Pre-RCM Listening Assignment

“Four Seasons” by Antonio Vivaldi

Allegro movement from “Spring”

Springtime is upon us.  
The birds celebrate her return with festive song,  
and murmuring streams are softly caressed by the breezes.  
Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar, casting their dark mantle over heaven,  
Then they die away to silence, and the birds take up their charming songs once more.

Antonio Vivaldi was a famous violinist and composer from the Baroque era. Baroque music (music written between 1600-1750) is known for being ornate, colourful, and complex.

Vivaldi wrote a set of four violin concertos called “Four Seasons”. Concertos are large works of music written for a soloist who is “backed up” by an orchestra or set of instrumentalists.

You’ll notice that there are occasionally some poetic descriptions in the captions of the video. Vivaldi based his Four Seasons on a series of beautiful sonnets from an unknown author. When music has a storyline or is explicitly meant to depict a scene, it’s called programmatic music.

1. Would you say the music sounds happy or sad? Fast or slow?

2. What instruments can you name here? Are there any that look a bit different from the ones you might normally see?

3. What elements of springtime do you hear in the music? Maybe you hear certain parts of music that remind you of sounds you might hear in nature, or of a character, or of a colour. Listen creatively!