

## Vivaldi: Four Seasons, Concerti (Szeryng) [2011]

Written by bluesever

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1. *Spring, in E major, RV 269* 2. *Summer, in G minor, RV 315* 3. *Autumn, in F major RV 293* 4. *Winter, in F minor, RV 297* 5. *Concerto in A minor Op.3 No.6, RV 356* 6. *Concerto in D Major Op.3 No.9, RV 230* English Chamber Orchestra Henryk Szeryng – violin, conductor

Henryk Szeryng and the ECO are also well worth hearing. The recording flatters the orchestra with a richer string sound than the LPO, but their playing is rather more stolid and a little short on picturesque fantasy—the staccatos that introduce "Winter", for instance, are thoroughly neat and musical but have no feel whatever of the icy chill that the composer intended. The glory of this disc is Szeryng's superb playing—you will not hear a more immaculately beautiful violin tone anywhere, and the absolute security of intonation in his doublestopping puts everyone else to shame. As a fill-up he offers the sixth and ninth concertos from Vivaldi's Op. 3. ---  
Gramophone [10/1989]

Here we can enjoy Szeryng in a 1972 Queen Elizabeth Hall concert with the English Chamber Orchestra, which he also directs. The fare is not new to the discography. He recorded both the Four Seasons, and rather more durably the G major; his set of the complete concertos is still a most impressive achievement. Nevertheless it's still salutary to be reminded of his prowess in the early seventies at the helm of an assured and compliant band.

The Four Seasons is perhaps less satisfactory as a reading. It's quite slow, romantic in orientation once more, with plenty of legato phrasing and ritardandi and the like. The ECO's

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string tone is purposeful, powerful but tends somewhat toward the generic-baroque. It tends to be a little unrelieved. It's true that the slow movement of Autumn is projected with genuine depth of expression and is markedly expressive and that the opening of Winter is eloquently delineated. But against that it should be admitted that for all the noble restraint of Winter's slow movement things like Autumn's Allegro finale sound very jog-trotty. There are no decorations or embellishments, which is hardly reprehensible given the time and the player. But perhaps more problematic is the avoidance of colour and a sense of animated fantasy in the performance. For all the moments of finesse this is a rather clement Four Seasons. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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