

PENTATONE OXINGALE SERIES: *PRIMAVERA I the wind*

Matt Haimovitz

Music by Lisa Bielawa, inti figgis-vizueta, Jake Heggie, Vijay Iyer, David T. Little, Tod Machover, Nkeiru Okoye, David Sanford, Laura Elise Schwendinger, Roberto Sierra, Asher Sizemore, Gabriella Smith, Jorge Sosa, Luna Pearl Woolf

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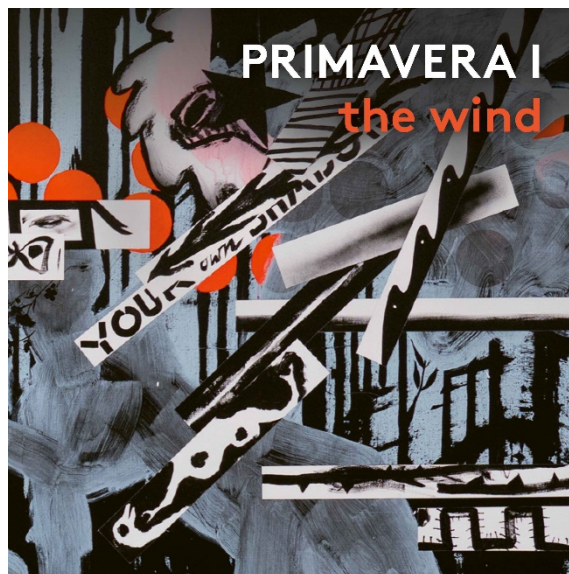
May 2021, Baarn, The Netherlands

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Digital Release Date
11 JUNE 2021

*Released in digital formats for streaming
and high-resolution downloads.*

Audio Resolution for digital files:
96/24 PCM stereo and 44.1k/16 PCM stereo



PTC 5186286

PRIMAVERA I the wind is the first collection in a momentous series encompassing 81 world premieres for solo cello. This digital album presents 14 new commissions by The Primavera Project for ground-breaking, multi-Grammy nominated cellist Matt Haimovitz. Each composer responds to Sandro Botticelli's enigmatic painting, *Primavera*, and the prophetic large-scale triptych, *Primavera 2020*, by world-renowned contemporary artist Charline von Heyl.

Framed by Gabriella Smith's *bare*, a moving chorale to environmental turmoil and Lisa Bielawa's *Missa Primavera*, a hopeful fantasy on Josquin des Pres' cantus firmi, Vijay Iyer, David Sanford, Nkeiru Okoye, Jorge Sosa, and others bring a multitude of influences from the world of Jazz and Latin music to Vivaldi and Scriabin.

Recorded in January 2021 at Charline von Heyl's artist studio near downtown Marfa, Texas, the distinct and diverse contemporary compositional voices bridge the centuries, expanding and redefining the range and repertoire of the solo cello. For more information on the project, composers and their works, please visit theprimaveraproject.com.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/eqTZqRN7G9k>



About the Music

The album opens with *bare* by **Gabriella Smith**, a moving chorale to environmental turmoil. Of the piece, Smith writes, "*Bare* is inspired by the seasons – not the archetypal seasons or the seasons I grew up with, but the new seasons of my home state of California: cycles of ever intensifying drought and fire – and the landscape that is left behind."

Of his piece *Suolo*, **David Sanford** writes, "The literal Italian translation of suolo is soil, and the piece is meant to capture the potency of the extraordinarily fertile earth beneath the feet of the mythological figures in Botticelli's painting, which has produced some five-hundred identifiable plant species and flowers and may be intrinsically connected with the characters Chloris and Flora as well (the second and third figures from the right)."



For *The Crocus Palimpsest*, composer **David T. Little** drew inspiration from a 1934 passage about spring by Samuel Beckett, in addition to the paintings by Botticelli and von Heyl: *I have positively*

never watched it coming with so much impatience and so much relief. And I think of it as a victory over darkness, nightmares, swears, panic and madness, and of the crocuses and daffodils as the promise of a life at least bearable, once enjoyed but in a past so remote that all trace, even remembrance of it, had been almost lost. Little says, "From within the darkness of this year, I found it hard to imagine spring. . . Like a keystone to a masonry arch, Beckett's words helped bring my ideas into balance, and helped reveal the title. *The Crocus Palimpsest* then came quickly. I would compose it over the course of several days, as the old year became the new, and we took a step closer to an again-remembered spring."

Euba's Dance by Nkeiru Okoye is named after the Nigerian scholar, ethnomusicologist, and composer Dr. Akin Euba. Okoye says, "Dr. Euba famously coined the phrase, 'African pianism' to describe the inclination of many African composers to use the piano's percussive effects. I had been doing this for years before meeting Dr. Euba, using some of the same 'color chords' that are in this lively dance etude. *Euba's Dance* is dedicated to Matt, and my Oberlin sister Luna who introduced me to this project."

Jorge Sosa writes of his piece ***Reimagined Spring***, "I wanted to write a work that reflected on the promise of hope that comes with the change of seasons: a reflection on the thawing process, as we gradually come out of the bitter cold winter and awake into a new season of rebirth. . . I took as a point of departure the painting by Charline von Heyl, where she re-imagines the *Primavera* by Botticelli. She uses the same construction as the Botticelli but distorts the images to create a stunning new work. I wanted my piece to reflect on that process, so I decided to use Vivaldi's "Spring" from *The Seasons* as a point of departure. The result is a piece that is referential to Vivaldi, Botticelli, and Charline Von Heyl, and continues a dialogue of shared experiences and reflections on the passing of seasons, and their connection to the longer cycles of life."

inti figgis-vizueta's work ***the motion between three worlds*** draws inspiration from the transitional aspects of Spring, centering poetics of new growth, creation, and interconnectivity. She writes of the piece, "The score behaves as a cosmological map, providing visual frameworks for navigation and movement between sets of given harmonic and timbral materials. The directionality of visual objects, lines of connectivity, and cosmological imagery help inform trajectories of transformation. The player is asked to 'always be moving between.'"

Of ***Equal night***, Vijay Iyer writes, "Equal night is a direct translation of 'equinox,' the moment in the earth's orbit when night and day are of equal lengths. So this piece is about spring, but also about fall, which has an equinox of its own. The piece takes the form of a mini-suite, which

I hear as a small collection of short stories, each segment finding its own balance of light and darkness, inner and outer, or high and low.”

Diaphanous Grace by **Luna Pearl Woolf** is inspired by the three dancing Graces pictured in the Primavera paintings. Woolf writes, “Together these women, swathed in *Diaphanous Grace*, are the promise of transformation and new creation. Through the flowing aura of their garments we sense the delicate buds of the unknown, the possibility of an awakening that remains just out of reach. In writing this, my fifth work for unaccompanied cello for Matt Haimovitz, I wanted to begin in that place of suspended, ever-changing transparency – however that may translate into sound – and never let it fall to earth.”

Of his piece ***Chloris & Zephyrus***, **Roberto Sierra** writes, “When my mind was focused on the task of writing a work for cello that, at some level, needed to relate to the Botticelli painting, my eyes went straight to Chloris and Zephyrus. The playful nature of their pose, the delicate nature of Chloris, who seems to be entranced while wanting to flee, and the otherworldly nature of Zephyrus became elements that I translated into musical expression.”

Six Graces by **Asher Sizemore** explores myriad ideas to sustain three-part polyphony with the solo cello in a sumptuous musical depiction of the six graces of Botticelli’s and Charline von Heyl’s Primaveras. Double-stop tremolos with accompanying pizzicato and ethereal natural harmonics with plucked open strings are two examples.

Tod Machover writes of ***Sorta Voce***, “I was interested in exploring the different forms of breath – from sustaining to destructive – that seem to animate the two paintings by Botticelli and von Heyl, as well as to hint at the mystery and diversity that underlie what can appear at first to be purely celebratory and life-affirming images. In exposing both the power and the ambiguity of breath, *Sorta Voce* explores the will to persist, the longing for rebirth after tough times, and the acceptance of life’s constant ebb and flow. ”

Spring Forward by **Jake Heggie** celebrates the momentum of early spring. He writes, “My favorite time of year is the front edge of spring, when we wake from a groggy winter’s sleep to notice buds appearing, blossoms and grasses pushing through insistently, magically, powerfully; slowly at first, then bursting forth everywhere. Best of all, we anticipate longer days and daylight savings time, when we set our clocks ahead an hour. This piece is a virtuoso Tarantella, constantly building, surprising and illuminating, faster and faster. To my great delight, Matt Haimovitz has lavishly embellished and personalized an already challenging score to add to the excitement of what will happen next.”

Fluorescenza by **Laura Elise Schwendinger** draws inspiration from fluorescence, or the state or act of flowering. Schwendinger writes, “Starting with the Botticelli and following through the transformation of the materials that are significant in Charline von Heyl’s work, my response starts with the cello playing the role of ancient lute player, sitting over a musical framework used during the late Renaissance and flowering fully in the Baroque period, used for songs, dances and sets of variations called the La Folia . . . the dual meaning of foglia (leaf), the reference to music of an earlier time that morphs into the world of the modern which references a more dramatic stance with large contrasts that grow out of, or “blossom” from, the original chord progression, still hidden in the substructure.”

Missa Primavera by **Lisa Bielawa** brings another layer of influence in addition to the two paintings by Botticelli and von Heyl – Renaissance composer Josquin des Prez’s *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrariae*. Bielawa writes, “Both Botticelli and Josquin were able to create luminously beautiful works that also, within their construction, celebrated wildly complex networks of cryptic meanings that art historians and musicologists, respectively, have been decoding with glee ever since. Singing Josquin is like being inside a superbly illustrated fantasy novel, full of color and magic and symbolism. I leaned into the surplus signification and symbolism inherent in the project itself. Josquin, composing in Italy around the same time as Botticelli’s heyday, created his *cantus firmus* (the core melody that underpins the structure of the composition) by matching the actual vowel sounds of the name of his benefactor (Hercules, the Duke of Ferrara) to the corresponding vowel sounds of the solfège syllables. I followed suit and generated my own *cantus firmus*, also gleaned from the name of the commissioner (and, coincidentally, with the painting): Mi (Pri-) Fa (ma-) Re (ve-) La (ra). With this underpinning in place, I was able to explore and reimagine many other features of Josquin’s masterwork, as von Heyl has done with the Botticelli masterwork.”

About Matt Haimovitz

Renowned as a musical pioneer, multi-Grammy-nominated cellist Matt Haimovitz is praised by The New York Times as a “ferociously talented cellist who brings his megawatt sound and uncommon expressive gifts to a vast variety of styles” and by The New Yorker as “remarkable virtuoso” who “never turns in a predictable performance.” He brings a fresh ear to familiar repertoire, champions new music, and initiates groundbreaking collaborations, as well as creating innovative recording projects. In addition to his touring schedule, Haimovitz mentors an award-winning studio of young cellists at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University in Montreal and is now the first-ever John Cage Fellow at The New School’s Mannes School of Music in New York City.

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Haimovitz made his debut in 1984, at the age of 13, as soloist with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic. At 17 he made his first recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, for Deutsche Grammophon. He has gone on to perform on the world's most esteemed stages, with such orchestras and conductors as the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic with Zubin Mehta, the English Chamber Orchestra with Daniel Barenboim, the Boston Symphony Orchestra with Leonard Slatkin, and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal with Kent Nagano. Haimovitz's recording career encompasses more than 20 years of award-winning work on Deutsche Grammophon (Universal), Oxingale Records, and the PENTATONE Oxingale Series. His honors include the Trailblazer Award from the American Music Center, the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Grand Prix du Disque, and the Premio Internazionale "Accademia Musicale Chigiana." He studied with Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School and graduated magna cum laude with highest honors from Harvard University. Haimovitz plays a Venetian cello, made in 1710 by Matteo Goffriller.

<https://www.facebook.com/cellistmatthaimovitz/>

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About Charline von Heyl

Charline von Heyl (German, b. 1960) studied at the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and participated in the Cologne art scene in the 1980s before moving to New York in 1995. She is a painter whose practice encompasses drawing, printmaking, and collage. Von Heyl's work takes inspiration from a vast and surprising array of sources – including literature, pop culture, metaphysics and personal history. She has been the subject of several survey museum exhibitions, most recently held at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Museum Dhont Dhaenens, Deurle; and the Deichtorhallen, Hamburg.

Past survey exhibitions include the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston; the Tate Liverpool; Kunsthalle Nürnberg; Bonner Kunstverein; and the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia. Her work can be found in collections around the world, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Kunstmuseum Bonn; and the Tate Modern, London. Charline von Heyl lives and works in New York and Marfa, Texas.

About PENTATONE

PENTATONE is a classical music label for genuine artistic expression, working with internationally renowned artists. PENTATONE's reputation for excellence is supported by a diverse catalogue, from the familiar to the unusual or unexpected, driven by the ambition to innovate classical music. The label continues to push boundaries to release recordings of high quality and artistry, acknowledged by the fact that PENTATONE has won both the Gramophone (2019) and ICMA (2020) Label of the Year awards.

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