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Russian and Ukrainian Conductors Share Baton

By The Moscow Times

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In today's Russia, where culture tends to be highly politicized, at least in one venerable cultural institution, nationality and political opinion seem to take a backseat to music.

The Russian National Orchestra (RNO), the nation's premier symphony orchestra, has just announced its 25th anniversary tour of the U.S. to take place in March. The orchestra will perform 16 concerts in seven states all across the country, from New York to Florida and California.

For the first half of the tour, the orchestra will be conducted by Mikhail Pletnev, the orchestra's celebrated founder and artistic director.

The second half of the tour will be conducted by Kirill Karabits, a Ukrainian national who is currently chief conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and artistic director of the I, CULTURE Orchestra of Poland. In August 2015, Karabits led the orchestra's performance of "The Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on Kiev's Maidan.

One of the highlights of the U.S. tour is the orchestra's performance of three Russian favorites: Alexander Borodin's "In the Steppes of Central Asia"; Sergei Prokofiev's "Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor" (with guest artist Stan Jackiw); and Igor Stravinsky's "The Firebird."

Pletnev will conduct this program at New York's Carnegie Hall on March 2, and Karabits will end the tour with it at the Phillips Center auditorium in the University of Florida in Gainesville on March 9.

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