

Antonio Vivaldi

Largo From Winter



This month **Bridget Mermikides** arranges and transcribes a well-known piece from Vivaldi's much celebrated magnum opus, the Four Seasons.

ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Easy/Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Baroque repertoire
TEMPO: 40 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Separation and balance
CD: TRACKS 43-44	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melodic phrasing

subsequent composers, including Johann Sebastian Bach, who spent evenings transcribing his music by moonlight, which some have suggested led to his ultimate blindness. The Four Seasons (composed in 1723) is a series of four violin concertos, each in three movements, representing the natural cycle, from icy winds and summer storms to the exuberant celebration of spring's arrival.

“**Largo is one of the more approachable arrangements in this series, which means you can bring to bear as much expression as possible.**”

FOR CENTURIES, PEOPLE have been inspired to emulate the natural environment in music. From the Japanese flute mimicking the wind through the mountains, Mongolian singers' uncanny impersonations of streams, to the Chinese zither's emulation of animal calls, there seems to have always been a desire to bring into music the sounds of the natural world. There are many examples in the Western Art music tradition of such 'programmatic' writing. These have included birdsong (in everything from medieval English songs, Renaissance madrigals and the modernist music of Messiaen and Ligeti) to Beethoven's musical interpretations of lightning bolts, thunder and babbling brooks in his 6th ('Pastoral') Symphony.

But perhaps the most famous 'musicalisation' of nature in the orchestral repertoire is Vivaldi's Four Seasons.


Antonio Vivaldi (1648-1741) was one of the greatest composers of the Baroque era, with a masterful, yet entirely accessible, control of melody and harmony. He was a huge inspiration to



Vivaldi: one of the Baroque era greats

The work has remained popular through the centuries and is perfectly accessible to cultures all over the world. Indeed, Nigel Kennedy's 1989 recording - by many seen as the modern definitive version - sold over two million copies!

For this article, I've chosen the beautiful middle movement (Largo) from Winter. Although this is a work for solo violin and string ensemble, the melody and harmony is so evocative and powerful in its simplicity, that it works in its entirety as a solo guitar arrangement.

I've transposed the original key of E-flat major down a semitone to D major, to make it more guitar friendly, and reduced the string accompaniment to make it more playable. Largo is one of the more approachable arrangements of this series, which means you can bring to bear as much expression as you can muster. Enjoy learning it, and I hope you gain pleasure from it all year round! 

NEXT MONTH: Bridget arranges & tabs *Solveig's Song* by Grieg



TRACK RECORD As mentioned in the main body copy, Nigel Kennedy's best-selling Vivaldi Four Seasons (EMI 1989) sounds as fresh and powerful as ever, but for a more recent yet 'authentic' performance on Baroque instruments, I recommend you seek out Philharmonia Baroque's self-released Vivaldi Four Seasons (2011), with Elizabeth Blumenstock on solo violin. It's fabulous!

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 44

This is a simple arrangement consisting of a single line melody played over a repeating single note bass line. Always play the bass notes with the thumb and melody notes with alternating fingers. Start the melody with the second finger of the fretting hand and stay in second position for two bars. On beat two of bar 4, shift to the fourth position and on beat three use a full barre at fret 7. Over the next few bars follow the indicated fretting hand fingering and make sure the longer melody notes in bars 5 and 6 sustain for their full value. To achieve a clean sounding bass line it's a good idea to mute unwanted over-ringing when the harmony has changed; for example,

in bar 8 on beat three the bass note has changed to an A from an E and we no longer want the open E to ring through. This E should be muted with the pad of the picking hand thumb immediately after the first A note on beat three has been plucked. The thumb should then 'spring' back to continue play the repeated A bass notes. This kind of muting is a common and normal part of classical guitar technique. Experienced players will do it naturally without thinking about it. The rest of this piece is easy to understand and does not contain anything of technical difficulty. However it should not be taken lightly and will make a nice addition to your repertoire!

♩ = 40

Chord symbols: D, A, A7, Dsus4, D, A/C#, Bm, A, G, E/G#, A, D, E/D, A, E, A.

Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Picking: i, p, a, m.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 44

9

E E7 Asus4 A

E B G D A E

2 5 3 2 4 2 4 2 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

11

A7 Dsus4 D G A

E B G D A E

3 2 5 3 2 3 3 2 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

3 3 3 3 0 0 0 0

13

Bm A

E B G D A E

3 5 2 3 5 7 2 3

2 2 2 2 0 0 0 0

5 2 4 2 5 2 2 3

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

15

D A D

E B G D A E

5 2 2 3 5 2 5 0 5

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

2 0 3 3 2 3 3 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0