

BENNINGTON COLLEGE MUSIC DIVISION

Presents

THE CONCORD STRING QUARTET

Mark Sokol, violin
Andrew Jennings, violin
John Kochanowski, viola
Norman Fischer, cello

QUARTET-IN-RESIDENCE, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

Wednesday
October 22, 1975

8:15 p.m.
Carriage Barn

String Quartet No. 1 (1908)

Béla Bartók

Lento; Allegretto
Introduzione: Allegro; Allegro vivace

String Quartet No. 3 (1927)

Béla Bartók

Prima parte: Moderato
Seconda parte: Allegro
Recapitulazione della prima parte
Coda

-- I n t e r m i s s i o n --

String Quartet No. 6 (1939)

Béla Bartók

Mesto - Vivace
Mesto - Marcia
Mesto - Burletta
Mesto

The Concord String Quartet plays on a matched set
of instruments made by the Italian violinmaker
Sergio Peresson of Udine.

Nonesuch, Vox, Turnabout, and CRI Records

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BARTOK: String Quartet #1, op. 7 (1908)

Lento: Allegretto

Introduzione: Allegro; Allegro vivace

Duration: Approximately 25 minutes

Taken as a set, the six Bartok quartet represent both one of this century's most significant musical utterances and a worthy shelf companion to the great works in that medium by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert - a statement which may be made without fear of hyperbole. Like the quartets of the earlier masters, Bartok expands still further the technical, sonic, and expressive possibilities of the four-voice string ensemble. At the same time they accurately chronicle Bartok's growth as a composer over three decades - covering all but the final five years of his creative life. His first effort, written in 1908 and revised twenty-eight years later, derives its inspiration in part from the works of the masters, in part (stylistically) from contemporaneous trends (outgrowths of and reactions to the Late Romanticism still precariously clinging to the musical mainstream), and from the beginnings of his own travels through the Hungarian provinces with Zoltan Kodaly, uncovering and notating indigenous folksong. The first movement is a slow fugue, undoubtedly inspired by the opening of Beethoven's c-sharp-minor Op. 131 quartet. After an agitated central section the fugue returns and evolves into the second movement, a faster, sonata-form assemblage of three themes. The gradual accelerando which defines the overall form of the work is furthered in the final movement - a fast introduction which leads into a spirited gypsy-like dance whose first theme previously took shape in the preceding movement. Bartok in this quartet plays with ideas which occupy him for the remainder of his career: Thematic unity of movements, Hungarian folk melodies and rhythm, and the free chromaticism which without hesitation adopts the best of both the tonal and atonal worlds.

Mark Woodward

BARTOK: String Quartet #3 (1927)

Prima parte: Moderato

Seconda parte: Allegro

Recapitulazione della prima parte

C Coda

(Played without pause)

Duration: Approximately 18 minutes

Composed in 1927 and dedicated to the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, Bartok's third quartet is the shortest he wrote, and among the most compact and intense. The first part begins quietly with two themes, one in very small chromatic intervals, a melody with accompaniment, and the other in wide skips, less chromatic, and with complementary rhythms in various voices. Tension and movement build again and again to forceful chords, but the quieter mood of the opening finally returns. Without a pause, the wilder second part interrupts the calm. A rhythmically complicated dance is introduced by trills, wisps of glissandi, and strummed chords in the lower parts. These elements are combined and developed with continually increasing vigor until the movement finally expires in the return of the first part. Respite is short, however, for the Coda erupts with renewed energy, bringing the piece to a furious close.

Dale C. Carr

BELA BARTOK: String Quartet No. 6

With the composition of his sixth quartet, Bartok discarded the use of the "arch form" used in his fourth and fifth, and evolved a new way of integrating four broadly contrasting movements. This final quartet was composed in the autumn of 1939, the last composition Bartok wrote while living on Hungarian soil. Its dedication is to the Kolish Quartet, who gave the first performance on January 20, 1941, in New York. The unifying factor in the sixth quartet is a motto theme that appears at the beginning of each movement and is marked, each time, *Mesto* (sadly). At the outset of the quartet it is played by the unaccompanied viola; the following movement, a sonata, opens *Vivace* with an augmented form of what is to be the first theme, followed immediately by the theme itself. A second and a closing group follow and are developed, and the whole is recapitulated in abbreviated form. The movement ends with a coda. The second *Mesto* is in a two-part setting in which the three upper strings play together in octaves; then comes a *Marcia*. In A-B-A form, the march itself, sardonic, harsh, perhaps even funny, but utterly tired, surrounds a middle section of tremolos, guitar-like pizzicati and a rubato cello-line abounding in glissandi.

The third *Mesto* is in a three-part setting, omitting the viola; the following *Burletta* is unquestionably humorous although the humor is sardonic rather than jolly, and in some ways curiously Beethovenesque. Stomping rhythms abound, violinistic "laughs", glissandi and intentional off-pitch playing are everywhere. The trio section is lyrical and rather wistful. With the last movement, the *Mesto* is played by four independent voices, which are drawn out into the entire finale. The sole exception is the entry of two themes from the gay first movement, recollected here in a kind of somber tranquillity that brings to mind some of the late works of Richard Strauss. The ending is beautiful but bleak, a somber peroration to this magnificent musical account of genius in its highest estate.