



Composer Profile: Antonio Lucio Vivaldi (1678 – 1741):

Born in Venice, little is known of Antonio Vivaldi's early years. He was the eldest of six children and although his father, a violinist in the orchestra of St Mark's Basilica, tutored him in the violin, he initially seemed destined for a career in the church, studying to become a priest from the age of 15. He was ordained in 1703, but his health was allegedly too delicate to allow him to discharge his religious duties, and he withdrew from them soon after.

At the age of 24 he began working at the Conservatorio della Pietà, an orphanage for girls, in Venice, which placed particular emphasis on musical education and had a superb choir and orchestra. His main pursuit was as a violin teacher, but he also devoted his life to composing; writing many of his concertos, cantatas and sacral music for the orphanage.

Vivaldi spent the next 30 years composing most of his major works as his reputation grew.

The publication of his *L'estro armónico* (12 concertos for one, two or four solo violins) in 1711, was a great success across Europe; with J.S. Bach copying and arranging several of them.

He travelled throughout Europe, and Italy, spending a large part of his time writing operas and supervising their production. After meeting Emperor Charles VI, Vivaldi moved to Vienna hoping for royal support, but the emperor died soon after Vivaldi's arrival and he himself died in poverty less than a year later.

Vivaldi is regarded as one of the greatest Baroque composers, with his influence widespread across Europe during his lifetime; prompting many imitators and admirers, especially the development of J.S. Bach's instrumental music and the French concerto.

Programme Notes: Gloria RV 589:

Vivaldi's musical reputation declined for almost 200 years, but received a revival in the early 20th Century. Although his popular reputation is largely for his numerous instrumental compositions, notably the *Four Seasons*, his vocal music is of considerable importance.

In the 18th Century, the boundaries between the church and secular society were flexible and Vivaldi, an ordained priest, excelled as a composer of both operas and sacred music, with his output of motets, settings of a number of psalms and also of the Roman Catholic Mass, or of isolated sections of it.

Among these Mass sections are at least 3 settings of the Gloria, one of which is now lost.

The elaborate Gloria RV588 survives and is considered as the mother-composition to the RV589. Both date from 1708, and were composed during his time working at the Pieta.

Since its first modern revival in Siena in 1939, this RV589 setting of Gloria, has been the most popular of Vivaldi's choral works by far, and is simply known as *the Vivaldi's "Gloria"*.

The Gloria itself is a joyful hymn of praise and worship divided into twelve relatively brief movements, ranging from festive brilliance to profound sadness, and is a testament to Vivaldi's skill that the work overall maintains a cohesive structure.

The piece feels part concerto – part opera, but the effect is one of sacred music's most uplifting choral works.

He sets us up from the very beginning, with the distinctive opening chorus, 'Gloria', which is a jubilant call to worship. Yet within minutes we're into the meditative next movement 'Et in terra pax hominibus'; representing the earth's peaceful response to the angel's song.

From the lilting soprano solos of 'Laudamus te', to solemn choral singing with duets and four-part harmonies, this really is a masterclass in choral writing.

The 'Quoniam tu solus Sanctus' is musically an abbreviated reprise of the opening movement and prepares us nicely for his grand finish; a double fugue on the words 'Cum Sancto Spiritu', bringing the whole work together in a vivid and effective composite of all that came before.

Gloria (in excelsis Deo)	Glory (to God in the highest)
Et in terra pax hominibus	And peace is Among Men on Earth
Laudamus te	We praise you
Gratias agimus tibi	We give thee thanks
Propter magnam gloriam	For your great glory
Domine Deus	Lord God
Domine Fili Unigenite	Lord only begotten Son
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei	Lord God, Lamb of God
Qui tollis peccata mundi	Who takes away the sins of the world
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus	For Thou only art holy
Cum Sancto Spiritu	With the Holy Spirit