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Alexey  
**SHOR**

## **Composer's Notebook • 6**

**Cello Concertos Nos. 2 and 3**

**Humoresque • Two Songs for My Kids**

**Narek Hakhnazaryan, Dmitry Yablonsky, Cello**

**Kyiv Virtuosi**

**Sergey Smbatyan • Daniel Raiskin**

## Alexey Shor (b. 1970)

### Composer's Notebook • 6

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)



## **Cello Concerto No. 2**

Composed in 2021 during one of the Covid-19-imposed lockdowns, *Cello Concerto No. 2* can almost be regarded as a partner piece to *Violin Concerto No. 5*, in the sense that both were conceived in the throes of a global pandemic, and both exhibit a darker tone when compared to Alexey Shor's wider *oeuvre*.

The first movement opens with a lush orchestral introduction which features many of the work's primary motifs in different instruments, while also planting the seeds for the musical ideas that will be developed across the course of the concerto's three movements. Once the cello enters, it immediately engages in a constant dialogue with the orchestra that will be maintained throughout, with the two parties acting as equal partners in the piece.

The second movement is characterised by a tragic and melancholic tone, spearheaded by the register of the cello. Leading up to the cadenza, the cello goes from the lowest note of the piece to the highest in the span of a single measure, and the movement ends with the cello crying mournfully in a high register.

For the concerto's final part, there is a return to the themes of the first movement. Written in the rondo form, this movement alternates between the ominous main motif of the concerto and a series of soaring melodies, with high virtuosic demands being made of the soloist for this finale.

## **Cello Concerto No. 3**

*Cello Concerto No. 3* is a captivating and emotionally rich addition to the contemporary concerto repertoire, which is characterised by lyrical melodies, rich harmonies and virtuosic writing for the soloist, seamlessly blending classical traditions with modern sensibilities in a way that makes it both accessible and deeply expressive.

The concerto opens with an *Allegro* movement, setting the stage with an energetic and rhythmically engaging orchestral introduction before the cello enters with a soaring theme. Shor's signature melodic style is evident here, with the soloist weaving through passages of tenderness and brilliance, supported by a prominent orchestral texture. The interplay between soloist and orchestra showcases the cello's full expressive range, from delicate nuances to powerful statements.

The second movement is the emotional heart of the concerto. Here, Shor crafts a deeply introspective and lyrical landscape, where the cello's warm and soulful voice takes centre stage. The orchestration is delicately balanced, allowing the solo line to sing with a vocal quality, reminiscent of a heartfelt aria. The movement's poignant harmonies and evocative phrasing create a sense of intimacy and reflection, drawing the listener into a world of profound beauty and emotion.

The final movement then bursts forth with lively energy and rhythmic vitality. Marked by playful dialogues between the soloist and the orchestra, this movement showcases Shor's ability to combine technical brilliance with engaging melodic material, as the cello navigates rapid passages, dazzling runs and dynamic contrasts, culminating in a thrilling conclusion that leaves an exhilarating impression on listeners.

## **Humoresque**

Counted among the earliest works in Alexey Shor's composing career, *Humoresque* is a charming and spirited piece for cello and string orchestra, blending lyricism with a noticeable light-hearted wit. The composition takes inspiration from the traditional humoresque form – a style characterised by playfulness and humour – while also embracing Shor's signature melodic elegance and accessible tonal language.

The cello assumes a central role here, engaging in a lively dialogue with the orchestral strings. The music unfolds in a series of contrasting sections, balancing expressive, song-like passages with moments of buoyant energy. Shor's harmonic palette is rich yet direct, evoking a warm and inviting sound world that captivates listeners with its sincerity.

While *Humoresque* carries an undeniable sense of joy, there are also hints of nostalgia woven into its melodic contours. The interplay between whimsical gestures and heartfelt lyricism gives the piece a unique emotional depth, making it a rewarding experience for both performers and audiences. Furthermore, as with much of Shor's music, *Humoresque* bridges classical tradition with a contemporary sensibility, offering a work that is both sophisticated and delightfully engaging.

## **Two Songs for My Kids**

As in the case of *Humoresque*, *Two Songs for My Kids* also hails back to the very beginning of Alexey Shor's journey as a composer, and similarly embraces a more stylistically straightforward musical language. In spite of this, however, each of these two short pieces, or songs, contain a sense of powerful profundity within them, as Shor explores the theme of fatherhood, delving into what is easily one of the most momentous periods of anyone's life.

*Lullaby for Mark* was written for the composer's son, a notoriously poor sleeper at the time. The piece is a musical embrace; a quiet hope that perhaps music can soothe where words and traditional lullabies fail. A tender and evocative piece that captures the essence of warmth, nostalgia and serenity, the work unfolds as a heartfelt musical embrace, with the cello singing a gentle, flowing melody, supported by a lush yet understated orchestral texture.

Throughout the piece, Shor employs subtle shifts in harmony and orchestration to create a sense of warmth and gentle movement, as if rocking a child to sleep, employing a harmonic language that is rich but never overwhelming.

As the lullaby progresses, moments of delicate counterpoint and expressive phrasing highlight the cello's lyrical qualities. The interplay between the soloist and orchestra remains intimate and tender, with the music unfolding in a natural, song-like arc. There is no sense of hurry, only a profound sense of peace and reassurance, leading to a gentle and touching conclusion.

Composed on the very day that Shor's daughter, Natalie, was born, *Natalie's Waltz* represents an attempt to capture the joy and tenderness of this overwhelming moment. A charming and elegant piece that embraces the essence of a traditional waltz while infusing it with a distinctly lyrical and nostalgic character, the work evokes a sense of grace and heartfelt emotion.

The waltz begins with a delicate and flowing melody in the solo cello, supported by a rich harmonic tapestry in the orchestra. Shor's signature melodic sensibility is already apparent here, as the theme unfolds with warmth and expressivity, reminiscent of the grand ballroom waltzes of the Romantic era. The interplay between the soloist and the orchestra creates a conversation of longing and joy, alternating between sweeping phrases and intimate, delicate passages.

As the piece progresses, the thematic material is developed with a blend of variation and repetition, leading to moments of heightened intensity before resolving into a serene and wistful conclusion. The music ultimately leaves the listener with a sense of both nostalgia and quiet joy, as if reflecting on a cherished memory.

**Julian Francalanza**

## Narek Hakhnazaryan



Since winning the First Prize and Gold Medal at the XIV International Tchaikovsky Competition at the age of 22, cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan has performed with most major orchestras and in recitals across the globe in the world's most prestigious venues. Hakhnazaryan has performed with orchestras such as the Orchestre de Paris, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Wiener Symphoniker, hr-sinfonieorchester, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, LA Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra, with conductors such as Valery Gergiev, Vladimir Jurowski, Jakub Hrůša, Marin Alsop, Hannu Lintu, Jiří Bělohlávek, Tugan Sokhiev, Manfred Honeck, Gianandrea Noseda, Tomáš Netopil and Paavo Järvi, among others. Hakhnazaryan has been awarded an honorable Movses Khorenatsi medal for outstanding achievements in the field of culture and the title of Honoured Artist of Armenia. Hakhnazaryan was mentored by Mstislav Rostropovich.

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

## Dmitry Yablonsky



Photo: Lusi Sargsyan

Born in Moscow, GRAMMY Award-nominated cellist and conductor Dmitry Yablonsky's 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)

## Daniel Raiskin



Conductor Daniel Raiskin cultivates a broad repertoire, and often looks beyond the mainstream in his strikingly conceived programmes. He has served as chief conductor of the Slovenská filharmónia since the 2020/21 season. In addition, he has been music director of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra since August 2018, and principal guest conductor of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra since the 2017/18 season. Regular guest appearances include the Athens State Orchestra, Copenhagen Phil, Düsseldorfer Symphoniker, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Japan Century Symphony Orchestra, Kanagawa Philharmonic Orchestra, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Mozarteum-orchester Salzburg, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México and NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, among many others. [www.danielraiskin.com](http://www.danielraiskin.com)

## Kyiv Virtuosi

Artistic Director and Chief Conductor: Dmitry Yablonsky



Photo: Pino Giannini

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.

[www.kyivvirtuosi.org](http://www.kyivvirtuosi.org)

The two cello concertos in this volume (*Cello Concerto No. 1* is on 8.579142) reveal both the lighter and darker sides of Alexey Shor's musical imagination. *Concerto No. 2* was composed during a Covid-19 lockdown, and for all its lushness and soaring melodies, displays a profoundly melancholic element rare in Shor's oeuvre. The *Cello Concerto No. 3* is a captivating, lyrical and harmonically rich addition to the repertoire. The charming *Humoresque* is an early work bridging Classical tradition with contemporary sensibility.

Alexey  
**SHOR**  
(b. 1970)

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	<b>Cello Concerto No. 2</b> (2021, arr. 2022)	<b>27:34</b>
1	<b>I. Maestoso – Allegro deciso</b>	11:10
2	<b>II. Andante</b>	8:10
3	<b>III. Allegro</b>	8:14
	<b>Cello Concerto No. 3</b> (2022)	<b>23:37</b>
4	<b>I. Allegro</b>	9:18
5	<b>II. Elegy: Lento – Più mosso – Lento</b>	8:37
6	<b>III. Allegro</b>	5:42
7	<b>Humoresque</b> (2019)	<b>2:04</b>
	<b>Two Songs for My Kids</b> (2013, arr. 2022)	<b>5:45</b>
8	<b>No. 1. Lullaby for Mark</b>	2:58
9	<b>No. 2. Natalie's Waltz</b>	2:47

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

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

**Narek Hakhnazaryan 1–6, Dmitry Yablonsky 7–9, Cello  
Kyiv Virtuosi**

**Sergey Smbatyan 1–3 7–9 • Daniel Raiskin 4–6**

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