

Alexander Ivashkin, conductor

Alexander Ivashkin began his music education at the Gnessins Special School of Music for gifted students in Moscow, Russia, at the age of five, playing both piano and cello. He graduated from the Gnessins Russian Academy of Music in Moscow as a cellist and musicologist. He studied conducting at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatoire, taking lessons with the great Russian conductors Boris Khaikin, Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Valery Poliansky.

In the 1970s and 1980s he was the founder and artistic director of The Bolshoi Soloists – a chamber orchestra which performed in many European countries and recorded over twenty CDs . He worked closely with the chief conductor of the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet, Alexander Lazarev. At that time Ivashkin was a member of the Board of Directors of the Bolshoi Opera/Ballet Company and was actively involved in the repertoire, planning, and rehearsal processes of what was then the largest and most acclaimed company of its type in Russia. He was the first performer and dedicatee of many works by great contemporary composers. He has actively collaborated with composers such as John Cage, George Crumb, Mauricio Kagel, Krzysztof Penderecki, Peter Sculthorpe, Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli, Arvo Part, Rodion Shchedrin, Nikolai Korndorf, Alexander Raskatov, Vladimir Tarnopolski, Augusta Reid Thomas, James MacMillan, Lyell Cresswell and Gillian Whitehead. As the artistic director of The Bolshoi Soloists he worked with many outstanding singers and instrumentalists.

Alexander Ivashkin is now well known as a conductor. He conducts orchestras and choirs in Great Britain, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. He has established an international reputation, both as an interpreter of the standard repertoire, and as a proponent of contemporary music. His highly acclaimed concerts, radio broadcasts and TV recordings, and his appearances with orchestras, have included performances in more than forty countries. Most recently he conducted the Russian State Symphony Orchestra of Voronezh, the Russian State Symphony orchestra of Tambov, the Armenian State Philharmonic Orchestra, the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra (Baku, Azerbaijan) , the Montreal Players (Canada), the Australian National Academy Symphony Orchestra in Melbourne (Australia), the Canterbury Festival Orchestra (New Zealand).

He has also been a regular guest at many important music festivals in Europe, Britain, the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Since 1995 Ivashkin has been the Artistic Director of the Adam International Cello Festival, held in Christchurch, New Zealand. He is also artistic director of annual festivals in London.

A recording artist for the Chandos, BMG and Naxos labels, Ivashkin has to his credit award-winning recordings of music by Rakhmaninov, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Roslavets, Tcherepnin, Schnittke and Kancheli.

In 2005 he was invited to conduct in Yerevan, Armenia. His programme with the Armenian State Philharmonic Orchestra included Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, works by Tchaikovsky, Schnittke, Charles Ives, and the leading Armenian composer, Tigran Mansurian.

In 2007 he conducted the UK première in London of Prokofiev's Cantata "Songs of Our Days" with the Goldsmiths Sinfonia and Chorus.

In the same year Ivashkin made his conducting début in Baku, Azerbaijan, with the Azerbaijan première of Erich Korngold's suite "A Midsummer Night's Dream". He also conducted works by the leading Azerbaijani composer, Faradgh Karaev.

In February 2009 he conducted the Russian State Symphony Orchestra of Tambov in an all-British programme, including the Russian première of James Macmillan's "Britannia", Elgar's Cello Concerto, Handel's "Music for the Royal Fireworks", and the suite from popular songs by The Beatles.

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