

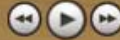
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Amarl Vieira - " Para mi Corazón" - Tributo a Neruda



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Norman Lebrecht's CD of the Week - 24 March

Date: 24 Mar, 2010

Mieczyslaw Weinberg: Sonatas for viola solo (Neos/BR Klassik) ****

There is not a lot of modern music for solo viola that you'd want to hear twice. Start with four dust-dry Hindemith sonatas and move on through Honegger, Krenek, Ligeti, beyond. Like a philosopher at a rave, the viola struggles to assert its character and offer engaging conversation.

Mieczyslaw Weinberg does not seem to recognise these limitations. The composer closest to Shostakovich, Weinberg (1919-1996) arrived in the Soviet Union in 1939 as a refugee from Nazi-occupied Poland, only to be imprisoned under Stalin's terror. Like Shostakovich, he found ways of conveying reality without getting arrested again. In the four viola sonatas, written between 1971 and 1983, he streaks gloom with ribald irony and Jewish melody, most emphatically in the fourth and last. Weinberg must have been aware that Shostakovich's deathbed work was also for viola and there are hints of valediction in this eloquent last piece. Julia Rebekka Adler, co-principal viola of the Munich Philharmonic, is all fire and ice – technically precise yet blazing with conviction in works and instrument alike. Introspective in the four solo sonatas, she saves her best for a 1945 clarinet sonata, transcribed for viola and piano, lamenting the Holocaust in Chassidic melodies with wry, self-knowing twists. More than just works of music, these are fragments of modern history, submitted in evidence.