

Vasily Kalinnikov - Symphonies Nos. 1 & 2 (1997)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Symphony No. 1 in G minor: I. Allegro moderato* 14:12 2. *Symphony No. 1 in G minor: II. Andante commodamente* 7:15 [play](#) 3. *Symphony No. 1 in G minor: III. Scherzo: Allegro non troppo - Moderato assai* 7:40 4. *Symphony No. 1 in G minor: IV. Finale: Allegro moderato* 8:40 5. *Symphony No. 2 in A major: I. Moderato - Allegro non troppo* 10:17 6. *Symphony No. 2 in A major: II. Andante cantabile* 8:08 7. *Symphony No. 2 in A major: III. Allegro scherzando* 8:09 [play](#) 8. *Symphony No. 2 in A major: IV. Andante cantabile - Allegro vivo*
Royal Scottish National Orchestra Neeme Järvi - conductor

Vasily Serge's life is another example of an incredibly talented artist's being taken before his/her full bloom. Based upon the few works he left, one can only guess as to what greatness he might have arisen.

I have the separate CD's of the two symphonies which are the basis for this release. I found that the performances seem to emphasize the brass section of the orchestra which gives the recordings a rather bright tone that can cause listener fatigue under certain situations. The tempo of the second symphony is quite quick especially the last movement marked *Allegro vivo*.

Personally I prefer the interpretations of these two symphonies by The Symphony Orchestra of Russia conducted by Veronika Dudarova. Performed at a more moderate tempo and with a warmer tone, this recording has a more sonically pleasing presentation to these ears.

Regardless of the orchestra, listening to these symphonies will cause one to grieve about Kalinnikov's short life. Perhaps had he lived his name would be up with those of the great

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Russian composers. One can only guess. --- R. Michael Craig

Vasily Sergeyevich Kalinnikov (1866 – 1901) was a Russian composer of two symphonies, several additional orchestral works and numerous songs, all of them imbued with characteristics of folksong. His symphonies, particularly the First, were frequently performed in the early 20th century.

Kalinnikov was a policeman's son. He studied at the seminary at Oryol, becoming director of the choir there at fourteen. Later he went to the Moscow Conservatory but could not afford the tuition fees. On a scholarship he went to the Moscow Philharmonic Society School, where he received bassoon and composition lessons from Alexander Ilyinsky. He played bassoon, timpani and violin in theater orchestras and supplemented his income working as a music copyist.

In 1892, Tchaikovsky recommended Kalinnikov to be the director of the Maly Theater, and later that same year to the Moscow Italian Theater. However, due to his worsening tuberculosis, Kalinnikov had to resign from his theater appointments and move to the warmer southern clime of the Crimea. He lived there at Yalta for the rest of his life, and it was there that he wrote the main part of his music, including his two symphonies and the incidental music for Alexey Tolstoy's *Tsar Boris*. Exhausted, he died of tuberculosis on January 11, 1901 just before his 35th birthday.

Thanks to Sergei Rachmaninoff's help, Tchaikovsky's publisher Pyotr Jurgensen bought three Kalinnikov songs for 120 rubles, and later the *Symphony No. 2 in A major*. The *Symphony No. 1 in G minor*, which uses some cyclic principles, was performed in Berlin, Vienna and Moscow during his lifetime, but not published until after his death, so Jurgensen increased the fees he would have paid Kalinnikov, and paid them to his widow. He was also survived by a brother, Viktor, who composed choral music and taught at the Philharmonic School.

He is most well known for his *First Symphony*, written between 1894 and 1895, whose themes are characteristic of Russian music.

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In Russia his First Symphony remains in the repertory, and his place in musical history there is secure (Spencer 2001). On November 7, 1943, Arturo Toscanini conducted the NBC Symphony Orchestra in a rare broadcast performance of the First Symphony; although the performance was recorded, it was never commercially released by RCA Victor, but has recently appeared on Relief CR 1886 (anon. [n.d.]b, 15).

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