

## Michiyoshi Inoue announced winner of the 54th Suntory Music Award for 2022



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The Suntory Foundation for the Arts (Directors General: Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi and Shingo Torii) has announced Michiyoshi Inoue as the recipient of the 54th (2022) Suntory Music Award, which is presented to individuals or ensembles for notable contributions to the development of Western-style music in Japan.

### ▽Selection process

The first round of selections to choose candidates was held on Sunday, January 8, 2023 at the conference room of the foundation. The competition continued with final qualifying round on Sunday, March 12, 2023 at the conference room of the foundation. After careful consideration, Michiyoshi Inoue was chosen as the winner of the 54th (2022) Suntory Music Award, a decision that received the formal agreement of the Board of Directors of the Foundation on Monday, March 27, 2023.

▽Prize-money    ¥7,000,000

### ▽The members of the selection committee

Seiji Choki, Atsuya Funaki, Morihide Katayama, Akane Matsudaira, Yuji Numano,  
Akeo Okada, Miyuki Shiraishi (In alphabetical order)

## ▽Reason for the award

Having distinguished himself from a young age, and having reached the age of 77 this year, you would think people would refer to Michiyoshi Inoue as a “heavyweight” or “Maestro.” But they almost never do. Despite his long, active career, Inoue still gives a sense of being focused on the future. It is as though he is still an up-and-coming young artist.

Even as he takes up the Western musical canon, he is also devoted to exploring contemporary works. His music is always honest and authentic, even when, at times, he seems to be playing the clown on the podium. These kinds of contradictions of temperament have sometimes made Inoue appear a heretic to tradition, but in his recent performances they seem to have transformed into a richness and abundance.

In 2022, in particular, his handling of the works of Shostakovich has delivered a specialist’s level of fulfillment. In February, for instance, he presented the composer’s Fifth Symphony with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, as well as the 15th (the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa) and the First Symphony (the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra); in March, he tackled the 8th Symphony (the Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra) and in November, the 10th (the NHK Symphony Orchestra). This was a truly hair-raising series of performances.

Aside from the Shostakovich works, Inoue also led orchestras in heavyweights such as Dai Fujikura’s new work *Entwine* (the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, January); Iannis Xenakis’s *Keqrops* (the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, February) and Akira Ifukube’s *Sinfonia Tapkaara* (the NHK Symphony Orchestra, November). At the same time, his elaborate programming stood out in an all-Prokofiev program (the Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra, April), and in “Mozart+” (the Kanagawa Philharmonic Orchestra, May), where he chose to present forged works of Mozart alongside their authentic counterparts. At year’s end, he went on to lead Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, again with the NHK Symphony Orchestra, with which he built an edifice of plush yet nostalgic sound. One is unlikely to find another conductor who has maintained such a strenuous level of activity.

It is for these reasons that Michiyoshi Inoue has been selected to receive the 54th Suntory Music Award.

(Yuji Numano, Committee Member)

## ▽Biography

### **Michiyoshi INOUE (Conductor)**

Born in Tokyo in 1946, Michiyoshi Inoue studied at Toho Gakuen School of Music under the late Hideo Saito. He came to international prominence after winning the 1971 Guido Cantelli Conducting Competition hosted by Teatro alla Scala in Milan. He made his Japanese debut in 1976 conducting a subscription concert of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra.

Inoue has since held positions as Principal Guest Conductor of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (1977 to 1982), Music Director of the New Japan Philharmonic (1983 to 1988), Music Director and 9th Chief Conductor of the City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra (1990 to 1998), Music Director of the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa (2007 to 2018), Principal Conductor of the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra (2014 to 2017) making a new era of each ensemble with his novel projects and ample musicality. He has conducted not only the major Japanese orchestras, but also prestigious orchestras all over the world including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, NDR Symphony Orchestra Hamburg, Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, La Scala Philharmonic Orchestra, St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Budapest Festival Orchestra, KBS Symphony Orchestra as well as Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela.

From 1999 to 2000, Inoue and the New Japan Philharmonic performed the integral set of Mahler symphonies, resulting in what was hailed as “the highest level of Mahler performances ever to be heard in Japan.” In 2007, he achieved great success in Tokyo both as the conductor and project leader of his Shostakovich symphony cycle concert series with five Russian and Japanese orchestras. Since this epochal event, the number of concerts programming Shostakovich has increased at a stretch in Japan. He fell seriously ill in April 2014 and returned to podium in October the same year.

Inoue has been the uncompromising general director of unique, unconventional stage projects such as the new productions of Mozart “Le Nozze di Figaro: What The Gardener Saw” staged by Hideki Noda (2015 and 2020), Bernstein “Mass” staged by Inoue himself for the 55th Osaka International Festival (2017), Mozart “Don Giovanni” staged and choreographed by Kaiji Moriyama (2019) as well as the world premiere of Inoue’s autobiographic musical opera “A Way from Surrender” staged by himself (2023).

Inoue has been awarded the International Music Prize / Crystal Prize from the Osaka Symphony Hall (1990), 9th Kenzo Nakajima Music Prize (1991), 6th Mitsubishi UFJ Trust Music Award's Encouragement Prize for his performance of opera "Iris" (2009), Person of Cultural Merit from the Kyoto City and Omotenashi Prize from the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts known as Kigyo Mécénat Kyogikai for his performance at the Kyoto Brighton Hotel Relay Music Festival (2010), Akio Watanabe Music Foundation Special Award and TonenGeneral Music Award (2016), Osaka Prefecture Culture Prize, Osaka Cultural Festival Prize and Music Critic Club Award (2018), Arima Prize from the NHK Symphony Orchestra (2019). In 1998, the French government decorated him with the insignia "Chevalier" of the Order of Arts and Letters. Currently the Honorary Conductor of the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa.

Official Website <http://www.michiyoshi-inoue.com/>

See [here](#) for more on the Suntory Music Award

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