

Lincoln Center's 2018/19 GREAT PERFORMERS

The Program

Wednesday, February 20, 2019 at 8:00 pm

*Pre-concert lecture by Harlow Robinson at 6:45 pm in the
Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse*

Symphonic Masters

Russian National Orchestra

Kirill Karabits, *Conductor* (New York debut)

Mikhail Pletnev, *Piano*

ALL-RACHMANINOFF PROGRAM

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor (1900–01)

Moderato

Adagio sostenuto

Allegro scherzando

Intermission

Symphonic Dances (1940)

Non allegro—Lento—Tempo I

Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)

Lento assai—Allegro vivace

Mr. Pletnev performs on the Shigeru Kawai Piano.

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

These programs are supported by the Leon Levy Fund for Symphonic Masters.

Symphonic Masters is made possible in part by endowment support from UBS.

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Steinway Piano

David Geffen Hall

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UPCOMING GREAT PERFORMERS EVENTS:

Sunday, February 24 at 11:00 am in the Walter Reade Theater

Verona Quartet

MOZART: String Quartet in F major, K.590 ("Prussian")

JANÁČEK: String Quartet No. 2 ("Intimate Letters")

Sunday, March 10 at 3:00 pm in David Geffen Hall

Philharmonia Orchestra

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 7 in E major

Pre-concert lecture by Christopher H. Gibbs at 1:45 pm in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Monday, March 11 at 8:00 pm in David Geffen Hall

Philharmonia Orchestra

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Truls Mørk, cello

SIBELIUS: The Oceanides

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN: Cello Concerto

STRAVINSKY: The Firebird

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit LCGreatPerformers.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a Great Performers brochure.

Visit LCGreatPerformers.org for more information relating to this season's programs.

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We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

Snapshot

By Harlow Robinson

Four decades separate the premieres of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto (in 1901) and his Symphonic Dances (in 1941). During those war-scarred years, he lived a nomadic existence as a composer and one of the 20th century's most celebrated (and well-paid) piano virtuosos. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was a turning point. Like so many other composers and musicians, Rachmaninoff—a descendent of Russian nobility who abhorred Communism—realized there would be no place for him amid the chaos and violence of post-tsarist Russia.

In late 1917 he emigrated with his family to the West, never to return to his homeland, where the Soviet government banned the performance of his music for a time. In December 1918, he gave the first of what would be hundreds of concerts in the United States, the country that made him so rich he jokingly called it "The Dollar Princess." Drawn to New York, he and his family rented a house on Riverside Drive in the 1920s. After moving to Switzerland in 1930, they returned to America in 1939, finally settling in Beverly Hills. Rachmaninoff became an American citizen eight weeks before his death in 1943, and is buried in Valhalla, New York.

Leaving Russia was a painful experience both personally and creatively. Rachmaninoff's output declined dramatically: Only six of his 45 opus numbers were completed after 1917. An early work, the masterful, moody, and very Russian Second Piano Concerto expands rhapsodically upon the concerto tradition exemplified by his idol and mentor Tchaikovsky. However, in the more eclectic and cosmopolitan Symphonic Dances—his last composition—we can hear how Rachmaninoff's musical world has widened to include the influence of American music, including jazz.

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Timeframe

ARTS

1900**Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2**

L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is published.

1940**Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances**

Walt Disney's film *Fantasia* premieres, merging animation and classical music.

SCIENCE

1900

The first airship, designed by Ferdinand von Zeppelin, is flown.

1940

The first metallic hip replacement surgery is performed in Baltimore.

IN NEW YORK

1900

Ellis Island's immigrant station is reopened after fire damage in 1892.

1940

Dr. Charles R. Drew opens the first blood bank but is forbidden from donating his own blood as he is black.

By Harlow Robinson

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18 (1900–01)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born April 1, 1873, in Oneg, Russia

Died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills

Approximate length: 33 minutes

The teenaged Sergei Prokofiev, who often performed Rachmaninoff's piano music, praised his Second Piano Concerto as "a very beautiful and famous concerto...it begins with chords, and then a broad theme *do-re-do*." The concerto's opening is undeniably dramatic, a series of rich piano solo chords tolling like bells for eight measures in F major, before the orchestra enters with the surging main "*do-re-do*" (C-D-C) theme in C minor. Another Russian pianist, Nikolai Medtner, called this dynamic, sobbing theme "one of the most strikingly Russian of themes," and added, "from the first bell stroke, you feel the figure of Russia rising up to her full height."

Oddly, Rachmaninoff completed the concerto's first movement (*Moderato*) after the remaining two. (The last two movements were even performed independently, before the first was written several months later.) A second, more lyrical, theme provides contrast, along with a seven-note march motif developed dramatically in a climactic *Maestoso* section, where the piano thunders rhythmic chords over the main theme in the orchestra. The mood changes in the second movement (*Adagio sostenuto*), dominated by a slow, pastoral theme in E major and 4/4 meter, but with surprising off-beat stresses in the accompaniment. A fast, marching theme opens the finale (*Allegro scherzando*) before Rachmaninoff introduces what became one of his most popular melodies in the oboe and violas, a sad and swooping theme of languid Oriental character. Passed several times almost unchanged between soloist and orchestra, it yields to a fast, short coda that breaks the mood of dreamy reverie.

Rachmaninoff himself played the premiere in Moscow, establishing his reputation as a concerto composer and virtuoso, and bringing an end to a period of self-doubt and depression. Over the years, the concerto has even entered the realm of popular culture. Songwriters Buddy Kaye and Ted Mossman adapted the last movement's second theme into the song "Full Moon and Empty Arms," recorded by Frank Sinatra. Music from the concerto has also turned up in many film scores, including *Grand Hotel*, *Brief Encounter*, and *The Seven Year Itch*.

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Approximate length: 35 minutes

Originally conceived as a ballet to be choreographed by Mikhail Fokine, this popular work sounds more “American” than anything else Rachmaninoff composed. (Fokine’s death in 1942 brought an end to the ballet project.) It was also written for an American orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, which gave the premiere under Eugene Ormandy in that city.

The optimistic music indulges less in Rachmaninoff’s trademark sorrowful nostalgia. Its strong rhythmic drive, energy, and pungent harmonic language occasionally recall Stravinsky or Prokofiev. The prominent use of the alto saxophone in the first movement’s glowing lyrical second theme seems informed by jazz. Indeed, Rachmaninoff said he considered calling the piece just *Dances*, “but I was afraid people would think I had written dance music for jazz orchestras.” Rachmaninoff (who often tinkered endlessly with his scores) never revised *Symphonic Dances*, and considered it his “best composition.”

In form, *Symphonic Dances* comes near to a symphony, comprising three movements. The first opens with a snap: a strong rhythmic pulse announced quietly first in the violins on insistently repeated eighth notes on the note C, then taken up by other strings and the timpani. Over this infectious toe-tapping foundation, the woodwinds sing a jaunty tune shaped in descending intervals of a fifth, followed by a highly punctuated series of chords recalling the tune of the *Dies irae* from the Requiem Mass, a motif Rachmaninoff had used in several major orchestral works. The alto saxophone then introduces one of the composer’s most seductive melodies, combined with sour accompaniment from oboes, clarinets, and English horn.

The second movement’s waltz builds the strongest link to the world of dance. But this waltz lacks confidence, first stuttering in fragmentary rhythm, then switching between 6/8, 3/8, and 9/8 meter. Rachmaninoff’s obsession with the *Dies irae* motif dominates the final movement. Another pointed religious reference appears: a fragment of the music Rachmaninoff wrote for the ninth section (“Blagosloven yesi gospodi,” “Blessed be the Lord”) of his *All-Night Vigil* (1915). This theme comes from an ancient Orthodox liturgical chant and contrasts with the pessimistic message of the *Dies irae*.

Brass fanfares break the nostalgic mood leading into the finale and the return of the *Dies irae* motif. Just before the coda, the chant tune reappears. Here, Rachmaninoff wrote in the score the word “Alliluya,” followed by a citation of the “alliluyas” from the *All-Night Vigil*. On the score’s last page he added the words “I thank Thee, Lord,” an expression of gratitude for a remarkable life of creativity.

Harlow Robinson is the author of Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography and Russians in Hollywood: Hollywood's Russians, and is a frequent annotator and lecturer for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Lincoln Center.

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Meet the Artists



DENIS MANOKHA

Kirill Karabits

The 2018–19 season marks Kirill Karabits's tenth anniversary as chief conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Together they have made many critically acclaimed recordings and appeared regularly at the BBC Proms. In September 2016, Mr. Karabits became general music director and principal conductor of the Deutsches Nationaltheater and Staatskapelle Weimar and has led many acclaimed productions; recently he led the Staatskapelle Weimar on its first tour of the U.S. In August 2018, they presented the world premiere of *Sardanapalo*, a rediscovered Italian opera by Liszt.

Mr. Karabits has worked with many of the leading ensembles in Europe, Asia, and North America, including the Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Chicago symphony orchestras, Munich and Rotterdam Philharmonics, Orchestre National de France, Philharmonia Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He enjoys a special relationship with the Russian National Orchestra, with whom he returned to the Edinburgh International Festival. Other highlights of the current season include debuts with the Toronto, Cincinnati, and Seattle symphony orchestras as well as the Wiener Symphoniker at the Musikverein, a return to the Deutsche Oper, and a U.K. tour with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

A prolific opera conductor, Mr. Karabits has worked with the Deutsche Oper (*Boris Godunov*) and Oper Stuttgart (*Death in Venice*). He has also conducted at Glyndebourne Festival Opera (*La bohème*, *Eugene Onegin*), Hamburg State Opera (*Madama Butterfly*), English National Opera (*Don Giovanni*), and Bolshoi Theatre. He conducted a performance of *The Flying Dutchman* at the Wagner Geneva Festival in celebration of the composer's anniversary.

Mr. Karabits was named Conductor of the Year at the 2013 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards. Working with the next generation of bright musicians is of great importance to him and, as artistic director of the I, CULTURE Orchestra, he led its 2015 European tour with violinist Lisa Batiashvili. In 2012 and 2014 he conducted the televised finals of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Award.

Mikhail Pletnev

COURTESY RUSSIAN NATIONAL ORCHESTRA



Pianist, conductor, and composer, Mikhail Pletnev was the Gold Medal and First Prize winner of the 1978 Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition when he was 21, a prize that earned him early recognition worldwide. An invitation to perform at the 1988 superpower summit in Washington, D.C., led to a friendship with Mikhail Gorbachev and the historic opportunity to make music in artistic freedom. Today he is one of Russia's most respected and influential artists.

In 1990 Mr. Pletnev formed the first independent orchestra in Russia's history. Many of the country's finest musicians joined him in launching the Russian National Orchestra. Under his leadership as artistic director and principal conductor, the RNO has achieved great stature among the world's orchestras. Mr. Pletnev's performances and recordings have shown him to be an outstanding interpreter of an extensive repertoire, both as pianist and conductor. His recordings have earned numerous prizes, including a 2005 Grammy Award for his own arrangement of Prokofiev's *Cinderella*. He received Grammy nominations for Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes* (2004) and the Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev Piano Concertos No. 3 (2003). His critically acclaimed album of Scarlatti's Sonatas (Virgin/EMI) received a 1996 Gramophone Award, and his recording of the complete Beethoven symphonies and piano concertos (Deutsche Grammophon) was named "Best of 2007" by the *New Yorker*.

Mr. Pletnev's compositions include works for orchestra, piano, strings, and voices. His transcriptions of the *Nutcracker Suite* and *Sleeping Beauty* were selected for the 1998 anthology *Great Pianists of the 20th Century* (Philips Classics).

Russian National Orchestra

The Russian National Orchestra was founded in 1990 by pianist and conductor Mikhail Pletnev. Maintaining an active international schedule, the RNO has appeared in the music capitals of Europe, Asia, and the Americas; is a frequent guest at festivals such as Edinburgh, the BBC Proms, and Festival Napa Valley; and presents the RNO Grand Festival each September to open the Moscow season.

RNO concerts are often aired on National Public Radio, the European Broadcasting Union, and Russia's Kultura channel. Its discography, launched with a highly praised 1991 recording of Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony, now numbers more than 80 critically acclaimed recordings. Notable releases include the complete Beethoven symphonies and piano concertos (Deutsche Grammophon), Tchaikovsky's six symphonies (Pentatone), and the RNO Shostakovich project (Pentatone), which has been described as the most exciting recorded cycle of the Shostakovich symphonies. The orchestra's recording of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Beintus's *Wolf Tracks*, conducted by Kent Nagano and narrated by Sophia Loren, Bill Clinton, and Mikhail Gorbachev, received a 2004 Grammy Award, making the RNO the first Russian orchestra to win the recording industry's highest honor. Its recording of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, conducted by Paavo Järvi, was awarded the 2015 Diapason d'Or de l'Année as the year's best symphonic album, and was nominated for a 2016 Grammy Award.

The RNO is unique among the principal Russian ensembles as a private institution funded with the support of individuals, corporations, and foundations in Russia and throughout the world.

Lincoln Center's Great Performers

Initiated in 1965, Lincoln Center's Great Performers series offers classical and contemporary music performances from the world's outstanding symphony orchestras, vocalists, chamber ensembles, and recitalists. One of the most significant music presentation series in the world, Great Performers runs from October through June with offerings in Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Walter Reade Theater, and other performance spaces around New York City. From symphonic masterworks, lieder recitals, and Sunday morning coffee concerts to films and groundbreaking productions specially commissioned by Lincoln Center, Great Performers offers a rich spectrum of programming throughout the season.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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SERGEI DEMIDOV

Russian National Orchestra

Mikhail Pletnev, *Founder and Artistic Director*

Kirill Karabits, *Conductor*

Violin I

Alexey Bruni,
Concertmaster
Olga Chepizhaia,
Assistant
Concertmaster
Anna Panina
Vasily Vyrenkov
Aleksei Khutorianskii
Anatolii Fedorenko
Olga Levchenko
Alexei Sobolev
Sergey Putnikov
Leonid Akimov
Igor Akimov
Daria Strelnikova
Yulia Paleleva
Viacheslav Chirkunov
Tamerlan Tedeev

Violin II

Sergei Starcheus,
Principal
Lina Vartanova,
Assistant Principal
Pavel Gorbenko
Evgenii Durnovo
Evgeny Feofanov
Vladimir Tesla
Elizaveta Dyakova
Varvara Baskova
Maria Dobrogorskaia
Mariia Tkacheva
Ekaterina Karpova
Ekaterina Braisheva
Valeria Kapko

Viola

Sergei Dubov,
Principal
Ivan Agafonov,
Assistant Principal
Sofiia Lebed
Sergei Bogdanov
Liubov Popova
Aleksandr Zhulev
Kseniia Zhuleva
Mariia Goriunova
Artem Kukaev
Olga Suslova
Aleksandr Tatarinov

Cello

Aleksandr Gotgelf,
Principal
Vsevolod Guzov,
Assistant Principal
Aleksandr Grashenkov
Sergey Kazantsev
Natalia Lyubimova
Dmitry Fastunov
Alevtina Fastunova
Ekaterina Kulakovskaia

Bass

Anton Vinogradov,
Principal
Miroslav Maksimuk
Vasilii Beschastnov
Alexei Vorobev
Gennadii Karasev
Leonid Bakulin
Aleksandr Muravev

Flute

Maxim Rubtsov,
Principal
Konstantin Efimov,
Assistant Principal
Sergei Igrunov
Nikolai Lotakov

Oboe

Olga Tomilova,
Principal
Vitaly Nazarov,
Assistant Principal
Stanislav Tokarev
Ekaterina Bespalova

Clarinet

Sergey Eletskey,
Principal
Dmitrii Aizenshtadt,
Assistant Principal
Dmitrii Belik
Khasan Mukhitdinov

Bassoon

Andrei Shamidanov,
Principal
Danila Iakovlev,
Assistant Principal
Vladimir Markin
Elizaveta Vilkovyskaia

Horn

Igor Makarov,
Principal
Alexey Serov,
Assistant Principal
Viktor Bushuev

Anton Afanasyev
Andrei Romanov

Trumpet

Vladislav Lavrik,
Principal
Leonid Korkin,
Assistant Principal
Andrey Kolokolov
Konstantin Grigorev

Trombone

Ivan Irkhin, *Principal*
Sergey Koryavichev,
Assistant Principal
Tarasov Maxim
Viacheslav Pachkaev
Dmitry Anakovskiy,
Tuba

Percussion

Alexandr Suvorov,
Principal
Ilia Melikhov,
Assistant Principal
Kirill Lukyanenko
Vitaly Martyanov
Leonid Lysenko
Marina Loginova

Harp

Svetlana Paramonova

Piano

Leonid Ogrinchuk

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The Russian National Orchestra thanks the generous patrons and sponsors who helped make the 2019 United States Tour possible, including Peter Paul and Elena Sysovskaia, Ann and Gordon Getty, Barbara Roach, Marianne Wyman, the Mikhail Prokhorov Foundation, the Prince Michael of Kent Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and the Friends of the RNO.

Exclusive tour management and representation for the Russian National Orchestra:

Opus 3 Artists

www.opus3artists.com

Mr. Karabits's representation:

Askonas Holt

www.askonasholt.co.uk