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

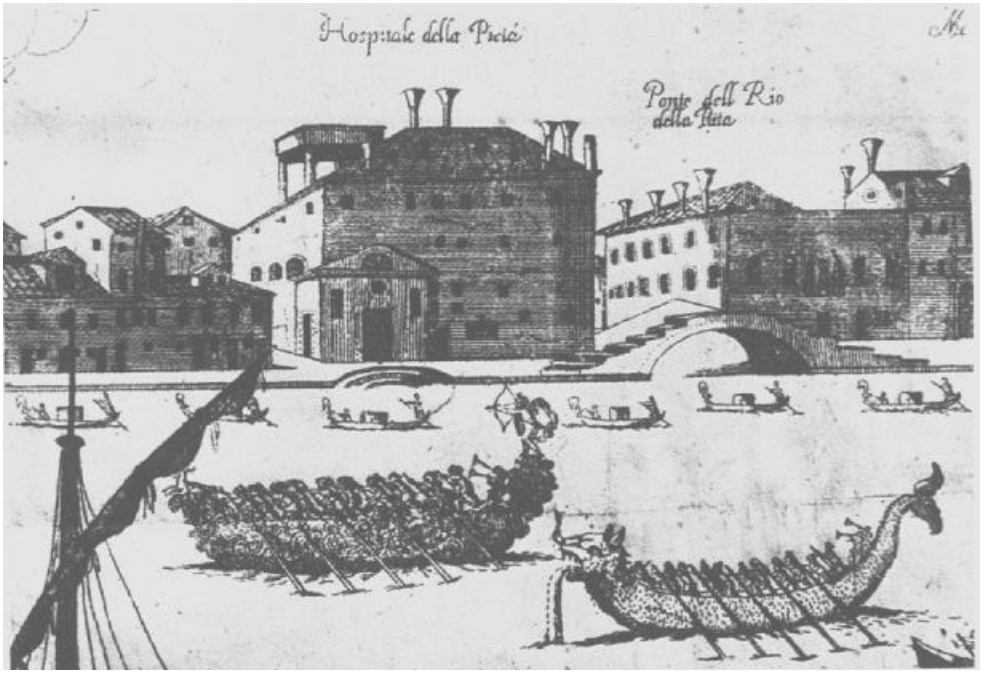


Figure 9. The Ospedale della Pietà in a 1686 engraving (detail).

absorbed the major share of his musical attention from 1703 until at least 1709, and perhaps until asiate 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


L'ESTRO ARMONICO
Consacrati
ALL' ALTEZZA REALE
Di
FERDINANDO III.
GRAN PRENCIPE DI TOSCANA
Da D. Antonio Vivaldi
OPERA TERZA
LIBRO SECONDO.
A AMSTERDAM
Aux depens D' ESTIENNE ROGER Marchand Libraire

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-

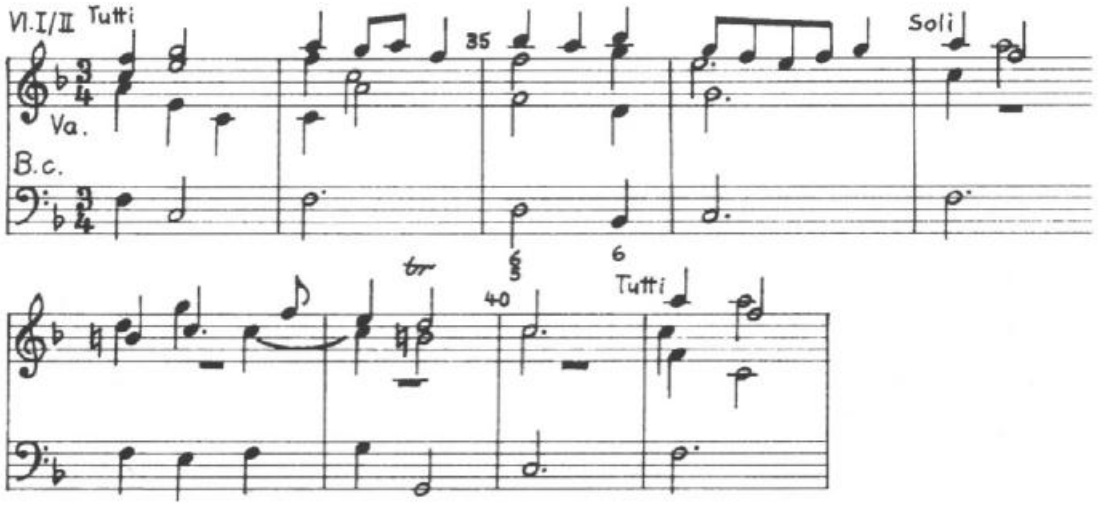
coming the prescription for a specific, new concerto form.[13] It was a convincing, virtually self-evident movement structure that became an established style for concertizing. I refer to the movement structure that has come to be known as *ritornello* form, which remained the basic model for fast concerto 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]

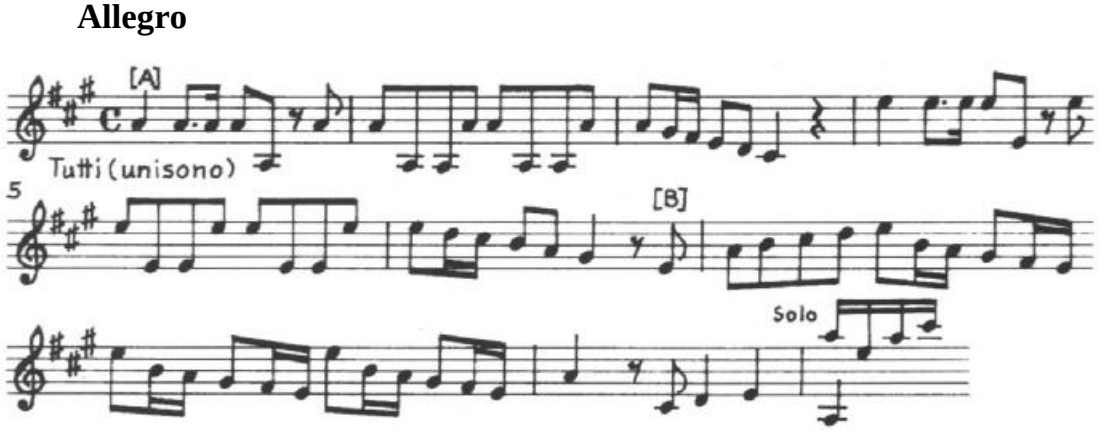


Example 4. Concerto in F Major, Op. 3, No. 7 (RV 567), last movement, bars 33 ff.

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

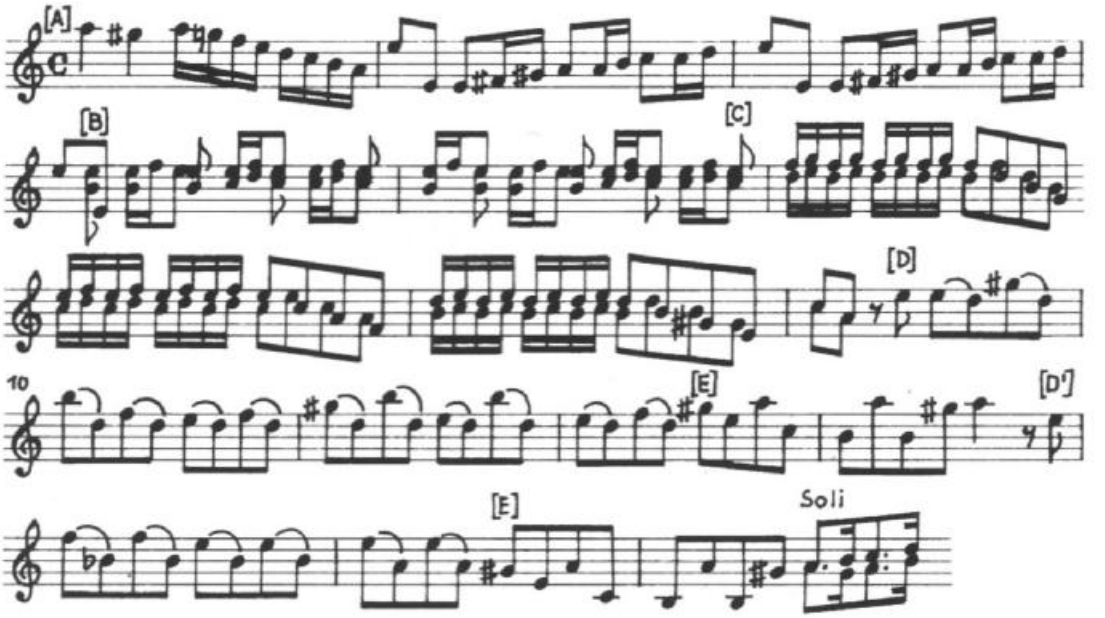


Example 5. Concerto in A Major, Op. 3, No. 5 (RV 519), first movement.

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 tuttis, 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.)

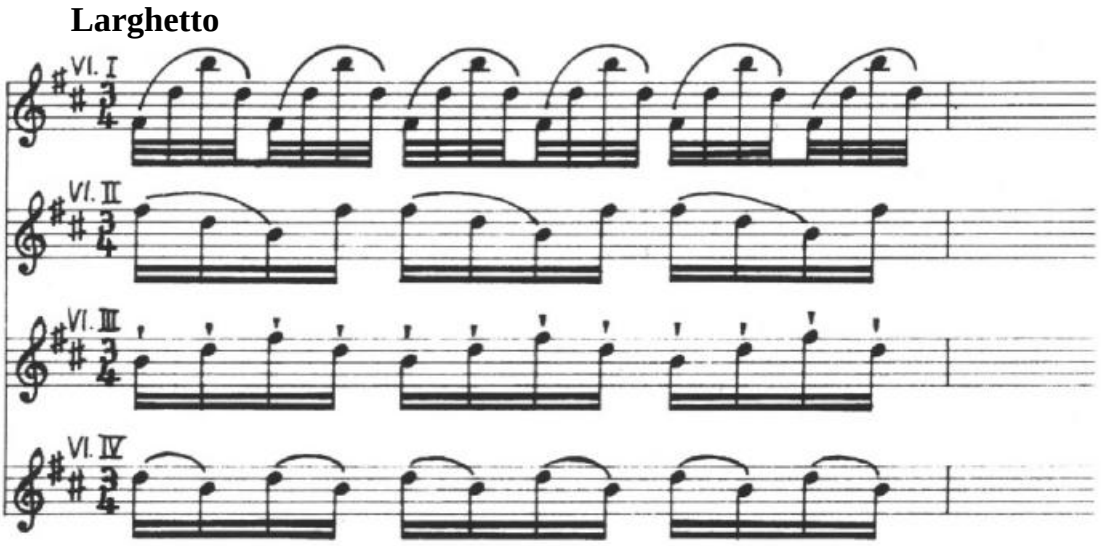
Vivaldi follows this basic model, of which the particular structure shown in Table 1 is only one variant among many, in almost all fast – that is, first and third – movements of his solo concertos. As a rule, the differences between first and third movements are ones of character – according to Quantz 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.

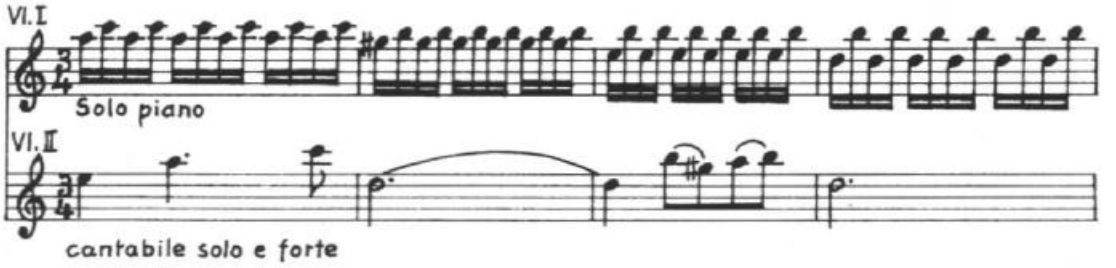
Vivaldi's development of the concerto structure represents only one side of his unique contribution to the genre. In addition, there is an overall new tone – a new joy in life that pulsates in his music. Who, before Vivaldi in his ritornellos, had written music with such irresistible verve that it practically 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



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 hi 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.

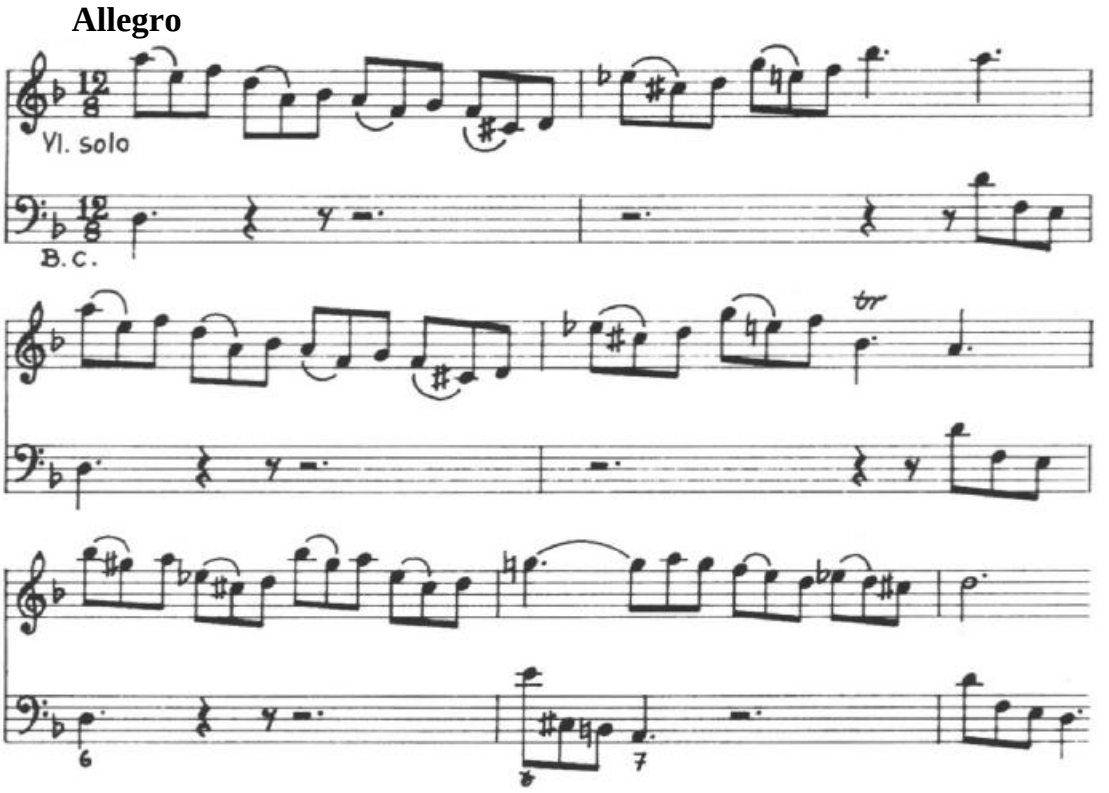
The first aspect concerns Vivaldi's consolidation of the concerto-movement form – the form that I referred to previously as *Vivaldi ritornello form*. Most of the fast movements in Op. 4 are already variants of this type or are very similar to it – approximately five ritornellos and four qualitatively 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,



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

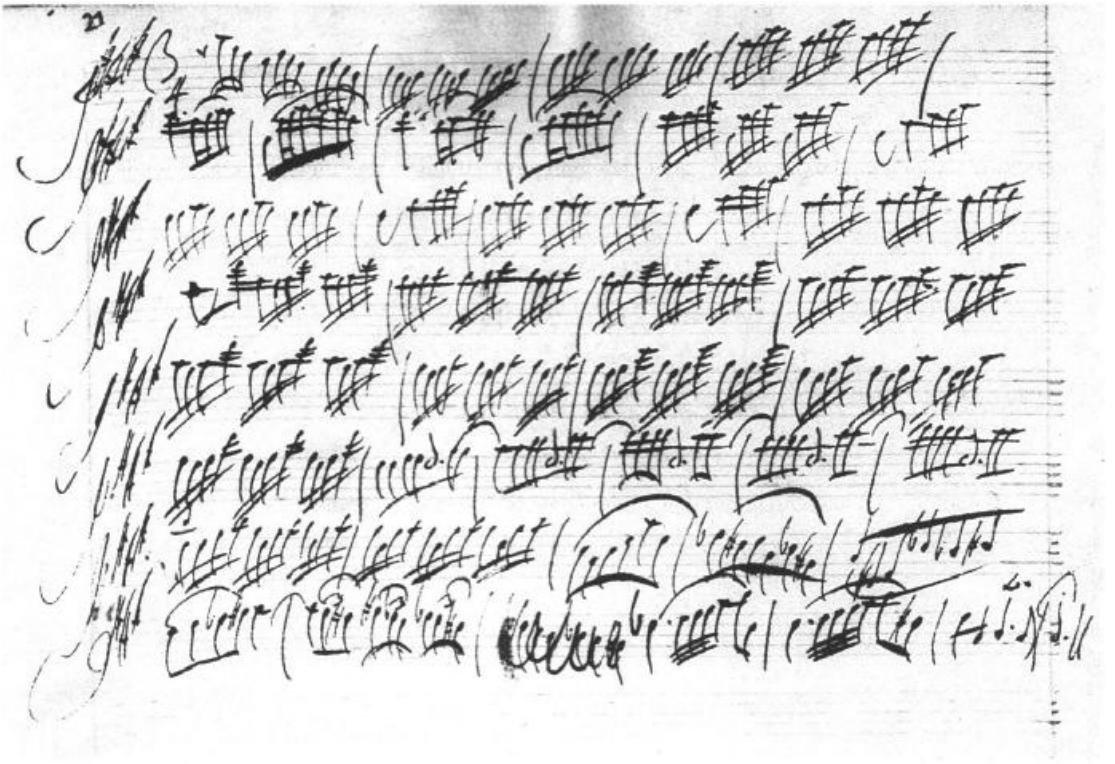


Figure 11. Cadenza to the last movement of the Violin Concerto (RV 340), in Vivaldi's hand.

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.).

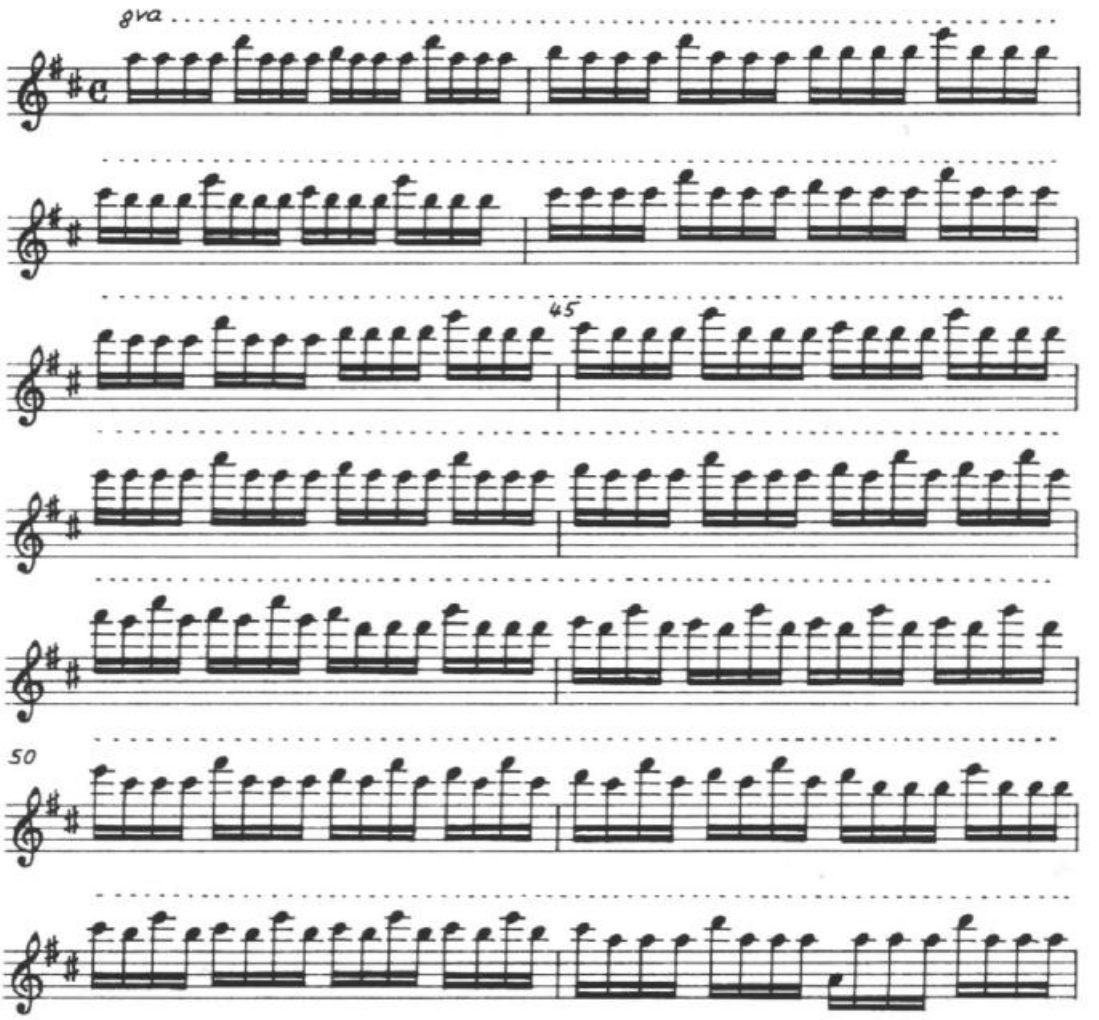
Remarkably enough, Vivaldi's virtuosic cadenzas were not reproduced in the printed sets of concertos, but were confined to a small circle of professional virtuosos who either had direct personal contact with him or had access to this special music through manuscripts. The two known versions of the Concerto 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 I717.[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 a^4, 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 polychoral 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]

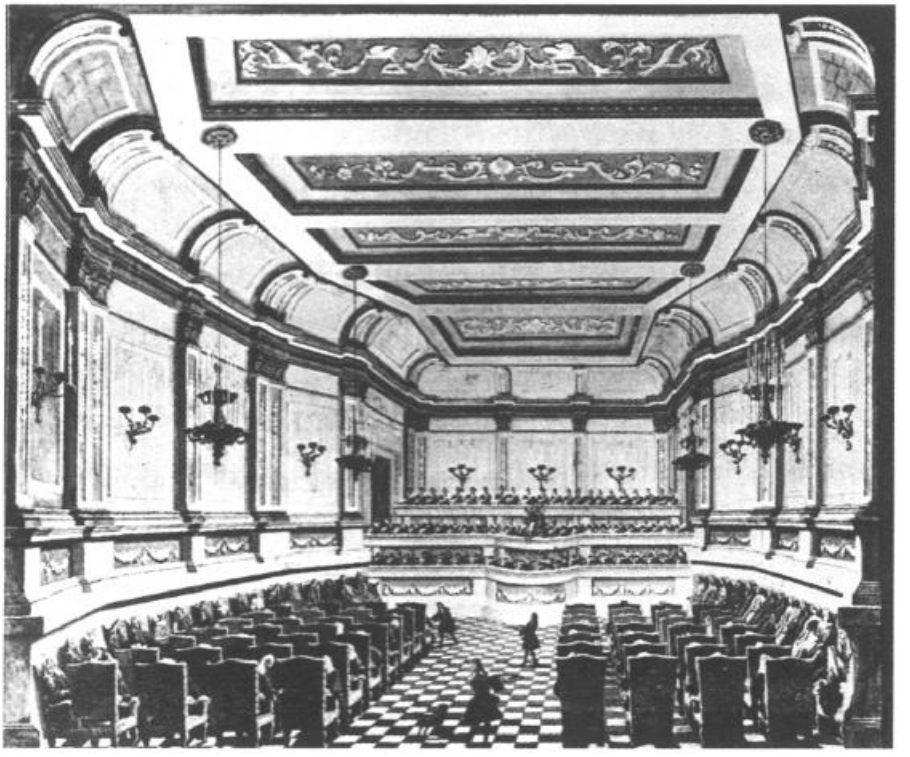


Figure 12. Girls' concert, perhaps at the Ospedale della Pietà.
Anonymous painting from the second half of the eighteenth century.

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.*

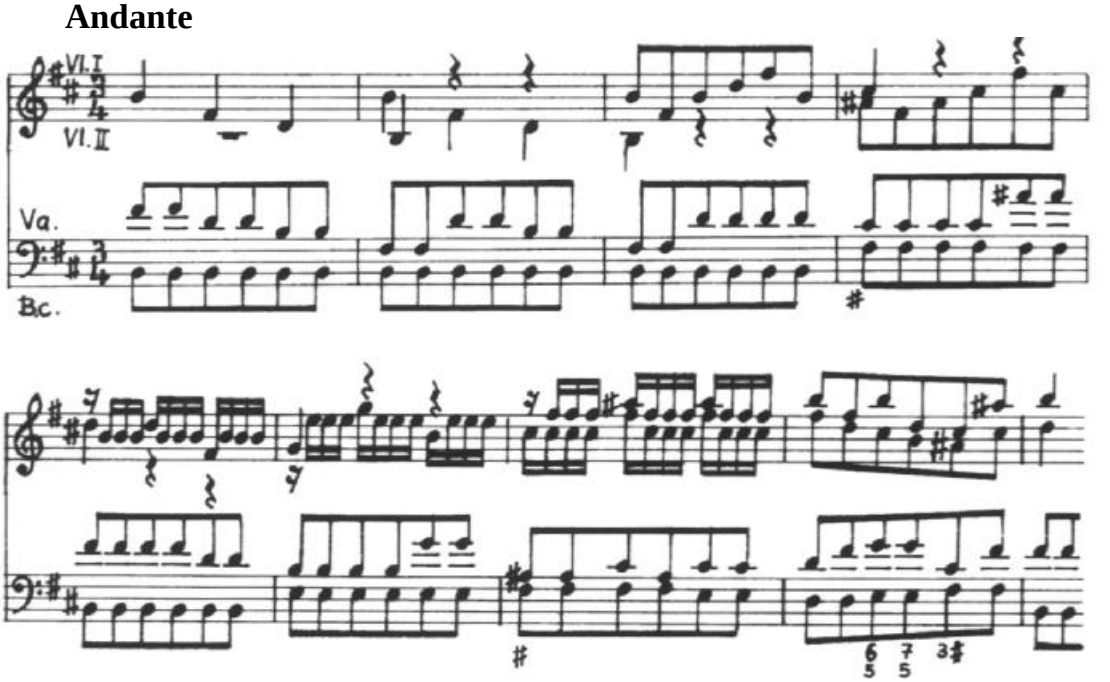
According to the most recent research, the Gloria (RV 589) (composed as early as 1713) is one of at least three Vivaldi settings of this portion of the mass, one of which, RV 590, is thought to have been lost. These Glorias are not fragments from complete or partially complete masses. The Gloria (RV 589) takes the place of a complete mass setting as "the representative composition for a festive mass", Helmut Hucke surmises.[42] It is a *Missa lecta*, that is, a mass read silently by the priest. According to Hucke, "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.

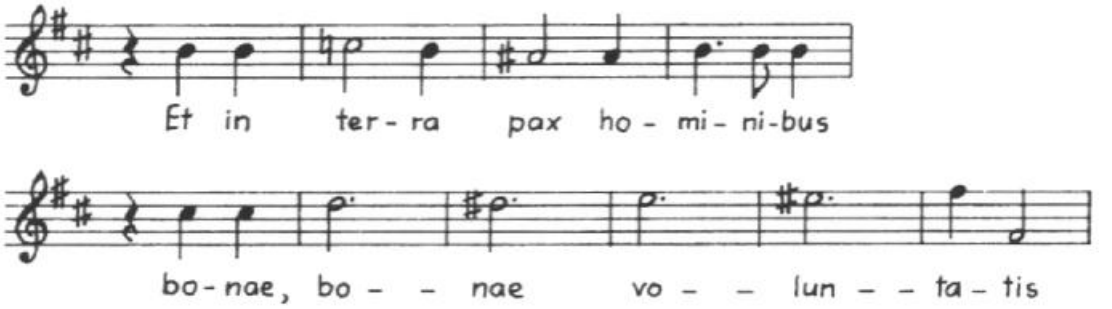
Vivaldi devoted an entire movement to the words "Peace on earth to men of good will". He sharply contrasted the words' setting with the festiveness of the opening Gloria chorus. The calm Andante in B minor, accompanied by strings alone, stressed the inward and subdued thoughts and feelings linked to 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



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

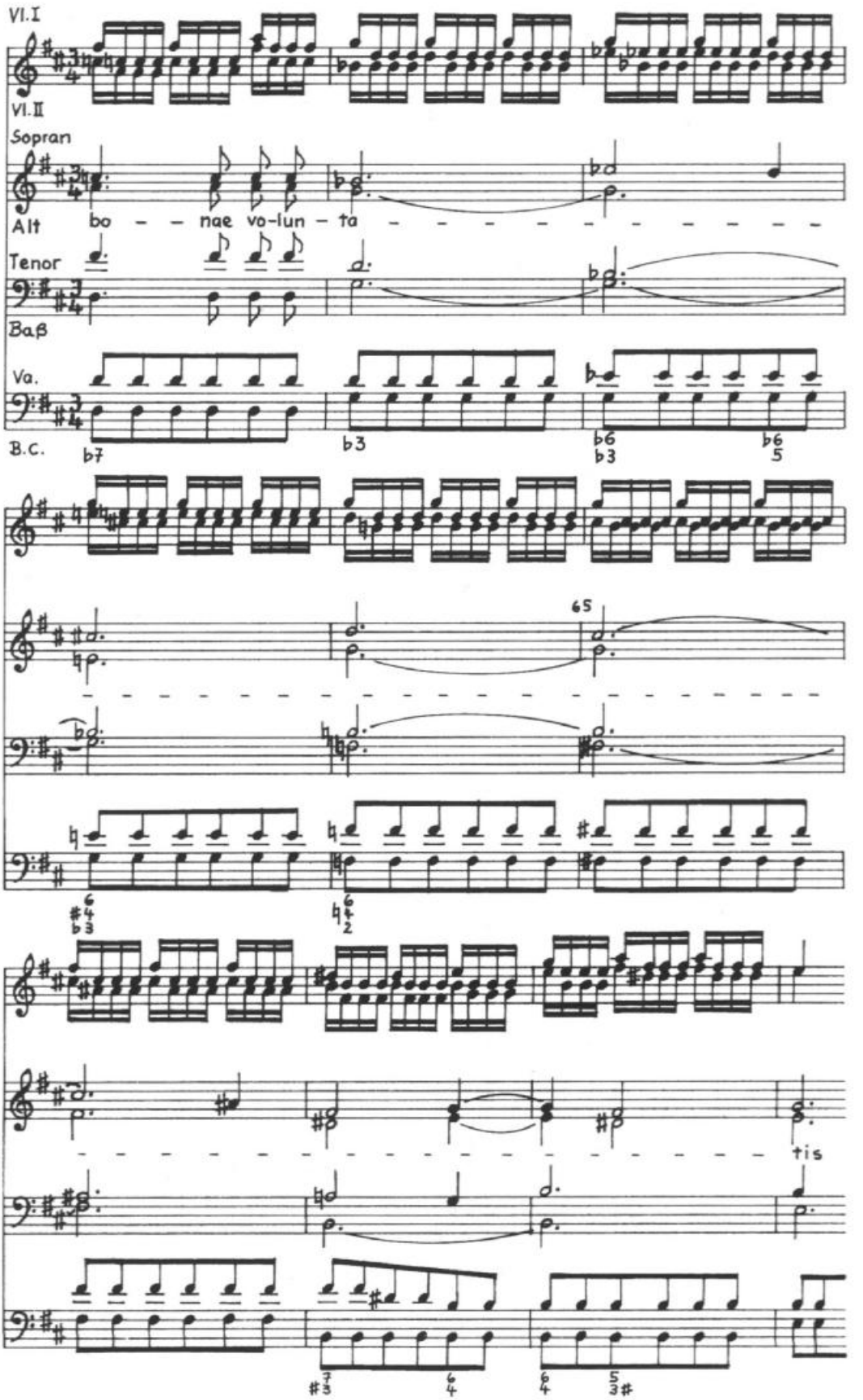
played in these introductory bars suffice for the instrumental writing of the entire piece; indeed the instrumental part existed as a substantial entity independent of the choral part.

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.



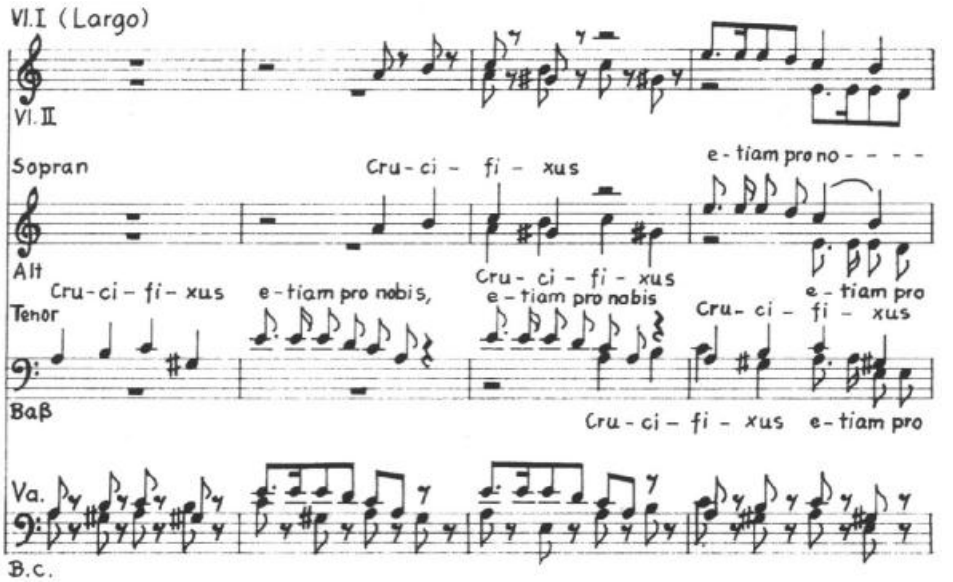
Example 12. Gloria in D Major (RV 589) "Et in terra pax".

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

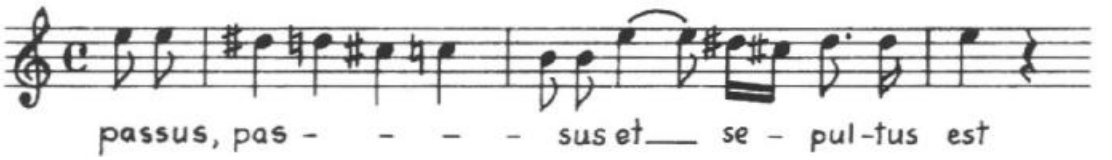


Example 13. Gloria in D Major (RV 589) “Et in terra pax”, bars 60 ff.

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 "Cruciftxus", 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).



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

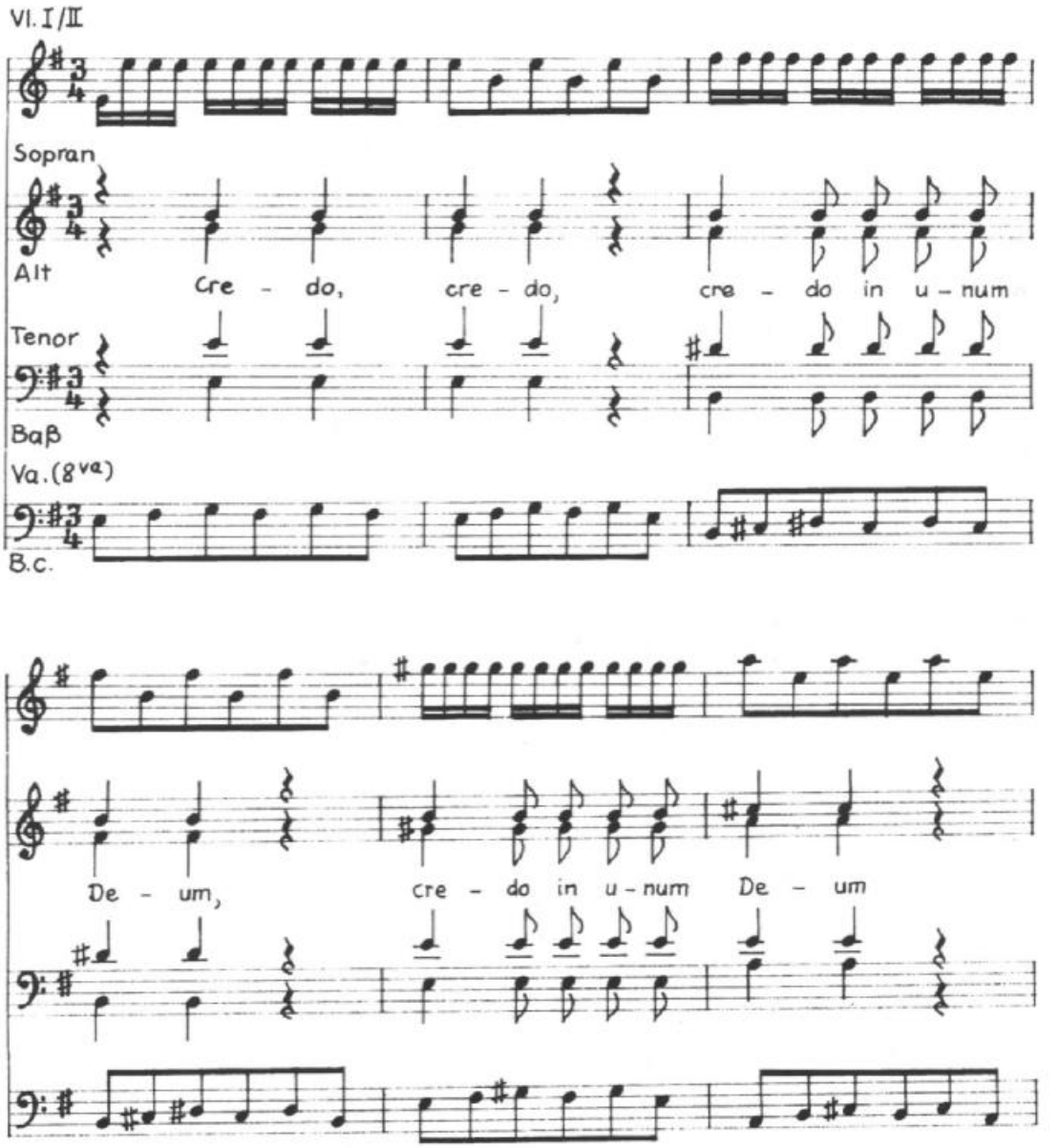


Example 15. Credo in E Minor (RV 591) “Crucifixus”.

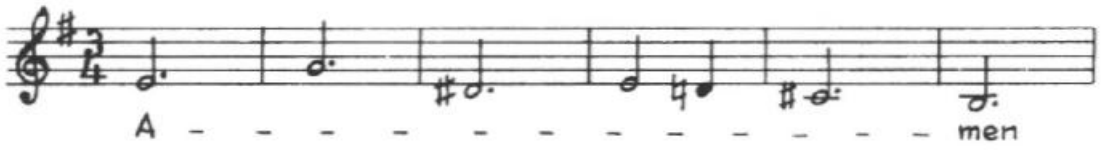
Vivaldi again follows the principle of two musical planes in the outer movements. The basic idea of the movement, a sustained rhythmic pulse with rapid repetition of the same note, dominates the orchestral writing. It is in two parts, with the first and second violins as the upper voice and the violas 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 Hucke rightly attributed this “to the development of



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



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. Hucke 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

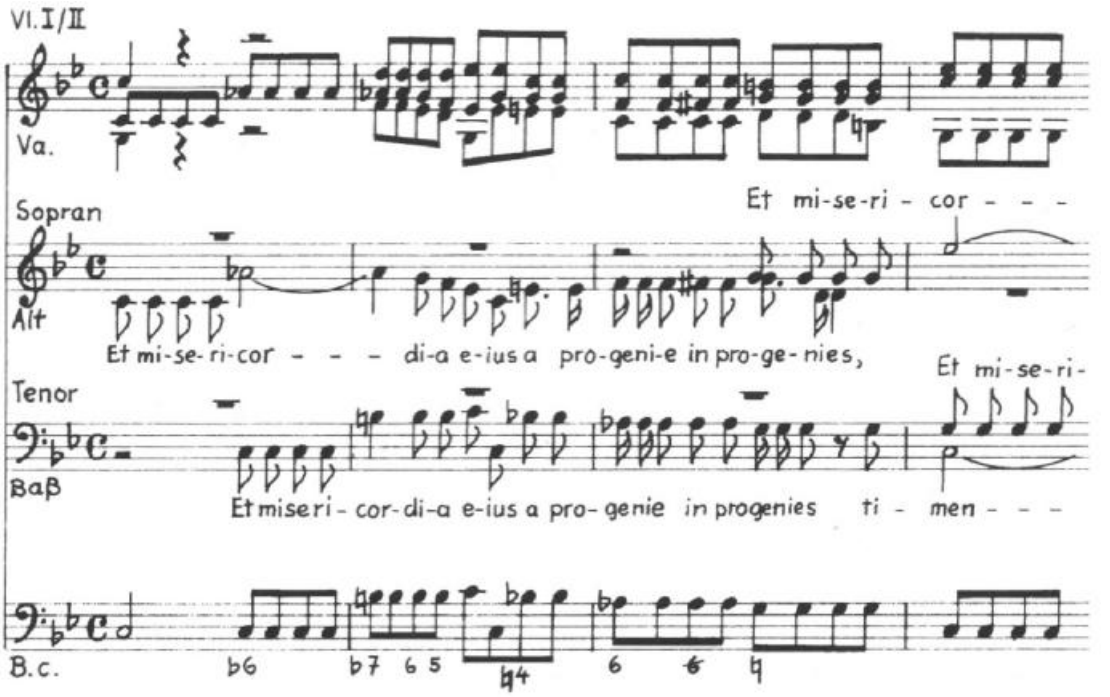
century, both texts were frequently set polyphonically by such great seventeenth- and eighteenth-century masters as Monteverdi, Schütz, Bach (Magnificat), Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Caldara, Agostino Steffani, and Pergolesi (Stabat Mater). Vivaldi's settings of these texts are outstanding even 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 Brescia[47]) 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.

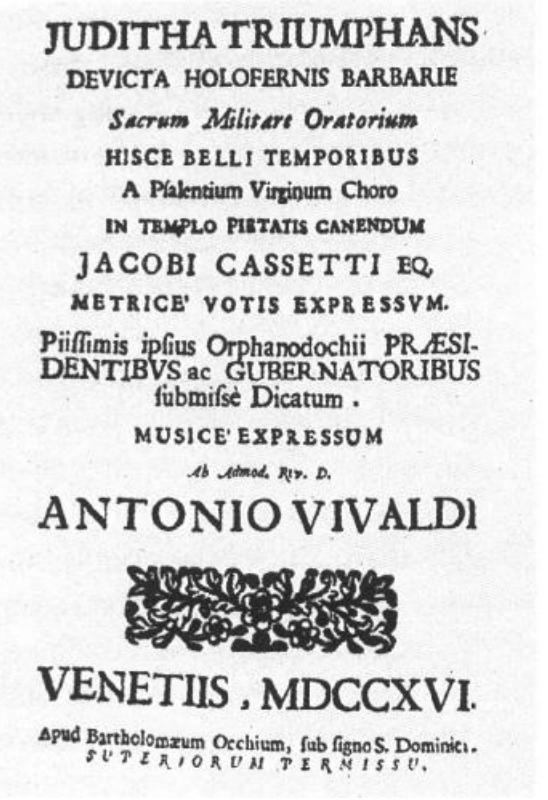

JUDITHA TRIUMPHANS
DEVICTA HOLOFERNIS BARBARIE
Sacrum Militare Oratorium
HISCE BELLI TEMPORIBUS
A Pſalentium Virginum Choro
IN TEMPLO PIETATIS CANENDUM
JACOBI CASSETTI EQ.
METRICE' VOTIS EXPRESSVM.
Piiſſimis ipſius Orphanodochii PRÆSIDENTIBVS ac GUBERNATORIBUS ſubmiſsè Dicatum.
MUSICE' EXPRESSUM
Ab Admod. Rev. D.
ANTONIO VIVALDI
VENETIIS, MDCCXVI.
Apud Bartholomæum Occhium, ſub ſigno S. Dominici.
SUPERIORUM PERMISSU.

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 Pollarolo 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 *clareni* (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 tendancy 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.