

The Budapest String Quartet
The Library of Congress Mozart Recordings (1940-45)
Gustave Languen, clarinet George Szell, piano

Disc A (69:47)

*Quintet in A major, for clarinet
and strings, K. 581 (24:06)*

- 1** Allegro (6:08)
- 2** Larghetto (5:39)
- 3** Menuetto (5:12)
- 4** Allegretto con variazioni (6:54)

Gustave Languen, clarinet The Budapest String Quartet
Joseph Roisman, violin 1 Alexander Schneider, violin 2
Boris Kroyt, viola Mischa Schneider, violoncello

(Performed and recorded on September 14, 1940)

String Quartet in D minor, K. 421 (23:11)

- 5** Allegro (5:17)
- 6** Andante (5:46)
- 7** Menuetto (Allegretto) (3:40)
- 8** Allegro ma non troppo (8:17)

The Budapest String Quartet

Joseph Roisman, violin 1 Alexander Schneider, violin 2
Boris Kroyt, viola Mischa Schneider, violoncello

(Performed and recorded on December 20, 1943)

*Quartet in E-flat major, for piano
and strings, K. 493 (22:14)*

- 9** Allegro (7:05)
- 10** Larghetto (6:45)
- 11** Allegretto (8:17)

George Szell, piano

Members of The Budapest String Quartet
Joseph Roisman, violin Boris Kroyt, viola
Mischa Schneider, violoncello

(Performed and recorded on October 11 and 12, 1945)

Disc B (62:24)

*Divertimento in E-flat major for violin,
viola and violoncello, K. 563 (36:29)*

- 1** Allegro (5:36)
- 2** Adagio (8:22)
- 3** Menuetto (Allegro) (5:07)
- 4** Andante (6:47)
- 5** Menuetto (Allegretto) (4:57)
- 6** Allegro (5:22)

Members of The Budapest String Quartet
Joseph Roisman, violin Boris Kroyt, viola
Mischa Schneider, violoncello

(Performed and recorded on November 2, 1944)

String Quartet in A major, K. 464 (25:49)

- 7** Allegro (4:37)
- 8** Menuetto (5:20)
- 9** Andante (11:10)
- 10** Allegro (4:30)

The Budapest String Quartet

Joseph Roisman, violin I Alexander Schneider, violin 2

Boris Kroyt, viola Mischa Schneider, violoncello

(Performed and recorded on December 18, 1943)

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This latest volume of the Budapest String Quartet's Library of Congress performances adds an exciting gloss to the ensemble's Mozart recordings. It offers, at long last, the first truly satisfactory and inspired version the celebrated foursome made of the *Clarinet Quintet*, K. 581, and, to add to the bounty, it gives us a revelatory reading of the *Quartet for Piano and Strings* in E-flat, K. 493, as well as characteristically vigorous accounts of two of the so-called "Haydn Quartets" (Nos. 13-19). As a final treat, we hear a magnificent Joseph Roisman-Boris Kroyt-Mischa Schneider interpretation of the sublime *Divertimento* for violin, viola and violoncello, K. 563. Who could ask for a more important addition to the Budapest Quartet's discography?

There were two studio recordings of the *Clarinet Quintet* made by the Budapest. The first one, with clarinetist Benny Goodman, was made in 1938, and is an intriguing performance to analyze. Goodman, "The King of Swing," is reputed to have been a stiff classical player, "ill at ease" with eighteenth century style. However, listening carefully to this performance, I believe that Goodman was unfairly maligned. He was a solidly trained exponent of Mozart—a natural stylist whose tutelage included studies with the principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony. A flaw in this performance is the ensemble's unwillingness to allow the music to breathe, the hapless Goodman seemingly hustled along by the quartet. The second Budapest Quartet studio recording of the *Clarinet Quintet* was made in 1958, with clarinetist David Oppenheim. It is a curious document of the group's late work—one of the few recordings where Alexander Schneider played first violin and Joseph Roisman took second.

With the release of this 1940 live performance, we can finally hear the Budapest Quartet version of the *Clarinet Quintet* that music lovers have imagined in their mind's ear! Gustave Langenus, a miraculous Belgian-American clarinet virtuoso, phrases here with exquisite taste and style, his cantabile and breath control nearly flawless. The music unfolds with a silkiness and rapture, and the Budapest is in a state of grace. How fortunate we are to have this jewel of a performance retrieved from the annals of time and given its premiere release, some 58 years after the event. Happily, the recorded sound is exceptionally good for its 1940 vintage.

The present 1943 Library of Congress live performance of Mozart's D minor Quartet, K. 421, is suave and subtle—to my ears preferable to the Budapest's contemporaneous studio account. It is good, also, to have the 1943 performance of Mozart's longest quartet, the A major, K. 464, representing the Budapest's peak years when its personnel included Msrs. Roisman, Schneider, Kroyt and Schneider. Though their later studio recording of K.464 (with Jac Gorodetzky replacing Sasha Schneider) is certainly admirable in many ways, this earlier 1943 version is wonderful for its great momentum and vitality.

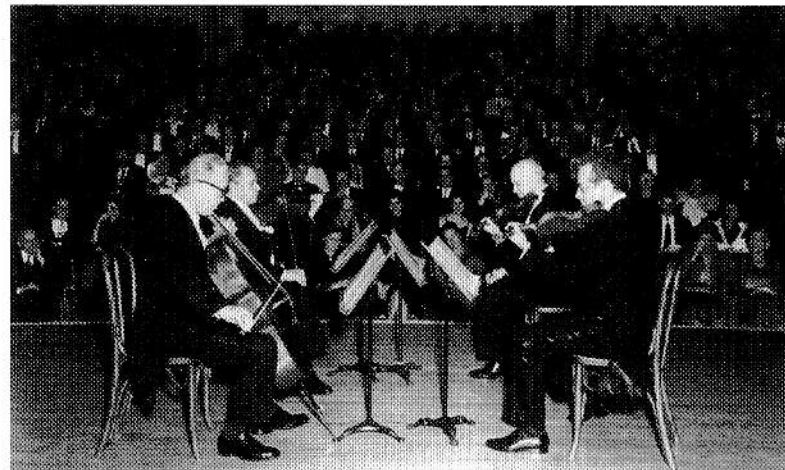
The Budapest made two studio recordings of the two Mozart piano quartets, the first with pianist George Szell, and the later version featuring pianist Mieczyslaw Horszowski. This remarkable concert performance from 1945, extant only on an early magnetic tape transfer, comes as a big surprise, with pianist Szell playing with a delicacy and flexibility not in evidence in his studio account. Interestingly, this recorded performance is a composite: the first movement recorded in a performance on December 11, 1945; the second and third movements also recorded in concert the following day.

The Roisman-Kroyt-Schneider performance of the *Divertimento* for violin, viola, and violoncello, K. 563, has much in common with the legendary 1941 RCA recording made by Jascha Heifetz, William Primrose, and

Emmanuel Feuermann. Comparison is fascinating, for although both of these interpretations share an early-1940s "aesthetic," replete with a fondness for fast tempos and what Virgil Thompson once called "streamlining," the three Budapest members offer a softer-grained reading with a more romanticized expressive lyricism.

With this release listeners can welcome a brilliant addition to the legacy of recorded music. What a stimulating and thought-provoking diversity for Mozarteans!

—Harris Goldsmith



The Budapest String Quartet in Concert at Coolidge Auditorium, The Library of Congress

Gustave Langenus

The distinguished Belgian/American clarinetist Gustave Langenus was born in 1883 in Malines, Belgium, where he also received his first instruction in music. At the age of twelve he was admitted to the Royal Brussels Conservatory in the clarinet class of Poncelet, where he remained for five years, graduating in 1900 with first prizes in both clarinet and transposition. Soon after graduation, the eighteen year old Langenus toured in Europe with Sousa's Band, and in 1902, emigrated to England, becoming well known as both a soloist and orchestral player, including engagements with Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra in London and later as solo clarinetist for the Duke of Devonshire's Orchestra. With the latter ensemble he performed as soloist on several occasions, receiving high praise from the English critics.

Walter Damrosch, always on the lookout for players to improve his New York Symphony, recruited Langenus to come to America in 1910 as the orchestra's solo clarinetist. Langenus remained in this position until the Fall of 1920, when he moved to the New York Philharmonic, also as solo clarinetist. Langenus's tenure in this orchestra was short-lived, as he resigned in 1923 to devote himself to solo playing and his true passion—chamber music. In 1915 he co-founded (along with the pianist Carolyn Beebe) the New York Chamber Music Society, whose innovative programming for more than twenty years is still a fond memory.

Gustave Langenus was a highly regarded teacher, a publisher and editor of numerous works for clarinet, the author of one of the standard clarinet method books, and in his day, probably America's foremost authority on woodwind instruments. Gustave Langenus died at his home in Commack, Long Island, on January 30, 1957.

—David Ross

George Szell

The American conductor and pianist George Szell was born in Budapest in 1897, but grew up in Vienna, where he was a composition student of Max Reger. Szell made his debut as a pianist at age eleven, and at age eighteen, having already conducted the Vienna State Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic, was invited by Richard Strauss to join the staff of the Berlin Staatsoper. Szell conducted opera and symphonic music throughout Europe

until 1939, when he emigrated to the United States. Upon his arrival in the USA, Szell conducted leading orchestras and frequently conducted at the Metropolitan Opera (1942-46). In 1946, Szell began his 24-year tenure as the musical director of the Cleveland Orchestra, building that ensemble into one of the very finest orchestras of its day. George Szell also guest conducted extensively, and left a highly admired recorded legacy. George Szell died in Cleveland, July 29, 1970.

—Robert Arctor



Producers: Becky and David Starobin (Bridge Records, Inc.)
Anne McLean (Music Division, The Library of Congress)

Restoration: Adam Abeshouse with Silas Brown, associate

Mastering Engineer: Adam Abeshouse

Transfer Engineer: Michael Donaldson, The Magnetic Recording
Laboratory, The Library of Congress

Annotators: Harris Goldsmith, David Ross, and Robert Arctor

Front cover photograph: Mrs. June Schneider, 1940

Photograph of Gustave Langenus: courtesy of the Langenus family

Photograph of George Szell by Robeert Carman—courtesy of the
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Booklet Design: Intermedia Design Ltd.

The restoration of these recordings was made possible by
a grant from the Joseph Haydn Society, Inc., New York City.

For The Library of Congress: James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress
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Bridge Records wishes to thank The Motion Picture, Broadcasting
and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress,
for their invaluable assistance:

David Francis, Chief, MPBRS; Samuel Brylawski, Head, Recorded Sound Section;
Larry Miller, Mary Bucknam, Neil Gladd, James Wolf, David Sager,
Brad McCoy, Edwin Matthias, and Jan McKee.

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