



## UAPRESENTS STUDENT CRITIC PROGRAM

### Venice Baroque Orchestra: “The Seasons Project” Review

By Michael Weingartner

Great minds think alike, even when separated by oceans and centuries. Antonio Vivaldi and Philip Glass, fortunately, are no exception. Vivaldi, an Italian, composed his now infamous “The Four Seasons,” (which, if you watch movies, you’ve undoubtedly heard before) in 1725. Philip Glass, an American, responded to Vivaldi’s piece with his “American Four Seasons,” in 2009. The result is “The Seasons Project”, a musical conversation between two of history’s most ebullient composers as performed by the equally enthusiastic Venice Baroque Orchestra.

The program began with Vivaldi’s composition, at once epic poem and violin concerto. Broken down into four distinct yet echoing segments for spring, summer, autumn, and winter; the performance grew and changed with each movement, resonating with the audience. As the courtly melodies of spring sprang into the lightning and thunder of a summer storm, those in attendance sat upright, and as autumn’s winding melodies crept into winter’s cool symmetry, audience members buttoned up their jackets as the room seemed to grow colder.

Following was the response by Glass, where no simple breakdown exists. The segments are left untitled, and their performance just as curiously ambiguous. Just as one is made to feel the warmth of a lazy summer afternoon, a fiercely chilling violin solo arrives to keep the audience on its toes. The American reply to Vivaldi’s masterwork is a short piece of remarkable complexity and substance.

The performance is a conversation between two geniuses as moderated by a third. The solo violinist, Robert McDuffie, demonstrates spellbinding technical range. He is both the voice of Vivaldi and the witty retort of Glass, all the while adding his own enthusiasm and twists on the pieces. Having worked in conjunction with Philip Glass in the development of this project, it is easy to see McDuffie’s passion in the tapping of his toes and in his movement around the stage, reeling and delving physically into each solo he performs. No other musician could have given such a performance, bringing together two fantastically written melodies flawlessly into harmony.