

**The Instrumental Variation Sets of Antonio Vivaldi:  
Old Forms in New Genres**

by

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## Abstract

Studies of variation form generally overlook the works of Antonio Vivaldi due to the lack of sufficient bibliographic resources and assumptions downplaying the significance of Vivaldi's variation sets. This study, however, argues that Vivaldi's sets represent innovative contributions to the form. It begins by cataloguing the twenty instrumental variation sets published in the first critical edition of Vivaldi's works (Milan: Ricordi, 1947-72). It then examines the sequence of variations and manner of conclusion in each set, issues crucial to the reception of variation form ever since late eighteenth-century writers such as Koch and Vogler expanded discussions of variation technique to address variation sets as a musical form. Vivaldi's examples are compared to those by Corelli, Rameau, and Handel, highlighting Vivaldi's greater emphasis on coherent progressions and firm conclusions. Additionally, recent chronological studies are combined to propose that Vivaldi was among the first composers to use variation form in solo concertos.

## Contents

Abstract	ii			
Contents	iii			
List of Tables	iv			
List of Figures	v			
List of Abbreviations	vii			
Acknowledgements	viii			
Dedication	ix			
Introduction: Vivaldi's Neglected Formal Type	1			
Chapter 1: Identifying Vivaldi's Variation Sets	10			
<i>Authenticity</i>	17, <i>Chronology</i>	21		
Interlude I: Assessing Coherence and Closure in Variation Sets	28			
Chapter 2: Structure in Vivaldi's Instrumental Variation Sets	35			
<i>Themes in Vivaldi's Variation Sets</i>	35, <i>Construction of Individual Variations</i>	50, <i>Linking Variations on the Surface Level: Overcoming Segmentation</i>	59, <i>Coherence and Closure in Background Structures</i>	63
Chapter 3: Coherence and Closure in Variation Sets by Vivaldi's Contemporaries	97			
<i>Corelli</i>	98, <i>Rameau</i>	106, <i>Handel</i>	109	
Interlude II: Variation Forms and Their Influence on Vivaldi's Instrumental Works	131			
<i>Ostinato</i>	131, <i>Variations</i>	139		
Conclusion: Vivaldi as Innovator	149			
Bibliography	152			
Appendix: Sources and Authenticity of Vivaldi's Variation Sets	156			

## Tables

1. Catalogue of Variation Sets in Vivaldi's Instrumental Works	11
2. Chronology of Vivaldi's Variation Sets	22
3. Components of Vivaldi's Ostinato Variation Formulas	41
4. Scoring and Texture in Variation Sets with a Soloist and Ritornello	70
5. Structure via Texture in RV 107	82
6. Background Structure of Corelli's Op. 2 No. 12	100
7. Background Structure in Rameau's Gavotte in A Minor	108
8. Handel's Variation Sets	110
9. Background Structure of HWV 306/1	122
10. Background Structure of HWV 310/3	126
11. Structure of RV 156, 1 <sup>st</sup> movement	133
12. Structure of RV 223, 2 <sup>nd</sup> movement	134

## Figures

1. Bass Formulae in Vivaldi's Ostinato-Variation Sets	37
2. Components of Vivaldi's Basso Ostinato Themes	40
3. Fundamental Theme Common to Vivaldi's Ostinato Variation Sets	42
4. Harmonic Patterns in Vivaldi's Constant-Harmony Variation Sets	46
5. RV 101, Recorder part	55
6. RV 19, Violin part	55
7. Repetition of Short Ideas in Individual Variations	56
8. RV 447, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Movement, Solo Oboe, Measures 214-216	56
9. RV 406, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Movement, Solo Cello, Measures 217-221	57
10. Examples of Figuration in Multiple Voices	57
11. Figuration Alternating Between Voices	58
12. Interpretations of Phrasing in RV 172, Measures 179-181	60
13. Solo Phrase Extension in RV 222, Measures 142-144	61
14. Foreshadowed Figuration in RV 114, Measures 97-99	63
15. Incipits of Statements 1-5 in RV 298, Solo Violin Part	72
16. RV 222, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 174-178 (End of Statement 9 and Solo Codetta)	74
17. Free Material, RV 334, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 104-109	77
18. Organization of RV 334	78
19. Structural Divisions of RV 387	79
20. Figurations in RV 107, Statements 14 & 15	83
21. Rhythmic Texture in RV 175, Measures 16 & 17	90

22. Rhythmic Texture in RV 157, Measures 46-48	90
23. Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 24-26	102
24. Corelli's Op. 5 No. 5, 4 <sup>th</sup> Movement, Measures 1-4	102
25. Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 18 & 19	105
26. HWV 432, Statements 12 & 13	115
27. Sequence of Statements 9-16, HWV 432/6	115
28. HWV 435, Endings of the 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> Versions	118
29. Structure of HWV 330/3	120
30. Structure of Section 3 of HWV 306/1	124
31. Accompaniment Ostinati in RV 269, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 5-7	136
32. Rhythmic Ostinato in RV 522, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movements, Measures 1-4	137
33. Bass Pattern of RV 113, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement	139
34. Structural Units of RV 302, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement	143
35. Beginning of Tutti and First Solo Episode, RV 356, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Movement	145
36. Varied Material in Solo Episodes, RV 236, 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement	146

## Abbreviations

- Bn Bassoon
- Cont. Basso Continuo
- Fl Flute
- HHA *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Edited by the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft. Serie IV: Instrumentalmusik. Kassel: Barenreiter, 1955-.
- HWV Refers to the catalogue number of a Handel work, as found in Bernd Baselt, *Verzeichnis der Werke Georg Friedrich Händels: Kleine Ausgabe*. Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1986.
- ISV *Informazione e Studi Vivaldiani*. Milan: Ricordi, 1980-.
- Mvt Movement (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> mvt= 2<sup>nd</sup> movement)
- Ob Oboe
- Orch. Orchestra
- Org. Organ
- Rec. Alto Recorder
- RV Refers to the catalogue number of a Vivaldi work, as found in Peter Ryom, *Verzeichnis der Werke Antonio Vivaldis: kleine Ausgabe*. Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1974.
- Str. Strings
- Va Viola
- Vc Cello
- Vn Violin

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*In memory of James Dale Holloway*

## Introduction: Vivaldi's Neglected Formal Type

In 1988 the editorial committee of the *Informazione e Studi Vivaldiani* (Milan: Ricordi, 1980-), placed variation forms at the top of a list of suggestions for future research topics. A substantial study addressing this topic has yet to appear, despite recent enthusiastic interest in Vivaldi's sonatas, sinfonias, fugal movements, sacred music, serenatas, and operas. This omission stems from the barriers posed by a lack of bibliographical tools and a tradition of negative critical attitudes that downplay the significance of early eighteenth-century variation sets.

One of the major obstacles to assessing the stature of Vivaldi's variation forms is the lack of a single, complete listing of them. Michael Talbot (2000) devotes three paragraphs to Vivaldi's variation movements, mentioning the existence of sonatas and concerto movements in variation form but only identifying four specific works (RV 63, 107, 114, 447).<sup>1</sup> Karl Heller (1997) gives a similarly brief list of variation sets (RV 63, 114, 157).<sup>2</sup> Peter Ryom's thematic catalogue, the *Répertoire des œuvres d'Antonio Vivaldi: Les compositions instrumentales* (1986), is still the most comprehensive listing of Vivaldi's instrumental works, but the thematic incipits are too brief to provide information on the structure of the pieces.<sup>3</sup> Since Vivaldi and his copyists did not use terms such as "variation" or "partite" in the manuscript sources, the indications at the head of each movement, transcribed in Ryom's

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Master Musicians Series, ed. Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Karl Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi: The Red Priest of Venice*, trans. from the German by David Marinelli (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Ryom, *Répertoire des Œuvres d'Antonio Vivaldi: Les compositions instrumentales* (Copenhagen: Engstrøm & Sødring, 1986).

catalogue, do not provide help in this matter. At best, the existing literature permits the piecemeal construction of a list of around a half-dozen variation sets while hinting at the presence of further examples.<sup>4</sup>

The first goal of the present study is to contribute towards a complete inventory of variation sets in Vivaldi's oeuvre. The only way to assess accurately the number of variation form movements in Vivaldi's output is to examine the score of each and every work, a daunting task considering that Vivaldi left over 800 works, most with three or more movements. Vocal works are excluded from this study because not enough examples have been published in critical editions to allow for a comprehensive perspective. The principal modern source for the instrumental works is the critical edition issued by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (1947-72) under the general editorship of Gian Francesco Malipiero.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the 529-volume edition is plagued by a number of shortcomings: 1) the omission of works discovered since 1947; 2) sharp inconsistencies between the practices of different contributing editors; 3) a lack of attention to variants and alternate versions; 4) the presence of markings (largely separated by brackets) that reflect mid-twentieth-century performance practice; 5) stylistically incongruent harpsichord and double bass parts (simplified from the "basso" of the original source) supplied by the editor; 6) and the inclusion of several spurious pieces on the basis of mistaken attribution at the time of series publication. There is a new critical edition of Vivaldi's works, intended to supplement rather than replace the Malipiero edition. The series, edited by the

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<sup>4</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 82, 111.

<sup>5</sup> *Le opere di Antonio Vivaldi*, Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, ed. G.F. Malipiero, 529 vols. (Milan: Ricordi, 1947-72).

*Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*, is currently in progress, so this study is limited to works published in the completed Malipiero edition.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the inventory of instrumental variation sets in Chapter One is not fully comprehensive.

A number of the most important questions pertaining to the text as transmitted in the critical edition, such as instrumentation, the existence of alternate versions, and tempo indications, can be addressed using information on the sources found in Peter Ryom's *Répertoire*. The most significant problem is the question of authenticity for variation movements found in the Malipiero edition; this is treated in Chapter One of the current study.

Creating the inventory required the adoption of specific criteria for determining which pieces constitute variation forms. My study is based on the descriptions and definitions provided by Elaine Sisman's article on "Variations" in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001).<sup>7</sup> The following criteria were used to compile the list:

1. This study is primarily concerned with variation sets, where a theme is followed by two or more variations. By comparison, works with a single varied reprise do not involve the same issues of consideration for the sequence of variations and large-scale structure. They are discussed in Interlude II.
2. The primary structural principle of the piece must be a series of variations.  
Works that include variations as intermittent or isolated sections within

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<sup>6</sup> *Nuova edizione critica delle opere di Antonio Vivaldi*, ed. Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (Milan: Ricordi, 1982-).

<sup>7</sup> Elaine Sisman, "Variations," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001): 284-326.

another structure (such as a portion of a ritornello form movement) are not variation forms. They are examined in Interlude II, which addresses the overlap between variation sets and non-variation-form movements.

3. It is possible for the variations to be separated by free material (modulations, cadential progressions) as long as the intervening passages function within the variation form and do not introduce new thematic or motivic material.

In most of Vivaldi's works the distinction between a variation form movement and another form (ritornello, binary, or through-composed form) is very clear. The few examples where the boundaries are murky have either been placed either within my catalogue, following Sisman's descriptions of hybrid forms (such as RV 447), or are examined along with Vivaldi's other applications of variation technique in Interlude II.

The other major barrier to a deeper understanding of Vivaldi's variation sets has been a general assumption that his works do not represent a distinctive entity in the history of variation forms. While a few extraordinary works, such as Corelli's *La Follia* variations Op. 5 No. 12 or Bach's Passacaglia in C Minor for Organ BWV 582, have attracted attention based on their choice of theme, popularity among performers, or imitation by other composers, the majority of variation sets from the early eighteenth century are presumed to either fall into a stereotypical progression from the simplest to the most elaborate variations or to represent traditions, such as the chaconne and passacaglia, that would become dormant until revisited in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The second goal of this study is to counter these assumptions, demonstrating the importance of Vivaldi's contributions to the form. Sisman claims that it was Haydn's innovation to place variation forms in every position in a multi-movement cycle, but the chronological examination in Chapter One reveals that Vivaldi set a precedent several decades earlier.<sup>8</sup> Vivaldi may have also been among the first composers to include variation movements in solo concertos, a marriage echoed in the keyboard concertos of Handel and Mozart.

One of the challenges in writing a set of variations is to instill an overall sense of coherence and to articulate a design with an identifiable ending. This has been a significant issue in aesthetical critiques of variation forms since the late eighteenth century. In her studies of eighteenth-century writings on the subject, Sisman finds that "the apparent arbitrariness of an additive structure, the series of variations having no necessary ordering or ending point beyond local convention, has...served to downgrade the form as one that lacks organic inevitability."<sup>9</sup> Judith Schwartz, describing variation forms that accompany choreographed dance, warns of the potential hazards inherent in the form by stating that the "ostinato element in the musical form [the theme], which imposes a certain degree of repetition upon the musical phrase structure, challenges both composer and choreographer not only to create variety, but to superimpose broad structural coherence and rhetorical shape upon what otherwise could be an additive form motivated primarily by virtuoso

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<sup>8</sup> Elaine Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, Studies in the History of Music 5, gen. ed. Lewis Lockwood and Christoph Wolff (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993): ix. Sisman, [op. cit., i], points to a particularly critical attack on the form in Jan LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis* (New York: 1970), 174.

<sup>9</sup> Elaine Sisman, "Variations," 284; See also, idem, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 6-18.

display.”<sup>10</sup> To convey a strong sense of organization it is especially crucial that the final variation or segment of material appears to be the result or counteraction of an ongoing process and that the audience perceives it as the end of the piece, otherwise it is possible to expect further variations to follow. In the early eighteenth century, the most common plan was a series of increasingly brilliant variations that steadily built towards a climactic ending. However, this arrangement is easily linked with leanings towards virtuoso display. Models of variation technique in classical rhetoric urge against such virtuosity. Erasmus, in demonstrating ways to vary a single sentence, warned against the tendency of orators to “pile up a meaningless heap of words and expressions without any discrimination, and thus obscure the subject they are talking about, as well as belabouring the ears of the unfortunate audience.”<sup>11</sup> Jérôme-Joseph Momigny echoed the same opinion three centuries later, complaining that musical variations typically consist of “much speech but little sense.”<sup>12</sup>

This study shows that Vivaldi arranged the sequence of variations in his variation sets with greater care than many of his contemporaries. In these works, large-scale coherence and closure are just as important as the art of varying a theme and the contrast between variations. His innovative methods, including the use of a

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<sup>10</sup> Judith L. Schwartz, “The *passacaille* in Lully’s *Armide*: phrase structure in the choreography and the music,” *Early Music* 26, no. 2 (May 1998): 300-320.

<sup>11</sup> Erasmus, *De duplici copia rerum ac verborum commentarii duo* (Paris, 1512; later enlarged editions until 1534); modern critical edition in *Collected Works of Erasmus, Literary and Educational Writings*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, vol. 24: *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*, trans. and ed. Betty I. Knott (Toronto, 1978); cited in Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 27-28.

<sup>12</sup> Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, *Encyclopédie méthodique: musique*, II (Paris, 1818; reprint New York, 1971), s.v. “Variations;” cited in Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 2.

solo codetta and a periodically recurring literal reprise, elevate Vivaldi's variation sets to a prominent position in the history of the form.

The first chapter of my study establishes the inventory of Vivaldi's instrumental variation sets published in the Malipiero edition. Addressing one of the key flaws of the critical edition, the authenticity of each work is verified according to the guidelines established by Ryom, Talbot, and others.<sup>13</sup> The chapter then correlates information from several existing and ongoing source and stylistic studies to establish a chronology for Vivaldi's variation sets. This chronology is used to support the notion that Vivaldi was among the first composers to use variation forms in solo concertos and that he foreshadowed Haydn by including variations in every position of a multi-movement cycle. Additionally, the dating of the variation sets identifies the appropriate historical context for the analytical comparisons in Chapter Three.

An interlude examines the significance of and criteria for coherence and closure in critiques of variation sets over the last two hundred years. This section draws some correspondences between problems with closure in musical and rhetorical variation models. It also discusses the importance that these issues assume in many of Vivaldi's non-variation-form works.

Chapter Two examines the ways Vivaldi combined elements of variation traditions and cross-generic influences to arrange the sequence of variations into a coherent structure and provide a sense of conclusion. The discussion begins with the characteristics of the themes Vivaldi used and how they affect the sectional or continuous nature of the entire set. The effectiveness of Vivaldi's background

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<sup>13</sup> See Peter Ryom, *Verzeichnis der Werke Antonio Vivaldis: kleine Ausgabe* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1974); and idem, *Répertoire*; Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 94.

structures relies to a great extent on the degree of contrast between individual variations, so the manner in which Vivaldi constructed sharply profiled individual variations is scrutinized before delving into the background structures themselves. Having examined individual variations, the techniques Vivaldi used to elide variations and overcome sectionalization on a surface level are brought into focus. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to examining each of the methods Vivaldi used to achieve coherence and closure for entire variation sets. The techniques, such as mirroring and use of a ritornello frame, are discussed individually and then in terms of the resulting background structures.

One of the points raised by Chapter Two is the high degree to which Vivaldi's sets are arranged to provide a sense of closure. Other early-eighteenth-century composers addressed the issue of completion in variation sets, but Vivaldi seems to be among the few to do so in almost all of his works. Chapter Three compares the background structures of Vivaldi's variation forms with those of three of his contemporaries, Corelli, Rameau, and Handel, to place Vivaldi's contributions within a historical context. Each composer's works are assessed for the level of concern devoted to coherence and closure. Comparisons are then drawn between the degree of closure in the sets of Corelli, Rameau, Handel, and Vivaldi, revealing the extent to which Vivaldi's structures elevate the significance of the background scheme as a means of providing a sense of conclusion.

The final goal of my investigation is to highlight the role of variation sets within the entirety of Vivaldi's instrumental output. Variation sets are relatively rare in Vivaldi's music. Of the 529 volumes in the Malipiero edition, the twenty works

containing a variation movement constitute less than four percent.<sup>14</sup> Interlude II presents several examples to show how the techniques of variation and organization found in these works occur elsewhere in Vivaldi's music, suggesting a line of influence between variation and non-variation works.

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<sup>14</sup> *Le opere di Antonio Vivaldi.*

## Chapter 1: Identifying Vivaldi's Variation Sets

Assessing the significance of Vivaldi's instrumental variation sets requires more than simply identifying the works. The authenticity of the works must be determined if an analysis of the music is to accurately reflect Vivaldi's contributions to the form. Similarly, a sense of chronology is needed to situate the pieces in an appropriate historical context and reveal whether the works were progressive or conservative for their period. Chronology can also provide clues to the evolution of variation sets within Vivaldi's style, suggesting whether his concept of the form changed over time or remained largely static.

Vivaldi's variation sets are fairly easy to identify once the guidelines listed above are adopted.<sup>15</sup> There is general agreement among Vivaldi scholars that all of the pieces identified below (Table 1) are authentic. However, the issue of chronology has not been adequately addressed in the literature. For most of Vivaldi's instrumental works, only a range of dates can be established and this range is often quite wide. This makes it difficult to arrange the variation sets into their order of composition and find evidence of stylistic evolution. However, enough details of the dating of individual works have emerged to draw some broad comparisons to the chronology of other Baroque variation sets.

The instrumental works of Antonio Vivaldi, as published by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi between 1947 and 1972, contain twenty pieces that qualify

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<sup>15</sup> See pp. 3-4.

as variation sets.<sup>16</sup> Table 1 presents a catalogue of Vivaldi's instrumental variation sets, arranged according to RV number.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1- Catalogue of Variation Sets in Vivaldi's Instrumental Works**

RV	T	Common Title	Scoring	Movement / Indication	Sisman's Structural Category	Notes <sup>18</sup>
19	491	Violin Sonata in F	Vn, Cont.	5 <sup>th</sup> mvt [no indication]	Sectional	"per Pisendel"
63	393	Trio Sonata in D Minor	2 Vn, Cont.	Entire piece, <i>Follia</i>	Sectional	Op. 1 No. 12
101	52	Chamber Concerto in G	Fl (Rec), Ob, Vn, Bn, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Allegro</i>	Sectional	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt related to 3 <sup>rd</sup> (2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt also in RV 242); see RV 437
107	40	Chamber Concerto in G Minor	Fl, Ob, Vn, Bn, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Allegro</i>	Ostinato	
112	507	Sinfonia for Strings in C	Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Andante</i>	Ostinato	Probably authentic (see p. 20); Dresden source includes inauthentic parts for 2 fl (added later)

<sup>16</sup> *Le opere di Antonio Vivaldi*. This count excludes works that contain a single varied reprise (such as the finale of the sonata Op. 1 No. 11 and the slow movement of the Concerto for Strings RV 113) or which draw upon the variation principle for sporadic passages within the context of a ritornello form (as for example when only the first two or three solo episodes appear to be variations of each other); these works are discussed in Chapter Five. In many cases, the accompanying instruments in a concerto employ a rhythmic ostinato (which may have a general pattern of vertical motion associated with it), but neither the harmonies nor the precise sequence of pitches can be considered an ostinato (this usually occurs in slow movements, such as Op. 3 No. 8). Works that are published as part of the new IIAV edition, *Nuova edizione critica delle opere di Antonio Vivaldi*, were not part of this study. Also excluded was the Oboe Concerto, Op. 11 No. 6, which is an early version of the Violin Concerto Op. 9 No. 3; the oboe version has not been published in any IIAV edition.

<sup>17</sup> Ryom, *Verzeichnis*; see also idem, *Répertoire*; and updated listings in Michael Talbot, "Vivaldi," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 26: 824-838.

<sup>18</sup> Ryom, *Répertoire*; Talbot, "Vivaldi."

114	493	Concerto for Strings in C	Str, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Ciacona</i>	Ostinato	
157	182	Concerto for Strings in G Minor	Str, Cont.	1 <sup>st</sup> mvt, <i>Allegro</i>	Ostinato	
172	322	Violin Concerto in C	Vn, Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt [no indication]	Ostinato	“fatto per Pisendel”
220	482	Violin Concerto in D	Vn, Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Largo</i>	Ostinato	Publ. By Roger (1717) No. 6 in <i>Concerti a 5</i> ; probably authentic (see p. 20)
222	294	Violin Concerto in D	Vn, Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Andante</i>	Ostinato	“Concerto per Sig. <sup>ra</sup> Chiara”
298	429	Violin Concerto in G	Vn, Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Largo</i> ( <i>Andante</i> in one source)	Ostinato	Op. 4 No. 12
334	127	Violin Concerto in G Minor	Vn, Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Largo cantabile</i> ( <i>Largo</i> in one source)	Ostinato	Op. 9 #3; Op. 11 #6 (RV 460) is (earlier?) version for oboe- mostly identical except for scoring
387	179	Violin Concerto in B Minor	Vn, Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Largo</i>	Ostinato	“Concerto Per Sig. <sup>ra</sup> Anna Maria”
406	212	Cello Concerto in D Minor	Vc, Str, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Minuet</i>	Sectional/ Hybrid	
407	523	Cello Concerto in D Minor	Vc, Str, Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Largo</i>	Ostinato	Probably authentic (see p. 20)
419	220	Cello Concerto in A Minor	Vc, Str, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Allegro</i>	Ostinato/ Hybrid	

437	458	Flute Concerto in G	Fl, Str, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Allegro</i>	Sectional	Op. 10 #6; orchestral version of RV 101; see notes to RV 101; authenticity of orchestral version not fully established (see p. 20)
447	216	Oboe Concerto in C	Ob, Str, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Minuet</i>	Sectional/Hybrid	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> movements share material with RV 448 and 470
473	118	Bassoon Concerto in C	Bn, Str, Cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> mvt, <i>Minuet</i>	Sectional/Hybrid	
583	136	Concerto a due Chori in B-Flat	Vn, Str (2 orch.), Cont.	2 <sup>nd</sup> mvt, <i>Andante</i>	Ostinato	

The concept of a variation set is founded upon two seemingly contradictory principles: continuity and change. Continuity is provided by an element that recurs throughout the entire piece or individual movement. This material, which may be a melody, a motivic idea, a bass line, a harmonic progression, a rhythmic figure, or a combination of these elements, is often referred to as a "theme."<sup>19</sup> Themes are often written at lengths of eight, sixteen, or thirty-two bars, and many can be subdivided into two sections, one or both of which may carry a repeat sign. Change to the theme may result from a wide range of methods, often employed in combinations, including altering the rhythm, harmony, scoring, register or voicing, mode, tonal center (i.e. modulation), tempo, character, articulation, vertical orientation (inversion), horizontal orientation (retrograde motion), duration (augmentation and diminution), and by

<sup>19</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 284.

applying motivic and rhythmic figurations that elaborate a basic melodic or harmonic outline.

My analysis of Vivaldi's variation forms incorporates Sisman's terminology and differentiates three ways in which the repetition of the theme contributes to the nature of the variations and the overall structure of the piece.<sup>20</sup> Short themes tend to serve as an ostinato, resulting in "a continuously unfolding structure with new figurations and textures [applied] at each statement of the theme."<sup>21</sup> Sectional themes, such as binary-structures, "result in a strophic form in which some elements of the theme change and others remain the same."<sup>22</sup> Pieces where non-variation material such as free episodes, a contrasting central section, or an interior literal reprise separates the variations are defined as hybrid variations.<sup>23</sup>

Virtually all of the sets listed in Table 1 constitute individual movements from concertos, sonatas, and sinfonias for both large and small ensembles.<sup>24</sup> The only exception is the Trio Sonata Op. 1 No. 12, in which the entire sonata consists of a self-standing variation set similar to variation-sonatas by Corelli (Op. 2 No. 12 and

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<sup>20</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 284.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 284. Laure Schnapper, "Ostinato," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 18: 782, defines ostinato as, "the repetition of a musical pattern many times in succession while other musical elements are generally changing." Unlike a theme, an ostinato pattern tends to remain largely unchanged despite changes to the surrounding musical material.

<sup>22</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 284.

<sup>23</sup> There is often a great amount of uncertainty as to whether some works classify as a true variation set, particularly when hybrid variations are involved. For a concise overview of the issues, see Sisman, "Variations," 289.

<sup>24</sup> Two closely related works, RV 101 and 437, share a strong motivic-melodic connection between the second movement and theme & variation finale. This is not entirely unique in Vivaldi's output, as the opening bars of the finale of the Concerto in C for 2 Oboes (RV 534) are a major-mode version of the minor-mode opening of the second movement of the same concerto.

Op. 5 No. 12), Purcell (Sonata 7 of the Ten Sonatas of Four Parts), and Caldara (Op. 2 No. 12). It has been mentioned that Sisman credits Haydn with “placing the variation set in every movement of the multi-movement cycle,” but Vivaldi undertook this several decades earlier, as his sets occur in middle movements (nine of the twenty examples), finales (ten), and RV 157 takes the rare step of opening with a variation-form movement.<sup>25</sup>

Variation sets had been used in ensemble works since at least the second quarter of the seventeenth century and in sonatas as early as the last quarter of the same century; examples can be found in Biagio Marini’s Opp. 3, 8, and 22 (1620, 1628/9, and 1655 respectively), and Giuseppe Scarani’s *Sonate concertante* (1630). Variation sets as individual movements within ensemble sonatas (usually as a middle or final movement) are found in Corelli’s Opp. 1 and 5 (1681, 1700), in each of Biber’s eight violin sonatas published in 1681, and elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> Despite these precedents, Vivaldi appears to be among the earliest composers to incorporate variation forms in the solo concerto medium.<sup>27</sup> For example, the concerto RV 298 represents Vivaldi’s first published solo concerto (Opus 4, c.1716) to use a variation-form movement, and this concerto, along with RV 220 (published 1717), may have been written as early as c. 1710/1711.<sup>28</sup> The Cello Concerto RV 407 survives in

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<sup>25</sup> Sisman, “Variations,” 301.

<sup>26</sup> Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music from Gabrieli to Vivaldi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1994): 131, 141, 153, 186.

<sup>27</sup> For an overview of the problems of classifying and identifying the origins of the solo concerto, see Michael Talbot’s contribution to Arthur Hutchings et al., “Concerto,” *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 6: 242-243.

<sup>28</sup> Rasch, “La famosa mano di Monsieur Roger: Antonio Vivaldi and his Dutch Publishers,” *ISV 17* (1996): 99-101, 122.

material also believed to date from around the year 1710.<sup>29</sup> These dates place the infusion of the form into the solo concerto very close to the apparent birth of the genre. Torelli's Opus 6, generally considered the first published collection of genuine solo concertos, appeared in 1698 and does not contain any movements resembling a variation form.<sup>30</sup> After Vivaldi, some of the best-known eighteenth-century solo concertos to use variation forms are the organ concertos by Handel (Op. 4 #1/iv-1735/36; Op. 7 #1/i & ii-1740; Op. 7 #5/iii-1750), the slow movements of Mozart's piano concertos K. 450, 456, and 482, the Rondo in D K. 382, and the finales of the same composer's concertos K. 453 and 491, all written in the 1780s.<sup>31</sup> Continuing efforts to establish the chronology of Vivaldi's works, greater accessibility of early concerto publications, and investigations into occurrences of variation sets in early solo concertos may someday indicate whether or not Vivaldi should be credited with introducing variation forms into the solo concerto genre.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 176.

<sup>30</sup> Giuseppe Torelli, *Concerti Musicali Opus 6*, ed. John G. Suess, vol. 115 of *Recent Researches in Music of the Baroque Era*, ed. Christoph Wolff (Madison: A-R Editions, 2002). There are no variation movements in Albinoni's Op. 5 concertos (1707), but Albinoni's Op. 2 (1700), Gentili's Op. 5 (1708), and Benedetto Marcello's Op. 1 (1708) are among several pre-1710 concerto collections that the author of the present study did not examine.

<sup>31</sup> See Cliff Eisen's contribution to Hutchings et al., "Concerto," 250. The variation movements in Handel's Organ Concertos appear to contradict Sisman's claim (Sisman, "Variations," 300) that all of Handel's variation sets are relatively early works written only for harpsichord. There also variation movements in Handel's *Concerti Grossi Opus 3* (#2/v-1734, material from 1712-33) and *Opus 6* (#5/vi and #12/iii-1739, publ. 1740).

<sup>32</sup> The barrier to research posed by the lack of an established chronology for the majority of Vivaldi manuscripts and current efforts towards dating manuscripts of Vivaldi's works are addressed in Paul Everett, "Towards a Chronology of Vivaldi Manuscripts," *ISV* 8 (1987): 90-106.

## Authenticity

Vivaldi scholars agree on the authenticity of virtually all of the works listed in Table 1. The Appendix provides a brief summary of the means by which each work can be authenticated. In his catalogue, Peter Ryom generally accepts the authenticity of works where at least one source attributes the work to Vivaldi, unless one or more competing sources list another composer (in which case the attribution goes to the more likely composer).<sup>33</sup> The appendix to his catalogue contains works where the authorship has been challenged by conflicting attributions or through the findings of other scholars, and in subsequent publications by Ryom and others several works have been transferred from the authentic list to the appendix, and vice versa.<sup>34</sup>

Michael Talbot uses stylistic evidence to support attributions, arguing that a work such as the Concerto in G RV Anh. 91 is probably by Vivaldi, the lack of proper attribution resulting from loss of the portion of the manuscript bearing the composer's name.<sup>35</sup> But stylistic congruity can be a misleading indicator, especially with a composer for whose music a chronology is difficult to establish. Talbot changed his published opinion regarding the trio sonatas RV 60 and 74, which he now regards as authentic, when it was revealed that RV 60 might be a very early

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<sup>33</sup> Ryom, *Verzeichnis*.

<sup>34</sup> See Ryom, *Verzeichnis* and idem, *Répertoire*; also Talbot, "Vivaldi," 824-838. For instance, in 1990 Philippe Lescat uncovered a royal privilege issued to Nicolas Chédeville, a relative of the printer Marchand, which clearly demonstrated that the "Il Pastor Fido" sonatas, previously known as RV 54-59 or "Opus 13," were arranged or composed by Chédeville and not by Vivaldi. [Philippe Lescat, "Il Pastor Fido", une œuvre de Nicolas Chédeville," *ISV* 11 (1990): 5-10.]

<sup>35</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 162.

work, which might explain why it does not match the style of Vivaldi's other surviving sonatas.<sup>36</sup>

Source-based studies provide firmer criteria to support attributions.<sup>37</sup> First priority is given to Vivaldi's autograph and partially autograph scores, which are preserved mostly in Turin.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, the violinist Georg Pisendel took a number of autograph scores and parts with him to Dresden, and autograph parts exist among some of the materials in the Manchester library.<sup>39</sup> Of the twenty variation sets, eleven can be authenticated through the survival of autograph material.<sup>40</sup> The set of parts for twelve string concertos (including RV 114 and 157) preserved in Paris is considered authentic because it is in the hand of an unidentified copyist known to have worked under Vivaldi's supervision in Venice.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the set of parts for RV 334 preserved in Manchester originated in Rome at the hands of a copyist believed to have used as an exemplar the (now lost) autograph score or a reliable copy of it.<sup>42</sup> The Chamber Concerto in G RV 101 does not survive in autograph materials, but on

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<sup>36</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 170.

<sup>37</sup> Everett, "Chronology;" and idem, "Vivaldi's Italian Copyists," *ISV* 11 (1990): 27-88.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Ryom, *Les manuscrits de Vivaldi* (Copenhagen: Antonio Vivaldi Archives, 1977): 32-33, 456-461. The Turin collection is thought to represent Vivaldi's personal library for the final twenty or more years of his life. See also Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 16-18.

<sup>39</sup> For Pisendel's role in the transmission of Vivaldi manuscripts, see Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 226-232. The Manchester concerto partbooks were originally part of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni's collection in Rome, sold upon his death in 1740 and purchased in 1742 by Edward Holdsworth on the behalf of the English collector Charles Jennens, (Paul Everett, "Vivaldi Concerto Manuscripts in Manchester: I," *ISV* 5 [1984]: 24-25).

<sup>40</sup> RV 19, 107, 157, 172, 222, 387, 406, 419, 447, 473, 583

<sup>41</sup> Michael Talbot, "Vivaldi and a French Ambassador," *ISV* 2 (1981): 38. This particular copyist is responsible for several of Vivaldi's vocal works and the "Manchester" sonatas, the latter including autograph corrections. The set is further corroborated by the existence of an autograph for RV 157.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Everett, "Vivaldi Concerto Manuscripts in Manchester: III," *ISV* 7 (1986): 10, 16-18.

the basis of comparing copyists and the fact that it is preserved in Vivaldi's library as a score bearing an attribution to Vivaldi, it is considered almost certainly authentic.<sup>43</sup>

Considerable more caution applies to printed works. Vivaldi's principal publisher, the Amsterdam firm of Roger, sometimes falsely attributed pieces to Vivaldi in order to make a full set of six or twelve works.<sup>44</sup> Virtually all scholars consider the publications for which Vivaldi submitted dedicatory letters to be authentic works. This applies only to the first editions of Opp. 1 (Venice: Sala, 1703 or 1705), 2 (Venice: Bortoli, 1709), and the Roger firm's Amsterdam publications of Opp. 3 (1711), 4 (c. 1716), 8 (1725) & 9 (1727).<sup>45</sup> The works published in these collections, many corroborated by autograph materials, are accepted as authentic, although the authority of the texts they transmit is difficult to establish since it is unknown if Vivaldi ever saw any proofs or copies of the editions.<sup>46</sup> A degree of speculation persists regarding the extent of Vivaldi's role in the publication of the

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<sup>43</sup> Not to mention that it was revised as Op. 10 No. 6 (also considered authentic) and the second movement recurs in Op. 8 No. 7 (considered authentic). The majority of manuscript traffic at this time was in the form of performance parts, making it unlikely that Vivaldi would have possessed a score of a work not given to him as a personal gift (of the type usually signed) by a fellow composer. In the few cases where material in Vivaldi's library is by another composer, the materials do not bear an attribution to Vivaldi. See Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> In fact, prior to 1710 Roger seems to have specialized in pirating Italian music, and this practice may have continued until well after he began to issue authentic works by Albinoni, Corelli, and Vivaldi among others. Several of Vivaldi's Op. 7 concertos (1720), published by Roger's younger daughter Jeanne, are thought to be entirely spurious. For an account of the works in question and the uncertain origin of this publication, see Rasch, "La famosa mano," 101-105.

<sup>45</sup> This statement only applies to editions brought out by the houses of La Sala, Bortoli, and Roger. Vivaldi may have authorized Roger's reprints of Opp. 1 and 2, since they occurred during the period when Vivaldi is most likely to have sent the first waves of materials to Amsterdam. The various editions of Walsh (London) and La Clerc (Paris) are mostly reprints of the Roger editions or compiled from unknown sources. Roger's Amsterdam competitor, Witvogel, published four works that are considered authentic, but there is no evidence that Vivaldi authorized these publications. See Ryom, *Répertoire*, 9-52. Vivaldi's almost exclusive relationship with the Roger firm is investigated in Rasch, "La famosa mano."

<sup>46</sup> This includes the following works with variation movements: RV 63, 298, 334. See Rasch, "La famosa mano," 93, 99, 102, 107, 108, 112.

Opus 10 Flute Concertos (Amsterdam, 1729).<sup>47</sup> However, since many of the works (including RV 437) are new versions of authenticated works (with new scoring and slight modifications, presumably made specifically to meet a sudden demand for flute concertos), there has never been serious questioning of the authenticity of the new versions.<sup>48</sup> Anthologies have the potential to be particularly unreliable, but no one has raised a serious challenge to the authenticity of RV 220 (which lacks a manuscript source), in part due to stylistic grounds and because it is one of three Vivaldi concertos in a particular anthology (*Concerti a cinque*, Amsterdam, 1717, Roger #432-433) where the publisher took the rare trouble of attributing each work individually in the part-books, rather than the Roger firm's more common practice of simply listing the names of included composers on the front page.<sup>49</sup>

The only works that do not meet the above-mentioned criteria for authenticity are the Cello Concerto RV 407 and the Sinfonia RV 112. The cello concerto survives in a set of parts copied in Venice and sent to the von Schönborn family in Wiesentheid sometime around 1710 or 1711.<sup>50</sup> The sinfonia is preserved in a non-autograph set of parts in Vienna and a similar set preserved in Dresden, the latter

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<sup>47</sup> Rasch, "La famosa mano," 112.

<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, several of the revisions are more substantial than merely adapting or simplifying parts, a premise that suggests Vivaldi played some role in revising the works (the revisions being transmitted through now-lost exemplars), perhaps intending to improve the structure of certain works (such as removing a variation in Op. 10 No. 6 that may have been felt to negatively interrupt the increasing intensity of the movement). For the most recent critical edition, see *Antonio Vivaldi: Six Flute Concertos, Op. 10 in Full Score: with related concertos for other wind instruments*, ed. with an introduction by Eleanor Selfridge-Field (New York: Dover, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> Rasch, "La famosa mano," 120-123.

<sup>50</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 176.

without a composer attribution.<sup>51</sup> However, no one has come forward to challenge the authenticity of either work in the most recent catalogues of Vivaldi's works; they are considered authentic for the purpose of this study.

### Chronology

Until recently, the idea of an established chronology for Vivaldi's works seemed beyond reach.<sup>52</sup> His manuscripts are undated and there are only a few biographical references that pinpoint when certain works were performed. Even the dates of the publications of his works have been uncertain.<sup>53</sup> Stylistic comparison, date ranges for first editions, and comparisons to his operas (for which dates of first performances are sometimes given by a number of administrative, commemorative, performance, and personal correspondence materials) have served as the main indicators of chronology. Vivaldi's style remained largely unchanged over the course of his career; changes are often too subtle to support a logical progression from early to late works.<sup>54</sup> Karl Heller and Paul Everett have used paper studies, scribal hands, and closer inspection of marginal notes in the scores to establish reference points for dating the source materials.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, there are still more questions than

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<sup>51</sup> Ryom, *Répertoire*, 179. Ryom proposes the inauthentic parts for two flutes were probably added at a later date, perhaps by Pisendel. The work is also listed as authentic in Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 330, and Talbot, "Vivaldi," 824-838.

<sup>52</sup> Everett, "Chronology," 90.

<sup>53</sup> For a comparison of the dates of publications, see Rasch, "La famosa mano," 115-116.

<sup>54</sup> Everett, "Chronology," 90-91. On page 92 Everett mentions how stylistic evidence can be useful as secondary support for conclusions reached by more "concrete" methods of dating. The most noticeable changes are some *style galant* features in his later works [Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 171-176].

<sup>55</sup> Karl Heller, *Die deutsche Überlieferung der Instrumentalwerke Vivaldis*, In *Beiträge zur musikwissenschaftlichen Forschung in der DDR* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971);

answers. Even with Rasch's recent theories regarding the publications of Vivaldi's music by the Roger firm, often the most that can be established is a *terminus ante quem* or *terminus post quem*.<sup>56</sup>

**Table 2- Chronology of Vivaldi's Variation Sets**

<b>RV</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Source of Dating</b>
19	By 1716/17	Heller <sup>57</sup>
63	By 1703	Talbot <sup>58</sup>
101	Possibly well before 1729	Rasch <sup>59</sup>
107	c. 1720	Everett <sup>60</sup>
112	?	
114	Mid-1720s	Talbot <sup>61</sup>
157	Mid-1720s	Talbot, Ryom <sup>62</sup>
172	By 1716/17	Heller <sup>63</sup>
220	By 1717	Rasch <sup>64</sup>
222	Not before c. 1727	Ryom, White <sup>65</sup>
298	c. 1710-1711	Rasch <sup>66</sup>
334	Mid-1720s, some material possibly earlier (via RV 460)	Everett, Rasch <sup>67</sup>

Paul Everett, "Vivaldi's Marginal Markings: Clues to Sets of Instrumental Works and their Chronology," *Musicology in Ireland*, ed. G. Gillen and H. White (Dublin, 1990): 248-63; also idem, "Chronology" and "Italian Copyists."

<sup>56</sup> Rasch, "La famosa mano."

<sup>57</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 228-229.

<sup>58</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 34-35.

<sup>59</sup> Rasch, "La famosa mano," 112-113.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Everett, "Towards a Vivaldi Chronology," *Nuovi studi Vivaldiani. Edizione e cronologia critica delle opere* Vol. 2 (1988): 753; cited in Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 191.

<sup>61</sup> Talbot, "French Ambassador," 38.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 38; Ryom, *Les manuscrits*, 246, and idem, *Répertoire*, 216.

<sup>63</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 228-229.

<sup>64</sup> Rasch, "La famosa mano," 122.

<sup>65</sup> Ryom, *Les manuscrits*, 246; idem, *Répertoire*, 291; Micky White, "Biographical Notes on the 'Figlie di coro' of the Pietà contemporary with Vivaldi," *ISV* 21 (2000): 85.

<sup>66</sup> Rasch, "La famosa mano," 99-101.

387	Not before early 1720s	Talbot, Ryom <sup>68</sup>
406	After early 1720s	Heller, Ryom <sup>69</sup>
407	c. 1710 (By 1714)	Heller <sup>70</sup>
419	After early 1720s	Heller, Ryom <sup>71</sup>
437	Based on RV 101; revised mid-late 1720s	Everett <sup>72</sup>
447	Not before early 1720s	Ryom <sup>73</sup>
473	c. 1730/31	Everett <sup>74</sup>
583	Not before early 1720s	Ryom <sup>75</sup>

### Provisional Timeline of Vivaldi's Variation Sets<sup>76</sup>

c. 1703	RV 63
c. 1710/11	RV 220, 298, 407
Mid-1710s (by 1717)	RV 19, 172
c. 1720	RV 107
Early or mid-1720s	RV 114, 157, 334
Mid-late 1720s	RV 437
c. 1730/31	RV 473

Table 2 brings together several of the dating methods to summarize the chronology of Vivaldi's variation sets. The majority of the works can be tied to publication dates (RV 63, 220, 298, 334, 437), Pisendel's stay in Venice (RV 19, 172), and particular details in manuscript sources (RV 107, 114, 157, 222, 407, 473).

<sup>67</sup> Everett, "Manchester: III," 16-18; Rasch "La famosa mano," 108-109.

<sup>68</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 16; Ryom, *Les Manuscrits*, 246; idem, *Répertoire*, 480.

<sup>69</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 176-177; Ryom, *Les Manuscrits*, 246; idem, *Répertoire*, 499.

<sup>70</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 176.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 176-177; Ryom, *Les Manuscrits*, 246; idem, *Répertoire*, 510-511.

<sup>72</sup> Paul Everett, *The Four Seasons and Other Concertos, Op. 8*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 20, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Ryom, *Les Manuscrits*, 246; idem, *Répertoire*, 541.

<sup>74</sup> Everett, "Chronology," 97.

<sup>75</sup> Ryom, *Les Manuscrits*, 246; idem, *Répertoire*, 700-701.

<sup>76</sup> Note: The date ranges of RV 101, 222, 387, 406, 419, 447, and 583 are too extensive to place within the above list. RV 112 has not been dated.

The remaining works are more problematic. Heller believes the cello concertos RV 406 and 419 are probably from the period 1720-32 when two cello instructors (Antonio Vandini, succeeded by Bernardo Aliprandi) were working at La Pietà (the institution for which a large part of Vivaldi's concertos were written). But at least one virtuoso cellist is among the students named as the dedicatee of some recently discovered partbooks from the Pietà that date from the period 1738-40, which suggests that Vivaldi's later cello concertos could have been written for use at the Pietà anytime after 1720.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, while there is no strong evidence of a specific date for the finale of RV 101, the slow movement of RV 101 (later revised in RV 437) was in existence by c. 1720 when, according to Everett, the Opus 8 collection (where the movement appeared in the concerto RV 242) was assembled.<sup>78</sup> The Pietà *violino principale* partbook of RV 387 is inscribed to Anna Maria, one of the most famous violinists at the Pietà, and since her name does not appear in the Pietà records until 1712, it could be argued that RV 387 must have been written no earlier than 1712.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, a second violin partbook of RV 222, also from the Pietà collection, shows that this concerto was written for Chiara, who entered the musical ensemble c. 1727 and eventually replaced Anna Maria as the principal solo violinist.<sup>80</sup> Heller believes that the Oboe Concerto RV 448 dates from c. 1727/28, and while it shares

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<sup>77</sup> Michael Talbot, "A Vivaldi Discovery at the Conservatorio 'Benedetto Marcello'," *ISV* 3 (1982): 3-11.

<sup>78</sup> Everett, *Four Seasons*, 20, 23.

<sup>79</sup> Details of the source in Ryom, *Les Manuscrits*, 480. For references to Anna Maria, see Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 16 and Micky White, "Biographical Notes," 82-83. Anna Maria was at the Pietà until her death in 1782.

<sup>80</sup> Faun Stacy Tanenbaum, "The Pietà Partbooks- Continued," *ISV* 9 (1988): 6; also White, "Biographical Notes," 85. Chiara remained at the Pietà until her death in 1796.

ritornello material with the first two movements of RV 447, no one has yet determined whether RV 447 is an earlier or later version, although the theme of the finale of RV 447 appears to have been used as early as the concerto Op. 4 No. 7, where it appears in the finale.<sup>81</sup>

Ryom has established that Vivaldi adopted a large “3” as a representation of any triple-meter time signature sometime between the operas *La Verità in Cimento* (1720) and *Il Giustino* (1724).<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the appearance of this idiosyncratic feature in autograph materials establishes the early 1720s as a *terminus post quem* for works containing this abbreviation.<sup>83</sup> In addition to supporting the above-cited dates of RV 107, 157, 172, 222, 406, 419, and 473, this fact appears to narrow the range of dates of RV 387 and 447. It also provides the only solid clue to the relative date of RV 583. At present only RV 112 lacks a chronological reference point.

Based on the above timeline, Vivaldi wrote variation sets throughout his entire career.<sup>84</sup> While both the continuous and sectional categories of variation may span the entire period, the movements labeled “Minuet” (RV 406, 447, 473) did not appear

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<sup>81</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 180. For the possible date of Opus 4 No. 7 see Rasch, “La famosa mano,” 99-101. For other thematic correspondences with this movement, see Ryom, *Répertoire*, 541.

<sup>82</sup> Ryom, “Les manuscrits,” 246.

<sup>83</sup> Everett, “Chronology,” 102.

<sup>84</sup> Tanenbaum has discovered (1988) from the Pietà partbooks that the Concerto RV 790 (which is a variant of RV 372) contains a completely different second movement that appears to be an ostinato-variation movement in B-Flat (marked “Andante” in one partbook, “Grave” in another). This fact was only brought to light with the discovery of the violin parts, since the previous source of this version was a single viola part (“*tacet*” in the second movement). See Tanenbaum, “Pietà Partbooks-Continued,” 7-8. The concerto has been dated to 1739-40, which is much later than the most precisely dated of the variation sets discussed in this chapter. See Faun Stacy Tanenbaum, “The Pietà Partbooks and More Vivaldi,” *ISV* 8 (1987): 8, 11. A modern edition of this work, which is still missing parts, has not yet been published.

until at least the early 1720s.<sup>85</sup> This is noteworthy since it coincides with Vivaldi's only known contact with the French ambassador to Venice. As these movements (with the addition of RV 419, also from the early 1720s or later) incorporate something akin to a French rondeau structure, it is possible that their form was somehow influenced by Vivaldi's contact with Ambassador Languet, since Vivaldi wrote both instrumental and vocal works from this period that either incorporate a few elements or imitations of French stylistic vocabulary (rondeau structure, minuet, the dotted rhythms of a French overture) or bear the marking "Alla francese."<sup>86</sup>

Until a more complete chronology is available it is difficult to determine whether Vivaldi himself was responsible for the innovative ideas or whether he was responding to as yet undocumented contributions by his contemporaries. By the same token, there is no evidence to suggest that Vivaldi's variation sets exerted influence on the works of other composers. Unlike Corelli's *Follia* variations or the passacaille in Lully's *Armide*, there are no known examples of works imitating one of Vivaldi's variation movements. Of the ten Vivaldi concertos that Bach transcribed for keyboard, none contain variation movements. If Bach had transcribed one of Vivaldi's variation sets, arguments could be made about whether or not that work influenced Bach's own variation forms.

Vivaldi's variation sets received no mention in critiques of his music by J. J. Quantz ('Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf, von ihm selbst entworfen' in

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<sup>85</sup> The same holds true for another "Minuet," the finale of RV 136 (binary form, no variations). Ryom, *Répertoire*, 198.

<sup>86</sup> Many of these are listed in Kees Vlaardingerbroek, "Vivaldi alla francese: Guido and Rameau 'à la manière vivaldienne'," *ISV* 18 (1997): 64-66.

Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1755), Charles Avison (*An Essay in Musical Expression*, London, 1752), and William Hayes (*Remarks on Mr. Avison's Essay on Musical Expression*, London, 1753).<sup>87</sup> Instead, Vivaldi's sets were overshadowed by discussions of his harmonic practices, part writing, and distinction between material for the soloist and ripieno in solo concertos.

The chronology of these works places them near the end of the Baroque era, at a time when contrapuntally oriented variation sets were giving way to strophic sets that placed greater emphasis on varying a treble melody.<sup>88</sup> Imitation and contrapuntal motives, important tools for unifying sections of a larger work, are still prevalent in Bach's variations, but they take on a lesser role in sets by Rameau, Handel, Domenico Scarlatti, and other Vivaldi contemporaries. The loss of imitation as a unifying device meant that composers needed to resort to other methods to ensure that variation sets added up to a complete musical structure. The frequent failure to accomplish this task has elicited strong criticism from commentators, particularly since early years of the nineteenth century. The next section emphasizes the role of coherence and closure in the critical evaluation of variation sets, showing the difficulty in establishing these features in variation sets as opposed to sonata-form and *da capo* structures.

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<sup>87</sup> Cited in Sisman, "Variations," 301 (Koch, Vogler); other in Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 42, 80, 81 (respectively).

<sup>88</sup> Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variations*, 2.

## Interlude I- Assessing Coherence and Closure in Variation Sets

Variation sets have often been attacked for their perceived lack of coherence and closure. Modern critiques of variation forms regularly draw negative comparisons to sonata-form structures, referring to variation sets as “a kind of musical link sausage,” compared to the supposed superiority of sonata form and its inherent organic unity.<sup>89</sup> Only sets that manage to overcome the potentially arbitrary and additive structure of variation form receive praise from writers upholding the German Romantic ideal of thematic development, such as Kurt von Fischer and Charles Rosen.<sup>90</sup>

Yet variation sets do maintain a sense of uniformity. Each variation can be seen as an alternative and/or elaboration of elements of the same theme.<sup>91</sup> The practice has a lengthy tradition in literary and rhetorical models, such as Erasmus’ *De copia*, where he provided a list of 150 different ways to write “Your letter pleased me mightily.”<sup>92</sup> Each sentence in his list is related to all the others and well as the

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<sup>89</sup> Quoted from Jan LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*, (New York: 1970): 174; in Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 1. For discussions of variation sets, see Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York, 1971); Leonard Ratner, *Classical Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: 1980); Kurt von Fischer, “Arietta Variata,” in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. H. C. Robbins Landon with Roger Chapman (New York: 1970): 224-235; Robert U. Nelson, *The Technique of Variation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1948). On the accepted value of organicism, see Ruth Solie, “The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis,” *19CM* 4 (1980): 147-156, and Janet Levy, “Covert and Casual Values in Recent Writings about Music,” *JM* 5 (1987): 3-27.

<sup>90</sup> Fischer, “Arietta Variata;” Rosen, *The Classical Style*.

<sup>91</sup> Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 7.

<sup>92</sup> Erasmus, *De duplici copia rerum ac verborum commentarii duo* (Paris, 1512; later enlarged editions until 1534); modern critical edition in *Collected Works of Erasmus, Literary and Educational Writings*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, vol. 24: *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*, trans. and ed. Betty I. Knott (Toronto, 1978), cited in Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 27.

opening sentence by an underlying thread of meaning derived from the initial sentence. With such an inventory, the questions arise: how does one choose the order for the variations, and when does the list stop? In Erasmus' case, one is hard-pressed to explain the sequence of variations, but he probably chose an artificial means, the nearest multiple of fifty, to stop the list. This leaves the reader to wonder if Erasmus could have continued with further variations.

The term "coherence" must be met with some caution. It is true that a variation set, especially when it varies a single theme, is naturally unified by the presence of an underlying theme throughout. For the criticisms discussed throughout this thesis, there is an implicit distinction between coherence of material and coherence of form. Variation sets are often thought to lack coherence of form; that is, the material may share a common bond but the arrangement of the variations within the set appears to follow at random. Without a clear plan for the sequence of the variations, which is what the present study refers to as coherence, the conclusion of a series of variations can seem arbitrary, unexpected, or externalized, as with Erasmus' superficial use of a numerically satisfying determinate.

As Sisman points out, the real challenge for variation sets is that they involve continual repetition which, like the recurrences of rondo form, is a different concept from the return of the *da capo* form and the resolution brought by the return in sonata form.<sup>93</sup> Sonata form provides internal coherence, through the development of thematic and motivic ideas, which permits closure to come as a result of a process within the music rather than through an independent factor. The *da capo* form

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<sup>93</sup> Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 4.

involves a single return after a departure into contrasting material. The return, like a circle, presents a closed structure.

Closure is undermined in variation and rondo forms because the principal material repeats or recurs more than once. Here repetition and return are transformed from devices of conclusion into a pattern of multiple repetitions or recurrences that has the potential to continue indefinitely. Sisman points out that the ideal in eighteenth-century musical composition was to blend aspects of the hypotactic rhetorical structure of Cicero (*oratio periodica*) with the more fragmentary Senecan paratactic outline (*oratio perpetua*); combining the elevated style associated with the former and the lower style of the latter.<sup>94</sup> According to Sisman, the former “retained the moral high ground” through such descriptions as “coherent,” while “in the eighteenth-century musical realm, choppy or episodic forms like variation and rondo were considered hierarchically lower than rounded or recapitulatory forms like sonata form.”<sup>95</sup>

Unfortunately, eighteenth-century writers were essentially silent on matters pertaining to the particular sequence of variations within a work, and Sisman does not believe that there is a useful rhetorical model for closure in variation sets. In her view, “the means of achieving closure in a variation form [...] must be imposed from without.”<sup>96</sup> This is partly true, in that the use of a coda or literal reprise at the end of a set is an external factor independent of the process of variation. However, the

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<sup>94</sup> Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 8-9.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

organization of the variations themselves can also contribute greater coherence and closure by superimposing another musical process or structure upon the variation set to provide an element of logic behind the sequence of variations that leads towards some sort of conclusion, such as any of the techniques described in Chapter Two. While this is still an artificially imposed concept, the sequence of the variations is dependent on the character of, and relationship between, individual variations and is therefore more strongly connected to the process of the variations than an inserted passage of free material.

That Vivaldi sometimes demonstrated greater concern for these issues than many of his contemporaries can be seen even in his non-variation form movements. The developments in early eighteenth-century Italian music, especially the shift from polyphonic to homophonic textures, and the evolution of the solo concerto demanded a new balance between unity and diversity in musical works. The diminishing role of counterpoint allowed composers to employ a wider variety of contrasting figures. But this freedom needs to be reined in if a piece is to maintain a sense of unity, otherwise it might resemble a fantasy or free improvisation that accumulates ideas without relating them to each other. By the nineteenth century, composers frequently solved this problem through organic means, selecting a theme or motive and exploiting its full potential such that many of the events in the movement can be traced back to the main idea. In the early eighteenth century, composers created “artificial” coherence, principally by strategically repeating ideas that were heard at the opening of the movement, which often do not bear resemblance to the intervening

material. Talbot calls these “mottos.”<sup>97</sup> Such repetitions are like beacons, reminding the listener of how the piece began and periodically flashing to assure that the music is still traveling along the same path despite the contrast between repetitions.

As emphasis was shifted towards a principal voice and the opposition between that voice and the other instruments, the range of contrasts widened. Vivaldi went beyond most early concerto composers, establishing greater contrast between the material allotted to the orchestra and the material played by the soloist. Yet the recurring ripieno mottos, played either in the ritornello sections or as accompaniment figures to many of the solos, provide a sense of organization behind the wealth of musical ideas. The solo material, for the most part, does not elaborate the main orchestral ideas, as happens in concertos of the Classical and Romantic periods; instead the ritornellos serve as a foil to highlight the melodic individuality of the soloist.

Vivaldi sometimes went beyond the repetition inherent in his approach to ritornello form and enhanced the cohesion of his works by repeating solo episodes, quoting part of a ritornello idea in a solo episode, placing a ritornello at the beginning and end of a movement as a frame for the soloist’s entire discourse (as in many slow movements), and using the same prevailing rhythm or specific rhythmic figuration throughout a movement. These methods allowed Vivaldi to give the soloist and orchestra distinct but related melodic material. On a broader scale, he also occasionally expanded the concept of unity to incorporate multiple movements in a multi-movement cycle. In a few of the concertos, the opening theme of one movement strongly resembles the opening of another. For example, the third

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<sup>97</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 108.

movement of the Concerto for Two Oboes in C Major RV 534 begins with a major-mode version of the main melodic idea of the minor-mode slow movement, the similarity heightened by the fact that in both instances the melody is heard in the solo oboes. Vivaldi seems to have exploited the concept of homotonicity far beyond most of his contemporaries. On Vivaldi's choice of key for his interior movements, Talbot remarks, "Whereas most of his contemporaries favour the relative major or minor key, Vivaldi resorts to it rather infrequently; instead, he most often plumps for the key of the whole work, sometimes its parallel minor key."<sup>98</sup> Vivaldi emphasizes the stability of a single tonic triad (although many times allowing for a shift of mode) that carries through all movements of the work.<sup>99</sup> This pervasive triad then becomes a common thread between multiple movements, so that they have a greater sense of interconnection when heard in sequence.

With greater coherence comes a stronger sense of closure. In ritornello-form movements, the conclusion is usually signaled by the return of the ritornello in the home key, often after the last solo has brought the tonal center back to the home key or the parallel mode. Sometimes Vivaldi omits one or more portions of the opening ritornello during all but the final reprise, giving the latter a sense of completeness missing from earlier returns. He also used methods of ending a piece that are independent of the inner structural coherence of the work. Principal among these is the immediate repetition of a cadential figure in the final bars of the ritornello, often

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<sup>98</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 112.

<sup>99</sup> This occurs in about forty concertos and at least four sonatas, in addition to most of the operatic *sinfonias* [Bella Brover-Lubowsky, "Die Schwarze Gredel," or the Parallel Minor Key in Vivaldi's Instrumental Music," *Studi Vivaldiani* 3 (2003), 112].

involving an echoed repetition. This device often occurs in the first ritornello statement, setting up an expectation that it will end subsequent returns of the ritornello. Combined with the previously mentioned closing properties of the final ritornello return, this cadential repetition is a further indicator that the work is ending, preparing the listener for the final cadence.

Viewing these sets outside the perspective of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticism, are coherence and closure really necessary for variation sets? While the majority of the present study focuses on the ordering of variations in Vivaldi's variation sets, it should be noted that coherence and closure are not necessarily the true indicators of "successful" variation forms. Sisman warns that focusing on these issues as problems that composers must seek to overcome "is to miss that the aesthetic experience of variation [...] depends as much upon the independence of individual segments as upon their ordering."<sup>100</sup> The variation set does not need to be defended because, in some sense, the marvel of the form is that it dwells in the moment of each variation being a self-contained entity that is a transformation of the underlying theme. The purpose in these pages is not to assign aesthetic value to Vivaldi's variation sets, but to answer the question: how did he select the order of the variations? That his choices tend to lead to structures with a significantly higher level of coherence and closure than many of those by his contemporaries highlights the individuality of these works, and this latter point addresses one of the key goals stated previously: to draw attention to the significance and uniqueness of Vivaldi's variation sets.

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<sup>100</sup> Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 10-11.

## Chapter 2: Structure in Vivaldi's Instrumental Variation Sets

The most characteristic aspect of Vivaldi's variation forms pertains not to his choice of themes, his methods of variation, or even the conjoining of individual variations, but to his consistent arrangement of the sequence of variations into a detailed background structure that gives the impression of a logical flow and a strong sense of closure. Vivaldi's sets are evidence that the degree of segmentation and coherence results from the interplay between the characteristics of the theme, the method of constructing and contrasting individual variations, and the manner in which the sequence of variations provides a sense of closure.

### 1. Themes in Vivaldi's Variation Sets

#### 1.1- Themes used in Ostinato Variation Sets

It is often difficult to identify the fundamental theme underlying a variation set. Unlike composers of the late eighteenth century and beyond, Vivaldi and his contemporaries frequently did not label individual sections of a variation form, nor did they always present (and label) the entire theme as a self-contained entity. In many cases, the first statement of the theme appears already to be subjected to variation, as the ostinato material is presented simultaneously with elaborative material in other voices.<sup>101</sup>

The majority of Vivaldi's themes are best classified as bass-line melodic-rhythmic patterns. In fourteen of the twenty sets, the pitches and associated rhythms

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<sup>101</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 287. Brahms, by comparison, in his *Variations on a Theme of Schumann* Op. 9 labels the first section "Thema" and designates each of the variations by number.

of the opening bars of the bass line form a unit that is repeated throughout the entire movement with few, if any, changes.<sup>102</sup> Laure Schnapper describes how a bass line melodic-rhythmic ostinato can become dominated by a harmonic rather than a melodic function.<sup>103</sup> While the bass line ostinato of Vivaldi's variation sets usually results in an implied harmonic progression, the horizontal realization of the bass line may change from one variation to the next, in effect reinterpreting the implied harmonies of the bass line. Sisman describes such works as "ostinato variations."<sup>104</sup> It is important to note that these are bass lines with a melodic character, rather than melodies transported from another voice into a bass line.<sup>105</sup> Within this broader category, Sisman identifies two sub-categories according to the harmonic phrasing of the thematic pattern: 1) sets with a tonic-providing theme, where the pattern concludes with a full cadence on the tonic, and 2) sets with a tonic-requiring theme, where the pattern ends (usually on the dominant) without providing a tonic cadence. In the latter sub-group, the tonic cadence is provided by the opening of the next statement of the pattern, resulting in a continually overlapping structure. Four of Vivaldi's ostinato-variation sets use a tonic-providing theme (RV 107, 114, 222, and 419), while the other ten have a tonic-requiring theme (RV 112, 113, 157, 172, 220,

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<sup>102</sup> RV 107, 112, 113, 114, 157, 172, 220, 222, 298, 334, 387, 419, 583; most of the changes to this bass melody pattern result from the entire unit changing mode or being transposed to a new key.

<sup>103</sup> Schnapper, "Ostinato," 783.

<sup>104</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 288.

<sup>105</sup> This latter description can be applied to some examples of *cantus firmus* technique as well as many chorale-variation sets, for example when a pre-existing (usually well-known) cantus or tenor-line melody is assigned to the bass voice of the variations. These sets would constitute part of the variation type Sisman calls "Constant-melody or cantus firmus variations." [Sisman, "Variations," 288]; Schnapper also refers to vocal works by Purcell and Blow where the bass line ostinato maintains its own melodic-rhythmic interest, distinct from other melodic lines. [Schnapper, "Ostinato," 783.]



*RV 172**RV 220**RV 298**RV 334**RV 387**RV 407**RV 583*

The sectional potential of the tonic-providing themes is readily apparent. If one of the themes is played repeatedly there will be a full cadence after every eight

bars. Since the theme also begins on the tonic, there is no harmonic motion between the end of one statement and the beginning of the next.<sup>107</sup> The long note in the final bar of each of the four tonic-providing themes adds to the sense that the motion has stopped. Furthermore, these four themes resemble periodic structure, divided into balanced antecedent and consequent phrases; two have a rhythmic pause at the end of each phrase. By contrast, the tonic-requiring themes do not have rhythmic pauses and by definition require harmonic motion to lead from the end of one statement into the start of the next. The unstable ending of a tonic-requiring theme is readily conjoined to the next statement, especially since the corresponding melodic phrase must be carried over into the next statement in order to end with tonic harmonization. The differences between these types of ostinati find comparison with the lengths of the themes: the tonic-providing themes, which require complete cadential progressions, are all eight bars long, whereas the tonic-requiring ostinati include lengths of two-and-a-half bars, five bars, and seven bars that are fairly unusual among Baroque ostinati.

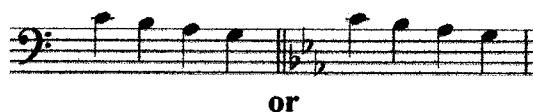
All of these pitch patterns consist of one or two essential components. Figure 2 shows these components, transposed to a 'C' tonic for ease of comparison.

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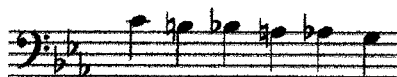
<sup>107</sup> The first appearance of the theme is often already accompanied by variation in other voices, and in order to avoid confusion with literal reprises, each reprise of the theme, whether literal or varied, is referred to as a "statement" for the remainder of this study. The statements are numbered sequentially for each piece, thus instead of: Theme- Variation One- Variation Two- Variation Three- Theme Reprise- Variation Four- Variation Five- Variation Six- Codetta- Theme Reprise, the structure of the Cello Concerto in A Minor RV 419, third movement, is referred to as Statement One- Statement Two- etc.

Figure 2- Components of Vivaldi's Basso Ostinato Themes

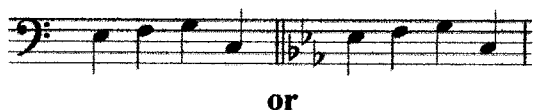
Component x



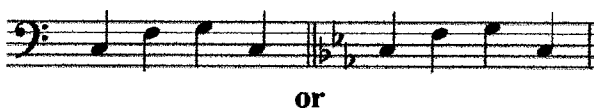
Component x<sup>1</sup>



Component y



Component y<sup>1</sup>



Note: all components transposed to 'C' tonic.<sup>108</sup>

In many cases, the final tonic of Component y is omitted, allowing one statement of the pattern to lead directly into the next. All of the themes in Figure 1 contain some variant of Component x or x<sup>1</sup>. While all the tonic-providing themes also include Component y or y<sup>1</sup>, the tonic-requiring themes are less strict in this regard. Table 3 demonstrates Vivaldi's strong association between these components, especially Component x, and the ostinato variation type.

<sup>108</sup> Despite the similarity, there is no evidence to suggest the Major-mode version of Component y<sup>1</sup>, a common cadential formula, was associated with the bergamasca when used in conjunction with other harmonic formulas in an ostinato. The bergamasca was in widest usage, as an ostinato for variation sets or a pattern for instrumental dances, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Richard Hudson, Giuseppe Gerbino and Alexander Silbiger, "Bergamasca," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 3: 328-329.

**Table 3- Components and Sub-Groups of Vivaldi's Ostinato Variation Formulas**

RV	Component x	Component x <sup>1</sup>	Component y	Component y <sup>1</sup>	Tonic-providing	Tonic-requiring
107	Yes		Yes		Yes	
114	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
222	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
419		Yes (inverted)	Yes		Yes	
112		Yes				Yes
157		Yes	Yes (no final tonic)			Yes
172		Yes	Yes (no final tonic)			Yes
220	Yes					Yes
298	Yes	Yes	Yes (no final tonic)			Yes
334		Yes		Yes (no final tonic, omitted in some)		Yes
387		Yes				Yes
407		Yes		Yes (sometimes replaced by modulation)		Yes
583	Yes		Yes (no final tonic)			Yes

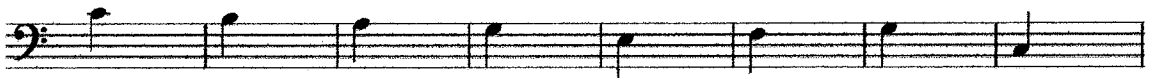
Note: Works that have mode changes between variations may use both Component x and Component x<sup>1</sup> during the course of the variation set

The themes of Vivaldi's ostinato variation sets appear to be derived from ostinato formulae in common use. According to Selfridge-Field, the descending tetrachord ostinato "was very popular in Venetian vocal music from the 1630s onward and was used by Monteverdi, Pesenti, and others."<sup>109</sup> Eventually the figure spread to purely instrumental music and it became almost universally known by the

<sup>109</sup> Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music*, 157, 158.

end of the seventeenth century or earlier. Minor-mode versions were often associated with the expression of lament, as in operatic laments by Cavalli and Purcell, and the “Crucifixus” of Bach’s *Mass in B Minor*.<sup>110</sup> Component y and its relatives include the common IV-V-I cadential progression that was one of the original *passacaglia* formulae (I-IV-V-I, which was also sometimes associated, albeit in duple-metre, with the *bergamasca*) and while Hudson suggests that the inclusion of the third scalar degree (3-4-5-1) was often specifically linked to chaconne patterns in Italian variation sets of the mid-seventeenth century, evidence indicates that such associations were not always adhered to and tended to fade as the century progressed, so that by the time of Vivaldi many of the original *passacaglia* and *ciaccona* formulae had melded into what Hudson calls “non-aligned forms.”<sup>111</sup> At the least, all of Vivaldi’s ostinato variation sets share a common fundamental theme, which draws from the repertoire of common ostinato patterns and combines versions of Component x and Component y. Figure 3 shows this theme in its simplest expression.

**Figure 3- Fundamental Theme Common to Vivaldi’s Ostinato Variation Sets**



Composers from Purcell (*Ground in Gamut*) to Bach (*Goldberg Variations*) used this same theme, which Karl Heller describes as “one of the *soggetti* that had been used

<sup>110</sup> Schnapper, “Ostinato,” 784.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Hudson, *Passacaglio and Ciaccona: from guitar music to Italian keyboard variations in the 17<sup>th</sup> century*, Studies in Musicology, Gen. ed. George Buelow (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981): 155, 168, 222-227. Hudson demonstrates this tendency in ostinato variation sets by Foscarini and Frescobaldi. By comparison, he demonstrates that the next generation of composers often used the 3-4-5-1 progression in both *passacaglia* and *ciaccona*.

again and again since the seventeenth century.”<sup>112</sup> Selfridge-Field notes that it is one of the two most common patterns used in Venetian chaconnes after 1680, and Corelli used it in portions of his *Ciaccona* Op. 2 No. 12.<sup>113</sup> Talbot, Heller, and Selfridge-Field have referred to some of Vivaldi’s ostinato sets as chaconnes, a dance that was popular in the seventeenth century but saw a decline in Italy during the early 1700s, although it continued on elsewhere until about mid-century.<sup>114</sup> This is partly due to the appearance of the descending tetrachord bass, which the literature often links with the chaconne and passacaglia, in the ostinato patterns of most of his ostinato variation sets. However this figure is frequently found in Vivaldi’s works that do not use variation form, and when chromatic passing tones are inserted (as in several of the Vivaldi examples) it is also a figure used to represent the ethos of lament in works like the ‘Crucifixus’ of Bach’s *Mass in B Minor* or ‘When I Am Laid in Earth’ from Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. It seems these patterns had broad associations and their use alone does not signal a chaconne or passacaglia.

Alexander Silbiger cautions against too readily connecting the chaconne and passacaglia with ostinato variation forms, pointing out a lack of “historical precedence” for this association unless other “genre markings,” such as certain characteristic dance rhythms, are present.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, by Vivaldi’s day these indicators were largely absent in works labeled ‘chaconne’ or ‘passacaglia.’ Thomas

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<sup>112</sup> Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 214. Heller also points out that this theme is also used as an ostinato in Vivaldi’s setting of the “Sicut erat in principio” (“As it was in the beginning”) movement of the *Dixit Dominus* (Psalm 109) RV 594. (Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 214-217.)

<sup>113</sup> Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music*, 351.

<sup>114</sup> Silbiger, “Chaconne,” 412.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

Walker, Richard Hudson, and Alexander Silbiger, among others, have conducted extensive research into the origins and definitions of the chaconne, along with the closely associated passacaglia.<sup>116</sup> The chaconne began in the late sixteenth century as a dance song whereas the passacaglia originated as a chord progression used between stanzas of a song. Distinctions between the two began to blur in the seventeenth century, especially when both were used as chord progressions for variation sets, as in Frescobaldi's first book of toccatas (1627). By the eighteenth century, composers seem to have used the terms interchangeably, except when a chaconne and passacaille are placed side by side in the same work, as in the contrasting sections of Francois Couperin's *Chaconne ou Passacaille* (1726).<sup>117</sup> At the very least it does not appear that attempting to characterize these works as either chaconnes or passacaglias enhances understanding of the formal principles upon which they are based. In fact, Silbiger has observed that, while frequently connected, variation technique is a distinct tradition from the chaconne and passacaglia. Most French examples of the dances are in a rondeau structure instead of being true variation sets, and variations often occupy only a secondary role in works incorporating a chaconne or passacaglia chord progression. It is thus more advantageous to consider Vivaldi's variations sets as part of the broader context of ostinato variations rather than the narrower field of the chaconne and passacaglia.

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<sup>116</sup> Hudson, *Passacaglio and Ciaccona*; Alexander Silbiger, "Chaconne," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by Stanley Sadie, vol. 5 (London: Macmillan, 2001): 410-415; Thomas Walker, "Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on Their Origin and Early History," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21 (1968): 300-320.

<sup>117</sup> Silbiger, "Chaconne," 413.

## 1.2- Themes used in constant-harmony variation sets

Vivaldi's remaining variation sets generally coincide with Sisman's definition of "constant harmony" type variations. In these works, "the harmonic progression takes precedence in retentive power over the melody."<sup>118</sup> Within each repetition of the pattern, the order and metrical duration of the harmonies remains largely unchanged from the first statement of the pattern. It is often difficult to determine whether the bass line is the product or cause of the harmonic series, but this type remains distinguished from the "constant-melody" type because the latter is based on a melody that "appears intact or with only slight embellishments in every variation, moving from voice to voice in the texture."<sup>119</sup> In Vivaldi's sets, the theme does not change voices, and the bass line (usually the root of a triad) is usually far more disjunct than a typical melody. Also, the bass line pitches sometimes change from one repetition to the next even though the harmonies remain unchanged (changing the inversion of the chord, not the fundamental chord).

Figure 4 shows the themes of Vivaldi's seven constant-harmony variation sets. The bass line from the first statement of the theme is given, along with the corresponding harmonic pattern expressed using figured bass notation.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 288.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>120</sup> The bass line is rhythmically simplified, especially in the last three excerpts, to make the harmonic changes more evident.



**RV 447**

7 7 # # # # #

# # 7 # 7 7 7 7 7

7 # # # # # 6/4

**RV 473**

7 # # # # # # #

# # # # # # # #

b b b7 b 6 6/4

These themes range in length from eight to thirty-two bars; the longest three (twenty, twenty-eight, and thirty-two bars each) are from movements labeled *Minuetto* in the sources (RV 473, 406, and 447 respectively). Each can be divided into two halves (in many cases a repetition of each half is indicated) and while most are symmetrically proportioned, the second half of the themes of RV 406 and 473 are longer than the first half. The themes of these constant-harmony sets display even more sectional properties than the tonic-providing ostinati discussed earlier. Every theme provides a final tonic, and the binary form structure makes each statement a self-contained entity, such that when the entire theme is reprised without intervening material there is no harmonic change from the final tonic of one statement to the opening tonic of

the next. The frequent presence of a cadence in the dominant key at the end of the first half of the theme and repeat marks around both halves increases the number of harmonic and rhythmic pauses, making it difficult to achieve a seamless structure when such themes are used in variation sets.

Of the patterns shown in Figure 4, only one has a name in eighteenth-century sources: RV 63 is based on the harmonic pattern of the popular “Follia” dance progression. This same progression had served as a basis for variation sets by Frescobaldi, Corelli, Reali, Pasquini, and Antonio Scarlatti.<sup>121</sup> The overall harmonic schemes of the remaining six works are similar to the common binary dance forms used throughout the Baroque, such as the Allemande, Courante, and Gavotte, and may have been influenced by them.<sup>122</sup>

There is some uncertainty regarding the classification of these sets as constant-harmony rather than melodic-outline variations because it is often difficult to determine whether the melodic outline of the opening bars is preserved in the subsequent variations. Sisman mentions that many variation sets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mix constant-harmony and melodic-outline variations, but the decision to classify these Vivaldi variation sets under the constant-harmony category is based on the observation that the preservation of harmonic outline is more persistent than the intermittent repetition of the initial melodic outline.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Sisman, “Variations,” 295.

<sup>122</sup> Comparison between Vivaldi’s binary-form, dance-inspired movements (many of which are not identified as such in the sources) and the themes of his constant harmony variation sets reveals strong similarities between the respective harmonic schemes.

<sup>123</sup> Sisman, “Variations,” 288.

### 1.3- Rhythm, Texture, and Voice-assignment of the Themes

Vivaldi's ostinato patterns are usually placed in the lowest voice of the ensemble, either the basso continuo line or the upper strings playing a *bassetto* (i.e. when, in the absence of a true bass line, voices in the alto or treble register imitate a bass line); moreover, when the lowest voice drops out for a variation the ostinato moves to the lowest available voice. This practice differs from variation sets by Germanic composers or the Renaissance concept of a cantus firmus work, where the theme is transported from voice to voice.<sup>124</sup> It probably stems from the Italian predilection for improvising dances upon bass melodies, which may have originated as early as the Middle Ages.<sup>125</sup> The choice to confine the elaborate figurations to a principal melodic voice, especially in the solo concerto movements, is part of the progressive trend towards emphasizing a solo instrument within an ensemble texture and the early-eighteenth-century move away from the contrapuntal textures in the sinfonias and concerti of previous generations.<sup>126</sup>

Vivaldi uses rhythm to distinguish the ostinato from other voices in the texture, especially in the ostinato variation sets. The pitches of the theme are almost always set to a rhythmic pattern that consists of small repeated figures, such as the continuous quarter notes of RV 112, the three-note pattern of RV 387, or the four-bar

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<sup>124</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 288.

<sup>125</sup> Timothy J. McGee, *Medieval Instrumental Dances* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989): 16-17; see also Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music*, 71-73.

<sup>126</sup> Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music*, 234; Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 89-90. A word of caution: the apparently increasing dominance of treble and bass in music of this period does not mean, as was once thought, that Vivaldi avoided contrapuntal writing altogether. The change was more of an additive than substitutive process, and several of his other works demonstrate great contrapuntal skill. See Talbot, *op. cit.*, 80-82.

pattern of RV 419 (Figure 1). These rhythmic ostinati usually have longer note values than the upper voices, and once the complete rhythmic pattern of each statement has been established it remains essentially unchanged for the duration of the piece. This stands in contrast to the frequent rhythmic changes in the other voices, both within individual variations and from one variation to the next.

Vivaldi's choice of themes is almost evenly divided between those with the potential to create sectional structures (tonic-providing ostinati and constant-harmony themes) and those for which the harmonically unstable ending readily lends itself to being elided with the next variation (tonic-requiring ostinati). Within each type, the harmonic scheme and lengths of the individual themes vary from one work to another, but the general properties of the theme, rather than the specific details, have the greater impact on the sectional quality of a variation set.

## 2. Construction of Individual Variations

Segmentation can also result from the way variations are constructed, especially when divisions in the theme are paralleled in the elaborations. For the most part, Vivaldi's variations bridge across pauses in the underlying theme. His background structures often rely on sharp contrast between variations. Since contrast within a variation weakens the potential for direct comparison between variations, Vivaldi tended to maintain a single figural pattern for an entire variation. Such continuity within each variation helps to create a solid unit that the listener can easily compare to other variations.

## 2.1- General Approach to Variation

In the simplest terms, Vivaldi treats each note or harmony of the theme as a small metrical segment within the complete length of the variation, similar to a single slice from a pie. Within the confines of the small segment, he tends to fill the space by supplying shorter rhythmic values to one or more voices. He usually handles each segment in the same fashion within a given variation, similar to the English variation technique of *divisions*.<sup>127</sup> These values may reiterate a single pitch, arpeggiate the harmonies of the small unit, or incorporate non-chord tones such as suspensions and passing tones. The changes may be *pleonastic*, where new material is added to the theme (notes added to the melodic line or the addition of a counter-melody), or *periphrastic*, where the original melody is replaced by a more elaborate line that usually retains at least some sense of the contours of the original melodic phrases.<sup>128</sup> In her discussion of these concepts, Sisman describes how these types of variation can be mixed within a single varied reprise and even within a single voice, as often happens in Vivaldi's variation movements. When the theme has a sectional structure, some parts may be varied, while others remain more or less constant. For example, the phrase endings of the solo flute line in RV 101 tend to remain unchanged in each repetition, despite the wide range of figurations applied to the rest of each variation. Indeed, if any part is literally retained it is usually the phrase endings, while the remainder of the variation is much more elaborate. This allows Vivaldi to be flexible

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<sup>127</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 297.

<sup>128</sup> Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 38-39.

in varying the phrases, while still preserving a sense of continuity by reference to a recognizable portion of the initial presentation of the melodic phrases.

Since the true theme of Vivaldi's variation sets is usually placed in the lowest voice, it can be argued that all material added by the upper voices represents at least pleonastic variation, even if it occurs during the opening bars. Even though the treble melodic line may assume the character of a principal melody, it is best described as a counter-melody. It is this counter-melody that is the principal location of figurative variation, both pleonastic and periphrastic. For this reason, the upper voice in two-voice works is best referred to as the principal voice; in works with three or more voices, those that carry the abundance of figurative variation constitute the principal voices.<sup>129</sup> In RV 114 the violins (usually in unison) assume the majority of figurative variation, while the viola and bass exhibit very little elaboration. This approach works particularly well in solo concertos, where the soloist is showcased as the principal source of variation. By contrast, the flute, violin, and oboe all demonstrate substantial variation in RV 107 and therefore all three can be considered principal voices. This procedure is better suited to chamber works and ensembles lacking a soloist, since rhythmic and motivic interest is shared by multiple voices throughout the texture. The role of principal voice can also be shifted during a movement, as in RV 114 where the second violins occasionally diverge from the first violins, resulting in two principal voices.

Except for the most periphrastic of variations, the melodic phrases of the principal voices often follow the general shape of the bass line rather than assuming a

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<sup>129</sup> The assumption in this designation is that of the two elements, repetition and variation, variation attracts the greater interest on the part of the listener and is therefore perceived as the more dominant voice.

truly independent profile. In many cases this is simply the result of the most natural possibilities for harmonizing the theme within the context of Vivaldi's harmonic vocabulary. For instance, the descending chromatic bass line has a limited number of dissonant options that were considered consonant by the standards of the early eighteenth century. Thus, in works with a descending chromatic bass line, the treble melody is usually a line that descends in tandem with the theme.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, the treble line of *La Follia* traditionally alternates between unison and a third above the pitch class of the theme. Because this is the most natural way to form a congruent melodic line that satisfactorily harmonizes with the bass progression, it is not surprising that variations on the folia theme tend to use the same basic melodic shape in the principal voice.

On rare occasions, as in RV 473, periphrastic variation pushes the limits of variation, preserving only the general character and loose structural features of the theme. In this work, the solo variations make noticeable changes to the harmonic scheme of the theme.<sup>131</sup> Sometimes the first half of each variation modulates to G Major rather than cadencing on the dominant of C Major. Similarly, the minore passage near the end of the second half of the theme is missing from several variations and the chains of secondary dominants are sometimes prolonged, with the result that the variations are slightly longer than the theme. Nevertheless, the expansion is accomplished by internal repetition, and the harmonic changes are only short-term. The overall structure (binary form, the first half ending on a G Major

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<sup>130</sup> The lament character of the descending bass line is further heightened when the upper voice mimics this descending motion.

<sup>131</sup> See RV 473 in Figure 4.

triad, the second half returning to C Major via a series of secondary dominant relationships) is preserved consistently enough that, combined with the progressively complex figurative variations in the solo bassoon part, the sense of theme and variation structure is maintained.<sup>132</sup> Only in Statement Five (measures 178-197), where the second half gravitates towards A Minor (the unique occurrence of this tonal area in the entire movement), does the harmony change so drastically that it cannot be said to relate to the theme.<sup>133</sup> Yet the sectional structure, central C Major tonality, and focus on a principal elaborative figure (syncopated quarter-notes) maintain a tenuous connection to the rest of the movement.<sup>134</sup>

## 2.2- Application and Arrangement of Figures

Vivaldi used figuration patterns to construct individual variations and relate one variation to another. In many cases, much of the variation consists of a single motivic idea that is repeated at various pitch levels, possibly changing at phrase endings. Here are two examples of this approach:

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<sup>132</sup> Literal reprises after small groupings of variations reinforce this unity, in a manner somewhat akin to a French rondeau. See Section 4.2 below.

<sup>133</sup> Measure numbers, following the guidelines of the Malipiero edition, are numbered consecutively from the beginning of the first movement of a piece.

<sup>134</sup> RV 473 is perhaps the only Vivaldi variation movement that resembles what Sisman calls “formal-outline variations” where “aspects of the theme’s form and phrase structure are the only features to remain constant” and “phrase lengths may expand or contract within the general outline, with harmonies usually referring to the theme at the beginning and end of a variation.” Sisman, “Variations,” 288.



**Figure 7- Repetition of Short Ideas in Individual Variations**



*RV 172- Solo Violin, measures 180-183 (Statement 4)*



*RV 298- Solo Violin, measures 149-150 (Statement 4)*



*RV 447- Solo Oboe, measures 166-169 (Statement 2)*

In these examples, two or more short motivic ideas are grouped into a unit that is then repeated, often sequentially, though sometimes the rhythmic pattern of the unit is preserved while the pitch pattern is abandoned. The excerpt from RV 447 is, in fact, only one of several units used during the variation (Statement Two), most of which share the sixteenth-note triplets found in the example above.

Often the basic idea of the variation is reduced to a predominant rhythmic value and does not consistently fix upon particular melodic motive patterns.

**Figure 8- RV 447, 3<sup>rd</sup> Movement, Solo Oboe, Measures 214-216 (Statement 3)**



Here the oboe adopts short melodic motives within a bar (such as the first two beats of bars 214 and 215, and a different motive in bar 216) but a single motive or chain of motives is not used consistently throughout the variation. The only common element

is the continuous output of 32<sup>nd</sup>-notes. Similarly, Statement Five of RV 406 focuses on a figure comprised of a sixteenth-note, a pair of 32<sup>nd</sup>-notes, and four more sixteenth-notes.<sup>135</sup>

**Figure 9- RV 406, 3<sup>rd</sup> Movement, Solo Cello, Measures 217-221 (Statement 5)**



Finally, mention should be made of variation sets where more than one voice participates in the act of variation. In these works, two or more voices may display similar figures (either simultaneously or in alternation) or each voice may use a different figure.

**Figure 10- Examples of Figuration in Multiple Voices**

***RV 63- measures 249-250 (Statement 17)***

<sup>135</sup> In this example, the 32<sup>nd</sup>-notes include a lower-neighbor motion that could be described as a melodic motive.

A musical score for measures 103-104 of RV 107. The score is in 3/8 time and features four staves: Treble Recorder, Oboe, Violin, and Bassoon. The Treble Recorder and Violin parts play a continuous eighth-note figure. The Oboe part has a single note followed by a rest. The Bassoon part plays a continuous eighth-note figure.

***RV 107- measures 103-104 (Statement 5)***

Likewise, a figuration pattern is occasionally used in multiple voices but the entrances are staggered, creating a dialogue or composite texture, such the following passage from RV 63:

**Figure 11- Figuration Alternating Between Voices**

A musical score for measures 161-162 of RV 63. The score is in 3/4 time and features three staves: Violin I, Violin II, and Basso. The Violin I and Violin II parts play a continuous eighth-note figure. The Basso part plays a continuous eighth-note figure.

***RV 63- measures 161-162 (Statement 11)***

There are some instances where Vivaldi carried the periodic aspect of the theme into the melodic voice, using one figuration pattern for the antecedent phrase and another for the consequent phrase (ex. RV 419, Statement Three). This reduces the effective contrast between statements, since the surrounding statements must then be heard in comparison to multiple figuration patterns, which can be difficult to do

with shorter variations and in the context of a performance. Instead, Vivaldi generally stuck with a single variation pattern for the entire variation. Paradoxically, the result both enhances and detracts from a seamless structure. While the use of a single figuration pattern for the entire variation creates a melodically and rhythmically cohesive unit that can connect across pauses within the theme, the same technique causes the individual variations to stand in sharper relief to each other, thus requiring some form of organizational logic to make one variation seem to lead into another.

### 3. Linking Variations on the Surface Level: Overcoming Segmentation Between Variations

Vivaldi's variation movements are generally quite sectional. The phrase endings of the melodic voices tend to coincide with the endings of the ostinato pattern or harmonic scheme. Nevertheless, he incorporated ideas such as overlapping phrases, omitting cadential bars, foreshadowing, phrase extensions, cadential mirroring, and extended anacrusis that carry melodic, rhythmic, and sometimes harmonic motion across the divide between variations.

When the ostinato ends on a dominant, the end of one phrase may overlap with the start of the next variation. Usually this happens because the soloists' phrases end on a pitch that requires tonic harmonization, and with the tonic-requiring type of ostinato the next nearest tonic harmony does not occur until the beginning of the next statement. Therefore, the first bar of a statement might simultaneously involve the cadence of the previous phrase and the start of the next phrase. At times, as in

measures 100, 105, and 114 of RV 220, there is a short rest between the phrases. In other cases, the same note simultaneously represents both phrases:

**Figure 12- Interpretations of Phrasing in RV 172, Measures 179-181**

The image shows a musical score for measures 179-181 of RV 172. It consists of four staves. The top three staves are labeled 'Solo Violin' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Violins I&2, Viola'. The music is in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score shows three different ways of interpreting phrasing, indicated by slurs. The first interpretation groups the notes from the start of measure 179 to the end of measure 180. The second interpretation groups the notes from the start of measure 180 to the end of measure 181. The third interpretation groups the notes from the start of measure 179 to the end of measure 181, with a slur that spans across the measure boundary.

Note: phrasing indicated by slurs

There is a sense of ambiguity in this latter example and others like it. Figure 12 gives three ways of interpreting the phrasing of this passage, depending on how the figurations in Statement Five are grouped: 1) the downbeat of measure 180 is the start of a new phrase, 2) the downbeat of measure 180 is the end of a phrase, 3) the downbeat of measure 180 is simultaneously the end of one phrase and the beginning of another.

The effect is a bridge across the end of one statement and into the start of the next. Sisman points out that, in contrast to strophic variation and ostinato-bass vocal works, which often articulate sections in the vocal lines according to patterns in the text or in locations that avoid corresponding to the phrases implied by the bass line, instrumental variation sets “tend to take their points of articulation from the bass line, changing their figurations, textures and rhetoric at cadential points, and are thus true

variation sets.”<sup>136</sup> Yet despite this sectional approach, even the slightest displacement of a phrase ending helps to connect the individual variations into a more continuous musical entity.

Constant-harmony type variation sets and sets with a tonic-providing bass rarely use overlapping phrases. In both cases, the last harmony of the theme is usually tonic, and the leading melodic line is able to cadence before the start of the next statement. Since each statement of the theme provides its own ending, there is a risk that forward momentum in these works may seem to stop at the end of the every variation. Vivaldi uses several methods to counter this phenomenon. In RV 19, for instance, each new statement is preceded by a short anacrusis. The statements in this movement usually conclude in the middle of a bar and only require a short anacrusis to carry rhythmic motion into the next statement. For works with a longer metric interval between the entrance of the last bass note of one statement and the first bass note of the next statement, the figuration in the last bar of the phrase is continued until well after the bass has come to rest on the final note of the theme (as in RV 222, Figure 13).<sup>137</sup>

**Figure 13- Solo Phrase Extension in RV 222, Measures 142-144**

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for Solo Vn (Violin) and the bottom staff is for Vns, Va (Violins and Violas). Both staves are in the key of D major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The Solo Vn part begins with a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth notes with triplet markings. The Vns, Va part begins with a quarter note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note.

Note: Measure 144 is the start of Statement Six

<sup>136</sup> Sisman, “Variations,” 294.

<sup>137</sup> In this example the final ‘A’ played by the violin in bar 143 is the fifth scale degree, which maintains a sense of melodic tension until resolution is provided by the first ‘D’ in measure 144 of the violin part. Thus, while the bass line in bar 143 is tonic-providing, the melodic line is tonic-requiring.

Another concept, referred to here as cadential mirroring, occurs only at the end of each half of a binary-form statement. In RV 101 and 437, the prevailing rhythmic values of the flute's figuration is transmitted to the bass line at the end of phrases while the flute pauses on a half-close or full close. For example, Statement Two of RV 101 is devoted to eighth-note triplet rhythm in the flute part. When the half-close is reached in bar 160, the flute concludes the phrase on a dotted half note (in a triple meter movement) but the bass line plays two pairs of triplets followed by a quarter note. In contrast to the majority of Vivaldi's variation sets, where the bass line shuns the spotlight and almost appears to proceed in ignorance of the rhythmic activity around it, these cadential imitations of the treble figurations, found in every phrase ending of RV 101 (except at bar 225 and 257) and RV 437 (except at bars 148, 212, 216, and 220) come across as momentary imitations of the treble voice and serve to propel the music forward across points that would otherwise become static (since the other voices tend to sustain longer notes in such places).

Vivaldi occasionally removes the final bar of the ostinato, eliminating the final tonic of the theme and therefore requiring the melodic voices to overlap into the next statement in order to cadence (see RV 107, measures 102 & 103). RV 114 uses a further tactic, introducing the figuration of a statement during the entire final bar of the previous statement. For example, the spinning sixteenth-note figures played by the violins in Statement Four are brought in at the end of Statement Three (measure 98).

**Figure 14- Foreshadowed Figuration in RV 114, Measures 97-99**

The image shows a musical score for three staves: Violins (Vns), Viola (Va), and Violoncello/Double Bass (Vc, B.C.). The music is in 3/4 time. The Vns staff features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns. The Va and Vc, B.C. staves provide harmonic support with longer note values and rests. The score spans three measures, with the final measure (99) marking the beginning of a new section.

Note: Measure 99 is the start of Statement Four

Vivaldi uses such devices to minimize the halting, sectional effect created when the bass line sustains the final tonic note of the ostinato pattern. Although the bass line of many tonic-providing themes pauses on a stable tonic at the end of each statement, the upper voices carry rhythmic activity from one phrase directly into another. In tonic-requiring sets, Vivaldi sometimes used ambiguous phrase overlaps to conjoin the end of one phrase into the start of the next. It would therefore seem that Talbot's comment that "Vivaldi and his generation rarely attempt to disguise the regularity of the ground bass by avoiding a perfect cadence at the point of repetition or phrasing the melodic parts over the join"<sup>138</sup> is only partly correct.<sup>138</sup> It is true that the phrase-endings of the bass line are almost always very clear and predictable, but Vivaldi uses several different approaches to bridge the gap between phrases in the melodic voices.

#### 4. Coherence and Closure in the Background Structures

The arrangement and sequence of variations is among the most important aspects of a variation set, from both a compositional and critical standpoint. The

<sup>138</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 82.

properties of the theme and the manner in which it is varied can either aid or challenge the composer's attempts to reduce the sectional quality of a variation set. But broader structural coherence, however, depends primarily on the sequence of variations. Sisman argues that issues such as the sequence of variations, the superimposing of structures that either highlight or minimize contrasts, and the way in which a sense of conclusion is reached, are important to the meaning derived from the piece.<sup>139</sup> Vivaldi paid careful attention to problems of closure and large-scale musical architecture. His background structures are of three main types: 1) directional schemes with a climactic ending; 2) circular plans (usually with a final resolution); and 3) a hybrid structure that combines directional and circular aspects so that the conclusion both returns to and progresses away from the opening. The variations are often grouped together by shared material, key, mode, and other methods to form units within the background structure. Combining concepts from variation traditions (such as mirroring) and cross-generic influences (such as the solo codetta), Vivaldi's examples are among the more coherent Baroque variation sets. His individual variations become so necessary to the structure that in most cases nothing can be added, removed, or substituted.

#### 4.1- Changes of mode and harmonic modulation between variations

Vivaldi used changes of mode and tonal center to enhance the sense of departure during the interior portions of his circular forms. Ten of Vivaldi's variation sets are in the major mode (RV 19, 101, 114, 220, 222, 298, 437, 447, 473, and 583) while minor mode is used for the other ten (RV 63, 107, 112, 157, 172, 334, 387, 406,

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<sup>139</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 284.

407, and 419). Only four sets involve true mode changes (RV 114, 222, 298, and 447). In each case, the theme is initially in the major mode (C, D, G, and C respectively), and switches to the parallel minor for one or more statements of the theme before returning to the major mode.<sup>140</sup> The change of mode usually requires only slight alteration to the theme. Sometimes this involves the inclusion of the descending chromatic tetrachord (Component x<sup>1</sup> replacing Component x); in RV 222 Vivaldi uses a diatonic descending tetrachord in one statement and a chromatic descending tetrachord in the next. One notably consistent trend is the placement of this minor-mode material: it is always located within the last one-third of a movement. For example, in RV 114 the C Minor variations occur at statements 10-14 of the 15 total statements of the ostinato. The same is true even in RV 447, for which a minor-mode binary-form episode is inserted between Statements Three and Four (of the four total statements). The return to the major mode coincides with a recapitulation of the first statement as a ritornello (in RV 114, 298 and 447; RV 222 inserts a final virtuosic solo variation in D Major before this ritornello).

Although mode change is not especially common in Baroque variation sets, it often occurs near the latter half of chaconnes, especially those directly influenced by French models (such as Purcell's final chaconnes from *King Arthur* and *The Fairy Queen*, and chaconnes in the *Tragédies lyriques* of Lully, Charpentier, and Rameau). Handel and Bach placed mode changes in the very center of their chaconnes (Handel's Chaconne in G HWV 435, Bach's Ciaccona for Violin from the Partita in D Minor BWV 1004). However, not all of these works are examples of true variation

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<sup>140</sup> RV 101/437 presents a special case where the second movement is a minor-mode version of the material that is varied in the major-mode third movement.

form. Vivaldi often included a minor-mode solo episode near the end of his ritornello-form concerto movements, so it is difficult to claim that the tonal structure of these works was influenced by the French chaconne any more than the Italian solo concerto. Certainly the return to the major mode provides a dramatic sense of return. Placing it at the end of the work means that the return itself signals the end of the journey.

Modulation between variations occurs in only four works (RV 220, 334, 387, and 407). In these movements, three or four statements establish the home key, followed by two statements in the non-tonic key, which is in turn followed by two or three statements reaffirming the home key. RV 407 is a miniature version of this format, with a pair of statements in G Minor followed by a statement in D Minor, another statement in F Major, and a concluding pair of statements in G Minor. In all four examples the material in a non-tonic key occurs in the center of the movement. For RV 220 and 334 there is a modulation to a single non-tonic key – (V) in RV 220, (iv) in RV 334 – followed by a return to the home key. RV 387 is more complex, beginning in B Minor, moving to D Major (III), E Minor (iv), and F-sharp Minor (v) before returning to B Minor. However, the relative size (in total measures) of each key area in this movement allows for a fairly balanced “home – away – return home” key scheme, and it is therefore merely an expansion of the tonal strategy in RV 220 and 334. Oddly, in RV 387 there is no statement of the ostinato when the piece modulates to D Major; after the modulation there is a cadence in D Major followed immediately by another modulation. This weakens the importance of the mediant (normally the principal non-tonic key for a Vivaldi minor-mode movement), and

Vivaldi chooses the subdominant before reaching the dominant (the latter is conventionally the principal non-tonic key in major-mode movements).<sup>141</sup> Coupled with the stepwise rise of the successive “away” keys (III, iv, v), this aspect suggests instability and tonal wandering in the central portion of this movement that leads increasingly far away from the tonic key.<sup>142</sup>

Such modulation between variations is less common than mode change in Baroque variation sets. When it is used, it tends to be found in large works that vary more than a single theme (such as Frescobaldi’s *Cento partite sopra passacagli* and the first movement of Handel’s *Organ Concerto Op. 7 No. 1*), or in works where the tonal regions create a symmetrical structure (such as Buxtehude’s *Passacaglia in D Minor*).<sup>143</sup> Once again, the prevalence of modulation in Vivaldi’s non-variation form concerto movements may be an influential factor, since only solo concerto variation sets use modulation.

Each modulation creates strong contrast between the variations in the home key and the variations in the new key. The return to the home key is a resolution, in that the tension of moving away from the home key is cancelled out at the end of the work. There are several ways to make returns at the end of a variation set, including modulation, literal reprise, or textural reprise, but the contrast generated by modulation is much more dramatic and makes the sense of return at the end of the work more obvious to the listener.

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<sup>141</sup> For a summary of Vivaldi’s tonal practice, see Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 86.

<sup>142</sup> The unusual strategic wandering and increasing tonal remoteness of RV 387 bring to mind the harmonic wandering of movements such as the ‘Et in terra pax’ of the *Gloria* RV 589. For a discussion of the *Gloria* movement, see Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 85.

<sup>143</sup> Sisman, “Variations,” 298, describes the structure of the Buxtehude work.

#### 4.2- Use of a Ritornello as a Framing Device or Rondeau Scheme

The use of a ritornello section is one of the most common organizational strategies employed by Vivaldi to create circular structures in his variation sets. These can be found in RV 112, 114, 172, 220, 222, 298, 334, 387, 406, 407, 419, 447, 473, and 583. The ritornello, consisting of a complete, unelaborated statement of the theme, usually occurs once at the very beginning of the movement and once at the very end, to frame the series of variations (RV 114, 172, 220, 222, 298, 334, 387, 407, 447, and 583).<sup>144</sup> RV 114 modifies this plan by immediately repeating the ritornello as an implied echo of Statement One, and in RV 112 the return is heard twice in succession.

The ritornello is usually scored for either the full ensemble or, in the case of movements with a solo instrument, for the *ripieno* ensemble only.<sup>145</sup> The exceptions to this trend are RV 220 (basso continuo only) and RV 334 (scored for the upper ripieno strings playing a *bassetto* in unison); in both of these examples the instruments featured in the ritornello are the only accompanying forces in use for the entire movement, and therefore the distinction is maintained between the ritornello being reserved for the accompanying instruments and the central variations

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<sup>144</sup> RV 406, 419, and 473 involve multiple returns of the ritornello and thus share some similarities to both the French rondeau (Louis and Francois Couperin were among composers who wrote chaconnes that incorporated a rondeau structure, although their chaconnes often lack variation form) and Italian ritornello form (for example, Biagio Marini's *Passacaglio* from his Op. 22, published in 1655, incorporates a ritornello structure).

<sup>145</sup> The solo instrument may double one of the ripieno parts during the ritornello.

incorporating the soloist.<sup>146</sup> When multiple instruments are used in a ritornello, they may double a single line at the octave (as in RV 172, 334, 407, and 419<sup>147</sup>) or divide into a three- or four-voice texture (RV 112, 114, 222, 298, 387, 406, 447, 473, 583).<sup>148</sup>

The ritornello establishes the ostinato material upon which the variations are based and returns at the end to bring circular closure. Yet this device also has the potential for contrast, and Vivaldi makes use of this property by differentiating the texture and/or scoring of the ritornello from that of the body of the movement in the variation sets for solo instrument and orchestra.<sup>149</sup> In addition to distinguishing the ritornello through the participation or exclusion of the soloist, Vivaldi draws from a number of other options such as changing the number of ripieno parts, changing the number of ripieno voices (i.e. combining or separating the ripieno parts), or exploiting a combination of these tactics. For example, the ritornello of RV 222 is scored for a four-part ripieno ensemble (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Bass + Continuo) in a four-voice texture, whereas the variations employ three ripieno parts combined into a single voice (Violins and Viola in unison).

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<sup>146</sup> *Bassetto* is a term for when instruments other than the basso continuo group imitate a bass line in a higher register. This is one of Vivaldi's favorite devices for the accompaniment of solo episodes.

<sup>147</sup> The ritornello of RV 419 has four parts – Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Basso/Basso Continuo – that heterophonically elaborate a single line.

<sup>148</sup> The ritornello of RV 220 is included in the single-voice group, as it uses only the basso continuo line.

<sup>149</sup> The sole exception, RV 437, does not use a ritornello frame, perhaps because it is likely a revision of the Concerto RV 101 for chamber ensemble.

**Table 4- Scoring and Texture in Variation Sets with a Soloist and Ritornello Section**

Work	# of instrumental parts in ritornello	# of independent voices in ritornello	# of parts in solo variations	# of voices in solo variations
172	4	1	3 + solo	1 + solo
220	1	1	1 + solo	1 + solo
222	4	4	2 + solo	1 + solo
298	4	4	2-4 + solo	1-4 + solo
334	3	1	3 + solo	1 + solo
387	4	4	4 + solo	4 + solo
406	4	3-4	1 + solo	1 + solo
407	4	1	4 + solo	1 + solo
419	4	1	4 + solo	1-3 + solo
447	4	3-4	4 + solo	1-3 + solo
473	4	3	1 + solo	1 + solo
583	5	3	5 + solo	3 + solo

Table 4 reveals the preference for solo sections that are accompanied by a single-voice texture, whether scored for a single part or several parts in unison, which stands in relief to the multiple-voice ritornello frame – a strategy similar to many arias and laments in Venetian opera. Nevertheless, in some of the works the soloist is accompanied by a multiple-voice ripieno, and two works (RV 387 and 583) do not vary the texture, scoring, or material that the ripieno plays.<sup>150</sup>

Three works incorporate multiple returns of the ritornello (RV 406, 419, and 473):

RV 406: A (ritornello) – A1 (solo variation) – A2 – A – A3 – A

RV 419: A – A1 – A2 – A3 – A – A4 – A5 – A6 – Solo Codetta – A

RV 473: A – A1 – A2 – A – A3 – A4 – A – A5 – A

<sup>150</sup> RV 419 is unusual in that the number of independent ripieno voices during two of the solo variations (bars 152-171) is actually greater than the number of independent voices in the ritornello.

For these works with multiple returns of the ritornello, there is perhaps a stronger connection to the French rondeau form. However, most French rondeaux use contrasting material between the refrains (ex. ABACADA), so they are not variation forms. The textural contrasts between the ritornello frame and the solo variations may be influenced by French chaconnes and passacaglias, particularly those from Lully's stage productions, where the scoring alternates between various vocal, instrumental, and full ensemble combinations, but these too are usually in rondeau form and not true variations.<sup>151</sup> In comparison, the use of a framing ritornello in the other sixteen movements bears a greater resemblance to operatic traditions, especially the instrumental ritornelli that frame many solo arias, including those by Vivaldi. There may also be a connection through his ritornello-form concerto movements, but these ritornelli are quite different from those in his variation sets. The ritornellos in the ritornello-form movements tend to be constructed of several segments of contrasting motivic materials, and successive returns of the ritornello may omit some of these segments or change the sequence of the material. The ritornelli in the variations sets are much simpler and always return complete. It is therefore difficult to determine if any specific tradition contributed to Vivaldi's use of a ritornello in his variation sets, but perhaps these works represent an amalgam of several traditions.

Whatever the source, the ritornello leads to a circular structure, canceling out any sense of progression from the intervening variations. Vivaldi used texture to distinguish between the ritornello and solo variations, and the solo concerto medium provides further contrast, since the soloist is allowed to introduce variations while the orchestra must either accompany the soloist or present a literal reprise of the theme.

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<sup>151</sup> Silbiger, "Chaconne," 413.



Increasing the rhythmic intensity by using shorter values in each subsequent variation, known as progressive diminution, builds excitement for the performers and audience, and therefore has long been a favorite organizational strategy for composers, from the works of English virginalists to Brahms' *St. Anthony Variations* Op. 56.<sup>153</sup> For Elizabethan variation composers, shorter values were considered more rhythmically intense than longer values, variations with dotted rhythms were "always seen as an intensification," and triplets were "normally reserved for the last group of a cycle."<sup>154</sup> Vivaldi used progressive diminution over the course of entire movements and for groupings of variations within a movement. In both cases the technique provides a clear sense of direction towards the most intense variation. In RV 19, the entire set has a climactic ending, generally building rhythmic intensity through the entire sequence of variations. For RV 298, Vivaldi used the device for only the first five statements, as a way to organize the first group variations. Combined with the mode change that precedes the return of the *tutti ritornello*, the result is a sequence of variations with logical ordering and a strong sense of closure.

#### 4.4- Codettas

In about half of his works Vivaldi included brief sections before the final cadence or final return of the *ritornello* frame that are described here as codettas. These sections, typically four or eight bars in length, are usually built upon the final bars of the theme, which is often quasi-cadential (especially when Component y is involved), or a cadential progression, and in several cases they adopt the prevailing

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<sup>153</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 292, 313.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

figuration pattern from the previous variation. In RV 222 the solo violin takes up a new figuration pattern (32<sup>nd</sup>-note arpeggios) in the last bar of Statement Nine and continues that pattern for three additional bars over a cadential harmonic pattern (the cadence itself occurs as the start of Statement Ten). This material is very brief and serves only to conclude the soloist's portion of the movement with a final summation.<sup>155</sup>

**Figure 16- RV 222, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 174-178  
(End of Statement 9 and Solo Codetta)**

The figure displays a musical score for measures 174-178 of the second movement of RV 222. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the solo violin, with the first staff labeled "perhaps:" and the second "or:". The third staff is labeled "arpeggio" and shows a harmonic progression. The bottom staff shows the accompanying bassoon part, reduced to a single staff.

Note: In this example, the accompanying bassoon has been reduced to a single staff, and two possible realizations for the indication "arpeggio" have been added above the solo part.

This allows the soloist to steal attention from the variation principle for a brief moment and to exit with one last flourish before the orchestral ritornello draws the movement to a close. Such an approach seems natural for a composer of solo

<sup>155</sup> The Pietà partbook containing the second violin part for RV 222 transmits a different version from the autograph score. Although a modern edition is not available, Tanenbaum's description mentions that the second movement in this source concludes with a four-bar orchestral codetta (following the solo codetta) that focuses on a dominant-tonic cadential progression instead of the ritornello statement familiar from the Turin version. It is currently unclear whether the Pietà materials are later or earlier than the Turin score.

concertos and operatic arias, where the final utterances of the principal voice cement the expression of the mood of the entire movement or aria. The placement of a codetta before the final ritornello does not appear to be common in Baroque variation sets, at least not prior to the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Perhaps this is due to the relative novelty of Vivaldi's use of variation forms in solo concertos, the genre in which interior solo codettas were most feasible.<sup>156</sup>

More typical for Baroque variation sets, but still relatively rare, is the placement of a codetta in the final bars of a work as a means of providing closure to an additive structure.<sup>157</sup> Vivaldi usually repeats the previous few bars, often twice. These bars are derived from the last part of theme (Component y or Component y<sup>1</sup>), which is usually a cadential progression, and form ready-made concluding material.<sup>158</sup> The extra bars either counter the forward momentum of the movement or drive the music forward to a brilliant ending, but in both cases they accomplish the desired effect of signaling an ending by breaking the cycle of ostinato repetitions.

RV 583 presents an inventive hybrid approach to the soloist's final bars: the codetta and final tutti ritornello are combined into a single ostinato unit. Over the seven bars of the ostinato theme, the soloist ruminates a codetta during the first four bars using the same figuration pattern as the preceding ostinato statement. For the final three bars of the ostinato, the orchestra, playing the last three bars of the ritornello, subsumes the soloist as if the solo codetta was only a substitute for the first

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<sup>156</sup> This feature also occurs in RV 387, 407, and 419.

<sup>157</sup> For example, there is a codetta (the final four bars) in Corelli's Op. 5 No. 12, but none are found in the rest of his variation sets, or the keyboard sets by Handel, Couperin, and Purcell.

<sup>158</sup> Vivaldi uses this feature in RV 63, 101, 107, 114, and 437.

part of the ritornello. The amalgam of these two structural features is unique among Vivaldi's variation sets, and quite possibly among Baroque variation sets in general.

Overall, Vivaldi's use of codettas in variation sets is among the more forward-looking techniques he employed and although it may have stemmed from his experience with solo concertos and operas, the use of "non-essential parts" in variation movements (to use Sisman's terminology) was rare before the late eighteenth century.<sup>159</sup> It is one of the most effective methods of providing closure for a variation set. It signals an ending so strongly that, unless it occurs away from the home key, only a final ritornello can conceivably follow.

#### 4.5- Free Material

The use of free material is another means by which Vivaldi articulated small groups of variations that reveal a sub-surface logical scheme. Free material includes modulatory transitions, codettas, and contrasting sections that do not appear to bear reference to the theme or function as a variation or partial reprise.<sup>160</sup> As the amount of free material and its structural significance increases, the boundaries between a variation set and other forms become blurred. Sisman observes that it is often difficult to distinguish between variation-form and sonata-form or rondo movements

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<sup>159</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 284, claims that non-essential parts were not introduced until the late eighteenth century, but the accuracy of this observation depends on whether codettas, transitions, and the like are identifiable as self-contained, structurally important entities. Vivaldi's codettas are very brief, and it could be argued that they are merely interior expansions of individual variations rather than separate units. However, they serve a function that goes beyond the limits of the preceding variation to affect the form of the entire set and are therefore structurally significant in their own right.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

that utilize the variation principle on a sectional scale.<sup>161</sup> For the nineteen variation movements under consideration here, the interruptions are generally brief and do not challenge the dominance of the variation structure. Instead they function to create separations between the groups of variations in the background structure.

A small handful of works introduce material used to execute modulations between variations. The slow movement of RV 334 expands the modulatory episodes, allowing the soloist to rhapsodize for a few additional bars. The first such episode, between Statements Four and Five (bars 105-108) modulates to the subdominant (C Minor) and the solo violin's phrase is extended to allow for a full cadential progression in the new key.

**Figure 17- Free Material, RV 334, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 104-109**

The musical score for measures 104-109 of the 2nd movement of RV 334 is presented in four staves. The top staff is for Solo Vn, the second for Vns, Va, the third for Vln., and the fourth for Vln. I. The key signature is C minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The Solo Vn part begins with a melodic phrase in measure 104, followed by a trill and a cadence in measure 109. The Vns, Va part provides a rhythmic accompaniment throughout. The Vln. part has a melodic line with a trill and a cadence in measure 109. The Vln. I part provides a rhythmic accompaniment throughout.

Note: Statement Four ends in measure 104 and Statement Five begins in measure 109

As Figure 17 shows, the harmony has momentarily abandoned the ostinato pattern, but the rhythm and vertical shape of the *bassetto* accompaniment remains the same as

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 289. Interlude II of my study provides some examples of Vivaldi movements that seem to exhibit aspects of variation technique but do not appear to adopt a strict variation form as the guiding structural principle.

in the preceding bars.<sup>162</sup> A shorter modulation occurs between Statements Six and Seven (bars 118-119). The important point about these examples is that their principal function is once again to permit a modulation between variations. The first modulatory passage also allows the soloist to add final commentary to the first group of variations in the home key, but this episode is still relatively brief. Furthermore, the insertion of modulatory passages helps to articulate a broader structure to the movement.

### Figure 18- Organization of RV 334

Ostinato: #1-----#2/#3/#4-----x-----#5/#6-----x-----#7-----#8  
Statement

Section: Rit. Frame----Var. 1/2/3---(Mod.)---Var. 4/5---(Mod.)---Var. 6---Rit. Frame

Key: G Minor-----x-----C Minor-----x-----G Minor

Ratio: 3-----2-----1

Note: Rit. Frame= Ritornello Frame; Mod.= Modulation; Var.= Variation; 'Ratio' refers to the number of solo variations in each of the three principal subsections (distinguished by tonal center)

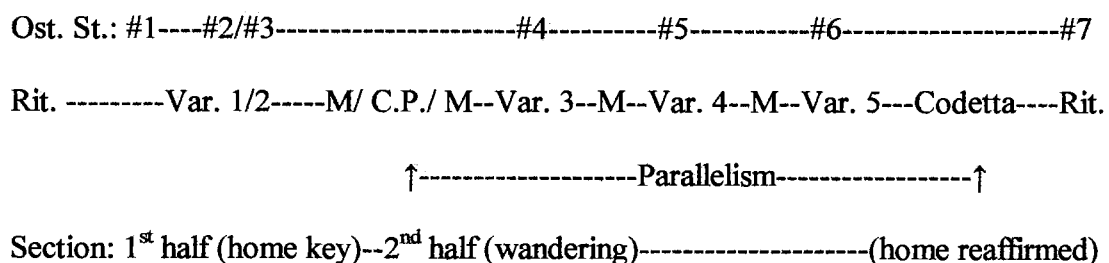
The result is three groups of solo variations- three in G Minor, two in C Minor, and a further variation in G Minor- each separated by a modulatory episode, and with the entire complex framed by a ritornello statement of the ostinato theme. The foreshortened length of each variation group (3:2:1) may explain why the second modulation is shorter than the first: shortening the space between variations complements the decreasing size of each group. The interruptions in this movement

<sup>162</sup> In this movement, the final bar of the ostinato is sometimes omitted, as in Statement Four (compare with Figure 1).

clearly serve to articulate the organization of the individual variations so that the tripartite structure is revealed.

RV 387 uses more extended passages of free material, combining modulations with extra cadential progressions.

### Figure 19- Structural Divisions of RV 387



(Key: Ost. St.= Ostinato Statement, Rit.= Ritornello Frame, Var.= Variation, M= Modulation, C.P.= Cadential Progression)

The last bar of Statement Three is altered harmonically to introduce a modulation to the submediant key (D Major), and measures 109-115 provide an extended cadential progression in the new key, followed by a modulation to E Minor. The cadential progression in D Major appears to parallel the four-bar cadential progression in B Minor near the end of the movement (measures 132-135); even the solo figuration of the former section (descending arpeggios) is inverted in the latter section (ascending arpeggios). Perhaps Vivaldi intended for these extra cadential progressions to articulate two main sections within this movement: the cadential progression in D Major emphasizing the departure from the home key and highlighting the resulting tension, with the cadential progression in B Minor overtly signaling the resolution of the harmonic tension. Neither progression is essential to the harmonic scheme: the

former could have been omitted (skipping from bar 109 to bar 114) or replaced with a complete ostinato statement in D Major; the latter also could have been omitted (probably skipping from bar 131 to bar 135, bar 135 being more melodically satisfying than a skip directly to bar 136). Once again, the free material functions as a surface level clue to a deeper structure behind this work.

Of the constant-harmony variation sets, only RV 447 has any free material. Between Statements Three and Four there is a self-contained thirty-two-bar binary-form episode. This interruption is far more substantial than any of the passages discussed above. Rather than a mere modulatory insertion, the section is in fact a minor-mode episode of a length and substance equal to the theme itself. In reality, this entire movement represents a hybrid type of variation form, combining the constant-harmony variation form with the ABA scheme of a minuet and trio (or Minuet I - Minuet II - Minuet I da capo). From this perspective, the movement can be viewed as a minuet and trio with two varied reprises ( $AA^1A^2BA$ ). This brings the movement in line with dance suites, both in terms of movements accompanied by a series of doubles and minuets with a minor-mode minuet *alternativement*.<sup>163</sup> Yet the bipartite structure of the minor-mode section and its scoring for solo oboe accompanied by the upper strings sounds so natural in the context of the variation set that without paying close attention it could almost be heard as a very loose variation of the theme.

For most of Vivaldi's variation movements, any interruptions function as points of articulation for larger groupings of variations. Only in RV 447 does free material break out of the barriers of a variation scheme in a substantial way; RV 447

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<sup>163</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 291-294.

is a hybrid that is shaped by both a variation scheme and a Minuet and Trio plan. Even then, the characteristics of the theme and variations make themselves felt strongly enough that the sense of a variation movement is still felt.

#### 4.6- Varying the Texture as a Means of Organization

A few of Vivaldi's sets (RV 172, 222, 406, and 473) use texture to articulate the contrast between a ritornello frame and the series of solo variations. Even in RV 406 and 473, with multiple returns of the ritornello, the solo sections are always scored for only two voices, in contrast to the greater number of voices in the ritornello.

In RV 107, 114, 157, and 298, Vivaldi used contrasting textures to suggest smaller groupings of variations with similar texture. In RV 298, the minor-mode variations correspond to a reduction from a four-voice accompaniment texture to a single accompanying voice, played as a *bassetto* by unison violins. RV 107 represents a particularly rich example of Vivaldi's planning. Scored for four parts (plus continuo), the entire movement alternates between groupings of accompanied duets, trios, and variations for the full ensemble. As Table 5 shows, not only are variations grouped according to the thickness of the texture, the assignment of individual melodic lines alternates within each grouping, and variations within a cluster tend to share similar material.

Table 5- Structure via Texture in RV 107

Ostinato Statement	# of voices	Scoring	Comments	Grouping of Variations
1	2	Fl, Bn/Cont.		#1
2	2	Ob, Bn/Cont.	Ob takes over Fl material from Statement #1	#1
3	4	All	All four voices playing different rhythmic patterns	#2
4	4	All	Ob and Vn switch roles from Statement #3	#2
5	3	Fl, Vn, Bn/Cont.		#3
6	3	Ob, Vn, Bn/Cont.	Ob takes over Fl material from Statement #5	#3
7	2	Fl, Bn/Cont.		#4
8	2	Ob, Bn/Cont.	Ob takes over Fl material from Statement #7	#4
9	4	All	Upper three voices play same rhythmic pattern, Bn/Cont. moves in 8 <sup>th</sup> notes	Not part of a group
10	3	Fl, Vn, Bn/Cont.		#5
11	3	Fl, Ob, Bn/Cont.	Ob takes over Vn material from Statement #10	#5
12	3	Fl, Ob, Bn/Cont.	Fl and Ob switch material from Statement #11	#5
13	4	All	Rhythmic figure passed between upper three voices, Bn/Cont. moves in continuous 32 <sup>nd</sup> notes	#6
14	4	All	Another rhythmic figure is passed between upper three voices, Bn/Cont. moves in continuous sixteenth notes	#6
15	4	All	All four voices playing continuous 32 <sup>nd</sup> notes (Bn pattern is different from upper three voices)	#6
Codetta	4	All	Repeats last four bars of statement #15	Not part of a group

Key: Fl=Flute, Ob=Oboe, Vn=Violin, Bn=Bassoon, Cont.=Basso Continuo



### Figuration in Measures 178 & 179

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Flute, Oboe, and Violin. The score is for measures 178 and 179. The time signature is 3/8 and the key signature has two flats. Each instrument plays a complex, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with the Flute and Oboe parts being identical and the Violin part being a variation of the same rhythm.

Figure 20 demonstrates that if the figures divided between the three upper voices in Statement Fourteen were to be combined into a single voice, the result would be very similar to the figuration each voice plays in Statement Fifteen.

Statement Nine represents a turning point, where the grouping of variations switches from clusters of two to blocks of three. The statement is also a crucial step in a background structure that uses textural contrasts and rhythmic intensity to create a series of peaks and valleys that build towards a final climax. The first time all four voices play simultaneously, Statements Three and Four, each voice is supplied with its own distinct rhythm. When the entire ensemble plays together for the second time in Statement Nine, the upper three voices play identical rhythms but the bass line remains rhythmically distinct. Only in Statement Fifteen, the final time the entire ensemble plays together, do all four voices adopt the same 32<sup>nd</sup>-note rhythm.

In effect, there are at least two planes of intensity operating in this piece. In the foreground is a series of peaks and valleys resulting in changes to the rhythmic intensity and texture of each variation. Meanwhile, the background shows a general increase in intensity, from the rhythmic disparity in Statements Three and Four, to the partial collaboration in Statement Nine, and finally culminating in Statement Fifteen with all voices united upon the most intense rhythmic figure of the movement.

Similar procedures are used in RV 114 and 157, although to somewhat differing effects.<sup>164</sup> Texture had been used to create contrasts in variations before Vivaldi, particularly in works by keyboard composers and the extended passacailles and chaconnes in French stage productions, but it is not known how often these contrasts were used to arrange groupings of variations towards a sophisticated and broad formal scheme.<sup>165</sup>

#### 4.7- Mirroring

Mirroring, when the figuration in one voice (often the treble) of a variation moves to another voice (usually the bass) in a succeeding variation, probably originated as a procedure in keyboard variations to ensure that both hands participate equally in technical display. Vivaldi, Corelli, and others adapted the concept to ensemble works as well. Vivaldi preferred to keep the bass line rhythmically simple and highlight the soloist (when present), so he limited his use of mirroring to works with more than one dominant treble voice.

Mirroring is almost an obsession in RV 157. The movement consists of twenty statements of the ostinato progression, divided into ten pairs of variations. The first nine pairs of variations are joined by the fact that both variations have nearly identical material, the only difference being that the two violin parts exchange roles

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<sup>164</sup> RV 419 and 447 exploit variation of texture, but only on a local level that does not result in a broader-scale structure (although RV 447 uses a thinner texture, two or three voices at a time, for all solo episodes). RV 63 uses the concept of mirroring to subdivide the three-voice texture into competing pairs of three melodically and rhythmically distinct voices. RV 583 changes the texture only in the final three bars, thickening the texture of the ritornello and enhancing the effect of the orchestra overwhelming the solo violin's last phrase.

<sup>165</sup> Schwartz, "Armide," details how the musical structure of Lully's 'Passacaille' from *Armide* may have been conceived to create a formal counterpoint with the structure of the choreography (or vice versa), and the texture of each musical unit is one element of her argument.

for the second variation of the pair.<sup>166</sup> The final two statements are linked because Statement Twenty is a written out echo of Statement Nineteen (the jump to a lower octave implies a decrease in volume).<sup>167</sup> As a result of all of the shared material, the two violin parts assume near equality. Such equality is a virtue for an orchestral concerto such as RV 157, but not for a solo concerto and this is perhaps why mirroring is not found in Vivaldi's solo concerto variation movements.

The only other work to make notable use of mirroring is RV 63. Vivaldi may have been paying homage to Corelli, who used the same device in his set of variations on this tune (Op. 5 No. 12).<sup>168</sup> This work, Vivaldi's only variation set for a trio sonata combination, uses voice exchanges between the two violin parts and between the violins and the continuo line. For instance, Statement Five introduces sixteenth-note descending scalar figures in the violin parts while the continuo bass line plays mostly continuous eighth notes. In Statement Six, the bass line assumes the sixteenth-note motion and the violins take over the eighth notes.<sup>169</sup> Similarly, the eighth-note triplets played by the violins in Statement Thirteen are passed to the bass line in Statement Fourteen.

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<sup>166</sup> The first pair of variations is an exception: the second violins do not enter until the start of the second variation, perhaps to make the voice exchanges easier to comprehend by momentarily thinning the texture before the complex series of exchanges commences. Similar quasi-canonic openings occur in the variation movements in Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12 and Op. 2 No. 12 (see Chapter Three).

<sup>167</sup> Selfridge-Field comments on the importance of the "octave echo" to Venetian instrumental music (idem, *Venetian Instrumental Music*, 129-130, 136). A similar passage concluding RV 63 is actually accompanied by the indication '*p*,' which would represent a decreased dynamic from the previous bars.

<sup>168</sup> Domenico Scarlatti, Rameau, and Handel (the latter in both keyboard and ensemble works) used mirroring extensively for variation sets.

<sup>169</sup> Although the shape and arrangement of the figurations is different (unlike a strict mirroring), the rhythmic intensity of the parts is the same; the treble sixteenths in Statement Five become the bass sixteenths in Statement Six.

Finally, mirroring may occur within a single variation. Statement Twenty of RV 63 consists of one-bar units that are exchanged between the two violin parts and the continuo bass line. In measure 297 the bass line plays sixteenth notes while the violins play quarter notes, and they switch roles in following bar, establishing the pattern that lasts through measure 310.

By itself, mirroring is a way to group two or three variations together, but another element is required to provide a coherent background structure and sense of closure. Most often mirroring is paired with progressive diminution (as it is in RV 107) to create a climactic ending. It can also be used in circular structures, such as RV 157, but the conclusion itself is achieved through the fluctuating levels of the rhythmic activity and the echoed repetition of the penultimate statement.

#### 4.8- Additional Methods of Organization

Vivaldi used several other strategies to enhance the directional aspects of his background structures, including progressively raising the cadential pitch ceiling, changing the thickness of the rhythmic texture, and even using figures in the orchestral accompaniment to suggest a grouping of variations. In each case, these are only used for small blocks of variations and therefore form part of a complex background scheme.

In RV 63 Vivaldi grouped several variations according to the pitch of the principal voice at phrase endings. The final bar of each variation assigns a dotted half note to all three voices. For most of the variations, one or both of the violins

cadences on  $d''$ .<sup>170</sup> The first ten statements fluctuate between both violins cadencing on  $d''$ , one violin cadencing on  $d''$  while the other cadences on  $d'$  or  $f'$ , and one variation where the violins cadence on  $d'$  and  $f'$ . The somewhat unpredictable sequence of cadential pitches in the first ten statements is followed by five statements where there is no variety, as both violins consistently cadence on  $d'$ . The stability represented in Statements Eleven through Fifteen provides a backdrop for the arch shape that occupies the final four statements and codetta, where the register of the cadential pitches gradually rises and then subsides. The final surge to the high register  $d'''$  (the only time either violin cadences in this range) coincides with the most dramatic and energetic variations (where at least two voices use extensive sixteenth notes), as if adding another element to make this the final climax of the movement. The falling octaves in the codetta are possibly intended to imitate a diminuendo or echo.<sup>171</sup> The overall shape of this movement, as with Corelli's *Follia* variations, is somewhat unclear, but the added directional aspect provided by the cadential pitches and the inclusion of a codetta provide a greater sense of closure than if both devices were absent.<sup>172</sup>

The orchestral accompaniment of RV 298 breaks out of the generally monotonous patterns played by the accompanying voices in most concerto slow movements by varying the presentation of two-note figures to form a subgroup of

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<sup>170</sup> From this point on, the traditional lettering system will be used for pitches, with *C* representing the C below the bass clef, *c* as the C below "middle C," and *c'* for "middle C."

<sup>171</sup> Vivaldi indicates something to this effect by marking the last four bars 'p,' implying an echo of the previous four bars. See note 167.

<sup>172</sup> Cadential pitches are also manipulated in RV 583, although in that case only the first three solo variations suggest an intentional structure, with each successive variation ending on a higher 'B-flat' until the four statement ends on the highest pitch in the movement, *B-flat'''* (measure 138).

variations in Statements Two through Four. In Statement Two, the upper strings each play a two-note descending leap, with each voice staggered so that the composite effect is that of a chain of entries from highest to lowest register. The process is partially reversed in Statement Three, where the two-note figures are ascending leaps, although the chain of entries still precedes from highest register to lowest. Statement Four combines these two directions, with ascending figures in the first violins and descending figures in the second violins and violas. While this process applies only to the accompaniment and not to the sequence of variations in the solo part (which displays increasing rhythmic intensity throughout these three statements), it nevertheless demonstrates that Vivaldi was concerned with treating the flow of variations in an artful way and that his focus was not placed solely on the principal voice.

RV 157 is a good example of how Vivaldi could combine several strategies to create a complex structural design. On one level, the variations are paired, with the violins trading material after the first variation of each pair. Vivaldi also varies the rhythmic texture, which is the number of distinct rhythmic voices. For example, the opening two and a half bars have a two-voiced rhythmic texture, since the violas and bass instruments move together as a single rhythmic entity (in quarter notes) while the first violins change pitches at different points in time. The rhythmic texture of Statement Seven is comprised of four voices: the first violins, the second violins (the violins move in half notes and quarter notes, and one voice changes pitch while the other sustains), violas (in sixteenth notes), and bass instruments (continuing their predominant motion of eighth and quarter notes).

**Figure 21- Rhythmic Texture in RV 157, Measures 16 & 17**

The musical score for measures 16 and 17 of RV 157 consists of four staves. The top staff is for Violin I (Vn I), the second for Violin II (Vn II), the third for Viola (Va), and the bottom for Violoncello and Bassoon (Vc, B.C.). The key signature has two flats and the time signature is 4/4. In measure 16, Vn I and Vn II play long notes with ties to the next measure. Va plays a continuous sixteenth-note pattern. Vc, B.C. plays a simple bass line with rests. In measure 17, the patterns continue, with Vn I and Vn II still having tied notes and Va continuing its sixteenth-note pattern.

The rhythmic texture of RV 157 grows from two voices in Statement One to four voices in Statements Five through Eight, after which it mixes pairs of variations with three-voice texture and pairs of four-voice texture. The final pair of variations reduces the rhythmic texture to two voices (upper strings vs. the bass instruments), the fewest since the opening of the piece. This coincides with the general impression that the ending is a calmer, relaxed conclusion (the last statement is marked 'p'). Even the rhythms of the voices resemble Statement One (the tied notes in the violins being replaced by rests).

**Figure 22- Rhythmic Texture in RV 157, Measures 46-48**

The musical score for measures 46-48 of RV 157 consists of two staves. The top staff is for Upper Strings (Upper Str.) and the bottom for Violoncello and Bassoon (Vc, B.C.). The key signature has two flats and the time signature is 4/4. In measure 46, Upper Str. has a complex rhythmic pattern with many notes, while Vc, B.C. has a simple bass line with rests. In measure 47, the patterns continue. In measure 48, a 'p' dynamic marking is present in both staves, indicating a piano ending.

This observation is matched by one further element of background structure: rhythmic intensity.<sup>173</sup> Apart from the opening groups of statements, the piece does

<sup>173</sup> Described in Section 4.3 above.

not build to a majestic or virtuosic climax. Instead it fluctuates between sections of activity and repose, allowing everything to drift by without reaching an overwhelming climax. This de-emphasis on climax is further enhanced when the last pair of variations, which according to the established pattern of the movement should be an active pair, turns out to be an inactive pair. By breaking the pattern of alternation to present two consecutive inactive pairs, Vivaldi curbs the momentum of the piece in order to draw it to a calm close, and this effect is enhanced by the simplified rhythmic texture of Figure 22. This movement, in some ways resembling Corelli's *Ciaccona* Op. 2 No. 12, is unlike anything else in Vivaldi's output of variation movements, giving proof that Vivaldi was capable of great subtlety and understatement.<sup>174</sup>

From a more general perspective, Vivaldi's most common structure (thirteen works) is a circular design with a resolving return at the end. He used texture, mode, and key to increase the impression of departure during the central portion of the set, and the greater contrast provided by these factors heightens the sense of return, making it more obvious. Closure is frequently achieved through the return of a ritornello or opening statement (RV 112, 172, 220, 222, 298, 334, 387, 406, 407, 419, 447, 473), often coupled with a return to the home key (RV 220, 334, 387, 407) or initial mode (RV 222, 298, 447). He also signaled the end of a set by combining a thinner rhythmic texture with an echoed repetition (RV 157) or by inserting a solo codetta before the ritornello conclusion (RV 222, 387, 407, 419). Within the main body of the movement, he also arranged many of the variations into a logical

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<sup>174</sup> Corelli's work is treated on pp. 99-101.

sequence, according to progressive diminution (RV 157, 298, 447), mirroring or pairing of variation with shared material (RV 157), tonal scheme (RV 334, 387, 407), and progressively shorter groups of variations (RV 334). In each case, the attention to structural detail is much more consistently maintained than in sets by Corelli, Handel, Pasquini, and many other Baroque composers

Vivaldi also wrote three works with periodic literal reprises (RV 406, 419, 473). This structure does not seem to appear elsewhere in Baroque variation sets, perhaps because it is difficult to make the ending definitive as the final ritornello loses some of its effect by having previously returned. Vivaldi found a solution to this problem as well, inserting a solo codetta before the final ritornello in RV 419, hinting that there will be no further variations and that the ensuing ritornello will be the last.

RV 583 has a circular structure in which the return is also enhanced, which suggests a circular-directional hybrid form. Closure is achieved by returning to the full texture of the ritornello, but the texture is even thicker in the final bars and the ritornello is melded into the solo codetta, making the ending more of a summation than a resolution. Something similar occurs at the ending of Handel's Chaconne in G HWV 435, but otherwise this type of an enhanced return is rare in Baroque variation sets.<sup>175</sup>

There is only one variation set where the sequence of variations does not seem to fit into a logical structure. RV 63, probably Vivaldi's earliest variation set, fluctuates between several different character contrasts, and is neither circular nor consistently directional. Despite the emphasis on contrast rather than coherence,

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<sup>175</sup> The Handel work is discussed on pages 117-119.

Vivaldi manages to provide a strong sense of closure, combining the rising and falling pitch ceiling of the final variations with a codetta.

On a broader level, Vivaldi's variation-form works are an amalgam of French and Italian characteristics. For example, although only one work, RV 114, is an undisputable chaconne, some of the characteristics of national chaconne traditions are observed in other variation sets. French chaconnes and passacailles tend to "exhibit a well-planned, orderly structure" that contrasts with Italian works, which "often proceed capriciously, in the vein of a spontaneous improvisation."<sup>176</sup> French chaconnes, unlike Italian examples, are rarely true variation sets. They emphasize "the repetition of units, [...] alternating half and full cadences, and the recurrence of earlier units, sometimes with variations superimposed."<sup>177</sup> Compared with the seemingly random structure of Corelli's *Follia* variations or one of Bernardo Pasquini's keyboard sets, Vivaldi's sets bear greater resemblance to the level of order and symmetry in French ostinato variation forms, especially those for the stage.

Similarly, the textural contrasts between sections in Lully's stage chaconnes may have been a model for the textural variety of works like Vivaldi's RV 107. The success of Lully's *tragédies lyriques* solidified the chaconne and passacaglia as central ingredients of French stage productions, and through the popularity of French culture at courts and institutions throughout Europe, French chaconnes were both heard and emulated in London, Venice, and elsewhere.<sup>178</sup> Composers like Purcell

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<sup>176</sup> Silbiger, "Chaconne," 413.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 413. The passacaille from Lully's *Armide* is subjected to structural analysis in Schwartz, "Armide."

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 414.

and Vivaldi combined certain characteristics of French models with their own personal and regional stylistic idiom. In Vivaldi's case, this meant drawing upon the greater textural contrasts of French chaconnes, such as the omission of the bass instruments for certain portions of the work.

The sharply differentiated layers of the rhythmic texture in Vivaldi's variations keep them rooted in the Italian style. French music of the period shows a preference for homogeneity in the rhythm of each voice, whereas Italian works seem to revel in the complex cross-rhythms that result from placing a different pattern in each voice.<sup>179</sup> In a large portion of Vivaldi's works each voice in the texture has "its own rhythmic stamp, often maintained in ostinato for several bars... Then the rhythms are redistributed or abandoned in favour of new patterns, and the process is repeated."<sup>180</sup> The sectional nature of variation sets is perfectly suited to changing the distribution of the rhythmic patterns, either at the middle or end of each variation.

In rhythm and form Vivaldi's sets are more Italian than French, but the textual contrast and sense of coherence derived from French models improves the structure of these works. Talbot and Vlaadingerbroek have begun to examine Vivaldi's emulation of the French style, but as Vlaadingerbroek points out, "what examples of French music composers active in the Venetian Republic actually had a chance to see is very often frustratingly unclear."<sup>181</sup> The present study allows the variation sets to form part of the ongoing investigation into the connection between Vivaldi and the French Baroque.

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<sup>179</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 76.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 82, 93; Vlaadingerbroek, "Vivaldi alla francese," 64.

Vivaldi's instrumental variations demonstrate a multi-faceted historical significance. In addition to being a focal point of Vivaldi's stylistic traits including variation technique and ostinato, these twenty works constitute a particular melding of existing variation traditions and cross-generic influences that is rare, if not unique, in early eighteenth century variation forms. Vivaldi is perhaps the first composer to introduce variation sets into the solo concerto (c. 1710), and the mixture led to a reinvention of traditional variation structures.

Vivaldi emphasized the importance of closure in his variation sets, more so than most of his contemporaries. He arranged the sequence of the variations into background designs that determined that nature of the material needed to conclude the set. Even when emulating the popular strategy of a continuous progression from the simplest to most virtuosic variation, Vivaldi superimposed schemes where virtuosity serves within the confines of an ordered and balanced structure. In this respect his works are much more clearly organized than many Baroque variation sets, in which the final variation seems to have been selected without obvious reason. His focus on closure led to the use of ritornello frames, modulation, mode change, textural contrasts, and solo codettas to strengthen the sense of completing a journey at the end of each variation set.

Besides directional structures with climactic endings, Vivaldi also wrote sets with circular conclusions, and the techniques he used to heighten the contrast between variations also enhance the perception of return in these works. Even in works with periodically returning literal reprises, Vivaldi found a way to close a potentially

unending form by inserting a solo codetta before the final ritornello, signaling the approaching end of the movement.

The same cannot be said for many of Vivaldi's predecessors and contemporaries, who were often much less consistent in addressing the issues of formal coherence and closure. To demonstrate this comparison, the next chapter relates the structural practices of Vivaldi the variation composer to those found in similar works by some of his best-known predecessors and contemporaries. The chapter assesses the breath of organizational devices and attention to closure in the variation oeuvre of each composer.

### Chapter 3: Coherence and Closure in Variation Sets by Vivaldi's Contemporaries

To place the background structures of Vivaldi's variation forms within the context of late-Baroque variation sets, three major Baroque figures have been selected whose sets are readily available in reliable editions and for whom a substantially complete inventory of variation sets can be established: 1) Corelli as an important Italian predecessor, 2) Rameau as a fellow opera-composer and contemporary French composer, and 3) Handel as a more international figure who also included variation forms in his solo concertos. This study excludes Bach's variation sets, since others have already extensively examined them, while Couperin's few variation movements are generally too different from Vivaldi's to make an effective comparison.<sup>182</sup>

Because sung texts introduce an organizational element not discussed in the previous chapter, the current chapter will also be limited to instrumental variation sets.

Without extensive cataloguing or modern editions of Baroque variation sets, it is difficult to make a systematic study of Baroque variations that determines whether certain techniques were perhaps more common than is currently believed.<sup>183</sup> The intent here is not to trace influences, but to draw comparisons among a few major Baroque composers in terms of their methods of organizing their variation sets. The primary focus is on how the structures create a sense of closure.

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<sup>182</sup>For example, J. Müller-Blattau, "Bachs Goldberg-Variationen," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 16 (1959): 207-19; and Y. Kobayashi, "The Variation Principle in Bach's Passacaglia in C Minor, BWV 582," *Bach Studies* 2, ed. D. R. Melamed (Cambridge, 1955): 62-69.

<sup>183</sup> Sisman, for instance, states that all of Handel's variation sets are for harpsichord, overlooking a number of variation movements in his concerti grossi, organ concerti, and chamber works. See Sisman, "Variations," 300.

## Corelli

The differences between the variation sets of Corelli and Vivaldi are more prominent than the similarities. Like Vivaldi, Corelli wrote both ostinato variation and constant harmony variation sets.<sup>184</sup> Individual variations in Corelli's ostinato variation sets are often less sharply distinguished from one another than Vivaldi's. Corelli tends to redistribute many of the same basic figurations (especially scalar ideas) and rely on phrases where it is difficult to identify a predominant melodic-rhythmic figure. The two constant harmony sets are closer to Vivaldi in this regard, but even Op. 5 No. 5 focuses primarily on arpeggiated eighth-notes for each statement and thus has less figurational contrast than Vivaldi's variation sets. Instead of sharply contrasted figures, Corelli achieves variety through harmonic coloring, the degree of harmonic stability, and a more flexible treatment of the theme itself. It may be impossible to determine whether these fundamental distinctions are responsible for differences in the broader formal structure of variation sets by Vivaldi and Corelli, but they appear to correspond to differences of approach to the sectional and additive nature of variation form.

Corelli uses the degree of harmonic stability to create a background structure for the *Largo, e puntato* of the Trio Sonata in D Op. 1 No. 12. Except for a momentary leaning towards the key of the dominant (second half of measure 5), the first two statements are firmly entrenched in the home key of D Major. This tonally stable section constitutes the beginning of the work. The middle section (Statements

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<sup>184</sup> These works are: the *Largo, e puntato* from the Trio Sonata in D Op. 1 No. 12 (Rome, 1681), the *Ciaccona* Op. 2 No. 12 (Rome, 1685), the fourth movement of the Violin Sonata in G Minor Op. 5 No. 5 and the *Follia* variations Op. 5 No. 12 (Rome, 1700).

Three through Eight) is pulled in multiple tonal directions, and although the ostinato pattern is never transposed the repetitions are harmonically colored by pulls towards the dominant, subdominant, submediant, and supertonic tonal areas. D Major prevails in the final two statements (Statements Nine and Ten), representing a restoration of tonal stability after the wandering of the middle section. At first, this strategy sounds similar to what Vivaldi used in RV 334 and RV 387, but Corelli operates on a much subtler level, as each pull away from D Major is only momentary and at no point does an entire group of variations occur in a new key. While both composers counteract the additive nature of variation form by arranging the variations into a background scheme with a beginning, middle, and end, Vivaldi is more dramatic in his approach. Also, the sense of concluding resolution in Statement Ten of Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12 is somewhat weakened by the tonal stability of Statement Five; Statement Ten could be heard as another momentary point of respite to be followed by further tonal wanderings rather than as the final resolution of the accumulated harmonic tension.

The *Ciaccona* Op. 2 No. 12 signals closure by placing several statements (Statements Twenty-Seven through Thirty-One) of relatively little rhythmic activity in the final portion of the movement. A similar grouping occurs in Statements Eleven through Sixteen, but that complex is situated between two sections of elevated rhythmic activity. To ensure that the final group of less-active statements is perceived as a progression towards a concluding resolution, the final statement (Statement Thirty-One) is an echoed repetition of Statement Thirty. Used anywhere other than the opening pair of statements, this latter device counteracts forward

momentum too strongly to permit further variations to follow. It clearly signifies the approach of the final cadence, as in Vivaldi's RV 156. The end creates a strong sense of a predetermined background structure.

**Table 6- Background Structure of Corelli's Op. 2 No. 12**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Tempo</b>	<b>Tonal Stability</b>	<b>Rhythmic Activity</b>	<b>Background Section</b>
1-4	1-16	Largo	Stable	Less	Beginning
5-10	17-40	Allegro	Stable	More	Middle
11-12	41-54		Unstable	Less	
13-16	55-62		Stable	Less	
17-20	63-78		Stable	More	
21-23	79-90		Unstable	More	
24-26	91-102		Stable	More	
27-29	103-118		Unstable	Less	
30-31	119-127		Stable	Less	End

The background structure has a beginning (measures 1-16), middle (17-118), and end (119-127). Within each of these sections there is a low point of intensity, with relatively stable tonality and little rhythmic activity. This can even be expressed in five sections: rest (measures 1-16), tension (17-54), rest (55-62), tension (63-118), and rest (119-127). The final section of reduced harmonic and rhythmic activity is also the least active passage since the opening, because the section in measures 55-62 is devoted to canonic imitations and is slightly more active than the section in measures 119-127. Once the movement reaches the lowest level of tension since the opening section, it would only be logical to either conclude or to then build tension again until a climax is reached that exceeds the previous high points in the movement. In this case, Corelli selected the circular option, with a reposeful ending.

The opening of the Ciaccona also represents an attempt to strengthen the directional aspects of the background structure, employing the device of a slow introduction (a feature not found in Vivaldi's variation sets). The first four statements are marked "Largo" and the remainder of the movement is an "Allegro." As a single entity, the slow variations constitute a distinct beginning to the piece, establishing the key, general character, and theme, as well as hinting at some of the upcoming rhythmic patterns and flexible treatment of the theme. Corelli's background structures are much looser than Vivaldi's. Corelli appears to have conceived of broad structural sections with large blocks or groupings of variations and to have distinguished between their conglomerate characteristics (tempo, harmonic stability, level of rhythmic activity) whereas Vivaldi related variations to each other either individually or in pairs, each section being a necessary step along the background journey.<sup>185</sup>

This is not surprising since variations in Corelli's ostinato variation sets seem to value similarity over difference from one to the next; it is natural to group them according to their similarities. Without great figurational variety, it becomes difficult for a composer to use organizational strategies such as mirroring, progressive diminution, and foreshadowing. For example, in the *Largo, e puntato* of the Trio Sonata Op. 1 No. 12, the second violin's figure in the first half of measure 25 could be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the figuration pattern for Statement Eight (which begins on beat three of measure 25).

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<sup>185</sup> Compare this with the outline of the structure of RV 107 (Chapter Two, Section 4.7), where each variation or pair of variations represents a middle ground unit and the relationship between individual variations demonstrates more change along the progress of the background scheme.

Figure 23- Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 24-26

Yet it could also be heard as a continuation of the pattern begun in measure 24, and since this figure is heard in both violin parts at various points throughout the entire movement it is perhaps impossible to say that this figure belongs exclusively to either Statement Seven or Eight. In order to be a case of foreshadowing, the figure would have to be heard in measure 25 as an early appearance of an idea that clearly belongs to Statement Eight (such as happens in Vivaldi's RV 114, measure 98; see Figure 14).

Corelli's constant harmony sets are much less clearly organized than his ostinato variation sets. The fourth movement of the Violin Sonata Op. 5 No. 5 in G Minor is an open-ended work. In the first statement, eighth-note arpeggios are traded between the violin and bass after each measure.

Figure 24- Corelli's Op. 5 No. 5, 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, Measures 1-4

Statement Two assigns all the eighth-note arpeggios to the violin, while Statement Three gives them to the cello. Because the principal rhythmic values are always

eighth notes, there is no change to the rhythmic intensity, and while the technique of mirroring links Statements Two and Three this feature is not enough to establish a sense of a beginning, middle, and end. Comparing this work to Vivaldi's violin sonata variation set (RV 19), which uses progressive diminution until reaching a final peak of virtuosity, Corelli's set does not provide a comparable sense of conclusion. Instead it appears to be an open-ended form, for it is easy to imagine further variations after Statement Three. Evidence from eighteenth-century sources suggests that performers may have used a movement such as this, already suited to variation treatment, as a starting point for further variations.<sup>186</sup>

Comparing the Follia variations of Corelli and Vivaldi, the influence of Corelli and the individualism of Vivaldi are both apparent in the plan for ordering the variations.<sup>187</sup> Both sets change tempo and character several times, use progressive diminution and mirroring for small groups of variations, have a codetta, and share some figurations. However, there are two noteworthy distinctions, beyond the different sequence of variations and the fact that Corelli's set is a duo for violin and bass while Vivaldi's is a trio sonata. First, in Statement Twenty-One Corelli changes the theme such that the first half of the statement ends in F Major instead of returning to D Minor, and F Major is the key in which the second half of the variation begins. This process does not occur in any other variation, and it is entirely absent from Vivaldi's Op. 1 No. 12. Second, the careful control of the cadential pitches in Vivaldi's variations, which aids the sense of progression towards an ending, is lacking in Corelli's set. While theories have been advanced regarding the layout of

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<sup>186</sup> R.E. Seletsky, "18<sup>th</sup>-Century Variations for Corelli's Sonatas," *Early Music* 24 (1996): 119-30.

<sup>187</sup> Cesare Fertonani, "Antonio Vivaldi: le sonate a tre," *ISV* 18 (1997): 13-18.

Corelli's set in terms of exploiting violin technique, finding an obvious organization behind the work is more challenging.<sup>188</sup> These differences suggest that in terms of style and structure, Vivaldi's set may have been only an acknowledgement of or tribute to Corelli's.

Corelli sometimes treats his themes more flexibly than Vivaldi. Particularly in the Ciaccona the theme is not a true ostinato because it switches back and forth between several similar yet distinct patterns. The bass changes even in the first four statements of the Ciaccona, and the constantly changing bass-line phrases in measures 47-62 oppose the principle of an underlying theme that unifies the work. However the periodic reappearance of the descending tetrachord bass line and the similarity between the overall shapes of the themes (all of which were associated with the ciaccona at one time or another) creates the impression of a single recurring theme. While Vivaldi may have retained a rhythmic pattern or accompaniment texture in order to bridge the gap between free material and variation, in Corelli the dividing line is far more ambiguous. Since the free material cannot be readily distinguished from the variations, it is not as effective as a means for articulating sections in the background formal structure.

Nevertheless Corelli and Vivaldi drew several of the same techniques from variation traditions to connect individual variations into a more seamless structure; both used mirroring, modulation, progressive diminution, overlapping phrases, and literal repetition. For example, overlapping phrases can be found in the *Largo, e puntato* of the Trio Sonata in D Op. 1 No. 12 (in measure 18 the ostinato begins a

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<sup>188</sup> C. M. Mossa, "Ostinati e variazioni nell'opera di Corelli: Una proposta di interpretazione del valore normativo delle raccolte corelliane," *Studi Corelliani IV: Atti del Quarto Congresso Internazionale (Fusignano, 4-7 settembre, 1986)*, (Florence, 1990): 19, cited in Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, 130.

new statement on beat three but the descending melodic pattern in the first violin continues from the previous statement and cadences on the third beat of measure 19).

**Figure 25- Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 18 & 19**  
(Statement 6)

The amount of displacement is much greater than in Vivaldi (who usually displaces the phrase ending by only one or two beats). There is even one instance where Corelli removes a cadential bar to link the end of one variation directly into the next: in the Follia variations the expected cadential bar of Statement Ten has been removed so that the phrase continues immediately into Statement Eleven. Despite these features, Corelli's variation sets, especially the constant harmony type, maintain a strong sense of a sectional quality, even more so than most of Vivaldi's variation movements.

Unlike Vivaldi, Corelli's variation form movements exhibit few cross-generic influences. While Vivaldi wrote variation sets in both sonatas and concertos, Corelli's sets are found only in trio and solo sonatas. This means that many of the organizational features Vivaldi borrowed from the concerto genre (such as the textural contrast between the ritornello frame and the solo variations, or the interior solo codetta) are absent. The most apparent generic contribution is an imitative, almost canonic opening, which Corelli frequently used in the fast movements of his trio sonatas. This is found in Vivaldi as well, playing an unusually substantial role in

RV 156. Imitative entrances open the Op. 1 and Op. 2 variation sets of Corelli and imitation in general (between treble voices and less often between treble and bass) has a pervasive if not primary role in all of Corelli's variation form works. Also, while there is an enhanced emphasis on a single violin in the Op. 5 variation sets, the bass still assumes greater importance than most of Vivaldi's treble-dominated sets, perhaps because the Op. 5 sonatas were written in a time before the gradual decline of the role of the bass in solo sonata textures.<sup>189</sup>

Vivaldi's structures are, on the whole, more directional and end-oriented than Corelli's. Corelli's background structures tend to place greater emphasis on thematic rather than formal coherence and lead to the perception that the aural journey is more important than the destination.

#### Rameau

Rameau, an opera composer like Vivaldi, wrote chaconnes in several of his operas, but these usually have a rondeau structure and do not use variation form. Thus, the only true variation sets he wrote were two for harpsichord: *Les Niais de Sologne* (with a 1<sup>er</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Double) from the *Pièces de Clavecin* of 1724 (revised 1731) and the Gavotte with six variations in A Minor from the *Nouvelles Suites de Pièces de Clavecin* (c. 1728). Both works are of the constant harmony type of variation form, with some variations clearly pleonastic while others are more periphrastic. The two sets also tend to stick to a single clear figuration pattern for each variation, a feature they share with most of Vivaldi's variation sets.

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<sup>189</sup> Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, 120-122; Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 99-100.

Rameau's sets differ in the logic behind the sequence of variations. The *Niais* set follows the principle of progressive diminution: the first statement consists primarily of eighth and quarter notes, the first double (Statement Two) adds triplets, and the second double introduces sixteenth notes. Following the increase of rhythmic intensity, a sense of conclusion is achieved by modifying the final bars of the second double to make them sound more brilliant and conclusive (rapidly alternating between tonic and subdominant chords) and repeating the cadential passage for added emphasis. Overall, this set steadily builds excitement and offers a stronger ending than either Corelli's Op. 5 No. 5 or Rameau's own Gavotte. It is a close-ended directional work like Vivaldi's RV 101/437, which has the overall shape of growing rhythmic activity and repeats the cadential material at the end to make a stronger conclusion.

The Gavotte is longer, consisting of a theme and six doubles, and unlike the previous set it does not have a strong sense of direction towards an ending. Progressive diminution is entirely absent since all of the variations are dominated by nearly perpetual sixteenth-note motion. Instead, its structure is achieved through grouping variations with similar patterns of figuration. The variations are divided into two halves, with the first three variations devoted primarily to sixteenth-note scales and the latter three variations highlighting rapidly repeated notes (in a manner reminiscent of guitar strumming).

**Table 7- Background Structure in Rameau's *Gavotte* in A Minor**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Double 1</b>	<b>Double 2</b>	<b>Double 3</b>	<b>Double 4</b>	<b>Double 5</b>	<b>Double 6</b>
<b>Figuration</b>	N/A	Scales	Scales	Scales	Repeated Notes	Repeated Notes	Repeated Notes
<b>Register of Figuration</b>	N/A	High	Low	Middle	Middle	High	Low

There is a shift from the extremes of register in the first two variations to the center of the keyboard in the middle variations before returning to the outside voices in the final pair of variations. With this kind of mirroring and manipulation of register, the final variation brings a sense of closure, but the ending is still less than definitive when compared to Vivaldi's examples. Following the premises in modern criticisms of variation forms, there isn't much in the conclusion of the sixth variation that would prevent further variations from ensuing, and additional concluding variations or a literal reprise of the theme would not necessarily disrupt the flow of the existing variations.<sup>190</sup> As is stands, this work resembles, albeit more subtly, the open structure of the final variation of Corelli's Op. 5 No. 5.

Rameau's sets demonstrate an interest in the issue of closure, but the issue is not always as central to the background structure of Rameau's sets as it is in Vivaldi's examples. The D Major set has a very coherent, end-oriented background structure. On the other hand, the variations in the *Gavotte* bear such strong resemblance to each other that they lack the degree of contrast that enhances closure in Vivaldi's sets, instead favoring a stronger unity of surface material.

<sup>190</sup> For example, a single variation using elaborate figuration in both hands could be added to the end of the work to balance the presence of the opening section (the theme) and to draw together the diverse registration of the preceding variations. This would be somewhat akin to the way Handel concluded several of his keyboard variation sets. See discussion below.

## Handel

Handel wrote far more variation sets than Corelli and Rameau, and while most are for keyboard, he also included some within his chamber and orchestral works. Examining the entire corpus of his instrumental sets is a major challenge because the primary concerns for identifying and cataloging his variation sets, namely the establishment of authenticity and definitive text, are confounded by problems of abundant pirated and unreliable first editions, scribal error, false attributions, and multiple authentic versions of the same work.<sup>191</sup> This latter point is particularly vexing since questions surround the authenticity and textual reliability of many of the versions. Moreover, it is sometimes unclear whether Handel even intended a definitive version of some pieces, making authentic alterations to seemingly older texts. However, by using the primary texts of the Halle Handel Edition and grouping substantially similar works together as a single item, it is possible to make the following list of Handel's instrumental variation sets.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> For extensive details, see the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Edited by the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft. Serie IV: Instrumentalmusik, (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1955-). [Referred to here after as HHA.] For this study the revised edition of Band 4.1 (Keyboard Works Vol. 1) was available but not the revised editions of Band 4.5 (Keyboard Works Vol. 2) or 4.17 (Keyboard Works Vol. 4); in these latter two cases the analysis is based on the older edition but supplemented by the notes in Band 4.7 (Critical Report for Keyboard Works Vols. 1-4, issued 2000) which describes many of the changes in the revised edition of each volume.

<sup>192</sup> Information taken from the HHA, as well as Anthony Hicks, "Handel," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 10: 796-808. The column for Principal first edition is an aid for identification, referring to the first edition of a work that modern readers are likely to be familiar with.

Table 8- Handel's Variation Sets

HWV	Work	Scoring	Movement	Principal 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition	Notes	Date
428/5	Suite in D Minor	Kbd	5 <sup>th</sup> - Air	1720 (Walsh)	Earlier version in HWV 449	c. 1717, rev. by 1720
430/4	Suite in E	Kbd	4 <sup>th</sup> - Air	1720 (Walsh)	4 or 5 versions	By 1718, rev. by 1720
432/6	Suite in G Minor	Kbd	6 <sup>th</sup> - Passacaille	1720 (Walsh)	Originally independent work	By 1718, rev. by 1720
494/3	Suite in B-Flat	Kbd	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Air	1733 (Walsh)	2 versions	[Not specified]
435	Chaconne in G	Kbd		1733 (Walsh)	5 versions; also an orchestral ritornello (HWV 343) survives that may have been used to make a concerto version of this work	Before 1706
436/5	Suite in D Minor	Kbd	5 <sup>th</sup> - Menuetto	1733 (Walsh)		c. 1722- 26
437/3	Suite in D Minor	Kbd	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Saraband	1733 (Walsh)	4 <sup>th</sup> movement in some sources	Before 1706
441/6	Suite in G	Kbd	6 <sup>th</sup> - Gavotte	1733 (Walsh)	Authenticity doubtful, possibly by Babell	Before 1723
442/2	Suite in G	Kbd	2 <sup>nd</sup> - Chaconne	1733 (Walsh)	Originally independent work	Before 1706
484	Chaconne in C	Kbd			2 versions	Before 1706
448/5	Suite in D Minor	Kbd	5 <sup>th</sup> - Chaconne			Before 1706

486	Chaconne in G Minor	Kbd				By 1717-18
465	Air in F	Kbd				[Not specified]
446/4	Suite in C Minor	2 Kbd	4 <sup>th</sup> - Chaconne		Incomplete, only one kbd part survives	[Not specified]
399/3	Sonata in G	2 vns, va, cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Passacaille	Op. 5 No. 4 (1739)	Passacaglia taken from <i>Terpsichore</i> ballet music (1734)	Between 1734 and 1739
313	Concerto Grosso in B-Flat	2 ob, 2 vn, 2 vc, str, cont.	5 <sup>th</sup>	Op. 3 No. 2 (1734)		c. 1712-33
323	Concerto Grosso in D	2 vn, vc, str, cont.	5 <sup>th</sup> - Menuet	Op. 6 No. 5 (1740)	2 ob added later; Menuet taken from Overture to Ode for St. Cecilia's Day	Autograph dated 1739
330	Concerto Grosso in B Minor	2 vn, vc, str, cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Larghetto, e piano; Variatio	Op. 6 No. 12 (1740)		Autograph dated 1739
289	Organ Concerto in G Minor	Org, 2 ob, str, cont.	4 <sup>th</sup> - Andante	Op. 4 No. 1 (1738)	Alternate version as finale of Trio Sonata in F Op. 5 No. 6 (rejected when published)	1 <sup>st</sup> performed 1736
306	Organ Concerto in B-flat	Org, 2 ob, 2 bn, str, cont.	1 <sup>st</sup> - Andante	Op. 7 No. 1 (1761)	Includes material from HWV 432/6	Autograph dated 1740
310	Organ Concerto in B-flat	Org, 2 ob, str, cont.	3 <sup>rd</sup> - Andante larghetto e staccato	Op. 7 No. 5 (1761)		Autograph dated 1750

There are twelve authentic keyboard variation sets, plus a further incomplete work for two keyboards, one ensemble sonata movement, three concerti grossi variation

movements, and three sets in the organ concertos.<sup>193</sup> The variation sets in the concerti grossi are scored for full ripieno ensemble without contrasting concertino for individual variations. The works listed in Table 8 can be examined in three groups based on scoring and texture: 1) keyboard works, 2) concerti grossi, and 3) solo concertos.<sup>194</sup> This division also reveals the similar methods of organization in the first two classes while highlighting the influence of textual resources in the solo concerto medium.

### *Keyboard Sets*

The most common approach to structure in the keyboard sets is a series of increasingly brilliant variations, typically combining the techniques of mirroring and progressive diminution. The most coherent of these end-oriented climactic sets is the theme with five variations from the Suite in E HWV 430, commonly known as the “Harmonious Blacksmith.” After the binary-form theme there are two pairs of variations, each linked by mirroring, and a final variation that divides the figuration between both hands. At the same time the rhythms are progressively shortened from eighth notes in the theme, to sixteenth notes in Variations One and Two, sixteenth-note triplets in Variations Three and Four, and 32<sup>nd</sup>-note flourishes in the final variation. The ending achieves a strong sense of closure through two factors: 1) progressive diminution heightens the tension until it reaches what seems to be the

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<sup>193</sup> The Gavotte from the Suite in G HWV 441, along with most of the other movements in the suite, is considered to be of doubtful authenticity. See the HHA, Band 4.7, 93. The structure of the Chaconne from the Suite in C Minor for Two Harpsichords HWV 446 cannot be analyzed effectively on the basis of the sole surviving keyboard part.

<sup>194</sup> The Trio Sonata Op. 5 No. 4 HWV 399 is discussed alongside the Chaconne HWV 435 with which it shares a broadly similar structure.

upper limit of rapid execution, giving the entire movement a directional shape, and 2) after beginning with both hands moving simultaneously in eighth notes, the two hands are distinguished from one another through mirroring during the central variations, being melded back together in the final variation for a sense of return. The latter method alone suggests completion, particularly as it balances the theme to create a symmetrical structure of theme (both hands equal) + four variations (both hands alternately dominant) + final variation (both hands equal). The directional aspect of the progressive diminution enhances the conclusion by providing a readily apparent goal-oriented climax. Furthermore, each variation is a necessary part of the scheme and the piece would suffer if any section was removed or more variations were added.<sup>195</sup>

On the other hand, most of Handel's goal-oriented sets tend to have at least one variation that does not seem to fit into a logical sequence and could conceivably be relocated, removed, or at least replaced by another variation without damaging the background structure of the entire set. This is one aspect of the lack of coherence that critics have seized upon.<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, Handel was still capable of making a satisfying conclusion even when one or two variations seem to defy organizational explanation. For example, the Passacaille in G Minor HWV 432/6 consists of sixteen statements of the ostinato pattern, divided into two equal halves. The first half is mostly devoted to variations in eighth notes while sixteenth notes dominate variations in the second half, with Statements Six through Eight making a sort of transition from

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<sup>195</sup> The division between the hands in the final variation was one of the revisions made for the final version of the work.

<sup>196</sup> See Sisman, "Variations," 284.

eighths to sixteenths (via eighth-note triplets and dotted-eighth + sixteenth figures). Over this subtle background progression, there are some smaller middle ground groupings of variations, most notably Statements Three to Five (the right hand figures of Statement Three are passed to the left hand in Statement Four before being taken up by both hands in Statement Five), which add to a general sense of growing activity. The ending is prepared first by placing the most harmonically divergent variations (Statements Twelve and Thirteen) near the end, in the same general position that variations in the contrasting mode occur in Vivaldi's works, usually signaling that the end is nearing. Finally, the last three variations form a group, similar to the grouping of Statements Three through Five, with sixteenth-note arpeggios in the left hand for Statement Fourteen, moving to the right hand in Statement Fifteen, and played by both hands simultaneously in the final statement. This trio of variations is not only a final build to a climax, but coming at the end of the second half of the movement it is also the most rhythmically florid variation in the entire piece.

The chromatic harmonies of Statements Twelve and Thirteen combined with the sequence of the final three variations provide a perceptible sense of closure. However several of the variations leading to this conclusion seem a little out of place. For example, Statement Thirteen is very similar to Statement Twelve except that the right hand Alberti bass-like pattern has been shifted into a higher register.

Figure 26- HWV 432, Statements 12 &amp; 13

*Statement 12 (Opening)*

Musical notation for Statement 12 (Opening). The score is for keyboard (Kbd) in G minor, 3/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays a continuous eighth-note figure: G4-A4-Bb4-C5-D5-E5-F5-G5. The left hand (bass clef) plays a harmonic accompaniment consisting of chords: G4-Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5.

*Statement 13 (Opening)*

Musical notation for Statement 13 (Opening). The score is for keyboard (Kbd) in G minor, 3/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays a continuous eighth-note figure: G4-A4-Bb4-C5-D5-E5-F5-G5. The left hand (bass clef) plays a harmonic accompaniment consisting of chords: G4-Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5.

Statements Twelve and Thirteen make an obvious pairing because they both use the same chromatic harmonies, but in a movement that tends to use mirroring, it seems strange to have two nearly identical consecutive variations with the figuration assigned to the same hand for both. Since the right hand plays somewhat similar figures in Statement Eleven, perhaps Statement Twelve could have given the figures to the left hand, preserving the alternation between hands for the entire second half of the movement.

Figure 27- Sequence of Statements 9-16, HWV 432/6

(As Written)

Statement:	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Figuration:	R.H.	L.H.	R.H.	R.H.	R.H.	L.H.	R.H.	Both

(Could Have Been)

Figuration:	R.H.	L.H.	R.H.	<b>L.H.</b>	R.H.	L.H.	R.H.	Both
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This particular arrangement may not necessarily represent an aesthetic improvement, since perhaps the intent was to break up the monotony of alternating dominant hands,

at the risk of placing two nearly identical variations back to back. Yet Statement Twelve could conceivably be replaced by another variation without really damaging the background structure, provided the replacement shared the same chromatic harmonies and figuration pattern as Statement Thirteen. To remove the variation entirely would upset the balance of the two halves of the movement and would leave Statement Thirteen as the only variation with chromatic harmony, potentially weakening the impact of the ending. In that sense, the specific variation in the location of Statement Twelve functions as a placeholder, filling a needed spot in the background structure but not necessarily being the only variation that could occupy that position. The same could be said for the variation at Statement Eleven, which has even fewer requirements to fill since it is not part of a pair and does not use chromatic harmonies.<sup>197</sup>

While the Passacaille still manages to achieve closure and a general sense of direction, the oddly placed or overly similar variations in some of Handel's other sets seem to weaken the sense of structural progression. The similarity between the first and fifth variation of the Air with 5 Variations HWV 494/3 suggests a return to the sixteenth-note motion of the first two variations after a modest relaxation into eighth-note triplets for Variations Three and Four, but the increased activity of the left hand in the fifth variation (especially near the end of the variation) hints at an attempt to make a more brilliant conclusion.<sup>198</sup> The problem with the structure of this set is that

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<sup>197</sup> Likewise the first variation (Statement Two) is a rather odd transition from Statement One (simplifying the right hand of the theme) to Statement Three; both share continuous eighth-note motion, but the left-hand octaves are very grandiose in comparison with the surrounding material and seem to overpower the buildup of Statements Three to Five. The first variation might fit better into the flow of the movement if it had been placed right after Statement Five.

<sup>198</sup> The left hand of the first half of both variations is almost identical.

it is not entirely convincing as either a circular or goal-oriented structure. The level of contrast between Variations One, Two, Five, and the variations they enclose is far too subtle (and too briefly sustained) for a return to make real sense (unless perhaps it is to be the first of several returns after increasingly contrasting departures). By the same measure, the contrast between the first and fifth variations is not sufficient to make the final variation seem climactic, and the intervening variations seem less energized so it can hardly serve as a resolution. Without a clear function, the final variation seems inconclusive. If it were not for the chords in the final bar, the listener might expect more variations to follow, and even with the chords there is little to prevent further variations from having been added.<sup>199</sup>

A few of the works arrange the variations in the same open-ended way that Corelli's Op. 5 No. 5 variation set is organized: the theme is followed by one variation with elaboration in the upper voice and another variation with elaboration in the lower voice. Such is the case with the famous Saraband in D Minor HWV 437/3 and the F Major Air HWV 465. Handel used a similar design in the Menuetto in D Minor HWV 436/5, but this time he added a further variation that gives the elaboration to both hands simultaneously. He thus unites the voices for an effective ending that, although lacking progressive diminution, is reminiscent of the conclusion to the E Major variations HWV 430/4.

The structures of the three large chaconnes, HWV 435, 442/2, and 484 (with 20/21 variations, 62 variations, and 49 variations respectively) are difficult to assess

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<sup>199</sup> If the repeat marks are observed, the concluding effect of these chords is somewhat strengthened, since the first time around they can be heard as a signal that the end is approaching. The original version of this movement had an additional arpeggio variation at the end of this movement, which was later removed. See HHA, Band 4.7, 74.

from the state of the surviving texts.<sup>200</sup> Of the five versions of HWV 435, the editors of the HHA believe the fifth version is the most authoritative, whereas the text published in the 1733 edition is probably a corruption of the fourth version of the work.<sup>201</sup> Yet the ending of the fifth version seems rather abrupt and is neither climax nor resolution.

Figure 28- HWV 435, Endings of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Versions

*Ending in Version 5*

*Ending in Version 4 (1733)*

The 1733 version ends by bringing the music back to the chordal nature of the theme that opens the work, a circular ending that is thwarted in the fifth version.<sup>202</sup> A

<sup>200</sup> The length of HWV 435 varies throughout its five versions.

<sup>201</sup> Terence Best, *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Serie IV: Instrumental Music, Volume 7: Critical Notes for Keyboard Music I-IV (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000): 76-77.

<sup>202</sup> The final bars of the revised ending seem to contradict the climactic surge of the final three variations.

circular structure is also present through the return to major mode after the contrasting minor-mode section (Variations Nine through Sixteen), a strategy used elsewhere in the Passacaille in G from the Trio Sonata Op. 5 No. 4 HWV 399. The other long chaconnes, despite some sections of highly organized variations, lack passages in a contrasting mode. They do not seem to be performable as they are preserved since both end very abruptly and contain multiple variations that come across as being either dispensable or misplaced.<sup>203</sup>

The Chaconne in G Minor HWV 486 presents one more layout: a hybrid variation-rondo structure. The full refrain makes varied reprises in different keys and it also periodically makes partial literal reappearances in the tonic key, while the intervening episodes are based on free material and usually modulate. Despite the shifting tonal areas and periodic restatements, elements found in Vivaldi's variation output, the episodes are more substantial than in Vivaldi's works. Furthermore, the literal reprises are abbreviated (Vivaldi's are complete), and the music fluctuates between G Minor and B-Flat Major, whereas Vivaldi typically does not leave the home key once he has returned to it. This movement has much more in common with French stage chaconnes, where the returns of the refrain are just as likely to be literal as varied, and with sections of contrasting mode, texture, and material.<sup>204</sup> The form

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<sup>203</sup> Howard Schott observes that the Chaconne HWV 442/2 is probably incomplete and should be performed by selecting and rearranging the variations into a logical sequence. See Howard Schott, *Playing the Harpsichord* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971; reprint, with a foreword by the author, New York: Dover Publications, 2002): 68-69. For HWV 484 the HHA places an editorial literal reprise of the theme at the end of the set to provide some sense of an ending.

<sup>204</sup> Silbiger, "Chaconne," 415.

of this piece is unique among Handel's output and may be a transcription of a lost orchestral or stage work.<sup>205</sup>

### *Concerto Grosso Movements*

In addition to a movement with a single varied reprise (the finale of Op. 6 No. 10), there are three variation sets in Handel's concerti grossi. The finales of Op. 3 No. 2 and Op. 6 No. 5 both consist of a binary-form theme followed by two variations, figuration moving from the lower voices in the first variation to the upper voices in the second. This is the same open-ended structure encountered in Corelli's Op. 5 No. 5 and some of Handel's keyboard sets (although in these works the upper voice is elaborated first). By comparison, Op. 3 No. 2 has a clearer directional structure because it incorporates progressive diminution: the eighth notes of the lower voices in Variation One become eighth-note triplets in Variation Two. Here the plan resembles Rameau's *Niais de Sologne* variation set, but Handel's set lacks the codetta that brings closure to the Rameau work. Despite goal-oriented tendencies it is still an open-ended background structure.

The third movement of Op. 6 No. 12 provides closure by nestling the two variations into a single continuous "variatio." The theme itself is in binary form, and each half is surrounded by repeat marks.

### **Figure 29- Structure of HWV 330/3**

Theme:  $m + m + n + n$

Variatio:  $m^1 + m^2 + n^1 + (n^2 + n)$

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<sup>205</sup> It is preserved in a source where many of the surrounding works are transcriptions of orchestral works. See HHA, Band 4.7, p. 20, 139-140.

For the *variatio*, the first statement of each half is heard with elaboration in the lower voice while the repetition is written out so that the second statement of each half can be supplied with elaboration in the upper voice. Thus there are really two variations of the original, and Handel utilizes the notion of varying the repetitions of each half of the binary form to interweave the two variations.<sup>206</sup> Closure is provided when, in the final four bars, the upper voice (unison violins) passes the continuous eighth notes of Variation Two back to the bass line and reverts to the unelaborated form of the final bars of the theme. This mid-phrase literal reprise of the theme, further enhanced when the bass line also abandons the eighths for the final two bars and the dynamic level returns to *forte* after having been *piano*, gives the movement a circular structure with a gentle rise in energy for most of the *variatio* that is calmed at the very end. It is almost inconceivable that further variations could follow; additional elaboration would not add anything beneficial to the structure, and further literal reprises of the final four bars would quickly lose effect. In light of the criticisms of eighteenth-century variation forms, this is the most satisfactory structure of the variation sets in the *concerti grossi*, and the formal plan is unique among the works examined in the present study.

### *Solo Concerto Variation Sets*

The first movement of the Organ Concerto Op. 7 No. 1 HWV 306 is undoubtedly Handel's most sophisticated variation set, exceeding even Vivaldi's

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<sup>206</sup> A similar nested effect, albeit involving a theme and a single variation, is found in Vivaldi's Op. 1 No. 11. See Interlude II.

most complex background structures by using two contrasting themes as a basis for variations as well as drawing upon the techniques of modulation, progressive diminution, transitional free material, changing meter, and textural contrasts made available from the solo concerto medium.

**Table 9- Background Structure of HWV 306/1**

Measures	Section	Key	Organization	Theme
1-4	Introduction	B-flat		
5-24	1	B-flat	Progressive Diminution	1 (4/4 meter, tonic-requiring)
25-26	Transition	Modulates to F		
27-40	2	F	Progressive Diminution	1 (4/4 meter, tonic-requiring)
41-42	Transition	Modulates to G Minor		
43-59	3	G Minor	Scoring contrasts	2 (4/4 meter, tonic-providing)
60-66	Transition	Modulates to B-flat		
67-194	4	B-flat	Scoring contrasts	1 (3/4 meter, tonic-providing)

The entire set can be divided into a four-part scheme. Sections one and two are based on the first, tonic-requiring ostinato bass theme in duple metre. The first section (measures 1-26) is in B flat and modulates to F at the end, the second section (measures 27-42), in F, concludes with a modulation to G Minor. The third section (measures 43-66) adopts a new theme, a tonic-providing ostinato in G minor, for ten statements. The final section returns to the first theme, in B flat, for an additional sixteen statements, but now the theme is in 3/4 and a tonic ending is provided for each statement. This may seem to resemble the form of many Baroque concerto movements, but it lacks the distinction between orchestral ritornellos that stay within

a key and solo passages that modulate. The divisions between these sections are heightened by the presence of transitional, modulatory passages that use free material involving both organ and orchestra. The movement opens with a series of short exchanges between the organ and orchestra based on motives from the first theme (the first half of the theme makes an appearance in measure 2). The ostinato gets underway in bar 5. The variations are interrupted in measure 25 to effect a modulation to F Major, and the full ensemble returns to the regal rhythms of the opening bars. This device is used again to make a transition from section two into section three. The end of the third section recalls the opening almost literally, to prepare the listener for the return to the first theme after an absence of forty-four bars. These interruptions, all of which function harmonically, act as dividers between the four groups of variations, akin to modulatory free passages in Vivaldi's variation sets. With Handel, the passages all share a strong affinity with the opening of the movement and are therefore more organic than Vivaldi's free passages.

The sequence of the variations within each section further supports the identification of four principal background sections.<sup>207</sup> The movement's first ten statements are grouped into five pairs, with the first variation of each pair repeated as the second, contrasted either by texture (a solo variation repeated by the orchestra) or as a softer echo. The five pairs build to a climax through progressive diminution from sixteenths, to triplets, to thirty-seconds, combined with increasing textural thickness. The transitional passage following Statement A10 concludes this growth by returning to the dotted-eighth + sixteenth-note groupings of the opening bars, after

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<sup>207</sup> In the following discussion, the first theme is labeled A (statements being A1, A2, etc.) and statements of the second theme, identical to the Passacaille in G Minor HWV 432/6, are represented as B1, B2, etc.

which the statements in section two start another build to a climax of rhythmic intensity. The third section abandons progressive diminution in favor of textural contrasts to create a logical structure. The relationship between organ and orchestra in this section can be diagrammed as follows:

**Figure 30- Structure of Section 3 of HWV 306/1**

Statement:	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10
Scoring:	Org.	Orch.	Orch.	Orch.	Orch.	Both	Org.	Org.	Org.	Org.
	↑	↑				↑	↑			
		Echo					Echo			

There are two groups of five variations in this section, each half opening with a pair of variations where the second variation echoes the first, and containing three further variations scored for either the orchestra or the organ. In the previous two sections of the movement the organ and orchestra either alternated frequently or played simultaneously. The third section increases the temporal separation between the two entities by isolating each one for several contiguous variations, making the absence of either the organ or the orchestra more strongly felt. In this respect the relationship between the soloist and ensemble is reminiscent of a work like Vivaldi's RV 406 or 473, except that Handel assigns variations to the orchestra rather than limiting their contribution to literal reprises of the theme. This is not to say the forces are opposed in an antagonistic manner, since the pair of related variations that begins each half can be viewed as a transition, or passing of the torch, from the organ to the orchestra and vice versa. The final section is more complicated, but it is sufficient to say that Handel continues to use textural contrasts, this time between organ solo,

organ accompanied by strings, and orchestra (without organ), generally grouping variations into pairs with similar material.

The background structure provides circular closure through the return to the home key of B-flat and the first theme. The ending also assumes a directional aspect because the first theme is slightly modified upon its return and the meter has been changed. Within the fourth section, Handel signals the approach of the ending by including the only variation with chromatic inflections near the very end (Statement A30, also the only statement marked with repeats, giving added emphasis), similar to the strategy in the Passacaille in G Minor HWV 432/6 and the Chaconne in C HWV 484. Also, after a long period of alternating between organ and orchestra variations, Statement A29 is an orchestral variation that adopts a sarabande rhythm (quarter, dotted quarter, eighth) in the outer voices for extra grandeur before three consecutive solo variations (the last solo variations in the movement).<sup>208</sup> The movement is then capped off with a final orchestral variation where all parts play the sarabande rhythm, the chordal nature of the passage harkening back to the dotted rhythms and chords that led to the fourth section as well as the beginning of the entire movement. Combining these factors with the background structure, the ending is effectively conclusive and there is little sense that further variations could have been provided.

Of the remaining organ concerto variation movements, the most detailed structure is that of the third movement of the concerto Op. 7 No. 5 in G Minor HWV

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<sup>208</sup> The sarabande rhythm is discussed in Richard Hudson and Meredith Ellis Little, "Sarabande," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 22: 273-277.

310.<sup>209</sup> In that set the eighteen statements of a B-flat major tonic-requiring ostinato divide into the following sections:

**Table 10- Background Structure of HWV 310/3**

<b>Section</b>	Statement 1 & 2	Statements 3-17	Statement 18
<b>Function</b>	Frame	Solo variations	Frame
<b>Scoring</b>	Solo organ (Statement 1), strings (Statement 2)	Organ w/ strings	Organ w/ strings

The ostinato pattern, with both pitch and rhythm as obstinate elements, is played unadorned in the opening two statements, first by solo organ and then by strings alone. Once again Handel has distinguished the orchestra and soloist as separate musical forces, for although they share the same material they are introduced individually. When the ostinato returns without figurative elaboration in the final bars, the organ and orchestra both play the pattern, thus uniting. During the interior variations, the soloist presents the elaborations while the orchestra continues in a supporting role with the basic ostinato, and the variations are divided into two halves (Statements Three through Nine and Ten through Seventeen) each of which is loosely organized according the principle of progressive diminution. Also, Handel places three variations with greater harmonic license near the middle of the movement (Statements Ten through Twelve), resembling the harmonic tension curve of Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12 variation set. Some of the individual variations are similar enough to others that Handel could have made some substitutions or omissions, but the general outline reaches an effective conclusion, with the circular return of the unelaborated

<sup>209</sup> Evidence from the autograph suggests Handel experienced some difficulty establishing the order of the variations in this movement. See HHA, Band 4.8, XXII.

ostinato amplified by sustained chords in the right hand of the organ part for a fuller-sounding end.<sup>210</sup>

There is no such closure in the finale of the concerto Op. 4 No. 1 HWV 289. While there is a slight increase in intensity between the two variations, the level of contrast is modest and there is nothing about the second variation that either signals an ending or prevents further variations from ensuing. On the other hand, there is an orchestral ritornello HWV 343<sup>b</sup> dating from c. 1739 that might have been used to conclude a concerto performance of part of the Chaconne in G HWV 435 or a very similar work. A continuo bass is directed to “repetatur ad libitum” for an opening section in G Major, followed by a “tacet” for a G minor section after which a four-voice ensemble of strings and oboes performs an eight-bar ritornello in G major. Without knowing the exact nature of the variations, which may have been improvised, all that can be said is that the thicker ensemble texture of the return to G major at the end of the work was probably meant to provide a clearer sense of closure.

Of the composers' works examined in this study, Vivaldi was alone in placing a codetta, literal reprise, or some other form of recognizable conclusion at the end of each variation set. His circular structures, such as with RV 387, tend to travel farther harmonically than similar plans in Corelli's Op. 1 No. 12 and Op. 2 No. 12, changing mode or modulating to new tonal areas for several consecutive variations. Some of Handel's sets share Vivaldi's harmonic contrasts, and both composers sometimes framed sets by a return to the characteristics of the opening statement, although

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<sup>210</sup> In the final statement the orchestra plays *forte* for the first time since it entered in Statement Two.

Handel tended to either recall only a portion of the opening (often the final bars) or to add an additional element (ex. full ensemble instead of organ only) to make the reprise sound somewhat more substantial than the opening of the movement.

Progressive diminution is the most common technique used to build towards a final climax in sets with directional structures, sometimes incorporating mirroring to expand the length of the set. Rameau and Handel used mirroring much more extensively than Vivaldi, probably due to their experience performing and composing for the keyboard, for which mirroring was a favored device.<sup>211</sup> Yet Corelli and Vivaldi, as with Purcell's *Chacony in G Minor* and *3 Parts Upon a Ground in D*, incorporated mirroring and imitative writing in ensemble variation sets. Vivaldi and Handel stand out, along with Corelli's *Ciaccona Op. 2 No. 12*, for using the device to articulate blocks of variations as units in the background structure of the set and combining this feature with other strategies, such as harmonic diversity or textural contrasts, to create a richer array of formal plans.

The most important difference between Vivaldi and Handel in the solo concerto medium is that Handel (Op. 7 No. 1) added the possibility of giving entire variations to the orchestra with the soloist either silent or in a supportive role. Most of Handel's orchestral variations are repetitions of preceding organ variations, but some are not paired with solo statements and represent a unique contribution to the material in the movement. Vivaldi clearly divided the roles of the forces so that the soloist is responsible for the variations while, in most cases, the orchestra is limited to the first presentation, ostinato repetition, and concluding reprise of the theme. When Mozart included variation movements in some of his piano concertos during the

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<sup>211</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 292, 300.

1780s, he tended towards Vivaldi's division of labor: the orchestra sometimes introduces a new variation but the piano eventually takes its own turn with the same variation, adding something new that asserts the importance of the soloist in the musical discourse. Mozart even wrote at least one work with a structure remarkably similar to Vivaldi's RV 406, 419, and 473; the Rondo in D K. 382 (1782) is really a variation form where the first statement makes periodic literal reprises and the orchestra dominates the literal returns while the variations highlight the piano.<sup>212</sup>

Vivaldi is also the only composer to include solo codettas before the final statement of the theme, although Vivaldi, Corelli, and Rameau placed codettas at the very end of the movement. In most cases the codetta is a cadential progression, repeating the end of the last statement or assuming a brilliant figuration pattern to end the set with a final flourish. Whether or not the codetta is the apparent result of an ongoing sequence of variations, this device is among the most effective ways to signal the end of a variation set. In fact, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven eventually expanded the codetta into a full-length coda, freeing it from being a mere repetition or extension of the preceding reprise.<sup>213</sup>

On the whole Vivaldi's variation sets stand in the middle ground, more sectional than Purcell's or Cavalli's but generally not as fragmented as the flow of some of Handel's sets. Vivaldi, Corelli, Rameau, and Handel all wrote some variation sets with strongly sectional character, placing sustained notes at the final cadences of each variation. Vivaldi, Handel, and Corelli sometimes used phrase extensions, extended upbeats, and cadential tails to continue momentum from one

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<sup>212</sup> Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, 41.

<sup>213</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 301-309.

variation into the next. Corelli, as with Purcell and other members of that earlier generation, sometimes overlapped the phrases further, such as ending one phrase in the middle of the next statement of the ostinato.<sup>214</sup> This latter approach is absent from Vivaldi sets.

While Vivaldi used many techniques not found in the other composers' variation sets, such as arranging the variations according to cadential register, including solo codettas, and incorporating periodic literal reprises, there are still other strategies used by Baroque composers that are not found in Vivaldi's works. Purcell often placed the simplest variations near the center or final portion of his sets, and Handel, Corelli, and Frescobaldi sometimes varied two themes within the same work. Vivaldi's innovations are with respect to the marriage of variation forms and the solo concerto, the role of the soloist and orchestra, the inclusion of solo codettas, the contrasts between periodic literal reprises and solo variations, and the frequent emphasis on formal coherence and closure.

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<sup>214</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 82.

## Interlude II- Variation Forms and Their Influence on Vivaldi's Other Instrumental Works

Chapter Two highlighted examples of how ritornello form and contrasts between solo and tutti sections appear to have influenced Vivaldi's variation sets. The use of harmonic ostinato and variation technique, the main structural principles of variation form, surface throughout Vivaldi's instrumental works. This suggests that the influence between variation forms and other works was mutual. What makes the variation sets so atypical of his instrumental output is that they are the only works that apply the concepts of harmonic ostinato and variation technique simultaneously for an entire piece.

### Ostinato

In Vivaldi's variation sets, the theme takes the form of a harmonic ostinato (either an ostinato bass line or a continually repeating harmonic progression), of which the repetitions always remind the listener of the theme that is being varied. Vivaldi used several types of ostinati in the greater portion of his works, but the harmonic ostinato is relatively rare, almost always used in tandem with variations.

The first movement of the Concerto for Strings in G Minor RV 156 is perhaps the closest Vivaldi comes to using a harmonic ostinato that does not support a series of variations. The principal harmonic progression (measures 1-4) is repeated eleven times in the course of the movement (77 total bars), and it is a version of the descending chromatic tetrachord (Component x<sup>1</sup>) with a short addition at the end. In fact, the entire opening passage of this movement bears several similarities to the first

movement of RV 157: the key of G Minor, the pitches and steady rhythms of the bass line, the quadruple metre, the viola moving in parallel tenths with the bass line, and the delayed entrance of the second violins that resembles a canonic imitation of the preceding phrase of the first violin part. However, the resemblance to a tonic-requiring ostinato variation movement is dispelled in measure 8, when the harmonic scheme switches to a new pattern (a sequence of descending fifths) and the violins imitate each other at half-bar intervals. This is not an interruption of an ostinato, but a second thematic cell in a ritornello complex, a fact confirmed by the appearance of a third cell in measures 13-16.<sup>215</sup> The descending bass pattern recurs eleven times, but none are accompanied by variations. Despite the lack of variations, it can at least be said that the first thematic cell resembles, possibly even alludes to, an ostinato-variation type of variation set.<sup>216</sup> The work does not involve a solo instrument, so the solo episodes of ritornello form are replaced by shorter connective material, more statements of the ritornello material, and modulations to a greater than average number of tonal areas.

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<sup>215</sup> Karl Heller argues against considering this to be a true ritornello form movement, since it is based almost exclusively on the ritornello complex itself. A true ritornello, he argues, requires non-ritornello material that assumes substantial structural importance, thus a movement such as the opening of RV 156 presents a separate tradition that shares some similarities to the ritornello form used in solo concertos. Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 193-194. There does not appear to be a widely accepted alternative term for the form of this movement and others like it.

<sup>216</sup> On the possibility that this opening cell alludes to a chaconne or passacaglia, see Chapter Two.

**Table 11- Structure of RV 156, 1<sup>st</sup> movement**

Measures	Tonal Area	Section	Thematic Cells
1-16	G Minor	Ritornello I	A-A-B-C
17-18	(modulation)	Transition	J
19-34	D Minor	Ritornello II	A-A-B <sup>1</sup> -C
35-36	(modulation)	Transition	K
37-46	F Major	Ritornello III	A-A-B
46-49	(modulation)	Transition	J
50-57	B-Flat Major	Ritornello IV	A-A
57-59	(modulation)	Transition	L
60-67	C Minor	Ritornello V	A-A
67-69	(modulation)	Transition	A (portion)
70-77	G Minor	Ritornello VI	A-C

Note: the letters A-C refer to components or principal cells of the ritornello material;

J-L signify the principal motivic material used in transition passages

There are two processes of variation at work in this movement. The first involves tonal variation, since the ritornello is first heard in G Minor, and then recurs in D minor, F Major, B Flat Major, C Minor, and back to G Minor. In each new tonal area, some modifications are made (Component x<sup>1</sup> becomes Component x when the ritornello is in the Major mode). On another level, the changing makeup of the ritornello complex is an example of variation, as explained later in this chapter. However, the basic material of the principal thematic cell is not elaborated via figuration during its many recurrences, and thus this is not a variation-form movement. The kaleidoscopic variance of tonal centers and thematic cells is the sole method of providing contrast.

The *Largo* movement of the Violin Concerto in D RV 223 (Table 12)

represents a more complicated use of ostinato while incorporating a limited amount of variation.<sup>217</sup>

**Table 12- Structure of RV 223, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement**

Bars	Key	Section	Basso Components	Solo material
100-106	D Minor	Ripieno phrase	$x^1+y$	-
107-113	D Minor	Solo phrase One	$x^1+y$	A+B
114-116	Modulation	Solo phrase extension	-	-
117-120	A Minor	Solo phrase Two	$x^1$	A
121	Modulation	Solo phrase extension	-	-
122-131	D Minor	Solo phrase Three	$x^1+y^1+new$	A+B <sup>1</sup> +new
132-137	D Minor	Solo phrase Four	$x^1+new$	A <sup>1</sup> +new
137-140	D Minor	Ripieno cadential phrase	$y^1$	-

Note: 'A' is the melodic material used in conjunction with Component  $x^1$  while 'B' is used with Component  $y$ .

Almost all of the accompanying ripieno material is set to a rhythmic ostinato (in triple metre: two quarter-note pulses and a quarter-rest), and the ripieno-only opening bars are a harmonization of Component  $x^1$  and Component  $y$ . In the four principal phrases

<sup>217</sup> In May 1971, when Ryom made his initial catalogue, the only known source of this work was a set of parts preserved in Paris. Subsequently, materials were discovered in Manchester (RV 762) that transmit the concerto in E Major. Due to the presence of autograph annotations, the Manchester version is currently presumed to be the more definitive version while the Paris version, probably a transposition of the work by an unknown copyist, has been withdrawn from the Ryom catalogue. However, since RV 223 is printed in the Malipiero edition and since the differences between RV 223 and RV 762 appear to be limited to choice of key, the structure of RV 223 can be treated as a stand-in for the presumably more authentic version (Ryom, *Répertoire*, 292, 348, 349).

with soloist, Component  $x^1$  is always reprised, but Component  $y$  is either omitted (solo phrase two) or transformed into Component  $y^1$  and followed by a phrase extension and cadential bars (third solo phrase). If this were a true variation movement, it is likely that Vivaldi would have either varied or literally reprised both Component  $x^1$  and Component  $y$  in the same phrase. The fact that Component  $x^1$  is heard in each principal solo phrase, usually unvaried, while Component  $y$  is treated more dispensably suggests that Component  $x^1$  is meant to be heard as the main recurring idea (the descending chromatic tetrachord being a widely-used *topos*, as discussed in the Conclusion) while Component  $y$  and Component  $y^1$  are used for their effectiveness as cadential progressions rather than obstinate elements in the harmonic scheme. This movement can be interpreted as a binary form movement (without repeats) with a return to tonic (solo phrase three) that begins with a literal reprise before diverging from the initial statement and a final solo codetta that elaborates the principal idea of the movement (the extra repetition perhaps causing the closing ripieno bars to dispense with Component  $x^1$ ). Like the parallel movements of Op. 4 No. 1 (RV 383a and its alternate version as RV 383) and Op. 8 No. 6 (RV 180), RV 223 is a work that occupies a middle ground between Vivaldi's variation sets and his most common practices for writing slow movements: a through-composed section dominated by the soloist (possibly framed by material for the accompanying ensemble), modulating chords that link two fast movements, or a binary-form movement (with or without repeats).<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> For more information on Vivaldi's slow movements, see the discussion of alternatives to ritornello form in Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 111; also Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 174-176.

The rhythmic ostinato is much more common in Vivaldi's oeuvre; in most cases a reference in the literature to an ostinato accompaniment is really referring to a rhythmic ostinato unless otherwise specified.<sup>219</sup> In a rhythmic ostinato, there may be a recurring melodic shape, such as a rising and falling arpeggio, but the exact harmonies and pitches change too frequently to be considered part of the ostinato element. Rhythmic ostinato is one of Vivaldi's frequent tactics for organizing the accompaniment voices in the slow movements of his concertos. A very familiar example is the slow movement of the "Spring" Violin Concerto (Op. 8 No. 1, RV 269). Beneath the solo violin's aria-like melodic line, the violins adopt one rhythmic ostinato while the viola assumes a different one.

**Figure 31- Accompaniment Ostinati in RV 269, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 5-7**

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4. The Violin I and Violin II staves are in treble clef and play a rhythmic ostinato of eighth notes. The Viola staff is in alto clef and plays a rhythmic ostinato of quarter notes and rests. The score covers measures 5, 6, and 7.

The violins play this same rhythmic pattern throughout the movement (the second violin is a freer in this respect, occasionally switching to a small group of eighth notes, as in bars 10 and 28), and the viola maintains its own rhythmic ostinato. However, rhythm is the only element subjected to true ostinato treatment in this movement. The pitch patterns played by the violins change quite often, as in the above example, where the third beat of the bar changes from one bar to the next.

<sup>219</sup> For example, in Selfridge-Field, *Venetian Instrumental Music*, 244

There are some parallel passages (measures 4-6 parallel the first three measures, transposed a fifth higher) and other passages where the bars descend in sequential motion, but the general melodic shape is treated rather flexibly. The same could be said for the harmonic structure of the piece. After establishing the tonic in the opening seven bars, the piece moves through a sequential progression (measures 8-15), and modulates to the key of the dominant (G-sharp Minor) where it cadences in measures 18 & 19. The opening key returns in bar 20, and the solo violin's melody alludes to the opening bars, but the harmonic scheme of the remainder of the movement differs considerably from the first half, focusing primarily on tonic, dominant, and subdominant harmonies. Thus it can be seen that when each of the elements- pitch, harmony, and rhythm- is isolated, only the rhythm of the accompaniment approaches a true ostinato.

Another famous example of a rhythmic ostinato is found in the slow movement of the Concerto in A Minor for Two Violins (Op. 3 No. 8, RV 522), although this work alludes to an ostinato rather than actually employing one. The figure played by the unison full ensemble in the first four measures represents the principal rhythmic idea of the accompaniment.

**Figure 32- Rhythmic Ostinato in RV 522, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, Measures 1-4**



The soloists enter in measure 5 while the accompaniment continues with this principal rhythmic idea. At first it appears that this figure represents more than a rhythmic ostinato, as the entire four-bar unit is repeated literally three times in the

first twelve bars, suggesting a rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ostinato. This is one of the relatively common types of beginnings for Vivaldi's slow movements.

However, at measure 13 the harmonic pattern is broken and does not return until it is heard once in the final bars of the movement. Similarly, the principal melodic and rhythmic motives of the opening bars (the downward octave leap, and the descending dactylic gesture) are also subjected to greater flexibility during the remainder of the piece.<sup>220</sup> In fact, the dactylic figure disappears entirely from the accompaniment in measures 31-40.

The impression generated by this movement (and others like it) is that it begins by alluding to the idea of an ostinato accompaniment (a melodic and rhythmic ostinato being alluded to longer than a harmonic ostinato) but eventually abandons strict use of ostinato in order to give the solo violins the dominant role in determining harmonies and phrasing.<sup>221</sup> Such abandonment typically occurs after two or three repetitions of a harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic pattern. From that point on, the accompaniment may treat only a single element as an ostinato (typically the rhythm) or may do away with ostinato altogether, continuing to allude to an ostinato by limiting the accompaniment to one or two principal rhythmic or melodic motives from the opening bars. Clearly, even though Vivaldi only rarely used a true harmonic ostinato, many of his works demonstrate the influence of the device or of the ostinato technique in general.

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<sup>220</sup> With regards to the melodic ostinato, Talbot mentions that, "groups of notes repeated at the same pitch," which he calls "ostinato figures," are commonly used by Vivaldi and are often used with as much harmonic freedom as a pedal point (Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 82).

<sup>221</sup> There are many similar examples in Vivaldi's works: the slow movements of Op. 3 No. 5 (RV 519), Op. 8 No. 4 (RV 297), Op. 8 No. 10 (RV 210), Op. 9 No. 10 (RV 236A), Op. 10 No. 3 (RV 428), Op. 12 No. 6 (RV 361), and the Cello Concerto in F (RV 412).

## Variations

On at least two occasions Vivaldi wrote instrumental works that use a single varied reprise. Technically, these works lack the number of variations needed to qualify as variation sets, and for this reason they do not raise the issue of how to organize a sequence of variations. Both works are in some respects unique among Vivaldi's output, but they show several similarities to the general concepts of variation form as used by Vivaldi elsewhere. The slow movement of RV 113 contains a seven-bar opening, a single varied reprise, and a literal reprise capped off with a cadential bar. The opening is very similar to the slow movement of RV 298 (especially the first violin and bass voices), and the recurring bass line is similar to those from the ostinato variation sets:

**Figure 33- Bass pattern of RV 113, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement**



This ostinato has Components  $x$  and  $y^1$ , and is heard three times in the movement. In light of the examples of single varied reprises from dance suites, the structure of this movement does not seem too out of the ordinary. What makes this piece unusual is that, unlike the sectional structure of a varied dance movement, each section of the  $A-A^1-A$  scheme is not a self-contained unit than closes with its own tonic cadence. The single variation focuses primarily on increasing the rhythmic intensity of the first

violin part. Furthermore, there is no free material in this movement to separate the reprises.<sup>222</sup> The overlapping nature of the ostinato repetitions brings this movement much closer to being an embryonic version of an ostinato variation set. I am not aware of any other Vivaldi movement to use an A-A<sup>1</sup>-A structure with overlapping ostinato repetitions.<sup>223</sup>

The finale (*Gavotta*) of the Trio Sonata in B Minor Op. 1 No. 11 (RV 79) may be Vivaldi's only instrumental work that resembles what Sisman refers to as the "alla ferrarese" varied structure, with "a series of open ended-phrases followed by varied repeats."<sup>224</sup> However, this structure, familiar from many pavans by English virginalists, usually involves at least three sections, each with its own varied repetition. RV 79 has only two sections, but while it is closer to the sectional, binary-form, dance-inspired constant-harmony themes of several of Vivaldi's variation movements, it resembles the *alla ferrarese* model insofar as it places the variation of each section of the binary form immediately after the initial presentation of the corresponding section (A-A<sup>1</sup>-B-B<sup>1</sup>) as opposed to Vivaldi's typical procedure of placing the varied reprises after the theme has been stated in its entirety (A-A<sup>1</sup>-A<sup>2</sup>;

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<sup>222</sup> Compare, for instance, RV 302 and 176, discussed below.

<sup>223</sup> Karl Heller has expressed doubts over the authenticity of this work, based on his study of the source material. See Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 192, 309. Currently he appears to be the only scholar to state such uncertainty regarding this work, although the fact that the opening of the second movement resembles the parallel movement in RV 298 raises the possibility that this may be an arrangement or imitation of material by Vivaldi. Nevertheless, as Chapter Two has shown, there are plenty of examples by Vivaldi of works that appear to be stylistically quite unique when examined on a deeper level. For an example of this stylistic problem, see Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 98, 170.

<sup>224</sup> Sisman, "Variations," 291, 292, traces the designation *alla ferrarese* to some pavans in J. A. Dalza's *Intabolatura di lauto* (1508) that distinguishes between the *pavana alla ferrarese* (AA<sup>1</sup>BB<sup>1</sup>CC<sup>1</sup>...) and the *pavana alla venetiana* (AA<sup>1</sup>A<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup>...), the latter being much closer to the forms used by Vivaldi.

this could also be expressed as  $\{A+B\}-\{A+B\}^1-\{A+B\}^2\dots$ .<sup>225</sup> Unlike the relatively symmetrical constant-harmony variation sets, the two halves of the theme are very unbalanced in length (four + twelve bars), and the first half of RV 79 comes to a half close rather than modulating to the key of the dominant (a trait shared only with RV 63 and 473). The form of this movement can also be explained as a written example of a performing tradition of varying the reprise of each half of a binary-form movement (such as discussed in connection with Corelli's famous *Gavotte*, Opus 5 No. 10), and in that sense it links Vivaldi's binary-form dance movements with his constant-harmony variation sets and the composition of variation sets with oral performing traditions.<sup>226</sup> As with Vivaldi's true variation sets, the figurative elaboration is given to the first violin only, while the other voices literally repeat the material they presented in the initial statement, so this again suggests that Vivaldi may have become familiar with variation techniques early in his career (Op. 1 was published c. 1703) partly through his own experience performing on the violin.<sup>227</sup>

The solo passages of several Vivaldi concertos reveal the influence of variation technique. The slow movement of the Violin Concerto in G RV 302 begins like a series of variations over a four-bar harmonic ostinato (played in three-part harmony by the orchestral violins and violas). Opening in E Minor, the first

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<sup>225</sup> It might be significant that this unique occurrence dates from 1703 or earlier, the period during which the equally unique *Follia* variations were written and before there is any evidence that Vivaldi started to write ostinato-variation movements. Perhaps something occurred between 1703 and 1710/11 (the point of composition of RV 298 and RV 407, the earliest dated variation sets by Vivaldi to use the ostinato-variation form) that prompted Vivaldi to explore other variation structures in lieu of those employed in Opus 1.

<sup>226</sup> Marc Pincherle, *Corelli: His Life, His Work*, Trans. Hubert E. M. Russell (New York: Norton, 1956): 116.

<sup>227</sup> For the publication date of Opus 1, see Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 34-35.

“statement” is dominated by quarter-note motion in the solo violin, followed by another statement where the soloist switches to more florid figuration in a manner strikingly similar to a true variation set. However, instead of a further statement, the next measures are a transitional modulation to the key of the dominant (B Minor). In a true variation set the modulation is followed by further variations, but in RV 302 the modulation is followed by a literal return of the theme (measure 133), unelaborated and transposed to the new key (see Figure 33).<sup>228</sup> A literal reprise of the theme so early in the course of the piece challenges classification of the movement as a variation set. Surprisingly, measures 137-140 present a new variation in the solo part, raising the possibility that the return in measures 133-136 could represent a ritornello or rondeau refrain. While a ritornello interpretation may hold true, the remainder of the movement extinguishes the notion that this piece is a variation set. There are modulations to several tonal areas, and each cadence is followed by a restatement of the theme in the new key, but no further variations are present and there is a relatively lengthy codetta that prolongs the soloist’s final cadence. Furthermore, unlike the variation sets discussed in Chapter Two, once the solo violin reaches its final cadential tonic the accompanying instruments add a three-bar postlude that does not recall the harmonic progression of the theme.

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<sup>228</sup> Even in RV 387, where the modulation to D Major is followed by a codetta before another modulation (to E Minor), the only material used between statements of the theme is modulatory or cadential.

**Figure 34- Structural Units of RV 302, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement**

Measures	Tonal Area	Material
122-125	E Minor (i)	A
126-129	E Minor (i)	A <sup>1</sup>
130-132	Modulation	Modulatory passage
133-136	B Minor (v)	A
137-140	B Minor (v)	A <sup>2</sup>
141-144	Modulation	Modulatory passage
145-148	A Minor (iv)	A
149-151	Modulation	Modulatory passage
152-155	C Major (VI)	A
156-158	Modulation	Modulatory passage
159-162	G Major (III)	A
163-167	Modulation	Modulatory passage
168-171	E Minor (i)	A
172-178	E Minor (i)	Extensive preparation of final cadence for soloist
179-181	E Minor (i)	Soloist cadences; then orchestra two bars later

While RV 302 uses the same harmonic progression frequently enough to strongly suggest a harmonic ostinato (based on Component x<sup>1</sup>), the use of variation technique is abandoned after the first third of the movement. It seems unlikely that Vivaldi intended this work to allude to a variation set since he does not maintain a sense of variation throughout the entire movement. Instead the movement seems to emphasize a contrast between variation in the first portion and a singularity of material in the remaining portion. It is true that the key of the reprises is varied, but this is necessary to avoid total monotony and it there is no compelling evidence that Vivaldi intended to shift the idea of “variation” from figuration-type to tonal center. There is one further possibility: Vivaldi may have intended this movement to serve a pedagogical function, providing two written variations and leaving a student to improvise or construct variations on the remaining reprises. Yet it is strange that the reprise at

measures 133-136 was left unvaried, which makes RV 302 rather unusual among Vivaldi's output.

In contrast, the slow movement of the Violin Concerto in C RV 176 could qualify as a partial compendium of violinistic figurations, so plentiful is the variety of figurations used, but there is no real allusion to an ostinato or common theme. The solo violin begins with quarter-note figuration, then continues through descending eighth-note arpeggios, sixteenth-note triplets and chains of trills, a phrase that mixes several rhythmic values, eighth-note chords, sixteenth-note arpeggiation, 32<sup>nd</sup>-note arpeggiation, and more eighth-note chords before returning to quarter notes for a calmer close. While a conjunct ascending bass line supports many of the individual phrases, the line changes multiple times and is often replaced by sequential modulations or even conjunct descending motion. The only portion of the bass that recurs often enough to command notice is the initial stepwise ascent from the first to the third scalar degree. Perhaps this is a hybrid movement that infuses some aspects of variation form into a through-composed solo concerto slow movement, but it is particularly odd that the changes of figuration in the solo part are not aligned with recurrences of a pattern in the bass.

A similar, but more delineated, additive approach to solo figuration is found in Op. 11 No. 2 (RV 277). The *Andante* is a through-composed movement that resembles an ostinato-variation structure because the accompanying voices (upper strings) play a rhythmic ostinato (continuous quarter notes) and each of the seven solo phrases adds a new figurative pattern while continuing to draw from the ever-expanding pool of solo figuration. However, this too is not a true variation movement

because there is no theme shared by more than one phrase; several of the solo phrases focus on modulation while other remain in a single key, and even the ripieno phrase that closes the movement has a different harmonic scheme than the opening ripieno phrase. This work, like the preceding examples, represents a relatively unique example among Vivaldi's instrumental compositions.

More commonly, the first solo episode in a concerto opens with a variation of material heard in the opening tutti ritornello (usually the opening or closing idea of the ritornello complex).<sup>229</sup> In most cases, Vivaldi seemed content to link the solo material to the tutti ritornello by opening the first solo with an unelaborated motive from the ritornello, but in the third movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 3 No. 6 (RV 356), the first solo episode goes further and actually elaborates several bars from the ritornello,<sup>230</sup>

**Figure 35- Beginning of Tutti and First Solo Episode, RV 356, 3<sup>rd</sup> Movement**

***Opening Tutti***



***First Solo Episode***



<sup>229</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 110.

<sup>230</sup> For a few of the many examples of opening solos quoting motives or entire phrases from a ritornello, see the first movement of the "Autumn" Concerto Op. 8 No. 3 (RV 293), the first movement of the Violin Concerto Op. 8 No. 7 (RV 242), the first and third movements of the Flute Concerto Op. 10 No. 4 (RV 435), the opening two movements of the Flute Concerto Op. 10 No. 5 (RV 434), and the finales of the Cello Concerto RV 424 and Oboe Concerto RV 451. Other examples of solos that elaborate a passage from a ritornello include the finales of the Violin Concerto Op. 9 No. 8 (RV 238) and the Flute Concerto Op. 10 No. 5 (RV 434).

The relationship between these two passages helps establish a stronger connection between the material of the soloist and the tutti ensemble, while allowing the soloist to emerge as the more technically brilliant voice.

Sometimes a solo episode near the end of a movement varies material from the first solo episode, as in the opening movement of the Violin Concerto Op. 8 No. 9 (RV 236).<sup>231</sup> Here the opening of the first solo passage (measures 22-25) is varied upon one of its two returns (measures 87-90).

**Figure 36- Varied Material in Solo Episodes, RV 236, 1<sup>st</sup> Movement**

*Measures 22-25*



*Measures 87-90*



Even when not written, the possibility exists that literal returns of a solo passage may have been elaborated in performance.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>231</sup> The autograph version of this concerto (RV 454) is for oboe. The relationship between the solo episodes in this work, all of which share certain motivic or rhythmic features, is discussed in Everett, *Four Seasons*, 47-48.

<sup>232</sup> Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 109; Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 64-65. Reprises of solo episodes are more common in Vivaldi's later works. See Heller, op. cit., 174. Examples include: the Violin Concerto in D Minor RV 242 (Op. 8 No. 7, third movement), the Violin Concerto in C RV 181a (Op. 9 No. 1, first movement), the Violin Concerto in D RV 207 (Op. 11 No. 1, third movement), the Concerto in F for Three Violins RV 551 (first movement), the Bassoon Concerto in A Minor RV 498 (first movement), and the Mandolin Concerto in C RV 425 (third movement).

Variations also play an important role in Vivaldi's concept of ritornello form, especially in his treatment of the ritornello material. Particularly in his later works, Vivaldi tended to construct the ritornello complex as a group of contrasting smaller units; each unit built upon one or two principal motives. Talbot calls these smaller units "elements," while Heller describes these as "sections" or "group of motifs."<sup>233</sup> The present study refers to these units as "thematic cells" or "ritornello units," both terms being used interchangeably. During the several returns of the ritornello throughout the course of the movement, the ritornello may be varied not so much through the application of figurative ornamentation as by omitting or changing the order of certain cells from the opening ritornello statement.<sup>234</sup> Ritornello form already suggests a loose link to the concept of an ostinato (by means of a recurring musical idea), and Vivaldi's treatment of the ritornello as a divisible and kaleidoscopic structure may be another manifestation of the same impulse that led to the use of variation forms.

The concepts of ostinato and variation pervade much of Vivaldi's instrumental music, and they underline several important aspects of the ritornello form he so often drew upon. Thus, while Vivaldi's variation sets do not constitute a large portion of his creative production, they are but one manifestation of the deeper issues of continuity and change. The similarities in construction between variation sets and other works suggest a free exchange of ideas between different forms. For Vivaldi,

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<sup>233</sup> Caution should be applied when labeling these ritornello units "motives," as the term is perhaps too vague and versatile for this context. Indeed, the typical cell or section of a ritornello could be interpreted as using several different motives, repeated many times. A cell tends to focus on a motif or small group of motifs. The next ritornello unit usually takes up a new group of motifs.

<sup>234</sup> For diagrams of this procedure used in specific works, see Talbot, *Vivaldi*, 109; and Heller, *Antonio Vivaldi*, 65.

variation and ostinato transcend form and genre to become an integral part of his compositional style.

## Conclusion: Vivaldi as Innovator

This study has challenged the assumption that Vivaldi's variation sets do not represent important contributions to the history of variation forms. Vivaldi's sets appear to occupy a unique position with respect to the history of variation forms, the solo concerto, and Vivaldi's instrumental output. They are perhaps the first body of variation forms to surface in the guise of concerto movements, and they stand out among the sets of Vivaldi's contemporaries for the level of formal coherence and closure they demonstrate. The research shows that Vivaldi foreshadowed some of the innovations Sisman attributes to Haydn, such as the placement of variation forms in every movement of the multi-movement cycle. This study assumes a place among examinations of individual variation sets, contributing towards a comprehensive investigation of background structure in Baroque variation sets that may one day provide a better understanding of the significance of these works.

Several questions remain for future research. Did Vivaldi's approach to variation forms evolve over time? A transition may have occurred between 1703 and 1710, since the changing character of the variations in RV 63 and the form of the single varied reprise in Op. 1 No. 11 disappeared from his variation sets, to be replaced by the ostinato-variation type and constant harmony sets with consistent tempo and metre. A further option may have been added to his compositional palette when the periodic literal reprise was used in works that probably date from the 1720s or later. However there is not enough chronological evidence to permit conjecture over whether Vivaldi became more concerned with the issues of coherence and closure as the decades progressed.

This investigation only looked at variation sets by a few of Vivaldi's predecessors and contemporaries: were there specific models by other composers that influenced the innovations in Vivaldi's variation sets? Perhaps similarities exist to ensemble works by Italian composers of the late sixteenth century, or to variation forms in Venetian operas. Continued investigation into the chronology of Vivaldi's works may provide some answers to these questions, as would greater accessibility to modern scores of this repertoire. There is also a need to re-assess structure in Baroque variation sets and examine approaches to the issues of coherence and closure. Many of Vivaldi's sets seem to foreshadow a shift in the aesthetics of variation forms, from a series of imaginative contrasts, to a continuous end-oriented structure. Progressive diminution and climax-oriented variation sets may not be as common in the early-eighteenth century as is currently thought, and apparently random series of variations might actually exhibit previously undetected structural schemes or imply different aesthetic ideals.

Another issue awaiting further study is the history of variation forms in solo concertos between those of Vivaldi and Mozart. Handel used different methods of organizing variations in his solo concertos. Did composers in the middle of the eighteenth century use the same strategies as Vivaldi or Handel, or did they adopt different plans? If the use of variation forms in eighteenth-century solo concertos after Vivaldi consists of mostly isolated cases, it is likely that either there are a few common models or that each composer found highly individualized approaches to background structures, drawing aspects from the concerto genre and variations sets in other mediums.

In conclusion, Vivaldi's instrumental variation sets are innovative works that stand out among variation forms of the early eighteenth century. Combining elements from variation traditions with aspects of the ensemble sonata and solo concerto, they show Vivaldi adapting older forms to newer genres. Each work is highly unique, and together they place Vivaldi among the most important composers of variation sets in the first decades of the eighteenth century.

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**Appendix- Sources and Authenticity of Vivaldi's Variation Sets**

<b>RV</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Work</b>	Violin Sonata in F	Trio Sonata in D Minor	Chamber Concerto in G	Chamber Concerto in G Minor
<b>Autograph</b>	Score, F-Pn, Rés. 2225			Score, I-Tn, Giordano vol. 31, fol. 314-323
<b>Partial Autograph</b>				
<b>Turin (I-Tn) (non- autograph)</b>			Score bears attribution to Vivaldi	
<b>Vivaldi- affiliated copyist (not in Turin)</b>				
<b>Unchallenged Attribution in First Edition</b>		Op. 1 #12; 1705 edition has dedicatory letter by Vivaldi		
<b>Pisendel's Venetian copy or Dresden Materials</b>				Set of parts, "Vivaldi" on set cover
<b>Non- autograph materials of unknown provenance</b>				
<b>Other</b>			Material also found in Opp. 8 & 10	

<b>RV</b>	112	114	157	172
<b>Work</b>	Sinfonia in C	String Concerto in C	String Concerto in G Minor	Violin Concerto in C
<b>Autograph</b>			Score, I-Tn, Giordano vol. 30, fol. 248-255	Score, D-Dl, 2389/0/42
<b>Partial Autograph</b>				
<b>Turin (I-Tn) (non- autograph)</b>				
<b>Vivaldi- affiliated copyist (not in Turin)</b>		Presentation set of parts	Same collection as RV 114	
<b>Unchallenged Attribution in First Edition</b>				
<b>Pisendel's Venetian copy or Dresden Materials</b>	Set of parts, no composer attribution			
<b>Non- autograph materials of unknown provenance</b>	Set of parts in Vienna, attributed to Vivaldi			
<b>Other</b>		See RV 157		

<b>RV</b>	220	222	298	334
<b>Work</b>	Violin Concerto in D	Violin Concerto in D	Violin Concerto in G	Violin Concerto in G Minor
<b>Autograph</b>		Score, I-Tn, Giordano vol. 29, fol. 48-62bis		
<b>Partial Autograph</b>				
<b>Turin (I-Tn) (non-autograph)</b>				
<b>Vivaldi-affiliated copyist (not in Turin)</b>				Probably earlier version in Manchester partbooks
<b>Unchallenged Attribution in First Edition</b>	#6 in <i>Concerti a cinque</i> (Roger, #432/433)		Op. 4 #12 (Roger, 1716) carries dedicatory letter by Vivaldi	Op. 9 #3 (Roger, 1727) carries dedicatory letter by Vivaldi
<b>Pisendel's Venetian copy or Dresden Materials</b>			Score probably made from lost autograph in Venice (differs from Roger ed.)	
<b>Non-autograph materials of unknown provenance</b>			Attribution in Anne Dawson's Book (keyboard transcription)	
<b>Other</b>		Performance material from Pieta, ded. to "Chiara"		Op. 11 #6 may be even earlier version

<b>RV</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>419</b>
<b>Work</b>	Violin Concerto in B Minor	Cello Concerto in D Minor	Cello Concerto in D Minor	Cello Concerto in A Minor
<b>Autograph</b>	Score, I-Tn, Giordano vol. 30, fol. 129-138			Score, I-Tn, Foà vol. 29, fol. 118-125
<b>Partial Autograph</b>		Score, mostly autograph, I-Tn, Foà vol. 29, fol. 142-149		
<b>Turin (I-Tn) (non-autograph)</b>				
<b>Vivaldi-affiliated copyist (not in Turin)</b>				
<b>Unchallenged Attribution in First Edition</b>				
<b>Pisendel's Venetian copy or Dresden Materials</b>				
<b>Non-autograph materials of unknown provenance</b>			Set of parts by unknown copyist, Schönbron Library, Wiesentheid	
<b>Other</b>	Solo part from Pieta library, ded. to "Anna Maria"			

<b>RV</b>	437	447	473	583
<b>Work</b>	Flute Concerto in G	Oboe Concerto in C	Bassoon Concerto in C	Concerto à due cori in B-flat
<b>Autograph</b>		Score, I-Tn, Foà vol. 32, fol. 4-13	Score, I-Tn, Giordano vol. 35, fol. 313-320	Score, I-Tn, Foà vol. 29, fol. 174-193
<b>Partial Autograph</b>				
<b>Turin (I-Tn) (non-autograph)</b>				
<b>Vivaldi-affiliated copyist (not in Turin)</b>				
<b>Unchallenged Attribution in First Edition</b>	Op. 10 # 6 (La Cene, 1729) no dedicatory letter			
<b>Pisendel's Venetian copy or Dresden Materials</b>				
<b>Non-autograph materials of unknown provenance</b>				
<b>Other</b>	Uses material from RV 101 & Op. 8			

For specific details on each work, sources of information, and discussion of the relative criteria for authenticity, see "Authenticity" in Chapter One. Library references and shelf marks for autograph materials are from Ryom, *Répertoire*.