

Mieczyslaw Weinberg - Kremerata Baltica & Gidon Kremer (2014)

Written by bluesever

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CD1 1. *Sonate Nr. 3 (op. 126)* 2. *Trio op. 48, Allegro con moto* 3. *Andante* 4. *Moderato assai* 5. *Sonatine op. 46, Allegretto* 6. *Lento* 7. *Allegro moderato* CD2 1. *Concertino (op. 42)* 2. *Symphonie Nr. 10 (op. 98), Concerto grosso. Grave* 3. *Pastorale. Lento* 4. *Canzona. Andantino* 5. *Burlesque. Allegro molto* 6. *Inversion. L'istesso tempo*
Daniil Grishin (viola) Giedre Dirvanauskaite (cello) Daniil Trifonov (piano) Kremerata Baltica Gidon Kremer (violin & director)

Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer has proven a near-infallible guide to the neglected music of the former Soviet bloc. In the case of Polish-born Soviet Jewish composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg, the revival was well underway even before Kremer came along, but this beautifully recorded two-disc set makes for a tasty sampler. Weinberg's career roughly paralleled that of Shostakovich, and he suffered the slings of history to an even greater degree than Shostakovich did. The influence went both ways: Shostakovich's embrace of Jewish themes was probably due to Weinberg's example. The Symphony No. 10 on disc two gives a good indication of why Weinberg's symphonies are showing up so often on orchestral programs. The tonal language, flirting with dodecaphony, is not simple, but the five compact movements, rooted in Baroque dances, are arresting, especially with a crack string section such as the one Kremer has at his disposal (check out the cello acrobatics). The work is similar tonally but of a different flavor from Shostakovich's more atonal works of the 1960s. Even more intense is the late Sonata No. 3 for solo violin, Op. 126, played by Kremer himself. The other three works all date from the late 1940s and early 1950s. These are pleasing pieces in the Soviet vein of enforced simplicity. They're probably better than Shostakovich's works of the same period, but with an album that seems to aim to be a survey of Weinberg's music, one will wonder why the full range of the composer's music wasn't exploited. But this is really the only possible complaint in this fine collection. ---James Manheim, Rovi

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The music of Mieczyslaw Weinberg is finally beginning to get the hearing it has long deserved. Weinberg's lifetime spanned the 20th century: born 1919 in Warsaw, he died 1996 in Moscow, in semi-obscurity. Along the way, his allies and supporters had included Dmitri Shostakovich, who considered him one of the great composers of the age. This double album by violinist Gidon Kremer and his Kremerata Baltica, recorded in Neuhardenberg and Lockenhaus, makes an excellent case for that claim.

Effectively a portrait album, it opens with one of Weinberg's most remarkable creations, the extraordinary and complex third violin sonata of 1978 brilliantly performed by Gidon Kremer. The violinist ranks this work alongside Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin as one of the masterpieces for the instrument. With friends (including star pianist Daniil Trifonov) he explores some chamber music - the Trio op 48 (composed 1950) and the Sonatina op.46 (1949) - and the commitment and skills of the Kremerata musicians are brought to bear on two strikingly-contrasting compositions for string orchestra, the graceful and lyrical Concertino op. 42 (1948) and the adventurous and gripping Symphony No 10 (1968), bringing 12-tone rows and chordal structure into unexpected juxtapositions.

Latvian-born master violinist Gidon Kremer founded Kremerata Baltica in 1997 to foster outstanding young musicians from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, the three Baltic States. Their other ECM recordings are Hymns and Prayers with works by Tickmayer, Franck and Kancheli; a pairing of the adagio of Mahler's unfinished Symphony No 10 and the 14th Symphony of Shostakovich; Schubert's G Major String Quartet orchestrated by Victor Kissine; Gubaidulina's Lyre of Orpheus; Kancheli's In l'istesso tempo; Kissine's Between Two Waves, and, in the Edition Lockenhaus box set, Messiaen's Trois petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine and Strauss's Metamorphosen. ---propermusic.com

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