UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MIECZYSLAW WEINBERG'S WORKS FOR CELLO AND ORCHESTRA: A PERFORMANCE GUIDE WITH EMPHASIS ON A COMPARISON OF THE CONCERTO FOR CELLO AND ORCHESTRA, OP. 43 AND CONCERTINO FOR CELLO AND STRING ORCHESTRA, OP. 43B

A DOCUMENT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By Hui-Hsuan Su

Norman, Oklahoma

2026

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A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Jonathan Ruck, Chair

Dr. Anthony Stoops

Dr. Yena Lee

Dr. Qiong Wang

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ABSTRACT

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996) was a Polish-Jewish composer who fled to the Soviet Union during World War II. Despite growing scholarly interest in his music, he remains one of the most understudied composers of the twentieth century, with significant gaps remaining in the existing literature, leaving considerable gaps in the existing literature. In particular, his works for cello and orchestra lack detailed and in-depth research.

This study focuses on three of his works for cello and orchestra: the *Concertino*, Op. 43b, the *Concerto*, Op. 43, and the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, with the aim of providing a comprehensive performance guide for cellists in preparing and interpreting these works. Drawing on existing literature, each work is examined through historical and theoretical analysis, including an exploration of Jewish and Polish folk influences on Weinberg's compositional style. Comparative analysis of Op. 43 and Op. 43b is also employed to examine the compositional similarities and differences between the two works.

A primary finding of this research is the identification of Polish and Jewish folk elements in these works. These elements have not been clearly analyzed in existing scholarship. Furthermore, a comparative analysis reveals the structural and melodic differences between the two works, offering performers a clearer understanding of how to approach each work.

This research hopes to promote an understanding of Weinberg's music. By highlighting these three cello works, the author hopes to encourage future scholars to explore in greater depth the areas not covered in this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my professor, Dr. Jonathan Ruck, for his guidance, support, and encouragement throughout my studies and performances at the University of Oklahoma. I am truly grateful for everything he has done for me.

My sincere thanks also go to my committee members — Dr. Anthony Stoops, Dr. Yena Lee, and Dr. Qiong Wang — for their time and helpful feedback on this dissertation.

Special thanks to the Director of the School of Music, Dr. Jonathan Nichols, and Associate Director Dr. Christopher Baumgartner for their support during my time at the University of Oklahoma. I would also like to thank Neil Whyte for being a wonderful supervisor and a good friend.

Finally, I want to thank myself. There were many difficult moments when I wanted to give up, but I kept going. I am proud that I made it to the end.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction
A. Statement of Purpose 1
B. Need for the study 3
C. Procedures/Methodology 4

II. Review of the Literature 6
A. Historical & Biographical Context 6
B. Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra 7
C. Concertino for Cello and String Orchestra and Cello Concerto 9

III. Weinberg: Life, Context, and Musical Identity 12
A. Early Life and Escape (1919-1943) 12
B. Moscow: Shostakovich and the Three Cello Works (1943-1956) 14
C. Later Years in Moscow (1956-1996) 21
D. Polish-Jewish Musical Identity 26

IV. Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 52 28
A. Historical Context and Background 28
B. Analysis 30
1. The Genre of Fantasy 30
2. Folk Elements 32
C. Why Not "Polish Fantasy"? 41
D. Performance Implications 43

V. Cello Concerto, Op. 43 and Cello Concertino, Op. 43b 48
A. Historical Context and Background 49
B. Analysis 50
1. Concertino vs Concerto 50
2. A Comparative Analysis 52
3. Folk elements 67
C. Performance Implications 73

VI. Conclusion 76

VII. Bibliography 79

LIST OF MUSIC EXAMPLES

Example 1 35

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, orchestra part, mm. 1-2

Example 2 36

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part, mm. 54-56

Example 3 38

Polonaise rhythm, after Grove Music Online

Example 4 40

Wedding song, Lublin region. From Grove Music Online

Example 5 40

Lydian Scale

Example 6 41

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part, *Allegro con fuoco*, mm. 172-176

Example 7 41

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part*, Adagio*, mm. 154-156

Example 8 45

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part*, Andantino leggiero*, mm. 34-35

Example 9 45

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part*, Andantino leggiero*, mm. 154-156

Example 10 46

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part*, Allegro con fuoco*, mm. 177-178

Example 11 46

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part*, Allegro con fuoco*, mm. 234-237

Example 12 46

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part*, Allegro con*

fuoco, mm. 292-293

Example 13 47

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, cello solo part, Allegro con fuoco, m. 25, two different bowings

Example 14 60

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Concertino for Violoncello and String Orchestra*, Op. 43bis, third movement, orchestra part, mm. 76–78

Example 15 60

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, third movement, orchestra part, mm. 76–78

Example 16 61

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Concertino for Violoncello and String Orchestra*, Op. 43bis, first movement, orchestra part, mm. 15 and 20

Example 17 61

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, first movement, orchestra part, mm. 15 and 20

Example 18 61

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Concertino for Violoncello and String Orchestra*, Op. 43bis, and *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, first movement, m. 24

Example 19 62

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Concertino for Violoncello and String Orchestra*, Op. 43bis, third movement, mm. 45-49

Example 20 63

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, third movement, mm. 45-49

Example 21 70

Mieczysław Weinberg, *Concertino for Violoncello and String Orchestra*, Op. 43bis, and *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, second movement, cello solo part, mm. 7–12

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to provide a performance guide for Mieczysław Weinberg's (1919-1996) three works for cello and orchestra: the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra, Op.52, Concertino for Cello and String Orchestra, Op,43b,* and *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op.43*. Specific attention will be given to providing future performers, teachers, and scholars with a comparison of the closely related *Concertino* and *Concerto*. Today, the traditional cello repertoire consists of standard works that continue to attract audiences to attend concerts and inspire cellists to learn and perform them. However, there is also interest from performers, teachers, and audiences in adding new, recently discovered, or underappreciated works to this body of music.

Scholars and performers are still in the process of discovering Mieczysław Weinberg. While he had a well-known friend and mentor in Dmitri Shostakovich, he did not achieve great fame because of this connection in his lifetime. Some of his music was not performed until after the composer's death. While Weinberg is gradually gaining recognition on performance stages and in the recording studio, most

of his compositions lack detailed scholarly analysis and discussion.

The *Cello Fantasy, Op. 52* was composed between 1951 and 1953 Weinberg's father-in-law was assassinated in 1948, and he and his family were under government surveillance. In 1953, he was arrested in a Soviet anti-Jewish campaign and remained imprisoned until a letter of support from Shostakovich facilitated his release. The *Cello Fantasy* was premiered in November 1953, but only in its version for cello and piano.

In contrast, the *Cello Concertino, Op. 43b* was composed in August 1948 and completed in just four days. The work remained undiscovered until 2016, meaning it was neither performed nor published during Weinberg's lifetime. Scholars have suggested that the political climate of 1948 compelled the composer to withhold the work from publication or performance. Government authorities demanded that artistic works reflect Soviet national identity, and the *Concertino*'s prominent Jewish elements might have been interpreted as an open act of dissatisfaction against this political and cultural oppression. Seemingly unwilling to take this risk, Weinberg set the work aside for nearly eight years. While he would later use many thematic elements of the *Concertino* as a basis for the *Concerto, Op. 43*, the two works are now considered independent. A primary purpose of this document will be to, through

thorough analytical comparison, deepen the understanding of the relationship between these two compositions.

Of Weinberg's three works for cello and orchestra, the *Cello Concerto, Op. 43* is the most well known. While based closely on the *Cello Concertino, Op. 43b*, the *Concerto* is nearly twice the length of the earlier work and should be considered an independent composition. The *Concerto* was published in 1956 and premiered in 1957 by the great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich.

This document aims to provide cellists with essential information about Weinberg's three works for cello and orchestra: the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra, Cello Concertino*, and *Cello Concerto*. Each work's historical context, musical structure, thematic content, and specific demands for performing cellists will be explored. Special attention will be given to comparing the closely related *Concertino* and *Concerto.* By offering a thorough performance guide, this document will serve as a beneficial resource for cellists and musicians seeking to expand their repertoire beyond the standard cello repertoire and gain understanding and appreciation for the works of Mieczysław Weinberg.

Need for the Study

Despite the growing recognition of Mieczysław Weinberg's music, there remains a lack of understanding and scholarly writing concerning his works for cello and orchestra. Most Weinberg research focuses on other instrumental music or his relationship with Shostakovich. Among the three works for cello and orchestra, the *Cello Concerto, Op. 43* has received the most attention. There is a notable lack of resources dedicated to either the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestr*a or the *Cello Concertino, Op. 43b*, particularly because this *Concertino* was rediscovered in 2016.

Weinberg was a composer with multiple identities, and his diverse background influenced his music. He was a Jewish composer, born and raised in Poland, who escaped to the Soviet Union during World War II. His works often include Jewish, Polish, and Russian folk music elements. Sources have noted that the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* contains Polish influence, but there is very little detailed analysis supporting this observation. Similarly, scholars have noted that, while Weinberg's *Concerto* is based closely on the *Concertino*, the earlier work is more overtly Jewish. This document will provide a much needed, thorough comparison of the *Concerto* and *Concertino* to further the understanding of the relationship between them, the composer's intentions in writing them, and their value as individual works of art.

Procedures/Methodology

This study focuses on Weinberg's three works for cello and orchestra: the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra Op. 52*, *Concertino for Cello and String Orchestra, Op. 43b*, and the *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 43.* Drawing upon and synthesizing existing related literature, historical context for each work will be provided. Theoretical analysis will be applied to each work in the study to explore compositional elements such as formal structure and thematic content. Special attention will be given to identifying the presence of Jewish and Polish influences in these pieces. Concerning the *Concertino, Op. 43b* and *Concerto, Op. 43*, comparative analysis will be used to provide cellists, teachers, and scholars a clear picture of how these two works relate on a compositional level. Finally, each work will be discussed from the standpoint of a cellist. Performance implications will be drawn from historical and analytical findings, and specific techniques and challenges for the performing cellist will be identified.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical & Biographical Context

David Fanning's *In Search of Freedom* (2010) is the most specific scholarly resource for Weinberg's biography in the English language. Fanning, a professor at the University of Manchester specializing in Soviet-era compositions, offers the most comprehensive study of Weinberg's life to date, focusing on his influences, his relationship with Shostakovich, and the political challenges he faced under the Soviet government. As a foundational source, it is broadly cited by researchers as their primary reference. This study draws on Fanning's biographical framework to contextualize the three cello works examined here, particularly those composed during the politically turbulent period between 1948 and 1953, which significantly shaped the stylistic characteristics and musical language of these works.

However, Fanning's book offers limited musical analysis of the cello works specifically, and because it was published prior to the discovery of the *Cello Concertino, Op. 43b* in 2016, it contains no discussion of this work or its relationship to the *Cello Concerto, Op. 43*. Furthermore, while Fanning provides essential biographical context, his book does not engage deeply with compositional analysis.

The present study therefore builds upon Fanning's biographical foundation while extending the discussion into areas his work does not address.

Daniel Elphick's "The String Quartets of Mieczysław Weinberg: A Critical Study" (2016) offers a broader analytical perspective, exploring Weinberg's compositional style through his seventeen string quartets. Although it does not address the cello works directly, Elphick's examination of Weinberg's harmonic language, formal structures, and the influence of Shostakovich provides useful comparative insights for the present study.

Ilana Shapiro's senior thesis "Music Transcending Tragedy" (2022) is notable in that it is the only extant work that discusses both the *Cello Fantasy, Op. 52* and the *Cello Concertino, Op. 43b*, including an interview with David Fanning. While limited in scope as an undergraduate thesis, it provides a useful point of reference for the present study, which aims to offer a more systematic and detailed analysis of both works.

Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra

Although Polish music is only one component of the chapter, scholarship specifically linking Weinberg's compositions to Polish folk music remains limited. While the scholars generally agree that the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* contains

Polish elements, no detailed analysis has been offered to support this observation. This section therefore draws more heavily on sources concerning Polish folk music in order to construct the necessary analytical framework.

Ada Dziewanowska's book *Polish Folk Dances and Songs* (1997) and the Polish Music Center at the University of Southern California (USC) serves as the most important references for defining these traditional elements. Dziewanowska's book introduces the five Polish national dances — *Polonez*, *Mazur*, *Kujawiak*, *Oberek*, and *Krakowiak* — including their history, regional differences, and musical characteristics. Among them, the *Kujawiak* is particularly relevant when considering Polish folk influences in Weinberg's *Fantasy*.

Dziewanowska's detailed descriptions of rhythmic and metric characteristics provide the analytical basis for identifying parallel features in the work. Both references offer clear information regarding traditional Polish musical and dance traditions. The Polish Music Center website complements this by offering additional context on modal characteristics, melodic tendencies, and regional variations within Polish folk traditions. While neither source addresses Weinberg directly, together they provide the analytical framework needed for a systematic examination of the Polish folk elements in the *Fantasy*.

Furthermore, three studies —Mami Hayashida's (2007) "*From Sonata and Fantasy to Sonata-Fantasy*," Jakub Dariusz Rompczyk's (2023) research on Weinberg's Symphony No. 8, Kwiaty polskie, and James Bakst's (1962) "*Polish National Influences in Chopin's Music.*" — serve to link the fantasy genre with Polish traditions, deepening the understanding of Weinberg's musical language and cultural elements. Additionally, Yun Jung Choi's dissertation on Paderewski's *Polish Fantasy*, Op. 19, serves as an analytical model for the present study, demonstrating how the fantasy genre can be combined with Polish dance characteristics — a structural parallel directly relevant to Weinberg's *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*.

Both Danuta Gwizdalanka and David Fanning have noted the presence of Polish folk elements in this work. Gwizdalanka's liner notes for the album *Weinberg: Cello Concerto, Fantasy, Concertino* (CPO, 2019) observe that the *Fantasy* displays a distinctly Polish character, while Fanning's *Gramophone* review of the same recording identifies specific Polish dance elements. However, neither source offers detailed analytical discussion, which this chapter aims to provide.

Concertino for Cello and String Orchestra and Cello Concerto

The central focus of this chapter is the comparative analysis of the two works; therefore, the musical score will be the primary source. The scores used are the

perusal scores provided by Peermusic Classical via the ISSUU platform. While these versions are available for digital consultation, they cannot be downloaded.

Scholars frequently mention that these two works contain distinct Jewish musical elements, but these connections remain largely unexplored. To identify these features, this study draws on Yale Strom's *Shpil: The Art of Playing Klezmer* (2012) and Patricia Pierce Card's (2002) "*The Influence of Klezmer on Twentieth-Century Solo and Chamber Concert Music for Clarinet"* (2002). Strom's book provides insights into Klezmer music's historical and stylistic characteristics, including musical examples with clear notation that are valuable for recognizing Jewish idioms in music. Card's dissertation identifies specific Klezmer characteristics in concert music, offering a model for applying this analytical approach to Weinberg's works. It should be noted that neither source discusses Weinberg's cello works directly; however, the musical characteristics they describe — including rhythmic patterns, ornamental practices, and structural conventions — can be applied as analytical tools to identify similar features in the *Concertino* and *Concerto*. Since no dedicated scholarly study of the Jewish elements in these two works currently exists, this study relies on these broader resources to construct its analytical framework.

Aleksandra Pereverzeva's 2019 dissertation "Mieczysław Weinberg: Concerto

for Cello and Orchestra and 24 Preludes for Solo Cello" provides the most directly relevant existing analysis of the *Cello Concerto, Op. 43*, highlighting its incorporation of Klezmer elements and the influence of Shostakovich. However, Pereverzeva was most likely unaware of the newly rediscovered *Concertino* at the time of her research, as her study does not mention it. The present study therefore extends her work by incorporating the *Concertino* into the analysis and examining how the two works relate to each other.

Agnieszka Nowok-Zych's article "Mieczysław Weinberg and the Category of Borderland" (2020) offers a broader interpretive perspective, arguing that Weinberg's three cultural identities — Polish, Jewish, and Soviet — made it difficult to classify his music within a single national or stylistic category. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding how all three cello works reflect multiple cultural influences simultaneously.

CHAPTER III

WEINBERG: LIFE, CONTEXT, AND MUSICAL IDENTITY

A. Early Life and Escape (1919-1943)

Mieczysław Weinberg (also known as Moisey/Moishe/Mojsze Vainberg/Vaynberg/ Wajnberg) lived through one of the most difficult periods in European history. Born in Poland in 1919, the first half of his life and music were shaped by war, loss, and displacement. Both of Weinberg's parents were Jewish from Moldavia. His father Shmuel (also known as Szmuel or Samuil Weinberg) arrived in Poland in at the outbreak of war in 1914 with a touring theater group, but there is little information available about his mother.[1]

Mieczysław Weinberg's first music teacher was his father, who collaborated with the Yiddish theater. Weinberg taught himself to play the piano at a young age, and he often substituted for his father during performances at the theater. When Weinberg was twelve, he began taking formal piano lessons with Ms. Maciulewicz. Because of his talent, Ms. Maciulewicz thought it would be best if he studied at Warsaw Conservatory. Weinberg continued his piano lessons at the Warsaw Conservatory in

[1] David Fanning, *Mieczysław Weinberg: In Search of Freedom* (Hofheim: Peermusic, 2010), 16.

1931 with the notable pianist Józef Turczyński (1884-1953). Weinberg also wrote his earliest compositions during this period, but he never received formal composition lessons until he moved to Minsk in 1941. Two mazurkas, signed with the name Mieczysław, were among his first works.[2]

While studying with Józef Turczyński, Weinberg had the opportunity to meet the virtuoso pianist Josef Hofmann, who was touring Warsaw. Hofmann invited Weinberg to study at the Curtis Institute of Music, where Hofmann worked as the director, and promised to assist with the visa.[3] However, the plan was changed due to the outbreak of World War II. If Weinberg had been able to emigrate to the United States, his future life and career would have certainly been different.

On September 6, 1939, five days after the German invasion of Poland, Weinberg returned home late from the Café Adria, where he worked as a pianist. A radio broadcast ordered all men to leave the city due to the approaching enemy. The next morning, he and his sister headed east on foot, but because her shoes were badly hurting her feet, she decided to return home. This would be the last time Weinberg

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[2] Isabel Herzfeld, "And the Pain Remains Forever: Portrait of Mieczysław Weinberg," *Berliner Philharmoniker*, accessed October 31, 2025, https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/stories/portrait-of-mieczyslaw-weinberg/.

[3] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 18.

ever saw his family. Weinberg faced numerous harrowing experiences during his escape. Upon crossing the Soviet border, he was officially renamed from "Mieczysław" to "Moisey," a name he would use for the next forty years. He settled in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, and he was allowed to continue his musical studies at the Minsk Conservatory with tuition being paid by the state.

Weinberg studied with Vasily Zolotarev (1872–1964), a pupil of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. This period marked Weinberg's first formal training in composition, as he had not previously received official instruction. Weinberg had his graduation concert on June 21, 1941. Just a few hours later, the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union. Weinberg had to escape from Minsk immediately. It was not easy for him because his personal documents did not give him permission to leave the city. Fortunately, he was able to get on one of the trains leaving Minsk on the first day of the war. However, he remained in Tashkent illegally due to a lack of official authorization. Initially, finding employment was difficult; however, he eventually secured a position coaching singers at the Uzbek Opera Theater. During his time in Tashkent, Weinberg met his future wife, Nataliya Vovsi-Mikhoels, who was the daughter of Solomon Mikhoels, a well-known Soviet Jewish actor.

B. Moscow, Shostakovich, and the Three Cello Works (1943-1955)

In 1941, Weinberg heard Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 for the first time. Before this encounter, he had believed that Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism represented the most advanced musical styles of the twentieth century. Upon discovering Shostakovich's music, Weinberg described the experience as "the discovery of a continent."[4]

There are two accounts regarding their initial contact. One version suggests that Weinberg sent the manuscript of his Symphony No. 1 directly to Shostakovich. Another indicates that his father-in-law, Solomon Mikhoels, helped by having a friend deliver the score. Regardless of which story is accurate, Shostakovich was so impressed by the work that he immediately invited Weinberg to move to Moscow in 1943.[5] However, there had been two earlier opportunities for them to meet. During the wartime evacuation, Shostakovich left Moscow by train in 1941. Both Kuybyshev and Tashkent were recommended as destinations, but Shostakovich decided to disembark at Kuybyshev because he could no longer endure the long railway

[4] Silvia Suarez, "Mieczysław Weinberg: Violin and Piano Sonata No. 3 Op. 37 and No. 5 Op. 53" (DMA diss., University of Alabama, 2020), 9.

[5] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 40-41.

journey.[6] If he had continued to Tashkent, he would have met Weinberg two years earlier. Additionally, on December 6, 1942, while Shostakovich was still in Kuybyshev, he wrote to Israel Finkelstein (1910-1987), his assistant at the Leningrad Conservatory: "You have already written to me several times about the composer Weinberg, each time with great praise. It would be very interesting to get acquainted with his works. I value your taste and instinct. Could you not help me with getting to know Weinberg's works?"[7] This suggests that had Finkelstein acted on this request earlier, the two composers might have connected sooner.

Although Weinberg never formally studied with Shostakovich, their close friendship is evident in numerous ways. The two composers frequently played piano duets together. In 1953, when Weinberg was arrested, Shostakovich bravely wrote a letter to Lavrentiy Beria, head of the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), attesting to Weinberg's innocence. He also arranged to have power of attorney for Weinberg's daughter Victoria in case Weinberg's wife was also arrested. When Weinberg was released, these papers were ceremonially burned. Their relationship also included a spirit of friendly competition. In a 1964 letter,

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[6] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 31–32.

[7] Ibid., 40.

Shostakovich wrote: “Another quartet, the Tenth, was finished yesterday. It is dedicated to Moysey Vainberg [Mieczyslaw Weinberg]. He wrote nine quartets and with the last of them overtook me, since at the time I only had eight. I therefore set myself the challenge of catching up and overtaking Vainberg, which I have now done.”[8]

Between 1943 and 1947, Weinberg composed prolifically. During the first half of this period, he focused on large-scale chamber music, producing works such as the Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 12 and String Quartet No. 3, Op. 14, while the second half saw a return to orchestral and large ensemble works, including Symphony No. 2 for String Orchestra, Op. 30 and Two Ballet Suites for Orchestra, Op. 40.

Two events in 1948 marked a devastating turning point for Weinberg. The first was the murder of his father-in-law Solomon Mikhoels, and the second was the Soviet anti-formalist campaign. These events would cast a shadow over Weinberg’s life for years to come. On January 13, 1948, Weinberg was informed of the death of his father-in-law, Solomon Mikhoels, the Artistic Director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater (GOSET) and chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. While Soviet

[8] Daniel Elphick, "Weinberg, Shostakovich and the Influence of 'Anxiety,'" *The Musical Times* 155, no. 1929 (Winter 2014): 58.

officials reported the incident as a traffic accident, it was later revealed to be a targeted assassination ordered by Stalin to suppress Jewish influence. Following this event, Weinberg was placed under surveillance from 1948 until Stalin's death in March 1953.

In 1946, Andrei Zhdanov, a high-ranking official under Stalin, introduced strict rules for all Soviet artists and writers. These rules, known as the Zhdanov Doctrine, required all creative works to follow Socialist Realism. All creative work had to be positive about the Soviet Union and support communist ideas. Artists were not allowed to show Western influences or criticize the Soviet system. All art had to support Stalin's government and its ideals[9].

In February 1948, the Soviet government issued a decree condemning "formalism" in music. This policy was led by Andrei Zhdanov, the Party's chief cultural official, and targeted prominent composers such as Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Myaskovsky. Although Weinberg was not mentioned by name, he remained under suspicion due to his Jewish heritage and his close ties to these composers.

Mieczysław Weinberg composed the *Cello Concertino, Op.43b*, in 1948.

[9] Suarez, "Violin and Piano Sonata," 4.

However, until the *Concertino*'s discovery in 2016, scholars believed that 1948 was the year Weinberg composed the *Cello Concerto, Op. 43*. Even David Fanning's 2010 book *Mieczysław Weinberg: In Search of Freedom* dates the *Cello Concerto, Op. 43*, to 1948. In retrospect, the earlier composition date of the *Concertino* seems logical. Weinberg also composed the *Violin Concertino*, Op. 42, in the same year, making these two works his first essays in the sinfonia concertante genre. Unfortunately, no documentary evidence explains why Weinberg composed the *Cello Concertino* at this particular time. Most historical accounts of Weinberg in 1948 focus on the tragic events in his personal and professional life.

Due to the anti-formalism in 1948, composers were pressured to produce music that was melodic and accessible; folk elements aligned perfectly with these Soviet requirements. Between 1949 and 1953, Weinberg composed numerous works incorporating non-Russian folk elements. Notable examples include orchestral works such as the *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes*, Op. 47, No. 1 (1949) and *Polish Tunes*, Op. 47, No. 2 (1949), as well as concertante works like the *Moldavian Rhapsody* for violin and orchestra, Op. 47, No. 3 (1949) and *Kujawiak and Oberek* (Two Polish Folk Dances) for two xylophones and orchestra (1952). During this time, Weinberg drew on folk traditions deeply connected to his personal history, both Moldavian (his

parents' origin) and Polish (his childhood home).

Following Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin, cultural policies experienced a relative relaxation. David Fanning describes Weinberg's work between 1956 and 1960 as a period of "recovery and renewal" in *Mieczysław Weinberg: In Search of Freedom*. According to Fanning, during these years Weinberg "renewed his work across all the genres in which he had shown so much promise in the 1940s."[10] In 1956, the *Cello Concertino* was rearranged (or recomposed) for cello[11] and full orchestra and premiered in 1957 by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra with Mstislav Rostropovich as soloist. Although no documentary evidence explains this transformation between the *Concertino* and *Concerto,* the "renewed" may be the reason that he returned to his *Cello Concertino* to *Concerto*. Weinberg's creative focus on string instruments also continued with the *Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 2, Op. 63* (1958-1959); the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 67* (1959); and the *Sonata for Cello Solo, Op. 72* (1960).

The *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 52*, was completed in 1953[12], the final

[10] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 97.

[11] Norman Lebrecht, "Mieczyslaw Weinberg: Cello Concerto (CPO)," *my/maSCENA*, August 21, 2020, accessed December 07, 2025, https://myscena.org/norman-lebrecht/lebrechts-album-of-the-week-mieczyslaw-weinberg-cello-concerto-cpo/.

[12] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 202.

year of Stalin's reign. The work received its premiere on November 23, 1953, in Moscow, performed by the cellist Daniel Shafran with piano accompaniment in place of the full orchestra. No documentary evidence explains the circumstances of its composition. Scholars have identified Polish folk elements throughout the work, an observation that seems logical given Weinberg's prolific output of folk-based works during this period, including *Polish Tunes* (1949) and *Kujawiak and Oberek* (1952). However, Weinberg chose the simple title "Fantasy" for this work. Op. 52 is his second work bearing this title, following the earlier *Fantasy for Orchestra* (1945). Following Op. 52, Weinberg wrote no further concertante works for solo instrument and orchestra until 1960.

C. Later Years (1956-1996)

The death of Stalin in 1953, followed by Khrushchev's denunciation of him in February 1956, led to a relative relaxation of Soviet cultural policies. Following this shift, Weinberg's compositional output became increasingly diverse. He composed not only concert music, including symphonies and chamber works, but also music for ballet, opera, film, and animation.

The 1960s represented a period of significant professional achievement for Weinberg. During this decade, his works were performed by leading musicians of the

time, including David Oistrakh, Mstislav Rostropovich, and Kirill Kondrashin.[13] This decade was a significant period in Weinberg's career. During these "starry years", he composed numerous works, including Symphonies Nos. 5 through 11, while also maintaining a strong focus on music for string instruments.[14] Beyond the chamber music such as string quartets and duo sonatas, Weinberg also composed significant works for solo instruments during this period including two sonatas for solo cello completed in 1960 and 1964. In 1969, Weinberg composed another work for solo cello, the *Twenty-four Preludes*, dedicated to Rostropovich. However, Rostropovich never performed this work, likely due to the political rift caused by the Solzhenitsyn affair.[15]

His opera *The Passenger*, which Weinberg considered his most important work, was completed in 1967-1968. The story was adapted from a novel by Polish writer Zofia Posmysz, based on her own experiences at Auschwitz concentration camp. Although how Weinberg came to know this novel remains a matter of debate, the story clearly affected him deeply.[16] Weinberg adapted this story into a two-act opera,

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[13] "Weinberg," *Proper Music*, Evil Penguin EPRC0045, accessed December 11, 2025, https://propermusic.com/products/pieterwispelweyjeanmichelcharlierlesmetamorphosesraphaelfeye-weinberg.

[14] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 103.

[15] Ibid., 121–122.

[16] Nicole Gabrielle Steinberg, "Witness Bearing in Holocaust Musical Presentation: Confronting

but he never saw it performed. The planned premiere at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater in 1968 was canceled. The first public performance took place in 2006, ten years after Weinberg's death, in Moscow. The fully staged premiere finally took place in 2010 at the Bregenzer Festspiele in Austria.[17]

Between the 1940s and 1980s, Weinberg composed scores for approximately 25 films and animations. However, none of these soundtracks became as popular as *The Cranes are Flying* (1956-1970) or *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1956)[18]. Regarding Weinberg's personal life in the 1960s, Weinberg returned to his homeland, Warsaw, Poland as part of a Soviet delegation, his first visit since escaping in 1939. However, he did not feel comfortable there. Polish composers remained enthusiastic about the avant-garde music of the 1950s, a style that did not interest Weinberg. During his stay, he appeared polite and humble in his interactions, but also anxious and distant.[19] His marriage to Natalya Mikhoels ended in 1968, and he later married Olga Rakhalskaya (b. 1943), who was a college friend of Weinberg's daughter.

David Fanning describes the 1970s as the height of Weinberg's creative

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Trauma in Mieczysław Weinberg's Opera *The Passenger*" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2025), 1–2.

[17] Ibid., 3.

[18] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 103–104.

[19] Ibid., 105.

powers.[20] He composed scores for eleven films and five cartoons; this income supported his life, allowing him to continue his concert music without financial concerns. In 1971, Weinberg's second daughter was born, and his first wife and their daughter emigrated to Israel in 1972. This divorce and family emigration upset the Moscow intelligentsia. However, Weinberg's position within Soviet officialdom remained secure, as shown by the prestigious state honors he received in the following decades. From this time, his life was marked by poor health and a simpler lifestyle, but his commitment to writing music grew even stronger.

His compositions in the 1970s covered a wide range of genres, primarily ensemble music, chamber music, and operas. Significant works included a *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra* (1970), as well as solo sonatas for cello, viola, and double bass (1971). Throughout the decade, he also continued his string quartet series with Nos. 12-15. He composed four operas: *The Madonna and the Soldier* (1970-1971), *Love of D'Artagnan* (1971), *Mazl Tov!* (1975), *and Lady Magnesia* (1975). The first three operas were performed during his lifetime, while *Lady Magnesia* did not receive its premiere until 2009.

During the final two decades of his life, he faced declining health, financial

[20] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 125.

struggles, and increasing public neglect. In the 1970s, he remained active in composing and promoting his works. However, by the 1980s, although he continued to compose, he became isolated and indifferent to whether his works were performed. By this time, his social activities decreased due to his poor health and most of his musician friends had died or emigrated.[21]

Weinberg received his last honor, the State Prize of the USSR, in 1991. However, after the Soviet Union collapsed later that year, many subsidies were cut. As someone who had long relied on composing commercial music to support himself, Weinberg found these opportunities increasingly shifted to younger composers. Since he had never taken on students, he encountered serious financial problems. Even his 75th birthday passed without any ceremony from the musical community.[22]

In his last two years, he was mostly bedridden. In the spring of 1994, medicines sent by a friend briefly improved his health, allowing him to complete the piano score of Symphony No. 22; however, was never able to orchestrate it. Fortunately, the Olympia label released his music in a series of 17 CDs between 1994 and 2000. He lived long enough to witness the early releases and received the third and fourth

[21] Ibid., 143.

[22] Ibid., 159.

albums from his friend Tommy Persson.[23] His memory has been honored through numerous performances and festivals worldwide, particularly marking what would have been his 80th and 100th birthdays in 1999 and 2019.

D. Polish-Jewish Musical Identity

Weinberg had said that "Poland is my homeland, but my second homeland remains Russia."[24] After moving to Russia in 1943, he lived there for the rest of his life — over half a century. In contrast, he spent only twenty years in Poland and with his family, far less than the time he spent in Russia. Yet despite this, his music continued to draw heavily on a cultural identity rooted in his Polish origins.

His works frequently incorporated elements from multiple cultural traditions. For instance, his *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes* for orchestra, Op. 47 No. 1 (1949), drew on the folk music of Moldavia, his parents' birthplace. *Jewish Songs*, Op. 17, incorporates Jewish musical traditions, while Symphony No. 8 "*Flowers of Poland*" (1964) explicitly references Polish culture. Even in works without culturally specific

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[23] David Fanning, "Mieczysław Weinberg: A Complete Guide to the Composer's Life and Music," *Gramophone*, 2019, accessed December 18, 2025, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/content/features/mieczyslaw-weinberg-a-complete-guide-to-the-composers-life-and-music.

[24] Harlow Robinson, "The Music of Mieczysław Weinberg, Revisited and Reclaimed," *San Francisco Classical Voice*, March 18, 2025, accessed December 18, 2025, https://www.sfcv.org/articles/review/music-mieczyslaw-weinberg-revisited-and-reclaimed.

titles, scholars have identified Polish and Jewish folk music elements, showing that these influences shaped his entire musical style.

While scholars have noted these folk influences in his cello works, detailed analysis remains limited. The following chapters examine Weinberg's major cello and orchestra compositions, exploring how this multi-cultural identity manifested in his writing for the instrument.

CHAPTER IV

FANTASY FOR CELLO AND ORCHESTRA, OP. 52

As discussed in the previous chapter, Weinberg's cultural identity is reflected in his compositional language. The *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op.52 is one of Weinberg's works in which scholars have noted the presence of his Polish roots, yet no in-depth analysis of these folk elements has been offered. This chapter contributes to that discussion by examining the work's historical context, the genre of Fantasy, and the Polish folk elements present in its melody, rhythm, and formal structure, before discussing the performance implications that arise from these findings.

A. Historical Context and Background

The *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 52* is believed to have been composed between 1951 and 1953 by most scholars, though leading Shostakovich scholar David Fanning, in his authoritative book *Mieczysław Weinberg: In Search of Freedom*, dates the beginning of its composition to 1952.[25] It is unusual for Weinberg, a notably fast composer, to take two years to complete a piece. However, the years in questions were marked by political difficulties and more than justify the atypically long gestation

[25] Fanning, *In Search of Freedom*, 202.

period of the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*. After his father-in-law was murdered by the Soviet secret police in 1948, Weinberg came under surveillance and was arrested in 1953 for allegedly promoting a Jewish state in Crimea. He spent three months in prison, and Shostakovich wrote a letter to Stalin and his security chief, Lavrenti Beria in his defense.[26] Weinberg was released on April 25, 1953, following Stalin's death.[27]

Both Danuta Gwizdalanka and David Fanning have noted the presence of Polish folk music elements in Weinberg's *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 52*. Gwizdalanka, who wrote the program notes for an album *WEINBERG Cello Concerto. Fantasy. Concertino* (Borowicz)[28], observed that the *Fantasy* displays a typically Polish character. Fanning, in his Gramophone review of the same album, similarly notes that all three works carry "discreet echoes of klezmer idiom, alongside those of Polish dances," suggesting the composer's determination to remain true to his

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[26] Carnegie Hall, "Shostakovich and the Soviet State," March 11, 2021, https://www.carnegiehall.org/Explore/Articles/2021/03/11/Shostakovich-and-the-Soviet-State.

[27] Jakub Dariusz Rompczyk, "Mieczysław Weinberg's Symphony No. 8, *Kwiaty polskie* [Polish Flowers], Op. 83 (1964): A Choral Symphony Exploring Poland's History and Spirit" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2023), 20.

[28] Mieczysław Weinberg, *Cello Concerto, Fantasy, Concertino*, Raphael Wallfisch, cello; Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra, cond. Łukasz Borowicz, CPO 555 234-2, 2020, streaming audio, Naxos Music Library, accessed May 15, 2025, https://uoklahoma.naxosmusiclibrary.com/indeplayer?s=e01mXF5YDgA=&source=/streama.asp.

cultural roots.[29] However, no study has offered an in-depth discussion of the Polish elements of in this work. This chapter presents my research findings, examining in detail how Weinberg incorporated Polish folk elements into this *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*.

B. Analysis

1. The Genre of Fantasy

The term Fantasy (or *Fantasia* in Italian, *Fantasie* in German) was first adopted in the Renaissance to describe an instrumental composition whose form and invention spring "solely from the fantasy and skill of the author who created it (Luis de Milán, 1535–6)."[30] The term *fantasia* derives from the Greek word *phantasia*, and the musical form was often associated with imagination and improvisation.

Although works titled "Fantasy" may appear improvisatory in nature, many examples from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries retain clear structural elements, such as sectional forms. In the Baroque period, composers such as J. S. Bach and

[29] David Fanning, "Weinberg: Cello Concerto, Fantasy, Concertino (Borowicz)," *Gramophone*, accessed May 14, 2025, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/weinberg-cello-concerto-fantasy-concertino-borowicz.

[30] Christopher D. S. Field, "Fantasia," *Grove Music Online*, published online 2001, Oxford University Press, accessed February 17, 2026, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040048.

Georg Philipp Telemann wrote fantasias for solo instruments. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the title was mostly applied to an independent single-movement work or to a prelude to a sonata or fugue at which point it became more clearly distinguished from other musical forms. However, during this period, its characteristics also began to overlap somewhat with other forms, most notably the sonata.[31]

As the genre continued into the Classical and Romantic periods, composers including Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert adopted and developed the form in their own works. Notable examples of Fantasies for solo instrument and orchestra include Beethoven's *Fantasia in C minor*, Op. 80 for piano, choir, and orchestra, Schumann's *Fantasy in C major*, Op. 131 for violin and orchestra, Fauré's *Fantaisie*, Op. 79 for flute and orchestra, and List's Fantasia on Hungarian Folk Melodies for piano and orchestra.

Among works for cello, the repertoire is relatively limited. One of the most well-known pieces associated with the cello is Schumann's Fantasiestücke, Op. 73; however, this work was originally written for clarinet and piano, with cello as an

[31] Mami Hayashida, "From Sonata and Fantasy to Sonata-Fantasy: Charting a Musical Evolution" (DMA diss., University of Kentucky, 2007),17.

alternative instrument. Therefore, Weinberg's *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, which was written specifically for the cello, represents an important contribution to the genre.

2. Folk Elements

Weinberg's *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* is influenced by Polish folk music elements, but does not arrange or adapt any specific pre-existing folk melody. Polish music is deeply rooted in different regional traditions, and many of its distinctive characteristics derive from local dances. The dances commonly referred to as "Polish national dances" in fact, originated in specific regions, where they served as expressions of local identity, reflecting the strong connection between Polish folk music and dance.[32] Poland recognizes five national dances: *Polonez*, *Mazur*, *Kujawiak*, *Oberek*, and *Krakowiak*.[33]

[32] "A Foreigner's Guide to Polish Folk Dances," *Culture.pl*, accessed September 14, 2025, https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-folk-dances.

[33] Ada Dziewanowska, *Polish Folk Dances and Songs: A Step-by-Step Guide* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997), 29.

Musical Characteristics of five national dance:

Polonez:

- Meter: 3/4 (evolved from 2/4 and 4/4) ; starts on the downbeat (no upbeat).
- Rhythm: *Polonaise rhythm* (an eighth note + two sixteenths' notes)
- Tempo: Moderate; stately walking pace.
- Phrase Structure: Regular 2-phrase units; typically, 4, 6, or 8 measures.

Mazur:

- Meter: 3/4 or 3/8, triple meter.
- Rhythm: Displaced accents typically falling on the 2nd or 3rd beat; the motif frequently starts with two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note.
- Tempo: Swift and running; the regular mazur is performed in the tempo range of a quarter note = 120-40.
- Phrase Structure: Four verses set in eight measures, typically organized into repeated sections of 8 or 16 bars.

Kujawiak:

- Meter: Triple meter (3/4); the second beat of each measure is frequently extended and accented.
- Rhythm: Characterized by rubato tempo and ritardando endings
- Tempo: Quarter note = 120–140
- Phrase Structure: The dance follows a ternary outline with a faster middle section, leading to a final accelerando at the end of the third segment.

Oberek:

- Meter: Triple meter (3/8) ; the main accent typically falls on the third beat of each measure.
- Rhythm: The music includes the same type of mazurka rhythms as the kujawiak and mazur.

- Tempo: The fast one in five national dances, a quarter note = 174–210+.
- Phrase Structure: Each phrase is usually 4 or 8 measures; older obereks may use 6, 7, or 9 measures.

Krakowiak:

- Meter: Duple meter (2/4)
- Rhythm: Two eighth-notes plus one quarter-note (or: short-short-long).
- Tempo: A quarter note = 120-126
- Phrase Structure: Phrases are symmetrically arranged in pairs of four measures

To identify which dance traditions inform Weinberg's *Fantasy*, the following analysis examines the work's tempo, rhythmic patterns, formal structure, modal characteristics, and stylistic features.

Structure, introduction, and cadenza

The *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, op. 52 is a single-movement work divided into four sections: *Adagio* (introduction), *Andantino leggiero* (slow section), *Allegro con fuoco* (fast section), *Andantino leggiero* (recapitulation/slow section).

Both Kujawiak and *Oberek* are typically preceded by a walking dance called the *Chodzony* as an introduction. In this arrangement, the *Chodzony* precedes the *Kujawiak*, which is then followed by the *Mazurek* or *Oberek*, forming another ternary

structure.[34] The walking dance is typically a four-bar introduction in the same triple meter, leading into the *Kujawiak* and *Oberek*. Similarly, both slow and fast sections of the *Fantasy* are preceded by introductions; however, Weinberg composed these introductions in a classical style, extending beyond the typical four measures. In Polish folk instrumental performance, specific melodic phrases mark the beginning and end of a melody, and also appear between verses. For instance, the four-measure phrase in the viola (mm. 3–4) at the opening reappears in the cello solo immediately before the *Allegro con fuoco*, though with rhythmic variations in diminution and augmentation (Example 1 and 2), functioning as a bridge passage in the classical sense. This phrase appears once more at the conclusion of the work.



Example 1. Mieczysław Weinberg, *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 52, orchestra part, mm. 1–2.



Example 2. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, mm.54-56

[34] Dziewanowska, *Polish Folk Dances & Songs*, 557.

In the traditional *Kujawiak* performance practice, the dance suite often concluded with an accelerando that created room for virtuosic display.[35] The cadenza in Weinberg's *Fantasy* may be seen as a classical counterpart to this tradition, serving as a structural bridge between the Allegro con fuoco and the return of the Andantino leggiero.

Together, the introduction and cadenza of the *Fantasy* may reflect an engagement with Polish folk dance tradition, while also showcasing Weinberg's mastery of classical compositional techniques.

Tempo, meter, and rhythm

The *Fantasy* is written primarily in triple meter, except for the introduction. Although it is a one-movement work, the clear contrasts in tempo suggest three sections: slow – fast – (cadenza) – slow. Most scholars interpret this this slow – fast – slow structure mirrors a traditional Polish dance suite (based on folk dance forms): *Kujawiak – Oberek – Kujawiak*.

Weinberg's *Fantasy* is composed primarily in 3/4 time, with the exception of the introduction. This is consistent with four of Poland's five national dances, which are

[35] Maja Trochimczyk, "Kujawiak," *Polish Music Center*, University of Southern California, accessed March 22, 2026, https://polishmusic.usc.edu/research/dances/kujawiak/.

typically performed in triple meter; the *Krakowiak* alone is in duple meter (2/4). In the *Fantasy*, the slow section is marked *Andantino leggiero*, with a tempo range of a quarter note= 76–108, while the fast section is marked *Allegro con fuoco*, ranging from a quarter quarter note= 120–168.

The *Fantasy*'s slow section appears to be based on the *Kujawiak*, which is the slowest dance among the five Polish national dances. It is written in 3/4 meter, and its basic step is similar to the waltz. The fast section appears to be based on the *Oberek*, which is the fastest of the five national dances. While the *Oberek* is also in triple meter, it is typically notated in 3/8 meter rather than 3/4[36]. However, in the *Fantasy*, the fast section is still in 3/4. As discussed above, *Kujawiak* is a slow dance, but the tempo is quarter note equal 120 and140, so the *Andantino leggiero* is much slower than the *Kujawiak*.

Although most sources show different patterns, *Grove Music online* provides an example of *Polonaise rhythm* (Example 3)[37] that corresponds to the rhythmic pattern

[36] Ruth Ruling, Bruce Wyckoff, and Virginia Wilder, "Kujawiak With Oberek (Poland)," *Let's Dance*, January 1987, Folk Dance Federation of California Dance Research Committee, accessed January 13, 2026, https://socalfolkdance.org/dances/K/Kujawiak-Oberek.pdf.

[37] Katarzyna Morawska, Zygmunt M. Szweykowski, Zofia Chechlińska, Adrian Thomas, Jan Stęszewski, and Krzystof Ćwiżewicz, "Poland," *Grove Music Online*, published online 2001, Oxford University Press, accessed March 25, 2026, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22001.

found in the cello solo of the *Andantino leggiero* section. The *Kujawial* , not the *Polonaise*, is the dance most consistently associated with the slow section of the *Fantasy*; however, Polonaise also shares a slow tempo and triple meter.[38] Since Weinberg did not arrange or adapt any specific pre-existing folk melody into the *Fantasy*, whether this rhythmic pattern reflects a deliberate reference to the *Polonaise* or simply an incidental resemblance within the broader Polish folk tradition remains an open question.



Example 3. Polonaise rhythm, after *Grove Music Online*

In the orchestral part, the melody emphasizes the first and third beats. In a *Kujawiak*, the accent may fall on any other beat, provided the rhythmic patterns are sustained.[39] While the *Kujawiak* shares a similar basic step with the waltz, a key distinction lies in their accentuation: the German waltz consistently accents the first beat, whereas the *Kujawiak* places no restriction on which beat is accented, allowing for greater rhythmic flexibility. These rhythmic characteristics of the *Kujawiak* are

[38] Ibid.

[39] James Bakst, "Polish National Influences in Chopin's Music," *The Polish Review* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1962): 57.

similarly reflected in Weinberg's *Fantasy*, further reinforcing its connection to Polish folk dance tradition.

Melody, mode, and interval

As previously discussed, *Kujawiak* is the slowest of Poland's five national dances. Its melodies are romantic and lyrical, often written in minor keys, which impart a sense of melancholy. The minor third interval lends the music a distinctly melancholy and sorrowful quality. In Polish folk songs, melodies typically move in stepwise motion, utilizing intervals of a second or a third. Wedding songs and annual ritual melodies generally span a range of a 3rd or a 4th interval (Example 4), and street vendors' calls usually have two notes a 3rd apart or three notes within a 4th.[40] The second characteristic of interval is the major ninth, which appears as an ascending leap at the beginning of some *Kujawiak* melodies[41].

[40] Morawska et al., "Poland."

[41] Trochimczyk, "Kujawiak."



Example 4. Wedding song, Lublin region From Grove Music Online.[42]

The melodies of the *Fantasy* are largely constructed from intervals of a second and a third. The cello melody at the opening of the *Andantino leggiero* section outlines an arpeggio spanning a major ninth. Furthermore, the USC Polish Music Center notes that "many Polish folksongs, including the mazurka, are modal, in the Lydian mode with a sharpened 4th," a scale pattern sometimes referred to as the "Polish mode."[43] This feature is evident in the *Allegro con fuoco* section, where sharpened fourths appear frequently. It is worth noting, however, that the Lydian mode is more commonly associated with the Mazurka than with the Oberek, despite the *Allegro con fuoco* otherwise displaying characteristics of the latter.



Example 5. Lydian Scale

[42] Morawska et al., "Poland."

[43] Maja Trochimczyk, "Mazur (Mazurka)," *Polish Music Center*, University of Southern California, accessed February 3, 2026, https://polishmusic.usc.edu/research/dances/mazur/.



Example 6. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Allegro con fuoco*, mm. 172-176

According to the USC Polish Music Center, citing Aleksander Pawlak, *Kujawiak* melodies do not end at the tonic note, but at the fifth or a different scale degree, leaving the melody with a sense of incompleteness and sustained melancholy.[44] This same technique appears in Weinberg's *Fantasy*: regardless of the section, the melody consistently avoids cadencing on the tonic, reinforcing the structural parallel with the *Kujawiak* tradition.



Example 7. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Adagio*, mm. 154-156

C. Why Not "Polish Fantasy"?

As established in the preceding analysis, Weinberg's *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* contains numerous Polish folk elements This raises the question of why Weinberg did not title the work *Polish Fantasy*. Weinberg faced serious political difficulties during this period, including artistic censorship and his arrest in 1953,

[44] Ibid.

which may lead some to assume that the title was also influenced by political concerns. However, Soviet cultural policy of the time in fact actively required composers to incorporate folk and national elements into their works[45], and during the same period, Weinberg composed several works with explicit national designations, including *Kujawiak and Oberek for two xylophones and orchestra* in 1952, *Rhapsody on Slavonic Themes for orchestra* in 1950, *"Moldavian Rhaspsody" for violin and orchestra* in 1949, and *Polish Tunes for orchestra* in 1949, suggesting that political considerations were not the primary reason for omitting "Polish" from the title.

According to Gwizdalanka, works situated between folk and concert traditions during this period commonly carried titles such as “Rhapsody,” “Melody,” “Suite,” or “Fantasy.”[46] Weinberg composed works in these genres around 1950. “Rhapsody” titles were often given national designations because they were typically based on folk melodies, as seen in Weinberg’s own *Moldavian Rhapsody* and *Rhapsody on Slavonic Themes*.

In contrast, it is less common for Fantasy works to carry national designations,

[45] "The Zhdanov Decree," *DSCH Journal* 9 (Summer 1998): 22.

[46] Danuta Gwizdalanka, liner notes to *Weinberg: Cello Concerto, Fantasy, Concertino*, Raphael Wallfisch, Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra, Łukasz Borowicz, CPO 555 234–2, 2019, compact disc, 13.

though some exceptions exist, such as Liszt's *Hungarian Fantasy* (Fantasia on Hungarian Folk Melodies), S.123 and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Fantasy on Russian Themes*. The reason Weinberg did not title the work *Polish Fantasy* may therefore lie in the very definition of the genre. As previously noted, the fantasy was defined by Luis de Milán as an invention arising "solely from the fantasy and skill of the author," focusing on the individual imagination and the psychological flow of the composer's own inner voice. Therefore, Weinberg most likely intended the work as an expression of his inner world, with Polish folk elements serving as a means of conveying that personal voice rather than as a defining national identifier.

D. Performance Implications

Tempo Rubato

Although the composer does not explicitly indicate tempo rubato, as a piece rooted in Polish folk tradition, the *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* performance may relate a rhythmic flexibility inherent in this style, most notably the use of tempo rubato. As discussed above, the slow section *Andantino leggiero* may resemble a *Kujawiak* dance from Kujawy area in triple meter. In Kujawy folk music, the second beat of each measure is frequently extended and accented, and performers often extend entire measures of the melody, or less commonly, compress them. This

inherent rhythmic flexibility is directly relevant to the performance of this piece, particularly in the application of tempo rubato.[47] The use of tempo rubato can also be found in Chopin"s Polish-inspired works, particularly his Mazurkas, which share the same folk rhythmic tradition.[48]

The performance of the first theme in the *Andantino leggiero* section can be approached in this way. As the melody is primarily based on eighth notes, tempo rubato can prevent the music from sounding metronomic. However, as this is a work for solo instrument and orchestra, the cooperation between the soloist and the orchestra must also be taken into consideration. As a general performance practice, all the rhythmic flexibility should be contained within the measure. This differs from traditional *Kujawiak* folk dance music, in which performers may extend or compress entire measures of the melody. While tempo rubato is rooted in Polish folk tradition, how the performer balances this folk expressiveness within the classical framework remains an open interpretive decision, as reflected in the variety of approaches found across different recordings.

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[47] Trochimczyk, "Kujawiak."

[48] Ibid.

Repeating Notes and Their Functions

Weinberg often composed repeating notes or rhythmic figures in the *Fantasy*, and their function and meaning may differ between slow and fast sections. Measure 34 provides one such example of a repeating rhythmic pattern in the slow section. The same pattern recurs three times within a single measure, marked with a crescendo. This repeated motivic pattern appears numerous times throughout the *Fantasy*. Within each eight-measure phrase, the pattern appears at the first and fifth measures. This repetitive motif creates a sense of urgency, as if striving to express something beyond words.



Example 8. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Andantino leggiero*, mm. 34- 35

Measure 59 presents another rhythmic pattern with a similar expressive function, but it marked mezzo-forte without any dynamic change within the measure. This pattern also appears in measure 63, following the same structure of an eight-measure phrase with occurrences at the first and fifth measures. However, the pattern appears one additional time in the subsequent phrase in measure 66, further enhancing the intensity.



Example 9. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Andantino leggiero*, mm.59-60

In contrast, the repeated notes in the *Allegro con fuoco* section carry a different meaning. From this author's perspective, the repeated-note motif in measures 177, 180, 185, and 187 resemble dance steps or a drumbeat rhythm, with accents placed on each eighth note. Notably, quarter notes appear in measures 234 to 247, and the repeated notes in measure 293 are also quarter notes without accents, appearing multiple times from measure 292 to 303. One possible explanation is that these quarter notes were simply written to fit the articulation of that section. However, their deeper meaning may be rooted in the traditional folk music style that influenced Weinberg's compositional language. Since the repeated notes appear in both eighth note and quarter note values throughout the *Fantasy*, the performer should carefully consider the choice of bow stroke for each context.



Example 10. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Allegro con fuoco*, mm. 177-178



Example 11. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Allegro con fuoco,* mm. 234- 237



Example 12. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Allegro con fuoco,* mm. 292-293

Bowing Choices in the Slow Section

The music for both the full orchestra score and the cello and piano edition includes bowing markings. These markings may possibly be attributable to Weinberg himself or the cellist who premiered the work, though this cannot be confirmed with certainty. The first measure of the cello solo in the *Andantino leggiero* section serves as a representative example of the bowing considerations throughout the slow section. The bowing in this measure is marked as one bow for the entire measure, which fits the phrase and poses no problem when performing with piano. However, as it requires a long bow, the volume may not be loud enough when performing with orchestra, even though that passage is marked *mezzo piano*. Most cellists therefore change their bowing in that measure when performing with orchestra, commonly slurring the first three eighth notes before changing bow. The performer is therefore free to explore different bowing options since no single solution exists, and the most appropriate choice will ultimately depend on the performance context and the performer”s own musical judgment.



Example 13. Weinberg, *Fantasy* cello solo part, *Allegro con fuoco,* m.25, two different bowings.

CHAPTER V

Cello Concerto, Op. 43 and Cello Concertino, Op. 43b

Mieczysław Weinberg's *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 43* and *Concertino for Cello and String Orchestra, Op. 43b* are deeply connected works: compositions that share most of their thematic content and formal structure. The *Cello Concerto, Op. 43*, nearly twice the length of the earlier *Concertino,* has long been recognized as one of Weinberg's most significant works for the instrument, yet it has received relatively little scholarly attention. The opus numbers assigned to Weinberg's two cello works appear confusing. The *Concertino*, despite being the earlier composition, is listed as Op. 43bis, while the later *Cello Concerto* bears the earlier designation of Op. 43. This reversal suggests that the opus numbers reflect the order of publication or discovery rather than composition. The situation is even more pronounced for the *Cello Concertino, Op. 43b*, which was only discovered in 2016 and has since attracted only brief mentions in album booklets and program notes. This chapter aims to address this gap by comparing both works, offering the *Concertino* as a complementary source that might provide a better understanding of the *Concerto*.

This discussion proceeds through three areas of analysis: the distinction between the two works as genres, a movement-by-movement comparison identifying shared

material and key differences, and an examination of the Jewish and Klezmer folk elements that shape Weinberg's musical language in both compositions.

A. Historical Context and Background

The *Cello Concertino* was written during the summer of 1948, completed between August 4 and 8, in the wake of a series of profound personal upheavals in Weinberg's life. One month earlier, he had also completed a *Violin Concertino*. Despite finishing the *Cello Concertino* in just four days, the work remained undiscovered and unperformed for nearly 70 years. In 2016, the score was found by the widow of Russian musicologist Manashir Yakubov (1936-2012), four years after he died.[49] Yakubov, primarily known as a Shostakovich scholar, also interviewed Weinberg and advocated for the dissemination of his music, so his possession of the *Concertino* score is highly plausible. That Fanning's definitive Weinberg biography, published in 2010, contains no record of the *Concertino* further confirms that the work remained unknown until this point. It was not until 2017 that performances of the piece began.

In 1957, Rostropovich premiered Weinberg's *Cello Concerto* in Moscow. The *Concerto* was composed in 1956, though for several decades musicologists believed it

[49] CD Booklet - WEINBERG, M.: Cello Concerto / Fantasia / Cello Concertino (R. Wallfisch, Kristiansand Symphony, Ł. Borowicz)

had been composed in 1948. From the standpoint that the *Concerto* is a reimagining, reorchestrating, and general enlarging of the earlier *Concertino*, one could say that work on the *Concerto* did indeed begin in 1948. While what exactly prompted Weinberg to return to the material from his earlier *Concertino* in 1956 remains unknown, one can speculate that his social and professional association with Rostropovich and the resulting potential for a major premiere performed by the eminent soloist was the motivation for the creation of a new and larger solo work. Rostropovich rehearsed the work during late December 1956 and early January 1957, with Weinberg guiding the preparation and accompanying Rostropovich on the piano.

B. Analysis

1. Concertino vs Concerto

The *Grove Music Online* defines concertino as "a work with solo instrument, or instruments, less ambitious in scale than a concerto, often with few movements or cast in one movement with changes of speed and character." The term represents a scaled-down concerto, comparable in concept to the sinfonietta (a reduced symphony). As *Grove Music Online* notes, the title "seems to have come into new vogue during the 1930s."[50]

[50] Arthur Hutchings, "Concertino," *Grove Music Online*, published online 2001, Oxford University

Weinberg's composition of concertinos likely reflects this mid-20th-century compositional trend. As previously mentioned, he wrote the *Violin Concertino* and *Cello Concertino* for solo instruments with string orchestra, demonstrating his interest in scaled-down genres during this period. Similarly, his *Sinfonietta* No. 1 (1948) and *Sonatina* (1949) also reflect this preference for compact forms. Notably, Nikolai Myaskovsky (1881-1950), who was also close to Weinberg, showed a similar inclination during the same period, composing his own Sinfonietta in 1946, just two years before Weinberg's *Sinfonietta* and *Cello Concertino* in 1948.

Unlike the concertino, which is a less common title for string instruments, the concerto has remained a major genre throughout much of music history. A concerto is an instrumental work that maintains contrast between an orchestral ensemble and a smaller group or solo instrument(s). Weinberg's *Cello Concerto* is his first work in this genre. Later examples include the *Violin Concerto, Op. 67* (1959), *Flute Concerto No. 1, Op. 75* (1962), *Trumpet Concerto, Op. 94* (1967), *Clarinet Concerto, Op. 104* (1970), and *Flute Concerto No. 2, Op. 148* (1987).

The standard concerto structure follows a "fast-slow-fast" three-movement form.

Press, accessed November 7, 2025, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000053668.

Although some 19th-century composers departed from this convention, it remained the predominant model in the 20th century. Weinberg does not follow this tradition in the *Cello Concerto*. He expands the form to four movements and opens the work with a slow movement, as he did in the earlier *Concertino*. These distinctions in scale, orchestration, and structure design are fundamental to understanding how Weinberg reconceived the same musical ideas across two very different generic frameworks and will be examined in greater detail in the following section.

2. A Comparative Analysis

Scholars agree that the *Cello Concerto* is an expansion and reimagination of the earlier *Cello Concertino*. Therefore, both works share common material while also exhibiting notable differences. Since the *Concertino* is a newly discovered work, no official scholarly document has yet addressed its formal structure in depth, and only a few album booklets provide brief introductions. However, even the more widely recognized *Concerto* has received limited scholarly attention in terms of musical analysis. This section examines the commonalities and differences between the two works.

a. Commonalities

Both the *Concertino* and the C*oncerto* are in four movements, unlike the more common three-movement structure. The first three movements of each work share the same principal themes, meaning that the main theme of each movement in the *Concertino* also serves as the main theme of the parallel movement in the *Concerto*. Of these four movements, only the first and second share the same tempo markings: the first movement is marked *Adagio*, and the second movement is marked *Moderato*. This first movement is dark and expressive. The two works open with the same lyrical cello melody supported by chordal orchestral accompaniment. The cello solo presents the same theme, beginning with a pickup to measure 2 and extending through measure 9, and the cello solo part remains essentially identical through measure 30. This shared opening demonstrates strong structural and melodic parallels between the two works. Throughout the first movement, the melody is primarily carried by the solo cello. Even in the *Concerto,* where a full orchestra is present, the melodic role remains largely confined to the solo cello and string instruments. As described in Yurasov's liner notes, this movement contains only a single theme, which is repeated four times with slight melodic and structural variations, each forming an eight-

measure phrase.[51] Each work concludes the first movement with an attacca, leading directly into the second movement.

Both second movements begin with a four-measure orchestral introduction. This introduction shares the same melody in both works, and although the *Concerto* is scored for full orchestra, Weinberg assigns this opening melody to the string section alone. At measure 5, the orchestra transitions into an accompanying role, establishing the texture of a new section, before the cello solo enters in measure 7 with an unusual theme. The cello solo presents the same main theme in both works, spanning measures 7 through 16. Unlike standard four- or eight-measure phrases, this theme spans ten measures, with the third and sixth measures repeating the second and fourth respectively. Following measure 16, the melodic material remains the same in both works, though it is distributed among different instruments due to the differing orchestration of each work. The cello solo uses a mute from the beginning of the movement, but it is removed at different points in each work. This muted cello solo reflects a characteristic feature of Weinberg's compositional style, as seen also in the *Solo Cello Sonata No. 1*, Op. 72, as well as in his *String Quartet No. 9* and *No. 15*.

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[51] Andrey Yurasov, liner notes to *Mieczysław Weinberg: Concertino for Cello and String Orchestra, Op. 43; 24 Preludes for Solo Cello, Op. 100*, Marina Tarasova, Musica Viva Chamber Orchestra, cond. Alexander Rudin, Northern Flowers NF/PMA 99131, 2018, booklet.

The third movement is the longest and fastest movement in both the *Concertino* and *Concerto*. Both works share the same eight-measure introduction, with the string section presenting the same melodic material, after which the cello solo enters with the first theme. Up to around measure 149, the melodic material in both works remains largely the same, though with occasional subtle differences. This movement is written in ternary form, which can be understood as an ABA' structure, a common structural choice for the third movement. Both third movements evoke the character of a dance, featuring a 3/4 meter and a repetitive, spinning quality typical of European dance traditions. What makes this movement particularly distinctive is that Weinberg combines ternary form with the character of a dance movement, two qualities not conventionally found together.

The Cadenza and the fourth movement are the most substantially different between the two works, sharing almost no common material. The only shared element in the fourth movement is the return of melodic material from the first movement, concluding with a pianississimo dynamic that mirrors the ending of the first movement.

b. Tempo and Performance Markings

Movement I

This is a slow movement, marked Adagio in both the *Concertino* and the *Concerto*, with the *Concertino* at quarter note = 69 and the *Concerto* at quarter note = 66, indicating only a slight difference in tempo.

The two works differ in their bowing from the very opening, despite sharing the same melodic material. This difference may reflect the different instrumental forces required by each work, as the larger orchestral setting of the Concerto may require a greater dynamic projection, necessitating more frequent bow changes. At the same time, these differing bowing choices result in a different musical phrasing and interpretation.

Movement II

The tempo of the second movement is marked Moderato, with the *Concertino* at eighth note = 152 (equivalent to quarter note = 76) and the *Concerto* at quarter note = 72, making the *Concerto* slightly slower. In both works, the cello solo uses a mute from the beginning of the movement. While the *Concertino* maintains the mute throughout the entire movement, the *Concerto* removes it at measure 33.

Movement III

The *Concertino* is marked Allegro vivace with quarter-note = 208, while the *Concerto* is marked Allegro at dotted half note = 100. It is worth noting that Rostropovich's 1964 recording is among the few recordings that attempt the *Concerto*'s indicated tempo of dotted half note = 100. Most recent recordings of both works are performed at approximately dotted half note = 72-76.

Beyond the difference in tempo markings, the two works also diverge in their performance markings within this movement. The bowings differ between the two versions: in measures 10 and 11, the first two eighth notes are slurred in the *Concertino*, with three eighth notes per bow in measure 12, whereas the *Concerto* uses separate bows throughout. This bowing pattern recurs several times in this movement, with each work consistently following its own approach. The articulation also differs in the orchestral accompaniment. Since the *Concertino* is written for cello and string orchestra, the entire ensemble plays pizzicato in this section, creating a detached texture without any slurs.

Movement IV

In the *Concertino*, the fourth movement is marked *Adagio* (Tempo Primo), directly matching the tempo of the first movement and reinforcing the slow. The

Concerto, however, takes a markedly different approach. The movement opens with an *Allegro* marking at half note = 120, and only near the end, when the first movement's theme returns, does the tempo revert to *Adagio* (Tempo Primo), though without a specific metronome marking.

c. Formal Structure and Scale

Movement I

Scholars have noted that this movement is built on a single theme repeated four times with subtle modifications, a structure that can be understood as strophic form, in which the same music is repeated for each successive section.[52] The main melody is carried by the solo cello, with each statement of the theme beginning at measures 1, 10, 18, and 32 in the *Concertino*, and at measures 1, 10, 18, and 34 in the *Concerto*.

At the same time, his movement can also be understood as an ABA' form. Although built on a single repeated theme, it divides into an A section at the beginning, a B section at measure 17, and an A' section at measure 32 in the *Concertino* and measure 34 in the *Concerto*. At measure 17, the lower strings introduce the melody before passing it to the solo cello, while the return of the main

[52] Michael Tilmouth, "Strophic," *Grove Music Online*, published online 2001, Oxford University Press, accessed March 20, 2026, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.26981.

theme at measure 32 functions as a recapitulation.

Movement II

The second movement of the *Concertino* follows an ABACA rondo form, with sections beginning at measures 7, 27, 46, 66, and 75. An eight-measure transitional passage leads back to the first theme at measure 75, where it also serves as the closing section. The second movement of the *Concertino* ends with an attacca leading into the third movement, while the *Concerto* separates them with a pause.

In the *Concerto*, by contrast, Weinberg introduced an entirely new section at measure 66 with a new theme, before theme B returns at measure 82. The *Concerto* also appears to be in rondo form, though not exactly. Its final statement of theme A retains its primary character while briefly incorporating motifs from themes B and C, giving it the quality of a closing section that draws together all preceding material.

Movement III

Both *Concertino* and *Concerto* are ternary form, while the third movement of the *Concertino* is in sonata-allegro form, the *Concerto*'s third movement takes on the character of a Minuet and Trio. The sonata-allegro form contains three sections: exposition, development, and recapitulation, and exposition and development usually

end with Dominant Key; these features fit with *Concertino*.

A	B	A'
Exposition	Development	Recapitulation
mm. 1-89	mm. 90-134	mm.135-220

Figure 1. Formal structure of the *Concertino* first movement sonata-allegro form, with corresponding measure numbers.

The third movement of the *Concerto*, however, is also in ternary form, though its character more closely resembles that of a Minuet and Trio. The Minuet and Trio is a traditional choice for the third movement, typically in 3/4 meter with a dance-like character, both of which are consistent with the *Concerto*'s third movement. Unlike the sonata-allegro form of the *Concertino*, the Minuet and Trio follows a large ternary structure, in which each of the two main sections — the Minuet and the Trio — is itself internally organized in ternary form. This compound ternary structure accounts for the considerably greater length of the *Concerto*'s third movement compared to that of the *Concertino*.

A	B	A'
Minuet	Trio	Minuet
mm. 1-203	mm. 204-306	mm. 307-403

Figure 2. Formal structure of the *Concerto* first movement Minuet and the Trio form, with corresponding measure numbers.

As seen in measures 9–12 and 25–28, the cello solo lines in the *Concertino* and *Concerto* are slightly different, sharing the same rhythm but with different pitch content. The bowings also differ between the two versions. In measures 10 and 11, the first two eighth notes are slurred in the *Concertino* and three eight-notes per bow in measure 12, whereas the *Concerto* uses separate bows throughout. The articulation also differs in the orchestra parts. Since the *Concertino* is written for cello and string orchestra, the entire ensemble plays pizzicato in this section, creating a detached texture without any slurs. In contrast, the *Concerto* assigns the accompaniment to the clarinets rather than string instruments.

In measure 76, the *Concertino* and *Concerto* differ in articulation. The *Concertino* simply presents three quarter notes without any special bowing markings. In the *Concerto*, however, each beat is marked with an accent, and the two repeated double stops on the second and third beats are connected by a slur.



Example 14. Weinberg, *Concertino*, Op. 43bis, third movement, orchestra part, mm. 76–78.



Example 15. Weinberg, *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, third movement, orchestra part, mm. 76–78.

Movement IV

The cadenza in the *Concertino* is positioned at the opening of the fourth movement, whereas in the *Concerto* it functions as a continuous section within the third movement. The cadenza in the *Concertino* consists of only 18 measures, whereas the cadenza in the *Concerto* extends to 54 measures.

d. Melodic and Rhythmic Differences

Movement I

The first movement opens with a steady, grounded quality in the lower register, building toward a passionate and emotionally charged character in the higher range, before drawing back to a quiet, settled close.

As seen in measures 15 and 20, the cello solo lines share similar melodic material in both the *Concertino* and *Concerto*, yet with subtle differences. In the *Concertino*, the cello solo features thirty-second notes paired with a dotted eighth note, whereas the *Concerto* presents sixteenth notes paired with an eighth note in the corresponding passages. Furthermore, the pitch content also differs between the two versions.



Example 16. Weinberg, *Concertino*, Op. 43bis, first movement, orchestra part, mm. 15 and 20.



Example 17. Weinberg, *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, first movement, orchestra part, mm. 15 and 20.

At measure 24, the *Concertino* and *Concerto* present contrasting expressive characters. The *Concertino*'s dotted rhythms and chromatic motion continue from the preceding passage. The *Concerto*, however, treats the same material in a more fluid way, creating a lyrical quality, perhaps in preparation for the new melody that follows.



Example 18. Weinberg, *Concertino*, Op. 43bis, and *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, first movement, m. 24.

Movement II

The second movement is lighter and more playful than the first, with a gentle dance-like quality. The use of mute lends the music a hazy, veiled character, while the subsequent removal of the mute in the *Concerto* brings a more open and clear quality to the sound.

The second movements of both works are essentially the same from the beginning through measure 65, after which the two works diverge.

Movement III

The third movement opens with a strong and energetic dance character, contrasting with a more lyrical and singing quality in the middle section.

Up to measure 149, the two works proceed similarly, though with subtle differences. The first theme spans measures 9 to 16, with the cello solo lines sharing the same rhythm but with different pitch content at measures 10 to 12. The same occurs in the following phrase (measures 25 to 32), where measures 26 to 28 also contain different notes.

In measure 45, the *Concertino* introduces the melody with two beats of sixteenth notes, while the *Concerto* uses two beats of triplets. This rhythmic substitution can be understood as a form of ornamental variation, according to Joel E. Rubin's book.[53] It is unclear why Weinberg changed the rhythm between the two versions. Additionally, although both share the same B-flat key signature, the cello solo lines start on different notes: the *Concertino* starts on D, while the *Concerto* starts on A.

[53] Rubin, Joel E. "'The Little Things That They Do': Ornaments and Performance Practice Techniques." In *New York Klezmer in the Early Twentieth Century: The Music of Naftule Brandwein and Dave Tarras*, NED-New edition. Boydell & Brewer, 2020, p. 222. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv105bbj7.13.



Example 19. Weinberg, *Concertino*, Op. 43bis, third movement, mm. 45-49.



Example 20. Weinberg, *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, third movement, mm. 45-49.

The scales in measures 84 to 85 differ rhythmically between the two works. In the *Concertino*, the scale consists entirely of sixteenth notes, whereas in the *Concerto*, it combines sixteenth notes and triplets. Consequently, the pitches within the scales also differ between the two versions.

Although the melodies are in different keys as previously mentioned, there are a few grace notes worth noting. In the *Concertino*, the first beats of measures 48 and 58 each have a grace note, and the second and third beats of measure 57 also have grace notes. Since these first notes are eighth notes, the addition of a grace note makes them even shorter. In the *Concerto*, however, the first note of measure 48 is a quarter note without grace notes, while measure 57 has grace notes on all three beats. In measure 58, both versions share a grace note on the first note, but in the *Concerto*, the grace note functions as a passing tone rather than a note two octaves lower.

Measures 104–105, 151–166, 187–188, and 191–192 of the *Concertino* are

omitted in the *Concerto*.

Cadenza

The cadenzas of the two works differ substantially. In terms of thematic content, the *Concertino*'s cadenza draws exclusively on material from the third movement, while the *Concerto*'s cadenza incorporates motifs from both the first and third movements. The *Concerto*'s cadenza opens in C minor, which is the key of the second movement, marked *fortissimo*. Pizzicato appears in the cadenza of the *Concertino* but not in the *Concerto*, though both works employ the technique in the third and fourth movements. The opening motif of the *Concerto*'s cadenza is derived from the closing measures of the third movement, while the melody of the first movement is introduced in the *Andante* section of the cadenza.

Movement IV

The fourth movement of the *Concertino* returns to the theme of the first movement, sharing a similar steady and grounded character. The Concerto, however, opens with a positive and driven quality, similar to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, with a sense of strength and will to overcome. Yet by the close, both versions return to the theme of the first movement, ending in a calm and settled manner.

In the *Concertino*, the fourth movement opens with a cadenza, after which the orchestra re-enters in the tonic key with a return to the melodic material from the first movement. The movement retains the same overall character as the first, presenting a slow, somber theme repeated over a mostly chordal accompaniment. The cello line in the cadenza transitions into obbligato-like writing that decorates the main melody carried by the first violins (mm. 11–28). The form is relatively straightforward and can be described as a kind of strophic structure, determined by three statements of the movement's main theme: once in the first violins and twice in the solo cello. A closing section begins at m. 37, marked by rising arpeggiated eighth notes in the solo cello, which is another motivic element drawn from the first movement.

The fourth movement of the *Concerto*, by contrast, is composed on a considerably larger scale and introduces an entirely different character. Rather than returning immediately to first-movement material, Weinberg presents entirely new melodic content. The movement extends to 332 measures, with the first movement's theme appearing only at m. 308. The exposition presents two contrasting themes: a fast yet lyrical melody in the solo cello at the opening, and a more assertive figure introduced by the trumpet over repetitive pizzicato chords in the strings at m. 75. An elaborate, virtuosic development section begins at m. 132, in which Weinberg

develops and combines this material into demanding passagework for the soloist. As is characteristic of sonata form, the development leads to an orchestral tutti (mm. 263–306). However, rather than recapitulating the fourth movement's opening theme, this passage transitions toward the material of the first movement. The solo cello re-enters with a statement of the first movement's theme at m. 308. Weinberg concludes the *Concerto* in a manner closely resembling the ending of the *Concertino*, restoring the tempo, melodic and textural content, and overall mood of the first movement.

e. Orchestration Differences

Movement I

The *Concertino* is scored for cello and string orchestra, while the *Concerto* expands the orchestration to include piccolo, flute, clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, and timpani. Despite this larger ensemble, Weinberg largely retained the same orchestration as the *Concertino* in passages shared between the two works. In sections that appear exclusively in the *Concerto*, however, he incorporated a wider range of instruments.

In measures 16 to 20 of the *Concertino*, the first violin maintains a harmonic support, while the viola and cello introduce the main melodic line in a canon-like fashion, creating a sense of dialogue with the solo cello. In the *Concerto*, however, the

first violin takes over the canonic role, creating a layered texture, while the viola and cello provide the harmonic support.

In both the *Concertino* and *Concerto*, the double basses are divisi, with half sustaining half notes throughout most of the first movement while the other half play pizzicato. The pizzicato pattern, however, differs between the two works due to their different meters: in the *Concertino* (3/2 meter), the pizzicato group plucks only on the first beat of each measure, whereas in the *Concerto* (6/4 meter), they pluck on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th beats, articulating each quarter-note beat within the measure.

Movement II

In the second movement, Weinberg frequently transfers the main melody between the solo cello and the orchestra, in contrast to the first movement where the solo cello carries most of the melody throughout. As a result, the solo cello at times takes on an accompanying role. In the *Concerto*, where wind instruments are added, the melodic lines that were originally assigned to the string instruments in the *Concertino* are transferred to the wind instruments instead.

In measures 17 to 22, the melodic roles are distributed differently between the *Concertino* and *Concerto*. In the *Concertino*, the main melody is carried by the cello and double bass, the cello solo line is nimble, and the second violin presents a fluid,

slurred pattern. In the *Concerto*, however, the main melody is transferred to the clarinet, the nimble cello solo figure is given to the flute, and the cello solo takes over the second violin's melody from the *Concertino*. In measures 27 to 32, the cello solo melody in the *Concertino* is taken over by the first trumpet in the *Concerto*, while the cello solo rests for these seven measures. This phrase, passed to the trumpet, takes on a festive and celebratory character.

Movement III

The cello rests from measure 62 in both works. In *Concertino*, first violin takes the melody in this section, and the viola also plays the same melody in the first few measures. In *Concerto*, first violin also takes the melody, but the second violin plays the same melody but an octave lower than the first violin.

In measures 91 to 93, the melodies differ between two works. In the *Concertino*, from measures 90 to 97, the main melody is carried by the cello and double bass, leaving the solo cello to function as an accompaniment. In the *Concerto*, however, the cello continues to carry the main melody, while the solo cello appears to function as a counter-melody, or perhaps a counter-subject, running at the same time.

In the *Concerto*, measures 191 to 194 are not limited to string instruments. The first and third measures are played by woodwind instruments, while the second and

fourth measures are played by brass instruments. The corresponding passage in the *Concertino* appears at measures 113 to 116.

Movement IV

This theme is first presented by the orchestra, after which the cello solo introduces the melody at measure 29. Violin I then echoes the same melody one beat later in a canon-like manner for three measures.

iv. Folk elements

The *Cello Concerto* and *Cello Concertino* are widely recognized as containing Jewish musical elements.[54] However, identifying these specific elements is challenging. Rather than simply arranging or quoting traditional folk melodies, Weinberg incorporated Jewish, Eastern European, and Slavic folk idioms into his musical language so naturally that they permeate both works without ever appearing as obvious quotations.[55] While all three traditions contribute to his musical identity, this section focuses primarily on the Jewish elements.

Jewish music is a term covering sacred and secular traditions across global Jewish

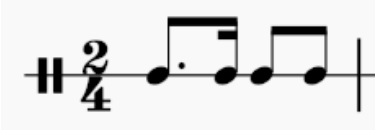
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[54] Richard Whitehouse, liner notes to *Weinberg: Complete Music for Cello and Orchestra*, Nikolay Shugaev, Tyumen Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Yuri Medianik, Naxos, 2025, booklet.

[55] "The Composer Mieczysław Weinberg," *Jewish Chamber Orchestra Munich*, accessed February 16, 2026, https://jcom.de/en/blogs/news/der-komponist-mieczyslaw-weinberg.

communities, while Klezmer specifically refers to the instrumental folk music of Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews performed at weddings and celebrations. [56] The word "Klezmer" is a Yiddish contraction of the Hebrew words for instrument (*kley*) and song (*zemer*).[57] There are certain musical characteristics that can help identify the presence of Jewish elements.

1. Habanera rhythm



A rhythm that appears frequently in the second movement is the Habanera rhythm, which is sometimes referred to as Terkish or Jewish Tango. However, since both Terkish and Jewish Tango rhythms originate from the Habanera, the term "Habanera" will be used as a general reference throughout this discussion. The most famous example of the Habanera rhythm in classical music is found in Bizet's opera Carmen, in the aria "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle."

The Habanera has its roots in the European contredanse, which was brought to Cuba in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and later developed into a rhythm with a

[56] Yale Strom, ed., *Shpil: The Art of Playing Klezmer* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 11.

[57] Rebecca Hunt, "Klezmer Music," *Boston Public Library*, October 31, 2019, https://www.bpl.org/blogs/post/klezmer-music/.

syncopation pattern.[58] The tango was first introduced to Poland in 1913 and gradually merged with Klezmer music over time.[59] The Terkish and Jewish Tango share essentially the same rhythm, which appears throughout most of the second movement in both the cello solo and orchestra parts. Through different slur combinations, the rhythm creates a sense of different rhythmic character throughout the movement.

2. Hora Rhythm



The Hora is a circular folk dance that originated in Romania. It can be divided into two types: a slow version in triple meter and a fast version in duple meter.[60] The Hora is popular at wedding celebrations and festivals, and is found in many European cultures, including Polish, Israeli, Bulgarian, and Jewish traditions. In Klezmer music, the Hora is typically in triple meter, often notated in 3/8. Its rhythm characteristically emphasizes beats one and three, which is why it is referred to as a "crooked dance."[61]

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[58] Frances Barulich and Jan Fairley, "Habanera," *Grove Music Online*, published online 2001, Oxford University Press, accessed March 6, 2026, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000012116.

[59] Juliette Bretan, "Polish Tangos: The Unique Interwar Soundtrack to Poland's Independence," *Culture.pl*, November 29, 2017, https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-tangos-the-unique-interwar-soundtrack-to-polands-independence.

[60] Yaakov Mazor, "Hora," *Jewish Music Research Centre*, accessed March 6, 2026, https://jewish-music.huji.ac.il/en/content/hora.

[61] Patricia Pierce Card, "The Influence of Klezmer on Twentieth-Century Solo and Chamber Concert Music for Clarinet: With Three Recitals of Selected Works of Manevich, Debussy,

In the third movement, both the *Concertino* and *Concerto* are in 3/4 meter. The Hora rhythm does not appear directly in the cello solo part, but only in the orchestra accompaniment. However, it can be argued that the accents, slurs, and melodic shape suggest a Hora-like character. There are three rhythmic patterns in the third movement that emphasize beats one and three, which is characteristic of the Hora.



3. Call and response



Example 21. Weinberg, *Cello Concertino*, Op. 43bis, and *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43, second movement, cello solo part, mm. 7–12.

Call and response, also called “responsive” or “responsorial,” is a singing performance style and one of the oldest musical forms, found across many cultures and religions. The Bible shows that it was already used in Ancient Israel, where different patterns existed: the leader sang a verse and the congregation completed it, the leader sang a verse and the congregation repeated it, or the congregation repeated a short phrase as a refrain. Before prayer books became widely available, synagogues had very few copies, so simple congregational responses were used to help everyone

Horovitz, Milhaud, Martino, Mozart and Others" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2002), 16.

participate in worship.[62]

Although Weinberg converted to Orthodox Christianity later in life, his Jewish heritage may have informed his musical language, suggesting a possible influence of Jewish liturgical music on his compositional style. In Western classical music, a technique similar to "call and response" is known as antiphony.

In these few measures, measures 9 and 12 present a response-like melody in the cello solo phrase. This melody serves as the main theme of the second movement. The first instance features the cello solo performing "call and response" by itself, while later this exchange occurs between the cello solo and the orchestra, reflecting the responsorial tradition mentioned above.

4. Eight-Measure Phrase Structure

Klezmer music is usually two to three sections with eight or sixteen measure phrases. The klezmer repertoire can be divided into four categories: core, transitional, co-territorial, and cosmopolitan. Among these, the core repertoire is most closely tied to Jewish religious tradition, with the freylekhs being one of its most common dance forms. Freylekhs are happy circle or line dances commonly performed at weddings.[63]

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[62] Geoffrey Goldberg, "Responsorial Singing," *Jewish Music Research Centre*, accessed March 7, 2026, https://jewish-music.huji.ac.il/en/content/responsorial-singing.

[63] Card, "Influence of Klezmer," 15.

The main themes in both the *Concertino* and the *Concerto*'s first, second, and third movements are eight measures. The main theme in the third movement appears irregular at first, as it is actually nine measures. However, as mentioned previously, measures 9 and 12 are "call and response" measures, so it effectively remains an eight-measure phrase. Any second or third themes appearing later within the same movement also follow this eight-measure phrase structure.

5. Pizzicato

In the second and third movements, Weinberg uses pizzicato technique in both the solo cello and the string orchestra. The *Concertino* is written for solo cello and string orchestra, with no wind or percussion instruments. In Shpil: The Art of Playing Klezmer, Yale Strom notes: "Some klezmer ensembles did not have bass, cello, trombone, or tsimbl, so a talented sekund player was required to keep the rhythmic energy as well as play clearly the chord changes."[64]

The sekund, which is the Yiddish term for second violin or viola, functions as the rhythmic and harmonic foundation of the ensemble. Strom also points out that the bass instrument in klezmer music serves a similar rhythmic role, often playing simple quarter-note patterns that, in certain dance forms, closely resemble a drum pattern.[65]

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[64] Strom, *Shpil*, 103.

[65] Ibid., 46–47.

In the *Concertino*, without percussion, the string orchestra assumes this rhythmic function through pizzicato. Unlike arco playing, pizzicato produces a short, dry sound that is more rhythmic than melodic, making it an effective substitute for percussion. As shown in mm. 77–78 of the third movement, the viola section performs a pizzicato chordal pattern, assuming the rhythmic and harmonic support function associated with the sekund.

Unlike the *Concertino* op. 43bis, the *Concerto* op. 43 includes timpani as a percussion instrument. However, the timpani part contains more rests than actual playing. Therefore, the string orchestra still plays a more rhythmic role throughout the work, particularly through pizzicato passages.

C. Performance Implications

In both *Concertino* and *Concerto*, the solo cello part does not imitate the idiomatic style of clarinet or violin as found in klezmer music. Instead, Weinberg retained a Western classical approach in his writing for the solo cello line. Nevertheless, to bring out a more authentic Jewish stylistic character, the responsibility falls largely upon the performer's interpretive choices.

Steven Greenman identifies expressive portamento and slides as among the most

defining characteristics of klezmer string playing.[66] While Greenman's discussion focuses primarily on violin technique, many of these expressive devices could be considered idiomatic on the cello as well. A cellist performing Weinberg's *Concertino* or *Concerto* may therefore look for appropriate moments within the score to incorporate subtle slides into lyrical melodic lines, in order to evoke a vocal quality reminiscent of klezmer performance.

Beyond ornamentation, klezmer performance practice is also characterized by a degree of rhythmic freedom that may inform a cellist's approach to certain passages in both works. As Strom observes, rhythmic vitality and interpretive flexibility are central to an authentic klezmer performance style, rooted in a long tradition of improvisation in which performers treat the notated rhythm as a framework for personal expression rather than a strict prescription. However, because these works are performed with orchestra, such freedom must remain within reasonable limits to maintain coordination with the conductor and ensemble. As with any interpretive decision, the precise shape of this rhythmic freedom will inevitably vary from performer to performer, reflecting each individual's musical background, sensibility,

[66] Steven Greenman, "Klezmer Violin Ornamentation," *Violinist.com*, May 4, 2021, https://www.violinist.com/blog/Greenfidl/20215/28751/.

and understanding of the work.

VI

CONCLUSION

This study has examined Weinberg's three major works for cello and orchestra — the *Fantasy*, Op. 52, the *Cello Concertino*, Op. 43b, and the *Cello Concerto*, Op. 43 — with the aim of providing cellists with a deeper understanding of these works before approaching them in performance. By identifying the Polish and Jewish folk elements in each work, this study suggests that understanding these cultural influences can help cellists approach these works with greater historical and musical insight.

Although Weinberg's music has gained increasing recognition in recent years, in-depth scholarly study of his works remains limited. Scholars have noted the presence of folk elements in his music, yet a systematic musicological analysis of these folk elements remains absent from the existing literature. Furthermore, following the *Concertino*'s discovery in 2016, a detailed comparative study of the two works remains absent from existing scholarship.

This study attempts to analyze the folk elements in each work and compare the *Concertino* and *Concerto* to fill existing information gaps. However, the primary focus of this study is to provide a practical contextual framework for performers rather than a strictly musicological analysis. Where documentary evidence is limited,

such as in the case of the *Concertino*'s compositional history, and where topics extend beyond the scope of this study, such as a comprehensive musicological analysis of folk elements, the discussion is necessarily confined to observations that are directly relevant to performance practice and informed interpretation.

Across all three works, Weinberg combines Polish and Jewish music with classical compositional techniques, reflecting a musical language shaped by his own multicultural background. Understanding his cultural background allows performers to make interpretive decisions of musical idea for tempo, articulation, and bowing choices. To identify Polish and Jewish folk elements in these works does not suggest that performers should approach them as folk music. As reflected in Weinberg's decision not to include national designations in his titles, the analysis of these folk elements serves to explain why scholars have identified them in these works. For performers, an awareness of these influences is intended to inform their interpretive choices, but it should not push the performer toward a folk-like treatment of these works.

The comparative analysis of the *Concertino* and *Concerto* reveals that two works share melodic and structural material while also differing in certain aspects. This movement-by-movement comparison offers performers a clearer understanding of

how the two works relate to each other. However, much of the historical background behind the composition of these two works remains unclear, and this study offers possible explanations based on the available evidence. Since these explanations cannot be fully supported by documentary sources, they should be understood as speculative observations that point toward direction for further scholarly research rather than serve as definitive conclusion.

As Weinberg's music continues to attract growing interest among performers, it is hoped that this document will provide a useful foundation for those approaching these works in performance. At the same time, this study offers a starting point for musicologists exploring further research, as scholarly work on Weinberg remains limited. Weinberg's works deserve to be heard and performed far more often, as his remarkable talent deserves far greater recognition.

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