

YURI BASHMET**Viola / Conductor**

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Through his virtuosity, strength of personality and high intelligence, Yuri Bashmet [www.YuriBashmet.com] has given the viola a new prominence in musical life. The pre-eminent viola player of the modern age, he has motivated the leading composers of our time to expand the repertoire with significant new music. He is Artistic Director of the *December Evenings* festival in Moscow, Principal Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of New Russia, and is the founder / director of Moscow Soloists. He also appears throughout the world in the dual role of conductor / soloist.

Born in 1953 in Rostov-on-Don in Russia, he spent his childhood in Lvov in Ukraine before studying at the Moscow Conservatoire with Vadim Borisovsky (of the Beethoven Quartet) and Feodor Druzhinin. His international career was launched in 1976 when he won the International Viola Competition in Munich. Since then he has appeared with all the world's great orchestras, including the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Boston, Chicago and Montreal Symphony Orchestras, New York Philharmonic, London Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestra, which presented its own Yuri Bashmet Festival.

He has inspired many composers to write for him, and has enjoyed strong personal and professional relationships with Alfred Schnittke and Sofia Gubaidulina in particular. Schnittke's Viola Concerto, written for him, is now firmly established in the repertoire. Other concertos composed for him include works by Poul Ruders, Alexander Tchaikovsky and Alexander Raskatov. He has also given the world premieres of *Styx* by Giya Kancheli, *The Myrrh Bearer* by John Tavener and *On Opened Ground* by Mark-Anthony Turnage – all of which were written for him.

In December 2002 Bashmet became Principal Conductor of the newly formed Symphony Orchestra of New Russia, with which he has embarked upon a series of concerts in Moscow, with touring plans in Russia, Italy, France and the UK. Other orchestras with which he appears as conductor / soloist include the Dresden Philharmonic, Orquesta Ciudad de Granada, Tokyo Philharmonic, Orchestra Sinfonica Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Camerata Salzburg, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and Brussels Philharmonic. He is also founder of Moscow Soloists, an ensemble he has performed with and directed throughout the world since 1992. This renowned chamber orchestra has been rapturously received in Moscow, Amsterdam, Paris, Tokyo, New York and at the BBC Promenade Concerts in London.

In chamber music his closest collaborators have included Sviatoslav Richter, Gidon Kremer, Mstislav Rostropovich, Maxim Vengerov, Natalia Gutman, Viktoria Mullova and the Borodin Quartet. He formed a highly successful trio with mezzo Angelika Kirchschrager and pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, showcasing music of the past and present for this unusual and evocative combination. Plans include an Beethoven trios with Lyn Harrell and Oleg Maisenberg. He is a frequent visitor to summer festivals such as Elbe, Verbier and Martha Argerich's festival in Japan.

Among his many CDs is a recording for Deutsche Grammophon of the Gubaidulina Concerto and Kancheli *Styx*, winner of a Diapason d'Or award and a Grammy nomination. Other notable DG discs are Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante with Anne-Sophie Mutter, Brahms' Piano Quartet No 1 with Argerich, Kremer and Maisky, and the recently released Bartók Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Boulez. For Onyx he and Moscow Soloists have embarked on a critically-acclaimed series of recordings; chamber symphonies by Shostakovich, Sviridoc and Vainberg; music by Stravinsky and Prokofiev (which received a Grammy award); and a disc of music by composers from the Far East, plus a recital disc of Encores with pianist Mikhail Muntian.

Described by The Times as '*without doubt, one of the world's greatest living musicians*', Yuri Bashmet brings an enquiring and perceptive mind to life beyond classical music; he is an enthusiast for the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix and has hosted his own political discussion show on Russian television. He plays a 1758 Testore viola (a similar model to the one Mozart played) which he bought in 1971.