



Alexey
SHOR

Composer's Notebook • 4

Cello Concerto No. 1 'Musical Pilgrimage'

Violin Concerto No. 3 'The Four Seasons of Manhattan'

Phoenix • Schubertango

Alexander Chaushian, Cello

Zia Hyunsu Shin, Dumitru Pocitari, Kristóf Baráti, Violin

Kyiv Virtuosi

John Warner • Massimiliano Caldi • Dmitry Yablonsky

Alexey Shor (b. 1970)

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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



Cello Concerto No. 1 ‘Musical Pilgrimage’

‘*Musical Pilgrimage*’ is an intriguing concerto in three movements composed by Alexey Shor in 2018. As its name suggests, the work takes the form of a musical journey, carrying listeners around with it on a tour spread out across genres and epochs, with various ‘stops’ inspired by the composer’s own favourite musical styles. While the music pays homage to various styles from the past, it is not, however, trying to emulate these old styles in an authentic manner but rather presents them through the eyes of a modern individual, allowing for further freedom and creativity. For this reason, although the concerto takes inspiration from the Baroque and Classical eras, the ultimate result is a work that would never have existed within those epochs.

Displaying a strong emphasis on melodies and traditional harmony, as is typical of Shor’s approach to contemporary music, the work’s first movement starts in a very neo-Classical manner but in a few minutes turns to a style more characteristic of the 19th-century virtuosic showpieces. Shortly after, the music shifts once more, becoming reminiscent of the Baroque, followed by a recapitulation of the opening ‘Classical’ themes before it then turns to a virtuosic coda.

This juxtaposition of various styles continues throughout the piece, with a highly emotional and tense second movement, where the cello dominates over the orchestra for long stretches, followed by a final movement that offers listeners a different play on the tango. Presented in a very unusual metre for a tango, the movement is scored in a manner that is far closer to the Classical style than one would usually expect from a tango, neatly tying off this unique musical exploration in the most fitting way possible.

Violin Concerto No. 3 ‘The Four Seasons of Manhattan’

Building on a strong tradition of so-called ‘seasonal’ sets of music, made most famous by Antonio Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* and Astor Piazzolla’s *Las cuatro estaciones porteñas*, Alexey Shor adds to this history with his own contemporary take on a musical piece inspired by the seasons. Whereas Vivaldi’s work paints a vivid picture of the changing seasons in the Italian countryside, and Piazzolla’s pieces capture the essence of Buenos Aires, Shor updates this tradition to his own time and place, with the *Violin Concerto No. 3* turning the focus on the bustling metropolis of Manhattan, the heart and soul of the United States of America’s most famous and populous city.

On the surface, the four-movement work ostensibly evokes the changing seasons of the famous borough, but Shor does not simply attempt to provide a musical description of the scene, choosing instead to present a very personal approach to this seasonal shift in a composition that has been noted for its accessibility and emotional depth.

In fact, the predominantly melancholic work encompasses a variety of themes within its four disparate sections, exhibiting memorable melodies, shimmering orchestral textures and a virtuosic yet highly emotive solo violin part, as it builds up to its concluding *Spring* that sheds a firm ray of light upon proceedings, allowing listeners a hopeful glimpse of an optimistic future to come.

Phoenix – Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra

Alexey Shor’s *Phoenix* violin fantasy is a short, captivating piece structured as a rhapsodic fantasy that unfolds in a series of contrasting episodes, seamlessly blending introspective sections with moments of virtuosic brilliance. Standing as a testament to the composer’s skill in creating music that is both deeply emotive and technically demanding, the work opens with a contemplative *Andante*, the violin’s expressive, soaring lines emerge against a backdrop of muted strings, setting a reflective and intimate tone.

As it develops, Shor’s masterful use of motivic variation becomes apparent, with the solo violin alternating between poignant melodies and complex technical displays, interwoven with richly textured string accompaniments. Rhythmically, the work also displays a dynamic variety, with the juxtaposition of lyrical, flowing sections and energetic and rhythmically intricate passages, as the tempo moves from the measured *Andante* to the exuberant *Vivace*.

The emotional core of the work lies in its ability to evoke a sense of renewal and transformation, mirroring the mythical phoenix of its title, crafted thanks to the poignant and lyrical qualities of Shor’s music. Ultimately, the piece concludes with a serene and introspective coda, offering a sense of resolution and calm.

Crystal Palace – Frozen Garden Waltz

Composed as part of Alexey Shor's ballet, *Crystal Palace*, which premiered to great success back in 2017, *Frozen Garden Waltz* is another short, evocative work that in this case, manages to perfectly capture the fragile beauty and stillness of a winter landscape.

Opening on an introspective tone, the work's melodic material is characterised by lyrical lines that float gracefully over an ever-changing harmonic landscape, imbued with a sense of ethereal longing. The tonal framework oscillates between warmth and coolness, symbolising the interplay of life and stasis within the garden, while the work's waltz-inspired passages give it a sense of hidden vitality beneath the stillness, suggesting the quiet pulse of nature persisting through the frost.

As the piece unfolds, the music grows more impassioned, with richer textures and a gradual build-up of intensity. The climactic passages feature sweeping melodic gestures and fuller orchestration, which culminates in a serene and reflective coda, where the music gently recedes, leaving listeners with a lingering sense of wonder.

Saint Elmo Barcarolle

Working within a style that traces its roots to the folk songs sung by Venetian gondoliers, this composition by Alexey Shor is a gentle, lyrical work that wholeheartedly embraces the tradition within which it resides.

Written in 4/4, which is not characteristic of this style, the piece nevertheless exudes an air of tranquillity throughout, with the solo violin taking centre stage across its entirety, delivering a warm and expressive melody that unfolds over a rich harmonic backdrop provided by the string orchestra. The violin's cantabile lines evoke the undulating motion of water, while the work's rhythmic framework similarly mirrors the gentle rocking of a boat. This rhythm, combined with the mellifluous melodic lines, evokes a timeless quality, transporting the listener to a tranquil and meditative space.

As the piece progresses, the music builds toward a luminous climax before subsiding into a serene and introspective conclusion. The final moments leave the listener with a lingering sense of peace, as the barcarolle gently fades away, like the last echoes of an evening on the water.

Schubertango

Alexey Shor's *Schubertango* is a delightful reimagining of some of Franz Schubert's most beloved melodies, presented here in the style of tango. Offering a uniquely exhilarating musical experience, the work offers a playful rearrangement of the Austrian composer's music, seamlessly blending his melodic elegance with the tango's fiery passion, thereby creating a sound world that feels both timeless and fresh.

As the piece progresses, listeners are guided through a dynamic interplay of contrasting moods, with the music oscillating between moments of reflective melancholy and bursts of exuberant energy. Schubert's melodies remain at the forefront across the composition, but the rhythmic vitality of tango simultaneously permeates all throughout the work, with sharp accents and syncopated motifs that mimic the percussive elements of traditional tango ensembles. Against this rhythmic backdrop, the violin soars with melodic freedom, creating a lush harmonic landscape that underscores the emotional depth of the work.

Ultimately, *Schubertango* is a celebration of contrasts, with the refinement of Schubert's classical melodies meeting the raw intensity of tango's passion, and its daring and imaginative approach continues to linger deeply within the mind long after the last note has been played.

Julian Francalanza

Alexander Chaushian



Recognised as one of the premier cellists of his generation, Alexander Chaushian has graced prestigious venues worldwide with solo performances alongside esteemed orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Wiener Kammerorchester. His captivating renditions have been heard in renowned venues such as London's Royal Festival Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York. A laureate of esteemed competitions, including the International Tchaikovsky Competition, Chaushian pursued his musical education in Armenia, the UK and Germany, graduating with distinction from the Hochschule Berlin. He is artistic director of the International Pharos Chamber Music Festival in Cyprus and the Yerevan International Music Festival in Armenia. Chaushian's recordings, made in collaboration with luminaries including Yehudi Menuhin and Julia Fischer, have garnered critical acclaim, most notably with pianist Yevgeny Sudbin. His recent extensive concert schedule has included performances across Europe, Asia and the Americas, affirming his place among the world's elite cellists.

Zia Hyunsu Shin



Violinist Zia Hyunsu Shin has built up her reputation at a breathtaking speed. She has been awarded top prizes in all the major international competitions, including the Long-Thibaud International Competition, the Premio Paganini International Violin Competition, the Tibor Varga International Violin Competition, the International Jean Sibelius Violin Competition, the Joseph Joachim International Violin Competition Hannover, the International Tchaikovsky Competition and the Queen Elisabeth Competition. Shin has appeared as a soloist with conductors including Iván Fischer and Daniel Harding, and orchestras such as the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, D.C.), Orchestra Philharmonique de Radio France, Helsingin kaupunginorkesteri, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, Osaka Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Kyoto Symphony Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Taipei Symphony Orchestra, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and the KBS Symphony Orchestra. She has also collaborated with the St Michel Strings (Mikkelin kaupunginorkesteri).

www.zia-hyunsu-shin.com

Dumitru Pocitari



Born in 1991 in Moldova, Dumitru Pocitari started his music studies at the age of seven. Between 2000 and 2012 he won numerous prizes and medals at international violin competitions in the United Arab Emirates, Romania, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. He has participated in masterclasses with Eduard Wulfson, Bujor Prelipcean, Sherban Lupu, Zakhar Bron, Julian Rachlin, Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider and Pinchas Zukerman. Pocitari has appeared as a soloist with conductors such as Zubin Mehta and Vladimir Spivakov in venues including the Philharmonie Berlin, Musikverein Wien Golden Hall, Smetana Hall in Prague and the Grand Hall of the Liszt Academy, and as a chamber musician has performed with pianists Martha Argerich, Fazıl Say and Yefim Bronfman. Concertmaster of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra since 2019, in 2022 he won the 'Classic Strings' International Competition and received two special prizes. Pocitari plays on a violin made by G.B. Guadagnini in 1755.

Kristóf Baráti



Kristóf Baráti was born in Budapest, but spent a large part of his childhood in Venezuela. A prizewinner of the Long-Thibaud and Queen Elisabeth competitions, he won the Paganini Competition in Moscow in 2010. Considered to be one of the finest violinists on the international scene, he performs in prestigious concert halls around the world and at leading festivals, with many of the major orchestras. In 2016 he made a sensational debut at the Verbier Festival and has since been back every year. Baráti has recorded extensively for major labels, with his discography including Paganini's violin concertos, Bach's complete music for solo violin, Beethoven's sonatas for violin and piano, Korngold's violin concerto and Mozart's violin concertos. In recent years he has also been more active as a conductor. He has received several awards, including the Kossuth Prize, the most prestigious distinction in his native Hungary. Baráti is head of the string department at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. He plays the 1703 'Lady Harmsworth' violin, kindly provided by the Stradivari Society of Chicago.

www.kristofbarati.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

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.

Massimiliano Caldi



Photo: Dariusz Kulesza

Winner of the Grzegorz Fitelberg International Competition for Conductors in 1999, Massimiliano Caldi is active as a conductor in both Italy and Poland, and in 2018 was awarded the Gazzetta Italia Prize for the cross promotion of Italian and Polish music within both countries. From 2021 to 2023 he conducted recitals across Italy at the Teatro alla Scala, Teatro La Fenice and Teatro Petruzzelli, and in 2023 and 2024 led two new opera productions at the Opera i Filharmonia Podlaska in Białystok, Poland, directed by Michał Znaniecki. From 2006 to 2022 Caldi held conducting positions across Poland at the philharmonic orchestras of Katowice, Gdańsk, Koszalin and Rzeszów. In recent years he has also been invited to lead orchestras such as the Konzerthaus Kammerorchester Berlin, St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Istanbul State Symphony Orchestra, İzmir State Symphony Orchestra, Baltic Opera (Gdańsk) and Sinfonia Varsovia.

www.massimilianocaldi.it

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

Memorable melodies and a descriptive sense of place mark out Alexey Shor's two concertos. The *Cello Concerto* juxtaposes styles across the epochs in pursuit of a unique 'musical pilgrimage', while in the *Violin Concerto No. 3* his focus is on 'seasonal' Manhattan, as he adds a contemporary vision to the historical precedents set by Vivaldi and Piazzolla. *Phoenix* is a rhapsodic fantasy, lyrical and full of variation, which evokes a sense of renewal and transformation, while *Schubertango* offers a celebration of playful contrasts.

Alexey SHOR

(b. 1970)

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Cello Concerto No. 1 'Musical Pilgrimage' (2018, arr. 2019) **21:04**

- 1 I. Allegro** 9:31
- 2 II. Adagio** 7:14
- 3 III. Ritmico** 4:13

Violin Concerto No. 3 'The Four Seasons of Manhattan' (2020, arr. 2021) **21:13**

- 4 I. Summer: Allegro** 6:29
- 5 II. Autumn: Andante lacrimoso** 6:04
- 6 III. Winter: Andante lacrimoso** 4:28
- 7 IV. Spring: Allegro** 5:05

8 Phoenix – Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra (2021, arr. 2022) **13:01**

9 Crystal Palace – Frozen Garden Waltz (2017, arr. 2022) **3:24**

10 Saint Elmo Barcarolle (2015, arr. 2022) **5:11**

11 Schubertango (2013, arr. 2022) **3:33**

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

Alexander Chaushian, Cello 1–3 • Zia Hyunsu Shin, Violin 4–7

Dumitru Pocitari, Violin 8 • Kristóf Baráti, Violin 9–11

Kyiv Virtuosi • John Warner 1–3

Massimiliano Caldi 4–7 • Dmitry Yablonsky 8–11

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