

**“Winter” from *The Four Seasons* (1725)  
by Antonio Vivaldi (Venice, 1678 – Vienna, 1741)**

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

Born in Venice in 1678, Antonio Vivaldi was ordained a priest in 1703 (he was widely known as *il prete rosso*, or “the red-haired priest”), but never actually served in any ecclesiastical capacity. He studied the violin with his father, who played at St. Mark’s, and in 1703 became *maestro di violino* at an institution named Ospedale della Pietà that was devoted to the musical education of orphan girls. Many of the girls played at an extremely high level, and Vivaldi was soon able to present performances at the Pietà, drawing large audiences from the ranks of Venetian nobility and also visitors from out of town. Many of Vivaldi’s instrumental works were written for the Pietà, but he started publishing them as early as 1705. In 1711, a foreign publisher, Etienne Roger of Amsterdam, brought out twelve of Vivaldi’s concertos under the title *L’Estro armonico* (“Harmonic Inspiration”). From this time on, Vivaldi was famous all over Europe. In Germany, J.S. Bach transcribed several Vivaldi concertos for keyboard, and Bach’s original concertos often show the Italian composer’s influence.

Vivaldi did more than any composer to develop and codify the Baroque concerto. He established many of the concerto’s standard features, such as its three-movement (fast-slow-fast) structure, its orchestral *ritornellos* (returning melodies that punctuate the structure), lyrical (usually short) slow movements, and spirited finales (often using dance rhythms). These rules, however, left a lot of room for variety, and in fact, Vivaldi’s ingenuity in handling musical form and his melodic invention seem endless.

The most popular of Vivaldi’s concertos (which number more than 500) are, without a doubt, the four for violin known as *Le quattro stagioni* (“The Four Seasons”). They were published in 1725 as part of a collection entitled *Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’inventione* (“The Test of Harmony and Invention”).

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If the concertos of *The Four Seasons* are not the earliest example of program music, they are definitely among the boldest musical experiments of the 18th century. Vivaldi, displaying no mean poetic gifts, composed a sonnet about each season and inscribed the poems into the score, indicating precisely where the events mentioned take place in the music. At the same time, despite all the storms, singing birds, barking dogs, and stumbling drunkards, Vivaldi managed to keep the concertos musically coherent and always preserved the basic ritornello-episode alternation characteristic of the genre.

One couldn't give a better introduction to the concertos than what Vivaldi offered in his accompanying poems. A prose translation of the “Winter” sonnet can serve as a guide to this music that hardly needs an introduction.

Winter

1. Trembling with cold amidst the freezing snow, while a frightful wind harshly blows, running and stamping one's feet every minute, and feeling one's teeth chatter from the extreme cold.
2. Spending quiet, contented days by the fire while the rain outside drenches people by the hundreds.
3. Walking on ice, and moving cautiously, with slow steps, for fear of falling, spinning around, slipping, falling down again, walking on ice, and running fast until the ice cracks and splits; hearing Sirocco, Boreas, and all the winds at war burst forth from the bolted doors—this is winter, but it also brings joy!



**Red Ferrari (Rosso Ferrari)  
Concerto for Accordion and Orchestra (2025)  
by Cristian Carrara (b. Pordenone, Italy, 1977)**

- I. Velocità (Speed)**
- II. Eleganza (Elegance)**
- III. Sogno (Dream)**

In 2016, the Santa Barbara Symphony co-commissioned the double concerto Machpelah for violin and cello by Cristian Carrara. Ten years later, the Italian composer returns with a new work, inspired this time not by Biblical antiquity but instead by something much more contemporary. This time, it is a concerto for accordion and orchestra, commissioned by a consortium of which our orchestra is a member. The first performance was given by accordionist João Barradas and the Orchestra della Toscana under the direction of Niklas Benjamin Hoffmann on May 16, 2025.

In a short video made at the time of the world premiere, Carrara pointed out that, by choosing an instrument that frequently plays popular music, he intended to reach out to a wide audience, including listeners who may not have a strong background in classical music. The composer offered these additional comments in a written program note:

*With Rosso Ferrari, I aimed to honor one of Italy's most recognized symbols around the world. Not just a symbol of speed, but also of elegance, design, and creativity. The story of Ferrari, now legendary, represents a country—my country—and follows it through some of the most important milestones of the last century. A country that, in Ferrari's sporting victories, found a reflection of itself, united its people, experiencing that long-desired unity that was, until then, so difficult to fully achieve.*

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*Rosso Ferrari is a symbol of speed, the Rosso Corsa used by Ferrari cars in races—which was even launched into space in a specially designed capsule aboard the Mars Express in the European Space Agency's 2003 mission to the Red Planet—is a pastel red, bold and vibrant. But there are other variations of Rosso Ferrari, such as Rosso Scuderia, Rosso Dino, Rosso California, and Rosso Portofino. Rarely does a color assume such an identifying significance for a brand.*

*But, I asked myself, does the world of motors have anything to do with music? My answer was: when it comes to Ferrari, yes. This is why I thought that the most fitting instrument to bring together all these aspects was the accordion. Because it is an expression of Italian tradition and because it is a popular instrument, yet at the same time, it boasts an ever-expanding serious repertoire. It is versatile, flexible, and offers an immense range of tonal possibilities. It is an instrument that adapts to dance, to speed, to song, and to reflection.*

*Thus, this concert was born, divided into three movements. The first—Velocità (Speed)—seeks to immerse itself in accelerations, in escapes, in that rapid movement which is not only and necessarily physical but also a speed of thought, the ability to anticipate responses, to predict the future, to prepare oneself, and the car, when approaching a curve, adapting, molding body and mind to the curves of life. The second—Eleganza (Elegance)—represents the delicacy of form, the soft lines that cut through the wind, the idea that power can be coupled with the*

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*appreciation of beauty. Therefore, respecting the tradition of concertos for soloist and orchestra, this is a lyrical movement where the melody strives to take flight. The third—Sogno (Dream)—is somewhat of a synthesis of the first two movements and also represents each one of our aspirations to create something that will endure over time, something we will eventually reach. Dream is more than just a nighttime fairy tale: it is a desire, a drive, something that ignites the will to be and to live. Ferrari, in my notes, is a bit of all this.*

*Lastly, but by no means least, I dedicated this work to my son Samuele. His two older sisters already had a piece dedicated to them. What better occasion to wish him to carry in his heart all three words that define the three movements of Rosso Ferrari?*



**Capriccio Sinfonico (1883, rev. 1893)  
by Giacomo Puccini (Lucca, 1858 - Brussels, 1924)**

As graduation pieces go, Puccini's *Capriccio Sinfonico* certainly shows great promise. The star student of Amilcare Ponchielli (author of the opera *La Gioconda*) at the Milan Conservatory had produced a twelve-minute orchestral piece that more than deserved a diploma. As Puccini's German biographer Dieter Schickling has written, the composer received a total of 163 points out of 200—"a very good result that earned him a bronze medal." The work was premiered on July 14, 1883, by the Conservatory orchestra under the direction of the celebrated Franco Faccio, chief conductor of La Scala.

The work is divided into three main sections: slow, fast, and slow. But there are many more subdivisions with rapidly changing characters, in turn dramatic, lyrical, and dance-like (one episode definitely sounds like a waltz). One particularly striking theme will be immediately recognized by contemporary listeners as the orchestral introduction to *La Bohème* (1896). The *Capriccio* did not get a lot of performances, and Puccini evidently wasn't going to let a good musical idea go to waste!



***I pini di Roma* (“The Pines of Rome,” 1923-24)  
by Ottorino Respighi (Bologna, 1879 – Rome, 1936)**

**I. The Pines of the Villa Borghese**

**II. Pines Near a Catacomb**

**III. The Pines of the Janiculum**

**IV. The Pines of the Appian Way**

If it is at all possible to set a whole city to music, Ottorino Respighi did it in his orchestral trilogy *The Fountains of Rome* (1916), *The Pines of Rome* (1923-24), and *Roman Festivals* (1928). Using a colorful and virtuosic orchestral language, Respighi conjured up vivid impressions of memorable places and moments in the Italian capital, where he made his home in the last quarter-century of his life. In doing so, he captured famous places and their inhabitants, the history and the present of the Eternal City. As he once remarked, the name of Rome had given rise to the words Roman, Romanesque, Romance, and Romantic; the city is truly “eternal” in that it could inspire every historical period in Western civilization.

Each of the three works is cast in four movements. In *The Pines of Rome*, two faster movements frame two slower ones, all played without a pause. Like in *Festivals*, Respighi provided short verbal descriptions for each movement:

1. The Pines of the Villa Borghese

Children are at play in the pine groves of Villa Borghese; they dance round in circles, they play at soldiers, marching and fighting, they are wrought up by their own cries like swallows at evening, they come and go in swarms. Suddenly the scene changes, and...

2. Pines near a Catacomb

We see the shades of the pine trees fringing the entrance to a catacomb. From the depth rises the sound of mournful psalm-singing, floating through the air like a solemn hymn, and gradually and mysteriously dispersing.

**Continued...**

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3. The Pines of the Janiculum

A quiver runs through the air: the pine-tress of the Janiculum stands distinctly outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale is singing.

4. The Pines of the Appian Way

Misty dawn on the Appian Way: solitary pine-trees guarding the magic landscape; the muffled, ceaseless rhythm of unending footsteps. The poet has a fantastic vision of bygone glories: trumpets sound and, in the brilliance of the newly-risen sun, a consular army bursts forth towards the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.

Early in the first movement, we hear the popular Italian children’s song, *O quante belle figlie, Madama Dorè* (“What beautiful daughters [you have], Mrs. Dorè”), played by English horn, bassoon, French horn, and cellos. A second, equally playful theme appears a little later in the strings and woodwind. As the merriment continues, a shrill dissonant note on the trumpet cuts through the happy melody, which is, soon afterwards, suddenly interrupted by the dark music of the catacomb scene. The horns intone what sounds like imitation Gregorian chant. The tam-tam evokes a solemn church bell, and a distant trumpet plays a melody reminiscent of an old church hymn. The chant-like melody is taken over by more and more instruments, in a powerful crescendo followed by a decrescendo, with piano, harp, celesta, and, most unusually, the deep pedal notes of an organ, adding their special colors to the sound. Then the scene changes again.

*Continued...*

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We now find ourselves on the Gianicolo (Janiculum), one of the seven hills on which Rome was built. It is one of the quietest spots in the bustling city, with lots of trees and walking paths. After a romantic piano prelude, the first clarinet plays a lyrical melody “as if in a dream,” according to the score. At the end of this gentle idyll, we hear the song of a real nightingale—from a recording, precisely identified by Respighi in the score!

The last movement takes us to the Via Appia, an ancient Roman road, paved with stones, that once stretched for more than 300 miles, from Rome to what is now the city of Brindisi in the south, parts of which still survive. Respighi imagined an army of the Roman Republic marching there under the command of the consuls. We hear the soldiers getting closer and closer; the martial themes of the wind instruments are supported by an ominous drumbeat. At the height of the crescendo, the brass section is augmented by six flugelhorns, which are used in military bands more often than in orchestras. These instruments represent the *buccina*, an ancient instrument used to signal important events both in war and civil life. The inexorable march of the legions reaches a magnificent climax at the end.

