

Bolshoy in 1970, Rozhdestvensky became Principal Conductor of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and in 1982 he founded the USSR Ministry of Culture Orchestra. He subsequently returned to the Bolshoy, although his relationship with the company came to an abrupt end in 2001 when he resigned following a critical mauling of a new production of Prokofiev's *The Gambler*. His appearances outside Russia have become more frequent with many noteworthy opera productions and concert engagements. In amongst all this activity, Rozhdestvensky has somehow found the time to make over 500 recordings and to teach conducting in Moscow. He is married to the pianist Victoria Postnikova with whom he often performs.

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**Piotr Tchaikovsky (1840-93)**

**Symphony 2 in C minor, Op.17**

**Symphony 3 in D major, Op.29**

*Large Symphony Orchestra of the Ministry of Culture,*

*Russian Federation / Gennadi Rozhdestvensky*

**Symphony 2 in C minor, Op.17 "Little Russian" (1880) [33:12]**

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|--|-------|
| [1] I. <i>Andante sostenuto - Allegro vivo</i>       | 11:25 |
| [2] II. <i>Andantino marziale, quasi moderato</i>    | 6:06  |
| [3] III. Scherzo: <i>Allegro molto vivace</i>        | 5:05  |
| [4] IV. Finale: <i>Moderato assai - Allegro vivo</i> | 10:35 |

**Symphony No. 3 in D major, Op. 29, "Polish" (1875) [44:40]**

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|--|-------|
| [5] I. <i>Moderato assai - Allegro brillante</i> | 13:39 |
| [6] II. <i>Allegro moderato e semplice</i>       | 6:28  |
| [7] III. <i>Andante elegiaco</i>                 | 9:24  |
| [8] IV. Scherzo: <i>Allegro vivo</i>             | 6:16  |
| [9] V. <i>Allegro con fuoco</i>                  | 8:52  |

**TOTAL TIME 78:03**

Recorded in the Large Studio, Moscow Radio, 1988/9,

Re-mastered for **alto** by Paul Arden-Taylor ([www.dinmore-records.co.uk](http://www.dinmore-records.co.uk))

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At the time of its composition in the summer of 1872 Tchaikovsky (1840-93) held his *Symphony No 2 in C minor* in high regard: ‘my best work’ he told his brother Modest, and this high opinion was undoubtedly reinforced on 7 January 1873 when he played its finale at the piano to a group of colleagues at the house of Rimsky-Korsakov. They were equally enthusiastic and Rimsky-Korsakov’s wife tearfully entreated him to arrange it for piano duet. Nikolay Rubinstein (1835–81) successfully presented the symphony’s premiere in Moscow exactly one month later at a Russian Musical Society concert, repeating the work on 8 April. At the second hearing Tchaikovsky was summoned to the stage after each movement and presented with a laurel wreath and a goblet.

Tchaikovsky however frequently became less enamoured of his compositions as time went on, and some years later (1879-80) he revised the symphony, making the most extensive alterations to the opening movement. Not everyone was convinced that the changes were for the better: fellow composer Sergey Taneyev (1856–1915) wrote in 1898 to the composer’s brother Modest: ‘God, what a difference! How good the original *Allegro* is, despite a few imperfections – rambling modulations which can be easily changed, a lovely first theme, a graceful second theme. Next to this the new *Allegro* is really weak....When I next see you I shall play you both and I am certain that you will agree that the first version is the best’. Opinion remains divided although musicologists have tended to disagree with Taneyev.

For the second movement Tchaikovsky recycled a wedding march he had previously composed for his opera *Undine* in 1869, a work rejected for production by the management in St Petersburg. This instantly memorable tune was criticised by César Cui (1835–1918) as being ‘rough and commonplace’. Cui was a member of *Moguchaya kuchka* or The Mighty Handful, a group of nationalist composers consisting of Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Borodin and Cui himself, who rarely praised new compositions by those outside the group. The central section of this movement owes its source to a Russian folk tune *Spin, oh my spinner*, part of a collection familiar to Tchaikovsky.

The lively scherzo movement, particularly the rustic middle section, again gives the impression of being based on Russian folk tunes. The final movement, a truly virtuosic set of variations on the well-known Ukrainian song *The Crane*, led to the *Symphony No. 2* being given the nicknames ‘Little Russian’ and ‘Ukrainian’.

Tchaikovsky began composing *Symphony No 3 in D Major* at Usovo (Tambov province), the estate of his wealthy pupil Vladimir Shilovsky (1852-93) during the summer of 1875. Shilovsky, never in good health, had frequently pestered Tchaikovsky to accompany him to various European spa resorts which he did in 1868, 1870 and 1873. As well as giving the composer some financial security, Shilovsky allowed Tchaikovsky to make the estate his own for five consecutive summers. Tchaikovsky worked better when alone, and by 1875 had begun to tire of Shilovsky’s company; yet he had the grace to demonstrate his gratitude to his wealthy friend by dedicating the new symphony to him. Tchaikovsky much admired Schumann’s *Rhenish Symphony* and he similarly set his *Third Symphony* in five movements, two lighter movements flanking the central *Andante elegiaco*.

Despite a letter in which Tchaikovsky states that he was ‘taking (the composition of the new symphony) steadily, not spending all (his) time at it, and taking long walks’ (letter to Alexei and Mikhail Sofronov, 19 June 1875), he had finished sketching the symphony on 20 June, just 15 days after beginning the work. He then left Usovo and, as a guest of Nikolai Kondratiev, began scoring the piece in Nizy. Having orchestrated the fourth and fifth movements inside a week he then moved to Verbovka, his sister’s home. Despite the potentially distracting presence there of his sister’s young children, Tchaikovsky always found it restful: he had not only completed the scoring of the entire symphony by the beginning of August but had also commenced work on *Swan Lake*, commissioned earlier that year.

The *Third Symphony* was given its first performance in Moscow under the baton of Nikolay Rubinstein on 7 November 1875. The Russian Musical Society and Rubinstein had bought the rights to perform the premiere but Tchaikovsky must have been nervous about Rubinstein’s participation: the preceding December he had shown the esteemed conductor the score of his *First Piano Concerto* and Rubinstein had been scathing in his critique. The response to the *Third Symphony* at its premiere was, on the whole, promising although Tchaikovsky showed some dissatisfaction over the performance itself, feeling that the orchestra should have played better given the rehearsal time. He was critical of the lack of musical ideas (a view since shared by many others) but he also considered the piece - in particular the first three movements - a step forward from his previous symphonies.

The symphony was repeated in January of the following year in St Petersburg under Eduard

Nápravník. On this occasion Tchaikovsky was far more satisfied and wrote to his brother Modest that the symphony ‘fared very well...I was called for and roundly applauded’. Hermann Laroche, a critic present at the St Petersburg performance wrote positively about the new symphony: ‘The importance and power of the music, 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 10 years. Were it to be played in any musical centre in Germany, it would raise the name of this Russian musician to a level with the most famous symphonic composers of the day.’ The first performance outside Russian borders took place in New York in February 1879 although it was not heard in London during the composer’s lifetime. It was first performed there in 1899 under Sir August Manns at the Crystal Palace when it was apparently given its nickname *Polish*, after the *Tempo di polacca* finale. It is generally considered that this nickname is rather misleading, since, apart from a nod towards the Weber of *Invitation to the Dance* in its *Alla Tedesca* movement, the symphony as a whole is typically Russian in character. Tchaikovsky borrowed from an earlier work *Cantata for the Opening of the Polytechnic Exhibition* (1872) for his scherzo movement. Some years later he recycled part of the second movement for use in his incidental music to *Hamlet*.

**Gennadi Rozhdestvensky** was born in Moscow in 1931. His father was the famous conductor Nikolai Anosov (1900 – 1962) and his mother, from whom he took his professional name, was the soprano Natalya Rozhdestvenskaya. He entered the Moscow Conservatory in 1941 to study conducting with his father and piano with Lev Oborin. Between 1951-61 Rozhdestvensky was a staff conductor at the Bolshoy, conducting their ballet company on his first tour to England in 1956. Appointed artistic director of the USSR Radio and TV orchestra in 1961, three years later he became the youngest ever principal conductor of the Bolshoy remaining there until 1970.

As an important Russian musical figure, Rozhdestvensky was frequently allowed to conduct outside the USSR. He made his Covent Garden debut in 1970 and conducted the Leningrad Philharmonic at the Proms (1971) following this with a USA tour in 1973. During that decade he took up important posts with the Stockholm Philharmonic, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. In the USSR he promoted somewhat daringly several twentieth century works by Hindemith, Poulenc, Orff and Britten, programming them alongside contemporary Soviet and Eastern-bloc compositions. Having concluded his first period at the