

---

## The red-haired priest

The surname Vivaldi is known from the twelfth century. In 1165 one Guglielmo Vivaldi from Taggia near San Remo was Governor of Sicily. In 1291 the Genoese brothers Guido and Ugolino Vivaldi were members of the ill-fated expedition led by Tedisio Doria, which, in search of a sea route to the Indies, disappeared mysteriously somewhere off Morocco. From the fifteenth century members of the Vivaldi family were prominent in Genoa, giving the Republic senators, ambassadors, a general and even a doge (Gerolamo Vivaldi, 1559–61). At the beginning of the sixteenth century Bernardo Vivaldi, an exile from Genoa, took refuge in Savona, founding a branch which is said to have multiplied rapidly and spread throughout Italy. Today the name Vivaldi is concentrated in no particular locality, though, perversely enough, it seems especially rare in Venice.

Agostino Vivaldi, the composer's grandfather, was a tailor in Brescia, a city of the *Veneto* famous for its violin makers.<sup>1</sup> He and his wife Margarita had two sons, Agostino junior and Giovanni Battista (or Giambattista). Around 1665, Agostino senior having died, the family moved to Venice. Although Giovanni Battista is generally supposed to have been born in Brescia in about 1655, his age is given as 70 in a membership list of the Venetian *Arte de sonadori* (an instrumentalists' guild) dated 20 June 1727.<sup>2</sup> If, as is possible, this figure is to be interpreted literally, Giovanni Battista will have been born between 21 June 1656 and 20 June 1657.

---

<sup>1</sup> The first thorough archival investigation into Vivaldi's ancestry and relatives was undertaken by Eric Paul, who shortly before his death presented his findings in a paper read to the First International Vivaldi Colloquium, held in Brussels on 16 December 1963. No full transcript of the paper has survived, but some of its content was summarized in *Vivaldiana I* (Brussels, 1969), p. 159. In recent years the principal researcher into the Vivaldi family has been Gastone Vio, several of whose articles are cited in Appendix D and elsewhere in the present book.

<sup>2</sup> ASV, Milizia da Mar. Busta 553, fasc. 'Sonadori'; see Eleanor Selfridge-Field, 'Annotated Membership Lists of the Venetian Instrumentalists' Guild 1672–1727', *R.M.A. Research Chronicle*, no. 9 (1971), p. 48.

In the document certifying his eligibility to marry, dated 6 June 1676, Giovanni Battista's address is described as 'nelli forni in contrà di S. Martin' (at the bakery, in S. Martino parish).<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding the implications of this address, Giovanni Battista is known to have been a barber. His bride, Camilla Calicchio, was a tailor's daughter. Their wedding took place on 11 June 1676.<sup>4</sup>

In the following year Giovanni Battista's profession is stated as 'sonador' (instrumentalist) in the record of Antonio's baptism. He must have been a good player, for on 23 April 1685 (the day of Legrenzi's appointment as *Primo Maestro*) he joined the orchestra of St Mark's as a violinist.<sup>5</sup> His annual salary, originally 15 ducats, was raised to 25 ducats on 21 August 1689 in consideration of 'a major increase of new functions involving the use of orchestral instruments and organs'.<sup>6</sup> As two colleagues, the violinist Lorenzo Novelloni and the cellist Bernardo Cortella, received the same increases, Giovanni Battista's new duties probably included playing in a trio or (in its orchestral context) a *concertino*.

Very significantly, he was first engaged under the name of 'Gio: Battista Rossi'. We know from many sources including Goldoni, who writes that the Abbé Vivaldi (Antonio) was called the 'red-haired priest' (*il Prete Rosso*) and even simply 'Rossi' by those unacquainted with his proper surname, of the unusual hair-colouring of the composer.<sup>7</sup> Evidently, the trait was inherited. In the light of this well-established sobriquet one may well wonder whether the Giambattista Rossi who composed the music to *La fedeltà sfortunata*, an opera performed in 1688 at an unknown theatre, possibly in Venice, was the elder Vivaldi.<sup>8</sup> As we shall see, he participated in opera as a performer, at the very least.

He was a founder-member, in 1685, of the *Sovvegno di S. Cecilia*, a self-governing association of musicians whose moving spirit was his fellow-parishioner Giandomenico Partenio, *Vice-Maestro* of St Mark's, and to which Legrenzi also belonged. From 1689 to 1693 he was

---

<sup>3</sup> Venice, Church of S. Giovanni in Bràgora, Registro di stato libero; reproduced and transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., pp. 14 and 32. The parish of S. Martino lies between the Arsenal and the Riva degli Schiavoni.

<sup>4</sup> Church of S. Giovanni in Bràgora, Matrimoni, Reg. 1664–1691, f. 73; transcribed in Gastone Vio, 'Antonio Vivaldi prete', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani*, vol. i (1980), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> ASV, Procuratia de Supra, Reg. 148, f. 59v; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Reg. 147, f. 288v; quoted in Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music from Gabrieli to Vivaldi* (Oxford, 1975), p. 219.

<sup>7</sup> *Commedie*, vol. xiii, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> See Livio Niso Galvani, *I teatri musicali di Venezia nel secolo xvii, 1637–1700* (Milan, 1879; facs. reprint, Florence, 1969), p. 166.

*Maestro di Strumenti* at the Mendicanti, a post similar in nature to the one his son would later hold at the Pietà. Growing age seems to have impaired his abilities as a violinist little, for in the 1713 edition of Vincenzo Coronelli's *Guida de' forestieri*, a kind of visitor's handbook to Venice, he is listed alongside his by now more famous son as one of the city's foremost virtuosi on that instrument. On 30 September 1729, now in his seventies, he petitioned the procurators of St Mark to be released from his duties in the Ducal Chapel for one year in order to accompany a son of his (Antonio, certainly) to Germany.<sup>9</sup> As the man designated as his deputy, Francesco Negri, kept the position for over 20 years, while Giovanni Battista disappears thereafter from the *Cappella's* records, one must presume that he was not re-engaged, and lived quietly until his death on 14 May 1736.\*

The marriage of Giovanni Battista and Camilla Vivaldi produced eight children of whom we have certain knowledge: Antonio Lucio (4 March 1678); Margarita Gabriela (18 July 1680); Cecilia Maria (11 January 1683); Bonaventura Tomaso (7 March 1685); Zanetta (Giannetta) Anna (1 November 1687); Francesco Gaetano (9 January 1690); Giuseppe (4 April 1692); Iseppo (Giuseppe) Santo (11 April 1697).<sup>10</sup> Only Antonio seems to have taken up music as a profession (and then, one must remember, after training for the priesthood), but Cecilia and Francesco were each the parent of a music copyist, respectively Pietro Mauro and Carlo Vivaldi.\* Bonaventura married in 1718 and went to live outside Venice.<sup>11</sup> Francesco became a barber and wigmaker like his father. What is probably the earliest notice we have of him is a report in the *Commemoriali Gradenigo*, a memoir preserved in the Museo Correr, that 'Francesco Vivaldi, a young wigmaker, brother of the famous Don Antonio, violin player', used insulting behaviour towards the nobleman Antonio Soranzo, for which he was banished from Venice.<sup>12</sup> He had evidently returned to Venice by 1727, when his name appears on a document giving a consortium engaged in re-paving the piazza of St Mark's permission to unload on the Riva degli Schiavoni.<sup>13</sup> Later, he turned his hand to publishing; his application to the *Riformatori* dated 18 December 1730 was granted

---

<sup>9</sup> ASV, Procuratia de Supra, Reg. 153, f. 117v. Though the tour was centred on Bohemia, Giovanni Battista's citation of 'Germany' was not inaccurate, given the political and linguistic subjection to Austria of the Czech lands.

<sup>10</sup> First given, with some omissions and inaccuracies, in 'Pedigree of A.L. Vivaldi' (genealogical table after Eric Paul), *Vivaldiana I*, p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> Giazotto, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>12</sup> Ms. Gradenigo 200, iv, f. 77v.

<sup>13</sup> Giazotto, op. cit., p. 234.

on 15 January 1731.<sup>14</sup> In an official register of barbers living in the Cannaregio *sestiere* (one of six districts into which Venice was divided) dated 18 July 1732, Francesco is listed as a ‘master barber’.<sup>15</sup>

Although Eric Paul, to whom we are indebted for many discoveries concerning the composer’s siblings, concluded that one Iseppo (Giuseppe) Vivaldi, sentenced on 18 May 1729 to be banished for five years from Venice for wounding Giacomo Crespan, a grocer’s errand-boy, had no direct connection with the other Vivaldis, the facts show otherwise.<sup>16</sup> He is not known to have practised any trade or profession and may have depended for a livelihood on the charity of his family.\*

Until Paul’s discovery in 1962 of a baptismal register containing Antonio’s date of birth, scholars had to rely on Pincherle’s inspired conjecture, which placed it 15 years before the date of his tonsure (1693), or else take refuge in approximations, of which 1675 was the most common. The entry in the baptismal register reads:

6 May 1678. Antonio Lucio, son of Signor Giovanni Battista Vivaldi, son of the late Agustin, instrumentalist, and his wife Camilla Calicchio, daughter of the late Camillo, born on 4 March last, who was baptized at home, being in danger of death, by the midwife Madama Margarita Veronese, was today taken to the church and received the exorcisms and holy oils from me, Giacomo Fornacieri, parish priest, at which he was held by Signor Antonio Veccelio, son of the late Gerolemo, apothecary, at the sign of the dose in the same parish.<sup>17</sup>

What was this *pericolo di morte*? One immediately recalls the chest ailment which troubled Vivaldi all his life. In a letter of 16 November 1737 to his Ferrarese patron Count Guido Bentivoglio d’Aragona he wrote: ‘I have not said Mass for 25 years, nor will I ever again, not because of a ban or an order – may it please His Excellency [Cardinal

---

<sup>14</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup> ASV, Milizia da Mar, Busta 58.

<sup>16</sup> The case is documented in ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Busta 4260/110, Miscellanea Penal, processo 1, ff. 1–11. From Gastone Vio, ‘Una nuova abitazione di Vivaldi a Venezia’, *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani*, vol. iii (1982), p. 61, we learn that in 1723 Iseppo was approved for the taking of holy orders (ASV, Notarile Atti, Reg. 3604, 1723, f. 186), but it seems that the process went no further.

<sup>17</sup> Venice, Church of S. Giovanni in Bràgora, Libro de’ battesimi; reproduced in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 33, and *Vivaldiana I*, p. 116: ‘Adi 6 Maggio 1678. Antonio Lucio figliolo del Sig.<sup>re</sup> Gio: Batta q. Agustin Viualdi Sonador et della Sig.<sup>ra</sup> Camilla figliola del q Camillo Calicchio sus Cons.<sup>te</sup> nato li 4 marzo ult.<sup>o</sup> caduto, quai hebbe L’acqua in casa p pericolo di morte dalla Comare allev.<sup>ce</sup> mad.<sup>ma</sup> Margarita Veronese, hoggi fù portato alla chiesa riceuè gl’essorcismi, et ogli ss.<sup>ti</sup> da me Giacomo Fornacieri Piuano à quali lo tene il Sig.<sup>re</sup> Antonio q Gerolemo Veccelio specier all’insegna del Dose in Contrà.’

Ruffo, Legate of Ferrara] to learn – but from choice, because of an ailment from which I have suffered from birth and by which I am afflicted.’ And later on: ‘For this reason I almost always live at home and go out only in a gondola or carriage, since my chest ailment, or constriction of the chest, prevents me from walking.’<sup>18</sup> This *strettezza di petto* is usually identified as asthma. Remo Giazotto, however, suggests another possible cause of anxiety: an earth tremor which is supposed to have shaken Venice on the day of Antonio’s birth.<sup>19\*</sup>

The young Antonio learned the violin from his father and – if the report of the nineteenth-century Venetian historian Francesco Caffi, culled from unknown sources, is trustworthy – played on occasion in the orchestra of St Mark’s as a supernumerary violinist or as Giovanni Battista’s deputy.<sup>20\*</sup> Little credence should be placed in an oft-repeated statement that he took composition lessons from Legrenzi. Too often the mere presence in the same city of an old and a young talent has led to the presumption of a master-pupil relationship, as if genius observed some kind of apostolic succession. Although Legrenzi has also been claimed as the teacher of Albinoni, Bassani, Biffi, C.F. Pollarolo, F. Gasparini, Lotti, Varischino and M.A. Gasparini, confirmation exists only in the last three cases.<sup>21</sup> Vivaldi had less chance than most, as Legrenzi died when he was 12.

It is possible that Antonio also received some instruction in the harpsichord, for in a report to the inquisitors of a banquet given by the Spanish ambassador to Venice in celebration of the marriage of the Infant Philip to Princess Marie-Louise-Elisabeth of France on 26 August 1739 a certain Giovanni Gilli recounted that the Abbé Vivaldi was seated at the harpsichord, where he directed the instruments accompanying the singer Anna Girò (of whom much more will be said later).<sup>22\*</sup>

That he, the eldest son, was directed towards the priesthood, a career that offered some hope of social mobility, was in keeping with his humble origins (in wealthier families one would more commonly find a younger son taking holy orders). He did not attend the principal seminary, that of S. Cipriano di Murano, but instead received instruc-

---

<sup>18</sup> Transcribed in Stefani, op. cit., p. 21f. The present location of this letter is unknown.

<sup>19</sup> Op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Storia della musica teatrale in Venezia* (MS notes, c 1850). Venice Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Cod. It. IV-747 (= 10465), f. 310r. The section dealing with Vivaldi (ff. 310r–315r) is in the hand of Caffi’s daughter Amalia.

<sup>21</sup> See Ursula Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara: sein Leben und seine venezianisch-römischen Oratorien* (Graz and Cologne, 1966), p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> ASV, Inquisitori di Stato, Busta 604; quoted in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 309f.

tion at the *scuole sestierali* attached to S. Giovanni in Oleo and S. Geminiano. His progress up to full ordination can be charted as follows:<sup>23</sup>

Tonsure	18 September 1693
---------	-------------------

*Minor Orders*

Porter ( <i>Ostiario</i> )	19 September 1693
----------------------------	-------------------

Lector	21 September 1694
--------	-------------------

Exorcist	25 December 1695
----------	------------------

Acolyte	21 September 1696
---------	-------------------

*Holy Orders*

Sub-Deacon	4 April 1699
------------	--------------

Deacon	18 September 1700
--------	-------------------

Priest	23 March 1703
--------	---------------

If one takes at face value Vivaldi's claim, in the letter to Bentivoglio quoted above, not to have said Mass for 25 years, 1712 becomes the year in which he performed this rite for the last time. A much earlier date is suggested, however, by the sentence which comes between the two already cited: 'Barely ordained a priest, I said Mass for a year or a little longer, and then I abandoned it, having had to leave the altar three times because of the same complaint.' Herein we see, perhaps, the source of Orloff's anecdote: Vivaldi was observed to terminate Mass prematurely, for which a member of the congregation supplied his own over-fanciful explanation. A few lines further down Vivaldi continues his justifications: 'Immediately after eating, I can usually move about [*andare*], but never on foot; this is the reason why I do not celebrate Mass.' Convenient pretext (to allow more time for the practice – and business – of music) or genuine excuse? Very likely something of both.\*

His association with the Pietà can be traced back to a resolution debated by its governors on 12 August 1703. Reading between the lines, one gathers that Francesco Gasparini, barely two years in office as *Maestro di Coro*, wished to improve the standard of string playing and consolidate, or perhaps even inaugurate, the teaching of wind instruments.

---

<sup>23</sup> Venice, Archivio Patriarcale, Registro sacre ordinazioni, anni 1688–1706, ff. 129f, 131, 163f, 205ff, 314, 380f, 463f; extracts reproduced in Giazotto, op. cit., opposite pp. 48, 49, and transcribed p. 397f.

## Vivaldi

### *New Music Teachers*

To increase ever further the perfection of the orchestra [*Coro*] and to introduce more polish into its performances, in accordance with the wishes of Signor Gasparini, it is moved that teachers of the *viola*, the violin and the oboe be appointed by the Officers in charge of Music [*Deputati sopra il Coro*] at a salary that shall be deemed proper, and no great expense to this venerable institution, and that their services be retained for as long as believed necessary, their duties being laid down by this Congregation [Board of Governors].

For the resolution .....	8	} carried <sup>24</sup>
Against .....	2	
Abstentions .....	1	

That Vivaldi was engaged soon after emerges from a series of payments, the first dated 17 March 1704, recorded in one of the Pietà's account books.<sup>25</sup> An itemized list of payments made to 'D.[Don] Antonio Vivaldi Maestro di Choro' (his full title would be *Maestro di Violino di C(h)oro*) shows that the 30 ducats received by him on that date represented his salary for the six months ending in February 1704. Subsequent payments on 3 May (20 ducats), 27 June (30 ducats), 4 August (20 ducats), 3 October (20 ducats), 13 December (20 ducats) and 13 February 1705 (20 ducats) are puzzling in one important respect: although the scale of payment (where made explicit) remains with one exception five ducats per month,<sup>26</sup> the gross payment over the period of 130 ducats would represent 26 months' work, an impossibility even if he were paid in advance.

Discounting the possible existence of double entries or errors of transcription by Pincherle, from whom our information is derived,<sup>27</sup> there remains the possibility that at least some of the money resulted from an increment to Vivaldi's salary awarded by the governors on 17 August 1704:

Since the sustained efforts of Don Antonio Vivaldi, the girls' violin teacher, have borne fruit, and since he has also rendered diligent assistance in the tuition of the *viola inglese*, which is considered by Their Excellencies [the governors] part of his duties, it is moved that 40 ducats be added to his normal salary on account of his teaching of the *viola all'inglese*, making a

---

<sup>24</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 688 (G), f. 102v; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 352. In Vivaldi's day *viola*, when not a generic term for instruments of the violin family, usually denoted the cello; the modern viola was known either as the *violetta* or (by reason of its role within the ensemble) as the *alto viola* or *tenore viola*.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Reg. 999, f. 316, and Busta 698, f. 3.

<sup>26</sup> The 20 ducats paid on 4 August represented three months' work.

<sup>27</sup> *Antonio Vivaldi et la musique instrumentale*, vol. i, p. 292f.

total of 100 ducats per annum, so that he may be encouraged in his tasks, and for the greater profit of those girls.

For .....	9	} carried <sup>28</sup>
Against .....	1	

Quarterly payments of 25 ducats to Vivaldi during 1706–7 show that this new salary, and the duties encompassed by it, remained in force.<sup>29</sup> In his main employment he was now earning only half the amount paid to the Pietà's musical director, but already his salary was four times greater than his father's.

His ancillary duties included the acquisition of instruments for the chapel: a violin in 1704; another violin and four *viole* (? of different sizes) in 1705; a violin bow for a certain Madalena Rossa in 1706; a violin and a cello in 1708; strings for a viola d'amore in 1708 and 1709 (January).<sup>30</sup> In all probability he was also unofficial *Maestro de' Concerti*, directing (and playing in) orchestral performances, and composing instrumental music for both private and public consumption.

His first publication, a set of trio sonatas, appeared from Sala in or before 1705. Until quite recently only the 'pirated' edition by Roger (1715) was known, but a solitary first violin part of the kalian edition survives in the library of the Venice Conservatoire. The trio sonata was still the most popular instrumental genre in Italy, though beginning to lose ground to the solo sonata and the concerto, and was commonly regarded as the touchstone of a composer's ability; Corelli's four great collections provided both a model and a yardstick of excellence. Small wonder, then, that emerging composers of Vivaldi's generation, men such as Gentili, Albinoni and Caldara, nearly always made their début in print with a set of trio sonatas.

Opus 1 was dedicated to Count Annibale Gambara, a prominent Brescian nobleman. Vivaldi's little-known dedication is worth quoting in full:

My devotion, ambitious to make itself known to Your Excellency, has suffered enough from the torments of desire. I confess that many times I restrained my ardour, mindful of your merit and mistrustful of my talent, but, no longer able to contain my ambition, I thought it proper to free it

---

<sup>28</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 688, f. 128v; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 352. The family of instruments known generically as *viole all'inglese* is discussed on p. 123f below.

<sup>29</sup> See Pincherle, *Antonio Vivaldi et la musique instrumentale*, vol. i, p. 293.

<sup>30</sup> Pincherle, loc. cit.; Denis Arnold, 'Instruments and Instrumental Teaching in the Early Italian Conservatoires', *The Galpin Society Journal*, vol. xviii (1965), p. 76f.



## Vivaldi

from its longing, since what was earlier a mere propensity had become a necessity. When considering whether to dedicate to Your Excellency the first fruits of my feeble efforts in the form of these sonatas, I realized that it was no longer in my power not to do so. Your lofty prerogatives took my judgment captive and rewarded my decision with the bounty of a Maecenas. I will not lose myself in the vast expanse of the glories of your most noble and excellent family, for I would not find my way out again, since they are so immense in greatness and number. Knowing that I possess no other adornments than those of my feebleness, I have sought the patronage of a great man, who can not only protect me from the tongues of Aristarchs [pedants, named after a grammarian of the second century BC], and in whose shade my labours – perhaps when maligned by critics, who in these times like to flaunt their impertinences – can enjoy a safe refuge, but can also perform these flaccid harmonies, which with so much humility I dedicate to Your Excellency. May your exalted generosity then deign to accept in respectful tribute these first, most humble products of my labours, and meanwhile grant me the honour of declaring myself:

the most humble, devoted and obliged servant of Your Excellency,

D. Antonio Vivaldi

One need only compare this dedication with the generality of dedications written by his contemporaries to realize how entirely conventional its tone and imagery are.<sup>31</sup> The composer's apology for his inadequacies; his eulogy of the dedicatee; his invocation of the classical age: all these occur over and over again, down to the very phraseology. Even the plea to the dedicatee to shield the composer from malevolent critics is a commonplace, especially in first publications (like those of Corelli and Caldara), although Vivaldi's tone is more bitter than usual, perhaps indicating that the sensitivity to criticism which he showed in later life was already one of his characteristics.

Two curious features of the surviving Sala edition suggest that it is a reprint of a work brought out earlier, perhaps in mid 1703. The title-page bears the printer's own typographical emblem (a seated King David playing the harp), normal in Sala's reprints, instead of the dedicatee's coat of arms, normal in first editions.<sup>32</sup> Further, although Vivaldi is identified as a cleric ('Don'), he is styled merely 'Musico di violino professore veneto' (professional violinist from Venice) with no mention of his post at the Pietà. Highly conscious of rank, even for his times, Vivaldi would hardly have omitted this detail from a title-page drawn up in 1705. Against this one can argue that the retention

---

<sup>31</sup> See the examples quoted in Claudio Sartori, *Bibliografia della musica strumentale italiana stampata in Italia fino al 1700* (Florence, 1952).

<sup>32</sup> Compare, for instance, the 1700 edition of Albinoni's op. 2 with the 1702 and 1707 reprints.

of the dedication is rare in a Sala reprint, but not entirely unknown, for the 1707 edition of Gentili's *Capricci da camera*, op. 3, possesses one, although it must be a reprint, since a pirated edition by Roger was advertised in April 1706.<sup>33</sup>

The dedication of Vivaldi's next opus, 12 sonatas for violin and harpsichord, is a perfect example of the opportunism an eighteenth-century composer had to practise in order to prosper, or merely to survive. A catalogue of the publisher Antonio Bortoli attached to the libretto of Caldara's opera *Sofonisba*, first performed in November 1708, lists second from the end Vivaldi's op. 2. Very likely, the composer's manuscript was already in Bortoli's hands. Then on 29 December Venice received a visit arranged at very short notice by Frederick IV of Denmark and Norway, who was by his own request to remain incognito (a state facilitated by the wearing of a Carnival mask). It has been stated that on the very day after his arrival Frederick attended a Sunday service at the Pietà at which Vivaldi officiated. As quoted by Remo Giazotto, who claimed to have discovered the reference in a dispatch of 'the Roman Chancellery in Venice' (no shelfmark given):

His Majesty appeared at the Pietà at 11 o'clock after receiving ambassadors from Savoy, to hear the girls singing and playing instruments under the direction of the master who was occupying the rostrum in the absence of Gasparini. Great was the applause for the *Credo* and *Agnus Dei* which were performed with instruments, and afterwards there was a concert very much after his taste, as befitted him.<sup>34</sup>

Sadly, the authenticity – even the very existence – of this source must be questioned. In the first place, both Rome and Venice employed, during this period, the so-called *ore italiane*: a 24-hour clock in which '24 hours' fell precisely at nightfall throughout the year. '11 o'clock' (*ore undeci* in the original Italian) would thus have been not in the late morning as nowadays but just after 4 a.m. modern local time – for too early for a prince to be attending Mass. The second suspicious element is that Italian (as opposed to German and Austrian) composers of the late Baroque did not make a practice of setting the *Agnus Dei* to music; Italian congregations expected, rather, to hear a motet at the equivalent point in the Mass. However this may be, it was certainly Vivaldi who presented the sonatas, duly dedicated, to the king before he departed on 6 March 1709.

---

<sup>33</sup> Lesure, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> Giazotto, op. cit., p. 105.

## Vivaldi

What of concertos? That Vivaldi did not publish any until 1711 may indicate simply that he could not afford the cost earlier. We have the rather pathetic testimony of the Roman composer Giuseppe Valentini from the foreword to his *Idee per camera a violino e violone o cembalo*, op. 4 (1706 or 1707), on this subject:

I have made so bold as to publish, further, the present work, which contains my first collection of sonatas, for one violin, reserving my second for sonatas with two and three stringed instruments; these I cannot consign to print at the moment, however, on account of the great expense involved: nevertheless, I will not take long, if you show me favour, to publish these too, likewise my theatrical concertos [*concerti teatrali*] and other things which I am now preparing.<sup>35</sup>

Strangely enough, the earliest datable manuscript copies of concertos by Vivaldi to have survived are not of works for principal (i.e. solo) violin, strings and continuo (a type he can hardly have neglected to write in abundance, however) but of concertos with an obbligato cello part. Among the eight cello concertos attributed to Vivaldi preserved in the library of the counts of Schönborn (Wiesentheid/Unterfranken, Germany) are three (RV 402, 416, 420) in the hand of Franz Horneck, a young musician in the service of Johann Philipp Franz von Schönborn who stayed in Venice from November 1708 until March 1709.<sup>36</sup> The works were destined for Count Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn, an enthusiastic cellist who also acquired some cello sonatas by Vivaldi. Between 1708 and 1713 the Schönborn brothers purchased a great deal of music from Venice, including unidentified instrumental works by Vivaldi, via Matthias Ferdinand von Regaznig, who acted as ‘resident’ (consul) for the Elector of Mainz, their uncle.

Vivaldi’s appointment at the Pietà was renewed in 1706 and in the following two years, though in 1707 he mustered only six votes out of nine, as compared with the eight votes obtained by the Pietà’s German-born oboe teacher, Ludwig (Ludovico) Erdmann. He was less fortunate in a ballot held on 24 February 1709, when seven votes were cast in favour of his retention and six against. In a fresh vote one of his supporters changed sides: he was out of office. It is often surmised that his independent personality and outside interests and ambitions harmed his relationship with the Pietà’s governors, but real evidence

---

<sup>35</sup> Sartori, *Bibliografia*, p. 591. The identification of the composer and work is the author’s. The trio sonatas of which Valentini writes were published in 1707, the concertos only in 1710.

<sup>36</sup> Karl Heller, *Die deutsche Überlieferung der Instrumentalwerke Vivaldis* (Leipzig, 1971), pp. 178ff.

is lacking. Meanwhile, we should not overlook the Pietà's readiness to reappoint him when the moment arrived, nor the even greater liability to dismissal of some of his colleagues.

Reappointment, evidently as violin teacher without special responsibilities for the *viola all'inglese*, came on 27 September 1711:

Realizing the necessity of securing ever better instrumental tuition for the girls studying music in order to increase the reputation of this pious establishment, the post of violin master being vacant, we move that Don Antonio Vivaldi be appointed violin master at an annual salary of 60 ducats, this governing body being certain that he will exercise his talent to the utmost in the good service of this pious establishment, and for the greater profit of those girls.

Abstentions.....	0	}	carried <sup>37</sup>
Against.....	0		
In favour.....	11		

The renewal of his post went through without serious opposition in 1712 and 1713. Then, on 23 April 1713, there occurred an event of great importance for Vivaldi's career and orientation as a composer. Francesco Gasparini was granted sick leave, nominally of six months, and permission to go outside Venice. This may well have been a stratagem on Gasparini's part, for he never returned, passing via Florence to Rome, where in 1716 he became musical director to Prince Ruspoli, in 1717 *Maestro di Cappella* at S. Lorenzo in Lucina, and in 1725, two years before his death, *maestro* of St John Lateran.

Gasparini's departure left a void which the Pietà had difficulty in filling for many years, as the record of the four succeeding *maestri di coro* reveals:

Pietro Scarpari ( <i>alias</i> Pietro Dall'Oglio)	appointed <i>Maestro di Canto</i> 11 June 1713	continued in post under succeeding <i>Maestri</i>
Carlo Luigi Pietragrua	appointed 22 February 1719	died 27 March 1726
Giovanni Porta	appointed 24 May 1726	left soon after 28 September 1737
Gennaro D'Alessandro	appointed 21 August 1739	dismissed 13 May 1740

---

<sup>37</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 689 (H), f. 182r; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 365.

## Vivaldi

The regular composition of new works was an important part of the *maestro*'s duties. In a memorandum of 6 July 1710 the requirements are specified: a minimum of two new Mass and Vesper settings annually (one for Easter and the other for the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, to whom the Pietà was dedicated); at least two motets every month; occasional compositions as required for funerals, the offices of Holy Week, etc. The scores had to be delivered to the *maestra di coro*, who would have them copied into parts and draw up a list of new compositions every six months for the inspection of the governors.<sup>38</sup>

To a limited extent Scarpari supplied this need, but the responsibility devolved principally on the more gifted Vivaldi. We learn this from a motion debated by the governors on 2 June 1715:

This pious congregation [the governors] having noted from the petition of the Reverend Don Antonio Vivaldi, violin master in this pious establishment, and the deposition of the Officers in charge of Music just read out, the acknowledged services and well-rewarded labours performed by him, not only in the successful and universally approved teaching of musical instruments to the girls, but also the excellent musical compositions supplied after the departure of the above-mentioned *maestro* Gasparini – a complete Mass, a Vespers, an oratorio, over 30 motets and other works – and seeing fit in its generosity to give him a token of its gratitude and recompense him in part for these services outside his normal duties, resolves that a single payment of 50 ducats be made to him from our exchequer in appreciation of his efforts and special contributions. And may this reward also stimulate him to make further contributions and to perfect still more the performing abilities of the girls of this our orchestra, so necessary to the musical standards and the good reputation of this our chapel.

Abstentions.....	0	} carried <sup>39</sup>
Against.....	2	
In favour.....	10	

Vivaldi no doubt continued to provide the Pietà's chapel with vocal works until Pietragrua's appointment in 1719 and thereafter intermittently, particularly during the two interregna (March–May 1726 and September 1737–August 1739).

One can only hazard a guess at the main line of his activity during his own period of absence from the Pietà (1709–11). Giazotto refers to a document of 1710 connecting G.B. Vivaldi (as a debtor) with the

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. (I), f. 136r; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 363f.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. (I), ff. 172–173r; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 368.

S. Angelo theatre. It was perhaps around then that Antonio established his first close links with the operatic world. The S. Angelo theatre enjoyed little support from the local nobility and for its survival had to cultivate a popular, ear-catching style. It rarely engaged singers of the highest class, and the composers most in the public eye (Albinoni, Gasparini, Lotti and Pollarolo) had their hands full elsewhere. For its librettos it relied on refurbishments of old texts and, for a brief period, on the prolific output of Grazio Braccioli, a Ferrarese poet resident in Venice. Despite his membership of the Arcadian Academy, Braccioli showed little finesse either of language or of plot construction, but his subjects were colourful and his style vigorous.

If S. Angelo librettos tended to be old or (in Braccioli's case) old-fashioned, its composers were young, rising talents. The experience of one composer, Johann David Heinichen, forms an enlightening prelude to Vivaldi's association with S. Angelo. Paying the almost mandatory visit of a promising German composer to Venice, Heinichen was engaged by its impresario to write a pair of operas (*California* and *Le passioni per troppo amore*) for the 1713 Carnival season. In his highly anecdotal account J.A. Hiller relates how the impresario tried to take one of Heinichen's operas off after only two performances, intending to substitute a work by a local composer, but was forced by the public outcry to restore it to the stage. When he then attempted to withhold the agreed payment of 200 ducats (a typical amount for an operatic score) from Heinichen, the composer initiated a lawsuit against him; this proving successful, the impresario became liable for 1600 ducats, including damages and costs.<sup>40</sup>

If a bankruptcy resulted, as one might well imagine, from this affair, it may not be unconnected with Vivaldi's appearance at S. Angelo as an entrepreneur and resident composer in the two years following. In the meantime he had blooded himself in the comparative obscurity of the provinces. By a unanimous vote the Pietà's governors granted him, on 30 April 1713, one month's leave of absence outside Venice 'for the exercise of his skill' (*all'impiego delle sue virtuose applicazioni*).<sup>41</sup> The place was Vicenza; the purpose, the performance of his first opera, *Ottone in villa*, whose librettist was Sebastiano Biancardi alias Domenico Lalli, later to become manager of the S. Giovanni Grisostomo and S. Samuele theatres.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> *Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Musikgelehrten und Tonkünstler neuerer Zeit*, vol. i (Leipzig, 1784), pp. 133f, 136.

<sup>41</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 689 (I), f. 88v; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 367.

<sup>42</sup> A mistaken belief that Vivaldi's *Tieteburga* (Venice, S. Moisè, Autumn 1717) was originally

Although S. Angelo was to remain the Venetian theatre with which Vivaldi was most frequently associated as a composer – no fewer than 18 of his scores, from *Orlando finto pazzo* (1714) to *Feraspe* (1739), were first performed there, not to speak of numerous revivals – his involvement in its management seems to have begun in 1713–14 (i.e. Autumn 1713 and Carnival 1714, regarded as a single season) and to have ended the following year. On 20 January 1714 he wrote the dedication of the libretto (by Braccioli) of Michel Angelo Gasparini's *Rodomonte sdegnato*.<sup>43</sup> His *Orlando finto pazzo* opened the Autumn of 1714, to be followed by a revival of Ristori's *Orlando furioso* (the huge success of the previous year), to which he contributed several new numbers.<sup>44</sup> Carnival was launched with a revival of L.A. Predieri's *Lucio Papirio*, whose libretto was once again dedicated by Vivaldi. In February there followed *Nerone fatto cesare*, on an old libretto by Matteo Noris first set by Perti in 1693 for S. Salvatore. Vivaldi arranged the work as a pasticcio, contributing 12 arias (and, very likely, also the recitatives) himself, but borrowing the remainder from other sources.<sup>45</sup> A conventional explanation for such hotch-potches is the haste with which operas often had to be written, copied into parts and rehearsed, but in this case it is equally likely that the borrowed arias were popular favourites which the singers or the public wished to have included. From a *faccio fede* discovered by Giazotto it appears that Vivaldi's *Arsilda, regina di Ponto*, performed at S. Angelo during the Autumn of 1716, was originally destined for the Ascension of 1715; Lath's libretto was not approved, however, by the censors.<sup>46</sup>

While Venice was becoming acquainted with a new personality in the realm of opera, all Europe was revelling in the sounds of his first published set of concertos, *L'estro armonico*, op. 3 – perhaps the most influential collection of instrumental works to appear during the whole

---

performed there ten years earlier arose from a typographical error (a missing Roman numeral 'X') on the title-page of a revised libretto issued later that same year.

<sup>43</sup> This is probably the reprinted, slightly altered libretto mentioned by Bonlini; presumably Braccioli wrote the original dedication.

<sup>44</sup> The first two acts of this score are preserved in Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, Giordano 37, ff. 161–250.

<sup>45</sup> Two arias are attributed in the libretto (the score is lost) to Orlandini and to Perti, one to F. Gasparini, A. Carli and D. Pistacchi, and 12 to unknown composers identified either as 'N.N.' or 'P.P.'. It is probable that *Nerone fatto cesare* was preceded by a first version called *Agrippina*, since the *faccio fede*, dated 12 February 1715, identifies the cast as 'the same that sang in *Agrippina* with [the addition of?] Marietta della Pietà'. Uffenbach, whose report we shall come to shortly, records having heard '*Agrippina*' on 19 February but '*Nerone fatto cesare* or *Agrippina*' on 28 February. See Giazotto, op. cit., p. 114, and Eberhard Preussner, *Die musikalischen Reisen des Herrn von Uffenbach* (Kassel and Basel, 1949), pp. 67f, 70.

<sup>46</sup> Op. cit., p. 141.

of the eighteenth century. 'Estro' means oestrus, or heat (though a translator will do well to avoid a too narrowly biological term), but it was less the undoubted passion and energy of the concertos that startled Vivaldi's contemporaries than the novelty of their design.

The set was dedicated to Grand Prince Ferdinand of Tuscany (1663–1713), son of Grand Duke Cosimo III (1642–1723). Ferdinand was a skilled and enthusiastic amateur musician, who bestowed his patronage upon Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Albinoni, Pasquini and Handel, as well as Bartolomeo Cristofori, reputed inventor of the pianoforte. Vivaldi may well have met the prince on one of his frequent visits to Venice for the opera. Although Ferdinand failed to outlive his father and become a reigning grand duke, he was universally known in flattering affection as Ferdinand III; the dedication of their third *opera* to him by Torelli, Albinoni, Gentili, Vinaccesi and Vivaldi is probably a sly allusion to this fact.

If Vivaldi's dedication contains nothing of note other than a renewed disparagement of his critics, his preface addressed to performers ('Alli dilettanti di musica') is very informative:

The kind indulgence you have so far accorded to my feeble efforts has persuaded me to seek to gratify you with a work containing instrumental concertos. I must acknowledge that if in the past my compositions have suffered from printing errors [*il discapito della stampa*] in addition to their own defects, their greatest distinction will now be their engraving by the famous hand of Monsieur Estienne Roger. This is one reason why I have tried to please you by having the concertos published, and I shall venture before long to present you with another set, comprising *concerti a quattro* ...

No doubt Vivaldi spoke for many of his compatriots in lauding the handiwork of the Dutch publisher. What he omitted to mention was the straightforward commercial advantage of having his music published north of the Alps, where its impact would be greatest. In Italy, where the concerto had been in existence for several years, composers such as Torelli and Albinoni had already moved some distance along the path taken by Vivaldi; consequently, his ideas were absorbed by slow diffusion among composers of his own generation, reluctant to abandon well-tried practices overnight. The first native composer to betray his influence strongly was the young Bolognese Giuseppe Matteo Alberti (1685–1751) in his *Concerti per chiesa e per camera*, op. 1 (1713), but it was not until the generation of Locatelli (1695–1764) and Tartini (1692–1770) that Italian concerto-composers



## Vivaldi

as a whole embraced the Vivaldian method. In northern Europe, where concertos had not yet achieved a wide dissemination (Roger had published a mere handful by 1711, when *L'estro armonico* appeared),<sup>47</sup> Vivaldi's concertos, spearheaded by op. 3, quickly established themselves as the norm. In Germany, particularly, they were received with enthusiasm. Johann Joachim Quantz, later famous as flautist and theorist, described his first acquaintance with them at Pirna (1714): 'As a then entirely novel type of musical composition, they impressed me considerably. I made sure to collect a good number of them. Henceforth, the magnificent ritornellos of Vivaldi served me as excellent models.'<sup>48</sup> Bach obviously knew *L'estro armonico*, for he transcribed five of its works for keyboard while at Weimar and another (BWV 1065, for four harpsichords and strings) at Leipzig.

Amateurs responded equally warmly, as Johann Friedrich Armand von Uffenbach, a member of a distinguished Frankfurt family of merchants and civic dignitaries, found when he introduced Vivaldi's op. 3 in 1713 to a Strasbourg music society.<sup>49</sup> Uffenbach's travel diary is of especial interest, for in it he recorded a visit to Venice in 1715, during which he visited S. Angelo four times and met Vivaldi.

He paid his first visit to the opera house on 4 February:

I remained here [at the casino] until it was time to go to the opera, and then went with some acquaintances to the S. Angelo house, which is smaller and also not as expensive as the one described above [SS. Giovanni e Paolo]; its entrepreneur was the celebrated Vivaldi, who also composed the opera, which was really nice, and very attractive to the eye; the machines were not as expensive as in the other theatre and the orchestra not so large, but none the less it was well worth hearing ... Towards the end Vivaldi played a solo accompaniment – splendid – to which he appended a cadenza [*phantasie*] which really frightened me, for such playing has never been nor can be: he brought his fingers up to only a straw's distance from the bridge, leaving no room for the bow – and that on all four strings with imitations [*Fugen*] and incredible speed. With this he astounded everyone, but I cannot say that it pleased me, for it was not so pleasant to listen to as it was skilfully executed.<sup>50</sup>

The opera was probably Predieri's *Lucio Papirio* in the altered version for whose libretto Vivaldi wrote the dedication. Uffenbach's belief that

---

<sup>47</sup> The *Post Man* of 16 October 1711 carried an advertisement for the works.

<sup>48</sup> 'Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf, von ihm selbst entworfen' in Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik*, vol. i (Berlin, 1755), p. 205.

<sup>49</sup> Heller, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Preussner, op. cit., p. 67.

he also composed the music may not have been without foundation if he contributed some new numbers, as in *Orlando furioso*. The mention of an elaborate cadenza brings to mind Quantz's statement that the most recent form of cadenza, in which the soloist played without accompaniment, arose 'roughly between 1710 and 1716'.<sup>51</sup>

On his next visit (19 February) Uffenbach heard a new opera, *Agrippina*. Neither the subject nor the ill-assorted costumes pleased him, and he regretted that Vivaldi this time played only a short solo 'air' (? obbligato accompaniment) on his violin. He thought better of *Nerone fatto cesare* (which, as we have seen, was probably only a revised version of *Agrippina*) and went to hear it twice, on 28 February and 4 March.<sup>52</sup>

On 6 March Uffenbach's attempt to meet Vivaldi was successful. With great satisfaction he noted in his diary:

After supper I received a visit from Vivaldi, the famous composer and violinist, having several times sent an invitation to his house when discussing some *concerti grossi* which I wished to order from him, and also having a few bottles of wine fetched for him, knowing that he was a cleric.<sup>53</sup> He let me listen to his very difficult and quite inimitable fantasias on the violin, so that, being close at hand. I could not but marvel even more at his skill. It was clear to me that although he played exceptionally difficult and animated pieces he lacked a pleasant and cantabile style.<sup>54</sup>

And three days later:

This afternoon Vivaldi came to me and brought me, as requested, ten *concerti grossi*, which he claimed to have composed especially for me. I bought some of them, and in order that I might have a better idea of them, he wanted to teach me to play them on the spot, and to visit me every so often, so that this occasion would be [just] a start.<sup>55</sup>

Uffenbach's reservations about Vivaldi's manner of playing suggest that like many Germans he was more at home with the French style than the less discreet Italian style, of which the Venetians, known for their extravagance in all things, were the boldest exponents. The composer's aggressive sales technique, in which the supply of music becomes a pretext for an offer of tuition, reveals something about his

---

<sup>51</sup> *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, third complete German edn (Breslau, 1789; facs. reprint, Kassel and Basel, 1953), p. 152.

<sup>52</sup> See p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> The remark 'Da er unter die Cantores gehört' implies that the Venetian clergy were notoriously partial to drink.

<sup>54</sup> Preussner, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

character; more generally, the whole transaction demonstrates how music could, in the Venetian environment, become a simple commodity turned out to order for the casual visitor.

The *concerti a quattro* (concertos for four-part strings and continuo with solo violin) promised in the foreword to op. 3 duly appeared from Roger in about 1714. They were collectively entitled *La stravaganza* and dedicated to Vettor Dolfin (the surname is given in its Tuscan form Delfino), a young Venetian noble to whom Vivaldi had taught the violin. In 1716–17 Roger brought out three further Vivaldi collections – one of sonatas and two of concertos – under the imprint of his daughter Jeanne. Although all these have regular opus numbers, the lack of a dedication, the numerous textual errors and some problematic features in their make-up (to be discussed later) indicate that Roger published them on his own initiative, possibly even bypassing the composer altogether. Such action was still quite uncommon, the rather special case of anthologies excepted, and reflects the quite extraordinary demand for Vivaldi's instrumental music in the wake of opp. 3 and 4.

By 1716 Vivaldi's merits as an operatic composer must have become widely recognized, for he had been commissioned to write the Carnival opera, *La costanza trionfante degl'amori e degl'odii* for S. Moisè. At the Pietà, however, his position as *Maestro di Violino* was growing vulnerable, either because economies were necessary or because the governors looked askance on his extra-mural activities. In a ballot held on 29 March 1716 the governors were initially seven to five (less than the required two-thirds) in his favour; a fresh count merely lost him one vote.<sup>56</sup> But his partisans must have been tenacious, for he was reinstated, now as *Maestro de' Concerti* (the change of nomenclature is probably not significant), on 24 May, by a near-unanimous vote.<sup>57</sup>

His restoration to favour may not be unconnected with his composition of the music to *Juditha triumphans*, a 'topical' oratorio to words by the local poet Giacomo Casseti performed at the Pietà in November 1716. Designated a 'sacred military oratorio', the work was conceived as an allegory on Venice's struggle against Ottoman belligerence, and in particular on the Venetian fleet's efforts to relieve beleaguered Corfu. The war – Venice's sixth against the Turks – had begun in 1714. Badly led and prone to mutiny, the Republic's forces in the Peloponnese and the Aegean had suffered severe reverses in 1715. In July 1716 the Turks began their siege of the strategic island

---

<sup>56</sup> ASV, Osp., Busta 690 (L), f. 18v.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., f. 26v.

of Corfu. Since *Juditha triumphans* was approved by the inquisitors on 7 August, Casseti probably composed his libretto in the shadow of this threat. Although direct reference to the affairs of 1716 is confined to a sort of epilogue in which Ozias, High Priest of Bethulia (really an amalgam of the biblical Ozias, Governor of Bethulia, and Joakim, High Priest of Jerusalem), prophesies Venetian victory, a *Carmen allegoricum* published at the end of the libretto provides a key for the allegorical interpretation of the entire oratorio: Judith represents the Adriatic (Venice) and Holophernes the Sultan; her handmaiden Abra (an invented character) and his servant Vagaus (Bagoas) respectively stand for Faith and the Turkish commander (perhaps to be identified with Ali Pasha, who had earned a reputation for brutality in the campaigns of 1715). Ozias personifies the union of Christians and the honour of virgins.

It was this union of Christians – more concretely, an alliance with Austria concluded on 25 May – which enabled Ozias's prophecy, in the short term, to be fulfilled. The Turks were defeated, and Ali Pasha killed, at Petrovaradin on 5 August. In consequence, they abandoned the siege of Corfu on 22 August. So it was that *Juditha triumphans*, written in fearful hope, was performed in an atmosphere of relieved jubilation.

Vivaldi's operas returned to S. Angelo in the following year. *Arsilda, regina di Ponto* was performed, belatedly as we saw, in Autumn 1716, the following Carnival closing with *L'incoronazione di Dario*.<sup>58</sup> It was next the turn of S. Moisè: *Tieteburga* occupied Autumn 1717, while the second and third Carnival works were *Artabano, re de' Parti*, a modified version of *La costanza trionfante*, and *Armida al campo d'Egitto*.

Revivals, presumably in Venice, of *Orlando finto pazzo* (Autumn 1716) and *L'incoronazione di Dario* (Carnival 1718) received the inquisitors' assent, but no record of their performance has survived.<sup>59</sup> One is tempted to imagine that application to perform these operas was made as an insurance against possible hitches with new works.

During the 1710s several of the young German composers fortunate enough to obtain leave from their employers to study in Venice made Vivaldi's acquaintance. First there was Heinichen, joined at the end of 1713 by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel. Daniel Gottlob Treu, sometimes known by his italianized name Daniele Teofilo Fedele, became Vivaldi's

---

<sup>58</sup> The date of 1716 in the libretto is to be interpreted *more veneto*.

<sup>59</sup> Giazotto, op. cit., pp. 138, 144.

pupil in 1716. The most important figure, however, was Johann Georg Pisendel (1687–1755), a violin virtuoso in the service of the Dresden court, who, having previously studied with Torelli at Ansbach, was already well versed in the Italian style.

Pisendel arrived in Venice in April 1716 as a member of an élite group of four musicians, the *Kammermusik*, sent from Dresden to join the visiting Prince-Elector of Saxony (from 1733 Frederick Augustus II of Saxony and Augustus III of Poland). Since the *Kammermusik* remained in Venice until the end of the year it became well integrated into Venetian musical life; Pisendel, moreover, revisited Venice in 1717. He became a friend as well as a pupil of Vivaldi.\* Their association is recorded in two delightful, if uncorroborated, anecdotes from Hiller. The first recounts how Vivaldi, walking with Pisendel in St Mark's Square, suddenly broke off the conversation and urged the visitor to return home with him immediately. Privacy regained, Vivaldi explained that he had observed four constables shadowing Pisendel and asked him whether he had done or said anything forbidden by the authorities. Since Pisendel could think of nothing, Vivaldi sought the advice of one of the inquisitors, from whom he learned that they were looking not for Pisendel but for a man resembling him.<sup>60</sup> The second anecdote concerns a concerto identifiable as RV 571 (P. 268) which Pisendel was asked to play, at the prince-electors' behest, as an operatic entr'acte. During an extended solo passage in the upper register his accompanists tried to discomfit him by rushing ahead, but he kept his composure and forced them to slow down by marking the beat vigorously with his foot, much to Frederick Augustus's amusement.<sup>61</sup>

Pisendel used his stay in Venice to amass a large quantity of musical manuscripts containing the latest works by her most eminent composers – principally, of course, Vivaldi. Some of these were presented to him by the composer, for instance the autograph manuscripts of five sonatas and six concertos by Vivaldi, all purporting to have been written for 'Monsieur Pisendel' (although the dedication seems in nearly all cases to have been an afterthought), and those of three sonatas by Albinoni, one with a formal dedication. The bulk of the music, however, was copied out by Pisendel himself. We possess his scores of 22 concertos and seven violin sonatas by Vivaldi, as well

---

<sup>60</sup> Op. cit., p. 189f.

<sup>61</sup> *Wöchentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen die Musik betreffend* (Leipzig, 10 March 1767). The opera might well have been either *Arsilda, regina di Ponto* or *L'incoronazione di Dario*, as scores of the overture to both works copied in Pisendel's hand are preserved in Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Mus. 2389-N-2(4).

as complete sets of parts of 15 further concertos. His copies of concertos by Albinoni and B. Marcello are also preserved.<sup>62</sup> Whether by annotating manuscripts that came into his hands or by editing music in the act of making his own copy, Pisendel was in the habit of subjecting the originals to considerable revision. The purpose of these alterations was doubtless manifold: to exercise his talents as a composer; to afford his virtuosity on the violin greater scope (more necessary in the case of Albinoni, the less adventurous composer, than in that of Vivaldi); to bring the scoring into line with the practice of the Dresden court orchestra, where wind instruments were prominent in both solo and *ripieno* functions; to eliminate infelicities of phrase balance or part-writing. At its most overt this re-shaping could result in added or substituted solo passages, cadenzas or even entire movements; at its most covert, in written-out embellishments, added *ripieno* parts for recorders, oboes and bassoons or simple marks of expression.

Pisendel returned to Dresden in 1717 to become acting (later, official) leader of the court orchestra. As a result of his influence Vivaldi's concertos and sinfonias later came to occupy a place of honour in its repertoire, making Dresden the centre of the Vivaldian cult in Germany. One may add that Vivaldi's church music was also cultivated there, as shown by the inclusion of his *Magnificat* in an inventory drawn up by Jan Dismas Zelenka, one of Pisendel's colleagues in the *Kammermusik* and subsequently official composer of church music to the court.\*

No musicians' names appear in the list of staff members appointed at the Pietà on 9 May 1717, and Vivaldi was not one of the musicians seeking reappointment on 24 April 1718. The second absence is easily explained, however: he had just left Venice for Mantua.

---

<sup>62</sup> All these MSS. except, curiously, that of one violin sonata (RV 19) dedicated to Pisendel by Vivaldi, which is found in the collection of the Paris Conservatoire (Rés. ms. 2225), are today in the possession of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek.