

## Music from the Heart

### Fenella Humphreys pairs Max Richter's classical chart-topping *Recomposed: The Four Seasons* with meditative masterworks by Vasks and Pärt for new Rubicon Classics recording

Humphreys' 'utter absorption and delight ... shines forth at every turn,' *Gramophone*, February 2017



Creative energy and emotional honesty flow freely whenever Fenella Humphreys makes music. The British violinist, winner of the 2018 BBC Music Magazine Instrumental Award, has won critical admiration and audience acclaim with the lyrical grace and intensity of her playing. She has chosen a programme of contemporary classics for her latest recording, set for international release on the Rubicon Classics label at the end of June. The album unites Max Richter's iconic *Recomposed: The Four Seasons* with Pēteris Vasks' *Lonely Angel* and Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* to produce a compelling meditation on the profound power of melody. Humphreys is partnered by the Covent Garden Sinfonia and its artistic director, Ben Palmer, ideal companions in a programme vibrant in tonal contrasts and expressive light and shade. They will mark the album's launch with a performance of *Recomposed* at St Jude's, Hampstead Garden Suburb on 24 June 2019.

Richter's hugely popular score surfaced as the focus for a recording when soloist and conductor first discussed the project. "Ben questioned my original ideas for a recording while we were having coffee," recalls Fenella Humphreys. "He asked me if I knew the Max Richter piece and I said only by name, so we went to Ben's car and listened to it at full volume in the street! I was totally blown away by it. I love the way Richter plays with the rhythm, articulation and phrasing of Vivaldi's original to create a beautiful new soundworld out of *The Four Seasons*."

Humphreys, Palmer and the Covent Garden Sinfonia recorded Richter's work last October and the choice of what to programme with it soon fell into place. "There's something about the intimacy and sadness that Max Richter creates at the end of 'Winter' that means you couldn't follow *Recomposed* with anything bright or bubbly. I originally wanted to couple it with Vasks' *Distant Light*, his first violin concerto, but we decided instead to programme *Lonely Angel*. I knew that its soundworld would complement Richter's and realised that it was the perfect match. We chose Pärt's *Fratres* to complete the album, because it continues the meditative state that runs from 'Winter' through the Vasks. There's something so visceral that each of those composers brings to these works. I can't fail to be moved when I play or listen to them."

A quick glance at Fenella Humphreys' portfolio of reviews confirms how critics have responded to her readiness to be entirely open to whatever emotions arise in the moment of performance, however intense or difficult they may be. "Vulnerability is the most important thing," she observes. "How can you explore the emotional depths of the music if you're not vulnerable? I don't think it's possible to get under the skin of a work if you're not prepared to take yourself to the edge. I've always been deeply emotionally involved in the music. We're so fortunate to be able to communicate in this way, to connect with others through music. And there are so many possibilities in how and what we play."

Over the past decade Fenella Humphreys has captured international attention by applying spellbinding virtuosity to a strikingly broad range of compositions. Her *Bach 2 the Future* albums, the second of which won the coveted BBC Music Magazine Instrumental Award, combined newly commissioned works with two of Bach's solo sonatas and partitas and other repertoire landmarks. She has given the first performances of scores by, among others, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sally Beamish, Gordon Crosse, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Adrian Sutton and Piers Hellawell, and made the world premiere recording of Christopher Wright's elegiac Violin Concerto. In addition to the Sonatina he composed for Humphreys in 2010, Gordon Crosse has recently completed a new violin concerto for her.

Sharp-edged boundaries between musical styles and periods are absent from Fenella Humphreys' worldview. "I don't ever wish to be pigeonholed in any way," she comments. "There's so much richness in the music that's out

there and so many possibilities for new works. We have the great fortune to be able to experience compositions from every corner of the world and of history. Why would you not want to appreciate and enjoy that, to play the greatest possible range of works? There's so much I love doing, which is why I would not want to travel down one single path. I love to explore and create within these many different worlds of music, and also love working with living composers as part of that. It's genuinely exciting to be part of the creative process and develop relationships with today's composers."

The violinist's openness to a multitude of compositional voices stems from her early musical experiences and rests on a lifelong interest in the new. "I've always wanted to discover unfamiliar things, whether it's food, culture or places," she notes. "It's part of my wiring! I've also been fortunate right from the time I was in the local youth orchestra to be introduced to incredible things by everyone from Lutosławski and Ligeti to Mark-Anthony Turnage. My dad had a really eclectic record collection and was always giving me new things, and my violin teacher, Sidney Griller, used to share stories about the many composers he'd known. That was an inspiration for me as a child and still is. I feel that what's out there is so rich and varied, why not celebrate that. It's always going to be exciting to hear and discover music in this way."

<https://www.fenellahumphreys.com/>

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### **Rubicon Classics, worldwide release 28 June 2019**

Rubicon Classics RCD1015

**Fenella Humphreys** violin | **Ben Palmer** conductor | **Covent Garden Sinfonia**

**Max Richter** *Four Seasons Recomposed*

**Pēteris Vasks** *Lonely Angel*

**Arvo Pärt** *Fratres*

**Monday 24 June 2019**

**St Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead, 7.45pm**

**PROMS AT ST. JUDE'S**

**Fenella Humphreys** violin | **Ben Palmer** conductor | **Covent Garden Sinfonia**

**Vivaldi** Sinfonia RV 169 *Al santo sepolcro*

**Max Richter** *On the Nature of Daylight*

**Arvo Pärt** *Fratres*

**Barber** *Adagio for strings*

**Max Richter** *Four Seasons Recomposed*