

KOUSSEVITZKY

CONDUCTS TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 36

- 1 1st mvt. - *Andante sostenuto* (17:54)
- 2 2nd mvt. - *Andantino in modo di canzone* (9:13)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: *Allegro* (5:03)
- 4 4th mvt. - Finale: *Allegro con fuoco* (9:00)

Recorded 26th April, 1949 in Symphony Hall, Boston

Matrix nos.: D9-RC-1708-2A, 1709-2, 1710-2, 1711-1, 1712-1, 1713-1, 1714-1, 1715-1B, 1716-1

First issued on RCA Victor 12-0972 through 12-0976 in album DM-1318 (LP: LM-1008; 45 rpm: WDM-1318)

Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

- 1 2nd mvt. - Waltz: *Moderato* (3:41)

Recorded 27th April, 1949 in Symphony Hall, Boston

Matrix no.: D9-RC-1717-1B

First issued on RCA Victor 12-0972 in album DM-1318 (45 rpm: 49-0510 in album WDM-1318)

Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

- 2 1st mvt. - *Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo; Allegro moderato* (9:34)
- 3 2nd mvt. - Waltz: *Moderato* (3:43)
- 4 3rd mvt. - *Elegy: Larghetto elegiaco* (9:27)
- 5 4th mvt. - Finale (Tema russo): *Andante; Allegro con spirito* (7:31)

Recorded 16th August, 1949 in the Theatre-Concert Hall, Tanglewood

Matrix nos.: D9-RC-1870-2, 1871-1, 1872-2D, 1873-1A, 1874-2, 1889-1 and 1890-1

First issued on RCA Victor 12-1070 through 12-1073 in album DM-1346 (LP: LM-1056; 45 rpm: WDM-1346)

Boston Symphony Orchestra
Serge Koussevitzky, conductor

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: **Mark Obert-Thorn**

Special thanks to Don Tait for providing source material

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Serge Koussevitzky

Total duration: 75:06 ©2010 Pristine Audio.

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KOUSSEVITZKY

CONDUCTS

TCHAIKOVSKY

SYMPHONY No. 4

IN F MINOR, OP. 36

SERENADE

FOR STRINGS

IN C MAJOR, OP. 48

**BOSTON
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA**

RECORDED IN 1949

Obert-Thorn

KOUSSEVITZKY

CONDUCTS TCHAIKOVSKY

Koussevitzky's 1949 recording of the Tchaikovsky Fourth was the first made by the Boston Symphony using the new medium of magnetic tape. It was initially released on 78 and 45 rpm discs, the two formats favored by RCA Victor during the "speed wars". After succumbing to the long playing format developed by Columbia, the performance was reissued on 33 1/3 rpm discs. However, as was the label's custom at the time, its original "filler" side, the *Serenade for Strings* Waltz, was dropped from the LP release and not subsequently reissued.¹

Four months later, Koussevitzky and the BSO reassembled at Tanglewood to record the entire *Serenade*. Unlike the Symphony and the Waltz, which had previously been recorded by the conductor and ensemble in 1936, the *Serenade* was Koussevitzky's first and only complete recording of the work. It is interesting to compare the drier, more detailed, but somewhat harsher sound RCA achieved here in comparison to the earlier Waltz recorded in Symphony Hall.

The sources for the transfer of the Symphony were the best portions of two late 1950s red "shaded dog" label pressings. The Waltz filler came from the 45 rpm set, and the *Serenade* was sourced from an early '50s plum "plain dog" LP. Longtime collectors may be familiar with several flaws in the original LP appearance of the Symphony, including a very noticeable join between the original Sides 1 and 2 in the first movement (RCA was still recording in four- to five-minute segments at this time), as well as sudden volume fluctuations in the first two movements. While I have been able to ameliorate these problems using digital editing techniques not available to the original engineers, I have been unable to undo the inherent compression that afflicts the louder passages of the performance.

Despite a *HiFi/Stereo Review* survey at the end of the 1950s that placed this recording of the Fourth Symphony at the top of an already-crowded field, RCA deleted the disc sometime around 1960, and has never reissued it in the subsequent half century. I am very pleased to be able to present it now for new generations to discover.

Mark Obert-Thorn, reissue producer

¹ An unpublished alternate take of the Waltz from this session was issued by BMG in 2001 on a compilation CD set.