
For immediate release
**Kurt Masur and Orchestre National de France
US Tour**

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ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DE FRANCE MAKES ITS FIRST U.S. TOUR WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR KURT MASUR, FEBRUARY 24 - MARCH 7, 2005

TOUR BEGINS WITH CARNEGIE HALL PERFORMANCE ON FEBRUARY 24

PIANIST JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET PERFORMS WORKS BY RAVEL AND DEBUSSY

“Galvanized and transformed, the Orchestre National de France gives its best. Without compromising the fullness of tone or the life of the sound, each attack is carefully treated, an abundance of colors evoked, a chiseled articulation produced. In just a few months, the man without a baton has created a tangible bond with his musicians, and established not just a mutual respect, but most importantly and even more rare, a strong emotional tie. This is seen, this is felt, and above all this is heard.” – *Le Monde*

The National Orchestra of France will make its first US tour with Music Director Kurt Masur, beginning on February 24 at Carnegie Hall and ending on March 7 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Maestro Masur began his relationship with Orchestre National de France in September 2002, immediately following the conclusion of his eleven-year tenure as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. About the tour, he said, "I believe it will be interesting for American audiences to find out how my musical life goes on after my years as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. The Orchestre National de France is a very young and ambitious orchestra, and I always find it refreshing to work with them. I believe US audiences will recognize the talent and spontaneity of this orchestra. The programs that I have selected will show all the colors and possibilities of the orchestra on our first USA tour together. I am also looking forward to working with Jean-Yves Thibaudet."

The ten-city tour includes Boston, Atlanta, and five cities in Florida, among other destinations on the East Coast. Although Mr. Masur has actively conducted in the United States since his departure from the New York Philharmonic, this is the first time he is bringing his new orchestra to his former hometown. He most recently appeared in New York on December 31, 2004 to conduct his former orchestra. About this concert, the *New York Times* wrote, "The conductor Kurt Masur has an unabashed belief in the power of great music to inspire and comfort us." His visit to Boston with the ONF is also significant, as he is a regular guest conductor at the

Boston Symphony Orchestra (he conducts the orchestra on subscription in April) and at Tanglewood.

Repertoire for the tour will focus largely on French music, with concerts featuring the Franck *Symphony in D minor* and Ravel's *La Valse*, as well as works with soloist by Debussy and Ravel. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scherherazade* will also be performed on some programs. Internationally recognized pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, who was born in Lyon, France, and studied at the Paris Conservatoire, will join the orchestra on tour. He will perform the Ravel Piano Concerto in G, as well as Debussy's rarely-heard *Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra*.

In addition to extensive touring in Europe and around the world, the ONF has recently released its first recording with Mr. Masur conducting. The Beethoven Symphonies Nos. 2 and 6 on the Naïve/Radio France label was released in May 2004. The recording features new critical editions of these works, recently published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

About Orchestra National de France

Orchestre National de France, France's first permanent symphony orchestra, was established in 1934. Although historically steeped in the French musical tradition, the orchestra has attached great importance to acquiring a fully international repertoire. It performs more than 70 concerts a year in the major Parisian concert halls and on tours in France and abroad: the USA, the Balkans and the French regions in 1997; Spain and Germany in 1998; South Africa (the first visit by a French orchestra); Central Europe and China in 1999; Eastern Europe, Germany, Vienna and Hong Kong in 2003; Japan and Italy in 2004. All its concerts are broadcast on the 'France Musiques' public radio station and are frequently picked up for transmission throughout Europe via the European Broadcasting Union.

In September 2002, the German conductor Kurt Masur became Music Director of the orchestra after his ten-year tenure at the helm of the New York Philharmonic. Highlights of his first season included a complete Beethoven cycle in November 2002; the French premiere of *All Rise* by Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in January 2003; a Mendelssohn cycle in Paris, as well as a three-concert residency in Hong Kong in February 2003; and a tour of Eastern Europe with concerts in Zagreb, Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Tallinn, Moscow and Wroclaw. The 2003-2004 season featured a Brahms cycle with the complete concertos and symphonies in March at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the German Requiem in June at the Saint-Denis Basilica. The 2004-05 season will showcase the beginning of a three-year Shostakovich cycle. Under Maestro Masur's guidance, the Orchestre National has also undertaken a series of new educational activities, including a partnership with the National Conservatory of Music in Paris.

Orchestre National de France is proud to have given the first performance of some of the major works of the 20th century, such as *Soleil des Eaux* by Pierre Boulez (1950), the *Turangalila Symphony* of Olivier Messiaen (first performance in France, 1950), the *Symphony No. 1* of Henri Dutilleux (1951) and his violin concerto

L'Arbre des Songes (1985, with Isaac Stern as soloist), *Déserts* by Edgar Varèse, whose premiere created a memorable scandal in 1954, and *Jonchaies* by Iannis Xenakis (1977).

The ONF's recording of *Debussy's Pelleas et Melisande*, given in a concert performance in March 2000 under the direction of Bernard Haitink and released on the Naïve-Radio France label, has been unanimously acclaimed by the critics and was awarded Best Classical Recording of the Year at the Victoires de la Musique Classique 2002. Ever since its first 78rpm was produced in 1947, the orchestra has appeared on many recordings, notable among which are Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* with Lorin Maazel, still considered a classic today, and, more recently, Alban Berg's *Lulu* conducted by Jeffrey Tate, and the complete orchestral works of Varèse with Kent Nagano. Other recordings recently released on the Naïve-Radio France Label feature Bernard Haitink (Mahler's Symphony No. 6), Michaël Schönwandt (the world premiere of Bizet's opera *Ivan IV*), Joel Levi (Puccini's opera *Edgar*), *A Tribute to Evgueny Svetlanov*, and Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony conducted in 1978 by Kurt Sanderling. The orchestra's first recording under the baton of Kurt Masur was released in March: it features Beethoven's Symphonies No. 2 and No. 6.

About Kurt Masur, Music Director, Orchestre National de France

Kurt Masur is well known to orchestras and audiences alike as both a distinguished conductor and humanist. In September 2002, Mr. Masur became music director of the Orchestre National de France in Paris. Since September 2000 he has been principal conductor of the London Philharmonic. From 1991-2002 he was music director of the New York Philharmonic; following his eleven-year tenure he was named Music Director Emeritus, becoming the first New York Philharmonic music director to receive that title, and only the second (after the late Leonard Bernstein, who was named Laureate Conductor) to be given an honorary position. The New York Philharmonic established the "Kurt Masur Fund for the Orchestra", which will endow conductor debut week at the Philharmonic in perpetuity in his honor. From 1970 until 1996, Maestro Masur served as Gewandhaus Kapellmeister of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, a position of profound historic importance. Upon his retirement from that post in 1996, the Gewandhaus named him its first-ever Conductor Laureate. Mr. Masur is a guest conductor with the world's leading orchestras and holds the lifetime title of Honorary Guest Conductor of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. A professor at the Leipzig Academy of Music since 1975, he has received numerous honors: in 1995, he received the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany; in 1996 he received the Gold Medal of Honor for Music from the National Arts Club; in 1997 he received the titles of Commander of the Legion of Honor from the French government and New York City Cultural Ambassador from the City of New York; in April 1999 he received the Commander Cross of Merit of the Polish Republic and in March 2002, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Johannes Rau, bestowed upon Mr. Masur the Cross with Star of the Order of Merits of the Federal Republic of Germany. Maestro Masur is also an Honorary Citizen of his hometown Brieg. Maestro Masur has made well over

100 recordings with numerous orchestras. In 1998, Mr. Masur celebrated 50 years as a professional conductor

About Jean-Yves Thibaudet:

A master of color, nuance and interpretation, pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet is renowned worldwide for his sophisticated performances and poetic soul. A respected and versatile artist, he is sought after by today's foremost orchestras, conductors and music festivals, as well as for collaborations with pre-eminent musicians. Considered one of the great pianists of our time, with an international career in both the performance and recording arenas, he has been praised by the press as "a musical treasure of this age."

Mr. Thibaudet's 2004-2005 season underscores his worldwide appeal. Engagements of note include an international tour with the Orchestre National de France and a solo recital at San Francisco's Herbst Theatre. US orchestral engagements include subscription series concerts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra, as well as the symphony orchestras of Minnesota, Houston, North Carolina, Nashville, Charlotte and the Oklahoma City Philharmonic. Mr. Thibaudet performs chamber music with the Rossetti String Quartet at Tacoma, Washington's Pantages Theater, and with members of the New York Philharmonic at New York City's 92nd St. Y/Tisch Center for the Arts. International orchestral engagements include performances with the Gewandhaus Leipzig Orchestra, the WDR Cologne Radio Orchestra, National Symphony of Taiwan, Bilbao Symphony, BBC Symphony, Orchestre de Cannes Provence, the Galicia Symphony and the Orchestre de Lyon. International solo recitals include China's Beijing Music Festival, the Macau International Festival, Spain's Sala Baluarte in Pamplona and Teatro Fraga in Vigo, and Germany's Liederhalle Stuttgart Beethovensaal.

An accomplished performer who is equally at home with chamber music and recitals as he is with orchestral repertoire, Mr. Thibaudet is in great demand as a collaborator. He currently performs and records with such artists as Renée Fleming, Cecilia Bartoli, Angelika Kirchschrager, Yuri Bashmet and the Rossetti String Quartet. He has also been a catalyst in championing young, up-and-coming artists such as Julia Fischer, Daniel Müller-Schott and John Matz.

An award-winning, Grammy-nominated exclusive recording artist for Decca with more than 30 recordings, Mr. Thibaudet's most recent release is a 5-CD box-set entitled "*Satie: The Complete Solo Piano Music*." Additional recent recordings include "*The Magic of Satie*," and a CD of the Mendelssohn Piano Concerti with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Herbert Blomstedt conducting. Scheduled for release during 2004-05 is a recording of Strauss' *Burleske* with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Herbert Blomstedt conducting.

Of French and German heritage, Jean-Yves Thibaudet was born in Lyon, France, where he began his piano studies at age five and made his first public appearance at age seven. At age 12, Thibaudet entered the Paris Conservatory where he studied

with Aldo Ciccolini and Lucette Descaves, a friend and collaborator of Ravel. At age fifteen he won the premier Prix du Conservatoire, and three years later won the Young Concert Artists Auditions in New York. In 2001, the Republic of France awarded Mr. Thibaudet the *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*. In 2002, Jean-Yves was awarded the *Premio Pegasus* from the Spoleto Festival for his artistic achievements and his longstanding involvement with the festival.

CONCERT PROGRAMS:

Jean-Yves Thibaudet is the soloist for all performances.

Program A:

Debussy Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra
Ravel, Piano Concerto in G Major

Rimsky-Korsakov, Scheherazade

Program B:

Franck, Symphony in D minor

Ravel, Piano Concerto in G Major
Ravel, La Valse

TOUR CITIES AND DATES:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>PROGRAM</u>
Thursday, February 24	Carnegie Hall, New York, NY	A
Friday, February 25	NJPAC, Newark, NJ	A
Saturday, February 26	Tilles Center, Greenvale, NY	A
Sunday, February 27	Symphony Hall, Boston, MA	A (mat., 3:00 pm)
Tuesday, March 1	Schwarz Center, Atlanta, GA	B
Wednesday, March 2	Kravis Center, West Palm Beach, FL	B
Thursday, March 3	Philharmonic Center, Naples, FL	A
Saturday, March 5	Van Wezel Hall, Sarasota, FL	A
Sunday, March 6	Bob Carr Auditorium, Orlando, FL	B (mat., 3 pm)
Monday, March 7	Broward Center, Fort Lauderdale, FL	B