Welcome to the NAC’s Vivaldi and the Four Seasons newspaper guide! Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra is pleased to share the remarkable life, times and music of one of the most famous composers of all time.

We want to hear from you! Submit your comments, drawings and reviews of this Vivaldi guide by emailing mused@nac-cna.ca or sending them to:

Music Education Programs
National Arts Centre
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Station B, Ottawa, ON K1P 5W1.

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www.ArtsAlive.ca where you can discover more about what we do at the National Arts Centre.

PLAY OR SING A VIVALDI PIECE

If you play the recorder or like to sing, turn to page 6.

SPECIAL THANKS

To Dwight MacPherson of the Ottawa Citizen for the design and layout and to Robert Markow, Alison Kenny-Gardhouse and Catherine West for writing the text.

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VIVALDI’S LIFE

Imagine for a moment that you are a composer so famous that you are a tourist attraction. You are someone a foreigner might come to and ask to write a piece of music as a souvenir of his visit to your city. Such a man was Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), one of the greatest musical figures of the Baroque period.

Vivaldi knew kings and princes and twice was invited to play the violin for the Pope. Strangely, after his death people ignored his music for 200 years. He was not re-discovered until the mid-20th century.

Now, once again, Vivaldi is tremendously popular, the way he was during his lifetime. Let’s find out more about this remarkable man and the exciting times he lived in.

VIVALDI’S FAMILY

Antonio was born into a large family. He had four brothers and four sisters. We know little more about his early years. But we do know that, at age 15, he began studying to be a priest. He became a priest in 1703, but he said mass only a few times. Vivaldi became known as “The Red Priest” because of his bright red hair.

Vivaldi had a medical problem he called “tightening of the chest.” Today we would call it asthma. His medical problems did not prevent him, however, from learning to play the violin, to compose, and to take part in many musical activities. As far as we know, his father was his only important teacher and they sometimes played the violin together in church.
In 1703, Vivaldi joined the staff of the school of the Ospedale della Pietà (Hospital of Mercy, so-called because it was attached to a hospital) as a music teacher. The Pietà’s musical reputation was so great that Vivaldi received a starting salary double that of his father, who worked at the city’s most important church, St. Mark’s. Vivaldi remained at the Pietà for most of his professional life. There he wrote hundreds of compositions for the girls to perform in the orchestra or to sing in the choir.

After forty years of service, Vivaldi left the Pietà and moved to Vienna to work for a former friend who was now an Emperor, Charles VI. But Charles died suddenly from food poisoning and no one else in Vienna was interested in hiring Vivaldi. Sadly, within a year, Vivaldi also died, on July 28, 1741. The cause was given as “internal inflammation,” which could have meant almost anything in those days. He received the cheapest possible funeral. The field where he was buried has disappeared entirely.

Vivaldi’s orchestra was largely made up of residents of the Pietà – a refuge for poor and orphaned girls. His music was written for this talented group, which was famous throughout Europe.

Visitors were surprised that young women could play such large or “unusual” instruments as the bassoon and clarinet. It was not considered proper for women to perform in public so they played from a gallery, as in this picture, or from behind an iron lattice, to protect their privacy. Similar institutions provided musical training for young men.

Prepare a comic strip about an event, actual or imaginary, in Vivaldi’s life. Your strip should tell a complete story. Look at comic strip characters in your local paper for examples.

In the Pietà, it was common practice to be named after your instrument – “Katarina della violino” for example. If you play an instrument, what could your nickname be?
Vivaldi lived near the end of an era known as the Baroque period, which lasted from about 1600 to 1750. It was an exciting time to be alive. The spirit of adventure and discovery filled the air. Astronomers like Copernicus and Galileo looked high into the heavens and learned that the Earth revolves around the sun. Anton van Leeuwenhoek found a whole new world under the microscope – bacteria, blood cells, and much more. William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood. There were many great composers too: in Germany there were Bach and Telemann; Handel and Purcell worked in England; France had Couperin and Rameau.

THE BAROQUE PERIOD

Just what does Baroque mean? This is a term that was originally used to describe architecture. Buildings of grand design and containing a lot of detailed decoration were called Baroque. By extension, these grandiose, highly decorated structures inspired art, music, furniture, gardens (for example, those at Versailles, outside of Paris), and even clothes and hairdos of the period. Strong colors, dramatic effects, splendour, and a sense of both dynamic movement and spontaneity were all features of baroque style. The word ‘awesome’ would be appropriate to describe much baroque art, architecture, and music.

The Baroque period was not all pleasure and joy. There were no luxuries like ovens or dishwashers. No indoor plumbing or central heating. No radios, televisions, or cell phones. Only a few people lived well – the aristocracy. Most worked much harder and longer hours than people do today. And many suffered under the autocratic rule of kings, queens, and emperors. Democracy such as we enjoy today was still far in the future.

ACTIVITY IDEA

Find examples of pictures showing BAROQUE gardens, furniture, hairstyles, and fashion.

Do you think fashion today could be called Baroque? Why or why not?

TIME LINE

- 1665 First Filles du Roi arrive in Canada.
- 1678 Antonio Vivaldi is born.
- 1685 Births of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel, two of the greatest composers of the Baroque era.
- 1697 Charles Perrault brings out a collection of fairy tales, Contes de ma mère l’Oye (or Mother Goose). The last remains of Maya civilization are destroyed by the Spanish in Mexico’s Yucatan region.
- 1705 Astronomer Edmund Halley correctly predicts the return (in 1758) of the comet that was last seen in 1682.
- 1709 Bartolomeo Cristofori invents the pianoforte (ancestor of today’s piano).
- 1714 German physicist Gabriel Daniel Fahrenheit constructs a mercury thermometer with a temperature scale.
- 1717 Inoculation against smallpox is introduced in England.
- 1719 Daniel Defoe writes Robinson Crusoe. Leopold Mozart (father of Wolfgang) is born.
- 1726 English author Jonathan Swift writes Gulliver’s Travels.
- 1732 Franz Joseph Haydn, one of the most important composers of the 18th century, is born.
- 1737 Antonio Stradivari, creator of superb violins and cellos worth millions today, dies.
- 1738 The first cuckoo clocks appear in Europe.
- 1741 Handel’s oratorio Messiah is first performed in Dublin.
Vivaldi was very much a Baroque composer. He loved to create music with brilliant effects: wide leaps from one register to another; attempts to describe natural phenomena like storms, wind, and rain; simulated bird calls; dramatic contrasts of loud and soft, or of full ensemble versus a solo instrument; and scales that zoomed up and down like a rollercoaster.

He lived in an age when people wanted to hear only the latest music, much like we do with pop music today. Composers were kept busy furiously turning out new pieces. Vivaldi composed a tremendous amount of music – over a thousand pieces. He even claimed that he could compose faster than a person could copy it! He wrote as much as Bach and Handel put together. But Vivaldi was not the champion; farther north, in Germany, Georg Phillip Telemann wrote even more.

Today, Vivaldi is remembered mostly for the large number of violin concertos he wrote – over 200. But even that number seems small compared to the total he wrote for all instruments – about 500, including concertos for mandolin, viola d’amore, oboe, recorder, bassoon, cello, horn, flute, and trumpet. The variety is almost endless! Vivaldi obviously had music not only in his head but in his fingers, bones, and heart as well. Vivaldi’s The Four Seasons violin concertos are without doubt his most famous.

Vivaldi’s The Four Seasons is so popular today that it is used in TV advertisements, as background music in restaurants and in films (Pretty Woman and Spy Game are two examples). Yet as recently as fifty years ago, hardly anyone knew this music. It started to become popular when violinist Louis Kaufmann played it on a CBS radio broadcast in the summer of 1950. Today you can choose from over one hundred recordings of The Four Seasons, including arrangements for flute, harp, soprano, guitar trio, or brass quintet, jazz quartet, strings, and even for traditional Chinese instruments!

**WORD SEARCH**

**ACROSS**

3. At the age of fifteen, Vivaldi trained to be a __________
4. Vivaldi lived for over forty years in __________
7. Vivaldi wrote over 200 __________
9. In 1709, Bartolomeo Cristofori invented the __________
10. Vivaldi taught music to __________ in the Pietà

**DOWN**

1. An example of great Baroque architecture in France is ________
2. The mercury thermometer was invented by ________
4. Vivaldi wrote over one __________ pieces of music
6. Vivaldi lived during the __________ period
8. Vivaldi suffered from ________

**ANSWERS**
Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* is a set of four short violin concertos written around 1720. Each “season” is a three-movement work lasting about ten minutes. This music ranks among the most popular ever written. You’ll find out why in a moment.

What do you listen for when a piece of music is playing?

Use the definitions below to guide your listening.

**DYNAMICS** - Dynamics refer to how loudly or softly the music should be played. In Baroque music the dynamics usually change abruptly rather than gradually.

You can hear this clearly in the first few moments of *Spring*.

**TIMBRE** - The specific kind of sound each instrument makes is its timbre. The bright violin sounds different from the darker-toned viola or from the deep, low cello, even if it’s playing exactly the same note.

You can hear an excellent example of the contrast of timbres between the violins and the cellos shortly after the beginning of *Summer*.

**HARMONY** - Underneath the melody are clusters of notes called chords, each of which sounds different. These chords can stand alone or they can support a melody. Some chords sound gentle and pleasant, some may sound harsh or unpleasant. The composer uses these to create the kind of mood he wants at each moment.

**Go to Activities & Games** at www.ArtsAlive.ca and play the melody of *Vivaldi’s Winter* with a harmonic accompaniment. Listen to how the chords support the melody.
PLAY ALONG WITH YOUR RECORDER, FLUTE OR ANOTHER INSTRUMENT AND BY ALL MEANS SING!

Here is an excerpt from the “Largo” of Vivaldi’s Winter concerto. Part I is Vivaldi’s melody (for more advanced players), and Part II is an accompaniment (for beginner players). When you have learned one of these parts, try playing it with the recording at www.ArtsAlive.ca/musicgames/.

“Largo” theme from Winter (The Four Seasons)

for Recorder and Orchestra

A. Vivaldi
Words: Marcelline Moody

Once, in the deep of the Winter, I heard a bird sweetly sing.

A-

mid the ice and snow, I listened. He sang of the promise, the magic, the power that

is the renewal of Spring. As he sang of my heart took flight and was uplifted. I was

warmed as the snow around me drifted, And his song softened Winter’s sting.
Dear Students,

Welcome to the wonderful world of Antonio Vivaldi. As one of the world’s most influential and well-known classical composers, Vivaldi’s importance lies, above all, in his concertos for their boldness and originality, and for their central place in the history of music. I hope you enjoy learning about the orchestra that brings his Four Seasons to life! And I encourage you all to make music yourselves – the rewards are endless.

Good luck!

Pinchas Zukerman,
Music Director of Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra

STRINGS: Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, & Harp

All string instruments of the orchestra have four strings. The vibration of the strings produces the sound. A string player either draws a bow made of horsehair across the strings, or plucks the strings with his or her fingers to produce sound. The larger the instrument, the lower the sound – violins make the highest sounds and double basses the lowest. Every string instrument is constructed of pieces of wood carefully glued together and covered with several coats of varnish – no nails or screws are used.

BRASS: Trumpet, French horn, Trombone, & Tuba

The Brass Section has the most resounding instruments in the orchestra. They are metallic loops of tubing, of different lengths, with a mouthpiece at one end and a bell shape at the other. The longer the length of tubing, the lower the sound. The vibration of the musician’s lips produces the sound as air is blown in the mouthpiece. Brass instruments have valves that the players press and release in order to change and produce different notes. The trombone has a slide that moves to change notes.

WOODWINDS: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, & Bassoon

Woodwind instruments are simply tubes pierced with holes. The musician blows through or across the tube while covering some holes to produce different notes. Many wind instruments are played with reeds. A reed is a thin piece of cane that is set in motion as the musician blows across it. The oboe and bassoon use a double reed while the clarinet uses a single reed. Most wind instruments are made from wood, like ebony, except for the flute, which is almost always made of silver. Flutes create the highest notes, bassoons create the lowest.

PERCUSSION: Timpani, Bass Drum, Cymbals, Triangle, And Tons of Other Interesting Instruments!

Percussion instruments are made of naturally resonant materials like skin, wood, and metal. The sound is produced when the instrument is struck. The percussion provides rhythm and character to the orchestra. Different pitches are produced on the timpani by changing the skin tension either by tightening or loosening screws fixed to the shell, or by using the pedal.

Visit the Instrument Lab at www.ArtsAlive.ca (Music) to learn more about the instruments of the orchestra. Also read complete interviews with National Arts Centre Orchestra musicians at www.ArtsAlive.ca/naco/.
A Calendar On Turtle’s Shell

Count the number of full moons in a year, using a conventional calendar for reference. Chart the dates of each moon.

On a turtle’s back there are almost always 13 large scales, surrounded by 28 smaller ones. This seems to be especially true of painted turtles, the most common turtle in North America. First Nations people discovered that the number of scales corresponded exactly to the thirteen full moons in a year, and to the average number of days between moons, which is 28. Imagine living in a community where you would be eating, sleeping, socializing and working outside most of the time. Label each moon/turtle scale with something that you would see, hear, touch, taste, or smell at that time of year, beginning with your birthday moon.

Research tribal names for full moons.
Research other calendars from ancient civilizations.
Explore habitats and communities of turtles.

Find out more about the First Nation Lunar calendar names:
http://americanindian.net click on Moons
www.angelfire.com/wi3/namcal

As a First Nations musician, I realized well into my career that there were many other successful Aboriginal Canadians who were invisible in both Canadian society and to Aboriginal people as well. My efforts to establish and build the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation and our annual CBC television special was an effort to profile these successful Aboriginal people and to provide more opportunities to Aboriginal youth.

Aboriginal peoples have enriched the life of Canada from prior to European contact to today. It is important for Canadians to learn about our rich cultures and to be informed of the important contributions First Nations have and continue to make.

– John Kim Bell, Conductor and Composer and Founder of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

First Nations Creation Myth Drumming Activity

Read the story “Creator and the Seasons” on pages 11 and 12. List the various characters in the story and their specific traits. Make your own drum by following the suggestions below.

Drum Making Ideas

If your school does not have a collection of hand drums, there are simple ways to make effective drums. Large empty water bottles turned upside down make a deep sound, as do various sizes of cardboard boxes. Large tins with both ends cut off (check at the local pizzeria), or 30cm lengths of cardboard sona tube with one end covered with overlapping layers of packing tape make a medium-deep sound.

Large yogurt or margarine containers turned upside down create a higher sound. Any kind of drum will work. Check for hand drums, African djembes, timpani, bongos, or congas in your community. If you live in or near a Native community, local musicians might be able to provide a drumming demonstration, and possibly lend drums for the lesson.

Once you have made a drum, experiment with different sounds that can be produced. Discuss tempo, rhythm, and dynamics. Create a short musical theme for each character.

Dramatize the story. Select who will read parts of “Creator and the Seasons” aloud and who will play the drums before each character speaks.
1. Read these facts about Venice (Venezia) during Vivaldi’s lifetime:

- A city built on 120 islands, with canals instead of streets
- Canals are traveled by ‘gondolas’, poled along by boatmen known as ‘gondoliers’.
- Positioned on the Adriatic Sea, it was a port city along busy ocean trade routes, a major centre of commerce in the 15th and 16th centuries
- In Vivaldi’s lifetime, new trade routes (the Cape Route to the Orient, and to the Americas) meant that Venice was becoming known more for culture, opera, art, and glass work, than commerce
- St. Mark’s Cathedral contributed to Venice’s musical tradition by using multiple choirs located in different parts of the building
- In the 16th-18th centuries, visitors from all over Europe were drawn to the city to admire the architecture, take part in the many ceremonies that marked the Venetian calendar, to attend the theatres and gaming houses, and to buy trend-setting paintings or musical scores
- Today, rising water levels and air pollution are eroding the historical buildings

Geographical Location/Special Notes:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Major Economic Base/Industries:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Cultural Activities:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Traditions/Innovations:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Main Tourist Attractions:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Environmental Concerns:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. In the space provided, make comparisons between your hometown and Vivaldi’s hometown. Are there any special features? Can you find any similarities to Venezia?

City/Town: ____________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Design a page for a travel magazine to promote the town or city where you live. Draw or cut out pictures of recognizable landmarks, industry, cultural activities, to accompany your description.
Then and Now: The Baroque Era and the 20th Century

1. Read about the following inventions and discoveries from the Baroque era and identify where they were invented and who invented them:

   Telescope: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Microscope: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Tennis: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Public Carriages: (Public transportation for pennies!)
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Umbrella: (The first using it were mocked)
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Adding Machine: (Could add eight figures)
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Calculator: (Could add, multiply and divide)
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Pendulum Clock: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Watch: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Paper Money: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Mercury Thermometer: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Rubber Erasers: ______________________________
   ______________________________
   Piano, Clarinet, Oboe: ______________________________
   ______________________________

2. Just as the Baroque era was a time of great change and discovery, so is the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. Consider the following questions and write your answers in the space provided.

   A. Can you think of some inventions, social changes, or new forms of art, music and literature that have altered the course of the 20th and 21st century?
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

   B. What inventions, social issues, and concerns do you predict in the near future?
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

   C. Name a famous scientist/astronaut of the 20th or 21st century.
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

   D. What do we know about the human body that we did not know 50 years ago?
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

   E. Name currencies (money) and coins, which you have used.
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

Did You Know?

- Mayonnaise, roller skates, and mechanically made toothbrushes all were invented soon after 1750.
- Isaac Newton’s work on motion and gravitation set the stage for the science of physics.
- Medical understanding improved with the study of the human body (anatomy and physiology).
- Merchants used currency such as the gold fiorino (florin), gold ducat and silver scudi, as well as bills of exchange and bills of credit.
Creator travelled the Earth making things right. One day, taking his giant birch bark canoe, he paddled across the tranquil waters of the world.

The canoe glided towards the shores nearest the rising sun. As he approached the distant horizon, it grew colder. Fierce winds swept the waters into huge crashing waves. Great chunks of ice floated around him, making it impossible to paddle. Abandoning the canoe, Creator stepped upon the frozen earth. Looking north he saw only a vast blanket of white. There were no seals or polar bears.

To the south he saw the tall pine tree in robes of white. The bare branches of the oak and maple stretched skyward like huge fingers swaying in the wind. Great sheets of ice draped over the rocks along the rivers and streams holding the once-rushing waters. All the animals and birds had disappeared.

Creator looked upon the people. He saw much suffering. Without the seals to hunt, the Inuit house of ice was cold and their stomachs empty. The Cree were starving without the caribou and water foul.

“This is not right,” he said. “Nothing can survive in this harshness.”

With all his magic, Creator tried to bring warmth to the Earth. Nothing changed. No matter what he did, the Earth still wore a blanket of ice and snow.

Growing weak from his efforts, Creator sat down to rest on a high mountain.

Suddenly, an icy wind swept around him, bringing great swirling curtains of snow. From the spinning white veil appeared an enormous ice giant. His old, cracked face loomed over Creator. A voice boomed through the screaming winds.

“I am Winter. My power is so great, the people shiver in fear, the animals run away, and the waters turn hard as rock.

“Even your magic is frozen. Soon the whole Earth will be mine.” The ice giant began to laugh, swirling away on the winds. The bitter cold had taken Creator’s magic.

“I will need help to make things right,” said Creator. With his last bit of strength, he left the land of ice and snow.

As Creator continued on his journey, it grew warmer. Soft new grass cushioned his footsteps as he made his way on shore. Bright green buds burst open, bringing the forests to life. Overhead, flocks of ducks and geese cast their pointed shadows as they raced across the awakening Earth in V formation.

Creator came upon a handsome young man. He stood tall above the treetops as songbirds darted about his head. In his arms, he held a basket full of berry bushes. One by one, he carefully planted each bush in the meadows.

“Good day, Spring,” Creator called out. “I have come to ask for your help.”

Creator told Spring of his encounter with Winter. Soon there will be nothing left for me. I will lose my power to wake the animals or call back the water fowl. The peoples of the Longhouse will not be able to grow their corn, beans, and squash.”

Both in agreement, Creator and Spring set off to find help. Their journey led them through lush forests, thick with undergrowth and busy with many creatures. The insects’ high-pitched serenade clung to the hot, dense air.

Read more stories by C.J. Taylor such as The Messenger of Spring and Peace Walker and George Littlechild’s This Land is My Land. Discuss how each author uses visual images and the written word to tell their stories.
They followed a long winding river that flowed into a deep lake. On its shores stood a beautiful woman with one foot in the water and the other on a sandy beach. Brightly coloured flowers decorated her long, black hair. In her arms she held a large clay pot and gently poured water, teeming with fish, into the lake.

Spring was the first to call out. “Good day, Summer. We have come for your help.”

Creator again told of his encounter with Winter. Summer listened as he spoke of the frozen Earth, the missing animals, and the suffering people.

“Winter has taken so much of my time,” added Spring. “It is difficult to do my work.”

“Without your work, I cannot do mine,” replied Summer. “I will lose my power. The buffalo will not return to the rolling hills or plains. The Blackfoot and Crow will have no food or skins for shelter.”

“It is not right,” said Creator.

“Which of you wishes to challenge me?” screeched Winter.

Creator stepped into the tornado of swirling ice pelts. The winds stopped and there was quiet. He gathered his strength and summoned all their powerful magic. Creator began to grow so immense, his body filled the heavens. "Winter," he called out. "We come as one." His voice echoed through the universe. The blanket of snow that covered the land began to melt as Winter’s power disappeared. The ground where Spring, Summer, and Autumn stood burst to life with colour. Winter shrank back to his proper place in the cycle of seasons.

Creator looked upon the Earth. "This is right." And he was pleased.

& THE FOUR SEASONS

VIVALDI

“And I will be unable to do mine,” added Summer. Autumn knew without Summer’s powerful work, he could not create the beautiful colours he used to paint the Earth. He would be powerless to help salmon, whale, and halibut on their journey. The beautiful forests would die. There would be no food to hunt, catch, or gather for the Shuswap of the mountains or the Kwakiutl of the coast.

“I too have noticed that Winter comes earlier each year. But what can be done?” asked Autumn. “Not one of us is strong enough to push Winter back.”

“It is not right,” said Spring, Summer, and Autumn.

“It is true, Winter’s power is great,” Creator told them. “But there is one greater power.”

“Whose?” they asked.

“Our own,” answered Creator. “Together, our magic is stronger.”

Creator led Spring, Summer, and Autumn along the path to the frozen lands of Winter. With each footstep, the land grew colder. Blankets of white covered everything. Howling winds sent sheets of frozen sleet whipping around them.

From the centre of the twirling and twisting hail appeared the ice giant.

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