



Un Natale Veneziano

A Venetian Christmas

Ensemble OrQuesta Baroque
directed by Marcio da Silva

St Thomas' Church Winchelsea
Friday 16th December 2022

Winchelsea Arts



The Baroque *Pastorale* or *Christmas Concerto* comes from old Italian folk custom. During the Christmas Novena (nine days of prayer) between 16th and 24th December, peasants playing instruments such as the *pifferari* (shawm) and *zamppognari* (bagpipes) entered local towns to re-enact the shepherds' adoration of the Christ-child

Characteristics of this traditional music were the thirds melodies, the burden bass (bagpipe drone) and the gently swaying siciliano rhythm typically in a minor key

This rustic tradition was transformed into the musical *pastorale* (*pastor*, from the Latin, a shepherd)

For the Christmas season a *pastorale* would be incorporated by composers into a concerto celebrating the Holy Nativity

ARCANGELO CORELLI 1653–1713

***Christmas Concerto* 1714**

- I. *Vivace, Grave. Arcate, sostenuto e come stà,*
- II. *Allegro*
- III. *Adagio – Allegro – Adagio*
- IV. *Vivace*
- V. *Allegro*
- VI. *Largo. Pastorale ad libitum*

Corelli was virtuoso violinist and influential composer who enjoyed great success in his lifetime, working mainly in Rome. The *Christmas Concerto* (published posthumously in 1714 as part of Corelli's *Twelve Concerti Grossi*, Op. 6 commissioned by his patron Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni) is arguably one the finest of its kind. Written for Christmas Eve, the lovely pastorale arrives in the final movement and is seen by many as a jewel in the crown of the piece, bringing a deep and lasting feeling of serenity.

GUISEPPE VALENTINI 1681-1753

***Sinfonia a tre per il santissimo Natale, Op. 1 No. 12*
(Christmas Symphony in three parts)**

- I. *Largo – Andante e forte*
- II. *Allegro*
- III. *Largo*
- IV. *Presto*

Valentini, nicknamed *Straccioncino* (little ragamuffin), was an Italian violinist, painter, poet, and composer, today known mainly for his inventive instrumental music. He worked in Rome and succeeded Corelli as director of the concertino at San Luigi dei Francesi, from 1710 to 1741. There are strong pastoral elements in the Christmas Symphony.

FRANCESCO CAVALLI 1602-1676

Sonata a 4

Cavalli, a pupil of Claudio Monteverdi, was a composer, organist and singer. He became a central figure of Venetian musical life, and wrote more than forty operas, for some of which he is still known. Born at Crema, Lombardy (part of the Venetian Empire), he was a boy chorister at St Mary's Cathedral, Crema and then at St Mark's, Venice, where he was later organist and *Maestro di Capella*. He took the name "Cavalli" from his patron, Venetian nobleman Federico Cavalli. Cavalli wrote much liturgical music as well as his operas, such as tonight's sonata and the *canzona* which will be played in the second part of tonight's concert.

GUISEPPE TORELLI 1658-1709

Concerto a Quattro in forma di pastorale per il santo Natale in G minor, Op 8 No. 6

(Christmas Concerto in four parts in the pastoral style)

I. *Vivace – Grave, sostenuto e come stà*

II. *Allegro*

III. *Adagio – Allegro – Adagio*

IV. *Vivace*

V. *Allegro*

VI. *Largo, pastorale ad libitum*

Torelli was a violinist, viola player, composer and teacher, contributing to the development of the concerto grosso, as well as writing extensively for the trumpet. Born in Verona, he worked in a number of Italian states and also spent time in the court orchestra of Georg-Freidrich II, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach (not J S Bach's Margrave). He died in Bologna where his activities included playing as an orchestral violinist.

INTERVAL

FRANCESCO ONOFRIO MANFREDINI 1684-1762
Concerto Pastorale per il Santissimo Natale in C major,
Op 3 No. 12 (Christmas Concerto) (1718)

- I. *Pastorale: Largo*
- II. *Largo*
- III. *Allegro*

Manfredini was an orchestral violinist, composer and church musician. He was born in Pistoia, Tuscany, where he later became choir master of St Zeno's Cathedral, a post he held (despite conflicts with his employers) until his death at the age of 78. He was in the service of Prince Antoine I of Monaco, a keen musician, for a number of years. The prince was godfather to one of Manfredini's sons. A contemporary of J S Bach and Vivaldi, Manfredini studied under Guiseppe Torelli. Unfortunately little of Manfredini's output survives, of which the melodious *Christmas Concerto* is the best known.

GAETANO MARIA SCHIASSI 1698–1754

Sinfonia Pastorale per il Santissimo Natali di Nostro Jesu
(Christmas Symphony)

- I. *Adagio*
- II. *Allegro*
- III. *Largo spiccato*
- IV. *Andante*

Schiassi was a violinist who wrote eleven operas and six oratorios of which only one opera (*Il Demofonte*, produced in Venice in 1735) survives. He was born in Bologna in the same year that Torelli wrote his first violin concerto, and worked there and in Darmstadt before moving to Lisbon in the mid-1730s, where he died in royal service. The date and place of composition of the *Christmas Symphony* are not known, but its style suggests that it was written before Schiassi left for Portugal. The pastoral elements are notable. The remarkable ending suggests that perhaps Schiassi visualised the Angels of the Lord ascending again after imparting their joyful message.

FRANCESCO CAVALLI 1602-1676

Canzona

Programme notes: R J Manuell

dp

ANTONIO VIVALDI 1678-1741

L'Inverno (Winter)

from Le Quattro Stagioni (The Four Seasons) 1723

Concerto No. 4 in F minor, Op. 8, RV 297

*Caminar Sopra il ghiaccio, e à passo lento
Per timor di cader girsene intenti;
Gir forte Sdruzziolar, cader à terra
Di nuove ir Sopra 'l ghiaccio e correr forte
Sin ch' il ghiaccio si rompe, e si disserra;
Sentir uscir dalle ferrate porte
Sirocco, Borea, e tutti i Venti in guerra
Quest' é 'l verno, mà tal, che gioja apporta.*

Tread we the icy path slowly and cautiously,
afraid of tripping and falling.
Then turn abruptly, slip, crash on the ground and,
rising, hurry across the ice lest it cracks up.
We feel the chill north winds course through the home
despite the doors locked and bolted
this is winter, which nonetheless
brings its own delights.

- I. *Allegro non molto*
- II. *Largo*
- III. *Allegro*

Vivaldi, known as “the red priest” because of his red hair and priestly ordination, was a virtuoso violinist, influential composer and teacher. Each concerto of *The Four Seasons* was headed by Vivaldi with a sonnet, probably written by him. The music was revolutionary in its time because Vivaldi sought to represent nature, and did so most effectively. Although renowned in Vivaldi’s lifetime, *The Four Seasons* were neglected until the 1940s. The fact that today they are among the most popular pieces of classical music need not obscure their subtlety and beauty.



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Christmas at St Thomas' Church

Sunday 18th 6pm : Lessons and Carols by Candlelight

Christmas Eve 4pm : Crib Service 11.30pm : Midnight Mass

Christmas Day 11am : Family Eucharist

Donations towards the upkeep of this remarkable building are always gratefully received. There's a contactless payment machine at the back of church and you can also donate via justgiving.com/fundraising/winchelseaapcc

