

Australian Brandenburg Orchestra

FOUR SEASONS

Paul Dyer artistic director and conductor
Genevieve Lacey (Australia) guest soloist, period recorder

Belinda Montgomery soprano
Fiona Campbell mezzo-soprano

Brandenburg Choir
The Choir of Trinity College (University of Melbourne)
The Melbourne Grammar School Chapel Choir

Program

Vivaldi *Gloria* in D Major, RV 589

Interval

Vivaldi *Le quattro stagioni (The Four Seasons)*

Arranged by Genevieve Lacey for period recorder

Concerto No 1 *La primavera (Spring)*, RV 269
Concerto No 2 *L'estate (Summer)*, RV 315
Concerto No 3 *L'autunno (Autumn)*, RV 293
Concerto No 4 *L'inverno (Winter)*, RV 297

SYDNEY City Recital Hall Angel Place

Friday 15, Saturday 16, Wednesday 20, Friday 22, Saturday 23 May 2009 at 7 pm
Saturday 23 May 2009 at 2 pm

MELBOURNE Melbourne Recital Centre

Sunday 17 May 2009 at 5 pm
Monday 18 May 2009 at 7.30 pm



The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



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Antonio Vivaldi

(1678–1741)

Gloria in D Major, RV 589

When an eighteenth-century visitor arrived at Vivaldi's birthplace of Venice it must have felt like stepping into another, exotic world – or rather floating into it, as the city could then be reached only by being rowed there, across the lagoon from the mainland. Spread across one hundred and eighteen islands, Venice had been a major world power, but as its lagoon was too shallow for warships to enter, it had none of the gates or fortifications encountered in other European cities. Time was different there: the year began on the first of March, so a traveller might leave France or Germany in 1723 but find himself back in 1722 when he got to Venice. For the Venetians (along with most of Italy) the first hour of the day was the hour after the sun set – so midnight could be 4 o'clock, or 8 o'clock, depending on whether it was summer or winter. The use of the twenty-four hour clock would have bamboozled the unsuspecting foreigner even more.

Once the visitor had got his head around the day and the time, and got used to canals and boats instead of streets and carriages, he also had to come to grips with the way Venetian society worked. This was particularly tricky if he had expected to have any dealings with the upper class, as Venetian nobility were forbidden on pain of death to visit or even speak to foreigners because of fears of espionage. The French man of letters Charles de Brosse, who visited Venice in 1739 wrote: "This is in no way a mere threat, and one noble has been put to death simply for having walked past an ambassador's house". Luckily, the nobility were permitted to dress only in black, which would have made them easier to spot. The Venetian custom of wearing masks in public at all times – initially done just during Carnival before the start of Lent but extended to about six months of the year – added to the foreigner's confusion as it resulted in a relaxation of the rules of polite behaviour, especially for women. The famous libertine Casanova explained, "You can see the nobility mingling with the people, the prince with the subject, the rare with the ordinary, the beautiful with the horrible. There are no longer any magistrates or laws in operation."

This lax behaviour extended to church going. A German visitor wrote in 1730: "Few people observe the externals of religion more than the Italians do, especially the Venetians. It can be said of them that they spend half of their life in doing wrong and the other half in asking God to forgive them for it." Churches were places of entertainment, to meet friends, and to keep assignations. A secret agent of the Venetian state reported in 1711:

I humbly inform you that for a long time recently the church of San Salvatore has become the object of profanation, on feast days, by a great number of women of all types, who, instead of going there to hear Holy Mass, come to be admired and courted. I have heard many devout people say that the church of San Salvatore has become a brothel.

The best church music could be heard at St Mark's Basilica and at the chapels attached to the four *ospedali*, charitable institutions which cared for orphans, children of the destitute, and the diseased or otherwise infirm. One, the Pio Ospedale della Pietà, had a niche in its wall where new-born babies could be left, rather like the afterhours chute at a library. When the boys reached adolescence they were placed in apprenticeships, but girls had to be protected from the outside world, and they needed a dowry in order to marry or to become nuns. Most earned their dowries through crafts such as lacemaking, but another course was possible for those girls who were musically talented, and that was to join the all-female orchestras and choirs which each *ospedale* maintained. They performed to celebrate the glory of God, not for their own fulfilment, and had to agree never to perform in public anywhere else. Yet the girls were taught by the best musicians in Italy, among them Farinelli's singing teacher Nicola Porpora, and the violinists Tartini, Gasparini, and Vivaldi, who was sometime music director at the Pietà. All composed music especially for them. A number of the girls became renowned virtuosi, and many lived their whole lives at the *ospedali*, performing and teaching.

In addition to their very high standard of performance, the pure exoticism of hearing women and girls perform in an age when court and theatre

orchestras and conventional church choirs were made up entirely of men and boys, made the *ospedali* a tourist attraction no visitor to Venice wanted to miss. An English traveller wrote in 1722:

Every Sunday and holiday there is a performance of music in the chapels of these hospitals [*ospedali*], vocal and instrumental, performed by the young women of the place, who are set in a gallery above and, though not professed [i.e. not nuns], are hid from any distinct view of those below by a lattice of ironwork. The organ parts, as well as those of the other instruments are all performed by the young women. ... Their performance is surprisingly good ... and this is all the more amusing since their persons are concealed from view.

Although the experience could be mesmerising (Rousseau commented after hearing them, “I cannot imagine anything so voluptuous, so touching as this music”), foreign visitors complained that the Masses at the *ospedali* more closely resembled a concert than a church service, and they were particularly scandalised when the congregation turned their chairs to face the musicians rather than the altar in the middle of the service. “You go there to listen to the concert, like going to the opera house”, sniffed the Frenchman Comte de Caylus who visited Venice in 1715, and indeed tickets were sold to the Masses as though they were concerts.

Vivaldi wrote a significant amount of sacred vocal music for the Pietà, including two settings of the *Gloria*, RV 588 and RV 589. Both settings are thought to have been composed about the same time, in the mid 1710s, just a few years before he wrote *The Four Seasons*. The second setting has become one of the best loved of all choral works and this is the one which we hear tonight.

Despite its popularity, we know nothing about the circumstances of the *Gloria*'s composition. It is scored for string orchestra, solo trumpet and oboe, with soprano and alto solos, and voices in the usual four parts – soprano, alto, tenor and bass. In the first performances given at the Pietà, all parts and instruments would have been performed by women only. It would have been thought scandalous to bring men in from outside to augment the choir,

and the male teachers never performed with them. Nevertheless, the tenor and bass parts were probably sung at the notated pitch, which would have given the choral sound a very different tone colour to the one we are used to hearing. There are some women who are capable of singing much lower than the usual female range, covering the same pitches as a baritone, but the sound would be quite soft. To accommodate this, Vivaldi set the bass part in the *Gloria* relatively high, and kindly doubled the voices with low strings when a lower note is necessary for the harmony. In modern performances the tenor and bass parts are sung by men.

The *Gloria* is one of the most important sung expressions of praise in the Christian tradition and is used in Protestant and Orthodox services, as well as Roman Catholic, where it forms part of the Mass except during Advent and Lent. Its first words are those sung by the angels announcing the birth of Christ as told in the Gospel according to Luke in the New Testament, and the remaining verses date from the fourth century. As a priest, Vivaldi would have been well aware of the importance of the text, but it is the force of his personality expressed through the music that makes the work so memorable, rather than the detail of the word setting. The opening bars contain a Vivaldi trademark – string instruments playing in unison and quickly alternating between an upper and lower octave. This simple device has an almost visceral effect, and the congregation hearing it at the Pietà for the first time would have found it thrilling and awe-inspiring.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Chorus
<i>Gloria in excelsis Deo</i> | Glory be to God on high |
| 2. Chorus
<i>Et in terra pax
hominibus bone voluntatis.</i> | And on earth peace
to people of good will. |
| 3. Duet
<i>Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus
te, glorificamus te.</i> | We praise you, we bless you,
we adore you, we glorify you. |
| 4. Chorus
<i>Gratias agimus tibi</i> | We give thanks |
| 5. Chorus
<i>Propter magnam gloriam tuam.</i> | For your great glory. |
| 6. Aria - Soprano
<i>Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.</i> | Lord God, king of heaven,
God the Father almighty. |
| 7. Chorus
<i>Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.</i> | Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son. |
| 8. Aria and chorus
<i>Domine Deus, agnus Dei, Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.</i> | Lord God, lamb of God, Son of the Father.
You who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us. |
| 9. Chorus
<i>Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.</i> | You who takes away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer. |
| 10. Aria
<i>Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.</i> | <i>You who sits at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.</i> |
| 11. Chorus
<i>Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus altissimus,
Jesu Christe.</i> | <i>For you only are holy,
you only are the Lord,
you only are the most high,
Jesus Christ.</i> |
| 12. Chorus
<i>Cum Sancto Spiritu
in glori Dei Patris.
Amen.</i> | <i>With the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.</i> |

**Le quattro stagioni (The Four Seasons)
from Opus 8: Il cimento dell'armonia
e dell'invenzione (The contest between
harmony and invention), arranged by
Genevieve Lacey for solo recorder
and string orchestra**

**Concerto No 1 *La primavera (Spring)* RV 269
Concerto No 2 *L'estate (Summer)* RV 315
Concerto No 3 *L'autunno (Autumn)* RV 293
Concerto No 4 *L'inverno (Winter)* RV 297**

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORD

*Lord Wenzel Count von Morzin, Hereditary
Lord of Hohen Elbe, Lomnitz, Tschista, Krzinetz,
Kaunitz, Doubek, and Sowoluska, Current
Chamberlain and Counsellor of His Caesarian
and Catholic Majesty*

BY DON ANTONIO VIVALDI

*Maestro in Italy of the Most Illustrious Aforementioned
Lord Count, Concert Master of the Pio Ospedale della
Pietà in Venice, and Director of Chamber Music to
His Most Serene Highness Prince Philip, Landgrave
of Hesse-Darmstadt.*

*Pray do not be surprised if, among these few and
feeble concertos, Your Most Illustrious Lordship
finds the Four Seasons which have so long enjoyed
the indulgence of Your Most Illustrious Lordship's
kind generosity, but believe that I have considered
it fitting to print them because, while they may
be the same, 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 that they will appear
new to you. ... The supreme understanding of music
which Your Most Illustrious Lordship possesses
and the merit of your most accomplished orchestra
will always allow me to live in the certainty that my
humble efforts, having reached your esteemed
hands, will enjoy that eminence which they do not
deserve... Therefore, nothing remains for me but
to beseech Your Most Illustrious Lordship to
continue your most generous patronage and never
deprive me of the honour of owning myself to be*

YOUR MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORDSHIP'S

Most Humble, Most Devoted, Most Obligated Servant

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Dedication of first publication of *The Four Seasons*

The Four Seasons, along with eight other concertos, were published in 1725 as part of Vivaldi's Opus 8, however, he had actually composed them some time earlier, probably around 1718–20. Although the 1725 volume is dedicated to Count von Morzin, it is not known for whom they were originally composed, but as this was a period of Vivaldi's life when he was absent from Venice it seems certain that they were not for the girls at the Pietà. The concertos were instantly popular, particularly in France: the first concerto, *La primavera (Spring)*, was played for Louis XV at Versailles and it was the favourite showcase piece for the greatest French and Italian violinists of the time.

Astonishing as it may seem today, interest in Vivaldi's works died with him in 1743 and *The Four Seasons* concertos were forgotten until the Vivaldi revival in the early decades of the twentieth century. They are now among the most popular pieces of classical music in the world and well over four hundred recordings have been made of the concertos. Their popularity peaked towards the end of the 1980s when new recordings averaged nineteen a year.

While composers both before and since have attempted to describe the changes of the seasons in music, Vivaldi achieves this in astonishingly vivid and original detail, from a barking dog on a sleepy spring afternoon to the chattering of teeth on a freezing winter's day. The concertos are a tour de force in the composition of representational music, that is, music which depicts scenes or sounds, most often those found in nature (known also as "programme music").

But Vivaldi was not just writing music that was purely descriptive: he was conforming to the baroque aesthetic that said that music should "not only please the ear, but ... strike the Imagination, affect the Mind, and command the Passions". So we hear the barking dog but also feel the loneliness of its owner, we hear the fury of the north wind but shudder at its potential for destruction, and we hear the steady drip of a cold winter rain but enjoy the cosiness of being inside by the fire.

Vivaldi was not content to leave the interpretation of the concertos to the listener's imagination, indeed quite the contrary. When the concertos were first published a sonnet entitled *Sonetto Dimostrativo* (literally 'Demonstrative Sonnet') was printed at the beginning of each concerto. The sonnets, probably written either by Vivaldi himself or one of his opera librettists, narrate the changing aspects of the seasons and each one consists of three main ideas which are reflected by the three movements of each concerto. Vivaldi clearly marked the scores to indicate which musical passages represent which verse, or in some places which line, of the sonnet. In the dedication at the front of the first edition of *The Four Seasons* he wrote "I have added to them, besides the sonnets, a very clear statement of all the things that unfold in them" by means of captions throughout the score. In the first movement of *Summer*, for example, the calls of the cuckoo, the turtledove and the finch are all captioned, as is the famous barking dog represented by the viola in the same movement. The events and sounds indicated in the captions are not always to be found in the sonnets, which has caused some commentators to speculate that Vivaldi did not write the music to illustrate the sonnets, but rather the other way around.

Vivaldi's method of delivering both description and emotional content is brilliantly simple: in the fast movements he uses recurring *ritornellos* (refrains) played by the full orchestra which provide the scene or backdrop, while individual, transient events or sounds are portrayed in short musical episodes, usually by the solo violin, replaced in these performances by solo recorder. The first

movement of *Spring*, for example, begins with a joyful dance which returns throughout the movement, punctuated by the sounds of bird song, a flowing stream, and lightning and thunder. The slow movements by contrast are more like static tableaux, although painted with considerable detail. In the second movement of *Spring* we "see" only the shepherd asleep in the meadow but hear the rustle of the trees above.

From a historical perspective replacing the violin with a recorder is particularly apposite. The recorder had been popular in Venice as a solo instrument since the Renaissance, but there was relatively little music composed specifically for it and players often adapted pieces intended for violin. There was a resurgence of interest in it among Venetian composers in the early eighteenth century led by Vivaldi, who composed many works for recorder or flute and used these instruments in virtuosic ways that were then very new.

It was common in the Baroque period for composers to re-present their musical ideas with different instruments, with the resultant change in musical textures and timbres often giving the work an entirely new feel. Played on the recorder, the solo episodes stand out against the orchestral string texture, and the instrument's soft, gentle sound is particularly effective in the purely representational moments such as the bird calls in *Spring*.

The texts of the sonnets are printed below, with Vivaldi's additional captions indicated in the places where they appear in the score by italics and square brackets.

Concerto No 1 in E major, *La primavera (Spring)*, RV 269

I Allegro

Giunt' è la Primavera e festosetti

[Il canto de gl'ucelli]

La salutan gl'Augei con lieto canto,

[Scorrono i fonti]

E i fonti allo spirar de' zeffiretti

Con dolce mormorio scorrono intanto:

[Tuoni]

Vengon' coprendo l'aer di nero amanto

E lampi, e tuoni ad annuntiarla eletti

[Canto d'ucelli]

Indi tacendo questi, gl'Augelletti;

Tornan' di nuovo al lor canoro incanto:

Spring has arrived and festively

[The song of the birds]

the birds salute her with happy song;

[The fountains flow]

and the fountains at the breath of the breezes

with a sweet murmur continually flow;

[Thunder]

coming to cover the sky with a black mantle

are lightning and thunder, chosen to announce her,

[Song of the birds]

then when they are silent, the little birds

return anew to their tuneful songs.

II Largo

[Murmors of fronds and plants]

[The dog barks]

[The goat-herd sleeps]

E quindi sul fiorito ameno prato
Al caro mormorio di fronde e piante
Dorme 'l Caprar col fido can' à lato.

III Allegro

[Danza pastorale]

Di pastoral Zampogna al suon festante
Danzan Ninfe e Pastor nel tetto amato
Di primavera all' apparir brillante.

[Murmurs of branches and leaves – a direction to the first and second violins]

[The dog barks – Vivaldi directs the viola: “this must be played very loudly and raspily throughout”]

[The goat-herd sleeps – a direction to the solo violin/recorder]

And later in the pleasant flowery meadow,
to the welcome murmurs of branches and leaves,
the goat-herd sleeps with his faithful dog beside him.

[Pastoral dance]

To the festive sound of rustic bagpipes,
nymphs and shepherds dance beneath the lovely canopy
of brilliant spring.

Concerto No 2 in G minor, *L'estate (Summer)*, RV 315

I Allegro non molto

[Languidezza per il caldo]

Sotto dura staglion dal sole accesa
Languie l'huom, languie 'l gregge, ed arde il Pino;

[Il cucco]

Scioglie il Cucco la Voce,

[La tortorella]

e tosto intesa canta la Tortorella e 'l gardellino.

[Il gardellino]

[Zeffiretti dolci]

Zeffiro dolce spira,

[Vento Borea]

[Venti impetuosi]

[Venti diversi]

mà contesa

muove Borea improvviso al suo vicino;

[Il pianto del villanello]

E piange il Pastorel, perche sospesa

Teme fiera borasca, e 'l suo destino;

II Adagio

[Mosche e mossoni]

Toglie alle membra lasse il suo riposo

Il timore de' Lampi, e tuoni fieri

E de mosche, e mossoni il stuol furioso!

[Tuoni]

III Presto

[Tempo impetuoso d'estate]

Ah che pur troppo i suoi timor son veri,

Tuona e fulmina il Ciel e grandinoso

Tronca il capo alle spiche e a' grani alteri.

[Languor due to the heat]

Beneath the harsh season of blazing sun
man languishes, flocks languish, and pines are scorched;

[The cuckoo]

the cuckoo raises its voice,

[The turtle dove]

and immediately the turtle dove and the finch sing.

[The finch]

[Soft breezes]

The soft breeze sighs,

[North wind – solo violin/recorder]

[Impetuous winds – violas]

[Diverse winds – basso continuo]

but is suddenly challenged

by the north wind moving into its vicinity;

[The tears of the shepherd boy]

and the shepherd weeps, because he fears

the fierce looming storm and his destiny.

[Flies and blowflies – tutti violins]

Depriving his weary limbs of rest are

the fear of lightning and fierce thunder,

and the furious swarm of flies and blowflies!

[Thunder]

[Stormy summer weather]

Ah, how true his worst fears are,

as the heavens thunder and flash, and hailstones

strike the heads from the stalks of the ripe grain.



Concerto No 3 in F major, *L'autunno (Autumn)*, RV 293

I Allegro – Allegro assai

[Ballo e canto de' vilanelli]

Celebra il Vilanel con balli e Canti
Del felice raccolto il bel piacere

[L'ubriaco / ubriachi]

E del liquor de Baccho accesi tanti

[L'ubriaco che dorme]

Finiscono col sonno il lor godere

[Dance and song of the villagers]

The peasant celebrates with dances and songs
the pleasures of a good harvest

[The drunkard / drunkards – solo violin and continuo]
and many, fired by Bacchus' liquor,

[The drunkard who sleeps]

end their enjoyment in sleep.

II Adagio molto

[Ubriachi dormienti]

Fà ch' ogn'uno tralasci e balli e canti

L'aria che temperata dà piacere,

E la Staggon ch'invita tanti e tanti

D'un dolcissimo sonno al bel godere.

[Sleeping drunkards]

The mild, pleasant air makes everyone
abandon songs and dances,

and the season invites all and sundry

to the delight of sweetest sleep.

III Allegro

[La caccia]

I cacciator alla nov'alba à caccia

Con corni, schioppi, e canni escono fuore

[La fiera che fugge]

Fugge la belva, e seguono la traccia;

[Schioppi, e cani]

Già sbigottita, e lassa al gran rumore

De' schioppi e canni, ferita minaccia

[La fiera fuggendo muore]

Languida di fuggir, mà oppressa muore.

[The hunt]

The hunters set out on the chase at first light
with horns, guns and dogs

[The quarry flees]

the beast flees, and they follow its track;

[Guns and dogs]

already bewildered, and distracted by the great noise
of guns and dogs, wounded, it attempts

[The quarry, fleeing, dies]

feebly to escape, but exhausted, dies.

Concerto No 4 in F minor, *L'inverno (Winter)*, RV 297

I Allegro non molto

Aggiacciato tremar trà neri argenti

[Orrido vento]

Al severo spirar d'orrido Vento,

[Correre, e batter li piedi per il freddo]

Correr battendo i piedi ogni momento;

[Venti]

[Batter li denti]

E pel soverchio gel batter i denti;

Frozen, shivering amid icy snows

[Dreadful wind]

At the cutting breath of the dreadful wind,

[Running and stamping the feet in the cold]

to run stamping one's feet at every moment;

[Winds]

[Chattering teeth]

and the overwhelming frost causing teeth to chatter;

II Largo

[La pioggia]

Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti

Mentre la pioggia fuor bagna ben cento

[Rain – pizzicato violins]

To pass quiet and contented days by the fire

while the rain outside drenches a hundred others;

III Allegro

Caminar sopra 'l giaccio,

[Caminar piano, e con timore]

e à passo lento per timor di cader gersene intenti;

Gir forte sdruzzolar, cader à terra

[Cader a terra]

[Correr forte]

Di nuove ir sopra 'l giaccio e correr forte

Sin ch'il giaccio si rompe, e si disserra;

[Il vento sirocco]

Sentir uscir dalle ferrate porte

[Il vento borea e tutti li venti]

Sirocco, Borea, e tutti i Venti in guerra

Quest' è 'l verno, mà tal, che gioia apporta.

To walk on the ice

[Walking slowly and cautiously]

and with slow steps tread cautiously for fear of falling;

To go fast, slip, fall to the ground;

[Falling on the ground]

[Running fast]

to go onto the ice again and run fast

until the ice cracks and breaks;

[The sirocco wind]

To hear as they emerge through the iron gates

[The north wind and all the winds]

Sirocco, Boreas, and all the winds at war;

this is winter, which nonetheless brings its own delights.