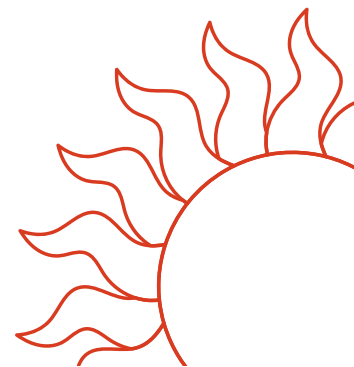


ANTONIO VIVALDI'S
**THE FOUR
SEASONS**



Eunae Koh, violin





PROGRAM

Introduction

Joshua Koestenbaum, Associate Principal Cello

Concerto No. 1, *Spring*

Allegro
Largo
Allegro

Concerto No. 2, *Summer*

Allegro non molto
Adagio e piano – Presto e forte
Presto

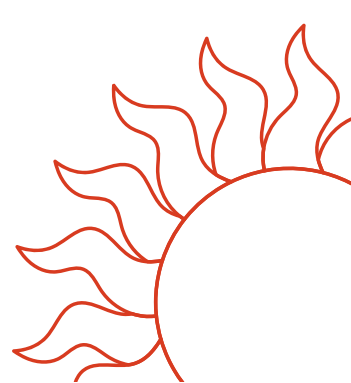
Concerto No. 3, *Autumn*

Allegro
Adagio molto
Allegro



Concerto No. 4, *Winter*

Allegro non molto
Largo
Allegro



A NOTE ON THE MUSIC

Antonio Vivaldi composed at least 230 violin concertos, many of them originating at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. He taught violin and directed an orchestra for the “orphaned” girls there, who were actually the illegitimate offspring of Venice’s upper crust — which explains why their school was endowed with such excellent music instruction.

In 1725, Vivaldi’s publisher in Amsterdam released a set of twelve violin concertos under the title *Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’invenzione (The Contest Between Harmony and Invention)*. Vivaldi named the first four concertos after the seasons, and he organized the musical ideas to correspond to descriptive sonnets. These interrelated works that we know simply as *The Four Seasons* live on as the crown jewels within Vivaldi’s incomparable catalog of solo concertos.

The sonnets offered Vivaldi ample opportunities for word painting, as in the “birds in joyous song” in the first movement of *Spring*, represented by trilling violin motives, countered later by thunder and lightning. The docile slow movement depicts a goatherd napping in a meadow, with the violas assigned the part of his barking dog. The finale introduces nymphs and shepherds dancing to bagpipes, a sound evoked in the droning accompaniments.

A NOTE ON THE MUSIC, CONT'D

Summer brings the “heat of the burning sun,” matched by wilting musical figures. The soloist enters in the style of a cuckoo, with the distinctive two-note call embedded within constant bow-strokes. The arrival of a stiff wind from the north, bringing a squall, sends the movement into an agitated state. The slow movement depicts another nap, this one interrupted by the nuisance of gnats and flies and occasional peals of thunder. The finale unleashes the full force of the summer storm, the lines cascading down like sheets of rain.

Autumn begins with peasants dancing and drinking in celebration of the harvest, until they all settle into an inebriated slumber. The slow movement descends into the soundest sleep yet, with the soloist joining the muted strings in slow-moving phrases, leaving only the harpsichord to decorate the harmonies with *ad libitum* (improvised) arpeggios. The finale wakes for a hunt, complete with imitations of hunting horns and barking dogs.

Winter paints a scene of desolate cold and chattering teeth. The slow movement moves the scene to a cozy fire inside, while pizzicato raindrops continue to fall outside. Starting with hesitant, slippery steps on the ice, the finale builds to raging gusts of wind.



Concerto No. 1, *Spring*

ACCOMPANYING SONNETS

Allegro

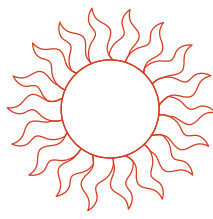
Springtime is upon us.
The birds celebrate her return with festive song,
and murmuring streams are
softly caressed by the breezes.
Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar,
casting their dark mantle over heaven,
Then they die away to silence,
and the birds take up their charming songs once more.

Largo

On the flower-strewn meadow, with leafy branches
rustling overhead, the goat-herd sleeps,
his faithful dog beside him.

Allegro

Led by the festive sound of rustic bagpipes,
nymphs and shepherds lightly dance
beneath spring's beautiful canopy.



Concerto No. 2, *Summer*

ACCOMPANYING SONNETS

Allegro non molto

Under a hard season, fired up by the sun
Languishes man, languishes the flock and burns the pine
We hear the cuckoo's voice;
then sweet songs of the turtledove and finch are heard.
Soft breezes stir the air, but threatening
the North Wind sweeps them suddenly aside.
The shepherd trembles,
fearing violent storms and his fate.

Adagio e piano – Presto e forte

The fear of lightning and fierce thunder
Robs his tired limbs of rest
As gnats and flies buzz furiously around.

Presto

Alas, his fears were justified
The Heavens thunder and roar and with hail
Cut the head off the wheat and damages the grain.



Concerto No. 3, *Autumn*

ACCOMPANYING SONNETS

Allegro

Celebrates the peasant, with songs and dances,
The pleasure of a bountiful harvest.
And fired up by Bacchus' liquor,
many end their revelry in sleep.

Adagio molto

Everyone is made to forget their cares and to sing and dance
By the air which is tempered with pleasure
And (by) the season that invites so many, many
Out of their sweetest slumber to fine enjoyment

Allegro

The hunters emerge at the new dawn,
And with horns and dogs and guns depart upon their hunting
The beast flees and they follow its trail;
Terrified and tired of the great noise
Of guns and dogs, the beast, wounded, threatens
Languidly to flee, but harried, dies.



Concerto No. 4, *Winter*

ACCOMPANYING SONNETS

Allegro non molto

To tremble from cold in the icy snow,
In the harsh breath of a horrid wind;
To run, stamping one's feet every moment,
Our teeth chattering in the extreme cold

Largo

Before the fire to pass peaceful,
Contented days while the rain outside pours down.

Allegro

We tread the icy path slowly and cautiously,
for fear of tripping and falling.
Then turn abruptly, slip, crash on the ground and,
rising, hasten on across the ice lest it cracks up.
We feel the chill north winds course through the home
despite the locked and bolted doors...
this is winter, which nonetheless
brings its own delights.