

A Conductor Comes to the Rescue to Lead Japan's Major Orchestras



The international conductor, John Axelrod, finds himself fortuitously in the right place at the right time – and crucially, with the depth of repertoire experience to ensure quality and confidence.

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- In November 2021, Japan closed its international borders in an attempt to limit the spread of the Omicron variant. Fortunately, **John Axelrod** was already in the country, fully vaccinated and out of quarantine, ready for planned performances with the **Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra** and the **City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra**, where he is the Principal Guest Conductor, and the only titled American conductor in Japan. Tokyo's three major orchestras: **the NHK Symphony Orchestra, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra** and **Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra** had a dilemma on their hands. With other top international conductors all due to conduct in Tokyo in the coming month and now unable to enter the country, how were the orchestras to proceed? The orchestras wanted an international conductor with a national profile in Japan and with the right experience to pick up an extraordinarily diverse range of core repertoire programs. **In Axelrod they found their conductor.** As he had to stay in Japan to fulfill his obligations with the City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra at the end of January, Axelrod was among the handful of foreign nationals with the authority and profile to ensure confidence and quality. While performing arts companies throughout the world search for ways to overcome the challenges of the omicron surge, Tokyo's orchestras have someone who can stand on the podium and provide the highest level of artistic quality for their players and audiences.

- Already well-known and trusted at the podium in Japan, having enjoyed a 12-year history of collaboration with the NHK Symphony Orchestra, as well as having served as the Principal Conductor of the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Axelrod also has an astonishing range of repertoire after 25 years of experience conducting some of the best orchestras around the world, including the London Symphony, the London Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, and Philharmonia Orchestras, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestras, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, The NDR ElbePhilharmonie, the Orchestre de Paris, and the Teatro alla Scala.
- Trained by **Leonard Bernstein**, **Ilya Musin** and **Christoph Eschenbach**, the American conductor, based in Europe since 2004, has held leadership roles with many international orchestras, eg. as Music Director of Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and Theater, the Orchestre National Pays de la Loire, and the Royal Symphony Orchestra of Seville, as well as the ORFs "Hollywood in Vienna" series in Austria, and as Principal Guest Conductor of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano "Giuseppe Verdi" and First Conductor of Sinfonietta Cracovia in Poland.
- For a foreign national to be given the opportunity to conduct three consecutive programs with the NHK Symphony Orchestra and debut with the other top orchestras in Tokyo, across such a short period of time, is highly exceptional, due only to the omicron conditions. The reward for a conductor is the return. Already, after the success of his debut with the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra in December, Axelrod is asked for another subscription program in February: the Romance of Russia.

John's Axelrod's Japan Journey

City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra (Kyoto Concert Hall) 27 - 28 Nov: the world premiere of 'The Samurai of Sevilla' by Jose Maria Gallardo del Rey and Strauss' 'Ein Heldenleben'

Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra (Sakurapia Concert Hall, Hiroshima) 12 Dec: Tchaikovsky' Sixth Symphony 'Pathetique' and Violin Concerto

Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (Tokyo Bunka Kaikan Hall) 15 Dec: Stravinsky's 'The Firebird Ballet' 1910 Complete Ballet and Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with Shion Minami

Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra (6 performances at Tokyo Metropolitan Theater, Suntory Hall

Tokyo and Festival Hall Osaka) 18 - 24 Dec: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony 'An die Freude / Ode to Joy'

NHK Symphony Orchestra (Orchard Hall) 8 - 10 Dec: New Year's Program: Strauss Waltzes and Polkas with Mahler's 4th Symphony with soprano Maki Mori

NHK Symphony Orchestra (Tokyo Metropolitan Theater) 21 - 22 Jan: Brahms' Third Symphony and the Bruch Violin Concerto with Mone Hattori

NHK Symphony Orchestra (Suntory Hall) 26- 27Jan: Prokofiev's' Fifth Symphony and Third Piano Concerto with Takahiro Yoshikawa and Khatchaturian Waltz from Masquerade

City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra (Shizuoka) 28 - 29 Jan: Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, Polonaise from the opera Eugene Onegin and 1st Piano Concerto with Yukio Yokoyama

City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra (Kyoto Concert Hall) 31 Jan: DVD /Television Filming: Diverse repertoire for young audiences

Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (Suntory Hall) 11 Feb: Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony with the Glazunov Violin Concerto with Coco Tomita

For more information, please visit: <https://johnaxelrod.com/calender>



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