
The instrumental music

Vivaldi's music for instruments falls into three broad genres: sonata, concerto and sinfonia. If one takes the catalogue of works in Appendix B as the basis of computation, discounting variants and excluding lost and incompletely preserved works, one arrives at a total of 92 sonatas (including two works with lute entitled 'Trio' and the *Sinfonia al Santo Sepolcro*, which is genetically a sonata),¹ 474 concertos and 14 sinfonias. This count includes some works recognized by many as spurious and – perhaps rather artificially – sinfonias not preserved independently of the larger vocal work to which all, presumably, originally belonged. By and large, I have followed Ryom's system of classification, but a word of warning is needed: Ryom's criteria of authenticity are bibliographical rather than stylistic, which means that provided that at least one original source names Vivaldi as the composer, the attribution is likely to stand regardless of any musical incongruity, unless another composer's name appears in a concordant source whose reliability is thought at least equal. Without doubt, several unauthentic works are listed by Ryom as genuine.² Conversely, one concerto (RV Anh. 91, for violin and cello) is regarded by Ryom as of uncertain authorship despite its evident (to me) genuineness. For statistical purposes, however, I shall treat as genuine all works presented as such in the most recent Ryom catalogue.

The sonatas

The impression gained from the statistics given above that Vivaldi cultivated the sonata merely as a sideline to his production of concertos

¹ Until the beginning of the eighteenth century sonatas of the 'church' variety were often termed 'sinfonia', particularly when scored for many instruments. Manfredini's *Sinfonie da chiesa*, op. 2 (1709), and the six sinfonias (individually entitled 'Sonata') in Albinoni's *Sinfonie concerti a cinque*, op. 2 (1700), fit this description.

² These include the sonatas RV 24, RV 54–59 (*Il pastor fido*) and RV 80, the *Introduzione* (Sinfonia) RV 144/P.145 and the concertos RV 415, 464/P.334, RV 465/P.331 and RV 373/P.335.

may be a little distorted by the vagaries of preservation; it is remarkable that only eight sonatas, none of them for the 'solo' medium, appear in the Turin manuscripts. Most of the sonatas were probably written not singly (like the concertos for the Pietà) but in groups, and were destined not for institutions but for private patrons.

A classification of the extant sonatas by medium and instrumentation produces the following picture:

1 *'Solo' sonatas (one instrument and bass)*³

violin	41
cello	9
flute	4
recorder	1
oboe	1
musette, etc. ⁴	6
TOTAL	62

2 *Trio sonatas (two instruments and bass)*

two violins	20
two flutes	1
two oboes	1
two unlike instruments	5
TOTAL	27

3 *Quartet sonatas (four instrumental lines)*

two violins, viola and bass	2
violin, oboe, obbligato	
organ and chalumeau	1
TOTAL	3

The 12 *Suonate da camera a tre*, op. 1 (1705), in which the cello (*violone*) and harpsichord are designated (following normal practice in chamber sonatas) alternative rather than complementary instruments, may well be the earliest of Vivaldi's works to have survived. Like many juvenile compositions they oscillate between excessive dependence on a model and striking, often clumsy, attempts to break

³ The term 'bass' denotes, according to context, a melody instrument (cello, bassoon, etc.) and/or a harmony instrument (harpsichord, organ, etc.).

⁴ Alternatively vièle (hurdy-gurdy), flute, oboe or violin. These works are now (1992) known to be pastiches by Nicolas Chédeville.

VIOLINO PRIMO.
S V O N A T E
DA CAMERA
A Trè due Violini , e Violone ò Cembalo
CONSCRATE
All' Illustrissimo, & Eccellentissimo Signor Conte
A N N I B A L E
GAMBARA
NOBILE VENETO & c.
Dà D. Antonio Viualdi Musico di Violino
Profesore Veneto
OPERA PRIMA.



IN VENETIA. Da Gioseppe Sala. M. D. CCV.

Si Vendono à S. Gio: Grifostimo All'Insegna del Rè Dauid.

Title page of Sala's edition of Vivaldi's op.1

free. Above all, they show the influence of Corelli, possibly transmitted via the first generation of Venetian imitators (Gentili, Ruggieri, Albinoni). The sequence and stylization of the movements is very Corellian: an abstract movement, generally in slow tempo and entitled

Preludio, introduces a group of dance-movements all in the same key and invariably in binary form. Two or three movements are chosen from the familiar types: *allemanda*, *corrente*, *sarabanda*, *giga* and *gavotta*.⁵ In some of the sonatas one, even two (in the first sonata), abstract movements are interspersed. They are signs of the interpenetration of church and chamber genres (in reality the two had never been sealed off from one another), which one may observe even in the classic models, Corelli's opp. 2 (1685) and 4 (1694). Like many other neo-Corellians, Vivaldi pays the older master tribute by closing the set with a one-movement work consisting of variations on the popular theme *La follia*.⁶

Vivaldi's stylistic debt is evident from the shape of many motives and the presence of certain contrapuntal routines, among them the typically Corellian 'leap-frogging' violins seen in the opening of the first sonata:

Ex. 12
Grave



While many of the more original passages in these sonatas seem arbitrary, there are signs that a powerful personality is emerging. The lyrical triplets in the *Allemanda* of the seventh sonata, the unaccompanied bass at the start of the *Gavotta* of the tenth sonata and the written-out varied reprises in the *Gavotta* of the eleventh sonata are as inventive as they are effective. *La follia* shows Vivaldi, like Liszt and Ravel in later centuries, to be a composer whose imagination is kindled in musically very fruitful ways by the expansion of instrumental technique.

Two further trio sonatas were published as the last works in his

⁵ Since the Italian dance-movements often differ in tempo and rhythmic character from the cognate French movements, the Italian form of the names will be retained.

⁶ Corelli's 'solo' sonatas op. 5 (1700) end with *La follia*. On Vivaldi's indebtedness to Corelli see Michael Talbot, ' "Lingua romana in bocca veneziana": Vivaldi, Corelli and the Roman School', in Pietro Petrobelli and Gloria Staffieri (eds.), *Studi corelliani IV: atti del quarto congresso internazionale (Fusignano, 4-7 settembre 1986)* (Florence, 1990), pp. 303-18.

Vivaldi

op. 5 (1716).⁷ They are mature and fluent, perhaps a little glib. Though not stated to be *sonate da camera* on the title-page, they are on the surface more consistently ‘chamber’ sonatas than many in op. 1, since they contain no abstract movements other than the *preludio*. The dance titles have become rather a formality, however; the spread of binary form to abstract movements, which gathered pace after 1700, and the stylization of the dances, which permitted more variety of tempo and rhythm, meant that practically any binary movement, other than a slow movement in common time, could acquire (or dispense with) a dance title, as circumstances dictated. The last movement of RV 72 (op. 5 no. 6), an ‘Air-Menuet’, demonstrates this ambiguity in its style. By 1716 the trio medium was losing ground to the ‘solo’ medium, which accommodated virtuosity more readily; the subordinate role of the second violin in these two sonatas (especially appropriate in a set largely consisting of works for the ‘solo’ medium) acknowledges this trend.⁸

Vivaldi’s only other extant sonatas for two violins and bass (two possibly unauthentic works apart) are a set of four, which may be remnants of a larger set, in the Turin collection.^{9*} The bass part, a *basso seguente* doubling whichever of the violin parts is lower, is stated by the composer to be optional. It is therefore legitimate to regard the sonatas as violin duos in the style of Leclair’s op. 3 (1730) and Telemann’s *Sonates sans basse* (1727). As Vivaldi’s works for the Pietà seem to have been written individually (so many per month), these sonatas were most likely composed to order, perhaps for a visitor from northern Europe.* All follow the concerto in having three movements (rather than the four or five more usual in the church or composite church-chamber sonata), but the binary form common to all the movements is typical of the sonata in the closing decades of the baroque period. The virtuosic handling and constant interplay of the violins recalls Vivaldi’s double concertos. These fine, unusual works deserve to be better known.

Of the remaining trio sonatas, four are of particular interest: two works for a high and a low instrument with bass, and two trios for lute, violin and bass. Like the sonatas just discussed, RV 86, for recorder and bassoon, and RV 83, for violin and cello, exploit a

⁷ Op. 5 being designated by Roger the ‘second part’ of op. 2, these two sonatas are numbered 17 and 18.

⁸ Not so radically, however, as the six trio sonatas in Michele Mascitti’s op. 4 (1711), where the second violin is marked optional.

⁹ RV 68, 70, 71 and 77.

combination more typical of France than of Italy. They move even closer to the concerto, using a version of ritornello form in their fast movements, though RV 86 preserves the traditional four-movement cycle. The lute trios for Count Wrtby, in contrast, approximate to 'solo' sonatas through having non-obbligato violin parts; much of the time the violin doubles the lute, and elsewhere it either presents the lute line in simplified form (a procedure familiar to *ripieno* violinists in the concerto) or supplies a discreet middle part.

What seem to be the earliest 'solo' sonatas for violin are the 12 in op. 2 (1709). The title-page specifies harpsichord (*cembalo*) as the accompanying instrument, but there is a particularly good case for strengthening the bass line with a cello, for these works, more than any others by Vivaldi, treat the bass contrapuntally, allowing it to take over motives from the violin part or counterpose distinctive material of its own. The idiom is still recognizably Corellian; Pincherle has pointed out the thematic similarity of the *Allemanda* in the fourth sonata (RV 20) and the *Gavotta* of Corelli's tenth sonata.¹⁰ Where Vivaldi is his more expansive self, he exercises far greater control and discretion than in op. 1. He retains the chamber idiom of his earlier opus (corresponding to the second half of Corelli's op. 5) but includes four quick abstract movements, variously entitled *Capriccio*, *Preludio a capriccio* and *Fantasia*, designed to flaunt the virtuoso.

Discounting the first four sonatas in op. 5, whose characteristics are broadly the same as those already described for the trio sonatas in the collection, the next 'cluster' of violin sonatas is a large group preserved in Dresden. It comprises 12 works: four in the composer's hand and dedicated to Pisendel; seven in copies made by Pisendel himself; and one in an unknown hand. Similar works are contained in isolated manuscripts as far a field as Brussels, Stockholm, Udine and Venice.

These sonatas, dating from about 1716, mostly preserve *da camera* outlines, although actual dance titles appear rarely. One very interesting work, RV 25, is laid out as a suite in the French sense of the term, containing seven very short movements, four in G major and three in G minor. Significantly, this is one of the sonatas dedicated to Pisendel; Vivaldi may have thought it appropriate to pay homage to the French style dominant at the Saxon court.¹¹ In contrast, RV 10 and RV 26

¹⁰ Antonio Vivaldi *et la musique instrumentale*, vol. i, p. 132. Two other F major works by Vivaldi, RV 69 (op. 1 no. 5) and RV 567 (op. 3 no. 7), have a close thematic resemblance to RV 20 and its Corellian parent.

¹¹ The external resemblance between RV 25 and the partitas in Telemann's *Kleine Kammermusik* (1716) is quite striking.

are works in the church idiom, looking back to the first half of Corelli's op. 6. RV 10 features a composite allegro-adagio movement of the sort pioneered in Corelli's first sonata, while RV 26 contains a fugal movement in which the single violin simulates through double stopping the sound of two violins. In comparison with op. 2, the bass parts of these sonatas tend to be severely functional, having almost ceased to interact thematically with the violin part, which has become enriched by varieties of rhythm and virtuosic figuration taken from the concerto.

This process is carried a stage further in the manuscript set of 12 sonatas copied during the 1720s under Vivaldi's supervision. Now in the Central Library, Manchester, these sonatas were probably presented to (or at least acquired by) Cardinal Ottoboni in Rome or Venice, for they seem to have been among a huge job lot, largely consisting of items from the late cardinal's library, bought by Holdsworth for Jennens in 1742. Comparison is facilitated by the reappearance in modified versions of three sonatas from the Dresden group (RV 3, 6, 12) and two preserved elsewhere (RV 22 in Brussels and RV 758, fragmentary, in Venice). In places, the violin line has been made smoother and more lyrical (this suggests the influence of operatic *bel canto*), but the bass has been thoroughly reworked to become an unobtrusive prop, more rhythmic (in the manner of the reviled 'drum bass') than harmonic in function. This time, the designation of the accompanying instrument as harpsichord suits the character of the music; the cello can be omitted with advantage. These 'Manchester' sonatas are ostensibly the most purely *da camera* of any group Vivaldi wrote, for they each consist of a *preludio* followed by three dance-movements. The effect is different, however, for most of the movements are totally abstract in mood.¹²

The nine extant cello sonatas are, as a group, the best instrumental chamber works produced by Vivaldi, easily outclassing their nearest rivals, the cello sonatas of Benedetto Marcello.¹³ One is tempted to write that the deeper the instrument (this observation applies equally to the bassoon), the more deeply felt Vivaldi's writing for it. One reason why the cello has always lent itself easily to pathos must be its duality of role: in one situation, it is a tenor instrument, a violin playing down an octave; in another, it is a bass instrument underpinning, in plain or elaborated fashion, the entire structure. Vivaldi's cello, like Bach's, switches roles frequently, sometimes dialoguing with itself.

¹² The 'Sarabanda' of the eleventh sonata (RV 756) is even a through-composed movement.

¹³ J.S. Bach's sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord and suites for unaccompanied cello are, strictly speaking, not comparable.

Although the accompanying bass line is generally as simple as that in the sonatas of the 1720s (with which most of the cello sonatas appear, on grounds of style, to be contemporary), enough contrapuntal tension is generated by the solo line itself to prevent a certain static quality which invades some of the violin sonatas.

Six cello sonatas were published in Paris by C.-N. Le Clerc *c* 1739. Remembering Vivaldi's resolution to send no more works for publication, one must assume that Le Clerc obtained the set in manuscript via a third party.* The works are perfect demonstrations of the convergence of church and chamber genres. Their four-movement plan (slow–fast–slow–fast) follows *da chiesa* norms, while the prevalence of binary form is a *da camera* heritage.

The best of the six 'solo' sonatas for wind instruments is the one for oboe (RV 53), which may have been written for the Dresden virtuoso J.C. Richter, who accompanied his prince to Venice in 1716.¹⁴ It is an unusually chromatic piece, which, on the two-keyed instrument of the time, must have posed problems of fingering and intonation.¹⁵

It is ironic that six of the most popular 'solo' sonatas known under Vivaldi's name – those of *Il pastor fido*, so-called op. 13 – are skilful pastiches by a foreign, probably Parisian hand.* Their background is briefly the following. During the 1730s the Le Clerc brothers, Jean-Pantaléon and Charles-Nicolas, had virtually cornered the market for Italian music in France: the first was Le Cène's agent in Paris from 1733, while Le Clerc the younger (publisher of the cello sonatas) obtained in 1736 royal letters of patent giving him sole right to publish in France the principal works which the other Le Clerc was importing from Amsterdam. This monopoly seems to have been a pre-emptive move to prevent rival publishers from pirating the Dutch editions. To circumvent it entailed acquiring works not originally intended for publication, arranging music for special instrumental combinations, or outright forgery.

On 21 March 1737 J.N. Marchand, a 'maître de musique', successfully applied for letters of patent, valid for nine years, to bring out Vivaldi's opp. 13 and 14, Albinoni's op. 10 and Valentini's op. 10.¹⁶

¹⁴ A date of composition around 1716 is also suggested by the thematic connection of the slow movement of the Sinfonia to *L'incoronazione di Dario* with the finale of RV 53.

¹⁵ Zelenka's writing for oboe shows similar boldness, which suggests that Dresden possessed one or more oboists of uncommon ability.

¹⁶ The petitioner was the younger of two half-brothers, both named Jean-Noël, from this numerous family of Parisian musicians. Jean-Noël the younger (1700–56) was a fife-player and drummer in the *Écurie*. He was also the composer and publisher of a *Nouvelle suite d'airs pour deux tambourins, musettes ou vielles*. This undated publication styles him 'Mr Marchand, Ordinaire de l'Académie Royale' (i.e. a member of the opera orchestra).

All these works were stated to be for the *musette* (bagpipe) and *vièle* (hurdy-gurdy), two mock-pastoral instruments then enjoying a minor vogue in Paris. If one regards as improbable that original compositions for these exotic instruments had already been composed by, or commissioned from, the three Italian composers, one's suspicions are deepened by the coincidence that the cited opus numbers begin exactly where those covered by Le Clerc's monopoly leave off. Marchand evidently did not know at the time of application for his *privilège* that a genuine op. 10 (a set of violin concertos) had appeared from Albinoni in 1735 or 1736, to be advertised in Le Clerc the elder's catalogue of 1737.

It seems that Marchand brought out only two of the promised four volumes: a collection for *musette* and *vièle* under Valentini's name entitled *Musica harmonica*¹⁷ and *Il pastor fido*, described on the title-page as 'Sonates pour la musette, vièle, flûte, hautbois, violon avec la basse continüe del Sigr. Antonio Vivaldi, opéra XIIIa'.¹⁸

Vivaldi's authorship of *Il pastor fido* can equally be contested on musical grounds. Several borrowings from concertos by not only him but also other masters can be identified. All inner parts are naturally sacrificed, and in many cases the bass line is remodelled. The amount of material actually appropriated varies; it depends on how easily the original ritornello form can be compressed into the dimensions of binary form. The table below shows what borrowings have been identified. The movements in which no borrowings have been identified include a number of typically French *rondeaux*. Further, they contain several touches of harmony peculiar to the French style. Ironically, these original movements are generally more attractive than the concerto pastiches. A *Pastorale* in the fourth sonata, where an obbligato cello joins the upper instrument, is especially memorable. It would be sad if the dubious origin of these sonatas were allowed to obscure their fine musical qualities.

It remains to discuss the three quartet sonatas. Two of them, the sonata 'al Santo Sepolcro' (RV 130/P.441) and the similarly titled sinfonia (RV 169), both for four-part strings, must have been written as occasional works for the Pietà's chapel. Oddly, they consist of only two movements, a contrapuntal slow introduction and a fugue, but their intensity belies their brevity.

The *Suonata a violino, oboè et organo, et anco se piace il salmoè*

¹⁷ Lost, but listed in C.J.F. Ballard's catalogue of 1742.

¹⁸ The frequent identification of 'op. 14' with Vivaldi's six published cello sonatas is incorrect.

<i>no. within set</i>	<i>RV no.</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>movement</i>	<i>source</i>	<i>material borrowed</i>
1	54	C	—	—	—
2	56	C	second	Vivaldi, op. 7 no. 2 (RV 188): third movement	opening ritornello (condensed) and start of first solo
3	57	G	second	Vivaldi, op. 6 no. 2 (RV 259): first movement	opening ritornello, transposed from E \flat , to G
4	59	A	second	J. Meek, WV 18 (= RV Anh. 65/P. 217): first movement ¹⁹	opening 4 bars
			fourth	G. M. Alberti, vn4A ₁ : first movement ²⁰	opening 3½ bars, some subsequent material paraphrased
5	55	C	second	J. Meck, WV 18: third movement	bars 1–14 and 69–76, transposed from A to C ²¹
6	58	g	fourth	Vivaldi, op. 4 no. 6 (RV 316a): first movement	entire movement, with two small cuts

(sonata for violin, oboe, organ, and chalumeau *ad libitum*)²² can be regarded as a quartet even if the chalumeau, which merely doubles the organ bass in the upper octave, is omitted, since the obbligato organ part is written on two staves and normally consists of one part in each hand; the player should supply a continuo realization when there are rests in the upper stave, and possibly elsewhere, if the hands are not too occupied. Originally, the work was composed for the Pietà, as one sees from the names of girls appearing alongside the instrumental specifications before the first system: Prudenza (violin); Pellegrina (oboe); Lucietta (organ); Candida (chalumeau). All four girls were among those granted permission on 5 June 1707 to teach private pupils (Prudenza is described as a contralto, and Candida as a player of the *viola*).²³ Candida also sang in Vivaldi's *Moyses Deus Pharaonis* (1714). It is thus reasonable to assign a date of *c* 1708 to the sonata.

The word 'pedale' appears under the organ bass in two places in the second movement. Italian organs of Vivaldi's day usually had only rudimentary pedal-boards capable of doing little beyond sustaining a low note, thus freeing the left hand for solo work. Vivaldi at some later point started to revise the instrumentation of the score, substituting a second violin and *basso* for the organ, but apparently soon thought better of the idea and gave up.

The organ was used as a continuo instrument in the Pietà's chapel in conjunction with at least two harpsichords (the *ceembali* referred to in the score of *Juditha triumphans*).²⁴ Instances of its use as an obbligato instrument in Vivaldi's sacred vocal music are few, but one may cite

¹⁹ The numbering of the concerto is taken from the thematic catalogue in Klaus Beckmann, *Joseph Meck (1690–1758): Leben und Werk des Eichstätter Hofkapellmeisters* (diss., Ruhr-Universität, 1975). Interestingly, the concerto was published as the final work in an anthology (publisher's catalogue no. 448) issued under Jeanne Roger's imprint (where Vivaldi is named on the title-page as one of the composers represented but not identified with any individual work), and later in an all-Vivaldi anthology, *Select Harmony*, issued by Walsh in 1730. Beckmann argues persuasively for Meck's authorship on the basis of other sources: what is important here is that Marchand may have believed the work to be Vivaldi's.

²⁰ Numbering from M. Talbot, 'A Thematic Catalogue of the Orchestral Works of Giuseppe Matteo Alberti', *R.M.A. Research Chronicle*, no. 13 (1976). Manuscripts of this concerto survive in Paris and Manchester.

²¹ See Beckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

²² A discussion of the chalumeau appears on p. 124f. For more details see Michael Talbot, 'Vivaldi e lo chalumeau', *Rivista italiana di musicologia*, vol. xv (1980), pp. 153–81, and 'A Vivaldi Sonata with Obbligato Organ in Dresden', *The Organ Yearbook*, vol. xii (1981), pp. 81–103. RV 779 was published in 1992 in the *Nuova edizione critica*.

²³ ASV, Osp., Busta 688 (G), f. 181; transcribed in Giazotto, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

²⁴ Where 'organo' appears on published continuo parts, however, it is used as a generic term for all keyboard instruments, not specifically the organ. This wider meaning is regularly mentioned in contemporary dictionaries.

Ex. 13

(Largo)

The musical score for Ex. 13 is presented in three systems. The first system includes parts for oboe (ob), violin (vn), and organ (manual). The oboe part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The violin part consists of chords and some melodic fragments. The organ part is highly active, with a dense texture of sixteenth and thirty-second notes in both hands. The second system continues the organ's intricate patterns, with the violin and oboe parts providing harmonic support. The third system shows the organ part reaching a long, flowing cadenza, characterized by continuous sixteenth-note runs in the bass and treble clefs. The oboe and violin parts have more sparse, chordal contributions during this section.

the arias 'Noli, o cara, te adorantis' in *Juditha triumphans* and 'Jucundus homo' in the *Beatus vir*, RV 597 (Ex. 13). The organ part in this sonata is remarkable for the presence of long cadenzas over

Vivaldi

pedal-points in the first two movements, and still more remarkable for the way in which figures are spread between the hands in the third movement; for once, Vivaldi achieves a keyboard texture that cannot be reduced to a right hand and a left hand operating independently, and would defy transference to other instruments (which may be why he abandoned his final revision). At the beginning of the movement the organist is instructed to ‘accompany’ (i.e. improvise chords) on the strong beats (*‘la prima nota del battere e levare’*) only, so as not to obscure the delicate fingerwork.

The concertos

Vivaldi’s extant concertos can be grouped in six classes according to their instrumentation.

1 Solo concertos (one solo instrument, string orchestra and continuo)

violin	214
viola d’amore	6
cello	27
mandolin	1
flute	14
recorder	2
<i>flautino</i>	3
oboe	20
bassoon	37
TOTAL	324

2 Double concertos (two solo instruments, string orchestra and continuo)

2 violins	25
2 cellos	1
2 mandolins	1
2 flutes	1
2 oboes	3
2 trumpets	2
2 horns	2
2 unlike instruments	11
TOTAL	46

3	<i>Ensemble concertos (more than two solo instruments, string orchestra and continuo)</i>	34
4	<i>Concertos for two string orchestras and soloist(s)</i>	4
5	<i>Chamber concertos (three to six solo instruments and continuo)</i>	22
6	<i>Concertos for string orchestra and continuo</i>	44

As a musical term ‘concerto’ enjoyed a variety of meanings during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, all of which conveyed either the notion of joining together or that of competing in friendly rivalry. The first connotation predominated during the seventeenth century, the second (which we retain today) during the eighteenth. Around 1710 both were current, as the following definition by Mattheson shows:²⁵

Concertos, broadly speaking, are [musical] gatherings and *collegia musica*, but in a strict manner of speaking, this word is often taken to mean chamber music for both voices and instruments (i.e. a piece actually so named),²⁶ and, more strictly still, pieces for strings [*Violin Sachen*] composed in such a way that each part in turn comes into prominence and vies, as it were, with the other parts; hence also in such pieces and others where only the uppermost part is dominant, and where among several violins one, called *Violino concertino*, stands out on account of its especially rapid playing.

Concertos in Mattheson’s ‘strictest’ sense came into being at the very end of the seventeenth century as offshoots of the sonata tradition. Leaving aside the problematic case of those works by Corelli published posthumously in 1714 as concertos,²⁷ but whose pre-1700 prototypes may have functioned as *sinfonias* or *sonatas*, and which represent in any case a subsidiary current, it is possible to discern three distinguishing characteristics of the concerto up to about 1710: its tolerance of – indeed, preference for – orchestral doubling; its fondness for display writing on violin or cello (not necessarily allotted to a soloist); its generally homophonic texture and receptivity to influence from the operatic *sinfonia*. After about 1710, largely as a result of Vivaldi’s work, other criteria became dominant: the presence of solo parts; the

²⁵ *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* (Hamburg, 1713), p. 193f.

²⁶ Mattheson’s term ‘*Cammer-Musik*’ would include music for private devotions.

²⁷ *Concerti grossi*, op. 6.

preference for a three-movement cycle, and the use of ritornello form in outer movements.²⁸

It was only during the second half of the seventeenth century that composers began to write with orchestral timbre specifically in mind, the Papal cities of Rome and Bologna becoming leading centres of this new fashion. The addition of one or two viola parts helped to fill the music out, but what was needed was a new style capable of giving expression to the power and richness of orchestral sound. The sonata for one or more trumpets and strings, cultivated in Bologna from the 1660s, became an important catalyst in this stylistic transformation; indeed, the characteristic figures of trumpet writing – note repetitions, fanfare-like arpeggios and tight clusters of stepwise-moving notes – left an imprint on violin writing that lasted for over a century.²⁹ Whereas the more substantial movements of an instrumental composition had previously relied for their coherence on imitative counterpoint, the unifying factor was now the statement, and restatement at strategic points, of pithy mottoes. The earliest concertos, including those of Torelli's op. 6 (1698) and Albinoni's op. 2 (1700), retain and develop this motto technique. A fast movement will consist of upwards of three periods,³⁰ each of which will be introduced by the motto, usually delivered in the key of the previous cadence.

Torelli's mottoes often preserve a dash of imitative counterpoint, even fugato; Albinoni's, however, are markedly similar to those in his operatic sinfonias – resolutely homophonic and rhythmically insistent. A comparison of the motto in the opening movement of the second concerto in his op. 2 with the opening bars of Vivaldi's op. 4 no. 2 (RV 279) reveals one aspect of the strong influence he exerted on the Vivaldi concerto in its formative stage (see Ex. 14).

Display writing in these early concertos is generally sandwiched between the motto and the cadential phrase ending the period, and consists of thematically rather nondescript passage-work. Occasionally, as in three instances in Torelli's op. 6, these bars are entrusted to a solo violin or pair of violins, sometimes partnered by a solo cello. However, the use of solo players, often associated (as one would expect) with advanced technical requirements, affects the movement's

²⁸ Because of this shift in emphasis, chamber concertos without orchestra – even a concerto for harpsichord alone like Bach's 'Italian Concerto', BWV 971 – ceased to be a contradiction in terms.

²⁹ The 'violino in tromba' appearing in three concertos acknowledges this stylistic indebtedness in exaggerated form.

³⁰ A period is to music what a sentence is to prose, cadences acting like marks of punctuation.

Ex. 14

ALBINONI

Allegro



VIVALDI

Allegro



form very little. It took a widening of the contrast between solo and tutti material to propel the form forward. In comparison, the Corellian type of concerto, where the alternation of *concertino* (ensemble of soloists, comprising two violins, cello and continuo) and *ripieno* (full ensemble) produced effects of light and shade but little contrast of material, was stagnant.

Torelli's later concertos begin the move towards segregating tutti and solo in separate, alternating periods, leaving Vivaldi to clinch the new form. The motto is expanded to become a period made up from a number of elements which is re-quotable in whole or part: the ritornello. The scoring is generally tutti throughout, and it is usual for the ritornello on any of its statements to begin and end in the same key. The connecting periods or episode, which commonly lead to a new key, are dominated by the soloist and introduce new thematic material freely. The third movement of the *flautino* concerto RV 443/P.79 exemplifies these principles particularly well (the letters A to E in the column 'thematic derivation' stand for elements of the ritornello):

<i>no. of bars</i>	<i>key centre</i>	<i>type of scoring</i>	<i>thematic derivation</i>
8½	C	tutti	ABCDE
9	C–G	solo	free
6	G	tutti	ABCE
13	G–e	solo	free
3	e	tutti	DE
13	e–a	solo	free
5	a	tutti	ABE
12½	(a)–C	solo	free
6½	C	tutti	BCDE

Vivaldi

In practice, this schema was adhered to far less rigidly by Vivaldi than by many of his imitators. Some common ways in which it is modified can be instanced.

(1) The first ritornello is preceded by an episode in the home key. This arrangement has great dramatic potential, for the soloist enters immediately and builds up towards the entrance of the tutti. Good examples occur in the opening movements of RV 249 and RV 204 (op. 4 nos. 8 and 11).

(2) The second ritornello, like the first, is in the home key. This device is common in, though not restricted to, movements on a particularly grand scale.

(3) The penultimate ritornello is in the home key. Inevitably, the episode which follows is centred on the tonic; Vivaldi often gives it the character of a cadenza (arpeggiation over a continuo pedal-point is a common feature here), or indicates an actual cadenza, as in the finale of RV 556/P.84, the *Concerto per la solennità di S. Lorenzo*. Very often, the concluding ritornello begins exactly where its predecessor left off, producing the effect of a single ritornello interrupted midway by an episode.

(4) Some of the ritornellos modulate. By thus absorbing one of the functions of the episode in the ritornello, Vivaldi is able, when the other function (solo-tutti contrast) is not required, to dispense with episodes altogether, as one sees in several of the concertos without soloist. Superficially, the result may seem like a reversion to the methods of Torelli and Albinoni; the difference is that Vivaldi brings back and develops all the elements of the ritornello, not just an initial motto.

Most of Vivaldi's movements in ritornello form go beyond the necessities of the form in unifying the diverse parts, though never as systematically and ingeniously as in Bach's concerto movements. Episodes are often punctuated by brief ritornello fragments, and the melodic substance of many episodes can be traced back to an element of the ritornello. One device taken over by Bach is to begin the first episode with a quotation, often ornamented, of the ritornello opening. Another is to lead off with a repetition of the ritornello's cadential phrase. The first and last episodes are often thematically linked, as in the first movement of the concerto for three violins RV 551/P.278; this supplies a welcome element of reprise in the solo part. The internal organization of some ritornellos (one is speaking primarily of opening ritornellos, as later statements tend to be curtailed) reveals a desire to produce a well-rounded musical entity, almost a piece within a piece,

whose own pattern of modulation may paraphrase in miniature that of the whole movement. As Vivaldi's opening phrases so often present the harmonic outline of a perfect cadence,³¹ nothing could be more natural than to recapitulate them, perhaps in condensed form, at the very end of the ritornello.

Ritornello form is the quasi-automatic choice for the first movement in a Vivaldi concerto. It is the most common choice for finales, and appears in a few slow movements, where it may be reduced to a simple frame around what would otherwise be a through-composed movement for the soloist, lightly accompanied.

Four alternatives to ritornello form are employed: fugue, unitary (or through-composed) form, binary form and variation form. Most of the fugues occur as fast movements in the concertos without soloist, but a few examples can be found in each of the other kinds of concerto. Where a soloist is employed, many of the episodes consist of conventional passage-work only tenuously related to the subject and countersubjects, a feature perhaps inherited from the fugal finales of Albinoni's op. 5 (1707). Unitary slow movements are of two main types: a series of modulating chords, or an arioso for the soloist. The first type, inherited from Torelli and Albinoni, serves to bridge the two fast movements (in its most condensed expression it appears in Bach's third 'Brandenburg' Concerto). The chords may be patterned in several ways: in flowing, quasi-vocal counterpoint replete with suspensions; in brief phrases, articulated by rests (during which the soloist may have bursts of lyricism, as in the second movement of op. 4 no. 9 (RV 284), hypnotic in its reiterative quality); in gently chugging quavers, like an accompaniment divested of its melody. The second type generally approximates to a binary movement without repeat signs. Binary movements, which include some finales, range from the brief and symmetrical to the extended and markedly asymmetrical. A movement such as the finale of RV 158/P.235 stands on the very threshold of sonata form. Vivaldi wrote few variation movements of sectional type (i.e. where there is a break between the end of one variation and the start of the next); one example is the minuet finale to the oboe concerto RV 447/P.41. He was fond, however, of the continuous type over a ground bass discussed in the previous chapter.

The vast majority of the concertos retain the three-movement cycle popularized by Torelli and Albinoni, but a group of almost 30, by no

³¹ Walter Kolneder has coined the excellent term 'Kadenzmelodik' (cadential melody) to characterize this feature of Vivaldi's style.

Vivaldi

means all early works, have an additional slow opening movement or slow introduction to the first fast movement. Several concertos in this group are linked through their titles with the Pietà (e.g. the two concertos for the feast of St Lawrence and the *Concerto funebre*); one can well imagine that Vivaldi hoped to add an extra touch of grandeur and solemnity by reverting to the four-movement cycle of the church sonata.

His choice of key for the 'interior' slow movement shows a rather unexpected distribution. Whereas most of his contemporaries favour the relative major or minor key, Vivaldi resorts to it rather infrequently; instead, he most often plumps for the key of the whole work, sometimes its parallel minor key. This bias to homotonicity does not seem to be an echo of the *sonata da camera*; perhaps Vivaldi, like Haydn later, retained a single key centre to give the work a more uniform character. Other choices of key are the dominant, the subdominant and (in major-key works) the mediant minor. Where more distant relationships are found, they must often owe their origin to the borrowing of a slow movement from another work. Compared with Locatelli, who liked to place his slow movement in a 'mediant' relationship with the outer movements (e.g. B flat major, for a work in D major), he is almost conservative.

Approximately one in five of Vivaldi's known concertos was published during his lifetime. Discounting 13 concertos published individually or in unauthorized collections, 84 appeared at intervals between 1711 and 1729 in sets bearing an opus number. Of these 60 were for a single violin soloist, reflecting the dominance of this type in the published repertory. The distribution of other types shows the influence partly of changing fashion, partly of the circumstances in which each opus came into being.³²

op. 3 (1711) 12 works	nos. 5 and 8 for two violins nos. 2 and 11 for two violins and cello no. 4 for four violins nos. 1, 7 and 10 for four violins and cello
op. 4 (c 1714) 12 works	nos. 1, 4, 9 and 11 for two violins no. 7 for two violins and cello
op. 6 (1716–17) 6 works	all for one violin
op. 7 (1716–17) 12 works	nos. 1 and 7 (= libro II no. 1) for oboe

³² In the concertos with additional solo instruments in opp. 4 and 9 only the first solo violin has its own partbook; the other solos are indicated by cues in the *ripieno* parts.

op. 8 (1725) 12 works	nos. 9 and 12 optionally for oboe
op. 9 (1727) 12 works	no. 9 for two solo violins
op. 10 (c 1728) 6 works	all for transverse flute
op. 11 (1729) 6 works	no. 6 for oboe
op. 12 (1729) 6 works	no. 3 without soloist

Through these nine collections we can gauge Vivaldi's development as a composer, allowing for the fact that several works, in their original versions, at least, must have been composed many years previously. Ryom has proposed, for instance, that the oboe concerto RV 460 (op. 11 no. 6) is an earlier version of the almost identical work (RV 334) published a few years before as op. 9 no. 3.³³ Opp. 3 and 4 show the composer groping his way towards the definitive shape of the Vivaldian concerto, realized most perfectly in opp. 8 and 9. The other five collections are less homogeneous stylistically and less even in quality; this, and the fact that they were not dedicated to a patron, suggests that Vivaldi or his publisher put them together hurriedly with commercial considerations uppermost. Vivaldi's powers did not decline with advancing years, as the four works composed for the Saxon prince's visit in 1740 attest convincingly, but it cannot be denied that it became increasingly easy for him to repeat himself (often, as we have seen, quite literally). Only op. 8 (which includes *The Four Seasons*) recaptured the success of *L'estro armonico*. Quantz, who acknowledged that Vivaldi, together with Albinoni, had given the concerto a better form and had provided excellent models, seems to be using him as a stick with which to beat other Italian composers (particularly those concerned with opera, for whom he had little regard) when he writes: 'But finally, as a result of too much daily composing, and especially after he began to write operas, he sank into frivolity and caprice both in composition and in performance, for which reason his last concertos earned less approval than his first.'³⁴

Opp. 3 and 4 require separate discussion, not only because of their complex organization and stylistic indebtedness to other composers

³³ 'Les catalogues thématiques et *La cetra*', *Vivaldi Informations*, vol. ii (1973), p. 47.

³⁴ *Versuch*, p. 309.

but also because they supplied the bulk of the concertos transcribed for keyboard by Bach. Op. 3 is an example of a composite set (like Torelli's op. 8 or Albinoni's opp. 2, 7 and 9) in which works of varying specification are grouped symmetrically. Discounting the solo cello, which appears irregularly, one finds the 12 concertos made up of four groups, each comprising in turn a work for four solo violins, one for two solo violins and one for a single violin. Four separate violin partbooks are provided. In the concertos for four violins no distinct *ripieno* parts exist, though orchestral doubling can be used in passages marked 'tutti'. The third and fourth violins in those with two solo parts constitute the *ripieno*. In those with one soloist there are potentially three *ripieno* violin parts, though doubling reduces their number to two or even one (save in the slow movement of the sixth concerto). There are two viola partbooks, five concertos requiring divided violas at least part of the time. Venice was later than Rome or Bologna to accept one viola part rather than two as the norm; even so, *L'estro armonico* is one of the last published set of concertos to call for two violas.³⁵ One should not infer, as Kolneder does,³⁶ that when the viola partbooks contain an identical part (similarly with the violins) antiphonal performance was intended. The eight partbooks serve to accommodate the maximum number of independent parts; when fewer than the maximum are needed, any 'redundant' part simply doubles the most appropriate of the others.

La stravaganza, op. 4, is nominally a collection of solo concertos for violin, though five works echo op. 3 by co-opting additional (violin or cello) soloists.

What distinguishes these two *opera* from their successors is their spirit of experimentation (suggested by their very titles) on the one hand and their open reminiscences of Corelli, Torelli and Albinoni on the other. Except in some of the later programmatic concertos, one does not see again such an assorted succession of movements, some very short, as in RV 565 (op. 3 no. 11): 1. Allegro (31 bars, soloists only). 2. Adagio (3 bars, tutti). 3. Allegro (70 bars, fugue). 4. Largo (20 bars, simple ritornello form). 5. Allegro (73 bars, ritornello form).

The most Corellian feature in them is the treatment of two solo violins and solo cello as a *concertino* group in dialogue with the tutti, most noticeably in the finale of RV 185 (op. 4 no. 7). Torelli's influence

³⁵ Vivaldi used divided violas again in the aria 'Siam navi all'onde argenti' in *L'Olimpiade* (II, 6).

³⁶ Antonio Vivaldi: *his Life and Work*, p. 97.

Bach transcription			Vivaldi original			
<i>BWV</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>instrument(s)</i>	<i>RV</i>	<i>identification</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>solo instrument(s)</i>
593	a	organ	522	op. 3 no. 8	a	2 violins
594	C	organ	208	variant of RV 208a (op. 7 no. 11)	D	1 violin
596	d	organ	565	op. 3 no. 11	d	2 violins and cello
972	D	harpsichord	230	op. 3 no. 9	D	1 violin
973	G	harpsichord	299	op. 7 no. 8	G	1 violin
975	g	harpsichord	316	variant of RV 316a (op. 4 no. 6)	g	1 violin
976	C	harpsichord	265	op. 3 no. 12	E	1 violin
978	F	harpsichord	310	op. 3 no. 3	G	1 violin
980	G	harpsichord	381	variant of RV 383a (op. 4 no. 1)	B \flat	1 violin
1065	a	4 harpsichords and orchestra	580	op. 3 no. 10	b	4 violins and cello

[page orientation in original: landscape]

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is seen in the rapid semiquaver passages for two violins over pedal-notes (a kind of display writing known to contemporaries as *perfidia*). Albinoni is recalled in the sharply etched rhythms, the fondness for unison violins and the use of a *tutti* motto in the opening movements of RV 383a and RV 347 (op. 4 nos. 1 and 5).

The ten concertos (six from op. 3) transcribed by Bach can be identified from the table on page 115. Some of the changes introduced by Bach are ones which any imaginative or even merely competent transcriber would have made. In the harpsichord transcriptions (which lack the convenience of a pedal-board) middle parts are drawn closer to the outer parts or sacrificed altogether; intertwining parts are separated by octave transposition; long notes (many of which would have been ornamented extempore in the original medium) are broken down into shorter notes or embellished. But Bach goes beyond such alterations, adding or subtracting bars to produce a symmetry more characteristic of his own music than of Vivaldi's, and devising new counterpoints. It is instructive to compare the closing bars of the first movement of BWV 972 with the equivalent bars in an anonymous English transcription of the same concerto (RV 230) made around the same time (see Ex. 15).³⁷

It would be perverse not to concede that Bach's retouchings help to make the works come alive in their new medium and often improve the musical substance into the bargain. Nevertheless, a streak of pedantry sometimes makes Bach gild the lily. One can see why he chose to insert an extra note (ringed) in the second bar of the finale of RV 580 (Ex. 16). What Vivaldi wanted, however, was not a smooth downward progression from *e'* to *a* (*f#'-b* in the original) but a gap drawing attention to the symmetry between bars 1 and 2.

Most of Vivaldi's concertos published subsequently, as well as those remaining in manuscript, are for solo violin. No full discussion of the technical aspect of his writing for violin will be attempted here, but attention should be drawn to the importance of the open strings in his violin parts. In Vivaldi's day vibrato was a special effect, not a natural part of technique, so the difference in sound between an open and a stopped string was more one of power and resonance than of timbre. One is not surprised to find, therefore, that the favourite keys for virtuosic violin writing are those in which open strings can contribute to the chords most likely to require special emphasis: the

³⁷ This version is one of 12 transcriptions for harpsichord of works in Vivaldi's opp. 3 and 4 contained in *Anne Dawson's Book*, an anthology preserved in Manchester, Central Library, B.R.M710.5.CR71.

Ex. 15

ANON. c 1715
(Allegro)



J.S. BACH, c 1715
(Allegro)



Ex. 16

Allegro



tonic and dominant chords. Among the extant solo violin concertos D major leads the table of popularity with 33 appearances, while C major and B flat major each have 24. Multiple-stopped chords tend to include one or more open strings, not merely for their sound but because an open string releases fingers for employment on other strings. Another facility of open strings may be less familiar: as Baroque violinists used no chin-rest, shifts of hand position were liable to produce a portamento, which could be avoided, however, if the shift took place after an open note.

Five concertos revive the obsolete technique of *scordatura*, a mistuning of the solo violin's strings whose main function is to make new combinations of notes possible in chords and *brisures* (rapidly broken chordal figures). Violin *scordatura* had never been popular in Italy – its foremost exponents were Germans and Austrians, such as Biber and Strungk – and Vivaldi's espousal of it is a reminder (like some of

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the more exotic instruments played at the Pietà) of Venice's close ties with northern Europe. The mistuned strings are written for like transposing instruments, the player fingering as if the violin were normally tuned. In interpreting the first two bars of RV 391 (op. 9 no. 12) as reproduced in (a) below, we must remember that the *e*" string has been tuned down to *d*" and the *g* string up to *b*, giving a sound shown in (b).

Ex. 17

(a) **Allegro non molto**



(b)



In a few concertos the solo violin is treated in other special ways. RV 221/P.179, RV 311/P.117 and RV 313/P.138 all feature a 'violino in tromba' (violin imitating a trumpet); RV 558/P.16 calls for two 'violini in tromba marina', which simulate that instrument (a kind of bowed monochord played entirely in natural harmonics) by confining themselves in solo passages to notes consistent with a fundamental C'. In RV 243/P.310 the soloist forgoes the use of his 'cantin' (E string).

A handful of authentic cadenzas to Vivaldi's violin concertos (and others by Pisendel which may be based to a greater or lesser extent on the composer's originals) have been preserved. But for their length and the fact that they are entirely unaccompanied they are not very different from several concluding episodes in fast movements; they remain in the home key and do not refer obviously to the principal material of the movement.

The six solo concertos for viola d'amore are very similar in style to the violin concertos.³⁸ Vivaldi's instrument has six bowed strings and most probably six sympathetic strings under the fingerboard. Normally,

³⁸ The viola d'amore also appears as a solo instrument in the double concerto (with lute) RV 540/P.266, the chamber concerto RV 95/P.286, and individual arias in *Juditha triumphans*, *Nisi Dominus* RV 608 and the original version of *Tito Manlio*.

the strings are tuned to a chord of D minor (*d–a–d'–f'–a'–d''*), but for other keys *scordatura* (without effect on the notation) is indicated. Two concertos (RV 393/P.289 and RV 397/P.37) conceal in their title the name of the person for whom they were written, 'amore' (how appropriately, perhaps) being spelt 'AMore' with obvious reference to Anna Maria.

Vivaldi's cello concertos tower above those of his contemporaries (Leonardo Leo perhaps excepted) no less than his cello sonatas. Some, as we saw, are very early works; others seem to date from the 1720s, when the Pietà employed Vandini and Aliprandi as cello teachers. It is noticeable how the concertos for low instruments, bassoon as well as cello, favour a fuller, motivically more complex accompaniment than those for high instruments. This feature is quite general in music of the period; one also finds it in arias for low voice.

The earliest concertos for wind instruments that Vivaldi is likely to have written are those for oboe. The Pietà appointed its first permanent oboe master, Ignazio Rion, in 1704. Rion, departing for Rome in 1705, was replaced in the following year by Ludwig (Lodovico) Erdmann. However, Erdmann himself left quite soon afterwards to serve the Grand Prince of Tuscany, and his replacement, Ignazio Sieber, arrived only in 1713. In late 1716 he was succeeded by Onofrio Penati, a member of the St Mark's orchestra, who was reappointed annually until 1722. The fact that two out of these four names are German underlines the slowness of the instrument's assimilation into Italian music. The earliest published oboe concertos are those of Albinoni's op. 7 (1715), although it is probable that German composers such as Telemann and Handel had already written examples. Ostensibly, the two oboe concertos in Vivaldi's op. 7 are the earliest by him on which one can place an approximate date (1716–17). Their style, very reminiscent of Telemann, is so uncharacteristic of him, however, that their genuineness must be questioned. They are so much more concertos 'with' oboe, after Albinoni's manner, than concertos 'for' oboe, and segregate solo and tutti scoring much less rigorously than Vivaldi's other oboe concertos. Perhaps Roger, wishing to repeat the success of Albinoni's works, could not wait for the genuine articles to arrive.*

This would leave op. 8 nos. 9 and 12 as the earliest of his oboe concertos to appear in print. Whereas Albinoni models his solo oboe parts on vocal writing, eschewing rapid leaps, Vivaldi takes his own style of writing for the violin as the basis of all his virtuosic woodwind parts, making some allowance for the player's need to draw breath and avoiding unobtainable or weak notes. Only the close spacing of

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the broken-chord figures in the next example (from the first movement of RV 463, a version for oboe of the bassoon concerto RV 500/P.89) and the thoughtful insertion of a rest suggest a part for oboe rather than violin.

Ex. 18
(Allegro)



It remains a mystery why Vivaldi wrote so many bassoon concertos (39, including two incomplete works), for there was no recent tradition of solo bassoon writing in Venice. One concerto (RV 502/P.382) is inscribed with the name of Giuseppe Biancardi, a local musician, and another (RV 496/P.381) with that of Count Morzin, but most were probably composed for the Pietà. Were a bassoon concerto even today less of a curiosity, they would be among the most highly prized of Vivaldi's works. In matters of style they relate to the oboe concertos rather as the cello concertos relate to those for violin. Just like his cello (but remarkably for a wind instrument), Vivaldi's bassoon often skips between the bass and tenor registers to produce the effect of a duet or dialogue. The passage in RV 500 (quoted above in its paraphrase for oboe) exemplifies this quirky style of writing very well. Elsewhere, Vivaldi gives the bassoon dreamily lyrical passages that belie the instrument's reputation for jocularly.

Ex. 19
(Allegro)



The earlier Ricordi edition advertises indiscriminately as flute concertos works which the sources show to be for two distinct instruments: *flauto* (alto recorder) and *flauto traversiere* (flute). The flute concertos proper are in a large majority (13 against two). Vivaldi probably did not write any before the late 1720s; Sieber's reappointment at the Pietà as flute master dates from 1728, and Vivaldi's first known use of the flute in an opera occurs in *Orlando* (Autumn 1727).* One would expect the works for recorder to be earlier, for the flute rapidly ousted the recorder, first in France and later in Germany and Italy, rather as the piano superseded the harpsichord 50 years later. The recorder was certainly in use at the Pietà in 1706, when Penati was paid for repairs

to four instruments.³⁹ Significantly, five of the six works making up op. 10 are arrangements for flute and strings of earlier recorder concertos or chamber concertos including a recorder or flute. They contain the three programme works *La tempesta di mare* (RV 433, op. 10 no. 1), *La notte* (RV 439, op. 10 no. 2) and *Il gardellino* (RV 428, op. 10 no. 3), all originally chamber concertos. RV 434 (op. 10 no. 5) is the recorder concerto RV 442 with its slow movement transposed from F minor to G minor. This alteration was needed, as the flute, whose natural scale was that of D (the recorder's is F), could not play satisfactorily in the original key.⁴⁰

The instrument called *flautino* required in three concertos can hardly be the piccolo (whose existence is not attested until the 1730s) or the flageolet, which Vivaldi terms *flasolet(to)* and uses in the aria 'Di due rai languire costante' from an unidentified opera;⁴¹ instrumental compass and etymology identify it as the sopranino recorder playing an octave above notated pitch. Obligato parts for *flautino* also occur in the operas *Tito Manlio* (1719) and *La verità in cimento* (1720). Vivaldi's parts for *flautino* are often quite fiendishly difficult, requiring the agility of a violinist rather than a wind player, and the rich musical substance of the concertos dispels any idea that he regarded this tiny instrument as an ear-tickling toy.

Most of Vivaldi's concertos with descriptive titles belong to the solo category. If one discounts immediately references in the titles to performers, patrons, occasions of performance and technical features, some 25 works, several existing in more than one version, are left. The titles often indicate no more than the general mood or style of the piece: thus 'rest' (*Il riposo*, RV 270/P.248) or 'pleasure' (*Il piacere*, RV 180, op. 8 no. 6). In concertos like *La caccia* (RV 362, op. 8 no. 10) or *Il gardellino* the description is lent concreteness by onomatopoeic touches in the music. Only seven concertos justify the label 'programmatic' by including a narrative element – slight in the three versions of the concerto *La tempesta di mare* with flute (not to be confused with a similarly named violin concerto in op. 8) and the two different concertos, for flute (RV 439/P.342 and the earlier RV 104) and bassoon (RV 501/P.401) respectively, entitled *La notte*, but well worked out in *Le quattro stagioni*, assisted by their descriptive sonnets.

³⁹ Arnold, op. cit., p. 76f. The author has translated the word as 'flutes', but the transverse flute is out of the question at this early date.

⁴⁰ The Turin score of RV 442 contains Vivaldi's direction to a copyist to write the movement out a tone higher, perhaps in preparation for the work's publication as a flute concerto.

⁴¹ Foà 28, ff. 104–6, 90–1.

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Programme music, whose history stretches back to the middle ages, was less popular in eighteenth-century Italy than in France, where the view of Art as an imitation of Nature was taken more literally. Nature was still man-centred, however; not the least modern aspect of *The Four Seasons* is their subordination of human activity to the uncontrollable play of the natural elements. The uninhibited and sometimes remarkably original way in which Vivaldi depicts situations permits use of the epithet 'romantic', both as a statement of general musical outlook and as a reminder that these four concertos inaugurated a tradition which continued right through to the nineteenth century. Works standing wittingly or otherwise in the line of descent from them include Telemann's secular cantata *Die Tageszeiten* (1759), Haydn's symphonic trilogy *Le matin–Le midi–Lé soir* (1761) and, naturally, his oratorio *The Seasons* (1800), Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* (1808), and even Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* (1830).

Vivaldi solves the problem of combining programmatic content with ritornello form in a manner both simple and satisfying. The underlying mood of the movement is captured by the ritornello, while successive events are portrayed in individual episodes. In the opening movement of the Spring concerto the ritornello, a heavy-footed dance, represents joy at the advent of Spring – 'Giunt'è la primavera'. The remainder of the two quatrains is parcelled out among the four episodes as follows:

(1) '... and joyfully the birds greet her [Spring] with merry song.' Vivaldi's avian chorus, based entirely on the tonic chord (E major), employs three solo violins, the orchestral parts being reduced to a single player.

(2) 'While the brooks, fanned by gentle breezes [Zephyrs], murmur sweetly as they course along,' Slurred pairs of conjunct semiquavers in thirds conjure up the rippling brooks, similar motion in minims the wafting breeze.

'Thunder and lightning, chosen to proclaim her, envelop the air in a black shroud.' Bowed tremolos depict the thunder, rapid ascending scales and flashing arpeggios the lightning.

(3) 'The birds, having meanwhile fallen silent, resume their melodious singing.' Vivaldi begins with a motive often found in his works in association with sleep and then reproduces in subdued form some of the bird motives.

(4) An uncaptioned episode, in which the chirruping of a bird is nevertheless audible.

In slow movements, whose smaller dimensions almost preclude the

narrative element, Vivaldi is content with a tableau-like depiction of a scene, of which different constituents may be represented by different layers of texture. In the Winter concerto, for example, the soloist and lower strings paint a picture of fireside comfort, while the violins supply the raindrops outside.

The special case of opp. 3 and 4 apart, Vivaldi's double concertos, whether for like or unlike instruments, are closely related in form and style to his solo concertos. The manner of interaction of the soloists is very varied: at one extreme, they may perform more in dialogue than as a pair, one instrument repeating immediately whatever the other plays; at the other, they may move in endless chains of thirds as if unable to escape from one another. Both devices become tiresome through over-use, and Vivaldi's record is not spotless in this regard. Against this, one is glad to find in several works, particularly those for two solo violins, a contrapuntal interplay worthy of his best trio sonatas.

The double concertos for like instruments comprise 25 for violins, three for oboes, two for trumpets, two for horns and one each for cellos, mandolins and flutes. Those for unlike soloists include four (RV 541/P.311, RV 542/P.274, RV 766 and RV 767) for violin and organ and two for violin and oboe (RV 548/P.406 and RV 543/P.301); the last work is curious in having the soloists in unison. RV 544/P.308, RV 546/P.238 and RV 547/P.388 combine violin and cello most effectively. Vivaldi later redesignated RV 546 for violin and bass *viola all'inglese*, making no alteration to the actual notes in either the solo or *ripieno* parts. The *viola all'inglese* appears in four other Vivaldi works: the ensemble concertos RV 555/P.87 and RV 579/P.385 (*Concerto funebre*), the oratorio *Juditha triumphans* (1716), where a five-part 'concerto' (consort) accompanies the heroine's prayer and subsequent aria, and the opera *L'incoronazione di Dario* (1717), where the bass member of the family has a difficult obbligato part in Statira's 'Cantata in scena' in Act I. Besides the sizes corresponding to the violin and the cello the *viola all'inglese* has a middle size, identifiable as the 'englisches Violett' mentioned by Leopold Mozart in his famous treatise. From Mozart's description and the very few surviving instruments⁴² one learns that the *viola all'inglese* broadly resembled the viola

⁴² Anthony Baines, *European and American Musical Instruments* (London, 1966), describes and provides illustrations of *viola all'inglese* dated 1712 and 1737 in the Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, and the Royal College of Music, London. From Pincherle onwards, many writers have identified Vivaldi's 'English viol' with the family of viols proper, which enjoyed a late florescence in seventeenth-century England; but the English connection can be explained just as well by the presence of sympathetic strings, whose introduction (in the lyra-viol) has been credited to the English.

d'amore, but had two or three times the number of sympathetic strings. One can establish from the layout of the chords in the *Dario* obbligato that the instrument used there had six strings tuned *D–G–c–e–a–d'*.

The catch-all phrase 'ensemble concerto' is a convenient way of referring to Vivaldi's numerous concertos for single orchestra with more than two solo instruments. It includes concertos for three and four violins, which reveal few features not already present in the double violin concertos, as well as works for a large, heterogeneous ensemble, which Vivaldi, lacking the patience or space to list the names of all the instruments in the title, liked to call 'concerto con molti istromenti'. At least two of the latter (RV 576/P.359 and R V 577/P.383) were supplied to the Dresden orchestra, as befitted its large complement of wind instruments, but most were clearly destined for the Pietà. If, as the English traveller Edward Wright averred,⁴³ its female performers were hidden from public view by a lattice, the revelation in brief solo passages of one rare specimen after another from the Pietà's menagerie of instruments must have both surprised and delighted the audience. Like animals in the Ark, these instruments, which include mandolins, theorboes, chalumeaux, clarinets and *tromboni da caccia*, usually come in pairs. Vivaldi makes no pretence of equality between his soloists, a violin or pair of violins often taking the lion's share of solo material. Sometimes, solo instruments are featured in certain movements only, like the lute in the slow movement of the original version of RV 556/P.84 and the two trumpets in the finale of RV 555/P.87.

Although the chalumeau was known in Italy – F. Bonanni includes it in his *Gabinetto armonico* of 1722 – the five works by Vivaldi in which it appears (three concertos, one sonata and *Juditha triumphans*) are the only ones so far discovered south of the Alps. Elder cousin (or perhaps parent) of the clarinet, the chalumeau first appeared towards 1700 in France or Germany as a more powerful type of recorder in which the usual mouthpiece was replaced by one housing a single reed on top.⁴⁴ The instrument could not overblow, but one or two keys located between the row of seven holes and the mouthpiece extended

⁴³ *Some Observations made in travelling through France, Italy ... in the years 1720, 1721 and 1722*, vol. i (London, 1730), p. 79.

⁴⁴ On the chalumeau see especially Heinz Becker, 'Das Chalumeau im 18. Jahrhundert', ed. H. Becker and R. Gerlach, *Speculum musicae artis: Festgabe für Heinrich Husmann* (Munich, 1970), pp. 23–46, and Michael Talbot, 'Vivaldi e lo chalumeau'. The role of both the chalumeau and the clarinet in Vivaldi's music is examined in Colin Lawson, 'Single Reed Instruments in the Music of Vivaldi', *Chigiana*, vol. xli (1989), pp. 185–96. In the light of recent research it is surprising that the hypothesis, first stated by Pincherle, that the *salmoè* was some kind of obsolete double-reed instrument continues to be widely believed.

its compass by a few notes. Although its tone was reputed harsh, the chalumeau, built like the recorder in various sizes, achieved a degree of popularity as a 'pastoral' instrument in Germany and Austria during the first half of the eighteenth century; it appears in instrumental works, including some concertos, by J.L. Bach, Fasch, Graupner, Hasse, Molter and Telemann, and operas by Ariosti, Bononcini, Fux, Keiser and even Gluck (*Orfeo* and *Alceste*). Handel's *Riccardo primo* (London, 1727) contains an aria with parts for two soprano chalumeaux. Vivaldi calls the instrument 'salmoè' or 'salmò' (a more orthodox Italian form is 'scialmò', as used by the Viennese composer Bonno). He employs the smallest (soprano) size in Judith's aria 'Veni, veni me sequere' (in which the cooing of a turtle-dove is evoked), confining the solo part to the notes between a' and b_b'' , which suggests an available compass $f'-b_b''$. A tenor instrument, pitched an octave lower, is used in the *Concerto funebre*. In both cases the instrument is muted. Tenor chalumeaux in C (compass $g-c''$) are required in RV 555/P.87, RV 558/P.16 and the Dresden quartet sonata. Vivaldi writes tenor chalumeau parts an octave lower in the bass clef, quite appropriately, as the instrument often has to supply a *bassetto* or double the bass line an octave higher.

He uses clarinets in C in three concertos (RV 556/P.84, RV 559/P.74 and RV 560/P.73), partnering them with two oboes; and in RV 556 with two recorders, two violins and bassoon in addition. The simple two-keyed clarinet is treated almost as two instruments in one, the first corresponding to the register of fundamentals ($f-f'$) and the second to that of twelfths ($c''-c'''$), the 'open' note g' being common to both. As the clarinet had yet to acquire its long B key, producing e and b' , the two registers are separated by a gap which coincides with that between the sixth and eighth harmonics (the seventh, lying outside the diatonic scale, is unusable) of the natural trumpet.

Vivaldi shows a prescient awareness of the aptness of the low 'chalumeau' register for eerie or lugubrious effects, as the following passage from the first movement of RV 560, with its typical minor inflections, demonstrates:

Ex. 20

(Allegro)



Vivaldi

Much of the writing for the clarinet in its higher register is stylistically indistinguishable from that of the trumpet in its 'clarino' register, a resemblance which the bold, strident tone of early instruments must have heightened. The following passage from the same movement is a good specimen:

Ex. 21



This identity of style (restricted, of course, to the range $g'-c'''$) induced some scholars to believe that the instruments Vivaldi called not only 'clarinet(ti)' (in RV 559 and 560) but also 'claren(i)' (in RV 556 and also in *Juditha triumphans*, where two instruments in B flat play in unison) and even 'clarini' (in the slow movement of RV 556) were in fact really trumpets.⁴⁵ It must be remembered, however, that it was Germans, not Italians, who used the term 'clarino' to refer to an instrument (trumpet) as well as a specific register; also that Bonanni's name for the clarinet is 'clarone'. The appearance of clarinets in *Juditha* (1716) is the earliest known instance of the instrument's orchestral use.

The identity of the two *tromboni da caccia* in RV 574/P.319 (and also in two numbers in *Orlando finto pazzo*) remains elusive. Nothing in the notation (in the treble clef, an octave above sounding pitch), the notes employed or the general style is uncharacteristic of *corni da caccia* in F; these 'hunting trombones' must be close relatives of the horn, if not the same instrument.*

Five concertos (one incomplete) requiring double orchestra have survived. Three attach a solo violin to the first orchestra, while the other two are laid out symmetrically with an identical group of soloists for each 'coro'. All were probably intended for the Pietà's chapel services, two being inscribed 'per la santissima assontione di Maria Vergine' (RV 581-2/P.14 (Turin version) and 164). The remarks in the next chapter on Vivaldi's vocal works 'in due cori', which were presumably performed at the same services, largely apply to these concertos.

The chamber concertos, written for three to six instruments and

⁴⁵ The most lengthily argued presentation of this case occurs in Walter Lebermann, 'Zur Besetzungsfrage der Concerti grossi von A. Vivaldi', *Die Musikforschung*, vol. vii (1954), pp. 337-9.

continuo, number 22. Several are for wind instruments only; in fact the only example not to include at least one wind instrument is the lute concerto RV 93/P.209 (discounting possible substitutions of wind by stringed instruments indicated by the composer in some scores). The instruments usually appear individually, but in a few cases paired instruments – violins, oboes or horns – are featured. The bassoon is required in 16 concertos, the flute and oboe each in 12 and the recorder in nine.

All are apparently mature works, but the purpose for which they were written remains obscure. Their conception is unique for Italy, though similar works, of which Bach's Third and Sixth 'Brandenburg' Concertos are elaborate but valid examples, were composed by a number of German and French composers, who often termed them 'sonatas', obviously thinking more of the medium than the musical forms employed.

In a chamber concerto all the parts (except the continuo, which doubles the lowest instrument) are obbligato, playing in unison only for special effect. In some instances the distinction between ritornello and episode is not reflected in the pattern of the scoring, which varies independently, so that tonal and thematic criteria alone establish the formal outlines; this occurs in RV 107/P.360, for flute, oboe, violin and bassoon. Elsewhere the texture lightens in the episodes as one or more instruments drop out, leaving behind a 'soloist'. The choice of such a soloist may vary between episodes or even within a single episode, but in many cases the same solo instrument appears during a movement, even a work. A disguised solo concerto of this type is RV 106/P.404, where the flute is partnered by violin and bassoon.

The most admirable qualities of Vivaldi's chamber concertos, scarcity value apart, are their exquisite tone colour and feeling for the natural idiom of each instrument. They are closer to the modern spirit of chamber music than any other of his works.

Vivaldi's 44 concertos without soloist for four-part strings and continuo (the ones Pincherle so aptly describes as being 'in symphonic style') show him in his best light as a composer pure and simple, freed of the necessity to engage in display for its own sake. The distinction between these *concerti a quattro* (in three works he employs the designation 'concerto ripieno' – concerto for orchestra) and operatic or operatic-style *sinfonias* is one of stylistic and formal tendency rather than something clear-cut. We thus find certain works, whose allegiance to one genre rather than the other is not pronounced, used *in toto* (and even more often in part) in both guises, or at any rate under both

Vivaldi

titles; RV 134/P.127, originally entitled 'Concerto' in the composer's autograph manuscript, later received the additional, presumably substitute, title 'Sinfonia'. The concerto RV 117/P.64 also appears, with another slow movement, as the sinfonia to *La Senna festeggiante*.

Typically, sinfonias are written in a homophonic, treble-dominated style, for which the violins are often in unison. The opening movement, traditionally by far the longest, tends to aim at sheer weight of sound (perhaps needed to silence a chattering audience) with multiple-stopped chords, *brisures* and prominent open strings, as illustrated by the beginning of RV 116.

Ex. 22

Allegro



The slow movement is customarily in *cantabile* style, while the binary finale, a mayfly of a movement, leads a merry but brief dance. Major tonality is greatly preferred.

The concertos are written in a severer, often contrapuntal vein, where one violin part is often set off against the other through imitation or dialogue. Their slow movements are more varied in type, and the disparity in length and weightiness between the outer movements is less marked, even absent. A normal incidence of minor tonality is found. An opening movement such as the one in RV 157/P.361, constructed over a ground bass, would be inconceivable in a sinfonia, as it lacks the vital ingredient of panache.

It is strange that only one of these 'symphonic' concertos – RV 124 (op. 12 no. 3) – was published in Vivaldi's lifetime, when so many less distinguished examples by Albinoni and Alberti were printed and reprinted. In statistical terms, *concerti a quattro* fared badly beside solo concertos almost everywhere. De Brosse, hearing some in Venice in 1739, thought them uniquely appropriate for concerts in small gardens and regretted the ignorance of them in France.⁴⁶ Perhaps the manuscript set of 12 such concertos by Vivaldi preserved in the Paris Conservatoire Library represents some Frenchman's attempt to repair the omission.

The foregoing survey of Vivaldi's concertos has neglected to discuss in as great detail as many earlier studies the extent of their influence

⁴⁶ Op. cit., vol. i, p. 194f.

on the course of development of the concerto and the nascent pre-classical style. One problem is that after those crucial years in the second decade of the eighteenth century when the imitation of *L'estro armonico* was almost *de rigueur* among German and Italian composers, it becomes hard to distinguish between the continuing personal influence of Vivaldi and that re-transmitted and often refracted by his disciples. By the third decade one encounters concerto composers like Locatelli and Tartini whose music is both stylistically and formally in advance of Vivaldi's in many respects. Vivaldi is henceforth their beneficiary as well as one-time mentor. (Albinoni's relation to Vivaldi shows the same reversal of roles.) Where Vivaldi continued longest to be a vital influence on his contemporaries was perhaps in matters of instrumental technique and nuances of performance. His importance for the history of orchestration may have been exaggerated. In his search for novelty he introduced dozens of incidental innovations, but it was not his intention to consolidate them into a distinct practice which others could imitate. Taken as a whole, however, Vivaldi's achievement in the concerto is as remarkable as that of Monteverdi in opera or Haydn in the symphony.