

toured Central and South America. The conductor himself made his American debut in 1953 (San Francisco) and took the SCO back to the U.S. the following year for a successful concert tour there. He would return with his ensemble in 1977, once more receiving generally favorable response from both critics and the public. By the mid-'50s, Münchinger had established a reputation as one of the finest Bach interpreters in Europe. His admirers will assert that he was instrumental in restoring Baroque traditions to Bach interpretation, filtering out errant Romantic elements that had crept in over the years. Also by this time, Münchinger and the SCO were receiving invitations from throughout Europe, Russia, and Japan, and appeared in these various locales over the next couple of decades, scoring particular triumphs at the yearly festivals in Edinburgh, Salzburg, Prague (Prague Spring), and Colmar. In the recording studio, Münchinger was scoring triumphs a well: in 1964, he led the SCO in a recording of Bach's St. Matthew Passion with soloists Peter Pears, Hermann Prey, and Elly Ameling for the Decca label, that was awarded a Grand Prix du Disque. He made numerous other notable recordings of choral works by Bach, as well as the Brandenburg Concertos; symphonies by Beethoven and Mozart; and even music by twentieth century Swiss composer Frank Martin. Münchinger founded the Klassiches Philharmonie Stuttgart in 1966, an offshoot ensemble of the SCO, expanding the membership to 45 musicians in order to accommodate performing larger compositions. Münchinger and the SCO continued a fairly heavy performance and recording schedule in the 1970s and '80s, with many tours abroad. In 1977, they became the first German ensemble to visit the People's Republic of China. Münchinger retired in 1988 and died two years later.

VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS



Karl Münchinger
Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra

The Four Seasons (Italian: *Le quattro stagioni*) is a group of four violin concertos by Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, each of which gives musical expression to a season of the year. These were composed around 1718–1720, when Vivaldi was the court chapel master in Mantua. They were published in 1725 in Amsterdam, together with eight additional concerti, as *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* (The Contest Between Harmony and Invention).

The Four Seasons is the best known of Vivaldi's works. Though three of the concerti are wholly original, the first, "Spring", borrows patterns from a *sinfonia* in the first act of Vivaldi's contemporaneous opera *Il Giustino*. The inspiration for the concertos is not the countryside around Mantua, as initially supposed, where Vivaldi was living at the time, since according to Karl Heller they could have been written as early as 1716–1717, while Vivaldi was engaged with the court of Mantua only in 1718.

They were a revolution in musical conception: in them Vivaldi represented flowing creeks, singing birds (of different species, each specifically characterized), a shepherd and his barking dog, buzzing flies, storms, drunken dancers, hunting parties from both the hunters' and the prey's point of view, frozen landscapes, and warm winter fires.

Unusual for the period, Vivaldi published the concerti with accompanying sonnets (possibly written by the composer himself) that elucidated what it was in the spirit of each season that his music was intended to evoke. The concerti therefore stand as one of the earliest and most detailed examples of what would come to be called program music—in other words, music with a narrative element. Vivaldi took great pains to relate his music to the texts of the poems, translating the poetic lines themselves directly into the music on the page. For example, in the middle section of "Spring", when the goatherd

sleeps, his barking dog can be heard in the viola section. The music is elsewhere similarly evocative of other natural sounds. Vivaldi divided each concerto into three movements (fast–slow–fast), and, likewise, each linked sonnet into three sections.

Karl Münchinger was one of those rare conductors whose careers are largely tied to their native city, in his case, Stuttgart. He was also closely identified with Bach, having conducted and recorded many of the Baroque master's compositions, generally with high critical praise. Münchinger also conducted much music from the Classical and Romantic periods and, to a lesser extent, from the twentieth century. The majority of his numerous recordings were made for the Decca label. Münchinger showed musical talent as a child and later began studies at the Hochschule für Musik in Stuttgart. He then studied conducting at the Leipzig Conservatory under Hermann Abendroth. After graduation, he returned to Stuttgart and freelanced as a conductor while primarily supporting himself as an organist and choir director. In 1941, he accepted the post of conductor of the Hanover Symphony Orchestra. This would be the only major appointment in his career outside of his native Stuttgart. He held no post from 1943 until the end of the war. In summer 1945, he founded the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, the ensemble he became identified with in much the way Karajan would be with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He quickly built the orchestra up from modest resources in the postwar era, so that by the late-'40s, they were making their first important tours abroad. Münchinger and the SCO debuted in Paris in 1949, representing the first German ensemble to appear there since the prewar era. That same year, they made successful tours of England and Spain. In 1952, they

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Violin, Soloist ~ Werner Krotzinger

1 The Spring, Op.8 No.1 11:05

2 The Summer, Op.8 No.2 11:00

3 The Autumn, Op.8 No.3 12:15

4 The Winter, Op.8 No.4 9:50

Released by Decca 1959

Engineer – Roy Wallace

Producer – James Walker



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