

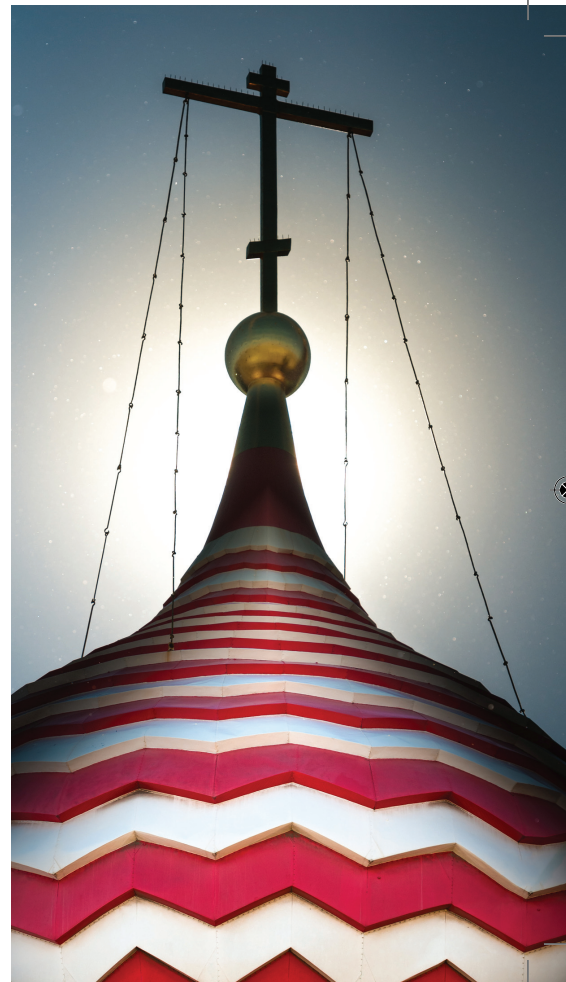
Carpe Diem String Quartet**Charles Wetherbee, Violin I • John Ewing, Violin II • Korine Fujiwara, Viola • Kristin Ostling, Cello**

The Carpe Diem String Quartet is a boundary-breaking ensemble that has earned widespread critical and audience acclaim for its innovative and electrifying performances. The quartet is dedicated to community engagement, and regularly performs programmes specifically designed to relate to audiences of all ages, even making use of video game songs and TV and movie theme music, such as *The Simpsons*. Through diverse musical partnerships with artists from many different genres, programming that reflects a passion for Gypsy, tango, folk, pop, rock, and jazz-inspired music alongside the traditional string quartet repertoire, Carpe Diem is committed to pushing the limits of the classical string quartet and revitalizing the chamber music experience. The Quartet champions the music of living composers, and has commissioned, premiered, and performed works from a stylistically diverse range of composers including Frank Bennett, Danny Elfman, Ken Fuchs, Korine Fujiwara, Osvaldo Golijov, André Hajdu, Donald Harris, Jennifer Higdon, Jonathan Leshnoff, Nicholas Maw, William Thomas McKinley, Clancy Newman, Carter Pann, Kevin Putts, Eric Sawyer, Gunther Schuller, Richard Smoot, Bradley Sowash, and Bruce Wolosoff, among others.


**Sergey Ivanovich
TANEYEV**
**Complete String
Quartets • 3**
**String Quartets
Nos. 5 and 7**
**Carpe Diem
String Quartet**

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Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev (1856-1915)

String Quartets Nos. 5 and 7

The youngest of three sons, Sergey Taneyev delighted his father Ivan Il'yich, an amateur violinist, pianist, and guitarist, with his precocious musical talent. While Ivan struggled to make his wife and two older sons enjoy the compulsory daily music-making sessions, Sergey was eager to play duets with his father. The only drawback was that his first piano teacher categorically forbade him even to listen to his father's playing, let alone play with him. She was afraid that Ivan Il'yich's haphazard and unmusical approach would have a detrimental effect on Sergey's musical education. Her decision proved to be right, and preserved Taneyev from developing a vehement hatred for music for the rest of his life – the fate that befell his older brother, Vladimir. What is more, Sergey Taneyev became a monumental figure in Russian music of the second half of the nineteenth century, whose significance as a performer, composer, theorist, and a pedagogue is only beginning to be discovered in the West. A pupil of Nikolay Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, and a teacher of Rachmaninov and Scriabin, Taneyev emerges as a link between these generations that is yet to be properly examined and evaluated.

Taneyev spent most of his creative life in Tchaikovsky's shadow, first as a pupil, and later as a colleague. Tchaikovsky's favourite student, Taneyev gradually became one of his most objective critics and closest friends, their friendship lasting until Tchaikovsky's death. Taneyev often commented on Tchaikovsky's music, and in many cases his opinion was more important to the older composer than that of any other musician. In turn, Taneyev was grateful for the criticism and advice from his senior colleague. Yet those who expected him to write in the same expansive way as his teacher were disappointed to find a different kind of expressive language, one characterized by noble gravitas and technical solidity.

In fact Taneyev seldom divulged his feelings to his friends and colleagues, and even his diaries are

circumspect and concise, but there are a few entries that speak volumes, where he exposes his thoughts for a fleeting moment, and where one can catch a glimpse of a person who was afraid of loneliness and who craved human contact, but who knew only too well that he was doomed to a life of solitude. He believed that his only option was to write more music, and write it in the best way he could. Even there, however, just as in the diaries, he kept his innermost emotions to himself. His music never aimed to impress, everything was written for a reason, and when in rare moments he was unable to contain his emotions, we hear the real Taneyev, a private man, but a profound one, with much to give and to share.

As a composer, Sergey Taneyev was an indisputable master of chamber music, contributing no fewer than eleven string quartets (two of which are incomplete), a piano quartet, four string trios, a piano trio, two string quintets, a piano quintet, and a sonata for violin and piano to the repertory. According to the Russian critic Asaf'yev, these works marked a clear break, in the field of Russian chamber music, from a phase characterised by decorative salon pieces, to a higher echelon of musical art. One of Taneyev's Soviet reviewers, E. Gunst, believed that 'It would be difficult, almost impossible, to find a composer of the post-classical period who has such a tremendous mastery of chamber ensemble style as Taneyev'. It is difficult to disagree with Gunst, because even Taneyev's earlier chamber works are well crafted and balanced compositions that point towards his mature style.

Taneyev's compositions for chamber ensembles were greatly welcomed by performers in search of new repertoire, such as the famous Czech Quartet, which tirelessly championed his works. Taneyev himself frequently joined the Czech Quartet in performing the piano part in his compositions for chamber ensemble with piano, in St Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, and Prague.

String Quartet No. 5 in A major, Op. 13 (1903) opens the central period of Taneyev's chamber music, in

which he produced works exclusively for stringed ensembles. This quartet (together with his *Third*) is written on a smaller scale than the rest of the works in this genre. Taneyev first mentions the work in his diary entry of 2nd February 1903. Known for composing slowly, Taneyev finished the *A major Quartet* within seven months, despite his busy teaching and social schedule. His diaries at the time mention frequent visits by Rachmaninov, who often came to play his new works for his former teacher, and Taneyev's visits to the Tolstoy family. He was also actively studying Wagner's music dramas and reading literature by and about Wagner. By October 1903 Taneyev sent the draft of the whole work to his publisher, and on 24th November 1903 a first rehearsal took place in St Petersburg. Although Taneyev was very unhappy with the rehearsal, the première on 26th November went well, and he celebrated it with his publisher Mitrofan Belyayev and colleague Rimsky-Korsakov.

Charming in its melodic simplicity and classical style, the *A major Quartet* is inspired by the quartets of Haydn and Beethoven. The first movement *Allegro con spirito* is built on syncopated rhythms, short expressive phrases, and alternating graceful dance-like and dramatic episodes. The action grinds to a halt, to be followed by a peaceful *Adagio espressivo* which, together with the *Allegro molto* movement, harks back to a Beethovenian style both in thematic invention and mood. Highly attractive melodically, the energetic and dramatic outer parts of the *Allegro molto* frame a bright trio section. The *Presto* finale continues with the upbeat and dramatic energy of the previous movement. It is a light, bustling movement, with short motivic phrases on the cello and viola interspersed by flowing lines in the violins. Playful in character, it is full of vigour and exuberance, providing a brilliant conclusion to this classically styled work.

Although numbered as No. 7, *String Quartet No. 7 in E flat major* (1880) is an early work, composed during his stay in Paris. While working on this quartet, Taneyev wrote to Tchaikovsky: 'In order to know something, whether it is harmony, counterpoint, or instrumentation, it is necessary to work hard first, and then create. I am attracted by the gracefulness and completeness of Mozart's musical form, and the freedom and purposefulness of Bach's voice leading, and I am trying to discover the secrets of their music...'. He added: '[In my E flat major quartet] there are Italian cadences and endings with archaic Mozartian trills.'

The formidable *Allegro* lasts almost thirteen minutes and shows Taneyev's predilection for counterpoint, which would develop in his later years to a degree of mastery unsurpassed by any other Russian composer. The first movement contains a four-voice canon, together with a number of contrapuntal devices such as thematic imitation and inversion, and canonic sequencing. The melodic and harmonic language of this movement is reminiscent of Beethoven, in particular his *Quartet Op. 127*, which is also written in the same key of E flat major. In a beautiful *Adagio cantabile* all instruments are given equally expressive melodic lines in order to create a delicate and highly emotive sound world. The *Andante* is the shortest movement, beginning with a sombre and slow introduction that quickly moves on to a rhythmical and passionate section. The rest of the movement is built on this alteration of rhythmically charged and peaceful episodes, finishing quietly and serenely. The lively *Allegro molto* finale is an excellent example of Taneyev's brilliant sense of form and his love of counterpoint — like the first movement, it features a canon. Its sparkling humour and vigour show a great promise that the 24-year-old composer fulfilled absolutely in his later chamber compositions.

Anastasia Belina-Johnson