

**April 2023**

[Billing:]

APOLLO’S FIRE | The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra

Jeannette Sorrell, Artistic Director

**Vivaldi’s Four Seasons: *rediscovered***

Francisco Fullana, violin
Jeannette Sorrell, conductor/harpsichord

Saturday, April 15 – St Martin in the Fields, London

Sunday, April 16 – Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh

– PROGRAM –

MARCO UCCELLINI (c.1603-1680) / arr. Sorrell

**La Bergamasca**

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

**La Primavera (Spring), Op. 8 no. 1**

Allegro | Largo | Allegro

*Francisco Fullana, violin*

**L’Estate (Summer), Op. 8 no. 2**

Allegro non molto – Allegro | Adagio e piano

Presto: Tempo impetuoso d'estate

*Francisco Fullana, violin*

**Concerto in G minor for Two Cellos, RV 531**

Allegro | Largo | Allegro

*René Schiffer & Mimé Yamahiro Brinkmann, cello*

– Intermission –

**L’Autunno (Autumn), Op. 8 no. 3**

Allegro | Adagio molto | Allegro

*Francisco Fullana, violin*

**L’Inverno (Winter), Op. 8 no. 4**

Allegro non molto | Largo | Allegro

*Francisco Fullana, violin*

Vivaldi / arr. Sorrell

**La Folia (“Madness”), after the Trio Sonata in D Minor, RV 63**

*Alan Choo & Emi Tanabe, violin*

**Apollo’s Fire CD recordings, including The Four Seasons with Francisco Fullana,**

**are for sale in the lobby after the concert.**

Apollo’s Fire and Jeannette Sorrell appear by arrangement with:

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*Notes on the Program*

**A Priest and Some Orphans Make Revolutionary Music**

by Jeannette Sorrell

*One day when Vivaldi (the Redhead Priest) was saying Mass, a musical theme came into his mind. He at once left the altar where he was officiating and repaired to the sacristy to write out his theme, then he came back to finish the Mass. He was reported to the Inquisition, which luckily looked on him as a musician, that is, AS A MADMAN, and merely forbade him to say Mass from that time forward.*

–P. L. de Boisgelou, 1800

**I. A Revolutionary Experiment**

In 1725 Antonio Vivaldi published a collection of twelve concertos titled *Il Cimento dell’Armonia e dell’Inventione* – *The Contest Between Harmony and Invention*. With this curious title, he unleashed a revolutionary question: should music simply be about harmony, or could it serve to illustrate inventive ideas, events, moods, natural scenes, and so forth? Vivaldi set out to prove that it could do both. The first four concertos of the collection, titled ***Le Quattro Stagioni (The Four Seasons)***, are virtuoso demonstrations of music in the service of storytelling – in this case, the story of Nature and her various moods.

The role of the performer as an animated and improvisatory storyteller was fundamental to baroque performance, and especially to Vivaldi’s music. Though Vivaldi had written music in imitation of Nature before, he took the art to new heights this time, supplying sonnets to clarify the meaning of the music. Scholars generally believe that the sonnets were composed by Vivaldi himself, as they do not seem to be the work of a trained poet. In the first publication (1725 in Amsterdam), the lines of the sonnets are labeled A, B, C, D, E, etc. These letters are also placed at the corresponding points in the score, so that the performer can understand which lines of poetry correspond to which passages in the music. However, Vivaldi also provided many more specific indications directly in the score, telling the performer exactly what each phrase is depicting. This level of detail is often lost today.

Here follows a description of Vivaldi's story, as told through specific indications in the score.

La Primavera - Spring

In the first movement, a joyful chirping theme tells us that spring has come. A trio of birds (solo violins) sings in canon, and then flies away. The little brook that was frozen all winter now babbles merrily. A brief spring shower with thunder and lightning does not disturb the joyful mood. In the second movement, we meet the shepherd boy (solo violin), who naps peacefully on a hillside while watched by his famous “barking dog” (the insistent violas). The third movement is a delightful peasant dance using a drone in the bass to suggest the musettes or bagpipes associated with outdoor festivities.

L'’Estate - Summer

The first movement is a brilliant evocation of hot summer days in Italy. The opening two-note sighing figure evokes the peasants wilting in the heat. A lively cuckoo springs into action, followed by a lonely goldfinch and a turtledove. A chilly North Wind hints of an approaching storm. Our shepherd boy fears the storm, and we sense his anxiety in some tearful music. In the slow movement, the shepherd boy tries to take another siesta, but this time is tormented by buzzing flies and wasps. His frayed nerves are not helped by the intermittent rumbling thunder, growing louder as the storm approaches.

The third movement is a stunning depiction of a thunderstorm. Anyone who has been in Italy during a summer storm will appreciate how the torrent of cascading violin scales evokes the deluge that comes when the clouds burst. The wind and rain batter the crops furiously.

L’'Autunno - Autumn

The first movement concerns the cheerful gatherings of peasants celebrating the harvest – including a fair amount of drinking. We meet an intoxicated farmer who staggers merrily. The farmers get progressively more tipsy until they fall asleep towards the end of the first movement. In the second movement, the dreams of the slumbering farmers ebb and flow. Vivaldi indicates that the harpsichord should play continuous arpeggios. In our performance, the solo violin plays occasional cascades suggesting the movement of dreams.

In the third movement we are invited to join a hunting party, complete with galloping rhythms and horn-calls. Animal lovers, be warned: this movement includes gun-shots and the squeals of a desperate animal. The poor creature finally gives up his spirit in a lightly floating violin arpeggio, immediately followed by the return of the jolly hunting theme.

L'Inverno - Winter

Vivaldi partly dispenses with *ritornello* form in order to relate the details of winter life: we begin stiff with cold (reminiscent of Purcell's *Cold Genius*), then the howling wind arises together with the famous chattering teeth (violins playing staccato repeated notes, very high and fast). In the second movement we experience a more typical Venetian winter: drizzling rain on the rooftop, brought to life by pizzicato violins.

The third movement begins with slipping and sliding on the ice, and suddenly the orchestra interrupts with jagged intervals, signaling that the ice has broken right in front of us. A quick series of descending arpeggios in the violin conveys attempts to get up from the ice and walk, with plenty of stumbling. A brief respite comes from the gentle spring breeze in the upper strings, soon interrupted with the return of the fierce North Wind. Vivaldi notes in the sonnet that while winter brings challenges, it ultimately brings joys as well.

In writing these violin concertos for his young orphan protégés, Vivaldi was also the great developer of *ritornello* form – the form that became the model for concerto-writing by all European composers of the century, including J.S. Bach. The Italian word “ritornello” means something that returns. The same word is used to mean the refrain in popular music – and indeed, Vivaldi’s *ritornellos* convey the bold and driving sense of rhythm and melody that is commonly associated with pop music. Like many pop music composers today, he was writing for teenagers as well as adults. So he imbued his concertos with the same sense of driving rhythm and earthy harmonies that we all respond to in rock music. I think of him as the rock-n’-roll composer of the 18th century.

Vivaldi’s trio sonata ***La Folia (“Folly” or “Madness”)*** is one of many baroque works based on the traditional folia ground-bass pattern. Scholars believe that the great *follia* or *folia* dance-tune originated in Portugal, where girls would engage in the “folly” of a mad dance around the fire. The *folia* is a ground bass in haughty sarabande-like rhythm, full of the tension of courtship and seduction. Traditionally, the dance grew faster and wilder toward the end. The theme has served as inspiration for variations by dozens of baroque composers, including Corelli, Marais, Geminiani, C.P.E. Bach, and of course, Vivaldi. I believe that Vivaldi’s version is the finest of them all; but since he wrote it as a trio sonata (for two violins and continuo) I felt compelled to arrange it as a concerto grosso so that all of us could join in the fray.

**II. The All-Girl Band of Venice**

To fully understand Vivaldi’s work, including *The Four Seasons*, we need to understand the extraordinary young musicians for whom he wrote nearly all of his violin concertos. (Though some scholars have suggested in the past that the *Four Seasons* were an exception, written for a professional ensemble in Mantua, this theory now seems unlikely in view of more recent evidence.) The unique situation of Vivaldi’s young musicians, and their intense focus and passion, probably made it possible for the composer to envision a new level of virtuoso artistry in his concerto-writing.

Venice in Vivaldi’s time was already a tourist destination. The floating city’s vibrant music and entertainment scene attracted European princes and British aristocrats by the hundreds. Eight opera houses flourished in Venice, but the biggest attraction of all was the famous Sunday evening concerts performed by… an orchestra of orphan girls.

Venice in Vivaldi’s time had several thousand illegitimate and orphaned children, especially girls. Why? Because aristocratic Venetian men liked to keep mistresses. It was common – even acceptable. The city was home to over 10,000 elegant prostitutes, who generated much revenue for the city. Illegitimate babies could not be brought up in the marital home, so the city maintained several very large religious orphanages, or *ospedali*. Babies were deposited at the orphanages through the tiny door known as the *scaffetta*. Most of them were the daughters of noblemen, and their wealthy fathers took an interest in their welfare. Thus, the orphanages were well funded.

And so it was that when the young Antonio Vivaldi failed to cut the mustard as a priest, the church elders decided to send him to the *Ospedale della Pietà* – a large convent and girls’ orphanage with an extraordinary emphasis on music. There he could be useful as a music teacher.

The *Pietà* was essentially the precursor to today’s *El Sistema* youth orchestras, designed to provide underprivileged youth with a pathway out of poverty through musical accomplishment. The girls at the *Pietà* played and studied music for hours every day. Other than music and academic classes, they lived the life of nuns. They were bound to silence and were not allowed to speak at meals or chat with each other at any time. As noted by a German tourist in 1730, the girls were not allowed to leave the orphanage unless they received a marriage proposal.

The *Pietà* had several orchestras of different levels. Vivaldi became the music-master and composer for the most elite orchestra, known as the *figlie del coro*. Their public concerts every Sunday drew aristocratic tourists from far and wide, thus bringing in revenue that supported the orphanage. When Jean-Jacques Rousseau visited Venice, he wrote that the music at the orphanage had “no equal, either in Italy or the rest of the world.”

The orphans for whom Vivaldi wrote his concertos had no identity other than their roles in the elite orchestra. They had no last names, and were known as “Marietta *dal Violino*,” or “Bernardina *dal Violoncello*,” etc. Vivaldi often wrote his concertos for a particular girl, indicating her name at the top of the manuscript. Many of the most virtuosic violin concertos were written for “Anna Maria *dal Violino*.” Since the manuscript of *The Four Seasons* did not survive, we do not know if Vivaldi wrote the solo part for Anna Maria, or for himself to perform.

Visitors were fascinated by the *Pietà’s* all-female orchestras, because such a thing was unheard of in the rest of Europe. These girls, confined in a convent and punished if they spoke, gave world-class, virtuoso performances. They knew that their two options in life were either to marry or to remain at the convent and dedicate their lives to music in the service of God. They needed to maintain pure and chaste reputations if they were to win a husband; however, women who gave public concerts were usually considered loose and disreputable. So, the church elders found a solution: Vivaldi’s orchestra performances could not be called “concerts.” Instead, they were called Vespers services.

The girls performed behind a screen in a balcony above the audience. Audience members were not supposed to applaud, so they shuffled their feet in appreciation at the end of a virtuoso performance. The spectators peered in fascination at the gallery above, trying to see the girls better. Tourist after tourist, including Charles Burney and Samuel Sharp, commented regretfully that the girls were hidden. Sharp wrote in 1765, “However beautiful the girls may be… their melody is intercepted from the sight of the audience by a black gauze hung over the rails of the gallery in which they perform; it is transparent enough to show the figures of women, but not in the least their features and complexion.” The girls often received proposals of marriage from wealthy gentlemen. However, any orphan of the *Pietà* who chose to marry was required to sign a contract saying that she *would never perform as a musician again*. She also had to return her instrument to the *Pietà*. This was how the *Pietà* maintained its standing as a leading tourist attraction of the world. Many of the girls turned down their marriage offers because they could not face the idea of living without music. Anna Maria *dal Violino* received proposals year after year, and was the subject of love poems printed in Venice newspapers. Nevertheless, she apparently could not bring herself to marry in view of the sacrifice she would have to make. She remained at the *Pietà* her entire life, becoming the principal Maestra of the orchestra.

The girls of the *Pietà* must have poured out their energy and passions at these Sunday concerts. Then, back to their vow of silence again.

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Cleveland 2022

[See next page for Musicians’ roster.]

APOLLO’S FIRE

Jeannette Sorrell, Artistic Director

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| --- | --- |
| VIOLINAlan Choo, *concertmaster*Emi Tanabe, *assistant concertmaster*Andrew Fouts, *principal* Holly PiccoliMin-Young KimAlice EvansVIOLANicole Divall, *principal*Yael Senamaud-CohenCELLORené Schiffer, *principal*Mimé Yamahiro Brinkmann | CONTRABASSCarina CograveTHEORBO & GUITARWilliam SimmsBrian KayBAROQUE HARPAnna O’ConnellHARPSICHORDJeannette Sorrell |

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Soloist Biographies

**Francisco Fullana**

*“A paragon of delicacy”*

–SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

Spanish-born **violinist Francisco Fullana** is one of the first international solo violinists to fully embrace and absorb the baroque language of historical performance. Hailed as a *“rising star”* (BBC Music Magazine), he is the winner of four international violin competitions as well as an Avery Fisher Career Grant. His Carnegie Hall recital debut was noted for its *“joy and playfulness in collaboration … it was perfection”* (New York Concert Review).

As Artist-in-Residence with Apollo’s Fire, he performed with the GRAMMY®-winning period orchestra in 17 concerts during 2021-22, including at Carnegie Hall in March and at Cleveland’s Severance Hall in May. He also shares his love of music and his immigrant story with youth at several Spanish-speaking public schools in Cleveland and Chicago, in collaboration with AF musicians.

Fullana’s CD album of *The Four Seasons* with Apollo’s Fire was released in 2021 and chosen by THE TIMES of London as #3 in the “10 Best Classical Albums of 2021.” His solo debut album, titled “Bach’s Long Shadow,” was chosen by BBC Music Magazine as “Instrumental Album of the Month” in July 2021.

Born into a family of educators, Francisco was raised in Mallorca and Madrid and was recognized in Spain as a prodigy. He moved to the U.S. at the age of 16 (as an unaccompanied minor) to study at The Juilliard School. His primary teachers and mentors for the next 8 years were Donald Weilerstein, Masao Kawasaki, and Midori.

His lifelong fascination with baroque music has influenced both of his prior recordings: his 2018 debut album, *Through the Lens of Time* (Orchid Classics) and his 2021 solo album, *Bach’s Long Shadow*, which juxtaposes Bach Partitas on gut strings and baroque setup with virtuoso solo violin works from the next three centuries.

As a concerto soloist, his engagements have included the Bayerische Philharmonie, the Münchner Rundfunkorchester, the City of Birmingham Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, and the St Paul Chamber Orchestra, among others.

As a chamber musician, Francisco is a Bowers Program Artist at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. His many performances have included the Marlboro Festival and the Perlman Music Program, as well as collaborations with Mitsuko Uchida and members of the Guarneri, Juilliard, Pacifica, Takács, and Cleveland quartets.

Using gut strings and a baroque bow, Francisco performs on the 1735 “Mary Portman” ex-Kreisler Guarneri del Gesù violin, on loan from Clement and Karen Arrison through the Stradivari Society of Chicago.

**ALAN CHOO,** violin, has been noted by critics as “a dynamo, delivering lines with panache. He exemplified virtuosity” (Cleveland Plain Dealer). He serves as Concertmaster and Assistant Artistic Director of Apollo’s Fire, having made his debut with the ensemble as a soloist at the Tanglewood and Ravinia Music Festivals in 2017. He is currently recording the complete *Rosary Sonatas* by Heinrich Biber with Apollo’s Fire.

Alan is also Founder and Artistic Director of Red Dot Baroque, Singapore’s first professional period group and Ensemble-in-Residence at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory. As a soloist, he has appeared with the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Chinese Orchestra, Tafelmusik Winter Institute Orchestra, and more. He holds a Doctorate in Historical Performance Practice from Case Western Reserve University and violin performance degrees from Peabody Conservatory and Yong Siew Toh Conservatory.

**EMI TANABE**, *violin*, enjoys a multi-faceted career as a baroque violinist and a solo crossover artist. In addition to being a core member of Apollo's Fire, she performs with the Chicago-based period groups Haymarket Opera and Third Coast Baroque. With Apollo's Fire, she has performed on tour across the U.S. and Europe. Her facility with world music styles and improvisation has led to many solo violin performances with Tango, Flamenco, Celtic, and jazz ensembles across the country. She has appeared with such groups as the renowned Surabhi Ensemble, the GRAMMY®-nominated children’s music band Wendy&DB, and the theater/dinner production “Teatro ZinZanni." Emi is a native of Japan and holds degrees in violin performance from the University of North Texas and Roosevelt University.

**RENÉ SCHIFFER**, *cello*, is praised for his *“interpretive imagination and patrician command of the cello”* (The Cleveland Plain Dealer). He is a native of Holland where he was a protégé of Anner Bijlsma. He later studied baroque cello with Jaap ter Linden and viola da gamba with Catharina Meints. As a member of Sigiswald Kuijken’s La Petite Bande for sixteen years, he toured four continents and appeared many times on European television. He has also performed with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Les Musiciens du Louvre, and in over forty projects with Tafelmusik of Toronto. As a concerto soloist, he has appeared throughout North America and Europe, and can be heard on acclaimed CD recordings of the Vivaldi *Concerto for Two Cellos* and the *Tango Concerto for Two Gambas* (his own composition) on British label AVIE. He can be heard on more than forty CD recordings, on the Harmonia Mundi, Philips, Virgin Classics, Erato, Sony, and AVIE labels. He serves on the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music as Teacher of Baroque Cello, and has given masterclasses and coachings for the New World Symphony (Miami), the University of Michigan, Oberlin Conservatory, and Cincinnati College-Conservatory.

**Mimé Yamahiro Brinkmann,** *cello*, is one of Europe’s most prominent baroque cellists. Her 2016 solo album *Cello Rising* was acclaimed for its “astounding virtuosity” (*The Strad*), and was featured as “Recording of the Month” by *MusicWeb International*. Her 2017 chamber music album, *Heroines of Love and Loss,* won the prestigious Diapason d'Or award in France.  She is the winner of many early music competitions, including the Musica Antiqua Brugge Soloist Competition (Belgium) and The International Competition for Original String Instruments in Brescia, Italy.  She can be heard regularly across the globe as a solo recitalist and as an orchestra musician with ensembles including Apollo’s Fire, Tafelmusik, Concerto Copenhagen, ARCO Chamber Soloists (Australia), the renowned Drottningholm Opera Orchestra (Sweden), and the Paul Hillier Ensemble (Denmark). Between tours, she enjoys teaching at The Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm. She holds a Performance Diploma in modern cello from the Toho Gakuen School of Music in Tokyo, Japan, and a soloist diploma on both cello and viola da gamba from The Royal Conservatory in The Hague.