
NAXOS
MYASKOVSKY
Symphonies Nos. 1 and 13
Ural Youth Symphony Orchestra
Alexander Rudin

Nikolay Myaskovsky (1881–1950)

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 13

Nikolay Yakovlevich Myaskovsky was born on 29 April 1881 at Novogeorgiyevsk (near Warsaw), the son of an engineer. He was educated at military schools at Nizhny Novgorod and St Petersburg, where he completed his studies in 1902. He pursued his musical interests throughout this time and took lessons from Glière before, in 1906, entering the St Petersburg Conservatory where his teachers included Liadov and Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1907 he resigned from the army, having completed his obligatory service, then in the following year wrote his *First Symphony*, which also won him the Glazunov scholarship. After graduation in 1911, he supported himself by teaching at music schools in St Petersburg and during the First World War served on the Austrian front. In 1917 he joined the Red Army and after demobilisation in 1921 joined the staff at the Moscow Conservatory, remaining a professor of composition there until his death and exercising an influence over a generation of composers, including Khachaturian and Kabalevsky. In character he was retiring and diffident, doubtless affected by shell shock suffered during the war, and latterly attempted to fulfil more overtly what he saw as the requirements of Soviet officialdom, abandoning the Association for Contemporary Music (of which he had been a founder member) and adopting a style more congenial to the establishment of the era. In 1948 his name was linked with those of Shostakovich, Prokofiev and several former pupils in Andrey Zhdanov's condemnation of 'formalistic distortions and anti-democratic tendencies'. Remaining unrepentant, he died in Moscow on 8 August 1950.

Myaskovsky is sometimes referred to as the 'father' of Soviet symphonism, though his earlier output is dominated by songs and piano music. This first of his 27 symphonies was written in 1908, when the composer was still studying at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, and while there is little overly academic about its content, the piece does convey the impression of a graduation exercise (in the same way as does Stravinsky's *Symphony in E flat*, written at much the same time). Sketched in February that year, all three movements had been drafted in piano score by July and the whole work completed at the beginning of September. Dedicated to the Russian composer and musicologist Ivan Kryzhanovsky, this received its premiere on 2 June 1914 in Pavlovsk, with Alexander Aslanov conducting the Court Orchestra. Myaskovsky remained dissatisfied, however, and he revised the piece in 1921; making cuts to the outer movements (particularly the finale) and generally overhauling the orchestration. Elements of Liadov and Scriabin are not hard to detect, but the overriding influence in terms of its formal procedures is Glazunov, whose *Eighth Symphony* [Naxos 8.553660] – often considered to be the epitome of the Russian symphony from that era – had appeared in 1905. Personal to Myaskosky is an underlying sombreness, even agitation of mood as was seldom absent from his earlier music.

The first movement begins with a slow introduction which emerges on lower woodwind and strings across the orchestra until a fervent climax is reached. This launches the main *Allegro* with an animated theme on lower strings, followed by one on woodwind of greater poise that has a distinctly Scriabin-like tinge to its harmonies. This unfolds at length prior to a gradual transition into the development, the earlier theme taking precedence in a strenuous process of motivic exchanges until a repeated-note idea on horns initiates the reprise. Both main themes are recalled, though here it is the latter theme such as comes to the fore on clarinet then upper strings. Despite the sense of relaxation this brings, underlying agitation has not been silenced and darker shades indicate the start of a coda which sees the music though to its fateful close.

The second movement opens with a wistful theme shared between woodwind and strings, the former delineating its melodic contours with an understated eloquence. At length the peaceful mood yields to an even more equable theme on upper woodwind, though now the harmonies range more freely and touch upon more ambivalent shades as the music builds methodically to a climax in which the main theme is restated in more opulent guise. From here it subsides gradually towards a brief recall of the secondary theme, before concluding in deepest repose.

The final movement commences with a purposeful theme that soon makes way for its songful successor and which, in turn, brings a full restatement of the exposition of what is a relatively straightforward sonata design. There follows a compact yet resourceful development of both themes, duly leading into a largely unaltered reprise that yet manages to maintain the ongoing momentum through to the coda. Here motivic elements from the first theme are subjected to intensive contrapuntal working, on the way to a decisive even if rather forbidding peroration.

The history of Myaskovsky's symphonies over the first decade of the Soviet Union was one of alternating works as suggested an outgoing and affirmative nature with those in which an introspective and fatalistic quality predominates. The latter approach became harder to justify once Stalin took control of the Soviet Union in 1928 and the tenets of Socialist Realism were gradually put into practice over the arts. Indeed, Myaskovsky composed no symphony during 1927–31 – after which, the *Eleventh* and *Twelfth* [Marco Polo 8.223302] each suggest rather different ways of coming to terms with the new orthodoxy. No such caution is evident in the *Thirteenth Symphony*, that continues on from several earlier works, notably the *Seventh* and *Tenth Symphonies*, [Marco Polo 8.223113] in pursuing a more personal and subjective path.

Composed over the greater part of 1933, the *Thirteenth* was duly premiered in Chicago on 15 November 1934 by the Chicago Symphony and Frederick Stock, the German-born conductor who had championed Myaskovsky assiduously (later commissioning his *Twenty First Symphony* for the orchestra's 50th anniversary). The Soviet premiere occurred on 26 December, Leo Ginsburg conducting the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra. The reception was at best equivocal and further performances were not to be forthcoming (its next known hearing was not until 1994, with a broadcast performance from Cardiff). Conceived as a continuous span, the work falls into three interrelated sections, though such a division does little to disrupt the prevailing mood which is inward-looking and pessimistic even by Myaskovsky's standards.

The piece starts with fragmentary woodwind gestures, soon joined by an equally uncertain response from strings. From here a searching discourse emerges whose intricate orchestral textures are interspersed with plangent instrumental lines. Tension gradually mounts as the music unfolds in expressive arcs that seem more foreboding at the entrance of lower brass and timpani. An increase in tempo towards the eight minute mark brings a flurry of activity between woodwind and strings, though even here the discourse feels intent on avoiding any definite goal. Towards the twelve minute mark it subsides, whereon solo brass then woodwind intone a solemn chant-like sequence linked thematically to the initial ideas while hardly less becalmed emotionally. The texture once more fragments as the music retreats into its earlier introspection – leaving solo woodwind, bassoon prominent among them, to initiate the main climax on strings and lower brass. As short-lived as it is enervated, this sinks back into the disconsolate mood, ending with the sparsest woodwind gestures over barely audible strings.

The *Thirteenth Symphony* has come to be regarded among Myaskovsky's most individual and characteristic statements, though its emotional trajectory was not one he could plausibly have followed up and the best of his subsequent symphonies were to find more accessible ways of reaching audiences (Soviet or Western) without sacrificing the need for personal expression.

Richard Whitehouse

Ural Youth Symphony Orchestra

The Ural Youth Symphony Orchestra was organised as a part of the Ural (Yekaterinburg) Philharmonic in 2007 and includes talented graduates of music schools from the Ural region. The orchestra gives about 50 concerts annually, presenting around 40 new programmes to the public. The orchestra is conducted by Vladimir Fedoseyev, Saulius Sondeckis, Dmitry Liss, Sergey Roldugin, Alexander Rudin, Sergey Krylov, Pavel Petrenko and many others, and regularly performs in Moscow and St Petersburg as well as abroad. For the few last years maestro Alexander Rudin is permanent guest conductor of this young orchestra.

Alexander Rudin

Alexander Rudin is a world-renowned cellist and conductor. A multifaceted musician, he collaborates both with symphonic and chamber orchestras, and is also a pianist, harpsichordist and professor at the Moscow Conservatory. Rudin also researches old scores, and is the author of orchestral editions of chamber works and unique thematic cycles. Rudin's vast repertoire covers symphonic works and works for the cello from four centuries, from the well known to pieces that have never been performed. Rudin has worked with outstanding artists such as Eliso Virsaladze, Nikolay Lugansky, Alexei Lubimov, Natalia Gutman, Roger Norrington, Mikhail Pletnev, Eri Klas and Saulius Sondeckis among many others. His discography is extensive and diverse, and his latest album of Baroque cello concertos, released by Chandos in 2016, was critically acclaimed.

With 27 symphonies to his name, Nikolay Myaskovsky is known as the 'father of the Soviet symphony', his legacy placing him in the same line as other great Russian symphonists such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Myaskovsky's richly Romantic *Symphony No. 1* won him the Glazunov scholarship, and as a graduation work reveals the influence of Tchaikovsky and Scriabin in its expressive, dramatic impact. The more experimental but also deeply inward-looking and disconsolate *Symphony No. 13* is regarded as one of Myaskovsky's most individual statements.

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	Symphony No. 1 (1908, rev. 1921)	**37:54**
1	**I. Lento, ma non troppo – Allegro**	**15:16**
2	**II. Larghetto (quasi andante)**	**12:12**
3	**III. Allegro assai e molto risoluto**	**10:23**
4	**Symphony No. 13** (1933)	**20:27**

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