



## **PROTOSTAR GROUP DENOUNCES CANCELLATIONS OF RUSSIAN PIANIST'S CONCERTS**

**SAN DIEGO, CA, March 10, 2022** – The ProtoStar Group denounces the decisions by the Vancouver Recital Society and Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (OSM) to cancel Alexander Malofeev's concerts simply because he is Russian and did not "speak out publicly against the war" in Ukraine. As much as the world is horrified and repulsed by what Vladimir Putin is doing to Ukraine, pressuring an artist to take a political stance sets a dangerous precedent. In fact, Mr. Malofeev is wise not to speak out against the war given Russia's newly-enacted ambiguous law punishing anyone within its jurisdiction who criticizes the war with 15 years in prison.

Nor does Mr. Malofeev have any personal connections to Mr. Putin, according to his agency in the U.S. Unlike the sanctions and embargoes, cancelling Mr. Malofeev's concert would have absolutely no effect on the Russian economy, the oligarchs, or Mr. Putin himself. The supposed justification by Vancouver Recital Society's founder and artistic director, Leila Getz, that she did not want people protesting Mr. Malofeev or "misbehaving inside the concert hall" seems rather condescending, as it assumes that the classical music audience does not know the difference between the brutal acts of an authoritarian regime and the artistic performance of a musician who did not say anything in support of those acts. Rather, the inescapable conclusion appears to be that the cancellations discriminated against an artist based solely on his national origin – something that is contrary to our democratic values.

Indeed, the arts could play an important role in comforting, inspiring, elevating, and transforming us, especially during these difficult times. President John F. Kennedy once said, "If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth."<sup>1</sup>

Music can also bridge divides. During another era when tensions between the U.S. and the then Soviet Union were also high, Vladimir Horowitz, who was from Kyiv, returned to perform at the Moscow Conservatory (where Mr. Malofeev is now studying) after a self-imposed 60-year exile as "an ambassador of peace." For his encore, Mr. Horowitz had carefully chosen "Träumerei" from Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood*. Watching from thousands of miles away, syndicated columnist Andy Rooney wrote:

Almost at the same instant I felt the suggestion of tears in my eyes, the television camera left Horowitz's fingers on the keyboard and dissolved to the face of a Soviet citizen in the audience. He did not

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<sup>1</sup> From President John F. Kennedy's Speech In Honor Of Robert Frost, delivered at Amherst College on October 26, 1963 (transcription made available by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum).



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look like the enemy. His eyes were closed, his head tilted slightly backward so that his face was up ... and one lone teardrop ran down his cheek. It was the same teardrop running down mine.<sup>2</sup>

### About ProtoStar

The ProtoStar Group is pleased and humbled to be a funder and supporter of the arts. It sponsors music and performing arts programs, makes grants to arts organizations, and commissions new works by contemporary composers. ProtoStar does not act as an agent, manager, promoter, publicist, presenter, or otherwise represent artists, composers, or performers in any way. Other than attending one of his concerts and admiring his artistry, ProtoStar has made no financial contributions to Mr. Malofeev or otherwise have any connections to him.

The ProtoStar Group is a set of pioneering companies that find resourceful ways to fund, develop, or incubate innovative projects and organizations that have a unique, compelling, and impactful social mission. It identifies, develops, and invests in *prototypes* that will hopefully become *star* projects, hence the portmanteau "ProtoStar." It seeks to **empower** organizations to better serve unserved and underserved communities worldwide, **challenge** nonprofit entities to be self-sustaining and more entrepreneurial, and **transform** the way in which funders engage in philanthropy. While ProtoStar does not engage in any political or lobbying activities, it condemns the Russian government's invasion of Ukraine based on humanitarian grounds and established principles of international law.

For more information, please visit [www.protostargroup.com](http://www.protostargroup.com) or contact us at [info@protostargroup.com](mailto:info@protostargroup.com).

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<sup>2</sup> Reproduced in Charles Kuralt's program notes to *Horowitz in Moscow* (Deutsche Grammophon 1986).