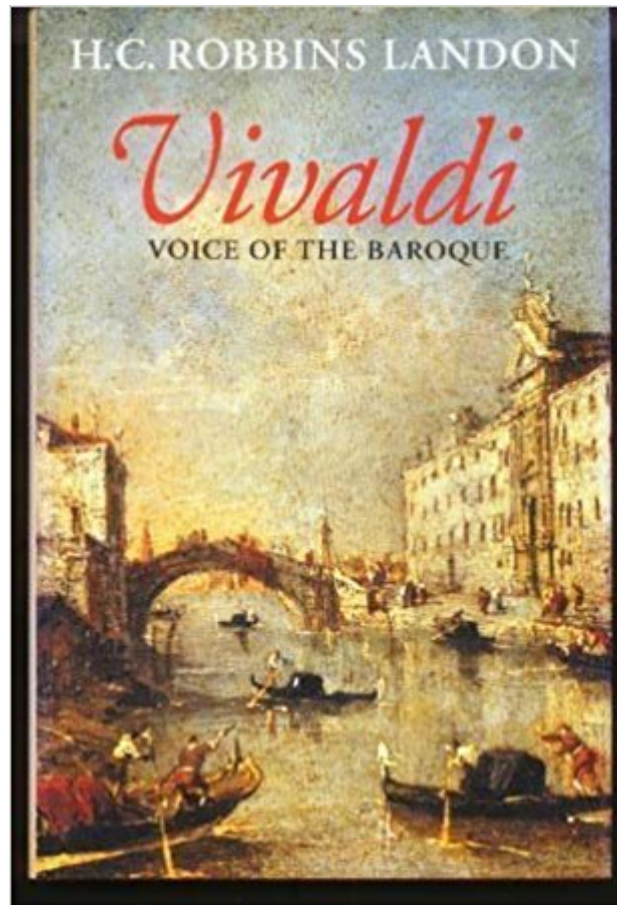




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Vivaldi: Voice Of The Baroque



Synopsis

There is no mistaking the Vivaldi sound - what Professor Robbins Landon calls a "wiry, nervous sound, with that concentration of rhythmic designs which, once experienced, is literally unforgettable". Even those who have never listened to another piece of classical music know "The Four Seasons". Vivaldi's music is deeply personal and sharply characterized; the man behind it is fascinating - a Catholic priest who gave up celebrating Mass almost as soon as he was ordained and who shared his house with an attractive soprano; a lifelong invalid who could travel all over Europe when it suited him; a dazzling violin virtuoso whose compositions captivated Venice but who died poor and forgotten in Vienna. New compositions by Vivaldi are still being brought to light, as are letters and documents connected with his life. In this newly researched biography, H.C. Robbins Landon brings his expertise to bear on Vivaldi. Every document that sheds light on the composer's career is translated complete. The book's strength, is in Professor Robbins Landon's integration of analysis and biography, using each to illuminate the other and unravel the riddle of Vivaldi's identity and extraordinary gift. H.C. Robbins Landon, is one of the world's leading musicologists. He is the author of "Haydn: Chronicle and Works", "Mozart and Vienna", "1791: Mozart's Last Year", "Mozart and the Masons" and "Beethoven: His Life, Work and World"; and editor of "The Mozart Compendium", all from Thames and Hudson.

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Customer Reviews

Antonio Vivaldi's life is hardly well documented: certainly not as well as Mozart's or Beethoven's.

Even Bach's biographical details, scarcely thorough, are significantly greater than the "Red Priest's". Vivaldi's music and reputation nearly disappeared following his death, along with a substantial number of his manuscripts and the day-to-day details of his sui generis career. His resurrection as a composer and the dogged efforts of musicologists have provided at least the rough outlines of a biography. H. C. Robbins Landon, whom some consider Joseph Haydn's alter ego, has written an excellent biography of Vivaldi, managing to provide the details of his life in only 170 pages (including illustrations). Hardly a voluminous tome, there just isn't much day-to-day knowledge available, and what is known must often be teased out of official documents that are still coming to light. What Robbins Landon reveals about Vivaldi, especially in his few surviving letters to the nobility or the inevitable dedications to his various noble patrons, is painful. Cringing obsequiousness, fawning servility, even an occasional whining sycophancy when things go wrong and Vivaldi pleads to a patron for assistance, are all prominently displayed. This was coin of the realm for the era: the artist as flotsam in a hierarchical world. It is painful to witness, nevertheless. What is also revealed is a certain wolfishness on Vivaldi's part. His strange and lengthy menage with the attractive and moderately talented Giraud sisters, slightly unusual for a Priest. His peculiar working habits and relationships with other artists. His somewhat craven demeanor throughout his compositional career, finally inducing him to abandon Italy for Vienna at the end.

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