

Chapter Six

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Figure 23. Prince Philipp of Hesse-Darmstadt.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

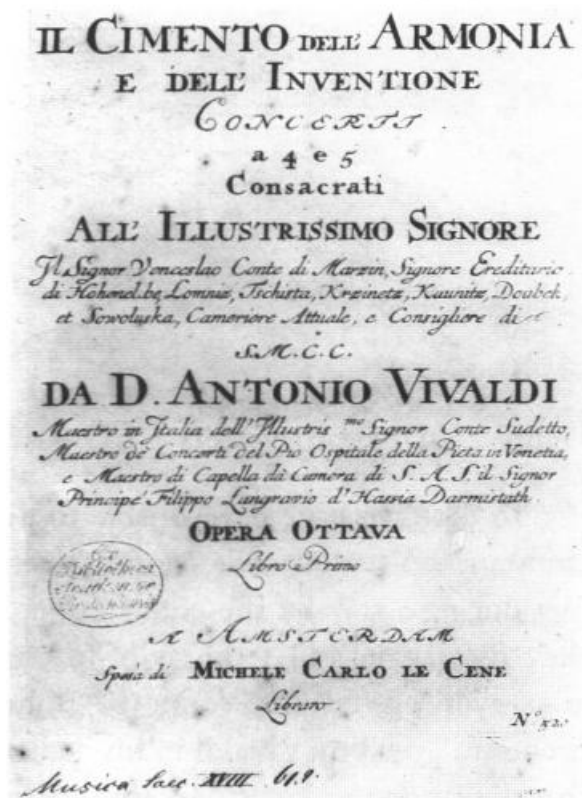


Figure 24. Title page of opus 8.

ILLUSTRISSIMO SIGNORE

Pensando frà me stesso al lungo corso de' gl'anni, nè quali godo il segnalatissimo onore di Scrivere à V. S. ILL.^{ma} in qualità di Maèstro di Musica in Italia, hò avessito nel considerare che non per anco le hò dato un Saggio della profonda ueneratione che le professo; Ond'è che hò rivolto di Stampare il presente uolume per umiliarlo à piedi di V. S. ILL.^{ma} Suplico non merauigliarsi se trà questi pochi, e deboli Concerti V. S. ILL.^{ma} trouerà le quattro Stagioni Sino dà tanto tempo compatito dalla Generosa Bontà di V. S. ILL.^{ma}, mà creda, che hò stimato bene Stamparle perche ad ogni modo che siano le stesse pure essendo queste accresciute, oltre li Sonetti con una distintissima dichiarazione di tutte le cose, che in esse si Spiegano, Sono certo, che le giungerano, come noue. Quiui non mi estendo à Suplicare V. S. ILL.^{ma}, acciò si compiaccia guardare con occhio di bontà le mie debolezze perche crederci di offendere L'innata Gentilezza con la quale V. S. ILL.^{ma} Sino da tanto tempo le 'Sà compatire. La Somma Intelligenza, che V. S. ILL.^{ma} possiede nella Musica et il Valore della di lei Virtuosissima Orchestra mi farano sempre uiue sicuro, che le mie pouere fatiche giunte che siano nelle di lei stimatissime mani goderano quel risalto, che non meritano. Onde altro non mi resta che Suplicare V. S. ILL.^{ma} per la continuatione del di lei Generosissimo patrocinio e perche giammai mi tolga L'onore di sempre più rassegnarmi.

DI V. S. ILL.^{ma}:

Humilissimo Deuotissimo

Obligatissimo Seruitore

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Figure 25. Dedicatory preface to opus 8.

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

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

(1) Folio two:

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

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

Vivaldi 528 fl.

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

(3) Folio twelve:

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

(4) Folio eighteen:

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

(5) Folio twenty-one:

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

[corrected]

(6) May, folio twenty-two:

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

(7) Folio twenty-three:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

*Il Povero Uomo Compositore
di Musica di Vivaldi
L'opera a Cygnaccio del 1723*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 28. Emperor Charles VI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Altezza Serenissima

Come è stato un ombra e troppo momentaneo l'onore
 che V. A. S. si è degnato compartirmi con lei
 lei Benignissimo persona così ne uado cercando
 un altro che mi consigli alla lunga et è quello
 della di lei Benignissimo corrispondenza.
 Poche a' Todio sono arrivato in Venetia e con
 buona salute dove in avvenire mi fermarò
 di continuo. Qui non mi manca per
 essere interamente felice se non che V. A. S. mi
 faccia degno di qualche di lei Benignissimo
 comando che solo può consolarmi e
 mia o' evuanza e può correggere i discapiti
 d'essere lontano, e non poter ubidire

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

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

V. S. B. personalm^{te}. Mio Benigno Padre
 non privarmi giamai del C. S. Tenete
 l'abocinio e vedere che non mi scorderò giamai
 mai d'un Principe ripieno di tante qualità
 tanto Merito. Anco di sapere se per
 diuersi con il Flauto et se il suo Regio si
 parte bene. Pregho l'innata Bontà del C. S. B.
 farmi gratia de potermi li miei officij a. S. D.
 et di Chi maggiormente esultato con l'ab. più profondo
 vendat. Ma di l'ordine di va segnat. S.
 V. S. B.

Venecia 20 Giugno 1730

Antonio Vivaldi

Figure 31. Page two of the same letter.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Solo Concertos and Double Concertos

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The image shows a musical score for Example 30, consisting of four staves. The top staff is labeled 'Vi. solo' and contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The second staff is labeled 'Vi. I/I' and contains a similar melodic line. The third staff is labeled 'Va. 8^{va}' and contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'B.c.' and contains a bass line with figured bass notation (5, 7, 5, 7, 4, 6, 4) and a melodic line with eighth notes. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and the time signature is common time (C).

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

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

The image shows a musical score for Example 31, consisting of four staves. The top staff is labeled 'Vi. I' and 'Largo' and contains a melodic line with dotted notes. The second staff is labeled 'Vi. II con sordino' and contains a melodic line with dotted notes. The third staff is labeled 'Va.' and 'pp' and contains a melodic line with dotted notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'B.c.' and contains a bass line with dotted notes. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and the time signature is 3/4.

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

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

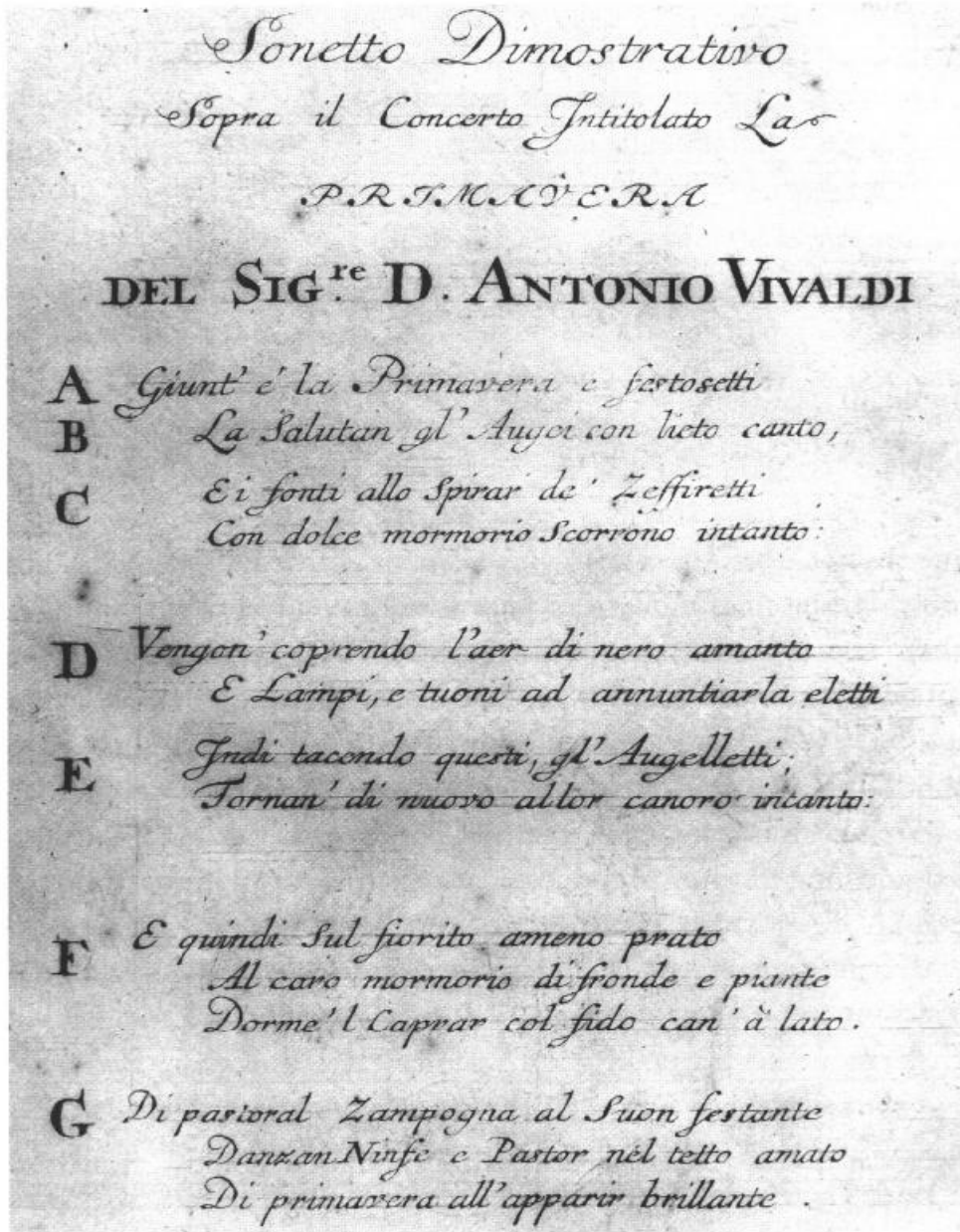


Figure 33. *Sonetto dimostrativo* (Explanatory sonnet) to the “Spring” Concerto (RV 269).

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

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

2
La Primavera *Violino Principale*
A giunta e' la Primavera
CONCERTO I
Allegro *Piano*
Forte **B** *Canto de' gl' Vcelli* *Piano*
e Fastosetti
La Salutan gli Augoi con lieto canto *Tutti*
E' forti allo spirar de' Zeffiretti
Scorrono i Tanti
Con dolce mormorio Scorrono in tanto *Piano*
D *Tuoni, Noncon coprendo*
Forte *L' aer di nero amante* *E* *Campi e Tuoni* *ad annuntiarla eletta*
Solo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The image displays a musical score for a concerto in D major, Op. 8, No. 11 (RV 210), first movement. The score is arranged in three systems, each with three staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system (bars 68 ff) features a solo violin (VI. solo) in the top staff, a violin I (VI. I/II) in the middle staff, and a basso continuo (B.C.) in the bottom staff. The second system (bars 114 ff) features a solo violin (VI. solo) in the top staff, a violin I (VI. I) in the middle staff, and a violin II (VI. II) in the bottom staff. The third system (bars 114 ff) features a solo violin (VI. solo) in the top staff, a violin I (VI. I) in the middle staff, and a violin II (VI. II) in the bottom staff. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamics like *p* and *ff*.

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

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

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

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

The main bulk of Vivaldi's twenty-seven cello concertos was presumably composed for the Pietà in the 1720s, while first Antonio Vandini (September 1720 – spring 1721) and then Bernardo Aliprandi (January 1722 – spring 1732) were *maestro di violoncello* and responsible for teaching the cello to the Ospedale girls. If the concertos were actually played by young cellists at the Pietà, some of them must have been excellent performers because Vivaldi demanded considerably more than the standard technical requirements of the period (which were exemplified by the cello concertos by the Bolognese cellist Giuseppe Maria Jacchini, published in about 1701). Walter Kolneder emphasizes “the frequent use of staccato over small groups of notes, up to eleven notes; detached staccato bowing indicated by wedges; and sixteenth-note passages using non-adjacent strings, which requires particularly flexible bowing”.⁵⁹ The concertos also provide extraordinary examples of an expansion in the technique of playing in upper positions, going as high as e² and f-sharp² – proving that a virtuosic style was being transferred to the cello, an instrument that for some time had largely been confined to doubling the basso continuo.

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

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

Vivaldi was writing for a viola d'amore with six melody strings, using a standard tuning d–a–d–f¹–a¹–d² and at least six sympathetic strings under the fingerboard, from which vibrations lent the particular sound coloration that Johann Gottfried Walther described in 1732 as “argentine or silvery, also quite pleasant and sweet”. The concertos in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin I (VI. I), Violin II (VI. II), and Bassoon (B.c.). The VI. I staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with several slurs and accents. The VI. II staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. It features a dense, rhythmic arpeggiated figure. The B.c. staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. It provides a steady accompaniment with slurs and accents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Allegro

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

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

Concertos for Chamber Ensemble and Ripieno Concertos

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Vivaldi's stylistic and structural means.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Allegro molto

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

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

Cantatas and Serenatas

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recitative (I)

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

Aria (I)

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

Recitative (II)

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

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

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

Aria (II)

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

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

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

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

VI. I

VI. II

Alt Passodi pena in pe - - - na Co - - me la navi - cel - la, la na - vi -

Va.

B.c.

Example 43. “Amor hai vinto” (RV 683), “Passo di pena in pena”, bars 11 ff.

Larghetto) is impressive in invention and form with carefully calculated instrumental effects (pizzicato and bowed notes within the unison violin section), the second (E-flat major, Allegro) bursts with irresistible energy in an agitated tonal image of racing, wide-ranging sixteenth notes to the text “*Nell’orrido albergo*” (In the fearful abode).

Not all Vivaldi’s cantatas achieve such high quality. Yet very few could be called insipid and musically uninteresting. Even in the smaller scale cantatas we constantly come across movements that are captivating in their individual tone, their vivid musical form, or simply their charming invention. Besides strong effects, gaiety and relaxation often inspire the composer to write imaginative music. One of the finest examples of this, from 1719, is the particularly appealing contralto cantata “O mie porpore più belle”.

The vocal virtuosity required in some of these works is impressive. In cantatas such as “Geme l’onda che parte” (RV 657), “Sorge ver-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Works for Double Chorus and Solo Motets

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Allegro molto

Vi. I
Vi. II
Sopran
Alt
Tenor
Baß
Va.
B. c.
Vi. I
Vi. II
Sopran
Alt
Tenor
Baß
Va.
B. c.

Im-ple-bit ru-i-nas, im-ple-bit ru-i-nas, im-ple-bit ru-i-nas, im-ple-bit ru-i-nas, im-ple-bit ru-i-nas

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

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

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

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

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

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

VI.I
VI.II
Primo Coro
Sopran
- men, a - - -
Alt
- men, a - - - men,
Tenor
- men. Si-cut e-rat in prin-ci-pi-o et nunc, et nunc et
Baß
- men, a - men,
VI.I
VI.II
Secondo Coro
Sopran
- men. Si-cut e-rat in prin-ci-pi-o et nunc, et nunc et
Alt
Si - - - cut
Tenor
- men. Et in sae - cu - la
Baß
- men. Si - cut e - rat in prin -
Va.
B.c.
#

(Continued)

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

The musical score consists of ten staves. The first two staves are vocal parts with lyrics: "-men, a - - - men. Et in a - - - men. Et in sae - cu - la saeculorum sem-per A - - - men. Et in a - men, a - men, a - men." The third staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "sem-per, et nunc, et nunc, et sem - per, et in e - - - - rat in sae - cu - lo - - rum. A - - - men." The fourth staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "ci - pio, si - cut e - rat in prin - ci - - pi - o et nunc, et nunc et semper, et in". The fifth staff is a piano accompaniment line. The sixth staff is a piano accompaniment line with figured bass notation: 6, 6. The seventh staff is a piano accompaniment line. The eighth staff is a piano accompaniment line. The ninth staff is a piano accompaniment line. The tenth staff is a piano accompaniment line.

(Continued)

Example 46 continued.

saecula sae-cu - lo-rum, et in saecula sae-cu - lo - rum. A - - men.
 et in saecula sae-cu - lo-rum, et in saecula saeculorum. A - - men.
 sae - cu - la saecu - lo - rum. A - - - - - men.
 Et in saecula sae-cu - lo - rum. A - men. Si -
 sae - cu - la sae - cu - lo - - - - rum, A - - men.
 prin - - - - ci - - - - pi - o.
 Et in sae - cu - la sae - cu - - lo - rum. A - - men.
 saecula saecu - lo-rum, et in saecula sae-cu - lo - rum. A - men. Si -

5 3#
 4

Example 46 continued.

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

The image shows a musical score for the Kyrie in G Minor (RV 587), first movement, bars 41 ff. (choir parts only). The score is in G minor, 3/4 time, and marked Adagio. It features two staves: a vocal line (Soprano/Contralto) and a bass line. The vocal line has lyrics: "Ky-ri - e e - le - i - - son." and "Ky-ri - e e le - i - son." The bass line has lyrics: "Ky - - ri - - e." The music is written in a simple, expressive style with long notes and rests, reflecting the Adagio tempo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

