

ACO MUSIC & ART

Lesson Eight: Composing

Additional Notes for teachers, parents and students

The Four Seasons, by Antonio Vivaldi (1716)

“The Four Seasons” is a set of four violin concerti written by renowned Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, depicting the mood of each of the four weather seasons experienced on earth. Each concerto is also accompanied by a sonnet (poem), which was unusual for this time. It is not known who wrote them, though it is rumoured to have been the composer himself. Each the sonnets are neatly broken down into three separate sections to depict the movements of the concerti.

La Primavera (Spring)

Opus 8, No. 1, in E Major

I. Allegro

Festive Spring has arrived,
The birds salute it with their happy song.
And the brooks, caressed by little Zephyrs,
Flow with a sweet murmur.
The sky is covered with a black mantle,
And thunder, and lightning, announce a storm.
When they are silent, the birds
Return to sing their lovely song.

II. Largo e pianissimo sempre

And in the meadow, rich with flowers,
To the sweet murmur of leaves and plants,
The goatherd sleeps, with his faithful dog at
his side.

III. Danza pastorale. Allegro

To the festive sound of pastoral bagpipes,
Dance nymphs and shepherds,
At Spring's brilliant appearance.

L'Estate (Summer)

Opus 8, No. 2, in G minor

I. Allegro non molto

Under the heat of the burning summer sun,
Languish man and flock; the pine is parched.
The cuckoo finds its voice, and suddenly,
The turtledove and goldfinch sing.
A gentle breeze blows,
But suddenly, the north wind appears.
The shepherd weeps because, overhead,
Lies the fierce storm, and his destiny.

II. Adagio; Presto

His tired limbs are deprived of rest
By his fear of lightning and fierce thunder,
And by furious swarms of flies and hornets.

III. Presto

Alas, how just are his fears,
Thunder and lightening fill the Heavens, and
the hail
Slices the tops of the corn and other grain.

L'Autunno (Autumn)

Opus 8, No. 3, in F Major

I. Allegro

The peasants celebrate with dance and song,
The joy of a rich harvest.
And, full of Bacchus's liquor,
They finish their celebration with sleep.

II. Adagio molto

Each peasant ceases his dance and song.
The mild air gives pleasure,
And the season invites many
To enjoy a sweet slumber.

III. Allegro

The hunters, at the break of dawn, go to the hunt.
With horns, guns, and dogs they are off,
The beast flees, and they follow its trail.
Already fearful and exhausted by the great noise,
Of guns and dogs, and wounded,
The exhausted beast tries to flee, but dies.

L'Inverno (Winter)

Opus 8, No. 4, in F minor

I. Allegro non molto

Frozen and trembling in the icy snow,
In the severe blast of the horrible wind,
As we run, we constantly stamp our feet,
And our teeth chatter in the cold.

II. Largo

To spend happy and quiet days near the fire,
While, outside, the rain soaks hundreds.

III. Allegro

We walk on the ice with slow steps,
And tread carefully, for fear of falling.
Symphony, If we go quickly, we slip and fall to the ground.
Again we run on the ice,
Until it cracks and opens.
We hear, from closed doors,
Sirocco, Boreas, and all the winds in battle.
This is winter, but it brings joy.