

## CityMusic: Vivaldi recomposed at St. Stan's (Mar. 16)



by Kevin McLaughlin

By the end of violinist Laura Hamilton's and CityMusic Cleveland's convincing performance of Max Richter's *Four Seasons Recomposed (after A. Vivaldi)* on Saturday, March 16 at the Shrine Church of St. Stanislaus, you had the uncanny feeling that what you were hearing was not so much a new piece but an old piece in a dream.

In each of the twelve movements Richter brings Vivaldi in and out of focus by isolating and repeating melodic fragments against an attenuated accompaniment. In the slow movements more of the melody is preserved — the Largo in “Winter” for example — but the original harmonic framework is altered. As meanings in

dreams, poetry or visual art are made more powerful when they are inferred, Vivaldi's depictions of nature are made more acute by the extra effort required by the listener. The solo violin's birdsong in the first movement of “Spring” begins so quietly that it takes a minute to grasp. Melodic shards of the rustic dance music of “Autumn” are livelier for what we conjure up, and Richter's “Winter” makes us colder for its vague adjacency.

Hamilton's playing was feathery light, but she was just as willing to apply a stronger touch when needed. Her comprehensive technique affirmed her thirty-three-year career as principal associate concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Konrad Kowal contributed his taste and technique as substitute concertmaster for CityMusic, and all sections participated in the ongoing conversation — a colloquy that was by turns atmospheric, obsessive, and jazzy.

Hamilton offered the first movement of Hindemith's Sonata for Solo Violin as an encore — one of her “all-time favorite pieces,” she announced. It also sounded like Vivaldi!

Conductor Annunziata Tomaro led a lively and stylish Beethoven Second Symphony, with forward-leaning urgency and beautifully shaped lines. Though unfair to judge after just one performance, the results achieved by Tomaro and the orchestra on Saturday might suggest the wisdom of adding a permanent conductor. Individual playing, as always, was first-rate. Balance between sections gave even the subtlest inner string and wind discourse a fair chance. Tomaro was also careful to exaggerate hairpin dynamics and accents, which helped delineate the musical terrain. The Scherzo was a regular hootenanny, aided by country-dancing winds in the Trio, and the Finale was just as rowdy. The blend of the ensemble was a special feature, complementing the magnificent acoustic of the Shrine of St. Stanislaus.

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