



THE FOUR SEASONS

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* are the first four concertos to open the collection of twelve violin concertos composed between 1723 and 1725 entitled *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* (*The confrontation between harmony and invention*), in which reason and imagination clash and are reconciled.

First performed in public in London and at the Concert spirituel in Paris in early 1728, the famous priest-composer - who died in poverty - poured all his genius into the composition of this universal hymn to nature, rediscovered in the mid-twentieth century.

The Four Seasons are now considered a major work in the history of Western classical music, where the abundance of contrasts perfectly matches the criteria of Baroque music. *The Four Seasons* marked a turning point in the concerto genre by involving a new organisation of the orchestra, moving from the concerto grosso, a concertante musical form in which the orchestra dialogues with a group of soloists, to what was to become the concerto featuring a single soloist in the foreground in relation to the orchestra. The *Four Seasons* are also the first work of program music, i.e. descriptive music illustrating the cycle of the seasons through its figuralisms.

Spring, written in E major, describes with joy the renewal of nature. Summer, composed in G minor, expresses the languor and heat of summer, which sometimes gives way to storms. Autumn, in F major, illustrates the grape harvest and drunkenness, but also hunting through the barking of dogs. Winter, in the key of F minor, expresses the desolation and harshness of winter.

PROGRAMME

Antonio Vivaldi

The Four Seasons (1723)

Motet *In furore iustissimae irae* (1720)

Opera arias

MUSICAL STAFF

7 artists (1 singer, 2 violins, 1 viola, 1 cello,
1 bassoon, 1 harpsichord)

Musical direction & harpsichord : Sébastien d'Hérin

Voice : Caroline Mutel

Solo violin : Armelle Cuny