



CHANNEL CLASSICS

CCS 8895

# BÉLA BARTÓK

string quartets 1 - 3 - 4  
volume 1

Orpheus Quartet



DIGITAL

# Orpheus Quartet

BÉLA BARTOK (1881-1945)  
string quartets 1 - 3 - 4 *volume 1*

## String quartet nr.1, opus 7

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. Lento                                     | 09.10 |
| 2. Allegretto                                | 08.30 |
| 3. Allegro (Introduzione),<br>Allegro vivace | 12.20 |

## String quartet nr. 3

- |                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| 4. Prima parte (Moderato)  | 05.04 |
| 5. Seconda parte (Allegro) | 11.18 |

## String quartet nr. 4

- |                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| 6. Allegro                  | 06.00 |
| 7. Prestissimo, con sordino | 03.38 |
| 8. Non troppo lento         | 06.40 |
| 9. Allegretto pizzicato     | 03.10 |
| 10. Allegro molto           | 05.54 |

**Total time** 71.42

Charles-André Linale *violin*

Emilian Piedicuta *violin*

Emile Cantor *viola*

Laurentiu Sbarcea *violoncello*

*Recording dates:*

1-4 May, 6-7 June 1995

*Recording location:*

Renswoude,  
The Netherlands



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LC 4481

*All Channel Classics productions are recorded and edited in the digital domain*



**Orpheus Quartet** *Orpheus Quartet on Channel Classics:*

Charles-André Linale	CCS 3892
<i>violin</i>	Debussy, Ravel, Dutilleux
Emilian Piedicuta	CCS 6094
<i>violin</i>	Beethoven Opus 18 & opus 19
Emile Cantor	CCS 6794
<i>viola</i>	Schubert Quintet in C
Laurentiu Sbarcea	Major with Pieter Wispelwey
<i>violoncello</i>	

**Béla Bartók (1881-1945)**

**String quartet nr.1, opus 7**

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3. Allegro (Introduzione), Allegro vivace	12.20

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*"One of the most interesting and most promising new string quartets",* wrote Jean Roy, the critic of *Le Monde de la Musique*, in July 1988, a year after the inauguration of the **Orpheus Quartet**. And since then the quartet - with Charles André Linale (first violin), Emilian Piedicuta (second violin), Emile Cantor (viola) and Laurentiu Sbarcea (cello) - has indeed built up a career of some prominence.

In 1988, a unanimous jury awarded first prize to the Orpheus Quartet at the Valentino Bucchi Competition in Rome; in the same year, they also won first prize in the Karl Klinger Competition in Munich. In April 1993 they were presented with first prize at the prestigious International Chamber Music Competition in Osaka, and simultaneously received the prize for the best performance of the compulsory work by the Japanese composer, Akira Miyoshi.

In 1992, great international acclaim greeted their CD recording of the quartets of Debussy, Ravel and Dutilleux (Channel Classics CCS 3892). In January 1993 the quartet was awarded the *Grand Prix du Disque* of the Academie Charles Gros for their recording of the complete quartets of Malipiero. In 1994 the quartet was awarded the *Diapason d'Or* for their recording of Schubert's String Quartet with Pieter Wispelwey (CCS 6794).

Since their establishment in 1987, the Orpheus Quartet have gained a worldwide reputation. Their success is founded on their many successful concerts and on a repertoire which extends through Haydn, Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Smetana and Dvorák to Hartmann, Shostakovich, Malipiero, Berg and Halffter.

## **BÉLA BARTÓK-STRING QUARTETS NOS. 1, 3, AND 4**

Béla Bartók's six string quartets show him not only as one of the most important Hungarian composers, but also as one of the great cosmopolitan artists of the 20th century. In these works, which trace a thread through his entire career, Bartók found a completely original way of combining the folk music which he researched with the great quartet tradition as established by Haydn, Beethoven, and Brahms.

Bartók undertook the business of quartet writing with particular seriousness. There was no other choice, given the presence of Beethoven and Brahms as his most important models. In particular, the last quartets of Beethoven left a deep and abiding impression on Bartók's six works, which recall their illustrious ancestors in the frequent contrapuntal treatment of themes, the complex melodic development throughout the instrumental web, the sometimes capricious and at other times dancelike extravert quality of the rhythm, and also in Bartók's tendencies towards experimentation with structure and form.

The First String Quartet, Opus 7, largely composed in 1908, is the first result, and it is an impressively mature one. The themes, fugal techniques, and closely worked structure recall Beethoven's Opus 130 and 131. In addition, this three-movement quartet is characterized by a strongly romantic expressive quality, with a trace of Wagner's *Tristan* and a mournful Hungarian folk melody in its make-up. After all, at this time Bartók was hopelessly in love with the young violinist Stefi Geyer, and his only emotional outlet was the composition of a violin concerto and a string quartet.

But Bartók was also in despair over his own career. His works were infrequently performed, more often than not badly received, and as a result were known only to small numbers of true enthusiasts. In the meantime, Bartók had become aware of the inestimable value of the Hungarian folk music tradition. Armed with pencil and paper, and soon thereafter with a phonograph and blank cylinders, he literally took to the field with Zoltán Kodály, for it was there that he felt that Hungary's true heart was to be found.

The fruits of his travels through Hungary and Romania (and later on, the Arabic and Turkish folk cultures as well) had their direct echo in his extensive oeuvre, in the numerous works for piano, the orchestral music, the vocal works, and the chamber music. They can be found in the composer's use of direct quotation, his transcriptions and arrangements which were made with the greatest possible fidelity to the original, but even more often in Bartók's way of allowing the style and technique of folk music to influence his own tonal language, producing a unique synthesis of idioms.

In the Third and Fourth String Quartets, composed in rapid succession in 1927 and 1928, Béla Bartók reached the height of his powers. This is also the period of his First Piano Concerto, the Piano Sonata, and the two Rhapsodies for violin and orchestra. The Third String Quartet was also the first chamber music composition with which Bartók achieved international recognition. The work consists of two main movements (Prima parte: Moderato, and Seconda parte: Allegro), followed by a return of the first part (Ricapitulazione della prima parte: Moderato)

and a Coda: Allegro Molto. The result is extremely succinct, condensed, rhythmically driven, but also lyrically introverted and evocative.

No less ingeniously planned is the Fourth String Quartet. On either side of a slow, hushed night-music, there are two rapid movements: Allegro-Prestissimo, con sordino- Non troppo lento-Allegretto pizzicato-Allegro molto. The transition from the outer movements' shell to the central movement's core and back again is accomplished by the ingenious use of thematically interrelated motives, which frequently function like rhyming words with respect to each other. They refer to each other, even when they occur in larger thematic blocks. In addition they are subjected to far-reaching transformations, from lyrical to aggressive, from hushed and evocative to exuberant dancing.

But in all the movements, the most important source of inspiration is the folk music of Hungary: "These melodies are the incarnation of the highest and most perfect art; they provide an example of how humanity can perfectly express a musical thought using only the simplest forms and means of expression." A perfect balance between simplicity and complexity in both collective and individual culture: there is the mastery of Béla Bartók.

*Leo Samama*

*Translation: David Shapero*



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### Colophon


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Producer: T.A. Diehl  
Recording engineer/editing: Bert van der Wolf  
Cover design: Charlotte Boersma  
Liner notes: Leo Samama  
Executive producer: C. Jared Sacks

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Channel Classics Records B.V.  
Jacob van Lennepkade 334 E  
1053 NJ Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Phone (+31.20) 6161775  
Fax (+31.20) 6160528  
Internet: channel@euronet.nl  
Compuserve: 100327,2765

P. O. Box 5642, Englewood  
New Jersey 07631, U.S.A.  
Phone (+1.201) 5681544

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