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## A Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

I'm so delighted to welcome you to the start of our 50th season for tonight's performance of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, which happens to be our first indoor concert since last February. Little did we know then that we would have many months ahead where Covid-19 would disrupt our world so deeply, resulting in such a devastating loss of lives.

Even though we can't be together in person tonight, I know you must be very happy that our musicians are back onstage. While we've downsized our orchestra because of health and safety considerations, this will in no way detract from the energy and vitality they bring to Vivaldi's perennial masterpiece.

Dame Jane Glover, our music director, will introduce the concert from her home in London. And while Concertmaster Gina DiBello is no stranger to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, we're delighted to welcome Ryan Opera Center alum Christopher Kenney to recite the sonnets Vivaldi wrote to accompany his marvelous programmatic creations for string orchestra.

This concert marks the first of six programs, one per month, which we are making available online at [baroque.org](http://baroque.org). I hope you will join us again next month for *Double Trouble*, featuring Baroque concertos for two violins by Bach and Vivaldi. In March, Jane Glover returns to Chicago for the first time since the pandemic began to conduct one of her signature Handel and Mozart programs, including Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 14 presented by the Israeli-American concert pianist Inon Barnatan.

We could not have made this return to the stage without your extraordinary support during these extraordinary times. Our musicians, staff, and board, along with Jane and Nicholas, so appreciate all you have done to keep us strong. We are happy to finally be making music again, though it will be all the more meaningful when we can welcome you back into our venues. We look forward to that day! In the meantime, please enjoy tonight's concert and thank you, sincerely, for caring so much about Music of the Baroque.

Declan McGovern  
Executive Director

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## Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*

Gina DiBello, director and soloist

Christopher Kenney, narrator

Sunday, January 24, 2021, 7:30 PM CST

North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, Skokie

### *Le quattro stagioni* (The Four Seasons)

**Antonio Vivaldi**

(1678-1741)

Concerto No. 1 in E Major, "La primavera" (Spring)

Allegro—Largo e pianissimo sempre—Allegro pastorale

Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, "L'estate" (Summer)

Allegro non molto—Adagio e piano—Presto

Concerto No. 3 in F Major, "L'autunno" (Autumn)

Allegro—Adagio molto—Allegro

Concerto No. 4 in F Minor, "L'inverno" (Winter)

Allegro non molto—Largo—Allegro

## Biographies



Soloist and director **Gina DiBello** joined the first violin section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in April 2013. She was previously principal second violin of the Minnesota Orchestra and a member of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. She was appointed Music of the Baroque's concertmaster in 2016.

A Chicago native, Gina DiBello developed an intense passion for music early in her life—her father Joseph is a veteran bass player with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and her mother Bonita a violinist with Lyric Opera of Chicago. She began her violin studies at age four and made her solo debut at age fifteen, performing the Glazunov Concerto with the Kishwaukee Symphony. She continued her studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music and The Juilliard School. Her principal teachers include Desirée Ruhstrat, David Cerone, and Linda Cerone.

A dedicated soloist and chamber musician, Gina DiBello performed Mozart's Violin Concertos Nos. 3 and 5 with the Minnesota Orchestra and is a founding member of New Music Detroit, a collective dedicated to performing and promoting contemporary music. She lives on the north side of Chicago with her husband, percussionist Ian Ding, and their cats.



Baritone **Christopher Kenney** is a recent alumnus of Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center, where he appeared as Fiorello in *The Barber of Seville*, the Master of Ceremonies in *Cendrillon*, and the Marchese d'Obigny in *La traviata*, among others. Other highlights include engagements with Santa Fe Opera, Central City Opera, and his mainstage debut with Washington National Opera as Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*. He last appeared with Music of the Baroque in September 2020.

Christopher Kenney's concert appearances include his New York City debut singing Bach cantatas with the American Symphony Orchestra and Leonard Slatkin at Alice Tully Hall, and debuts with the Seattle Symphony and Grant Park Music Festival. He also presented a series of songs with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended World War I.

A native of the Red River Valley on the North Dakota-Minnesota border, Christopher Kenney is a graduate of Concordia College and the University of Kentucky. In his spare time, he is an avid aviator and commercial pilot.



## Program Notes

An accomplished violinist, Antonio Vivaldi left an indelible impression on his audiences. A witness at one of his performances remarked, “He added a cadenza that really frightened me, for such playing has not been heard before and can never be equaled: he brought his fingers no more than a straw’s breadth from the bridge, leaving no room for the bow—and that on all four strings with imitations and incredible speed.” Not surprisingly, Vivaldi was one of the central figures in the development of the concerto, a musical genre that perfectly complemented his era’s fascination with virtuoso playing. Pitting solo performer against an orchestra, the concerto thrusts the soloist onto center stage, showcasing the player’s prowess while stretching the capacity of the instrument to its limits.

While Vivaldi penned hundreds of concertos, he is most famous for the set of four grouped under the title *Le quattro stagioni*, or *The Four Seasons*. Written around 1717, the concertos were published in 1725 in a collection entitled *Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’inventione (The Trial Between Harmony and Invention)*, Op. 8. The work was popular in Europe throughout Vivaldi’s lifetime; as one critic wrote in 1740, “Who does not know the Four Seasons of Antonio Vivaldi?” Modern audiences didn’t, interestingly enough, until the collection was revived through recordings in the mid-twentieth century. As the title of Op. 8 suggests, *The Four Seasons* presents an interesting tension between standard musical structure and compositional creativity. Although the concertos fulfill the basic requirements of the genre, consisting of three movements (fast—slow—fast) containing both ritornello sections for the orchestra and flashy solo passages, the majority of the musical content corresponds to sonnets that were published with each concerto. Whether Vivaldi wrote the sonnets before the music or vice versa is not known.

### ***La primavera (Spring), Op. 8, No. 1, RV 269***

The opening Allegro announces the arrival of spring, depicting twittering birds and murmuring streams. A thunderstorm briefly interrupts the tranquility, but peace is soon restored. A goatherd sleeps with his faithful dog beside him in the Largo, while rustic bagpipes, nymphs, and shepherds dance in the concluding Allegro.

#### **Allegro**

Festive Spring has arrived,  
The birds salute it with their happy song.  
And the brooks, caressed by little Zephyrs,  
Flow with a sweet murmur.  
The sky is covered with a black mantle,  
And thunder, and lightning, announce a storm.  
When they are silent, the birds  
Return to sing their lovely song.

#### **Largo**

And in the meadow, rich with flowers,  
To the sweet murmur of leaves and plants,  
The goatherd sleeps, with his faithful dog at his side.

#### **Allegro**

To the festive sound of pastoral bagpipes,  
Dance nymphs and shepherds,  
At Spring’s brilliant appearance.

### ***L’estate (Summer), Op. 8, No. 2, RV 315***

An oppressive heat opens the Allegro non molto; a few birds still manage to sing, cautiously, in the blazing sun. Their calls seem to foretell a violent storm, which fills the shepherd with dread. The second movement, marked Adagio e piano, depicts his growing awareness of the approaching tempest. In the concluding Presto, the storm arrives with thunder, lightning, and violent hailstorms that flatten the ripened corn.

#### **Allegro non molto**

Under the heat of the burning summer sun,  
Languish man and flock; the pine is parched.  
The cuckoo finds its voice, and suddenly,  
The turtledove and goldfinch sing.  
A gentle breeze blows,  
But suddenly, the north wind appears.  
The shepherd weeps because, overhead,  
Lies the fierce storm, and his destiny.

#### **Adagio e piano**

His tired limbs are deprived of rest  
By his fear of lightning and fierce thunder,  
And by furious swarms of flies and hornets.

#### **Presto**

Alas, how just are his fears,  
Thunder and lightning fill the Heavens, and the hail  
Slices the tops of the corn and other grain.

***L'autunno (Autumn), Op. 8, No. 3, RV 293***

A celebration of the harvest is the subject of the first movement, in which the peasant sings and dances, Bacchus's flowing bowl intoxicates, and "they finish their celebration with sleep." Celebration yields to complete relaxation in the Adagio molto, while the Allegro represents the exhilaration of hunters on a chase—and their quarry's terror.

**Allegro**

The peasants celebrate with dance and song,  
The joy of a rich harvest.  
And, full of Bacchus's liquor,  
They finish their celebration with sleep.

**Adagio molto**

Each peasant ceases his dance and song.  
The mild air gives pleasure,  
And the season invites many  
To enjoy a sweet slumber.

**Allegro**

The hunters, at the break of dawn, go to the hunt.  
With horns, guns, and dogs they are off,  
The beast flees, and they follow its trail.  
Already fearful and exhausted by the great noise,  
Of guns and dogs, and wounded,  
The exhausted beast tries to flee, but dies.

***L'inverno (Winter), Op. 8, No. 4, RV 297***

The final concerto depicts the unique features of the coldest season of the year. The opening Allegro illustrates the chill of being outside in unrelenting winds and frosty snow, while the pleasure of sitting next to the warm hearth is the subject of the Largo. Contentment is quickly replaced with the ironies of the season: slipping on the ice in spite of having exercised extreme caution, feeling the draft of a cold wind inside despite having closed all the windows and doors. As the sonnet wryly concludes, "this is winter, but it brings joy."

**Allegro non molto**

Frozen and trembling in the icy snow,  
In the severe blast of the horrible wind,  
As we run, we constantly stamp our feet,  
And our teeth chatter in the cold.

**Largo**

To spend happy and quiet days near the fire,  
While, outside, the rain soaks hundreds.

**Allegro**

We walk on the ice with slow steps,  
And tread carefully, for fear of falling.  
If we go quickly, we slip and fall to the ground.  
Again we run on the ice,  
Until it cracks and opens.  
We hear, from closed doors,  
Sirocco, Boreas, and all the winds in battle.  
This is winter, but it brings joy.

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## A Song of the Four Seasons

Henry Austin Dobson (1840-1921)

1. When Spring comes laughing  
By vale and hill,  
By wind-flower walking  
And daffodil,-  
Sing stars of morning,  
Sing morning skies,  
Sing blue of speedwell,-  
And my Love's eyes.

2. When comes the Summer,  
Full-leaved and strong,  
And gay birds gossip  
The orchard long,-  
Sing hid, sweet honey  
That no bee sips;  
Sing red, red roses,-  
And my Love's lips.

3. When Autumn scatters  
The leaves again,  
And piled sheaves bury  
The broad-wheeled wain,-  
Sing flutes of harvest  
Where men rejoice;  
Sing rounds of reapers,-  
And my Love's voice.

4. But when comes Winter  
With hail and storm,  
And red fire roaring  
And ingle warm,-  
Sing first sad going  
Of friends that part;  
Then sing glad meeting,-  
And my Love's heart.



## NORTH SHORE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS IN SKOKIE

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