



# East Texas Symphony Orchestra

Richard Lee, Music Director and Conductor

## THE SPLENDOR OF THE SEASONS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2024 7:30 PM

UT TYLER COWAN CENTER

**RICHARD LEE**  
CONDUCTOR

**MARK MILLER**  
VIOLIN

Godfrey Ridout  
(1918-1984)

*Fall Fair\** (8')

Antonio Vivaldi  
(1678-1741)

*The Four Seasons: Concertos Op. 8, Nos. 1-4* (37')

*Concerto in E Major, "Spring," Op. 8, No. 1, RV 269*

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Largo*
- III. *Allegro pastorale*

*Concerto in G minor, "Summer," Op. 8, No. 2, RV 315*

- I. *Allegro non molto*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Presto*

*Concerto in F Major, "Autumn," Op. 8, No. 3, RV 293*

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Adagio molto*
- III. *Allegro*

*Concerto in F minor, "Winter," Op. 8, No. 4, RV 297*

- I. *Allegro mon molto*
- II. *Largo*
- III. *Allegro*

Mark Miller, Violin

INTERMISSION

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

*Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major, Op. 38, "Spring"* (33')

- I. *Andante un poco maestoso - Allegro molto vivace*
- II. *Larghetto*
- III. *Scherzo: Molto più vivace*
- IV. *Allegro animato e grazioso*

\*First performance by ETSO

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# The Orchestra

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Richard Lee

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Tami Peterson  
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# Meet the Guest Artist

## Mark Miller



Besides serving as concertmaster of the East Texas Symphony Orchestra, violinist Mark Miller performs with the Fort Worth Symphony and other North Texas ensembles. He is a founder and president of Mount Vernon Music, a membership-based nonprofit bringing outstanding performances of chamber music to underserved audiences in East Texas. Consistent with an emphasis on outreach to school children in rural communities, MVM has commissioned numerous musical stories for young audiences, including *The Town Musicians*, which was made into an illustrated book and CD with narration by Hollywood actor Will Ryan. MVM performances can be enjoyed on Mount Vernon Music's YouTube channel. Mark also co-presented the chamber series "The Color of Sound" at Texas A&M University – Commerce, where he taught and performed as Artist-in-Residence with his wife, ETSO principal violist Ute Miller. Their duo recordings (Duo Renard) can be found on the MSR and Fleur de Son labels. Following studies at SUNY Purchase, Indiana University - Bloomington and Boston University, Mark studied with Jürgen Kussmaul in Germany, where he was assistant concertmaster in the Robert Schumann Kammerorchester of Düsseldorf and a member of the Orchester der Beethovenhalle Bonn.



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# The Four Seasons: The Poems

Antonio Vivaldi created these poems which appear in the score for the piece, at the beginning of each respective concerto.

## Spring

*Springtime has arrived, and merrily the birds salute her with happy songs, and at the same time, at the breath of Zephyrus, the brooks flow with a gentle murmuring voice.*

*The sky is covered with a dark mantle and thunder and lightning are elected to announce her; when they are silenced, the little birds take up their harmonious songs anew.*

*And so, in the meadow, strewn with flowers, to the welcome murmuring of leaves and trees, the goatherd sleeps, his faithful dog beside him.*

*To a rustic bagpipe, making a festive sound, nymphs and shepherds dance in their favorite spot, when Springtime appears in its brilliance.*

## Autumn

*The peasants celebrate with song and dance the sweet pleasure of a rich harvest, and when they are fired by Bacchus's liquor, they finish their celebration with sleep.*

*The singing and dancing is now halted, by the air, now mild, giving pleasure, and the season which invites everyone to enjoy the sweetest slumber.*

*At dawn the hunters begin the chase leaving home with horns, guns, and dogs; the wild beast flees and they track it.*

*Already terrified, fleeing the great noise of guns and dogs, it is wounded, feebly tries to escape, but finally dies, overwhelmed.*

## Summer

*Beneath the relentless season heated by the sun, languishes both man and flock, and the pine trees are scorched; we hear the cuckoo's voice, and then the turtle-dove and the goldfinch sing.*

*Sweet Zephyrus blows, but suddenly Boreas joins battle with his neighbor; and the shepherd weeps, because he fears the dreaded storm overhead, and his destiny.*

*His tired limbs are robbed of their rest by fear of lightning and powerful thunder, as gnats and flies swarm furiously around him.*

*Alas, his fears are well-founded: the sky is filled by dreadful thunder and lightning and hail cuts down all of the tallest crops.*

## Winter

*To shiver, frozen in icy snow, in the severe blasts of a horrible wind. To run while stamping one's feet constantly, with teeth chattering in the cold.*

*To spend quiet and happy days by the fire, while rain soaks hundreds outside.*

*To walk on ice, stepping very slowly, moving carefully, in fear of falling.*

*To hurry, slip, and fall to the ground. To go again over the ice and run energetically until the ice cracks and breaks open.*

*To hear, as they leave their iron gates, Scirocco, Boreas, and all the winds in battle. This is Winter, but it brings joy.*

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# Program Notes

BY J. MICHAEL ALLEN

## **Godfrey Ridout (1918-1984)**

### ***Fall Fair***

Leading Canadian composer Godfrey Ridout was born in Toronto, and spent most of his life there. He trained at the Toronto Conservatory of Music, and later taught there. In 1948 he joined the faculty of University of Toronto and spent 42 years teaching. In a long compositional career, Ridout wrote a TV opera, *The Lost Child* (1976), orchestral and choral pieces, and chamber and solo piano works. His brief orchestral work *Fall Fair* was commissioned in 1961 by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for a United Nations concert in New York City. The composer provides the following description:

*"Fall Fair* opens with a noisy flourish followed by a rather vulgar tune in D major. After some elaboration and the introduction of new country-fiddle figures, the first tune appears again, substantially rounded off and in long notes, as a horn solo. After further expansion there is a broad middle section, a 'big tune,' for English horn, with harp and plucked strings. Returning to the first tempo, the 'bucolicism' is rampant. A lop-sided waltz, a hymny passage, a brief return to the first tune, and finally a coda on the 'big tune' wind it up."

## **Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)**

### ***The Four Seasons - Concertos Op. 8, Nos. 1-4***

The Venetian Antonio Vivaldi, nicknamed the "Red Priest," was the most prominent and influential Italian composer of his generation. He composed in nearly every genre: over 500 concertos, some two dozen operas, nearly 100 of his chamber works and dozens of Latin sacred works. He spent most of his life in Venice, but maintained connections with patrons and business partners throughout Europe. Aside from the operas, the vast majority of his works were written for use at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà, the girl's orphanage and school in Venice where he spent most of his career. All four of Venice's *ospedali* had large musical establishments in the early 18th century, but the chorus and orchestra he directed at the Pietà must have been particularly good, to judge by Vivaldi's virtuoso concertos and fine sacred pieces. Many of the concertos were written to feature either the students themselves (as in a series of bassoon concertos written for one particularly talented young woman) or the other professional musicians associated with the school. His solo violin concertos - over 230 in all - were probably written to feature Vivaldi himself, a virtuoso violinist with a high reputation among his contemporaries.

Vivaldi's concertos were widely circulated and imitated in his day, and it was he who popularized many of the standard operating procedures followed by his contemporaries Bach, Handel, and Telemann in their concerto writing. Though his works were passed around Europe in handwritten copies, they were also well known in a series of printed collections, mostly published by his business partners in Amsterdam. Vivaldi's Opus 8 collection of 1725 was given the fanciful title *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* (*The contest between harmony and invention*). The first four concertos of *Il cimento*

are collectively known as *The Four Seasons: La Primavera (Spring), L'Estate (Summer), L'Autunno (Autumn), and L'Inverno (Winter)*. Programmatic titles like this were not unusual for Vivaldi, but here he goes a step further, publishing sonnets with each concerto that describe the action of each season. Vivaldi himself may have been responsible for these poems. Translations of the sonnets appear on page 4 of this insert.

Aside from the striking musical images suggested by the sonnets, the music of the concertos is fairly typical, matching the style of the many other solo violin concertos by Vivaldi - placing a solo violin part in contrast to a small string orchestra. Typically, he sets the concertos in three movements, fast-slow-fast. The outer fast movements have the typical alteration of *ritornellos* - passages for the entire ensemble - and flashier solo sections. Slow movements are generally more vocal in conception, emulating the passionate vocal display of contemporary Italian opera. But it is of course the wonderfully programmatic aspects of the concertos of *The Four Seasons* that make them so attractive.

### **Concerto in E Major, "Spring," Op. 8, No. 1, RV 269**

Undoubtedly the most familiar of this very familiar set, *Spring* begins with a *ritornello* that announces the arrival of the goddess Springtime. The first solo episode, for the birds, is an appropriately chirpy passage. There is a thunderstorm and murmuring brooks in subsequent solo episodes. The *Largo* has some of the most evocative music in the set, with the orchestra playing the role of gently shifting foliage, and the viola plays the role of the goatherd's dog throughout, insistently barking as the solo violin plays a wonderfully lyrical melody. (One of my favorite memories of a long-ago Music History class is of my rather dignified professor playing a recording in class and solemnly intoning "bow-wow" along with the violas!) The final *Allegro* is clearly pastoral in nature, with long held notes in the low strings filling in for bagpipes, and a rather serious peasant dance. Flashier episodes for two solo violins intrude, but the music always returns to the dance.

### **Concerto in G minor, "Summer," Op. 8, No. 2, RV 315**

The second concerto is a perfect picture of a blisteringly hot summer in northern Italy. Uncharacteristically, it begins with an uneasy slow *ritornello*, and the tempo quickens for a bit of turbulence from the solo violin. The birds chirp again here, but there is none of the happiness of *Spring*. In the end, violin takes the role of the weeping peasant as he sees the potentially destructive weather. The slow movement is a purely operatic aria - a lament set for a solo violin above strings playing a rather spooky background. In the *Presto*, the storm finally breaks, with lightning flashes and booming thunder throughout.

### **Concerto in F Major, "Autumn," Op. 8, No. 3, RV 293**

After the natural disasters of *Summer*, *Autumn* is a return to optimism, and the first movement is a rustic harvest party. There are quick and witty solo passages, perhaps representing the peasants who have had just a bit too much of "Bacchus's liquor" and stumble around until they finally settle down to sleep - a quiet passage that sounds suspiciously like a lullaby. Their sleep is cut short by a final dancing *ritornello*. Vivaldi titled the slow movement "Sleeping Drunks" - a series of quiet and sometimes

startlingly chromatic chords that allow the continuo part to create most of the melodic interest. In the third movement, which depicts a hunt, virtually everything in his poem - from hunting horns and barking dogs to the terrified quarry - shows up clearly in the music.

### **Concerto in F minor, "Winter," Op. 8, No. 4, RV 297**

The shivering violin lines at the beginning of *Winter* set the tone for the entire movement. Vivaldi uses the imagery of wind and cold as the inspiration for the most virtuosic solo passages in the entire set. In contrast, the *Largo* is a cozy picture of a winter day spent inside in a warm room: a lovely solo melody set above a string background that suggests a gently crackling fire. The last movement is slapstick comedy: tiptoeing across the ice, falling down on your behind, and eventually scooting across the ice happily until it begins to crack and the wind starts to howl. The final line of his sonnet is fitting end to the set as a whole: "This is Winter, but it brings joy!"

### **Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

#### ***Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major, Op.38 (Spring)***

Schumann described 1841 as his year of "symphonic fire." He had spent most of his energy in the 1830s on piano music, and devoted much of 1840-41 to the composition of songs - many of which seem to be love-letters to his fiancée and soon-to-be wife Clara Wieck. By 1841, happily married and confident, he was ready to tackle the largest of instrumental genres, the symphony. Clara seems to have been one of his greatest sources of encouragement. In 1839, she had written in her diary: "...his imagination cannot find sufficient scope on the piano...My highest wish is that he should compose for orchestra - that is his true calling! May I succeed in bringing him to it." Schumann threw himself into orchestral composition with almost manic energy. He sketched out his *Symphony No.1* in four sleepless days in January, and refined it over the first few months of 1841. By the end of the year, his "symphonic fire" had cooled, but he then worked in other genres with the same concentration, focusing on chamber music in 1842, and then spending much of 1843 at work on an oratorio.

His *Symphony No.1* is an innovative work with intense thematic development. Schumann was responsible for the "Spring" symphony's title, which drew its inspiration from the concluding lines of a poem by his friend Adolph Böttger. Böttger's poem, mostly about a gloomy, cloud-shaded landscape, ends with the poet looking into a valley with the lines *O wende, wende deinen Lauf - im Tale blüht der Frühling auf!* (*O turn, turn aside from your course - for in the valley, spring is blossoming forth!*) Schumann may in fact have used the rhythm of the last line in the brass fanfare that begins the symphony. In the original score, he prefaced each of the movements with descriptive titles: 1. *Frühlingsbeginn* ("The coming of spring"), 2. *Abend* ("Evening"), 3. *Frohe Gespielen* ("Merry play"), and 4. *Voller Frühling* ("The fullness of spring"). Though he removed these titles before publishing the symphony in 1843, probably because he wanted to avoid a completely programmatic interpretation of the work, the description "Spring" remains perfectly appropriate. In 1842, he wrote to the composer Louis Spohr: "I composed the symphony in that flush of springtime

that carries a man away even in his old age, and comes over him anew every year. Description and painting were not part of my intention, but I believe that the time at which it came into existence may have influenced its shape and made it what it is.”

The opening movement begins with a brass fanfare and a long slow introduction (*Andante un poco maestoso*). The body of the movement (*Allegro molto vivace*) begins with a main theme that is derived from the fanfare. A quieter second theme is carried by the woodwinds. Schumann’s long development concentrates mostly on the first theme, though woodwinds slyly introduce a new minor-key idea that surfaces a few times during this section. Brass fanfares announce a full recapitulation. Strings introduce a serene new melody during the coda, but the movement ends with the abrupt return of the brass and a brilliant conclusion.

The two middle movements, though of very different characters, are clearly linked. The *Larghetto*’s main theme, heard at the beginning, is a beautifully wandering melody. Another contrasting episode interjects a note of tension, but the theme returns once more, now played by oboes and horn. At the very end, the trombones introduce a rather mysterious chorale theme. The mystery is quickly solved, however - the music proceeds without a pause into third movement (*Molto più vivace*), and the trombone chorale becomes the scherzo’s main theme. Though this unrelentingly serious melody hardly seems like “merry play,” Schumann inserts several playful episodes, and there is a long frolicsome trio section that plays with the main theme in a mischievous way. After the main idea returns briefly, there is a second trio, a sprightly dance. The movement ends with one more repeat of the main idea, and a coda that seems to leave the music waiting in anticipation.

The finale (*Allegro animato e grazioso*) begins with a forceful statement, but then continues with a lighthearted main theme. The second theme is a mock-serious idea passed between woodwinds and strings. There are allusions to the symphony’s opening fanfare throughout the development, but Schumann interjects a lovely little pastoral moment for horns and solo flute as a bridge to the recapitulation. The coda begins with a sudden quickening of tempo and the “Spring” symphony ends in a jubilant mood.

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