

# JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

## PIANO QUARTET NO. 1 IN G MINOR, OP. 25 (40:16)

- 1 I Allegro (13:02)
- 2 II Intermezzo: Allegro ma non troppo (9:05)
  - 3 III Andante con moto (9:58)
  - 4 IV Rondo alla zingarese: Presto (8:11)

Artur Balsam, piano  
Members of The Budapest String Quartet  
Joseph Roisman, violin  
Boris Kroyt, viola  
Mischa Schneider, cello

*(recorded on December 18, 1951)*

# ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

## PIANO QUINTET IN E FLAT MAJOR, OP. 44 (27:14)

- 5 I Allegro brillante (6:42)
- 6 II In Modo d'una Marcia: Un poco largamente (8:30)
  - 7 III Scherzo: Molto vivace (4:41)
  - 8 IV Allegro ma non troppo (7:21)

Artur Balsam, piano  
The Budapest String Quartet  
Joseph Roisman, violin 1  
Jac Gorodetzky, violin 2  
Boris Kroyt, viola  
Mischa Schneider, cello

*(recorded on December 18, 1953)*

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**O**f the thirty-eight pianists who concertized with the Budapest String Quartet, it is fair to say that one of the most congenial of those collaborators was the fine Polish-American artist, Artur Balsam, who first joined the illustrious foursome for a concert in 1946. A photograph commemorating that occasion bears the inscription to "The most punctual colleague we ever had, but also one of the finest chamber music players, Artur Balsam in remembrance of a wonderful concert...." Balsam's first Library of Congress appearance, in March 1951, had him partnering the violinist Szymon Goldberg, and it was later that same year that Balsam and the Budapest Quartet were happily reunited at a Library of Congress marathon comprising three formidable works, the Schumann *Piano Quintet*, Op. 44; the Brahms *Piano Quartet No. 1*, Op. 25; and the Shostakovich *Piano Quintet*, Op. 57. Bridge Records has already released Balsam's performance of the Rachmaninoff *Trio élégiaque*, Op. 9 with members of the Budapest Quartet (BRIDGE 9063), as well as Balsam's 1953 recital with vio-

linist, Nathan Milstein (BRIDGE 9066). With the present disc, we can hear a thrilling reading of the Brahms Op. 25 from the December 1951 concert, along with the Schumann Quintet, as played by the same protagonists two years later to the day.

Balsam and his Budapest Quartet colleagues, Roisman, Kroyt and Mischa Schneider, give Brahms's first large-scaled masterpiece (it dates from 1861, the composer's twenty-eighth year) a magnificently well organized, symphonic treatment. The Budapest always had a stylistic affinity for this music, and Balsam had likewise shown himself to be a master of Brahms's style, including distinguished performances of the Brahms *D Minor Sonata* with Goldberg and Milstein. It is a pleasant surprise to find Balsam assertively augmenting his usual role as collaborative artist here, and triumphantly stepping into the role of soloist, as required by this work (its *Rondo alla zingarese* particularly).

The Balsam/Budapest account of the Schumann *Piano Quintet* joins two commercial Budapest recordings of the work—from 1951 with Clifford Curzon, and from 1963 with Rudolf Serkin. The present performance strikes a middle ground between the lyrical reticence of the Curzon reading and the fiery acerbity of the Serkin version (whose earlier 1940s account with the Busch Quartet drove that approach to even greater extremes). It's a splendid interpretation by any reckoning—and with so much architectural authority, one doesn't even miss a first movement exposition repeat.

—Harris Goldsmith

**Artur Balsam** (1906-1994) was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1906. Balsam's early studies were at the Conservatory at Lodz, and later at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin (1928-31). He won the International Piano Competition in Berlin in 1930, and received the Mendelssohn Prize in Chamber Music, with violinist Roman Totenberg, in Munich in 1931. Balsam left school to accompany the 14-year-old violin prodigy, Yehudi Menuhin, in 1932, touring Europe and North America. By 1938, he was touring the world as partner to the violinist Nathan Milstein. Balsam and his wife Ruth escaped Europe just before the Nazi Holocaust, and settled permanently in the U.S.A. in 1940.

Artur Balsam performed with many of the great musicians of the 20th century. In addition to Menuhin and Milstein, he partnered violin virtuosos Szigetzi, Kogan, Oistrakh, Fuchs, Francescatti, Shumsky, Goldberg and Stern, and the cellists Rostropovich, Fournier, Nelsova and Parnas. In the 1940s, he was pianist with the NBC Orchestra under Toscanini. In the 1950s Balsam appeared as a soloist with the Royal Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the Philharmonia of London, Milan and Warsaw, the radio orchestras of Berlin, London, Zurich and many others. In 1956 he was invited by the BBC to play six piano concerti for the Mozart bicentenary. During the same period, he was a frequent guest with the Budapest and Juilliard String Quartets. He toured in the 1960s with the Albeneri Trio, and was engaged by The Concert Soloist in Philadelphia, The Beethoven Society, the Chamber Music Society

of Lincoln Center and Mostly Mozart in the 1970s. His last public appearance, at age 87, was with The Music Project at Carnegie Recital Hall in February 1993.

The Balsam discography comprises over 250 works, including the complete solo works of Haydn and Mozart, ten Mozart piano concerti, the Hummel A minor Concerto, the Beethoven violin and cello sonatas, Mozart violin sonatas, and the violin sonatas of Brahms, Schumann and Prokofiev. Balsam had a significant influence on several generations of young musicians, including pianists Murray Perahia and Emanuel Ax. Balsam performed and coached chamber ensembles at festivals including Banff, Aldeburgh, Music Mountain, Orono and, for 35 seasons, Kneisel Hall in Blue Hill, Maine. In addition, Artur Balsam taught at the Eastman School of Music, Boston University and The Manhattan School of Music (1965-92).

The cover portrait of Artur Balsam is dedicated by the artist, Johan Castberg: "To Artur Balsam! in admiration from Dikke and Johan Castberg. Sthlm. 51." (Stockholm, 1951). On the reverse, the artist painted a whimsical sketch of himself and his wife standing in the street behind a gate (with seagulls, a streetlamp and a Cupid flying overhead) waving to the Balsams. According to Artur Balsam Foundation director, Dan Berlinghoff: "The painting was never framed. Mrs. Balsam didn't like it, and kept it wrapped in a closet because it was 'too impressionistic.' Her own distinctly inferior (but realistic) portrait was permanently hung in Mr. Balsam's den. They now gaze at each other from opposite walls in my office."

**THE BUDAPEST STRING QUARTET**  
at The Library of Congress



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**BRAHMS:** Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34

**SCHUBERT:** "Trout" Quintet, Op. 114

with George Szell, piano

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**RACHMANINOFF:** String Quartets No. 1 & 2; Trio élégiaque, Op. 9

with Artur Balsam, piano

BRIDGE 9063

**HAYDN:** String Quartet, Op. 64, No. 5

String Quartet, Op. 76, No. 5; Rondo from Trio, Hob. XV: 25

**BEETHOVEN:** Quartet, Op. 16

with Mieczyslaw Horszowski, piano

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Major, Op. 96, "American"; Arrangement of "Dinah"

with Marcel Grandjany, harp

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Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493

Divertimento in E-flat Major, K. 563

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with Gustave Langenus, clarinet; George Szell, piano

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**BEETHOVEN: THE MIDDLE QUARTETS**

In Concert at The Library of Congress: 1940-1960

BRIDGE 9099A/C (Three Discs)

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*Left to right: Joseph Roisman, Jac Gorodetzky, Mischa Schneider, Boris Kroyt.*

**The Budapest String Quartet** gave its first concert in 1917, and its last in 1967. The original members, all of whom played in the Budapest Opera Orchestra, were Emil Hauser, Imre Poganyi, Istvan Ipolyi and Harry Son. During its subsequent history, the quartet changed personnel and by 1936 consisted of 4 Russians—Joseph Roisman, Alexander Schneider, Boris Kroyt and Mischa Schneider. It was with these performers that the Budapest String Quartet became known throughout the world. From 1944 to 1949 Edgar Ortenberg played second violin with the quartet, and from 1949-1955 Jac Gorodetzky held the same position. In 1940, the Budapest began a residency at The Library of Congress, where between the years 1940 and 1962, the quartet played more than 450 concerts. Many of these concerts were recorded and are now being released for the first time on the present Bridge/Library of Congress series.