

TANEYEV
Suite de Concert, Op. 28

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV
Fantasia on Two Russian Themes, Op. 33

Annelle K. Gregory, Violin
Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra
Dmitry Yablonsky



Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev (1856–1915)
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Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)
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Rimsky-Korsakov, survivor and musical executor of 'The Five' Russian nationalist composers, seems to have entertained mixed feelings about Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev. In his published memoirs he has high praise for the younger composer as a wonderful musician and highly-trained teacher, and goes on to describe both his expertise in counterpoint and the dry, laboured character of his early compositions. He continues to explain how Taneyev, in the 1890s, changed his attitude to the nationalists, whom he had previously regarded as amateur – a view that Anton Rubinstein, with some justification, had unwisely expressed some 30 years before. There was a public quarrel with Mily Balakirev during the rehearsal of a concert in Smolensk, but Taneyev came to respect the music left by Borodin and the work that Rimsky-Korsakov's former pupil Alexander Glazunov had done in preparing it for publication. Modest Mussorgsky, however, he could never accept.

Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev was born in 1856, the son of a government official and nephew of Alexander Sergeyevich Taneyev, director of the Imperial Chancellery and, in private, a gifted composer and admirer of the

nationalists. Sergey Ivanovich had piano lessons from the age of five, and when he was ten became a pupil of the Moscow Conservatory, where his later teachers were Nikolay Rubinstein, the director of the conservatory, and Tchaikovsky, with whom he remained on close terms until the latter's sudden death in 1893. Taneyev had succeeded Tchaikovsky as professor of harmony and orchestration at the Moscow Conservatory after the latter had withdrawn in 1878, and went on to become professor of piano and of composition, and, for four years, to serve as director. He died in the summer of 1915, after catching a chill at the funeral of Scriabin in April. Rachmaninov paid public tribute to his old teacher, declaring that he taught his pupils how to live, how to think, how to work and even how to speak.

Taneyev wrote his *Suite de Concert* ('Concert Suite') for the violinist Boris Sibor, who was soloist in the first performance in 1909. The work reflects their interest in earlier music and follows the model of the Baroque suite. The opening *Préludium* in G minor, includes passages of grandiose display, and is followed by the D major *Gavotte*, with a

contrasting *Musette*. The third movement, *Märchen* ('Fairy Tale') suggests something of the narrative element of Schumann and his contemporaries. It is followed by a *Theme and Variations*, the F major *Andantino* melody leading to seven variations, the third a waltz, the fourth a double fugue and the fifth marked *Presto scherzando*. The sixth variation is an F minor *Mazurka*, marked *Allegro con fuoco*, capped by a final variation and coda. The suite ends with a vigorously energetic D minor *Tarantella*.

Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov originally intended a naval career, following the example of his elder brother. He showed some musical ability even as a very small child, but at the age of 14 entered the Naval Cadet College in St Petersburg in pursuit of a more immediately attractive ambition. The city, in any case, offered musical opportunities. He continued piano lessons, but, more important than this, he was able to enjoy the opera and attend his first concerts.

It was in 1861, the year before he completed his course at the Naval College, that Rimsky-Korsakov met Mily Balakirev, a musician who was to become an important influence on him, as he was on the young army officers Modest Mussorgsky and César Cui, who already formed part of his circle, later joined by Alexander Borodin. The meeting had a far-reaching effect on Rimsky-Korsakov's career, although in 1862 he set sail as a midshipman on a cruise that was to keep him away from Russia for the next two and a half years.

On his return in 1865, Rimsky-Korsakov fell again under the influence of Balakirev. On shore there was more time for music and the encouragement he needed for a serious application to music that resulted in compositions in which he showed his early ability as an orchestrator and his deftness in the use of Russian themes, a gift that Balakirev did much to encourage as part of his campaign to create a truly Russian form of music. Nevertheless, as Rimsky-Korsakov himself soon realised, Balakirev lacked the necessary technique of a composer, justifying Anton Rubinstein's taunts of amateurism. In spite of his own perceived deficiencies in this respect, in 1871 he took a position as professor of instrumentation and composition at St Petersburg Conservatory and the following year resigned his commission in the navy, to become a civilian inspector of Naval Bands, a position created for him through personal and family influence.

Rimsky-Korsakov's subsequent career was a distinguished one. Understanding the need for a sure command of compositional techniques, harmony, counterpoint and orchestration, he set to work to make good these defects in his own musical formation with remarkable success. This led him, as the only real professional of the nationalist group dominated by Balakirev, to undertake the completion and, often, the orchestration of works left unfinished by other composers of the new Russian school. As early as 1869, Dargomyzhsky had left him the task of completing the opera *The Stone Guest*. 20

years later he was to perform similar tasks for the music of Mussorgsky and for Borodin, both of whom had left much undone at the time of their deaths. Relations with Balakirev were not always easy, and Rimsky-Korsakov, who had become increasingly intolerant of the former's obligatory and dogmatic interference in the work of others, was to become associated with Mitrofan Belyayev and his schemes for the publication of new Russian music, a connection that Balakirev could only see as disloyalty. There were other influences on his composition, particularly with his first hearing of Wagner's *Ring* in 1889 and consequent renewed attention to opera, after a brief period of depression and silence, the result of illness and death in his family.

Rimsky-Korsakov was involved in the disturbances of 1905, when he sided with the conservatory students, joining with some colleagues in a public demand for political reform, an action that brought his dismissal from

the institution, to which he was able to return when his pupil and friend Glazunov became director the following year. He died in 1908.

It was in 1886, after the composition of his *Third Symphony*, that Rimsky-Korsakov tackled his *Fantasia on Two Russian Themes*, Op. 33, completed the following year. The work was dedicated to Pierre Kranokutsky, who taught the violin at the Court Chapel and had been able to advise Rimsky-Korsakov on writing for the violin. The *Introduction* includes a series of cadenzas and leads to a Russian theme, marked *Lento*. An *Allegro animato* passage leads to an *Allegro scherzando*, then an *Allegretto* Russian theme in double-stopping and a more extended cadenza. In the work, Rimsky-Korsakov was able to explore the virtuoso possibilities of the solo violin with some success, in a form of concerto that found a place for melodies of purely Russian character.

Keith Anderson

Annelle K. Gregory

Photo: Michael Oletta



American violinist Annelle Kazumi Gregory is the First Prize and the Audience Choice Award winner of the 2017 National Sphinx Competition, and laureate of the 2013 Stradivarius International Violin Competition. Gregory's love of Russian music has led her to revive forgotten works of great Russian composers: in 2017 she released the first album of Rachmaninov's complete violin and piano works, recorded with pianist Alexander Sinchuk. As a soloist, Gregory has performed with the Houston, Nashville, New Jersey, La Jolla and San Diego Symphonies, the Detroit, Santa Monica and Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestras, the Chicago Sinfonietta, and the California Chamber Orchestra, performing in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Walt Disney Concert Hall, and the Kennedy Center, as well as abroad in Azerbaijan, England, Germany, Portugal, Russia, and Ukraine. Gregory graduated first in her class, *summa cum*

laude, from the USC Thornton School of Music. Her teachers have included Michael and Irina Tseitlin and Glenn Dicterow.

Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra



Based in the capital of Ukraine, the Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra has earned national and international recognition from both listeners and critics around the world as one of the country's

leading orchestral ensembles. With an average age of 30, this youthful orchestra unites talented musicians from all over Ukraine, most of whom are winners of various competitions. The ensemble gained its reputation by popularising the music of Western composers in Ukraine, as well as enjoying a very close collaboration with outstanding contemporary composers such as Krzysztof Penderecki, Valentin Silvestrov and Myroslav Skoryk. The orchestra's unique sound and virtuosity have attracted many internationally acclaimed soloists and conductors to appear with them over the years. The Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra bring their high level of artistry together with their Ukrainian pride to a wide range of audiences. Their recent tours have taken them to countries such as Switzerland, France, Spain and Azerbaijan, among others.

Dmitry Yablonsky

Photo: Sergei Ilyin



GRAMMY® Award-nominated cellist/conductor Dmitry Yablonsky was born in Moscow into a musical family. At a very early age he showed musical talent, and at six was accepted into the Moscow Central Special Music School for Gifted Children. Yablonsky moved to New York in June 1977 and was accepted into The Juilliard School. Yablonsky began conducting in 1989 in Camerino, Italy and has since been very active as a conductor. He has collaborated with orchestras such as the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, the Moscow Virtuosi, the Moscow Soloists, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, the Russian State, St Petersburg, Jerusalem and Israel Symphony Orchestras, Rishon LeZion, the Tenerife and Lamoureux Orchestras, the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, the Belgian National Orchestra and the Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM. Yablonsky is an artistic director of the Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra, which performs repertoire from Vivaldi to

Mahler. Yablonsky has collaborated with artists including Montserrat Caballé, Olga Borodina, Leif Ove Andsnes, Yuri Bashmet, Boris Berezovsky, Roberto Alagna, Krzysztof Penderecki, Dmitrij Kitajenko and Vadim Repin. He has been very active in organising international music festivals and in 2009, together with pianist Farhad Badabeyli, organised a large-scale festival in Gabala, Azerbaijan, featuring many renowned orchestras and musicians. He has made more than 80 albums for Naxos, Chandos, Warner Classics and Erato Records.

Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* is the quintessential national virtuoso showpiece, but other Russian composers have contributed strongly to the genre of works for solo violin and orchestra. Tchaikovsky's student Taneyev, who rose to eminence in Moscow, wrote a memorable *Suite de Concert* that followed the model of the Baroque suite while infiltrating it with warm lyricism and brilliant variations. Earlier, Rimsky-Korsakov had written a *Fantasia on Two Russian Themes* that explored virtuoso potential in a concerto form that is both seductive and vibrant.

Russian Music for Solo Violin and Orchestra

Sergey Ivanovich TANEYEV (1856–1915)

Suite de Concert, Op. 28 (1909) 45:14

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| ❶ Prelude: Grave | 7:49 |
| ❷ Gavotte: Allegro moderato | 6:03 |
| ❸ Märchen ('Fairy Tale'):
Andantino | 8:34 |
| ❹ Theme and Variations | 15:30 |
| ❺ Tarantella: Presto | 7:18 |

Nikolay Andreyevich

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844–1908)

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| ❻ Fantasia on Two Russian
Themes, Op. 33 (1887) | 15:21 |
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Annelle K. Gregory, Violin
Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra
Dmitry Yablonsky

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