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NAXOS

Alexey
SHOR

Composer's Notebook • 2

**From My Bookshelf, Suite for Piano and Orchestra No. 2
Flute Concerto No. 1**

**Behzod Abduraimov, Piano • Jasmine Choi, Flute
Kyiv Virtuosi
Massimiliano Caldi • Dmitry Yablonsky**

Alexey Shor (b. 1970)

Composer's Notebook • 2

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 Wiener Musikverein, 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.



From My Bookshelf, Suite for Piano and Orchestra No. 2

From My Bookshelf, Suite for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 is a work that was composed in 2019, but enjoys a far older and richer history than its composition date would suggest. In fact, the piece can trace its roots back to Alexey Shor's own childhood, which contained, among other things, the titular bookshelf that would go on to feature so strongly in this musical work.

Located in his bedroom, just across from his bed, this bookshelf and its contents were a constant presence in Shor's early life, leaving an indelible, albeit subconscious, impression on his mind. Moving forward in time to when his own children began to develop an interest in the seminal works of children's literature, and this bookshelf emerged in Shor's thoughts once again, leading the composer to explore the possibility of crafting a work inspired by these beloved literary tales.

The concept of merging the spheres of music and literature is not a novel one, and indeed there are many renowned musical pieces that are at least partially indebted to the literary realm, ranging from Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade, Op. 35*, to Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, to mention a couple. However, Shor's contemporary take on this theme goes in a different direction, since the composer does not attempt to present a musical interpretation of a single story. Instead, he offers listeners a series of musical portraits, each one focusing on a particular character or two from a wide number of different books. In this way, the piece itself is functioning as a form of bookshelf, with various disparate worlds all gathered together within one entity.

Starting with the figure of Cinderella, taken from the fairy tale of the same name, Shor analyses each character, distilling them down to a few core elements that are then presented through a musical lens. Thus, we move from the grandeur of palaces and balls, to the daring adventurer that is Don Quixote, the protagonist of Miguel de Cervantes's famed 17th-century novel, before turning to the spirited youth of Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer, taken straight from the pages of the American author's lauded representation of life on the banks of the Mississippi River in the 1800s.

With *Quasimodo*, the composer shifts focus to the complex, tortured soul – and arguably the world's most famous bell-ringer – that forms the beating heart of Victor Hugo's French Gothic novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, before we return to the fantastical realm once again with *Queen of Hearts*, where the attention turns to the bloodthirsty antagonist from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

The sixth movement presents us with the swashbuckling, heroic figure of d'Artagnan, plucked straight from Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, followed by a shift in traditions as we move to King Matt the First, the only character from the 20th century, and also the first to come from Eastern Europe, with the novel being published in 1923 by the Polish author Janusz Korczak. Finally, Shor concludes on a romantic note by presenting the first, and solitary, duo of the series in the shape of the literary world's most famous and influential couple – the star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet.

Farewell Nocturne – Homage to Mikhail Glinka

Functioning as a type of encore to *From My Bookshelf*, this short, intimate piece perfectly complements the previous work with its distinctly romantic and nostalgic approach. As indicated in its title, this nocturne evokes the work of the celebrated composer Mikhail Glinka, hailed as one of the seminal figures in the world of classical music. Of particular influence here is Glinka's famous nocturne, *La Séparation*, which is a melancholic and emotionally charged piece – much like Shor's own. While taking this work as his cue, however, Shor nevertheless takes it in new and interesting directions, creating an emotionally complex piece with highly expressive melodies and rich harmonies. Listeners are taken on an emotional journey, as Shor explores themes of longing and transience with a lush orchestration and intricate interplay between the piano and the orchestra that captivates the heart and showcases the composer's ability to capture deep emotions in his music.

Flute Concerto No. 1 in B flat major

This work is based on Alexey Shor's *Clarinet Concerto No. 1*, and was adapted for flute by the composer himself. It is a contemporary piece that freely draws on Classical traditions while also incorporating modern elements. Composed in three movements, and adhering to the traditional fast–slow–fast format, this work is characterised by its lyrical melodies, dynamic contrasts, and intricate interplay between the solo flute and the orchestra, with a structure that allows for an exploration of various musical themes and emotions.

The first movement, marked *Vivace*, is lively and spirited, setting a vibrant tone for the concerto. The tempo is brisk, and the movement is characterised by a rhythmic energy and a playful interaction between the flute and the orchestra, with the soloist introducing a series of rapid, articulated passages which are then echoed and developed by the ensemble. The movement follows a sonata-allegro form, with a clear exposition, development, and recapitulation. The development section is somewhat unusual in that it introduces a completely new and memorable melody, rather than merely reworking existing themes. The tonality remains firmly rooted in B flat major, although there are moments of modulation that add harmonic interest. The orchestration is full and rich, adding to the dynamic intensity of the movement.

The second movement provides a stark contrast to the first. It is slow and lyrical, showcasing the flute's ability to convey deep emotion and expressiveness. This section is structured around a central theme that is introduced by the soloist and then passed to the orchestra. The tonality is more ambiguous, with frequent modulations that create a sense of longing and introspection. The orchestration is more restrained, and plays a prominent role in creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

The final movement returns to a fast tempo, marked *Allegro maestoso*, and brings the concerto to an energetic and triumphant conclusion. This phase is characterised by its rhythmic drive and virtuosic demands on the soloist. The flute engages in rapid passages and intricate dialogues with the orchestra, showcasing the technical prowess of the performer. The movement is in rondo form, with a recurring main theme that is interspersed with contrasting episodes. The tonality is bright and affirmative, returning to B flat major and emphasising the concerto's overall coherence. The orchestration is vibrant and colourful, with the ensemble heavily contributing to the movement's exuberant character.

Overall, this concerto is a work that combines traditional Classical forms with contemporary harmonic language and rhythmic vitality. The composition draws on the virtuosic traditions of flute concertos, and simultaneously incorporates modern elements such as unexpected modulations and intricate rhythmic patterns. It challenges the soloist while providing an engaging and varied listening experience with its blend of lyricism, technical brilliance, and orchestral richness.

Julian Francalanza

Behzod Abduraimov



Photo: Evgeny Eutykhov

Behzod Abduraimov's performances combine an immense depth of musicality with phenomenal technique and breathtaking delicacy. He has performed with renowned orchestras worldwide including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, San Francisco Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Concertgebouworkest, Česká filharmonie, Wiener Philharmoniker, NHK Symphony Orchestra and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (RSB). In recital, Abduraimov has appeared at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, Queen Elizabeth Hall in London and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, among others. In January 2024 he released a recital album on Alpha Classics, which included works by Ravel and Prokofiev. 2021 saw the release of his debut album on the same label, featuring Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Abduraimov started playing the piano aged five as a pupil of Tamara Popovich at Uspensky State Central Lyceum Tashkent. In 2009 he won First Prize at the London International Piano Competition. He studied with Stanislav Ioudenitch at the International Center for Music at Park University, Missouri, where he is currently artist-in-residence. www.behzodabduraimov.com

Jasmine Choi



Lauded as the 'goddess of the flute' by *The Korea Times*, Jasmine Choi is one of the most celebrated flautists of our time, known for her virtuosity and refined interpretations as well as her adventurous projects. She has performed across the globe as a soloist with the Wiener Symphoniker, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, among many others, and has given recitals in Paris, Vienna, London, New York, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong. Choi has recorded several solo albums on the Sony Classical label, including Mozart's flute concertos and quartets, as well as Bolling's *Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano Trio*. Other recordings include a live recital, *Trio Joy* (free improvisation), and three solo albums. Choi began studying flute at the age of nine, and was accepted into the Curtis Institute of Music at sixteen, later attending The Juilliard School. www.jasminechoi.com

Kyiv Virtuosi

Artistic Director and Chief Conductor: Dmitry Yablonsky



Photo: Pino Giannini

Based in the capital of Ukraine, the chamber orchestra 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.

kyivvirtuosi.org

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 concerts 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



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

A native of Ukraine, Alexey Shor now lives and works in New York. His music has received prestigious performances and recordings in collaboration with leading international musicians. Joining a long tradition of music inspired by literary sources, *From My Bookshelf* is a series of musical character portraits that range from the tortured soul of Quasimodo to the dashing D'Artagnan, with plenty of fantasy and romance in between. The engaging and virtuoso *Flute Concerto No. 1* combines traditional Classical forms with unexpected harmonic language and intricate rhythmic vitality.

Alexey
SHOR

(b. 1970)

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From My Bookshelf, Suite for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 (2019) (version for piano and string orchestra, 2021)	36:00	9 Farewell Nocturne – Homage to Mikhail Glinka (2019) (version for piano and string orchestra, 2021)	3:52
1 I. Cinderella	8:41	Flute Concerto No. 1 in B flat major (2019) (adapted from <i>Clarinet Concerto No. 1</i> , version for flute and string orchestra, 2021)*	20:33
2 II. Don Quixote	3:17	10 I. Vivace	10:01
3 III. Tom Sawyer	3:29	11 II. Andante doloroso	7:06
4 IV. Quasimodo	6:01	12 III. Allegro maestoso	3:22
5 V. Queen of Hearts	3:52		
6 VI. D'Artagnan	2:20		
7 VII. King Matt the First	4:58		
8 VIII. Romeo and Juliet	3:06		

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Behzod Abduraimov, Piano 1–9 • Jasmine Choi, Flute 10–12
Kyiv Virtuosi • Massimiliano Caldi 1–9 • Dmitry Yablonsky 10–12

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