

Solo concerto – Baroque Period

Vivaldi – *Spring* (from *The Four Seasons*)

Vivaldi composed more than 400 concertos. *The Four Seasons* consists of four solo concertos for violin, string orchestra and continuo. These are descriptive works based on poems describing the seasons of the year. Vivaldi breaks up each poem into sections and prints them throughout the score, indicating those points where the music vividly illustrates the ideas in the poem. Here is a listening guide to the first movement of *Spring*. The overall form of this movement is **ritornello**.

Watch the movement here:

Solo concerto – Baroque Period

Vivaldi – *Spring* (from *The Four Seasons*)

First movement: *Allegro*

Tutti 1 *Joyful Spring is here . . .*

The poem's opening words are perfectly matched by Vivaldi's joyful, rhythmic ritornello theme (in the tonic key, E major):

RITORNELLO



Solo 1 *Birds merrily greet it with their happy songs.*

The solo violin is joined by two others from the ripieno group, their trills and decorations imitating birdsong.

EPISODE

Tutti 2 A lengthy tutti in four sections:

- a) Part x of the ritornello theme, in the tonic key;
- b) *Streams murmur sweetly, caressed by gentle breezes.*
- c) Part x of the ritornello, in the dominant key (B major);
- d) *The sky darkens as thunder and lightning announce a storm.*

RITORNELLO

Solo 2 Agitated semiquaver triplets on the solo violin; the ripieno instruments play shuddering tremolos.

EPISODE

Tutti 3 Part x of the ritornello, in the relative minor (C# minor).

RITORNELLO

Solo 3 *When all is quiet once more, the birds
Again take up their melodious songs.*

EPISODE

Tutti 4 The opening of the ritornello theme – clearly recognizable in rhythm, though the melody is altered.

RITORNELLO

Solo 4 Solo violin and continuo only.

EPISODE

Tutti 5 The last half of the ritornello theme, in the tonic key.

RITORNELLO

Now complete the following worksheet on this movement