

Петр Чайковский

The Seasons

Времена года

Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Piero Dorazio

Nevà Trio

The Seasons

Времена года

Pyotr Tchaikovsky
The Seasons op.37
Transcription for piano trio by A. Gedike
World premiere recording

Nevà Trio - St. Petersburg
Igor Uryash piano
Ilya Ioff violin
Alexey Massarsky cello

Piero Dorazio
The Seasons
Four coloured silkscreen prints (cm 32x32)
200 signed and numbered copies



Production Katrin Canessa
© Officina della Musica, 2003
Castello di San Polo in Rosso 53013 Gaiole in Chianti (Italy)
Tel +39 0577 74 68 63 Fax +39 0577 74 61 72
e-mail:officinamusica@sanpolo.it <http://www.officinamusica.de>

Петр Чайковский

The Seasons

Времена года

Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Transcription for piano trio by A. Gedike

Nevà Trio

Ilya Ioff
violin

Alexey Massarsky
cello

Igor Uryash
piano

Январь

JANUARY

У камелька

By the Fireside

Moderato semplice, ma espressivo

Февраль

FEBRUARY

Масленица

Shrovetide Festival

Allegro giusto

Март

MARCH

Песнь жаворонка

Song of the Lark

Andantino espressivo

Апрель

APRIL

Подснежник

The Snowdrop

Allegretto con moto e un poco rubato

Май

MAY

Белые ночи

White Nights

Andantino

Июнь

JUNE

Баркарола

Barcarolle

Andante cantabile

Июль

JULY

Песнь косаря

Song of the Reaper

Allegro moderato con moto

Август

AUGUST

Жатва

Harvest

Allegro vivace

Сентябрь

SEPTEMBER

Охота

The Hunt

Allegro non troppo

Октябрь

OCTOBER

Осенняя песнь

Autumn's Song

Andante doloroso e molto cantabile

Ноябрь

NOVEMBER

На тройке

On the Troika

Allegro moderato

Декабрь

DECEMBER

Святки

Christmas Eve

Tempo di valse



Maja Elik

The well-known piano cycle by Pyotr Tchaikovsky (Op. 37b) was initiated and commissioned by N. M. Bernard, the St. Petersburg publisher and editor of "The Novelist", a popular monthly intended for family reading and music-making. He also selected four-line epigraphs for the forthcoming composition, taken from some of Tchaikovsky's favourite Russian poets: V. Zhukovsky, A. Maikov, N. Nekrasov, A. Plescheyev, A. Pushkin, L. Tolstoy, and A. Fet. In addition to the name of the month and the epigraph, each piece was given a subtitle meant to suggest to the imagination a sphere of free yet characteristic associations.

Starting late in 1875, and throughout the following year, month after month and piece after piece, the composer sent sheets of paper freshly covered with notes to St. Petersburg. He liked to compose on commission and with a deadline, wherever he might be in Moscow, Paris, London, Bayreuth, or Vienna. He was travelling a great deal at the time, and he probably felt the charm of Russian nature, customs, and way of life with particular poignancy when he was abroad.

The cycle is framed by pictures typical of winter past times in the warmth of the home: it begins on a January evening, illuminated by candles and the soft, fading glow of the hearth, and ends in December with a traditional waltz around the Christmas tree, with all the trimmings. The remainder of the pieces are set in the open air and are more or less related to nature. Tchaikovsky matches lyrical, musically poetic pieces and/or attitudes, as well as colorful, earthy genre scenes of everyday life, with expressive pictorial sketches transformed into sound - much in the manner of such Schumann cycles of the late 1840's as "Bunte Blätter", "Waldszenen", and "Album für die Jugend". Some of the pieces combine features of two or even three types.

The pieces that most vividly convey the atmosphere of a lyrical emotion or mind setting are - January, "By the Fireside" - , in which comfort, bliss, warmth, repose, contemplation, and a hint of anxiety are melted together;

- April, "A Snowdrop" - , where we feel waves of freshness, radiance, purity, inspiration, contemplation, and timid anticipation of happiness;

- June, "Barcarolle" - , the music of which conjures up conciliation, contemplation, and peaceful harmony

with the world, followed by a sudden outbreak of joy, then returning to the surrounding quietude. - October, "Autumn's Song" - is a typical elegy, replete with pensive sorrow, regret and complaint over things irrevocable and unachievable, yielding to reconciliation.

- December, "Christmas Eve" - is one of Tchaikovsky's best waltzes, comparable to those in his ballets, although this time in an intimate chamber guise - the music transports one into a happy state of carefree and naive intoxication with the generosity of life; it zooms, spins, and soars.

A second group of pictures - in contrast to those described above - is in the manner of genre paintings:

- February, "Shrovetide" - is an ancient Slavic carnival, seeing Winter off by eating pancakes, with entertainment and merrymaking; the stamping of spirited dancing is heard, with merry romp and noisy feasts, with loud toasts alternating with polite conversation, interrupted by still more joyous commotion. - July, "Reaper's Song" - , with its peculiar, predominantly 7-bar structure typical of Russian folk songs, conveys the strain of a broad and vigorous swing and the rhythm of movements concerted in doing a difficult but pleasant common task; - August, "Harvest" - , is also a subject related to summertime toil. Presented in a more abstract manner, without evoking any tangible visual association, it is a veritable scherzo, starting and concluding in a covert, concentrated and suppressed rhythm with snatches of melody (Allegro vivace), gradually increasing in volume and then soaring upwards, in three big crescendos, towards a climax. In the contrasting middle section (Tranquillo), we hear a leisurely meditative dialogue affording a few moments of rest. - September, "The Hunt" - : The leitmotif here is the call of the hunters' horns from Pushkin's lines in the epigraph to this piece. This is the most logically unfolded musical scene, rendering, in a three-part composition, all the exciting stages of the "plot": I. G Major. Preparations; the hunters set off on horseback and gallop. II. E minor. A cautious, stealthy approach towards the hunted beast, and its surroundings.

III. G Major, recapitulation and coda. The animal is successfully shot; the hunters are delighted and return home in triumph.

The pieces of the third group combine the features of the first two: their overall lyrical, poetic atmosphere is

supplemented with "pictorial" and/or acoustic components fitting the mood created, detailing and enhancing it. These are - March, "Skylark's Song" - : tender garlands of birds' impromptus fly up to the "blue abysses" of the sky against a static background with an organ point imitating the dripping accompanying the spring thaw; - May, "White Nights" -: the term "imagery" is applicable to this piece - with reservations. One cannot deny a kind of impressionistic effect: placid tempo, extended time, quiet arpeggios, retardandos, and rests in the framing segments are reminiscent of a watercolor full of air, moisture, and dissipated light. In the more agitated and mobile middle section, one hears the liquid approach and backwash of the waves on the banks of the River Nevà in St. Petersburg. - November, "In the Troika" - is arguably the most popular, surely one of the most poetic and lovely pieces in the cycle; it cannot be compared with kitschy pictures on the same theme, but rather reminds one of Gogol's fantastic Troika Bird. The melody gradually broadens, filling the space; then the horses jerk their reins, the snow spurts from under their hooves, and a bell rings. In the recapitulation, the melody takes off, accompanied by a magic tinkling, to fade away over the horizon.

The arranger of "The Seasons" for trio (violin, cello, and piano) is Alexander Fedorovich Gedicke (1877-1957) from Moscow, a composer, hereditary organist, pianist, and teacher; a contemporary of Taneyev and Rachmaninoff who ardently loved the music of Tchaikovsky and, in his own words, was "infinitely enthusiastic" about it. He performed, both alone and with his students, Tchaikovsky's works such as the Piano Trio in A minor ("To the Memory of a Great Artist").

A contemporary recalls that, in an organ concert of the 1946-47 season, Gedicke performed, "in his talented register arrangement", some pieces from "The Seasons" ("Shrovetide", "A Snowdrop", "Harvest", and "The Hunt"). Gedicke masterfully arranged the entire cycle for trio "for instructional purposes"; i.e., for teaching work with his students; the arrangement probably dates from the 1930's.

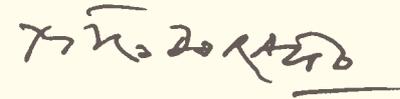
Piero Dorazio

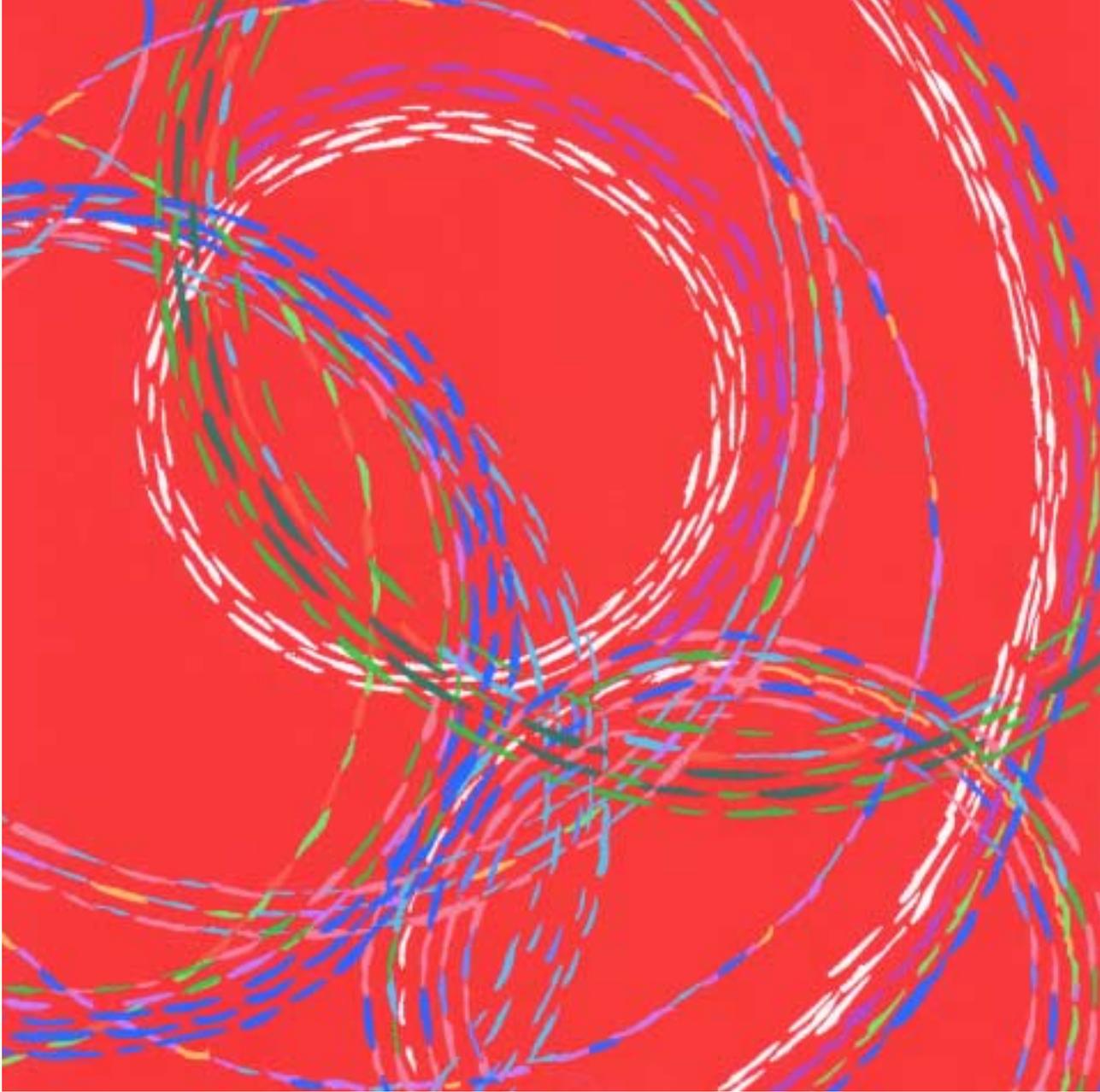
The Four Seasons has always been and remains a fascinating theme for painting, literature, film or photography. The images, sensations and emotions engendered by different natural conditions of light and climate during the various seasons offer the artist endless chromatic, compositional and spatial possibilities.

Each time of year can be defined by a combination of colours or by a single colour, as it were the dominant colour. When creating the four images inspired by this recording, or rather by Tchaikowsky's composition, I first chose four dominant colours, one for each season. Yellow, red, green and orange-brown.

I opted not to give to each work a precise title, since this could have restricted the viewer's imagination. Here he is presented with four different pictures and as he looks carefully at the pictures and listens to the great Russian's music he can conjure up at will either Spring, Winter, Summer or Autumn.

There is another reason for playing this game. Observing the succession of the seasons, I note that they seem ever less distinct from one another. Spring either gives way in untimely haste to summer or allows winter to linger too long, autumn does the same with summer, whilst only winter gives no quarter, remaining substantially true to itself.

The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Piero Dorazio'. The signature is stylized and written in a cursive hand.



Piero Dorazio
The Seasons
fragments out of four prints



