



City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra

FOUR SEASONS

Town Hall, Birmingham | Saturday 22 April 2023, 7pm

CONCERT PROGRAMME: £4

simplify the complex.



66

I am immensely proud to announce SCC's Principal Sponsorship of the CBSO, which has offered so many opportunities and so much enjoyment to local people and international audiences for more than 100 years. This is a partnership that can be shared by our people at SCC, throughout the City of Birmingham, and internationally. SCC and the CBSO are two prominent organisations in Birmingham, with a long history and shared passion for community engagement. I am looking forward to seeing what we can achieve together.

Sir Peter Rigby, Founder and Chairman of SCC



scc.com

FOUR SEASONS

Town Hall, Birmingham

Saturday 22 April 2023, 7pm

Eugene Tzikindelean – Violin/Director

Schubert (arr. Mahler), *Death and the Maiden* 40'

Interval

Vivaldi *The Four Seasons* 40'

Movements of the Vivaldi will be interspersed with:

Piazzolla (arr. Desyatnikov) *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* 25'

Mahler looks back 100 years to turn Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* into a powerful orchestral piece. And Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* from the 1700s travels 200 years into the future to dance a tango with Piazzolla's version.

Cover photo: Eugene Tzikindelean © Andrew Fox

We are very happy for you to take photographs at our concerts, and we'd love for you to share them with us on social media @TheCBSO. Please do be discreet to avoid disturbing other audience members – we would suggest dimming the brightness on your phone, taking pictures during applause breaks and not using your flash. Please note that filming is not allowed. We also regularly take photographs for promotional purposes at our concerts, so you may see a professional photographer at our concerts. Please ask a member of the front of house team if you have any questions about this.

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If you have downloaded one of our digital programmes and are reading it during the performance, we would just ask you to please be mindful of other audience members and ensure that the light from your device doesn't disturb them. Thank you.

If you have any queries about the CBSO, please visit our Information Desk situated in the ground floor foyer. CBSO staff are available from 30 minutes before the concert and again at the interval and will be happy to help.

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828),
arr. Gustav Mahler**

STRING QUARTET IN D MINOR, OP. POST. (D.810) "DEATH AND THE MAIDEN"

Allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Presto

For all his genius in the field of songwriting, Schubert's sights were constantly set on the largest of musical forms. On 31 March 1824 he wrote to his friend Leo Kupelweiser: "I have tried my hand at several instrumental things, and have composed two quartets... and want to write another quartetto, really wanting in this manner to pave the way to a big symphony". The quartets were those in A minor (later published as Op.29), and a larger, even more ambitious work in D minor containing a set of variations based on his 1817 song *Der Tod und das Mädchen*.

But the doubts and depression that tormented Schubert throughout that year had already intervened; he would not begin the third quartet of the set (G major, D.887) until June 1826. Although the A minor quartet had already been premiered – and warmly praised – by the great Viennese violinist Ignaz



Franz Schubert

Schuppanzigh, the D minor quartet fell victim to Schubert's deepening depression, and was not played until 1 February 1826. Schuppanzigh was present at a repeat performance a few days later at the home of the composer Franz Lachner, and his assessment of the new quartet was blunt – "My dear fellow, this is really no good at all. Leave well alone and stick to your songs".

Musical history is full of performers misjudging great music at first hearing, and to be fair, Schuppanzigh had heard a read-through of a work that was unlike any piece of chamber music then in existence. Not only was it Schubert's longest string quartet up until that point, it's also his most personal – beginning and ending in the minor key and sustains an almost claustrophobic emotional intensity from beginning to end. Its gestures

are powerful, often abrupt, and the rhythm heard in the quartet's first bar recurs in each movement to an almost obsessive extent, binding the whole Quartet together but allowing it no repose even in the places – such as the second theme of the first *Allegro* – where classical form permitted some relaxation.

That rhythm provides the driving force both of the first movement and the final *Presto*: a relentless tarantella that some commentators have heard as a totentanz – a dance of death. The scherzo, too, is a severe, angry dance rather than a relaxation. Only in the *Andante con moto* – variations on a theme crafted from elements of *Der Tod und das Mädchen* – is there a real sense of consolation. In the song, a young girl pleads with the spectral figure of Death: “Go away, wild skeleton – I am still young!”. “Be comforted” responds the Reaper. “You will sleep gently in my arms”. Schubert's sombre theme and five beautifully-coloured variations culminate in a radiantly peaceful sixth variation and conclusion

To hear all this for the first time – well, Schuppanzigh's mistake can be understood. And (bearing in mind Schubert's stated intention that the quartet should be a precursor to a “big symphony”) it's easy to see why the 34-year old Gustav Mahler – a composer who wrote a whole

series of “big symphonies” based on death-haunted songs – should feel such a strong desire to conduct it. In 1894 (round about the time he was completing his *Resurrection* Symphony) he obtained a score of Schubert's quartet and filled it with elaborate notes as to how it might be expanded for full string orchestra. He only completed the second movement, and conducted it in Hamburg in November 1894. The remainder of his plans were carried to completion in the 1980s by the scholar Donald Mitchell and the composer Colin Matthews. The result is a meeting of two very different – but kindred – musical imaginations: one of the most powerful of Romantic chamber works, transformed and transfigured into the symphony of Schubert's wildest imagining.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

**LE QUATTRO STAGIONI (THE
FOUR SEASONS), OP.8, NOS.1-4**

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

**THE FOUR SEASONS OF
BUENOS AIRES**

Vivaldi Concerto in E major Op.8 No.1
“La primavera” (Spring)

Allegro

Largo

Allegro pastorale

Piazzolla Invierno Porteño
(Summer in Buenos Aires)

Vivaldi Concerto in G minor Op.8 No.2
“L’estate” (Summer)

Allegro non molto

Adagio e piano

Presto

Piazzolla Otoño Porteño
(Autumn in Buenos Aires)

Vivaldi Concerto in F major Op.8 No.3
“L’autunno” (Autumn)

Allegro

Adagio molto

Allegro

Piazzolla Verano Porteño
(Winter in Buenos Aires)

Vivaldi Concerto in F minor Op.8 No.4
“L’inverno” (Winter)

Allegro non molto

Largo

Allegro

Piazzolla Primavera Porteña
(Spring in Buenos Aires)

Two great cities; two composers who gave them their voice. And four – or is that eight – seasons? After all, Venice and Buenos Aires are in different hemispheres; when it’s winter on the lagoon, it’s summer in the barrios. But we’ll get back to that. What’s certain is that the music of Antonio Vivaldi, with its glittering beauty and ever-shifting symmetry captures the shimmering reflections and gilded palaces of La Serenissima just as perfectly as – three centuries later – Astor Piazzolla’s tangos embodied the seductive glamour and dark secrets of his adopted home: the all-embracing, all-consuming city of Buenos Aires.

Piazzolla is still the ultimate litmus test for musical snobs: a composer who emerged from the dance halls to write music that was simultaneously as catchy as the Beatles and as sophisticated as Stravinsky. At the end of his life, he was asked whether he saw himself as a popular composer. “No” he replied, “absolutely not. I would be offended if they said my music is light, trivial. My music is a popular chamber music that comes from the tango.” But like all great popular musicians, he wrote music to be enjoyed. His *Estaciones Porteñas* (“porteño” is the nickname for a Buenos Airean; the equivalent of “Brummie”) emerged one by one in

the late 1960s. *Summer* was part of a score for a 1965 stage play; *Winter* and *Spring* were written in 1970 for his Quinteto of violin, piano, electric guitar, bass and bandoneon – the huge Argentinean folk-accordion. He never expected them to be played as a set.

Antonio Vivaldi, on the other hand, was so proud of his *Four Seasons* that he put them at the very front of his latest collection, *Il cimento dell' armonia e dell' inventione*. Some time in late 1725, newly returned to his native Venice after seven years' service in Mantua and Rome, Vivaldi bundled up the manuscripts of twelve violin concertos and dispatched them to Michel Le Cène, a music publisher in Amsterdam. As was the custom of the time, he headed them with a florid dedication to one of his foreign patrons – the Bohemian nobleman Count Wenceslas Morzin:

“Thinking to myself of the many years during which I have enjoyed the most signal honour of serving Your Most Illustrious Lordship, I blushed when I reflected that I have not yet given a demonstration of the profound veneration that I profess towards you; wherefore I resolved to print the present volume in order humbly to present it at the feet of Your Most Illustrious Lordship.

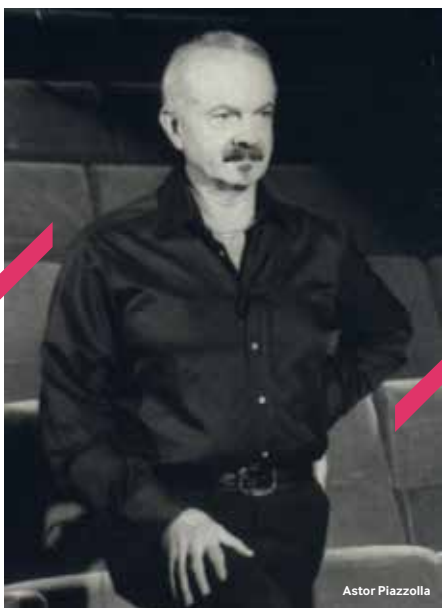


Pray do not be surprised if, among these few and feeble concertos, Your Most Illustrious Lordship finds the ‘Four Seasons’ which have so long enjoyed the indulgence of Your Most Illustrious Lordship’s kind generosity, but believe that I have considered it fitting to print them because, while they may be the same, I have added to them, besides the sonnets, a very clear statement of all the things that unfold in them, so that I am sure that they will appear new to you...”

Vivaldi’s own words, and despite the obsequious courtesy (which was absolutely par for the course in the Baroque era), they tell us several intriguing things. For starters, the “Four Seasons” were not new – in fact, the implication was that Count Morzin had already enjoyed them.

Furthermore, Vivaldi was perfectly happy to draw attention to the fact that this music told a story. More than that: for this new edition (which he'd numbered "Opus 8") he accompanied each of the "Seasons" with a specially-written sonnet, telling that story – and had inserted letters in the music to indicate which passages related to which lines of verse.

So as well as enjoying the endless melody and virtuoso fireworks of these four masterly Italian concertos, we need have no qualms about relishing Vivaldi's brilliant splashes of picturesque colour. If we hear "the birds hailing Spring with happy song" in *La primavera*, "The sky thundering,



Astor Piazzolla

flaring, and with hailstones laying low the waving crops" in *L'estate*, *L'autunno*'s "Hunters setting out with horns, guns and dogs" and "The harsh wind's chill breath" in *L'inverno*; that's exactly as Vivaldi intended.

Even in Vivaldi's own era, that was a bold move: scholarly Italian musicians took a dim view of descriptive music. "The imitating of the cockerel, cuckoo, owl and other birds ... or the drum, french horn and the like ... rather belong to the Professors of Legerdemain and Posture-masters than to the Art of Musick" snorted one. It's telling that Vivaldi sent the "Seasons" north to be published – where programmatic music was relished (indeed, French critics grumbled that *La primavera* was not literal enough!). We know his own opinion on the matter: "Il cimento dell' armonia e dell' inventione" translates as "The trial of harmony and invention", or, more accurately, "The testing of musical skill and imagination". Most of us would agree that he passed with flying colours.

Piazzolla could have chosen the same motto. He never set out to match Vivaldi note for note, but the existence of two sets of "Seasons" from such charismatic composers has been just too much of an open goal for musicians to resist.

PROGRAMME NOTES

The great Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer had the idea of combining them in the 1990s, commissioning his friend Leonid Desyatnikov to rework Piazzolla's tangos for the same string orchestra as Vivaldi used. And then...well, just have a listen. Desyatnikov has woven the eight pieces into a chronological sequence, subtly tweaking Piazzolla's tangos to echo and comment on Vivaldi's music. The result is a musical hall of mirrors;

a meeting of two centuries, two hemispheres and two very different musical spirits whose sole aim – across 300 years and 11,300 miles – is to entertain.

Programme note © Richard Bratby



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CBSO

Photo: Mark Allan

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) is the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the West Midlands, and one of the world's great orchestras.

Based in Symphony Hall, the CBSO typically presents over 150 concerts each year in Birmingham, the UK and around the world, playing music that ranges from classics to contemporary, film scores and even symphonic disco. With a far-reaching community programme and a family of choruses and ensembles, it is involved in every aspect of music-

making in the Midlands. But at its centre is a team of 90 superb musicians, and over a 100-year tradition of making the world's greatest music in the heart of Birmingham.

That local tradition started with the orchestra's very first symphonic concert in 1920 – conducted by Sir Edward Elgar. Ever since then, through war, recessions, social change and civic renewal, the CBSO has been proud to be Birmingham's orchestra. Under principal conductors including Adrian Boult, George Weldon, Andrzej Panufnik and Louis Frémaux, the

CBSO won an artistic reputation that spread far beyond the Midlands. But it was when it discovered the young British conductor Simon Rattle in 1980 that the CBSO became internationally famous – and showed how the arts can help give a new sense of direction to a whole city.

Rattle's successors Sakari Oramo (1998-2008) and Andris Nelsons (2008-15) helped cement that global reputation, and continued to build on the CBSO's tradition of flying the flag for Birmingham. Now, with Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla as Principal Guest Conductor, the CBSO continues to do what it does best – playing great music for the people of Birmingham and the Midlands.

Meet the family

The CBSO Chorus is one of the world's great choirs – 180 people from all walks of life who come together to sing symphonic choral music. Trained for almost 40 years by Simon Halsey CBE, and supported by a professional staff team, the chorus is a hard-working group of singers who give up their own time to perform the most challenging works in the choral repertoire to the highest international standard. The CBSO Children's Chorus and Youth Chorus showcase singers as young

as six. Through its unauditioned community choir – CBSO SO Vocal in Selly Oak – the CBSO shares its know-how and passion for music with communities throughout the city. The CBSO Youth Orchestra gives that same opportunity to young instrumentalists aged 14-21, offering high-level training to the next generation of orchestral musicians alongside top international conductors and soloists. These groups are sometimes called the "CBSO family" – over 650 amateur musicians of all ages and backgrounds, who work alongside the orchestra to make and share great music. But the CBSO's tradition of serving the community goes much further. Its Learning and Participation programme touches tens of thousands of lives a year, energising whole neighbourhoods.

Now more than ever, the CBSO remains the beating heart of musical life in the UK's Second City. Kazuki Yamada has been appointed as its Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor with effect from 1 April 2023.

EUGENE TZIKINDELEAN

Violin/Director



Eugene Tzikindelean
CBSO Leader

Born into a musical family in Romania and educated in Bucharest and Paris, Eugene Tzikindelean won top prizes in international competitions including the Enescu Competition in Romania, the Carl Nielsen International Competition in Denmark and France’s Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition.

Leader of the CBSO since 2020, Eugene has previously held a position with the Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse, and has been Leader of the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark. He also keeps a busy schedule as a soloist, chamber musician and guest leader with ensembles around the world including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Trondheim Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic, and Århus and Norrköping Symphony Orchestras, and at the Mikhailovsky Theatre in St Petersburg.

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN I

- Eugene Tzikindelean
- Philip Brett *
- Lowri Porter
- Stefano Mengoli *
- Julia Åberg *
- Angus Bain
- Colette Overdijk *
- Robert Bilson

VIOLIN II

- Peter Campbell-Kelly **
- Catherine Yates
- Amy Jones **
- Charlotte Skinner *
- Laura Embrey
- Georgia Hannant *
- Amy Littlewood
- Agnieszka Gesler

VIOLA

- Carol Ella
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- Marcos Lopez Martinez
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- Helen Roberts

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- Eduardo Vassallo **
- Miguel Fernandes *
- Jacqueline Tyler **
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HARPSICHORD

- Masumi Yamamoto

Recipient of the CBSO Long Service Award

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List correct at time of going to press



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just £5 per
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From a closer insight into the music and rehearsals, to hearing about life as a musician, CBSO members can get more from their concert-going experience by getting to know the people behind the instruments.

From priority booking to members' events and behind-the-scenes information, there are plenty of reasons to join the CBSO. But it is the people themselves who are at the very heart of our membership. CBSO members can enjoy the chance to share the company of musicians and artists and meet new like-minded friends. In

addition, through their annual donation, they help to provide vital support towards our Sound of the Future Campaign, a fundraising campaign launched to help the orchestra recover from the pandemic and reinvigorate its future, giving musical experiences to even more people.

“Membership has really enhanced our experience of the CBSO. We enjoy talking to the team, the orchestra members and fellow CBSO supporters. We feel privileged to be able to support.”

Chris and Eve Parker, Gold Patrons

GET IN TOUCH

To join us as a CBSO member, simply visit cbsoco.uk/support-us/memberships to sign up online or call Rachel Cooper on 0121 616 6510. We look forward to welcoming you to the family!

THANK YOU

The Sound of the Future is a £12.5m fundraising campaign – launched to mark the CBSO’s centenary – which will ensure the orchestra’s recovery from the pandemic and redefine its future for the benefit of everyone across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

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The following individuals, trusts and companies have nurtured the CBSO’s world-class excellence and broad community reach by offering exceptional philanthropic support to the CBSO and the CBSO Development Trust’s private endowment fund over time, either by making major gifts, by leaving a legacy or through sustained annual giving.

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