



Vivaldi's Seasons Bolette Roed

ARTE DEI SUONATORI





VIVALDI'S SEASONS

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

"Spring"

CD 1

Concerto in E-flat Major, RV 257

1	I. Andante molto e quasi allegro	4. 34
2	II. (Adagio)	2. 25
3	III. Allegro	3. 35

Concerto in A Major, RV 335a "Il rosignuolo"

4	I. Allegro	4. 20
5	II. Grave	2. 23
6	III. Allegro	4. 10

Concerto in E Major, RV 271 "L'amoroso"

7	I. Allegro	3. 37
8	II. Cantabile	2. 27
9	III. Allegro	3. 37

Concerto in E Major Op. 8 No. 1, RV 269 "La primavera"

10	I. Allegro	3. 15
11	II. Largo e pianissimo sempre	2. 46
12	III. Allegro	3. 41

"Summer"

Concerto in D Minor Op. 8 No. 9, RV 236

13	I. Allegro	3. 05
14	II. Largo	2. 25
15	III. Allegro	2. 50

Concerto in C Major Op. 4 No. 7, RV 185

16	I. Largo	2. 31
17	II. Allegro	2. 16
18	III. Largo	1. 44
19	IV. Allegro	2. 21

Concerto in D Minor Op. 4 No. 8, RV 249

20	I. Allegro	1. 51
21	II. Adagio - Presto - Adagio	2. 23
22	III. Allegro	3. 41

Concerto in G Minor, Op. 8 No. 2, RV 315 "L'estate"

23	I. Allegro non molto - Allegro	5. 27
24	II. Adagio e piano - Presto e forte	2. 08
25	III. Presto	3. 00

Total playing time: 76. 47

“Autumn”

CD 2

Concerto in C Major, Op. 8 No. 12, RV 449

1	I. Allegro	3. 16
2	II. Largo	2. 30
3	III. Allegro	3. 40

Concerto in G Minor, Op. 4 No. 6, RV 316a

4	I. Allegro	2. 49
5	II. Largo	2. 39
6	III. Allegro	4. 09

Concerto in A Minor, Op. 4 No. 4, RV 357

7	I. Allegro	3. 09
8	II. Grave	2. 39
9	III. Allegro	2. 51

Concerto in F Major, Op. 8 No. 3, RV 293 “L'autunno”

10	I. Allegro - Allegro assai	5. 00
11	II. Adagio molto	2. 42
12	III. Allegro	3. 22

“Winter”

Concerto in G Minor, Op. 9 No. 3, RV 334

13	I. Allegro non molto	3. 30
14	II. Largo	4. 12
15	III. Allegro non molto	3. 01

Concerto in B Minor, RV 389

16	I. Allegro poco	4. 11
17	II. Largo	2. 50
18	III. Allegro	4. 27

Concerto in C Minor, Op. 4 No. 10, RV 196

19	I. Spirituoso	3. 06
20	II. Adagio	2. 16
21	III. Allegro	2. 57

Concerto in F Minor, Op. 8 No. 4, RV 297 “L'inverno”

22	I. Allegro non molto	3. 20
23	II. Largo	1. 52
24	III. Allegro - Lento	3. 22

Total playing time: 78. 04

Bolette Roed, recorder
Arte dei Suonatori

About this recording

Titles and nicknames have long been applied to pieces to describe aspects of the music ("Unfinished," "Surprise") or to reflect extra-musical associations with stories, objects, moods, etc. ("The Storm at Sea", "Emperor", "Pathetique"). All too often, works bearing names - whether given by the composer, a performer, a music critic, or a publisher - have tended to receive far more attention than those only known by generic titles, such as Concerto in D, Sonata Op. 2 #5, or Suite in F Minor. This is a particular problem for Vivaldi, whose numerous works are mostly known by generic titles and RV catalog numbers. The fact that a composer did not supply a specific nickname does not necessarily mean that the composer did not have extra-musical ideas in mind and simply wished not to limit the imagination of the audience. It is therefore tempting to wonder what would happen if nicknames existed for some of the many

equally wonderful pieces that lack these catchy keyword tags.

Nicholas Lockey



Few, if any, pieces of classical music are as recognizable or popular as "The Four Seasons" by Antonio Vivaldi. They have been recorded innumerable times and re-interpreted over more than three centuries.

While working with Arte dei Suonatori it dawned upon us, that so many of Vivaldi's other concertos could comfortably fit into the "seasons" theme if one thinks about it. The seasons all have contrasting elements: no matter if it's spring, summer, autumn or winter, they all contain beautiful and promising moments as well as dark and tormenting ones. These thoughts inspired us to search out a few concertos that we felt could fit into the seasons theme, while at the same time holding a strong appeal for me personally.

The result is that we have added a total of 12 Vivaldi concertos that we feel match the character of the respective Op. 8 pieces.

This idea and work resulted in the current release – Vivaldi’s Seasons.

The famous Four Seasons and a couple of the additional concertos already have titles from Vivaldi’s hand, while the majority does not. For this subset, adding our own titles might help us as listeners to create a stronger bond with each concerto and ultimately, to enjoy the music more intensely. Along these lines and while working on the concertos, I imagined different scenarios from Vivaldi’s epoch; for instance op. 8 no. 9 (Disc 1, tracks 13-15), I termed “The fire” and Op. 4 no. 7 (Disc 1, tracks 16-19) I associated with “Sunrise” – both within the summer season. Within the autumn selection, I nicknamed Op. 4 no. 6 (Disc 2, tracks 4-6) as “The fishermen” and Op. 8 no. 12 as “The harvest” (Disc 2, tracks 1-3).

Thus, I invite you to imagine your own story or emotions while listening to these recordings, and to consider what title you

might give each piece. Perhaps you’ll agree with my suggested titles or discover your own. In any case, it is my hope that these concertos will spark your imagination as they did for mine.

Bolette Roed

Vivaldi’s cycle of violin concertos known as *The Four Seasons* (published in 1725 but probably written during the 1710s) strikes us now — as it did for his contemporaries — as something special. Out of the hundreds of concertos, sinfonias, and sonatas that he wrote, they are among only a very small number that make explicit reference to extra-musical ideas. And yet, Vivaldi was contributing to a rich tradition within European cultures of celebrating various aspects of the seasons in music, literature, poetry, dance, and the visual and decorative arts. While Vivaldi appears to have been the first to use the relatively new genre of the concerto for his representations, the seasons had already been the subject of a few ballets, masques, and sets of sonatas and suites.

Much more unusual for his time — and a big part of the reason Vivaldi’s cycle continues to resonate with current audiences — are the topics he chose to address in each season, for they significantly depart from the traditional preference for sacred and

secular allegories, mythological characters, or the tendency to focus almost exclusively on human activities. Instead, in Vivaldi’s seasons, humans frequently come into conflict with untamed elements of the natural world. The interactions that result are often praised for their realism as well as the sheer drama they contribute to these concertos.

In his **Spring** concerto, Vivaldi avoids the typical references to Flora or Venus as well as the common themes of new-found love and planting crops. The concerto is nonetheless a predominantly joyous celebration of life newly emerged from winter. The first movement is a tribute to the sonic beauties of the natural world – the melodious songs of the birds, the soft rustling of leaves, and the murmuring of small streams. The leaves continue to rustle through the second movement — a tribute to the value of sleep and fidelity (represented by the barking dog – played by the viola – aside the sleeping goatherd). In the third movement, the nymphs and shepherds enjoy a rustic dance (complete with viola

and basso continuo imitations of bagpipe drones), although Vivaldi gives no explanation for the lament-like minor-mode episode near the end. Likewise, Vivaldi introduces a troubling moment in the first movement of this otherwise celebratory concerto, as the skies darken during a short but powerful thunderstorm; these are forebodings of the drama that awaits us elsewhere in the cycle of concertos.

Vivaldi did take up the concept of love and the display of affection directly in his violin concerto **L'Amoroso** RV 271. One of several concertos where the title seems to refer to a general expressive character rather than any specific narrative, this work is notable for using the same bright key of E major as Vivaldi employed for *Spring* and a plethora of grace notes that lend a suggestion of flattery and amorous sighs to the melodic line. This concerto also shares with *Spring* the use of an appealing ritornello melody in the opening movement and a slow movement where a repetitive accompaniment — also scored here

for violins and violas without bass — supports a plaintive, aria-like melody.

Like *Spring*, the violin concerto **Il Rosignuolo** RV 335 makes extensive use of loose imitations of birdsong, although in this case the birdsong and other perpetual-motion writing dominates nearly all of the solo episodes in the fast movements. The version of RV 335 heard on this recording comes from a manuscript source in Ancona (formerly identified as RV 335a), with a slow movement that is also found in a concerto elsewhere published under the name of Francesco Maria Veracini. Scholars have not reached a consensus on the authorship of the Ancona slow movement, but *The Cuckow* (as RV 335 was known in early English printed editions, where it appeared with a slow movement of undisputed authenticity) was among the most popular of Vivaldi's concertos during his lifetime and for many decades thereafter. The **Violin Concerto in E-flat RV 257**, which probably dates from the last decade or so of Vivaldi's career, exhibits some of the same

gestures found in the thunderstorm episode of *Spring* (near the middle and later parts of the first movement), but now these are set within a more expansive concerto that features an even greater array of rhythmic and textural variations, including a myriad of figurations for the soloist (which Vivaldi subjected to several modifications) during the first and third movements. Unlike *Spring*, the lyrical solo melody of slow movement is accompanied by the full ensemble.

The **Summer** concerto constitutes Vivaldi's most radical departure from previous representations of summer in the arts. Instead of the expected allusions to Vertumnus or Ceres, suggestions of blissful days shared between a couple in love, or for breath and sinking to the ground beneath the intense heat, bird solos that now hint at difficulties to come, violent winds that rush over the landscape, and a remarkable lament-like final solo episode where a descriptions of harvesting crops nourished by the life-sustaining sun, Vivaldi presents



us with scenes of physical and psychological turmoil. The first movement introduces the oppressive conditions of summer — panting shepherd vents his anxiety and despair. As in *Spring*, the slow movement presents a lyrical melody accompanied by a regular rhythmic pattern, although here the shepherd's sleep is troubled by interruptions of thunder (recalling another part of *Spring*) and the barking dog has been replaced by the less endearing suggestion of buzzing flies. A violent and destructive storm is unleashed in the third movement, where the main ritornello begins with a four-note descending gesture (often used, in a minor key, to signal trouble or despair) intensely scored for the full ensemble in parallel octaves.

Descending lines and chromatic writing also figure prominently in the **Violin Concerto in D Minor Op. 8 No. 9**, whether in the sighing figures for unison violins in the first movement's main ritornello, the descending lines in the first solo episode of the same movement (the material of which returns,

embellished, to start the last solo episode), the harmonic surprises just before the end of the slow movement, or the descending half-step in the melody that begins the final movement. Another prominent feature of this concerto is the use of syncopation, found in every section of the first movement and returning in the melody and bass lines of the third movement. Only the pensive second movement provides a greater degree of regularity via the almost-continuous quaver bass line that underpins a rhythmically-diverse melodic line.

As with several movements in *The Four Seasons*, the **Violin Concerto in C Major Op. 4 No. 7** defies present-day expectations of Vivaldi's concertos. It has four movements (in a slow-fast-slow-fast sequence), contains the most extended use of imitative textures amongst all the concertos on this album, includes a plethora of harmonic surprises in the first three movements, and features a second solo violin (in movements 3 and 4) and solo cello (in the finale). The main theme

of this finale also appears in the sinfonia to Vivaldi's opera *Ottone in villa* (1713) as well as the Violin Concerto in C Op. 7 No. 2 and the Oboe Concerto in C RV 447.

Few of Vivaldi's concertos could be farther from our textbook-based perceptions than the **Violin Concerto in D Minor Op. 4 No. 8**, a work that fully embodies the bizarre and fantastic aspects suggested by the title of the Op. 4 collection 'La Stravaganza' ('The Extravagance'). The concerto opens with a series of apparently unrelated and highly contrasting segments (here spread across two tracks) in a fantasia-like sequence that seems to defy rationalization: 1) a segment that alternates boldly chromatic solo arabesques with a terse but highly energized ritornello idea, 2) a single *Adagio* measure of repeated chords, 3) a rapid-fire *Presto* that progresses to the remote key of A-flat major before spiraling back towards D minor, and 4) an even more harmonically-adventurous *Adagio* where the sustained string harmonies snake through a labyrinth of chromatic

turns. While the second movement initially allows us to gather our bearings, several of the solo episodes play with our harmonic and metric equilibrium — in one case near the end, returning us briefly to A-flat Major just as the bass appears to skip a count and get one beat ahead of the solo line.

With the **Autumn** concerto, Vivaldi kept the season's long-standing association with harvests and drinking but reduced the habitual portrayal of Bacchus to a quick euphemistic reference for wine. The first movement, making frequent use of echo effects, begins with the songs and dances of villagers celebrating a good harvest. The remainder of the movement is centered upon the rather unpredictable antics of a drunken villager who falls asleep in a slower section near the end before the other villagers return to their celebrations. Sleep is again the subject of the slow movement (also featured, with some modifications, in the Chamber Concerto RV 104 "La Notte" and its adaptation as the Flute Concerto Op.



10 No. 2). This time, everything is eerily still (Vivaldi's direction that the harpsichordist should improvise arpeggios throughout emphasizes the lack of activity in the other parts). The finale is a hunting scene filled with the sounds of horn calls, gunshots, and dogs giving chase before the unidentified "wild beast" dies from exhaustion.

The **Violin Concerto in C Major Op. 8 No. 12** comprises two bright, cheerful movements that surround a somber dance with melodic phrases that frequently elaborate a descending line. In addition to being marked by large leaps in the main ritornello, the first movement of this concerto shares with *Autumn* the use of echo effects and a tendency to feature harmonious parallel thirds in the violin parts. One pleasant surprise in the finale is that in the closing ritornello the upper voices adapt the semiquaver notes that have dominated the solo part and apply them to material that had previously been heard mostly in quavers — the transformation is so natural that it easily passes unnoticed!

The first movement of the **Violin Concerto in G Minor Op. 4 No. 6** makes extensive use of rising harmonic lines and syncopation rather than the descending lines and rhythmic regularity found in the ritornellos of *Autumn*. The highly expressive slow movement brings a surprise when the full ensemble suddenly enters to reinforce the two strongest cadences in a movement that is otherwise scored for soloist and basso continuo only. Descending chromatic lines and bold harmonic twists make frequent appearances in the intense finale, particularly in the triplet-dominated penultimate solo episode, which would not have been out of place in the concerto Op. 4 No. 8.

Repeated melodic leaps and echoed repetitions are an essential feature in the outer movements of the **Violin Concerto in A Minor Op. 4 No. 4**; these often pass to the bass line during solo episodes or when there are imitative exchanges between the upper parts. The same movements also make powerful use of textures where all the

parts are in parallel octaves. In contrast, the restless solo line of the slow movement is accompanied only by violins and violas that occasionally touch upon very dissonant harmonies.

For his **Winter** concerto, Vivaldi magnifies the harshness of the weather conditions and forgoes popular references to old age, faded romance, and the figure of Aeolus. This new focus is clear from the very first measures, where the instrumental parts enter one by one on a very dissonant chord before the soloist bursts forth as a "horrid wind" that soon sends everyone running and stamping through the snow. The remarkable slow movement represents the customary fireside retreat with a richly layered texture that includes pizzicato violins in steady semiquavers (rain drops falling on the window) and a rapid leaping figure played by a single cello (presumably flames dancing in the fire). Instead of being the invitation for amusing games, the ice that is the subject of the first part of the finale is a source of



fear and — as people fall down — physical pain. The ice soon wrenches apart and the music plunges before a sudden pause and a change of tempo. The warming Sirocco wind brings another moment of respite before the North wind gives battle with a stream of demisemiquavers.

Vivaldi himself established a precedent for adapting his concertos to suit different instruments. For instance, the concertos Op. 8 No. 9 and 12 were probably written for oboe and adapted for violin when published in Op. 8 (although a notice in Op. 8 gives the option of using either instrument for these two concertos). The opening of Spring was even adapted by Vivaldi in two of his operas (*Il Giustino* and *Dorilla in tempe* — the latter including parts for a chorus), while the dissonant opening of Winter serves as a starting point for the aria 'Gelido in ogni vena' ('I feel the blood run cold in all my veins') featured in his operas *Siroe*, *Argippo*, and *Farnace*. The **Violin Concerto in G Minor Op. 9 No. 3** is another adaptation

of an oboe concerto (RV 460, eventually published a few years after the violin version as Op. 11 No. 6). The ritornellos of the first movement are marked by melodic suspensions and several repeated, rising melodic gestures. The second movement is a set of variations over a descending chromatic bass line (heard alone at the start and end) organized through a process of subtraction: three variations in G minor are followed by two variations in C minor and another, single variation in G minor. The third movement abounds with dramatic contrasts and fiery exchanges between the two uppermost voices.

The **Violin Concerto in B Minor RV 389** is another work that likely dates from the latter part of Vivaldi's career. Evidence of this can be seen in the greater rhythmic variety and complex array of gestures in the solos — a trait probably influenced by the rising popularity of the *galant* style. The outer movements are marked by these ornate solos while the middle movement is another

lyrical musing supported by a perpetual quaver bass line played by unison violins and violas.

With the **Violin Concerto in C Minor Op. 4 No. 10** we return to many elements heard elsewhere throughout this album. The first movement makes prominent use of rising harmonic lines (c.f. Op. 4 No. 6), has a first solo episode that quotes from the opening ritornello (c.f. *Autumn* and Op. 4 No. 6), and ends with a plunge to a half close (c.f. *Winter* before the appearance of the Sirocco winds). The second movement begins with four-voice imitation after which the solo commences and is imitated by the basso continuo. As with Op. 8 No. 12 and several passages in *The Four Seasons*, the boundaries of ritornello and solo episode are blurred in the finale, where the soloist repeatedly interjects a syncopated idea before the opening ritornello is concluded.

Nicholas Lockey

Arte dei Suonatori

July 2017 Session

Violin I: Aureliusz Goliński, Joanna Kreft,
Marcin Tarnawski

Violin II: Ewa Golińska, Michał Marcinkowski,
Katarzyna Olszewska

Viola: Natalia Reichert

Violoncello: Poppy Walshaw

Double bass: Michał Bąk

Theorbo: Yasunori Imamura

Harpsichord: Martin Gester

July and August 2018 Sessions

Violin I: Aureliusz Goliński, Katarzyna Olszewska

Violin II: Ewa Golińska, Michał Marcinkowski

Viola: Natalia Reichert

Violoncello: Poppy Walshaw

Violone: Julia Karpeta

Theorbo: Yasunori Imamura

Harpsichord: Imbi Tarum



Acknowledgments

PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive producer **Bolette Roed**

July 2017: Producer, sound engineer & editing **Nora Brandenburg** | Mixing **Stephan Reh**

July 2018: Producer, sound engineer & editing (for RV 293 & 297) **Nora Brandenburg** Editing (RV 257, 269, 271 & 335a) **Daniel Davidsen** | Mixing **Stephan Reh**

August 2018: Producer, sound engineer, mixing & editing **Stephan Reh**

Liner notes **Nicholas Lockey** | Cover photography **Kirstine Ploug** | Booklet photography of Bolette Roed

Caroline Bittencourt | Design **Marjolein Coenrady** | Product management **Kasper van Kooten**

This album was recorded at Kościół Ewangelicki św. Jana (St John Evangelical Church), Mikołów, Poland in July 2017 (RV 185, 236, 249, 316a & 449), July 2018 (RV 257, 269, 271, 293, 297 & 335a) and August 2018 (RV 196, 315, 334, 357 & 389).

Special thanks to pastor Kornel Undas and his wife for their hospitality and for making the St John Evangelical Church available for the recording sessions.

Thanks to the Augustinus Foundation and the William Demant Foundation for the generous support.

PENTATONE TEAM

Vice President A&R **Renaud Loranger** | Managing Director **Simon M. Eder**

A&R Manager **Kate Rockett** | Product Manager **Kasper van Kooten**

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