

The 152nd Tokyo Opera City Subscription Concert
Wed. Feb. 22, 2023, 19:00 at Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall

The 980th Suntory Subscription Concert
Fri. Feb. 24, 2023, 19:00 at Suntory Hall

The 981st Orchard Hall Subscription Concert
Sun. Feb. 26, 2023, 15:00 at Bunkamura Orchard Hall

Mikhail Pletnev, conductor

Yunchan Lim, piano

Masanobu Yoda, concertmaster

Ludwig van Beethoven:
 Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73 "Emperor"
 (ca. 40 min)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio un poco mosso
- III. Rondo. Allegro - Più allegro

— intermission (ca. 15 min) —

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky:
Manfred Symphony, Op. 58 (ca. 55 min)

- I. Lento lugubre - Moderato con moto
- II. Vivace con spirito
- III. Andante con moto
- IV. Allegro con fuoco

Presented by Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra
 Subsidized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan |
 Japan Arts Council
 In Association with **Bunkamura** (Feb. 26)



- Exiting during the performance will be tolerated. If you do not feel well, please exit or enter as you need. However, please mind the other listeners so that they will be minimally disturbed.
- If you enter just before the concert, we may escort you to a seat different from the one to which you were originally assigned.
- Please refrain from using your cellphone or other electronic devices during performance.
- Late admittance will be refused during the live performance.
- Hold applause please. Please cherish the "afterglow" at the end of each piece for a moment before your applause.

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Artist Profile



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Mikhail Pletnev, conductor

Special Guest Conductor of
the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra

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Mikhail Pletnev is an artist who cannot be classified in one word. Known as a genius and one of the greatest pianists of our time and also as conductor and composer. Born in Archangel, Russia in 1957. Awarded the 1st prize and Gold Medal at renowned Tchaikovsky Competition in 1978 when he was 21 years old.

The resulting friendship with Mikhail Gorbachev in time gave Pletnev the opportunity to found Russian National Orchestra (RNO) in 1990.

Pletnev is also often invited to conduct noted orchestras such as Staatskapelle Dresden, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and others. Starting from July 2003, he has been invited to conduct the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra and was appointed as Special Guest Conductor from 2015. As a composer, he has been composing numerous works among which there is a cello sonata written for Steven Issarlis. His CDs have been released from Deutsche Grammophon and Pentatone Classics.

In 2022, he founded the Rachmaninoff International Orchestra (RIO).



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Yunchan Lim, piano

“Lim got to the soul of the piece.” — La Scena

“Lim is a one-in-a-million talent.” — Dallas Morning News

In June 2022, Yunchan Lim became the youngest person ever to win gold at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Born in Siheung, Korea, Yunchan Lim began piano lessons at age 7, when it was time to choose an after-school activity; he entered the Music Academy of the Seoul Arts Center the next year and quickly became immersed in his musical studies. He auditioned for and was accepted into the Korea National Institute for the Gifted in Arts at age 13, where he met his teacher and mentor, Minsoo Sohn. Yunchan entered the international music stage a year later, in 2018, winning second prize and the Chopin Special Award in his first-ever competition, the Cleveland International Piano Competition for Young Artists. Also that year, he stood out as the youngest participant in the Cooper International Competition, where he won both third prize and the audience prize, and was provided the opportunity to perform with the Cleveland Orchestra. The next year, 2019, brought more accolades, when, at the age of 15, he was the youngest to win Korea’s Isang Yun International Competition, also taking home two special prizes.

His 2022–2023 inaugural tour as Cliburn winner will take him across four continents.

In Dec 2022, he made his Japan debut at Suntory Hall.

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Program Notes

Text by Robert Markow

Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73 "Emperor"

Although Beethoven did not affix a subtitle to this work, it is, in its grandeur and splendor, indeed an emperor among concertos. The name, which, strangely enough, is not used in German-speaking countries, appears to have been bestowed by the pianist and publisher John Cramer, a close friend of Beethoven. Another theory has it that a French officer called out “C’est l’empereur” during a majestic passage at the first Viennese performance. In any case, Beethoven would certainly not have had in mind to honor Napoleon: the French, led by their Emperor, were once again at war with Austria, and in the spring of 1809, France occupied Vienna. “Nothing but drums, cannons, human misery of every sort!,” wrote Beethoven on July 26 to his publisher in Leipzig. But the spirit of heroism nonetheless infuses this music, and the *Emperor* Concerto, over and above its inherent musical qualities, stands as a stirring testament to man’s heroic will to survive in trying times. The last of Beethoven’s five piano concertos was finished in late 1809, but the first performance waited until January 13, 1811 in Vienna (not November 28 in Leipzig, as most sources indicate). The soloist was the concerto’s dedicatee, the Archduke Rudolph - friend, student, and patron of the composer.

The *Emperor* Concerto opens in resplendent majesty: three imperious chords are sounded by the orchestra, each in turn elaborated by the soloist in “fountains and cascades” (to quote music critic Michael Steinberg’s apt phrase) of arpeggios, trills, scales and broken octaves. Following this impressive introduction comes the first subject – a big, sonorous, richly scored theme punctuated with martial elements. The mysterious second theme occurs first in tentative tones in E-flat minor, then immediately afterwards in a flowing legato horn duet in E-flat major. When the piano

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finally returns, the two principal themes and other material as well are elaborated and developed in a mighty discourse between soloist and orchestra.

The slow movement is one of Beethoven's most profound. A hushed mood of sublime simplicity offers refreshing, soothing contrast to the militant grandeur and exuberance of the first movement. At its conclusion, in a transitional passage, Beethoven outlines the principal theme of the next movement, and suddenly, without a break, the jubilant finale, a rondo, bursts forth in full panoply. Although nominally in rondo form, there is only a single contrasting episode, a lyrical theme of regal bearing heard twice in the course of the movement, and only by the soloist. Eventually the movement's main theme expires, almost as if exhausted from its relentless repetitions, only to revive in one final, exuberant burst of energy.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Born in Bonn, December 16, 1770; died in Vienna, March 26, 1827
Work composed: 1809 **World premiere:** January 13, 1811 in Vienna at Palais Lobkowitz with Archduke Rudolph of Austria as the soloist
Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, solo piano

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Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: *Manfred* Symphony, Op. 58

Excepting possibly Tchaikovsky's Third Symphony, *Manfred* remains the least played and least known of this composer's symphonies. It is also the longest, the most difficult to perform, the only one with an overt program, and the only one without a chronological number. But it boasts an intensity of emotional content, sophistication of contrapuntal development, and richness of orchestral sonority unsurpassed by any of Tchaikovsky's numbered symphonies. Many connoisseurs consider it Tchaikovsky's best symphony, and newcomers

to the work are invariably swept immediately into its orbit and left emotionally exhausted by the end nearly an hour later.

Tchaikovsky's symphony is a musical portrait of the famed "Byronic hero" – that darkly brooding, disturbed, lonely outcast who harbors some terrible secret. This figure appealed to Russians generally and to Tchaikovsky in particular, not least due to the nature of his own deep dark secret, for Manfred's, like Tchaikovsky's was sexual in nature: for Manfred, it was an illegitimate daughter he fathered by his sister-in-law; for Tchaikovsky, it was the "crime" of homosexuality.

Byron's epic poem appeared in 1817 and quickly captivated all Europe. Composers wrote all kinds of music to *Manfred*: incidental music (Schumann), opera (Reinecke), ballet (Montsalvatge) and numerous piano pieces, including a *Manfred Meditation* by the philosopher Nietzsche.

The direct inspiration for Tchaikovsky's *Manfred* was another musical setting of a Byronic masterpiece, Berlioz' *Harold in Italy*, based on Byron's *Childe Harold*. The Russian critic and journalist Vladimir Stasov heard the work during Berlioz' second visit to Russia in 1867-68, and afterwards assembled a literary program suitable for a four-movement symphony. Stasov sent the idea to the composer Mily Balakirev, who in turn passed it on to Berlioz. But Berlioz was tired, discouraged, and in poor health (he died the year after). Fourteen years passed. Balakirev then suggested to Tchaikovsky that he write a *Manfred* Symphony. At first he declined, then two years later accepted. This brings the date to 1884, which in the chronology of Tchaikovsky's numbered symphonies puts the *Manfred* between Nos. 4 and 5. The symphony was written quickly during a six-month period in 1885, and received its premiere in Moscow on March 23, 1886 conducted by Max Erdmannsdörfer.

Audiences are often perplexed as to why Tchaikovsky assigned no number to his *Manfred* Symphony. There are no definitive answers, only probable causes. The most likely explanation is that, unlike his six numbered symphonies (with and without subtitles), this one has

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an undisguised program throughout. Also, not one movement utilizes traditional sonata form (it is more like a symphonic poem in four parts). And since it is obviously modeled after another one-of-a-kind work, Berlioz' *Harold in Italy*, there seems little point in considering it as one of a series. Even the instrumentation is more akin to the ballets than to the other symphonies in its use of harps, bells, cornets, English horn and even an organ for the final apotheosis.

The symphony opens with a dour theme in the low tones of bass clarinet and bassoons, a theme that continuously develops in a mood rife with anxiety and restless energy, and that may be associated with the title character. This theme becomes the *idée fixe* which runs through the entire symphony as Berlioz had done in both his *Symphonie fantastique* and *Harold in Italy*. The second subject, presented initially in the muted strings, then with the addition of the bass clarinet, surely represents the fair Astarte, Manfred's beloved. The movement ends with music of searing passion.

Following the long, immensely powerful first movement, with its predominantly dark colors and heavy orchestration, some kind of relief is needed. Tchaikovsky provides this with a movement of light, almost elfin character, conjuring up a mood out of some fantastical supernatural world. Indeed, here is portrayed the realm of the Alpine fairy, who appears to Manfred from within the rainbow of a waterfall. In this music are found some of Tchaikovsky's most imaginative and delicate orchestral textures. The contrasting central Trio section is a song for the fairy, obviously a Slavic one.

The third movement is a genre piece describing the peaceful mountain folk – simple, unpretentious, untouched by the despair and compulsive introversion of Manfred. The pastoral setting is evoked by the solo oboe. When Manfred appears on the scene, the tranquil mood changes.

The finale returns us to the world of Manfred's traumas. Tchaikovsky allows himself the indulgence of depicting a wild bacchanal, a scene

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not found in Byron's poem. We are in the realm of the Prince of the Underworld. The infernal dance is interrupted by deeply somber music, then is resumed in a fugue. When Astarte appears as a vision, the orchestral colors become an ethereal glitter. Manfred makes a final, agonized appeal for understanding, but succumbs to death. Release from earthly sorrow comes in the form of a grandiose finale with organ.

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY: Born in Votkinsk, May 7, 1840; died in St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893

Work composed: 1885 **World premiere:** March 23, 1886 in Moscow, conducted by Max Erdmannsdörfer.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (3rd doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (tambourine, bass drum, triangle, cymbal, tam-tam, bell), 2 harps, organ, strings

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Formerly a horn player in the Montreal Symphony, **Robert Markow** now writes program notes for orchestras as well as for numerous other musical organizations in North America and Asia. He taught at Montreal's McGill University for many years, has led music tours to several countries, and writes for numerous leading classical music journals.