and it contains records of varying sums paid annually to Vivaldi during this period with the exception of the year 1729.¹⁵ Several samples of entries follow.¹⁶

(1) Folio two:

May 1724 – Item dito [= 30 May] a draft sent to Signor Vivaldi in Venice 400 fl.

(2) Undated sheet between folios eight and nine [under expenditures]:

Vivaldi 528 fl.

[neighboring sheets in the book are from 1725, this page, however, does not indicate the year. Care must be taken over the date in as much as the order of the sheets may have been changed over the years]

(3) Folio twelve:

February 1726 – a draft to Vivaldi in Venice for 333 fl. 48 kr.

(4) Folio eighteen:

In May 1727 – A draft to Vivaldi in Venice 133 fl. 42 kr.

(5) Folio twenty-one:

February 1728 – To Vivaldi a draft for 138 fl. 10 kr.

[corrected]

(6) May, folio twenty-two:

1728 – To Vivaldi a draft for 133 fl. 10 kr.

(7) Folio twenty-three:

August To Ottel [this was the writer's name for his second son, in addition to Karl] and Vivaldi by draft [a large portion of the beginning is visibly smudged with ink, so only the following is clear] 12 fl. 54 kr.

These entries are revealing in a number of ways. First of all, they prove that Vivaldi served, from Venice and for a long period of time, as *Kapellmeister* to Count Morzin, which confirms the phrase *Maestro in Italia dell' Illustrissimo Signor Conte [di Marzin]* given on the title page to Op. 8. Lacking a source prior to 1724 for documenting this relationship, it is impossible to determine the exact time Vivaldi began supplying compositions. We do, however, have information from another source indicating that at least as early as 1723 Morzin had begun acting as a go-between for Vivaldi's works, that is, he was already known as having a special link to the composer. Two entries, dated 13 and 16 October 1723, from the diary of Prince Anton Ulrich of Saxony-Meiningen, who was staying in Vienna at the time, note that Count "Marcin" had sent him, in addition to other works (including a number of overtures by Fasch), six concertos and, on a second occasion, another concerto by Vivaldi.¹⁷ Thus we can now document the relationship between Morzin and Vivaldi from 1723 to 1728.

It remains to be seen whether the lack of a draft in 1729 indicates the end of their business relationship. Unfortunately, we have proof of only one composition written for Morzin by Vivaldi: the autograph score of the Bassoon Concerto (RV 496) bears the note "Ma[rquis] de Morzin".

The indications of payment in Morzin's ledger are also important in as much as they allow us to make certain inferences of a general kind on employment matters and on the remuneration associated with it. At least in the case of Morzin, it seems that a court music director who was not in residence could earn a considerable amount of money. Of course, each of Vivaldi's music director titles may have involved widely varying conditions and responsibilities.

All Vivaldi's major artistic enterprises during 1723 and 1724 were connected with Rome. According to present-day knowledge, the Eternal City first commissioned the *prete rosso* to compose the third act of a *pasticcio* opera, *Tito Manlio*, for the 1720 Carnival. It is rather unlikely, however, that he went to Rome in person at the time since he premiered his new opera *La Candace* that month (January 1720) in Mantua. Perhaps Vivaldi's stay in Rome during the 1723 Carnival was his first personal acquaintance with the city and with its musical and theatrical life.

The earliest indication of a planned Vivaldi opera production for Rome was in a letter of recommendation, dated 15 October 1722,

written by his fellow composer and Venetian nobleman Alessandro Marcello to Princess Maria Livia Spinola Borghese in Rome.¹⁸ In it he informed her that Vivaldi, the “*famoso professor di violino*,” whom she knew well, would be coming to Rome to produce the Carnival opera. He commended the musician to her “most capable patronage”. The opera with which Vivaldi introduced himself to the Roman audience was *Ercole sul Termodonte*. The fact that the composer received two further *scritture* from the Teatro Capranica for the following Carnival – for the second act of the *pasticcio* *La virtù trionfante* and for *Giustino* – allows us to conclude that he was well received. The unusual attention that Vivaldi was said to have aroused by allegedly introducing the *Lombard style* to Rome was, however, caused by *Giustino*. Quantz gave an account of these events, which covered the second half of 1724, based on his first-hand knowledge.¹⁹

Although opera commissions brought Vivaldi to Rome and were doubtless a major part of his activities there, sufficient evidence remains to indicate that his artistic activities were not restricted to the theater. Marcello’s letter to Princess Borghese was also not primarily intended to create support for Vivaldi’s opera project, which had probably been concluded by that time, but was meant to provide the composer with access to the social circles responsible for Roman musical life. A letter of thanks, which Vivaldi sent to the princess on 20 March 1723 after he had returned to Venice,²⁰ suggested that she had, in fact, taken her charge under her wing and with tangible success at that. Vivaldi even managed to gain an audience with the pope in his private chambers, where, according to the composer, he played twice and met with high favor.²¹ We do not know where and before which of the two popes (Innocent XIII or Benedict XIII) these audiences in the Vatican took place. If the pontiff in question was, as most have assumed, Benedict XIII (Pietro Francesco Orsini), that “would mean that Vivaldi had stayed in Rome considerably longer in 1724 than he had during the previous year, because Benedict’s investiture did not take place until 29 May. Or could this be an indication that the composer undertook a third, yet to be proved, stay in Rome? I will return to this question.

Recent information suggests that Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni played a key role in Vivaldi’s ties to Rome, both as an influential patron of the Teatro Capranica and as owner of the Palazzo di Cancelleria, which was one of the centers of Roman musical life between 1690 and 1730.

Ottoboni, a scion of the Venetian nobility and appointed, at age twenty-two, cardinal and vice-chancellor of the church, enjoys a place of honor in Roman musical history due to his generous patronage to the city's theatrical and musical institutions. Most of all, his name will always be associated with the last years of Arcangelo Corelli.

Cardinal Ottoboni's connection with Vivaldi did not arouse interest until the 1970s. At that time, a large number of Vivaldi instrumental works were discovered in manuscript at the Manchester Central Library. Most of them, as studies by Michael Talbot and Paul Everett have shown, came from the Ottoboni Collection, which had been sold in 1740.²² Some of the manuscripts are autographs or partial autographs of the parts to twenty-four concertos. Another is a presentation manuscript of twelve violin sonatas (now known as the "Manchester" Sonatas) with a title page in the composer's hand.²³ Most of the concerto parts are from works written during the mid-1720s, including those that had been prepared in Vivaldi's "workshop" in Venice for his Roman patron and those written by Ottoboni's copyists. Everett considers the fact that the copyist wrote after Vivaldi's name on the title page of one concerto (RV 761) a nickname, *detto, Amato Bene* (called, the dearly beloved), an indication that the Venetian composer was a familiar figure to the cardinal's musicians.²⁴ Perhaps this was a reference to the words "Amato ben", which open an aria from *Ercole sul Termodonte*, first performed in Rome in 1723. Yet there is also proof in the form of the famous portrait sketch of Vivaldi made by Pierleone Ghezzi early in 1723 that Vivaldi's real nickname was well-known in these Roman circles (fig. 26). What is, according to Petrobelli, "the only picture of Vivaldi to capture his striking facial features with absolute certainty"²¹ bears the inscription: "Il prete rosso compositore di Musica che fece l'opera a Capranica del 1723" (The red-headed priest and composer, who wrote the 1723 opera at the Capranica Theater). There can be no doubt about it – the *prete rosso* was a striking figure in Roman music and theater life.

The dates for the period during which Vivaldi was in contact with Ottoboni remain uncertain. It seems unlikely that the two Venetians met in their native city, because the cardinal had been banished from the Republic in 1712. He was accused of serving a foreign power in his capacity as France's advocate at the Vatican. On the other hand, it is highly likely that the cardinal and the musician met in autumn 1726, when



Figure 26.
Pierleone
Ghezzi's
caricature of
Antonio Vivaldi
(1723).

Ottoboni visited Venice (and the Ospedale della Pietà) and was showered with praise from all sides during the months he stayed in Venice. Talbot surmises that the distinguished guest was presented at that time with the “Manchester” Sonatas as a gift from the French ambassador to the Republic of Venice, Count Languet de Gergy.²⁶

In a letter dated 16 November 1737, Vivaldi wrote that he had been in Rome “to make opera” for *three* Carnivals. Is this another one of his corrections of fact? If his statement is correct there are only two possible times for a third Roman stay: either Vivaldi had a hand in preparing the performance of the *Tito Manlio pasticcio* in early January 1720 or the third stay was during the winter of 1724–1725. In the latter case, however, he would not have been able to premiere an opera in the Eternal City as all the theaters were closed during the holy year. Reinhard Strohm believes it possible that Vivaldi’s three Carnivals combine two different things: “He composed operas for three Roman Carnival sea-

sons, that is 1720, 1723, and 1724, but he was in Rome during other seasons, that is, 1723, 1724, and 1725".²⁷ If, as Michael Talbot assumes, a good many of Vivaldi's sacred vocal works were connected with Rome, this conjecture becomes more likely.²⁸

The speculation that Vivaldi may have been in Rome during 1725 is largely based on the absence of any information suggesting that he was present or involved in artistic activities in Venice during that time. The period between the Rome visit of 1724 and early autumn of 1725 is so poorly documented that we are virtually compelled to surmise that he was traveling and working outside his native city. Of course, Rome is only one of many possibilities; among others were Mantua, Prague, and Amsterdam. Vivaldi's opera *La costanza trionfante* was revived in Mantua during the 1725 Carnival under the title *L'Artabano*. It was at this time that the company of the Venetian Antonio Denzio (Denzio was in contact with Vivaldi) began performing in Prague, so that the composer had another possible reason to travel to the Bohemian capital. Amsterdam is of interest because the engraving entitled "Effigies Antonii Vivaldi" by the Dutch painter and engraver François Morellon La Cave bears the date 1725. After all, Amsterdam was the home of the publisher who had brought out all the first editions of Vivaldi's works, starting with *L'estro armonico*. In 1725 he had published the composer's Op. 8 (which Vivaldi has worked very hard at), probably toward the end of the year. Yet all the above possibilities may be nothing more – at least for the present – than attempts to fill in the gaps in our documentation of Vivaldi's activities.

The four year period from autumn 1725 to autumn 1729 presents us with an entirely different situation. This period was the first time Vivaldi returned to concentrate his activities in Venice for an extended time, after having left the city in 1718. He had concluded a new contract with the Ospedale della Pietà in the summer of 1723, and he continued to work for the Pietà until the end of the 1720s on the basis of these new conditions. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that he always managed to produce two concertos a month; indeed, on the basis of the payments to Vivaldi as recorded in the Pietà account books, we must assume that interruptions occurred. On 24 October 1726 Vivaldi received, for example, forty-two ducats, fourteen grossi (this equals twelve sequins) for twelve concertos he had delivered over a period of six months. The next documented payment, however, took place on

1 April 1728, when he was paid for sixteen concertos (fifty-six ducats, nineteen grossi, which amounted to sixteen sequins). The last documented payment for this period (ninety-two ducats, six grossi for twenty-six concertos) was recorded on 21 August 1729.²⁹

Vivaldi's distinctly different relationship to the Pietà is made clear by the fact that he no longer belonged to the group of *maestri*, whose contract renewals had to be voted on annually by the *congregazione*. Thus Vivaldi's name disappeared from the Ospedale's minutes after the resolution of 2 July 1723. In modern terms he had the status of a regular free-lance staff member, with his only obligations being to provide regularly a given number of compositions for performance at the Pietà and to conduct several rehearsals when in Venice. Though the motion mentioned only concertos, one should not interpret this as referring to instrumental concertos alone, but rather to works that are *concertos* in a more general sense, that is, concertos for string orchestra without soloists, or concerto-like chamber music works. The Pietà must have given special terms for religious vocal music, which was probably composed individually on special commission and remunerated separately. We have no proof, however, of either of the above suppositions.

Vivaldi's strong concentration on Venice is most evident in his opera work. After four and a half years of not working for Venetian theaters, Vivaldi produced no fewer than seven new operas and *pasticci* at the Teatro Sant'Angelo between autumn 1725 and Carnival 1728. He also worked again at the theater as impresario.

In addition to these customary endeavors, in the mid-1720s Vivaldi began a contact with the French embassy in Venice that lasted a number of years. In 1723, following an extended period of chilly relations between the two states, the French sent a new ambassador who was endowed with full diplomatic authority and prestige (fig. 27). Recent research has shown that the diplomat who held the office until 1731, Count Jacques-Vincent Languet de Gergy, was "an important patron (or if you prefer, customer) of Vivaldi during the mid-1720s".³⁰ Vivaldi seems to have been his favorite composer for important larger functions; perhaps, as Talbot conjectures,³¹ owing to a recommendation by Cardinal Ottoboni.

The occasions for which the embassy required large-scale compositions were, for the most part, the annual celebrations of the holiday of St. Louis (25 August), which was also the name day of King Louis XV,



Figure 27. “Reception of the Imperial Ambassador Count Bolagno” (detail), by Giovanni Antonio Canal (called Canaletto).

and the celebrations on occasions of special importance to the French royal family. The most important celebrations during the period that concerns us were the wedding of Louis XV, on 5 September 1725, and the births of twin princesses in August 1727. Vivaldi composed the serenatas *Gloria (e) Himeneo* (RV 687) (for the royal wedding) and *L'unione della Pace e di Marte* (RV 694) (for the births of the princesses) for the festivities held by the French embassy on 12 September 1725 and 19 September 1727 in celebration of these two events. For the royal births, he also performed his *Te Deum* (RV 622) in Madonna dell'Orto Church, located near the embassy. An article published in the *Mercure de France* of October 1727 provides a detailed account of the festive and imaginative backdrop built for the open-air performance of the serenata and for the instrumental works that surely accompanied it.

Day and night, many salvos of fireworks were fired from the Palais de France where gatherings and games were held in the afternoon. At about 8:00 in the evening all sides of the palace and a kind of amphitheater, or stage, which had been built on the lagoon on top of large boats, were illuminated. This sixty-foot-high and fifty-foot-wide structure represented the Palace of the Sun as described by Ovid. In the middle of the palace, built upon twelve Corinthian columns, one saw a statue of Apollo with his lyre and the French coat of arms, which was affixed to the cornice. The entire building was circumscribed by a shining sun atop a pyramid. One could also see the signs of the zodiac, with Gemini at the center. A very beautiful instrumental concert, which lasted almost two hours, was held in the amphitheater. The music, like that of the *Te Deum*, was by the famous Vivaldi. During all this time every kind of refreshment was served.³²

The motives for the composition and for the performance venue of Vivaldi's most *French* work, the serenata *La Sena festeggiante* (The Festive Seine) (RV 693), are still unexplained. All that can be said with reasonable certainty is that the work was written during the 1720s, probably around 1725. The commission for this piece in all likelihood also came from the French embassy.

It is impossible to determine the extent to which Vivaldi also supplied the embassy with instrumental works. A manuscript now in the Paris National Library containing twelve *concerti ripieni* has been associated with Languet as patron or addressee with good reason.³³ As previously mentioned, the Ottoboni presentation manuscript of the "Manchester" Violin Sonatas may also have been commissioned by Languet. Members of the French embassy must have been especially taken by *The Four Seasons* because it seems these concertos were most popular in France. After *Le quattro stagioni* was first performed at the Concerts Spirituels in Paris in early 1728, the *Mercure de France* repeatedly gave accounts of performances (in particular of the "Spring" Concerto) within this concert series, for which Jean Pierre Guignon was always violin soloist. According to another report in the *Mercure de France*, Louis XV requested that Guignon give a command performance of the "Spring" concerto on 25 November 1730.³⁴

The Four Seasons cycle is the opening section of the Op. 8 concertos, “Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’inventione”, Vivaldi’s first concerto publication in some time, which appeared in the mid-1720s.³⁵ The release of this collection, surely the composer’s most successful since *L’estro armonico* fifteen years before, was announced on 14 December 1725 in the *Gazette d’Amsterdam*. Vivaldi’s fifth published concerto opus was new and remarkable in that the twelve works – ten violin concertos and two oboe concertos – included seven pieces with programmatic headings. *La cetra* (The Lyre), Op. 9, was published two years later in 1727 and also contained twelve concertos. Also published at this time were the following collections of six concertos each: Op. 10 with six flute concertos (c. 1728), Op. 11 with five violin concertos and one oboe concerto, and Op. 12 with five violin concertos and one string concerto without soloists (both from 1729). This second series thus totals forty-two concertos, the vast majority of which were violin concertos, with three oboe concertos and, for the first time in the genre, a group of six concertos for transverse flute. All were published by Michel-Charles Le Cène (formerly Roger) of Amsterdam.

As has been pointed out in regard to earlier collections, Vivaldi’s personal involvement in preparing and shaping publication of his works varied considerably. While the structure of some sets was without doubt largely or entirely the work of the composer, he presumably had little or no role at all in others. Of the 1720s’ works, Opp. 8 and 9 contained dedications and prefaces (as had Opp. 2–4), indicating that Vivaldi had authorized and taken an active role in their publication. Op. 8 was dedicated to Count Morzin, while Op. 9 bore the name of no less than Emperor Charles VI, whose name appeared here for the first time in connection with the composer (fig. 28).

The relationship between Vivaldi and Charles VI merits our attention not so much because only a few pieces of information on the topic exist, but rather owing to the many unanswered questions concerning Vivaldi’s journey to Vienna in 1740 and another trip to *Germania*, which he began in 1729. The composer wrote to Bentivoglio on 16 November 1737 that he was “called to Vienna” (*sono stato chiamato a Vienna*), referring to an event that had occurred in the past. One would logically assume that this call had come from the imperial court. Was this invitation the result of the composer’s meeting with the emperor in the early autumn of 1728?



Figure 28. Emperor Charles VI.

Though we have no details about this meeting, the information that we possess leads to the conclusion that the emperor, who was an accomplished musician and connoisseur of music, was particularly interested in Vivaldi. Their meeting took place sometime between 10 and 12 September 1728, when Charles VI was visiting Trieste for several days during his tour of allegiance through several southern provinces of the Habsburg monarchy. There, on 11 September, he received a delegation from the Venetian Republic consisting of two ambassadors. According to recent research,³⁶ it is almost certain that Vivaldi was among the 200-member Venetian delegation.

The single source providing information about Vivaldi's meeting with the emperor is a letter from the Venetian aristocrat and scholar Antonio Conti to a French countess.³⁷ Writing from Venice on 19 September, Conti informed his correspondent that the emperor had given Vivaldi "a great deal of money and a gold chain ... and knighted him".

In a subsequent letter, dated 23 September, he reported that the emperor had had a long conversation with Vivaldi about music, “they said he talked more with him in two weeks than he had with his ministers in two years”.

This information by Conti, which certainly must have come originally from members of the Trieste delegation, does not seem to agree with the facts. Is it conceivable, if the emperor had really honored Vivaldi with a knighthood, that he would not have added this title to his name? And how was the composer supposed to have managed to stay near the emperor for two weeks? If this was the case, it is hard to explain why Vivaldi’s name was not mentioned either in Charles VI’s diary or in the archives and detailed reports about the emperor’s trip.³⁸

If Conti’s news about Vivaldi does not stand up to close examination, the fact remains that during a personal meeting in September 1728 Charles VI showed an interest in Vivaldi, which was considered unusual by the imperial party, and that the emperor presented Vivaldi with a gift. The latter could have been in appreciation for a second set of twelve violin concertos, in manuscript, which Vivaldi probably presented to the emperor on this occasion. An unfortunately incomplete autograph, with dedication, is preserved in the Austrian National Library and bears the name *La cetra*. Like Op. 9, it was dedicated to the emperor and bears the date “l’Anno 1728” on the title pages of the four preserved part books (fig. 29).³⁹ It can be assumed that the emperor’s gift to Vivaldi also included an invitation to come to Vienna; it is much more difficult to determine whether the fifty-year-old composer was also offered an attractive post in the imperial court chapel.

We have now come to the problems associated with Vivaldi’s trip around 1730. Though he doubtless took this trip – or more precisely, two short trips – we have no idea of or information on the nature, the destination, or the purpose of the venture. As yet, no information has been uncovered indicating the exact length of the trip or trips, the destinations, or any stops.

The first indication of Vivaldi’s intention to take a long trip is a letter of approval, written by the procurator of St. Mark and dated 30 September 1729, for a leave application by Giovanni Battista Vivaldi in which he is granted permission “to absent himself from his service to the Cappella Ducale for one year in order to accompany one of his sons on a trip to Germania”.⁴⁰ The only possible son is Antonio,⁴¹ and at the



Figure 29. Title page of the manuscript concerto set *La cetra*, dedicated to Emperor Charles VI.

time, Germania also included present-day Austria and Bohemia. The composer was responsible for a revival of his first opera, *Ottone in Villa*, in Treviso in October, probably not later than mid-October; the earliest possible date for his departure would therefore have been the second half of October 1729.

Lacking information about Vivaldi's artistic activity in Venice or in other Italian cities from late autumn 1729 to 1731, scholars have usually concluded that the composer was permanently absent from his native country. This assumption can be refuted with a letter by Vivaldi found in 1988: on 10 June 1730 Vivaldi, writing from Venice, informed an unknown addressee that "Thanks be to God, I have arrived in Venice, and am in the best of health".⁴² In all likelihood, the correspondent, addressed as "Altezza Serenissima" (Your Serene Highness), was the twenty-two-year-old prince Carl Ludwig Frederick of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, who had made Vivaldi's acquaintance during the 1729 Carnival and had met him again, probably at the beginning of 1730, in an unknown place (probably Vienna or Prague) (figs. 30 and 31). Vivaldi's

Altera Reverendissima

Come è stato un ombra e troppo momentaneo l'onore
che V. B. S. si è degnato compartirmi con lei
lei Benignissima persona così ne yado cercando
un altro che mi consigli alla lunga et è quello
della di lei Benignissima corrispondenza.
Dopo il lutto sono arrivato in Venetia e con
buona salute dove in avvenire mi fermerò
di continuo. Qui non mi manca per
essere interamente felice se non che V. B. S. mi
faccia degno di qualche di lei Benignissima
comando che solo può consolarmi e
mi o'evuaria e può correggere i disordini
d'essere lontano, e non poter ubidire.

Figure 30. The opening of a letter from Vivaldi dated 10 June 1730, presumably to Carl Ludwig of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

wording creates the impression that he had returned to Venice shortly before writing the letter, but this is inconsistent with what we know regarding another activity during this period: Vivaldi changed his place of residence early in May 1730, and we must assume he was present in Venice for the move. From 4 May 1730 he lived in a house on the Calle Sant'Antonio facing the Grand Canal, next to the Palazzo Bembo. According to his own information – in a letter of 23 November 1737 – Vivaldi paid an annual rent of two hundred ducats for these quarters, although existing documents give the rent as only one hundred and

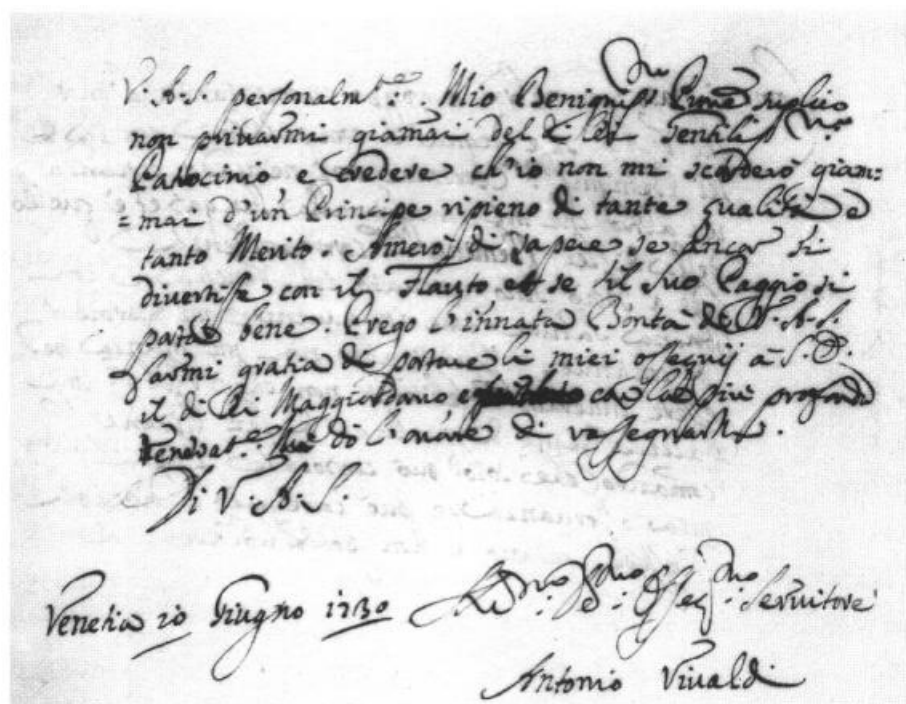


Figure 31. Page two of the same letter.

thirty-six ducats. Of course, even the latter amount was almost twice what he had paid for his previous residence. The house on Calle Sant'Antonio was the composer's last domicile in Venice, and it was from there that he left the city in 1740. This was the house where his father, Giovanni Battista Vivaldi, died on 14 May 1736 at age eighty-one, after "being confined to bed for a long time".⁴³

In the letter of 10 June 1730 (see figs. 30 and 31), Vivaldi stated his intention to remain in Venice "always in the future". According to everything we can currently surmise it would seem that he quickly changed this resolution and soon afterward took a new trip to Germany, presumably accompanied by the Girò sisters. While Anna Girò's presence in Italy is documented by opera engagements in Milan and Venice for the 1730 Carnival and spring seasons, there is no proof that she sang in Italy from the summer of 1730 up to and including the 1731 Carnival. She apparently did not sing there again until a performance of Vivaldi's *Farnace* in Pavia in early May 1731. We can assume that Vivaldi took part in the revival of his successful opera because of the list of his titles given in the libretto. Alongside the title of *maestro di cappella* (for the prince of Hesse-Darmstadt), we find for the first time two other court conductor titles, which he was probably granted during his trip

(or trips): “maestro di cappella di S. A. R. il serenissimo Sig. duca di Lorena, ... di S. A. R. il Sig. principe Joseppe Gio. Adamo prencipe regnante di Liechtenstein”.⁴⁴ The “duca di Lorena” is Duke Franz Stephan of Lorraine, who resided at the time in Florence. He married Maria Theresa in 1736, became grand duke of Tuscany in 1737, and, as Francis I, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1745. There is definite proof of Vivaldi having returned to Venice in December 1731, because he premiered two new operas in quick succession: *Semiramide* on 26 December in Mantua, and *La fida ninfa* on 6 January in Verona.

Of the possible destinations for Vivaldi between late autumn 1729 and (probably) spring 1731, the most likely was Bohemia, with Prague as its center. Two of the five Vivaldi operas that Count Sporck produced between 1730 and 1732 – *Argippo* and *Alvilda regina dei Goti* – were new works, and it is hard to imagine that these productions would have been staged without the composer’s personal supervision (fig. 32). Perhaps the motivating factor for Vivaldi’s trip to the north (if indeed he went) in the second half of 1730 was the *scrittura* for the autumn 1730 performance of *Argippo*. There is, however, other convincing evidence that Vivaldi traveled to Bohemia for reasons other than the opera performances at the Sporck theater, particularly in the form of a large group of Vivaldi autographs written on Bohemian music paper.⁴⁵ Three of these works – compositions for lute, violin (or two violins), and basso continuo (RV 82, 85, and 93) – bear the dedication “Per Sua Eccellenza Signor Conte Wrttbij”, that is, Count Johann Joseph von Wrtby (or Vrtba), who held the high office of *Oberstburggraf* from 1710 until his death in 1734.⁴⁶ In November 1729 Franz Stephan of Lorraine stayed in Count Wrtby’s Prague palace during a visit to the city, and while there he attended an opera performance in Sporck’s theater. Wrtby, whose family was fond of playing the lute, regularly attended Sporck’s opera performances, as shown, among other things, by his numerous handwritten notes on preserved librettos. On the libretto to *La tirannia gastigata*, he wrote, for example, “Everyone liked this opera very much”, and he noted in his libretto copies for *Farnace* and *Argippo* that they “met with great approval” and “met with very great approval”.⁴⁷

Strictly speaking, the only evidence for Vivaldi’s having traveled to Vienna at this time rests on the previously quoted letter from 1737. To date, no further documents have been found that can substantiate his stay in the city or at court or that can give us an idea of the journey’s



Figure 32. Count Franz Anton von Sporck. Copper engraving by Martin Bernigeröth after an oil painting by Daniel Tressniak (1721).

purpose. Treatment of this topic is therefore limited to questions and conjectures. Unlike recent hypotheses, which mostly revolve around the composer's search for regular employment,⁴⁸ I believe it more likely that Vivaldi's efforts were directed at obtaining attractive commissions and at guest performance possibilities at this court, famous for its concerts and opera. Yet Vivaldi's hopes must have been disappointed. If he had succeeded either as composer or performance virtuoso at court, traces would have been left and Vivaldi would have gone beyond his general mention of Vienna in his apologetic letter to Bentivoglio. He was not even able to secure the sinecure title of *maestro di cappella* from the emperor; he obtained this title only from Duke Franz Stephan of Lorraine. "Was this insignificant title the Viennese court's consolation prize for not granting Vivaldi's request?"⁴⁹

Besides Vienna and Prague, the Saxon court in Dresden is a third possible destination for this trip. An Italian musicologist has called this court Vivaldi's "first propaganda center in Germany".⁵⁰ It was there that for a time there must have been a veritable Vivaldi cult.⁵¹ Nothing could make more sense than his visiting this court, where he had a dependable supporter and champion in his former student and friend, Pisendel, who had been Dresden concertmaster since 1728. There is no proof Vivaldi stayed in Dresden, but we cannot exclude this visit, in part because there is also no documentary evidence of his having been in Prague or Vienna. Like the possible visit to Vienna, a stay in Dresden would have had to have been one of which the influential court literally took no notice.

On balance, when the fifty-three-year-old Vivaldi returned to Venice in 1731, he must have been disappointed in spite of the number of successes and enriching experiences he had behind him. Whatever his hopes may have been, the fact that so few visible traces of his travels remain indicates negative results.

In many respects, the first two years after his return recall the period after his stay in Mantua – his ties to his old Venetian performance venues were not yet reestablished and his activities were directed outside his native city. This is indicated by his production of two operas in Mantua for the 1732 Carnival and by the signing of the *scrittura* for the inaugural opera (*La fida ninfa*) at the Verona opera house. We find him at the Mantuan court during the following year's Carnival, though apparently only in the capacity of impresario. The series of operas that he produced in autumn 1733 at "his" Teatro Sant'Angelo gives the impression that the *prete rosso* had finally reestablished himself in Venice.

Solo Concertos and Double Concertos

In spite of all the progress that has been made in past decades establishing the chronology of the composer's works and documenting his stylistic development, it is still impossible to divide Vivaldi's works into clear stylistic periods. We can, of course, assume that our insights into Vivaldi's creative career and into changes in his musical language will increase, yet it seems doubtful that this knowledge will ever yield a truly

cogent timeline. For the time being at least, the body of Vivaldi's immense concerto output resembles a continuum without sudden changes or wild fluctuations in quality, so any imposed subdivisions seem arbitrary. Thus the commonly made tripartite division – early, middle (the largest), and late – of the composer's concertos is a practical solution analogous to the customary division made in his biography corresponding to his departure for Mantua.

On the other hand, I would assert that Vivaldi's concerto style underwent observable evolution. It is virtually impossible to overlook the differences between early concertos and those from the late 1720s and the 1730s, although the differences are not equally evident in all cases and one cannot posit a straight line of development.

A comparison between the printed collections of the 1720s and those of Opp. 3 through 7 reveals a special feature: a high percentage of concertos with programmatic titles. While the early concertos lack any such titles, fully ten works of Opp. 8 and 10 have them. This number may be relatively unimportant within the context of Vivaldi's vast concerto *œuvre*, yet these sets acquire their distinct character because of their titles. This is especially apparent in that programmatic concertos were not common in Italy. None of Vivaldi's contemporaries had any particular liking for the genre, whereas about thirty Vivaldi concertos with programmatic titles or descriptive headings have come down to us, some in more than one version.

Of course, many of these works cannot be classified as program music in the strict sense of the term. About half of the titles merely indicate the basic character of the work without the music being meant to arouse concrete associations or *pictures*. These include the violin concertos entitled “Il piacere” (Pleasure) (RV 180), “Il sospetto” (Suspicion) (RV 199), “Il ritiro” (The Retreat) (RV 256 and RV 294/294a), “L'inquietudine” (Unrest) (RV 234), “L'amoroso” (The Beloved) (RV 271), “Il favorito” (The Favorite) (RV277).

It is not always clear why a work was given its name. Present-day listeners probably would require additional information, which is no longer available, before they could make sense of such titles as “Il favorito”, “Il sospetto”, or even “Grosso Mogul” (RV 208).⁵² The title “Concerto d[et]to Il Carbonelli”, which appeared on a Dresden part for the RV 366 violin concerto, apparently referred to a person. In another group of works the titles referred to their occasion of per-

formance – and thus, indirectly, to the character of the compositions: Concerto “Funebre” (RV 579), Sonata (RV 130), and Sinfonia “al Santo Sepolcro” (At the Holy Sepulcher) (RV 169), Concerto “Per il S[antissim]o Natale” (For Most Holy Christmas) (RV 270). The last concerto, which was meant to be played throughout with mutes and without harpsichord and which bore the additional title of “Il riposo” (Rest), was a work of gentleness and charm where loud sounds would have been out of place. While concertos such as “Il gardellino” (The Goldfinch) (RV 90/428), “The cuckow”, (The Cuckoo) (RV 363), “Il corneto da posta” (The Post Horn) (RV 363), or “La caccia” (The Hunt) (RV 362) had programmatic elements that were restricted to individual aspects of themes (such as the musical imitation of bird calls or bugle-calls), other concertos – “La notte” (Night) (RV 104/439, RV 501) and “La tempesta di mare” (The Sea Storm) (RV 253, RV 98/433/570) – in part offered true programmatic scenes similar to those found in *Le quattro stagioni* (The Four Seasons).

Bird songs, hunts, storms, and sleep are all familiar musical images found in *The Four Seasons*. It would not be going too far to say that the Vivaldi program concertos already mentioned and some of the individual movements of *The Four Seasons* include separate pictorial representations. By contrast, in *The Four Seasons* such material is treated in a broader, thematic manner. A movement such as the opening allegro of the Violin Concerto “La tempesta di mare” (RV 253) is actually a single, huge storm scene, of which there are no less than four in *The Four Seasons*. The means used in achieving this effect are also strikingly identical: in both works rapid repetitions of a single note and ascending and descending scales depict the unleashed elements and dramatically intensify the music. Occasionally, the material heard simultaneously in solo violin and ripieno strings is remarkable, as demonstrated by a passage from the first movement of the “Tempesta” Concerto (RV 253) in which the soloist’s wide-ranging arpeggios are underpinned by the scale-like motif extending over two octaves (ex. 30) in the opening ritornello.

There are only two concertos besides *The Four Seasons* in which there are programmatic indications according to movement: the two “La notte” concertos, one for bassoon (RV 501) and the other for flute (RV 439), which also exists in an early version for chamber ensemble (RV 104). Each of the works contains a presto movement marked

VI. solo

VI. I/I

Va. 8^{va}

B.c.

Example 30. *La tempesta di mare* Concerto (RV 253), first movement, bars 63 ff.

“Fantasmi” (Ghosts) and a slow movement entitled “Il sonno” (Sleep); in addition, the final movement bears the title “Sorge l’aurora” (Dawn breaks). The cyclical structure of both works is unusual and is clearly modified by their programs, with irregular sequences of movements and tempi: Largo / Andante molto – Presto – Presto – Andante molto – Allegro (RV 501) and Largo – Presto / Largo / Presto – Largo / Allegro (RV 439). The “Sonno” movement of the flute concerto is outstanding: obscure veiled and muted chords conjure up a picture of shimmering rapture (ex.31).

VI. I Largo

VI. II con sordino

Va. pp

B.c.

Example 31. “La notte” Concerto (RV 439), “Il Sonno”.

The main features that assure the concerto cycle *Le quattro stagioni* a special place among the composer's program works are well enough known that it is worth looking at smaller details. Each of the four concertos was preceded by a *Sonetto dimostrativo* (by the composer?) describing in poetic form the images and events depicted by the music. In the printed edition of the Op. 8 concertos, the sonnets were presented together before the music and were individually included above each corresponding passage of music verse by verse (fig. 33). This clearly in-

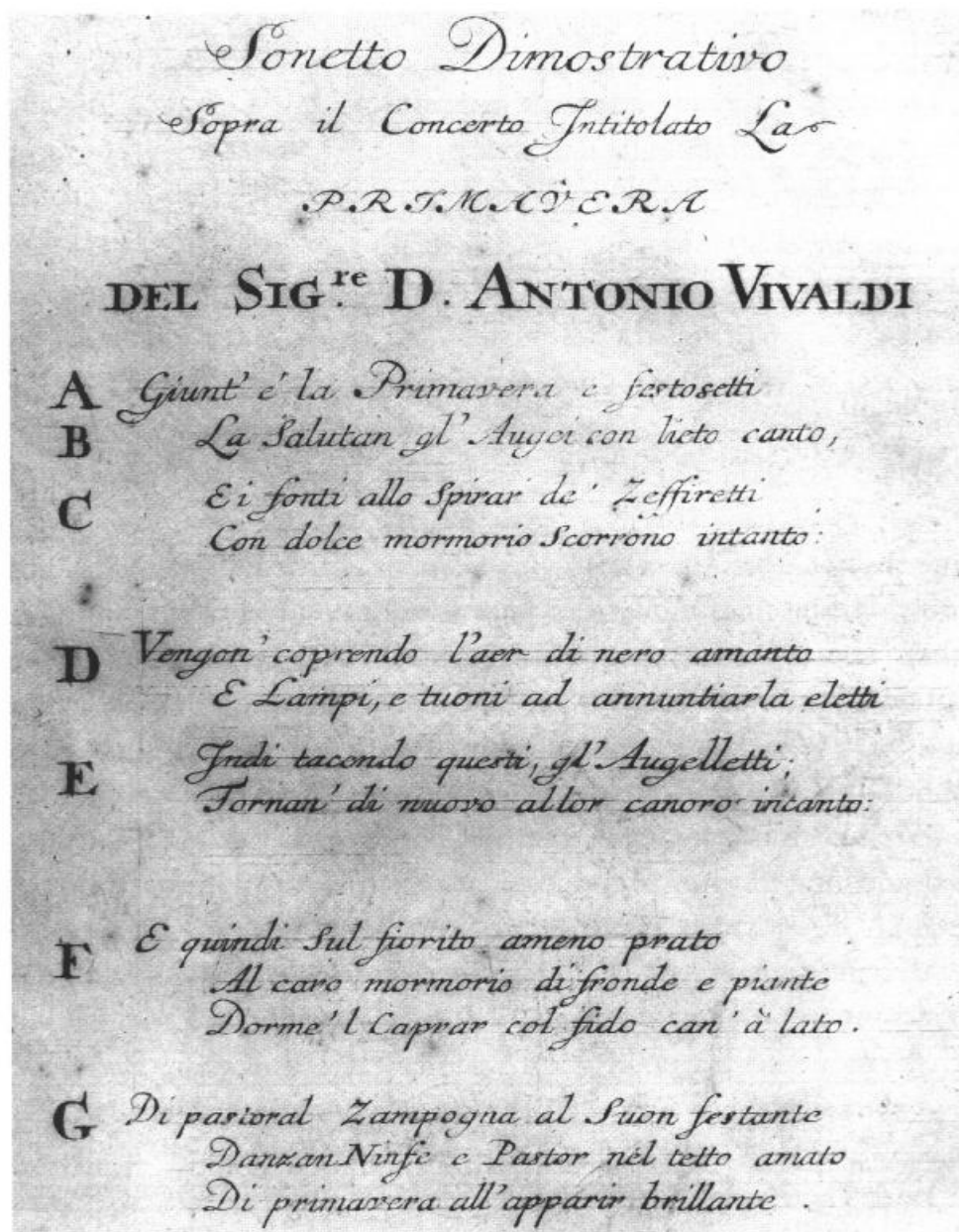


Figure 33. *Sonetto dimostrativo* (Explanatory sonnet) to the “Spring” Concerto (RV 269).

licated the detailed connections between words and music that were shown in earlier manuscript versions of the score by the use of letters keyed to the sonnets. These letters were retained in the printed version (fig. 34).

Despite a number of idiosyncrasies attributable to the programs, on the whole *The Four Seasons* follows Vivaldi's solo concerto model: a cyclical form with two fast outer movements and a slow middle movement along with a ritornello form in the allegro movements. The com-

2
La Primavera
CONCERTO I
Violino Principale
A giunti e la Primavera
Allegro
Piano
Forte
B Canto de gl' Vcelli
Piano
e Fastosetti
Tutti
E folti allo spiraz de Zeffiretti
Scorrono i Tanti
Con dolce mormorio Scorrono in tanto Piano
D Tuoni, n'engon coprendo
L'aer di nero amanto
E Cumpi e Tuoni ad annuntiarla eletti
Solo

Figure 34. Solo violin part of “Spring” (RV 269), with the key letters and quotations from the preceding *Sonetto dimostrativo*.

poser was able to retain the basic form because the ritornello form of the solo concerto movement lent itself especially well to portraying varied images in music. The recurring ritornellos musically translated each basic statement of the sonnet “Spring is come” (*Giunt’è la Primavera*). In the episodes, each individual scene is presented using, in turn, a background of bird song, the murmuring of the waves, the blowing of zephyrs, the approaching storm with thunder and lightning, or the renewed song of the birds. Unlike the allegro movements, which are often filled with images and contrasts, most middle movements express a single mood. Only the “Summer” Concerto uses the corresponding sonnet stanza to generate a permanent alternation of *adagio e piano* with *presto e forte*. The stanza reads: “Toglie alle membra lasse il Suo riposo Il timore de’ Lampi, e tuoni fieri / E de mosche, e mossoni il Stuol furioso!” (The fear of lightning and thunder, and the maddening host of flies large and small shakes slumber from tired limbs). The Largo of the “Spring” Concerto is a showpiece of imaginative and artful program music, depicting three different scenes simultaneously: the rustling of leaves symbolized by the gently rocking rhythm of the violins; the peaceful, melodic song of the sleeping shepherd; and a barking dog in the form of the violas playing an ostinato motif marked “molto forte e strappato” (very loud and rough). The sonnet reads: “And then the shepherd sleeps on the pleasant flowery meadows with his faithful dog by his side to the gentle rustling of ferns and plants”.

It would require too much space to go into the many, original structural elements of these four works, which offer us the whole expressive and mimetic wealth of Vivaldi’s instrumental style in an uncommonly compressed fashion. In very few other works can one feel the degree to which, in this work, Vivaldi has placed specific linguistic and formal means of dramatic music at the service of his orchestral language.

As much as *The Four Seasons* charms us time and again with delightful musical images and detailed picturesque descriptions, these features taken alone do not do justice to the nature of the work. If Vivaldi’s contemporaries regarded *The Four Seasons* as “the best we have of this kind of music”,⁵³ and if today the concertos continue to demonstrate their artistic value, this assumes a greater, more comprehensive “imitation of nature”, the intuitive, complete grasp of the human experience of nature. As a result, the concertos have become an exemplary cycle of program music.

According to Vivaldi's preface, *The Four Seasons* was composed long before its publication. Recent findings based on newly discovered manuscripts⁵⁴ suggest that they could have been written as early as 1716–1717, at a time in which “La tempesta di mare”, which was also published in Op. 8, must have been completed. The sources in question come from a group of parts from the period 1716–1717, a time Pisendel spent in Venice. Not only was the performance material prepared for Pisendel written on Venetian paper, but the composer himself copied one of the parts.⁵⁵ “The cuckow” was also probably first published in 1717, and the concertos “Il riposo”, “L'inquietudine”, and “Il sospetto” have recently been dated anytime from 1718 to 1729,⁵⁶ which means that a large number of program concertos were composed as early as 1716–1720.

The composition of the other Op. 8 concertos should also not be placed a priori during the mid- or late 1720s. The first movement of the Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 8 (RV 242), for example, exists in an early manuscript version that was probably written during Pisendel's studies with Vivaldi. The autograph contained in the Dresden collection bears the inscription “fatto per Monsieur Pisendel” and was doubtless presented to the German violinist by the composer. Nevertheless, the majority of the late-printed sets and the manuscript collection *La cetra* consist of works that represent an advanced and apparently relatively late stage of Vivaldi's concerto style in both structure and musical language. The proximity to certain other manuscript works that were definitely or almost certainly written either in or around 1730 is evident. I am primarily referring to concertos whose autographs can be dated as 1727–1728 or whose paper came from the composer's presumed trip to Bohemia in 1730–1731.⁵⁷

The following comments about several main aspects, which clearly set the concertos of this period apart from early works, should not be understood as dating criteria. They are intended instead to characterize developmental tendencies in Vivaldi's concerto style against a background of certain constants. I will begin by using the approximately 220 known solo violin concertos, that is, about half of the extant Vivaldi concertos.

I have shown in prior discussion of early concertos that the structure of the opening ritornello is an important indication in gauging the relative chronological position of a concerto movement within the de-

velopment of the genre. Using several examples from *L'estro armonico*, I was able to demonstrate how Vivaldi developed a terse opening tutti, restricted to a few motivic components, into a complex ritornello of considerable dimensions and variety. This trend continued and led to a type of ritornello determined by the principle of connecting groups of motifs. A ritornello usually consisted of four or five relatively autonomous, contrasting motivic groups. In major-key movements, it was often the case that a middle ritornello section was in a minor key and was marked with alternations between *piano* and *pianissimo*. Particular motivic groups were also likely to have strong motivic and dynamic contrasts in combination or separately. The beginning of the ritornello from the first movement of the RV 191 violin concerto is a typical example (ex. 32).



Example 32. Concerto in C Major (RV 191) first movement.

I could just as easily point to the final movement of this work or to concertos such as RV 278, 375, or 380, all probably written between 1727–1730. The ritornello of the first movement of the Concerto in E Major, Op. 9, No. 4 (RV 263/263a), has a special form of continuous contrast – a long section of three powerful tutti chords in 4/4 time contrasted either with a whispering figuration motif played by the high strings, or with brief interjections by the solo violin.

With both the expansion and the increasing variety in motifs and contrasts in the ritornello, there unfolded a differentiation of themes and, concomitantly, a new character to movements. The allegro movement of early solo concertos is largely characterized by a type of theme of which the principal features are (1) motivic elements such as repeated notes, auxiliary seconds, broken triads, and partial scales played *forte*, and (2) the use of a standardized allegro tempo. The uniqueness of this early standard type of allegro, found in Op. 3, is truly astonishing and has not received sufficient attention. Of course, there are many

allegro movements in works from Vivaldi's mature period that used standard thematic forms like those I have described, but there are also many movements that have highly individual themes. It is impossible to illustrate the diversity of themes and their characteristics using just a few examples. Some representative examples are (1) the unusual but weak ritornello from the magnificent Concerto in C Minor (RV 201) (first movement, Allegro molto), (2) the mysterious bass figure that appears *below pianissimo* chords opening the first movement of the Concerto in B-flat Major (RV375) (Allegro non molto), (3) the affectionate tone of the opening Allegro of the "*L'amoroso*" Concerto in E Major (RV 271), and (4) the movements with purely lyrical ritornellos, which range from expressive, minor-key sections to a flowing cantabile that clearly anticipates the "singing allegro" of the generation to come.

The previously indicated differentiation of theme and movement types went hand in hand with a differentiation, even an individualization, of tempo. The fast opening movement, a kind of "standard allegro", gave way to a wide variety of tempos. Vivaldi's tempo markings speak for themselves: Allegro molto, Allegro assai, Allegro spiritoso, Presto, Allegro non molto, Allegro poco, Allegro ma non tanto, Allegro ma cantabile, Allegro poco e cantabile, Andantino, Andante molto, and Andante molto e quasi Allegro. No other early eighteenth-century composer used such a subtle variety of tempo indications.

The solo part also continued developments that had begun in the early printed sets. Most of all, the solo acquired a strong thematic profile (as opposed to being more or less limited to stereotypical figuration), and there was a growing versatility and variability of violinistic forms of figuration. If a long solo brought patterned figuration, it was meant to achieve a certain effect, for example, to increase the tension toward the movement's climax. Vivaldi's solos in this period became highly varied with different motifs and figuration even within a single solo. Above all, almost every concerto movement contained at least one passage in the solo episodes (where the lyric element was concentrated) in which the solo violin unexpectedly blossomed into song. In a number of cases the solo instrument used an unabashedly lyric theme, as for example in the first movement (Allegro non molto) of the Concerto in B Minor (RV390) (ex. 33) of 1727–1728.

The solo episodes were usually accompanied by ripieno violins and violas (as in the above example) rather than by the continuo alone. The



Example 33. Concerto in B Minor (RV 390), first movement, bars 25 ff.

accompaniment motifs are largely neutral, and they are subordinated to the solo instrument. There are, however, a good many parts in which the solo is underpinned by ritornello motifs or in which the solo instrument and the ripieno are given material of equal importance, thus making it virtually impossible to determine whether it is a solo or a tutti passage. Passages of this type can be either multiple rapid tutti-solo interchanges or sections in which ritornello motivic groups and solo figures are played simultaneously. The great Concerto in D Major, Op. 8 (RV 210), which has fugato ritornello openings in the first and third movements, provides vivid examples of all these forms. In the middle of the first movement, the wide-ranging arpeggios of the solo violin are supported by polyphonic ripieno writing. In the final section of the movement (beginning with the return of the ritornello theme in the tonic) the fugato ritornello opening is effectively embroidered by the soloist's figuration (ex. 34).

Of course, the ritornello form remained the structural basis for fast concerto movements. Still, the broader structure of both ritornello and solo episodes tended to decrease the number of exchanges between tutti and solo. The concerto movements written during Vivaldi's middle and late periods usually have only four ritornellos and three solo episodes, and the movement as a whole tended to be longer. That the last (or next-to-last) solo episode returned to the beginning of the first solo episode can be seen in the early concertos, although more frequently so in the mature concertos. Since this thematic return was always linked to the home key, it also had the clear effect of a recapitulation.

The main form of the slow (primarily largo or adagio) middle movement is a lyrical solo section framed by ritornellos. Parallel and dominant keys are preferred, although it is not uncommon for the middle movement to retain the key of the other movements. All these movements are characterized by the expressive song of the solo violin,

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a concerto. The first system (bars 68 ff) consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'VI. solo' and features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It contains a series of eighth-note chords. The middle staff is labeled 'VI. I/II' and 'Va.' with a piano (p) dynamic; it has a treble clef, one sharp, and common time, showing a melodic line with some rests. The bottom staff is labeled 'B.C.' and has a bass clef, one sharp, and common time, with a melodic line including a '6' fingering. The second system (bars 114 ff) also has three staves. The top staff is labeled 'VI. solo' and has a treble clef, one sharp, and common time, with a rapid sixteenth-note passage. The middle staff is labeled 'VI. I' and 'VI. II' and has a treble clef, one sharp, and common time, with a melodic line. The bottom staff has a bass clef, one sharp, and common time, with a melodic line and a 'Va.' marking at the end.

Example 34. Concerto in D Major, Op. 8, No. 11 (RV 210), first movement, bars 68 ff and bars 114 ff.

which leads to the predominance of certain recurrent effects. Still, the middle movements vary considerably in character. One has only to contrast pieces such as the gracefully lilting *Andante* of the RV 380 concerto with its Lombard rhythms, or the serenade-like *Largo* or *Larghetto* movements in RV 300 (Op. 9, No. 10) and RV 390, both with pizzicato accompaniments, to a brooding movement like the *E minor Largo* of the RV 278 concerto, full of dissonances and containing a “fateful” *ostinato* motif. Many of the movements in minor keys are intensely expressive.

There are distinct reasons for the predominance of the violin concerto among Vivaldi’s concertos. Apart from the fact that during the early phase of the solo concerto the violin was by far the preferred solo instrument, the composer’s own needs as a virtuoso and as a teacher and supervisor of performance at the *Pietà* dictated its virtually unrivaled hegemony among solo instruments. It is rather remarkable then that in addition to over 200 concertos for solo violin Vivaldi wrote over 100 solo concertos for other instruments, most of which were not among the preferred concerto instruments. The most striking examples are his thirty-nine preserved solo concertos for bassoon.

Vivaldi’s preferred solo instrument after the violin was probably the cello. The Schönborn Music Library in Wiesentheid (Lower Franconia) contains a group of eight Vivaldi cello concertos written around 1710 (certainly before 1714). At that time, Matthias Ferdinand von Regaznig, the representative of the elector of Mainz in Venice, sent the von Schönborn family new music, including “rare compositions by Vivaldi”.⁵⁸ Franz Horneck, a young musician in the service of Johann Philipp Franz von Schönborn, stayed in Venice during the winter of 1708–1709 and was charged with procuring new music for his master and probably for his cello-playing brother, Count Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn. The three Vivaldi cello concertos in the Wiesentheid collection (RV 402, 416, and 420), of which Horneck copied the parts, could have been written at this time. The style of the Wiesentheid concertos is quite close to that of the solo concertos of Opp. 3 and 4, and the technical demands on the soloist are clearly less than for some later concertos. One is inclined to assume that the *Concerto in E Minor* (RV 409) was written even earlier, since its irregular form points more toward an experimental stage than to intentional deviation from a fully developed model.

The main bulk of Vivaldi's twenty-seven cello concertos was presumably composed for the Pietà in the 1720s, while first Antonio Vandini (September 1720 – spring 1721) and then Bernardo Aliprandi (January 1722 – spring 1732) were *maestro di violoncello* and responsible for teaching the cello to the Ospedale girls. If the concertos were actually played by young cellists at the Pietà, some of them must have been excellent performers because Vivaldi demanded considerably more than the standard technical requirements of the period (which were exemplified by the cello concertos by the Bolognese cellist Giuseppe Maria Jacchini, published in about 1701). Walter Kolneder emphasizes "the frequent use of staccato over small groups of notes, up to eleven notes; detached staccato bowing indicated by wedges; and sixteenth-note passages using non-adjacent strings, which requires particularly flexible bowing".⁵⁹ The concertos also provide extraordinary examples of an expansion in the technique of playing in upper positions, going as high as e^2 and $f\text{-sharp}^2$ – proving that a virtuosic style was being transferred to the cello, an instrument that for some time had largely been confined to doubling the basso continuo.

The concertos RV 413 (G major), RV 418 (A minor), and RV 424 (B minor) are among the musically richest and stylistically most progressive of the cello concertos. Original thematic invention and imaginative figuration characterize the solo part, and we are constantly surprised by how effectively the ripieno orchestra intervenes in the solos. The slow movements are more than sonorous solo cantilenas, and contain a remarkably sensitive language, often displaying a wealth of highly differentiated emotional coloration and motivic work.

The six preserved concertos for viola d'amore, an instrument not generally blessed with solo concertos, command (for that reason) special attention. These works are no less important, with their main interest being in the special sound of the instrument rather than in their extraordinary musical or formal qualities. The concertos, which were presumably written during the early 1720s, are inferior in both imagination and formal variety to many other of the composer's works.

Vivaldi was writing for a viola d'amore with six melody strings, using a standard tuning $d\text{--}a\text{--}d\text{--}f^1\text{--}a^1\text{--}d^2$ and at least six sympathetic strings under the fingerboard, from which vibrations lent the particular sound coloration that Johann Gottfried Walther described in 1732 as "argentine or silvery, also quite pleasant and sweet". The concertos in

which the home key is not D minor use a different tuning, for example, a D major chord tuning for the Concerto in D Major (RV 392), and an e–a–c–sharp¹–e¹–a¹–e² one for the Concerto in A Major (RV 396). Perhaps the latter is the most beautiful of these works with its glowing A major and the flowing lyricism of its ritornellos.

In at least two cases, the autograph scores may provide a clue as to the player for whom the works were written. In the titles of concertos RV 393 and RV 397, the word *amore* is written *AMore*, which Michael Talbot has interpreted – perhaps suggesting a relationship – as Anna Maria.⁶⁰ Anna Maria, whose name appears in the Pietà records for the first time in 1712, was apparently the outstanding violinist at the institute for quite some time and was surely a student of Vivaldi's. She was named *maestra di violino* and *maestra di coro* in 1737. Manuscript notes indicate that a number of Vivaldi's violin concertos were composed for her, among them the great F major concerto "Per la solennità di S. Lorenzo" (RV 286). It was also Anna Maria about whom Joachim Christoph Nemeitz wrote, after hearing a concert in 1721, that "there are very few virtuosos of our sex who are her equal."⁶¹

Clearly, Vivaldi himself mastered the viola d'amore, and his Dresden violinist colleague, Pisendel, loved to play the instrument. Two of Vivaldi's viola d'amore concertos, RV 392 and RV 397, were copied in Dresden for Pisendel; the manuscript of the D major concerto contains many notations in his hand. The Dresden violinist also collected viola d'amore music by other composers.⁶²

Of the wind instruments for which Vivaldi wrote solo concertos, the oboe was undoubtedly the most common concert instrument during the period. The strong, overtone-rich sound of the instrument and its suitability for agile figuration and expressive cantilena must have made the *hautbois* (which was first popular in France) seem especially suited for solo instrumental parts. Early examples of Italian oboe concertos include Alessandro Marcello's well-known Concerto in D Minor (arranged by Bach in 1713–1714 as a concerto for unaccompanied harpsichord, BWV 974) and Tommaso Albinoni's eight solo and double concertos published in 1715 as Op. 7.

Vivaldi included two oboe concertos in Op. 7 (RV 465 and 464) and Op. 8 (RV 454 and 449) and another in Op. 11 (RV 460). An additional concerto, RV 456 (of dubious authenticity), was published in the Walsh *Harmonia Mundi* in 1728. The two Op. 8 concertos may

suggest that the oboe was only an alternative to the violin as solo instrument, yet the structure of the solo part leaves no doubt that both works were conceived for oboe and not violin. The solo part, which demands a considerable degree of virtuosity on the part of the oboist and provides opportunities for display, would (compared to the other concertos in the set) clearly be less challenging for a violinist.

In addition to the six published works, we currently have fourteen or fifteen solo concertos for oboe in manuscript. These include a manuscript in the Dresden collection described as a “Violin Concerto” in C Major (RV 184), which according to recent knowledge is probably best described as an “Oboe Concerto”.⁶³ No fewer than four of the oboe concertos that have come down in manuscript are arrangements of bassoon concertos (RV 457 and 463) or have ritornellos (RV 447 and RV 448) that are identical with those of a single bassoon concerto (RV470).

The oboe concertos were probably also written for performers at the Pietà. As early as 1707–1708, the Ospedale employed Lodovico Erdmann as *maestro di oboè*, and the tradition was continued with Ignazio Siber (from 1713) and Onofrio Penati (1716). The latter was oboist in the San Marco Orchestra. According to the Pietà records from around 1707, an especially accomplished oboist was a girl referred to as “Pelegrina dall’Aboè”. She was mentioned in the Dresden autograph of the sonata RV 779 from the period as the performer of the oboe part. Nemeitz names Susanna (“auf der Hautbois la Susanna”) as one of the outstanding performers at the Pietà in 1721.⁶⁴ This does not exclude the possibility that one or more of Vivaldi’s oboe concertos were written for a musician outside the Pietà. Not least among these is the Dresden oboe virtuoso Johann Christian Richter, who, like his court orchestra colleague Pisendel, belonged to the small group of musicians that in 1716 accompanied the prince-electors to Venice. All Vivaldi’s sonatas for oboe and continuo exist in manuscript in Dresden.⁶⁵

By far Vivaldi’s most important oboe concertos are not among the six published works mentioned above. To be sure, the Concerto in D Minor (RV 454 / RV 236) published in Op. 8 is a compelling work, full of infectious verve and virtuosic brilliance in the solo episodes of the first and last movements. Works like the characteristic Concerto in A Minor (RV 461) or the broadly melodic Concerto in F Major (RV 457) are superior to the D minor concerto in their complexity of

expression, in their motivic variety, in the distinct rhythm of the solo part, and, not least of all, in their elaboration of the accompaniment. Both of these works must be considered relatively late for stylistic reasons. At least in the case of RV 457 (together with the concertos RV 448, 450, and 463) this has been confirmed by a source that has placed k with compositions recently dated within the period 1727–1728.

To obtain an accurate list of Vivaldi's flute concertos is no easy matter. This is less the result of the composer having written concertos for three different types of flute (transverse flute, recorder, and *flautino*) than it is due to the fact that a considerable portion of the works exists in different versions. No fewer than seven of the fifteen transverse flute concertos listed in Ryom's catalog (RV 426–440) are arrangements of works originally written for other instruments. Op. 10 (c. 1728) contains only a single work that has not been shown to be an arrangement. One of the fifteen concertos, RV 434, is practically identical with one of the two preserved recorder concertos (RV 442), and one originated as a cello concerto (RV 438 / RV 414) and one as a violin concerto (RV 430 / RV 275a). Four cases (RV 428, 433, 437, and 439), in which the transverse flute versions were originally for solo chamber ensembles, are especially characteristic. The flute part was originally written for transverse flute in three of these instances (RV 90, 98, and 104) and for recorder (RV 101) in one.

It is not clear why so many solo concertos for transverse flute are adaptations. It would be all too easy to say that Vivaldi had no original works for the transverse flute at hand when he was asked to produce for publication a collection of flute concertos. After all, Vivaldi had already produced concertante works that included transverse flute, and according to the most recent dating research, it is virtually certain that several of these works – the concertos RV 91 and RV 107 – were written as early as 1720.⁶⁶ Moreover, would not a composer of Vivaldi's caliber have been able to write six original flute concertos in a very short amount of time? The decision to assemble a collection of flute concertos, consisting largely of arrangements of works originally written for other solo instruments, could have resulted from reasons we know nothing about. Of the four concertos for chamber ensemble used for Op. 10, three – presumably found to be successful – were programmatic concertos (“La notte”, “La tempesta di mare”, and “Il gardellino”). This may have caused both composer and publisher to include them in the

new set. The Concerto in F Major, Op. 10, No. 5, which was originally for recorder, could have been included for similar reasons. The first movement of the work was based on the apparently very popular aria “Ti sento, sì ti sento”, which the composer reused a number of times. Had the concerto in question also become so much of a hit that he had to include it in his first printed collection of flute concertos?

The transverse flute, which Vivaldi calls *flauto traverso* or *flauto traversier*, is surely the last type of flute to have attracted the composer and to have caused him to write for it. We have, however, no definite idea of when this might have happened. It has been stated repeatedly that Vivaldi was encouraged to compose concertos for this new and soon-to-be popular instrument when he met Quantz in 1726, but we have no proof of this supposition. Quantz’s autobiography does not contain the least indication that he ever met Vivaldi. Now that several concertos for chamber ensemble in which the transverse flute is a leading instrument can be dated from the period around 1720, I am more inclined to assume that Vivaldi began composing works for the transverse flute far earlier than has been supposed. Nonetheless, his use of the instrument in concertos for solo chamber ensemble initially attracted the most attention.

The instrument Vivaldi calls *flauto* is the alto recorder in F, for which the composer wrote throughout his career. The first of the *Concerti con molti Istromenti*, first performed for the Saxon prince-electors by the Pietà orchestra in March of 1740, is scored for a pair of recorders. In view of this, we cannot define the period during which the two preserved solo concertos for this instrument, a Concerto in C Minor (RV 441) and the previously mentioned Concerto in F Major (RV 442), were composed. The beautiful, serious C minor concerto, which contains passages of flowing lyricism in the first movement *ritornellos*, is a work of considerable depth, containing all the marks of Vivaldi’s mature concerto style.

Scholars were initially unsure about what instrument was meant by the term *flautino*. We know today that Vivaldi used the word to denote a sopranino recorder, its range extending from the two-line to the middle of the four-line octave (the part was written an octave lower than it sounded). The effect of the instrument relies on timbre. Vivaldi wrote three concertos, still frequently performed today, for this instrument – RV 443, 444 (both in C major) and 445 (A minor). The use of the

flautino as an obbligato instrument in two operas from 1719 (*Tito Manlio*) and 1720 (*La verità in cimento*), may also offer a clue as to approximately when the three concertos were written.

Probably the most remarkable group of solo concertos is that of the thirty-nine concertos for bassoon (RV 466–504). The bassoon, an instrument for which no solo concerto had been written up to that point, thus became one of Vivaldi's main concerto instruments and inspired him to write a significant number of works of unusually high musical quality. Whatever the reason for the large number of bassoon concertos, there can be no doubt that this deep, resonant wind instrument enjoyed Vivaldi's special favor.

Two bassoon works are known to have been composed on commission: RV 496 for the Marquis de Morzin and RV 502 for the Venetian musician Gioseppino (Giuseppe) Biancardi. Two others (RV 473 and 500) were probably composed in Bohemia, though the vast majority of the bassoon concertos were written for the Pietà. We do not know the names of any bassoon teachers or of any bassoonists there, but de Broses mentioned the bassoon as one of the instruments played by the girls.

Exceptional aspects of the Vivaldi bassoon concertos include the uncommonly versatile and technically demanding solo parts that had to be played on an instrument with only two keys (ex. 35a and 35b).



Example 35a. Concerto in C Major (RV 472), first movement, bars 33 ff.



Example 35b. Concerto in C Major (RV 473), third movement, bars 101 ff.

Their expressive qualities include wide-ranging lyrical themes and virtuosic passage work and complex arpeggio figures and leaps covering the instrument's entire range (C–g¹). More important than the technical side is the overall musical quality of these generally highly progressive works. Though we have no definitive proof, the majority of these concertos seem to have been composed during the 1720s and 1730s. Many of the ritornellos, especially in the opening movements, display an attractive spontaneity of form and tone. Examples include the rousing, irresistibly dashing sequence section of the Allegro molto of the Concerto in A Minor (RV 497), the ebullient lyricism of the arpeggio-framed opening theme of the Concerto in E Minor (RV 484) (Allegro poco), and the sudden terpsichorean grace and unmistakably galant motifs of the Concerto in G Major (RV 493) (Allegro ma poco). Remarkable also is the Concerto in C Major (RV 475) (Allegro non molto), in which the dynamics change eighteen times in the sixteen bars of the ritornello, from *forte* to *piano* or *pianissimo*. Here *stravaganza* truly triumphs!

The bassoon concertos are also distinguished by a high degree of orchestral participation in the solo line. The ripieno strings often support the solo parts with neutral accompanying figures, though in many cases the solo is also underpinned by motivic fragments from one section of the ritornello or from other characteristic motifs. Musical example 36, taken from the opening allegro of the Concerto in D Minor (RV 481), illustrates a case in which the figuration in a solo part sequence-passage is linked to a lyrical motif in the violins. The substan-

The musical score for Example 36 consists of three staves. The top staff is for Violin I (VI. I) in treble clef, showing a melodic line with a long slur. The middle staff is for Violin II (VI. II) in treble clef, showing a fast, repetitive arpeggiated figure. The bottom staff is for Bassoon (B.c.) in bass clef, showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Example 36. Concerto in D Minor (RV 481), first movement, bars 20 ff.

tial thirty-nine-bar *Larghetto* middle movement (G minor) of this concerto merits special attention. It begins with a rugged unison motif, a gesture of tragic pathos, that at first gruffly rejects the delicate strings, which hesitantly enter in the third bar. In the solo after the *forte*, the violins accompany the expressive solo part almost continuously with the emphatic ritornello motif (ex. 37). In other movements the cantilenas or the figuration of the solo bassoon are accompanied by static chords in the high strings. The middle movements of RV 491 and RV 493 provide beautiful examples of this.

The image displays a musical score for Example 37, which is the second movement of the Concerto in D Minor (RV 481) by Antonio Vivaldi. The score is for bars 13 and following. The instruments involved are Violins I and II, Flute, Viola, and Bassoon. The key signature is D minor (two flats) and the time signature is common time (C). The score shows a rugged unison motif in the strings and a solo part in the bassoon. The bassoon part is marked with a forte (f) dynamic and features a series of eighth notes and triplets. The strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment with various note values and rests.

Example 37. Concerto in D Minor (RV 481), second movement, bars 13 ff.

Even though the bassoon concertos were written relatively late, they particularly refute the charge that the composer “ended in frivolity and caprice ... as a result of too much daily composing”⁶⁷ – that is, if one interprets this quote as meaning that attention to detail gave way to excessive routine.

In addition to solo concertos, that is, concertos for one solo instrument, strings, and continuo, Vivaldi consistently composed concertos for other forces, from double concertos to concertos with *many* solo in-

struments (*con molti Istromenti*). Not included are those types of works that the composer also called concertos but which lie outside the usual meaning for the term *instrumental concerto*: concertos for trio or quartet and string concertos without soloists.

I now begin discussing the slightly less than fifty concertos for two solo instruments and string orchestra, so-called double concertos, which constitute the largest group of concertos after the solo concertos. Although earlier literature often calls them *concerti grossi*, they really no more deserve the name than Vivaldi's concertos for three, four, or more solo instruments because they do not conform to the overall structure, to the types of movements, or, most importantly, to the kind of interaction between instruments as represented by the Corelli concerto grosso. Rather, they are related in all respects to the later solo concerto. Their having two (or more) solo instruments instead of one is purely incidental. They should therefore be called double concertos, as is the customary term for similar works by Bach and by other composers. Vivaldi did not devise a more precise name, calling them simply *concerto con due violini obligati*, *concerto con 2 trombe*, *concerto per 2 flauti traversieri*, and so on.

Vivaldi's first printed set of concertos, *L'estro armonico*, contains double concertos for two violins. The twenty-seven or twenty-eight concertos of this type constitute by far the largest group to have come down to us. Double concertos for other combinations of instruments exist singly or, at least, infrequently. Those once-occurring combinations include concertos for two cellos (RV 531), for two mandolins (RV 532), for two transverse flutes (RV 533), for two trumpets (RV 537), for viola d'amore and lute (RV 540), and for oboe and bassoon (RV 545); there are two concertos each for two horns (RV 538 and 539) and for violin and oboe (RV 543 and 548), and three each for two oboes (RV 534–536) and for violin and cello (RV 544, 546, and 547). There are presumably seven double concertos for violin and organ, at least two of which (RV 766 and RV 767) are arrangements.

Most of the double concertos were also probably written for the Ospedale della Pietà. The only works where this is dubious are the two concertos *con 2 corni da caccia*, because there seem to have been no horns at the Pietà when Vivaldi was at the institution. Recently, it has been conjectured "that Vivaldi wrote his two concertos for two *corni da caccia* for Count Sporck's horn players".⁶⁸ Count Sporck's name is especially

linked to the propagation of the instrument. The Concerto for Two Trumpets, on the other hand, could quite easily have been composed for two players at the Pietà, since trumpets are used in the oratorio *Juditha triumphans*, a work performed at the Ospedale.

In a certain sense the special forms of interaction between two equal solo instruments are givens. Primarily, there is interplay in dialogue form. This offers many different ways of concertizing and of forming nuance: the “double” or successive performance of a long solo section, the closely knit tossing back and forth of short motifs, or the joining of both instruments through imitation and through the exchanging of parts. Almost every movement contains more or less extended passages for the solo instruments in parallel thirds, whereas episodes in which roles are genuinely different are much rarer. The preferred type of interaction between the two instruments is exemplified as early as the concerto Op. 3, No. 8 (cf. ex. 8): a lyrical theme played by one instrument is surrounded by arpeggios in the other. The concertos for two violins RV 516 (last movement) and RV 529 (first movement) contain particularly effective passages of this type. The Double Concerto for Oboe and Bassoon (RV 545) is something of an exception, because the oboe almost always plays the melody while the bassoon is confined to accompanying.

The double concertos also vary widely in artistic quality. In a few cases, the timbre of an unusual combination of instruments seems to have been more important than other inherent musical and formal qualities. The Concerto for Two Mandolins and the Concerto for Two Transverse Flutes fit into this category as do several concertos with organ, in which only the monophonic upper part is concertante. Many concertos and, in particular, many movements are also uneven in musical substance and construction. In the first movement (Andante molto) of the Concerto in G Major for Oboe and Bassoon, for example, the unimaginative solo episodes, which leave out the ripieno completely, do not live up to the magnificent lyricism of the ritornello.

The double concertos for violin include a large group of highly virtuosic works. Included among these works are the four concertos in C major (RV 505–508), the “Dresden” Concerto in A Major (RV 521), and the far more rewarding concertos in D major (RV 511) and B-flat major (RV 529). The great Concerto in E-flat Major (RV 515) is a

work of real substance, with a first movement introduced by a ritornello lasting twenty-six and a half measures of 4/4 time and an extraordinarily imaginative solo part in all movements. Of the shorter works, the beautiful Concerto in C Minor (RV 509) has an especially impressive and individual but restrained tone in its lyrical ritornello (*Allegro ma poco e cantabile*). The Concerto in G Minor (RV 517), the double concertos for two oboes in D minor and A minor (RV 535 and 536), and the Concerto in C Minor (RV 510), a strikingly small-scale piece with contrapuntal ritornellos in both outer movements, are probably among the earliest of the double concertos.

Among the concertos that display great originality in form and that stand out because of their timbre are the Concerto in B-flat Major for Violin and Cello (RV 547) and the later Concerto in D Minor for Viola d'Amore and Lute (RV 540). The generally most noteworthy double concerto (Vivaldi's only one for two cellos) is his Concerto for Two Cellos in G Minor (RV 531). In this work the dark color of the two deep-toned instruments perfectly matches the serious expression, which is devoid of all virtuosity. The most striking aspect of the first movement (*Allegro*) is the wholly individual organizational approach that Vivaldi took in the opening. The two cellos imitate each other at a distance of one bar; they then play for the rest of the movement at an interval of a third, and play eight bars of figuration over the continuo's G minor harmony. After a cadenza, the ripieno orchestra enters for the first time in bar 10, preparing a sequence dialogue between the two solo instruments. The first real tutti is not reached until bar 19. The largo middle movement (also in G minor), which thrives on the expressive melody and tonal beauty of the two solo instruments playing a duet over the continuo, is followed by a last movement that has a confusing, irritating, indeed oppressive expression and tone. It is hard to describe the mood established by the brittle, unwieldy notes of the syncopated ritornello theme – probably a result of the lower parts rather mechanically moving in twelfths and in thirds (ex. 38). The entire fifteen-bar ritornello consists of nothing more than these four bars repeated sequentially three times and a three-bar epilogue that adheres closely to this motif – not a note to soften the restless, fearful quality of the mood. To a certain extent, a slight easing does happen in the solos, yet the beginning of the last solo episode, with its whirring, mysterious *concitato* motifs

Allegro

Example 38. Concerto in G Minor (RV 531), third movement.

in the ripieno strings interrupting the solo one bar at a time, impressively shows the extent to which the expressive world of the ritornello affects the movement as a whole. The movement is characterized by an aura of ambivalence and subtlety rather than by clear, unambiguous effects.

Concertos for Chamber Ensemble and Ripieno Concertos

If the Vivaldi concerto movement has correctly been recognized as a “prototype”,⁶⁹ this appellation applies first and foremost to his own chamber music. However, if we view the influence of the concerto and the concerto movement as restricted solely to the formal aspect, the recognition that the ritornello process spread into other genres would be far too limited. The attraction of the concerto and the concerto movement was more than structural; it consisted of other elements of musical language and of general formal aspects – in the final analysis, what could be described as the music’s basic posture. Such new elements are largely absent in the first printed sets and, generally, in the composer’s printed chamber music; in this sense, they are genuine sonatas. In a considerable portion of the almost fifty solo and trio sonatas that have come down to us in manuscript, a tendency is displayed of imbuing the sonata with more and more concerto elements. This began with the type of themes and the occasionally concertante, virtuosic figuration and extended to correspondences in formal structure, in both overall form (the division into three movements: fast – slow – fast) and struc-

ture of individual allegro movements. Some of the manuscript trio sonatas are especially quite close to concerto form, including the four three-movement sonatas for two violins and continuo RV 68, 70, 71, and 77⁷⁰ as well as (though with considerable variation) the works for two different melody instruments and continuo: the two sonatas for violin, lute, and continuo (RV 82 and 85), composed for Count Wrtby; the Sonata for Violin, Cello, and Continuo in C Minor (RV 83), the Sonata for Recorder, Bassoon, and Continuo in A Minor (RV 86), and especially the Sonata (? – its Dresden manuscript contains no genre name) for Transverse Flute, Violin, and Continuo in D Major (RV 84). In this three-movement composition both fast outer movements have a clear solo concerto form with readily identifiable ritornellos and episodes.

Due to the processes I have described, Vivaldi also wrote chamber music that he called concertos: three-movement works in the concerto style that apply the basic stylistic elements to pure chamber music ensembles, namely, the interplay of tutti and solo as found in the instrumental concerto. In such works, the tutti sections are performed by strings with several players to a part. The resulting ensemble consists of all players from among the small group of soloists. These works are, unfortunately, often called by the ambiguous term *chamber concerto*, though it would be more precise to refer to them as concertos for chamber ensemble or concertos without ripieno.

All but one of the almost twenty works in this group (RV 87–108) are trios or quartets, that is, compositions with three or four obbligato instruments and basso continuo. It would seem that the composer used the term *concerto* for works with three or four parts, though not for compositions for two instruments and continuo. The trio and quartet concertos are joined by the Concerto in F Major (RV 97), a work which is an exception as regards the number and type of instruments used. It is a sextet consisting of a viola d'amore, two horns and oboes, and bassoon. Among these concertos, the most common scoring is for woodwinds and strings, while trios for flute, violin, and bassoon (five concertos) and quartets for flute, oboe, violin, and bassoon (nine concertos) are in a certain sense standard trio or quartet scorings. Eight of the flute parts are for recorder, and twelve are for transverse flute. The combination of “contrasting instrumental sounds” creates “both colorful tuttis and variety of sound among the solos”.⁷¹

The relative prominence of instruments may vary even while the ensemble stays the same. While there are compositions in which all instruments are treated roughly as equals, in others just one stands out as soloist. This view applies to the *Concerto con 2 Violini, Leuto e Basso* (RV 93), in which the solo lute clearly dominates over the violins, which always play as the tutti. It also applies to the four quartet concertos that the composer later recast as true solo concertos for transverse flute and string ripieno, including them in Op. 10 (RV 90 / RV 428, “Il gardellino”, RV 98 / RV 433, “La tempesta di mare”, RV 101 / RV 437, RV 104 / RV 439 “La notte”). In their original versions these were virtually concertos for flute with three-part chamber ensemble. It goes almost without saying that there are differences in movement structure compared to regular solo concerto movements. For example, there is a greater use of solo elements early in the opening ritornello and an increased participation of the three accompanying instruments, singly and together, in the solo episodes.

The genuine trios and quartets are more interesting from a historical point of view because all participating instruments function in both tutti and solos. These are the first works in which the principle of virtuosic solo playing, the concerto component, was fully integrated with the idea of chamber music, implying equality of players. Yet the truly uncommon aspect of these concertos, with respect to traditional trio sonata writing, is that they represent “a new kind of chamber music”.⁷² Unlike the traditional type of trio sonata, these concertos are based on a homophonie concept, and the *a tre* writing gives way to a more differentiated and highly contrasted interaction among the instruments. On the one hand, there are extended solo sections for individual instruments – occasional sections in which the concerto aspect, the virtuosic display of solo performance, seems to replace true ensemble playing. This is shown especially well in the great violin solos of the D major concertos (RV 92 and 94). There also are intermediate textures, such as in the closing movement (Allegro non molto) of the concerto RV 91 (ex.39).

The performance of a passage such as this, with its distribution of thematic fragments among the instruments and with its creation of an almost pointillistic line, opens up whole new aspects of instrumental ensemble playing – a virtuosic dimension. The demands made on the



Example 39. Concerto in D Major (RV 91), third movement, bars 7 ff.

performers not only presuppose perfect command of their instruments, but call for a professional approach to chamber music performance as well.

The slow middle movements are largely preoccupied with instrumental color. This was already the case for the movements in which two upper voices of different instrumental color played a duet, such as in a trio sonata, though it was especially the situation for those in which the melody was in the flute part, surrounded by delicate figuration by one or more other instruments. The Concerto in D Major (RV 94) and the lovely C minor middle movement (*Largo cantabile*) of the Concerto in C Major (RV 88) are particularly effective examples. I have already pointed out the tonal magic of the “Sonno” movement of the “La notte” Concerto.

Although we must assume that the works were written over an extended period of time – for example, the “Dresden” Trio in D Minor (RV 96) was probably written relatively early – without doubt the majority of the concertos for chamber ensemble belong to the composer’s mature period. Recently, two of the works that belong to the group of “genuine” trio sonata and quartet concertos and which demonstrate particularly advanced forms of chamber music ensemble (RV 91 and 107) have been dated with great certainty to around 1720.⁷³ These works were composed first and foremost for the Pietà, though naturally the established date would include the possibility of their having been written for the virtuosos of the Mantuan court orchestra.

As far as we can determine, none of Vivaldi’s Italian contemporaries matched him in transferring the concerto form principle to ensembles. On the other hand, one can immediately think of Johann Sebastian Bach, whose preludes for organ or harpsichord in ritornello

form such as the “Italian” Concerto and the *Concerto a due cembali* in C Major (BWV 1061a) belong among works of this type, as does his Sonata in G Minor for Viola da Gamba (BWV 1029). The concertos of Georg Philipp Telemann’s *Quadri* (for “Violino, Flauto Traversiere, Viola di Gamba o Violoncello e Fondamento”, nos. 1 and 2 of the so-called Twelve “Paris” Quartets, first published in 1730) are based on a conception of chamber music much like Vivaldi’s. In neither of these cases, however, is there evidence of imitation of Vivaldi’s concertos for chamber ensemble.

In addition to the concertos for one or more solo instruments with orchestra and the concertos for chamber ensemble, Vivaldi wrote a third group of concertos: concertos without solo instruments. For these works, the use of the term *concerti ripieni* (ripieno concertos) has become accepted. This designation was employed by Vivaldi for several of these works without soloists – concertos for ripieno only in which each part is played by a number of string instruments. According to present-day knowledge, the composer wrote about forty-five of these string concertos, the largest group of such works composed by a single composer. It is impossible to ascertain an exact figure because, among other reasons, a sharp distinction was not always made between works called *sinfonia* and a number of other works that have come down to us under different names. This may be due in part to the activity of copyists (such as in the case of RV 111 and 146), though in at least two instances (RV 134 and 140), Vivaldi used different titles for the same work, no doubt dictated by the occasion on which the pieces were played. Performed by itself as an autonomous work, a string composition without solo was called a concerto, while, in theory at least, the composer designated it a *sinfonia* when it served as the instrumental introduction to a vocal work (opera, oratorio, or serenata). We must further take into account that a number of works that have come down to us in other than autograph form but that are attributed to Vivaldi, are either dubious or most likely not by him. Most of the compositions in question are called *sinfonias*.⁷⁴

Why does a composition for string orchestra without solo parts bear the title “concerto”? The answer is to be found in the history of the concerto concept. Initially, the concept did not include the meaning of concertizing, that is, the interchange between different instruments and in particular the featuring of one or more soloists. Concertos that used

concertizing did not become a normative genre until the birth and consolidation of the instrumental concerto. In this respect, the first half of the eighteenth century represents a transition: while on the one hand, the word *concerto* had become a genre term (for the instrumental concerto), on the other hand, it also continued to be used for works that contained no concertante elements. In other words, a practice was continued in which “the term was used to denote instrumental ensemble music in general”.⁷⁵ The adjective *ripieno*, which Vivaldi used in the title of some of his string concertos, suggests that this older use of the term concerto as a work without soloists needed to be qualified as such. The term *concerto* did not necessarily imply interchange of tutti and solo, so the works under discussion were not always linked to the concerto form, either in their overall structure, or, particularly, in the form of their allegro movements. In concertos without soloists written by other composers, deviations from the form of the entire work and of individual movements tend to be striking. However, and Vivaldi is included here, the consistent use of three movements and of allegro movements that are very close to a concerto movement should not automatically be taken as indicating an offshoot of the solo concerto. No one will deny that Vivaldi’s *concerto ripieno* is closely related to the solo concerto, yet the statement that Vivaldi “based his concertos without soloists on the design which he had found successful in the solo concertos”,⁷⁶ can be questioned on a number of aspects. On the one hand, basic elements of the structure of the Vivaldi *concerto ripieno* movement already existed in Torelli’s and Albinoni’s string concertos without soloists, which were written prior to the creation of the mature solo concerto form. On the other hand, the allegro movement of the ripieno concerto is distinctly different from the ritornello form of the solo concerto movement. Using the terms *ritornello* and *ritornello form* assumes that there is a second motivic, structural, and/or tonal level, outside the parts of the movement that are designated as ritornellos – one which is *not* a ritornello. The *concerto ripieno* movement and the sinfonia movement do not, however, fulfill this condition because all musical events unfold along a unified structural level. These movements suggest ritornello form because they repeat – in more or less modified form – a complex musical unit consisting of a number of motivic groups (the ritornello in a solo concerto movement) that is played at the beginning of the movement and in which one finds modulations to various keys.

Yet the Vivaldi *concerto ripieno* movement is neither historically nor objectively a solo concerto movement minus solo episodes, rather it is a type of movement with its own genesis and prehistory. It is one of the two principal forms that arose in Italy around 1700 and that continued afterward in the orchestral allegro with free, non-fugal writing. (The other main form was that of the allegro movement, which consisted of two repeated sections, after the model of the suite and the old sonata movement, and which became the main, basic unit of the evolving sonata-allegro form).

If, as in eighteenth-century music theory, we use the term *period* to designate the structural units of the *concerto ripieno* movement, one of the main differences between these periods and concerto movement ritornellos is that in the vast majority of cases, the periods modulate. This already applies to the opening period, which corresponds in its basic structure to the opening ritornello of the concerto movement and closes in the dominant or a parallel key instead of in the home key, that is, it modulates to the key in which the second period begins, again with the opening theme of the first. In general, there are three to five periods (movements with more than three periods frequently tend to run through the cadential caesura between the middle periods, thus breaking up the more or less uniform period arrangement inherent in the movement paradigm). As a result, these movements also tend to be tripartite and frequently contain considerable development within the movement. In many movements the only genuine caesura takes place just before the beginning of the final period, accentuating the reprise effect through the use of the home key.

The concerto for strings without soloists, which is usually labeled *Concerto a quattro* in printed collections, was quite popular in Italy around 1700. Torelli's set of concertos *Sei sinfonie a tre e sei concerti a quattro*, Op. 5, is considered the first important work in the genre. Following a rise in the number of printed collections between about 1700 and 1715 (including works by such composers as Torelli, Albinoni, Giulio and Luigi Taglietti, Albicastro, Gentili, and Dall'Abaco), the genre began to fade around 1720. We may therefore be tempted to assume that Vivaldi's string concertos were also early works, but there are a number of indications to the contrary – indications that Vivaldi wrote most of these compositions during his middle and late years. On the evidence of

sources for a number of works, it can be determined that RV 121, 138, and 160 were written between 1718 and 1720, RV 120 and 141 between 1727 and 1728, and RV 155 and 163 during 1730. The only Vivaldi ripieno concerto (RV 124) to have appeared in print was issued as part of Op. 12 in 1729, and if a Paris manuscript with twelve Vivaldi ripieno concertos can be linked to Count Languet, the French envoy to Venice, it is likely that these works also were composed during the mid-1720s.⁷⁷ Last but not least, stylistic evidence indicates that Vivaldi's *concerti ripieni* represent a late stage in the relatively short history of the genre.

With its cyclical structure the ripieno concerto was as unified as any of Vivaldi's other concertos. Almost all his ripieno concertos are in three movements and therefore represent the form that led to the main Italian orchestral music of the period. Yet there is a great deal of variation within this three-movement form, revealing distinctly different concepts of these concertos. One group consists of about twelve works, modest both in their dimensions and in their level of difficulty: compact pieces typically no more than five minutes in length, generally in a light, pleasant tone, and with a quite unpretentious structure. In many cases the outer movements are played by the first and second violins in unison, and there is no development of motifs. The opening movements are striking in both their use of similar motifs and avoidance of contrasts; indeed, in a few cases (RV 109, 127, 150, and 151) they are virtually monomotivic. A good example may be found in the opening movement (Presto) of the Concerto "alla rustica" (RV 151), with its perpetual triplet motion. Most middle movements are chordal, having transitional largos or adagios, while final movements are generally short, with two repeats. These often quite charming, "small" concertos have been aptly described as "orchestral etudes".⁷⁸ We must, of course, assume that they were written as show pieces for the Pietà orchestra.

The opposite of the "small" concerto is the numerically equal group of ripieno concertos, which are set apart by their considerable use of contrapuntal forms and textures. Not only do most of these works contain a fugai movement, but the other movements are also stylistically complex. Their expression is largely serious and deliberate, as can be seen from the preponderance of minor keys: four of the works are in G minor (RV 152, 153, 156, and 157), three are in C minor

(RV 118, 119, and 120), and one each is in D minor (RV 128), E minor (RV 134), and F minor (RV 143). Only three of this group are in a major key: RV 114 (C major), and RV 123 and 124 (D major).

These features lend each work considerable esthetic weight, and each composition has its own character. In saying this, I am referring primarily to the variability of structure in the sense that every movement in the three-movement cycle has a different pattern and character. The following descriptions are intended to provide illustrations of these features:

1. Concerto in C Major (RV 114): the outer movements are a festive, motivically rich *concerto ripieno* movement (Allegro 4/4, 72 bars) and an even longer Ciaccona (4/4, 127 bars). Two bars of adagio consisting of only three chords take the place of a middle movement, ending on a dominant half cadence – no doubt to be used for cadenza-like embellishment.

2. Concerto in D Major (RV 124): an especially rich *concerto ripieno* movement (Allegro 4/4, 68 bars) is followed by a freely rhapsodic grave middle movement and a fifty-three-bar (4/4) Allegro fugue.

3. Concerto in D Minor (RV 128): the opening movement (Allegro non molto, 4/4, 61 bars) is dominated by sensitive melody; the following Largo (4/4, 13 bars) is an unusual type of middle movement, having a strict rhythmic ostinato. The final movement (Allegro 4/4, 48 bars) uses fugai imitation for the theme's beginning only, rather than throughout.

4. Concerto in F Minor (RV.143); an extended fugue (Allegro 4/4, 70 bars) is followed by an expressive eight-bar adagio section that is full of suspensions, whereas the last movement is a large three-part movement with repeats (3/8, 36  48 bars).

5. Concerto in G Minor (RV 157): a strict chaconne (Allegro 4/4, 51 bars) is followed by a largo movement based on imitation (3/4, 26 bars). The last movement is an extended, dynamic *concerto ripieno* movement (Allegro 4/4, 63 bars).

The most unusual feature of this type of concerto is the central role played by the fugue. The above-mentioned group of works contains no fewer than eight allegro fugues, either in first movements

(RV 119, 134, and 143) or third movements (RV 120, 123, 124, 152, and 153). If we compare Vivaldi's use of this aspect to that in the string concertos of other Italian composers, we find that fugues were used only by a somewhat older generation and in general only in works following the four-movement *sonata da Mesa* model, whereas they were almost entirely absent in the *concerti a quattro* of Vivaldi's generation. In any case, Vivaldi was apparently the only musician of rank in his generation who, around 1720 – 1730, wrote modern three-movement orchestral works that had a large number of fugai movements. The structure of the fugues is also remarkable; it largely follows the model of the (non-fugal) *concerto ripieno* movement, with the succession of periods in different keys, each shift in key coinciding with the beginning of a new fugai exposition.

The majority of these *concerto ripieno* fugues are not only exciting musically but also reveal considerable structural mastery. The extended themeless sections, which occasionally display *moti vie* elaboration pointing to the compositional techniques of classicism, are by no means negligible. In the fugue of the Concerto in F Minor (RV 143) for example (ex. 40), a newly introduced episode motif moves through all parts in imitation. An excerpt from the closing fugue of the Concerto in C Minor (RV 120) (ex. 41) shows the end of the first episode and the beginning of the second development at bar 17 in which the contrapuntal motif b is passed through all the parts (ultimately in a freely varied form). In the preceding episode this motif led twice to a characteristic submotif of fugue theme a.



Example 40. Concerto in F Minor (RV 143), first movement, bars 9 ff.



Example 41. Concerto in C Minor (RV 120), third movement, bars 14 ff.

With but one exception (RV 143), all Vivaldi's final movement fugues are stretched by more or less extended dominant pedal points. These points constitute the last part of the usually quite extensive free final sections in which motifs of the fugue theme, of the counter subjects, and of the episode are extensively developed by imitation and by sequence. The pedal point section of the E minor fugue from RV 134 is particularly concentrated.

In Vivaldi's *concerto ripieno* fugues, elements of traditional contrapuntal style are permeated by aspects that embody the most advanced compositional style of the time (as the fugue themes themselves show). These include large-scale harmonic plans; intense movement created by figuration, by counterpoint, and by episode motifs; and new forms of motivic development. These fugues, then, are by no means nostalgic, old-fashioned compositions, but are works that bring together all

Vivaldi's stylistic and structural means.

The *small* and the *contrapuntal* concertos mentioned above are the two types on either side of the ripieno concertos. A third one is represented by the previously discussed opera sinfonia. Within these types are variants, and a considerable number of works do not fit into any of these basic types. The few works with descriptive titles occupy a certain special position: the Concerto “madrigalesco” (RV 129), the Concerto in B-flat Major, “La conca” (RV 163), and the two “Sepolcro” compositions (RV 130 and RV 169) (a sonata and the Sinfonia “al Santo Sepolcro”). The Concerto “alla rustica” (RV 151) conforms perfectly to criteria that identify it as among the “small” concerto group.

The two Sepolcro works, both of which consist of only two movements (slow – fast), belong to the primarily seventeenth-century ensemble sonata for church use (*da chiesa*). The Sinfonia in B Minor (RV 169) is a work of high artistic worth that expresses the basic effect of pain and mourning using a densely contrapuntal, dissonant language. Closely related to these two works is the Concerto “madrigalesco” in D Minor with four movements: its expressive stance and archaic style mark it unmistakably as a composition also intended for church performance.

The concerto called “Conca”, for which the title has only recently been deciphered,⁷⁹ belongs to an entirely different domain. The Italian word means *trough*, *basin*, *container*, or *shell*, though in this specific instance it signifies a conch horn (also called conch trumpet), a musical and military instrument made largely from a conch shell. The instrument's calls (limited to a few notes) determined the themes of the “Conca” concerto (mostly a falling octave motif), which is not only a highly original, imaginative, and unique work, but one with many fascinating details. It is one of the works written on Bohemian paper, and it is possible that the idea for the work came from Bohemia, where the conch horn was quite popular.⁸⁰

Vivaldi's ripieno concertos partly owe both their identity and specific place in the evolution of orchestral music to the fact that the features and stylistic elements of a number of genres and traditions came together and were superimposed. These are: the *concerto a quattro*; the older, contrapuntal *da chiesa* ensemble sonata; the solo concerto; and, increasingly, the opera sinfonia. If the evolution of the preclassical symphony has been seen all too exclusively as the emancipation of the Italian opera sinfonia, we can right this somewhat by pointing to this

second line of development through the string concerto. A number of specific qualities of the orchestral symphony are much more in evidence in the string concerto than in the contemporary opera sinfonia: a balanced overall form with greater equality of the movements; a high degree of technical writing; and an openness to depicting all affects. Vivaldi's ripieno concertos (unlike his opera sinfonias) demonstrate this already by the use of such a wide variety of keys.

The works in which Vivaldi most closely approached the pre- and early classical symphony resulted from his bringing together elements of the *concerto ripieno* with those of the opera sinfonia. Apparently, the tendency was permanent and was the reason why, despite the existence of two clearly distinct genres, the line between *concerto ripieno* and opera sinfonia was not rigid. A work as stylistically advanced as the Concerto in A Major (RV 158) represents a synthesis – not because this concerto ripieno could also be played as an opera sinfonia, but because infusing the *concerto ripieno* with elements of the opera sinfonia yielded what was essentially a new genre, one which was much closer to the symphony of mid-century than to the *concerto a quattro* from the beginning of the century. The first movement (Allegro molto 4/4, 72 bars – ex. 42) is a

Allegro molto

The musical score is for the first movement of Vivaldi's Concerto in A Major (RV 158). It is written for Violins I and II (VI. I and VI. II) in 4/4 time, key of A major (two sharps). The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto'. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the initial melodic lines for both violins. The second system features rapid sixteenth-note passages in both parts. The third system continues with similar rapid passages, including a piano (p) dynamic marking in the second staff.

Example 42. Concerto in A Major (RV 158), first movement.

concerto ripieno movement in which the themes and the “brio of the string writing ... are strongly reminiscent of Mozart’s early symphonic style”.⁸¹ The Andante molto (2/4, 42 bars) is a refined, highly expressive variant of the serenade-like, cantabile middle movement, which derives from the opera sinfonia. The final Allegro is a relatively large movement in repeated sections (34 :|||: 60 bars, 2/4), remarkably close to the early sonata movement in its pronounced three-part form.

Cantatas and Serenatas

When Eugen Schmitz published his *Geschichte der weltlichen Solokantate* (History of the Secular Solo Cantata) in 1914, only “about a dozen”⁸² Vivaldi cantatas were known. The compositions in question – the ten works contained in the Dresden library – represent the largest single body of Vivaldi solo cantatas outside the Turin collection.⁸³ With the discovery of the Turin manuscripts, the number of surviving Vivaldi cantatas increased to a respectable thirty-nine (RV 649 – 686, RV 753, and RV 796), yet Schmitz’s statement that, like Albinoni, Vivaldi “only wrote solo cantatas in his spare time” is essentially true.⁸⁴ To be sure, quantity is not the only yardstick by which to judge these works, though when a composer as prolific as Vivaldi produced fewer works than his contemporaries, we may conclude that the genre was of lesser importance to him. After all, Alessandro Scarlatti, the leading Italian master in this type of work, wrote well over 600 solo cantatas, and the young Handel must have written considerably more cantatas during his three years in Italy than Vivaldi wrote during his entire career.

Vivaldi’s biography provides the answer to this neglect. The secular solo cantata was a genre favored by aristocratic and court circles, academies, and other artistic-intellectual circles. Conversely, it was not cultivated by the musical institutions of Venice where Vivaldi concentrated his activities: the Ospedale della Pietà and the theater. The composer therefore only turned to the genre for special occasions and for extraordinary commissions. The one exception to this pattern came during his years at the court in Mantua, for which he probably wrote the major part of his cantatas. To date, about one-quarter of the works have been dated between 1718 and 1720, including cantatas in praise of

both Prince Philipp of Hesse-Darmstadt (“Qual in pioggia dorata”, RV 686) and of the newly appointed bishop of Mantua, Monsignor di Bagno (“O mie porpore più belle”, RV 685; O my fairest purple robes). Several other cantatas were written toward the end of the 1720s, although the recipient of these works has yet to be determined. We also do not know the extent to which the cantatas found in Dresden (most of which are complete or partial autographs) are “Dresden” works, that is, whether they were commissioned and intended for the Saxon electoral court.

The thirty-nine Vivaldi cantatas that we know of today and which are exclusively for either solo soprano (twenty-seven) and solo contralto (twelve), are stylistically and formally wholly within the parameters of the cantata, the leading vocal chamber music genre of the early eighteenth century. The texts with their constant complaints and protestations of love, the musical forces used, and the basic formal structure conform to the period standards. About half of the cantatas consist of two arias linked by a recitative, the others are made up of two recitative-aria pairs. No fewer than thirty of the works are purely basso continuo cantatas written for voice and continuo. The remaining nine are *con Istromenti*, mostly strings, occasionally with an obbligato instrument (“All’ombra di sospetto”, RV 678, with transverse flute; “Lungi dal vago”, RV 680, with violin). The only work to add a pair of horns to the strings (a gesture indicating the music’s official character) is the contralto cantata “Qual in pioggia dorata”, written in honor of the governor of Mantua. (Werner Braun believes that the forces for which a cantata was written determine whether it is “private” or “official” chamber music; “The cantatas *con strumenti* are full-bodied official chamber music intended for a large audience”, while the basso continuo cantatas are “private chamber music ... quieter and more subtle, that is, for a small number of listeners”.)⁸⁵

The authorship of the vast majority of Italian cantata texts is unknown, though it is for opera librettos. We know the name of only one of Vivaldi’s cantata librettists. The writers of the stereotyped pastoral verse and flowery similes were largely local *letterati*. The baroque chamber cantata therefore clearly belongs to the century-old tradition of the Italian madrigal in which the amorous poetry is dominated by similar topoi. A translation of the text to “Amor hai vinto”, which Vivaldi set twice (RV 651 and RV 683), illustrates the predominant type of cantata

poetry and reveals the extent to which librettists endeavored to give composers a helping hand by writing images easily translatable into musical terms:

Recitative (I)

Love, you have won, you have won. Here is my breast
Pierced by your arrows; who shall now sustain
My soul abandoned to pain?
I feel my blood flow cold
In every vein,
And only pain and suffering keep me alive.
My heart beats in my breast because of fatal blows.
Cruel Clori, how long
Shall your harsh severity last?

Aria (I)

I stagger from pain to pain
Like a tiny ship tossed
From one wave to the next.
Lightning and thunder fill the sky,
The sea rages,
It sees neither port nor shore,
It knows not where to land.
I stagger ...

Recitative (II)

In what strange, confused
Muddle of thoughts
Does my mind spin?
Now k is calm, now angry
And cannot decide where to find a hold.

O God, it seeks to turn
Now to stone, now to dust!
Yet why, of what do you complain,

Unbelieving, faithless heart, of what?
 Why do you complain? Alas! Do you not know
 That your port, your shore, lies in Clori's breast?

Aria (II)

When my dearly beloved
 Gazes upon me
 I no longer feel torment;
 Then I can live again.
 My soul fears no danger,
 Feels no suffering and no pain
 And comes to rest like the sea
 When the wind has died down.
 When my dearly beloved ...

The lines "*Gelido in ogni vena / scorrer mi sento il sangue*" (I feel my blood flow cold / In every vein) reveal an interesting aspect of how these texts were written: they are taken verbatim from the *Siroe* aria by Metastasio that begins with the same words. The Metastasio libretto in question was published and became known in Venice in 1726, which is a valuable indication of the earliest possible date for the two cantatas. The aria texts of another cantata ("T'intendo sì mio cor", RV 668) are taken from Metastasio's frequently set cantata "Amor timido" (Timid Love).

The "Amor hai vinto" cantatas are both of high musical quality, the version for alto *con Istromenti* (RV 683) as expected being richer in color than the setting for soprano and continuo (RV 651). One of the high points of the contralto cantata is the first aria (E minor, Larghetto andante), which follows the introductory *secco* recitative. It compellingly expresses the words "Passo di pena in pena" (I stagger from pain to pain) with parlando musical diction and delicate contrapuntal lines (ex. 43). The text of the second recitative is set as *recitativo accompagnato* with abrupt changes in tempo and in accompanying motifs and with the grand gestures of the effects of operatic accompanied recitative. The closing allegro aria (C major) is imbued with feelings of lighthearted joy.

The contralto cantata with strings "Cessate omai cessate" (Cease, oh cease) (RV 684) is also a musically inspired piece. It has two *accompagnato* recitatives and two great da capo arias: the first (G minor,

miglia in ciel” (RV 667), or “Pianti, sospiri” (RV 676), the composer must have had virtuosos of both sexes (including castrati) at his disposal, each equally able to sing bravura coloraturas and leaps of twelfths or even two octaves. The voice range required in the soprano cantata “Sorge vermiglia” is from g to b^2 ; in “Geme l’onda” and in “Par che tardo” (RV 662) there are many c^3 s and even d^3 s.

The alto cantata “Piango, gemo, sospiro e peno” (RV 675) merits our special attention (ex. 44). In an essay published in 1966, Bernhard Paumgartner remarked that the pain-filled opening aria of this cantata is “based on the same *ciacona* theme of a descending chromatic fourth”⁸⁶ found at the center of the “Crucifixus” in Bach’s B Minor Mass, which in turn goes back to the opening chorus of the cantata “Weinen, Klagen. Sorgen, Zagen” (BWV 12) that Bach composed in Weimar in 1714. “The four-bar theme”, Paumgartner writes “which is no less strict than Bach’s, appears no less than eighteen times in the course of the seventy-five-bar movement”. He maintains that the thematic relationship is “incontrovertible proof” of Bach’s “rapport with the Italian master’s vocal writing” in “deriving a strongly pietistic sacred aria from a love song in a secular Italian cantata”.⁸⁷ Given the general use of this musical symbol to represent pain, one must doubt this sweeping conclusion, yet, even if there is no proof of direct influence of Vivaldi’s aria on Bach’s cantata chorus (indeed it is still uncertain whether Vivaldi’s cantata was written as early as 1714), the correspondence of music and text is striking.

B.c.

Alt
A1

Pian - - go, ge - mo, so - spi - ro, e - pe - no

B.c.

Example 44. “Piango, gemo, sospiro e peno” (RV 675).

Though *cantata* is now an almost catch-all term used to indicate a wide variety of vocal compositions, the only compositions given this name in Italy during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries

were secular solo vocal pieces of the kind just described above. Another group of Vivaldi's vocal works, which today's listeners would also call secular cantatas (as a result of Bach's compositions of this type), were called *serenatas* in Vivaldi's time. These were festive works or works of praise written to celebrate particular occasions and which played a major role in baroque musical culture. These works are unlike the intimate chamber cantata, since not only are they longer and richer in scoring (usually with three to six vocal soloists and an orchestral ensemble) but they are also more dramatic. In a certain sense they occupy "the middle ground between cantata and opera".⁸⁸ *Dramma per musica*, Bach's preferred term for his festive vocal works (today we call them cantatas), more aptly describes the genre's dramatic character.

The "plot" involving the characters in a serenata was, however, not based on dramatic action. It usually involved disputes between allegorical or mythological figures and culminated in a collective song praising the celebrated person or event for which the work was written. We are unable to determine the extent to which serenatas were staged, yet there is considerable proof they were performed in costume. Performance preferably took place outside in the evening and it takes little imagination to visualize Venice as the ideal backdrop for such performances, for which special stages were sometimes erected on the Grand Canal or on the lagoon. Aquatic performances of serenatas were especially popular, as proved by the magnificent staging in the autumn of 1719 of Johann David Heinichen's serenata *Diana sull'Elba* at a court festivity in Dresden. "There is no better place", Johann Mattheson wrote, "to hear such a serenata than on the water when the air is calm".⁸⁹

We are currently aware of eight Vivaldi serenatas (RV 687–694), although the music of only three of them has been preserved. Of two of the works only the title survives: the previously mentioned serenata for the name day of Emperor Charles VI entitled "Le gare della Giustizia e della Pace" (The Contests between Justice and Peace) (RV 691), probably composed between 1720 and 1723, and an *egloga pescatoria* (fisherman's eclogue) called "Il Mopso" (RV 691), which was performed at the Ospedale della Pietà during Carnival of 1738 in honor of Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria. The dedicatee of the work, a brother of Elector Karl Albrecht (Albert) of Bavaria and later Emperor Charles VII, is said to have praised the work highly and honored the composer with gifts.

The earliest known Vivaldi serenata dates from 1708.⁹⁰ The work, of which only one copy of the libretto has been preserved, was called “Le gare del dovere” (The Contests of Duty) (RV 688) and was performed in July 1708 on the occasion of Francesco Querini leaving the post of *podestà* (mayor) of Rovigo. In the two-part composition, which consists of twenty self-contained numbers, we meet the allegorical figures of Night, Rovigo, Time, The River Adige, and Fame; the conclusion to part one is sung by a chorus of The People. Of special interest is the date this work was written, because we now know that five years before composing his first opera, Vivaldi wrote a work that “while not itself an opera, contained all the essential musical ingredients of one”.⁹¹

Six of the eight serenatas were written between about 1718 and 1727, though we know the dates of performance for only three. These are the birthday serenata “a quattro voci” (beginning “Questa Eurilla gentil”, RV 692) for Prince Philipp of Hesse-Darmstadt at Mantua on 31 July 1726, and the two festive works Vivaldi wrote in 1725 and 1727 for September festivities at the French embassy in Venice. As I have previously mentioned, the festivities were the wedding of King Louis XV and the births of twin French princesses. In the wedding serenata (consisting of one part with eleven numbers) the cast is comprised of Glory, the god of marriage (contralto), and Hymen (soprano); in the “twins” cantata (“L’unione della Pace e di Marte”, RV 694) the characters are Apollo, Mars, and Lucinda, the goddess of childbirth (fig. 35). Of the two, only the wedding serenata has come down to us, in an autograph score without title page or sinfonia.

To date there is no reliable information establishing the date of composition, the patronage, or the place of performance of the two other serenatas. Michael Talbot, on the basis of the score, identified Monsieur le Marquis du Toureil as the patron of the *Serenata a 3* RV 690;⁹² yet there are still many unanswered questions about this richly scored work (with horns, oboes, recorders, bassoon, and strings). One clue for dating the work is the fact that one of the arias (“Alla caccia d’un ben adorato”) is also found in the opera *Tito Manlio*, which was given during Carnival of 1719. (In that same year the Abbé de Tournell died.) The three vocal roles in the serenata are for two sopranos – the shepherdess, Eurilla, and her confidant, Nice – and for tenor – the shepherd, Alcindo.



Figure 35. Title page of the libretto to the serenata “L’Unione della Pace e di Marte” (RV 694).

There are a number of hypotheses about the date and occasion of the composition of “La Sena festeggiante” (RV 693), arguably Vivaldi’s most important serenata. It would take up too much space to go into them all, but suffice it to say that the work was probably composed during the mid-1720s, presumably after the wedding serenata of September 1725, and was dedicated to a festive occasion in honor of France and the French royal family. One might assume that the commission came from the French ambassador to the Republic of Venice, yet evidence exists to

suggest that the performance did not take place in Venice or under the personal direction of Vivaldi. The only plausible explanation for cast notes written by the composer in the score is that he did not know what performing conditions would be like.

The work is composed to a libretto by the Venetian *letterato* Domenico Lalli with a plot involving three allegorical figures. After an arduous journey, Golden Age (L'Età dell'oro, soprano) and Virtue (La Virtù, contralto) arrive at The River Seine (La Sena, bass), who welcomes them to his gay and happy world. He calls white swans, nymphs, and forest deities to entertain his guests. In order to bring them perfect joy, La Sena accompanies them to the throne of the young king (Louis XV), whose glory and virtues they extol together.

The composer used the libretto as the basis for a large two-part (perhaps to be performed over two days) serenata, filled with inspired music and lasting about one and a half hours. The work contains eleven solo arias, three duets, and three trios (the latter are labeled *cori*), and mostly accompanied recitatives. In addition, there are two instrumental introductions of different types: part one begins with a sinfonia in three movements while part two opens with an *Ouverture* in the French style (with an elaborate presto fugue). In the *Ouverture* and elsewhere in the work, Vivaldi employs typical French stylistic elements, most prominent being sharply dotted rhythms. The wonderfully beautiful D minor aria "Al mio seno il pargoletto" (The little lad at my breast), in sarabande-like rhythm and sung by L'Età dell'oro, is marked "largo alla francese".

The music is generally gay and charming, yet the emotional range is great. Several of the recitatives contain moments of melting sentiment and musical concentration; perhaps the most impressive example is the setting of Golden Age's words "colma d'amaro duol mesta piangea" (Filled with bitter pain she sadly wept). With the exception of an aria accompanied by two solo recorders, the composer demands only a four-part string orchestra. He does, however, consider it advisable to reinforce the *cori* with additional winds: "2 Hautbois o più se piace" and "2 Flauti o più" (two oboes or more ad lib., two or more flutes). These notes probably indicate that the work was intended for open-air performance.

Works for Double Chorus and Solo Motets

Following the large amount of church music Vivaldi had written between 1713 and 1717, he must have entirely stopped composing such works during his years as *maestro di cappella* in Mantua. Once he returned to Venice he was probably soon entrusted with writing sacred vocal music again, yet we have very few reliable indications that he did so. With the exception of a brief interruption in the spring of 1726, the post of *maestro di coro* at the Ospedale della Pietà was occupied by someone else. We must therefore assume that Vivaldi composed vocal music only in place of someone else or on special occasions; there are only sparse indications of performances at other venues. Vivaldi wrote, for example, an oratorio entitled *L'adorazione adii tre re magi al Bambino Gesù* (RV 645) that was performed in January 1722 for the San Fedele Jesuit college in Milan. In addition, on 19 September 1727 a *Te Deum* (RV 622) by Vivaldi was performed at the French legation in Venice, and on 7 January 1732 a “most solemn” (*solemnissimo*) “*Laudate Dominum*” by “Abate Vivaldi of the Pietà” was played to accompany the bearing of relics to St. Mark’s Basilica.⁹³ Moreover, almost all the motets datable from the 1720s are unconnected to the Pietà since they were written during the composer’s stay in Rome (RV 623, 626, and 631),⁹⁴ for Dresden (RV 627 and 632), or for the Basilica di Santo in Padua (RV 634). Nevertheless, for his church compositions of the 1720s and early 1730s, we may conclude that Vivaldi relied far more heavily than previously on commissions from outside the Pietà. It is also easy to see that he produced far fewer works in this area than when he was acting *maestro di coro*: fewer sacred works have come down to us from about 1720 through 1735 than from the five years 1713 through 1717.

The most striking new aspect of Vivaldi’s church music from the post-Mantuan period is the use of double chorus. Given present knowledge about the chronology of Vivaldi’s works, it can be stated that it was not until the 1720s that the composer began to utilize this (originally Venetian – since the time of Adrian Willaert) type of composition, which was considered the most prominent aspect of festive, large-scale church music well into the eighteenth century. It seems very likely that this change was tied to the construction of two lateral choir lofts (*coretti*) in the Pietà church as the result of a resolution of 2 July 1723.⁹⁵ Yet the impetus for multiple-chorus works could also have come

from a completely different source. Michael Talbot recently suggested that a Roman church, San Lorenzo in Damaso, might have been a possible performance venue for Vivaldi's church music from the 1720s.⁹⁶ There are still many unanswered questions in this area.

We currently know of eight Vivaldi works for double choir, one of which is simply an arrangement of a work for single choir: the Magnificat (RV 610), written before 1718, which the composer rewrote for double choir (RV 610a). There is, however, little antiphonal singing within movements, in most cases *Primo* and *Secondo Coro* perform together throughout; each movement may be sung either by the first or by the second choir.

With the exception of the psalm setting "Lauda Jerusalem" (RV 609), the compositions for double choir were most probably written during the 1720s. Because the names of the vocal soloists are given in the score, we know that "Lauda Jerusalem" was written during the late 1730s or even as late as 1740. Because the four female singers were charges of the Ospedale della Pietà, at least this work's destination is known. It is one of the compositions in which all solo parts are for women. The works with tenor and bass solos ("Beatus vir", RV 597, and "Dixit Dominus", RV 594) must have been intended for other performance venues.

The composer uses the possibilities that double choir writing offers to greatest advantage in his five psalm settings for multiple choir, the largest group in this scoring. Works such as "Dixit Dominus" (The Lord Said Unto My Lord, Psalm 109) (RV 594) or the "Beatus vir" (Blessed the Man Who Feareth the Lord, Psalm 111) (RV 597) are certainly not primarily convincing due to the *due cori* writing, although the sonorities and compositional techniques resulting from this are an important feature of these pieces. "In due cori", as the composer designates these works, refers not only to the division, of the vocal choir into two parts but also to the concept of *choir (coro)* as in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, that is, the including of both the solo ensemble and orchestra in the meaning of the word. A Vivaldi psalm for double choir is therefore for two ensembles, each consisting of its own soloists, choir, and orchestra.

Works for double chorus were intended for special festivities, a purpose shared by Vivaldi's principal forms of antiphonal choral music-making. The dividing and re-joining of two ensembles separated in

space and the merging of both blocks in powerful tutti movement created effects that enhanced the festive character of the music regardless of the text. The first movements of the two previously mentioned psalms are impressive examples of this.

The “Dixit Dominus” and the “Beatus vir” also contain passages in which the multiple choirs are made to interpret the text musically, for example, the rapid alternation on the word “dispersit”, the treatment of “Paratum cor eius” in the seventh movement of the “Beatus vir”, and, most of all, the incredibly dramatic setting (ex. 45) of “Implebit ruinas”

Allegro molto

The musical score is for a section titled "Allegro molto". It features two choirs, Primo Coro and Secondo Coro, and instrumental parts for Violins I and II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The Primo Coro section includes parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, with lyrics "Im-ple-bit ru-i-nas, im-ple-bit ru-i-nas, im-". The Secondo Coro section includes parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, with lyrics "Im-ple-bit ru-i-nas, im-ple-bit ru-i-nas". The instrumental parts for Violins I and II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass are also shown.

Example 45. “Dixit Dominus” (RV 594), “Judicabit.”

in the psalm verse “Judicabit”) of the “Dixit Dominus”. Finally, I wish to point out such excellent pieces as the final movements of the two psalms in which the wealth of *cori* voices, often ignoring the division of choirs, is used to create elaborate polyphonic writing. The “Sicut erat” of the “Dixit Dominus” reaches high, contrapuntal density and achieves moments in which the music unfolds with truly overwhelming power (ex. 46). In the final movement of this psalm there is a feature unrelated to the double chorus scoring that deserves special mention. The movement is built on a striding, whole-note ostinato (eight-bar) theme to the words “Sicut erat in principio” (As it was in the beginning). The sequence of notes (as can be seen in the alto part of the *secondo coro* in the preceding musical example) has the melodic shape of one of the *soggetti* that has been used again and again since the seventeenth century. We find exactly the same notes in the “first eight fundamental notes” of the aria in Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*. The theme goes through every voice and, in addition to the main key of D major, appears in A major, in B minor, and in F-sharp minor, the last two times in diminution (half notes). The only part of the seventy-six-bar piece not using the *cantus firmus* is the final section; the end of the movement (with a pedal point in the dominant lasting seven-and-a-half bars) is dominated by an impassioned declamation of “saecula saeculorum” and by the ornamental flood of sound in the “Amen”.

The ostinato principle comes to the fore in the “Beatus vir” in a different way: the composer uses a ten-bar musical phrase consisting of a five-bar bass theme with repetitions. Using this theme, he sets the first verse of the psalm as a kind of refrain, repeated five times during the nine-movement work as a motto-like, *Antifona* beginning (for the third, fourth, sixth, seventh, and ninth movements). The treatment of the bass theme is almost identical to that in “Sicut erat”.

The two psalm settings I have discussed are among Vivaldi’s most impressive sacred works. They are large-scale compositions, lasting a good thirty minutes, and have large scorings (two four-part choirs and two orchestras in both; three vocal soloists in “Beatus vir” and five in “Dixit Dominus”) that result in a substantial, musically rich structure.

Much the same can be said of Vivaldi’s only mass movement for double chorus, the Kyrie in G Minor (RV 587). The setting consists of three independent movements (Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, and Kyrie eleison). Each of the two *cori* is scored for soprano and contralto

solo voices, four-part choir, and string orchestra with basso continuo. With the exception of the solemn D minor middle movement

VI.I
VI.II
Sopran
- men, a - - -

Alt
- men, a - - - men,

Tenor
- men. Si-cut e-rat in prin-ci-pi-o et nunc, et nunc et

Baß
- men, a - men,

VI.I
VI.II
Sopran
- men. Si-cut e-rat in prin-ci-pi-o et nunc, et nunc et

Alt
Si - - - cut

Tenor
- men. Et in sae-cu-la

Baß
- men. Si-cut e-rat in prin-

Va.
B.c.

(Continued)

Example 46. “Dixit Dominus” (RV 594), “Sicut erat,” bars 16 ff.

The musical score is written for a choir and instruments. It consists of 12 staves. The first five staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and another vocal part). The last seven staves are instrumental parts (Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, and another instrumental part). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 7/8. The lyrics are in Latin and include: -men, a - - - men. Et in a - - - men. Et in sae - cu - la saeculorum sem-per A - - - men. Et in a - men, a - men, a - men. sem-per, et nunc, et nunc, et sem - per, et in e - - - - - rat in sae - cu - lo - - - rum. A - - - men. ci - pio, si-cut e-rat in prin - ci - - pi-o et nunc, et nunc et semper, et in

(Continued)

Example 46 continued.

saecula sae-cu - lo-rum, et in saecula sae-cu - lo - rum. A - - men.

et in saecula sae-cu - lo-rum, et in saecula saeculorum. A - - men.

sae - cu - la saecu - lo - rum. A - - - - men.

Et in saecula sae-cu - lo - rum. A - men. Si -

sae - cu - la sae - cu - lo - - - rum, A - - men.

prin - - - ci - - - pi - o.

Et in sae - cu - la sae - cu - - lo - rum. A - - men.

saecula saecu - lo-rum, et in saecula sae-cu - lo - rum. A - men. Si -

5 4 3#

Example 46 continued.

(Allegro) that is for solo voices alone, the work uses double chorus throughout. A climactic intensity is achieved in the last movement, an allegro double fugue with short adagio introduction, through a concentration on strict counterpoint in four-part writing. There is not even an independent instrumental part since the orchestra parts double the choir throughout. As in the Credo (RV 591), the soprano and contralto parts are doubled: the soprano by the second violins and the contralto by the firsts an octave higher. The fascination of the first movement derives largely from its tense, expressive harmonic language, which does not shun even the harshest, most painful dissonances (ex. 47).



Example 47. Kyrie in G Minor (RV 587), first movement, bars 41 ff. (choir parts only).

During this period Vivaldi also used liturgical texts in several hymns (“Deus tuorum militum”, RV 612, “Sanctorum meritis”, RV 620), a “Regina coeli” (RV 615) and several settings of the “Salve Regina” (including one in C minor for double chorus, RV 616). Yet overall, the *motetti* and the *introduzioni*, two closely related genres set to non-liturgical Latin texts, are more characteristic. We currently know of twelve Vivaldi *motetti* (RV 623–634) and eight *introduzioni* (RV 635–642), though the number of these works, especially of the motets, must have been much greater. A document that concerns the special fee Vivaldi was paid during the summer of 1715 speaks of “più di trenta mottetti” (more than thirty motets) he had supplied to the Pietà; and again later, the works for which the composer was paid by the Ospedale, on 14 April and on 27 May 1739, include eleven motets. The previously mentioned decision of the Pietà governors, dated 6 July 1710, also stated that the *maestro di coro* was to undertake the composition of “almeno due Mottetti al mese” (at least two motets per month).

Even if the works mentioned by these documents included what Vivaldi called *introduzioni*, we must assume that an unusually high percentage of these compositions has been lost. We do not have, for example, a single one of the motets the composer submitted to the Pietà in 1739. I say this because all the motets that have come down to us, including the *introduzioni*, stem from the period 1713 to 1717 and from 1720 to the early 1730s.⁹⁷

The genre called *mot(t)etto* in eighteenth-century Italian church music has very little in common with the motet as found in the works of Schütz and Bach. Vivaldi's motets (and, in principle, those of his Italian contemporaries) are multimovement compositions consisting of arias and recitatives for vocal soloists and strings, set to modern Latin texts. Thus they are the sacred counterparts of the contemporary secular solo cantatas. Their basic structure is the same, consisting of two da capo arias linked by recitative and a closing Alleluia "in which", Johann Friedrich Agricola wrote in 1757, "there are commonly a large number of passages".⁹⁸ Mozart's solo motet "Exsultate, jubilate" (K. 158a), written in Milan in 1773, comes automatically to mind, since it matches (though, like Vivaldi's motets, it does not have a second recitative) Johann Joachim Quantz's and Agricola's descriptions of the Italian motet. Quantz wrote, "In Italy a sacred Latin solo cantata, which consists of two arias and two recitatives and ends in an Alleluia and is usually sung after the Credo of the mass by one of the best singers, is currently given this name".⁹⁹ As Quantz indicated, motets were usually performed during mass.

The texts of the Vivaldi motets, in an Italianate mongrel-Latin, consist largely of standard, general turns of phrase intended to provide the composer with effective situations for expressing effects in music. They demonstrate a predilection for certain popular images and emotive terms, which also constantly occurred in opera and cantata arias: "Sum in medio tempestatum" (I am in the midst of a storm) (RV 632), "In turbato mare irato" (In the raging turbulent sea) (RV 632), "In furore giustissimae irae" (In the fury of righteous anger) (RV 626), "Longe mala, umbrae, terrores" (Far more evil, shadows, terrors) (RV 629), "Invicti, bellate" (Fight, indomitable ones!) (RV 628), and "Canta in prato, ride in monte Philomena" (The nightingale sings on the meadow, laughs on the mountain) (RV 623). The poetry also clearly accommodates the requirement that different and, ideally, diametrically

opposed effects be used for the two aria texts of a motet. To name only one example, in the motet “In turbato mare irato” the storm image of the first aria (Allegro) is followed by the especially lovely Larghetto aria “Risplende, bella divina stella” (A minor), a vision of sheltered refuge beneath the “fair, divine star”.

The striking similarity between Vivaldi’s motets and his solo concertos has rightly been pointed out. The dominant impression, Denis Arnold writes, is that the motets are “the work of a concerto composer”.¹⁰⁰ This assessment is based not only on certain formal elements, such as the three-movement structure or the ritornello Alleluia movement, but also on the type of thematic language in general, including “the ‘hammer-blow’ rhythms and the scales characteristic of the Vivaldian concerto”.¹⁰¹ Not least of all, the solo concerto is brought to mind by the instrumental virtuosity required of the singing voice (mostly soprano, in three works contralto), culminating in the great Alleluia coloratura of the final movement. Fine examples are the Alleluia movements from “In furore”, “In turbato mare”, and most of all, the Siciliano aria that begins the E minor motet, “Nulla in mundo pax sincera” (There is no true peace on earth) (RV 630). “It would be hard to imagine more scintillating, virtuosic music for soprano”.¹⁰²

The only real difference between the *introduzione* and the motets is the lack of a closing Alleluia. Being introductory in character, as the name implies, it makes sense that a finale-like conclusion would be out of place. Instead, a conclusion was required that pointed toward the following principal work, meaning that even a recitative was possible. In fact, the two preserved Vivaldi *introduzioni* “al Miserere” (“Filiae maestae”, RV 638 and “Non in pratis”, RV 641) and the Gloria *introduzione* in two movements (“Longe mala”, RV 640) end with recitatives, while the other three Gloria introductions and the two *introduzioni* “al Dixit” are structured aria – recitative – aria. In one of the pieces, the “al Gloria” *introduzione* “Jubilate, o amoeni Chori” (Rejoice, O Sweet Choirs) (RV 639), the second aria leads directly into the beginning of the Gloria (RV 588).

Only in one case – the above pair RV 639 and 588 – has it been possible to identify the work to which an *introduzione* was linked. In most cases, the association is purely hypothetical. The second D major Gloria *introduzione*, “Ostro picta, armata spina” (Painted Purple, Armed with Thorns) (RV 642), for example, has been tied to the well-known

D major Gloria (RV 589). According to dating of the two “Dixit” *introduzioni*, one belongs to “Ascende laeta” (RV 635) of the single chorus setting of RV 595 (from prior to 1718), and the other, “Canta in prato” (RV 636), to the great double-chorus “Dixit” (1720s).¹⁰³ Both Misereres to which we have *introduzioni* must also be considered lost as are two other Gloria settings whose *introduzioni* have survived: “Cur sagittas” (RV 637) and “Longe mala” (RV 640).

As can be seen in the text openings, two of the *introduzioni* use verses that the composer also set as motets (“Canta in prato” and “Longe mala”); an additional indication of the close kinship between the two genres.

Chapter Seven

“Per l’orchestra di Dresda” – Vivaldi and Court Musical Performance in Dresden

The importance of the electoral court as a performance venue for Vivaldi’s music in Dresden has come up a number of times in this book, directly or indirectly. I have mentioned Vivaldi’s decisive advocate at the royal residence on the Elbe River, Johann Georg Pisendel on more than one occasion. Leading violinist and long-standing concertmaster of the court orchestra, and one of the key figures of Dresden musical life of the period, Pisendel’s personal meetings with Vivaldi and his experience of Vivaldi’s art during the Venice stay of 1716–17 left a deep impression on him (fig. 36).

At first sight, the topic of Vivaldi and Dresden may seem to be of largely local interest, though a closer look reveals it to be of far greater importance. The relevant areas include specific aspects of Vivaldi’s life and works, along with the positive regard for and reception of his works by leading exponents and certain segments of German musical culture.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, Dresden was the city of the so-called Augustinian Age, that is, of the reigns of the elec-



Figure 36.
Johann Georg Pisendel in a
freehand drawing by Fauk.

tors Frederick August I (August the Strong, 1694–1733) and Frederick August II (1733–1763) (fig. 37). Both electors were also kings of Poland (as August II and August III), which increased the brilliance of the Dresden court. Critical as our assessment of these two rulers' absolutism may be today, without doubt, Dresden, the royal residence of one of the largest and economically most developed German states at the time, became a major European cultural and artistic center. Baroque Dresden came into being: a fascinating metropolis famed for splendid architecture, sculptural masterpieces, and rich art collections, its many festivities involving theater and music. Of course, the prime motive behind these events was each sovereign's need to display his power and wealth, his absolutistic splendor; yet it is also true that both rulers possessed a genuine affinity for the arts. The younger of the elector-kings was probably fonder of music and of the theater than August the Strong, and the Habsburg princess he married in 1719, Maria Josepha, eldest daughter of Emperor Joseph I, was also a passionate music lover and patron. It was she who subsequently acquired the estates of several leading Dresden musicians for the court orchestra archives, including the priceless private music library of Pisendel, who died in 1755.

The part of court musical life holding greatest interest in relation to Vivaldi is the so-called *Kammermusik*, as distinct from (Catholic) court



Figure 37. Frederick August II as prince-elect. Copper engraving by Martin Bernigeroth.

church music and opera, including all concertante musical offerings in the *chamber* and at table. In charge of this music was the Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Orchestra, as the Dresden court orchestra of the two elector-kings was called. Following the difficult years that Saxony went through during the first phase of the Northern War (which also created a crisis in the court musical establishment) a long growth period began for this ensemble, starting about 1709. A 1709 orchestra budget already included about thirty names, and by 1719 the orchestra had increased to slightly more than forty members, including eight violinists, five violists, five cellists, three bass players, two flutists, five oboists, three bassoonists, two horn players, two organists, and two theorbists.¹ During the 1730s, the number of violinists increased to

thirteen. The orchestra's ensemble, which consisted of many renowned virtuosos, was soon considered of the highest order. The violin section included the long-standing concertmaster, Jean-Baptiste Volumier (in Dresden from 1709 to 1728), Pisendel, and Francesco Maria Veracini (1717–1722), while the leading wind players were flutists Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin and his student Johann Joachim Quantz (in Dresden until 1741), oboists François Le Riche and (his student) Johann Christian Richter, and, finally, musicians such as Jan Dismas Zelenka (contrabass player from 1710 and later church composer), lutenist Silvius Leopold Weiß, and Pantaleon Hebenstreit. Hiller wrote in his *Lebensbeschreibungen* (Biographies), referring to the time around 1717, that “No orchestra in Europe could claim as many virtuosos as the Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Orchestra in Dresden”.²

Under such conditions, there can be no doubt that the Dresden court orchestra was receptive to the appealing repertoire of modern Italian chamber music. Vivaldi concertos were played at an amateur concert in Strasbourg in February 1713.³ Shortly thereafter, a relatively wide selection of works was available to the small Weimar court orchestra, both in printed and in manuscript form. We can therefore assume with certainty that at this point, along with solo and trio sonatas and concerti grossi, the newer solo concertos (including Vivaldi's) became part of the Dresden orchestra's repertoire. To date, however, we have no indications that Vivaldi's works enjoyed a privileged position in the repertoire at that time.

The incidence of Vivaldi's music in the Dresden court repertoire did not become truly extraordinary until the autumn of 1717 when Johann Georg Pisendel returned from Italy. From April 1716 Pisendel had been south of the Alps as the leader of a small ensemble that accompanied the prince-elector. The ensemble spent most of its time in Venice, where the prince stayed from February 1716 to July 1717. Frederick August's *Kammermusik*, which also included oboist Johann Christian Richter, violone player Jan Dismas Zelenka, and court organist Christian Petzold, apparently stayed together only until the beginning of 1717; in any case, at that time Pisendel was granted permission to continue on to both Rome and Naples.

Though our main interest in the prince-elector's stay in Venice, along with his musical entourage, is directed toward Pisendel and his relations with Vivaldi, the prince-elector's own musical contacts also

merit our attention, especially since he was engaged in hiring Venetian musicians and singers for the upcoming Dresden opera. The prince-elect, who was born in 1696 (making him twenty years old at the time) and was considered a great lover of Italian music, must have been an important figure in the city's musical life during this, his third visit to Venice (he had been there briefly in both 1712 and 1713). The many musical homages and the number of works dedicated to him in the *Serenissima* are proof of this. Carlo Francesco Pollarolo, for example, dedicated to him his opera *Ariodante*, which premiered in November 1716 at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo. In addition, Giorgio Gentili dedicated his *Concerti a quattro*, Op. 6, of 1716, and Veracini dedicated his manuscript set of Twelve Violin Sonatas dated 26 July of the same year. Not least of all, the important artists that he signed for Dresden are proof of the prestige enjoyed by both the prince-elect and the court he represented among Venetian musicians. Among those holding favorable impressions of the music at his court were Antonio Lotti, one of the most respected Venetian composers, and Veracini, one of the leading violin virtuosos of the time, who had triumphed over the young Tartini in 1716 in an academy held in a Venetian palazzo. Several episodes concerning Johann David Heinichen's stay in Venice, reported by Hiller, also give a vivid picture of the role Frederick August played in the city's musical life.⁴ Heinichen, who dedicated his oratorio *La Pace di Kamberg* (performed during Lent of 1716) to the prince-elect, was also engaged by Frederick August in Venice; his duties as electoral Saxon *maestro di cappella* began on 1 August 1716.

The Italian musicologist Fausto Torrefranca was the first scholar to investigate the relationship between the Saxon prince-elect and Vivaldi.⁵ His research came about because he saw that Vivaldi (with whom the Dresden violinist accompanying the prince had particularly close ties) played only a peripheral role in Frederick August's eyes. The *Concerto a 10 oblig.* (RV 576) exists as a set of parts without dedication in Dresden (Mus. 2389-0-125), while the Turin copy of the score bears a note in the composer's own hand: "p. S. A. R. Sas.^a", which stands for "per Sua Altezza Reale di Sassonia" (for His Royal Saxon Highness). We can also assume with certainty that the prince-elect and Vivaldi, who was probably the most popular Venetian musician of the time, knew each other. Why then did Vivaldi not dedicate a representative printed work to the prince? And was it Frederick August's or

Vivaldi's decision that he was not to be among the Venetian artists who traveled to Dresden in September 1717? After all, Vivaldi left his native city only a few months later to work as *maestro di cappella* in the far more modest court of Mantua.

Although Torre Franca's hypotheses, which are built on the notion of scant favor (*scarso favore*) on the part of the prince-electors toward Vivaldi, are untenable as a whole, they do contain noteworthy observations and suppositions about the relationship between the prince-electors and Vivaldi. To be sure, any attempt to find a fitting explanation without sufficient facts would be pure speculation.

In spring 1716, when Johann Georg Pisendel arrived in Venice, he was twenty-nine (born 26 December 1686). He was not only an accomplished virtuoso on his instrument but also a musical all-rounder, familiar with both Italian and French styles. He had been a choir boy in the Ansbach Hofkapelle (court chapel) and a voice student of Francesco Antonio Pistocchi. He had studied violin with Giuseppe Torelli and, during his years of playing with the court chapel orchestra (1703–1709), had developed into a violinist who in 1709 amazed the members of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum, led by Melchior Hoffman, by playing a Torelli violin concerto. The newly matriculated Pisendel was soon appointed deputy leader of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum. Here, the young musician was discovered by the new Dresden concertmaster, Volumier, and hired for the court orchestra, starting in January 1712 as assistant concertmaster. Before he traveled to Venice in 1716, he had in 1714 (again as part of the prince-electors' *Kammermusik*) visited Paris.

It seems relevant to mention these facts because they place Pisendel's *studies* with Vivaldi in their proper light. The *Lebenslauf Herrn Johann Georg Pisendels* (Biography of Johann Georg Pisendel), published in 1767, states that Pisendel in fact "took actual violin lessons"⁶ from Vivaldi (and from the "famous violinist, Montanari", in Rome, though presumably he mostly taught him modern Italian interpretation in Vivaldi's manner). In addition, a recently rediscovered document proves that the consultations (as we might call Pisendel's lessons with Vivaldi, using modern terminology) included composition: the autograph of a concerto movement composed by Pisendel in Venice contains corrections in Vivaldi's hand.⁷ The relationship between the two musicians was surely more than that of a friendship between professional colleagues

than one of teacher and pupil. Not least of all, the fact that Vivaldi entrusted a considerable number of compositions to the Dresden violinist would support this view: five violin sonatas and six violin concertos that are part of the autograph manuscripts of the Pisendel collection in Dresden bear the dedication “fatto per Monsieur Pisendel” (fig. 38).⁸ These manuscripts are remarkable for not being clean copies, as would have been normal in the case of dedicated works; they are all working manuscripts, some of which are more like sketches, containing extensive corrections. In one instance (Mus. 2389-0-44), the manuscript is an opening Allegro and not a complete concerto and is presumably the first draft of an early version of what was later published as the Concerto in D Minor, Op. 8 (RV 242). Manuscripts of this kind were certainly given only to friends or trusted colleagues.

The close relationship between the two musicians is also indicated by the two episodes that Johann Adam Hiller reports from Pisendel’s period in Venice: the previously mentioned experience with the *sbirri* and Pisendel’s appearance as virtuoso “between two acts” of an opera at



Figure 38. Beginning of the Violin Sonata (RV 26) in Pisendel’s hand.

which he played Vivaldi's Concerto in F Major "with hunting horns" (RV 571). In that performance, the German violinist took the place of Vivaldi, who (as we know from Uffenbach's diary)⁹ normally shone between the acts of his operas in violin performances. This was certainly not the only occasion on which Pisendel performed Vivaldi concertos and sonatas publicly in Venice. Taken alone, the fact that we have the instrumental parts to at least eight of the *prete rosso's* violin concertos in Pisendel's hand and an even larger number of violin sonatas that he copied himself or received from the composer (while in Venice) proves as much.

It would be wrong to mention Pisendel's relationship with Vivaldi only in connection with the German's stay in Venice. We are certain that the Dresden violinist maintained personal contacts with other leading musicians in the city, including Tommaso Albinoni and Benedetto Marcello. Albinoni also presented the German virtuoso with a violin sonata in manuscript bearing the dedication "Composta per il Signor Pisendel".¹⁰ Yet the ratio between the Vivaldi works that traveled to Dresden and those by other Venetian composers clearly shows the extraordinary impact that Vivaldi had on Pisendel. In September 1717 when he returned to Dresden from Venice, he took at least forty manuscripts of Vivaldi instrumental works with him – in addition to the original manuscripts given to him, his own copies of seven sonatas, and more than twenty concertos and sinfonias in score form or in parts.

This was presumably the first large body of works by Vivaldi to reach Dresden, though not the only one. To the best of our present knowledge, a considerable portion of the Vivaldi manuscripts in Dresden were written a good deal later, probably between 1725 and 1730. Two groups of scores totaling twenty-four concertos, which Pisendel had assigned two of his apprentice musicians (one of whom has been identified as the young Quantz)¹¹ to copy, and an overwhelming part of the performance material, copied by the copyists for the court orchestra, can probably be dated at around 1730. Contrary to earlier suppositions, the copyists in question began working for the court orchestra in about 1725.¹²

Based on the information about the court copyists, the hypothesis has been advanced that intensive performance of Vivaldi in Dresden did not begin until "Pisendel became concertmaster in 1728" and that "the actual heyday of Vivaldi performances in Dresden was intense, but brief".¹³ These conclusions are open to a number of questions. Is it

likely that the performance materials of the concertos, copied in Venice under Pisendel's direction (and doubtless also played there), were abandoned in Dresden? Taken together, these performance materials, which were available after 1717, along with the sonatas and the printed works (the Op. 2 sonatas and Op. 3 concertos), make up a quite large repertoire. These works, including the "Prince-Elector" Concerto (RV 576) could have been copied in Dresden soon after Pisendel's return from Venice. The objection that Vivaldi's champion, Pisendel, did not yet have the authority of a concertmaster, that is, no "responsibility for selecting orchestral repertoire",¹⁴ is unconvincing. Given concertmaster Volumier's predilection for French music, it would seem more reasonable to assume that he and Pisendel practiced a division of labor. František Benda's autobiography alludes to the role Vivaldi's concertos played at the Dresden court around 1720. The Czech violinist, who was a student of Pisendel while a choirboy in Dresden, wrote in 1763, "In Dresden, where the choirboys played concerts for each other, I played the viola. At the same time I practiced the violin and played the latest Vivaldi concertos by heart".¹⁵ That Benda was able to recall Vivaldi's violin concertos after more than four decades would seem to indicate that they played a special role in court musical life at the time,

The fact that large portions of the Dresden Vivaldi repertoire were almost certainly written during the late 1720s and perhaps early 1730s seems to confirm the view "that Vivaldi's works must have been regularly performed in Dresden for a long period".¹⁶ There can be no doubt that Vivaldi continued to supply the Saxon capital with new works, which were copied in Dresden, for a relatively long time after the first influx of the composer's works in 1717. Possibly not all these works were the composer's most recent, yet some of the compositions that went to Dresden after about 1725 must have been written at that time. In addition to concertos also found in the later printed sets (Opp. 9, 11, and 12), these include works such as the Concerto in C Major (RV 177), which is closely related to the sinfonia to *L'Olimpiade* (1734). We also should note that certain works were repeated after a long interval, as indicated by duplicate sets of parts or duplicate individual parts copied at a later date. Possibly, one such work is the Concerto in F Major (RV 571) that, according to Hiller's account, Pisendel had already played in Venice and of which there are two part sets and a score in Dresden. One of them, a revised version by Pisendel, must have

been written during the mid-1720s at the earliest.

Performances of Vivaldi's works seem to have fallen off during the 1730s, so Dresden's "Vivaldi era" may have come to an end (virtually no new compositions were acquired), but this is entirely natural. Not only had audiences grown somewhat tired of the style of Vivaldi's concertos, even Vivaldi – a "progressive musician"¹⁷ – was left behind stylistically during his lifetime. Two factors were especially important in regard to Dresden: the influence of Johann Adolph Hasse, who headed the court music starting in 1734, and, especially, the style that the ex-Dresdener Quantz called the German, or mixed, style. Indigenous concerto production was going on in Germany, not least among Dresden musicians and those close to them. These composers took Vivaldi (and other Italian models), added their own creative contributions, and adapted them to Dresden conditions by considerably expanding the orchestra's participation. Good examples of this trend are found in the concertos of the Zerst court music director, Johann Friedrich Fasch, who had close ties with Dresden. The Dresden manuscript collection contains about two-thirds of his sixty-one verifiable instrumental concertos, most of which were presumably composed for the Saxon capital.

By far the most comprehensive and significant part of the instrumental works in the Dresden Vivaldi collection consists of roughly ninety instrumental concertos, about a dozen orchestral compositions without soloists (primarily opera sinfonias), and eighteen chamber music works (sonatas and concertos for chamber ensemble).¹⁸ Still, the Dresden collection also contains more vocal works than any other library except the Turin library, which houses the composer's autographs. We therefore have to ask whether the privileged position Vivaldi's instrumental works enjoyed at the Dresden court also extended to sacred and secular vocal music.

The answer to this question is definitely negative. First, not one of Vivaldi's stage works was performed at the Dresden court, in spite of the fact that for a long period – from autumn 1717 to Carnival 1720 and again starting in the early 1730s – the Saxon capital was one of the most brilliant centers of Italian opera in Germany. During that period the repertoire consisted almost entirely of works by the local court composers Lotti and Hasse. Virtually no operas were performed in Dresden between 1720 and 1730, that is, during the major period of Vivaldi's career as an opera composer. We probably should not over-

emphasize this fact, but we should not ignore it either. The only works in the Dresden manuscript collection by Vivaldi the opera composer, with the exception of a few surviving separate opera sinfonias, are two large aria collections totaling forty-four opera arias. One of these manuscripts (Mus. 1-F-30) is a volume of eighty-four arias from Venetian operas from 1713 to 1716 which contains sixteen arias (as a group) from Vivaldi's *Arsilda regina di Ponto* (autumn 1716, Teatro Sant'Angelo). Most probably this volume, written by a Venetian copyist, was brought to Dresden in 1717. The second aria collection (Mus. 2389-J-1) contains twenty-eight pieces (some of them in the composer's hand) from Vivaldi operas written between 1727 and 1732/33, most of which are from *La fida ninfa* (eight arias and the trio "S'egli è ver"). In 1730, after his stay in *Germania*, Vivaldi may have wished to present himself as an opera composer to the Saxon capital, then without a court music director.

Nor did Vivaldi's sacred music occupy a privileged position at the Dresden court. Except for the extant manuscripts of two motets ("In turbato mare irato", RV 627, and "Sum in medio tempestatimi", RV 632) and the solo psalm setting ("Laudate pueri", RV 601), only one other work belonged at one time to the Dresden music collection: the Magnificat in G Minor (RV 610 or 610a/b). It is included in an *Inventarium* compiled starting in 1726 by Jan Dismas Zelenka and containing all the sacred compositions he owned. Along with the extant manuscript and printed music, this inventory is our most valuable source of information about the repertoire of Dresden court church music from this period.¹⁹ The inventory includes the two Vivaldi motets RV 627 and RV 632. Zelenka was initially in charge of religious music together with Kapellmeister Heinichen; after Heinichen's death in 1729, he had sole responsibility for the post for many years. During his visit to Venice in 1716, he must have become acquainted with Vivaldi's sacred music. Yet it is almost impossible to detect, in the few Vivaldi sacred works acquired for Dresden, an indication that this meeting had an especially lasting effect on the Dresden church composer-to-be (he was not officially granted the title until 1735). Vivaldi was considered as important as many lesser masters of the period, while Antonio Caldara is represented in the inventory by fully ten masses or parts of masses. As far as we can determine today, not a single Vivaldi mass was brought to Dresden.

The last areas that remain to be considered are vocal chamber music (cantatas) and festive court music (serenatas). While the respectable

number of at least ten Vivaldi solo cantatas are to be found in Dresden archives,²⁰ there is no trace of any festive or celebrative works. This is not surprising in regard to works written for festive events in Dresden, though the Saxon prince-electoral visited Venice on three occasions between 1712 and 1716/17, which certainly would have provided ample opportunities for such works. When the son of the previous prince-electoral, the eighteen-year-old prince Frederick Christian, was paid musical tribute by the Ospedale della Pietà in March 1740, the festive program contained four instrumental compositions by Vivaldi and a serenata. The composer of this latter work, of which only the text has survived, was, however, Gennaro d'Alessandro, the *maestro di coro* at the time, not Vivaldi.

Among all his works, Vivaldi's instrumental works can be singled out as having a dominant position in the Dresden court repertoire. To a large extent, this reflects the generally held impression and appreciation of Vivaldi's works, but Pisendel's role here is significant. It was Pisendel alone who was responsible for ensuring the works of the *prete rosso* such a prominent role. Pisendel's area of "jurisdiction" was restricted to instrumental music, however, and his special interest as performer was in the violin concerto and in the violin sonata.

The initial impression one has in dealing with the concerto and sonata manuscripts contained in the Dresden Vivaldi archives is that the repertoire was tailored to the violinist Pisendel. Almost every one of the roughly ninety concertos preserved in manuscript in Dresden is written for one or more solo violins. Although Vivaldi wrote some eighty solo and double concertos for wind instruments, none are in the Dresden collection. Of his twenty-seven solo concertos for cello, only one is in Dresden. Much the same can be said for the sonatas: thirteen (possibly only eleven) solo sonatas for violin and continuo (not counting the printed edition of the Twelve Violin Sonatas, Op. 2) as opposed to at most three oboe sonatas – presumably for Johann Christian Richter.²¹ The Dresden collection not only contains the largest number of Vivaldi solo sonatas but also contains the sonatas the composer presented to Pisendel in autograph manuscripts, which include his perhaps finest and most demanding violin sonatas, the Sonata in A Major (RV 29) and the Sonata in C Minor (RV 6).

In addition to the violin virtuoso Pisendel, the Dresden court orchestra with its special and unusual performance is the second

factor responsible for the type of Vivaldi repertoire performed in the Saxon capital. The Dresden court was the second most predominant performance venue for Vivaldi, following only the Pietà and its highly praised orchestra. The Dresden orchestra gave performances (often probably commissions) of a very distinct new kind of concerto: the concerto with “many” concertante instruments, scored for strings and winds. The composer called these pieces *Concerti con molti Istromenti*. About half of the over fifteen pieces of this kind known today are preserved in Dresden or are connected with Dresden, and one is tempted to identify a certain scoring as the *Dresden type*. It is found in the five concertos for solo violin, which have one pair each of concertante horns and oboes (usually also with a bassoon) and strings, and form part of the repertoire of the Dresden court orchestra (RV 562, 568, 569, 571, and 574). The *Dresden* works also include the previously mentioned Concerto in G Minor “per Sua Altezza Reale di Sassonia” (RV 576) and the especially colorful concerto in the same key, of which there is no copy in Dresden, entitled “per l’Orchestra di Dresda” (RV 577) (fig. 39).²² Both of these works employ two recorders and two oboes together with violin (RV 577) and violin and oboe (RV 576) as the principal solo instruments.

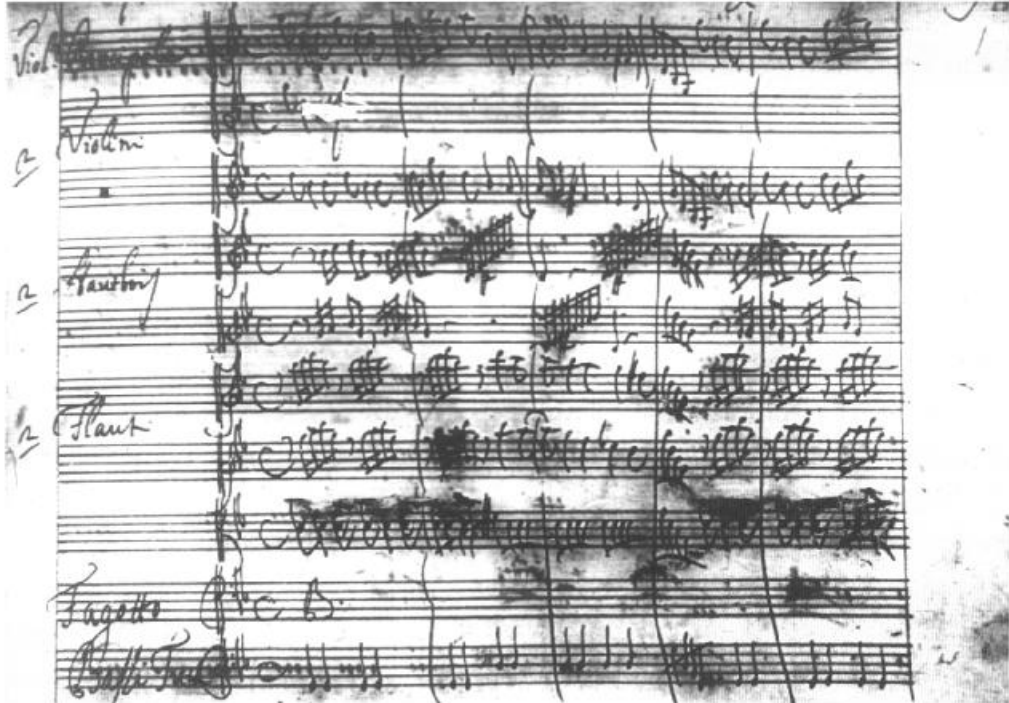


Figure 39. Autograph score of the Concerto in G Minor “per l’Orchestra di Dresda” (RV 577).

“Concerti con molti Istromenti”

Compared to the total number of the composer’s instrumental concertos, a group consisting of less than twenty works would seem to be relatively insignificant. Still, on the basis of their weight and historical influence, the works Vivaldi called *Concerti con molti Istromenti* (Concertos for Many Instruments) are of particular importance not only for their form but also within the context of early eighteenth-century orchestral music as a whole. The crucial distinctiveness of these concertos is that they are not Corellian concerti grossi in the old style, rather, they are works that fully conform to the model of the three-movement solo concerto, with, however, at least four or five solo instruments of different types. Concertos such as those for four violins (with or without a cello), as found in *L’estro armonico*, do not fall under this definition. On the other hand, there is no definition that clearly separates this group of works from others. As far as we know, Vivaldi used the term “Concerti con molti Istromenti” only twice: once, to designate an individual work, the RV 555 concerto with thirteen (!) concertante instruments, and secondly, in the title of the famous 1740 Dresden manuscript collection (Mus. 2389-O-4), in which the first work – the one that lends the set its name – is a concerto for eleven solo instruments (RV 558). In general, the composer also uses the title *concerto* to describe works with more than one or *many* solo instruments, after which he usually enumerates the instruments in question (“... con Corni da Caccia, due Oboè, Fagotto”, etc.). If today Vivaldi’s coinage “Concerto con molti Istromenti” is increasingly being used as the term for a genre or type of music, it is because there is really no more fitting name for these works.

It is impossible to know when Vivaldi wrote his first of the “concertos for many instruments”, yet there are a number of indications that this type of concerto came into being soon after the solo concerto. Vivaldi seems to have created this special kind of concerto; certainly, no one has been able to identify any direct Italian genre models. Musical conditions in the Pietà orchestra may have played an important role in stimulating such scoring because the Ospedale’s rich potential of soloists on various instruments must have made him think of uniting *many* players in one work. We must, however, keep in mind that a major portion of these concertos could hardly have been written for the Pietà

orchestra – those with pairs of concertante horns, for example, since to the best of our knowledge the horn was not used at the Pietà. Hiller writes that one of these concertos with horns (RV 571) was played by Pisendel in a Venetian theater between the acts of an opera during the winter of 1716–1717; another concerto's (RV 562) designation, "Per la solennità di San Lorenzo", refers to the location at which an especially splendid celebration on the martyr Lawrence's saint day (10 August) was held. In Venice, the main celebration venue was the Benedictine convent of San Lorenzo (which had to draw on outside musicians for such festivities), not the Ospedale della Pietà.²³ There are sets of parts for the Concerto in D Major (RV 562) in Pisendel's hand on Venetian paper (Mus. 2389-O-94) – also for the Concerto in F Major (RV 571), so the work cannot have been composed later than 1717.²⁴

It is impossible to tell whether any of the other concertos with horns were commissioned by Dresden. The possibility exists because the fact that all Vivaldi's works with this scoring were brought to Dresden shows the special interest the Dresden court orchestra (which had two regular horn players as early as 1710) had in these particular compositions.

Rudolf Eller has best described the particular historical and structural features of the "Concerti con molti Istromenti". Using the analysis of what I have described as the *Dresden Type*, with solo violin, horns, and oboes, Eller sees "the new and special aspect ... (as) the purposeful and intelligent organization of the movement form by use of different solo instruments in various sections of the structure", that is, the dominant solo violin, on the one hand, and the two pairs of concertante winds on the other. This means that the composer is not content in the fast, ritornello-form outer movements merely to "have the various solo instruments and their groupings play freely with the tutti and among themselves", but "rather he creates definite links between the different soloists and the formal structure". Especially characteristic is the occurrence of concertizing within the ritornellos as well as concertizing in the form of extended solos. In this kind of movement, the opening ritornello is "not performed throughout by the tutti but, at times, by solo instruments, chiefly groups of winds".²⁵ For example, in the opening Allegro of the Concerto in F Major (RV 571), which I have mentioned several times, the fanfare-like ritornello opening is followed by an eight-bar episode in which three groups of instruments – horns/bas-

soon, oboes, and violins – engage in a kind of dialogue (ex. 48). Almost all ritornellos in these works contain similar passages, some of which are quite long (42 bars of 4/4 in the first movement of the concerto RV 569, 58 bars of 3/4 in the opening movement of the concerto RV 568). In a few cases (the last movements of RV 569 and 574), even the opening of the ritornello is entrusted to a concertante wind group.

The image displays a musical score for Example 48, which is the first movement of the Concerto in F Major (RV 571) by Antonio Vivaldi. The score is for bars 11 and following. It includes staves for Corno I, Corno II, Ob. I, Ob. II, VI. I, VI. II, Fg. (Fagotto), and B.c. (Basso Continuo). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a dialogue between the woodwinds and strings, with a 'Tutti' marking appearing in the lower staves.

Example 48. Concerto in F Major (RV 571), first movement, bars 11 ff.

According to Rudolf Eller:

When, however, [after the end of the ritornello] the first large solo section begins, most of which was always played by the principal violin, another type of playing begins that brings a second, contrasting dimension. The solo contrasts already with

the ritornello as a whole, solely by its largely figurative, strongly virtuosic motifs, but also, the motives differ collectively from those in the ritornello, from those in the tutti, and from those in the contrasting episodes within the tutti. Thus the result is not only a mixing or combining but also an intensification of concertizing, a concertizing on various levels. In the course of the movement these levels interact a number of times; there is varied concertizing between the wind groups, the principal violin, and the tutti or single tutti voices.²⁶

In many cases there is an extraordinarily free use of ritornello form.

Of course, these remarks cover only one aspect of the special qualities of these pieces. The concertos are equally remarkable for the way in which the orchestra is used: the imaginative interplay of instrumental groups and the occasionally almost symphonic tutti writing. Two examples (mus. ex. 49a and 49b) illustrate this. The first comes from the last movement of the Concerto in F Major (RV 569) and contains the beginning of the last solo episode, which unfolds over a long tonic pedal point. The second is the seventeen-bar sequential passage from the first

The musical score for Example 49a is presented in two systems. The first system includes staves for Corno I, Corno II, Ob. I, Ob. II, Vcl. solo, and B.C. The second system continues the Vcl. solo and B.C. parts. The key signature is one flat (F major), and the time signature is 2/4. The score shows a complex interplay of instrumental groups, with the horns and oboes playing a rhythmic pattern, the violin soloist playing a melodic line, and the bassoon/contrabass playing a long, sustained tonic pedal point.

Example 49a. Concerto in F Major (RV 569), third movement, bars 198 ff.

The image shows a musical score for Example 49b, Concerto in D Major (RV 562), first movement, bars 17 ff. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Ob. I/II, Corni, VI. I, VI. II, Va., Organo principale, and Organo ripieno. The second system continues the same instrumentation. The music features sustained wind chords and rustling string figuration.

Example 49b. Concerto in D Major (RV 562), first movement, bars 17 ff.

movement ritornello of the “San Lorenzo” Concerto (RV 562), which is interesting owing to its combination of rustling string-figuration and long-held, sustained wind chords.

In addition to the group of five concertos with pairs of horns and oboes as concertante instruments, three concertos feature two recorders and two oboes in this function. As I have mentioned, two of these works, the Concertos in G Minor (RV 576 and RV 577), were certainly written for Dresden, and the third work, the Concerto in D Minor (RV 566), probably was also intended for the “orchestra di Dresda” owing to clear parallels to RV 577. The work dedicated to the prince-elector (RV 576) was probably composed in 1716, while the other two most likely were not written before 1720 or 1721.²⁷ The two G minor works display differences of musical character and structure when compared with the Concerto in D Minor, which features two violins as the principal solo instruments and which has a moderate, almost intimate

character. Its final movement, like the opening movement of the Concerto in F Major for Flute (RV 434 or RV 442), is based on the ritornello of the aria, “Ti sento, sì, ti sento”, but the theme is recast in minor in RV 566. In contrast, the two concertos in G minor are powerful, with insistent tuttis and highly varied instrumental interaction. The pairs of recorders and oboes are the main soloists, joined by one violin and a second oboe in one case (RV 576) and by one solo violin in the other (RV 577). In the latter work, however, the two wind groups and individual instruments within them have unusually large solo parts. Both pieces are excellent examples of the most artistically and historically advanced Vivaldi concerto.

In general, the other concertos use uncommon scoring groups and the instrumentation varies from work to work. The only exceptions to this rule are two concertos for two oboes and clarinets (RV 559 and RV 560) and the concertos for two violins and cellos (RV 564 and RV 575).²⁸ Still, in the same way, these concertos can be considered “Concerti con molti Istromenti”. The interaction is largely confined to dialogue between the two pairs of instruments, which gives special interest to the pieces. This principle is applied most consistently and effectively in the especially beautiful largos of RV 559 and RV 575.

The other concertos scored for large numbers of instruments are written for unique combinations, including some unusual sounding instruments. Such uncommon scoring is an indication that these concertos were written for the Pietà orchestra, in which such instruments were something of a specialty. The only concerto of this group that we know was written for another venue is the Concerto in C Major (RV 556) composed for the feast of San Lorenzo.²⁹ Table 2 gives a list that includes the most important of these works and their scoring.³⁰

Finally, one of the five preserved concertos for double orchestra (RV 581–585) also belongs to this group: the Concerto in A Major “in due cori con flauti obligati” (RV 585) (the autograph score is in Dresden), with each of the two *cori* consisting of two violins and two recorders (as solo instruments).

Each of these concertos is remarkable in its own right – in technical craftsmanship, in musical expression, and in style, but most of all in instrumentation. Though musical substance is secondary to instrumental color in some of the cheerfully festive movements, a work like the “San Lorenzo” Concerto in C Major (RV 556) shows that works of this

Table 2

Selected Vivaldi concertos that have uncommon scoring.

Work	Scoring of Work
1. Concerto in C Major (RV 555)	3 violins, oboe, 2 recorders, 2 <i>viole inglesi</i> , <i>salmoè</i> , 2 cellos, 2 harpsichords, 2 trumpets (final movement only), strings, and continuo
2. Concerto “per la solennità di S. Lorenzo” in C Major (RV 556)	2 oboes, 2 clarinets (<i>clarini</i>), 2 recorders, 2 violins, bassoon, strings, and continuo
3. Concerto in C Major (RV 558)	2 <i>violini in tromba marina</i> , 2 recorders, 2 mandolins, 2 <i>salmo</i> , 2 theorboes, cello, strings, and continuo
4. Concerto “Funebre” in B-flat Major (RV 579)	violin, oboe, <i>salmoè</i> , 3 <i>viole all’inglese</i> , strings and continuo (oboe and ripieno strings are noted “con sordini”)

kind can go beyond a kind of neutral festiveness. A good example of this is the Largo introduction to the first allegro movement – it begins with the brilliance of a French overture and ends *pianissimo* with subdued, descending minor chords covered by a lonely, infinitely long high note in the winds. The wonderful, formally distinct Concerto “Funebre” with its muted, wan timbre is an exception in every respect. One commentator rightly speaks of a “mourning shroud” cast over the music.³¹

Historically, the most influential works were not those for unusual ensembles, but rather those concertos scored for common groups. These include concertos with pairs of concertante flutes and oboes and, in particular, those works with pairs of horns and oboes, anticipating the standard scoring of pre- and early Classical symphonies. The language of future orchestral music is already present to an astonishing degree, and although we should not overestimate the pioneering aspect of such works, we can recognize that they play a role in the complex processes that prepared the symphonic orchestral style of the decades to come.

The lasting influence of this type of concerto in general and specifically on the German concerto, is incontestable. It is no exaggeration to state that, regardless of modifications to the Vivaldi model, the vast majority of the so-called group concertos (with or without a single dominant solo instrument and written in Germany between roughly 1720 and 1750) derived, at least indirectly, from the tradition of Vivaldi's concertos scored for mixed instruments. The Dresden court was by far the most important transmission channel for this particular trend toward a German acceptance of Vivaldi style. Virtually all the relevant composers (most of all Heinichen, who was active generally only in Dresden) were in more or less close contact with the Dresden orchestra, especially with Pisendel. The Dresden violinist and concertmaster was on friendly and professional terms (which in many cases involved the exchange of manuscripts or printed music) "with Stölzel in Gotha, Telemann in Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg, Fasch in Zerbst, Förster in Rudolstadt, Graupner in Darmstadt, and later, with his students Quantz and the brothers Graun in Berlin".³²

In this context I would like to stress once again the extent of Vivaldi's influence in Dresden, using for this purpose examples furnished by works of Johann Friedrich Fasch, whose large number of concertos for Dresden demonstrate perhaps most directly how important Vivaldi's wind concertos were as models. This is particularly apparent in an early group of works, composed about 1730, that are scored for the same forces as Vivaldi's "Dresden" concertos (solo violin, two horns, two oboes, and bassoon).

Finally, we come to Johann Sebastian Bach, another name from the list of composers who maintained especially close ties with the Dresden court. As cantor for the Thomas school in Leipzig, he was a Saxon subject and was permitted to carry the title (albeit only as of November 1736) of "Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Composer". We have evidence he took trips from Leipzig to Dresden as early as 1724, and we know of visits in the opposite direction by musicians of the Dresden court orchestra to the house of the Leipzig cantor. In 1773 Johann Adolph Scheibe wrote about the period around 1730 saying that "we received reliable and thorough information almost every day through the connection between the late *maestro di cappella* Bach and other music lovers in Leipzig and the virtuosos of the royal orchestra in Dresden".³³ One of these "virtuosos" with whom the Leipzig music director was on

friendly ternis certainly was Pisendel, who in 1709, during his journey from Ansbach to Leipzig, had stopped in Weimar and “introduced himself to Mr. Johann Sebastian Bach, who was employed there at the time”.³⁴ Pisendel was also referred to either as the one who suggested that Bach write his partitas and sonatas for solo violin or as the violinist for whom they were composed.

The first phase of Bach’s involvement with the Italian concerto was long behind him at that point. It had begun during his early and middle years in Weimar, and probably culminated around 1713–1714, when the not quite thirty-year-old composer transcribed at least twenty mostly Italian instrumental concertos as unaccompanied organ or harpsichord concertos, thus creating a new repertoire of virtuoso keyboard music. Though not all the works were originally by Vivaldi, as was assumed during the nineteenth century, the nine arrangements by Bach of concertos by the Venetian composer clearly demonstrate that he was at the heart of Bach’s interest. Of the other composers identified, only the young prince Johann Ernst of Weimar wrote more than one of the works arranged by Vivaldi. Bach surely had access to *L’estro armonico*, which had been published in 1711 and from which he transcribed five concertos.³⁵ The other transcriptions must have been based on manuscripts. Table 3 includes the most important information about these works.

Since scholars have shown that the transcriptions adhere closely to the form of the individual movements and to the works as a whole, the arranger’s changes are not as major as was assumed for many years. On the whole, Bach’s changes either are necessitated by the transcription for a keyboard instrument, providing idiomatic writing for these instruments (for example, reworking the continuo as an accompanying keyboard figuration), or furnish written out versions of more or less understood performance conventions of the period (for instance, ornamentation of a solo line). To be sure, the arranger occasionally betrays his utterly different musical nature by inserting secondary parts that make for a denser texture.

Though the Weimar concerto arrangements clearly document Bach’s involvement with the newly created Italian concerto, they are documents of secondary importance. The real measure of the importance of Vivaldi’s compositional principles for Bach comes in the significant stylistic changes in his own writing during those years. His main

Table 3

J. S. Bach Transcription Sources.

BWV #	Key	RV #	Key	Solo Instruments by Bach	Source Used
1. Transcriptions for Organ					
593	A minor	522	A minor	2 violins	Op. 3, No. 8, printed version
595	C major	208	D major	violin	manuscript of Op. 7, No. 11 (RV 208a) different from the printed version
596	D minor	565	D minor	2 violins & cello	Op. 3, No. 11, printed version
2. Transcriptions for Harpsichord					
972	D major	230	D major	violin	Op. 3, No. 9, printed version
973	G major	299	G major	violin	source identical to the printed version of Op. 7, No. 8
975	G minor	316	G minor	violin	manuscript version differing from the printed score of Op. 4, No. 6 (RV 316a)
976	C major	265	E major	violin	Op. 3, No. 12, printed version
978	F major	310	G major	violin	Op. 3, No. 3, printed version
980	G major	381	B-flat major	violin	manuscript; parts of first movement identical with Op. 4, No. 1 (RV 383a)

interest was not initially in composing concertos of his own (to which he did not devote major attention until his Cöthen years), but rather it was in evolving his own musical language under the influence of and based on the formal principles Vivaldi had developed in his concerto movements. This applies to types of themes, to harmonic placement, and to understanding of form. For Bach, the ritornello form remained,

well into his later years in Leipzig, one of his basic structural principles in almost all areas. The influence of Vivaldi's concertos is not, therefore, confined to Bach's concertos, but it includes the German composer's musical language as a whole, and, as Forkel would put it, his way of "thinking musically". The statement that "Vivaldi's influence" on Bach can "scarcely be exaggerated"³⁶ must be seen in this light.

Given the importance of Bach's encounter with Vivaldi during the Weimar years, it hardly seems conceivable that his interest was confined to a single early study of a relatively narrow selection of the Venetian composer's works. Instead I would assume that he continued to seek out Vivaldi's music in all areas. The major source of these works would certainly have been the Dresden court, which Bach first visited in the autumn of 1717 while he was still active in Weimar, that is, at the time when Pisendel was returning or had just returned from Italy. The most salient event of this first visit to Dresden was Bach's competition with Louis Marchand, though he must also have been exposed to new works by Vivaldi.

Rudolf Eller assigns a central role in Bach's presumed Dresden encounter with Vivaldi to the *Concerto con molti Istromenti*, which, according to the German musicologist, provided a major impetus for composing the *Brandenburg Concertos* ("Concerts avec plusieurs instruments"). These works, which have as little in common with the concerto grosso as do Vivaldi's compositions, also occasionally have "scoring consisting of a dominant solo instrument with a concertino-like group or groups" and the overridingly important "formal idea of ensemble playing on two levels".³⁷ If Vivaldi's concepts of movement and form are greatly enriched and individualized in the process (assuming that Bach was actually stimulated by the Vivaldi works in question), this would only conform to the general line of Bach's Vivaldi reception that always includes the "modification and transformation of the Vivaldi model". Of all the composers who adopted Vivaldi's formal model, "Bach was the one who best understood its possibilities and was therefore better able to develop it further".³⁸

The *Concerto con molti Istromenti* genre also relates to other aspects of Vivaldi performances in Dresden: performance style and arrangements. Clearly, works that include concertante wind instruments require heavier scoring than the normal solo concerto with string ripieno. Vivaldi's concertos with pairs of winds are therefore preserved in Dresden with

parts for up to thirty and more players: ten to twelve violins, four violas, the required winds, and a bass section of up to twelve performers, including cellos, basses, bassoons, and occasionally two keyboard instruments. Existing scores and parts prove that not only mixed concertos were performed with large ensembles but also normal violin concertos and Vivaldi's works without soloists. We have parts for about fifteen of these compositions in large scoring; in these, the original strings are augmented by winds. In the simplest and most frequent cases, the violins are doubled by oboes (sometimes oboe and flutes) and the bass strings by bassoon(s). The sinfonias and concertos RV 122, 162, 192, 212, 213, 253, 507, 508, and 521 were performed this way. In most cases the string parts were slightly modified for the winds. Theorists from the period relate that, at least in Germany, it was common practice to reinforce the winds, and this is confirmed by the performance materials found in Dresden for many other works of the time. Johann Joachim Quantz advised "music leaders" to "take one viola, one cello, and a medium contrabass for four violins ... for eight violins take two violas, two cellos, another slightly larger contrabass than the first; two oboes, two flutes, and two bassoons".³⁹

The role of additional winds in Dresden arrangements was not, however, confined to doublings. The added winds (oboes and bassoon) were also given some concertante passages, as seen in the Dresden arrangements of the following violin concertos: RV 294 (Mus. 23S9-O-156), RV 319 (Mus. 2389-O-86), and RV 519 (Mus. 2389-O-159). Although such wind episodes are far less frequent here than in concertos originally scored for mixed winds, the model is clearly the *Concerti con molti Istromenti*. In some instances, these scoring changes also brought about substantial alteration of the work's structure. I will not touch on this area just as I will not touch on the broad topic of the practice of solo ornamentation, which is amply documented in the Dresden performance materials.

Pisendel was responsible for virtually all these adaptations and arrangements. He not only painstakingly added expression marks to the works he directed but he also often recast them according to a distinct ideal of musical taste and performance. A crucial aspect of the Dresden style of performance was to bring out the brilliance of the court orchestra, which meant favoring large, truly orchestral scoring with extensive use of wind instruments.

Pisendel's version of two string works by Vivaldi (and without soloists), the two sinfonias (or concertos) in F major (RV 135 and RV 140) are particularly striking examples of this tendency. Both pieces were originally string works in four parts (at times as little as three parts) whose effects derive from the brilliant, supple writing for the tutti violins. In Dresden, not only were oboes and bassoons used to double string parts, Pisendel also added two horn parts. The opening of the first movement of RV 140, entitled "Allegro molto" in the original Turin version, looks somewhat different in the orchestrally enriched Dresden version (ex. 50).

The musical score is for the first movement of Vivaldi's Sinfonia in F Major (RV 140), Dresden version. It consists of four staves. The top staff is for Corno I (Allegro), the second for Corno II, the third for Ob. u. VI. I/II, and the fourth for Va. (Violoncello). The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The score shows the first two measures of the piece, with various musical notations including eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. The bottom staff is labeled 'B.c.' and has a '6' below it. The top staff has a '7 5' below it.

Example 50. Sinfonia in F Major (RV 140), first movement (Dresden version).

Chapter Eight

“Old Vivaldi or the *Prete Rosso*” – The Composer’s Last Decade (1732–1741)

Regardless of the success or failure of Vivaldi’s travels from 1729 to 1731, the end of this period marked a turning point in the composer’s career. He became used to the ideas of staying in Venice and of orienting his career toward the possibilities his native city offered him and the projects he could undertake from Venice (figs. 40 and 41). Vivaldi began a relatively settled period, interrupted at most by the few opera productions – in Mantua, Verona, Florence, and Treviso – mounted outside Venice. Almost a decade went by before the *prete rosso*, then sixty-two, decided to leave Venice in the spring of 1740 and risk a complete change in his life.

Even if one attempts to consider Vivaldi’s situation during the 1730s without knowing about the final part of his life, it is impossible not to note that, on the whole, his fame declined during this period. To be sure, he was still “the famous Vivaldi” who continued to fill “almost half the world” with his concertos, but the time was past when he had established and spread his fame; he was past the zenith of his career. We have no way of knowing to what degree and at what point Vivaldi began to feel this, though one assumes that he may have begun to sense his declining fame during his travels in *Germania*. The events surrounding

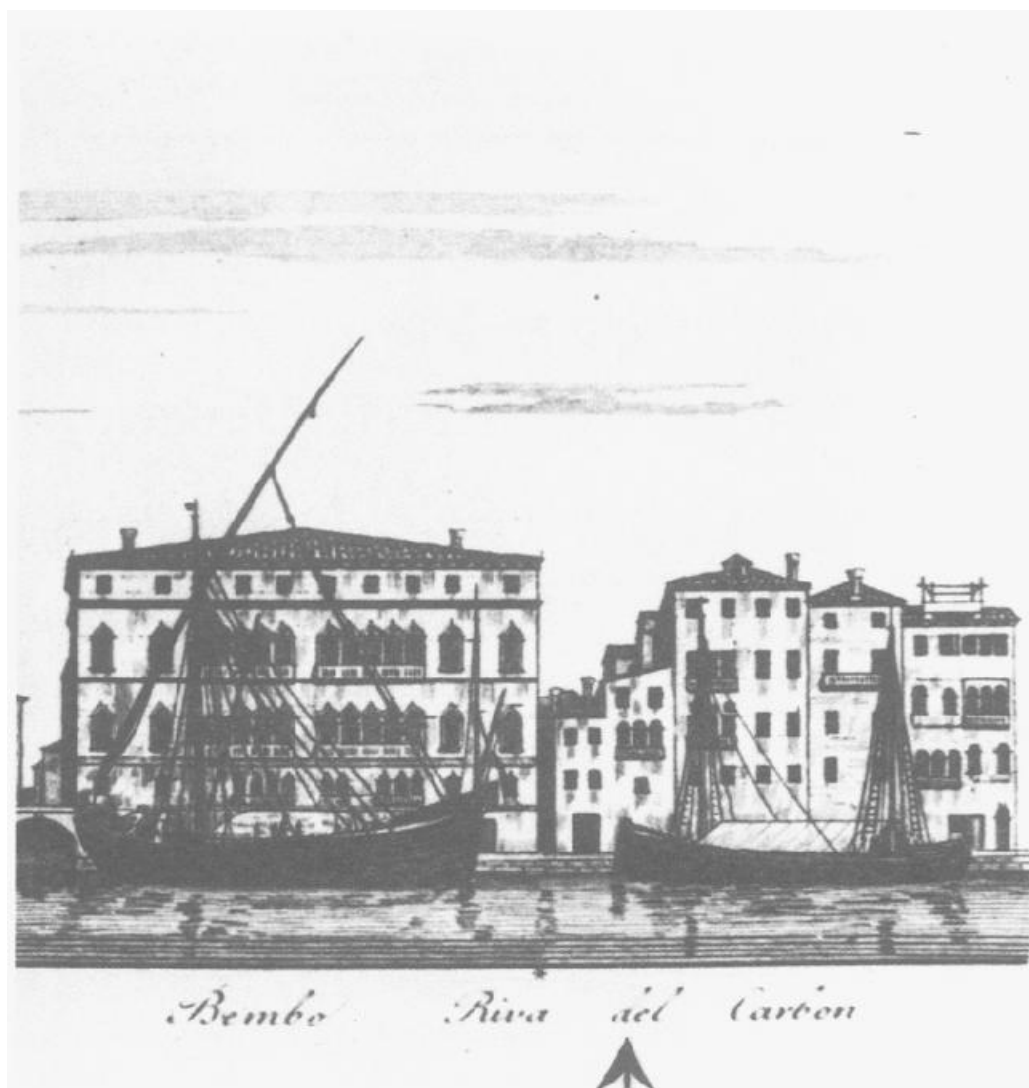


Figure 40. Vivaldi's last house in Venice (1731–1740) (see arrow). Engraving by Antonio Quadri (1828).

his operatic endeavors in Ferrara, between autumn 1736 and Carnival 1739, must have made it clear to him that his prestige as a musician was vanishing, indeed that it was gone.

The main biographical reference points for the 1730s are opera productions, and it is also primarily and most clearly in this area that one finds his reputation as a composer reflected. I would like to recall here (see chap. 5) only a few salient facts of Vivaldi's operatic career. Especially conspicuous is the fact that Vivaldi no longer had regular ties to any Venetian opera house and was no longer able to maintain his influence there. His work with the Teatro Sant'Angelo, which he had dominated for many years as impresario and house composer, ceased for four



Figure 41. Vivaldi's last house in Venice (1730–1740), present condition.

years following his three premieres in the autumn of 1733 and Carnival 1734. It was not until Carnival 1738 that another two Vivaldi operas and a *pasticcio* arranged by him were performed there. During this lull he filled two opera commissions (spring and autumn 1735) – in addition to possible intermezzo commissions – for the Grimani theater of San Samuele; these operas did not, however, result in a continuing association with the theater. The only theater outside Venice with which he occasionally collaborated was the Teatro Filarmonico in Verona, where Vivaldi produced the opening opera, *La fida ninfa*, in January 1732, a new opera and a *pasticcio* during Carnival 1735, and another new opera during spring 1737. Earlier, I described his failed attempts, accompanied by serious artistic and personal defeats, to establish himself in Ferrara as an opera composer.

The number of new operas and *pasticci*, at least thirteen, that Vivaldi produced after 1732 is still substantial, though the new works are mostly concentrated in the period up to January 1736, with a peak – four operas and one *pasticcio* – between Carnival 1735 and Carnival 1736. Subsequently, the Venetian produced only three new operas and one *pasticcio*. Vivaldi's last documented work for the stage is the opera *Feraspe*, performed in November 1739 at the Sant'Angelo.

We have only sporadic information about how these late operas were received by audiences. Vivaldi reported that a series of performances of *Catone in Utica* in Verona, in spring 1737, was successful, while a revival of *Siroe* in Ferrara, to begin the 1739 Carnival, turned out to be a total failure. Quite apart from these surviving notices, the operas must not have enjoyed more than brief local success. They did not make their way into leading opera houses. The fact that the operas were launched in secondary theaters is in part responsible, though their limited popularity was largely due to the scores themselves – not owing to the artistic quality of the music as such, but to its backwardness with respect to the trends of the new Neapolitan style of Hasse's generation. *La fida ninfa*, *L'Olimpiade*, and *La Griselda*, the only operas from the 1730s that we have in their entirety, must have been well above the average levels of musical inspiration and effectiveness of opera productions of the times, but they did not give audiences the wide-arching, supple vocal melody they loved and found in the operas of Johann Adolph Hasse.

There is reliable evidence that Vivaldi knew how effective this new operatic style was – it was no accident that his late *pasticci* increasingly

contained music by such composers as Giacomelli, Hasse, and Leo. The situation was driven home to him during the 1737 Ferrara Carnival *stagione*, in which he had to revive two Hasse operas in place of his own, originally scheduled, *Ginevra* and *L'Olimpiade*.

The sources say nothing about Vivaldi's relationship with the Ospedale della Pietà during the early 1730s. There are no remaining minutes of the governing board from between February 1729 and February 1733, but since the ledgers do not record any payments, it would seem that the composer did not work for the Pietà at the time. He was not regularly employed as *maestro* during 1733 and 1734 and was not re-employed until 5 August 1735. On that day, the *congregazione* of the Pietà voted eight to two (with three abstentions) to appoint Vivaldi *maestro de' concerti*. His duties consisted of supplying the Pietà with "concertos and compositions for all types of instruments" and of being available "as frequently as necessary" to teach the girls and rehearse works.¹ His annual payment was one hundred ducats.

The reasons why the *prete rosso* now returned to regular employment with a fixed annual sum, unlike in the 1723 settlement, remain to be seen, though clearly his terms were now less advantageous. According to the agreement of 2 July 1723 Vivaldi earned twenty-four sequins (about eighty-five ducats) a year merely for supplying two concertos per month, and he was obliged to lead only three to four rehearsals when he was in Venice. The 1735 decision, however, assumed a permanent presence in Venice and obligated him to teach and to hold rehearsals "as frequently as necessary". The annual salary of one hundred ducats also seems to have been anything but commensurate with Vivaldi's reputation – it was the same sum he had been paid as a beginning musician when he entered the Pietà in 1704.

Vivaldi worked for two full years under the conditions stipulated in the employment decision of summer 1735. After he had been confirmed unanimously in 1736 and with only one "no" vote in 1737, he obtained a mere seven/four vote in his favor at the governing board's vote of 28 March 1738, thereby losing his post as *maestro* for the third time in his career at the Pietà (the first two occasions were in 1709 and 1716).

Vivaldi's loss of his regularly paid position did not, however, mean the end of his relations with the Pietà; indeed he was employed for special tasks until the spring of the year when he left Venice. He was charged with composing church music because the *maestro di coro* posi-

tion had been vacant for almost two years after Giovanni Porta had departed in September 1737. Vivaldi was one of the interim, composers who wrote sacred vocal works until Gennaro d'Alessandro was appointed to the post in August 1739. Two fee payments to Vivaldi in spring 1739 along with works or new versions of works from this period are proof of this activity. The payments were for "six psalms with antiphons and six motets" (14 April) and for five motets and nine "concertos and sonatas" (27 May). For these he received seventy-four ducats twelve grossi (twenty-one sequins) and fifty ducats (fourteen sequins).² We do not know which works the payments were for.

I will mention here only the few large vocal works verifiably written for the Pietà and datable from the composer's last years in Venice. The works in question are the RV 611 version of the Magnificat in G Minor and the psalm setting for double chorus, "Lauda Jerusalem" (RV 609). Both scores bear the names of the vocal soloists: Margarita, Julietta, Fortunata, and Chiaretta for the soprano parts in "Lauda Jerusalem;" Apollonia, Bolognese, Ambrosina, Albetta, and, again, Chiaretta, for the solo parts in the Magnificat. All these girls also performed in the serenata performance of 21 March 1740. It is especially interesting from a performance practice point of view that the solo soprano parts in "Lauda Jerusalem" (one each in the *Primo Coro* and *Secondo Coro*) were both sung by two girls.

The governors of the Pietà also availed themselves of the *prete rosso* when they prepared a special musical event in March 1740: a gala concert in honor of the visiting Saxon prince-electors Frederick Christian, son of Elector Frederick August II, who had been similarly feted in Venice twenty-five years earlier. Musical homages of this sort were hardly unusual for the Pietà, though it would seem that the institution this time spared no expense or energy to provide a fitting tribute to the eighteen-year-old prince. The elaborate, festive program, entitled *L'Adria festosa*,³ is the kind of publication printed for only truly extraordinary events. (A visit by Prince Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria, brother of Elector Karl Albert – later Emperor Charles VII – during Carnival 1737, for example, received far less attention.) In order to honor him the Pietà performed a Vivaldi serenata, "Egloga pescatoria", entitled *Il Mopso* (RV 691), but the only remaining information about this performance comes from a 1755 opera catalog and from the notes of a

nineteenth-century Italian musicologist.⁴ According to these notes, Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria praised the performance highly and honored the composer with gifts.

The concert that the Pietà held on 21 March 1740 to honor Prince-Elector Frederick Christian, who had been staying in the city since December 1739, was the first of three similar musical homages the Venetian ospedali dedicated to the royal visitor from Saxony; the performance at the Pietà was followed one week later by one at the Ospedale degli Incurabili, and on 4 April it was the Mendicanti's turn. Understandably, the three institutions tried to outdo one another not only in musical offerings but also in festive and imaginative scenery design as well. For the Pietà concert the hall was decorated "with gold brocade and magnificent damask with frills, with candle-holding crystal chandeliers, and with numerous great torches"; "the canal leading from the Riva to the aforementioned holy place was illuminated by torches", and for the performance of the homage serenata, *Il coro delle muse*, by Carlo Goldoni (libretto) and Gennaro d'Alessandro (music) a "beautiful stage with a pleasing set piece showing the choir of muses" was erected.

Unlike the performances at the Incurabili and at the Mendicanti, the festive concerts of the Pietà consisted mostly of instrumental music, since the orchestra and its excellent soloists were long considered the highlights of the house, that is, the obligatory serenata was the center of the program – with nine young Ospedale singers as the muses – but the most important musical part of the program was instrumental, featuring Vivaldi's concertos exclusively. For the occasion, the *prete rosso* composed four works, which were performed on the evening of 21 March by the girls of the Pio Ospedale della Pietà: the richly scored C Major *Concerto con molti Istromenti* (RV 558) featuring rare instruments, the Concerto for Solo Violin in A Major (RV 552) (with a second violin as "a distant echo"), the Double Concerto for Viola d'Amore and Lute in D Minor (RV 540), and the Sinfonia for Strings and Basso Continuo in G Major (RV 149). Moreover, the scores of all four works were bound in presentation copies and presented to the prince-electors together with a dedication manuscript. This volume of eighty-three folios bearing the title *Concerti con molti Istromenti* found its way into the private music collection of the Saxon electors and has been one

of the especially prized pieces of Dresden Vivaldiana for many years (fig. 42).⁵ This source is all the more valuable because the presentation scores of the Concerto for Viola d'Amore and Lute and for the sinfonia were written by the composer himself, and these two scores are the last known Vivaldi autographs of any type (fig. 43). Interestingly enough, on the calligraphic title page of the manuscript Vivaldi still calls himself *maestro de concerti* of the Ospedale, although he was no longer employed in this position.

Despite the abundant information about the musical soiree at the Pietà in honor of Frederick Christian, there are still a number of gaps. Did Vivaldi present the manuscripts to the Dresden prince personally? Was there personal contact between the musician and the scion of the court that had been one of the Vivaldi bastions for a number of years? But most of all, could Vivaldi, who must have already been planning to leave Venice, have used the dedication with other ends in mind?

Frederick Christian's travel journal contains no answers to these questions, the name Vivaldi does not appear. Still, the prince wrote a few sentences about the evening: the performance of the "cantata written expressly for me" was very successful, "but it is the musical instruments, which are truly excellent and much rarer because they are all



Figure 42. Title page of the 1740 manuscript volume dedicated to Prince-Elector Frederick Christian.



Figure 43. Opening of the Concerto for Viola d'Amore and Lute (RV 540) in the 1740 autograph score.

played by women without a single man, that make this hospital famous. The last concerto for two violins was very pretty”.⁶

Events such as the festive concert for Frederick Christian must have been rather infrequent during Vivaldi's last years. Apart from the aforementioned serenatas for Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria, we know of no enterprise of real importance during the composer's late life. Until recently, it was believed that Vivaldi undertook a major trip to attend the centennial of the Amsterdam Stadsschouwburg in January 1738, but a recent examination of sources has excluded the possibility of Vivaldi's personal participation in the celebration at the Amsterdam Municipal Theater on 7 January 1738.⁷ All that remains is the fact that the large festival concert (with works by, among others, Agrell, de Fesch, Chintzer, and Sammartini) opened with a concerto by Vivaldi. The concerto in question was not a new work, but an arrangement (RV 562a) of the Concerto in D Major “per la solennità di San Lorenzo”, which was probably written about twenty-five years earlier. The Amsterdam version added timpani.

Vivaldi published no works after his second series of collections, which came out between 1725 and 1729 (Opp. 8 to 12). This is true if we refer to printed collections with opus numbers that were put together or authorized by the composer, such as the concerto and sonata sets Opp. 1 to 12. Perhaps this category also includes six cello sonatas published in Paris by Le Clerc le Cadet in 1740 (RV 47, 41, 43, 45, 40, and 46), although it is likely, in this case as well, that the composer did not have a hand in preparing the edition. We are sure that the same applies to a collection published in Paris in 1737 (by Madame Boivin) entitled *Il pastor fido*, containing six *Sonates pour la Musette, Vièle, Flute, Hautbois, Violin, avec la Basse Continue* (RV 54–59, called Op. 13), and consisting of concerto movement arrangements (of Vivaldi, Meck, and Alberti) and some original movements. The instruments listed in the title are intended as alternative instruments, the scoring being for one melody instrument and continuo. It has recently been proved⁸ that these arrangements were made by the Paris musician and instrument maker Nicolas Chédeville. Chédeville is also the author of the 1739 collection entitled *Le Printems ou les Saisons amusantes concertos d'Antonio Vivaldi...*, which consists of arrangements of six Italian instrumental concertos, including Vivaldi's *La primavera* (RV 269).

Vivaldi made unmistakably clear to a foreign visitor why he did not publish new collections of works. He had a conversation on 13 February 1733 with the English scholar Edward Holdsworth, who reported to his friend and Vivaldi admirer Charles Jennens in a letter written that same day that Vivaldi said that “he had resolved not to publish any more concertos, because it prevents him from selling his compositions in manuscript, which he thinks will turn more to account”. The passage concerning Vivaldi's prices that follows is especially interesting, “as certainly it would if he finds a good market because he expects a guinea for every piece. Perhaps you might deal with him if you were here to choose what you like, but I am sure I shall not venture to choose for you at that price”.⁴

To understand Holdsworth's reaction, it is necessary to know that a guinea was worth about fifty lire at the time, that is, about two sequins six lire. At that price it is evident that on the free market Vivaldi charged more than twice what the Pietà paid him, which was one sequin per concerto. Certainly this is an example of the musician's keen business sense, which we have seen elsewhere. This quality also shows

the special conditions Vivaldi faced as a musician in Venice. He held a regular position for only part of his career, essentially the first half, which assured him a fixed, albeit insufficient, income. He was essentially a free-lance artist subject to all the risks and demands of the music world, which was already largely subject to middle class market laws. His only possibility of creating and guaranteeing for himself a seemingly existence under such conditions was to insure that the success of and demand for his works could be translated into material gain.

Vivaldi was certainly an artist who also understood this side of his profession, and his extraordinary position and popularity as a composer of concertos permitted him to charge unusually high fees. This is again confirmed by an account by French scholar and music lover Charles de Brosses (later the first president of the Dijon Parliament), in probably the most important document, dated August 1739, of the composer's final years in Venice. De Brosses's *Lettres historiques et critiques sur l'Italie*, the result of his Italian travels, contain extremely perceptive remarks about music in that country. The material about Vivaldi, contained in the letter dated 29 August 1739, also refers to the composer's business sense: "Vivaldi has become very friendly with me", de Brosses wrote, "in order to sell me some concertos at a very high price. He has succeeded in part".¹⁰

The same letter contains the only contemporary source to confirm Vivaldi's fading star in Venice. "To my great amazement", the observant visitor to Venice states, "I have found that he is not as appreciated here as he deserves, for fashion is everything in Venice, where his works have been heard for too long and where last year's music makes no money. The current man of the day is the famous 'Sassone' (Hasse)".

The sixty-two-year-old composer must have decided to leave Venice because of this situation. The first document indicating that Vivaldi planned to leave the city is the voting record of the Pietà governors of 29 April 1740¹¹. The resolution concerned the acquisition of a large number of Vivaldi concertos because of the necessity of purchasing such concertos to maintain the ensemble's reputation and because of the composer's intention to leave Venice. "The honorable Vivaldi" had set aside "a certain number of concertos" ["una certa portione de concerti"] for sale, and the proposed price per concerto was one sequin. Though there were two ballots, the required majority was not reached that day. A payment of seventy ducats twenty-three grossi (twenty

sequins) made to Vivaldi on 12 May 1740 proves that the Pietà finally approved his offer. Three days earlier, on 9 May, Vivaldi had received fifteen ducats twenty-three grossi for three concertos and one sinfonia – most probably the performance material of the four works performed at the festive concert for Frederick Christian.

The receipts dated 9 and 12 May are the last entries concerning Vivaldi in the Pietà ledger and the last proof of his presence in Venice. When Vivaldi received a summons to testify before court, on 24 May, his neighbors stated that he was “outside the city” (“fuori della terra”).¹² This would seem to indicate that Vivaldi left Venice between 12 and 24 May. We then lose the composer’s track for no less than nine months – until 7 February of the following year, when we have the first proof of his presence in Vienna. We do not know when he arrived in there, nor do we know where he visited between the two cities. The main uncertainty, however, is Vivaldi’s reason for traveling to Vienna and whether the city was his original final destination. Similar to his travels to *Germania* ten years before, we can only speculate about why he went.

Understandably, the Habsburg court and Vivaldi’s patron Charles VI are regularly mentioned in these conjectures, yet the assumption that Vivaldi had a real chance at the time to be appointed court orchestra director in Vienna is not convincing. This does not mean that Vivaldi did not hope to find patronage and commissions at court, and we should not discount the possibility that his situation in Vienna would have been radically different had Charles VI not died in the autumn of 1740. With the emperor’s death and with the beginning of the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748), the composer must have ceased counting on the Austrian court for help.

All the information we currently possess seems to indicate that Vivaldi was hoping to realize opera projects north of the Alps, for public not court theaters. The first indication in this direction has to do with the opera company of Pietro and Angelo Mingotti. The Mingotti brothers, whose opera company had originated in Venice, were the first to tour Austria and Germany from their base in Italy. The troupe had been performing in Graz since 1736 and engaged Vivaldi’s prima donna and companion, Anna Girò, during the 1739–1740 season. Performances were held in the city’s first public theater, the wooden “Theater am Tummelplatz” built by Pietro Mingotti. Girò, who had last performed

in Italy in Ferrara in the *Siroe* revival that opened the 1739 Carnival season, appeared in five opera productions between spring 1739 and Carnival 1740. Two of these works, *Catone in Utica* and *Rosmira*, were probably Vivaldi's settings of 1737 and 1738; some of the other titles of the operas performed by the Mingotti company (*Ipermestra*, *Farnace*, *Siroe*, and *Adelaide*) may also be by Vivaldi. The name of the composer of all of the above works is not given in the libretto.

By the time Vivaldi arrived in Graz, the spring *stagione* was about to end or was already over, and in the fall of 1740, as a result of financial difficulties, the Mingottis could not perform in this city. Anna Girò probably left the troupe at the end of the Carnival season. We have no information regarding her whereabouts during subsequent years, though a note, dated 17 February 1742, in a tax file states that she had "traveled to Vienna."¹³ The next proof of her presence in Venice is from 1745. As far as we can determine today, her last Venetian operatic appearance took place at the Teatro San Samuele in 1747.

There is a considerable amount of evidence that Vivaldi's plans and aspirations in Vienna were primarily concentrated on opera projects, specifically for the Kärntnertortheater. A number of Vivaldi operas (*Tito Manlio*, *Artabano*, *Il Teuzzone*, *Farnace*, *Candace*, and *Bajazet*) were probably performed at this theater during the 1730s, though we have no concrete proof of this since only the title has survived, not the composer. It is therefore possible that Vivaldi pinned his special hopes on the Kärntnertortheater owing to these earlier performances. Two circumstances during Vivaldi's last months in Vienna draw our attention to this theater: the fact that the composer took up lodging very close to the theater (the house in which he died, the "Satlerisch Haus" on the corner of Kärntnerstrasse and Sattlergasse, was only one building away from the theater), and Vivaldi's repeated efforts to gain an audience with an aristocrat who was presumably a patron of that theater. The individual in question was Anton Ulrich of Saxony-Meiningen, at the time co-regent and later sole duke of the small state of Thuringia.¹⁴ The libretto collection of this music- and theater-loving prince and duke (who assembled a rich music collection during his long stay in Vienna) contains the only known libretto of the Vienna performance of Vivaldi's *L'oracolo in Messina*, perhaps the most convincing proof of Vivaldi's personal tie to the Kärntnertortheater.¹⁵ *L'oracolo in Messina* was not performed until Carnival 1742 (the libretto states that "La musica è

del fù Sig. D. Antonio Vivaldi” [The music is by the late Signor Don Antonio Vivaldi]), though we have good reason to assume that the performance, for which Vivaldi himself had prepared the ground, may have been originally scheduled for autumn 1740 or Carnival 1741.¹⁶

Only a handful of information about Vivaldi’s brief period in Vienna exists from direct biographical sources, including the documents concerning his death and burial. Sketchy though these documents are, they give a clear indication of the difficult situation of his final months and how abandoned “the famous Vivaldi” was when he died. The first pieces of information are diary entries, dated 7, 8, and 11 February 1741, from Duke Anton Ulrich of Meiningen (fig. 44). As I previously mentioned, they are the first evidence of Vivaldi’s presence in Vienna. There is some obscurity and muddle in these sparse, casual notes, yet they state unmistakably that on two occasions (8 and 11 February) “the composer Vivaldi” was denied an audience with Anton Ulrich. The first time “he was told to come another time ... because I was dictating my diary”, and he notes cursorily on 11 February that “The composer Vivaldi came a second time; I did not speak with him this time either”. His visitor had been successful only on 7 February; the clearly incomplete entry states, “After speaking with old Vivaldi or the *prete rosso*, who...”.¹⁷

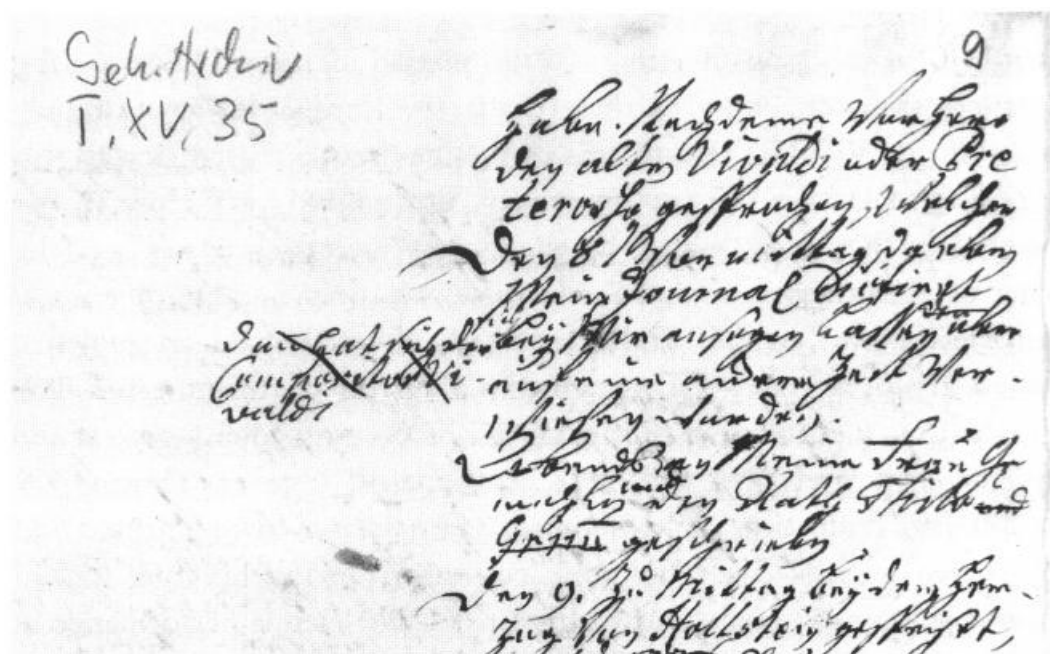


Figure 44. Anton Ulrich of Saxony-Meiningen’s diary entry of 7 February 1741 concerning Vivaldi’s visit.

The next document is a receipt Vivaldi wrote in Vienna on 28 June 1741. In it the composer confirms receiving twelve Hungarian ducats from the secretary of Count Collalto for the sale of an unspecified number of compositions (“tanta Musica vendutali”).¹⁸ Vinciguerra Tommaso di Collalto (erroneously called Antonio Vinciguerra in Vivaldi’s receipt), scion of a patrician Venetian family, was lord of Brtnice (Pirnitz) Palace in Moravia. His active patronage of music is attested to by the catalog of a large number of scores from the mid-1700s. Probably the sixteen Vivaldi works contained in this collection (one sinfonia and fifteen violin concertos)¹⁹ are the works for which the above receipt was written. If this is the case, however, the price paid per work is appallingly low: about twelve lire or slightly more than half the amount the Pietà paid him (one sequin or twenty-two lire) and not even a fourth of what he had charged foreign buyers for a concerto in 1733. It would seem that only genuine need could have compelled him to sell at this price.

The composer’s death is noted in the official coroner’s report and in the burial account book of St. Stephen’s Cathedral Parish as having occurred on 28 July 1741, exactly one month after the above receipt.

“The Very Reverend Signor Antonio Vivaldi, secular priest”, states the burial account book, died, according to the coroner’s verdict, “of an internal inflammation in Satler’s house by the Kärntner (Carinthia) Gate, aged sixty years, [buried] in the hospital burial ground” (fig. 45).²⁰ What follow are the costs of the burial, held on the same day, a Friday:

Poor bells	2.36
Curates	3.00
Pall	2.15
Parish emblem	0.30
Burial site	2.00
Gravedigger and sexton	1.15
Sacristan	0.30
6 pallbearers with coats	4.30
6 storm lanterns	2.00
6 choirboys	0.54
Bier	0.15
	19.45



Figure 45. The hospital cemetery (Spitaler Gottesacker) in Vienna with chapel and St. Charles Church. Engraving by Salomon Kleiner, 1737.

This entry in the register of deaths gives as much information as we have concerning the composer's death and burial. The remaining available notices – the entries in the death records register and in the “List of Those who Died in Vienna” in the *Wienerisches Diarium* (chronicle) of 2 August 1741²¹ contain less information and are valuable only because they expressly confirm 28 July as the date of death (and not the date of burial), though the possibility still exists that death occurred on the night of 27–28 July. All other details concerning the composer's demise have been lost; the indication of the cause of death (“internal inflammation”) is too vague to enable conjecture about the length and the course of the illness.

Two details about Vivaldi's death that have come down to us merit special attention. The first is a negative one, the fact that Vivaldi is not called musician, composer, or the like in any of the entries; instead he is only designated a secular priest. We have the impression that people had no idea who the deceased was, that those around him in his last surroundings had no inkling of the fame this secular priest enjoyed as a musician. That would coincide with the lack of any public notice of his death.

Second, the cost of his burial is indicative. Although it is not true that, as one often reads in the literature, he was given a “pauper’s burial”, the sum of nineteen florins and forty-five kreutzers would have been sufficient for only the simplest of ceremonies. By way of comparison, the funeral of the Vienna court music director Johann Joseph Fux, who died in February of the same year, cost roughly nine times as much as Vivaldi’s.

The house (Walleris Haus or Satlerisch Haus) where he died, which was owned by the Wahlers (Wallerers), a family of saddlers, no longer exists nor does the burial ground (also called poor sinners’ burial ground), which belonged to the public hospital (Bürgerspital). The cemetery was abandoned at the end of the eighteenth century, while the house, “an ample four-story structure during Vivaldi’s time”, and “a quite good property”,²² was torn down in 1876 to make way for another building.

Despite the many open questions regarding the final period of the composer’s life, without doubt “the famous Vivaldi” died in Vienna impoverished, anonymous, and unnoticed. The composer who “filled almost half the world with his concertos” and who a few years earlier had boasted of “corresponding with nine high princes” was buried in the musical city of Vienna to the pealing of “poor bells”, without the musical world seeming to take the slightest notice. This state of affairs may be due in part to a change in style and taste, and it surely has to do with Vivaldi’s lifestyle, to which the eighteenth-century Venetian chronicler Pietro Gradenigo devoted special attention. He wrote in his *Commemoriali* that “The Abbate D. Antonio Vivaldi, the incomparable violinist known as the red-haired priest, highly esteemed for his concertos and other compositions, earned at one time more than fifty thousand ducats, but his inordinate extravagance caused him to die in poverty, in Vienna”.²³ Yet the real reasons for the way his musical career ended must be sought elsewhere. Vivaldi engaged in the risky undertaking to live as a largely independent musician and man of the theater without ties of service. He could only succeed in this during the long period when he had above average success. He was condemned to failure when his art ceased to arouse an enthusiastic response, and it was precisely in this situation that he set out to start over in new surroundings.

This pronounced will for independence and freedom of movement is an expression of artistic self-assurance and a general trait of Vivaldi’s

personality. Difficult though it is to grasp the musician's character in all its complexity, certain qualities come up repeatedly to betray an irresistible spirit of initiative directed toward self-fulfillment. He was the opposite of the artist who lives and works in peace and solitude; he sought and needed an active link to the public and stimulation through an environment that fed his craving for recognition and success. Limited by a physical ailment, he seems to burst with an inner urge for action, an urge that is surely at the roots of his tendency to write large numbers of works very quickly. He wrote on the score of his opera *Tito Manlio* "Musica del Vivaldi fatta in 5 giorni" (Music by Vivaldi, composed in five days – fig. 46). As late as 1739, Charles de Brosses saw in Vivaldi "a phenomenal passion for composition" ("une furie de composition prodigieuse"). According to de Brosses, the composer offered to "compose a concerto with all its parts faster than a copyist could copy it".²⁴

Many of Vivaldi's manuscripts provide eloquent proof of this "furie de composition". He begins a concerto in a careful, balanced, and



Figure 46. Page one of the autograph score of the opera *Tito Manlio*, with the heading in the composer's hand "Musica del Vivaldi fatta in 5 giorni".

controlled hand, only to quickly shift to a scribble that throws all these good intentions to the wind.

Ludwig Landshoff described this phenomenon, which is evident in the Dresden autograph of the “Pisendel” Concerto, RV 340. (See also fig. 47.)

As the composer grows increasingly agitated his energetic strokes become more cursory from page to page. Clearly, his racing pen was barely able to keep up with the impetuous speed of his inexhaustibly inventive mind. The signatures at the beginning of the lines grow larger and larger, and the baroque curve of the brackets and the tails of the treble clefs reaching down to the next staff become more and more sweeping.²⁵

Liveliness, spontaneity, a temperament marked by dynamism and compulsive vitality were clearly dominant qualities of Vivaldi's person-



Figure 47. Excerpt from the autograph score of the Violin Concerto (RV 205).

ality, a personality that contained winning aspects and appears in positive light. He enjoyed the reputation of being an uncommonly clever businessman. According to Edward Holdsworth, he was vain and he occasionally bent the truth when it served his own interests.²⁶ I have already mentioned examples.

Beyond the general outline I have given above, we still are largely in the dark as to the subtle facets of Vivaldi's personality. Only one account provides a vivid portrait of the musician's personality: Goldoni's description of his encounter with Vivaldi in 1735 (fig. 48). Yet this writer of comedies turns this account into a scene from a play in which the composer is a stock character. This tendency is especially evident in the second version of his description, in his *Mémoires* (Paris, 1787),



Figure 48. Anonymous copperplate engraving of Carlo Goldoni.

which intensifies the earlier telling of 1761 into a caricature. Especially characteristic is the central role played by the prayer book (mentioned in passing in the earlier version) and the exhibition of piety. The following is the *Mémoires* version in its entirety:

His Excellency Grimani, owner of the San Samuele Theater, this year had an opera performed at his expense; and he had me work on this production, as he had promised.

They were not performing a new opera that year; they had chosen *La Griselda*, an opera by Apostolo Zeno and Pariati, who worked together before Zeno left for Vienna to enter the emperor's service, and the composer who was chosen to write the music was Abbé Vivaldi, who is called *Il prete rosso* (the red priest) because of his red hair. He was better known by this nickname than by his family name.

This clergyman, an excellent violinist and middling composer, had taught Mlle. Giraud [Girò] and given her voice training; she was a young singer born in Venice, though the daughter of a French wigmaker. She was not pretty, but she had charms, a very slim waist, beautiful eyes, lovely hair, a charming mouth, and a small voice, but a great deal of acting ability. It was she who was chosen for the part of Griselda.

M. Grimani sent me to the musician's home in order to make the necessary improvements in the opera: to shorten the drama and to change the position and the nature of the arias to suit the wishes of the actors and the composer. Therefore I went to the home of Abbé Vivaldi and presented myself on behalf of His Excellency Grimani. I found Vivaldi surrounded by music and with his breviary in his hand. He got up, made a complete sign of the cross, he put his breviary aside, and made me the usual compliments. "What is the cause of my having the pleasure of seeing you, Monsieur?"

"His Excellency Grimani has entrusted me with the alterations that you think necessary in the opera of the Carnival. I have come to see, Monsieur, what your intentions are."

"Ah! Ah! Are you entrusted, Monsieur, with the alterations in the opera *Griselda*? Then M. Lalli is no longer connected with M. Grimani's theater?"

"M. Lalli, who is very elderly, will always profit from the dedicatory letters and the sale of the librettos, which does not concern me. I have the pleasure of busying myself in work that ought to please me, and I have the honor of being under the direction of M. Vivaldi."

The Abbé took up his breviary again, made another sign of the cross, and did not answer.

"Monsieur," I said to him, "I do not wish to distract you in your religious devotions. I shall come back at another time."

"I am well aware, my dear sir, that you have talent for poetry; I have seen your *Belisario*, which gave me great pleasure. But this is very different. One may be able to create a tragedy or an epic poem, if you please, and not be able to fashion a musical quatrain."

"Do me the honor, sir, of showing me your drama."

"Yes, yes, gladly. Where then is *Griselda* tucked away? It was here ... *Deus in adiutorium meum intende ... Domine ... Domine ...* . It was here just now. Ah, here it is. See, Monsieur, this scene between Gualtiere and Griselda; it is an interesting and moving scene. The author has put a pathetic aria at the end, but Mlle. Giraud does not like the pathetic style. She would like a piece with expression and excitement, an aria that expresses emotion by different means, by interrupted words, for example, by heaved sighs, by action and agitation; I don't know if you understand me."

"Yes, Monsieur, I quite clearly understand you. Moreover, I have had the honor of hearing Mlle. Giraud and I know that her voice is not very strong."

"Why, Monsieur, do you insult my pupil? She is good at everything, she sings everything."

"Yes, Monsieur, you are right. Give me the book and allow me to do it."

"No, Monsieur, I cannot give it up, I need it, and I am very hard pressed."

"Very well, Monsieur, if you are in a hurry, give it to me for a moment and I shall accommodate you at once."

"At once?"

"Yes, Monsieur, at once."

The Abbé, while scoffing at me, gave me the drama, paper, and a pen and ink, again took up his breviary and recited his psalms and hymns while walking about. I reread the scene, with which I was already acquainted. I recalled what the musician wanted, and in less than a quarter of an hour I wrote down the text for an aria of eight lines divided into two parts. I called the clergyman and showed him my work. Vivaldi read it and smoothed the wrinkles from his brow; he read it again and uttered cries of joy; he threw his prayer book on the ground and summoned Mlle. Giraud. She came.

“Ah,” he said to her, “here is an unusual man, here is an excellent poet. Read this aria. This gentleman has done it right here without hedging and in less than a quarter of an hour,” and coming back to me, he said:

“Ah, Monsieur, I beg your pardon.” And he embraced me and swore that he would never have another poet but me.

He entrusted me with the drama and asked me for additional alterations. He was entirely satisfied with me, and the opera succeeded excellently.²⁷

Gerber's assertion that Vivaldi was “extraordinarily bigoted” and that “he did not let the rosary out of his hand unless he picked up a quill to write an opera”²⁸ is based entirely on this theatrically effective scene from Goldoni's *Memoirs*. Following the German's statement in 1792, older literature constantly repeated this commonplace about the Venetian.

Despite the reservations about Goldoni's description of Vivaldi, it still remains the liveliest depiction of the musician written by a contemporary. It is perhaps no accident that, like Pierleone Ghezzi's sketch (surely the most realistic likeness we have of the composer),²⁹ this portrait is also a caricature. The *prete rosso*, especially the old one, must have provoked it.

Chapter Nine

“A Completely New Variety of Musical Pieces for the Time” – Vivaldi’s Achievement and Place in the History of Music

In 1714 when the young Quantz “saw the Vivaldi violin concertos for the first time” he felt them to be a “completely new variety of musical pieces for the time”.¹ We might be tempted to attribute this impression to the German music student’s limited experience, yet Quantz’s statement was made half a century after his early encounter with Vivaldi, beyond any subjective impression, and states an objective fact in the history of music. The type of concerto created by Vivaldi around 1710 was not only a new musical genre, it also embodied a new quality in the development and understanding of instrumental composition in general. The solo concerto created at that time was the first mature, firmly established instrumental form in which compositional principles and stylistic models were no longer rooted in the style and structure of traditional contrapuntal music nor in the formal models of dance music. It arose instead from new beginnings in musical thought that enabled the creation of large-scale, logically structured, *free*, that is, non-contrapuntal, musical forms.

Viewed from this perspective the Vivaldi concerto movement is not one compositional model among many, but a process and an achieve-

ment of historical proportions: the concerto allegro based on the ritornello principle and the structurally justified interchange of tutti and solo is the first normative manifestation of a large orchestral movement. It would be a gross oversimplification to attribute the evolution and the shaping of this type of movement to a single artist, yet this situation is clearly different from the long and complex process leading to the emergence of the sonata form (which never reached the degree of codification of the ritornello form). A number of possibilities came together in the solo concerto movement, with such musicians as Giuseppe Torelli and Tommaso Albinoni playing a decisive role during the pre- and early history of the form. Yet the main figure associated with the emergence of both the concerto allegro, as model movement, and the consistent use of three movements, is, and rightly so, Vivaldi. It was his concertos that became the epitome of the modern Italian concerto, establishing a new language of instrumental music for musical Europe around 1710.

The reasons why the Vivaldi concerto movement was the basis of instrumental music from those decades and why the concerto became the leading instrumental genre before the rise of the symphony are not primarily formal ones. The new conditions in movement and work structure are part of and express changes that affect the fundamental posture of music, and they are reflected in a tangibly different stylistic situation. We therefore correctly regard c. 1710 as a turning point in music history, the point at which the new sound in eighteenth-century music becomes palpable – a new musical language that, unlike that of the seventeenth century, we now consider “old” only to a very limited degree. The main representative of this change in vocal music is *opera seria*, dominated by the great da capo aria; in instrumental music, it is the young solo concerto. No other genre of instrumental music from the period so clearly reveals certain shifts in musical culture and brings as many new elements into musical language as the concerto, which therefore assumed a key function for the future development of instrumental (and not only instrumental) music.

One crucial factor in this special role of the solo concerto is that it was especially suitable for effective public performance. It was also appropriate for princely chambers and private and semi-private performance venues, but chiefly it was directed toward the public, and in Venice, the first bastion of the solo concerto, its home was indeed in the

centers of musical performance. Vivaldi and virtuosos such as Pisendel played violin concertos at the opera, and the hundreds of concertos Vivaldi supplied for the concerts at the Ospedale della Pietà using every conceivable instrument are further proof. Vivaldi's concertos were not primarily directed at an exclusive circle of connoisseurs, but at the broad anonymous audience that attended the performances at the *ospedali* and at the opera houses of the commercial and tourist metropolis of Venice. There can be no doubt that these factors played a decisive role in the music the composer wrote.

The fact that it was a Venetian who led the solo concerto to its first heyday, thereby ushering in the first great century of instrumental music, may also derive from the city's particular richness. Venice possessed the openness and vibrancy of a metropolis devoted to the arts and to amusement and simply overflowed with theater and music. Where, if not here, could music lose the pomp and gravity of traditional stylistic ideals to embark on a freer and lighter tone? What atmosphere could be more propitious to music of engaging melody and imaginative virtuosity than Venice?

Such general qualities of the Vivaldi concerto style are of no less historic importance than the new formal characteristics. In addition to its clear-cut harmonic structure based on major-minor tonality, the Vivaldi ritornello movement is uncommonly vivid and convincing because of the new, concise, and effective thematic language, and because it features a type of solo that permits the instrument to develop all its possibilities, from virtuosity to expressive songfulness. Arnold Schering considers Albinoni responsible for "clearly defining the ritornello principle and for lending it the force of, as it were, a quotation".² This is truer still for Vivaldi, whose first-movement concerto themes had by far the greatest influence on the new style of early eighteenth-century instrumental themes. Heinrich Bessler links Vivaldi's themes with the new "active-synthetic listening" developed during the eighteenth century;³ Karl H. Wörner sees Vivaldi as "the inventor of the new theme", by which he is referring particularly to the complex form of the opening ritornello as "one of the composer's most forward-looking inspirations".⁴

The tutti ritornello, which Vivaldi expanded into a broad, self-contained complex of themes, made possible the large-scale solo that allowed the soloist to stand out to a degree hitherto unheard of in en-

semble music. The associations with certain social and intellectual developments during the century of the Enlightenment are undeniable. “An ideal of the early age of Enlightenment was the emancipation of the individual... . The spirit of the times was marked by a new self-awareness of the bourgeoisie, by the full utilization of the forces within the individual: achievement, courage, and daring”, especially in a city like Venice, in which “the confrontation with the exceptional, with the marvelous, with boldness and adventure, this was a constant, a necessity of life... . Here Vivaldi’s exuberant virtuosity had an ideal environment in which to develop and to take hold”.⁵

His most virtuosic works are clearly the violin concertos. The violin is not only, in general, the instrument with the most highly developed possibilities for virtuosity, it is also the instrument of Vivaldi, who was one of the most prominent virtuosos of his time. He was perhaps the first great eighteenth-century Italian violinist to represent the new type of virtuoso who, as Uffenbach put it, “terrifies” his listeners (how utterly unlike, for example, Arcangelo Corelli). I should also reiterate that Vivaldi wrote solo and double concertos for many other instruments, some of which he established as solo instruments by writing concertos for them, while he required of others a new level of technical virtuosity – all of which is linked also to exploring and to consolidating new, expressive possibilities and tonal effects by these instruments.

If we look beyond the solo concerto, Vivaldi deserves special mention for the other concerto type he developed (presumably shortly after the solo type) for mixed strings and winds. The direct and indirect effects of *Concerti con molti Istromenti* on the concerto (especially in Germany) and, in general, on the developing orchestral style, are still underestimated. It is precisely in this genre that there are links that lead directly to the composers of the Mannheim school of the mid-eighteenth century.

To all these aspects we must add recognition for the new and free sound of Vivaldi concertos, which Alfred Einstein depicted using the lovely image of “fresh air of nature” flooding into a “magnificent baroque hall”.⁶ It leaps out at us in the electrifying, infectious allegro movements and in the supple cantabile melodies and intoxicating color of many slow movements. What a vast distance separates the lilting, serenade-like Andante of the Sinfonia to *Arsilda*, composed in 1716,

with its gentle, supple, insinuating melody in the upper voices, from the gravity and pathos of a Corelli Largo. The world of feeling expressed in these sounds is "the gentle grace of the eighteenth century".⁷

The Vivaldi concerto had been shaped during the decade of 1710 to 1720; this period and the years immediately following represent the crucial phase in the composer's momentous historical influence. This in no way detracts from the achievements of Vivaldi's later works, it also does not ignore or dispute the wide diffusion of his concertos as late as the 1730s. Still, the period during which the Vivaldi concerto made history is the ten-year span from 1710 to 1720 when the innovations of the Vivaldi instrumental style changed the musical language and the musical thinking of an entire generation.

As our discussion of the concertos has shown, Vivaldi did not retain the style of his early concertos in works written during the 1720s and 1730s. They underwent many stylistic changes, which also allows us to date a given work at least approximately as relatively early or relatively late. "The ritornellos are broader and richer in contrasts, with cantabile or chromatic motivic groups and abrupt modal changes. The solos have more distinct thematic material and more differentiated figuration", and the ritornellos "often have continuous cantabile melodies, also found in portions of the solos".⁸ To be sure, these and similar elements are largely overshadowed by the essential unvarying elements of the Vivaldi concerto style, the most conspicuous of which is the ritornello form of the outer movements. This model remained the accepted formal basis of his fast concerto movements to the end, and changes in form were negligible. It is apparent, then, that the composer's interest shifted "from overall movement form to the handling of details".⁹

It is virtually impossible to determine the extent to which certain features from relatively late works indicate Vivaldi's own development or reflect the stylistic influences of composers of a later generation. This applies to an increased tendency toward setting out motifs in series and to a number of remarkable examples of "cantabile melody..., phrases of which occur almost verbatim in works by the young Mozart".¹⁰ As astonishing as much of this appears for a composer who was born in 1678 (for example, the opening theme of the "Echo" Concerto, RV 552, from 1740, or the opening of the ripieno of the Concerto in A Major, RV 158), this type of melody began to appear everywhere at

the beginning of the second third of the century. At that time, Tartini, Pergolesi, and Sammartini were already active in Italian music. Vivaldi was, however, no longer in the vanguard of stylistic development, and we should not exaggerate the influence of his works after 1730.

Another aspect of Vivaldi's artistic and stylistic development is worth noting. Vivaldi was apparently not an artist who, before attaining full mastery, gradually evolved a personal style over a relatively long period of development. The composer was probably over thirty when his first set of concertos was published, and we know little or nothing about his development during the very early years, yet the most advanced of the concertos in Opp. 3 and 4 (1711, 1714) already have the unmistakable Vivaldi flavor. While he enriched his music and added some new details during the following decades, the basic stylistic orientation remained unchanged. In this sense, unlike many other artists, Vivaldi does not have a late period.

So far my remarks in this chapter have been almost entirely about Vivaldi as a concerto composer, as if his operas and church music had not been rediscovered. This may seem to contradict my intent – to comprehensively discuss Vivaldi's work – in this biography. The composer's achievement in these other genres is definite, yet a modern reexamination of the composer cannot avoid the conclusion that Vivaldi's exceptional position in musical history and his enduring importance are rooted in his work as a composer of concertos. Vivaldi's contemporaries and the eighteenth-century historians clearly saw this as well: all mention of the composer's special merits centers on his concertos. He “not only performed a boundless service with his many published violin concertos”, Gerber wrote in 1792, “he also gave beginning artists good and correctly composed works for the violin to study...; he also set, as it were, the tone that remained the preferred way of writing concertos for thirty years”.¹¹ It was a certain, albeit small, portion of his concertos that kept Vivaldi's popularity alive the longest in Central and Western Europe, where single works were still reprinted after 1750. *The Four Seasons* enjoyed a special reputation during this period as exemplary program music.

Vivaldi's historical importance is significantly less in all other areas. Of course, there are certain gradations from genre to genre, yet his operas and his church music did not exercise an influence on the development of their respective areas in any way comparable to that of his

concertos and other instrumental music. Here, I think of the string concertos without soloists and opera sinfonias, but especially of new, concerto-like chamber works.

This all says very little about the artistic importance of Vivaldi's vocal works. We would do well not to make sweeping judgments if only because such a small portion of these works are available to us today and because very few comparable works by his contemporaries are accessible. Moreover, we still have a difficult time relating to genres such as *opera seria* and the cantata. Our yardstick for these remains limited to the artistic power and effect on listeners of single works, and, granted, some sensational finds have been made in these genres. The sacred music, most of all such works as the mass movements, the Magnificat, the Stabat Mater, and some of the large psalm settings (such as the "Dixit Dominus" and the "Beatus vir", both *in due cori*) are so compelling that they have been spontaneously compared to Bach's Latin church music.

Vivaldi's sacred works have two especially remarkable stylistic aspects. On the one hand, they reveal an entirely new side of the composer in that they continue traditions of the polyphonic church style, while, on the other, they so unmistakably contain the language of his concertos that they still sound like typical Vivaldi. Not only do they contain the main features of the concerto movement model but they also display the many elusive qualities that constitute the essence of the Vivaldi idiom.

Regardless of how we judge the importance and the artistic worth of Vivaldi's music, no one will seriously dispute that its entirely characteristic individual achievement sets it apart from other music of the early eighteenth century. It contains aspects not found elsewhere in this form and combination: great spontaneity, exuberant sensuality, spacious and free virtuosity, and a tonal imagination that extends to impressionistic mood painting. His music also contains within light, transparent movement many elements that offset the danger of one-sided and predictable expression. Vivaldi entitled his second printed set of concertos *La stravaganza* to characterize the unusual, strange, and irregular side of his music. Abrupt contrasts, bizarre melodic and harmonic turns, unruly rhythmic-metric accents, a virtuoso madness that violates the "amiable and cantabile style" are all aspects of this tendency that often irritated his contemporaries.¹² In 1752 Quantz criticized the "frivolity and arro-

gance” Vivaldi had sunk to, “both in composition and in performance”,¹³ and the English music historian John Hawkins described Vivaldi’s concerto style as “wild and irregular”.¹⁴

While today’s listeners no longer notice these peculiarities to any significant degree, the broad renaissance that Vivaldi’s works are currently enjoying is strengthened because, to some extent, these productive tensions and excitement live in his music. Almost no other composer of his generation shares Vivaldi’s broad, free spirit, the pulsating life of an approaching new age; yet it also reveals something of a Venetian culture that clearly bore the mark of a declining civilization and of the personality of an artist who embodied these contradictory forces. His music embraces all the fullness, movement, and color of Venetian life, as well as its penchant for exaggeration, eccentricity, and many things that point to ambivalent, cryptic, and complex feelings. The unique attraction of Vivaldi’s music lies precisely in this combination: an accessible, spontaneous kind of music filled with the sensual warmth of the here and now, with, at the same time, a side in which clear contours contrast with wan twilight and with the nuances of fluid transitions; music that has room for the bizarre and the high-strung, for the excitement of nocturnal visions, for melancholy and desolation, in which the elemental and the genuine are coupled with artistic refinement. The sum of all these qualities makes Vivaldi’s music a distinctive voice in the concert of this great musical century.

Appendix

Selected Letters by and to Vivaldi

We currently know of the existence of about twenty-five letters and other handwritten documents by Vivaldi and of almost seventy letters addressed to him. Thirteen of the Vivaldi letters are addressed to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio d'Aragona in Ferrara; one each to the Marchese's father, Luigi Bentivoglio, to Princess Maria Livia Spinola Borghese in Rome, and to the Venetian scenery painter Antonio Mauro; two to the Bolognese count Sicinio Ignazio Pepoli (see Vitali 1989.) The addressee of the four letters that came to light in Schwerin in 1988 is most likely Prince Carl Ludwig Frederick of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Of the letters addressed to Vivaldi, nine are from Guido Bentivoglio, two from Antonio Mauro, and, as has recently been discovered, no fewer than fifty-two from the Florentine impresario Marchese Luca Casimiro degli Albizzi (cf. Holmes 1988).

Today the vast majority of Vivaldi's letters reside in Italian archives (the Ferrara, Venice, and Bologna State Archives; the Vatican Archives; and the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna). Some letters are owned by private individuals. The four letters addressed to Carl Ludwig Frederick of Mecklenburg-Strelitz are part of the Mecklenburg-Strelitz Letter Collection in the Schwerin State Archives.

There is no critical edition of the letters both by and to Vivaldi. The following translations are based on texts and facsimiles contained in the following publications:

- Cavicchi, Adriano. 1967. Inediti nell'epistolario Vivaldi–Bentivoglio, *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* 1: 45–79.
- Eller, Rudolf. 1989. Vier Briefe Antonio Vivaldis, *Informazioni* 10: 5–22.
1969. Fac simile et traductions de cinq nouvelles lettres de Vivaldi à Bentivoglio, *Vivaldiana* 1:117–141.
- Moretti, Lino. 1980. Dopo l'insuccesso di Ferrara: Diverbio tra Vivaldi e Antonio Mauro, *Vivaldi Veneziano Europeo*, 89–99.

I have chosen the following letters largely on the basis of the information they contain.

1. *Vivaldi to an anonymous addressee*

(probably Prince Carl Ludwig Frederick of Mecklenburg-Strelitz)

Your Serene Highness,

Since the honor which Your Serene Highness had the goodness to show me was but a shadow and all too short-lived, I have looked for something else to console me for a longer period of time, that is, a most gracious correspondence with you. Thanks be to God, I have arrived in Venice and am in good health, and will stay here always in the future. I lack nothing here for perfect happiness except that Your Serene Highness's most esteemed hand find me worthy of a commission, which alone can console me and make amends for the loss that I am far from you and cannot personally do Your Serene Highness's will. My most gracious Prince, I beseech you never to deprive me of your most noble patronage and to believe me when I say that I will never forget a prince so replete with goodness and great merits. I would be pleased to know whether you still enjoy the flute and whether your page is still in good health. I entreat Your Serene Highness to grant me the favor of assuring

His Excellency your majordomo of my devotion. For the present, I renew my deepest reverence and have the honor, etc. to be

Your Serene Highness's
most respectful, most devoted,
most humble servant
Antonio Vivaldi

Venice, 10 June 1730

2. Vivaldi to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio

Excellency,

I have learned through Your Excellency's kindness that you have never forgotten the highly esteemed promises made in Rome that you would always extend to me your valuable patronage. I assure Your Excellency that I was just as surprised as pleased by the appearance of Abbé Bolani. I will not dwell on thanking Your Excellency both because I desire to trouble you as little as possible and because my poor pen would be insufficient to write adequate thanks. I hope that Your Excellency will be able to realize from the actions of said abbé that my only purpose in this maneuver is to prove to you my most humble respect and to establish a perfect theater. I therefore assure Your Excellency that we have succeeded in putting together such a company which I hope is better than the theaters of Ferrara have seen in many a Carnival. The majority of the artists have appeared more than once at the first theaters and each has special merits. Although I have yet to hear the company I give Your Excellency my word of honor that you are well served by and will be satisfied with it. After I turned down an offer to write the third opera for S. Cassiano for ninety sequins, they had to agree to my usual fee of one hundred sequins in order to have me. Nevertheless, Ferrara will receive two operas that will seem to have been composed especially for her, since they have been specially adapted and written by me for only six sequins each, that is, for the fee paid to a copyist.

I have made this sacrifice solely in consideration of Your Excellency's gracious intercession.

I regret not being able to come in person because the aforementioned opera at the S. Cassiano prevents me from doing so. In any case, I will be at Your Excellency's feet by the end of Carnival, circumstances permitting.

Signora Anna Girò sends Your Excellency her most humble respects, and because she is pleased to present her imperfect talents in Ferrara, she also begs you to place her under your most valuable patronage.

Overwhelmed with favors, I can only attempt in every possible way to find favor with Your Excellency.

Antonio Vivaldi

Venice, 3 November 1736

3. Vivaldi to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio

Excellency,

The highly esteemed feelings with which Your Excellency has chosen to conclude your most esteemed letter lead me to believe ever more strongly in your memory. These are simply the consequences of goodness and tokens of forbearance. I am therefore unable to explain the great joy I feel as I do not wish to disturb Your Excellency unduly. Allow me then to submit to Your Excellency's most prudent consideration a small matter which has arisen and which I have tried to the best of my ability not to bring up.

In a moment of exuberance the Reverend Abbé Bollani [sic] brought me to promise him to arrange two operas, *Ginevra* and *L'Olimpiade*, and to adapt their recitatives for his company for the wretched price of six sequins each. As soon as he returned to Ferrara he pestered me to give him *Ginevra* immediately. I immediately arranged the original, had the parts copied, and am sending them to Your Excellency as a token of my sincerity; the parts for Moro and the tenor are still in their hands.

The moment I was finished, I received a new order: these [Ferrarese] gentlemen now wished *Demetrio* instead of *Ginevra*. I

obtained the original from Cà Grimani to have it copied, only to see that of six parts I would have to change five because all the recitatives did not fit; nonetheless (Your Excellency can see my good heart in this) I resolved to rewrite them all. I must inform Your Excellency that I have reached an agreement with the impresario for him to pay, in addition to the agreed upon six sequins, for copying the vocal and instrumental parts. Thus after I had completely arranged *Demetrio* I had the vocal and instrumental parts copied, obliged everyone to learn them by heart, held three rehearsals, and had everything set. To be sure, the business about the second opera gave me no such pleasure. Having done all of this, I informed him that I had spent fifty lire to have the vocal and instrumental parts to *Ginevra* and *Demetrio* copied, and because they counted on only thirty lire for one opera, I have since written him ten letters, without receiving an answer, to instruct Lanzetti to pay the remaining twenty. Yet, he has pestered me with many letters to send him *L'Olimpiade*. I arranged my own original, indeed I ruined it with changes. Still without a contract, I had some parts copied under my supervision because of differences between these copyists and the others; then I received a new order saying that he wishes *Alessandro nell'Indie* instead of *L'Olimpiade*. He made this request under the ridiculous pretext that His Excellency Michiel Grimani wanted his original sent to Ferrara to be copied, something a true impresario would never do. As this original has been smiled upon by fortune, I swear to Your Excellency that signor Pietro Pasqualigo had to use force to obtain it, and only on condition that it was immediately to be copied for a fee of three sequins, as known by the above impresario. The original was copied and payment was made, all the recitatives were marked with my changes. Letters were dispatched to Venice only last Wednesday, and I wanted to send the first act at all costs, even at an additional charge of four lire. Moreover, in order to save postage, I sent it to Signora Girò via Signor Bertelli. I also sent (on Wednesday) the second and third acts to Your Excellency through him. The impresario wanted to have it arranged in Ferrara, after its being copied here, in order to save three sequins; I could not permit this. The impresario therefore owes me six sequins twenty lire. I leave it to Your Excellency to decide whether cooperating with this impresario should entail: arranging four operas instead of two, writing new recitatives, and incurring additional expenses; I rely entirely upon Your Excellency's goodness in this matter. This gentleman is incapable of carrying out the duties of an impresario, and

he does not know where to spend and where to save. If he had assembled the entire company in my theater he would not have had this tenor, saving 150 scudi, but he wished to keep Lanzetti, who only wants to please La Becchera, but he is wrong, because La Isola and associate are not worth the money. Following Easter I will undertake a large venture, though one run properly. I beg your indulgence for troubling you at such length and kiss your hands most humbly.

Antonio Vivaldi

Venice, 29 December 1736

4. Vivaldi to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio

Excellency,

Once more I extend my most humble respects to Your Excellency, which I assure you continue unabated in my memory here in Verona. Praise be to God, my opera is an absolute success here, and there is nothing that does not please: musicians and dancers, each according to his abilities. Intermezzi are not popular in this city, which is why they are left out on many evenings. I regret that Your Excellency is perhaps already preparing for your trip to Bologna and will not be able to honor this opera of mine with your presence, I believe you would have found it magnificent.

We have had only six performances to date and yet I know with certainty from the balance that we have not lost money; indeed, if God blesses us till the end, we will make a profit and perhaps a considerable one at that. I believe such an opera, especially if it were to have several different roles (and a somewhat different plot), would also meet with great approval in Ferrara. It cannot, however, be performed at Carnival because the dance numbers alone, which I can put on at whatever price I wish during the summer, would cost even me seven hundred gold louis. I am an independent businessman in such matters and settle accounts from my own purse and not with loans. Your Excellency need only give the order or give an indication of your pleasure and I will have the honor

of doing your bidding this coming autumn. I shall await your esteemed instructions, etc.

Antonio Vivaldi

Verona, 3 May 1737

5. *Vivaldi to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio*

Excellency,

After so many maneuvers and a great many toils the opera is now ruined. His Reverence, the Apostolic Nuncio, had me summoned today and commanded me in the name of His Eminence Cardinal Ruffo not to come to Ferrara to mount opera, because I am a cleric who does not say Mass, and because I am friends with the singer Girò. Your Excellency can imagine my state of mind at such a blow. For this opera I am burdened with six thousand ducats in signed contracts, and so far I have already paid out more than one hundred sequins. It is impossible to perform the opera without La Girò because it is impossible to find another prima donna of her caliber. I will not allow the opera to be performed without my presence because I will not entrust so large a sum to the hands of others. On the other hand, I am obligated by these contracts, hence this sea of woes. What troubles me most is the stain His Eminence Cardinal Ruffo has attached to these poor women, the like of which has yet to be seen.

Over the past fourteen years we have appeared together in many European cities and their modesty was everywhere admired, and the same can be said of Ferrara. They make devotions every week, to which sworn and authenticated records attest. I have not celebrated Mass in twenty-five years and will never say Mass again, not because of an interdiction or an order, as His Excellency can find out, but because of my own decision owing to the ailment from which I have suffered from birth and which still afflicts me.

After being ordained a priest I celebrated Mass for a year or somewhat longer, after which I stopped because my ailment forced me to leave the altar three times without finishing Mass. I therefore spend most of

my life at home, which I can only leave in a gondola or coach, because my chest ailment or constriction of the chest does not permit me to walk.

No nobleman calls me to his house, not even our prince, because they all know of my condition. I usually go outside immediately after lunch, though never on foot. Such is the reason I cannot celebrate Mass. I was in Rome for three Carnival seasons to produce opera, and Your Excellency knows I have never asked to say Mass, and I played in the theater, and it is common knowledge that even His Holiness wished to hear me play and how many favors I received. I was called to Vienna and never said Mass there. For three years I was in the service of the extraordinarily devout prince of Darmstadt in Mantua, together with the above ladies, who were always honored by His August Majesty with the greatest kindness, and I never said Mass. My travels were always very expensive because I always took along four or five persons to assist me.

I accomplish all the good I can at my writing desk at home. I therefore have the honor of corresponding with nine high princes and my letters travel all over Europe. I have therefore written Signor Mazzucchi that I cannot come to Ferrara if he does not allow me to stay at his house. In short, this has all come about as a result of my illness, and the above ladies are very helpful to me because they know my ailment well.

These truths are known throughout most of Europe; I therefore appeal to Your Excellency's goodness to kindly inform His Eminence Cardinal Ruffo, because this business means my utter ruin.

I reiterate to Your Excellency that the opera cannot be performed in Ferrara without me. You can see the many reasons. Should it not be performed I will either have to take it to another city, which it is now too late to find, or pay off all the contracts. If His Eminence cannot be persuaded to change his mind I beg Your Excellency at least to persuade His Eminence, the Papal Legate, to postpone the opera in order to release me from the contracts.

I am also sending Your Excellency the letters of His Eminence Cardinal Albani, which I should submit myself. I have been teaching at the Pietà for thirty years without any scandals. I therefore commend myself to Your Excellency's most gracious protection and humbly remain, etc.

Antonio Vivaldi

Venice, 16 November 1737

6. Vivaldi to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio

Excellency,

God wills it thus; I have nothing more to add. I can assure Your Excellency on my word of honor that I wished to come to Ferrara and produce opera and to serve Your Excellency, my ever gracious patron, for a long time to come.

Without taking into account that I played in Rome, including twice for the pope in his private apartments, His Eminence Cardinal Ruffo has placed this obstacle in my path, to which I must acquiesce. There will surely be no opera in Ferrara without me. So as not to trouble Your Excellency unduly with my long letters, I am writing to Signor Picchi to instruct him to inform you about everything.

His Eminence Cardinal Ruffo is very badly informed if he believes that my opera endeavors are too lavish.

I never wait by the door, because I would be ashamed to do so, and I thought this would be Picchi's place in Ferrara. I never play in the orchestra except on opening night because I do not choose to pursue the profession of instrumentalist. I never stay at the Giròs' house. Let wicked tongues say what they wish, Your Excellency must know that I have a house in Venice for which I pay two hundred ducats; the Giròs live in another house, very far from mine. I will stop here because I am going to H. E. Signor Marchese Rondinelli, to humiliate myself, and remain most humbly, etc.

Antonio Vivaldi

Venice, 23 November 1737

7. Vivaldi to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio

Excellency,

I believe Signor Picchi has already told Your Excellency everything. The proposals he has made to me are ridiculous. If I had been able to have musicians and dancers for less – please believe me – I would have done so from the start. I swear to Your Excellency that if I had to put together a company other than the one I have it would cost twenty-four thousand lire instead of fifteen thousand.

I have postponed my decisions until today, but if I am ruined by the times I cannot cheat the others and still have musicians all the way to Rome. I am sorry because the main reason for this move was to serve Your Excellency at length. Still I beg Your Excellency to blame my unlucky fate and to believe that I will prostrate myself before you at every place and opportunity, and I remain

Antonio Vivaldi

Venice, 30 November 1737

I do not have the time to reply. After I had written all the letters I thought I might be able to use a messenger, who would, however, cost me an additional nine sequins, to be able to have the decisions from Ferrara by Wednesday morning. Picchi has made many errors in his figures; still I would beg Your Excellency to have my letter read and to forgive my boldness.

8. *Vivaldi to Marchese Guido Bentivoglio*

Your Excellency!

If the most select benefactors do not assist poor wretches the latter must fall into despair. I will be in such a wretched state if Your Excellency, my most gracious long-standing patron, does not help me. My reputation in Ferrara has been scourged to such a degree that they have already refused to perform the second opera, *Farnace*, which I had completely rewritten for the company as per the contract with Mauro. My greatest crime is that they consider my recitatives to be horrible. Given my name and reputation throughout Europe having composed ninety-four operas, I cannot stand for such annoyance. Everything I have taken the liberty to write to Your Excellency is therefore the absolute truth.

On the basis of reports I have just received I suspected that Beretta was not capable of playing the first harpsichord; Signor Acciaioli assured me, however, that he was a capable artist and an honest man, while I have since discovered that he is a brazen fool. As early as the first rehearsals I was told that he had no idea of how to accompany the recitatives. To

adjust them to suit his abilities, malicious as he is, he had the audacity to tamper with my recitatives thus ruining them, partly because he was unable to play them, in part because of his changes.

Not a note of these recitatives is different from the ones that had been performed in Ancona, for which, for Your Excellency's information, I earned deafening applause, some scenes being applauded especially for the recitatives.

Precisely the same recitatives were excellently performed in Venice during rehearsal by Michielino, the second tenor from Ferrara, and if they are performed by Michielino at the house rehearsals we will see whether they are good or bad. The situation is this way, not a note or number of my original had been cut, neither with the knife nor with the pen, which means that everything was done by that capable artist.

Excellency, I am at the point of despair, I cannot allow such a fool to make his fortune by destroying my poor name. I beg you, for heaven's sake, not to abandon me, for I swear to Your Excellency that if I am dishonored I will do something terrible to regain my reputation, because whoever robs me of my honor can also take away my life.

Your Excellency's high protection is my only consolation in this matter, and I remain with tears in my eyes and I kiss your hands.

Antonio Vivaldi

Venice, 2 January 1739

PS: This has all come about because I am not in Ferrara and because the Monsignor Commissario wished to believe the impresario no matter what.

9. Notarized Letter by Antonio Mauro Served to Vivaldi

On Wednesday, 4 March, in the year of our Lord seventeen hundred thirty-nine, second file.

Document submitted by and in the name of Signor Antonio Mauro to be filed and served as indicated herein.

As a result of repeated intentional requests which you, Reverend Don Antonio Vivaldi, have made of me on a number of occasions, I had no choice but to confirm and sign for appearance's sake and without any prejudice to my interests such contracts with singers, dancers, instrumentalists, and others which were previously agreed, stipulated, and confirmed by you for the performance of opera in Ferrara in 1738, where you were the one and only authority. These statements are true because they are based on the fact that I was only hired to paint the stage scenery according to instructions. The facts being what they are, I, Antonio Mauro, am compelled in the interest of upholding my dignity and honor to serve you, Reverend Don Vivaldi, with the present notarized letter, which has been placed on record by Signor Iseppo Mozzoni, Notary in Venice, in order to have you relieve me and protect me, as is fair and proper, from any and all harassment resulting from any and all claims both private and judicial resulting from my confirmation of contracts stipulated by you. It was only upon your orders and your repeated insistence that I suddenly and quickly traveled from here to Ferrara. You presented me with a bill with which I was supposed to settle the expenses and payments made in Ferrara, all of which is familiar to you. Should you not be of this opinion, which I do not believe, I will be compelled to take this matter to those courts where I can better defend my interests and needs, and which will counsel me if I tell them about the tricks you used to suppress me, who was merely the executor of your will, and to justify my position. I have thus sufficiently informed you by this letter, so that you do not deny knowledge of my intentions and my needs, and so that you will see to it that I am not the victim in this matter.

It is therefore incumbent upon you to reflect on your obligations, otherwise I will be forced to avail myself of those means which will convince you and to reveal your fraud and your methods that neither God nor the world can approve of.

I have thus []

Following day. The legal office of Giacomo Cuppi reported that the above letter was served in full, as stipulated, to a woman in Reverend Don Vivaldi's house, who signed a receipt for it.

10. *Notarized Letter by Vivaldi Served to Antonio Mauro*

I, Antonio Vivaldi, have been brought, over the period of an entire month (as will be confirmed by witnesses), by your, Antonio Mauro's, repeated requests, to dismiss, as a favor to you and with almost physical force, Girolamo Lech from the Ferrara enterprise, even though he was put in charge of the theater as the regularly appointed impresario (as is clear from the letters). I did this in order to create a post for you; therefore I would never have believed that you could go so far in attempting to cleanse yourself of guilt as to preempt the court proceedings and to attempt to incriminate me with an uncivil letter, me who was only interested in helping you and who was trying to find a way to raise you from your wretched state, to the extent that (of this you are well aware) I lent you an Andrienne dress to pawn and to use the money for yourself.

Do you really believe that everyone who acted or played instruments in Ferrara has died? That all the letters you have sent me have been burned? That the contracts and agreements you signed have been destroyed? What confused state of mind has so poorly advised you to serve me such a ridiculous letter? You would have done far better to use your accustomed hypocrisy and the tears you always have ready to continue to beg for mercy and to make others believe in your innocence as you did in Ferrara. Had you done so your creditors might have given you the three hundred scudi you embezzled from the above enterprise and with which you fled.

I, who more than anyone else have always shown you a good heart, would surely not be able to resist your feigned tears, for you know, and all Venice knows of the thousands of ducats I paid you in the course of all the years you served me in the theater. Do you believe I lost the letters in which you wrote me that Francesco Picchi from Ferrara forcibly insisted you resign from the enterprise, though you did not wish to do so because there was a guaranteed large amount of money involved! Remember that I have in my possession the answer to that letter I wrote you in which I not only urged and convinced you to give up the enterprise because you could earn 150 scudi or more with scenery, lighting, and your labor, but I also wrote that if you did not resign you would no longer be my friend and would not deserve God's help. Remember that I have in my possession the unjustified and exorbitant demands, written in your own hand, when you were forced to resign. It is a well known

fact that you who left all scruples behind when you left Venice with the object of using this enterprise to help your house; you preferred to join with the aforementioned experienced Picchi in order to split the pie as you wished, and to let the poor musicians, dancers, and conductor go hungry. You left everything in such an impoverished state that everyone knows you had to pawn the necklace which you claimed belonged to your new wife; and after you returned from Ferrara you not only bought new wardrobes for yourself and your nephews, but you redeemed the necklace, you spent twenty-five ducats to rebuild the stairway in your house, bought expensive cabinets, purchased large quantities of wine and flour – all this is known and can be proved.

You would therefore be well advised to consider your duties and to remember that your slanders and your wicked frauds will not be enough to prevent you from having to pay the musicians, dancers, and myself. Remember that ingratitude is one of the most detestable of sins. Pretexts are but diabolical innuendoes to hide the truth.

And, finally, remember that God sees, God knows, and God judges, and that in addition to the most holy justice of the Most Serene Republic you will have to answer for everything before God.

As far as []

The present letter placed in the files of Signor Giovanni Domenico Redolfi, notary in Venice.

Thursday, 12 March 1739

Letter submitted by the excellent Signor Marco Lezze, attorney at law, in the name of Signor Abate Don Antonio Vivaldi, for the purpose stated herein.

Friday, 13 March 1739

The office of Signor Iseppo Treve reported that the above letter was served in full, as stipulated by Signor Abbate Don Antonio Vivaldi, to a man in Signor Antonio Mauro's house, who signed a receipt for it.

11. *Notarized Letter by Antonio Mauro Served to Vivaldi*

On Monday, 16 March, in the year of our Lord seventeen hundred thirty-nine, second file.

Submitted by and in the name of Signor Antonio Mauro with the purpose of inclusion in my files and served as indicated herein.

The letter which you, Reverend Don Antonio Vivaldi, have filed with Signor Zan Domenego Redolfo, notary in Venice, and served to me, Antonio Mauro, on 13 March is one of the usual scribblings filled with misleading allegations, which I am answering point by point (despite serious objections on my part) because you claim that the said enterprise, the administration of the opera during the 1738 Carnival, was implemented only due to repeated persuasion on your part to confirm issuing those said contracts for the above opera, carrying out your wishes. But these contracts had already been concluded, agreed, and confirmed by you without my prior knowledge, for you already knew that I did not seek to become impresario, but rather, like anyone else, to find a post, to wit, creating opera scenery intended for your use although some of them were not intended to be placed on stage, whereas you spread the word that these were your compositions. It was therefore impossible to carry out your wishes, which were contrary to those of the people of Ferrara.

Don Vivaldi, the infernal slander contained in your letter of 13 March that I caused Signor Gerolamo Lechi to be evicted from the 1738 opera enterprise in Ferrara in order to obtain his post for myself is very far from the truth. This occurred at a time when you alone chose me, or rather more precisely, you made sure to involve Signori Antonio Denzio and Antonio Abatti in said enterprise, neither of whom wished to become part of it despite promises made by you and the responsibilities I was to assume, and other things which can approach justice; nor could they be convinced to do so when you told them that you had concluded agreements and contracts, selected musicians, dancers, and others. But these promises failed to convince them; indeed you made a desperate attempt to make it appear that I was the impresario, at a time when I was only your agent and nothing more, in order to inform you in writing of any success and of the progress of your business and to pass on the aforementioned news for your benefit.

The accusation, which is of no relevance in the present matter, that I borrowed an Andrienne dress from Signora Paulina Girò three years ago (who was well-known to you at the time), so that I could receive the sum of sixteen filippi for the trip to Pesaro, cannot be used in your defense in this case. Though she lent it to me, I returned it in good condition a few days later. You should consider my apparent indigence not, as I wrote you at the time, hypocritically but honestly. This is the sense of your obligation to improve my woeful state and to take it upon yourself to caution the singers and the other persons you have under contract to be forbearing of what has happened to you.

It is ridiculous, though claimed by you, and not by a witty person, that I bought furniture, paid debts, and redeemed pledges, all of which I did only for you. When I was supposed to travel from here to Ferrara, you had no money, so you compelled me to pawn my wife's jewelry for twenty ducats, and upon my return I managed to redeem the first item with another pledge, though not with the money from Ferrara, but with my own, and if I paid my own bills in the house in which I live, you have no business telling me which money I should use to pay them, and if you have nothing to write, but that I used the Ferrara money, you could have spared yourself the effort because this fabricated accusation not only is false but also is of no use to you. This also applies to the accusation that I wished to dispose of the theater because it was not in my power to do so without your express permission. Instead you should write that when some people wanted to burden themselves with that business, they all stayed away and fled like the devil from holy water once they were informed by the business partner. My dearest Signor Vivaldi, you would be better advised to execute your task justly, to which you are bound by your conscience, the business, authorizations, and other reasons, rather than to become involved in sentimentalities without any legal basis that have little to do with the truth (though you have always handled matters this way), or to pretend that you gave me a great deal of money when you were impresario in other theaters. If I have received such money it was for my work, for which you still owe me a not insubstantial sum, though I did not attempt to force payment in order to deny Reverend Vivaldi a pretext for litigation. I would, however, like to believe that once you have thought through what has happened and what

is happening, you will, if necessary, take my side in the contracts you have concluded and will not give cause for further notarized letters, for with the present letter I protest against any and all court costs that I, Antonio Mauro, might be charged with because of you.

The above is stated according to proper procedure and without prejudice.

Abbreviations

In the notes, frequently cited collections and periodicals have been identified by the following abbreviations:

AVT

Bianconi, Lorenzo, and Giovanni Morelli, eds. 1982. *Antonio Vivaldi: Teatro musicale, cultura e società*. 2 vols. Florence: Leo S. Olschki.

AVV

Degrada, Francesco, and Maria Teresa Muraro, eds. 1978. *Antonio Vivaldi da Venezia all'Europa*. Milan: Electa.

INF

Informazioni e studi Vivaldiani: Bollettino dell'Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi. 1980–88. 9 vols. Milan: Ricordi.

NRM

Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana. Antonio Vivaldi. Numero spedito in occasione del terzo centenario della nascita (1678–1978). January–March 1979. Turin: ERI (Edizioni RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana).

NSV

Fanna, Antonio, and Giovanni Morelli, eds. 1988. *Nuovi studi Vivaldiani. Edizione e cronologia critica delle opere*. 2 vols. Florence: Leo S. Olschki.

SAF

Studien zur Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation von Instrumentalmusik des 18. Jahr-hunderts. 1975–88. 35 issues. Blankenburg-Harz: Studien zur Aufführungspraxis.

VST

Vivaldi-Studien. 1981. Referate des 3. Dresdner Vivaldi-Kolloquiums. Mit einem Katalog der Dresdner Vivaldi-Handschriften und -Frühdrucke. Dresden: Sächsische Landesbibliothek.

VVA

Vivaldiana. 1969. 1. Publication du Centre International de Documentation Antonio Vivaldi. Brussels: Centre International de Documentation Antonio Vivaldi.

VVE

Degrada, Francesco, ed. 1980. *Vivaldi Veneziano Europeo*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki.

VVF

Vivaldi vero e falso: Problemi di attribuzione. 1992. Antonio Fanna and Michael Talbot, eds. Florence: Leo S. Olschki.

Notes

Chapter One

1. Forkel 1950, 40.
2. Rühlmann 1867, 393.
3. Rühlmann 1867, 394 ff.
4. Wasielewski 1869, 61–63.
5. Wasielewski 1893, 3rd ed., 113 f.
6. Schering 1905, 57.
7. Schering 1905, 93 and 95.
8. Schering 1905, 60.
9. The Viennese collector Aloys Fuchs compiled a “Thematisches Verzeichnis über die Compositionen von Antonio Vivaldi...” as early as 1839. The manuscript catalog (Mus. ms. theor. K 828), held by the Berlin Staatsbibliothek, lists eighty-four works by Vivaldi.
10. Eller 1966, column 1859.

Chapter Two

1. See also Wolff 1937, 30 – specifically, information from the *Mercure Galant*.
2. Casanova 1983, 2:205 ff. See also Machen, trans. 1984, 1:368 f.

3. Casanova 1983, 2:223.
4. Cristoforo Ivanovich, quoted in Wolff 1937, 23.
5. Hiller 1979, 189 f.
6. Nemeitz 1726, 61.
7. Nemeitz 1726, 62.
8. De Broses 1858, 1:215 f.
9. Strohm 1979, 12.
10. The coins in circulation in Venice were the *zecchino* (sequin), *ducato* (ducat), *lira*, and *soldo* (sol). Fluctuations in the exchange rate notwithstanding, the following rates apply to the period we are dealing with: one gold sequin (*zecchino*) equaled twenty-two silver lire; one ducat (*ducato corrente*) was usually worth six *lire* four *soldi* or eight *lire*; one *lira* was equal to twenty *soldi* (sols). If we take a ducat to equal six *lire* four *soldi* (LIT 6.2), a sequin was worth roughly three and a half ducats.
11. Nemeitz 1726, 74 ff.
12. Strohm 1979, 12.
13. Wiel 1979.
14. De Broses 1858, 1:214.
15. The text is cited in full in *Antonio Vivaldi da Venezia all'Europa*, or (AVV), 143.

Chapter Tree

1. The baptismal entry in the *Libro de' battesimi* of the church of San Giovanni in Bràgora is reproduced in facsimile in Kolneder 1983, 23 and Talbot 1978, 38.
2. See also the letter dated 16 November 1737 in app. 1.
3. Giazotto 1973, 12.
4. See Vio 1980a, 1980b, 1983, 1984. Giovanni Vio's articles in INF 1980–89 contain all the information we currently have about Vivaldi's family history.
5. All other dates quoted in even the most recent literature are incorrect. Cf. the document printed in INF 1980, 1:33.
6. See Vio 1987, 24 ff.
7. See Vio 1981, 51 ff., esp. 55 f.
8. Everett 1990, 35 ff.
9. Caffi 1854–56.
10. See Vio 1980a, 106.
11. I am indebted to Professor Michael Talbot for this information.
12. Wasielewski 1896, 60.
13. See also the letter dated 16 November 1737 in app. 1.
14. See Travers 1982.
15. See Talbot 1978, 46.

Chapter Four

1. Degrada 1978, 84.
2. The Italian text of the resolution is contained in Giazotto 1973, 352, and in Kolneder 1983, 223.
3. In 1976 the autograph of this sonata was discovered by Manfred Fechner among the anonymous holdings of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden. Details of the find are contained in Fechner's afterword to his edition of the work (No. 9456, 1978, Leipzig: Peters). See chap. 4, n. 53 concerning *salmoè*.
4. We have virtually no information about Vivaldi's whereabouts and activities during this time. A recently discovered document provides proof of a brief stay in Brescia in February 1711. Vivaldi and his father participated in musical performances in honor of the Feast of the Purification (2 February) and for the displaying of the Holy Sacraments. See also Termini 1988, 64–73.
5. The Italian text of the resolution is contained in Giazotto 1973, 368, and in Kolneder 1983, 225.
6. Hiller 1979, 189.
7. From Uffenbach's diary, cited in Preußner 1949, 67 and 71.
8. See Vio 1987, 24 f. and Vio 1984, 96 f.
9. In some cases it is difficult to determine dates of performance due to the use of both the Venetian calendar, which during Vivaldi's lifetime began on 1 March and, unofficially, the modern Gregorian calendar. Very often there is no indication which calendar is meant, thus, occasional confusion occurs in dating Carnival operas. These two performances at the Teatro San Moisè, for instance, could have taken place one year later, in 1719.
10. From the "Vorred" (Preface) to Georg Muffat's collection of concerti grossi, published in 1701, entitled "Außerlesener mit Ernst- und Lust-gemengter Instrumental-Music Erst Versammlung", reprinted in *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, 1904, 9/2:23.
11. Woehl 1937, preface.
12. The Italian original is cited in Schering 1905, 32.
13. The term *structurally based concertizing* (*strukturell begründetes Konzertieren*) was coined by Rudolf Eller. My discussion of Vivaldi's concerto form and technique is based largely on Eller's publications about these topics.
14. Pincherle 1948, 1:158.
15. See ex. 3.
16. Rönna 1974, 281.
17. Modern edition 1978, ed. Karl Heller (Leipzig: Peters).
18. Quantz 1983, 299.
19. The arpeggios in thirty-second notes in the first violin(s) are not written out in the original; other performance variants are possible.
20. Hilgenfeldt 1850, 128.

21. Einstein n.d., preface.
22. Eller 1978, 174–177, the quote is from p. 175.
23. Cited in Preußner 1949, 67.
24. Hawkins 1776, 5:214.
25. The works in question are a number of printed collections, which contain the concertos RV 276, 195, 220, 275, and Anh. 15 and Anh. 65, published by Roger of Amsterdam in about 1712 (Roger Nos. 188, 417, 422, 423, 448).
26. See Preußner 1949, 71.
27. Talbot 1980, 71.
28. Quantz 1983, 152.
29. We have written-out cadenzas for the following Vivaldi violin concertos: RV 212, 268, 340, 507, 556, 581 (all autograph with RV 212 and 581 also in Pisendel's hand), RV 213, 349, 562 (copied by Pisendel), and RV 208.
30. Mecklenburgische Landesbibliothek Schwerin, Musikaliensammlung, Mus. 5565. The copyist of the part was the “lackey” and court-organist Peter Johann Fick (d. 1743), whose presence at court was first documented in 1730.
31. The concertos RV 205, 314, 340 (Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden, Mus. 2389-O-123, O-70, and O-43).
32. The title page of the violin part (Mus. 2398-O-74), which was copied by Pisendel during his stay in Venice, reads: “Concerto fatto per la Solenità della Lingua di S. Antonio in Pad.^a / 1712”.
33. The example is from a Dresden version of the cadenza that diverges from the Turin autograph in a number of details.
34. Cited in Preußner 1949, 67.
35. The list is in Heller 1971, 180 ff.
36. Hiller 1766–67, 285 f.
37. Quantz 1754–55, 232.
38. Nemeitz 1726, 60.
39. The full text of the resolution, consisting of seven points, is given in Giazotto 1973, 363.
40. A four-voice Mass with accompaniment by two violins, cello, and continuo is ascribed to Vivaldi and entitled *Sacrum*. The manuscript copy is owned by the Warsaw University Library.
41. I have used the most recent chronological research by Paul Everett and by Michael Talbot as presented in Venice in 1987 (see their articles in NSV 1988). The dates used for vocal works follow Talbot, 1988b.
42. Hücke 1982, 192.
43. Hücke 1982, 194.
44. Hücke 1982, 195.
45. All psalm numberings are given according to the Vulgate (e.g., Psalm 116 in the Vulgate is the same as Psalm 117 in the Luther Bible).
46. See also Talbot 1978, 24.

47. Talbot 1978, 23–26.
48. Talbot 1978, 199.
49. The complete text appears in INF 1986, 44 ff.; the article also contains a description of the festivities in Vicenza during which the oratorio was performed.
50. The oratorio *Il padre sacrificator della figlia ovvero Jefte* (no RV) was performed in Florence in 1720. The work is a *pasticcio*, containing music by fifteen composers, including Gasparini, Orlandini, Scarlatti, and Porta as well as Vivaldi. The music has not been preserved.
51. See also Selfridge-Field 1980, 135–153. This article gives a list of composers for these works that includes Scarlatti, Gasparini, Marcello, and Vivaldi.
52. On 7 August 1716 the Venetian censors issued the *faccio fede*, which gave per-mission to print Cassetti's libretto.
53. *Juditha triumphans* called for three instruments that require further explanation, especially since the literature concerning them contains a considerable number of discrepancies.

The name *claren* is found both in *Juditha* and in the concerto *Per la solennità di S. Lorenzo*, RV 556, which requires “2 claren”, or “clarini” as they are called in the second movement. Two other concertos stipulate “2 clarinets” together with two oboes. The 1950s debate about whether the term referred to trumpets, as claimed by W. Lebermann (*Die Musik-forschung* 7, 1954) and others, has clearly been decided in favor of clarinets. *Juditha* is one of the earliest examples of the use of clarinets in an orchestral score.

The question as to what instrument was intended by *viola all'inglese* in Vivaldi's scores has been in dispute among researchers. Some scholars contend that the instrument was a viola d'amore with sympathetic strings (the “Englisch Violet” described by Leopold Mozart and others), and other investigators argue that it was, simply, the more common six-stringed viola (da gamba). There is still no agreement on this point, though the fact that Vivaldi uses the instrument elsewhere, as part of a large consort, would seem to suggest the latter instrument. Vivaldi used the *viola all'inglese* in *Juditha triumphans*, in *L'incoronazione di Dario* (1717), and in the RV 555 and 579 (“Funebre”) concertos; the RV 546 concerto requires a *violoncello all'inglese*. The five *viola all'inglese* in *Juditha triumphans* include at least three ranges, from treble to bass.

The wind instrument Vivaldi calls *salmoè* or *salmò* is used in a number of ranges, for example, as a soprano instrument in *Juditha triumphans* and as an alto-tenor instrument in the concertos RV 555, 558 and 579. The *salmoè*, which is used as a continuo instrument with the organ bass line in the RV 779 sonata (for violin, oboe, and obbligato organ), supports the bass line as a four-foot accompanying instrument. Since Pincherle's 1948 publication, a great deal of discussion has gone on as to whether “salmoè” designated the double-reed shawm or the “chalumeau”, which was a precursor of the clarinet. It is now almost certain that the *salmoè* (a Venetian form of

salmò) was a non-overblown type of instrument related in construction and in fingering to the recorder, a forerunner or early form of the clarinet.

54. Eller 1978b.
55. Ahnsehl 1977, 3.
56. The libretto, unlike the score, assigns this aria to Judith, which is equally plausible given the relatively unspecific situation of the *aria di paragone*. It is possible that special sensibilities made Vivaldi write the aria for Holofernes, who would have had only four arias without this one.

Chapter Five

1. See Cavicchi 1967. For the complete text of the letter, see app. 1.
2. Strohm 1981, 90 f.
3. Strohm 1978, 240.
4. See Vivaldi's letter of 3 November 1736 in app. 1.
5. *Nerone fatto Cesare* was also known as *Agrippina*. In his diary entry dated 28 February, Uffenbach calls the opera "Nerone fatto cesare, oder Agrippina". It is not true that it was "an opera composed entirely by ... Vivaldi". Uffenbach's diary is cited in Preisedanz 1920, 118 ff.
6. See Luigi Cataldi's articles in INF 6 and 8. The following chapter in this book treats Vivaldi's activities in Mantua in greater depth.
7. Strohm 1976, 1:4.
8. See Vivaldi's letter of 3 May 1737 in app. 1.
9. Talbot 1978, 70.
10. Strohm 1981, 90.
11. Quantz 1754–55, 223.
12. A facsimile of the contract is contained in the exhibition catalog "Vivaldi e l'ambiente musicale veneziano", *Archivio di Stato de Venezia* 1978, 48; and in Talbot 1978, 76.
13. See Vio 1988, 26–44.
14. From a letter by the Venetian nobleman Abbé Conti to Madame de Caylus dated 23 February 1727 and cited in Kolneder 1984, 198.
15. See below, p. 269 ff.
16. See chap. 6, n. 15.
17. For example, *La costanza trionfante* was performed in 1718 at the Kurfürstliches (Elector's) Theater in Munich and an arrangement of the second version of the opera *Artabano re de' Parti*, under the title *Tigranes*, was performed in Hamburg in 1719.
18. Volek & Skalická 1967, 65.
19. Strohm 1979, 227
20. See app. 1.
21. Stegemann 1985, 102.

22. Quoted in Stegemann 1985, 102.
23. De Broses 1858, 2:361.
24. Strohm 1981, 90.
25. Strohm 1978, 241 and 238.
26. Abert 1960, 8: column 714.
27. See Strohm 1978, 240 f.
28. Wolff 1968, 180 f.
29. Strohm 1978, 245 f.
30. The scene is analyzed thoroughly by Steinebrunner 1988, 45–82.
31. Kolneder 1965, 17–27.
32. The autograph score calls for a viola d’amore; a copy made from the autograph contains a blank part for Vivaldi to perform on the violin as a variation of the obbligato part. See Ryom 1977, 311 f.
33. The aria “Gelido in ogni vena” is one of the surviving numbers from *Siroe*; it was published by Strohm in the volume of musical examples included with *Italienische Operarien des frühen Settecento* and taken from an autograph in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden (Mus. 2389-J-1).
34. Strohm 1976, 1:53.
35. Strohm 1976, 1:53.
36. Finscher 1973–74, 21–32.
37. Wolff 1968, 183 if also includes an extended musical example.
38. Botstiber 1913, 47.
39. Hell 1971, 164.
40. This is especially true of the sinfonias RV 112, 122, 131, 135, 140, and 146. For more information, see Heller 1982 and Heller 1984, which also include extended musical examples.
41. See Travers 1988.
42. Strohm 1981, 94.

Chapter Six

1. See chap. 4, n. 4.
2. The document is reproduced in Giazotto 1973, 374 and, in a German translation, in Kolneder 1983, 173.
3. See Cataldi 1987, 52–88, especially p. 70, n. 10.
4. See Gallico 1980 and Cataldi 1985.
5. *Faccio fede* (I approve) was the formula used by the censors to approve libret-tos for printing. The date of the *faccio fede* gives an important clue to an opera’s date of performance. The period between the granting of the *impri-matur* and the first performance, however, could vary from a few days to several weeks.
6. The designation *more veneto* (in the Venetian fashion) referred to the Venetian calendar, which was officially in force until the end of the Republic

- in 1797 and that began the new year on 1 March. See also chap. 4, n. 9.
7. Talbot 1978, 65.
 8. See Stegemann 1985, 63.
 9. See the documents contained in Cataldi, INF 6 and 8. See chap. 2, n. 10 for the relationship between ducats and lire.
 10. See Everett 1987, 753 f.
 11. The two letters were published for the first time in Gallico 1980, 79 f.
 12. Antonicek 1978, 35 f.
 13. Selfridge-Field 1981, 44–49.
 14. See Vio 1982, 61–65 and Vio 1984.
 15. The archives of the Morzin family of Hohenelbe are now housed in the Zámorsk State Archives in the Czech Republic. The author owes his knowledge of this information to a paper delivered by Milan Poštolka of Prague at the Fasch Conference in Zerbst on 5 December 1983 (Poštolka 1983, 26–29). The author wishes to thank the director of the Zámorsk State Archives for making available the account ledger dates concerning Vivaldi.
 16. Quoted according to a letter by the Zámorsk State District Archives dated 14 November 1988. The passages in brackets were translated from the Czech by Brunhilde Gebler of Rostock. “Fl.” and “kr.” mean *florins* and *kreutzers*.
 17. See Oesterheld 1974, 106.
 18. Reproduced in Della Seta 1982, 521 ff.
 19. Quantz 1754–55, 223
 20. Printed in Della Seta 1982, 525 f.
 21. See the complete letters of 16 and 23 November 1737 in app. 1.
 22. Talbot 1980, 73 ff., and Everett 1984, 1986.
 23. Talbot 1976. The sonatas are now also available as part of Ricordi’s critical edition of Vivaldi’s works.
 24. Everett 1984, 1:31.
 25. Petrobelli 1982, 2:415. The Vivaldi caricature is one of over 200 Ghezzi sketches of music and theater personalities.
 26. Talbot 1981, 38.
 27. Strohm 1982, 51.
 28. Talbot 1988, 37 ff.
 29. Information about these payments has been provided to the author by Professor Michael Talbot.
 30. Talbot 1981, 39.
 31. Talbot 1987, 37.
 32. The original French text may be found in Talbot 1981, 36.
 33. See Talbot 1981, 38.
 34. See Pincherle 1957, 194.
 35. There are a number of possible translations of the title: *The Gamble Between Harmony and Invention*; *Experiment with Harmony and Invention*; and *The Contest Between Harmony and Invention*.
 36. Talbot 1987, 39 f.

37. The handwritten letters are contained in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice ("Lettres de M. l'abbé Conti, noble vénétien, à Madame de Caylus"). Much extremely valuable information has remained inaccessible to date because excerpts that involved Vivaldi have been quoted only as they appear in a revised version that has been compiled for a planned publication. The text of the originals was first published in Talbot 1987, 39 f.
38. See Antonicek 1978, 131.
39. A brief description of the source is found in Heller 1971, 198 ff.; the first detailed description appeared in Ryom 1973, 43 ff.
40. Cited in Kolneder 1983, 161 and 232.
41. It must have been Antonio: we know nothing of Bonaventura Tommaso's (b. 1685) whereabouts (he married a woman from outside Venice); Francesco Gaetano was a barber in Venice; and the youngest, Giuseppe (Iseppo) Gaetano, was sentenced on 18 May 1729 to three years banishment from Venice for brawling.
42. See Eller 1989. Though three other letters are undated, they were quite probably written in January 1729. Prince Carl Ludwig Frederick of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, who had arrived in Venice on 24 December 1728 and left the city on 31 January 1729, wrote, in a letter dated 15 January, that he "had begun to study music with the famous Vivaldi". Vivaldi's letter of 10 June 1730 is the first letter in app. 1.
43. This information is based upon the San Salvador parish death register as quoted in Vio 1980, 45. This and other publications by Vio contain information about where Vivaldi lived in Venice.
44. From a quote in Bellina, Brizi, Pensa 1982, 61 f. Vivaldi apparently used, just this one time, the title of music director of the duke of Lorraine (*duca di Lorena*), which position he held until at least 1735. The duke died in December 1732. It is of interest that this printed libretto contains no mention of Vivaldi being *maestro* at the Pietà.
45. See Everett 1987, 97.
46. The *Oberstburggraf* was royal governor and represented the king in his absence. See also Benedikt 1923 and Bentheim and Stegemann 1988, 75–88. According to Bentheim and Stegemann (p. 77), who give the year of Wrtby's death as 1737, Wrtby was "one of the wealthiest men in the country, with an annual income of 59,000 florins; of course, he maintained his own court orchestra and dedicated himself to extensive patronage".
47. Cited in Volek and Skalická 1967, 72.
48. Stegemann 1985, 92 ff. and Stegemann 1984, 12–15.
49. Antonicek 1978, 132.
50. Torre Franca n.d., 197.
51. Eller 1961, 33.
52. Only one of the concerto copies – a violin part held by the music collection of the Mecklenburgische Landesbibliothek Schwerin – used the title "Grosso Mogul". The Turin autograph and another Italian manuscript

source have no title and neither does the printed version of RV 208a, Op. 7, No. 11, which has a different second movement.

53. Blainville 1754.
54. Everett 1984, 1:31 ff.
55. Heller 1971, 93. The call number for the Dresden set of parts is Mus. 2389-O-62.
56. Everett 1988, 753.
57. See Everett 1988, 753 ff. and INF 1987, 97.
58. See also Heller 1971, 178 ff. Regaznig's letter was dated 27 February 1711 not 1710.
59. Kolneder 1965, 159 f. and 1970, 128.
60. Talbot 1978, 153.
61. Nemeitz 1726, 61.
62. See Just 1979, 47.
63. Fechner 1988, 775–784, especially p. 779.
64. Nemeitz 1726, 61.
65. Manfred Fechner considers the two sonatas RV 28 and RV 34, which do not have instrumental indications in the versions we have and that were previously thought to be violin sonatas, to be oboe sonatas. See also the sleeve notes on the recording *Vivaldi: Die Werke für Oboe. Sonaten*. 1988. Eterna 725 131.
66. Everett, 1988, 753 f.
67. Quantz 1983, 309.
68. Stegemann 1986, 67.
69. Fischer in Adler 1924, 482 ff., especially p. 500.
70. Hell 1984, 149–169.
71. Eller 1978c.
72. Eller 1978c.
73. Everett 1988, 753 f.
74. The compositions that bear Vivaldi's name, but that probably are not by him, are as follows: RV 113, 116, 125, 132, 137, 147, and 148/Anh. 68. See Heller 1983, 164 ff.
75. Reimer 1972 ff.
76. Kolneder 1965, 185.
77. See Talbot 1981, 38.
78. Kolneder 1965, 185.
79. Kendall 1978, 70 and Talbot 1984, 66–81.
80. Talbot 1984, 78. For a discussion of the use of the conch horn in Bohemia see Kunz 1974, 130–133.
81. Kolneder 1965, 187.
82. Schmitz 1914, 150.
83. Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden, Mus. 1-J-7. One of the eleven works is the manuscript of an anonymous cantata entitled "Usignoletto bello" (RV 796). This work has been conclusively identified by recent sources as

- a Vivaldi work. The new source has been acquired by the Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden and has been given the call number 2389-1-500. Publication is in preparation as part of the *Nuova Edizione Critica*.
84. Schmitz 1914, 151.
 85. Braun 1986, 94.
 86. Paumgartner 1966, 502.
 87. Paumgartner 1966, 502.
 88. Jander 1979, column 1694.
 89. Mattheson 1739, 217.
 90. See Talbot 1982, 84 ff.
 91. Talbot 1982, 87.
 92. Talbot 1982, 88 f.
 93. See Kolneder 1965, 142 and 230. Pier Caterino Zeno, a brother of librettist Apostolo Zeno, described this ceremony in a letter.
 94. Talbot 1988, 765.
 95. Vio 1986, 72–86.
 96. Talbot 1988, 37 ff.
 97. According to Talbot (Talbot 1988b, 767 ff.), the motets RV 624, 625, 628, 630, and 633 belong to the period 1713–17, while the other seven were written during the *middle* period c. 1720–35.
 98. Tosi and Agricola 1966, 163.
 99. Quantz 1983, 288.
 100. Arnold 1980, 45.
 101. Arnold 1980, 45.
 102. Steude 1986, 43.
 103. Talbot 1988, 762 ff.

Chapter Seven

1. Fürstenau 1971, 50 f. and 134 f. The orchestra's personnel roster included music director, instrument inspector, tuner, copyists, and other associates.
2. Hiller 1979, 209.
3. From the Uffenbach diary entry of 4 February 1713; see Heller 1971, 6.
4. Hiller 1979, 136 ff.
5. Torre Franca 1949, 199 f.
6. Hiller 1766–67, 285; Hiller 1979, 189.
7. Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden. We are indebted to Manfred Fechner for the identification of manuscript Mus. 2421-O-14.
8. The works in question are the sonatas RV 2, 6, 19, 25, and 29, and the concertos RV 172, 205, 237, 242, 314, and 340. These works are available in a facsimile edition as part of the *Musik der Dresdener Hofkapelle* series (Leipzig: 1981) with commentary by Karl Heller.

9. Hiller 1766–67, 285 f.
10. Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden, Mus. 2199-R-1. A facsimile was edited and published by Talbot in 1980.
11. The Leipzig physician and Quantz scholar Dr. Horst Augsbach has identified *scribe C* as Quantz (Heller 1971, 41 ff).
12. The copyists in question, whom the author has labeled *scribe A* and *scribe D*, are probably the *Hofnotisten* (court copyists) Lindner and Schmidt (Heller 1971, 30 ff). According to Ortrun Landmann's recent research the two copyists are Johann Gottfried Grundig and Johann Georg Kremler and were from the next generation (Landmann 1981, n. 24). Manfred Fechner (Fechner 1988) tentatively identifies *scribe A* as Grundig and *scribe D* as Johann Gottlieb Morgenstern, a violist in the Royal Orchestra.
13. Landmann 1983, 57.
14. Landmann 1981, 27.
15. Quoted in Lorenz 1967, 141.
16. Eller 1961, 31.
17. Schering 1905, 96.
18. Detailed surveys of the Dresden Vivaldi holdings are contained in Heller 1971 and Landmann 1981.
19. See Wolfgang Horn 1987, 145 ff. Only Zelenka's catalog, "Psalmi varii", gives G minor as the key for Vivaldi's Magnificat.
20. See chap. 6, n. 84.
21. See chap. 6, n. 65.
22. The autograph score of the concerto is contained in the Turin National Library (Foà 32:239–54). A published version can be found in volume 25 of the Ricordi critical edition.
23. See Talbot 1988, 37.
24. The following goes in favor of a considerably earlier date for the Concerto in F Major (RV 571): the ritornello of the last movement is identical in themes and in overall structure with the ritornello of the aria "Come l'on-da" from *Ottone in Villa*, written in 1713.
25. Eller 1961, 45 f.
26. Eller 1961, 45 f.
27. The author wishes to thank Paul Everett, Cork, for information regarding the dating of these concertos.
28. The concerto RV 564 also exists in Dresden in a score copied by Pisendel for 2 violins, 2 oboes, bassoon, and strings. This version shows significantly different instrumental and musical content. We do not know who is responsible for these changes.
29. Michael Talbot (Talbot 1988a, 35 ff.) surmises that this concerto was written for San Lorenzo in Damaso Church in Rome.
30. For the meaning of the names of several uncommon instruments see chap. 4, n. 53. The "violini in tromba marina" required in the concerto RV 558 can only mean that a sound like a marine trumpet ("tromba marina") is

required and would be produced by normal violins playing in a special way. The way in which this sound was produced is unknown to us, perhaps the instrument was played with a special articulation such as very short bow strokes that were close to the bridge (*sul ponticello*). The “Violino in tromba” as solo instrument is called for in three other Vivaldi concertos (RV 221, 311, and 313), and no doubt means the same thing.

31. Riemer n.d.
32. Landmann 1979, 51.
33. Cited in Bach-Dokumente 1972, 3:241.
34. Hiller 1766–67, 279.
35. Around 1730 Bach chose another concerto from the Concerto No. 10 in B Minor for 4 Violins, Op. 3 (RV 580), as the basis of his Concerto in A Minor for 4 Harpsichords, Strings, and Continuo, BWV 1065.
36. Dahlhaus 1972, 10–16. Recent articles on the relationship of Bach to the works of Vivaldi include those by the following authors: Klein 1970, Eller 1980, Breig 1986, and Christoph Wolff 1988.
37. Eller 1961, 47.
38. Rudolf Eller in an unpublished 1979 lecture on Bach’s concertos.
39. Quantz 1983, 185.

Chapter Eight

1. Giazotto 1973, 378 f.
2. See Talbot 1982b, 3–11, especially p. 6 f. The name of the composer is listed on 14 April as “D.^{no} Ant.^o Viviani” and on 27 May as “D.^{no} Ant.^o”. Talbot believes, probably rightly so, that this was Vivaldi.
3. From a copy in the music division of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Ca 66, Berlin.
4. Francesco Caffi in a collection of materials on Venetian music history in the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice.
5. In 1978 a facsimile edition of this manuscript (Mus. 2389-O-4 in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek) was published by the Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik with an afterword by Karl Heller.
6. Taken from *the Journal der Reise des Kurprinzen Friedrich Christian von Rom nach Wien*, 2:263c. Staatsarchiv Dresden Loc. 355.75.
7. Hasselt 1977, 398 f.
8. Lescat 1990, 5–9; VVF (*Vivaldi vero e falso. Problemi di attribuzione*, 1992), 109–127.
9. See Talbot 1980, 71 and Talbot 1978, 103 f. See also de Brosses 1858, 1:212 ff.
10. De Brosses 1858, 1:212 ff.

11. See Giazotto 1973, 382. The literature following Salvatori 1928 usually gives the incorrect date of 29 August 1740.
12. Vio 1990, 89–96.
13. Vio 1980b, 45 f.
14. Talbot 1987, 44.
15. Oesterheld 1974, 91 ff.
16. See Strohm 1978, 247 and Talbot 1987, 44 f.
17. See the entries of 7–11 February 1741 in the diary of Anton Ulrich of Saxony-Meiningen (Staatsarchiv Meiningen, Geheimes Archiv, TXV, 35:9 and 10).
18. Facsimile in VVA, 1:142.
19. The works are the sinfonia RV 703 and the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major (RV 371), Anh. 8, Anh. 13, RV 337, 367, 390, 189, 200, 255, 259, 273, 286, 290, 309, and 304.
20. Facsimile in Kolneder 1983, 203.
21. See Pabisch 1972, 82 f.
22. Panagl 1985, 112.
23. Cited in AVV, 90.
24. From a letter of 29 August 1739 translated in de Brosses 1858, 1:214 f.
25. Landshoff 1935. Introduction.
26. Letter to Charles Jennens of 16 July 1733.
27. Goldoni 1814, 161 ff. A slightly different version is quoted in Pincherle 1957 61–63.
28. Gerber 1790–92, 2:736 f.
29. In addition to Ghezzi's caricature there is a second authentic picture of the composer, a 1725 engraving by François Morellon La Cave. The anonymous oil portrait of a musician at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna is also thought to represent Vivaldi (see the evidence presented in Vatielli 1938).

Chapter Nine

1. Quantz 1754–55, 205.
2. Schering 1905, 75.
3. Besseler 1959, 46 ff.
4. Werner 1969, xviii and 73.
5. Ahnsehl 1984, 21.
6. The complete quote is given above, p. 66.
7. Nef 1921, 104.
8. Eller 1975.
9. Eller 1958, 154.
10. Eller 1966, col. 1868.

11. Gerber 1790–92, 2:col. 737.
12. Uffenbach takes exception to the claim that there was an absence of the “amiable and cantabile style” in Vivaldi’s playing. See the diary entry of 6 March 1715 in Preußner 1949, 71.
13. Quantz 1983, 309.
14. Hawkins 1776, 5:214.

Chronology of Important Dates in Vivaldi's Life

- 1678 4 March: Antonio Vivaldi born (and baptized *in extremis*) in Venice to the musician (previously barber) Giovanni Battista Vivaldi.
- 1685 23 April: Vivaldi's father employed as violinist of St. Mark's Orchestra.
- 1693 Vivaldi begins his training for the priesthood. He is administered tonsure on 18 September and is ordained ostiary the following day.
- 1696 21 September: Vivaldi receives the last of the four lesser orders and is ordained acolyte.
Christmas: becomes a substitute violinist in St. Mark's orchestra.
- 1703 23 March: Vivaldi ordained priest; as in previous years, he serves at the church of San Giovanni in Oleo.
September: assumes position of *maestro di violino* at the Ospedale della Pietà, where he is also chaplain until November 1706.
- 1705 Vivaldi's first published work: Trio Sonatas, Op. 1.
- 1708 The Venetian publisher Bortoli announces publication of a set of violin sonatas (Op. 2 that are printed at the latest) in early 1709.

- 1709–1711 First interruption of Vivaldi's employment at the Ospedale della Pietà; he is reappointed 27 September 1711.
- 1711 Roger, Amsterdam, publishes *L'estro armonico*, Op. 3, Vivaldi's first published collection of concertos.
February: Vivaldi and father perform at festive church music concerts in Brescia.
- 1713 17 May: Vivaldi's first known work for the stage performed in Vicenza: the opera *Ottone in Villa*.
June: the oratorio *La vittoria navale* performed in Vicenza.
Autumn: Vivaldi takes up duties as impresario at the Teatro S. Angelo, Venice.
- 1713–1717 Vivaldi assumes the duties of *maestro di coro* (composing sacred works) at the Pietà after Francesco Gasparini leaves Venice.
- 1714 The oratorio *Moyses Deus Pharaonis* performed at the Ospedale della Pietà.
November: first performance of a Vivaldi opera in Venice – *Orlando finto pazzo*, Teatro S. Angelo.
- 1715 Carnival: Vivaldi meets the Frankfurt patrician Johann Friedrich A. von Uffenbach.
- 1716 29 March: Vivaldi temporarily loses his post at the Pietà. He is reappointed on 24 May with the title *maestro de' concerti*.
Johann Georg Pisendel, who has been in Venice in the retinue of the Saxon prince-electors Frederick August since April, takes lessons with Vivaldi.
November: the oratorio *Juditha Triumphans* performed at the Pietà.
- 1718–1720 Vivaldi employed as chamber music director at the court of Prince Philip of Hesse-Darmstadt, the imperial viceroy in Mantua.
- 1722 9 January: the oratorio *L'adorazione delli tre Re Magi al Bambino Gesù* performed in Milan.
- 1723 Carnival: Vivaldi visits Rome to supervise (among other activities) the premiere of his opera *Ercole sul Termodonte*.
2 July: Vivaldi resumes regular employment at the Pietà; he is obliged to compose two concertos per month and to hold three to four rehearsals for each concerto while he is present in Venice.

- 1724 Carnival: Vivaldi again in Rome, where his new opera *Giustino* is a success.
 Autumn: opera debut in Venice of the singer Anna Girò, Vivaldi's student, companion, and future prima donna.
- 1725 Publication of the set of the Concertos, Op. 8, containing *The Four Seasons*.
 12 September: performance at the French embassy in Venice of the serenata *Gloria (e) Imeneo*, composed for the wedding of Louis XV.
 Autumn: Vivaldi resumes regular employment at the Teatro S. Angelo.
- 1726 31 July: serenata composed for the birthday of Prince Philip of Hesse-Darmstadt and performed in Mantua.
 13 October: Vivaldi concludes a contract with a female singer in his capacity as *direttore delle opere in musica* of the Teatro S. Angelo.
- 1727 Publication of the collection of concertos *La cetra*, Op. 9, dedicated to Emperor Charles VI.
 Carnival: premiere of the opera *Ipermestra* in Florence.
- 1728 6 May: Vivaldi's mother dies.
 September: meeting in Trieste with Emperor Charles VI, to whom Vivaldi dedicates another manuscript set of concertos entitled *La cetra*,
 29 December: premiere of the opera *L'Atenaide* in Florence.
- 1729 30 September: Vivaldi's father receives one year's leave from his duties in St. Mark's orchestra to accompany his son to Central Europe (*Germania*).
- 1729–
1730 Vivaldi begins a journey in Autumn 1729 lasting several months, going (presumably) to Vienna and Prague. A number of Vivaldi operas performed at the theater of Count Sporck in Prague from Spring 1730 to 1732.
- 1730 10 June: Vivaldi returns to Venice and states his intention (in a letter) to stay there for the rest of his life.
- 1730–
1731 Vivaldi probably travels to *Germania* a second time during the second half of 1730, most likely until early 1731.
- 1731 Late December: premiere of the opera *Semiramide* in Mantua, where Vivaldi is impresario during Carnival 1732.
- 1732 6 January: premiere of the opera *La fida ninfa* to inaugurate the Teatro Filarmonico in Verona.

- 1733–1734 Autumn 1733–Carnival 1734: Vivaldi stages three operas at the Teatro S. Angelo, including the premieres of *Motezuma* and *L'Olimpiade*.
- 1735 Carnival: Vivaldi works as impresario in Verona where he stages a *pasticcio* and a new opera (*L'Adelaide*).
 Spring: Vivaldi works with Carlo Goldoni, who has revised the *Griselda* libretto for the composer. *Griselda* is premiered at the Teatro S. Samuele on 18 May.
 5 August: Vivaldi again named *maestro de' concerti* at the Pietà.
- 1736 14 May: Vivaldi's father, Giovanni Battista, dies.
- 1736–1739 Correspondence with Marchese Guido Bentivoglio d'Aragona, Ferrara, concerning Vivaldi's opera projects in that city.
- 1737 March: premiere of the opera *Catone in Utica* in Verona.
 November: Cardinal Ruffo, archbishop of Ferrara, refuses to admit Vivaldi to Ferrara, where the composer was supposed to prepare the premiere of a Carnival opera.
- 1738 March: the Pietà governors vote not to confirm Vivaldi as *maestro de' concerti*.
 Late December: the performance of the opera *Siroe Re di Persia* in Ferrara is a failure, resulting in the cancellation of another opera project.
- 1739 August: Charles de Brosses, who meets Vivaldi in Venice, states that the composer is not sufficiently esteemed in his native city.
- 1740 21 March: three concertos and a sinfonia by Vivaldi performed at a festive concert at the Pietà in honor of the Saxon prince-electors Frederick Christian.
 29 April: the Pietà learns that Vivaldi intends to leave Venice.
 9 and 12 May: Vivaldi sells more than twenty concertos to the Pietà; the entries recording this sale are the last evidence of Vivaldi's presence in Venice.
- 1741 7–11 February: first evidence of Vivaldi's presence in Vienna; he tries to gain an audience with Duke Anton Ulrich of Saxony-Meiningen.
 28 June: Vivaldi sells a large number of works to Count Collalto.
 28 July: Vivaldi dies in his Vienna apartment close to the Kärntnertor (Carinthia Gate) and is buried the same day in the hospital burial ground.

Chronological List of Vivaldi's Operas

The list contains only complete operas and acts of opera wholly by Vivaldi and *pasticci* arranged by him. It does not include works, whole or in part, of dubious authorship. Numbering is provided for orientation.

In addition to first performances, repeat performances are listed only if the entire opera was given, or substantial portions thereof. In general, reworkings with a changed title are not recorded.

In organizing the items of information, letters are used according to the following key:

Letter Item(s) of Information

- a. Title of opera, RV number, librettist or libretto arranger.
- b. Theater and date of first performance. A precise date indicates the premiere. The total number of performances of a given opera is unknown, though in general between one and about thirty, in some cases more than thirty.
- c. Verified additional performances.
- d. Music preserved (not including individual arias).
- e. Miscellaneous remarks. Information concerning contemporary reprises is taken from the essay "L'exhumation des opéras de Vivaldi au XX siècle" by Roger-Claude Travers.

1. (a) *Ottone in Villa* (RV 729). Domenico Lalli
 (b) Vicenza, Teatro delle Garzerie, 17 May 1713
 (c) Treviso, Teatro Dolfín, October 1729
 (d) Autograph score (Turin)
 (e) Hill, J. W., ed. Facsimile edition of the score in the series *Drammaturgia Musicale Veneta*, vol. 12, Milan: Ricordi, 1983.
2. (a) *Orlando finto pazzo* (RV 727). G. Braccioli
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, c. 10 November 1714
 (c) None
 (d) Autograph score, without sinfonia (Turin)
3. (a) *Nerone fatto Cesare* (RV 724). M. Noris
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, February 1715
 (c) None
 (d) Music not preserved
 (e) A *pasticcio* arranged by Vivaldi which contains, in addition to twelve Vivaldi arias, arias by, among others, A. Pollarolo, F. Gasparini, G. Perti, G. M. Orlandini, and D. Pistocchi
4. (a) *La costanza trionfante degl'Amori e degl'Odii* (RV 706). A. Marchi
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Moisè, c. 18 January 1716
 (c) Munich, Kurfürstliches Theater, 1718; Venice, Teatro S. Moisè, January 1718 (revised as *Artabano Re de'Parti*, RV 701); Vicenza, Teatro di Piazza, Carnival 1719; Hamburg, Oper am Gänsemarkt, May 1719 (a version entitled *Tigranes*); Mantua, Teatro Arciducalc, Carnival 1725 (*L'Artabano*); Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, January 1731 (a version entitled *L'Odio vinto dalla Costanza*); Prague, Sporck Theater, Carnival 1732 (a version entitled *Doriclea*, RV 708)
 (d) Music not preserved
5. (a) *Arsilda Regina di Ponto* (RV 700). Domenico Lalli
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 27 or 28 October 1716
 (c) None
 (d) Two scores (one of which is autograph), of two different versions of the work (Turin)
6. (a) *L'incoronazione di Dario* (RV 719). A. Morselli
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 23 January 1717
 (c) None
 (d) Autograph score (Turin)
 (e) Modern revivals in August 1978 in Siena arranged and conducted by Newell Jenkins, and in 1984 in Grasse, France, arranged and conducted by Gilbert Bezzina, who conducted the 1985 recording for the Harmonia mundi label.

7. (a) *Tieteburga* (RV 737). A. M. Lucchini
(b) Venice, Teatro S. Moisè, 16 October 1717
(c) None
(d) Music not preserved
8. (a) *Armida al campo d'Egitto* (RV 699). G. Palazzi.
(b) Venice, Teatro S. Moisè, 15 February 1718
(c) Mantua, Teatro Arciduciale, 24 April 1718; Vicenza, Teatro delle Garz-
erie, May 1720 (in a version entitled *Gli inganni per vendetta*, RV 720);
Venice, Teatro di Santa Margherita, Carnival 1731; Venice, Teatro S.
Angelo, 12 February 1738
(d) Autograph score of the first and third acts (Turin)
9. (a) *Scanderbeg* (RV 732). A. Salvi
(b) Florence, Teatro della Pergola, 22 June 1718
(c) None
(d) Music not preserved
10. (a) *Teuzzone* (RV 736). Apostolo Zeno
(b) Mantua, Teatro Arciduciale, 26 December 1718
(c) None
(d) One score in Turin (partial autograph) and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek
Preußischer Kulturbesitz
(e) *Arsilda* sinfonia used
11. (a) *Tito Manlio* (RV 738). M. Noris
(b) Mantua, Teatro Arciduciale, Carnival 1719
(c) None
(d) Two scores, including one autograph, in Turin
(e) 1977 Eterna (East Berlin) recording of an adaptation by Franz Giegling
conducted by Vittorio Negri; stage revival February 1979 in Milan
(Giegling / Negri). Also see no. 12
12. (a) *Tito Manlio* (pasticcio) (RV 778). M. Noris
(b) Rome, Teatro della Pace, 8 January 1720
(c) None
(d) See (e)
(e) Vivaldi wrote the music to act 3, act 1 was written by Gaetano Boni, and
act 2 by Giovanni Giorgi. The music to act 3 is, in part, identical to that of
no. 11
13. (a) *La Candace, o siano Li veri amici* (RV 704). E. Silvani / Domenico Lalli
(b) Mantua, Teatro Arciduciale, Carnival 1720
(c) None
(d) Music not preserved

14. (a) *La verità in cimento* (RV 739). G. Palazzi / Domenico Lalli
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 26 (?) October 1720
 (c) None
 (d) Autograph score (Turin)
 (e) Stage revival entitled *Die teuer erkaufte Wahrheit* during February 1978 at the Landestheater, Halle, in a stage version by this theater (original score edited by Peter Ryom, recitative arrangements by Walter Heinz Bernstein, conducted by Max Pommer); the same version was performed at the Teatr Wielki, Warsaw, in 1984

15. (a) *Filippo Re di Macedonia* (RV 715). Domenico Lalli
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 27 December 1720
 (c) None
 (d) Music not preserved
 (e) A *pasticcio*, with acts 1 and 2 by Giuseppe Boniventi, and act 3 by Vivaldi

16. (a) *La Silvia* (RV 734). E. Bissaro
 (b) Milan, Regio Ducal Teatro, 26 (or 28 ?) August 1721
 (c) None
 (d) Music not preserved
 (e) Libretto calls the work a *Dramma pastorale*

17. (a) *Ercole sul Termodonte* (RV 710). G. Bussani
 (b) Rome, Teatro Capranica, January 1723
 (c) None
 (d) Sinfonia to *Armida* used, some of the arias have been preserved.

18. (a) *La Virtù trionfante dell'Amore e dell'Odio ovvero Il Tigrane* (RV 740). F. Silvani
 (b) Rome, Teatro Capranica, Carnival 1724
 (c) None
 (d) Score of act 2 – composed by Vivaldi – in Turin
 (e) A *pasticcio*. Act 1 and the intermezzi by Benedetto Micheli, act 2 by Vivaldi, and act 3 by Nicola Romaldi

19. (a) *Il Giustino* (RV 717). N. Berengani / Pietro Pariati
 (b) Rome, Teatro Capranica, Carnival 1724
 (c) None
 (d) Autograph score (Turin)
 (e) Stage version mounted 1985 in Vicenza, Versailles, and Venice (arranged by Reinhard Strohm, conducted by Alan Curtis) and 1986 in Como and Buenos Aires. Modern edition; *Giustino*. *Dramma per musica* di Nicolò Berengan. RV 717. Edizione critica a cura di Reinhard Strohm. Milan: Ricordi, 1991

20. (a) *L'Inganno trionfante in amore* (RV 721). M. Noris / G. M. Ruggeri
(b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, autumn 1725
(c) None
(d) Music not preserved
(e) Perhaps a *pasticcio* arranged by Vivaldi
21. (a) *Cunegonda* (RV 707). A. Piovene
(b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 29 January 1726
(c) None
(d) Music not preserved
(e) Perhaps a *pasticcio* arranged by Vivaldi
22. (a) *La fede tradita e vendicata* (RV 712). E. Silvani
(b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 16 February 1726
(c) None
(d) Music not preserved
23. (a) *Dorilla in Tempe* (RV 709). A. M. Lucchini
(b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 9 November 1726
(c) Venice, Teatro S. Margherita ai carmini, autumn 1728; Prague, Sporck Theater, spring 1732; Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, February 1734 (*pasticcio* version with arias by J. A. Hasse and G. Giacomelli)
(d) Score, partly autograph (Turin)
(e) Called *Melodramma eroicopastorale* in the libretto
24. (a) *Ipermestra* (RV 722). A. Salvi
(b) Florence, Teatro della Pergola, 25 January 1727
(c) None
(d) Music not preserved
25. (a) *Farnace* (RV 711). A. M. Lucchini
(b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 10 February 1727
(c) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, autumn 1727; Prague, Sporck Theater, spring 1730; Pavia, Teatro Omodeo, May 1731; Mantua, Teatro Arciduciale, c. 26 January 1732; Treviso, Teatro Dolfín, Carnival 1737; Hamburg, 1747 (?)
(d) Two scores, the later of which contains only acts 1 and 2, and which differs considerably from the first (both in Turin)
(e) Concert performance and recording (Voce), New York, 1978, arranged and conducted by Newell Jenkins; stage performance in Genoa, December 1982, arranged by Gianfranco Prato and conducted by Massimo de Bernart.
26. (a) *Siroe Re di Persia* (RV 735). Pietro Metastasio
(b) Reggio Emilia, Teatro Pubblico, ca. 19 April 1727

- (c) Ancona, Teatro Fenice, summer 1738; Ferrara, Teatro Bonacossi, ca. 26 December 1738
 - (d) Music not preserved
27. (a) *Orlando (furioso)* (RV 728). G. Braccioli
- (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, November 1727
 - (c) None
 - (d) Score, partly autograph, without sinfonia (Turin)
 - (e) Recording (Erato, 1977; RCA) arranged and conducted by Claudio Scimone; also stage performances directed by Scimone in Verona, Dallas, Nancy, and Paris, 1978–1981.
28. (a) *Rosilena ed Oronta* (RV 730). G. Palazzi
- (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 17 January 1728
 - (c) None
 - (d) Music not preserved
29. (a) *L'Atenaide* (RV 702). Apostolo Zeno
- (b) Florence, Teatro della Pergola, 29 December 1728
 - (c) None
 - (d) Autograph score without sinfonia (Turin)
30. (a) *Argippo* (RV 697). Domenico Lalli
- (b) Prague, Sporck Theater, autumn 1730
 - (c) None
 - (d) Music not preserved
31. (a) *Alvilda regina dei Goti* (RV 696). Librettist unknown
- (b) Prague, Sporck Theater, spring 1731
 - (c) None
 - (d) Music not preserved
 - (e) The recitatives and buffo arias are not by Vivaldi
32. (a) *Semiramide* (RV 733). F. Silvani
- (b) Mantua, Teatro Arciduciale, ca. 26 December 1731
 - (c) None
 - (d) Music not preserved
33. (a) *La fida ninfa* (RV 714). S(cipione?) Maffei
- (b) Verona, Teatro Filarmonico, 6 January 1732 (to inaugurate the theater)
 - (c) Vienna 1737, in an arrangement entitled *Il giorno felice/Der glückseelige Tag*
 - (d) Autograph score without sinfonia (Turin)

- (e) Modern printed edition, edited by Raffaello Monterosso, Cremona, 1964; stage versions arranged and conducted by Angelo Ephrikian in Brussels, Paris, and Nancy (all 1958); arranged by Monterosso in Milan (1962) and Marseille (1964); recording conducted by Monterosso (Vox, 1964); concertante performance in Paris, 1978, conducted by Vittorio Negri.

- 34. (a) *Motezuma* (RV 723). G. Giusti
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 14 November 1733
 (c) None
 (d) Music not preserved

- 35. (a) *L'Olimpiade* (RV 725). Pietro Metastasio
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 17 February 1734
 (c) None
 (d) Autograph score (Turin)
 (e) *L'Olimpiade* was the first Vivaldi opera to be revived in the twentieth century: in a stage performance of an arrangement by Virgilio Mortari during the 1939 Vivaldi Week in Siena; Bremen (1963, concert version, arranged by Lutz Besch); Turin (1978, Mortari version); Como and Milan (arranged by Francesco Degrada); Linz, Madeira, and Lisbon (1984, arranged by René Clemencic); recording (Hungaroton, 1977) of the heavily edited Mortari version conducted by Ferenc Szekeres.

- 36. (a) *Il Tamerlano* (*Bajazet*) (RV 703). A. Piovene
 (b) Verona, Teatro Filarmonico, Carnival 1735
 (c) Florence, 1748 (?)
 (d) Score, partly autograph (Turin)
 (e) A *pasticcio* arranged by Vivaldi, consisting largely of arias by other composers, including Hasse and Giacomelli.

- 37. (a) *L'Adelaida* (RV695). A. Salvi
 (b) Verona, Teatro Filarmonico, Carnival 1735
 (c) Graz, Theater am Tummel-Platz, Carnival 1739
 (d) Music not preserved

- 38. (a) *La Griselda* (RV 718). Apostolo Zeno / Carlo Goldoni
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Samuele, 18 May 1735
 (c) None
 (d) Autograph score (Turin)
 (f) Facsimile edition, edited by Howard M. Brown, in the *Italian Opera 1640–1770* series (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978); concert revivals in London, 1978 (arranged by Eric Cross, conducted by John

Eliot Gardiner); Rome (1978, arranged and conducted by Renato Fasano); stage performances in Buxton (1983, arranged by Eric Cross), and Ludwigs-hafen, Liège, and Lausanne (1989, conducted by Hans-Martin Linde)

39. (a) *Aristide* (RV 698). Carlo Guidoni
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Samuele, autumn 1735
 (c) None
 (d) Music not preserved
 (e) Called *Drama eroi-comico* in the libretto
40. (a) *Ginevra Principessa di Scozia* (RV 716). A. Salvi
 (b) Florence, Teatro della Pergola, 17 January 1736
 (c) None
 (d) Music not preserved
41. (a) *Catone in Utica* (RV 705). Pietro Metastasio
 (b) Verona, Teatro Filarmonico, 26 (?) March 1737
 (c) Graz, Theater am Tummel-Platz, summer 1739 (?)
 (d) Score of acts 2 and 3 (Turin)
 (e) Concert performances in Verona and Padua, and recording (Erato), 1984, arranged and conducted by Claudio Scimone
42. (a) *L'oracolo in Messenia* (RV 726). Apostolo Zeno
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 30 December 1737
 (c) Vienna, Kärntnertortheater, Carnival 1742
 (d) Music not preserved
43. (a) *Rosmira* (RV 731). Silvio Stampiglia
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 27 January 1738
 (c) Klagenfurt, Carnival 1738; Graz, Theater am Tummel-Platz, autumn 1739
 (d) Score, partly autograph (Turin)
 (e) A *pasticcio* arranged by Vivaldi with arias by Hasse, Handel, Pergolesi, and others
44. (a) *Feraspe* (RV 713). E. Silvani (?)
 (b) Venice, Teatro S. Angelo, 7 November 1739
 (c) None
 (e) Music not preserved

Vivaldi Works List

Heller’s catalogue of works is unsatisfactory and not included.

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The abbreviations AVV, INF, NRM, NSV, SAF, VST, VVE, and VVF are used for certain collections and periodicals. For further information, see p. 298.

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ANTONIO Vivaldi's rediscovery after World War II quickly led him from obscurity to his present renown as one of the most popular and frequently performed eighteenth-century composers. The Venetian's long-silent music was assured a rebirth of immense proportions when it began to be available through the medium of the long-playing record, and an average of forty new Vivaldi recordings have been issued each year over the past thirty years. There are currently about two hundred recordings of *The Four Seasons* alone.

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Written for musicians and music students as well as for the many other lovers of Vivaldi's music, the book also offers musicologists little-known material, new information, and new perspectives on the composer.



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