



The Four Seasons (*Le Quattoro Stagioni*)
Spring (*La Primavera*)
By Antonio Vivaldi

Using Music to Inspire Visual Art

Unusually for the time, Vivaldi published the concerti with accompanying poems (possibly written by Vivaldi himself) that elucidated what it was about those seasons that his music was intended to evoke. It provides one of the earliest and most-detailed examples of what was later called program music—music with a narrative element.

We can also look to visual art for inspiration. The illustrations included in this concert video are by Sara Rosecrans. She found her inspiration by tying the music with a sense of place. Does the music remind you of a feeling or a place you have been or a place you love? She says, “To me, the music gave me peace and peace is what I associate being at home with. Therefore, I drew the bridge I cross everyday going to my parents’ house.”

Have students create their own interpretation of the music. Use any medium readily available to the students.

1. **Listen and watch** the performance of Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons, Spring*
2. **Ask** students to describe what they hear and see
3. **Play** again with audio only and **ask** students to think about what they hear
4. While listening, **create an image** to reflect the music

Music and Poetry

Vivaldi took great pains to relate his music to the texts of the poems, translating the poetic lines themselves directly into the music on the page. In the middle section of the *Spring* concerto, where the goatherd sleeps, his barking dog can be marked in the viola section. Other natural occurrences are similarly evoked. Vivaldi separated each concerto into three movements, fast-slow-fast, and likewise each linked sonnet into three sections.

1. **Listen and watch** the video of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons, Spring*
2. **Ask** students to describe what they hear and see
3. **Play** again with audio only and **ask** students to think about what they hear
4. While listening, **list words** to reflect what you hear in the music
5. Take **20 minutes** to write your poem using your listening notes

Vivaldi's poem

Spring

Allegro

Spring has arrived with joy
Welcomed by the birds with happy songs,
And the brooks, amidst gentle breezes,
Murmur sweetly as they flow.

The sky is caped in black, and
Thunder and lightning herald a storm
When they fall silent, the birds
Take up again their delightful songs.

Largo e pianissimo sempre

And in the pleasant, blossom-filled meadow,
To the gentle murmur of leaves and plants,
The goatherd sleeps, his faithful dog beside him.

Allegro

To the merry sounds of a rustic bagpipe,
Nymphs and shepherds dance in their beloved spot
When Spring appears in splendour.

Dive Deeper

Program Music

- instrumental music that carries some extramusical meaning, some “program” of literary idea, legend, scenic description, or personal drama.
- Other musical examples to explore:
 - Claude Debussy [*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*](#) (*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*)
 - Composition was inspired by the poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* by Stéphane Mallarmé. It describes the sensual experiences of a faun who has just woken up from his afternoon sleep and discusses his encounters with several nymphs during the morning in a dreamlike monologue.
 - Camille Saint-Saëns [*The Carnival of the Animals*](#) (*Le Carnaval des animaux*)