

Antonio Vivaldi

“There are no words, it’s only music there.”

Antonio Lucio Vivaldi was an Italian composer born in Venice in 1678. As a child, Vivaldi first learned music from his father, a violinist. Later, the two began touring Venice and performing together.

Vivaldi received music lessons from renowned Italian composer, Giovanni Legrenzi and wrote his first piece by the age of 13. Two years later he began his 10 year journey towards becoming a priest and, in 1703, began teaching children at an orphanage in Ospedale della Pietà, where he was appointed violin master.

In 1711, Vivaldi’s concertos for violin and string orchestra *Op. 3, L'estro armónico* was published. He then made his debut as a composer of church vocal music and achieved great success. Vivaldi received commissions from institutions, European nobility and royalty; whereas later Emperor Charles VI of Austria honoured him by publicly naming Vivaldi a knight.

Vivaldi helped establish the fast-slow-fast tempo of concerti, in what later became known as a classical three-movement concerti. In perfecting the structure, his works have been used as models by Baroque composers such as Johannes Sebastian Bach. Vivaldi’s musical writings for solo violin reflect in the eloquent technicality written for the instrument.

Vivaldi’s musical oeuvre is extensive and consists of operas, oratorios, secular music, and concerti. Amongst his most celebrated works is *Le quattro Stagioni ‘The Four Seasons’*, which consists of four violin pieces; Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. It was written between the years 1720-1723 and published with accompanying poems as a narrative element. This work is considered to be one of the earliest and most comprehensive examples of programme music.



DID YOU KNOW?

Vivaldi documented that he produced 94 operas, however only 50 of them have been found so far, some were discovered in the 1920s and the most recent was discovered only in 2006!

FUN FACT

Vivaldi was known as “il Prete Rosso” (the Red Priest) because of his red hair.

MUSICAL TERM

Programme music: A form of instrumental music intended to convey a scene, mood, or narrative.

