

Listening Activity: Responding to Poetic Music

Antonio Vivaldi: The Four Seasons

Musical Concepts: Dynamics, tempo, themes (structure)

Theme links: How does music make us feel?

- **Watch the video:** there is a chance for the children to learn some movements to accompany different themes to match the words to the poem and the music.
- **Focused Listening:** Listen to all three movements of a season and follow the music with the poem (translated into English- note the Italian version rhymes). The tempo markings are listed for each movement (both in Italian, which is standardly used by musicians and translated into English); discuss with children what they think that the Italian dynamics markings mean once they have listened to each piece. Listen for the repetition of themes, the structure. Feel the pulse, count the metre (time signatures). Count how many bars some of the themes last.
- **Listen and Respond:** ask the children to create coordinated movements to accompany the themes of chosen pieces. Use the understanding of the structure and repetition of themes to choreograph accompanying 'dances' for one of the pieces.
- **Create your own:** listen to a season without following the poem. To all of the children have them listen, eyes closed, to imagine what they see. How does the music make them feel? How does the tempo marking change how the music makes them feel?

RESOURCES: BBC Ten Pieces features the First Movement of Winter with accompanying lesson plans and resources.

Videos of each season are available for listening, including highlighted phrases that mirror Vivaldi's musical themes. (Attached with 'Episode 2' files.)

La Primavera (Spring)

Opus 8, No. 1, in E Major

I. *Allegro* {quickly and brightly}

Festive Spring has arrived,
The birds salute it with their happy song.
And the brooks, caressed by little Zephyrs,
Flow with a sweet murmur.
The sky is covered with a black mantle,
And thunder, and lightning, announce a storm.
When they are silent, the birds
Return to sing their lovely song.

II. *Largo e pianissimo sempre*—
{deliberately slow and always quietly}
And in the meadow, rich with flowers,
To the sweet murmur of leaves and plants,
The goatherd sleeps, with his faithful dog
at his side.

III. *Danza pastorale. Allegro*—{quickly,
dance-like)

To the festive sound of pastoral bagpipes,
Dance nymphs and shepherds,
At Spring's brilliant appearance.

L'Estate (Summer)

Opus 8, No. 2, in G minor

I. *Allegro non molto*—{briskly, but not
extremely quick}

Under the heat of the burning summer
sun,
Languish man and flock; the pine is
parched.
The cuckoo finds its voice, and suddenly,
The turtledove and goldfinch sing.
A gentle breeze blows,
But suddenly, the north wind appears.
The shepherd weeps because, overhead,
Lies the fierce storm, and his destiny.

II. *Adagio; Presto*—{staring slowly and
becoming very, very fast}

His tired limbs are deprived of rest
By his fear of lightning and fierce thunder,
And by furious swarms of flies and
hornets.

III. *Presto*—{rapidly}

Alas, how just are his fears,
Thunder and lightning fill the Heavens,
and the hail
Slices the tops of the corn and other grain.

L'Autunno (Autumn)

Opus 8, No. 3, in F Major

I. *Allegro*—{brightly and quickly}

The peasants **celebrate with dance and song,**

The joy of a rich harvest.

And, full of Bacchus's liquor,

They finish their celebration with sleep.

II. *Adagio molto*—{slowly but with movement}

Each peasant ceases his dance and song.

The mild air gives pleasure,

And the season invites many

To **enjoy a sweet slumber.**

III. *Allegro*—{brightly and quickly}

The hunters, at the break of dawn, **go to the hunt.**

With horns, guns, and dogs they are off,

The **beast flees**, and they **follow its trail.**

Already fearful and exhausted by the great noise,

Of guns and dogs, and wounded,

The exhausted beast tries to flee, but dies.

L'Inverno (Winter)

Opus 8, No. 4, in F minor

I. *Allegro non molto*—{briskly- but not too quickly}

Frozen and trembling in the icy snow,

In the **severe blast of the horrible wind,**

As **we run**, we constantly **stamp our feet,**

And our **teeth chatter** in the cold.

II. *Largo*—{very, very slowly}

To **spend happy and quiet days near the fire,**

While, outside, the rain soaks hundreds.

III. *Allegro*—{quickly}

We walk on the ice with slow steps,

And **tread carefully**, for fear of falling.

Symphony, If we go quickly, we slip and fall to the ground.

Again **we run on the ice,**

Until it cracks and opens.

We hear, from closed doors,

Sirocco, Boreas, and **all the winds in battle.**

This is winter, but it brings joy.