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RHYTHMS OF EASTERN EUROPE

WITH JONIAN ILIAS-KADESHA

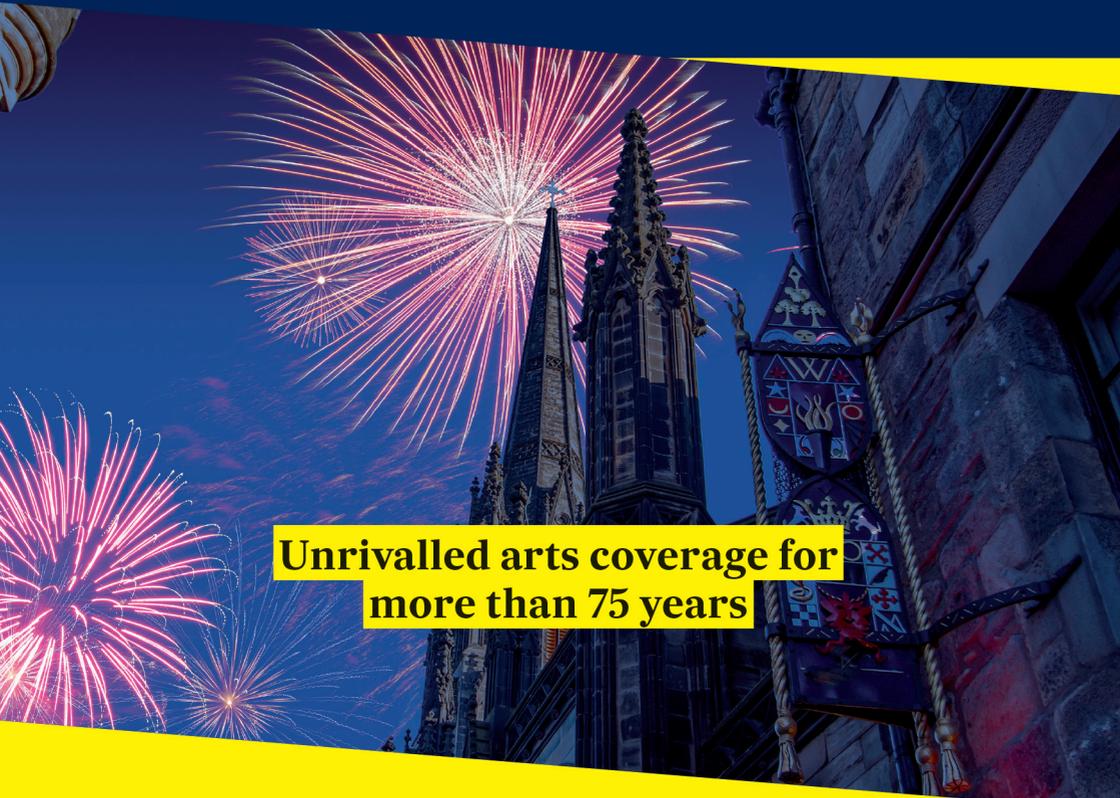
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RHYTHMS OF EASTERN EUROPE

Wednesday 10 January, 7.30pm, Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries

Thursday 11 January, 7.30pm, The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

Friday 12 January, 7.30pm, City Halls, Glasgow

LIGETI Concert Românesc

BARTÓK Divertimento

Interval of 20 minutes

SKALKOTTAS Five Greek Dances

MOZART Violin Concerto No 5 'Turkish'

RAVEL Tzigane

Jonian Ilias-Kadesha Director/Violin



Jonian Ilias-Kadesha

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Jonian Ilias-Kadesha
Kio Seiler
Oleguer Beltran Pallares
Kana Kawashima
Aisling O'Dea
Siún Milne
Amira Bedrush-McDonald
Sian Holding

Second Violin

Marcus Barcham Stevens
Gordon Bragg
Michelle Dierx
Rachel Smith
Sarah Bevan Baker
Kristin Deeken

Viola

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Jessica Beeston
Brian Schiele
Steve King

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Su-a Lee
Donald Gillan
Eric de Wit

Bass

Nikita Naumov
Jamie Kenny

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Marta Gómez

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Robin Williams
Katherine Bryer

Clarinet

Maximiliano Martín
William Stafford

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Antonia Lazenby

Horn

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Jamie Shield
Andy Saunders

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Shaun Harrold

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Louise Lewis Goodwin
Kate Openshaw

Harp

Sharron Griffiths

Celeste

Peter Evans



Su-a Lee
Sub-Principal Cello

WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

LIGETI (1923-2006)

Concert Românesc (1951)

Andantino

Allegro vivace

Adagio, ma non troppo

Molto vivace

BARTÓK (1881-1945)

Divertimento (1939)

Allegro non troppo

Molto adagio

Allegro assai

SKALKOTTAS (1904-1949)

Five Greek Dances (1946)

Epirotikos

Kretikos

Tsamikos

Arkadikos

Kleftikos

MOZART (1756-1791)

Violin Concerto No 5 'Turkish' in A Major,
K 219 (1775)

Allegro aperto

Adagio

Rondeau: Tempo di Menuetto

RAVEL (1875-1937)

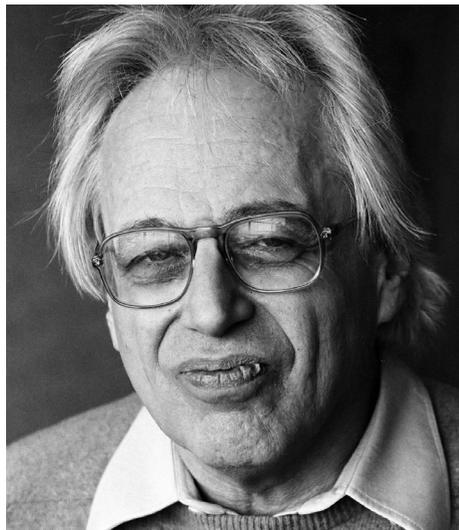
Tzigane (1924)

If you're a regular concert-goer – or even if you're not – here's a question for you. Historically speaking, where have been the main centres of music? You might very reasonably think of Vienna, or maybe Leipzig and Berlin. Or perhaps Paris, or St Peterburg, or Venice, or even London (or, more recently, New York). At a push, possibly, Prague.

It's a trick question, of course. It depends on what kind of music you're talking about, and when. If you immediately thought of any of those cities mentioned above, you're almost certainly very knowledgeable about Western classical music. But of course, there's always been plenty of music happening not too far away (and also a lot further away) – sometimes music that's a bit too raw and folksy for our classical concert halls, or sometimes music that looks at things we're familiar with in entirely different ways. But even music that's relatively nearby but still unfamiliar has long fascinated our better-known Western musicians, who've drawn on it for profound inspiration, or even simply a bit of exotic colour.

Imagine you're not in Scotland for tonight's concert, but somewhere further east, maybe southeast – perhaps in Budapest or even Bucharest. If we shift our starting point, we might experience things differently: these are the kinds of sounds that might be more familiar from the region around us – as well as music by a couple of composers from further West who are demonstrating their own fascination.

György Ligeti is probably best known as an avant-garde experimenter in sound, creator of the mysterious sonic clouds that accompany alien presences in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, or even a playful



György Ligeti

What Ligeti created is a colourful, energetic concerto for orchestra in four short, connected movements, a piece that throws many of its orchestral players into the spotlight for brief moments in the sun.

prankster in his later music. Tonight's opening piece, however, comes from much earlier in Ligeti's career, when he was working in a very particular musical context.

Ligeti grew up in a Jewish family in the city of Diciosânmartin, then in Hungary, and now named Târnăveni in Romania. He survived Hungary's alignment with Germany during World War II (his brother and father were murdered in Nazi death camps), only to find himself battling the rigid stipulations of socialist realism as a student in post-war communist Hungary.

Added to that political switchback ride, Ligeti also faced a challenging dualism in language and culture. 'I grew up in a Hungarian-speaking environment in Transylvania,' he later wrote. 'While the official language was Romanian, it was only in secondary school that I learned to speak the language that had seemed so mysterious to me as a child. I was three when I first encountered Romanian

folk music, an alpenhorn player in the Carpathian Mountains.'

That 'alpenhorn' player would make a personal appearance in the *Concert Românesc* that Ligeti wrote in 1951. And the musician sparked a fascination with folk music that the composer pursued in his studies, first at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, then at Bucharest's Folklore Institute.

And it was while studying at that second institution that Ligeti travelled to record authentic folk tunes for the Institute's archives. It was on some of those melodies that he based his *Concert Românesc* – although, as he explained, 'not everything in it is genuinely Romanian as I also invented elements in the spirit of the village bands'. Invented or not, however, what Ligeti created is a colourful, energetic concerto for orchestra in four short, connected movements, a piece that throws many of its

orchestral players into the spotlight for brief moments in the sun, and that celebrates its folk origins with dashing wit and verve.

It's ironic, then, that those very qualities caused Ligeti's piece to fall foul of the communist authorities: it was banned by Hungarian censors before it could be premiered, only receiving its first performance in 1971 in the USA. 'Under Stalin's dictatorship,' the composer later ruefully remembered, 'even folk music was allowed only in a "politically correct" form, in other words, if forced into a straitjacket of the norms of socialist realism. The peculiar way in which village bands harmonised their music, often full of dissonances and "against the grain", was regarded as incorrect.'

Ligeti based his two opening movements on a *Ballad and Dance* for two violins that he'd written in 1950. The first opens with a unison melody from clarinet and strings that quickly takes on ancient-sounding harmonies, while the second is a quick, swirling dance with the spotlight on piccolo, solo violin and percussion. Ligeti's 'alpenhorn' player makes a visit in the slow third movement, seeming to call across the vast distances between the Carpathian Mountains, while a trumpet call to attention kicks off the frantic energy of his wild, frenetic finale (complete with one last-minute contribution from that mountain musician).

Hungarian composer Béla Bartók was actually in Switzerland rather than his native country when he wrote his *Divertimento* in 1939, but its distinctive music provides an ideal example of his seamless blend of Hungarian folk ideas with more modernist musical techniques.

He'd been invited to the mountain chalet of the Swiss conductor and impresario

Paul Sacher, who commissioned countless new works from composers as diverse as Stravinsky and Birtwistle, Strauss and Boulez for his Basle Chamber Orchestra. (At the time of his death in 1999, Sacher was rumoured to be the richest man in Europe, having married the heiress of pharmaceutical giant Hoffmann-La Roche.)

Sacher had previously commissioned Bartók's denser, thornier *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, and asked for some lighter fare this time round. The composer was delighted to oblige, all the more so when Sacher offered him his mountain retreat in which to compose, complete with specially shipped-in piano and on-site personal chef. Remarkably, Bartók completed the *Divertimento* in just 15 days, between 2 and 17 August. When Sacher called in on him at the end of this period, he found the composer so engrossed in his work and oblivious to the outside world that he had to bring him up to speed on just how close Europe was to war.

That's not to imply that Bartók was unconcerned by world events. He was a vehement, outspoken anti-Nazi, cancelling his German publishing contract once the Reich began to exert control, and increasingly critical of Hungary's own Nazi-sympathising regime (which would later inflict such suffering on his compatriot Ligeti's family). His ailing mother was one reason the Bartók family remained in Budapest in the run-up to the conflict. When she died in December 1939, however, Bartók and his wife headed for New York the following year.

So it was a strange, dark time for Bartók to be working on one of his lightest, most immediate pieces. And not insignificantly,



Béla Bartók

So it was a strange, dark time for Bartók to be working on one of his lightest, most immediate pieces.

the work he moved on to immediately after the Divertimento was his serious-minded, grief-stricken, searingly intense Sixth String Quartet. But it's not all fun and games in the Divertimento, either. Bartók consciously looks back to the bubbling invention of the Baroque concerto grosso in its witty dialogues between a group of front-desk soloists and the fuller orchestra, and makes joyful use of his passion for folk music in the stomping, unpredictable rhythms and bluesy accents of the first movement.

The second movement, however, takes a far darker turn, beginning in ominous undulations from the lower strings against which the violins intone what's barely a melody. It grows via a lumbering, heavy-footed march to reach a screaming, dissonant climax, before quickly subsiding to a grotesquely transfigured memory of the opening music. Just as well, then, that the good-humoured finale dashes on stage with exuberant energy, even if Bartók puts

its folksy violin tune through all manner of upside-down, back-to-front contrapuntal trickery before the movement hurries to its joyful close.

From Hungary via Switzerland, we travel southeast to Greece, where Nikos Skalkottas was born on the island of Euboea in 1904, going on to study at the Athens Conservatory before upping sticks to Berlin where he took composing classes with Arnold Schoenberg and Kurt Weill. Skalkottas is one in a very select group (too select, truth be told) of Greek composers with international reputations, one in Skalkottas's case that rests on the complex, often thorny music he wrote after developing Schoenberg's 12-note theories. But he maintained a compelling sideline in Greek-inspired works, drawing on his life-long love for his country's folk music, encapsulated most vividly in the *36 Greek Dances* he wrote for symphony orchestra in the 1930s. Various selections have been



Nikos Skalkottas

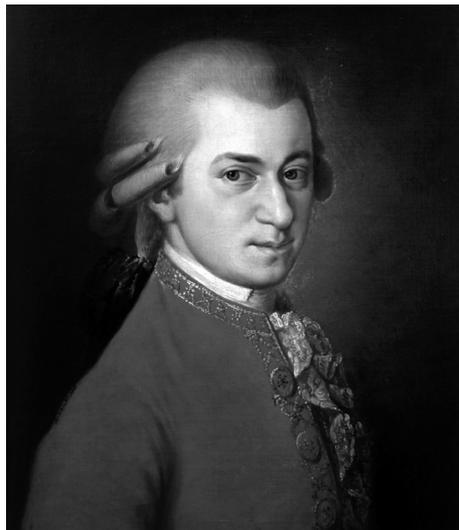
Skalkottas is one in a very select group (too select, truth be told) of Greek composers with international reputations, one in Skalkottas's case that rests on the complex, often thorny music he wrote after developing Schoenberg's 12-note theories.

made from that vast collection, including tonight's *Five Greek Dances* for strings, first performed in December 1953 at London's Royal Albert Hall.

With a melody wavering between the brighter major and the darker minor, Skalkottas's opening 'Epirotikos' also makes use of a gently stomping accompaniment blending bowed and plucked strings. There's a refined elegance to the second 'Kretikos', a dance from Crete, and subtle dissonances in the third movement 'Tsamikos'. A lyrical viola melody opens the richly scored penultimate 'Arkadikos', and Skalkottas finally lets rip with the blazing colour and energy of his closing 'Kleftikos', complete with the few off-kilter syncopations for those brave enough to try tapping their feet.

From Greece, we travel east over the Aegean for tonight's next piece – well, kind of. Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto might have acquired the nickname 'Turkish', but it's really

only Turkish in a very Viennese manner of speaking. That Austrian fascination with all things Turkish began as far back as 1699, when long-time foes in the Austrian and Ottoman empires negotiated the Treaty of Karlowitz, bringing to an end the Great Turkish War that had raged for the previous 13 years. In celebration, the Ottomans sent to Vienna a Janissary military band, bringing with them exotic percussion and wind instruments never before encountered. Later Ottoman musicians entertained delighted listeners in Poland, Russia, Prussia and elsewhere in Austria, and composers set about incorporating the bands' unusual sounds into their own music. Haydn employed triangle, bass drum and cymbals in his 'Military' Symphony, No 100, to represent the noise of battle, while Beethoven incorporated 'Turkish' sounds in his incidental music to *The Ruins of Athens* and even in the finale of his Ninth Symphony. Mozart would go on to set a whole opera – *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* – in a make-believe Turkey



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto might have acquired the nickname 'Turkish', but it's really only Turkish in a very Viennese manner of speaking.

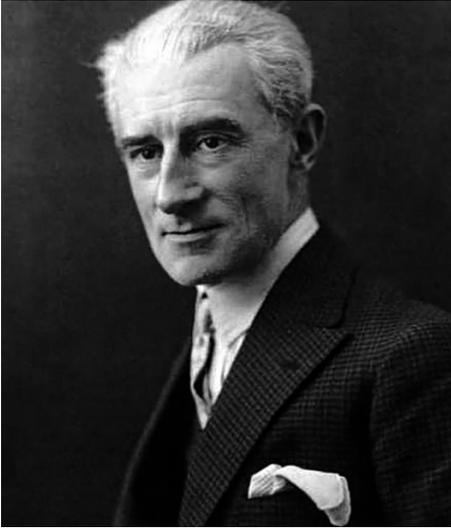
in 1782. Seven years earlier, however, he'd already included distinctively 'Turkish' sounds in the final movement of his Violin Concerto No 5.

It's the last of the five violin concertos that Mozart wrote in his birthplace of Salzburg between April and December 1775, at the age of just 19, possibly for himself to perform. Young Wolfgang was a fine violinist, and had been encouraged in his fiddle studies by his father Leopold, one of the great violin exponents of the time, and author of a seminal treatise on violin playing that's still in use today.

And while Mozart Jr's earlier violin concertos might have stuck quite closely to tried-and-tested models, by No 5 the composer was stretching his wings. After the first movement's orchestra-only introduction, for example, the soloist suddenly slows the tempo for their unusually thoughtful first entry, before launching into the movement's main theme.

Mozart's slower second movement is lyrical, contemplative and richly scored. And his closing movement might begin as a refined minuet, led by the violin, but it suddenly shifts from major to minor, and from a tripping three-time dance to a more military two-time march, when Mozart introduces his 'Turkish' music. There are no additional percussion instruments as such, although Mozart asks his cellos and double basses to play with the wood of their bows, producing a brittle, percussive sound. The movement quickly returns to the gracefulness of its opening minuet before its elegant close, however.

We end tonight's concert possibly in Hungary, or more probably in a kind of fairy-tale invented Eastern Europe seen from the glittering lights of Paris. There's – understandably – a lot more sensitivity about use of the word 'gypsy' in the 21st century to refer to a people or a musical style, although when Maurice Ravel was writing his violin showpiece *Tzigane* (literally



Maurice Ravel

Tzigane is a rich, hard-edged, breathtakingly virtuosic violin showpiece that puts paid to any notion that Ravel was simply a purveyor of hushed, dreamy impressionism.

'Gypsy') in 1924, he probably intended it in a more generic sense of something exotic, alluring, possibly slightly wild and dangerous, in rather shorthand terminology that no doubt felt more comfortable a century ago than it does today. Indeed, there's little explicit reference to anything we'd probably now be happier calling Roma culture in Ravel's glittering, virtuosic violin showpiece. Its jumping-off points are more Eastern European traditions, along similar lines to Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies.

And it was a Hungarian musician – the legendary violinist Jelly d'Áranyi – who inspired Ravel to compose the piece. They'd met in London in 1922, where they were both touring, and d'Áranyi had given Ravel a private performance of his Sonata for Violin and Cello, which he found so entrancing that he requested some traditional Hungarian tunes from her. The violinist duly obliged, and reportedly kept the composer entertained into the small hours. Two years

later, he presented her with *Tzigane*, which she premiered in London on 26 April 1924.

Tzigane is a rich, hard-edged, breathtakingly virtuosic violin showpiece that puts paid to any notion that Ravel was simply a purveyor of hushed, dreamy impressionism. Taking the traditional Hungarian slow-fast dance form (of the *lassù* and *friss* sections of a traditional *csárdás* dance), it opens with a long, slow, pungently flavoured and increasingly virtuosic solo for the violin, before the orchestra joins in with a series of increasingly wild and abandoned dances.

So over-the-top are *Tzigane's* fiddle fireworks, indeed, that some listeners wondered if it was all a bit unnatural, tongue-in-cheek, even audaciously artificial. Ravel responded: 'Doesn't it ever occur to these people that I can be "artificial" by nature?'

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JONIAN ILIAS-KADESHA



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Born in Athens of Albanian and Greek heritage, Jonian Ilias-Kadesha has a keen interest in philosophy and rhetoric and possesses boundless imagination of sound and curation. His playing is characterized by stylistic accuracy and idiomatic interpretation from early to contemporary works, executed with immaculate articulation.

Kadesha has performed widely as soloist throughout Europe, including with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe conducted by Sir András Schiff, New Russian State Symphony conducted by Yuri Bashmet, Tapiola Sinfonietta conducted by Ryan Bancroft, Slovenian Philharmonic conducted by Aziz Shokhakimov, Munich Radio, Lübeck Philharmonic, Neue Philharmonie Frankfurt, RTE Concert Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, Bad Reichenhall Philharmonic, Albanian Radio, New Russian State Symphony, Greek Radio and Thessaloniki State Orchestras.

As director and soloist, Kadesha has appeared with many of the leading chamber orchestras, including the Netherlands, Scottish and Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestras, Manchester Camerata and the London Mozart Players. He has championed repertoire from composers such as Enescu, Bartók, Mozart, Bach, Nikos Skalkottas and a new concerto, TYCHE, written for him in 2022 by Giovanni Sollima. In 2017 Kadesha founded and assumed the role of Artistic Director of the Caerus Chamber Ensemble, a flexible chamber ensemble made up of outstanding instrumentalists from the young generation of European musicians.

In 2021 Kadesha signed to Linn Records. His debut solo album featuring Bach Partita in D minor alongside the premiere commercial recording of Helena Winkelman's Ciaccona and works by Biber, Schnittke, Kurtág & Auerbach was released in 2022. With pianist Nicholas Rimmer he recorded works by Enescu, Ravel and Skalkottas for Cavi Music and with cellist Vashti Hunter he recorded a disc of violin and cello repertoire in collaboration with Deutschland Radio.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Biography

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in November 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in November 2023.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, John Storgårds and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by the late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einjuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Nico Muhly.

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Pulsant proudly supporting SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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For over 250 years, we have been performing for our clients, building and preserving their wealth. Our Discretionary Portfolio Service comes with a dedicated investment manager and local team who aspire to deliver the highest level of personal service, working with you to achieve your goals.

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QUILTER CHEVIOT
INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

Approver: Quilter Cheviot Limited, 25th August 2023

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SCOTTISH
CHAMBER
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From world-class music-making to pioneering creative learning and community work, we are passionate about transforming lives through the power of music and we could not do it without regular donations from our valued supporters.

If you are passionate about music, and want to contribute to the SCO's continued success, please consider making a monthly or annual donation today. Each and every contribution is crucial, and your support is truly appreciated.

For more information on how you can become a regular donor, please get in touch with **Hannah Wilkinson** on **0131 478 8364** or **hannah.wilkinson@sco.org.uk**

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