

RECOVERING VIVALDI'S LOST PSALM

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ABSTRACT

In 1739, two years before his death, Vivaldi sold a group of five psalms to the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. All but one of these psalms had been identified and located prior to May 2003, when the missing work, a *Nisi Dominus* in A major for three solo singers, five obbligato instruments and strings, turned up in Dresden as the unexpected by-product of a routine inspection. Like one of the other psalms belonging to the same group, the *Beatus vir* RV795, this new discovery, RV803, is attributed in its Dresden source to Baldassarre Galuppi. The misattribution appears to have been an act of deliberate falsification by the Venetian copyist Iseppo Baldan, who slipped the two Vivaldi compositions in to a large consignment of sacred vocal works, mainly by Galuppi, dispatched to the Saxon Hofkapelle in the late 1750s. The new *Nisi Dominus* is noteworthy for the high level of vocal virtuosity that all eight movements demand and for its use of rare instruments (viola d'amore, tenor chalumeau and violino in tromba marina) to lend added colour in individual movements. It is also a striking example of Vivaldi's 'late' manner, which, although influenced by the galant style of younger composers, remains true to his personal idiom. At the same time, it rivals the oratorio *Juditha triumphans* as a showcase for the diverse talents of the Pietà's female musicians.

THE BACKGROUND

In 1982 I reported finding fragments of three psalm settings and a *Magnificat* by Vivaldi in the Fondo Esposti, the group of manuscripts originating from the Ospedale della Pietà that was acquired in the nineteenth century by the Museo Civico Correr, Venice, and later passed to the Conservatorio Statale di Musica 'Benedetto Marcello' of the same city.¹ The character and location of these works within their respective partbooks made it certain that they belonged to a group of six psalms (the *Magnificat* counting, in this context, as a 'psalm'), three antiphons and six motets, for which Vivaldi was paid twenty-one sequins by the Pietà on 14 April 1739. Of these four works, two – the psalm *In exitu Israel*, RV604, and the last (RV611) of Vivaldi's three extant versions of his setting of the *Magnificat* in G minor – existed complete in autograph manuscripts preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Turin. The *Beatus vir*, another 'late' version of a familiar work (RV597), was shown by Peter Ryom in 1992 to be extant in complete form under the name of Baldassarre Galuppi in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden, and has subsequently been given the RV number 795.² A fourth psalm, the *Lauda Jerusalem*, RV609, has not been traced among the Fondo Esposti manuscripts, but annotations providing the names of the solo singers in the autograph manuscript in Turin establish that it, too, is a

1 Michael Talbot, 'A Vivaldi Discovery at the Conservatorio "Benedetto Marcello"', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani* 3 (1982), 3–11.

2 Peter Ryom, 'Vivaldi ou Galuppi: Un cas de doute surprenant', in *Vivaldi vero e falso: Problemi di attribuzione*, ed. Antonio Fanna and Michael Talbot (Florence: Olschki, 1992), 25–40.



member of the group.³ Source details for the four psalms and *Magnificat* so far recovered can be tabulated as follows:

RV	Title	Key	Psalm	Location
789	<i>Confitebor</i>	B flat	110	I-Vc, B. 77.2, ff. 67r–68v: viola ⁴ I-Vc, B. 105.5, ff. 53r–53v: alto I-Vc, B. 121.1, ff. 55v–56r: alto
795	<i>Beatus vir</i>	C	111	I-Vc, B. 77.2, f. 73v: viola I-Vc, B. 105.5, ff. 55v–56r: alto I-Vc, B. 121.1, ff. 56v–57v: alto D-Dl, Mus. 2389-D-1: score
604	<i>In exitu Israel</i>	C	113	I-Vc, B. 77.2, 68v–69v: viola I-Vc, B. 105.5, 54r–55r: alto I-Vc, B. 127.81: bass (vocal) I-Tn, Giordano 33, ff. 220–229: score
609	<i>Lauda Jerusalem</i>	e	147	I-Tn, Foà 40, ff. 127–144: score
611	<i>Magnificat</i>	g	—	I-Vc, 105.5, ff. 56v–57v: alto I-Vc, 121.1, ff. 59r–60r: alto I-Tn, Giordano 35, ff. 89–112: score

There remains, therefore, only one psalm to track down. To imagine what this psalm might be like, it is useful first to view the general context. The Pietà's choirmasters had the annual task of composing a group of Vesper psalms that would be given their first outing on Easter Sunday or at the foundling home's patronal festival, the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on 2 July. Since no more than two or three psalms in figural (that is, composed) music would be heard on a single occasion and since the psalms prescribed liturgically for the two occasions partly coincided – the *Dixit Dominus*, Psalm 109 (in the Vulgate numbering), and the *Laudate pueri*, Psalm 112, are common – it was possible for the composer to meet the needs of both feasts by composing a single group of five or six psalms, to which would be added a *Magnificat* and sometimes also the prefatory respond *Domine ad adjuvandum me festina*. In early 1739 the Pietà found itself temporarily without a choirmaster, since the previous incumbent, Giovanni Porta, had left for Munich in 1737, and this is the reason why its former director of instrumental music, Vivaldi, had to step into the breach and become acting choirmaster. This expedient had occurred once before, in the interregnum between the departure of *maestro di coro* Francesco Gasparini in 1713 and the appointment of his successor, Carlo Luigi Pietraruja, in 1719. The difference on the second occasion was that Vivaldi was paid *pro rata* for his compositions (two sequins for each psalm, one sequin for each antiphon or motet) instead of merely receiving the choirmaster's customary annual bonus of fifty ducats.

At the Pietà the psalm settings belonging to this annual cycle were given a serial number by which they could be instantly recognized in the partbooks used by the singers and instrumentalists. All the psalms in

³ See Michael Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi* (Florence: Olschki, 1995), 171. The two solo singers specified by Vivaldi for the first (Margarita, Giulietta) and second (Fortunata, Chiaretta) *cori* were possibly not expected to perform *a 2* on each of the two lines but only to learn the respective parts, so that either would be available if called upon.

⁴ The shelfmarks of manuscripts at the Conservatorio are given in their current form following a recent reorganization. These differ from the ones in force at the time when the article cited in note 1 was published.



Porta's first cycle, dating from 1727, bear the ordinal number 'primo', while those of his last cycle, from 1737, are 'undicesimo'. Like rings in tree trunks, these numbers make it possible, with a considerable degree of reliability, to fix the year in which any Vesper psalm (or *Magnificat*) entered the Pietà's repertory. Vivaldi's set is numbered 'primo', which implies that the numerous compositions that he had composed for the Pietà in the second decade of the century were already old history – perhaps fortunately for the composer, since if they had remained in the Pietà's active repertory, some very blatant instances of self-borrowing might have been revealed.

Although hardly any items in this repertory have come down to us in the form of scores – the Pietà customarily returned the composer's working score to him once the parts had been copied – the partbooks, which contain the music entrusted over a period of several years to a given (often named) singer or player and usually hold several dozen compositions, provide the basis for an accurate, and probably eighty to ninety per cent complete, databank of what was sung in the chapel from Porta's time onwards.⁵ Accordingly, it is very easy to infer from observation the ground rules for putting together a cycle of Vesper psalms. The first principle was that neither unity of key nor correspondence with the modes of antiphons was sought. At most, the various keys employed were loosely congruent with one another (veering either to the sharp or to the flat side of C major). Key duplication was generally avoided, although an exception was often made for the 'festive' keys of C major and D major, with their special suitability for wind instruments. Composers for the Pietà also liked to vary the scale and scoring of the psalms. The most common form of treatment assigned a separate movement to each verse, setting verses in groups only when this was needed to avoid excessive length (as in the psalm *In exitu Israel*, which comprises twenty-nine verses, including the two final ones for the Lesser Doxology). Such a composition was scored for four-part (SATB) choir but used soloists, normally sopranos and altos, for episodes or entire movements.⁶ The instrumental accompaniment was for four-part strings, to which a rich assortment of wind instruments or less usual stringed instruments could be added, as the occasion or the composer's imagination demanded.

The first important variation on this formula was to write the composition 'in due cori'. Even in the 1710s Vivaldi was able to write a composition, his *Laudate pueri*, RV602, in which two separate *cori* participated: the first consisted of a soprano soloist, a four-part choir and a string ensemble; the second comprised a soprano and strings, without the choir. The asymmetry of this layout hints at difficulty in accommodating the second *coro*. The addition of two small choir lofts (*coretti*) adjacent to the main one in 1723 and the acquisition of a second large organ in 1732 appear to have solved the problems of space and balance at the Pietà. From that time onwards the musicians were grouped, typically for Italian churches, in two separate performing areas – although only a minority of the compositions written for the chapel exploited the *in due cori* effect to the full by having different musical parts performed by the two sections. Psalms *in due cori* seem to have been parsimoniously rationed. It is very unusual to find more than one such setting in an annual cycle. For example, Porta's last five cycles (1733–1737) employ the technique only in the *Laudate pueri* (1733 and 1735), the *Nisi Dominus* (1734), the *Laetatus sum* (1736) and the *Magnificat* (1737).

Another variation was to omit soloists altogether and make the composition purely choral. This kind of setting is called *pieno* (full) in the Pietà's terminology. Once again, its incidence is rationed, albeit less strictly. The same five cycles by Porta contain three *pieno* settings of the *Laetatus sum* (1734, 1735 and 1737), two of the *Lauda Jerusalem* (1735 and 1737) and two of the *Magnificat* (1733 and 1736). It is interesting that the two psalms common to Sundays and Marian feasts – *Dixit Dominus* and *Laudate pueri* – are never set without solo voices in the annual cycles, although one comes across a few examples among the more utilitarian, small-scale settings that composers for the Pietà contributed in addition from time to time.

⁵ The preservation of the instrumental music appears somewhat less complete.

⁶ Since the performers were all female, the tenor part always occupied a high register (becoming equivalent, in other words, to a second contralto) and the bass part, normally doubled by the instrumental bass, was sung an octave higher than the notated pitch whenever circumstances demanded.



A useful variation whenever saving time in performance became all-important was to make the setting *piccolo* (short) – in other words, to accommodate all the verses within a single movement. Such movements could in themselves be unusually long, as Vivaldi's setting of the *Beatus vir* in B flat major, RV598, demonstrates. This work fits the eleven verses of the psalm into no fewer than 420 bars, whereby it becomes the most extended and complex ritornello-form movement ever penned by the composer. On the other hand, they could be as brief as his *Laudate Dominum*, RV606, a mere forty-three bars long. *Piccolo* settings are understandably rare among works belonging to the annual cycles, given the latter's ceremonial function, but they are staples of the supplementary repertory and must have been widely used on ferial days or at feasts of lesser importance. Several settings are both *pieno* and *piccolo*, complementing textural simplicity with structural compactness.

A very few works are *a cappella* (for example, the *Lauda Jerusalem* of Porta's first cycle of 1727). By definition, this makes them *pieno*, but they have one important further characteristic: they possess no independent instrumental parts. Instruments participate in them, if at all, only on condition of doubling the appropriate vocal line strictly.

The last category, a relatively small one, comprises works for one or more solo singers with instruments. This is a standard form of scoring at the Pietà for motets, antiphons and hymns, but an exceptional one for psalms. Settings for two or three singers are clearly identified by their titles, which describe them as 'a 2' or 'a 3'. In the repertory of the middle decades of the century such 'non-choral' psalms are a rarity, but it is likely that they enjoyed greater favour previously, given the survival of two psalm settings of this type by Vivaldi dating from the 1710s (the *Laudate pueri* in C minor, RV600, and the *Nisi Dominus* in G minor, RV608).

This information allows us to draw some inferences about the 'lost' fifth psalm of Vivaldi's 1739 cycle. It was probably not in B flat major, G minor, E minor or C major. It was not *pieno* (like RV604) or *in due cori* (like RV609). It was not *piccolo*, since both RV604 and 609, contrasted though they are in all other respects, are conceived as single movements. The text set may have been that of the *Dixit Dominus*, the *Laudate pueri*, the *Laetatus sum* or the *Nisi Dominus*.

The survival of sources for the 1739 cycle in the Fondo Esposti and in Vivaldi's own working collection, today in Turin, is unproblematic. What requires explanation, however, is how a score of the *Beatus vir*, RV795, turned up in Dresden under Galuppi's name. The background is fascinating and instructive.

The Dresden manuscript is easily identified as coming from the *copisteria* (copying shop) of the priest Giuseppe ('Iseppo', in Venetian) Baldan, the foremost Venetian copyist of the middle and late eighteenth century. Born around 1710, Baldan first worked for the music copying firm of Francesco Trogiani but later set up on his own at a location conveniently situated by the bridge of San Giovanni Grisostomo, close to the opera house of that name.⁷ Other copyists known to have worked for him include Orazio Stabili, Pietro Maschietto and Vivaldi's nephews Daniele Mauro (born 1717) and Carlo Vivaldi (born 1731). He came to enjoy a position of near-monopolistic dominance among Venetian copyists, serving the needs of three opera houses (San Giovanni Grisostomo, San Samuele, San Moisè) and fulfilling private commissions from composers, including Galuppi. The diarist Pietro Gradenigo pays tribute to him, noting on 24 August 1760 that he was 'one of the most accurate copyists of music for singing and playing' in Venice.⁸ Burney writes of him with similar approval in the account of his travels in France and Italy. He relates: 'I procured at Venice, some of his [Galuppi's] motets; and Giaseppe [*sic*], an excellent copiest [*sic*] there, undertook to transcribe, and send after me, two or three of his masses'.⁹

7 The most complete single source of information on Baldan's activity remains Gaetano Cozzi, 'Una disavventura di pré Iseppo Baldan, copista del Galuppi', in *Galuppiana 1985: Studi e ricerche. Atti del convegno internazionale (Venezia, 28–30 Ottobre 1985)*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro and Franco Rossi (Florence: Olschki, 1986), 127–131.

8 Venice, Museo Civico Correr, Mss. Gradenigo 67, *Notatori Gradenigo*, volume 6, f. 57r (24 August 1760): 'uno de più esatti copisti di Note per cantare, e sonare sopra la Parte nella musica, egli è il sacerdote Giuseppe Baldan stà a San Gio. Grisostomo'.

9 Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy* (London: Becket, 1771), 180n.



Power evidently went to Baldan's head. He narrowly escaped a criminal sentence in 1755 for making a young domestic servant pregnant (the resulting child was deposited forthwith at the Pietà). His arrogance, noted by witnesses at the hearing held by the Signori Esecutori contro la Bestemmia (the Venetian magistracy concerned with public morals), is visible on the title pages of the manuscripts produced in his *copisteria*, which he seems to have liked to pen personally, even if the musical content was usually delegated to one or more members of his team. The lettering of Baldan's titles, exuding self-importance, is commonly decorated with a sprawling mass of curlicues that threaten to crowd out the text itself.¹⁰

The activity of any Italian *copisteria* had two distinct aspects. One was to perform the duties of an amanuensis for a composer, theatre, church or court. The other was to act as an independent retailer of music to members of the general public, who could visit the shop in person, send an intermediary or make and receive their orders through the mails. Most of the stock for the second task was acquired by surreptitiously making extra copies while carrying out the first task. And whereas working directly on behalf of composers provided no opportunity for the 'creative' ascription of authorship, fulfilling commissions from distant and often none too knowledgeable customers positively encouraged the practice.

The *Beatus vir*, RV795, belongs to a group of almost one hundred sacred vocal works, most bearing Galuppi's name, that the Saxon Hofkapelle in Dresden obtained from Baldan – either as a single order or as a series of related orders – around 1758, a year mentioned on several of the title pages.¹¹ The purpose of the acquisition appears to have been to renovate in a radical fashion its sacred vocal repertory. Most of the scores in the group can be matched against entries in the manuscript catalogue of the Hofkirche prepared in 1765 during Johann Georg Schürer's directorship of its music.¹² Such a large order, which possibly specified very closely not only the composers but also the choice of liturgical texts, may have placed the resources of Baldan's shop under strain, increasing the temptation to 'dress mutton as lamb' and pass off the work of a dead, near-forgotten composer (Vivaldi) as that of a living, fashionable one (Galuppi). This is the likeliest explanation for the misattribution of the *Beatus vir*. Admittedly, Baldan would have needed little extra prompting, since he had by then turned falsification of authorship almost into a compulsion: Helmut Hell has drawn attention to various other instances of his forgery – an oratorio by Pescetti, *Gionata*, masquerading as one by Vinci, and a similar work by an unidentified composer, *Il sacrificio di Jepht* [sic], being claimed on its title page as the great Neapolitan's last work.¹³

But from what source did Baldan obtain his copy text of Vivaldi's *Beatus vir* in the first place? Here two different hypotheses, each carrying some plausibility and neither more convincing than the other, suggest themselves. The first is that the link was Daniele Mauro, who, on learning of his uncle's death in the first days of August 1741, raided his working collection in order to 'cream off' those works that would be of most use to him in his profession of music copyist before the official inventory of possessions was made.¹⁴ The second

10 For a sample see Dénes Bartha and László Somfai, *Haydn als Opernkapellmeister: Die Haydn-Dokumente der Esterházy-Opersammlung* (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Mainz: Schott, 1960), 428–429.

11 I am indebted for this information to Janice Stockigt (University of Melbourne), who is conducting a research project on Catholic church music in Saxony in the age of J. S. Bach.

12 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mus. ms. theor. Kat. 186. The present *Nisi Dominus* is one of two listed there under Galuppi's name (the other is a setting in C minor for four voices, preserved in Dresden as Mus. 2973-D-38). I am grateful to Janice Stockigt for giving me reproductions of the relevant pages. It is interesting that the Galuppi works in the catalogue also contain a 'Lauda Jerusalem a 5 voci a Capella con stromenti'. As its two-bar incipit suggests, this work (Mus. 2973-D-41) is indeed the same as RVAnh. 35, the *Lauda Jerusalem* preserved anonymously in Turin (Giordano 33, ff. 115–120) that Vivaldi adapted to make his *Credidi propter quod*, RV605. I am grateful to Dr Karl Geck, the director of the Music Department of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, for confirming the concordance, which clearly deserves further investigation.

13 Helmut Hell, *Die neapolitanische Opersinfonie in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1971), 449–452.

14 There is circumstantial evidence that the collection was not left untouched. For example, it contains no sonatas of orthodox type (sonatas for a single instrument with bass and trio sonatas for two like instruments and bass).



is that Vivaldi's departure from Venice for Vienna in the summer of 1740 prevented him from receiving back the score of the *Beatus vir*, which had been loaned to the Pietà for copying. Finding this score uselessly on its hands, the Pietà may later have sold it off to Baldan. Or Mauro himself may have reclaimed the score, passing it subsequently to his employer.

This general background was already clear to me in 1995 when I edited the psalm for the New Critical Edition of Vivaldi's works, although I was at that time unaware of the copyist's identity.¹⁵ I suspected, of course, that where one misattributed Vivaldi work lay others might also be present but did little concrete to act on my suspicions.¹⁶ My active interest was suddenly rekindled, however, when Janice Stockigt recently wrote to me of her doubts about the authenticity of a *Nisi Dominus* setting attributed to Galuppi in Dresden, since the score included a viola d'amore, a tromba marina and a 'salmò' – all instruments associated with the earlier part of the century.¹⁷ What struck me was not so much the problem of reconciling the date with Galuppi's authorship (though this factor, too, is pertinent) but the constellation formed by these three particular instruments. The Pietà is the only place in the world known to have cultivated the violino in tromba marina (the name is variously abbreviated to 'violino in tromba', 'tromba marina' and 'tromba')¹⁸ and the only place in Venice known to have cultivated the chalumeau (of which 'salmò' is a local dialectal form); it was also a place where two successive leaders of the orchestra – Anna Maria (1696–1782) and Chiara (1718–1796) – were expert viola d'amore players, for whom concertos were written by Vivaldi, Johann Baptist Runker, Antonio Martinelli and Lorenzo Morini.¹⁹ Moreover, all three instruments come together in an obbligato role in the group of three concertos and one sinfonia (RV558, 540, 552 and 149) specially commissioned from Vivaldi which were performed at the Pietà before the visiting Crown Prince of Saxony–Poland on 21 March 1740.²⁰ Two 'violini in tromba marina' and two tenor chalumeaux participate as solo instruments in RV558, while a viola d'amore partners a lute in RV540. What is certain, at any rate, is that Galuppi had no association with the Pietà and so cannot have had access to the first, nor, probably, the second, of these instruments, whereas Vivaldi was very familiar with all three, exploiting them frequently as novelties.

Something should be said about the history of each instrument at the Pietà. The violino in tromba marina, as its name suggests, was a violin modified to mimic the tromba marina, the instrument that derived its rattling, trumpet-like sound from a special bridge that was unattached to the instrument's belly on one side and therefore vibrated noisily against it. We know that the Pietà ordered special bridges (*scagneli da tromba*) for these instruments from the violin makers who supplied and maintained its stringed instruments, and it may well be that their only peculiarity vis-à-vis ordinary violins lay in the type of bridge

15 Antonio Vivaldi: *Beatus vir, Salmo 111 per soprano e tre contralti solisti, coro a quattro voci miste, due violini, viola e basso*, RV795 (Milan: Ricordi, 1995).

16 Dr Wolfgang Reich, who was director of the Music Department of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek at the time, very kindly had a look at some of the manuscripts attributed to Galuppi at my request, but no leads ensued.

17 Communication of 29 April 2003. The manuscript, which at that time was shelfmarked Mus. 2973-D-39, has since been recatalogued as Mus. 2389-E-5 in consequence of its altered attribution.

18 That an ordinary tromba marina (a bowed monochord) is not meant is established immediately by the presence of double-stopping in the obbligato part and confirmed by the use of notes outside the harmonic series and the violin-like agility of the part.

19 Information on individual *figlie di coro* provided in this article is taken from Micky White, 'Biographical Notes on the "Figlie di coro" of the Pietà Contemporary with Vivaldi', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani* 21 (2000), 75–96.

20 The original manuscript of these four compositions is available in reprint: Antonio Vivaldi. *Concerti con molti istromenti. Faksimiledruck nach der Musikhandschrift 2389-O-4 der Sächsischen Landesbibliothek Dresden. Mit einem Nachwort von Karl Heller* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR, 1978). On the background to the performance, see also Massimo Gemin, 'L'Adria festosa per Federico Cristiano: La lunga visita', in *L'invenzione del gusto. Corelli e Vivaldi. Mutazioni culturali, a Roma e Venezia, nel periodo post-barocco*, ed. Giovanni Morelli, Ex Libris del Festival Vivaldi I (Milan: Ricordi, 1982), 191–212.



fitted.²¹ It is not known when the Pietà acquired its brace of *violini in tromba marini*, but Vivaldi employs the instrument in a solo role in no fewer than six surviving works: singly in the concertos RV221, 311 and 313 (all for violino in tromba) and as a pair in the heavily scored concertos RV555 (composed c1726) and RV558, as well as in the 'Et resurrexit' movement of the fragmentarily preserved antiphon *Regina caeli*, RV615.²² During his brief tenure as *maestro di coro*, Porpora employed two of these instruments in the 'Suscitans a terra' movement of a *Laudate pueri* in A major dated 1742.²³ In 1790, when the Pietà drew up an inventory of its instruments, two similar instruments – by then unloved and neglected, one supposes – were still in its possession.²⁴ The inventory describes them as '[violini che] servono per trombe marine' (violins serving as trumpets marine). A player of this instrument contemporary with Vivaldi was Mariana (c1709–1780), on whose behalf the violin maker Zuanne Selles repaired a 'violin a tromba', according to an invoice of 23 December 1745; and on 1 September 1746 *maestra di coro* Anna Maria acquired from him two old violins with 'trumpet' bridges.²⁵

The chalumeau was introduced to the Pietà by Ludwig Erdmann (1683–1759), a Prussian wind player who served as its teacher of wind instruments in 1707–1708 but had contact with it earlier as a supplier of instruments. One of the first *figlie di coro* to master this new arrival was Candida (1674 or 75–1757), who has an optional part in Vivaldi's early (c1709) sonata for violin, oboe, obbligato organ and tenor chalumeau, RV779. The tenor chalumeau appears singly in the *Concerto funebre*, RV579 (c1726), and as a pair of instruments in the concertos RV555 and 558; a soprano chalumeau is used to imitate the cooing of a turtle-dove in his oratorio *Juditha triumphans* (1716).

Vivaldi was himself a virtuoso of the viola d'amore; an impromptu recital on the instrument that amazed his listeners on the occasion of a stopover in Cento in 1717 recently came to light.²⁶ The instrument he employed, which was cultivated at the Pietà from the early years of the eighteenth century, was one with six bowed strings, tuned to a variable *accordatura* that formed a broken chord. The two lowest strings were not fingered but supplied occasional extra notes for chords, while the four upper strings were played as if on *scordatura* violin – that is, with a 'finger' rather than 'real sounds' notation.²⁷ This straightforward – in fact rather primitive – way of treating the instrument made it easier for violinists to master. The surviving compositions by Vivaldi that were written for the Pietà and include a viola d'amore part comprise six solo concertos (RV392–397), the concerto for viola d'amore and lute RV540, possibly the chamber concerto RV95, the oratorio *Juditha triumphans* and the *Nisi Dominus* RV608. The privilege of playing solo parts on the instrument passed from Anna Maria to Chiara in 1737, when the first-named *figlia* was promoted to *maestra di coro*.

21 For further information see Michael Talbot, 'Vivaldi and the English Viol', *Early Music* 30/3 (2002), 381–394. In his preface to *The Art of Playing on the Violin*, Op. 9 (London, 1751), Francesco Geminiani refers disparagingly to imitations on the violin of 'the Drum, French Horn, Tromba-Marina, and the like', but it seems clear that the allusion is to a manner of playing rather than to a special form of instrument.

22 To my knowledge, this is the first time that the two 'trombe' in RV615 have been identified as *violini in tromba marina* rather than as trumpets.

23 London, British Library, Add. Ms. 14128, ff. 144–177, at ff. 158r–161v.

24 Venice, Archivio di Stato, Ospedali e luoghi pii diversi, B. 906, carta 2.

25 *Ibid.*, B. 731, *filze*, carta 50, and B. 733, *filze*, carta 37. I am grateful to Micky White for giving me transcriptions of these documents. Strangely enough, on both 29 July and 3 August 1746 Selles supplied a 'scagnelo a tromba' for a viola ('violetta') to Maria Rosa (born c1720, married 1748). This may have been for her private use: as we know from surviving dowry inventories of the minority of *figlie di coro* who found a husband and left the institution, some of them were keen collectors of musical instruments.

26 The contemporary report is translated in Talbot, 'Miscellany', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani* 20 (1999), 137–138.

27 Vivaldi's scores normally notate actual sounds for the viola d'amore, but the one separate part to have survived (for the 'Gloria Patri' of the *Nisi Dominus* in G minor, RV608) is presented in 'finger' notation. The same is true of the obbligato part in the suppressed first version of the aria 'Tu dormi in tante pene' in his *Tito Manlio* (Mantua, 1719).



In fact the Dresden *Nisi Dominus* is adorned not only with these three obligato instruments but with two others in addition. A solo cello is introduced in the sixth movement, and an obligato organ (that is, an organ part notated on two staves, with an independent line for right hand) in the seventh movement. The cello and the organ both figure prominently as obligato instruments in Vivaldi's late works.²⁸ RV558 (1740) has a part for solo cello, while the somewhat earlier RV555 features two solo cellos. Solo organ occurs intermittently in Vivaldi's music for the Pietà from RV779 onwards; a late work calling on this resource is RV793, headed 'Concerto in due Cori con 2 Organi obligatti [*sic*]'. Likely candidates for the solo part in the *Nisi Dominus* are Bianca Maria (born c1707, married 1740) and Antonia (born 1703, married 1755).

Vivaldi is justly famed for his love of contrasted instrumental colours. That this arose from inner volition rather than merely from the availability of an unusually varied range of instruments at the Pietà is suggested by the relative indifference that the institution's *maestri di coro* of the mid-eighteenth century showed towards instrumental timbre in their vocal compositions for the chapel. Whereas a majority of Vivaldi's sacred vocal works, including ones not composed for the Pietà, include at least one movement with 'novelty instrumentation' (this expression embraces the unusual treatment of familiar instruments as well as the employment of unusual ones), this does not appear to be true of Porta, D'Alessandro, Porpora, Bernasconi or Latilla. The *ne plus ultra* of Vivaldi's recourse to obligato instruments in a sacred vocal context is his oratorio *Juditha triumphans*, in which the conventional accompaniment for four-part strings becomes almost a rarity. The Dresden *Nisi Dominus* approaches this ideal more closely than any other known liturgical composition by Vivaldi. It is in this respect more 'Vivaldian' than the master himself usually ventures to be. One has the impression almost of a 'final fling' – an object lesson, delivered close to the end of his life, in how a sacred composition enriched to the fullest extent by the resources of instrumental technique and timbre can be made to sound.

Even before we examine a note of this remarkable composition, its choice and use of instruments mark it out clearly as a composition by Vivaldi supplied to the Pietà around 1740. But, of course, we must consider other aspects of it before reaching a final verdict.

THE SOURCE AND ITS MUSIC

The manuscript is written on paper in oblong format (measuring approximately 20.5 by 16 cm), with ten staves pre-ruled on each page.²⁹ The vertical guidelines that frame the staves identify the paper immediately as originating from the Veneto.³⁰ The unusually small dimensions (identical with those of the Dresden score of RV795) are characteristic of manuscripts sent to customers through the mails. There are fifty-five pages (including the separate title page occupying the opening recto side), all numbered by the library itself. No gathering signatures are visible on the reproduction. Leaving aside Baldan's title page, the manuscript is copied in a single hand identical with the one responsible for the score of RV795. With one exception, each movement begins on a fresh page. The exception occurs on page 20, where the last two bars of the third movement share the upper half of the page with the first four bars of the fourth movement.

As is usual for the repertory of the Dresden Hofkapelle, the manuscript is enclosed in a folder bearing an identification label prepared a few decades after the 1765 catalogue. This label reads: 'Lit: Schranck No: I. / G. 24 Fach 15. Lage / Nisi Dominus / à 3. voci / Sopr. Alt: e Ten: / co VV^{mi} Viola ed Org. / Partitura sola / del Sig.^r

28 In the Pietà's standard nomenclature, which follows Venetian usage, 'violetta' is a viola, 'viola' is a bass violin (sometimes, perhaps, a proper cello) and 'violon' is a double bass.

29 I should like to record here my thanks to Ines Burde, who is undertaking research in Venice into Galuppi's sacred vocal music and very generously supplied me with information about this manuscript and others in the Dresden collection.

30 Since the source has been consulted only in reproduction, no personal inspection of the paper's watermarks has been possible. Ines Burde confirms, however, that the main watermark is of the familiar *tre mezze lune* (three crescent moons) variety commonly exhibited by Venetian papers.



Galuppi / [incipit]. 'Schranck' (cupboard), 'Fach' (compartment) and 'Lage' (layer) identify the manuscript's place of storage. The ornate title page (which, unlike the label, is an integral part of the manuscript) has the wording: 'Nisi Dominus. / a 3. Voci. / con varj Strumenti Obligati. / Del Sig.^r Buranello.'³¹

The easiest way of surveying the composition is to consider it movement by movement, beginning with a note of external details before discussing notational, structural and stylistic features. This approach is especially appropriate to the present setting, in which diversity among the movements is one of the composer's prime aims.

i Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum: Psalm 126, verse 1.

Pages 2–10. Systems of seven staves: 'Violino 1' (G2), 'Violino 2' (G2), 'Viola' (C3), 'Canto' (= Soprano) (C1), 'Alto' (C3), 'Tenor' (C4) and 'Basso' (F4).³² Key, A major;³³ tempo, 'Allegro'; metre, 'C'. 35 bars



Vivaldi's authorship is suggested straight away by the incipit. The repeated quavers e¹ and a¹ in bars 1 and 2 conform to a *topos* within his oeuvre. They represent, so to speak, an intermittent *Trommelbass* (drum bass) built into the melodic line itself. Similar iambic pairs occur in the violin part at the opening of the G minor *Nisi Dominus*, RV608, and the four previously mentioned instrumental works of 1740 are saturated with them.³⁴ Example 1 follows a quotation from RV608 with passages taken from the first movement of the concerto RV552, the third movement of the concerto RV558 and the second movement of the sinfonia RV149 respectively.



Example 1a RV608/i



Example 1b RV552/i

31 'Buranello' (a reference to his birth on the Venetian island of Burano) was Galuppi's widely used nickname.

32 The order of the staves runs from the top downwards. 'C1' means a C clef on the first (lowest) line. The names of instruments that are followed by an asterisk are written in the source; all others are inferred from the part's choice of clef or its position in relation to the other parts. 'Basso' means in every case an untitled and unfigured instrumental bass part.

33 All key signatures employed in this work correspond to modern usage.

34 Like many other composers, Vivaldi emphasises different compositional formulas at different points in his career. The 'intermittent *Trommelbass*' seems to have reached its apogee near the end of his life.



(c) **(Allegro)**

Violin I in tromba marina

Example 1c RV558/iii

(d) **Andante**

piano sempre
Violini con l'arco

Example 1d RV149/ii

More than that, this incipit (like some of those below) accords well with Vivaldi's ingrained preference for a 'modular' form of melodic construction. His melodies are pieced together from a string of intensively treated, detachable motives. It is this 'provisional' quality that gives them their plasticity, their propensity to alter whenever they are restated.

This movement and the seven that follow are all cast in the form known to German musicology as the *Kirchenarie*, or 'church aria', in which a pair of vocal sections, each presenting the text complete, is prefaced, separated and concluded by instrumental ritornellos. In movements for solo voice or voices the *Kirchenarie* is well-nigh ubiquitous in Italian sacred vocal music of the first half of the eighteenth century, and Vivaldi shows himself to be much more conventional in its use than in his ritornello-form concerto movements. If there is a specifically Vivaldian trait in the structure of the movements in this *Nisi Dominus*, it can be seen in the composer's propensity to slim down, truncate or paraphrase the original ritornello material whenever it is restated. Several of the movements indicate *dal segno* rather than *da capo* repeats of the opening ritornello, indicating passages to be omitted in Vivaldi's favourite way: by closing (and sometimes also introducing) them with a vertical row of symbols resembling a large 'hash' sign. The explanatory instructions for this kind of repeat (such as 'Dà Capo al segno # sino al segno [fermata]' at the end of the second movement on page 13) follow word for word Vivaldi's own convention.

The first movement is so utterly Vivaldian that it seems arbitrary to draw attention to any particular detail, but the canonic imitation of the first violin by the second at the outset of the movement (which can be reconstructed from the quoted incipit) and the presence of 'stamping' octaves in the bass at cadence points are two features for which countless parallels can be found in his music.

ii *Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem*: Psalm 126, verse 2.

Pages 11–13. Systems of three staves: 'Alto solo'* (C₃), 'Viola d'amor[e]*' (G₂) and 'Basso' (F₄).³⁵ Key, D major; tempo, 'All[egr]o'; metre '3' (= 3/8). 90 bars (bars 76–90 are a *dal segno* repeat of bars 9–23)

Allegro

Viola d'amore

The 'large 3' time signature, common in France but rare in Italy, is used regularly by Vivaldi for triple metres (3/8 and 3/2 as well as 3/4) from the early 1720s onwards. Its appearance here, and in three later movements, points firmly towards his authorship. Copyists of the time were apt to imitate the peculiarities of their copy

35 The bass is scored for 'Violoni soli' in the ritornellos, 'Org[an]o solo' in the vocal sections.



text's notation slavishly, knowing (rather like some present-day typesetters) that they could never be faulted professionally for reproducing a defective or deviant text with scrupulous fidelity.

The *accordatura* employed by the composer for the viola d'amore is identifiable from the chords employed as $d-a-d^1-f\sharp^1-a^1-d^2$, a tuning encountered also in RV392, a concerto in D major for viola d'amore. Like the alto part itself (but even more so), the part for the solo instrument is quite challenging, as one sees from Example 2, the climax of the second vocal section. The abbreviated, 'chordal' notation of the viola d'amore part will be very recognizable to Vivaldians; highly characteristic of the composer too is the lurch from a tonicized submediant chord (B minor) in bar 57 to a dominant seventh chord in bar 58.

Example 2 *Nisi Dominus/ii*

iii Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere: Psalm 126, verse 3.

Pages 14–20. Systems of five staves: 'Violino 1' (G2), 'Violino 2' (G2), 'Viola' (C3), 'Alto solo'* (C3) and 'Basso' (F4). Key, G major; tempo, 'All[egr]o'; metre, 2/4. 126 bars

Allegro

Violin 1

This bravura movement relies heavily on an accompanimental background of chugging strings, whose quavers are rarely written out in full: instead the composer, abetted by his copyist, writes the notes as minims or crotchets, slashing their stems or writing 'crome' – typical 'late Vivaldian' practice as regards both style and notation. In bars 9–15 there is an effective touch of 'minorization', as shown in Example 3. What is so characteristically Vivaldian – and masterly – here is not so much the shift to minor as the abrupt augmentation of note values that comes with it. Note too the ternary (2 + 2 + 2) phrase structure of bars 10–15, another idiosyncratic feature.

The tonal structure of this movement reveals a uniquely Vivaldian feature: it is 'hinged' on the supertonic. That is, the first vocal section is addressed to A minor rather than the more conventional D



Example 3 *Nisi Dominus/iii*

major. Such irregular key relationships within (and also between) movements are a hallmark of Vivaldi's style. Among his prominent Italian contemporaries, only Domenico Scarlatti takes similar liberties, and even Scarlatti steers clear of the supertonic in this context.

iv *Cum dederit dilectis suis somnum*: Psalm 126, verse 4.

Pages 20–23. Systems of four staves for 'Salmò'* (= Chalumeau), 'Violini soli'* (G₂), 'Alto solo'* (C₃) and 'Basso' (F₄).³⁶ Key, C major; tempo, 'And[ant]e'; metre, 6/8. 67 bars (bars 58–67 are a condensed da capo repeat of bars 1–15)

Andante

Chalumeau

Vivaldi always pays special attention to the depiction of sleep (*somnum*) in his compositions.³⁷ The languorous tone of the tenor chalumeau, whose part has the compass G–d¹ (notated, following a customary practice of the time, in the bass clef one octave below sounding pitch), evokes sleepiness very effectively. In its avoidance of F, this part resembles those in RV555 and RV558; but by rising in solo passages to d¹, it goes higher and appears to lend support to a theory I advanced many years ago that the intended instrument was pitched in G rather than the more usual F.³⁸ The naive beauty of this movement recalls the

³⁶ The unison violins (by 'soli' the composer perhaps means only two instruments, one from each section) play a *bassetto* under the chalumeau in the opening ritornello and later. The bass, marked for 'Organo solo', plays *tasto solo* throughout.

³⁷ In his earlier *Nisi Dominus* (RV608) this is achieved by using lead mutes (*piombi*) for the upper strings and introducing the same 'sleep' figure that occurs in the first movement of the violin concerto *La primavera* (RV269) at the point when the birds doze off. The passage in RV608 is shown as a music example in Talbot, *The Sacred Vocal Music*, 276.

³⁸ Michael Talbot, 'Vivaldi e lo chalumeau', *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 15 (1980), 176–177. See also the discussion in Colin Lawson, *The Chalumeau in Eighteenth-Century Music* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1981), 167–168.



pastoralism of the 'Domine Deus, Rex caelestis' movement with obbligato oboe in Vivaldi's well-known *Gloria* (RV589).

v *Sicut sagittae in manu potentis*: Psalm 126, verse 5.

Pages 24–33. Systems of six staves: 'Violino [1]' (G2), 'Violino [2]' (G2), '[Violino in] Tromba marina'* (G2), 'Viola'* (C3), 'Tenor solo'* (C4) and 'Basso' (F4). Key, G major; tempo, 'Allegro'; metre, '3' (=3/4). 85 bars (bars 80–85 are a *dal segno* repeat of bars 12–17)



The tenor – or rather, low contralto reading from the tenor clef – for whom this movement was composed was very likely the celebrated Ambrosina (dates unknown). The compass of the vocal part is a–e² – close to the a–c² required for her part in the 'Esurientes' movement in the *Magnificat* RV611.³⁹

The *violino in tromba marina* is able to evoke very vividly the warlike spirit and the image of arrows flying through the air conveyed by the psalmist. The rapid alternation, shown in the incipit, between two notes a fourth apart (something very difficult on a real trumpet marine and even harder on a trumpet) is characteristic of this instrument: compare the opening of the finale of the *Concerto con molti istromenti* RV555 or, even better, the last solo for the two *violini in tromba marina* in the finale of RV558. Frequent double-stopping augments the *strepitoso* effect excitingly.⁴⁰ This is Vivaldi's personal interpretation of the *stile concitato*.

vi *Beatus vir qui implevit desiderium suum ex ipsis*: Psalm 126, verse 6.

Pages 34–38. Systems of three staves: 'Violoncello solo'* (G2), 'Canto solo'* (C1) and 'Basso' (F4).⁴¹ Key, D major; tempo, unmarked (but slow); metre 'C'. 56 bars (bars 49–56 are a *dal segno* repeat of bars 6²–14¹)



The choice for this movement of a solo cello playing in cantabile style relates clearly to the spirit of contentment present in the text. The intended performer was perhaps Teresa (born 1721, married 1751), also known as Tersetta, to whom Vivaldi entrusted the parts for solo cello in his late (c1738) concertos RV787, RV788 and RVAnh. 91.⁴²

The theme presented in the incipit is remarkably Vivaldian in its outline, draped as it is around the chiasmic opening formula I–V–V–I. To find a parallel in Vivaldi's music, we need go no further than the slow movement of *L'inverno*, RV297, but the second movement of the 1740 concerto for viola d'amore and lute, RV540, whose opening is shown as Example 4, comes even nearer melodically.

39 The e² is required only in the penultimate bar of the last movement, where the tenor moves in unison with the soprano and alto.

40 It is probable that some of the apparent chords should be played in 'broken' (alternating) fashion, thereby obviating the problem of whether to take long notes off short or to slur together the shorter notes sounding against them.

41 The bass is marked 'Org[an]o solo'.

42 Although Peter Ryom relegates this fragmentarily preserved double concerto for violin and cello to the *Anhang* of his catalogue, implying that its authenticity is not assured, most Vivaldi scholars accept it as genuine. Chiara (commonly known as Chiaretta) was Teresa's partner on the violin.



Largo cantabile

Example 4 *Nisi Dominus/vi*

The closest Vivaldian parallel occurs not in a sacred work but in the aria ‘L’adorar beltà che piace’ ending the ‘cantata in scena con viola all’inglese’ in Act 1 of his opera *L’incoronazione di Dario* (1717).⁴³ The relationship between voice, obbligato bass instrument (playing predominantly in the tenor register) and continuo bass is remarkably similar in all respects – right down to the instrumental soloist’s florid runs of triplet semiquavers and perilous ascent to a high position over a continuo pedal note.

vii Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto: Psalm 126, verse 7 (= Lesser Doxology, verse 1).

Pages 39–47. Systems of six staves: ‘Violino 1’ (G2), ‘Violino 2’ (G2), ‘Viola’ (C3), ‘Canto’ (C1), ‘Organo ob[b]ligato*’ (G2) and ‘Basso’ (F4). Key, E minor; tempo, ‘Larghetto’; metre, ‘3’ (=3/4). 68 bars

Larghetto

Organo

Triple metre, with its Trinitarian associations, is Vivaldi’s favoured choice for the first verse of the Lesser Doxology. The tempo direction *Larghetto*, used for the corresponding movement in his G minor setting (RV608) of the same psalm, is very frequently encountered in his music.⁴⁴

Except in bars 56–61, where it moves in dulcet sixths and thirds with the voice, the organ provides a shimmer of broken demisemiquaver chords, always notated as block chords after bar 1. This style of treatment – colouristic rather than contrapuntal, scintillating rather than sonorous – is quintessentially Vivaldian. In fact it appears to be almost Vivaldi’s only way of writing for the instrument.⁴⁵

Alone among the eight, this movement is in a minor key. The preponderance of major modality is, of course, a standard feature of music composed in the central decades of the eighteenth century. It is noteworthy, incidentally, that the major keys of the other seven movements form the perfectly palindromic sequence A–D–G–C–G–D–A. Such symmetry is typical of Vivaldi’s psalm settings in several movements.⁴⁶ In fact the major-key movements in the *Nisi Dominus* also exhibit symmetry of scoring: the two in A major (i and viii) are both for three voices and orchestral strings, while the two in D major (ii and vi) are scored for a solo voice and a solo instrument with continuo alone, and the two in G major (iii and v) for a solo singer

43 Bars 1–11 are shown in Talbot, ‘Vivaldi and the English Viol’, 387, and the complete movement is transcribed in Eric Cross, *The Late Operas of Antonio Vivaldi, 1727–1738* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1981), volume 2, 28–30. Similar, too, is the da capo aria ‘Di verde ulivo’ for Vitellia in Act 1 Scene 10 of Vivaldi’s *Tito Manlio*, where the obbligato instrument is a cello. This aria contains triplet semiquavers and a cadenza over a pedal note but makes no use of the ultra-high register.

44 See the list, referring to concerto slow movements, in Rebecca Kan, ‘The Concerto Adagios of Antonio Vivaldi’ (PhD dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2002), 23. ‘Larghetto’ is the direction in thirty-eight works.

45 Vivaldi’s approach to writing for the organ is discussed in Michael Talbot, ‘Vivaldi and the Concertante Organ’, *The Organist* 2/2 (1992), 1–3.

46 A good work for comparison is the *Laudate pueri* in A major, RV602a, in which the sequence of the major keys (discounting recurrences of the refrain) is A–D–G–D–A.



and orchestral strings (with the addition in movement v of the *violino in tromba marina*). The central movement (iv) has a unique scoring: solo voice, chalumeau, unison violins and organ.

viii *Sicut erat in principio*: Psalm 126, verse 8 (= Lesser Doxology, verse 2).

Pages 48–55. Systems of seven staves: 'Violino 1' (G2), 'Violino 2' (G2), 'Viola' (C3), 'Canto' (C1), 'Alto' (C3), 'Tenor' (C4) and 'Basso' (F4). Key, A major; tempo, 'Allegro'; metre, 'C'. 30 bars



To have a retexted free reprise of the opening movement as the last movement was, of course, standard practice in psalm settings of Vivaldi's day, since this responded both to the desire for musical rounding and to the pun implicit in the words '*Sicut erat in principio*' (As it was in the beginning). Close examination reveals how many significant differences of detail there are between the present outer movements based on identical material. Our pseudo-Galuppi takes care, for instance, to add a rousing climax at the end (Example 5), when all three voices sweep up in majestic unison before swooping down to a trilled dominant and a final cadence.

GALUPPI, VIVALDI OR COMPOSER X?

In theory the choice of possible composer for the *Nisi Dominus* does not lie between Galuppi and Vivaldi alone, since Baldan, as he demonstrated so often elsewhere, was under no contract to misattribute merely the works of the latter. But if we accept that the Pietà was the only conceivable destination for this work, the possibilities become rather limited. Galuppi himself falls at the first hurdle; and if we were to become soft-headed and hypothesize that, under the noses of the Pietà's administrative staff, he secretly smuggled in compositions for which he expected no payment and which, in any case, were seemingly never used, we would still have to explain how a composer who, even at the outset of his career around 1730, is already thoroughly galant in style and making rapid strides towards classicism can suddenly regress to late baroque mannerisms laced with Vivaldian stylistic and notational idiosyncrasies.⁴⁷

If we forget about Galuppi, we nevertheless have to consider the claims of D'Alessandro, Porpora, Paradies, Cardena, Arena, Giuseppe Scarlatti, Beretta, Terradellas, Ciampi and various others who supplied small quantities of sacred vocal compositions to the *coro* in the unsettled period between Porta and Bernasconi on either side of 1740. Most can be ruled out right at the start for one of two reasons: either because their style is too modern or because, being outsiders, they cannot have been sufficiently familiar with the less common instruments in the Pietà's instrumentarium to contemplate writing for them. In any case, few of them are strong enough composers to entertain as serious candidates. The most credible among them is Porpora, who, as we saw, at least took the trouble to become acquainted with the *violino in tromba marina*. But Porpora's style is always smooth and rather bland: it altogether lacks the ruggedness and the hint of quirkiness that we observe in every movement of the *Nisi Dominus*.

To snatch a work from one composer and award it to another is not an act to undertake lightly, particularly when the second composer is not mentioned in connection with it in any contemporary source. In the present instance, however, the indices are so many, so diverse and so unanimous that one is led

⁴⁷ A suitable indicator of Galuppi's early style would be his *Confitebor* in B flat major for soprano, alto and bass, an autograph manuscript of which, dated 1733, is preserved in the library of the Conservatoire Jean-Philippe Rameau, Dijon. This setting provides an instructive comparison with Vivaldi's *Confitebor* in C major, RV596, for alto, tenor and bass, which is contemporary with it. It is not quite true that nothing by Galuppi survives in the Fondo Esposti, but the little that there is consists of instrumental music from a later period.



24

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Basso

- men. Et in sæ - cu - la sæ - cu - lo - rum. A

- men. Et in sæ - cu - la sæ - cu - lo - rum. A

- men. Et in sæ - cu - la sæ - cu - lo - rum. A

27

men, a - men, sæ - cu - lo - rum. A - men.

men, a - men, sæ - cu - lo - rum. A - men.

men, a - men, sæ - cu - lo - rum. A - men.

Example 5 *Nisi Dominus/viii*

inexorably towards Vivaldi. Any alternative composer is, quite simply, unimaginable. If someone else was responsible for the work in Dresden, why have this composer's music and his notational habits not been compared with Vivaldi's on earlier occasions? Where are the rest of his works hiding?

Let us finally cast all doubt aside and consider briefly what the acceptance of this *Nisi Dominus* into the canon of Vivaldi's works would – I venture to say will – mean. First, it raises the tally of his extant sacred vocal compositions without choir but with more than one solo singer from two (RV596 and RV620) to three. Second, it adds usefully to our knowledge and enjoyment of his late style. Third, it introduces within a single composition by our composer an almost unprecedentedly wide selection of 'exotic' instruments and instrumentation; and this within a sub-domain – sacred music on liturgical texts – from which they earlier appeared to be almost excluded. Fourth, it provides evidence of creative vitality and the urge to do something



new from a time in his life when the composer, who had recently turned sixty, could have been forgiven for resting on his laurels. Fifth, it is a work with strong musical qualities and enormous intrinsic interest for both performers and audiences that will undoubtedly make its way in concert life and the recording studio. Sixth, its discovery solves the mystery of the lost psalm. We still await the recovery of the *Confitebor* RV789 as a complete, performable text, but the identity of the compositions constituting Vivaldi's 1739 cycle of Vesper music is now established – apart, that is, from the three antiphons and six motets, which should be placed next on the agenda for investigation.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, one reflects with wonder and a certain amount of pleasure on the irony of owing the survival of an important composition to something as fortuitous as another composer's celebrity and a copyist's lack of scruple.⁴⁹

48 Needless to say, the *Confitebor* settings attributed to Galuppi in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek have been looked at closely with this in mind, but none is concordant with the fragments in Venice. I acknowledge here the kind assistance of Karl Geck, through whom I obtained a microfilm of the manuscript of the *Nisi Dominus*.

49 The *Nisi Dominus* came out in the New Critical Edition in 2003. The RV number allotted to it by the Editorial Committee is RV803. Its first modern performance, given by the Dresdner Barockorchester and soloists directed by Guido Titze, took place on 7 December 2003 in Dresden's Catholic Cathedral.