



**‘Winter’ from ‘The Four Seasons’,
Allegro non molto (1st mvt)
by Antonio Vivaldi**

CLASSROOM RESOURCE FOR KS2

For:

- Key Stage 2 in England and Wales
- Second Level, P5-P7 in Scotland
- Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland

Written by Rachel Leach

Background

- The composer:** **Antonio VIVALDI (1678–1741)**
- Italian composer, teacher and violinist
 - A superstar among baroque composers, he wrote mostly concertos and operas
- The music:** **‘Winter’ from ‘The Four Seasons’, Allegro non molto (1st mvt)**
- A group of four violin concertos written around 1721
 - Inspired by anonymous sonnets, each one describes a season. The sonnets were possibly also written by Vivaldi
 - They are one of the first examples of ‘programme’ music – i.e. music that tells a story
 - Each ‘season’ has three movements – fast: slow: fast
 - They are his most famous works and among the most famous pieces in the history of music
- Trailblazer:** Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi was one of the very first composers to write programme music – music designed to evoke thoughts of places and things in the world around us.

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- create their own piece of music using instruments and voice
- perform as an ensemble
- learn musical language appropriate to the task

Curriculum checklist:

- play and perform in ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

Glossary of music terms used:

Concerto	A piece with a prominent solo, the full orchestra provides accompaniment. A solo concerto has one soloist, a concerto grosso has a group of soloists
Motif	A very short musical 'idea' – often just a sound or a rhythm
Pitched percussion	percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars, etc.
Programme music	Music that tells a story or describes an event, place, emotion
Ritornello	A structure used in concertos where the full orchestra alternates with the soloist
Unpitched percussion	percussion instruments that can only make a limited number of sounds – drums, shakers, woodblocks, tambourines, etc.

Glossary terms can be found underlined throughout.

Resources required:

- classroom percussion instruments
- paper and pens
- a large space such as the school hall

This scheme of work is plotted out over six lessons. Feel free to adapt it to suit your children and the resources you have available.

The six lessons at a glance

Lesson 1:

Activities: Watch the film, listen to the performance
Create poetry

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
Develop an understanding of the history of music

Lesson 2:

Activities: Create a dance

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
Develop an understanding of the history of music

Lesson 3:

Activities: Use Vivaldi's motifs to create a piece

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 4:

Activities: Manipulate words into a musical structure

Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Lesson 5:

- Activities: Use words to inspire musical motifs and structure these into a piece
Learn about Ritornello form
- Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Lesson 6:

- Activities: Structure sections of music into a bigger piece
Perform in a concert
- Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

LESSON 1

Watching and listening

1. **Prepare your class**

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a six-week music project focusing on a fantastic piece of music by a composer called Vivaldi. He lived 300 years ago, and he was one of the first composers to try to describe things with his music.

2. **Watch the full orchestral performance** and afterwards, ask your children if they can guess what season is being described. Tell them it is winter.

3. **Listening task**

Give out paper and pens and as you listen to Vivaldi's 'Winter' again ask your children to make a list of wintery weather that the music might be describing. For example, dripping icicles, blustery wind.

Listen again and ask for a list of how you might feel in this winter weather. For example, 'frozen to the bone', 'ice cold hands'.

Finally, listen for a third time and ask for a list of what you might do to warm up, i.e. run around in circles, jump up and down.

4. **Ask your class** to choose their two favourite things from each list and join these ideas together to make a short poem. Vivaldi's music was inspired by just four lines of poetry, can they condense their six ideas down to just four short lines?

5. **Encourage your children** to read their poetry to the class. They could do so with Vivaldi's music playing softly in the background and try to fit their ideas to the music. Keep the poems safe – you will need them later in the project.

6. **FINALLY**, end the lesson by watching the BBC Ten Pieces Trailblazers film and discussing it.

LESSON 2

Frozen dances

For this task you will need a large, empty space – the school hall would be ideal.

1. **Remind your children about Vivaldi** and ask them to spread themselves around the hall or classroom so that they are not touching anyone else and can swing their arms around and move freely, you are going to make a dance!
2. **Play the opening to ‘Winter’** - just until the solo violin enters (about 30 seconds) and ask your children to count to eight in their heads over and over in time with the music. They should be able to count to eight 11 times before the solo violin enters. Encourage them to count like this:
 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
 - 2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
 - 3, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 *etc.*

When you play this opening for a 2nd time, challenge the class to make a twisted ‘frozen’ shape with their bodies and freeze on the first of each set of eight. Like this:

Freeze, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Freeze, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Freeze, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 *etc.*

They should imagine they are frozen trees.

3. **Continue listening**, the next thing that happens is the solo violinist enters. Vivaldi said this represents ‘the harsh breath of horrid wind’. Ask your children to move as if blown by wind every time they hear the solo violin. There are two rules for this:
 - their feet must not move – they are rooted to the spot like trees
 - they must freeze again every time the solo violin stops (in this section there are three solo moments alternating with passages for full orchestra)

If this causes chaos, choose soloists to move during the violin solo while everyone else continues to freeze or slowly ‘pulse’ during the orchestra passages – perhaps they are melting and dripping!

4. **The next passage** at about 1’20 is very famous. Vivaldi said it was ‘stamping feet’ so ask your children to do just that. Or perhaps they can choreograph some ‘stamping’ movement to go with Vivaldi’s rhythms.
5. **Continue working in this way** – listen to a short section, ask your children what it might describe and how they want to move to it. You don’t have to make up a lot of new material because Vivaldi’s piece is quite repetitive.

Here's a guide to the approximate structure and some movement ideas you might use:

0'09	Counts of eight	'frozen trees'
0'45	Solo violin depicts 'wind' Alternates with full orchestra	Solo dancers swirl Others 'melt' or 'drip'
1'20	Famous rhythm	Stamping feet
1'33	Solo violin	Running? Trying to get warm?
2'00	Solo alternates with orchestra again	Swirling and dripping again?
2'14	Counts of eight (or four) A few short solos	Frozen trees again? 'Dripping?'
2'40	Very fast, short notes	Vivaldi said this was 'chattering teeth'
3'10	Famous rhythm again	Stamping feet again

6. **FINALLY**, end your session by performing (and perhaps filming) your new dance to Vivaldi's 'Winter'.

LESSON 3

Dripping icicles

1. Warm-up

Start with your class sitting in a circle and pass a clap around. Ask your class to suggest sounds and gestures associated with the cold, i.e. a shiver, 'brrr!', hands rubbing together. Pass these sounds around the circle.

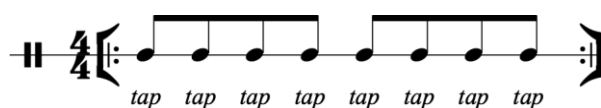
When this is working well try overlapping your gestures and sounds so that you have two going around the circle at once (i.e. start the second sound when the first is halfway round).

Keep this going, layering up sounds and gestures until you have a winter soundscape zipping around the circle. To end, simply stop passing on the sounds until you come to a natural stop.

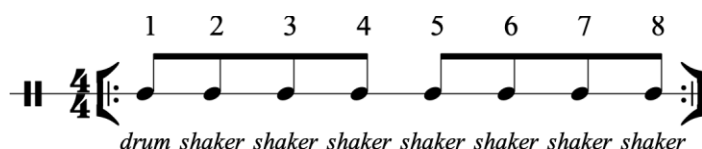
Try this again with eyes closed.

2. Explain

You are going to steal a musical idea from Vivaldi to make your own winter music; the sound of dripping icicles which is heard at the beginning of Vivaldi's piece and then throughout. Softly tap two fingers of one hand on the other like this, and encourage your children to join in:



Choose an instrument to play the tapping, this needs to be something that can play softly and ideally sounds 'cold'. Ask a volunteer to choose a contrasting instrument to play on just the first beat of each eight to help keep everyone together. You might end up with something like this:

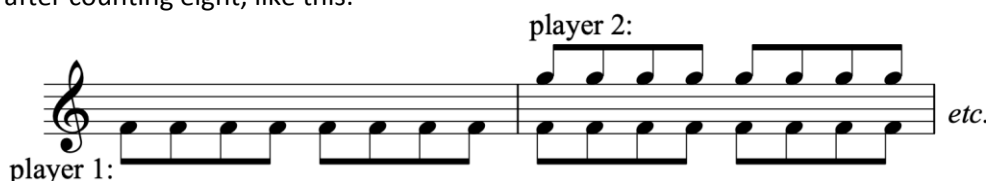


3. Move on to pitched instruments next.

Place four xylophones in the middle of the circle and choose eight players, two for each instrument. Give them an order (i.e. call them player 1, player 2 etc.)

Players 1, 3, 5, 7 must find an **F** on their xylophone. The others can choose whatever note they like but they must choose only one and stick to it (black notes will work too).

Player 1 will begin and play their F in time with the tapping, each subsequent then player joins in after counting eight, like this:



Non-xylophone players can help by tapping the pulse or playing it on unpitched instruments. The person playing on the first beat of each group of eight notes should also play to keep everyone together and help signal when each new player joins.

4. **Split into four groups** and challenge each group to re-create this 'frozen build-up'. They may use whatever instruments you have available. If you have a lot of unpitched instruments encourage your class to choose 'cold' sounds and remind them to keep the music steady and soft and start, if possible, on an **F**.
5. **Bring the class back** together, hear each group one by one and then challenge them to join the pieces together to create one big frozen build up. Can they also figure out a way to stop their music? Vivaldi comes to rest on a C ready for the first violin solo, but you don't have to. How can you end this section neatly?
6. **FINALLY**, end this session with a performance. Write down what you have done and who played what, and give this section a name so that everyone will remember it in future sessions, something like 'dripping icicles'.

LESSON 4

Secret sonnets

1. Warm-up

Repeat the wintery soundscape warm-up from last lesson passing 'cold' sounds around the circle and layering them up. Add in a couple of sentences from Vivaldi such as:

"Tremble from cold"
"The harsh breath of horrid wind"
"Teeth chattering"

2. **Repeat** the 'dripping icicles' tapping idea and gradually get out the instruments until everyone has the same as last lesson and you have put your music back together.

3. Explain

Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons' was inspired by short poems (sonnets). Vivaldi even wrote the words of the poetry above his music so that the players would know what they were describing. No one knows who wrote the poems, Vivaldi kept it a secret.

Here is the beginning of Vivaldi's winter sonnet:

*"Frozen, trembling on the ice
In gusts of horrid wind, we run
Stamping our feet to keep warm
Our teeth chattering"*

4. **Write this on the board** and split the class back into their four groups. Give one line to each group and ask them recreate their music from last week but now add in their line of poetry line – they could whisper the words over and over, chant them in time with the tapping rhythm or even sing them. They can also repeat, cut or adapt the words to fit.
5. **Bring the class back together** and again hear each piece one by one before structuring them into one big piece like last lesson. This can have the same shape as last week or maybe, now that you have words to consider, the shape might be different.
6. **FINALLY**, fix the structure and write it down or record what you have made so far.

LESSON 5

'Solos' and structure

1. Warm-up

Begin in a large circle with a quick focusing activity and (spoken) reminder of what happened during the last session.

2. Split the class

back into their four working groups and give out the poems they created in lesson 1. Ask them to read through their ideas and select their two favourite lines. As they do this, wander around and try to make sure that each group chooses something different. Ask each group to read their ideas to the class.

3. Remind your children

that Vivaldi's piece is a 'concerto'. This means that it has a soloist who plays alone (the violin) and these solo, showing-off passages alternate with sections for full orchestra. Your 'dripping icicles' piece is performed by everyone, so now you need to make some 'solo' moments to go alongside it.

These will be for solo groups rather than individual solo players, so your resulting piece is actually going to be a Concerto Grosso (concerto for a group of soloists) rather than a Solo Concerto like 'The Four Seasons'.

4. Ask each group

to turn their poetry lines into music. To do this they must invent musical motifs (or sound effects) to match the words and then structure these into a short burst of sound.

For example: 'I wiggle my icy cold fingers' could become a fast xylophone wobble, 'I stamp my feet in the snow' could become a loud, fast pulse.

5. Bring the class back together

and hear each group one by one giving gentle feedback and making sure that the music is short and repeatable, and that everyone knows what they are doing. It will also help to check at this point that children are playing the same instrument for this 'solo' moment as they play in the class build-up piece.

6. Explain

that Vivaldi uses a shape called 'ritornello' and write this up on the board:

FULL ORCHESTRA – SOLO – FULL ORCHESTRA – SOLO – FULL ORCHESTRA – SOLO, etc

Can you structure your piece in the same way?

- Begin by putting your full class 'dripping icicles' back together
- Then decide on an order for the solo sections
- Finally, decide how to finish – with a solo or full class section?

7. Finally,

write the order on the board and finish this lesson by playing it through. Don't worry at this stage if it's a bit messy as you will have time to practise it next lesson.

LESSON 6

Performance time!

1. **Prepare your class**

Sit the children in a circle and recap all the elements you have created so far using just voices and body percussion. You should have:

- Full class 'dripping icicles'
- Four group 'solos'

Also, talk through your overall 'ritornello' structure.

2. **Get the instruments out** and split back into groups. Give the class just five minutes to remember their ideas and put the 'solo' sections back together.
3. **Hear each group** and put back together the 'dripping icicles' section, then slowly stagger through the full structure.
4. **Rehearse this full piece** fixing any issues that might arise until everyone knows what they are doing, and you are ready for a performance.
5. **FINALLY**, invite another class to hear your music. Tell them about Vivaldi and explain how he used poetry to inspire his music. You could even perform your music again as the audience jot down their own poetry ideas.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **MUSIC:** Listen to the other movements of Vivaldi's 'Winter' or his other 'Four Seasons'. Many other composers were inspired to write music based on the seasons and weather. Listen to Haydn's 'Seasons', Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, mvt 4 ('storm') or from BBC Ten Pieces, [Benjamin Britten's 'Storm Interlude' from 'Peter Grimes'](#).
- **MUSIC:** 'The Four Seasons' are concertos. Other concertos featured in BBC Ten Pieces are: [Mozart Horn Concerto](#), [Haydn Trumpet Concerto](#), [Gabriel Prokofiev Concerto for Turntables and Orchestra](#).
- **ARTWORK:** use your new music, your poems or Vivaldi's music to inspire artwork.
- **UPLOAD:** Show us what you've created! Submit your creative responses using our [Uploader](#) for a chance to be featured on the Ten Pieces website.