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VIVALDI

Opus 8 Vol. 1

The Four Seasons & other concertos

La Serenissima

Adrian Chandler *Director / Violin*

VIVALDI 8 VOLUME 1
THE FOUR SEASONS & OTHER CONCERTOS

Sponsored with the generous support of John Osborn CBE

Opus 8: *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione (libro primo)* 6 concertos for violin, strings & continuo; Concertos RV 170, RV 515

Concerto I: *La Primavera* in E, RV 269

1	Allegro	[3.25]
2	Largo	[2.35]
3	Allegro	[3.48]

Concerto II: *L'Estate* in g, RV 315

4	Allegro non molto – Allegro	[5.30]
5	Adagio – Presto – Adagio – Presto – Adagio – Presto – Adagio	[2.15]
6	Presto	[2.51]

Concerto III: *L'Autunno* in F, RV 293

7	Allegro – Larghetto – Allegro assai/molto	[5.51]
8	Adagio molto	[2.42]
9	Allegro	[3.36]

Concerto IV: *L'Inverno* in f, RV 297

10	Allegro non molto	[3.22]
11	Largo	[2.04]
12	Allegro – Lento – Allegro	[3.34]

Concerto V *La Tempesta di Mare* in E♭, RV 253

13	Presto – Adagio – Allegro	[2.50]
14	Largo	[2.20]
15	Presto	[3.58]

Concerto VI *Il Piacere* in C, RV 180

16	Allegro	[3.23]
17	Largo	[2.37]
18	Allegro	[3.12]

Concerto for violin, strings & continuo in C, RV 170

19	Presto	[3.03]
20	Largo	[3.46]
21	Allegro	[3.34]

Concerto for 2 violins, strings & continuo in E♭, RV 515

22	Allegro	[5.27]
23	Largo	[3.26]
24	Allegro	[3.58]

Total timings: [1.23.07]

LA SERENISSIMA · ADRIAN CHANDLER

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ANTONIO VIVALDI
Opus 8 concertos 1 – 6; concertos RV 170 & 515

The concertos that make up *Le quattro stagioni* (*The Four Seasons*) are probably the most famous pieces of classical music ever written, enchanting audiences globally since the Vivaldi revival of the early twentieth century. In the eighteenth century too, these works were immensely popular, prompting Vivaldi himself to rework the opening ritornello of *La Primavera* for inclusion in his operas *Giustino* and *Dorilla in Tempe*. This was the concerto that delighted above all others, even receiving the approval of King Louis XV of France who, on one occasion in 1730, demanded an impromptu performance.

Le quattro stagioni first gained great popularity when Vivaldi published the concertos as part of his Opus 8, *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* (*The Fusion of Harmony and Invention*). The collection was dedicated to the Bohemian Count Wenzel von Morzin for whom (according to its dedicatory epistle) Vivaldi served as *Maestro di Musica in Italia*. One of the most original characteristics of these works is the programmatic element found in both the descriptive tags given to each section and also the sonnets which accompany each concerto (probably written by Vivaldi himself) to which Vivaldi provides cues in the score through a series of letters.

The Opus 8 was published in Amsterdam, c1725 by the house of Le Cene. The composer's autograph manuscript (presumably sent to Amsterdam for their engraving) has since been lost but in Manchester, there survives a set of parts in the hand of one of Vivaldi's main copyists. These were probably prepared at Antonio's behest in around 1726 to be presented to Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni[1]. Although this source postdates the Amsterdam publication, it is possible that it transmits an earlier version of the concerti.

Vivaldi's aforementioned epistle states that these concertos were not freshly composed for

1. On Ottoboni's death, much of his music library was sold off in order to pay for huge debts incurred through his lavish musical entertainments. A large number of concerti by Vivaldi and other (Italian) composers were bought by Edward Holdsworth in 1742 on behalf of Handel's friend and occasional librettist, Charles Jennens. On Jennens' death in 1773, the manuscripts passed through the hands of a succession of Earls of Aylesford before being purchased at auction in 1918 by Handel scholar Sir Newman Flower. Shortly after his death in 1965, this collection was bequeathed to the Henry Watson Library, Manchester, where it remains to this day.

the publication, but that their inclusion was due to the fact that they had 'so long enjoyed the indulgence of Your Most Illustrious Lordship's kind generosity'; he then adds that 'I have added to them besides the sonnets a very clear statement of all the things that unfold in them, so that I am sure they will appear new to you.'

Although there are differences between the two surviving sources, particularly regarding the usage of articulations and phrasing, if one delves further into the musical text transmitted by the Amsterdam publication, it is possible to find plenty of references to the Manchester version, particularly where a 'new' version has not been carried through to all the parts in a consistent manner. Is it possible that Vivaldi employed one of his copyists to prepare the score to be sent to Amsterdam resulting in rather a large haul of errors? Another possibility is that some of the (more obvious) changes made to the work are in fact mistakes made by the Amsterdam engravers. Given the complexity of the music, the presence of the sonnets and additional captions, it is understandable that a piece that conveys so much information can become somewhat confused when engraved for publication; this is still a major problem when editing the work using modern computer software.

The subjects of *The Four Seasons* and its closely related *Ages of Man*[2] appeared widely throughout the European arts of the post-Renaissance, inspired by the Arcadian poetry of Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*. An educated man of Vivaldi's day would have been schooled in the classical texts and their more modern counterparts in addition to the art of rhetoric, which helped artists, orators, musicians and writers to disseminate their ideas[3]. Vivaldi's own writings show a knowledge of these ancient texts, the first sonnet containing strong echoes of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*[4].

Invention, or *inventio*, to which Vivaldi alludes in his title, was one of the five key parts of rhetoric. Painters used this concept to draw inspiration for their pictorial composition whilst composers

2. *The Four Seasons* are often depicted as different stages of human life: childhood, youth, middle age, and old age.
3. The playwright Carlo Goldoni with whom Vivaldi worked in 1735 refers to the study of rhetoric in his *Mémoires* (Paris, 1787).
4. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*; v.737 – 740. Vivaldi scholar Paul Everett has also identified some astonishing parallels between Vivaldi's sonnets and Milton's *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso* suggesting that both works draw on a common Latin or Italian source.

used a similar process to help develop 'figures' in order to express their ideas or affects in much the same way. Vivaldi's experience as a composer of opera must have come in very handy for *Le quattro stagioni* as it becomes apparent that several themes present here can be found among stock aria-types of baroque opera, including Birds (*Spring* (i) & *Summer* (i)), Storm (*Spring* (i), *Summer* (i – iii)), Sleep/Slumber (*Spring* (ii), *Summer* (ii), *Autumn* (ii), *Winter* (ii)), Hunting (*Autumn* (iii)) and War (*Winter* (iii)). In addition to these we can find various *affetti* and *concetti* (affects and concepts), devices that the operatic composer used in a rhetorical way (as opposed to 'feelings') to communicate with his audience including *natura, calma, fede, amore, malinconia* and *sospetto* (nature, calm, faith, love, melancholy and suspicion).

Also worth noting is the opening theme of *La Primavera*, which makes its sole appearance in the opening bars of the concerto (one can only have a beginning once) and the use of E major and f minor for the opening and closing keys of these four concertos. These represent the most extreme keys used by Vivaldi in terms of number of sharps (4 - E major) and number of flats (4 - f minor). When viewed as a collection of concertos that are not cyclical, but that are instead related to the *Ages of Man* (representing the passage of life from birth through to death), it makes total sense for Vivaldi to end in a key as far removed from E major as possible.

Other features to point out include the use of the dog – the personification of Melancholy – in conjunction with the key of c sharp minor in *La Primavera*; the cuckoo, the first bird of *L'Estate* foretelling doom for the unfortunate lover, his emotional state of mind shown through the means of the storm in this concerto's finale (a common operatic device); the recycling of rhythmic material from *La Primavera* in *L'Autunno*; echoes of the heat of *L'Estate* in the coming of the *Sirocco* in *L'Inverno.*

Presented with such an apparently complex design, one wonders whether *Le quattro stagioni* has an overall allegorical plan and indeed, whether this can be pursued through the other concerti of the Opus 8[5]. For the *libro primo*, Vivaldi at least provides a title for every single concerto.

5. Even when presented with untitled instrumental music, given the stock rhetorical figures used by Vivaldi and others, is it really possible that these can be used in an abstract way?

Interestingly, the concerto that follows *Le quattro stagioni* is *La tempesta di mare* (*Sea Storm*), a topic which had fascinated artists and writers for centuries.

'For four and twenty houres the storme in a restlesse tumult, had blowne so exceedingly, as we could not apprehend in our imaginations any possibility of greater violence, yet did wee still finde it, not onely more terrible, but more constant, fury added to fury, and one storme urging a second more outragious than the former.' *(A true reportory of the wracke, and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Knight, William Strachey, 1625)*

When the above account was published, the publisher, Samuel Purchas, described it as 'A terrible storme expressed in a patheticall and retorical description'. The pamphlet was an eyewitness account of the real-life shipwreck of *The Sea Venture* off the coast of Bermuda in 1609. As well as accidentally starting England's colonisation of that particular Atlantic archipelago, it is also generally accepted that this text was one of the sources drawn on by Shakespeare for *The Tempest* (1610-11).

Tempests and shipwrecks were by no means new to writers and artists. The Bible contains several 'stormy' passages (for example, Jonah and the whale; Christ asleep in the storm; Psalm 107) whilst ancient writers such as Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Tatius also penned breathtaking accounts of storms. Descriptions of storms were set as basic exercises in the classical world's schools of rhetoric, and in rhetorical theory they were used as suitable subjects for a *descriptio* (or part of a declamation). It is no surprise therefore, that this rich repertory had a profound effect on the Arts of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance: man's frailty in the face of natural violence was a theme that could be exploited again and again, particularly in an age where an understanding of classical rhetoric was considered to be essential. For someone such as Vivaldi, who must have seen many a storm sweeping across the Venetian lagoon, the subject of *La tempesta di mare* must have been most tempting.

Vivaldi composed at least three concertos upon which he bestowed the above title or similar. Probably the earliest was a chamber concerto (subsequently arranged for flute and strings, and again for flute, oboe, violin, bassoon and strings); there was also a concerto in G major for violin (now lost) and finally, the present concerto in E♭, again for violin, included as part of his Opus 8.

In addition, one can find many 'storm' arias in

his vocal music (both sacred and secular) often (particularly in his secular works) representing the tempestuous nature of love; after all, not only is the analogy easy for an audience to understand, but Vivaldi was presumably aware that Venus (or Aphrodite) was both goddess of love and protector of sailors. Thus, it is unsurprising that one finds similar 'figures' used in both La tempesta di mare and the depiction of the storm in the finale to *L'Estate* (*Summer*).

It is frustrating that Vivaldi abandons the use of both sonnets and captions from *La tempesta* onwards. However, with *La tempesta*, one can glean an understanding of what Vivaldi probably had in mind if we look at the similarly titled *Concerto XII* from Lorenzo Gaetano Zavateri's Opus 1. This work, like *Le quattro stagioni*, includes captions such as *Principio di cattivo tempo* (beginning of the bad weather); *Vento contrario* (headwinds); *Pioggia con tuoni* (rain with thunder); and *La Tempesta* (the storm). Of considerable interest, however, is the final caption of the first movement and the overall caption for the second movement: *Voti al cielo* (prayers to heaven) and *Navicella in calma* (the boat in the calm), both of which confirm that the concerto isn't a simple musical tableau of a storm, but of a boat *in* a storm. The similarity of musical figures used both by Zavateri and Vivaldi is uncanny.

The placement of this concerto within the Opus 8 - hot on the heels of *Le quattro stagioni* - is revealing. *The Four Seasons*, closely related to *The Ages of Man* can be viewed as a musical *memento mori* reminding the listener that death comes to everyone; *La Tempesta* then reinforces the idea of man's perilous existence before the concerto *Il piacere* warns the listener against the dangers of (excessive?) pleasure.

The idea of 'pleasure' today is wide-ranging to say the least, but in the eighteenth century too, it encompassed a variety of activities from the refined to the bawdy and perverse. Such activities were popular in high society and led, for instance, to the formation of the first Hellfire Club in London in 1718 (only a few years before the publication of Vivaldi's Opus 8) whose interests included sex, satanism and secret societies. It is easy to understand Vivaldi's musical (and maybe priestly!) warning contained within the jarring melodic twists of the slow movement.

During his lifetime, Vivaldi composed around 500 concertos, mostly for a single soloist with an accompaniment of strings and continuo; the bulk of these were probably written for the chapel of

the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian foundling hospital which provided Vivaldi with significant periods of employment throughout his career. Concertos for a single soloist – or even with no soloist at all – would suffice for most services held in the chapel, but sometimes the occasion demanded something a little more celebratory. For special religious festivals, Vivaldi composed either grandiose solo concertos or concertos with more than one soloist. The largest group of these works is a body of around 40 concertos written for identical pairs of instruments with a further 15 for contrasting instruments such as violin and organ, violin and oboe, and violin and cello. Only three – for viola d'amore and lute, oboe and bassoon and for oboe and cello – survive in single examples.

As in his solo concertos, the violin is the instrument for which Vivaldi composed the bulk of his double concertos. Around thirty concertos for two violins survive spanning a period between 1711 and 1740. It is difficult to assign dates to many of Vivaldi's instrumental compositions, but we suspect that the concerto in E♭ (RV 515) probably dates from the late 1730s; this work is heavily influenced by the gallant style, a fashion that Vivaldi embraced increasingly towards the end of his life in order to keep abreast of the trends emanating from modish Neapolitan composers such as Hasse, Porpora and Vinci. The techniques required by both violinists show exactly why Vivaldi's reputation as a great violinist was undisputed (even by his critics) and why his pupils from the Pietà such as Anna Maria were said to be among the finest violinists in Europe.

The concerto for solo violin in C (RV 170), one of around 250 such works, probably comes from an earlier period of Vivaldi's career, most likely the early 1710s. Although one cannot categorically say, the hint of polyphonic writing in the opening movement and the wrenching tutti sections of the slow movement would suggest that this was a work again composed for the chapel of the Ospedale della Pietà.

LA SERENISSIMA

Recognised for 'whipping up a storm with Vivaldi', La Serenissima is 'one of Britain's best-loved chamber orchestras' (*The Telegraph*) known for championing a host of neglected Italian baroque composers and its outstanding performances. Uniquely, the group's entire repertoire is edited from source material by founder and violinist, Adrian Chandler OSI. La Serenissima plays to a global audience of millions, evidenced by 1.3m monthly listeners on Spotify alone and regularly features on international radio (BBC Radio 3, Radio:24, Sveriges Radio), advertising (Beats, 2022) and film (*Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, 2020). La Serenissima albums have topped the UK Classical Chart (2018) and won two Gramophone Awards (2010 & 2017).

La Serenissima has performed throughout the UK and internationally in concert series and festivals including London Festival of Baroque Music, MustonenFest (Estonia), Handel-Festspiele (Germany), Valletta International Baroque Festival (Malta) and International Cervantes Festival (Mexico). The group celebrates its 30th Anniversary at London's Wigmore Hall during 2024-5 with a Residency 'The A-Z of the Italian Baroque' and is proud to have as its Honorary Patron, His Excellency The Ambassador of Italy to the UK.

www.laserenissima.co.uk

ADRIAN CHANDLER OSI

Director / Violin

Born on Merseyside in 1974, Adrian Chandler is recognised internationally as a leading interpreter of Italian baroque music with an 'avant-garde approach that would have awed Hendrix' (The Guardian). Adrian founded La Serenissima in 1994, channelling his love affair with Vivaldi into a lifetime's mission. He has performed and directed a host of recitals, concertos and operas for major festivals and his performances have been broadcast by radio stations throughout the world.

Through his research, Adrian has created an extensive catalogue of music by Italian baroque composers from Ariosti to Zavateri. During the 2020 UK lockdown, he edited a Vivaldi violin concerto daily reaching fans, musicians and scholars across the globe via social media. His landmark recording of *The Devil's Trill* sonata in 2024 prompted Gramophone to write: 'He's a violinist-shaped tornado.' Adrian regularly guest-directs concerts abroad, including recent projects for Concerto Copenhagen and Deutsche Philharmonie Merck. He was awarded the honour of 'Cavaliere' of the Order of the Star of Italy for his services to Italian baroque music in 2022.

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PERFORMERS & INSTRUMENTS

Adrian Chandler, *violin & director*
Rowland Ross, Guildford, 1981, after Amati

Oliver Cave, *violin I (violin II solo in RV 515)*
Martin Hilsden, UK, 1985 after anonymous c1650

Henrietta Haynes, *violin I*
Longman and Broderip, No.26 Cheapside, London, C18

Abel Balazs, *violin I*
John Betts, London, c.1800 on loan from The Harrison-Frank Family Foundation

Samuel Staples, *violin II*
Anon, c1780

Camilla Scarlett, *violin II*
Rowland Ross, Hampshire, 1996, after Amati

Ellen Bundy, *violin II*
Kloz Family, Mittenwald, c1780

James O'Toole, *violin II*
Anon, c1750, Tyrol

Oliver Wilson, *viola*
Eric Mawby, UK, 2012, after Guarneri

Thomas Kirby, *viola*
Bernd Hiller, Germany, 2006

Sam Kennedy, *viola*
Willibrord Crijnen, Amsterdam, after C18

Vladimir Waltham, *continuo cello*
Anon., c1710, Venice

Carina Drury, *cello*
Maker unknown, Italy, c1850

Jan Zahourek, *double bass*
Domenico Busan, 1756, Venice

Lynda Sayce, *archlute, theorbo and baroque guitar*
Archlute by Ivo Magherini, Koper, Slovenia, 2013. Theorbo in A: Michael Lowe, Wootton-by-Woodstock, 2000, after iconography c.1700
Baroque guitar: Ivo Magherini, Bremen, 2002, after Giovanni Tesler, Ancona, 1620

Robin Bigwood, *harpsichord, organ*
Alan Gotto, Norwich, 2024, after Florentine (?) C18 (harpsichord)
Hauptwerk, digitisation of organ by Pietro Nacchini (c1730), Izola, Slovenia (organ)

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Recording Engineer – Dave Rowell (Filo Classical)
Recording Producer – Simon Fox-Gál
Mix and mastering – Simon Fox-Gál

Editions – Adrian Chandler
The harpsichord used in this recording is based on an anonymous Italian instrument, made by Alan Gotto (Norwich UK) for La Serenissima, in 2024.
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Pitch – A = 440 Hz
Tuning Temperament – Vallotti & Young prepared by Robin Bigwood
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