



WEINBERG

**Complete Music
for Cello and
Orchestra**

Nikolay Shugaev, Cello

Tyumen Philharmonic Orchestra

Yuri Medianik

Mieczysław WEINBERG (1919–1996) Complete Music for Cello and Orchestra

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, relocated further east to Tashkent where he soon became immersed 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. Despite numerous personal setbacks (his father-in-law, the famous actor Solomon Mikhoels, was murdered in 1948, then Weinberg himself was imprisoned for alleged 'Jewish subversion' and freed only after the death of Stalin in 1953), he gradually gained a reputation as a figure who was championed by many of the leading Soviet singers, instrumentalists and conductors.

Despite receiving various official honours, Weinberg's fortunes declined notably across his final two decades – not least owing to the emergence of a younger generation of composers whose relative antagonism to the Soviet establishment gained them greater coverage in the West (where Weinberg never enjoyed more than a modest success even during his heyday), and his death in Moscow on 26 February 1996 went largely unnoticed. Since then, however, his catalogue – which comprises 26 symphonies and 17 string quartets, together with 7 operas, some 24 song cycles plus a wealth of chamber and instrumental music – has secured an increasing number of performances and recordings. The past quarter-century has found it held in greater regard as a vital and personal continuation of the Russian symphonic tradition.

Weinberg's concertos were written largely during the earlier part of his maturity, starting with the *Violin Concertino* (Naxos 8.572631) of 1948. That same year, the composer wrote a *Cello Concertino* which remained unheard in his lifetime and was only discovered posthumously in the estate of musicologist Manashir Yakubov. Apparently written during just four days, this is effectively a preliminary version of the *Cello Concerto*, albeit scored just for strings and with the four movements considerably more compact than they became in the process of revision.

Over a halting backdrop, the soloist unfolds a pensive melody as is duly taken up by strings then reaches a brief culmination before retreating into the depths from where it had emerged. Strings briefly introduce the second movement, somewhere between scherzo and intermezzo, which has pronounced overtones of Yiddish music as it unfolds in dextrous dialogue before stuttering to its close. From here, the third movement is launched by strings which are then joined by the soloist in a lively and often trenchant repartee. This reaches its decisive close, upon which the soloist continues alone with a forceful cadenza that makes a resourceful use of pizzicato – gradually heading to a return of the initial music in a finale which brings this piece full circle, before closing in a mood of fatalism, which characterises the work overall.

Almost twice as long, the *Cello Concerto* evidently took shape between 1948 and its premiere in Moscow, given by Mstislav Rostropovich and the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Samuil Samosud, on 9 January 1957. Here scored for a full orchestra, each of its four movements has been elaborated and intensified, making for a concerto demonstrably in the Romantic tradition, which might explain why it has become one of the most performed among Weinberg's larger works following the composer's relatively recent surge in popularity.

Although the first movement begins much as before, both the theme and its continuation are elaborated at greater length, which also occasions a wider range of expression from the larger number of strings. These latter bring about a more sustained climax, reinforced by the baleful intoning of brass, after which the soloist winds down towards a close of musing uncertainty. The second movement again centres on the same material, but now accompanied it is much more sharply drawn so that the Yiddish element feels more pronounced. Woodwind adds its discreet colouring throughout, and there is a capricious aspect to the writing for strings that extends the expressive remit accordingly, though the

music comes more methodically to its conclusion as the soloist bows out in the company of pert comments from upper woodwind.

The third movement once again gets going with an animated theme on strings, though this is extended by pertinent asides in which woodwind are to the fore and brass add an incisive or even martial quality. A completely new episode finds the soloist in thoughtful dialogue with strings, but this is increasingly undercut by allusions to the foregoing music which presently resumes in earnest then combines elements of both main themes into a forceful culmination. This is summarily curtailed for the cadenza, extended and intensified to reflect the enhanced scale of the work. It leads into a finale that now begins gracefully with woodwind and upper strings then continues with sardonic contributions from brass and lower strings, but this acts as a foil to the main climax. The original movement has thus become an extended coda to the whole work though, as before, the end mirrors the beginning in its gently enveloping fatalism.

In between these works, Weinberg wrote a *Fantasia* for cello and orchestra. Composed during 1952–53, this was premiered in a version with piano by Daniil Shafran and Nina Musinyan in Moscow on 23 November 1953. This was published the following year, though there is no documentation regarding any first performance of the orchestral original – surprisingly so, as this is among the most appealing of Weinberg’s earlier works in the way it channels elements of the concerto format into a span as formally symmetrical as it is expressively spontaneous.

Starting once more with a gently pensive motion on strings, the soloist enters with an elegiac theme whose undulating phrases betray more than a hint of folk music. Horn and flute join in a gradually unfolding dialogue, which opens out expressively as it continues, before suddenly being confronted by impetuous strings. This presages a more animated episode whose dance-like gait and sharp irony make the most of the contrast, as does the appearance of trumpets to accentuate the incisiveness. A more graceful passage with flutes alternates with the foregoing, before the soloist launches into a strenuous cadenza which duly sees the return of the opening theme – now in the company of musing woodwind and upper strings. This builds to an apex of enfolding eloquence, after which the soloist alights on a cadence of calm conclusiveness.

Richard Whitehouse



Nikolay Shugaev

Nikolay Shugaev is a conductor, cellist and chamber musician known for his dynamic international performances. He was awarded the President of the Jury Prize at the 2024 International Conducting Competition in Bucharest, and served as chief conductor of the North-Caucasus State Philharmonic Safonov. Recent conducting achievements include a special award at the Russian Grand Orchestra Prize '440hz' for Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*; a tour across China with the Jiangsu Province State Orchestra; and Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* at the 28th International Ballet Festival of Havana. Shugaev has collaborated with orchestras such as the St Petersburg State Academic Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Simfonică București, Norrlandsoperan, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra Academy and the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Cuba, among others. He studied cello at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory with Natalia Shakhovskaya and the Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana with Enrico Dindo, and symphonic conducting with Petter Sundkvist at Luleå University. He has appeared at international festivals such as VivaCello, Società dei Concerti di Milano and Lucerne Festival.

www.nikolayshugaev.com



Tyumen Philharmonic Orchestra

The Tyumen Philharmonic Orchestra is a cultural gem of Siberia, starting its creative journey in September 2015 as one of Russia's youngest symphony orchestras. Comprising graduates from regional higher educational institutions, the ensemble has been under the artistic direction of Yuri Medianik since 2022. The orchestra's repertoire includes Russian masterpieces and symphonic classics, world premieres of new instrumental works and opera concert performances. Its programmes feature

multidisciplinary projects that blend various art forms and include musical crossover elements. The orchestra collaborates with prominent musicians such as Denis Matsuev, Yuri Bashmet and Vadim Repin, among others. It performs annually in top concert halls in Moscow and St Petersburg, as well as throughout the Tyumen region, and actively participates in regional festivals including Alyabyev Music Autumn and Summer in the Tobolsk Kremlin. In 2024, it hosted successful festivals honouring composers Khachaturian, Rachmaninov and Glinka. www.tyumphilorchestra.ru



Yuri Medianik

Yuri Medianik has been the artistic director and chief conductor of the Tyumen Philharmonic Orchestra since 2022, and is recognised as a distinguished conductor and multi-instrumentalist (violin, bayan, bandoneon) in Russia and internationally. He graduated from the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory (violin) and the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music (bayan), and is a laureate of five international competitions. He completed his postgraduate studies at the Ippolitov-Ivanov Institute of Music as a conductor. His performance history includes appearances before the presidents of 15 countries. He has conducted the Novaya Opera in Moscow since 2015, with a repertoire of over ten operas and concert programmes, and has been the chief conductor of the Nizhny Novgorod State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre named after A.S. Pushkin since 2021. Medianik founded both the Emotion Orchestra and Pluri Art Orchestra, specialising in crossover music, and conducts the orchestra of the All-Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company. His concerts have been featured on the Russia-Culture and Russia-1 channels, and he leads the televised All-Russian competition *Blue Bird*. He has served as an artistic director of the Summer in the Tobolsk Kremlin festival of arts since 2024.

www.yurimedianik.ru

Mieczysław Weinberg flourished as a composer despite working amidst political and personal setbacks. He gained the admiration of Shostakovich, and was championed by the leading Soviet musicians of the day. The soulful *Cello Concertino* with its Yiddish overtones and melodic eloquence was discovered posthumously, and is effectively a preliminary version of the more elaborate and intense *Cello Concerto*. The potent Romantic nature of the *Concerto* has made this one of Weinberg's most performed large-scale pieces. The *Fantasia* is an appealing early work – expressive and spontaneous. The orchestral piece *Polish Melodies, Op. 47, No. 2* recorded during the sessions for this album is available to download and stream (Naxos 9.70381).

Mieczysław
WEINBERG

(1919–1996)

	Concertino for Cello and String Orchestra, Op. 43bis (1948)	16:26
1	I. Adagio –	4:59
2	II. Moderato espressivo –	3:05
3	III. Allegro vivace –	3:19
4	IV. Adagio (cadenza) – Adagio	5:06
5	Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 52 (1952–53)	15:44
	Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 43 (1948/56)	31:09
6	I. Adagio –	7:17
7	II. Moderato	5:27
8	III. Allegro – Cadenza –	9:24
9	IV. Allegro	9:01

Playing Time: 63:32

Nikolay Shugaev, Cello
Tyumen Philharmonic Orchestra

(Aleksandr Kascheev, Concertmaster)

Yuri Medianik

Recorded: 18–20 January 2024 at the Tyumen Philharmonic Hall, Russia
Producer: Nikolay Shugaev • Sound producer: Andrey Semenov
Sound engineer: Elizaveta Mikhaylova • Booklet notes: Richard Whitehouse
Publisher: Compozitor Publishing House, St Petersburg • Cover: G. Paolo Zeccara
© & © 2025 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com