

Antonio Lucio Vivaldi was born on March 4, 1678 and was baptized immediately by the midwife because his parents feared he might die, most likely because he was initially in poor health and an earthquake had struck the city the same day. His father, Giovanni Battista was initially a barber, but became a professional violinist and taught young Vivaldi how to play at first, then took him on tour with him playing violin around Venice. Though Vivaldi suffered from asthma, he was an ardent student of the violin and began composing and playing at every opportunity from an early age. At 15 in 1693, he began to study to become a priest and was ordained in 1703 at 25. It was at this point that he earned the nickname "Il Prete Rosso," or "The Red Priest," because of his red hair and spirit.

In 1706, Vivaldi had to withdraw from the priesthood due to his asthma, and became the violin teacher at a girls' orphanage called "Pio Ospedale della Pieta" in Venice. Soon after Vivaldi took this post, the orphans began to gain renown for their musical abilities abroad. Most of Vivaldi's concertos, cantatas and his sacred music was written specifically for these girls, and he soon published his first collection of works. Though he was forced to leave his job in 1709 due to financial difficulties at the orphanage, he returned in 1711 after traveling abroad with his music and in 1713 was appointed as the head of all musical programs at the orphanage that had become a respected and heralded music institute in Italy.

In 1718, he started traveling while commissioned by the institute to write two concertos a month for orchestra. He returned frequently to rehearse with them in Venice and was able to publish 140 concertos between 1723 and 1729. He is credited with inventing the most new themes of nearly any composer in history, and was able to make music that was entirely non-academic and made for the public popular among many different classes of society. His music reflects the joy he took in composing, and its spirit is one of the major reasons it has become so popular and remains so well-respected today. Vivaldi was a master of improvisation and could replay the same theme in a thousand different ways.

Like many other composers, Vivaldi died in poverty in Vienna on July 28, 1741. Before his life ended, because of a decline at the time in his works' popularity, the composer chose to sell off many of his manuscripts to pay off sizeable debts.