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Concerti Vivaldi, Venice

Introduction: Venice has been a center of musical experimentation and performance for centuries. Gabrieli, Monteverdi and Vivaldi have sought to give sonic expression to the many moods and celebrations of the city. Opera itself was formed in Venice. Composers as varied as Bach, Handel and Wagner found in Venice inspiration for their artistry. While there are numerous venues in the city for opera and religious music, there are few opportunities to hear the secular music of the city in the appropriate acoustical and visual setting. The numerous Palazzi of the city which were once host to performances are now closed to the public.

The recent acquisition of the Al Sal Warehouses for conversion into a gallery of contemporary art, and the moving of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection to this gateway of the Grand Canal, presents an opportunity to transform the site of the unfinished Palazzo Venier del Leoni into a concert space for the performance of the music of Vivaldi.

The new Sala Concerti Vivaldi is dedicated to the acoustical performance, on traditional instruments, of the secular works of Vivaldi. The performances will occur throughout the year within the new concert hall, extending into the garden, and into Grand Canal to the North.

Setting: The new Sala Concerti Vivaldi, founded by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, is located in one of the most concentrated and continuous lines of significant buildings in the world. In no other city is there a similar set of "continuous facades" measuring no less than three thousand eight hundred meters long. Additionally the Canalazzo (Grand Canal) is the largest, most central and most important landmark of the city. Its openness provides a visual reference point and relief for the medieval density of the city. It is one of the few overriding organizational elements of the city.

The cityscape of the Grand Canal presents a very high degree of homogeneity despite the variety of its styles, the changing dimensions and periods of its buildings. Canalazzo also enhances the mystery and complexity of the city through its "S" curve which many new to the city conceive as a straight line.

The location of the unfinished Palazzo Venier del Leoni is on one of the largest privately owned sites along the Grand Canal. Started in 1749, the palazzo was to be a monumental addition to the Grand Canal and include a formal enclosed courtyard along the southern fondamenta. The proposed scale and height of the Palazzo would have been an imposing structure in its context, especially considering its white Istrian stone façade. With the purchase of the Al Sal Warehouses, and structural failures within the Palazzo Venier, this piece of the Grand Canal is ready for its completion.

Immediately after their purchase, the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi has had all remnants of the Palazzo Venier removed from the site, although the garden area to the south remains.

The site measures about 130 feet along the Grand Canal and 180 feet to a small canal to the south. Currently there is pedestrian access at the southern side of the site along the fondamenta, and from motor launch at the Grand Canal.



Design Requirements:

- The directors of the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi have requested that:
1. The concert hall permits unamplified performances of the solo and orchestral music of Vivaldi in a setting which enhances the relationship between artist and audience.
 2. They have requested a hall which can accommodate a minimum 600 in the audience.
 3. It is the intention to have performances throughout the year occurring daily at 8:00 PM, and at 2:00 PM during the "high tourist season."
 4. The directors of the Istituto would prefer to have the hall open to a garden setting to the south and open to the Grand Canal at the north, "to extend the listening area into the city".
 5. They envision a space which is closed acoustically, but can open to the context in good weather, providing shade from the summer sun in the afternoon, and protection for the elements during inclement weather.
 6. The concert hall will also be used for special events during the Venice Biennale for experimental acoustic music, during the various regattas that occur along the Grand Canal and during Carnevale.
 7. Guests will arrive to the site via boat at the Grand Canal entrance(s), and from the fondamenta along the sites southern border.
 8. All rehearsals will be open to the public and will occur on the main stage.
 9. The new concert hall fit appropriately in the "continuous facades of the Grand Canal."
 10. The new concert hall should be designed, both acoustically and visually, for one vocal soloist, one harpsichordist, four vocalists, to 24 instrumentalists with four vocalists.
 11. The new concert hall must include a café which will be open throughout the day and evening throughout the year, and include outdoor dining.

