

SOUVENIR

The Budapest String Quartet

Joseph Roisman, violin 1 Alexander Schneider, violin 2 Boris Kroyt, viola
Mischa Schneider, cello with Edgar Ortenberg, violin 2 in Dvořák and Dinah arr.
Marcel Grandjany, harp

Concerto for Harp and Strings, Op. 4, No. 6 (12:14) George Frideric Handel
1 1. Allegro moderato (4:19) (1685-1759)

2 2. Larghetto (3:15)

3 Cadenza by Marcel Grandjany

4 3. Allegro moderato (1:54)

Performed and recorded on March 19, 1941

String Quartet on Negro Themes, Op. 19 (21:46) Daniel Gregory Mason

5 1. Allegro commodo, ma con spirito (8:23) (1873-1953)

6 2. Larghetto tranquillo-Allegro scherzoso-Tempo 1 (8:44)

7 3. Allegro moderato, drammatico-Allegro vivace (4:37)

Performed and recorded on May 16, 1942

8 Danse sacrée et danse profane (8:23) Claude Debussy
(*harp and string quartet*) (1862-1918)

Performed and recorded on March 19, 1941

Two Sketches based on Indian Themes (9:48) Charles Tomlinson Griffes
(*string quartet*) (1884-1920)

9 1. Lento e mesto (6:35)

10 2. Allegro giocoso (3:14)

Performed and recorded on May 6, 1943

String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96 "The American" Antonín Dvořák
11 Lento (7:32) (1841-1904)

Performed and recorded on October 20, 1949

12 Dinah (4:17) (arr. unknown)
(*string quartet*)

Recorded on May 12, 1948

Total Time: 64:42

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The Budapest String Quartet is best known for its expertise in the Central European repertoire--from Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven through Béla Bartók. Much less well known are the quartet's activities outside of the standard canon. In fact, the Budapest played American music frequently, and with the same intense commitment that they brought to the standard repertoire. Because the record companies (HMV and Columbia) that recorded the Budapest commercially only recorded the group in the staples of the repertoire, dozens of works that the quartet performed were recorded only in concert at the group's home--the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress. As resident quartet of the Library, the Budapest gave more than 450 concerts between 1940 and 1962. With the exception of Dvořák's *Lento* from Op. 96, none of the works heard on this compact disc was ever given a studio recording by the foursome.

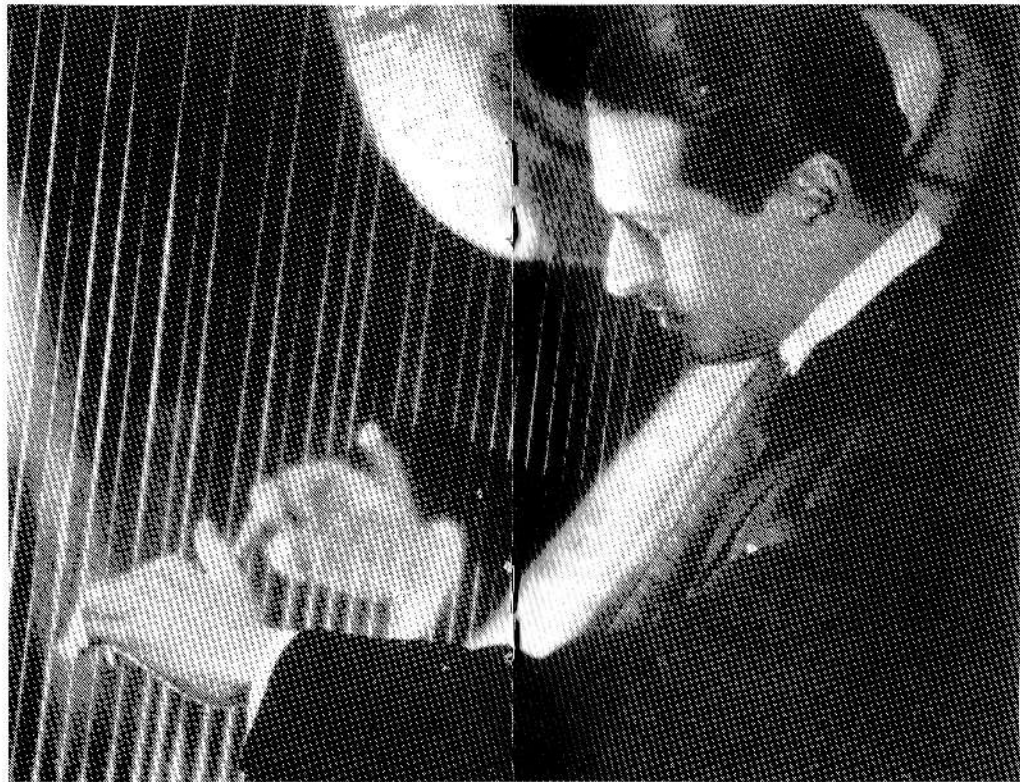
When the Budapest Quartet invited harpist Marcel Grandjany--one of the great musicians of the mid-20th century--to be a guest artist at the Library of Congress on March 19 and 20, 1941, the artists chose to play two works that are usually performed by harp and string orchestra: Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* and Handel's Concerto for Harp and Strings, Op. 4, No. 6.

Unlike the other five concertos of Op. 4, Handel designated No. 6 for either organ or harp in the published score. The other concertos in Op. 4 call for an organ soloist--originally Handel himself, who used to play them, with a lot of improvisation, during the intervals of his oratorios. Marcel Grandjany's own prolonged and elegant cadenza at the end of the second movement is a dramatic addition to this performance of March 19, 1941.

Antonín Dvořák's work inspired many American composers of the early 20th century, including two heard in this compilation, Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920), and

Daniel Gregory Mason (1873-1953). Mason was a scion of a family that played a prominent role in American music throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, beginning with Lowell Mason (1792-1872), a pioneer in American musical education. A composition student of Vincent d'Indy, Daniel Gregory Mason was a prolific writer on musical subjects and a composer of considerable accomplishment. His *String Quartet on Negro Themes*, Op. 19, composed in 1920 and dedicated to the Flonzaley Quartet, dates from the period when he believed in the creation of a distinctively American musical style--an idea that he later reluctantly discarded. The quartet's thematic material is derived mostly from spirituals, notably "Deep River," which is the primary theme of the second movement, introduced at a *Larghetto tranquillo* tempo, subjected to a variety of moods, and contrasted with a recurring scherzando theme. In the third and last movement, also marked by frequent changes of tempo, "Deep River" reappears just before the end. Other spirituals used are much less familiar, but have been identified as follows by music journalist R. D. Darrell: Mvt. I: "You May Bury Me in the East;" Mvt. III: "Shine, Shine, I'll Meet You in the Morning;" "Oh, Holy Land," and "Oh, What Do You Say, Seekers?". Mason's quartet is heard here in the Budapest's performance from May 16, 1942.

Claude Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* was commissioned by the Pleyel company, a manufacturer of musical instruments best known for its pianos. The company's director, Gustave Lyon, developed a new kind of chromatic harp, played without pedals; in 1904, he asked Debussy to compose a piece for a competition at the Brussels Conservatory, which had a course of instruction in the instrument. The dances are composed in archaic modes: "Dorian" for the sacred dance, which has a solemnity to match its title, and "Lydian" for the livelier profane dance. The French-American harpist Marcel Grandjany's transparently delicate touch resounds admirably in these old recordings.



Two Sketches based on Indian Themes, by Charles Tomlinson Griffes, was published posthumously, edited by Adolfo Betti, the first violinist of the Flonzaley Quartet. The Griffes *Sketches* seem to have appealed strongly to the Budapest Quartet, which played these two short pieces on its first program as resident string quartet of the Library of Congress, on August 3, 1940 and again in 1943, 1950 and 1954. The performance on this recording was given on May 6, 1943. Griffes hints at one of his thematic sources in the published score. The melody introduced by the viola near the beginning of the first sketch, marked *Molto espressivo, senza rigore di tempo*, is identified in a footnote as "Farewell Song of Chippewa Indians" and develops into an impassioned expression of grief. Griffes at one point instructs the cellist to make his pizzicato notes sound "like Indian drums."

During his years in the United States (1892-95), Antonín Dvořák advised American composers to develop a national musical style using themes derived from or modeled on the songs of African Americans and Native Americans. Dvořák's idea was expressed first in newspaper interviews, and later, more fully, in the article "Music in America," published in the February 1895 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Not content with merely pointing the way, Dvořák took his own advice, composing the masterful Symphony No. 9, Op. 95 ("From the New World"), and the String Quartet in F, Op. 96 ("The American"), in 1893. Though it has been persuasively argued that the pentatonic melodies in his Op. 96 String Quartet have a strong family resemblance to the Bohemian folk motifs found in his earlier music, Dvořák himself said that these works would have been different had he not written them while living in the United States. The haunting *Lento* of Op. 96 is heard in a performance from October 20, 1949.

Our final example of an American melody given a (relatively) classical treatment is the

popular tune "Dinah" in an arrangement that the Budapest Quartet did not play in public but fooled around with backstage. The fun begins right away with a quotation of a Schubert sonatina familiar to all aspiring violinists and their teachers. Among the variations and interruptions to which the tune is subjected, lovers of golden oldies will recognize a quote from the sentimental song of an earlier era, "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

--Joseph McLellan

Joseph McLellan is music critic emeritus of *The Washington Post*, and was classical music critic of the Post from 1982-1995.

Marcel (Georges Lucien) Grandjany (*b.* Paris, France, September 3, 1891; *d.* New York City, February 24, 1975) is regarded as one of the most influential figures of modern harp playing. He studied harp with Henriette Renié before winning the *premier prix* in 1905 at the Paris Conservatoire, making his debut with the Concerts Lamoureux orchestra and giving his first recital at age 17. In addition to his career as a touring harp virtuoso, Grandjany was an outstanding organist, playing regularly at the *Sacré-Coeur* basilica. Eventually, he devoted himself exclusively to the harp, making his London debut in 1922, and his New York debut in 1924. In 1936, he settled in New York, and in 1945 became an American citizen. He taught at the Montreal Conservatory from 1943 to 1963, and at the Juilliard School from 1938 until a few weeks before his death.

When it was founded in 1917, the **Budapest Quartet**, true to its name, was made up of four players from the Budapest Opera Orchestra. By the mid-1930s, all of the original members had been replaced by players of Russian or Ukrainian origin: Joseph Roisman on first violin, Boris Kroyt on viola and the Schneider brothers, Alexander (Sasha) on second violin and Mischa on cello. Alexander Schneider left the Budapest String Quartet in 1944 but returned to the ensemble in 1955, having been replaced in the interval first by Edgar Ortenberg and later by Jac Gorodetsky. The Budapest Quartet began performing regularly at the Library of Congress in 1938, and in 1940, became the Library's quartet in residence, a position it would hold with distinction for 22 years.

Producers: David & Becky Starobin (Bridge Records, Inc.)
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Cover photograph: Budapest String Quartet with Koala Bears, Adelaide Australia 1937,
courtesy of June Schneider.
Photographs of Marcel Grandjany: courtesy of Encore Consultants (San Francisco)

For The Library of Congress: James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress
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This recording was restored and issued with assistance from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music.

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