

JUPITER ENSEMBLE

THOMAS DUNFORD, lute and Artistic Director
LEA DESANDRE, mezzo-soprano
LOUISE AYRTON, violin
AUGUSTA McKAY LODGE, violin
MANAMI MIZUMOTO, viola
BRUNO PHILIPPE, cello
DOUGLAS BALLIETT, double bass
TOM FOSTER, harpsichord & organ

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

Vedrò con mio diletto

from *Il Giustino* RV717

(approx. 6 minutes)

Armatae face et anguibus

from *Juditha triumphans* RV 644

(approx. 4 minutes)

Lute Concerto in C major RV 82

Allegro non molto – Larghetto – Allegro

(approx. 9 minutes)

Cum dederit

from *Nisi Dominus* RV 608

(approx. 5 minutes)

Lute Concerto in D major RV 93

Allegro giusto – Largo – Allegro

(approx. 11 minutes)

L'inverno (Winter) in f minor, RV 297, Op. 8, No. 4

Allegro non molto

Largo

Allegro

(approx. 10 minutes)

Gelido in ogni vena

from ***Il Farnace* RV 711**

(approx. 11 minutes)

Gelosia, tu già rendi l'alma mia

from ***Ottone in Villa* RV 729**

(approx. 3 minutes)

Cello Concerto in G minor RV 416

Allegro – Adagio – Allegro

(approx. 10 minutes)

Onde chiare che sussurate

from ***Ercole sul Termodonte* RV 710**

(approx. 7 minutes)

Scenderò, volerò griderò

from ***Ercole sul Termodonte* RV 710**

(approx. 2 minutes)

THE MUSIC OF ANTONIO VIVALDI

If Baroque music seems fresh and alive to us today much of the credit must go to Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), whose rhythmically punchy, harmonically colourful and formally innovative scores influenced virtually every composer of his generation.

He is largely credited with establishing the style and form of the three-movement Baroque concerto and for pioneering the idea of scene-painting and story-telling in orchestral music. His pictorial writing for orchestra is nowhere better known than in the four violin concertos that make up his *Four Seasons*, which remains one of the most popular and recognizable works from the Baroque era.

Vivaldi's musical output was vast, comprising over 500 concertos, dozens of operas, a significant amount of sacred music as well as numerous works for chamber ensemble. Much of it was composed for performance by the talented young girls that he taught at the Ospedale della Pietà orphanage in Venice, where he worked off and on in various capacities from 1703 to well into the 1730s. But his fame extended far beyond the city of his birth and his operas were performed not only in the three opera houses of Venice but in Rome, Florence, Mantua, Verona, Prague and Vienna, as well.

Like his compatriot Gioacchino Rossini a century later, he had a gift for unusual sonic “hooks” that would tickle and captivate the ears of his listeners. His orchestral textures are usually quite thin, their harmonic colouring perfectly transparent due to his preference for simple, functional bass lines with little relation to the upper parts.

He often used pulsing ostinato rhythms to create an undercurrent of visceral excitement against which fits of virtuoso playing or coloratura singing often erupt with explosive force. His is the archetypal ‘accessible’ type of Baroque music that comes ready-made to please and to intrigue with its wide range of titillating musical effects and sonic surprises.

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Vivaldi was largely forgotten by the end of the 18th century, except by violinists who continued to study – and marvel at – his innovations in violin technique. The mid-20th century saw a revival of interest in his music due mainly to the discovery of a large number of manuscripts, leading to the publication, begun in 1947, of a complete works edition from the G. G. Malipiero publishing house and a major monograph on the composer by French musicologist Marc Pincherle in 1948.

The standard reference numbers used to identify Vivaldi's works are from the Ryom-Verzeichnis (RV) catalogue compiled by Danish musicologist Peter Ryom (b. 1937).

Vedrò con mio diletto

from *Il Giustino* RV717

Vedrò con mio diletto
l'alma dell' alma mia
Il core del mio cor pien di contento.

I will see, to my delight
the soul of my soul,
the heart of my heart, filled with joy.

E se dal caro oggetto
lungi convien che sia
Sospirerò penando ogni momento

And if from my beloved object
I am to be for long
I will sufferingly sigh each moment.

Vivaldi's *Il Giustino*, which premiered in Rome in 1724, celebrates the life and rise to power of the Emperor Justin I, who ruled the Byzantine Empire from 518 to 527 AD. As is customary in such operatic tales, love interest and political interest intertwine, creating a complex plot line rife with court intrigue and emotional turmoil.

In the opera's first act, the Emperor Anastasio – sung by a castrato since women were not allowed on the stage in the Papal States – regrets having to leave his wife, the Empress Ariane, before heading off into battle. Normally such a setting would require a bravura aria in which the singer spits with rage and splutters with determination to dance on the skulls of his foes – or words to that effect. But here Vivaldi defies tradition to create a more tender and intimate portrait of a loving husband and reluctant warrior.

The accompaniment is typical of Vivaldi's style of orchestration, with a pulsing ostinato of chords that change harmonies one voice at a time over a bass line largely based on a chromatically descending line in the manner of a passacaglia, reminiscent of *When I am laid in earth* from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. The melody line in this da capo aria is replete with wistful passages of sequential repetition that show off the singer's voice to advantage.

Armatae face et anguibus

from *Juditha triumphans* RV 644

Armatae face et anguibus
a caeco regno squallido
furoris sociae barbari,
furiae, venite ad nos.

Morte, flagello, stragibus
vindictam tanti funeris
irata nostra pectora
duces docete vos.

Armed with a firebrand and serpents
from your kingdom blind with filth,
oh barbarous companions of rage,
Furies, come to us!

With death, a scourge, and slaughter
teach our enraged hearts
to take vengeance
for our murdered leader.

Vivaldi's *Juditha triumphans* (Judith triumphant) is a 'military' oratorio in Latin composed in 1716 for the girls of the Ospedale della Pietà, who sang all 11 roles in the work. Set in ancient times when the land of Israel faced annihilation at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's Assyrian army, it tells the apocryphal story of how the ravishingly beautiful Judith wins entrance into the tent of the Assyrian general Holofernes and beheads him when he falls asleep, thus saving Israel from destruction.

For the Venetians this storyline was more than just an instructive moral tale from ancient history. It was a patriotic allegory of recent military events, with the virtuous Judith representing Venice itself and Holofernes representing the Ottoman Turks who had just recently been forced off the island of Corfu by armed forces loyal to the Venetians.

Armatae face et anguibus is a 'fury' aria sung by Vagaus, Holofernes' eunuch who, having discovered the headless body of his master, summons the avenging Furies to exact revenge for his murder. This aria requires not only a convincing theatrical presence on stage but also an extraordinary degree of vocal agility and breath control, especially in over-the-top melismatic passages such as this:



With regard to this aria, some have wondered if Vivaldi might have been savouring the multi-layered irony of a young girl singing the role of a eunuch that would normally be sung by a castrato.

Lute Concerto in C major, RV 82

Stravinsky is famously said to have sniffed that Vivaldi did not write 500 concertos but rather the same concerto 500 times. And a certain regularity of form and procedure is indeed noticeable in Vivaldi's concertos.

They all consist of three movements, many of them in binary (two-part) form, with each half repeated. This pattern of repetition allows the soloist, like the singer of a da capo aria, the freedom to 'riff' on the melody line the second time through to create a more varied listening experience for the audience.

Vivaldi's Lute Concerto in C major is also known as his Trio Sonata in C major since its simple three-part texture of violin, lute and continuo makes it suitable for performance by either a small chamber ensemble or larger orchestral forces.

Vivaldi's talent for creating interest out of the simplest musical materials is on full display in this thinly-scored work. In the happy-go-lucky first movement and jolly dance-like finale the ear is entertained by catchy tunes arranged in a variety of different rhythmic patterns over easy-to-follow slowly unfolding changes in harmony. The more intimate 'chamber' quality of the music is evident in the way the lute soloist in these outer movements rarely stands out from the texture but merely seeks to animate the melodic lines of the other instruments in faster note values.

The exception is the calm and serene central *Largo* movement that gives a solo spotlight to the lute. The pervasive dotted rhythms of the lute's solo line simply beg for further elaboration in the repeated sections to exploit the pathos of the movement's minor-mode harmonies.

Cum dederit

from *Nisi Dominus* RV 608

Cum dederit dilectis suis somnum :
ecce hæreditas Domini, filii :
merces, fructus ventris.

As he gives sleep to his loved ones
behold the inheritance of the Lord, children:
a reward, fruit of the womb.

Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominum* for solo treble voice and string orchestra is a setting of Psalm 127 from the Vulgate (Latin) text of the Old Testament. Its fourth verse beginning *Cum dederit* sings the praises of children as a gift from God and would be particularly flattering to the young girls of the Ospedale della Pietà for whom it was composed and who would be singing it at its first performance.

And yet the sombre mood with which this movement opens – in the minor mode, with haunting pulsations of unisons in *Siciliana* rhythm – appears anything but congratulatory.

IV Cum dederit

Andante

con piombi

con piombi

con piombi

Largo

tasto solo

Vivaldi is obviously painting here the idea of sleep (*somnum*) in a pastoral setting indicated by the emphasis on long drone tones in the bass alternating between tonic and dominant. The mood of somnolent lethargy is further reinforced by the composer's recommended use of heavy lead mutes (*con piombi*) to deaden the sound of the strings. In the course of the movement creeping chromatic lines seem heedless of their harmonic context, creating some shocking dissonances that add to the eeriness of the scene.

Against this sonic backdrop of implacable monotony the solo voice sounds lonely and lost, almost bewildered, like a forlorn wind blowing aimlessly through a deserted landscape. And yet, a radiant lyricism shines through in the many long-held notes in the melodic line.

Lute Concerto in D major RV 93

Vivaldi's Lute Concerto in D major RV93 is much more representative of the classic Baroque concerto form than the Concerto/Trio Sonata in C major RV 82 played earlier on the program. It features a fuller four-voice texture, with the two upper violin lines often playing in parallel thirds, and most importantly, with clear contrasts between solo passages and orchestral tutti.

The first movement *Allegro* opens with the little melodic 'bite' figures in Lombardic rhythm (short-long) that C.P.E. Bach described as a characteristic feature of Vivaldi's melodic writing style.



A second thematic element in the minor mode introduces a change in tone colour. Frequent dialogues between soloist and orchestra make this a very "chatty" concerto movement.

The lute figures as the lone melodic protagonist of the *Largo* slow movement. The strings in this movement are relegated to providing a kind of soothing sonic 'lustre' in the high register against which the lute's meditative musings and pathetic pleadings stand out particularly well despite the relatively low volume of sound produced by the instrument.

The *Allegro* finale is a dance movement infected with the rhythms of the gigue. Its melody lines are radically simple in design, almost entirely comprised of rocking chordal skips.

The Four Seasons RV 297

L'inverno (Winter) in F minor

The Four Seasons must surely count as Vivaldi's best-known work, its distinctive orchestral textures and picturesque sonic effects familiar even to those who have never stepped into a concert hall. Published in Amsterdam in 1725, the work comprises four three-movement concertos for violin and string orchestra, each provided with a descriptive sonnet setting out in remarkable detail the exact nature of the various scenes depicted in the music. *Winter*, the last of these four concertos, presents us with a frozen landscape of wind and ice from which only the comforts of a home fire can offer relief.

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*Agghiacciato tremar tra nevi argenti
Al severo spirar d' orrido vento,
Correr battendo i piedi ogni momento;
E pel soverchio gel batter i denti.*

Shivering cold as ice in the snow,
In the sharp horrid breath of the wind,
Running and stamping your feet with each step
Your teeth chattering from the frigid cold.

The first movement opens with a slow build-up of voices to create a dissonant harmony that pulses with trills in its highest register in imitation of shivering from the cold:

A **Allegro non molto**
'Aggiacciato tremar trà nevi argenti'

Violino Principale
Violino Primo
Violino Secondo
Alto Viola
Organo e Violoncello

Until, that is, the solo violin bolts out of the gate, fast as the wind, in a series of virtuoso figurations that will be its trademark throughout the movement. We, the listeners, are left trying to escape the cold wind, vividly portrayed by the solo violin, as we stamp our feet in a memorable passage of harmonic sequences until finally our teeth chatter uncontrollably in time with the fast tremolos that end the movement.

* * *

<i>Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti</i>	Spending quiet peaceful days before the fire
<i>Mentre la pioggia fuor bagna ben cento</i>	While outside raindrops fall in their hundreds

The *Largo* second movement brings us indoors where we bask in the warmth of a comforting fire.

B **Largo**
'Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti Mentre la pioggia fuor bagna ben cento;'

Violino Principale
Violino Primo
Violino Secondo
Alto Viola
Organo e Violoncello

Solo La Poggia
Pizzicati *f* La Poggia
Pizzicati *f*
p con l'arco
sempre *p*

The leisurely gracious melody in the solo violin conveys our cozy contentment while a constant patter of pizzicato 16ths in the 1st and 2nd violins gives voice to the myriad drops of rain softly falling outside.

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<i>Caminar sopra il ghiaccio, e a passo lento</i>	Walking on the ice with slow measured step
<i>Per timor di cader girsene intenti;</i>	for fear of falling, intently turning
<i>Gir forte, sdruciolar, cader à terra,</i>	a sudden turn, slip-sliding to the ground,
<i>Di nuove ir sopra 'l ghiaccio e correr forte</i>	getting up again, running full speed
<i>Sinch' il ghiaccio si rompe, e si disserra;</i>	lest the ice crack and break apart;
<i>Sentir uscir dalle serrate porte</i>	feeling the gusts of wind through locked doors:

Sirocco, Borea, e tutti i Venti in guerra. Sirocco, the North Wind, all at war with each other.
Quest' è 'l verno, mà tal, che gioia apporte. This is winter, bringing joy nonetheless.

The third movement sees us outdoors again, walking ever-so-tentatively on the ice, afraid of falling. Our caution and care as we walk is evoked in the repetitive phrases of the solo violin as the movement opens. The low drone tone in bass is an image of the smooth slippery surface of the ground beneath our feet.

The image shows the beginning of the third movement, 'Allegro Caminar Sopra 'l ghiaccio,'. The score is for a full orchestra. The tempo is 'Allegro'. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 3/8. The first staff is for the Violino Principale, which has a 'Solo' marking. It plays a repetitive eighth-note pattern. The other string staves (Violino Primo, Violino Secondo, Alto Viola, Organo e Violoncello) are marked with a low, sustained drone tone. The organ and cello/bass part is marked 'Arcate lunghe, e Tasto Solo'.

But whoops! Somebody didn't shovel the walk and down we go, over and over again ...

The image shows a section of the musical score starting at measure 125, marked 'a terra,'. The score is for a full orchestra. The tempo is 'Allegro'. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 3/8. The first staff is for the Violino Principale, which has a 'Solo' marking. It plays a repetitive eighth-note pattern. The other string staves (Violino Primo, Violino Secondo, Alto Viola, Organo e Violoncello) are marked with a low, sustained drone tone. The organ and cello/bass part is marked 'Arcate lunghe, e Tasto Solo'.

But no matter. Along comes the wind again in a whirling vortex of string tremolos that sweeps us, and the work as a whole, to its breathless conclusion.

Gelido in ogni vena

from *Il Farnace* RV 711

Gelido in ogni vena
Scorrer mi sento il sangue.
L'ombra del figlio esangue
M'ingombra di terror.

Chilled in every vein
I can feel my blood flowing.
The bloodless shadow of my son
freezes me in terror.

E per maggior mia pena
Veggio che fui crudele
A un'anima fedele,
A un innocente cor.

And only increasing my pain
I see how cruel I was
to a trusting soul,
to an innocent heart.

Il Farnace was one of Vivaldi's most popular operas, receiving performances in six separate versions in various European cities after premiering in Venice in 1727. It then slipped into obscurity until it was re-discovered in the last quarter of the 20th century.

In the opera, Farnace, King of Pontus (on the southern shore of the Black Sea) has been defeated by the Romans and orders his immediate family killed to prevent their falling into the hands of his enemies. Believing his son, heir to his throne, to be dead (spoiler alert: he's not) the King's blood runs cold at the thought of what he thinks he has done.

Fans of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* may also feel their blood running a bit on the chilly side when hearing the opening bars of *Gelido in ogni vena*, instantly recognizable as borrowed from the famous *Winter* concerto from the *Four Seasons*.

Larghetto

The musical score is for the opening of the aria 'Gelido in ogni vena' from Vivaldi's opera *Il Farnace*. It is written for five parts: Farnace (soprano), Violine I, Violine II, Viola, and Cello. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Larghetto'. The Farnace part has a long rest for the first two measures, then enters in the third measure. The instrumental parts (Violins I and II, Viola, and Cello) all play a pulsing eighth-note accompaniment from the first measure. Dynamics include piano (p) and sforzando (sf).

The mood of anguish and turbulent self-recrimination in this aria is enhanced by Vivaldi's trademark pulsing accompaniments and by frequent dramatic leaps in the vocal melody.

Gelosia, tu già rendi l'alma mia

from ***Ottone in Villa*** RV 729

Gelosia, tu già rendi l'alma mia
Dell'Inferno assai peggior
Ma se pria,
La vendetta io non farò,
Non m'uccidere nò nò,
Mio crudele aspro dolor.

O Jealousy, you have rendered my soul
worse than a living hell.
But before
I exact vengeance
let me not be slain
by my bitter cruel pain.

Vivaldi's first opera *Ottone in Villa*, presented in Venice in 1713, is set – to the surprise of no one who can read its title – in the sumptuous country villa of the Roman emperor Ottone, a pastoral paradise where love triangles of every imaginable geometric configuration embroil a long list of lead characters in misunderstandings and merry mix-ups that make their love lives a jigsaw puzzle of confusing emotions.

At the end of Act I the handsome young Caio Silio, sung by a castrato, overhears how his current crush, the Emperor's girlfriend, claims to hate him and be in love with his own former girlfriend who, disguised as a man, has popped back on the scene and is conniving to get him back.

In a bid to wallow in his violent emotions, and display his vocal agility to the audience, he erupts into just the kind of jealous rage to which many volatile characters with anger management issues in Italian opera are habitually prone.

While the outer sections of this da capo aria display the youthful energy fueling his jealousy in a dizzying array of florid scale figures, the central slower section, with its wandering chromatic harmonies, depicts the unsettled emotional terrain he finds himself traversing.

Cello Concerto in G minor RV 416

While the vast majority of Vivaldi's concertos are for violin, he certainly did not neglect the cello as an orchestral soloist, writing twenty-seven concertos for the instrument. And in the Concerto in G minor RV 416 we find his powers of invention and gift for sharply chiselled musical effects at the top of their game.

The concerto's outer movements are written in the 'ritornello' form that Vivaldi helped to popularize in which a recurring refrain for full orchestra is interspersed with a series of episodes for the solo instrument. The slow movement is a lyrical aria in binary form for solo cello with continuo.

Remarkable in the work as a whole is the unusually low range in which the cello part is written and the aggressive bravura that characterizes the instrument's solo outings from under orchestral cover. This is music meant to grab you by the collar and keep you enthralled with a succession of arresting aural "hooks".

The first comes in the off-kilter syncopated rhythm of the opening orchestral tutti, with its dramatic octave leaps of all instruments in unison.



Throughout the movement the orchestra steps back radically during the cello's solo passages, dropping to mere continuo alone in order to let the cello stand out in high relief in this alternation of 'concerting' (i.e., struggling, striving) music forces.

The same discreet pattern of accompaniment holds for the lyrical slow movement, in which the repeats allow ample opportunity for ornamentation of the cello's wide-ranging melody line.

The ritornello of the *Allegro* finale is a jumpy affair full of leaps, out of which the cello charges straight out of the gate in its first solo foray with a breathtaking series of runs. After a second episode in continuous triplet 8ths, the cello on its third time out shows the orchestra who's boss in the leaps department with this ear-catching display of tone-register hiccups:



In the end, though, orchestra and soloist are on the same side and join forces to close the movement racing side-by-side to its final bars.

Onde chiare che sussurate

from *Ercole sul Termodonte* RV 710

Onde chiare che susurrate,
Ruscelletti che mormorate,
Consolate il mio desio,
Dite almeno all'idol mio
La mia pena e la mia brama.

“Ama” risponde il rio,
“Ama” la tortorella,
“Ama” la rondinella.

Vieni, vieni, o mio diletto,
Ch'il mio core tutto affetto
Già aspetta e già ti chiama.

Clear bright whispering waves,
and little murmuring streams,
relieve my burning desire
and tell the idol of my heart
of my pain and of my craving.

“Love!” replies the brook,
“Love!” the turtle dove,
“Love!” the swallow, too.

Come, oh come, my beloved,
for my afflicted heart
calls out for you and waits.

In Vivaldi's *Ercole sul Termodonte* we find ourselves back in the ancient world again, as Hercules carries out the ninth of his famous 'labours' at the court of the Amazon queen Antiope, whose sister Ippolita has fallen madly in love with our hero's bosom buddy, Theseus.

Wandering into a woodland setting at the opening of Act II she gives vent to her girlish feelings in vivid conversation with the chirping feathered flocks of the forest and the gently burbling waves of a nearby stream.

Vivaldi's pictorial imagination goes into high gear in this aria, prompting the singer to outdo the trills and warbles she hears all around her in the natural environment.

Scenderò, volerò griderò

from ***Ercole sul Termodonte*** RV 710

Scenderò, volerò, griderò
Sulle sponde di Stige, di Lete
Risvegliando furori e vendette
Di Megera e d'Aletto nel cor.

I'll plunge, I'll fly, I'll scream
down to the banks of the Styx, to the Lethe,
awakening fury and vengeance
in the hearts of Megaera and Alecto.

Rio destin, del mio sangue la sete
Sazia pur, che già Dite m'aspetta
Nuova furia del suo cieco orror.

O fateful river, satiate my lust
for blood, since Pluto awaits me
in the furious blind horror of his kingdom.

Late in Act III of *Ercole sul Termodonte* all is not well in Amazonia. Queen Antiope is quite obviously not having as good a time of it as her love-besotted sister Ippolita, so she resolves to kill herself after yet another plot twist that doesn't go her way.

Venting her suicidal rage at her daughter Martesia, she passes in review the various tourist sights and hellish celebrities she expects to encounter when she descends into the underworld: the river Styx; Lethe, the stream of forgetfulness; Megaera and her sister Alecto, two of the three Fury Sisters; and Dis Pater, i.e., Pluto, the god of the underworld.

This is a 'fury' aria to end all fury arias.

Program notes by
Donald G. Gíslason 2023