

The 994th Suntory Subscription Concert
Tue. Jan. 23, 2024, 19:00 at Suntory Hall

The 159th Tokyo Opera City Subscription Concert
Thu. Jan. 25, 2024, 19:00 at Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall

The 995th Orchard Hall Subscription Concert
Sun. Jan. 28, 2024, 15:00 at Bunkamura Orchard Hall

Mikhail Pletnev, conductor

Martín García García, piano*

Masanobu Yoda, concertmaster

Sibelius: *Karelia Suite*, Op. 11 (ca. 15 min)

- I. Intermezzo
- II. Ballade
- III. Alla marcia

Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16* (ca. 30 min)

- I. Allegro molto moderato
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato

— intermission (ca. 15 min) —

Sibelius: Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43 (ca. 45 min)

- I: Allegretto
- II: Andante, ma rubato
- III: Vivacissimo
- IV: Finale: Allegro moderato

Presented by Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra
 Subsidized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan |
 Japan Arts Council (Jan. 23)
 In Association with **Bunkamura** (Jan. 28)



- ♪ All seats are reserved. Late admittance will be refused during the live performance. If you enter or reenter just before the concert or between movements, we may escort you to a seat different from the one to which you were originally assigned.
- ♪ 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.
- ♪ Please refrain from using your cellphone or other electronic devices during performance.
- ♪ Hold applause please. Please cherish the "afterglow" at the end of each piece for a moment before your applause.

Artists 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 Rachmaninov International Orchestra (RIO).



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Martín García García, piano

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Martín García García (born in Gijón, 1996) is considered, at 27 years old, one of the pianists with the greatest international projection. In 2023, he has performed around 80 concerts worldwide (in America, Asia, and Europe), a year that marked his debut in Korea, Mexico, and Brazil. He has also visited Japan, the United States, Canada, Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Lithuania, and Luxembourg to give remarkable recitals and perform alongside prestigious orchestras such as the NHK Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Hamburg Symphoniker, Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, and the Brasilia Orchestra. It's worth noting that the Spanish artist also gave over 70 performances across America, Asia, and Europe in 2022, achieving significant milestones like his debut at Carnegie Hall in New York and a successful tour in Japan with 25,000 attendees across 14 performances. García García has received major global recognitions, including first prize at the 2021 Cleveland International Piano Competition and third place at the 2021 International Chopin Piano Competition. He released his debut album "Chopin and His Master" in 2022, a production done by the artist himself.

He graduated from the Reina Sofía School of Music, where he studied for a decade under Professor Galina Eguiazarova, and was honored by Her Majesty Queen Sofía with the recognition of being the Most Outstanding Student of her chair. He also holds a Master's in Piano from the Mannes School of Music in New York, where he studied with the renowned pianist Jerome Rose for 3 years.

Program Notes

Text by Robert Markow

Sibelius: *Karelia Suite, Op. 11*

In 1893, at the age of 27, Sibelius was already something of a national hero for his magnificent symphonic poem-cantata *Kullervo*, based on passages from the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. He was therefore the natural choice by the Viipuri Student Corporation of the University of Helsingfors (later renamed Helsinki) to write some music for a pageant depicting scenes from the history of Karelia. (Karelia is the region just northwest of St. Petersburg. Currently part of Russia, it has been owned by various lands over the centuries. Vyborg is its principal city.) Without incorporating any native folk songs, Sibelius successfully captured the special flavor of this individualistic land in an overture and eight short pieces. Subsequently the overture was published as Op. 10, and three of the remaining pieces as the *Karelia Suite, Op. 11*.

The “Intermezzo” is meant to depict Karelians passing in procession to offer tribute to a Lithuanian prince, but it is not difficult to imagine also armored knights riding through dark forests on proud chargers, much as Bruckner had done in his Fourth Symphony (*Romantic*) in the same key (E-flat major). The “Ballade” portrays a deposed ruler, Karl Knutsson, quietly listening to a minstrel at Viipuri (Vyborg) Castle, and the “Alla marcia” is the lively response to a summons to battle.

JEAN SIBELIUS: Born in Hämeenlinna (formerly Tavastehus), Finland, December 8, 1865; died in Järvenpää (near Helsinki), September 20, 1957
Work composed: 1893 **World premiere:** April 24, 1894 in Helsinki, conducted by Robert Kajanus

Instrumentation: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (tambourine, bass drum, triangle, cymbals), strings

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Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16

It is hardly surprising that, aside from a youthful symphony the composer ordered never to be played, Grieg's only large-scale orchestral work is a piano concerto, for, like Chopin, the piano was the instrument central to his compositional output. Grieg's first works were for the piano, written as a teenager, and he wrote all his life for the instrument, including ten volumes of *Lyric Pieces*. The melodic inspiration, wonderful freshness and harmonic piquancy that distinguish these pieces are found as well in the Piano Concerto.

Grieg was the first composer from Norway to achieve international recognition in a big way, and it was his Piano Concerto, written at the age of 25, that brought him his first major success. It was written mostly during the summer months of 1868 while Grieg was spending an idyllic vacation in the town of Søllerød in the Danish countryside. The first performance was given by Edmund Neupert, Norway's leading pianist of the day, on April 3, 1869 at Copenhagen's Royal Theater. The concerto was initially dedicated to the composer Rikard Nordraak, but Neupert received the dedication of the second edition of the score.

Musical connoisseurs have long made an exercise of comparing two of the world's most popular piano concertos written in the mid-nineteenth century, Schumann's (1841/1845) and Grieg's. Both concertos open with an orchestral "bang" followed by a cascade of octaves from the soloist, and have for their first themes a plaintive melody played by the woodwind choir. In fact, Grieg modeled his entire first movement on Schumann's.

But Grieg was no mere imitator. The music is deeply imbued with a quality all his own. Building on the stylistic inheritance of the German romantic tradition, Grieg integrates elements of Norwegian folk music as well as individual touches of his own musical personality (fondness for certain intervals, melodic turns of phrase, etc.). The Norwegian elements are most pronounced in the final movement. Here, the principal theme,

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announced by the piano, conforms to the rhythmic pattern of the *halling* (a national dance), combined with the sound effects suggestive of the Hardanger fiddle (bare fifths, drones, slides to a dissonant pitch). Towards the end of the movement, this *halling* pattern becomes a *springdans* when the theme is played in triple rather than duple meter.

EDVARD HAGERUP GRIEG: Born in Bergen, June 15, 1843; died in Bergen, September 4, 1907

Work composed: 1868 **World premiere:** April 3, 1869 in Copenhagen, conducted by Holger Simon Paulli with Edmund Neupert as the soloist

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (2nd doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, strings, solo piano

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Sibelius:

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43

So many people have read so many things into Sibelius' Second Symphony that its purely musical argument sometimes gets lost. To Finns searching for nationalistic connotations in anything their compatriots wrote, the Second Symphony, with its broad scale and heroic gestures, provided a perfect vehicle. The composer's own avowal that "I am a poet of Nature. I love the mysterious sounds of the fields and forests ..." has been used to detect nature imagery in the Symphony, but composition of the work preceded this statement. Folk material? Some of Sibelius' themes may sound like popular tunes, but the composer himself asserted that "I have never used a theme that was not of my own invention." And what about geographical implications – those darkly brooding Finnish forests, silent lakes and wintery landscapes? The Second Symphony was composed mostly in warm, sunny Italy during the spring of 1901. The first performance took place a year later in Helsinki, with Sibelius conducting.

The success and popularity of this work – the most frequently performed of Sibelius’ seven symphonies and the longest as well by a good margin – have not depended on the imaginative minds that devised the foregoing theories. As a structure in sound, the symphony stands on its own as one of the most magnificent creations in the orchestral repertory. In the tensions arising from opposing elements of the score, the contrasts of mood, the continuous control of pace, the fusion of its component parts into an organic whole, and the vast sweep of its trajectory from humble beginnings to mighty apotheosis, the Second Symphony embraces a true symphonic world of towering strength.

The first movement opens with softly throbbing chords in the lower strings. This and several motifs heard in rapid succession make up the first theme group. Sibelius is concerned not so much with long, broadly-arched themes as he is with arranging small fragments into a coherent whole as the movement unfolds. A second, contrasting group begins with an oboe solo consisting of a sustained note followed by a flourish at the end. The commentaries of numerous distinguished musical analysts differ widely in their interpretation of this movement’s form; perhaps it is best simply to let Sibelius’ own comment serve to work on a subliminal level. He once described the symphonic process as follows: “It is as if the Almighty had thrown down pieces of a mosaic from Heaven’s floor and asked me to put them together.” The listener might also consider how often the three-note rising figure of the very opening motif is integrated, in both the ascending and descending forms, into most of the other motifs as well.

The second movement is drawn in somber colors. A chant-like theme given initially to two bassoons in octaves over a pizzicato bass accompaniment is answered by a complementary theme for oboes and clarinets. Among the many themes and fragments Sibelius uses in this movement is a highly characteristic effect consisting of a loud chord (often in the brass) which diminishes in strength and ends with a mighty crescendo to even greater volume than before.

The Scherzo might best be described as a whirling blizzard of

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sound. The central Trio section provides the greatest possible contrast in its idyllic, pastoral melody sung by the oboe. The furious Scherzo is then repeated in modified form, followed by a return of the Trio, now shortened, which acts as an extended bridge passage to the Finale. As in Beethoven's Fifth, the third and fourth movements are directly connected, with the Finale's majestic chorale-like first theme arising from transitional material connecting the movements. Sibelius covers much emotional territory in this movement. In contrast to the optimistic, affirmative opening, a distinct mood of gloomy turbulence is created at several points by darkly swirling ostinatos in the lower strings. Resolution, triumph and glory inform the massive final pages of the symphony as the brass intone the magnificent chorale theme for the last time.

Work composed: 1901-1902 World premiere: March 8, 1902 in Helsinki, conducted by the composer

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, strings

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Formerly a horn player in the Montreal Symphony, **Robert Markow** now writes program notes for numerous orchestras and 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.