

# Vivaldi: Concerto for flute 'Il cardellino'

**Strand:** Western art music – Baroque instrumental music – Instrumental concerto

## 1. Composer background

[Accompanying PowerPoint provides illustrations]

There is a significant amount of easily accessible material about Vivaldi, but beware of inaccuracies and simplifications. Much is made of the Ospedale della Pietà and Vivaldi's role there, but it is important to understand the Pietà in the broader context of 18<sup>th</sup>-century social care and politics, and in particular the status of women in society and more specifically in Venice. For further information and some discussion points and research activities, see the companion resource 'Music at the Ospedale della Pietà'.

Vivaldi wrote a very large number of concertos for almost all instruments of his day. The majority are for a single instrument with orchestra, but there are also a number of examples for two, three or four solo instruments. Vivaldi's concerto for 4 violins was so well-known that it was reworked by the great Johan Sebastian Bach as a keyboard concerto. Most of Vivaldi's concertos consist of three movements (fast-slow-fast) and most follow the ritornello structure that is typical of baroque concerti.

### Activity

Research the difference between instruments that Vivaldi may have been familiar with and the same instruments as they are used today.

These videos produced by the Open University's partner, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment may be useful.

<https://oae.co.uk/introducing-the-baroque-flute/>

<https://oae.co.uk/introducing-the-baroque-violin/>

<https://oae.co.uk/introducing-the-baroque-cello/>

Websites from major instrument collections include:

The National music museum, South Dakota <https://emuseum.nmmusd.org/>

The Musical Instrument Museum, Brussels (large collection of harpsichords) <http://www.mim.be/en>

Germanisches national Museum Nuremberg <https://www.gnm.de/en/exhibitions/permanent-exhibitions/musical-instruments/>

## 2. Genre

What is ritornello structure and how does it work?

Put simply, a ritornello structure uses a returning idea – the meaning of the word 'ritornello'. The idea (ritornello) does not have appear each time in the same key, or even be complete at each appearance. A ritornello may have a characteristic rhythmic pattern, melodic shape or both. In between each appearance of the ritornello, there are **episodes**. These are often played by the solo instrument or instruments.

One simple way of working out how a ritornello structure works is to visualise it. This is particularly helpful for visual learners. Use different colours to represent the repeating thematic material and contrasting episodes, or solos and tutti, or key schemes. Different elements can be layered up to create a more complex visualisation that could also include repeated motifs.

### Activity

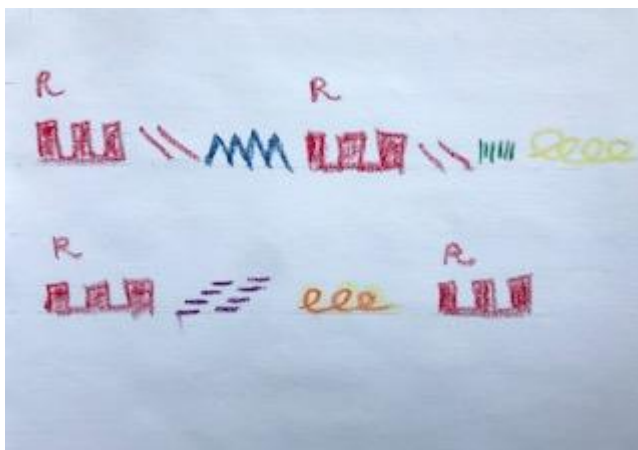
Listen to the first movement of Vivaldi's flute concerto 'il cardellino' and create a visual representation of the piece. Use one colour to represent the ritornello played by the ripieno, and different colours for each episode that presents new material.

Here's my version. [included on slides]



Once you have identified the ritornello and episodes, you can start adding to your representation to show the different melodic or rhythmic ideas. The ritornello has two distinct features or motivic ideas: the backwards and forwards between two adjacent notes played with a dotted rhythm followed by a large leap downwards; and the rapid scalar passages in semiquavers. In my more detailed version, I have kept the colour scheme, but have drawn two different patterns to show the construction of the ritornello. You'll notice that the third and fourth appearance of the ritornello is shorter, so I've shown this in my patterns. I've also used different patterns to show the different material in the episodes.

Here's my more detailed version [included on slides]



As you listen further, you can add more detail, such as which episodes are played by the solo flute, and which ones by flute with an accompaniment. You might for example label each episode with an E, and add an S to show 'solo' or 'S A' to indicate a solo with accompaniment.

Once you are familiar with the structure, you can listen following the score to add more close detail such as keys, and the reappearance of motifs from the ritornello.

### 3. Analysis

Vivaldi makes use of a number of important compositional techniques within the ritornello structure of each movement.

- a) Sequence. A sequence is the repetition of a melodic idea at a different pitch.
- b) Harmonic sequence. A harmonic sequence is the repetition of a chord pattern at a different pitch. This may result in brief tonicisations (that is, notes other than the home key function as temporary tonics) In bars 5-7, for example, the material of both the solo and accompaniment moves downwards by step.
- c) Circle of fifths. A chord progression in which each chordal root is five notes above (or four notes below) the previous one. If the chordal third is major, the pattern initiates a series of tonicisations – that is one chord functions as the dominant of the next chord.

#### Activity

[included in slides]

Identify the compositional techniques in the following bars of the first movement - Allegro:

bars	Compositional technique
5-7 flute	
5-8 <sup>2</sup> complete texture	
21-24 <sup>2</sup>	
32-33	
65-68 <sup>1</sup>	
80 <sup>3</sup> -85 <sup>1</sup>	

#### Solution

bars	Compositional technique
5-7 flute	sequence (the outlined chords follow the melody in moving from G major – f sharp minor – e minor)
5-8 <sup>2</sup> complete texture	Harmonic sequence (D-G-C#-F#-B-E-A-D) I-IV-vii-iii-vi-ii-V-I Note from b.6 this is also a circle of fifths, but the tonicisations are implied as the chordal third and fifth are missing from the texture in which a single line accompaniment is doubled at the octave
21-24 <sup>2</sup>	Two-bar repetition. Although this looks like a sequence it isn't as the interval pattern in the accompaniment is different
32-33	Melodic sequence bar 32, but this is a simple repetition in bar 33
65-68 <sup>1</sup>	Sequence in solo part but harmonic sequence is disrupted at 67 to modulate from B min back to tonic (D maj)
80 <sup>3</sup> -85 <sup>1</sup>	Nested harmonic sequence around a circle of fifths (80 <sup>3</sup> -82 <sup>2</sup> pattern 82 <sup>3</sup> -83 sequence) (E min- A maj-D maj-G maj / C# min-F# min-B min) final sequence to 85 is truncated to reach the tonic (E min-A maj-D maj)

### Activity:

#### Extension activity:

Research and find other music relating to nature written in Italy during the Baroque period. You might like to start with some of Vivaldi's other concertos. How are they similar or different to the concerto you are studying?

#### Compositional activity:

Research music relating to nature, to the seasons or to time. What particular features do you notice in the music that brings that element of nature to life? This article from the Royal Meteorological Society may be of interest. [http://www.met.rdg.ac.uk/~williams/publications/wea\\_765.pdf](http://www.met.rdg.ac.uk/~williams/publications/wea_765.pdf)

Find a sound in the natural environment that you can re-create in a musical way, then try to compose or improvise a short piece of music for your instrument or voice as a response to it.

## 4. Related repertory

Vivaldi – Violin concertos from *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione* (The four seasons) Flute concertos from op. 10 - La notte (night), La tempesta di mare (the storm at sea)

Marini – La luna (the moon)

These pieces all invoke something of the natural world – the seasons, times of day, weather

## 5. Teaching points

[addressing BLM/gender issues]

Issues around the hiding of disability and of promoting 'norms' of desirability for women are as relevant today as they were in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A disabled person who is talented should not be hidden from view but celebrated.

See the companion resource 'Music at the Ospedale della Pietà' for further information.

### Questions for consideration or research

- Should music be used as a means of social reform or change?
- Are there examples of music today that are attempting to comment on social problems?
- What might have been the advantages for female musicians at this time?

## 6. Curriculum links

History & History of medicine

See also OU resources on Music at the Ospedale della Pietà

## 7. Bibliography/further reading

Baldauf-Berds, J. *Women musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations 1525-1855*,

Laven, M. *Virgins of Venice*, Penguin, 2002

Eanes, C. 2009, "Research Report - Angels of Song: An Introduction to Musical Life at the Venetian "Ospedali"", *Choral Journal*, vol. 49, no. 8, pp. 71-81

Pincherle, M. (1938) 'Vivaldi and the Ospitali of Venice', *The Musical quarterly*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 25, p. 300.