CHANDOS

VOL. FIVE

WEINBERG

String Quartets Nos 3, 9, and 14

Improvisation and Romance

ARCADIA QUARTET

Mieczysław Weinberg, 1981

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919 – 1996)

String Quartets, Volume 5

		String Quartet No. 3, Op. 14 (1944) in D minor • in d-Moll • en ré mineur	**20:18**
		Georgij Wassiljewitsch Swiridow gewidmet	
1	I	Presto –	7:36
2	II	Andante sostenuto –	7:49
3	III	Allegretto	4:53
		Improvisation and Romance (1950)	**7:24**
		for String Quartet	
4		[Improvisation.] Adagio –	3:24
5		[Romance.] Andante	3:59

String Quartet No. 9, Op. 80 (1963) — 29:26

in F sharp minor • in fis-Moll • en fa diese mineur

6	I	Allegro molto –	6:23
7	II	Allegretto –	6:01
8	III	Andante –	10:21
9	IV	Allegro moderato	6:39

String Quartet No. 14, Op. 122 (1978) — 24:24

Juri Lewitin gewidmet

10	I	♩= 96 –	3:03
11	II	♩= 63 –	3:51
12	III	♩= 108 –	5:11
13	IV	♩= 54 –	3:45
14	V	♩= 152 – Doppio più lento	8:32
			TT 81:32

Arcadia Quartet

Ana Török violin
Răsvan Dumitru violin
Traian Boală viola
Zsolt Török cello

Kindly provided by Tommy Persson

Mieczysław Weinberg's signature

Arcadia Quartet

© Raluca Ciornea

Mieczysław Weinberg, 1970s

Weinberg:
String Quartets, Volume 5

Introduction
The Third, Ninth, and Fourteenth String Quartets of Mieczysław Weinberg (1919 – 1996) are representative of three distinct phases in his career. No. 3 documents his first maturity as a composer, succeeding the remarkable achievement of a self-taught teenager in Warsaw (Quartet No. 1) and a beautifully poised, almost neo-classical student work from his two years in Minsk (No. 2). No. 9 dates from the 1960s, his 'starry' decade as he himself described it, referring to the advocacy he enjoyed from the likes of Emil Gilels, Leonid Kogan, Kirill Kondrashin, Rudolf Barshai, and the Borodin Quartet. No. 14 finds him in the process of renewing his stylistic identity following the death three years previously of his great friend and mentor, Dmitri Shostakovich.

String Quartet No. 3 in D minor, Op. 14
The Third Quartet (1944) was the first work which Weinberg composed after his move from Tashkent, where he had settled after the wartime evacuation of Minsk, to Moscow. It is in three large movements that play continuously. Quite distinct from the relaxed quality of its immediate predecessor, it returns to the wiry intensity of the First Quartet, but this time with a greatly clarified harmonic language and more confident, assertive use of the instruments, as well as a profound, consolatory lyricism in the central slow movement that would remain a marker of his style for the rest of his life.

Structurally, each movement is adventurous in its own way. Several ideas compete for attention in the implacably driven *Presto*, while the tonal scheme is unpredictable and seemingly improvisatory. The *Andante sostenuto* slow movement, in 5 / 4 metre, tweaks the standard ABA form by means of a developing synthesis in its second A section. As if in compensation for the prolific invention of these movements, the finale is virtually monothematic and ebbs away unexpectedly and beautifully. Such freedom of manoeuvre could be viewed critically, as a vestigial sign of immaturity, and certainly Weinberg's next quartet would demonstrate more razor-sharp structural focus. All the same, one can imagine the D minor Quartet seriously impressing Shostakovich at a time leading up to his own

Third String Quartet, which would follow three years later; by this stage he and Weinberg were routinely sharing their new works at the piano, before public audition.

There is no record of a performance of Quartet No. 3 before that given, at the University of Manchester, on 12 October 2007 by the Quatuor Danel. Nor was it published in Weinberg's lifetime, though the manuscript score does contain the conventional engravers' markings for system-division, suggesting that the publication process was at some stage under way, but halted for reasons unknown. That Weinberg maintained a high regard for the work is evidenced by the fact that he returned to it later in life, as he did to his two earlier quartets, which had also remained unpublished. In refashioning Quartet No. 3 as Chamber Symphony No. 2, Op. 147 (1987), he added a new slow movement and sent the original one to the end of the finale.

Improvisation and Romance

The Third Quartet initiated a remarkable succession of chamber works that rapidly made Weinberg's name in his adopted Moscow and the highpoint of which was Quartet No. 6 (1946). That imposing work had the misfortune to coincide with the notorious post-War 'anti-formalist' campaigns spearheaded by Stalin's henchman, Andrey Zhdanov, which blighted the lives of composers and other artists until the dictator's death, in March 1953. During those years, Weinberg and others kept their heads down and did their best to obey the obligatory guidelines, composing music that should be easily comprehensible and rooted in the experience of 'the People'.

Among such endeavours is the unpretentious Improvisation and Romance for string quartet. This pair of pieces was composed in 1950, at a time when the 'anti-formalist' campaign was still in operation and public performances of new full-scale string quartets would have been hard to reconcile with official demands. That Weinberg still managed to suffuse his music in some measure with his own personal brand of lyricism is testament both to his inner moral strength and to his canny adaptation to the political runes.

The Improvisation is a straightforward ABA-form *Adagio*, played with mutes on, and beautifully sustained in its melodic unfolding. The Romance, marked as following *attacca* from the Improvisation, is in the style of Weinberg's collection of piano pieces, the *Children's Notebooks*, Opp. 16, 19, and 23 (1944 – 45). Its second stanza transfers the thematic line to the second violin, taking that instrument perilously high for a piece of such

otherwise modest technical demands. The first performance was given by the Quatuor Danel in St Charles Hall, Meggen (Lucerne), in June 2018.

String Quartet No. 9 in F sharp minor, Op. 80
Unlike the great majority of his fellow-composers in the late Stalin years, Weinberg had to endure a period of incarceration, in his case as a result of family connections with figures implicated in Stalin's imaginary 'Doctors' plot'. That experience was mercifully short-lived, but it severely damaged his already less-than-robust health, and it left its mark on his music at a deep level. As he regained creative vigour through the 1950s and early 1960s, the energetic side of his musical personality acquired a streak of bloody-minded insistence, even outrage, while his lyrical writing was nuanced by personal wariness and social compassion. Both aspects are prominent in the Ninth Quartet, composed in July – August 1963.

Whereas Shostakovich's Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Quartets had avoided the standard four-movement mould, and Weinberg himself had previously used it only in his First, Second, and Fourth Quartets, in the Ninth Quartet he re-engaged powerfully with this model, merely directing that all four movements be played without a break.

The first movement is relentless in its rhythmic drive and boisterous contrapuntal energy. If Shostakovich's first movements had tended to become more tentative and provisional in tone over the years, storing up tension for brutal scherzos and / or densely argued finales, Weinberg here produced a super-concentrated sonata structure, with both exposition and development / recapitulation sections repeated and the whole thing sustained at an unrelenting *fortissimo*. A brief coda feints to go yet again into the development / recapitulation cycle, then cuts off without explanation.

A shadowy waltz-scherzo follows, initially *pizzicato* but with a graceful contrasting *arco* theme, and with mutes added soon after the declamatory opening bars. Both ideas are underpinned by a gentle melancholy, and their alternation, dovetailing, and exchange of characters is exquisitely crafted, right up to a conclusion marked by fragile harmonics.

Around the time of the Ninth Quartet, Shostakovich jested that he and Weinberg were engaged in a 'quartet competition', as they were neck and neck in terms of the number of quartets they had composed. The most striking musical affinity is evident in the texture of the opening bars of Weinberg's elegiac *Andante* third movement, which is

echoed in the corresponding movement of the Tenth Quartet, which Shostakovich would compose the year after Weinberg's Ninth and, presumably, in full knowledge of it. Similarly, it is hard to imagine that the quizzical character of Shostakovich's Eleventh Quartet was not stimulated by the example of Weinberg's finale, notable for its stubborn repeated notes. Deployed by Weinberg in a more extended sonata structure, this intransigent gesture re-materialises from time to time, as if to negate the cheerfulness of the folk-dance-like contrasting theme. At length, all tensions are resolved in a coda that drives towards an optimistic F sharp major conclusion.

Like Weinberg's previous two quartets, the Ninth was premièred by the Borodin Quartet in the Chamber Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire, the performance taking place on 27 March 1964.

String Quartet No. 14, Op. 122

There is a seven-year gap between the Twelfth and Thirteenth String Quartets, during which Weinberg devoted a large part of his creative energy to opera. Quartets Nos 13 – 16 then appeared in fairly quick succession, in the years 1977 to 1981. It is as though after the death of Shostakovich, in 1975, he now felt freer to return to those genres which the older man had so dauntingly mastered, and to follow into new regions the expressive paths that they had mapped out.

Weinberg contributed an essay in a memorial symposium, published in 1976, in which he described the music of Shostakovich in terms that could easily be applied to his own:

> he boldly synthesised new methods in harmony, melody, intervallic configurations, polyphony, tone-colour, rhythm, and constructive schemes, creating images that are amazing in their beauty and novelty of expressive means. And how miraculous is his fusion of generosity and asceticism!... [T]he treasury of mankind's musical culture only preserves those works that harbour a great humanistic idea and whose creators are touched by the uniqueness of genius.

Not that Weinberg always composed with an eye on posterity. But truthfulness – to himself and to the nature of individual conscience and consciousness in the modern world – was certainly at the front of his mind. And if that meant denying himself easy solutions but instead pursuing an emotionally complex 'fusion of generosity and asceticism', even at the expense of popularity or *succès d'estime*, then so be it.

Weinberg's Fourteenth String Quartet was composed in 1978 and dedicated to Yury

Levitin, a pupil of Shostakovich (and also a prolific composer of string quartets). Its five movements run without a break but are highly differentiated in thematic character. As in the quartets directly before and after, Weinberg avoids any indication of character or tempo other than metronome marks.

The first movement is built on two strongly contrasted ideas. Cello and first violin lead off with a stark, impassioned duet, notable for its hiatuses and silences as well as for its tightly knotted motifs, and the contrasting section features all four instruments more or less in rhythmic unison. Each idea is then intensified, and a phase of close imitation ensues. As in Quartet No. 13, a striking passage marked *grand détaché* (i.e. notes separately articulated but with minimal gaps) heralds a kind of synthesis. The movement is rounded off by abrupt chords.

Another passionately wide-ranging solo for the cello announces the slower second movement, and the viola's imitative entry leads us to expect a fugue. At this point Weinberg veers away into chord progressions that seem to be searching for the safe haven of consonance. The best that can be achieved, however, is a becalmed brooding – as much to do with turning away from pain, perhaps, as with actively searching for comfort.

Similarly destined to ebb into despondency are the third and fourth movements. Both are muted throughout. Initially, the scurrying paired semiquavers and vamp accompaniment of the third movement seem to herald one of Weinberg's characteristic ethnically tinged dance-scherzos. But the movement eventually slinks away in a mixture of anxious reminiscences and bold proposals that have no firm ground on which to build.

In the fourth movement the viola appears to hold the clue to deflecting anxious themes of wide intervals into something more lyrical and sane. Here too, however, the surrounding environment is uncooperative, and any progress made is strictly provisional.

It remains for the finale to embody a purposeful sense of construction. Initially the signs are positive. In between the rising triads of the second violin's theme in broken chords, melodic cells grow and acquire harmonic support, while contrasting wispy *staccato* lines seem to harbour great potential. Eventually the mutes are removed and the cello's reminder of the first movement promises a summatory conclusion. Another *grand détaché* section decks out the main theme in bold colours. However, the music's destiny lies elsewhere: in unresolved thematic oppositions, tinged

with fragile harmonics, and in a final inscrutable, white-note cadence.

The first performance of Quartet No. 14 was given by the Quatuor Danel in the Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall, of the University of Manchester, on 26 January 2007.

Light in the dark: a note by the performers

In the field of classical music, we tend to categorise composers into two main groups: the well-known ones whose music is often played, and... the others. The first group is the one that shaped the history of music and gave humanity one of its most important gifts: the ability to express our soul through the power of sound. The music of these composers is present all around us and enriches our lives with meaning, beauty, and delight.

Although from time to time we encounter music that we have never heard before, rarely is that music something we would listen to or play again. In our times, with our technology of information, it is rather difficult to discover something meaningful and valuable that had been overlooked in the past, but when it does happen it is a really special moment.

For us it happened when we first encountered the string quartets of Mieczysław Weinberg. We felt instantly captivated by the wonderful music, the deeply inspired melodies and perfectly shaped structures. The joy of playing his music has only proved equalled by the enthusiastic response of the public every time we present these quartets in concert, so the obvious question arises: 'How can it be that we never heard about Weinberg earlier?'

His music is like a glow of light surrounded by the darkness of the unknown, and it quickly became a goal of ours to attempt to dilute these shadows. With every recording and every live performance of his music, we intend to shine some light on this wide-ranging, profound phenomenon, which has remained overlooked for so long, and we hope that, with time, Mieczysław Weinberg will take his rightful place in the history of music.

Winner of the International Chamber Music Competition, Hamburg in 2009, International Chamber Music Competition, Almere in 2011, Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, London in 2012, and Osaka International Chamber Music Competition in 2014, the **Arcadia Quartet** is one of the most exciting string quartets of its generation. Formed in 2006, the Quartet has performed

throughout the world, making appearances at the Budapest Spring Festival, George Enescu International Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, North Norfolk Music Festival, International Chamber Music Festival Q'arto Mondi, Poznań, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Kammermusiktage Mettlach, and Zeist Music Days, The Netherlands, as well as at the Cité Internationale des Arts and Salle Gaveau, Paris, Alte Oper, Frankfurt, Pollack Hall, Montreal, Royal Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Wigmore Hall, London, Suntory Hall, Tokyo, Izumi Hall, Osaka, Wiener Musikverein, Berliner Konzerthaus, and Romanian Athenaeum, Bucharest, in addition to venues throughout the United Kingdom, in Portugal, Tel Aviv, and Beijing.

The Quartet is regularly heard on BBC Radio 3 and is Quartet-in-Residence at the prestigious Centrul Naţional de Artă Tinerimea Română, Bucharest, playing six concerts a year, broadcast by the Romanian Broadcasting Company. The Quartet issued its début CD, of works by Mendelssohn and Brahms, in 2009, a disc followed in October 2013 by a recording of Janáček's quartets, both attracting critical acclaim. Under its new, exclusive recording contract with Chandos Records, the Arcadia Quartet in October 2018 released a recording of the six string quartets by Bartók. This double CD received five-star reviews in *Diapason* and *Classica*, was named Disc of the Week by BBC Radio 3, one of the best albums of October 2018 by WQXR-FM, in New York, and Disc of the Month by *Classica* in January 2019. In 2020 the Quartet launched a project to record the complete set of seventeen string quartets of Mieczysław Weinberg, issuing the first disc in January 2021. This was called one of 'the best classical albums released in 2021 so far' by *BBC Music*, named Record of the Week by BBC Radio 3, and listed among 'Die Alben der Woche' by Westdeutscher Rundfunk. It went on to win the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik in 2021 and was a finalist of the International Classical Music Awards 2022. Volume 2 in the series reached the finals of the Limelight Recording of the Year 2022 and was nominated for the ICMA 2023. The third volume (Quartets Nos 4 and 16) was released in March 2023 and awarded the Diapason d'Or by *Diapason* in August; it was shortlisted for the *Gramophone* Awards in September and nominated for the 2024 International Classical Music Awards (ICMA) in November.

The Arcadia Quartet founded its own chamber music workshop in 2021, the Arcadia Chamber Music Classes, acting on the desire to share its experiences

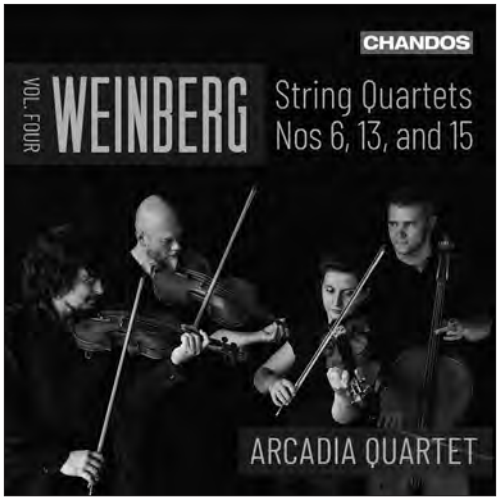
with future generations of musicians and to promote classical music at the highest level. Organised annually, this series of master-classes and concerts is dedicated to chamber string ensembles and aims to offer guidance and professional support in an effort to encourage and promote young musicians in their professional development through the art of chamber music, and to enrich the community.

Mieczysław Weinberg, right, with Dmitri Shostakovich, left, and Olga Rakhalskaya, Weinberg's wife, at the première of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15, on 8 January 1972

Arcadia Quartet

Mieczysław Weinberg (right), with the composer Yury Levitin, 1989

Also available

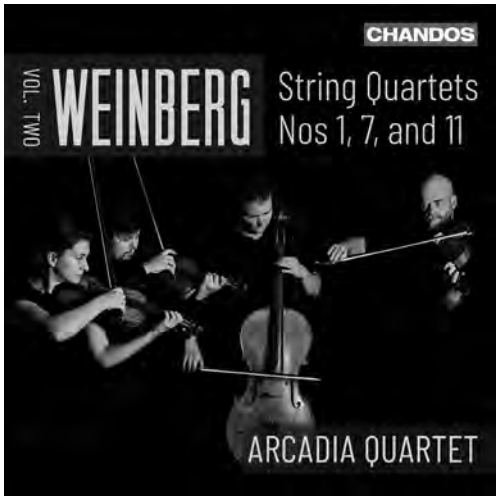


Weinberg
String Quartets, Volume 4
CHAN 20281

Also available

Weinberg
String Quartets, Volume 3
CHAN 20180

Also available



Weinberg
String Quartets, Volume 2
CHAN 20174

Also available

Weinberg
String Quartets, Volume 1
CHAN 20158

Also available

Bartók
Complete String Quartets
CHAN 10992(2)

You can purchase Chandos CDs and DVDs or download high-resolution sound files online at our website: www.chandos.net

For requests to license tracks from this CD or any other Chandos products please find application forms on the Chandos website or contact the Royalties Director, Chandos Records Ltd, direct at the address below or via e-mail at mhewett@naxosmusic.co.uk

Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House, 1 Commerce Park, Commerce Way, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, UK.
E-mail: enquiries@chandos.net Telephone: + 44 (0)1206 225 200 Fax: + 44 (0)1206 225 201

 www.facebook.com/chandosrecords

 www.x.com/ChandosRecords

Chandos 24-bit / 96 kHz recording
The Chandos policy of being at the forefront of technology is now further advanced by the use of 24-bit / 96 kHz recording. In order to reproduce the original waveform as closely as possible we use 24-bit, as it has a dynamic range that is up to 48 dB greater and up to 256 times the resolution of standard 16-bit recordings. Recording at the 44.1 kHz sample rate, the highest frequencies generated will be around 22 kHz. That is 2 kHz higher than can be heard by the typical human with excellent hearing. However, we use the 96 kHz sample rate, which will translate into the potentially highest frequency of 48 kHz. The theory is that, even though we do not hear it, audio energy exists, and it has an effect on the lower frequencies which we do hear, the higher sample rate thereby reproducing a better sound.

Acknowledgement
Chandos Records and the Arcadia Quartet would like to thank the Gheorghe Dima National Music Academy for its generous financial support of this recording.

Recording producer Jonathan Cooper
Sound engineer Jonathan Cooper
Editor Jonathan Cooper
A & R administrator Karen Marchlik
Recording venue Potton Hall, Dunwich, Suffolk; 28 – 30 April 2024
Front cover Photograph of Arcadia Quartet © Raluca Ciornea
Back cover Photograph of Arcadia Quartet © Raluca Ciornea
Design and typesetting Cass Cassidy
Booklet editor Finn S. Gundersen
Publishers Musikverlag Hans Sikorski GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg (String Quartet No. 14), Peermusic Classical GmbH, Hamburg (other works)

Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, England
Country of origin UK

MIECZYSŁAW WEINBERG (1919 – 1996)

String Quartets, Volume 5

1 - 3	String Quartet No. 3, Op. 14 (1944) in D minor · in d-Moll · en ré mineur	20:18
4 - 5	Improvisation and Romance (1950) for String Quartet	7:24
6 - 9	String Quartet No. 9, Op. 80 (1963) in F sharp minor · in fis-Moll · en fa diese mineur	29:26
10 - 14	String Quartet No. 14, Op. 122 (1978)	24:24
		TT 81:32

ARCADIA QUARTET

Ana Török violin
Răsvan Dumitru violin
Traian Boală viola
Zsolt Török cello

 © 2025 Chandos Records Ltd Chandos Records Ltd • Colchester • Essex • England

WEINBERG: STRING QUARTETS, VOL. 4 – Arcadia Quartet
CHANDOS CHAN 20328
WEINBERG: STRING QUARTETS, VOL. 5 – Arcadia Quartet
CHAN 20328