



Alexey  
**SHOR**

## Composer's Notebook • 5

Violin Concertos No. 1 'Seascapes',  
No. 2 'Phantasms' and No. 5

Valeriy Sokolov, Nurie Chung, Marc Bouchkov, Violin  
Kyiv Virtuosi

Dmitry Yablonsky • Sergey Smbatyan • John Warner



## Alexey Shor (b. 1970)

### Composer's Notebook • 5

Alexey Shor was born and raised in Ukraine. He left the Soviet Union to study mathematics in the United States. He currently spends most of his time in New York.

His compositions have been performed at some of the most prestigious concert halls in the world, including the Musikverein Wien, Philharmonie Berlin, Carnegie Hall (New York), The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), Kyiv Conservatory, the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Gasteig München, Wigmore Hall (London) and Teatro Argentina (Rome), among many others.

Concerts featuring his music have been broadcast on medici.tv, Mezzo and Euronews, among others. Shor's music has also been showcased on Fox Business news and the websites of Bloomberg News, *The New Yorker*, Yahoo and the Huffington Post. The *Overture* to his ballet *Crystal Palace* was performed at the 40th *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards ceremony in London. In 2018 he was awarded an honorary professorship at the Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan. In 2022 Shor was appointed as the Yehudi Menuhin School's first associate composer. He has been the composer-in-residence for the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra since 2017, and in the 2024–26 seasons he will also perform that role for the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. Shor's scores are published by Breitkopf & Härtel and Universal Edition. Albums featuring his compositions have been released on Naxos, Warner Classics, Decca and Sony Classical, among others.

Many internationally acclaimed artists have performed Shor's music, including Behzod Abduraimov, Salvatore Accardo, Gautier Capuçon, Ray Chen, James Ehnes, Steven Isserlis, Clara-Jumi Kang, Evgeny Kissin, Denis Kozhukhin, Shlomo Mintz, Mikhail Pletnev, Gil Shaham, Yeol Eum Son, Yekwon Sunwoo, Maxim Vengerov, Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider and many others. Shor also holds a PhD in mathematics.

[www.alexeyshor.com](http://www.alexeyshor.com)



## Violin Concerto No. 1 'Seascapes'

Composed in 2014, *Seascapes* is the first violin concerto penned by Alexey Shor, and indeed, can be seen as a snapshot in time of sorts, providing a window into the development of the composer's signature style. Already exhibiting several features that would go on to become firm staples of his musical approach, including neo-Classical leanings, and a strong emphasis on melodies and traditional harmony, this piece gave the composer more opportunities to experiment with contrast and the art of finding a fine balance of interplay between the soloist and the orchestra, allowing him to explore and refine his core musical instincts, and shape the expressive and narrative-driven style that continues to define his work to this day.

As its name indicates, *Seascapes* continues in the long tradition of musical works inspired by the sea, following in the footsteps of such seminal pieces as Claude Debussy's *La Mer*, Edward Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, Jean Sibelius's *The Oceanides*, and many, many more. In this instance, Shor is not attempting to depict any specific geographical location, but is instead putting forward various different portraits, each of which captures the sublime beauty, mystery, and unpredictability of the ocean at a particular moment in time, as the composer displays his mastery of the art of storytelling through the medium of music.

In fact, with the title of each movement directing the expectations of listeners and musicians alike, this concerto is a highly evocative work, as Shor uses the voices of the soloist and the orchestra in order to suggest a distinct series of images for each section, taking his audience on a breath-taking voyage with the sea, from tranquil waters to raging storms.

The first movement, *Abandoned Lighthouse*, welcomes listeners with a haunting and introspective opening that sets the stage for the concerto's journey. The music conjures the image of a lighthouse standing solitary against the horizon as a silent witness to the ebb and flow of time, with an ethereal orchestration and a lyrical, melancholic violin line which creates a sense of memory and solitude. *Lonely Sail* then builds on this, as the second movement presents a profoundly expressive scene of isolation, tempered by quiet determination. The bittersweet melody of the violin takes centre stage here, with the melody eventually fading into the vast expanse of the ocean as the movement draws to a close.

The third portrait presents a masterclass in suspense building, with the orchestra and soloist engaged in a thrilling dialogue as Shor introduces a brooding and suspenseful atmosphere. The music shifts into a state of tension, with the violin taking on an increasingly agitated role, and just as the titular storm reaches its peak, the music surges forward, leading directly into *Summer Hail*, the concerto's exhilarating finale. Marking a dazzling display of energy and virtuosity, this final movement brilliantly captures the fleeting, intense power of a sudden storm, showcasing the full powers of the soloist and orchestra as it races towards a thrilling conclusion, bringing the concerto to a triumphant close.

## Violin Concerto No. 2 'Phantasms'

Composed in 2018, Alexey Shor's *Violin Concerto No. 2 'Phantasms'*, is a deeply evocative and richly textured work that explores a spectrum of emotions, from the elegant and graceful to the introspective and virtuosic. Displaying Shor's distinctive melodic style, the concerto's three movements offer moments of nostalgia, reflection and triumphant energy that are realised through a richly orchestrated soundscape. With the solo violin serving as both narrator and protagonist, *Phantasms* stands as a demonstration of Shor's ability to blend accessibility with technical brilliance, as listeners are guided through an imaginative journey of shifting moods and contrasts, from the refined charm of the opening movement to the heartfelt lyricism of the second and the unbridled energy of the finale.

Entitled *Dance of the Graces*, the work's first movement invokes the Three Graces – minor goddesses of Greek and Roman mythology that are associated with beauty, nature, human creativity and fertility. The usual list, from oldest to youngest, is Aglaea (Splendour), Euphrosyne (Good Cheer) and Thalia (Festivity), and due to this association this opening movement of *Phantasms* is based on three main themes, representing the dancing graces, unlike the first movements of most concertos, which are usually only based on two principal themes. Listeners are welcomed with a lyrical violin that glides above a delicately orchestrated accompaniment, evoking images of an elegant ballroom filled with fluid motion. Shor's melodies are graceful and expressive, reminiscent of the great Romantic composers, yet imbued with his own distinct harmonic sensibilities. The movement balances refinement and playfulness, drawing the listener into its captivating world of charm and beauty.

The second movement, *Elegy*, lies in stark contrast to the light-hearted nature of its predecessor, delving into a realm of deep emotional introspection and exploring feelings of profound sadness and loss. Complex harmonies and the polyphony of this movement convey great pain and anguish, with the violin taking on a more solemn character, weaving long, expressive lines that speak of longing and nostalgia. Throughout this movement, Shor masterfully evokes a sense of wistful contemplation, creating a moment of profound emotional depth before the virtuosic finale.

Fittingly called *Flight of a Falcon*, this last movement is inspired by the world's fastest animal, which can dive at speeds of over 300 km/h, and is easily the most technically demanding section of the concerto. With soaring melodies and complex passages that require extremely high levels of technique, this energetic finale propels the listener forward with unstoppable momentum. The violin bursts forth with rapid passages and dazzling runs that showcase both technical brilliance and fiery passion, while the orchestra provides a rhythmic drive that enhances the feeling of flight, capturing the spirit of a falcon gliding effortlessly through the sky before diving with precision and power. This movement is a tour de force, bringing the concerto to an exhilarating conclusion.

### **Violin Concerto No. 5**

Composed in 2021 during one of the national lockdowns imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the *Violin Concerto No. 5* in C minor is notably darker in tone and imagery than many of Alexey Shor's previous works in the genre, potentially arising as a reflection of the period in which it was written. Marking a striking addition to the modern violin repertoire, the piece blends evocative lyricism with a deep sense of narrative and virtuosity, embracing expressive melodic writing while infusing contemporary harmonic textures. As with much of Shor's music, it carries an immediate emotional appeal, making it accessible to audiences while offering intricate technical challenges for the soloist.

Throughout the work's three movements, there is a distinct and ongoing conflict between the soloist and the orchestra, with the two vying for dominance across the duration of the piece, and with neither party allowed to gain any decisive advantage for too long. This is immediately noticeable from the concerto's first movement, which adopts a sonata form, and which bears many ominous moments, thereby setting the brooding tone that pervades through the rest of the composition. The soloist is given rapid, fiery passages interspersed with moments of lyrical reflection, reflecting a dynamic interplay between urgency and expressivity that is set against a rich orchestration.

The second section then, is characterised by an unusual structure, with a relatively slower intro and outro bookmarking a more vigorous middle segment than one would expect, mirroring the unsettling nature of the work. In contrast to the first movement's tension, the piece takes on a more lyrical and introspective nature here, showcasing Shor's gift for crafting memorable melodies, and drawing listeners into a world of contemplation while preparing them for the concerto's energetic final movement.

Written in the rondo style, this concluding section brings to the fore the underlying tug-of-war between the soloist and the orchestra that has been taking place throughout the entire piece. Bursting forth with rhythmic vitality, this rousing finale quotes motifs from the previous two movements, as the melody expands, contracts, and gets passed around between the orchestra and the soloist in an encapsulating play of lyricism and virtuosity. Featuring rapid-fire violin runs, and lively dialogues between the soloist and orchestra, this movement brings the concerto to an exhilarating conclusion, with listeners left feeling both uplifted and energised.

**Julian Francalanza**

## Valeriy Sokolov



Winner of the George Enescu International Violin Competition, Ukrainian violinist Valeriy Sokolov regularly collaborates with the Philharmonia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestre de Paris, under esteemed conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Zinman, Susanna Mälkki, Andris Nelsons and Charles Dutoit. He has appeared at many major festivals including Verbier, Lockenhaus and Lucerne, and performs in major concert halls around the world including the Théâtre du Châtelet, Wigmore Hall, Lincoln Center, Teatro alla Scala, Mariinsky Theatre, Prinzregententheater in Munich and Musikverein in Vienna. He has collaborated with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo for multiple concerts, and serves as artist-in-residence with the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini, engaging in orchestral and chamber projects. Sokolov's repertoire includes the Sibelius violin concerto, showcased in recordings and live performances worldwide, reflecting his versatility and artistry.

## Nurie Chung



South Korean violinist Nurie Chung was awarded Second Prize at the 2021 Premio Paganini International Violin Competition in Genoa, Italy, at the age of 16. He was also awarded two more special prizes; one for best performance of the commissioned piece, and the other for the youngest finalist. Chung studied with Nam Yun Kim at the Korea National Institute for the Gifted in Arts, and has won many international and national competitions, including First Prize at the Il Piccolo Violino Magico in Italy in 2016, and the Grand Prize across all categories of the 2016 Euroasia young violin competition in Japan. Recent highlights include a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* with the Orchestra San Marco, and an appearance at the Festival Musicale Le vie del Barocco which was broadcast on Radiotelevizija Slovenija. He also recently appeared with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra at the Malta International Arts Festival, and the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra at the InClassica Dubai International Music Festival.



## Marc Bouchkov



Photo: Nikolaj Lund

Belgian violinist Marc Bouchkov is celebrated for his profound expression and musical depth. With performances at international prestigious concert halls, including Wigmore Hall, Teatro alla Scala and Carnegie Hall, he has captivated audiences with his emotive performances. Bouchkov has collaborated with orchestras such as the Münchner Philharmoniker and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under conductors including Christoph Eschenbach and Mariss Jansons. A fine chamber musician, he is a regular guest of the Verbier Festival (Switzerland). A winner of numerous top honours, including a gold medal at the Concours musical international de Montréal and a silver medal at the International Tchaikovsky Competition, Bouchkov's talent is widely recognised. Alongside his performing career, he shares his expertise as a professor at the Conservatoire royal de Liège. Bouchkov's musical journey is enriched by his dedication to excellence and passion for connecting with audiences worldwide. Bouchkov's performance on this album was played on a violin by Carlo and Michelangelo Bergonzi on loan from Edwulstrad RMIC Ltd.

[www.bouchkov.com](http://www.bouchkov.com)

## Dmitry Yablonsky



Photo: Lusi Sargsyan

Born in Moscow, Dmitry Yablonsky is a GRAMMY Award-nominated cellist and conductor. His career has taken him to Carnegie Hall, Teatro alla Scala and Théâtre Mogador, among other such celebrated venues. As a conductor he has worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM, Mexico, and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2010 he received the Diploma of Honorary Academician at the Independent Academy of Liberal Arts at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He has transcribed and edited works for cello which have been published by the International Music Company and Dover Publications. In 2008 Naxos released his recording of Popper's *Forty Études* for solo cello (8.557718–19) to critical acclaim. He is a professor at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University and has served as artistic director of the Wandering Stars Music Festival in Israel since 2019. Yablonsky is currently music director of Kyiv Virtuosi. He plays two cellos, a Joseph Guarnerius, filius Andrea and a Matteo Goffriller.

[www.dmitryablonsky.com](http://www.dmitryablonsky.com)

## Sergey Smbatyan



Sergey Smbatyan is the artistic director and principal conductor of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra and principal conductor of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra. Born into a family of musicians, Smbatyan took his first steps in the world of classical music under the guidance of his grandmother Tatyana Hayrapetyan, a distinguished violin teacher, followed by studies at the Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan and Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory. In 2012, he furthered his academic journey at the Royal Academy of Music, studying under Sir Colin Davis. Smbatyan serves as the artistic director of a number of annual music festivals, as well as the Khachaturian International Competition. He is the founder of the Music for Future Foundation (M4FF), which is committed to discovering young talented musicians and fostering their career advancement. Up until the 2024–25 season, he was principal guest conductor of the Berliner Symphoniker. Sergey Smbatyan was appointed as a UNICEF National Ambassador in 2023.

[www.sergeysmbatyan.com](http://www.sergeysmbatyan.com)

## John Warner



Photo: Benjamin Ealovega

John Warner is founder and artistic director of Orchestra for the Earth and music director of Oxford Opera. The 2023–24 season saw Warner debut with the Berliner Symphoniker, Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana, Slovak State Philharmonic and State Philharmonia of Armenia. He has also conducted the London Symphony Orchestra and BBC Philharmonic, and works with soloists such as Thomas Hampson, James Ehnes and Wu Wei. Equally at home in the opera house, recent invitations include Glyndebourne, Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía in Valencia and Opéra national de Paris. His pioneering work with Orchestra for the Earth takes him around Europe, giving a wide variety of concerts that bring together music and nature, collaborating with leading environmental artists, scientists and charities. A committed advocate of contemporary music, Warner has been invited to commission and conduct world premieres at the Philharmonie Luxembourg, Het Concertgebouw and, most recently, a residency at the Beijing Music Festival.

## Kyiv Virtuosi

Artistic Director and Chief Conductor: Dmitry Yablonsky



Based in the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv Virtuosi has gained national and international recognition from listeners and critics as one of the country's leading orchestras. With an average age of 30, this youthful ensemble unites talented musicians from all over Ukraine, most of whom are competition winners. The orchestra built its reputation by bringing Western music to Ukrainian audiences and has also become known for its collaborations with outstanding contemporary composers such as Krzysztof Penderecki, Valentin Silvestrov and Myroslav Skoryk. Many internationally acclaimed soloists and conductors have performed with the ensemble over the years. Under current artistic and musical director Dmitry Yablonsky, Kyiv Virtuosi continues to bring Ukrainian musical talent to audiences the world over, most recently to Switzerland, France, Spain and Azerbaijan, among other countries.



Alexey Shor's music is regularly performed at some of the world's most prestigious concert halls. His popularity comes from a signature style that includes neo-Classical clarity with a strong emphasis on lyricism and traditional harmonies, as can be heard in his *First Violin Concerto*. The *Second* and *Fifth Violin Concertos* are works that explore a spectrum of emotions, from profound sadness and loss, to exhilarating and uplifting passions, both of which require high levels of virtuosity from both soloist and orchestra.

Alexey  
**SHOR**  
(b. 1970)

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### Violin Concerto No. 1 'Seascapes' (2014, arr. 2015)

**17:13**

- |   |                         |      |
|---|-------------------------|------|
| 1 | I. Abandoned Lighthouse | 6:08 |
| 2 | II. Lonely Sail         | 4:07 |
| 3 | III. Gathering Storm    | 2:39 |
| 4 | IV. Summer Hail         | 4:19 |

### Violin Concerto No. 2 'Phantasms' (2018, arr. 2020)\*

**19:57**

- |   |                         |      |
|---|-------------------------|------|
| 5 | I. Dance of the Graces  | 7:57 |
| 6 | II. Elegy               | 4:45 |
| 7 | III. Flight of a Falcon | 7:15 |

### Violin Concerto No. 5 (2021, arr. 2021)\*

**24:24**

- |    |                       |      |
|----|-----------------------|------|
| 8  | I. Allegro incalzando | 8:40 |
| 9  | II. Andantino         | 7:49 |
| 10 | III. Allegro          | 7:55 |

All works are performed in the composer's arrangements with string orchestra

**\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

**Valeriy Sokolov 1-4, Nurie Chung 5-7, Marc Bouchkov 8-10, Violin**  
**Kyiv Virtuosi • Dmitry Yablonsky 1-4**  
**Sergey Smbatyan 5-7 • John Warner 8-10**

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Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd, 3rd Floor, Forum House, 41-51 Brighton Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 6YS, UK. info.NREU@naxos.com

Contact: Naxos Deutschland Musik & Video Vertriebs-GmbH, Gruber Str. 46b, DE-85586 Poing, Germany. info@naxos.de