

The Naxos logo is a white rectangular box with the word "NAXOS" in a bold, serif font. Above the text are several horizontal lines of varying lengths, resembling a stylized architectural element or a musical staff. The background of the entire image is a textured, abstract painting with a color palette of greens, yellows, and blues, suggesting a landscape or a natural scene.

WEINBERG

Symphony No. 18

'War – there is no word more cruel'

Trumpet Concerto

Andrew Balio, Trumpet

St Petersburg Chamber Choir

St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra

Vladimir Lande

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996): Symphony No 18 'War – there is no word more cruel' (In memory of those who fell in the Great Patriotic War), Op. 138 · Trumpet Concerto, Op. 94

Mieczysław Weinberg was born on 8th December 1919 in Warsaw, where he emerged as a highly regarded pianist. He 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). During 1939-41 he studied composition with Vasily Zolotarev, then, soon after the Nazi invasion, he headed 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 executed in 1948 and he himself was briefly imprisoned for alleged Jewish subversion prior to the death of Stalin in 1953), he gradually amassed a reputation as a composer who was championed by many of the leading Soviet singers, instrumentalists and conductors.

Despite several official honours Weinberg's fortunes declined notably over his final two decades, not least owing to the emergence of a younger generation of composers whose perceived antagonism to the Soviet establishment ensured them much greater coverage in the West, and his death in Moscow on 26th February 1996 went all but unnoticed. Since then, however, his output – which comprises 26 symphonies and seventeen string quartets, along with seven operas, some two dozen song-cycles and a wealth of chamber and instrumental music – has received an increasing number of performances and recordings, and has been held in ever greater regard as a substantial continuation of the Russian symphonic tradition.

Although their number is relatively modest, Weinberg's concertos still make for a viable overview of his output. Among the most substantial is the *Trumpet Concerto*, written during 1966-67 and premièred in Moscow on 6th January 1968 by Timofey Dokshitzer and

the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kirill Kondrashin. In three movements, this is among the composer's most diverse works from the period – ranging from pointillist textures invoking the modernist currents then prominent in Soviet music, to elements of the sardonic and the grotesque such as evoke that heady period prior to Socialist Realism. Not for nothing did Shostakovich consider this work a 'symphony for trumpet and orchestra'.

The first movement, *Etudes*, opens with nonchalant scales from the soloist which are seconded by the orchestra – the music duly opening out into an animated repartee between these two forces that abounds in rhythmic syncopation and quirky orchestration. A central section is initiated by a more inward response from the soloist against pizzicato strings, and while this soon builds to a hectic dance with percussion to the fore, the soloist responds even more inwardly over a backdrop of muted strings and harp. The initial activity presently continues – soloist and orchestra vying for attention as the scalic writing at the beginning is recalled and the music heads towards a sardonic while undeniably decisive close.

The second movement, *Episodes*, immediately denotes a greater seriousness of purpose with its intensive polyphonic writing for strings, offset by the wistful tones of a flute whose melodic line is taken up by the soloist (muted), together with upper strings and woodwind. Towards mid-point, the mood intensifies as wind and percussion introduce a martial tone that is assumed imperiously by the soloist, but this is offset by the flute over pizzicato strings in dialogue with the soloist and side-drum stealthily in attendance. The music gradually regains its earlier poise, a repeated gesture from the soloist sounding ominously before, over a quiet pedal-point, flute then piccolo and harp effect a calmly expectant close.

The third movement, *Fanfares*, ensues without pause – the soloist's repeated gesture proving to have Mendelssohnian overtones, which are continued with echoes of Rimsky-Korsakov and Stravinsky among others.

An elaborate cadenza unfolds, accompanied in the main by woodblock and side-drum, which leads into an obliquely elegant dialogue where the soloist is partnered by a succession of solo wind, string and percussion – all the while making reference back to the handful of quotes heard at the beginning. Towards the close the soloist touches musically upon the scales heard at the work's very opening, before this most unlikely of finales is rounded off by a single conclusive chord from percussion.

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) during the Great Patriotic War of 1940-45, as well as a need for Soviet composers to embody the eventual Socialist victory that persisted almost to the end of the Soviet era. Not that Weinberg's trilogy is 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 (1889-1966), while the *Eighteenth 'War – there is no word more cruel'* features a chorus in settings from Sergey Orlov (1921-77) and Alexander Tvardovsky (1910-71) – poets, it might be noted, whose initially 'official' writings soon became more inward and questioning – which frame a text derived from folk sources. Composed during 1982-84, the piece was given its first performance at the Moscow Autumn Festival in October 1985, with the Latvian State Academic Chorus and the USSR Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Fedoseyev (who had given the premières of almost all Weinberg's symphonies since the *Thirteenth* and continued to advocate the composer's music throughout his last years and beyond).

The work is in four continuous movements. The first is purely orchestral – opening with meditative writing for divided lower strings before trombones and trumpets make a ceremonial entrance. After a pause, the music resumes with aspects of both ideas combined before the former returns on upper strings and solo woodwind – the pensive

mood continuing until strings pursue an intensive threnody that brings the first climax and launches an animated motion for strings and brass which gains inexorably in dynamism as it reaches a powerful culmination on full orchestra underpinned by organ. This subsides into fragmented gestures, then an eloquent passage for muted strings provides the introspective postlude.

The second movement, setting Orlov's commemorative verses, begins with unaccompanied voices (and pursues a similar thematic trajectory to that of its predecessor) then quickly gains in expressive plangency. This dies down to leave strings and woodwind musing in its wake – with oboe, horn and bells unfolding an atmospheric dialogue. The chorus re-enters and the emotional import rises as voices and orchestra underscore each other in measured tread, but any climax is short-lived as the music returns to wistful exchanges between solo woodwind over a sombre backdrop on strings. Repeated gestures from woodwind and strings alternate with sparse gestures from solo strings as a point of near stasis is reached.

II. He was buried in the earth
Text by Sergey Orlov (1921-77)

“Yego zarili v shar zemnoy,
A bil on lish' soldat,
Vsego, druz'ya, soldat prostoy,
Bez zvaniy i nagrad.
Yemu kak mavzoley zemlya –
Na million vekov,
I Mechniye Puti pilyat
Vokrug nego s bokov.
Na rizhikh skatakh tuchi spyat,
Metelitsi metut,
Groma tyazhoyiye gremyat,
Vetra razbeg begut.
Davnim-davno okonchen boy...
Rukami vsekh druzey
Polozhen paren' v shar zemnoy,
Kak budto v mavzoley...”

*“He was buried in the earth,
He was only a simple soldier,
A simple soldier, my friends,
Without titles or awards.
The earth became his mausoleum –
For millions of years,
And the Milky Way
Surrounds him from all sides.
Clouds sleep on the crimson hills,
Snowstorms rage,
Heavy thunder roars,
Winds speed past.
The battle finished long ago...
The hands of all his friends
Laid the lad to rest in the earth,
As if in a mausoleum...”*

The third movement, setting a folk (evidently war-time) text, commences with piquant writing for female voices that are joined by their male counterparts and upper woodwind over stealthy lower strings. Solo voices periodically emerge from out of the choral texture, as if to point up the text's personal connotations, then brass and percussion enter as the music gains in urgency – the orchestra continuing in ever more hectic terms until the chorus re-emerges to bring about the main climax. Forceful exchanges between brass and timpani are curtailed to leave the voices unaccompanied. A passage for divided strings and harp restores serenity, organ adding a deep pedal and percussion hinting at the now distant activity.

III. My dear little berry, you do not know the pain that is in my heart
Slova narodniye (Folk Song)

“Yagodinochka, ne znayesh' v moyom serdtse boli-to.
Ti menya-to ne zhaleyesh', pozhaley lyubovi-to!
Belaya snezhinochka, ne sadiysya na ogon',
Tayu, tayu, po minutam bez tebya moy dorogoy!
Balalayechka, volinochka, akh,
tebya razbit' hotyat –
Dorogaya yagodinochka, tebya zabit' velyat.
Oy, kakiye nashi godiki kakiye vremena!
V samı yunı nashi godiki nagryanula vojna!
Neuzheli ne prikonchat na germanskoy pole boy,
Neuzheli ne vernyotsya yagodinochka domoy.
Neuzheli pulya mednaya zalotyochku ub'yt?
Pulya vpravo, pulya vlevo,
Pulya sdelay perelyot.”

*“My dear little berry, you do not know the pain that is in my heart.
If you have no pity for me,
then have pity for my love.
Little white snowflake, do not land on the flame,
I am melting minute by minute without you,
my dearest!
Ah, balalaika, bagpipes,
they want to destroy you –
My dear little berry, they are telling me to forget you.
Oh, what times, what years these are!
The war started when we were so young!
Will they not finish the struggle on the German battlefield,
Will my little berry not come home?
Will the copper bullet kill my intrepid lad?
May the bullet go right, may it go left,
May it fly past him.”*

The fourth movement, setting Tvardovsky's admonitory lines, unfolds in divided voices high above the mainly discreet accompaniment of muted brass – mezzos then sopranos having the melodic line. This swells into a brief upsurge, before the voices intermingle as a conclusion is reached whose calm is pervaded by the knowledge of what 'War' has entailed.

IV. War – there is no word more cruel
Text by Aleksandr Tvardovsky (1910-71)

“Voyna – zhestochke netu slova.
Voyna – pechal'ney netu slova.
Voyna – svyateye netu slova
V toske i slave etikh let.
I na ustakh u nas inogo
Yeshchyo ne mozhet bit' i net.”

*“War – there is no word more cruel.
War – there is no word more sad.
War – there is no word more holy
In the sorrow and the glory of these years.
There is and there could not be
Any other word on our lips.”*

Richard Whitehouse

*Transliterations and translations
by Anastasia Belina-Johnson*

Andrew Balio



Photo: Christian Colberg

A native of Wisconsin, Andrew Balio was appointed as Principal Trumpet of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in 2001. Prior orchestral appointments include Principal Trumpet of the Israel Philharmonic since 1994 and the Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México since 1990, in addition to the Boston Philharmonic. He has also been a guest soloist with the Bergen Philharmonic. His solo debut was at the age of fifteen, when he played Haydn's *Trumpet Concerto* with the Milwaukee Symphony. His teachers included Charles Schlueter, Adolph Herseth, Roger Voisin and Gene Young. As a soloist, Andrew Balio has appeared throughout Europe, South America, Japan and the United States.

St Petersburg Chamber Choir

Music Director: Nikolai Kornev · Chorus-master: Vladimir Dobrovolsky



Founded by Nikolai Kornev in 1997, only two years later the St Petersburg Chamber Choir performed to acclaim at the Leningrad Musical Spring Festival. This was the start of a successful series of concerts both in Russia and abroad, of recording sessions for soundtracks for over forty films and theatre productions, as well as television and radio programmes. The choir has performed as a leading participant at numerous festivals and has won a multitude of awards and prizes. It is led by Nikolai Kornev, who continues to develop the excellent traditions of the St Petersburg choral school which he studied at the Glinka Choral Institute and the Leningrad Conservatory in the classes of the legendary Yelizaveta Kudryavtseva and Pyotr Levando. The choir has worked with many leading conductors such as Sir Georg Solti, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Semyon Bychkov, Valery Gergiev, Mikhail Pletnev, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Yuri Temirkanov and others. It has toured abroad with repeated success, visiting almost all the countries of Europe, South Asia and North America.

St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra



The St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra was established in 1967 and until 1985 was known as the Orchestra of Ancient and Modern Music. Renowned soloists and conductors, including Yuri Temirkanov, Mariss Jansons, Svyatoslav Richter, and many others, have performed with the orchestra. In 1988, the orchestra began holding concerts in the Mirror Hall of the famous Princes Beloselsky-Belozersky Palace in the very heart of St Petersburg. Since 1990, the orchestra has been successfully touring in China, Japan, Germany, Austria, Mexico, Spain, Finland, Norway, Sweden, France, and Belgium. Its repertoire is limitless thanks to a well-considered policy of performing music of every epoch, genre, and style, with particular attention afforded to the music of living composers. In 2008, the American Vladimir Lande became the orchestra's principal guest conductor. www.spb-orchestra.ru/index_eng.php

Vladimir Lande



Vladimir Lande is Principal Guest Conductor of the St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra. He is guest conductor of the National Gallery Orchestra, Washington D.C., Music Director of the Washington Soloists Chamber Orchestra, the COSMIC Symphony Orchestra, and the Johns Hopkins University Chamber Orchestra. He appears as conductor with ballet and opera companies in Europe and the United States. In summer 2004, he conducted the opening concert of St Petersburg's White Nights Festival. Since then, he has led notable orchestras in the United States, conducted the National Gallery Chamber Orchestra on an American tour, and served as conductor of the 64th American Music Festival. Recent tours have taken him to New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy and Russia. In October 2011 he led the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra on their tour of the United States, Mexico and South America, and was made Associate Conductor in 2012. In addition to his busy conducting schedule, Vladimir Lande maintains a successful solo and chamber music career as oboist of the renowned Poulenc Trio. Recordings include those on the Marquis, Arabesque, Kleos, and Naxos labels. www.vladimirlande.com

Mieczysław Weinberg's *Eighteenth Symphony* is the centrepiece of his symphonic trilogy *On the Threshold of War*, which focusses on the traumas of the Soviet Union in World War II and stands as one of the most significant creations of his later years. Using texts by important Soviet poets, the work reflects on war with eloquent expressive power. The *Trumpet Concerto* is amongst Weinberg's most substantial and diverse works from the 1960s. Ranging in effects from pointillist modernism to the grotesque and sardonic, it was described by Shostakovich as a 'symphony for trumpet and orchestra'.

Mieczysław
WEINBERG
(1919-1996)

Trumpet Concerto, Op. 94 (1966-67)* **26:05**

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| 1 I. Etudes | 9:08 |
| 2 II. Episodes | 10:41 |
| 3 III. Fanfares | 6:16 |

Symphony No. 18 'War – there is no word more cruel', Op. 138 (1982-84) **44:21**

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 4 I. Adagio. Allegro – | 15:31 |
| 5 II. 'He was buried in the Earth' – † | 12:36 |
| 6 III. 'My dear little berry, you do not know the pain that is in my heart' – † | 12:03 |
| 7 IV. 'War – there is no word more cruel' † | 4:11 |

Andrew Balio, Trumpet* • St Petersburg Chamber Choir†

Tatyana Perevyazkina, Soprano† • Ekaterina Shikunova, Alto†

Vladimir Dobrovolsky, Tenor† • Zahar Shikunov, Baritone†

St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra • Vladimir Lande

Russian transliterations and English translations of the sung texts can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded by Petersburg Recording Studio at the St Catherine Lutheran Church, St Petersburg, Russia, on 25th and 27th December, 2010 (tracks 1-3), and on 29th and 30th December, 2012, and from 9th to 11th January, 2013 (tracks 4-7) • Produced, engineered and edited by Dirk Fischer (tracks 1-3); Recording assistant: Alexey Barashkin (tracks 1-3) • Produced, engineered and edited by Alexei Barashkin (tracks 4-7) • Booklet notes: Richard Whitehouse

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