

THE OTHER SEASONS *LES ALTRES ESTACIONS*

VIVALDI



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ENSEMBLE CONTRATEMPS

Farran Sylvan James, concertino



Jorge Juan Morata, tenor

María Gomis, violin *violí*

Katy Elkin, oboe *oboè*

Tiam Goudarzi, recorders *flautes de bec*

Lixsania Fernández, viola da gamba

Guillermo Turina, violoncello *violoncel*

Mario Lisarde, contrabass *contrabaix*

Eduardo Egüez, guitar *guitarra*

Adrià Gràcia, harpsichord *clavicèmbal*

Recorded September 4-6, 2024. Auditori de Terrassa.

Recording and edition Enric Giné Guix, Tasso Laboratori de So.

Concept: J. Morata. Photos and Design: K. Elkin

Instrumentation: K. Elkin. Assistant sound editor: L. Fernández.

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SPRING PRIMAVERA

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| 1 <i>Allegro</i> from Concerto Op. 8/1, RV 269/1 | 3:34 |
| 2 <i>Aria Vedrò con mio diletto (Il Giustino, RV 717)</i> | 5:34 |
| 3 <i>Largo e spiccato</i> from Concerto RV 565/2 | 2:04 |
| 4 <i>Allegro</i> from Concerto RV 565/3 | 2:16 |

SUMMER ESTIU

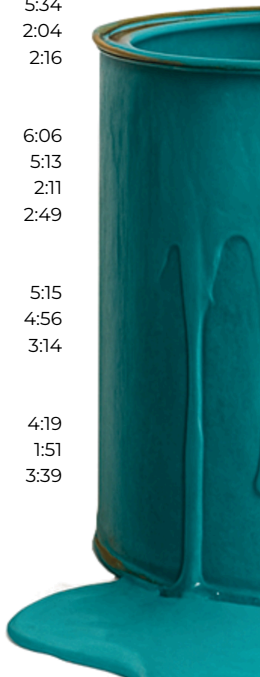
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| 5 <i>Allegro non molto</i> from Concerto Op. 8/2, RV 315 | 6:06 |
| 6 <i>Aria Sempre copra Notte Oscura (Tito Manlio, RV 738)</i> | 5:13 |
| 7 <i>Adagio</i> from Concerto Op. 8/2, RV 315 | 2:11 |
| 8 <i>Presto</i> from Concerto Op. 8/2, RV 315 | 2:49 |

AUTUMN TARDOR

- | | |
|---|------|
| 9 <i>Allegro I</i> from Concerto Op.8/3, RV 293 | 5:15 |
| 10 <i>Largo</i> from Lute Concerto, RV 93/2 | 4:56 |
| 11 <i>Allegro III</i> from Concerto Op.8/3, RV 293 | 3:14 |

WINTER HIVERN

- | | |
|--|------|
| 12 <i>Aria Gelido in ogni vena (Farnace II/5, RV 711)</i> | 4:19 |
| 13 <i>Adagio II</i> from Concerto Op. 8/2, RV 297 | 1:51 |
| 14 <i>Allegro III</i> from Concerto Op. 8/2, RV 297 | 3:39 |



A Revolution in Sound and Imagination

“Contratempo transforms Vivaldi’s timeless Four Seasons into a flowing river of inventiveness, originality, and light — a breath of fresh air. For in the end, a true classic belongs to us all, and there is no finer tribute than to revisit it, to rekindle its spirit, and to celebrate it with joy.” — Núvol

At the very top of the list of classical masterpieces stands *The Four Seasons*—and for good reason.

Its melodies, energy, and sheer vitality are nothing short of infectious. Composed between 1718 and 1723, when Antonio Vivaldi served as *maestro di cappella* at the court of Mantua, the concertos were later published in Amsterdam in 1725 under the title *Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’invenzione* (*The Contest Between Harmony and Invention*).

Vivaldi’s work represented a true revolution in musical conception. Remarkably for its time, he published the concertos alongside a series of sonnets that describe the spirit and imagery of each season. These poems—probably written or at least co-written by Vivaldi himself, since no other author is credited and their connection to the music is so precise—reveal the vivid programmatic intent behind the compositions. Thus, *The Four Seasons* stands as one of the earliest and most detailed examples of program music—music designed to tell a story or paint a picture through purely instrumental means.



Through his brilliant orchestral writing, Vivaldi creates a vibrant soundscape of nature: flowing streams, singing birds, summer storms, harvest revelry, and the icy chill of winter. Yet in our Contratempo recording, we have sought to bring these musical characters to life in an especially fresh and imaginative way.

With our distinctive instrumentation—adding **recorders, oboe, viola da gamba, and voice** (all instruments familiar to Vivaldi)—the animals and natural scenes seem to leap directly from the score. A family of recorders contrasts the voices of the goldfinch, dove, and cuckoo, before yielding to thunderous winds evoked by the full tutti strings. A shepherd's lament and his dog's bark are rendered through the expressive tones of the viola da gamba; buzzing flies emerge in the violins beneath the plaintive sigh of the oboe.

In *La caccia (The Hunt)*, the final movement of *Autumn*, snapping pizzicati evoke gunshots, while oboe and violin join in the thrilling pursuit of the prey with added "chase" parts—culminating in the animal's final breath, conveyed with touching poignancy by the violin. *Winter*, by contrast, offers the comforting warmth of the gamba's sound amid the biting cold, as the cello and continuo depict the relentless rain and icy winds outside.

In addition, we have included arias and movements from other Vivaldi concertos that sound strikingly familiar. The composer often reworked his own material - borrowing, transforming, and refining themes across different genres. A notable example is the first movement of *Winter*, whose music later reappears in the haunting aria "*Gelido in ogni vena*" from the opera *Il Farnace* (premiered in 1727).

Through this reimagined performance, we celebrate not only the timeless genius of Vivaldi's music but also the ever-changing seasons of creativity itself—where invention and harmony continue their eternal dance, just as fresh and alive today as they were three centuries ago.

Farran Sylvan James, concertino



Known for her infectious energy and improvisational spirit, Farran Sylvan James leads numerous ensembles of all sizes with her signature virtuosic style. After completing her Master's degree in Performance in New York (Stony Brook University and The Juilliard School), she has performed around the world both as a soloist and concertmaster with renowned ensembles such as Ayre Español, Vespres d'Anardi, Bach Consort Wien, Café Zimmermann, and Quartet Albada, among others.

She is frequently invited to appear as concertmaster and director with leading period orchestras including Vespres d'Anardi, Orquestra Barroca Catalana, Orquestra Barroca de Sevilla, Orquestra 1750, and the Orquestra Illa de Menorca. Farran Sylvan James has performed in many of Europe's most prestigious concert halls, including the Musikverein (Vienna), the Palau de la Música (Barcelona), the Berlin Philharmonie, the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), and the Teatro Real (Madrid), and has toured extensively throughout Russia, Asia, North America, and across Europe. Alongside her work as a performer, she enjoys exploring other forms of

expression. She is the founder of MuOM, an ensemble dedicated to harmonic singing, which explores the potential of the human voice through the creation of original music.

Ensemble Contratemp



Ensemble Contratemp, under the artistic direction of Jorge Juan Morata and Katy Elkin, brings together musicians devoted to historically informed performance, whose careers have taken them to some of the world's most renowned stages. Their creative energy has given life to productions such as Monteverdi's *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* and Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*, in collaboration with the brilliant

Adrián Schvarzstein; Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at Òpera Terrassa under the direction of Frederic Roda; Handel's *Acis and Galatea*; the revival of Caldara's *Atenaide* with Albert Arribas; *Les Autres Estacions* by Vivaldi, in dialogue with the poetic imagery of Quim Moya; *Orishas*, a sonic journey through Afro-Cuban spiritual music; and *Cagliostro*, the world premiere of a new genre blending Baroque music and magic.

Each project has been a shared artistic adventure, connecting with diverse audiences at festivals and theaters across Spain and Europe, including the Varazdin Baroque Evenings (Croatia), Kilkeny Festival (Ireland), Camino de Santiago Festival (Jaca), Bach Astea (Donosti), Festival de Música Antigua (Peñíscola), Teatre Auditori (Sant Cugat), Teatre Principal and Auditori (Terrassa), Fundació Cañada Blanch, Protofest (Tortosa), Lux Bella (Valencia), Musas (Sagunto), among others.

The ensemble also keeps alive one of the most moving traditions of Catalan heritage: the *Cant de la Sibil·la* at the Monastery of Sant Cugat, bridging past and present in a celebration of spirituality and beauty.

With the support of the **Ajuntament de Sant Cugat, the Diputació de Barcelona**, and the **Generalitat de Catalunya**, and as a member of the FestClásica association since 2023, *Ensemble Contratempo* continues its mission: to share the emotion, power, and enduring relevance of early music with today's audiences.

