



Dartmouth College
6041 Wilson Hall
Hanover, NH 03755
hop.dartmouth.edu
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CONTACT:

Rebecca Bailey, Publicity Coordinator/Writer
Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College
rebecca.a.bailey@dartmouth.edu
603.646.3991

Mandolin “god” joins with orchestra to re-invent Vivaldi

HANOVER, NH—**Carlo Aonzo**, who travels the world as a renowned mandolin virtuoso, teacher and scholar, joins the **Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra** on **Friday, February 9**, for a concert that reinvents Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*. The concert takes place at 8 pm in Spaulding Auditorium of the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College.

Aonzo (“real, virtuoso mandolin playing, to compete with the like of any instrument”—*Mandolin Café*) will spend the week before the concert at Dartmouth doing class visits and tutorials, and also will give a **free mini-concert and lecture** on his instrument on **Tuesday, February 6**, at 5 pm in the Top of the Hop. Mandolin players are invited to bring their instruments and stay after for a short jam session with Aonzo.

The best-known work of Vivaldi (1678-1741), *Four Seasons* was originally written for solo violin plus chamber orchestra. Aonzo plays the entire violin part on mandolin, executing on that plucked instrument the rapid passages that spin far more easily off a violin bow—a feat only one of the world’s greatest mandolin virtuosos could manage, said DSO Conductor Filippo Ciabatti. While few attempt this instrumentation for *Four Seasons*, it’s “in line with Baroque performance practices,” Ciabatti said: Vivaldi himself was a mandolinist, and musicians of his era felt free to play works on instruments other than the ones they were written for.

Aonzo recently recorded this transcription of the work with Italy’s Ensemble Il Falcone. Founder Guido De Vecchi wrote: “With this project, Carlo Aonzo expresses all the potentialities of the mandolin, playing the virtuosic and impressionistic Vivaldi of *Four Seasons*, demonstrating how the four double strings of the mandolin can distinctly express the adagios while giving rhythmic power and virtuosity to the fast tempos.”

The Vivaldi work shares the DSO program with Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 1, Op. 13 (*Winter Daydreams*), a “precious gem” inspired by the winter colors and atmosphere, “as good as Tchaikovsky’s better-known symphonies,” Ciabatti said.

A native of Savona, Italy, Aonzo tours throughout northern Europe, Italy and the US as a soloist with chamber ensembles and orchestras, from symphony orchestras to the mandolin ensembles that exist in cities throughout the world. He also performs with the Carlo Aonzo Trio, which plays a range of folk, jazz and European styles. He created and directed the winter Festival Internazionale di Mandolino in Varazze, Italy. He is an active scholar of historic mandolinists and mandolin repertoire and has contributed to The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. A “god” to mandolin players around the world, Aonzo has collaborated with mandolin organizations in the US, Europe and Asia. Since 2000 he has led the annual Manhattan

Mandolin Workshop in New York; in 2006 he founded the International Italian Mandolin Accademia, which he directs; and he is on the regular faculty member at the mandolin-oriented Kaufman Kamp in Tennessee. Aonzo came from a musical family; his first mandolin teacher was his father. He went on to study with Ugo Orlandi, the current patriarch of the Italian mandolinists, at the Cesare Pollini Conservatory of Padua. Aonzo's playing has been recognized with awards at prestigious competitions including the "Vivaldi" prize of the 6th annual Vittorio Pizzanti National Mandolin Competition in Venice as well as the 27th annual Walnut Valley National Mandolin Contest in Winfield, Kansas.

Aonzo's recorded output reflects his scholarship and passion to both champion the mandolin's forgotten past and to develop its classical tradition into the future. He has recorded Paganini's complete works for mandolin on period mandolino Genovese (*Integrale per Amandorlino & Chitarra Francese*, Arion). His recordings have also featured the works of early 20th-century Italian virtuosos with guitarist Beppe Gambetta (*Serenata*, Acoustic Music Records) and Italian immigrants to America with Gambetta and mandolinist David Grisman (*Traversata*, Acoustic Disc). His Orchestra a Pizzico Ligure's recording of arrangements of Vivaldi concerti is a rare demonstration of the rich sonority of a modern, active mandolin orchestra. His CD *Kaze* with guitarist Katsumi Nagaoka both offers a respectful nod to historic repertoire and premieres a lively, sophisticated new composition. In 2016 he released his *Four Seasons* recording and, with the Carlo Aonzo Trio, the album *A Mandolin Journey*, on the international mandolin repertoire.

For Mel Bay he has published the concert video *Carlo Aonzo: Classical Mandolin Virtuoso* and the book & CD collection *Northern Italian & Ticino Region Folk Songs for Mandolin*; while for Hal Leonard he has released two books of his mandolin transcriptions, *Bach Two-Parts Inventions* and the *Classical Mandolin Solos*. As a researcher, he has been working on the history of his instrument and collaborated with the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. He has given presentations on the iconography of the mandolin, in renowned institutions, including St. John's University in New York, Boston University, Vancouver Italian Cultural Centre, New England Conservatory, Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, Vanderbilt College of Nashville, Berio Library in Genoa and National Instrument Museum in Rome. His current musical projects focus on further experimentation of the mandolin's potentials and repertoire.

In an interview last year with the web publication Madolin Café, Aonzo sketched a vibrant musical upbringing. "I've been playing mandolin since I was a child. The mandolin is a tradition in my family and my father taught me. I got from him the love and passion for this instrument and he was a link to the roots of its tradition. I got my degree at the Conservatorium in Padova with Ugo Orlandi - a scientist of the instrument, with a knowledge of the history of mandolin like no one else in the world. I learned many important things from him about technique, repertoire, research and so on. I got from him one basic concept: how important our instrument is! I grew up in a mandolin orchestra, literally, since it was formed at home, where we also had our music school. My father gave (and he still does) a big contribution to the music developing in my city, Savona. As soon as I learned, I had a great training in teaching, since I did it right away, one year after I began studying music.

Aonzo has been performing and teaching in the US since 1997, he said. "I come about three times a year doing concerts, joining local mandolin orchestras and giving workshops. I can say that I've met almost everybody in the classical mandolin field in the US, and I've seen classical music's steady development. Since 1999, I've been running a mandolin workshop in Manhattan that has inspired many mandolinists and has become a reference point for the classical mandolin. Since the first time I came here, I've seen the level of playing and knowledge grow exponentially. The level of mandolin playing has grown quite a lot thanks to lovers of the instrument that also have reference points with these kinds of events and activities."

Aonzo is the second Italian musician to collaborate with the DSO in as many concerts in the 2017-18 season. The first was, in fall, Luciano Tristaino, an internationally esteemed flutist and the director of the Conservatory

of Siena, Italy (“Rinaldo Franci”). Tristaino was on campus for a week leading up to the concert to meet with students in and beyond the DSO, give mini-performances around campus, coach chamber music and visit classes in music, Italian language and culture and other topics. Tristaino’s visit launched an exciting musical partnership between the DSO and conservatories in Italy’s culturally vibrant Tuscany region, which will culminate in a December 2018 DSO Tuscany tour that includes deep musical exchange.

MORE ABOUT

Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra

The DSO is the resident orchestra of the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College. Comprising primarily Dartmouth students, and performing during the fall, winter and spring terms, its powerful performances have made it a major hit with area music lovers, who appreciate not having to travel to the city to enjoy a quality evening at the symphony.

DSO Conductor and Music Director Filippo Ciabatti

A native of Florence, Italy, Ciabatti was appointed Music Director of the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra in 2016, after an international search. Also, in 2016, Ciabatti conducted *Tosca* at Opera North (NH), directed by Russell Treyz, and Britten’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Lyric Theatre at Illinois, directed by Christopher Gillett. In May 2015, he made his South American debut conducting the Universidad Central Symphony Orchestra in Bogota, Colombia, where he also taught masterclasses in orchestra and Italian opera. With La Nuova Aurora Opera, he conducted full productions of Handel’s *Rodrigo* (2015) and Purcell’s *King Arthur* (2016). In 2017–2018, he was invited to conduct *Madama Butterfly* at Opera North (NH), *Hansel and Gretel* and *Don Giovanni* (directed by Nathan Gunn) at the Lyric Theatre at Illinois.

Ciabatti has appeared as guest conductor with many orchestras including the Lamont Symphony Orchestra, Sangamon Valley Symphony Orchestra, East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra, University of Illinois Symphony Orchestra and Truman State Symphony Orchestra. He also served as Choirmaster of Emmanuel Episcopal Church (Champaign, IL).

As a pianist and coach in Italy, Ciabatti worked for the Cherubini Conservatory, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and Florence Opera Academy, and performed with singers such as Adriana Marfisi and Silvia Bossa. He has played for masterclasses of Renée Fleming, Nathan Gunn, William Matteuzzi, Donald George and Isabel Leonard. He is currently music director and coach of Scuola Italia per Giovani Cantanti Lirici (Piobbico, Italy), where he works with young singers and renowned coaches and directors. He has attended conducting masterclasses in Europe and in the United States, studying with prominent teachers such as Mark Stringer, Michael Luig, David Efron, Lawrence Golan and Donald Schleicher. He is currently a doctoral candidate in Orchestral Conducting at the University of Illinois.

RELEVANT LINKS

<https://www.carloaonzo.com>

<https://hop.dartmouth.edu/Online/dartmouth-symphony-orchestra-winter-2018>

<https://hop.dartmouth.edu/Online/dartmouth-symphony-orchestra>

CALENDAR LISTING

Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra, with Carlo Aonzo, guest mandolinist

The DSO teams up with one of the world’s top mandolin virtuosos for a thrilling new take on Vivaldi’s well-known gem *The Four Seasons*. That Baroque contemplation of the cycle of the seasons is complemented by Tchaikovsky’s first symphony, a folk music-flavored journey through a winter landscape.

Friday, February 9, 8 pm

Spaulding Auditorium, Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College, Hanover NH

\$20, Dartmouth students \$5, other students \$10

Information: hop.dartmouth.edu or 603.646.2422

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Founded in 1962, the Hopkins Center for the Arts is a multi-disciplinary academic, visual and performing arts center dedicated to uncovering insights, celebrating diversity and nurturing talents to help Dartmouth and the surrounding Upper Valley community engage imaginatively and contribute creatively to our world. Each year the Hop presents more than 300 live events and films by visiting artists as well as Dartmouth students and the Dartmouth community, and reaches more than 22,000 Upper Valley residents and students with outreach and arts education programs. In addition, the Hop continues to mentor young artists, support the development of new work and provide a laboratory for participation and experimentation in the arts.