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**Armenian State Symphony Orchestra and Sergey Smbatyan make
Barbican debut featuring European premiere of
John Ter-Tatevosian's Symphony No 2**

**Rare chance to hear ASSO in the UK with Maxim Vengerov as soloist for Bruch's
Violin Concerto No. 1**

14 January 2020 | 19:30 | Barbican Hall

The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra (ASSO) makes its Barbican debut on Tuesday 14 January with its 2019-20 Artist-in-Residence Maxim Vengerov. Artistic Director Sergey Smbatyan, who founded the ASSO 14 years ago, conducts the Orchestra in a programme which includes the long-awaited European premiere of Armenian composer John Ter-Tatevosian's Symphony No. 2 *The Fate of Man* (1959). They will also play Composer-in-Residence Alexey Shor's Barcarolle for Violin and Orchestra and Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 with Vengerov as the soloist.

This performance is a rare opportunity for UK audiences to hear one of Europe's newest and most distinctive symphony orchestras, under the charismatic leadership of Sergey Smbatyan, who founded the ASSO at just 18-years-old. The 32-year-old conductor has not only been recognised in Armenia, being recently awarded the title of "Honoured Artist of the Republic of Armenia" by the President of the Republic of Armenia, but has also received international recognition with the title of Chevalier of the "Order of Arts and Letters", granted by the Minister of Culture and Communication of France, making him the youngest and only Armenian recipient of this title.

One of Smbatyan's and the Orchestra's key missions is to share Armenian culture and history internationally. Their decision to bring Ter-Tatevosian's work to new audiences stems from a wish not only to introduce people to Armenian composers and their music, but to spread the message of hope that many Armenians have felt since the recent revolution.

Armenian composer and violinist John Ter-Tatevosian (1926-1988) based his second symphony on Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov's text "The Fate of Man", which tells the emotionally fluctuating tale of a soldier enduring trialling and devastating times throughout

the second world war, but who eventually finds hope in adopting a young boy, also ravaged by the horrors of war. This premiere comes at a pivotal point in Armenian history following their 2018 revolution, alongside continuing, and occasionally violent, tensions with some of their neighbouring countries.

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the ASSO, **Sergey Smbatyan**, said: *"The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra is comprised of extraordinary musicians, not just in their virtuosity and dedication to the highest level of music making, but in their belief in music to spread messages of hope and joy, even in turbulent times. We hope our first ever Barbican performance, and indeed the rest of the European tour, brings a beacon of light from Armenia to the rest of the world."*

Having worked tirelessly with the Orchestra for 14 years, Smbatyan has been praised for his conducting of "great dignity and nobility" (Hessisch Niedersächsische Allgemeine) and continues to guide the Orchestra from strength to strength as it approaches its 15th year. The Armenian conductor champions innovation in music. In 2015 he founded the 24/04 World Orchestra to commemorate the centenary of the Armenian genocide, comprising of 123 musicians from 43 countries. Earlier this year, Smbatyan also brought members of the ASSO together with musicians from all five continents for the World Congress of Information Technology, where they performed the first ever piece of music composed by artificial intelligence in real-time.

The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra has grown in status, both nationally and internationally, in an impressively short timeframe. Artistic Director Sergey Smbatyan founded the ensemble in 2005, at which point it was still considered a youth orchestra. After many years of dedication and significant international touring, the Orchestra made the natural progression to State Symphony Orchestra, and despite its relatively recent founding, has been welcomed at venues such as Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, Paris's Opera Garnier, Madrid's Teatro Real and the Dubai Opera House. Made up entirely of the best Armenian musicians, the Orchestra brings an unparalleled vibrancy and youthfulness to their playing, communicating a deep understanding of Armenian history and culture through their performances.

The ASSO's Barbican performance is part of a European tour, which takes the Orchestra to cities across Germany, Austria, Russia, the Czech Republic and the UK. The ASSO is supported by the European Foundation for Support of Culture (EUFSC), who are organising this European tour.

Tickets to the London performance are available to purchase from the Barbican website [here](#).

For more information on the tour, and the rest of the ASSO's activities, please visit the Orchestra's website [here](#).

Tour dates

Jan 8	Munich, Gasteig
Jan 9	Salzburg, Großes Festspielhaus

Jan 10 Stuttgart, Beethoven Saal
Jan 12 Berlin, Philharmonie
Jan 14 London, Barbican Centre
Jan 17 Vienna, Musikverein
Jan 19 Prague, Dvorak Hall
Jan 21 Moscow, Zaryadye

Programme

Alexey Shor St. Elmo Barcarolle for Violin and Orchestra

John Ter-Tatevosian Symphony No.2 "The Fate of a Man" (European premiere)

Max Bruch Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, Op.26

Maurice Ravel Tzigane Concerto-Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra

Soloist: **Maxim Vengerov** (violin)

Conductor: **Sergey Smbatyan**

Armenian State Symphony Orchestra

Ends

For further information, or to request press tickets, please contact Tessa Deterding at
Premier:

Tessa.deterding@premiercomms.com | 0207 292 7355

IMAGE ATTACHED:

Conductor Sergey Smbatyan, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Armenian State
Symphony Orchestra, who leads the concert

Notes to editors

About Armenian State Symphony Orchestra

The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra ([ASSO](#)) was founded in 2005 by conductor Sergey Smbatyan, its current Artistic Director and Principal Conductor. Initially founded as the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia, the continued devotion of the young musicians led to its upgrade to a State Symphony Orchestra.

The Armenian State Symphony performs more than 50 concerts yearly and has a versatile repertoire, which spans all-time favourites and orchestral masterpieces to cutting-edge premieres of pieces by Armenian and foreign contemporary composers.

About Sergey Smbatyan

Sergey Smbatyan was born in Yerevan in 1987, into a family of musicians. A lifelong advocate of music education and social development through art, Sergey himself started his early musical career as a violinist. Since then, he has turned his hand to conducting, and has founded four local and international festivals, an international music competition, five orchestras and seven educational projects.

About Maxim Vengerov

Maxim Alexandrovich Vengerov is a Russian-born Israeli violinist, violist, and conductor. Often hailed as one of the world's finest musicians, and referred to as one of the greatest living string players in the world today, Grammy award winner Maxim Vengerov also enjoys international acclaim as a conductor and is one of the most in-demand soloists in all of classical music.