

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 30 September 2023
11.30am

This concert is supported by the Sir Jack Lyons Charitable Trust



Weinberg Focus Day 1

Linus Roth violin
Rachel Roberts viola
Danjulo Ishizaka cello
Amy Harman bassoon
Florian Uhlig piano

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996)

Sonata No. 2 for violin and piano Op. 15 (1944)
I. Allegro • II. Lento • III. Allegro moderato

Sonata for bassoon Op. 133 (1981)

String Trio Op. 48 (1950)
*I. Allegro con moto • II. Andante •
III. Moderato assai*



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When I first encountered the composer Mieczysław Weinberg in 2010 while performing his piano trio at a chamber music festival, I couldn't help but hope that he had composed more pieces for violin. To my surprise, a treasure trove awaited me. My heart raced with excitement as I discovered not only five sonatas and a sonatina for violin and piano, but also three solo violin sonatas, the *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes*, three pieces, a Concertino with string orchestra and the grand Violin Concerto with symphony orchestra, which I had the privilege to première in Germany (2014), Ukraine, Estonia and various other places, as well as recording it.

Presenting Weinberg's complete violin chamber music, solo sonatas and some additional works in six concerts - three today and three before the pandemic in 2019 - is an unparalleled highlight in my performance career.

The **Sonata No. 2 for violin and piano Op. 15** was composed in Moscow in 1944. While it is dedicated to David Oistrakh, the dedication was likely added retroactively around the time of its belated première in 1962. This work represents a transitional piece for Weinberg, occasionally evoking elements of Prokofiev's second violin sonata. However, at these moments, Weinberg takes a sudden turn and embraces his distinct, already developed voice. These shifts mark an audible progression towards the darker, more acerbic style found in the three sonatas that would follow over the next nine years.

In the **Sonata for bassoon Op. 133**, Weinberg characterises this otherwise somewhat ponderous instrument in a surprisingly diverse and contrasting manner across its four movements. He takes the listener through heartfelt melodies with echoes of a pastoral song, joyful passages and lively dance-like sections, culminating in Weinberg's characteristic 'morendo', a frequent ending in his compositions. How many composers have written a solo sonata for the bassoon? A wonderful and rare piece, and since even many bassoonists are unfamiliar with it, this is reason enough for it to be performed today here at Wigmore Hall's Weinberg Focus Day.

Weinberg composed his **String Trio Op. 48** in 1950 in Moscow. Despite its significance, the trio was never performed during his lifetime. The years between the end of the war and Stalin's death in 1953 were a difficult time for the composer. In the second wave of persecution, his father-in-law, a well-known actor and director, was murdered by Stalin. Not long after completing this trio, Weinberg himself ended up in prison.

The trio encompasses various aspects: a subtly joyful first movement, followed by a mysteriously subdued mood in the second movement. It contains many folk-like interludes, especially in the final movement, where Weinberg's Jewish roots are revealed once again through the music. The violin engages in Klezmer-like chants, only to then disappear with a cawing whispering in *piano-pianissimo*, played *ponticello*.

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