

scottish  
ensemble



LIVE AT  
Nº40

# Sound Bites

18 & 19 July 2021

Scottish Opera Production Studios, Glasgow

## Programme

Charity and social enterprise Social Bite will create a delicious, themed picnic box inspired by the music for you to enjoy as Scottish Ensemble perform Vivaldi's iconic masterpiece The Four Seasons, in this live outdoor concert.



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It is with a sense of relief, trepidation, and excitement that we re-enter the world of sharing live music with audiences. After more than a year without it, I hope that we will all be reminded of the unique significance of coming together - as a community of listeners, in real time - and being moved in beautiful and mysterious ways.

Breaking bread with friends and family is another essential part of our social fabric which has been under strain. As a way of highlighting the return and importance of communal experiences, we wanted to combine live music with the sharing of food, so we are delighted that Social Bite accepted our invitation to create a delicious picnic menu. This amazing organisation is the largest UK provider of free, freshly made food to those in need, as well being a major employer of people who have experienced homelessness, and your presence today is contributing to help fund this vital work.

Outdoor performances come with a fair dose of meteorological unpredictability... The sheer variety of natural phenomena, and our responses to it, is the perennial theme that Antonio Vivaldi chose to explore nearly 300 years ago. I hope that the power of the music, the exposure to the weather, and the sharing of food will connect us to each other, and to the natural world.

**Jonathan Morton**  
Artistic Director of Scottish Ensemble



This feels like a significant moment, as we begin to gather with loved ones and share in something special through this performance. Throughout the past year, we have all suffered and struggled with the on-going uncertainty and insecurity. At Social Bite, we have had the privilege to stand alongside some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and support them through the provision of food, shelter, and community. During the pandemic, thanks to the generosity of people across the country, we distributed over 800,000 food packs and essential items to those who needed it most.

Despite the devastation of the past year, we are more hopeful than ever that change is possible; we have witnessed people coming together in ways previously unheard-of, and we have seen councils, governments, and key decision makers move at a pace never seen before.

Sharing food together will always be at the heart of who we are as Social Bite, so we were delighted when we were invited to provide something special for this performance. When we started Social Bite we were determined to make a positive change, and over the years we have learned that for this to happen we need to invite everyone to join us in any way they can; so whether you bought a ticket, ordered a picnic, or are enjoying a tippie from our coffee cart, thank you!

If you would like to find out more about our work or how you could get involved, you can email [josh.littlejohn@social-bite.co.uk](mailto:josh.littlejohn@social-bite.co.uk)

**Josh Littlejohn MBE**  
Founder of Social Bite

## Programme

Vivaldi  
*The Four Seasons*

William Grant Still  
*Summerland*

## Notes on the music

It's almost 300 years since Vivaldi's evocative musical interpretation of nature's seasons was introduced to the world and it's quite astonishing to think how a piece of music – or any piece of art, for that matter – can endure for so long; that something published in 1725 can be just as relevant, powerful and thrilling today; that the same thunderous summer storm and glittering winter wind would still be enthralling people, centuries later.

Of all the classical works that have pierced the mainstream consciousness, *The Four Seasons* is one of the most intriguing. Its most famous motifs have become so ingrained in our collective mind that they've become a kind of cultural parody, a ubiquitous reference threaded through our lives in various disguises – garish and distorted through the phone as you wait on hold; in faint, memory-like fragments as you wait in a lift; sudden, stark and unapologetic in an advert, film, TV programme or computer game.

But, rather than hauling itself up through another cultural reference (unlike Puccini's *Nessun Dorma*, say, or Tony Britten's adaptation of Handel's *Zadok The Priest*, now forever attached to football) Vivaldi's eternally-hummable masterpiece seems to have secured such a hallowed place in part due to its intrinsic ability to please – like, in many ways, a contemporary pop song.

The singable melodies; those neat harmonic resolutions; the repeated blocks that pull our focus back, again and again. The irresistible 4/4 propulsion of the bass; the intense slabs of sound as musicians join as one; and, perhaps most pleasingly, those passages of fizzing, creeping tension, building and building

towards a thunderous, euphoric release of pressure... The same techniques are used by today's pop producers to light up our cerebral pleasure centres.

The two genres are even united in their perceived flaws; across the 20th century, the snub of “sewing machine music” caught on amongst critics of Baroque music as a way of coining the motoric, mechanical chug that, in their ears, drove the distinctive music of this era. Repetitive, mindless, thoughtlessly churned out... fast-forward a century and the same complaint is levelled, by some, at the latest releases on Radio 1.

One of the other most striking features of the work is the fact that it attempts to represent our visual, almost tangible, experience of nature through music – a ground-breaking idea, in the early 1700s. Vivaldi's score was accompanied by a series of poems, providing a narrative which provides clues to the many evocative musical allusions. Rather than pointing them out in dry musical terms, we'll leave you with the far more satisfying task of discovering them for yourself...

You'll notice, in the space after Vivaldi's heady *Summer*, a contrasting interlude. Written in 1935 by one of the most important African-American composers of the 20th century, *Summerland* is an orchestral arrangement of a piece from William Grant Still's *Three Visions* suite for solo piano, which tells the story of the human soul after death. Through its woozy, wistful evocation of a heat-stilled summer's afternoon, *Summerland* offers a serene, blissed-out depiction of the ultimate comfort: the promise of an afterlife.

Programme note by Rosie Davies

**Spring**

Allegro  
Springtime is upon us.  
The birds celebrate her return with festive song,  
and murmuring streams are softly caressed by the breezes.  
Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar,  
casting their dark mantle over heaven,  
Then they die away to silence,  
and the birds take up their charming songs once more.

Largo  
On the flower-strewn meadow, with leafy branches  
rustling overhead, the goat-herd sleeps,  
his faithful dog beside him.

Allegro  
Led by the festive sound of rustic bagpipes,  
nymphs and shepherds lightly dance  
beneath the brilliant canopy of spring.

**Summer**

Allegro non molto  
Under a hard Season, fired up by the Sun  
Languishes man, languishes the flock and burns the  
pine  
We hear the cuckoo's voice;  
then sweet songs of the turtledove and finch are  
heard.  
Soft breezes stir the air, but threatening  
the North Wind sweeps them suddenly aside.  
The shepherd trembles,  
fearing violent storms and his fate.

Adagio e piano - Presto e forte  
The fear of lightning and fierce thunder  
Robs his tired limbs of rest  
As gnats and flies buzz furiously around.

Presto  
Alas, his fears were justified  
The Heavens thunders and roar and with hail  
Cuts the head off the wheat and damages the grain.

**Autumn**

Allegro  
Celebrates the peasant, with songs and dances,  
The pleasure of a bountiful harvest.

And fired up by Bacchus' liquor,  
many end their revelry in sleep.

Adagio molto  
Everyone is made to forget their cares and to sing  
and dance  
By the air which is tempered with pleasure  
And (by) the season that invites so many, many  
Out of their sweetest slumber to fine enjoyment.

Allegro  
The hunters emerge at the new dawn,  
And with horns and dogs and guns depart upon  
their hunting  
The beast flees and they follow its trail;  
Terrified and tired of the great noise  
Of guns and dogs, the beast, wounded, threatens  
Languidly to flee, but harried, dies.

**Winter**

Allegro non molto  
To tremble from cold in the icy snow,  
In the harsh breath of a horrid wind;  
To run, stamping one's feet every moment,  
Our teeth chattering in the extreme cold.

Largo  
Before the fire to pass peaceful,  
Contented days while the rain outside pours down.

Allegro  
We tread the icy path slowly and cautiously,  
for fear of tripping and falling.  
Then turn abruptly, slip, crash on the ground and,  
rising, hasten on across the ice lest it cracks up.  
We feel the chill north winds course through the  
home  
despite the locked and bolted doors...  
This is winter, which nonetheless  
brings its own delights.

**Scottish Ensemble**

Scottish Ensemble is a pioneering string orchestra based in Glasgow and regularly performing across Scotland, the UK and the globe. A constellation of exceptional musicians led by Artistic Director Jonathan Morton, SE champions music for strings, promoting the rich diversity of the string repertoire, exploring adventurous ways through which it can be presented and shared, and seeking out thoughtful ways of connecting it to contemporary life.

SE is a bold advocate for progress in the classical sector, and in 2020 received the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society's Ensemble award in recognition of 'sheer quality and innovation'.

Whether through imaginative concert programmes and work with soloists (including violinists Nicola Benedetti, Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Pekka Kuusisto, pianist Gabriela Montero, trumpeter Alison Balsom, percussionist Colin Currie, bassist Edgar Meyer, and many more) or cross-artform collaborations (with the likes of Swedish contemporary dance company Andersson Dance, composer/producer Anna Meredith, theatre companies Vanishing Point and Untitled Projects and visual artist Toby Paterson), SE presents well-known pieces alongside newly commissioned or more rarely performed works with the aim of introducing audiences to inspiring music which may challenge, surprise or inspire them, focusing on compelling musical story-telling and visually-striking production.

This ethos of connecting music with contemporary life is extended through SE's year-round programme of creative learning and community activities, which incorporates collaborations with schools, charities and healthcare organisations to share the well-being benefits of engaging with live music amongst a diverse audience.

**Social Bite**

Social Bite began as a sandwich shop on Rose Street in Edinburgh in 2012 and has grown to become a key player in ending homelessness in Scotland and beyond. Every day the charity welcomes people experiencing homelessness to their cafes for free-food, and over the years has also received visits from Hollywood superstars Leonardo DiCaprio and George Clooney.

Social Bite is one of the largest distributors of free fresh food to homeless people in the UK, annually providing over 140,000 items of food and hot drinks. In response to the recent pandemic, more than 800,000 emergency food packs and essential items were distributed.

At the heart of the organisation remains a passion for empowering people to transform their own lives, with one in three of Social Bite's staff coming from a background of homelessness.

Social Bite's 2017 and 2018 Sleep in Park events in Scotland raised almost £8m and saw more than 18,000 people sleeping out. The funds raised saw The Social Bite Village become a reality in May 2018. The charity also launched a nationwide program to bring 830 rough sleepers off the streets into their own accommodation, with over 500 people now in homes of their own with tailored support.

This year Social Bite plans to replicate its Social Bite Village project in two new cities, targeting Glasgow and London. Find out more: [www.social-bite.co.uk](http://www.social-bite.co.uk).

The Social Bite Fund (SC045232) is a registered charity in Scotland which remains committed to alleviating homelessness and poverty through pioneering projects.

## Performers

### Leader/Violin

Jonathan Morton

### Violin

Cheryl Crockett  
Daniel Pioro  
Emily Davis  
Tristan Gurney  
Joanne Green  
Laura Ghio

### Viola

Jane Atkins  
Andrew Berridge

### Cello

Alison Lawrance  
Naomi Pavri

### Double Bass

Diane Clark

### Harpsichord

Jan Waterfield

### Sound Engineer

Douglas Martin

With thanks to Director and Designer Sir David McVicar for permission to present *The Four Seasons* on the set of *Falstaff*. Thanks also to the team at Scottish Opera for their support on Live at No.40 and to the Citizens Theatre for providing seating and Front of House staff.

## Scottish Ensemble

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### Jenny Jamison

Chief Executive (on maternity leave)

### William Norris

Chief Executive (maternity cover)

### Catherine Ferrell

General Manager

### Stuart Burns

Producer

### Alison Lewis

Marketing & Communications Manager

### Duncan Sutherland

Creative Learning & Projects Manager



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