

Chamber Orchestra Concert II

June 1, 2024

Saturday, June 1st – 7:30 pm

The Four Seasons for Violin and Orchestra *in Venice and Buenos Aires*

Antonio Vivaldi (March 4, 1678 – July 28, 1741)

Astor Piazzolla (March 11, 1921 – July 4, 1992) / Leonid Desyatnikov (b. October 16, 1955)

Aaron Schwartz, Violin

Antonio Vivaldi (1678 – 1741): Le quattro stagioni, Op. 8, Nos 1-4

Vivaldi "Spring": Concerto No. 1 in E Major, Op. 8, RV 269 - "La Primavera"
Allegro – Largo e pianissimo sempre – Allegro pastorale

Vivaldi "Summer": Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 8, RV 315 - "L'estate"
Allegro non molto – Adagio e piano/Presto e forte – Presto

Vivaldi "Autumn": Concerto No. 3 in F Major, Op. 8, RV 293 - "L'autunno"
Allegro – Adagio molto – Allegro

Vivaldi "Winter": Concerto No. 4 - "L'inverno"
Allegro non molto – Largo – Allegro

INTERMISSION

Ástor Piazzolla (1921 – 1992): Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas

Piazzolla "Autumn": "Otoño Porteño"

Piazzolla "Winter": "Invierno Porteño"

Piazzolla "Spring": "Primavera Porteña"

Piazzolla "Summer": "Verano Porteño"

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A chamber orchestra is a small ensemble. Chamber orchestras are usually led by a conductor. They will have a full complement of first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses. A harpsichord may be present to provide the “continuo” or bottom line which is also played by the cellos and double basses. As in larger orchestras, not everyone plays all the time for any one piece.

Antonio Vivaldi (b. Venice, Italy, March 4, 1678; d. Vienna, Austria, July 28, 1741)

Le quattro stagioni, Op. 8, Nos 1-4

"Spring": Concerto No. 1 in E Major, Op. 8, RV 269 - “La Primavera” – 10 minutes

- I. Allegro
- II. Largo e pianissimo sempre
- III. Allegro pastorale

"Summer": Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 8, RV 315 - “L'estate” – 10 minutes

- I. Allegro non molto
- II. Adagio e piano/Presto e forte
- III. Presto

"Autumn": Concerto No. 3 in F Major, Op. 8, RV 293 - “L'autunno” – 10 minutes

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio molto
- III. Allegro

"Winter": Concerto No. 4 - “L'inverno” – 9 minutes

- I. Allegro non molto
- II. Largo
- III. Allegro

Antonio Vivaldi and Ástor Piazzola were both born on a Friday in March. One, (Vivaldi) 243 years before the other (Piazzola). The first, on the fourth day of the month; the second, on the eleventh, but in 1921.

Both composers portrayed with music the four seasons of the year; one (Vivaldi) is from the High Baroque 18th century Venice, the other (Piazzolla) is from the bustle of the streets of Buenos Aires in the second half of the 20th century. Both were sons of musicians; they were in their forties when they composed their respective works dedicated to the different features that nature shows throughout the year. The then republic of Venice, La Serenissima, and the modern capital of Buenos Aires, have in common historical ports, a diversity of natural and urban landscapes, and paths that lead to the mystery of the waters, sources of irrevocable inspiration. See douglasmeyer.info/the-four-seasons-of-buenos-aires-astor-piazzolla.

“Versatile and highly prolific, Antonio Vivaldi was the outstanding Italian Composer of his time as well as a celebrated violinist,” reads *Composers: Their Lives and Works*. “Vivaldi’s name is inseparable from his most famous work, *The Four Seasons*, one of the most frequently performed and recorded pieces in the classical repertoire. However, these four violin concertos represent only a tiny part of his output. In addition to about 500 concertos (almost half of them for his own performance instrument, the violin), he wrote 50 operas of which 16 survive, a large amount of sacred music, numerous sonatas for one or two instruments, and various other compositions. His finest creations rank among the greatest of their time.”

Vivaldi was born in Venice. His father, who started out as a barber, was such a good amateur violinist that he was able to turn professional and began working as a musician at St. Mark’s Church. Vivaldi inherited his father’s talent for the violin and studied the instrument. “While a musical career beckoned, religion was also to play an important role in his life. In 1693, he began training for the priesthood, perhaps influenced by an uncle, a priest at the family’s parish church.”

Vivaldi was ordained a priest in 1703, at the age of 25. Six months later, he was appointed a violin teacher at a home for orphaned and abandoned girls. Music was part of the curriculum here. Here Vivaldi’s duties came to include composing, conducting, and buying instruments.

Vivaldi’s music was first published in Venice in 1705 and later in Amsterdam. The publisher Estienne Roger in Amsterdam was the most important music publisher in Europe at that time and had a highly efficient distribution network, with agents in Berlin, London, Paris, and other cities. He played a key role in securing Vivaldi’s international reputation.

Later Vivaldi moved to Vienna but died the following year. After his death, Vivaldi’s reputation declined, and he remained virtually forgotten. Scholarly interest in the composer emerged in the early 20th century when a large collection of his scores was discovered.

Vivaldi established the three-movement pattern (fast-slow-fast) for concertos; the first movement is typically majestic and third more playful). They are full of exuberant, inventive music. *The Four Seasons* is one of the earliest and greatest examples of program music – that is, music expressing a narrative or pictorial idea: barking dogs, rustic bagpipes, and icy landscapes are among the vivid images that Vivaldi conjures. Listen closely!!



Vivaldi

INTERMISSION

Ástor Piazzolla (b. Mar del Plata, Argentina, March 11, 1921; d. Buenos Aires, Argentina – July 4, 1992) / Leonid Desyatnikov (b. in Kharkiv, Ukraine, October 16, 1955)

Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas

"Autumn": "Otoño Porteño" – 8 minutes

"Winter": "Invierno Porteño" – 7 minutes

"Spring": "Primavera Porteña" – 6 minutes

"Summer": "Verano Porteño" – 6 minutes

The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires is a set of four tango compositions written by Ástor Piazzolla, which were originally conceived and treated as different compositions rather than one suite. The pieces were scored for his quintet of violin (viola), piano, electric guitar, double bass and bandoneón. By giving the adjective porteño, referring to those originating in Buenos Aires, the Argentine capital city, Piazzolla details the four seasons in Buenos Aires. The order of performance Piazzolla gave to his "Estaciones Porteñas" is: Otoño (Autumn), Invierno (Winter), Primavera (Spring), Verano (Summer). It was different from Vivaldi's order.

Piazzolla's most famous concert work is a salute to Vivaldi entitled *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* ('Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas'). It represents the apex of the Argentine's "Tango Nuevo" style, music emanating from the tango but was designed to be listened to.

Vivaldi wrote his *Four Seasons* as a tetralogy of violin concertos, one of his favorite forms. Piazzolla created each season little by little, within a period of six years, between 1964 and 1970. As described below, he first composed *Verano Porteño* (summer), the following year the *Otoño Porteño* (winter); and later, the *Primavera* (spring) and *Invierno Porteños* (autumn).

Before becoming a collection, they were performed autonomously. Later, they were conceived as an inseparable combo. The original instrumentation of most of them corresponds to that of the "New Tango" or "Tango Nuevo" quintet founded by Piazzolla in the 1960's: bandoneón, violin, piano, electric guitar and double bass. (A bandoneón is a small, square concertina or accordion with buttons instead of a keyboard, used especially in Latin America for tango music.)

Ástor Piazzolla was born in Argentina, grew up in New York, and educated in Paris by the legendary composition teacher Nadia Boulanger. One day Boulanger heard him playing a tango at her piano before a lesson. She encouraged him to follow this direction saying, "Here is the true Piazzolla." But she also insisted that he continue his study of Baroque and High Classical music.

When the young composer returned to Buenos Aires, he began to do for the tango what Johann Strauss had for the waltz over a century before. He thrust classical complexities, harmonies, and textures into the form, and adapting it. See douglasmeyer.info/the-four-seasons-of-buenos-aires-astor-piazzolla.

Interestingly, Piazzolla wrote a piece for piano and asked pianist Arthur Rubinstein (who was on tour in Buenos Aires) for his opinion of the work. As described in *Ástor Piazzolla – A Memoir by Natalio Gorlin and translated by Fernando Gonzalez*, Piazzolla went to visit the pianist and showed him his new concerto for piano. Rubinstein began playing the work and then asked the composer if he wished to have additional composition guidance. After a few telephone calls, Rubinstein recommended that Piazzolla study with Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera. Rubinstein gave Piazzolla Ginastera's phone number and as Piazzolla was leaving, the pianist also gave him an autographed photo. Although Piazzolla never saw Rubinstein again, that telephone number – and subsequent studies with Ginastera – began to change his life. He was now even more focused on classical music.

This version for solo violin and string orchestra was composed well after Piazzolla's death. The Russian violinist, Gidon Kremer, wanted a piece to complement Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and commissioned composer Leonid Desyatnikov to make this arrangement to include the work by Piazzolla, which was completed in 1998.

Leonid Desyatnikov – who made this arrangement combining both versions of the *Four Seasons* – was born in 1955 in Ukraine, and is a graduate of the Leningrad Conservatory, where he studied composition and instrumentation. Desyatnikov has written four operas, several cantatas, and numerous vocal and instrumental compositions. He has been collaborating with Kremer since 1996 by arranging other works of Astor Piazzolla, including the tango-operita *María de Buenos Aires* and the tango suite *Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas*).

Desyatnikov made a new arrangement of these four pieces with a link between Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Piazzolla's, by converting each of Piazzolla's movements into three-sections, and arranges the piece for solo violin and string orchestra. In each movement, Desyatnikov includes quotations from original Vivaldi's work. Desyatnikov reflects the inversion of the seasons in his placement of the Vivaldi quotations; for example, *Verano Porteño* has added elements of *L'inverno* (Winter) of Vivaldi.

Desyatnikov did not confine himself to a mere transcription. He recomposed the pieces to fit Kremer's concept, adding quotations from the Vivaldi *Seasons* as well as cadenzas for the solo violinist and principal cellist. He did preserve certain special effects Piazzolla devised to compensate for the lack of percussion in his quintet—slapping the back of the bass and scrubbing behind the violin bridge to produce an imitation of the stick-scratched gourd called a *guiro*.

Buenos Aires is located about two-thirds down the East coast of South America on the Rio de la Plata; its climate is classified as subtropical. However, in recognition of the reversal of seasons south of the Equator, in Desyatnikov's arrangement Vivaldi's *Winter* is quoted in Piazzolla's *Summer*, and Vivaldi's *Summer* in Piazzolla's *Winter*. Spring and Autumn references are similarly switched!

January is the coldest month in Venice, and the warmest months are July and August. January is the hottest month in Buenos Aires and the coldest is June. Therefore, music written about the seasons in the Northern hemisphere would be different from a similar work written in the Southern hemisphere.



Piazzolla



Desyatnikov