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Shostakovich Five

Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Fri 2 Oct 2026 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
Sat 3 Oct 7.30pm

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Shostakovich Five

Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 2 Oct 2026 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 3 Oct 7.30pm

In Stalin's Russia, music really was a matter of life and death. Written under political oppression, Shostakovich gambled everything on his Fifth Symphony, and when it was first played, the audience wept – and then cheered. Make no mistake, this is a musical thriller with a devastating emotional punch, and tonight Principal Guest Conductor Patrick Hahn sets the scene with another Cold War classic, Schnittke's haunting Viola Concerto, with the brilliant Lawrence Power as soloist. Expect shadows, secrets and some powerful surprises.

J S BACH arr. STOKOWSKI Komm, süßer Tod BWV 478 [4']

SCHNITTKE Viola Concerto [35']

INTERVAL

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No5 in D Minor Op47 [46']

Patrick Hahn Conductor

Lawrence Power Viola

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

The Glasgow performance will be recorded for the RSNO Archive.
Supported by the Iain and Pamela Sinclair Legacy.

If viewing these notes at the concert, please do so considerately and not during performances.

**Please silence all mobile telephones and alerts, and refrain from taking photographs,
without flash, until the end of each piece.**

The logo for the Scotland's National Orchestra (RSNO) is displayed in a large, white, serif font. The letters 'R', 'S', and 'N' are connected, and the 'O' is a simple circle. The background of the entire poster is a stylized illustration of a city skyline at sunset or sunrise, with a prominent water tower and industrial buildings silhouetted against a sky with horizontal bands of orange, red, and pink.

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Welcome

Thank you for joining us this evening, for what is the first of two concerts this month featuring symphonies by Shostakovich.

I'd like to welcome Principal Guest Conductor Patrick Hahn for his first concert of the 2026:27 Season. However, some of you may have already seen Patrick lead the Orchestra on Thursday night as part of the Sonica Festival at Glasgow's Tramway in Philip Glass' *Bowie* Symphony, where he was joined by visual artist Tatsuru Arai. Tonight's programme is a little different, with the fantastic violist Lawrence Power taking the spotlight in Alfred Schnittke's extraordinary concerto – we are definitely in for a treat!

On Sunday afternoon Lawrence is back with us in Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's New Auditorium for a matinee with five of the RSNO's string players. They will perform a programme of Brahms and Schoenberg, and I thoroughly recommend you join us – it will be something quite special.

Those of you joining us in Glasgow this evening will have had the opportunity to see the young musicians of the Music School of Douglas Academy performing in a pre-concert showcase. It is an important part of our commitment as a National Performing Company to nurture upcoming talent, and this is just one of the many ways in which we do this alongside our extensive engagement work. It's always a pleasure to welcome these young people onto the stage and see them flourish.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy tonight's performance.

Alistair Mackie

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Royal Scottish National Orchestra



Formed in 1891, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. Awarded royal patronage by Her Late Majesty The Queen in 1977, its special status in the UK's cultural life was cemented in 2007 when it was recognised as one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies, supported by the Scottish Government.

Led by Music Director Thomas Søndergård, the Orchestra performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms. The RSNO tours internationally, most recently visiting China and Europe. In May 2026, Giedrė Šlekytė was announced as the RSNO's Music Director Designate and will formally become Music Director from the beginning of the 2027:28 Season, with Thomas Søndergård taking on the new position of Music Director Emeritus.

The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving a 2020 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Chopin's Piano Concertos (soloist: Benjamin Grosvenor), conducted by Elim Chan, two Diapason d'Or awards (Denève/Roussel 2007; Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight GRAMMY Award nominations. In recent years, the RSNO has cultivated an international reputation for world-class film, television and videogame soundtrack recording. The Orchestra has recorded for BAFTA-winning

series *Silo* (Apple TV) and worked with the likes of GRAMMY Award-winning composer Lorne Balfe on *Life on Our Planet* (Netflix). Other notable titles include *Nuremberg* (Sony Pictures), *Now You See Me: Now You Don't* (Lionsgate), *Horizon: An American Saga* (Warner Bros) and *Star Wars Outlaws* (Ubisoft). The Orchestra records at its bespoke in-house facility in Glasgow, Scotland's Studio. In 2026 the RSNO was the first professional orchestra since 2014 to be awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Ensemble Award. The award recognises musical ensembles for outstanding quality and scope of performances and work.

The RSNO believes that music can enrich lives and aims to inspire, educate and entertain people throughout Scotland and beyond with its performances, recordings and engagement programmes. Supporting schools, families, young professionals and wider communities, the RSNO delivers high-quality initiatives for all ages and abilities. The RSNO's engagement offering includes its singing strand, encompassing a Buggy Choir and Chorus Academy in both Dundee and Glasgow and a lunchtime Workplace Choir, which complements the well-established and highly respected RSNO Youth Choruses and RSNO Chorus. The community choruses are designed with the benefits of group singing for health and wellbeing at their core and are open to all.

On Stage

FIRST VIOLIN

Maya Iwabuchi
LEADER
Shlomy Dobrinsky
ASSOCIATE LEADER
Tamás Fejes
ASSISTANT LEADER
Patrick Curlett
Liu-Yi Retallick
Veronica Marziano
Susannah Lowdon
Caroline Parry
Elizabeth Bamping
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Alan Manson
Helena Rose
Wen Wang

SECOND VIOLIN

Marion Wilson
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Kirstin Drew
Anne Bünemann
Colin McKee
Robin Wilson
Paul Medd
Emily Nenniger
Sophie Lang
Seona Glen
Gary Ngan
Sophie Sild

VIOLA

Felix Tanner
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Asher Zaccardelli
Beth Woodford
Francesca Hunt
Nicola McWhirter
Claire Dunn
Maria Trittinger
Katherine Wren
David McCreadie

CELLO

Pei-Jee Ng
PRINCIPAL
Betsy Taylor
Kennedy Leitch
Yuuki Bouterey-Ishido
Rachael Lee
Sarah Digger
Robert Anderson
Gunda Baranauskaitė

DOUBLE BASS

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PRINCIPAL
Ted Merritt
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Yat Hei Lee
Moray Jones
Alexandre Cruz dos Santos
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Patrick Hahn

Conductor



Patrick Hahn is Principal Guest Conductor of the RSNO and the BR Münchner Rundfunkorchester.

In the 2026/27 season, he conducts Barrie Kosky's production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Wiener Staatsoper, and new productions of Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* at Oper Frankfurt, directed by Damiano Michieletto, and Wagner's *Rienzi* at the Semperoper Dresden, directed by Eva-Maria Höckmayr. He also returns to the New National Theatre Tokyo for a revival of Jonathan Miller's production of Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Patrick's 2026/27 concert engagements include debut appearances with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, performances of Mahler's Symphony No.9 with the Berner Symphonieorchester and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and return invitations from the Wiener Symphoniker and RAI Torino with pianist Jan Lisiecki. He also returns to the RSNO and BR Münchner Rundfunkorchester as Principal Guest Conductor.

Highlights of recent seasons include engagements with the Münchner Philharmoniker, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and London Philharmonic Orchestra, alongside opera productions at the Opernhaus Zürich, Bayerische Staatsoper and Dutch National Opera.

Patrick's highly successful tenure as General Music Director in Wuppertal made a lasting impact over five seasons. He concluded his directorship with concert performances of Wagner's monumental Ring cycle across the 2025/26 season, featuring an internationally acclaimed cast including Catherine Foster, Benjamin Bruns, Michael Kupfer-Radecky and Karen Cargill.

Patrick's critically acclaimed discography includes an all-Gottfried von Einem album with the RSNO on Linn Records, and Ethel Smyth's *Der Wald* with the Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal for cpo, marking the opera's first-ever recording in its original German. Recordings of Zemlinsky's *Eine florentinische Tragödie* and Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with the Münchner Rundfunkorchester have been released on the BR Klassik label.

Alongside his classical career, Patrick performs the cabaret songs of Austrian satirist and composer Georg Kreisler, accompanying himself at the piano. An accomplished jazz pianist, he has received awards from the Chicago Jazz Festival and the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, where he was honoured with the Outstanding Soloist Award as Best Jazz Pianist at the 37th annual jazz festival.

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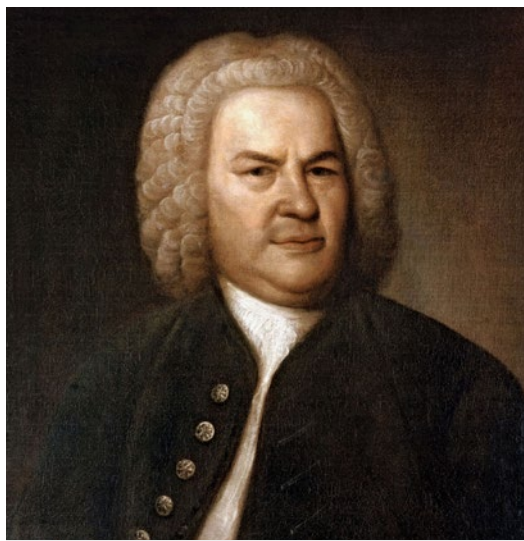


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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) arr. **Leopold Stokowski** (1882-1977)

Komm, süßer Tod

BWV 478



COMPOSED

1736; Stokowski arrangement 1946

DURATION 4 minutes

Polish-Irish Leopold Stokowski, born in Nether Wallop in Hampshire, emigrated in the 1930s to the USA, where he worked for most of his life. He was an extraordinary figure – a champion of modern music and a tireless arranger of pieces from earlier eras, such as Bach's *Toccatina and Fugue*, for full orchestra. His aim in both cases was to introduce classical music to as many people as possible. He was highly successful at it too, partly through the strength of his own personality, described variously as 'charismatic', 'seductive' and even 'magical' in terms of his effect on both audiences and orchestras. Something of a maverick, Stokowski could play fast and loose with older symphonic scores, which at times caused a certain amount of critical pearl-clutching. He did not revere the Western canon to the exclusion of other music, nor did he believe that 'canonical' works couldn't be bettered by a little Stokowski sheen.

His arrangement of Bach's *Komm, süßer Tod* (Come, sweet death) dates from 1946. It is a richly expressive work for orchestra, leaning fully into the pain and the longing for sweet release found in Johann Sebastian Bach's original piece. Bach composed it in 1736 as one of the 69 sacred songs and arias attributed to the composer (the volume was edited by Georg Christian Schemelli). The text is both heartbreaking and courageous, with its exhausted yet impassioned plea for death:

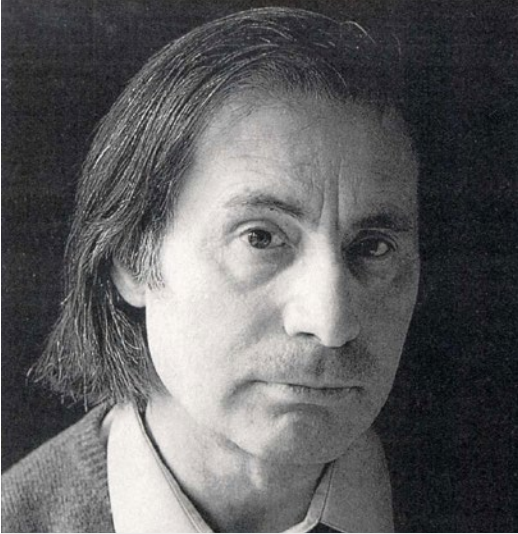
Come, sweet death, come, blessed rest!
Come lead me to peace
for I am weary of the world,
O come! I wait for you,
come soon and lead me,
close my eyes.
Come, blessed rest!

As a transcription of Bach's original song, it still divides critical opinion (a reviewer in recent years suggested that Stokowski 'soaked the original in dense orchestral syrup'). Yet others have admired its sincerity and seriousness, especially in the context of Stokowski's own era. While Bach's song was composed for a bass soloist with continuo accompaniment, Stokowski transforms the single voice into a collective entreaty. Given it was arranged and first performed only a year after the end of World War II, the arrangement takes on the quality of an elegy, or even a memorial.

© Lucy Walker

Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998)

Viola Concerto



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Amsterdam, 9 January 1986

DURATION 35 minutes

1. *Largo*
2. *Allegro molto*
3. *Largo*

Alfred Schnittke was one of the most individual of Soviet composers, a cat who very much walked by himself. No doubt this stemmed to some degree from a lifelong sense of being an outsider. He was born in 1934 to a Latvian-Jewish father and a Catholic-German mother in the city of Engels, a port on the Volga river that was a historical centre of German settlement, and his first language was German. At the age of 12 he spent two years with his parents in Vienna, where they felt equally alien. After a lengthy education at the Moscow Conservatoire, his early music largely consisted of film scores, of which he wrote 70. It was also there that he developed the technique of mixing various styles of music together, which he would then import into his 'serious' music to significant effect.

The inflexible Soviet musical establishment didn't really know what to make of this unbiddable composer who went his own way, and he was always marginal to that establishment (at least until it was too late to matter to him). His First Symphony, finished in 1974, was a baffling piece in an entirely new style, with quotations from 19th-century composers colliding (often simultaneously) with jazz improvisations, film music, café music. Machinations in the all-powerful Union of Composers meant the premiere wasn't permitted to be in Moscow, and instead happened in Gorky, hundreds of miles to the east (and the Symphony wasn't played in Moscow until 1984).

Schnittke's lifelong obsession was to 'unify serious music and light music', in an idiom he called polystylism. But this was at bottom a technique to allow the spiritual struggle that is at the heart of all his music to express itself: Schnittke was deeply religious, was baptised as a Roman Catholic in 1983, and was obsessed

with the figure of the devil. But it would be a mistake to identify the rather sweet strains, like something out of Johann Strauss, that feature prominently in his music, as representing unalloyed 'goodness', and likewise the many anguished passages are not necessarily about 'the devil'.

In the clubbish Soviet musical world, Schnittke had close relationships with the cream of performers, writing music for among others Gidon Kremer and Oleg Kagan (violin), Natalya Gutman and Mstislav Rostropovich (cello) – and the outstanding violist Yuri Bashmet, for whom the Viola Concerto was composed in 1984/5. It was these performers, when they performed abroad, who exported Schnittke's music to the West, where it became very popular in the 1980s.

Now, for centuries composers have entertained themselves by encoding their names – or those of others – into their music, and Schnittke was no exception: here, it is the name of Bashmet (using a complicated system of different musical notations) that lies inside the notes of a theme that pervades the Concerto. The name emerges as the notes B flat – A – E flat – C – B – E, a theme that emerges very near the beginning of the work (see below).

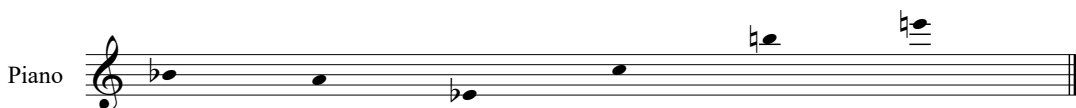
The solo viola launches the piece with a sort of tormented declaration, softening into a lyrical passage over harmonious chords that could almost be by Vaughan Williams, then returning to a growing sense of anguish leading to the shrieking climax – tailed off with the cutest pseudo-classical curlicue of a cadence.

And that is the first movement. The next two, in effect, go over the same ground at increasing length and depth, each movement longer than its predecessor. The second begins with frantic viola arpeggios over a bass derived from the Bashmet theme, with the feeling of silent horror-movie music. But nothing lasts very long in a movement packed with all kinds of very contrasting things: military music, café waltzes, most notably a long, increasingly sugary development of the classical cadence from the previous movement, and finally a cadenza for the soloist.

The last movement, in a much calmer way, continues the expansion and development with a sort of resigned air, the viola trying and not really succeeding in getting any themes going, or eliciting a response from the orchestra. There is a gloomy lyricism, but none of the passion of the second movement, and finally the Concerto decides to go nowhere at all but to ebb away in an endless chord, with odd pulses, that you feel could go on for ever.

Soon after finishing the Concerto, Schnittke suffered the first of many strokes that severely compromised the rest of his life. He wrote of the piece: 'Like a premonition of what was to come, the music took on the character of a restless chase through life (the second movement) and a slow and sad overview of life on the threshold of death (in the third).'

© Robert Thicknesse



Lawrence Power

Viola



Internationally acclaimed viola player Lawrence Power is widely praised for his richness of sound, technical mastery and advocacy for new music. Heralded by the *New York Times* as 'a musician on a mission to make us pay attention to the viola', Lawrence has advanced the cause of the instrument through outstanding performances as well as through the creation of the Viola Commissioning Circle. This pioneering initiative has inspired a significant body of new repertoire by today's leading composers.

Highlights of Lawrence's 2026/27 season include an Artist Residency at the Barbican Centre, featuring the London premiere of Anders Hillborg's Viola Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra; *Travellers' Tales*, a cross-arts collaboration with violinist Vilde Frang and creative director Jessie Rodger, bringing together music and film; a play-direct programme with his Collegium Orchestra; and a chamber programme with Ilya Gringolts, Nicolas Altstaedt and EXAUDI,

including the UK premiere of Cassandra Miller's *The Years*. Elsewhere, he makes his debut with the RSNO, Orchestre National de Lille, Tonkünstler-Orchester and Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra, marking his Japanese debut. Lawrence returns to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra for the world premiere of Anna Clyne's Viola Concerto, *Resonant Forms*, followed later in the season by its Australian premiere with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and performs Brahms' Double Concerto with Nicolas Altstaedt and the Tapiola Sinfonietta and Britten's Double Concerto with Vilde Frang and the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra.

Chamber music highlights include an appearance at Carnegie Hall, and duo recitals with long-standing collaborator Simon Crawford-Phillips in Madrid and Australia. Lawrence also enjoys play-directing from both violin and viola, with recent projects including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and a three-week tour with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)
Symphony No5
in D Minor Op47



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Leningrad, 21 November 1937

DURATION 46 minutes

1. **Moderato**
2. **Allegretto**
3. **Largo**
4. **Allegro non troppo**

Shostakovich's fractious relationship with the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin pushed the composer close to mental breakdown. Stalin had clear ideas about what artists in Soviet Russia should create. Composers in particular, he decreed, should write literal, uplifting and easily understandable music. There was no place for the brutal, the complex or the worrisome.

In 1934, ten years after Stalin came to power, Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* was first performed. A claustrophobic satire full of darkly expressionistic music, it ticked none of those boxes. Stalin's newspaper condemned the opera as 'muddle instead of music'. Shostakovich was in the firing line.

With his reputation in tatters and his life under threat, the composer quietly locked away in a drawer the score he was working on at the time – his ominous *Symphony No4*. In its place, he started work on a new symphony, his Fifth. It has since become the most performed and adored of the composer's 15 symphonies while remaining shrouded in ambiguity.

When the work was first performed in Leningrad, today's St Petersburg, in November 1937, it was cheered to the rafters. The composer described the piece as 'a Soviet artist's response to just criticism' while faintly touting it as 'a lengthy spiritual battle, crowned by victory'.

But Shostakovich was a master of diverting and distracting comments. He had to be. With the benefit of hindsight, of some knowledge of his views on Stalin, of comments made in private and of how seriously he took his art, it's easy to hear Shostakovich's Fifth as an act of defiance disguised as a gesture of compliance.

It helped that the work was a wordless, abstract symphony absolutely open to interpretation. The music appeared to channel the spirits of Beethoven and Mahler, doing so with clear themes and melodies (ostensibly, what Stalin wanted). Those themes do become complex, to a point. More interesting is the ambiguity of feeling in which Shostakovich envelops them.

The first two movements appear to look outwards to the world that immediately surrounded the composer. The opening, by turns menacing and drudging, presents a series of themes in the strings. Each of them tries to push upwards only to fall down again. The second movement, a folksy scherzo marked 'fairly brisk', has something of the vulgarity of street life in Soviet Russia.

In the slow third movement, Shostakovich begins to look inward. Brass instruments remain silent and strings are divided even within their sections. The music resembles a prayer; after incantations from oboe and clarinet, the orchestra musters in a moment of quivering intensity.

Shostakovich's striking final movement is the most likely to carry the sort of double meaning its composer was adept at conjuring. It resembles a monumental chase, in which Shostakovich plays the musical trick of having the tempo get faster and faster while actually ending up at the same speed – perhaps a metaphor for the plight of those who, during Stalin's reign of terror, could run but never hide.

Then there is Shostakovich's depiction of 'triumph'. Apparently, the composer privately described the Symphony's last movement as a satire on Stalin himself – deliberately hollow,

pumped up by disingenuous adulation. Brass and percussion are back, hammering home an apparent message of triumph in the Symphony's final pages. But it's the strings that draw more attention, slashing out a repeated note 'A' for seven whole pages of the score.

Commentators have described these relentless notes variously as 'brainwashing' or 'lashes on the backs of the Russian people'. Others have pointed to the sense of a 'mask of triumph' concealing unbearable pain. And Shostakovich himself? He eventually described the Symphony's ending as an 'irreparable tragedy'.

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