

Mieczysław WEINBERG

COMPLETE WORKS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, VOLUME FOUR

CONCERTINO FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 42

SONATA FOR TWO VIOLINS, OP. 69

TWO SONGS WITHOUT WORDS

SONATA MOVEMENT

THREE PIECES

Yuri Kalnits, violin
Igor Yuzefovich, violin
Michael Csányi-Wills, piano

MIECZYŚLAW WEINBERG: COMPLETE MUSIC FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, VOLUME FOUR

by David Fanning

Towards the end of his life Weinberg gave a number of interviews and recalled:

Life was my first music teacher, since I was born into a family where my father had devoted himself to music since childhood. He was a violinist and a composer, but... how can I put it?... not on a very high professional level. He travelled with touring Jewish theatre companies and wrote music for them. During performances he would sit at the conductor's music desk, playing the violin and conducting. From the age of six I tagged along behind him.¹

The young boy even tried his hand at composing, though many of his early efforts are presumed lost in his flight from the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 to Belorussia. The relatively sophisticated pre-Op. 1 works that survive in the family archive, of which the Three Pieces for Violin and Piano are represented in this album, are probably not those referred to in the following reminiscence:

What does writing music mean to a child? I simply took my father's manuscript paper and scribbled down something or other: some clefs, some notes, without any coherent meaning. But in this way I studied music right from my birth, as it were. And when I wrote these 'operettas' [i.e., mini-opuses] I probably imagined myself to be a composer. But before everything there was my career as a pianist. At the age of ten or eleven I was already playing the piano with my father at the theatre.²

The Three Pieces are a notably ambitious triptych for a fourteen/fifteen-year-old. They certainly have little of the salon about them, and nothing of the popular theatre

¹ Quoted in Lyudmila Nikitina, 'Pochti lyuboy mig zhizni – rabota' ('Almost every moment of my life is work'), *Muzika'naya akademiya*, 1994, p. 17.

² *Ibid.*

music Weinberg would have heard his father play. By this time he was in his third year of tuition at the Warsaw Conservatoire, but as yet untrained in composition. Whatever stylistic affinities one might pick up can only have come from the repertoire he heard in concert or played himself at the time. Each piece is, in effect, a miniature tone-poem, and one wonders whether his father had sufficient command of his instrument to join his son in playing them, or whether a fellow student at the Conservatoire may have tried them out (there is no record of a public premiere).

In the autograph manuscript, the titles of the first two pieces – ‘Nocturne’ and ‘Scherzo’ – are added in a different hand from the music and may therefore be afterthoughts, whereas ‘Dream about a Doll’ – eventually placed third – is headed ‘2’, suggesting that the pieces did not originate as a pre-ordered group. Probably coincidentally, the opening ‘Nocturne’ [6] uses as a springboard the same broken-chord motif that was a favourite of Bartók in his early works. The unmetred arpeggio figure, which returns in free inversion at the end of the piece, is an opening gambit that also features in the last movement of Weinberg’s Clarinet Sonata, Op. 28. In the ‘Nocturne’ it is ingeniously transformed into one of the leading motivic characters, spurring the music on to heights of passionate declamation. Similarly, the ‘Doll’ of the third piece (or is it perhaps the dreamer?) [8] is evidently no stranger to sensuality or *Weltschmerz*. In between these sweltering mood-pieces, the ‘Scherzo’ is an exhilarating *perpetuum-mobile* caprice [7] that makes considerable technical demands on both players, not least in its polyrhythmic middle section. All three pieces are cast in elaborately varied ABA structures, with heavily chromatic voice-leading, enriched whole-tone-based harmonies, and hyper-intense climaxes, topping off passages of luxuriant texturing. If they were billed in concert as previously undiscovered youthful works of Szymanowski, probably few would question the attribution. (Szymanowski had been Director of the Warsaw Conservatoire from 1927 to 1929, and although there is no evidence that Weinberg ever met him, his music was a staple feature of Warsaw concert life through the 1930s.)

Ten years later, Weinberg’s life had taken a succession of violent turns. His escape from the Nazi invasion of Poland had more or less ended his ambitions as a pianist but had put in their place a solid academic training in composition, with the

Rimsky-Korsakov pupil Vasily Zolotaryov (1872–1964) in Minsk. Less than two years later, the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, and Weinberg took refuge in Tashkent, from where friends of Shostakovich sent reports of his burgeoning talent. Once the tide of the war had turned in favour of the Allies, Weinberg settled in Moscow from September 1943, confident of Shostakovich's support. During his first three years in the capital he produced a remarkable succession of first-rate chamber works, including the Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Op. 15 (1944).³ In its definitive version the Sonata has a *Lento* slow movement. But the pagination in the manuscripts suggests that it was a replacement for a different original movement. This *Largo* in F major [9] was rediscovered in the private collection of Weinberg's friend, the musicologist Manashir Yakubov, after his death in 2012, and has now been returned to the family archive. Weinberg evidently had the manuscript, or a copy thereof, in his possession when he came to compose his Op. 110 song-cycle *Lulling the Child* (1973),⁴ because he followed the music closely for his setting of the last poem, 'My Song'.

The anti-formalism campaign that blighted the arts in the Soviet Union following the war did not put a stop to Weinberg's chamber-music output, but it forced him for the first time to negotiate with demands from above, in this case for tuneful music comprehensible to the 'People' and preferably closely related to folk sources. Those demands became explicit only in 1948, following Andrey Zhdanov's notorious dressing-down of composers. But they were in the air from 1946, when the literary world was brought to heel, soon to be followed by film-makers. Weinberg's negotiation was eased by the fact that his style was already imbued with instinctive lyricism and with the idioms of Polish, Moldavian and Jewish folk-music. The *Two Songs without Words* of 1947 are modest try-outs for this change in stylistic direction. The first is a lyrical *Andantino* [4] featuring Prokofievian arching lines, of the kind Weinberg would develop in the 'apotheosis' sections of his two ballets from the 1950s; the second [5] is a transcription of his Op. 9 *Aria* for String Quartet (1942), a Fauré-like inspiration that he also arranged as the second movement in his *Orchestral Suite*, Op. 26, and as the

³ Recorded by Yuri Kalnits and Michael Csányi-Wills on Toccata Classics TOCC 0026.

⁴ Recorded by Olga Kalugina, soprano, and Dmitry Korostelyov, piano, on Toccata Classics TOCC 0078.

‘Melody’ from Five Pieces for Flute and Piano, both versions made in the same year as the *Songs without Words*.

In 1948 Weinberg produced two *concertante* works: a modest three-movement Concertino in A minor for Violin and String Orchestra, Op. 42, and a full-scale Cello Concerto in C minor, Op. 43. This conjunction gives the former, composed between 1 and 9 July, the appearance of a warm-up for the latter. Such a judgement does scant justice to the intrinsic beauty of the Violin Concertino. Moreover, the Cello Concerto itself also originated as a Concertino, being beefed up over a number of years until it emerged as a fully fledged Concerto in 1956. The solo part of the Violin Concertino is modest and predominantly lyrical; the accompaniment likewise makes few technical demands. Formally straightforward and almost entirely lyrical throughout, it is the kind of music that could have been conceived in a spirit of holiday relaxation. It was actually composed at the beginning of July 1948 at a *Stantsiya ot dikh* (Rest Station), 25 miles south-east of Moscow, and it abundantly fulfils official requirements for non-trivial, listener-friendly tunefulness. The opening sonata-form *Allegretto cantabile* [1] is based on a lyricised version of a downward scale-motif that could have lodged in Weinberg’s mind from the first movement of Shostakovich’s Second Piano Trio (1943–44) but which he manages to make entirely his own thanks to the wistful turns of phrase that complement it. This movement is spaced from the central heartfelt *Adagio* [2] by a cadenza that eschews display and contortion (unlike many of Weinberg’s later, more structurally load-bearing cadenzas) and effectively prepares the ground for the *Adagio* itself – a movement as deeply melancholic as it is transparent in texture. More demanding on the soloist in terms of intonation and agility, the rondo finale [3] is muted for the first half and equally subdued in colour as the rest of the work, apart from a Prokofiev-toccatà-style contrasting section that returns to round off the work. The first performance of the Concertino was given on 2 November 1999, by Valery Vorona with the Musica Viva chamber orchestra under Aleksandr Rudin, at a mini-festival devoted to Weinberg’s music in celebration of what would have been his 80th birthday, when its

rediscovery caused quite a stir.⁵ The violin-and-piano version is the composer's own, but it is not clear whether it was intended for performance or merely rehearsal.

Before the baleful influence of the anti-formalism campaign had dissipated, in February 1953 Weinberg was arrested – under the absurd accusation of ‘Jewish bourgeois nationalism’ – and incarcerated in the notorious Butyrka and Lubyanka prisons. He was effectively saved by the death of Stalin the following month and was released on 25 April. Although his already less than robust health was severely damaged, he soon recovered his creative vigour, and by the end of the 1950s he was entering a new period of energetic exploration. In the first half of November 1959 he composed his Sonata for Two Violins, Op. 69, dedicated to Yelizaveta Gilels (sister of Emil) and Leonid Kogan, making full use of their virtuosity in what is one of the most demanding – not to say intractable – of all his chamber works. The character of the *Allegro molto* first movement [10] picks up on the relentless drive of such 1950s pieces as the finale of the Second Cello Sonata, Op. 63. Meanwhile, the structure is devised in a similar manner to the finale of the Seventh Quartet, Op. 59, consisting as it does of 28 variations on the opening eight-and-a-half-bar theme (the ‘half’ comes from a two-beat expansion of the last bar that is retained throughout and in this respect strongly echoes the finale of Shostakovich's Second String Quartet). Onto this scheme are grafted elements of sonata-form contrast and developmental intensification. The central movement [11] begins *Adagio* and as if paralleling the variational principle of the first. It soon diverts, however, to a muted *Andante* that traces an arc from lyrical reflection to passionate high double-stopping and back again, the symmetry being reinforced by a final return to the *Adagio*. The *Allegro* finale [12] starts in the arcadian-innocent G major world of the finale of Shostakovich's Piano Quintet but before long develops a penchant for special effects – harmonics, *pizzicato* and *sul ponticello* – that will supply an element of contrast in the quasi-rondo form and return to haunt the quiet, spectral coda. Here, too, is a foretaste of Weinberg's late chamber-music style, which frequently reserves such effects for finales.

⁵ Cf. Tamara Grum-Grzhilmaylo, ‘Malen'kaya sensatsiya iz zhdanovskikh vremyon’ (‘A little sensation from the Zhdanov times’), *Vechniy klub*, 20 November 1999, p. 8.

David Fanning is Professor of Music at the University of Manchester and has a varied career as scholar, pianist and critic. Following books on Nielsen, Shostakovich and Weinberg, and editions of Russian songs and Nielsen's piano music, his most recent publications include the co-edited Routledge Handbook to Music under German Occupation, 1938–45 (Routledge, Abingdon, 2020) and a commented translation of Nielsen's Selected Letters and Diaries (Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen, 2017). His jointly authored, expanded book on Weinberg is in preparation from Toccata Press. He is also active as critic for Gramophone and The Daily Telegraph, and frequently performs chamber music as pianist with the Quatuor Danel.

Awarded two Diapasons d'Or for his previous recordings of Weinberg's violin sonatas, **Yuri Kalnits** was described by one reviewer as 'an interpreter of the highest order'. He has participated in festivals throughout the world, among them the Festival Musicales Internationales Guil-Durance (France), Young Artist Peninsula Music Festival (USA), Festival Cziffra (France), Waterford International Music Festival (Ireland), Irina Kandinskaya and Friends (Russia), Pharos Trust Festival (Cyprus), Festival Musica da Camera (Germany), Festival International Ciudad de Ubeda (Spain), Beyond the Music Festival (Spain), Loch Shiel Spring Festival (Scotland) and the Ljubljana International Festival (Slovenia). The major venues in which he has appeared include The Purcell Room, Kings Place, St John's, Smith Square, the Barbican and St Martin in the Fields in London, the Small Hall of Moscow Conservatoire, the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, NYC, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. Tours have taken him to Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and the USA. The orchestras with which he has appeared as a concerto soloist include the London Festival Orchestra, Mozart Festival Orchestra, Arpeggione Chamber Orchestra, London Soloist Chamber Orchestra, Novosibirsk Symphony Orchestra, Kazan Chamber Orchestra La Primavera, London Musical Arts Ensemble, Minsk Symphony



Photograph: Andrey Grlic

Orchestra and the Junge Philharmonie Köln, and his playing has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 as well as on New Zealand national radio.

A dedicated chamber musician, he has worked with such artists as Emanuel Abbühl, Edward Brunner, Roger Chase, Alexander Chaushian and Ivry Gitlis. Together with the cellist Julia Morneweg, he co-directs the London concert series ChamberMusicBox, which brings together leading British and European artists.

Born in Moscow into a musical family, he received his first violin lessons from his father and went on to become a pupil at the Central Music School and later at the Gnesin Music School for Gifted Children, both in Moscow. At the age of sixteen he began studying at the Royal College of Music in London with Itzhak Rashkovsky, winning several major College prizes, including the Foundation Scholarship, W. H. Reed and Isolde Menges prizes and the Leonard Hirsch Prize for the outstanding string-player of the year. He went on to win other important prizes, notably those of the Bromsgrove and Watford Music Festivals, the Yehudi Menuhin Award from the Sudborough Foundation and KPMG/Martin Musical Scholarship in the UK, the Cziffra Foundation competition in France, the Web Concert Hall Competition in the USA and the Barthel Prize from the Concordia Foundation UK.

Upon graduation from the RCM, he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Scholarship for postgraduate studies there. He completed his training with Yfrah Neaman at the Guildhall School of Music and with Vasko Vassiliev at Trinity College of Music, while receiving further artistic guidance from such eminent musicians as Valentin Berlinsky, Sergei Fatkulline, Edward Grach, Shlomo Mintz, Igor Oistrakh, Sylvia Rosenberg and Abram Shtern.

His most recent recording, with Yulia Chaplina, *Prokofiev by Arrangement*, 37 transcriptions of Prokofiev for violin and piano (Toccata Classics TOCC 0135), has attracted critical encomia, the critic of 'Classical CD Choice' reporting that the music is 'delivered with such a combination of style, charm and panache by the team of Yuri Kalnits, violin, and Yulia Chaplina, piano, who have the full measure of the music and have collated a program which is both varied and ear-tickling'.
www.yurikalnits.co.uk

Now in his third season as Concertmaster of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, **Igor Yuzefovich** had previously served in that role with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic and, before that, as Assistant Concertmaster with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

In addition to a busy orchestral performing calendar, Igor Yuzefovich continues to be an active chamber musician, often reuniting with the Monument Piano Trio, which he co-founded

in 2004. The Trio made its concert debut in the USA to loud acclaim and has since captivated audiences across the United States and in China. Its debut recording, featuring works by Brahms, Shostakovich and Schoenfield, was well received by professionals and enthusiasts alike.

Although his concerts and recitals have taken him from Carnegie Hall to the Cairo Opera House, across Europe and throughout Asia, he has been equally committed to educating the next generation of musicians as a Visiting Artist at the Royal Academy of Music in London and is highly sought after for solo, chamber music and orchestral master-classes around the globe.

Born into a musical family in Moscow, Igor Yuzefovich began his violin studies at the age of five and soon afterwards enrolled at the Gnessin Music School, studying with Irina Svetlova. In 1991, he moved to the United States, where he continued his violin studies and later earned advanced degrees from the Peabody Conservatory under the tutelage of Victor Danchenko.

When he is not leading the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Igor Yuzefovich can be seen and heard in his frequent appearances as guest concertmaster with many of the best-respected orchestras around the globe.

He plays a Ceruti violin graciously loaned to him through the Beare's International Violin Society.

The award-winning composer and pianist **Michael Csányi-Wills** has written works ranging from chamber music via choral and orchestral works to film scores. He was composer-in-residence with the Welsh Sinfonia in 2013–16. His recent orchestral works have been widely performed throughout the UK, and commissions have taken him around Europe, Australia, China and the USA, where in 2016 his Violin Concerto was premiered in the Constella Arts Festival by the violinist Tatiana Berman with the principal conductor of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, José Luis Gomez. Other recent projects have included two song-cycles written for James Robinson-May, and a project entitled 'Songs on the Spectrum', funded by



Photograph: Lertkat Chongjitrajitra

the Arts Council/National Lottery Fund, which is raising awareness of Autism through *Lieder*. A work for string orchestra, *Nocturne for Yodit*, released in 2019, was written for Martin Anderson's 'Music for My Love' project and released on Toccata Classics (TOCC 0504).

His First Symphony was performed and recorded by the University of Cardiff Symphony Orchestra in November 2019, followed by its release on Prima Facie Records in 2020. The album was nominated for the best disc of 2020 by MusicWeb International. An album of orchestral songs, also for Toccata Classics (TOCC 0329), featuring Nicky Spence, Jacques Imbrailo and Ilona Domnich, was released in 2015 and selected as 'Recording of the Month' by MusicWeb International.

He has written scores for over 40 films, including documentaries such as *The King of Nerac* and *Maestro*, a documentary feature on the conductor Paavo Järvi, and, most recently, a feature drama, *Sideshow*, starring Les Dennis and Anthony Head, released in 2020. He won 'Best Score' at the Movie Maverick Awards for his score to the short film *A Love Story in Milk*, and was nominated at the World Soundtrack awards for Best Newcomer.

He still performs and records frequently as a pianist. This album is the fourth instalment of the complete Weinberg Violin Sonatas, the first two volumes of which each won a Diapason d'Or in the French magazine *Diapason*.

As an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music and a regular teacher of both Piano and Composition at the World Heart Beat Music Academy in London, he is passionate about music education. Many of his students have been awarded scholarships to major music colleges in the UK. He is also associate conductor of the BBC Ariel Orchestra, and of the World Heart Beat Music Academy Orchestra.





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MIECZYŚLAW WEINBERG Complete Works for Violin and Piano, Volume Four

Concertino in A minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 42 (1948)	18:22
1 I <i>Allegretto cantabile</i>	6:43
2 II Cadenza. <i>Lento – Adagio</i>	6:35
3 III <i>Allegro moderato poco rubato</i>	5:04
Two Songs without Words (1947)	6:52
4 No. 1 <i>Andantino</i>	3:42
5 No. 2 <i>Larghetto</i>	3:10
Three Pieces for Violin and Piano (1934–35)	14:48
6 No. 1 Nocturne. <i>Moderato</i>	6:19
7 No. 2 Scherzo. <i>Allegro</i>	2:16
8 No. 3 Dream about a Doll. <i>Moderato</i>	6:13
Sonata Movement (1944)	
9 <i>Largo</i> in F major	3:57
Sonata for Two Violins, Op. 69 (1959)	18:12
10 I <i>Allegro molto</i>	6:17
11 II <i>Adagio</i>	6:27
12 III <i>Allegro</i>	5:28
Yuri Kalnits, violin	TT 62:14
Igor Yuzefovich, violin 10–12	
Michael Csányi-Wills, piano 1–9	
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