



Budapest Quartet

Introuvables



This release brings together several classic performances recorded by the Budapest Quartet during their first great era of international acclaim in the 1930s, most of which have, rather surprisingly, received scant, if any, previous reissues on CD or even LP. The Haydn, Tchaikovsky and Dvořák works presented here have been unavailable since the 78 rpm era; the Schubert "Rosamunde" Quartet has only previously seen reissue in a Japanese EMI LP set; and the Schubert "Quartettssatz" and Mendelssohn quartet, while available on LP, have only been reissued on a couple CD labels of limited distribution. Adding to their rarity, the Haydn and Dvořák items were never subsequently recorded by the ensemble. Rounding out our program are two recordings (the Bartók quartet and Wolf Serenade) which have seen prior CD reissue, but are now long out of print.

The recordings featured here saw the Budapest Quartet at a crossroads in personnel. The ensemble had been founded in 1917 by four members of the Budapest Opera Orchestra, three Hungarians and a Dutchman. By 1932, when the earliest of the recordings presented here was made, only one of the original members (Hungarian violist István Ipólyi) was still in the group, while the other three positions had been taken by Russians (actually two Lithuanians – the Schneider brothers – and the Ukrainian Roisman, all born in what was at the time part of the Russian empire). Their different training styles led to many contentious arguments within the group, which, unusually for the time, developed its interpretations by consensus, with one member designated as an authority for a particular composer to break a tie, if necessary. These disputes usually pitted Ipólyi against the three putative Russians, leading to his departure in 1936. He was replaced by the Ukrainian Boris Kroyt, who is heard in the latest recording presented here (the 1938 Dvořák Sextet), and who would continue with the group until it disbanded in 1967.

The behind-the-scenes drama did not carry over into the actual performances, which display a high degree of unanimity of conception and disciplined ensemble playing. Critic Harris Goldsmith likened the quartet to "a kind of chamber music equivalent to that icon of symphonic music, Arturo Toscanini", writing that their performances during the period covered here and into the 1950s "shared with the Italian maestro an easily recognizable (and then distinctly modern) technical brilliance, a certain streamlining of architecture, a pervasive rhythmic virility, unfussy phrasing and momentum [...] an analogous lean transparency and vertical clarity, and beautiful intensity and silkiness of tone."

The sources for the transfers were American Victor Red Seal Scroll label 78 rpm pressings with "Z"-type or similar shellac material for the Schubert "Rosamunde", Mendelssohn and Bartók quartets; late 1930s "Gold" or Black label Victor pressings for the Tchaikovsky, Dvořák and Wolf works; and British HMVs for the Haydn and Schubert "Quartettssatz".

Mark Obert-Thorn



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introvables

DISC ONE (77:58)

HAYDN Quartet No. 43 in G major, Op. 54, No. 1 [Hob.III:58]

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (4:08)
2. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (5:54)
3. 3rd mvt. - Menuetto (Allegro) & Trio (3:33)
4. 4th mvt. - Finale (Presto) (3:47)

SCHUBERT Quartet No. 13 in A minor, Op. 29, D.804 "Rosamunde"

5. 1st mvt. - Allegro ma non troppo (9:17)
6. 2nd mvt. - Andante (6:44)
7. 3rd mvt. - Menuetto (Allegretto) & Trio (7:21)
8. 4th mvt. - Allegro moderato (7:03)

MENDELSSOHN Quartet No. 1 in E flat major, Op. 12

9. 1st mvt. - Adagio non troppo - Allegro non tardante (7:45)
10. 2nd mvt. - Canzonetta (Allegretto) (3:51)
11. 3rd mvt. - Andante espressivo (4:15)
12. 4th mvt. - Molto allegro e vivace (7:45)

13. TCHAIKOVSKY Andante cantabile (from Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 11) (6:35)

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover picture based on a photo of the Budapest Quartet (L-to-R: Roisman, A. Schneider, Ipolyi, M. Schneider) courtesy of the Tully Potter Collection

Full discographic information can be found on our website
Total duration: 2hr 33:12

DISC TWO (75:13)

1. SCHUBERT Quartet No. 12 in C minor, D.703 "Quartettsatz" (9:00)

DVOŘÁK Sextet in A major, Op. 48*

2. 1st mvt. - Allegro moderato (9:56)
3. 2nd mvt. - Dumka (Poco allegretto) (7:50)
4. 3rd mvt. - Furiant (Presto) & Trio (3:48)
5. 4th mvt. - Finale - Theme & Variations 1 - 5 - Stretta (7:51)

Watson Forbes (viola II)
John Moore (cello II)

BARTÓK Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 17 [Sz67]

6. 1st mvt. - Moderato (11:50)
7. 2nd mvt. - Allegro molto capriccioso (9:04)
8. 3rd mvt. - Lento (9:36)

9. WOLF Italian Serenade in G major (6:19)

Budapest String Quartet

Joseph Roisman (violin I)
Alexander Schneider (violin II)
István Ipolyi or *Boris Kroyt (viola)
Mischa Schneider (cello)

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