

## CityMusic Cleveland: Laura Hamilton plays *Four Seasons Recomposed*

by Mike Telin



Without a doubt, *The Four Seasons* — that group of four violin concertos by Antonio Vivaldi — is one of the most recognizable works in the classical music canon. And like many, composer Max Richter fell in love with it as a child, as he told *NPR*'s Audie Cornish in an [interview](#).

“It’s beautiful, charming music with a great melody and wonderful colors. Then, later on, as I became more musically aware — literate, studied music and listened to a lot of music — I found it more difficult to love it. We hear it everywhere — when you’re on hold, you hear it in the shopping center, in advertising; it’s everywhere. For me, the record and the project are trying to reclaim the piece, to fall in love with it again.”

That project he’s referring to is his *The Four Seasons Recomposed (after A. Vivaldi)*. On Thursday, March 14 at 7:30 pm at Fairmount Presbyterian Church, violinist Laura Hamilton (pictured) will join CityMusic Cleveland in Richter’s inventive re-imagining of Vivaldi’s masterpiece. Under the direction of guest conductor Annunziata Tomaro, the program, “Rediscovered Classics,” will also include Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 2*. The program will be repeated on Friday at 7:30 at Lakewood Congregational Church, Saturday at 7:30 at Shrine of St. Stanislaus, and Sunday at 4:00 at St. Noel Catholic Church. All performances are free.

Although *The Four Seasons Recomposed* received critical acclaim following the October 2012 premiere at London’s Barbican Centre with violinist Daniel Hope and the Britten

Sinfonia — as well as the recording by Hope and the Konzerthausorchester Berlin for Deutsche Grammophon — Richter's concerto is still relatively unknown.

"I didn't know of the piece," Laura Hamilton said during a telephone conversation. "It was Eugenia Strauss, the executive director of CityMusic, who learned about it and decided she wanted to program it. So I was assigned the work. But I am so delighted to be performing it. It's been a revelation."

Hamilton said that there are many similarities between the Richter and Vivaldi's original — a piece she has performed on a number of occasions. "In fact, there are some pretty significant swaths of Vivaldi's music which are identical to Richter's, but set slightly differently. So it is a different experience. Richter's music is more abstract, and less directly chromatic. You have to enter into this post-minimalism mindset. Although he still keeps the names of each of the concertos, it's interesting that he chose not to reference the sonnets — Vivaldi's music is so linked to them programmatically."

While electronics are featured prominently in the recording, Richter has made suggestions for how to achieve a similar effect in an acoustic performance. "Before 'Spring' begins, Richter has an electronic soundscape that sets this kind of otherworldly prologue," Hamilton noted. "I'm playing it in a concert tomorrow with a pianist, and in the piano-violin edition there is a suggestion from the composer to achieve that effect by playing the violin into the piano lid with the sustaining pedal down."

In addition to playing the violin and piano version to prepare for the CityMusic concerts, Hamilton also attended a performance of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. "I wanted to just be in the audience and experience the entire cycle."

Hamilton, who served as principal associate concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra for 33 years, said that while Richter's *The Four Seasons Recomposed* has been a big undertaking, she's enjoyed the challenge. "I'm really glad that Eugenia was taken by the piece and that she asked me to play it."

And how is life away from the Met? "I love my orchestra," she said. "I had so many fantastic musical experiences with the greatest artists, but my career has transitioned in a very nice way. I'm doing different things and I'm super busy with CityMusic and with Classical Tahoe, which is a festival where I'm the artistic director. So I have a big spectrum of activities which I really enjoy."

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