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Bartók & Szigeti Sonata Concert, 1940

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This is, quite simply, one of the greatest concerts ever recorded. Blazing with passion, it ranks right up there with Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall, James Brown at the Apollo, the Almani Brothers at the Fillmore, or your own sweat-drenched favorite. As with most such events, its supreme quality arose from a unique confluence of forces, a single moment in time that would never recur.

Joseph Szigeti, one of the most acclaimed violinists of the century, was a fervent advocate of modern music. Bela Bartók was not only an accomplished pianist but one of the most influential composers of his era. Bartók and Szigeti both were life-long friends, allied by their ardent nationalism and anti-fascism, who emigrated to America. Szigeti came first. Bartók arrived on April 11, 1940. This recital two days later was their first in the New World.

Both deeply loved their native land. Each had devoted decades to collecting and perpetuating its musical traditions and had become Hungary's greatest musicians. Although now physically safe in America, they were keenly aware that the world they had left behind was on the brink of extinction. It was with that crushing burden that they transplanted their culture to a new, hopefully temporary home, in the symbolic form of a recital at the Library of Congress, the shrine of intellectual freedom. (Although Szigeti lived until 1973, Bartók would die in exile in New York in 1945, never again seeing his country.) Both the style and the content of the recital seethed with emotional significance. This concert was nothing less than a deeply personal plea for an entire culture that was about to evaporate.

Both musicians were not only ideal spokesmen and advocates for their national music but exemplified the entire Eastern European approach to interpretation, perhaps the most viscerally exciting of all classical performing traditions. Intonation, rhythm, dynamics and texture all become wildly distorted to produce an uninhibited, egotistical emotional effect. While such stylistic matters are hard to describe, the first minute of the Bartók *Rhapsody* will explain this unbuttoned approach better than a thousand books...

Peter Gutmann, *classicalnotes.net*, 1995 - *excerpt*

Transfer notes

Working from near-mint LP pressings from two different sources, my aim here was to highlight what one reviewer referred to as Szigeti's tone "in all its steely glory", whilst dealing with myriad issues: "electrical humtable rumble, occasional swish and pops and crackles and the other by-products of such a recording". I was also able to cure a number of issues relating to wow, and reveal from the rather dim-sounding records that actually a huge amount of detail had been captured and preserved on the original acetates by the impromptu actions of Harold Spivacke, Director of the Music Division of the Library of Congress at the time, who had the foresight to preserve this remarkable concert. The effect upon the recording of XR remastering, particularly when heard in the Ambient Stereo version, is quite stunning. Despite the occasional reminder of its age, the performance is now more vivid, visceral and alive, with a fabulously extended frequency range that conveys brilliantly the tone and performance of both musicians. AR

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Bartók Szigeti

BEETHOVEN 'Kreutzer' Sonata

BARTOK Rhapsody No. 1

DEBUSSY Violin Sonata

BARTOK Violin Sonata No. 2

Live recording, Library of Congress, 1940

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BARTOK & SZIGETI PLAY BEETHOVEN, BARTOK AND DEBUSSY
BARTOK, SZIGETI

BEETHOVEN Violin Sonata No. 9 in A, Op. 47, "Kreutzer"

- 1 1st mvt. - Adagio sostenuto - Presto (11:10)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Andante con variazioni (12:00)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Finale (Presto) (8:27)

BARTOK Rhapsody No. 1 for Violin & Piano

- 4 1st mvt. - Lassu (4:12)
- 5 2nd mvt. - Friss (5:06)

DEBUSSY Sonata for Violin and Piano

- 6 1st mvt. - Allegro vivo (4:09)
- 7 2nd mvt. - Intermède - fantasque et léger (3:47)
- 8 3rd mvt. - Finale - très aминé (4:01)

BARTOK Second Sonata for Violin and Piano

- 9 1st mvt. - Molto moderato (7:42)
- 10 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (11:09)

Joseph Szigeti violin Béla Bartók piano

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XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Bartók and Szigeti**,
taken in Berlin in 1929

Transfers from Philips AL3542 and
Vanguard SRV-304/5 LPs

Recorded at the Coolidge
Auditorium, Library of Congress,
Washington DC on April 13, 1940

This release preserves the original order of
the performance. We are grateful to Cary
O'Dell, Boards Assistant, Motion Picture,
Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division,
at the Library of Congress for additional and
swift research in this matter.

Total duration: **69:43**

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