



PASC201

BARTOK MUSIC FOR STRINGS,
PERCUSSION AND CELESTA
BLOCH CONCERTO GROSSO No. 1



BARTOK Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta

- 1 1st mvt. - Andante tranquillo (9:00)
- 2 2nd mvt. - Allegro (7:13)
- 3 3rd mvt. - Adagio (7:17)
- 4 4th mvt. - Allegro molto (6:57)

Recorded 24th April, 1951

BLOCH Concerto Grosso No. 1
for String Orchestra and Piano Obligato

- 5 Concerto Grosso: 1st mvt. - Prelude (2:59)
- 6 2nd mvt. - Dirge (6:22)
- 7 3rd mvt. - Pastorale and Rustic Dances (6:15)
- 8 4th mvt. - Fugue (5:49)

Recorded 23rd April, 1951

Both recordings issued as Mercury MG 50001

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra
conducted by **Raphael Kubelik**
with George Schick (piano obbligato)

Transfers and XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, November 2009
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Raphael Kubelik

Total duration: 51:52 ©2009 Pristine Audio.

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RAPHAEL KUBELIK

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BARTOK MUSIC FOR STRINGS, PERCUSSION AND CELESTA
KUBELIK, CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Rafael Jeroným Kubelík (29 June 1914 – 11 August 1996) was a Czech conductor and composer. Kubelík was born in Býchory, Bohemia, Austria-Hungary, today's Czech Republic. He was the sixth child of the renowned Bohemian violinist Jan Kubelík, whom the younger Kubelík described as "a kind of god to me." Rafael Kubelík studied violin with his father, and later violin, composition, and conducting at the Prague Conservatory. He graduated from the conservatory in 1933, at the age of 19; at his graduation concert he played a Paganini concerto and a composition of his own for violin and orchestra. Kubelík was also an accomplished pianist, and served as his father's piano accompanist on a tour of the United States in 1935.

In 1939, Rafael Kubelík became music director of the Brno Opera, a position he held until the Nazis shut the company down on 12 November 1941. The Nazis allowed the Czech Philharmonic to continue operating, and Kubelík became its principal conductor. (He had first conducted the Czech Philharmonic in 1934 when he was 20 years old.) In 1944, after various incidents, including one in which he declined to greet the Nazi Reich-Protector with a Hitler salute — along with his refusal to conduct Wagner during the War — Kubelík "deemed it advisable to disappear from Prague and to spend a few months undercover in the countryside so as not to fall into the clutches of the SS or Gestapo" (Albert Scharf, in *Rafael Kubelík: His Life and Achievement*, p. 114).

Kubelík conducted the orchestra's first post-war concert in May, 1945. In 1946, he helped found the Prague Spring Festival, and conducted its opening concert. But after the Communist coup of February 1948, Kubelík left Czechoslovakia, vowing not to return until the country was liberated. "I had lived through one form of bestial tyranny, Nazism," he told an interviewer, "As a matter of principle I was not going to live through another."

He defected during a trip to the United Kingdom. He had flown there to conduct Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, where he had been engaged on the recommendation of Bruno Walter (whom Kubelík had assisted in this work at the 1937 Salzburg Festival). Kubelík told his wife of his decision to defect as their plane left Czechoslovakia. Upon arriving in London, Kubelík and his wife surrendered their Czech passports.

In 1953, the Communist government convicted the couple in absentia of "taking illicit leave" abroad. In 1956 the regime invited him back "with promises of freedom to do anything I wanted," said Kubelík, but he refused the invitation. In a 1957 letter to *The Times* of London, Kubelík said he would seriously consider returning only when all the country's political prisoners were freed and all émigrés were given as much freedom as he would have possessed. He was invited back by the regime in 1966 but again refused; in 1968, after the Prague Spring had ended by the Soviet invasion, he organized an international boycott, in which most of the major classical artists of the West participated.

Kubelík eventually did return to Prague after the fall of Communism, leading the Czech Philharmonic in the Prague Spring Festival in 1990.

In 1950, Kubelík became music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, choosing the position over an offer from the BBC Symphony Orchestra to succeed Sir Adrian Boult as chief conductor. But in 1953, he left. Some hold that he was "hounded out of the [Chicago] job" (to quote *Time Magazine*) by the "savage attacks" (to quote the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) of the Chicago Tribune music critic Claudia Cassidy. But Chicago Sun-Times music critic Robert C. Marsh argued in 1972 that it was the Chicago Symphony trustees who were behind the departure. Their foremost complaint, and that of Cassidy as well, was that Kubelík introduced too many contemporary works (about 70) to the orchestra. Recordings made by Kubelík in Chicago, many available on CD, are now greatly admired by critics.

After leaving Chicago, Kubelík became music director of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden from 1955 to 1958. Among his notable conducting achievements there was the 1957 production of Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, performed on a single evening. Although Covent Garden sought to renew his contract, he chose to leave, partly because of a letter to the newspapers by the aged Sir Thomas Beecham decrying the engagement of "foreign" artists at the Royal Opera. Kubelík then accepted the position of music director of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1961; he remained until 1979, when he retired. Kubelík's association with the Bavarian Radio Symphony is generally regarded as the high point of his career both artistically and professionally.

In 1971, Göran Gentele, the new general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, New York City, asked Kubelík to accept the newly created position of Music Director of the Met. Kubelík accepted partly because of his strong artistic relationship with Gentele. The death of Gentele in an automobile accident in 1972 undermined Kubelík's reasons for working at the opera house. The first production that Kubelík conducted as the Met's Music Director was *Les Troyens*. Kubelík had prior conducting commitments away from the Met in his first season in New York City, and these so diverted his attention from the Met that the opera company began to experience stresses that undermined their situation, and Kubelík's position. Thus Kubelík resigned from Met in 1974, after only 6 months as music director.

In his post-Czechoslovakian career, Kubelík worked closely with such orchestras as Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His penultimate conducting appearance, in October 1991, was with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; at the end, the orchestra gave him an honorary fanfare, a tribute it had offered conductors only rarely in its history. His final concert was with the Czech Philharmonic.

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA - FURTHER NOTES ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM

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