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**Sonatina Op. 49 (1950–1951), Revised as Sonata Op. 49b (1978)
Composed by Mieczyslaw Weinberg**

The music of Polish-Russian composer and pianist Mieczyslaw Weinberg has received international acclaim since his death in 1996, especially during recent years. Although many of his solo piano works were published, performed and recorded during his lifetime, including his 6 solo piano sonatas and 17 Easy Pieces, there were several solo piano compositions in his archives which have remained unpublished, unperformed and unrecorded for many years. Peermusic Classical in Hamburg, Germany obtained pdf copies of these compositions, which were subsequently included as part of the recordings of “Mieczyslaw Weinberg – Complete Piano Works Volumes I–IV” on Grand Piano/Naxos Records.

Sonatina Op. 49 (1951) and its subsequent revised version as Sonata Op. 49b (1978) are two such works. There are interesting comparisons to be made between the compositional techniques Weinberg employed in each version, i. e. how he used the original material from the Sonatina in the Sonata revision, what changes he made and how he made them, including quotations from previous solo piano works inserted into the latter versions. It is also a notable fact that Weinberg, himself a virtuoso pianist, had ceased to compose for solo piano after 1960. The Sonata Op. 49b, “Can-Can” in Honor of Rastorguyev (1965), and Two Fugues (1983) present the sole exceptions, of these Sonata Op. 49b being the most compositionally substantial work.

Keywords: Mieczyslaw Weinberg, Moisei Vaynberg, Dmitry Shostakovich, Jewish composers in the Soviet Union, Polish/Soviet composers in the 1950's, Piano music in the Soviet Union during the 1950's, folk music influences, Children's Notebook.

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**Сонатина оп. 49 (1950–1951) и её версия – Соната Оп. 49b (1978)
Мечислава Вайнберга**

Музыка польско-русского композитора и пианиста Мечислава Вайнберга получила международное признание после его смерти в 1996 году и особенно в последние годы. Хотя многие сольные фортепианные произведения были опубликованы, исполнены и записаны в течение его жизни, в том числе 6 сольных фортепианных сонат и 17 пьес, в его архивах имеется несколько композиций, которые остаются неопубликованными, непроверенными и незарегистрированными. Гамбургское издательство «Peermusic Classical» (Германия) получило архивные копии сочинений, которые впоследствии были включены в комплект «Мечислав Вайнберг – Полное собрание фортепианных произведений, I–IV том» грамзаписей «Grand Piano / Naxos».

Сонатина оп. 49 (1951) и последующая её переработка в версии под названием Соната оп. 49b (1978) – два из этих произведений. Представляется интересным сравнить композиционные приёмы, технику Вайнберга, музыкальный материал, каким он был в Сонатине и как был изменён в последующей версии Сонаты, какие цитаты из предыдущих сольных фортепианных произведений были включены. Важно учитывать и такой факт, что будучи пианистом-виртуозом, Вайнберг перестал сочинять для сольного фортепиано после 1960 года. Соната оп. 49b, «Канкан», посвящённый Расторгуеву (1965) и «Две фуги» (1983) являются исключением, из них Соната 49b – самая значимая работа.

Ключевые слова: Мечислав Вайнберг, Моисей Вайнберг, Дмитрий Шостакович, еврейские композиторы в Советском Союзе, польские/советские композиторы 1950-х годов, советская фортепианная музыка 1950-х годов, влияние народной музыки, детская тетрадь.



The music of Polish-Russian composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg has gained considerable international prominence in recent years, in the West, starting from the early 1990's with the pioneering performances of pianist Murray McLachlin, produced by Tommy Persson.

One of the greatest influences in his compositional life arose from his Jewish origins. Although he was not a religiously observant Jew at any point during his lifetime, Weinberg's exposure to Jewish/Yiddish culture was constant from his earliest childhood. His father, a violinist and music director, toured with Jewish theatrical companies and composed music for them; starting at a young age, Weinberg accompanied him on many of these tours. Weinberg's own early musical activities included his participation as a pianist, ensemble leader, and composer at the Jewish theatre with his father.

Weinberg's formal piano studies began at the age of 12 and continued at the Warsaw Conservatory with the renowned pianist and pedagogue Józef Turczyński, himself a student of Ferruccio Busoni. Evidently Turczyński considered Weinberg to be one of his best students, such a distinguished musician, that had events in Weinberg's life been different he would have had the opportunity to study at the Curtis Institute of Music with Josef Hofmann, to pursue the career of a concert pianist. However, World War II intervened, and Weinberg's only recourse as a Jew was to escape east to the Soviet-occupied zone.

After crossing into Soviet territory Weinberg settled in Minsk for two years, where he studied composition with Vasily Zolotaryov at the Belorussian Conservatory, from which he received his diploma in 1941. Zolotaryov, a student of Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and himself a prolific composer, provided Weinberg with a solidly-grounded compositional foundation. At that time Weinberg also met Nikolai Myaskovsky, the renowned symphonic composer and teacher, to whom Weinberg continued to show his compositions after moving to Moscow to continue his career as a professional composer. Weinberg later performed many works by Myaskovsky for members of the Composers' Union.

However, the strongest influence on Weinberg, one that would remain such for the rest of his life (and, it could be said, vice versa), was his first encounter with the music of Dmitri Shostakovich, a performance of Symphony No. 5 at the Philharmonic Society. Because Shostakovich's music was not

well known in Poland, Weinberg would previously have been unfamiliar with it, the possible exception being the Three Fantastic Dances Op. 5 for piano. Shostakovich and Weinberg would meet subsequently.

When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, it was necessary for Weinberg, as a Jew, to escape from Minsk, but the peculiarities of the data in his documents did not permit him to leave. Weinberg received assistance in this plight; he was able to board a train to Tashkent, where he spent the next couple of years. Although he did not have proper background papers upon his arrival in Tashkent, he eventually found employment as a rehearsal pianist for the Uzbek Opera. It was in Tashkent that he met his first wife, Nataliya Vovsi-Mikhoels. Solomon Mikhoels, Nataliya Vovsi-Mikhoels' father, the renowned Jewish actor, artistic director of the Moscow Jewish State Theater and chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, at the time was the Artistic Director of the Uzbek Opera and Ballet Company where Weinberg worked. According to Nataliya Vovsi-Mikhoels, it was her father who first introduced Weinberg's works to Shostakovich. According to Weinberg himself, Yury Levitin, a former student of Shostakovich and director of the musical theatre in Tashkent during the time Weinberg lived there, either sent a score of Weinberg's First Symphony to Shostakovich or brought it to him personally. This was the beginning of their association, which continued until Shostakovich's death in 1975.

During the difficult years of the early 1950's, when anti-Semitic activities directed at the Jewish community increased dramatically, Weinberg was arrested in 1953, purportedly on the grounds that he was a Jewish nationalist. The accusation was founded both on the Jewish themes in his compositions and on his alleged political activities to establish a free Jewish republic in Crimea. The real reason for his arrest was his familial tie with Solomon Mikhoels and Miron Vovsi, a close relative of Weinberg's wife, who was Stalin's chief physician. Vovsi was the chief defendant in Stalin's fabricated "Doctors' plot," in which it was claimed that a group of physicians conspired against the lives of Soviet leaders by means of medical sabotage. Shostakovich wrote to Lavrentiy Beriya, director of the NKVD, on Weinberg's behalf to vouch for his credentials as a composer and as a person, also citing Weinberg's health issues.

After Weinberg's release from imprisonment, his life settled in a pattern where he was able to maintain enough artistic freedom to pursue

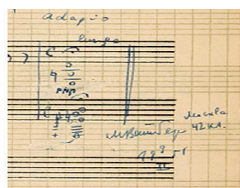
his compositional activities without having a particularly high public profile. The reasons for this were many. First, his health was always delicate and especially after his arrest. Second, he did not receive complete public rehabilitation as he did not involve himself greatly in the work of the Composers' Union, nor did he promote himself as a performer or teacher.

One of his most prominent works from the 1950's was the Sonatina Op. 49, later revised as Sonata Op. 49b, and this is the main subject of this article.

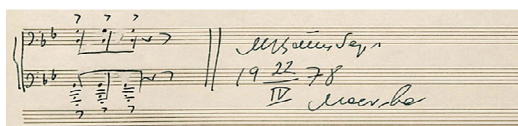
Sonatina Op. 49 was composed in 1950–1951, as inscribed on the cover page, and is dedicated to Dmitri Shostakovich.



The completion date is given as 9 February, 1951¹.



The completion date of the Sonata Op. 49b is given as 22 April, 1978.



Since the revision of the Sonata is dated 27 years after the composition of the original Sonatina was composed, Weinberg clearly intended to develop the original work further, possibly to improve it, and certainly to reorganize some of its musical material and to lengthen it substantially; hence the change in title from Sonatina to Sonata.

The first alteration is the discrepancy of the opening tempos between the original Sonatina and the revised Sonata. The tempo marking in the Sonatina Op. 49 is *Allegro leggiero*, quarter note = 200, and the time signature is given as cut time. The tempo marking in the Sonata Op. 49b is also *Allegro leggiero*; however, the metronome marking is half note = 88 and the time signature is 2/2. What was the composer's intention changing in both the time signature and the tempo?

Opening of Sonatina Op. 49:

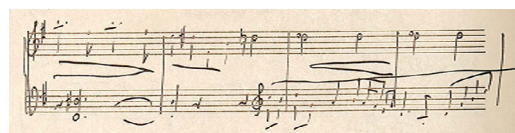


Opening of Sonata Op. 49b:



The change from cut time to 2/2 does not in fact alter the basic harmonic rhythm, or pulse, of either movement as both are interpreted as containing 2 beats to a measure. What may in fact account for the slightly slower tempo in the Sonata is the rhythmic alteration in the first full measure. In Sonatina Op. 49 the opening rhythmic motive in the third beat is two sixteenth notes and an eighth note as shown in the above example; in Sonata Op. 49b the opening rhythmic motive in the first half of the second beat is an eighth note and two sixteenth notes, also as shown in the above example. The pitches in both instances are B A G. By changing the rhythmic figure in the Sonata, it has a less forward-moving impetus, thus lending itself to a more relaxed feeling to the pulse. As the rhythmic alteration in the opening theme appears to be consistent throughout both the Sonatina Op. 49 and the Sonata Op. 49b, it could be concluded that this is a conscious choice on Weinberg's part.

There is also a discrepancy of notes at the end of the second full measure of Sonata Op. 49b as seen in the above example. In the Sonatina Op. 49 the last note of the second full measure is clearly an E, whereas in the Sonata Op. 49b it is clearly a D. Is this intentional? Below is a later entrance of the opening theme of the Sonata in the left hand:



Given that other entrances of the opening theme are consistent with the second example, it would appear that the composer's intention would be to maintain the consistency of the theme in both versions. Therefore, the D in the Sonata Op. 49b could be considered to be an error on the part of the

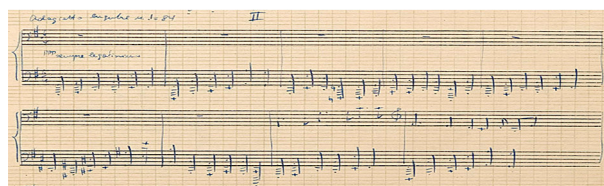
composer. There are additional changes in the notes, but none that merit mention, except to be observed when learning and performing both the Sonatina and the Sonata.

The Sonata's first movement, although only extended by an additional 13 measures (4 measures in the exposition; 9 measures in the beginning of the development section, with the left hand playing the melody, accompanied by the right hand playing on the second beat), is significantly longer than the Sonatina. This is achieved by the implementation of repeats, whereby the exposition is played twice exactly as written and the development is played with two different endings².

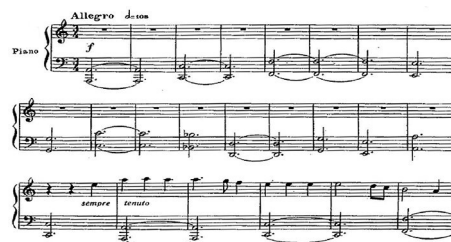
There are many similarities between both first movements, including the use of sequences and repetition by rhythmic displacement of thematic material³. Both movements are folk-like in character and follow the same compositional formula, i.e. exposition, development, recapitulation and coda. Both codas are played twice as slowly as the opening tempo; in the Sonatina the rhythm is augmented to twice its value, whereas in the Sonata the last 4 measures are marked as *Doppio più lento*, and the meter is changed to 3/2. The difficulty level does not significantly increase between the Sonatina and the Sonata; perhaps the only passages that could be considered more difficult in the Sonata are the two double-third scales as opposed to the single-note scales in the Sonatina.

One of the fascinating aspects of the second movement of the Sonatina is Weinberg's choice of free passacaglia as a compositional structure, which Weinberg chooses to incorporate as the B section of the third movement in the Sonata. Because it is not strictly in the passacaglia tradition since the bass pattern changes with each reiteration after the first measure, it would be appropriate nonetheless to classify this as a free passacaglia, given its ground-bass *function* throughout the movement. This is an example not only of his knowledge of the Baroque style, but also his apparent fascination with passacaglia. Sonatina Op. 49 and Sonata Op. 49b are not the only instances of Weinberg's use of passacaglia in solo piano composition; the entire 603-measure first movement of Sonata No. 5, Op. 58 for solo piano⁴, composed in 1956 (5 years after the original Sonatina) is also built on passacaglia.

Opening of Sonatina Op. 49, 2nd Movement in which the passacaglia is established in the first 7 measures:

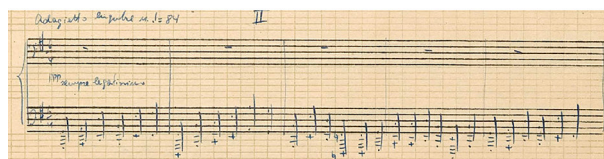


The opening of the 1st movement of Sonata No. 5, in which the passacaglia is established in the first 18 measures:



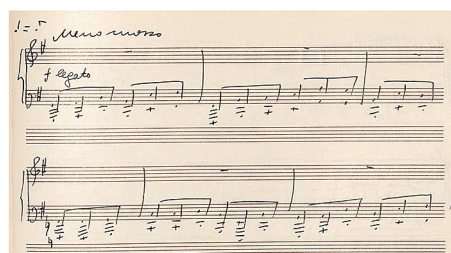
The second movement of the Sonatina Op. 49 is reiterated as the middle, or B, section of the third movement of the Sonata Op. 49b. However, we must observe the difference in notation, and metronomic/tempo indications.

The opening of Sonatina Op. 49, 2nd Movement:



Although it is difficult to read the handwriting in the above example, the rhythmic value is set to the quarter note, i.e. 6/4, and the metronome marking of quarter note = 84. In the Sonata the rhythmic value is set to the eighth note, i.e. 6/8; based on the opening tempo as dotted quarter note = 80, which would equate to quarter note = 160, it is reasonable to state that in this section eighth note = 80 is the composer's intention. Weinberg further indicates the tempo as *meno mosso*.

Sonata Op. 49b, 3rd Movement B Section:



Although there is little actual difference between the two metronomic indications, Weinberg changes the *character* of this material; it functions as a slow, lugubrious, rather stately stand-alone second movement in the Sonatina, as opposed to the more intense, rather restless B section of the third movement of the Sonata. This is partially attributed to the continuation of the *Allegretto* as established in the beginning of the third movement of the Sonata; it is also based upon visual interpretation. 6 separate quarter notes in 6/4 time would be played differently as written in the Sonatina from 2 groups of 3 eighth notes in 6/8 time as written in the Sonata⁵. The change in character is particularly fascinating as the actual material used in both differs only in their endings as the first 24 measures are exactly the same.

The final 2 measures of the B section of the 3rd movement of the Sonata, passing into the short repeat of the A section:



The Sonata has a more concise conclusion to the passacaglia, although the movement does not end at that point, but continues into the restatement of the opening fugue subject. This is achieved by an elision at the cadence, i.e. an enharmonic V+ chord into a held E, serving as both the end of the B section and the beginning of the A restatement.

Last 5 measures of the Sonatina, 2nd movement:



The regular motion of the quarter notes in the Sonatina ceases during the last 4 measures of the second movement, which ends with an inconclusive cadence as the final chord, that is not only incomplete, but in an implied first inversion of the triad.

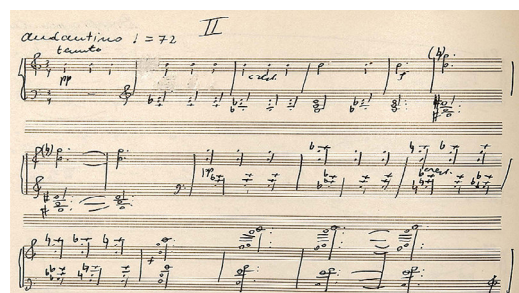
There are also significant differences in dynamics as the second movement of the Sonatina ranges from *ppp* to *p* with *crescendi* and *decrescendi* throughout; the only dynamic indications in the passacaglia section of the Sonata are *f*, which is maintained throughout, and *espressivo*.

The second movement of Sonata Op. 49b begins with musical material that does not appear in the Sonatina Op. 49. A superficial examination of Weinberg's solo piano compositions does not yield

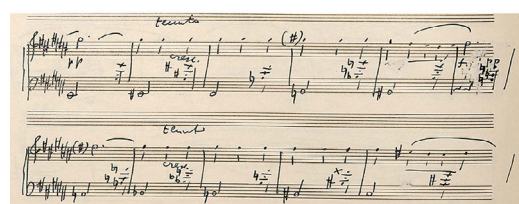
any relationship between this material and any pre-existing piece; however, as the B section of this movement exists originally as No. 14 of Weinberg's Children's Notebooks Op. 19, further examination is required. There is in fact a direct relationship between the opening and closing A sections with the B section that can be substantiated. The opening and closing A sections are built upon repeated quarter notes on the same pitch, supported by harmonies, which move chromatically in opposite directions, for 4 measures at a time. The B section contains measures with repeated quarter notes on the same pitch, supported by harmonies that ascend chromatically by half-steps for 4 measures at a time. Weinberg's use of clusters, chromatic harmonic progression and expanding registration create an intense atmosphere completely different in character to Sonatina Op. 49.

The first two examples demonstrate the continual use of quarter notes on the same pitch. In the first phrase of the Sonata a B quarter note is repeated for 4 measures (with the exception of the last beat, which changes to a C), followed by another four measures in which the B (with the G above) appears as a half note. In the next phrase the B (with the G above) quarter note is present for 4 measures, followed by another four measures in which the B and G appear as half notes. The surrounding notes move chromatically in opposing directions in the second phrase.

Sonata Op. 49b, Opening of the Second Movement:



The Sonata incorporates the same music exactly as in the Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 14, i.e. a tied dotted half note G# to a quarter note followed by two G#'s in the same measure, 2 full measures with G# quarter notes, and a downbeat G# quarter note in the excerpt below:



However, instead of repeating the same note in the next phrase, Weinberg chooses to bring in F# instead. The harmony moves chromatically by half-step in the bass.

The opening of the Sonata B Section is exactly the same as in the Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 14.

B Section Opening of Sonata Op. 49b:



The opening of Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 14:



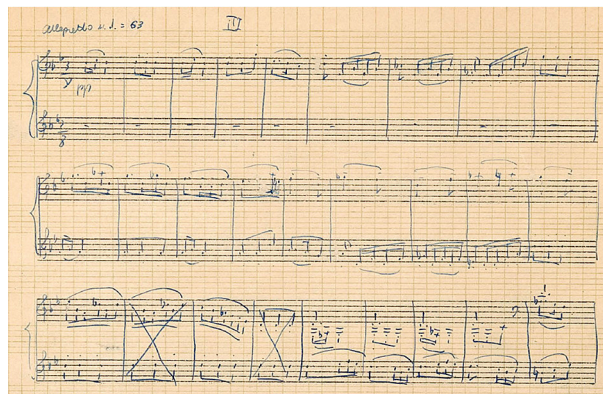
Weinberg alludes to this opening in the A section of the Sonata by the descending pattern F# – D – B followed by the sequential F – D♭ – B♭ in the right hand.

There are almost no substantial changes from the Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 14 to the music incorporated in Sonata Op. 49b. The most important differences would be in their conclusions. In the Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 14 there is an *attacca* indication directly into the next piece with an inconclusive cadence at the end of the piece. In the Sonata the measures that set up the *attacca* in the original piece are removed; instead a measure of F# quarter notes played first by the right hand serves as an elision from the B section into the A concluding section. The left hand continues the F# quarter notes, while the right hand has chromatically-ascending harmonies. The final two measures present a plagal cadence of iv6–5 to i in G# minor.

The third movement of the Sonatina Op. 49 is a fugato, whereas the third movement of the Sonata Op. 49b is a fugue with the B section passacaglia

described in this chapter. One major difference between the two is the respective lengths; the third movement in the manuscript of the Sonatina is less than 2 pages long and presents the subject in the style of a fugue with 3 complete statements, followed by several episodes without any further complete statements, winding down to a 3-note motive of repeated quarter notes.

The opening of Sonatina Op. 49, 3rd Movement:



The exposition of the Sonata is 5 pages long in the manuscript; that is partially due to Weinberg's physical manner of writing, but it is also the result of the exposition's measure length of 116 measures.

The opening of Sonata Op. 49b, 3rd Movement:



The A section in this movement is in the form of a 4-voice fugue, with clearly-established entrances of the subject, divided into three sections. The case could be made for an exposition, development and recapitulation as follows.

Exposition – Measures 1–65, utilizing both complete subject statements in all 4 voices plus episodes. This section is almost exactly the same as the original Sonatina; the Sonatina's entire

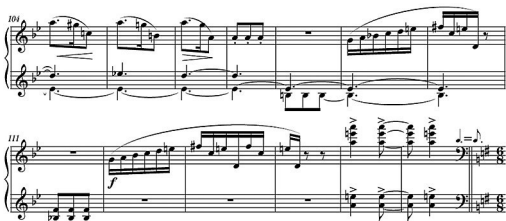


3rd movement is 67 measures in length with a 4-measure cadential extension. Weinberg writes hand crossings in both the Sonatina and the Sonata, a device he employs frequently in his compositions.

Development – Measures 66–79, with fugue subjects in opposite chromatic motion, creating restlessness and instability.

Recapitulation – Measures 80–116, utilizing the upper registers of the piano for a complete subject statement and descending in register with additional statements or episodes. Weinberg once again uses hand-crossing techniques mentioned earlier in the Exposition. This section ends with an allusion to the Coda, which utilizes material from the Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 10. The Coda material starts in the example below in measure 109.

Conclusion to A section of Sonata, 3rd Movement:



Beginning of Sonata Op. 49b, 3rd Movement – Coda:



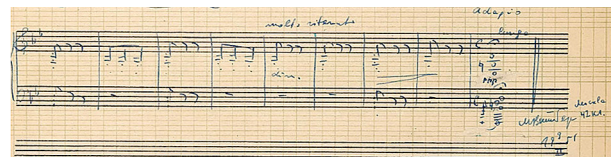
Beginning of Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 10:



In the Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 10 the 5-note ostinato G – A – B \flat – C – D (with the D descending) in the left hand is established in the 1st measure and is used throughout until it reaches the Coda, whereas in the Coda of the Sonata it first appears in the 3rd measure. The interpolated

music in the Coda of the Sonata is also shorter than in the Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 10; the Coda of the Sonata incorporates 28 measures from its predecessor, which has 38 measures plus its 10-measure Coda.

The endings of the Sonatina Op. 49, Sonata Op. 49b and Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 10 are all significantly different. The third movement of Sonatina Op. 49 winds down to a quiet completion with a *diminuendo*, using a cadential extension of 8 measures without great fanfare other than an inconclusive *ppp* final chord⁶.



The Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 10 actually has two different endings in one. The first is a *p espressivo* which plays on the minor second interval in the right hand between G \flat and F with ascending and descending half-step chromatic motion in the left hand. The second is a *pp* augmentation of the last 4 notes of the right hand opening measure, descending by octave in each hand. The character of the ending is both pensive and inconclusive, followed by declamatory, emotionally intense piece in its original context.

Children's Notebook, Op. 19 No. 10, Last Measures:



The last several measures of the Coda in the Sonata are very dramatic as opposed to its source material. This is achieved by the use of the fugue subject episodically and by the extreme register ranges in the piano. The dynamics, not shown in this example, are *ff* as established earlier in the Coda. The fugue subject is first introduced in the right hand in measure 184, leaving the left hand to continue the 16th-note ascending motive of the right hand in measures 184–186 at the same starting note played by the right hand during measure 183⁷. When the left

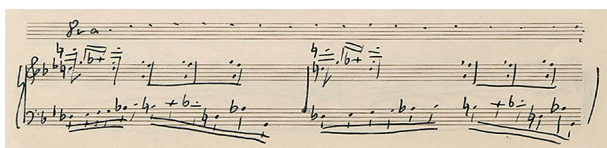


hand states the fugue subject in measures 187–188, the right hand continues the left hand motif of measures 184–185 in an inversion.

Ending of Coda with episodic entrances of fugue subject starting in measure 184:



There is a glaring omission in both the original manuscript and the example above⁸, which is the change in meter from 5/8 to 6/8 from measure 184 to the end. This is not indicated in either, a clear example of unintentional composer error.



Does the inclusion of two different sections of the Children's Notebooks affect the integrity of the original material? This is an interesting question to consider, as composers frequently borrow from their own material or from music by other composers; Weinberg is not the first, nor is he the last composer to borrow from himself. The answer would be that it does not as much affect the *integrity* of the material as it does the *intention* of the material. If the answer depends on the definition of integrity, i.e. the state of being whole, entire, or undiminished⁹, both movements from the Children's Notebook would be considered undiminished as their value is maintained in their original context and their integration into a different context. If the answer depends upon the definition of intention, i.e. the purpose or effect of an action¹⁰, both movements from the Children's Notebook are affected by Weinberg's choice to integrate them into a different context.

Does this lessen their musical value in either context? That is a matter of opinion, which may require some further historical perspective to answer fully; for now, it is fair to say that the music merits full consideration regardless of its context.

NOTES

¹ This is the same year in which Shostakovich completed his 24 Preludes and Fugues, mentioned earlier in reference to Weinberg's Two Fugues.

² This is atypical of early Sonata Allegro form; for example, in a survey of Mozart's piano sonatas the exposition is repeated in its entirety and the development and recapitulation would be repeated together in their entirety. This practice was later abandoned as composers further developed sonata as a compositional form.

³ Rhythmic displacement of thematic material is a compositional device employed by Weinberg throughout many of his compositions.

⁴ Dedicated to his friend and colleague, the pianist and composer Boris Tchaikovsky, this sonata was published during Weinberg's lifetime and is currently

in print, available through Internationale Musikverlage Hans Sikorski.

⁵ The 6/8 tempo indication is given at the bottom of the previous page; although difficult to read, nonetheless it is present.

⁶ The grace note in the left hand, an F, changes the last chord from a Picardian 3rd to a G dominant seventh chord in 3rd inversion.

⁷ The D \flat is a 4th below the opening measure of the right hand, with the 4ths varying note to note from perfect to augmented intervals.

⁸ From Peermusic Classical Germany engraving.

⁹ Dictionary.com | Find the Meanings and Definitions of Words at Dictionary.com. Web. 07 Nov. 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse>>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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