
Years of travel

The duchy of Mantua, bordering the *Veneto*, was a flourishing centre of the arts during the seventeenth century. Indirectly, lavish spending on court entertainment led to the downfall of the Gonzaga dynasty, for the last duke, Ferdinando Carlo, being greatly in debt, was bribed into an alliance with the French during the War of the Spanish Succession. As Mantua was a fief of the Austrian Empire, this constituted treason; accordingly, the victorious Austrians made Mantua an hereditary imperial possession, appointing as governor the younger brother of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, Prince Philip. Fortunately, Mantua's cultural life continued much as before under Philip's governorship (1714–35).

The movement of musicians between Venice and Mantua was a two-way traffic of long standing. If Vincenzo di Gonzaga had lost Monteverdi to Venice in 1613, Ferdinando Carlo's recruitment of Caldara in 1700 showed that the pull could as well come from the other direction. A period of service at even a small court like Mantua's offered a musician from republican Venice a type of experience and a species of patronage for which his city provided no equivalent.

It has long been known that Vivaldi spent three consecutive years at Mantua in the service of Prince Philip, since he wrote in his letter to Bentivoglio of 16 November 1737: 'In Mantova sono stato tre anni al servizio del Piissimo Principe Darmistadth'. Pincherle proposed the years 1720 to 1723 and Kolneder 1719 to 1722, but more recent research based on the dates of newly discovered librettos leaves no room for doubt that the period spanned 1718 to 1720.*

Vivaldi's position, as we learn from title-pages, was that of *Maestro di Cappella da Camera*. What this curiously cumbersome formula seems to indicate is that he enjoyed the status of a *Maestro di Cappella* but concerned himself only with secular music. There are some parallels between Vivaldi's activity at Mantua and Bach's at Cöthen (1717–23). Both men had to write occasional works for local festivities, such as

Vivaldi's cantatas *O mie porpore più belle* celebrating the installation of Antonio Guidi di Bagno as Bishop of Mantua or *Qual in pioggia dorata* in praise of Prince Philip. The last-named cantata and the operatic scores Vivaldi provided for Mantua's Teatro Arciduciale point to another similarity: the frequency and prominence of horn parts.

Opera was indeed Vivaldi's main concern. Scarcely off the stage of S. Moisè, his *Armida al campo d'Egitto* was presented during April and May 1718. The following Carnival season witnessed the premières of *Teuzzone* and *Tito Manlio*, on old librettos by Apostolo Zeno and Matteo Noris. Vivaldi's autograph score of *Tito Manlio* in Turin is inscribed 'Musica del Vivaldi fatta in 5 giorni' (music by Vivaldi written in five days);¹ even Handel never achieved such speed. The last opera he produced for Mantua while resident there was *La Candace* (otherwise, *Li veri amici*), heard during Carnival 1720. His departure did not mean, however, the severance of links with the Teatro Arciduciale, for *Artabano, re de' Parti* was given in 1725, and the already much-travelled *Farnace* in 1732. A *Semiramide* performed in 1732 may have been specially commissioned, for no earlier setting of Francesco Silvani's libretto is attributable to Vivaldi; the composer may even have revisited Mantua for the occasion on his homeward journey from Bohemia. As he retained his Mantuan title without, apparently, incurring the displeasure of the court, he probably retained vestigial duties *in absentia* after his initial sojourn was over.²

Many, perhaps the bulk, of Vivaldi's solo cantatas must have been written for Mantua. Most of the non-autograph cantata scores in Turin are in the hands known from the manuscripts of Vivaldi operas copied in Mantua (e.g. *Teuzzone*). The solo cantata was the courtly genre *par excellence*, for the virtuoso singers to whom nobles lent their patronage had few other outlets during the operatic off-season, when they returned to their employers. He must also have composed instrumental music there, but until more solid evidence is found, one can do no more than surmise that those instruments having important solo parts in the Mantuan operas (horns and recorders) also had concertos written for them.

It must have been at Mantua that Vivaldi first made the acquaintance of the young contralto Anna Girò (Giraud), a native of that city. Until Gastone Vio's researches confirmed her Mantuan provenance – which

¹ Giordano 39, ff. 172–365. A partly autograph score of the same opera survives in Foà 37, ff. 119–306.

² *Queste, Eurilla gentil*, a serenata written for Philip's birthday in 1726, supports this hypothesis.

had always been reckoned a possibility, since on her début as an operatic singer, in Albinoni's *Laodice* (S. Moisè, Autumn 1724), she was described in the cast-list of the libretto as 'mantovana' – many scholars had given credence to the idea that she was Venetian by origin, as Goldoni (who believed her to be the daughter of a wigmaker of French descent) and Quadrio both affirmed,³ Girò became Vivaldi's pupil; the inseparability of composer and singer led her to be dubbed, a little maliciously, 'L'Annina del Prete Rosso'. She also appears as 'Annina della Pietà', but her connection with the Pietà was merely through her teacher. A sister, Paolina, also attended Vivaldi, probably as a chaperone and factotum.

Not surprisingly, intimacy in matters other than musical was suspected; had not many of the most eminent Venetian composers – including Albinoni, Caldara, Lotti and Marcello – chosen singers as their companions (albeit clerically sanctioned) for life? Gilli's report to the inquisitors identifies Anna by the fact of her living in Vivaldi's house.⁴ Aware of these allegations, which had evidently been revived at a most inopportune moment for him, the composer bitterly denied them in his letter to Bentivoglio of 16 November 1737: for 14 years he had travelled with the Girò sisters all over Europe and their virtue had never been impugned, nor their piety; he admitted to a friendship with Anna, but claimed (in a following letter dated 23 November) that the Girò sisters lived in a house far from his own. Despite, or perhaps because of, the wealth of 'evidence' Vivaldi musters in his defence, his case is not wholly convincing. It is so noticeable how he tries to divert the issue of *his* relationship with *one* of the sisters (Anna) into a discussion of the morals of *both* women, as appraised by their spiritual mentor. Besides, it takes little cynicism to concur with the suggestion that Vivaldi would hardly have courted scandal for so long without enjoying some of its fruits.*

We are well informed by Goldoni of Anna's qualities as an operatic singer. In 1761 he remembered her as 'bella e graziosa', while in his later account, which is both fuller and less charitable in tone, he denied that she was actually pretty, though complimented her on her grace, good figure, attractive eyes and hair and charming mouth. He found her voice weak but praised her acting ability, a rare quality in singers. Indeed, the mission on which Goldoni had been sent to Vivaldi's house

³ Gastone Vio, 'Per una migliore conoscenza di Anna Girò (da documenti d'archivio)', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani*, vol. ix (1988), pp. 26-45. See also Francesco Saverio Quadrio, *Della storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia*, vol. iii/2 (Milan, 1742), p. 539.

⁴ See p. 30.

primarily concerned the rewriting of part of the text of Zeno's *Griselda* so that *La Girò*, in the title-role, could be shown off to best advantage; her teacher had decided, no doubt wisely, that *arie d'azione*, emphasizing her talent for movement, suited her better than *arie cantabili*.

Nevertheless, her first few operatic seasons (S. Moisè 1724–5, S. Angelo 1726–8) were triumphantly successful, earning her many admirers. Antonio Conti wrote that she performed marvels,⁵ while Zuane Zuccato, newly appointed Venetian resident at Naples, found her incomparable and mentioned the *fuore* she was then (1726) causing.⁶ The fact that she was engaged for roles in operas by composers other than Vivaldi (among them, Galuppi and Hasse) during his lifetime and even afterwards⁷ proves that she was not simply his creature. If anything, it was he who was more dependent on her, declaring in the first letter to Bentivoglio just quoted: 'To put on the opera without *La Girò* is not possible, for a comparable prima donna is not to be found.' It is remarkable how well her absences from the Venetian stage correspond to premières of Vivaldi operas outside Venice, in which – so one gathers from his next letter – he liked to lead the orchestra on the opening night. Herself performing or not, she must have been a faithful member of his entourage. Giazotto believes, perhaps on insufficient evidence, that she acted as his secretary.⁸

Vivaldi's return from Mantua was signalled by the performance of *La verità in cimento* at S. Angelo in Autumn 1720. At the height of his fame, he must have been disconcerted by the appearance in December of an anonymous satirical volume, whose author was soon revealed as Benedetto Marcello, entitled *Il teatro alla moda* (The Theatre in Fashion). It was advertised as a compendium of hints for librettists, composers, singers of both sexes, players, engineers, scene painters, performers of comic parts (in intermezzos), costumiers, pages, supers, prompters, copyists, protectors (of singers), mothers of lady singers and others connected with the theatre. The imprint identifies through anagram, pun or other allusion some of the persons at whom Marcello's barbs are aimed (all were prominent in the world of Venetian opera during 1720): the composers Vivaldi ('Aldiviva'), Porta and Orlandini; the librettist (of *La verità in cimento*) Giovanni Palazzi; the impresarios

⁵ *Lettres de M. L'Abbé Conti, noble vénitien, à Mme. de Caylus*, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. fr. append. 58 (= 12102), p. 10; quoted in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 214.

⁶ ASV, Serenissima Signoria, Terra, 1726; quoted in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 215.

⁷ Her last known appearance was in Carcani's *Artaserse* at Piacenza in Carnival 1748. Later that year she married a Piacentine count and retired from the stage.

⁸ Op. cit., p. 217f.

Modotto (S. Angelo) and Orsatto (S. Moisè); the singers Caterina Borghi, Cecilia Belisani, Antonia Laurenti and Anna Maria Strada. In an amusing engraving above the imprint a suitably ursine Orsatto is shown together with Modotto in a rowing-boat (an allusion to the latter's previous involvement in the boat trade); a fiddling angel in a priest's hat, representing Vivaldi and his S. Angelo connections, has one foot on the rudder and the other in the air marking the beat to symbolize his commanding position as both musician and entrepreneur. Throughout the book Vivaldi is obviously a prime target. Marcello pretends to endorse – that is to say, he attacks as slipshod or meretricious – some of Vivaldi's favourite practices, such as *all'unisono* accompaniments, the elimination of lower strings in accompanimental passages, lengthy cadenzas, special effects (e.g. muting) and the introduction of rare instruments. Giazotto suggests, without convincing evidence, however, that Marcello bore Vivaldi a special grudge arising from legal wrangles over the S. Angelo theatre, built, as we saw earlier,⁹ on a site partly owned by a branch of his family. Three years earlier Vivaldi and the impresario at the time had been cited as debtors and mismanagers in respect of that theatre.¹⁰ Be that as it may, Vivaldi could hardly have escaped Marcello's censure, since he was responsible, in one capacity or another, for so much of what was normal practice in the opera houses.

Judging from contemporary references, some in later satires, *Il teatro alla moda* quickly won the approval of discerning opera-goers. Perhaps it put Vivaldi for a time under a cloud, for after the opening Carnival work of 1721 at S. Angelo, *Filippo, re di Macedonia* (of which he wrote only the last act, the previous two being by Giuseppe Boniventi), his operas disappeared from the Venetian stage until 1725–6.

Despite his vacillating fortunes at home, the major Italian opera houses were one by one opening their doors to him. Discounting revivals of older operas and the appearance of individual arias in pasticcios, we have five scores from the period 1715–25: *Scanderbeg* (Florence, Summer 1718); *La Silvia* (Milan, Autumn 1721); *Ercole sul Termodonte* (Rome, Carnival 1723); *Giustino* and *La virtù trionfante dell'amore e dell'odio ovvero il Tigrane* (Rome, Carnival 1724).¹¹

⁹ See p. 20.

¹⁰ Giazotto, op. cit., p. 185.

¹¹ *Il Tigrane* was a joint composition of B. Micheli (Act I), Vivaldi (Act II) and N. Romaldi (Act III). A version of *Tito Manlio* with acts composed by G. Boni, G. Giorgio and Vivaldi respectively (the last's contribution drawing in part on the Mantuan score) opened the 1720 Carnival season at the Teatro della Pace, Rome.

In his letter to Bentivoglio of 16 November 1737 Vivaldi claimed to have spent three Carnival seasons at Rome in connection with opera. Two are evident from the above list, but the third has not yet been ascertained. It is not even clear whether Vivaldi meant consecutive seasons. In the same letter and its sequel (23 November) he boasted that the Pope had asked him to play the violin, courteously receiving him on two occasions in a private apartment. Circumstantial evidence indicates that he also enjoyed the patronage of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667–1740), Corelli's last and most generous Maecenas. The famous sketch of Vivaldi drawn in 1723 by Pier Leone Ghezzi is one of several he made of persons in the cardinal's circle, while remnants of Ottoboni's large music collection preserved in the Central Library, Manchester, include copies of Vivaldi concertos that are of unmistakably Roman provenance. Coming from a noble Venetian family, but prevented by a decree of 1712 from returning to his native city because he was deemed to have compromised the Republic's neutrality by becoming Protector of France at the Vatican, Ottoboni would have had every reason to welcome Venice's foremost musician.*

Contacts with the Pietà were re-established (perhaps they had never been broken) in 1723. Since 1720 the Pietà had employed a cello master, first the famous Antonio Vandini and subsequently Bernardo Aliprandi, but neither man had the facility in composition (not to speak of the reputation) of Vivaldi.¹² On 2 July the governors passed a motion that Vivaldi, who had just supplied two concertos for the celebration of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, be asked to provide two more every month at one sequin each; this arrangement could hold even during his absence from Venice, provided that their postage was not charged to the Pietà. While in Venice, he would be required to direct personally three or four rehearsals of each piece. The intimate but at the same time patronizing manner in which the governors' minutes normally refer to members of staff is dropped: Vivaldi is an outsider with whom a bargain is to be struck.^{13*}

On 14 December 1725 the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* advertised his op. 8, 12 concertos collectively entitled *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione*, the test of harmony (representing the rational side of

¹² Giazotto's suggestion (op. cit., p. 165f) that Vandini was the same man as Vivaldi must be rejected; however, it is a strange coincidence that Vivaldi chose to anagrammatize his name as Lotavio Vandini in the libretto of the comic opera *Aristide* – unless, as Piero Weiss has argued ('Venetian Commedia Dell'Arte "Operas" in the Age of Vivaldi', *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. lxx (1984), pp. 195–217), the work was a spoof written by someone else. A cello sonata in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, shows Vandini to have been a competent but unexciting composer.

¹³ ASV, Osp., Busta 691 (N.I), f. 179; reproduced in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 256.

composition) and invention (imagination). Some of the concertos had been circulating in manuscript for several years; in his dedication, to the Bohemian count Wenzel von Morzin (1676–1737), a cousin of Haydn's patron at Dolní Lukavice, Vivaldi acknowledges this in the case of the opening four works, *Le quattro stagioni* (The Four Seasons). The novelty in Le Cène's edition of these works is the appearance before each of an explanatory sonnet (*sonetto dimostrativo*) containing the complete 'programme'. Cue-letters and portions of the sonnet texts engraved over the notes locate precisely the depicted events. Vivaldi speaks of having served Morzin (whose name he gives as Marzin) for several years as his 'Maestro di musica in Italia'. This probably means simply that he provided the count with music when requested; one bassoon concerto (RV 496) in the Turin collection is headed with the name of Morzin.*

No doubt because of the programmatic nature of half the works in it, op. 8 was received with especial enthusiasm in France.¹⁴ From 1728 *The Four Seasons* were often heard at the Concert Spirituel; the *Mercure de France* reported that on 25 November 1730 the king commanded an impromptu performance of *La primavera*, for which a scratch orchestra containing several nobles was assembled.¹⁵ Such was the vogue for this particular concerto that it was subjected to many arrangements, of which the most extraordinary were a motet, *Laudate Dominum de coelis*, by Michel Corrette (1765) and a version for unaccompanied flute by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1775).

Three serenatas were written by Vivaldi during the 1720s in honour of the French royal house. A work of which the title-page (and perforce the title) is lost, but which is generally known by the names of its two allegorical characters, Gloria and Imeneo (Hymen), commemorates Louis XV's wedding on 5 September 1725 to the Polish princess Maria Leszczyńska.* *L'unione della Pace e di Marte*, of which only the libretto survives, celebrates the birth of royal twins, 'Mesdames de France', on 14 August 1727; it may have formed part of the festivities on 19 September at the residence of Count Languet de Gergy, Ambassador to Venice, about which the *Mercure de France* reported that towards eight o'clock in the evening there was 'a very beautiful concert of instrumental music lasting nearly two hours, whose music, as well as that of the *Te Deum*, was by the famous Vivaldi'.¹⁶ The event for

¹⁴ In addition to *Le quattro stagioni*, op. 8 contains works entitled *La tempesta di mare* (The Storm at Sea) and *La caccia* (The Hunt).

¹⁵ December 1730, p. 2758.

¹⁶ October 1727, p. 2327.

which the grandest of the serenatas, *La Senna festeggiante* (The Seine Rejoicing), was composed has not yet been established. Lalli's libretto pays homage in a very general way to the young monarch Louis XV. At all events, the work can date from no earlier than 1724, for its final chorus is a slightly lengthened arrangement, to new words, of the final chorus in *Giustino*. A suggestion by Roland de Candé that the serenata commemorates the birth of the dauphin on 4 September 1729 must be ruled out:¹⁷ first, because the libretto refers to the king's *sons* (in the hypothetical context of the future), when a single living son would surely have been alluded to more concretely; secondly, because Albinoni provided a serenata (*Il concilio de' pianeti*) for that occasion, which, after its première at the ambassador's residence, was repeated with success at the French court. There are hints in Vivaldi's score that *La Senna festeggiante* was intended for a performance which he knew he would not be able to supervise – possibly, therefore, one outside Venice. The rubric '2 hautbois (flauti) o più se piace' at the head of the first chorus implies that he anticipated the doubling of wind parts (a French rather than Venetian practice), while the choral chaconne borrowed from *Giustino* has its tenor part marked as optional, indicating that Vivaldi was uncertain of the vocal forces available.¹⁸ Although he often adopted elements of the French style for the sake of variety, their quite exceptional prominence in *La Senna festeggiante* (which even boasts a French overture to its second part) strongly suggests that, unlike the other serenatas, it was aimed at a French audience.*

During the Carnival seasons (with preceding Autumn) of 1726, 1727 and 1728 Vivaldi once more stood at the helm of the S. Angelo theatre. *L'inganno trionfante in amore*, on a libretto adapted from Matteo Noris's original by G.M. Ruggieri, a Veronese musical and literary dilettante whom we shall encounter again when examining Vivaldi's church music, occupied Autumn 1725. Two of the Carnival works were also Vivaldi's: *Cunegonda* and *La fede tradita e vendicata*. In 1726–7 *Dorilla in Tempe* (Autumn) and *Farnace* (Carnival) were staged.¹⁹ Vivaldi even found time to write *Ipermestra* for Florence. Antonio Conti reported to Mme de Caylus on 23 February

¹⁷ Vivaldi (Paris, 1967), p. 75n.

¹⁸ Peter Ryom, *Les manuscrits de Vivaldi* (Copenhagen, 1977), points out that, to judge from its almost identical text in the libretto, the lost final number of *La verità in cimento* may well have been the first incarnation of this movement. If so, 1720 and not 1724 is the *terminus post quem* of *La Senna festeggiante*.

¹⁹ The date of 1726 on the title-page of the libretto to *Farnace* is *more veneto*.

A T T O R I.

Farnace Re di Ponto.

La Sig. Maria Maddalena Pieri. Virtuosa del Seren. Duca di Modona.

Berenice Regina di Cappadocia Madre di Tamiri.

La Sig. Angela Capuano Romana detta la Capuanina.

Tamiri, Regina Sposa di Farnace.

La Sig. Anna Girò.

Selinda Sorella di Farnace.

La Sig. Lucrezia Baldini.

Pompeo Pro-Console Romano nell'Asia.

Il Sig. Lorenzo Moretti.

Gilade Principe del Sangue Reale, e Capitano di Berenice.

Il Sig. Filippo Finazzi.

Aquilio Prefetto delle Legioni Romane.

Il Sig. Domenico Gioseppe Galletti.

Un Fanciullo Figlio di Farnace, e Tamiri.

Il Luogo dell'Azione in Eraclea.
Cori di Soldati Romani, e Asiatici.

La Musica è del celebre Sig. D. Antonio Vivaldi Maestro di Cappella di S. A. S. il Signor Principe Filippo Langravio d' Haffia Darmstath.

Li Balli sono invenzioni del Sig. Giovanni Galletto.

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Cast-list from the libretto of *Farnace* (Carnival 1727)

1727: 'Vivaldi has composed three operas in less than five months, two for Venice and the third for Florence; the last of these has restored the reputation of the theatre of that city and earned him a lot of

money.’²⁰ Vivaldi’s position at S. Angelo is made clear in a contract, dated 13 October 1726, drawn up privately between himself and the singer Lucrezia Baldini, in which he is named as ‘direttore delle opere’.²¹ The contract contains some interesting details: the singer was to appear in the third and last opera (*Farnace*) of the season and was to be paid 200 ducats in three instalments – the first just before the opera opened, the second halfway through its run, and the third on the last Thursday before Lent. For the following season Vivaldi provided *Orlando furioso* (Autumn),²² using a slightly altered version of Braccioli’s libretto for Ristori, and *Rosilena ed Oronta* (Carnival). With these two works his second period of intense activity at S. Angelo abruptly closes.

Vivaldi’s standing as an operatic composer had reached, and would soon pass, its high point. At the time when he started to compose works for the Venetian stage the dominant figures were all natives or at the very least residents of that city – men like Albinoni, Gasparini, Lotti, Caldara and the two Pollarolos. While it would be an exaggeration to speak of a Venetian ‘school’, one can with justice point to a regional style. Now a degree of cosmopolitanism had arrived, and a younger generation of composers, mostly Neapolitan (Leo, Vinci, Porpora) or Naples-influenced (Hasse), was coming to the fore, borne aloft by the new lyricism of Metastasian verse. Among younger Venetian composers only Baldassarre Galuppi (1706–85) could still count as a front-runner. True, Venice did not wholly desert her favourite sons, Albinoni and Vivaldi, and a trickle of operas, new or refurbished, by both men continued to reach the stage in the smaller theatres for several years, but both found difficulties in updating their style to conform with current fashion. In general, their greatest successes after 1728 were to be enjoyed in northern Europe or the Italian provinces, where audiences were more conservative or simply less fashion-conscious. From now on, Vivaldi was to pay increasing attention to the promotion of his operas outside Venice. In Spring 1727 *Siroe, re di Persia*, his first setting of a Metastasio libretto, was staged in Reggio Emilia; *Atenaide* received its première in Florence during Carnival 1729, while *Ottone in villa* was performed in Treviso (Autumn 1728) and *Farnace* in Livorno (Summer 1729).

In the late 1720s Vivaldi came into close contact with the Austrian emperor Charles VI and at some point visited Vienna, if his affirmation

²⁰ Op. cit., p. 10; inexactly quoted in Pincherle, *Antonio Vivaldi et la musique instrumentale*, vol. i, p. 22f.

²¹ Reproduced from the original in ASV in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 193.

²² The title is shortened to *Orlando* in the libretto, but not in the autograph score.

to Bentivoglio: 'Sono stato chiamato a Vienna' (letter of 16 November 1737) is to be believed. The first sign appears in the dedication to Charles (curiously, without a letter of dedication) of his op. 9, 12 concertos entitled *La cetra* (The Lyre). The set was advertised in the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* of 31 January 1727 as soon to appear, and its publication was announced in the issue of 28 November. The dedication was evidently well received, for on the occasion of Charles's visit to Carniola, during which he inspected the port of Trieste, Vivaldi was received by the emperor and treated very handsomely. In the words of Antonio Conti (letter of 19 September 1728): 'The emperor has given Vivaldi much money, together with a golden chain and medal; and tell him [the son of Mme de Caylus] that he has made him a knight.' And again (letter of 23 September): 'The emperor conversed with Vivaldi for a long time about music, and people say that he spoke more to him in private in two weeks than he speaks to his ministers in two years'.²³ It may have been this meeting which prompted Vivaldi to dedicate and present to the emperor a second, this time manuscript, set of violin concertos entitled *La cetra* and dated 1728 in the autograph parts (lacking only the solo part) preserved in the Austrian National Library.²⁴ Until recently scholars generally presumed the manuscript *La cetra* to be the same as the published set of that name, but in reality only one work (RV 391) is common to them. Nothing more is known for certain about Vivaldi's links with the Viennese court, except that a serenata, *Le gare della Giustizia e della Pace*, was performed for Charles's name-day in Venice; the year is not recorded.

La cetra was quickly followed by a set of six concertos, op. 10 (c 1728), for flute and strings, almost the first for that combination ever published. (They were not quite the first published concertos to include flute, however, as Boismortier's *Six concerts pour cinq flûtes traversières sans basse*, op. 15, had appeared in Paris in 1727; in the same year Robert Woodcock assigned three of his 12 concertos to a transverse flute.) Twelve violin concertos, opp. 11 and 12 (really two volumes of a single opus), came out in 1729. Like opp. 6 and 7, these three new collections included no dedication, and like opp. 8 and 9, they were said in the imprint to be published at Le Cène's expense.

The visit to Bohemia, already mentioned in connection with G.B. Vivaldi's application for leave, probably began shortly before Anna Girò's appearance in Hasse's *Dalisa* (Ascension 1730). Between 1724

²³ Op. cit., pp 142f, 144; quoted in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 233.

²⁴ Cod. 15996.

and 1734 a Venetian troupe led by Antonio Denzio mounted a total of 57 operas (discounting intermezzos) at the theatre of Count Franz Anton von Sporck in Prague.²⁵ Already, Denzio had used arias by Vivaldi (including several from *La costanza trionfante*) in *La tirannia castigata* (Carnival 1726), for which Antonio Guerra wrote the recitatives.

Vivaldi probably reached Prague in time for the revival of his popular *Farnace* (Spring 1730). Having familiarized himself with conditions in Prague, he proceeded to compose a new opera, *Argippo* (Autumn 1730), and write arias for *Alvilda, regina de' Goti* (Spring 1731). It is less likely that he was present for the revivals of *La costanza trionfante* (as *Doriclea*, Carnival 1732) and *Dorilla in Tempe* (Spring 1732).

The evidence for Vivaldi's residence in Bohemia is circumstantial. The fact that *La costanza trionfante*, retitled *L'odio vinto dalla costanza*, was staged at S. Angelo during Carnival 1731 with its music arranged by A. Galeazzi bespeaks Vivaldi's absence from Venice, for we know from his later Ferrara projects that he was extremely jealous of the privilege of arranging his music. A stronger hint is provided by the autograph scores of two trios for lute, violin and bass and one concerto for lute, two violins and bass, all from the Turin collection.²⁶ They are written on an unusual paper of central-European provenance, and each has on its opening page the following superscription: 'Per Sua Eccellenza Signor Conte Wrttbij' (abbreviations spelt out). This nobleman can be identified (not with certainty, as his family had several branches) with Count Johann Joseph von Wrtby (1669–1734), who held some of the highest offices in Bohemia, including those of royal governor, president of the Court of Appeal and hereditary treasurer, Wrtby was a regular visitor to the Prague opera, and his collection of librettos, which passed first to the Křimice branch of his own family, then to the Lobkowitzes, and latterly to the National Museum in Prague, includes several in which the count recorded how well the opera had been received. *Farnace*, for instance, earned 'great approbation', and *Argippo* 'very great approbation'.²⁷ A meeting with Wrtby in Prague could explain both the commission (perhaps for six trios, as the surviving pair are numbered 2 and 5) and the unusual paper of the scores.*

²⁵ The best account of the activity and repertoire of Denzio's company is in Pravoslav Kneidl, 'Libreria italské opery v Praze v 18. století', *Strahovská knihovna*, vol. i (1966), pp. 97–131.

²⁶ RV 82 (Foà 40, ff. 6–9), RV 85 (Foà 40, ff. 2–5) and RV 93/P.209 (Giordano 35, ff. 297–301).

²⁷ Kneidl, op. cit., p. 114f.

Vivaldi

By Carnival 1732 Vivaldi was probably back in Italy. He was asked, in place of Orlandini, the original choice, to compose the music for Scipione Maffei's *La fida ninfa*, an opera written by this celebrated savant to inaugurate Verona's Teatro Filarmonico (6 January 1732). His *Semiramide* was given during the same season at nearby Mantua.

He was certainly in Venice on 13 February 1733, when Edward Holdsworth met him. One gathers that Charles Jennens, for whom Holdsworth was ceaselessly carrying out 'commissions' during his visits to Italy, had asked his literary friend to seek out Vivaldi and explore the possibility of buying works from him. It is obvious that Jennens greatly admired Vivaldi's music, for in the sale catalogue of Puttick & Simpson for 25 August 1873, when part of the musical library of the Earl of Aylesford (to whose family Jennens had bequeathed his collection) was put on auction, we find all the published sets except op. 5. Holdsworth writes:

I had this day some discourse with your friend Vivaldi who told me that he had resolved not to publish any more concertos, because he says it prevents his selling his compositions in MSS which he thinks will turn more to account; as certainly it would if he finds a good market for he expects a guinea for every piece. Perhaps you might deal with him if you were here to choose what you like, but I am sure I shall not venture to choose for you at that price. I had before been informed by others that this was Vivaldi's resolution. I suppose you already know that he has published 17 concertos.

Jennens took the reference to '17 concertos' to mean that number of *sets* of concertos or sonatas, and in his reply, alas lost, seems to have disputed the figure. Hence another interesting passage in a letter Holdsworth sent him on 16 July 1733 from Antwerp:

Monsieur La [sic] Cene who has published Vivaldi's and Albinoni's works assured me that if you have 12 of Vivaldi's op. [sic] and 9 of Albinoni, you have all. Let Vivaldi, he says, reckon as he pleases. He has published no more than 12, and must count several of them double to make up the number 17, which piece of vanity suits very well with his character.

Vivaldi was undoubtedly vain, but on this occasion there was a grain of sense in his calculation, if he meant to count double those five sets of concertos divided into two *libri*.

In 1733–4 he returned to S. Angelo. *Motezuma* (Autumn) was followed by *L'Olimpiade* and a revived *Dorilla in Tempe*. The following year it was the turn of Verona with *L'Adelaide* and *Bajazet* (or *Tamerlano*), a pasticcio including arias by G. Giacomelli and Hasse.

Later in 1735 Vivaldi came back to the Venetian stage. Let Goldoni take up the story:²⁸

His Excellency Grimani was accustomed to have an *opera seria* performed at the same theatre [S. Samuele] during the Ascensiontide fair. Normally, old librettos were used, and these always needed to be altered in part, either because the composer required it or to suit the whims of the singers. So for this purpose, as well as that of directing and coaching the actors [i.e. singers], it was necessary to have a poet capable of writing new aria texts and possessing some knowledge of the theatre. [There follows a description of how Domenico Lalli, Grimani's manager, used to delegate this work to Goldoni, and some introductory remarks (to which reference has been made earlier) concerning Vivaldi and Anna Girò]. Vivaldi badly needed a poet to adapt, or rather to hash up, the drama to his taste, so that he could include for better or for worse the arias which his pupil had sung on other occasions, and I, charged with this task, presented myself to the composer on the instructions of my noble patron. He received me rather coldly. He took me for a novice, quite correctly, and finding me ill versed in the science of mutilating dramas, made obvious his great desire to send me away. He knew of the applause which had greeted my *Bellisario* and the success of my intermezzos, but he deemed the task of hashing up a drama a difficult one, which required a special talent. Then I remembered those *rules* which had driven me mad at Milan, when I read my *Amalasunta*, and I too wanted to depart, but my position, my reluctance to disappoint His Excellency Grimani, and my hope of assuming the directorship of the magnificent theatre of S. Giovanni Grisostomo [also owned by Grimani] made me conceal my feelings and almost beg the *Prete Rosso* to try me out. He looked at me with a compassionate smile and picked up a libretto. 'Here you are', he said; 'this is the drama to be adapted: Apostolo Zeno's *Griselda*. The opera (he went on) is very fine; the part of the leading lady could not be better; but certain changes are needed ... If you, Sir, knew the rules ... Enough – how could you know them? You see here, for instance, after this tender scene, there is a *cantabile* aria; but as Miss Annina does not ... does not ... does not like this kind of aria (that is, she could not sing it) we need here an aria of action ... to express passion without being pathetic or *cantabile*.'

'I see', I replied, 'I see. I will attempt to satisfy you: please give me the libretto.'

'But I need it', Vivaldi resumed; 'I have not finished the recitatives; when will you return it?'

'Straight away', I say; 'please give me a piece of paper and an inkwell ...'

²⁸ *Commedie*, vol. xiii, pp. 10ff.

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‘What? You think, Sir, that an aria in an opera is like one in an intermezzo!’

I became a little angry, and cheekily replied: ‘Let me have the ink-well’; and I took a letter from my pocket, from which I tore a piece of white paper.

‘Do not take offence’, he said gently; ‘please – sit down here at this desk: here is the paper, the ink-well and the libretto; take your time;’ and he returns to his study and begins to recite from his breviary. Then I read the scene carefully; I size up the feeling of the *cantabile* aria, and write one expressing action, passion and movement. I bring it and show it to him; he holds the breviary in his right hand, my sheet in his left hand, and he reads softly; having finished reading, he throws the breviary in a corner, gets up, embraces me, rushes to the door, and calls Miss Annina. Miss Annina comes with her sister Paolina; he reads them the aria, shouting loudly: ‘He did it *here*, he did it *here*, *here* he did it!’ Again he embraces me and congratulates me, and I became his dear friend, his poet and his confidant; and from then on he never forsook me. I went on to murder Zeno’s drama as much as, and in whatever way, he wanted. The opera was performed and met with success.

The pen-portrait emerging from this account is not a wholly unsympathetic one. Note how meagrely Vivaldi’s breviary figures in it, compared with Goldoni’s later and better-known account of the meeting. At any rate, the two men liked one another enough to collaborate (as Lotavio Vandini and Grolo Candido) on the ‘heroic-comic’ opera *Aristide*, performed at S. Samuele in the following Autumn.*

We must now return to the Pietà, where on 5 August 1735 Vivaldi was once again engaged as *Maestro de’ Concerti*, his salary 100 ducats as before.²⁹ Composing, teaching and rehearsal were to be his duties. The appointment followed a report of 3 August, quoted in part by Pincherle, which stated that Vivaldi intended to remain in Venice ‘without any more thought of leaving, as he had done in past years’.³⁰ One might as well ask a bird to remain in its nest.

The years 1737–9 are dominated by Vivaldi’s three attempts, all unsuccessful in different ways, to mount a season of opera at Ferrara. Our information comes from his surviving correspondence with the Marquis Guido Bentivoglio d’Aragona, which comprises 19 letters, 13 from Vivaldi and copies of six from the marquis, to which one may add some letters to Bentivoglio from other persons concerned in the

²⁹ ASV, Osp., Busta 692 (Q), f. 113; transcribed in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 378f.

³⁰ *Antonio Vivaldi et la musique instrumentale*, vol. i, p. 24: ‘senza idea di più partire, come ha praticato negli anni passati.’

operatic projects. Eleven of the letters are preserved in the Ferrara State Archives, the others mostly being in private ownership. To quote at length from this voluminous correspondence would be impossible here, so the content of each letter will be summarized.³¹

28 October 1736. Bentivoglio, replying to Vivaldi's proposal, in a letter (lost) of 20 October, to organize an operatic season at Ferrara in the coming Winter, informs the composer that the Abbé Bollani, impresario of the Ferrara opera, has come to Venice to discuss the project with him.

3 November 1736. Thanking Bentivoglio for keeping a promise made (when?) in Rome to act as his patron, Vivaldi reports a successful meeting with Bollani. He has assembled a strong team of singers. Although he has just turned down an invitation to write the third opera of the season at S. Cassiano for 90 sequins, demanding his normal fee of 100 sequins, he will be able to let Ferrara have two operas specially arranged by him for six sequins – what it costs to have them copied – apiece. His responsibilities at S. Cassiano prevent him from coming in person to Ferrara, except, possibly, at the very end of the season. Anna Girò, who will be singing at Ferrara, offers her respects.

24 November 1736. After mentioning a point at issue in the contract of one singer (La Mancini), Vivaldi reports that he has had to rewrite the recitatives of *Demetrio* (identifiable as Hasse's opera performed at S. Giovanni Grisostomo in 1732) and provide some arias of his own. The first act is already in rehearsal at Venice.

26 December 1736. Vivaldi expresses hope that *Demetrio* has opened successfully. He is sending on the first act of another opera, ready for copying into parts. He proposes to alter a few lines of the libretto, which he is submitting for the marquis's approval, rather than trouble the impresario (Bollani), who might take exception. Vivaldi disparages the incumbent impresarios of S. Cassiano, S. Angelo, Brescia and Ferrara, describing them as 'di poca prattica' (is their common fault to have obstructed his plans?). He finally asks Bentivoglio (obviously angling for a commission) whether he still enjoys playing the mandolin.

³¹ See Giazotto, op. cit., *passim*, for a complete series of transcriptions and information on sources.

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29 December 1736. Vivaldi brings to the marquis's attention a matter which he had earlier wished to conceal. He reveals that it was originally agreed with Bollani that the two operas should be *Ginevra* and *L'Olimpiade* (his own operas of 1736 for Florence and 1734 for Venice). Having revised *Ginevra*, Vivaldi was suddenly informed by Bollani that the patrons of the Ferrara opera wished instead to have *Demetrio*. He obtained the score from the impresario Grimani, and, seeing that five out of six vocal parts needed re-shaping, composed new recitatives. Grimani made him pay for the copying of parts, which resulted in an unforeseen expense of 20 *lire*. As Bollani was pressing him to have *L'Olimpiade* ready, Vivaldi, having greatly altered the original (he made a fine art of this kind of conversion), took it upon himself to start having parts copied. Then Bollani informed him that in place of *L'Olimpiade*, *Alessandro nell'Indie* (probably also Hasse's setting) was now wanted, and had the temerity to suggest that Grimani send the score in his possession to Ferrara – something no impresario would agree to. So Vivaldi has had to assume the cost of copying, another six sequins. Bollani therefore owes him six sequins and 20 *lire*. Vivaldi ends by bemoaning the impresario's incompetence. (One cannot altogether discount his pique at having his own scores rejected in favour of Hasse's).

30 December 1736. Bentivoglio, who has not yet received Vivaldi's letter of the day before, approves the alterations to *Alessandro*, and agrees that Bollani is inexperienced. He confesses, pointedly, that he takes his mandolin out only once a year, or even less often.

2 January 1737. Vivaldi reports sending off the final act of *Alessandro*. He asks Bentivoglio to help him obtain the outstanding sum from Bollani. He has heard that *Demetrio* is thought overlong, and agrees that an opera lasting four hours is unsuitable for Ferrara. It was his intention to cut the recitatives, but Lanzetti (Bollani's underling) stopped him. He reports that S. Cassiano is being managed very badly, tickets being overpriced, for which reason he has turned down a commission worth 100 sequins for a new opera.³² (Lanzetti, who on 9 January had written to Bentivoglio confirming Vivaldi's extra expenses, retracted his account in a further letter of 12 January, complaining

³² No opera by Vivaldi, discounting his posthumous contribution to the pasticcio *Ernelinda* (1750), is known to have been composed for S. Cassiano.

that Vivaldi, who had exaggerated these expenses, had forced him by threats to write the first letter.)

17 March 1737. In a cool letter, which almost seems to suggest that Bentivoglio suffers Vivaldi for the sake of his female companions, the marquis expresses his desire to show his appreciation of the Girò sisters. Vivaldi will be welcome in Ferrara, but should not put himself out...

3 May 1737. Vivaldi writes excitedly from Verona, where his new opera (*Catone in Utica*) is enjoying great success, having covered its costs after only six performances.³³ A similar opera, with ballets in place of intermezzos, would suit Ferrara excellently – not during Carnival, when the ballets alone would cost 700 *louis*, but in the Summer, when they can be had for a knockdown price. He boasts of being an independent entrepreneur, capable of meeting costs from his own pocket without taking loans, and invites Bentivoglio to ask him to Ferrara that Autumn.

5 May 1737. Bentivoglio expresses pleasure at Vivaldi's success, but advises him against taking the opera to Ferrara in the Autumn, when he will be away.

6 November 1737. In the meantime, Bentivoglio has given Vivaldi his blessing for an opera in the following Carnival. Vivaldi is having trouble with Coluzzi, a dancer under contract with him, who has eloped with another dancer, Angelo Pompeati, 'a very bad man by nature and capable of any error or extravagance'.³⁴ Now there is talk of her dancing that Autumn in Venice, which will allow her less than the 16 or 18 days needed to rehearse a ballet. He begs Bentivoglio to write to the wife of the procurator Foscarini in order to compel Coluzzi to be in Ferrara by 2 December. He will travel up towards the 15th (of November).

13 November 1737. Vivaldi thanks Bentivoglio for his intercession and continuing help in the Coluzzi affair. Whenever Coluzzi shows up, the

³³ It was this opera which so delighted Charles Albert, Elector of Bavaria, and his wife on 26 March 1737. See Pincherle, *Antonio Vivaldi et la musique instrumentale*, vol. i, p. 24.

³⁴ Pompeati later became a dancing master and teacher of Italian, instructing the young Dittersdorf in both arts. Vivaldi evidently forgave him by 1739, when he choreographed the ballets in *Feraspe*.

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opera will open on time, on 26 December. God willing, he is leaving for Ferrara on Monday.

16 November 1737. God, or rather one of his earthly representatives, is not willing! A distraught Vivaldi reports that the papal nuncio (in Venice) has just informed him that Tomaso Ruffo, Cardinal of Ferrara, will not allow him to enter Ferrara, citing his refusal to say Mass and his friendship with Anna Girò.³⁵ Contracts worth 6000 ducats, of which more than a third has been paid out, are jeopardized. It is unthinkable to put on the opera without Girò, whose talents are unique, or without him, since he cannot entrust so large a sum to other hands. Besides, the allegations are unfounded.

Then follows the *apologia pro vita sua*, to which reference has been made earlier. Where Vivaldi is not wallowing in self-pity, he tries to pull rank with statements like: 'I have the honour to correspond with nine high princes, and my letters travel all over Europe'. He ends by asking Bentivoglio to use his good offices with Ruffo. If Ruffo still will not let him in, at least the opera should be prohibited, so as to release him from his contracts!

20 November 1737. Bentivoglio replies that Ruffo is immovable in his resolution to forbid Vivaldi's presence as impresario. Nor can he prohibit the opera, for no good reason can be cited, especially as comedies will also be playing during Carnival. The marquis advises Vivaldi to put the opera in the hands of Picchi, a local impresario. He politely reproves Vivaldi for having sent Bollani to plead with Ruffo, for priests are the last people His Eminence likes to see mixed up with opera.

23 November 1737. Vivaldi resigns himself to handing over the opera to Picchi. Continuing his self-defence, he pleads that he never demeans himself by standing at the door of the opera house (? to sell tickets) like a common impresario, nor does he play in the orchestra like a common violinist, except on the first night. Defending himself against the charge of cohabiting with Anna Girò, he cannot forbear to mention that his house costs 200 ducats to rent.

30 November 1737. Picchi is evidently driving a hard bargain. Conscious

³⁵ Ruffo (1664–1753) had a reputation for strictness, and in 1738 actually issued an edict forbidding the clergy under his jurisdiction to take part in the Carnival festivities. See Giazotto, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

of the weakness of his position, Vivaldi begs Bentivoglio to back him up.

Our sympathy for Vivaldi lessens a little when we learn that he had by no means put all his eggs in one basket. He contributed a richly scored concerto to the centenary celebrations of Amsterdam's Schouwburg theatre (RV 562a) in January 1738.* Moreover, he evidently took up the reins of S. Angelo once more, providing for Carnival one new opera, *L'oracolo in Messenia*, one revised opera, *Armida al campo d'Egitto*, and the pasticcio *Rosmira*. But let us pick up the threads of the Bentivoglio correspondence again:

2 January 1739. Vivaldi is writing in great distress, having heard about the reception of his *Siroe* in Ferrara, which has been so bad that the management are refusing to follow it with his specially revised *Farnace*, in defiance of contract. His recitatives have been declared miserable – an accusation that he, with 94 operas to his credit, will not stand for. The real villain is the first harpsichordist Pietro Antonio Berretta (*Maestro di Cappella* at Ferrara cathedral), who, finding the recitatives difficult, has tampered with them. Add to that his bad playing, and the result is bound to be dreadful. These are the same recitatives performed with great success at Ancona (Summer 1738), and which went well in rehearsal at Venice. In the original score no notes or figures have been struck out or erased: Berretta's alterations will therefore be identifiable. Imploring Bentivoglio to protect his threatened reputation, Vivaldi blames his misfortune on his absence from Ferrara.

7 January 1739. Bentivoglio commiserates, but writes that he is unwilling to become embroiled.

Ferrara had had enough of Vivaldi's operas, but Venice remained indulgent. *Feraspe* was heard at S. Angelo in Autumn 1739. A *faccio fede* for *Tito Manlio* dated 27 January 1739 (? *more veneto*) reported by Giazotto must refer to a projected but unrealized performance.³⁶

The Pietà, too, still kept him in the public eye. When Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria, Charles Albert's brother, visited Venice around Carnival 1738, he possibly heard there a performance of Vivaldi's 'piscatorial eclogue' *Il Mopso* (probably a kind of serenata), which he greatly admired. Lacking a *Maestro di Coro* at the time, the Pietà

³⁶ Op. cit., p. 310.

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commissioned from Vivaldi a sizable group of vocal compositions (psalms, votive antiphons, a *Magnificat* and motets) in early 1739. When Frederick Christian, Prince-Elector of Saxony, paid a state visit to Venice in 1740, three of the conservatories feted him with music. The Pietà led off, on 21 March 1740, with a serenata, *Il coro delle muse*, for which Vivaldi wrote a sinfonia (RV 149) and three concertos, all exploiting unusual combinations of instruments (RV 540/P.266, RV 552/P.222 and RV 558/P.16). (A division of labour where one composer wrote the vocal music and another the instrumental music (overture, entr'actes, etc.) to the same work was very common at the time, corresponding to the respective composers' terms of employment; even ostensibly independent works like Corelli's *concerti grossi* often originated as parts of a greater whole.)

There is no doubt, however, that Vivaldi's opportunities in Venice were drying up. The point is made in de Brosses's much-quoted letter of 29 August 1739, where one reads:³⁷

Vivaldi has made himself one of my intimate friends in order to sell me some concertos at a very high price. In this he partly succeeded, as did I in my intention, which was to hear him play and have good musical recreation frequently. He is an old man with a mania for composing. I have heard him boast of composing a concerto in all its parts more quickly than a copyist could write them down. To my great astonishment, I have found that he is not as well regarded as he deserves in these parts, where everything has to be fashionable, where his works have been heard for too long, and where last year's music no longer brings in revenue.

The reason why Vivaldi, now aged 62, ventured on a final journey in 1740 remains mysterious. Since Vienna was his destination, one might guess that he had been invited by Charles VI, who died in October 1740. Alternatively, his original destination might have been different, and his decision to make for Vienna a result of the accession of Empress Maria Theresa's consort Francis Stephen, Duke of Lorraine (and latterly Grand Duke of Tuscany), since in opera librettos from 1735 onwards Vivaldi had styled himself *Maestro di Cappella* of the duke, proof of some form of association. We first get wind of his imminent departure in a resolution debated by the Pietà's governors on 29 April 1740:³⁸

³⁷ Op. cit., vol. i, p. 193.

³⁸ *ASV, Osp.*, Busta 692 (R), ff. 78v-79r; reproduced in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 257. The date of 29 August given in Salvatori, op. cit., p. 341, and accepted by many later writers including Pincherle, is thus incorrect.

It has been brought to our attention that our orchestra needs concertos for organ and other instruments to maintain its present reputation. Having heard also that Reverend Vivaldi is about to leave this capital city and has a certain quantity of concertos ready for sale, we shall be obliged to buy them, therefore:

It is moved that the Officers in charge of the Chapel and of Music be empowered to buy these from our funds as they see fit at the rate of one sequin each, in accordance with normal practice.

abstentions.....	3	}	indecisive
against	3		
for	4		

Although the balance tilted slightly against Vivaldi on a fresh vote, the governors eventually relented, for on 12 May he was paid 70 ducats and 23 *grossi* for 20 concertos.³⁹

We then lose track of him for over a year. His presence in Vienna on 28 June 1741 is attested by an autograph receipt for the sale of an unspecified number of compositions to Antonio Vinciguerra, Count Collalto, a nobleman of Venetian origin whose main residence was at Brtnice in south-west Moravia.⁴⁰

Death overtook the composer a month later. When he breathed his last, on Thursday 27 July 1741, he was living in the house of the widow of a saddler named Waller (or Wahler), hence its description in the necrology as ‘saddler’s house’ (*Satlerisches Haus*).⁴¹ This house, demolished to make way for the new Ringstrasse in 1858, stood at the end of the Kärntner Strasse nearer the Kärntner Tor (Gate of Carinthia). The cause of death was stated to be an internal inflammation (*innerlicher Brand*). Later that day Vivaldi was unceremoniously buried in the Hospital Cemetery (*Spitaler Gottesacker*), which also no longer exists. His funeral was accompanied by a *Kleingeläut* (small peal of bells), and the expenses, which totalled 19 florins and 45 kreutzers, were kept to the minimum. If Mozart’s burial 50 years later was that of a pauper, Vivaldi’s deserves that sad epithet equally. His straitened circumstances are confirmed by a brief report in the *Commemoriali Gradenigo* that ‘the Abbé Don Antonio Vivaldi, known as the *Prete Rosso*, an excellent performer on the violin and a much admired

³⁹ ASV, Osp., Reg. 1009, f. 541. The same payment is recorded as the equivalent sum of 44 *lire* (or 20 sequins) in another account book (Busta 704, Scontro 3, opening 41).

⁴⁰ The compositions may be among the 16 recorded in an inventory of the Collalto collection preserved in Brno, Moravské Muzeum.

⁴¹ Vienna, Parish of St Stephen, necrology, vol. xxiii, f. 63. See Gallo, op. cit., and Hedy Pabisch, ‘Neue Dokumente zu Vivaldis Sterbetag’, *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, vol. xxvii (1972), pp. 82–3.

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composer of concertos, once earned over 50,000 ducats (? annually), but through excessive prodigality died a pauper in Vienna.^{42*}

There are two, possibly three, portraits of Vivaldi still surviving, one of which was much copied during the eighteenth century and exists in several variants. This 'Effigies Antonii Vivaldi' was an engraving made by François Morellon La Cave (a Frenchman resident in Amsterdam) in 1725. The composer is shown full-face, holding up a sheet of music over a table on which an ink-well stands. His expression is a little sanctimonious and, as Pincherle says, ovine (though the shape and texture of his wig contribute to this impression). Ghezzi's ink sketch (Rome, 1723) shows the head and shoulders in profile, lightly accentuating the nostrility of his nose and the pugnacious thrust of his chin. Lastly, there is an anonymous portrait in oils of an unnamed violinist in the Liceo Musicale of Bologna, which was identified as that of Vivaldi by Francesco Vatielli on account of its similarity to other portraits and the hint of red hair showing at the edge of the blond wig. Indeed, it has so many features in common with La Cave's engraving (Vivaldi's gown, his chemise, the ink-well and paper, the proportions of his face) that it might well have served as its model. If La Cave's engraving stresses self-satisfaction, and Ghezzi's caricature avidity, the oil portrait gives Vivaldi's face a sweet, almost angelic cast.*

The character revealed by what details we possess of the composer's life is complex, and – like those of Lully and Wagner, two other composers famous for their entrepreneurial zest – not always sympathetic. Vivaldi's ailment, which restricted his movements, must be held to account for many traits. Was it not to compensate for physical immobility that he played at such breakneck speed, wrote down his music in a tearing hurry (in many original drafts he begins by writing neatly, but in his impulsiveness allows his hand to degenerate into a scrawl), and allowed himself to be transported in a carriage back and forth across Europe? Did he not compensate for his physical dependence on others by stubbornly refusing to delegate matters concerning his career to collaborators, even at the cost of overstretching his capacity to keep a grip on events? Was not the inferiority complex to which invalids are susceptible inverted to become a superiority complex – a megalomania, even – making the composer intolerant of all criticism

⁴² Venice, Museo Correr, Ms. Gradenigo 200, ii, f. 36r; reproduced in Giazotto, op. cit., p. 289.

and full of his musical accomplishments and social connections?

This contrast between Vivaldi's knowledge of himself and the face which he wished to present to the world comes out in his music, where frenetic gaiety is found side by side with dreamy withdrawal or brooding introspection. The melancholy repetitiveness of a movement such as the Largo of op. 4 no. 9 (RV 284), suggestive of great loneliness, is paralleled in its period only in the music of Zelenka, whose service at Dresden was marked by deep frustration.

One cannot so easily explain Vivaldi's obsession with money and, more generally, with quantification of all kinds. Even when inflating his statistics, he seldom uses round figures.

Vivaldi's religiosity seems, superficially at least, to be confirmed by the famous motto standing at the head of many of his longer scores: L.D.B.M.D.A. As this motto is usually presented as a monogram, the letters superimposed on one another, its elucidation has escaped many commentators, who preferred to see in it the initials of Vivaldi's name; but since the letters are spelled out consecutively in the scores of *Bajazet*, *L'Olimpiade* and *Teuzzone*, their identity cannot be questioned. Reinhard Strohm has suggested the expansion of the initials to 'Laus Deo Beataeque Mariae Deiparae Amen', which seems entirely convincing.⁴³ One might liken this motto to the formula 'Adsit scribenti Virgo Beata mihi' found in autograph scores of Benedetto Marcello, himself something of a religious recluse in later life.

Fortunately, Vivaldi did not lack a somewhat rough sense of humour. One remembers the inscription 'per li coglioni', rather too delicately rendered as 'for blockheads', in the finale of the autograph score of the concerto RV 340 dedicated to Pisendel, where Vivaldi had included, no doubt for a copyist's benefit, some bass figures, which, if left in, could be interpreted as a slight on Pisendel's musicality. One also smiles at the exasperated comment written over the score of an aria in *Orlando finto pazzo* intended to replace the one originally composed, probably at the singer's behest: 'Se questa non piace, non voglio più scrivere di musica' (If you don't like this, I'll stop writing music). Some of the descriptive titles of concertos are attractively whimsical – *La disunione*, *Grosso Mogul*, *Il Proteo* – and the intriguingly enigmatic dedication of the concerto RV 574/P.319 to 'S.A.S.I.S.P.G.M.D.G.S.M.B.' must be in jest, satirizing the eighteenth century's fondness for abbreviation.

⁴³ 'Eine neuentdeckte Mantuaner Opernpartitur Vivaldis', *Vivaldi Informations*, vol. ii (1973), p. 105.

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There was kindness, too, in the man. Once his initial suspicions had been overcome, he treated Goldoni with real warmth. Also, one doubts whether the devotion of the Girò sisters was inspired merely by self-interest. Let us not judge Vivaldi's character on the strength of the surviving documentation alone, since this is inevitably weighted towards his business activities, which brought out his less attractive side, but let us rather infer from his music what nobler qualities lay, perhaps latently, in his personality.