

**DUNEDIN
CONSORT**

**ČIČIĆ DIRECTS
VIVALDI**

Director & solo violin **Bojan Čičić**

Dunedin Consort

15 - 19 November

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DUNEDIN CONSORT

PROGRAMME

Antonio Vivaldi

Sinfonia à 4 in C major, RV 192a

Concerto for violin and strings in C major, RV 195

Concerto for two violins in A major, RV 519

Concerto for violin in A major, RV 341

interval

Sinfonia/Concerto for strings in F major, RV 140

Concerto in B flat major, 'L'elite des Concerto Italiens', RV 382

Concerto for 4 violins, viola and basso in F major, RV 567

Concerto for violin in A major 'per li Coglioni', RV 340

Bojan Čičić director & solo violin

Dunedin Consort



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

Programme Note

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) is a composer who has achieved rare fame through one collection of works above all—*The Four Seasons* are ubiquitous, whether in the concert hall or in other media. If a brand wants to illustrate the calibre of its product or a TV producer the mastery of their programme's subject, then an excerpt of *Spring* or *Winter* is never far away. Vivaldi, though, was astonishingly prolific and there is so much more of every conceivable genre of music including opera, sacred vocal music, concertos and sinfonias for a breathtaking range of instruments from bassoon to chalumeau. In this evening's programme, we take the same forces that we know so well from *The Four Seasons*—an elite string band of violins, viola, cello, double bass, and harpsichord—and showcase a host of lesser-known but equally astonishing works.

Vivaldi had the opportunity to compose such a range of music partly because of historical accident. He was born into a musical family in Venice and was taught the violin by his father who was himself a professional violinist. This early teaching, combined with his training for the priesthood, gave him the experience to take up the job that would underpin his musical activities for decades. In 1703, *Il Prete Rosso*—The Red Priest, a reference to his hair colour—became master of the violin at *Pio Ospedale della Pietà*, one of four orphanages paid for by the Venetian state. Although his relationship with the board of governors was not always straightforward, it was here that Vivaldi wrote a vast amount of his music. By 1718, he was under contract to produce two concertos a month for the *Ospedale* as part of his role as musical director.

Alongside this post, Vivaldi was also extremely busy with operas and other commissions and appointments. Again, the sheer volume of work produced by composers of that time is extraordinary to modern audiences. We might expect to get a concerto or an opera a year from a particularly prolific or in-demand composer now, whereas we have fifty of Vivaldi's operas and he claimed, in a letter of 1737, to have written 94.

At the height of his fame, Vivaldi was in demand across Italy in Rome, Milan, and Mantua—where he wrote *The Four Seasons*—and abroad. He received commissions from the French court and Emperor Charles VI in Vienna. The strength of the last connection was such that the Holy Roman Emperor knighted Vivaldi and invited him to Vienna. He took up this invitation in 1740 but Charles VI died soon after his arrival. Left without that patronage and financial support, Vivaldi was soon in financial difficulties and died in comparative poverty at the age of 63.

This somewhat diminished end should not encourage us to underestimate the influence that Vivaldi had on his contemporaries across Europe. His exceptional virtuosity as both violinist and composer drew musicians to him and to his music. In 1716, the young German violinist Johann Georg Pisendel visited Vivaldi in Venice. The resulting friendship and informal study led to Pisendel taking Vivaldi's music back with him to the court in Dresden. The archives there contain a lovely demonstration of that relationship with six violin concertos and five sonatas written out by Vivaldi himself and dedicated to 'Maestro Pisendel', several of which we hear this evening.

The French title of *L'elite des Concerto Italiens* is another indication of the spread of Vivaldi's music across Europe and its admiring title was given to the piece by its Parisian publisher in the 1740s. Crossing borders was not always so straightforwardly successful though, with differences in musical style and convention meaning that there was often some translation required. The final piece in our programme is perhaps the best example of this, coming again from the set from Vivaldi to Pisendel in Dresden.

In the manuscript of his A major violin concerto (RV 340), Vivaldi wrote out the figured bass—the shorthand numbers in bass parts that tell the players about the harmony they're supporting above them—almost comically large and annotated the piece '*per li coglioni*'. The story goes that Vivaldi was moved to do this after a German player complained that there was no figured bass in his part—he would have expected it to be there, because German music of the time was more harmonically complex than Italian music. As for a translation of '*per li coglioni*', it's hard to judge whether this title is a note of genuine frustration or cross-border banter but—slightly sanitised—it means something like 'for those idiots'.

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Biographies



Bojan Čičić

Croatian-born violinist Bojan Čičić has established himself as one of the leading names on the early music scene, as both a soloist and music director. In addition to being the leader of the Academy of Ancient Music, he directs ensembles including De Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and Phion Orkest van Gelderland & Overijssel. As a soloist he appeared with Kioi Hall Chamber Orchestra Tokyo, Orquesta Barocca de Sevilla and the Academy of Ancient Music.

Bojan formed his own group, Illyria Consort, which explores and specialises in lesser known repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries. Their debut Delphian Records album of Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli, *Sonate da camera* achieved great critical acclaim and won "Presto Recordings of the Year Award" in 2017.

Their collaboration with Marian Consort titled *Adriatic Voyage* won the same award in 2021. The same year saw the release of *Pyrotechnia* featuring Italian virtuoso violin concertos by Vivaldi, Tartini and Locatelli ("a thrilling musical discovery" - Classical Music Daily). In 2022, Illyria Consort released the first ever complete recording of Johann Jacob Walther, *Scherzi da violino solo* ("enviously spontaneous and carefree" – Gramophone), as well as an album of Christmas instrumental music titled *La Notte* ("One for every December!" - BBC Music Magazine).

This July saw the release of Bojan's much awaited solo disc Bach, *Sonatas and Partitas*.



Dunedin Consort

Dunedin Consort is one of the world's leading Baroque ensembles, recognised for its vivid and insightful performances and recordings. Formed in 1995 and named after Din Eidyn, the ancient Celtic name for Edinburgh Castle, Dunedin Consort's ambition is to allow listeners to hear early music afresh, and to couple an inquisitive approach to historical performance with a commitment to commissioning and performing new music. Under the direction of John Butt, the ensemble has earned two coveted Gramophone Awards, a BBC Music Magazine Award, and a Grammy nomination. In 2021 it was the recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Ensemble Award.

Dunedin Consort performs regularly at major festivals and venues across the UK and abroad, and enjoys close associations with the BBC Proms, Wigmore Hall, Edinburgh International Festival and Lammermuir Festival. Alongside its performance and recording work, Dunedin Consort is committed to a wide-ranging education programme both in schools and in the wider community. In inspiring and encouraging musical participation, developing vocal skills and fostering a love of classical music, historical performance and new music, Dunedin Consort aims to develop and nurture its potential audience and to encourage the performers of the future.

Dunedin Consort is an enthusiastic champion and commissioner of contemporary music, and in recent years has premiered a new set of orchestral dances at the BBC Proms, a new opera by Errollyn Wallen at the Barbican Centre, and new choral music for its a cappella consort. In 2024 it will premiere a new guitar concerto by Cassandra Miller for Sean Shibe, the first instalment of a 3-year co-commissioning series which will see further new music by David Fennessy and Tansy Davies.

DUNEDIN CONSORT

**Director &
solo violin**

Bojan Čičić

Harpichord

David Gerrard

Violin I

Sarah Bevan-Baker
Hilary Michael

Violin II

Huw Daniel
Alice Rickards

Viola

Beth Woodford

Cello

Andrew Skidmore

Double bass

Carina Cosgrave



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**DUNEDIN
CONSORT**

MESSIAH

19 - 21 December 7pm
Perth • Edinburgh • Glasgow

John Butt director
Anna Dennis soprano
Bethany Horak-Hallett mezzo-soprano
Anthony Gregory tenor
Matthew Brooke baritone

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