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GHCD 2422
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Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Symphony No.2 in C minor, Op.17, 'Little Russian'

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|---|--|------|
| 1 | I. Andante sostenuto | 9:18 |
| 2 | II. Andantino marziale, quasi moderato | 6:56 |
| 3 | III. Allegro molto vivace | 4:14 |
| 4 | IV. Moderato assai - Allegro vivace | 9:10 |

CINCINNATI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
EUGENE GOOSSENS

Recorded: 20 February 1941

(RCA Victor 78rpm set M-790 - transferred to RCA Camden LP CAL-185)

Symphony No.3 in D, Op.29, 'Polish'

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| 5 | I. Introduzione e allegro - Moderato assai (Tempo di marcia funebre) - Allegro brillante | 12:55 |
| 6 | II. Alla tedesca - Allegro moderato e semplice | 5:33 |
| 7 | III. Andante elegiaco | 8:00 |
| 8 | IV. Scherzo - Allegro vivo | 5:46 |
| 9 | V. Finale: Allegro con fuoco (Tempo di polacca) | 7:39 |

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
HANS KINDLER

Recorded: 8 November 1940

(RCA Victor 78rpm set M-747 - transferred to RCA Camden LP CAL-182)



Guild
HISTORICAL

TCHAIKOVSKY

**AMERICAN PREMIERE
RECORDINGS**

**Symphony No.2
'Little Russian'**

**Cincinnati Symphony
Orchestra**

EUGENE GOOSSENS

**Symphony No.3
'Polish'**

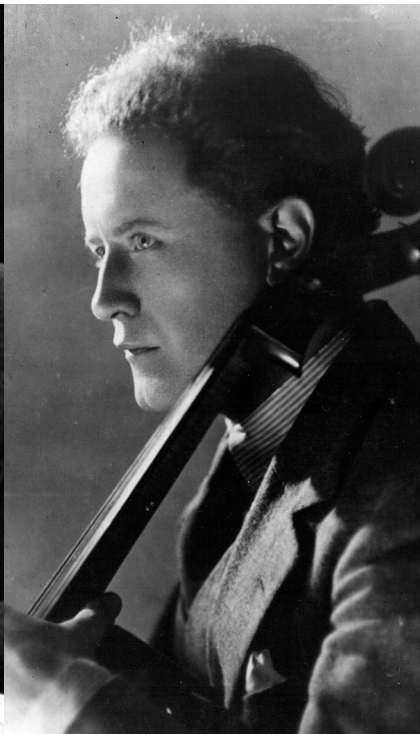
**National Symphony
Orchestra**

HANS KINDLER

Recorded 1940-1941



EUGENE GOOSSENS



HANS KINDLER

A GUILD HISTORICAL RELEASE

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Hans Kindler had been born in Rotterdam, sixteen months before Eugène Goossens, and like the Englishman, established a considerable career in the USA, first as a cellist (aged 22, he was offered the post of principal cellist of the Philadelphia Orchestra by Leopold Stokowski), and then as a conductor. It was Stokowski who gave Kindler his first opportunity on the podium – and just a year later, in 1928, Kindler conducted the world premiere of Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète*.

Realising where his true musical vocation lay, Kindler went on to found the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC, soon getting considerable political and government financial support from President Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor. Kindler was similar to Goossens in his choice of repertoire – wide-ranging, with much contemporary music, and with Russian music featuring strongly in his programming. Interesting, also, that both conductors gave significant premieres of music by Stravinsky, and that, within a few months of one another, they were to make these extremely fine premiere recordings of early symphonies by Tchaikovsky for the same record company, remarkable examples of the high orchestral standard American orchestras enjoyed at the time of the outbreak of World War II.

Goossens was to leave Cincinnati in 1945 and settle in Australia, before falling victim in 1956 to what is now widely regarded as a plot to discredit his joint positions as Music Director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Principal of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, obliging him to return to England, where he died in 1962. Kindler, however, remained in that nation's capital, serving as director of the fine orchestra he founded until he retired through ill-health in 1948. He died the following year, but not before having seen 'his' orchestra firmly established, to the extent that Kindler was succeeded by such eminent musicians as Howard Mitchell, Antál Dorati, Mstislav Rostropovich, Leonard Slatkin, Iván Fischer and Christoph Eschenbach.

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In the 120-odd years since Tchaikovsky's sudden and still largely unexplained death in 1893 at the age of 53, it is probably true to say that his music has become arguably the most popular of any classical composer. The reasons are not heard to seek: Tchaikovsky possessed an original melodic genius, coupled with a strong dramatic sense and a mastery of orchestration that enabled him to place his ideas in context in a manner that was on the one hand wholly individual and on the other utterly unforgettable.

Tchaikovsky's music has the quality of staying in the mind, often after just one hearing. It is a creative gift, not a characteristic that was sought after by him or one that can be acquired by any composer – but he clearly knew he possessed a truly inspirational gift. Tchaikovsky was not wholly alone amongst Russian composers of the 19th-century in writing music that was immediately attractive and memorable, but there is no doubt that none of his compatriots possessed his equally consistent vein of melody and dramatic insight, which Tchaikovsky applied in large measure to his operas, ballets, overtures, concertos, chamber music – and to his symphonies, of which he composed eight.

Tchaikovsky composed six numbered symphonies, as well as the programmatic 'Manfred' Symphony (Opus 58, 1885) and a Symphony in E flat major (1892) – which he withdrew, using the material in a number of other (largely unfinished) works. One ought to emphasize that the E flat major Symphony was conceived in its entirety by him from first bar to last: perhaps it was the second subject of the finale of that work which caused him finally to discard the music in that form – for, in truth, that theme is the least inspired and least significant of all of the composer's symphonic ideas. On balance there is no doubt that the E flat major Symphony does not approach the qualities of Tchaikovsky's Fourth, Fifth and Sixth ('Pathétique') Symphonies – the great symphonic trilogy with which his output in the genre came to an untimely end.

The success and impact of Tchaikovsky's Symphonies 4, 5 and 6 has led to the first three being overshadowed, but Nos 1-3 are each fine mature works by a composer of genius. As with Tchaikovsky's final symphony, but not in the case of the Fourth and Fifth, they each have subtitles – No 1, in G minor, is subtitled 'Winter Daydreams', No 2 (the shortest of Tchaikovsky's symphonies) the 'Little Russian' and the Third Symphony (the only one in five movements, and the only one – apart from the aborted E flat Symphony – in a major key), is known as the 'Polish' – although the sub-title was not sanctioned officially by Tchaikovsky.

Nevertheless, we should clearly bear those titles in mind when listening to these works, but they do not – indeed, cannot – tell the whole story, for as Tchaikovsky well knew, the essence of an orchestral symphony is not narrative or purely colouristic, but the development of ideas which of themselves are genuinely symphonic in that they suggest and invite further working within the fabric of the music and not through the alleged depiction of extra-musical events. Tchaikovsky's symphonies therefore are not pictorial overtures (such as *Romeo and Juliet* or *1812*) writ large: they remain genuinely symphonic, the titles a mere indication of mood or inspirational provenance, albeit allied throughout to symphonic development.

Tchaikovsky died at the end of 1893, a year which saw him make his only transatlantic journey to the United States, for the opening of Carnegie Hall in New York where he conducted several concerts in the first week of the Hall's existence, before undertaking a month-long trip of the north-eastern parts of the USA, where he additionally conducted in Baltimore and Philadelphia.

The year, too, saw an awakening of interest in gramophone recording, not wholly confined to the USA (in which country, in 1877, the permanent capturing of sound had been first achieved by Thomas Edison). Back in Russia, Tchaikovsky himself can be heard speaking on an early Edison cylinder, and his posthumous reputation ensured that when it became possible – largely through the development of the flat disc, an invention of Emile Berliner – to make multiple copies of recordings of orchestral music (albeit in reduced circumstances in the acoustic process) Tchaikovsky's music featured strongly on early commercial discs. For example, at the second recording session in January 1918, the New York Philharmonic under its chief conductor Josef Stransky recorded Tchaikovsky's 'Waltz of the Flowers' from 'The Nutcracker', and a significant number of earlier recordings of the composer's music had been made and issued before then.

This unique CD brings together the first-ever complete recordings of Tchaikovsky's Second ('Little Russian') and Third ('Polish') Symphonies, and it is worthy of note that both recordings were made in the United States for RCA. The Goossens recording was made in 1941, the last of three major works recorded over a three-day period (February 18-20), which included the world premiere recording of Walton's Violin Concerto with Jascha Heifetz, and Vaughan Williams's 'London' Symphony (in the world premiere of which in 1914 Eugène Goossens, then a member of the first violins of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, had played). For many collectors, this world premiere recorded performance of

Tchaikovsky's Second Symphony has never been surpassed.

Although born in London in May 1893 into a very musical family of Belgian extraction, Eugène Goossens III had, by 1940, made a hugely successful career in the United States, where, for six years from 1925, he was music director of the Rochester Philharmonic before succeeding Fritz Reiner as music director of the Cincinnati Symphony in 1931. Goossens was also a highly regarded composer (Toscanini was an admirer, and conducted his music); his repertoire as a conductor was wide, with Russian music featuring strongly – Goossens had conducted the British premiere of *The Rite of Spring*, among other works of Stravinsky, in London in the early 1920s.

With regard to Hans Kindler's version of the Third Symphony, there may be some nit-picking over the use of the word 'complete' being applied to the 'Polish' Symphony recording, for Kindler makes two very small cuts, one in the coda of the first movement and the other in the closing pages of the finale. In total, this means that about 40 bars are omitted in the work, in very fast and somewhat repetitive music – points which seem to have escaped the attention of some earlier record critics, certainly contemporaneous when the recording was issued. Rather than deplore such actions by conductors of earlier generations, we should note that Tchaikovsky himself both made, and indeed sanctioned, cuts in his own works – particularly in his Fifth Symphony, when he conducted it in Hamburg.

In terms of discographical details, however, Kindler's performance with the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC, is substantially more faithful to Tchaikovsky's score than the earlier recording by the London Symphony Orchestra under Albert Coates, for Coates's set, made for His Master's Voice in 1932 – eight years before Kindler's RCA version – is much more heavily cut, with unwarranted excisions in each of the five movements.

For most people, it would appear that Kindler's pioneering account truly deserves the claim of being the 'first complete recording', but what should also be taken into account is that, at the time both recordings of these symphonies were made, 1940 and 1941, neither work had been recorded in Russia. It was not until following World War II that the premiere Russian recordings of the Second and Third Symphonies were made by the USSR State Symphony Orchestra under Konstantin Ivanov (conductor and orchestra also made the first Russian recording of the First Symphony around the same time – all three works being recorded in sequence).