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Music Study With the Masters

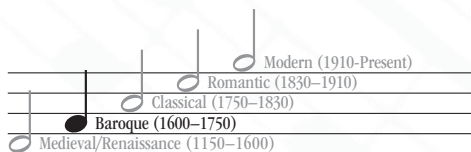
by Rebekah Carlson



SAMPLE

VIVALDI

1678–1741



*“Let the young people hear good music as often as possible,
... let them study occasionally the works of a single great master
until they have received some of his teaching, and know his style.”*

—Charlotte Mason

With **Music Study with the Masters** you have everything you need to teach music appreciation successfully. Just a few minutes once a week and the simple guidance in this book will influence and enrich your children more than you can imagine.

In this book you will find

- Step-by-step instructions for doing a music study of Vivaldi.
- Links to two curated playlists of Vivaldi's music.
- Listen and Learn ideas on two levels that will add to your understanding of the music.
- A living biography of Vivaldi for your whole family to enjoy.
- A list of recommended resources that you can use to learn more about Vivaldi and his works.

*Simply
Charlotte Mason*

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678–1741)

by Rebekah Carlson

Excerpts from Charlotte Mason's Original Home Schooling Series are surrounded by quotation marks and accompanied by a reference to which book in the series they came from.

Vol. 1: Home Education

Vol. 2: Parents and Children

Vol. 3: School Education

Vol. 4: Ourselves

Vol. 5: Formation of Character

Vol. 6: A Philosophy of Education

Music Study with the Masters: Antonio Vivaldi

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Charlotte Mason on Music Study

Let the young people hear good music as often as possible, and that *under instruction*. It is a pity we like our music, as our pictures and our poetry, mixed, so that there are few opportunities of going through, as a listener, a course of the works of a single composer. But this is to be aimed at for the young people; let them study occasionally the works of a single great master until they have received some of his teaching, and know his style. (*Formation of Character*, p. 235)

How to Use Music Study with the Masters

1. Play the music recordings often and mention the composer's name when you do. You can play them as background music during a meal, while running errands in the car, at nap time or bedtime, or while the students work on some handwork. (Try not to keep them playing all day or during noisy times when other sounds or conversation would distract.) Encourage the students to describe what the various pieces make them think of, to “draw the music” with art, or to move to the music. Allow them to form their own relations with it.
2. Read the composer's biography to the students and ask them to narrate. Enter this composer in your Book of Centuries. Other For Further Study resources are listed if you would like to learn more.
3. Once every week or so, give focused listening to a particular piece. Use the Listen and Learn ideas in the back of this book to guide your listening and discussion. Each Listen and Learn is followed by an optional Dig Deeper section, written for students who would like to learn more about the music they are enjoying.

As opportunity presents itself, go to a concert that features the music of this composer so the students can listen to a live performance.

The Story of Antonio Vivaldi

By Rebekah Carlson

“I can conceive of nothing...as moving as this music.”

Lightning crackled through the violin sections, and thunderbolts from the cellos and basses boomed down to the audience below. The concertgoers gasped, whispering to each other in a host of languages as they marveled at the sounds floating above their heads. They peered up at the orchestra of girls, hidden behind a latticework screen in the balcony above. The only person visible was the conductor, a priest who wore a black robe and had a shock of bright red hair. “They say he was born during an earthquake,” whispered a bejeweled Austrian countess. “His hair matches the storm in his music!” marveled a traveler from Bohemia, rubbing his beard with a weathered hand. Men and women, rich and poor, foreigner and Venetian, all were captivated by the revolutionary sounds of Vivaldi and his orchestra of orphaned girls.

Let us take a step away from this scene and start at the beginning of our composer’s story, shall we? Despite persistent legends, Antonio Lucio Vivaldi was not born during an earthquake, though that is a fun story! He instead made his entrance into the world on a quiet morning on March 4, 1678, in Venice. His mother, Camilla, quickly noticed that her firstborn infant was having trouble breathing, and small Antonio was hastily baptized. Antonio would have frail health throughout his life; some scholars have speculated that he suffered from asthma. Our composer spent most of his childhood indoors; he was not well enough to run and play with the neighborhood children, and as an adult, he relied on gondolas and carriages

Listen and Learn

Note to parents

The guided listenings in this book are usually focused on a single movement and are intended to be completed in a 10- to 15-minute span. However, you are encouraged to listen to the pieces in their entirety in a more unstructured manner: in the car, during mealtime, while children are nature journaling, or working on handicrafts . . . be creative! There are times where we want to encourage active listening—walking through the following guides and listening carefully to the musical elements, for example. However, passive listening is also incredibly valuable, and children benefit from having beautiful music playing in the background whenever it is not a distraction from the task at hand. Do not worry if your children don't seem to pay attention; they are being introduced to great beauty, which contributes to the atmosphere of learning in the home.

In addition to following the listenings, attending live performances is a wonderful way to experience music; there is something truly special about being in the same space with the performers and an audience, and the visual component of seeing musicians perform is especially exciting and inspiring to children. Supporting the arts helps to keep these opportunities available, and most communities offer free or discounted concerts; check your parks and recreation departments, or look at the music department schedule at your local college or university.

Visit simplycharlottesmason.com/vivaldi-playlists/ or scan this QR code to access a full playlist on a variety of streaming platforms. A complete track listing with production information appears on page 44.



Concerto No. 1 in E major, Op. 8, RV 269,
“Spring” (*La primavera*). I. Allegro

In 1725 Antonio Vivaldi published a set of 12 concertos under the intriguing title *The Contest Between Harmony and Invention*. Within this collection of wildly creative works are the four concertos that number among the most recognizable pieces in classical music: *The Four Seasons*. Each of the seasons was written for a solo violin and string orchestra: first and second violins, violas (pronounced vee-OH-la), cellos, and “basso continuo,” which can be played by a string bass and/or harpsichord. These concertos, comprised of three separate movements, are among the very first examples of “programmatic music” or “program music”—music that is intended to represent something specific. You can guess from the titles that these concertos paint musical pictures of each season: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. *The Four Seasons* have accompanying poems, which most scholars believe were written by the composer himself.

The first movement of “Spring” opens with a cheerful, light melody and harmony in the violins and violas, while the lower-voiced cellos and bass provide a bouncy accompaniment. Three violins start a birdsong, trilling lightly—can you hear the birds calling back and forth to each other? What do you think they are singing about? The original theme returns before Vivaldi turns to a soft, flowing melody that imitates the murmuring streams in his poetry. The opening melody makes a brief return before a sudden, violent thunderstorm breaks out with very fast notes in the orchestra, followed by a difficult violin solo that flies through the upper registers. Do those fast notes sound like lightning streaking across the sky? Difficult music is often called *virtuosic*, and this is a wonderful early example of virtuosic violin music. We assume that Vivaldi himself played the solo parts from time to time—he must have practiced this difficult passage a lot! A minor version of the opening theme

cautiously emerges after the thunderstorm section—it sounds like the beginning, but sad. The birds tentatively trill to each other. It seems like they are asking each other “is it alright to come back out?” They evidently conclude that it is safe, and the joyful melody returns to close out the movement with gusto!

Dig Deeper

The first movement, “Allegro” (which is a tempo marking meaning “a brisk, lively tempo”), is in *Rondo* form. To help us understand this, think of a club sandwich—it has layers of bread with different fillings (we’ll leave the bothersome toothpick out of this analogy). Listen again to the Allegro—the opening theme is the “bread” and the “fillings” are the bird trills, the flowing stream, and the thunderstorm. In music, we assign a letter to each section (which has nothing to do with the names of the notes played); thus, this Rondo is

- A (opening/main theme)
- B (birds)
- A (main theme)
- C (stream)
- A (main theme)
- D (thunderstorm/minor theme/birds trilling)
- A (main theme)

Listen to the second movement; do you feel the heaviness of sleep as the strings play a languid harmony over a calm violin solo? Listen for the violas, who portray the shepherd’s dog, barking rhythmically in pairs throughout the movement.

The third movement starts with a burst of energy—do you hear the bagpipe drone played in the lower strings? The movement is easy to dance to—if you wish, make up a dance that goes along with the different emotions expressed in the music.

Allegro

*Giunt' è la Primavera e festosetti
La Salutan gl' Auei con lieto canto,
E i fonti allo Spirar de' Zeffiretti
Con dolce mormorio Scorrano intanto:
Vengon' coprendo l' aer di nero amanto
E Lampi, e tuoni ad annuntiarla eletti
Indi tacendo questi, gl' Augelletti;
Tornan' di nuovo al lor canoro incanto:*

Springtime has now arrived, and full of cheer
The birds greet her return with festive song,
And streams caressed by breaths of western breezes
With gentle murmuration flow along.
Casting a dark mantle over heaven,
Come thunder, lightning, harbingers of spring:
They die away to silence, and the songbirds
Take up their tuneful strain once more and sing.

Largo

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

Now in the lovely meadow, filled with flowers,
Under the branches rustling overhead
The goat-herd sleeps, his faithful dog beside him.

Allegro

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

Led by the festive sound of rustic bagpipes,
The nymphs and shepherds lightly dance and sing
Beneath the brilliant canopy of spring.

Translation of *The Four Seasons* sonnets courtesy of Armond D'Angour: simplycm.com/msm-vivaldi-links