



Canberra
Symphony
Orchestra
2024

SPECIAL EVENT

FOUR SEASONS

Welcome

Antonio Vivaldi's much-loved Four Seasons is the final concert in our 2024 special event series and having the opportunity to lead my CSO colleagues in bringing this universally adored and recognised work to you is a highlight of my year.

As an extra special treat, we also feature Argentinian tango composer Astor Piazzolla's *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, delivering a striking juxtaposition of musical interpretations of the changing seasons.

As Vivaldi's rich storytelling takes us on a vivid cinematic journey through the cyclical nature of the seasons, we intertwine each season with a correlating season of Piazzolla.

The experience is to criss-cross the hemispheres – when it is spring in Vivaldi's home town of Venice, for example, it is autumn in Piazzolla's Buenos Aires.

While Vivaldi's Four Seasons are universally recognised, having inspired countless arrangements and remixes from opera to video games and everything in between, Piazzolla's seasons are at their core steeped in his signature tango style, a fusion of jazz and classical harmonies and rhythms.



Piazzolla has us dancing in the streets of Buenos Aires, hypnotised by the colourful sights, aromas and sounds of the city during the day and into the soulful atmosphere of the night.

Then, quite unexpectedly, we hear a snippet, a quote from Vivaldi, before he lulls us back into his world with his tango rhythms, nostalgic free singing improvisation and solo violin and cello.

Tonight will be a unique experience and we hope you enjoy it as much as we will enjoy performing it for you.

Warm regards

Kirsten Williams
Concertmaster | Director, Violin

Image: Martin Ollman

The Canberra Symphony Orchestra acknowledges the Ngunnawal people, traditional custodians of the land on which our concerts take place. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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FOUR SEASONS

SPECIAL EVENT

7pm, Friday 18 /
Saturday 19 October 2024
Llewellyn Hall
ANU School of Music

Kirsten Williams *Director, Violin*
Canberra Symphony Orchestra

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Le Quattro Stagioni (The Four Seasons)

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (Arr. Leonid Desyatnikov)

Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas
(The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)

Vivaldi *La primavera* (Spring)

Violin Concerto in E major,
Op.8 No.1 (RV269)
Allegro. Largo. Allegro

Piazzolla *Verano porteño* (Summer in Buenos Aires)

Vivaldi *L'Estate* (Summer)
Violin Concerto in G minor,
Op.8 No.2 (RV315)
Allegro non molto. Adagio. Presto

Piazzolla *Otoño porteño* (Autumn in Buenos Aires)

Vivaldi *L'Autunno* (Autumn)
Violin Concerto in F major,
Op.8 No.3 (RV293)
Allegro. Adagio molto. Allegro

Piazzolla *Invierno porteño* (Winter in Buenos Aires)

Vivaldi *L'Inverno* (Winter)
Violin Concerto in F minor,
Op. 8 No. 4 (RV297)
Allegro non molto. Largo. Allegro.

Piazzolla *Primavera Portena* (Spring in Buenos Aires)



Kirsten Williams Director, Violin

Kirsten Williams is Concertmaster of the Canberra Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and one of Australia's leading violinists. For Four Seasons, she will be directing the CSO in a performance of this iconic work.

Kirsten studied with Alice Waten (Sydney Conservatorium) and Igor Ozim (Switzerland) before joining the Royal Opera House Orchestra at Covent Garden and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Upon returning to Australia, Kirsten was appointed Associate Leader of the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Kirsten has appeared as guest Concertmaster with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia, and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

From 2000 to 2019, she held the position of Associate Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Kirsten's versatility as a soloist and chamber musician both in Australia and internationally extends also to her passion for music for healing and has recorded two much-acclaimed CDs with American harpist Jane Rosenson.

A key figure in the CSO's Kingsland Pathways Program, Kirsten also works with the Sydney and Australian Youth Orchestras and teaches at the ANU School of Music. Her contributions to the CSO and the wider arts community were recognised in 2021 when she received the Governor-General's Medallion.

Image: Martin Ollman

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The orchestra list
and stage plan are
correct at the time of
printing and subject
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EIGHT SEASONS IN ONE CONCERT

Antonio Vivaldi

Le Quattro Stagioni
(The Four Seasons)

Astor Piazzolla (Arr. Leonid Desyatnikov)

Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas
(The Four Seasons of
Buenos Aires)



VIVALDI AND PIAZZOLLA

Antonio Vivaldi wrote 221 concertos for solo violin and orchestra; he is best known for just four of them, *The Four Seasons*. Published in Amsterdam in 1725, they were the first in the set of a dozen concertos constituting his Opus 8. We know their popularity now, but these were concertos were also popular across Europe in Vivaldi's lifetime.

Vivaldi had a firm reputation as 'the most popular composer for the violin, as well as player on that instrument'. He protected much of his best work by keeping the scores out of the public eye, but when he published his first collection of concertos in 1711 (the set known as *L'estro armonico* or 'Harmonic Inspiration'), travelling virtuosos carried the music throughout Europe.

Everyone, it seemed, was eager to find out what Vivaldi was doing on his fiddle and with this newfangled form, the solo concerto.

—

“...Vivaldi tested the power of music to describe the natural world...”

With his Opus 8 collection, Vivaldi tested the power of music to describe the natural world, a challenge he announced on the cover of the compendium by naming it *Il cimento dell'armonica e dell'invenzione* (The contest between harmony and invention). Using a set of sonnets about the four seasons, which he may have written himself, Vivaldi attempted to convey in sound what was written on the page about birds, zephyr winds and storms that break with thunder and lightning. So engrossed in the challenge was Vivaldi that he included supplementary 'captions' throughout the music, directing the musician's attention to the barking dogs, chattering teeth and other striking effects.

Most believe he succeeded spectacularly in his attempt, and it is a fun and enriching experience to read the poems while listening to the music. A true test, however, might involve some scientific method, with a control group of people who knew nothing of his intent to guess at what the music depicted, if anything. (Something a sceptic might pursue!) The debate about music's capacity to communicate as directly as an oil painting or a poem continued to rage for centuries afterwards, even as Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* gathered dust and disappeared from the musical firmament.

In fact, it disappeared for the entire Enlightenment. As reason and science took over, the musings of an Italian composer and virtuoso with fanciful ideas about the use of music as an expressive tool went underground. Between his impoverished death in July 1742 and the Great Depression of the early 1930s, *The Four Seasons* was seldom (if ever) in the public ear.

—

Igor Stravinsky accused Vivaldi of writing not 500 concertos but the one concerto 500 times. You might say Vivaldi was on to a good thing and he stuck to it. Not unlike the direction that an ambitious but self-doubting Astor Piazzolla received when he left his native Argentina to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger in the 1950s.

By then 32, Piazzolla was already famous as leading performer on the bandoneón, a smaller version of the accordion that takes the strong melodic lead in many a swirling tango. Like Vivaldi, he was a virtuoso performer who also composed and arranged music for bands and small orchestras.

Whereas Vivaldi created music for orphans and the illegitimate daughters of rich and powerful Viennese to perform at the Ospedale della Pietà, Piazzolla created the *nuevo tango*, a more complex version of the traditional tango that took inspiration from the Argentinean underclass and brothel scene. And when Piazzolla sought Boulanger's advice after composing a symphonic work, she told him the way forward lay in his experience with tango. He would go on to compose about 750 tangos, introducing elements of classical music (chromaticism, dissonance, rhythmic complexity) and jazz into the dance form, much to the distaste of the old guard.

—

“These tangos did not describe the weather or the natural landscape, but the barometer of the people in the city, their attitude, sensuality, vulnerability and passion.”

The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires was not originally composed for violin and orchestra, after the Vivaldi model. It was not composed as a set, after that model, or even with all the references you will hear to that model in today's performance. Piazzolla penned the first of his *Estaciones porteñas* – *Verano* (Summer) in 1965 for his Quinteto Nuevo Tango, comprising violin, electric guitar, piano, bass and bandoneón.

Autumn followed in 1969, then *Winter* and *Spring* in 1970. But the pieces were seldom (if ever) performed together until 1991, when Piazzolla was in a coma that would endure for a year before his death.

The timing is interesting. In 1989, Nigel Kennedy recorded Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and established a runaway success. It still holds the record for the most classical albums ever sold – more than two million. In 1991, while Piazzolla was in a coma, his friends and admirers banded together to create a tribute album that they called 'Four Seasons of Buenos Aires'. They took the title from a Jaques Morelenbaum arrangement of the four tangos Piazzolla composed for the *porteños*, or port people of Buenos Aires.

These tangos did not describe the weather or the natural landscape, but the barometer of the people in the city, their attitude, sensuality, vulnerability and passion. They combined popular dance rhythms with brooding harmonies, art music devices and special effects (one of which sounds remarkably like a croaky frog). Each season is a single-movement rhapsody, but like Vivaldi's seasons, they are divided into clear sections and display an endless inventiveness that entertains and rewards the ear and the mind.

—

Morelenbaum pulled the four tangos together to make a suite, and orchestrated them for woodwind quintet, three cellos and a double bass. Many other arrangements of the suite were made subsequently, including today's ingenious arrangement for solo violin and orchestra by the Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov.

It was Gidon Kremer, the Latvian violinist and leader of Kremerata Baltica, who asked his long-time collaborator Desyatnikov to arrange Piazzolla's *Seasons* after the Vivaldi model. Kremer's conception – captured on his recording of the two works, *Eight Seasons* – splices them in the same order that you will hear them performed today. And there is plenty of fun to be had spotting the similarities.

Piazzolla's spring is filled with lots of funny croaking sounds, like Vivaldi's birds, then moves into the chordal stasis of Vivaldi's autumn movement. Kremer says this combination of spring and autumn acknowledges that while it's spring in Argentina it is autumn in Italy. In Piazzolla's autumn tango, there are references to Vivaldi's spring concerto. The winter tango quotes from the summer concerto (as well as Boccherini and Bach), and there are obvious allusions to Vivaldi's winter at the start and finish of Piazzolla's summer.

The timeless beauty of both works makes it hard to imagine a day when this music will ever be out of season.

Rita Williams
Sydney Symphony ©2008

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THE POETRY OF PASTORAL VISIONS

SPRING

Allegro

Here comes the Spring, and festively
She is saluted by the birds with a merry song;
The fountains and whispering Zephyrs
Flow all the while, with sweet murmuring harmonies.

Advancing over the heavens is a black mantle
With lightning and thunder chosen to announce her;
Then, when all is silent, the little birds
Return anew to their tuneful songs.

Largo

And later in the lovely flowering fields,
To the delightful murmuring of fronds and leaves,
The goat-herd sleeps, his faithful dog watchful beside him.

Allegro

To the rustic bagpipes' sound
Nymphs and shepherds dance beneath the canopy;
Spring appears, clothed in brilliance.

SUMMER

Allegro non molto — Allegro

Beneath this hard and burning sun
Men and beasts languish and the pine trees burn;
Stuttering, the Cuckoo gives voice, and in answer
Sing the Turtledove and the Goldfinch.

The sweet Zephyr blows, but is challenged
by Boreas the North Wind;
The shepherd weeps, because he fears
The fierce coming storm, and for his fate.

Adagio

His tired limbs are deprived of their rest
By his fear of lightning and fierce thunder;
The flies swarming furiously!

Presto

Ah, his fears are all too true –
Thunder and flashes in the Heavens!
Hailstones dash the heads from stalks of ripe grain!

AUTUMN

Allegro

The peasants celebrate with dance and song
The happiness of a good harvest
And the wine of Bacchus having fired them,
It comes to an end in sleep.

Adagio molto

Gradually each ceases singing and dancing;
The mild and pleasant air
Of this Season beckons one and all
To the sweetness of sleep.

Allegro

The hunter at the new dawn joins the chase
With horn, guns and dogs;
The hunted beast flees, and the scent is followed;
Already confused and distracted by the great noise
Of guns and dogs, wounded by shot
Weakly it flees, but exhausted, dies.

WINTER

Allegro non molto

We freeze and shiver amidst the silvery snow
At the severe breath of the horrid wind;
We stamp cold feet relentlessly
While the harsh frost makes our teeth chatter.

Largo

To pass the day by the fire, quiet and content,
While outside there is drenching rain.

Allegro

To walk out on the ice, and with slow steps,
For fear of falling, tread cautiously.
To go boldly, skid, fall to the ground,
And go on the ice anew; to run strongly
Until the ice breaks and splits apart.
To hear them emerge from their iron gates:
Sirocco the South, Boreas the North and all the Winds at war –
This is Winter, but it too brings joy.

**Originally in Italian,
translation by David V. Russell
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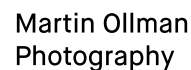
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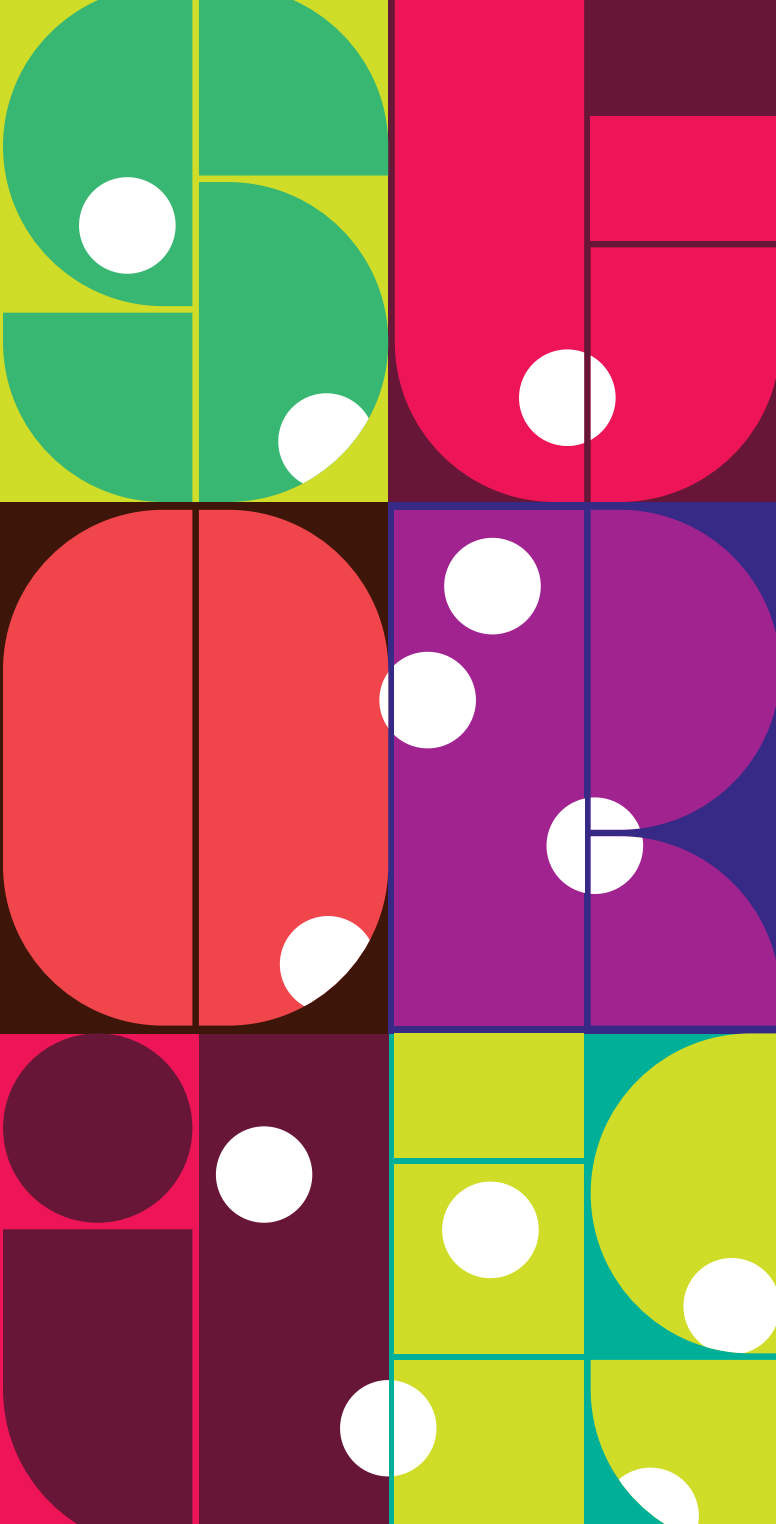
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