

Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (Krasnoyarsk)



The Siberian State Symphony Orchestra 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.

Vladimir Lande



Music Director and Conductor of the Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (Krasnoyarsk), Vladimir Lande has, since 2008, 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

NAXOS

WEINBERG

Symphony No. 17

'Memory'

Suite for Orchestra

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Vladimir Lande

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996)

Symphony No. 17 'Memory' • Suite for Orchestra

Mieczysław Weinberg was born in Warsaw on 8th December 1919, where he emerged as a highly regarded pianist who might well have continued his studies in the United States until the Nazi occupation saw him 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). From 1939 until 1941 he studied composition with Vasily Zolotarev; then, after the Nazi invasion, headed much further east to Tashkent where he immersed himself in 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. In spite of numerous personal setbacks (his father-in-law, the actor Solomon Mikhoels, was murdered in 1948, then Weinberg himself was imprisoned for alleged 'Jewish subversion' and released only after the death of Stalin in 1953), he gradually built a reputation as a composer who was championed by many of the leading Soviet singers, instrumentalists and conductors.

Despite numerous official honours, Weinberg's fortunes declined notably during his final two decades, not least due to the emergence of a younger generation of composers whose perceived antagonism to the Soviet establishment gained them much greater coverage in the West, and his death in Moscow on 26th 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 gained a rapidly increasing number of performances and recordings, and is now held in ever greater regard as a significant continuation of the Russian symphonic tradition.

Among the most significant projects of Weinberg's later years is a symphonic trilogy which was given the collective title *On the Threshold of War* – reflecting the traumas of the Soviet Union (and indirectly that of Poland, from which he was forced to flee in September 1939) over

the Great Patriotic War of 1940-45, as well as a need for Soviet composers to embody the eventual Socialist victory such as persisted almost to the end of the Soviet era. Not that Weinberg's trilogy was in any sense an establishment undertaking: both outer symphonies, the *Seventeenth 'Memory'* and the *Nineteenth 'Bright May'* [Naxos 8.572752], are purely orchestral works which bear epigraphs by the once ostracized poet Anna Akhmatova, while the *Eighteenth 'War – there is no word more cruel'* [8.573190] features a chorus in settings from Sergey Orlov (1921-77) and Alexander Tvardovsky (1910-71) (poets whose 'official' writings became more inward and questioning) that frame a text derived from folk sources.

Composed during 1982-84, the *Seventeenth Symphony* bears the dedication 'In memory of the fallen in the Great Patriotic War'. It received its première at the Moscow Autumn Festival on 1st November 1984, with Vladimir Fedoseyev directing the USSR Radio and TV Symphony Orchestra. While the subtitle 'Memory' is explicit enough in context, Weinberg was silent as to a more concrete programme – leaving these lines by Akhmatova to speak for themselves:

My country you have regained
Your power and freedom!
But in the treasure-house of the people's memory
There will always remain
The incinerated years of war.

The largest in scale of these three works, the *Seventeenth* is cast in four movements – though the formal follow-through is as unpredictable as any among the composer's later symphonies.

The prelude first movement commences with lower strings that presage an intense threnody for strings as a whole, all the while gaining in emotional force as it becomes more flexible rhythmically. At length this ceases to leave woodwind and lower strings musing pensively, itself gaining emotive force before a solo clarinet is heard

softly against strings in a sustained accumulation towards the climax. Subsiding lower strings make way for a relatively calm close, made more ominously by the equivocal presence of woodwind in a fragmented texture.

The lengthy second movement opens with a rapid *ostinato* on piano that underpins sustained and dissonant exchanges between woodwind and lower strings, assuming greater presence when horns and strings take the foreground. From here momentum gradually and inexorably increases, as the initial *ostinato* becomes a confrontational basis with brass increasingly to the fore. Greater restraint is sounded by the woodwind, but tension mounts towards a climax whose underlying rhythm is hammered out on brass and timpani. There follows an evocative episode for upper strings with the *ostinato* on harpsichord – the music winding down to hesitant asides from woodwind and strings – that soon focusses on a piercing gesture for violins at the top of their register, leading to a densely shifting web of rhythmic patterns and an ambivalent close.

The brief but explosive third movement, launched as a striding motion on strings, joined by horns, brings a hectic activity that calms briefly for a more reflective episode with woodwind to the fore. These latter continue over pizzicato strings in a transition to that earlier activity, percussion entering as the music builds in activity before heading towards a forceful ending.

The wide-ranging finale begins with pensive woodwind over a discreet pizzicato backing on strings, presently answered by speculative gestures on violins then more fervently by horns and lower strings. This gains briefly in ardour before making way for more capricious music on woodwind and strings, the music taking a more sardonic turn as strings, brass and timpani press on inexorably towards the main climax in which various motivic threads from across the work overall coalesce into a bitter peroration. This is cut off at its height to leave wind

and upper strings musing in the company of celesta and lower strings; the strings as a whole launching a final strenuous outburst that, goaded by brass and percussion, alights on a series of repeated chords. A breathless harp glissando heightens tension in the brutal closing bars.

The early 1950s proved a difficult period for Weinberg, as for most other Soviet composers, in terms of deciding just what was stylistically acceptable within the bleak artistic climate of Stalin's final years. Other than the *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes* [8.572779], none of his orchestral pieces met with any notable success and several are now missing – presumed lost. One of the most intriguing is the *Suite*, written in 1950 and published the following year, but of which no performance seems to have taken place. The present account is its first recording.

The *Romance* opens with an eloquent theme for trumpet that is soon taken over by violin and clarinet then flute, before being heard across the strings prior to its returning to the now muted trumpet and an elegiac close. The *Humoresque* centres on a nonchalant tune for solo woodwind over a lilting accompaniment on pizzicato strings, with violins sometimes adding a discreet countermelody: lower strings and brass trade exchanges in the trio section, before a fairly literal return to the initial tune. The *Waltz* is similarly dominated by an insinuating and slightly edgy theme which gains in character through some resourceful scoring for wind and strings, with a rhythmic syncopation to the fore throughout the heady central climax. The *Polka* opens with an athletic gesture from full orchestra, after which woodwind and strings embark upon a lively caper in which the use of percussion and piano adds an unlikely 'dance-band' mood to proceedings. The *Galop* rounds off matters with a breezy orchestral display as brass and strings vie for the limelight, duly concluding in an uproarious spirit to the finish.

Richard Whitehouse