

THE SEASONS

PARAPHRASES OF TCHAIKOVSKY

FOR STRING QUARTET

(2019)

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Introduction

The Seasons is a set of paraphrases of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's famous eponymous suite for piano. It consists of four movements and each represents a season characterized by its unique soundscape realized by the employment of certain instrument techniques. That is to say, the sounds and timbres and the atmosphere built by them become the theme of each movement, whereas the musical materials of Tchaikovsky are woven into the big picture primarily as symbolic and witty elements. A visual analog would be viewing multiple paintings with different prisms and lenses, which capture parts of each painting and present them through the unique distortion of that optical system. Tchaikovsky's materials are quoted in an order that is consistent with the typical climate of the temperate zones in the north hemisphere, as tabulated below:

Spring – March, April, May

Summer – June, July, August

Autumn – September, October, November

Winter – December, January, February

To echo the original work of Tchaikovsky, I also composed a poem for each movement in both Chinese and English.

Spring:

The breeze sweeps my face, flipping my sleepy eyes,	风拂面，撩睡眼，惊睹一枝绿艳。
Suddenly I see, a full branch of green colors.	

Summer:

The rain pounds the ground, wetting my shirt,	雨打地，湿衬衣，静赏万丈霹雳。
Silently I watch, a long stretch of lightning bolt.	

Autumn:

The sun sets on the field, plating the golden leaves,	日落野，镀金叶，独踏覆草石阶。
Solely I tramp, the stone steps covered by grass.	

Winter:

The snow swings in the heaven, irking the gods,	雪漫天，扰神仙，怒断冰封树尖。
Grumpily I break, the treetops sealed by ice.	

Performance note

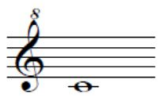








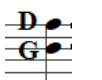




This work is written for a standard string quartet with standard tuning.




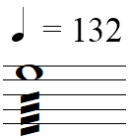



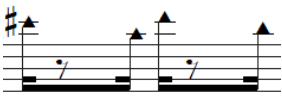


The performers may choose to start and end with any of the four movements while in between they should cycle through all four seasons in the correct order at least once. Each movement lasts *ca.* 3' and the duration of one full year is *ca.* 12'. The performance may continue for more than one year (not necessarily in the literal sense) but should stop before the performers or the audience are tired, obviously.

Notations

- Because the performers have the liberty of choosing which movement to start the cycle with, every movement starts with bar number 1.
- The score is written in bars of 4 crotchets, but it serves for reading convenience only. It does not bear any rhythmic meaning. Therefore, the time signature is omitted. At the usual location of time signatures appears the specification of string use, see below for detail
- Long notes are sometimes noted as a thick line with stems to avoid too many note heads and ties and to indicate the timing of the dynamic and technique changes, *e.g.* **Spring**, Vla, Bar 5.
- NO *vibrato* AT ALL TIMES.
- A solid arrow \longrightarrow represents a transition of fingering or bowing techniques, *e.g.* from *sul tast*o to *sul ponticello*, or from firm stop to light touch. The timing of the transition is indicated by the location and the length of the arrow with respect to the stems. Look for the technique difference at the beginning and the end of the arrow. In less obvious places, the transition techniques are elaborated, *e.g.* **Spring**, VI I, Bar 42.
- Special requirements and symbols used in very few incidences are explained by text on spot in the score.

Table of notations by categories

Category	Notation/Symbol	Explanation	Example
Clefs	In addition to the common clefs, octave-clefs are used to avoid excessive ledger lines. Please watch out for these clefs.		
		 one octave higher	Spring , VI I&II, Bar 1
		 two octaves higher	Winter , VI I, Bar 31
Accidentals	Common rules of accidentals apply. Some extra cautionary accidentals are used where inter-stave reference can be confusing.		
		a quarter tone flat	Winter , VI II, Bar 37
		a quarter tone sharp	Winter , VI II, Bar 37
Specified string use	Performers shall play the notes on the specified string(s) as noted in the stave until the symbol  appears, e.g. end of Spring . When string use is not specified, use common sense.		
		Play the notes on the G string from this point until marked changes.	Spring , Vla, Bar 4
		Letter at the beginning of a stave is a reminder of the continuing specified string use until marked changes.	Spring , VI I, Bar 1
		Play the chord on the named strings	Spring , Vc, Bar 7
Left hand technique	Many sections call for a playing technique similar to artificial harmonics, however the noted fingering, <i>i.e.</i> the combination of the firm stop and the light touch, does NOT necessarily produce a clean harmonic sound (impossible harmonics). Accept whatever sound it makes. The intention is to create a semi-random variation of accidental harmonics and string noise. Blow pressure is normal when employing special left hand techniques.		
	normal note heads	normal, firm stop on neck	
	black diamond 	medium finger pressure, half way down and not touching the fingerboard	Spring , VI I, Bar 46; Spring , VI II, Bar 47 Autumn , VI I, VI II&Vla, Bar 3-11
	white diamond 	light touch, as in playing harmonics	Spring , VI I, Bar 1
		use finger to mute the string immediately after the noted duration is fulfilled	Spring , Vla&Vc, Bar 5
Bowing technique	In this work, sp and st connote the extreme degree, as noted by <i>molto</i> or <i>extreme</i> seen in some other works. They also apply to the plucking position of pizzicato.		
	sp	<i>(molto) sul ponticello</i> , very close to the bridge	Spring , Vla, Bar 5
	st	<i>(molto) sul tasto</i> , further onto the finger board, almost next to the finger stop at high pitches	Spring , Vla, Bar 10
	cl	<i>col legno battuto</i>	Winter , Bar 1
	ord	back to ordinary position	Spring , VI I&II, Bar 6
	normal note heads	Normal bow pressure	
	solid square 	extremely heavy bow pressure, dry and rough sound	Winter , Bar 15-16

	empty square □	extremely light bow pressure, rubbing and hissing noise	Winter , VI I, Bar 38; Winter , VI II, Bar 41
Pizzicato	The plucking position is indicated by notations of ord, st and sp		
	pizz	normal pizzicato, use two fingers for fast notes	Spring , Vc, Bar 5
	♯	Bartók (snap) pizzicato	Autumn , Vc, Bar 12
	2-pizz	pluck two strings simultaneously	Spring , Vc, Bar 20
	+	left hand pizzicato	Spring , VI II, Bar 18
	nail pizz	strum with the back of the nail	Summer , Bar 98
<i>Tremolo</i>		<i>tremolo</i> with indicated alternating note and speed, this case for example, should be played as  The base note must be held all the way when the alternating note is a diamond.	Spring , VI I, Bar 1; Spring , VI II, Bar 3
		trill with the closest pitch possible, typically a quarter tone higher	Autumn , Vc, Bar 14; Autumn , VI II, Bar 21
		When the noted speed of the <i>tremolo</i> seems impossible, play as fast as possible.	Autumn , Vla, Bar 40
Miscellaneous		let ring/vibrate	Spring , Vla, Bar 9
	•	a short pause	Spring , Bar 6
		<i>portamento</i> . Notes on the <i>port.</i> line are required passing notes, empty stems are approximate pass notes.	Summer , Vla, Bar 21
		slide to a lower pitch at the end of the duration	Spring , Vla&Vc, Bar 43
		extremely high pitches, notations are approximate	Winter , VI I, Bar 31-32
		use right thumb nail to scratch string from stop to bridge	Winter , Vc, Bar 40, 44
		use right thumb to pluck the strings in the peg box to produce a very crispy sound. Each line of the stave represents a string.	Winter , Bar 33-35

Spring

The breeze sweeps my face, flipping my sleepy eyes,
Suddenly I see, a full branch of green colors.

Teneramente ♩=66

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

ord

tr

pp

mp

sp'ord

ord

tr

pp

mp

sp'ord

ord

pp

mp

ord

pp

mf

ord

pizz

mf

7

(tr)

4

pp

mp

mf

(tr)

pp

mp

ord

sp

ord pizz

sf

st arco

10

mp

10

tr

pp

mp

p

sp

11

(tr) *mf* *mp* *p* *mf*

(tr) *mf* *pp* *mf*

(tr) *mf* *f* *pp* *mf*

ord pizz *mf* arco *pp* *mf*

15

st pizz *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf* *ffp* *f*

ord arco *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff*

pizz *ff* sp arco *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff*

(tr) *ff* *mp* *ff* *mp* *ff* *mp* *ff*

(tr) *ff* *mf* *ff*

pizz *mf* sp arco *mf* *ff*

Agitato ♩=76

8va-----

25 (33)

p < *f* *mp* *p* < *f* *mp* *p* < *f* *mp* < *f*
ord *tr* *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f*
arco *tr* *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f*
mf < *mf* < *mf* < *mf* <

=

(8)-----

37 (39)

mp < *f* *mf* < *f* *mf* < *ff* *mf* < *ff*
ord *tr* *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f*
tr *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f* *tr* *f*
mf < *mf* < *mf* < *mf* <

trill rit.

A tempo (♩=66)

(tr) both fingers

42

fp *ff* *p* *pp*

fp *ff* *p*

ord → sp

mf *ff*

st → sp

fp *ff*

6

ord

47

mp *pp*

pp *mp*

6 3

mp *pp*

ord 6 3

mp *pp*

3

49

dim. *pp* *dim.*

3 3 3

sp

Summer

The rain pounds the ground, wetting my shirt,
Silently I watch, a long stretch of lightning bolt.

Animato ♩=132

I

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

f

11

pp

pp

pizz

pp

pizz

pp

18

pizz

mp

pizz

mp

f

arco

f

arco

f

pp

mf

3

3

25

arco

mf

ff

f

arco

mf

ffp

fp

poco a poco cresc.

pp

fp

poco a poco cresc.

30

f

f

f

34

quasi port

cresc.

ff

poco a poco cresc.

poco a poco cresc.

ff

38

ff

ff



44

p

p

p

p



49

mf

mf

mf

ff *mf*

53

f *ff* *ff* *ff*

56

mp *sf*

60

mp *sf* *mp*

66

mp *mf* *mf*

10
71

8

sf

3

3

2

f

f

75

8

sf

3

3

2

f

78

8

cresc.

ff

cresc.

ff

2

cresc.

ff

3

3

cresc.

ff

81

8

ff

sf

3

3

6

6

6

6

f

89

p

poco a poco cresc.

mf

cresc.

poco a poco cresc.

poco a poco cresc.

[illegible]

7

tr

pp

(tr)

pp

pp

tr

simile

tr

pp

8

tr

p

(tr)

pp

pp

tr

tr

pp

9

(tr)

p

(tr)

3

p

(tr)

p

tr

pp

tr

pp

tr

pp

[illegible][illegible]

17

non-strict rhythm, ad lib.

pp

p

mf

3 3 4



21

sp
trill to the closest pitch possible

p quasi gliss.

pp

p

3 3 3 3 3 3

2 2

simile



26

2 2 2

pp

p

32

E

2

G

A

D

pp

dim.

dim.

ppp



41

E

2

G

2

simile

pp

p

pp

mp

pp

mp

A

2

45

Measures 45-46 of a musical score. The score is written for four staves: E (treble), G (treble), A (treble), and A (bass). Measure 45 features a piano (pp) dynamic in the G staff, a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the A staff, and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the A staff. Measure 46 features a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the G staff and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the A staff. The score includes a repeat sign at the end of measure 46.

47

Measures 47-48 of a musical score. The score is written for four staves: E (treble), G (treble), A (treble), and A (bass). Measure 47 features a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the G staff and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the A staff. Measure 48 features a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the G staff and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the A staff. The score includes a repeat sign at the end of measure 48.

49

Measures 49-50 of a musical score. The score is written for four staves: E (treble), G (treble), A (treble), and A (bass). Measure 49 features a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the G staff and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the A staff. Measure 50 features a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the G staff and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the A staff. The score includes a repeat sign at the end of measure 50.

Winter

The snow swings in the heaven, irking the gods,
Grumpily I break, the treetops sealed by ice.

Semplicemente ♩=60

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

cl

ord cl

st

nail pizz

arco

p *jeté* *simile* *mp*

4

7

10

12

st arco

mf

- extremely heavy bow pressure

f

3

st arco

mf

- extremely heavy bow pressure

3

3

cl

mf

st arco

- extremely heavy bow pressure

3

st arco

- extremely heavy bow pressure

3

mf

- extremely heavy bow pressure

3

17

mf

3

mp

ord nail pizz

3

st arco

mp

f

3

mf

mp

f

3

mf

mp

23

sp cl

ff

p

sp cl

p

sp cl

pp

ord nail pizz

3

st arco

f

ff

p

mp

27

ord pizz

f

29

poco accel.

ord pizz

f

▲ - approx. highest pitch possible

ord pizz

f

ord

f sub.

32

Scherzando ♩=72

ca. 10" proportional notation

thumb pluck in peg box

thumb pluck in peg box

thumb pluck in peg box

□ - extremely light
bow pressure

21

36

ord pizz *pp* 5

arco *p* *f* 3

ppp *ff*

ord pizz *pp*

arco *p* *f*

pizz *pp* 5 5

arco *p* *f*

ord pizz *pp* 6

arco *p* *f* 3

pizz *pp*

arco *p* *f*

pizz *pp* 3 3

arco *f*

ppp *ff*

□ - extremely light
bow pressure

40

cl *p*

arco *p*

cl *p*

arco *p* □ - extremely light
bow pressure

cl *mf*

pizz *p*

arco

p

3 3

use thumb nail to scratch
string from stop to bridge

43

pizz *mf* 5 *p*

sp arco *f* *tr*

pizz *mf* 5 *p*

cl *f*

arco

pizz *p*

f

【ca. 12'】