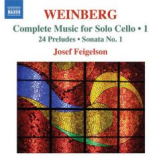


Mieczyslaw Weinberg - Cello Music Vol.1 (1996)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 25 April 2011 18:52 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 July 2014 16:32

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01 - 24 Twenty Four Preludes Op.100
25 - 27 Sonata for Solo Cello No.1 Op.72

Josef Feigelson - cello

The music of Soviet Russian composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg (also known as Moises Weinberg) has enjoyed a modest revival as the issues surrounding who left for the West and who stayed and made the best of a bad situation begin to recede. The music on this fascinating album reflects that schism in several ways, and the notes by Latvian-born cellist Josef Feigelson (in English only) will be worth the price for students of Soviet music. Feigelson is, for now, the champion of the 24 Preludes for solo cello, Op. 100, and the story of how he came to perform and record them is illustrative in itself. After finding them in a small-town music store, he prepared to leave the Soviet Union himself. As he scheduled his final recitals in the country, pianists regarded him as a defector (although his emigration followed legal channels) and refused to perform with him, so he turned to Weinberg, whom he had previously disdained as an "official" Soviet composer. Later he learned that Weinberg had written the preludes (and the shorter Sonata for solo cello No. 1, Op. 72, that rounds out the program) for Mstislav Rostropovich, who refused to perform them after he left for America. In response to Feigelson's question, Rostropovich angrily called the non-dissident Weinberg a coward. But the next generation often can see past the individual choices to the music, and Feigelson is unlikely to be the last cellist to perform the preludes.

For players, they have the attractive feature of being susceptible to slicing and dicing in several different ways. They might be thought of as a mixture of the Bach and Chopin prelude-set concepts, using a variety of 20th century techniques (none, of course, too adventurous, but this isn't socialist realism, either). That is, they ascend through the keys, or at least tonal centers,

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beginning with C, but each prelude is also a study in a certain texture or motive and its possible implications. A sensitive and committed cellist is a necessity, and Feigelson definitely qualifies as one, but these are not showpiece works. Originally recorded in 1996 with decent sound from a New York college recital hall and released on the Olympia label, this was a fine choice for reissue on Naxos, with its focus on neglected national styles. ---James Manheim, Rovi

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