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PACM 089a

The Juilliard String Quartet plays Bartók

CD1: Quartets 1 & 2

"**POSSIBLY the release of the year** is the three-disc L.P. set, just recorded by Columbia, of the six string quartets by Bela Bartok, played by a young foursome named the Juilliard Quartet...."

Harold C. Schonberg, "Letter from America", The Gramophone, October 1950

It is good news that at long last the Juilliard's splendid set of the Bartok quartets, issued some time ago in the States, is to be released here ; for the absence these works was one of the most glaring lacunae in the catalogue. Fantastic that only one of the six should have been available on LP until now ; but, with due acknowledgment to Argo's enterprise in the matter, their recording is quite outclassed by the new one, which also works out more economically with two quartets on a 12-inch disc instead of one on a 10-inch. Incidentally, I should have thought that the Juilliard's publicity manager (or whoever it is) might have secured the issue of this disc prior to the Quartet's appearance in this country last month : as it is, it will have to serve as an inspiring reminder of the visit of a first-rate ensemble. For of its quality there can be no doubt whatever : these are readings of the first two Bartok quartets which are authentic in style, extremely fluent technically without ever descending into mere slickness, and beautifully polished. There is presumably no need at this juncture to say anything about the works themselves, which are universally recognised as among the great landmarks of the chamber music repertoire, There is a warmth of tone and a sympathy about the Juilliard's performance which, if it rather tones down the barbaric element occasionally, heightens the music's expressive quality : the forceful sections are not allowed to assault our ears too mercilessly, and in the first movement of the Second Quartet we are led to agree with Mátyas Seiber that in its romantic intensity it "remains one of the most beautiful pieces Bartok ever wrote ". Connoisseurs of ensemble playing will admire the unflinching unanimity of thought and execution apparent here: such passages as the *pp prestissimo* ending of the second movement of No. 2 are a real tour de force. The recording is a bit ungenerous to the first violin, whose very high register sounds noticeably weak, but otherwise it is entirely acceptable and well balanced.

L.S., The Gramophone, December 1955

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STUDIO RECORDINGS, 1949



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BARTÓK COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS (CD1)
THE JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

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BARTÓK COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS (CD1)
THE JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

PACM 089A

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XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **The Juilliard
String Quartet**

Quartet No. 1

Recorded 11 May, 1949
30th St. Studio, New York

Quartet No. 2

Recorded 18 March, 17 August 1949
30th St. Studio, New York

Released as Columbia ML-4278

Total duration: **59:56**

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JUILLIARD QUARTET
Bartók Quartets 1 & 2

BARTÓK
String Quartet No. 1 in A minor, Sz. 40

- 1 1st mvt. - Lento (10:35)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (8:46)
- 3 Introduzione - Allegro (1:34)
- 4 3rd mvt. - Allegro vivace (10:28)

BARTÓK
String Quartet No. 2 Sz. 67

- 5 1st mvt. - Moderato (11:07)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Allegro molto capriccioso (7:53)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Lento (9:33)

Robert Mann *violin*
Robert Koff *violin*
Raphael Hillyer *viola*
Arthur Winograd *cello*

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The Juilliard String Quartet plays Bartók

CD2: Quartets 3 & 4

"As Edgard Varese, John Cage and Pierre Henry were moving the argument on, kicking down the doors of perception about what music could be - or kicking doors literally in Pierre Henry's case — music lovers the world over were still struggling to reconcile themselves with Bartok, Schoenberg and Webern: how their music linked into the 'classical' tradition as they knew and understood it.

Columbia Records was under no obligation to give anybody any answers about this new music, but that a company with Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett on its books chose to record the first cycle of Bartok's string quartets is symptomatic of a wholesome core belief in music. Buy 'The Voice of Frank Sinatra' and you were subsidising the Juilliard Quartet's Schoenberg, Ol' twelve-tones is back...

Until now I hadn't quite grasped how luxuriantly warm the Juilliard's take on the first movement of Bartok's String Quartet No 1 sounds. The queerly dislocated voicings of the Second Quartet's last movement and the muffled, vibrato-less clusters that subliminally launch the Third Quartet are outlined in stark, point-of-view detail here: a weightless hover that sounds electronic...

The pinball-machine violence of the Fourth Quartet's *Allegretto pizzicato* movement and the Fifth Quartet's *Alla Bulgarese Scherzo* tell us the same thing - that the Juilliards were prepared to act against long-cherished assumptions about how string quartets 'ought' to behave. 'Bartok-pizzicatos' (the string is snapped against the fingerboard) trash 'classical' politeness with delirious physicality; the lyricism of the Sixth Quartet is quarried with equal grit. The Juilliard Quartet don't do coy. Bartok's melodic writing is non-generic and unsettling. You can hear the quartet trying to work out why..."

Philip Clarke, Gramophone, April 2012 *excerpts*

Producer's Note

After our release earlier this year of quartets by Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, recorded by the Juilliard Quartet for early LP releases on Columbia, a number of people asked me to look at the Bartók they'd covered a couple of years earlier. These were very early days for both tape and vinyl, yet Columbia did an essentially fine job in capturing the Juilliards. This new XR remastering has corrected some quite severe pitch-droop during the second half of the second quartet, as well as general instability not uncommon with the new tape technology. I've reduced tape hiss relatively gently, aiming to preserve as much of the air as possible in the strings - upper harmonic tone which has been greatly revealed by the XR remastering process, giving the sound a vitality lacking in previous editions, yet which is essential for so much of this remarkable music.

A.R.

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The Juilliard String Quartet plays Bartók

CD2: Quartets 3 & 4



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BARTÓK COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS (CD2)
THE JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

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BARTÓK COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS (CD2)
THE JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

PACM 089B

PRISTINE
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XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **The Juilliard
String Quartet**

Quartet No. 3

Recorded 11 May, 1949
30th St. Studio, New York

Quartet No. 4

Recorded 17 August 1949
30th St. Studio, New York

Released as Columbia ML-4279

Total duration: **38:33**

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JUILLIARD QUARTET

Bartók Quartets 3 & 4

BARTÓK

String Quartet No. 3 Sz. 85

- 1 Prima parte - Moderato (4:34)
- 2 Seconda parte - Allegro (5:33)
- 3 Recapitulazione della prima parte - Moderato (3:09)
- 4 Coda - Allegro molto (1:56)

BARTÓK

String Quartet No. 4 Sz. 91

- 5 1st mvt. - Allegro (6:12)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Prestissimo, con sordino (2:53)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Non troppo lento (5:40)
- 8 4th mvt. - Allegretto pizzicato (2:49)
- 9 5th mvt. - Allegro molto (5:47)

Robert Mann *violin*

Robert Koff *violin*

Raphael Hillyer *viola*

Arthur Winograd *cello*

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The Juilliard String Quartet plays Bartók

CD3: Quartets 5 & 6

POSSIBLY the release of the year is the three-disc L.P. set, just recorded by Columbia, of the six string quartets by Bela Bartok, played by a young foursome named the Juilliard Quartet. The latter derives its name from the fact that its members all studied at the Juilliard School of Music in New York: they are, for the record, Robert Mann and Robert Koff (violins), Raphael Hillyer (viola) and Arthur Winograd (cello). It goes without saying that they form an efficient ensemble ; nobody would dare approach such difficult scores without utmost confidence plus the technical ability to back it up.

In an effort to meet this magazine's deadline I devoted an afternoon to listening to all six quartets : a foolhardy thing to do. What resulted, despite some previous acquaintance with the music, was a jumbled impression, quite surrealistic in nature, composed of bits of sensory remnants— lyricism, moments of frighteningly concentrated savagery, Hungarian tunes nightmarishly distorted, late Beethoven, polyphony, almost insuperable technical complications, a mighty rhythmic pulse, shocking dissonance, uncanny sounds and tonal juxtapositions, enormous string glissandos. But above all there was strength and imagination and feeling. You may shrink in horror from Bartók's uncompromising approach, and the dissonances may grate on your nerves. Yet the quartets form a sextet that cannot be ignored. They are great music, really great music. Popular they may ; ever be, but a certain music-experienced segment will be studying them with fascination for years to come. The present recordings are superbly managed. It is interesting to note that each quartet, uncut, occupies a single side, which means that in the cases of the first and fifth, Columbia has engraved about a half hour of playing time on one twelve-inch face.

Harold C. Schonberg, "Letter from America", The Gramophone, October 1950

"BELA BARTOK considered that the Juilliard Quartet gave the most convincing performances of his Quartets that he had ever heard." - **Philips ad copy, UK, 1955**

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The Juilliard String Quartet plays Bartók

CD3: Quartets 5 & 6



STUDIO RECORDINGS, 1949

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BARTÓK COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS (CD3)
THE JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

COMPACT
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DIGITAL AUDIO
PACM 089c

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **The Juilliard
String Quartet**

Quartet No. 5

Recorded 18 August, 1949
30th St. Studio, New York

Quartet No. 6

Recorded 13 May 1949
30th St. Studio, New York

Released as Columbia ML-4280

Total duration: **59:08**

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BARTÓK COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS (CD3)
THE JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

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JUILLIARD QUARTET
Bartók Quartets 5 & 6

BARTÓK
String Quartet No. 5, Sz. 102

- 1 1st mvt. - Allegro (7:26)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Adagio molto (6:03)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: Alla bulgarese (Vivace) (4:44)
- 4 4th mvt. - Andante (5:04)
- 5 5th mvt. - Finale: Allegro vivace (7:07)

BARTÓK
String Quartet No. 6, Sz. 114

- 6 1st mvt. - Mesto - Più mosso, pesante - Vivace (7:11)
- 7 2nd mvt. - Mesto - Marcia (7:24)
- 8 3rd mvt. - Mesto - Burletta: Moderato (7:14)
- 9 4th mvt. - Mesto (6:55)

Robert Mann *violin*
Robert Koff *violin*
Raphael Hillyer *viola*
Arthur Winograd *cello*