

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

Vivaldi's The Four Seasons

Jonathan Crow, leader & violin

Sarah Jeffrey, oboe

Heidi Elise Bearcroft, harp

Rémi Pelletier, viola

Johann Sebastian Bach

Concerto for Violin and Oboe in C Minor,
BWV 1060R

I. Allegro

II. Adagio

III. Allegro

Georg Philipp Telemann

Viola Concerto in G Major

I. Largo

II. Allegro

III. Andante

IV. Presto

George Frideric Handel

Harp Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 4, No. 6

I. Andante allegro

II. Larghetto

III. Allegro moderato

Intermission

Antonio Vivaldi

The Four Seasons for Violin and Orchestra,
Op. 8

I. Concerto in E Major ("Spring")

II. Concerto in G Minor ("Summer")

III. Concerto in F Major ("Autumn")

IV. Concerto in F Minor ("Winter")

Program 1

Thursday,
January 8, 2026
7:30pm

Friday,
January 9, 2026
7:30pm

Saturday,
January 10, 2026
7:30pm

Sunday,
January 11, 2026*
3:00pm

*George Weston Recital Hall

*The TSO's George Weston
Recital Hall Series is
generously supported by Jim
Fleck and Georgina Steinsky.*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Concerto for Violin and Oboe in C Minor, BWV 1060R

Composed 1736

16 min

IN 1729, though already busy as cantor of Leipzig's Thomasschule (St. Thomas School), Bach agreed to direct a local *collegium musicum*, made up of university students and professionals, that performed every Friday evening in a coffee house. Around the late 1730s, he wrote 14 concertos for one, two, three, or four harpsichords with strings—history's first great body of keyboard concertos—for his *collegium* concerts, but only one of them was certainly an original composition. The rest were (or probably were) arrangements of concertos for other solo instruments.

The Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C Minor, BWV 1060, was long assumed to be an arrangement of a concerto for two violins, but, in the early 20th century, the German musicologist Max Seiffert demonstrated that the original was probably for violin and oboe. He noticed, for instance, that the part for the second harpsichord was largely melodic and

wholly devoid of string-like figuration, and concluded that it had originally been written for a high woodwind instrument with enough projecting power to compete with a solo violin. In the early 1700s, that could only have meant an oboe. Hearing is believing: with the (presumably) original solo parts for violin and oboe restored, the instrumentation of BWV 1060 seems more appropriate to its musical ideas than it does in the two-harpsichord version.

As is typical of Baroque concertos on the Italian model, BWV 1060 has three movements (fast-slow-fast). The outer movements are in ritornello form (i.e., with alternating orchestral and solo episodes), though they unfold organically: in both, there is much subtle interplay between solo and orchestral forces, and throughout each, Bach develops the ideas he introduces in the opening bars, always in counterpoint and in endlessly imaginative ways. In the central "Adagio", the strings accompany pizzicato, except in a brief but striking passage near the end and in the final bar, which leads without a break into the stormy finale.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767)

Viola Concerto in G Major

Composed 1716–1721

12 min

ALTHOUGH GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN might not have quite the same level of name recognition, he unquestionably ranks among the giants of the Baroque era. (Telemann was even the namesake and godfather of Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel.) Counts vary, but

the largely self-taught German composer is believed to have written more than 3,000 compositions, including more than 1,000 cantatas alone, making him one of the most prolific composers of all time.

Among the most famous and oft-performed of his compositions is the Viola Concerto in G Major, the first known such work by anyone. Unlike many concertos of the era, this 12-minute work has four instead

of three movements and is written in the *sonata da chiesa* form, in which the compact movements alternate slow-fast-slow-fast. It was first published in 1731 but was out of print for two centuries until the appearance of a 1941 edition prepared by composer and musicologist Hellmuth Christian Wolff.

Emphasizing musicality over flashy technique, the Viola Concerto opens with a serene “Largo” movement that highlights the burnished timbre of the viola’s lower register, and then moves into a sprightly “Allegro” movement with a solo part that is showy but measuredly so. This second section is

written in the simpler, forward-looking galant style that was beginning to replace the more complex late-Baroque style. It shows some of the Gallic influences that run through many of the concertos of Telemann, who famously described these works in his autobiography as having the “smell of France.” Arguably, the high point of the concerto is the breathtaking, slightly melancholic “Andante” third movement, which supplies the soloist with ample opportunity for depth and expressiveness. The work ends with a lively “Presto” movement featuring contrapuntal cross-rhythms.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Harp Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 4, No. 6

Composed 1736

12 min

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL, one of the titans of the Baroque era, is remembered best today for instrumental works like the *Water Music* and his dozens of oratorios and operas. None is more celebrated or frequently performed than his towering *Messiah*, a staple at the holidays. But the composer was also a first-rate organist who pioneered the organ concerto. And, indeed, this concerto is part of a well-known group of six such works that were performed as interludes during performances of the composer’s oratorios in London from 1735 to 1736, and published in 1738 by John Walsh as Handel’s Op. 4.

But there is a fascinating twist. Unlike the other five, which Handel premièred on the organ, the Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 4, No. 6, was originally written for the harp and was first performed on that instrument in 1736 as part of the première of *Alexander’s Feast*. The oratorio, which proved to be a big success, featured a libretto adapted from English poet John

Dryden’s ode *Alexander’s Feast, or the Power of Music* (1697). The concerto was later adapted for the organ with little modification needed, but it will be heard here in its original form, though on a more technologically sophisticated modern harp.

This gentle concerto, with its simple, pleasing melodies, is less about dialogue and exchange between the soloist and orchestra, and more about the orchestra accenting and supporting the harp’s dominating solos, starting with the light and airy first movement. This first section is marked “Andante allegro”, a kind of compromise tempo that is not too fast or too slow. The “Larghetto” middle section is more reflective and inward-looking, and almost exclusively focused on the solo harp. The work concludes with the animated “Allegro moderato” movement, with by far the fastest tempo of the three movements but still one that is moderated in keeping with the overall feel of the work. This section gives listeners the most opportunities to hear the harp and orchestra together, with the work ending in the same unostentatious way that it began.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

The Four Seasons for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 8

Composed 1716–1717

39 min

VIVALDI'S CONCERTOS WERE CELEBRATED even when they circulated only in manuscript copies, but with the publication of collections of them, beginning with *L'estro armonico* (*The Harmonic Inspiration*), Op. 3, in 1711, his reputation blossomed throughout Europe. Perhaps his most sensational success was his fifth such collection, Op. 8—12 concertos (ten for solo violin, two for violin or oboe) published in 1725, in Amsterdam (then the music-printing capital of the world), and later reprinted elsewhere. Dedicated to one of his patrons, a Bohemian count, Op. 8 bore a fanciful title, *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione* (*The Contest between Harmony and Invention*).

The success of Op. 8 owed much to its first four concertos, collectively entitled *Le quattro stagioni* (*The Four Seasons*), each inspired by one season of the year. In fact, *The Four Seasons* was known long before 1725: in his preface to Op. 8, Vivaldi referred to an earlier version of these concertos, which were likely composed between 1716 and 1717. The popularity of *The Four Seasons* eclipsed that of Vivaldi's other concertos—and his dozens of operas—in his lifetime, and not only in Italy. But by the end of the 18th century, he was largely forgotten. The popularity of these concertos today is actually owed to the long-playing record. Before the set was first recorded in the 1940s, it had been considered (like Vivaldi generally) a historical curiosity of interest mostly for what it told us about Bach. Since then, of course, *The Four Seasons* has been performed and recorded countless times, and co-opted by movie soundtracks, TV commercials, Muzak feeds, etc.

The over-familiarity of *The Four Seasons* should not blind us to the extraordinary quality and originality of these concertos, however. Though all four superficially adhere to the three-movement plan and the ritornello form that Vivaldi helped to standardize, no two are really alike. Throughout the set, Vivaldi plays fast and loose with his own rules, seeking always to maximize the individuality and expressive power of each piece.

In the original edition of Op. 8, each of the four concertos was preceded by a sonnet evoking the relevant season. Likely written by the composer himself, these sonnets were based on a series of paintings by the Italian Baroque artist Marco Ricci. Each concerto is intimately related to its poem: in the first edition, Vivaldi actually indicated which lines of the sonnets were illustrated by certain bits of music, and even provided some additional descriptions for musical images not literally linked to the sonnet. The music of *The Four Seasons*, in short, is thoroughly programmatic.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana

A Note on Petrarchan Sonnet Form

A sonnet is a poem that consists of 14 lines. However, unlike the Shakespearean sonnet, which comprises three quatrains (four-line stanzas) followed by a rhyming couplet, the Petrarchan sonnet—named after the Renaissance poet Petrarch—includes an opening octave (eight-line stanza) followed by a sestet (six-line stanza). The octave sets a scene, states a problem, or establishes an overall context, while the sestet acts on the octave in some way, or presents some counterpoint to it. Vivaldi works intricately within (and occasionally against) this Petrarchan sonnet form in terms of the breaks between movements in these four concertos.

The Four Seasons Sonnets

English translation: en.wikisource.org

Spring (Concerto in E Major)

Allegro

Springtime is upon us.
The birds celebrate her return with festive song,
and murmuring streams are
softly caressed by the breezes.
Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar,
casting their dark mantle over heaven.
Then they die away to silence,
and the birds take up their magical songs
once more.

Largo

On the flower-strewn meadow, with leafy
branches
rustling overhead, the goat-herd sleeps,
his faithful dog beside him.

Allegro

Led by the festive sound of rustic bagpipes,
nymphs and shepherds lightly dance
beneath the brilliant canopy of spring.

Summer (Concerto in G Minor)

Allegro non molto

Under a hard season, fired up by the sun
Man and flock both languish, and pine
trees burn.
We hear the cuckoo's voice; followed by
sweet songs of turtledove and finch.
Soft breezes stir the air, but, threatening,
the North Wind sweeps them suddenly aside.
The shepherd trembles,
fearing violent storms and his fate.

Adagio e piano – Presto e forte

The fear of lightning and fierce thunder
Robs his tired limbs of rest
As gnats and flies buzz furiously around.

Presto

Alas, his fears were justified
The Heavens thunder and roar; and hail
Cuts off the heads of the wheat, and
damages the grain.

Autumn (Concerto in F Major)

Allegro

The peasant celebrates with songs and dances
the pleasure of a bountiful harvest.
And fired up by Bacchus's liquor,
many end their revelry in sleep.

Adagio molto

Everyone is made to forget their cares and
made to sing and dance
By the air which is tempered with pleasure
And (by) the season that invites so many, many
Out of sweetest slumber to blissful enjoyment.

Allegro

The hunters emerge at the new dawn,
And with horns and dogs and guns depart
upon their hunting.
The wild beast flees and they follow its trail;
Terrified and tired by the great noise
of guns and dogs, the wounded beast,
tries futilely to flee, but harried, dies.

Winter (Concerto in F Minor)

Allegro non molto

To tremble from cold in the icy snow,
In the harsh breath of a horrid wind;
To run, stamping one's feet every moment,
Teeth chattering in the extreme cold.

Largo

Before the fire to pass peaceful, contented days
while the rain outside pours down.

Allegro

We tread the icy path slowly and cautiously,
for fear of tripping and falling.
Then turn abruptly, slip, crash on the ground,
And rising, hasten on across the ice in case
it cracks.
We feel the chill north winds course through
the home
despite its locked and bolted doors...
This is winter, which, nevertheless,
brings its own delights.



Jonathan Crow, leader & violin

Jonathan Crow made his TSO soloist début in September 2011.

One of Canada's brightest talents, violinist Jonathan Crow exudes "masterful coolness" (*Montreal Gazette*) as Concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. A native of Prince George, BC, Crow earned his Bachelor of Music degree in honours performance from McGill University in 1998, at which time he joined the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM) as Associate Principal Second Violin. From 2002 to 2006, Crow was Concertmaster of the OSM, making him the youngest concertmaster of a major North American orchestra at the time.

Crow performs as guest concertmaster with orchestras around the world, including the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia de Lanaudière, and Pernambuco Festival Orchestra (Brazil).

Crow has performed as a soloist with most major Canadian orchestras including the OSM, the TSO, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the National Arts Centre and Calgary Philharmonic Orchestras, the Victoria and Kingston Symphonies, and Orchestra London, under the baton of such conductors as Charles Dutoit, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Sir Andrew Davis, Peter Oundjian, Gustavo Gimeno, Kent Nagano, Mario Bernardi, and João Carlos Martins.

An avid chamber musician, Crow has performed at many chamber music festivals in Europe and North America. He was the Artistic Director of Toronto Summer Music from 2016 to 2025, and is a founding member of the JUNO Award-winning New Orford String Quartet. Crow is currently Associate Professor of Violin at the University of Toronto.



Sarah Jeffrey, oboe

Sarah Jeffrey made her TSO soloist début in September 2007.

Hailed by critics for her "exquisite solo work" (*The Globe and Mail*), "luscious tone" (*Toronto Star*), and sensitive musicianship, Sarah Jeffrey is Principal Oboe of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

A regular soloist with the TSO, Jeffrey has also appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras across Canada, performing works by Bach, Mozart, Vaughan Williams, Marcello, Haydn, and Mozetich. She is also a recitalist and chamber musician, making frequent guest appearances with the Amici Chamber Ensemble, the ARC Ensemble, and Trio Arkel.

A devoted performer of new music, Jeffrey has commissioned several chamber works, including *Chaconne for Oboe, Horn, and Piano* by Erik Ross, and *Rhapsody* by Ronald Royer.

Jeffrey is a recipient of the Ontario Arts Council's Chalmers Award for Creativity and Excellence in the Arts, and teaches regularly at Canada's finest music schools. A passionate and devoted teacher, Jeffrey is on faculty at The Glenn Gould School at The Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Toronto, and spends her summers with Orford Music and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. She can be heard discussing the finer points of the oboe on CBC Radio, both as a performer and as a guest on several podcasts.

Jeffrey shares her life with her husband, TSO Horn Gabriel Radford, their two children Evelyn and Aidan, and Jack the cat. In her spare time, Jeffrey enjoys travelling, cooking, swimming in cold lakes, hiking, and, of course, the art of reed making.



Heidi Elise Bearcroft, harp

Heidi Elise Bearcroft made her TSO soloist début in January 2013.

Harpist Heidi Bearcroft has classical music in her DNA. Consider her family tree: Bearcroft grew up in Pittsburgh where her dad was co-principal oboe of the Pittsburgh Symphony for over 40 years. Her maternal grandfather was a leading American bassoonist and pedagogue. Her paternal grandmother was a concert pianist, and her aunt plays first violin with the San Francisco Symphony. To top it off, her great-grandfather was in the chorus in *A Night at the Opera*—the 1935 Marx Brothers movie.

Her mom, who still plays principal harp in Pittsburgh, kept up a busy playing and teaching schedule even when she was pregnant. Bearcroft believes that by experiencing music in utero, she fell in love with the sound of the harp before she even knew what she was hearing.

While still an infant, she travelled the world with her parents when they were touring with the Pittsburgh Symphony, eating baby food on the Great Wall of China, watching locals drink snake blood in Taipei, and riding a camel in the Canary Islands.

Bearcroft started playing piano at age 3, and harp at age 7. She mostly studied with her mom before moving to New York and earning both bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School. While still in her teens, she made her début as a concerto soloist and won a number of major national competitions.

Bearcroft has played with the Pittsburgh, Mariinsky, and Manitoba Chamber Orchestras, and has been Principal Harp of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since 2011.



Rémi Pelletier, viola

Rémi Pelletier made his TSO soloist début in April 2024.

Rémi Pelletier joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in September 2019, having served in the New York Philharmonic's viola section from July 2013, and in the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal beginning in 2007.

Previously, he was a regular substitute with The Philadelphia Orchestra, and also performed with The Haddonfield Symphony and Orchestre Métropolitain. He served as Guest Principal Viola of the International Orchestra of Italy in the summers of 2011 and 2012, Principal Viola of Japan's Pacific Music Festival, and Assistant Principal of the New York String Orchestra Seminar.

An active chamber musician, Pelletier was a regular guest at the Société de musique de chambre de Québec and performed with *Rendez-vous musical de Laterrière* and *Musica Camerata Montréal*, as well as with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal's chamber music series. His honours include the CBC/McGill Music Award (2003) and winning first prize at the *Concours du Québec* and Canada's National Music Competition.

A native of Quebec, Pelletier was a scholarship recipient at Encore School for Strings and the Orford Arts Centre. He studied with Michael Tree and Joseph de Pasquale at the Curtis Institute of Music, and with André Roy at McGill University, from which he graduated with the distinction of Outstanding Achievement in Viola Performance, and where he was Principal Viola of the McGill Symphony Orchestra.