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Piano Works By Those Who Escaped The Nazis

Over the last 20 years conductors like James Conlon and John Mauceri and ensembles like the Hawthorne String Quartet have made a specialty of works by Jewish composers

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**MUSIC
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whose careers were derailed during the Nazi era. They focused at first on composers who were killed, among them Erwin Schulhoff,

Hans Krasa and Gideon Klein, but lately they have included composers who survived by fleeing their homelands, and non-Jewish German composers who resisted the regime.

The Royal Conservatory, in Toronto, has joined in this exploration, and made an estimable recording of music by Mieczyslaw Weinberg in 2006. Now its faculty ensemble, Artists of the Royal Conservatory, or ARC ensemble, is presenting "Music in Exile: Émigré Composers of the 1930s," an ambitious, five-day overview at the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. The series, directed by Simon Wynberg, focuses mostly on the composers who escaped to Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States.

The opening concert, on Sunday, coincided with the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht, a night of Nazi rioting in which hundreds of synagogues were burned, thousands of homes and businesses vandalized, and about 30,000 men and boys (Jews, not rioters) arrested. Before the per-

formance Ernest W. Michel, a trustee of the museum, spoke about his memories of Kristallnacht (he was 15), and Mr. Conlon, the honorary chairman of ARC, spoke about the importance of performing the forgotten music of the era.

The first program was to have included works by Walter Braunnfels, who was half Jewish, and Adolf Busch, who was not Jewish but considered the Nazis contemptible, refused their order to replace Jewish musicians in his string quartet and eventually left Germany. (He was also Rudolf Serkin's father-in-law.) Alas, a death in the family of an ensemble player forced ARC to replace those pieces with piano quintets by Franz Reizenstein and Weinberg that also appear on later programs.

Both these rarities can stand two hearings in close succession, and the Weinberg Piano Quintet (Op. 18) is a real find. Weinberg fled Poland for the Soviet Union in 1939. He became friendly with Shostakovich, who wrote to Stalin on his behalf when he was arrested during the Soviet Union's anti-Semitic persecutions in the early 1950s.

The quintet, composed in 1944, is an intense but not particularly troubled work: its rich, Brahmsian string writing is consistently vigorous and sometimes steamy, with singing solo lines that travel among the instruments, a vibrant dance figure in its finale and surprising structural touches. Shostakovich's influence is slight, but you hear it in the accent and shape of the piano line.

The Reizenstein Quintet in D (Op. 23), from 1948, is also a stone's throw from late Brahms. It begins and ends with the barest hint of modernist acidity but is mostly given to lush textures and sumptuous themes. The ARC musicians performed both scores with passion, polish and vitality. And Mr. Wynberg provides an extraordinary amount of information about the era and the music in the beautifully produced 104-page program book.

"*Music in Exile: Émigré Composers of the 1930s*" runs through Thursday at the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, 18 First Place, at West Street and Battery Place, Lower Manhattan; (646) 437-4202, mjhny.org.

