



# Mieczysław WEINBERG

## COMPLETE VIOLIN SONATAS, VOLUME THREE

SONATA NO. 6 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 136BIS

SONATA NO. 3 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 37

SONATA NO. 3 FOR VIOLIN SOLO, OP. 126

Yuri Kalnits, violin  
Michael Csányi-Wills, piano

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

# MIECZYSŁAW WEINBERG: COMPLETE MUSIC FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, VOLUME THREE

by David Fanning

Once settled in Moscow in September 1943, following escapes from the Nazi invasions of Poland in 1939 and Belorussia in 1941, Weinberg rapidly made a name for himself as one of the rising stars of the younger generation of Soviet composers. The arena in which his reputation first soared was chamber music – a well-chosen field, since his new friend and mentor, Dmitry Shostakovich, had for some years been calling on his colleagues to cultivate it and had been leading by example, with his Cello Sonata, Piano Quintet, Piano Trio and first two string quartets, all composed between 1934 and 1944. These genres were precisely the ones Weinberg favoured in his first years in Moscow, along with the sonata for violin and piano, of which Shostakovich also essayed an example (in 1945), only to abandon it half-way through the first movement. One important difference between Weinberg and Shostakovich is that where the latter left only two mature piano sonatas and one each for violin, viola and cello with piano, Weinberg composed 29 sonatas in all, of which six are for violin and piano, and three for violin solo. The violin had been his father's instrument, although, as Weinberg once put it, 'not on a very high professional level',<sup>1</sup> and in later life the composer was at various times close to a number of fine Soviet violinists, not least David Oistrakh. Although not a string-player himself, Weinberg's command of the idiom was sure-footed, almost from the beginning.

Composed between 26 February and 22 April 1947, the **Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano, Op. 37**, is in three movements. It adopts the fast-slow-moderate template that was one of Weinberg's favourites at the time, and it carries a dedication to the prize-winning Jewish violinist Mikhail Fikhtengolts. As with the previous two

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Lyudmila Nikitina, 'Pochti lyuboy mig zhizni – rabota' ('Nearly every moment of my life is work'), *Muzikal'naya akademiya*, 1994–95, p. 17.

violin sonatas, the first movement – an *Allegro moderato* [1] – is fast but mainly lyrical, though now with a noticeably more acerbic harmonic language. This time, however, the structure is more economical and more disciplined in its elaborations, not least in the fugato presentation of the second subject. In addition, structural turning-points are more subtly handled (though the overall sonata-form design is not in doubt) and the compressed dimensions give the sense of important matters held back.

The following *Andantino* [2] keeps its cards even closer to its chest. The tempo heading in the manuscript was clearly *Andantino molto rubato*, but the modifier was crossed out, along with some 26 further directions to vary the tempo. Evidently Weinberg must have felt that his original markings were too prescriptive, and that the flexibility he had in mind would be best left to the instincts of the performers. Later in his output this policy would extend to dynamic markings, and even to tempo.

The tortuous lyricism of the slow movement strongly echoes the ascetic chromaticism and stripped-bare textures of the slow movement of Shostakovich's Second Piano Sonata and, more distantly, his Cello Sonata. Even more strikingly, the last movement, *Allegretto cantabile* [3], opens with a close paraphrase of the corresponding point in Shostakovich's Piano Quintet and continues with the same *freylekhs* idiom (a fast-moving klezmer dance) as the finale of his Second Piano Trio. Other melodic cells are, however, self-borrowings, notably from the outer songs of Weinberg's *Jewish Songs*, Op. 13. A violin cadenza – entirely unexpected – then precedes an impressively intransigent slow coda. All in all, this is one of the most impressive and ambitious of Weinberg's chamber-music finales to date, all the way to the coda, which feints at a cyclic recall of the first movement but in fact steers a middle course between this feint and the mood of the finale itself.

**The Sonata No. 3 for Solo Violin, Op. 126**, dates from 1 September to 15 November 1979 and is dedicated – uniquely in Weinberg's output – to the memory of his father. The 1984 publication by Sovetsky kompozitor included added performance directions by the Oistrakh-pupil Viktor Pikayzen (b. 1933), winner of the Paganini Competition in 1965, who also made a magnificent recording of the work and gave the first public performance, in November 1983 at the third Moscow Autumn Festival. At least one

review of that occasion picked up resonances from the ‘dramaturgical peculiarities’ of Shostakovich’s late works, specifically the String Quartet No. 15 and the Viola Sonata. It is fairly typical of Soviet music criticism (and not in any way a comment on any lack of individuality in Weinberg’s works) that these remarks could apply to any of Weinberg’s three solo-violin sonatas and indeed to many of his other solo sonatas. Closer still to the specific musical ideas of Weinberg’s work is Shostakovich’s Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 134 – its scherzo in particular.

The Sonata is cast in a single movement, beginning with passionate, jagged double-stopped declamations, which ascend in drawn-out waves [4]. Eight distinct sections are can be discerned, demarcated by changes of texture and metronome marking. The brief reference to the first section between sections two [5] and three [6] is the only significant backward glance. In its overall layout the Sonata echoes Weinberg’s recently composed Fifteenth Quartet, though it is closer to a large-scale four- or five-in-one design, by virtue of the pairing of its inner ‘movements’.

The second and third sections seek to establish a calmer, more lyrical frame of mind, whereas the fourth [7] and fifth [8] are both scherzos, respectively quizzical and insistently dramatic in character. The brief sixth section [9] introduces a seventh [10] that functions as a slow movement. The finale [11] takes the form of a gentle folk-like dance, echoing the third movement of the String Trio, Op. 48, perhaps in tribute to Weinberg’s father. Here the metres that previously were constantly changing are stabilised for the first time. At length a calmer lyrical episode is reached, though its calm gradually becomes more anxious and troubled. The ethereal conclusion is marked, as so often in the late stages of Weinberg’s chamber music of the time, by special effects, in this case harmonics, ricochet bowing and *pizzicato-glissando*.

Weinberg’s **Sonata No. 6 for Violin and Piano, Op. 136bis**, is dedicated to the memory of his mother, who reportedly perished along with his father and sister in the Nazi concentration camp of Trawniki (the other works so dedicated are the Symphonies Nos. 13 and 16 and the song *Memorial*, Op. 132). Given that the Sonata was not listed in the official Soviet-era catalogue of Weinberg’s works, which he himself checked and annotated, and was only discovered in the family archive in 2007,

it has been given the appellation Op. 136bis, even though it pre-dates the official Op. 136, the Sonata No. 4 for Solo Viola.

The manuscript is dated 1 January to 14 October 1982 – an exceptional time-span in Weinberg's output for such a comparatively short piece. The start-date is significant, because it was from 1 January that Weinberg also dated the beginning of his work on Symphonies Nos. 17 and 18. Whether Weinberg shelved the Sonata as in some way unsatisfactory, or perhaps too close in its material to his *War Trilogy* (Symphonies Nos. 17 to 19) to qualify in his mind as an independent work, or whether he perhaps simply mislaid it and assumed it to be lost, is unknown. At any rate it is as complete as any of his other late sonatas, and in its adventurous textures and profound expressive character it deserves to be ranked no less highly.

The single movement falls into three large sections plus a short coda, delineated by the tempo-scheme *Moderato – Adagio – Moderato – Adagio*. The striking opening *Moderato* [12] begins with an extended violin solo that Weinberg went on to re-use in the first *Allegro* of his Symphony No. 18. Here the leading idea is strikingly reminiscent of the finale of Rachmaninov's First Suite for Two Pianos, its insistent, bell-like effect being reinforced when the violin ascends to its highest register and the piano joins it. As if to redress the balance between the instruments, the piano concludes this first section with a more lyrical solo over chorale-like chords, which Weinberg also used in the opening pages of Symphony No. 17.

In the *Adagio* [13] the violin picks up the piano theme and adds characteristic lamenting rocking ideas. At the return of the *Moderato* [14], the violin synthesises ideas from the previous two sections, building to a passionate but concentrated climax, before a sudden drop in the dynamic level for the brief, reflective *Adagio* coda.

*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, 2019) and a commented translation of Nielsen's Selected Letters and Diaries (Museum Tusculanum 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 Czifra (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. 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 Soloists Chamber Orchestra, Novosibirsk Symphony Orchestra, Kazan Chamber Orchestra La Primavera, London Musical Arts Ensemble, Minsk Symphony Orchestra and the Junge Philharmonie Köln. 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, Eduard 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 in Moscow and later at the Gnesin Music School for Gifted Children there. 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](http://www.yurikalnits.co.uk)

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, Jose 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 the Arts Council/National Lottery Fund, which is raising awareness of autism through Lieder. A work for string orchestra, *Nocturne for Yodit*, 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, and the recording released by Prima Facie Records in 2020. The CD was nominated for 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, becoming 'Recording of the Month' for MusicWeb International.

He has written scores for over 40 films, including documentaries such as *The King of Nerac* and *Maestro*, a 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 third 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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# The previous instalments of the Kalnits/Csányi-Wills Weinberg series on Toccata Classics

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Critical commentary on Volume One:

‘a most auspicious introduction to Weinberg’s violin music, offering a chameleon-like variety that extends from the feral onslaught of the Solo Sonata to the profundities of the Fourth Sonata and to the outright melodiousness of the First. Strongly recommended for repertoire, performances, and recorded sound.’

—Robert Maxham, *Fanfare*

TOCC 0026



...and Volume Two

‘The terseness of the cultural references in all the works here is brought out with honest intensity by the Moscow-born violinist Yuri Kalnits and British pianist Michael Csányi-Wills, whose performance is very much one of musicians who carry the music in their blood.’

—Caroline Gill, *Gramophone*



**Violin Sonatas Nos. 3 and 6, Opp. 37 and 136bis**

Recorded on 9–12 July 2015 at St John's Church, Fulham, London

Producer-engineer: Michael Csányi-Wills

Mixing: Michael Csányi-Wills and Rupert Coulson

**Solo Sonata No. 3, Op. 126**

Recorded on 7–8 July 2020 at K Studios, London

Producer-engineer: Yuri Kalnits

Mixing: Rupert Coulson

Booklet essay: David Fanning

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## MIECZYŚŁAW WEINBERG Complete Violin Sonatas, Volume Three

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<b>Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano, Op. 37 (1947)</b>	<b>21:09</b>
1 I <i>Allegro moderato</i>	4:06
2 II <i>Andantino</i>	8:17
3 III <i>Allegretto cantabile – Lento (quasi adagio)</i>	8:46

<b>Sonata No. 3 for Violin Solo, Op. 126 (1979)</b>	<b>23:40</b>
4 ♩ = 208 (bars 1–71) –	3:39
5 ♩ = 84; <i>molto espressivo</i> (bars 72–136) –	3:16
6 ♩ = 63 (bars 137–81) –	3:57
7 ♩ = 126 (bars 182–287) –	3:28
8 ♩ = 92; <i>con fuoco</i> (bars 288–581) –	4:12
9 ♩ = 116 (bars 582–96) –	0:54
10 ♩ = 69 (bars 597–619) –	1:38
11 ♩ = 152 (bars 620–741)	2:36

<b>Sonata No. 6 for Violin and Piano, Op. 136bis (1982)</b>	<b>15:47</b>
12 I <i>Moderato</i> –	7:15
13 II <i>Adagio</i> –	3:56
14 III <i>Moderato – Adagio</i>	4:36

**Yuri Kalnits, violin**

**TT 60:36**

**Michael Csányi-Wills, piano** 1–3 12–14

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