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50

THE FOUR SEASONS

WITH PEKKA KUUSISTO

7-9 March 2024

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THE FOUR SEASONS

WITH PEKKA KUUSISTO

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Thursday 7 March, 7.30pm, The Usher Hall, Edinburgh

Friday 8 March, 7.30pm, City Halls, Glasgow

Saturday 9 March, 7.30pm, Aberdeen Music Hall

RESPIGHI Gli ucelli (The Birds)

TARRODI Birds of Paradise

Interval of 20 minutes

VIVALDI The Four Seasons (interspersed with traditional Nordic folk tunes)

Pekka Kuusisto Director/Violin

Ale Carr Cittern



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WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

RESPIGHI (1879-1936)

Gli ucelli (The Birds) (1928)

Prelude
La colomba
La gallina
L'usignuolo
Il cucù

TARRODI (b.1981)

Birds of Paradise (2008)

VIVALDI (1678-1741)

The Four Seasons (1718-1720)

Concerto No 1 in E major, RV 269, 'Spring'
Allegro / Largo / Allegro

Traditional Nordic folk song

Concerto No 2 in G minor, RV 315,
'Summer'
**Allegro non molto - Allegro / Adagio - Presto -
Adagio / Presto**

Traditional Nordic folk song

Concerto No 3 in F major, RV 293,
'Autumn'
Allegro / Adagio molto / Allegro

Traditional Nordic folk song

Concerto No 4 in F minor, RV 297,
'Winter'
Allegro non molto / Largo / Allegro

From the cuckoo's distinctive call captured in the medieval English song 'Sumer is icumen in' to the raucous cacophony of Messiaen's many 20th-century aviary creations, birds have inspired musicians for centuries. It's hardly surprising: they're nature's most extrovert singers, and composers have long viewed them as embodiments of the natural world's beauties and wonders, even the voice of God resounding through his creation – or, in more recent times, messengers warning of the dangers humankind poses to the planet we all share.

And it's birds – their exuberant, haunting songs and their spiralling, athletic flight – that swoop and soar through the music in tonight's concert, in many contrasting guises. They're joined, in tonight's final piece at least, by a whole host of other elements, both natural and man-made – but we'll come to those later.

In the five exquisite pieces of his 1928 *Gli ucelli (The Birds)*, Italian composer Ottorino Respighi provides a slightly indirect way of celebrating birds in music. Respighi held a long fascination for the music of earlier centuries – most evidently in his three sets of *Ancient Airs and Dances*, in which he recast Renaissance lute tunes for a modern-day orchestra. He did something similar in *Gli ucelli*, but the connecting thread here is – you guessed it – that each piece describes a particular avian companion to humankind. The sources that Respighi drew from were French, Dutch and Italian pieces for lute or harpsichord from the 17th and 18th centuries, but he doesn't hold back in his colourful, shimmering orchestrations – not for nothing had he studied in



Ottorino Respighi

In the five exquisite pieces of his 1928 Gli ucelli (The Birds), Italian composer Ottorino Respighi provides a slightly indirect way of celebrating birds in music.

St Petersburg with Russian colourist extraordinaire Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

After a stately, somewhat sober introduction, Respighi's Prelude, based on a harpsichord piece by Bernardo Pasquini, bursts into a chorus of birdsong, its dashing figurations evoking birds in flight. A solo oboe represents the bird's serene song in 'La colomba' ('The Dove'), based on a lute piece by Jacques de Gallot, in a movement that focuses on the dove as a symbol of peace. Tranquility is something that's far removed from 'La gallina' ('The Hen'), based on a harpsichord piece by Jean-Philippe Rameau, which conveys the incessant clucking and pecking of the bird (or indeed a whole harem of hens) under the control of the rooster, who himself makes a raucous appearance towards the end.

Respighi had a soft spot for the nightingale, subject of his next movement,

'L'usignolo'. Four years earlier, he'd already used an actual recording of a real nightingale in the penultimate movement of his orchestral *Pines of Rome*, where it represents a lone bird singing high on the Janiculum Hill overlooking the Italian capital. His movement here, based on music by Jacob van Eyck that's itself based on the folksong 'Engels Nachtegaeltje' (or 'English Nightingale'), sets the bird amid a similarly magical, nocturnal soundscape that twinkles with starlight. Respighi finishes with – what else? – 'Il cucù' ('The Cuckoo'), based on another harpsichord piece by Pasquini, in which the bird's distinctive two-note call is heard right across the orchestra, and is joined by those of its avian colleagues from earlier in the piece at its conclusion.

Swedish contemporary composer Andrea Tarrodi sets out to evoke a sense of magic and awe in her 2008 *Birds of Paradise*, one of many works she's



Andrea Tarrodi

Her inspiration came from observing the 'strange and beautiful birds of paradise' in one of the BBC's Planet Earth films, whose flashing colours, flight and song she captures in her iridescent, impressionistic piece.

written inspired by the natural world. In this case, she's said, her inspiration came from observing the 'strange and beautiful birds of paradise' in one of the BBC's *Planet Earth* films, whose flashing colours, flight and song she captures in her iridescent, impressionistic piece. A quietly magical opening seems to build to the birds' arrival with a sudden, resplendent shift in harmony, and the avian visitors take centre stage in a later passage of peculiar, unearthly calls and glimpses of colour, only for the music to slowly die away with whoops and far-off rumbles.

Birds make vivid appearances, too, in tonight's concluding piece – Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* – though they're just one of many musical evocations of nature and human activities that the composer incorporated. Indeed, there's even a set of Italian sonnets (see pages 14-17) – possibly written by Vivaldi himself – to

accompany the four concertos, which serve to provide detailed descriptions to the scenes and events he's describing in his music (or which perhaps inspired those musical evocations in the first place). So clearly did Vivaldi tie the written texts and musical sounds together, in fact, that he inscribed specific descriptions of what particular passages were conveying into the concertos' scores.

As so often with music from this period, the origins of *The Four Seasons* are slightly sketchy, although we know the concertos were first published in Amsterdam in 1725, as the first four pieces in a collection entitled 'Il cimento dell' armonia e dell' inventione' (or 'The Contest Between Harmony and Invention'). They're one of the cornerstones of the classical repertoire, of course, and an inescapable element in any self-respecting violinist's arsenal. They were phenomenally popular



Antonio Vivaldi

So clearly did Vivaldi tie the written texts and musical sounds together, in fact, that he inscribed specific descriptions of what particular passages were conveying into the concertos' scores.

in Vivaldi's own time, and paved the way for such later nature portraits as Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony, and even arguably Messiaen's visionary bird evocations. Since Vivaldi's music is so colourful, so descriptive and so open to individual interpretation, it might feel like the composer is almost challenging his performers to discover their own distinctive ways of conveying it. Many have taken up that challenge: there are countless period performances inspired by what went on in the composer's own time, as well as jazz and electronic versions, arrangements for Chinese and Japanese instruments, even a wholesale 'recomposition' by German/British composer Max Richter. It's unlikely, however, that you'll have ever heard The Four Seasons in quite the same way as you will this evening.

Tonight's soloist Pekka Kuusisto admits that it might be a somewhat

unconventional approach, but it's one he imagines Vivaldi might well enjoy. He first met Ale Carr during the Covid-19 pandemic, when both musicians were separately recording sessions for video performances being put together by fellow violinist Daniel Hope. Carr plays the cittern, a mandolin-like instrument whose origins go back to the Renaissance, in Nordic folk trio Dreamers' Circus and also as a soloist. Kuusisto and Carr got to talking and, over a few beers, hatched a plan to collaborate on The Four Seasons. Carr learnt the music by heart, but also brought his own folk sensibilities to his performance. They spent a weekend in Finland discussing approaches and playing together, and you'll hear the results tonight, with Carr joining the orchestra in the four concertos, and he and Kuusisto providing folk-inspired interludes in between.

© David Kettle

SONNETS

VIVALDI (1678-1741)

The Four Seasons (1718-1720)

Concerto No 1 in E major, RV 269, 'Spring'

Allegro / Largo / Allegro

Allegro

Giunt' è la Primavera e festosetti
La Salutan gl'Augei con lieto canto,
E i fonti allo Spirar de'Zeffiretti
Con dolce mormorio Scorrono intanto:
Vengon' coprendo l'aer di nero amanto
E Lampi, e tuoni ad annuntiarla eletti
Indi tacendo questi, gl'Augelletti;
Tornan' di nuovo al lor canoro incanto:

Largo

E quindi sul fiorito ameno prato
Al caro mormorio di fronde e piante
Dorme'l Caprar col fido can'à lato.

Allegro

Di pastoral Zampogna al suon festante
Danzan Ninfe e Pastor nel tetto amato
Di primavera all'apparir brillante.

Allegro

*Springtime has arrived.
The birds celebrate its return with song,
And breezes softly caress the murmuring
streams.
Casting their dark cloaks over heaven,
Thunderstorms roar, heralding the spring,
The birds die away to silence,
Then resume their charming songs again.*

Largo

*At the flower-strewn meadow,
with branches rustling overhead,
the goat-herd sleeps, beside him his loyal dog.*

Allegro

*Led by the festive sound of rustic bagpipes,
Nymphs and shepherds delicately dance
Under spring's exquisite canopy.*

Birdsong in the orchestra's violins is joined by smooth melodic lines representing murmuring streams in Vivaldi's opening movement, while the violas play the role of the goat-herd's yapping dog in the second. Vivaldi clearly brings droning bagpipes into his closing movement's celebrations. © David Kettle

Concerto No 2 in G minor, RV 315, 'Summer'

Allegro non molto - Allegro / Adagio – Presto – Adagio / Presto

Allegro non molto

Sotto dura Staggion dal Sole accesa
Langue l'huom, langue'l gregge, ed arde il
Pino;
Scioglie il Cucco la Voce, e tosto intesa
Canta la Tortorella e'l gardelino.
Zeffiro dolce Spira, mà contesa
Muove Borea improvviso al Suo vicino;
E piange il Pastorel, perche sospesa
Teme fiera borasca, e'l suo destino;

Adagio e piano - Presto e forte

Toglie alle membra lasse il Suo riposo
Il timore de' Lampi, e tuoni fieri
E de mosche, e mossoni il Stuol furioso!

Presto

Ah che pur troppo i Suo timor Son veri
Tuona e fulmina il Ciel e grandioso
Tronca il capo alle Spiche e a'grani alteri.

Allegro non molto

*Under the season's merciless sun
Both man and flock languish, and the pine tree
burns.
We hear the cuckoo's call, and then
The songs of the turtle dove and finch.
Gentle breezes stir the air, but the North Wind
Sweeps them suddenly aside.
The shepherd trembles,
Fearing brutal storms – and his fate.*

Adagio e piano - Presto e forte

*His tired limbs are robbed of rest
By his fear of lightning and fierce thunder
As gnats and flies buzz furiously around.*

Presto

*Alas, his fears come true:
The Heavens thunder and roar, and hail
Cuts down the tall wheat and damages the grain.*

Birdsong from the solo violinist interrupts Vivaldi's depiction of languid summer heat in his opening movement, which ends with his shepherd imagining the destruction wrought by a summer storm. Buzzing flies disturb the calm of the second movement, while the storm erupts in all its fury in Vivaldi's finale. © David Kettle

Concerto No 3 in F major, RV 293, 'Autumn'

Allegro / Adagio molto / Allegro

Allegro

Celebra il Vilanel con balli e Canti
Del felice raccolto il bel piacere
E del liquor de Bacco accesi tanti
Finiscono col Sonno il lor godere

Adagio molto

Fà ch'ogn'uno tralasci e balli e canti
L'aria che temperata dà piacere,
E la Staggon ch'invita tanti e tanti
D'un dolcissimo Sonno al bel godere.

Allegro

I cacciator alla nov' alba à caccia
Con corni, Schioppi, e canni escono fuore
Fugge la belua, e Seguono la traccia;
Già Sbigottita, e lassa al gran rumore
De'Schioppi e canni, ferita minaccia
Languida di fuggir, mà oppressa muore.

Allegro

*With songs and dances, the peasant celebrates
The pleasures of the rich harvest.
And fired up by Bacchus's liquor,
Many end their merrymaking with sleep.*

Adagio molto

*Everyone forgets their cares, sings and dances
Because the mild air gives pleasure
And because the season invites so many
To find enjoyment in sweet slumber.*

Allegro

*The hunters emerge at dawn,
And with horns, dogs and guns they depart.
The beast flees and they follow its trail;
Terrified and tired of the great noise
Of the guns and dogs, the wounded beast
Tries to escape, but harried, dies.*

A good-natured peasant dance quickly becomes rather drunken in Vivaldi's opening movement, with a slower section that zooms in on the revellers who have fallen into an inebriated slumber – and who return in the slow movement. We cut to an energetic hunt in Vivaldi's finale, complete with hunting-horn calls, yapping dogs and even gunshots.

Concerto No 4 in F minor, RV 297, 'Winter'

Allegro non molto / Largo / Allegro

Allegro non molto

Aggiacciato tremar trà neri algenti
Al Severo Spirar d'orrido Vento,
Correr battendo i piedi ogni momento;
E pel Soverchio gel batter i denti;

Largo

Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti
Mentre la pioggia fuor bagna ben cento.

Allegro

Caminar Sopra'l ghiaccio, e à passo lento
Per timor di cader gersene intenti;
Gir forte Sdruzziolar, cader à terra
Di nuove ir Sopra'l ghiaccio e correr forte
Sin ch'il ghiaccio si rompe, e si disserra;
Sentir uscir dalle ferrate porte
Sirocco Borea, e tutti i Venti in guerra
Quest'é'l verno, mà tal, che gioja apporte.

Allegro non molto

*Trembling in the icy snow,
In the harsh blasts of a fearsome wind;
Run, stamping your feet at every moment,
Your teeth chattering in the cold.*

Largo

*Spend happy, peaceful days by the fire,
While the rain pours down outside.*

Allegro

*Walk on the ice slowly and carefully,
For fear of slipping and falling.
Then turn abruptly, slide, crash down on the ground,
Then get up again and run hard
Across the ice in case it cracks.
Hear the wind despite the bottled doors,
All the winds fighting each other.
This is winter, but what delights it brings.*

With its bodily shivering, its gusting winds, stamping feet and chattering teeth, there's no doubt about which season Vivaldi's opening movement places us in. By way of contrast, however, his slow movement transports us to the warmth of the fireside, made even more joyful since we can hear the gentle pitter-patter of rain from outside. We're back out there in his finale, however, slipping and sliding on the ice amid the return of those wild winter gales.

Violin

PEKKA KUUSISTO



© Bård Gundersen

Violinist, conductor, and composer Pekka Kuusisto is renowned for his artistic freedom and fresh approach to repertoire. Kuusisto is Artistic Director of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor & Artistic Co-Director of Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra from the 2023/24 season. He is also a Collaborative Partner of the San Francisco Symphony, and Artistic Best Friend of Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen.

In the 2023/24 season, Kuusisto performs with Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Helsinki Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Norwegian Chamber, Los Angeles Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Tokyo Symphony, and Boston Symphony. He appears as guest conductor with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra and Orchestre de chambre de Paris. As *Council*, Kuusisto also tours North America and Australia with American singer-songwriter Gabriel Kahane.

Kuusisto is an enthusiastic advocate of contemporary music and a gifted improviser and regularly engages with people across the artistic spectrum. Uninhibited by conventional genre boundaries and noted for his innovative programming, recent projects have included collaborations with Hauschka and Kosminen, Dutch neurologist Erik Scherder, pioneer of electronic music Brian Crabtree, eminent jazz trumpeter Arve Henriksen, juggler Jay Gilligan, accordionist Dermot Dunne and folk artist Sam Amidon.

Pekka Kuusisto plays the Antonio Stradivari Golden Period c.1709 'Scotta' violin, generously loaned by an anonymous patron.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

***Pekka Kuusisto Visiting Artist Chair sponsored by The Honorary Consulate of Finland,
Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen***

Cittern

ALE CARR



Ale Carr hails from the Skåne region in southern Sweden, where he grew up in a family of folk musicians. Together with his parents and siblings they would perform as 'Familjen Carr' (the Carr Family), something which created a strong foundation for his musicianship. Growing up Ale played an arsenal of instruments until finally, as a 14-year-old, he got his hands on a cittern which today has become his signature instrument. Self-taught on the cittern until he began his formal studies at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm, Ale has been inspired and learnt much from musical pioneers like Ale Möller, Roger Tallroth and Olle Lindvall. Today, Ale is recognised as one of the leading players of plucked string instruments within the Nordic music tradition. Also a prominent fiddler, Ale became a Riksspelman at the age of 19. In 2017 he became the world champion of clog-fiddle, a traditional instrument from Skåne. Since 2015 Ale is the artistic director of Folkrot, a festival which celebrates the traditional music from Skåne.

In his early teenage years, Ale was determined to challenge and develop the traditional music that he loved. Influenced by his father's Danish heritage, Ale found his way into Denmark's folk music scene and, together with Nikolaj Busk and Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen, founded the band Dreamers' Circus in 2009, as well as joining the Danish band Basco in 2010. Other collaborations include duos with Esko Järvelä and Pekka Kuusisto, and through his various projects Ale has performed his music with symphony orchestras, big bands, choirs, and chamber ensembles like the Danish String Quartet. He now performs on stages all over the world as diverse as Sydney Opera House, Roskilde Festival, Royal Albert Hall, and Hayao Miyazaki's personal atelier in Japan. He has been awarded ten Danish Music Awards, including Artist of the Year and Composer of the Year.

Ale has been teaching at Malmö Academy of Music since 2011, mainly in music theory and main instrument, but he also teaches ensemble and gives seminars on various subjects.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Biography

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in November 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in November 2023.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, John Storgårds and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by the late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Nico Muhly.

SCOTTISH
CHAMBER
ORCHESTRA

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The Auld Alliance Thu 21 March, 7.30pm

With Maxim, Karen Cargill and The SCO Chorus

Kindly supported by Donald and Louise MacDonald

The Lark Ascending Thu 2 May, 7.30pm

With Andrew Manze

Mendelssohn's Elijah Thu 9 May, 7.30pm

With Maxim and The SCO Chorus

UPCOMING USHER HALL CONCERTS

18 and Under go FREE

Under 16 must be accompanied by an adult

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SCOTTISH
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For 50 years, the SCO has inspired audiences across Scotland and beyond.

From world-class music-making to pioneering creative learning and community work, we are passionate about transforming lives through the power of music and we could not do it without regular donations from our valued supporters.

If you are passionate about music, and want to contribute to the SCO's continued success, please consider making a monthly or annual donation today. Each and every contribution is crucial, and your support is truly appreciated.

For more information on how you can become a regular donor, please get in touch with **Hannah Wilkinson** on **0131 478 8364** or **hannah.wilkinson@sco.org.uk**

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