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[back to Maine](#)
[back to home page](#)
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Scandia Duo Enthralls Ogunquit Audience

By Mary Elizabeth Nordstrom

Ogunquit, ME, 16 September 2012. At this third and final concert of Mark Thallanger's summer concert series at the First Baptist Church, I encountered for the first time the virtuosity of violinist Jodi Hagen, in duo performance with Heinrich Christensen, the "sitting" organist at the C. B. Fisk organ, King's Chapel in Boston, whom it had been my privilege to hear previously. Together, they performed an excellent interpretation of a baroque work originally written for violin, strings and continuo: Vivaldi's, *Le Quattro Stagioni*, (*The Four Seasons*). The audience was enthralled.

First published in 1725, the "Four Seasons" by Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), Opus 1:22-25, includes four violin concerti: Violin Concerto in E major, RV 269 (*La primavera* = "Spring"), Violin Concerto in G minor, RV 315 (*L'estate* = "Summer"), Violin Concerto in F major, RV 293 (*L'autunno* = "Autumn"), and Violin Concerto in F minor, RV 297 (*L'inverno* = "Winter"). It should be noted that the Scandia Duo began with No. 2, "Summer" which was an excellent programming move. It allowed them to conclude with the burst of renewed hope that comes with (No.1) "Spring."

Significant program music, including bird calls and other signs of the "Summer" season, was described in the reading offered by Christensen to open the program. Indeed he would read a prologue to each ensuing season, as well. Behind the podium from which he read, and the place on the platform where the violinist performed, was a recessed background area that was flooded with colored light representing the changing seasons. This touch was made possible by the producer, Mark Thallanger. Thallanger is the organist/director at First Baptist Church, Ogunquit, who has concluded a successful 2012 summer season of three outstanding concerts.

It was amazing how well the organ embraced the chamber orchestra transcription. During the rendition of "Summer," a low organ pedal stop selection made the entire church floor tremble, reminiscent of the effect of subway cars passing below St. Thomas Church during extravagantly beautiful services of sacred music on Fifth Avenue in New York City. I immediately worried that the organ pedal would distract from an anticipated orchestral sound, but this distraction soon disappeared. The result was balanced orchestral organ stops complementing the robust violin.

A treat during the free will offering at the end of the program, was the unheralded performance of "Meditation" from *Thais* by Jules Massenet (1842-1912), a work well known to aficionados of all classical music radio stations and television channels. One does not play such easily recognizable music in concert unless confident that he or she can excel in its performance. Both musicians responded to that challenge, rendering a strong and sensitive interpretation.

A veteran recitalist throughout Europe, award-winning organist Christensen is a native of Denmark who studied at the Royal Conservatory in Arhus. In Paris, he was an organ student of Olivier Latry of Notre Dame. Ms. Hagen's Artist Diploma, M. A. and B. A. are from Boston University where she was a student of Roman Totenberg. She plays solo violin for the PBS television series "The American Experience." A freelance violinist, she is widely sought by a number of symphony orchestras.

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