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BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

Taneyev

Chamber Music with Piano

Piano Quartet Op.20

Piano Trio Op.22

Violin Sonata

Piano Quintet Op.30

Daniela Cammarano violin

Alessandro Deljavan piano

Paolo Castellitto viola

Andrea Agostinelli cello

Daniele Orlando violin



Sergei Ivanovich Taneyev 1856-1915
Chamber Music with Piano

CD1	65'08
Violin Sonata in A minor (1911)	
1. I. Allegro	6'49
2. II. Adagio cantabile	6'51
3. III. Minuetto. Allegretto	7'31
4. IV. Allegro ma non troppo	4'33

Daniela Cammarano *violin*
 Alessandro Deljavan *piano*

Piano Trio in D for violin, cello and piano Op.22	
5. I. Allegro	10'27
6. II. Allegro molto	11'10
7. III. Andante espressivo	7'25
8. IV. Finale. Allegro con brio	11'00

Alessandro Deljavan *piano*
 Daniela Cammarano *violin*
 Paolo Castellitto *viola*
 Andrea Agostinelli *cello*

CD2	45'27
Piano Quartet in E Op.20 (1902-06)	
1. I. Allegro brillante	15'43
2. II. Adagio più tosto largo	11'33
3. III. Finale. Allegro molto	18'08

Alessandro Deljavan *piano*
 Daniela Cammarano *violin*
 Andrea Agostinelli *cello*

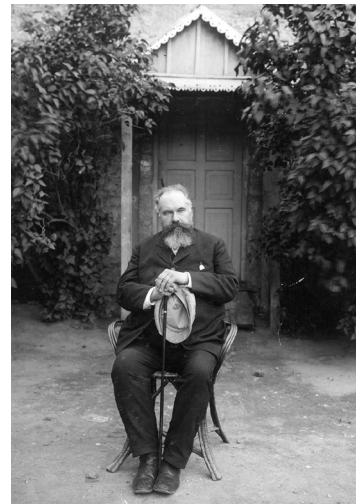
CD3	47'04
Piano Quintet in G minor Op.30 (1910-11)	
1. I. Introduzione. Adagio mesto	20'29
2. II. Scherzo. Presto	6'33
3. III. Largo	9'14
4. IV. Finale. Allegro vivace	10'44

Alessandro Deljavan *piano*
 Daniele Orlando *violin I*
 Daniela Cammarano *violin II*
 Paolo Castellitto *viola*
 Andrea Agostinelli *cello*

The musical output of the Russian composer **Sergei Ivanovich Taneyev (1856 -1915)** has been suspiciously absent from the mainstream of public performance.

Perhaps this can be attributed to a number of reasons, but it should certainly be held that it is not because of the music itself. As a master of intellect and balance, his compositions share with Brahms' a sturdy structural outline combined with a romantic heat which emanates from every phrase and gesture. The confidence of his craft along with a frank and sometimes brutal honesty was to put him at odds with many of his contemporaries, not the least of which were the group of nationalist composers known as The Mighty Handful. But it would be his close friendship with Tchaikovsky that would bring him to the forefront of the debate between the practitioners of nationalistic style and those of the European. At the heart of his composition, however, was his particular skill and affinity for counterpoint. As a student of the polyphony from its earliest incarnation in the late medieval period to the high baroque, Taneyev's works are rich in the colours and harmonies produced by a strict adherence to traditional and scientific principles of counterpoint practice. This is certainly an attribute he would instil in his own students which included Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Medtner and Glière.

As a precocious talent, Taneyev entered the newly formed Moscow Conservatory at the age of 10 where he quickly captured the favour of the conservatory's founder,



Nikolai Rubinstein. Taneyev would learn from Rubinstein a great love of chamber music performance as a pianist. But it was through his composition teacher and close friend Tchaikovsky that the musical tastes of western Europe would enter his artistic vocabulary. In 1875, at the age of 18, he made his solo debut performing the Brahms D minor Concerto and soon after played the first performance in Moscow of Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto. When Tchaikovsky had resigned from the conservatory in 1878, Taneyev was persuaded to take over harmony and orchestration classes that his former teacher had vacated. Further concerts as a pianist and a modest number of compositions had solidified his reputation both in Russia and the rest of Europe.

In 1881 with the death of Rubinstein, his teaching responsibilities expanded to include the same piano class from which he had graduated. From the years of 1885 to 1889 even the duties of conservatory director became his own. Because he felt that the significant work associated with this directorship kept him from his creative pursuits as a composer, he resigned the position in order to increase his compositional output.

The year of 1889 marked a new artistic spirit in Taneyev as he began to indulge his passion for counterpoint. Through the extensive study of the Franco-Flemish school of Renaissance polyphony, his aesthetical philosophy reached new heights. Although this sparked a new series of compositions, it was not until 1905 that he began a prolific period of writing. Resigning altogether from the Moscow Conservatory because of a dissatisfaction with the new leadership that came with the tumultuous and uncertain political and social upheaval of the time in Russia, Taneyev began in earnest to apply his talents entirely to performing and composition while continuing to teach only privately. This is the period in which we see the creation of a number of chamber works for piano and strings.

Although each work bears the fingerprints of a man obsessed with structural and harmonic detail, it is remarkable to observe vast differences between each of these. That over the course of a few years such a variety of communicative intention could

be produced by one person is the sign of a prodigious intellect.

The *Violin Sonata in A minor* of 1911 might have been a bit difficult to understand, considering the musical happenings at the time in Russia as well as the rest of the world. While its overall form is one of looking back to the early 19th century and even into the 18th century, it is a well-crafted work that makes a statement not by being revolutionarily different but by using forms, harmonies, and methods often neglected by most composers at the turn of the 20th century in the name of modernity.

After a resolute introduction of chords to establish tonality in A minor, a stirring and restless first theme begins. While not immediately imposing on the listener, it is put into a more specific emotional context by the contrasting nature of the second theme. The pure simplicity of this new material is playful yet mindful of the extreme that it represents. The melodic contour and harmonic accompaniment could have been taken directly from Beethoven. Here he is not the fierce, late romantic, Russian composer but full of the charm and grace of early 19th century Vienna. At the end of the exposition, no mistake could be made as to where the border with the development exists.

Again in the fashion of Beethoven, the development begins by obsessing on the dotted rhythms of the transitional material from between the exposition's two themes to bring the listener far away from the orderly world of the initial section. Through a series of harmonic twists and sequences, we are brought back to the first theme. For the remainder of the movement, a formal, almost academic layout of the classical sonata-allegro form is played out. It is by this point already apparent that an individual mind is at work rather one satisfied with following contemporary trends.

The second movement begins with a beautiful chorale played by the piano. Its power is in the simplicity of phrasing which allows the entire movement to be built upon it in a series of variations. The elegant musical arch that is constructed is reminiscent of many of the slow movements of Schubert. By contrast the minuet

which follows in an austere baroque style. Here is where we can begin to realize the tremendous influence of 18th century contrapuntal style. Particularly in the secondary section material, the delicately jarring harmonic sensibilities of Scarlatti are on display. This is certainly baroque music, but it is filtered through the mind of a composer whose familiarity with the inner workings of harmony and counterpoint was masterful.

The finale begins were the minuet leaves off. The rhythmic vitality and the terraced dynamics make the listener think that Taneyev has dedicated the movement to J.S. Bach. But just when the ear has become accustomed to the sound, the style is completely destroyed by a stroke of genius humour; a dramatic median shift from A minor to F major along with contiguously interlocking sixths and fifths in the late romantic style catapults the music forward an hundred and fifty years. Making reference to each of the other movements, the work is concluded with no less sophistication. Understanding that the piece as a whole is a statement of logic and a demonstration of Taneyev's command over his craft places the work among the first in the 20th century to use the past to communicate with the future.

The first declaration made by the piano in the **Piano Trio in D Op.22** of 1908 leaves no ambiguity as to its place in time. An unambiguous similarity to the opening measures of Tchaikovsky's second piano concerto gives the movement a certain magisterial quality; impetuous at the same time that it is regal. This is maintained throughout the movement only relenting in its intent at a few choice structural points. An expanded sonata-allegro form complete with a repeated exposition is again evidence to Taneyev's fascination with the traditional structures. As a means of creating a fluid texture, the piano and strings maintain polyphonic separation from each other. This device has the added benefit of strengthening the important harmonic shifts of the movement when the three do work homophonically.

The second movement persists with same motive that started the first movement. However, we now hear it in the cello as part of a new melody. The music is now

more brooding and disturbed, and it works its way up to a fever pitch before completely breaking for a light Tchaikovskyan theme and variations. It is here that he demonstrates an amazing conservation of material as the variations, some no longer than a page in the score, present numerous interpretational difficulties. A huge variety of emotive colours are displayed with all the markings of consummate technician. The final variation is a return to the material which began the movement but is now wise to the experience of the variations and even perhaps a bit more tragic in feeling as a result.

In the *Andante espressivo* movement, an interweaving melody is shared in turn by each of the instruments. While beautiful in sound and texture, the interruptions of the piano part with heavenly arpeggios in a reflective manner give the movement its light. As quickly as it goes by, one beings to realize that it is simply an introduction to the finale. Unusual for a piano trio, the penultimate and final movements are tied together by a cadenza for the violin. The sporadic and spritely material that welcomes the listener is at once a fresh, new light on the same impetuosity that began the piece. Before the final rush for the end of the work, another cadenza, this time for the piano, is presented. Strategically, this gear shifting makes the listener ready. The balance of the structure bears this well, bring the work to a satisfying close.

Although first published in 1907, the **Piano Quartet in E Op.20** was started when before Taneyev's departure from the Moscow Conservatory. Understandably, the work is in some ways the most Romantic of all his chamber works including the piano. Although the melodic contour is less defined, there is still a structural steadfastness that holds the work together. In the first movement, the clearly defined motives he uses to build the first and second themes contrast greatly. The first is dark and dense in texture, but the second is light and clear. The exposition is, as is Taneyev's habit, clearly separated from the development with a substantial break in the sound. In the development, the complexity of the various independent lines becomes a bit difficult to follow. However, the harmony is anchored by the piano which serves as the compass for the work. There is a certain lightness to sections of the development. Episodes of

textural variation ensure that the shades of light emanating from the piece are directed and specifically aimed toward an emotional goal.

The middle movement of the work is an Adagio which, like in the Violin Sonata, is suggestive of the early 19th century sense of pacing and evocation. Slowly, the movement unwinds held together by a constant harmonic support in the quarter note chords of the piano part. Again, the strings do not make an attempt to make a unified, homogenous sound but in swirling polyphony make a statement of a relaxed, inward pathos. Continuing the pattern of great extremes, the second section is suddenly urgent and agitated, more in line with the first movement. The two diametrically opposed sections meet reconciliation in a lengthy transition back to Adagio through reversing the roles of the instruments; the piano continues in its agitated state while the strings hold the harmony together until the storm subsides. But a less stable piano accompaniment is present perhaps representing the temporary calm. A less tragic mood now takes over. Each instrument is now sharing in the harmonic support as well as in the forward motion in a unified, grand gesture that completes the movement. The finale makes use of a small amount of musical material cascaded throughout the ensemble. Through rapid repetition of the motives, Taneyev creates the illusion of dramatic action. Swift and intense, the first section reaches a high point of focused energy before giving way to a lyrical respite first pronounced by the solo piano. As the other instruments join the texture, the listener can delight in another impressive feat of contrapuntal writing. Although there is much ink on the page, the lines of polyphony are clearly defined. The remainder of the piece is worked out through a logical structure. While it could be perceived as more an intellectual exercise than a work of unbridled passion, it is this structure that keeps the music fresh to the ear. And this is something we can readily rely on Taneyev to supply without exhaustion. Whether in producing a fugue section or a moment of halting suspense, the precise measurements of a craftsman are at work here.

The sizable sonic forces at work in the **Piano Quintet in G minor Op.30** require

a modified strategy when compared to the other chamber works. The string quartet is here is often working as a cohesive unit against the piano. This sectioning off of various forces is something seen in many of both the chamber and orchestral works of Taneyev's contemporaries. However, the constructive outline along with a fairly economical use of materials make the piece distinctively his own in its overall effect. From the very beginning of the introductory movement, the piano is acting alone. After the presentation of the initial material, the quartet reacts together. Soon thereafter, the piano makes the same statement a half step lower in pitch with an equal reaction by the strings. The tension increases as a conflict seems to simmer between the piano and the strings. But the heat boils into an Allegro patetico that is ripe with an almost sinister dread and longing. In the second theme, the piano is given another attractive melody to which each of the strings can make an alliance. Aside from the texture and the treatment of melodic material, there is a noticeable tilt in the direction of 20th century harmonic thinking. More than simply chromatic in their relation to one another, the harmonies express a colour we might associate with Scriabin. In fact, some measures could be easily mistaken for Taneyev's student in their distinct flavour. For the movement's enormous development, it might be easier to compare to a symphonic structure than to chamber music. No fewer varieties in the presentation of the main themes than in a symphony make this movement more complex than any other in the chamber music of Taneyev. However, he manages to keep the listener interested through a thoughtful balance of heavier and lighter harmonic and textural forces.

The second movement, a scherzo, is again a nod to large-scale symphonic form. The humour in this music is sophisticated and refined. Through a brilliant display of virtuosic writing, fun is poked at the rhythmic motive of the scherzo in Beethoven's fifth symphony. The trio which follows is almost disingenuous. It is beautiful on the surface, but it is hard to take at face value when framed by cheek as it is. The brevity of this movement comes at a shock when compared to the first.

The Largo is alone an argument for the constructive genius of this composer. It begins with all instruments in unison or at the octave playing what will become a sort of ostinato on which a series of variations is built. The staggering wealth of colour and expressive force created by this process

can leave the listener overwhelmed. So carefully is the progress plotted that one can easily forget the important thematic ties to preceding movements; its beauty is enough to stand on its own.

The final movement takes the listener back into the dramatic world of the first. Immediately, the piano is again isolated from the strings. The tension starts at a heightened level and only occasionally beaks. A rhythmic vitality permeates the string texture with occasional interjections and interruptions in turn. Eventually, the strings and the piano join forces to build a fiery heat that leads to a grand Moderato maestoso. The unrestrained passion of this passage can be seen as the focal point of the entire work. The remainder of the piece looks back to that moment until a hyper-romantic lunge for the end consumes all attentions in all the fervour of a summation of experience. This quintet is unquestionably a masterwork among many of the neglected works of Sergei Taneyev.

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