

# **Chamber Orchestra Concert II**

**June 1 and 2, 2024**

**June 1st – 7:30 pm**

**June 2nd – 3:30 pm**

## **The Four Seasons for Violin and Orchestra – in Venice and Buenos Aires**

*Antonio Vivaldi (March 4, 1678 – July 28, 1741) / Astor Piazzolla (March 11, 1921 – July 4, 1992) / Leonid Desyatnikov (b. October 16, 1955)*

**Aaron Schwartz, Violin**

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Piazzolla's most famous concert work is a salute to Vivaldi entitled *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* ('Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas'). It represents the apex of the Argentine's "Tango Nuevo" style, music emanating from the tango but was designed to be listened to.

*The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, is a set of four tango compositions written by Ástor Piazzolla, which were originally conceived and treated as different compositions rather than one suite. The pieces were scored for his quintet of violin (viola), piano, electric guitar, double bass and bandoneón. By giving the adjective porteño, referring to those originating in Buenos Aires, the Argentine capital city, Piazzolla details the four seasons in Buenos Aires. The order of performance Piazzolla gave to his "Estaciones Porteñas" is: Otoño (Autumn), Invierno (Winter), Primavera (Spring), Verano (Summer). It was different from Vivaldi's order.

Vivaldi wrote his *Four Seasons* as a tetralogy of violin concertos, one of his favorite forms. Piazzolla created each season little by little, within a period of six years, between 1964 and 1970. As described below, he first composed *Verano Porteño* (summer), the following year the *Otoño Porteño* (winter); and later, the *Primavera* (spring) and *Invierno Porteños* (autumn). Before becoming a collection, they were performed autonomously. Later, they were conceived as an inseparable combo. The original instrumentation of most of them corresponds to that of the "New Tango" or "Tango Nuevo" quintet founded by Piazzolla in the 1960's: bandoneón, violin, piano, electric guitar and double bass. (A bandoneón is a small, square concertina or accordion with buttons instead of a keyboard, used especially in Latin America for tango music.)

This version for solo violin and string orchestra was composed well after Piazzolla's death. The Russian violinist, Gidon Kremer, wanted a piece to complement Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and commissioned composer Leonid Desyatnikov to make this arrangement to include the work by Piazzolla, which was completed in 1998.

Antonio Vivaldi and Ástor Piazzola were both born on a Friday in March. One, (Vivaldi) 243 years before the other (Piazzola). The first, on the fourth day of the month; the second, on the eleventh, but in 1921.

Both composers portrayed with music the four seasons of the year; one (Vivaldi) is from the High Baroque 18th century Venice, the other (Piazzola) is from the bustle of the streets of Buenos Aires in the second half of the 20th century. Both were sons of musicians; they were in their forties when they composed their respective works dedicated to the different features that nature shows throughout the year. The then republic of Venice, La Serenissima, and the modern capital of Buenos Aires, have in common historical ports, a diversity of natural and urban landscapes, and paths that lead to the mystery of the waters, sources of irrevocable inspiration. See [douglasmeyer.info/the-four-seasons-of-buenos-aires-astor-piazzola](http://douglasmeyer.info/the-four-seasons-of-buenos-aires-astor-piazzola).

Leonid Desyatnikov – who made this arrangement combining both versions of the *Four Seasons* – was born in 1955 in Ukraine, and is a graduate of the Leningrad Conservatory, where he studied composition and instrumentation. Desyatnikov has written four operas, several cantatas and numerous vocal and instrumental compositions. He has been collaborating with Kremer since 1996 by arranging other works of Astor Piazzola, including the tango-*operita* *María de Buenos Aires* and the tango suite *Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas*.

Desyatnikov made a new arrangement of these four pieces with a link between Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Piazzola's, by converting each of Piazzola's movements into three-sections, and arranges the piece for solo violin and string orchestra. In each movement, Desyatnikov includes quotations from original Vivaldi's work. Desyatnikov reflects the inversion of the seasons in his placement of the Vivaldi quotations; for example, *Verano Porteño* has added elements of *L'inverno* (Winter) of Vivaldi.

Desyatnikov did not confine himself to a mere transcription. He recomposed the pieces to fit Kremer's concept, adding quotations from the Vivaldi *Seasons* as well as cadenzas for the solo violinist and principal cellist. He did preserve certain special effects Piazzola devised to compensate for the lack of percussion in his quintet—slapping the back of the bass and scrubbing behind the violin bridge to produce an imitation of the stick-scratched gourd called a *guiro*.

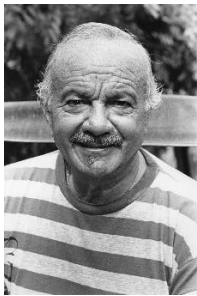
Buenos Aires is located about two-thirds down the East coast of South America on the Rio de la Plata; its climate is classified as subtropical. However, in recognition of the reversal of seasons south of the Equator, in Desyatnikov's arrangement Vivaldi's *Winter* is quoted in Piazzola's *Summer*, and Vivaldi's *Summer* in Piazzola's *Winter*. Spring and Autumn references are similarly switched!

January, is the coldest month in Venice, and the warmest months are July and August. January is the hottest month in Buenos Aires and the coldest is June. Therefore, music written about the seasons in the Northern hemisphere would be different from a similar work written in the Southern hemisphere.

Ástor Piazzola was born in Argentina, grew up in New York, and educated in Paris by the legendary composition teacher Nadia Boulanger. One day Boulanger heard him playing a tango at her piano before a lesson. She encouraged him to follow this direction saying, "Here is the true Piazzola." But she also insisted that he continue his study of Baroque and High Classical music.

When the young composer returned to Buenos Aires, he began to do for the tango what Johann Strauss had for the waltz over a century before. He thrust classical complexities, harmonies, and textures into the form, and adapting it.

Interestingly, Piazzolla wrote a piece for piano and asked pianist Arthur Rubinstein (who was on tour in Buenos Aires) for his opinion of the work. As described in *Ástor Piazzolla – A Memoir by Natalio Gorlin and translated by Fernando Gonzalez*, Piazzolla went to visit the pianist and showed him his new concerto for piano. Rubinstein began playing the work and then asked the composer if he wished to have additional composition guidance. After a few telephone calls, Rubinstein recommended that Piazzolla study with Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera. Rubinstein gave Piazzolla Ginastera's phone number and as Piazzolla was leaving, the pianist also gave him an autographed photo. Although Piazzolla never saw Rubinstein again, that telephone number – and subsequent studies with Ginastera – began to change his life. He was now even more focused on classical music.



Piazzolla



Vivaldi



Desyatnikov