

**GEORGE BARATI Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1953)**

*BERNARD MICHELIN with the London Philharmonic Orchestra*  
*GEORGE BARATI, conductor*

**KLAUS EGGE Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 21 (1944)**  
**(Symphonic Variations and Fugue on a Norwegian Folk Song)**

*ROBERT RIEFLING with Members of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra*  
*ØIVIN FJELDSTAD, conductor*

AS PART OF ITS 1964 PROGRAM, CRI is continuing its excursions into distinguished contemporary repertoire from overseas that was started with CRI 160 and CRI 179. The first of these discs offer two Norwegian works — Olav Kielland's *Concerto Grosso Norvegese* and Bjarne Brustad's Symphony No. 2, both played by the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, while the second paired works by the Icelandic composers, Jón Leifs (his *Iceland Overture*) and Páll Isólfsson (his Passacaglia) with the Symphony No. 16 ("Icelandic") by renowned American, Henry Cowell — all three works being recorded by Iceland Symphony Orchestra under the direction of William Strickland.

The present disc again pairs a foreign score with an American work of distinction. In this instance the Concerto for Piano and Strings by Klaus Egge, most prominent of Norway's composers to have reached creative maturity during World War II, is paired with a first recorded performance of the Cello Concerto by George Barati, Hungarian-born composer-conductor who has played an active role in American musical life since the late 1930's, emerging as a composer of unusual gifts during the 1950's.

George Barati (b. Gyor, Hungary, 1913) is more than usually qualified to essay composition of a cello concerto, having first achieved musical prominence in his native Hungary in 1936 when he was principal cellist of the Budapest Symphony Orchestra. Following this he received both Teacher's Diploma and State Artist Diploma, having graduated with honors from the Franz Liszt Conservatory of Music in Budapest. However, Mr. Barati's career as conductor and composer had its beginning in this country; for while studying and teaching at Princeton University and New Jersey Teacher's College, he was conducting Princeton and Lawrenceville School vocal and instrumental groups and at the same time studying counterpoint and composition with Roger Sessions. He was in the U.S. Armed Forces during the War years and was active both as conductor of the Alexandria Military Symphony in Alexandria, Louisiana, and as an orientation lecturer for the Army Engineer Corps. Yet he also was able to carry on composition.

The end of the War found Barati on the West coast where he had been engaged for the cello section of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra under Pierre Monteux. He also played cello in the California String Quartet. By 1948 he was conducting his own Barati Chamber Orchestra as well as special concerts with the San Francisco Symphony, and by

1950 he had been appointed to the post he presently holds, that of Musical Director of the Honolulu Symphony Society. During the 1950's he worked tirelessly to develop both his own orchestra and the general musical culture of what was to become the fiftieth state, and the success of his work gained for Barati not only an honorary doctorate from the University of Hawaii, but invitations to conduct all over the world. Both in Honolulu and elsewhere, Mr. Barati has featured contemporary music prominently on his programs, and for CRI he has recorded previously Gordon Binkerd's Second Symphony and Ulysses Kay's Sinfonia in E (CRI 139), while for the Lyrichord label he has done a series of fascinating and half-forgotten masses of Haydn and Schubert, as well as the St. Luke Passion ascribed to J. S. Bach.

As composer, Barati began to be heard not only in San Francisco where his works had begun to be played as early as 1950, but throughout the country, thanks to the California String Quartet LP disc for the Contemporary label of his First String Quartet (1944) and the Eudice Shapiro-Ingolf Dahl recording of the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1956) issued by the same label. His *Configuration* (1947) was the first of Barati's major orchestral works to achieve wide and favorable notice, and by 1959 he had won the Naumburg Award that resulted in the Columbia recording with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra of his Chamber Concerto (1952). Another orchestral score that has won a striking success is *The Dragon and the Phoenix* (1960) which was commissioned by the Honolulu Symphony Society.

Barati's musical language is essentially modern-cosmopolitan in character, reflecting the varied milieu in which he has matured artistically and as a human being. Thus *The Dragon and the Phoenix* evokes something of both Orient and Occident; in the Cello Concerto there are Hungarian elements discernible in some of the thematic material; the Chamber Concerto is a brilliant essay in colorful modern neo-classic vein. Regardless, however, of whatever elements may predominate in any given work of Barati's, one is aware above of all three things — 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.

Barati's Cello Concerto was composed during the summer of 1953 during a sojourn at the MacDowell Colony, the entire 27-minute score being completed in less than a month. "I arrived with some very scanty sketches," recalls the composer, "but from the first moment the music just poured out of me and I found myself taking my work with me from studio to dormitory where I continued working into the evening hours."

The Concerto underwent revision in 1957 and was recorded for CRI early in 1963. The music has since been published by C.F. Peters with a dedication to Anita Pauling, and its concert premiere took place in Honolulu in January of 1964 with Tibor Varga as soloist and Mr. Barati conducting.

Barati has employed a full but not overpowering orchestral backdrop for the cello soloist — winds in pairs, strings, and percussion augmented by tamtam, cymbals, triangle, snare drum, and celesta.

A six-bar rising chord progression in flutes and clarinets with bassoon in contrary motion introduces the first movement (*Andante espansivo* 3/4), following which the solo cello enters with a lyrical theme characterized by a descending stepwise phrase and typically Hungarian iambic meter. The flute adds its voice to the contrapuntal flow and the texture soon thickens to the point of full climax. A short cadenza episode prepares the way for a plaintive cantabile melody sung by the solo cello. Motoric quadruplet figures add an element of momentum, then the English horn introduces development of the wind motive that opens the movement. The opening cello melody is developed subsequently over a pizzicato ostinato punctuated by snare drum figures. The final pages of the movement offer a poignant and intense summation of the music's materials, with the soloist carrying the burden of the utterance.

Following a few introductory pizzicato bars by the soloist, the second movement (*Scherzando* 4/4) begins in sauntering, easygoing pace (*Insouciantly* is the composer's marking) with the soloist taking the lead under rhythmic woodwind triplet figurations. A theme in trochaic meter soon assumes dominance, chiefly at the hands of the soloist. Then follows an episode (*vivacissimo* 2/4) wherein soloist, winds, and percussion project a nervous ejaculatory figure over a thrumming low string *pizzicato* pedal point. The initial tempo of the movement resumes and the materials of the opening section are restated in somewhat varied guise, concluding with the introductory pizzicato figures.

The finale begins with an *Adagio* introduction wherein the soloist sets forth under *pp* low brass chords a highly expressive theme distinctly dodecaphonic in cut. After a dozen bars, the soloist takes over with a concluding *quasi cadenza*, whereupon the tempo changes to *Allegro non troppo e grazioso* in a dancelike 6/8 meter. However, while the basic movement of the music flows along at the pace dictated by the rondo-like basic theme, the time signatures undergo constant and subtle shifts until the final pages where a climax and sudden broadening of tempo lead to a lyrical apotheosis for the soloist over *divisi* muted strings. The final bars return to the main tempo and the concerto comes to a spirited but abrupt conclusion.

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BERNARD MICHELIN is one of the best known of present-day French cellists. A pupil of Paul Bazelaire, he has toured widely throughout Europe and has played at the Edinburgh International Music Festival. Among his major recordings have been performances of the Schumann and Lalo concertos, and the Fauré *Elegie*.

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FROM THE TWO GENERATIONS of Norwegian composers who have come to maturity since the passing of Edvard Grieg and his disciples, three dominating figures have emerged. Harald Saeverud (b. 1897) who has imbued his highly personal and nationalist musical language with a wholly modern spirit; Fartein Valen (1887-1952) who developed a neo-Palestrina pan-tonal idiom very much his own, yet curiously in key with the more solitary aspects of the Scandinavian temperament; and finally, Klaus Egge (b. 1906) whose extraordinarily varied output of choral and instrumental works has represented a bold attempt to synthesize the Norwegian spirit and the major trends of Western European music as they have developed since the middle 1930's.

A pupil of Valen and also a product of study at the Berlin Musikhochschule, Egge has been composing steadily since the late 1920's — though his output has been limited to some extent by the enormous range of his “extra-curricular” activities, which have included music criticism, the presidency of the Norwegian Composer's Society (through whose good offices half of this disc and the whole of CRI 159 have been released), and representation for Norway on the UNESCO International Music Council. Those who know Egge personally will confirm the fact that these official posts barely hint at Egge's enormously vital influence on the Norwegian musical scene as organizer, gadfly, and host to visiting composers and musicians from all over the world.

Unlike some composers whose characteristic musical language takes form early and changes little through subsequent years, Egge has sought with every major work to achieve more flexibility in expression, more refinement of craft, more intensity of utterance. Thus, viewing his works as a whole, one looks not so much for stylistic development in the Beethovenian or Brahmsian sense as for certain key works that can be called milestones of creative realization. Thus Egge's First Symphony (1942) can be said to mark the peak of his effort along epic neo-romantic lines, while the Piano Concerto No. 2 (1944) on this disc represents a remarkable integration of Norwegian folklore style with the modern-classic spirit that dominated the European and American musical scene during the 1935-45 decade. In the Violin Concerto (1953), we sense a striving toward a more intense, terse, and tautly woven musical language that has found its most telling realization in the *Sonata Patetica* for piano (1955) and the Third Symphony (1957) that was written for the Louisville commissioning series (recorded on Louisville 602).

The designation Symphonic Variations and Fugue on a Norwegian Folk Song represents an accurate formal summation of Egge's Piano Concerto No. 2. Scored for solo piano and strings, the music is not merely a bead-strung variation sequence, but also partakes of the tripartite Viennese symphonic concept, wherein the first three variations may be considered as exposition, with Variation IV functioning as development, Variation V and the greater part of Variation VI serving as slow movement. A gradual increase of dynamic tension and textural density lead to the dance-like Variation VII. This ends with a brief *cadenza*, following which the first violins announce a fugue subject that combines elements both of the Norwegian folk-dance spirit and of the classical baroque fugue. Thus far in the music's course the piano has been treated in alternately soloistic and *concertante* style; but in the fugue, the keyboard style is definitely *concertante* after the manner of the Bach concertos. The fugue theme winds in and out of the tonal texture in a variety of contrapuntal guises—its lyrical, rhythmic, and motoric aspects being exploited to the full. Its final entry in the music's concluding pages is underlined by simultaneous proclamation with augmented note values in the bass.

The folk song that forms the thematic basis of the Concerto— sung by celli in the course of an 18-bar introduction—comes from Egge's native district of Telemark and is an ancient medieval *kjempevis* called *Solfager og Ormekongen* (“Sunfair and the Dragon King”).

NOTES BY D.H.

ROBERT RIEFLING has been regarded throughout the international European concert circuit since World War II as the foremost of Norway's pianists. Trained initially in his home city of Oslo, Riefling later studied with Karl Leimer, Wilhelm Kempff, and Edwin Fischer. He has made a number of highly successful solo appearances in the United States, playing both classic and contemporary repertoire. His list of recordings, available chiefly in Europe, is substantial, encompassing a gamut of repertoire from the Bach well-tempered clavier complete, a series of Haydn sonatas, the Beethoven *Emperor* and Grieg concertos through Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis* and contemporary Norwegian works.

ØIVIN FJELDSTAD has been conductor-in-chief for the Norwegian State Radio since 1935, and in that capacity has given innumerable premieres of new Norwegian works. Since 1961 he has been musical director of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. He has made guest appearances throughout the length and breadth of Europe, as well as in New York City, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Vancouver. Besides his CRI recording of Brustad's Symphony No. 2 (CRI 159), Fjeldstad's performances may be heard on the London and RCA Camden labels.

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*