

# **Honorary President of Edinburgh International Festival is asked for resignation**

**As the invasion of Ukraine continues four days after its beginnings before dawn on Thursday, the cultural fallout has also begun.**

It was only last August that “Powerhouse Russian conductor” Valery Gergiev was feted at a concert with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in the grounds of Edinburgh Academy Junior School.

Appointed more than a decade ago as Honorary President, his apparent links to Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the fact that he has not spoken out against the invasion have prompted the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) to distance themselves from the conductor..

A spokesperson for EIF explained their position in a statement: “The board of trustees of the Edinburgh International Festival has asked for, and accepted the resignation of, Valery Gergiev as Honorary President of the Festival.

“Edinburgh is twinned with the city of Kyiv and this action is being taken in sympathy with, and support of, its citizens.”

According to the EIF programme from last August's concert, Gergiev was born in Moscow in 1953 and studied conducting with Ilya Musin at the Leningrad Conservatory (now the Rimsky-Korsakov St Petersburg State Conservatory). He won the Herbert von Karajan Conducting Competition in Berlin in 1977 and made his Kirov (now Mariinsky) Opera debut one year later, conducting *War and Peace*. In 1988 he was appointed Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Kirov and in 1996 he became General Director of the Mariinsky Theatre.

Formerly Principal Guest Conductor of the Metropolitan Opera, New York (1997–2008) and Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra (2007–15), he is currently Music Director of the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra and of the World Orchestra for Peace, and Co-Chair of the International Tchaikovsky Competition. He is the founder and Artistic Director of the Stars of the White Nights Festival, St Petersburg; the Moscow Easter Festival; the New Horizons Festival at the Mariinsky Theatre Concert Hall; the Gergiev Festival, Rotterdam; and the Mikkeli International Festival, Finland.

His numerous awards include the 2006 Herbert von Karajan International Music Prize, the Polar Music Prize, a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, the Dmitry Shostakovich Award, the Golden Mask Award and a Grammy award.

He was made an Officier de la Légion d'honneur in 2007 and became honorary president of the Edinburgh International Festival in 2011.



The Pavilion at Edinburgh Academy Junior School at the performance of Ariadne aux Naxos PHOTO Matt Beech Courtesy of EIF