

St. Petersburg Philharmonic Inaugurates International Celebration of Russian Day in New York

Nikolai Alexeev to lead Orchestra 12 June 2015



St. Petersburg Philharmonic

Photo by Daniil Rabovsky

In 1992, **June 12th** was set aside by the Russian government as "Russian Day" - the national holiday of the Russian Federation. Since that time the holiday has been celebrated annually in Russia, but **in 2015, for the first time Russian Day** will be marked by **festivities in five countries on the same day**. This year five of Russia's most famous ensembles, each one a jewel in the crown of Russian culture, will perform in prominent venues in

Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Americas. In five countries on four continents, 550 artists, 10,000 spectators and millions of TV viewers will be able to participate in the celebrations of the Russian Day International Series.

New York / Carnegie Hall

The **St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra** - "probably the world's greatest orchestra" (*The Guardian*) - will perform two of the best loved compositions of the Russian standard repertoire, Symphony No. 4 by **Tchaikovsky** and Symphony No. 5 by **Shostakovich**, under the leadership of Deputy Artistic Director **Nikolai Alexeev**. Tickets, ranging in price from \$12.50 to \$100, are on sale now at 212-247-7800 or online at [St. Petersburg Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall](#).

Rio de Janeiro / Theatro Municipal

Conductor **Vladimir Altshuler** and the **Academic Symphony Orchestra of St. Petersburg** will perform **Tchaikovsky's** Symphony No. 4 and excerpts from Alexander **Glazunov's** *The Seasons*, a Petipa ballet originally premiered at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg in 1900.

Beijing / National Center for the Performing Arts

The **State Academic Capella of St. Petersburg** presents its symphony orchestra, soloists and mixed chorus under the direction of **Alexander Chernushenkoin** *Kamarinskaya* (Fantasy on Two Russian Folk Songs) by **Glinka**, *Capriccio Espagnol* by **Rimsky-Korsakov**, *Moscow Cantata* by **Tchaikovsky**, and *Alexander Nevsky Cantata* by **Prokofiev**.

Paris / Salle Gaveau

The **State Academic Russian Sveshnikov Chorus** will present a program of choral music drawn from diverse genres and regions of the Russian Federation. The classical music tradition will be represented by works of **Bortniansky, Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Taneyev, Gretchaninov** and others. Sacred music is interlaced with secular miniatures by **Khachaturian, Volkov** and **Dovgan**, and arrangements of Russian folk songs by **Sveshnikov** and **Schwartz**. A choral arrangement by Khachaturian of *Le Chant des Partisans* will be sung to celebrate the anniversary of Russia's heroic sacrifices and contribution to victory in World War II.

Jerusalem / International Conference Center

While audiences in New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro and Beijing listen to Russian classical music on Russian Day, the audience at the International Conference Center in Jerusalem will be treated to an entire concert of **music and dance from authentic Russian folklore**. The world-renowned **State Academic Russian Pyatnitsky Chorus** - a group of musicians, singers and dancers - will present a thrilling performance incorporating folkloric traditions from many regions and epochs of Russia's history.

The **June 12 Russian Day International Series** is meant to be a true ambassador of Russian culture to the world. It is planned as an **annual event**, embracing more and more countries each year and becoming a symbol of friendship among Russia, the host

countries, and the world at large.

The **St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra** is Russia's oldest symphonic ensemble, tracing its origins to a group of music-loving aristocrats who founded Europe's first Philharmonic Society in the 19th century. The St. Petersburg Philharmonic we know today has earned near-legendary status as the pre-eminent exponent of the modern Russian symphonic tradition. With Deputy Artistic Director Nikolai Alexeev alternating conducting duties with Music Director and Principal Conductor Yuri Temirkanov in recent times, the SPPO has maintained an ambitious schedule of worldwide touring and recording, built on the foundation laid by the great **Yevgeny Mravinsky**, the Orchestra's conductor from 1938-1988. The Orchestra's performances in the U.S. have been characterized as "breathtaking" (*San Francisco Chronicle*), "stunning" (*Palm Beach Post*), "simply profound" (*Baltimore Sun*) and, according to the *New York Times*, "Voluptuous, seductive, almost bursting out of its clothes."

In the earliest days of its existence, the SPPO's energies were directed first and exclusively to the Russian aristocracy, then after the revolution in 1917, to the working classes. Even in the first half of the 20th century, some of the greatest conductors of the time led the SPPO - **Glazunov, Koussevitsky, Tchernin, Walter, Klemperer, Kleiber** and **Knappertsbusch** among them. The chief architect of SPPO's greatness during that time (when the Orchestra was known as the Leningrad Philharmonic) was Yevgeny Mravinsky. Mravinsky established and maintained an extraordinary level of musical quality and integrity which remains the hallmark of this superb ensemble to this day. Mravinsky had a special friendship with composer Dmitri Shostakovich, which enabled the Orchestra to become recognized as a champion and authoritative interpreter of his works. It was after World War II that the Orchestra's reputation took on a global dimension. As the first Soviet ensemble to tour abroad, the Orchestra performed throughout Europe, Asia and the U.S. under the direction of such greats as **Stokowski, Munch, Cluytens, Markevitch, Krips, Kodály**, and **Britten**. Maestro Mravinsky also made numerous recordings with the Orchestra which eventually obtained distribution outside the USSR.

In 1991 the city of Leningrad reclaimed its original name and its orchestra became known as the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. The ensemble now regularly tours Europe, the U.S. and Japan. The SPPO is a favorite at such major summer festivals as Salzburg, Edinburgh, Helsinki, Rheingau, MDR, Lucerne and the BBC Proms. The Orchestra's performances in the concert hall and on record have established a reputation of

unparalleled excellence throughout the world. Recordings of the Orchestra can be heard on Sony Masterworks, EMI and Decca.

One of the most outstanding representatives of the Russian conducting tradition, People's Artist of the Russian Federation **Nikolai Alexeev** is Deputy Artistic Director of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, in which position he leads the Orchestra on frequent tours of the world's major cultural capitals. On the occasion of the very first international celebration of Russian Day (12 June 2015), he brings the St. Petersburg Philharmonic to New York City's Carnegie Hall. From 2001 to 2010 Maestro Alexeev was Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and toured the U.S. with the Orchestra in 2013. During his tenure he brought the Estonian National Symphony to an entirely new level of excellence, for which he was awarded the State Prize of the Republic of Estonia. Maestro Alexeev has also served as Chief Conductor of both the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra and the Ulyanovsk Symphony Orchestra. In addition to his outstanding work with leading Russian orchestras, Nikolai Alexeev has conducted the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Rotterdam, Dresden, Stuttgart and Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestras, the Symphony Orchestras of Berlin, Göteborg and Baltimore, the Liverpool Royal Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony, New Japan Philharmonic and many others.

Nikolai Alexeev graduated from Glinka Choir College and the Leningrad State Conservatory, where he studied choir conducting with Avenir Mikhailov and opera/symphony conducting with Mariss Jansons. He rose to international prominence after winning the Herbert von Karajan Conducting Competition in Berlin in 1982. He assumed the position of Associate Conductor of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic upon the departure of the prior Associate Conductor, his former teacher Mariss Jansons. A dedicated educator, Maestro Alexeev is also currently director of the symphony department of the Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory.

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