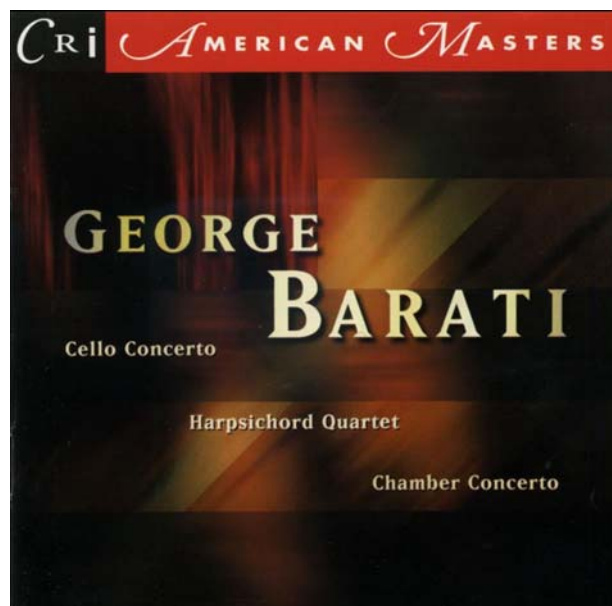


George Barati (1913–1996)



Concerto for Violoncello & Orchestra (1953)	(26:32)
1. I Andante espansivo	(12:35)
2. II Scherzando (Insouciantly)	(6:12)

3. III Adagio; Allegro non troppo e grazioso	(7:46)
Bernard Michelin, violoncello; London Philharmonic Orchestra; George Barati, conductor	

Harpischord Quartet (1964)	(18:16)
4. I Andante scherzando	(6:15)
5. II Adagio	(6:18)
6. III Allegretto ritmico	(5:43)

Baroque Chamber Players of Indiana: James J. Pellerite, flute; Jerry E. Sirucek, oboe and English horn; Murray Grodner, double bass; Wallace W. Hornibrook, harpsichord

Chamber Concerto (1952)	(21:38)
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7. I Energico, non troppo allegro	(8:08)
8. II Andante tranquillo	(4:56)
9. III Allegretto e grottesco	
IV Allegro pressando	(8:34)

William M. Kincaid, flute; Marcel Tabuteau, oboe; Anthony M. Gigliotti, clarinet; Sol Schoenbach, bassoon; Philadelphia Orchestra; Eugene Ormandy, conductor

Total playing time: 68:44

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Notes

As Fascism spread across Europe during the nineteen-thirties, a steady stream of writers, scientists, technicians, artists, and musicians poured into the United States, altering irrevocably the nation's cultural and intellectual landscape. In Hungary, the oppressive regime of

Gyula Gómbós, appointed premier in 1932, drove many of that nation's most prominent citizens into exile. Most notable among the musicians was Béla Bartók, Hungary's most important composer, who arrived in New York in 1940. But barely less important for American musical life was the composer and conductor **George Barati**, who came to the U.S. in 1938 to study composition with Roger Sessions—and who, for the next half century, made a profound mark on his adopted country as composer, educator, conductor, and champion of new music.

Born in Győr in northwestern Hungary on April 3, 1913, Barati arrived in the New World virtually a full-blown musician, though only twenty-five years old. A musical prodigy and brilliant cellist, he had studied at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest from 1932, where his teachers had included Kodály and Leo Weiner. He had also played in orchestras there, including the Budapest Symphony Orchestra and Budapest Opera Orchestra, where from 1936 to 1938 he was principal cellist. America brought a whole new set of challenges. Barati arrived in New Jersey as founder and cellist in the Pro Ideale String Quartet with the assignment to create a string department at Westminster Choir College and to study at Princeton University. He became a citizen in 1944, just in time for military service, during which he led the Alexandria (Louisiana) Military Symphony (1944–46). After the war he moved to the West Coast, where he played cello in the San

Francisco Symphony under Pierre Monteux. While Schoenberg and Stravinsky lorded over musical life in Los Angeles, Barati became a key figure in the Bay Area's more amiable scene.

Throughout his life he placed a high value on the experience of conducting, which he said was crucial for a composer because it was like “hearing music from outside-in versus from inside-out.” During his career he led some eighty-five ensembles, in Asia, South America, and Europe, as well as his own Barati Chamber Orchestra (1948–52); the Honolulu Symphony (where he was music director from 1950 to 1968); the Santa Cruz County Symphony (1971–80); and the Barati Ensemble, which he founded in 1989.

As a composer he responded to influences around him—Bartók's rhythms, Schoenberg's twelve-tone method, Stravinsky's neoclassicism, and the challenges of the sixties avant-garde—but was not a partisan of any school—yet his music reveals indelible traces of an American identity. Further, in addition to idioms from his native Hungary, his works manifest an interest in the music of the Pacific Islands, the impact of the eighteen years he spent in Hawaii. “I was influenced not so much by ‘Hawaiian’ music,” he wrote, “as by the climate of Polynesian attitudes and of Oriental awareness far removed from any previous experiences.”

Filled with explosive rhythms and bold harmonic excursions, Barati's music continually holds the attention. It is not always easy—and he never made excuses for this. “Any piece of music must include complexity and mystery,” he said, “for further revelations upon re-experiencing.” Having traveled much, Barati characterized his outlook as multicultural, one marked by a “highly personal style which allows influences

from Beethoven, Brahms, Berlioz, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Bartók—all the way to jazz and Schoenberg—to blend naturally with sounds beyond the Pacific Ocean.”

The present disc includes three of Barati’s most compelling works: the Cello Concerto from his early years in Hawaii, the Chamber Concerto written in Berkeley shortly before his departure for the Pacific, and the densely modernist Harpsichord Quartet from 1964. Together they manifest the chief elements of Barati’s music that were astutely noted by the critic and annotator David Hall: “immense rhythmic tension and vitality, a telling sense of instrumental and harmonic coloration, and a flair for taut modern-classic structuring in both overall conception and details of phrasing and rhythmic pattern.”

The Concerto for Violoncello & Orchestra was penned in a single month at the MacDowell Colony during the summer of 1953. “I arrived with some very scanty sketches,” the composer has written, “but from the first moment the music just poured out of me, and I found myself taking my work with me from my studio to the dormitory where I continued working in the evening hours.” As a cellist with the instrument’s repertoire at his fingertips, Barati was well-prepared to write a work that was both idiomatic and expressive. “I set myself the task of composing a concerto for the cello in which the instrument would be allowed not only every opportunity for expression in terms of the instrument itself but also for full audibility in a modern concert hall.” Dedicated to Anita Pauling, the score received an extensive revision in 1957. It was recorded for CRI in early 1963 and received its concert premiere in Honolulu a year later, in January 1964. Laszlo Varga was the soloist, and the composer conducted.

The first of the concerto’s three movements, *Andante espansivo*, is built chiefly from the typically Hungarian “short–long” motif heard in the solo part at the outset. A melancholy second theme in the English horn represents a striking change of mood, but gives way to a driving climax, followed by denouement and tranquility. The *Scherzando* second movement, with prominent wind and percussion parts, contains something of Shostakovich’s irony—dry, somewhat bitter, and hardly “funny” at all. An impassioned *Adagio* introduces the finale, the fleet and dance-like *Allegro non troppo e grazioso*.

Barati takes a different point of departure altogether in the Quartet, for harpsichord, flute, oboe, and double bass. Here we move from the “public” vein of the concertos to a more private exploration of coloristic characteristics of individual instruments. Commissioned by the Baroque Chamber Players of Indiana University, it was first performed by that ensemble in Bloomington on February 10, 1965. “I was intrigued from the beginning by the unusual sonorities inherent in the flute-oboe-double bass combination with the harpsichord,” he wrote, noting also that he had felt compelled to add English horn and alto flute, for the sake of tonal and textural contrast. “I have developed a new language for myself in which I have explored several means to achieve a free rhythm of speech—mainly through a combination of ‘irrational’ rhythms as well as further minimizing the tyranny of the bar line without, however, changing the latter too often. This approach is coupled in the work with a pronounced soloistic use of instruments, within the boundaries of chamber music.”

The Quartet opens with a rhythmically insistent *Andante scherzando* that makes no small conceptual demand on the listener. The main theme is heard some moments into the movement, played quasi-canonically by flute and oboe; it is cast and recast throughout, in a series of variants that slowly transform the material. The pensive central *Adagio* is a

reflection on the difference between the “dry” harpsichord sonority and the sustained quality of the winds. The composer’s contrapuntal art comes to the fore in the driving *Allegro ritmico*, in which all various motivic strands are woven together with great skill.

It was the Chamber Concerto for four wind soloists and orchestra, begun in Berkeley in 1949 and completed in 1952 that earned Barati the Naumburg Award—resulting in the magnificent recording represented here. The soloists on the present disc, uncredited on the original recording, are the peerless first-chair wind players of the Philadelphia Orchestra of 1952.

“The title, Chamber Concerto, is self-explanatory,” wrote the composer, “the four woodwinds ... not being featured necessarily as solo instruments since their primary role is to provide contrast in timbre and the manner of tone production. I do not know if it is unusual, but after many years I have become accustomed to the fact that I hear everything orchestrally. That is, at the moment of conceiving a musical idea I not only hear it as a row of tones and a series of rhythms with or without secondary lines, but also completely in terms of specific instruments. It is by this method that the woodwinds in the Chamber Concerto were chosen and carefully integrated as orchestral as well as solo instruments. This manner of hearing also determines my technique of composition, which is to use the piano only after I have written down the passages I am working on.

“The first movement is strongly rhythmic. It gains an immediate momentum which is sustained throughout the first main section. The plaintive second theme is first played by the oboe and is in contrast to the central idea, not only in character but in tempo as well. It requires here and throughout all four movements a type of sound truly based on a singing, sustained tone. In spite of the initial difference in tempo, the two themes appear later simultaneously, producing a ‘thematic climax.’ The movement does not really end but keeps rising in pitch as if floating away.

“There is a connection between the first and second movements, though not obvious, which serves as one of several links in the overall structure of the work: the second movement opens with the same thematic material but several octaves lower, and against that background the bassoon plays the nostalgic theme which gives a dark color to the mood of the movement. The third movement is a short tongue-in-cheek interlude leading without stop to the fourth. This finale is very fast, very tempestuous, providing ample opportunity for virtuoso playing by all the instruments. An episode of grotesque nature interjects an ironic comment of doubt into the basic philosophy of hope, as in similar sections of the first movement and the entire third movement, like the inevitable interplay of the yin and the yang. The work ends with a dashing passage of final affirmation.”

Through the years Barati garnered a number of prestigious honors, including the Naumburg Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1965-66, a Ditson Award for outstanding devotion to performance of contemporary American music and an honorary doctorate from the University of Hawaii. In 1991 the University of California at Santa Cruz established a George Barati Archive, and published *George Barati: A Life in Music*, a volume of the composer’s writings and recollections. During his last years Barati completed two contrasting compositions that he viewed as companion pieces: *Chant of Darkness*, written in 1992 as an expression of grief over the death of his daughter, Lorna, earlier that year; and *Chant of Light*, completed in early 1996.

But in the summer of 1996, tragedy struck. On a warm evening in June, the vigorous 83-year-old composer was taking a walk in downtown Los Gatos, California, while waiting for his wife, Ruth, to finish teaching her yoga class. In an incident that was initially reported as a fall, Barati was apparently struck on the head by an assailant who has not been identified. He died eleven days later, on June 22, from severe head injuries. As ironic as it might seem to lament the

passing of an octogenarian as “premature,” Barati’s works of the 1990s suggested a new sense of promise and direction—and thus his violent death came as a shock to those around him. Nevertheless the finely wrought compositions he left behind have added a vital and essential piece to the tapestry of twentieth century music, as the present disc makes clear.

—*Paul J. Horsley*

Production Notes

CD Mastered by Joseph Dalton and Robert Wolff, engineer at Sony Music Studios, NYC.

From CRI SD 226: Harpsichord Quartet: Recorded by William H. Kroll at the Radio and Television Center, Indiana University, April 8, 1967.

From Columbia MS-6379: Chamber Concerto. Originally released in 1962.

From CRI SD 184: Concerto for Violoncello & Orchestra. Originally released 1964.

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