PROGRAM

Violin Concerto No. 1 in A Minor, BWV 1041
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Featuring Lara St. John, violin

I Allegro moderato
II Andante
III Allegro assai

The Four Seasons
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
Featuring Lara St. John, violin

Concerto No. 1 in E major, Op. 8, RV 269, "Spring" (La primavera)

I. Allegro (in E major)
II. Largo e pianissimo sempre (in C minor)
III. Allegro pastorale (in E major)

Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 8, RV 315, "Summer" (L'estate)

I. Allegro non molto (in G minor)
II. Adagio e piano – Presto e forte (in G minor)
III. Presto (in G minor)

Concerto No. 3 in F major, Op. 8, RV 293, "Autumn" (L'autunno)

I. Allegro (in F major)
II. Adagio molto (in D minor)
III. Allegro (in F major)

Concerto No. 4 in F minor, Op. 8, RV 297, "Winter" (L'inverno)

I. Allegro non molto (in F minor)
II. Largo (in Eb major)
III. Allegro (in F minor)
Materworks II

Celebrated violinist Lara St. John (see bio below) joins South Florida Symphony to bring you two of the most beloved works from revered Baroque composers Vivaldi and Bach. St. John’s raw passion and imagination return to the South Florida stage with these two signature works from her repertoire. Critics rave about her explosive performances, including the LA Times, which exclaimed that “Lara St. John happens to be a volcanic violinist with a huge, fabulous tone that pours out of her like molten lava.”
Violin Concerto No. 1 in A Minor, BWV 1041

Johann Sebastian Bach

Considered by many musical scholars to be the greatest Baroque composer, Bach was born in Eisenach, in the Duchy of Saxe-Eisenach, today part of Germany. Between his birth and death in Leipzig, 65 years later, he held many musical posts, all in the land of his birth.

So many myths have become attached to his name that a synopsis of known facts is called for. Blame for the most preposterous fiction falls on Peter Schichele, a gifted musical humorist. In 1965 he invented the youngest son of J.S. Bach. -- P.D.Q. (which stands for "Pretty Damned Quick") Bach -- who lived from 1807-1742? Now for some truths.

For generations, the Bach family had been both musical and prolific. Johann Sebastian was the youngest of eight siblings and, by far, the most gifted. He was only ten when, within a period of eight months, both parents were dead. From then on, he was raised by an elder brother. He married twice. At 22 he tied the knot with Maria Barbara. Twelve years and seven children later she expired, leaving Johann to care for the four surviving offspring.

Nineteen months after Maria's death the composer married Anna Magdalena. She was 16 years his junior and destined to outlive her husband by a decade. Of their 13 children, six survived infancy. So, here's the skinny. Bach had 20 children of whom ten became adults. The eldest, Catherina, was already 34 when Regina, the youngest, was born.

In 1721, Bach had been Director of Music for the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Kothen for four years. As a Calvinist, though musical himself, the prince expected Johan Sebastian to compose secular, rather than ecclesiastical, music.

Scholars share little agreement with one another regarding when, where and why the composer wrote his first violin concerto. Traditionally, it dates between 1717 and 1723. That is either shortly before or shortly after his appointment as Prince Leopold's director of music in Kothen.

Unfortunately, the original manuscript has disappeared though various parts copied out survive from about 1730. In other words, Bach may have composed the work soon after he assumed the post of Director of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum, in 1729.

The concerto, written for violin, strings and continuo, is in three movements starting with a ritornello which implies that the main theme keeps recurring in fragments. The andante second movement is in C major and is characterized by a constantly repeated base part ostinato. The lively final movement, in the form of a gigue, returns to the original key of A minor.

The exquisite Violin Concerto in A Minor is featured on St. John's first album by her own Ancalagon Records, which spent weeks at #1 on iTunes Classical, and nearly a year in the top 20.
Antonio Vivaldi's beloved *The Four Seasons* concludes today's concert of Baroque music.

Vivaldi was born in Venice, Italy, seven years earlier than Bach's birth in Eisenach and he died nine years before the German. To all intents and purposes, they were contemporaries. Both were prolific composers and gifted performers, Bach on the keyboard and Vivaldi as a fiddler. In their personal lives they were very unalike. Vivaldi was frail all his life. Indeed, he may almost have died at birth as he was immediately baptized and promised to God should he survive. Consequently, he started studying for the priesthood at 15 and took holy orders at 25. From then on, he was known as "The Red Priest" on account of his carrot top. His father, an erstwhile barber, taught his gifted son to play the violin.

The same year as his ordination, Vivaldi began his long association with a Venetian orphanage where he composed and taught music to the girls. While Bach had two wives and twenty children, Vivaldi said the rosary.

Though much of Vivaldi's music is sacred, he wrote innumerable violin concertos and some 50 operas. An early opera, Arsilda, Regina di Ponto, ran afoul of the moral authorities when first staged because Arsilda, the heroine, falls in love with Lisea, another woman! Once the modification of Lisea disguised as a man was added, the opera enjoyed a long successful run.

The following year, Vivaldi travelled to Mantua as music maestro to the Governor and soon after he was peripatetic, travelling around Italy and staging operas in Milan and Rome where he performed before pope Benedict XIII. It was during this period that he composed his best-known series of concertos known as *The Four Seasons*. Written about 1716-1717, they were first published in Amsterdam in 1725. Among his hundreds of violin concertos, they stand alone for their programmatic content. *Il Giustino*, a recently composed opera, contains a "sinfonia" in the first act which was recycled, by Vivaldi, for the first, or Spring, concerto. The "Summer," "Autumn" and "Winter" concertos are completely original.

St. John and SFSO bring this lyrical masterpiece to life -- from the chirping birds and gentle breezes of spring; to buzzing insects and summer thunderstorms; from fleeing foxes in autumn; to teeth chattering and listening to rain by a cozy winter fire.
Canadian-born violinist St. John has been described as "something of a phenomenon" by The Strad and a "high-powered soloist" by The New York Times.

She has performed as soloist with the orchestras of Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, the Boston Pops, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, NDR Symphony, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Strasbourg Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, Camerata Ireland, Belgrade Symphony, Amsterdam Symphony, and the Akbank Chamber Orchestra in Turkey, among others.

St. John has also performed with the Queensland Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony, ACO², Auckland Philharmonia, Tokyo Symphony, Kyoto Symphony, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, China Philharmonic, Hangzhou Symphony and the Shanghai Symphony.
She has traveled to Latin America for appearances with the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, the Sao Paulo Symphony, Rio de Janeiro’s Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira, Orquesta Filarmónica de Minas Gerais, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional del Ecuador, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, the SODRE in Montevideo and the Sociedad Filarmónica de Lima in Peru.

Recitals in major concert halls have included New York, Boston, San Francisco, Ravinia, Wolf Trap, Washington DC, Prague, Berlin, Toronto, Montreal, Bogotá, Lima, and in the Forbidden City.

The Los Angeles Times wrote "Lara St. John happens to be a volcanic violinist with a huge, fabulous tone that pours out of her like molten lava. She has technique to burn and plays at a constant high heat."

Lara owns and runs her own label, Ancalagon, which she founded in 1999. Bach: The Six Sonatas & Partitas for Violin Solo was the best-selling double album on iTunes in 2007. Her 2008 world premiere recording of Matthew Hindson's Violin Concerto prompted Gramophone to write: "It's the sort of work that should get audiences running, not walking, back to concert halls on new-music nights."
In 2009, American Record Guide said of her Vivaldi/Plazzolla disc with the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela: “I can imagine no suaver, more atmospheric performance.” Her Mozart recording won a Juno Award in 2011.

In 2014, her Schubert album with Berlin Philharmonic harpist Marie-Pierre Langlamet, cellist Ludwig Quandt and soprano Anna Prohaska was chosen as one of 'The Best CDs of Spring' by Der Tagespiegel and MDR Figaro recommended it for its “boundless enchantment.”

Her 2016 release of re-imagined folk music with pianist Matt Herskowitz got a five-star review from All About Jazz: “Music like this is beyond imagination and talent. It exists only in the loosely-held molecules found on the razor’s edge of Creation.”

She has been featured in People, US News and World Report, on CNN’s Showbiz Today, NPR’s All Things Considered, CBC, BBC, Bravo! Special: Live at the Rehearsal Hall and on the cover of Strings.
Lara began playing the violin when she was two years old. She made her first appearance as soloist with orchestra at age four, and her European debut with the Gulbenkian Orchestra when she was ten. She toured Spain, France, Portugal and Hungary at ages 12 and 13 and entered the Curtis Institute at 13. Her teachers have included Felix Galimir and Joey Corpus.

She performs on the 1779 “Salabue” Guadagnini thanks to an anonymous donor.