

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)



Born: 1678 (Venice, Italy)
Died: 1741 (Vienna, Austria)

FAST FACTS

- Trained as a musician and priest
- Father was a violist
- Known as “the Red Priest”
- Worked as a music teacher and composer at school for orphaned girls
- Helped establish the concerto as a popular music style

Antonio Vivaldi was one of the most influential and prominent composers of the early Baroque period in music. He was trained to be a musician by his father, who became a professional violinist after leaving his career as a tailor. Vivaldi also had eight younger brothers and sisters.

Vivaldi studied to be both a priest and a music teacher, which was not very typical at the time. In 1703, Vivaldi began teaching as the master of violin at the Pio Ospedale della Pieta (“the Pieta”), which was a home and school for orphaned girls. In the same year, he was ordained as a priest, and was known as “Il Prete Rosso,” or the Red Priest, because of his flaming red hair. His chronic asthma, however, prevented him from being able to lead the mass service, so he was relieved of his duties, and became the full-time Master of Concerts at the Pieta.

For almost 40 years, Vivaldi composed a great deal of music for the students at the Pieta. He wrote operas, concertos, sinfonias, cantatas, solo and trio sonatas, and other sacred vocal works. Vivaldi is most famous, though, for his concertos: he wrote about 500 over the course of his life. He even boasted that he could write a concerto faster than the copyist could produce the concerto’s parts! Vivaldi wrote a famous set of concertos called the “Four Seasons,” in which each season is portrayed through music. For example, in one of the movements in “Winter”, Vivaldi wrote pizzicato notes, or plucked notes, in some of the stringed instruments to make the listener picture icy-cold raindrops.

Vivaldi eventually died as a poor man, but is remembered today for the large amount of music he produced, and for establishing the concerto as a popular form of classical music.



Let's Listen!

- See world renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman perform Vivaldi's *Spring* from The Four Seasons: [click here](#).
- The second movement from Vivaldi's *Winter* (listen for the sound of ice and water droplets in the plucked string parts!): [click here](#).
- Watch “Summer” from the Four Seasons, depicting a violent summer storm: [click here](#).