

# Music essays - antonio vivaldi music



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## Antonio Vivaldi Music

ANTONIO VIVALDI 1678-1741

Antonio Vivaldi was born on March 4, 1678 in Venice, the Capital of the Republic of Venice and was the oldest of nine brothers and sisters. His father, Giovanni Battista, was the son of a tailor. Giovanni was a barber when Antonio was born and in 1685, became a full-time violinist at St. Mark's under the surname Rossi. His mother, Camilla Calicho, also happened to be the daughter of a tailor. When Antonio was born, he was immediately baptized by the midwife, most likely because an earthquake had shaken Venice earlier than day. His official church baptism did not take place until several months later.

Antonio Vivaldi entered the priesthood in 1693 and was ordained in 1703. During this time, Antonio was learned to play the violin with his father as his teacher. Within a year of his ordination, Antonio no longer wished to celebrate mass because he complained of “tightness of the chest” which was probably some type of asthma or nervous disorder. There were also rumors that he may have been faking the illness. Other stories describes times when Antonio left the altar in order to quickly jot down a musical idea in the sacristy. Obviously, he had become a priest against his own will, perhaps because training for the priesthood in those times was one way a boy from a poor family could obtain free schooling.

In December of 1703, Antonio became *maestro di violino* (master of violin) at an orphanage called the Pio Ospedale della Pietà (Devout Hospital of Mercy) in Venice. This was one of four such institutions in Venice. Although

termed an orphanage, this Ospedale was actually a home for the female children of nobleman and their numerous affairs with their mistresses therefore was well endowed by the anonymous fathers. The young ladies were well looked after and the musical standards were among the highest in Venice and the Ospedale's orchestra and choir was well renowned. Vivaldi wrote for them most of his concertos, cantatas, and sacred music. In 1704 the position of teacher of *viola all'inglese* was added to his duty as violin instructor. Vivaldi remained teaching at the Ospedale until 1709, when his appointment was not renewed. After a year as a free-lance musician working for the Teatro Sant' Angelo, an opera theater, he was recalled by the Ospedale with a unanimous vote in 1711. He became responsible for the musical activity of the institute in 1713 and was promoted to *maestro de' concerti* in 1716.

During his years at Ospedale della Pietà, Vivaldi wrote much of his music, including many operas and concerti. In 1705, the first collection of his works was published, *Raccolta*. In 1709 a second collection of 12 sonatas for violin & basso continuo, *Opus 2*, appeared. In 1711, twelve concerti he had written for one, two, and four violins with strings, *L'estro Armonico* (*Opus 3*), were published in Amsterdam by music publisher Estienne Roger. In 1713, the Ospedale della Pietà gave Vivaldi one month's leave in order to stage his first opera, *Ottone in villa*, in Vicenza. Get help with your essay from our expert essay writers...

The end of 1716 was a high point for Antonio Vivaldi as far as his theatrical activities were concerned. The Ospedale della Pietà performed his first great oratorio, *Judith Triumphans devicta Holofernis barbaric*, an allegorical

description of the victory of the Venetians over the Turks and the recapture of the island of Corfù in August of 1716. All eleven singing parts were performed by girls of the Pietà, both for the female and male characters. Many of the arias included parts by solo instruments that showcased girl's talents, recorders, oboes, clarinets, viola d'amore, and mandolins. Also in 1716, Vivaldi wrote and produced two more operas, *L'incoronazione di Dario* and *La costanza trionfante degli amori e degli odi*. His modern operatic style was not well accepted by other more conservative musicians, like Benedetto Marcello. Marcello was a magistrate and amateur musician and wrote a pamphlet called *Il teatro alla moda* against Vivaldi and the modern style of opera. The cover of the has a caricature of Vivaldi playing the violin.

Vivaldi moved to Mantua near the end of 1717 to take the position as Chamber Capellmeister of the court of the prince Phillip of Hesse-Darmstadt, the governor of Mantua. His job there involved providing operas, canatats, and concert music as well. He remained there for two or three years and produced several more operas, *Armida* and *Tito Manlio*.

In 1721, Vivaldi moved to Rome. His operas introduced the new style and the new pope Benedict XIII invited him to play for him. Vivaldi moved back to Venice in 1725 with aspiring young singer Anna Giraud, an acquaintance he met while in Mantua. She moved in with him as well as her sister, Paolina. According to Vivaldi, Anna was no more than a housekeeper and a good friend. He went on to produce four more operas in that year. Some time in this period between 1717 and 1725, Vivaldi wrote the *Four Seasons*, four violin concertos depicting natural scenes in music. The first concerto, "Spring," borrows motifs from a Sinfonia in the first act of his opera *Il Giustino*

which was written at the same time. The next three of the concerti are of original compositions. The inspiration for them is believed to be the countryside around Mantua. The concertos were a revolution in musical conception. Vivaldi represented flowing creeks, singing, barking dogs, buzzing mosquitoes, crying shepherds, storms, drunken dancers, silent nights, hunting parties (both from the hunter's and the prey's point of view), frozen landscapes, children ice-skating, and burning fires. Each concerto was associated with a sonnet written by Vivaldi, describing the scenes depicted in the music. These concertos were published in Amsterdam in 1725 as the first four of a collection of twelve, *Il cimento dell'Armonia e dell'Invention*, his Opus 8. The remaining concertos were *Storm at Sea*, *Pleasure*, and *The Hunt*. These concertos were enormously successful. In 1730, Vivaldi traveled to the music-loving city of Prague with his father and Anna Giraud. His opera *Farnace* was presented as well as two new operas during the 1730-1731 season.

Vivaldi's life ended in financial difficulties. He decided to sell off many of his manuscripts because they no longer held the popularity they once did in Venice. He ended up selling them off very cheaply in order to travel to Vienna. It is believed that Vivaldi moved to Vienna in 1740 or 1741 under the patronage of Charles VI who unfortunately died shortly after his arrival. Vivaldi himself passed away on July 28, 1741 due to "internal fire," most likely the asthma that plagued him his entire life. He was buried in a modest grave next to the Karlskirche in Vienna, at the site of the Technical Institute.

Vivaldi's compositions included over 500 concertos; 350 of which are for solo instrument and strings while about 230 are for violin. The remaining

compositions are for bassoon, cello, oboe, flute, viola d'amore, recorder, lute, and mandolin. He also composed 46 operas and 73 sonatas, in addition to chamber music and sacred music. His most famous work is believed to be *Le Quattro Stagioni* (The Four Seasons).