

Friday, October 14, 2011, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Mariinsky Orchestra

Valery Gergiev, *Music Director & Conductor*

### PROGRAM A

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13,  
“Winter Dreams” (1866; rev. 1874)

Reveries of a Winter Journey: Allegro tranquillo  
Land of Desolation, Land of Mists:  
Adagio cantabile ma non tanto  
Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso  
Finale: Andante lugubre — Allegro maestoso

### INTERMISSION

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74,  
“Pathétique” (1893)

Adagio — Allegro non troppo  
Allegro con grazia  
Allegro molto vivace  
Finale: Adagio lamentoso

*Program subject to change.*

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Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)  
Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13,  
“Winter Dreams”

*Composed in 1866; revised in 1874. Premiere of complete Symphony on February 15, 1868, in Moscow, conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein; the second and third movements had been heard earlier.*

In 1859, Anton Rubinstein established the Russian Musical Society in St. Petersburg; a year later his brother Nikolai opened the Society's branch in Moscow, and classes were begun almost immediately in both cities. St. Petersburg was first to receive an imperial charter to open a conservatory and offer a formal curriculum of instruction, and Tchaikovsky, who had quit his job as a clerk in the Ministry of Justice to devote himself to music, was in the inaugural class of students when the school was officially opened in 1862. In January 1866, he completed his studies in theory and composition, and Anton recommended his promising student to his brother as a teacher for the classes in Moscow.

Tchaikovsky was greeted upon his arrival at the train station in Moscow like an old friend by Nikolai Rubinstein, who immediately took the young musician under his wing, lending him clothes (including a frock coat left behind by Wieniawski on a recent visit), introducing him to his wide circle of acquaintances, offering him a room in his home, and lavishing upon him every hospitality (including taking him along on his nightly pub-crawls, during which mentor and protégé impressed each other with their capacity for alcohol.) Nikolai encouraged Tchaikovsky to supplement his teaching duties by composing, and the first project he suggested was a revision for full orchestra of the *Overture in F major* for small ensemble he had written at the end of the preceding year and conducted on a student concert shortly before leaving St. Petersburg. The success of the revised version when Nikolai conducted it in Moscow on March 4th (the first public performance of one of Tchaikovsky's compositions) was such that the young composer was motivated to begin a symphony that same month. Almost as a

fatalistic mockery of the enthusiasm with which it was begun, this G minor Symphony was to cause Tchaikovsky more emotional turmoil and physical suffering than any other piece he ever wrote.

On April 5, 1866, only days after he had begun sketching the new work, Tchaikovsky discovered a harsh review in a St. Petersburg newspaper by César Cui of his graduation cantata, which he had audaciously based on the same *Ode to Joy* text by Schiller that Beethoven had set in his Ninth Symphony. “When I read this terrible judgment,” he later told his friend Alina Bryullova, “I hardly know what happened to me... I spent the entire day wandering aimlessly about the town repeating to myself, ‘I am sterile, I am a nonentity, nothing will ever come of me, I have no talent.’” In defiance of his tottering self-confidence, he pressed on doggedly with the new symphony. On April 25th he wrote to his brother Anatoli, “I have been sleeping very badly lately. My ‘apoplectic strokes’ have returned stronger than ever... My nerves are in an awful state because: 1) my symphony is not going well; 2) Rubinstein and [the composer's friend] Tarnovsky, who have noticed that I am easily frightened, try everything they can to scare me in all sorts of ways; 3) the ever-present thought that I am going to die soon and will not have time to finish my symphony.” His misery was relieved somewhat when he received news that Anton Rubinstein had conducted the recently revised *Overture in F major* in St. Petersburg on May 13th to considerable acclaim.

Tchaikovsky originally planned to spend the summer of 1866 with his family at Kamenka in Ukraine, but he instead chose to accept an invitation from the sisters Vera and Elizabeth Davidova and their mother to join them at Myatlev, not far from the famed Peterhof Palace near St. Petersburg, because, he explained, his straitened financial situation would not allow the longer trip and he was frightened by the reports that weather had made the road to Kamenka impassable. Actually, he may have been trying to rouse his passion for Vera in one of his first attempts to deny his homosexuality to himself and to the world. The visit seems to have started

out well at the end of May, when Tchaikovsky played piano duet versions of Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony and Schumann's orchestral works with Vera, took long, solitary walks, and made enough progress on the new symphony to report to his sister Alexandra that he had begun its orchestration on June 6th. But his mental state soon degraded to an alarming degree from the frustration with his new work, perhaps aggravated by his conflicting sexual feelings. In his biography of his brother, Modeste Tchaikovsky recalled that Peter's troubles were "most probably due to the fact that he wrote this symphony not only during the day but also at night. He referred in his letters to 'throbbings in the head' and insomnia as a result of working at night. Despite his application and enthusiasm, the work progressed slowly, and the further he got with the symphony, the more his nerves became affected. His sleep was ruined by the unaccustomed labor, and sleepless nights paralyzed his energy and ability to compose. At the end of July, all this came to a head in fits brought on by terrible nervous disorders such as he never again experienced in his life. The doctor who was called in to treat him found that 'he was on the verge of madness' and, during the first few days, considered his case almost hopeless. The chief and worst symptoms of this illness were hallucinations, a terrifying sense of dread, and a feeling of complete numbness in his extremities." Rest was prescribed, and Tchaikovsky temporarily gave up work on the new score. He never composed at night again.

Tchaikovsky was well enough to return to Moscow in August, but he decided to detour through St. Petersburg to show the unfinished manuscript of the symphony to his composition teachers, Anton Rubinstein and Nikolai Zarembo, in hopes of having it performed during the coming season of the Russian Musical Society. Both criticized the score, however, and demanded that it be thoroughly revised before he brought it to them again. Tchaikovsky arrived in Moscow in time for the official opening of the Conservatory in September, but before he could return to the symphony he had to write an *Overture on Danish Themes* for the

festivities surrounding the upcoming marriage of the Tsarevich to his Scandinavian bride. The G minor Symphony was finally finished in late November 1866. Despite incorporating the changes ordered by his St. Petersburg teachers, they accepted only the second and third movements for performance. The movements were applauded when Nikolai Rubinstein conducted them on February 11, 1867, though the *Scherzo* had been less successful when it had been given a trial at a concert in Moscow on December 10th. Tchaikovsky continued to revise the work, which was finally performed in its complete form by Nikolai in Moscow on February 15, 1868 "with great success," reported the composer to his brother Anatoli. More changes were made to the score after its premiere, especially in tightening the structure of the first movement, before it was published early in 1875 by Jurgenson. This is the form in which the Symphony is known today.

Tchaikovsky had a lifelong affection for this Symphony that was the product of such travail. He wrote to a friend on October 17, 1883, "Despite its glaring deficiencies I have a soft spot for it, for it is a sin of my sweet youth." And a month later, to Mme. von Meck: "I don't know if you are acquainted with this work of mine. Although it is immature in many respects it is essentially better and richer in content than many other more mature works." About the titles he appended to the Symphony he left no such thoughts. The entire work was inscribed "Winter Dreams." The first two movements were called "Reveries of a Winter Journey" and "Land of Desolation, Land of Mists"; the closing movements are without subtitles. There is no specific program apparent in the music, and Tchaikovsky may have intended that this Symphony simply be his contribution to the many depictions of the Russian winters that have always been popular subjects in the country's literature and art.

The first movement opens as the flute and bassoon present the doleful main theme above the murmurings of the violins; a complementary melody, more lyrical in phrasing and brighter in mood, is introduced by the clarinet. The development section combines motivic elaboration

of the earlier themes with boisterous, newly invented figuration. The recapitulation returns the materials of the beginning before ending with a hushed recall of the opening measures. A chorale-like passage for strings opens and closes the second movement. Within this frame are set two folkish melodies: the first, a plaintive tune intoned by the oboe, hints at the *Volga Boatmen*; the other is a more flowing strain given by flutes and violas. The nimble *Scherzo*, indebted to Mendelssohn for its effervescent writing, is based on a movement from Tchaikovsky's Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor of 1865; the lovely central trio is the first of Tchaikovsky's great waltzes for orchestra. The finale, a gloriously noisy display of orchestral color and rhythmic energy, begins with a slow introduction ("lugubrious," notes the score) during which the violins present the Russian folk song *The Gardens Bloomed*. A vivacious main theme in fast tempo is presented by the full orchestra before the folk song returns to serve as the second theme. Twice the tempo is increased in the closing pages to close the Symphony amid brilliant whirling vitality and bursting high spirits.

### Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, "Pathétique"

*Composed in 1893. Premiered on October 28, 1893, in St. Petersburg, conducted by the composer.*

Tchaikovsky died in 1893, at the age of only 53. His death was long attributed to the accidental drinking of a glass of unboiled water during a cholera outbreak, but that theory has been questioned in recent years with the alternate explanation that he was forced to take his own life because of a homosexual liaison with the underage son of a noble family. Though the manner of Tchaikovsky's death is incidental to the place of his Sixth Symphony in music history, the fact of it is not.

Tchaikovsky conducted his B minor Symphony for the first time only a week before his death. It was given a cool reception by

musicians and public, and his frustration was multiplied when discussion of the work was avoided by the guests at a dinner party following the concert. Three days later, however, his mood seemed brighter and he told a friend that he was not yet ready to be snatched off by death, "that snubbed-nose horror. I feel that I shall live a long time." He was wrong. The evidence of the manner of his death is not conclusive, but what is certain is the overwhelming grief and sense of loss felt by music lovers in Russia and abroad as the news of his passing spread. Memorial concerts were planned. One of the first was in St. Petersburg on November 18th, only twelve days after he died. Eduard Napravnik conducted the Sixth Symphony on that occasion, and it was a resounding success. The "Pathétique" was wafted by the winds of sorrow across the musical world, and became—and remains—one of the most popular symphonies ever written, the quintessential expression of tragedy in music.

In examining the Sixth Symphony, whether as performer or listener, care must be taken not to allow pathos to descend into bathos. It is virtually certain that Tchaikovsky was not anticipating his own death in this work. For most of 1893, his health and spirits were good, he was enjoying an international success unprecedented for a Russian composer, and work on the new Symphony was going well. He wrote to his nephew Vladimir Davidov in February that he was composing "with such ardor that in less than four days I have completed the first movement, while the remainder is clearly outlined in my head." Tchaikovsky was pleased with the finished work. "I give you my word of honor that never in my life have I been so contented, so proud, so happy, in the knowledge that I have written a good piece," he told his publisher, Jurgenson, as soon as he had finished the score in August. The somber message of the music was, therefore, seems not to have been a reflection of the moods and events of Tchaikovsky's last months.

The music of the "Pathétique" is a distillation of the strong residual strain of melancholy in Tchaikovsky's personality rather than a mirror of his daily feelings and thoughts. Though he

admitted there was a program for the Symphony, he refused to reveal it. “Let him guess it who can,” he told Vladimir Davidov. A cryptic note discovered years later among his sketches suggests that the first movement was “all impulsive passion; the second, love; the third, disappointments; the fourth, death—the result of collapse.” It is not clear, however, whether this précis applied to the finished version of the work, or was merely a preliminary, perhaps never even realized, plan. That Tchaikovsky at one point considered the title “Tragic” for the score gives sufficient indication of its prevailing emotional content.

The title “Pathétique” was suggested to Tchaikovsky by his elder brother, Modeste. In his biography of Peter, Modeste recalled that they were sitting around a tea table one evening after the premiere, and the composer was unable to settle on an appropriate designation for the work before sending it to the publisher. The sobriquet “Pathétique” popped into Modeste’s mind, and Tchaikovsky pounced on it immediately: “Splendid, Modi, bravo. ‘Pathétique’ it shall be.” This title has always been applied to the Symphony, though the original Russian word carries a meaning closer to “passionate” or “emotional” than to the English “pathetic.”

The Symphony opens with a slow introduction dominated by the sepulchral intonation of the bassoon, whose melody, in a faster tempo, becomes the impetuous first theme of the exposition. Additional instruments are drawn into the symphonic argument until the brasses arrive to crown the movement’s first climax. The tension subsides into silence before the yearning second theme appears, “like a recollection of happiness in time of pain,” according to American musicologist Edward Downes. The tempestuous development section, intricate, brilliant and the most masterful thematic manipulation in Tchaikovsky’s output, is launched by a mighty blast from the full orchestra. The recapitulation is more condensed, vibrantly scored and intense in emotion than the exposition. The major tonality achieved with the second theme is maintained until the hymnal end of the movement.



Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

*Illustration by Tom Bachtell*

Tchaikovsky referred to the second movement as a scherzo, though its 5/4 meter gives it more the feeling of a waltz with a limp. This music’s rhythmic novelty must have been remarkable in 1893, and the distinguished Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick even suggested that it should be changed to 6/8 to avoid annoyance to performers and listeners. Charles O’Connell, however, saw the irregular meter as essential to the movement’s effect, “as if its gaiety were constantly under constraint; directed, not by careless joy, but by a determination to be joyful.”

The third movement is a boisterous march whose brilliant surface may conceal a deeper meaning. Tchaikovsky’s biographer John Warrack wrote, “On the face of it, this is a sprightly march; yet it is barren, constructed out of bleak intervals, and for all the merriness of its manner, essentially empty, with a coldness at its heart.”

The tragedy of the finale is apparent immediately at the outset in its somber contrast to the whirling explosion of sound that ends the third movement. A profound emptiness pervades

the finale, which maintains its slow tempo and mood of despair throughout. Banished completely are the joy and affirmation of the traditional symphonic finale, here replaced by a new emotional and structural concept that opened important expressive possibilities for 20th-century composers. Olin Downes dubbed this movement “a dirge,” and, just as there is no certainty about what happens to the soul when the funeral procession ends, so Tchaikovsky here leaves the question of existence forever hanging, unanswered, embodied in the mysterious, dying close of the Symphony.

Wrote former Boston Symphony Orchestra program annotator Philip Hale, “The somber eloquence of the ‘Pathétique,’ its pages of recollected joy fled forever, its wild gaiety quenched by the thought of the inevitable end, its mighty lamentations—these are overwhelming and shake the soul.”

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Saturday, October 15, 2011, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Mariinsky Orchestra

Valery Gergiev, *Music Director & Conductor*

### PROGRAM B

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Op. 17, “Little Russian” (1872–1873)

Andante sostenuto — Allegro vivo  
Andantino marziale quasi moderato  
Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace  
Finale: Moderato assai — Allegro vivo

### INTERMISSION

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 (1888)

Andante — Allegro con anima  
Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza  
Allegro moderato  
Finale: Andante maestoso — Allegro vivace

*Program subject to change.*

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Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)  
Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Op. 17,  
“Little Russian”

*Composed in 1872–1873; revised in 1879–1880.  
Premiered on February 7, 1873, in Moscow, con-  
ducted by Nicholas Rubinstein.*

Looking back through the mists of well over a century to the last decades of Imperial Russia, it might at first seem that an unwavering unanimity joined together the music from Glinka through Borodin, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky to Scriabin and Rachmaninoff. Upon closer examination of the lives and philosophies of these men, however, bitter enmities are revealed. The group of musical nationalists known in the West as “The Five”—Cui, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov—were all amateur musicians determined to establish a distinctly Russian school of composition based on native folk and church music, history and lore. In this, they followed the lead of Mikhail Glinka, revered as the father of Russian concert music. They belligerently defended their untutored status on the basis that their lack of formal training freed them from German musical hegemony and allowed them to penetrate more directly into the heart of the Russian ethos. They looked upon the Russian graduates of the leading conservatories almost as traitors to the nationalistic cause they espoused, and Tchaikovsky was among their most favored targets. For his part, the well-trained Tchaikovsky could hardly help but look down on the rough-hewn music of The Five. He once castigated Mussorgsky's work in a letter to his brother Modeste as “the lowest, commonest parody of music; it may go to the devil for all I care.”

Still, there was inevitably frequent contact between these two factions, and eventually a *laissez-faire* understanding was achieved. Rimsky decided to forsake the ranks of the uneducated, and he taught himself the techniques of music well enough to eventually become Russia's most respected pedagogue, numbering Stravinsky and Respighi among his students. Tchaikovsky,

though critical of their lack of professionalism, always respected the raw talent of the little group of nationalists, and he even agreed with their ideal of fostering a distinctly Russian music. Like them, he felt drawn to the native traditions of his homeland, and once wrote to his benefactress, Mme. von Meck, “As regards the Russian element in general in my music (i.e., the instances of melody and harmony originating in folksong), I grew up in the backwoods, saturating myself from earliest childhood with the inexplicable beauty of the characteristic traits of Russian folksong.” Unlike The Five, however, who felt that a free fantasia form could best express their ideas, Tchaikovsky believed that the Russian influence should be channeled into traditional, Classical forms. It is therefore not hard to understand why Tchaikovsky was the first Russian composer widely appreciated in the Western world, whose tastes had so long been dominated by German music.

Despite their underlying differences, there were at least two significant instances in Tchaikovsky's early life when he was musically drawn to The Five. One was when Balakirev suggested the topic and even the structure for his 1869 tone poem, *Romeo and Juliet*. Another was in this Second Symphony. After an exhausting year of teaching, composing and writing music criticism in Moscow, Tchaikovsky visited his beloved sister, Alexandra, in Kamenka, Ukraine, in June 1872. He was refreshed during the summer months not only by the time spent with his family, but also by the chance to return to the country and its people. Among the things that he enjoyed most was hearing the peasants sing, and it may have been that rustic music which inspired the Second Symphony, just as it did many of the works of The Five. It was Tchaikovsky's use in this Symphony of three folk tunes that he may have heard in Kamenka that caused the work to be nicknamed “Little Russian” by the critic Nicholas Kashkin in 1896. The diminutive referred not to any characteristic of the work but rather to the Ukrainian region from which Tchaikovsky borrowed his themes, known in Tsarist days as “Little Russia.”

After beginning the Symphony in Kamenka, Tchaikovsky continued work on it in Ussowo and Moscow, completing much of the orchestration by November. In January he journeyed to St. Petersburg for a meeting with the management of the Imperial Opera about tentative plans to produce his opera *The Oprichnik*, and took along the manuscript for his new Symphony, the finale of which he played for Rimsky-Korsakov and his family. “The whole company nearly tore me to pieces in rapture,” he reported, “and Mme. Korsakov, with tears in her eyes, asked if she might arrange it for piano duet.” A similar success greeted the work at its premiere, and it was immediately scheduled for another performance, at which the composer was called to the stage after every movement and, at the close of the concert, presented with a silver goblet and laurel wreath. Despite the acclaim achieved by this Symphony, however, Tchaikovsky eschewed membership in The Five, and he soon returned to the traditional, Germanic symphonic forms in which he cast the masterpieces of his later years.

Tchaikovsky worked so furiously on this Symphony during the autumn of 1872 that he apologized in a letter of November 14th to his brother Modeste for not writing more regularly. About the new composition he added, “It seems to me to be my best work, at least as regards correctness of form.” By 1879, however, he had decided that the Symphony was flawed, and he undertook its extensive revision, completely rewriting the opening movement, radically revising the Scherzo, and making a large cut in the finale. It is the revised version that is usually performed today. The first movement is prefaced by a slow introduction based on a variant of the traditional Russian song *Down by Mother Volga*. The plaintive theme is first intoned by the solo horn before it is given a lengthy consideration by the rest of the orchestra. The movement’s sonata form begins with a quickening of the tempo and the presentation of the main theme, a vigorous, stormy strain with a grand, balletic sweep. The secondary theme is presented almost immediately. Introduced by the clarinet, its lyricism, gentleness and yearning make a strong contrast with the preceding theme. In the energetic

development section these two melodies are intertwined with the folk tune from the introduction, a structural device Tchaikovsky had first employed in *Romeo and Juliet* to join the introduction more closely with the rest of the work. A massive climax ends the development and leads into the recapitulation of the stormy main theme and the yearning complementary melody, this latter here sung by the oboe. The closing pages bring the movement around full circle, with a quiet reminder of *Down by Mother Volga* from horn and bassoon.

The second movement was taken whole from *Undine*, Tchaikovsky’s unsuccessful opera of 1869. Having failed to secure its performance, the composer destroyed the score of the work except for this excerpt and a few other fragments. In the opera, this music was used as a wedding march, though one considerably more subdued in character than the similar pieces by Mendelssohn and Wagner, and in the Symphony it takes the place of the slow movement. The center of this three-part movement (A–B–A) is a treatment of *Spin, My Spinner*—one of the *Fifty Russian Folksongs* that Tchaikovsky arranged for publication in 1868–1869—begun by the clarinet accompanied by icy, octave figurations in the flutes. The third movement is a quicksilver Scherzo, much indebted to the music of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov, whose central trio shifts rhythmic gears into a jaunty duple meter.

“Magnificent” was the rare complimentary word the finale brought from César Cui, the least-known member of The Five and one of Tchaikovsky’s bitterest musical enemies. The movement, a dazzling display of orchestral color and rhythmic exuberance, is a set of variations on the Ukrainian tune *The Crane*. A slow introduction for full orchestra presents the basic shape of the melody before the variations are begun by the strings. The tiny tune is presented over and over, each time appearing in a different orchestral vestment so that the variations are based as much on changing tone color as on melodic manipulation. (Tchaikovsky admitted deriving this technique from Glinka’s influential orchestral miniature *Kamarinskaya*, which he called “the acorn from which the oak of Russian

music grew.”) As a foil to the movement’s propulsive rhythmic energy, Tchaikovsky added a lyrical melody, first heard in the violins and then repeated by the flutes. Joyous festivity, however, is at the heart of this music, and it is not kept long at bay by tender sentiment. The finale gathers momentum as it goes, becoming a swirling, fiery Cossack dance driven by one of the most athletic displays of rhythmic electricity to be found in Tchaikovsky’s (or anyone else’s) music.

### Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

*Composed in 1888. Premiered on November 17, 1888, in St. Petersburg, conducted by the composer.*

Tchaikovsky was never able to maintain his self-confidence for long, and his opinion of a new work frequently fluctuated between the extremes of satisfaction and denigration. The unjustly neglected *Manfred Symphony* of 1885, for example, left his pen as “the best I have ever written,” but the work failed to make a good impression at its premiere, and Tchaikovsky’s estimation of it tumbled. The lack of success of *Manfred* was particularly painful because he had not produced a major orchestral work since the Violin Concerto of 1878, and the score’s failure left him with the gnawing worry that he might be “written out.” The three years after *Manfred* were devoid of creative work.

It was not until May 1888 that Tchaikovsky again took up the challenge of the blank page. On May 27th he wrote to his brother Modeste, “To speak frankly, I feel as yet no impulse for creative work. What does this mean? Have I written myself out? No ideas, no inclination! Still, I am hoping to collect, little by little, material for a symphony.” Though he was unusually secretive about the progress of this new piece, he must have begun it as soon as this letter was written, since the sketch of the complete score was finished just six weeks later. “I am exceedingly anxious to prove to myself, as to others,” he wrote to his benefactress, Nazedha von Meck, “that I am not played out as a composer.” He

worked doggedly on the symphony, ignoring illness, the premature encroachment of old age (he was only 48, but suffered from continual exhaustion and loss of vision), and his troubling self-doubts, and when it was completed, by the end of August, he allowed, “I have not blundered; it has turned out well.”

Tchaikovsky’s satisfaction was soon mitigated, however, by the work’s premiere in St. Petersburg on November 17, 1888. Though the Fifth Symphony was applauded by the public, he felt that it was a failure, that the ovation was for his earlier pieces rather than for this new one, and that the whole affair was cause for “a deep dissatisfaction with myself.” Modeste was convinced that any negative reaction to the Fifth Symphony—and the critics had some—could be traced to an inadequate performance, but Tchaikovsky could not be persuaded of the work’s value until a performance in Hamburg early in 1889, when musicians, critics and audience alike received it enthusiastically. Even the venerable Johannes Brahms, who was not strongly drawn to the music of his Russian colleague, made a special effort to attend the performance on a visit to his hometown. Tchaikovsky was buoyed by his reception in Hamburg, and his estimation of the Fifth Symphony (and of himself) shot up once again. The work has remained among the staples of the concert repertory.

Tchaikovsky never gave any indication that the Symphony No. 5, unlike the Fourth Symphony, had a program, though he may well have had one in mind. Years after its composition, some rough sketches that apparently refer to the Symphony No. 5 were discovered in his notebooks: “Introduction. Complete resignation before Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Allegro (1) Murmurs, doubts, complaints against XXX. (2) Shall I throw myself into the embrace of faith???” The “XXX” probably referred to Tchaikovsky’s homosexuality, the only matter he concealed behind secret signs in his notes and diary. If that is so, the Fifth Symphony represents Tchaikovsky’s resignation to his fate in the way he could best command—music. The workings of fate were an obsessive theme with him, and the program

of the earlier Fourth Symphony portrays man's happiness crushed by that intractable power at every turn. In their biography of the composer, Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson reckoned Tchaikovsky's view of fate as the motivating force in the Symphony No. 5, though they distinguished its interpretation from that in the Fourth Symphony. "In the Fourth Symphony," the Hansons wrote, "the Fate theme is earthy and militant, as if the composer visualizes the implacable enemy in the form, say, of a Greek god. In the Fifth, the majestic Fate theme has been elevated far above earth, and man is seen, not as fighting a force that thinks on its own terms, of revenge, hate or spite, but as a wholly spiritual power which subjects him to checks and agonies for the betterment of his soul."

The structure of the Fifth Symphony reflects this process of "betterment." It progresses from minor to major, from darkness to light, from melancholy to joy—or at least to acceptance and stoic resignation. It is the same path Beethoven blazed in his Fifth Symphony, and the power of such a musico-philosophical construction was not lost on Tchaikovsky, or on any other 19th-century musician. The sense of a perilous obstacle surmounted through struggle energizes both works, and is the substance of any "message" that Tchaikovsky may have embedded in this Symphony.

The Symphony's four movements are linked together through the use of a recurring "Fate" motto theme, given immediately at the beginning by unison clarinets as the brooding introduction to the first movement. The sonata form proper starts with a melancholy melody intoned by bassoon and clarinet over a stark string accompaniment. The woodwinds enter with wave-form scale patterns followed by a stentorian passage for the brass that leads to a climax. Several themes are presented to round out the exposition: a romantic tune, filled with emotional swells, for the strings; an aggressive strain given as a dialogue between winds and strings; and a languorous, sighing string melody. Again, the brasses are brought forth to climax this section. All of the themes are treated in the development section. The solo bassoon ushers

in the recapitulation, and the themes from the exposition are heard again, though with changes of key and instrumentation. After a final climax in the coda, the movement fades, softer and slower, and sinks, finally, into the lowest reaches of the orchestra.

At the head of the manuscript of the second movement Tchaikovsky is said to have written, "Oh, how I love...if you love me..." a sentiment that calls to mind an operatic love scene. (Tchaikovsky, it should be remembered, was a master of the musical stage who composed more operas than he did symphonies.) The expressiveness of the opening theme, hauntingly played by the solo horn, is heightened as the movement proceeds through enriched contrapuntal lines and instrumental sonorities. Twice, the imperious Fate motto intrudes upon the starlit mood of this *romanza*.

If the second movement derives from opera, the third grows from ballet. A flowing waltz melody (inspired by a street song Tchaikovsky had heard in Italy a decade earlier) dominates much of the movement. The central trio section exhibits a scurrying figure in the strings which shows the influence of Léo Delibes, the French master of ballet music whom Tchaikovsky deeply admired. Quietly and briefly, the Fate motto returns in the movement's closing pages.

The finale begins with a long introduction based on the Fate theme cast in a heroic rather than a sinister or melancholy mood. A vigorous exposition, a concentrated development and an intense recapitulation follow. The long coda uses the motto theme in a major-key, victory-won setting. This stirring work ends with a final statement from the trumpets and horns, and closing chords from the full orchestra.

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Sunday, October 16, 2011, 3pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Mariinsky Orchestra

Valery Gergiev, *Music Director & Conductor*

### PROGRAM C

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) Symphony No. 3 in D major, Op. 29, "Polish" (1875)

Introduzione e Allegro: Moderato assai (Tempo marcia funebre) — Allegro brillante  
Alla Tedesca: Allegro moderato e semplice  
Andante elegiaco  
Scherzo: Allegro vivo  
Finale: Allegro con fuoco (Tempo di polacca)

### INTERMISSION

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 (1877–1878)

Andante sostenuto — Moderato con anima  
Andantino in modo di canzona  
Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato (Allegro)  
Finale: Allegro con fuoco

*Program subject to change.*

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Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)  
Symphony No. 3 in D major, Op. 29, “Polish”

*Composed in 1875. Premiered on November 19, 1875, in Moscow, conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein.*

Tchaikovsky composed his Third Symphony in the astonishingly short period of only eight weeks during the summer of 1875—astonishing not just because of the speed with which such a large work was written, but also because it was composed immediately after one of the worst episodes of depression and self-deprecation that he ever experienced. On the preceding Christmas Eve, he had taken his new B-flat minor Piano Concerto to Nikolai Rubinstein, director of the Moscow Conservatory and his boss, for his evaluation. Rubinstein vilified it. Tchaikovsky was both enraged and wounded. His always-delicate nerves gave way, and his doctors advised him to travel abroad, forbidding him to compose or touch a piano, which counsel he ignored to stay in winter-bound Moscow to continue his teaching duties at the Conservatory.

On January 21, 1875, Tchaikovsky wrote to his brother Anatoli of the underlying cause of his malaise: “I am very, very lonely here, and if it weren’t for my constant work, I should simply succumb to my melancholia. It’s a fact that XXX [his symbol in his correspondence and diaries for his homosexuality] constitutes an unbridgeable chasm between me and the majority of people. It imparts to my character an aloofness, a fear of people, a timidity, an excessive shyness, a distrustfulness—in a word, a thousand traits which are making me more and more unsociable.” He admitted to Modeste, Anatoli’s twin, that he was so disgusted with his life that he often considered suicide. He could rouse little enthusiasm for creative work during those months, composing only the bittersweet *Sérénade Mélancolique* for Violin and Orchestra (Op. 26) for Leopold Auer and a handful of songs. These latter works, as with most of the songs that he wrote, were a musical marking-time, written when he could not bring himself to undertake larger projects. The only solution to his problem, he believed,

was to marry, as a sign to himself and to the world that he was capable of living a conventional life. “From this day on I will seriously consider entering into matrimony with any woman,” he wrote to Modeste on September 22, 1876. “I am convinced that my *inclinations* are the greatest and insuperable barrier to my well-being, and I must by all means struggle against my nature.” He finally did marry, in 1877—to one of his students—and it was a disaster. His marital catastrophe did serve, however, to exorcise at least some of his personal devils, and he became more contented with himself thereafter.

Tchaikovsky’s gloom of the winter of 1875 lifted when the weather improved. He reported to Anatoli on March 21st, “Now, with the approach of spring, these attacks of melancholia have completely stopped, but,” he added pessimistically, “I *know* that each year—or rather, each winter—they will return more strongly.” His mood was further improved in May, when he received the commission for *Swan Lake* from the Imperial Directorate of the Moscow Theaters, a project he longed to undertake since conceiving a passion for the ballet music of Delibes during a trip to France. As soon as classes at the Conservatory finished in June, he accepted an invitation to visit the country estate of his friend Vladimir Shilovsky at Ussovo, where he began the Third Symphony. The sketches were completed by the end of the month, when he moved to the estate of Nikolai Kondratiev, a classmate at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, at Nizi; he orchestrated the fourth and fifth movements in just five days after his arrival there on July 10th. His final stop of the summer was at his sister Alexandra’s home in Verbovka, where the three remaining movements were orchestrated in about a week. Tchaikovsky was refreshed at Verbovka not just by completing the Symphony and having begun *Swan Lake*, but also by the loving attention of his sister, her children and his father, so that he was able to return to Moscow in the fall stronger both physically and mentally.

For the fee of 300 rubles, the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society and its director, Nikolai Rubinstein, were given the rights to the

premiere of the Third Symphony. Rehearsals began early in November, and the piece was first performed on the 19th of the month to a warm response. Tchaikovsky assessed the event and the music in a letter to Rimsky-Korsakov: “It seems to me the work does not contain any very happy ideas, but, as regards form, it is a step forward. I am best pleased with the first movement, and also with the two scherzos, the second of which is very difficult, consequently not nearly so well played as it might have been if we could have had more rehearsals.... On the whole, however, I was satisfied with the performance.” When the work was played in St. Petersburg early in 1876, Tchaikovsky reported to Modeste, “My Symphony went well and had considerable success. They called out and applauded me in a very friendly way.” The critic Hermann Laroche was unstinting in his praise. “The importance and power of the music,” he wrote, “the beauty and variety of forms, the nobility of style, the original and rare perfection of technique, all contribute to make this Symphony one of the most remarkable works produced during the last ten years. Were it to be played in any musical center in Germany, it would raise the name of the Russian musician to a level with those of the most famous symphonic composers of the day.” Not all agreed with Laroche, however, and the composer was soon worried because “the press... has been rather cold toward my Symphony. They are all agreed that it contains nothing new and that I am beginning to repeat myself. Is this really so?” he asked Modeste. His fears were allayed the following summer when he attended the first Bayreuth Festival as a press correspondent, but was received as a distinguished visitor whose presence incited “one long confusion of hospitality,” he marveled. “It appears that I am not so unknown in Western Europe as I thought.”

The sobriquet “Polish” attached to the D major Symphony (the only one of Tchaikovsky’s six symphonies in a major key) did not originate with the composer, but seems to have first been appended by Sir August Friedrich Manns when he conducted the work at a London Crystal Palace concert in 1899. Manns’s inspiration

was the stylized polonaise used as the finale, though there is no question that the Symphony is thoroughly Russian in spirit and thoroughly Tchaikovskian in manner. The model for this five-movement work may well have been Schumann’s “Rhenish” Symphony, which Tchaikovsky held in high esteem. Instead of adding a slow movement to the traditional four-movement structure, as Schumann had done to depict a grand ceremony in the Cologne Cathedral, however, Tchaikovsky inserted a waltz before the slow movement.

The Symphony opens with a doleful introduction based on a fragmented idea passed between the strings and the horns. The sonata form proper begins with the change to a brighter key and the presentation of the sweeping main theme; the subsidiary theme is a sad, little melody intoned by the solo oboe. A buoyant tune initiated by the clarinets closes the exposition. All three themes are elaborated in the development section. The recapitulation recalls the melodies in their original forms before one of Tchaikovsky’s most exciting codas ends the movement. The second movement, *Alla Tedesca* (“In the German Manner”), traces its waltz heritage to Glinka’s *Valse-Fantasia*, Weber’s *Invitation to the Dance* and, ultimately, the Austrian peasant dance, the *Ländler*. The movement’s central trio is built on quick, chattering woodwind figures, which continue as accompaniment when the waltz theme returns. The elegiac *Andante* takes as its principal subject a plangent melody intoned by the woodwinds; a passionate strain for full orchestra provides formal and expressive balance. The *Scherzo* is indebted to Mendelssohn for its mercurial grace and to Tchaikovsky’s own 1872 cantata celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Peter the Great for the theme of its trio. The finale (*Tempo di Polacca*) is a majestic polonaise that encompasses episodes based on a broad complementary theme and an imposing amount of fugal development.

**Tchaikovsky**  
**Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36**

*Composed 1877–1878. Premiered on February 22, 1878, in Moscow, conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein.*

The Fourth Symphony was a product of the most crucial and turbulent time of Tchaikovsky's life—1877, when he met two women who forced him to evaluate himself as he never had before. The first was the sensitive, music-loving widow of a wealthy Russian railroad baron, Nadezhda von Meck. Mme. von Meck had been enthralled by Tchaikovsky's music, and she first contacted him at the end of 1876 to commission a work. She paid him extravagantly, and soon an almost constant stream of notes and letters passed between them: hers contained money and effusive praise; his, thanks and an increasingly greater revelation of his thoughts and feelings. She became not only the financial backer who allowed him to quit his irksome teaching job at the Moscow Conservatory to devote himself to composition, but also the sympathetic sounding-board for reports on the whole range of his activities—emotional, musical, personal. Though they never met, her place in Tchaikovsky's life was enormous and beneficial.

The second woman to enter Tchaikovsky's life in 1877 was Antonina Miliukov, an unnoticed student in one of his large lecture classes at the Conservatory who had worked herself into a passion over her young professor. Tchaikovsky paid her no special attention, and he had quite forgotten her when he received an ardent love letter professing her flaming and unquenchable desire to meet him. Tchaikovsky (age 37), who should have burned the thing, answered the letter of the 28-year-old Antonina in a polite, cool fashion, but did not include an outright rejection of her advances. He had been considering marriage for almost a year in the hope that it would give him both the stable home life that he had not enjoyed in the 20 years since his mother died, as well as to help dispel the all-too-true rumors of his homosexuality. He believed he might achieve both these goals with Antonina.

He could not see the situation clearly enough to realize that what he hoped for was impossible—a pure, platonic marriage without its physical and emotional realities. Further letters from Antonina implored Tchaikovsky to meet her, and threatened suicide out of desperation if he refused. What a welter of emotions must have gripped his heart when, just a few weeks later, he proposed marriage to her! Inevitably, the marriage crumbled within days of the wedding amid Tchaikovsky's searing self-deprecation.

It was during May and June that Tchaikovsky sketched the Fourth Symphony, finishing the first three movements before Antonina began her siege. The finale was completed by the time he proposed. Because of this chronology, the program of the Symphony was not a direct result of his marital disaster. All that—the July wedding, the mere eighteen days of bitter conjugal farce, the two separations—postdated the actual composition of the Symphony by a few months, though the orchestration took place during the painful time from September to January when the composer was seeking respite in a half dozen European cities from St. Petersburg to San Remo. What Tchaikovsky found in his relationship with this woman (who by 1877 already showed signs of approaching the door of the mental ward in which, still legally married to him, she died in 1917) was a confirmation of his belief in the inexorable workings of Fate in human destiny. He later wrote to Mme. von Meck, "We cannot escape our Fate, and there was something fatalistic about my meeting with this girl." The relationships with the two women of 1877, Mme. von Meck and Antonina, occupy important places in the composition of this Symphony: one made it possible, the other made it inevitable, but the vision and its fulfillment were Tchaikovsky's alone.

After the premiere, Tchaikovsky wrote to Mme. von Meck, with great trepidation, explaining the emotional content of the Fourth Symphony:

The introduction [blaring brasses heard immediately in a motto theme that recurs several times throughout

the Symphony] is the kernel, the chief thought of the whole Symphony. This is Fate, the fatal power that hinders one in the pursuit of happiness from gaining the goal, which jealously provides that peace and comfort do not prevail, that the sky is not free from clouds—a might that swings, like the sword of Damocles, constantly over the head, that poisons continuously the soul. This might is overpowering and invincible. There is nothing to do but to submit and vainly complain [the melancholy, syncopated shadow-waltz of the main theme, heard in the strings]. The feeling of desperation and loneliness grows stronger and stronger. Would it not be better to turn away from reality and lull one's self in dreams? [The second theme is begun by the clarinet, with trailing sighs from the rest of the woodwinds.] Deeper and deeper the soul is sunk in dreams. All that was dark and joyless is forgotten....

No—these are but dreams: roughly we are awakened by Fate. [The blaring brass fanfare over a wave of timpani begins the development section.] Thus we see that life is only an everlasting alternation of somber reality and fugitive dreams of happiness. Something like this is the program of the first movement.

The second movement shows another phase of sadness. How sad it is that so much has already *been* and *gone*! And yet it is a pleasure to think of the early years. One mourns the past and has neither the courage nor the will to begin a new life. One is rather tired of life. One would fain rest awhile, recalling happy hours when young blood pulsed warm through our veins and life brought satisfaction. We remember irreparable loss. But these things are far away. It is sad, yet sweet, to lose one's self in the past.

There is no determined feeling, no exact expression in the third movement. Here are capricious arabesques, vague

figures which slip into the imagination when one has taken wine and is slightly intoxicated. Suddenly there rushes into the imagination the picture of a drunken peasant and a gutter song. Military music is heard passing in the distance. There are disconnected pictures which come and go in the brain of the sleeper. They have nothing to do with reality; they are unintelligible, bizarre.

As to the finale, if you find no pleasure in yourself, look about you. Go to the people. See how they can enjoy life and give themselves up entirely to festivity. The picture of a folk holiday. [The finale employs the folk song *A Birch Stood in the Meadow*, presented simply by the woodwinds after the noisy flourish of the opening.] Hardly have we had time to forget ourselves in the happiness of others when indefatigable Fate reminds us once more of its presence. The other children of men are not concerned with us. How merry and glad they all are. All their feelings are so inconsequential, so simple. And do you still say that all the world is immersed in sorrow? There still *is* happiness, simple, naive happiness. Rejoice in the happiness of others—and you can still live.

There is not a single line in this Symphony that I have not felt in my whole being and that has not been a true echo of the soul.

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## MARIINSKY ORCHESTRA

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 Ekaterina Rostovskaya  
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**OBOE**

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 Pavel Kundyanok  
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 Rodion Tolmachev  
 Yury Radzevich

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 Igor Prokofiev  
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 Yury Akimkin  
 Petr Rodin  
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The Mariinsky Orchestra enjoys a long and distinguished history as one of the oldest musical institutions in Russia. Founded in the 18th century during the reign of Peter the Great and housed in St. Petersburg's famed Mariinsky Theatre since 1860, the Orchestra entered its "golden age" in the second half of the 19th century under the musical direction of Eduard Napravnik, whose leadership for more than a half century (1863–1916) secured its reputation as one of the finest in Europe.

Numerous internationally famed musicians have conducted the Orchestra, among them Hans von Bülow, Felix Mottl, Felix Weingartner, Alexander von Zemlinsky, Otto Nikisch, Willem Mengelberg, Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Erich Kleiber, Hector Berlioz, Richard Wagner, Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg.

Renamed the "Kirov" during the Soviet era, the Orchestra continued to maintain its high artistic standards under the leadership of Yevgeny Mravinsky and Yuri Temirkanov. The leadership of Valery Gergiev has enabled the Theatre to forge important relationships for the Mariinsky Ballet and Opera to appear in the world's greatest opera houses and theaters, among them the Metropolitan Opera, the Kennedy Center, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, San Francisco Opera, the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, the Salzburg Festival, and La Scala in Milan.

The success of the Orchestra's frequent tours has created the reputation of what one journalist referred to as "the world's first global orchestra." Since its U.S. debut in 1992, the orchestra has made 15 tours of North America, including a 2006 celebration of the complete Shostakovich symphonies, a cycle of stage works of Prokofiev in 2008, major works of Hector Berlioz in February–March 2010, and a centennial Mahler cycle in Carnegie Hall in October 2010. In October 2011, the Mariinsky Orchestra opens Carnegie Hall's 120th season and presents a cycle of Tchaikovsky symphonies on both the East and West Coasts and in Canada.

The 2009 and 2010 releases of the new Mariinsky Label were Shostakovich's *The Nose*,

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 15, Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3 and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Tchaikovsky's *The Year 1812*, Shchedrin's *The Enchanted Wanderer* and Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and *Oedipus Rex*.

Recordings released in 2011 have included Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos. 2 and 11, Wagner *Parsifal*, Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos. 3 and 10, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and the fall 2011 releases include DVD/Blu-ray of Tchaikovsky Symphonies Nos. 4, 5, 6 and Balanchine's ballet *Jewels*.

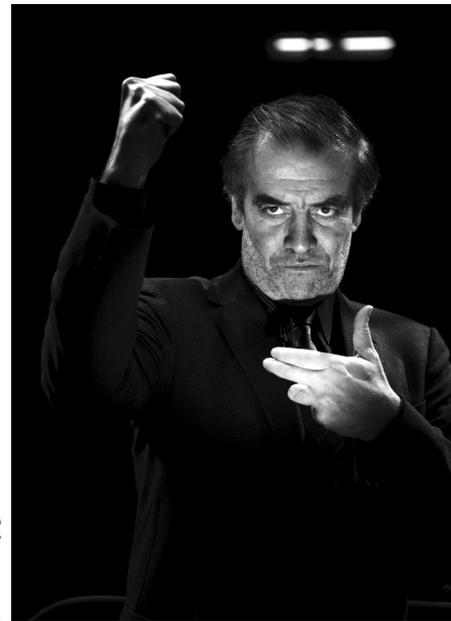
November 2006 marked the grand opening of the Orchestra's Mariinsky Theatre Concert Hall and late 2012 will mark the opening of Mariinsky III, a new theater placed alongside the historic and fabled Mariinsky Theatre.

Valery Gergiev's inspired leadership as Artistic and General Director of the Mariinsky Theatre since 1988 has taken Mariinsky ensembles to 45 countries and has brought universal acclaim to this legendary institution, now in its 229th season.

At home in St. Petersburg, his leadership has resulted in the new and superb Mariinsky Concert Hall, which opened in November 2006, and the Mariinsky Label, which was launched in 2009. The new Mariinsky Theatre is scheduled to open in 2012 and immediately after the original and classic Mariinsky Theatre (currently celebrating its 150th anniversary) will be renovated to bring its staging facilities to 21st-century standards.

Presently Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra and the World Orchestra for Peace, Valery Gergiev is also founder and Artistic Director of the Stars of the White Nights Festival and New Horizons Festival in St. Petersburg, the Moscow Easter Festival, the Gergiev Rotterdam Festival, the Mikkeli International Festival and the Red Sea Festival in Eilat, Israel.

Mariinsky Label releases in its first year included Shostakovich's *The Nose* and Symphonies Nos. 1 and 15, a Tchaikovsky disc of short pieces, Rodion Shchedrin's *The Enchanted Wanderer*, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto



Joachim Ludzke/VIII

No. 3 and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* and Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and *Oedipus Rex*. The label's first two recordings received five Grammy Award nominations. In fall 2010, the Mariinsky Label released Wagner's *Parsifal* and DVDs of Tchaikovsky's Symphonies Nos. 4, 5 and 6.

Maestro Gergiev is the recipient of a Grammy Award, the Dmitri Shostakovich Award, the Golden Mask Award, People's Artist of Russia Award, the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award, Sweden's Polar Music Prize, Netherlands's Knight of the Order of the Dutch Lion, Japan's Order of the Rising Sun, Valencia's Silver Medal, the Herbert von Karajan Prize and the French Order of the Legion of Honor.

Although now recording for the Mariinsky and LSO Live Labels, he has recorded extensively for Decca (Universal Classics), and appears on the Philips and Deutsche Grammophon labels.