



WEINBERG

Chamber Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4

EAST-WEST CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
ROSTISLAV KRIMER

Warsaw - Minsk - Tashkent - Moscow

*"I am leaving in oblivion and poverty, but I believe:
after my death there will be international festivals of my music."*

M. Weinberg

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919–1996)

Chamber Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4

I would like to express my warm regards and thanks to the performers and listeners of my father's music for their love and attention.

I am so happy that the whole cycle of his chamber symphonies was recorded by the wonderful international Orchestra-for-Peace the East-West Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Rostislav Krimer, in the city of Minsk, the city that saved my father's life. If Belarus had not given my father asylum, he would have suffered the tragic fate of his family: death at the hands of the Nazis in a concentration camp.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Belarusian people from the bottom of my heart and wish great success to the wonderful performers of my father's music!

Anna Weinberg

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 Vasily Zolotaryov, then, after the Nazi invasion, headed further east to Tashkent where he became immersed in numerous theatre and opera projects. There he also wrote his *Symphony No. 1, Op. 10*, which favourably impressed Shostakovich and resulted in his settling in Moscow in 1943, where he remained 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), Weinberg gradually gained a reputation



as a figure who was championed by many of the leading Soviet singers, instrumentalists and conductors. He received numerous official honours but his 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 accorded them greater coverage in the West (where Weinberg was never to enjoy 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 an increasing number of performances and recordings and is now held in high regard as a significant and distinctive continuation of the Russian symphonic tradition.

Symphonic thinking dominated Weinberg's final decade even more than previously, with his last three symphonies and four chamber symphonies completing the cycle through their nexus of references to and reworkings of earlier works. His chamber symphonies throw an ambivalent light over almost his whole creativity, however. That Weinberg began writing them after composing 19 symphonies has itself been noted; he himself admitted, 'I got a bit lost', stating that they differed '...neither in length nor in character from the [strings only] *Second*, *Seventh* and *Tenth*'. Aside from his not wishing to equal the 27 symphonies of Nikolai Myaskovsky, the main reason lies in their content: the first three chamber symphonies draw, in whole or in part, on his string quartets written decades earlier.

While the *Chamber Symphony No. 1, Op. 145* (1987) [Naxos 8.574063] is a straightforward transcription of the *String Quartet, Op. 3* (Weinberg's second string quartet, in its revised version from 1986), the *Chamber Symphony No. 2, Op. 147* from the same year (whose initial designation as 'Symphony No. 21' underlines Weinberg's continuing indecision as to whether these chamber symphonies should be included in his symphonic canon) revisits the third quartet, *String Quartet, Op. 14*, written in 1944 but never performed in public. Here, though, the composer recast the *Quartet's* central slow movement as the Finale and wrote an entirely new second movement and a significant part for timpani. The result brings it firmly within the expressive orbit of Weinberg's music from this period, above all the *Symphonies Nos. 20–22*, whose sombrely fatalistic tone probably owes as much to the composer's declining health as to the chaotic closing years of the Soviet Union. It seems pertinent to remember these first two chamber symphonies being singled out in

the citation when Weinberg was awarded the State Prize of the USSR in 1990, though this televised occasion did little to revive interest in the composer as he entered his eighth and last decade.

The first movement of *Chamber Symphony No. 2* launches with a surging theme in the strings urged on by the timpani. At length the tension subsides and a second, more reflective theme unfolds in the upper strings over a sparse and searching accompaniment. The texture gradually thickens as the stormy development section approaches, where elements of both themes are heard before the reprise, which is largely given over to the second theme as the music subsides into a spectral Coda. This is briefly disrupted by a sudden outburst from the violins and timpani prior to the quizzical-sounding close. The second movement is a type of intermezzo that Weinberg made his own over the course of his composing. The upper strings proceed with hesitation over a faltering accompaniment, beneath which the timpani's discreet taps sound almost ominous in their restraint. These taps come to the fore during a transition back to the initial theme, whose restatement gradually recedes as the music reaches its uncertain ending. The final movement begins with a stern theme announced in rhythmic unison and shared between the upper and lower strings. This is evidently the emotional culmination to which the work has been heading, and it continues with an elegiac melody in the violins which expands into a sustained, expressive discourse. From here the music subsides regrettably yet inevitably into a lengthy postlude, made more fateful by further quiet strokes from the timpani. A sudden anguished outburst makes way for a lonely violin solo, though it is the timpani that have the last, defiant gesture.

The *Chamber Symphony No. 3, Op. 151* [Naxos 8.574063], for which Weinberg drew on his *String Quartet, Op. 27* (1945) (although with an original Finale), followed in early 1991. The *Chamber Symphony No. 4, Op. 153*, written between 30 April and 12 May 1992, was Weinberg's last completed work and here the strings are joined by an obbligato clarinet (in A) and a triangle (heard just four times during the Finale). Unlike its predecessors, *No. 4's* movements form an unbroken continuity and the

piece does not rework an earlier string quartet, although there are allusions to earlier pieces – notably a chorale melody Weinberg once referred to as a constant presence across his creative work. Dedicated to the composer Boris Tchaikovsky, his younger contemporary and longstanding confidante, the piece was unheard in Weinberg's lifetime. Its first outing was probably by Thord Svedlund with the Umeå Symphony Orchestra in May 1998.

The opening movement commences with the forementioned chorale, its nostalgia shot through with hushed anguish. There is elaboration from the strings, but with no increase in tension or dynamics, until the clarinet makes its discreet entrance, its lilting theme heard against *pizzicato* accompaniment and a haunting counter melody. The clarinet returns to the chorale theme, gradually regains its earlier somnolence, then reaches a motionless close. The second movement affords a strong contrast, its hectic main theme shared between the clarinet and strings above a pulsating accompaniment. The second idea feels no less fraught, with its stark rhythmic exchanges between the upper and lower strings followed

by intensive development of both themes with the clarinet to the fore. There follow two impassioned solos – for violin and then cello – after which the third movement commences with pensive exchanges between the clarinet and the lower strings. This evolves haltingly into an eloquent discourse for strings that alludes to the chorale melody then builds towards a plangent culmination topped by the clarinet. A resonant pause leads into the final and longest movement, initially evoking the desolate mood from the beginning until the clarinet makes its reticent entry. A stroke of the triangle announces a plaintive melody played by the clarinet, with klezmer overtones, heralding a more animated though still restrained expression, with characterful phrases from the upper strings. The music reaches a sustained climax, followed by a rapid descent from the clarinet and an abrupt exchange with the double bass, before heading to a resigned close on the lower strings with *pizzicato* chords and one last triangle chime.

Richard Whitehouse

Igor Fedorov



Photo: Evgeny Evtyukhov

Born in Moscow, Igor Fedorov is one of few clarinetists in the world who enjoys an exclusively solo career. He entered the Gnessin School of Music at the age of five and since his childhood has received scholarships from Rostropovich, Vladimir Spivakov and Yamaha. The last of these gave him the opportunity to perform before HRH Queen Elizabeth II and Pope John Paul II. Fedorov graduated from the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music in 2001, completing his postgraduate studies there two years later. He was the longest-term student of and successor to the legendary Professor Ivan Mozgovenko, who knew Weinberg personally and performed his music in the composer's presence. Fedorov appears as a soloist and chamber music partner with such artists as Yuri Bashmet, Vladimir Spivakov, Denis Matsuev, Alexander Ghindin, the Borodin Quartet, Gautier Capuçon and Vladimir Fedoseev.



East-West Chamber Orchestra

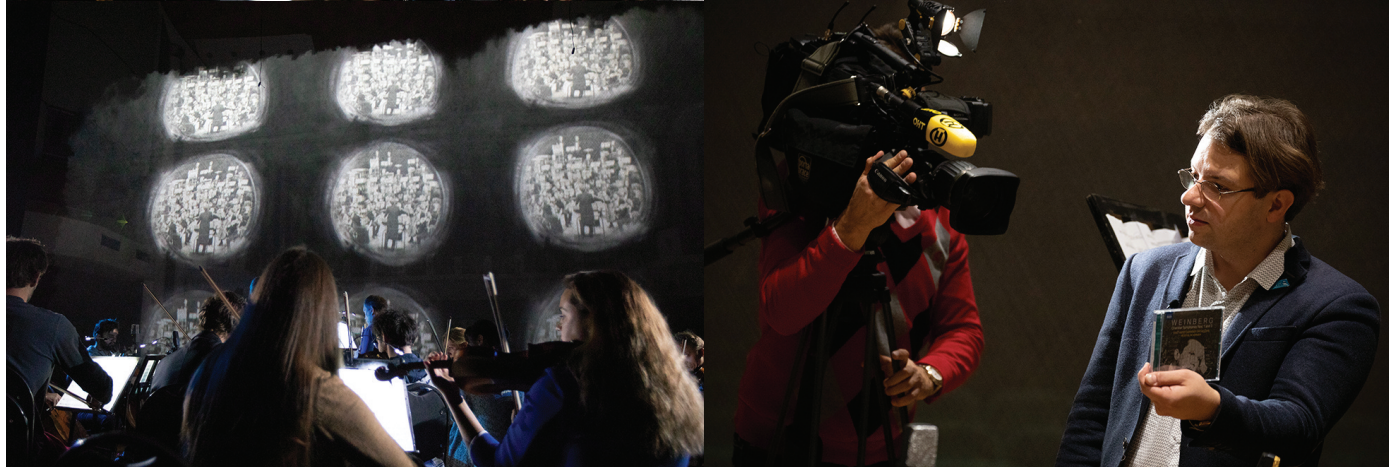


The East-West Chamber Orchestra – orchestra-in-residence at the Yuri Bashmet International Music Festival – was founded in 2015 by pianist and conductor Rostislav Krimer. Its mission as an 'orchestra for peace' is to strengthen cultural co-operation between eastern and western Europe as well as the east and the west. Its musicians comprise outstanding soloists, orchestral players and concertmasters, including laureates of the Tchaikovsky, ARD, Queen Elisabeth and Long-Thibaud competitions, among others, performing on exceptional instruments including Stradivaris, Guarneris and Guadagninis. As an active promoter of contemporary music and new repertoire, the East-West Chamber Orchestra has performed at festivals and on tour with artists including Yuri Bashmet, Fazil Say, Sergei Krylov, Julian Rachlin, Alexander Kniazev among many others. The ensemble also runs projects for young people, children, babies and pregnant women, and participates in charity events for children, working with UNICEF and collecting funds for children's health programmes. The Orchestra's first recording, of Mieczysław Weinberg's *Chamber Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3* (Naxos 8.574063, released 2019), received glowing reviews in the music press, including *Gramophone* magazine, and was nominated for an ICMA and Opus Klassik Award. www.EastWestChamberOrchestra.com

Rostislav Krimer



Pianist and conductor Rostislav Krimer is a collaborator of Yuri Bashmet and was a duo partner of the legendary Paul Badura-Skoda, with whom he recorded Mozart's *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra*. He has also worked with Krzysztof Penderecki, Gidon Kremer, Maxim Vengerov, Sergei Krylov and Fazil Say, and performed with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Kremerata Baltica and Moscow Soloists. He has given world premieres of works including Bruno Mantovani's *Piano Quintet* and a rediscovered piece by Dmitry Shostakovich. Born in Belarus, Krimer studied in Helsinki, Cologne and London and was also mentored by Paavo and Neeme Järvi. In 2018 he was named a Friend of UNICEF and he was a Star Ambassador of the Second European Games in 2019. In 2020 he became an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in London. He is artistic director of the Yuri Bashmet International Music Festival and chief conductor of the East-West Chamber Orchestra. www.krimer.de



Symphonic thinking dominated Mieczysław Weinberg's final decade, and these chamber symphonies are part of an interrelated sequence that reworks and cites earlier pieces. The *Second Chamber Symphony* draws on a string quartet from 1944, reflecting the sombre and fatalistic tone of the period. The *Fourth Chamber Symphony* was Weinberg's last completed work, and uses a haunting chorale melody that he once referred to as a constant presence throughout his creativity. Weinberg's *First* and *Third Chamber Symphonies* (8.574063) 'blossom in vividly colourful performances' (*Pizzicato*).



Mieczysław
WEINBERG
(1919–1996)

Chamber Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4

Chamber Symphony No. 2, Op. 147 for string orchestra and timpani (1987)	21:59
❶ I. Allegro molto	8:55
❷ II. Moderato	4:38
❸ III. Andante sostenuto	8:23

Chamber Symphony No. 4, Op. 153 for string orchestra, clarinet and triangle (1992)	35:58
❹ I. Lento –	9:41
❺ II. Allegro molto – Moderato –	7:58
❻ III. Adagio – Meno mosso –	10:00
❼ IV. Andantino – Doppio più lento (Adagissimo)	8:13

Igor Fedorov, Clarinet ❹–❼

East-West Chamber Orchestra • Rostislav Krimer

Recorded: 10 October 2019 ❶–❸, 11 October 2019 ❹–❼ at the Grand Hall of the Belarus State Philharmonic, Minsk, Belarus, during the 14th Yuri Bashmet International Music Festival
Producers: Vilius Keras, Aleksandra Kerienė • Engineers: Vilius Keras, Evelina Staniulytė
Editor: Aleksandra Kerienė • Booklet notes: Richard Whitehouse
Publishers: Peermusic Classical ❶–❸, Kompozitor Sankt-Peterburg ❹–❼
Photograph of the composer courtesy of Olga Rakhalskaya and Anna Weinberg

© & © 2021 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com