



# Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY

## *Symphony No. 3, Op. 29 "Polish"*

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (7 May 1840–6 November 1893) was a Russian composer of the late-Romantic period, some of whose works are among the most popular music in the classical repertoire. He was the first Russian composer whose music made a lasting impression internationally, bolstered by his appearances as a guest conductor in Europe and the United States. Tchaikovsky's work was first publicly performed in 1865, with Johann Strauss the Younger conducting Tchaikovsky's *Characteristic Dances* at a Pavlovsk concert. In 1868, Tchaikovsky's *First Symphony* was well received when it was publicly performed in Moscow. The following year, his first opera, *The Voyevoda*, made its way to the stage—with little fanfare. In 1876, he completed the ballet *Swan Lake* as well as the fantasy *Francesca da Rimini*. Tchaikovsky resigned from the Moscow Conservatory in 1878 to focus his efforts entirely on composing. As a result, he spent the remainder of his career composing more prolifically than ever. His collective body of work constitutes 169 pieces, including symphonies, operas, ballets, concertos, cantatas and songs. Among his most famed late works are the ballets *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and *The Nutcracker* (1892).

**Symphony No. 3 in D major, Op. 29** was written in 1875. He began it at Vladimir Shilovsky's estate at Ussovo on 5 June and finished on 1 August at Verbovka. Dedicated to Shilovsky, the work is unique in Tchaikovsky's symphonic output in two ways: it is the only one of his seven symphonies (including the unnumbered *Manfred Symphony*) in a major key (discounting the unfinished Symphony in E $\flat$  major); and it is the only one to contain five movements (an additional *Alla tedesca* movement occurs between the opening movement and the slow movement). The symphony was premiered in Moscow on 19 November 1875, under the baton of Nikolai Rubinstein, at the first concert of the Russian Music Society's season. It had its St. Petersburg premiere on 24 January 1876, under Eduard Nápravník. Its first performance outside Russia was on 8 February 1879, at a concert of the New York Philharmonic Society. Its first performance in the United Kingdom was at the Crystal Palace in 1899, conducted by Sir August Manns, who seems to have been the first to refer to it as the "Polish Symphony", in reference to the recurring Polish dance rhythms prominent in the symphony's final movement. Several musicologists, including David Brown and Francis Maes, consider this name a faux pas. Western listeners, conditioned by Chopin's use of the polonaise as a symbol of Polish independence, interpreted Tchaikovsky's use of the same dance likewise; actually, in Tsarist Russia it was musical code for the Romanov dynasty and, by extension, Russian imperialism. The symphony was used by George Balanchine as the score for the *Diamonds* section of his full length 1967 ballet *Jewels*, omitting the opening movement.