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26/27 Concert Season

Max Richter+

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
New Dimensions
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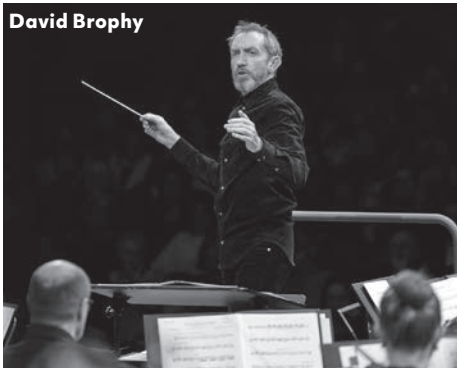
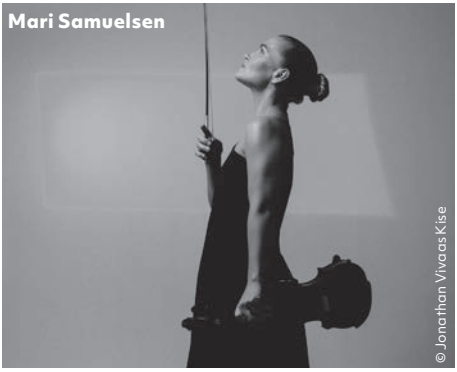
Thursday 22 October, 7.30pm Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Friday 23 October, 7.30pm City Halls, Glasgow

MAX RICHTER OPUS 2020
PHILIP GLASS Company
JOHN ADAMS The Chairman Dances
Interval of 20 minutes
MAX RICHTER Recomposed: Vivaldi – The Four Seasons*

David Brophy conductor
Mari Samuelsen violin/director*
Chris Ekers sound


David Brophy


Mari Samuelsen

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BBC RADIO 3 *This performance will be recorded for the BBC 'Radio 3 In Concert' series, due for broadcast on 6 January 2027.

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Eric de Wit
Niamh Molloy
Christoff Fourie

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Ciro Vigilante
Ben Havinden-Williams
Rupert Ring
Stewart Wilson

Harp
Eleanor Hudson

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Piano/Harpsichord
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Second Violin

Rachel's Chair is kindly supported by Colin Mumford.

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What You Are About To Hear

MAX RICHTER (b.1966)

OPUS 2020 **(2020)**

PHILIP GLASS (b. 1937)

Company **(1983)**

I. ♩ = 96

II. ♩ = 160

III. ♩ = 96

IV. ♩ = 160

JOHN ADAMS (b. 1947)

The Chairman Dances **(1985)**

MAX RICHTER (b.1966)

Recomposed: Vivaldi – The Four Seasons **(2012)**

Spring 0
Spring 1
Spring 2
Spring 3
Summer 1
Summer 2
Summer 3
Autumn 1
Autumn 2
Autumn 3
Winter 1
Winter 2
Winter 3

Max Richter is a phenomenally successful musician, and a composer who's also received wide acclaim. That's partly because of the enormously widespread exposure of his music: he's scored more than 50 films and TV series, as well as writing for the concert hall and the ballet stage, and for installations and catwalk fashion shows. But it's also because of his works' sheer emotional eloquence, conveyed using often surprisingly simple means.

Richter has acknowledged early influence from US minimalists Terry Riley and Philip Glass (we'll hear more from the latter shortly), as well as from pioneering pop artists Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream. Could you call Richter himself a minimalist? It's a contentious point. Certainly his music often draws on the cycling repetitions and luminous harmonies of composers including Glass and Steve Reich. But rather than to expose his pieces' inner workings, he uses those elements to build slowly accumulating textures of immense emotional weight, in music that can sound at once fragile, intimate and grandly cinematic.

Richter has long been fascinated by memory, time and reimagining the past, drawing on a sometimes bewildering collection of influences – from the richness of 19th-century classical music to drum and bass – in his explorations and reworkings, thereby establishing new connections with musical history for 21st-century listeners. The two works by Richter in tonight's programme do just that, looking with fresh eyes at a pair of well-established composers from earlier centuries.

OPUS 2020 was commissioned by the Beethoven Orchester Bonn in 2020, to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the

Max Richter

OPUS 2020 was commissioned by the Beethoven Orchester Bonn in 2020, to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven.

birth of Ludwig van Beethoven. As we enter the current season marking the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's death, it seems like a particularly appropriate place to begin. Richter himself writes about the piece:

OPUS 2020 *takes its inspiration from Stockhausen's OPUS 1970, the special 'Beethoven Edition' of* Kurzwellen*, his work for multiple radios. In the case of OPUS 1970, the music resulted not from radios tuned at random, but from tape recorders playing back a collage of Beethoven works together with Stockhausen's own reading from the Heiligenstadt Testament.*

When I started thinking about OPUS 2020*, I decided to bring some elements of Stockhausen's practice into the present in new ways. My own work has always sought to integrate instrumental and electronic means; the studio is for me not simply a recording tool, but also a sculptural one.*

Electronic music practice has informed my writing as much as traditional notions of harmony and counterpoint. Therefore, I took as my compositional starting point a simple and universal studio technique, that of the tape loop, something employed equally by Stockhausen, King Tubby, Brian Eno and many others.

I wondered if I could make an orchestral work made of Beethoven fragments that are treated as 'tape loops', but played instrumentally. This is the origin of OPUS 2020*.*

In order to realise this idea, I have had to rethink how the orchestra works, and it has resulted in a very challenging, though seemingly simple score. The multiple temporal worlds of the differing loops means that the orchestra has to behave as a democratic community of ensembles, all playing in different meters, in order for

the overall effect to be realised. In spite of its architectural simplicity, the score relies on the finely calibrated and continuously shifting dynamic relationships that mark the ebb and flow of the work.

The Beethoven fragments I have used as raw materials for these loops are from works that mean something special to me personally, and I see OPUS 2020 *as a place to reflect on them and on the extraordinary human value of Beethoven's music more generally.*

For anybody wanting to avoid spoilers, move to the next paragraph now. The result of Richter's multi-layered live 'tape loops' is a dream-like, constantly shifting soundscape from which distinctly Beethovenian sounds emerge, but often sound fresh and new, even alien. Richter's final surprise, however, is a shift in both sonic environment and musical language, as he explains: 'inspired by Beethoven's vision, I, too, passionately believe in the uplifting impact of creative works on the individual and on society. I therefore leave the final word of OPUS2020 to Beethoven himself, as a reminder that, despite the challenges we face, the future lies in our hands; if we choose creative and positive action, that future will be brighter.' Richter's final passage is unadorned Beethoven, the opening of the final movement of the latter's Piano Sonata in E, Op.109.

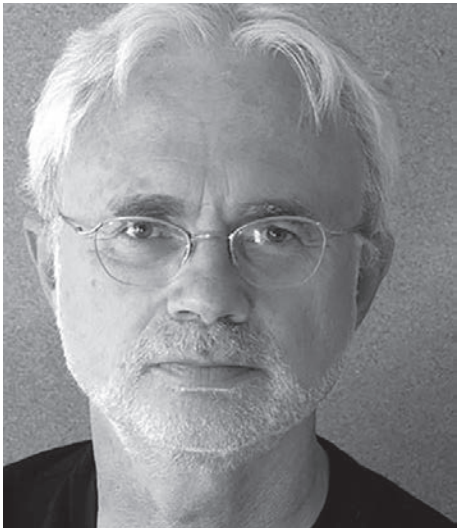
From Richter looking back to Beethoven in the 18th and 19th centuries in 2020, we step back in time to a composer Richter has acknowledged as an early influence. Philip Glass is one of the founding fathers of minimalism (though that's a term he himself detests), and he celebrates a significant anniversary of his own in January 2027, when he turns 90. Glass' undulating patterns and distinctive harmonic progressions once baffled or even outraged listeners, but we're now more familiar with his unmistakable musical language, and aware of his immense influence.

Company counts as Glass's String Quartet No.2, though it was originally written in 1983 as incidental music for a stage adaptation of Samuel Beckett's 1979 novella *Company* by the Mabou Mines theatre company in New York. It's often performed, as tonight, in a version for string orchestra.

Company unfolds in four brief movements, which originally interrupted and commented upon Beckett's text. The opening movement begins hesitantly, but soon builds in grand arches of sound, including some unexpected dissonances. The second movement is more urgent, with striking contrasts, and after the delicate third movement, the quicker final movement explores contrasting textures while remaining within a familiar harmonic landscape.

If Glass isn't comfortable being labelled a minimalist, then his younger colleague John Adams actively describes himself as 'a minimalist who's bored with minimalism'. In his earliest pieces, it was just about reasonable to place him alongside Glass and Reich as a radical minimalist, creating music full of repetition, slowly changing textures, and usually consonant, lush harmonies. But very quickly, Adams started to strain against the boundaries, introducing all kinds of new, swiftly developing material into his pieces, to such an extent that some of his more recent works have even been described as 'maximally minimalist'.

Philip Glass



John Adams

The Chairman Dances neatly encapsulates both these sides of Adams' musical personality. He describes the piece as an 'out-take' from his first opera, *Nixon in China*, which relates US President Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to China, a defining moment in the thawing of US-Chinese relations. *Nixon in China* was enormously successful, as well as groundbreaking in its focus on very recent, real-world events, and has been staged across the world since its 1987 premiere at Houston Grand Opera (including its UK premiere at the 1988 Edinburgh International Festival).

In the title of tonight's piece, though, 'Dances' is a verb, not a noun. The Chairman in question is Mao Tse-tung (in the opera, at least – we'd now more likely call him Mao Zedong), and the piece describes a specific fantasy scenario, which Adams later reworked in the opera's third act. Chiang Ch'ing – whom Adams describes as 'the fabled "Madame Mao", firebrand, revolutionary executioner, architect of China's calamitous Cultural Revolution, and (a fact not universally realised) a former Shanghai movie actress' – gatecrashes a Presidential banquet, inviting her husband – present only in a gigantic, 40-foot portrait – to dance with her. He dutifully steps down from his picture, and they begin to dance a foxtrot together, remembering their youthful days on the Long March, dancing to music from a wind-up gramophone.

The Chairman Dances begins with a typically Adams minimalist texture, all chugging rhythms on strings and woodwind, a propulsive bassline and increasingly insistent 'pings' from woodwind, piano and percussion. After a couple of gradual build-ups, the texture suddenly clears and the tempo slows for the piece's sensuous, sultry middle section, complete with a soaring, Hollywood-style string melody, mirrored

in a ghostly, stratospheric theme on violin harmonics later on.

When the opening music returns, it's almost like a train slowly picking up speed, but the sensuousness of the middle section soon returns in a joyful rerun of the Hollywood-style melody, now combined with the chugging minimalist textures in a kind of ecstatic union. Suddenly a solo piano takes over, and as the Maos' gramophone runs down, all that's left is the crackle of the needle in the groove.

Adams himself playfully suggests that we might associate the piece's minimalist opening with Mao, and the more 'seductive, swaying-hips melody' of its central section with Chiang Ch'ing, adding: 'you might imagine the piano part at the end being played by Richard Nixon.'

We return to Richter for tonight's final piece, and to what must surely count as his best-known and most widely loved creation. *Recomposed* is a piece that exerts a profound emotional power on many listeners, partly because of the familiarity of Vivaldi's original *Four Seasons*, and partly because of what Richter does with that earlier music.

But before we turn to what Richter does, let's take a look at Vivaldi's original. As so often with music from the early 18th century, the origins of *The Four Seasons* are slightly sketchy, although we know the concertos were first published in Amsterdam in 1725, as the first four pieces in a collection entitled *Il cimento dell' armonia e dell' inventione* (or *The Contest Between Harmony and Invention*). The four seasonal concertos form one of the cornerstones of the classical repertoire, of course, and they represent an inescapable element in any self-respecting violinist's arsenal. They were phenomenally popular in Vivaldi's own time, and established a tradition that stretched through to such later nature portraits as Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony, and even Messiaen's visionary bird evocations. Since Vivaldi's music is so colourful, so descriptive and so open to individual interpretation, it might feel like the composer is almost challenging his performers to discover their own distinctive ways of conveying it. Many have taken up that challenge: there are countless period performances inspired by what went on in the composer's own time, as well as jazz and electronic versions, and even arrangements for Chinese and Japanese instruments.

It's that very familiarity of *The Four Seasons* that lies behind Richter's 'recomposition' of the concertos. He writes about his version of the pieces:

When I was a young child I fell in love with Vivaldi's original, but over the years, hearing it principally in shopping centres, advertising jingles, on telephone hold systems and similar places, I stopped being able to hear it as music; it had become an irritant – much to my dismay! So I set out to try to find a new way to engage with this wonderful material, by writing through it anew – similarly to how scribes once illuminated manuscripts – and thus rediscovering it for myself. I deliberately didn't want to give it a modernist imprint but to remain in sympathy and in keeping with Vivaldi's own musical language.

This kind of 'recomposition' might strike us as an intricate philosophical conundrum in 2026. After all, it poses profound questions about authorship (who's really the composer here?), the sanctity of iconic

Though Richter is careful to retain the clarity and focus of Vivaldi's own musical language – or at least to create a distinctively 21st-century version of it – he nonetheless introduces a sense of distance between the listener and the music, which in this new version sounds at once familiar and entirely new.

artworks (is Richter even allowed to tamper with such an iconic creation?), and even cultural familiarity (what does it mean to us to encounter a 'new' version of something we already know so well?). In Vivaldi's own time, however, adapting and reworking another composer's music was common practice. Even JS Bach did it to his Italian colleague: around 1713-14 he reworked several of Vivaldi's existing violin concertos as concertos for harpsichord or organ. In the early 18th century, as now, great music was not necessarily treated as an inviolable museum object.

Though Richter is careful to retain the clarity and focus of Vivaldi's own musical language – or at least to create a distinctively 21st-century version of it – he nonetheless introduces a sense of distance between the listener and the music, which in this new version sounds at once familiar and entirely new.

Richter estimated that during his recomposition, he discarded around three-quarters of Vivaldi's original music. And while there are passages that sound almost entirely untouched, there are many other sections where Vivaldi's music is only glimpsed through Richter's radical reworkings – in a multi-storey aviary of layered birdsong, for example, or in an energetic, EDM-style dance movement. New, almost club-like harmonies set Vivaldi's melodies in unexpected contexts, and witty, irregular rhythms might keep you guessing as to where the music's going next.

Alongside the intricate details of Richter's imaginative reworkings, however, it's perhaps the broader question posed by *Recomposed* that lingers longest: how can music we think we know intimately be made strange, vivid and new again?

© David Kettle

Conductor

David Brophy

David Brophy, Chief Conductor of the WDR Funkhausorchester (WDR Radio Orchestra) Cologne, is widely recognised as one of the most established Irish conductors. He has held positions throughout Ireland, including Principal Conductor with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra and titular positions with both the National Symphony Orchestra Ireland and the Chamber Choir Ireland.

In Europe, David has guest conducted orchestras such as Orquesta Nacional Clásica de Andorra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Aalborg Symfoniorkester, Oulu Symphony Orchestra. American engagements have included appearances with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, Nashville Symphony Orchestra, Naples Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra at The Kennedy Center, Washington D.C. He also performed at the Lincoln Center in New York with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra.

Soloist collaborations include performances with Martin Fröst, Lang Lang, Nicola Benedetti, Maxim Vengerov, James Galway, Barry Douglas, Willard White, Lesley Garrett, Danielle de Niese, Kim Criswell, Daniel Hope, Evelyn Glennie, and Carolin Widmann. He has also worked closely with pop artists including U2, Andrea Bocelli, Father John Misty, The Chieftains, Dreamers' Circus, Sinéad O'Connor, and with international stars of the silver screen including Brendan Gleeson, Fiona Shaw, and Kenneth Branagh.

David has recorded for Silva Screen Records, Lyric FM, Tara Records, V2 Records, and Compass Records. Other recordings include Victor Herbert's operetta *Eileen* and Rogers & Hart's *Dearest Enemy* for New World Records, conducting the Orchestra of Ireland. In Ireland, David is a well-known figure on public TV and radio, having presented multiple award-winning programmes, extending the reach of classical music in mainstream media.

He has recently been awarded an honorary doctorate from The Open University for services to music and the community in Ireland.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

Violin / director

Mari Samuelsen

© Andrea Gjestvang

In Mari Samuelsen's musical universe, there are no barriers between the music of contemporary composers like Max Richter, Caroline Shaw and Philip Glass, and that of Bach and Beethoven. With her breathtaking artistry, adventurous approach to programming, and emotionally charged style of playing, backed by immaculate technique and a drive to defy traditional expectations, she inspires a global audience.

Mari's passion for genre blurring has seen her collaborate with a range of musicians including electronic music artists Jeff Mills, Dubfire and multimedia artist Philipp Geist, and to perform with Max Richter and Hollywood actress Tilda Swinton at the Bluedot Festival.

LIFE, Mari's third studio album on Deutsche Grammophon, inspired by her experience of becoming a mother, includes music by Max Richter as well as Olivia Belli, Jóhann Jóhansson, and Nils Frahm, with a track by Hania Rani being selected by Louis Vuitton for their Olympic campaign. This follows her two previous albums LYS and MARI, both of which reached top 10 in the Classical Album Charts.

"When making music and putting together programs, I don't think about what's traditionally perceived to be "correct" or "expected", rather the opposite. My aim is to create innovative programmes for music lovers – regardless of genre."

Sound

Chris Ekers

© Bobby Airken

From gaining a choral scholarship as a chorister at Wells Cathedral, Chris began his sound engineering career as an apprentice with Autograph Sound Recording in London, specialising in theatre sound for musicals.

Later, as a freelancer, he became involved in contemporary classical music and dance, working with many leading composers, choreographers and ensembles.

In 1988, he assisted with the opening performance of Tate Gallery Liverpool, where he met the composer Gavin Bryars. This led to a long association with him and his ensemble, both in live performance and recordings of such works as *The Sinking of the Titanic* and *Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet*.

His collaboration with composer Max Richter started in 2004 and until recently, he had been instrumental in realising much of Richter's chamber, orchestral, theatre and site-specific repertoire; but now he concentrates more on the global success of his scores for the ballets of Sir Wayne McGregor and the Royal Ballet.

Chris is head of sound for the annual Fes Festival of World Sacred Music in Morocco and works with conductor Kristjan Jarvi's Nordic Pulse Orchestra in Estonia on their collaborations with Brian Eno and Jon Hopkins.

Chris first encountered Norwegian violinist, Mari Samuelsen, with her ground-breaking performances of Richter's *Recomposed:Vivaldi, The Four Seasons* in 2016. Since then, he has realized numerous performances with her around the world.

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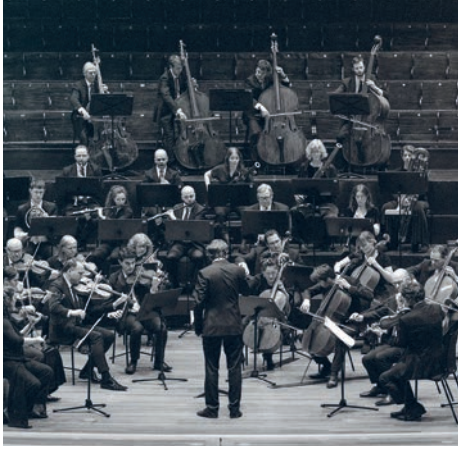
Biography

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

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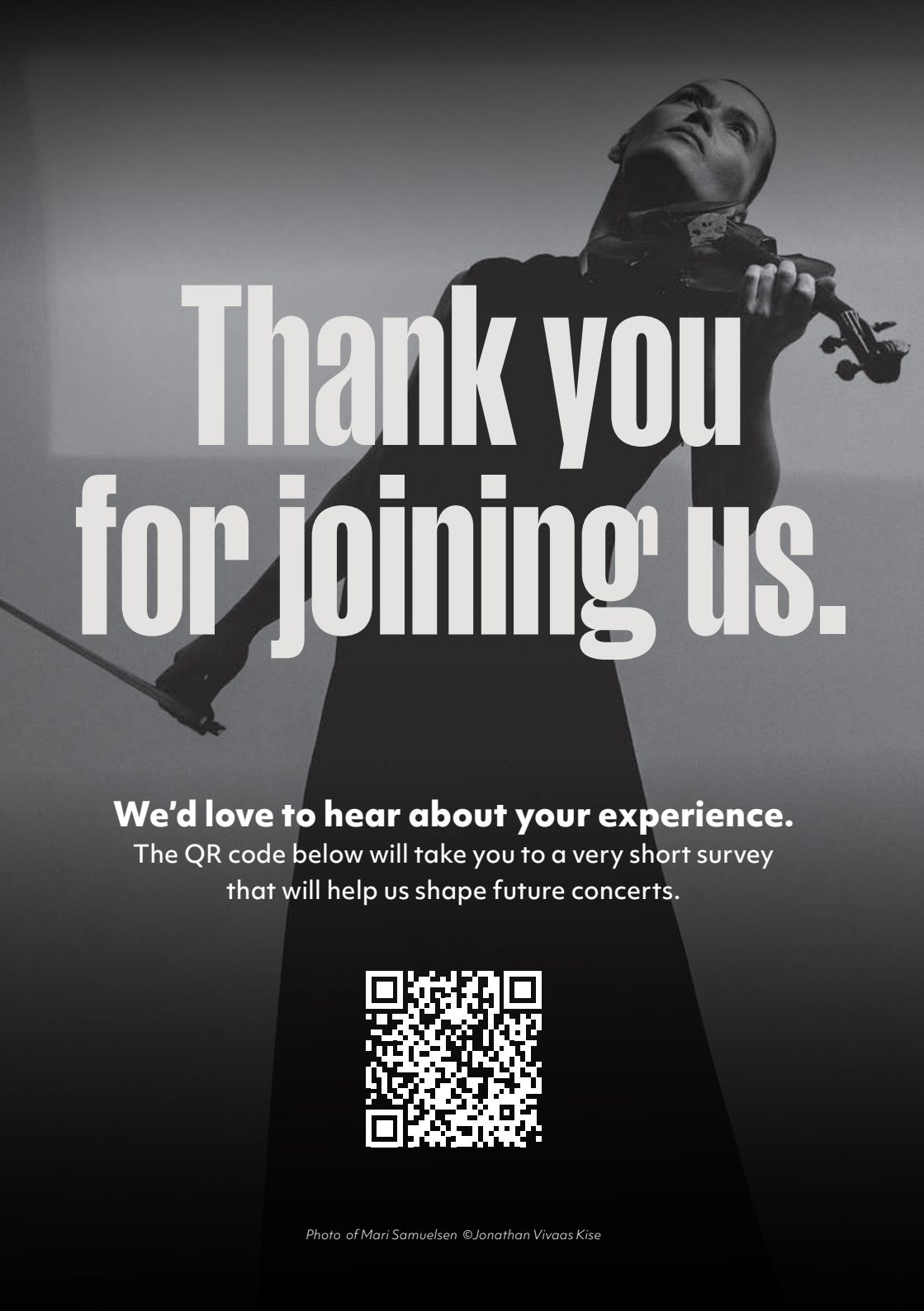
The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity 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 at least 2031. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in 2023, with Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8 following in 2024.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, Lorenza Borrani 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 Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Nico Muhly and the late Peter Maxwell Davies.



Thank you for joining us.

We'd love to hear about your experience.

The QR code below will take you to a very short survey that will help us shape future concerts.

Photo of Mari Samuelsen ©Jonathan Vivaas Kise

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Each year, the SCO must fundraise around £1.3 million to bring extraordinary musical performances to the stage and support groundbreaking education and community initiatives beyond it.

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To learn more and support the SCO from as little as **£5** per month, please contact **Sadie Purves** on **0131 478 8341** or **sadie.purves@sco.org.uk**.

The SCO is a charity registered in Scotland No SC015039.

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