

NAXOS

Sergey Ivanovich  
**TANEYEV**

**Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4**

**Novosibirsk Academic Symphony Orchestra**  
**Thomas Sanderling**



## Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev (1856-1915)

### Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4

The Russian composer Sergey Taneyev wrote four symphonies between 1875 and 1898, but only the last of them, the *Symphony in C minor*, received an opus number and was published during his lifetime. The two symphonies on this recording, written two decades apart, are entirely different works that show how Taneyev's compositional style evolved and developed in this genre. From a talented student Taneyev progressed to the title of "Russian Brahms", leaving behind earlier influences of Tchaikovsky and welcoming the traditions of the Western European symphony in one of his finest instrumental scores.

*Symphony No. 2 in B flat major* (1875-1878) closely follows Taneyev's *First Symphony*, which he similarly began to compose while a student at the Moscow Conservatoire. Taneyev's composition teacher Tchaikovsky saw the sketches of the first movement in 1875, but had to wait two years to see the work progress, and never managed to persuade his pupil to complete the symphony. In the summer of 1877, after an eight-month sojourn in Paris, Taneyev sketched the *Finale*, and in December 1877 wrote to Tchaikovsky, by then his close friend, that he had completed the first movement. Taneyev was in the rare situation of a young composer who had a chance to hear a part of his work performed by an orchestra even before it was finished. His former teacher Nikolay Rubinstein, a brother of Anton Rubinstein and a piano virtuoso in his own right, conducted the *Allegro* at a symphonic rehearsal in Moscow. Rubinstein did not like the movement, and Taneyev himself appeared to be very critical towards his new work. Tchaikovsky, however, advised Taneyev not to rely on the opinion of Rubinstein too much, because he could well change it later. Tchaikovsky undoubtedly had in mind his experience with the *First Piano Concerto*, which at first Rubinstein declared "unplayable", but later performed with great success.

In 1878, while Taneyev was making a piano reduction of Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony*,

Tchaikovsky was analysing Taneyev's *Second*. The older composer declared that he played the symphony so many times that he knew it well and was able to comment on its merits and shortcomings. He immediately remarked that it was a work that benefited from multiple hearings, a characteristic that can be applied to many of Taneyev's compositions. Tchaikovsky admitted that he grew to love what he declared was no longer the work of a student.

Despite Tchaikovsky's encouragement to finish the symphony, Taneyev did not complete it. Although the *Introduction and Allegro* and *Finale* were finished, the second movement was only partially scored, and not a single musical idea for the *Scherzo* survives. The Soviet musician Vladimir Blok edited the first and last movements of the symphony and orchestrated the *Andante*, which was published and given its première in 1977.

Tchaikovsky believed that the excellent melodic and harmonic language of the *Introduction* proved that Taneyev had great talent. This begins with a theme played by woodwind and strings in their lower registers. The *Allegro* breaks through the dark hues of the *Introduction* with an impatient, pulsating theme in the strings, which propels the movement towards its first climax. Both first and second subjects of the *Allegro* are rather similar in their lyrical qualities, but they provide contrasting episodes between orchestral tutti that become more frequent as the movement advances to its conclusion. In the development Taneyev exhibits a typical trait of polyphonic development present in many of his later works by introducing three themes simultaneously, the beginning of the main theme, and the beginning and end of the second subjects. After the recapitulation the first subject returns powerfully in the brass, bolstered by full orchestral sound, thus completing the first movement.

After an impassioned introduction, the two main themes of the *Andante* appear in the cor anglais and

clarinet; the former contains brief reminiscences of Handel, one of Taneyev's favourite composers. Halfway through the movement a powerful and heroic move in the brass signals the return to the lyrical mood of the two hauntingly beautiful main themes. Taneyev then explores the possibilities of this melodic material before wrapping up the *Andante* in the style of Western European symphonic tradition.

The last movement, *Allegro*, opens with a timpani roll, followed by a boisterous introduction, reminiscent of the composers of the Mighty Handful. For contrasting lyrical material Taneyev uses a theme from his romance *People are Sleeping*, written in 1877 and revised in 1894. The dance-like, robust finale relates Taneyev's symphonic writing of this period to the style of such composers as Borodin and perhaps Mussorgsky, a characteristic which diminished rather quickly in Taneyev's later compositions. A powerful, heroic, and epic-like summary drives the *Allegro* to the return of timpani rolls that round off a well-crafted finale.

*Symphony No. 4 in C minor, Op. 12*, (1898), was dedicated to Alexander Glazunov, who conducted its première on 21st March 1898 in St Petersburg. If the *Second Symphony* was the work of a young composer at the beginning his career, the *Fourth* was written by a master of counterpoint, composer of the cantata *Ioann Damaskin*, the monumental opera *Oresteia*, a number of chamber works and a great many vocal compositions. By the time he completed his *Fourth Symphony*, Taneyev had earned the nickname the 'Russian Brahms', which he vehemently rejected, but, as this work suggests, the comparison was certainly not without foundation. The music of both composers, renowned masters of counterpoint who produced four symphonies each, bears striking similarities in its melodic and harmonic structures, form, and even origins. Taneyev finished the symphony in less than two years — quickly for the composer who took more than twenty years to write his opera *Oresteia*, and almost twelve years to complete his theoretical treatise *Invertible Counterpoint in the Strict Style* (1906, published 1909).

Countess Sophia Tolstaya wrote in her diary: 'Sergey Ivanovich played for me his wonderful symphony and it affected me very much: it is a beautiful work, with noble, elevated style'. Rimsky-Korsakov also wrote to Taneyev: 'I think that your symphony is the best contemporary work: it is noble in style, excellent in form and marvellous in the development of all its musical ideas'.

The opening *Allegro molto* is a complex, extensive essay in counterpoint, which introduces most of the main themes of the symphony. It starts with a powerful three-note call based on the tritone (C to F sharp), Taneyev's trademark interval in all his mature works, in the strings and trombones. Like the opening 'Fate motif' in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, Taneyev's tritone call reappears throughout the movement. The confident composer freely and organically develops the musical material, building up waves of tension and sound that eventually lead to the repeat of the opening call and a pulsating theme in the strings. Taneyev's lyricism is of a more mature, profound quality than that heard in his *Second Symphony*. The composer observes rather than participates, thus being in greater control over his emotions. Despite its predominantly optimistic character, the *Allegro* rushes towards a climax that leaves us with the sense of unresolved conflict.

The broadly flowing *Adagio* begins with a repetition of the three-note motif of the *Allegro molto* in the violins, this time a minor third lower. Powerful, surging, yearning, the *Adagio* abounds in clear textures and full sounds, which display Taneyev's absolute confidence in orchestral writing.

A delightful *Scherzo* brings back the opening tritone call, and contains a playful, dance-like theme in the oboe. The *Scherzo* is an encrypted self-portrait of the composer, who adored jokes and tricks. Taneyev's high-pitched laughter, once musically depicted by Anton Arensky in his *Suite for Two Pianos, Op. 23, No. 2*, is clearly heard in the opening theme of this *Scherzo*. The glimpses of light sarcasm reveal a little-known but important side of Taneyev's character, seldom found in his music.

The energetic and decisive grand finale, marked *Allegro energico – Molto maestoso*, with its brilliant, scintillating orchestration, and majestic, optimistic character re-confirms life-giving strength. As in his opera *Oresteia*, here Taneyev is interested in a human being who is the master of his own destiny, but who has to earn this right through struggle and hardship. This is shown in great contrasts, which are reminiscent now of Wagner's musical identification of Fafner in *Das Rheingold*, now of instrumental episodes from

Rubinstein's opera *The Demon*, and signal flashes of what Shostakovich would develop later in his motoric drumming instrumental episodes. Taneyev powerfully and confidently marches towards victory in the brass-heavy finale of this monumental, heroic symphony that has been considered by many to be his finest instrumental composition.

**Anastasia Belina**

## Novosibirsk Academic Symphony Orchestra



The Novosibirsk Academic Symphony Orchestra has been well-known outside Siberia for a very long time, a cultural asset of not only the city of Novosibirsk and the Siberian region but of the whole of Russia and comparable to the orchestras of Moscow and St Petersburg. Established in 1956 and led by the People's Artist of the USSR, laureate of the National Award of Russia, Arnold Kats (1924-2007), the

orchestra has given concerts in various cities and towns in Russia, participated in numerous international musical festivals, and undertaken concert tours throughout Europe and to Japan. The most important event in the history of the orchestra took place on 8th June, 2006, when the Novosibirsk Academic Symphony Orchestra was honoured to take part in the Festival of Symphony Orchestras from all over the world, for Russian National Day. On this unique occasion, organized by the Association of Symphony and Chamber Orchestras of Russia at the Column Hall of the Dom Sojuzov, the Novosibirsk Academic Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Arnold Kats performed alongside the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under Zubin Mehta, the Toscanini Philharmonic Orchestra under Lorin Maazel, the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields and other orchestras, in the presence of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. The orchestra has been conducted by many world-renowned Russian conductors, and appeared with leading soloists. In 1982 the orchestra acquired the title 'Academic'. Since 2002 the principal guest conductor has been Thomas Sanderling, together with Fabio Mastrangelo, and since September 2007 Gintaras Rinkevičius (Lithuania) has served as artistic director and chief conductor.

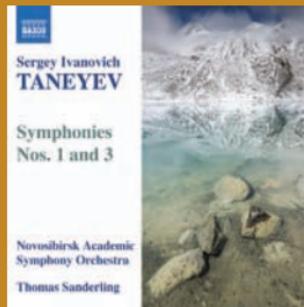
## Thomas Sanderling



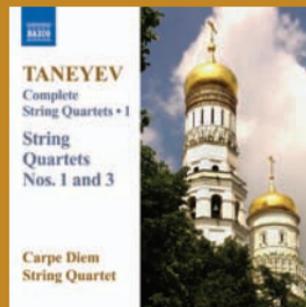
Thomas Sanderling grew up in St Petersburg, where his father Kurt Sanderling was conductor of the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. After graduating from the Music School of the St Petersburg Conservatory he studied conducting at the Music Academy in East Berlin and at the age of 24 became Music Director of the Halle Opera. He appeared frequently with the leading East German orchestras and opera houses, and won the Berlin Critics' Prize for his performances at the Komische Oper. On the invitation of the composer he gave the German premières of Shostakovich's *Thirteenth* and *Fourteenth Symphonies* and made the world première recording of the orchestral version of the *Suite of Verses of Michelangelo*. He went on to work as assistant to Leonard Bernstein and Herbert von Karajan. Thomas Sanderling has conducted extensively on the international stage, with orchestras throughout North America and Europe. In Japan he won the Grand Prix of the Osaka Critics twice in three years and in 1992 became Music Director of the Osaka Symphony Orchestra, of which he was named Music Director Laureate for Life. Thomas Sanderling was Guest Conductor of the Berlin Deutsche Staatsoper Unter den Linden from 1978 until 1983, conducting an extensive repertory of operas. He enjoys a strong relationship with the St Petersburg Philharmonic with whom he appears regularly in concert. Their recording of Mahler's *Sixth Symphony* won a Cannes Classical Award

in 1998. For Deutsche Grammophon Thomas Sanderling has made two critically acclaimed world première recordings of works by Shostakovich. He has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Novosibirsk Philharmonic Orchestra since 2000.

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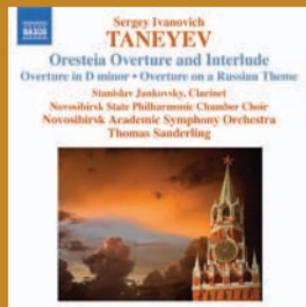
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Playing Time

78:22



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Known to Tchaikovsky as the 'Russian Bach' and to Rachmaninov as 'a master composer [and] a pinnacle of musical Moscow', Sergey Taneyev was one of the most highly regarded and influential musical figures of his time. His unfinished *Symphony No. 2*, begun while Taneyev was a student at the Moscow Conservatoire, was recognised by his teacher, Tchaikovsky, as a work of considerable promise. It is heard here in Vladimir Blok's edition, first performed in 1977. Taneyev's *Symphony No. 4*, composed twenty years later, is a large-scale masterpiece considered by many to be his finest orchestral work. Thomas Sanderling's first disc in the Naxos Taneyev series (*Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3* / 8.570336) was praised by *The Guardian* for its 'strongly characterised performances'.

Sergey Ivanovich  
**TANEYEV**

(1856-1915)

## Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4

**Symphony No. 2 in B flat major** **37:23**  
 (completed and edited by Vladimir Blok, 1977)

- |   |                                    |              |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | <b>I. Introduction and Allegro</b> | <b>15:28</b> |
| 2 | <b>II. Andante</b>                 | <b>12:47</b> |
| 3 | <b>III. Allegro</b>                | <b>9:09</b>  |

**Symphony No. 4 in C minor, Op. 12** **40:59**

- |   |  |              |
|---|--|--------------|
| 4 | <b>I. Allegro molto</b>                              | <b>12:49</b> |
| 5 | <b>II. Adagio</b>                                    | <b>11:44</b> |
| 6 | <b>III. Scherzo: Vivace</b>                          | <b>6:06</b>  |
| 7 | <b>IV. Finale: Allegro energico – molto maestoso</b> | <b>10:20</b> |

**Novosibirsk Academic Symphony Orchestra**  
**Thomas Sanderling**

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