



New Release - Press Information



ARTIST(S): Murray McLachlan
COMPOSER(S): Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996)
TITLE: Russian Piano Music Series Volume 9
CATALOGUE NUMBER: DDA25105 [Bar Code 0809732510526]
RELEASE DATE: 22nd October 2012
PRICE POINT: Single CD/Full Price (UK Dealer £7.95)

Track Listing:

Piano Sonata no. 1 Op. 5 (1940); Piano Sonata No. 2 Op. 8 (1942); Piano Sonata No. 3 Op. 31 (1946); 17 Easy Pieces Op. 34 (1946)

Total playing Time 70.37

CD originally released in 1998 on Olympia

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Issued on behalf of Divine Art Records by
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Repertoire/Product Information:

THE EDITION

Mieczysław Weinberg – who actually preferred the non-German spelling ‘Vainberg’ – was born in Warsaw in 1919, the son of a composer and violinist at a Jewish theatre. When he was only ten he began his musical career there as a pianist and music director; two years later he started piano studies at the Warsaw Conservatory. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939 he was forced to flee the country and he went to the USSR, initially to Minsk. There he attended composition classes at the conservatory for two years, but when the Germans attacked the USSR in 1941 he had to flee again: he spent the next few years at the opera house in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In the meantime his family had been murdered – burned alive – by the Germans.

In 1943 Weinberg sent the score of his newly completed *First Symphony* to Shostakovich, asking for an opinion of the work. Shostakovich arranged for him to receive an official invitation to Moscow – of especial value in the war years – and thus their close friendship was born. From the end of August 1943 until his death in 1996, Weinberg lived in Moscow, working as a freelance composer. From time to time he also made highly regarded appearances as a pianist – for instance, he performed alongside Galina Vishnevskaya, David Oistrakh and Mstislav Rostropovich at the premiere of Shostakovich’s *Alexander Blok Songs*.

Weinberg was an extremely productive composer with an output ranging from a *Requiem* to circus music. He had a (perhaps not entirely fashionable) inclination towards large-scale, epic music; in this respect Mahler and Prokofiev were important role models. His musical style was extremely varied, however, and his richly-coloured palette ranges from folk elements to dodecaphonic techniques. Folk-music elements were not only of Polish and Russian origin, but also Jewish and Moldavian (some of his ancestors had come from Moldavia).

Like most Soviet composers, Weinberg wrote collections of short, lightweight pieces for piano solo such as the three *Children’s Notebooks* or the *Easy Pieces*, Op. 34, recorded here, but in view of his predilection for larger forms it is no surprise that the sonatas are the mainstays of his piano oeuvre. The **Sonata No. 1**, Op. 5, is a relatively early work: it was written in 1940 during Weinberg’s time in Minsk. It was dedicated to Alexei Klumov, a Belorussian composer of approximately the same generation as Weinberg who is known especially for his works for violin and piano, a piano concerto and the satirical comedy *The Adventures of Fritz*. It was moreover thanks to Klumov that Weinberg could later go to Tashkent.

The **Sonata No. 2**, Op. 8, is also a very early work. It was first performed by Emil Gilels in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on 16th October 1943 – less than two months after Weinberg’s move to the city. Gilels had previously enjoyed great success with the *First Sonata*, and played music by Weinberg on numerous occasions. Weinberg started work on the piece while he was still in Tashkent, however, and the year of composition is listed as 1942.

The **Sonata No. 3**, Op. 31, was dedicated to the composer Lev Abeliovich, who was born in Vilnius. Weinberg’s family cannot state with certainty whether or not the two composers had already met in Warsaw, but this must have been almost unavoidable because they were both students at the Conservatory at the same time.

The **Easy Pieces**, Op. 34, were also written in 1946. In catalogues of Weinberg’s music they appear as ‘21 Easy Pieces’, and it is also claimed that the set originally contained 23 numbers, but the only edition so far published (1947) confined itself to the seventeen pieces played here. It is rather implausible that the publisher, Muzfond SSSR, would have left out four out of 21 pieces without the composer’s consent, and we can therefore presume that the compilation on this CD is authentic, and that Weinberg may himself have removed the four ‘missing’ pieces. The set was



dedicated to Weinberg's fellow-composer Nikolai Peiko. In the former Soviet Union it was customary for even the most eminent composers to write this sort of music from time to time, for teaching purposes: huge runs of such works were printed, mostly by Muzfond, an organization that helped the members of the Composers' Union in a wide variety of ways – from arranging concerts to purely material concerns such as medical care and the building of apartments.

Artist Information:

“Murray McLachlan is a pianist with a virtuoso technique and a sure sense of line. His timing and phrasing are impeccable, and his tone – full but unforced in the powerful passages, gentle and restrained in the more lyrical – is a perpetual delight” (*BBC Music Magazine*)

As a concert artist **Murray McLachlan** has received outstanding critical acclaim for intelligent and sensitive interpretations and superb technical ability. His prolific discography, much of it for Divine Art and Dunelm, has received long-standing international recognition and includes over thirty commercial recordings, including the complete sonatas of Beethoven and Prokofiev and many rarities such as the 7-CD series of piano music by Erik Chisholm (Divine Art Diversions label) which has received glowing accolades from critics without exception. He has also championed many other contemporary British composers, whilst also gaining a fine reputation as a specialist in Russian piano music. All of the recordings on this disc, made in 1996, are world premières. McLachlan's repertoire includes over 40 concertos and he has appeared as soloist with most of the leading UK orchestras. His recognition has been far-reaching, bringing many invitations to perform abroad. In recent seasons his engagements have included performances in the USA, Scandinavia, South Africa, Poland, Byelorussia and Norway. In 1997 he was awarded a knighthood by the Order of St John of Jerusalem in recognition of his services to music in Malta. In 2003 he performed the complete cycle of 32 Beethoven Sonatas to critical acclaim in Manchester, and in 2004 his Wigmore Hall Erik Chisholm Centenary Recital and subsequent national tour attracted superlatives in the national press.

His intense schedule continued in 2006 with a 'Shostakovich Centenary Recital tour', sponsored by the UK Shostakovich Society and including 15 concerts all over the UK. This included a return to the Wigmore Hall in September.

Murray McLachlan has given first performances of works by many composers, including Martin Butler, Ronald Stevenson, Charles Camilleri, Erik Chisholm, John R. Williamson, Michael Parkin and even Beethoven! Recordings of contemporary music have won numerous accolades, including full star ratings, as well as 'rosette' and 'key recording' status in the Penguin Guide to CDs, and 'Disc of the month' and 'Record of the month' *MusicWeb* and *The Glasgow Herald*. He is Head of Keyboard at Chetham's School of Music and tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, as well as Artistic Director both of the Chetham's International Summer School and Festival for Pianists, an event which attracts outstanding musicians annually from all over the world, and the Manchester International Concerto Competition for Young Pianists, which began in 2007. His website can be found at www.murraymclachlan.co.uk

Additional Details & Marketing:

The CD will be fully serviced to all UK classical music press and radio. Advertising will include major classical music magazines and publications.

For more details, and to request a review sample, please contact John Cronin at Music & Media Consulting Limited.