

A b s t r a c t s

The Power of Music Mieczyslaw Weinberg: A Chronology in Sounds

David Fanning

“But What Counts Is the Music”

Mieczysław Weinberg’s Life and Work

The discovery of Mieczysław Weinberg’s work is not a flash in the pan. The more music from Weinberg’s pen becomes known, the more clear it becomes that this Soviet composer of Polish-Jewish origin was not only one of the most productive but also one of the most creative of the 20th century. He completely mastered the mediums of music and drew on its wealth of folkloric and artistic sources for his work. The power of his music can make life better. The question is raised all the more: How could it take so long for this music to come into its own?

Jascha Nemtsov

Distinctive, Jewish, Unrecognised

Reasons for M. Weinberg’s “Non-Reception”

For a long time, the phenomenon of “non-reception” in music attracted little attention. Music history was considered just and rational. It seemed to retain what was valuable and to abandon what was less valuable to oblivion. The insight that the forgotten works included treasures that enrich musical life changed the conception of music history. Mieczysław Weinberg’s works were also ignored for decades. One reason is to be found in his musical language. It is rooted in Polish-Jewish musical culture. Weinberg must number among the outstanding composers of the 20th century.

Wolfgang Mende**Cycles of a Myth****Weinberg and the Great Patriotic War**

The 20th century's experiences with violence are a central theme in the work of Soviet composer Mieczysław Weinberg. Weinberg's handling of these themes reflects the development of Soviet history policy. During the Great Patriotic War, he wrote patriotic works to strengthen the resolve to fight. The Polish-Jewish composer, whose family was murdered by the Nazis, only publicly addressed the Holocaust in the 1960s when the taboo of this topic was loosened. In the Brezhnev era, when the Soviet regime raised the commemoration of victory into a mass ritual, Weinberg also dealt with the war intensively. But Weinberg avoided gestures of blaring triumph and focused on suffering and sorrow.

Stefan Weiss**What Did the West Know?****The Repression of Composers in the Soviet Union**

Only recently has music research addressed the persecution of musicians under Stalinism. Western publications had already published information about this after the Second World War. But these writings revealed more about Cold War patterns of thinking than the mechanisms of music-related repression in the Soviet Union. Some of what was dismissed at the time as the anti-Communist propaganda of Soviet émigrés turned out to be true. Once determined by an entrenched means of interpretation, the view to the facts is now free.

Reinhard Flender**The Story of a Friendship****Dmitrii Shostakovich and Mieczysław Weinberg**

Longstanding friendships between artists are rare, for artists are to a high degree egocentric. A close friendship bound Dmitrii Shostakovich and Mieczysław Weinberg for over 32 years. The polarity of temperaments enhanced their creative powers. The work on their own compositions, the uplifting experience of give and take, bound both composers. This productive and creative use of "common stylistic devices" is an exception in the history of music in the 20th century.

Friedrich Geiger
Ideology and Autonomy
Mieczysław Weinberg's String Quartets

The string quartet stood in diametric opposition to the ideological precepts of Soviet socialist realism: It was considered the epitome of bourgeois musical culture, an elite art for connoisseurs. Due to the intimacy of the genre, it was not suitable for the masses, its tradition as a place of compositional experimentation and artistic self-exploration placed it a priori in the vicinity of "subjectivism" and "formalism". The composition of string quartets was therefore a balancing act for Soviet composers. Weinberg created 17 string quartets. He found an equilibrium between ideological demands and genre-specific tradition. The transformations of ideology in art are reflected in the changing emphasis.

Inessa Dvuzhil'naia
Freylekhs – Festive and Tragic
Jewish Themes in Prokof'ev, Shostakovich, and Weinberg

In three works of chamber music that appeared in the 1940s, Prokof'ev, Shostakovich, and Weinberg used the most well known of East European Jewish dances, the freylekhs. Integrated into the genre of trio or quartet, the freylekhs sounds sometimes high-spirited and dance-like, sometimes mournful, it flares up briefly or permeates thematically the dramaturgy of an entire movement. Just as the composers are different, so are the hues that the freylekhs assumes. In Weinberg's Piano Trio, the dance-like theme in the upper registers of the violin sounds like a desperate scream – recalling his murdered father, who had been employed as a violinist at Warsaw's Jewish Theatre.

Verena Mogl
Music in Motion
Mieczysław Weinberg's Compositions for Film

Starting at the end of the 1940s, Mieczysław Weinberg composed for the film industry. Between 1949 and 1989, he wrote the music for over 70 cinematic, television, and animated films, among them such well known movies as *The Cranes Are Flying* or the animation classic *Vinni-Pukh*. He never pushed his music into the foreground, but always highlighted details of the plot with great skill and a modicum of musical devices, thus interpreting scenes by means of sound.

Dorota Szwarzman
Caught in the Middle

Why Mieczysław Weinberg Is Unknown in Poland

As a Polish Jew who spent the greater part of his life in the Soviet Union, Weinberg eludes clear national classification. As a composer, he was primarily bound to the Russian symphonic tradition. In Poland, Weinberg was seen as a Soviet composer of Jewish ancestry – and even that only by a small circle of music experts. Concerts and recordings are rare. Weinberg's traditionalist style was long considered old-fashioned, the composer as epigone of Dmitrii Shostakovich. To this day, this misperception hinders Weinberg's reception in Poland.

Zofia Posmysz
The Passenger

On Auschwitz, Her Book, and Weinberg's Opera

Zofia Posmysz survived Auschwitz. She worked through her experiences in the concentration camps in the novella *The Passenger*. The book appeared in 1962 and served Mieczysław Weinberg as the source material for the opera of the same name. For reasons of ideology, it was taboo in the Soviet Union and in Poland. Now it is to have its premiere. Zofia Posmysz considers this very fortunate. She looks back at the time in the concentration camps, depicts the way to the book and to the opera, recalls the taciturn Weinberg, and argues against a competition of victims between Jews and Poles. Auschwitz is a trauma for humanity.

Michał Bristiger
Remembering Auschwitz

Mieczysław Weinberg's Opera "The Passenger"

Over 40 years after Mieczysław Weinberg composed "The Passenger," the staged premiere of this opera is taking place. Soviet censorship scrapped the opera because of its inopportune subject matter: A former overseer from Auschwitz encounters a victim and is confronted with her own guilt. Despite the tradition of works that capture the terror of the camp in music, the staging of an Auschwitz opera seems an aesthetically risky venture. A new interpretation must take into consideration the changed understanding of Auschwitz as a metaphor for the break with civilisation, as a timeless symbol for "industrial" mass murder.

Antonina Klokova

“My Moral Duty”

Mieczysław Weinberg and the Holocaust

Composers from the United States and Israel define the Holocaust genre in music. In their works, they express admonishment, indictment, and remembrance through twelve-tone technique, atonality, and expressive rhythm. Jewish melodies do not play a central role. It is different in the Soviet Union: Mieczysław Weinberg and Dmitrii Shostakovich used numerous Jewish musical elements as one of the few possibilities to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and to take up a position against anti-Jewish sentiments in their own country. Weinberg encrypted his own examination of the trauma instead of admonishing and accusing.

Matthias Stadelmann

Music and Power

Composing in the Former Soviet Union

For a long time, music research in the West depicted the relationship between composers and the Soviet system as a black and white image. But unlike literature, music was frequently able to elude the pressure of state cultural policy. Two new books address this topic in different ways.

