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**Antonio Lucio Vivaldi** was a virtuoso violinist, composer, and music teacher.

*Vivaldi Unmasked. Hong Kong City Chamber Orchestra [8.53]*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iqA8AUwd1o>

Mainly known for composing instrumental concertos, sacred choral works, and more than 40 operas, we know him best for his most famous series of violin concertos:

### ***The Four Seasons***

Vivaldi epitomises Italian Baroque music, composing over 800 works (RV 1– 820). During his life time his music and influence was widespread throughout Europe.

*Four Seasons for Viola. David Aaron Carpenter. [2.38]*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaCkedXrVHs>

## Born 4 March 1678

Vivaldi was born in Venice to Camilla and Giovanni. He had five known siblings. He was baptised by the midwife immediately after birth due to his poor health, his mother dedicated him to the priesthood. His official church baptism took place two months later.

His father was a man of many talents, a barber and professional violinist, he taught his young son to play the violin to a virtuoso standard. Giovanni was appointed to the orchestra of the **San Marco Basilica** in 1685, and in 1696 Vivaldi made his first public appearance there playing with his father.





## 1693 -1703: The Priesthood

He entered the priesthood at the age of 15 and studied for 10 years receiving Holy Orders at the age of 25, in 1703.

Throughout his life Vivaldi suffered from what he called “strettezza di petto” (tightness of the chest) - this severe asthma affected his speech, and made him weak and dizzy when he spoke. He was given a dispensation from celebrating Mass, but he remained a priest all his life.

Vivaldi's crop of curly red hair, inherited from his father, prompted his friends to nickname him - the **Red Priest**. His father was just nicknamed ‘Rossi’ or ‘Redhead’.



## 1700: The Trio Sonata in G. RV 820

This piece is the earliest known work by Vivaldi and was listed in the RV Catalog in 2015, and dated between 1700 and 1703.

It was identified by Federico Sardelli who is updating the catalog – and he believes this work is key to understanding Vivaldi’s early years and musical training.

It presents a different Vivaldi to the one we are used to, showing that the young Vivaldi was clearly influenced by the masters of the 17th century such **Corelli, Bonporti and Torelli**.

But it is easy to see that some new and original ideas are starting to blossom in this early work which is important in understanding the roots of Vivaldi’s style and the changes in musical taste that happened at the beginning of the 18th century.

*1700 - Trio Sonata in G. Lux Terrae Baroque Ensemble. [9.40]*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT2j2JgP1yk>



## 1703 – 1740: The Ospedale della Pietà

At 25 Vivaldi was appointed Master of Violin at the Ospedale della Pietà (Devout Hospital of Mercy), which was one of four Ospedale or hospitals in Venice.

*More information about the Hospital:*

<https://www.barbaraquick.com/history-vivaldis-virgins>

<https://www.barbaraquick.com/ospedale>

A few years later he was appointed Conductor of the orchestra at the Pietà. Under his direction, the orchestra gave many brilliant concerts and achieved an international reputation.





A basso continuo is, in 17th and 18th century music, the bass line and keyboard part that provides an harmonic framework for a piece of music

## 1705: Twelve Trio Sonatas, Op. 1

His first collection of music was published by Giuseppe Sala – collectively known as Opus 1 and written for **two violins and basso continuo**:

### Sonata No. 1 in G minor, RV 73

Sonata No. 2 in E minor, RV 67

Sonata No. 3 in C major, RV 61

Sonata No. 4 in E major, RV 66

Sonata No. 5 in F major, RV 69

Sonata No. 6 in D major, RV 62

Sonata No. 7 in E-flat major, RV 65

Sonata No. 8 in D minor, RV 64

Sonata No. 9 in A major, RV 75

Sonata No. 10 in B-flat major, RV 78

Sonata No. 11 in B minor, RV 79

Sonata No. 12 in D minor "La Follia", RV 63

VOLINO PRIMO.  
**S VONATE**  
**DA CAMERA**  
A Trè due Violini, e Violone o Cembalo  
**CONSCRATE**  
*All' Illustrissimo, & Eccellenissimo signor Conte*  
**ANNIBALE**  
**GAMBARA**  
NOBILE VENETO & c.  
Da D. Antonio Vivaldi Musico di Violino  
Professore Veneto  
**OPERA PRIMA.**

IN VENETIA. Da Giuseppe Sala. M. D. CCV.  
*Si Vendono à S. Gio: Grisostimo All'Insegna del Rè Duoi.*

Trio Sonata Op.1 No1. G minor. RV 73. [7.45]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLx9DhwEuDk>



## 1715: Gloria in D Major, RV589

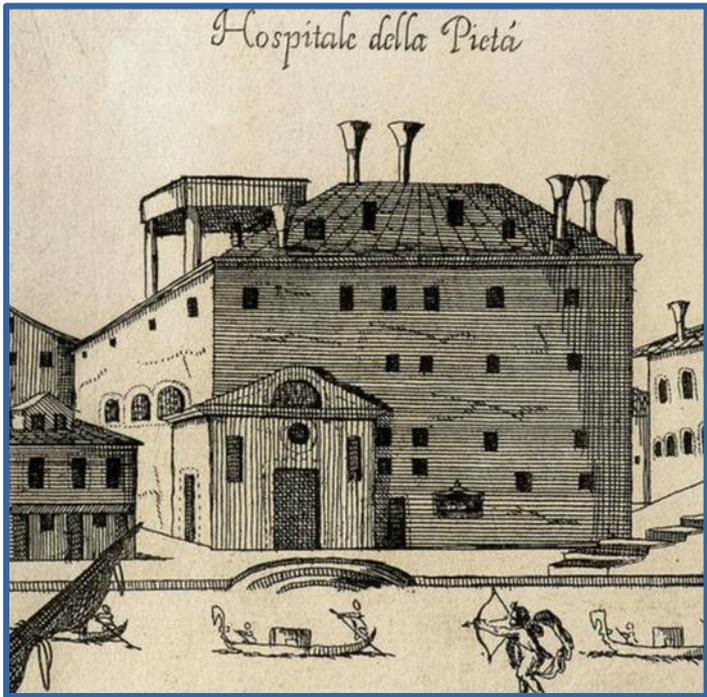
Vivaldi wrote at least three “Glorias” based on the 4th century hymn “***Gloria in excelsis Deo***”.

Only RV 588 and RV 589 have survived.

This version is a familiar and popular piece among his sacred works. Incredibly, following the first performance, this resplendent Baroque favourite gathered dust in a pile of the composer’s manuscripts until it was discovered in the 1920’s.

*Gloria 7 - Domine fili unigenite. At Ospedale della Pieta. [2.21]*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAr-M5i6v08>



## About the Ospedale della Pietà

It was founded in 1346 and was a convent, orphanage, and music school. Its purpose was to give shelter and education to boys and girls who were abandoned or orphaned, deformed, or whose families could not support them. There were 3 similar institutions in Venice, and all were funded by the Republic.

Infants could be left at the Pietà via a “scaffetta”, or baby door in the wall, which was only large enough to hold infants.

The boys learned a trade and left at fifteen. The most talented girls received a musical education, and could stay to become members of the Ospedale's renowned all female orchestra and choir, which attracted tourists and patrons from all over Europe.

*The girls had three options:*

- *to remain in the hospital*
- *to enter the convent or*
- *to get married*

*Each girl had a bank account and took a part of the money collected during the concerts - if they left the hospital to marry they then had a dowry.*

*Vivaldi's Women, BBC Documentary. [59.00]*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efonp34pV2E>

## Vivaldi's Women – No Men Required!

“Gloria Patri” from Dixit Dominus. RV595.

Women sang the bass and tenor parts:

- Margaret Jackson-Roberts (shown here centre) sings the bass part of **Anna dal Basso** (1670-1742), a documented bass singer at the Pietà.
- Victoria Couper on the left sings the contralto part of **Cecilia dal Contralto** (1679-1726).
- Penny Vickers on the right sings the tenor part of **Paulina dal Tenor** (1675-1748).

Vivaldi's women challenged the stereotype which assumes the female voice is naturally high and that it is wrong for them to sing low. Dr John Kitchen of Edinburgh University, says this was not so unusual as “*Women were doing far more in the musical world at this time than the history books would have us believe.*”

*Gloria Patri from Dixit Dominus. Vivaldi's Women. [3.38]*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JPKCfvhuyM>





*Academics are puzzled as to how Il Gran Mogol arrived in Scotland. One theory is that it was acquired by flute-playing nobleman Lord Robert Kerr, son of the 3rd Marquess, on a Grand Tour of Europe in the early 1700s.*

## Vivaldi's Lost Works

He wrote over 800 works, but his music was rarely played after his death in 1741, when his manuscripts were sold off or locked away. But his music is gradually being rediscovered:

- In 2010 his Flute Concerto, **Il Gran Mogol** (The Great Mogul), RV 431a, was found among the Marquess of Lothian's archives in Edinburgh.

*Played here by Elizaveta Katerinchuk, aged 8. [4.50]*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icmb5JIRwm0>

- In 2012, an unknown manuscript of his opera "**Orlando Furioso**" (RV 819) was found in Turin. The work is dated 1714, 13 years before he composed the version popularly performed today.



## About Opera in Venice

With the large number of overseas guests, entertainment was foremost in Venice. In 1637 during the ***Carnival of Venice***, a play '**rappresentata in musica**' (represented in music) was performed for the very first time – it was a great success — Opera was born and it spread like wildfire. With 20 venues, Venice had the largest number of theatres in the world.

In 1677, the **Teatro San Angelo** opened its doors on the campo of the same name. Tiny, chaotic, cheap and extremely productive, it was renowned for its operas, musicians and sets.

This effervescence owes much to Vivaldi who, from 1705, regularly premiered his operas there and acted as impresario together with his father. He invited other composers such as the young **Chelleri** and **Ristori** to stage their operas at the Teatro San Angelo.



# ORLANDO

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## 1714: The Opera 'Orlando Furioso'. RV 819.

**Orlando Furioso** is an Italian epic poem by Ariosto which first appeared in 1516 and was published complete in 1532. The real Orlando was an 8th-century military leader who served the Frankish warrior king Charlemagne.

This opera combines magic, heroism and comedy to tell the story of Orlando, a noble knight who falls desperately in love with the pagan princess Angelica. She is in love with another man! There is a feisty fiancée who disguises herself as a man to rescue her bewitched lover Orlando, and a magic ring that helps ensure everything ends happily ever after.

In 1980 **Dallas Opera** revived *Orlando Furioso* 266 years after it was composed. It is a great place to start when it comes to the many operas Vivaldi is known to have composed.

*An Animated Guide to Vivaldi's opera Orlando Furioso.* [1.40]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnmmlTtqmx8>

*Orlando Furioso. "Ah! fuggi rapido". Roberta Marni, Soprano.* [3.00]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZFr5iPYWCU>

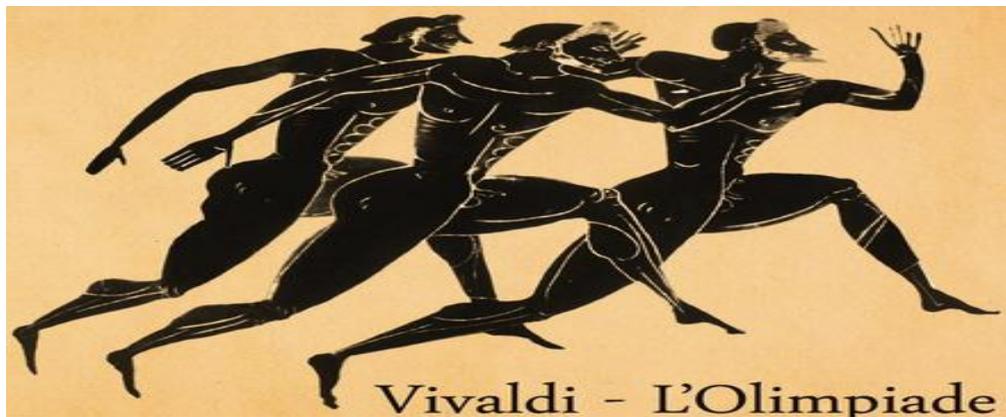


Countertenor Kangmin Justin Kim  
singing Megacle's aria  
"Lo seguitai felice".

## 1734: The Opera L'Olimpiade. RV 725.

The most celebrated of Vivaldi's operas, L'Olimpiade, is set in Ancient Greece, and is about two friends who are both in love with women they are forbidden to meet.

The plot involves a series of misunderstandings of identity, resulting in a drowning, near-assassination and near-suicide based at the time of the Olympic Games.



*L'Olimpiade. Lo seguitai felice. [5.30]*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqpRar6MMKk>

## 1741: Vienna and Death

Like many composers of the time, Vivaldi faced financial difficulties in later years. His compositions were no longer held in such high esteem; changing musical tastes quickly made them out of date.

In response, Vivaldi chose to sell off large numbers of his manuscripts at paltry prices to finance his move to Vienna where he hoped for the support of Emperor Charles VI.

However, the Emperor died soon after Vivaldi's arrival which left the composer without any royal protection or a steady source of income. Soon afterwards, Vivaldi became impoverished and died of an internal infection during the night of 27 July 1741, aged 63. His funeral took place at **St. Stephen's Cathedral** and he was buried in a simple grave in a burial ground that was owned by the hospital.

*A modern version of The Storm, Four Seasons. [3.05]  
Greek composer Yiannis Chryssomallis - aka Yanni  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suy4PZpl2RY>*

*Vivaldi Monument, Vienna*



## Longer videos:

**Vivaldi Documentary** [1.48.00]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7o3m7Pv6ZPc>

**Vivaldi and the Ospedale della Pietà.** [1.06.40]

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecoJ8Cxe1\\_s&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecoJ8Cxe1_s&t=3s)

Kerry Graham discusses life at the Ospedale della Pietà, and the music that Vivaldi wrote while teaching there from 1703-1740. The Salt Spring Baroque Music Society is a non-profit organization founded by Kerry Graham.

