

CRI 226 USD

Quincy Porter/George Barati

1. Quincy Porter: Concerto for Harpsichord and Orchestra (24:15)
Virginia Pleasants, harpsichord
Polish National Radio Orchestra,
Jan Krenz, conductor
Recorded by Polskie Nagrania

2. George Barati: Harpsichord Quartet (18:00)
Baroque Chamber Players of Indiana
James J. Pellerite, flute
Jerry E. Sirucek, oboe and English horn
Murray Grodner, cello and bass
Wallace W. Hornibrook, harpsichord

Quincy Porter was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1897 and died in Bethany, Connecticut, in 1966. He was the son and grandson of professors at Yale and himself graduated from that institution, a pupil of the redoubtable Horatio Parker. Later he studied in Paris with Lucien Capet (violin) and Vincent d'Indy (composition), and upon returning to New York, with Ernest Bloch. During this period he earned his living as a violinist in the Capitol Theater Orchestra. He followed Bloch to the Cleveland Institute of Music and held a teaching post there. A Guggenheim grant took Porter back to Paris for another three years, where he composed his first mature works. After a brief return to Cleveland, he taught for six years at Vassar College, and then moved to the New England Conservatory of Music. In 1946, he accepted a professorship at the Yale School of Music which he held until his retirement in 1965.

Among Quincy Porter's last professional acts before his sudden death in November 1966 was to voice enthusiastic approval of the completed recording of the enclosed Harpsichord Concerto.

It was during the 1928-31 Paris period that Quincy Porter's musical language took definitive shape. Though his Yale schooling had been under the German-oriented Horatio Parker, the work with d'Indy proved an effective foil, and that with Bloch paved the way for a wholly fruitful and personal synthesis of the traditional and the modern, of German rigor, Gallic sparkle, and American rhythmic vitality.

The Harpsichord Concerto was commissioned by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra which gave the work its first performance on January 19, 1960, with Frank Brieff conducting and Ralph Kirkpatrick as soloist. Mr. Porter has made the following observations regarding his Harpsichord Concerto:

"I was interested in the particular qualities of the harpsichord, especially of clarity in the portrayal of more complicated harmonic combination, and in the delineation of rhythms. These qualities I tried to take advantage of, and I think that I even made the characteristics of the solo instrument dominate my treatment of the whole orchestra so that the orchestra may, at times, sound like the harpsichord 'let loose.'

"I have tried to build a composition which has the proper contrasts coming at psychological points where they seem called for as the music progresses. Between these variously placed points of contrast, I have tried by rhythmical means or by changes of one kind or another, to give rise to dynamic lines (leading either up or down) which will assure the audience that the music is going somewhere. Or on occasion the music may be temporarily static, for another type of contrast.

"The theme at the beginning of the Concerto returns to its original form at the very end. After this theme has been developed for some measures, another theme is given out quietly by the harpsichord. This motive is used extensively in a great variety of ways throughout the whole Concerto, both thematically and as figuration."

Virginia Pleasants graduated from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, following which she studied in Europe with the aim of specializing in eighteenth-century repertoire. Mrs. Pleasants's performance on this disc marks her return to active recording work, which in the past was highlighted by her readings of eight Haydn piano sonatas for the Haydn Society label. Her husband, Henry Pleasants, is author of the controversial volume *The Agony of Modern Music*, and more recently a historical study, *The Great Singers*.

Jan Krenz, gifted conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, has won international renown for the versatility and musicianship displayed during the annual Warsaw Autumn Festivals of Contemporary Music from 1953 to the present. The present recording of Quincy Porter's Harpsichord Concerto, together with the CRI discs of Russell Smith's Second Piano Concerto (CRI 214) and Richard Donovan's *Passacaglia on Vermont Folk Tunes* and *Epos* (CRI 203) is one of a series of major recorded performances of contemporary American repertoire done for CRI under Mr. Krenz's baton.

George Barati is familiar to CRI listeners, as he is to the rest of the music world, both as a conductor and composer (he has recorded six orchestral works, including his own Cello Concerto for this label). He has been music director of the Honolulu Symphony since 1950 and his conducting assignments have led to annual tours in Europe, the Far East, and the U.S.A. His compositions have received popular and critical acclaim, and won him the Naumburg Award in 1959 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1965.

Barati was born in Győr, Hungary, in 1913, and showed early musical talent. A graduate of the Franz Liszt Conservatory in Budapest, he received his Teacher's Diploma and State Artist Diploma and was solo cellist of the Budapest Symphony when he left Hungary before World War II. Upon discharge from the U.S. Army, he divided his time playing in the San Francisco Symphony, composing, playing chamber music, and conducting the Barati Chamber Orchestra.

Wherever it has been played, Barati's music has elicited praise. The *San Francisco Chronicle* called his *Chamber Concerto*, "one of the most inventive, adroit, colorful and stimulating pieces to be produced in San Francisco in recent years." *Time* magazine found his String Quartet "consistently thoughtful, occasionally warm, once or twice fiery in a moderately dissonant idiom." About his Cello Concerto *The New York Times* stated: "The harmonies are strongly dissonant, although basically tonal. What seems to be a major virtue of Barati's style, however, is the strong rhythmic drive."

The Harpsichord Quartet was composed in 1964 as the first of three commissioned works for Indiana University's Baroque Chamber Players. The other two are an octet and a concerto. Mr. Barati has said:

"I was intrigued from the beginning by the unusual sonorities inherent in the flute-oboe-double bass combination with the harpsichord. I 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, further minimizing the tyranny of the bar line without, however, changing the latter too often."

The first performance of the Quartet occurred in Bloomington, on February 10, 1965; it has become a much-performed piece in the group's repertory. After a performance in Baltimore, the *Baltimore Sun* wrote: "There was also in it something impressionistic in its skillful exploitation of the instruments' coloristic potentialities. Although eclectic, Barati's quartet is also highly individual music, especially interesting for its wide skips of melody and its repeated short rhythmic patterns."

—Carter Harman

The **Baroque Chamber Players** of Indiana University bring together individual artists of outstanding skill in the world of music. James Pellerite was, until recently, a solo flutist with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy; Jerry Sirucek was an oboist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Reiner; Murray Grodner, double bassist, was formerly a member of the NBC Symphony under Toscanini; and Wallace Hornibrook, harpsichordist, conductor, and concert pianist, was formerly accompanist for Dorothy Sarnoff, Fred Waring, and Columbia Concerts. All are members of the faculty of the School of Music, one of the worlds largest.

The flexible ensemble of the Baroque Players allows combinations of from one to four players, and they are frequently joined by other members of the artist faculty at Indiana University to explore the vast field of Baroque literature. Their programs also offer a choice of contemporary music, some especially written for the ensemble. Works by Elliott Carter, Villa-Lobos, Ginastera, Surinach, Falla, Walter Kaufmann, Juan Orrego-Salas, George Barati, and Alec Wilder appear in their repertory.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)