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## Foreword to the Second Edition

The first edition of this book appeared in 2006 and I was soon to discover that it became too popular! Everyone of my opponents seemed extremely well prepared against the Taimanov, leaving me little room for surprise. Thus I decided to take a rest from the constant race for finding newer and newer novelties. It took me nearly two years to recharge my batteries and return back to my pet line this year.

It was refreshing to have a new look at my old repertoire. The result of my work is this Second edition of The Safest Sicilian.

White players seem to believe that they can refute the whole system by the universal English attack 3.d4 cd4 4.♘d4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♗c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗d2. It is true that game 25 Vachier Lagrave – Vitiugov, Plovdiv, 02.05.2008 posed some problems to Black, but, first, Black's play could be improved around move 19, and second, Black has elaborated new ideas at earlier stages, like 11...♗b8!? or even 9...0-0 which I also examine. Thus, instead of getting theoretical advantage following in others' footsteps, White will have to prepare against three different

lines which are nearly unexplored!

The Classical System 3.d4 cd4 4.♘d4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♗c7 6.♗e2 has always been unpleasant to face since White is very solid there and in some positions can play for a win without risk. I attempt to complicate his task by offering a wider choice to Black. Apart from patching the old line 6...♗c7 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♗e3 ♗b4 9.♘a4 ♗e7 10.♘c6 bc6 11.♘b6 ♗b8 12.♘c8 ♗c8 13.♗d4 c5, I also examine 13...♗c7!?. It is more flexible and will force your opponent to think on his own.

Part 5: 3.d4 cd4 4.♘d4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♗c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗d3 has also underwent a major reconstruction. I added the system 7...♘f6 8.0-0 ♘e5 9.♗d4 ♗c5. It is simple, safe and suits the name of the book. It is proposed as an alternative to 7...♘f6 8.0-0 ♘e5 which is more demanding to both sides.

I have also added new material to the Alapin system 3.c3 and to the 3.d4 cd4 4.♘d4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♗c7 6.f4 variation. The rest of the book has only minor corrections.

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July 2008*

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