

# SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

Nov. 1 and 3

## Legendary Music and Instrument

[Marin Symphony](#)

By [Marianne Lipanovich](#)

Certainly you've heard [Vivaldi](#)'s *Four Seasons*, both live and on recordings, over the years. But have you heard it played on a violin that inspired an Academy Award-winning movie?

That's what's in store at the Marin Symphony program coming up on Nov. 1 and 3. The "Red Violin" that inspired the 1999 movie of the same name is what violin virtuoso Elizabeth Pitcairn will be playing as a guest soloist.

Also known as the "Red Mendelssohn" Stradivarius, this instrument is considered one of the finest violins ever crafted, with a beautiful sound and equally beautiful power.

Elizabeth PitcairnIts mysterious past is just as intriguing as the rich tone Pitcairn pulls from the instrument. It disappeared shortly after it was built in 1720 and didn't surface again until the 1930s, over 200 years later. It was sold to a private collector and amateur musician in 1945, and remained out of sight until it was bought anonymously for the then-16-year-old Pitcairn at a Thanksgiving Day auction at Christie's in 1990.

Pitcairn began playing at age 3, performed her first concert at age 14, and made her professional debut in New York in 2000. Even though she had owned the violin since 1990, she didn't perform publicly with it until she was playing professionally, by which time she was already considered one of the best up-and-coming violinists in the country. Even so, she does not take ownership of this legendary instrument lightly. She considers the violin her partner, one from whom she is still learning new things.

The music she'll be playing in Marin may be familiar, but the musician and the instrument are not. Pitcairn is the first known person to perform publicly on the Red Violin. She's also known for her charisma on stage. Between her presence and the skills of Alasdair Neale, who conducts the Marin Symphony, these performances should be something to remember.

**Marianne Lipanovich** is writer and editor based in Redwood City. A gardening expert, she is a lifelong music lover, having learned to read music before she learned to read.