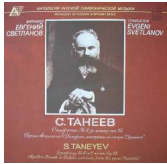


## Sergei Taneyev - Symphony No.4 In C Minor (1988)

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## Sergei Taneyev - Symphony No.4 In C Minor (1988)



1. *Allegro molto* 2. *Adagio* 3. *Scherzo. Vivace* 4. *Finale. Allegro energico - Molto maestoso* 5. *The temple of Apollo at Delphi from Oresteia* The USSR Symphony Orchestra Evgeni Svetlanov - conductor

The Op. 12 designation would normally indicate an early work, but this symphony came 25 years after the composer's first. Ironically, Taneyev originally designated this as his Symphony No. 1, having suppressed his first three efforts. Taneyev understood the complexities of composition as well as any Russian contemporary -- especially its contrapuntal aspects -- but his own vast knowledge and skills, combined with his lifelong self-critical nature, only served to make him more scrupulous in evaluating the worth of his own music.

The four-movement Fourth Symphony is generally regarded as the composer's greatest orchestral work. It opens with an *Allegro molto*, whose seriousness of mood recalls the darker music of Tchaikovsky and the Franck D minor Symphony. Yet, there is little that is derivative here and much that is imaginative and masterful, especially in the development of the thematic material. There is a dire relentlessness about the muscular, dark main theme, not unlike that in the first movement of the Brahms First. The lovely alternate material provides excellent contrast, but is ultimately helpless to stave off the insistent angst of the main theme.

The second movement, *Adagio*, actually sounds startlingly close to Mahler in some of its instrumentation, but it is doubtful Taneyev could have been familiar with that emerging giant's works at the time. Spiritually, the music is anything but Mahleresque, but neither is it Russian. (Taneyev remained a confirmed Europeanist in an increasingly nationalistic compositional environment.) The main theme is beautiful, and the orchestral writing throughout is imaginative and subtle, divulging Taneyev's considerable expressive depth. The ensuing *Scherzo* is light and cheerful, skillfully crafted and full of energy and playfulness. The finale is colorful and

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celebratory, featuring the composer's usual brilliant orchestration. Even here, though, the celebration has a quasi-seriousness and intensity about it. If the last two movements seem slightly lightweight compared with the first and second, they are nevertheless brilliant creations. Overall, this is one of the most underrated masterpieces from the late nineteenth century.  
---Robert Cummings, allmusic.com

'The Temple of Apollo at Delphi' is the best-known excerpt from Taneyev's only opera, Oresteia, the mammoth overture to which has all the force of a Romantic symphonic poem.

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