

The 1012th Orchard Hall Subscription Concert
Sun. Mar. 9, 2025, 15:00 at Bunkamura Orchard Hall

The 168th Tokyo Opera City Subscription Concert
Wed. Mar. 12, 2025, 19:00 at Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall

The 1013th Suntory Subscription Concert
Fri. Mar. 14, 2025, 19:00 at Suntory Hall

Kensho Watanabe, conductor

※The conductor has been changed from the original announcement.

Ryoma Takagi, piano*

Kaoru Kondo, concertmaster

Stravinsky: Petrushka (1947 version)* (ca. 35 min)

- I. The Shrovetide Fair
- II. Petrushka's Room
- III. The Moor's Room
- IV. The Shrovetide Fair (towards evening)

— intermission (ca. 15 min) —

Weber: Overture to the opera "Oberon" (ca. 10 min)

Hindemith:

Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes

by Carl Maria von Weber (ca. 20 min)

- I. Allegro
- II. "Turandot," Scherzo: Moderato - Lebhaft
- III. Andantino
- IV. Marsch

Presented by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra
 Subsidized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan |
 Japan Arts Council
 In Association with **Bunkamura** (Mar. 9)



- ♪ 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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Kensho Watanabe,
conductor

Japanese-American conductor Kensho Watanabe is internationally acclaimed for his dynamic musicality, thoughtful interpretations, and engaging presence on the podium. Following a successful run at the Metropolitan Opera of Kevin Puts' *The Hours* last season, Watanabe returns to the Met this season for eight performances of Puccini's *La bohème*. In addition to Watanabe's return to the Met, highlights of the 2024-25 season include a Suntory Hall debut with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, and debuts with the Calgary Philharmonic and Opera Theatre St. Louis. The 2023-24 season saw Watanabe make his Detroit Opera debut with Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, as well as returns to l'Orchestre Métropolitain in Montréal, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the RTE Concert Orchestra in Dublin. Recent highlights include work with the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, with whom he maintains a close relationship following his tenure as Assistant Conductor from 2016-19. Based in Paris, France, Watanabe is an accomplished violinist, receiving his MM from the Yale School of Music, and serving as a substitute violinist of the Philadelphia Orchestra from 2012-16. A protégé of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Watanabe was the inaugural conducting fellow of the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with both Nézet-Séguin and Otto-Werner Mueller.

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Ryoma Takagi, piano

Ryoma Takagi gained international recognition after winning First Prize and Audience Prize at the 16th Grieg International Piano Competition. He also secured first prizes at seven other international competitions. He collaborates with renowned orchestras like the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, National Philharmonic of Ukraine, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra, and Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, and with celebrated artists such as Fumiaki Miura, Sergei Nakariakov, and Ray Chen. Born in 1992, he studied with Elena Ashkenazy, Hiroko Nakamura, Boris Petrushansky, and Micael Krist, earning degrees from Vienna's University of Music and Performing Arts. In 2023, he joined Kyoto City University of Arts as an instructor.

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Column

Story of Hindemith and Ballets russes

Chief Conductor Andrea Battistoni's first concerts of 2025 follow hot on the heels of the orchestra's return from Seoul. His first programme of the year pairs Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*, together with Weber's overture to *Oberon*.

It is a programme linked through the person of Léonide Massine, who danced *Petrushka* alongside Nijinsky with the Ballets Russes in the late 1910s. Massine later collaborated with Hindemith on *Nobilissima Visione*, and suggested Hindemith arrange Weber's music for another ballet. Though the *Symphonic Metamorphosis* emerged with intentions to be a concert work, it would soon be choreographed by another son of the Ballets Russes, George Balanchine.



Léonide Massine,
1896-1979) by Léon
Bakst, 1914

—Bachtrack

Program Notes

Text by Robert Markow

Stravinsky: Petrushka (1947 version)

In his memoirs, Stravinsky relates how he “had in mind a distinct picture of a puppet, suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of *arpeggi*.” He called it *Petrushka* – “the immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries.” The 35-minute score was first performed in Paris’ Théâtre du Châtelet on June 13, 1911. Years later, mostly for copyright reasons, Stravinsky slightly revised the score and had it published in 1947; this is the version usually heard today. The neatly symmetrical, four-part scenario calls for two outer scenes set in Admiralty Square, St. Petersburg, at Shrovetide (the three days in late winter before Ash Wednesday in the Christian liturgical calendar), 1830; and two inner scenes, each in a different private room.

SCENE I: THE SHROVETIDE FAIR – We are immediately plunged into the hustle and bustle of a carnival scene, with all its attendant noise, confusion, high spirits, dances, magicians, vendors, side shows, and attractions of all sorts – a veritable riot of sound and color. A procession of drunken revelers approaches; an organ grinder plays a popular Russian folksong; a man with a music box arrives with another tune (flutes and clarinet), all of them competing for the crowd’s attention. Suddenly, the Magician steps out from behind the curtains of a little theater to present three puppets: *Petrushka*, the *Ballerina*, and the *Moor*. After charming the audience with his flute playing, he does some hocus-pocus and breathes life into his three puppets, who execute the brilliant Russian Dance.

SCENE II: PETRUSHKA’S ROOM – *Petrushka* suffers from an inferiority complex and tries to console himself by falling in love with the *Ballerina*. The music follows *Petrushka*’s every shift of emotional response to his surroundings: his terrified shriek as he is thrust through the door, his tearful sobs and whimpers (clarinets, bassoon), his frantic racing about the room (piano) and screams of rage at his cruel master (full orchestra, with piercing “screams” from the trumpets).

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SCENE III: THE MOOR'S ROOM – The scene is rife with menace and danger. The Ballerina enters, and is romantically attracted to the brutish and stupid but also handsome and rich Moor. She tries to impress him with a dance (solo trumpet acrobatics), then a waltz. Petrushka creeps in, furiously jealous (soft trumpet fanfares), hoping to “rescue” the Ballerina from the Moor, but he is unceremoniously tossed out.

SCENE IV: THE SHROVETIDE FAIR – We are back where we started, amidst the noisy, swirling crowds at the carnival. It is now evening. Everyone is singing, dancing, drinking, making merry. Stravinsky takes us from one group of revelers and entertainers to another, nearly all of whom are portrayed in Russian folksongs and dances. Petrushka suddenly rushes out from the little theater, pursued by the Moor, who eventually catches up to him and destroys him with one sweep of his scimitar. The Magician demonstrates to the astonished crowd that it is nothing more than straw and sawdust. But as the Magician begins to drag off his lifeless doll, he glances up at the roof of the theater to see Petrushka's immortal spirit mocking him.

Igor Stravinsky: Born at Oranienbaum (an estate near St. Petersburg), Russia, June 17, 1882; died in New York City, April 6, 1971

Work composed: 1911 **World premiere:** June 13, 1911, in Paris, conducted by Pierre Monteux with the Ballets Russes

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (3rd doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (3rd doubling on bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (tambourine, snare drum, bass drum, xylophone, triangle, cymbals, tam-tam), harp, celesta, piano, strings

Weber: Overture to the opera “Oberon”

Weber wrote much music for the stage, and opera was his most successful medium. *Oberon*, his last opera, was commissioned by an actor and joint proprietor of the Covent Garden Theatre in London, Charles Kemble. Weber was already highly respected by London operaphiles for *Der Freischütz*, which had gone through six different productions there in 1824 alone. Although his health was already precarious, he accepted the

assignment anyway, pouring his greatest effort into the venture. He even took over 150 English lessons so as to understand the language he was setting and to be prepared for his London visit to conduct the premiere. This took place on April 12, 1826 and was a resounding success. The English libretto, based on Wieland's epic poem *Oberon*, was written by James Robinson Planché (1796-1880) and involves quite a potpourri of characters and locales: Oberon, Titania and Puck (from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*), Charlemagne, Haroun al Rashid, the Calif of Baghdad, mermaids and fairies, who appear variously in settings from France to Baghdad to fairyland. Like many German romantic operas, *Oberon* incorporates elements of the supernatural, pageantry, exotic locations and maidens in distress rescued by knights in shining armor.

The opera's overture begins with the vision of just such a knight, Oberon, whose soft, beguiling call from his magic horn bids us enter the world of romantic adventure. Flutes and clarinets answer with a touch of fairy dust, followed shortly by a suggestion of the pageantry of Charlemagne's court. The main body of the overture (*Allegro*) follows a sonata-form movement, employing themes from the opera.

CARL MARIA VON WEBER: Born in Eutin, November 18, 1786; died in London, June 5, 1826

Work composed: 1826 **World premiere:** April 12, 1826 in London, conducted by the composer

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

Hindemith: Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber

Hindemith wrote his *Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber* in 1943 while waiting out the war in America. The first performance was given by the New York Philharmonic under Arthur Rodzinski on January 20, 1944.

The work's full title, while cumbersome, is explicit, for Hindemith did

truly “metamorphose” Weber’s themes in this brilliant orchestral work. Weber’s themes, used as points of departure, are transformed from their originals even upon initial presentation. Harmonic alterations, rhythmic displacements, and orchestral clothing are all called into service as Hindemith stamps his unmistakably personal stylistic fingerprints on the music. The mood throughout is playful, pointing to good, clean musical fun.

The opening movement is based on the fourth of Weber’s eight pieces Op. 60 for piano duet. Weber described it as “all’ ongarese,” and indeed, there is an unmistakable Hungarian flavor to the fiery first theme. The second theme is a proclamation from the brass in chorale style, which is later wittily developed in inverted form by various woodwind instruments, beginning with the oboe and extending from the piccolo down to the contrabassoon.

For the second movement, Hindemith chose the Chinese tune from the Overture to *Turandot*, incidental music Weber wrote in 1809 for a staged production of Carlo Gozzi’s play (the same *Turandot* on which Puccini’s opera is based). Hindemith felt free to adapt the theme at will, for Weber himself had already used it in adapted form – from a tune he found in the *Dictionnaire de musique* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in turn had misquoted it from an earlier source, a travel book of 1735 by the Sinologist Jean Baptiste du Halde (or Duhalde). Hindemith added chromatic piquancy to the theme and brought orchestral virtuosity to the fore, especially in the central jazzy section where the theme is fragmented and thrown about the orchestra like so many bits of broken toys. The percussion department (a small orchestra in itself consisting of timpani, tubular bells, triangle, tam-tam, woodblocks, gong and cymbals) is twice given an extended solo passage, the second of which constitutes the movement’s coda, where a quite remarkable clangor of duple and triple meters compete for supremacy.

A quiet, pastoral piece in ternary form follows. Its outer sections feature the solo clarinet singing a lyrical theme based on the second of Weber’s piano duet pieces from Op. 10. The central portion consists of a particularly rich, even sensuous theme that might easily serve as the basis for a vocalization as well. The reprise of the clarinet theme is richly embroidered by a continuous fine tracery in the flute.

For the concluding March, based on Weber’s Op. 60, No. 7, Hindemith used a theme originally intended by Weber as a funeral march, dressing it up

first with eerie, ghostly effects and colors, then transforming it into something nobly tragic. The mood suddenly changes as the horns announce a joyous new theme against skittering woodwinds. The death theme momentarily clouds the picture again, but Hindemith concludes his *Symphonic Metamorphoses* with a spectacular display of orchestral brilliance based on the horn quartet motif.

PAUL HINDEMITH: Born in Hanau, near Frankfurt, November 16, 1895; died in Frankfurt, December 28, 1963

Work composed: 1943 **World premiere:** January 20, 1944 in New York City, conducted by Artur Rodziński with the New York Philharmonic

Instrumentation: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (tambourine, snare drum, Tenor drum, bass drum, triangle, wood block, small gong, small cymbals, cymbals, tubular bells, tam-tam, glockenspiel), 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.