

## **THE FOUR SEASONS:**

1: Concerto No.1 in E Major, RV 269, "SPRING" *Allegro / Largo / Allegro (Pastorale dance)*

2: Concerto No.2 in g minor, RV 315, "SUMMER" *Allegro non molto - Allegro / Adagio – Presto – Adagio / Presto (Summer Storm)*

3: Concerto No.3 in F Major, RV 293, "AUTUMN" *Allegro (Peasant Dance and Song) / Adagio molto (Sleeping Drunkards) / Allegro (The Hunt)*

4: Concerto No.4 in f minor, RV 297, "WINTER" *Allegro non molto / Largo / Allegro*

One of the earliest uses of music was in the accompaniment of theatrical dance and story-telling, so it is natural that composers should from time to time produce what we know as "program music" – music written to portray events, activities or moods such as pastoral scenes or storms. Music representing the moods of the four seasons has always been popular, and baroque composers such as Werner and Fischer among others produced cycles of concertos representing the four seasons. But none were to do so in such precise pictorial detail as Antonio Vivaldi in his Four Seasons concertos.

As a descriptive basis for his Four Seasons, Vivaldi took four Sonnets, apparently written by himself. Each of the four sonnets is expressed in a concerto, which in turn is divided into three phrases or ideas, reflected in the three movements (fast-slow-fast) of each concerto. The published scores (by Estienne Roger of Amsterdam in 1725) are marked to indicate which musical passages are representative of which verses of the sonnet. It is advisable, at least during the first few hearings, to follow the sonnets and music together, for they are bound up with one another to an extent rarely heard in any other programmatic pieces either of the baroque period or subsequently

### Spring – Concerto in E Major

*Allegro*

Springtime is upon us. The birds celebrate her return with festive song, and murmuring streams are softly caressed by the breezes. Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar, casting their dark mantle over heaven, then they die away to silence, and the birds take up their charming songs once more.

*Largo*

On the flower-strewn meadow, with leafy branches rustling overhead, the goat-herd sleeps, his faithful dog beside him.

*Allegro*

Led by the festive sound of rustic bagpipes, nymphs and shepherds lightly dance beneath the brilliant canopy of spring.

### Summer – Concerto in g minor

*Allegro non molto*

Beneath the blazing sun's relentless heat men and flocks are sweltering, pines are scorched. We hear the cuckoo's voice; then sweet songs of the turtle dove and finch are heard. Soft breezes stir the air...but threatening north wind sweeps them suddenly aside. The shepherd trembles, fearful of violent storm and what may lie ahead.

*Adagio e piano - Presto e forte*

His limbs are now awakened from their repose by fear of lightning's flash and thunder's roar, as gnats and flies buzz furiously around.

*Presto*

Alas, his worst fears were justified, as the heavens roar and great hailstones beat down upon the proudly standing corn.

Autumn – Concerto in F Major

*Allegro*

The peasant celebrates with song and dance the harvest safely gathered in. The cup of Bacchus flows freely, and many find their relief in deep slumber.

*Adagio molto*

The singing and the dancing die away as cooling breezes fan the pleasant air, inviting all to sleep without a care.

*Allegro*

The hunters emerge at dawn, ready for the chase, with horns and dogs and cries. Their quarry flees while they give chase. Terrified and wounded, the prey struggles on, but, harried, dies.

Winter – Concerto in f-minor

*Allegro non molto*

Shivering, frozen mid the frosty snow in biting, stinging winds; running to and fro to stamp one's icy feet, teeth chattering in the bitter chill.

*Largo*

To rest contentedly beside the hearth, while those outside are drenched by pouring rain.

*Allegro*

We tread the icy path slowly and cautiously, for fear of tripping and falling. Then turn abruptly, slip, crash on the ground and, rising, hasten on across the ice lest it cracks up. We feel the chill north winds coarse through the home despite the locked and bolted doors...this is winter, which nonetheless brings its own delights.