

**CRI 338**

**MARTIN BOYKAN**

**STRING QUARTET NO. 1 (1967)**

**Contemporary Quartet (Jeanne Benjamin Ingraham, Thomas Kornacker, Jacob Glick, Christopher Finckel)**

MARTIN BOYKAN (April 12, 1931, New York City) studied composition at Harvard and Yale with Walter Piston, Aaron Copland and Paul Hindemith. His major works besides the *STRING QUARTET NO. 1* (winner of the Jeunesse Musicales prize in 1967) include Psalm for a capella chorus, Concerto for 13 Players and String Quartet No. 2. He is a respected writer on musical subjects and is a member of the editorial board of *Perspectives of New Music*. He has been on the faculty of Brandeis University since 1957. About his music, Mr. Boykan writes:

“My *QUARTET NO. 1* is in four movements. It opens with an expansive slow movement, rich in figuration. As the movement progresses, the music becomes increasingly bare; figural elements recede as the harmonic language becomes more and more restricted. The second movement is scherzo-like in character, juxtaposing fragmentary passages with others of greater breadth. A slow interlude, the still center of the Quartet, looks directly into the last movement. The finale is divided into four sections of equal length, it is intended to provide a contrast to the broad periods of the opening. Its texture becomes relatively uniform and the breathing fairly even.”

**ELAINE BARKIN**

**STRING QUARTET (1969)**

**American Quartet (Martin Foster, Laurie Carney, Robert Becker, David Geber)**

ELAINE BARKIN (b. Bronx, N.Y., 1932, néé Radoff) studied with Karol Rathaus (Queens College), Irving Fine, Harold Shapero, and Arthur Berger (Brandeis University), and Boris Blacher (Berlin Hochschule für Musik on a Fulbright Grant, 1957). Several years of compositional dormancy ensued, during which time she was primarily occupied with bearing and rearing three sons. However, with the support and encouragement of her husband George and her friend Ben Boretz, she reentered musical life: began (with the help of Saul Novack) teaching part-time at Queens, became associated with *Perspectives of New Music* (of which she is now co-editor), resumed formal studies at Brandeis (Ph.D., 1970), was on the Executive Board of the A.S.U.C., and has since written articles, reviews, and chamber music. She has also taught at Sarah Lawrence College, the University of Michigan, Princeton University (as a Humanities Council Junior Fellow) and in the fall of 1974 joined the faculty of the University of California at Los Angeles as Associate Professor. Ms. Barkin writes:

“Both movements of the *STRING QUARTET* reveal my interests during 1968 and 1969 in: continuity and pervasiveness; transformation and elaboration; ways to imagine surfaces which continually reflect some quality of the latent 'ground.' Constancy of change is an attribute of the work that even the most casual listener will detect. I hope, too, that the listener will hear the cluster-like harmonic referent that prevails. Also, I simply wished to 'write a string quartet' and thus preoccupied myself with sonic resources of the ensemble; its oft-alleged homogeneity; its (less mythical) heterogeneity; the diversity of each instrument.

“Movement 1: Phrases proceed by apposition, by abruption, by elision. Each new phrase picks up from some prior thing — a pitch, a register, a bunch of pitches (a chord or a tune), a mode of attack — and then extends cumulatively. (In fact, the opening frame, whose likeness recurs about 3/4 of the way through and at the end, was not written first; it too emerged from prior heard things.) Phrase-sections are shaped by polyphonic reinterpretations (and re-surfacing) of the ground, e.g., a single voice or four voices distributed for one, two, or all four instruments — or as many as twelve voices (as in those agitated ensemble passages).

“Movement 2: The subtitle should be an assist, for a set of variations seemed to be a way to realize and frame my ideas. The movement opens with a totality, aspects of which are subsequently unravelled and revealed — exteriors are re-spanned, interiors unfold as exteriors. For example: the attack-pattern of the thickest chords of the opening is texturally and temporally diminished; an opening inner-voice rhythm stretches over the entire ensemble; what was initially spun-out is crammed and piled-up in the *ritornello* — variation(s); an oblique or zigzag (between-instruments) line straightens out, or is recast as four voices for one instrument. The movement concludes with a refined chorale-reprise.”

The CONTEMPORARY QUARTET takes its name from Manhattan's Group for Contemporary Music, where its members play individually and collectively. It is widely admired for the sensitivity and musicality which it adds to superb technical command.

The AMERICAN STRING QUARTET is a relatively young group started in the Juilliard School of Music. In 1974 the group won both the Coleman Chamber Music Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Award. Elaine Barkin adds: “There were moments when I conceived of string players as polydactyls, a conception which members of the American String Quartet hastened to point out. However, they solved their — and my — problems with diligence and alacrity; without their help I never would have gotten to know the work as well as I now do.”

The American String Quartet: “Another first-class young quartet seems to have been born”

*The New York Times*

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*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*