

SYMPHONY REVIEW



Elizabeth Pitcairn

## CHANGES IN PROGRAM AND ATTIRE HIGHLIGHT MARIN SYMPHONY CONCERT

by [Donna Kline](#)

Sunday, November 01, 2009

Conductor Alasdair Neale saved the best for last Nov. 1 in the Marin Symphony's concert at the Marin Center when he announced that guest violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn would perform and lead the orchestra in Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* after Intermission, instead of the scheduled first spot on the program. As an alternative, Mr. Neale began the evening's enjoyable concert with Mozart's eloquent and dramatic G-Minor Symphony No. 40, K. 550.

Composed in four movements, the Symphony from 1788 (Vienna) is the second of three late-period works from Mozart, all masterpieces in the classical symphonic forms. From the lyrical opening strings melody in the first movement (*Molto allegro*), to the spirited fourth, (*Finale, Allegro assai*), Mr. Neale led the orchestra in a beautifully balanced and lyrical reading. The low strings were especially sonorous.

The concert's *piece de resistance* was the exhilarating *Four Seasons* with Ms. Pitcairn leading the ensemble. Vivaldi, the "Red Priest" of Venetian music, wrote the piece in 1723 as a group of four concertos, each depicting a season of the year, beginning with spring. Vivaldi also wrote four Sonnets to accompany each of his concertos, making the composer not only the scribe, but also one of the first composers to introduce program music. Parts of a set of 12 concertos of Op. 8, there were many telling programmatic points that were artfully depicted, such as *the barking dog* in the second movement of "Spring" and *drunkards have fallen asleep* in the second movement of "Autumn."

The *Four Seasons* is perhaps Vivaldi's most famous and often performed work, but this performance was also very unique. While Ms. Pitcairn gave a bravura performance in the four concertos (E Major, G Minor, F Major, F Minor), she also adroitly led the Symphony's chamber orchestra. Between each concerto, Maestro Neale stood at stage right and recited each sonnet in both Italian and English, giving Ms. Pitcairn the opportunity to slip back stage to change her attire to match the season of the work. It was a brilliant evening, giving this often-heard work a more distinctive presentation and Ms. Pitcairn's performance was dazzling.

This second concert during the *Season of the Scribe* was festive and expertly performed.

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