

Weinberg 100

Major celebrations throughout 2019 mark the Polish composer's centenary

A wide range of high-profile events are planned for 2019 to celebrate Weinberg's 100th birthday – including a major concert series at London's Wigmore Hall, new international productions of *The Passenger*, major concerts, books, recordings and a conference – all supported by Polska Music

Historians have formed neat labels for the last century's cataclysms. The life of composer and pianist Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996), in common with those of countless millions who bore the consequences of war and peace, bears witness to a more fluid reading of the past, where one tyranny yields to another, former liberators become oppressors, and criminals emerge as statesmen. The approaching centenary year of Weinberg's birth offers the chance to reflect on history's nature while exploring the work of a strikingly prolific composer, whose music was championed during his lifetime by such outstanding performers as David Oistrakh, Mstislav Rostropovich, Emil Gilels, the Borodin Quartet, and Kirill Kondrashin.

Adam Mickiewicz Institute and its Polska Music programme will play central roles in raising awareness of Weinberg's art over the next two years. It is planning a range of concerts and events to mark the composer's centenary, which aim to broaden audiences for his music and give momentum to the strengthening Weinberg renaissance.

The [Weinberg centenary conference](#), staged by The University of Manchester, with support from Polska Music, opens today and marks the start of a series of major events for the UK. The event, convened by Weinberg expert Professor David Fanning, will include papers presented by leading international scholars and run in tandem with a three-day festival of music by Weinberg and his contemporaries. Quatour Danel and members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic's Ensemble 10/10 are among the artists scheduled to take part. A comprehensive life-and-works study of Weinberg, by David Fanning and pianist and musicologist Michelle Assay, will receive its launch during the conference.

Wigmore Hall has just announced that Weinberg has been chosen by Director John Gilhooly as a featured composer for its 2019-20 season, in one of the most ambitious retrospectives of the composer's chamber music ever staged and the most extensive collaboration between Polska Music and a leading British cultural institution.

Quatour Danel, the first group to record all seventeen of Weinberg's string quartets, will present the complete cycle at Wigmore Hall in eleven concerts over two seasons, while violinist Linus Roth, hailed by the *Guardian* as one of the 'standard-bearers' of the Weinberg revival, will lead Wigmore

Hall focus days devoted to the composer in October 2019 and October 2020. Exploring a range of Weinberg's chamber works, the focus days will include the three solo sonatas for violin; the Sonata for two violins Op.69; the *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes*, a tribute to the composer's Bessarabian parents; and two sets of *Jewish Songs* for voice and piano trio Opp.13 & 17, with St Petersburg-born soprano Ilona Domnich as soloist.

Quatuor Danel will also be performing Weinberg in Paris [this February](#).

UK celebrations for Weinberg in 2019 begin with a key highlight: his Violin Concerto, with Gidon Kremer as soloist, and the UK premiere of the Tolstoy-inspired ballet *The Golden Key* comprise a programme given by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla at Symphony Hall Birmingham on 31 March 2019. The CBSO and Gražinytė-Tyla also presented a Weinberg Weekend in late 2018, performing with Kremer and Kremerata Baltica.

Meanwhile, throughout mainland Europe and Asia, the centenary is celebrated by both [The Israeli Opera Tel-Aviv-Yafo](#) and [Staatstheater Braunschweig](#) with performances of *The Passenger*, marking the Israeli premiere of the work. In Germany the two-act opera will be sung in German, English, Polish and Hebrew, whilst in Tel-Aviv it will also be sung in Czech, Russian, French and Yiddish, as it was in the first fully-staged performance at the Bregenzer Festspiele.

The Passenger is told from the perspective of a former camp guard who, fifteen years after its liberation, embarks with her husband on an ocean liner destined for Brazil. On board she recognises an Auschwitz survivor whose violinist fiancée was executed by the Nazis for playing Bach's Chaconne – emblem of universal hope and fraternity – at a command concert. Novel and opera move between scenes set at sea and flashbacks to the world of Auschwitz.

Polska Music has also commissioned a new book about Weinberg's string quartets from Daniel Elphick, Teaching Fellow at Royal Holloway, University of London. *Music behind the Iron Curtain: Weinberg and his Polish Contemporaries* places the composer's quartets in the broader context of twentieth-century Polish music. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute is also working with French publishing house Actes Sud on Weinberg biography by eminent musicologist Danuta Gwizdalanka to be published later this year.

Mieczysław Weinberg - Biography

Mieczysław Weinberg was born to a Jewish family in Warsaw on 8 December 1919, little over a year after Poland gained her independence from foreign rule. The prodigiously talented musician, forced to abandon his studies at the Warsaw Conservatory following Nazi Germany's invasion of his homeland in September 1939, fled to the Soviet Union. A Belarussian border guard insisted that young Mieczysław adopt the stereotypical Jewish name 'Moisey'. He was officially recognised as such until 1982, when Weinberg finally persuaded the authorities to accept his Polish first name.

Weinberg's mother, father and sister were murdered by the Nazis at a transit camp in Eastern Poland; most of his wider family also perished during the Holocaust. He was able to continue his studies with one of Rimsky-Korsakov's pupils in Minsk before being evacuated to Tashkent following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Shostakovich, impressed by the score of his younger contemporary's First Symphony, invited him to Moscow two years later. Weinberg remained in the Soviet capital until his death in 1996. He paid homage to Shostakovich in later life, confiding that 'I count myself as his pupil, his flesh and blood'.

Although the two men remained good friends, Weinberg maintained his creative independence and cultivated a strong and distinctive personal style. '[He] retained a higher level of independence than

many of his Soviet colleagues, distancing himself both from official academic conservatism and, in the 1960s and after, the younger generation's fervent embrace of Western-style modernism,' notes David Fanning.

Weinberg married the daughter of Solomon Mikhoels, artistic director of the Moscow State Jewish Theatre and among the Soviet Union's finest actors. Mikhoels, chairman of the wartime Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, was assassinated in 1948 on Stalin's orders. In February 1953 Weinberg also became ensnared in the Soviet dictator's anti-Semitic paranoia. He was arrested, imprisoned on trumped-up charges but spared execution or the gulag following an intervention by his friend Shostakovich and by Stalin's death.

While recognised as a Polish composer, Russians also remember Weinberg today for the strength he showed under extreme pressure, not least his refusal to claim victim status in the years after his release. His music, however, has attracted greater attention in the West over the past two decades than in the countries that claim him. Beyond his seven operas, twenty-five symphonies, six concertos and seventeen string quartets, Weinberg was loved by generations of Soviet youngsters for his soundtrack scores to the *Vinni Pukh* – or *Winnie-the-Pooh* – cartoon films. He also wrote the music for an enduring landmark of Soviet film-making, *The Cranes are Flying*, one of sixty film soundtracks to his name, and produced scores for theatre productions and even for circus.

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PICTURE ATTACHED:

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Key events

[Mieczysław Weinberg: Between East and West](#)

24 – 27 January 2019 – University of Manchester

A four-day conference to mark the beginning of Weinberg's centenary year, bringing together scholars and practitioners from all over the world, including the composer's daughter, Victoria Bishops, as the Guest of Honour.

[Philharmonie de Paris – The Quatuor Danel](#)

4 – 8 February 2019 - Cité de la musique, Paris

The Quatuor Danel play the first three of Weinberg's seventeen quartets, repertoire well-versed among the group, in this celebratory concert in Paris.

[Weinberg at Wigmore Hall](#)

2019-2020

Weinberg has been selected as a featured composer for the Wigmore Hall's upcoming season, which will portray an ambitious retrospective of the composer's chamber works.

[Gidon Kremer Weinberg's Violin Concerto](#)

31 March 2019 – Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra unite with Gidon Kremer in a celebration of Weinberg's music

The Passenger – Israeli Opera

30 April – 06 May 2019 – Israeli Opera Tel-Aviv-Yafo

Weinberg's mesmerising opera about female prisoners is performed for the first time ever in Israel.

The Passenger – Braunschweig

06 April – 05 June 2019 – Staatstheater, Braunschweig

The two-act opera receives another highly-anticipated performance, this time in North Germany.

Music Behind the Iron Curtain: Weinberg and his Polish Contemporaries – Daniel Elphick

October 2019

Polska Music have commissioned this new work exploring Weinberg's string quartets, placing them in the broader context of twentieth-century Polish music.

Actes Sud - D. Gwizdalanka

The Adam Mickiewicz Institute is working with French publishing house Actes Sud on Weinberg biography by eminent musicologist Danuta Gwizdalanka.

TBC

New recording with Weinberg's works

Polska Music is going to release a new CD with Mieczysław Weinberg's works with leading music record label.

TBC

Editors' notes

Adam Mickiewicz Institute

The goal of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, a state-funded cultural institution operating under its flagship brand Culture.pl, is to promote Poland and Polish culture abroad. Through the presentation of high-quality initiatives and events in the fields of art, music, and design, the Institute aspires to introduce an international audience to contemporary Polish culture. Adam Mickiewicz Institute has presented more than 5500 events, attracting an audience of more than 52.5 million across five continents.

Polska Music

For years now the Adam Mickiewicz Institute actively supports performances of Polish classical music by renowned international artists worldwide, aiming to increase its popularity across the globe under the brand Polska Music. As well as initiating international stage productions and concerts, commissioning new work, and nurturing contemporary composers, Polska Music also promotes recordings, books and events. Polska Music has collaborated with a host of high-profile partners around the world, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker, Bregenz Festival, Chandos Records, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cité de la Musique – Philharmonie de Paris, Ensemble Musikfabrik, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Klangforum Wien, Lincoln Center Festival, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles

Philharmonic, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Philharmonia Orchestra, Elbphilharmonie, Münchener Kammerorchester, Rambert Dance Company, Time of Music Festival, Welsh National Opera, Quay Brothers, Royal Opera House, Salzburg Festival and Sound and Music.

The Polska Music programme was launched in 2011 by the **Adam Mickiewicz Institute** – a national cultural institution aiming to strengthen Polish cultural impact and to benefit international cultural exchange.

More information about Polish culture worldwide at culture.pl

Further details on Polska Music programme at polskamusic.iam.pl

Intuitive, bilingual and interactive tool, dedicated to Polish composers available at:
<http://mapofcomposers.pl/en/>

Some of the Weinberg 100 events are financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland as part of the multi-annual programme NIEPODLEGŁA 2017–2022.

