

Shostakovich & Other Russians



Session Five

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LIFECourses.ca/Shostakovich

Plan for today

- Prokofiev – he warrants more attention
 - Symphony No. 6
 - Romeo & Juliet
- Mieczysław Weinberg – too little known
 - The Passenger
 - Piano Quintet - 1944
- Shostakovich
 - Piano Quintet – 1940
 - String Quartet No 8 – two versions
- 3rd hour – discussion + missing bits & pieces

Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y52JYoHY9g>

Prokofiev – Romeo & Juliet



- National Ballet of Canada – Toronto
 - November 2015
 - December 2015
 - March 2016

NYC Ballet – Romeo & Juliet



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwpZcae8tsw>

Mieczysław Weinberg 1919-1996

- Born in Poland
 - Played in his father's Yiddish theater orchestra
- 1939 Fled Nazi invasion to Russia
 - Parents & sister died in the death camps
- 1943 Invited to Moscow
 - By Shostakovich
- Composed
 - 26 Symphonies
 - 17 String Quartets
 - Operas, piano music, film scores



David Fanning 2010

- If someone were to tell me that there is a Soviet composer of whom I've barely heard, who composed 26 symphonies and 17 string quartets, many of which deserve to be in the standard repertoire, my first reaction would probably be to assume they meant Nikolay Myaskovsky, ... But if that same informant said no, it's someone entirely different, then I'd probably have to stifle a groan.

What! Yet another "neglected genius"?

The Passenger (1966)

- First full staging in 2010 - Bregenzer Festspiele

- Polish National Opera in 2010
- English National Opera in 2011
- Houston Grand Opera in 2014
- Chicago, Frankfurt & Detroit in 2015

- Synopsis

The opera is set on two levels: the upper level depicts the deck of an ocean liner after the Second World War where a German couple, Liese and Walter (a West German diplomat on his way with his new wife to a new diplomatic posting), are sailing to Brazil. The wife, Liese, thinks she recognizes a Polish woman on board, Marta, as a former inmate of Auschwitz where she, unknown to her husband, was a camp guard. The second lower level develops below the liner deck, depicting the concentration camp. The opera is an interplay between the two levels.

English National Opera Preview

THE PASSENGER

Music by Mieczyslaw Weinberg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJOz3DXiNtM>

Houston Grand Opera introduction

- Commentary
 - Patrick Summers,
Houston Grand Opera
Artistic & Music Director
 - David Poutney, stage
director
 - Archive news footage



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bcr4Hb20tr8>

Weinberg's musical life

- Began in Yiddish music halls
- Nazi interruption of conservatory studies
- Very promising early work
 - Early symphonies, string quartets, etc
- Problems as a Jew and a “modern” composer
 - Released from prison after Stalin's death (1953)
- Eventually, he was composing for himself and for his musical supporters
 - Gilels, Kogan, Rostropovich, Kondrashin, ...
- Some great compositions, should be better known

Weinberg Piano Quintet, Op. 18

- Composed in August - October 1944
 - Weinberg was 25, living in Moscow
 - The Nazi forces were headed for defeat



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNzKJ_-mbdM

Shostakovich example

- Piano Quintet in G Minor, opus 57
 - Composed during relative peace of 1940
 - Awarded Stalin Prize in 1941 (rare for chamber work)
- Started as String Quartet No. 2
 - Wanted to tour with the Beethoven Quartet; needed a piano part to play
- “Shostakovich seems one of those fortunate artists - like Schubert or Britten - where conception encounters few hitches on the way to the page. Of course, a great technique doesn't hurt.”

Shostakovich Piano Quintet

- Argerich, Piano; Bell, Violin; Kraggerud, Violin; Bashmet, Viola; Maisky, Cello
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YXwE6VTT6g>



The real essence

- Is it the musical ideas or their expression or more?
- Example
 - Shostakovich String Quartet No. 8, Op. 110
 - Shostakovich Chamber Symphony Op. 110a
 - Approved orchestration by R. Barshai
- Widely seen as one of Shostakovich's finest compositions
 - In 5 short movements ~ 20 minutes long

Opus 110 (string quartet)



- Concierto Cuarteto Casals en la escuela Reina Sofia, noviembre 2012
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ms7PdLJsZdg>

Opus 110a (string orchestra)

Chamber Symphony
Op. 110 bis
(Arr. R. Barshai)

- Chamber Capella Russkaya Conservatoria
- Ayako Tanabe, concertmaster; Alexander Mitinsky, viola; Mina Zakic, cello
- Nikolay Khondzinsky, conductor
- Live in Rachmaninov Hall of the Moscow Conservatory
 - Jan 2013
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecoXa0A377M>

Essence thoughts?

- What's most important
 - The musical thought
 - The orchestration
 - The performance
 - The social context
 - The listener
 - All of the above
- Can there ever be a right answer?

Next week

- Weinberg peers
 - Galina Ivanovna Ustvolskaya 1919
 - Boris Alexandrovich Tchaikovsky 1925
- Shostakovich students
 - Sofia Asgatovna Gubaidulina 1931
 - Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin 1932
 - Boris Ivanovich Tishchenko 1939
- Shostakovich 24 preludes & fugues
 - To end on a musical high point

Our 3rd hour

- Hear more of something that was only started
 - Documentaries: Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff
 - More symphony, ballet or chamber music
- Just talk about our Russian music experience
 - Best Russian music concert/performance
 - Russian music “bucket list” entry
- Listen/watch something that you brought

