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The Pieta Museum, Venice

Eleanor Selfridge-Field

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## Eleanor Selfridge-Field

### The Pietà Museum, Venice


The opening of a small museum (the Piccolo Museo della Pietà 'Antonio Vivaldi') within the Istituto della Pietà in Venice was marked on 24 May 2004 with a concert directed by Claudio Scimone. The realization was the outcome of years of planning by Anna Maria Giannuzzi Miraglia, the president of the institute. Its purpose is to re-establish the institute's commitment to music. The Pietà continues its 600-year involvement in the care of orphaned and abandoned children.

The institute's collection of string and wind instruments, principally from the 18th century, is on permanent display. This collection, which includes 18 bowed strings and five horns, was resituated many times between 1866 and 1990, when it was finally restored to the Pietà. Among the most noted instruments are violins by Andrea Guarneri, Pietro Guarneri, Mathias Hornsteiner and Jacob Stainer; two cellos by Matteo Gofriller, and a contrabass by Pietro Caspan (1665). Four of the horns are by Andrea Coin (1770).

The museum also houses various kinds of documents and paraphernalia relating to life in the institute in the later 17th and 18th centuries. These include registers documenting the acceptance of infants, tokens of identification left by their mothers, death registers and other materials that attest to the manner in which daily life was conducted. As many as 800 inhabitants were housed at the Pietà at one time; contrary to popular belief, many of these, including a substantial number of the *figlie di coro*, were adults.

A long-term plan for the performance of sacred music originally composed for Venice's four *ospedali* (of which the other three were the Derelitti, Incurabili, and Mendicanti) is currently being drafted.

The museum is open to the public on Mondays and Wednesdays from 11 to 4. A guidebook by Micky White, who assembled the exhibit materials and is preparing a book on Vivaldi, is available at the door. The institution's archivist is Giuseppe Ellero. Arrangements for group tours can be made by any of the following means: telephone +39 (0)41 5222171; fax +39 (0)41 5204431; e-mail: [ipipiet@tin.it](mailto:ipipiet@tin.it); postal address: Calle della Pietà, Castello 3701, 30122 Venezia, Italy.




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