

SERGEI TANEYEV

(1856-1915)

**1 Duet for Soprano and Tenor after Tchaikovsky's
Fantasy-Overture "Romeo & Juliet"** (12:23)

Stella Zambalis, soprano; John Daniecki, tenor
Jelena Shkolnikova, soprano (Juliet's Nurse)
Moscow Radio and Television Orchestra
Peter Tiboris, Conductor

Symphony No. 4, Op. 12 in C minor (39:30)

- 2** I Allegro molto (12:13)
3 II Adagio (11:18)
4 III Scherzo: Vivace (5:43)
5 IV Finale: Allegro energico (10:06)

Moscow Radio and Television Orchestra
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Total Time 52:03

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Sergei Taneyev

by John W. Barker

Sergei Ivanovich Taneyev (1856-1915) is one of those "lost" composers who—thanks in major part to recordings—is in the process of rediscovery. Russians so admire Sergei Taneyev that they cannot understand why he is not as well-known in the West as their other great masters. Perhaps one reason is the absence in his music of the raw power and overt emotionalism that, along with ethnic touches, we associate with "Russian Soul". Since he contradicts our assumptions about what Russian music should be, it has been easier for us to ignore him than to accommodate him.

Certainly Taneyev is exceptional in his own context. As a student of Tchaikovsky, as a friend of Rimsky-Korsakov and others of "The Five," as a teacher of Gliere, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and even Prokofiev, Taneyev was at the center of musical life in the Russia of his day: a superlative pedagogue, a prolific composer, and a beloved colleague. Other composers sought his advice and dedicated their works to him out of respect. Yet, compositionally, Taneyev stood apart. He escaped the nationalist fervor that had captivated so many other Russian musicians, pursuing instead a more broadminded and cosmopolitan path. This outlook by no means made him indifferent to Russian traditions, for he was an avid student of both the folk and liturgical music of Russia, which he attempted to integrate often into his music. But his essential characteristic was polished professionalism, not flamboyant experimentation. That characteristic made him a reliable colleague and teacher, and it is to be heard in his superbly crafted writing. Yet, that very polish sometimes can seem an elegant artificiality, too conservative and eclectic—just not "Russian" enough, you know!

To shrug off Taneyev, however, is to make a great mistake, for he composed music of great variety, depth, and beauty. Nor is the element of feeling, even passion, necessarily absent. Perhaps his masterpiece is his *Oresteia* trilogy, an opera triptych after Aeschylus. At least some of his masterful chamber works,

as well as at least two of his Symphonies—long championed by Soviet performers in a steady stream of their recordings—can readily appeal to international taste, while his splendid choral music justifies the efforts of non-Russian performers to overcome problems of language.

Above all, Taneyev's music conveys a strong sense of humanity, reflective of the man himself. Born the son of a cultivated and socially well-established government functionary, Taneyev was recognized for his brilliant talent by Nikolai Rubinstein and directed into early conservatory training, both in composition and in piano—on which instrument he soon became a virtuoso. He graduated in 1875, the first student ever to win simultaneously the first prizes in performance and composition. After a period as a touring pianist, he was offered Tchaikovsky's position on the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory. By 1885 he had risen to the institution's directorship, but he resigned from this post in 1889 to devote himself more fully to composing.

As composer, Taneyev was able to assimilate a remarkable range of interests. He immersed himself in the music of earlier eras, from Bach's on through that of the Baroque and Renaissance masters, making himself one of the leading contrapuntalists of his day. At the same time, he had a vivid sense of humor, composing a number of pungent musical parodies. While interested in Russian traditional styles, he was also fascinated by the new international language of Esperanto and he even set to music some texts written in it.

All of these were dimensions of a life lived totally for music. Tall, stocky, near-sighted, he might have been taken for a comic self-caricature—a bit of Tolstoy's Pierre, a kind of Slavonic nerd. He lived his entire adult life cared for by his childhood nurse, residing in simple lodgings, without electricity or running water. Jealous of his privacy, he had the nameplate on his door read simply:

Sergei Taneyev
is not at home.

He abstained totally from alcohol (so rare for a Russian then!), and he seemed impervious to emotional or amorous attractions. (Once, during a visit to Tolstoy's estate, it was clear that Tolstoy's wife had become deeply infatuated

with Taneyev, much to her husband's irritation, but apparently without the composer ever noticing.) Quaint as this personality might seem, it included an affability and an integrity that endeared Taneyev to all who worked with him, regardless of differences they might have had with him as a result of his outspoken frankness. It was a gesture of good will that cost Taneyev his life: attending the funeral of his precocious former pupil, Scriabin, on April 27, 1915, he caught pneumonia, which led to a fatal heart attack less than two months later. The previous autumn, Russia had entered World War I; two years after Taneyev's death, the Russian Revolution swept away much of the world the composer had known, his death at fifty-nine at least sparing him sight of that.

The combination of works in this recording juxtaposes provocatively two dimensions of Taneyev's life: not only do we have one of the finest examples of his own music, but we can observe also his collegial relationship with one of the most important people in his life, Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Taneyev had been one of Tchaikovsky's earliest and certainly best students at the Moscow Conservatory. Taneyev was to develop into one of the most perceptive teachers and analysts of the processes of composition, perhaps in the entire history of Western music. Tchaikovsky must have recognized quickly his pupil's capacities and soon turned him from student into confidant, despite the difference of sixteen years in their ages. Deeply insecure, the older man regularly submitted his latest works to Taneyev for criticism, or sought and respected his reactions. Tchaikovsky's letters, whether to Taneyev or to others, are filled with references to such reactions. Exactly how much Tchaikovsky followed Taneyev's advice is often debatable, but our first selection documents one very special case of interaction that amounts to actual collaboration.

Duet for Soprano and Tenor after Tchaikovsky's Fantasy-Overture, "Romeo and Juliet"

Tchaikovsky's brilliant "Fantasy/Overture" after Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, is so familiar that we forget its long gestation. First composed in the

autumn of 1869 and premiered the following March, it was revised in the summer of 1870, and then revised still again ten years later. It is the third and final version that we regularly hear today; the constant recasting perhaps responsible for the fact that, alone among Tchaikovsky's standard works, it bears no opus number.

The recurrent process of revision seems to have reinforced the composer's preoccupation with the Shakespearean subject matter, despite work on other projects, and amid personal upheaval. His operatic masterpiece, *Eugene Onegin*, was composed in 1877-78, during the episode of his misbegotten marriage (July 1877), its collapse, and the beginnings of its overextended aftermath. In August of 1878, Tchaikovsky wrote to his "Beloved Friend" and patroness, Mme. von Meck, that he was considering the Romeo and Juliet story among several subjects for a new opera; only concern about competing with Gounod's ("mediocre") opera on the same theme gave him pause, he admitted. An opera about Joan of Arc, *The Maid of Orleans* (1878-79), proved instead to be his next, followed by the welcome distraction of his Fourth Symphony.

But opera continued to draw him back, and in the summer of 1881 he puttered with a project after Pushkin, to be entitled *Mazeppa*. Unhappy with that subject, he wrote in October to his brother Anatoly that he had decided instead to compose an opera on Romeo and Juliet after all. It was apparently at this time that he actually began some sketches in that direction. But the scheme came to naught: he was compelled after all to finish *Mazeppa* (1883, premiered the following year), and nothing more was heard of Romeo and Juliet.

Until, that is, Tchaikovsky's death in 1893. As musical executor for his teacher and friend, Taneyev found the aborted sketches that Tchaikovsky had begun a dozen years earlier. In short order, Taneyev produced a realization of these sketches, completed and published the following year, 1894.

What Taneyev discovered was a draft of vocal parts to a love-duet, setting a translation by A. L. Sokolovsky based on Act III, Scene 5, of Shakespeare's play, wherein the illstarred couple awake from their one night together and

Romeo must wrench himself away. That Tchaikovsky should have made an operatic start at this point, *in medias res*, was by no means unusual. In fact, at about the same time he began sketches both for *Mazeppa* and for yet another projected opera, starting precisely with parallel nocturnal lovescenes in each. Moreover, we need but recall that Tchaikovsky's first undertaking of *Eugene Onegin* began with his drafting of Tatiana's Letter Scene, the episode that first drew him to Pushkin's great verse-novel.

Tchaikovsky's Romeo sketches included a brief appearance of a third character, Juliet's Nurse (a mezzosoprano part), who calls out a warning. The vocal lines for the two lovers were mostly new (and quite attractive) music, but they also incorporated clear references to two strains from the Overture's Love Scene, one of them its famous "big tune". It is not clear if Tchaikovsky intended yet another revision of the Overture, in order to weave it into a full operatic score; he may just have been fascinated with the continuing potential of its themes. In completing the sketches, adding first a piano accompaniment and then a full orchestration, Taneyev created an ending by using more of the lovemusic from the Overture. For an introduction, he adumbrated one of the two love-themes Tchaikovsky was reusing but he also built the scene's opening out of music from the Overture's beginning (final version), further stressing the scene's link to that score.

However faithful or not to his teacher's intentions, Taneyev at least has made performable a tantalizing fragment—as much as we will ever have of a Tchaikovsky opera that was not to be.

Symphony No. 4 ["No. 1"] in C minor, Op. 12 (1898)

Taneyev's Symphonies are a subject of some confusion, recalling that which once plagued the Symphonies of Dvorak. Our composer wrote four in all. The First, in E minor, dates from 1873-74. The Second, in B-flat, is a three-movement work, originally written in 1877-78, and left unfinished; it was completed and prepared for performance by Vladimir Blok, in which form it has circulated and even been recorded. The Third, in D minor, was first

performed in 1884; like the First, it was not published until the late 1940s. It was only the Fourth, in C minor, composed about 1896-97 and first performed (under its dedicatée, Glazunov) in 1898, that Taneyev thought sufficiently worthy to be released and published in his own lifetime. When it was printed in Leipzig in 1901, it was designated as his Op. 12 and called the "First" Symphony, as his first to be published. As a result, this work has often been identified alternatively, and confusingly, as both "No. 1" and "No. 4". Whatever the confusion, though, Taneyev was correct in his confidence in the work, for it was enthusiastically received; in 1905, it belatedly won the largest of the first Glinka Prize Fund awards.

Whereas Taneyev's chamber works reflected his refined and "abstract" cosmopolitanism, his orchestral music sometimes became a vehicle for more unashamed "romanticism". Cast in the traditional four movements, it is full of strong, lyrical, highly colored, even passionate music. Indeed, with its melodramatic opening material, contrasted with the waltz-melody that is the second theme, the first movement proclaims a style about as close as Taneyev ever got to our stereotypes of "Russian" sound. The influence of his teacher-friend, Tchaikovsky, can be perceived in the elegiac and restless elements of the second movement, with its middle-section of idyllic nature-painting; in the sparkling and quixotic whimsy of the scherzo third movement; or in the finale's penultimate climax, a preemptory drumroll that clears the way for the grand epilogic conclusion—the same features Tchaikovsky used to conclude his own Fifth Symphony.

Yet, there is never anything "nationalistic" about this work, a product of urbane and thoroughly classicizing craftsmanship. Though the movements are quite distinctly delineated in character, they are subtly fused into an entity, through "cyclic" interrelationships between them, with motives first heard in the initial movement used as germinal ideas in the rest of the work. Hints and variants of its opening motto and the subsequent waltz-melody serve as recurrent anchors, to be reaffirmed in the triumphal summing-up at the end of the stormy, marchlike finale. The powerful C-minor tonality of the outer

movements creates a quality not of tragedy but of compelling seriousness and unflagging energy, converted to victory in the C-major epilogue. The ample scoring (triple woodwind and brass, save for four horns, plus tuba, with percussion and the usual strings) allows a rich and full-throated orchestral sonority.

Here is a masterpiece of the Romantic era that richly deserves a permanent place in the working orchestral repertoire!

**Duet for Soprano and Tenor after
Tchaikovsky's Fantasy-Overture "Romeo and Juliet"**

Juliet: O my darling, isn't that the nightingale singing?

Romeo: That's no nightingale.

Juliet: The one that sings every night in the pomegranate tree?

[Juliet: He's singing, it's he, it's he!

[Romeo: It's no nightingale, it's not, it's not!

Romeo: No, my angel, that's the lark, heralding the morning.

Juliet: No, it's the nightingale.

Romeo: No, no, my dearest, it's the lark singing before the dawn.

[Juliet: No, it's the nightingale,

[Romeo: Yes, singing before dawn!

[Juliet: O, my darling, don't be afraid.

[Romeo: It's he, it's he!

Romeo: See, the dawn is colouring the eastern clouds; the stars are fading; the mountaintops are golden; the joyful day has wakened! If I don't go now, I shall die!

Juliet: Don't be afraid; the light is from a meteor, not from the day.
Stay, stay, it's not yet time to go.

Romeo: If I stay and am taken, I shall die; but if it's at your command,
I'll die happy.

Juliet: O Romeo!

Romeo: Yes, and let this not really be the light of day.

Juliet: It's a nightingale singing.

Romeo: I believe you.

Juliet: O night of bliss, enfold us!

Romeo: I shall welcome death rapturously!

Juliet: O night of bliss.

Romeo: No, that's not the day. O night, o blissful moment, stay.
O night of love, enfold us, comfort us.

Juliet: The day, it's daybreak! O torment!

Romeo: No, it's not the day. No, no, no! My dearest, isn't that the
nightingale singing?

Juliet: That's no nightingale.

Romeo: The one that sings every night in the pomegranate tree?

[Juliet: It's no nightingale, it's not, it's not!
Romeo: He's singing, it's he, it's he!

Juliet: No, my angel, that's the lark, heralding the morning.

Romeo: No, it's the nightingale.

Juliet: No, no, my dearest, it's the lark, singing before the dawn.

[Juliet: Yes, singing before the dawn.
Romeo: No, it's the nightingale.

[Juliet: It's he, it's he!
Romeo: Oh, my darling, don't be afraid.

Nurse: Juliet, Juliet!

Juliet: That's my nanny.

Romeo: Heaven help us.

Nurse: My child, it's morning. Hurry, hurry, it's time to part. Your mother
will catch you.

Juliet: Wait one moment for us, nanny.

Romeo: Must we say goodbye?

J & R: O torment, torment! Must we part? O night, time of love, of bliss,
rapturous dreams, gentle whispers-o night, must you pass?
Linger a moment more.

Juliet: O night, stay!

Romeo: Why do you no longer enfold us in your magical darkness,
o night of bliss? Stay with us, hide us in your sweet, dreaming darkness.

[Juliet: Farewell, my tender love.
Romeo: Sweet love, my life.

[Juliet: Alas, the night is passed,
Romeo: The night is passed.

[Juliet: The day is parting us.
Romeo: Day, pitiless day,

[Juliet: O pitiless day!
Romeo: You are parting us.

[Juliet: You darken my love.
Romeo: Where are you, darkness of night?

[Juliet: Alas, you are
Romeo: You bring light to my love-

[Juliet: the end of bliss!
Romeo: and heavenly bliss!

[Juliet: Farewell, my tender love.
Romeo: Juliet, Juliet.

[Juliet: The night is gone, we must part,
Romeo: Farewell, sweet love, farewell,

[Juliet: Romeo, my darling,
Romeo: Farewell, farewell,

[Juliet: Farewell, my Romeo
Romeo: Juliet.

J & R: It's time for us to part, the night is over, farewell.

[Juliet: Farewell, farewell, o my Romeo
Romeo: Sweet love, farewell.

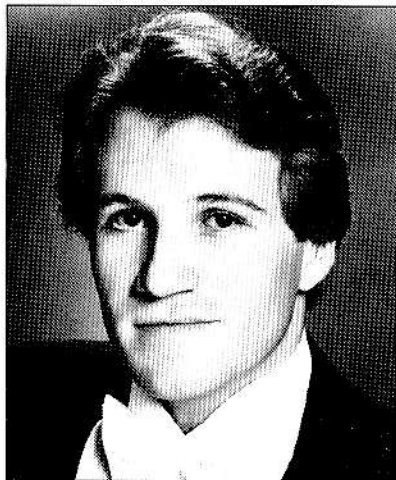
J & R: Farewell, farewell, farewell.

– Translation by Boris Zhutnikov

Soprano **Stella Zambalis** has performed with many of the major opera houses throughout the U.S. including the Metropolitan Opera, Houston, Seattle, St. Louis and Miami. Major performances include appearances in Carnegie Hall with the Opera Orchestra of New York in *La Wally* and *Roberto Devereux*; her debut at the Met singing Cherubino in the world premiere of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*; and her debuts at the Spoleto Festival USA and Italy, singing the title role of Menotti's *Maria Golovin*, as well as the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Ms. Zambalis will return to the Met for their new production of *Ariadne*.



Since his debut in 1986 with the Pittsburgh Opera, tenor **John Daniecki** has performed with opera companies in the U.S. and Europe, including The New York City Opera, Grand Theatre de Tour, The Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Wolf Trap Opera, The Dublin Grand Opera, and Toledo Opera. Festival appearances include Aix-en-Provence, Wexford (Ireland) and Pepsico Summerfare. Most recently he has been heard in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with the Florentine Opera, in *Carmina Burana* with the Atlanta Symphony, and in the world premiere of Anthony Davis's *Tania* at the American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia.



Jelena Shkolnikova, soprano, has been a singer with the Bolshoi Opera since 1978. The roles she has portrayed include Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Oskar in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Antonida in *Ivan Susanin* by Glinka, Violetta in *La Traviata*, and Sophie in *Werther*, among many others. She holds the title "Honored Artist of Russia".

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Conductor Peter Tiboris, founder and music director of New York's Manhattan Philharmonic has performed extensively in New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall since his New York debut in 1984. His conducting has yielded critical praise in major European music capitals including concerts with the Glinka Cappella Symphony Orchestra at St. Petersburg's Great Shostakovich Hall, with the Brno Philharmonic at the State Theater in Brno, and on tour with the Moscow Radio and Television Orchestra.



Peter Tiboris has also conducted The Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras of Great Britain; Yugoslavia's Dubrovnik Symphony; Poland's Poznan Philharmonic, Szczecin Philharmonic, the Baltic Symphony of Gdansk and the Polish Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra of Warsaw; Bulgaria's Plovdiv Opera Orchestra and Chorus; The Kiev Opera Symphony Orchestra; the Niedersachsische Staatsorchester of Hannover, Germany; and New York's American Symphony. Mr. Tiboris's recent recording of Mahler's 1895 re-orchestration of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is available on Bridge BCD 9033.