Mieczysław Weinberg: Music Transcending Tragedy

Ilana Shapiro

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/pomona_theses

Part of the Musicology Commons, and the Music Performance Commons

Recommended Citation
Mieczysław Weinberg: Music Transcending Tragedy

Ilana Shapiro

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/pomona_theses

Part of the Musicology Commons, and the Music Performance Commons

Recommended Citation

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Pomona Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pomona Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.
Mieczysław Weinberg: Music Transcending Tragedy

Ilana Shapiro

Pomona College
Claremont, California
June 2, 2022

Alfred Cramer, advisor
Associate Professor of Music

Joti Rockwell, advisor
Associate Professor of Music

Eric Lindholm, reader
Professor of Music

Submitted to the Department of Music in partial fulfillment of requirements for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music
Abstract

This thesis examines the music of Mieczysław Weinberg, a prolific Jewish Holocaust-era composer whose compositions remain in relative obscurity through the present day. I begin by investigating the musical expression of Weinberg’s Polish and Jewish identity under Soviet state persecution via close analysis of selected works: the Cello Fantasia, Op. 52 and Cello Concertino, Op. 43bis. Through context of composition and allusions to Jewish music and Polish folksong, these works reveal Weinberg’s identity as a Jew and a Pole, his connection to his homeland and youth, and his musical expression beyond the demands of the state. Subsequently, I explore qualities of narrative and memory in Weinberg’s Symphony No. 21, Op. 152, Kaddish. I initially address these characteristics by analyzing of the eighth movement “Matka” from Symphony No. 8, Op. 83, Polish Flowers; the cantata Diary of Love, Op. 87; the first section of Symphony No. 18, Op. 138, War – there is no word more cruel; and Weinberg’s music to Boris Ermolaev’s Perestroika-era Soviet Holocaust film Otche nash. These works semantically develop a four-chord chorale central to the Kaddish Symphony. Through complex musical symbolism, self and external musical quotations, and references to Jewish and Polish folk music, the Kaddish Symphony weaves a harrowing, profound story of love, loss, and memory, a story that ties together Weinberg’s yearning for his lost childhood and family in Poland, his mourning for the country of his youth, and his everlasting lament for the millions murdered in the Holocaust.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not be possible without the continued support of my teachers and family. To my thesis advisors, Professors Alfred Cramer and Joti Rockwell: Thank you so much for your continued support throughout my journey learning about Weinberg, both with my recital and my thesis. I never would have written this thesis without your incredible mentorship, and I’m so grateful that you gave me the opportunity to delve so deep into my research. To Victoria and Katia Bishops, Weinberg’s daughter and granddaughter: words cannot express how special it was getting to communicate with you. I am so thankful for the time you spent answering my questions. Your father’s music has touched me so deeply in a way no other has, and I will be forever grateful that I discovered it and have been able to both study and play it. My sincere hope is that with my thesis and performances, I will help continue to bring it back to life. To Dr. Agnieszka Lazorczyk, Professor Mietek Boduszynski, and Dr. Magdalena Maczynska: I am infinitely grateful for your help with the Polish translations. I would not have been able to write about several incredibly important pieces without your assistance. This thesis owes so much to your translations. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Lazorczyk for going above and beyond to offer helpful contexts to confusing texts that deeply strengthened my understanding and analysis. To Professor Lenny Fukshansky: Thank you so much for your help and dedication with the Russian translations. They allowed me to make incredible discoveries from source texts that I had no way of reading myself and gave me the ability to gain glimpses into Weinberg’s mind and life that I never would have had otherwise. To Professor David Fanning, Weinberg’s biographer at the University of Manchester: I am so grateful for your thoughtful answers to my questions, as well as for the excerpts you shared from your soon-to-be-published book. Your published works were the basis for much of my learning, but the unpublished Kaddish Symphony excerpt you shared
with me was particularly invaluable in pointing me in the right direction for my research of the chorale. To Professor Eric Lindholm: I am so grateful for you going above and beyond to offer detailed and constructive comments on my thesis, including your detailed explanation about the tradition of horn orderings, and for making me aware of the crucial question at the end of the *Kaddish* Symphony back in sophomore year that led me on a multi-year journey of research and discovery. Thank you so much too for your help with my flute transcription of the Fantasia, which truly helped me gain a deeper understanding of the piece. To my flute professor at Pomona, Dr. Rachel Rudich: I am infinitely grateful for the last four years of your kindness, wisdom, and incredible mentorship. Thank you so much for your ceaseless support, and for your continued encouragement of my musical journey with Weinberg and beyond. To my long-term flute teacher, Catherine Ransom Karoly: words cannot express how much the last seven years have meant. You have been such an integral part of shaping me into the flutist, musician, and person I am today. I am so grateful for all you have taught me, and for your unending compassion and encouragement. To Professor Donna Di Grazia: thank you so much for your help in locating the score of the Cello Fantasia after many months of unsuccessful searching on my own. To the Peermusic and Subito Music publishing companies, particularly to Victoria Policht: I am so grateful for your help in obtaining the scores for Weinberg’s Symphony No. 8 and *Diary of Love*. Without you, I would never have been able to include them in my analysis. To Yael Kirat-Curtis, our dear family friend: Thank you so much for the last-minute phone call that finally helped me understand the correct gematria phrase. You were the key that unlocked almost three years of my searching for a plausible answer, and I’m so grateful. Finally, most importantly, to my wonderful friends and endlessly supportive family: I could never have done this, nor would never be where I am today, without you.
Contents

Introduction 1

Music Under State Persecution
Cello Fantasia, Op. 52 (1951-53) 7
Cello Concertino, Op. 43bis (1948) 14

Music as Narrative and Memory
Symphony No. 21, Op. 152, Kaddish (1989-91) 32
   Establishing the Semantics of the Chorale 39
      Symphony No. 8, Op. 83, Polish Flowers (1964), mvt. 8: “Matka” 39
      Diary of Love, Op. 87 (1965) 51
      Symphony No. 18, Op. 138, War – there is no word more cruel (1982-1984), section 1: Adagio – Allegro 74
      Otche nash (1989) 76
   Narrative and Memory in the Kaddish Symphony 87
      A Cryptic Message in the Symphony’s Final Bars: 1 246 35 151

Conclusion 159

Works Cited 163

Appendix A: Original Polish Text of Julian Tuwim’s “Matka” 169
Appendix B: Diary of Love Original Polish Text 171
Appendix C: Diary of Love Original Russian Text 174

Table of Weinberg’s Compositions 177
Introduction

Mieczysław Weinberg was a prolific composer whose compositions remain in relative obscurity through the present day. He was born in 1919 in Warsaw to a Jewish musical family. Weinberg and his sister Esther spent much of their childhood at the Jewish theater where his father, Shmuel, was a composer and violinist, and his mother, Sara, was an actress. During his teenage years, he received education in composition and piano at the Warsaw Conservatory. Tragedy struck when the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939. Five days later, Weinberg fled to Minsk, Belarus in the USSR.\(^1\) His family remained trapped in Warsaw, after which they were ultimately deported to the Łódź ghetto and murdered in the Trawniki concentration camp. Weinberg and his family are pictured in FIGURES 1-4.

![Figure 1: Mieczysław Weinberg](image)


Shapiro 2

FIGURE 2: Esther Weinberg

FIGURE 3: Sara Weinberg with her children Mieczysław and Esther


In Minsk, Weinberg studied at the city’s Conservatory in what would be the last formal musical instruction he ever received. Soon after, in 1941, he was evacuated to Tashkent after Minsk was invaded by the Nazis. There he also met and married his first wife, Natalia Vovsi-Mikhoels, daughter of the prominent Soviet Jewish actor and theater director Solomon Mikhoels. Tashkent was also where Weinberg was introduced to Dmitri Shostakovich, marking the beginning of what would become a lifelong friendship and musical partnership. At Shostakovich’s urging, Weinberg and his family moved to Moscow in 1943, but continued to suffer the anti-Semitism of Stalin’s regime. In 1948, Solomon Mikhoels was murdered by the state, and five years later Weinberg was imprisoned after a period of intense government surveillance. Though Stalin’s death ultimately granted him freedom, the trauma profoundly affected him psychologically and led to his gradual retreat into his “private world.” After a long battle with Crohn’s disease, in 1996 Weinberg passed away in Moscow at the age of 76.6

---


6 Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, passim.
I first discovered Weinberg entirely by accident when browsing through sheet music on a fateful one-time visit to Flute World San Francisco on August 17, 2019. Hidden in the stacks were Weinberg’s *12 Miniatures for Flute and Piano*, Op. 29, and his *Five Pieces for Flute and Piano* (1947). Intrigued, I purchased the *12 Miniatures*, and went home curious to learn more about this unknown composer. Our shared Jewish heritage drew me to his music, and as I discovered more and more about his story and prolific number of works, I became increasingly stunned at their profundity and complexity. I was baffled as to why he was not better known. Since then, I have been on a two-and-a-half-year journey with Weinberg and his music. I have sought out scores that have never been published and gazed upon manuscripts in Weinberg’s own hand. In the semester I wrote this thesis, I also presented a solo flute recital on four of his works, three of which are my own transcriptions of works originally for cello.7

Weinberg’s music reveals the incredible depths of pain he suffered throughout his life. The past and family that were ripped from him in Poland were the “main theme of his music and his inner life, which in his case is the same thing.”8 His daughter Victoria Bishops paints him as “an exquisite, fragile composer detached from the mundane life… [living] in the world of sounds. Yet the 20th century, with all its cataclysms, rolled over him like a tank and his entire music output turned into a requiem to the Holocaust.”9 Weinberg published more than 150 numbered works, with more continually uncovered as the years pass. The style of his compositions varies intensely. Some pieces, written to pass the Soviet Composers’ Committee,

---

7 My recital can be viewed here: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPwyBV1x-R8ZPdgk8EtOGh8I6L0SH0](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPwyBV1x-R8ZPdgk8EtOGh8I6L0SH0) and program notes can be accessed here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y54es87XzWPMBCY_ciYs11hBSCaEbwpR](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y54es87XzWPMBCY_ciYs11hBSCaEbwpR)


are extremely nationalistic, while others reveal a stunning and intimate glimpse into the mind of the composer himself. Works written during this period of state persecution often contain cleverly disguised musical elements that on a deeper level reveal aspects of Weinberg’s Jewish and Polish identity. His later works embody intricate levels of musical symbolism that, though unclear to the naked ear, tell profound stories that constitute Weinberg’s “requiem to the Holocaust.” In these works, Weinberg embarks on a complex journey of self-quotation, many of which extend back several years from the culmination of the quote in the final work. Studying the development of these motives over time, in the various works they appear in, imparts a significant comprehension of the role they play in the story the music tells.

As both a performer and listener of Weinberg’s music, I have found that my comprehension of the music (and thus the depth of my performing and listening experiences) has been unimaginably enhanced by my research, and I have been continually astounded at the many semantic layers I have uncovered. This thesis aspires to allow others to share in this understanding – to shed light onto the complicated, stirring story of the composer himself, and to inspire others to themselves learn about and perform his works.

I begin by investigating the musical expression of Weinberg’s Polish and Jewish identity under state persecution via close analysis of selected works: the Cello Fantasia, Op. 52 (1953) and the Cello Concertino, Op. 43bis (1948). Through context of composition and allusions to Jewish music and Polish folksong, these works reveal Weinberg’s identity as a Jew and a Pole, his connection to his homeland and youth, and his musical expression beyond the demands of the state. Subsequently, I focus on qualities of narrative and memory in Weinberg’s Symphony No. 21, Op. 152, Kaddish (1989-1991). I initially address these characteristics via close examinations of the eighth movement “Matka” from Symphony No. 8, Op. 83, Polish Flowers (1964); the
cantata _Diary of Love_, Op. 87 (1965); the first section of Symphony No. 18, Op. 138, _War – there is no word more cruel_ (1982-1984); and Weinberg’s music to Boris Ermolaev’s Perestroika-era Soviet Holocaust film _Otche nash_ (1989). These works all semantically develop a four-chord chorale that is central to the _Kaddish_ Symphony. With this analysis, I hope to open the ears of performers, listeners, and scholars to the stories hidden in the music that have never before been studied at this level of detail. Through complex musical symbolism, self and external musical quotations, and references to Jewish and Polish folk music, the _Kaddish_ Symphony weaves a harrowing, profound story of love, loss, and memory, a story that ties together Weinberg’s yearning for his lost childhood and family in Poland, his mourning for the country of his youth, and his everlasting lament for the millions murdered in the Holocaust.
Cello Fantasia, Op. 52 (1951-53)

Weinberg’s Cello Fantasia, Op. 52 is scored for cello and orchestra, with a piano reduction provided by Weinberg. The piece comprises an opening haunting, lyrical slow section, a brilliant, dance-like fast section, and finally a return to the initial plaintive and melodious theme. When analyzing the Fantasia, it is crucial to consider its context of composition. After Mikhoel’s murder in 1948, Weinberg and his family fell under extreme state scrutiny. They lived under virtual house arrest, enduring the presence of armed guards day and night who followed Weinberg wherever he ventured.  

We were not permitted to work. The phones were disconnected. Officers were posted on every exit and entrance and floor of the building and outside in the courtyard. We were allowed to leave only under supervision. I would spend as much time as possible reading adverts and newspapers posted outside on the walls in the winter to make them stand in the cold…

Weinberg described the pre-arrest experience as “worse than prison,” and it only ended with his physical arrest on 6 February 1953 on absurd charges of “Jewish bourgeois nationalism” as part of the USSR’s anti-Semitic “Doctor’s Plot.” In his own words, Weinberg was kept 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.”

He was kept alive for three months solely due to the efforts of Shostakovich, who, despite danger to himself, composed a letter on Weinberg’s behalf stating that “that he, Shostakovich, vouches for M. Weinberg, knows him as an honest citizen, a very talented young composer, whose main

---

10 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 61-62.
12 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 62.
13 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 87.
Shapiro 8

interest is music.”14 Weinberg himself credits Shostakovich for saving his life, recalling “That's quite enough when they don't let you sleep from eleven to six, and a spotlight hits you in the eyes... So he, Shostakovich, saved me from prison. The investigator told me: ‘Your friends are standing up for you.’”15 This bought Weinberg time, but he was not freed until 14 April 1953 by Stalin’s death.16

These are the circumstances under which the Fantasia was written. It was ultimately premiered on 23 November 1953 in a version for cello and piano by Daniil Shafran and Nina Musinyan. The Fantasia is unusual amongst Weinberg’s works in that its composition spans two years; the vast majority of his works were each produced “fast and in a concentrated time-span.”17 No explanation for the Fantasia’s lengthy period of composition is known, as Weinberg “hardly ever spoke or wrote to anyone about his work in progress.”18 At first glance, this seems to imply that Weinberg may have considered the work to be especially noteworthy, though Weinberg’s daughter Victoria Bishops is “not aware of any specific significance he attached to this piece… my father always worked so fast, that he felt almost uncomfortable admitting to his colleagues how quickly he finished composing his pieces. There was no piece, including the more voluminous ones, that he worked on for two years.”19 She speculates that the dates on the manuscript indicate he stepped away from the piece for some time, that “the surveillance and subsequent arrest may have pulled him away from working on it,” before he returned to complete it.20

14 Ludmila Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 3” Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ), last modified May 2021, https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer3/lnikitina/.
15 Ludmila Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 3.”
16 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 88.
17 Ilana Shapiro, Interview with Professor David Fanning, October 25, 2021.
18 Shapiro, Interview with Professor David Fanning.
19 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
20 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
I originally conjectured that the musical elements of the Fantasia might reflect this trauma, but Weinberg’s biographer David Fanning reveals otherwise. He explains that “rather than his life having immediate impact on the music he was writing at any particular time, his [Weinberg’s] music tended to take him out of the everyday world into an ideal world of humanistic values. And impact from painful events tended to be reflected years, if not decades later, when it had been through extended inner processing.” This is consistent with Bishops’ own remark that his “music happened within him and he drew inspiration from within.”

Thus, it appears that the Fantasia was a means for Weinberg to retreat into the solitude of his mind as the world around him fell into chaos.

Furthermore, during the years of the Fantasia’s composition, Weinberg also wrote several works without an opus number. He was faced with increasing pressure from the state to produce so-called “Music for the People” that was “tuneful, accessible, and folk-like.” In response to this, Weinberg wrote a large body of works—including the Fantasia—that featured non-Russian folk themes in an attempt to appease the state while leaving his true artistic expression uncompromised. Fanning feels that the reason he chose to give the Fantasia an opus, unlike most of the other works in this category, was that “he regarded the work as more thoroughly worked out and truer to his creative individuality.”

The “folk-like” idiom manifests in the Fantasia through Polish folksong, with occasional (and much vaguer) references to klezmer. The incorporation of Polish folkloric elements in concert pieces was not a new concept to Weinberg; he heard it frequently on Polish radio in his youth. The incorporation of Polish folksong in the

---

21 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
22 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 73.
23 Shapiro, Interview with Professor David Fanning.
Fantasia is thus a bridge to Weinberg’s personal history that was subtle enough to appease the nationalistic demands of the state.

After a lyrical, calm, adagio introductory section, the main theme of the Fantasia’s slow movement is introduced (FIGURE 5).

![FIGURE 5: Cello Fantasia, R2, mm. 3-6](image)

Musicologist Danuta Gwizdalanka reveals that the theme is based on a kujawiak, a Polish folk dance in triple meter originating from the Kujawy region in central Poland. The dance quickly spread to major cities, including Warsaw, where Weinberg likely encountered it in his youth. Polish folk dance expert Ada Dziewanowska describes the dance as calm, simple, and dignified, performed in “a smooth flowing manner ‘reminiscent of the tall grain stalks in the fields swaying gently in the wind.’” Rubato is frequently used in performance, which is consistent with the few existing recordings I have heard of the Fantasia. The Fantasia’s kujawiak is in F# minor, and its folk-like and pastorale character is enhanced by frequent flute solos (e.g. in the eight bars leading up to R10, and again at the very end of the movement, six bars after R13 until the closing Adagio). The flute solos are reminiscent of a fujara, or a shepherd’s pipe (FIGURES 6 and 7).

---

24 I am using the 1954 Moscow State Publishing House original edition, which has rehearsal numbers but no measure numbers. Thus, all examples will refer to measures based on rehearsal numbers.

25 Maja Trochimczyk, “Kujawiak,” Polish Music Center, USC Thornton School of Music, last modified February 9, 2018, [https://polishmusic.usc.edu/research/dances/kujawiak/](https://polishmusic.usc.edu/research/dances/kujawiak/).
Polish folksong persists through the Fantasia’s fast second movement, though via a *mazurka* rather than a *kujawiak* (Figure 8).\(^{27}\)

The *mazurka* is a Polish dance in triple meter, usually in a quick and lively tempo, featuring unusually placed accents (i.e. on the second or third beat of the measure). Such unconventional use of accents in a triple meter is heard frequently through the second movement of the Fantasia,


such explicitly as in the solo cello part at R19, and implicitly through the placement of the accompaniment against the solo cello at R24 (Figures 9 and 10).

![Figure 9: Cello Fantasia, R19, mm. 1-3](image)

![Figure 10: Cello Fantasia, R24, mm. 1-9](image)

The characteristic Lydian fourth (i.e. raised scale degree 4) of the mazurka is also used extensively throughout this movement, and is established immediately in the C Lydian scale at the solo cello’s entrance to the movement (Figure 11).

![Figure 11: Cello Fantasia, R14, mm. 1-4](image)

Finally, Weinberg also includes extremely subtle references to klezmer music in this movement through the instrumentation of the winds in the orchestral version, which at times resemble a klezmer band. Fanning notes that Weinberg would not have risked anything more overtly Jewish in the piece in face of the USSR’s anti-Semitic ‘Anti-Cosmopolitan’ campaign, which labeled

---

28 Unfortunately, I could not access the full orchestral score.
Jews as unpatriotic “cosmopolitans” and in doing so targeted them for persecution.\textsuperscript{29} The product of this campaign was the increasing persecution Weinberg experienced in these critical few years leading up to his arrest. Thus, through the incorporation of Polish folksong as well as subtle references to klezmer, the Fantasia is a work representing Weinberg’s musical individuality, connection to his Polish homeland, and his Jewish identity even in the face of great political scrutiny and oppression.

Cello Concertino, Op. 43bis (1948)

The Cello Concertino, Op. 43bis, especially when compared to the Cello Concerto, Op. 43, embodies a multitude of Jewish musical themes. These elements reveal Weinberg’s strong Jewish identity as well as his personal and musical roots in his father’s theater in Warsaw. Before delving into the technicalities of the individual movements, it is again crucial to consider the context in which Weinberg composed this work. Unlike the Fantasia, the Concertino was only discovered decades after Weinberg’s death. It was composed in four short days, between 4 and 8 August 1948. Yet, until 2016, the only existing version was the original manuscript sitting in the archives of musicologist Manashit Yakubov, to whom Weinberg had originally given it.30 Two major events took place in 1948 that deeply impacted Weinberg’s life. The first was Stalin’s personally mandated murder of Weinberg’s father-in-law Solomon Mikhoels on January 12, disguised by the state as a random accident.31 The second was the beginning of the Anti-Cosmopolitan campaign. Thus began the five painful years of surveillance and persecution before Weinberg’s own arrest in 1953. Clearly, the political climate was not one that fostered the inclusion of Jewish themes in composers’ works.

It is also important to recall the Zhdanov Doctrine of 1946, a Soviet cultural doctrine partitioning the world into “imperialistic” and “democratic” ideologies.32 This led to the anti-formalism campaign, in which absolute music, not serving an objective social purpose, was condemned. Weinberg, as well as Shostakovich and other major Soviet composers, were accused of “formalism.” In the words of musicologist Grigory Bernandy, this meant they were charged

31 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 61.
with “building a certain musical structure, a form for its own sake, forgetting of what and in the name of what this form is being built [i.e. socialism].”33 This expectation was further enforced in the Second Plenary Session of the Union of Soviet Composers in December 1948. Its leader, composer, Tikhon Khrennikov, called for an assessment of Soviet composers’ defense of the “‘national character of Soviet music against the reactionary ideas of bourgeois cosmopolitanism by developing an art of the land of Socialism, Socialist in substance, national in form.”34

The Concertino is anything but nationalistic in character, instead emphasizing “freedom of the personality, the freedom of a creator, the fate of the single, ‘small’ human being and of humanity as a whole.”35 Weinberg accomplishes this through the incorporation of Jewish musical themes and allusions to the Polish folksong of his youth. The piece is scored for solo cello and string orchestra. Both the first movement and the final reprise consist of a single theme—simple, haunting, and lyrical—that is repeated four times with slight variations, seeming to imitate a Jewish cantor (FIGURE 12).36

![Figure 12: Cello Concertino, mvt. 1, mm. 1-10](image)

33 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 65.
34 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 67.
35 Prokhorova, foreword to Concertino, Op. 43bis.
36 Prokhorova, foreword to Concertino, Op. 43bis.
37 I am using the 2017 Peermusic edition of the score, in which measure numbers restart for each movement.
Prokhorova describes the movement as a song of “weeping and storytelling,” a wordless lament. The extraordinarily sparse orchestration seen in Figure 12 persists throughout the movement, reinforcing the cantorial-singer concept. Furthermore, consider the rhythm of the recurring motive in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Cello Concertino, mvt. 1, m. 20

The condensed rhythm of the run at the beginning of the motive makes it evocative of the krekhts (Yiddish for “sobbing,” or “sigh”) technique that is a trademark feature of klezmer music from the Ashkenazi cantorial tradition that Weinberg would have been familiar with. In this way, the “weeping and wailing” effect of the cantor is enhanced.

The balance changes in the second movement, where suddenly Weinberg writes as though for string ensemble, giving equal weight to soloist and accompaniment. This movement is in rondo form, with a dance-like character, and appears to be a Hasidic klezmer terkish (a “quasi-Oriental” line dance in duple meter). The rhythm of the terkish resembles a Spanish habanera. Yiddish dance researcher Steven Weintraub describes the dance as a four-beat melody with a “♩♩♩♩” rhythm. The terkish rhythm appears from the very outset of the second movement of the Concertino, as detailed in Figure 14. (Note that the rhythmic unit is the eighth note, not the quarter, even though the time signature is 2/4).

Figure 14: Cello Concertino, mvt. 2, mm. 17-22

The cello soloist similarly picks up this rhythm soon after its entrance (FIGURE 15).

![FIGURE 15: Cello Concertino, mvt. 2, mm. 17-22](image)

The third movement is written in the more traditional sonata form, yet simultaneously conveys a vivacious dance that scarcely stops for breath. Gwizdalanka conjectures that this movement recalls folk musicians from the streets of pre-war Poland; I further conjecture that these “folk musicians” were specifically klezmer musicians. The very entrance of the solo cello is a distinctively klezmer theme (FIGURE 16).

![FIGURE 16: Cello Concertino, mvt. 3, mm. 9-16](image)

Weinberg employs an identical technique in the immediate restatement of the theme, though transposed up a fourth. The plucked strings in the accompaniment further enhance the dance-like quality (FIGURE 17).
These passages can be interpreted harmonically in two ways: in C and F harmonic minor, respectively, or in the Mi Sheberach (Ukrainian Dorian) mode starting on F and Bb, respectively. The Mi Sheberach mode is a common klezmer mode with the same interval set as the harmonic minor scale, but transposed up a fourth (i.e. it is the fourth mode of the harmonic minor scale). It is primarily seen in two klezmer forms: the bulgarish, a lively dance genre, and the doyne, a free-form non-dance genre. The strict rhythm and dance-like character of the third movement of the Concertino indicate a connection to the bulgarish rather than the doyne. The bulgarish originates from Bessarabia, which is particularly significant in that this is the homeland of Weinberg’s parents. Weinberg played in his father’s theater band as a child, where he first learned music. In Weinberg’s own words,

Life was my first music teacher, since I was born into a family where my father had devoted himself to music since childhood… He travelled with touring Jewish theatre

---


41 “Bulgar (LKT),” Jewish Music Research Centre; Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 16.

companies and wrote music for them… From the age of six I tagged along behind him; I went to listen to all those less than top-quality, but always very sincere melodies.\textsuperscript{43}

In addition to his father’s own compositions, Weinberg was exposed to variety of klezmer ensembles.\textsuperscript{44} It is therefore very likely that Weinberg was exposed to his father’s native Bessarabian klezmer music during this time, thus fortifying the Concertino’s allusion to the bulgarish and rooting the work in Weinberg’s childhood in Poland as well as his Jewish identity. Gwizdalanka further notes that though the movement is modally “Jewish,” its style closely resembles a Polish mazurka. This blending of musical traditions was common among Jewish folk musicians on the streets of pre-WWII Poland, who would imbue local assimilated styles with their own ideas.\textsuperscript{45} That Weinberg was doing the same in the Concertino reinforces the connection to his childhood years.

Finally, before returning to the opening theme of “weeping and storytelling,” the third movement leads to a “philosophical recitative-monologue” cadenza.\textsuperscript{46} Its telltale, persistent Lydian fourth recalls Polish folk tunes, Weinberg’s tribute to his past in Poland. (Notice the G# in \textbf{FIGURE 18}; the local key is D major).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{cadenza.png}
\caption{Cello Concertino, Cadenza, mm. 1-2}
\end{figure}

Furthermore, the \textit{krekhts} motives appears once again in the cadenza for the first time since the opening movement (\textbf{FIGURE 19}).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Fanning, \textit{In Search of Freedom}, 16-17.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Liverpool Philharmonic, “David Fanning talks about Mieczysław Weinberg,”
\item \textsuperscript{45} Gwizdalanka, “Voices in the Wilderness.”
\item \textsuperscript{46} Gwizdalanka, “Voices in the Wilderness.”
\end{itemize}
This simultaneously recalls the Jewish cantorial tradition as well as the klezmer tradition before returning entirely to the cantorial lament that concludes the work.

Many of these elements did not make it into the only version of this work that was published during Weinberg’s lifetime: the Concerto, Op. 43, which expanded the Concertino and added winds and brass to the orchestration. Weinberg’s work catalog indicates that the Concerto was written in 1948, but the USSR’s “All Union Administration for the Protection of Copyrights” indicates that the published version was revised in 1956, shortly preceding its premiere by Rostropovich on 9 January 1957. In order to avoid the gaze of the state, Weinberg frequently disguised his works containing Jewish themes (e.g. renaming his song cycle “Jewish Songs” to “Children’s Songs”). It therefore seems plausible that he was required to perform such modifications here in order for the work to be accepted by the state. The pre-1956 version of the Concerto is not available, and it cannot ultimately be determined exactly how much of the Concertino was removed or replaced in the final version of Concerto to comply with the state as opposed to Weinberg’s own intellectual development of the musical material. I conjecture that many of the differences between the Concertino and the Concerto stem from Weinberg’s desire to preserve the essence of the work while removing the “Jewishness” from it, considering the anti-Semitic atmosphere in which it was composed in 1948 coupled with the terror Weinberg faced.

---

47 Gwizdalanka, “Voices in the Wilderness.”
experienced following Mikhoel’s murder. Victoria Bishops herself believes this theory is likely correct, but notes that “sadly no one but the author himself can reply with any certainty.”

Distinctive alterations in the Concerto that support these ideas include the reworking of recurring musical figures in the first movement; the removal of the klezmer references in the third movement; the addition of a heroic, Soviet-nationalist sounding section to the third movement; the complete reworking of the cadenza to remove any references to Polish folk music or Jewish music; the addition of an entirely new nationalistic fourth movement that, as cellist Nicolas Altstaedt notes, closely resembles the last movement of Shostakovich’s Op. 57 Piano Quintet; and a striking change in character in the return of the cantorial theme at the end. There are of course additional changes, such as insertion of new material in the second movement, but the role these differences play in the purported goal of removing Jewish elements is less clear; they may instead simply reflect Weinberg’s natural progression of the material.

In the first movement, Weinberg distinctly alters a recurring melodic motive; specifically, the *krekhts* motive from the first movement of the Concertino. As shown in Figures 20 and 21, the speed of the first two notes in the Concertino is double that of the Concerto. The motive occurs six times in the first movement of the Concertino, and ten times in the (longer) first movement of the Concerto in precisely the same respective rhythms of Figures 20 and 21.

---

49 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
50 I am using the 2003 Peermusic edition of the score, in which measure numbers restart for each movement.
In making this conversion, the “weeping and wailing” quality imbued by the *krekhts* is severely diminished.

Furthermore, I notice a markedly different harmony in the same motive appearing in m. 28 of both the Concertino and the Concerto (FIGURES 22 and 23).

The motive appears twice in the Concertino (once in the first movement, once in the final reprise) and the Concerto (twice in the first movement). The alterations in FIGURE 23 occur in every appearance of the excerpt. Clearly, the harmony is much more complex in the Concertino: the orchestra and solo cello together form an Ab minor-major seventh chord, until the F# introduced in the cello muddies it further. The harmony in the Concerto is much more straightforward: F₄min⁷, a continuation of the chord in the previous measure, with the G in the
treble serving as a nonchordal suspension tone. The chord in the Concertino is extremely jarring to the listener in the context of the surrounding triadic harmony. It is the most dissonant moment in the entirety of the “cantorial” sections and seems to convey a sense of pain. Recall that in 1948, during the anti-formalism campaign, the Soviet Composers Committee called for music that must be “written in a language that is close and accessible to our people.” I conjecture that Weinberg simplified the harmony to achieve this goal, at the cost of losing the sense of disquiet this chord introduces into the “weeping and wailing” of the cello.

Intriguingly, Weinberg also moved the recapitulation of the cantorial theme at the end of the Concertino to the end of the first movement of the Concerto, the beginning of which is demonstrated in Figures 24 and 25.

![Figure 24: Cello Concertino, mvt. 4, mm. 18-23](image)

![Figure 25: Cello Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 37-41](image)

Though the thematic essence of the Concertino’s recapitulation is preserved in the Concerto, its initial presentation is markedly different. In the haunting, atmospheric lament of the Concertino in the measures following Figure 24, the strings swell in unison with the cantorial melody, accompanied by the low murmur of the solo cello (Figure 26).

---

In contrast, the Concerto essentially removes the solo cello from this section, completely transferring the theme to the tutti orchestra where it is punctuated by the brass section and the timpani (Figure 27).

Notice too that the solo cello’s line in the Concertino in Figure 26 has here been transferred, verbatim, to the tutti celli and viola in Figure 27. This passionate, articulate presentation is entirely at odds with the “weeping and wailing” sigh of the strings in the Concertino version. The cantorial metaphor is further marred here by the disjointing of the of the cello line. Rather than an unbroken, mellifluous line embodying a cantor singing against sparse accompaniment, by removing the solo cello from the melodic line, the wailing cantor has been lost.
Perhaps the most jarring alteration to the Concerto is the complete removal of the klezmer harmony in the third movement, the Concertino version of which is seen in Figures 16 and 17. In contrast, Figures 28 and 29 demonstrate the new harmony in the Concerto.

The Ukrainian Dorian scale has disappeared, and with it all harmonic references to klezmer. Instead, the themes are simply presented in D major and G major, respectively. These are both major modes, which is almost never seen in klezmer music. The tempo of the movement is also considerably sped up (♩=300 vs ♩=208 in the Concertino) and dynamic is increased from forte to fortissimo, making it less of a dance and more, as Gwizdalanka puts it, of a “bravura piece.” This frenetic quality is further enhanced by the replacement of the plucked strings accompanying this theme in the Concertino with the accented, almost bugle-like blaring of the clarinets. Furthermore, at the point where the third movement in the Concertino ends and gives way to the cadenza, Weinberg adds an entirely new section in the Concerto (Figure 30).
A grandiose, almost militaristic theme is presented forcefully in the trumpets, completely out of character with the Concertino’s klezmer-infused version of this movement. These changes certainly appear to embody the spirit of “Soviet optimism” the Committee called for, and the removal of the Jewish elements increases its nationalistic appeal.

A cadenza following the third movement is still present, as in the Concertino, but is so deeply altered as to become unrecognizable. Gwizdalanka notes that it is “more fully developed than the one in the Concertino,” but no elements of the Concertino’s cadenza remain. In particular, the Lydian fourth indicative of Polish folk music has disappeared, and is replaced with references to other parts of the Concerto. The cantorial theme of the first movement is now presented passionately, almost aggressively, embellished with virtuosic elements, that then lead into quotes from the Concerto’s modified third movement (FIGURE 31).
Weinberg then returns to the cantorial theme, but this time presents it “somewhat sentimentally – far removed from the intimate music familiar to us from the Concertino.”\(^{52}\) All references to Weinberg’s religion and past—Jewish cantorial music, klezmer music, and Polish folksong—have been obliterated from the cadenza.

Finally, instead of leading into the final reprise of the cantorial theme as in the Concertino, the cadenza gives way to an entirely new fourth movement Weinberg created for the Concerto.\(^{53}\) It is utterly out of character with any part of the Concertino, and instead “creates the impression of having been added to lend the music ‘Soviet optimism.’”\(^{54}\) Indeed, as Altstaedt noted, it very closely resembles the Finale from Shostakovich’s Piano Quintet, Op. 57 (FIGURES 32 and 33).

![Figure 32: Shostakovich, Piano Quintet, Op. 57, R81, mm. 1-6](image)

![Figure 33: Cello Concerto, mvt. 4, mm. 1-2](image)

Weinberg commonly drew upon Shostakovich’s music for inspiration, and by doing so here, he achieves the “Soviet optimism” Gwizdalanka speaks of by incorporating an “acceptable” example of Soviet music. He goes on to further obscure the “weeping and wailing” quality of the cantorial theme in this movement by presenting again it near the end in a glaring brass fanfare,

---

\(^{52}\) Gwizdalanka, “Voices in the Wilderness.”


\(^{54}\) Gwizdalanka, “Voices in the Wilderness.”
punctuated militaristically by the percussion similarly to the altered end of the Concerto’s opening movement, again forging the Jewish singing qualities in favor of more nationalistic effects (FIGURE 34).

It remains unanswered if Weinberg added the Shostakovich-inspired fourth movement specifically as part of the Concerto’s mandatory revisions in 1956, as it is the modification that furthest departs from the Concertino’s material.

After this, the more familiar wailing quality re-emerges with the final reprise of the cantorial theme, just as in the Concertino. Yet, although the reprise consists of general thematic content from the first movement, it visibly departs from the analogous reprise in the Concertino (which, as previously discussed, was moved to make up the second half of the Concerto’s opening movement). In particular, the Concertino concludes in a keening, ethereal hum, almost reminiscent of an angel’s song as the cello trails off in an eerily high harmonic against a hollow perfect fifth (FIGURE 35).
The first movement of the Concerto concludes precisely as in Figure 35. However, the final movement of the Concerto concludes with an altered version. At first glance, the cello’s final wail on high G is lowered an octave, which the cellist will not play as a harmonic, thus losing the unique piercing quality of the original note (Figure 36).
Furthermore, the harmony in the reprise is murky and unsettling, dissonant in a way it never is in the cantorial theme of the Concertino. Figures 35 and 36 are a prime example of this. The harmony of the Concertino in Figure 35 is simple: a perfect fifth of C and G, with C minor implied throughout by the melody in the lower strings, allowing the solo cello to soar above with the consonance of a cantor’s song. In Figure 36, however, the Concerto immediately devolves from this harmonic purity with the following sequence over C pedal point: E minor, D major, Db major, D major, Db major. The uneasy harmony, tied together horizontally via chromaticism, is entirely at odds with the Jewish cantorial tradition. It seems to be more a nod towards Shostakovich than anything else, as Shostakovich’s music, per Fanning’s analysis, is “sometimes tonal, sometimes modal, sometimes somewhere in between, and sometimes outside the bounds of either.”

The Concerto then closes optimistically in C major. This contrasts with the Concertino’s ending, which, as the melody in the strings implies through the penultimate Eb, is in C minor. That final chord of the Concerto certainly seems to end the work with the “Soviet optimism” so greatly desired by the Soviet Composer’s Committee.

It appears that Weinberg, by combining all the material he used from the Concertino into the first three movements of the Concerto, seemingly surrendered any attempt to preserve the essence of the Concertino after this point. Unlike the first three movements, the fourth movement, cadenza, and reprise of the Concerto do not make use of the elegant musical camouflage Weinberg cleverly executed in the preceding movements to maintain their original vision. The newly created fourth movement, essentially borrowed from the final movement of Shostakovich’s Op. 57 Piano Quintet, and the unrecognizable cadenza bear almost no connection.

to the Concertino. The reprise, while a nod to the cantorial theme that is so deep an aspect of the Concertino’s identity, ventures into novel musical areas that only serve to distort the link to the original work. Cumulatively, it is abundantly clear that Weinberg removed a host of potentially “unacceptable” musical elements, both Jewish and Polish, from the Concertino in order to produce a version that was both acceptable to the Composer’s Committee and safe for him as a Jew in light of his father-in-law’s murder.
Symphony No. 21, Op. 152, Kaddish (1989-91)

One of the most personally significant pieces Weinberg ever composed was the single-movement, six-section, 55-minute Symphony No. 21, Op. 152, Kaddish. It was premiered in the 1996 Moscow Autumn festival by the Russian Philharmonic under Aleksandr Vedernikov. Reviews were overwhelmingly positive; famed critic Alexander Medvedev said it was “a journey through the circles of hell, from whose depths the bright voices of life persistently broke through.” Its manuscript bears the dedication “To the Memory of Those who Died in the Warsaw Ghetto.” Fanning notes that Weinberg likely interpreted “Warsaw Ghetto” broadly. Though Weinberg’s family was murdered hundreds of miles away in Trawniki, Weinberg frequently referred to their murder occurring in Warsaw. This is confirmed in his interview with Musicologist Lyudmila Nikitina, in which he describes the Kaddish Symphony as “dedicated to the burning of the Warsaw ghetto, where my loved ones died,” even after he knew their fate in Trawniki. There is some confusion as to whether Shmuel Weinberg was murdered in Trawniki or in Luninets, Belorussia. The actor Zalmen Koleshnikov indicates Shmuel was killed in Luninets, but the “Yizkor-List” of the Polish State Yiddish Theater notes that Shmuel was indeed murdered in Poland. The latter has largely been accepted as truth due to Koleshnikov’s lack of credibility.

---

56 David Fanning and Michelle Assay, “Mieczysław Weinberg: His Life and Music” (unpublished manuscript, October 25 2021), typescript.
57 Fanning and Assay, “His Life and Music.”
58 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
59 Ludmila Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 1” Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ), last modified May 2021, https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer1/lnikitina/.
Though its official dates of composition are 1989-91, the draft score of the *Kaddish* Symphony has a second title page dating 1965-91, with the “‘65’ being a correction from something scratched out, which could easily be ‘89’” (Figure 37).  

![Figure 37: Insert on the Title Page of Kaddish Symphony Draft Score](image_url)

Intriguingly, the draft score does not include the subtitle “Kaddish.” This appears to have been added later in Weinberg’s catalogue of works. Indeed, the draft score in Figure 37 reveals that initially Weinberg considered various dedications, including labeling the piece “пляч” (*plach*, or

---

61 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music.”
62 Ludmila Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 5” *Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ)*, last modified May 2021, [https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer5/nikitina/](https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer5/nikitina/).
63 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music.”
lament) rather than a symphony. “плач” also appears on a second page upon which Weinberg was contemplating various dedications of the symphony (FIGURE 38).

FIGURE 38: Weinberg's Potential Dedications of the *Kaddish* Symphony

Recalling Bishops’ remark that there “was no piece, including the more voluminous ones, that he [my father] worked on for two years” this extended timeframe likely reflects the period of mental processing required for him to produce such an emotionally complex and personally significant work. As Weinberg neared the end of his life, he grew increasingly ill with Crohn’s disease, the condition that ultimately led to his death in 1996. By 1989, he was already incredibly frail, and wrote the *Kaddish* Symphony while bedridden. Victoria and her mother Natalia Vovsi-Mikhoels, at this point divorced from Weinberg, were now residing in Israel. In one of Natalia’s final visits to him in in Moscow, he requested that she bequeath the manuscript to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, where it remains to this day.

---

64 Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”
65 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
67 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
68 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
Significantly, Weinberg’s first and only return to Poland was in 1966, a visit he certainly would have anticipated in 1965, the start year of the Kaddish Symphony’s alternate timeline. This visit was where he confirmed for the first time that his family was deported from Warsaw to the Łódź ghetto, and then the Trawniki concentration camp, in 1943.69

The loss of Weinberg’s family was a trauma he never recovered from. Over fifty years after he was separated from them, Weinberg recalled the fateful evening 6 September 1939, five days after the Nazis invaded Poland.70 He had been playing piano at the fashionable Warsaw café Adria, and

I came home. I remember that Mother offered me apple compote and ham sandwiches… Suddenly the radio broadcast an order: since the enemy… was approaching Warsaw, all men had to leave the city. Mother and I panicked terribly. In the morning I left eastwards with my little sister [Esther]. She soon returned to Mother and Father, because her shoes were hurting her feet badly…71

Weinberg continued on, “for seventeen days [walking] under bullets, under bombing, without food, without drink.”72 If Esther had not turned back, she would have survived. Yet, the precise account of the fate of his family is inconsistent even among Weinberg’s own recollections. In an interview, Ada Gorfinkel, the daughter of Weinberg’s first cousin, reveals that according to Natalia Vovsi-Mikhoels,

Contrary to official reports that his parents refused to leave Warsaw, they, in fact, wanted their whole family to leave Warsaw occupied by the Germans. But on the way to the train, his sister's heel broke and they delayed. Mieczysław (as he was then called in Poland) caught the train, but the family did not have time.73

69 Elphick, Music behind the Iron Curtain, 62.
70 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 21.
71 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 21.
73 Gorfinkle, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg.”
Bishops confirms this report, which an interview with Colta.ru reveals she heard firsthand from her father:

In the middle of the summer of 1939, he went on tour to the east of Poland. Parents and younger sister remained in Warsaw. In the very first days of the war, together with other Jewish refugees, they left the city, but halfway through the sister's heel broke, and this played a fatal role in their fate. They decided to return home to change shoes, to Warsaw, from which they could not get out.  

In my own interview with Bishops, she confirmed that the Kaddish Symphony was “definitely inextricably related to the perishing of his family.”  

Weinberg at one point proclaimed to his second wife that

In no way do I wish to appear before you in the halo of an exceptional person—G-d forbid. Unfortunately, there were innumerable fates similar to mine. 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 derby, that no 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week creative hard labor would take me even an inch towards paying it off.  

To function despite the pain, in general Weinberg “did not like to talk about this painful topic for him, to remember his parents and sister, who all died in the Trawniki concentration camp.”  

Yet, they remained close to his mind and heart throughout his life—it was simply not a subject easily expressible for him in words. Bishops recalls that “as a child, he told me before bedtime fairy tales, the main characters of which were the girl Esti, his sister, and the boy Metek, himself.”  

In Judaism, the Kaddish prayer (fully known as the Mourner’s Kaddish) is recited once daily for after the passing of a close family member, asking for “abundant peace from heaven,

---

74 Blumina, “Interview with the Daughter of Moses Weinberg.”
75 Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
76 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 15.
77 Gorfinkle, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg.”
78 Blumina, “Interview with the Daughter of Moses Weinberg.”
and life” in attempt to ease the journey of the souls that have departed. The length of time varies based on the relationship of the mourner to the deceased. For a parent, Kaddish is recited for eleven months, while for a sibling, spouse, or child, Kaddish is generally recited for one month. Its full text is as follows:

Glorified and sanctified be G-d’s great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will.

May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

By so writing this symphony, Weinberg is saying Kaddish for his own family, and for the multitudes that had no family left to recite it for them. Nikitina believes that the Kaddish Symphony was Weinberg’s “farewell to those who died in the concentration camp and a prayer for the souls of thousands of other Jews, as well as Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians,

81 “Mourner's Kaddish.”
Russians and Germans who died during the years of repression and war.”\textsuperscript{82} In this way, he perhaps also alleviates the sense of burden and guilt from his survival.

Though by this point Stalin had died and Weinberg possessed relative freedom of composition, the layers of symbolism in the \textit{Kaddish} Symphony extend far beyond its short dedication and are not evident to the untrained listener. Furthermore, Weinberg was unique as a composer in that in addition to the more common technique of quoting of other composers’ works, he engaged in frequent self-quotation of his own material. He was not necessarily alone in this technique (Shostakovich does so, for instance, by citing his Symphony No. 1 in his String Quartet No. 8); yet, his striking choice of material to quote from is unparalleled.\textsuperscript{83} In the \textit{Kaddish} Symphony, Weinberg directly references the second movements of his String Quartet No. 4, Op. 20 (1945) and his Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 73 (1960), as well as the third movement of his Sonata for Solo Double Bass, Op. 108 (1971). Weinberg himself further notes that the \textit{Kaddish} Symphony heavily incorporates a chorale central to his Symphony No. 8 “Polish Flowers” (1964) and his cantata \textit{Diary of Love} (1965). The chorale is also seen in his 1989 film score to Boris Ermolaev’s Perestroika-era Soviet Holocaust film \textit{Otche nash} (orig. \textit{Отче наш}: “Our Father,” or “The Lord’s Prayer”) and in the first section of Symphony No. 18, Op. 138, \textit{War – there is no word more cruel} (1982-1984). Finally, Weinberg utilizes direct quotation and development of external material: Chopin’s Ballad in G minor for solo piano, Mahler’s lied \textit{Das Irdische Leben} from the 1805-1908 song cycle \textit{Des Knaben Wunderhorn} (a theme that also runs heavily throughout the \textit{Otche nash} score), and klezmer tunes from his childhood.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{82} Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”
\textsuperscript{83} Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music.”
\textsuperscript{84} Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music.”
Establishing the Semantics of the Chorale

Late in his life, Weinberg revealed a profound motivation behind this chorale in an interview with Nikitina.

I would say that G-d is present in everything. Ever since my First Symphony I have had a kind of chorale wandering around, which ‘sits down’ powerfully in the Eighth Symphony, in the movement “There is a cemetery in Łódź….” Then the same chorale can be found in the music for [Vadim] Korostilov’s play The Warsaw Alarm-Bell, and in the [Auschwitz-based cantata] Diary of Love. And the same chorale is a dominant theme in my 21st Symphony, dedicated to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This isn’t a church melody, but one of my own. Some quite elementary chords.\(^85\)

This chorale, this “melody of his own,” in the Kaddish Symphony is the beginning of Weinberg saying the Kaddish prayer for his family, who were detained in the Łódź ghetto before they were murdered in the Trawniki concentration camp. The complex symbolism of the chorale is magnified through examining its appearances in Weinberg’s previous compositions. Unfortunately, I was able to obtain neither a recording nor a score of The Warsaw Alarm-Bell, so present an analysis of the other works in which the chorale appears.

Symphony No. 8, Op. 83, Polish Flowers (1964), mvt. 8: “Matka”

Symphony No. 8 is scored for tenor soloist, mixed choirs, and orchestra, and sets excerpts from poems of the same name by the Polish-Jewish poet Julian Tuwim.\(^86\) Weinberg expresses in a rare publicity interview that

In the war my entire family was murdered by Hitler’s executioners. For many years I wanted to write a work in which all the events would be reflected on which the poem was founded—the social contrasts in Poland before the war, the horrors of war, and at the same time the deep faith of the poet in the victory of freedom, justice, and humanism.\(^87\)

---


\(^{86}\) Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 111.

\(^{87}\) Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 111.
The chorale appears in the eighth movement, “Matka” (“Mother”). The movement opens with the chorale, four chords barely audible in the hum of the low, subdued strings (Figure 39).

![Figure 39: Symphony No. 8, R82, mm. 5-8](image)

The progression is F minor, C minor, $G^{\text{sus}4}$, and what can be interpreted as a Bb minor chord with the C continuing to serve as a suspension from the previous chord. (For the remainder of the thesis, the latter chord will be referred to as Bb minor (+C)). The progression in the chorale serves no apparent harmonic function; these chord names are given purely for descriptive purposes. Instead, I argue that the chorale, the musical embodiment of the hymn that manifested so powerfully in Weinberg’s mind since his first symphony, serves a deeply symbolic function in all the works Weinberg quotes it in.

The text in Tuwim’s poem “Matka” that the tenor sings in Symphony No. 8 depicts “a mother at a cemetery in Łódź, cut down by the Nazis as she grieves for her son.” Weinberg chose Tuwim’s texts for many of his vocal works. Perhaps shared aspects of their heritage drew Weinberg to Tuwim’s writings. Indeed, musicologist Daniel Elphick, a former student of Fanning’s, notes that until Weinberg finally returned to visit Poland in 1966, “Tuwim represented one of the most concrete links he had with his own idealized version of prewar Poland.” He believes it is likely that Weinberg encountered Tuwim in person during Weinberg’s time playing in the Warsaw cabarets.

---

88 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 111.
Tuwim was born to an assimilated Jewish family in Łódź, and he eventually settled in Warsaw. Jewish scholar Avraham Milgram remarks that Tuwim identified as a “Polonized Jew, the ‘Jew-Pole.’”\(^{90}\) This resonates with how Weinberg felt inextricably connected to both aspects of his heritage. When the war struck, Tuwim fled to Paris with the support of the Polish legation. He joined his sister there; his father had passed away years before. Tuwim’s mother Adela, however, remained behind, and Tuwim remained tormented over her well-being. Tuwim fostered a deep connection with his mother. When his father passed away in 1935, the 64-year-old Adela moved from Łódź to Warsaw to be near Tuwim and his sister. Tuwim’s father was distant, showing little interest in his children, but Adela was utterly devoted to them. She was the one to introduce Tuwim to the theater; “she, who taught me poetry. She read to me the most beautiful Polish poems even before I knew how to read. If I became a poet, it is thanks to her.”\(^{91}\)

However, when Tuwim’s father died, Adela fell into a deep depression, nearly committing suicide. Her persisting fragile health devastated Tuwim, and Adela was ultimately admitted to a mental hospital in Otwock. For this reason, she remained in Poland when Tuwim and his sister left. Tragically, in 1940 the Nazis converted Otwock to a ghetto, and on August 19 of that year, the Nazis liquidated the ghetto.\(^{92}\) They murdered the Jewish patients in the sanatorium, and Tuwim later learned that the Nazis shot Adela and threw her body off a balcony. When Tuwim returned to Poland years later, he exhumed her body and moved it to their family tomb, in a Jewish cemetery in Łódź.\(^{93}\) In his poem “Matka,” Tuwim commemorates Adela.\(^{94}\)

---


\(^{91}\) Milgram, “Julian Tuwim,” 63, 71, 76.

\(^{92}\) Milgram, “Julian Tuwim,” 76-77.


The translated text of the poem, originally in Polish, is as follows:95

I:
At a Łódź cemetery,
The Jewish one,
The Polish grave of my mother,
My Jewish mother.

The grave of my Polish Mother,
My Jewish Mother,
Whom I brought from the banks of the Vistula River,
To the banks of industrial Łodka.

A boulder smashed the grave,
While on a pale stone,
Lay some laurel leaves,
Fallen from a birch.

And when a sunny breeze,
Plays with their goldenness
The leaves arrange themselves
Into Polonia, into Komandoria

II:
A fascist shot her,
Just as she was thinking of me,
A fascist shot her,
When she was missing me

He loaded a round and killed that longing
Started loading again
So that later… – but then
There was nothing left to kill

He shot through the maternal world
Two caressing syllables
He threw the corpse out of the window
Onto the holy cobblestones of Otwock.

Remember, my dear daughter!
Remind us, my future grandson!
The word was fulfilled:
“The Ideal reached the cobblestones”.

I gathered her up from the field of glory  
I returned it to Mother Earth,  
But the corpse bearing my name,  
Is laying there to this day.

Though Weinberg’s own family, including his mother Sara, was indeed imprisoned in Łódź before their terminal destination in Trawniki, it is not likely Weinberg was thinking of Sara during this movement. Weinberg first attempted to discover the fate of his family during his time in Tashkent. By sheer chance, in the summer of 1942, Weinberg encountered Polish-Jewish trumpeter Eddy (Ady) Rosner in Tashkent, whom he had known from the pre-war Warsaw music scene. Rosner revealed that he had kept in contact with Shmuel after Weinberg’s departure. He divulged that Weinberg’s parents and sister had been taken from Warsaw by train, but was unable to provide dates, nor details of their fate beyond this point.96 This may be the reason Weinberg would mention enigmatically for many years that his family was murdered in the Warsaw Ghetto. Recall that Weinberg did not confirm that they in fact were deported to the Łódź ghetto and the Trawniki concentration camp in 1943 until his sole return visit to Poland in 1966, one year after Symphony No. 8 was composed.97 Weinberg’s “Matka” is therefore most likely a more universal lament for the lost Poland of Weinberg’s memory, for all the mothers and sons, parents and children, that were murdered in his homeland.

The movement opens with the chorale, the chords presented nearly inaudibly in the strings in a simple progression, almost dreamily, and without any ornaments. As soon as the progression is complete, the tenor soloist enters, singing over the ostinato string chorale for the majority of the poem. The movement concludes with the chorale sung despondently one more time in the strings and low brass, punctuated by celesta and finally, once, with the deep,

disquieting rumble of percussion. For the most part, each stanza corresponds to one repetition of the chorale, and each line is a chord in the chorale. Deviations to this pattern occur in the third, fifth, sixth, and eighth stanzas.

The first stanza takes us to a cemetery in Łódź, to the grave of the narrator’s mother, each line punctuated by the chorale (FIGURE 40).

\[\text{FIGURE 40: Symphony No. 8, R82, mm. 9-12}\]

Polish and Jewish identities are dually emphasized. The second stanza is essentially a musical copy of the first, with only a minor deviation in the tenor’s melody on the final chord of the chorale. Polish linguist Agnieszka Lazorczyk points out double meanings of phrases throughout this stanza. In the Polish source text, Tuwim pens “Matka Polka” rather than “polska matka” at the end of the first line to indicate “Polish Mother” as opposed to the more generic “Polish mother.” This is an idiom in the Polish language for “a woman who devoted her entire life to the family and raising children in the spirit of traditional and patriotic values.”

On the next line, Tuwim goes on to indicate “Jewish Mother” (“Matki Żydówki”) rather than “Jewish mother” (“Matki żydówki”). Lazorczyk did not mention any particular significance of this phrase in Polish, but in Jewish religion and culture the concept of the “Jewish mother” is a well-known icon. Judaism is passed down through the mother, so she ensures the continuity of

---

Jewish heritage. In this sense, she is a symbol of the Jewish people at large. During Weinberg’s and Tuwim’s lifetime, the symbol of the “Jewish mother” culturally was the Yiddish **Figure Yiddishe Mama**, a “balabusta, a sentimentalized figure, a good mother and homemaker, known for her strength and creativity, entrepreneurialism and hard work, domestic miracles and moral force,” all with exceedingly positive connotations. She was a symbol of the Old World, imbuing a deep sense of nostalgia and yearning.\(^99\) In this sense, Tuwim extends the notion of the Polish Jewish mother beyond his own family, and universalizes her image to represent both the broader Jewish people and the national spirit of his homeland, Poland. Furthermore, the final line of second stanza appears to refer to Tuwim’s own journey to move his mother’s body to their Jewish family grave in Łódź. However, linguist Agnieszka Lazorczyk notes Tuwim plays with the name of the city, Łódź, to indicate a figurative journey. In English, łódź translates to “boat,” and the diminutive łódka means “little boat.” Lazorczyk points out that pre-war Łódź was only 35% Jewish, and so Tuwim’s journey likely alludes to his experiencing the tragedy of the demolished Jewish population left in the city after the massacre.\(^100\) The symbols of the Polish Mother and the Jewish Mother are thus consistent with the interpretation that Weinberg’s “Matka” grieves not for a specific person, but for the entire murdered Jewish community and the beloved Poland of this youth.

In the third stanza, the orchestra departs for the first time from the chorale (**Figure 41**).

---


\(^{100}\) Ilana Shapiro, Interview with Dr. Agnieszka Lazorczyk, February 4, 2022.
Each line of the stanza still corresponds to a chord, the first two of which are F# major and F# minor. Though the third chord plays with the neighbor tone, G#, of its chordal third A#, it remains essentially in F# minor. The fourth chord, however, makes a significant harmonic departure to a C minor seventh chord, with the chordal third (Eb) present in the tenor only. This leads immediately into the first chord of the chorale, the familiar F minor triad, for the fourth stanza in the following measure in a $v^{\text{min7}}$-i progression. Overall, Weinberg appears to be toying chromatically with the first chord of the chorale throughout the third stanza. As he does so, the text of the poem depicts the violent image of the iconic Polish Jewish mother’s grave decimated by a boulder, while, preternaturally, as though oblivious to the violence, a birch tree peacefully sheds its leaves onto a pale, empty stone.

The metaphor of the fallen leaves continues in the fourth stanza, which musically is identical to the first two as the tenor once more sings to the chorale. The leaves, on the blank stone from the previous stanza, form into “Polonia” and “Komandoria.” “Polonia” is a national symbol of Poland, referring specifically to the Poles living outside Poland that nonetheless “cultivate Polish traditions, are interested in Polish culture and show understanding for Polish matters.”101 It is less clear to me what Komandoria signifies,

beyond that it is a neighborhood in western Poland. In any case, the “sunny breeze” shaping “golden,” “laurel” leaves into Polish symbols on a pale, blank stone appears to be a metaphor for birth of a new, beautiful Poland, one untouched by the history of violence that the boulder and the grave signify. This again speaks to Weinberg’s commemoration and yearning for his birthplace throughout the movement and conveys hope that his country will be born anew.

Again, the fifth stanza departs from the chorale. The first line of the stanza is backed by an A major chord, with the choral fifth implied in the tenor, and the second line transitions to what initially appears to be an A minor chord that briefly ventures to and returns from Bbsus2. However, the D# in the tenor also alludes to the klezmer Mi Sheberach mode starting on A. Recall that this is a Western minor scale with raised scale degrees four and six. This is followed by a Cmaj7 chord, with G, the choral fifth, solely in the tenor. Finally, an Fmaj7 chord closes the stanza. The first A minor and third Cmaj7 chords, respectively, accompany the repeated line “A fascist shot her.” The second A minor chord, enhanced by the potential use of the Mi Sheberach mode in the tenor, punctuates “Just as she was thinking of me,” and the Fmaj7 chord backs “When she was missing me” (FIGURE 42).

![Figure 42: Symphony No. 8, R83, mm. 5-9](image)

This stanza delivers Tuwim’s bottomless grief for his mother, as he imagines her thinking of her beloved son as the Nazis shot her on the balcony in Otwock. Weinberg’s possible
use of the Mi Sheberach mode imbues this line with potential Jewish overtones, making the line utterly personal yet simultaneously representative of the larger tragedy. Might he have been imaging his own mother, whose fate he had not yet confirmed? It is very possible, though we will never know for certain.

Stanza 6 opens on an Fmin7 chord and moves to D minor for the following line as the tenor grows ever more passionate with “He loaded a round and killed that longing / Started loading again.” Nothing will ever be enough for Nazis, the epitome of evil. They murder the yearning of the son for his mother, and even then reach for more violence. The phrase climaxes on the third line, with a mournful wail of “So that later…” as the orchestra lands on a dissonant chord with an augmented sixth sonority imbued by the F# and Ab. This morphs into an E minor chord. The orchestra repeats both the discordant, augmented sixth-sounding chord and the E minor chord as the horn echoes the tenor, punctuating his exclamatory words, and the tenor finally sighs “– but then” almost as an afterthought. “There was nothing left to kill” falls away into nothing atop a chromatic neighboring chord of E minor. This chord has the notes of a C#sus2 or G#sus4 chord, but D# is in the bass (FIGURE 43).

As the poem and the musical setting convey, the Nazis murdered and murdered until no life remained. They tore away love and humanity until all that remained was emptiness and memory.
With this, the chorale returns, subdued and aching as the tenor mourns the mother, whose corpse the Nazis tossed carelessly onto the city streets. This is a direct allusion to the fate of Tuwim’s mother, but Tuwim’s use of “maternal world” also universalizes the loss to all the mothers who fell in the massacre and speaks to the maternal qualities that died along with the body. Safety, tenderness, and loving devotion are gone, and their corpse rots on the “holy cobblestones” of the Polish city as the child is left alone. The “holy cobblestones” again is a national tribute to the Poland of before, the “holy” nation that fell to the Nazis just as the people did. A mournful horn echoes a fragment of the tenor’s line, and the chorale departs once more for the fifth stanza.

This stanza is the high point of the movement, peaking in both dynamics and intensity. Harmonically and melodically, it is essentially identical to the third stanza in Figure 41 except for some rhythmic alterations. The tenor stresses “Remember, my dear daughter! / Remind us, my future grandson!” In the aftermath of the violence, we must never forget. The son, the child, is the keeper of the mother’s memory, of the stories of all the families who were murdered. With “The word was fulfilled: / ‘The Ideal reached the cobblestones,’” the tenor grows increasingly agitated and passionate, with the movement’s forte climax at “The Ideal reached the cobblestones.” As Lazoreczyk notes, the final line is a quote from C.K. Norwid’s poem “Chopin’s piano.” Jerome Rothenberg’s and Arie Galles’ English translation of Norwid’s poem renders this line as “The Ideal – now brought low on the pavement.”102 “Chopin’s Piano” was inspired by events from the 1863 January Uprising, in which the Polish people rebelled against the

occupying Russian government. In the ensuing conflict, the Russians destroyed Zamoyski Palace, which housed Frederic Chopin’s piano. The Russians threw it onto the pavement, thus inspiring the line from Norwid’s poem.103 More deeply, the destruction of the piano symbolizes the decimation of Chopin’s genius musicality as well as the expression of Polish national values. However, the demolition of the physical instrument does not equate with the death of the intangible ideas developed in Chopin’s music. Norwid believed that all art is inherently immortal, and so Chopin’s music can never truly be destroyed.104 Tuwim’s use of this line likely parallels this metaphor. The mother has fallen, murdered on the pavement, just as Chopin’s piano lay broken on the streets. Yet, just as the piano embodies the essence of Chopin’s music, so does the mother’s soul survive eternally. The Nazis may have taken her body, but they can never touch her spirit and the memory that persists with the ones that loved her. Thus, the murderers can never truly prevail, and the lonely mourning children become the porters of her memory.

The chorale returns for the closing verse. The tenor sighs out the final words, of the son gathering the mother to give her a fitting burial. After he returns her body to the earth, the tenor weeps “But the corpse bearing my name / Is laying there to this day” to the final two chords of the chorale. The corpse bears “my name,” the name of the son, not the mother. A part of the child has died along with the mother and remains with her infinitely in her final resting place. The children are forever witness to the atrocities committed to the parents. These evil acts are marked upon them eternally, to be passed down for generations, “to this day.” As the tenor fades

into silence, a short, subdued interlude follows in the strings and horns before the chorale returns, alone, one last time. An eerie, ethereal celesta taps out a fragment of the tenor’s melody before failing and giving way to a low bassoon. “Matka” closes with distant rumble of percussion, as though gunshots heard faintly from far away.

The chorale is thus witness to the entire depravity. A grieving mother is murdered by the Nazis as her mind is filled with her son at his grave in Łódź. We are beseeched to remember the children, to remember the parents, to remember the perfection of the souls that were destroyed. Simultaneously, we grieve for the glorious Poland that lives on solely in memory, and yearn for the resurrection of the mutilated nation, with all its beauty and spirit restored. The chorale is infused with this suffering, exuding the devastation of the metaphorical mother-son (or, more generally, parent-child) tragedy.

_Diary of Love, Op. 87 (1965)_

Written shortly after Symphony No. 8, Weinberg dedicated _Diary of Love_ to the “Children of Auschwitz” (FIGURE 44).

From Weinberg’s note on the score, it appears the cantata was specifically composed from September 6 to 8, 1965 in Moscow (FIGURE 45).
The cantata draws from texts by Stanisław Wygodzki (1907-1992), from his 33-poem collection of the same name (Pamiętnik miłośc). Like Weinberg, Wygodzki was a Polish Jew whose family was murdered in a concentration camp. In Wygodzki’s case, his wife, four-year-old daughter, and extended family were killed in Auschwitz in 1943. The poems in Diary of Love acutely depict the grief of the survivor, questioning why them, why not another. This was a burden Weinberg and Wygodzki shared. Wygodzki himself is the lyrical subject of the poems, which are an expression of the trauma he endured losing his entire family in the camps while suffering as prisoner himself. The poems cry out Wygodzki’s “pain, despair, lack of consent for the death of his loved ones and the loneliness resulting from his experience,” and are an aspect of his self-proclaimed identity as “a porter of memory.” They are his diary of love for those he has lost, his diary of remembering and a testimony to the horror. In a way, this is Wygodzki’s own form of saying Kaddish. In an interview, he revealed that “I could only store these poems in my mind … it was a final conversation with my wife, with my daughter, with my parents—I did not write poems, I only talked to the victims of murder one last time—it was a spontaneous and final conversation with those I loved most.” Grieving the death of one’s loved ones – in particular, Wygodzki’s cherished daughter – are central elements of the work. After its publication, Wygodzki’s daughter went on to become a larger symbol of the multitudes of Jewish children murdered in the camps. Weinberg drew upon five of Wygodzki’s poems for the cantata. In

109 A recording of Diary of Love can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OecsWsH4yjU
Weinberg’s Polish text essentially matches Wygodzki’s original poems. Its English translation is as follows:\textsuperscript{110}

\textit{1st section (Adagio).}

\textit{Choir: Mothers}

\textit{Tenor}: One day I will yet write about you
One day I will yet return to you
But now, I dedicate to you this silence
which you gave to me, humming already long ago

Yet I do not sing songs for you
I am unable to. I no longer know how.
Let it be the trees bent over Auschwitz that sigh for you with their muffled hum.

The only thing I can still do is float over you belatedly while sobbing
and turn into the night of your ashes -
into the hum, the darkness and the forest

\textit{2nd section (Allegretto).}

\textit{Choir: Daughters}

\textit{Tenor}: “A locomotive is standing at the station,
heavy, enormous, and dripping with perspiration…”
And there was a girl, a little girl
with a poem by Tuwim.

She was tiny like a slender sapling –
little birch, little fir, young apple.
A little girl with a green tune
just\textsuperscript{111} like a meadow.

\textsuperscript{110} Polish-English translation by Dr. Agnieszka Lazorczyk and Dr. Magdalena Maczynska, made possible by Dr. Lazorczyk’s transcription from the original manuscript.

\textsuperscript{111} Weinberg adds this word.
And when she heard the whistle of locomotives, 
it was likely only from afar. 
A little girl – a musical theme 
with a string of beads.

And then the little girl left 
in a dark rail car, 
but there was no mention of her in Tuwim’s poem.

And there was no mention of those chimneys 
that blow smoke 
as the little girl arrives 
in Auschwitz.

And there was no mention of the mother or me, 
when the chug of wheels went quiet, 
and the little girl they handed over to flames 
is my daughter.

3rd section (Lento). 
Choir: To Father

Tenor: When my father was leaving for his final journey 
when he was leaving with my mother and his two sons 
He must have looked very stern, with a wrinkle on his forehead 
as always,

Choir: always

Tenor: But he certainly didn’t know that I would be the only one left 
to bear witness to his contemplation of the matter of life and death 
to bear witness to the hunger of the heart 
to the pain of silent suffering,

Choir: suffering

Tenor: of which I cannot speak, 
of which one need not speak.

it is as if, while dying, he commended me 
from the gas chamber: 
live, be silent, and suffer.

4th section (Andante).

112 These lines were removed from the original Wygodzki here: “Gray, bent over, as when he read for the last time / The books of Paul de Kruif and the poems of Bialik.” The second repetition of “always” is Weinberg’s addition.
**Choir: To Wife**

**Tenor:** Do not tell me verses about a dark rail car
Do not tell me verses about a locomotive;
Feet get so cold, hands get so cold
in the camp.

Don’t tell me verses, instead be quiet
Instead, keep silent and let me rest
I can still see you, I can still breathe
the wheels are still turning.

Tell me instead about Luminal\(^{113}\)
whether it’s hard to wake up once I fall asleep
and when I’m all in flames, when they burn me
will I go out quickly?

Instead, tell me more about the child
Look how stuffy it is in this rail car
Are you sure it won’t cry before it burns?

**Choir:** (*) The urn will be made of fired native clay
from Poland, from my country.
My parents’ ashes remain inside it

**Tenor:** and those of my brothers, daughter and wife.

**Choir:** The urn will be ordinary, like a jug
with a small lid, and not like a vase
so the thick fog of gas can stay inside it

**Tenor:** grey-blue like early morning
like a painful night

**Choir:** my parents’ ashes in there remain.\(^{114}\)

Bolded or italicized words are headers that are not sung. The first three sections of the cantata use Wygodzki’s poems “To My Mother,” “Locomotive,” and “To My Father,” respectively. The fourth section comprises two poems: “Wife” and “Urn,” which begins at the (*) asterisk above.

---

\(^{113}\) Luminol was a brand of the barbiturate phenobarbital.

\(^{114}\) Weinberg added this line.
Weinberg’s Russian text departs in significantly from the Polish in the second and fourth sections. The first section is identical, and the only alteration in the third is “He must have looked very stern, with a wrinkle on his forehead” becomes “He must have looked very stern” in the Russian text. The English translations of the second and fourth sections from the Russian are as follows, with the most significant translation differences noted in the footnotes.115

2nd section (Allegretto).

Choir: Daughters

Tenor: “This colossal train has arrived at the station, Here it stands, as if choking in smoke…” This is what the baby-girl read in Tuwim's book.

The train cars were rushing in Tuwim's book towards the sea and the branches of magnolias.
In this magical book,
In the book, green as a field.

Suddenly she heard the signal of the locomotive, the real signal. The colossal train arrived at the station, beautiful and hissing.116

Now the baby-girl is leaving in the dark traincar, There is not a word about her in Tuwim's book.

There is nothing in this book about the chimneys, tall as the towers, Nothing about how the girl was taken away to the horror of Auschwitz.

Choir: To the horrible Auschwitz.

Tenor: Nothing about the train wheels that went silent, Nothing about her mother, not a line. And that baby-girl, thrown into the flame – that is my daughter.

4th section (Andante).

Choir: Wives

Tenor: Do not recite me poems about dark boxcars Do not recite me poems about locomotives

115 Russian-English translation by Dr. Lenny Fukshansky.
116 The previous six lines have the most significant translation differences.
When hands and feet are freezing in the camp.

Do not recite me poems, be quiet rather
Rather be silent and let me rest
I can still see you, for my heart is not silent.\(^{117}\)
Such a long journey.

Why don't you tell me of a sleeping potion,
That would not let me wake in a turbulent night,
If I flare up in black flames, will I go out quickly?

Why don't you tell me of our daughter.
It is so stuffy in this dark boxcar.
Is there hope that she won't cry as she is burning?\(^{118}\)

*Choir:* This urn will be made of fired clay
Of native soil, from Poland, my country
In it, the ashes of the parents continue to live.\(^{119}\)

*Tenor:* My daughter, brother, sister, and wife.

*Choir:* The urn will be simple, like a jug
With a small lid, and not like a vase
So that it can hold a thick mist of gas

*Tenor:* Painful as night and gray like dawn.

*Choir:* In it, the ashes of the parents continue to live.

It is critical to note that in Weinberg’s original manuscript, he attributes the Polish-Russian translation to his then-wife, Natalia Vovsi Mikhoels (FIGURE 47).

**FIGURE 47:** Weinberg’s Translation Dedication in *Diary of Love*\(^{120}\)

More clearly, this says “перевод Натальи Вовси,” or “translation Natalia Vovsi.” It was somewhat baffling to me that Vovsi-Mikhoels translated the poems, as I could not find any

---

\(^{117}\) “I can still breathe” becomes “my heart is not silent” in the Russian.

\(^{118}\) In this stanza, the original Polish has “child,” whereas the Russian specifically says “daughter.”

\(^{119}\) Here and in the last line, “remain” becomes “continue to live” in the Russian.

\(^{120}\) Study score made possible by the permission of Subito Music, the American subsidiary of Peermusic Classical in Germany.
source confirming she spoke Polish, let alone well enough to translate poetry. In any case, it is highly possible that Weinberg himself made the alterations discussed above in the Russian to her base translation. Even if he did not, he certainly must have been aware of every change, as the score is in Weinberg’s hand and he was fluent and literate in both languages. Thus, the alterations can be assumed to have been intentional. Finally, from the 33 poems in Wygodzki’s collection, Weinberg intriguingly chose poems for mother, daughter, father, and wife. Recall that Weinberg lost his mother, father, and sister in the camps. It is possible to interpret that each of these poems describes one of them: Sara, his mother, wife to his father, Shmuel, whose daughter, Esther, was Weinberg’s beloved sister.

The cantata opens with the chorale, sung twice in the slow, subdued strings (Figure 48).

![Figure 48: Diary of Love, mm. 0-11](image)

The boys’ choir enters on the final chord of the second statement of the chorale, announcing the first section (“Mothers,” Adagio). The final syllable of the word lands on the first chord of a third lament of chorale. However, rather than continue, the strings land consonantly on G major (Figure 49).

![Figure 49: Diary of Love, mm. 12-15](image)
The tenor soloist then enters with the text of “To My Mother.” Weinberg sets it to a calm, hymnal melody that to me is reminiscent of an Ashkenazi *nigun*, a wordless song for spiritual elevation used by the Hasidim in Europe (Figure 50).

![Figure 50: Diary of Love, R1, mm. 1-8](image_url)

This same melody will repeat, though with slight variations, for each stanza of “Mothers.” Notice that in mm. 5-7 of Figure 50, the tenor is locally in the key of A, which is solidified by the repeated A’s in the beginning of m. 7. The G# in m. 4 implies A major rather than A minor. The D# can therefore be seen as a Lydian fourth, establishing the shadows of Polish folksong and the connection to Weinberg’s homeland from the beginning. The Lydian fourth will continue to appear throughout the section, continuing to echo Weinberg’s past. The passage in Figure 50 corresponds to the lines “But now, I dedicate to you this silence / which you gave to me, humming already long ago.” It is as though through the musical allusion to Poland, Weinberg is borrowing Wygodzki’s words to overlay his own memories of the time, “long ago,” when his mother hummed to him as a child in the peaceful warmth of their house in Warsaw. Underlying the meditative melody is an infinite pool of loneliness and yearning. Even as the tenor continues, he proclaims that he is unable to, “Yet I do not sing songs for you / I am unable to. I no longer know how.” Grief has clouded his memory, and his lament springs from pure emotion.
At the same time, Polish musical overtones mingle with Jewish melodies with the introduction of the Ukrainian Dorian klezmer mode. Recalling that alto flute is transposed to the key of G, the mode jumps out with its distinctive augmented second from concert G#-F and raised submediant (i.e. concert B♭) (FIGURE 51).

![FIGURE 51: Diary of Love, R1, mm. 9-10](image)

The mode is built on concert D. However, the scale has been altered slightly, as we would expect concert E♭ rather than Eb in the second measure of FIGURE 51. We could interpret this second measure as a chromatic alteration of the first, and not part of the scale. (This measure was included in FIGURE 51 as the entire motive will reappear throughout the cantata.) The phrase appears solely on alto flute until the end of the section, when the tenor finally picks it up twice with “into the hum, the darkness and the forest” (FIGURE 52).

![FIGURE 52: Diary of Love, R3, mm. 9-10](image)

The tenor, with his Jewish harmonies, is grasping for the soul of the mother, her hum and the night of her ashes from the previous line, yearning to melt into that intangible essence that eternally binds together their love. His lament then melts into the chorale, once again sighed in the strings. On the third chord, the boys’ choir re-enters with the title of the second section: “Daughters” (FIGURE 53).
Many of the poems in Wygodzki’s volume *Diary of Love* are about his daughter. Weinberg’s choice of “Locomotive” as the text for “Daughters” is particularly significant, as this poem is a retelling of none other than Julian Tuwim’s famous children’s poem of the same name.\(^{121}\) Indeed, Wygodzki directly quotes Tuwim in the opening lines. Tuwim’s poem is cheerful and comical, depicting a massive locomotive rolling to some unknown destination, with forty wagons carrying people and animals. Wygodzki contorts the story into a dark mirror of the original. While the train and the children remain, their journey is not a meandering, sunny path, but rather a dark voyage into death in Auschwitz. Beyond establishing the connection to Poland through Tuwim, Wygodzki’s “Locomotive” also acutely emits the intense grief and guilt of the survivor. Unlike most Jews deported to the camps, many Polish Jews knew exactly what fate awaited them on the way to Auschwitz. Utterly out of options, in order to save himself and his family from the gas chambers, Wygodzki and his wife and daughter attempted suicide on the train by ingesting phenobarbital. The attempt failed only for Wygodzki, and for the rest of his life he sunk into “a mere shadow of fear and sorrow.”\(^{122}\) Wygodzki’s deeply personal and everlasting trauma as the sole, random survivor is imbued in the poem. By using “Locomotive” for the section titled “Daughters,” Weinberg seems to convey his own grief and guilt as the only survivor of his family through his own set of terrible, arbitrary circumstances. His choice of the poem is particularly significant given that all Weinberg knew for certain in 1965 was Eddy

---

\(^{121}\) An English translation of Tuwim’s “Locomotive” can be viewed here: [https://allpoetry.com/The-Locomotive](https://allpoetry.com/The-Locomotive)

\(^{122}\) Gliński, “The Crash of Silence on Silence.”
Rosner’s confirmation in 1942 that Weinberg’s family had been sent from Warsaw on a train, never to be seen again.

In the cantata, this section opens with the tenor soloist accompanied by pizzicato strings in a bouncy melody, as though conveying the movement of the locomotive from Wygodzki’s poem (Figure 54).

The Lydian fourth permeates the entire section, even here from the very beginning as the tenor sings “A locomotive is standing at the station, heavy, enormous, and dripping with perspiration…”. In Figure 54, the local key is G major, and the Lydian fourth (i.e. the C#) is in every measure. It transports us to a train station in Poland, where the great locomotive rumbles ominously on Polish soil. This motive persists throughout the section, with three significant exceptions. In these cases, the rollicking melody is replaced with plaintive, ascending, lyrical cries from the tenor, which culminate in descending melismas heavily reminiscent of the Ashkenazi cantorial style. The initial melisma is in the last two lines of the first stanza “This is what the baby-girl read in Tuwim’s book,” and is spread over the last words, “in Tuwim’s book” (Figure 55).
The melancholy theme subsequently reappears, identically, in the last two lines of the second stanza: “In this magic book, / In the book, green as a field,” with the melisma emphasizing “as a field.” Both these lines were altered by Weinberg from the original. Together, the first two occurrences of the melisma conjure the otherworldly fantasy of the book with the vibrant meadows, a story that in Weinberg’s own words is pure “magic.”

Throughout this section, Weinberg frequently departs from Wygodzki’s Polish text that he transcribed on the top lines of the score. For instance, the material from Figure 55 is not the original Wygodzki. Weinberg replaces the second stanza, “She was tiny like a slender sapling – / little birch, little fir, young apple. / A little girl with a green tune / just like a meadow,” with “The train cars were rushing in Tuwim's book / Towards the sea and the branches of magnolias. / In this magical book, / In the book, green as a field.” The sweet, innocent image of the girl is eschewed to build up the otherworldly dreams she is immersed in through her book, through Tuwim’s train, before the horror. This magnifies the subsequent juxtaposition to Wygodzki’s deathly locomotive, with the locomotive’s “real signal” (a phrase that Weinberg added) in the third stanza that jars her back to grim reality. Indeed, the entire second stanza is very intentionally changed from “And when she heard the whistle of locomotives, / it was likely only from afar. / A little girl – a musical theme / with a string of beads” to “Suddenly she heard the signal of the locomotive, the real signal. / The colossal train arrived at the station, beautiful and hissing” (Figure 56).

![Figure 56: Diary of Love, R7, mm. 1-7](image)

The locomotive is no longer “far away” as in the Polish; instead, it is right here, tangible and horrible and close enough to touch. The little girl is wrenchen from Tuwim’s wonderous
fantasy and rushed away on the twisted echo of the train she reads of, to chimneys and flames and silence. Since, as I discussed previously, “Daughters” might specifically refer to Esther, this section may refer to those tragic circumstances in which Weinberg was separated from his own sister, as well as his family’s own subsequent horrific fate on that train out of Warsaw. The music speaks to the lifelong burden that Weinberg carries from those final moments with her. On that fateful day in Warsaw, Esther was supposed to board the locomotive into life with Weinberg. She did not, and instead she and Weinberg’s parents were later forced to board a different train, one into death at Trawniki. Weinberg’s train was the one from Tuwim’s poem; Esther’s was the one from Wygodzki’s.

The musical climax of this section begins with “Now the baby-girl is leaving in the dark traincar, / There is not a word about her in Tuwim's book” as the tenor and the orchestra swell in painful intensity (FIGURE 57).

The theme is inverted and transposed to C major, and Lydian fourth (now F#), remains omnipresent. The C-F# tritone is the harmonic center of the motive, imbuing it with disquiet. This same inverted theme repeats again for “There is nothing in this book about the chimneys, tall as the towers, / Nothing about how the girl was taken away to the horror of Auschwitz.” The little girl has been violently torn from the fantasy, shoved into the darkness of the locomotive and to a landscape of chimneys and despair. The possible image of Esther is overlayed. The
Poland of her childhood, the years she shared with Weinberg, float distantly in the land of dreams and memories and the magic of Tuwim’s fantasy. All that remains is the horror, driven by the sinister locomotive that smothered the light. Finally, achingly, the weeping motive re-appears one last time at the end of the section, in the closing line of the poem: “And that baby-girl, thrown into the flame -- that is my daughter.” The melisma is concentrated on a singular word, “is.” It draws on, ascending once more and down again, over twice the length of the previous two melismas. The tenor pauses, and then, bare without the orchestra, utters the singular words “my” and “daughter,” with another weighted silence between them (FIGURE 58).

![Figure 58: Diary of Love, R10, mm. 6-13](image)

With scarcely a pause, as the daughter is lost and the tenor mourns, the chorale re-enters for a fourth time (FIGURE 59).

![Figure 59: Diary of Love, R10, mm. 14-23](image)

Like the previous sections, the refrain of the chorale after “Daughters” is joined by the boys’ choir announcing the third section, “Fathers.” This section is a prolonged lament from the tenor, backed lyrically by the orchestra (FIGURE 60).
The theme from Figure 60 repeats several times until we arrive at “He must have looked very stern, as always” (Figure 61).

The Ukrainian Dorian scale has returned in a direct quote (albeit transposed) of the motive from “Mothers” in Figure 51. Father and mother are bound together in the music. Furthermore, this is the first time a direct Polish or Jewish music reference has appeared in “Fathers.” Through the allusion to the klezmer mode, the father in the cantata gains Jewish identity, and a possible connection to Weinberg’s own father Shmuel.

In the lines directly following the choir’s subsequent echo of “always,” the theme from Figure 60 returns, the section growing in intensity throughout “But he probably could not know that I would remain alone / To bear witness to his reflections on the questions of life and death. / To bear witness to the heart’s hunger!” It peaks dynamically at “To bear witness to the heart’s hunger!” before falling away again. If we consider the interpretation that Weinberg, like Wygodzki, is communicating with his own father here, the emphasis Weinberg places on this final line offers an intimate and heart wrenching glimpse into irreparable hole his father’s death
left in his heart. Shmuel was Weinberg’s first music teacher, and they fostered a close and loving relationship. After Shmuel was killed, Weinberg was indeed left alone to ponder his survival and his family’s murder, to bear witness to the unending pain imprinted upon his heart. Following this, a solo cello fades in with fragment of the Ukrainian Dorian scale built on C (FIGURE 62).

![Figure 62: Diary of Love, R13, mm. 8](image)

The scale is characterized by the Eb (minor third) and F# (augmented fourth), giving it the trademark klezmer augmented second interval. Immediately after, the chorale emerges in the strings, as the tenor simultaneously mourns “As if, dying, he commanded me, from the gas chamber” (FIGURE 63).

![Figure 63: Diary of Love, R14, mm. 1-4](image)

This is the first time the chorale has not appeared alone in the cantata, contrasting with its previous, solo presentation between sections. The chorale is enmeshed with the intensity of the father’s imagined dying command, with his last words for his child, but also with the impossible grief of the survivor who conjures the scene in his anguished fantasies. The suffering of the metaphorical parent and child from Symphony No. 8 has transformed into something deeply personal and painfully intimate. Above the chorale, the tenor’s line is again the transposed quote
from “Mothers” in Figure 51. It is repeated twice in the first three measures of Figure 63, with
the Ukrainian Dorian scale now built on F rather than D. The spirit of the mother returns in the
music as the father exhales his final lament. The chorale is thus witness to the unfailing bond
between father and mother, a bond potentially between Shmuel and Sara.

The father whispers the rest of his line in Figure 64, which is again in the Ukrainian
Dorian mode, this time on E (note the C# in the final measure as the requisite raised
submediant).

“Live, be silent, and suffer,” sighs the father, voice fading away. In the acute grief that
Wygodzki carried with him all his life, he imagines his father beseeching him to continue to live,
to seal the pain into silence in his heart and carry it within him, mutely and eternally. It reflects
the trauma that festers within him. In borrowing Wygodzki’s words and infusing theme with
Jewish harmonies, Weinberg overlays the ache of his own shattered heart as the sole survivor.
Solo, faltering phrases from the alto flute fill the resulting silence, and the boys’ choir joins them
to proclaim the final section: “Wives.”

The previous sections are poems for mother, father, and daughter, but the text for this
section is not for a wife. Instead, it is from the perspective of Wygodzki’s wife, as he imagines
her thoughts in the horrific moment of their collective suicide attempt in their final bid to avoid
the gas chambers. Rather than a survivor’s tribute to or memory of a loved one, it is a step back
into the immediacy of the horror. It is a conversation, a message from his wife, that played out in
Wygodzki’s tortured imagination as he wrote the poem in the aftermath of his unintentional
survival and their murder. The tenor enters with a fluid, lamenting melody, a slow and steady refrain that repeats in the first, second, and fourth stanzas (Figure 65).

However, in third stanza, the tenor departs from the subdued, weeping quality to passionately lament “Why don't you tell me of a sleeping potion, / That would not let me wake in a turbulent night, / If I flare up in black flames, will I go out quickly?” The phrase peaks at “flare up” and “flames,” before sighing, as if in an afterthought “will I go out quickly?” (Figure 66).

The final stanza, closing with “Is there hope that she won't cry as she is burning?” returns to the section’s opening weeping refrain. In this final section, Weinberg has returned to the theme of the little girl and the train. Now, instead of watching from afar as the little girl is taken by the deathly train, we are beside her on the wagon as it hurtles towards the flames. Recall now that this poem is from perspective of the wife/mother. The conjecture that Weinberg thought of his own family as he chose this poem is supported by his alterations of Wygodzki’s original poem beginning on the second line of the second stanza. In particular, Weinberg changed the Polish writing on top of the line (i.e. the original Wygodzki) from “I still see you, I am still breathing” to “I can still see you, for my heart is not silent” in the Russian writing beneath it (Figure 67).
Wygodzki’s original line speaks to the fact that his wife is still alive – that the phenobarbital has not yet taken them. However, in Weinberg’s version, the wife/mother can still “see” her family, can still “see” Shmuel, Esther, and Mieczysław, not because she is dead or alive, but because they are forever imprinted upon her heart. Death may steal the breath, but the memories of the heart are forever beyond its reach. This speaks to a bond that transcends the physical, a bond that endures in a love beyond time. This translation alteration also appears to be a direct response to the father’s imagined command from the first stanza “live, be silent, and suffer.” Weinberg’s heart is not silent. He may live and suffer, but the pain of his family’s memory leaps from his soul to his music, immortalizing their spirits. Recall that Weinberg rarely spoke of his family, struggling to “talk about this painful topic for him, to remember his parents and sister, who all died in the Trawniki concentration camp.”¹²³ Music comes in when voice fails, giving life to the stories in his mind that he would whisper to his daughter Victoria as “before bedtime fairy tales, the main characters of which were the girl Esti, his sister, and the boy Metek, himself.”¹²⁴

At this point, Wygodzki’s poem “Wife” has concluded, but this is not the end of the cantata. The fourth section continues as the tenor falls silent and the oboe picks up the melody. Soon, the phrase breaks down, oboe and flute both now falling away in incomplete motives, before the strings fade in uneasily with a G major chord that is unsettled with an additional Ab. The thread of dissonance continues as the boys’ choir enters hauntingly with Wygodzki’s “Urn”

¹²³ Gorfinkle, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg.”
¹²⁴ Blumina, “Interview with the Daughter of Moses Weinberg.”
in precisely the same melody as the opening section, “Mothers.” The only difference is the uneasy discord that initially underlies the melody, but the Ab soon resolves to a true, consonant G major chord that mirrors the beginning of “Mothers” (Figure 68).

![Figure 68: Diary of Love, R19, m. 13 – R20, m. 6](image)

In this way, the sections “Wives” and “Mothers” are intertwined, reinforcing the conjecture that the cantata really is a memory of three people: mother, daughter, father. Sara, Esther, Shmuel.

In “Urn,” the ashes of the deceased loved ones lie together in a single vessel. In turn, this urn will be able to “concentrate [Wygodzki’s] lament upon itself.”\(^{125}\) In this way “Urn” ties together all the previous poems in the cantata, poems that in a sense are sung as prayers, binding together the memories of the loved ones that are lost. Weinberg goes on to alter the third line of “Urn” from “In it are lodged the ashes of my parents” in the Polish to “In it, the ashes of the parents continue to live” in the Russian text. The next line is given over to the tenor, who overlaps with the end of the choir’s phrase to lament “My daughter, brother, sister, and wife” (Figure 69).

![Figure 69: Diary of Love, R20, mm. 7-8](image)

\(^{125}\) Szabłowska-Zaremba, “Diary of Love,” 144.
Notably, Weinberg’s Polish writing (the original Wygodzki) does not include the word “sister.” One can clearly see the Russian word “сестра” added between the measures in FIGURE 69. Weinberg had a sister; Wygodzki did not. This further supports the conjecture the cantata alludes to Esther. Furthermore, in his 1969 article “My Word to Polish Friends” commemorating the 25th anniversary of Polish liberation by the USSR, Weinberg himself pens “In the long-suffering Polish land, the ashes of my father, my mother and my sister, who were killed by fascist executioners during the Second World War, are buried.” A possible interpretation of this is that though the ashes of Weinberg’s family are buried in Poland, they survive eternally in the memories suspended in the urn. Notably, however, unlike when writing this article, Weinberg did not receive confirmation of his family’s fate in Trawniki until the year after composing the cantata. All he knew was that they were sent from Warsaw by train and perished sometime after that. Weinberg was however aware of the horrific fate that awaited so many Jews, like Wygodzki’s own family, in the ovens. It is therefore extremely likely that even in 1965 he believed the “ashes of my father, my mother and my sister” lay on Polish soil.

After a brief interlude in the strings and flute, the choir re-enters with the theme in precisely the same structure as “Mothers.” They describe the urn, the simple jug with the lid that preserves a gas-like mist. Within this fog lies the ashes of the parents, and the tenor soloist returns to moan the devastation imbued in the vapor. Likely, Wygodzki is referring to the gas chambers from the camps. This final section thus far matches Weinberg’s Polish writing (and Wygodzki’s original poem), but the final line does not. Intertwined with the tenor’s final “Painful as night and gray like dawn,” the choir continues on to repeat “In it, the ashes of the parents continue to live.” The choir enters after the tenor’s “Painful as night,” singing “In it…”.

They hold their note as the tenor pines “and gray like dawn,” blending with the tenor’s final syllable as they again sigh “the ashes of the parents” (Figure 70).

Precisely as in “Mother,” the tenor’s repeated refrain is again infused with the Ukrainian Dorian mode on D. The choir lingers alone on the final syllable of “parents,” and, arrestingly, the next syllable is joined by the first chord of the chorale. To conclude Diary of Love, the chorale has returned, painfully and hauntingly in the strings. In Russian, “continue to live” is written as “life continues” (“жизнь продолжает”), which has five syllables. The first four syllables are drawn out, punctuated individually, each backed by a single chord of the chorale. The final syllable resolves to G major/minor (note the presence of both B♭ and Bb) (Figure 71).

The cantata has come full circle, as Figure 71 essentially imitates how the chorale at the beginning of the cantata gives way to the fully consonant G major chord in “Mothers.” Yet, the Bb in the final syllable of Figure 71 imbues us with a deep sense of disquiet. Nothing will ever be the same in the aftermath of the tragedy. In the painful, depraved gas that forever endures in the urn, the ashes of the parents live eternally. The gas chambers stole their physical lives, but
not their spirits. The cantata, this diary of love, bears witness to their memories, and the chorale underlies the music from beginning to end. The chorale has thus become both a testament to the horror and an everlasting tribute to the loved ones whose lives were stolen in the camps.

**Symphony No. 18, Op. 138, War – there is no word more cruel (1982-1984), section 1:**

**Adagio – Allegro**

Weinberg himself once declared that “many of my works are connected with the issue of war. Alas, this was not my own choice. It was dictated by my fate and by the tragic fate of my family. I see it as my moral duty to write about the war, and about the terrible things that happened to people in our century.”

His eighteenth symphony is the central volume in his “symphonic trilogy” titled *Perestupiv voyni porog* (“Having Crossed the Threshold of War”) that consists of Symphonies No. 17-19. Symphony No. 18, a single-movement work broken into four sections, is the only one of the collection to feature vocal parts. The first section, titled “Adagio – Allegro” is however purely orchestral, with the Adagio resembling “a kind of anthem.”

The choir finally enters in the second section, where they sing “They buried him in the earth,” a poem by Russian tank driver Sergey Orlov (1921-77). The third section uses texts derived from Russian folk poetry, and the fourth is sourced from the beginning of Alexander Tvardovsky’s poem “War – there is no word more cruel” that the symphony is named for. This final section serves as an epilogue, incorporating lamenting self-quotations from Weinberg’s opera *The Madonna and the Soldier.***

---

127 Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 129.
130 Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 151.
My discovery of the chorale in Symphony No. 18 greatly surprised me, as Weinberg never mentions this reference, nor is the work directly related to Symphony No. 8, *Diary of Love*, *Otche nash*, or the *Kaddish* Symphony. The chorale appears three times in the Adagio from the wordless orchestral first section (Figures 72-74).

In Figures 72 and 73, the chorale is identical to the original, untransposed, though in a different order. Rather than F minor – C minor – G\textsuperscript{sus4} – Bb minor (C), the progression is now G\textsuperscript{sus4} – Bb minor (C) – F minor – C minor. Notice that in Figure 72, the chorale is presented twice, with the fourth chord of the repeat landing on Bb minor (C) again, rather than the expected C minor.

131 The following edition was used: https://issuu.com/peermusicclassical/docs/weinberg__m.__symphonie_nr._18__00-\_c0fb4b22b7bb/1.
In Figure 74, the chorale returns to the original ordering, although the C minor chord in the second measure is murky and appears to be layered over the F minor chord with an added Bb.

Through its incorporation in Symphony No. 18, especially given the war themes the symphony embodies, the chorale assumes the tragedy of human violence, and the duty of those left behind to be the keepers of the memories of those who fell.

*Otche nash (1989)*

Intriguingly, though Weinberg does not mention it in his interview, the chorale is also featured in Weinberg’s 1989 film score to Boris Ermolaev’s *Otche nash* (“Our Father”). The film is a dramatization of Soviet writer Valentin Kataev’s short story “Our Father Who Art in Heaven,” based on the true story of a mother and son in Odessa.\(^{132}\) Nikitina compares the plot to “The Last Judgment” from the second coming of Christ: a fate from which one can neither escape nor hide. She notes that throughout the film, dialogue is scarce, and the narrative unfolds like a silent movie. Most of the spoken words are from an anonymous narrator, whose detached voice intones texts from the Bible. Throughout the film, Nikitina notes the following musical and symbolic elements that Weinberg establishes, the first three of which he would revisit in the *Kaddish* Symphony.

- Solo soprano voice, vocalizing a prayer atop a hymnal chorus
- The tolling of a bell, as a symbol portending trouble
- Solo piano, as both a symbol of and a memory of childhood
- A choir, as a symbol of “humanity, experience and consolation”\(^ {133}\)


\(^{133}\) Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”
On a high level, the film tells the tale of a nameless Jewish woman and her young son sent to the ghetto by authorities but flee as they realize the horror that awaits. They wander the city, terrified and freezing until they fall asleep on a bench, where they die in the night. The film closes as apathetic soldiers throw their frozen bodies into a truck.134

Like the story, the composition of the film is circular. Its opening and closing scenes are identical. A cathedral is shown as bells toll grimly in the silence, and a detached voice reads an apocalyptic omen from Revelation 8:10-11: “and the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”

As the nameless voice intones Biblical texts and the bells continue to toll, a woman watches a truck creeping ominously through the frozen streets. This is consistent with Nikitina’s interpretation of the bells as a dark omen. We do not understand until the end of the film that the function of the truck is to collect dead bodies. In a flashback, the woman and her son are shown playing happily at a sunlit beach, accompanied by a wordless choir, which indeed takes us back to a moment of “humanity, experience and consolation.”

Then, the scene cuts to a dark apartment where an unnamed Jewish woman is confronted by an elderly couple who appear to be her landlords. Weeping, they tell her she must leave per the demands of the Nazis, and beg for her forgiveness, though they will not defy the authorities. The woman hurriedly gathers a suitcase and her toddler son to join other Jews in a bleak procession to the ghetto. Significantly, as they trek through the snow, they follow the partially covered lines of a train track. It is unclear how much influence Weinberg had over the film

beyond the music, but the allusion to the railroad (and therefore the locomotive) evokes the second movement of *Diary of Love*, the section that may refer to Weinberg’s sister. Certainly, however, it must have been Weinberg’s choice to write the chorale in the very section that emphasizes the child walking to grim fate along the train tracks, reminding us of the train that tore him from his family to safety, and the other, later train that took his family into the darkness. As the camera zooms in on the little boy’s stumbling gait, the narrator’s voice floats over the chorale with “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of G-d and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” from Revelation 20:6.

As the frigid line progresses closer to the ghetto, it grows increasingly tense and despairing. The woman is briefly separated from her son in the crowd, and when she finds him, she reflexively darts away. The scene is filled with shadows as they hurry along a long wall until they reach a tower of glass bottles. The little boy grabs one, curiously, and the entire structure comes crashing down, overtaking all other sounds with the cacophony of shattering glass. The little boy stands beneath the thorny downpour as his mother worries over him, brushing blood out of his eyes. The scene greatly evokes symbolism of Kristallnacht.

From there on, the plot is the mother and son’s despairing quest for shelter in the relentless, freezing prison of the city. They sit in a café amongst prostitutes and sinister objects and must flee again when the space is compromised. As they wander the deadly maze of the prison city, they find temporary reprieve in a barber shop. So long as the woman can keep the barber cutting her hair, they can remain in the shelter. Yet, even as she begins, she knows the clock is ticking, and it is only a matter of time until they will be forced to leave.136 They

eventually emerge on a street filled strangely with clothes (they do not realize these were 
confiscated from Jews in the ghetto). A crowd of Jewish prisoners are forced to leave their coats 
on racks, after which they are violently beaten and forced into a dark wagon. Terrified, mother 
and son start running again, towards the cathedral from the opening scene. They slip on the ice 
and fall in slow motion down the staircase they just ascended, the woman clutching her son to 
her as they ride down atop their suitcase. This scene is a reference to Sergei Einstein’s silent 
Soviet film *Battleship Potemkin*, a famed symbol of “violence against the innocent.”

The narrative starts to break down as we are suddenly transported from the ice and the 
stairs and the terror to a sunny, idyllic day at the seaside, seemingly a flashback. An old man 
gives the little boy candy, and mother and son play in the sand. The scene turns perverse as the 
man suddenly carries a bag of bones rather than a bag of candy. The sticks of sugar have 
seemingly transformed into bones, polished white and eerie. With this, the scene cuts back to the 
present. The woman and child are now in a movie theater, silent amongst drunk German soldiers, 
waiting for their time to run out when the theater closes and the curfew begins. Inevitably, they 
are left out again on the freezing, darkening streets. Mother and son flee the room, next seeking 
shelter at the home of a pregnant friend. She welcomes them, and they have found a haven until 
her husband returns home. The woman experiences flashbacks of both the idyllic beach from the 
past and the singular image of the Jewish prisoners hanging up their coats.

When the friend’s husband returns, despite her pleas to let them stay, he forces the 
mother and child to leave. A kind music teacher attempts to help them and leads them to a 
Russian Orthodox church. The priest allows them to remain there through the night. As they 
speak, the woman’s reflection is shown superimposed on a glass Madonna in another Christian 

---

reference equating her with the persecuted Madonna. Soon after, the police raid the church, and again they are forced onto the streets. Exhausted and defeated, the woman attempts to return to her own apartment, which she finds vandalized by the police. She finds her elderly landlord hiding among the rubble, sobbing, as the body of her husband lies nearby.

In the final scenes, mother and son trek wearily to a frozen park. They sit on an icy bench, and the child recites the Lord’s Prayer as they try to stay awake. When they fail, an unseen narrator takes up the prayer as the sun-filled scenes of the beach from the mother’s memory play on the screen. As the prayer finishes, the film ends precisely as Kataev’s story does:

“First soldiers carried a woman with bent legs to the truck. They swung the body. The woman banged against other corpses like a piece of wood. Then soldiers brought the boy, swung him and easily threw him into the truck. He banged on the woman like wood, and even bounced back. The truck drove away. Only a bench with a dark trace of those who sat on it was left behind.”

The final scene cuts to an image of Jesus from the cathedral, and finally to the cathedral itself as the bell tolls one last time. We have come full circle back to the opening scene.

The chorale features prominently throughout the film, often mixed with spoken voice and other melodies. It appears, notably, in identical form to its presentation in the Kaddish Symphony, with minor alterations and embellishments compared to the original chorale from Symphony No. 8 and Diary of Love. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a score for Otche nash, but much of its musical content can be analyzed simply by listening. Notably, in the film, the chorale cannot be fully comprehended without considering its connection to Mahler’s lied Das Irdische Leben, as well as its integration with the other symbolic elements Nikitina listed. Upon listening, I realized that Weinberg’s first use of Das Irdische Leben is in fact in

139 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BS3f7H2Czlc.
*Otche nash*, not in the *Kaddish* Symphony. Though it sometimes appears on its own, it is deeply intertwined with the chorale throughout the film. In the poem of Mahler’s lied, a child cries out to his mother that he is starving and will die if he does not eat. His mother tells him to wait, that the bread is almost ready, yet when the bread is finally baked the child lies dead upon a bier.\(^{140}\) Here, throughout *Otche nash*, Weinberg specifically references the beginning of the child’s line “Mother, ah mother, I am starving.” The mother’s response does not appear in the film (it will not appear until the fifth movement of the *Kaddish* Symphony).

After the opening scenes of the white truck with the tolling bell, and the radiant beach with the wordless choir, the grim ringing of the bells returns at 7:42 as a man’s body is shown hanging from a noose outside the woman’s apartment. As she flees with her son out into the black, frozen streets, the wordless soprano soars over them and the narrator flatly recites “What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me” from Job 3:25-3:26. At 8:25, the choir fades in behind the soprano, and they continue in a fluid duet until a man’s scream cuts them off at 9:13. Immediately after this is the first appearance of the chorale at 9:55, in the scene where the mother and son enter the line for the ghetto and wait amongst the increasing crowds. It repeats for nearly eight minutes, until 17:35, throughout their brief glimpse into the ghetto and their flight into the freezing city. The chorale begins softly in the strings and grows in agonizing intensity. It only ends, finally, when it is overtaken by the sound of shattering glass as the wall of bottles collapses. Throughout the section, the chorale alternates continuously with the Mahler quote. Unlike the chorale, which is played by the complete string section in both *Symphony No. 8* and *Otche nash*, the Mahler quote comes through on a solo violin, pitched to a high register. The high, keening voice of the solo violin, with its singing quality like that of the human voice,

reinforces the impression of the starving child. As the chorale grows intensity, so does the Mahler, and the theme is eventually taken up by the entire string section, punctuated with ominous strikes of a low bell. This occurs for the first time at 14:51, as the narrator intones “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed” from Revelation 13:10.

The chorale and the Mahler continue in ostinato dialogue until the glass shatters as the boy stands bleeding in the middle of the chaos. The Mahler returns immediately after this in the café scene from 18:07-21:00, plucked out mournfully on what sounds like either a piano or harp as eerie, chromatic chords float from a harmonium. The mother is on high alert, knowing this temporary safe haven could at any moment be compromised. When the man arrives who scares the mother and child back into the streets, the Mahler fades away into silence. As they are thrust from their temporary haven, the bells toll again at 23:20. An image of Jesus flashes briefly on the screen, and the narrator intones “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” from Revelation 22:14-22:15. In other words, those who fulfill the Biblical commandments are worthy of the “the tree of life,” of survival within the prison gates of the city.

Subsequently, in the scene directly after the mother and child flee the barbershop, they stand alone on the frigid street as gusts of snow blow around them at 34:37. The image of Jesus briefly flashes again, and the narrator intones “My G-d, my G-d, why have you left me? You seem too far away to save me, too far to hear my cries for help!” from Psalms 25:1. As he does so, the chorale reappears, repeating continuously, though with variations, through 36:54. In this passage, a kindly music teacher comes up behind the mother and child in attempt to help them,
ringing a little bell – a friendly one, not the bleak church bells – and the woman startles at the sound. She grabs her son, and they race blindly down the street, stopping when they reach the gruesome gathering of Jewish prisoners relinquishing their coats, suffering beatings, and being loaded like animals into the dark carriage. Throughout this, the narrator chants “The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins. See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me!” from Psalms 24:16-19. As his voice trails off, a prisoner is seen exchanging his coat for a number in slow motion. The chorale fades away for an excruciating, suspended moment as the church bells toll out their grim judgement at 35:59. The man’s humanity is left on the hanger; he is reduced to a number. Chaos and sound return, and the man is swept anonymously into the despairing crowd. The chorale screams above the scene in the strings. When the mother and son flee, they are chased by a crowd of incoming prisoners ensconced by guards. As the scene intensifies, so does the chorale, growing ever more passionate and ascending to higher registers. Then, abruptly, all sound cuts off at 36:53 as the mother and son ascend the stairs towards the cathedral. The prisoners flash past below them in eerie silence.

When the mother and child ascend the frozen steps towards the cathedral, the chorale reappears in full force at 37:15, wailed out on chords in the piano as the strings scream in the background. The church bells ring out in crazed, dissonant cacophony, overtaking the orchestra until they suddenly are joined with the fortissimo, fervent lament of the Mahler in tutti orchestra at 37:26. Every half beat is punctuated by the tolling of a bell, the clanging of which only grows louder the higher they go. For a single, suspended moment, the Mahler and church bells are slowed as the cathedral fills the screen, and then, with a gasp, the mother and child fall. The strings scream out the chorale at 38:12 as the mother and child slide down the grim stone stairs in
the reference to Einstein’s “violence against the innocent.” Every chord is punctuated darkly by a church bell as the horrified, helpless faces of the mother and son fill the screen.

As they continue their helpless fall to the unrelenting frost and stone at the bottom of the stairs, the Mahler returns, softly, plucked out again on the solo piano at 38:27. The mother sobs as their suitcase bursts open, and they struggle through the snow. The little boy falls and falls in the deep white, his boot eventually coming off. Variations on the Mahler theme continue in church bells, and an image of Jesus flashes on the screen with a single, bleak low bell at 40:13. A cacophony of higher, eerie bells fill the scene as it cuts to the perverse flashback of the sunny beach, marred with the candy-man whose sweets transform to bones. As the man hands the candy to the child, the Mahler returns again at 40:43, fading out only as we are taken back to the present in the dark movie theater at 41:10.

Just before the theater inevitably closes and the mother and child return to the streets, the wordless soprano fades in with the choir at 45:05. Over this, the disembodied voice of the narrator recites “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death” from Psalm 22:14-15. As he chants, the solo soprano cuts off, and the mother and child flee the theater into the shadows of the streets. The Jesus image flashes briefly again at 46:26 with another singular toll of the bells, the choir continuing unbroken as faraway screams ring out in the streets. The soprano returns from 47:00-49:47 as the mother and child find brief, weary respite in front of a fire and continue to the mother’s pregnant friend’s house. Both choir and solo soprano fall into silence when they enter the safety of the friend’s home.
The wordless soprano returns, alone, at 50:36 as the mother falls into an uneasy slumber. The flashback of the mother and child at the sunlit beach reappears, this time unadulterated by the man of candy and bones, yet slips away as darker memories of numbers, marked deathly white in chalk, are written on the arms of the Jews in the line for the ghetto, and the scene of the prisoner exchanging his coat for a number tag forces its silent entry into her dreaming mind. The angelic soprano sings consolingly throughout until she awakes at 51:42.

All is silent, save sparse spoken dialogue, until the mother and son are ejected from her friend’s house by the unfeeling husband at 54:30. At this point, soprano angel returns, soaring above the dark scene, utterly alone. The soprano stays with the mother and child until 55:10 until the kind music teacher encounters them again, directing them to the church. The priest welcomes them, pausing in his rehearsal of the boys’ church choir. Snippets of their song play at 57:56, and the child joins them. Then, eerily, as the priest cues the choir to begin again, though their mouths open in song, the wordless choir from before replaces their voices at 58:43, and the soprano angels soars above at 58:49. Images flash between the innocence of the children and of biblical figures on the walls above. Though the world crumbles around them, the choir and soprano welcome in a rare moment of warmth and humanity in the walls of the holy building. This continues through 1:05:50, sound ceasing when the woman’s faced is superimposed on the persecuted Madonna. Shortly after this, the police raid the church, and the sanctity of the walls has been violated. The church has fallen, and evil has prevailed.

The Mahler finally returns with a keening solo violin at 1:07:15, accompanied only by the somber chords of a solo piano or harp. The mother and child trek wearily through the snow-covered night after they flee the raid on the church. The Mahler is punctuated by howling winds and distant screams and continues as the mother and child arrive at their vandalized apartment.
and speak with their elderly landlord. As the body of her husband is revealed at 1:12:26, the Mahler’s voicing changes from solo violin to what I believe is either monophonic piano or harp, punctuated again with sinister, chromatic harmonium chords much like the café scene earlier. The boy gently strokes the old man’s forehead with a feather, but he does not move, and the mother gathers her son. The Mahler continues until 1:15:40 as the mother and son trudge emptily over streets of ice, settling on the park bench in the frigid night. The Mahler persists as little boy recites from Psalm 38, his mother rocking him. Silence overtakes the scene and they succumb to sleep and death in the unrelenting winter of the prison city.

As dawn rises over the frozen park, the mother and son sit peacefully, their frozen faces serene as the narrator recites the Lord’s prayer. Amorphous chords in the strings evolve into the chorale at 1:16:40 over the narrator’s continued intonation of the Lord’s prayer. The chorale continues, ostinato, through 1:17:00 as the scene cuts back again to flashbacks of the sunlit beach. No preternatural bone-candy man leers now. The woman and child float happily in a small boat in a calm harbor. The strings meander in a calm melody before returning briefly to the chorale at 1:18:09 as men drag frozen bodies into the truck, white as the snow surrounding it, that we first saw mysteriously at the beginning of the film. The chorale returns from 1:18:43-1:19:09 as more bodies are swung with utter indifference into the truck, and immediately melts into the wordless choir with the solo soprano soaring high above it with the Lord’s Prayer, suggesting an “angelic voice beckoning the mother and child to Heaven.”

As the truck melts into the distance, images of Jesus fill the screen, and the film closes with a final portrait of the cathedral and the grim, tuneless tolling of the church bells.

141 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
The themes from the eighth movement of Symphony No. 8—the mother and son, the cemetary in Łódź, the murder of Weinberg’s own family following their internment in the Łódź ghetto—run heavily throughout the film, emphasized by Weinberg’s intertwining of the chorale with the Mahler lied. *Otche nash* takes the chorale through a journey of fear and despair with no light waiting at the end. The chorale serves as a recurring symbol of violence against the innocent, but also recalls us to the unbreakable bond of mother and child. Even when they succumb to the darkness at the end of the film, the chorale brings us back to their memories at the end of the film, where their love persists eternally, untouchable by the unyielding winter and the murderous drive of their would-be executioners. In doing so, a strong parallel is drawn to the final lines of *Diary of Love*: “in it, the ashes of the parents continue to live.”

*Narrative and Memory in the Kaddish Symphony*

Now that we have built up the semantics of the chorale, we are ready to embark chronologically through the *Kaddish* Symphony to unveil qualities of narrative and memory hidden in the music. The first Largo section opens with a slightly modified version of the chorale (Figure 75). The original chorale is shown again below in Figure 76 for comparison, with the progression F minor – C minor – G\(_{\text{sus4}}\) – Bb minor (+C).

---

142 Listen to the *Kaddish* Symphony: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJWwZplM3yo&list=PLPwyBV1x-R8ZeIKHTVly7dFZ_ONHNoaXt&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJWwZplM3yo&list=PLPwyBV1x-R8ZeIKHTVly7dFZ_ONHNoaXt&index=5).
Before delving into the analysis, note that the chords of the chorale in the Kaddish Symphony will be labeled solely based on pitch classes relative to the chord labels in the original chorale. Inversions are disregarded. For instance, the chords G-C-D and D-G-C would both be considered $G^{\text{sus}4}$ chords that match the third chord of the original chorale. In Figure 75, the first three chords of the Kaddish Symphony’s chorale precisely mirror the original, though transposed down a fourth, to become C minor – G minor – $D^{\text{sus}4}$. Following this, the Kaddish Symphony begins to deviate substantially from the original chorale, devolving into a pitch collection of the first four notes of the F minor scale. This is succeeded by a series of dissonant sonorities.

The initial presentation of the chorale then gives way to a rhythmically elongated quote from the Mahler-infused solo violin excerpt in Otche nash (Figure 77).

\footnote{I am using the 2017 Peermusic edition of the score (which is Weinberg’s handwritten manuscript). There are rehearsal numbers but no measure numbers. Thus, all examples will refer to measures based on rehearsal numbers. Note that rehearsal numbers do not restart after each section, reflecting the “one-movement” nature of the piece.}
The Mahler quote is in turn is followed by a restatement of the chorale in a form slightly more similar to the original (Figure 78).

The chorale is no longer transposed, and the first, second, and fourth chords are identical to the original. The deviation is now in the third chord, which (rather than the G\textsuperscript{sus4} of the original) can now be interpreted either as D major, if we exclude the C suspended from the previous chords, or D\textsuperscript{7}, if we include the C.

Immediately after, the solo violin excerpt of the child’s line from the Mahler in Otche nash is quoted precisely as it appears in the film, the beginning of which is shown in Figure 79. The original line from Mahler’s Das Irdische Leben is shown for reference in Figure 80, where the child wails “‘Mother, ah mother, I am starving.’"
In his draft score, Weinberg explicitly references ‘Irdische Leben’ as the source material for the solo (FIGURE 81).

This confirms the Mahler allusion in Otche nash as well as in the symphony. Furthermore, Weinberg’s reference to “klezmer orchestra” in FIGURE 81 puts the solo violin of the Mahler line into context. Nikitina reveals that:

Klezmer orchestras [varied] in composition and depended on local characteristics. Often it was clarinet, violin, drum or tambourine. The composition of the instruments changed, their number was also mobile and depended on the circumstances. There are also free alternations of solo instruments and those played by all performers of the ensemble.\(^{145}\)

The solo violin emerging from the tutti orchestra thus fits perfectly in the context of the klezmer orchestra. The same logic applies to subsequent instrumental solos throughout the symphony. Furthermore, beyond expressing Jewish folk culture and identity, Weinberg’s “klezmer orchestra” is likely a direct reference to the klezmer band in his father’s theater that Weinberg

\(^{144}\) Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”

\(^{145}\) Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”
played in as a child. Nikitina confirms that the solo violin was likely of personal significance to Weinberg:

Samuil [Shmuel] Weinberg, as follows from the memoirs of his son, played the violin and composed music, often traveling with itinerant actors. The violin as a solo instrument and the violin group in the orchestra are very important in the work of Moses Weinberg, in his chamber symphonic and operatic music. The instrument became a double symbol for Weinberg: as a typical instrument of Jewish art and as a symbol of the father.\footnote{Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 1.”}

Thus, beyond the Jewish folk music reference, the solo violin manifests a direct connection between Weinberg and his father. Finally, Weinberg’s childhood friend Grigory Frid recalls that Weinberg’s childhood experiences with klezmer forms also extended beyond the confines of Shmuel’s theater:

Father's affairs went from bad to worse, and from the age of twelve, Metek actually supported the family. In the mornings he played waltzes and freylekhs at Jewish weddings, ran to the conservatory during the day, and in the evenings until late at night he pleased the merry audience with foxtrots, waltzes, and tangos in a restaurant.\footnote{Ludmila Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 4” Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ), last modified May 2021, \url{https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer4/lnikitina/}.}

The klezmer ensemble and its associated musical styles were thus clearly major aspects of Weinberg’s upbringing and musical growth.

Returning to Figure 79, notice the first two beats of the third measure. This is precisely the passage that is rhythmically exaggerated by the strings in Figure 78, between the two chorale statements. Reappearances of the chorale and the violin solo with the child’s line continue to alternate for the first six minutes of the section—exactly as in the film. Indeed, the beginning of the Kaddish Symphony until R6 m.5 is essentially one long self-quotation,
extended and modified, of 9:25 to 17:35 of the *Otche nash* production.\textsuperscript{148} Mother and child wander the frozen streets of Warsaw, desperately hiding within the city walls from their would-be executioners. At the same time, the chorale overlays the image of the mother grieving at her son’s grave in Łódź, the everlasting grief and guilt of the survivor from *Diary of Love*, and the tragedy of war from Symphony No. 18. Łódź and Warsaw, past and present, weave together, establishing the connection to Weinberg’s past and family from the very opening.

Weinberg made no secret that he was thinking of *Otche nash* as he composed the *Kaddish* Symphony. His draft score contains a setting of the “Our Father” prayer that dates October 13, 1988. It is unrelated to any of the *Kaddish* Symphony’s musical material and is most likely some early notes taken for *Otche nash*, which was released the following year, even though the setting of the prayer in *Otche nash* differs from this draft as well.\textsuperscript{149} Regardless, the explicit connection between *Otche nash* and the *Kaddish* Symphony cannot be denied.

The following analysis traces the development of the chorale throughout this section as it alternates with Mahler lied variation from *Otche nash*. Throughout, Weinberg plays with the original chorale. Each repetition in the symphony dances around the original, but with continuously new variations. The chorale rarely completes – instead, it melts into suspended chromatic pitch collections, like in FIGURE 75. For the sake of analysis, the chromatic collections are left off of the following figures.

The chorale initially reappears, briefly, in FIGURE 82, shortly after the first Mahler solo from FIGURE 79.

\textsuperscript{148} David Fanning, “Weinberg’s ‘Cooking-Pot’, With a Note on Quotation,” University of Manchester Research Explorer, University of Manchester, accessed April 17, 2022, https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/78905107/Weinberg_s_Cooking_pot_and_a_tool_for_assessing_the_status_of_musical_quotation.docx.

\textsuperscript{149} Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
This resembles the original chorale, except for the chromatic A♮ and Ab, rather than G and B♭, in the bass of the final two chords. The chorale correspondingly reappears in *Otche nash* at 9:55, as the mother and son trek through the snow to the ghetto in the grim procession after their jarring eviction from their apartment. The kindly music teacher looks worriedly on from the sidelines. Then, just as in the film at 10:05 (albeit in a different key), the mother’s line from the Mahler returns (Figure 83).

As the little boy stumbles and slips down across the icy railroad tracks in *Otche nash*, dead, frozen sparrows lie plastically before him. He pauses to bend down at 10:14 and pat one’s head as he clings to his mother’s hand (Figure 84).
When he straightens, the chorale returns at 10:28 (FIGURE 85 in the Kaddish Symphony). The narrator intones from Revelation 20:6: “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of G-d and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”

![Figure 85: Kaddish Symphony, R1, m. 14](image)

This is nearly identical to the original chorale. The first three chords are the same, but the fourth is a chromatic alteration of the third (G-G# in the bass), rather than the Bb minor (+C) chord of the original. As the chorale rings out in both Kaddish Symphony in FIGURE 85, and in Otche nash at 10:28, the potential allusion of the train tracks in Otche nash to the locomotive from “Daughters,” the second movement of Diary of Love that could refer to Esther, cannot be missed. The chorale underlies them all, bringing the hopelessness of the mother and the suffering of the child from the film together with the universal grief of the survivor from the cantata. It also evokes the possible connection to the terrible fate Weinberg’s sister and parents met. Unlike his train from Warsaw into safety and life, they were forced onto another into danger and death.

The narrator’s chant from the Book of Revelations continues as the chorale transitions to a new version of the Mahler quote in both the Kaddish Symphony (FIGURE 86) and Otche nash at 10:38.
Throughout this quote, in the film the kindly music teacher peers worriedly at the frozen procession of Jews over the tracks, and the image of the priest tending to a sickly Jewish man flashes briefly against images of Jesus. Then, the mother and child reluctantly enter the dark, crowded shelter the Jews are being funneled into (Figure 87).

The chorale appears once more at 11:19 in film and Figure 88 in the Kaddish Symphony as they scramble into the smoky darkness of the shed on the tracks. The concerned music teacher follows and searches for them.

Again, the first three chords are identical to the original chorale. The fourth chord is once again a chromatic deviation of the third (C-C# in the G\textsuperscript{sus4} chord), which subsequently devolves into suspended chromatic collections. The Mahler lied re-enters in
FIGURE 89 as the mother and child struggle through the suffocating dimness of the crowded shed at 11:35 in the film.

FIGURE 89: Kaddish Symphony, R3, m. 1-2

In this section, the music teacher locates the mother and son from afar, and beckons for the little boy to leave the line. The chorale returns at 12:09 as the scene pans out to the line of Jews throwing their belongings on a grimy platform while masked Nazi officers oversee them (FIGURE 90).

FIGURE 90: Kaddish Symphony, R3, m. 6-7

Now, the first (F minor), second (C minor), and fourth (Bb minor (+C)) chords match the original chorale. The third is similar – the D and C in the upper voices are consistent with G\textsuperscript{sus4} – but rather than G in the bass, we have B♮. Indeed, the third chord seems to function simply as a chromatic neighbor of the fourth Bb (+C) chord. The corresponding scene in the film is shown in FIGURE 91.
The faceless procession of Jews is forced to leave their personal effects in the grime. They rescind their individuality, their humanity, as they pass into the murky hall beyond. As they do so, the Mahler returns at 12:21 in the film, and Figure 92 in the Kaddish Symphony.

The mother and son struggle through the line to the checkpoint where they will part with their belongings, and the music teacher finally makes eye contact with the boy in the unobserved space under the platform they walk beside. After this, the Kaddish Symphony’s quotation of Otche nash deviates somewhat. Both the chorale and the Mahler appear several times in the film as the little boy breaks free of the line. The music teacher beckons to him as his mother frantically searches for him, and when she finds him, she scoops him up and flees the shed. Conversely, in the Kaddish Symphony, the Mahler continues seamlessly from Figure 92 to Figure 93, where, for the first time, the quote is taken up by the entire orchestra.
At first glance, it is unclear whether Figure 93 corresponds to this same quote in Otche nash that appears at both 14:51 (transposed) and 16:35 (identical) in the film. However, upon listening further, it becomes evident it refers to the 16:35 version, as the subsequent musical material continues to match, which is not the case for the 14:51 appearance. In Otche nash’s 16:35 entrance of the Mahler, the mother and son have escaped the shed and thus the ghetto temporarily. They are huddled around a fire in the freezing streets as the mother burns documents she kept in her pocket. It is unclear what these are, but they appear to have personal significance, and their dramatized burning seems to symbolize the destruction of identity (Figure 94).
The chorale re-emerges in *Otche nash* at 17:10, as well as in Figure 95 in the *Kaddish* Symphony.

![Figure 95: Kaddish Symphony, R5, mm. 10-12](image)

Figure 95 is nearly identical to the original chorale, apart from the third chord, which is now a D♭ chord missing its chordal fifth, rather than a G₄sus⁴ chord. In the film, the little boy has found the wall of glass bottles, knocking them over. The shattering of glass rains down around his bloody and lacerated face, choking off the chorale at 17:37 and continuing until 17:59 (Figure 96).

![Figure 96: Otche nash at 17:42](image)

The allusion to Kristallnacht cannot be missed. However, in the *Kaddish* Symphony, the Mahler-chorale dialogue is pushed a little longer. Here, the chorale in Figure 95 gives way to another variation of the child’s line screamed in the tutti orchestra, the melody of which is shown in Figure 97.

![Figure 97: Kaddish Symphony, R6, mm. 2-5](image)
Then, rather the sounds of broken glass, a series of stark, pizzicato, fortississimo chromatic pitch collections cut off the Mahler, punctuated in unison in the strings, piano, and timpani (FIGURE 98).

**FIGURE 98:** Kaddish Symphony, R6, mm. 6-9

The collections strongly emulate gunshots, resonating violently in the sudden silence. Immediately, we are taken back to “Matka.” The mother and son from the Mahler have been transformed to the mother and son in the poem. The mother has been shot as she grieves for her son at the graveyard in Łódź; the Ideal has reached the cobblestones.

Immediately after the gunshots abate, the chorale wails again in the winds and brass (FIGURE 99).

**FIGURE 99:** Kaddish Symphony, R6, mm. 9-11

For the first time, the original chorale has finally returned, verbatim, although it is transposed up a semitone. The progression is now C# minor – G# minor – D#sus4 – F# minor (+G#). The mother has been murdered in Łódź at her son’s grave with the pizzicato gunshots, in the final resting place of Weinberg’s family. We are taken back to the violence of Tuwim’s “Matka:”
… A fascist shot her,
Just as she was thinking of me,
A fascist shot her,
When she was missing me

He loaded a round and killed that longing
Started loading again
So that later… – but then
There was nothing left to kill

He shot through the maternal world
Two caressing syllables…

Mother and son are lost; the maternal world, a child’s haven of love and safety, has been shot.

The chorale sobs in the bitter aftermath, fading into dissonance as a solo clarinet enters over the faint, indistinct murmur of the strings with another variation on the child’s line from the Mahler (Figure 100).

![Figure 100: Kaddish Symphony, R7, mm. 1-11](image)

It is as though we have taken a step back away from the violence and are looking down on it from afar in some ethereal realm. At the same time, the solo clarinet recalls us to the klezmer orchestra from Figure 81. The Mahler quote, more distorted than ever before, echoes mournfully as it floats above the barren musical landscape. The chorale fades in softly, murmuring subdued in the bassoons and horns (Figure 101).

![Figure 101: Kaddish Symphony, R8, mm. 1-2](image)
Recalling that horns are pitched in F, the first three chords are identical to the original chorale, albeit transposed up a fourth (B minor – F# minor – C# sus4). The final chord of Figure 101 is a simply a chromatic alteration of the third (the G# goes to G), and it subsequently devolves into the same sort of suspended chromatic pitch collections we encountered earlier. The Mahler variation from Figure 100 returns, with the clarinet now joined in a duet with the solo flute. Their line is suspended twice while more string pizzicato gunshots ring faintly in the background in Figures 102 and 103.

We have not escaped the violence. It is still there, omnipresent, but it is as though the shock of the initial gunfire in Figure 98 has muted all senses as we struggle to comprehend the aftermath. We are in the final stanza of Tuwim’s “Matka.” The mother’s corpse lies on the cobblestones, broken and vacant, as the lyrical subject “… gathered her up from the field of glory / I returned it to Mother Earth, / But the corpse bearing my name, / Is laying there to this day.”

The solo clarinet and flute do not remerge after the second echo of the gunshots in Figure 103, but their Mahler variation is seamlessly taken up by the strings (Figure 104).
The strings grow increasingly more intense until they erupt passionately with the chorale in Figure 105.

Finally, we have returned same variation of the chorale that opens the symphony in Figure 75, albeit an octave up this time. The instrumentation (strings only) is identical. Recall that the first three chords match the original chorale, though transposed down a fourth, to become C minor – G minor – D\textsuperscript{sus4}, and finally to an unexpected variation of a Bb\textsuperscript{13} chord (or a pitch collection of the first four notes of the F minor scale) that devolves into a series of suspended chromatic pitch collections.

Like the opening of the symphony, the transposed chorale is succeeded by a second appearance of the chorale (Figure 106).
Unlike the opening of the symphony from Figure 78, here the chorale remains transposed, albeit in a new key. The first three chords mirror the original chorale (Bb minor – F minor – C\textsuperscript{sus4}), but the fourth begins to crumble into a dissonant sonority. After the chorale concludes, the final chord in Figure 78 morphs into an even more discordant pitch collection. Unease penetrates the line, and the orchestra is cut off suddenly with a single, violent gunshot in the string pizzicato and timpani (Figure 107).

Figure 107: Kaddish Symphony, R9, m. 9

The Nazi executioner from “Matka” has returned. The mother lies dead on her son’s grave in Łódź, and we are left in the darkness of the silence that remains.

The orchestra holds its breath in the wake of the destruction. The first sounds to emerge are the tentative, mournful chords of the solo piano and harp. They are joined shortly by the solo violin again on the Mahler, a quote last heard during the mother and son’s fruitless flight through the prison city in the initial extended quote from Otche nash (Figure 108).

Figure 108: Kaddish Symphony, R10, mm. 1-6
FIGURE 108 is the beginning of a long, second, separate self-quotation from *Otche nash*. It corresponds to the scene from 1:07:10-1:12:05 in the film, images from which are shown in FIGURES 109 and 110.

This is the scene where mother and son have just fled the church after it was compromised by the Nazi raid. They flee through the frozen streets to their own apartment. When they arrive, they find it wrecked, with their elderly female landlord huddled amongst the rubble. The self-quotation concludes just before the little boy discovers the corpse of the frail male landlord. This is their last hope for shelter. When it they find it cannot be a haven, they are cast into the streets one final time, this time with despair dragging their steps.

Unlike in *Otche nash*, as the quote ends in the Kaddish Symphony the violin holds onto that last note of the phrase, refusing to let go as it screams in increasingly agitated and quick rhythms before cutting off abruptly (FIGURE 111).
It is as though, unlike in *Otche nash*, the violin refuses to relinquish that last hope for shelter and life, clinging desperately to that fantasy rather than face the reality of the frozen streets that await them. This motive will return with great significance in the second *Allegro molto* section and the final *Lento* section. Returning to the first *Largo*, soon after the violin cuts off, the chorale returns, subdued and moaning (Figure 112).

Harmonically, Figure 112 strongly resembles the original chorale. In fact, it matches the version of the chorale in Figure 95, which differs from the original only in its third chord, a D⁷ missing its chordal fifth rather than the expected G⁷sus⁴. This is significant: Figure 95 was the last appearance of the chorale before the initial long self-quotiation from *Otche nash* completes. It immediately precedes the scene in the film where the glass rains around the little boy’s bloodied face in Figure 96, and is also the last emergence of the chorale in the symphony before the pizzicato gunshots in Figure 98. In Figure 95, the chorale was fortissimo, but now we are pianissimo. We are in a shadow, an echo, of the violence and despair that is enhanced by Weinberg’s specific instructions to mute (“tutti con sord”) in Figure 112. The musical landscape sinks further into despondency and quietness. Its vitality diminishes with the mother and son on their weary journey.
Just as Figure 95 was the last time the chorale appeared in the extended *Otche nash* quote, so is the chorale in Figure 112 also an ending. It marks the final occurrence of the chorale in the first Largo section and also heralds the first time the symphony breaks away from *Otche nash* with different quotation—this time, an external one. The chorale melts into a solo piano playing a fragment of Chopin’s Ballade in G minor, Op. 23, an incomplete phrase with no cadence that will go on to reappear in the closing Lento section (Figure 113).

![Piano notation](image)

**Figure 113: Kaddish Symphony, R14, mm. 3-6**

A solo violin attempts to pick it up, but fails in discord (Figure 114).

![Violin notation](image)

**Figure 114: Kaddish Symphony, R14, m. 7**

The orchestra dissolves into murky dissonance. The quote is a symbol of Poland, of Weinberg’s lost home and family. Roman Polanski independently used this Chopin in his 2002 film *The Pianist*, which tells the story of pianist and Holocaust survivor Władysław Szpilman based on Szpilman’s 1946 memoir *Śmierć Miasta* (Death of a City). However, Fanning believes the two are entirely unrelated, as Weinberg makes no reference to Szpilman in his personal handwritten catalogue.\(^{150}\)

The choice of Chopin to represent Poland is particularly significant given Weinberg’s personal history with Chopin’s music. During his teenage piano studies at the Warsaw Conservatory (formerly and currently the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music), his principal teacher was pianist Jozef Turchinsky, a Chopin expert. Turchinsky regularly performed Chopin

\(^{150}\) Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
throughout Europe and was one of the three editors who published *Chopin: Complete Works*. Weinberg, as Turchinsky’s student, accordingly played Chopin frequently under his tutelage, and “until his [Weinberg’s] last days knew almost all of Chopin by heart.”¹¹⁵¹ Weinberg himself recalls being raised “in the musical environment in which the Chopin cult reigned.”¹¹⁵² Chopin continued to be a cornerstone of Weinberg’s musical world his entire life, through the years he wrote the *Kaddish Symphony* and beyond. As Weinberg lay weak upon his deathbed on his 75th birthday in 1994, he was visited by officials from the Polish Embassy to honor him. They asked him, “How can you withstand complete inactivity?” and replied, “I'm playing Chopin's pieces in my mind.”¹¹⁵³ When physical strength failed him, Chopin sustained him, a remnant of his childhood threading through his memory. Chopin is therefore not simply a symbol of Poland, but of Weinberg’s youth and early years with his family. It is heavily symbolic of the loss of his family, and of all the Jews in Poland whose lives were cut short. That Weinberg chose the solo violin to attempt rescue of the Chopin line alludes to both his father (the violinist) and also to the klezmer orchestra, imbuing the violin with spirit of the Jewish klezmer musicians from the streets of Weinberg’s youth, and from his own father’s theater, that were lost.

The Chopin is further significant if we consider the eighth stanza of Tuwim’s “Matka” from Symphony No. 8: “Remember, my dear daughter! / Remind us, my future grandson! / The word was fulfilled: / ‘The Ideal reached the cobblestones.’” Recall the Ideal’s origin in C.K. Norwid’s poem “Chopin’s piano,” inspired by 1863 January Uprising where Chopin’s own piano was smashed on the pavement. As Chopin’s piano is shattered, so does the mother from “Matka”

¹¹⁵¹ Ludmila Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 2” *Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ)*, last modified May 2021, https://7i.7iskustv.com/y2021/nomer2/lnikitina/.
¹¹⁵³ Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 4.”
lie broken and bloody on the streets, and so are the piano and violin in Figures 112 and 113 choked into silence. Yet, remember Norwid’s staunch belief in the immortality of art, that Chopin’s music can never truly be destroyed. It follows then that just as the mother from “Matka” lives on in spirit and memory, so do the voices of those in Weinberg’s past who would have played the Chopin. So do the memories of all those he left behind. Weinberg is saying Kaddish for his family at the cemetery in Łódź, putting to rest the souls of the Polish Jews who never made it out.

Shockingly, after the unformed dissonance following the dissolution of the Chopin, the orchestra coalesces in an open, consonant G major chord in the strings, strongly reminiscent of the opening of Diary of Love in Figures 49 and 50. The narrative is turned to the suffering of the survivor, of the trauma that burdens them eternally and the impossible guilt and grief that torments them. Soon, the distant rumble of the timpani heralds the eerie voice of the celesta in yet another Otche nash quote (Figure 115).

This Figure occurs many times in Otche nash, though it was difficult for my ear to discern whether it was played on the celesta or the harmonium. Each time, the motive is in dialogue with the Mahler. It is introduced in the café scene, directly after the little boy shatters the glass wall at the end of the self-quotation from the beginning of the symphony. Recall that the café is where the mother and son seek temporary reprieve amongst prostitutes and grotesque objects, but must
soon flee when a suspicious man compromises the haven. In this section, the theme from Figure 115 plays at 18:22, 18:52-19:02, 19:45-19:52, 20:37, and 20:50 in various transpositions. The motive goes on to reappear later in the film after the mother and son have run blindly from the Jews beaten violent by Nazi guards, when they slide in slow motion down the icy staircase atop their suitcase in the allusion to Einstein’s Battleship Potemkin, the symbol of “violence against the innocent” (Figure 116).

Throughout this section, the figure appears at 38:41, 39:10-39:22, and 40:03.

Subsequently, the same motive reappears at 40:56 and 41:09, in the mother’s flashback to the beach marred by the supranatural candy-man whose sweets turn to bones (Figure 117).

The excerpt does not play again until 1:12:40, 1:13:09, and 1:13:33 in the scene directly after the second self-quotation in the symphony in Figures 108–110. After speaking to their sobbing elderly landlord amongst the rubble of their home, the little boy spots the corpse of her husband nearby and tenderly strokes his forehead with a feather (Figure 118).
Finally, the motive appears one last time at 1:14:55 and 1:15:09, as the mother and son collapse wearily on the park bench after leaving their broken apartment and the corpse that lay within (Figure 119).

This is their final destination in their flight through the prison city, their final resting place before they die in the frozen night. Later, after the excerpt plays, the little boy recites the Lord’s Prayer as they drift off into eternal sleep.

By closing the first Largo section of the Kaddish Symphony with this musical self-quotation, Weinberg brings the story of Otche nash to its grim conclusion. We are drifting off into darkness, into the silent cold, guided by the ethereal celesta from Figure 115. The section closes in Figure 120 with a shadow of the second Allegro molto section— a section, we will see, that takes us from the deeply personal despair of the Largo to the violence and tumult of war.
The *Allegro molto* immediately explodes in full force with the theme introduced at the end of the Largo (FIGURE 121).

![Figure 121: Kaddish Symphony, R14, m. 1-2](image)

This short, tumultuous introduction soon dissolves into another self-quotation, this time from the toccata-like second movement of Weinberg’s 1945 String Quartet No. 4, Op. 20, screamed ostinato in the woodwinds (FIGURES 122 and 123).

![Figure 122: Kaddish Symphony, R48, mm. 1-4](image)

![Figure 123: String Quartet No. 4, mvt. 2, mm. 10-12](image)

By this time, it was not uncommon for symphonic composers to engage in musical self-quotations. Yet, it was exceedingly odd to quote a string quartet in a symphony, indicating that

---

154 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
this movement of the quartet likely had some symbolic significance Weinberg hoped to convey. Fanning is stumped as to exactly what this is, but suspects that the theme has “Jewish connotations that suited his purposes for a Holocaust-commemorative work.” Elphick however reveals that many critics saw the movement as a war theme. The reviewer Aleksandr Ostretsov “links the work to its wartime origins, particularly in the toccata-like second movement,” and musicologist Lev Raaben describes it the quartet as “addressing the themes of war,” with the second movement in particular “a picture of the enemy invasion.” The rendition of this theme in the Kaddish Symphony seems consistent with this view, as the theme is continually punctuated with aggressive percussion, as though emulating bullets. Finally, Nikitina also agrees that the “ostinati, tight harmonies, and a ringing tone” in the string quartet quote convey a theme of militarism.

The connection of this motive to war is further supported by my discovery that it also appears in the first movement of Weinberg’s Symphony No. 17, Op. 137, Memory (1982-84), written years before the Kaddish Symphony’s official dates of composition (Figure 124)

155 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
156 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
Recall that Symphony No. 17 is the first in Weinberg’s trilogy Perestupiv voyni porog (“Having Crossed the Threshold of War”), where Symphony No. 18, which recall contains the chorale, is the second. Symphony No. 17’s themes thus center around war, in particular “passionate resistance, violence, and lament.” Furthermore, unlike Symphony No. 18, Symphony No. 17 features a famed motto from the venerated poetess Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966):

My country, you have regained
Your power and freedom!
But in the treasure-house of the people’s memory
There will always remain
The incinerated years of war.

Symphony No. 17’s name, Memory, is thus clarified: it is a memory of “the incinerated years of war.” The incorporation of the quote from String Quartet No. 4 in this symphony thus solidifies its identity as a symbol of militarism.

Returning to the string quartet, unlike earlier reviews, Nikitina goes on to notice the abundance of minor seconds and klezmer-like scales (e.g. major IV in a minor key) scattered

---

159 The following edition was used: https://issuu.com/peermusical/docs/weinberg_m_symphonie_nr_17_00-p.
160 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 150.
161 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 150.
throughout the movement.\textsuperscript{162} This brings to mind Jewish folk songs, creating a spectral dance that combined with the war theme evokes the Nazi ghettos. Finally, Elphick himself describes the solo cello line in the second theme of the original movement from the quartet as “tantalizingly folk-like, leading to speculation that this melody could be a Polish or Jewish folksong” (FIGURE 125).\textsuperscript{163}

![Figure 125: String Quartet No. 4, mvt. 2, mm. 13-17](image1)

Notice how the klezmer-like cello line is presented simultaneously against a variation of the war theme. An identical melody also makes its way into the second section of the \textit{Kaddish} Symphony, albeit slightly later, in violin 1, celli, and bass (FIGURE 126).

![Figure 126: Kaddish Symphony, R17, mm. 6-11](image2)

Just like in FIGURE 125, the klezmer-like line sings out in the low strings while the war rages above it. The war theme is thus suffused with Jewish references and klezmer harmonies. The

\textsuperscript{162} Elphick, “The String Quartets of Mieczyslaw Weinberg,” 95.

\textsuperscript{163} Elphick, “The String Quartets of Mieczyslaw Weinberg,” 130.
combination of the two evokes a painful reminder of the violence, but also a sense of hope, that the klezmer cello, though faint, refuses to be broken despite the war raging against it.

The klezmer line threads through the war theme for several lines until the opening theme returns in a violent brass fanfare, punctuated militaristically by timpani and bass drum (Figure 127).

![Figure 127: Kaddish Symphony, R17, mm. 18-20](image)

After this, the klezmer theme returns alone, taking over the oboes, clarinets, and saxophones in a moment of triumph (Figure 128).

![Figure 128: Kaddish Symphony, R18, mm. 1-3](image)

Yet, the moment is short lived, as the war theme soon returns. The klezmer line, war theme, and initial militaristic, percussive motive alternate throughout the rest of the movement in a continuous struggle.

I would be remiss not to mention a second self-quotation Weinberg includes in the second Allegro molto section: a direct reference to the second movement of his 1960 Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 73 that first appears in R21 of the Kaddish Symphony (Figures 129 and 130).
Fanning does not elaborate on the significance of this quotation, and after both closely listening, studying the score, and reading what little literature exists on this sonata, I too am unsure of its semantic role in the symphony, though I am inclined to believe there is one. Fanning does, however, note that this was the last substantial work Weinberg composed for piano, and that “it is somewhat remarkable that in the remaining 36 years of his life he composed no music of significance for his own instrument.”

This I leave this question to the reader for further contemplation.

As the section progresses, the orchestra grows ever more intense, and its harmonies become dense and fiercely chromatic. Then, shockingly, the crazed war theme surges upwards and gives way to an utterly foreign wail of the chorale at the section’s climax in the clarinets, horns, and strings (Figure 131).

\[164\] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 97.
Figure 131: Kaddish Symphony, R.25, mm. 6-7

The chorale has broken through the storm in a stunning moment of clarity, sobbing twice before falling to the violence. The harmony is identical to the original chorale, untransposed: F minor – C minor – G\textsuperscript{sus4} – Bb minor (+C) in both repetitions. Recalling that in our analysis we purely label chorale chords in the Kaddish Symphony via pitch collections, though the bass of the G\textsuperscript{sus4} chord in Figure 131 is D, we indeed consider it a G\textsuperscript{sus4} chord. Significantly, this is only the second time thus far in the entire Kaddish Symphony that the chorale has matched the original, though the previous occurrence in Figure 99 from the first Largo was transposed up a semitone. Thus, this is the first time in the Kaddish Symphony that the chorale has ever truly matched the untransposed original. Doing so amplifies the overwhelming qualities of love, loss, grief, guilt, and memory the chorale was imbued with in its journey through “Matka,” Diary of Love, Symphony No. 18, and Otche nash. Yet, unlike the hymnal lament that the chorale assumed in the first movement – and indeed, in all the other works we considered that it appears in– now the chorale has been sped up aggressively, perfectly in sync with the war theme. Suddenly, we are transported from a violent, yet unspecified, war, to the very specific devastation of the gunshots ringing in the ghetto in Łódź as the mother wails for her son at his grave. The war from Symphony No. 18 has arrived in Warsaw and in Łódź, from a terror not fully formed to a tangible horror in the ghetto where Weinberg’s family spent their last days. Weinberg’s words
from Symphony No. 18 again ring through here: he had no choice to bring war into his music. It was a decision “dictated by my fate and by the tragic fate of my family. I see it as my moral duty to write about the war, and about the terrible things that happened to people in our century.”

Immediately after, the chorale struggles to break free for a third time in the flutes, oboes, saxophones, horns, trumpets, and piano, elongated in a suspended cry as the heavy chromaticism in the strings, clarinets, and piccolo trumpet (in D) attempts to bury it (FIGURE 132). (Again, since our analysis of the chorale is predicated on pitch collections, the D in the bass of the G\textsuperscript{sus}\textsubscript{4} chord does not impact how we label it).

![FIGURE 132: Kaddish Symphony, R.25, mm. 8-9](image)

Yet, the increasing chromatic dissonance in the strings quickly prevails, choking the chorale into silence. Even by the fourth chord, key voices from the first three chords (piano and alto sax)

---

\textsuperscript{165} Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 129.
have fallen away. The moment is incredibly significant: this is the last time the chorale appears in the entire *Kaddish* Symphony.

As the chorale collapses, silenced through the remainder of the symphony, the quote from Piano Sonata No. 6 takes over, shrieking in the high winds (Figure 133).

The klezmer cello line then returns, elongated and accented in measured super triplets, taken up now by the entire orchestra (Figure 134).

It is now harmonized with dissonant, unsettling parallel fourths, both perfect and augmented. The dance-like rhythm is gone. A solo cello klezmer dancer no more, it is as though the klezmer theme has surged up in a last, desperate rebellion against the war theme. The struggle between these two motives is evident in mm. 5 and 8 of R25 in Figure 134. Critically, though the *Kaddish* Symphony is formally dedicated to those who perished in the Warsaw ghetto, Weinberg
attributed the symphony specifically to “the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto” in his interview with Nikitina.¹⁶⁶ This struggle between the klezmer line and the war theme seems to reenact that final, failed, eleventh-hour rebellion.

This metaphor is particularly poignant as immediately after, at R26, the aggressive theme from the section’s opening in Figure 121 surges up, cutting off the klezmer line completely. In the chaos that follows, the orchestra coalesces into a cacophony of militaristic percussion in the timpani, piano, and low strings, and trills in the winds, brass, and high strings, as though a rain of gunfire (Figure 135).

![Figure 135: Kaddish Symphony, R27, mm. 4-5](image)

Shortly thereafter, the orchestra falls into an extended, terse silence, leading us into the third Largo section. The quietness is punctuated brutally by a single bass drum gunshot, a pickup to the following beat where the full orchestra wails synchronously on a B minor chord (Figure 136; only part of the orchestra is shown for the sake of example).

¹⁶⁶ Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 1.”
For a moment, it seems the chorale may be reappearing, transposed to B minor – the battle lost, the mother sobbing at the grave of her child. Yet, the chorale never progresses past the first chord, and the low brass enter with the shadows of a self-quotation from the third movement of Weinberg’s 1971 Sonata for Solo Double Bass, Op. 108. This sonata is Weinberg’s only work for solo double bass, written in six days and with no dedication, though Fanning believes it is likely he had bassist Rodion Azarkhin in mind.\textsuperscript{167} Fanning describes the third movement as a “quick march” (FIGURE 137).\textsuperscript{168}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figures/figure136.png}
\caption{Kaddish Symphony, R27, mm. 13-14}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figures/figure137.png}
\caption{Sonata for Solo Double Bass, Op. 108, mvt. 3, mm. 1-22}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{168} Heyes and Fanning, “M. Weinberg - Sonata Op. 108 for Solo Double Bass.”
The entire movement is centered around this quotation, though it does not immediately appear verbatim to the original. It begins as a variation in the opening mournful brass solo cutting through the sustained B minor chord in the strings (Figure 138).

![Figure 138: Kaddish Symphony, R28, mm. 1-2](image)

The cannon-like timpani at the end of Figure 138 heralds repetitions of this motive in various voices, until fragments of the true quotation are taken up by double bass, trumpets, and trombones, both solo in the klezmer orchestra style, that play around the theme in a jaunty dialogue.

![Figure 139: Kaddish Symphony, R29, mm. 7-11](image)

Fragement of the theme are broken up by groaning, increasingly dissonant sequences of chromatic pitch collections in Figures 140–142, in subdued, elongated versions of the gunshots from the first Largo section beginning in Figure 98.

![Figure 140: Kaddish Symphony, R29, m. 3](image)
It is an echo of the war sounds from the first Largo, a dark reminder that even in the brief respite of the klezmer rebellion, the violence remains, always waiting. This motive will return with great significance in the final Lento section.

At last, the solo double bass erupts with the entire, unadulterated quote from the Op. 108 sonata (FIGURE 143).

It is unclear if the Op. 108 sonata has personal significance to Weinberg, as there is nothing obviously Jewish about it or noteworthy circumstances it appears to be tied to. Notably, though,
Weinberg significantly slows down the quote in the *Kaddish* Symphony. Here, it seems to resemble the klezmer *freylekh* dance. According to Steven Weintraub, *freylekh* resembles a “bouncy walk – with a step on the strong beat, and an upward bounce on the offbeat: 1 and 2 and….”\(^{169}\) The *freylekh* dance is often accompanied by the *freylekh* klezmer musical form, which Weintraub describes as “happy walking tempo, characterized by a clear 2/4 or 4/4 feel, with light, tripping melodies and 16th note passages.”\(^{170}\) The third Largo is marked at \( \textit{j}=52, \) certainly a walking tempo. Though the meter changes frequently in the *Kaddish* Symphony version of the double bass quote, to the listener it maintains the same 2/4 metric structure as the original version. This fulfills Weintraub’s requirements of the 2/4 “feel.” Furthermore, the melody is buoyant, suffused with sixteenth notes, landing on the beats and ricocheting up from the off beats. It appears to fall perfectly in line with the *freylekh* klezmer music and dance forms. Drawing upon Weinberg’s personal history, the solo double bass can further be envisioned as a hesitant klezmer dancer finding his steps in the *freylekh* on the streets of pre-war Warsaw, which fits perfectly with Grigory Frid’s memory that in Weinberg’s youth “he played waltzes and freyleks at Jewish weddings.” \(^{171}\)

Suddenly, the march of the double bass is joined in duet with a Bb clarinet that wails a klezmer tune above it, perfectly in sync. The double bass, the hesitant klezmer dancer, has invited the clarinet to burst forth with the melody after the dancer has set the stage. It is suffused with the telltale glissandi and pitch bends of the “laughing and wailing” *krekhts* inherent to klezmer, intended to model the human voice (Figure 144).\(^{172}\)

\(^{169}\) Weintraub, “Klezmer ‘Gaits.’”
\(^{170}\) Weintraub, “Klezmer ‘Gaits.’”
\(^{171}\) Ludmila Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 4”
\(^{172}\) For instance, see: https://youtu.be/cRBApWrUvoU?t=280 at 5:37.
Notice that the tune is simultaneously a clever reworking of the child’s theme from the Mahler, a realization that dampens the exuberant jig of the *freylekhs* with the child’s grief and desperation. The child’s voice has materialized in the eerily human wail of the klezmer clarinet. The chromaticism at the beginning of the clarinet solo, passed smoothly from the double bass, soon settles two measures before R32 into a slight variant of the Phrygian dominant scale (i.e. the Ahavah Rabbah mode), the most standard of the klezmer modes. When viewed from the perspective of a Western major scale, the Phrygian dominant scale can be described as $1 - \flat 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - \flat 6 - \flat 7 - 1$, with the telltale augmented second from $\flat 2 - 3$. In this case, the scale is built on Bb. There is a slight inconsistency in that a C$\natural$ appears in both measures (i.e. $4\natural$) of Figure 144, but in both cases it immediately resolves to C$\flat$/B$\natural$ (i.e.$\flat 2$)—the C$\natural$ can therefore be interpreted as a chromatic neighbor tone. Furthermore, according to ethnomusicologist Moisei Beregovsky, the majority of *freylakhs* are indeed in Ahava Raba, thus reinforcing the double bass solo and duo with the clarinet as a *freylakhs*.\(^{173}\)

The continually strengthening klezmer line subsequently reaches full force in the fourth Presto section that Fanning describes as “short and brutal.” The solo clarinet melts into a frenetic tutti orchestra that desperately screams out this same melody, sped up considerably. Repetitions of the three motives in Figures 145-147 constitute the majority of the section. The Mahler theme

is so inundated with additional chromaticism as to be nearly unrecognizable (its clearest presentation is not until the third motive in Figure 147).

**Figure 145:** *Kaddish* Symphony, R32, mm. 9-10
It is as though when faced with the full force of the klezmer orchestra’s final attempt to survive, the child’s plea from the Mahler is nearly obscured. The vitality of the klezmer musicians abounds, and the anguish of the child is momentarily quieted. Notice the unique call-and-
response structure in each of the motives, and the notable emphasis on the upbeats in the bass line. Furthermore, each of the repeated phrases is two or four beats, or four to eight beats if we consider the eighth note to be the metric unit. The Presto section thus appears to emulate a *honga*, a Moldavian klezmer line dance featuring “repeated 4 or 8 bars motives in eighths” that resembles the *bulgarish* discussed in the third movement of the Cello Concertino in Chapter 2.\(^{174}\) The *honga* is further characterized by sixteenth note passages and arpeggios, as well as “sharp upbeats,” all of which are core qualities of the Presto section.\(^ {175}\) Itzhak Perlman’s recording of a traditional *honga* from his CD “In the Fiddler’s House” clearly reveals these similarities.\(^ {176}\) Furthermore, Fanning notes that Sara, Weinberg’s mother, grew up in Kishinev (today, Chișinău), the capital of the USSR-controlled state of Bessarabia that would later become the Moldavian Soviet Republic, and finally the modern-day Republic of Moldova.\(^ {177}\) Thus, it is not only possible that Weinberg was familiar with the *honga* from his childhood in his father’s theater, but the allusion to the *honga* may have been made with Sara specifically in mind, a tribute to his mother’s past and memory. The *honga* continues in all its frenzy until suddenly, at the section’s climax, the Op. 108 sonata quote cuts through powerfully for the first time since the third Largo section, interjected regularly by chromatic fragments from the *honga* (FIGURE 148).

---


\(^ {175}\) “*Honga* (LKT),” Jewish Music Research Centre, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, accessed April 17, 2022, [https://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/content/honga-lkt](https://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/content/honga-lkt); Weintraub, “Klezmer ‘Gaits.’”

\(^ {176}\) See: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efhUAA3O2Pc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efhUAA3O2Pc). Notice the similarities to the *Presto*: accented upbeats in the bass line, sixteenth note runs, and repeated eight-beat phrases.

\(^ {177}\) Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 77.
The klezmer musicians have triumphed for a brief, glorious moment. The war has receded, the gunshots have abated. This again may be emblematic of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Left with no other options, the Jews in Warsaw fought with everything they had, and for a short time managed to hold their own. Yet, just as in the brutal aftermath of the uprising, the klezmer orchestra lasts scarcely longer than a minute before it is replaced with the passionate wail of the high strings in a repeat of the motive from Figure 111 in the first Largo section (Figure 149).

Not only is the motive quoted rhythmically, but it also occurs on the same note (E), albeit an octave higher. This takes us back to that moment from *Otche nash* where Figure 111 originates.
from. Mother and child have just been ejected from their final possible haven in their old
apartment and are forced back into the icy night, where they are accompanied by the child’s line
from the Mahler. Recall that in Figure 111, it is as though the solo violin clings desperately to
that last note of the Mahler, unwilling to rescind that final, frantic hope before death greets them
in the freezing night. Now, with this same quote, it is as though the klezmer orchestra
desperately grips onto life, unwilling to accept the certain fate that awaits them, just as the
leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were aware of the darkness they barely kept in check.

After the repeated E’s, the strings are cut off into silence, and a solo violin thinly emerges
in a weakening attempt to revive the Op. 108 quote to no avail (Figure 150).

![Figure 150: Kaddish Symphony, R36, mm. 10-12]

This brings back vivid memories of the violin’s failed effort to resuscitate the Chopin in Figure
114 from the opening Largo. The darkness has returned, the rebellion has lost its fury, and hope
is fast receding in the murky dissonance of the strings that blends seamlessly into the fifth
Andantino section, which Fanning aptly describes as a “stricken wasteland.” For the first time
in both Otche nash and the Kaddish Symphony, the mother’s line from the Mahler lied appears,
opening the Andantino section on a faraway, keening xylophone cutting preternaturally through
the B major hum of the strings below (Figure 151).

![Figure 151: Kaddish Symphony, R38, mm. 1-8]

178 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music."
In the lied, the mother cries “Wait, only wait, my beloved child!” every time this motive appears (Figure 152).\(^{179}\)

![Figure 152: Mahler, Das Irdische Leben, mm. 7-14 (the mother’s response)](image)

The mother has finally answered her child, her response every bit as grim as the child’s plea. Her line is passed around the orchestra to other solo instruments. The first echo comes from the slightly more substantial solo violin pizzicato, with the xylophone interjecting at the end, and her line is finally solidified by the bass clarinet, with the same interjection now in the pizzicato violin. The child’s cry from the first Largo, the immediacy of the war from the second Allegro molto, the klezmer-infused child’s cry from the third Largo, and the honga klezmer rebellion from the fourth Presto have all fallen away into a grim and empty void. We have entered some other realm now, an eerie place shaped by weariness and despair, and all that is left is the mother’s supplication to wait just a moment longer, to resist the darkness for one more second.

Immediately after this, the child’s refrain “Mother, ah mother, I am starving” responds in its klezmer guise from the third Largo and the fourth Presto in a solo oboe duet (Figure 153).

![Figure 153: Kaddish Symphony, R39, mm. 2-10](image)

\(^{179}\) Stokes, “Das Irdische Leben (1892).”
It is mournful and heavily subdued, devoid of the life it embodied in the klezmer rebellion of the previous sections. The vitality of the Jewish klezmer musicians has transformed into the pleading of the child and the desperation of the mother. Their voices echo in the vastness of the quiet suffusing the movement, grasping for each other in the darkness.

The mother’s response morphs smoothly into the child’s continued cry, taken up by the same three solo voices (xylophone, pizzicato solo violin, and bass clarinet) as before (FIGURE 154).

FIGURE 154: Kaddish Symphony, R39, m. 10 – R40, m. 8

Just like the solo violin’s failed attempt to resuscitate the Chopin quote in FIGURE 114 and the Op. 108 sonata’s klezmer line in FIGURE 150, so the flutes try and fail to pick up the klezmer-infused child’s line from the Mahler in FIGURE 155.

FIGURE 155: Kaddish Symphony, R40, mm. 10-13

Their somber duet cedes to a different variation of the child’s line in the solo piccolo trumpet in FIGURE 156.
Note that this is the same variation on the child’s line that we saw frequently in the first Largo section (for instance, in Figure 100), and it is the first time this particular variation has reappeared since then. The flute duet returns to echo the piccolo trumpet, and the violins enter in one more attempt to reanimate the klezmer child’s line.

Each attempt at revival is shorter and weaker than the last (consider the progression through Figures 153, 155, and 157), and this is the final one. The klezmer version of the Mahler never again returns in the symphony. We have come full circle, from the brief, eleventh-hour moment of hope in the Presto, to the despair from the mother and son’s fruitless flight in the prison city of Odessa in Otche nash. Over the eerie hum of the strings, in that suspended moment of shock in the aftermath of violence, mother and child are wrapped in a cocoon of longing and quietness.

The solo violin then enters again with the mother’s response in tentative, anguished arco (Figure 158).

This time, however, the line begins to break down, groaning in dissonance starting in the second measure of the figure. The ethereal realm where the mother and child’s voices have echoed thus far in the section is beginning to fracture. As the violin trails off, reality returns in full force in the sudden, shocking fortissimo of the strings (Figure 159).
Notice how the second and third measures of Figure 158, the moment where cracks began to form in whatever ethereal medium the mother’s and child’s voices were floating in, are repeated again in Figure 159, but this time with the brutal force of the violent reality that surrounds them.

Immediately after, the child’s line rings powerfully throughout the entire orchestra (Figure 160).

Notice that this is a self-quotation from within the Kaddish Symphony itself, as well as from Otche nash. This passage originally occurs in Figure 93 in the first Largo section, during the
initial extended quote from *Otche nash*. It comes from the scene where mother and son stand freezing by a small fire moments after they have escaped certain fate in the ghetto. The mother burns documents she keeps in her pocket and stares blankly as they crumble (see Figure 94). As the child screams painfully to his mother in the lied, we have simultaneously returned to that moment of the destruction of self, that tipping point where the documents that give mother and son an identity, a place in society, turn to ash. Then, unlike in the first Largo or in *Otche nash*, instead of the chorale the mother’s response rings out in passionate, tumultuous triplets.

![Figure 161: Kaddish Symphony, R43, mm. 7-10](image)

Wait, she cries, just a moment longer. Yet, wait for what? The literal words of the Mahler indicate sustenance, but here one can extrapolate that she pleads for the child to hold on to his humanity for another second, to that innate sense of self that burned in *Otche nash* like so many books did in the Nazi book burnings. The mother’s line continues to grow in intensity, until the orchestra coalesces in accented, rhythmic synchronization (Figure 162).
The combination of the rhythmic synchronicity with the *molto ritенно* makes her line ever more emphatic. The high winds shriek out the soul-piercing remnants of her phrase, her final, pained cry before measured gunshots in the tabor and tambourine choke her into silence at the end of Figure 162.

With this, we enter the black, wrenching final Lento section of the symphony, a section that Nikitina calls “a tragic cry for all living things.” The low, opening rumble of percussion immediately gives way to the tolling of a bell, a sound strikingly similar to the cathedral bells in *Otche nash*. The church bells peal throughout the film, but notably the single clang that repeats in the *Kaddish* Symphony both opens and closes the film against the image of the cathedral (Figure 163).

---

180 Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”
Recall that based on Nikitina’s analysis, each peal of the bell portends danger. This is the first time the bells have made their way into the Kaddish Symphony. The final stage of the symphony is thus built on a premise of darkness and peril, a warning that the final hour is near. As the toll of the bell rings out in the timpani, bass drum, tam-tam, piano, and strings, the brass section enters with a quote from the Mahler lied – one we have never heard thus far (FIGURE 164).

For the first time, the remainder of the child’s line has made its way to the symphony. Recall that previously in the symphony, as well as in Otche nash, the child’s line was limited to its first half: “Mother, ah mother, I am starving.” In FIGURE 164, the child’s refrain is finally complete: “Give me bread or I shall die.” The two musical forms of the original end of the child’s line from Das Irdische Leben are shown in FIGURES 165 and 166.
The motives are essentially the same, though the shape of the second version is the one that matches the *Kaddish* Symphony. Regardless, all appearances of this motive in the Mahler correspond to the same words, except for the one shown in Figure 167.

Unlike the beginning of the child’s line, as well the beginning of the mother’s refrain, that have frequently been referenced throughout the symphony, rather than match the same phrase each time in the lied, the latter half of the child’s line also corresponds to the words “The child lay dead upon the bier.”¹⁸¹ A “bier” is a mobile stand that holds a coffin or corpse prior to the final burial. It is the deceased’s penultimate destination before their final resting place. In thus referencing this motive from the Mahler, Weinberg is layering a double meaning: even as a final, desperate hope resounds in the child’s cry, we know that all is already lost. Hope lies dead in the coffin, the battle forfeited before it began.

Immediately after the child’s cry resounds, the war theme returns for the first time since the second *Allegro molto*. Recall that before, the theme was engaged in a constant struggle with the desperate rebellion of the klezmer line, that, though faint, refused to be broken despite the war raging against it. This is not the case when the war theme reappears in the final Lento. Now,

¹⁸¹ Stokes, trans., “Das Irdische Leben (1892).”
the valiant klezmer cello line that resisted the war has completely disappeared, silenced into oblivion (Figure 168).

The war has returned, the rebellion is crushed. The child lies dead in his coffin, the bells are tolling death and destruction. The Lento is a vessel of despair and bitter endings. It grimly faces the violent truth that concludes all the stories Weinberg knew in the dark portrait of his past and tortured memories.

The latter half of the child’s line, heralded by the tolling of the bells, alternates in ostinato dialogue with the war theme for several minutes, until the child’s wail screams an extra time, elongated. This gives way in Figure 169 to the succession of accented chromatic pitch collections seen in Figures 140 and 142 in the third Largo, those arco chords that are nearly a perfect reproduction of the pizzicato gunshots from Figure 98.
In the silent aftermath of the violent machinery, the solo clarinets venture tentatively through the void, thinly crying the second half of the child’s line that corresponds to both “Give me bread or I shall die” and “The child lay dead upon the bier” in the Mahler (Figure 170).

![Figure 170: Kaddish Symphony, R47, mm. 1-6](image)

It is as though we have returned to that preternatural, heavenly realm we briefly ascended to in the fifth Andantino in that suspended moment of shock, a place where the boundary between life and death hangs in balance. This is enhanced by the unbroken hum of the low strings on F# throughout this entire section, as though paused in time, or in a realm where time has no meaning.

The clarinets then fall away into the quiet. Through that frigid silence descends the eerie, haunting voice of the wordless solo soprano (Figure 171).

![Figure 171: Kaddish Symphony, R48, mm. 1-4](image)

Notice the instruction “сзади оркестром” (also in German as “hinter dem orchester”). This translates to “behind the orchestra.” The soprano’s voice is thus disembodied, an otherworldly presence whose source is left unseen. This is the first time since Otche nash itself that the soprano has returned. She enters with an echo of the clarinets, crooning the end of the child’s line with the indicated “ah” syllable, and then returns to the beginning of his line in the second measure, precisely as the solo violin did in both Otche nash and in the first Largo section of the symphony. This contrasts with Otche nash, where she never sung the Mahler and was also accompanied by a chorus. Recall that Otche nash, Nikita concludes that the chorus is a symbol of
“humanity, experience and consolation.”

No chorus backs the soprano in the Kaddish Symphony, no remnant of humanity or consolation. Furthermore, in the soprano’s final appearance in *Otche nash*, she sung the Lord’s Prayer. By now giving the soprano the Mahler and removing any references to Christian prayers, Weinberg thus removes the Christian overtones that were requisite for the plot of *Otche nash*.

The soprano’s voice evokes imagery of an angel beckoning the child to heaven, the child who lies dead upon the bier. We are now in the aftermath of the horror, emerging from the immediate violence of the war theme and guns, bombs, or some other weapon of mass destruction embodied by the ostinato chromatic pitch collections. The angel has descended to care for the souls left behind. It is as though Weinberg is calling for the souls of the Jews murdered in Poland to rest, to ascend peacefully to Heaven. He is saying Kaddish for both the children and the parents; the angel in the music carries them both. Soon, she is joined by the solo clarinet in the end of the child’s line (Figure 172).

![Figure 172: Kaddish Symphony, R48, mm. 5-6](image)

It seems that the souls of the children are responding to her call, rising up to meet her in a tentative dialogue before falling away. The soprano picks up the clarinet’s failed line, repeating the Mahler violin quote from *Otche nash*, until she is joined again in duet by the solo clarinet (Figure 173).

![Figure 173: Kaddish Symphony, R48, 11-12](image)

---

182 Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”
Immediately after, the solo violin echoes this same motive, but fragmented and dissonant. The solo clarinet sings the end of the child’s line, alone, and the violin picks up the beginning of the line again. As the clarinet responds with the rest of the line, the violin again echoes beneath it, a thread of dissonance in the smooth exchange between the clarinet and the angel, like a memory of the pain that no longer has meaning in this elevated realm (Figure 174).

![Figure 174: Kaddish Symphony, R48, 13-17](image1)

The dissonant interjection of the violin resembles the phrase in Figure 158, when the ethereal void in the fifth Andantino first began to fracture back into reality. Here, that does not happen just yet. Instead, the violin falls away, and the clarinet murmurs ostinato triads as the wordless soprano floats above with fragments of the second half of the child’s line (Figure 175).

![Figure 175: Kaddish Symphony, R49, mm. 5-10](image2)

Then, for the first time, instead of circling back to the beginning of the child’s line, the soprano continues to the mother’s line (“Wait, only wait, my beloved child!”), now enunciating it with the more emphatic “la, la, la” rather than the softly breathed “ah” of before. She is echoed almost inaudibly by the supranatural tones of the marimba (Figure 176).

![Figure 176: Kaddish Symphony, R49, mm. 13-16](image3)
The angel carries with her the lost souls, enacting the entire dialogue between mother and child, parents and children, in a monophonic lament. They are bound together in the darkness by the thread of her song, floating insubstantially in the void expanse.

The soprano, clarinet, and solo violin murmur the entire Mahler sequence once again, the soprano lingering alone on the final note. As she fades into silence, for the first time since the initial Largo section in Figure 113, the Chopin quote reappears, struggling to continue before falling into silence (Figure 177).

Again, just like in Figure 114 from the first Largo, the violins attempt to revive the theme, but fail in dissonance.

Pressed between the pleas of the mother, the cry of the Jews of Poland—of the family Weinberg left behind, of the sister whose shoe broke on the way—comes full circle. From the beginning in the graveyard in Łódź, to the end as the soprano angel beckons the souls to heaven, Weinberg never forgets Poland—his home, his memory, and the trauma he forever bore.

The failed Chopin gives way to an extended, terse pause, which is broken with an extended version of the mother’s line, now played on solo harmonium (Figure 179).
This is somewhat of an odd instrument for Weinberg to choose, as it is not one I have frequently encountered in his works. Notably, however, recall that *Otche nash* does feature a harmonium as far as my ear can discern, though musically its material differs significantly. The harmonium in *Otche nash* accompanies the motive from FIGURE 115. (See FIGURES 116 – 119 for a summary of where the harmonium appears in the film).

As the mother’s line begins to dissolve, the harmonium’s upper voice and other solo instruments leap to hold onto it (FIGURE 180).

![FIGURE 180: Kaddish Symphony, R52, mm. 8-13](image)

They pass the same phrase around to each other, unable to continue the line. The piccolo trumpet’s initial attempt is tentative, a dynamic step below the *ppp* of the harmonium from FIGURE 179. Each subsequent repetition grows more substantial, with a brief dynamic plateau in the solo violin where the mother’s line is eerily pitched an octave higher in harmonics. Finally, the rhythm grows staggered and slow, fading into the atmosphere as the line trails off sleepily in the marimba. The chords in the harmonium below, previously oscillating around the same B major chord in FIGURE 179, now steadily ascend chromatically with each iteration. It is as though the mother has finally ascended to heaven, leaving the barren, twisted landscape below to join the soprano angel in a higher realm of souls. Indeed, this is the last time we ever hear the mother’s line in the symphony.

---

183 The higher octave of the solo violin harmonics is confirmed in this recording: [https://youtu.be/8-6ek2xa6Cc?t=633](https://youtu.be/8-6ek2xa6Cc?t=633).
Her line is succeeded by a recurring fragment from the beginning of the child’s line, softly crooned in the clarinets and solo violin. The wordless soprano then reenters with the latter half of the line, sighing “ah” for each syllable (FIGURE 181).

![FIGURE 181: Kaddish Symphony, R52, mm. 13 – R53, m. 5](image)

The harmony is peaceful and consonant, cocooning the child, shushing him to sleep. It is a caress, a final goodbye, as the child slips into dreaming, floating upward on the wings of the angel. Like his mother before him, this is the final appearance of the latter half of the child’s line in the symphony. The soprano holds tight to the last note in FIGURE 181, refusing to let go (FIGURE 182).

![FIGURE 182: Kaddish Symphony, R53, mm. 6-9](image)

This is the same motive as in FIGURES 111 and 149. The soprano clings to the child, growing more and more animated. She sings alone, each syllable enunciated strongly by a “la,” and the piccolo raises her final note to an even higher octave, as though they have pierced the heavens themselves.

With this, the storm breaks loose. The soprano cuts off, the last we will hear of her in the symphony, as though she has fully ascended from this early realm, carrying with her the souls of the departed. The full orchestra replaces her, crashing down to reality and echoing her final rhythm from FIGURE 182 in a series of dense, thorny chromatic pitch collections (FIGURE 183).
Then, arrestingly, out of the chaos emerges the klezmer line from the Op. 108 double bass sonata for the first time since the third Largo section (FIGURE 184).

Though at **fff** and **ffff** dynamics, it is nearly inaudible, muted by the violent dissonance in the rest of the orchestra. Back in the throes of grim reality, Weinberg leaves us with the unalterable truth of violence. The klezmer line is brief and valiant, an echo, a memory of the courage and vitality of its failed rebellion in the third Largo and the fourth Presto sections. Its presentation here matches its appearance in FIGURE 148, where an elongated, punctuated version of the Op. 108 theme interjects the *honga* klezmer dance in the fourth Presto section. In FIGURE 148, the motive is in continuous dialogue with fragments of the *honga*, itself a highly chromaticized klezmer version of the beginning of the child’s line. The same happens here, though with the rhythm elongated (FIGURE 185).
The Op. 108 klezmer line does not reappear as in Figure 148. It is replaced instead by the grim, measured sequence of chromatic pitch collections in the full orchestra (Figure 186).

These were encountered earlier in this section, in Figure 169. Recall this is the also same motive that first appeared as pizzicato gunshots in the first Largo section. Though they are no longer pizzicato, they seem to embody that same sense of violent machinery. They are the porters of death, the fascist executioners.

The chromatic collections alternate with the brief honga quote of the first few notes of the child’s line from Figure 185, descending lower and lower into the bowls of the earth. Both the pitch collections and the child’s line grow softer and softer. The child’s line becomes slower and weaker, floating over the tortured chords first on solo piccolo and finally on piccolo trumpet.
Below the piccolo trumpet, the chromatic collections grind in the double bass, in the lowest reaches of the lowest instrument in the orchestra, before fading away completely as the tormented moan of the harmonic B in the solo cello above them dims into nothing (FIGURE 187).

The silence they leave behind rings ever louder, deafeningly so, as the void they descend in implodes with the immensity of the devastation the symphony bore witness to. As Nikitina puts is, “there is no resurrection, no calm, only scattered ashes.”184 The tortured memories and crushing grief are all that remain in the aftermath of the horror.

The bleak, profound story enmeshed in the Kaddish Symphony is thus revealed. The symphony opens with music from Otche nash, taking us through the prison city of Odessa as the mother and son struggle and fail to hide before freezing to death in the grim and thankless night. The chorale, a melody of Weinberg’s own imparting love, tragedy, memory, the grief and guilt of the survivor, the unbreakable bond between parent and child, and the immortality of spirit, sobs in ostinato dialogue with the solo violin wailing the child’s line from the Mahler lied: “Mother, ah mother, I am starving.” With the chorale, we are taken to the cemetery in Łódź, the penultimate destination of Weinberg’s family before their murder in Trawniki. Eventually, instead of the child’s weeping refrain, the fragment of the Chopin ballade comes in, a symbol of

184 Nikitina, “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg, no. 5.”
Weinberg’s past and homeland, and the music that shaped his childhood. The Chopin chokes off into dissonance, the solo violin failing to revive it. Instead of the chorale, the music is overcome with the war theme from Weinberg’s String Quartet No. 4, with a nearly inaudible klezmer cello line threading defiantly beneath it. The chorale breaks through suddenly at the climax of the war theme, its final appearance in the symphony, before ceding to the desperate rebellion of the klezmer line that is quickly subdued by the war. A freylekh klezmer dance from Weinberg’s Op. 108 Sonata for Solo Double Bass follows, and a klezmer clarinet melody joins in duet, itself a heavily chromaticized version of the child’s line from the Mahler. Following this, a powerful, desperate tutti klezmer band picks up the clarinet’s melody in the Moldavian honga klezmer line dance in a musical revolt reminiscent of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The child’s line is still present, but harder to hear.

Yet, the klezmer band’s attempt at rebellion is cut off abruptly, and in the suspended void of shock that remains, the eerie, crystalline sound of the xylophone cuts through the silence with the mother’s response from the Mahler: “Wait, only wait, my beloved child!” Various solo instruments pick up the line, which transforms into a dialogue between child and mother that culminates in the tutti orchestra. The low tolling of a bell, that symbol of darkness from Otche nash, heralds the first appearance of the remaining half of the child’s line. The child begs for bread, a story we already know ends with him lying lifeless upon the bier. The war theme reemerges, this time untempered by the valiant klezmer cello beneath it. The war consumes all, overtaking the music, until it cuts off abruptly into a muted, desolate landscape, and the wordless soprano angel swoops in. She sings the Mahler theme again—the quote from Otche nash with the child’s line—but also sings the line of the mother. She beckons them to heaven, parents and children both, until she is interrupted with the Chopin quote appearing for the first time since the
opening. Again, the phrase fails to finish, and the violin fails to resuscitate it. A solo harmonium enters with the mother’s line, and she ascends to heaven. The soprano angel carries the child up with her.

The harmony then dissolves into forceful dissonance with the gunshot-like sequences of chromatic pitch collections. Brief memories of life and resilience from the klezmer-like Op. 108 double bass sonata quote and the honga interject as the collections descend ever lower, growing nearly inaudible until they are groaned a final time by a sextet of double basses in the lowest possible reaches of the orchestra. We are left with a silence that is thunderous and brutal. There is no light left in the aftermath for those who must live on with the grief.

_A Cryptic Message in the Symphony’s Final Bars: 1 246 35_

Beginning in R55 m. 1 in the published score from Peermusic, the Kaddish Symphony closes with an extraordinarily odd ordering of the double basses, as seen in FIGURE 187: 124635. Conductor and orchestrator Eric Lindholm initially noticed the sequence, revealing that Weinberg ordered the double basses like so “for no reason that I can come up with – in fact I have never seen anything like this.” He then conjectured that the digits might have some hidden significance.¹⁸⁵ That these numbers close a work that meant so much to Weinberg and spanned so many years certainly gives credence to this conjecture. Further research led me to the original manuscript, where the numbers are grouped distinctively and seemingly arbitrarily into three staves as 1 246 35 (FIGURE 188).

---

¹⁸⁵ Shapiro, Interview with Professor Eric Lindholm.
**Figure 188**: *Kaddish* Symphony, R54, m. 10 – R55, m. 11

Figure 188 also reveals that the double bass ordering in the published Peermusic score from Figure 187 incorrectly begins at R55 m. 1. The source manuscript confirms that the sequence actually begins at R55 m. 6. Visually, this means that Weinberg waits until the beginning of the final line of the manuscript to break up the double basses, supporting Lindholm’s conjecture that Weinberg encodes some hidden message in these terminal bars. When I inquired about this with Victoria Bishops, she responded that she is “equally curious,” but unfortunately is not aware of any meaning attached to these numbers.\(^\text{186}\)

---

\(^{186}\) Shapiro, Interview with Victoria Bishops.
Notably, Weinberg also orders instruments strangely elsewhere in the symphony. Specifically, he does so in the horns, such as in R32, m. 8, the final measure of the third Largo section, in which he labels the horns 124356. Curious horn orderings appear in others of Weinberg’s works as well, such as in the first page of his opera *The Passenger* (1968) where they are ordered 132546. However, it is common for horns to have atypical orderings, stemming from the long tradition of observing a distinction between high-horn and low-horn writing. This is not the case for double basses, and that they are grouped unevenly into three staves in Figure 188 is even more unusual. The strange double bass ordering is in fact the only shuffled part ordering in the entire *Kaddish* Symphony aside from the horns. All the horn orderings can be explained from the orchestral tradition; the double basses in Figure 188 cannot be rationalized so easily. I searched for potential connections to addresses, phone numbers, and area codes in Poland and Russia, as well as birthdays and both train numbers and concentration camp records (although this information was extremely limited), to no avail.

I then thought the numbers could encode a message in gematria, an ancient Jewish numerology system that assigns numbers to Hebrew letters. Several systems for gematria have developed over centuries, but the oldest and most frequently used is the Mispar Hekhrehi (“absolute” or “normative”) method. Here, each letter in the Hebrew alphabet is given a value from 1 to 400 (the first nine letters are assigned 1-9, the next nine receive 10-90, and the final

---

187 Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 188.
188 According to Lindholm, early orchestral writing normally used two horns, with the second player pitched below the first. A tradition developed where low (including solo) parts would go to the second player, not the first. When the orchestra grew over time, composers usually wrote for two pairs of horns: high (horns 1 and 3) and low (horns 2 and 4). As orchestras fully expanded, horns became fully chromatic instruments in F, and the high/low horn distinction (odd-numbered horns for high, even for low) was frequently (albeit inconsistently) honored, particularly in Mahler and Strauss. Mahler also considered the stamina of the players. For instance, at R13 in mvt. 3 of Mahler’s Symphony No. 1, the three high horns are 1, 3, and 6, and the low horns are 2, 4, and 7, with 5 omitted completely, giving an ordering of 136247.
four are given 100-400).\textsuperscript{189} Gematria has its roots in Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism. Indeed, the foundations of the Kabbalistic cosmological system are predicated on the philosophy that G\-d created the universe through the potency of Hebrew letters and their numerological (gematria) values. The permutations of G\-d’s name in gematria are thought to contain immense power, and it is also widely held that gematria unlocks secrets to the Torah and the universe.\textsuperscript{190}

Weinberg neither spoke Hebrew nor was overtly religiously observant throughout his life, raising the question of where he would have learned gematria. Though his family did not actively participate in religious rites, his father Shmuel was the son of “deeply religious Hasidic parents” and grew up steeped in Jewish liturgy.\textsuperscript{191} The Hasidic movement was founded upon the Kabbalistic tradition, and they “employed gematria as a tool in their mystical writings.”

Shmuel’s childhood education would thus have emphasized Kabbalah and gematria, knowledge that could easily have been passed to Weinberg.\textsuperscript{192} As an adult, though there is no documentation that he actively practiced religious rites, Shmuel conducted the Jewish Theatre Orchestra of Warsaw in over a dozen recordings of Hebrew and Yiddish songs for Syrena Records, one of the most popular Polish record companies at the time.\textsuperscript{193} In 1929, when Weinberg was ten, Shmuel led the orchestra and the famed cantor Jacob Koussevitzky in some of the most holy of Jewish prayers, including the sacred “Al Chet” confession of sins that is recited ten times during Yom Kippur services so that the Jewish people can repent to G\-d; the “Eilu Devarim” prayer that lists the Ten Commandments; and the “Leil Shimurim” (“Night of Vigil”) prayer that is the Torah’s

\textsuperscript{190} Hila Ratzabi, “What Is Gematria?” My Jewish Learning, 70 Faces Media, last modified March 22, 2019, \url{https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/gematria/}.
\textsuperscript{191} Elphick, “Biographies of Weinberg's Parents.”
\textsuperscript{192} Ratzabi, “What Is Gematria?”
\textsuperscript{193} Elphick, \textit{Music behind the Iron Curtain}, 22-23.
accounting of the night G-d delivered the Jewish people from Egypt. Against the backdrop of his father’s songs, Weinberg himself spent his teenage years playing at “traditional Jewish weddings and bar mitzvahs.” Clearly, even if Weinberg and his family were not actively observant, they embraced their religious heritage and identity.

The very fact that Weinberg titled his magnum opus symphony “Kaddish,” one of the most central and sacred prayers of the Jewish liturgy, to honor his family and other victims of the Holocaust, indicates Jewish religion played an important role in his music. If Weinberg wished to learn about gematria during the years he composed the symphony, he also could have sought out his father-in-law Solomon Mikhoels’ close friend Marc Chagall (1887-1985), the famed Jewish Belarusian-French artist. Before studying at secular institutions, Mikhoels himself received an orthodox rabbinic Jewish upbringing in Lithuania in the traditional heder, though it is unclear whether he was learned in Kabbalah. Chagall, however, was indeed versed in Kabbalah. His Jewish education began in his childhood in Vitebsk, White Russia, in the Hasidic Lubavich movement. As an adult, Chagall “studied the Bible each Sabbath afternoon in Hebrew as a boy, [and] was also influenced by Kabbalah mysticism,” which was manifested in his art.

Weinberg’s first wife Natalia Vovsi-Mikhoels describes her father Mikhoels’ and

---

194 See: [http://www.rachelnet.net/F/?func=direct&local_base=REB01&doc_number=000154694](http://www.rachelnet.net/F/?func=direct&local_base=REB01&doc_number=000154694) and [http://www.rachelnet.net/F/?func=direct&local_base=REB01&doc_number=000154693](http://www.rachelnet.net/F/?func=direct&local_base=REB01&doc_number=000154693) for “Al Chet,” and [http://yiddishmusic.jewniverse.info/weinbergshmuel/index.html](http://yiddishmusic.jewniverse.info/weinbergshmuel/index.html) for “Eilu Devarim” and “Leil Shimurim.”


Chagall’s relationship as a “mutual understanding worthy of telepathy.”

Although Weinberg and Chagall have no documented friendship, Weinberg’s admiration of Chagall shines through in a quote from Weinberg’s second wife Olga Rakhalskaya. In the final months of Weinberg’s life, “He wanted to write a work called Chagall’s Album. Although he was almost unable to move, could not get up and could hardly hold a pencil, he said that ‘if there was an order’ he would have forced himself and wrote the Chagall Album.”

Chagall is thus revealed to be both a respected figure and artistic inspiration to Weinberg. Significantly, Chagall was also alive during the first decades in which Weinberg wrote the Kaddish Symphony. It is of course possible that Weinberg may have learned gematria elsewhere, either in his childhood or from another mentor in Moscow, but Chagall certainly presents a possible source.

Returning to the 1 246 35 sequence, if we use the Mispar Hekhreḥi encoding method, א (aleph) must have the value 1. There are several Hebrew words and phrases with equivalent gematria for both 246 and 35. From these combinations, the only grammatically conceivable phrase I could ascertain was “א פסוק ל-ה.” This matches the word-for-word gematria for 1 246 35 and translates to “one verse to G-d,” where “verse” (פסוק, or pasuk) is a sacred or holy passage from a Jewish religious text (as opposed to a mundane text such as a newspaper). Note that א does not mean “a.” א is not precisely a word in Hebrew, but is understood to mean “one” from a long-standing tradition amongst Hebrew speakers to use letters in place of numbers based on their gematria values. Intriguingly, in Kabbalah, א also is thought to comprise three distinct

---


200 Nikitina: “an order, in this context, it seems to me a task that must be completed without fail, since it is not only for myself.”

201 See: https://www.torahcalc.com/gematrias/. Thank you to Yael Kirat-Curtis for helping to decode the correct Hebrew phrase from the gematria, and for the Hebrew translation.

Hebrew letters: י (yud) as the dot on top, a diagonal ו (vav) below it, and י again as the dot on the bottom (FIGURE 189).

FIGURE 189: aleph (א) as comprised of vav (ו) and yud (י)

The upper י represents G-d, in a higher ethereal plane, while the lower י represents the Jewish people who dwell in the lower, mundane world. The י connects the two realms and symbolizes the Jewish faith in G-d. Since the gematria of א is 1, the letter is also thought to represent the oneness of G-d (as seen in the famous Shema prayer: “Hear, O Israel, G-d is our Lord, G-d is One”). Additionally, since א comprises two י and one ו, on a more mystical level its gematria is also 26 (= 10 and 1 = 6, and 10 + 10 + 6 = 26). This is the same as the gematria of the Tetragrammaton, G-d’s Ineffable Name: יהוה. The gematria of ה (hay) is 5, so its follows that the Tetragrammaton has the gematria 10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26. Thus, א represents G-d’s name via the gematria.

Furthermore, א here does not mean כל (la, meaning “her” or “to her”) as would be seen in a secular text. Rather, according to native Hebrew speaker Yael Kirat-Curtis, it is really כל, an abbreviation for “to G-d.” י means “to;” י is an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton and is the accepted spelling of the Tetragrammaton outside biblical texts. One [sacred] verse to G-d also perfectly describes the Mourner’s Kaddish prayer that the symphony is named for, as it is part of Jewish liturgy and therefore a pasuk. Notably, neither G-d’s name nor the names of the

---

departed are referenced in the prayer. Death is never mentioned either, only praise of G-d from the very beginning: “Glorified and sanctified be G-d’s great name throughout the world…..” The Kaddish prayer is indeed one sacred verse to G-d, sanctifying and magnifying His name while soothing the souls of the departed. Weinberg is saying Kaddish, “one sacred verse to G-d” in the mist of the dusk and the ashes that the symphony leaves behind. We are taken briefly back to Weinberg’s own words about the chorale, the motive that is so central to the symphony: “I would say that G-d is present in everything…..” The Kaddish Symphony, at its core, is one holy verse for the souls and memories of his own family, of all the Jews murdered in the darkness with no one left to say Kaddish for them.
**Conclusion**

Mieczysław Weinberg’s compositions conceal profound insights into his lost past and family, as well as the trauma he bore throughout his life. Bishops was indeed insightful that “his entire music output turned into a requiem to the Holocaust.” Weinberg’s inner world is expressed through his music, encompassing themes of love, loss, memory, and identity. His family and his childhood, which survived solely in his heart, found a home in his music, and the burden of having lived when they did not drove much of his creative process. The works composed during the intense oppression and persecution he suffered at the hands of Stalin, including the Cello Fantasia, Op. 52 and Cello Concertino, Op. 43bis, conceal Jewish and Polish musical symbols that Weinberg disguised, likely in fear of further retaliation from the state. When listening to or performing Weinberg’s works from this period of his life, comprehending the context of their composition is crucial to attaining a deeper understanding of their musical content and the relevance of musical elements to his own life, family, and history. Though he faced no such constraints from the state during his final years, particularly as he wrote the *Kaddish* Symphony on his deathbed, the complexity of the musical symbolism in his later works requires a close analysis to comprehend the intricacy and depth of the narratives and memories they conceal.

Weinberg’s unique use of self-quotation makes for a fascinating study of musical semantics. This is a technique that persists through many of his compositions, a technique whose surface is only just scratched in this thesis. Fanning’s article “Weinberg’s ‘Cooking-Pot’, with a Note on Quotation” paints an intricate web of self-quotations throughout Weinberg’s musical output. In this article Fanning reveals that Weinberg believed that “often the rational principle does not dominate, only melody,” indicating that many of his self-quotations are absolute, with no extramusical connotations. It seems unlikely that the chorale in the *Kaddish* Symphony has no
real semantic interpretation, given its consistent thematic use and Weinberg’s own statement about it, but the extensive network of self-quotations that Fanning lists calls for a close study of those that may impart a story, and those that are purely melody. As Fanning notes, this accounting of self-quotations is not complete, and a further study of Weinberg’s prolific output is necessary to form a more complete picture.

A particularly interesting avenue this thesis could lead to is a study of Weinberg’s magnum opus opera *The Passenger* (1968). This opera is based on Auschwitz survivor Zofia Pozmysz’s novel recanting her experiences in the camp. Her book was inspired by an incident in 1959 while traveling in France’s *Place de la Concorde*, when in a moment of terror, she thought a German tourist’s voice was that of her former guard. In the novel, a middle-aged German woman named Annaliese “Liese” Kretschmer is traveling on a ship with her husband Walter, from Hamburg to his new diplomatic position in Rio De Janeiro sixteen years after WWII. Leise was formerly an SS guard at Auschwitz, a gruesome past that Walter is unaware of. Suddenly, Leise spots a woman named Marta, whom she recognizes as a prisoner from the camp. Walter is appalled to discover his wife’s secret, yet Liese does not feel guilty for her crimes, as she believes that she treated the prisoners well. She claims she saved Marta’s life and allowed her to speak to her fiancé, Tadeusz, who was imprisoned in the male section, in order to use Marta to control other inmates. Throughout the plot, the narrative oscillates between Liese and Walter’s conversation and scenes in the concentration camp. In the flashbacks to the camp, Liese ultimately realizes that Marta is covertly staging a resistance amongst the prisoners, and Liese sets out to break her, going so far as to mandate Tadeusz’s murder. Even then, she is unable to
break Marta, who insists on remaining with her fellow inmates when Liese is offered a transfer. In the present, the mystery woman departs from the boat, her identity never confirmed.205

Weinberg’s music to The Passenger contains a host of both external and self-quotations, including a quote from Bach’s Chaconne in D Minor at the climax of the Auschwitz narrative. When Tadeusz is ordered to play his favorite waltz by the commander, he instead plays the Bach, which breaks down into dissonance. Opera director David Poutney believes this is a means of “throwing an apogee of German culture in the face of its Nazi betrayers.”206 Weinberg also self-quotes throughout the opera, such as from his Sándor Petőfi Songs, Op. 70. He quotes from a song whose poem, Petőfi’s “If,” presents the scenario in which G-d allows the poet to choose his manner of death: “in autumn at sunset to the accompaniment of birdsong and in the name of love, or… in spring, in wartime and in the name of freedom.”207 Fanning also notes a plethora of other self-quotations in the opera, including works cited in the Kaddish Symphony, such as “Matka” from Symphony No. 8 and a waltz from The Warsaw Alarm-Bell. Clearly, The Passenger overlaps musically with the Kaddish Symphony, and their thematic content is also similar. The Passenger would thus provide a natural continuation of the study initiated in this thesis.

Even now, as was seen with the Op. 43bis Cello Concertino, new works of Weinberg’s are being discovered. For instance, a stunning Largo for violin and piano, the lost original version of the second movement of Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Op. 15, was uncovered and premiered by Linus Roth in 2019. Weinberg reused this movement for both the last song of

206 Romanska, “Mieczyslaw Weinberg's Opera ‘The Passenger.’”
207 Fanning, In Search of Freedom, 114.
his Op. 110 song-cycle *Lulling the Child* and the second movement of his Flute Concerto No. 2, Op. 148. Another fascinating discovery is two reorchestrations of Weinberg’s Aria for String Quartet, from his early years in Poland just before the war. Posthumously, settings from 1947 for both flute and piano (the Melodie for Flute and Piano) as well as for violin and piano (the second of the Songs without Words) were discovered and premiered. The continued work of musicologists and performers is vital to uncovering the hidden, acute depths of meaning infused in Weinberg’s music, to thus revitalize the memories they impart and the stories they tell.

---

208 Fanning and Assay, "His Life and Music;” Fanning, “Weinberg's ‘Cooking-Pot.'”
Works Cited


Nikitina, Ludmila. “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 1” *Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ)*, May 2021. [https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer1/lnikitina/](https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer1/lnikitina/).

Nikitina, Ludmila. “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 2” *Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ)*, May 2021. [https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer2/lnikitina/](https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer2/lnikitina/).


Nikitina, Ludmila. “Moses (Mechislav) Weinberg: Through the pages of life through documents, memories, and research, no. 5” *Seven Arts (СЕМЬ ИСКУССТВ)*, May 2021. [https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer5/lnikitina/](https://7i.7iskusstv.com/y2021/nomer5/lnikitina/).


Shapiro, Ilana, and Agnieszka Lazorczyk. Interview with Dr. Agnieszka Lazorczyk. Personal, February 4, 2022.

Shapiro, Ilana, and David Fanning. Interview with Professor David Fanning. Personal, October 25, 2021.


Appendix A: Original Polish Text of Julian Tuwim’s “Matka”

Jest na łódzkim cmentarzu,
Na cmentarzu żydowskim,
Grób polski mojej matki,
Mojej matki żydowskiej.

Grób mojej Matki Polki,
Mojej Matki Żydówki,
Znad Wisły ją przywiozłem
Nad brzeg fabrycznej Łódki.

Głaz mogiłę przywalił,
A na głazie pobładłym
Trochę liści wawrznym,
Które z brzozy opadły.

A gdy wietrzny słoneczny
Igra z nimi złociście,
W Polonię, w Komandorię
Układają się liście.

II

Zastrzelił ją faszysta,
Kiedy myślała o mnie,
Zastrzelił ją faszysta,
Kiedy tęskniła do mnie.

Nabił - zabił tęsknotę,
Znowu zaczął nabijać,
Żeby potem... - lecz potem
Nie było już co zabijać.

Przestrzelił świat matczyny:
Dwie pieszczotliwe zgłoski,
Trupa z okna wyrzucał
Na święty bruk otwocki.

Zapamiętaj, córeczko!
Przypomnij, późny wnuku!
Wypełniło się słowo:
"Ideał sięgnął bruku".

Zebrałem ją z pola chwały,
Oddałem ziemi-macierzy...
Lecz trup mojego imienia
Do dziś tam jeszcze leży.
Appendix B: Diary of Love Original Polish Text

Transcribed from the original, handwritten manuscript by Dr. Agnieszka Łazorczyk

*Do Matki*

Jeszcze kiedyś o tobie napiszę,
Jeszcze kiedyś do ciebie powróczę
Teraz tobie poświęcam tę ciszę,
Którą mi dałaś, już dawno nucąc

Ale ja tobie pieśni nie śpiewam
Ja nie potrafię. Ja już nie umiem
Niech tobie szumią schylone drzewa nad Oświęcimiem w głuchym poszumie

Ja tylko jeszcze potrafię w szlochu płynąć nad tobą spóźnionym czasem
i zostać nocą twojego prochu -
szumem, ciemnością i lasem.

*Do córki*

„Stoi na stacji lokomotywa, ciężka, ogromna i pot z niej spływa…”
I była dziewczyna, mała dziewczyna
z wierszem Tuwima.

Była maleńka jak wiotkie drzewko -
bróźka, jodełka, jabłonka.
Mała dziewczyna z zieloną śpiewką
jak łąka.

a gdy słyszała świst lokomotyw,
to chyba z dali.
Mała dziewczyna – muzyczny motyw
z sznurkiem korali.

I odjechała mała dziewczyna
w ciemnym wagonie,
ale nie było w wierszu Tuwima o niej.

Ani nie było o tamtych kominach,
co dymią,
kiedy przyjeżdża mała dziewczyna
do Oświęcimia.

do Oświęcimia.

Ani o matce nie było, ni o mnie,
gdy ucichł kół turkot,
a mała dziewczynka, co dali ją w płomień,
to moja córka.

Do ojca

A gdy odjeżdżał mój ojciec w podróż ostatnią
a gdy odjeżdżał z matką i dwoma synami
Pewnie był taki surowy ze zmarszczką na czołe
jak zawsze, zawsze

Ale na pewno nie wiedział, że pozostanę jedynym
by świadczyć o jego zadumie nad sprawą życia i śmierci
by świadczyć o głodzie serca,
o bólu niemego cierpienia, cierpienia,
o którym mówić nie mogę,
o którym mówić nie trzeba.

tak jakby ginąc mi kazał
poprzez komorę gazową:
żyj i milcz i cierp.

Do żony

Nie mów mi wierszy o ciemnym wagonie
nie mów mi wierszy o parowozie;
tak nogi marzną, tak marzną dłoń
w obozie.

Nie mów mi wierszy, raczej bądź cicho
raczej zamilknij i pozwól spocząć
jeszcze cię widzę, jeszcze oddycham,
koła się toczą.
Powiedz mi raczej o luminalu
czy ciężko zbudzić, kiedy już zasnę
a kiedy spłonę, a kiedy mnie spałą
czy szybko zgasię?

Powiedz mi jeszcze o dziecku raczej -
popatrz jak duszno w ciemnym wagonie;
czy jesteś pewna, że nie zapłacze nim spłonie?

Urna ta będzie z gliny palonej ziemi ojczystej
z Polski, z kraju
Prochy rodziców we wnętrzu trwają -
i moich braci, córek i żony.

Urna ta będzie zwykła, jak dzbanek
Z małą pokrywą, a nie jak wazon
aby w niej trwała gęsta mgła gazu
sina jak ranek
jak noc bolesna
prochy rodziców we wnętrzu trwają.
Appendix C: Diary of Love Original Russian Text

Transcribed from the original, handwritten manuscript by unknown\textsuperscript{209} with further corrections by Dr. Lenny Fukshansky

Матери

Стану рифмы слагать о тебе я, 
стаму думой стремиться к тебе я. 
А теперь тишину посвящаю, 
что мне в детстве дала напевая.

Петь же песни тебе я не стану 
Я не умею, уже не могу я, 
пусть лишь тихо склоняются клены 
над Освенцимом глухо стеная.

Я лишь сумею с большим опозданием 
Плыть над тобою в тяжких рыданьях. 
И на мгновенье стать твоим прахом, 
Шорохом, лесом и мраком

Дочери

«Поезд огромный к станции прибыл, 
Вот он стоит, задыхаясь от дыма» 
Об этом читала крошка-девчонка в книжке Тувима.

Мчались вагоны в книжке Тувима 
к морю и веткам магнолий. 
В книжке волшебной, 
В книжке зеленой как поле.

Вдруг услыхала свист паровоза, свист настоящий. 
Поезд огромный к станции прибыл красивый, шипящий

Вот уезжает крошка-девчонка в темном вагоне, 
нету ни слова в книжке Тувима о ней. 
Нет в этой книжке о трубах высоких как башни, 
Как увозили крошку-девчонку в Освенцим страшный

в Освенцим страшный. 
О том, как колеса замолкли, 
о маме там нету ни строчки,

\textsuperscript{209} See: https://archive.org/stream/holocaust_na_territorii_sssr/holocaust_na_territorii_sssr_djvu.txt
А девочка-крошка, что брошена в пламя — то моя дочка.

Отцу

Как в последний путь отец отправлялся,
Как отправлялся с матерью и сыновьями,

Был он наверно такой же суровый и
строгий как вечно

вечно.

Но он не ведал, наверно, что я один уцелею,
Чтоб мысли его о жизни и смерти миру поведать.

Чтобы поведать о боли и сердца немного страданьях.

страданьях

О чем сказать не могу я, о чем невозможно.
Будто бы сам он велел мне сквозь камеры с газом,
взывая: Живи, молчи, страдай ...

Жене

Нет, не читай мне о темном вагоне,
Нет, не читай мне о гибельном мраке.
Там ноги мерзнут, мерзнут ладони в бараке.
Нет, не читай мне. Пусть будет тихо.
Лучше замолкни и дай отдохнуть,
Еще тебя вижу, ведь сердце не стихло.

Долгий какой путь.
Лучше скажи мне о зелье снотворном,
Чтоб не проснуться ночью ненастной.
Если я вспыхну в пламени черном, быстро ль погасну?
Лучше скажи мне о дочери нашей.
Видишь, как душно в темном сарае.
Есть ли надежда что не заплачет, сторая.
Будет та урна из глины жженой
Родины милой, родимой земли.
И в ней прах родителей жизнь продолжает

дочери, брата, сестры и жены.
Будет та урна обычным кувшином
с маленькой крышкой, простая, как жбан,
чтоб в ней сохранилась густая мгла газа
как ночи страданий и серый туман.
В ней прах родителей жизнь продолжает.
# Table of Weinberg’s Compositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Year(s) Composed</th>
<th>Soviet Publication Info</th>
<th>Modern Publication Info</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cello Concertino, Op. 43bis</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td></td>
<td>2017, Peermusic Classical, New York &amp; Hamburg</td>
<td>Composed the year of Mikhoel’s murder; the original blueprint for the Op. 43 Concerto; Jewish themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cello Concerto, Op. 43</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Moscow, 1956</td>
<td>2003, Peermusic Classical, New York &amp; Hamburg</td>
<td>Composed the year of Mikhoel’s murder; revised (likely forced) and premiered by Rostropovich in 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cello Fantasia, Op. 52</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Moscow, 1953</td>
<td>Unpublished, Sikorski</td>
<td>Polish folk themes; composed the year of Weinberg’s arrest and imprisonment by Stalin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 73</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td></td>
<td>2013, Sikorski</td>
<td>Last substantial work ever composed for piano, Weinberg’s own instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otche nash</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unpublished, but the film is still available on YouTube</td>
<td>Boris Ermolaev’s Perestroika-era Soviet Holocaust film</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Displaying the quotes from Weinberg’s Peermusic works happened with kind permission by Peermusic Classical, New York & Hamburg.

### Appearances of the Chorale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Movement/Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 8, Op. 83, Polish Flowers</td>
<td>Mvt. 8, “Matka”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary of Love, Op. 87</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 18, Op. 138, War – there is no word more cruel</td>
<td>Sect. 1: Adagio – Allegro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otche nash</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 21, Op. 152, Kaddish</td>
<td>Sects. 1: Largo and 2: Allegro Molto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Warsaw Alarm-Bell</td>
<td>Unsere, inclusion of chorale is based on Weinberg’s interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>