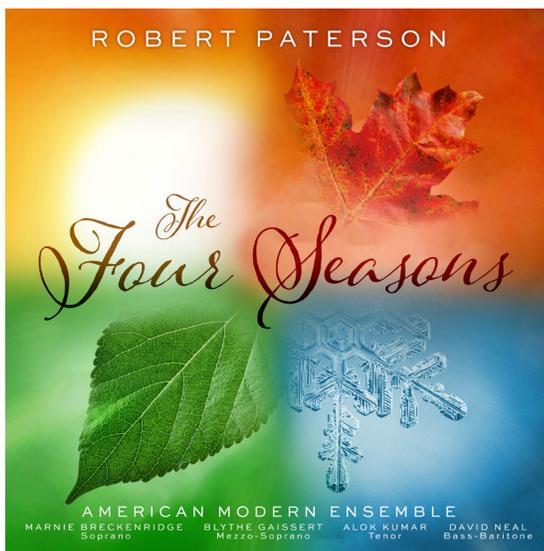


# UN – FINISHED SIDE

FEBRUARY 19, 2020  
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## Composer Robert Paterson celebrates 50th birthday with premieres and a new album *The Four Seasons* – Out April 24

*This spring, the composer enjoys three Carnegie Hall performances, including two world premieres, and the culmination of his 20-year-long “Four Seasons” project.*



Spring 2020 marks a particularly busy and celebratory period for composer **Robert Paterson**. Called a “modern day master” by the *New York Times*, Paterson’s String Quartet No. 3 will be premiered at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Hall on **March 5** by the Indianapolis String Quartet. On **April 17**, he celebrates his 50th birthday and the release of his 21-song **Four Seasons** project (out April 24 on Paterson’s American Modern Recordings). On **May 6**, the **Oratorio Society of New York**, under Kent Tritle, will perform Paterson’s *Whitman’s America*.

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,

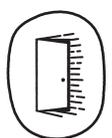


Dorothea Tanning, to name a few. The world premiere recording consists of four song-cycles (21 songs), written over the last 20 years, for four voice types (each representing a different season). The four singers on the album are soprano **Marnie Breckenridge**, mezzo-soprano **Blythe Gaissert**, tenor **Alok Kumar**, and bass-baritone **David Neal**.

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, and premiered together at Carnegie Hall, 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.”*



## UPCOMING CONCERTS

- March 5**      **The Indianapolis Quartet @ Weill Hall, Carnegie Hall** [\[info\]](#)  
*The quartet makes its NYC debut with a program featuring the premiere of Robert Paterson's String Quartet No. 3.*
- March 20 & 22**      **New Amsterdam Singers @ Theater at St. Jean Baptiste** [\[info\]](#)  
*New Amsterdam Singers, directed and conducted by Clara Longstreth, gives the world premiere of 'I Go Among Trees' for SATB choir and marimba, with texts by Wendell Berry, May Sarton, and John Freeman. Special guest, Makoto Nakura, marimba.*
- April 17**      **American Modern Ensemble @ Weill Hall, Carnegie Hall** [\[info\]](#)  
*Composer Robert Paterson's 50th birthday and "The Four Seasons" release celebration.*
- May 6**      **A Nation of Others & Whitman's America @ Carnegie Hall** [\[info\]](#)  
*Kent Tritle conducts the 200-voice Oratorio Society of New York in a two-part program that salutes our legacy and diversity. The first part will feature the world premiere of 'A Nation of Others,' a new work by Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell. In part two, 'Whitman's America,' a setting of 'Leaves of Grass' by Robert Paterson, will be presented. Special guest soloists include Jennifer Zetlan, Maeve Höglund, Raehann Bryce-Davis, Isaiah Bell, Steven Eddy, and Joseph Beutel.*

*Celebrate the Composer*

**THREE SHOWS AT CARNEGIE HALL**

Thursday, March 5  
7:30 PM

Indianapolis  
String Quartet

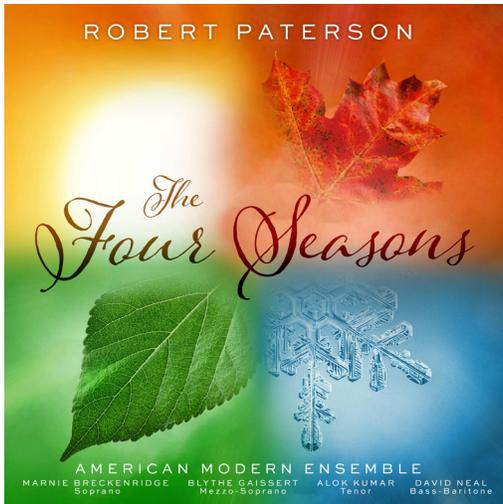
Friday, April 17  
8:00 PM

Robert Paterson  
*The Four Seasons*  
50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration & CD Release

Wednesday, May 6  
8:00 PM

Oratorio Society of New York  
Kent Tritle, Conductor





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

**AUTUMN SONGS**

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

**DISC 2**

**WINTER SONGS**

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

**SPRING SONGS**

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



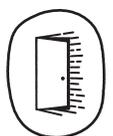
## **ROBERT PATERSON**



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 of 2012’ 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.

Season highlights included The Nashville Opera world premiere of *THREE WAY* in January, 2017 and then Nashville performed the opera at BAM in Brooklyn, June, 2017. 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 three year 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 the American Modern Ensemble 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, Dixon Place, and National Sawdust are a winning testament to AME's 14 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,



Christopher Rouse, Steven Stucky, 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 our albums have made it to the Grammy Ballot for the past four 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, Cutting Edge New Music Festival, Prototype Opera Festival, American Opera Projects, the Dance Theater of Harlem, and the Mazzini Dance Collective. AME has an ongoing In-Situ partnership with National Sawdust, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where we perform annually to sold-out crowds

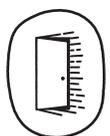
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## **MARNIE BRECKENRIDGE / SOPRANO**



American American soprano Marnie Breckenridge is captivating international audiences with roles ranging from the Baroque and bel canto to Modern. Her passionate interpretations of contemporary works include: Mother in *Dog Days* by David T. Little where the *New York Times* praised Breckenridge's "lovely soprano" and *Time Out Magazine* voted

it Best Opera 2012 (premier-Montclair Peak Performances, Los Angeles Opera 2015, Prototype Festival 2016, Ft. Worth Opera 2015,) Sierva Maria in Peter Eötvös's *Love and Other Demons* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera), La Princesse in Philip Glass' *Orphée*, title role in Milhaud's



*Médée*, and Margarita Xirgu in Golijov's *Ainadamar* (Opera Parallèle), Ruth in Luna Pearl Woolf's *The Pillar* (Julian Wachner and Washington Chorus), her Berkeley Symphony debut in Chin's *Cantanrix Sopranica* with Kent Nagano and her Ravinia Festival debut in Jake Heggie's *To Hell and Back* with Philharmonia Baroque, co-starring Patti LuPone. Of her performance at Ravinia noted by reviewer John Von Rein, "she sounded as gorgeous as she looked, achieving both lyrical poignancy and dramatic power" (*Chicago Tribune*). Her superb acting and musicianship have brought her into the worlds of television and voice-over as well as theatre where she recently composed the vocal lines for and sang the lead in *Wake* an original production with director Mei Ann Teo (PUC Alumnus) and composer Jon Bernstein at the Connelly Theatre in New York.

## **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*).

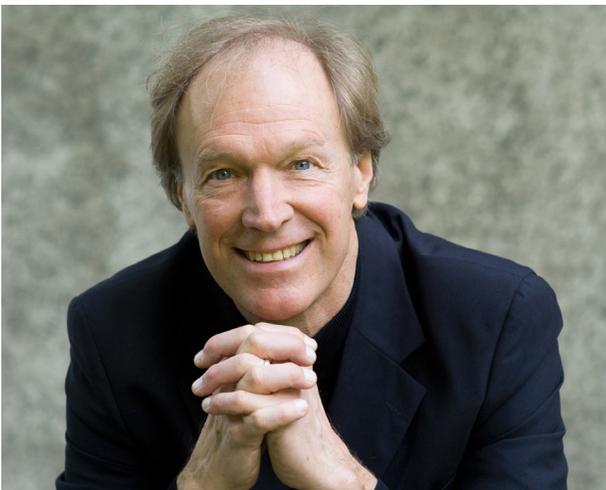


## **ALOK KUMAR** / TENOR



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

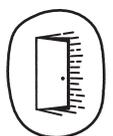
Shankar's opera *Sukanya*. Other appearances include those with the Los Angeles Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Florida Grand Opera and Michigan Opera Theatre, at the Domaine Forget, Sanibel and Spoleto festivals, with the Boston and Cincinnati Pops Orchestras and at Boston Symphony Hall, Carnegie Hall, Hong 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 a wide range of roles in opera, concert, musical theatre, and recital, with performances at Carnegie Hall / Weill Hall, Lake George Opera, Syracuse Opera, Tri-Cities Opera, Baltimore Opera, the Opera Company of Philadelphia, Sorg Opera,

Lyric Opera Cleveland, the Kitchen Theatre, the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, Symphoria, the Society for New Music, the Center for Contemporary Opera, and the American Modern Ensemble.



## 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. Numerous excellent composers have composed works for this grouping, and there are many professional performing ensembles based on this instrumentation.

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, but I didn't have access to orchestras when I began *Winter Songs*, the first work in this set.



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, and other ensembles with similar instrumentation.

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 or similar 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 and that listeners will enjoy this album.

– Robert Paterson

