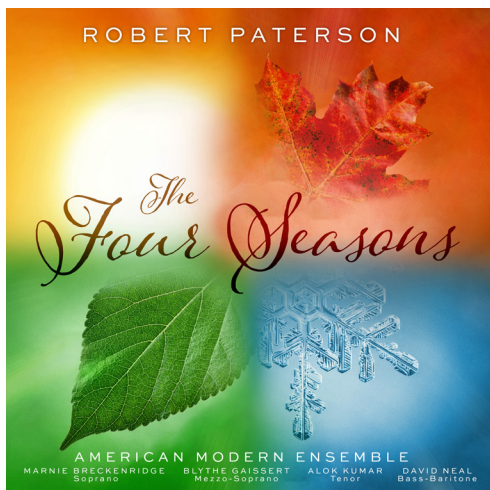


UN – FINISHED SIDE

MARCH 19, 2021
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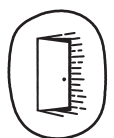
Composer Robert Paterson celebrates his 50th birthday (a year late) with *The Four Seasons* – out April 29

The recording is the culmination of a 20-year-long project, comprised of four song cycles with 21 songs for voice and chamber ensemble.



Called a “modern day master” by the *New York Times*, [Robert Paterson](#) celebrates his birthday with the release of [The Four Seasons](#). The album, originally scheduled for release in spring 2020 along with a Carnegie Hall performance, will be available on **April 29** on [American Modern Recordings](#).

The world premiere recording consists of four song-cycles (21 songs), written over the last 20 years, for four voice types (each representing a different season). The four critically-acclaimed singers on this album, soprano, **Marnie Breckenridge**, mezzo-soprano, **Blythe Gaisert**, tenor **Alok Kumar**, and bass-baritone **David Neal** have worked closely with Paterson, and gave the world premieres of these works with **American Modern Ensemble** at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, and The DiMenna Center. Paterson’s ability to set text has been widely praised, with *Gramophone* stating that he “could probably set a telephone book to music and create something that captivates.” In *The Four Seasons* the



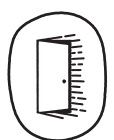
composer has set the poems of Ann Stanford, Sharan Strange, Wallace Stevens, Dorothea Tanning, to name a few.

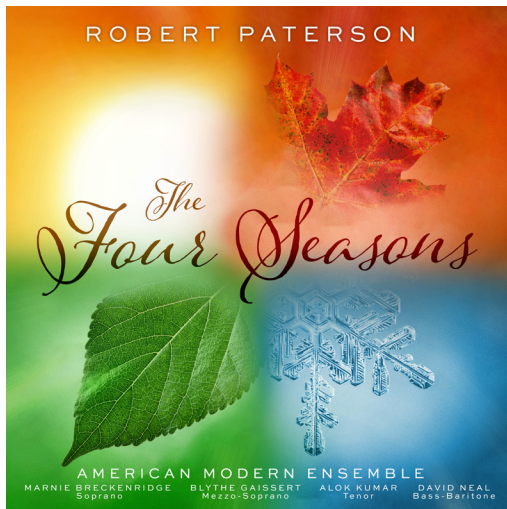
In 2014, the six *Winter Songs* were released as part of a broader collection. The *New York Times* described the song-cycle as a “beautiful, witty and sometimes utterly desolate collection of vocal works,” and *Audiophile Audition’s* Steven Ritter proclaimed “few cycles I have heard describe the season in all its vicissitudes as deeply.”

Robert Paterson’s work has been performed by major American orchestras, named to many top-ten lists including NPR and *Opera News*, and earned him Composer of the Year honors from the Classical Recording Foundation. Paterson describes the culmination of the *Four Seasons* project:

“Having all four seasons on one album has been a dream of mine for the past 20 years, and it feels cathartic—like climbing a huge mountain and finally reaching the top.”

The Four Seasons was produced by Grammy-winning producer and engineer Adam Abeshouse, and recorded at The DiMenna Center for Classical Music’s Mary Flagler Cary Hall (Summer Songs and Autumn Songs), the American Academy of Arts and Letters (Winter Songs), and in the Ladd Concert Hall Skidmore College’s Arthur Zankel Music Center (Spring Songs).





Robert Paterson
THE FOUR SEASONS

Release Date: April 24, 2020

[American Modern Recordings](#)

American Modern Ensemble
 Marnie Breckenridge, soprano
 Blythe Gaissert, mezzo-soprano
 Alok Kumar, tenor
 David Neal, bass-baritone



TRACKS

DISC 1

SUMMER SONGS

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. <i>I. Summer Music</i> (May Sarton) | [3:58] |
| 2. <i>II. The Kite</i> (Anne Sexton) | [4:56] |
| 3. <i>III. Childhood</i> (Sharon Strange) | [4:44] |
| 4. <i>IV. Moths</i> (Jennifer O'Grady) | [4:39] |
| 5. <i>V. Summer Night, Riverside</i> (Sara Teasdale) | [5:19] |

AUTUMN SONGS

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 6. <i>I. Ascension: Autumn Dusk in Central Park</i> (Evelyn Scott) | [4:16] |
| 7. <i>II. Under the Harvest Moon</i> (Carl Sandburg) | [3:25] |
| 8. <i>III. All Hallows' Eve</i> (Dorothea Tanning) | [2:10] |
| 9. <i>IV. November for Beginners</i> (Rita Dove) | [4:45] |
| 10. <i>V. Leaves Before The Wind</i> (May Sarton) | [4:33] |

DISC 2

WINTER SONGS

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. <i>I. Icicles filled the long window</i> (Wallace Stevens) | [2:37] |
| 2. <i>II. Dark Day, Warm and Windy</i> (A. R. Ammons) | [3:22] |
| 3. <i>III. The Snow Man</i> (Wallace Stevens) | [4:11] |
| 4. <i>IV. Boy at the Window</i> (Richard Wilbur) | [4:07] |
| 5. <i>V. Old Story</i> (Robert Creeley) | [2:56] |
| 6. <i>VI. Neither Snow</i> (Billy Collins) | [3:28] |

SPRING SONGS

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 7. <i>I. English Sparrows (Washington Square)</i> (Edna St. Vincent Millay) | [3:32] |
| 8. <i>II. April 5, 1974</i> (Richard Wilbur) | [3:24] |
| 9. <i>III. Done With</i> (Ann Stanford) | [5:20] |
| 10. <i>IV. The Widow's Lament in Springtime</i> (William Carlos Williams) | [4:54] |
| 11. <i>V. Spring Rain</i> (Sara Teasdale) | [3:30] |



ROBERT PATERSON

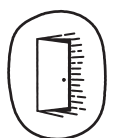


A 'modern day master' and often the 'highlight of the program' (*New York Times*), Robert Paterson's music is loved for its elegance, wit, structural integrity, and a wonderful sense of color. Paterson was named The Composer of The Year from the Classical Recording Foundation with a performance at Carnegie's Weill Hall in 2011. His music has been on the Grammy ballot yearly, and his works were named 'Best Music By a Living Composer' on National Public Radio. His works have been played by the Louisville Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Austin Symphony, Vermont Symphony, BargeMusic, the Albany Symphony Dogs of Desire,

among others. Paterson's choral works were recorded by Musica Sacra and maestro Kent Tritle, with a world premiere performance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City in 2015.

The Nashville Opera world premiere of *THREE WAY* in 2017, and then took the production to BAM in Brooklyn later that year. The New York premiere of his opera, *The Whole Truth* with a libretto by Mark Campbell, sold out in January 2016, at Dixon Place in New York City. Other premieres & commissions include *Shine* for the American Brass Quintet, *Moon Music* for the Claremont Trio, and *Graffiti Canons* for the Volti Choir of San Francisco. Notable awards include winner of the Utah Arts Festival, the Copland Award, ASCAP Young Composer Awards, a Music Alive! grant from the League of American Orchestras and New Music USA, and yearly ASCAP awards. Fellowships include Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and the Aspen Music Festival.

Paterson holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music (BM), Indiana University (MM), and Cornell University (DMA). Paterson gives master classes at colleges and universities, most recently at the Curtis Institute of Music, New York University, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. Paterson is the Artistic Director of Mostly Modern Projects and resides in NYC with his wife Victoria, and their son, Dylan.



AMERICAN MODERN ENSEMBLE



Co-Founders, Victoria & Robert Paterson

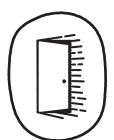
American Modern Ensemble (AME) spotlights contemporary music via lively thematic programming. AME performs a wide repertoire, using a varied combination of instrumentalists, vocalists, and conductors, and the ensemble often

highlights AME's house

composer and co-founder, Robert Paterson. Since its inception, AME has performed over 250 works by living composers, and has received critical success in the *New York Times*, *Time Out*, the *New Yorker*, among others. Sold out crowds at BAM, Merkin Hall, Lincoln Center, the Rubin Museum, and National Sawdust are a winning testament to AME's 16 year-track record as to what is 'right' about classical music today.

AME includes on-stage chats with composers and the creative team, allowing audience members to learn even more about the creative process. AME provides a welcoming environment for audience, creators and performers. Over 95% of the composers we program participate and attend our shows, including luminaries such as John Luther Adams, John Corigliano, David Del Tredici, Aaron Jay Kernis, Libby Larsen, Steven Mackey, Paul Moravec, Joan Tower, Chen Yi, and countless others. AME also enthusiastically performs works by America's most talented, emerging and mid-career composers.

AME produces stellar recordings via its house label, American Modern Recordings (AMR), which has received fantastic reviews in *Gramophone*, the *LA Music Examiner*, the *New York*



Times, *Sequenza21*, and *New Music Box*, and all albums have made it to the Grammy Ballot in past seasons.

AME's summer home is now at the Mostly Modern Festival, located in Saratoga Springs, New York. This festival celebrates the music of our time. It is educational, with robust outreach initiatives. Other residencies include Princeton University, James Madison University, Keene State College, the CUNY Graduate Center, Adelphi, Rutgers, and many more. AME is deeply invested in collaboration. Some examples are On Site Opera, Sing for Hope, Cutting Edge New Music Festival, American Opera Projects, and the Dance Theater of Harlem.

* * *

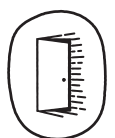
MARNIE BRECKENRIDGE / SOPRANO

American soprano Marnie Breckenridge is captivating international audiences with passionate portrayals of roles ranging from the Baroque and Bel Canto to contemporary opera, concerts and recordings. A favorite of living composers, she has solidly established herself as a go-to performer of critically acclaimed new works praising her, “bell-like ring



over an enormous range and personality spilling from every note” (*Globe and Mail*), “lovely soprano” voice (*New York Times*), and “lyrical poignancy and dramatic power” (*Chicago Tribune*). Recent favorite roles include, Jacqueline Du Pré in *Jacqueline* created for her and Matt Haimovitz by Luna Pearl Woolf, Mother in *Little’s Dog Days* (LA & Ft. Worth Opera, Prototype Festival, Montclair Peak Performances and voted best opera in 2012 by *Time Out*), Sierva Maria in Peter Eötvös’ *Love and Other Demons* (Glyndebourne Festival

Opera), Emily in Ned Rorem’s *Our Town*, Margarita Xirgu in Golijov’s *Ainadamar*, La Princesse in Glass’ *Orphée*, Beck Strand in Kaminsky’s *Today It Rains* (Opera Parallèle), Ruth Madoff in Woolf’s *The Pillar* (Julian Wachner and Washington Chorus), and Cunegonde in *Candide* (English National Opera and Prague State Opera), deemed “simply terrific” (*Opera Magazine*) and “note perfect” (*Prague Post*). Breckenridge is a featured soloist on the 2012 New World Records’ album of Victor Herbert songs, and can be heard on Dimitri Hvorostovsky’s *Heroes and Villians*, and countless other recordings by American composers. She trained at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in voice (MM) and at The American Conservatory Theatre in drama.



BLYTHE GAISSERT / MEZZO-SOPRANO



American Mezzo-soprano Blythe Gaissert has established herself as one of the preeminent interpreters of some of the brightest stars of new classical music. A true singing actress, she has received critical acclaim for her interpretations of both new and traditional repertoire in opera, concert, and chamber repertoire. “Gaissert gave a dramatically powerful, vocally stunning portrait of a woman growing increasingly desperate and delusional from lack of contact with the outer world.

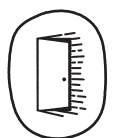
Gaissert’s development of Loats’s personality was utterly believable, and she gave a virtuoso performance of this very challenging music” (Arlo McKinnon, *Opera News for The Echo Drift*). Known for her warm tone, powerful stage presence, and impeccable musicianship and technical prowess: “Mezzo-soprano Blythe Gaissert was impossible to ignore as the headstrong Mother Marie. She has a pure, powerful and appealing voice and a forceful stage presence to match.” (*Denver Post*).

ALOK KUMAR / TENOR



Alok Kumar’s successful debut with The Metropolitan Opera in Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West* has led to return invitations including opening the company’s 2020-21 season in its production of *Aida* to be broadcast in HD. He also returned to the London Philharmonic Orchestra to reprise his world premier portrayal of the principal tenor role in Ravi Shankar’s opera *Sukanya*. Other appearances include those with the Los Angeles Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Florida Grand Opera and Michigan Opera Theatre, at the Domaine

Forget, Sanibel and Spoleto festivals, with the Boston and Cincinnati Pops Orchestras and at Boston Symphony Hall, Carnegie Hall, Hong Kong City Hall and Walt Disney Concert Hall. Mr. Kumar’s most frequent and recently performed operatic roles include Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), Don José (*Carmen*), Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), The Italian Singer (*Die Rosenkavalier*), Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*) and il Duca (*Rigoletto*). Concert appearances include works by Beethoven, Dvořák, Mahler, Rossini and Verdi. A proponent of new music, he recently collaborated with composers Ricky Ian Gordon and Frederic Chaslin on commissions by The Metropolitan Opera/Lincoln Center Theater and Los Angeles Opera, respectively.



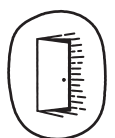
DAVID NEAL / BASS-BARITONE



David Neal's lyric bass-baritone voice has been described as "resounding," "sonorous," and "supple," and as having a "wonderfully rich and vibrant vocal quality." He has performed at Carnegie Hall / Weill Hall, the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, the DiMenna Center, the TimesCenter, Bargemusic, Merkin Hall, Symphony Space, and with such companies as the Opera Company of Philadelphia, Baltimore Opera, Lake George Opera, Syracuse Opera, Tri-Cities Opera, Sorg Opera, Lyric Opera Cleveland, the Kitchen Theatre, the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, Symphoria, the American Modern Ensemble, the Society for New Music,

the Center for Contemporary Opera, and Opera Ithaca. World premiere performances include *Winter Songs* and *Night Songs* by Robert Paterson, and *Stopping By Woods On a Snowy Evening* by Lowell Liebermann. He created the role of The Commissioner in Michael Dellaira's *The Secret Agent* in the Center for Contemporary Opera's production at the Kaye Playhouse in New York City, with subsequent performances in Szeged, Hungary and Avignon, France. Other performances with CCO include the role of John Henry in William Mayer's *A Death in the Family* in Szeged and numerous workshop performances. David has performed frequently with the Society for New Music, in music of Stephen Paulus, Persis Parshall Vehar, Karel Husa, and Charles Fussell.

He has performed much of the standard oratorio repertoire, including recent appearances with Symphoria and the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra. A native of the Finger Lakes region of Central New York, he is the founding Artistic Director of The Arts at Grace, a community-supported concert series in Cortland, and was recently appointed Director of Classical, Jazz, and New Music Programming at the Dan and Rose McNeil Foundation. His recorded performances may be heard on the Albany and AMR labels.



THE STORY BEHIND THE FOUR SEASONS

I am certainly not the first composer to create a work based on the seasons! There is, of course, Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, but also Glazunov's ballet *The Seasons*, Haydn's oratorio of the same name, Schubert's *Winterreise*, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Mahler's *Solitary in Autumn* from *The Song of the Earth*... the list is seemingly endless. Nonetheless, I wanted to create a new work of my own that I hope is deeply personal and heartfelt, using the seasons as inspiration.

The Four Seasons began twenty years ago with a single movement, the first movement of *Winter Songs*, which was initially a stand-alone song. At first, I thought I would just compose a single set of poems based on a single season, but then I became obsessed with the idea of creating four cycles, each for a different voice type and season, to create a full evening's worth of songs. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to create two versions of each cycle: one for a Pierrot ensemble (voice, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion, inspired by the instrumentation of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*) and an alternate version for voice and piano.

Since the premiere of Schoenberg's work, Pierrot ensembles have become a default instrumental combination for new chamber music; an orchestra in microcosm, with strings, winds, and percussion, that affords a lot of timbral color with an easily obtainable number of instruments.

The piano/vocal versions of these works are meant to stand on their own as separate, though related, compositions. They are not just straight transcriptions of the chamber versions. In fact, there are details in the piano/vocal versions that are noticeably different. The only cycle that started out as a chamber version first was *Winter Songs*; the other three cycles all began as piano/vocal versions.

Something that evolved naturally between all of the cycles was how I approached percussion. Being a percussionist, I am keenly aware of how much work it is to move percussion equipment, and how much renting percussion instruments costs, so I made sure to keep the percussion set-up economical. I chose vibraphone as the main instrument (which is also much easier to fit in a car than a marimba!), and then added metallic sounds such as suspended cymbal, three triangles, glockenspiel (orchestra bells), tam-tam, and so on. I decided to use this basic percussion set-up for all four cycles.

As an aside, I never envisioned that I would compose so many Pierrot pieces. To date, at least according to Wikipedia, I have composed more pieces for this type of ensemble than anyone in the world. I certainly never set out to do that as part of some sort of master plan; I think it was really just an accident. If I had been given a choice, I might have composed these works for orchestra.

For a variety of reasons, universities are often hesitant to let composers write significant pieces for their own orchestras. Pierrot ensembles are often used as a kind of miniature



orchestra, so composers can experience composing a piece for a variety of instruments without needing the orchestra to perform a piece that may not be good, or, as is often the case, take the spot of a classic work that the conductor wants to perform with the students. Fortunately, at this point in my career, I am receiving quite a few orchestral commissions and performances, so perhaps writing so many Pierrot pieces helped me in this respect.

I wrote my first Pierrot piece, Sextet, for the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble and won an ASCAP award for that, and then received other opportunities to write works with similar instrumentation. As I went on, I became comfortable with the idea of composing for this ensemble, and after receiving so many performances of my Sextet and other similar works I befriended lots of Pierrot ensembles.

Regarding the timing of the release of this album, I think part of the reason it is being released now is because it was aligned with a world premiere concert at Carnegie Hall in honor of my 50th birthday, and it also took time to find appropriate texts and then compose all twenty-one songs. While researching what to set, I read an enormous amount of poetry dedicated to the seasons, along with poetry by poets such as May Sarton or Richard Wilbur who focus on nature or the seasons. Sometime it takes up to a year or even longer to obtain rights to set poems, so that can cause delays as well.

It also takes time to find ensembles or organizations that will commission new works, and also to find the right singers to premiere and perform the works. However, probably the single biggest reason this took a while is because I prefer to take breaks between pieces of the same instrumentation by composing pieces that are completely different; it's nice to come back to writing for an ensemble with a fresh perspective. Having said that, I definitely use many of the same techniques between all four pieces, since I wanted the entire set to sound unified.

With all of this in mind, I hope that my music, coupled with the myriad of wonderful poems I am honored to have had the opportunity to set, offers a unique perspective on the seasons.

– *Robert Paterson*

