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# LINDBERG, STRAVINSKY AND SHOSTAKOVICH

WITH MAXIM AND PEKKA

21-23 February 2024

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# LINDBERG, STRAVINSKY AND SHOSTAKOVICH

## WITH MAXIM AND PEKKA

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**Wednesday 21 February, 7.30pm**, Holy Trinity Church, St Andrews

**Thursday 22 February, 7.30pm**, The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

**Friday 23 February, 7.30pm**, City Halls, Glasgow

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**FAURÉ** Suite: Pelléas & Mélisande

**LINDBERG** Violin Concerto No 1

*Interval of 20 minutes*

**STRAVINSKY** Dumbarton Oaks

**SHOSTAKOVICH (arr. Barshai)** Chamber Symphony

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**Maxim Emelyanychev** Conductor

**Pekka Kuusisto** Violin



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Emily Dellit  
Kana Kawashima  
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Fiona Alexander  
Amira Bedrush-McDonald  
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Michelle Dierx  
Rachel Smith  
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Niamh Lyons  
Sarah Bevan Baker  
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## **Viola**

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Francesca Gilbert  
Brian Schiele  
Steve King  
Liam Brolly  
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Su-a Lee  
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Eric de Wit  
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**Philip Higham**  
Principal Cello



# WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

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## **FAURÉ (1845-1924)**

Suite: Pelléas & Mélisande, Op 80 (1898)

Prélude

Fileuse

Sicilienne

La mort de Mélisande

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## **LINDBERG (b.1958)**

Violin Concerto No 1 (2006)

I

II

III

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## **STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)**

Concerto in E-flat major, K060  
'Dumbarton Oaks' (1937-38)

Tempo giusto

Allegretto

Con moto

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## **SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)**

Chamber Symphony, Op 110a (1960)  
arr. Barshai (1967)

I. Largo

II. Allegro molto

III. Allegretto

IV. Largo

V. Largo

From existential angst to sensuous desire, there are some big emotions behind the music in tonight's concert. Dmitri Shostakovich might have been staring down despair in his 1960 Eighth String Quartet, which Rudolf Barshai transformed into the Chamber Symphony that closes the programme. But three decades earlier, Igor Stravinsky (composer of tonight's penultimate piece) had been denying that music was even capable of expressing moods or feelings – or, he felt, pretty much anything at all. (He later partially retracted that sweeping observation.) Even for contemporary Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg, expression and meaning are clearly key to the surging emotions and intricate solo writing of his First Violin Concerto, as we'll hear later.

We begin, however, with love – in particular, a love that's forbidden, and doomed from the start. There was clearly something in the air around Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist play *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which got its premiere production in Paris in 1893. Perhaps it was its brooding, dream-like atmosphere, its sense of being both ancient and modern, even its apparent parallels with that other great musical love story, *Tristan and Isolde*.

Its story can be simply told, in fact. Golaud discovers the mysterious Mélisande, who has lost her crown in a woodland stream, while out hunting. He quickly marries her, and Golaud's ancient grandfather – Arkël, King of Allemonde – gives his approval. But Mélisande finds herself enamoured of Golaud's brother, Pelléas: they meet by a fountain, into which Mélisande accidentally drops her wedding ring. Increasingly suspicious, Golaud sends his young son Yniold to spy on the lovers, and the boy reports back that, yes, he's seen them caressing. Furious, Golaud slays his brother and wounds his wife. She later dies while giving birth to their daughter.



*Gabriel Fauré*

***It's that Suite – which received its concert premiere in Paris in December 1912 – that we'll hear this evening, capturing four key moments in the play in some of Fauré's most atmospheric, evocative music.***

Claude Debussy was in the audience at that premiere staging, and felt so overwhelmed that he transformed the play into an opera (though it took him nine years to do so). It also inspired a symphonic poem from Arnold Schoenberg in 1903, and Jean Sibelius wrote incidental music for a production at Helsinki's Swedish Theatre in 1905.

Before all of those musical responses, however, came Gabriel Fauré's, in the form of incidental music for the play's London premiere in 1898. He was often in the British capital visiting friends, and on one occasion met the celebrated stage actress Mrs Patrick Campbell, who'd been longing to play Mélisande herself since she'd first encountered Maeterlinck's play. A London staging was in the works, and she'd originally approached Debussy to provide the music – but, since he was in the throes of transforming it into an opera, he declined. In the end, she considered Fauré the ideal man for the job, and for his own part, the composer was delighted to be involved.

It was, however, a bit of a rush job. Campbell and Fauré made their agreement in the spring of 1898, but the production's opening had already been scheduled for June of that same year. For that reason, Fauré quietly reused some material he'd already composed, and also enlisted the help of his pupil and colleague Charles Koechlin to orchestrate his music. It came together in the end: when the production opened on 21 June 1898 at the Prince of Wales Theatre, near Leicester Square, it was a huge success, and even got a thumbs-up from Maeterlinck himself.

Fauré later boiled down his original 19-number incidental music to a four-movement orchestral Suite, making a few tweaks to Koechlin's orchestration in the process. It's that Suite – which received its concert premiere in Paris in December 1912 – that we'll hear this evening, capturing four key moments in the play in some of Fauré's most atmospheric, evocative music.

The 'Prélude' would originally have been heard before the curtain went up on Act I, and its mysterious, slow-moving opening theme is probably a portrait of the enigmatic Mélisande herself, though the music's increasing passion hints at some of the heightened emotions to come. Listen out, too, for Golaud's distant hunting horn just before he makes his fateful discovery.

'Fileuse' is a delicate portrait of Mélisande at her spinning wheel, propelled along by violin figurations accompanying a long oboe melody, originally used as an overture to Act III. The 'Sicilienne' is one of the best-known pieces that Fauré ever wrote, and it's also one of the sections that he quietly slid into his *Pelléas et Mélisande* music from earlier works – in this case, from music for a production of Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*. It accompanies the all-important tryst between Pelléas and Mélisande at the fountain, capturing an uncanny blend of happiness, hope and undeniable melancholy, as its opening melody for just flute and harp blossoms into warmer orchestral colours. 'La mort de Mélisande', a slow-moving, poignant lament for Mélisande after her death, was originally used as a prelude to the play's final act, and was also played at Fauré's own funeral in 1924.

From doomed desire to – well, some kind of other emotion entirely. Though it might be near impossible to pin a particular mood or feeling on Magnus Lindberg's First Violin Concerto, there are definitely emotions being stirred – in its fiendishly exuberant violin writing, for example, or its radiant harmonies that seem to be leading us ever forward, towards the next sonic surprise.

Lindberg is one of today's most celebrated composers, with a rare gift for blending

unashamedly modernist experimentalism with a desire to engage and communicate with listeners. That need to connect was there even during his student years at Helsinki's Sibelius Academy, where he established the Ears Open Society in 1980 with fellow Finns Esa-Pekka Salonen and Kaija Saariaho, as well as the performing ensemble Toimii (literally, 'It works'), in which he played piano. And even in his earliest pieces – like the tumultuous, wildly colourful *Kraft*, for example – Lindberg was clearly as interested in entertaining listeners as he was in prodding or provoking them with his uncompromising modernism.

More recently, however, he's rediscovered such fundamental musical features as memorable melody, glowing harmony and, especially, kaleidoscopic orchestration, harnessing them to the service of musical expression. Though some of his ideas might sound familiar, however, what he does with them sounds entirely new.

And what Lindberg managed to create with his First Violin Concerto is something quite remarkable. The piece was commissioned by New York's Mostly Mozart Festival in 2006, and premiered at that year's event by violinist Lisa Batiashvili and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra conducted by Louis Langrée. During early discussions, the festival requested some kind of link between Lindberg's new piece and Mozart. The Finnish composer's solution was to use a typically Mozartean orchestra – just strings, plus pairs of oboes, bassoons and horns. The way he employs those small-scale forces, however, is anything but Mozartean: he subdivides his string sections into multiple individual lines, recombining them with the wind instruments to create a luxuriant, deeply sensual sound world that competes with the violin soloist's flamboyance for attention.





*Magnus Lindberg*

*Lindberg is one of today's most celebrated composers, with a rare gift for blending unashamedly modernist experimentalism with a desire to engage and communicate with listeners.*

It's the solo violinist who kicks off the Concerto's first movement, introducing a simple, down-and-up-again theme that will return again and again throughout the piece. The orchestral strings' accompanying harmonies might sound icy at first, but things quickly warm up as the music develops a mounting sense of overheated ecstasy. Hymn-like harmonies from the woodwind launch the Concerto's second movement, which follows without a break. It again builds to a grand orchestral climax before a fiendish cadenza for the violin soloist, joined by an orchestral double bass. Fast-moving, dance-like figures from the oboes begin Lindberg's finale, a frantic, breathless dance that's quickly taken up by the soloist, growing more unhinged and brisker as the music progresses. But the return of the Concerto's down-and-up-again theme in a lavish orchestral restatement restores some sense of calm, before an ecstatic but restrained close.

But are we really right to talk about music expressing ecstasy, sadness, desire, or any

other emotion? Igor Stravinsky might have said: no. He famously wrote in his 1936 autobiography: 'I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc... Expression has never been an inherent property of music.' The comments became so notorious that he was forced to clarify his position a couple of decades later: what he ought to have said, he explained, was not that music couldn't express anything, but more simply that 'music expresses itself'.

Whether that clarifies matters has occupied certain music scholars ever since. But it's a conundrum that also feels particularly relevant to the clipped, brisk objectivity of much of the composer's later music, at once distinctive and meaningful, but also somewhat cool and detached. They're all adjectives you could easily apply to tonight's next piece, Stravinsky's Concerto in E flat, nicknamed 'Dumbarton Oaks'.



Igor Stravinsky

***Dumbarton Oaks, as it's universally called, is an intimate, witty work that has all the bustle of a Baroque concerto, even if its repeating basslines, its shifting rhythms and its stuttering syncopations are pure Stravinsky.***

Former US diplomat Robert Woods Bliss and his art collector wife Mildred Barnes acquired a historic estate in Washington, DC, in 1920, hiring an architect to remodel and enlarge the mansion, which they named Dumbarton Oaks. (They bequeathed it to Harvard University in 1940, an institution it still forms part of, and it even hosted a 1944 conference that laid the groundworks for what would become the United Nations.)

Bliss and Barnes were wealthy and generous supporters of the arts, and had met Stravinsky in 1937, when he'd visited the US to conduct the premiere of his ballet *Jeu de cartes*. That year was the couple's 30th wedding anniversary, and they requested a new work from Stravinsky to celebrate the occasion. What the composer came up with – after a lengthy immersion in the music of Bach, he said – is a piece that melds the Baroque and the contemporary, clothing Stravinsky's unmistakable rhythmic and harmonic quirks into the formal garb of a

Baroque concerto grosso, albeit one whose soloists are constantly shifting, so that almost all of the work's 15 players gets their moment in the spotlight. *Dumbarton Oaks*, as it's universally called, is an intimate, witty work that has all the bustle of a Baroque concerto, even if its repeating basslines, its shifting rhythms and its stuttering syncopations are pure Stravinsky. In three short movements, joined together by slow, chordal passages, it progresses from a bustling opening to a graceful second movement, ending with a finale whose determined tread slowly morphs into something far more buoyant.

From bracing objectivity to – well, something rather more sombre. When Dmitri Shostakovich applied to join the Communist Party in 1960, at the age of 54, it seemed like a mystifying, if not downright shocking act. He'd not only endured decades of scrutiny and criticism from the Soviet authorities, but had also seemed to hold

his nerve (just about) during the particular terrors of Stalin's dictatorship, including two brutal condemnations of his music – the first in 1936 for his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, the second in 1948 in a post-war crackdown on the arts – that left him fearing for his career, his freedom and even his life.

With Nikita Krushchev as Soviet leader from 1958, it seemed like the terror had marginally relaxed – but there was ever increasing pressure on the composer to give credence to the new leader's regime, and join up to the Party. His String Quartet No 8, written in just three days from 12 to 14 June 1960 – and transformed into the Chamber Symphony for string orchestra that you hear tonight by Shostakovich's friend Rudolf Barshai in 1967 – may, it's been speculated, reflect the composer's inner struggles during this difficult time.

That cautious reference to speculation is intentional. For, as with so much of Shostakovich's music, his intentions, meanings and purposes are almost impossible to pin down. The facts around the Eighth Quartet's composition are fairly clear. Shostakovich was in Dresden, at that time in East Germany, in a rare excursion outside the Soviet Union, writing music for the film *Five Days, Five Nights*, about the Allied bombing of the city during the Second World War. It was there that, in those three June days, he wrote one of his most personal and deeply felt works.

Shostakovich dedicated the Quartet to 'the victims of fascism and the war', but even that dedication is open to interpretation. Some take it at face value, citing the 'Jewish' theme (from his own Piano Trio No 2) that Shostakovich quotes in the Quartet's second movement as a reference to Nazi atrocities. Others, however, believe that Shostakovich

effectively dedicated the work to himself. He wrote about the piece to his friend Isaac Glickman: 'When I die, it's hardly likely that someone will write a quartet dedicated to my memory. So I decided to write it myself.' Another friend, Lev Lebedinsky, claimed that Shostakovich believed joining the Communist Party represented a moral death that could only be followed by a physical one. On returning to Russia from Dresden, the composer apparently purchased a large number of sleeping pills, and Lebedinsky spent as much time as he could with Shostakovich over the subsequent few days until he felt the immediate danger of suicide had passed.

The Eighth Quartet received its public premiere in Leningrad in 1960, in a performance by the Beethoven Quartet. An earlier, private performance, given by the Borodin Quartet for the composer at his Moscow home, perhaps revealed more about the work's significance. The Borodin players were hoping for guidance from the composer about their interpretation. Instead, when they'd finished, Shostakovich simply buried his head in his hands and wept. The four players quietly packed away their instruments and left.

It's unlikely we'll ever know for sure what was Shostakovich's true message behind the piece that became the Chamber Symphony, and it's equally unlikely that there's even such a simple key to unlocking its enigmas. That sense of unanswered questions, however, only adds to the already immense power that the piece conveys.

The Chamber Symphony is cast in five short movements, all of which run together without breaks, and each of which uses the distinctive, four-note motif that Shostakovich



*Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich*

***It's unlikely we'll ever know for sure what was Shostakovich's true message behind the piece that became the Chamber Symphony, and it's equally unlikely that there's even such a simple key to unlocking its enigmas.***

derived from his own name (transformed into the initials DSCH, and then, via the German note-naming system, into D-E flat-C-B). In fact, those notes are the very first things we hear, quietly in the cellos, as the theme that launches the first movement's intense, slow-moving fugue. Listen out, too, for a memorable accompaniment figure with repeated notes, which goes on to play a central role in the rest of the piece – not least the blazing, vitriolic second movement, whose furious opening violin theme is a simple transformation of that repeated-note idea. Shostakovich adds his own four-note name motif into the mix, and about halfway through breaks into the 'Jewish' theme from his Second Piano Trio. The result is an often terrifying mix of material, pitched at a screaming intensity.

The tension dissipates – momentarily, at least – in the ghostly waltz of the third movement, whose skittering violin melody is again based on the composer's four-note name motif, and

it moves on to a tune from Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto. Things wind down further into the enigmatic fourth movement: its distinctive texture of a long, whining drone with sudden explosions of sound was long thought to depict anti-aircraft gunfire and the distant whine of a bomber, perhaps over Dresden. It's more likely, however, that Shostakovich had something more personal in mind: later in the movement we gain a rare glimpse of light and hope, with a yearning, nostalgic melody high in the cellos, singing an aria from the composer's denounced opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.

Shostakovich's final movement returns to the brooding intensity of the first, and pits a new, more lyrical accompaniment figure against Shostakovich's now familiar four-note name motif. A brief memory of the first movement's repeated-note theme takes the piece to its desolate conclusion.

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# MAXIM EMELYANYCHEV



At the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Maxim Emelyanychev follows in the footsteps of just five previous Principal Conductors in the Orchestra's 49-year history; Roderick Brydon (1974-1983), Jukka-Pekka Saraste (1987-1991), Ivor Bolton (1994-1996), Joseph Swensen (1996-2005) and Robin Ticciati (2009-2018).

Recent highlights have included a US tour and a performance at the London Proms with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and his debuts with the Berliner Philharmoniker, New Japan Philharmonic, Osaka Kansai Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris.

In 2023/24 Maxim's highlights include the following debuts: Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, SWR Symphonieorchester Stuttgart, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, Mozarteum Orchestra at the Salzburg Festival. He returns to the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

He regularly collaborates with renowned artists such as Max Emanuel Cenčić, Patrizia Ciofi, Joyce DiDonato, Franco Fagioli, Richard Goode, Sophie Karthäuser, Stephen Hough, Katia and Marielle Labèque, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Julia Lezhneva, Alexei Lubimov, Riccardo Minasi, Xavier Sabata and Dmitry Sinkovsky.

Maxim is also a highly respected chamber musician. His most recent recording, of Brahms Violin Sonatas with long-time collaborator and friend Aylen Pritchin, was released on Aparté in December 2021 and has attracted outstanding reviews internationally. With the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Maxim has recorded Schubert Symphony No 9 – the symphony with which he made his debut with the orchestra – and Mendelssohn Symphonies Nos 3 'Scottish' and 5 'Reformation' both on Linn Records.

***For full biography please visit [sco.org.uk](https://sco.org.uk)***

Violin

## PEKKA KUUSISTO



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Violinist, conductor, and composer Pekka Kuusisto is renowned for his artistic freedom and fresh approach to repertoire. Kuusisto is Artistic Director of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor & Artistic Co-Director: Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra from the 2023/24 season. He is also Artistic Partner with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, a Collaborative Partner of the San Francisco Symphony, and Artistic Best Friend of Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen.

In the 2022/23 season Kuusisto debuted with Berliner Philharmoniker and performed with the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. He returned to orchestras such as The Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco, and Cincinnati symphony orchestras, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, and Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Kuusisto makes his debuts as a conductor with the Philharmonia, and Gothenburg symphony orchestras. He is also Sinfonieorchester Basel's Artist-in-Residence with whom he appears as conductor, soloist, and recitalist.

As a conductor, recent highlights include appearances with Helsinki Philharmonic, Saint Paul Chamber, and European Union Youth orchestras, the Concertgebouworkest, and Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Orchestre de chambre de Paris and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

***For full biography please visit [sco.org.uk](https://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, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Nico Muhly.



SCOTTISH  
CHAMBER  
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50

23 | 24 Concert Season

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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](mailto:hannah.wilkinson@sco.org.uk)**

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*The SCO is a charity registered in Scotland No SC015039.*