# Mieczysław Samuilovich Weinberg's Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 5, Op. 53: An Analysis and Adaptation for Cello and Piano

By

James Halverson Waldo

A written document submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
(Music Performance)

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Mead Witter School of Music

2020

Date of Final Oral Examination: August 18, 2020

This written document is approved by the following members of the final oral committee
Uri Vardi – Professor of Cello
Les Thimmig – Professor of Saxophone
David Crook – Professor of Musicology
Sally Chisholm – Professor of Viola
Parry Karp – Professor of Chamber Music and Cello

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Uri Vardi, my primary professor and cello teacher, for his mentorship, ongoing support, and musical integrity, and also for first exposing me to Weinberg's music. Many years ago, I first came to audition for Uri in 2003 as a high school senior with a rather late start on serious cello studies. Uri uniquely saw potential in me when others did not, and it is to him that I owe the most for giving me a path toward a fulfilling life in music. Our ongoing work together has been a central part of my personal and professional development.

For their attendance of my recitals, support of my various projects, and contributions to the completion of this document, I would like to thank the remaining members of my doctoral committee. I thank Sally Chisholm and Parry Karp for many illuminating conversations and for bringing the music of Weinberg to the UW-Madison campus through their performances with the Pro Arte String Quartet. I thank Les Thimmig for encouraging me to sit at the piano more often, and to listen and think in new ways about music. I thank David Crook, who provided me with tools for effective research and writing, fueled my curiosity to understand the contexts in which we create and consume music, and who devoted considerable time and energy as a reader, editor, and problem-solver in the process of assembling this document.

Beyond my committee, there have been many others at UW-Madison that have made this work possible. I would like to thank Charles Dill for his guidance in the disciplines of musicology and writing, for his guidance as my supervisor as Teaching Assistant for Music 212. I would like to thank Francine Hirsch for her many inspired lectures, seminar meetings, and reading assignments on the subjects of Soviet history and historiography. I would like to thank Alexandra Walter for her devoted teaching and support as my Russian instructor. For their support in locating texts and ordering new material, I would like to thank Jeannette Casey and

Tom Caw of the Mills Music Library. For their guidance and administrative support, I would like to thank John Chappell Stowe, Marina Drake, and James Doing, Jr.

Beyond the university, I'm grateful to Daniel Elphick, Matt Heck, Emily Frey, Jenny Kallick, David Ordovskiy, Joseph Patrych, and Anna Voskoboynikova for helpful tips on Weinberg research. For sharing the page proofs of his forthcoming Weinberg biography, I would like to thank David Fanning, whose sustained scholarship and advocacy has made Weinberg's music and life accessible to the English-speaking world. For archival support, I would like to thank Kira Yevgen'yevna Ivanova, director of the Reading Room at the Russian National Museum of Music in Moscow.

I would like to thank my parents, Andrew and Mary, for their encouragement and support, as well as their role as a sounding board for the various ideas explored and expressed in this project. For her hospitality, kindness, and many shared memories of her life as a musician in the Soviet Union, I would like to thank my mother-in-law, Nina, who taught countless young pianists, shook hands with Shostakovich, and played four-hands duets with Khachaturian. For her joy, presence, humor, and indominable spirit, and for wisdom beyond her years, I would like to thank my daughter, Sofia. For her loving companionship, musical wizardry, adventurous spirit, and endless patience, I thank my wife, Alyona.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Mieczysław Weinberg, né "Mojsze Wanjberg" (Polish) and "Moishe Weinberg" (Yiddish), was born in Warsaw on December 8, 1919 into a family of Jewish musicians with Bessarabian heritage. Since his death in Moscow on February 26, 1996, the composer has gradually begun in recent years to enter into the international consciousness as one of the great Soviet composers. Having lived and breathed music from his infancy due to his father Samuil's career as a violinist and conductor and his mother Sonia's gifts as a talented actress and singer, the prodigious Mieczysław began performing professionally in the Warsaw Yiddish Theater and other venues of entertainment alongside his father starting at the age of ten. His precocious playing and musicianship began to turn heads, and he was soon invited to study at the Warsaw Conservatory, where he thrived and showed great promise as a concert pianist. Despite the hopeful future that Weinberg's talent promised, a shadowy threat loomed over Poland, interrupting his ascent in the arts community of Warsaw. The Nazi invasion on September 1, 1939 led to the outbreak of war, and the nineteen-year-old Weinberg looked for a way out. It would have been too late at this point to flee westward; therefore, like many coming-of-age Polish youths of Jewish heritage, Weinberg sought enrollment into an educational institution in the Soviet Union in order to escape the approaching horrors.[1] Landing a spot at the Minsk Conservatory in Belarus, Weinberg thus became separated from his father, mother, and younger

[1] For a detailed and riveting biographical account of two young Polish, Jewish women in the same generation as Weinberg who followed a similar eastward flight to the USSR, see Masha Gessen, *Esther and Ruzya: How My Grandmothers Survived Hitler's War and Stalin's Peace,* (New York: Dial Press, 2004).

sister, Esther. The three family members would not survive the Holocaust, eventually perishing in the Trawniki concentration camp in Poland.[2]

With his homeland laid waste and his family's fate sealed, Weinberg had to look forward and find a place for himself in this new land. His gifts served him well, quickly launching him into a position of esteem among his colleagues and mentors in Minsk. David Fanning's passage reveals something about both Weinberg's aptitude and his personality:

> Boasting was alien to Weinberg's nature, and he carefully avoided mentioning his rapid progress and success during his barely two years in Minsk. But various events are significant – above all, perhaps, the fact that he was chosen to participate as pianist at the First Ten-day Festival. This bears witness to two striking things: that in the space of barely eight months Weinberg had settled down so impressively in his new environment that despite being a Polish Jew he was picked to represent his adopted homeland; and secondly, that his abilities were considered outstanding even in a country liberally strewn with piano virtuosi.[3]

In addition to his accomplishments as a performer in Minsk, Weinberg also studied composition there under the tutelage of Vasily Zolotaryov (1872–1964), himself a student of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. While Weinberg would continue to maintain a presence on the concert stage in the years to come, he would henceforth be known primarily for his work as a composer.

On June 22, 1941, the Nazis' *Wehrmacht* launched a surprise invasion into the USSR entitled Operation Barbarossa. Unfit to enlist because of tuberculosis of the spine, Weinberg was thus forced to flee again.[4] This time, the composer went to Tashkent, capital of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan, where two significant biographical events would occur.

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[2] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 367.

[3] *Ibid.,* 72.

[4] *Ibid.,* 90.

First, he met and married Nataliya Vovsi-Mikhoels, daughter of Solomon Mikhoels. Weinberg's tie to Mikhoels would prove consequential in the years to come; Mikhoels, the director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater, a prominent actor, and chair of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, would be singled out and assassinated by General Secretary Joseph Stalin on January 12, 1948 amid a campaign to ramp up anti-Semitic rhetoric and crackdowns in the postwar USSR. Anti-Semitism was not a new feature of the Russian landscape; in its most recent resurgence, Stalin feared that, following the Israeli declaration of Independence in 1948, the Soviet Jews would be loyal to a foreign power outside his control. Due to Mikhoels' activism, Weinberg's familial connection put the composer at risk, as we will see.

Secondly, the stage was set in Tashkent for Weinberg's first meeting with Shostakovich. While "family recollections vary" as to how a copy of Weinberg's First Symphony made it from Tashkent into Shostakovich's hands in Moscow, we know that after receiving this score (some believe that it was hand-delivered by Mikhoels), Shostakovich arranged a visa for Weinberg to come and play for him in 1943, thus launching a decades-long friendship and working relationship between the two.[5] On Shostakovich's bidding, Weinberg would relocate with his family to Moscow that year. Despite difficulties in finding work and repeated rejections from the Ministry of Culture, Weinberg found community in Moscow, and would call the city his home for the rest of his life.[6]

One additional biographical event must be shared here, as it is both central to Weinberg's experience as a Polish Jew in the USSR, and because of its close proximity in time to the writing

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[5] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 112.

[6] For more details on Weinberg's repeated nominations and subsequent snubs at the annual Stalin Prize awards, see Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics*, (New Haven: University Press, 2016).

of the Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 5, Op. 53, the focus of this project. Ever since the assassination of Solomon Mikhoels in 1948, Weinberg had suspected he was being tailed by members of the secret police. By January 1953, the effects of the infamous "Doctor's Plot" were being felt, as an increasingly paranoid Stalin accused many of Moscow's finest—and principally Jewish—doctors of plotting to assassinate him.[7] Sure enough, the infamous knock on the door came late on the night of February 6, 1953, during a gathering at the home of the Weinbergs following a performance earlier that evening by David Oistrakh of the composer's *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes,* Op. 47, No. 3. On trumped up charges of "bourgeois nationalism" (read: Jewish nationalism), Weinberg was summarily carted off to prison. Fanning shares an excerpt of this encounter given by composer Boris Chaykovsky's widow, Yanina Iosifovna Moshinskaya-Chaykovskaya, who was present that evening: "They had a search warrant ... As far as I now remember, Metek [diminutive name for Mieczysław] was standing there, already in his overcoat, without his tie and belt. And Metek said: 'Dear friends! I am not guilty of anything. Please excuse me…' And so he left. This episode from Metek's life was very characteristic of him – in spite of all his vulnerability, his childishness, and a certain timidity, he endured this moment in a very courageous way."[8]

Weinberg would remain in prison for seventy-eight days. The exact cause for his eventual release is not known, but two events surely had an influence on this outcome. First, in a bold but not uncharacteristic move, Shostakovich sent a letter in support of Weinberg, by then not only his colleague but also his close friend, to Lavrentiy Beria, then head of Stalin's secret police. The

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[7] For a detailed narrative of this historical event, see Yakov Rapoport, *The Doctor's Plot of 1953,* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[8] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 235.

letter vouched for Weinberg's innocence and pled for his release. The second event came on March 5, when Josef Stalin died suddenly of a stroke. Whether or not any doctor could have saved him, it is clear that the freshly purged ranks of Moscow's finest physicians certainly would have had reduced capacity to assist the General Secretary in his hour of need. In any event, Weinberg was released on April 25, the worse for wear after many days in solitary confinement, but anxious to put the episode behind him and resume his work.

While exploring the file on Weinberg at the Russian National Museum of Music, I came across the autograph of the composer's Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 5, Op. 53, and I immediately was intrigued by the proximity of the work's dates of composition, July 7-17, 1953, to Weinberg's recent release from prison. I was drawn still further by the fact that the piece featured the violin, the primary instrument of Weinberg's murdered father, Samuil. As I paged through the work, I felt an immediate connection to this piece, and knew that I wanted to get to know it more closely. As a cellist with a love of the duo sonata medium, the next steps seemed clear: perform a careful study of the score, and develop a cello-piano adaptation for use in concerts.

# Chapter 2: Adaptation

The development of a new musical adaptation is a project for which there is both historical and modern-day precedent. The practice has enabled both composers to earn additional publishing revenue and performers to expand their instrument's repertoire. Specifically relating to Weinberg's work, a notable instance of adaptation is the performance and recording by violinist Gidon Kremer of the 24 Preludes for Solo Cello, Op. 100. Kremer's recording makes a strong case for such an exercise: as Verena Mogl writes in the accompanying booklet to Kremer's recent documentary DVD on the project, "Kremer recognized the enormous potential hidden in the Preludes, Op. 100 for the violin as well, successfully 'translating' the work for the violin. Although the timbre changes, the Preludes retain their original character. And the intensive soundscapes that Weinberg created in the Preludes, interspersed with numerous musical cross-references and quotations, are captured in all their density by both the violin and the cello."[9] My present efforts in creating a cello/piano adaptation of Weinberg's Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 53 involve a similar experiment in the opposite adaptational direction. This chapter will constitute a record of the process, challenges, and discoveries that have accompanied my work on this adaptation. To organize my efforts in approaching the task of adaptation, I have created the following framework with which to approach decision-making in the adaptation process:

1. Key: To transpose or not to transpose?

[9] Verena Mogl, tr. Erik Dorset, text drawn from booklet accompanying *Gidon Kremer: Finding Your Own Voice*, DVD-ROM (Accentus Music, 2018).

2. Issues of register/tessitura
3. Issues of passages particularly idiomatic to the violin
4. Intervallic relationships between cello and piano parts

The question of whether or not to transpose the piece makes for a useful starting point as one sets out to adapt a work for a new instrument. A common practice in the context of art songs meant to be sung by different voice types with their disparate ranges, transposition is also sometimes seen in instrumental adaptations. The cello's open strings are tuned a twelfth below those of the violin; it is therefore reasonable to consider a key change to accommodate the new instrument's tessitura. The Duo Sonata, Op. 78 by Johannes Brahms is an example of such a maneuver. Violinist Paul Klengel—no doubt with his brother Julius, a virtuoso cellist, in mind—made the interesting choice to transpose the work down a perfect fourth from its original G major to D major.[10] Why he chose this particular interval is not explained. My guess is that this choice struck the desired balance between the need to lower the tessitura in order to accommodate the cello, and the need to avoid modifying the piano part, with its frequent middle-register closed chords, into too low register, where those chords would become muddy and indistinct.

On the other hand, cellist Jules Desart's cello/piano adaptation of César Franck's Sonata for Violin and Piano, FWV 8 (made with permission from the composer) retains the original key of A major, with the cello part  playing the vast majority of the work's

[10] John Henkin, "Sonata in D Major, Op. 78," Hollywood Bowl, accessed on July 27, 2020, https://www.hollywoodbowl.com/musicdb/pieces/3472/sonata-in-d-major-op-78

material—with a few notable exceptions—down an octave.[11] An obvious benefit of this second approach is that collaborative pianists will not have to contend with two different versions with two different keys of the same piece of repertoire. A more contemporary example that takes this approach is the aforementioned violin adaptation of Weinberg's 24 Preludes for Solo Cello, Op. 100 by Gidon Kremer. Here too, the original key is preserved. Because Weinberg draws on the upper extremes of the cello's range, the original register is at times preserved, and at others transposed up an octave in Kremer's adaptation. I have chosen a path similar to Desart's and Kremer's, preserving the original key and blending octave-transposition with passages in the piece's original register. In Weinberg's Sonata No. 5, Op. 53, much of the piano part occupies the instrument's middle and lower registers. In these low-set areas, altering register and key creates considerably more pronounced changes to timbre and effect than an analogous transposition higher up. Thus, all but a very few moments in the piano part of this project's adaptation are identical to Weinberg's original violin/piano score. The few exceptions constitute moments of octave transposition in the piano part in order to preserve voice relationships with the cello part.

At the piece's opening, the cellist is already confronted with a choice about register. Following a seven-bar piano introduction, the violin part begins with a *simplice* melody starting a major ninth above middle C. This phrase happens to sit quite well in the cello's lyrical tessitura; as such, one's first instinct is to simply play it at register. However, when the same theme reappears in a dramatic cadenza-like iteration at the

[11] Peter Jost, " 'Pour Piano et Violon ou Violoncello' – Is There a Cello Sonata By César Franck?" Henle, November 11, 2013, accessed June 10, 2020, https://www.henle.de/blog/en/2013/11/11/%E2%80%98pour-piano-et-violon-ou-violoncelle%E2%80%99-%E2%80%93-is-there-a-cello-sonata-by-cesar-franck/.

movement's halfway point, it is now transposed up an octave and ornamented with double- and triple-stop chords that, at register, become unrealistic for the cello. Therefore, a choice emerges: either pave over register changes, playing this second iteration at the same register as the first, or preserve the registral differences of the two statements by playing the opening statement down an octave, even though the original register is playable. I opted for the latter option. Weinberg employs these distinct registral spaces as an important narrative and expressive tool, and I wanted to preserve the arc created by these different registral spaces. Furthermore, given the already-repetitive nature of the opening movement, with its oft-repeated statements of the theme, removing a registral change would render the movement too static and repetitive. Thankfully, the wealth of melodic material in this work ends up being quite flexible where the need for octave transposition arises. In similar fashion to lieder that can be sung by either a soprano or a tenor, the resonant timbre and melodic capabilities of the violin and the cello can convey these melodies compellingly in either register. The low-set piano part almost always allows the space needed for such a transposition without damaging the intervallic relationships between the parts. David Fanning observes that "Weinberg's writing for his own instrument in all his duo sonatas is idiomatic yet, with a few exceptions, fundamentally discreet, so as not to steal the limelight from the 'main' instrument, or to pose undue balance problems."[12] In most cases throughout the piece, similar choices were made with regard to instances where the same tune occurs across different registers. Rather than opting for at-pitch renderings whenever possible, priority was given to the

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[12] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 367.

preservation of the work's different registral soundscapes, so that the drama and structural significance of varying registers would survive the adaptation process.

While most of the work's tunes easily survive the octave transposition, passages in which the string part serves an accompanimental or textural role often prove less flexible to registral transfer. For example, in mm. 46-50 of the first movement, the string part has double-stops closely enmeshed in the register of the piano right hand's material. It goes on in ms. 48 into a repeated sighing figure of minor thirds which sit just below the piano right hand, forming a closed chord alongside the piano's melody. If these figures were to be lowered the octave for consistency's sake, the delicate, blended texture of the two instruments would be lost. Furthermore, in ms. 48, the string part would now sound below the piano's left-hand bass note, fundamentally altering the harmonic functionality of the passage.

Another textural instance where the need to preserve register outweighs the technical convenience of the downward octave transposition is found in the opening of the last movement. The particular sonic quality of this high, ethereal 7/8 line becomes unpleasantly earthbound when transposed down the octave. Even though the piano's bass sits quite low with no danger of an unwanted voice crossing, the loss of spaciousness between the deep bass and the high loon-call quality of the original violin line would negatively alter the effect of this passage. Luckily, with the employment of thumb position, cellists will find that these winding lines sit quite comfortably in their original register.

In deciding where precisely to effect transitions between the registers in this adaptation, care has been taken to avoid imposing octave transpositions mid-passage—a

maneuver that Kremer does not shy away from, with sometimes questionable outcomes. Every effort has been made to effect transitions between sections of melody and accompaniment, or at the appearance of a new theme. With this in mind, the discussion will now turn to issues of a "violinistic" nature.

In addition to the above considerations of registral preference, certain instances in the original violin part end up making very particular demands on the cellist, due to the idiomatic technical considerations around those gestures. These demands in turn often dictate the register decision, regardless of other factors. One such example, seen in figure 1, would be the arpeggiating accompanimental passage in the string part beginning in ms. 217 of the second movement. While not quite impossible to play on the cello at register, the difficulty of such a maneuver coupled with the passage's emphasis on rhythm, makes this a moment where all the extra woodshedding required would yield diminished returns. The root of G would be played with an open G-string on the violin, and the instrument's E-string would allow all the required notes to be easily accessed from the first position. There is therefore an openness and easiness to the sound that would unquestionably be lost if the cellist attempted these riffs at register.

*Figure 1. II. mm. 215-225.*

Another issue relating to the cello's lack of an E-string comes in the middle section of the first movement, shown in figure 2. Aside from a low G pedal point in the piano, this section is a string solo, featuring a unique harmonization of the opening theme. Because the string player is entirely responsible for this alternate harmonization, the adapting cellist cannot simply cut out notes here and there due to his lack of an E-string. In order to preserve these pitches, the cellist must sometimes perform a shift maneuver between the grace-note chords and the principal pitch. These shifts often cover close to an octave of distance up the A-string in order to compensate for the missing E-string. Special care must be taken here to prevent these shifts from playing an outsized role in the expressive contour of the work; the main theme must remain clear and straightforward. In order to absorb this version of the tune away from the challenges of playing it on the cello, I formed my interpretation of the passage at the piano.

*Figure 2. I. mm. 37-48.*

Like composers before him, Weinberg sometimes employs open strings to create a distinctive, ringing, folk-like sound. Figure 3 presents a fitting example, the opening of the third movement scherzo. When played on a violin, the octave Ds would certainly involve the violinist using the open D string for the lower of the two pitches, a nice effect for the rustic feel of this opening. Additionally, this line, playable in the first position of the violin, possesses a technical simplicity that would be difficult to emulate in an at-pitch cello part, where everything would have to take place up in the realm of thumb position, and where a sense of ease would be lost by the physics of playing thicker cello strings at half-length versus playing thin violin strings full-length. Here, the octave transposition for the cello facilitates this same open, simple sound, and the absence of any piano part in the opening precludes crossed voices. This transposition also prevents an awkward downward octave drop later on when the part gets too high for the cello. Meanwhile, there are some melodic passages in the string part which seem only to work at original pitch in the cello adaption, due to the instruction that they be played entirely on the violin's G-string.

*Figure 3. III. mm. 1-4.*

Many enthusiasts of violin repertoire have a particularly soft spot in their hearts for moments when the violin soars into a melody in the upper registers of the instrument's lowest string. The ensuing sound is dark, rich, and inviting of a very different form of vibrato in order to accommodate the thicker gauge of the string. In every instance when I attempted these passages an octave lower, such as the second theme's statements in the second movement at mm. 69 and 276, or the middle episode of the third movement scherzo-rondo beginning at ms. 181, the tunes fell flat on their faces. Here, at-pitch renditions of the melodies high up on the cello's D-string seemed to best emulate that idiomatic violin sound of playing up high on the G-string. The similar string gauge, string tension, and the vibrato such conditions invite all assist in retaining the unique expressive effect called for at these moments.

A final point of consideration is the issue of preserving intervals. Unlike Kremer's adaptation of the Preludes, Op. 100, the present adaptation brings the challenge of maintaining the intervallic relationships between two different instruments during instances of octave transposition in the string part. This particular sonata's typically low-set piano part made efforts on this front rather painless. I have altered the piano part only twice in order to accommodate situations where the cello part must be played down the octave. As seen in figure 4, the first alteration occurs at mm. 42-43, near the end of the string solo section at the center of the first movement. As the string part descends from its climactic peak in the upper registers, the piano enters with rising thirds, eventually meeting the string part in a closed chord, where the violin's D in ms. 43 is sandwiched between the C and E-flat in the right hand of the piano. Since the cello part is transposed down an octave at this moment, the piano part has been lowered an octave as well for

these two measures so that the rising thirds may meet the cello's line with the same closed chord, rather than climbing up above the cello's place of arrival.

*Figure 4. I. mm. 42-43*

The second and final alteration of the piano part, shown in figure 5, occurs near the beginning of the second movement in mm. 44-47, when the cello part's lower-octave version would otherwise create a major second with the piano right hand's upper voice, rather than the minor seventh created by the two voices in the original version. The example below is taken from my cello/piano adaptation. Both the cello and piano right hand have been transposed down an octave, and a lower-octave G has been added to the piano left hand in order to preserve the bassline's integrity.

*Figure 5. II. mm. 44-48*

The process of adaptation is quite dynamic; as the piece becomes more and more familiar, the adapter develops more insight into the work's nature, and with it an increasingly refined intuition for how to proceed, while first and foremost upholding the composition's integrity. This type of project offers a unique opportunity to examine attributes, commonalities, and differences between the original and new instrumentation of a work. It also provides the occasion to welcome the work into a new instrument's repertoire.

## Chapter 3: Analysis

Weinberg's compositional voice is at once rooted in traditions of Western European art music, popular musics of interwar Poland, Yiddish and broader Jewish folk traditions, and the distinct sonic realms of Russian and Soviet music. While it can be helpful to draw comparison and notice such sources of influence, Weinberg's body of work constitutes an artistic contribution far greater than the sum of these various cultural inputs. The composer's gradual emergence into western consciousness in the early 2000s has been buoyed by a compelling personal narrative tied to larger twentieth century narratives of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and the reign of Joseph Stalin. With deference to the importance of Weinberg's biography and to the broader historical tapestry into which it is woven, an appreciation for and understanding of this composer would not be complete without substantive engagement with the crackling brilliance of his compositional craft. The goal of the following chapter is to move towards a deeper understanding of the compositional processes at work in Weinberg's music, as evidenced in his Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 5, Op. 53 (1953).

In his discussion of Bach's Prelude No. 7 from *Twelve Short Preludes*, Heinrich Schenker describes initial motivic material as "the seed from which the prelude emerges; once this seed is sewn, the entire harvest is determined."[13] The concepts of organicism and unity referenced here will prove useful throughout the study of this sonata. While the cyclic, verbatim return of the first movement's opening theme in the sonata's final movement presents the most obvious instance of inter-movement cohesion, examples abound across all four movements where fragments of the opening theme, itself developed from a three-note "seed" motive,

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[13] Heinrich Schenker, "Bach: Twelve Short Preludes, No. 7 [BWV 941]," *The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook*, vol. 1, trans. Hedi Siegel, (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 58.

determine the “harvest” of the piece’s subsequent sections. Before addressing these inter-movement activities, it will be helpful to begin by examining some properties of the first movement’s opening theme, shown here in figure 6.

*Figure 6. I. mm 1-7. 3-note seed motive, opening theme.*

Schenker’s seed metaphor applies immediately to the opening seven measures of the sonata’s first movement, *Andante con moto* in G minor. Solo piano introduces a songful opening theme in the right hand, beginning with the three-note “seed” motive: D – C – G / $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{4}$ – $\hat{1}$. This simple motive excels at both form and function; its natural melodic beauty draws attention away from, rather than onto, the gesture’s immense functional flexibility. Consisting of the audibly distinct intervals of a step plus a leap, the motive can accommodate considerable variation—especially the intervallic variability of the leap—and still be audibly perceived as a distinct and memorable musical idea. The seed motive begins the piece, unfolding in quarter notes in the piano right hand at a 1:1 pace over simple, pendulum-like closed-chord motion between a G-

minor triad and a colorful collection of that triad's lower neighbor-tones ($\hat{5}$ to $\hat{4}$; $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$) combined with the original triad's preserved perfect fifth. The resulting cluster happens to include the three pitches of the seed motive, sounding simultaneously as a chord ($\hat{1}/\hat{2}/\hat{4}/\hat{5}$).[14] As this back-and-forth accompanimental figure continues, the motive steadily unfolds into a melodic theme whose simple lyrical beauty and plaintive natural minor tonality disguise a steady and highly methodical process of motivic germination. Following the initial three-note statement, the same material is immediately restated in diminution: $\hat{5} – \hat{4} – \hat{1}$ sounds again, this time at an eighth-note pace, while the accompanimental chords continue on in quarter-notes. With this second statement, the melodic idea is expanded to a total duration of four quarter-notes, compared to the initial seed motive's duration of three. The melodic range is expanded, covering an octave span from $\hat{5} – \underline{\hat{5}}$.[15] This developing melody adapts a winding contour, changing direction frequently amid a pentatonic cast: $\mathbf{\hat{5} – \hat{4} – \hat{1}} – \hat{3} – \hat{2} – \underline{\natural\hat{7}} – \underline{\hat{5}} – \hat{1}$; the key of G natural minor's diatonic pitches have now all been represented with the exception of $\flat\hat{6}$ / E♭. Thus, the original three-note motive is subjected to an immediate acceleration of pace, an increasingly developed melodic contour, and an expansion of duration, range, and total represented pitches.

The motive's germination continues forward in this manner. The next phrase, now *five* quarter-note beats in rhythmic duration, begins with the final three pitches of the second "germination stage" of the seed motive, $\natural\hat{7} – \hat{5} – \hat{\mathit{1}}$, now transposed up an octave. With this climb in register, a novel apex of g1 is reached, and this new melodic crest sets off a sweeping downward motion of

[14] The presence of $\hat{2}$, in this chord, in addition to its role as lower-neighbor tone to $\hat{3}$, also suggests the possibility of motivic inversion ($\hat{1} – \hat{2} – \hat{5}$), a motivic variant that will come to fruition in the second theme in the sonata-form of the second movement.

[15]Explanation of $\hat{5} – \underline{\hat{5}}$: An underlined scale degree will indicate a pitch sounding in the octave below the previous pitch. An italicized scale degree (e.g. $\hat{5} – \hat{\mathit{5}}$) will indicate a scale degree sounding in the octave above the previous pitch.

steps and leaps, covering the distance of a minor ninth (to a new melodic nadir, f♮/ ♮$\hat{7}$) and sounding as a melodic elaboration of the seed motive.[16] Amidst this sweeping gesture, the last of the diatonic pitches sounds: the expressive ♭$\hat{6}$ / E♭. Rebounding from the downward sweep, the line buoys upward with a leap of a minor seventh, settling on d1 / $\hat{5}$, the first pitch of the original seed motive. While not particularly cadential from a harmonic standpoint, a sense of arrival is achieved through relative expansion of time, with tied notes in the accompaniment and melody alike serving to tap the breaks. The melody elides via a tie over the bar line back into a verbatim statement of the piece's opening seven beats—the seed motive, plus its first degree of expansion. After this stabilizing reinforcement of the seed motive, the melody blossoms further into a new phrase, *seven* quarter-notes in duration. This new developmental stage begins on the novel apex of a1 with a transposed and ornamented form of the motive: $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$ – $\underline{(\hat{4})}$ – $\underline{\hat{5}.}$ This final developmental stage of the motive covers the range of an octave plus a perfect fifth. Here, an additional pitch is introduced: the novel E♮ (♮$\hat{6}$) appears as the theme's single pitch occurring outside of the natural minor diatonic scale. This chromatic addition lends a modal tint to the overall theme being crafted from these developing ideas which, along with the fascinating duality of ♮$\hat{6}$ – ♭$\hat{6}$ / E♮ – E♭, will be discussed below in more detail. This final phrase in the seed motive's germination process concludes in an open-ended manner: rather than resolving to any sort of traditional cadence, the melody gravitates towards D / $\hat{5}$ as the accompanimental figure blooms via $\hat{5}$♮ - $\hat{6}$♮ - $\hat{7}$ motion in its upper voice from a closed G-minor triad to a stack of perfect fourths ($\hat{1}$ – $\hat{4}$ – ♮$\hat{7}$). The seventh bar, a single truncated 2/4 bar preceded and succeeded by tracts

[16]Here and throughout, I will use the system designated by The Music Library Association (MLA) to refer to range-specific pitch designations: "C2 C1 C c c1 c2 c3 c4, with middle C as c."

"Notes Style Sheet," Music Library Association, accessed July 1, 2020, https://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/mpage/notes_style_key

of music in 4/4, serves as a sort of metrical cadence. In the absence of traditional harmonic cadential punctuation, this metrical alteration defines the boundary of a seven-bar melodic theme that has emerged from the opening three-note seed motive. Here and in other moments throughout the sonata, these single-measure metric alterations will continue to serve as metrically-sourced punctuation between phrases, often in lieu of a traditional cadence, and thus often creating the paradoxical effect of conclusion alongside open-endedness. The string part enters in ms. 8 with a restatement of the opening seven-bar theme, and in so doing further solidifies the phrasal perimeters of this theme. And while the string part's restatement is verbatim until its last four notes, a new melody derived from the opening thematic material emerges in the piano right hand, as shown in Figure 7.

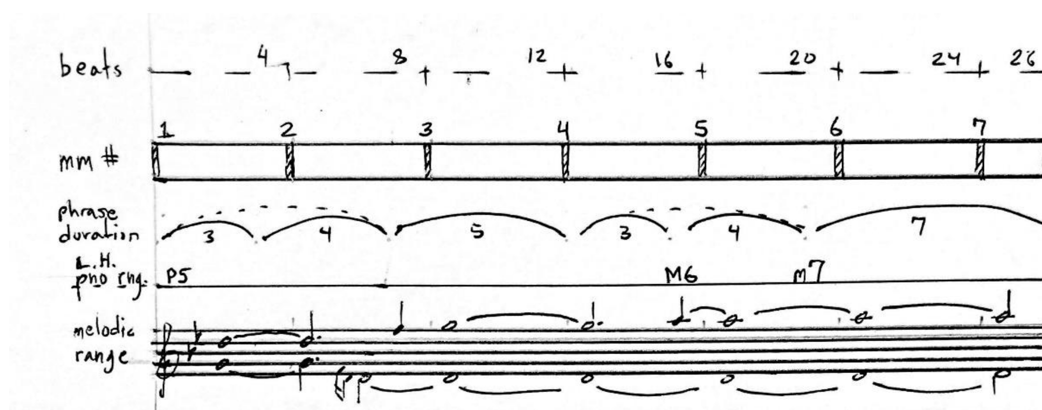
*Figure 7. Pitch similarities between opening theme and new material in piano right hand*

The seven-bar process of motivic germination, summarized numerically in Table 1 and visually in Figure 8**,** is exceptional not only because of the consistency with which processes develop on so many fronts, but also because of the way all these processes work together with such ease to form a songful melodic theme, compelling enough to direct attention away from, rather onto, these function-rich processes. The material of these first seven bars will be employed in myriad ways across the rest of the sonata. Recalling Schenker's metaphor, it will determine the harvest.

*Table 1 – Motivic Germination*

| Motivic "developmental stage" | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| mm. #s | mm 1.1-1.3 | mm. 1.4-2.3 | mm. 2.4-3.4 | mm. 5.4-7.2 |
| Rhythmic duration (quarter notes) | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Melodic Range | P5 | P8 | M9 | P12 |
| Cumulative pitch collection (G min) | 5 ($\hat{1}$, $\hat{2}$, $\hat{3}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{5}$) | 6 (+ ♮$\hat{7}$) | 7 (+ $\hat{6}$) | 8 (+ ♮$\hat{6}$!) |
| Phrase apex | $d^1$ | $d^1$ | $g^1$ | $a^1$ |
| Range of piano L.H. accompaniment | P5 | P5 | P5 | M6, m7 |

*Figure 8. Visualization of Germination Processes in I. mm. 1-7*




Another feature of the opening theme is the blended tonality created by the presence of both $\hat{6}$♭ and $\hat{6}$♮ (E♭ and E♮) as equally viable scale tones. This feature presents an opening to briefly discuss a possible influence of Jewish folk idioms on this theme. Notwithstanding the

problematic racial commentary, which ascribes different melodic and rhythmic predilections to supposed genetic differences between various races, Abraham Zevi Idelsohn's massive survey of the tonal characteristics of Eastern European Jewish folk music represents a significant resource for guidance on detecting specific attributes of Jewish folk traditions in Weinberg's music.[17] Having examined the tonal characteristics of over 1000 Jewish folk melodies, Idelsohn documented distinct trends of tonality across the repertoire. Several of these trends appear in Weinberg's Sonata, Op. 53: "Tunes in minor with a minor seventh …. [and] Tunes in minor, with the sixth sometimes in major and sometimes in minor. In the tunes of this group the major sixth occurs as leading note to the minor seventh."[18] Beginning in natural G minor with its minor sixth and minor seventh, the sonata's theme takes on a modal quality with the introduction in ms. 5.4 of E♮. The theme's conclusion, marked by the gradual accompanimental ascent in the piano right hand's inner voice of D – E♮ – F♮/$\hat{5}$ – $\hat{6}$♮ – $\hat{7}$♮, could be heard as an instance of $\hat{6}$♮ serving as a leading note to $\hat{7}$♮, a function described in the Idelsohn passage. Vacillations between E♭ and E♮ occur throughout the first movement and beyond. Rather than sounding as direct quotations of Jewish folk music, these folk-like idioms are employed by Weinberg in a Bartokian manner; just as Bartok incorporated folk music in innovative and idiosyncratic ways, Weinberg seems to probe elements of Jewish folk music traditions for new and unpredictable functionality. One

[17] "Abraham Zevi Idelsohn (1882-1938), Jewish cantor, composer, [author of] *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies*, 10 vol. (1914–32). This work and the more than 1,000 recordings made by Idelsohn provided a basis for the first comparative study of Jewish biblical cantillation (intoned recitation) and demonstrated an underlying unity in the religious chants." *Encyclopedia Britannica,* s.v. "Idelsohn, Abraham Zevi: Russian Composer," accessed July 3, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abraham-Zevi-Idelsohn.

[18] A. Z. Idelsohn, "East-European Jewish Folk-Song," *Musical Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (October 1932): 635, accessed July 2, 2020, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/stable/738944.

particularly interesting repurposing of this chromatic pair is found in the opening of the second movement, discussed in greater detail below.[19]

From a structural point of the view, the sonata's first movement, titled *Andante con moto*, functions as a musical prologue; the movement is relatively brief and formally sparce. David Fanning refers to this movement as "preludial," and having "a kind of free strophic" form, referring to the frequent repetition of the opening theme, stated in its entirety a total of four times, and additionally appearing in different fragmented guises and contexts.[20] The first movement above all sets a precedent for a variety of methods in which the flexible motivic material itself, as well as its harmonic trappings, can be altered in myriad ways, often while retaining its distinct step-leap aural signature. The primary form of motivic variation heard in this movement is that of transposition; the seed motive's step-leap descent, often joined by either fragments or entire repetitions of the opening seven-bar theme, begins on a variety of different scale degrees, each imbuing the figure with distinct melodic inertia. Table 2 illustrates this phenomenon.

*Table 2. Motivic variation in I. Andante con moto*

| Starting pitch | Scale degrees | Intervallic variation | mm. # |
|---|---|---|---|
| D (original seed motive) | $\hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{1}$ | M2 / P4 | 1, 4, 7, 11, 24.3, 37, 51* |
| A | $\hat{2} - \hat{1} - \underline{\hat{5}}$ | M2 / P4 | 14.3 |
| E♭ | $\flat\hat{6} - \hat{5} - \hat{1}$ | m2 / P5 | 20, 32.2 |
| G | $\hat{1} - \underline{\hat{7}} - \underline{\hat{4}}$ | M2 / P4 | 28, 58 |
| D♭** | $\hat{4} - \hat{3} - \hat{1}$ | m2 / M3 | 48 |
| A | $\hat{2} - \hat{1} - \underline{\flat\hat{6}}$ | M2 / M3 | 63.2 |

**At ms. 51, the violin delivers the fully realized theme, while the seed motive repeats over and over in the piano right hand*

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[19]Another resource recommended to the author, still to be acquired and studied at the time of this writing, is the following: Hanoch Avenary, *The Ashkenazi Tradition of Biblical Chant between 1500 and 1900. Documentation and Musical Analysis*, (Tel-Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1978).

[20]David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 244.

***In A♭ Major; all other occurrences are in the orbit of G minor*

In keeping with the opening movement's sparseness, alternative pathways for the theme's conclusion are realized through the economical repurposing of thematic material. Near the conclusion of the string part's restatement of the opening theme, the B♭-A♮ pair[21] in ms. 14 is now repeated twice, interrupting the otherwise verbatim restatement of the piano's opening material, and initiating a transposed restatement of the theme by the cello: $\hat{2} – \hat{1} – \underline{\hat{5}}$. This transposed statement is in turn cut short in ms. 16 by a restatement of the new repeated neighbor-tone gesture, now transposed to A♭ – G♮ – A♭ – G♮ and expanded to resolve downward to F♮, followed by an upward leap to B♭. A "new" motivic figure is crafted here; it will appear in various transpositions for the remainder of the movement and beyond. It is new in the sense that it is sonically distinct from previous material, and yet it is not new in that it clearly originates from previous material. It is the first of many recurring ideas to be wrought from the musical DNA of the sonata's opening theme. Referring to Schenker's metaphor, this "new" motive constitutes an early harvest. The remainder of this paper will explore these processes in detail.

The impassioned *Allegro molto* sonata-form second movement of the Sonata, Op. 53 pairs with the sonata's *Andante con moto* first movement (which ends with an "*attacca"* instruction) in a similar fashion to the slow and fast sections of the first movement in Beethoven's C-major cello sonata Op. 102, No. 1 (1815). As with Weinberg's sonata, the slow opening section acts as a prelude, lacking the sonata-form structure of the second movement, but containing motivic material that will reappear later. Notably, Op. 102, No. 1 is demonstrative of

[21] This B♭-A♮ pair originally appears in ms. 2 as the first melodic expansion of the three-note opening motive. It appears again as passing motion in ms. 6.4 towards the first statement of the opening theme's conclusion.

Beethoven's pioneering forays into cyclic composition. Weinberg's sonata employs the cyclic technique as well, repeatedly drawing from the seed-motive and melodic theme of mm. 1-7 of the opening movement. In the case of Beethoven's sonata, a motivic link between slow and fast sections of this first movement is made immediately clear. The fast section begins with an upward scale of $\hat{1} – \hat{2} – \hat{3} – \hat{4} – \hat{5}$, a melodic inversion to the slow section's opening, a descending scale of $\hat{1} – \underline{\hat{7}} – \underline{\hat{6}} – \underline{\hat{5}}$. By contrast, the C-minor second movement of Weinberg's Op. 53 begins without even a hint of motivic continuity. Instead, the solo piano begins with a hushed and breathless line of running eighth-notes in 6/8 time. It is not long before motivic hints begin to emerge as the introductory statement winds off into fugato textures. In figure 9 below, we see how the right hand passes off its running figures of the left hand in ms. 11 and immediately sounds a familiar three-note gesture: G – F – C ($\hat{5} – \hat{4} – \hat{1}$ in C minor) in dotted quarter-notes, with the first of those three notes highlighted by a hairpin. In addition to its role as a link to the first movement, the appearance here of the seed motive serves an important rhythmic role. It is the first moment in which any melodic idea is stated at the dotted-quarter pace, and thus primes the ear for the main thematic material of the movement; both the first and second themes of this movement are more or less entirely driven by declamatory lines of dotted quarter-notes. Just before the string part launches in with the arpeggiating first theme in ms. 20, the main source of this movement's first theme is revealed: the piano left hand pounds out a clarion call of four dotted-quarter notes, E♮ – C – E♭ – E♭, all highlighted with accents, further underscoring the gesture's motivic significance. This chromatic feature from the first movement's theme is now acting both as a formal sign-post, signaling the arrival of the *agitato* first theme, and as the primary characteristic of that very theme, comprised of an arpeggio carrying out an incessant argument between E♭ (on the way up) and E♮ (on the way down). Here, Weinberg is tapping

absolute pitches for motivic continuation, rather than their scale-degree equivalents. In the context of a C tonic, this E♭ – E♮ pair, now $\flat\hat{3}$ – $\natural\hat{3}$, has the effect of destabilizing the established minor tonality. The bassline accentuates this duality, sometimes favoring ostinato riffs alternating between C and E♭, and at other times between C and E♮. The motivic “E♮ – C – E♭ – E♭” clarion call will appear again at ms. 348, this time signaling the movement’s formal recapitulation. The E♮ – E♭ pair makes a conspicuous final appearance in the coda, where at ms. 437 the string part’s final ***mp*** pizzicato arpeggio peters out in chromatic indecision before the two instruments comedically arrive at disparate conclusions, with the string part blasting ***ff*** C-major cadential chords, only to be interrupted by the piano’s own C-minor concussive chords, to which the string part responds by joining in comic resignation by simply playing an unharmonized C alone.

*Figure 9. II. Allegro molto, mm 10 – 27.*

*(Figure 9 continues on next page)*

Beyond the repurposing of the E♮ – E♭ pair from the first movement's opening theme, additional cyclic motivic activity is detected as the turbulent rhythmic undercurrent of the first section's accompaniment opens out into spacious, open chords in E♭ major, setting the stage for the monorhythmic *espressivo* second theme beginning on ms. 69. This peculiar theme is literally

searching for the E♭-major triad over which it unfolds; the first eight pitches sound as dissonance against the chord. Starting on C ($\hat{6}$), the melody unfolds as follows: $\hat{6} - \hat{7} - \hat{7} - \hat{6} - \hat{7} - \hat{2} - \hat{2} - \hat{7} - \hat{3} - \hat{5}$. Only on the ninth pitch does the melody lock into alignment with the triad. Its melodious, cantorial quality, its modulation to the relative major, and its contrast to the movement's opening invite matter-of-fact acceptance of this second theme, à la carte. And yet, the shift from tonal dissonance to consonance on this ninth pitch is no coincidence; the arrival on the consonant $\hat{3}$ of E♭ major marks the completion of the original first movement seed motive, here inverted and embedded in this new theme. The pitches C, D, and G, here $\hat{6} - \hat{7} - \hat{3}$, outline an inversion of the seed motive's contour of M2 – P4. As with the first movement's flexible use of its opening theme, this second theme will experience variations in starting pitch, the intervallic size of the leaps, and will occasionally toggle the opening upward M2 step to a m2.

The development section is marked at ms. 135 by a change in key signature and a return of the winding eighth-note figures of the movement's opening. This new key signature, which simply removes the three flats of the previous section, seems more to pave the way for the turbulent modulations ahead rather than to establish a new key. This middle section alternates between bursts of fugato exchange between string and piano and full restatements of both the first and second themes of the exposition, often in keys distant from the movement's home key of C minor. In the midst of all this, a distinct new idea emerges: at ms. 235, a Beethovenian "light switch" is flipped: the dynamic jumps from ***f*** to ***ff***, a new instruction of *marcatissimo* is given, and the meter changes from 6/8 to 2/4. At this moment, a new theme appears which does not seem to have any connection to the seed motive, but instead evokes the melismatic line in the second phrase of the *Kol Nidre* liturgical chant (shown here in plate 1) from the Jewish high

holiday of Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, considered to be the holiest and most solemn day in the Jewish calendar.[22]

*Plate 1. Kol Nidre Melody. Source: Library of Congress*

[22] "Yom Kippur 101: The Most Solemn Day in the Jewish Calendar," *My Jewish Learning*, accessed on July 18, 2020, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yom-kippur-101/

*Figure 10. II. Allegro molto, mm. 232-242. "Kol Nidrei" quotation.*

As seen in Figure 10, the sole difference between Weinberg's new theme and the excerpt of the chant melody is the interval between the first and second pitches; in Weinberg's case, the interval is a minor second, whereas in the chant tune, the interval is a major second. With its minor second, Weinberg's version is imbued with a Phrygian quality. The string part echoes this line in parallel fifths on the offbeat in a folksy chop, where the player is instructed to hammer each off beat with a down-bow repeatedly, rather than alternating down- and up-bow strokes. When this theme repeats at ms. 247, the minor second is "corrected" to a major second, and the six-pitch fragment is now identical to that of the *Kol Nidre* line. The similarity could be

coincidental; at present there is little justification beyond the notes themselves to speculate as to whether or not that material is indeed a quotation of the *Kol Nidre* liturgical chant, and if it were, what significance or meaning this might convey. This instance, along with another example of possible extramusical reference, will be contemplated in further detail in the appendix.

*Figure 11. III. mm. 1-4.*

*Plate 2. Scherzo from Sonata in A minor, D. 845, Franz Schubert. Source: Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.*

David Fanning observes a striking similarity between the opening lines of the sonata's scherzo third movement (figure 11) and that of the scherzo from Schubert's Piano Sonata in A

minor, D845 (plate 2).[23] Similar references to western European nineteenth century composers are not infrequent in Weinberg's music. To name a few, one can hear fragments of Schumann's cello concerto in his 24 Preludes for Solo Cello, Op. 100, a spark of Mendelssohn's String Octet, Op. 20 in the opening of the fourth movement of Weinberg's Quartet No. 4, Op. 20, and perhaps most dramatically in Weinberg's symphony No. 21, Op. 152 (subtitled "Kaddish"), where a haunting quotation from Chopin's Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23 emerges from a palate of utter darkness. Returning to the present comparison, the Schubert and Weinberg scherzos both begin with a repeated figure of a double-eighth-note anacrusis followed by a half-note. The opening of Weinberg's scherzo goes beyond just a simple nod to Schubert; a closer look reveals that this sonata's own seed motive is present yet again. The three pitches of this motive, D – C – G, are put to use in the crafting of Weinberg's version of Schubert's gesture, which here begins with solo string: the eighth-note pick-ups are comprised of a G – C double-stop, and the half-note is a double-stop pair of Ds in octaves. Thus, the first two measures of this scherzo are comprised entirely of the original seed-motive's pitches. Beyond this opening reference (as far as I can tell), the scherzo has no additional inter-movement motivic activity beyond this initial cyclic contact with the seed motive. Instead, the scherzo does what scherzos often do so well, providing a nimble, playful balance to the somber opening movement and the turbulent second movement. Exhibiting an eclectic mix of distinct episodes between each restatement of the main theme, this movement has the feel of a rondo. I suspect that some of the episodic material is drawn from music beyond this piece but have yet to locate any sources that make a compelling case for such a suspicion. At the movement's ***pp*** conclusion, the string part holds an open fifth

[23]David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 244-245.

on the open strings of G and D over a gentle, open-voiced G-major chord in the piano, winding down to a quiet stasis before the final movement begins *attacca*.

*Figure 12. IV. Allegro, mm. 1-3.*

The finale's ***ppp*** *attacca* opening, shown in figure 12, causes an immediate brightening, like morning's first light. With the G-major sonority of the third movement still lingering in the air, the piano strikes and holds fifths and octaves of B♭ and F♮, and the string part introduces a quicksilver riff of eighth-notes in a peculiar 7/8 meter.[24] This riff adds the major third (D♮) and major seventh (A♮) chord tones to the piano's perfect fifths and octaves, completing a B♭ major harmony with a major seventh. And yet, any stable sense of a single tonal center is already challenged beginning in the third bar, with E♮ and C♯ in in the string line hinting at a polytonal presence of D minor, and the bass's gentle and temporary drop to G-D fifths further destabilizing B♭ as a tonic. In the midst of this otherworldly texture, this eighth-note riff immediately reveals its connection with the seed-motive; the seven-note pattern, D – F – **A – G – D** – F – C, contains the descending M2 – P4 melodic line, here transposed. Beyond this three-note quotation, the riff is imbued with additional qualities of the first movement's opening. The initial ascending minor

[24] In the original score, the violinist is instructed here to "Play this whole section most fluently as if below a single slur, without accentuation when changing the bow."

triad of the riff, D – F – A, recalls the closed-position minor triad of the piano left hand in the first movement's opening. The seed-motive contour of the riff's third, fourth, and fifth pitches continues to the sixth note with the same rising minor third contour, A – G – D – F, as that of the seed motive's first restatement in mm. 1.4-2.1 in the first movement, D – C – G – B♭. The long-playing undulation between B♭ and G in the bassline, in effect for the first 29 bars, seems to draw further attention to this feature. As if to recap the thematic ideas found earlier in the piece, the ethereal eighth-note line also passes through the now-familiar E♮-E♭ pair in mm. 21-22, these two measures being metrically highlighted also by a brief modulation to 5/8. The riff eventually evaporates with fleeting brushes of B♭ and D over B♭ – F fifths in the bass, and the dying-out string line finally settles on D, a final note which turns out also to be a return to the beginning. As seen in in figure 13, the first movement's time signature of 4/4 and tempo marking of *Andante* now return at ms. 30. Sure enough, the seed-motive sounds from the solo piano: D – C – G. With it sound the first seven beats of the first movement's opening theme. This fragment of the first movement theme is restated melodically and rhythmically verbatim, albeit an octave lower—the piano right hand's first D enters at the same register as the string part's final D from the previous measure—and in the original key of G minor. This moment marks the true cyclic reemergence of the opening theme, hinted at prior to this point by features in the middle movements and the finale's opening.

*Figure 13. IV. mm. 29-32. Cyclic return of opening theme from mvt. I.*

The motivic G-B♭ relationship, taken from the third and fourth notes of the first movement's opening theme and drawn out in the bassline of the finale's opening sequence, now comes even more into focus, as this reanimated theme turns from G again to B♭ in ms 31.4 instead of continuing into the next phrase of the original first movement statement. A truncated version of the 7/8 riff over B♭ returns, trimmed down in a way that further highlights the motivic material of that opening section. The first two bars imitate the very opening of the finale, and the third and fourth bars repeat the 5/8 bars from mm. 21-22 emphasizing the E♮ – E♭ pair. The fifth sixth bars feature a G-minor triad plus the three-note seed-motive in its original key. The seventh and eight bars reveal the G-B♭ relationship as the key to transformation, that all-important component in the classic narrative arc. Indeed, true thematic transformation comes next. Hugh MacDonald describes the nineteenth century phenomenon of thematic transformation as "the process of modifying a theme so that in a new context it is different but yet manifestly made of the same elements."[25]

[25]Hugh Macdonald, "Transformation, thematic," Grove Music Online, 2001; Accessed 19 Jul. 2020. https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000028269.

Macdonald's definition provides an apt description of the new theme that first appears in mm. 40-42. As figure 14 demonstrates, this theme is cut from the same cloth as the sonata's opening theme, itself restated a few bars back in mm. 30-31 to make sure the listener gleans the connection. Also marked *Andante*, the tune begins with a rising major sixth from B♭ to G. Recalling the rising minor third from G to B♭ formed by pitches three and four of the piece's opening theme, this new B♭ – G major sixth hints at a possible retrograde action, thinly disguised by inversion. What follows next confirms this relationship to the opening theme. The G ascends a perfect fourth to C. The apex of C passes downward through melodic material, complete with the original theme's "eighth-note plus two sixteenth-notes" rhythmic signature, to land on D. The new theme thus outlines the old theme in retrograde, B♭ – G – C – D, with inverted first and last pitches.

*Figure 14. Structural comparison of original theme and transformed theme.*

Figure 15 illustrates Weinberg's orchestration of a most ecstatic convergence of the old and new themes. The string part begins the new theme in mm. 48 over the same rolling E♭ harmony, as in the piano's initial statement of the same theme in ms. 40. But at the theme's conclusion, instead of leading from D to F as the piano had done, the string line leaps up an octave, landing on D atop a powerful open B♭-major chord in the piano. As the string line points toward continued ascent, the piano right hand's D initiates a sublimely reharmonized version of

the piece's opening theme, with the bass walking stepwise from B♭ up to a G, the root of a dramatic G-*major* chord. The string line's ascent is motivically predetermined as well. After a stepwise ascent in eighth-notes from D up to G, the final (rhythmically elongated) ascending pitches, G – A – D, comprise a strict inversion of the seed-motive, rising now in the familiar M2 – P4 motion to the crest of this cathartic moment of peripeteia.

*(See figure 15 on pp. 39-40)*

*Figure 15 (pp. 39-40). VI. mm 37-60. Thematic transformation.*

37
Andante ♩= 66
Vc.
Pno
espr.
f

42
Allegro 𝅗𝅥.. = 84
Vc.
Pno
molto dim.

46
molto rit.
senza sord.
espr.
Vc.
Pno
f
pp
mf
♩= ♩

MacDonald goes on to state that “the transformed theme has a life and independence of its own and is no longer a sibling of the original theme.”[26] Indeed, in the wake of this climactic moment, the new theme will embark on its own journey, one that will define much of the rest of this finale movement. Leading into an *Allegretto* section in E minor (note the relation to the recent peripeteic arrival at G major) with a folksy “um-pah-pah-pah” accompaniment, this new theme sets off on a musical trip through the forest, exploring different registers and dancing playfully alongside the piano. This reverie is soon interrupted. Fragments of the quicksilver line

[26] Hugh Macdonald, "Transformation, thematic," Grove Music Online, 2001; Accessed 19 Jul. 2020. https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000028269.

from the movement's opening reemerge beginning in ms. 115, leading to a complete return of that material in ms. 134, now ironed out from its previous 7/8 meter to a 2/4 meter. Fighting against the current as one might resist awakening from a pleasant dream, the new theme attempts to take over the music again at ms. 142. But the accompaniment only intensifies, pulling the string part into an intensifying melee, culminating with a launch into a strict fugue for the solo piano whose subject is formed from the contour of the "transformed" theme.

Let us pause here for a moment. A fugue, in a tonal key? It is 1953. Arnold Schoenberg's innovative twelve-tone system was already thirty-two years old, and the International Summer Courses for New Music and Darmstadt, "a meeting place for the emerging avant-garde… where the music of Schoenberg and Webern was performed and studied," had been on since 1946.[27] On July 18, 1953, the day after Weinberg's Sonata Op. 53 was completed, Elvis Presley recorded his first tracks at Memphis Recording Service.[28] This is not to say that the likes of Schoenberg and Stravinsky had altogether moved on from the older traditions espoused by Weinberg; Schoenberg's twelve-tone Suite for Piano, Op. 25 and Webern's Symphony, Op. 21 are fine examples of pouring new wine into an old bottle, so to speak. And yet, while these works draw significantly on older traditions, they are also staging grounds for new and experimental concepts. Weinberg's Sonata, Op. 53, with its nineteenth-century cyclic techniques, its traditional employment of western tonality, and even a baroque fugue, seem solidly oriented towards the past. While it stands as a new work with a unique arrangement of notes and a distinct expressive palate, it would be inaccurate to attempt to locate musical innovation as a central

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[27] Bryan R. Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure*, 2nd ed., (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 331.

[28] Stephen L. Betts, "Jack White Has Elvis Presley's First Recordings Digitally Transferred," Rolling Stone, April 15, 2015, accessed on July 20, 2020, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country/jack-white-has-elvis-presleys-first-recordings-digitally-transferred-101499/

motivation for the piece's existence. This is perhaps a reason why Weinberg is altogether absent from so many textbooks on twentieth-century music history.

Fanning alludes to a lack of access by Soviet composers to the more innovative currents in the west, writing, "in a community of composers whose younger generation had barely had a chance to become acquainted with Bartók or Stravinsky, never mind Schoenberg, Webern or their followers, there was no question of an avant-garde suddenly materialising, even had the freedom existed to allow such a thing."[29] But perhaps, given Weinberg's western training and access to Western trends and news through the community at the Warsaw Conservatory until the age of nineteen, it was not a lack of exposure, but rather a matter of preference, that directed Weinberg's proclivities for traditional forms, techniques, and tonalities. In a letter written to his daughter Victoria on 11 August 1974, Weinberg shares his estimation of Schoenberg's innovations, and also alludes to his respect for what he felt to be the more tradition-oriented innovations of Bach.

> I'm very sorry that you were too shy to share your thoughts about Schoenberg. You know that I value the sharpness of your artistic judgments (since your childhood, in fact). I can tell you that the work of this composer is alien to me. The works that you have heard are characterised by a large portion of eclecticism (as you rightly said – Wagner). I don't know the opera *Moses and Aaron*, so I can't say anything about that. But for me this whole invented system is the stillborn pastime of a scholarly brain. In my opinion it's impossible to create music from such a prejudiced conception. If Bach, with infinite ramifications and deviations, created within some kind of defined system, then it was still the result of a centuries-old process of the growth of polyphony, counterpoint, cycle and so on. It was a natural evolutionary process, dictated by the very life's blood of musical art. It may of course be possible, in the presence of a speculative analytical spirit, to dream up hundreds of other systems, but they aren't much use for the development of music.[30]

[29] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 238.

[30]*ibid.,* 547-548.

Weinberg, for all his humility, implicitly places himself (and his music) in the realm of the musical art's "natural evolutionary process." In this context his musical choices and tastes seem much less about political or artistic limitation, and more about preference. The composer viewed music as a form of communication. While he drew upon techniques that were not the most current and most experimental, these tools were always employed with the goal of communicating. Unlike the irony-drenched reanimation of older compositional forms and techniques often found in the neoclassical school, Weinberg employed these techniques with sincerity, adapting them to meet the needs of the moment. In the case of his Sonata, Op. 53, the final movement's rousing fugue serves as a frenetic contrast to the fantastical wanderings of the transformed theme earlier in the movement. In ms. 203, the string part finally renters, picking up the fugue subject in ***fff*** as the piano returns to the transformation theme. This convergence eventually leads to an elemental outcry, beginning with the new theme's familiar upward sixth leap, as the string line soars into the highest registers called for in the piece. From here, the music winds down in an abridged reflection of what has come before. The transformed theme steadily works its way out of the "forest," darkened now with Phrygian shades in both the melody and the ominous undulations of sixteenth notes in the accompanimental figures, which eventually give way to the um-pah-pah-pah figures of the forest's more innocent outer edge. At ms. 281, a 2/4, G-major/B-minor version of the shimmering string line from the movement's opening appears, marking the conclusion of the transformed theme's "forest" episode. This line in turn undergoes a gentle, written-out deceleration from sixteenth notes to triplet eighths, to duple eighths, and finally to three slurred pairs of rising quarter notes, easing with the support of a ritardando to *Andante* (the first movement's opening tempo), at ms. 297. The piece's final

fourteen bars return to the first movement's opening theme, here transposed to its $\hat{1} - \hat{7} - \hat{4}$ pattern and augmented to a pace of one note-change per measure. A steady, tolling G marks the half-bars in the bass, while the right hand punctuates each bar's second eighth note with a chromatically descending line of minor thirds outlining B♮/A♭ to E♭/C♮, finally landing on a downbeat arrival on D/B♮, $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ of the piece's final *morendo* G-major chord. If an interested browser were to look at the first and last chords of the piece, she would quickly surmise that this is another one of those "minor to major" works, crossing from G minor to G major over the four-movement schema. And yet the glorious transformations of works associated with such modulations—Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, or closer at hand, any number of the optimistic "socialist realism" works of the Soviet Union—seem far off from this work's desolate conclusion.

The overall mastery of Weinberg's Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 5, Op. 53 lies in its subtlety and simplicity. As this analysis has attempted to show, it is a deeply engineered work; the exposition of a seed-motive, its germination into a theme, cyclic recurrences of both the motive and its theme, and that theme's ultimate transformation bind the movements and sections of the piece together on many levels. And yet the work does not broadcast its structure and engineering as a primary point of focus. Lyrical melodies, virtuosic instrumental passages, and balanced, contrasting sections draw the performer and listener into a narrative that is paradoxically strange and familiar. Considered by Fanning to be "among his most profound and challenging [works] to date," it is my hope that the present project will do its part in creating new opportunities for this composition to be studied, performed, and enjoyed, and for the music of

Weinberg to become more widely known.[31] While Weinberg rarely spoke in any detail about his own music, one clue reveals his own positive estimation of the sonata, and that is the composer's inscription on the first page of the autograph: "Dedicated to Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich."

[31] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 242.

## Appendix: Some Intuitive Observations

In a 2018 interview with the *DSCH Journal*, Weinberg enthusiast and scholar Tommy Persson described one of the challenges faced by his late colleague Per Skans, who began the process of constructing Weinberg's biography: "Another difficulty was that Weinberg left no diaries and, like Shostakovich, seldom wrote or spoke about his music. Instead Weinberg would say 'My diary is in my work, my music.' There are frustratingly few papers by him on his works and life."[32] The implication of the statement is clear for those studying the music of Weinberg: no matter how compelling a given pattern or musical quotation is in a given work, we remain in the dark about whether or not the composer intended a certain feature to be experienced in a certain way. And if he did in fact intend it so, we are left in still deeper darkness about the specific significance or meaning of this musical event. The following observations should therefore be considered as part meditation, part indulgence—in sum, a creative exercise that has helped me to ask new questions, and to form a space in which I may imagine what sorts of experiences, ideas, events, and people might have appeared in Weinberg's musical diary.

Such an exercise is potentially problematic; in what sense can I—an Episcopalian from Minnesota with Scandanavian and Anglo-Saxon heritage—hope to have valuable insights into the veiled inner life of a Jewish, Polish-born, Soviet émigré and Holocaust survivor? The problem involves a lack of lived experience on my part, but it also stems from the one-dimensionality and lack of curiosity with which many non-Jewish people regard all things "Jewish." I have encountered the same frustrating phenomenon over and over again when reading about Weinberg and other composers of Jewish heritage. Passages of musical description

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[32] Tommy Perrson, interview by Henny van der Groep, "My diary is in my work, my music: Weinberg through the eyes of Tommy Persson, *DSCH Journal* no. 49 (July 2018), accessed on July 21, 2020, http://dschjournal.com/wordpress/onlinearticles/dsch49_weinberg.pdf.

would reference in passing a "Jewish influence" or "Jewish flavor." In conversations with colleagues, I have heard the composer jokingly referred to as "the Jewish Shostakovich." While many have with sincere and sustained effort sought to bring Weinberg the composer out from under Shostakovich's shadow, it seems that little has been accomplished towards understanding with a greater specificity what his Jewish heritage meant to him.

When we say that music "sounds Jewish," what does that mean, exactly? To simply say something "is Jewish-sounding" is reductive, tokenizing, and dismissive, in the familiar manner with which minority cultures and peoples are all too often treated. Through many friendships, musical encounters, nine years of life in New York City, and a bit of study, I have come to understand that being Jewish can mean many different things. Saying that something is Jewish is like saying something is African or Asian. In a setting where minorities are marginalized and tokenized, and where it is understood that the desired audience will have a limited knowledge of or interest in the complexities of that given minority's culture (classical music, anyone?), playing this card is an effective method for evoking cultural tropes, stereotypes, or just a little exotic charm. But this approach can do more harm than good towards gleaning substantive characteristics of a given subject's true nature. I therefore challenged myself to avoid making summary assumptions about a given passage's "Jewishness," and instead sought to investigate my intuitions a bit more critically and substantively. This choice quickly revealed countless and complex lines of scholarship, running far beyond the scope of the current project, and illuminating the trailheads of numerous possible future projects. I nevertheless followed a few of these leads and intuitions. Here is what I found.

Upon identifying the possible quotation from the *Kol Nidre* chant in the sonata's second movement, I wondered what basis there might be for assuming that Weinberg would have known

this liturgical melody, and if so, what significance it might have had for him. This quotation cannot be heard without considering the context of Weinberg's Jewish heritage, which at this point would have been entirely internalized due both to pervasive anti-Semitism and the Communist Party's condemnation of any practice of organized religion in the Soviet Union. In considering the feasibility of such a musical quotation, two important questions arise: 1) Is there precedent for exploring the possibility that Weinberg would have quoted music from a liturgical setting, and 2) how likely was it that Weinberg would have heard this melody in a synagogue during his upbringing in Warsaw? To the first question, I think that there is indeed a precedent for such speculation, but it is complicated. David Fanning argues that the composer's "[Jewish] heritage is of huge significance to an understanding of his life and works."[33] But accounts of Weinberg's religiosity—or lack thereof—are to this day conflicting, depending on which of his relatives one chooses to cite. Weinberg's daughter from his first marriage, Victoria Bishops, allows that "the Holocaust, Jews and the tragedies they lived through were the leitmotifs of his life," while in the same breathe vehemently denying that her father ever had any predilection for organized religion of any sort.[34] The remainder of her statement, quoted in Fanning's book, makes an argument for Weinberg's solitary lifestyle and disdain for organized religious gatherings, but in the end does not seem to bear much insight regarding the composer's spiritual compass. Meanwhile, a significant—and rather confusing—biographical event bears consideration in all this: Weinberg's decision near the end of his life to be baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church. While his first wife and first daughter dispute the composer's soundness of mind on this occasion, Weinberg's second wife, Olga Rakhalskaya, and their

[33] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 49.

[34] Quoted in David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 508.

daughter, Anna Weinberg, who were living with him at the time of the baptism, claim that he "was baptized when sound of mind and memory, without the slightest pressure from any side; it was his thought-through and conscious decision, and why he did this is not for us to judge."[35] With even his own family in disagreement on such matters, I would not dare make any claims about Weinberg's inner religious life. Nevertheless, I am curious about his exposure to different religious settings and the music that attended them, and how he might have adapted these experiences to suit the expressive needs of the moment in his compositional processes. An example of the composer giving a specific Jewish prayer programmatic significance in an instrumental work appears in the subtitle of Weinberg's Symphony No. 21, Op. 152 (1989-1991), "Kaddish," dedicated to the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto. The Kaddish, incidentally, is a mourner's prayer, and is part of the Yizkor, a Jewish memorial service—a service that originally was *only* performed on Yom Kippur, the same exclusive annual occasion on which the Kol Nidre melody is performed.[36] Why would Weinberg explicitly mention the Kaddish in his symphony, but not the Kol Nidre melody in his Sonata, Op. 53? This might have to do with the fact that his Symphony No. 21 was written amid the Soviet Union's collapse, and therefore the composer may have been less concerned over the prospect of critical backlash or outright censorship.

Addressing the second question of whether Weinberg would have heard that particular melody during his childhood in Warsaw is a bit more difficult, requiring knowledge and research beyond the scope of this present paper. Questions ring out, at present unanswered, about the specifics of the Weinberg family's faith, practice, and participation in public gatherings such as

[35] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 490.

[36] Ron Wolfson, "Yizkur, the Jewish Memorial Service," My Jewish Learning, accessed on July 22, 2020, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yizkor-the-memorial-service/.

the annual High Holidays services. If the Weinberg family did indeed attend services in Warsaw, what sorts of music would have commonly accompanied such liturgies there? Cantorial melodies varied greatly. While much work remains to be done on these questions, some initial discoveries allow us to at least remain open to the possibility that he might have heard this particular melody. Marsha Edelman's research on the Kol Nidre tune points to its origination in the Ashkenazic Jewish diaspora of Eastern Europe.[37] In addition to this geographical proximity, the melody makes prominent chronological appearances before, during, and after the time period when Weinberg would have encountered it. In the nineteenth century, the tune was already mainstream enough to receive an instrumental setting for solo cello and orchestra (1880) by Prussian/German composer Max Bruch (1832-1920), who had come into contact with the melody despite having no Jewish heritage or connection to the Jewish faith. Closer to Weinberg's dates, the same melody appears in a 1959 recording by opera singer and cantor Richard Tucker (1913-1975), a Brooklyn native, and the son of Bessarabian Jewish immigrants.[38] Weinberg's grandparents were also Bessarabian Jews; the composer's father, Samuil Weinberg, was "born in 1882 in Kishinev, Bessarabia, to deeply religious Hasidic parents."[39] While far away geographically, Tucker's common heritage with Weinberg's Bessarabian grandparents might point toward similar strains of worship sought out and experienced by both families, along with the music that would have attended them.

Tucker gives a spoken introduction in his recording before beginning to sing the Kol Nidre melody, saying that "the theme of the [Yom Kippur] service is the power of repentance,

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[37] Marsha Bryan Edelman, "The Sounds of Kol Nidrei," Reform Judaism: Jewish Life in Your Life, accessed July 22, 2020, https://reformjudaism.org/sounds-kol-nidre.

[38] *Wikipedia,* s.v. "Tucker, Richard," accessed July 22, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Tucker.

[39] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* forthcoming, 18.

and God's willingness to accept the sinner once he atones for failures of the past and resolves to live the life of purity and holiness in the future."[40] Given the proximity of the Sonata, Op. 53 to Weinberg's false imprisonment on the baseless accusation that he was party to "bourgeois nationalism" activity—party-speak for Jewish nationalism—it is fascinating to hear a possible quotation of a melody which calls for atonement, repentance, and an annulment of vows.[41] Why might such a melody speak to Weinberg and seem worthy of quoting as he worked through his first serious composition, post-imprisonment? Weinberg recalls of his time in prison, "I was in a solitary cell, where I could only sit, not lie down. At night, a very strong floodlight was occasionally turned on so that it was impossible to sleep. There was not really much joy."[42] Weinberg liked to keep busy, in no small part due to the sense of survivor's guilt he experienced in being the only one of his immediate family to flee from Poland and avoid the violence of the Holocaust. In his own words, "Alas! And if I consider myself marked out by the preservation of my life, then that gives me a kind of feeling that it is impossible to repay the debt, that no 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week creative hard labour would take me even an inch towards paying it off."[43] How then must it have been for him to be stuck there in that cell, without his piano or his composing materials? I imagine that this moment constituted a unique chapter for Weinberg in processing the loss of Samuil, Sonia, and Esther—his murdered father, mother, and sister. In consideration of this, perhaps the inclusion of this spiritually weighted music could indicate an expression of torment, a desire to part ways with the guilt felt by him and so many

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[40] Richard Tucker, "Kol Nidre Service (with Shofar): Kol Nidre (All Vows… to God)," *Kol Nidre Service,* originally released 1959 *Sony BMG Music Entertainment;* rereleased 1993 *Sony Classical.* B001AUZLA. Accessed on July 22, 2020 on *Spotify*.

[41] The full text of the Kol Nidrei can be found here: https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/text-of-kol-nidre/.

[42] Quoted in David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music,* [publishing forthcoming] 236.

[43] *Ibid.,* 23.

others who fate allowed to live while their loved ones perished. If the passage in question from the Sonata, Op. 53 is indeed a reference to the Kol Nidre tune, the fast pace, chopping off-beat rhythms of the string part, and Phrygian shading certainly reflect a level of torment which calls into question one's ability to receive atonement of any sort.

Are there other possible "diary entries" in this piece which could constitute a direct reference to Weinberg's lost family members? In the second movement of the piece, we recall the new motive that is formed from the first-movement theme's chromatic pair E♮ and E♭: E♮ – C – E♭ – E♭. Given the well-known cryptograms associated with two composers for whom Weinberg had great respect, J. S. Bach (B – A – C – H) and Shostakovich (D – S – C – H, first appearing in Symphony No. 8, Op. 65, 1943, the year that Weinberg met Shostakovich) it is worth considering that Weinberg may have embedded his own cryptogram into this movement, illustrated below in table 3. Three of the four pitches match the first letters of the given names of his immediate family members: E♮ for Esther and a pair of E♭s for Samuil and Sonia. But what about the C? In Russian, the Cyrillic equivalent of the letter "C" produces a soft "S" sound. If Mieczysław Weinberg indeed formed a cryptogram, the use of his patronymic, Samuilovich, spelled Самуилович in Cyrillic, would be suitably represented by the pitch of C. I am aware that simply proposing a cryptogram already places me on dubious grounds in the eyes of some scholars. Proposing the mixed use of Latin letters for Esther, Sonia, and Samuil, and a Cyrillic letter for Samuilovich is therefore likely to seem especially forced. But then again, it also seems biographically fitting, as the composer was the only family member to leave Poland, survive the Holocaust, and adapt this new language and alphabet. The turbulent, at times nightmarish quality of this movement, along with the possible fragment of the Kol Nidre melody, make this moment in the sonata a fitting location for a family reunion, now only possible in the realm of sound. An

alternative reading of the cryptogram would attribute the Cyrillic letter C to Solomon Mikhoels (Соломон Михоэлс), his father-in-law who was assassinated by the state in 1948.

*Table 3 – A Possible Cryptogram*

| E | C | E♭ (Es) | E♭ (Es) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Esther (sister) | Samuilovich / Самуилович (Weinberg's Patronymic), *or* Solomon/Соломон (Weinberg's father-in-law) | Sonia (mother) | Samuil (father) |

One final feature of the sonata warrants attention, and that is the possible significance of certain numbers. Without any initial agenda as a "musical numbers" detective, I could not help but notice that certain numbers had an unusual prevalence in the work. Through my own knowledge of the Old Testament, and through encounters with my various Jewish friends making peculiar eighteen-dollar donations to fundraising causes in which I was involved, I know that numbers have long had a particular significance in many strains of Jewish culture.[44] I make no claims whatsoever to expertise on gematria (a system attributing numerical values to Hebrew letters), Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalistic numerology. Furthermore, at the time of this paper's writing, as alluded to above, I have yet to find any source which illuminates the sort of religious environment and education in which Weinberg might have been raised in the Jewish community of Warsaw. At the same time, precedent exists for speculation on Weinberg's intentional interaction with numbers that allude to extramusical themes. In his Op. 17 Cycle of Jewish Songs, his setting of "Schmuel Halkin's poem 'Di Muter' (The Mother), which describes a mother receiving letters from her five sons at the battlefront, [is] largely in quintuple metre, and

[44] The number 18 corresponds to the spelling of the Hebrew word "chai," which means life. Therefore, donations of $18 are given as an expression of blessing for long life. "18 number," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/18_(number)#In_religion_and_literature.

in the five-sharps key of G-sharp minor, suggesting a possible symbolic connection with the five sons."[45] Having already established above in Chapter three that this sonata's opening theme rejects a more standard musical symmetry in favor of organic growth, it is worth observing the specific details of the numerical pattern that emerges alongside this organic growth. The number three makes an obvious starting point, given that the main motive of the piece consists of three pitches of equal rhythmic value. In addition to its ubiquity in sacred texts, the number three would have had significance to the composer, who lost his three immediate family members. David Pountney speculates on another numerical reference along these lines in his program notes for the composer's *Three Palmtrees* (after Mikhail Lermontov's poem) for Soprano and String Quartet, Op.120 (1977):

> Whether the three palm trees are emblematic of the Holocaust, the deaths of Weinberg's three family members or his own sufferings in the artistic dictatorship of the Soviet Union remains an open question. Perhaps all these aspects played a role in the music. Whatever the case, his great empathy for the fate of the three palm trees is everywhere apparent, impressively transformed into music.[46]

While the number three receives initial significance, the number seven, also a sacred number in and beyond the traditions of Judaism, stands out as even more centrally woven into the piece's DNA. Referring back to table 1 and figure 8 on page 22, this number appears in several contexts in this opening. The overall theme constructed from the seed motive occupies seven bars—six 4/4 bars, and a final 2/4 bar. Recalling the Biblical book of Genesis' seven days of creation, this odd opening phrase has the look of a calendar, complete with the final day of rest. Could this be a metrically articulated Shabbat? This "musical week" elicits further interest

[45] David Fanning, Michelle Assay, Per Skans, *Mieczyslaw Weinberg: The Composer and His Music*, forthcoming, 124.

[46] David Pountney, "Weinberg: 'Three Palmtrees,'" Yellowbarn, accessed on May 10, 2020, https://www.yellowbarn.org/page/weinberg-three-palmtrees.

caused by the odd single-measure meter shift at the phrase's conclusion because its presence brings the total beat-count of the phrase to twenty-six, the gematria for the tetragrammaton, the numerical spelling of Yahweh (*YHVH;* Yud = 10, Heh = 5, Vav = 6, Heh = 5).[47]

The initial seed-motive and its first elaboration together share a duration of seven quarter-notes. These two phraselets are grouped together under one seven-beat slur, as seen in figure 6 on page 18. The final elaboration of the initial motive (mm. 5.4-7.2) has a metrical duration of seven quarter notes. Meanwhile, the accompanimental figure in the piano left hand, occupying the range of a perfect fifth for most of the seven-bar phrase, concludes by expanding its range from a perfect fifth to a minor seventh, via a major sixth. Beyond the abundance of sevens in the piece's opening, the most compelling case for compositional intentionality around the number seven is its reappearance again at the beginning of the sonata's final movement, along with the clearest cyclic reemergence of the first movement's melodic material yet to occur. Though my knowledge of Weinberg's complete body of work is nowhere near comprehensive, my current impression is that 7/8 meter does not appear often, or stand out as a preferential metric "flavor" of Weinberg's across his many works. The number seven *does* often appear in the context of his song cycles, many of which consist of seven songs (including cycles Opp. 4, 7, 13, 17, 22, and 25).

Why the number seven? In the context of the above discussion relating to the Kol Nidre chant, Weinberg's family, and his own recent imprisonment, several Biblical themes associated with the number seven resonate: completion and perfection, as associated with the above

[47] "Gematria, the substitution of numbers for letters of the Hebrew alphabet, a favourite method of exegesis used by medieval Kabbalists to derive mystical insights into sacred writings or obtain new interpretations of the texts. Some condemned its use as mere toying with numbers, but others considered it a useful tool, especially when difficult or ambiguous texts otherwise failed to yield satisfactory analysis." *Encyclopedia Britannica,* s.v. "Gematria," accessed July 15, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/gematria.

reference to Genesis' creation narrative and other Old Testament appearances; the fulfillment of promises and oaths, with the Hebrew word for swearing an oath (shaba) and the Hebrew word for seven (sheba) both deriving from the Hebrew word meaning satisfaction or fullness (saba); and finally, exoneration and healing: Deuteronomy tells us that on every seventh year, the Israelites were to cancel all the debts they had made with each other and free their slaves, and in the book of Kings, the prophet Elisha referenced the number seven when he directed Naaman the leper to bathe in the Jordan River seven times to be healed.[48] The Jubilee year, marked by forty-nine—the perfect square of the number seven—is of special importance, arriving on "the seventh sabbath year, or "shmita," the seventh year of the seven-year agricultural cycle mandated by the Torah for the Land of Israel."[49] While all this must remain in the realm of speculation, it is finally interesting to note that the fourth movement's moment of peripeteia, where the original theme and new transformed theme overlap, occurs on the forty-ninth bar of the movement.

We must always be cautious about number studies in music. In their Grove entry on the subject, Ruth Tatlow and Paul Griffiths deliver a rather withering takedown of those who are quick to engage with and interpret numbers in music. "Characteristic of this so-called 'numerological' approach is the swift move from counting to interpreting… Without a firm historical basis it is both premature and irresponsible to draw conclusions about compositional procedure from numbers in the score. A separation must be maintained between numerical analysis, comment upon the compositional process and speculative interpretation of the numbers. There is also a need to consider whether there is any historical justification for the analytical techniques used to generate the numbers; and if so, whether the numbers in the score were

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[48] Dolores Smith, "What is the Biblical Significance of the Number Seven?" Christianity Today, accessed on July 15, 2020, https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-is-the-biblical-significance-of-the-number-7.html.

[49] *Wikipedia,* s.v. "Shmita," accessed on July 23, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shmita.

created consciously by the composer and whether the numbers are wholly structural or have some further significance.” [50] It is out of deference to this cautionary message that the above observations have been relegated to this document’s appendix. While I have alluded here to possible historical and cultural bases for these observations, I understand that they remain purely in the realm of speculation. Rather than providing answers, these observations point to questions which may never be answered about the interplay between Weinberg’s inner life and his music. Perhaps the most useful application of such an exercise, from a performer’s perspective, would be to treat these ideas the way a stage actor might conjure vivid associations to accompany her assigned script. Whether or not any concrete evidence exists for the validity of the idea, it may serve to bring the performer into more intimate and specific contact with the piece and its author. In any case, these observations certainly spark curiosity for further study, especially regarding the specific cultural and sacred experiences with which Weinberg might have come into contact during his childhood in Warsaw.

Another speculative reading of Weinberg’s seeming proclivity for the number seven reads less dramatically than the spiritual overtones of the observations above. Perhaps Weinberg was simply conjuring a musical talisman in hopes that a bit of much-needed luck might come his way. From the rejuvenating refuge of his family’s dacha at Staraya Ruza, Weinberg penned a letter on July 18, 1953, fourteen years after his eastward flight from his home in Poland, eighty-nine days after being released from prison, and one day after he completed this violin sonata. In the letter, addressed to his friend and fellow composer, Levon Atovmian, Weinberg makes no

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[50] Ruth Tatlow and Paul Griffiths, "Numbers and music," Grove Music Online. 2001; Accessed 23 Jul. 2020, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000044483.

explicit reference to his recent imprisonment, instead carrying on about various mundane social and professional topics. But here too, the laconic Weinberg might be speaking in ciphers. Just as other symbols and stories seem to be adumbrated in the sounding notes of the Sonata, Op. 53, the trauma of imprisonment remains veiled behind the terse, four-word sentence that begins the letter: “I am,” Weinberg writes, "very unlucky."[51]

[51] “Ochen’ mne ne vezot.” GTsMMK 226/58.

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