
RSNO
SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
RPS ROYAL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY
Winner
2026 RPS Ensemble Award
Shostakovich
Seven
Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Fri 30 Oct 2026 7.30pm
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
Sat 31 Oct 7.30pm
Caird Hall, Dundee
Sun 1 Nov 3pm


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Shostakovich
Seven

Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 30 Oct 2026 7.30pm
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 31 Oct 7.30pm
Caird Hall, Dundee Sun 1 Nov 3pm

As Hitler's armies surrounded the city of Leningrad, Dmitri Shostakovich composed his Seventh Symphony – a shout of courage, defiance and victory, written for massed battalions of musicians. Brace yourself for wartime drama on an heroic scale as Bassem Akiki conducts the RSNO in this sonic blockbuster: the climax of a concert that begins with Copland's show-stopping fanfare and stars a real RSNO favourite, Philippe Quint, in a violin concerto with a dazzling difference.

COPLAND Fanfare for the Common Man [3']
LERA AUERBACH Violin Concerto No1 Op56 [28'] *UK PREMIERE*

INTERVAL

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No7 in C Major Op60 *Leningrad* [70']

Bassem Akiki Conductor
Philippe Quint Violin
Musicians of Sinfonia Smith Square
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.

RSNO
SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Recommended by CLASSIC fM



Verdi Requiem

Edinburgh | Fri 6 Nov: 7.30pm
Glasgow | Sat 7 Nov: 7.30pm

Patrick Hahn Conductor | **Jennifer Davis** Soprano | **Deniz Uzun** Mezzo-soprano
Mario Lerchenberger Tenor | **Edwin Crossley-Mercer** Bass
RSNO Chorus | **Stephen Doughty** Director, RSNO Chorus
Edinburgh Festival Chorus | **James Grossmith** Director, Edinburgh Festival Chorus
Paul Whittaker BSL Performer

Supported by the **Jennie S. Gordon Memorial Foundation**

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Welcome

I'm delighted that musicians from Sinfonia Smith Square join the RSNO for today's concert, which features Shostakovich's overwhelming Seventh Symphony.

Sinfonia Smith Square's esteemed fellowship programme offers early-career musicians the chance to form a professional orchestra every year; that its alumni now perform all over the world is testament to the quality and calibre of the programme. In our own ranks we have several alumni, including First Violin Veronica Marziano and Double Bass Alexandre Cruz dos Santos, as well as Principal Oboe Adrian Wilson, who was a founding member of Sinfonia Smith Square in its previous incarnation, Southbank Sinfonia.

We are looking forward to more collaboration with Sinfonia Smith Square in 2027, which will bring musicians back to Scotland during the renovation of Smith Square Hall, their London home. I'd like to extend a big thank you to the Solti Foundation for facilitating this partnership. We're grateful not only for their continued financial support but also for the fantastic community and opportunities for collaboration they bring with them.

A little while ago now, I was invited to Warsaw by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute. During my visit I attended a performance of Penderecki's *The Black Mask*. I was so blown away by the charismatic conducting of Bassem Akiki in the pit that I had to invite him to Scotland. I am certain he will blow you away too!

Joining Bassem is Philippe Quint, a long-time friend of the Orchestra. He recorded Lera Auerbach's Violin Concerto No1 in Scotland's Studio with the RSNO, so it is a real pleasure to have him back with us to give the piece its UK performance premiere.

I hope you enjoy the concert.

Alistair Mackie
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Keep in touch with the RSNO

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rsno.org.uk

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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
Lena Zeliszewska
ASSOCIATE LEADER
Tamás Fejes
ASSISTANT LEADER
Cheryl Crockett
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Elizabeth Bamping
Lorna Rough
Susannah Lowdon
Alan Manson
Liam Lynch
Veronica Marziano
Momoko Arima
Sonja Tuomela +
Fiona Stephen
Maria Oguren

SECOND VIOLIN
Emily Davis
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Marion Wilson
Emily Nenniger
Paul Medd
Anne Bünemann
Sophie Lang
Robin Wilson
Kirstin Drew
Colin McKee
Kaylee Ramella
Ray Sun +
Seona Glen
Sophie Sild
Joe Hodson

VIOLA
Tom Dunn
PRINCIPAL
Asher Zaccardelli
Susan Buchan
Nicola McWhirter
Claire Dunn
Maria Trittinger
Francesca Hunt
Beth Woodford
Eugenia García Cuesta +
Henry Justo
Marsailidh Groat
Aoife Magee

CELLO
Pei-Jee Ng
PRINCIPAL
Betsy Taylor
Kennedy Leitch
Yuuki Bouterey-Ishido
Rachael Lee
Sarah Digger
Robert Anderson
Gunda Baranauskaitė
Tahee Kim +
Sonia Cromarty

DOUBLE BASS
Nikita Naumov
PRINCIPAL
Carlos Navarro
Michael Rae
Yat Hei Lee
Moray Jones
Alexandre Cruz dos Santos
Christopher Sergeant

FLUTE
Katherine Bryan
PRINCIPAL
Oliver Roberts
Justyna Szynkarczyk +
Janet Richardson
PRINCIPAL PICCOLO

OBOE
Adrian Wilson
PRINCIPAL
Peter Dykes
Henry Clay
PRINCIPAL COR ANGLAIS

CLARINET
Timothy Orpen
PRINCIPAL
William Knight
Frank Barr +
Thomas Knollys +
Duncan Swindells
PRINCIPAL BASS CLARINET

BASSOON
David Hubbard
PRINCIPAL
Francesco Di Matteo +
Paolo Dutto
PRINCIPAL CONTRABASSOON

HORN
Amadea Dazeley-Gaist
PRINCIPAL
Andrew McLean
David McClenaghan
Martin Murphy
Neil Mitchell
Alice Knight +
Chloe Chang +
Peter McNeill

TRUMPET
Jason Lewis Goodwin
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Oscar Whight
Robert Baxter
Bob Farley
Nina Noble +
John Vernon +
Ruby Orlowska

TROMBONE
Dávur Juul Magnussen
PRINCIPAL
Lance Green
Andrew Foden
Cillian Ó Ceallacháin
Joshua Parkhill
Alastair Sinclair
PRINCIPAL BASS TROMBONE

TUBA
John Whitener
PRINCIPAL

TIMPANI
Stefan Beckett
GUEST PRINCIPAL

PERCUSSION
Lewis Blee
GUEST PRINCIPAL
Stuart Semple
Philip Hague
Colin Hyson
Pete Murch
Sehyogue Aulakh +

MUSICAL SAW
Katharina Micada

HARP
Pippa Tunnell
Teresa Barros Pereira Romão

PIANO AND CELESTE
Lynda Cochrane
Judith Keaney

+ Smith Square Sinfonia musician

Orchestra list and programme details correct at time of going to print.

Bassem Akiki
Conductor



Bassem Akiki is a Lebanese-Polish conductor and composer. Recent collaborators include Dutch National Opera, La Monnaie/De Munt Brussels, Philharmonie de Paris, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa Warsaw and Sinfonia Varsovia. Informed by his own work as a composer, Akiki is a specialist in contemporary repertoire and has conducted many world premieres. Recent successes include Philip Venables' *We Are the Lucky Ones* and Alexander Raskatov's *Animal Farm* at Dutch National Opera, the latter of which won the OPER! Award for world premiere of the year in 2023. He regularly works at La Monnaie/De Munt, where he has conducted world premieres of Björk's *Medúlla* and the intercultural, interdisciplinary music-theatre *Orfeo & Majnun* (also at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence), Mark Grey's *Frankenstein*, and most recently Philippe Boesman's final opera *On purge bébé!* Other world premieres include Nicholas Lens' *Slow Man* at Malta Festival Poznań, and Zad Moultaka's *Hémon* and Simon Steen-Andersen's *Don Giovanni's Inferno* at Opéra National du Rhin.

Akiki recently made his debuts with the Warsaw Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Netherlands Philharmonic, Royal Danish Opera and Finnish National Opera. Forthcoming debuts and returns include to London's Royal Opera, Ruhrtriennale, Staatsoper Stuttgart, Opéra de Lille, Opéra de Lyon, Dutch National Opera, Opéra National du Rhin, Théâtre du Châtelet Paris and Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa. He made his professional conducting debut aged 24 with Verdi's *La traviata* at Opera Wrocławska, where he was resident conductor until 2013. Since then, he has built an extensive repertoire of titles from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* to Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*, Thomas Adès' *Powder Her Face* and Penderecki's *Die schwarze Maske*.

Alongside conducting, Akiki is a scholar in the music of East and West and their mutual influence, giving lectures on the subject, and his interest in astronomy and prime numbers has influenced his recent compositions. He has led masterclasses in institutions such as the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel at Waterloo, the Opera Academy of La Monnaie/De Munt, and Swarthmore College Pennsylvania, where he also performed Barbara Wysocka and Michał Zadara's *Chopin Without Piano*.



Celebrating 10 years with the RSNO

Strings Associate Leader Lena Zeliszewska celebrates a decade with the RSNO

'The last 10 years with the RSNO have flown by! I still vividly remember my first visit to Scotland in the Spring of 2016. I fell in love with Glasgow instantly. I loved its people, its architecture and its weather (I am being serious!). I immediately felt that I belonged here in Scotland, and in the Orchestra. From many highlights over the years, I always go back to the 2019 California Tour where we played one of my favourite pieces, Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. I have also loved all our epic Wagner opera projects with Sir Andrew Davis at the Edinburgh International Festival. Recently, it was a real privilege to showcase the Orchestra in Shostakovich's defiant Eleventh Symphony at the 2026 BBC Proms alongside a group of almost 90 RSNO supporters who had taken the trip down to be with us in London. On a more personal note, I will never forget the feeling of overwhelming joy and happiness when I found out I had been promoted to Associate Leader back in 2019. A short glimpse in one's life when you feel a huge wave of support from the people you work with. I will cherish that moment forever.'

If you have a passion for a particular instrument or seek an insight into the life of an orchestral musician, find out more about becoming a Chair Patron by contacting Constance Fraser, Head of Development at *constance.fraser@rsno.org.uk*

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Fanfare for the Common Man



FIRST PERFORMANCE
Cincinnati, 12 March 1943
DURATION 3 minutes

During the First World War the English composer and conductor Eugene Goossens commissioned a series of fanfares to introduce orchestral concerts at a time of national emergency. Years later, after the USA had entered the Second World War, and while he was conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Goossens decided to do the same thing in America, eventually commissioning 18 composers to provide something similar as a musical way of boosting national morale.

One of those commissioned – and, it has to be said, the only one whose fanfare has become a lasting feature of the repertoire – was Aaron Copland, whose piece was introduced at the Cincinnati Music Hall on 12 March 1943; indeed, it has gone on to become Copland's best-known composition.

The title took a while to arrive at. The USA entered the War on 8 December 1941, following Japan's surprise attack on the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii the previous day. The following year, Vice-President Henry A Wallace gave a speech in which he declared the 20th century 'the century of the common man', which finally gave Copland the title he had sought.

Goossens approved. 'Its title is as original as its music, and I think it is so telling that it deserves a special occasion for its performance. If it is agreeable to you, we will premiere it on March 12 1943 at income tax time.' 'I am all for honoring the common man at income tax time,' replied the composer. He also said, in terms of the War itself, that 'it was the common man who was doing all the dirty work [...] He deserved a fanfare.'

Copland later used the piece as the main theme of the finale of his Symphony No3 (1944-6); earlier parts of the Symphony also hint at it. Perhaps he thought that it was an ephemeral piece and might simply disappear after its initial performance.

But the *Fanfare* did not disappear. Instead it has been arranged, transcribed and referred to innumerable times in other works and in other genres ever since: employed in films and television programmes, at sports stadia, and on such special occasions as Pope Francis' visit to Independence Hall, Philadelphia, in 2015, when he made a speech about religious freedom.

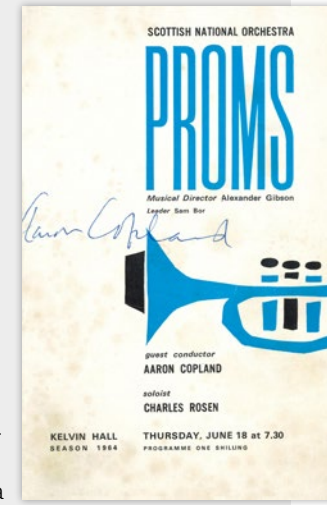
Pop and rock bands have also made use of it, perhaps most famously Emerson, Lake and Palmer in their 1977 album *Works Volume 1*, which as a single reached No2 in the UK charts. Many more versions will surely follow. Copland's own is scored for four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum and tam-tam.

© George Hall

RSNO Connections

Aaron Copland conducted the Scottish National Orchestra (as it was known before 1991) on two occasions in the mid-1960s.

He made his debut in the Scottish Proms at Glasgow's Kelvin Hall in June 1964, conducting a programme that included Bernstein's overture to *Candide*, Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No4 with soloist Charles Rosen, and his works *Quiet City*, *Outdoor Overture* and *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo*. The image right shows the cover of a programme book from that concert signed by Copland himself, now in the RSNO's archives.



Copland returned early in the Orchestra's 1965/66 season for performances in Edinburgh and Glasgow which included works by Handel and Mendelssohn alongside Ives' *The Unanswered Question* and his own Clarinet Concerto and music from the ballet *Billy the Kid*.

© Ewen McKay

Lera Auerbach (Born 1973)

Violin Concerto No1

Op56



UK PREMIERE
FIRST PERFORMANCE Disney Hall, Los Angeles, 22 February 2004
DURATION 28 minutes

1. Grandioso

2. Moderato

3. Andante religioso

4. Allegro

It is always fascinating to observe a journey from an initial idea to a final form and how a piece has a life and fate of its own – very much like a human being.

A character of a novel may influence a real flesh-and-blood person as much as this real person may become a prototype for a fictional character. Similarly, a musical composition, although bound by birthright to its creator, is in fact a creator on its own, with its own angels and demons, struggles and hungers, losses and triumphs.

A world premiere [Auerbach wrote this note in 2004] is always frightening. For a composer it is the ultimate goodbye to a child who graduates into the world. The child, vulnerable yet ambitious, is completely on its own now, and the composer feels helpless at this point as he is no longer the creator, but simply an observer, listener, almost stranger, never fully satisfied, always somewhat guilty.

This Violin Concerto had a long pre-history that led to its premiere at the Walt Disney Concert Hall. Back in 2000, my friend and a wonderful violinist Philippe Quint asked me to write a violin concerto. I started writing it while in residency at Johannes Brahms' home in Baden-Baden. When I was about halfway through the score, Philippe contacted me and asked if I could write a sonata for violin and piano instead of a concerto, so I had to change direction. However, the sonata went through many transformations and was so orchestral in its nature that it was clear that one day it needed to return to the original idea of a concerto for violin and orchestra. I was very happy when the American Youth Symphony decided to commission this work for my first-year residency, as it gave the perfect opportunity for this Violin Concerto to finally come to life. When I returned to my orchestral sketches of 2000, I

understood that I could no longer use them for this piece, as they were for a chamber orchestra, and felt the piece now required a full orchestral force (although I have chosen to exclude the brass section with the exception of the four French horns). The Violin Concerto in its present form was completed in December 2003 at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts.

The first movement begins with an overwhelming apocalyptic orchestral tutti – 'Death-clusters'. In a way, the Concerto starts with the end – everything that happens afterwards, happens AFTER the end. When the solo violin enters, it feels dreamy and unreal in the context of the shocking orchestral introduction. There is a nostalgic sense of memories, but memories are always multilayered and distorted by future experiences and this is often reflected in my music – different realities blur into each other; sometimes what appears very simple may be highly complex (and vice versa), and things are most of the time not what they appear to be at first glance.

These paradoxical qualities are especially apparent in the second movement – a creepy scherzo, humorous, grotesque, attractive and repulsive at the same time, all too familiar yet foreign. Is it a waltz? Is it a tune we may have heard before? Is it a cheerful tune or the remains of a nightmare – and does it matter? Is it funny or scary? Is there something terrifying about the banality of everyday life? Or, perhaps, is it a memory of a perfect simple life forever lost to catastrophe and war? Is it a crooked mirror – or a perception of a listener being questioned?

The third movement, *Adagio religioso*, is a prayer in the form of a passacaglia based on the E flat Major scale. Despite the promise of the major key, it is deeply tragic. The obsessive inescapability of the chord progression in the orchestra can be frightening; its simplicity may be of false premises, and the solo violin cannot break free from the hypnotic repetition of the orchestral columns.

The fourth movement is a fiery dance of life and death, a rondo, inescapable circle, where end and beginning are one and the same, and the dance of life goes on even if one is no longer dancing.

I wish to express my gratitude to Philippe Quint for performing this work; to Mary Bianco, Herbert and Beverly Gelfand, AYS orchestra and its patrons for this commission; to Herbert and Beverly Gelfand and to Rafael Agudelo for their continued support of my work, and to the Brahms Society in Baden-Baden and VCCA for creating perfect environments where this piece was written.

© Lera Auerbach

Listen again to the RSNO

Milestones
Featuring **Lera Auerbach's Violin Concerto No1**

Philippe Quint Violin
Andrew Litton Conductor

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Lera Auerbach

Composer

Lera Auerbach is an American composer, pianist, conductor, poet and visual artist whose work reflects a distinctly cross-disciplinary and international perspective. Born in Chelyabinsk in the Ural region of Russia, she moved to New York at 17 during her first US concert tour, establishing the United States as her artistic home. She studied piano and composition at the Juilliard School and comparative literature at Columbia University, and made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2002 performing her own Suite for violin, piano and string orchestra with Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica.

Auerbach has since established an international career. As a pianist, she has appeared in major concert venues including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center New York, and the Kennedy Center Washington, DC. Her extensive composition catalogue spans all genres – from solo and chamber music to symphonic works, opera and ballet – performed by leading artists and institutions worldwide.

Auerbach's music is characterised by a highly individual voice that bridges tradition and innovation. She maintains a fluid relationship with the avant-garde, drawing on tonal language and classical forms while continually expanding their expressive possibilities. Her works frequently engage with literary, philosophical and mythological themes. These influences shape richly layered works that move fluidly between historical reference and contemporary expression, combining structural rigour with emotional immediacy.

Among her most celebrated works is the ballet *The Little Mermaid*, created in 2005 for choreographer John Neumeier. The work has toured internationally, received major awards including an ECHO Klassik for its recording, and has been performed hundreds of times worldwide. Other notable works include the choral cycles *72 Angels* and *Goetia*, and a series of symphonies that challenge and expand the genre through their integration of orchestra, choir and soloists, reflecting her ongoing interest in redefining large-scale musical forms.

In recent years, Auerbach has also appeared frequently as a conductor, bringing her multidisciplinary perspective to the podium.

Her literary output includes poetry, prose and essays, and she has been named 'Poet of the Year' by the International Pushkin Society. Her book *Excess of Being* has been published in English, and in 2022 her children's book *A is for Oboe* (Random House) received the AudioFile Best Audiobook Award.

Auerbach is also active as a visual artist, creating sculptures that reflect her interdisciplinary approach and interest in the intersection of artistic forms. She holds both American and Austrian citizenship, the latter awarded in 2021 in recognition of her contributions to music and culture.

Her works are widely recorded on major labels, including ECM, Deutsche Grammophon, Nonesuch, Sony Classical, Alpha Classics and BIS.

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Philippe Quint

Violin



For Philippe Quint, the violin has always been a voice for storytelling and discovery, transforming each performance into a musical journey shared with the audience.

With multiple GRAMMY Award nominations for his albums, Quint has forged an international career notable for its unconventional artistic path, broad repertoire and unwavering commitment to exploration.

As Founder and Music Director of Magellan Arts and Magellan Chamber Orchestra, he is entering the organisation's second season, continuing the Chamber Music Immersive Series in partnership with the Chicago History Museum through innovative performances and impactful educational programmes.

Quint has performed with the world's finest orchestras, including the London Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and RSNO. His dedication to contemporary music is evident in numerous premieres by today's foremost composers, including Errollyn Wallen, Lera Auerbach, William Bolcom and John Corigliano. His boundless curiosity led him to create original multimedia-format programmes such as *The Muse, Homage to J S Bach, Charlie Chaplin's Smile* and *Astor Piazzolla: Between Angels and Demons*.

Highlights of his 2026-27 season include a return to the Cabrillo Festival with Cristian Măcelaru for the world premiere of Clarice Assad's *Kontrol*; a return to the RSNO for the UK premiere of Lera Auerbach's Violin Concerto No1; the Irish premiere of Errollyn Wallen's Violin Concerto with the Ulster Orchestra under Anna Handler; leading the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra USA in performances of Vivaldi's and Piazzolla's *The Four Seasons*; and his debut with the Fort Worth Symphony under Anna Skryleva.

An active chamber musician, Quint has appeared at the Mostly Mozart, Verbier, Luzern, Dresden, Caramoor, Colmar, Ravinia, Aspen, Rome, Moritzburg, La Jolla, Lincoln Center and Chautauqua festivals, in addition to recitals and chamber performances at the Kravis Center Florida, UC Davis Presents, National Gallery Washington, DC and San Francisco Performances.

Making his home in New York in 1991, Quint studied at the Special Music School for the Gifted with Andrei Korsakov, making his orchestral debut at the age of nine. He earned both Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Juilliard School. His distinguished pedagogues and mentors included Dorothy DeLay, Cho-Liang Lin, Masao Kawasaki, Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman, Arnold Steinhardt and Felix Galimir.

Quint plays the magnificent 1708 'Ruby' Antonio Stradivari violin on loan to him through the generous efforts of The Stradivari Society.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Symphony No7

in C Major Op60 ***Leningrad***



FIRST PERFORMANCE
Kuybyshev, USSR, 5 March 1942
DURATION 70 minutes

1. Allegretto

2. Moderato (poco allegretto)

3. Adagio

4. Allegro non troppo

'Comrades – a great occurrence in the cultural history of our city is about to take place. In a few minutes, you will hear for the first time the Seventh Symphony of Dmitri Shostakovich, our outstanding fellow citizen. He wrote this great composition in the city during the days when the enemy was, insanely, trying to enter Leningrad. This performance is witness to our spirit, courage and readiness to fight. Listen, Comrades!'

These were the words of conductor Karl Eliasberg prior to the Symphony's first Leningrad (now St Petersburg) performance on 9 August 1942. The city had been under siege since September 1941. Assembling the required orchestra of 100 players was an enormous task: only 14 of the Leningrad Radio Orchestra's members were still alive, so adverts were posted ordering all available musicians to report for rehearsals.

The first rehearsal had to be terminated after just 15 minutes because the musicians were so devoid of energy. In recognition of their efforts, they received extra food rations as the Symphony was pieced together.

The performance was broadcast live and played over loudspeakers to the German soldiers. It was greeted with stunned silence before the audience erupted into an hour-long ovation. While the citizens of Leningrad were uplifted by this astonishing performance, the Germans understood that a city that showed so much spirit while suffering such privation would never capitulate.

Shostakovich was working as a relief fireman when he began composing the Symphony in July 1941. The Soviet authorities, aware of its morale-boosting potential, persuaded the reluctant composer to be evacuated to Kuybyshev (now Samara in southwest Russia), where he completed the final movement. The Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra conducted by Samuil Samosud, also in exile in Kuybyshev, premiered the Symphony. The score was later microfilmed and smuggled to America, where it was performed as an act of defiance towards the Nazis.

However, as the composer's son Maxim pointed out, his father 'did not write about this war or that revolution, but about war and revolution in general, the state of mind and emotion, not facts'. Under Stalin, almost every family had lost someone dear to them, and people were terrified of speaking out against the regime. Shostakovich remarked that during the war, people were at least finally free to express their grief, united by a common sorrow.

The central dichotomy of this vast musical canvas is the strength and individuality of the Soviet people, represented by the strings, pitted against the savage power of oppressive regimes, represented by brutal, mechanistic writing in the brass and percussion.

The first movement opens with a bold and confident theme representing the citizens. As the energy dissipates, a solo flute ushers in a lyrical theme over gently rocking lower strings. With an air of serenity tinged with nostalgia, wistful piccolo and violin solos bring this section to a close. Almost imperceptibly, an insidious side drum rhythm enters, and pizzicato strings introduce a banal march theme. The march becomes increasingly violent and bombastic until a powerful unison minor scale ushers in the catastrophic climax. As the music subsides, flute and violins recall earlier themes, devoid of energy. A solo bassoon intones a lament. The strings re-inject some human compassion, but it is rapidly crushed as the movement ends with a shocked reminiscence of the march.

Shostakovich initially entitled his second movement 'Memories'. The elegant music haltingly attempts to dance before giving way to a keening oboe. An E flat clarinet cries out over an implacable three-note figure before the wind and brass unleash a mechanistic march. The strings are forced to join the dance. The poised opening music returns, and the bass clarinet intones the oboe theme over shivering flutes. An alto flute suggests there is still hope and the movement ends in the major key.

At the start of the third movement, woodwinds intone an austere chorale which is answered by impassioned strings. The sombre bassoons introduce an ominous plucked string theme, and a lonely flute sings a haunting melody before a second flute consoles it. The violins usher in an agitated central passage characterised by mechanistic rhythms. After a bleak dialogue between violins and oboes, the violas consolingly intone the flute's haunting melody. The strings gradually overwhelm the wind chorale, injecting it with human warmth.

The fourth movement begins searchingly, yet there is a suppressed air of optimism. The basses attempt to introduce a motif that eventually launches the faster section, and the music becomes increasingly spirited. As it subsides, there is a sense of uneasiness. The violins dance in an irregular metre over short plucked notes, introducing a sombre passage. The motif introduced earlier in the basses stirs once again in the violas. Slowly and painstakingly the citizens recover their spirit, and the Symphony ends in triumph. In the words of conductor Semyon Bychkov, the *Leningrad* Symphony 'was composed for humanity. And the best proof is that today we still need it – we are still listening to it.'

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