



*International  
Presentations of  
Music & Dance*

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## Guarneri String Quartet

ARNOLD STEINHARDT, *Violinist*      MICHAEL TREE, *Violist*  
JOHN DALLEY, *Violinist*              DAVID SOYER, *Cellist*

*Assisting Artists*

GYORGY SANDOR, *Pianist*              DAVID SHIFRIN, *Clarinetist*

MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 20, 1981, AT 8:30  
RACKHAM AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

*Compositions of Béla Bartók*

Quartet No. 1

Lento  
Allegretto  
Introduzione, allegro vivace

“Contrasts” for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano

Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)  
Pihenő (Repose)  
Sebes (Fast)

MICHAEL TREE, DAVID SHIFRIN, and GYORGY SANDOR

INTERMISSION

Quartet No. 6

Mesto, vivace  
Mesto, marcia  
Mesto, burletta  
Mesto, molto tranquillo

*RCA Red Seal Records*

## PROGRAM NOTES

by JEREMY YUDKIN

### String Quartet No. 1 . . . . . BÉLA BARTÓK

The First String Quartet was written in 1908 when Bartók was twenty-seven. It is a fascinating piece that reflects the images of earlier styles and techniques absorbed by the young composer, while still containing music of abundant originality and finesse. The three movements form one continuous whole, and are played without pause. The opening slow fugue is a clear nod in the direction of Beethoven, particularly his Op. 131, and floats free and untrammelled. In a central passage strong cello chords lay the foundation for a rhapsodic viola oration, joined soon by the second violin. All four instruments combine before a return of the opening. The whole movement is a study in contrasts—of texture, dynamics, and joint or solo playing.

The second movement starts quietly and grows directly from the ending of the first. The parallel thirds lend a slightly old-fashioned air to the music. A little repeated rhythmic figure in the first violin contains elements which prove to be important both in this movement and in the final Allegro. Later a repeated note on the cello changes the musical landscape. Tranquillity slowly gives way to agitation and sustained rhetoric, but the movement subsides quietly and peacefully.

An introduction to the last movement is characterized by improvisatory solos punctuated by chordal outbursts. The movement proper is carried forward by frenzied and clashing repeated notes. A hint may here be heard of the Hungarian folk music that Bartók and Kodály were together investigating and publishing. A central section is slow and expressive over *tremolo* chords. The quixotic energy of the gypsy music returns, however, and a dance melody that has grown from earlier material. The tempo slows again several times, which only intensifies the final whirling, impassioned ending.

### “Contrasts” for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano . . . . . BARTÓK

“Contrasts” is the only chamber work that Bartók wrote that uses a wind instrument. As a composer, Bartók was vitally concerned with sound and the sound quality of the instruments for which he wrote. The six string quartets are marvels of variety and color within the medium of a completely homogeneous group. When writing for piano, Bartók frequently exploited the inherent percussive qualities of that instrument. In the case of “Contrasts,” which was commissioned from the composer by Benny Goodman in 1938, Bartók was driven to emphasize the tonal and timbral differences between the three instruments, rather than to attempt to blend them.

The piano is relegated primarily to an accompanying role, providing coloristic effects and rhythmic underpinning. The potentialities of the other two instruments, however, are exploited to the full. The clarinetist is encouraged to use two instruments (a clarinet in B-flat for part of the last movement), though a version of the piece for one instrument throughout exists; and a wide range, diverse tone colors, extremes of dynamics and articulation are thoroughly explored. The violinist begins playing the last movement with a violin *scordatura*, or deliberately mistuned, but soon switches to another instrument tuned in the normal way. Throughout, the violin part exhibits the virtuoso writing and expanded effects of color and sonority that Bartók had developed so highly in his string quartets.

The opening movement is slow and rhythmic, but scattered with rippling cascades of sound and a soaring clarinet cadenza.

*Pihenő* is relaxed and peaceful with occasional stormy and dissonant passages that cloud the atmosphere.

The final movement projects a quick and humorous dance, with a quiet central section in mixed Bulgarian rhythm that dissolves into polytonality. A fiery violin cadenza precedes the lively and exuberant ending.

### String Quartet No. 6 . . . . . BARTÓK

With the Sixth Quartet (1941), Bartók abandoned the arch form that had provided such a powerful architectural design in his previous two quartets, and developed a completely new

concept of unification through a single melody. This melody, marked *Mesto* (sad), is heard at the very beginning of the piece, played unaccompanied by the viola. The contrasting first movement is fast and lightly scored, with predominantly transparent contrapuntal writing based on a quick rising theme.

The *Mesto* melody is played by the cello against the three upper strings in octaves before the second movement. This is a March whose dotted rhythms continue through a turbulent passage marked by rising *glissandi*. The cello then rhapsodizes through a passionately declarative solo line, accompanied by *tremolo* violins and plucked chords on the viola. The March returns, this time with glassy harmonics, and a tendency to disintegration.

This satirical overtone is continued in the third movement, which is entitled *Burletta* (burlesque). It is preceded by the *Mesto* melody played by the first violin with a smooth imitative accompaniment. The *Burletta* itself is enormously varied and full of ideas, including some sweet and simple folk tunes.

The fourth movement presents the *Mesto* melody in its fullest development. It has grown from its single-line exposition at the beginning of the quartet, through fuller settings, until it now becomes the *raison d'être* of the whole final movement. The music here is quiet, sometimes almost to the point of nothingness. A few wistful backward glances, a last determined summoning of strength, and the melody is transmuted into the apotheosis of resignation and peace.

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### A Tribute to Béla Bartók

b. March 25, 1881, Transylvania, Hungary; d. September 26, 1945, New York City

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of Bartók's birth, the United Nations has designated 1981 as "Bartók Year." This evening's concert is the second of two performed in Ann Arbor this season by the Guarneri Quartet, devoted exclusively to his music: the Quartets, Nos. 1, 2, 5, and 6; Duos for Two Violins; and "Contrasts." Further homage will be paid to the great Hungarian composer at the closing concert of the May Festival on May 2, which will include two of his most important works—the Concerto for Orchestra and the Third Piano Concerto, performed by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and pianist Gyorgy Sandor. Mr. Sandor, a pupil of Bartók in their native Hungary and a close friend until the composer's death, gave the world première performance and made the first recording of the Third Piano Concerto. Limited seating remains for this concert.

## 100 Years of Great Performances

This brand-new publication of the University Musical Society is available in the lobby this evening for your perusal and purchase. In its 208 pages is a wealth of human interest and information, including: a 100th Season Anniversary Guest Book, handwritten greetings from each artist who performed that season; personal letters from nearly 200 artists who share reminiscences of their Ann Arbor performances over the years; a 100-year history tracing the Musical Society's growth from the small "Messiah Club" in 1879 to its present-day stature; and a roster of performing artists who appeared under our auspices from 1879 through 1979.

This anniversary/souvenir book is also available for purchase (\$10 per copy) in our Burton Tower office, and at the following Ann Arbor locations: Borders Book Shop, Liberty Music Shop, and Little Professor Book Center.

## "The Elixir of Love"

### Synopsis

ACT I, *Scene 1*: Nemorino, a poor young farm worker, has fallen in love with Adina, owner of the farm, who rejects him. He is driven to despair when Adina is paid a visit by her flashy admirer, the dashing Sergeant Belcore.

*Scene 2*: Having heard the legend of the magic potion which made Isolde fall in love with Tristan, Nemorino naively spends his meager savings on an elixir from the quack Doctor Dulcamara. Believing in the potion's power, Nemorino acquires the courage to court Adina. She is, however, even more irritated with his confident behavior than with his shyness and decides to marry Belcore in order to spite Nemorino.

ACT II: During the festivities prior to the marriage of Adina and Belcore, Nemorino begs further aid from Dulcamara. He is sold a second bottle of the elixir, but can only pay for it with the money gained by enlisting (with the help of Belcore) in the army. The sudden death of his uncle makes Nemorino rich and popular with the girls. As yet, neither he nor Adina know of this news. Nemorino attributes his sudden popularity to the effect of the elixir, while Adina is jealous and upset at having lost his complete attention. When she hears of Nemorino's efforts to win her favor, however, she is so deeply moved that she buys his release from the army and proves her love by marrying him.

### Director's Notes

In 19th-century Italy, opera was the popular art form of the day. Although the number of these *opera buffa* works (roughly translatable as "musical comedy") must reach into the thousands, only a few of them are still performed. Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* and *Don Pasquale*, the comedies of his contemporary, Rossini, and a handful of works by other composers are the sole survivors on modern stages.

*The Elixir* was composed within the space of only two weeks, to replace the work of a composer who had failed to honor his contract. Donizetti's librettist, Felice Romani (one of the most prolific Italian poets of his day), fashioned for the text a translation/adaption of a popular French comic opera by Daniel F. E. Auber, *The Filtre*, whose characters and situations are firmly rooted in the buffo tradition. Out of these clever but conventional raw ingredients, Donizetti fashioned a work whose simplicity, honesty, and rich understanding of human behavior transcend the accepted values of the genre in which he was working. It is not at all surprising to learn that it was Donizetti who insisted, despite Romani's strong objections, that Nemorino sing a serious solo aria near the end of the second act. That aria turned out to be the most famous in the opera, "Una furtiva lagrima" ("Did not a tear unwillingly"). Never forgetting the fact that *The Elixir* is a tremendously entertaining show, its warm, gentle, humanistic side is perhaps the secret key to its enduring success.

### About the Company

It was through the impetus of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts that Western Opera Theater was founded in 1967 by San Francisco Opera General Director Kurt Herbert Adler. His ambition to take opera out of the opera house and into communities throughout the western states has been successfully achieved for the past fifteen years. This year the company has expanded its touring activities: in 1981, from January 9 through June 5, it will have performed in 46 communities in 17 states including Alaska. Music Director for the tour—in his first year with Western Opera Theater—is Mark D. Flint. Mr. Flint is known to area opera fans as music director of the Michigan Opera Theater for the past four years. He has also been associated with the opera companies of Lake George, Chautauqua, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and Graz, Austria. The singers are young experienced professionals, many of whom have performed with major opera companies and who often return to San Francisco to perform with the San Francisco Opera or one of its affiliates.

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### "100 Years of Great Performances"

Be sure to see our new anniversary/souvenir book in the lobby:

"What a litany of greats! It is a splendid book, and details in excellent fashion the remarkable history of the Society."

—JOHN GUINN, Music Critic, *Detroit Free Press*

"What a terrific chronicle of achievement!"

—ANDREW RAEBURN, Artistic Administrator, Detroit Symphony Orchestra

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