

PROGRAM NOTES

THE GRANDE SESTETTO CONCERTANTE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)



The Grande Sestetto Concertante, an historic arrangement of the Sinfonia Concertante for violin and viola, K.364, was published in 1808. The arrangement was originally attributed to Mozart, but is now believed to have been arranged by an unknown early 19th century composer. All six parts are divided equally among the six players rather than for soloists with accompaniment as in the

“original” Sinfonia Concertante.

Mozart composed the “original” Sinfonia Concertante, K.364, in 1779, while on a tour of Europe that included Mannheim and Paris. He had been experimenting with the sinfonia concertante genre, and this work can be considered his most successful realization in this hybrid genre between symphony and concerto.

THE NORDIC SEASONS (2024)

Hanna Helgegren (b.1981)



Camerata Nordica Octet is excited that their performances in North America of The Nordic Seasons in October 2025 will be the first public performances of the pieces anywhere in the world!

Hanna Helgegren began playing the violin at the age of four, and decided early on that she wanted to become a professional violinist. At 17, she began her studies at the Gothenburg School of

Music in Sweden, and graduated from the University of the Arts in Berlin in 2004. She says, “I travelled the world with symphony orchestras as well as pop artists. After many years in big cities like Stockholm and Los Angeles, I’ve ended up living in a house next to the forest in the south of Sweden. Somewhere along the path, I happened to discover that I have a strong passion for gardening...”

In addition to her work as a violinist, Hanna is also a composer and arranger. Her music is inspired by the wide array of music she has performed throughout her career, from classical and jazz to folk music and pop. Navigating effortlessly through different musical genres, she finds that experiences and knowledge gained in one genre often prove to be highly valuable

in another. She feels an equal fascination with the melancholy of Swedish folk music and the dramatic gestures found in the works of composers such as Richard Strauss. The composer writes about “The Nordic Seasons”:

In ‘The Nordic Seasons’ I sought to capture the essence of Nordic melancholy, where thoughts can darken as deeply as winter itself. Yet, after a long winter, light inevitably returns, bringing with it hope, playfulness, and joy. Nature has been an immense source of inspiration. Leaning against a tree and watching the mist rise over a bog, or lying on a beach listening to the rhythmic waves, somehow makes it easier to connect with the mystery of existence. In such moments, there is space both for contemplation of life’s transience and for awe at the miraculous nature of creation. The movements mirror nature’s cycles throughout the year, as well as how we, as humans, are shaped by these shifts in mood and emotion. The piece is performed alongside a film which depicts the seasons through landscape imagery.

‘The Nordic Seasons’ is a tribute to life in all its forms, an ode to the mystery that surrounds the very essence of our existence. It is also a reminder of how nature invites us to recharge, as well as reconnect with our origins—after all, we are an inseparable part of the natural world.”

About the video: “The Nordic Seasons” has been a long-term artistic project of Camerata Nordica. The idea behind this commission was to create a piece with a visual component connecting sound and imagery in order to deepen the storytelling and artistic impact. As Camerata frequently performs abroad, this would serve as a unique way to bring a piece of Sweden with us wherever we go.

The videographer for this project is Jack Walton, a British filmmaker based in Sweden who has made documentaries for the BBC. Passionate about the arts, Jack has collaborated regularly with Camerata Nordica over the past five years, bringing a deep understanding of their musical identity to the project.

The director’s goal in “The Nordic Seasons” is to offer audiences a visual experience that will enhance the music’s origins, connecting sight and sound in a way that deepens the storytelling and artistic impact.

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SOUVENIR DE FLORENCE, OP.70

Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)



Tchaikovsky adored Italy. He spent the long, harsh Russian winter in Rome, Florence, and Venice, seduced by the warmth of the sun, the music in the streets, the beauty of the men. "I am under a clear blue sky," he wrote, "where the sun is shining in all its magnificence. There's no question about rain or snow, and I go out wearing nothing but a suit . . . a magical shift is finally happening to me."

By 1890, the forty-something Tchaikovsky had finally achieved international fame. He was at the peak of his powers, pouring his full emotional self into every bar he wrote, not knowing that he had just three years left to live.

In Florence, he scratched out a simple duet for violin and cello. This germ gave birth to *Souvenir de Florence*. The title can mislead. In English, a "souvenir" is a physical object, kept as a reminder. In French, the word has a slightly different meaning. "Souvenir" is closer to "remembrance," to "memory."

Tchaikovsky found the relatively unusual form—two violins, two violas, two cellos—challenging. "There must be six independent and at the same time homogeneous parts," he wrote. "It is frightfully difficult!"

The finished work balances these opposing forces: filling the hall with the weight of a much larger ensemble, each musician is pushed to play with the boldness of a soloist. Tchaikovsky's music pulses with intensity, allowing no real moment of rest for any of the players.

The first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, comes rushing in a flood. A tempest in the lower strings tosses the first violins around like a tiny boat in a storm. In the second movement, *Adagio cantabile e con moto*, a hymn-like richness raises the curtain. Plucked strings—bringing to mind a lover's serenading guitar—accompany a halting love song shared by violin and cello.

The third movement begins with a humble viola singing a simple folksong to the ensemble, who take it and turn up the intensity. Tchaikovsky's mother tongue

is never far away. "Italy is beginning to cast her magic spell on me," he wrote on one early trip. "But in spite of the enjoyments of life in Italy, in spite of the good effect it has upon me—I am, and shall ever be, faithful to my homeland."

In the fourth movement, the ensemble lets its hair down to a Slavonic beat, players sharing melodies in every conceivable combination of solo, duo, and trio.

Tchaikovsky's verdict on his work? "It's frightening to see," he wrote, "how pleased I am with myself."

—Adapted from a note by Tim Munro

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