THE VIOLA AS A SECRET WEAPON IN ANTONIO VIVALDI’S ORCHESTRAL REVOLUTION: SONORITY AND TEXTURE IN LATE BAROQUE ITALIAN MUSIC

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Abstract

This dissertation examines Vivaldi’s use of the viola as a flexible orchestra resource, revealing the composer’s varied strategies for achieving striking contrasts of texture and sonority in his work. Using Vivaldi’s music as a case study, my research provides a fundamentally new approach to understanding the co-existence of multiple textural models in late Baroque music, exploring hitherto-overlooked continuities between textures and orchestrations in early and late eighteenth-century music. The first musicology study to focus on scoring and texture in the music of Vivaldi and his contemporaries, my dissertation presents vocabulary and theoretical models that make it possible to analyze the various roles fulfilled by the viola in a piece of ensemble music, and the complex ways in which these aspects of scoring and orchestration interact with one another.

After highlighting problematic assumptions in existing historiographies of orchestration and eighteenth-century music, I identify Vivaldi’s earlier works – those written prior to the beginning of his employment at the court of Mantua in spring, 1718 – as a focal point for demonstrating the variety of ways Vivaldi uses the viola to achieve effects that might otherwise require a larger number of ensemble parts (Chapter 1). I then examine, in turn, the range of melodic (Chapter 2), bass (Chapter 3), rhythmic (Chapter 4), and harmonic-rhythmic and textural functions (Chapter 5) assigned to the viola. In all of these cases, I show how Vivaldi relied on the flexibility of his viola parts to produce expressive and structural contrasts, often through imaginative use of devices such as the bassetto, parallel melodic lines, monophonic textures (including orchestral unisons),
vertically-elaborated bass lines, sostenuto harmonic writing, metric emphasis, and a variety of contrapuntal and rhythmic imitation.

I also demonstrate (Chapter 6) the interactions of texture and sonority with aspects of form, harmony, and melodic-rhythmic motives over the course of entire movements. In the case of a work such as the opening movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 No. 3, this raises several possibilities for a narrative reading of the movement. As I then show, Vivaldi harnessed these interactions, coupled with descriptive sonnets, to help communicate more detailed expressive and narrative elements in *The Four Seasons* – works that may have been composed during his employment in Mantua (Interlude).

While I focus on the earlier works of Antonio Vivaldi – those written prior to the beginning of his employment at the court of Mantua in spring, 1718 – I also address the music of Albinoni, Corelli, and Torelli to show that Vivaldi’s revolutionary contrasts of sonority and texture build upon the most innovative trends of his predecessors and contemporaries (Chapter 7). The net result (Conclusion) is that Vivaldi’s works emerge as some of the more striking examples of a trend towards aligning textural juxtapositions with melodic, harmonic, structural, and expressive contrasts within certain late-Baroque Italian music – the products of which often appear to foreshadow similar alignments in music of the late eighteenth century,
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This project was initially inspired by discrepancies I noticed between scholarly descriptions of eighteenth-century viola parts and my personal experience playing the viola in orchestras and chamber ensembles. Time and again, I read that the viola was almost always subservient to other parts, made little or no real contribution to the musical fabric of a piece, and either provided harmonic filler or paralleled the bass line (except in an ever-decreasing number of polyphonic works). While these assessments appeared to be true in some cases, they described very little of what I believed the viola parts were really contributing to the music, and I also encountered features that were not discussed in the scholarly literature at all. The present study began as part of my effort to arrive at a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the use of the viola as an orchestral resource in early eighteenth-century music. I say “began” because it has evolved into a broader examination of the orchestration of sonority and texture – topics fundamental to a reassessment of the history of orchestral music in the early eighteenth century.

I am delighted to have the opportunity here to thank some of the many people and institutions that have made this project possible. Above all, I have benefited from the unstinting support of my family, especially my parents, who have supported me in so many ways as I pursued my research and persevered through all of life’s surprises (including two hurricanes), even though this resulted in several years of being 3000 miles apart for most holidays and special occasions. I am also blessed to have the love and support of Erin, who has patiently stood by me even though our school commitments have meant being geographically apart for the majority of the years we’ve been together up until now.
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especially Darwin Scott, Dan Gallagher, Jenny Scro, and Maggie Capewell, have been very helpful in tracing a wide variety of materials from the library’s collection over the years.

Since only a relatively small portion of Vivaldi’s works have yet appeared in critical editions (and some works have yet to appear in any modern edition), a crucial phase of my research involved examining reproductions of original sources. To Dr. Karl Geck and the staff at the SLUB in Dresden I owe substantial thanks for their work in publishing online digital scans of music from the former collections of the Dresden Hofkapelle, including the kind prioritization of a couple of Vivaldi manuscripts of vital importance to my research.

I was extremely fortunate to spend several weeks in Venice, consulting reproductions of Vivaldian sources in the archives of the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi. This work was generously supported by the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation through a 2010-2011 Grant for Independent Research on Venetian History and Culture. My studies at the Vivaldi Institute were enriched by my residency at the Vittore Branca Center for International Studies of Italian Culture, on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice. I would like to thank Massimo Busetto and Marta Zoppetti of the Vittore Branca Center for their help in arranging the details of my residency. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, the parent organization of the Vivaldi Institute and the Vittore Branca Center, for generously helping to support the cost of my stay in Venice. To the Vivaldi Institute’s director, Francesco Fanna, I extend thanks for assisting with my inquiries in advance of my trip. I must also express particular gratitude to Giovanna Clerici who, with a dedication that cannot be conveyed through her job title
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**Glossary and Guide to Abbreviations and Conventions**

The following are terms and abbreviations used throughout this study that are either new or that require special definition to limit their usage with respect to an existing range of definitions. An asterisk * indicates a term that is believed to originate or find new application in the present study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Bass-Bassetto compound line</td>
<td></td>
<td>A bass line that alternates between default bass registration and bassetto registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassetto registral mode</td>
<td></td>
<td>A passage where the bass line is scored for non-bass-register instruments only (in terms of organ registration, this resembles 2’ or 4’ without 8’ and/or 16’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Compound bassetto line</td>
<td></td>
<td>A line that is divided between two or more bassetto voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Default bass registration</td>
<td></td>
<td>A composer’s normal combination of registers for scoring a bass line; in Vivaldi’s case, this is 8’ + 16’ (i.e. bass + contrabass registers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Default registral distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>A composer’s most common distribution of ensemble parts within the vertical soundscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Full-ensemble parallel monophony</td>
<td>FEPM</td>
<td>A passage of monophonic texture where all of the instrumentalists and/or vocalists simultaneously sound the same pitch class and rhythms, whether at the unison or paralleled in multiple octaves (commonly referred to, sometimes incorrectly or inadequately, as ‘tutti unison’ or ‘parallel octave’ writing); unless otherwise noted, all cases discussed in this study imply the FEPOM subclass of FEPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Full-ensemble parallel octave monophony</td>
<td>FEPOM</td>
<td>A passage of monophonic texture paralleled in one or more octaves; this is a subclass of FEPM and is implied by references to FEPM in the present study unless otherwise noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Full-ensemble rhythmic unison</td>
<td>FERU</td>
<td>Rhythmic unison (without pitch unison) between all parts of the ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Full-ensemble unison monophony</td>
<td>FEUM</td>
<td>A passage of monophonic texture with true pitch and rhythmic unison (no octave parallels); a subclass of FEPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmonic-rhythmic scoring</strong></td>
<td>Passages where an ensemble part fills a harmonic and rhythmic role without simultaneously providing a distinct melodic or bass-line function</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Melodic Line</td>
<td>IML A melodic line scored for a single ensemble part</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metric emphasis</td>
<td>Reinforcement of metrically strong beats to sharpen the profile of underlying metric stress patterns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Multi-voice relay</em></td>
<td>A single, composite line (or the repetition of a short melodic-rhythmic figure) where each segment is scored for a different ensemble voice; often the same sequence of exchanges is repeated one or more times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Octave compression</em></td>
<td>A brief deviation from strict parallelism whereby pitch class parallelism is retained but the octave is transposed to fit within the compass of the instrument or voice; this typically occurs for isolated notes within a passage of parallel or unison writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel bass registral mode</td>
<td>PB A passage where the bass line is scored with parallel motion for bass-register and non-bass-register instruments (for example, 4′ + 8′); this can include parallel at the unison, third, octave, tenth, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Melodic Lines</td>
<td>PML Two or more voices perform a melodic line in parallel, regardless of whether it is a primary or secondary melodic line; this can also be simulated when the melodic and bass lines parallel each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Partial-ensemble rhythmic unison</em></td>
<td>PERU Rhythmic unison (without pitch unison) between some (but not all) parts of the ensemble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pendulum imitation</em></td>
<td>Imitation where a gesture is tossed back and forth between two voices at a regular interval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Range compression</em></td>
<td>When a passage is modified to fit within a narrower range than parallel voices or corresponding passages/gestures; this is sometimes required when the passage would otherwise exceed the compass (or selective compass) of an instrument or voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Registral density</em></td>
<td>The relative density of a particular register that results from the number of ensemble parts occupying that register at any given point in time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Registral distribution</em></td>
<td>The relative placement of ensemble parts across the vertical soundscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Registral mean</em></td>
<td>The average range of all voices sounding in a given passage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Selective compass</em></td>
<td>Of the full available compass of an instrument or voice, the portion that is actually used by a composer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Simplified default bass registration</td>
<td>The omission of one or more components from a composer’s most typical combination of bass line registration; in Vivaldi’s case, this is often the omission of the contrabass (16’) register</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sostenuto writing</td>
<td>The use of sustained notes in a non-melodic or non-bass-line part</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Unison bassetto line</td>
<td>UBT A bassetto written as a single line, whether scored for a single part or several parts in unison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Vertically elaborated bass line</td>
<td>VEB A passage where the bass line is scored in parallel 3rds, 6ths, and related compound intervals involving different pitch classes; this is a sub-category of the parallel bass registral mode that excludes parallels at the unison and octave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Vertically elaborated bassetto line</td>
<td>VEBT Two or more bassetto voices traveling in parallel motion to form a single, vertically elaborated line</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unless otherwise indicated, movement divisions/numbering follows that in the 2007 edition of the Ryom catalog and subsequent updates in *Studi vivaldiani*. In the present study, a listing such as “RV 455/ii” = the second movement of RV 455; for operas, a reference such as “Act 2.ix” = Act two, scene nine.

Measure numbers generally follow the editions prepared by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (when such editions are available), except for those works where the measure count runs continuously across all movements – in such cases, I have generally re-started the measure count for each movement (as defined in Ryom, 2007) unless otherwise

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noted. For works not included in these editions (including works by Albinoni, Corelli, and Torelli), measure numbers generally follow those found in modern editions (when available) or original sources.

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Chapter 1: Rethinking Texture, Orchestration, and the Role of the Viola in the Early Eighteenth Century

In his seminal study of Baroque music, Manfred Bukofzer devoted a chapter each to the topics of “Form in Baroque Music,” “Musical Thought in the Baroque Era” (performance practice, composition, and theory), and “Sociology of Baroque Music,” but a mere four paragraphs on orchestration and texture in Baroque music (with additional comments sprinkled throughout the book). Bukofzer summarizes the history of orchestration between 1600 and 1750 as a gradual loss of the richness and flexibility of late Renaissance instrumentation (such as found in Monteverdi’s Orfeo), due to the emergence of a relatively homogeneous string ensemble as a core instrumental ensemble and the frequency with which independent parts for the middle voices (alto and tenor registers) are replaced by basso continuo harmonization. Yet Bukofzer also closes his first chapter with a caution that,

“the modern revival of baroque music is limited almost exclusively to works in late baroque style, and the music historian cannot help wondering whether a new legend is in the making which mistakes the late baroque style for baroque music

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3 Manfred F. Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era: from Monteverdi to Bach (New York: Norton, 1947). Orchestration, texture, and sonority are also given fairly superficial treatment in George J. Buelow, A History of Baroque Music (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), David Schulenberg, Music of the Baroque, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chappell White, From Vivaldi to Viotti: A History of the Early Classical Violin Concerto (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 1992), and Arthur Hutchings, The Baroque Concerto (London: Faber and Faber, 1961). These writers (and many others) treat texture and orchestration in terms of the presence or absence of counterpoint, the density (i.e. total number) of lines in the texture, the presence of winds and/or unusual instruments, and the use of contrasts between reduced and full scorings in solo concertos and concerti grossi – all with a broad and generalized perspective that emphasizes contrasts between larger structural units rather than detail on the scale of individual musical phrases or subsections of larger formal units. Much the same could be said for Pippa Drummond, The German Concerto: Five Eighteenth-Century Studies, Oxford Monographs on Music (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); for instance, the subsection on “Orchestration and Texture” in Telemann’s concertos (pp. 229–232) provides a mere thirty-four lines of text and two musical examples, demonstrating how these elements have continued to be a relatively low priority for writers addressing the history of the concerto.
in general. [...] Whether or not the new legend of baroque music will stand in the way of a more enlightened evaluation cannot yet be decided.\textsuperscript{4}

In addition to warning against letting one set of aesthetic values and expectations – those ascribed to the late Baroque – cloud modern perspectives on an entire era, Bukofzer’s case for valuing the distinctiveness and importance of early and middle Baroque music was also a call to avoid allowing an interest in late Baroque music to guide modern narratives of the entire era – a warning that most scholars have now taken to heart, even if segments of the general public continue to possess a more monolithic view of Baroque musical style. However, there is another “legend,” not specifically mentioned by Bukofzer, which has continued to influence historiographies of eighteenth-century music: the notion that the types of contrapuntal writing found in some of Bach’s music represent a status quo for Baroque music in the early eighteenth century, which progressive composers gradually tried to break away from, in turn laying the foundations for the Classical style.\textsuperscript{5} In addition to featuring a drastically one-sided view of Bach’s achievement, this myth has a tendency to artificially enhance the aesthetic centrality of Bach’s music and to negate the stylistic parameters of composers who works do not resemble Bach’s – as if such composers are less representative of the Baroque era.

Bukofzer himself countered this by pointing out that what he termed “continuo orchestration” (i.e., orchestration consisting of a basso continuo line supporting one or more “ornamental” voices, with middle voices or continuo harmonization supplying harmonic filler) achieved prominence during the middle Baroque and “remained in favor

\textsuperscript{4} Bukofzer, \textit{Music in the Baroque Era}, 19.
throughout the baroque era."\(^6\) When he says that “contrapuntal orchestration” (which he describes as an “equality of all voices [...] which allows no instrument to drop out entirely during a movement”) achieved “perfection in the late baroque,” he does not imply that it dominated the era or that it did not exist previously. But despite also allowing for a type of orchestration built on contrasts between large and small groups that contributed to the emergence of the Italian instrumental concerto style, Bukofzer’s account of Baroque orchestration is still reductive, for it provides little account of the extensive cross-fertilization and blending of these types of orchestration, particularly during the late Baroque.\(^7\) Bukofzer also does not consider that while a string ensemble may, on the surface, have less overall timbral variety than, say, a mixed consort of viols, cornettos, and sackbuts, there is a remarkably wide range of sonorities that can be elicited from a four- or five-part string ensemble.

Bukofzer was fighting against a deeply ingrained tradition wherein polyphonic textures are equated most strongly with Baroque music and homophonic or quasi-homophonic textures are seen as belonging to a pre-Classical era rather than being a valid alternative within Baroque music. Bukofzer’s challenge arose, in part, from a simplistic and often erroneous assumption that late eighteenth-century composers were the first to regularly approach orchestration as germane to the conception of a piece whereas previous composers based orchestration primarily on the circumstances of individual performances (i.e., using particular instruments to engage players at hand, rather than for

\(^6\) Bukofzer, op. cit., 381-82.

\(^7\) Bukofzer (op. cit., 381) also discusses “cumulative orchestration” – assigning a wide variety of instruments to reinforce each line (especially the bass line) – as the main type of orchestration in early Baroque music.
the unique sound qualities of a particular instrument). This, in turn, is connected with conventional narratives on the gradual establishment of the orchestra as a stable and identifiable entity in the mid- and late eighteenth century. At the same time, modern historiographies have also been shaped, explicitly or implicitly, by the notion that early eighteenth-century composers tended to approach music as a purified, abstract relationship between equal voices, where the choice of instrumentation was inconsequential as long as balance between the individual lines was maintained. The corollary argument is that, with the relative abandonment of intense contrapuntal styles, composers of the later eighteenth century were thus freed to begin composing with the sound qualities of particular instruments in mind, aligning instrumental timbres with specific expressive aims.

There are grounds for arguing that orchestration became a significant part of the compositional process (rather than being a pre-compositional condition or afterthought left to the discretion of the performers) on account of increasing standardization of orchestras during the eighteenth century, although a causal relationship cannot be firmly established. There is evidence of Baroque composers’ tendency, especially in the case of obbligato wind parts, to write for the forces at hand, which might vary considerably from one occasion to the next. In general, as orchestras became more standardized by the latter half of the eighteenth century, this became less of a concern and (in theory) a composer could write for one of the standard orchestra formulations (say, two oboes, two horns, and strings, with or without basso continuo) and expect the necessary players to be

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available on any occasion. However, orchestras at the end of the eighteenth century were still by no means standardized (witness, for example, the presence or absence of clarinetists), and there is no clear evidence of what percentage of late-Baroque works were written for a specific performance (or performance run) rather than as stand-alone works intended for repetition and revival. Instead, a careful look at music from throughout the Baroque era reveals countless examples where sonority and texture are so primal to the essence of the passage that it is difficult to believe such considerations were not integral to the compositional process. In addition, there are often significant discrepancies between the instrumentations specified in early printed editions, manuscript sources, and accounts of performances of Baroque music, raising the possibility that a composer may have conceived a score with certain assumptions about instrumentation (based on local performance conventions) that are not reflected in the surviving musical notation.\(^9\)

Similarly, Bukofzer’s remarks should give us pause before assuming a causal link between a growing interest in homophony and the emergence of orchestration as a step in the compositional process. The use of fugue and sustained polyphonic writing as the default texture in music was already waning by the beginning of the eighteenth century and several types of homophonic textures had existed since at least the beginning of the seventeenth century. It must also be remembered that fugal, canonic, and other types of polyphonic texture persisted as options in late eighteenth-century music and beyond. If composers needed a motivation for incorporating orchestration in the compositional process,\(^9\)

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\(^9\) See, for example, Crescimbeni’s reference to performances of Corelli’s works using large orchestras of winds and strings – despite the absence of any indications for wind instruments in Corelli’s surviving music (excepting, perhaps the Trumpet Sonata WoO 4). Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni, *Notizie istoriche degli Arcadi morti* (Rome, 1720).
process, changes in textural preferences were by no means the only source of that motivation. Other possibilities exist, including increased competition with other composers (especially with the growth of semi-private and public performances and the rise of musical connoisseurship seen in academies, music criticism, and score collecting), influence from other arts (such as theoretical writings about painting), and the creation of more extended compositions that provided a larger canvas for sonic contrasts.

 Appearing to Do Nothing: Orchestration and the Viola

Bukofzer also inherited certain traditional views of the history of the orchestra that are manifest in one of the earliest and most influential treatises devoted to orchestration — the *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* by Hector Berlioz (1844, rev. 1855). Through an examination of this work and selections from other orchestration treatises and discussions of the history of orchestration, we can see many of the underlying assumptions and anachronistic value judgments that have led to a reductive and inaccurate view of early eighteenth-century orchestration. Recognizing these factors makes it possible to admit the limitations of our current understanding of orchestration in the early eighteenth century. The issues are especially prevalent in discussions of eighteenth-century viola parts — the portion of the string ensemble most affected by differences in scoring between polyphonic and homophonic textures.
As Berlioz writes:

“The masters of the 18th century, rarely writing four real voices, generally did not know what to do with the viola. Whenever they could not give it a few notes to fill up the harmony, they did not hesitate to write the odious col basso.”

In this passage, from the entry for “The Viola,” Berlioz presents the instrument as more of a burden than an ensemble resource for eighteenth-century composers. In an early twentieth-century treatise, Cecil Forsyth also posits, perhaps with a satirical undertone, that the viola parts in eighteenth-century ensemble music were shaped primarily by a need to keep violists occupied rather than an essential thread of the musical fabric – as if the instrument was a superfluous holdover from an earlier period in music history.

“The instrument was there and had to be written for. [...] The viola, therefore, either did nothing or something which by the ingenuity of the composer was made to appear as much like nothing as possible.”

Several points emerge from these comments that reveal what criteria are being used to evaluate eighteenth-century viola parts. There is an assumption that, in order for a viola part to be a significant contributor to the ensemble texture, it must convey a melodically and rhythmically independent line. Other functions, such as the provision of harmonic

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11 As a sign of Berlioz’s influence, note that the passage was retained, for example, in Richard Strauss’s expansion of the Berlioz treatise [Hector Berlioz and Richard Strauss, *Treatise on Instrumentation*, (1904), 60], and is still found in the third edition of Samuel Adler’s popular textbook, *The Study of Orchestration* (New York and London: Norton, 2002), 65. While Berlioz’s knowledge of repertoire before Gluck was probably rather limited (although how limited is not certain, as his writings indicate that was at least aware of some music by Bach, Handel, and even Palestrina – repertoire that did not fit into his apparent agenda to promote Gluck as the forerunner of a tradition of orchestration that supposedly began to flourish only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), most later writers have done little to counteract this blanket assessment of eighteenth-century viola writing, even though they have had much greater access to and familiarity with Baroque repertoire.

filler (i.e., sounding notes in the harmonies that are not played or sung by another part) are treated by these writers as a strategy for keeping players occupied in less significant roles; that is, allowing the players to participate while causing little or no interference with the truly significant parts.

This hierarchy of textural significance, albeit presented in a more neutral manner, underlines Michael Talbot’s more recent description of Albinoni’s viola parts.

“It [the viola] rarely has any other role in his [Albinoni’s] music than to accompany, except in fugal movements. Even there, its obbligato status lapses as soon as it has finished presenting the subject or countersubject. It rarely contributes anything essential to the harmony; [...] Nor does it have any rhythmic independence except in those few cases where it enlivens the middle of the texture with repeated semiquavers. [...] Many of his works remain perfectly viable when shorn of violas [...]”¹³

The sequence of points in Talbot’s commentary provides a progressive negation of significance: after qualifying the presence of “obbligato” contributions in fugal passages, Talbot finds a void at the next levels of potential value – unique harmonic contributions and rhythmic independence (albeit allowing for a few exceptions). Unlike Berlioz and Forsyth, however, Talbot never suggests that Albinoni felt required to minimize the impact of his viola parts; in saying that many works are “viable” without their viola parts, he does not indicate that such an omission is preferable.

This hierarchical view is, by itself, a reasonable account of certain (but not all) textural models used in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ The main problem here is that these

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¹⁴ There are, for example, many instances where the violins are in unison and the viola becomes a secondary melodic voice or is necessary to help complete the dominant triad, thus raising the profile of the viola part.
writers (and others) focus on the contributions made by parts at the top of the hierarchy and neglect to detail the true significance made by parts at the bottom of the hierarchy. For example, while Talbot never claims that the viola parts lack value, he does not specify the value of their contribution in Albinoni’s music; omissions such as this make it easy for readers to assume (erroneously) that Talbot finds no real value in Albinoni’s viola parts.¹⁵

Yet even Forsyth, in saying that viola parts were “made to appear [emphasis added] as much like nothing as possible,” implied – perhaps unintentionally – that they were in fact doing something after all. Consider the following passage that opens the third movement of the Violin Concerto in G Minor Op. 4 #6 by Vivaldi:

Example 1.1: Violin Concerto in G Minor Op. 4 No. 6, 3rd movement, ms. 1-16

¹⁵ Likewise, Marc Pincherle, *Vivaldi: Genius of the Baroque*, trans. from the French by Christopher Hatch (New York: W. W. Norton, 1957), 114, notes that “In the use that Vivaldi makes of the other string instruments (besides the violin), the viola does not call for special comment. Its role is modest, as it is in most other works of the time.”
The viola has the same rhythm as one of the other voices (mostly the second violin part but occasionally the bass line) in all but the sixth and eleventh measures and would thus be viewed by modern writers as lacking rhythmic independence. If rhythmic independence is a factor in determining what makes a part essential or important, then the viola part here is largely dispensable because it duplicates rhythms provided by other voices. In this particular example, the viola part contains many pitches that are not simultaneously present in other parts, such as the very important F-sharps that help define the dominant chord in measures 4 and 6. However, one can argue, as is often done, that the viola part still is not necessary because these pitches should be provided by the continuo players (as indicated by the figures in the bass line). In that case, a question
arises concerning what the viola part contributes to the piece if both the pitch and
rhythmic content of the part duplicate the pitches and rhythms provided by other parts.

But what if we think about these scorings more in terms of what they actually do
contribute than in terms of what they fail to contribute? That is, rather than treat
doubling as merely the taking away of an independent part we can consider it instead as
the addition of one or more players to a pitch or rhythmic line. Augmenting the number
of performers brings, among other things, an increase in volume, emphasis, and, perhaps,
intensity. The doubling (i.e. parallelism) of parts is in fact a redistribution of the
available sonic resources. A reduction in the number of independent parts by doubling or
parallelism increases a sense of unity among parts, as if one were to switch from having
several people speaking different messages to having them saying the same thing
simultaneously.

In the example from the Vivaldi concerto, the viola part generally serves as a
member of a team of voices presenting musical materials. For the first four measures, the
second violin and viola adopt a rhythmic unison that reinforces the extended anacrusis in
the first violin part and helps propel the music forward into the downbeat. These inner
voices also add an emphasis on the third beat of each measure that acts as a slight
counterweight to the well-marked downbeat. In assigning these functions to the inner
voices, Vivaldi leaves the cello and continuo parts to provide the downbeats in the lower

16 Even if the Vivaldi example were performed with one player to a part, there is a notable difference in
volume and emphasis when two performers play the same rhythm as opposed to a single player, and there
is an even greater difference in tone color when the same pitches are played by two players rather than by a
single player.

17 “Well-marked” because the entire ensemble plays on the downbeat of each of these first four measures
and the cello and continuo lines enter only on the downbeats, sounding the lowest notes of the ensemble’s
ambitus.
For measures 7-9, the viola part is rhythmically aligned with the second violin, cello, and continuo parts, helping to emphasize a single rhythmic idea in opposition to (or partnership with) the eighth-note figure in the first violin and solo violin parts. Similar pairings occur throughout most of the remainder of the excerpt.

What appears to be “as much like nothing as possible” from a linear, contrapuntal perspective, turns out to be something of substance from an aural perspective. To appreciate the role of viola parts requires us to rethink our notions about the variety of effects that can be achieved through the parallelism. In this regard, there is something striking about Forsyth’s assertion that viola parts were intended to appear to do nothing. The viola is often used to support material shared by several voices rather than drawing attention to itself as a highly independent part. Perhaps this focus on musical material that transcends the confines of an individual part is what prompted Forsyth to suggest that viola parts were often designed to seem insignificant. Considering the composer’s decision to reduce the independence of an inner voice as a form of collaboration between parts rather than solely as a compromise in the integrity of a part allows us to hear such pairings as a deliberate textural choice about the best way to use the ensemble’s resources.

If a viola part had not been an available option when composing the piece, the only way to strengthen the effects of the second violin part would have been to have the cellos play something similar to the current viola part. However, Vivaldi would have encountered a problem here because, while the cellos could have played the last three notes of the viola part in measure 1 at the same pitch as the viola part is written, he would have had to choose whether the downbeat that starts measure 2 should be played at the octave found in the viola part or at the octave written in the current cello part. If he had opted for the octave of the viola part, the downbeat of measure 2 would have sounded different from the downbeat of measure 1 (because of the loss of the pitch G below middle C). If, however, he had decided to omit the octave of the viola part, the continuity of having three anacruses and a downbeat all at the same pitch level would have been lost. The provision of a viola part allowed Vivaldi to deploy the instruments of the ensemble such that he did not have to sacrifice either effect.

In measure 6 the viola provides a foretaste of the dotted rhythms in the following measures, permitting an overlap between the phrases of measures 1-6 and 7-12.
to present the musical material, regardless of where the piece falls in the spectrum between polyphony and homophony.

A similar perspective, albeit not specifically referring to any particular period of music, is suggested in Walter Piston’s 1955 guide to the study of orchestration, where the writer finds that “the situation of the viola in the middle of the pitch range of the strings seems to have made it the busiest member of the group.”\(^\text{20}\) Piston then goes on to briefly describe how the viola can be used for melodic, harmonic, and bass roles in ensemble music. Indeed, prescriptive discussions of how to write for the viola as an orchestral instrument frequently refer to it as a unique and all-too-often undervalued sonic resource; however, these same authors generally find that, rare occasions aside, the viola was not regarded as such until some time after 1800. One exception is Adam Carse (1925), who singles out Gluck’s orchestral viola parts for praise.

“To the viola, the Cinderella of the string orchestra, Gluck was the fairy-godmother who rescued the instrument from a mean position and made it not only independent and indispensible, but discovered in it […] a peculiarity of tone-colour with which no other member of the string family was endowed. Thus, although the viola part in Gluck’s scores does sometimes run with the bass part, the normal function of the instrument is either to provide essential harmony notes in the tenor register, to balance or thicken the tone, to take part in the prevailing motion or figuration in company with first and second violins, or to create an effect by means of its own individual tone-colour.”\(^\text{21}\)

For Carse, providing “essential harmony notes” is a positive function of the viola – a resource rather than the least-offensive expedient implied by Forsyth. He also recognizes


a multitude of functions that the viola can fill. Carse stands out for crediting the “rescue” of the viola to a composer writing well before the end of the century, but the general portrait of the era nevertheless remains the same: the full potential of the viola was not realized by most composers of the eighteenth century.\footnote{Composers who occasionally played viola, such as Torelli, Bach, and Mozart, have also been singled out for the greater prominence of the viola parts.}

The history of orchestration – and thus the history of the viola – is inevitably influenced by the dominant historiographies of the development of texture and style. The tendency of scholars to minimize or dismiss entirely the role of the viola in eighteenth-century ensemble music is thus tied to long-held historiographical notions about the transition from the Baroque into a Classical style, in which there is a more or less gradual shift from polyphonic textures towards a two- or three-tiered hierarchy dominated by one or two melodic lines accompanied by a bass line and between which there usually is some harmonic support from inner voices.\footnote{See, for example, Bukofzer, \textit{Music in the Baroque Era}, 221-22; Jens Peter Larsen, “Some Observations on the Development and Characteristics of Viennese Classical Instrumental Music,” \textit{Studia musicologica, Academiae scientarium Hungaricae} 9/1 (1967): 115-39, reprinted in \textit{Handel, Haydn & the Viennese Classical Style}, translated by Ulrich Krämer, Studies in Musicology No. 100, Series edited by George J. Buelow (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1988), 227-49; and Schulenberg, \textit{Music of the Baroque}, 327-29. Schulenberg’s account of stylistic changes in the eighteenth century includes some brief, but important, caveats that are too infrequently found elsewhere: this writer notes that much late Baroque music fits the description of the \textit{galant} style even though modern writers tend to apply the term to music of the mid-eighteenth century (p. 327), he reminds readers that older, non-\textit{galant} styles continued throughout much of the century (p. 329), and he warns against the anachronistic tendency whereby “modern writers have sometimes found \textit{galant} music to be stylistically impoverished by comparison with the more complex music of J. S. Bach, Handel, and others.”}

Within this general perspective there are two basic viewpoints – one that places greater value on polyphony and the distinction between individual parts within the ensemble (typically a preference for a Bach-centered view of early eighteenth century music), and another viewpoint that places a greater value on the blend of homophonic
and polyphonic textures typically associated with the Classical style of the 1770s, -80s, and -90s; in other words, giving highest praise either to works that retain dense contrapuntal textures or to those that can be seen to foreshadow elements of the Classical style. Both of these views tend to foster the assumption that melodic lines (whether principal or subsidiary) and bass lines (whether as purely harmonic foundations or as quasi-melodic lines in themselves) are the only important elements to study in the musical texture and the only parts that composers considered essential to the conception of the piece.

The danger of this bias is a tendency to dismiss, as Berlioz did, the multi-faceted role given to inner parts in eighteenth-century ensemble music, especially non-polyphonic early eighteenth-century ensemble music. For most writers concerned with orchestration and texture in eighteenth-century music, inner parts in homophonic and semi-polyphonic textures provide “harmonic filler” – the phrase being used in ways that could mean either that the parts play notes otherwise absent from the notated vertical harmonies (e.g., “missing” notes in triads or seventh chords) or to fill the middle register of the ensemble’s ambitus with non-melodic figuration. Unfortunately, the vagueness of the term “filler” – especially in the way it is often used to refer to the middle voices – has the potential to devalue the true significance of the inner voices; at worst, they can be seen as having elicited little care and effort during the compositional process because the parts merely fill in whatever gaps are left over after the other parts have been

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24 As seen in the quote at the opening of this document, Berlioz and his followers emphasize this “filler” function. Piston (Orchestration, 70) also notes that, “It has always fallen to the viola to perform a great deal of harmonic filling up.”
meticulously crafted. It is true that manuscript sources of the period sometimes employ shorthand notation of the viola part, often presented as a segment of blank staff with an indication to double one of the other parts when the two voices are intended to travel in parallel or in unison. Yet this time-saving notational procedure does not constitute proof that the composer employed the doubling as a compositional expedient, and the order of composition does not signify the relative care applied to the creation of a part.

*The Viola as a Flexible Orchestral Resource: Vivaldi’s Oeuvre as a Case Study*

Any effort to provide a detailed examination of the value of parts at the bottom of the homophonic textural hierarchy in late Baroque Italian music is soon faced with the difficulty in finding adequate descriptive terminology and the recognition that a three-tiered hierarchy (melodic, bass, and harmonic “filler” voices) is not as persistent as the dominant historiographies imply. Indeed, the full scope of interactions between ensemble parts in late Baroque music has yet to receive a proper account. Most discussions, including those cited earlier, focus on relatively superficial matters, such as the alignment between smaller ensembles for solo episodes and full ensembles for ritornello sections in instrumental concertos and concerti grossi, or on matters of instrumentation (the presence of wind instruments, the role of the basso continuo, etc.) – important aspects in their own right. However, as an analysis of “orchestration,” this approach allows many historiographies, perhaps unintentionally, to give the impression that composers of the late Baroque and early Classical styles generally adopted a single

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25 This also applies to the similarly vague word “functional,” which is often used as a substitute for “filler.”
texture for an entire movement or alternate textures between sections for the full ensemble and segments for one or more soloists with accompaniment. By focusing on what might more properly be described as the instrumentation of formal sections within a piece of music, it is easy to lose sight of the complex and dynamic interactions that can characterize the texture and sonority of each formal segment.

As part of a “bottom-up” approach to building a catalog of roles to be filled in ensemble music, I have chosen to examine the functions of the viola part in a select body of repertoire. While the results do not provide a complete guide to ensemble interactions in the repertoire I have selected, removing many of the assumptions described earlier allows the special, potent nature of many viola parts to emerge. Since the viola part normally is not consistently occupied with melodic or bass line material (unlike, for

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26 One wonders whether there is an underlying belief that composers of the early and mid-eighteenth century generally strove to create a unity of affect and that the drive to maintain a single character for an entire movement necessarily resulted in the use of a limited range of textures throughout the piece. There is no reason to assume a direct, static link between affect and textural density. Works in the theatrical style might exhibit homophonic textures more often than any other textural option, but monophonic and quasi-polyphonic passages are not uncommon in these same works. Within each affect and style, there is room for a great deal of textural variety. On unity of affect and mixture of styles in early Haydn criticism, see discussions and citations in Gretchen A. Wheelock, Haydn’s Ingenious Jesting with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor (New York: Schirmer, 1992), 35-37, 46-51. Concerning Vivaldi’s works, for example, comic style can be found in numerous concerto movements (particularly in the bassoon concertos) and opera arias, as can stile antico, and there are several works where the predominant character is interrupted by a passage of sharply differentiated affect. Likewise, church, chamber, and theatre styles can be found in concertos, sonatas, sinfonias, sacred works, and dramatic works. Note, for example, the mixture of comic and serious elements in the Autumn concerto (even within the first movement), the opening movement of the Chamber Concerto in C Major RV 87, the finale of the Concerto for Strings in A Major RV 159, and the mixture of other affects in the first movement of the Cello Concerto in E Minor (with obbligato bassoon) RV 409.

27 Chappell White, in generalizing the characteristics of Vivaldi’s violin concertos (a task he identifies as difficult and potentially misleading), remarks that Vivaldi’s textural contrasts were primarily concerned with distinguishing between tutti-ritornello and solo-episode formal sections, despite acknowledging occasional exceptions where Vivaldi contrasted tutti and soloist + accompaniment scorings within a formal section. Focusing more on instrumentation and the number of independent lines, White fails to acknowledge textural contrasts within Vivaldi’s ritornellos, which sometimes exhibit the type of phrase-aligned textural and scoring contrasts that he finds lacking in Vivaldi’s solo episodes. See White, From Vivaldi to Viotti, 4-9, 53-54, 58.
example, the violins), it is a convenient resource for a composer to draw upon to thicken the ensemble texture, to alter the amplitude or timbre of a particular line, or to highlight (via reinforcement or contrast) individual aspects of a phrase. As a result, the viola, the very part so often dismissed by later writers, becomes one of the most important tools for accomplishing textural variety. One way to describe this practice that reveals similarities to the concepts of orchestration found in the treatises already mentioned is to view the viola as a flexible orchestral resource. This means that, rather than being locked into a single hierarchical position within the ensemble texture, the viola is more often assigned to numerous, changing partnerships during the course of individual movements. With a stronger and more detailed awareness of ensemble interactions in late Baroque Italian music, the significance of sonority and short-term textural contrasts – important aspects of “modern” orchestration – can be more easily recognized.

The present study sheds light on the manner in which Vivaldi used the viola as a resource for orchestrating texture and sonority in his ensemble music. Among the multitude of eighteenth-century composers who wrote for the viola, Vivaldi’s music provides a fascinating case-study because his viola parts include several types of writing that are common in Italianate music of the period as well as writing that is much more typical of the orchestration found in music of the second half of the eighteenth century. A survey of Vivaldi’s viola parts reveals examples of virtually all of the types of writing that Carse praises in Gluck’s scores (and that Forsyth lauds in Beethoven’s works) and thus affords an opportunity to study several aspects of string orchestration from a period
that supposedly pre-dates the birth of “modern orchestration.”

Michael Talbot has noted that,

“Whereas in German music of Vivaldi’s time [...] the viola often has a harmonically and contrapuntally significant part [...] in Italian music its role is normally utterly subordinate to the violin parts unless these join together in unison (and sometimes even then): it fills in the meagre harmonic leavings, balances the overall texture and generally supports the rhythm of the bass. Unsurprisingly, it is often an ad placitum part, except where it has to supply fugal entries.”

In this passage, we encounter the previously discussed tendency (more subtly manifest here) to devalue apparently subordinate parts. Note, for example, Talbot’s phrase choice “utterly subordinate” and how he uses the lack of harmonic and contrapuntal significance to prepare the reader for his reference to the omission of some viola parts in performance (i.e., “an ad placitum part”). As structured, the passage implies that filling in the harmony, balancing the texture, and supporting the rhythms of the bass are of so little value that we shouldn’t be surprised if the viola part is ad placitum in Italianate music of Vivaldi’s day. Perhaps this is why Talbot, as most writers, is content with not specifying exactly how the viola part “balances the overall texture” or “generally supports the rhythm of the bass.” He then goes on to record some distinctive features of Vivaldi’s use of the viola:

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28 Definitions of modern orchestration are often rather vague, but seem to imply the selection of instrumental combinations where each musical gesture is scored with consideration of the expressive potential of particular timbral colors and the technical capabilities specific to each type of instrument. See, for example, Carse, *The History of Orchestration*, 167; Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era*, 382; Robert L. Weaver, “The Consolidation of the Main Elements of the Orchestra 1470-1768,” in *The Orchestra*, ed. Joan Peyser, New York: Billboard Books, 2000, 30-31; and Hans Joachim Marx, “The Instrumentation of Handel’s Early Italian Works,” *Early Music* 16/4 (Nov. 1988), 505. Bukofzer (op. cit., 382) noted that “the modern coloristic orchestration which can be reconciled with neither the continuo nor the contrapuntal orchestration began with the French rococo and took its first strides in the operas of Rameau.”

“Vivaldi does little to challenge the relative harmonic unimportance of viola parts beyond allowing them to proceed in thirds or tenths with the bass part and sometimes allowing them to carry the seventh, but he increases their textural impact by making them move within a wider ambit, often crossing the second violin. Most importantly, he removes their rhythmic dependence on the bass or any other part. [...] The result of these changes is a very individual kind of viola line that, without robbing the second violin of its traditional prerogatives, makes a significant musical contribution. [...]”

While Talbot’s full dictionary entry also cites Vivaldi’s use of syncopation in the viola parts to increase the rhythmic complexity of the texture, as well as his tendency to have the bass line played by violas (and/or violins) as a bassetto when the normal basso continuo instruments are silenced, his description does not reference such functions as the harmonization of melodic lines (e.g., traveling in parallel thirds with the violins’ melodic line) or non-fugal types of imitation (e.g., imitative rhythmic interactions with one or more additional ensemble voices). Talbot’s comments therefore only begin to hint at the variety of functions assigned to Vivaldi’s viola parts.

Beyond these details, however, Talbot’s summary of Vivaldi’s viola parts misses a broader aspect of their constitution: Vivaldi treats the viola as a flexible, pragmatic orchestral resource, which can be called upon to serve whatever function is required; often, this involves multiple functions simultaneously. In one sense, his viola parts behave like the navy of the Venetian Republic, in that they ally themselves with whichever part seeks their support, even to the extent that they are often aligned with multiple, competing parts (for instance, paralleling the rhythms of one voice while paralleling the pitch contours of another). Generally playing in a register between the highest and lowest voices of the ensemble (i.e., between the violins and the basso continuo group), the viola part is well-positioned to alternate between serving as a
member of the “upper strings” and “lower strings,” in addition to occupy a separate layer in the vertical texture.\(^{30}\)

But the most underappreciated aspect of Vivaldi’s viola parts, which emerges in the present study, is the degree to which his viola parts carry an amalgam of functions that composers in the latter half of the eighteenth century often assigned to wind parts. Tasks such as the provision of sustained harmonies, rhythmic punctuations that emphasize the strong beats of the underlying metre, or the reinforcement of leading lines (via doubling to increase amplitude) are all regular components of wind parts in orchestral music of the 1760s (or earlier) and beyond, yet these roles can all be found in Vivaldi’s viola parts. The difference is that, since wind parts in Vivaldi’s works are usually featured as obbligato, concertante instruments, the viola is often the only available resource to accommodate this diverse palette of functions. Therefore, the resulting viola parts often represent a compromise in which Vivaldi attempts to satisfy as many demands as possible in a single part. Although Vivaldi’s music was largely unknown and unavailable at the time of Forsyth’s observation, I propose that it is this degree of compromise – by no means unique to Vivaldi – that is at the heart of the claim

\(^{30}\) Vivaldi’s viola parts, at least in the works examined herein, are written for a span from C (the octave below middle C, which is the lowest pitch on the modern viola as normally tuned) upwards to e\(^2\) (a range that is entirely within the first position of the left hand for the violist), with a few possible instances of f\(^2\) or even g\(^2\). This compass is what I term Vivaldi’s “selective compass” for the viola – the portion of the full available compass of the instrument that is actually used by the composer. Modern editors often imply that the viola part goes higher than e\(^2\) in passages of unison or parallel motion with other parts, but these are mostly speculative editorial realizations of Vivaldi’s shorthand notation for parallel parts (which specifies the pitch class but not necessarily the octave) and are contradicted by the numerous examples (some of which are given in subsequent chapters) where Vivaldi appears to have carefully avoided taking the viola part above e\(^2\) (by breaking the strict parallelism with a leap to a lower octave).
that the viola did “something which by the ingenuity of the composer was made to appear as much like nothing as possible.”

In order to reveal the progressive aspects of Vivaldi’s orchestration, I have chosen to focus on viola parts in their entirety rather than studying inner voices in general. As Piston suggests, the viola can be used to transcend the category of middle voice and assume functions more commonly assigned to outer voices. To catalogue and detail all of the functions of the viola involves highlighting the great variety of roles available in ensemble music and demonstrating the multitude of tasks required of viola parts.

Vivaldi was by no means the only composer of his day to use the viola in a flexible manner. In choosing to focus on his music, I aim to highlight the fundamental error of a monolithic view of orchestration and texture in music of the early eighteenth century – even within specifically Italianate music of the period. Rather than conducting a broad survey that might miss many important details, I prefer to focus on a case-study in order to build a new viewpoint “from the ground up.” This provides a detailed view of many aspects of Vivaldi’s style, but with the result that the focus is, necessarily, too narrow to provide substantive evidence of broader historical trends. Nevertheless, preliminary comparisons with Vivaldi’s Italian contemporaries begins to suggest that at least some composers of the early eighteenth century were experimenting with aspects of orchestration that scholars have traditionally associated with the late eighteenth century.

In this connection, it is worth noting that the generation of Italian composers before Vivaldi, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, moved away from a tradition

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31 Forsyth, _Orchestration_, 395.
32 Piston, _Orchestration_, 70.
of using two viola parts (often labeled “Alto” and “Tenore” and written in alto and tenor clefs, respectively). This was particularly the case in Rome, as witnessed in the music of Corelli and his contemporaries. Venetian composers retained two viola parts a little longer: Albinoni’s last publication to include two viola parts – his Op. 5 concerti – appeared in 1707. Vivaldi himself normally used one viola part, spanning the range of the former alto and tenor viola parts, including two parts only in a few earlier works and pieces in due cori, or for special textural effects in a handful of arias and aria-like movements (i.e., “church arias”). Some centers in France and the Germanic lands retained multiple viola parts for many more decades, but they soon represented the

33 As Talbot notes [Albinoni, 69-70], the tenor instrument may have been a few inches longer than the alto instrument (much as there is still some variety in modern viola sizes – the larger instruments sounding a little richer at the bottom of the instrument’s compass but requiring a player with a slightly longer reach), but the similar compass of the parts in scores of the period combined with the lack of contradictory evidence makes it unlikely that these designations marked noticeably different sizes of instrument. As with some alto and tenor choral parts that occupy a similar register, the designations appear to refer to the tendency of one part to fall within a slightly higher register than the other whenever the two parts are used in an ensemble texture.

34 See Ibid.

35 Among the pre-Mantuan works are: the twelve concerti Op. 3, the Violin Concerto in D Minor RV 813, the Concerto a due cori in A Major RV 585, the ‘Qui sedes’ movement of the Gloria in D Major RV 588, the Laudate puere RV 602 (= first version), Adrasto’s aria ‘Agitata da’ venti, dall’oneto’ (Act 3.v) from Armida al campo d’Egitto RV 699-A, Mirinda’s aria ‘Io son quel gelsomino’ (second setting, Act 1.xv) from Arsilda, regina di Ponto RV 700, and Ersilla’s arioso ‘Lo stridor l’orror d’Averno’ (Act 3.vi) from Orlando finto pazzo RV 727 (three viola parts – further discussion in Chapter 2); later works include: the concerti a due cori RV 581-584 and 793, the slow movement of the Concerto con violino principale et altro Violino per eco in lontano in A Major RV 552, several sacred works a due cori (RV 587, 593, 594, 597, 602a/603, 609, 610a, 616, 618, 636 – this last work with two parts in unison, according to a rubric on the score), Ernelinda’s aria ‘Sin nel placido soggiorno’ (Act 3.iii) from La fede tradita e vendicata RV 712, Ramiro’s aria ‘In mezzo alla procella’ (Act 2.x) from Motezuma RV 723, Aminta’s aria ‘Siam navi all’onde algenti’ (Act 2.v) from L’Olimpiade RV 725, the coro in Act 2.xi of Orlando (furioso) RV 728 (there is one viola part each in the in Scena and the in Orchestra ensembles), Zidiana’s aria ‘Caro adorato bene’ rejected from Act 1.iii of II Teuzzone RV 736, and Zelinda’s aria ‘Hò nel seno un doppio ardore’ (Act 3.x) from II Teuzzone RV 736. Also, the coro from RV 728 (Act 2.xi) was a holdover from the Ristori-Vivaldi Orlando furioso RV Anh. 84 (as Act 2.xiii) of 1713/14 (the decision not to include this work in the present study is discussed further on). Talbot has suggested that Vivaldi’s use of two viola parts (and four violin parts) in his L’estro armonico Op. 3 (publ. 1711) was a special essay in textural extravagance aimed at outclassing contemporary Roman composers (whose orchestral works often employed many violin parts), rather than a conscientious tribute to an older Venetian tradition. See the entry for “Viola” in Talbot, The Vivaldi Compendium, 192-93.
exception to the general tendency to use one viola part in music in the early eighteenth century. In Rome, Naples, and elsewhere, the viola even began to disappear entirely from the roster of some ensembles as the century progressed.\textsuperscript{36}

With such a trajectory, it is easy to see how a historian might conclude that inner voices gradually became less significant over the course of the century until semi-independent wind parts began to become regular features of orchestral music after the mid-century (as often in the history of orchestration, this latter trend appears earlier in operatic scores than sacred and purely instrumental music). However, this narrative is based on only a single aspect of the evolution of the orchestra, ignoring exceptions to the trend towards the reduction of forces for the inner voices. Despite the production of numerous works where the viola parallels the bass line throughout or is omitted entirely, there continued to be a fresh supply of works with more complex viola parts, especially from composers who continued to write in the increasingly archaic \textit{stile antico} topos or for special descriptive or programmatic pieces.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} See Sven Hansell, “Orchestral Practice at the Court of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni,” \textit{Journal of the American Musicological Society} 19/3 (Autumn, 1966), 399, 402. Some of the sets of parts in Trondheim (such as those for the Sinfonia in G Major RV 146) and elsewhere have a “Violino terzo” (or its equivalent) that is a replacement for the viola part (with any necessary adjustments to fit the compass of the violin). This suggests that the parts were important enough to the texture to be transferred to one or more violinists when no violists were available. Ryom seems to assume, on account of the absence of viola parts, that manuscript sets of parts from libraries in these cities preserve early versions of Vivaldi concertos that did not have viola parts. For example, see Peter Ryom, \textit{Antonio Vivaldi: Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis seiner Werke (RV)} (Wiesbaden, Leipzig, and Paris: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2007), 87 (Naples source for RV 204) and 137 (Zurich source for RV 316a). However, the frequent absence of viola parts from these libraries in works that are elsewhere preserved with viola parts suggests that the parts were simply lost. It is true that the two sources cited above appear to convey earlier versions of the texts published, respectively, as Op. 4 #11 and 6 – however analysis of the scores assembled from the parts in Naples and Zurich strongly suggests that a part is missing from the texture of each concerto that must have once existed, even in early versions of the work.

\textsuperscript{37} Numerous examples can be found, for instance, in the works of Caldara, Durante, Fux, Geminiani, Locatelli, Rameau, Handel, and Telemann.
The present study offers evidence in support of a more enriched view of orchestration and texture in eighteenth-century music, offering a revised notion of the prevailing trends.

Existing Studies

The recent Vivaldi literature shows a growing interest, spurred to an extent by new theories of chronology, for redefining our understanding of Vivaldi’s style and charting significant influences on stylistic transformation. Studies concerning orchestration have been conducted on Vivaldi’s use of instruments such as the violin, cello, flute, recorder, and bassoon, but the viola has been absent from this agenda despite being used in the majority of Vivaldi’s surviving compositions.\(^{38}\) I suspect this stems from a couple of trends. First, there has been a tendency to focus on instruments that Vivaldi used as soloists, either in chamber works (solo and trio sonatas, quartets and quintets, chamber cantatas, etc.) or as obbligato and principale instruments in ensemble works (concertos, opera arias, arias in sacred works, etc.). The viola suffers from neglect in this regard because Vivaldi’s surviving music confines the instrument, with a few very brief exceptions, to a non-soloistic role.\(^{39}\) It is therefore among the less outwardly


\(^{39}\) The main exception is three measures of melodic writing marked “solo” for the two viola parts in the second movement of the Concerto for Four Violins in B Minor Op. 3 #11 (RV 580).
prominent instruments and, as a result, attracts less attention in a climate that favors soloistic roles when studying the history of instrumental writing. Vivaldi’s prominent position in the early history of the solo concerto has likewise drawn a great deal of interest towards his choice of – and manner of writing for – solo instruments.

Secondly, those who have studied orchestration in the early eighteenth century have focused largely on “exotic” effects – such as the combination of muted solo violin, solo oboe, three viols, tenor salmoé, string orchestra, and continuo in the Concerto funebre RV 579 – while assuming that other types of orchestration represent a few basic, normal models that shun interesting orchestration in deference to melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, or virtuosic attraction. In fact, when the viola’s role in orchestration is discussed, this usually happens because the passage under focus is considered to be a special exception. This dissertation challenges the implicit assumption that a common mode of orchestration de-emphasizes the pure sonic interest of the ensemble writing.

Repertoire Focus: Vivaldi’s Earlier Works

In the broadest sense, I focus on the music Vivaldi wrote during the first stages of his compositional career – from his earliest surviving works up to those written prior to

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41 Talbot (op. cit., 91) mentions the viola, in the context of his discussion of Vivaldi’s orchestration, only to single out a scene in Orlando finto pazzo where the violinists are instructed to play violas. The unusual scoring of this scene is discussed further in Chapter 2 of the present study.
his departure from Venice in early 1718 for what was intended to be a prolonged period of employment at the court of Mantua. I also offer a brief contextual comparison between his viola parts and those of three of his most important Italian predecessors and contemporaries, as a demonstration of how he inherited and expanded upon existing progressive trends in orchestration.

The decision to limit myself to a particular chronological period was threefold: 1) with over 800 works in the latest versions of the Vivaldi works-list, practical considerations dictated a need to focus on a smaller body of repertoire, 2) a chronological division has an advantage over others (e.g., specific genre, works for a specific patron or institution, etc.) in that it permits comparisons across genres and destinations as well as comparisons with other chronological spans (in subsequent studies), and 3) it makes it possible to compare Vivaldi’s works with previous and concurrent trends in music by other composers.²²

The starting point is easy to determine: Vivaldi’s earliest known compositions, the set of trio sonatas Op. 1, were probably published in 1703, although his earliest known works with a viola part probably date from closer to 1708.⁴³ Selecting the end point for defining the “earlier works” is more difficult. Rather than relying on the often nebulous criterion of “style,” I have opted to use biographical factors to provide a cut-off point.

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²² Identification of individual works follows the most recent catalog of Vivaldi’s works, issued as Ryom, Verzeichnis, with annual updates and corrections supervised by Federico Maria Sardelli and published as “Aggiornamenti del catalogo vivaldiano,” Studi vivaldiani (2009-).

⁴³ Talbot [Vivaldi, 34-35] has suggested that the earliest surviving edition of Vivaldi’s trio sonatas Op. 1 (Venice: Sala, 1705) might be a reprint of an edition originally issued in 1703. The three cello concertos RV 402, 416, and 420 probably date from 1708-09. See Karl Heller, Antonio Vivaldi: the Red Priest of Venice, translated from the German by David Marinelli (Portland, Ore.: Amadeus Press, 1997), 176. Additionally, the Concerto a due cori RV 585 has been dated to 1708-09; see Federico Maria Sardelli, “Le opere giovanili di Antonio Vivaldi,” Studi vivaldiani 5 (2005), 54-55.
Vivaldi’s employment in Mantua (April 1718–early 1720), where he served as Maestro di Cappella da Camera to the Prince Philip of Hesse-Darmstadt (the governor of Mantua), marked changes in Vivaldi’s geographic location, personal connections, material situation, and professional responsibilities, as well as a shift in the nature of surviving source materials. Most of Vivaldi’s career prior to his appointment in Mantua has been relatively well documented, except for sparser information on his earliest years (up to 1703), for which no music appears to survive, and for a gap for most months between March 1709 and September 1711.

Leaving aside the uncertainty regarding most of the time between 1709 and 1711, Vivaldi appears to have been based primarily in Venice between 1703 and early 1718, with brief engagements in Brescia, Padua, and Vicenza. These years saw Vivaldi’s initial affiliation with two of the principal institutions of his career – the Ospedale della Pietà (1703-1709 and 1711-1717) and Teatro Sant’Angelo (1713-1718 and possibly in 1705). By the time Vivaldi resumed activities with these organizations in 1720 (1723 for the Pietà), he had experienced his only period of court employment. The new contacts and

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44 For the latter, Vivaldi started using a Mantuan type of paper for his autographs in 1718 – a factor crucial to the latest research on the chronology of Vivaldi’s works that makes it easier to establish which works were written before or after Vivaldi moved to Mantua. See Paul Everett, “Vivaldi Concerto Manuscripts in Manchester: I,” Informazioni e studi vivaldiani 5 (1984): 23-52; and idem, “Towards a Vivaldi Chronology,” in Nuovi studi vivaldiani. Edizione e cronologia critica delle opere, Quaderni Vivaldiani 4, Edited by Antonio Fanna and Giovanni Morelli (Florence: Olschki, 1988), 2:740, 752-54. On Vivaldi’s experience in Mantua, a good overview is provided in Michael Talbot, The Chamber Cantatas of Antonio Vivaldi (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2006): 89-94.

45 See Talbot, The Vivaldi Compendium, 5. While Vivaldi’s dismissal from the Pietà in 1709 suggests a natural cut-off point for the present study, there is too little surviving music from the years 1703-09 for the purposes of this investigation.

differing obligations he encountered in Mantua may have led to changes in his conception of the viola as a musical resource and therefore the 1720s phase of his Venetian activity (which also included two or three opera seasons in Rome) belongs to a different stage of his compositional activity.\textsuperscript{47}

The Mantuan years, which likely ended much earlier than Vivaldi had anticipated, also stand apart from the previous fifteen or so years in terms of the types of work Vivaldi wrote.\textsuperscript{48} During the early Venetian years, Vivaldi made his first forays into almost every genre (trio sonata, solo sonata, concerto, sinfonia, opera, motet, oratorio, etc.) and type of venue (opera theatre, church, private residence, etc.) that marked his career. In Mantua, there was apparently little or no reason for him to write sacred music (he was not, after all, \textit{Maestro di cappella}); instead, Vivaldi made his first forays into the genre of secular cantatas.\textsuperscript{49} At the same time, evidence from Paul Everett’s study of paper types and rastrography may indicate that Vivaldi became increasingly interested in composing instrumental music with programmatic and allusive qualities during his time in Mantua – expressive contexts that invited special approaches to orchestration.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} Two recent discussions of Vivaldi’s style post-1720 are Kurt Markstrom, “The Vivaldi-Vinci Interconnections, 1724-26 and Beyond: Implications for the Late Style of Vivaldi,” 103-46, and Michael Talbot, “Vivaldi’s ‘Late’ Style: Final Fruition or Terminal Decline,” 147-68, both in \textit{Vivaldi, “Motezuma” and the Opera Seria: Essays on a Newly Discovered Work and Its Background}, Edited by Michael Talbot. \textit{Speculum Musicae} 13, Series ed. Roberto Illiano (Brepols: Turnhout, 2008); see also Heller, \textit{Antonio Vivaldi}, 165-76.

\textsuperscript{48} Talbot, \textit{Chamber Cantatas}, 91.

\textsuperscript{49} Talbot, \textit{Vivaldi Compendium}, 8.

\textsuperscript{50} Everett suggests that Vivaldi gained a particular interest in programmatic and allusive concertos that began some time during the mid-1710s and climaxed c. 1720 – thus the trend had started and perhaps was on its way towards a peak while Vivaldi was at Mantua. See Paul Everett, \textit{The “Four Seasons” and Other Concertos, Op. 8}, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18-19.
Identifying the “Pre-Mantuan” Works

In order to study works belonging to this phase of Vivaldi’s career, it is necessary to establish which pieces were written during these years and which works are correctly attributed to Vivaldi. The uncertain chronology of Vivaldi’s works is an issue that has plagued scholars for decades because Vivaldi did not attach a date to the manuscripts of most of his works, and the pieces published during his lifetime do not always provide unequivocal evidence of their date of publication. Recent research has provided a number of tools for this endeavor, including analysis of paper types and watermarks, study of Vivaldi’s orthography and the handwriting of his scribes, revised dating of the performances of Venetian operas, new biographical findings, computerized databases of thematic concurrences, and new estimates of the publication dates for several of his works.51 One recurring problem is an inability to ascertain whether the musical text

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51 For works brought out by the Amsterdam publisher Estienne Roger (and then by his daughter Jean Roger), the best study of chronology issues is Rudolf Rasch, “La famosa mano di Monsieur Estienne Roger: Antonio Vivaldi and his Dutch Publishers,” Informazioni e studi vivaldiani 17 (1996): 89-137. Paul Everett has conducted extensive research into the manuscript paper used by Vivaldi and many of his contemporaries, as well as the handwriting of the抄ists for non-autograph sources originating in Italy. His work has emerged only in stages (via his dissertation, books, articles, and citations in other people’s writings). For some examples, see Paul Everett, “Towards a Vivaldi Chronology;” idem, The Manchester Concerto Partbooks, 2 vols. (New York and London: Garland, 1989); idem, “Vivaldi’s Italian Copyists,” Informazioni e studi vivaldiani 11 (1990): 27-88; and idem, The Four Seasons. Karl Heller and Manfred Fechner have conducted similar studies of Vivaldi sources in German libraries, particularly in Dresden. See Karl Heller, Die deutsche Überlieferung der Instrumentalwerke Vivaldis (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971) and Manfred Fechner, “Bemerkungen zu einigen Dresdner Vivaldi-Manuskripten,” in Nuovi studi vivaldiani. Edizione e cronologia critica delle opere, Quaderni Vivaldiani 4, Edited by Antonio Fanna and Giovanni Morelli (Florence: Olschki, 1988), 2:775-84. Livia Pancino and Peter Ryom have studied Vivaldi’s handwriting and orthographic practices in order to arrive at some conclusions that allow us to locate autograph manuscripts within broad date ranges. See Livia Pancino, “Le caratteristiche grafiche della mano di Vivaldi secondo il metodo grafologico,” Informazioni e studi vivaldiani 13 (1992): 67-95; and Peter Ryom, Les Manuscrits de Vivaldi (Copenhagen: Antonio Vivaldi Archives, 1977). Federico Maria Sardelli’s article on Vivaldi’s early style attempts to identify the corpus of Vivaldi’s known compositions from before c. 1713 by identifying concordances in the musical text between works dated to these years through various means with other pieces of uncertain vintage or questionable authorship [Sardelli, “Le opere giovanili”]. Many further studies of individual works and
transmitted in a source belongs to the same date as the source itself. As Paul Everett has discussed, it is occasionally possible, depending on the nature of the source (autograph, copy with autograph corrections, etc.), to assert that the text is likely to have been created (or edited) simultaneously with or close to the creation of the source. In other cases, a later source may transmit what appears to be an earlier text. At the current state of research into the chronology of Vivaldi’s works, each work has to be treated on an individual basis according to the nature of the surviving sources. In many cases the sources provide only a terminus ante quem – stylistic comparison to works with a narrower date range may suggest a certain time frame for the composition of less securely dated works, but I treat this possibility with caution.

The Appendix to this document provides a list of all of the works that I consider to belong to Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan years, along with references to the sources that provided each dating. I do not claim to have included every possible pre-Mantuan work by Vivaldi. Chronological information is highly scattered in the existing Vivaldi literature, and authors have often made terse statements about the possible dating of a work without citing any specific evidence to support their assessment; I have opted to omit such works since that would require a separate full-length study. I have also specific genres offer additional chronological arguments, although much is still uncertain and open to reconsideration.


53 For example, Paul Everett [*The Four Seasons*, 18] states, without further explanation, that “The Four Seasons are likely to be of the same mid-1710s’ vintage.” Earlier he points out that Vivaldi’s dedication to Op. 8 (publ. 1725) admits that the concertos had already been known to the dedicatee for some time, but Everett does not explain how he can assign a mid-1710s date with any greater certainty than a date closer to c. 1720, the point at which he argues the Op. 8 set was prepared (p. 23). In discussing his discovery of a new source, Talbot [“Miscellany,” *Studi vivaldiani* 7 (2007), 127] commented that the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major RV 377 “on stylistic evidence is datable to the period of Vivaldi’s Opp. 3 and 4” without
omitted works where the date range is too imprecise to be certain that the work was written before Vivaldi began his employment in Mantua.\textsuperscript{54} My belief is that the relative certainty of the dating of the works I have included provides a picture of Vivaldi’s approaches to orchestration and texture prior to his Mantuan employment that is accurate and comprehensive enough to ensure that the identification of other pre-Mantuan works will yield no significant challenges to the trends discussed herein.

The correct attribution of works is another large problem in Vivaldi scholarship. These issues are especially prevalent for Vivaldi’s earlier works because they are primarily transmitted in non-autograph, peripheral sources for which direct provenance is often difficult to establish. The primary resource for the identification of Vivaldi’s works is the catalogue published by Peter Ryom.\textsuperscript{55} Ryom provides entries for all works attributed to Vivaldi in surviving sources or according to hypotheses from modern scholars. The principal list consists of works of certain or likely authorship by Vivaldi. Each entry assigns a number to the piece (the “RV” number), provides a thematic incipit for each movement, describes the physical attributes of the known sources, makes references to historical catalogue entries and lost sources, cites select editions of the

\textsuperscript{54} The serenata RV 690, for example, has recently been dated, with reasonably certainty, to the years 1716-18, but the absence of information about the purpose and venue for the first performance (including who may have commissioned it), combined with a date range that straddles Vivaldi’s move to Mantua, leaves open the possibility that this work was written after the first months of 1718. See Antonio Vivaldi: Serenata a 3 RV 690, ed. by Alessandro Borin, Milan: Ricordi: 2010, p. xlvii.

\textsuperscript{55} Ryom, Verzeichnis, with updates by Federico Maria Sardelli in Studi vivaldiani (Florence: S.P.E.S., 2001- ).
music, identifies concordances with other Vivaldi pieces, and references some of the literature specific to the piece. The appendix (Anhang) contains the secondary catalogue—a list of works where the attribution to Vivaldi is considered doubtful or incorrect.

For some works in both lists there is disagreement among scholars over whether or not the pieces are by Vivaldi. Ryom, in earlier versions of his catalog, initially accepted pieces as authentic Vivaldi works unless the (purely numerical) balance of attributions in multiple sources weighed towards another composer. A more skeptical stance towards the reliability of eighteenth-century scribal and published attributions has emerged from more recent Vivaldi scholarship, and authenticity is now generally determined by a combination of stylistic studies and consideration of the physical aspects of the sources. The latest version of Ryom’s catalogue takes account of many of the challenges made to his initial authenticity decisions, in consultation with the scientific committee of the *Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*. However, there are works still listed as “authentic” for which one or more scholars has questioned Vivaldi’s authorship, as well as works considered to be of uncertain authorship that various scholars have asserted to be products of Vivaldi’s pen.\(^{56}\)

I have opted to accept as authentic those works listed as such in the list found in Michael Talbot’s recent book, *The Vivaldi Compendium*.\(^{57}\) Among the early works, this means the inclusion of the Violin Concerto in C Major RV 175 (*olim* RV Anh. 104), the

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\(^{56}\) Sardelli [“Le opere giovanili,” 45-79] argues for the authenticity of several works traditionally considered not to have been written by Vivaldi. Elsewhere, Sardelli [*Vivaldi’s Music for Flute and Recorder*] has provided strong evidence that all four flute sonatas attributed to Vivaldi (two of which are still listed in Ryom’s main section [Ryom, *Verzeichnis*, 24]) are not by Vivaldi.

\(^{57}\) Talbot, *The Vivaldi Compendium*, 201-32.
Violin Concerto in D Minor RV 813 (*olim* RV Anh. 10), and the Violin Concerto in A Minor RV 355 (*olim* RV Anh. 107/107a). While Ryom has already withdrawn the two oboe concertos that were published as Vivaldi’s Op. 7 #1 and #7, I concur with Talbot that, based on stylistic factors, the Violin Concerto in B-flat published as Vivaldi’s Op. 7 #9 (RV 373) is also spuriously attributed to Vivaldi. I have chosen to omit works where current scholarship lacks a consensus about their authorship and the available evidence is too inconclusive.

The result is an extensive collection of c. 120 works, including several that survive in multiple versions and a few that are partially or entirely lost. In addition to a few independently preserved sinfonias and ripieno concertos, there are numerous violin concertos, three cello concertos, two oboe concertos, several concertos for two or more

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58 The authenticity of these works was argued most recently by Sardelli in “Le opere giovanili,” 45-79. The current RV numbers, belonging to the list of authentic works, were assigned in the “Aggiornamenti del catalogo vivaldiano,” ed. Federico Maria Sardelli, *Studi vivaldiani* 9 (2009), 105-12.


60 One of the most substantive of these works, although only fragmentarily preserved, is the Ristori-Vivaldi opera *Orlando furioso* RV Anh. 84. It appears that Vivaldi adapted a copy of Ristori’s score at some point, in connection with performances in 1713 and 1714, but it is difficult to ascertain which surviving numbers (some of which only survive in fragments or as bass lines) are by Ristori and which are by Vivaldi, especially since it is possible that some of the apparently older layers in the manuscript may have already contained contributions by Vivaldi. See Reinhard Strohm, *The Operas of Antonio Vivaldi*, Quaderni Vivaldiani 13 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2008), 1:133-38. I have decided to leave this work in abeyance until it has received further study.

61 The first slow movement (movement 2a in Ryom, *Werkverzeichnis*, p. 91) of the Violin Concerto in D Major RV 212 is only fragmentarily preserved, due to water damage in the Dresden set of parts (D-Dl, Mus. 2389-O-74) and the presence of a concordant source for the first violin part only (I-Tn, Giordano 29, ff. 236-37); I have analyzed as many aspects of this movement as I could. The presumed viola part of the motet *Carae rosae, respirae* RV 624 is lost – this work has been excluded from my study. The motet *Invicti, bellate* RV 628 has been included, despite the loss of a portion of the first aria. The music by Vivaldi for the opera *Cresco tolto a le fiamme* RV Anh. 138 is lost. For the operas *Nerone fatto Cesare* RV 724, *La costanza trionfante* RV 706-A, *Artabano, re dei Parti* RV 706-B, and *Tieteberga* RV 737, most of the music is lost or survives by presumed re-use in other scores (where adaptations may have occurred); a few other numbers survive, but these are contained in widely scattered sources that I have not been able to examine, so these works have been omitted for now, with the exception of the aria ‘L’innocenza sfortunata’ from *Tieteberga* (Act 3.xi) preserved in Turin (I-Tn, Foà 28 ff. 115-16). I also have not attempted to trace possible concordances of numbers from the lost second act of *Armida al campo d’Egitto* RV 699-A.
soloists, twenty-six sacred works (including an oratorio), and significant portions of five operatic scores (with fragments of a few others).

However, some questions remain about how well the surviving sources reflect Vivaldi’s actual compositions during this period. As noted previously, provenance is difficult to establish for many of Vivaldi’s earlier works, and there are several pieces where multiple sources transmit alternate readings from which it is impossible to ascertain which reading or readings (if any) stem from Vivaldi himself. I generally parallel the text of the New Critical Edition (when available) or the Malipiero edition, as these are the most reliable editions that are widely available.\textsuperscript{62} However, when possible I have consulted reproductions of original sources as well as a few alternate editions of individual works – discrepancies between these and the editions published by the I.I.A.V. are noted herein whenever relevant.

\textit{Methodology and Structure}

One of the primary challenges in discussing the ways Vivaldi uses the viola as an orchestral resource is the lack of an adequate and consistent system of terminology for describing the relationship between the parts of the ensemble. Through my analysis of viola parts, I have established a vocabulary of ways to write for the viola in an ensemble

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Le opere di Antonio Vivaldi}, Edited by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, Gian Francesco Malipiero, General Editor, 529 vols. (Milan: Ricordi, 1947-72). Each work was published as a separate volume, and because of the sheer number of volumes, several editors divided up the task so that each volume was prepared by a single editor. Malipiero himself was responsible for editing most of the volumes, but the remainder were edited, variously, by Ugo Amendola, Angelo Ephrikan, Antonio Fanna, Bruno Maderna, Romeo Olivieri, Gianfranco Prato, and Fritz Zobeley. Additional works (and newly edited issues of select works previously issued by Ricordi) have been appearing in the \textit{Nuova edizione critica delle opere di Antonio Vivaldi}, Edited by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (Milan: Ricordi, 1982-). Incomplete works have recently been issued in the series \textit{Antonio Vivaldi: Opere incomplete}, Critical edition by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (Florence: Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 2001-).
texture. My preference has been to adopt existing vocabulary (often with modifications) or devise new terminology that can be used for analysis of works by multiple composers and in multiple styles (at least for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), so that future investigations can place Vivaldi’s orchestration in a richer contextual analysis.

In the music of Vivaldi’s day, each line in the texture performs multiple functions simultaneously; even a single phrase has rhythmic and pitch characteristics that can be assessed in terms of their vertical (harmonic, registral) and horizontal (melodic, voice-leading) properties. To identify and clarify these contributions, I first examine each type of function in turn, gradually illustrating more of the ways these functions can interact. The sequence in which the functions are discussed is not meant to imply any hierarchy of significance; it is a practical arrangement that builds understanding from the functions that are the easiest to recognize and describe to those that are more difficult to elucidate.

The analysis begins in Chapter 2 with a discussion of melodic functions in Vivaldi’s viola parts. These roles range from fugal and canonic imitation to parallel melodic lines and the so-called “tutti unison.” Here we see how Vivaldi used the viola as a resource for highlighting melodic gestures through a combination of traditional and relatively new types of orchestration.

Chapter 3 addresses Vivaldi’s use of the viola to orchestrate bass lines. In addition to paralleling the bass line, a considerable amount of discussion is devoted to Vivaldi’s use of the bassetto (see glossary), a scoring he used to such great extent that he may have been a pivotal figure in the expansion of this scoring into a wider array of expressive contexts and genres.
Rhythmic functions, an aspect of Vivaldi’s viola parts that Talbot has highlighted for praise, are the domain of **Chapter 4**. While attention is given to the circumstances where Vivaldi assigns the viola a degree of rhythmic independence, this chapter also reassesses the value of rhythmic parallelism and casts it within a broader view of the orchestration of rhythm where individual ensemble parts can be used to highlight or complicate specific rhythmic figures and/or aspects of the underlying metric patterns.

**Chapter 5** is focused on the remaining contributions of the viola part. After questioning the true function of “harmonic filler,” I examine the competing factors that shape the viola part when not performing a melody or bass line, issues such as: register within the ensemble texture, voice-leading, and chord completion.

To illustrate how Vivaldi used the viola as a flexible orchestral resource even within a single piece, **Chapter 6** examines the entire viola part of the first movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 4 #3. An unexpected finding, revealed through the inclusion of texture in the analysis of the movement, is the possibility of interpreting this movement according to an archetypal narrative template – a suggestion for interpretive options that Vivaldi occasionally made more focused and explicit in the allusive and programmatic instrumental works he began to write a few years later.

While there is a possibility that Vivaldi’s most famous work, *The Four Seasons*, may have existed in some form prior to his employment in Mantua, the available evidence is not sufficient to establish this with any certainty. Nevertheless, since these concertos may have been written at the end of the pre-Mantuan years or shortly thereafter, an **Interlude** examines the relationship between scoring and texture in *The Four Seasons* and Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works. With this comparison, we can see how
the programmatic aspects of those four famous concertos draw upon the techniques and (possible) innovations from Vivaldi’s earlier works, and we can apply the vocabulary developed herein to discuss some of the ways Vivaldi used scoring and texture to strengthen cyclic links between each of these concertos.

The analysis of Vivaldi’s viola parts provides a snapshot of the practices of a particular composer in a specific locale during a limited span of time. Ideally, the works studied here would be placed in relation to works from the remainder of Vivaldi’s career, as well as to works by his predecessors, contemporaries, and immediate successors from all regions (i.e., not just the Italian peninsula). For instance, Michael Talbot, as cited earlier, has been among those to make brief mention of several aspects of Vivaldi’s viola parts that he finds to be unusual among Italian composers of the period. If true, this assertion raises the question of whether or not Vivaldi’s viola writing, as one of several idiosyncratic aspects of a markedly personal style, may have influenced the reception of his works during his lifetime. It may be significant, for example, that during the 1730s, as the northern Italian musical scene fell under the spell of the so-called Neapolitan style of Leo, Porpora, Vinci, and others (who often omitted the viola from the string ensemble), Vivaldi’s music seems to have enjoyed increasing popularity in central and northern Europe – regions where local composers such as Telemann and Bach still wrote viola parts that are far more complex than those of their Italian and French contemporaries.63

63 Schulenberg’s first edition [David Schulenberg, Music of the Baroque (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 273] notes the greater complexity of some German viola parts of the period, stating that “In such pieces [overtures and concertos for larger ensembles] the viola often merely doubled the bass line an octave higher, although German composers such as Bach were more likely to give it an independent inner voice.” In his second edition (Music of the Baroque, p. 285), Schulenberg expands this to record that “much
In view of the scope of this study, which already focuses on a sizeable amount of repertoire, it was not possible or practical to delve too deep into detailed comparative work. Instead, the current investigation is intended to be a foundational study—identifying issues, developing the vocabulary and methods needed to examine those issues, and generating an initial sampling of repertoire that can serve as a point of comparison for future studies. This focus, nevertheless, imposes limitations on the ability to make strong cases for broader historical arguments. While I offer some speculation as fodder for future inquiries, I attempt to limit comparisons to more focused contexts. In support of this latter effort, Chapter 7 provides an examination of the use of the viola in music by three of Vivaldi’s most prominent Italian contemporaries: Albinoni, Corelli, and Torelli. Spanning their earliest works up to (in the case of Albinoni) those written before Vivaldi’s move to Mantua, this preliminary study already indicates some of the precedents for Vivaldi’s orchestration as well as some of the ways his scoring and textures are distinct from these three composers. While not exhaustive, these points of comparison strengthen my hypothesis that many composers of the early eighteenth century were exploring approaches to orchestration and texture that foreshadow some of the same principles found in late eighteenth-century orchestration. As we shall see, Vivaldi was incredibly resourceful in his use of the viola, but he was also well-positioned

Baroque instrumental music, even eighteenth-century works played by large ensembles, consists essentially of just one or two violin parts with continuo, winds and violas either doubling one of those lines or adding simple ‘filler’ parts. This was particularly true in the Italian style; French composers retained the traditional five-part string scoring of the Twenty-Four Violins of the King into the eighteenth century, and German composers, such as Bach, favored complex counterpoint in which even the viola has a melodically independent role.”

64 This study is “preliminary” in the sense that it is only comprehensive for Corelli’s surviving works; there are a relatively small amount of Albinoni’s surviving pre-1718 works that were not examined, while I was only able to analyze a small portion of Torelli’s works. Until more complete studies of the viola parts of these latter two composers are undertaken, the results in Chapter 7 are subject to further refinement.
historically to draw upon some of the most progressive trends in orchestration at a point in time where new orchestral genres and new approaches to blending textures were coming to the fore.

*Multiple Players per Part?*

The repertoire under study here is generally assumed to be orchestral in conception, to the extent that it was written for larger ensembles with multiple players for each string part. These works – concertos, sinfonias, and instrumental lines in sacred and secular vocal works – are generally accepted as “orchestral” in modern literature, as opposed to chamber genres (a single player per part, basso continuo excepted) – solo sonatas, trio sonatas, chamber concertos (in Vivaldi’s case, typically quartets and quintets), and chamber cantatas. It happens that Vivaldi’s chamber works almost always lack viola parts, aside from a handful of cantatas.

Richard Maunder, however, has recently argued that the solo concerto as a genre was intended for performance by a single player to each part. Maunder finds that the small number of surviving partbooks for each work (both in printed and manuscript sets), the fact that “solo” and “tutti” markings are used too inconsistently to generally refer to the actual number of players, and the supposedly “inconceivable” situations that would arise from multiplying the number of players on some parts all point to the conclusion that “these concertos [i.e., all published Venetian concertos from the first quarter of the eighteenth century] are not ‘orchestral’ but are chamber works for between four and nine
performers, including the keyboard continuo [...] No provision is made for the addition of ripieno players [...].”

This is not the place for a detailed response to Maunder’s strongly prescriptive arguments, but a few points suggest that the scoring of Vivaldi’s concertos is not as decisively one-to-a-part as Maunder claims. For instance, Maunder assumes that the surviving sets of parts represent actual performance material and thus can be used as strong evidence for performance practice. However, the sheer number of errors in these parts implies that the performers would have had to either deduce the correct reading on the spot or make corrections in now-lost performance materials to avoid cacophony and confusion. In fact, while Maunder takes great pains to argue that issues of performance practice should heavily favor literal interpretations of source evidence rather than modern “musical instinct,” he fails to provide any evidence that the majority of manuscript partbooks surviving in libraries across Europe were actually intended for use in performance.

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66 Maunder is silent about these errors (such as missing or additional measures, missing accidentals, etc.), never insisting that performers would have needed written corrections (generally not found in surviving materials), even though he repeatedly asserts that performers would have needed consistent written instructions (such as detailed “solo” and “tutti” markings) to know when to double a part in performance. Maunder also dismisses the possibility of using other (now lost) materials in performance (with performance annotations not found in the surviving partbooks), simply on the grounds that he cannot conceive of why such parts would appear to have been lost from most libraries. Maunder apparently does not consider the practical (space-saving) benefit of libraries retaining only archival sets of parts (one, or maybe two, of each part), and he too readily dismisses the instances where more substantial numbers of parts survive (including portions of multiple sets of parts for the same piece). See ibid., 7-8.

67 Ibid., 1-2, 7-8. Maunder, however, allows his own instincts to serve as judge when determining what scoring balances would be “inconceivable.” See, for example, ibid., 42. Also, his reference (on pp. 49-50) to the “obviously soloistic parts” for first and second violin at the opening of Vivaldi’s Cello Concerto in A Minor RV 420 (ms. 13-17) reflects his own perception; these parts are no more soloistic in nature than some of those found in the opening movements of opera sinfonias (which, according to available evidence, tended to be performed with multiple players per part except, perhaps, in venues with smaller budgets).
Ultimately, the present study depends little on whether or not one accepts Maunder’s broad claims. The relationship between the parts within the texture is not dramatically altered by a switch from a single player per part to multiple players per part, although uneven multiplication of players can lead to changes in the balance between parts. The resulting difference between those two scenarios is mostly a matter of amplitude and altered tone quality; depending on the specific passage and the response of the individual listener, an increase in the number of players per part can either intensify or disperse the effects of each scoring combination or texture, but the effects themselves are nevertheless present with or without additional players.

There are two issues in operation here: the composer’s conception of the piece as orchestral or chamber music (or the lack of such a polar distinction), and the documented performance of the piece as orchestral or chamber music. I believe there is at least one bit of evidence to indicate that Vivaldi conceived of some (or all) of his concertos as “orchestral” works. In the autograph score of the Concerto in A Minor for Viola d’amore RV 397 preserved in Turin (Ms. Foà 29, ff. 293-300), Vivaldi specifies that the three accompanying parts in the second movement – the two violins and the viola – should each be played by a solo player.68 There is otherwise nothing about this movement, likely composed in the 1720s, that is substantially different from Vivaldi’s many other

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For cautionary arguments against literal readings of source evidence, see the points in Spitzer and Zaslaw, *The Birth of the Orchestra*, 26-28.

68 According to the reproduction I examined at the I.I.A.V., Vivaldi labeled the accompanying staves in this movement: “Violino 1mo Solo”, “Violino 2nd Solo”, and “Alto Solo”. A non-autograph copy of the score in Dresden (Mus 2389-O-82) has “Violino Primo 1 Solo”, “Violino Secondo 1 Solo”, and “Viola 1 Sola”.
slow movements where a soloist is accompanied only by violins, with or without violas. Here, as in similar movements, the accompanying voices are background supporting parts that do not merit any more attention than similar accompaniments in other Vivaldian slow movements. If RV 397 had been composed under the assumption that solo concertos were always performed with a single player for each part, there would be absolutely no need to specify the use of solo players in this movement. By adding the special instructions about the number of performing forces in the slow movement, rather than leaving it to chance, Vivaldi indicates his desire to contrast the chamber-like sonority of the slow movement against the orchestral sonority of the outer movements.

To this argument we can add the fact that Vivaldi often used the plural “violette” in his opera scores, which suggests that he expected the participation of at least two players. While opera orchestras may not have been the principal ensembles to perform concertos, we know that concertos were sometimes performed between the acts of an opera (or before the sinfonia) so, unless evidence emerges to indicate certain players were

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69 In addition to stylistic factors, this dating is supported by Talbot’s interpretation of the capitalization in the autograph designation “Viola d’AMore” as a reference to Anna Maria, who was known to play the viola d’amore. See Talbot, Vivaldi, 119. Since Anna Maria became the principal violinist at the Pietà in the 1720s (until 1737), concertos written for her are likely to date from that same period. See Michael Talbot, “Anna Maria’s Partbook,” in La musica negli ospedali / conservatori veneziani fra Seicento e inizio Ottocento. Atti del convegno, Venezia, 4-7 aprile 2001, eds. H. Geyer and W. Osthoff (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 23-79.

70 While it belongs to a different genre, the Gloria in D Major RV 588 may have been performed with three or four violists, as suggested by the otherwise superfluous marking “2 Alti soli” in the eleventh movement (“Qui sedes”). See the critical commentary in Antonio Vivaldi: Jubilate, o amoeni chori RV 639/639a & Gloria RV 588, ed. Denis Arnold and Michael Talbot (Milan: Ricordi, 1990), 166. In response to the uncertainties acknowledged by Arnold and Talbot, I argue that since Vivaldi does not mark ‘soli’ in any of his operas when two viola parts suddenly appear for a single aria, this likely means that each line in RV 588/xi should be taken by a single player (the placement of “2 Alti soli” between the staves being more efficient than writing “Alto solo” next to each stave), rather than being a cautionary indication that the parts have an obbligato status.
paid extra for these concertos, it is reasonable to assume that most or all members of the opera orchestra played during these particular concertos.\footnote{See entry for ‘Theatre concerto’ in Talbot, The Vivaldi Compendium, 184.}

Nevertheless, Vivaldi’s orchestral music often has chamber-music-like qualities – a factor that likely aided, for example, the borrowing of movements from solo sonatas and chamber concertos into solo concertos. Thus it is not possible to make a steadfast distinction between orchestral and chamber music textures in Vivaldi’s solo concertos as a whole. Based on my own inspection of surviving musical and documentary sources, I am inclined to believe that Vivaldi expected that the works included in this study would be performed with multiple players to each string part \textit{whenever possible}, therefore I use the term “orchestral.” However, orchestral will be understood here to leave open the option to perform the works with single players to each part.
Chapter 2: Melodic Functions

The astonishing variety of ways the viola engages important melodic material is the clearest evidence that Vivaldi did not confine the viola to supporting, harmonic functions but instead used it to orchestrate a wide range of textural elements. The melodic content in Vivaldi’s viola parts stems from the convergence of two of the most remarkable aspects of Vivaldi’s style: (1) his juxtaposition of monophonic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures within a single movement (often within a single ritornello), and (2) his flexible, non-hierarchical writing for the viola within homophonic textures. His Italian predecessors and contemporaries, even those also who used the viola part as a flexible resource, seldom included the same amount of textural diversity as found in much of Vivaldi’s oeuvre.

Vivaldi’s imaginative blending of several types of homophonic, polyphonic, and quasi-monophonic textures (which is often referred to as “tutti unison” in modern discussion) is an element of his style that deserves a separate, detailed study. While a number of scholars have focused in various ways on the notion of juxtaposing polyphonic and homophonic segments in succession, there are additional instances, seldom discussed, where Vivaldi employed both types of textures simultaneously by incorporating contrapuntal elements within secondary voices.72

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72 Marc Pincherle was perhaps the first modern scholar to acknowledge that Vivaldi introduced segments of imitative polyphonic writing within predominantly homophonic works, such as an isolated fugal exposition or canonic opening, besides writing sustained fugal movements. See Pincherle, Antonio Vivaldi et la musique instrumentale, 1: 243-44. Karl Heller has also noted the frequent inclusion of non-fugal passages (including codas) in some of Vivaldi’s ripieno concerto fugues. See Karl Heller, Concerto ripieno und Sinfonia bei Vivaldi (Ph.D. dissertation, Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität Rostock, 1982), 63-75. Recognizing that Pincherle and Heller were arriving at similar observations from different directions, Cesare Fertonani
Vivaldi seized upon the viola as a crucial tool for managing this expanded textural diversity. This chapter identifies several of Vivaldi’s approaches to orchestrating melodic material in various ensemble textures and highlights the often progressive stance Vivaldi adopted when compared to several of his contemporaries, especially in purely instrumental music. On this last point it will be observed that, despite many similarities across genres and mediums, there are some striking differences in the way Vivaldi scores melodic material in purely instrumental works as opposed to works with voices.

The spectrum of melodic-rhythmic material included in this chapter is very broad because Vivaldi often assigned melodic prominence to stock gestures that other composers had typically reserved for supportive, non-melodic roles such as the large number of common bass-line cadential formulas that Vivaldi assigned to treble melodic lines.73 There is one substantial omission from the present chapter: Vivaldi frequently assigned melodic content to his bass lines, making it difficult to fully separate melodic and bass functions in bass-line parts.74 Because the intersection of these functions imposes a more complex set of demands on an individual line, we will here restrict our

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73 Pincherle, Vivaldi: Genius of the Baroque, 70-71, highlights Vivaldi’s frequent construction of melodies from simple melodic-rhythmic gestures. The migration of bass-line gestures to upper parts is mentioned in Talbot, Vivaldi, 74.

74 Since a single line typically proves to be a source of melodic interest, this chapter includes discussion of monophonic passages. One important exception is monophonic framing passages, scored for violins and/or violas only, which frame slow movements. These typically introduce material that is repeated as the bass line accompaniment to the solo melody that enters a few measures later and thus represent a foreshadowing of the bass line rather than a melodic line. As such, these passages are included in the discussion of bass lines in Chapter 3. Once a texture involves two or more voices, I treat any part that behaves like a bass line in Chapter 3 and may only briefly touch upon the melodic aspects of the line in the current chapter.
focus to Vivaldi’s use of the viola as a melodic resource when it is not simultaneously being called upon to score a bass line.

This chapter begins with an examination of a particular type of monophonic texture – the so-called “tutti unison” – and continues through various homophonic and polyphonic textures, including a study of the viola’s participation in imitative textures (e.g., canon, fugue, and several types of less-rigorous imitation) before concluding with non-imitative passages where the viola alone is assigned the melodic line. Certain of these approaches, especially imitation and independent melodic lines, strongly imply that Vivaldi assumed the presence of capable violists when he wrote these works. All of these scoring choices, however, are linked by an over-arching emphasis on sonic effect. Ultimately, these passages are significant not merely because the viola has the melody, but because they reveal the degree to which Vivaldi took into consideration aspects such as timbral color and the acoustic geography of the performance soundscape.

*Full-Ensemble Parallel Monophony: “Tutti Unison”*

One of the scoring and textural devices that Vivaldi employed is variously referred to as the tutti unison or orchestral unison effect. A classic example is found in the opening ritornello from the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Major Op. 3 #5.

Example 2.1: Concerto for 2 Violins in A Major, Op. 3 #5, 1st mvt, ms. 1-5
Vivaldi was certainly not the first person to use this device in vocal or instrumental music, although a detailed history of its use before 1700 has yet to be undertaken. Nevertheless, Vivaldi used this texture very frequently in his works, perhaps introducing it into new contexts and helping to establish its greater popularity during the 1710s and 1720s, especially in purely instrumental music. As a result, the viola gained an opportunity to assume a melodic role that is largely absent in the more conventional textures of many of Vivaldi's colleagues.

In the simplest of terms, I define the tutti unison as any passage where all of the instrumentalists and/or vocalists simultaneously sound the same pitches and same rhythms – multiple performers assigned to a monophonic line. There is, however, often a high degree of flexibility between the literal meaning of the phrase “tutti unison” and its general use in discourses concerning music. For instance, many passages commonly referred to as examples of the tutti unison do not actually involve the entire ensemble; certain instruments, voices or obbligato soloists may be omitted from the passage. The

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75 A brief discussion can be found in Talbot, *The Vivaldi Compendium*, 130-31. The anonymous translator and annotator of the 1709 English-language edition of François Raguenet’s *Parallele des Italiens et des Français, en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéra* (Paris: J. Moreau, 1702) believed that “Pollaroli the Venetian [i.e, Carlo Francesco Pollarolo] invented the Unison Arietto’s.” See François Raguenet, *A Comparison between the French and Italian musick and operas*, translated from the French with some remarks (London: William Lewis, 1709), 32n. The remarks about Pollarolo are found in neither the original 1702 edition nor the 1753 revised and abridged edition (François Raguenet, *La paix de l’opéra, ou Parallele impartial de la musique française et de la musique italienne* [Amsterdam: (n.p.), 1753]) and therefore the identity of their author is uncertain. The 1709 English translation is attributed to John Ernest Galliard in most catalogs, but I have not been able to trace the source of this attribution.

76 For example, timpani and brass are often omitted during these unison passages in earlier scores due to their limited spectrum of available pitches. Walter Piston notes that deviations from true unison or parallel octaves often occur to accommodate limitations of range, the relative strength or weakness of a particular register on a specific instrument, and considerations of overall balance (often affected by the previous two issues). See Piston, *Orchestration*, 357-63. A good example of simulated FEPM is given as Piston’s example 375 (the first ff passage in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony), where the trumpets, timpani, and second pair of horns deviate from strict parallel octaves and some of the other wind instruments switch to a
effect is, instead, understood to be suggested by having the majority of the ensemble sound in unison. Flexibility is also applied to the use of the word “unison,” as there are many passages that only approximate literal unison of pitch and rhythm, primarily due to technical limitations of some of the instruments. More often, the participating ensemble parts are divided into two or more voices that travel in parallel octaves, as in Example 2.1. “Unison” is thus an imprecise term that is being used to cover passages in rhythmic unison combined with a range of parallels within a single pitch class – whether at the unison, at the octave, at the fifteenth, etc.

To better reflect the sonic realities of these passages (i.e., the simultaneous sounding of the same pitch class in different octaves), I propose adopting a different umbrella term: “full-ensemble parallel monophony” (FEPM). This broader category encompasses both “full-ensemble unison monophony” (FEUM; true pitch and rhythmic unison) and “full-ensemble parallel octave monophony” (FEPOM; retaining unison pitch class and rhythmic unison but allowing for the simultaneous use of two or more different octave mid-phrase. Piston also discusses several types of textures “composed of but one element;” while he distinguishes between true unison and parallel octaves and acknowledges a wide range of options for omitting certain instruments or altering the lines of individual parts, his terminology does not provide a convenient way to signify which portion of the ensemble is playing a passage of parallel monophony. There are also some cases where one part may refrain from forming a true unison, creating what could be termed an “implied” or “undermined” tutti unison passage. This happens, for instance, when the bass line is rhythmically simplified in the opening passage from the first movement of Albinoni’s sinfonia to Zenobia, or through the independence of the viola part in the same composer’s Concerto Op. 7 #11, first movement (measures 18-19 and elsewhere).

77 In addition to pitches that exceed the range of a particular instrument, departure from strict unison writing can also be triggered to avoid pitches that were not available on historical instruments (mainly early brass instruments) or rhythms that are difficult to execute on a particular instrument.

78 This terminology permits the use of “wind ensemble parallel monophony,” “brass ensemble parallel monophony,” “string ensemble parallel monophony,” and other specific divisions to refer to subsections of the orchestra when these large sections perform parallel monophony in nineteenth- and twentieth-century repertoire.
Virtually all of Vivaldi’s FEPM passages are of the multiple-octave variety, so references to FEPM in this study imply FEPOM unless otherwise stated. A degree of flexibility can still be allowed for individual parts that are prevented from maintaining strict parallels with other parts. For more precision, an individual passage that implies or suggests the full ensemble aspect without necessarily involving the full ensemble can be considered an example of “simulated full-ensemble parallel monophony” (simulated FEPM).

It is counter-intuitive to have a large number of assembled musicians perform a monophonic passage that could, technically, be performed by a single performer. There is much room for debate about what precisely this scoring contributes to the meaning and impact of a passage, but it is clear that there is a dramatic difference between FEPM passages and other scoring options. Interpreting the sonic and visual contrasts between FEPM and single-part monophonic scoring (or homophonic and polyphonic textures) may depend on the disposition of individual listeners; to some audiences, FEPM may intensify and concentrate the delivery of the musical material while others may find the delivery more focused when executed by a solo performer. Aside from issues of amplitude, the clearest sonic difference concerns the use of physical space: a FEPM passage distributes the same musical material throughout the entire physical space occupied by the performing ensemble (implied physical space in the case of audio

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79 A third sub-category, involving parallels at intervals with different pitch classes (e.g., parallel fifths, parallel thirds, etc.) may belong under this umbrella, depending on how monophony is defined, but it is not clear whether most writers would consider this to be another form of “tutti unison,” a form of parallelism between multiple distinct lines or a hybrid texture. It does not make a significant appearance in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works.

80 One example of FEUM occurs in the finale of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major Op. 7 #6, measure 58.
recordings), whereas homophonic and polyphonic writing maps different material across the acoustic and physical space of the performance and monophony scored for a smaller number of parts creates an island of sound production within the physical space – an effect that is often coupled with a sense of absence that stems from the temporary silencing of other locations in the sound space. Beyond this effect on the physical aspects of the soundscape, full-ensemble parallel monophony can be used to strive towards a psychological impact (conscious or subconscious) – a suggestion of communal or universal agreement – although it may be up to the individual auditor to decide how to interpret this implication (e.g., celebration, antagonism, supplication, etc.).

Michael Talbot has noted that Albinoni used FEPM in the opening of the sinfonia to his first opera, *Zenobia* (Venice, 1694), which was also circulated independently as a sonata for trumpet and strings. However, while my own preliminary investigation finds no further examples in Albinoni’s music until after 1710, the device was used in operas of Aldrovandini and Alessandro Scarlatti by the late 1690s, and it must have achieved a fair amount of dissemination by the first decade of the eighteenth century, as it already appears in Hamburg, via Handel’s first opera, *Almira*, HWV 1 (1704, premiered in 1705).

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81 One caveat about this piece: the basso continuo line (no instrumentation is indicated, but this line is supplied with figures) is rhythmically simplified, moving in steady eighth notes, unlike the measured tremolo (in sixteenth notes) found in the other string parts. Also, the trumpet is silent during the passages of parallel monophony. Nevertheless, the suggestion of FEPM is clear.

82 The recitative that opens Act 1.xiv of Scarlatti’s opera *La caduta de’ Decemviri* (Naples, 1697) features a short segment of FEPM for the instrumental ensemble that alternates (transposed) with sections of secco recitative. Cleopatra’s aria from Act 2.viii of Aldrovandini’s opera *Cesare in Alessandria* (Naples, 1699) is accompanied by a single instrumental line scored as FEPM (“che il Violini è tutti l’istromenti sonano unisu[oni il] Bass[o]”); a similar aria occurs in Act 2.xii of the same composer’s *Semiramide* (Genoa, 1701). See also Osman’s aria “Zürne was hin” from Handel’s *Almira*. Werner Breig has proposed that the aria “Dieser Haare güldnes Scherzen” from Reinhard Keiser’s opera *La forza della virtù* (1700), written on
Vivaldi’s earliest dated examples of this texture and scoring combination occur in
the *Concerto a due cori* in A Major RV 585 (1708-09) and the cello concertos in G
Minor RV 416 and A Minor RV 420 (both by c. 1708-09), and he continued to use FEPM
prominently in instrumental, sacred, and operatic works right up through his move to
Mantua; in fact, he was still using it in his very last works. The passage in RV 585
already illustrates several key aspects of Vivaldi’s handling of this ensemble texture.

Example 2.2: Concerto in A Major, RV 585, 4th movement, ms. 20-26
There is only a single line here, in terms of rhythm and pitch class, although parallel octaves are involved: violins and violas in unison, cellos and other basso continuo instruments an octave below the violins, and a *violone* or two possibly sounding an octave below the cellos. This passage can be understood as a simple bass line scored for a large ensemble across multiple registers – indeed, there may be some familial relationship to bass-line-only passages (such as framing ritornellos and interludes between phrases in a chamber cantata aria) – but, unlike the bass lines that are discussed in Chapter 3, this FEPM passage does not accompany another line. This means that the melodic-rhythmic material of the line is the only source of melodic-rhythmic interest during this passage.

The structural placement and figural content of this particular FEPM passage – containing a common cadential gesture that closes a ritornello or tutti period – is an example of one of the two most common scenarios for Vivaldi’s use of FEPM scoring. For instance, FEPM is only used in the final measure of the finale of the Oboe Concerto in F Major RV 455, which is similar to the cadential gesture in measures 25-26 of Example 2.2. The other most common location is the opening cell of a ritornello, perhaps intended to open the movement with a dramatic call to attention. Such

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83 On the presence or absence of contrabass instruments (sounding an octave lower than written) in Vivaldi’s music, see the discussion in Chapter 3.

84 A frequently performed example of the FEPM texture used primarily for a cadential gesture occurs in several of the ritornello periods from the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Minor Op. 3 #8, third movement. Even here, though, Vivaldi occasionally defies expectation by scoring the first of the two ritornello cells as FEPM during subsequent returns. In another example, the two outer movements of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 7 #4 use an identical motivic tag, scored as FEPM, to close the movement. This is the only example that I’ve found thus far in Vivaldi’s works where the same ending is shared by two movements of the same concerto.

85 Some examples include: the opening movements of the violin concertos RV 302 and 306 (both in G major), the Violin Concerto in A Major RV 340, the Cello Concerto in G Minor RV 416, the Oboe
placement is also related to Vivaldi’s fondness for employing cadential gestures in the opening segment (Vordersatz) of a musical period; when similar material occurs at the beginning and end of a period, Vivaldi can create the effect of a reprise (although it is usually more of a simulated reprise than a literal return).  

In Vivaldi’s autograph score for RV 585, all of the participating parts in the FEPM passages are written in the bass clef. The real advantage of this is not certain; in most passages from a few years later, he often provided only the bass clef and a direction, such as “con il Basso” that made it possible to signal his intentions while only requiring that he write out a single part for the duration of the passage. In this score, he could have done the same, but instead he undertook the additional labor of entering the same notes into all of the parts. Perhaps this notation made the parallel monophony more readily apparent or saved Vivaldi a little effort by eliminating the need to transpose the monophonic line into the proper clef for each instrument. Also, if a copyist retained

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86 I thank Michael Talbot for this observation on the placement and effect of cadential gestures in Vivaldi’s musical phrase periods.

87 See Ryom, *Les Manuscrits*, 142-43. A more typical example is provided in the autograph score (I-Tn, Giordano 38, ff. 177-310) of the opening of the Sinfonia from *L’incoronazione di Dario*. The notation in RV 585 invalidates Michael Talbot’s claim, in the critical notes to his edition of the *Beatus vir*, RV 598, that bass clefs weren’t used in Vivaldi’s earlier works for the upper strings in this type of passage. See Michael Talbot (ed.), *Antonio Vivaldi: Beatus vir, Salmo 111 per due sopranini e contralto solisti, coro a quattro voci miste, due violini, viola e basso*, RV 598, Nuova edizione critica delle opere, ser. ed. Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (Ricordi: Milan, 2003), 81. Talbot also cites RV 589 in this context, but it would be more accurate to say that Vivaldi’s notational approach was less consistent in his earlier works.
Vivaldi’s notation when producing parts for performance, this would have had the benefit of signaling to the violins and violas that they were playing a bass line here.

The scoring of this passage in RV 585 is typical for Vivaldi. Aside from the two solo violins in Coro 2 that finish their duet before joining the ripieno strings in measure 21, all of the available string and basso continuo instruments participate. Often, as in Example 2.2, the line may exceed the compass of a particular instrument. This happens for the violins in measure 23, where the last E of the measure would be below the compass of the violin. In these cases, Vivaldi compresses the range of the line – what I call “range compression” – using octave displacement to bring the final E into the range of the violins (a specific type of range compression that I term “octave compression”). True parallelism may be broken, but the prevailing parallelism in other voices allows the passage to be heard as a close simulation. Most of the time, no octave compression is needed in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan FEPM passages; when it does occur, it usually affects violin parts that descend too low or viola parts that ascend beyond the upper limit of Vivaldi’s selective compass for the viola.88

In contrast to these modifications of the string parts, Vivaldi more often omitted pitches that fell outside the compass of wind instruments during FEPM passages rather than using range compression. As with many similar passages, Example 2.2 is a case of simulated FEPM because the recorders are suppressed here.89 Most likely, this was

88 Octave compression can be witnessed, for example, in the viola part of the Dresden score copy (Mus. 2389-O-48.1) of the first movement of the Concerto in F Major RV 571, where the pitch f2 (which would provide strict unison with the violins) is replaced by f1.

89 The notation of this concerto is a bit unusual (but typical of Vivaldi’s notational economy), in that a large ensemble is condensed onto a small number of staves, from which individual parts are occasionally signaled. Normally, Vivaldi leaves measures empty when he does not want an instrument to play, an option that was not available for the recorders here since they do not have independent staves. While it is
intended to maximize the timbral contrast between the concluding segment (scored for strings and basso continuo) of the first paragraph of the movement with the duet for solo recorders (accompanied by a pedal point on the viola) that opens the second musical paragraph.

In fact, Vivaldi often employs FEPM to create sharp contrast between segments of musical material – frequently enough to suggest this may have been a primary motivating factor in his use of the FEPM scoring. The opening ritornello of the Violin Concerto in D Major RV 212 demonstrates the use of FEPM scoring as a textural contrast within a single ritornello. The structure of the ritornello can be outlined as follows:

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often unclear whether wind instruments doubled string parts when not specifically indicated in a score (i.e., when not assigned a separate stave), Vivaldi specifically indicates the doubling of recorders and violins in the second “tutti” passage of the first movement of this concerto, marking the joint violin + recorder lines “Tutti anco li Flauti”. The possibility remains that the recorders may have doubled the violins in other passages, perhaps simplifying the pitch and rhythmic content as needed, but the absence of similar directions from Vivaldi elsewhere in this movement suggests that the remaining “tutti” indications refer to violins only (in contrast to the “solo” passages that precede them).
Table 2.1: Structure of Opening Ritornello, Violin Concerto in D Major, RV 212, 1st mvt, ms. 1-28\(^{90}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase Unit</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th># of voices</th>
<th>Scoring (Vn Pr, Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vns + Va, Bassi</td>
<td>voices alternate in high-low pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vns + Va in parallel octaves with Bassi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vns + Va, Bassi</td>
<td>voices alternate in high-low pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vns + Va in parallel octaves with Bassi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vns + Va, Bassi</td>
<td>voices alternate in high-low pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vn Pr + Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi</td>
<td>2 rhythmic voices (Vns, Va + Bassi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vn Pr + Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi</td>
<td>2 rhythmic voices (Vns, Va + Bassi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vn Pr + Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi</td>
<td>2 rhythmic voices (Vns, Va + Bassi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vn Pr + Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi</td>
<td>2 rhythmic voices (Vns + Va, Bassi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vn Pr + Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi</td>
<td>2 rhythmic voices (Vns + Va, Bassi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c</td>
<td>23-25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vn Pr + Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi</td>
<td>2 rhythmic voices (Vns + Va, Bassi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d</td>
<td>26-28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vn Pr + Vn 1, Vn 2, Va, Bassi</td>
<td>2 rhythmic voices (Vns + Va, Bassi) (solo episode begins in ms. 28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table indicates, the first two phrase units (1a and 1b) begin with two alternating voices that unite as a single, FEPM voice in the closing measure of each phrase unit.

These relatively spare textures are then contrasted with the four-part homophony of the second and third groups of phrase units (the homophony itself being varied between the second and third phrase groups). Since most of the phrase units utilize the same one or

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\(^{90}\) Note: In the scoring column, a ‘+’ sign indicates that the parts play in unison.
two principal melodic-rhythmic motivic gestures, interest is maintained by harmonic changes (e.g., 2a, 2b, and 2c are steps within an ascending secondary-dominant progression) and textural contrasts between phrase units. Subsequent ritornellos bring harmonic change, especially modal alterations, just as one would expect in ritornello form. However, Vivaldi also exploits the textural contrasts signaled in the opening ritornello of this movement by expanding the amount of material with FEPM scoring in other ritornello passages. While not a continuous linear process of transformation, the combination of the growing presence of FEPM within each ritornello and Vivaldi’s tendency to excise and shorten phrase units in subsequent ritornellos (common to his ritornello forms in general) provides the astonishing result that the final ritornello of the movement is completely scored in FEPM (six measures, plus a four-measure return following a cadenza). Not only has the harmonic variety and overall length of the ritornello been reduced, but the textural contrasts that were previously a prominent feature have now been erased – parallel monophony has come to dominate the extremely simplified content of the ritornello. This is apparently the only pre-Mantuan Vivaldi concerto movement that follows this remarkable course, but it is one of many examples where melodic-rhythmic material originally scored homophonically is re-scored monophonically or where FEPM is used as a textural contrast to shape and distinguish individual ritornellos and entire movements.

Another important result of the textural shift during the course of the first movement of RV 212 is the increasing portion of each ritornello where the main melodic-rhythmic material is included in the viola line. In the opening ritornello, the viola plays the melodic line in phrase units 1a, 1b, and 1c (ten of the twenty-eight measures in the
ritornello), performing different functions for more than half of the ritornello. In the final ritornello of the movement, the viola plays melodic material for the entire ritornello – the ritornello is now shorter, but the retention of FEPM phrases and FEPM rescoring of other phrases increases the relative portion of the viola’s share of the melodic material.

The tendency of parallel monophony to increase the viola’s share of melodic material is particularly striking in Vivaldi’s slow movements. While examples of FEPM before Vivaldi can be found in fast movements, the slow movements of the concertos Op. 3 #1 and 8 (publ. 1711), framed by FEPM ritornellos (with an additional interior ritornello, scored as FEPM, occurring in Op. 3 #1), may be the earliest concerto slow movements to use FEPM.\(^{91}\) The slow movements of concertos and similar works for large ensemble by Corelli, Torelli, and Albinoni – by comparison – lack FEPM passages. Vivaldi’s use of this special texture in a new context is a major factor in the greater amount of melodic content assigned to the violas in his slow movements and was likely an important hallmark of his style.

There is at least one distinction between Vivaldi’s use of FEPM in works with and without voices: only in the former is FEPM featured for entire movements. This is true for all of Vivaldi’s contemporaries who used FEPM. All indications point to Vivaldi’s inheritance of a type of “unison” aria used in operas and oratorios, such as those found in

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\(^{91}\) Although the texture appears, on the basis of the Malipiero edition (tomo 521, ed. by Fritz Zobeley, 1972), to fluctuate between true FEPM and simulated FEPM, the slow movement of the Cello Concerto in A Minor RV 420 (probably written by c. 1708-09) may be an even earlier example: the violin and viola parts are written in bass clef, but I have not been able to confirm that the rhythmic simplification in the bass line of the edition stems from the original source. The opening, slow movement of the Violin Concerto in C Major RV 175 may be another early example, although it has not been explicitly established whether this concerto predates the publication, let alone the composition of the Op. 3 concertos. On the date of RV 175, see the brief suggestion in Sardelli, *Vivaldi’s Music for Flute and Recorder*, 213.
Handel’s *Almira* HWV 1 (1705) and *La Resurrezione* HWV 47 (1708). Vivaldi used this texture for most or all of the “Deposuit” movement for alto voice from the *Magnificat* RV 610b, the A-section of Grifone’s (soprano) Act 2.xiii *da capo* aria from *Orlando finto pazzo* (1714), the Act 2.iv arioso for Statira (soprano) in *L’incoronazione di Dario* (1717), the final *coro* of *Armida al campo d’Egitto* (1718), and sizeable portions of several other arias. Vivaldi appears to link the aria type with malicious characters, feelings of rage or terror, and references to violence whether through war or from forces of nature. In these pre-Mantuan examples, Vivaldi tends to maintain stricter FEPM in alto and soprano arias, while simulating the texture in tenor and bass arias by opening and closing extended periods with FEPM but elsewhere breaking into a two-part texture more often than in alto and soprano arias.

While this texture could be maintained when voices and instruments were involved, it was probably considered too monochromatic to maintain in instrumental

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92 See Breig, “*La Resurrezione,*” 85-106. Breig notes that, while a passage of unison writing (with or without octave doublings) occurs in Florinda’s aria “Frede ceneri d’amor” from the opera *Rodrigo*, HWV 5 (1707), the oratorio *La Resurrezione* appears to include the earliest examples of Handel’s unison arias (Maddalena’s aria “Ho un non so che nel cor” and Cleofe’s aria “Augelletti, ruscelletti”) – an aria texture that he uses often for the remainder of his career. Both of the arias from *La Resurrezione* contain ritornellos with two or more linear voices. As Breig observes, many so-called unison arias, including those in *Rodrigo*, actually involve unison writing (with octave doublings) for the instruments as an accompaniment to an independent vocal line that may or may not partially double the vocal line (i.e., tending towards a unison accompaniment texture rather than the consistent monophonic texture implied by the analysts’ term “unison aria”). Lucifero’s aria “O voi dell’Erebo” from *La Resurrezione* is one such example. While not mentioned by Breig, Osman’s aria “Zürne was hin” from *Almira* and Rodrigo’s aria “Siete assai superbe” from *Rodrigo* also belong to this denser type of aria texture.

93 The later, post-Mantuan versions (RV 610, 610a, 611) of the movement from the *Magnificat* are scored with chorus in parallel monophony rather than as a solo vocal movement. Ryom (*Verzeichnis*, 289) incorrectly gives the scoring of the movement as found in RV 610b as “SATB unis.”

94 Breig has noted that Handel initially tended to write unison arias for sopranos but came to favor bass soloists in unison arias of the 1720s. See Breig, “*La Resurrezione,*” 103-6. It is difficult to make a similar examination of Vivaldi’s output, because he was more likely to open a movement with the hint of a unison aria and then break into a thicker texture. Thus far I have found no clear evidence of a shift resembling the one Breig finds in Handel’s music, as Vivaldi continued writing or alluding to unison arias for high and low voices, especially alto and bass, in the 1720s and 1730s.
ensemble movements. At the same time, the peculiarity of employing an ensemble and asking them to all play the same exact thing likely explains why FEPM is typically only used for entire movements when there is a dramatic or symbolic significance to the texture, such as a sense of communal expression or extreme intensity. This is the first of several distinctions raised in the present study between Vivaldi’s scoring of works with and without voices. As such, it is one of the ways that Vivaldi’s flexible treatment of the viola allows him to write a little differently for it in his operas and sacred works than in his concertos and sinfonias.

*Parallel Melodic Lines*

It is no secret that Vivaldi, as was common in his day, often wrote melodic lines where two or more parts travel in unison, parallel thirds, parallel sixths, or (less often) in parallel octaves or larger intervals. I refer to this scoring technique as the use of “parallel melodic lines” (PML), where two or more voices in a homophonic or polyphonic texture perform a melodic line in parallel, regardless of whether it is a primary or secondary melodic line. In most cases from Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works, this involves two ripieno violin parts, two solo parts, or a solo voice and one or both ripieno violin parts. The PML method of scoring had been in existence long before Vivaldi began composing.

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95 The stipulation that this occurs in homophonic and polyphonic textures requires a qualification: PML can also occur when there is a passage of unaccompanied melodic writing (such as the violin duets in the first movement of the Concerto for 2 Violin in A Major Op. 3 #5) – while such passages can be interpreted as monophonic, I believe they imply a homophonic texture (through a sense that a bass line is temporarily silenced) much more strongly than, for example, the full-ensemble parallel monophony of the opening measures of the same movement. The main point of specifying homophonic and polyphonic textures in this definition is to provide a basis for distinguishing between PML and FEPM.
The same is true of instrumental lines that double vocal lines *colla parte* (i.e., PML at the unison or octave).

However, it is seldom noted that Vivaldi employs the viola, from time to time, to move in parallel with one or both of the violin parts. More striking is the flexibility he provides for the viola to shuttle between different PML partnerships in these passages and in *colla parte* writing. His approach treats the viola as a resource that can be applied to melodic lines almost at will to reinforce important melodic-rhythmic gestures while harmonizing them or spreading the unison line across more of the sonic space of the performance venue.

PML are, in general, found very often in Vivaldi’s music, but the scoring technique accounts for a relatively small portion of the viola parts in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works.\footnote{PML typically constitute only brief portions (one measure or less) of the pre-Mantuan viola parts. Some of the most noticeable uses include: Op. 3 #6/iii, Op. 3 #7/i, Op. 3 #11/iii, Op. 4 #3/i, Op. 4 #5/i, Op. 6 #6/i, Op. 7 #11/i & iii, RV 112/iii, RV 146/ii, RV 175/vii, RV 208/i, RV 212a/i, RV 574/i, RV 639/588/v, RV 595/vi, RV 630/iii, RV 633/iii first setting, RV 811/iii, *Orlando finto pazzo* Act 3.9 first setting, *Arsilda* Act 3.10, *Dario* Act 1.13, *Armida* Act 1.12, as well as *colla parte* doubling of choral lines in some of the sacred works.} Example 2.3, although more extended than the typical passage, illustrates several of the most common and intriguing aspects of Vivaldi’s use of PML.
In this example, PML is operating on multiple levels: 1) the four violin parts are playing a melodic line in unison, 2) the violas play in parallel sixths (measures 20-21) and parallel thirds (measures 23-27) with the violins, and 3) the two viola parts are in unison when they are playing melodic material (this includes measure 19, which is discussed later in this chapter). A striking number of PML using the viola occur when the violin parts are in unison with each other, as in **Example 2.3**. This allowed Vivaldi to maintain the dynamic intensity and spatial effects derived from scoring the violins in unison while simultaneously providing a harmonically enriched, two-voice melodic line. Acting as a reserve secondary violin, the viola becomes an equal partner to the violins in regards to the task of presenting the melodic material.

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97 The eight partbooks have here been condensed to three lines to make the intervallic relationships clearer.

98 The violins are in unison for all ritornellos in this movement.

99 If the effects of unison violin writing had not been as important, Vivaldi could have easily detached one of the violin parts to play the other voice. Even in cases where there are limited staves on the page, Vivaldi was quite skilled at finding ways to indicate additional parts for particular passages.
As in almost every instance of PML in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan viola parts, the
violins in Example 2.3 are pitched higher than the viola line. However, Example 2.3
illustrates how readily Vivaldi changed the interval between the PML during the course
of a single ritornello, so that the violas were not locked into a single pitch relationship
with the violins. Using two of the most common intervals for Vivaldi’s PML, the lines in
Example 2.3 first travel in parallel sixths and then, after a break, move in parallel
thirds.

The break itself is a significant demonstration of the viola as a flexible resource.
After two measures of the violas as a PML, the part is assigned a new mixture of roles in
measure 22, before being re-tasked again to serve as a parallel melodic line (measures 23-
27), albeit at a different interval from the violins than in measures 20-21. This highly
localized use of the viola for PML is typically for Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works,
especially the instrumental works, and is a classic case of Vivaldi’s easy transfer between
different functions for the viola.

One substantial benefit of this flexibility is the way Vivaldi can utilize it to
contrast elements within a ritornello or phrase group. The dactylic figures in the violins

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100 Exceptions occur in the third movement of the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Minor Op. 3 #8 (four times),
the finale of the Violin Concerto in E Minor Op. 6 #5 (three times), the finale of the Violin Concerto in B-
flat Major Op. 7 #6 (twice; Vn 2 + Va on top, Vn 1 on bottom), and the last movement of the Violin
Concerto in C Major RV 175 (once). Assuming that the unison violins outnumbered the violas (regardless
of how many performers played each part), Vivaldi may have intended to use any differences of timbre or
amplitude between each part to contribute a subtly surprising color to the sound of these particular parallel
lines. For example, the passages in Op. 6 #5 are elsewhere heard with the violins pitched higher than the
violas, so the inverted scoring makes for interesting, albeit fleeting variety.

101 The viola is also frequently assigned PML in unison or at the octave, although these occur more often in
vocal works than purely instrumental works. Parallel tenths are also occasionally used, but parallel
thirteenths are very rare; examples of parallel thirteenths involving the viola occur in the first movement of
the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Minor Op. 3 #8, the first movement of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major
Op. 7 #6, the last movement of the Violin Concerto in C Major RV 175, and the third movement
(Laudamus te) of the Gloria RV 588 (= the fifth movement if the introductory motet is included in the
count).
and violas are a new element in the movement when they are first heard in measure 20. The scoring and textural contrast brought by the sudden use of PML after nineteen measures of a single treble line sets this melodic-rhythmic gesture and its incessant repetition apart from the preceding material in a dramatic fashion. Similarly, the return to a single treble line in measure 27, after four measures of the violins and violas in parallel thirds, helps place the violins’ gesture in measure 27 in sharp relief. These types of contrasts are a vital part of Vivaldi’s ritornello periods, so it is not surprising that many of the PML scored with viola are found there.

However, there is a clear split between the approach that Vivaldi uses during solo sections in his instrumental and vocal works: the viola parts contain PML during solo and choral periods in vocal works (especially in choral movements), but PML are rare during solo periods of purely instrumental works. The latter absence may stem from the notion that unisons and parallel octaves generally infringe on the idiomatic nature and authority of instrumental solo episodes while parallels at the third, sixth, or tenth are

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102 In this case, the contrast in measures 26-27 is reflected later in the movement (measures 69-74), when the melodic-rhythmic material of these measures is heard three times in succession, with the solo violin suddenly shorn of the unison ripieno violins and the violas (end of measure 70). The sense of a sudden loss of a denser treble line and, in measures 70-74, of a fuller texture and number of players is common to both passages, which are already linked by shared melodic-rhythmic material. While solo passages occasionally cite melodic-rhythmic figures from ritornellos, there is no evidence that Vivaldi routinely intended material of a ritornello to serve as germinal motives for development later in the movement. Whether or not a person wishes to interpret measures 69-74 as an elaborated citation, varied reprise or a development of earlier material, the scoring contrasts of this particular passage are demonstrably as much a part of the fundamental idea of measures 27-28 as the melodic-rhythmic material itself.

103 The exceptions, in the instrumental works, are: a fleeting moment in the second movement of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major Op. 4 #1 (measure 25), where the viola emerges from the thick accompaniment texture to partner with the solo violin in parallel sixths; the first movement of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major RV 370 (ms. 94-98 in the Dresden autograph score, Mus. 2389-O-55, and revised as ms. 79-84 in the Turin autograph score, Giordano 30, ff. 172-183), when the viola parallels one voice of the compound line in the solo violin part, and the first movement of the Cello Concerto in C Minor RV 402 (ms. 62-63), when the broken arpeggios in the unison violins are loosely paralleled in thirds, sixths, and tenths by the violas. This last example is related to the concept of parallel triads, discussed below.
treated as a duet alternative to a true solo passage – a role Vivaldi was more apt to give to violins than violas.

The vocal works include many choral movements with imitative elements, where each vocal line is paralleled in unison or at the octave by one or more instrumental parts. Since a prolonged focus on specific vocal lines was less important to a typical Vivaldian choral movement, doubling at the unison and octave was more acceptable. As for solo vocal periods, the timbral difference between solo voices and string instruments was deemed sufficient to allow violins and/or violas to parallel vocal lines without diminishing the recognition of the primacy of the vocal line.

However, even in vocal works, Vivaldi did not always bind the viola line to a single vocal line. Taking the vocal works as a whole, the viola is most commonly partnered with the tenor line in choral movements, but there are many instances of the viola paired with the alto line and a few cases of the viola and choral soprano parts written as PML. For example, in the *Et misericordia ejus* movement from the *Magnificat* RV 610b, the viola is variously in parallel with the tenor choral line, the alto choral line, or – as in the opening instrumental measures – unparalleled.

In both vocal and instrumental works, there are a few instances where the viola is partnered with an added, short-lived melodic line (i.e., a line that appears for a few measures to add another layer of melodic interest) – whether a second treble line or one that suddenly emerges from within the middle of the ensemble texture. An example of this occurs in the first movement of the Violin Concerto in G Minor Op. 4 #6 (measures

104 While it is tempting to call such intermittent melodic lines “secondary,” it is not certain that a listener hears one line as primary and one as secondary rather than hearing both as a pair of interacting lines.
27-30 and two subsequent appearances), where the second violins and violas play a brief melodic line in parallel thirds (although the violas join in only for a portion of each measure) that is an elaborated canonic imitation of the first violin line.¹⁰⁵ A similar situation occurs in a suspension-filled passage from the first movement of the Concerto for 4 Violins and Cello in F Major Op. 3 #7 (measures 13-18, returning as measures 60-72), where Vivaldi takes advantage of the two viola parts to score each of the two treble-register voices as PML: Violins 1 and 3 in parallel tenths over Viola 2; Violins 2 and 4 in parallels thirds over Viola 1.¹⁰⁶

Two further aspects of Vivaldi’s use of the viola for PML merit attention: its greater prevalence in fast movements and its use to build melodic phrases in triadic harmonies. The former trend may stem from the fact that most of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan slow movements with viola parts favor textures that are not conducive to PML, such as block chordal textures, viola bassetto lines (discussed in Chapter 3), or sustained harmonies.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the frequency of PML used to create triadic harmonies owes much to Vivaldi’s fondness for melodic lines that are, in essence, a series of inversions of

¹⁰⁵ See also the first movement of the Violin Concerto in D Major RV 208 (measures 1-5).

¹⁰⁶ In what appears to be an earlier version of this concerto, RV 567a (preserved in Dresden), the single viola part parallels the higher of the two lines (in parallel tenths, as in the published version), so that the lower line lacks the parallel thirds familiar from the published version. Another classic example occurs in the first movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 4 #3 (measures 110-113), where the viola alternates between forming PML with the first and second violins; this is true in the version published in Vivaldi’s lifetime, although the PML are absent (replaced by a different viola line that parallels the bass line) in a secondary source of unknown origin and preserved in Lund (S-L, Saml. Engelhart, N:r 426).

¹⁰⁷ Choral movements aside, where imitative textures in the vocal lines are more likely to be paralleled by instrumental lines, the main exceptions to this preference for fast movements are: the third movement of the Concerto for 2 Violins and Cello in D Minor Op. 3 #11 (“Largo e spiccato”), the second movement of the Sinfonia in G Major RV 146 (“Andante e sempre piano”, which recurs as an “Allegro” aria in Armida, Act 3.vi = Osmira’s aria “Se correndo in seno al mare”), the second movement of the Violin Concerto in C Major RV 170 (“Largo”), and the fourth movement (“Adagio”) of the Violin Concerto in C Major RV 175.
the same triad. **Example 2.4** presents the second phrase of the ritornello in the third movement of the Violin Concerto in B Minor RV 388.

**Example 2.4:** Violin Concerto in B Minor, RV 388, 1st mvt, ms. 5-9

In this passage, one-measure gestures of triads for the upper strings alternate with FEPM measures. The lines in measures 5, 7, and 9 aren’t strictly parallel – the intervallic relationship between the second violin and viola parts in measure 5, for example, changes from a third to a fourth and then returns to a third. However, the three voices maintain a parallel contour and have identical rhythms, so the gesture imitates PML while retaining the harmonic identity of the underlying triad.

There is at least one work where Vivaldi scored the components of PML for two viola parts.
Example 2.5: Concerto for 4 Violins and Cello in F Major, Op. 3 #7, 3rd mvt, ms. 40-43

Example 2.5 is a special type of passage, where the violas have a melodic line that is not paralleled by other instrumental parts (such as the violins) but is scored for violas in parallel thirds with each other and is thus an example of PML. Although Vivaldi occasionally assigns single, brief melodic-rhythmic gestures to violas in parallel thirds when two viola parts are present (especially in Op. 3 #7 and 10), more extended passages, such as in Example 2.5, are exceedingly rare. In the relatively few works with two viola parts, Vivaldi tends to assign predominantly non-melodic material to the violas, as is typical when two viola parts are found among works by Vivaldi’s immediate predecessors.

108 The same concerto movement contains two similar passages, in measures 33-35 and 51-54. The melodic content of these passages are absent from the much simpler single viola part in the presumably earlier version of the concerto, RV 567a. It appears that, in revising the concerto (perhaps in preparation for publication), Vivaldi conceived of a new layer to add to these passages and he took advantage of the presence of two viola parts to score the new melodic line in parallel thirds.

109 Among the pieces in Op. 3 that have two distinct viola parts (Concertos 1-3, 7, and 10), Concertos 1-3 contain higher portions of non-melodic material, bearing a stronger resemblance to viola parts in such works as those in Albinoni’s Op. 2 and Op. 5. The same can be said for both viola parts in most of the movements in the Violin Concerto in D Minor RV 813 (olim RV Anh. 10).
Some of Vivaldi’s predecessors and contemporaries occasionally used the viola part in PML. For instance, Carlo Pallavicino’s opera *Il Vespasiano*, which was premiered in Venice during the year of Vivaldi’s birth, features a few ritornellos and aria accompaniments that juxtapose, concertato fashion, brief phrases scored as PML, grouping each violin part alternately with the first, second, or third viola part. However, Pallavicino’s PML typically occur within dense six-part string textures. Stronger resemblances to Vivaldi’s writing occur in works with trumpet by Torelli, Aldrovandini, and Alessandro Scarlatti, especially those where the two violin parts play in unison and the violas serve as the equivalent of “on-call” second violins. The brevity of many of these passages and the readiness with which Vivaldi re-aligns the violas with different parts in the ensemble texture are testimony to Vivaldi’s treatment of the viola as a versatile resource.

*Imitative Devices*

While the viola partners with other melodic voices in simultaneous fashion during full-ensemble parallel monophony and parallel melodic lines, Vivaldi’s use of imitative textures provides multiple opportunities for the viola to engage melodic material in sequential collaboration with other ensemble parts. Contrapuntal imitation in Vivaldi’s music can operate on macro levels (full-length fugues) and micro levels (e.g., isolated fugal episodes, canonic imitation between two or three voices, non-fugal points of imitation, etc.). The viola is a regular participant in all of these scenarios, a fact that is particularly notable as it gives the viola a variety of melodic roles that are not available within a stricter homophonic texture.
The two most interesting aspects of Vivaldi’s fugal writing, as concerns the viola, are the strong degree of equality between the viola and other voices as well as the intriguing, but relatively rare, examples of isolated fugal passages within non-fugal movements. Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan music exhibits his interest in fugal textures, ranging from full-scale fugues in *stile antico* (all of which are known or suspected adaptations of fugues by other composers) and *concertante* fugues (fugues with concertante solos during episodes) to isolated fugal expositions occurring as a localized device with a different large-scale structure (e.g., fugal ritornellos in a *da capo* aria or ritornello-form movement, fugato at the conclusion of a movement, etc.).

Table 2.2 lists eleven full-scale fugues and seven additional movements with fugal expositions.

Table 2.2: Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works with fugal passages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work/Movement</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RV 185/ii (Op. 4 #7)</td>
<td>Violin Concerto in C Major</td>
<td>concertante fugue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 265/ii (Op. 3 #12)</td>
<td>Violin Concerto in E Major</td>
<td>framing ritornello</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 292/i.3 (second Allegro, ms. 7ff)</td>
<td>Violin Concerto in F Major</td>
<td>concertante fugue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 319/i</td>
<td>Violin Concerto in G Minor</td>
<td>concertante fugue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

110 The fullest study to date of Vivaldi’s use of fugue is Talbot, *Vivaldi and Fugue*, where information on the known and suspected adaptations is presented on pp. 125-26. The present discussion focuses additional attention on issues pertaining specifically to the viola parts in pre-Mantuan fugues.

111 This table is adapted from the table provided in ibid., 119-21; works without a viola part have been omitted and a few examples excluded by Talbot have been added (as noted below).

112 Classifications are based on the definitions in Talbot, op. cit.

113 Talbot lists this fugue as the fourth section of the first movement of the concerto in ibid., 120, but the same fugue is listed as the third section of the first movement on p. 182. This is a difficult concerto to divide into individual movements. The fugue proper in this *Allegro* is preceded by several measures in the manner of a virtuosic *preludio*. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RV 354/iii (Op. 7 #4)</th>
<th>Violin Concerto in A Minor</th>
<th>other</th>
<th>isolated fugal expositions in ms. 107-114 and 119-123</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RV 565/ii (Op. 3 #11)</td>
<td>Concerto for 2 Violins and Cello in D Minor</td>
<td>concertante fugue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 565/iv (Op. 3 #11)</td>
<td>Concerto for 2 Violins and Cello in D Minor</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>isolated fugal exposition in ms. 43-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 588/iv “Et in terra pax”</td>
<td><em>Gloria</em> in D Major</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>vocal periods as fugal expositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 588/viii “Domine Fili unigenite”</td>
<td><em>Gloria</em> in D Major</td>
<td>fugue</td>
<td>suspected adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 588/xiv “Cum Sancto Spiritu”</td>
<td><em>Gloria</em> in D Major</td>
<td>fugue</td>
<td>adaptation of fugue by Ruggieri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 589/v “Propter magnam gloriam tuam”</td>
<td><em>Gloria</em> in D Major</td>
<td>fugue</td>
<td>suspected adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 589/xii “Cum sancto spiritu”</td>
<td><em>Gloria</em> in D Major</td>
<td>fugue</td>
<td>adaptation of fugue by Ruggieri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 591/iv “Ext resurrexit”</td>
<td><em>Credo</em> in E Minor</td>
<td>fugal conclusion</td>
<td>fugue in ms. 106-125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 595/v.2 “Tu es sacerdos”</td>
<td><em>Dixit Dominus</em> in D Major</td>
<td>fugal conclusion</td>
<td>borrowed from composer of RV Anh. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 595/xi “Et in saecula saeculorum”</td>
<td><em>Dixit Dominus</em> in D Major</td>
<td>fugue</td>
<td>adaptation of fugue by “Composer X”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 610/iii “Et misericordia ejus”</td>
<td><em>Magnificat</em> in G Minor</td>
<td>accompanied fugue</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

114 This passage is not included in Talbot’s table of Vivaldi’s fugues.

115 This fugue is listed as the third section of a multi-part first movement in ibid., 120.

116 Although this passage is not included in Talbot’s table of Vivaldi’s fugues, he has confirmed (in private correspondence) that these measures constitute an example of what Talbot has termed the “pendulum exposition,” where symmetrical subject and answer entries regularly alternate between tonic and dominant poles. For definition, see ibid., 100.

117 Movement numbers for RV 588 follow the second (parenthetical) set in Ryom, *Verzeichnis*, 260-61, where the introductory motet RV 639 counts as movements one and two while the final movement of the motet (interwoven with the opening movement of the Gloria proper) counts as the third movement of the joint RV 639/588.

118 Movement numbers for RV 589 follow those in ibid., 261-63.
The viola plays a prominent role in the melodic content of these pieces, engaging the subjects and countersubjects in all of these fugal textures. This is particularly important in fugal episodes, because the process of allowing each voice to enter successively with a subject, answer or countersubject can focus attention on that voice.

If the greatest emphasis is placed on the first voice to enter during a fugal exposition, the viola is generally bereft of this honor – at least during the first exposition in full-scale fugues, although the viola enters first when doubling the choral tenor line in a few works. Instead, the instrument is typically second or third in a succession of four

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RV 610/vii.2\textsuperscript{119} “Et in saecula saeculorum” | Magnificat in G Minor | fugue | suspected adaptation
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RV 639/i “Jubilate, o amoeni chori” | Introduzione al Gloria in D Major | other | fugal ritornellos in ‘A’ section
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RV 699, Act 1.x Aria for Califfo “So che combate ancor”\textsuperscript{120} | Armida al campo d’Egitto | other | several fugal expositions, vocal line also participates
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\textsuperscript{119} Movement numbers for RV 610b follow those in ibid., 287-88. Some editions of this work split the “Fecit potentiam” and “Deposuit potentes” sections of the work into separately numbered movements.

\textsuperscript{120} This item is not included in Talbot, op. cit., but Talbot confirms, in private correspondence, that the fugal expositions are “classic” examples of pendulum fugue.

\textsuperscript{121} For a good illustration, see the analysis of the distribution of subjects and countersubjects in the fugue from the second movement of RV 565 in Talbot, op. cit., 90-1. The viola does not, however, get the fugal subject or answer in the second exposition of Op. 7 #4/iii, instead playing a melodic gesture that is heard nowhere else in this movement and yet has the typical characteristics of fugal material (especially as part of a countersubject).

\textsuperscript{122} The amount of attention each entrance commands depends on the interest level of the material and the amount of competing material that is simultaneously heard. Fugal expositions that build up from a single voice (as opposed to those where the exposition commences with a multi-part texture) are likely to focus more attention on each voice as it takes over the subject.

\textsuperscript{123} The viola and choral tenor enter first with the subject in RV 588/viii, 595/xi, and 610/ix.2 (one of two subjects).
entries, usually arranged in a top-down (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Bass) or bottom-up order (Bass, Viola, Violin 2, Violin 1). As Talbot has noted, these two arrangements are extremely common in fugues for practical and aesthetic reasons (the former in fugues for instrumental ensemble, the latter in fugues for keyboard and vocal ensemble), so this is not evidence of a deliberate devaluation of the viola. In fact, the substantial melodic and rhythmic contrast between subjects and countersubjects (as well as free material) in many of Vivaldi’s fugal expositions permits the viola to be clearly heard as a participant in fugal imitation. It is also worth noting that this relatively high degree of melodic and rhythmic importance persists even in stile antico fugues where the strings tend to parallel the choral voices colla parte.

Vivaldi also incorporates the viola in a variety of imitative textures that are not, strictly speaking, fugal. Several movements feature canonic or quasi-canonic imitations where a melodic-rhythmic subject is imitated by all of the voices in turn. Example 2.6 illustrates one such passage.

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124 Occasionally, the viola is the last voice to enter, with the subject answer (as in RV 265/ii). Some of the fugal expositions have additional, redundant entries (i.e., when a voice that has already entered with a subject enters again in the same exposition).

125 Talbot, op. cit., 60.

126 It should be noted that fugues with voices, including those in stile antico, often include partially independent instrumental accompaniments or passages for instruments only. For example, the strings maintain a fair amount of independence in RV 588/xii, 589/xii, and 591/iv. The “accompained fugue” in RV 610/iii is framed by instrumental-only passages and the instrumental parts retain a rhythmic pattern that is largely distinct from the vocal lines.
Example 2.6: Violin Concerto in E-flat Major, Op. 8 #5, 1st mvt, ms. 1-4

This passage shares many aspects of a fugal exposition, except that each voice enters on the tonic and is therefore a four-voice canon at the unison or octave rather than two subject-answer pairs. When it comes to the distribution of melodic content, however, textbook distinctions between fugal and canonic expositions are insignificant. In Example 2.6, as in Vivaldi’s fugal expositions, the primary melodic content is distributed among all parts of the ensemble and attention is directed from one voice to another as each takes up the melodic material in turn. Much the same could be said for

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127 Vivaldi rarely maintains strict canonic writing for more than a few measures in his pre-Mantuan works, so the indication “canon” in the present discussion is more suggestive than literal, although Example 2.6 is a canon at the unison and octave.

128 Other examples of this type of imitation occur in the opening movement of the Concerto for 2 Violins and Cellos in G Minor Op. 3 #2 (and its earlier version as RV 578a), the main ritornello of the finale of the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Minor Op. 3 #8 (strict canonic passages), the opening movement of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major RV 370 (and its counterpart as the opening movement of the sinfonia to the opera
movements where the beginning of a melodic phrase serves as an *attacco* point of imitation between all of the voices, in a manner familiar from much Renaissance vocal and consort music.\(^{129}\)

Vivaldi’s three-voice imitations within four-part textures demonstrate his readiness to draw upon the viola as a component in a group of upper string parts set against (or accompanied by) the bass line.\(^{130}\) **Examples 2.7 and 2.8** illustrate this phenomenon.

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\(^{129}\) Definition from Talbot, op. cit., 35 (note 10), which references G.B. Martini, *Esemplare o saggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto fugato*, 2 vols. (Bologna, Lelio dalla Volpe, 1774-1775). Examples in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works include the opening movement of the Violin Concerto in C Major Op. 4 #7, the slow movement of the Violin Concerto in C Minor Op. 4 #10, the slow movement of the Violin Concerto in G Minor RV 319, the third movement, “Crucifixus,” of the *Credo* in E Minor RV 591 (with the strings paralleling the voices throughout this movement), and possibly the fifth movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor RV 355 (*olim* RV Anh. 107/107a). The descending scales in sixteenth notes imitated throughout the ensemble in measures 42-44 of the first movement from the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Minor Op. 3 #8 also share some affinity with the imitation in these works. The second movement (*Adagio*) of the Violin Concerto in F Major RV 292 is unusual for Vivaldi, in that it opens with three voices in rhythmic imitation (Vn Pr & Vn 1; Vn 2; Va) and then initiates a second series of imitations, adding, after some prolongation, the basso continuo line. Although the intervals and tonal areas are not strictly fugal or canonic, the combined gestures of repeated pitches (followed in some entries by a large descending leap) and dotted rhythms are enough to suggest three-voice imitation that repeats and grows into an imitative four-voice texture.

\(^{130}\) The alliance between the violins and violas for three-voice imitation is so strong that I have thus far found only two pre-Mantuan works where the sequence is Violin 1, Violin 2, and Bass – the opening of the ritornello from Decio’s aria from Act 2.ii of *Ottone in villa*, where the viola enters (playing free material) simultaneously with the basso continuo line, and the second fugal exposition in the finale of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 7 #4.
In both of these passages, boxes highlight the material that is set imitatively. The passage from RV 388 (Example 2.7) is built on imitation in the violin and viola parts, over an ostinato figure in the bass line. The melodic material combines a rising triadic arpeggio...
in eighth notes followed by a stepwise descending line in quarter notes, initiated by the first violin and solo violin parts in unison. The top-down sequence is typical for these passages, as is the fact that the viola entrance is curtailed in measure 13 in order to move to the new harmonic center on an E pedal point that underpins the syncopated gestures that begin on beat three of the measure.\footnote{The second movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 4 #12 (which is abbreviated, without a solo line, in the slow movement of the Sinfonia in C Major RV 113) follows this sequence of voices but presents an unusually complex situation. Not counting the two-voice imitation between the violas and second violins in the framing ritornello (discussed later in this chapter), the accompanying violins and violas spend a good portion of the movement (a set of variations on a six-measure theme) accompanying the solo violin with imitative exchanges of short melodic-rhythmic gestures. The order of the voices remains the same in each exchange, but different gestures are used for each of the first several variations: a descending two-note leap, an ascending two-note leap, an ascending leap in the first violins that is answered by descending leaps (second violins, imitated by violas) and three-note rising arpeggios, all of which are blended and overlapped into a denser texture by some additional notes that are not always imitated.} In this instance, Vivaldi, so fond of bold contrasts and sudden juxtapositions, also demonstrates his tremendous skill at effecting smooth transitions when desired. To achieve this, the first violin part in measure 11 actually outlines a different arpeggio than the second violins and violas – prolonging the dominant chord on F-sharp that ends the previous phrase while simultaneously introducing the rhythms and melodic profile of the new phrase.

In Example 2.8a, the three upper voices (formed by three pairs of unison parts) perform a descending triad in *note ribattute* with stretto imitation (shown by the boxes in Example 2.8a), initiated by the first and third violins on the downbeat of each measure. Once again, this is a suggestion of a canon rather than true canonic writing because the triads are modified as needed to accommodate changes to the vertical harmonies. For example, the second and fourth violins in measure 7 (extending to the downbeat of measure 8) play the triad E-B-A rather than E-B-G# because the latter would clash with A-major chord on the downbeat of measure 8. By the time the viola enters, it has to...
further modify the triad (now E-C#-A). Vivaldi’s scoring of this passage provides a
textural effect that highlights the falling triads and the sense of note ribattute – an effect
that here required engaging the violas and modifying the imitation to complete the triads.
For a passage that could easily have been written as a sequence of simple repeated triads
scored for upper strings over a steady bass line (as re-written in Example 2.8b), the use
of imitation allows for a much greater degree of interplay and, once again, treats the
violas as equal partners in the upper-string subgroup formed with the violins.\footnote{132}

The contrast between the scoring of three-voice imitation and two-voice imitation
in Vivaldi’s works with viola parts is evidence that he did not associate the viola
exclusively with either the bass line instruments or upper strings. Whereas the passages
of three-voice imitation tend to be scored for violins and violas over an independent bass
line, two-voice imitation can pair the viola with either the violins (singly or in unison) or
with the bass line. In the majority of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan passages with two-voice
imitation, the exchanges involve one of four options: 1) between the two violin parts, 2)
between a soloist (usually violin or voice) and an accompanying violin part, 3) between
the violins (a single part or two parts in unison) and the bass line, or 4) between a soloist
and the bass line. However, there are many exceptions in which the viola is featured.
\textbf{Examples 2.9} and \textbf{2.10} provide two passages, the first with the second violins and violas
in quasi-canonic imitation, and the second with violas and cellos in imitation.

\footnote{132 The hypothetical Example 2.8b is not far-fetched, as very similar passages occur quite frequently in
Vivaldi’s works, often as accompaniments to solo episodes and with a little more disjunct motion in the
bass line or with the bass instruments temporarily silent. See, for example, the passage beginning in
measure 31 of the first movement of the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Major Op. 3 #5.}
Example 2.9: Violin Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 4 #1, 1st mvt, ms. 7-10

In Example 2.9, the second violins introduce a three-note motive that is treated to stretto imitation by the violas, all framed by the bustling sixteenth-note figures in the first violins (joined by the principal violinist) and the leaping octaves of the bass line. Once again, Vivaldi’s skill at bridging phrases is evident in the way the second violins in measure 7 initiate the sixteenth-note figuration adopted by the first violins in measure 8,
with the result that the imitation between the second violins and violas that begins at the end of measure 7 is not clarified until the middle of measure 8. In the strictest sense, it is only the second and third pitches of each gesture that are literally imitated (at the octave), but the listener is given the sense of imitation, regardless of the fact that the intervals are necessarily adjusted to accommodate the shifting harmonies.\textsuperscript{133}

In Example 2.10, the violas initiate a series of imitative exchanges between the violas and the bass line.\textsuperscript{134} Although many examples of imitation between the viola and the bass line fall primarily within the categories of bass functions (specifically addressed in Chapter 3) and rhythmic imitation (treated in Chapter 4), this passage also belongs in a discussion of melodic content because the leaping octaves in the viola and bass lines form the most prominent motivic content of the main ritornello and return in numerous guises during the course of the movement.\textsuperscript{135} It is also a good example of a passage in which Vivaldi distributes melodic content between two different pairs of voices within his typical four-voice ritornello framework: one high pair (violins) and one low pair (violas and bass-line instruments), with chains of imitations in both pairs.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{133} Interestingly, the second pitch of each group in the viola part is different in the alternate version of this movement (as the first movement of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major RV 381), conveying less sense of pitch imitation that the version in Example 2.9. Rasch [“La famosa mano,” 99-100] has proposed that RV 381 was created after the published version (RV 383a), but it is tempting to think that the unisons between the viola and bass on the fourth beat of each bar in the version of RV 381 were replaced by harmonically richer and more contrapuntally interesting pitches when RV 381 was revised for publication as RV 383a.

\textsuperscript{134} The boxes are positioned to include the first, tied note, to point out the overlapping nature of these exchanges and to signal their motivic relationship to the opening measures of the movement.

\textsuperscript{135} While not exactly a case of an accompaniment figure that morphs into a melodic voice, the ease with which these leaping octaves transition between melodic and accompanying roles is a characteristic example of how Vivaldi’s music is a not-so-distant cousin to Charles Rosen’s description of “classical counterpoint.” See Charles Rosen, The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Expanded edition (New York: Norton, 1997), 117.

\textsuperscript{136} The viola is also grouped with the bass line instruments when two-voice imitations are made between the high and low pairs of voices. In these cases, the violins usually introduce an idea in parallel thirds,
**Example 2.10** can also be placed in a category of imitative exchanges where symmetrical units of melodic-rhythmic gestures are repeatedly exchanged between two voices. I refer to this phenomenon as “pendulum imitation,” where the gesture is tossed back and forth between two voices at a regular interval.\(^{137}\) **Example 2.11** represents a rare instance of pendulum imitation between violins and violas, as opposed to the far more common alternation of two violin sections or of violins and basso continuo.

Example 2.11: Violin Concerto in A Minor, Op. 3 #6, 3\(^{rd}\) mvt, ms. 15-19

In this instance, there are two melodic-rhythmic gestures (marked \(x\) and \(y\)) that are traded between the violins and violas from one measure to the next, all during the course of a

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\(^{137}\) This choice of terminology is inspired by Talbot’s term “pendulum exposition” for a fugal exposition that alternates symmetrically between two tonal poles without necessarily modulating to either. See Talbot, op. cit., 100. I use “pendulum imitation” merely to refer to symmetrical alternation, with or without tonal polarity.
falling secondary dominant harmonic sequence. All of these features, except for the
melodic role of the violas, are typical for Vivaldi’s use of pendulum imitation.  

Vivaldi may not have penned full-scale fugues on a regular basis, but imitative
devices form an important component of his style. This is already apparent in his earliest
works (including the trio sonatas Op. 1 and violin sonatas Op. 2) and there is no evidence
of a decline in the frequency of imitative textures as the 1710s progressed. Not only did
Vivaldi write full-scale fugues in sacred works believed to date from the years 1713-17,
but fugal textures are found in at least one aria from Armida (1718) and several important
fugal passages that were possibly written during Vivaldi’s residence in Mantua in the
closing years of the decade.  

Talbot has even argued that Vivaldi reached the pinnacle
of his interest in imitative textures, or at least of pure fugal writing, in the decade from
the second half of the 1720s to the first half of the 1730s.  

This lifelong interest, which
transcended genres and mediums, provided the viola with far more opportunities to
engage melodic material through imitation than one might expect from predominantly
homophony-oriented twentieth-century impressions of Vivaldi’s style. Indeed, our

138 Another example is the opening movement of the Violin Concerto in D Major Op 7 #5 where, in
measures 14 and 91, the violas and violins twice exchange (via imitation at the octave) a rising scalar
gesture in sixteenth notes before the gesture is entirely taken over by the violins. The exchanges in
Example 2.11 require the violas to make wide string crossings that are not required for the violin parts
(which merely alternate between the neighboring A- and E-strings). In measure 19, the leaps between the E
and F can be performed in first position (with leaps between the D- and C-strings, skipping over the G-
string) or in third position (limiting the figure to the G- and C-strings), but the final leap from the low F to
the A requires a skip over at least one string (from the C-string to a stopped A on the D-string) or possibly
over two strings (from the C-string to an open A-string).

139 Among other examples, many of the concertos that were eventually published in Op. 8 were likely
composed or revised in Mantua, including the remarkable Violin Concerto in D Major Op. 8 #11, which
combines fugue and ritornello form in both of its outer movements. For the dating of these works, see
Everett, The Four Seasons, 19-25.

140 Talbot, op. cit., 233.
increasingly sophisticated understanding of Vivaldi’s blend of monophonic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures allows us to see how this flexible handling of texture can alternately be used to strengthen or undermine hierarchical relationships between the voices of the ensemble. It is for that reason that Vivaldi could establish distinct roles for each part in one phrase and then switch roles or eliminate the differences altogether in a subsequent phrase. Such transmutability is what allows the violas, for example, to play in a ritornello where non-melodic roles are suddenly interrupted by a passage of canonic or fugal writing. Bolstered by a confident assumption that sufficient performers – in terms of technique and quantity – were likely to be at hand, Vivaldi did not shrink from drawing the violas into imitative textures when desired.

Independent Melodic Lines

Confidence in the skill of his performers would have also been a critical factor in one other aspect of Vivaldi’s orchestration of melodic material: a melodic line scored for a single ensemble part, regardless of how many performers play or sing it – what I place under the heading of the “independent melodic line” (IML). The IML appears in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan viola parts in two circumstances: as a contrapuntally independent interior voice with melodic interest, or as a principal melodic line. The former scenario is by far the more common, and this reflects a standard distinction between the use of violins and violas in music of Vivaldi’s day: violins are almost exclusively preferred for the principal melodic lines within the typical string ensemble. The feature

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141 As a single line, the violas also engage melodic material when the melodic material is heard in a bass line scored for the violas alone (discussed in Chapter 3) and in imitative textures.
that distinguishes Vivaldi’s music from the work of many of his contemporaries is his relatively higher frequency of passages where the violas have a contrapuntally independent and melodically noteworthy interior voice. These lines, which emerge locally within the context of an individual movement, are strong evidence that Vivaldi expected the same musicians who played seemingly non-descript and technically undemanding parts in certain passages to be sufficiently competent, at a minimum, to successfully perform an IML. If this was a routinely unrealistic expectation, Vivaldi could have altogether avoided writing an IML for the viola.\(^{142}\)

There is often a degree of subjectivity involved in determining what constitutes a “melodically interesting” line in the middle of an ensemble texture. While a distinct rhythmic profile is one important element, an IML marries this to familiar melodic figures to produce recognizable melodic-rhythmic gestures. Vivaldi often writes an IML for the viola in passages where a dense texture formed by multiple layers of melodic lines is woven over a harmonic sequence built over a secondary dominant progression, typically also involving several layers of rhythmic activity. Example 2.12 illustrates this type of scoring.\(^ {143}\)

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\(^{142}\) Vivaldi may have had difficulty avoiding this in some imitative textures if he was bent on writing for four or five imitative voices, since he typically only had four or five ensemble parts to draw from. However, there is no such doubt regarding non-imitative textures: Vivaldi could have chosen to minimize or avoid using an IML in the viola part if he found that players of sufficient skill were rare. See also the discussion of Example 2.11 above.

\(^{143}\) The Lund source of this concerto (S-L, Saml. Engelhart, N:r 426) has the viola part in this passage (and its recurrences) replaced by sustained notes (dotted half notes, some with ties). It is unknown whether this represents an earlier or alternate version penned by Vivaldi or someone else.
Example 2.12: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1\textsuperscript{st} mvt, ms. 13-21

The viola parts in this type of passage are comprised of melodic-rhythmic gestures that distinguish themselves from the surrounding texture while bearing some resemblance to gestures in other voices. The eighth-note arpeggios in the viola part of Example 2.12 are suggestive of the eighth-note arpeggios in the first violin part and yet the arpeggios in each voice maintain distinct vertical contours, rising and falling in different patterns. This is similar to a phenomenon in Example 2.5 (Op. 3 #7) above, in which the first six pitches of the viola parts – an anacrusis, a dactylic figure comprised of an eighth note plus two sixteenth notes, and an upward-leaping pair of eighth notes – can be interpreted as an inversion of the six pitches in the second and fourth violins that begins at the end of measure 40. However, the almost obsessive repetition of that gesture in the violas, scored for both viola parts in parallel thirds and rhythmically offset from the second and
fourth violin line, has a distinct profile that makes it possible to also interpret it as a separate melodic line.\textsuperscript{144}

There are, however, two instances when the violas play an IML that is clearly the primary source of melodic interest in a passage. The first occurs in the slow movement of the Concerto for 4 Violins and Cello in B Minor Op. 3 #10, where each series of full-ensemble chords is followed by two solo instruments (marked “solo”) playing a dotted figure in quasi-imitative fashion.

Example 2.13: Concerto for 4 Violins and Cello in B Minor, Op. 3 #10, 2\textsuperscript{nd} mvt, ms. 1-8

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\textsuperscript{144} Another interesting example occurs in the finale of the Cello Concerto in A Minor RV 420 (ms. 6-11 and two later passages), where the viola’s moderately distinctive motive (repeated over an extended secondary dominant progression) is derived from the neighbor-note motion of the opening measures of the bass line (which is paralleled by the viola). It is as if the viola retains a subtle trace of the neighbor-note gesture while the bass line switches to a scalar pattern during the second, predominantly contrasting unit of this opening ritornello period.
In this passage, the two viola parts form the second pair of solo voices (out of a total of three pairs). Vivaldi could have chosen to use violins instead, scoring the passage like the opening movement of the Concerto for 4 Violins in E Minor Op. 3 #4, since the violins are not otherwise occupied in measures 5-7 and the material fits well within the range of violins. By using violas instead, Vivaldi perhaps desired the effect of their unique timbre – the result makes the “solo” interjections more varied in timbre and more “orchestral” in their distribution between ensemble parts since, whether or not the indication “solo” implies that more violists play each part in the surrounding measures,

145 Interestingly, the passage in Op. 3 #4 (measures 9-22) uses a similar ascending scale in dotted rhythms, although it is scored there with a bassetto accompaniment (see Chapter 3) played by the two unison viola parts. Whereas the violins in Concerto 4 form a continuously revolving web of melodic gestures and sustained tones, the passage in Example 2.13 is interrupted by the chords scored for the full ensemble that probably encouraged Vivaldi to exploit the opportunity to distribute the melodic phrases across a wider spectrum of the ensemble forces – combining a sense of sharply contrasting textures with surprisingly varied orchestration of the melodic lines.
these two voices are the only melodic lines and they form a response to the pair of solo violins heard in measures 2-4.\footnote{146}

The other pre-Mantuan example of a prominent IML assigned to the violas is an astonishing and inventive passage during Ersilla’s arioso in Act 3.vi of Orando finto pazzo, where Vivaldi instructs the violinists (in addition to the violists) to play violas (“Tutti suonano le Violette”), with all three sections initially playing in unison, resulting in a single melodic line over the basses (“Bassi senza cembali”).\footnote{147} A variety of textures ensue throughout this arioso, although the expanded viola section tends towards divided, non-melodic accompaniments or parallel octaves with the bass line once the voice enters. Talbot has remarked that this scoring is quite appropriate for an underworld scene where the sorceress Ersilla performs incantations in her magical grotto, but one has to wonder whether it was specifically the timbre of the viola or the consort-like effect (on a massive scale) of scoring for the same string instrument in three parts that inspired Vivaldi’s scoring choice – a combination of these factors is likely.\footnote{148}

\footnote{146} If, as is often suggested, the indication “solo” is merely a cautionary note to inform the single performer that the part is very prominent, this further points to the melodic significance allotted to the violas in this passage. To the best of my knowledge, this is Vivaldi’s only melodic passage where the viola parts are marked “solo.” The absence of similar melodic passages scored for the violas, however, does not help settle the question of the proper meaning of the “solo” direction.

\footnote{147} The opening segment of this arioso – recitativo accompagnato sequence (beginning after three measures of deleted material) was apparently cut at some point in the history of the piece, although the widely spaced deletion strokes were Vivaldi’s normal way of directing a copyist to skip material that Vivaldi did not want to permanently delete. Even if this ritornello and the arioso that follows were never performed, it appears that the violinists may have still played violas in the accompanied recitative, which is notated with all parts in bass clef – there is no indication to cancel the instructions on fol. 125r until “Violini” are named at the start of the following “Coro.” A slight pause may have been needed to allow the violinists to switch instruments in preparation for this chorus. Regardless of whether the violinists ultimately played violas for any production of this opera, it is remarkable that Vivaldi at one point intended it.

\footnote{148} See Talbot, Vivaldi, 91, where the scene is erroneously identified as Act 2.vi.
There is at least a little evidence for a pre-existing tradition of using large numbers of violas to orchestrate underworld or magical scenes. However, Vivaldi’s example is the first one I’ve found to specifically request the participation of the violinists to make it happen in performance. Clive McClelland has recently noted that while trombones (often combined with cornets and bassoons) had been associated with underworld scenes, night scenes, and funeral scenes since the era of the Florentine *intermedii* and early operas, there appears to be a gap in their use for *ombra* scenes (i.e.,

149 Johann Mattheson, in *Das neu-eröffnete Orchester* (Hamburg: Mattheson, 1713), 283, notes that “now and again whole arias are composed with the Violetta in unison, which, because of the low compass of accompaniment, sounds very original and pleasant.” Cited and translated in Maurice W. Riley, *The History of the Viola* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Braun-Brumfield, 1980), 106; Riley also lists examples of arias from Hamburg operas by Keiser, Handel, Graupner, and Mattheson with one or two obbligato viola parts (some indicating solo players, others for multiple players in unison) during a variety of scenes, including those with supernatural implications (pp. 109-110, citing Andrew D. McCredie, *Instrumentarium and Instrumentation in the North German Baroque Opera*, Ph.D. dissertation (Hamburg Universität, 1964), 254-67). Hellmuth Wolff cites a few Venetian operas (by C. F. Pollaro, Sartorio, and P. A. Ziani) with arias featuring “violen” in place of violins; I have not seen the original sources and it is possible that some of these were intended for viol (i.e. da gamba), with the Italian designation “viola” referring to a viol. This is particularly likely in the case of the Act 2.ii ‘Adagio con viole’ from P. A. Ziani’s *Il Canduale* (1679) – given as Wolff’s example 65 – where the top part reaches up to a₂ and spends much time in third position on the modern viola; a treble viol is a more probable candidate for this part. See Hellmuth Christian Wolff, *Die venezianische Oper in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Musik und des Theaters im Zeitalter des Barock* (Berlin: Verlagsgesellschaft, 1937; reprinted with new foreword, Bologna: Forni, 1975), 52, 60, 99, 124. The obbligato “Violette Unisoni” that Wolff mentions (p. 99 n. 117) for one of Eucherio’s arias in Pollaro’s *Onorio in Roma* (1692) are much more likely to have been intended for true violas. Another precedent is Cleofe’s aria ‘Piangete, si, piangete’ from Handel’s oratorio *La Resurrezione* (Rome, 1708), in which the voice and basso continuo are joined by a third line for “Viole unis.” according to directions in the main autograph score and the performing score; the direction “colla Viola da Gamba” was probably added to the main autograph at a later date. See the edition and critical notes in Terence Best, ed., *Georg Friedrich Händel: La Resurrezione. Oratorio in Due Parti HWV 47*, Hallische Händel-Ausgabe: kritische Gesamtausgabe, i/3, ser. ed. Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2010). This is a nocturnal scene of lament upon the death of Jesus, which shares the notion of darkness (visual and spiritual) with the scene from Vivaldi’s *Orlando finto pazzo*. In addition to the precedents of melodic viola writing cited above, there are at least three further instances that have thus far attracted little attention. Alessandro Scarlatti’s opera *La caduta de’ Decemviri* (Naples, 1697) includes an aria for voice and basso continuo (Act 2.ii) with obbligato parts for “Violetta Sola” and “Violoncello [Solo]”. The same composer’s *Eraclea* (Naples, 1700) features an aria (Act 1, for Flavia) scored for two violins, two violas, and basso continuo, with highly active melodic parts for the violas. The E minor key, *Adagio* character, and text (beginning “A questo nuovo affano tutta s’abbandonò l’anima mia”) of the latter aria share similarities with the A-section (marked *Andante*) of Mandane’s aria from Act 1.vii of Aldrovandini’s *Semiramide* (Genoa, 1701), which is scored for “Viole Unisone”, voice, and basso continuo; the highly contrasted B-section adds parts for violins. The text of the Aldrovandini begins “Lontanda la mia pena già sento una catena che va legando il Cor”.

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There is at least a little evidence for a pre-existing tradition of using large numbers of violas to orchestrate underworld or magical scenes. However, Vivaldi’s example is the first one I’ve found to specifically request the participation of the violinists to make it happen in performance. Clive McClelland has recently noted that while trombones (often combined with cornets and bassoons) had been associated with underworld scenes, night scenes, and funeral scenes since the era of the Florentine *intermedii* and early operas, there appears to be a gap in their use for *ombra* scenes (i.e.,
supernatural and magic scenes) in operas between the late seventeenth century and the 1760s. Indeed, trombones are not required for any of Vivaldi’s surviving operas; for Ersilla’s magic scene, Vivaldi may have used the three-part viola section to allude either to a three-part trombone ensemble or a gamba consort.

Although relatively uncommon, the passages of IML in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan viola parts tend to occur in instrumental works and are focused in the earliest layers of Vivaldi’s compositional activity – they are much less common in vocal works and in pieces likely written between 1715 and 1718. The disparity may be linked to the apparent loss of most of Vivaldi’s earliest vocal works, while the decreased use of the IML in viola parts over time may be a by-product of an increase in other scoring combinations or a desire to explore other roles for the violas. Nevertheless, in publishing the concertos of Op. 3 and Op. 4, both of which contain important examples of the IML scored for violas, Vivaldi boldly indicated his confidence in the availability of skilled players and this encouraged him to write non-imitative melodic lines for the viola that suited his insertion of contrapuntal elements within predominantly homophonic works.

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151 The ‘Trombon[i] da Caccia’ in Orlando finto pazzo and the Concerto in F Major RV 574 are probably a pair of horns identified with reference to Roman-Neapolitan nomenclature, which may be a clue to the identity of the original performers. See the entry for “Trombone da Caccia” in Talbot, The Vivaldi Compendium, 187-88. The parts correspond to the range, stylistic parameters, and technical demands found in Vivaldi’s other horn parts.

152 The participation of the viola in imitative textures in works from 1718 and beyond, along with numerous other functions discussed in later chapters, argues against the thought that Vivaldi gradually became less confident that skilled violists were available to play melodic and rhythmically independent lines.
Conclusion

The process of scoring the tremendous variety of textures and sonorities in Vivaldi’s works necessarily means that the many voices of his ensemble engage in multiple forms of melodic interaction. As a result, the viola is frequently used to score melodic lines in a host of monophonic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures, even though only a tiny portion of his viola parts contain passages with fully independent melodic content. Indeed, almost every pre-Mantuan work contains at least a few measures of melodic material scored for the viola alone or in combination with other instrumental parts.

The presence of the viola as a scoring resource, for instance, allowed Vivaldi to write PML at the interval of the third or sixth even when both violin parts were in unison. In multi-voice relays and quasi-canonic imitations, Vivaldi drew upon the viola to expand his options for the total number of participating voices and the sequence of entrances; those of his contemporaries and successors who wrote for string ensembles without a viola part were limited to two- or three-voice exchanges and had fewer options for altering their order of entrance. With more variety at his disposal, Vivaldi could use the same devices more extensively before running the risk of having them become too predictable.

The relative brevity of most melodic passages in his viola parts is actually the strongest testament to his flexible use of the viola – the ease with which the violas transition between melodic and non-melodic roles within the same work demonstrates an approach to orchestration that treats the viola as a flexible resource. As an important
component of his bold and idiosyncratic style, Vivaldi’s orchestration was thus well suited to his blend of differing textures. The melodic content of his viola parts is, ultimately, a product of the intersection of an inventive approach to orchestration, a flexible manipulation of the density of linear textures, and confidence in the availability of skilled performers for most performances of these works.
Chapter 3: Bass Functions

Among the most striking features of Vivaldi’s brilliant orchestral style is the remarkable variety of ways in which his viola parts engage the bass, whether alone or in combination with other parts. This chapter details each method in turn, exploring the factors that motivated Vivaldi to use a given scoring technique. Scholars have frequently sought practical explanations to account for his methods of scoring bass lines, but a closer examination of Vivaldi’s works reveals several aesthetic motivations. Vivaldi may not have been the originator of the scorings under discussion here, but he appears to have taken over some of the most progressive ideas in orchestration and, in a few cases, greatly expanded the scope of a particular technique. In the process, he created a role for the viola that placed it on much more equal terms with other ensemble instruments than many of Vivaldi’s immediate successors.

Vivaldi used the viola, perhaps more than anyone before him, to vary the sonority and timbre of his bass lines. His achievement is best understood by contrasting the most common modes of scoring bass lines in the early eighteenth century with some of the more progressive techniques exploited by Vivaldi and his contemporaries.

Fundamentally, the orchestration of a bass line involves two principal factors: the choice of register and the choice of instrumentation. This is because a line can function as a bass line without occupying the bass register (which in Vivaldi’s day typically spanned from F to c1 with extensions in both directions) and, while the compass of a particular instrument may impose limits on the register of a bass line, there are often several instruments that can be chosen to play in a particular register.
In the early eighteenth century, the bass line was typically placed in the bass register and the most common scoring of a bass line was to employ one or more bass-register instruments, often (but not always) combining sustaining instruments (e.g., one or more cellos or a bassoon) with the left hand of a keyboard instrument (harpsichord or organ) and/or various plucked instruments (lute, theorbo, etc.). Under the most typical circumstances, these instruments played essentially the same line in unison – both rhythmic and pitch unison (with some flexibility, perhaps, for the plucked instruments or for keyboard instruments in passages with rapidly reiterated pitches) – a situation that is apparent in the score, where the bass line looks as if it was intended for a single instrument. One or more contrabass-register instruments were often added without indication in the score (such as a large violone in contrabass register), usually playing the same notes but sounding an octave lower than the bass-register instruments, thus giving a deeper sound to the bass line than is visually apparent from the score. To use the

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153 Either class of instrument could be subtracted from the group by a direction such as “senza cembalo” or “organo solo”.

154 The meaning of the term violone has been a source of much debate; it does not appear to have universally signified a single instrument. See the summary by Marc Vanscheeuwijck, “Violoncello and Violone,” in *A Performer’s Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. by Stewart Carter, rev. and expanded by Jeffery Kite-Powell (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2012), 238-242. Some writers and composers, such as Janovka (2/1715), Eisel (1738), Schütz, and Bach distinguished between a violone and a violone grosso, the latter of which was tuned to a contrabass register more akin to the modern double bass than the violoncello or bass gamba. For Muffat (1698), Brossard (1703), Prelleur (1731), Pepusch (c. 1731), and later writers such as Leopold Mozart (1756) and Koch (1802), the term violone was synonymous with the double bass. On all of these writers, see Thorald Borgir, Stephen Bonta, and Alfred Planovsky, “Violone,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie (New York and London: MacMillan, 2001), 26: 766-67. François Raguenet (*Paradis des Italiens et des Français*, 105-6) also noted that the Italian orchestras he had encountered used basses that were deeper, louder, and larger than the lowest bowed string instruments in French orchestras. To the best of my knowledge, Vivaldi and his Venetian contemporaries did not distinguish between and violone and violone grosso; the presence of a 16’ instrument appears likely in most cases, as there are many passages where the bass line appears to cross above the inner voices, resulting in unorthodox six-four chords unless a 16’ instrument is also playing the bass line. Since many of Vivaldi’s concertos are known to have been performed between the acts of operas, in churches, and in other settings using larger ensembles, it is also reasonable to assume the use of a 16’ instrument to strengthen the tone of the bass line, as strongly
analogy of organ registration introduced in the previous chapter, the bass line was thus normally written in score as if it was a single line played on a single stop at 8’ pitch; in practice, however, there could be any combination of 8’ stops (cello, bassoon, harpsichord bass, continuo organ bass, etc.), which could be coupled to a 16’ stop (violone, contrabassoon, etc.). In this way, both the organ and the orchestra translated the single bass line in the score into a variety of timbres involving multiple, simultaneous registers.

Vivaldi’s usual mode of bass-line registration is at the 8’ pitch level, roughly corresponding to the normal range of the male bass voice, with doubling at the 16’ pitch level; this is what I call his “default bass registration.” While Vivaldi rarely specifies that a 16’ instrument is part of the basso continuo group, its general presence is implied in the occasional passages where he requests the 16’ instruments to fall silent – a situation that I refer to as his “simplified default bass registration.”\footnote{For example, in Act 1.xv (Act 1.xvi in the autograph score) of L’incoronazione di Dario (aria ‘Affetti del cor’) Vivaldi specifies that the bass line is to be played by “Viol:a [violetta] Viol:Io [violoncello], et un solo Cembalo senz’altri B: [bassi]” - i.e., viola, cello, and one harpsichord without other basses. This implies that, while 4’ and 8’ instruments are included, any 16’ instruments are excluded, otherwise there would have been no need to mention the cello. If Vivaldi had wanted a single cello, his customary indication was ‘1 viol:Io solo’, as occurs later during the vocal period of the aria. If, for example, he had wished to exclude only the bassoon, he could have said “Viol:a, Bassi et un solo Cembalo senza Fagotto”. Passages where the bass line is played at the 16’ pitch without 8’ doubling, such as Niceno’s aria “Non lusinghi il core amante” (Act 2.xix in the libretto) in L’incoronazione di Dario, can be said to feature “contrabass registration.”} Thus, within any given mode of

registration, the options for instrumentation are limited only by the compatibility of the practical range of an instrument and the ambitus of the bass line.\textsuperscript{156}

When Vivaldi wanted to further vary the scoring and registration of the bass line, he often turned to non-bass-register instruments – instruments that might be considered to correspond to tenor, alto, or soprano registers. To be sure, he could also omit the bass line altogether, allowing it to be implied by the harmonic consequences of other lines – a phenomenon most common in brief duet passages, such as between two solo violins or soprano voice and solo flute.\textsuperscript{157} More often, though, he drew other ensemble parts, especially the viola, into the mix, effectively adding 4’ stops to his options for setting a bass line.

There are three principal ways that Vivaldi drew upon non-bass-register instruments for the bass line. Vivaldi often added the non-bass instruments (usually violins or violas) to the bass line, creating parts that travel in parallel motion while retaining the underlying elements of his default bass registration. To refer once again to the analogy of organ registration, this is similar to coupling higher-register stops to the bass line, creating a more complex mixture. This is what I call “parallel bass” writing

\textsuperscript{156} “Practical range” here denotes the portion of an instrument’s range that the composer considers to be desirable for use, even if other notes are theoretical available on that instrument. This can be affected by the technical difficulty of sounding certain notes, the limits of the technical proficiency of an individual performer (when the piece is written with a specific performer in mind), the mechanical characteristics of a particular instrument (in an era where standardization between instruments was not the norm), and non-uniformities of timbre across an instrument’s range. Talbot is among those who has commented upon Vivaldi’s flexible approach to scoring bass lines, which he suggests is inspired by an interest in thinning the texture via “the removal of doubling instruments normally present.” See Talbot, \textit{Vivaldi}, 90; and Walter Kolneder, \textit{Performance Practices in Vivaldi}, trans. from the German by Anne de Dadelsen (Winterthur: Amadeus, 1979), 69-85.

\textsuperscript{157} This happens numerous times in Vivaldi’s own concerti for two solo violins, two oboes, or two trumpets, as well as in arias by Keiser and Handel, to name but a few examples.
(PB), regardless of the interval of parallelism (unison, thirds, octaves, tenths, etc.) between the bass-register and non-bass-register instruments.\textsuperscript{158}

In other cases, Vivaldi silenced the bass-register instruments and transferred the bass line exclusively to non-bass-register instruments, resulting in what is often referred to as “bassetto” writing. This would be similar to playing the bass line on a 4’ organ stop without 8’ or 16’ doubling. Vivaldi also employed what I call the “bass-bassetto compound line,” which refers to a variety of situations where default bass and bassetto modes of registration are heard in alternation. These range from bassetto passages with brief default bass interjections to hocket-like exchanges between default bass and bassetto registral modes.

While the parallel bass, bassetto, and bass-bassetto scoring techniques were not entirely new when Vivaldi began his career as a composer, many of Vivaldi’s fellow composers were much less eager to exploit their sonic potential. As a result, these devices, all of which Vivaldi used fairly often, even in his pre-Mantuan works, are important markers of Vivaldi as a progressive orchestrator.

Vivaldi’s innovative thinking is particularly evident through his tendency to assign great prominence to the viola when using some of these techniques, especially the bassetto. Very few composers before Vivaldi opened a concerto or sinfonia movement with a bassetto scored for violas alone as Vivaldi did in the first movement of the Concerto in B Minor Op. 3 #10 and the finale of the Violin Concerto in F Major RV

\textsuperscript{158} While a case could be made for using the term “col basso” writing (drawing upon one of the notational abbreviations frequently employed in scores of this period), I have decided against it because I have seen Vivaldi use it only when referring to parallel motion in octaves. This direction, as used by Vivaldi, is therefore too narrow a term for the broader concept under discussion here. I prefer to use a new term in order to avoid misunderstandings about Vivaldi’s use of the direction “col basso” (and similar directions).
Similarly, only a handful of Vivaldi’s contemporaries partnered the viola (whether singularly or as a multiple players sharing a part) with solo violins to replace the cello in a trio-sonata-like texture as happens in several concertos from Op. 3. Using the viola to perform these bass functions gives it a distinct role and, especially in bassetto passages where the viola replaces the bass instruments, identifies the viola as a viable – even desirable – alternative to the using the basso continuo. Further, the interplay afforded by bass-bassetto compound lines and certain types of bassetto passages permits the viola to participate in dialogue with other parts rather than being restricted to a single plane within the ensemble texture.

The importance of the viola becomes apparent in the following closer examination of Vivaldi’s handling of what could be called “modified bass techniques” (parallel bass, bassetto, and bass-bassetto compound line). This analysis demonstrates the ways in which Vivaldi’s orchestration of these bass lines differed from the approaches used by some of his contemporaries and the degree to which aesthetic concerns provide a more plausible explanation of his motivations than purely practical matters. The discussion also reveals several important generic distinctions in his use of these special scorings – especially between purely instrumental works and works with voices. As we shall see, all three of these scoring techniques were often used to highlight specific motives and harmonic ideas, and this deliberate use of orchestration to mark off

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159 One exception is the slow movement of Albinoni’s Concerto in G Minor Op. 5 #11 (publ. 1707), which begins with a cello solo accompanied by two viola parts.

160 One example is in the first movement of the sinfonia to Aldrovandini’s Cesare in Alessandria (Naples, 1699). Wolff cites the use of the viola as a bassetto accompaniment to a concertante violin in Alessandro Scarlatti’s Le nozze col nemico (Naples, 1695 as Le nozze con l’inimico). See Wolff, Die venezianische Oper, 99 (n. 117). The surviving score of the opera actually stems from the Florentine revival of 1702.
special material is further evidence of the importance of Vivaldi’s sensitivity to orchestration and its role in the overall formation of his style.

**Vivaldi and the Parallel Bass Technique**

Parallel bass writing, while not found in every work, spans Vivaldi’s entire earlier output, from the early cello concertos RV 402, 416, 420 (all by c. 1708-9) and the Concerto *in due cori* RV 585 (1708/9) to the opera *Armida al campo d’Egitto* RV 699 (1718). Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan parallel bass passages tend to be brief, as one would expect in works that generally pre-date the widespread uses of the parallel bass by many composers of the 1720s and later. Nevertheless, Vivaldi’s early uses of the parallel bass already demonstrate a special awareness of the sonic capabilities of the device, and he may have been among the first composers to use parallel bass scoring for an entire movement.

Vivaldi employed three varieties of the parallel bass technique, which are differentiated by the choice of interval: 1) unison parallel, 2) octave parallels and 3) parallels between different pitch classes. The term “vertically elaborated bass” (VEB) can refer to the latter two categories, where the single bass line acquires further layers at higher pitch levels. These types are not necessarily interchangeable, as is often assumed, and Vivaldi used each to achieve a specific sound effect.

The simplest type of parallel bass passage is the unison parallel bass, where the bass line is scored for bass and non-bass instruments in unison. This configuration was used rarely in the pre-Mantuan works, and only for a measure or two at a time. This is
likely due to the fact that most of Vivaldi’s bass parts throughout his career cross below the practical range of non-bass instruments (especially the violins).

Octave parallels (whether a single octave or, more rarely, multiple octaves between parts) retain the harmonic simplicity of unison parallels but distribute a bass line across multiple registers simultaneously. Thus, the octave separation allows non-bass instruments to parallel the bass line even when the latter goes below the compass of the non-bass instruments. One benefit of this, as seen in Example 3.1, is that the effects of parallel bass scoring can be retained while preserving the continuity of linear motion.

Example 3.1: *Arsilda*, Act 2.iii Initial Setting of ‘Và superbo’, ms. 6-12

In this example, asterisks mark the notes in the bass part that would require the viola to descend below its compass had it been directed to play in unison with the continuo line rather than in parallel octaves. If the passage had begun with those parts in unison, some kind of deviation would have been necessary beginning in measure 10, which might have weakened the strong sequential repetition of the triadic figure in the bass line.

There are cases of parallel octave writing where an isolated note still exceeds the compass of the non-bass instrument. In these instances, the usual practice is merely to sound the note at the lowest available octave on the non-bass instrument. In other words,
the pitch class is retained, but strict parallelism is momentarily suspended. This minor deviation from true parallelism can be referred to as an octave compression of the upper component voice.

Example 3.2: Violin Concerto in C Major, Op. 8 #6, 2nd mvt, ms. 9-11 (score compiled from partbooks as printed by La Cène, 1725)

In Example 3.2, the bass descends to a low F-sharp and, while the viola (paralleling an octave higher) can follow, the F-sharp below middle C is outside the compass of the violins. Instead, the latter players must either omit the notes or, as specified in this example, play the lowest F-sharp within the violin’s compass.

Many composers, including Vivaldi, often did not write out the notes of the upper components of a parallel bass when octaves were involved. Instead, they used a variety of methods for supplying directions specifically to a copyist, with the understanding that the copyist would in turn deduce the necessary pitches when producing parts for

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161 While the work was published in 1725, Paul Everett has hypothesized that it was likely completed by c. 1720 at the latest. See Everett, *The Four Seasons*, 23. The absence of concordant sources for this particular concerto makes it difficult to ascertain whether it was written before, during, or slightly after Vivaldi’s time in Mantua. While not considered pre-Mantuan for the present essay, it has been chosen here because it provides an excellent and widely available illustration of the issue of octave compression.
performance. If the upper voice or voices are assigned their own stave in the score, the composer might provide a bass clef in those parts and, perhaps after indicating the first pitch or two of the passage, add a direction such as “col Basso” or “sempre con il Basso” while leaving the remainder of the stave void until the parallel bass passage is concluded. If the upper component is not assigned a separate stave (as often happens when parallel bass scoring is used for an entire movement), the composer typically adds “Violette col Basso” or a similar comment to the bass line to indicate how the upper component should be derived from the notated bass line. Since the majority of these passages are too low to fit the compass of the instruments assigned to the upper component, it is assumed that parallel octaves are intended between the notated and derived voices unless otherwise directed (e.g., by a direction such as “alla bassa” or through the provision of a few pitches at the beginning of the passage that clearly indicate a unison parallel). If a particular note was still too low, octave compression needed to be applied. For example, the sources available to the La Cène firm in Amsterdam for the passage in Example 3.2 may have appeared as follows:

162 Copyists occasionally transferred the bass line literally (i.e., in the bass clef) into the violin and viola parts during these passages, leaving to the performer the task of selecting the appropriate octave and making any necessary changes to fit the compass of the instrument. See, for example, the opening measures of the heavily water-damaged parts for the Violin Concerto in D Major RV 212 in the Dresden library (D-DI), shelf mark Mus. 2389-O-74.

163 In the first movement of the sinfonia to the opera Griselda, Vivaldi leaves the viola stave blank and uses a bass clef and “B.” [=”col Basso”] to indicate parallel octaves between the viola and bass lines in measures 45-48 but switches to alto clef and a written-out viola part in the middle of measure 48 to indicate parallel lines at the unison. See Antonio Vivaldi: La Griselda, facsimile edition with introduction by Howard Mayer Brown, Italian Opera 1640-1770 (New York and London: Garland, 1978). On the interpretation of Vivaldi’s abbreviations for paralleling the bass line, see Ryom, Les Manuscrits, 178-80; and Talbot, The Vivaldi Compendium, 21, entries for “All’alta” and “Alla bassa.”
Example 3.3: Violin Concerto in C Major, Op. 8 #6, 2\textsuperscript{nd} mvt, ms. 9-11 (as it might have appeared in La Cène’s exemplar)

It was then left to La Cène or his staff to translate Vivaldi’s intentions when preparing each partbook.\textsuperscript{164}

The most complex parallel bass passages involve the use of different pitch classes. As with vertically elaborated melodies (i.e., parallel melodic lines), this technique resembles a harmonic coloring of the bass line akin to the effect of using an organ mixture.\textsuperscript{165} The following example shows Vivaldi using parallel thirds between the viola and bass parts to execute a rhythmically active descending sequential gesture.

\textsuperscript{164} Eleanor Selfridge-Field’s widely accessible edition of the Op. 8 concerti prints this same passage with impossibly low F-sharps for the violins, even though the only source of the concerto is the (correctly interpreted) edition by La Cène. See Antonio Vivaldi, “The Four Seasons” and Other Violin Concertos in Full Score: Opus 8, Complete, ed. Eleanor Selfridge-Field (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 103-4. There are grounds for questioning whether Vivaldi’s publishers always accurately interpreted such abbreviations, as witnessed by some unattainable notes and unusual textures (for Vivaldi) printed in the original edition of the Op. 6 concerti and several works that first appeared in Dutch anthologies. Some of these passages are treated, later in this chapter, in the discussion of Vivaldi’s bassetto passages.

\textsuperscript{165} It should be observed that, unlike on an organ, the quality of the interval can be altered to respond to the local tonal or modal environment. Whereas coupled organ pipes have a fixed interval between them, parallel orchestral parts can, for example, alternate between major tenths and minor tenths.
Example 3.4: *Laudate pueri* in C Minor, RV 600, 10\(^{th}\) mvt, ms. 45-48

The components of the parallel bass in passages such as this were probably always written out in full in the composer’s score. If a non-bass instrument was at risk of descending too low or too high, the composer typically switched to a different parallel interval (such as from parallel thirds to parallel tenths).


In Example 3.5, the viola and bass travel in parallel thirds until just before the bass line descends too low for the viola to follow (marked here with a box). By switching to parallel tenths, Vivaldi is able to maintain a very similar harmonic profile for the bass line and the sense of two voices travelling in parallel as they descend over a minor sixth, even though this requires him to relinquish the close vertical proximity of the viola and bass in the first measure of this passage.
A familiar issue emerges from Vivaldi’s application of all three types of parallel bass writing: he preferred to orchestrate purely instrumental works differently than works with voices, and these were further distinguished by different approaches to solo episodes and ritornello periods. In other words, Vivaldi weighed the harmonic complexity of each type of parallelism together with the timbre (instrumental or vocal) and large-scale structural function of a passage when choosing where to deploy the parallel bass. Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan vocal works are more likely to use the parallel bass technique during vocal periods (whether solo or, as in the outer movements of the Credo RV 591, during choral movements), while the majority of the parallel bass passages in instrumental works tend to occur in ritornellos. The intervals favored for the instrumental ritornellos are typically those involving different pitch classes (usually parallel tenths or thirds), whereas many of the vocal movements use parallel octaves, especially if parallel bass writing occurs while one or more voices is singing. Vivaldi apparently favored one type of color in ritornellos and one that was less harmonically complex when accompanying vocal solos. Moreover, he does not appear to have been fond of either during solo episodes in instrumental works.

The same divide between vocal and instrumental works is also apparent in the sixteen distinct movements – a tiny fraction of his pre-Mantuan output – in which Vivaldi used parallel bass scoring for all or most of the movement.166 Only one of these

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166 These works are: the concertos Op. 7 #10/ii, Op. 8 #5/ii, the Credo RV 591/i (which recurs as the fourth movement of the same work), the fifth movement of the Laudate pueri RV 600, the Laetatus sum RV 607, the fourth movement of the Nisi Dominus RV 608, and numbers from Orlando finto pazzo (the Act 2.xiii aria), Arsilda, regina di Ponto (the Act 1.xiv aria, the vocal quartet from Act 2.vi, the second discarded aria from Act 2.xiii, and the arias from Act 3.iii and Act 3.vii), L’incoronazione di Dario (the arias from Act 2.iv and Act 2.v), Tietebgera (the aria from Act 3.xi), and Armida al campo d’Egitto (the aria from Act 3.iv). As noted earlier, there are often FEPM passages that blur distinctions between what constitutes
movements is in an instrumental work and, with the exceptions of fluctuating parallelisms in the fifth movement of RV 600 and the fourth movement of RV 608, these involve parallel octaves between the components of the parallel bass.

In addition to revealing Vivaldi’s tendency to favor parallel octaves when accompanying vocal periods and different pitch classes for parallel bass writing in ritornello passages of his instrumental works, a survey of the pre-Mantuan parallel bass writing shows that his fast movements harbor more parallel bass passages than slow movements.\textsuperscript{167} The best explanation for the higher frequency of parallel bass writing in fast movements is that Vivaldi used the technique to emphasize certain kinds of ideas in the bass line that occur with far less frequency in slow movements. We see how Vivaldi uses scoring to highlight a bass line gesture in the following passage:

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{167} There are some exceptions, including slow movements from Op. 3 #2 (the revised, published version), Op. 7 #10, Op. 8 #5, RV 112, RV 146, RV 175 (first movement), and several arias.
Example 3.6: Violin Concerto in E-flat Major, Op. 8 #5, 1st mvt, ms. 7-9

In the opening ritornello of the first movement of the Violin Concerto E-flat Major RV 253 (later published as “La Tempesta di Mare” Op. 8 #5), Vivaldi introduces a rising octave figure in the bass line (indicated with a box in Example 3.6) that is among the few ascending scalar ideas to oppose the proliferation of descending scales in this movement. Vivaldi chooses to orchestrate this with violas in parallel tenths over the bass line, drawing attention to the motive by reinforcing it through repetition and augmented scoring and simplifying the contrapuntal density of the passage.¹⁶⁸ This figure is also heard later in the second violins and solo violin, but it is somewhat obscured in both cases – by a simultaneous, descending scale in the first violins or by elaborate variation in the solo violin. The only time it returns in the bass line is in the final appearance of the ritornello, where it is scored as in Example 3.6 (ms. 87-89). This shows that Vivaldi was using scoring here as a means to highlight a distinctive idea within the bass line.

Many similar examples of parallel bass writing coincide with special types of bass-lines that Vivaldi may have wanted to emphasize by allocating additional

¹⁶⁸ Observe, too, that the four eighth notes following the figure are not set as parallel bass, suggesting that they are rather less important than the scalar idea.
instruments to increase the amplitude of the line – descending tetrachords, repetition of motives from the treble line, attractive rhythmic and melodic gestures, etc. Especially in several of the slightly later concertos (those likely dating from the mid-1710s), such bass gestures are often repeated many times in succession to accompany a particular ritornello segment that tends to recur throughout the movement and that may furnish material (albeit differently scored) for the accompaniment of solo episodes.

These sorts of motives also occur in slow movements, but Vivaldi’s preferred approaches to writing and scoring slow movements during this period tended to minimize opportunities for parallel bass writing. The repetition of ideas from the treble line of slow movements, for example, is often reserved for imitative exchanges in passages involving only a soloist and basso continuo – passages where there is already sufficient emphasis on the bass line through the absence of inner voice parts. The accompaniments of Vivaldi’s slow movements from this period typically involve less motivic variety than his fast movements, with melodic-rhythmic gestures often used repetitively to form a backdrop throughout an entire slow movement, eliminating the need to momentarily highlight a particular accompanying voice.169 Even if a contrasting gesture emerges during the course of a slow movement, parallel bass writing was not a preferred means to

169 In several cases, an FEPM frame (see Chapter 2) introduces the melodic-rhythmic gestures that later form the backdrop for the soloist during the central portion of the movement. A classic example is the second movement of the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Minor Op. 3 #8. Another common situation, found in the second movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 4 #3, involves a full-ensemble opening passage that introduces the basic rhythmic gestures and metrical definitions that pervade the entire movement.
highlight the contrast because Vivaldi’s earlier slow movements generally featured scorings and textures that were less suitable for parallel bass writing.\textsuperscript{170}

The viola was Vivaldi’s favored non-bass-register instrument to parallel the bass line, regardless of which interval relationship is used. Already in his earliest surviving orchestral and vocal-orchestral works, the majority of parallel bass passages are scored for viola and continuo instruments and this scoring remains predominant right up through Vivaldi’s move to Mantua. During this entire period, one or both violin sections may join the viola, typically in unison. Only on rare occasions do one or more violin parts parallel the bass without the participation of the viola.\textsuperscript{171} This preference is at least partially due to the normal range of the viola and the similar tunings of the viola and cello: since the viola is tuned the same, pitched an octave higher, as the most common tuning of the cello, it can (in theory) play the same part an octave higher without alterations. As noted earlier, when the violins are drawn into a parallel bass passage, they are more likely to need to alter the line when it would otherwise require them to descend below the pitch g.

All of the trends and patterns discussed herein were probably manifest in Vivaldi’s earliest orchestral and vocal-orchestral works and remained fairly consistent up through the spring of 1718. For example, while Vivaldi’s earliest surviving opera, \textit{Ottone in villa} (1713), does not contain any movements with parallel bass scoring throughout,

\textsuperscript{170} Such as: soloist and basso continuo only, bassetto in place of default bass mode, ensemble chords that punctuate solo passages, and multi-layered rhythmic and contrapuntal textures involving all available independent parts.

\textsuperscript{171} Wind instruments are seldom explicitly involved in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan parallel bass writing; the main exceptions are the bassoon (in the third movements of RV 571 and 574) and horns (the third movement of RV 574). This does not count the likeliness of an unspecified bassoon participating in other cases, albeit as a bass instrument already within in the continuo group.
one such movement occurs in *Orlando finto pazzo* (1714) and aside from a higher
frequency in *Arsilda, regina di Ponto* (1716), the remaining pre-Mantuan operas return to
a rate of one or two similar movements. Whether or not the actual number of parallel
bass passages increased in the years immediately prior to Vivaldi’s departure for Mantua,
there is a sense that his use of parallel bass writing in the mid-1710s was more prominent
than in his earliest works. Many movements from the operas and (perhaps) the sacred
vocal works of 1716-18 make more extended use of the device; in some of these works
parallel bass writing is used for most of the A- or B-section of a da capo aria, or it may
be employed during the vocal periods but not during ritornellos or ripieno passages
interjected between vocal phrases. Similarly, there is a tendency to link parallel bass
writing with certain repetitive bass-line ideas in the concertos published as Opp. 6 and 7
as well as a few of the unpublished concertos that may date from the mid-1710s. In
several of these concertos, this occurs in the ritornello cell that opens the movement, a
prominent position rarely allotted to parallel bass writing in Vivaldi earliest concertos.

These changes are rather subtle and do not suggest a sudden shift in Vivaldi’s
approach to the parallel bass technique. They do, however, signal that, in the years
leading up to his departure for Mantua, the parallel bass concept became an integral part
of his personal idiom in a variety of styles, genres, and contexts. By the spring of 1718,

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172 While parallel bass writing is absent from the *Stabat Mater* of 1712, the presence of the technique in
several of Vivaldi’s instrumental works believed to date from the period 1708-11 suggests that the parallel
bass may have been used at least sparingly in the lost scores of the serenata *Le Gare del dovere* RV 688
(Rovigo, 1708) and Vivaldi’s contributions to Girolamo Polani’s opera *Creso tolto a le fiamme* RV Anh.
138 (Venice, 1705). On the latter, see Beth Glixon and Micky White, “*Creso tolto a le fiamme*: Girolamo
Polani, Antonio Vivaldi and Opera Production at the Teatro S. Angelo, 1705-1706,” *Studi vivaldiani* 8

173 See, for example, the third movements of the concertos Op. 6 #4, Op. 6 #6, and RV 328, or the first
the parallel bass technique was only one of many options Vivaldi had at his disposal for scoring a bass line and the viola was his preferred non-bass instrument for this orchestration technique.

Re-assessing the value of Parallel Bass Technique

The parallel bass technique, especially the use of parallel octaves, has been the subject of criticism by commentators in the centuries after Vivaldi, especially in discussions of mid-eighteenth-century music.\(^{174}\) These discussions tend to revolve around notions that parallel bass scoring is merely a compositional and notational expedient, a contingency plan for situations where players of certain parts (especially the viola) might not be available, or a sign of uncertainty over how to make effective use of orchestral resources.\(^{175}\) The resulting texture has often troubled modern writers, who either find fault with passages where the upper component of the bass line crosses above

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\(^{175}\) Jack Westrup is among the few to explicitly argue against Berlioz’s claim that parallel bass scoring was used to accommodate violists of limited proficiency. Westrup argues that “The reason for treating the violas in this way [unison or parallel with the bass] can hardly be the alleged incapacity of viola players, since they were expected to be as nimble as the other strings.” See Jack Westrup, “Instruments and Orchestration” §3, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York & London: Macmillan, 2001), 12:409.
the main melodic line or who find the three-octave scoring of viola, cellos and double basses disruptive to the overall balance of lines within the ensemble.  

The common thread in these criticisms is an underlying aesthetic preference for the independence of parts that stems from a bias in favor of counterpoint and the notion that each instrument should be written for in an individual, idiomatic manner — the very effects that the parallel bass technique avoids. The implication is that a composer only resorted to using parallel bass writing in less-than-ideal situations and that with more time or certainty about the forces available, a composer would have inevitably opted for independent parts rather than parallel bass scoring or omitted certain parts altogether.

On the basis of the evidence from compositions by Vivaldi and his contemporaries, we can now see that composers employed parallel bass writing specifically to lend particular qualities to the sound of the passage. This is amply demonstrated in Vivaldi’s tendency to pair certain types of parallel bass writing with specific sections of a musical form and his habit of treating vocal works differently from purely instrumental works. One additional motivation, considered in the previous chapter’s discussion of parallel melodic writing, is an increase in the dynamic level of the

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176 See Carse, *The History of Orchestration*, 183, where he remarks that several of Haydn’s early symphonies feature passages with a reduction to two real voices (unison violins vs. violas in parallel octaves with the bass line), “sometimes with the strange result that the violas play a high version of the bass part above the melody itself.” Forsyth, *Orchestration*, 396, wrote that parallel octaves between the viola and bass lines “often resulted in an unnecessary and uncomfortable three-octave-bass [...]” While not limited to bass functions per se, Forsyth’s further comments (p. 404) on parallel octaves between the viola and cello are also significant here: he warns that, apart from a few special circumstances, this scoring should be avoided as much as possible, especially since “haphazard interpolation [of this scoring] into a musical ensemble where the other parts are merely in single notes, not [parallel] octaves, produces a feeling of emptiness in the alto- and tenor-registers.”

177 Westrup points towards a similar conclusion, suggesting that “The purpose [of using the viola for parallel bass scoring] is obviously to add a greater clarity to the bass line, as an organist might by adding a 4’ stop on the pedals.” See Westrup, “Instruments and Orchestration,” 409. By “clarity,” Westrup appears to mean heightened prominence through increased amplitude.
bass line. Vivaldi and his contemporaries occasionally specified different dynamic levels for individual parts, but the principal alternate method by which they could increase the amplitude of a particular line was to score it for a larger number of parts. If the full continuo section is already employed, the best available resource in the typical Vivaldian ensemble is the addition of a parallel part for a non-bass-register instrument. The bass line could be brought into focus by temporarily silencing the inner parts (i.e., reducing competition from other lines), but the parallel bass allowed composers to draw attention to the bass line without silencing parts from the middle range of the ensemble (which would create a gap between the upper and lower instruments) or sacrificing the harmonic richness of a passage (which would be maintained except when unisons and parallel octaves are involved). On this latter point, it is worth observing that, of all intervals, Vivaldi clearly preferred to write for parts in parallel tenths and parallel thirds, followed by parallel octaves and a few rare examples of parallel sixths and even parallel fifths.179

Most of the traditional, practical explanations for the use of the parallel bass technique prove to be insufficient upon closer inspection. There is, for example, no arguing against the claim that parallel bass writing saves time in the notation of a score (but not the copying of parts) and, if used for extended stretches, some time in the

178 For instance, the finale of Vivaldi’s Violin Concerto in E Major Op. 3 #12 (ms. 65ff) features the solo violin and viola (as the temporary bass line) playing forte (the solo violin implicitly retaining the dynamic level of the previous measures, the viola being explicitly marked f in measure 65), while the remaining parts (Violins 2-4) are marked piano.

179 Parallel sixths can be found in movements from the concertos Op. 3 #2 (only in the earlier version, RV 578a), Op. 4 #7, Op. 6 #6, the motet RV 625, and the opera Arstilda, regina di Ponto. Parallel fifths are suggested very briefly in the fourth movement of RV 617, although thirds are interpolated right before each change of the repeated bass notes, thus avoiding literal parallel fifths.
compositional process, although how much time is saved we may never know.\textsuperscript{180} However, this implies that composers were willing to (supposedly) mar the overall quality of a piece of music simply to save time, which is very unlikely in situations where a composer’s finances and reputation were at stake. Meanwhile, the argument that parallel bass writing is a solution for situations where there is nothing else to give the violas assumes, without substantiation, that there is no option to omit the violas when there truly is no function to give them.\textsuperscript{181} This theory, however, could only account for some circumstances at best because most Vivaldi operas include arias where the violas are tacet for passages or entire movements; their participation in parallel bass scoring elsewhere in the same works affirms that this orchestration technique was used out of desire rather than necessity.

Likewise, one might expect a device that reduces the complexity of the texture to be especially welcome during solo episodes, minimizing the chances of having the accompaniment steal attention from the solo or principal parts. But as we have seen, Vivaldi’s concertos tend to avoid using the parallel bass technique during solo episodes, reserving it for tutti ritornello sections. There is little reason to doubt the argument that the simpler rhythmic and contrapuntal texture that results from assigning the same line to two voices (thus reducing the total number of contrapuntally and/or rhythmically independent parts) can make it easier to hear more complex rhythms and textures in upper voices. However, many of these passages in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works occur

\textsuperscript{180} Talbot, \textit{Vivaldi}, 90 suggests the doubling of parts may have gained some motivation from the desire to speed the notation of a score, but he adds that “genuine artistic reasons are usually present” in Vivaldi’s doublings.

\textsuperscript{181} See Forsyth, \textit{Orchestration}, 396, 404; Carse, \textit{The History of Orchestration}, 144
when the violin parts are united, so that the contrapuntal texture has already been reduced and the rhythms of the treble line are executed by a larger number of players. More importantly, while the rhythms of Vivaldi’s music in later decades are more varied and show influences of galant features, the rhythms in passages using parallel bass writing are generally no more complex than those in passages that do not feature the parallel bass technique. Further, in some cases Vivaldi could have omitted parts from a particular passage (via rests), as he does in other situations, if he was truly motivated to employ thinner textures.

Against the argument that parallel bass writing was useful in situations where no violists were available, we must consider that all but one of the cases where Vivaldi used parallel bass for an entire movement occur in multi-movement works where the viola part is more often engaged in non-parallel bass roles. Even if no violists were on hand, the viola part in those other movements would need to be played by other instruments. If Vivaldi had wanted to minimize this kind of contingency scenario, he could have opted to include far more movements with parallel bass passages. It is more likely that he generally assumed violists would be available to perform these works. This means that parallel bass orchestration for an entire movement is a particular color that makes a cameo appearance (or limited recurrences, in the case of some of his operas) within a multi-movement work.

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183 The exception is the single-movement Laetatus sum RV 607.
The potential octave doubling of a large *violone* with the continuo bass line, the combinations available to the organs of the period, and the popularity of the bagpipe drone in the eighteenth century provide evidence that parallel voices were part of Vivaldi’s sound world. As a composer famous for his aspirations towards sonic naturalism and experimentation, Vivaldi was often willing to incorporate particular sonic effects even if it meant setting aside some of the practices of orthodox counterpoint. To insist that contrapuntal writing is the *only* path to musical quality is to take a political-aesthetic stance that Vivaldi and many of his colleagues would have contested.

*The Bassetto*

The viola is given far greater prominence in the many instances where Vivaldi silenced the traditional bass instruments and scored the bass line for non-bass instruments only: this scoring technique is commonly referred to as “bassetto” writing. Whether for an isolated passage or an entire movement, the material played by the non-bass instruments behaves much like a traditional bass line.\(^{184}\) Quantz, writing in the 1750s, cautioned against a blind transfer of the bass line without considering how any upward transposition of register might turn consonances into dissonances when the “bass” line is pitched higher than the melody it presumably supports.\(^{185}\) However, Vivaldi and his

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\(^{184}\) For the discussion that follows, I am generally not counting passages in imitative textures because the bassetto-like passages in these moments, while technically “bass by default” usually also fill a primary melodic role – providing the subject and/or countersubject – and it is often ambiguous whether the passage has a real bass line or is momentarily without bass. These have already been considered in *Chapter 2*.

\(^{185}\) Specifically, Quantz warns (Ch. 15:3 §16) that a consonant fifth between the melody and bass becomes a dissonant fourth when the bass is transposed up an octave to be heard above the melody. See Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch*, 240. Pointing out objections from C.P.E. Bach (*Essay on the True Art of*
fellow Italian composers disregarded this issue rather frequently: the desire to imitate the gestures of a traditional bass line (including cadential octave leaps) trumped any concerns over dissonances and awkward voice-leading that might result.\(^{186}\)

The term *bassetto* (and regional variants) has been used in a number of different ways from the seventeenth century onwards, referring at times to an instrument smaller than a true “bass,” to the lowest part in a passage without a bass instrument, or to a continuo line written in a G- or C-clef.\(^{187}\) In the present study, the term *bassetto* refers to a bass line played solely by a non-bass instrument (regardless of register) whereas a high-register bass line played on a bass instrument (such as a cello) is considered to simply be a high-register bass line.\(^{188}\) This distinction favors the choice of scoring over the choice of pitch range in situations where the same pitches fall within the compass of bass and non-bass instruments. If we return to the concept of organ registration as a model, bassetto registration mode for a bass line can be understood as a choice to use 4’ instruments without 8’ or 16’ doubling.

Although no comprehensive study of the history of the device appears to exist, it is clear that the bassetto was already in use before Vivaldi’s earliest surviving works for larger ensemble and his pre-Mantuan works coincided with a period in the history of

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\(^{186}\) Talbot refers to this as a situation where the bass line is “treated as if the upward transposition [...] had not occurred.” See Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 90.


\(^{188}\) I have elected to use the term here because all of the existing definitions share the underlying concept of a bass line sounding in a higher register than normal, and the idea of a “small bass” instrument is rather akin to the idea of a violin or viola behaving as a diminutive cousin of a true bass instrument.
orchestration that saw an almost explosive growth in the exploitation of the bassetto technique.\textsuperscript{189} The bassetto (or at least the sonic effect) was in use at least as early as the late sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{190} With the rise of the basso continuo and the practice of \textit{basso seguente} performance (playing a continuous functional bass line built by bridging together the lowest part in each successive passage), the bassetto appears to have been used less often as the seventeenth century progressed, until composers in the 1670s and 1680s started to experiment with using the bassetto again in more situations, particularly for individual couplets of chaconnes and passacailles in operas, especially those inspired by Lully.\textsuperscript{191} This trend continued in the 1690s, although some locales may have been more resistant to its use.\textsuperscript{192} For example, if Albinoni’s works are in any way reflective of general trends, the bassetto (which does not figure much in the surviving scores of Venetian operas and ensemble music that can be dated to the 1680s and 1690s) did not become part of the Venetian orchestral vocabulary until some time between 1700 and 1707 (when the bassetto could be found in Albinoni’s Op. 5). In the first decades of the

\textsuperscript{189} One recent study is Deborah Kauffman, “Violons en basse as Musical Allegory,” \textit{Journal of Musicology} 23/1 (Winter, 2006), 153-85. Kaufmann focuses, very narrowly, on bass lines scored for violins in French repertoire of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries and finds evidence of a link between such scoring and pastoral imagery. However, the French scores Kauffman cites tend to provide basso continuo figures in the violin part during these passages, a practice generally not found in early-eighteenth-century Italianate bassetto passages, suggesting a more conservative taste (retaining a link to the \textit{basso seguente} tradition) among French composers.

\textsuperscript{190} Examples can be found, for instance, in Monteverdi’s first book of madrigals (1587).

\textsuperscript{191} The chaconne in Lully’s \textit{Cadmus et Hermione} (1673), as printed in score published in 1719, has continuo figures supplied for the lowest voice in what are otherwise bassetto passages, suggesting \textit{basso seguente} scoring for the harmonizing continuo instruments. However, figures are absent in the bassetto passages of the passacaille from \textit{Armide} (1686; score published in 1686) and in “Fear no danger” from Purcell’s \textit{Dido and Aeneas} (1689 or earlier). See Kauffman, op. cit., for more examples in Lully’s works.

\textsuperscript{192} Examples from the 1690s include examples in such diverse works as Purcell’s \textit{Dioelesian} (1690), \textit{King Arthur} (1691) and \textit{The Fairy Queen} (1692/93), Alessandro Scarlatti’s \textit{Massimo Puppieno} (Naples, 1695) and \textit{La Caduta de’ Decemviri} (Naples, 1697), and Giovanni Bononcini’s operas \textit{Xerses} (Rome, 1694) and \textit{Il trionfo di Camilla} (Naples, 1696). Kauffman (op. cit., 160, note 13) mentions a few scores from the 1690s that contain entire airs scored without true bass instruments.
eighteenth century, the bassetto was much more widely used by composers across Europe – both in frequency of occurrence and the variety of situations where it was used. For example, whereas operas c. 1700 tend to only include one or two arias (if any) with bassetto passages, by 1710 it is not uncommon to find bassetto in multiple arias per opera; another decade later and there are few operas without multiple bassetto passages.¹⁹³

Vivaldi continued and extended the trends he inherited, exploiting the sonic and expressive potential of the device perhaps more than any of his recent predecessors. Before examining several special aspects of Vivaldi’s bassetto writing, including the tremendous prominence assigned to the viola for this purpose, it is worth discussing the three types of bassetto that Vivaldi employed, one of which – the compound bassetto – may have been Vivaldi’s own invention.

Varieties of Bassetto

Once Vivaldi decided to place a bass line an octave or two higher than the usual register, he had to choose which type of bassetto to use. The bassetto, as with the bass line, can be presented as a single, unison line (what I call the “unison bassetto,” abbreviated as “UBt”) or an expanded bass line where two or more voices are linked by parallel pitches and rhythms to form a single, vertically elaborated line (what I call the “vertically elaborated bassetto,” abbreviated as “VEBt”). The following are two examples of the unison bassetto mode of registration.

¹⁹³ See, for example, the operas of Keiser and Handel from this decade.
Example 3.7: Violin Concerto in F Major, RV 292, 3rd mvt, ms. 1-9

Example 3.8: Violin Concerto in E-flat Major, Op. 6 #2, 1st mvt, ms. 62-64
In both of these examples, the bass line is played as a bassetto in a higher register than normal (here primarily in the octave extending up from middle C). The usual bass instruments – cello, violone, keyboards and/or any other continuo-line instruments are silent and the bass line function has been assigned to instrumental parts that do not normally play the bass line. In Example 3.7, the bassetto is scored for the viola part whereas in Example 3.8 the bassetto is played by two violin parts in unison. Both examples constitute unison bassetti because the bassetto that results is a monophonic line.

The following passage demonstrates the vertically elaborated bassetto.

Example 3.9: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #12, 1st mvt, ms. 45-51

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194 The example follows the source preserved in Dresden (Mus. 2389-O-79), which is a score copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper. In the alternate source of this concerto (A-Wn, E.M. 149 Nr. 4), a set of manuscript parts by an unknown scribe, the bassetto is scored for Violin 2 instead of Viola. The reason for this difference is uncertain, although it is more natural to suspect that the original viola line was transferred to violins (in the absence of a sufficient number of capable violists for a particular performance or ensemble) rather than that an original violin line was re-orchestrated for violas alone – a relatively unusual scoring for the opening of a movement. It is also worth noting that whereas the opening measures in the Dresden source feature the violino principale doubled by the first violins, the Vienna source omits the first violins. Perhaps this second change triggered the first.

195 The choice to call these passages “unison bassetti” rather than “monophonic bassetti” is intended to point out that while a single, monophonic line can result from either a single part or the unison parallelism of multiple parts, the number of ensemble parts playing that line is significant to the aural effect of a passage.
The vertically elaborated bassetto allows the composer to harmonize the bassetto (or, in the case of parallel octaves, to span across multiple registers) while keeping the rhythmic density relatively thin through the use of rhythmic unison for all parts in the VEBt. In general, the vertically elaborated bassetto is far less frequently used than the unison bassetto.\footnote{The device occurs in only about twenty-five or so instrumental works and seven vocal works (RV 589/ix, 628/ii, 644/xb, Ottone, Orlando finto pazzo, Arsilda, and Armida). VEBt is found in four concerti from Op. 3, three from Op. 4, and one from Op. 6, which represents a ratio of less than 1:2 per set (1:4 in the case of Op. 6) between VEBt and UBt, even as both modes become less frequent from one published collection to the next.}

This may correlate with Vivaldi’s trend, especially evident in later concertos, towards replacing single-line continuo accompaniments in solo episodes with single-line accompaniments scored for one or two violin parts in unison; i.e., a growing tendency to use thin textures in solo episodes coupled with the “lighter” sound of a high bass line – a combination that is better accomplished with a UBt than a VEBt.\footnote{I thank Michael Talbot for drawing my attention to this potential correlation.}

The majority of VEBt passages employ two parallel voices, as in \textbf{Example 3.9}, almost always in parallel thirds. Unlike parallel bass scoring, the VEBt is rarely set as parallel octaves or tenths.\footnote{Parallel octaves occur in Op. 6 #2/iii ms. 91-102, RV 275/iii ms. 39-60, and passages from RV 364/i (ms. 51-57) and RV 364/ii (ms. 35-44). These three concerti survive as published by the Roger firm.} One reason for this limitation may be that by raising the
bass line to a higher register, Vivaldi has compressed the entire ambitus of the ensemble texture. Unless the upper voices are also raised higher than normal during a bassetto passage, all voices in the texture are bounded within a smaller vertical range than when the bass is in its normal register, making it more difficult to avoid part-crossing. Parallel thirds are more likely to keep the bassetto low enough to allow room for one or two upper voices without crossing lines too often.

Chapter 2 has shown that Vivaldi was fond of exploiting high-register triads in his music and this may contribute to his frequent use of bassetto passages. This provides another explanation for the near-exclusive use of parallel thirds to form vertically elaborated bassetti. As Example 3.9 shows, when the texture is comprised only of a VEBt in close proximity to a principal treble line, the three lines can create the effect of a series of triads. The passage in Example 3.9 is essentially a decorated series of treble-register triads that initially alternate between root position and first inversion before making a stepwise descent in pitch. Similar passages occur elsewhere in the pre-Mantuan works and this particular use of the two-voice VEBt became part of the vocabulary of Vivaldi’s idiom – basic material that could be crafted to fit each new context.

Because parallel octaves have not been found specifically indicated in any bassetto passages from an autograph Vivaldi source during this period, one can question whether Vivaldi ever intended a unison bassetto in the above passages and if his intentions were possibly misunderstood by a copyist at some point between Vivaldi’s lost autograph and the Roger print. The Dresden (D-Dl, Mus.2389-O-111) and Weisentheid sources of Op. 6 #2 (D-WD, Ms. 777), in fact, have the violins and violas in unison rather than parallel octaves. For the passage in RV 364/i (and, by extension, RV 364/ii), see the note concerning Example 3.10 below. Parallel octaves occur from time to time in Grifone’s Act 1 Scene vi aria from Orlando finto pazzo, but this is not a true bassetto passage, as the bass continuo line (marked “Pizzicatti Senza Cembalo” at the opening but reduced to “Violoncello solo” in tenor clef during vocal periods) plays in unison (and the occasional parallel octave) with the pizzicato violas – the vocal periods are thus scored with parallel bass writing between the viola and a simplified default bass line. The only works from this period for which Vivaldi wrote a two-voice VEBt in parallel tenths are Argillano’s aria in Act 1 Scene V of Orlando finto pazzo and the first movement of Op. 3 #5 (ms. 31-35) where the viola plunges to a lower octave mid-phrase, switching the bassetto from parallel thirds to parallels tenths; the reasons for this switch will be discussed later, but this example appears to be a special exception to Vivaldi’s normal bassetto practice prior to 1718.
Example 3.10 is a rare example of a three-voice bassetto in Vivaldi’s earlier works.¹⁹⁹

Example 3.10: Violin Concerto in B-flat Major, RV 364, 1st mvt, ms. 57-61

In this passage, the VEBt begins on the third beat of measure 57, with parallel octaves between Violin 2 and Viola, and parallel tenths between Violin 1 and Viola. As noted above when discussing the use of parallel octaves for bassetti in RV 364 (and other works that do not survive in an autograph source), it is possible that Vivaldi intended the viola and second violin part in this passage to be played in unison (perhaps with the viola one

¹⁹⁹ The only other such passage, albeit very different in effect, occurs in measures 37-40 of the third movement of Op. 3 #3, where the three real parts of the accompaniment (Violin 2, Violins 3 & 4, and Violas 1 & 2) form a drone of reiterated B Major triads on the downbeat of each measure.
octave higher than printed) or for the viola to be silent here.\textsuperscript{200} If so, this would make the passage a typical example of a two-voice VEBt travelling in parallel thirds. As it is printed, the bassetto consists of the first violins in parallel tenths above the violas and the second violins in parallel octaves above the violas. The resulting vertical width of this rather unusual (for Vivaldi) bassetto passage does not force the solo violin into a higher-than-normal register because the lowest voice of the bassetto, assigned to the viola part, is kept within a low pitch compass that allows plenty of registral space for the additional bassetto voices to fit between the frame of the viola and solo violin parts.

The rarity of three-voice VEBt passages stems from the limited range of instances where they can be employed. Maintaining the fairly strict parallelism needed to constitute a vertically elaborated bassetto requires that the voices either travel in parallel chords or reiterate the same chord as a sort of drone repetition. Sequences of parallel chords are rare in Vivaldi’s music and they occur only in a few special instances, as they otherwise violate basic principles of proper voice-leading. Even the passage in Example 3-10 requires some slackening of strict parallelism to fit Vivaldi’s normal harmonic vocabulary. Here the relationship between the lower two voices of the bassetto and the first violin part is parallel, but not quite to the level of every ascending chromatic step,

\textsuperscript{200} This uncertainty applies to the entire passage in measures 51-61. As printed by Roger, the viola part descends to a B-flat below the range of the viola in measure 52. Based on the surviving source of RV 364a in Dresden (D-Dl, Mus.2389-O-160, with a second movement that differs from RV 364), where the viola part is here written in bass clef, it is likely that the lost exemplar used by Roger was similarly notated (or already contained an incorrect realization of the notation); placing the entire viola part an octave higher in these eleven measures would also resolve the problem of fitting the line into the compass of the viola. The only surviving concordance of RV 364 itself, a manuscript set of parts (D-SWI Mus. 5564), appears to relate very closely to the source tradition of the print (i.e., it is either a copy derived from the print, or both the print and manuscript stem from very similar – now lost – exemplars), so the fact that the viola takes the lower octave (including the low B-flats found in the print) in this manuscript source does not settle the question of what Vivaldi intended in this passage. The authority of the parallel octaves between the violins and violas in the second movement of RV 364 (ms. 35-44) also remains open to question due to the similar textual lineage of the print and the Schwerin parts.
while the quality of the interval between the first violins and violas changes between a major and minor tenth to reflect the local harmonic environment.

Yet Vivaldi appears to have generally liked a thick texture in his ensemble writing of these decades and perhaps for that reason it is fairly common to find a passage of unison bassetto that imitates a vertically elaborated bassetto without following the fairly strict parallelism required for a true VEBt. In such passages, there is usually a principal soloist partnered with a multi-part accompaniment, and one or more of the parts of the accompaniment maintain rhythmic unison with the bassetto. The critical element all of these passages share is that the voices imitating the VEBt are in rhythmic unison with one another. The vertical relationship may change from one note to the next, but the voices move between notes at the same rate and each note has the same duration in the voices regardless of the pitch relationship between them. As long as rhythmic unison is retained, the voices sound banded together and preserve some semblance of a vertically elaborated bassetto. These mere suggestions of a VEBt were a way to accomplish some of the effects of a VEBt without sacrificing the harmonic proprieties and richness of Vivaldi’s musical idiom.

There is great variation in the degree to which the pitch relationships of these parts imitate the parallel voices of a VEBt. Some passages, such as in Example 3.11a, break from strict parallelism to accommodate proper voice-leading or complete triads.
Example 3.11a: Concerto for 4 Violins and Cello in F Major, Op. 3 #7, 2nd mvt, ms. 26-29

\begin{music}
\example{26}{Allegro}{Vn I}{Vn II, III, IV}{Va I, II}{Vc, Ve Comb}
\end{music}

Example 3.11b: As above, with hypothetical changes to Violins II-IV

\begin{music}
\example{26}{Allegro}{Vn I}{Vn II, III, IV}{Va I, II}{Vc, Ve Comb}
\end{music}

The two voices of the accompaniment (the middle two staves of the example) do not parallel each other from one pitch to another. The unison bassetto, in the viola parts, displays a rising chromatic tetrachord from the notes A to D. As indicated by the boxes drawn in the example, the three unison violin parts of the accompaniment (Violins 2-4) make a similar ascent in a general manner, sounding parallel tenths with the violas on the third beat of each bar. Meanwhile, the same two voices form a chain of parallel fifths on the downbeat of each bar (as indicated by the arrows in the example). If the notes of the upper accompaniment voice (i.e., the second stave) at the arrows were D-E-F instead of F-G-A, the entire example would be a VEBt in parallel tenths, similar to Example 3.10 above (see Example 3.11b). The leaps between tenths and fifths accomplish two things
that apparently were more important to Vivaldi than using simple parallelism between the
two voices of the accompaniment. First, they allow the voices to follow the principles of
good voice-leading by avoiding consecutive parallel intervals through reliance on
contrary motion from beats 4 to 1. They also permit all three voices of the example to
form complete triads on the strong beats of each measure (beats 1 and 3). For instance,
the Violin 1 part (marked ‘solo’ throughout this passage) on the downbeat of measure 27
provides the note D over the B-flat of the bassetto. By leaping down to F, the other violin
parts are able to complete a B-flat-major triad. If the same voice had maintained the
parallelism of a VEBt and ascended to D, the result would have been a dyad on the
downbeat of measure 27, with four violin parts on the upper pitch (D) against the two
viola parts on the lower pitch (B-flat). The leaps, in essence, allow Vivaldi to maintain a
fuller, triadic texture. Yet the voices maintain strict rhythmic unison and this, combined
with the moderate degree of pitch parallelism, creates the impression of a VEBt even
though the voices enjoy a greater degree of pitch independence than occurs in a truer
VEBt (such as Vivaldi used in Examples 3.9 and 3.10 above).

Other passages maintain a loose sense of two or three voices moving together,
even though the intervals between the voices may change frequently.
Example 3.12a: Violin Concerto in C Major, Op. 4 #7, 1st mvt, ms. 7-9

Example 3.12b: As above, with hypothetical changes to Violin I

In Example 3.12a, the second violin and viola parts form a two-voice vertically elaborated bassetto in parallel thirds. The first violin part contains the same steady eighth-note pulse heard in the VEBt, but the pitch rise of the first violin part is offset from that of the VEBt by the length of a quarter note, so that the three voices together sound a series of alternating first-inversion and root-position triads. Nevertheless, the three parts all make the same general ascent and parallel root-position triads occur on the strong beat of each measure (F major on beat 1 of measure 8, G major on beat 3 of
measure 8, and A minor on beat 1 of measure 9). Instead of the simple harmonic accompaniment of ascending root-position triads shown in Example 3.12b, Vivaldi deviated from the three-voice VEBt concept to incorporate inversions and enrich the harmonic progression, although he used rhythmic unison and general pitch parallels to provide the sense of a three-voice VEBt.

While the UBt and VEBt have precedence in works prior to 1708, Vivaldi may be the first composer to use a third type of bassetto passage, splitting the bassetto line to alternate between two or more parts within the ensemble, creating a compound bassetto.\footnote{VEBt, for example, can be found in Albinoni’s concertos Op. 5 #6 (first movement) and #11 (second movement), both published in 1707. I have not, thus far, been able to find instances of the compound bassetto prior to Vivaldi’s examples from the 1710s.} Example 3.13 illustrates this technique.

Example 3.13: Violin Concerto in D Major, RV 205, 1\textsuperscript{st} mvt, ms. 40-42

In Example 3.13, a single bassetto line is split between two voices (the ripieno violins in unison and the violas) at half-measure intervals, forming a hocket-like composite voice.
Vivaldi could easily have placed the entire bassetto line within a single voice, perhaps played by the ripieno violins in unison.\textsuperscript{202} The value of a compound bassetto is similar to that of any compound line, in that the frequency of the exchanges between parts enhances the level of interplay and engagement between sections of the ensemble and presents a change for both listener and performer from a static, hierarchical relationship between parts. Vivaldi was apparently fond of using such ensemble-oriented textures from his earliest works onwards, but while he frequently employed the device within the treble register, between voices in the middle of the ensemble texture, or across voices in multiple registers, a compound bassetto such as in Example 3.13 is very rare.\textsuperscript{203} Perhaps since the bassetto registral mode was already a “special” device, there was less desire to add further variety through the application of hocket-like exchanges than there was for the more typical bass registral mode. If that is true, it is singularly remarkable that there are a few passages where Vivaldi grafted this one form of “modification” (compound line) onto another (bassetto registral mode). If Vivaldi was the first to use the compound bassetto, the novelty of the device may have also limited its use during his pre-Mantuan years. As with the VEBt, the compound bassetto demonstrates Vivaldi’s recognition and exploitation of the possibilities of treating the bassetto as a full-fledged bass line rather than a mere echo or diminutive shadow of the more common bass line.

\textsuperscript{202} No portion of this bassetto exceeds the compass of the violin or viola, so it would be possible to play all notes of this passage on either the violin or viola.

\textsuperscript{203} Pre-Mantuan examples of the compound bassetto appear to include only RV 205/i (ms. 40-59) and RV 507/iii (ms. 151-162 & 169-181). RV 205 was in probably composed by 1716/17, while RV 507 seems to be contemporary with Vivaldi’s sacred vocal works from the years 1713–17 – thus both works probably date from the mid-1710s. More generally, Michael Talbot has identified Vivaldi as being among the first composers to use broken accompaniments, which he describes as “a milestone in the development of orchestration.” See Talbot, \textit{Vivaldi}, 89. Some early examples are referenced in Sardelli, “Le opere giovanili,” 62-63. Kolneder illustrated several of these passages, under the rubric “Varying the Bass Line,” in Kolneder, \textit{Performance Practices in Vivaldi}, 81-85.
The Bassetto in Vivaldi’s Pre-Mantuan Works: Significant Trends

At first glance, Vivaldi’s use of the bassetto changed little across genres and across time, even as other aspects of his style changed. But, as we shall see shortly, a close examination of works within a span of a single decade points to several trends in distinctions of genre, scoring, and published vs. manuscript pieces. Taken together, these trends show how Vivaldi was consolidating his approach to the bassetto in the years leading up to his employment in Mantua.

From his earliest works onwards, bassetto writing was a normal part of Vivaldi’s stylistic framework. The device occurs at least once in nearly four out of every five works with viola from this period, and the ratio is approximately the same for instrumental and vocal works.204 The earliest examples of bassetto usage in Vivaldi may be the Concerto in A Major RV 585 (perhaps from 1708 or 1709) and the concerti of Op. 3 (published in 1711 but containing works that may date from several years earlier).205

Among instrumental works, bassetti are spread across distinctions of genre and instrumentation. Bassetto is used in works for one, two, and four violins as well as pieces

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204 Out of nearly ninety instrumental works examined (counting each separate RV entry once), bassetto writing is absent from the following twenty works: Op. 4 #8, 10, 11; Op. 6 #3, 4; Op. 7 #2, 3; Op. 8 #7/i, the Sinfonias RV 113, 146, 192, and 192a; and the Concerti RV 175, 220, 355, 383, 402, 416, 420, and 578a. Of the approximately thirty vocal works that probably date from this period, only the following seven works lack bassetto passages: RV 591, 606, 607, 613, 635, 642, and the aria from Tietberga preserved in Turin.

205 It is unclear whether bassetto was part of Vivaldi’s stylistic vocabulary prior to 1708, due to a lack of surviving music for larger ensemble that can be securely dated before 1708-1709. However, we shall see that the frequency and sophistication with which Vivaldi used bassetto passages in Op. 3 – at least in the final, published versions of the pieces – suggests the device had been familiar to him for some time. The Violin Concerto in D Minor RV 813 may also belong to the years before 1711.
with an obbligato cello solo. Even in the six concerti with obbligato wind parts, Vivaldi did not refrain from transferring the bass line to higher voices.\textsuperscript{206}

However, there is one area where generic conventions limited Vivaldi’s use of the bassetto in a way that distinguishes works in a particular genre: the \textit{sinfonia}.\textsuperscript{207} Bassetto passages are found in the independently preserved Sinfonia in C Major RV 112 and the sinfonias of several operas alongside the numerous concerti from these years. Within these early sinfonias, however, the bassetto is only used in opening movements – never in middle and closing movements.\textsuperscript{208} The brief phrases of the terse final movements may have discouraged the types of situations (phrase extensions, repetition, and contrast) that invited bassetto usage in opening movements. Bassetto technique is even less appropriate for passages within the interior slow movements of sinfonias, where the style tends to focus attention on lyrical treble melodies with full-ensemble accompaniments that avoid distraction from scoring and textural contrasts.\textsuperscript{209} In the absence of a soloist, there is also no invitation to create textural contrasts between tutti segments and accompanied solo passages, as Vivaldi otherwise liked to do in the slow movements of solo concertos. As Talbot has pointed out, prior to Vivaldi’s Mantuan years, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{206} RV 455 and 462 (both with obbligato oboe); RV 562 (with 2 oboes, 2 horns and violin solo); RV 571 and RV 574 (both with 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 horns and violin solo); and RV 585 (with obbligato parts for 4 recorders, 2 violins and organ).
\item \textsuperscript{207} It should be observed that Vivaldi and his scribes did not acknowledge a polar opposition between sinfonia and concerto; some works survive under both titles and it is possible that a ripieno concerto could function as an introductory work while a sinfonia composed to precede an opera (oratorio, serenata, etc.) could function as an independent concert work. See Heller, \textit{Antonio Vivaldi}, 136. “Sinfonia” in the present discussion refers to works that appear to have been composed as functional sinfonias/overtures, bearing the stylistic hallmarks of operatic sinfonias from the period.
\item \textsuperscript{208} This pertains to the Sinfonia RV 112 as well as those preserved in \textit{Ottone in villa} (1713), \textit{Arsilda, regina di Ponto} (1716), \textit{L’incoronazione di Dario} (1717), and \textit{Armida al campo d’Egitto} (1718).
\item \textsuperscript{209} Excellent descriptions of the style of the sinfonias, as distinct from ripieno concertos, are given in Heller, \textit{Antonio Vivaldi}, 134-36, and Talbot, \textit{The Vivaldi Compendium}, 170-71 (entry for “Sinfonia”).
\end{itemize}
sinfonias and ripieno concertos exhibited similar stylistic parameters. However, from 1718 onwards the two genres became more distinctive, and one aspect of this generic split, not mentioned by Talbot, is the increasing use of bassetto in the second and third movements of the ripieno concertos, which stands in contrast to the continuing absence, with one exception, of bassetto passages in the second and third movements of Vivaldi’s sinfonias.  

Vivaldi used the bassetto in his settings of liturgical texts and it occurs in the only applicable work for double coro as well as most of the single coro works. The only strong limiting factor appears to be whether or not a piece is written with one or more vocal soloists, as the bassetto is absent from all three pieces of this period that use choir without vocal soloists.

This limitation points to a more general trend, wherein the greater portion of Vivaldi’s bassetto passages during this period occurs in accompaniments to solo instruments and voices. In addition to sacred vocal works without vocal soloists, the bassetto is absent from virtually all of Vivaldi’s coro passages from the period, both sacred and secular. To be sure, there are plenty of examples of bassetti in ritornello

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210 See Talbot, *Vivaldi and Fugue*, 75. Vivaldi did include bassetto passages in the original third movement of the sinfonia used for the opera *L’Olimpiade* (Allegro, 3/8), which was subsequently replaced by a new finale (Allegro, 2/4) without bassetto passages. The Sinfonia in E Minor RV 134, with bassetto passages in the third movement, was originally dubbed a “Concerto” – based on its style, it is likely to have been composed as a ripieno concerto and perhaps later re-tasked for a particular occasion. See Ryom, *Werkverzeichnis*, 59.

211 Of the liturgical genres in Vivaldi’s surviving earlier works, the bassetto occurs in the following: Mass Movements- 2/3, Psalms- 5/7, Magnificats- 1/1, Hymns- 1/2, Antiphons- 1/1, Motets- 5/5, Introduzioni- 3/5, Oratorios- 1/1.

212 The three works are: the *Credo* RV 591, the *Laudate Dominum* RV 606, and the *Laetatus sum* RV 607.

213 The only exceptions I have found are the *Et in terra pax* movement of the Gloria RV 588 (ms. 23 only), the final movement of the *Magnificat* RV 610b (ms. 31-32) and measures 31-34 of the opening movement of the *Dixit Dominus* RV 595. The passage in RV 588 is the beginning of a new point of imitation and only
passages (a feature of Vivaldi’s style that might have become more common by the mid-
1710s), but bassetti are far more common when soloists play or sing the principal
melodic lines.\(^{214}\)

Vivaldi favored alternating between a range of bassetto, basso continuo, and tutti
orchestrations to enhance the sense of variety and richness of invention between the solo
episodes of a concerto or motet movement. This also allowed the various portions of the
orchestra to take turns partnering with the principal soloist, making the collaboration
more fluid than it would have been had he maintained a strict delineation between tutti
ritornellos and continuo-accompanied solo episodes. There is a practical reason for using
the bassetto during a solo episode, namely that the temporary omission of the lowest
instruments of the orchestra reduces the size of the accompanying forces and makes it
easier for the solo part to assume greater aural prominence. However, a similar situation

the choral sopranos sing here (doubled in the organ and accompanied by the violins and violas in unison). The bassetto in RV 595 accompanies first the choral alto part and then both choral soprano parts. The passage from RV 610b has the fullest texture – choral sopranos + violin 2; choral altos + violin 1 (an octave higher); choral tenor + viola (this latter pair of parts provides the bassetto). This moment without choral or instrumental basses is very brief and the change of texture may have been intended to announce the approach of the final bars, as it comes on the heels of a period of very active harmonic rhythm and initiates a final pedal point supporting slow harmonic motion before the final cadence of the piece. Perhaps Vivaldi found the choral forces here to still be too numerous for the bassetto to have the intended effect, for he added the instrumental basses an octave lower when the work was revised as RV 610/610a (probably in the late 1720s).

\(^{214}\) Some examples of bassetti in ritornello passages include: Op. 3 #3/i, Op. 7 #11/i, RV 205/i & iii, RV 208/i, RV 292/iii, RV 306/i & iii, RV 314/iii, RV 319/ii, RV 328/iii, RV 370/i, RV 381/i, RV 388/i, RV 455/i, RV 562/i & iii, RV 574/i, RV 505/vii, RV 600/i, RV 621/vii, RV 628/i, RV 644 #20 & #26, and in arias from the surviving operas of the period. A noteworthy feature of this list is that few of these examples were published in Vivaldi’s lifetime – thus the pre-Mantuan works surviving in manuscript are more likely than those surviving in printed editions to feature the bassetto in ritornello passages. This is likely to be a coincidence, or an indirect result of other processes of selection, as there is little apparent reason to avoid publishing such works. An explanation, however, may stem from the higher incidence of works that seem to belong to the years 1713-17: if many of the works featuring bassetti in ritornello or tutti passages date from the mid-1710s, these same works would have post-dated the publication of Op. 3 (and perhaps the submission of Op. 4), while several of the concertos conscripted to form Op. 7 may also belong (in some form) to a layer of Vivaldi’s œuvre that is slightly earlier than many of the works on this list. This is supported by the high incidence of bassetti in ritornello passages found in concertos published as Opp. 9 (1727) and 11 (1729).
occurs when a solo episode is accompanied by the basso continuo only. Likewise, the
frequency with which Vivaldi’s solo episodes feature the full ensemble indicates that,
rather than merely responding to a potential need to adjust the balance between parts,
Vivaldi often employed the bassetto when he wished to vary his accompaniments.

Despite this general preference for variety, many of the interior slow movements
of concertos (but not sinfonias) rely on the bassetto to provide the bass function for most
or all of the movement. Typically, these are slow movements where the soloist or
soloists have uninterrupted obbligato parts, except perhaps for a ripieno-only frame at the
start and close of the movement (and perhaps with one or two brief tutti interjections).215
This is one aspect of Vivaldi’s treatment of the bassetto that distinguishes it from some of
his contemporaries in the years before 1720.216 Albinoni, Corelli, Dall’Abaco, and
Torelli used the bassetto much more sporadically in their instrumental works and did not
employ it for entire slow movements, favoring full-ensemble textures instead. While he
was not alone in writing entire slow movements with little or no contribution from bass
and continuo instruments during the 1710s, Vivaldi employed bassetto in this way at least
as early as 1711 and used it prominently in his concertos.217 As an innovative approach
to scoring slow movements in the first decades of the eighteenth century, the widespread

215 This is distinct from, for example, slow movements where the soloist is in unison with the ripieno
ensemble for frequent tutti interjections (giving the inverse impression of being a movement dominated by
full ensemble with solo interjections) or movements without a principal soloist.

216 There are, for example, entire arias with bassetto accompaniment in operas by Alessandro Scarlatti and
Aldrovandini. Although these appear to mostly have a moderato or fast tempo, similar arias may have
inspired Vivaldi to transfer an operatic scoring to an exclusively instrumental medium.

217 See, for example, the slow movements of the published concertos Op. 3 #1, 5*, 6*, 8, 9, 11, and 12; Op.
4 #3 and 4*; Op. 7 #6, 8*, 11*, and 12; RV 275* and 276; and the manuscript concertos RV 172*, 205*,
212* (original slow movement), 302*, 388*, 455*, and 571* (works with an asterisk* feature the bassetto
for the entire movement). Among works preserved in manuscript that may belong to the years before 1711,
the bassetto is also found in the fifth movement of the Violin Concerto in D Minor RV 813 (for all but the
final measure of the movement).
use of such slow movements in the later 1710s and beyond suggests that Vivaldi may
have been significant in the promotion and transmission of this technique via the wide
circulation of his printed works outside of Italy, especially Opp. 3 and 4.218

As regards fast movements, the bassetto tends to be found in the interior portions
of an individual movement (i.e., not at the very beginning or conclusion of a movement).
There are exceptions (such as in Ex. 3.7), and these hold great interest for their dramatic
potential to surprise the listener with the contrast of the full ensemble that enters a few
measures later. The reverse – a full-ensemble gesture followed by a passage with
bassetto, also occurs and is suggestive of the juxtaposition of ideas found in repertoire
from much later in the century.

Example 3.14: Violin Concerto in G Major, RV 314, 3rd mvt, ms. 1-14

218 See, for example, the slow movements of concertos by Tartini, Heinichen, Hasse, Telemann, and J. S.
Bach – these latter two composers are more likely to use the convention of writing slow movements with
extensive bassetto accompaniment as a reference point against which a more complex dialogue of textures
plays out.
Example 3.15: Mozart, Symphony No. 15 in G Major, K. 124 (1772), 4th mvt, ms. 1-10
Vivaldi’s surviving operas from these years also make frequent use of the bassetto. Contrary to received opinion, the choice of when to use bassetto was probably motivated by desire for textural contrasts rather than a response to practical performance issues. It is wrong to presume, for example, that the use of a bassetto constitutes evidence that certain singers had particularly limited capabilities. For example, John Walter Hill supports his assumption that the singers assembled for the first performance of Ottone in villa at Vicenza in 1713 might have had “weak voices” with an erroneous statement that in “all but a few [of thearias], the bass (and hence the harpsichord as well) drops out when a character is singing” [emphasis added].\(^{219}\) In fact, the continuo rests during most or all of the vocal periods in only nine of the twenty-seven arias in the opera – one-third of the total arias. Hill’s observation is prejudiced by the assumption that “provincial” theatres were likely to engage less-talented singers and by the belief that the bassetto was a practical remedy for vocal limitations.\(^{220}\) As it turns out, all four of the characters in Ottone who sing such arias also sing arias where the continuo plays during vocal periods.\(^{221}\) Only Cajo Silio (sung by the castrato Bartolomeo Bartoli) has more than two of the arias Hill refers to, but even this character is accompanied with the basso continuo in two arias and some ensemble numbers. If bassetto accompaniment was truly


\(^{220}\) Earlier, Hill discusses what he finds to be rather limited careers of most of the cast for Ottone, but Reinhard Strohm observes that several singers had international careers and were renowned for their skill, and that “the production in Vicenza benefited from an above-average singing cast.” See Strohm, The Operas of Antonio Vivaldi, 1:115-16. While a footnote in Hill’s essay cites Benedetto Marcello’s Teatro alla moda (Venice, c. 1720) as evidence that composers at times felt obliged to omit the bass to aid the singers, Hill never explains how this would help a singer.

\(^{221}\) These arias are distributed in the following manner: four for Cajo Silio, two for Tullia, one for Ottone, and two for Cleonilla, which Hill says was taken by the “featured singer” Maria Giusti detta la Romanina. See Hill, “Vivaldi’s Ottone in villa,” xi.
helpful to the singers’ performance, why didn’t Vivaldi use it in all of their arias? The benefit to the singers, if any, must have been small enough that bassetto wasn’t a necessary scoring choice.\footnote{This is not to say that there was never any benefit – some singers, in certain circumstances, may have had difficulty projecting over a larger ensemble. However, this could have been accommodated by scoring the accompaniment for basso continuo only, rather than (for example) a three-part texture of violins and violas. What is clear is that we cannot assume a direct relationship between the use of bassetto accompaniments and the abilities of an individual singer.} One could even argue that a deeper or louder bass line aids intonation for less-skilled singers, making the bassetto a risky device to use in some situations. Moreover, since most of Vivaldi’s operatic characters (including those in his later operas) sing arias with passages of bassetto accompaniment, Hill’s viewpoint would mean that virtually all of his leading singers had “weak” voices – a situation that is refuted by the evidence of the scores themselves and the emerging information about the careers of the singers.\footnote{For example, see the information on various operas in Strohm, The Operas of Antonio Vivaldi.} As further counter-evidence to Hill’s implications, the use of bassetto in Vivaldi’s operas does not appear to be dependent upon the number of parts in the instrumental texture of an aria, as bassetto passages occur in arias where one or both violin parts double the voice in unison or at the octave, as well as in arias where the voice is accompanied by an independent three or four-part ensemble; occasionally even more parts are involved. Practical considerations, therefore, were not the primary motivation for using a bassetto accompaniment, and this finding invalidates important evidence cited in Hill’s assessment of the first performances of Ottone.

In fact, the chief limiting factor for using a bassetto accompaniment in Vivaldi’s operas is the register of the role (the gender of the role does not appear to make a noticeable difference here): virtually all of the arias in Vivaldi’s earlier operas that use
bassetto are written for soprano and alto voices. The only tenor arias with bassetto are: one aria (Decio) in _Ottone_, two arias (Tamese) in _Arsilda_ and two arias (Dario) in _L’incoronazione di Dario_. Of these, Tamese’s aria from Act 2 Scene xi only uses bassetto during the opening ritornello – the same passage is later played in the bass/continuo line when the tenor is singing. Similarly, the only bass arias to use bassetto – one for Cisardo in _Arsilda_ and one for Niceno in _L’incoronazione di Dario_ – only employ bassetto during ritornello passages when the singer is silent. This preference for using bassetto to accompany soprano and alto voices corresponds with trends in Vivaldi’s instrumental and sacred vocal works, where soprano and alto lines are the most likely to be paired with a bassetto. This is a very logical pairing, as it is easy to keep the vocal lines above the bassetto – something that is more challenging to do with tenor and bass soloists.

The diversity of the arias that include bassetto passages make it difficult to identify the precise expressive motivations for using bassetto in a particular aria. For example, Vivaldi does not appear to systematically discriminate between different aria affects when choosing to use a bassetto, nor is there strong evidence of specific dramaturgical motivations. All indications are that bassetto was used for textural contrast within the succession of arias, especially as a foil to arias with textural paradigms that discourage internal textural contrasts (arias that primarily use FEPM, imitative textures, rhythmically stratified complex textures, etc.), for echo effects, or between different affects within what Reinhard Strohm has termed a “dual-affect aria.”

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224 See Strohm, _The Operas of Antonio Vivaldi_, 2:751.
The Viola and the Bassetto: the “special case” of Op. 3

A chronological examination of Vivaldi’s bassetto writing, despite the questions that remain about the dating of many pieces, quickly raises awareness that the concertos of Op. 3 contain elements that are native to Vivaldi’s idiom but in quantities that are atypical for his earlier works in general. For example, while bassetti occur about as often within individual works whether published or not, a real surprise with Vivaldi’s published collections during this period (Opp. 3, 4, 6, and 7) is the sheer frequency with which bassetti occur in Op. 3 compared to subsequent collections – Op. 3 is the only early set to include a bassetto passage in every concerto. From the perspective of those consumers who encountered Vivaldi’s music primarily through these printed collections, it might have appeared that Vivaldi gradually decreased the frequency of bassetto passages in works published between 1711 and 1719, a trend particularly evident in the total number of movements from each set that incorporate bassetto passages – twenty-four in the twelve concertos of Op. 3 (1711), thirteen in the twelve concertos of Op. 4 (1716) and seven in the six concertos of Op. 6 (1719).225

225 The twelve concertos of Op. 7 (1720) contain sixteen movements with bassetto, but this includes four movements in the spuriously attributed first, seventh, and ninth concertos. We must, however, remember that whereas Vivaldi was probably responsible for compiling (and revising) sets of concerti to send off to the Roger firm for publication in Amsterdam (Opp. 3, 4, and 6), the concerti published in the Op. 7 collection and various Roger anthologies were most likely selected for publication by someone in the publisher’s firm who came across the exemplars second hand. These publisher-created anthologies, therefore, are not likely to reflect any preferences Vivaldi may have had for publishing pieces with or without bassetto passages. While they might, in turn, convey the tastes of the anonymous compiler, there is no way to be certain that the pieces chosen for publication were not selected merely because they were the only suitable pieces that happened to be on hand when an anthology was planned. See Rasch, “La famosa mano,” 102-6, 120-23.
Yet the picture given by the publications does not necessarily reflect a true change in Vivaldi’s personal musical idiom. We have too few surviving sources and too little chronological precision to be able to ascertain when Vivaldi actually composed the works that were eventually published in Amsterdam. Each set may well consist of pieces dating from a span of several years and it may be that, for example, some of the Op. 4 concerti were begun while Vivaldi was still working on some of the Op. 3 concerti. The matter is further hindered by the almost complete lack of additional relevant ensemble music from the years up to 1711. However, the frequency of bassetto passages in unpublished concerti believed to date from the years after 1711 suggests that Vivaldi probably continued to employ the bassetto device more or less as frequently at the end of the 1710s as he did at the start of the decade, despite the impression conveyed by the published collections. In fact, the frequency of bassetto passages in Op. 8 (which was published in 1725 but, according to Paul Everett, probably compiled around 1720 and including works composed throughout the second half of the 1710s) shows that Vivaldi was still regularly using the bassetto. Vivaldi may have actually used the bassetto a bit more often in the 1720s - of the concertos in Opp. 9-12, there is at least one bassetto passage in ten of the twelve from Op. 9 and in every concerto from Opp. 10-12.

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226 Likewise, the Op. 6 collection may have been part of a supplemental supply of pieces sent to Roger along with the exemplars of the Op. 4 concerti, in which case the composition of Op. 4 and Op. 6 may have overlapped. Since Op. 6 does not have a dedicatory letter or any sign that Vivaldi intended these six works to be published together, Rasch has advanced the idea that Vivaldi sent Roger a package of concerti to be used as he saw fit – some of which found their way into Op. 6 while others were used in anthologies and the possibly unauthorized Op. 7 (although Roger apparently ran out of concerti and had to resort to other means to fill out the latter collection). See Rasch, op. cit., 104-5.

227 As regards the early cello concertos RV 402, 416, and 420, the absence may be due to instrumentation, since Vivaldi apparently did not use bassetto writing in cello concertos until the 1720s or later.

228 Everett, The Four Seasons, 7-25.
Of the instruments available to play a bassetto in Vivaldi’s typical string ensemble, the viola is the most obvious choice to take up a bass line, in part because anything that is written for the cello can be played an octave higher as a bassetto on the viola without needing to modify the intervals of the pitch content. This was useful, for example, if Vivaldi wanted to use a bassetto to echo a passage previously heard with basso continuo. Because the viola has a compass that extends lower than the violins, it also makes a good choice for bassetti that are centered around middle C.

Based solely on his printed output, it is tempting to conclude that Vivaldi’s orchestration of bassetti changed over the course of the decade. While violins are often assigned to bassetti, the viola was used for roughly half of the bassetti from Vivaldi’s earlier years. However, there is a much greater concentration of bassetti scored for viola in solo episodes and ritornello passages from Op. 3 than in either Opp. 4 or 6. In Op. 3, the clear majority of bassetti employ both of the viola parts (typically in unison, but occasionally in a VEBt) and virtually all of the remaining bassetto passages include the violas. In Op. 4, the balance is more evenly spread between violins and violas, despite

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229 Even in pieces that include wind instruments, the viola remains the best choice for bassetti in this range, because throughout his career Vivaldi typically wrote for wind instruments that occupied relatively high or low compasses. Wind instruments with compasses centered around middle C are relatively rare in Vivaldi’s music and when they are used (such as clarinets in their lower register, horns, tenor salmoë), it is often as principal soloists rather than as an accompanying voice. Ever interested in the unusual, Vivaldi does, however, use these wind instruments for rare bassetto passages when they accompany other principal soloists, such as in the Concerto con molti strumenti RV 555 (bassetti for 2 salmoë in the first and third movements) and the Concerto for 2 Oboes and 2 Clarinets RV 560 (bassetti for 1-2 clarinets in the first and third movements, as well as a bass-bassetto compound line (discussed below) in the third movement that alternates scoring between the second clarinet, second oboe, and basso continuo) – both works that date from a later stage in Vivaldi’s career.

230 It is extremely rare to have a bassetto in Op. 3 scored for one or more of the four violin parts without violas. I have found only three clear exceptions: two in Op. 3 #7/iii and one in Op. 3 #10/i.
a general decline in the frequency of bassetto passages overall. In contrast, violins are more clearly favored for bassetti in Op. 6.\textsuperscript{231}

However, the same trend is not evident in the unpublished works, where the task of providing the bassetto was fairly evenly distributed throughout the decade.\textsuperscript{232} In light of these findings, Op. 3 appears to stand apart from the rest of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan output. It is less a matter of Vivaldi using ideas totally unfamiliar from elsewhere in his music; rather the Op. 3 concerti present extreme usage of many aspects of Vivaldi’s style – aspects that are elsewhere given less emphasis. The high frequency with which the viola is included in bassetto passages in Op. 3 may reveal a desire to utilize the availability of two viola parts. In fact, the Dresden sources of Op. 3 #2, 5, and 7 contain versions (RV 578a, 519a, and 567a, respectively) of these concertos with a single viola part that may pre-date the versions published in 1711; all of the bassetto passages familiar from the published version of RV 578 are absent in RV 578a; presumably, Vivaldi added them when revising the concerto for publication.\textsuperscript{233} When RV 578a was revised with two viola parts for inclusion as Op. 3 #2, all of the bassetto passages added to the first movement were scored for the violas. However, the bassetto passages in RV 519 and 567 were already present in the earlier, single viola part versions and Vivaldi used two viola parts in other pieces that do not show the same level of association between the viola and the bassetto. Something else must have been at work in Vivaldi’s mind,

\textsuperscript{231} A preference is less clear in the problematic case of Op. 7, owing to the inclusion of three spuriously attributed concertos.

\textsuperscript{232} One possible exception is the realm of opera, where the viola part tends to provide the bassetto in the majority of cases.

\textsuperscript{233} It is, however, possible that Vivaldi revised the piece and added the bassetto passages even before it was intended for publication.
motivating the way he orchestrated Op. 3, and here we confront the intersection of Vivaldi as an innovative orchestrator and Vivaldi as a keen self-promoter.

Op. 3 represented many important “firsts” for Vivaldi. It was his first published collection of music for larger ensemble and his first published collection of concertos. It was also his first collection especially prepared for a publisher outside of Italy – the Roger firm in Amsterdam – and, as such, promised to introduce his music to a new market. The publication of Op. 3 provided Vivaldi with an important chance to prove himself as a leading contender in the field of instrumental ensemble music. This is probably why we find highly innovative personal touches blended with familiar Venetian, Roman, and Bolognese idioms. It is as if Vivaldi wanted to demonstrate that he was just as capable of being on the cutting edge as he was of being fluent in a variety of familiar styles.

The cutting edge of orchestration emerges in another surprising feature in Op. 3: the frequency with which a bassetto, scored as a unison bassetto for violas without violins, is the sole accompaniment to a solo episode. In passage such as Example 3.16, the role and status of the continuo (or even a solo cello) has been allotted to the unison violas as they accompany the two solo violins.234

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234 Notice that, unlike the two violin parts, the viola parts are not marked ‘solo’ here. Assuming that each part is intended, as published, to have at least one player assigned to it, this means a bare minimum of two violists should perform this passage in unison (one player each for Viola 1 and Viola 2) – thus it is not a true solo trio.
Example 3.16: Concerto for 4 Violins in E Minor, Op. 3 #4, 2nd mvt, ms. 101-106

That the viola here enjoys a status comparable to the cello is demonstrated in another concerto where the same portion of the solo episode appears, transposed, with the viola bassetto now played in default registral mode on the cello.

Example 3.17: Violin Concerto in G Minor, RV 319, 1st mvt, ms. 7-13

The first three bars of this passage occur again, transposed to C Minor, in the first movement of the Sinfonia of L’incoronazione di Dario, scored for two violins and viola (all ripieno).

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235 Not shown in this example: staves for Vn 3, Vn 4, Vc, and Ve + Org (i.e., B.C.), all of which are tacet in these measures.

236 A similar passage occurs in Erminia’s Act 1.iv aria from Armida al campo d’Egitto, scored for Soprano + Violin 1, Violin 2, and Violoncello + Violone soli.

237 Not shown in this example: staves for Vn 1 and Va, both of which are tacet during these measures.
Multiple similar passages exist within Op. 3, where the violas are partnered with the solo violins to form a trio texture (whether or not the number of violas exceeds the number of soloists), including such memorable moments as the solo sections of the slow movement of Op. 3 #1, the passage near the end of the slow part of the first movement of Op. 3 #2 (added during a revision of the piece prior to publication), or the finale of Op. 3 #8.\textsuperscript{238} Vivaldi places the viola on an even higher pedestal in the opening of the tenth concerto (Example 3.18) – one of only two pre-Mantuan passages I have found where Vivaldi marked the viola part “solo.”\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{238} These passages are: Op. 3 #1/ii measures 8-14 and 20-35, Op. 3 #2/i measures 10-12, and Op. 3 #8/iii measures 132-142.

\textsuperscript{239} Regardless of the exact significance of this marking in Op. 3 (i.e., whether it refers to a reduction in the number of players or provides a cautionary signal of a prominent part not doubled by other instruments), the autograph manuscript of the “Qui sedes” movement of RV 588 is very explicit: “2 Alti soli” (one player for each of the two viola parts) indicates a reduction in the number of players. “Alto solo” (“Viola solo” in the Dresden copy) is once again applied to the accompanying viola part in the slow movement of the autograph score of the Viola d’amore Concerto in A Minor RV 397 (probably from the 1720s), where the indication is superfluous as a cautionary marking (the entire movement uses bassetto accompaniment and all three accompanying parts are marked “solo,” yet there is nothing to distinguish this movement from any other movement with the viola as a UBt); in this case, the direction must also refer to a reduced number of performers.
Example 3.18: Concerto for 4 Violins and Cello in B Minor, Op. 3 #10, 1st mvt, ms. 1-4

In Op. 3 Vivaldi treats the viola as an equal or nearly equal part of the ensemble, not as completely subservient “filler.” He demonstrates that, within the concerto genre, the viola can be used as a viable alternative to the cello for accompanying solo episodes with a solo or trio sonata texture. He also shows that the solo viola can form an ensemble grouping with solo violins. Perhaps this elevated role proved too much of a gamble, for Vivaldi appears not to have called for this again in his published works. However, the minimal technical demands in the solo viola part in the opening of Op. 3 #10 – much simpler than many of his ripieno viola passages – raise doubt that the subsequent avoidance was due to players’ limited technical capabilities. In any case, Vivaldi continued to write single-part accompaniments with a bassetto scored only for viola. The

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240 One must bear in mind that the controversial question of how many players took each part leaves open the possibility that some of the bassetti written for viola only, such as the slow movement of Op. 8 #1, were conceived by Vivaldi as “solos.” Even if not conceived as such, there is the potential that these were on some occasions performed as solos, such as when only a single violist was available.
only difference in works after Op. 3 is that these passages occur far less frequently.\textsuperscript{241}

There is a sense in which the role of the viola in Op. 3 is purposely elevated compared to how most of Vivaldi’s Italian contemporaries normally conceived of it. If Vivaldi sought to impress and make a statement with his Op. 3, a substantial facet of that impression was the novelty of his orchestration and treatment of sonority, in which his use of the viola and the bassetto occupy a prominent role.

Several bassetto passages highlight this intersection between Vivaldi’s exploration of sonic variety and his employment of orchestration and texture as components that can define the important characteristics of a musical passage. As has been discussed earlier, using a VEBt instead of a UBt can increase the harmonic richness of a passage, fill more layers within the ensemble register, and impart a greater sense of communal music-making. These results are also affected by the number of voices above the bassetto, such as whether the bassetto is a single-part accompaniment forming a duet-like ensemble with the melodic line or set as the foundation of a multi-part accompaniment texture.

In some cases, a change in harmonic material may coincide with a shift to the use of bassetto, a shift from unison bassetto to a VEBt, and/or a change in the scoring of the

\textsuperscript{241} Other examples of pre-Mantuan works where the viola provides the only accompaniment to one or more solo violins include: the Violin Concerto Op. 7 #5, the Concerto for 2 Violins RV 507, and the Concerto con molti strumenti RV 574. A quick perusal of the published collections reveals that this scoring also occurs less frequently in later works, such as the concerti Op. 9 #6, Op. 9 #7, and Op. 11 #1 (but not in Opp. 8 or 12, aside from some brief snatches between overlapping textures in Op. 12 #1). The viola is also the sole accompaniment to the flute for several passages in the Flute Concerto in D Major Op. 10 #3 (first movement), but this is a special case, since the concerto is based on a chamber concerto (RV 90) that lacked a viola part – the viola line in Op. 10 #3 is generally adapted from the original bassoon line (cello in the version RV 90b); in re-scoring the piece for publication, Vivaldi has changed from bass mode to bassetto mode.
bassetto passage. For instance, Example 3.19 presents a portion of a solo episode where a descending tetrachord bassetto enters.

Example 3.19: Concerto in G Minor for 2 Violins and Cello, Op. 3 #2, 4th mvt, ms. 41-46

The passage begins with two solo violins over the bass and continuo instruments, as found in the first beat of the example. At the point where the descending chromatic
tetrachord enters, the mode of registration shifts from default to bassetto. Even more strikingly, the bassetto is now scored for Violins 3 and 4 as well as Violas 1 and 2 – four parts total. Measures 41-46 contain the only bassetto passage in the entire movement, and the descending tetrachord coincides with the only time in the entire concerto where the unison bassetto is scored for more than two parts. In fact, this UBt is assigned to all violin and viola parts that are not marked ‘solo.’ As soon as the tetrachord is complete and the harmonic material changes to an alternation between dominant and tonic chords, the bassetto is vertically elaborated and divided between the accompanying voices. In this case, a particular combination of ensemble texture, bassetto registration, and scoring is reserved in order to distinguish a harmonic pattern from its neighboring material.

This is not to say that either the use of bassetto, the choice of a single-part accompaniment, or the unison scoring of so many ensemble parts implies that the descending tetrachord is necessarily more or less important than the surrounding harmonic material. The exact significance of the tetrachord pattern in this context is difficult to discern (and Vivaldi certainly didn’t use this every time he presented a descending tetrachord), but he may have used the bassetto technique simply to highlight the presence of material familiar from long-standing conventional bass-harmonic

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242 It is worth considering that the original, pre-publication layout of the piece might have called for the equivalent of the following violin parts (whether thus titled or not): Violino Principale I, Violino Principale II, Violino Primo, Violino Secondo. If so, this would mean that all ripieno violins play during this passage. As printed to fit the eight part-books of Op. 3, it is possible that the Violino Primo (= Violino Principale I) and Violino Secondo (=Violino Principale II) can be played by multiple players, with the ripieno players tacet during the portions marked ‘solo’ (as there is no other way to indicate a separate part for ripieno players during the solos without using an additional stave). If multiple people play each of the part-books, the print implies fewer players for the bassetto than Vivaldi might have intended. The difference is one of effect: the sound of fewer unison players and the visual effect of only some violinists participating in the bassetto vs. more unison players and the image of all ripieno violinists and violists playing the bassetto. This is one example of how Vivaldi’s intentions are not entirely clear because we do not know exactly how much the layout of the print reflects Vivaldi’s intentions. There is no definite evidence that Vivaldi ever saw the print of Op. 3, so we cannot be certain if he was satisfied with the accuracy of the product.
patterns. In the context of a first collection of instrumental concertos by a relatively unknown composer of a younger generation writing in a style full of novel effects and radical features, I propose that Vivaldi used this scoring to create quotation marks around a traditional formula to highlight moments where the novel elements acknowledge their debt to convention, perhaps for the benefit of more conservative audiences. There are several similar cases, within the pre-Mantuan works, where a change to the scoring of the bassetto is used to enhance contrast between descending tetrachord passages and surrounding material.

*Bass-Bassetto Compound Lines*

Vivaldi took the re-distribution of scoring resources a step further in a third type of bass-line scoring that features rapid exchanges between two or more parts, providing a more integrated, kaleidoscopic ensemble texture where each voice becomes an essential step in a sequence of events: the bass-bassetto compound line. There are many passages in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works where the interaction between bassetto and default bass instruments falls somewhere between classification as parallel bass or bassetto writing. The motivation for these interactions varies, but I shall loosely group them under the heading “bass-bassetto compound line.” These are lines where the bass function is passed between default bass and bassetto modes, forming a compound bass line shared by

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243 The pronounced counterpoint of the fast movements of Op. 3 #11 may also stem from a desire to acknowledge and blend an older contrapuntal style with the newer instrumental idioms of Vivaldi’s concerto writing.

244 See, for instance, the second movements of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 4 #2 and the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 4 #12.
bass and non-bass instruments. As with Vivaldi’s parallel bass and bassetto passages, the viola is a key contributor to his bass-bassetto compound lines.

One type of interaction that does not quite fit within the bass-bassetto compound line definition comprises bassetto passages with occasional, brief interjections from bass instruments. In these passages, the bass instruments enter to provide reinforcement of the bass line at certain moments, adding emphasis by temporarily increasing the number of players assigned to the bass line and expanding the ambitus of the passage by invoking a lower register.

Example 3.20: *L’incoronazione di Dario*, Act 1.xiii, Aria for Alinda, ms. 13-23245

In this example, the bass instruments respond to and cap off a bassetto phrase, using a shift in the register and scoring of the bass line to add rhetorical emphasis to a phrase-ending.

True bass-bassetto compound lines tend to adopt one of three basic patterns: pendulum alternations, hocket-like exchanges, or multi-voice relays. Pendulum

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245 Note: The text has been omitted from this example and accidentals have been modernized.
alternations involve the regular, immediately recurring exchange between equal-length segment of bass and bassetto writing. While the alternations in the third movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 7 #4 involve different pitch classes for bass and bassetto, most of Vivaldi’s earlier examples of pendulum alternations simulate imitation at the unison or octave. The material featured in each part of these canonic or quasi-canonic exchanges is usually derived from a melodic-rhythmic idea previously heard in a treble or bass line, although unique material may also be introduced. Such is the case with the following passage, where the viola and bass exchange a melodic-rhythmic idea borrowed from the quasi-fugal subject material of the main ritornello.

Example 3.21: Violin Concerto in C Major, Op. 4 #7, 2nd mvt, ms. 31-32

\[\text{Example 3.21} \]

246 In Op. 7 #4, the unison first and second violins alternate with the continuo instruments every two measures in a series of dominant vs. tonic exchanges that support the rising sequential harmonic progression of the solo violin part.
Example 3.22: The same, with the viola and bass parts simplified to highlight exchanges of the two-note bass-line figure

Example 3.23: The same, with the viola and bass parts further simplified and combined

In **Example 3.21**, Vivaldi took what is otherwise a relatively simple bass figure (an undulating two-note gesture, shown in **Example 3.23**) and orchestrated it in a way that combines default bass and bassetto modes to form a bass-bassetto compound line with overlapping, imitative exchanges between the two components (violas and continuo instruments) that are linked to one of the main melodic-rhythmic ideas of the movement. The final product introduces rests and anacruses in the viola and continuo lines that convey a sense of anticipation and tension that would have been absent if the passage had been written as in **Example 3.23**.

Many bass-bassetto compound lines are formed byocket-like exchanges between bass and non-bass instruments. In the majority of these passages, the bass
instruments play on the downbeats and the intervening portions of the bass line is set as a bassetto.

Example 3.24: Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 6 #4, 3\textsuperscript{rd} mvt, ms. 75-78

In this example, the violins and viola are in the same octave. Vivaldi could have set the entire passage for violas or violins (plus bass) if desired, but he chose to add another level of rhythmic interplay between members of the ensemble. There is at least one instance, however, where Vivaldi reverses the sequence of events, using bassetto for the downbeats and switching to default bass mode for everything else.

Example 3.25: Violin Concerto in A Minor, Op. 3 #6, 1\textsuperscript{st} mvt, ms. 13-15

The final category, which straddles the divide between melodic and bass functions, concerns melodic-rhythmic ideas that are tossed, imitatively, between three or
more voices of the accompanying texture during vocal and instrumental solo episodes.

For example, the accompaniment to the solo violin in the following passage is comprised of a single line that is distributed across the ensemble in what I term a “multi-voice relay.”247

Example 3.26: Violin Concerto in D Minor, RV 237, 2nd mvt, ms. 1-3

The advantage of this scoring is in the way it allows a simple gesture to travel throughout several voices in the ensemble texture; the shifts in timbre and the physical point of origin for the sounds adds richness and complexity to the character and profile of the melodic-rhythmic ostinato gesture. Vivaldi could instead have opted for a more traditional setting of the bass line, as found in the slow movement of Violin Concerto in D Major Op. 4 #11, where the solo violin is accompanied by continuous rocking sixteenth notes in the continuo line.248 In many cases, the material in these exchanges is

247 In this case, the relay is arranged into a “visual” high to low pattern – “visual” because the violins and viola actually play in the same register and thus to do not execute an “aural” high to low pattern; examples of the latter can be heard in the finales of Beethoven’s Seventh and Eighth Symphonies.

248 A similar accompaniment texture can also be found in the abandoned thirteen-measure sketch for a second movement of the Violin Concerto in B-flat Major RV 370 that is found in the Turin score of the concerto (I-Tn Giordano 30 ff.172-183). The date of this sketch is uncertain (the manuscript opens with a version of the first movement that is apparently later than the version preserved in Dresden) and therefore was not necessarily part of Vivaldi’s output prior to the spring of 1718.
clearly derived from principal thematic material. However, in the context of these multi-voice relays, the material becomes redefined as a bass line accompaniment to the principal treble line/s.

Bass-bassetto compound lines emerged along with the renewed interest in bassetto writing at the junction of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which allowed portions of the bass line to be assigned to non-bass instruments. Although not particularly common in Vivaldi’s day, brief precedents can be found in music by Albinoni, Torelli, Aldrovandini, and Alessandro Scarlatti. A fuller study of the history of this orchestration technique is needed before Vivaldi’s role can be accurately assessed, but it seems likely that this was among the more interesting and “novel” sound effects he used to set his bass lines. A passage such as Example 3.25 may have struck early performers and audiences as a surprising, inventive, and (perhaps) amusing way to score a relatively normal bass line.

Conclusion

The textural spectrum of Vivaldi’s works is enriched by his diversely scored bass lines. In addition to the default bass registration provided by the basso continuo, Vivaldi frequently utilized parallel bass and bassetto writing while introducing further variety through the occasional use of bass-bassetto compound lines and contrabass registration. By aligning the shifts between these bass-line scorings with particular elements in the

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249 This can be seen, for example, in the opening movement of RV 370 and the finale of Op. 8 #5.

250 Of these four composers, Torelli’s music has some of the more remarkable examples of bass-bassetto compound lines.
formal structure of a piece (e.g., between solo episodes and ritornellos) or with individual melodic-rhythmic gestures (such as a descending tetrachord pattern or individual gestures within a ritornello), Vivaldi harnessed the power of these scoring contrasts to sharpen the distinctions between passages and heighten the dramatic potency of a piece in a way that presages the elevated dramatic contrast in late-eighteenth-century music.

The viola proved to be an excellent resource for flexible scoring of the bass line, as its position (in terms of vertical sonority) between the violins and bass instruments made it a natural choice for temporary partnerships with, or substitutions for, the bass instrument group. Whereas the violins are often engaged in melodic material, the viola is frequently available to play the bass line as desired. The range of the viola, an octave higher than a cello, made it an excellent resource to parody a “little bass.” The fullest extent of this potential is realized in those works where the viola part, without doubling by another part, provides the bass support for the violins in a passage that is later (or previously) heard with basso continuo accompaniment, as happens in the second movement of Op. 3 #4 (see Example 3.16).

Yet Vivaldi was not content to merely alter the register and instrumentation of the bass line. There is much evidence that he was keenly interested in the harmonic coloration of his bass lines, particularly in the difference between writing parallel octaves and parallel thirds, sixths, etc. One of the more striking aspects of this distinction is that Vivaldi employed both varieties of parallelism (between pitches of the same class and between pitches of different classes) in default bass registration and bassetto registration, strengthening the status of the bassetto as an alternative to the traditional basso continuo line (compare Examples 3.4 and 3.9). An awareness of harmonic complexity also
underlies his tendency to use parallel octaves more often in vocal works and parallel
thirds and tenths in instrumental works.

Apart from this difference, and a tendency to avoid using the bassetto in the
second and third movements of sinfonias, there are relatively few signs of distinctions
between genres and mediums. Instead, Vivaldi appears to have embraced diverse
approaches to the scoring of bass lines right from his earliest years of composition and
continued to exploit the expressive potential of each option throughout the period before
his employment at Mantua (and beyond). Within this context, the oft-maligned scoring
of viola and bass in parallel octaves emerges as a sonic device – one of several at
Vivaldi’s disposal – rather than a compositional, notational, or practical performance
expedient.

Two of these sonic devices merit special attention for their significance in the
history of orchestration: bass-bassetto compound lines built upon multi-voice relays and
the bassetto itself. Bass-bassetto compound lines divided between two voices have some
precedence in the music of the generation before Vivaldi, but three-voice relays (such as
found in Example 3.26) do not appear, thus far, to have as much of a history prior to
Vivaldi’s works and represent a significant example of orchestrally conceived ensemble
writing (i.e., scoring that divorces textural function from strict hierarchical
instrumentation). Bassetto writing, by comparison, was certainly not new when Vivaldi
began to use it. However, the decision to use it for entire slow movements, and the idea
to score it for viola alone in accompaniment to one or more soloists, may have been a
novelty in Vivaldi’s day. Novel or otherwise, the various scorings that Vivaldi used for
his bass lines reveal his careful consideration of the sonorities that resulted from different
combinations of the orchestral resources and the impact this had on the delineation of formal segments and the presentation of melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic elements.
Chapter 4: Rhythmic Functions

Michael Talbot has praised the rhythmic independence of Vivaldi’s viola parts, especially for the frequent presence of syncopation, but independence is not the sole indicator of sophisticated rhythmic scoring. In this chapter, I demonstrate the fundamental principles underlying Vivaldi’s rhythmic scoring and the complex ways these interact to shape the often subtle relationships between ensemble parts. The viola is a critical component of these rhythmic interactions, as its liberation from a single hierarchical function permits it to be used as reinforcement or foil to rhythmic material in any ensemble voice.

Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan viola parts contribute to the rhythmic texture of the ensemble through four types of interaction: 1) as a rhythmically independent voice that does not participate in rhythmic imitation, 2) as a component of a relay between three or more ensemble lines, 3) in rhythmic unison with a portion of the ensemble, and 4) in rhythmic unison with the entire ensemble. The first of these categories can be further divided into several important subcategories: repetition of previously heard gestures, contribution of unique rhythmic gestures (in Vivaldi’s viola parts, this often features sostenuto writing, perpetual motion, and syncopation), and semi-independent contributions (typically consisting of metric emphasis). While most of these categories and subcategories are quite common for viola parts by Vivaldi’s contemporaries and immediate predecessors, relays between ensemble lines are much more unusual outside of fugal and imitative polyphonic textures. Yet even the more common of these general

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250 Talbot, The Vivaldi Compendium, 191-92 (entry for “Viola”).
categories receive fresh treatment by virtue of Vivaldi’s revolutionary use of the viola as a flexible resource.

Non-Imitative Rhythmic Independence: Repetition of Previously Heard Gestures

Passages of non-imitative rhythmic independence occur, to some extent, in a majority of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works. These usually occur when the viola plays a bassetto line by itself, but there are also instances where the viola adopts its own rhythmic profile in a non-melodic or non-bass line role. While this type of viola writing can be found in some of Vivaldi’s German and English predecessors and contemporaries (Henry Purcell and Henrico Albicastro, for example), it is relatively uncommon to find extended passages of rhythmic independence in Italian music of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, aside from situations where the viola is used for a bassetto, as a surrogate second violin part when the true violins are in unison, or in arias with one or two obbligato viola parts.

In Vivaldi’s earlier music, these passages tend to consist of one of three types of rhythmic contribution. In the first group of passages, as illustrated by Example 4.1, Vivaldi uses the viola to re-introduce or maintain the presence of a prominent rhythmic idea heard earlier in the movement.
Example 4.1: Violin Concerto in A Minor, Op. 4 #4, 3rd mvt, ms. 1-15

This example begins with violins and violas playing a rhythmic pattern often referred to as a “sarabande” or “chaconne” rhythm, usually expressed (in triple meter) as:

\[
\frac{1}{4} \quad \frac{1}{4} \quad \frac{1}{8} \quad \frac{1}{8}
\] (or a variant)
This rhythmic figure is a vital component of the melodic-motivic material in the opening eight measures of the first ritornello and returns many times through the movement. In measures 9-15, a new melodic-motivic gesture is presented in pendulum imitation by two violin parts (the violino principale being in unison with the violino primo) over a descending harmonic sequence. Despite the introduction of new rhythmic and melodic gestures in the violins, Vivaldi is able to maintain a sense of continuity between this passage and the preceding measures by retaining the perpetual eighth-note motion of the opening measures and by placing the dotted figure of the opening bars in the viola part. The latter step was hardly necessary for the sake of basic continuity of motion, since the bass line and even the leaping eighth notes in the violin parts contribute to a strong sense of perpetual eighth notes throughout these fifteen measures. However, the presence of the more distinctive rhythmic gesture in the viola part during the contrasting passage in measures 9-15, devoid of the melodic leaps that shaped the opening phrases of the ritornello but closely associated with those phrases, suggests that this rhythmic figure will mark the identity of the movement on a much larger scale than within the confines of a single ritornello cell.

As it turns out, this figure is present in a number of critical moments in the movement: three of the four main components of the opening ritornello period, one of three components from the second ritornello period, the entire third ritornello period, one of two components of the fourth ritornello period, and the continuo line for the entire fourth solo episode – a total of forty-five measures within a movement of 118 measures. Removing the rhythmic figure from the fourteen measures where it is played by the viola alone would shift the overall balance of rhythmic figures in this movement, lessening the
(relative) sense of motivic unity throughout. With the violins and bass line engaged by other material, the viola is the only available resource for the important task of presenting the dotted rhythmic figure in measures 9-15. Here, as elsewhere in Vivaldi, the viola performs an important rhythmic function despite the fact that the melodic interest of the part may be limited or non-existent.\textsuperscript{252}

\textit{Sostenuto Writing}

A second group of passages featuring non-imitative rhythmic independence allows the viola to introduce a new idea that may remain exclusive to it for the duration of the movement. Here we encounter one of the most peculiar and most forward-looking aspects of Vivaldi’s homophonic and quasi-homophonic passages: the use of sustained notes in a non-melodic or non-bass line function (which I refer to as “sostenuto” writing). \textbf{Example 4.2} is one of the many such passages in Vivaldi’s earlier works.

Example 4.2: \textit{Ottone in Villa}, Act 1.vi, Aria for Tullia, ms. 55-65\textsuperscript{253}

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\textsuperscript{252} Passages similar to \textbf{Example 4.1} are very rare in Vivaldi’s earlier works. One example can be found in the first viola part of the Concerto in B Minor Op. 3 \#10 (first movement, ms. 7-8), where the group of three eighth notes continues a pattern previously scored for violas and bass line instruments as a VEB.

\textsuperscript{253} The stave for the character \textit{Tullia} is omitted in this example (the part is tacet in these measures).
In measures 58-62 of this ritornello that concludes the A-section of this *da capo* aria, the violas play a series of half notes that are both longer in duration than the majority of the rhythmic values assigned to the other parts and longer than the basic quarter-note pulse of the 2/4 metre. The viola line thus provides a sostenuto component to the rhythmic texture of the passage.

It is important to consider that Vivaldi sought a particular effect when he chose to employ sostenuto writing in the viola part of Example 4.2, since he easily could have selected a number of other options, including repeated eighth notes, a combination of quarter and eighth notes, or silencing the viola part for those measures. The relative stasis of the viola line provides a foil for the greater rhythmic activity of the violin and continuo lines, highlighting the rhythmic characteristics of each line while filling any silences between notes in the other parts. At the same time, the viola part sustains portions of the vertical harmonies not present in other voices, although the requisite stasis makes it difficult for a single line to ensure the completion of each chord because the other voices change pitches more rapidly – the result is a compromise where chords sound more complete than they often are.

While pedal points provided a model for the simultaneous use of sustained and rhythmically active voices, the use of the organ as an accompanying instrument may have also served as an inspiration for this effect, since it has the ability to create a block of
continuous sound set against the series of attacks, releases, and breaths between the notes of other ensemble parts. The use of a continuo organ would have made this possible on many occasions when sostenuto writing is not called for in the score, so the real “novelty” here is the concept of explicitly scoring sostenuto writing for individual non-melodic instrumental parts outside the basso continuo group.

In the pre-Mantuan works, non-paralleled (i.e., single-voice) sostenuto writing often occurs during ascending and descending falling-fifths sequences of full-ensemble passages. These tend to involve some of the densest rhythmic and linear textures within a tutti period and they frequently represent the emotional summit of the entire formal unit. In passages representing an apex of rhythmic diversity and harmonic motion (albeit motion that seeks to define the tonal center by mapping the hierarchy of secondary dominants), sostenuto writing can provide a block of sound to maintain a base level of volume and perceived “fullness” regardless of how many rests and rhythmic fluctuations are present in the other ensemble voices. An added value of sostenuto writing in this context is that the extreme rhythmic differentiation between parts creates a perceived gain in total sonic output without the risk of obscuring melodic and figurative lines that the composer wishes to keep in the forefront of the listener’s attention.

254 Similar effects can be heard in much rock and pop music, where layers of sustained chords played by strings, brass, or on synthesizers are often added to increase the overall volume and fullness of a passage, filling the spaces between percussion attacks, vocal phrases, etc.
The most intriguing aspect of Vivaldi’s use of unparalleled sostenuto writing in his viola parts is the hitherto unacknowledged resemblance it bears to one of the standard techniques of orchestration in the mid- and late-eighteenth centuries: sustained harmonies for wind instruments set against rhythmically active string parts. At the point when pairs of oboes (or flutes) and horns were a standard part of the orchestra, it became quite common for full-ensemble passages to be scored with the task of sustaining harmonic tones assigned to the wind instruments. In the first decades of the century, however, winds were still primarily used in obbligato, concertante fashion – taking up melodic material (often in alternation with other ensemble parts) that left little opportunity to also occupy a background role in the ensemble texture. Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works actually include a few examples of passages of “Classical” or “pre-Classical” sostenuto writing for pairs of recorders, oboes, horns, and even trumpets. Nevertheless, early-eighteenth-century composers who wanted to feature a sostenuto layer within a stratified rhythmic texture were often constrained to use violins and violas rather than winds, since the winds (if present) were otherwise occupied.

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255 Spitzer and Zaslaw [The Birth of the Orchestra, 464–467] note that this type of writing for wind instruments in sometimes referred to as the “wind organ.”

256 See, for example, the horns in the Concerto in D Major RV 562 (third movement), the Concerto in F Major RV 574 (first and second movements), and Argillano’s aria in Act 2.vi from Orlando finto pazzo; the horns and oboes in the Concerto in D Major RV 562 (first movement); the recorders in the Concerto in due cori in A Major RV 585 (third movement); the oboes in the third movement of the conjoined Introduzione and Gloria RV 639/588; the trumpets (and, to a lesser extent, the oboes) in the opening chorus of Juditha triumphans; and possibly the oboe in the first movement of the Oboe Concerto in A Minor RV 462 and the trumpet in the seventh movement of the Dixit Dominus RV 595 (depending on whether one hears these examples as a principal or supporting line).
If the violins are accompanying one or more obbligato solo parts, then the orchestral violins and violas may be available for non-melodic sostenuto writing. However, the majority of the examples in Vivaldi’s earlier music occur in ritornellos and other tutti passages where at least one of the violin parts occupies the spotlight of melodic-motivic interest. For that reason, the second violins and violas are tasked with inner-voice sostenuto writing more often than any other part in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan music, and in this role they carry out a function that later generations of composers tended to associate with wind instruments.\textsuperscript{257}

The similarity of function between portions of Vivaldi’s second violin or viola parts and the wind parts in, say, a symphony or aria by Mozart raises questions of when and where this function originated and whether Vivaldi’s works in any way influenced this aspect of his successors’ approaches to orchestration. Vivaldi was certainly not the first composer ever to specify that a non-melodic or non-bass line part play sustained pitches against more rhythmically active parts. Precedents existed, but these typically involved the use of variation technique or pre-existing material (such as a cantus firmus). If immediate precedents are sought, they tend to surface in operatic contexts and other vocal works, where the different rhythmic layers can assume allusive functions. The opportunity for single-voice sostenuto writing in a non-melodic or non-bass line voice became possible on a normative, non-allusive basis with the late seventeenth century’s increased use of three or more rhythmic layers in homophonic textures, all supported by a

\textsuperscript{257} While Vivaldi’s works, in general, provide all ensemble parts with a turn at sostenuto writing (especially in a few pieces where a sostenuto line is traded among several parts in textures with frequent role exchanges), the outer voices are more likely to have non-parallel sostenuto writing for special allusive effects, as a pedal point (usually as a foil to an active melodic line in the highest or lowest voice), or when the melodic line itself is built from longer rhythmic durations.
slower harmonic rhythm that invites several types of figural writing for inner voices that were not as well-suited to the pace of harmonic changes in much repertoire prior to the late seventeenth century. However, it appears that few of Vivaldi’s immediate predecessors and contemporaries exploited the possibility of sostenuto writing. Perhaps Vivaldi’s use of sostenuto was a natural extension of his well-documented penchant for writing entire movements that are built upon a strictly maintained rhythmic stratification between the various parts of the ensemble (the most famous example is perhaps the second movement of the Concerto in B Minor Op 3 #10, arranged as a concerto for four harpsichords in A minor by J.S. Bach (BWV 1065).258

*Perpetual Motion*

Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works yield at least one example of the viola being used as the sole provider of the opposite effect: perpetual motion using very short note durations. True cases of perpetual motion (i.e., the continuous repetition of equal-duration notes or short rhythmic patterns in a single voice or spread across multiple voices) are not especially common for entire Vivaldian movements, but isolated and brief recurring passages are relatively frequent, especially within the solo episodes of Vivaldi’s earlier

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258 Other examples of rhythmic layering, just within instrumental works and not necessarily pre-Mantuan in date, include: the slow movements of the Violin Concerto in D Minor Op. 8 #7 (which later served as the slow movement of the Chamber Concerto in G Major RV 101, and the Flute Concerto in G Major Op. 10 #6), the Violin Concerto in F Minor ‘L’inverno’ Op. 8 #4, the Chamber Concerto in G Minor RV 107, and the Concerto for 3 Violins in F Major RV 553. Non-parallel sostenuto writing for the viola can be found in such places as the Concerto in G Minor Op. 3 #2 (fourth movement), the Concerto for 2 Violins in A Minor Op. 3 #8 (first movement), the Violin Concerto in D Minor RV 237 (first movement), the motets RV 628 (first movement) and RV 811, Ottone’s aria in Act 1.iv of *Ottone in villa*, and Dario’s original aria from Act 3.iv of *L’incoronazione di Dario*. 
concertos. While thirty-second notes and shorter durations occasionally appear in solo violin parts or as part of a *tirata* (i.e., a rapid scalar gesture, often as an extended anacrusis) scored for one or more violin parts, a steady stream of sixteenth notes appears to have been the normal high end of the scale for rhythmic activity in non-soloistic ensemble parts of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan music. This type of rhythmic material is scored for many different combinations in Vivaldi’s earlier works, but seldom for the viola alone unless the viola forms part of a chain of imitations. However, an exception such as Example 4.3, while rare, illustrates how Vivaldi’s range of approaches to scoring rhythms would have been difficult to develop without reasonable certainty that suitable performers would be readily available.

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259 These include passages of *note ribattute*: measured tremolos, written as sixteenth- or thirty-second-note repetitions of a pitch.

260 The chief exception is found in the violin and viola parts of the seventh movement of the *Dixit Dominus* in D Major RV 595 at the line “Implebit ruinas”, as the text refers to destruction brought upon the wicked on the Day of Judgment—an appropriate place for the rushing sounds of *stile concitato* measured tremolos.

261 Another example, albeit much briefer, occurs in the first movement of the Violin Concerto in F Major Op. 7 #5 (ms. 35-43), where the viola provides a steady stream of eighth notes—a local continuation of the steady eighth notes heard elsewhere in the movement. See also the third movement of the *Salve Regina* in F Major RV 617, Act 2.iii of *Orlando finto pazzo*, and the first movement of the Violin Concerto in E-flat Major Op. 8 #5 (ms. 44-48)—in this last example, the viola is rhythmically paralleled alternately by first and second violins, but it is the only voice to maintain constant sixteenth notes for the entirety of the passage (and into the following measures, where the second violins and first violins cumulatively join the sixteenth-note motion, each “step” in the rhythmic coalescence gradually intensifying the effect of the measured tremolo).
Example 4.3: *Gloria* in D Major, RV 588, ‘Qui sedes’ ms. 1-5

In this movement, two solo violas play a nearly continuous stream of broken dyads that, taken together, generally sound the underlying harmonic triad of each bar. The viola writing in this movement allows Vivaldi to accomplish three things simultaneously: 1) to sound the full triad of the underlying harmony in the alto register of the ensemble texture, 2) to provide a sense of overall vertical stasis within each measure that serves as a foil rather than a distraction to the vertical linear motion of the violin parts, and 3) to incorporate another layer of rhythmic activity that contrasts with the slower patterns in the bass line and the fluctuating rhythmic phrases of the violin and voice parts. Vivaldi could have accomplished the first and second tasks by using sustained tones or having the violas play the same rhythmic pattern as the cellos, adding a third solo viola to complete the triads. The steady, unobtrusive propulsion generated by the sixteenth notes could also

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262 “Soli” in this context strongly implies one player for each part rather than being a warning to the performer that the part is prominent and not in unison with another part. If the latter was the case, there would have been no need to indicate “soli” in the violin parts, which are no more prominent than normal.
have been achieved through repeated tones, simple arpeggio fragments, or other means. The viola writing as it stands here is one of the very few ways to accomplish all of these tasks simultaneously, and this is an example of how Vivaldi conceived of texture as an aggregate of rhythmic layers and used the viola to provide a unique layer even when the part does not simultaneously assume a melodic role.

*Syncopation*

Another way Vivaldi used the viola to add another layer of rhythmic interest was through the use of syncopation. This device, relatively rare in his pre-Mantuan viola parts (aside from numerous instances of quasi-canonic imitation between voices), is typically employed for brief passages such as the single phrase (and its variants) seen here:

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263 This is not, in the strictest sense, a “true” perpetual motion movement: the violas (as with all of the voices) pause at the end of the opening instrumental ritornello (ms. 25-26) and the sixteenth notes are replaced by longer durations leading into the final vocal cadence (ms. 111-112, which includes a fermata, perhaps for a small vocal cadenza). Nevertheless, the motion of the viola parts dominates the movement and is more than continuous enough to evoke the idea of perpetual motion – which makes the rare pauses all the more prominent.
Example 4.4a: *Beatus vir* in B-flat Major, RV 598, ms. 57-61\(^{264}\)

This passage revisits an idea heard twice in the opening ritornello (ms. 5-6 and 10-11) and recurs several times in this single-movement piece, always with the syncopated line assigned to the viola part. Vivaldi could have accomplished almost the same harmonic and registral effects without the syncopation, as is shown in the hypothetical version of Example 4.4b.

Example 4.4b: As above, with viola part modified to remove syncopation

By including the syncopation in the viola part, Vivaldi adds another level of rhythmic interest to this sequential passage and reduces the emphasis that would have occurred on the main beats if he had written the passage more like Example 4.4b. The original

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\(^{264}\) Note: vocal staves (tacet in this passage) have been omitted in this example.
passage is also harmonically enriched through an alternation of thirds and sevenths between the viola and bass lines – a series of suspensions that are missing from the simpler rhythms of Example 4.4b.

_Semi-Independent Contributions: Localized Rhythmic & Metric Support_

In the third group of non-imitative rhythmically independent passages, which are the most common in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works apart from bassetto lines, the viola provides rhythmic support to one or more voices without actually paralleling the other voices. An excellent example of what can be referred to as “metric emphasis,” on account of the way the reinforcement of strong beats sharpens the profile of the underlying metric stress patterns, can be seen in Example 4.5.

Example 4.5a: Violin Concerto in B-flat Major, RV 381, 1st mvt, ms. 1-3

In this example, the viola emphasizes the strong beats (beats 1 and 3, with their anacrases) by reinforcing the bass line at these points (highlighted with boxes in the above example) – the bass line already giving extra weight to these beats by leaping back to the lower octave. This provides a launch point for the sixteenth-note figures in the
violins that begin on each half-measure. The transformation of the viola pattern to continuous eighth notes for the first half of measure 3 propels the phrase into the half-cadence, momentarily contrasting metric emphasis with continuity of equalized motion and thereby highlighting rhythmic differences across the entire phrase. Interestingly, the version of this movement that was published as Vivaldi’s Op. 4 #1 (RV 383a) contains an initial anacrusis in the viola and bass parts but otherwise replaces the metric emphasis of the viola part in RV 381 with the continuous motion of even eighth notes.

Example 4.5b: Violin Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 4 #1, RV 383a, 1st mvt, ms. 1-3

Because it is unclear which version of this movement came first and whether Vivaldi considered one version to be an improvement on the other, it is possible only to observe that each version of the viola part carries a different effect: contrast between metric emphasis and continuous motion in RV 381, uncontested continuous motion in RV 383a.

Metric emphasis leaves its mark on many passages of localized rhythmic support in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan viola parts. Example 4.5 represents this effect occurring as a pattern within a phrase or ritornello unit, but it can also be found on a much more localized level, as in Example 4.6.
Example 4.6: Oboe Concerto in A Minor, RV 462, 1st mvt, ms. 36-38

This example shows how Vivaldi capitalized on the ability to tailor the viola part to suit a variety of purposes, as it executes multiple functions within a mere three measures. In measure 36, the viola has a quasi-independent rhythm while it plays a non-paralleled bassetto line that provides metric emphasis. The viola is also rhythmically grouped with the upper voices (solo oboe and violins) at the cross from measure 36 to measure 37 (indicated by the first box in the example), but this overlaps with the shift of the viola’s allegiance to the bass line in measure 37 (indicated by the second box in the example) as this instrument participates in a vertically elaborated bass line that is a rhythmic and pseudo-melodic response to the upper voices. The upper voices begin a new idea that places metric emphasis on beat 3 (with anacrusis) of measure 37, which is then answered in the “lower” voices (with viola) for the downbeat of measure 38 – however, the viola sustains its first pitch in measure 38, avoiding rhythmic unison until the second half of the measure, suggesting that the purpose of the viola’s rhythm in the cross from measure 37 into measure 38 is to help emphasize the metric stress of the downbeat in measure 38.
In these three measures alone, the viola forms so many different allegiances that it conveys independence by avoiding both neutrality and exclusivity.

Taken as a whole, Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works abound in numerous additional brief passages where the viola has a degree of rhythmic independence that intermittently provides rhythmic support to another part. This is a significant factor in the evaluation of Vivaldi’s flexible use of the viola because even when the instrument does not maintain a unique profile in a traditional sense, metric emphasis permits so many different configurations that it always retains a degree of independence. The same is true when Vivaldi uses the viola to preserve the basic unit of motion by continuing a prevailing rhythmic pattern while one or more voices pause or utilize different rhythmic values. In some cases, the appearance of rhythmic independence stems from a process of rhythmic simplification, whereby the viola generally parallels the rhythms of one voice but occasionally uses longer rhythmic durations (e.g., eighth notes when paralleling a series of sixteenth notes). This pseudo-independence allows the viola to de-emphasize the rhythmic activity on certain beats by providing a slightly greater sense of stasis. It is important to note that, unlike similar rhythmic simplifications in wind parts, there is no evidence that the process was encouraged by any limitations in the capabilities of the instruments or the performers. Instead, this level of minute adjustment to the rhythmic constitution of even the shortest spans of music demonstrates Vivaldi’s attention to rhythmic detail right from his earliest works and makes a strong case that long spans of unvaried rhythmic activity were the result of deliberate choice rather than the consequence of a lack of rhythmic imagination. Beyond these tendencies, found at various times in all of Vivaldi’s other ensemble parts, there are a multitude of individual
passages with rhythmic felicities that are best appreciated within their specific context rather than via reference to general trends in Vivaldi’s music. For the most part, the instances of non-imitative rhythmic independence in Vivaldi’s viola parts reveal an interest in using the viola to add an additional layer of interest to the rhythmic texture of a piece, even when that layer is also used to simultaneously underline aspects of another rhythmic line.

*Rhythmic Unison with a Portion of the Ensemble*

The process of providing support to one rhythmic layer of a multi-layered ensemble texture, as seen in Examples 4.5 and 4.6, is taken a step further when the viola forms a rhythmic unison with a portion of the ensemble (i.e., a “partial-ensemble rhythmic unison” or PERU). The viola is in these instances used to reinforce a rhythmic profile, and the rhythmic density of the passage is reduced by the omission of separate rhythms for the viola. This type of scoring, where the viola is drawn into a coalition with a sub-section of the ensemble, is one of the most common rhythmic contributions of the viola parts in the music of many of Vivaldi’s predecessors and contemporaries, and accounts for a large portion of the rhythmic attributes of his own pre-Mantuan viola writing. Vivaldi’s contemporaries tended to pair the viola line (or lines) with the bass instruments in PERU passages, and Vivaldi generally conforms to this trend. Two differences, however, set Vivaldi’s music apart from that of many of his colleagues: 1) the high incidence of full-ensemble rhythmic unison passages (FERU) as well as of passages scored with the viola as an independent rhythmic line causes the overall percentage of PERU passages scored with viola to be much lower in Vivaldi’s music, and
2) Vivaldi at times allows the viola to remain, like the former Venetian navy, available to
temporarily serve any coalition of ensemble parts without making a firm and lasting
allegiance to a single relationship. This latter feature does not occur very often in
Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan music, but it is found frequently enough to indicate that Vivaldi’s
willingness to realign the viola part was more than a passing novelty.

Vivaldi’s “for hire” approach to the viola as a resource for rhythmic parallelism is
demonstrated by passages such as Example 4.7.

Example 4.7: Concerto for 2 Violins and Cello in G Minor, Op. 3 #2, 2nd mvt, ms. 4-8
In this example, the two viola parts begin in rhythmic unison with the cello and bass parts but switch to rhythmic unison with the violin parts in measure 7, with the result that the violas are the only parts to play in continuous sixteenth notes for the entire excerpt. This passage is typical to the extent that the two rhythmic layers are divided into high- and low-pitched voices, with the mid-register violas serving both sides consecutively. However, it is rather unusual among examples of PERU for the way the treble and bass motivic ideas are swapped in measure 7 – approximate parallel between the pitches of the viola (especially the second viola) and bass lines in measures 4-6 probably suggested the parallel of the violin and viola lines when the sixteenth notes are repeated and transferred to the treble register in measures 7-8, such that the violas repeat almost the same material in measures 7-8 that they play in measures 4-6.

In most cases where Vivaldi transfers the violas between two different PERU combinations, there is a significant difference between the rhythmic material of each grouping. **Example 4.8** is a typical passage.
Here the violas are initially partnered with the rhythms of the bass line. In the second half of measure 5, the violas join the violins in rhythmic unison for a brief moment of parallel melodic lines (PML). The violas are then realigned with the bass in measure 6, only to parallel the violins again in the second half of the same measure before resuming their PERU with the bass line in measure 7. Another common feature illustrated by this particular series of exchanges is that, while there can be parallels between the rhythms of the viola and bass lines without parallels between their pitches, the viola generally parallels both the rhythms and pitches of the violin parts when joining them for a PERU. In other words, Vivaldi, as with most of his Italian colleagues, generally paired the rhythms of the viola part with those of the bass line except when he wanted to use the viola to parallel a melodic gesture in the violin parts. This tendency stems from a bias towards homophonic textures that treat the inner voices as harmonizations of the bass line. In Example 4.8, Vivaldi aligned the viola with the violins only for the ascending arpeggiated gestures in measures 5 and 6. He could have elected to maintain the PML for the rest of the measures, but instead he shifted the balance between the on-beat and off-
beat voices by adding the viola to the former group in the first half of measures 5 and 6, thereby strengthening the beat that the violins are syncopating against.

As suggested by Examples 4.7 and 4.8, Vivaldi typically partners the viola with the bass line in PERU passages unless there is a specific reason for temporarily aligning the viola with the violins (or other parts) that trumps the value of pairing the viola and bass. The same examples, combined with the relatively low percentage of PERU passages in Vivaldi’s viola parts, also show that this tendency to pair the rhythms of the viola and bass lines (rather than the viola and violin lines) is on the basis of preference rather than the result of necessity – a choice to increase emphasis on the rhythms of the bass line rather than as a result of a fundamental conception that the viola belongs to the “bass group.”

_Rhythmic Unison with the Full Ensemble_

One of the main reasons that partial-ensemble rhythmic unisons are less frequent in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works than in the music of many of his predecessors and contemporaries is the higher incidence of full-ensemble rhythmic unisons in Vivaldi’s works (FERU). In addition to the multitude of FEPM passages discussed in Chapter 2, there are many of passages where rhythmic unison occurs without parallel pitches.

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265 Among other examples, see the first and third movements of the Violin Concerto in A Minor RV 355 and the third movement of the Cello Concerto in G Minor RV 416, both believed to be very early works. A later example occurs in Armida’s aria from Act 3.iii of _Armida al campo d’Egitto_ (1718). In the third movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 7 #4, there are passages where the viola forms a PERU with the second violins as they are set in dialogue with a PERU between the first violins and bass line.
Example 4.9a demonstrates how Vivaldi could write a FERU without simultaneously using FEPM. While the violins are here engaged in PML (variously parallel thirds or sixths), the viola and bass lines are generally quite independent from the pitch contours of the violin parts, with the viola tending to center upon a single pitch (D). This passage does not lend itself easily to FEPM since the melodic line provides only a vague sense of implied harmonies that need a bass line to provide harmonic clarity, but Vivaldi could have opted for more differentiation between the parts by using the following rhythmic texture:

266 The stave for Barzane (tacet here) and the continuo figures have been omitted from this example.
Example 4.9b: as above, with FERU segmented

In fact, passages similar to the rhythmic profile of Example 4.9b are relatively common in Vivaldi’s works and those of his contemporaries, so the choice to use continuous FERU in Example 4.9a stems from a desire for the sonic effect of having all voices change notes simultaneously for the duration of the passage.

Yet there is a further category that is particularly important – the ripieno FERU that is simultaneously heard against the rhythms of one or more soloists. The classic example is the series of punctuating chords, such as those set against the cello solo in the opening movement of the Concerto in D Major Op. 3 #1. Here and elsewhere, the solo voices or instruments maintain their own rhythmic profile that stands in contrast to the united rhythms of the remainder of the ensemble, although the soloist periodically matches the ensemble’s rhythms at cadences or other phrase junctures. In this capacity, as a two-tiered rhythmic texture of soloist and ripieno, the FERU was a vital and versatile tool for dramatic contrast in Vivaldi’s works.
The Amalgamated Rhythmic Profile of Vivaldi’s Viola Parts

The rhythmic characteristics of the typical viola part in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works result from a confluence of the principles outlined in this chapter. Yet, while underlying principles can be identified, there are relatively few extended and unadulterated examples of any single type of rhythmic contribution. For instance, a passage where the viola tends to be used as a sostenuto voice may be modified to contribute metric emphasis, or a partial-ensemble rhythmic unison passage may be slightly emended to incorporate a moment of syncopation in the viola part. Even when the rhythms of the viola part are aligned with the rhythms of the bass line, frequent deviations may occur to achieve metric emphasis, sostenuto contrast, continuity of prevailing motion (i.e., taking over the most common rhythmic duration of a passage, such as a series of eighth notes, while other voices pause or use different rhythmic durations), or intensification of the prevailing motion (e.g., introducing sixteenth notes when the prevailing motion has been in quarter or eighth notes).

As a result of this mosaic-like construction, the rhythmic character of Vivaldi’s viola parts frequently occupies a zone between parallelism and independence. There are passages where one pole is more evident than another, such as the rhythmic independence that stems from using the viola alone as a unison bassetto line or the rhythmic parallelism that goes hand in hand with strict parallel melodic lines. As a whole, however, there are very few entire movements where the viola writing stays at either end of this spectrum. Instead, Vivaldi typically alternates between these poles during the course of an individual movement in addition to allowing the viola to occupy the wide middle ground between true parallelism and non-parallelism.
A traditional assessment of the rhythmic characteristic of Vivaldi’s viola parts might conclude that they merit the most praise for the instances where they maintain the most rhythmic independence, otherwise being generally subservient to the rhythmic ideas of other ensemble parts. We can now see that such a restrictive focus on rhythmic independence overlooks Vivaldi’s real achievement: his conception of the viola as a powerful asset for the orchestration of rhythmic details. It is true that Vivaldi readily modifies the contributions of the viola part to accommodate matters such as the reinforcement or counter-balancing of other ensemble parts, but it is exactly this ability to rapidly shift alignments that is a seed of the flexible concept of coloristic orchestration in much nineteenth- and twentieth-century ensemble writing.

The rhythms of Vivaldi’s viola parts are, nevertheless, shaped by factors beyond the ever-changing interaction of diverse rhythmic principles. In addition to the demands placed on viola parts by melodic and bass line functions, the rhythms of a particular viola part can also be affected by the harmonic contributions that Vivaldi assigned to the viola. The principles behind those harmonic contributions are the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Harmonic, Registral, and Timbral Functions

The previous chapters have demonstrated the most easily recognizable ways in which Vivaldi drew upon the viola as a resource for the orchestration of texture and sonority. The present chapter investigates the many less prominent features in Vivaldi’s viola parts and explores the often complex considerations at work in those instances in which a viola part deviates from a strict adherence to the principles of melodic, bass, and rhythmic functions we have considered thus far. These considerations include the use of registral space, management of voice-leading, the voicing of vertical sonorities, continuity in sequential passages, and the overarching issues of amplitude and timbre that are fundamental to the art of orchestration. The goal is not to provide an explanation for each note in every one of Vivaldi’s viola parts – rather, the intent is to draw attention to some of the more common patterns that occur and to elucidate some of the decision-making that Vivaldi invested in his viola parts. As we shall see, even the most deceptively simple passages – conventionally understood as serving a purely harmonic role – reflect Vivaldi’s attention to the finer details of sonority and can be better understood in terms of how the viola functions as a layer of timbre in his music.\footnote{“Timbre” in this chapter refers only to the general characteristics of the sound qualities of bowed string instruments – as opposed to plucked strings and wind instruments – and is not used to discuss the finer nuances that distinguish, for example, a violin from a viola, an A-string from a D-string, or specific modifications of tone quality made by the performer. At least in his pre-Mantuan works, Vivaldi does not appear to consistently distinguish between the timbre of a violin or viola unless the latter is featured prominently (such as in a soloistic passage or a bassetto line that is sharply differentiated from the character and register of the violin parts).}

267
“Harmonic filler” is the catch-all phrase modern writers tend to use for passages where the viola does not serve a melodic, bass line, or rhythmically independent function. Example 5.1 illustrates one passage where the viola part might elicit such a label, because the viola part does not provide a clear melody or bass line and appears to serve primarily to thicken the vertical harmonies.

Example 5.1: *Salve Regina*, RV 617, 2nd mvt, ms. 1-8

In this example, we are confronted with several reasons why the phrase “harmonic filler” is neither synonymous with harmonic function nor adequate for describing the contributions of the viola part. The previous chapter demonstrated that the lack of rhythmic independence does not equate with a lack of rhythmic contribution, and the viola in Example 5.1 can be said to reinforce the rhythm of the bass line in measures 1, 3, and 8 while providing a sostenuto effect modified to draw out metric emphasis for most of the remaining measures. Similarly, vestiges of parallel bass writing (at the tenth) can be seen between the viola and bass parts – particularly in measures 1, 3, 5, and 7. In

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268 “Harmonic filler” in itself is an umbrella term that incorporates passages as diverse in purpose as chord completion to non-contrapuntal figurations such as an Alberti bass pattern.

269 The staff for the solo soprano, silent during the opening ritornello, has been omitted in this example.
light of these considerations we can see that, even in a passage such as Example 5.1, the harmonic function is only one aspect of the viola’s contribution. “Harmonic filler” is therefore inadequate for the description of the overall purpose of this passage.

The phrase is also problematic because it fails to acknowledge that decisions regarding amplitude and timbre can be of great importance to choices of orchestration. While not explicit, “harmonic filler” implies that a part’s most valuable contributions are those where the pitch class is unique to that part (e.g., the only part to play the fifth of the chord). While it is true that virtually every one of Vivaldi’s works includes several passages where the viola provides chord tones that are not present in the violin or bass parts, as is well apparent in Example 5.1, there are many other moments when the pitch class of the viola part is the same as one of the other string, wind, or vocal parts. More importantly, even when the viola appears (in the score) to be the only part to carry a particular pitch class, such as the third or fifth of a vertical harmony, the pitch class is likely to be present in the harmonies of the basso continuo part, as in the case in Example 5.1, whether specified by continuo figures or not (unless, of course, the continuo is expressly marked “senza cembalo,” “tasto solo,” etc.).

In these cases and in Vivaldi’s viola writing in general, it is more productive to think of the viola as a resource for impacting the timbre and amplitude of specific pitches within the vertical harmonies – i.e., for orchestrating the harmonic content of a passage.

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270 In this example, the only pitches of the viola part that are not indicated or implied by the continuo figures, including assumed triads and repetitions within the measure that are not expressly indicated by figures, are the viola’s final notes in measures 4 and 6. Here, a dash or figures could have been provided to indicate that a single harmony is more-or-less sustained throughout the measure despite the motion in the bass line, but it is entirely possible that experienced continuo players might have recognized and understood the harmonic context of these spots without prompting and played or sustained a realization that included the viola’s pitch class.
Implicit in this refined understanding is the fact that Vivaldi chose whether or not to have a chord fully orchestrated with the timbre of the string ensemble (as opposed to omitting one or more pitches, reserving them for any continuo harmonizations) in addition to deciding how to voice the chord overall (including doublings). This wider array of options corresponds with the range of scenarios found in Vivaldi’s music, and also incorporates the numerous scenarios – discussed in previous chapters – where Vivaldi uses the viola to harmonically enrich a melodic line, bass line, or rhythmic gesture through parallelism between different pitch classes. If we consider that harmonic contributions can be provided in a specific passage whether or not melodic and bass line contributions are also being made, then Example 5.1 simply represents a subgroup of passages where the harmonic contributions are uncoupled from these functions.\(^{271}\)

Instead of “harmonic filler,” I propose referring to passages where the viola fills a harmonic role without simultaneously providing a distinct melodic or bass line function as passages of “harmonic-rhythmic scoring.” The dual emphasis on harmonic and rhythmic contributions acknowledges that, in addition to precisely specifying one or more pitch classes of the vertical harmony (whether or not the pitch class is doubled by another voice), the durations of the viola part lend a rhythmic profile to the harmonies. The reverse – that the viola participates in the harmonization of the rhythmic material – is equally true.\(^{272}\) The inclusion of “scoring” in the terminology is important because it acknowledges that decisions of how to score these harmonies and rhythms incorporate

\(^{271}\) Parallel lines of the same pitch class, whether melodic or bass, could be considered, by the same token, to constitute the scoring of melodic or bass functions without additional harmonic contributions.

\(^{272}\) This broad understanding encompasses, at the simplest extreme, the harmonization of parallel rhythms in multiple voices and, at the most complex extreme, the harmonization of a rhythm that is implied by the interaction between voices with multiple, distinct rhythmic profiles.
the deeply intertwined issues of amplitude, timbre, and register. We can use this broader view of harmonic orchestration and the distinction between harmonic functions and passages of harmonic-rhythmic scoring to appreciate better the differences between passages such as Example 5.1 and, say, an example of parallel bass writing (for instance, Example 3.4).

There are many passages of harmonic-rhythmic scoring in the viola parts of Vivaldi’s works, but the relatively high-frequency of instances in the pre-Mantuan works where the viola is used for melodic or bass line functions (or is silent for a passage) makes these harmonic-rhythmic passages less common than in the works of many of Vivaldi’s predecessors and contemporaries. It is, in fact, difficult to find entire movements in Vivaldi’s earlier works where the viola does not take on a melodic or bass line function, whereas some of his colleagues wrote entire movements where the viola engages only in harmonic-rhythmic scoring. This is important evidence that the variety of functions found in Vivaldi’s viola parts is the result of using the viola as a flexible resource – a tendency that places Vivaldi somewhat apart from many of his Italian colleagues.

Since the specific harmonic contribution of the viola part during a particular passage (both with and without melodic or bass functions) often results from the interaction of a multitude of the factors, we shall examine each factor individually and reflect on how these can affect the harmonic profile of the viola part.
Pitch Class Options

The options Vivaldi had for choosing which pitch class to assign to the viola in passages of harmonic-rhythmic scoring were primarily affected by the harmonic vocabulary of his idiom. Despite a tendency towards relatively uncomplicated triadic harmonization, many Italian composers of the period, including Vivaldi, also drew from rich harmonic palettes on occasion, especially in through-composed slow movements or for special dramatic circumstances in texted works. In these cases, interest tended to center around surprising juxtapositions of harmonies rather than construction of more complex vertical harmonies. In most ways, Vivaldi’s viola parts fit within the harmonic parameters of his Italian colleagues. For instance, the expected chord tones (i.e., the root, the third, the fifth, and the dominant seventh) are quite plentiful, as are passing tones and upper and lower neighbor tones – especially when the viola is serving a melodic or bass function. Chromaticism, Neapolitan sixths (i.e., triads on the lowered supertonic), diminished chords, and dissonances resulting from suspensions occur in many works. On occasion, the viola part even legitimately clashes with other parts, usually as a result of holding steadfast to a particular linear pattern in the part-writing, as if the harmonic changes of the other voices are unable to overcome the linear inertia of the viola part.273

273 For example, see the finale of the Violin Concerto in D Minor Op. 6 #6 (ms. 8 and elsewhere) where the violins and violas clash with parallel seconds on beats 2 (second half) and 3. These dissonances arise from the strictly maintained sequential repetition of different gestures in the unison violins and the VEB (violas in parallel tenths with the bass). However, some of the apparent clashes are the result of glitches by scribes and editors (both historical and modern in the latter category). To give but three examples the reader might encounter in modern editions: in the third measure of the second movement of RV 113, the Malipiero edition records that the viola’s third pitch is an E, which clashes with the F in the first violins and deviates from the sequential pattern of the viola part in measures 2 and 4. See Vol. 509, ed. Gian Francesco Malipiero, of Le opere di Antonio Vivaldi. Review of the sole surviving source, in Vienna, reveals an oversight by the modern editor – the pitch should be an F as in the source and in agreement with the parallel passage of measures 16-18. Harmonic oddities resulting from editorial glitches can also
Two features of Vivaldi’s harmonic vocabulary impact his viola parts in a way that sets them slightly apart from most of his Italian contemporaries: his use of augmented triads, typically in first inversion, and chains of unprepared seventh chords. Most of the augmented triads in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works occur during minor-mode stepwise sequential passages. Not every such sequential passage includes an augmented triad, and those that do are typically found in solo episodes accompanied by one or two violin parts or basso continuo. Nevertheless, these special harmonies are occasionally found in Vivaldi’s viola parts, although they occur more often in his violin parts.

Occasionally be found in the new critical edition [Nuova edizione critica delle opere di Antonio Vivaldi, edited by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (Milan: Ricordi, 1982-)], such as the F-sharp on the first beat of measure 52 of the third movement of the Dixit Dominus RV 595 (ed. Michael Talbot), which should read G – resulting in an expected tonic chord rather than an awkwardly placed submediant; the correct reading has been confirmed, in private correspondence, by Michael Talbot. A similar error occurs on beat three of measure 12 in the same movement. In the case of RV 112, both sources (in Dresden and Vienna) record that the first pitch for the viola in the penultimate measure of the third movement is a D, which clashes with the C in both violin parts and the bass part – a clash retained in the Malipiero edition (Vol. 507, ed. by Gian Francesco Malipiero, of Le opere di Antonio Vivaldi). It is extremely unlikely that Vivaldi intended such a scenario, given the harmonic context – most probably, Vivaldi meant for the viola to play an E and the mistake resulted from a scribal error or confusing markings in a now-lost source that pre-dated both surviving sources.

His fondness for sudden shifts between parallel major and minor modes does not appear to have a strong effect on the viola parts of the pre-Mantuan works.
Example 5.2a: Concerto for 4 Violins and Cello in B Minor, Op. 3 #10, 1st mvt, ms. 53-57
Ex. 5.2b: Harmonic reduction of the above (fundamental bass shown on lower stave)

In this example, the augmented triad is outlined by the violins and violas. Reading the viola part alone without the benefit of a score, a violist might be tempted to assume there is an error in measure 55. But we can see that this relatively unusual-looking arpeggio is a logical, if colorful, variant of the rising sequential harmonies of this passage that alternates root-position and first-inversion triads. Specifically, the harmony at the end of measure 55 stems from the intersection of the V-I sequentially rising leaps in the fundamental bass line and the overlapping stepwise ascent of the second highest voice from C-sharp to F-sharp via D-sharp and E-sharp. Arpeggiated augmented triads are not particularly common in Italian viola parts of the period, so the passage in Example 5-2 likely came as a surprise to some of the violists who encountered it.

Another Vivaldian trait found in many sequential passages are chains of unprepared and unresolved seventh chords. Talbot notes that “no previous composer had

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275 For ease of reading, bracketed Roman numerals indicate highly localized chord relations without reference to the underlying tonality of the passage.

276 In other instances, Vivaldi loosened the linear ascent of one of the voices – avoiding the augmented triad by lowering the augmented fifth scale degree a semitone. See, for example, the second movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 3 #6 (ms. 10), where the C-sharp in the third violin part is followed by a C-natural, resulting in a normal F-major chord for the second half of measure 10 – a true preparatory dominant for the B-flat-major chord that follows in measure 11.

277 Further examples of this harmony in Vivaldi’s earlier works include the first movement of the Violin Concerto in D Major Op. 6 #4 (ms. 50), the second movement of the Concerto in G Minor Op. 3 #2 (ms. 5 and elsewhere), and the third movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 3 #3 (ms. 34).
used the seventh in a chord with greater licence." Vivaldi’s contemporaries occasionally wrote passages of consecutive seventh chords, especially in music for one or two treble parts and basso continuo. Vivaldi was more willing than most others of his time to use this harmonization in passages scored for a four- or five-part string ensemble. For all the examples where the sevenths are exchanged between violin parts and indicated in the figured bass, there are other passages where the viola provides the seventh, typically by suspending a tone from a previous chord (a 3-7 suspension). Such 3-7 suspensions would become very common in subsequent decades, but the consecutive sevenths in Example 5.3, resulting from the overlapping 3-7 suspensions of the first violin and viola parts, are a bit bolder and more logically sophisticated than is typical of fast movements in Italian ensemble music of the period.

Example 5.3: Violin Concerto in A Major, Op. 4 #5, 3rd mvt, ms. 18-20

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278 Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 78.

279 This series of harmonies, however, is far less radical than those found in certain through-composed slow movements and transitional sections in works by Corelli, Albinoni, Vivaldi, and others, where the slower tempo, rhythmic homogeneity, and lack of a clearly defined melodic line encourage the listener to focus on the harmonic motion, which is often marked by apparent non-sequiturs that only gradually reveal their connection to an underlying harmonic logic.

280 The sustained viola pitches have been subdivided in this example to indicate changes in chord-tone function. Boxes indicate pitches sounding the seventh of a chord.
In Example 5.3, the first violin and viola parts engage in a dialogue of sevenths, even though the melodic interaction is between the two violin parts. The most exceptional aspect of this passage is that the violas form a seventh chord on the final beat of the measure – normally, dissonances occur at the beginning of the measure, resolving to a consonance at the end of the measure. The violin parts abide by this convention, but the viola (and continuo harmonization) adds a surprising harmonic twist to the end of measures 18 and 19.

While we have outlined the range of chord tones that Vivaldi used, the actual pitch that he selected for the viola part in passages of harmonic-rhythmic scoring depended on several additional factors. Even a basic triad offered multiple choices for scoring and registral distribution of pitches (i.e., the “voicing” of the chord), often affected by the relationship of one chord to its neighbors. These options are governed, in part, by a series of principles – principles of part-writing and harmonic scoring – that Vivaldi’s music frequently exhibits.281 It is to these principles that we now turn our attention.

The Contest between Voice-Leading and the Completion of String Triads

Vivaldi’s full-fledged fugal movements provide ample evidence of his awareness of the conventions of contrapuntal voice-leading and part-writing, such as the avoidance of parallel fifths, a preference for contrary motion, and the stepwise resolution of leading

281 Although these are general guidelines that Vivaldi’s music tends to exhibit, he at times breaks from his own conventions for particular expressive purposes; this is one reason why it can be difficult to ascertain the authenticity and chronology of Vivaldi’s works based on stylistic factors alone.
tones. The same concerns are evident in Vivaldi’s non-imitative textures, but they are often mitigated or suspended to accommodate other tasks. The chief competition in this regard is Vivaldi’s preference, where possible, to present a complete chord scored within the string ensemble. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the presence of the basso continuo means that chords may be complete even if one or more tones aren’t expressly written into the string parts, and there are plenty of passages where Vivaldi sought a thinner string texture that does not involve complete chords. Nevertheless, when full chords are desired (especially at cadences and chordal punctuations), Vivaldi was willing to sacrifice voice-leading conventions if necessary. As a result, the part-writing in Vivaldi’s chord-oriented passages reflects the ever-changing battles in the contest between voice-leading and full string chords – an ongoing conflict that reveals the broader intersection between the issues of counterpoint and sonority within Vivaldi’s style.

Cadential leading tones prove to be one of the most frequent sites for skirmishes in this ongoing struggle. Vivaldi normally resolved cadential leading tones in the expected manner (i.e., stepwise ascent to the octave) when these occur in melodic voices, but he often allowed the inner parts to abandon this guideline.\footnote{See Talbot, \textit{Vivaldi}, 79, 84.}
Example 5.4: Aria ‘O sidera’ (#15b) from *Juditha triumphans*, RV 644, ms. 1-3

In Example 5.4, the viola presents the leading tone over dominant harmonization on beat 2, but this E does not resolve to an F on beat 3 as would be expected. Instead, Vivaldi has the viola part leap downward to a C – sacrificing orthodox resolution of the leading tone for a complete string triad (F-C-A) at the cadence’s arrival point. The resolution from E to F within the register around middle C is implied by the bass F and may even be sounded by one or more harmonizing continuo instruments, but “on paper” it appears to be left unresolved. Such instances abound in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works – in these cases, the desire to have a complete triad in the string parts on the resolution of the cadence was apparently stronger than the pull of voice-leading convention.\(^{283}\) This most commonly happens when, as in Example 5.4, the viola approaches the cadence by falling from a leading tone to the fifth of the cadential chord.\(^{284}\) Example 5.4 also illustrates

\(^{283}\) As further evidence of Vivaldi’s priorities in these matters, Kolneder, in discussing the part-writing of the slow movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 3 #6, finds that “the parallel unisons in bars 4-6 and above all the doublings of the leading note in the cadence show that here too considerations of sound-colour took priority over purity of technique […]”. See Walter Kolneder, *Antonio Vivaldi: His Life and Work*, trans. by Bill Hopkins (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 77.

\(^{284}\) By contrast, cadences approached from the root of the preparatory chord either carry the same pitch into the cadential resolution (i.e., thus becoming a fifth of the chordal resolution) or by falling to the third of the chordal resolution.
how Vivaldi can still preserve the convention of contrary motion – here between the viola and bass – while sacrificing leading-tone resolution.

Vivaldi’s reliance on implied leading-tone resolutions, where the resolution occurs across multiple voices and/or registers rather than within a single voice in a single register, was not unique; Bach’s chorale settings often do the same.285 From a contrapuntal point of view, this type of part-writing may seem clumsy or, at best, highly compromised. But the frequency with which it occurs in Vivaldi’s music, when it would have been easy enough to refrain from such licenses, strongly suggests that sonority – specifically the timbre of scored harmonies – was a more important criterion for Vivaldi’s compositional thinking. Perhaps, as with his use of parallelism, this aspect of Vivaldi’s part-writing betrays a hint of keyboard-oriented chordal thinking rather than a contrapuntal linear conception.286

Complete chords distributed among the string parts are not always possible, especially when the top parts unite to create a three-line texture comprised of unison violins, violas, and bass lines. This is particularly evident during cadences, since the violins and bass normally both cadence on the root of the chord. In these cases, a general trend emerges, although exceptions are easy to find: for final cadences of a movement, including the A-section of a da capo aria, the viola tends to take the third of the chord, with the fifth omitted from the string scoring. By comparison, interior cadences are

285 I thank Scott Burnham for drawing this to my attention.

286 A quick perusal of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan second violin parts suggests that cadential leading tones are less likely to be dropped from second violin parts than viola parts; this is probably because the second violin part is more often used to approach cadences in a melodic or linear fashion. Nevertheless, dropped leading tones can be found, for instance, at half cadences where one or both violin parts leap to begin the next phrase rather than resolving the leading tone by stepwise motion.
rather more varied, although they often present the fifth in the viola part and omit the third entirely from the string scoring.\textsuperscript{287} The difference may stem from the position of prominence for the final cadence, where the final sonority may linger longer in actual performance and/or in the listener’s memory. If the prevailing tonality has already been established and a choice between the third and fifth must be made, reinforcing the root and third in the string ensemble emphasizes the tonal center and the prevailing modality (major or minor).\textsuperscript{288} Since the continuo instruments would likely provide the third and fifth, and Vivaldi was more willing to choose either option for interior cadences (even when these have the same melodic and bass lines as the final cadence), Vivaldi appears to have had a special preference for making sure the mode of the piece contributes to the parting impression of the work.

On the other hand, in textures of four or more “real” parts, the majority of final cadences have the fifth in the viola part and the third in the second violins. This is usually due to adherence to the principles of part-writing in the approach to the cadence, where contrary motion between the violin parts in the cadence tends to make the third of the chord preferable for the second violin. In that case, Vivaldi’s interest in scoring full chords for the string ensemble frequently dictates that the viola should sound the fifth of the chord, even if that means violating the conventions for leading-tone resolution.

Even with this narrow focus on cadential chords, it is evident that Vivaldi’s choice of chord tones was connected to a web of compromises between the conventions

\textsuperscript{287} In both three- and four-part textures, there are also cadences with all parts on the root of the cadential chord.

\textsuperscript{288} The mode of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works is only rarely altered at the final cadence. Exceptions include two sacred works: the final movement of the \textit{Stabat Mater} RV 621, and \textit{Laudate Dominum omnes gentes} RV 606 – both involving a \textit{tierce de Picardie}. 
of good voice-leading and Vivaldi’s attention to timbre. Yet there is an additional element to the decision-making process for assigning pitches in passages of harmonic-rhythmic scoring: the impact that the choice of register has upon the use of registral (i.e., vertical) space within the ensemble texture. This consideration has implications that extend throughout entire pieces, so we will now consider Vivaldi’s handling of the viola as a resource for the mapping of registral space.

**Registral Space**

Considering Vivaldi’s fascination with arresting and dramatic sonorities, the registral function of the viola is exceedingly more important than has hitherto been acknowledged. The ambitus of the viola line in any given passage is subject to a number of factors, such as voice-leading, the pitch range of the entire ensemble throughout a piece or during a specific passage, and the additional contributions simultaneously provided by the viola part, especially melodic and bass functions.

In the most general sense, Vivaldi’s deployment of the viola part within the vertical sonority of his ensemble music fits the standard conventions of his day, where the viola line is primarily located somewhere between the registers of violins and the bass instruments, typically favoring closer proximity to the violins than to the bass.\(^{289}\) This distribution yields extra sonic brilliance by mirroring the natural resonance of the overtone series, which also has wider spacing in the lower part of the series and becomes denser among the highest overtones. However, Vivaldi frequently pushed the upper

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\(^{289}\) However, his use of the vertically elaborated bass (VEB) provides many instances where this tendency is abandoned.
extreme of the solo violin’s selective compass higher than most of his colleagues, thus expanding the registral canvas in many passages featuring one or more solo violins. This expansion of the ensemble ambitus provided the opportunity for the more dramatic and individualistic aspects of Vivaldi’s deployment of registral space: his use of contrasting sub-sections – juxtapositions of registral extremes and adjustments to the vertical distribution of the ensemble parts – that often give the impression that the ensemble’s pitch range is dramatically wider than in much music of the period.

As we have already seen in Chapter 3, Vivaldi’s use of the bassetto fits into a broader tendency to exploit the upper reaches of the ensemble ambitus as a means to differentiate the sonority of units ranging in size from individual phrases to single solo passages to entire movements within a multi-movement cycle. To these examples can be added numerous instances of high-register lines scored for the basso continuo, often crossing above middle C. Even when the continuo line is kept within a low register and the violins do not ascend particularly high, Vivaldi could suggest an upwards shift of ambitus by writing a viola part that shifts from the low alto register to a high alto register.

Less frequently but no less dramatically, Vivaldi exploited the bottom of the ensemble’s ambitus. For instance, there are a few movements that end with a twofold statement of a cadential phrase, the second statement placed an octave lower than the first. These are occasionally written with the violins near the bottom of their compass and the remaining voices filling the registers below the violins. However, even when the violins are playing these low pitches, the bass line does not always descend to the bottom of its compass – the contrast against the normally wider spacing of voices coupled with a denser texture of violins and violas in alto and tenor registers is enough to create a sense
of dwelling within the bottom registers of the ensemble’s ambitus. Similarly, in the many instances where Vivaldi writes a series of motivic exchanges between an ensemble divided into higher-register and lower-register voices, the actual range of the voices may not be particularly high or low (for instance, the violas, as part of the lower pair of voices, may occupy the same range as the violins) – the contrast is more of a relative distinction. Nevertheless, the exchanges are an effective means to draw attention to the width of the ensemble ambitus by sounding each register in sequence rather than simultaneously.

To understand the role of these trends in the formation of Vivaldi’s viola parts, it is useful to draw upon a few key terms. I use the term “registral distribution” to refer to the placement of parts across the vertical soundscape.\textsuperscript{290} The registral distribution is, in part, characterized by the “registral density” of a passage, a relative assessment based on the number of parts placed within a particular register of the ensemble ambitus.\textsuperscript{291} By manipulating a passage’s registral density and/or utilizing different registers within the ambitus (or even expanding or decreasing the prevailing ambitus of a piece), Vivaldi

\textsuperscript{290} For example, a passage might have the following registral distribution: one violin part placed in a high register from \( d^2 \) to \( d^3 \), another violin part in the range from \( b^1 \) to \( a^2 \), a viola part in an alto register (\( a^1 \)), the continuo bass line in the tenor register (\( c^# \)-\( d^1 \), with possible doubling an octave lower on a violone); any gaps across the larger ambitus from \( c^# \) to \( d^3 \) might be filled by harmonizing continuo instruments.

\textsuperscript{291} For example, the placement of three of four ensemble parts (say, two violins and viola) within the range of \( g \) to \( e^1 \) for the concluding measures of a piece creates a registral distribution that has greater registral density in the middle of the ensemble ambitus. It should be noted that registral density, as I use it, is relative and only accounts for specified linear parts and presumed doubling of the continuo line, at the octave, by the violone. The option of multiplying the number of performers on a part, especially the bass line, can have a profound effect on the amplitude of a particular line (particularly if all parts are not multiplied equally) but it does not alter the number of lines unless parallel octaves or other parallels are introduced – factors that, while worth bearing in mind, belong more to the study of the effects of re-orchestration in performance (a practice well validated in the historical record) than the present study of orchestration specified or implied by Vivaldi’s scores.
could alter the “registral mean” – the average range of the voices in a given passage.\textsuperscript{292}

The following examples illustrate these concepts.

Example 5.5: Cello Concerto in C Minor, RV 402, 1st mvt, ms. 13-15

Example 5.6: Sinfonia in C Major, RV 113, 1st mvt, ms. 9-11

For most of Example 5.5 (from beat 2 of measure 13 to beat 2 of measure 15), the four parts are distributed in close vertical proximity, with the two violins in the alto register, the viola in a low alto or tenor register, and the bass instruments in the bass register. The registral density of this passage is greatest in the alto register, with much of the activity

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\textsuperscript{292} The registral mean can be likened to a vertical center of gravity: it can be described as either the balance between the number of higher- and lower-register parts, or the average between the extremes (high and low) of the ambitus of a passage. For example, a passage with a treble-oriented registral mean might have an ambitus that extends from c to g\textsuperscript{3}, or it could have a continuo line reaching from C to d, a viola line stretching from g\textsuperscript{1} to e\textsuperscript{2}, and three violin parts (including soloist) with compound lines occupying c\textsuperscript{2} to e\textsuperscript{3} – i.e., a registral density in the treble register than exceeds the density of all lower registers.
occurring between g and f. As the downbeat of measure 13 indicates, the overall ambitus of the ensemble in this movement extends much higher than in the phrase highlighted here. However, the density of the alto register combined with the low ambitus (G to f) gives this passage a relatively low registral mean – somewhere around c or slightly lower.

This stands in contrast with Example 5.6, where the registral distribution of the parts is closer to what I call the “default registral distribution” found in music by Vivaldi and many of his contemporaries, even though both violin parts are in unison for this particular passage. Here, both violin parts occupy a moderately high treble register centered around e, with the viola in an alto register and the bass line in a bass or baritone register centered around c. There is a small registral gap between the ambitus of the viola and violin parts (between f-sharp and a) and a slightly larger gap between the basso continuo and viola parts (from f-sharp to c). The registral density in Example 5.6 is fairly evenly distributed between the high, middle, and low voices, although it is often denser in the treble register in other passages where the two violin parts are not in unison. The registral mean of Example 5.6 is higher than that of Example 5.5, hovering a few pitches above c. With frequent recourse to his default registral distribution, especially during ritornello and other tutti passages, Vivaldi established a sonic benchmark that

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293 Often in Vivaldi’s default registral distribution, these gaps are filled – literally or suggestively – by leaps in the violin or bass parts to create compound lines that help cover multiple registers simultaneously.

294 The halfway-point between the unison treble line and the bass line covers a range of c-g, which happens also to cover most of the ambitus of the viola part in this passage. In fact, the registral mean momentarily dips lower at the end of measure 10 as all parts descend to lower pitches, while the mean in measure 11 is a step higher than measure 9 because measure 11 begins a sequential repetition of a phrase heard in measure 8 and the registral distribution of the parts is preserved in the sequential repetition (which is not always the case in Vivaldi’s sequential repetitions).
could be used to chart the music’s ventures into different registral distributions and registral extremes.

While the basso continuo generally marks the bottom of the ensemble ambitus, these examples show how the viola part provides a fairly consistent reference point against which changes to the register of the bass or treble lines, as well as the ensemble’s registral distribution, registral density, and registral mean are brought into sharper focus. These manipulations of register, and their interconnections with Vivaldi’s orchestration, should be treated as an important element of his style.

Since the range of the viola part is normally located between those of the violins and the bass line, the overall range of a specific passage guides the ambitus of the viola part. Most of the time, the viola part is written in the middle (g to d⁰) of Vivaldi’s selective compass for the instrument. There are only two main reasons for the viola part to descend lower than the compass of the violin (i.e., below g): 1) sequential repetition or some other transposed repetition of a parallel passage, and 2) a narrow and low-pitched ensemble ambitus. The first circumstance occurs when the viola line needs to descend below g in order to maintain the descending sequential repetition of a figure that began on a higher pitch or when a passage heard in one key is repeated in a different key (as happens in ritornello-form movements, for example). Meanwhile, whenever the violin parts descend to the lower part of their compass (especially from g to d¹), the viola part is likely to utilize the bottom of the instrument’s compass so that the part can stay below the violins.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵ See, for example, the final measures of the Concerto in B Minor Op. 3 #10, first movement, and the Concerto in D Minor Op. 3 #11, fourth movement. However, if the bass line is relatively high or other
Similar circumstances account for a large portion of the passages where Vivaldi places the viola part in the top register of his selective compass for the instrument, albeit it is the high register of the bass line that raises the register of the viola line during passages with a narrow and high-pitched ensemble ambitus, in order to minimize the crossing of these two parts. Most of the other high-register passages occur, ironically, when the viola part is given a bass function, whether as a bassetto or a VEB, particularly when the bass line is high and the VEB uses parallel octaves or parallel tenths.

Even when Vivaldi uses these extremes, however, the viola part is seldom assigned to the top or bottom of the selective compass for more than a few notes at a time. In many instances, the viola part maintains the same ambitus found in passages of default registral distribution. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the viola was employed primarily as an anchor point, helping to define space within the tenor and alto registers, and that the strongest contrast in Vivaldi’s scoring of vertical sonority typically stem from the presence or absence of the viola (and thus the tenor or alto register) during a particular passage, rather than whether or not Vivaldi placed the part within the viola’s highest or lowest register. By extension, changes to the default registral mean are mainly accomplished by altering the register of one or more violin or bass parts or temporarily silencing them. Through its place in the middle of the ensemble’s selective compass, the viola is ideally positioned to occupy variously the top range of a low-register ensemble ambitus, the bottom range of a high-register ensemble ambitus, and the center range of a passage using Vivaldi’s default registral distribution.

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voice-leading considerations intervene, the violas may cross higher than the violins. At least in the pre-Mantuan works, evidence suggests Vivaldi was more willing to let the violas cross over the violins than to descend below the bass line.
Navigating Competing Demands

We have seen in Example 5.1 how the principles and preferences outlined above interact to shape the viola part and the resulting harmonic-rhythmic scoring. As further evidence, let us examine what this passage might look like if Vivaldi’s music was shaped by a different set of tendencies. Example 5.7a indicates all of the places where the viola part is used to score a complete triad within the string ensemble, as well as instances of contrary motion between the violins and viola or the viola and bass.

Example 5.7a: Salve Regina, RV 617, 2nd mvt, ms. 1-8, showing contrary motion and chord completion

As indicated by the asterisks, complete triads are formed by the string parts for the majority of this passage – typically for fifty to seventy-five percent of each measure.296 More importantly, there are very few pitch classes in the viola part that are not implicitly or explicitly indicated by the bass figures.297 This means that the decision to assign triad-

296 The main exceptions are, in fact, in situations where more than three parts are needed to complete the chord – places where the treble and bass sound the tonic (e.g., the downbeat of measure 1), instances of passing tones and neighbor tones (as with the bass b-flat in measure 4), or implied seventh chords (e.g., the last eighth note in measure 4).

297 The exceptions are: the last note in measure 4, the last note in measure 6, and places where the continuo bass has passing tones while the viola sustains a pitch (as in measure 2). However, it could be that throughout this passage, the chord (explicit or implied) signaled by a figure at the beginning of a measure...
completing chord tones to the viola was based to a large extent on a desire to clothe the complete chord in string timbre.

**Example 5.7a** also shows how there is a greater frequency of contrary motion between the viola and bass lines than between the violin and viola lines. This supports the theory that Vivaldi was more apt to adhere to the rules of part-writing when fashioning the relationship between the viola and bass lines. If, instead, he had preferred to apply these rules to the interaction between the violin and viola parts, the passage in **Example 5.1** might have been written as follows:

Example 5.7b: As above, with viola part altered to favor contrary motion against the violin parts

As indicated by the boxes in the above example, changing the octave (but not the pitch class) of six notes in the viola part is enough to shift the balance of contrary motion towards greater interaction between the violin and viola parts without decreasing the

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remains in effect for the entire measure, as per the pattern of harmonic rhythm here, unless a new figure is introduced later in the same measure (as happens in measure 3). In this case, there are no viola pitches that are not implicitly present in the continuo part.

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298 In fact, there are also more instances of contrary motion between the viola and bass parts than there are between the violin and bass parts.
number of complete triads scored for the string ensemble parts.\textsuperscript{299} In other words, Vivaldi could have written \textbf{Example 5.7a} as shown in \textbf{Example 5.7b} without sacrificing the timbral effect of nearly continuous string triads.\textsuperscript{300} Instead, \textbf{Example 5.7a} provides an important counterweight to any temptation to assert too broadly that Italianate viola parts of the early eighteenth century tend to parallel the motion of the bass line or show little evidence of the conventions of good part-writing.

\textbf{Example 5.7a} also illustrates Vivaldi’s default registral distribution and the registral density is fairly evenly spread across the vertical spectrum, although the viola part tends to venture much closer to the register of the violin parts than to that of the bass part – a typical occurrence when the two violin parts play in unison. In the hypothetical \textbf{Example 5.7b}, the registral distribution and registral mean are shifted lower, as the viola line is brought much closer to the register of the bass line and stays firmly within the alto register. While this distribution is not uncommon in Vivaldi’s music, the passage as he wrote it (\textbf{Example 5.7a}) fits into a preference for registral distribution that is a bit wider between the viola and bass than between the viola and violins.

\textsuperscript{299} One place where parallel motion between the viola and bass is difficult to avoid without losing chord completion is the second half of measure 3. In this instance, the isolated moment of VEB is the best solution to the harmonic and rhythmic demands placed on the viola part rather than the result of a desire to employ the sonic qualities of VEB writing.

\textsuperscript{300} In \textbf{Example 5.7a} and \textbf{Example 5.7b}, the completed triads in measures 7 and 8 result in an unresolved leading tone in the viola part at the end of measure 7. In \textbf{Example 5.7b}, the augmented second in the viola part of measure 3 and the pair of successive downwards leaps spanning a seventh in measures 5-7, while frowned upon in textbook counterpoint, would not be particularly unusual for Vivaldi.
Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the observations in this chapter show how the choice of octave for each pitch class was governed by a combination of important elements of Vivaldi’s idiom: his treatment of voice-leading and preference for a slightly treble-oriented registral distribution and registral mean. The choice of pitch class itself was further influenced by an acute interest in the timbre of the vertical sonorities – an artistic impulse that was strong enough to, at times, override conflicting principles such as the resolution of leading tones.

However, the assessment of Vivaldi’s harmonic-rhythmic scoring involves one further element: rhythm. While the harmonies might be indicated in the basso continuo part, harmonic-rhythmic scoring provides an opportunity to specify rhythmic content for each layer of the vertical sonority such that the chords do not have to completely parallel the rhythms of the bass line. In Example 5.7a, for instance, the viola is able to sustain pitches in measures 2 and 4-7, despite the eighth-note motion in the bass line. The harmonizing basso continuo instruments might elect to do the same, but there is no method for Vivaldi to specify these longer durations, so the players are free to select whatever rhythms they prefer.\textsuperscript{301} Thus, harmonic-rhythmic writing was a means for Vivaldi and his colleagues to impact the timbre of the vertical sonorities as well as the rhythmic profile of the successive harmonies. Vivaldi’s manner of orchestration in these passages simultaneously aligns the viola to the bass with regard to the rules of part-

\textsuperscript{301} Vivaldi could have applied dashes to indicate more clearly that a particular continuo figure remains in effect over several bass notes, but this refers only to the choice of harmonization, not to the rhythmic execution of that harmonization.
writing while grouping it more closely with the violins in matters of registral distribution. Yet his treatment of the viola as a flexible resource is evident in the many instances where these trends are reversed as well as in the numerous passages where the rhythmic profile of the viola part is distinct from other harmonic voices.

The harmonic and related functions of the viola part may appear to be the part’s least substantive contribution when reading a score, but they exert a significant influence on the character of a passage. These instances of harmonic-rhythmic scoring were carefully crafted to provide a crucial layer in the timbral profile of the sonic tapestry. As we shall see in Chapter 7, different approaches to these sonic effects can be important hallmarks of the style of individual composers or of different periods in the creative output of a single composer.
Chapter 6: The Interaction of Functions – Scoring and Texture in the First Movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 4 #3

The interactions of the textures and functions examined in the previous chapters are best understood by examining the orchestration of an entire movement. The first movement of the Violin Concerto in G Major Op. 4 #3 provides a good focal point, as it is a typical example of a movement that uses a relatively full spectrum of Vivaldi’s textural and orchestral resources. As it turns out, an analysis that accounts for scoring and texture suggests an underlying narrative template in this movement – not a detailed program as one might find for a Liszt tone poem, but a flexible framework for interpretive listening that invites the audience to provide the narrative details, if desired, rather than explicitly imposing a single interpretation (as Vivaldi did in the sonnets and annotations for The Four Seasons).

The following discussion uses the viola part as a guide for the ensemble interactions within the movement because the malleable nature of the part allows it to provide an illuminating window into the ever-changing balances between monophonic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures. We shall see how Vivaldi’s carefully planned and interrelated compositional choices shapes the interplay of textural, melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and formal elements.

Before discussing the relationships between the various parts within the ensemble, let us begin with an overview of the entire viola part.

302 The present discussion is based on the version of the concerto published by Roger (c. 1716), which is generally believed to reflect Vivaldi’s intentions with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The version of the concerto preserved in Lund (S-L, Saml. Engelhart N:r 426) contains several variants (especially in the third movement), but the authorship of these variants is uncertain, so they are not included in the main body of this analysis.
Example 6.1: Viola part for the Violin Concerto in G, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt

I. Allegro

Piano

Forte
Sustained polyphonic imitation is not to be found here, and the part lacks the variety of melodic-rhythmic figuration that we expect from Vivaldi’s violin parts. Instead, the part is characterized by a tendency to repeat pitches several times in succession. The rhythmic pattern of the first measure (specifically, the extended anacrusis into the subsequent measure) occurs forty-one times, and there are many measures that feature short arpeggiated figures and scalar passages. From the viola part, taken in isolation, we get very little sense of the relationship it has to other ensemble parts, although we might suspect that it contains little, if any, of the melodic material in the movement. As we shall see, however, this latter conclusion is wrong; in fact, the viola part has important melodic, bass, rhythmic, harmonic, and registral functions in this movement.
Measures 1-29: Ritornello I

The movement begins with the first statement of the ritornello paragraph, which comprises three distinct segments. The first of these segments (ms. 1-12) is an antecedent-consequent pair of phrases – the first in the tonic (ms. 1-6) and the second in the dominant (ms. 7-12). Example 6.2a shows the score of the first phrase.

Example 6.2a: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 1-6

Vivaldi has constructed the opening phrase of the ritornello as three gestures with contrasting textures. In the first three measures, there are two main ensemble groupings – the two violin parts (the Violino di Concertino doubling the Violino Primo) playing broken arpeggios in steady eighth notes, while the viola and continuo bass parts have a threefold repetition of a downbeat plus an extended anacrusis. In this instance, the viola serves two primary functions: registral and rhythmic. The violins occupy the range from g¹ to d², while the bass line has the narrow range of f-sharp to g. This would have left the octave from g to g¹ empty of string timbre, so the viola is assigned to the middle of this open register in order to create the sense that the full range from f-sharp to d² is occupied.
by the string ensemble. At the same time, the viola parallels the rhythm of the bass line, reinforcing the metric emphasis provided by the extended anacrusis – an important contrast to the relatively undifferentiated sense of meter in the continuous eighth notes of the violin parts. Why does Vivaldi use a pedal point in the viola part here? To answer this, let us simplify the appearance of the score. As written, the violin parts antiphonally trade reiterated pitches. If the passage were rewritten without this ensemble interchange, it would look like Example 6.2b.

Example 6.2b: as above, the violin parts simplified and combined

As we can see, the material in all parts is based on *note ribattute*, with harmonization in parallel thirds (among the violins) and parallel tenths (lower violin voice and bass).

Vivaldi could have exploited different options for the viola part, but I believe that the pedal D was used to create an even emphasis on the three notes of each anacrusis; for instance, a leap in the viola part (such as in Example 6.2c and Example 6.2d) might have lead to greater emphasis on the penultimate note of each measure. At the same time, by using the pedal in the viola part, Vivaldi is able to reinforce and highlight the
repeated $d^2$ in the violins. This, in turn, forms an opposition between this pitch and the repeated G’s of measure 4.\footnote{In the whole of Vivaldi’s works there are countless examples where the composer builds sentences out of phrases incorporating one or more melodic pedal points. Even though I find no reason to believe this is a motivic germ that is meant to bear significant consequences for the rest of the movement in the same manner found in repertoire from the late eighteenth century and onwards, there is a slight sense in which the rhythm of the D’s in measures 1-3 is a restrained introduction of the more continuous repetition of a single pitch that is finally unleashed in measure 4.}

Example 6.2c: as above, with hypothetically modified viola part

Example 6.2d: as above, with a different hypothetically modified viola part

In measures 4-6 (see Example 6.2a) the viola switches from the previous balance of functions to a predominantly melodic role, participating in a passage of full-ensemble parallel monophony (FEPM). Here the viola plays in unison with the violins (i.e., with the higher octave, as is most common in Vivaldi’s FEPM passages) rather than with the bass line in the lower octave. In other words, whereas the viola is grouped with the basses in measures 1-3 (via rhythmic parallel), it is grouped with the violins in measures 4, 5, and the downbeat of measure 6 (via unison pitch parallel). More importantly, the
slight independence of the viola part in measures 1-3 is just enough to strengthen the contrast between the four-voice texture of the first gesture with the essentially monophonic texture of the second gesture. Further contrast comes with the reduced scoring of the monophonic texture of most of measure 6, which is scored only for the first violins (doubled by the solo violin part).

In the absence of distinctive melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic contrast, careful manipulation of texture is the main source of variety in this opening phrase. The entire phrase is then repeated, transposed up a fifth, in measures 7-12. Having twice presented the audience with the same series of textural juxtapositions, in the next segment of the ritornello Vivaldi introduces one of his trademark stylistic fingerprints: an extended harmonic sequence that is scored with a consistent textural profile. In Example 6.3a; the regularized pattern of sequential harmonic changes is joined to a regularized, albeit multi-tiered, ensemble texture.

Example 6.3a: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 13-21
Of the numerous details in the relationships between the four lines in this passage, a few points stand out in particular. The register of the quasi-melodic viola part once again spans the gap between the violins and the bass line. Likewise, the viola is the only part to have a rest on the downbeat of each measure, adding a slight amount of syncopation to the rhythmic texture of the passage. The vertical shape of the viola line is designed to be an inverse of the shape of the second violin line – for example, when the second violin rises in pitch (such as in measure 13), the viola primarily descends.

Within this inverse relationship, however, there is an interesting deviation in the viola’s arpeggiation: the ascending arpeggios in measures 14, 16, and 18 peak on the penultimate note of the measure rather than ascending through the end of the measure, unlike the longer descending arpeggios in measures 13, 15, and 17. Harmonic and timbral considerations provide one reason for reversing the direction of the end of the ascending arpeggios in the viola. If the arpeggios had continued to ascend for the entire measure, all four lines would end on the same pitch class (C in measure 14, D in measure

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304 Also, the slurs in the violin parts and rests in the bass line cause the viola to be the only part to provide emphasis on the second beat of each measure, providing syncopation on another level.

305 The viola part has sustained pitches (dotted half notes, some with ties) during this passage in the Lund source of this concerto, greatly simplifying the melodic relationships between parts while providing a rhythmic layer not found in the published version of the concerto.
16, and E in measure 18). At the same time, the placement of these peaks forms special metrical interactions with the pitch ceiling in the violin parts. For example, the arpeggios in the violin and viola parts are arranged such that a rising pitch ceiling is heard in a different voice on each beat (measures 13-18, indicated by stars above the pitches in Example 6.3a). The result is a subtle two-measure meta-rhythm (Example 6.3b) that coincides with each dominant-tonic pair in the secondary dominant progression.

Example 6.3b: as above, violin and viola parts reduced to highlight meta-rhythm of pitch ceiling (original lower octave of viola part retained)

It is the convergence of multiple functions that shapes the viola part in this passage: a different blend of desired functions would have yielded a much different part. To briefly illustrate this point, consider Example 6.3c.

Example 6.3c: as above, hypothetical version with different contributions from the viola

\[\text{\textsuperscript{306} Note that the pitch ceiling of the viola part is within the alto register (i.e., an octave lower than the violin parts) – this allows the viola to interact with the violins' pitch ceiling without exceeding Vivaldi’s selective compass for the viola.}\]
In this re-composition, I have retained the viola’s contribution to the meta-rhythm of the rising pitch ceiling (see Example 6.3b), but the register of the viola part now spans a narrower compass, the rhythm of the viola is more closely aligned with the bass part, and the viola forms a modified vertically elaborated bass (VEB) in parallel tenths with the bass line rather than being a more independent quasi-melodic line that mirrors (in inversion) the vertical motion of the second violin line. The net result is a thinner texture – both contrapuntally and rhythmically – that creates stronger emphasis on the bass line than is found in the passage as Vivaldi wrote it.

The final segment of the ritornello is, in fact, an extended cadential preparation that retains some of the textural layers from the previous segment while placing greater emphasis on the rhythm of the bass line (as found in the opening segment). Example 6.4 shows how Vivaldi accomplished this blended texture.

Example 6.4: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 22-29
Continuing the steady eighth notes that have occupied the first violin part since the beginning of the composition, the passage also retains the slurred quarter-note arpeggios of the second violin part from measures 13-21. The bass rhythm is also a carryover from both of the previous segments of the ritornello, while the ascending line in measures 22-25 shares a link with the ascending lines of measures 13-18. What distinguishes the texture of this passage from the previous ritornello segment, however, is the role of the viola part. This part, which had been fairly independent in measures 13-21, is now in rhythmic unison with the bass line, reinforcing the extended anacrusis pattern (much as it did in the opening measures of the movement). The pitches in the viola part, however, are initially determined by Vivaldi’s tendency to write contrary motion between viola and bass lines: after beginning two octaves apart (at the end of measure 22), the lines eventually converge at the interval of an octave (in measure 25).

Taking a look back at the entire ritornello, we see the following relationship between the three ritornello segments: emphasis on an extended anacrusis, textural contrasts and note ribattute in segment 1; a fixed heterogeneous texture that supports a single harmonic pattern in segment 2; and a closing segment that combines elements of
the previous two segments, perhaps suggesting a reconciliation or summation of the ritornello material. The frequently shifting balance of functions in the viola part, especially the return of material from segment 1 during segment 3, helps distinguish the relationship between the ritornello segments.

Measures 29-41: Solo Episode 1

The sense of peaceful co-habitation between diverse elements at the end of the opening ritornello begins to be challenged in the first solo episode. Besides allowing the solo violin to gain independence from the rest of the ensemble for the first time, the first solo episode exploits differences in rhythm and texture to provide further contrast with the preceding ritornello period.\(^{307}\) The episode is formed from two segments: the first is accompanied by the full ensemble, while the second (ms. 37-41) is accompanied by basso continuo only. Example 6.5 gives the entire passage.

\(^{307}\) It is assumed in this chapter that, as was common in Vivaldi’s day, the solo violinist played during the ritornellos, doubling the first violin part unless explicitly given distinct material.
Example 6.5: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 25-41

The first segment of this episode (ms. 29-36) consists of two phrases of unequal length that, similarly to the opening antecedent-consequent pair that starts the movement (ms. 1-
12), introduce a series of gestures in the tonic and then transpose part of the passage up a fifth to the dominant. There are three textural elements here: the continuous eighth notes (and occasional sixteenth notes) of the solo violin, the metric emphasis provided by the violins and violas in three-part harmony, and the leaping bass line that contributes a degree of syncopation by sounding on the second beat of selected measures. The interplay of these last two elements (the bass line and the rest of the accompanying ensemble), coupled with the fact that the bass does not play on the second beat in every measure, raises the metric tension of the passage in contrast with the metric stability of the entire opening ritornello. Indeed, this passage is almost an anti-parallel or deconstruction of the opening of the concerto. The solo violin is thus introduced as a character that almost mocks the ritornello.\textsuperscript{308}

Whereas the viola was paired rhythmically with the bass line at the end of the ritornello (and, for that matter, at the opening as well), it is here grouped with the violins, reinforcing their emphasis on the downbeat of each measure; this, in turn, helps underscore the difference between the single-note anacrusis pattern here (and the rests that precede it) and the three-note anacrusis pattern that was featured in the previous measures. In terms of register, the viola is also allied with the violins in this passage, creating a gap in the tenor and alto registers that produces sonorities distinct from those in the ritornello. The viola in measures 29-35 occupies a higher register than previously, being focused between $g^1$ and $d^2$. This, in combination with the low tessitura of the bass

\textsuperscript{308} This is different, for example, from a concerto where the first solo begins with a near-literal iteration of the material from the opening ritornello, such as the first movement of the Violin Concerto in G Minor Op. 4 #6, or one of the many concerto movements where the soloist enters with new material that does not bear strong resemblance to the melodic-rhythmic gestures, phrase structures, harmonic periodization, or rhythmic textures of the opening ritornello.
line, results in a registral distribution that leans more heavily towards the treble register, with an absence of string timbre for the tenor and alto registers (between g and g\textsuperscript{1} in measures 29-33, between d\textsuperscript{1} and d\textsuperscript{2} in measures 34-35). The higher register of the viola allows it similarly to form close-position treble-register triads with the violin parts – a sonic effect of which, as noted in previous chapters, Vivaldi was particularly fond.

**Measures 42-88: Ritornello 2, Solo Episode 2, Ritornello 3**

The second ritornello period provides an opportunity for the community to respond to the challenges posed in the previous solo episode. Composed of four segments with different tonal centers (in G major, E minor, A minor, and D major), the second ritornello (ms. 42-59, **Example 6.6**) attempts to reassert some of the melodic and rhythmic material of the opening ritornello.

**Example 6.6: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1\textsuperscript{st} mvt, ms. 42-59**
While this at first seems to be a simple return of the first five measures of the piece, the harmonic stability as well as several aspects of the texture, registral distribution, and ensemble ambitus are now altered or undermined as the passage is repeated in multiple transpositions. The modulatory measures (ms. 45-46, etc.) that connect the five-measure segments utilize the melodic gesture from measure 4, but parallel monophony is here replaced by four-part harmonization with rhythmic unison. This effectively

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309 The five-measure phrase units are not unusual for Vivaldi, whose works use a wide range of phrase lengths (such as one-and-a-half measures, five measures, seven measures, etc.).

310 This rhythmic homogeneity, and the resulting simplicity of the rhythmic texture, may be intended to place emphasis on the harmonic modulations.
replaces the series of contrasting textures heard in the opening phrases of the piece with a focus on alternation between harmonically stable gestures and modulating gestures. In other words, the first segment of the ritornello, once the marker of tonal stability within the ritornello, has now been recast as a less stable unit.

There is also a sense in which the bass line is a character that dissents from providing too strong a parallel to the material from the opening ritornello. Vivaldi accomplishes this by altering the expected register of the bass line to undermine the impact of the juxtapositions in the ensemble’s register between the short segments of the second ritornello. In the movement’s initial ritornello, the contrast between the antecedent and consequent phrases of the opening segment had been accomplished via an upward transposition. This ascent is alluded to in the second ritornello, as the material in measures 42-44 is transposed to a higher register in measures 47-49. However, beginning in measure 47, the bass line switches to a lower octave rather than following the upward transposition of the rest of the voices, thus expanding the overall ensemble ambitus.\(^{311}\) This means that while the violins still ascend higher during the consequent phrases, the bass line remains in a bass register without the ascent to the alto and tenor registers that had been found in measures 7-12. The function of the viola is also transformed by the new vertical relationship between the violins and bass line because, while it may be in rhythmic unison with the bass line for these phrase units, it is registrally conjoined with the violins. Leaving aside measures 42-44 (which are essentially identical with measures 1-3), the viola is in closer vertical proximity to the

\(^{311}\) This modification is not the result of a limitation imposed by Vivaldi’s selective compass for the bass line, because the pitch e\(^1\) is used several times in concertos from the same publication, including the opening and closing ritornellos of the first movement of the Violin Concerto in E Minor Op. 4 #2 (which also use the pitch f-sharp\(^3\)).
violins than to the bass line, even though this results in a wider gap between the viola and bass (spanning the interval of a thirteenth) – a gap that aids the sense that the bass line has become more isolated from the remainder of the ensemble, perhaps sympathizing with the solo violin’s character.

As the movement progresses, the challenges posed by the solo episodes continue to elicit reaction from the ritornellos. Following a solo episode accompanied by basso continuo alone (ms. 60-76), the third ritornello (ms. 77-89) contradicts even more material from the opening ritornello (Example 6.7).

Example 6.7: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 77-88
The material and texture that open the first ritornello segment (ms. 1-12) are recapitulated in D major in measures 77-78, but are cut short in order to switch to the material of the rhythmically and contrapuntally complex second segment (from measures 13-21, now presented as measures 79-85). However, this time the pitch ceiling of the passage descends from b2, as if reversing the ascent in measures 13-21. This occurs in the context of a modulation from D major to B minor, and the period concludes with a return to the material and texture that began the ritornello (plus a cadential progression), now transposed to B minor. Perhaps the switch from ascending to descending lines for the second segment of the ritornello can be heard as an attempt at reconciliation by (literally) demonstrating a willingness to change direction.

*Meades 89-108: Solo Episode 3*

If the previous ritornello didn’t quite lead to reconciliation, this next episode may be the moment where the soloist points the way towards the solution. The third solo episode (see Example 6.8) is the most texturally diverse episode in the entire movement. Taken as a whole, it uses rhythmic diminution (i.e., progressively shorter pitch durations), contrasting harmonic profiles, and manipulations of rhythmic density, vertical texture (i.e., the number of accompanying voices), and registral distribution to present a diverse episode that builds intensity from start to finish. The three component segments, distinguished by melodic material, harmonic trajectory, and accompanying texture, are arranged in such a way that Vivaldi is able to build increasingly thicker vertical sonorities while maximizing the contrast between adjacent textures.
Example 6.8: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 89-108
The first segment of the solo is a four-measure phrase scored for solo violin and basso continuo (the latter using the ubiquitous three-note anacrusis figure) that vacillates between tonic and dominant. This is followed by a passage (ms. 93-100) quite unlike anything else in the movement. Under a solo violin part that pairs descending lyrical scalar gestures with playful ascending figures, the viola and violins alone play a chain of continuous quarter-note chords – a rhythmic profile that has not previously been heard in this movement and one that, with its emphasis on each beat, contradicts the extended anacrusis rhythm that pervades so much of this movement. Not only is the accompaniment – a unison bassetto (UBt) for viola in rhythmic unison with the violins (thus loosely simulating a vertically elaborated bassetto) – the only bassetto passage in the movement, but it has a narrow ensemble ambitus with a dense treble-oriented registral distribution that dramatically contrasts with the preceding measures. Likewise, the four-

312 The entire passage is a stepwise descending harmonic progression, but this is enriched by suspensions in the first violin part that, combined with leaps in the second violin part and the linear descent of the lowest voice (the viola), produces pairs of first-inversion triads followed by minor seventh chords (dominant seventh in measure 98).
part vertical texture represents a change from the two-part texture that initiated this solo episode.

The closing portion of the solo episode (ms. 101-108), following a one-measure segue accompanied by the basso continuo, expands the vertical texture to five parts. This extended cadential preparation also expands the rhythmic density from two to three layers (solo violin; violins and viola; basso continuo). Finally, with the continuous sixteenth notes, the rhythmic profile of the solo part reaches a peak – the culmination of a rhythmic intensification (via progressively shorter note durations) that began with the eighth and quarter notes of segment one and continued through the eighth and sixteenth notes of segment two.

*Measures 109-124: Ritornello 4, Solo Episode 4*

The fourth ritornello (Example 6.9) constitutes the crux of the movement: it is the most complex of the internal ritornello periods (three different segments, each with a very distinctive texture) and the only ritornello that does not begin with a literal or transposed reprise of the opening measures. It is as if the solo episodes’ repeated rejections of the material, simplicity, and rigidity of the previous ritornello statements have finally convinced the ensemble to set aside the normal opening gesture and give in to greater abandon.
Example 6.9: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 109-125

The first segment here is, in fact, a variation on the second segment of the opening ritornello – specifically, on the quarter notes that were featured in the second violin part;
here, the descending quarter-note arpeggios have been subjected to pleonastic embellishment with eighth-note passing tones. The source of this passage is rendered almost unidentifiable because the harmonic sequence descends (whereas it was ascending in the first ritornello period) and the rigid four-part rhythmic layering of the first ritornello period has been abandoned and replaced by three rhythmic layers, where the two violin parts alternate gestures. The contrapuntally interesting gestures of the viola part in measures 13-21 are absent here; in their stead, Vivaldi uses the viola to form parallel melodic lines (PML) alternately with the descending scales in the first and second violins, emphasizing and harmonizing the chains of descending scales. Finally, the relationship between measures 13-21 and 109-114 is also disguised by the apparent kinship (in general terms) between the descending eighth-note gestures of latter passage and similar (albeit not identical) gestures in the solo violin part of the previous solo episode (measures 93-100).

After a transition measure (ms. 114), the next segment features a return to a sparser, two-part texture and a greater emphasis on melodic and rhythmic gestures taken from the opening of the movement. This process of textural simplification, which counteracts the textural expansion of the preceding solo episode, is then taken to the extreme in the final segment, where FEPM returns for the first time since the opening measures of the piece. Is this a return to normalcy following a catharsis, or a rejection of

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313 The Lund source of this concerto has several differences in this first section of the ritornello. In particular, the second violin part initiates the exchanges of descending scales in measure 109 and the viola has a series of steady quarter notes. Whereas the printed version reinforces and harmonically enriches the sequence of descending scales, the Lund version of this passage features greater reinforcement of the quarter-note motion that alternates with the eighth-note scales.

314 Note that the pitch and register of the viola part allows Vivaldi to use it to form treble-register triads with the violin parts on the downbeats of each measure (and for some anacruses).
the soloist’s growing assertions of independence and command of textural resources?

Whatever narrative implications the ritornello ultimately has, the following solo episode is extremely brief – a mere four measures over a single chord that elaborate a dominant-seventh-chord in preparation for a return to the home key of G major.

Measures 125-end: Ritornello 5 (Joint Ritornello – Solo Period)

At last a solution is found whereby the soloist can be a part of the ensemble presenting the ritornello but still retain a separate identity. Rather than making a literal return to part or all of the opening period, the final ritornello period (Example 6.10) brings several surprises that challenge expectations of form and texture.

Example 6.10: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, ms. 126-end
The period begins with a four-measure segment that resembles the opening segment of the first ritornello only in a general sense. The three-note anacrusis has returned in the viola and bass lines, but the intricate polyphonic weave of the violin parts in measures 1-3 is here replaced with simpler arpeggiated two-part PML. The melodic pattern that the violins play is nearly identical to what the second violins played in the opening of the piece, but now the harmony vacillates between tonic and dominant chords at the rate of one measure per chord, rather than within a single measure (as in the opening of the movement). Overall, there is a sense that this segment is either a faulty recollection or a denial of several aspects of its former self.

A “re-invention” is the best description of the second segment of the closing ritornello period. The corresponding passage of the opening ritornello period was its most texturally complex segment, and measures 129-137 are likewise the most texturally complex segment of the concluding ritornello. However, Vivaldi has both modified several elements of the original ritornello segment and grafted on an additional rhythmic and figurative layer to the texture. The viola part in this passage is essentially the same as in the first ritornello, but there are changes to all of the other parts. For instance, the first violin figurations are slightly different (i.e., they have the same rhythm but a different sequence of pitches, and the slurs are gone) and the bass line now includes leaps whereas it moved exclusively by step in the opening ritornello. Also, the second violin part omits the ascending gestures that previously alternated with descending gestures.

The most obvious difference is the addition of the solo violin playing continuous sixteenth notes. After the oppositions of material and textures between previous solo and tutti periods, this moment bears a spirit of cooperation, collaboration, and (perhaps)
reconciliation. It is as if the soloist is a character that has finally found a niche for self-expression within a communal message.

The soloist rejoins the first violins during the cadential progression in measure 118. While there is no precedent for this cadence in the corresponding location of the first ritornello period, the compound line in the unison violins bears a resemblance to the third segment of the opening ritornello; not coincidentally, this segment is absent from the closing ritornello.

Instead of the expected third segment, the audience is given two measures (ms. 139-140) of a literal reprise (this time “correctly remembered”) of the opening measures of the movement, effectively beginning a new phrase. But Vivaldi has one final surprise in store: under a guise of a cadential repetition, the first violin part of measures 139-140 (and, by extension, measures 1-3) is now re-scored as FEPM for measures 141-142. In addition to being unprecedented in this movement, the combination of this melodic material and one-voice texture actually defies expectations: the audience is prepared, via a correlation with the first ritornello period, to hear repeated pitches and a descending scale – the only material that had previously been specifically associated with FEPM texture (ms. 4-5, 10-11, and 119-120).

The maximal intensity conveyed by the FEPM texture makes a sharp contrast with the four-part texture normally associated with recurrences of the arpeggiated gesture used in the final measures of the piece. Reasons for the change are suggested by the course of the melodic figuration in this movement: the pattern in measures 139-140 appears to be the main melodic figure triggering the split between the solo episodes and the ritornello periods, to the extent that its repetitions are abbreviated, modified, or
entirely absent from the interior ritornellos of the movement. By comparison, the extended anacrusis figure manages to return unaltered more frequently, and even creeps into portions of the solo episodes. The texture of the final measures – a “tutti unison” on paper (although instruments playing the bass line at the 16’ octave likely turn the passage into parallel monophony) – is either a final, universal affirmation of the pronouncement that was once a source of conflict or, perhaps, a final act of stubborn insistence.

Re-assessing the movement and the role of texture

This reading of the movement has revealed how Vivaldi could use textural contrasts to build a specific trajectory within the formal and generic expectations of a concerto movement. The evidence here raises the possibility that ritornello form is not entirely a product of a harmonic plan or an abstract formal scheme – it is more credibly the result of the interaction of several processes. Admittedly, many of the broader details of form in concerto movements became more codified as the eighteenth century progressed, perhaps in response to growing expectations of the appropriate form to use in concerto movements. When Vivaldi wrote the concertos of Op. 4, the genre of the solo concerto was still relatively young and the variety of forms exhibited in concertos of the early eighteenth century is far greater than that found in the 1730s and later. However, subtler details – such as how the soloist responds to specific material or the manipulation of texture and orchestration during recurrences of melodic and rhythmic gestures – may ultimately reveal a continuing experimentation with the possibilities afforded by the genre.
What is certain in the opening movement of Op. 4 #3 is that an account of texture is at least as important to understanding the complexity of the piece as its melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and formal elements. When all of these factors are examined together, a narrative template emerges – one seldom found in existing accounts of ritornello form but which follows an archetypal trajectory in literature and drama: proclamation of group identity/authority, challenge to authority (or demand for individual identity), growing disunion, compromise (or rebuke), acceptance (or reluctant acquiescence), cooperation/reconciliation (or rebellion crushed).

Vivaldi’s treatment of the viola as a flexible ensemble resource is a vital ingredient for the wide range of textural options that he had at his disposal for accomplishing this scheme, especially in a work scored for strings and bass continuo alone. If the viola had been linked entirely with the bass line or provided only harmonic-rhythmic scoring, far fewer textural contrasts would have been possible. Instead, the part is aligned and realigned, being partnered variously with the bass line and with one or more violin parts, or left independent; sometimes it is even vertically aligned with one part while being rhythmically aligned with another. The diversity of functions assigned to the viola part can be appreciated if we once again view the part in its entirety, with some of the functions labeled (Example 6.11).
Example 6.11: Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 4 #3, 1st mvt, viola part with select functions indicated
Even without taking into account registral functions or specifying the nature of every rhythmic contribution, the multiplicity of roles given to the viola part quickly emerges. While there are plenty of harmonic-rhythmic contributions (e.g., the “harmonic filler” that many writers would have us believe is the only alternative to contrapuntal independence or parallel bass writing for viola parts in early-eighteenth-century music), the part enriches melodic lines (ms. 110-113), provides the bass line (ms. 93-100), reinforces important rhythmic and melodic gestures (e.g., the rhythmic unisons and
FEPM passages), adds a layer of rhythmic and contrapuntal complexity to certain passages (including ms. 13-21, 79-85, and 129-137), and fills registral gaps in the timbre of the string ensemble. The characteristics of a seemingly nondescript viola part reveal themselves as the product of the competing demands placed upon an important ensemble resource.

This, in turn, demonstrates how the traditional narrative of texture in eighteenth-century music as a linear transition from imitative polyphony to homophony (via non-imitative polyphony and continuo-homophony) fails to adequately reflect compositional practice. Rather than diametrically opposed combatants, these textures (along with others such as monophony and heterophony) co-existed historically and even within the same piece, whether blended simultaneously or heard in sequence. The mixture of these respective textures may have differed over time, between individual composers, or across particular genres, but a movement such as that which opens Op. 4 #3 and the multitude of similar examples in Vivaldi’s works from the first two decades of the century represent an important and largely misunderstood phase in the history of orchestration and texture.
Interlude: “The Four Seasons”

Measured in terms of published editions, reprints, documented performances, adaptations, and sustained interest over time, the concertos of Le quattro stagioni, together with the collection L’estro armonico, were Vivaldi’s most popular works in the eighteenth century, much as they are in our own time. For this reason, these four concertos are a particularly important test case for the analytical method outlined in the previous chapters. Indeed, The Four Seasons demonstrate what is possible when Vivaldi applies the broad narrative strategies discussed in Chapter 6 to the portrayal of a more specific – and (through the use of sonnets and written cues) more explicit – narrative.

The present discussion examines the role of scoring and texture, and the contributions of the viola part to the narrative trajectory of the concertos, revealing hitherto-overlooked distinctions in the textures of each concerto and links between scoring patterns and narrative themes across the four concertos.

Although there is a possibility that they were begun prior to the spring of 1718, the exact date of composition for The Four Seasons is uncertain. For this reason, they have not been included in the analysis of the pre-Mantuan works that serves Chapters 2-6. Paul Everett has convincingly argued that The Four Seasons were written, in some

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316 For discussions of additional expressive and cyclic aspects of these concertos, see Everett, op. cit., Cesare Fertonani, Antonio Vivaldi: La simbologia musicale nei concerti a programma (Pordenone: Edizioni Studio Tesi, 1992), 55-95; and ibid., La musica strumentale di Antonio Vivaldi, Quaderni vivaldiani 9 (Florence: Olschki, 1998), 319-51.
form, far earlier than the date of their first publication (1725) and that the concertos eventually published as *Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’inventione* (The Contest of Harmony and Invention) Opus 8 were probably assembled into a collection c. 1720, combining older works with more recent compositions. Everett speculates that *The Four Seasons* originated in the mid-1710s, around the time that a few of Vivaldi’s other descriptive concertos began to appear, including the Dresden source of *La tempesta di mare* RV 253 (later revised and published as Op. 8 #5) and *The Cuckow* RV 335 (publ. 1717). However, the surviving musical texts and sources do not permit us to establish the original date of *The Four Seasons* with any certainty, and therefore it is more useful, in the present context, to note that *The Four Seasons* were probably written at – or just after – the end of the period examined in Chapters 2-6. In light of this caveat, and armed with a better understanding of how Vivaldi’s handling of scoring and texture in his previous works provided a substantial palette of techniques to draw upon for descriptive

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317 See Everett, *The Four Seasons*, 7-25. Attempting to account for the lack of a unified scheme in support of the collection’s title and the uneven balance in the distribution of descriptive and non-allusive concertos in this collection (four vs. two in the first half, one vs. five in the second half), Everett suggests that Vivaldi’s initial project may have encountered difficulties that forced him to fill out the set with other concertos. If so, I am inclined to suspect a severe shortage of time or sudden change of circumstances, for which many scenarios from Vivaldi’s life in 1720 present themselves: the sudden death of the Dowager Empress Eleonora von Neuberg in January, the closing of the Mantuan theater for a year of mourning, the resulting cancellation of his opera *La Candace* (it is unclear if it was even performed), and Vivaldi’s departure from Mantua in March. However, I also propose that the “contest” does not have to refer to a blatantly obvious polarization (for modern listeners) across the entire set, as it could be a description of competing demands in the individual concertos – such as the balance between contrapuntal and virtuosic writing in the eleventh concerto – aspects that might not elicit a descriptive title for the concerto. In contrast to Everett’s assertions, I do not believe we can be certain that the set fails to deliver on the promise of the title simply because it lacks a clearly organized, unified scheme where two opposing poles are alternately exploited and engaged in an explicit or implicit aesthetic debate. As we have seen in the examples of contrapuntal intricacies among interior voices, Vivaldi (unlike, for example, Benedetto Marcello) often delighted in hiding his sharpest intellectual touches just beneath the surface.

318 Ibid., 18.

319 If they had substantially existed by the winter of 1716/17, it is surprising that Pisendel does not seem to have acquired a copy of them at that time, considering their subsequent popularity with virtuoso violinists.
music, the *Four Seasons* merit treatment in a separate section. As we shall see, there are only a few aspects of orchestration in *The Four Seasons* that are beyond the scope of the works examined in earlier chapters.

*At the Mercy of Nature’s Whim: Scoring Techniques and Narrative Functions*

   a)  Melodic

One of the strongest examples of Vivaldi’s linkage of a scoring technique with a particular class of narrative ideas can be found in his use of full-ensemble parallel monophony (FEPM) in *The Four Seasons*. The majority of FEPM passages occur where the sonnets and inserted textual cues refer to depictions of violent physical motion and unwelcome disturbances, such as thunder (Spring/i, Summer/ii), violent winds with or without lightning (Summer/i, Summer/iii, Winter/iii), falling down after slipping on ice (Winter/iii), or ice being sheared apart (Winter/iii). The fact that Vivaldi used FEPM for the most violent and frightening passages in each concerto shows that he consistently drew upon this technique whenever the extra-musical content called for dark, intense musical expression. It is no coincidence that, with the exception of the main ritornello segment of the finale of Summer (a movement that is entirely devoted to the realization of humanity’s fears of nature’s fury), the FEPM passages in *The Four Seasons* are generally found at the close of a period or movement – the texture being used to dramatically intensify the preceding violence or provide a sense of uniform challenge to the narrative trajectory of the previous passage, thus prompting the soloist to adopt new allusive material in response to the sudden change of events (e.g., the thunder in Spring/i, falling down on the ice in Winter/iii, etc.).
Parallel melodic lines (PML) are also associated with images of rigorous motion, albeit without a specific link to positive or negative connotations. Most of the relatively few passages of PML provide triadic harmonizations of chords and arpeggios for violins and violas, such as during the illustration of rushing winds (Summer/iii and Winter/iii) and the stamping of feet in the snow (Winter/i). The brief examples of strict two-part PML are found in representations of peasants dancing (Spring/iii) and shivering in the cold (Winter/i).\(^{320}\) Imitation is used less for specific descriptive imagery than as a way to convey motion by outlining wide vertical spaces, such as the high/low exchanges for the drunkards in Autumn/i, or to gradually illuminate a scene (almost cinematographically) through the successive entrances that build to a complex chord at the openings of Autumn/ii and Winter/i.\(^{321}\) By contrast, independent melodic lines (IML), mainly found as brief, interior lines in Summer and Winter, lack a common allusive purpose in these concertos: in Summer they provide an additional voice to maintain rhythmic activity during rests in other active parts, while in Winter they tend to occur over pedal points, where they add an extra layer of complexity to the web of contrapuntal activity over the harmonically static bass line.\(^{322}\)

\(^{320}\) In Spring, third movement, ms. 6-8, and Winter, first movement, ms. 20-22.

\(^{321}\) The passage for the drunkards in Autumn/i occurs at ms. 41-43, 46, and 48. The alternation between ascending and descending arpeggios here is actually a continuation of an idea introduced by the continuo line in ms. 32-35.

\(^{322}\) See Summer, third movement, ms. 21-28 and 55-66; Winter, third movement, ms. 27, 29, and 30-38.
b) Bass

As a whole, *The Four Seasons* present a wide variety of scoring options for the bass line, including unison bassettos, vertically elaborated bassettos, and vertically elaborated bass lines (whether scored for viola and bass, or for violins, viola, and bass). Even Vivaldi’s most complex bass-line orchestration – the bass-bassetto compound line – is put to use for the gun shots that accompany the hunt in Autumn/iii (as multi-voice relays) and for the staggering drunkards in Autumn/i.  

In the realm of bass scorings, bassetto writing in *The Four Seasons* emerges with the most distinctive and consistent usage, as the dramatic juxtapositions between a smaller sub-section of the ensemble and the full ensemble are often aligned with sharply contrasted dynamics and tempo and character markings. The shifts in texture and scoring allow Vivaldi, for example, to differentiate between chattering teeth and stamping feet in Winter/i or between buzzing insects and thunder in Summer/ii. Often, but not always, bassetto scoring is used when the bass line features descending tetrachords or descending scales. Apart from those instances, however, bassetto is used more as a way to provide variety during the course of a particular allusion (e.g., the

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323 See Autumn, first movement, ms. 68-69, and third movement, ms. 82-83, 92-93, 106, and 108-115. Users of the Dover Publications edition of *The Four Seasons* [Antonio Vivaldi, “The Four Seasons” and other Violin Concertos in Full Score, Opus 8, Complete, ed. by Eleanor Selfridge-Field (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1995)] should observe that the second violin part in measure 69 of the first movement of Autumn is printed incorrectly: it should read identical to the first violin part (rests on beats 1 and 3, pitches on beats 2 and 4) rather than matching the violas and bass – this apparent re-orchestration of the bass-bassetto compound line is actually a product of modern editorial oversight. This passage is given correctly in: Antonio Vivaldi, *Le quattro stagioni : da Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’inventione op. VIII : per violino principale, due violini, viola e basso*, Edizione critica a cura di Paul Everett e Michael Talbot (Milan: Ricordi, 1996).

324 See, for example, Summer/ii, or the alcohol-induced slumber near the end of Autumn/i.
storms of Summer/iii, the peasants dancing in Spring/iii, etc.) than for a hint of sonic realism.

In at least one case, the bassetto is even used to link descriptive content between two concertos of the set. Paul Everett has posited that the gentle Sirocco winds in the finale of Winter are a cyclic reference back to the opening of Summer (both passages include measures in triple meter that begin with a rest on each downbeat), but there is another connection between the Sirocco passage in Winter and the light rustling of the cool breeze (the Zephyrs) in the first movement of Summer: these passages are linked by a common theme of bringing welcome relief from the harsh realities of their respective seasons, and in a metaphysical sense they represent the only overtly positive moments in the narratives of their respective movements. Not only are these two passages boldly set apart from the surrounding material by the use of the bassetto and a change of melodic-motivic material, but the passage in Winter additionally involves a closed harmonic period in E-flat major (in an F-minor movement) and a change of tempo (from Allegro to Lento). Yet a less obvious link between these two examples is provided by the fact that these are the only instances in the whole cycle where bassetto scoring is used outside of a solo episode. Rather than being sui generis, these memorable passages can be traced back to Vivaldi’s previous examples of bassettos in ritornellos and other non-

\[\text{325 See Everett, op. cit., 71.}\]

\[\text{326 To my mind, the tempo change (which parallels the change near the end of Autumn/i) and tonal surprise wrought by the passage in Winter (which is approached by an unresolved dominant seventh of C minor) provides the strongest indication that Vivaldi composed The Four Seasons with all or most of the details of the sonnets already in mind, whether or not he penned the sonnets (or arranged for their provision) before, after, or simultaneously with the composition of the concertos.}\]
solo periods; now Vivaldi has enlisted this combination of scoring and formal function to serve a narrative purpose and contribute a degree of cyclic unity.

c) Rhythm

The rhythmic vitality and intricacy of *The Four Seasons* owes much to the vocabulary Vivaldi had already developed in his earliest works, as we saw in Chapter 4. Sostenuto writing, for example, not only provides for a sense of stasis before or after a period of motion (as in the famous “Sleep” movement of Autumn, where all of the parts employ sostenuto writing); it is also used as a foil to simultaneous motion in other parts (e.g., the murmuring springs in Spring/i, the bagpipe drones accompanying the peasant dancing in Spring/iii, or the slippery ice in Winter/iii). One of Vivaldi’s best examples of using a single part to provide the sostenuto backdrop for complex rhythmic activity is found in Winter/ii: here the viola (marked “pp”) plays long durations almost continuously throughout the movement – much longer durations than all of the other voices (some notes are held for several measures). Set against the moderately quick perpetual-motion pizzicato arpeggios of the first and second violins, the rapid perpetual-motion octave leaps of the obbligato cello, the steady pulse of eighth notes in the continuo bass, and the lyrical melody of the solo violin, the viola provides the sustained sound that binds together individual phrase units and emphasizes certain harmonic felicities that might otherwise be lost in the activity of the other parts (such as the suspensions in measures 3

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327 If the continuo line is harmonized on an organ, the viola might not be the only real sostenuto voice in this movement, but Vivaldi’s scoring assures that, in the absence of organ continuo, there will be at least one sustaining voice throughout.
In the absence of obbligato parts for wind instruments, the viola is a good choice for sostenuto writing in the center of the ensemble ambitus, and it helps Vivaldi to differentiate between the treble-register rhythms of the violins and the activity of the cello and bass in the lower registers, all without obscuring the cantabile melody of the solo violin. This is an extreme case of using sostenuto writing nearly continuously in a single interior part, but it is rooted in Vivaldi’s earlier forays into sostenuto writing for individual voices. Once again, Vivaldi took a scoring concept from his existing arsenal and deployed it in a particular way as a response to the narrative demands of a particular piece.

Most of the remainder of the rhythmic scoring in The Four Seasons can similarly be traced to Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan practices, although many of the particular techniques are now used to underline individual allusive gestures. Full-ensemble rhythmic unison primarily occurs in ripieno passages from Summer, Autumn, and Winter, where it focuses attention on a single type of motion that is central to the narrative of the extra-musical program (e.g., the force of surging winds, a simple peasant dance, stamping feet in the snow, shivering in the cold, etc.). Compound rhythmic lines in Summer/iii create the impression of storm forces blowing from all directions and bustling activity divided

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328 An interesting cousin of this movement, which to my knowledge has not previously been noted, is the slow movement of the Concerto for Strings in D Minor RV 128. In that movement, the interweaving violin parts are accompanied by a viola part that provides sustained harmonies (quarter notes, half notes, and long pedal points) and, as with the obbligato cello in Winter/ii, a highly active bass line. The date of RV 128, in relation to The Four Seasons, is not currently known.

329 Vivaldi only specifies that the pizzicato violins are the “rain” mentioned in the sonnet. Perhaps the viola line can be heard as the warmth of the fire (with the flickering flames presented by the leaping octaves of the obbligato cello) or a sense of calm protection inside from the harsh winter elements outside.
across the ensemble.\textsuperscript{330} To portray the barking dog in the slow movement of Spring, Vivaldi writes a UBt for the viola part that consists of a syncopated pattern, which also provides a rhythmic foil to the metrically regularized placement of the solo violin’s phrases.\textsuperscript{331}

One of the most striking rhythmic differences in \textit{The Four Seasons}, when compared with the definitely pre-Mantuan works, is the greater prevalence of thirty-second notes in the non-soloistic parts. This expansion of the rhythmic vocabulary is felt most strongly in the viola part, which rarely includes passages of thirty-second notes in the pre-Mantuan works.\textsuperscript{332} Yet, this increased rhythmic demand in the viola part is also motivated by the narrative goals of these concertos, as these passages occur in full- and partial-ensemble rhythmic unisons (FERU and PERU) where the viola helps to reinforce the rhythmic profile of other voices as they generally depict vigorous or violent motion (e.g., storms, thunder, and dogs chasing the wild beast).

\textsuperscript{330} See Summer, third movement, ms. 21-28 and 55-66.

\textsuperscript{331} This is another example of a movement with distinct rhythmic layers arranged, from shortest to longest durations, as Violin 1 & 2, Viola, and Principal Violin. Here (unlike Winter/ii but similar to Summer/ii and the slumber section near the end of Autumn/i) it is the solo violin that provides the most sustained lyrical line, although I would not classify it as an example of a sostenuto textural element because it serves a melodic rather than harmonic-rhythmic purpose.

\textsuperscript{332} The main exception is in the seventh movement of the \textit{Dixit Dominus} RV 595. The pre-Mantuan works require scalar figures (violins only) and measured tremolos (violins and violas) in thirty-second-note passages, but the viola parts in \textit{The Four Seasons} incorporate both types of material as well as undulating leaps – up to the width of a minor sixth – a technique that requires some skill for several players to execute cleanly at a rapid pace, particularly to coordinate changes of left-hand fingers, bow direction, and string crossings. For the rapid leaps, see Autumn, third movement, ms. 84-85, 94-95, and 127ff.
d) Register

Vivaldi’s isolation of contrasting ensemble registers is, in *The Four Seasons*, also linked to specific groupings of extra-musical ideas: passages of high overall ambitus are used for birdsong, gentle breezes, and chattering teeth, while the lowest overall ambitus is used to represent violent endings, dogs in the hunt, and cadential repetitions. In these cases (excluding cadential repetitions), there is a rough sonic equivalence – in reality or in the imagination – between the register of the music and the register of the sound being represented.

_Distinguishing the Sonic Character of Each Concerto_

The exploration of ensemble interactions in *The Four Seasons* yields one further result that has hitherto escaped notice in scholarly literature: there are distinctions in the balance of scoring and textural combinations that differentiate the overall sonic character of each concerto – differences that have narrative significance. To be sure, there are some commonalities, such as the prominent use of the bassetto in all four concertos. But a comparison of the viola part in each concerto reveals that the web of contributions it makes to the ensemble changes from one concerto to the next.

The greatest variety of melodic functions occurs in the viola parts of Summer and Winter, making these two concertos the locus of melodic activity for the violas and, in turn, distinguishing the character of these concertos from that of Spring and Autumn. Bass functions, on the other hand, dominate the viola’s contributions in Autumn, the
outer movements of which are a veritable compendium of bass-line scoring combinations. The balance and range of rhythmic interactions is relatively equal across all of the concertos, but Autumn and Winter stand out for having an entire movement (their slow movements) where the viola never engages in a melodic or bass function. The viola helps create a denser texture in the outer movements of Summer and Winter through its more frequent melodic and contrapuntal independence; as these seasons are portrayed as bringing the greatest challenges to mankind, the heightened activity of the viola in the outer movements of these two concertos enhances the intensity of the drama signaled in the sonnets’ narrative. In contrast, the viola part’s greater tendency to parallel and support the outer voices in the framing movements of Spring and Autumn allows the texture to reflect the narrative’s sense of harmonious coexistence between nature and civilization.

The distinctions between the types and scoring of ensemble interactions in these four concertos further heighten the individual qualities of these exceptionally famous works and can serve, in turn, as an element of consideration in our understanding of the similarities and distinctions between individual works from Vivaldi’s entire compositional output.

*Distinctions between “The Four Seasons” and Vivaldi’s Pre-Mantuan Works*

Vivaldi had already used most of these varied scoring techniques prior to writing *The Four Seasons*. Yet despite their breadth, these concertos do not provide a full representation of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan use of the viola as an orchestral resource. The slightly reduced spectrum of scoring options for these works (“reduced” only in relation
to Vivaldi’s full array of options) is mainly prevalent for melodic and bass functions, as there is an absence of principal melodic lines scored for viola, fugal or canonic imitation, parallel thirds between unison violins and the violas, compound bassetto lines, and the use of the viola to provide the sole accompaniment to a principal soloist.³³³

Are the missing orchestration techniques a sign that *The Four Seasons* were composed after most or all of the definitively pre-Mantuan works? For now the evidence is inconclusive. Some features, such as the use of the viola as the only accompaniment to a solo passage, appear to have achieved their peak deployment early in the pre-Mantuan years, but the chronology of the individual works is still too vague and perhaps the descriptive content of *The Four Seasons* simply left no good opportunity to use those specific scoring techniques. The latter is probably true of fugal imitation, which remained an element in Vivaldi’s idiom during the Mantuan years (witness the Violin Concerto in D Major Op. 8 #11) and beyond. The use of special techniques, such as differentiated dynamics for each part or the use of mutes, is also of little help for chronological assessments – the former were used as early as Op. 3 (Concerto 10/ii and Concerto 12/iii) and while Vivaldi may have only started requesting mutes for the violas in the mid-1710s (in the opera *Arsilda*, the oratorio *Juditha triumphans*, and the *Nisi Dominus* RV 608), the special narrative demands of *The Four Seasons* probably would

³³³ One observation that will need further investigation is that a large number of three-voice interior cadences in *The Four Seasons* opt for placing the third scalar degree in the viola and omitting the fifth, whereas the definitively pre-Mantuan works tend to place the fifth in the viola and omit the third. However, until a detailed, systematic study of Vivaldi’s cadential voicing is undertaken, we cannot rule out the possibility that the apparent differences between the interior cadential sonorities of *The Four Seasons* and the definitively pre-Mantuan works are statistically insignificant – four works measured against a preliminary survey of cadential patterns in more than one hundred works. If there is a statistically significant difference, this would be one sonic element that distinguishes *The Four Seasons* from many of Vivaldi’s earlier works.
have motivated the use of mutes regardless of whether the concertos were written before, during, or after those years. Further investigation into the scoring of Vivaldi’s descriptive and allusive concertos (and relevant arias in operas, serenatas, and sacred works) as well as compositions from his Mantuan period and later years may yield some clues. However, the rather exceptional nature of *The Four Seasons* – the only consistently descriptive purely instrumental music that Vivaldi wrote (as opposed to the less detailed narrative of the *La notte* concertos or the general allusive nature of concertos such as *L’amoroso, Il sospetto, or La tempesta di mare*) – means that they may prove too exceptional for such subtle details to provide strong evidence of their precise date of composition.

But even if *The Four Seasons* do not convey the full spectrum of Vivaldi’s viola writing up to 1718, they are fundamentally shaped by the innovations in scoring and texture that Vivaldi had adopted in his earlier works. The slow movement of Spring, for example, owes much of its uniqueness to Vivaldi’s previous examples of scoring entire slow movements with bassetto accompaniment. Likewise, the sostenuto viola part in Winter/ii and the FEPM passages throughout the four concertos build upon the sonic layering and drama of textural contrasts that Vivaldi had been experimenting with for a decade or longer. Whereas Haydn, in *Die Jahreszeiten* (1799-1801), drew upon an ensemble of vocal soloists, chorus, and a much larger and more diverse orchestra, the flexibility of Vivaldi’s viola parts allowed him, with an ensemble of solo violin, strings, and basso continuo, to convey much of the same intense emotional and physical drama of humanity’s relationship to the changing seasons.
Chapter 7: The role of the viola in Italian music 1678-1718: some alternative approaches

How does Vivaldi’s music stand in comparison with that of his fellow Italian composers? With only a quick glance at the partbooks of selected works, it may not be immediately apparent that there are often substantial differences in the way each composer utilized the resources of the ensemble to orchestrate texture and sonority. Indeed, the viola parts of Italian works from that period often appear, on the surface, to be very similar from one work to another. The principal differences were in the way the parts functioned within the ensemble, rather than in the types of material (i.e., melodic gestures, rhythms, etc.) allotted to the part.

In this chapter, we examine the range of different approaches to using the viola as an orchestral resource in music by three influential Italian composers active during the period from Vivaldi’s birth up to his employment in Mantua. The works of the three composers selected, Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751), Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), and Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709), show that the distinctions between these composers and Vivaldi’s orchestration cannot be attributed solely to differences in regional styles, chronological changes, or distinctions of genre. Albinoni has been chosen as a Venetian contemporary of Vivaldi, while Corelli’s surviving output, as a highly individual but very influential manifestation of earlier Roman concerto grosso traditions, provides a chance to investigate orchestration in a genre that Vivaldi seldom cultivated. Torelli, as an older contemporary with strong connections to the musical activities in Bologna and the earliest stages in the birth of the solo concerto genre, also makes for an instructive comparison, since he is the only one of these four composers (including Vivaldi) who is
documented as a professional violist. We might expect Albinoni’s music or, in those few works outwardly resembling Roman *concerto grosso* models, perhaps Corelli’s to exhibit the strongest similarities to Vivaldi’s orchestration, yet we shall see that it is Torelli’s works that provide the closest match to the variety of scoring and textures in Vivaldi’s oeuvre.

**Albinoni**

We have encountered, in Chapter 1, the prevailing assessment of Albinoni’s viola parts and their function within Albinoni’s orchestral textures as summarized by Michael Talbot:

As we have seen, the viola figures prominently in Albinoni’s accompanimental textures. Indeed, it rarely has any other role in his music than to accompany, except in fugal movements. [...] It rarely contributes anything essential to the harmony; [...] Nor does it have any rhythmic independence except in those few cases where it enlivens the middle of the texture with repeated semiquavers.

This description is broadly similar to Talbot’s summary of Vivaldi’s viola writing, aside from noting Vivaldi’s use of greater rhythmic variety and activity for the viola. In

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334 Torelli applied to a regular position as a violist in the Cappella Musicale of S. Petronio in Bologna in September 1686 and is recorded as “sonatore di viole tenore” in the orchestra for 1687, 1688, 1691, and 1693, in addition to playing for the patronal feast in other years variously as a violinist and a violist. See Osvaldo Gambassi, *La Capella Musicale di S. Petronio: maestri, organisti, cantori e strumentisti dal 1436 al 1920* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1987), 30, 150-54, 335, 495. Remo Giazotto purportedly found a reference to Corelli as a teacher of “violin, viola, violetta and violone or violoncello.” See Remo Giazotto, *Quattro secoli di storia dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, 1970), 276; cited in Stefano La Via, “Violone e violoncello a Roma al tempo di Corelli: Terminologia, modelli organologici, tecniche esecutive,” in *Studi corelliani IV. Atti del Quarto congreso internazionale* (*Fusignano, 4-7 settembre 1986*), ed. by Pierluigi Petrobelli and Gloria Staffieri (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1990), 186.

335 Talbot, *Tomaso Albinoni*, 69.
discussing Albinoni’s works, Talbot also remarks upon the part-writing and register of the violas, finding that: “During his musical apprenticeship Albinoni seems to find viola parts an embarrassment. [...] Around the time of Op. 5, however, he begins to show a surer touch; [...]”

Elsewhere, he comments on the persistence of a “monolithic succession” of “equal notes” (especially eighth notes), in Albinoni’s middle and bass voices, despite the gradual expansion of the rhythmic palette of this composer’s melodic lines over the course of his career.

However, there are exceptions that are not accounted for in Talbot’s description. For example, let us consider one example from Albinoni’s “musical apprenticeship” (Op. 2, publ. 1700) and two others that likely belong to the years 1715-17 (or slightly earlier).

Example 7.1: Albinoni, Concerto in C Major, Op. 2 #10, 1st mvt, ms. 43-45

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337 Talbot, Tomaso Albinoni, 71.

338 Talbot, Tomaso Albinoni, 56-57.

339 Basso continuo figures have been omitted and the tenor viola part has been shown in the alto clef rather than the tenor clef of the original editions.
Example 7.2: Albinoni, Sinfonia in B-flat Major, Si 6, 1st mvt, ms. 9-11

Example 7.3: Albinoni, String Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 7 #10, 3rd mvt, ms. 71-87

In this example, the boxes in measure 9 indicate voice-exchanges between the second violin and viola, asterisks mark parallel melodic lines between the first violin and viola, and the boxes in measure 11 indicate overlapping imitation between the second violin and viola (the imitation continues in measure 12).
In the viola parts from these passages, all occurring in non-fugal textures, we find examples of quasi-independent melodic lines (portions of which parallel other instrumental parts or engage in pendulum imitation and overlapping canonic writing), parallel bass writing, inversions of motivic figures heard in other voices, bass-bassetto compound lines, rhythmic parallelism that frequently shifts between difference voices, and semi-independent rhythmic lines that do more that merely repeat extended sequences of eighth notes.

Yet Talbot is largely correct in his assessment of the characteristics and trends in Albinoni’s viola parts. The key to reconciling Talbot’s comments with the passages illustrated in Examples 7.1-7.3 is found in Albinoni’s deliberately infrequent use of textural contrasts. Although there is evidence, especially during the years c. 1705-1717, of some of the same attention to boldly contrasted textures and sonorities as found in Vivaldi’s music, Albinoni typically explored a narrower range of possibilities and used such contrasts much less often than Vivaldi. While Albinoni began composing a decade earlier than his slightly younger contemporary, the distinction between them is not simply a matter of Albinoni being rooted in older stylistic traditions, since he deliberately retained many of his older practices after Vivaldi’s music began to show influences on his style.

Part of the explanation for the separation in their styles can be attributed to the different aesthetic priorities of each composer: Vivaldi revels in textural contrasts, whereas Albinoni holds them in reserve. In other words, Albinoni gives the viola many different roles overall, but there are often long stretches between moments of prominence (the latter of which are rarely on the level seen in Vivaldi’s works) and the character of
the parts tends to appear less varied than in many of Vivaldi’s works. Yet Albinoni’s viola parts also contain more rhythmic and contrapuntal intricacy than one might suppose. Vivaldi may have been more radical in his liberation of the viola part, but Albinoni, whose works exhibit a different set of preferences in sonority and texture, also found effective and highly individual occasions to treat the viola as a flexible resource.

Typically, the viola parts in Albinoni’s earliest works (those from the 1690s) are marked by a narrow spectrum of ensemble functions and a limited vocabulary of rhythmic values that allows the viola parts (typically two – alto and tenor) to blend with other accompanying voices.341 Especially in homophonic textures, Albinoni prefers homogeneity that relishes the sonority of dense alto and tenor registers. This represents a paradigm that, while still discernible as part of the foundational inheritance of Vivaldi’s viola writing, is more representative of what Vivaldi sought to reach beyond.

The strongest exceptions to this general framework appear in Albinoni’s music from the next two decades. Indeed, the typical Albinoni concerto or sinfonia from the decade or so after c. 1705 includes at least one movement with passages enriched by textures and sonorities seldom found elsewhere in Albinoni’s music of the period. While there is reason to suspect that this textural variety was further expanded in response to the successes of Vivaldi’s compositions, Albinoni had already begun to explore the

341 These include the opera *Zenobia, regina di Palmireni* (Venice, 1694), the Violin Concerto in D Major Co 1 (c. 1695), and the 12 Sinfonie e Concerti Op. 2 (publ. 1700). “Co 1” refers to “Concerto 1” in Talbot’s list of Albinoni’s works. Talbot, *Tomaso Albinoni*, 279-80. I have not been able to consult the following works with viola, all believed to belong to the same period: the Trumpet Sonata in C Major So 1, the 6 Balletti a cinque So 2-7, the 12 Balletti a quattro So 8-19, and some independently preserved arias from otherwise lost operas. The Sinfonia in D Major Si 1 is identical to the Sinfonia from *Zenobia*. See ibid., 279.
importance of sonority as an expressive agent before Vivaldi’s music was widely available.

Indeed, Albinoni’s interest in textural variety began to appear in the works written c. 1705 – c. 1710, such as the concerti of Op. 5 (publ. 1707) and the comic intermezzi Vespetta e Pimpinone (Venice, 1708). In these works there is a sense that Albinoni has ventured away from his earlier preference for rhythmic and textural homogeneity towards a style that places increased priority on rhythmic distinctiveness and textural contrasts. We still find numerous examples of full textures and extended use of continuous eighth notes, but Albinoni now begins to make greater use of a mixture of full and reduced accompaniment textures and is less likely to rely on steady eighth notes to accompany consecutive phrases. To accomplish this variety, Albinoni draws upon orchestration techniques such as the sudden engagement of the violas for parallel melodic lines (PML) and his first examples of true bassetto passages. Other striking sonorities are employed in the slow movement of the Concerto in G Minor Op. 5 #11 (two violas accompanying a solo cello melody that later returns when the movement transforms into an accompanied duet for solo violin and cello) and the codetta to the slow movement of the Concerto in D

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342 Of Albinoni’s other surviving works from these years, I have not been able to consult the opera Engelberta (Venice, 1709, jointly composed with Francesco Gasparini), the serenata Il nascimento de l’Aurora (Barcelona, 1709), the Sinfonia in A Major Si 3 (although I have examined a related work, Si 3a, publ. Amsterdam 1709-12), the Sinfonia in D Major Si 4 (by 1714), the Sinfonia in A Major Si 5, and a few independently preserved opera arias. The Sinfonias Si 3-5 may have originated after 1710; Talbot (op. cit., 154-55) proposes a date of 1710-15 for the group.

343 The first movement of the Concerto in D Major Op. 5 #3 is one notable exception to this trend.

344 For PML, see measure 6 of the second movement of the Concerto in B-flat Major Op. 5 #1 and measure 28 of the first movement of the Concerto in D Minor Op. 5 #7. Examples of bassetto passages, which are typically brief in Albinoni’s works of 1705-10, include several passages in the first movement of the Concerto in C Major Op. 5 #6, the second movement of the Concerto in G Minor Op. 5 #11, and arias from Vespetta e Pimpinone.
Major Op. 5 #3, where a passage for the reduced four-voice scoring of solo violin, second violin, alto viola and cello is then answered by the full ensemble in five voices.

Albinoni takes this variety a degree further in subsequent works, and it is with the works written in the middle of the next decade (c. 1715-17), from the concertos of Op. 7 to the works taken to Dresden by Pisendel, that we see the closest resemblance to the textural paradigms of Vivaldi’s works. Perhaps reacting to the success of Vivaldi’s early works (including Opp. 3 and 4), with their prominent use of full-ensemble parallel monophony (FEPM), Albinoni used FEPM for the entire opening ritornellos (and many of the subsequent returns) in the first movements of the Concerto in C Major for 2 Oboes Op. 7 #2, the Violin Concerto in C Major Co 2, and the Violin Concerto in G Major Co 4.

In the first movement of the Oboe Concerto in D Major Op. 7 #6, on the other hand, FEPM is applied only to the closing gestures of the ritornellos – a position frequently used by Vivaldi, concluding the ritornello with a sense of unanimous agreement. In combination with a few instances of PML and IML (see Examples 7.2 and 7.3), these examples demonstrate that Albinoni indeed called upon the viola to make melodic contributions from time to time, even though this happens with much less frequency than

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345 The works included here are: the 12 Concerti Op. 7 (publ. 1715), the Violin Concerto in C Major Co 2 (publ. c. 1717), and a group of works from Dresden – the Violin Concerto in D Major Co 3, the Violin Concerto in G Major Co 4, the Violin Concerto in A Major Co 5, the Sinfonia in B-flat Major Si 6 and the Sinfonia in G Minor Si 7. Talbot assigns these latter works to the years c. 1716-17 based largely on stylistic grounds combined with Pisendel’s known interaction with Albinoni in Venice during the winter of 1716/17. See Talbot, op. cit., 168-71. While the Dresden materials contain various alterations (such as the addition of wind instruments and alternate passages), it is generally possible to elucidate Albinoni’s original versions. The concerto Co 5 probably contains substantial alterations (even changes to the accompaniments) that, in the absence of other sources, make it too difficult to establish the authorship of many details.

346 Compare these, for example, with the first movement of Vivaldi’s Concerto for 2 Violins in A Major Op. 3 #5 or the first movement of the Oboe Concerto in F Major RV 455.

347 The same happens in several ritornellos from the first movement of the Concerto in C Major for 2 Oboes Op. 7 #11.
in Vivaldi’s works from the same years – a feature that is not evident from Talbot’s description.

Similarly, bassetto is used more frequently and for longer durations in the compositions of this period, and there is also an uptick in instances of parallel bass writing as well as at least one example of a bass-bassetto compound line in the first movement of the Violin Concerto in D Major Co 3.\textsuperscript{348} Meanwhile, the rhythmic palette of the viola parts remains mostly unchanged from Albinoni’s earlier works, but many movements include examples of rhythmic independence and a dynamic approach to rhythmic parallelism whereby alliances between parts are easily shifted. These trends all point to Albinoni’s gradual move away from continuous thick, homogeneous textures towards the inclusion of thinner textures and heterogeneous distribution of emphasis among the voices.

The cumulative effect of the changes that occurred in Albinoni’s works over the years 1694-1717 is that the works written in the mid-1710s exhibit a range of techniques and textures that is much wider than in earlier layers of Albinoni’s works. These later works contain several movements where Albinoni employed a more flexible approach to the viola; a few even feature contrasting textures for different phrase units. The main differences between Albinoni’s and Vivaldi’s use of the viola in the years up through 1717 are: Vivaldi’s inclusion of certain techniques in situations where Albinoni never used them (e.g., bassetto for entire slow movements, FEPM for slow movements, or the

\textsuperscript{348} This concerto was previously believed to have been lost, as the sole-known manuscript (formerly at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden) was destroyed during World War 2. A modern edition has been made from a microfilm (held in the Library of Congress) of the lost manuscript. See Tomaso Albinoni, \textit{Concerto D-Dur für Violine, Streicher und Basso continuo}, ed. by Nicola Schneider (Beeskow: Ortus Musikverlag, 2010).
compound bassetto in any setting), Albinoni’s narrower rhythmic palette that makes the distinctions between voices less transparent than in Vivaldi’s works, and Vivaldi’s more frequent use of the viola as the solo accompaniment voice during solo episodes.

However, more research is needed before we can establish whether Albinoni’s approach to sonority and texture was influenced by Vivaldi’s music as opposed to broader trends. The fact that Albinoni was already experimenting with textural variety at least as early as the years between 1705 and 1710 suggests that he was already beginning to take a new approach to orchestration when Vivaldi’s music began to attract a lot of attention. Perhaps Vivaldi’s examples merely provided Albinoni with some additional textures to try out in his own works. Nevertheless, by comparing their use of the viola we come to a better understanding of the varied way in which the two Venetian composers use texture and a deeper sense of Albinoni’s stylistic development.

**Corelli**

On the basis of the sheer number of printed editions, manuscript sources, transcriptions, thematic borrowings, and general stylistic imitations, Arcangelo Corelli ranks among the most widely influential figures in music during the first decades of the eighteenth century. As a result, we might expect to find evidence that Corelli’s orchestration provided a model for many of Vivaldi’s earlier works.\(^{349}\) Yet, while the

\(^{349}\) The effect of Corelli’s music on several of Vivaldi’s earlier works has been assessed many times in modern scholarship. An early mention occurs in Arnold Schering, *Geschichte des Instrumentalkonzerts* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1905), 85. Schering’s observations, as well as many of those made by more recent writers, are cited and evaluated in Michael Talbot, “*Lingua romana in bocca veneziana*: Vivaldi, Corelli and the Roman School,” in *Studi Corelliani IV*, 303-318, reprinted in Michael Talbot, *Venetian Music in the Age of Vivaldi* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). However, aside from Vivaldi’s use of Corellian
works of the two composers occasionally display important similarities in an abstract sense, these vague resemblances manifest themselves differently in the textures and sonorities of the works by each composer. There are also some remarkable distinctions between their works, with more contrast and technical demand in Vivaldi’s viola parts that helps expand his palette of available textural resources. Indeed, the whole of Corelli’s surviving output provides nothing in terms of orchestration that Vivaldi could not have encountered from other sources.\footnote{In this connection, it is worth remembering that Corelli’s Op. 6 did not appear in print until after Vivaldi’s most “Corellian” movements had been published or at least written. As we do not have any evidence that Vivaldi visited Rome before 1714 or that Corelli’s works were performed in Venice prior to their publication, this means that either: 1) Vivaldi encountered the works as they circulated in currently unknown manuscripts, 2) Vivaldi encountered Corelli’s concerto grosso style through an intermediate composer, or 3) Vivaldi learned to emulate Corelli from the elder composer’s trio and solo sonatas rather than from his orchestral works. The likelihood of the latter two options is supported by Allsop’s discussions of Corelli’s influence. See Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli: New Orpheus of our Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 162-68.}

To the extent that Vivaldi was, on a few occasions, willing to put on the robe of a Corelli emulator, he also declared his independence by doing things Corelli never did. For example, whereas Corelli tended to restrict the “for hire” aspects of his viola parts to their rhythmic interactions with other ensemble parts, Vivaldi’s viola parts often combine a variety of melodic, bass, and rhythmic scoring functions. In Corelli’s music there is no (or, more generally, Roman) concertino and ripieno groupings in a few concertos (two violins and cello concertino in Op. 3 #2 and 11, Op. 4 #7, and the finale of the Ripieno Concerto in A Major RV 159; and four violins in Op. 3 #1, 4, 7, 10, and the Concerto for 4 Violins in B-flat Major RV 553), there has been little close comparison of the way the two composers manipulated ensemble textures, with particular reference to tutti passages in Vivaldi’s most “Corellian” works. Vivaldi did not use the term ‘concertino’ in these works, as far as we know: the autograph materials are lost, but the principal edition labels the four violin parts as ‘violino primo,’ ‘violino secondo,’ ‘violino terzo,’ and ‘violino quarto,’ with ‘solo’ and ‘tutti’ cues as needed in each part. Nevertheless, the frequent contrasts between phrases for a three-member solo group (two violins and a cello) and the full ensemble in the finale of Op. 3 #7, for example, makes a link to Corellian concertino scoring readily apparent, regardless of terminology.
sign of FEPM, multi-voice relays, or of using the viola for quasi-canonic exchanges, and instances of PML are exceedingly rare.\textsuperscript{351}

Instead, Corelli generally uses the viola as a source of reinforcement for important passages in the bass line, for metric emphasis, and to provide a layer of contrapuntal and rhythmic intricacy via highly localized interactions with other parts.\textsuperscript{352} The instrument also serves to heighten the contrast between the concertino-only and tutti passages by enhancing the registral density of the latter. But, lest it be said that Corelli’s use of the viola is consistently more conservative when compared to Vivaldi, the opening of Corelli’s sinfonia WoO 1 (1689) dramatically assigns the viola a position of prominence by allowing it to open the entire movement alone – something that Vivaldi, at least up to 1718, never did.

There is also one melodic-rhythmic gesture that Corelli assigns to the violas with great frequency – a particular interior gesture that is used during a cadence.

\textsuperscript{351} Canonic writing between the two violin parts, on the other hand, can be seen in the fast sections of the first movement of Op. 6 #1.

\textsuperscript{352} Corelli’s surviving output of ensemble music with viola parts is small: 12 concerti grossi in Op. 6 (publ. Amsterdam, 1714), the Sinfonia in D minor (WoO 1) to Giovanni Lorenzo Lulier’s oratorio \textit{Santa Beatrice d’Este} (Rome, 1689), and two sonatas ‘a quattro,’ WoO 2 and WoO 3 (both publ. Amsterdam, 1699). The \textit{Sonata a quattro} in E Minor WoO 3 is, unfortunately, only fragmentarily preserved. However, there are some features of the viola part (the only part that survives) that make it possible to determine a few aspects of the viola’s contribution to the ensemble texture, especially in the two \textit{Allegro} movements, so this work is included in the discussion that follows.
Example 7.4: Corelli, Concerto Grosso Op. 6 #7, 3\textsuperscript{rd} mvt (Andante Largo), ms. 11-13

The gesture is essentially a line that begins on scale degree 2, rises to scale degree 5 via stepwise motion, and leaps downward to scale degree 3 on the resolution of the cadence. The pitch pattern of this cadential figure (without the stepwise ascent from scale degrees 2-5) is sometimes given to one of the violin parts, but Corelli appears to have used the combination of the pitch profile and the rhythmic characteristics highlighted in Example 7.4 only in his viola parts when writing orchestral music.\textsuperscript{353} There are two good explanations for this: 1) the viola is an obvious choice to play an interior line that is in the alto or tenor register, and 2) in the event that the viola is omitted in performance (discussed below), the loss of this cadential figure is less significant than the absence of either line already assigned to the violin parts. This gesture was not unique to Corelli – it

\textsuperscript{353} Corelli may vary the rhythm a little, typically by doubling the length of each note (opening movement of Op. 6 #1) or by transforming the dotted-eighth + sixteenth combination into two eighth notes. The final pitch of the gesture is also occasionally scale degree 1 instead of scale degree 3. The overall impact of these changes is, however, small enough that gesture is still very recognizable.
can occasionally be found, for instance, in Torelli’s music. But Corelli used it so often that it can be described as a regular feature of his viola parts and shows that, at least for cadences, he sought to add a little linear interest to the inner voices even in predominantly homophonic textures.\textsuperscript{354}

The true nature of Corelli’s orchestration is, however, clouded by uncertainties regarding the relationship between the surviving printed editions and the works as they were composed and performed under Corelli’s direction. While Corelli may have intended the concerti grossi to be published as an idealized, perfectly distilled pinnacle of his career, Peter Walls, Peter Allsop, and Agnese Pavanello have suggested that this was not necessarily what ultimately materialized and that the works published as Op. 6 may not be an accurate reflection of the music Corelli had written earlier in his career.\textsuperscript{355} On the title page of the collection, Corelli informs the reader that the pieces can be performed either as written (with the option to increase the number of performers on each of the ripieno parts as desired) or by omitting the ripieno parts entirely and performing only the concertino parts.\textsuperscript{356} As Pavanello has recently pointed out, the publication of Corelli’s concerti grossi, as also occurred with publications of early concertos by Torelli and others, marked an innovative effort to make this complex repertoire for large ensemble

\textsuperscript{354} For example, the gesture occurs five times in the twenty-eight measures of the B minor \textit{Largo} of Concerto 1.


\textsuperscript{356} “Concerti grossi con duo violini e violoncello di concertino obbligati e duei altri violini, viola e basso di concerto grosso ad arbitrio che si potranno raddoppiare”.

accessible to a wider audience in a commercially viable manner.\textsuperscript{357} Pavanello suggests that composers and publishers sought to encourage sales of concertos by tapping into the existing market for trio sonatas; adapting concertos to a trio sonata medium (with a viola part of limited contrapuntal interest that could be omitted if circumstances required this) allowed an existing base of consumers to explore the concerto repertoire while making it possible to perform the music without having to assemble a large number of instrumentalists. Indeed, Corelli’s preface implies that he made some accommodations in the printed parts to permit performance of the concerti grossi with trio sonata instrumentation. I interpret this to mean that rather than publish a reduced trio sonata edition and a separate full version, the 1714 edition was designed as a compromise that includes a reduction and a modified full version – thus we now lack a true full version of the concerti grossi.\textsuperscript{358}

Yet we can reconstruct much of this supposed full version by reversing the processes that Walls, Allsop, and Pavanello suggest Corelli used to produce the flexible version of the printed edition. As these writers note, the most obvious issue facing Corelli was that important melodic material and bass lines exclusive to the ripieno parts needed to be inserted into the concertino parts, as much as possible, in the event that the

\textsuperscript{357} See Pavanello, op. cit., 71-89 and Walls, op. cit., 388-89. In Torelli’s case, surviving materials in the archives of San Petronio and elsewhere show that publication of concertos and sonatas for large ensemble often involved dramatic reductions in scoring demands – condensing multiple violin and bass parts into two violin parts and one or two bass partbooks and removing wind parts entirely whenever possible. See Pavanello, op. cit., 71-75.

\textsuperscript{358} Since Corelli died in 1713 and the set was published in 1714, he never had a chance to prepare separate editions, if he had wished, following the enormous success of the first edition of Op. 6; the publisher, Roger, would have had little motivation to tinker posthumously with an already successful product.
pieces would be played as trio sonatas. Since the concertino violins generally play the main melodic and imitative material regardless of whether or not this is shared with the ripieno violins, and the concertino cello and continuo parts normally (with only a few exceptions) play the bass line and imitative material assigned to the bass line, the concern was primarily with any bass functions and imitative material originally given to the ripieno viola part. Allsop and Walls are among those who observe that Corelli’s solution was generally to retain the original ripieno viola part but add the concertino cello as a duplicating line where possible. The practice can be seen by comparing the fugal exposition of the fourth movement of the sinfonia WoO 1 with its revised version as the third movement of Op. 6 #6.

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359 See Allsop, op. cit., 145; and Pavanello, op. cit., 79-81.
360 Allsop, op. cit., 145. Walls (op. cit., p. 408) recommends that the concertino cello doublings in fugal passages should be treated as cues (i.e. not played when the viola is present in performance), but he does not extend this suggestion, for example, to bassetto passages.
Example 7.5: Corelli, Sinfonia in D Minor, WoO 1, 4th mvt (*Largo andante*), ms. 1-4

Example 7.6: Corelli, Concerto Grosso in F Major, Op. 6 #6, 3rd mvt (*Largo*), ms. 1-4
In WoO 1, the violas (alone) initiate the movement with the subject entrance—the
contcertino cello does not enter until measure 4, when the ripieno bass line also enters. In
the version from Op. 6, the concertino cello plays in unison with the viola up until the
bass voice enters in measure 4 with the subject, scored here for the ripieno and the
concertino basso continuo group.\(^{361}\) In other words, the concertino continuo part has
become a *basso seguente* part in Op. 6—an increasingly old-fashioned approach in Italy
by 1714 (although retained longer in some areas north of the Alps), made even more
unusual by its absence in the version from 1689. This has the effect, in *Example 7.6*, of
transforming a monophonic texture into a harmonized texture, through the realization of
the continuo figures. As Walls, Allsop, and Pavanello have shown, Corelli provided
alternative scoring for this material in Op. 6 for circumstances where the original scoring
was not feasible, adapting a four-part fugal texture to a three-part trio sonata scoring.\(^{362}\)

If we remove the concertino cello from these apparent doublings, we should also
remove it from the passages where the concertino cello parallels the viola or ripieno
violins as they play what would otherwise be a bassetto. As published, Op. 6 contains
only a few true bassetto passages, usually limited to places where the bassetto is played
by one of the violin parts from the concertino and ripieno groups. Whenever both
concertino violin parts are already engaged with other material, Corelli adds the bass line
into the concertino cello, transforming a bassetto for ripieno violins and/or violas into

\(^{361}\) Note that measures 1-3 are not a self-contained solo passage for the concertino group; each of the
concertino violins plays together with its respective ripieno part, and it makes logical sense that the
concertino bass line should do the same.

\(^{362}\) Walls, op. cit., 386-87; Allsop, op. cit., 145; Pavanello, op. cit., 79-81.
parallel bass scoring. When we reverse this process, we encounter a great number of bassetto passages, including several portions of the famous pastorale that concludes the ‘Christmas’ concerto (Op. 6 #8). There is, however, no reason to believe that Corelli’s works provided a model for Vivaldi’s use of the bassetto, especially since they were published with most of the bassetto passages re-scored as parallel bass writing – and there were plenty of other models available to Vivaldi. The same can be said for Corelli’s use of vertically elaborated bass lines (VEB) and bass-bassetto compound lines.

Regardless of how one chooses to interpret the scoring of Op. 6, the broad picture that emerges from this comparison is that Corelli was probably not a model for Vivaldi’s use of the viola as a resource for scoring textural contrasts and special sonorities. Even in those movements with a superficially Corellian appearance (e.g., concertino groupings of two violins and cello, the use of concertino-ripieno contrasts, allusions to themes from Corelli sonatas, etc.), it is quite likely that other parameters of the stylistic vocabulary (such as relationships to a dance, the melodic and harmonic vocabulary, alternations of

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363 For example, in the second half of the first Allegro of Concerto 4, the exchanges between the two concertino violins are supported by a bass line scored in parallel octaves between the ripieno violins and concertino cello. In a performance with all seven parts, the concertino cello could be omitted, re-scoring the bass line as a bassetto. A similar situation occurs in the pedal drones of the Pastorale from Concerto 8.

364 Any attempt to understand the influence Corelli’s scoring and textures may have had on the scoring techniques of other composers is also bound up with questions surrounding the origins of the twelve concerti grossi of Op. 6. Allsop has provided a good account of the issues, in Allsop, op. cit., 145-46. As Allsop, Owen Jander, and others have noted, “Corellian” concerto grosso instrumentation was already in use in Rome before Corelli is known to have written his own examples; it is found in several works by Alessandro Stradella. See Allsop, op. cit., 143; and Owen Jander, “Concerto Grosso Instrumentation in Rome in the 1660’s and 1670’s,” JAMS 21 (1968): 170-71. On the basis of the scant available evidence, Allsop (pp. 150-151) proposes that Op. 6 contains a few revised older movements (exact vintage uncertain) integrated with newer cycles of movements (some with certain common properties and shared melodic profiles). This means that, while published (posthumously) in 1714, the scoring of texture and sonority in these works may reflect an amalgam of practices spanning a thirty-year period, rather than being a snapshot of Corelli’s approach at any given point in time.

365 VEB can be found, for example, in the second movement (Allegro, fugal) of Concerto 2 and the opening of Concerto 11. There is a passage with a bass-bassetto compound line in the finale of Concerto 1, and this texture is also hinted at in other concertos as a result of overlapping gestures for the viola and bass parts.
solo and tutti across brief phrase units, etc.) shaped many aspects of the viola parts without any need for a deliberate attempt to imitate Corelli’s viola parts. In the remainder of Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan output, the similarities between Corelli’s and Vivaldi’s viola parts are limited to the most general properties common to many Italian composers in the decades around 1700.

Torelli

Of the three composers discussed in this chapter, Giuseppe Torelli is the one whose music bears the strongest resemblance to Vivaldi’s as regards flexibility of texture and sonority. In comparison with the music of Corelli and Albinoni, there is a stronger sense of the viola’s functioning as a flexible orchestral resource in several of Torelli’s works. This distinction is particularly striking since Torelli died in 1709 – a point at which Albinoni’s compositional career was just reaching its peak and Vivaldi’s was still getting started. This means that many of the sonorities in Torelli’s music predate similar textures in Vivaldi’s works.

The most widely used catalog of Torelli’s works is included in Franz Giegling, *Giuseppe Torelli: ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des italienischen Konzerts* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949). The most up-to-date and complete catalog of Torelli’s works is: Francesco Passadore, *Catalogo tematico delle composizioni di Giuseppe Torelli* (1658-1709), (Padua: I Solisti Veneti, 2007). Torelli’s works are identified in the present study by the catalog number from Giegling, followed by the catalog number from Passadore, in the format: Giegling/Passadore (ex. G.1/A.2.2.1). Works examined for the present study include: the four-part works from Op. 5 (#2, 4, 6, 8 and 10; I was unable to consult #12), the concerti Opp. 6 and 8, the trumpet sonata G.deest/A.2.2.17 (Amsterdam: Roger, c. 1710) and trumpet concerto G.deest/A.2.2.18 (Amsterdam: Roger, 1715), and the various concerti, sonatas, and sinfonias G.1/A.2.2.1, G.3/A.2.2.3, G.6/A.2.2.6, G.7/A.2.2.8, G.8/A.2.2.8, G.10/A.2.2.10 (Amsterdam: Roger, c. 1710), G.14/A.2.2.13, G.18/A.5.1.4, G.23/A.5.1.9, G.24/A.5.1.10, G.26/A.9.1.1, and G.29/A.9.1.4 – forty-three pieces in total. Apart from an alternate scoring of G. 3/A.2.2.3 in due cori, these works have a single viola part, although Torelli used two or more viola parts in a few works not included here.
In addition to his expertise as a violist, the emergence of the solo concerto likely contributed to Torelli’s more liberal use of the viola as an orchestral resource. In contradistinction to the concertino-tutti contrasts in Corelli’s oeuvre and the thicker textures in most of Albinoni’s earlier works, Torelli’s compositions exhibit a strong inclination towards the textures of the nascent solo concerto – a genre he helped to establish – such as a drive for variety in the homophonic accompaniments to passages featuring a soloist. In fact, the types of orchestration found in Vivaldi’s music are most strongly evident in Torelli’s later music – just when solo concerto elements became more strongly pronounced.\(^{367}\) In the move away from a relatively strict dependence upon imitative textures or dance-inspired movements, Torelli may have been responding to a need to find new resources for maintaining interest. Emphasizing variety of texture and sonority was one way to avoid the monotony that might arise from frequent repetition of ritornello passages and a relatively limited vocabulary of melodic-rhythmic figurations in the solo episodes.

While Torelli, like many of his Italian contemporaries, primarily uses the viola as a rhythmic and timbral resource, there are a significant number of examples where the part is tasked with melodic and bass functions. One of the clearest resemblances to Vivaldi’s scoring concerns Torelli’s use of the viola for PML. There are several movements in the works with trumpet where Torelli wrote for the violin parts in unison, drafting the violas to form PML with the violins whenever he wishes to add harmonic color to the sonority of the melodic line. In this regard, he is closer to Vivaldi than

\(^{367}\) See Op. 8 and the unpublished works he wrote after c. 1700. A similar observation could be made regarding the trajectory of Albinoni’s output.
Albinoni, who generally preferred not to use the violas as a melodic resource when writing for unison violins.

In at least two pieces, Torelli took this melodic partnership to an extreme not encountered in any of the other works encountered in the present study. One of these, the Concerto for 2 Trumpets in D Major (G.24 / A.5.1.10) is illustrated in Examples 7.7-7.9.

Example 7.7: Torelli, Concerto for 2 Trumpets in D Major, G.24 / A.5.1.10, 1st mvt, ms. 5-8

Example 7.8: Torelli, Concerto for 2 Trumpets in D Major, G.24 / A.5.1.10, 2nd mvt, ms. 1-12
Example 7.9: Torelli, Concerto for 2 Trumpets in D Major, G.24 / A.5.1.10, 3rd mvt, ms. 9-14

While there are no surviving second violin partbooks for this concerto, the eight first violin partbooks for this concerto in the archives of San Petronio are labeled ‘unissoni’ and this likely means that all of the violins played in unison throughout this concerto (aside from four violin solos in the second movement, each assigned to a different performer in the surviving partbooks). As we can see in Examples 7.7-7.9, Torelli effectively treats the violas as equal partners to the violins, engaging in pendulum and canonic melodic exchanges with the violins in a manner normally reserved for

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368 See Passadore, op. cit., 199. For most of the concerto, it is extremely difficult to imagine what a hypothetically lost independent second violin part would have looked like, so this further increases the likelihood that all the violins were intended to play in unison for all or most of the concerto (the aforementioned solo passages excepted), as happens in several of Torelli’s other works.
interactions between two violin parts. Another Torelli work, a sonata for trumpet and strings in D Major (G. 10 / A.2.2.10) published as “Sonata VI” in an anthology issued by Roger (Amsterdam, c. 1710, catalog no. 96), has outer movements that are dominated by exchanges of even longer melodic segments between trumpet, unison violins, and viola – frequently resulting in a chamber-sonata-like texture of three interweaving melodic voices over the bass line. Outside of imitative textures, Vivaldi assigned this type of role to the viola only during much briefer spans than occur in these Torelli works. While these particular examples might suggest amplified “chamber” music that is different from more “orchestral” writing in much of Vivaldi’s music, both composers experimented with a wide variety of textural models for large ensemble music and a more important distinction is that these examples by Torelli adopt one model for entire movements whereas Vivaldi preferred to contrast a similar model against others within individual movements. Such cases of extreme prominence for the viola, likely influenced by Torelli’s experience as a professional violist, indicate the wide scope of his conception of the viola as an orchestral resource, even though two of the more recognizable features of Vivaldi’s orchestration – bassetto and FEPM – do not turn up in the works examined here.

Many other passages that draw upon the viola for PML and VEB result from Torelli’s fondness for brief melodic exchanges between the treble and bass lines. In particular, Torelli often places the viola in parallel tenths (or thirds) with the bass, alternating with the violins (in parallel thirds or sixths), as seen in Example 7.10.
Example 7.10: Torelli, Concerto in D Minor, Op. 5 No. 4, G. 118 / A.8.1.2, 2nd mv., ms. 40-41

These alternations represent a scoring and textural pattern that set a strong precedent for Vivaldi’s works. In other high-low exchanges, the viola may parallel a melodic violin part (for PML) or a melodic line in the bass. In the latter case, it is not always clear whether the viola is heard as an elaboration of a bass-line melody or the bass is heard as vertical-elaboration of viola melody. The fact that Torelli often keeps the violins and violas in a similar register makes this distinction even less clear. Ultimately, what matters most is the emphasis Torelli places on contrasting registers through the presence or absence of bass instruments for a given phrase segment. Unlike Vivaldi, however, Torelli typically limits each high- or low-register segment to a very small duration – rarely exceeding a couple of measures and frequently as brief as one or two

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369 The viola has a melodic function in the opening of the Concerto in G Major Op. 6 #1, but the identification of melodic lines is less certain in the second movement (Allegro) of the Concerto in G Minor Op. 5 #8.

370 John Suess also makes special note of these contrasts, as a sign of an orchestral conception of sonority aligned with phrase structures, in his preface to Giuseppe Torelli: Concerti musicali Op. 6, ed. John G. Suess, Recent Researches in Music of the Baroque Era 115 (Middleton, Wisc.: A-R Editions, 2002), x.
beats. As vertically elaborated two-voice imitation or bass-bassetto compound lines, this is in keeping with the examples found in the music of Albinoni, Corelli, and Vivaldi, although Torelli seems to relish these types of rapid registral interactions far more than the other composers.

Like Albinoni, Torelli was an important pioneer in the melding of concerto and fugal elements, especially in Op. 8 and several of the works with trumpet. Many movements feature imitative writing for two violin parts with accompanying material for the viola and bass, but there are also fugal passages that engage all of the ensemble parts, and in these expositions the viola can enter in any position (first to last) and carry subject and countersubject material in a multitude of combinations with other voices. Torelli also uses the viola part for imitative exchanges with the bass line or a secondary, interior melodic line. The viola parts even include, on occasion, the interior cadential voice frequently encountered in Corelli’s music, perhaps signaling the influence of a common source.

Vertically elaborated bass lines and, to a lesser extent, bass-bassetto compound lines are also a feature of Torelli’s works. In fact, bass-bassetto compound lines may

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371 The long end of this spectrum can be seen in the first movement of the Concerto in C Major Op. 6 #7, while the short end (single-beat exchanges in a bass-bassetto compound line) is evident near the end of the Concerto in B-flat Major Op. 6 #11.

372 For an example of the viola initiating an exposition, see measures 113-119 (the final exposition) of the finale of the Concerto in D Minor Op. 6 #10; this is a reversal of sorts, since the viola had been the last voice to enter (with the answer) in the opening exposition of this movement.

373 See, for example, the first movement of the Trumpet Concerto in D Major, G.3/A.2.2.3.

374 VEB is typically used, as expected, for harmonic coloring and amplitude to score exchanges between high and low registers, scalar passages in the bass, and chains of suspensions. Parallel thirds and tenths are most common, but parallel sixths, octaves, and even seventeenths also occur. In some of the works with trumpet, VEB is used rather extensively, but I have not encountered any entire movements with continuous parallelism between the viola and bass lines such as occasionally occur in Vivaldi’s music.
actually occur more often than in Vivaldi’s music. However, Torelli tends to give the viola less rhythmic independence, generally aligning it with at least one other voice, although he does not hesitate to realign rhythmic partnerships between the voices during the course of a piece, especially in his later works. Especially in concertos with pronounced independence for one or more solo parts, the viola is frequently used only during ritornello periods to emphasize the contrast between four-part tutti textures and solo episodes accompanied by one or two parts.

Thus, for all the remarkable exceptions noted here, in the average passage from Torelli’s music (especially in his earlier works), the viola part resembles much of Talbot’s description of Albinoni’s viola parts. Like Albinoni, however, the full scope of Torelli’s oeuvre reveals an awareness of the expressive and structural potential of distinctive sonorities. What distinguishes Torelli from Albinoni (and Corelli) is a greater degree of boldness when he deviates from his normal modes of orchestration. For example, whereas Albinoni might save a particular texture for a single passage, Torelli exploits that texture throughout an entire movement, making that specific sonority a prominent component of the conception of that piece. As a result, Torelli comes closer than anyone else examined in this chapter to providing a model for Vivaldi’s music, both in terms of specific techniques and a general attention to the potential uses of contrasting sonorities.

375 Most of Op. 5 and several works in Op. 6 feature extensive PERU between the viola and bass (with or without the second violin). Leaving aside a little sostenuto writing in the Concerto in G Minor Op. 8 #6 (ms. 8-11, 42-44, 54-57, and 79-82 of the final movement), the main purposes of non-imitative rhythmic independence in Torelli’s viola parts are the provision of metric emphasis and pulse definition. Incidentally, Op. 8 #6 is Torelli’s “Christmas Concerto,” so drone pedal points suggesting shepherds’ bagpipes are found throughout the concerto. However, the non-pedal point sustained tones for the viola in the passages listed here provide a sustained descending line that is at least partially distinct from the suggestion of the bagpipe drones.
Conclusion: Building upon an Ever-Expanding Array of Ideas

The majority of the common ground between Vivaldi and the three composers discussed here comes from their treatment of the viola as a resource for rhythmic, registral, and harmonic-rhythmic scoring. This is not surprising, since Italian composers in the decades around 1700 generally found similar ways to delegate ensemble resources to such functions as the provision of metric emphasis, pulse definition, and registral distribution. Recognizable melodic and bass functions are not as commonly allotted to the viola by Albinoni, Corelli, and Torelli, but varying amounts of FEPM, PML, VEB, bassetto, and bass-bassetto compound lines turn up from time to time. Until the advent of a regular appearance of percussion and wind instruments in non-concertante roles, the viola part remained one of the best available resources for these functions and others. All three of the composers discussed in this chapter drew upon this resource, but Vivaldi’s music demanded a greater breadth of scoring contrasts and, as a result, he made much more flexible use of the viola part.

These assessments of the scoring of texture and sonority in music by three of Vivaldi’s important contemporaries and predecessors show that our composer inherited many of the more remarkable orchestrations found in the music of his predecessors and kept abreast of trends in the music by his contemporaries, even if direct lines of influence have not been established. While each of the composers discussed here developed his own distinctive mixture of scoring combinations, this chapter has also demonstrated that the particular palette of textures and sonorities in Vivaldi’s music is even more diverse than that used by any of these other composers.
It is difficult to pinpoint the reasons behind the greater diversity in Vivaldi’s music, which may stem from a variety of factors. The emergence of the solo concerto may have been an important component, since Torelli’s, Albinoni’s, and (in a few cases) Corelli’s orchestration often bears the strongest resemblance to Vivaldi’s in works with a more clearly defined role for one or two soloists, including a few movements from Corelli’s Op. 6 that resemble solo concerto movements. However, this link cannot fully explain Vivaldi’s orchestration, as many of the techniques he used – such as FEPM, VEB and bassetto – also had precedents in dramatic and sacred music. Likewise, Vivaldi’s involvement in operatic activities may have helped expand his palette of textures and sonorities, but all three of the other composers discussed in this chapter similarly had ample opportunities to compose and/or perform works for voices with instruments.

Overall, Corelli’s orchestration and textures provided, at best, a model for only a small portion of Vivaldi’s earliest orchestral works, whereas Albinoni is more likely to have been influenced (if at all) by Vivaldi’s music rather than vice versa. Only in Torelli’s music do we find some notable similarities to Vivaldi’s writing; further research may determine whether these resemblances are a sign of direct influence or a product of two independent personalities drawing upon similar stocks of new orchestral and textural ideas. Ultimately, the examples of these four composers show that while there is a fair amount of difference in each composer’s approach to the scoring of texture and sonority, their music collectively provides evidence that several Italian composers in the years just after 1700 were beginning to experiment with orchestration as a tool for expressive and structural variety in a manner that foreshadows the role of orchestration in music of the late eighteenth century and beyond. This finding places the “birth” (or at least the
“seeds”) of “modern orchestration” several decades further back than most commentators have hitherto acknowledged.
Conclusion

The works produced during Vivaldi’s first fifteen or so years as a composer yield strong evidence that his resourceful use of the viola is a significant counter-balance to Berlioz’s remark that “The masters of the 18th century [...] generally did not know what to do with the viola” or Forsyth’s suggestion that viola parts of that period typically exist because “The instrument was there and had to be written for.” Even Forsyth’s later remark, that “The viola, therefore, either did nothing or something which by the ingenuity of the composer was made to appear as much like nothing as possible” may be more clever than accurate, for it implies that a composer such as Vivaldi was mainly concerned with ensuring that the viola part did not interfere with the focus on other ensemble parts. We can now see that the viola was quite often used to highlight and complement aspects of the other ensemble voices. In fact, the viola part is an important ingredient in Vivaldi’s use of texture and sonority for expressive and structural purposes.

Here is a summary reflection on the role of the viola in Vivaldi’s pre-Mantuan works as it might appear in a reference guide to Vivaldi’s instrumentarium:

Vivaldi and the Viola – to early 1718

Vivaldi’s scores typically identify the modern viola as a “violetta”; scribal copies and printed editions also used the names “alto”, “alto viola”, or “tenore viola”. In some of his earlier works, Vivaldi was among the last Italian composers to write for two viola

376 Forsyth, Orchestration, 395.
parts (alto and tenor), which have an identical compass, although the selective compass of the alto viola part in Vivaldi’s music is often a third higher (at both extremes) than the tenor viola. Aside from also employing two or more parts in works *a due cori* and a few portions of operas and sacred works, Vivaldi generally used only a single viola part. Except for a few examples of rapid string crossings, Vivaldi’s viola parts normally stay within the bounds of technical difficulty common to those of his Italian contemporaries.

The viola engages in melodic material through four main avenues: 1) full-ensemble parallel monophony (often referred to, albeit not always accurately, as the “tutti unison”), 2) parallel melodic lines, where the viola parallels the melody in another part, 3) melodic imitation (fugal, canonic, etc.), and 4) independent melodic lines (typically short melodic-rhythmic motives that may or may not be related to melodic material heard elsewhere in the movement). Melodic solos for the viola are found in the second movement of the Concerto in B Minor Op. 3 #10, and the same concerto is one of several where a single viola part provides the bass line in accompaniment to one or more solo violins.

Vivaldi often uses the viola to provide or reinforce the bass line, either as a bassetto (unison or in parallel with other bassetto voices), in parallel with the basso continuo line, or as part of a bass-bassetto compound line. Rhythmically, the viola is often independent, but it also travels in parallel with a portion or all of remainder of the ensemble. Among specific rhythmic functions, the viola is used for metric emphasis, increased rhythmic complexity (e.g., via syncopation), and to provide a foil to motion in other parts (e.g., through the use of single-voice sostenuto writing).
Because the basso continuo is often already harmonized by keyboard and/or plucked string instruments, the viola’s harmonic role is better understood as a timbral contribution – specifying the voicing of a chord within the string ensemble – and as a way to rhythmicize elements of the vertical harmonies. These functions can be described as “harmonic-rhythmic scoring.” Vivaldi also uses the viola to contrast the registral density and registral mean of individual passages. Aside from parallel bass writing, his viola parts tend to form contrary motion with the bass line more often than with the treble voices. However, Vivaldi is apt to break traditional rules against part-crossing and improper resolution of leading tones in order to follow the course of his sonic imagination.

Beginning with his earliest surviving works, Vivaldi treated the viola as a flexible orchestral resource for the scoring of texture and sonority, frequently aligning and re-aligning it with different ensemble parts in order to reinforce or complicate various elements of the music. The largest portion of Vivaldi’s viola parts is concerned with rhythmic, timbral, and registral contributions (including harmonic-rhythmic scoring), but compared with those of many of his Italian predecessors and contemporaries (such as Corelli, Torelli, and Albinoni), Vivaldi’s viola parts feature a significantly higher incidence of melodic and bass line content, resulting in a much more diverse array of functions. Through this diversity and flexibility, the viola perhaps becomes the central ingredient in Vivaldi’s dynamic, kaleidoscopic orchestration and his use of contrasting textures that anticipate orchestral writing in the second half of the eighteenth century.
New Perspectives on the Historiography of Orchestration and Texture

Vivaldi was among the Italian composers around 1700 who shifted their preferences away from the continuities generated by Fortspinnung and contrapuntal formulae towards the use of distinctive phrase units that could be repeated, transposed, and contrasted to delineate phrase groupings. With a four-part string ensemble (plus additional basso continuo instruments) as the primary foundation of Vivaldi’s orchestra, the viola proved to be an excellent resource in the quest to contrast textures and sonorities.

In many respects, the role of the viola in Vivaldi’s music frequently looks forward to some of the roles of orchestral wind instruments (especially paired horns and oboes) in music from the second half of the eighteenth century. The strongest resemblance comes from Vivaldi’s use of the viola for single-voice sostenuto writing, but we can also observe Classical era composers using orchestral wind parts for reinforcement, metric emphasis, and matters of registral distribution in ways that are similar to many of the functions found in Vivaldi’s viola parts. The main difference is that later composers, often relying on eight or more ensemble parts (four string parts + four wind parts), could then enlist the viola for other textural and timbral purposes.

The other important factor that significantly contributes to the forward-looking character of much of Vivaldi’s orchestration is his emphasis on sonic qualities, even at

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the expense of theoretical rules. Vertical elaboration of melodic and bass lines (perhaps inspired by organ registration), triads fully voiced by the string ensemble, exploration of the upper portions of the ensemble register, and the allusion to contrapuntal elements within a homophonic framework are among the many sonorities where Vivaldi was apt to set aside the traditional rules of voice-leading, especially the avoidance of part-crossing, the proper resolution of leading tones, and the general independence of parts.

The individual orchestral parts, therefore, become agents in the quest to present a diverse array of textures and sonorities. Vivaldi’s music, striving towards greater dramatic and emotional intensity, drew heavily upon this style of orchestration, harnessing the ability to emphasize melodic-rhythmic gestures and associate specific textures with individual phrases. Even in the realm of chamber music, the blending of monophonic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures that is praised in the string quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and their contemporaries has remarkable precedence in Vivaldi’s orchestral writing.

Vivaldi’s music (along with examples by Albinoni and Torelli, among others) is best accommodated within a much more intricate history of texture in eighteenth-century ensemble music. Rather than a binary opposition between polyphony (especially imitative polyphony) and proto-galant homophony, the music examined in this study provides evidence that composers c. 1700 also had the option to combine or allude to multiple textures within the same work. From a post-Baroque perspective on the history of orchestration, those composers such as Vivaldi who frequently explored this third,

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379 Kolneder made a similar observation when discussing the part-writing of the middle movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 3 #6. See Kolneder, Antonio Vivaldi, 76-77. See also Kolneder’s remarks on the distinction between the part-writing conventions of eighteenth-century practicing musicians and the rules prescribed by theorists, in: Kolneder, Performance Practices, 63.
fluid option developed ways to orchestrate texture and sonority that presage many of the innovations of the late eighteenth century. As we saw in *The Four Seasons*, this permitted Vivaldi to write music with a high level of expressive intensity and dramatic potency. Perhaps, then, it is more accurate to say that all three textural modes (imitative polyphony, homophony, and varied textures) were being explored simultaneously by various composers throughout the century (even within the oeuvre of a single composer, as happened with Vivaldi). The main change over time, then, was a shift in balance that led to one mode being more widely used and occupying a more prominent reception among audiences, with differences likely existing between individual locales and particular genres.

These findings place Vivaldi’s earlier works at a point in time when the balance was beginning to shift away from imitative polyphony (especially in opera and the nascent solo concerto) but had not yet tilted heavily toward the homophonic textures that suited *galant* idioms so well, even though the *galant* vogue was already beginning to take root in some circles. Thus there was a particularly vast array of textural possibilities, at least up through the 1710s. Yet even though the *galant* style was a substantial influence on many composers of the 1720s and 1730s, there were composers who continued frequently to write imitative contrapuntal textures (in addition to Handel and Bach, several composers in Vienna such as Fux, Caldara, and Conti come immediately to mind), while Vivaldi, Telemann, Locatelli, and others still composed works with mixed textures.\(^{380}\) There is little reason to believe that Vivaldi’s music provided Classical

\(^{380}\) It should be noted that even this listing is simplistic, to the extent that each of these composers also utilized different types of textures within their own works – the groupings made here are only to suggest
composers with any specific model for contrasts of texture and sonority. However, if all three modes persisted side-by-side throughout the century, then Vivaldi’s works fit within a broader continuum that would have provided numerous other models for the textural variety and malleable orchestration in Haydn’s and Mozart’s works from the 1770s and beyond.

Value of Method

With a method for evaluating and understanding details of sonority and scoring in Vivaldi’s music, there now exist possibilities for addressing a broad swath of repertoire and a range of important issues for the study and performance of eighteenth-century music, such as: dating individual works and specific concepts of orchestration, assessing authenticity, interpreting narrative and programmatic elements, differentiating the styles of composers often grouped together by modern scholars, and refining our understanding of the stylistic transformations in the output of individual composers. These areas, in turn, can help refine our conventional stylistic divisions of eighteenth-century music.

To highlight just one advantage of this method: the definitions provided here can serve as a model for the studies of the origin and development of particular orchestral devices, including those that may have been relatively new c. 1700. A more detailed account of the history of effects such as the bassetto, FEPM, and single-voice sostenuto

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381 However, much work needs to be done to explain, for example, the resemblances between some of Vivaldi’s textures and those in the early symphonies of Giovanni Battista Sammartini (including their treatment of the viola).
will clarify to what extent Vivaldi and his contemporaries drew upon as-yet-unknown influences.

The present study has revealed much of the richness of Vivaldi’s scoring of texture and sonority. In the end, the viola part – so often dismissed by later writers – provides the key to unlocking the secret of Vivaldi’s orchestration and holds the potential to reshape significant aspects of our view of the history of musical style.
Appendix: Vivaldi’s Pre-Mantuan Works with One or More Viola Parts

The following provides basic information on the works included in this study, arranged according to the most recent edition of Peter Ryom’s catalog and its subsequent updates in the journal Studi vivaldiani. Further information on the identification, sources, and chronological details of each work can be found in Ryom’s catalog and the literature cited for each item. Work titles are my own, adapted from critical editions (when available) or Ryom, and are intended for quick reference rather than to convey ironclad distinctions of genre and instrumentation or literal transcription of titles in original sources. For works published during Vivaldi’s lifetime, only the earliest publication is mentioned. Lost works and works with missing viola parts are not included. It should be noted that the available methods for determining chronology tend to be more successful at establishing a terminus ante quem rather than a terminus post quem; unless otherwise specified, each work may have been written several years before the date given below, although in most cases stylistic factors tend to favor a 3- to 5-year maximum span before the terminus ante quem given here for each work. Unless otherwise noted, it can be assumed that the dates given below are based on the intersection of such factors as source provenance, physical attributes of the sources (paper type, rastrography), scribal characteristics, and stylistic factors (including thematic borrowings).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Principal Basis for Date / Other Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinfonia in C Major</td>
<td>by 1717(^{383})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 112</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto/Sinfonia in C Major</td>
<td>by 1717(^{384})</td>
<td>2(^{nd}) mvt uses material from Op. 4 #12/ii</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concerto/Sinfonia in G Major</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier(^{385})</td>
<td>1 source copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in C Major</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier(^{386})</td>
<td>copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 170</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in C Major</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier(^{387})</td>
<td>autograph score has Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and an added inscription to Pisendel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in C Major</td>
<td>c. 1711 or earlier(^{388})</td>
<td>formerly listed as RV Anh. 104</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 175</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in C Major</td>
<td>by 1716(^{389})</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #7 (1716); 2 Vn &amp; Vc solo in 4(^{th}) mvt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV 185</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in C Major</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717(^{390})</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #2 (1720); shares material with RV 185 and Sinfonia to RV 729</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 188</td>
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\(^{384}\) Ibid.


\(^{386}\) Ibid.

\(^{387}\) Heller, ibid.; Fechner, op. cit., 777.

\(^{388}\) Sardelli, op. cit., 60-66, 72-73.


\(^{390}\) Rasch, op. cit., 101-102, 105. The date for this particular work is based on my assumption that if, as Rasch proposes, the concertos of Op. 7 were assembled in 1719 or 1720 from manuscripts of older works, a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sinfonia/Concerto in C Major RV 192</th>
<th>before c. 1717; c. 1708?</th>
<th>with Vn solo</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sinfonia/Concerto in C Major RV 192a</td>
<td>before c. 1717; c. 1708?</td>
<td>with Vn solo; different finale than RV 192</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in C Major RV 195</td>
<td>by 1716(^{395})</td>
<td>publ. as #6 in <em>VI Concerts à 5 &amp; 6 Instrumens</em> (Amsterdam: J. Roger #417, 1716)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in C Minor RV 196</td>
<td>by 1716(^{394})</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #10 (1716); 1 score copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 204</td>
<td>by 1716(^{393})</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 205</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier(^{396})</td>
<td>autograph score with Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and an added inscription to Pisendel; also parts copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 208</td>
<td>by 1713/14(^{397})</td>
<td>‘Grosso Mogul’; transcribed for organ by Bach (BWV 594)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 208a</td>
<td>possibly before c. 1713-14; probably no later than 1717(^{398})</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #11 (1720); different 2nd mvt than RV 208</td>
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Date of composition after 1717 would not have provided enough time for a manuscript to reach Amsterdam via indirect transmission.

392 Everett, ibid.; Sardelli, op. cit., 60-66, 71-72.
393 Rasch, op. cit., 121.
394 Heller, op. cit., 9-164; Rasch, op. cit., 95-99; Fechner, op. cit., 778.
395 Rasch, ibid.
396 Heller, ibid.; Fechner, op. cit., 777-78.
398 Rasch, op. cit., 101-102, 105. Rasch believes this version predates the version of the concerto transcribed by Bach. See also note 390.
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<tr>
<th>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 212</th>
<th>1712? (by 1716/17)(^{399})</th>
<th>‘Per la Solennità della S. Lingua di S. Antonio in Padoa’; most of the original 2nd mvt has been lost due to source damage; set of parts copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper &amp; dated ‘1712’</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 214</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717(^{400})</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #12 (1720)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 216</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717; possibly by c. 1712-14(^{401})</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 6 #4 (1719)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 220</td>
<td>by 1717(^{402})</td>
<td>publ. as #6 in <em>Concerti a Cinque</em> (Amsterdam: J. Roger #432-433, 1717)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Major RV 230</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 3 #9 (1711); transcribed for hpd by Bach in 1713-14 (BWV 972)(^{403})</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Minor RV 237</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier(^{404})</td>
<td>autograph score with Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and an added inscription to Pisendel; set of parts copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Minor RV 239</td>
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\(^{400}\) Rasch, op. cit., pp. 101-102, 105. See also note 390.

\(^{401}\) Rasch, op. cit., pp. 101, 103-104. The end date of 1717 for this particular work is based on my assumption that a date of composition after 1717 would not have provided enough time for a manuscript to reach Amsterdam via indirect transmission (if the Op. 6 concertos did not stem from a direct submission earlier in the same decade).

\(^{402}\) Ibid, p. 121.


\(^{404}\) Heller, *Die deutsche Überlieferung*, 9-164; Fechner, op. cit., 777-78.

\(^{405}\) Rasch, op. cit., 101, 103-104. See also note 401.
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<tr>
<th>Vn Concerto in D Minor RV 242</th>
<th>1716/17 or earlier(^{406})</th>
<th>early version of 1(^{st}) mvt only; later version (including remaining movements) publ. as Op. 8 #7 (1725); autograph score of early version with Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and an added inscription to Pisendel</th>
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<td>Vn Concerto in D Minor RV 249</td>
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<td>publ. as Op. 4 #8 (1716)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in D Minor RV 813</td>
<td>c. 1711 or earlier; by 1713/14(^{408})</td>
<td>formerly listed as RV Anh. 10; transcribed for hpd by Bach in 1713-14 (BWV 979)</td>
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<td>Vn Concerto in E-flat Major RV 253</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier(^{409})</td>
<td>early version of Op. 8 #5 (publ. 1725) ‘La Tempesta di Mare’; set of parts copied by Vivaldi, Pisendel, and 1 other person</td>
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<td>Vn Concerto in E-flat Major RV 259</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in E Minor RV 275</td>
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<td>Vn Concerto in E Minor RV 276</td>
<td>by 1714; before 1711(^{413})</td>
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<td>Vn Concerto in E Minor RV 279</td>
<td>by 1716(^{415})</td>
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\(^{407}\) Rasch, op. cit., 95-99.


\(^{409}\) Heller, *Die deutsche Überlieferung*, 9-164; Fechner, op. cit., 778.

\(^{410}\) Ibid.; Rasch, op. cit., 95-99.


\(^{412}\) Sardelli, op. cit., 53; Schulze, Ibid.; Rasch, op. cit., 121.

\(^{413}\) Sardelli, ibid.; Rasch, op. cit., 120-21.

\(^{414}\) For this work I have consulted both the printed edition and the slight longer manuscript version (A-Wn, *E. M. 148d*), which contains 11 measures not found in the printed version of the third movement.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in F Major</td>
<td>by 1716\textsuperscript{417}</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #9 (1716); shares material with RV 285 and 285a</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 284</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in F Major</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier\textsuperscript{418}</td>
<td>score copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper; shares material with RV 284 and 285a</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 285</td>
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<td>Vn Concerto in F Major</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717\textsuperscript{419}</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #5 (1720); shares material with RV 284 and 285</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 285a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in F Major</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier\textsuperscript{420}</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 292</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in F Major</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier\textsuperscript{421}</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #10 (1720); 1 score copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 294a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Major</td>
<td>by 1716\textsuperscript{422}</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #12 (1716)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RV 298</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Major</td>
<td>by 1713/14\textsuperscript{423}</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #8 (1720); 1 set of parts copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper; transcribed for hpd by Bach in 1713-14 (BWV 973)</td>
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<td>RV 299</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Major</td>
<td>by 1716\textsuperscript{424}</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #3 (1716)</td>
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<td>RV 301</td>
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</table>

\textsuperscript{415} Rasch, op. cit., 95-99.
\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., 101, 103-104. See also note 401.
\textsuperscript{417} Ibid., 95-99.
\textsuperscript{418} Heller, \textit{Die deutsche Überlieferung}, 9-164; Fechner, op. cit., 778.
\textsuperscript{419} Rasch, op. cit., 101-102, 105. See also note 390.
\textsuperscript{420} Heller, op. cit., 9-164; Sardelli, op. cit., 59; Fechner, op. cit., 778.
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{422} Rasch, op. cit., 95-99.
\textsuperscript{424} Rasch, op. cit., 95-99.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vn Concerto in G Major RV 302</th>
<th>1716/17 or earlier</th>
<th>score copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Major RV 306</td>
<td>by c. 1717</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Major RV 310</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 3 #3 (1711); transcribed for hpd by Bach in 1713-14 (BWV 978)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Major RV 314</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier</td>
<td>two scores with Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and added inscriptions to Pisendel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Minor RV 316a</td>
<td>by 1716; probably by 1713/14</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #6 (1716); Bach transcribed a version of this concerto (RV 316, with a different third movement) for hpd in 1713-14 (BWV 975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Minor RV 318</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717; possibly by c. 1712-14</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 6 #3 (1719)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Minor RV 319</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier</td>
<td>score copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Minor RV 324</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717; possibly by c. 1712-14</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 6 #1 (1719)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Minor RV 326</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #3 (1720)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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426 Everett, op. cit., 33-37, 50.
430 Rasch, op. cit., 101, 103-104. See also note 401.
432 Rasch, op. cit., 101, 103-104. See also note 401.
433 Rasch, op. cit., 101-102, 105. See also note 390.
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date/Period</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in G Minor RV 328</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier</td>
<td>1 score with Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and possible inscription to Pisendel; 1 score copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by 1717</td>
<td>“The Cuckow”; publ. as <em>The Favourite Concerto</em> (London: D. Wright, 1717)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in A Major RV 340</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier</td>
<td>score with Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and added inscription to Pisendel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by 1716</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #5 (1716)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in A Minor RV 354</td>
<td>probably no later than 1717</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 7 #4 (1720)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. 1711 or earlier</td>
<td>formerly listed as RV Anh. 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in A Minor RV 356</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 3 #6 (1711)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in A Minor RV 357</td>
<td>by 1716</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #4 (1716)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in B-flat Major RV 364</td>
<td>by 1717</td>
<td>publ. as #8 in <em>Concerti a cinque</em> (Amsterdam: J. Roger #432-433, 1717)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in B-flat Major RV 370</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier</td>
<td>1st and 2nd versions of 1st mvt only; 1 score with Vivaldi’s earlier handwriting characteristics and added inscription to Pisendel</td>
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435 Heller, ibid.; Fechner, op. cit., 777.
437 Ibid., 101-102, 105. See also note 390.
440 Ibid., 121.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vn Concerto in B-flat Major RV 374</th>
<th>probably no later than 1717</th>
<th>publ. as Op. 7 #6 (1720)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in B-flat Major RV 381</td>
<td>by 1713-14</td>
<td>transcribed for hpd by Bach in 1713-14 (BWV 980); 1st movement shares material with RV 383a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in B-flat Major RV 383</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier</td>
<td>score copied by Pisendel in Venice; 2nd and 3rd mvts similar to RV 383a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in B-flat Major RV 383a</td>
<td>by 1716</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 4 #1 (1716); shares material with RV 381 and 383a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vn Concerto in B Minor RV 388</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier</td>
<td>score copied in Pisendel in Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vc Concerto in C Minor RV 402</td>
<td>1708-09</td>
<td>parts copied by Horneck in Venice 1708-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vc Concerto in G Minor RV 416</td>
<td>1708-09</td>
<td>parts copied by Horneck in Venice 1708-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vc Concerto in A Minor RV 420</td>
<td>1708-09</td>
<td>parts copied by Horneck in Venice 1708-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ob Concerto in F Major RV 455</td>
<td>by 1716/17; mid-1710s?</td>
<td>inscription “p[er] Sass[oni]”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ob Concerto in A Minor RV 462</td>
<td>c. 1711 or earlier</td>
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</tbody>
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442 Rasch. op. cit., 101-102, 105. See also note 390.
446 Heller, op. cit., 9-164; Fechner, op. cit., 778.
448 Heller, op. cit., 178-79, 183-84; Kotsoni-Brown, ibid.
449 Heller, op. cit., 178-80; Kotsoni-Brown, ibid.
450 Everett, op. cit., 33-37, 51, 55.
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<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
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<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concerto for 2 Vn in C Major RV 507</td>
<td>1713-17\textsuperscript{452}</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concerto for 2 Vn in A Major RV 519</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 3 #9 (1711)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto for 2 Vn in A Major RV 519a</td>
<td>before 1711?</td>
<td>possibly an early version of RV 519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto for 2 Vn in A Minor RV 522</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>publ. as Op. 3 #8 (1711); transcribed for organ by Bach in 1713-1714 (BWV 593)\textsuperscript{453}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto in D Major RV 549</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>with 4 Vn &amp; Vc solo; publ. as Op. 3 #1 (1711)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto in E Minor RV 550</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>with 4 Vn solo; publ. as Op. 3 #4 (1711)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto in D Major RV 562</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier\textsuperscript{454}</td>
<td>with Vn, 2 Ob, 2 Hn solo; set of parts copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto in D Major RV 564</td>
<td>1716/17 or earlier\textsuperscript{455}</td>
<td>with 2 Vn &amp; 2 Vc solo; score of version with wind soloists copied by Pisendel on Venetian paper (RV 564a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto in D Minor RV 565</td>
<td>by 1711\textsuperscript{456}</td>
<td>with 2 Vn &amp; Vc solo; publ. as Op. 3 #11 (1711); transcribed for organ by Bach in 1713-1714 (BWV 596)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concerto in F Major RV 567</td>
<td>by 1711</td>
<td>with 4 Vn &amp; Vc solo; publ. as Op. 3 #7 (1711)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto in F Major RV 567a</td>
<td>before 1711?</td>
<td>possibly an early version of RV 567</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{454} Heller, op. cit., 9-164; Fechner, op. cit., 778.

\textsuperscript{455} Ibid.

| Concerto in F Major RV 571 | 1716 or earlier\(^{457}\) | with Vn, Vc, 2 Ob, 2 Hn, Bn solo |
| Concerto in F Major RV 574 | by 1717\(^{458}\) | with Vn, Vc, 2 Ob, 2 Hn, Bn solo |
| Concerto in G Minor RV 578 | by 1711 | with 2 Vn & Vc solo; publ. as Op. 3 #2 (1711) |
| Concerto in G Minor RV 578a | before 1711 | probably an early version of RV 578 |
| Concerto in B Minor RV 580 | by 1711 | with 4 Vn & Vc solo; publ. as Op. 3 #10 (1711); arranged for 4 Hpd, Str, Bc by Bach (BWV 1065) |
| Concerto (in due cori) in A Major RV 585 | probably 1708-09\(^{459}\) | with 4 Vn, 2 Vc & 4 Rec solo; probably composed between the restoration of Pietà’s large organ (2 Sept., 1708) and Vivaldi’s departure from service at the Pietà (24 Feb., 1709) |

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<tr>
<th>Sacred Music</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Gloria</em> in D Major RV 588</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Gloria</em> in D Major RV 589</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Credo</em> in E Minor RV 591</td>
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</table>


\(^{458}\) Everett, op. cit., 33-37, 50.

\(^{459}\) Sardelli, op. cit., 54-55.


\(^{462}\) Antonio Vivaldi, *Credo per coro a quattro voci miste, due violini, viola e basso RV 591*, ed. by Paul Everett, Nuova edizione critica delle opere, ser. ed. by Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (Milan: Ricordi, 2003), 80-81.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Dixit Dominus</em> in D Major RV 595</td>
<td>1713-17; c. 1715/16?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Beatus vir</em> in B-flat RV 598</td>
<td>1713-17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Laudate pueri</em> in C Minor RV 600</td>
<td>1713-17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Laudate pueri</em> in A Major RV 602</td>
<td>1713-17</td>
<td>1st of several versions of this work</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Laudate Dominum</em> in D Minor RV 606</td>
<td>1713-17; c. 1715?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Laetatus sum</em> in F Major RV 607</td>
<td>1713-17; c. 1715?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Nisi Dominus</em> in G Minor RV 608</td>
<td>1713-17</td>
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<tr>
<th>Work</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Magnificat</em> in G Minor RV 610b</td>
<td>1713-1737/0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Gaude, Mater Ecclesia</em> (Hymn) in B-flat Major RV 613</td>
<td>1713-1737/1</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Salve Regina</em> (Antiphon) in F Major RV 617</td>
<td>1713-1737/2</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Stabat Mater</em> in F Minor RV 621</td>
<td>17123/5</td>
<td>probably the ‘Stabat Mater’ provided to the Chiesa della Pace in Brescia shortly after Holy Week in 1712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clarae stellae, scintillate</em> (Motet) in F Major RV 625</td>
<td>1713-17; c. 17154/74</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Invicti, bellate</em> (Motet) in G Major RV 628</td>
<td>1713-174/75</td>
<td>a portion of the first aria has been lost</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Nulla in mundo pax</em> (Motet) in E Major RV 630</td>
<td>1713-17; c. 17154/76</td>
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</table>


471 Talbot, op. cit., 240.


475 Ibid., xxii-xxiii.

476 Ibid., xxiii.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Vestro principi divino</em></td>
<td>1713-17</td>
<td>c. 1715?[^477]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Motet) in F Major RV 633</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Vos invito</em></td>
<td>1713-17[^478]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Motet) in F Major RV 811</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ascende laeta montes</em></td>
<td>1713-17[^479]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Introduzione al Dixit) RV 635</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Filiae maestae Jerusalem</em></td>
<td>1713-17[^480]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Introduzione al Miserere) RV 638</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Jubilate, o amoeni chori</em></td>
<td>1713-17[^481]</td>
<td>introduction for <em>Gloria</em> in D RV 588</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Introduzione al Gloria) RV 639</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Non in pratis</em></td>
<td>1713-17[^482]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Introduzione al Miserere) RV 641</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ostra picta, armata spina</em></td>
<td>1713-17[^483]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Introduzione al Gloria) RV 642</td>
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[^477]: Ibid.
[^480]: Ibid, 305.
[^482]: Ibid, 263, 305.
[^483]: Ibid, 301-302.
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Juditha triumphans (Oratorio) RV 644</td>
<td>early 1716&lt;sup&gt;484&lt;/sup&gt; possibly performed March 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;, 1716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottone in villa RV 729-A</td>
<td>early 1713&lt;sup&gt;485&lt;/sup&gt; premiered May 1713 at the Teatro delle Garzere, Vicenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando furioso RV Anh. 84</td>
<td>late 1713, rev. late 1714&lt;sup&gt;486&lt;/sup&gt; opera by Ristori with revisions by Vivaldi&lt;sup&gt;487&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando finto pazzo RV 727</td>
<td>autumn 1714&lt;sup&gt;488&lt;/sup&gt; premiered November 1714 at Teatro Sant’Angelo, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La costanza trionfante RV 706-A</td>
<td>early 1716&lt;sup&gt;489&lt;/sup&gt; premiered 18 or 19 January 1716 at Teatro San Moisè, Venice; music mostly lost; not included in present study&lt;sup&gt;490&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arsilda, regina di Ponto RV 700</td>
<td>autumn 1716&lt;sup&gt;491&lt;/sup&gt; premiered 27 or 28 October 1716 at Teatro Sant’Angelo, Venice (revived there in January 1717)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’incoronazione di Dario RV 719</td>
<td>late 1716-early 1717&lt;sup&gt;492&lt;/sup&gt; premiered 23 January 1717 at Teatro Sant’Angelo, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tietegera RV 737</td>
<td>autumn 1717&lt;sup&gt;493&lt;/sup&gt; premiered 16 October 1717 at Teatro San Moisè, Venice; music mostly lost&lt;sup&gt;494&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<sup>487</sup> While it is highly likely that Vivaldi wrote at least some of the surviving music, currently there is no consensus in the literature about which version the surviving numbers belong to. Similarly, there is uncertainty about how many of the surviving numbers were written by Vivaldi (as opposed to being remnants of Ristori’s setting). For these reasons, I have omitted this opera from the present study.


<sup>490</sup> I was unable to study the few surviving arias that are preserved in various manuscript aria collections and did not include arias that were reused in other operas.


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<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Premiere Details</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Artabano</em> RV 706-B</td>
<td>late 1717-early 1718</td>
<td>premiered January 1718 at Teatro San Moisè, Venice; music mostly lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Armida al campo d’Egitto</em> RV 699-A</td>
<td>early 1718</td>
<td>premiered 15 February 1718 at Teatro San Moisè, Venice; most of Act 2 lost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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494 Of the dozen or so arias known or presumed to have survived, largely through reuse in other operas, the present study includes only Ercoino’s independently preserved Act 3.11 aria ‘L’innocenza sfortunata’.

495 Strohm, op. cit., 1:171.

496 I was unable to study the few surviving arias preserved in various manuscript aria collections and did not include arias reused in other operas.


498 I have included only Acts 1 and 3 in the present study.
Bibliography

Facsimile and Printed Editions:


**Literature:**


———. La paix de l’opera, ou Parallele impartial de la musique françoise et de la musique italienne. Amsterdam: (n.p.), 1753.


