

WEINBERG ATTACCA QUARTET | JEANNE GOLAN
PIANO QUINTET | CELLO SONATA NO. 2 | PIANO SONATINE



STEINWAY & SONS

MIECZYSLAW WEINBERG (1919–1996)

QUINTET FOR PIANO AND STRING QUARTET, OP. 18 (1944)

- 1 MODERATO CON MOTO 9:22
- 2 ALLEGRETTO 7:11
- 3 PRESTO 7:14
- 4 LARGO 13:53
- 5 ALLEGRO AGITATO 9:42

SONATINE FOR PIANO, OP. 49 (1951)

- 6 ALLEGRO LEGGIERO 2:16
- 7 ADAGIETTO LUGUBRE 3:17
- 8 ALLEGRETTO 1:19

SONATA NO. 2 FOR CELLO AND PIANO, OP. 63 (1958)

- 9 MODERATO 7:06
- 10 ANDANTE 8:44
- 11 ALLEGRO 6:40

PLAYING TIME 76:48

Weinberg: Of Cycles and Such A particular implication is posed when a composer returns to a melody after taking the listener on an extended journey away from it, which can result in bringing the musical universe of that piece together. The Romantics, following in Beethoven's footsteps, understood the power of cycling back. Whether the melody serves as a recollection, a new understanding of an earlier time, or perhaps reliving a moment, it taps into the human psyche of associating like-events (birthdays, holidays, memorials) to each other and drawing meaning from them. In the mid-20th century, even as many artists went in overtly avant-garde directions, there were those who, choosing to work within seeming norms of structure, managed to integrate them with their sound-worlds in singularly captivating and moving ways.

Mieczyslaw (Moises) Weinberg [1919-1996] was such a composer. The following two quotes from his final years encapsulate the ways in which music became 'home' for a man who suffered persecution and exile many times over, and how he chose to furnish that home.

"I believe that every moment in the life of a real artist consists in some sense of work. Interesting, persistent, endless work. Work not only at the writing desk but also work in observation, in the absorption of sounds, colors, motion and the rhythms of reality into oneself. I am always working."

"In general I have what I would call a 'large cooking-pot' in which all my themes live together, because I think that the most important thing in music – including instrumental music – is melody, which gives [the piece its] identity/image. ... Everything is infinitely intertwined. Often the rational principle does not dominate, only melody..."

His life full of twists and turns, Weinberg was born in Poland and died in Russia. He endured the despotism first of Nazi rule where his family was killed at the Trawniki Concentration Camp, then of the

Soviet Union that he'd fled to, where he was placed on death row for false charges of treason until the demise of Joseph Stalin.

His works are strong, beautifully crafted and grippingly original. While often structured by classic forms, they equally embrace influences that range from Jewish cantorial music and the Yiddish Theatre his father wrote and conducted for, to his conservatory training as composer and pianist in Warsaw, to his abiding and deep mutual friendship with Dmitri Shostakovich at the vanguard of Russian Modernism. Now beginning to be known outside of Russia, Weinberg is one of the most significant and prolific composers of the 20th Century.

The two main works in this recording, the Piano Quintet and the Cello Sonata No. 2, are cyclical in nature, as the climactic melody of each first movement returns toward the coda of the last movements. They are also each written in the wake of Weinberg having escaped a near-death situation.

The Piano Quintet op.18 was written in 1944. Just five years earlier, "Metek" along with his little sister were sent away by his mother to flee the Nazi Panzers that were about to overrun Warsaw. After walking the first few miles, his sister complained that her feet hurt and turned back. Weinberg never saw her or his parents again. In the years between, he somehow managed to cross the border to the East, maneuver through the Soviet bureaucracy and make such an impression as a young composer that he was given permission to reside in Moscow. With the USSR's main focus being German defeat, Moscow had become a haven of relative freedom of expression and creativity.

This relative freedom was not to last once WWII was over and the need for getting along with the Allied Forces diminished. However, it afforded Weinberg the room to develop his distinctive musical 'voice'. His first fully mature piece was the Piano Quintet. In five movements, one can't capture the dimensions of such an epic piece in a few words, but one can offer a few thoughts about how gratifying it is to live within it, both as player and listener.

"War --- there is no word more cruel." Throughout his life, Weinberg set this line of poetry of Tvardovsky to music. This credo-of-sorts can be understood as an undercurrent to the Quintet as well. The piece is an amalgam of classic forms, counterpoint and motivic development, melodies that resonate folk, liturgical, dance hall and romantic influence, thick sonorities that both sway and strain. Some passages pull the ensemble apart, some bring it together, and others give each individual instrumentalist moments of personal expression. The virtuoso pianist in Weinberg composes in a way that lets each player treat the instrument as a natural extension of oneself. This is not to say that he backs away from creating an effect and making the player deal with pulling it off!

Five players, five movements; whether intended or not, a nice parallel occurs between the instrumentation of string quartet with piano and five movements that imply four plus one more. The 2nd movement Allegretto functions as a second scherzo, with the other being the 3rd movement Presto. For all of Weinberg's seriousness, he also takes humor seriously, bringing playfulness, exuberance and raucousness to the mix, even as the piece ultimately starts and finishes in otherworldly realms.

Toward the first movement Moderato con moto's coda, the music climaxes with a lush, emphatic passage based on the very opening theme of the piece – all five parts are imitating and interrupting each other over a thunderous piano bassline. This exact passage reappears toward the end of the fifth movement Allegro agitato. It is this cyclic revisiting of such a passionate episode that frames the entire work, and which ultimately allows for closure, even if that closure is something ghostly and intangible.

The Cello Sonata No. 2 op. 63 follows a similar five-year lifecycle to the Quintet. The apex of post-war anti-Semitism that began in 1948 found Weinberg under arrest in 1953 on charges of "Jewish bourgeois nationalism." His close friend, musical brother and neighbor Shostakovich tried to intervene. To no avail, Weinberg was imprisoned in a freezing jail-cell, deprived of sleep and interrogated. His release was granted after the death of Stalin. Fast forward to 1958, with his family intact, living in the same Moscow housing complex as his esteemed Shostakovich, with whom he played two-piano versions of each of

their works-in-progress, Weinberg wrote the Cello Sonata at another peak of public and state approval and adoration.

The overall pacing of the Cello Sonata is affected by how personally it begins. The opening Moderato unfolds much like stream of consciousness. Mournfulness and rumination turn adamant as the cello and piano answer each other back and forth. At its climax, a chorale-like series of chords are pounded out in the piano part over a booming bass pedal point in the cello, almost as a cry of despair. What follows is quiet consolation. The Andante movement is fashioned as a sicilienne (an aria style), with lilting piano sonorities in 6/8 beneath an ethereal cello line. It eases the listener away from the first movement's overtones of sadness and distress. The finale Allegro couldn't be more life-affirming! In rondo form, it playfully trips along pitting cello against piano at a lickety-split tempo, calling for extreme sound effects in dynamics and articulation, (pings, shrieks) and uneven phrasing to catch the listener (and sometimes the players, too!) off-guard. The biggest surprise though, is the return of the chorale from the first movement in the coda. In this energized context, it registers as triumph that signals a big, exciting finish.

The Sonatina shows another side of Weinberg; a man of the people, writer of film music and children's pieces, celebrator of folk music, living within the confines of Soviet realism and art that was populist in spirit. But even in this composition full of tunefulness and charm, Weinberg finds ways to insert subtle yet unexpected touches.

Though it is in three movements, the Sonatina functions more as a single-movement piece with three sections. The Allegro leggiero breezes by with an uninterrupted melodiousness that either lends itself to counterpoint or music of the dance hall. This leads directly into the Adagietto lugubre, that is indeed lugubrious, organized as a two-voice passacaglia with a repeating seven measure bassline above which the melody weaves and comments. In another quick shift, the final Allegro sets up a quasi-fugue before

an unexpected outburst, after which it trails away. But whether ultimately heard in minor mode or major is Weinberg's little secret. The Sonatina is dedicated to Shostakovich.

— Jeanne Golan

Footnotes for quotes:

David Fanning, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: In Search of Freedom*, p. 139, 144, 150-1.

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The internationally acclaimed **Attacca Quartet** is one of the most dynamic ensembles of their generation. Praised by *The Strad* for possessing “maturity beyond its members’ years,” they were formed at the Juilliard School in 2003 and made their professional debut in 2007 in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall. From 2011-2013 they served as the Juilliard Graduate Resident String Quartet, and for the 2014-2015 season they were selected as the Quartet in Residence by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. As stated by *The Washington Post*, “Mastery like this is scarce enough in quartets that have played together for decades.”

The Attacca Quartet’s most recent album release included string quartets of Michael Ippolito. These works were performed as part of the group’s original project “Recently Added”, a series that features complete string quartet music by living composers. The group’s next recording project will feature string quartet works of Caroline Shaw.

The Attacca Quartet recently completed a recording project of Haydn's masterwork "The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross," arranged by Andrew Yee and the Attacca Quartet. In his review for Gramophone, Donald Rosenberg wrote, "*The Attacca Quartet explore the work's range of expressive moods with utmost sensitivity to nuance and interplay They triumph in every respect, and are captured in such vivid sound that no telling Haydn detail is allowed to go unheard.*" Thewholenote.com wrote, "*It's easily the most satisfying string version of the work that I've heard.*"

In 2013, the quartet released the complete works for string quartet by John Adams on Azica Records. It was praised by Steve Smith of The New York Times as a "*vivacious, compelling set,*" describing the Attacca Quartet's playing as "*exuberant, funky, and ... exactly nuanced.*" The Boston Globe also praised the release, stating, "*Few [recent recordings] are as consequential as 'Fellow Traveler,' ... superb performances.*" The album was the recipient of the 2013 National Federation of Music Clubs Centennial Chamber Music Award. The quartet has been honored with both the Arthur Foote Award from the Harvard Musical Association and the Lotos Prize in the Arts from the Stecher and Horowitz Foundation.

The Attacca Quartet has engaged in extensive educational and community outreach projects, serving as guest artists and teaching fellows at the Lincoln Center Institute, the Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Vivace String Camp in New York, the Woodlands ChamberFest in Texas, Virginia Arts Festival, Bravo! Vail Valley and Animato Summer Music Camp at Florida International University in Miami. The group currently serves as the Ensemble-in-Residence at the School of Music at Texas State University. Since 2006, they have performed in yearly benefit concerts supporting the Parkinson's Disease Foundation's efforts. The members of the Attacca Quartet currently reside in New York City. They are represented by Baker Artists, LLC.



The New York Times describes pianist **Jeanne Golan** as “technically polished and superbly expressive,” and the Philadelphia Inquirer as having the “gift and ability to clarify the core of music.” Her programming reflects her active involvement in the fostering of works by new composers and discovering relatively unknown musical treasures. With an impressive collection of pieces written for her and that she has premiered and recorded, her solo and collaborative CDs appear under the Steinway & Sons/ArkivMusic, Albany, Capstone, Arsis Audio and Newport Classic labels.

Ms. Golan has been featured at such venues as Carnegie and Merkin Halls in NYC; her range of experience includes work with the Philip Glass Ensemble, the Lark and Attacca Quartets, with singers as in *Innocence Lost: The Berg-Debussy Project*, and appearances with the American Symphony Orchestra. Her Ravinia debut was hosted by James Conlon, where she performed piano works of Viktor Ullmann whose complete sonatas she has recorded. She holds degrees from Eastman and Yale and is a professor at SUNY/Nassau. Jeanne Golan is a Steinway Artist.



Cellist **Andrew Yee** has been praised by Michael Kennedy of the London Telegraph as “spellbindingly virtuosic...remember you heard his name here first”. He is a founding member of the internationally acclaimed Attacca Quartet. They have released several albums to critical acclaim including his arrangement of Haydn’s “Seven Last Words” which Thewholenote.com praised as “ . . .easily the most satisfying string version of the work that I’ve heard.” In 2017 he was the soloist with the Oregon Bach Festival orchestra playing John Taverner’s “The Protecting Veil”. He likes making

stop-motion videos of food, drawing with charcoal and has developed coffee and cocktail programs for award-winning restaurants (Lilia, Risbo, Atla) in New York City. He received his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, and Artist’s Diploma in String Quartet studies from the Juilliard School.

MIECZYSLAW WEINBERG

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Recorded June 13–15, 2017 at Steinway Hall, New York City.

Producers: Christopher Oldfather & Jeanne Golan

Engineer: Lauren Sturm

Editing, Mixing and Mastering: Daniel Shores

Equipment: Pyramix using Merging Technologies Horus Converters;
mixed and mastered through Merging Technologies Horus Converter

Microphones: DPA ST4006A, AEA N8, Schoeps MC6/MK2

Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner

Art Direction: Jackie Fugere

Design: Cover to Cover Design, Anilda Carrasquillo

Piano Technician: Lauren Sturm

Pianos: Steinway Model D #597590 (New York)

Cover Photo: Roman Vishniac

[Interior of the Anhalter Bahnhof railway terminus near Potsdamer Platz, Berlin]
1929–early 1930s

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1-5 Quintet for Piano and String Quartet, Op. 18 (1944)

6-8 Sonatine for Piano, Op. 49 (1951)

9-11 Sonata No. 2 for Cello and Piano, Op. 63 (1958)

Jeanne Golan, Piano

Attacca Quartet: Keiko Tokunaga & Amy Schroeder, Violins; Nathan Schram, Viola; Andrew Yee, Cello



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