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## MUSIC BY BOB KEEFER



PHOTO: GARY PARKER

## ROLLING ON THE RIVER

*Eugene Symphony, McKenzie River Trust and Travel Lane County team up for music and photo extravaganza*

When Eugene Symphony began planning this month's orchestra concert some two years ago, Executive Director Scott Freck wondered to himself: What are the things we're proudest of about living here?

"This is an incredible city for the arts," he said. "And right on our doorstep we've got some of nature's greatest wonders."

Thus was born *The Four Seasons of the McKenzie River*, the name of the program the symphony will present Thursday, Feb. 15, at the Hult Center's Silva Concert Hall. The evening will interweave a live performance of a tried and true musical warhorse, Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* violin concerto cycle, with projections above the orchestra of photographs of the McKenzie River.

The concert is being put on in partnership with the McKenzie River Trust and Travel Lane County.

First, those Baroque concerti. The *Four Seasons* is more than familiar music, even for people who swear they've never heard it. Vivaldi's work, composed nearly 300 years ago, pops up in television commercials and Muzak. J.S. Bach did one of the first covers, stealing the theme of "Spring" for a movement of his cantata "Wer weiß, wie nahe mir mein Ende?" Centuries later, Windows 3.0 included a MIDI version of "Spring." Like time and tides, the *Four Seasons* are inescapable.

So how, we asked Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, can the musicians possibly turn out a fresh-sounding performance of this centuries-old piece?

"That's the challenge performing almost every piece," he said. "But this one's beyond popular. It's almost taken on a commercial bent. It's lobby music. Elevator music."

Lecce-Chong, who will play harpsichord while conducting the Vivaldi from the keyboard in Baroque style, began talking about violinist Rachel Barton Pine, the soloist that night. "She sees the piece very similar to me," he said, "bringing out how edgy the piece really is."

Edgy? Vivaldi?

"Vivaldi's all over the map, using musical techniques that you don't hear again until the 20th century."

"Kind of sonic effects," Freck chimed in.

"Like a modern-day synthesizer," Lecce-Chong said. "The piece really needs to crackle. Are we going to treat it like mood music, or are we going to really rev it up?"

You'll have to show up to find out.

When you do, you'll get to view scenes of the McKenzie and environs projected above the musicians.

The images were chosen from more than 600 submissions by local photographers and videographers, explains Joe Moll, executive director of the McKenzie River Trust, which is dedicated to protecting the river and its environs.

He was joined in picking the photos and videos by Eugene Mayor Lucy Vinis, Springfield Mayor Christine Lundberg, Juanita Metzler of Travel Lane County and Freck for a marathon jurying session to select about 45 minutes of images from the entries.

Moll admits his own relationship to Vivaldi is more populist than Lecce-Chong's. "What I associate with classical music is Bugs Bunny cartoons," he says.

But Moll said he was delighted through this project to discover a significant overlap between symphony supporters and protectors of the McKenzie watershed.

His biggest surprise?

"What people associate with the river is relatively narrow," he said. That meant a lot of photos of familiar places and scenes, and not too many from, say, high up in the Cascades, where the McKenzie watershed begins.

"That's still a connection we're trying to get people to make."

Also on the program will be Gabriella Smith's 2014 *Tumbleweed Contrails* and Edward Elgar's early 20th century work *In the South*. ■

*Eugene Symphony presents Four Seasons of the McKenzie River at the Hult Center 7:30 pm Thursday, Feb. 15; tickets at [eugenesymphony.org](http://eugenesymphony.org).*

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