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 Wagener 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. Medefìnd 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 bad 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 occured: 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.