The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Italian Concert Organizers Cancel Gergiev Performance Amid Backlash Over Kremlin Ties

July 21, 2025



Vladimir Putin and Valery Gergiev. **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

Concert organizers in Italy have canceled a performance by Russian conductor Valery Gergiev following mounting criticism over his ties to the Kremlin, the Italian news outlet ANSA reported Monday.

Gergiev, a supporter of President Vladimir Putin who has since December 2023 led Moscow's world-famous Bolshoi Theatre, has been largely ostracized in the West for refusing to denounce Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

His symphony concert outside of Naples, scheduled for July 27 at the Reggia di Caserta, had been promoted as an "unforgettable symphony."

ANSA did not specify its sources but reported that organizers decided to cancel the event amid growing public outcry.

Gregiev later told the state-run TASS news agency that he had not been informed about the symphony concert cancellation.

Related article: Italy's Culture Minister Slams Concert Invite for Pro-Kremlin Conductor

Italian Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli and Yulia Navalnaya, widow of the late opposition activist Alexei Navalny, had both condemned the invitation for Gergiev, warning it could be exploited as a Kremlin propaganda tool.

Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation had also urged Italian authorities to call off the performance.

An online petition opposing the event garnered over 16,000 signatures, according to ANSA.

Russia's Ambassador in Italy Alexei Paramonov said in a statement later on Monday that he was "dismayed by the excessive controversy and aggressive rhetoric in the Italian press" about the invitation for Gergiev to perform at Reggia di Caserta.

"The sensationalist uproar deliberately provoked over the July 27 concert... appears highly inappropriate and out of place," Paramonov said. "Evidently, those who spread hate lack any real artistic sensitivity."

"It is saddening to witness an Italy whose government, contrary to its pledges to protect national sovereignty and interests, now bows to the demands of Ukrainian immigrants and other lobbying groups," he added.

Gergiev has supported Putin's policies for more than two decades and has performed at government events celebrating Russian military victories.

In one of his most criticized appearances, Gergiev conducted a concert among the ruins of Palmyra in Syria after Russia intervened in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

He also performed in 2008 in South Ossetia, a breakaway region in Georgia under Russian military control, just meters from a detention center where Georgian civilians were being held.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/07/21/italian-concert-organizers-cancel-gergiev-performance-amid-backlash-over-kremlin-ties-a89899