



# **WEINBERG**

## **Symphony No. 13**

### **Serenade for Orchestra**

**Siberian State  
Symphony Orchestra**

**Vladimir Lande**

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**



## Mieczysław Weinberg (1919–1996)

### Symphony No. 13 • Serenade for Orchestra

Mieczysław Weinberg was born in Warsaw on 8 December 1919, where he emerged as a highly regarded pianist who might well have continued his studies in the United States until the Nazi invasion forced him to flee to Minsk (in the course of which his travel documents were inscribed as Moisey Vainberg, by which name he was 'officially' known until 1982). During 1939–41 he studied composition with Vassily Zolotaryov then, after the Nazi invasion, headed further east to Tashkent where he duly became immersed in numerous theatrical and operatic projects. There he also wrote his *First Symphony*, which favourably impressed Shostakovich and resulted in his settling in Moscow in 1943 where he was to remain for the rest of his life. Despite various personal setbacks (his father-in-law, the renowned actor Solomon Mikhoels, was murdered in 1948 and Weinberg himself was imprisoned for alleged 'Jewish subversion' then freed only after the death of Stalin in 1953), he gradually gained a reputation as a figure who was championed by many of the leading Soviet singers, instrumentalists and conductors.

Despite receiving various official honours, Weinberg's fortunes declined noticeably over his final two decades – not least owing to the emergence of a younger generation of composers whose perceived antagonism to the Soviet establishment had gained them greater coverage in the West (where Weinberg had never enjoyed more than a modest presence even during his heyday), and his death in Moscow on 26 February 1996 went largely unnoticed. Since then, however, his output – which comprises 26 symphonies and 17 string quartets, together with seven operas, some two-dozen song cycles and a wealth of chamber and instrumental music – has secured a rapidly increasing number of performances and recordings and is now held in ever greater regard as a significant personal continuation of the Russian symphonic tradition.

The period between the 'Zhdanov decree' in 1948 and Stalin's death five years later proved a difficult time for Weinberg as it did for many Soviet composers. After the censure of his *First Sinfonietta* (1948) and rejection of

his *Third Symphony* (1949), he turned instead to mainly shorter orchestral pieces derived from folk sources. Typical examples are those that comprise Weinberg's *Op. 47*, of which the *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes* (1949) – whether in its orchestral version (*Op. 47, No. 1*) [Naxos 8.572779] or that with violin (*Op. 47, No. 3*) – soon became popular. Also included in this sequence are the *Suite on Polish Tunes* (*Op. 47, No. 2*) and the *Serenade* (*Op. 47, No. 4*) written in 1952 and premiered on 7 November that year by the USSR Symphony Orchestra with Gennady Rozhdestvensky. Dedicated to Alexander Gauk (who recorded an abbreviated version with the State Radio Orchestra in 1956), this stands with the *Suite* written two years before [8.573565] as an instance of undemanding yet pleasurable music that, for all he might have felt compelled to compose it, Weinberg was so adept at producing when the need arose.

The opening *Allegretto* begins with a lyrical melody on violins (curiously akin to that which opens Malcolm Arnold's own *Serenade* from just a year later), followed by a more animated theme with woodwind to the fore. These are repeated in subtly varied guise, before the initial melody returns a final time and leads into a limpid coda for clarinets. The *Allegro molto* that follows opens with an echoing horn-call and features a lively first theme for strings then a rumbustious one with brass and percussion to the fore. The horn-call also introduces the middle section, a capering idea passed between woodwind, before the two main themes are reprised and the horn-call launches into an energetic coda. The ensuing *Adagio* has a wistful introduction for clarinet, leading into an elegant theme which finds contrast in an atmospheric theme for cor anglais and strings; both themes being recalled prior to a gentle signing-off. The final *Allegro giocoso* starts with a perky theme for woodwind that is again contrasted with a more energetic one for strings and percussion. These are repeated even more vividly, before the first theme leads to its transformation into a stately anthem on horns then strings and brass. The original version is now

recalled as transition to a headlong coda, in which elements of all the themes are combined on their way to a rousing conclusion.

At the time of Shostakovich's death in August 1975, Weinberg had not essayed a symphony for full orchestra since his *Fifth* of 13 years earlier. He responded with his *Twelfth Symphony* [8.573085], as dedicated to the memory of his mentor and his largest purely orchestral such work. This was soon followed in 1976 with his *Thirteenth* – dedicated to the memory of his mother who had perished, with his father and sister, in the Polish transit camp at Trawniki in the early 1940s (and who was also the dedicatee of his *Sixteenth Symphony* (1981) and *Sixth Violin Sonata* (1982) [8.572320–21]). Surprisingly enough, there seem not to have been any public performances at this time (only from his *Fourteenth Symphony* in 1977 onwards did Weinberg secure the advocacy of Vladimir Fedoseyev), and this is also its first recording.

Unlike its predecessor, which adheres to the archetypal four-movement format, the *Thirteenth Symphony* is cast in a single movement (a procedure further pursued in the *Fourteenth* and *Sixteenth*) that unfolds as a near symmetrical arc toward its central culmination. A large orchestra (including triple woodwind, six horns and four each of trumpets and trombones) is found, but this is for the most part used sparingly in textures which are austere or chamber-like in manner. No less notable here is the avoidance of what might be described as self-contained themes, in favour of linear or motivic ideas which evolve over the course of its almost 35 minutes. Weinberg had worked with such processes in his string quartets and solo instrumental sonatas from the 1960s, but here he transfers them to a larger canvas with gripping if often unsettling results.

The work opens with a sombre theme on violas, soon continued by the strings as this grows in volume and intensity. Cor anglais makes a pensive contribution, followed by clarinet then lower woodwind as the music heads to a brief climax. This is curtailed to leave upper strings in musing uncertainty, joined by piccolo and other solo woodwind as the momentum steadily increases, then gradually taking in the full orchestra until percussion enter and a strident climax is reached. Solo instruments now unexpectedly come to the fore, notably violin with a cadenza-like passage which is intensified as strings and brass engage in confrontation over pounding timpani. Woodwind add their sardonic commentary, not least the *glissandi* from trombones, then a baleful culmination – capped by trumpets – is reached. The opening string theme now returns as a broad *cantilena* over a throbbing accompaniment on harps and lower strings, but this is suddenly cut off to leave solo woodwind and strings groping their way forwards. The emotional intensity duly subsides as the introspective mood from the outset is regained, with one last attempt at a climax which collapses into plangent gestures on bassoons and timpani. At length, solo viola comes into focus, leading through to the work's close with fragmented responses from woodwind that merge into sparse chords on harp and ascend beyond earshot.

A final observation is the quotation (after the first climax) of a chorale from the second act of Weinberg's opera *The Passenger* (1968), as linked to the mutual support of female inmates in Auschwitz and which duly serves a personal and a more abstract function in this piece overall.

Richard Whitehouse

## Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (Krasnoyarsk)



The Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (SSSO) dates back to 1977. The orchestra, then led by eminent Soviet conductor Ivan Shpiller, soon won a reputation as one of the best orchestras in the former Soviet Union. The SSSO has worked with conductors including Leonard Slatkin, Dmitri Jurowski, Gintaras Rinkevičius and Vladislav Chernushenko, and has performed regularly with soloists including Mikhail Pletnev, Vadim Repin, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Lazar Berman, Igor Oistrakh, Denis Matsuev, Rudolf Buchbinder and Nikolai Lugansky. Political changes enabled the orchestra to start touring internationally to critical acclaim. In 1993, by special decree of the Russian Ministry of Culture, the orchestra was awarded the title of State Orchestra and in 2009 received the honour of being named an important element of cultural heritage. In 2015 Vladimir Lande

became the orchestra's new artistic director and chief conductor. Since then, the SSSO has embarked on a recording programme with international labels such as Naxos, Delos and Parma Records, and televised concerts have become available for online streaming.

[www.krasfil.ru](http://www.krasfil.ru)

## Vladimir Lande



Music director and conductor of the Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (Krasnoyarsk), Vladimir Lande has, since 2008, also served as principal guest conductor of the St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, music director and conductor of the Washington Soloists Chamber Orchestra, guest conductor of the National Gallery of Art Symphony Orchestra, and music director of the COSMIC Symphony Orchestra. In 2015 he became artistic director of the Asian Pacific Festival (APF), for countries of the Asian-Pacific region. He has worked with distinguished orchestras and soloists and has enjoyed an extraordinarily active recording career. He is recording a seventeen-volume cycle of orchestral works by the neglected Russian composer Mieczysław Weinberg for Naxos. In June

2011 he also launched a series of video recordings for Naxos of *Concerts from the Palaces of St Petersburg*. His many other recording projects include works by Respighi and Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

[www.vladimirlande.com](http://www.vladimirlande.com)

Weinberg's *Symphony No. 13*, dedicated to the memory of his mother, is cast in a single movement that unfolds in a symmetrical arc. A large orchestra is used sparingly in chamber-like textures with motivic ideas that evolve over the course of the work. The result is music of gripping and unsettling power, both emotionally intense and architecturally complex. Some years earlier Weinberg wrote the light-hearted *Serenade, Op. 47, No. 4* which offers a study in contrasts: by turn capricious, rumbustious and wistful.

Mieczysław  
**WEINBERG**  
(1919–1996)

❶	<b>Symphony No. 13, Op. 115 (1976)</b>	<b>34:42</b>
	<b>Serenade, Op. 47, No. 4 (1952)</b>	<b>18:18</b>
❷	<b>I. Allegretto</b>	<b>3:44</b>
❸	<b>II. Allegro molto</b>	<b>5:26</b>
❹	<b>III. Adagio</b>	<b>2:45</b>
❺	<b>IV. Allegro giocoso</b>	<b>6:11</b>

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**Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (Krasnoyarsk)**  
**Vladimir Lande**

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