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Hi everyone, and welcome back to Busy Kids Love Music, the podcast where we explore the stories behind classical music, one composer at a time. I'm your host, Carly Seifert, creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so glad you're here today.

Last episode, we began our three-part series about the Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi. We learned about his childhood in Venice, how his father taught him violin, and how he eventually became a composer and teacher at the Ospedale della Pietà, where he wrote music for talented young musicians. Today we're going to explore one of the most famous pieces of classical music ever written:

The Four Seasons.

Before we start listening, I also have a fun activity you can use while you listen today.

I've created a Four Seasons Weather Map that you can download in the show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/174. On the first page, you can act like a musical weather reporter! As you listen to the music for each season, you can write words or draw pictures that describe the "musical forecast" you hear — things like birds singing, thunderstorms, or icy winds. And on the second page, there's a Musical Meteorologist badge you can color and print once you've completed your listening map.

So if you'd like to follow along, you can pause the episode and download your weather map from the show notes.

Even if you've never heard the name Antonio Vivaldi before, there's a very good chance you've heard music from this piece, and we've even talked about aspects of some of the pieces before in some previous episodes of Busy Kids Love Music, but today we're taking a deep dive into the music as a whole.

So what makes The Four Seasons so special? And how did Vivaldi use music to paint pictures of nature? Let's listen and find out.

Vivaldi wrote The Four Seasons around the year 1720, when he was already an established composer. By this time in his life, he had written many concertos and was becoming known throughout Europe for his exciting violin music.

A few years later, in 1725, the concertos were published together as part of a larger collection called *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* – which means something like “The Contest Between Harmony and Invention.”

In other words, Vivaldi was showing how a composer could combine beautiful musical structure with creative storytelling. And storytelling is exactly what makes The Four Seasons unique.

Each violin concerto represents a different season of the year. In Antonio Vivaldi's The Four Seasons, the violin plays the solo part while a string orchestra accompanies it. And Vivaldi didn't just write the music for this collection of concertos, he also included short poems which many believe he also wrote, called sonnets, that describe what is happening in each season.

As listeners hear the music, they can imagine birds singing, thunderstorms rolling in, farmers celebrating harvest time, and icy winds blowing through winter.

Let's listen to some examples. Listen again to the opening of the Spring Concerto:

Spring begins with bright, cheerful music. Right away you can hear the violins bouncing lightly, almost like birds hopping around. Can you hear the birds singing in the violin part?

The short, quick notes represent birds chirping in the trees.

A little later in the music, something surprising happens.

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Suddenly the music becomes more dramatic sounding. Can you hear the storm rolling in?

But just like a real spring storm, it passes quickly, and the cheerful bird music returns.

Now let's move to Summer.

Summer begins very differently. Instead of cheerful birds, the music feels slow and heavy. How does the music feel to you? I think it sounds hot and tired! Vivaldi is trying to show the feeling of heat pressing down on the countryside.

Soon the tension starts to build.

And then suddenly— a huge summer thunderstorm explodes in the stringed orchestra.

The violins race quickly up and down, and the orchestra plays loudly to represent thunder, lightning, and strong wind. Can you imagine rain pouring down during this part?

Next comes Autumn.

Autumn begins with joyful, dancing music.

The poem that goes along with this concerto describes farmers celebrating the harvest. What do you think –does this music sound like a party or a celebration?

Soon the music slows down.

The poem describes the farmers eventually becoming tired and even a little sleepy after their celebration.

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Later in the concerto, the music becomes energetic again.

This time, Vivaldi is representing a hunting scene, with horns and running animals. Can you hear the solo violin music moving quickly, almost like people chasing through the forest?

Finally we arrive at Winter.

The music starts with short, sharp notes. Can you hear the shivering in the violins? The music almost sounds like teeth chattering in the cold.

Later in the piece, the music becomes smoother and calmer. The poem describes people sitting by the fire indoors while the icy rain falls outside.

Can you hear how the music suddenly feels warmer and more peaceful?

Near the end of the concerto, the music becomes slippery and fast again. Perhaps Vivaldi is illustrating someone walking carefully on icy ground.

One reason *The Four Seasons* became so popular is that listeners can easily imagine the scenes in the music. Instead of abstract sounds, the music tells a story. It's an early example of something called program music – music that describes images, stories, or events.

Another reason the piece became famous is that it shows off the violin in exciting ways. Remember, Vivaldi himself was a violinist, so he loved writing music that allowed the instrument to shine.

Over time, *The Four Seasons* became one of the most frequently performed pieces in the entire classical repertoire. Today it's played by orchestras and violinists all over the world.

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If you'd like to explore more of this music, I've created a curated playlist of performances of The Four Seasons that you can find in the show notes. You can listen to different recordings and see which performances you enjoy the most. Sometimes the same piece of music can sound or feel slightly different depending on how musicians interpret it.

And don't forget, you can download the Four Seasons Weather Map listening activity in the show notes for today's episode. Use the weather map while you listen to the music and see if you can describe what kind of musical "weather" Vivaldi is creating in each season.

When you're finished, you can color your Musical Meteorologist badge to celebrate becoming an official Vivaldi weather reporter. You'll find the printable and the curated playlist of The Four Seasons performances at: busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/174

And before we finish today's episode, I also want to share something exciting.

Enrollment for Busy Kids Do Piano, my online piano lesson program for kids, will be opening again on May 1st. If you'd like to be notified as soon as enrollment opens, you can join the waitlist at:

busykidsdopiano.com/waitlist, and I'll include that link in the show notes as well. Families on the waitlist are the first to hear when registration opens.

In our next and final episode in this Vivaldi series, we'll explore more of the musical style that made him famous and look at how his music influenced other composers.

Until then, keep listening for the sounds of nature around you... and maybe even imagine how you might turn those sounds into music.

Thanks for joining me today on Busy Kids Love Music. Keep listening, keep learning, and keep making music. Bye for now!