

Disc A (69:42)

Piano Quartet No. 2 in E flat Major, Op. 87 (34:00) Antonín Dvořák

(1841-1904)

- 1 I. Allegro con fuoco (7:48)
- 2 II. Lento (10:15)
- 3 III. Allegro moderato, grazioso (6:56)
- 4 IV. Finale: Allegro ma non troppo (8:40)

Artur Balsam, piano
Peter Rybar, violin
Oskar Kromer, viola
Antonio Tusa, cello

Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65 (35:32)

Antonín Dvořák

- 5 I. Allegro ma non troppo (11:49)
- 6 II. Allegro grazioso - Meno mosso (6:00)
- 7 III. Poco Adagio (8:51)
- 8 IV. Finale: Allegro con brio (8:38)

Artur Balsam, piano
Louis Kaufman, violin
Marcel Cervera, cello

Disc B (45:31)

Romantic Pieces, Op. 75 (7:43)

Antonín Dvořák

- 1 I. Allegro moderato (1:29)
- 2 II. Allegro maestoso (1:57)
- 3 III. Allegro appassionato (1:12)
- 4 IV. Larghetto (2:50)

Louis Kaufman, violin
Artur Balsam, piano

**Concerto in D Major for Violin,
Piano & String Quartet, Op. 21 (37:36)**

Ernest Chausson
(1855-1899)

- 5 I. Décidé - calme - animé (13:26)
- 6 II. Sicilienne: Pas vite (4:14)
- 7 III. Grave (9:05)
- 8 IV. Finale: Très animé (10:35)

Louis Kaufman, violin
Artur Balsam, piano
The Pascal String Quartet
Jacques Dumont, 1st violin
Maurice Crut, 2nd Violin
Leon Pascal, viola
Robert Salles, cello

Total Time: 1:55:12

Artur Balsam and Louis Kaufman

Play Dvořák and Chausson

One may only assume that the music lover who acquires the present edition of Artur Balsam's historical recordings would do so in order to acquaint themselves with the unparalleled art of this Polish-American pianist (1906-1994) or the equally great virtuoso skills of his American colleague, violinist Louis Kaufmann (1905-1994). After all, these chamber works by Antonín Dvořák and Ernest Chausson – his *Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet*, Op. 21 – while far from being unknown, were hardly staples in the chamber music pantheon during the 1950's. It is perhaps difficult to imagine today, in a market saturated by dozens of separate and complete recordings of Dvořák's chamber music, that the recording of the *Piano Quartet in E-flat*, Op.87 you now hold in your hand

was conceivably the first ever of this work. Similarly, the grand *Piano Trio in F minor*, Op. 65 was rarely heard in concert or on record during the '50's. The Chausson Concerto fared slightly better: it was championed before the Second World War by the great French musicians Alfred Cortot and Jacques Thibaud, and recorded by them on 78 shellacs. On our continent, in 1941, Heifetz and Sanroma recorded the Concerto, also on 78's, but theirs is a rather murky sounding version. Nowadays both the Trio and Quartet of Dvořák are performed frequently and constitute the core of the chamber music repertory. Interesting to note is the fact that although the great Rudolf Serkin performed this Quartet in Carnegie Recital Hall (now renamed Weill Hall) in 1939 with members of the Busch Quartet, the work was not introduced at Serkin's Marlboro Music Festival until 20 years later, in 1959. The *Trio in F minor* had to wait another 11 years to be heard there!



Artur Balsam

In the early 50s, with the advent of a new reproducing medium in the form of long playing records, record companies, especially smaller ones like the Concert Hall Society, for which all of the present recordings were made, attempted to reach new customers by offering them repertory not yet available in the catalog of so called major companies. Most companies were solely interested in promoting star soloists and orchestras in traditional repertory. But the Concert Hall Society recordings, some of them produced on unique-looking transparent red vinyl, offered unusual repertory in performances by first-rate artists. Among those one could find well-known conductors such as Hans Swarovsky and Otto Ackermann, cellists such as Andre Navarra and Raya Garbousova, violinists like Riccardo Odnoposoff, Oscar Shumsky and Daniel Guilet (later a member of the famed Beaux Arts Trio), and pianists like Mewton Wood, Grant Johannsen

or the young Philippe Entremont, at the onset of his big international career.

Two of the stalwarts and pillars of this company were the artists whose recordings are being offered here for the first time in over 50 years: pianist Artur Balsam and violinist Louis Kaufman. They made a wonderful pair, representing the highest level of playing even though they never attained celebrity status as performers. This type of musician, be it pianist or violinist, often carried the designation "musician's musician". Both Balsam and Kaufman were described as such on many occasions. In the United States Balsam was mostly known as collaborative artist or "accompanist", as chamber music pianists and duo partners were called in those days. In fact Balsam was one of the world's most sought-after collaborators for such international figures as Francescatti, Milstein, Fuchs, Morini, and Nelsova, as well as being an



Louis Kaufman

esteemed chamber music partner of the Budapest and Juilliard Quartets. His work with Milstein and Francescatti is documented in other issues of the Bridge catalog. As Balsam's reputation grew, he became known not only as a supremely musical partner to the great ones like Francescatti and Milstein, but also as a pianist possessing a set of infallible fingers and astonishing sight-reading ability. Record companies must have loved him! Give him a new score on Monday, and on Tuesday he was ready to record it.

Kaufman's fame was somewhat less obvious. As the concertmaster for major Hollywood orchestras, he lent his unique and expressive musicianship to virtually every violin solo in hundreds of classic American movie scores of the 1930's and '40's – *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Modern Times*, *Casablanca* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, to name just a few. According to radio personality Jim Svejda, "If one were to judge solely on

the basis of how many people actually heard his playing, then Louis Kaufman should be the most famous violinist who ever lived. It was Louis Kaufman, perhaps more than any other single performer, who gave American film music its voice". Before he agreed to join any Hollywood orchestra, Kaufman would claim, "I came here (to California) to play chamber music and solo concerts, and to teach". Well, chamber music he did play, and with such famous colleagues as Heifetz, Piatigorsky, Kreisler, and Zimbalist.

Both musicians became prolific and popular recording artists, often providing the very first phonographic documentation of any given work. As mentioned earlier, this was also true of the Dvořák and Chausson works represented here. Like Balsam, who was the first pianist to record the music of Hummel and Clementi, as well as many of the Haydn sonatas and the first eight Mozart concertos, Kaufman was the first violinist to record works

by Milhaud and Martinu, and to issue the premiere recording of Barber's *Violin Concerto*. He was also the first to rediscover scores of Vivaldi concertos, and to make the first commercial recording of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. Can we even imagine a time when this work was relatively unknown? Thus Kaufman's reputation was that of an adventurous violinist always looking for the unknown repertory.

How those two formidable musicians met was explained by Kaufman's wife, Annette, herself a pianist, with whom Louis lived for 60 years, concertizing, recording and co-authoring an auto-biographical book called "A Fiddler's Tale".

"Louis knew all the important string players in NYC and played chamber music with them", Annette recalled. "He knew Nathan Milstein and attended all of his concerts in the 1920's and '30's. He heard Balsam accompanying Milstein and liked his lovely sound and artistry.

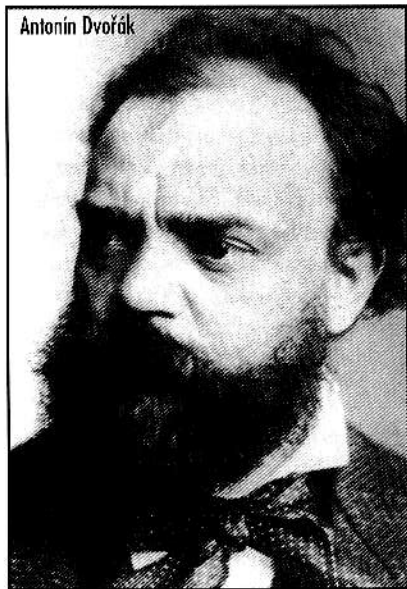
Louis asked if Balsam would assist him at a concert at Hunter College in New York. Later, when he was planning a trip to Paris to perform Milhaud's Second Concerto at an all-Milhaud concert celebrating the composer's return to France after World War II, Louis suggested to Capitol Records that he and Balsam could record the full program at the Theatre de Champs Elysee. Louis was also to do some recordings in Paris & Switzerland for the Concert Hall Society, and suggested they use Artur. That is how our association and friendship took place."

In one of the performances presented here, Dvořák's *Piano Quartet in E-flat*, Op. 87, Balsam is assisted not by Kaufman, but by the members of the Winterthur String Quartet, a group drawn from members of Switzerland's Winterthur Symphony Orchestra, which contributed significantly to the growth of the Concert Hall Society catalog. The Winterthur Quartet's first violinist, Peter Rybar (1913-2002)

was highly respected in Europe as an instrumentalist, chamber musician, concertmaster of some of the finest symphony orchestras, and a fine teacher with quite a large following. In the early LP era he made the first recordings of the Viotti and Goldmark concertos as well as his teacher Joseph Suk's *Phantasy*. Today Rybar is mostly remembered as the partner of Clara Haskil in two celebrated recordings which, until they appeared on CD, commanded a four-digit sum among record collectors. We are referring to the Brahms *Piano Quintet in F minor* (with his Winterthur Quartet) and Busoni's *Second Violin Sonata in E minor*, Op. 36. In the Dvořák Quartet Peter Rybar's colleagues are violist Oskar Kromer (also known as a conductor) and cellist Antonio Tusa, who also takes part in the *Trio in F minor*, Op. 65. Unfortunately, Kromer and Tusa are not in the same league as their partners: it is regrettable, because these works offer both instruments

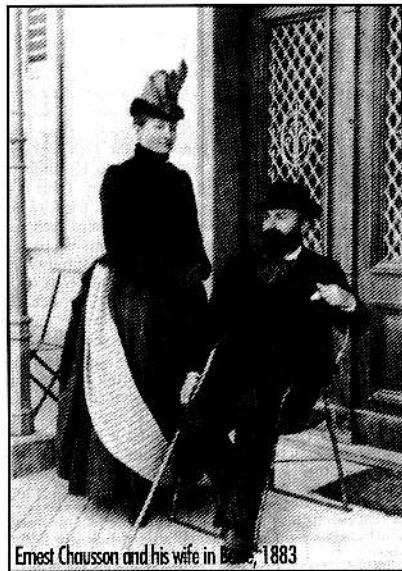
prominent roles and provide them with beautiful solos.

On a personal note, after listening to this new release in its CD form I recalled that during my years as Artur Balsam's pupil I studied the two Dvořák compositions with him. In the



Antonín Dvořák

case of the Trio, I remember bringing it for the first time to a lesson, having already listened to Balsam's recording. Balsam dismissed that influence: "You know, in those days we played everything too fast". Another lesson I learned and hopefully retained is that in Dvořák, as in the music of other composers influenced by folk-music, what is on the page has to be "pronounced" by the instrument with the proper inflection and accent: one simply has to know how this music would sound if it were sung or danced by the natives. I am sure Mr. Balsam truly loved this work. To this day I can't forget the enraptured look on his face when the beautiful violin solo appears in the *Poco Adagio* of the Trio. My young violinist colleague, as proficient as she was, didn't understand how to play it with the proper expression. Balsam, our incomparable piano coach, knew a thing or two about violin playing, and with a few simple pointers he reshaped her student playing into



Ernest Chausson and his wife in Paris, 1883

that of an artist. The Piano Quartet must also have been close to his heart: In the twilight of his long career, at one of the last concerts of the Music Project, he programmed this work, playing it masterfully with musicians two generations younger. Today, from the perspective of

more than three and half decades, I realize that during my few summers studying chamber music with Balsam in Maine, he didn't just assign me these Dvořák works to learn and perform, he actually entrusted them to me, believing – rightly, I hope – that I would do them justice.

During a live performance of the Chausson Concerto with his long-time partner Joseph Fuchs (for which I turned pages) I recall hearing a rare confession from this great artist usually unperturbed by the complexity of the score. He actually admitted that the piano part was cruel! Because of these inherent difficulties, the Chausson was almost invariably recorded by a duo of virtuosos: Cortot/Thibaud, Sanroma/Heifetz, Casadesu/Francescatti, or more recently, Bolet/Perlman and Thibaudet/Bell.

The fact remains that the piano part is infinitely more demanding than the violin part, which can be mastered relatively easily by any decent fiddler.

But Artur Balsam, the modest Polish pianist known more as an “accompanist-for-hire” than a barn-storming virtuoso, gives his famous colleagues a run for their money, dispatching this composition with the same ease, elegance, panache and swagger that marks his performances of chamber music masterpieces by Brahms, Franck, Schumann and Rachmaninoff (all documented in the Bridge catalog).



*This recording is dedicated to
Annette Kaufman with gratitude and admiration.*

Executive Producers: Becky and David Starobin

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Transfer Engineer: David Merrill

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Artur Balsam photographs courtesy of the Artur Balsam Foundation

Louis Kaufman photographs courtesy of Annette Kaufman

Photograph of Louis and Annette Kaufman; James Abresch

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The Art of Balsam on **BRIDGE**

Rachmaninoff: Trio élégiaque, Op. 9

Artur Balsam, piano with members of the Budapest String Quartet

BRIDGE 9063

Beethoven: Sonata in F Major, Op. 24

Brahms: Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 108

Nathan Milstein, violin; Artur Balsam, piano

BRIDGE 9066

Brahms: Piano Quartet No. 1, Op. 25 **Schumann:** Piano Quintet, Op. 44

Artur Balsam, piano; The Budapest String Quartet

BRIDGE 9110

Music of Paganini: Concerto in D Major, Op. 6

The Carnival of Venice; I Palpiti, Op. 13; Caprice No. 20, in D Major

Zino Francescatti, violin; Artur Balsam, piano

BRIDGE 9125

Mozart: Sonata in D Major, K. 381; Sonata in C Major, K. 521
Adagio and Allegro in F Minor, K. 594; Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 358
Sonata in F Major, K. 497

Nadia Reisenberg, piano; Artur Balsam, piano

BRIDGE 9148

Hindemith: Sonata, Op. 11, No. 4 **Brahms:** Horn Trio, Op. 40

Shostakovich: Piano Quintet, Op. 57

Boris Kroyt, viola; Artur Balsam, piano; Jac Gorodetzky, violin

John Barrows, horn; The Budapest String Quartet

BRIDGE 9175

The Art of Balsam on



Schubert: "Trout" Quintet, D. 667
Franck: Quintet for Piano and Strings in F Minor
Artur Balsam, piano; Julius Levine, contrabass;
The Budapest String Quartet
BRIDGE 9185

Mozart: Concertos: K. 246; K. 415; Beethoven: Concerto Op. 61A
Hummel: Concerto, Op. 85; C.P.E Bach: Concerto in D minor
Winterthur Symphony Orchestra; Concert Hall Symphony Orchestra
Walter Goehr, Clemens Dahinden, Henry Swoboda,
Otto Ackermann, Victor Desarzens, conductors
BRIDGE 9196A/B

Mozart Recordings:

Piano Concertos: K. 449, 450, 453, 456; Sonata, K. 330; Rondo, K. 511
Artur Balsam, piano; The Haydn Orchestra, Harry Newstone, conductor
BRIDGE 9217A/B

