



## New Classical Tracks: Celebrating 'The Four Seasons'

by [Julie Amacher](#), Minnesota Public Radio

April 21, 2009

### AUDIO

[New Classical Tracks: Celebrating 'The Four Seasons'](#) (feature audio)

### An 18th century Red Priest meets a 20th century Tango master on a fresh, new recording celebrating "The Four Seasons."

St. Paul, Minn. — Venezuelan conductor Eduardo Marturet first met Canadian violinist Lara St. John when she opened the 2007-2008 season of the Miami Symphony Orchestra at the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami.

That program featured "The Four Seasons from Buenos Aires," by 20th century Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla.

"I was so taken by her playing of that music of Piazzolla," Marturet recalled, "and I knew she was thinking of recording 'The Seasons,' by Vivaldi. Then I told her, why don't we make a recording? You just played with us so fantastically we just have to choose an orchestra of your liking."

Marturet immediately approached a group of young musicians from his homeland, The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela.

This talented group of musicians is a true source of national pride, like football stars in other countries. They're a product of El Sistema, a program that transforms at-risk kids into classical musicians.

The chemistry between Lara St. John and the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra is exhilarating. Producer Martha de Francisco does a superb job capturing the freshness of this performance, proving there is still something new to say about Vivaldi's most famous set of concertos.

"Lara does a reading of the Vivaldi Seasons which you think you're hearing for the first time," Eduardo Marturet said. "And yet, she's not playing out of bounds stylistically, which is unique. She keeps on the right tracks of style, and yet she does something completely new. As one of the reviews says, it's not your Dad's Vivaldi."

This interpretation is packed with driving rhythms, vivid orchestral colors, and high drama. St. John does an exquisite job of painting expressive musical pictures of each season.

In the first movement of "Summer," the solo violin weeps as the frightened shepherd anticipates a pending storm. Orchestral cracks of thunder and driving rain open the final movement. St. John's brisk articulation and precise intonation heightened the intensity of this summer storm.

The first movement of "Autumn" from Vivaldi's, "Four Seasons," begins with a joyful dance as villagers celebrate the bounty of the fall harvest. Lara St. John eloquently slides and tumbles through the solo part, depicting revelers who have over-indulged a bit.

Astor Piazzolla's "Four Seasons" wasn't written as a set, or as a response to Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." The tango-master first wrote "Buenos Aires Summer," to accompany a play in 1965. Five years later he composed pieces reflecting the other three seasons using the same instrumentation; bandoneon, violin, electric guitar, piano and string bass.

Eduardo Marturet confirms that Lara St. John really loves this music, and she plays it with so much conviction.

"Her reading of the Piazzolla is so powerful, and of course the young orchestra literally loved it because we chose not a big orchestra. We chose as we should do, 18 players, so forceful, and yet very, very lyrical," said Marturet.

It wasn't until after Piazzolla's death that a link was made between his "Four Seasons" and that of Vivaldi's. This recording features a clever new arrangement of Piazzolla's pieces for solo violin and string orchestra by the Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov.

"It quotes from Vivaldi's Seasons in the Piazzolla, so that also blends nicely," Maturet said.

My personal favorite is Piazzolla's "Winter," because it quotes briefly from Vivaldi's "Summer." It's a delicate reminder that summer in Venice corresponds to winter in Buenos Aires.

Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" never really caught on until the 20th century. Astor Piazzolla's "Four Seasons" was born in the 20th century.

Now, we have a 21st century interpretation of these works on this sparkling new recording with violinist Lara St. John, The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela and conductor Eduardo Marturet.

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

#### SPONSORS

