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SUPER AUDIO CD

# BARTÓK

CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

MUSIC FOR STRINGS, PERCUSSION  
AND CELESTA

HUNGARIAN SKETCHES

FRITZ REINER  
CHICAGO SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA



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**BÉLA BARTÓK** (1881–1945)



**Concerto for Orchestra**

- 1 Introduzione: Andante non troppo; Allegro vivace 10:01
- 2 Giuoco delle coppie: Allegretto scherzando 6:03
- 3 Elegia: Andante non troppo 7:59
- 4 Intermezzo interrotto: Allegretto 4:15
- 5 Finale: Pesante; Presto 8:59  
*(Recorded October 22, 1955)*

**Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta\***

- 6 Andante tranquillo 7:05
- 7 Allegro 7:03
- 8 Adagio 6:58
- 9 Allegro molto 6:44

**Hungarian Sketches\***

- 10 An Evening in the Village 2:44
- 11 Bear Dance 1:41
- 12 Melody 2:05
- 13 Slightly Topsy 2:17
- 14 Swineherd's Dance 1:57  
*(Recorded December 28 & 29, 1958)*

**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

**Fritz Reiner**, conductor  
*(Recorded Orchestra Hall, Chicago)*

Produced by Richard Mohr  
Recording Engineer: Lewis Layton  
Mastering Engineer: Mark Donahue  
DSD Engineer: Philipp Nedel  
Remastering Supervisor: John Newton  
Reissue Producer: Daniel Guss  
Series Coordination: Tim Schumacher

Editorial Supervision: Elizabeth A. Wright  
Design: Red Herring Design  
Photography: Sara Foldenauer

**These were original two-track and \*three-track stereo recordings; in SACD surround mode, the music will be heard only from the front left and right channels (two-track) and front left, center and right channels (three-track).**

For years, the Concerto for Orchestra has been not only the most played of Bartók's works, but also the most frequently performed among other contemporary scores. Between 1945 and 1955 it had more than two hundred performances, here and abroad.

In a very real way, Fritz Reiner is the conductor preordained to conduct this masterful score, written during the difficult last years of Bartók's life, when he was a self exile from Nazi-occupied Hungary and far from adjusted to life in America. Beset by economic difficulties, plagued by an undiagnosable illness which restricted his activities, Bartók was nevertheless a proud man to whom charity was abhorrent. One of his occasional engagements in 1943 was with the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York. In writing about it to a friend, Bartók described it as "a 'unique' engagement... a 'family' business... made through my friend Fritz

Reiner who is guest conductor in some of these concerts. So we [Bartók and his wife] live from half-year to half-year..."

Before the "half-year" was out, Bartók was again hospitalized, inactive, with little mind for composition. Alerted to these circumstances by my article in the *New York Sun*, Reiner, in association with Joseph Szigeti, set in motion means to stimulate Bartók's mind for work. It took the form of a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation, personally conveyed to the composer in his room at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York by the man who often said, "If we do not encourage the music of today, there will be no music of tomorrow."

The mood for work came to Bartók in August at Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks, and he brought the finished score to New York with him in October. Early in December, he visited Boston for the first performance, of which he wrote: "...the performance was excellent. Koussevitzky is very enthusiastic about

the piece, and says it is 'the best orchestral piece of the last 25 years.'..."

This qualifies Koussevitzky for honors not only in generosity but also in prophecy; and gives to Reiner the rare distinction, among conductors, of having assisted in the creation of a work, as well as in its recreation.

Concertos for orchestra and solo instrument are, of course, common commodities in the concert hall. For that matter, the work for orchestra alone in which the word "concerto" appears was an equally common commodity in the eighteenth century. But the connotation was quite different, even as the orchestra itself was; and Bartók may be credited with inventing a pattern and perfecting it, all in the space of three months. "The title of this symphony-like orchestral work," he commented in a note written for the Boston premiere, "is explained by its tendency to treat the single orchestral instruments in a *concertant* or

soloistic manner. The 'virtuoso' treatment appears, for instance, in the fugato sections of the development of the first movement (brass instruments) or the *perpetuum mobile*-like passage of the principal theme in the last movement (strings), and especially in the second movement, in which pairs of instruments consecutively appear with brilliant passages...."

The movements are as follows:

### **Allegro vivace**

Two main themes dominate this movement: an active, chromatic one, in shifting 3/8, 2/8, 3/8, 2/8, etc., which promises much for development; and a leaping, chordal one, with contrapuntal implications. All sorts of instrumental effects are utilized.

### **Allegretto scherzando**

This second movement is subtitled *Gioco delle Coppie* or "Game of Pairs." Pursuant

to the description, the bassoons have the first duet, followed by oboes, clarinets, flutes (each at different intervals) and then muted trumpets in major seconds. Out of this varied but harmonious plan Bartók evolves a charming series of permutations.

### **Andante, non troppo**

In this *Elegia*, Bartók utilizes the introductory material of the first movement, shaped to folk song-like contours. It has a kind of nocturnal quality, described by the composer as a "misty texture of rudimentary motifs."

### **Allegretto**

An intermezzo intrudes, interrupted by a reference to the "Leningrad" Symphony of Shostakovich, which Bartók heard broadcast while at work on this Concerto.

### **Pesante**

Bartók described the Concerto's mood as "apart from the jesting second movement, a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death song of the third, to the life assertion of the last...." Dance rhythms predominate in this finale, as the virtuoso demands on the orchestra accumulate.

Fritz Reiner first met Bela Bartók, whose friend he was for forty years and whose music he has championed for nearly half a century, in 1905. Both were piano students of István Thomán at the Budapest Academy. The conductor-to-be, only son of a prosperous metropolitan merchant, was seventeen and an undergraduate; Bartók, at twenty three, had begun the final year of his formal education in music. Although the "Kossuth" Symphony of 1903 had gained him the reputation of composer both at home and in England, the young Bartók was far better known as a concert pianist—and as a patriot. He was a slender youth, withdrawn and quietly dignified, always dressed in the Hungarian national costume: black embroidered jacket, black sash tie, and black boots. Despite his orientation as a keyboard virtuoso, Bartók's passions already were folk music and composition, des-

tinued ever increasingly to dominate his life's work. In 1907, however, Bartók succeeded Thomán at the Academy, as professor of piano—not then, or ever, of composition.

Reiner, a pianist in whom the conductor was just awakening, studied a full year with Bartók, and when Reiner graduated in 1909, it was Bartók who recommended him for honors and signed his diploma. Thirty-one years later, Reiner was able to return that recommendation and signature—on an affidavit that permitted Bartók's entry into the United States as a resident alien.

In 1910 Reiner went to Laibach (Ljubljana today) as conductor at the local opera, and this forced a suspension of direct contact with Bartók. His appointment to Dresden in 1914 took Reiner entirely from Bartók's personal orbit, though not so distant as to lose contact with Bartók the composer and correspondent. In Dresden, at a concert

of the Saxon State Orchestra, Reiner conducted his senior countryman's music for the first time. His domain there, however, was principally operatic, and not until he was invited to America in 1922 as music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra was Reiner able really to promote his controversial colleague's bold, spiky scores. There, in staid southern Ohio, Reiner gave the music of Bartók its first American performances—*Suite No. 1* in 1923; *Suite No. 2* in 1924; the *Dance Suite* and *Deux Images* in 1925, and two scenes from *The Miraculous Mandarin* in 1926.

The composer himself finally came to the United States in 1927, as a pianist, bringing with him a new concerto for the occasion. It was scheduled for performances by the New York Philharmonic under Willem Mengelberg's direction. One look at the score of the *Concerto No. 1*, however, convinced Mengelberg

that the music would be impossible to prepare in the allotted rehearsal time; Bartók played, instead, his early *Rhapsody*. When Reiner heard the news, he asked for first performance rights, received them, prepared the music, and conducted performances with Bartók as soloist not only in Cincinnati but on tour in New York and Boston. If the Ohio premiere was sensational, the audience in Carnegie Hall disapproved vocally. Bartók's press was savage, yet his career had been importantly served: the entire nation knew his name in a matter of days.

Reiner moved to Philadelphia in 1931 as a teacher at Curtis Institute and guest conductor, but he continued to champion Bartók's cause. With the Philadelphia Orchestra he introduced to America the five *Hungarian Sketches* on this recording (orchestrations of early piano music, undertaken by Bartók at

Mondsee, in Austria, during the summer of 1931 "on account of the money" he was sure would accrue from frequent performances). When Reiner went in 1938 to Pittsburgh, his professional home for a decade, not only did he continue to play Bartók's earlier music but added the *Divertimento for Strings* to his list of first performances in North America.

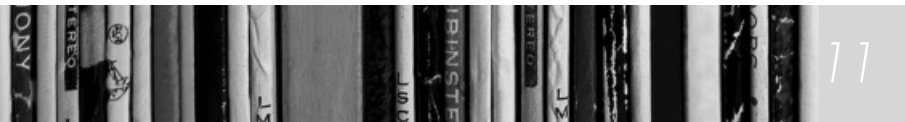
Only *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, the suite in four movements composed in 1936 found no place in the Reiner repertoire until, at concerts of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in December 1958, he conducted this music for the first time, with overwhelming success.

Bartók, for his part, revisited the United States briefly in 1939. Then, in 1940, he returned here, never to leave. His American years were neither prosperous nor at all happy ones—through no neglect, it must be said,

on the part of his friends. As a man of pride, Bartók steadfastly refused any help so labeled, and made it, for that matter, increasingly difficult to render even indirect assistance. Nevertheless, on January 21, 1943, in New York, Reiner conducted the first performance of the *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra* with the composer and his wife as soloists—Bartók's last public appearance as a concert artist.

It was Reiner that same year who apprised Serge Koussevitzky of Bartók's American residence, and urged that the Koussevitzky Foundation commission a work: the *Concerto for Orchestra* of 1943. And it was Reiner who opened his home near Westport, Connecticut, whenever Bartók cared or was able to visit. Here at "Rambleside," in the final years of an austere life, ravaged by illness, in the company of a colleague and friend he respected, Bartók spent many of the too few happy days

remaining to him in a land far from his own. A land, however, that did give him haven in time of need, and that has paid his memory unexampled tribute— this in major part because of Fritz Reiner's devoted and unceasing service to music he believed in, long before the rest of the world came to share his vision.



Fritz Reiner was internationally recognized as one of the foremost conductors of his time. Born in 1888 in Budapest, he received his musical education at the Academy of Music there. At the age of 23 he became conductor of the Budapest Volksoper and two years later was appointed principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden; while there he worked with Richard Strauss on productions of his early operas and conducted the German premiere of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. In 1922 Reiner became conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; nine years later he went to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia to head the orchestral department. After a decade (1938–48) as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, he joined the Metropolitan Opera. Then in 1953 he became music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which

he built into one of the world's great ensembles. Ill health forced him to resign his post in 1962, and he died the following year.

Reiner was extraordinary not only as an orchestra builder but also for his broad range of repertoire, both symphonic and operatic. He was equally the master of the delicately balanced sonorities of Mozart and the massive richness of Richard Strauss; he was a champion of 20th-century music, and he could give incomparably lilting performances of the waltzes of Johann Strauss.

## THE HISTORY OF LIVING STEREO

**O**n October 6, 1953, RCA Victor made its first experimental “binaural” recordings. At New York’s Manhattan Center, Leopold Stokowski conducted a pick-up orchestra in Enesco’s *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* and Tchaikovsky’s *Waltz from Eugene Onegin*. In December RCA continued stereo tests in Manhattan Center with Pierre Monteux and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Then, in February 1954, RCA took equipment to Boston’s Symphony Hall, where Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony were recording Berlioz’s *The Damnation of Faust*. For the first time, RCA engineers captured the performance on both mono and two-track tape. These experiments, combined with further technological refinements employed in Chicago’s Orchestra Hall in March 1954, were the first forays into the world of stereo.

At the time that RCA initiated multi-track sessions, disc mastering and consumer playback technology were monaural. RCA Victor proceeded to use two- and three-track equipment to record the world’s greatest artists—Heifetz, Piatigorsky, Reiner, Munch, Rubinstein, Fiedler—in anticipation that home technology would catch up to stereo sound. Finally, in 1955, 1/4” 7 1/2ips stereophonic tape players arrived on the consumer market, and RCA released its first Stereo Orthophonic tapes.

Stereo Orthophonic tapes redefined high fidelity. In 1958, the Western Electric Company produced the breakthrough Westrex stereo disc cutter, thereby revolutionizing master disc production. Stereo playback equipment was developed to coincide with the new disc cutting technology. The same year, Living Stereo LP records were launched, ushering in the golden age of stereo high fidelity.

RCA Victor’s first two-track sessions in late 1953 and early 1954 were captured on proprietary RCA RT-21 1/4” 30ips tape machines, wired to a pair of mono mixers, each dedicated to one tape track. Neumann U-47 cardioid and M-49/50 omnidirectional microphones were favored, as were RCA-designed LC-1A 15” duo-cone speakers in the control room. Three track recordings were realized on tube amplifier Ampex 300-3 1/2” machines running at 15ips and in later years at 30ips, and were mixed down to 1/4” two-track masters. No equalization was used in the original tracking process; the microphone signals were summed through passive electronics and printed straight to tape. In addition, no equalization was used to alter playback takes for artist approval.

## TECHNICAL NOTES

JOHN NEWTON, *SOUNDMIRROR INC.*

Since the earliest days of recording, engineers have strived to make recorded sound as immediate and thrilling as natural sound. The earliest electrical recordings were made with a single microphone positioned in the hall for optimum balance. The signal was fed to a cutting lathe, and with the advent of magnetic recording, to a monaural tape recorder; a copy of that tape was used to produce the LPs which consumers listened to at home.

With stereo, two microphones were placed in the hall. Signals were fed to a stereo tape recorder and consumers, listening back on two speakers, heard a new “depth” of sound. By placing microphones in the left, center, and right of the hall, engineers progressed to 3-channel recordings, which afforded them greater control over the musical

balances that ended up in the stereo mix. Even as CDs replaced LPs, this same process was often followed.

Today, with the advent of SACD and multi-channel playback, the listener can hear the left, center, and right channels exactly as the engineers heard them at the original recording sessions. In this series of Living Stereo reissues on hybrid SACDs, we have used the 3-channel original tapes whenever they existed; when the material was recorded only in stereo, we used that tape. Some of the SACDs will therefore contain 2-channel, or a combination of 2- and 3-channel material. We used only two or three of the available six channels on the SACD disc because that was the vision of the original producers.

In remastering these tapes, we kept the signal path as short as possible. A Studer-Aria analog tape recorder was

connected with premium Siltech cabling directly to specifically chosen dCS converters. This DSD data is directly encoded on the SACD. Thus the listener is able to hear the output of these converters exactly as we heard it in the studio. The DSD program is essentially identical to the analog tape. What you hear are faithful copies of each historic recording—the pure performance, presented in its original splendor. No signal processing was necessary to “improve” these extraordinary tapes.

Throughout this very exciting project, history came alive as we heard the voices of legendary engineers verbally slating the tapes with the location and date of each session. We were greatly impressed not only with how little the original tapes were edited, but how skillfully engineers edited with their high-tech tool of the day, namely, a

razor blade! Applying the best in 21st-century remastering technology, we believe we have done justice to the best in 20th-century recording technology for a new generation of listeners.

## TECHNISCHE ANMERKUNGEN

JOHN NEWTON, SOUNDMIRROR INC.

Seit Beginn der Aufnahmetechnologie streben Tontechniker danach, den Klang der Aufnahme so unmittelbar und ergreifend zu erzeugen, wie der natürliche Klang selbst. Die frühesten elektronischen Aufnahmen wurden mit einem einzigen Mikrophon durchgeführt, das in der Mitte des Aufnahmesaals positioniert war, um eine optimal ausgewogene Balance zu erzeugen. Das Signal wurde zu einer Schnittmaschine, und nach der Einführung von magnetischen Aufnahmen zu einer Bandmaschine geleitet. Eine Kopie dieses Bandes wurde dann für die Produktion der LPs verwendet, welche die Käufer zuhause abspielten.

Seit dem Stereozeitalter wurden zwei Mikrophone im Aufnahmesaal platziert. Die Signale wurden zu einer Stereo-Bandmaschine geleitet, und die Konsumenten, die die LP auf zwei Lautsprechern abspielten, bekamen einen neuen

Eindruck der „Tiefe“ des Klages. Durch eine Anordnung der Mikrophone links, mittig und rechts im Aufnahmesaal, gelangten die Tontechniker zu 3-Kanal Aufnahmen. Diese erlaubten ihnen eine größere Kontrolle über die musikalische Balance, was im Stereo Mix aufging. Noch als CDs die LPs ersetzten, wurde dieses Verfahren oft verwendet.

Heute, seit der Einführung der SACD und Multi-Kanal Wiedergabe, kann der Konsument den linken, mittleren und rechten Kanal exakt so wahrnehmen und hören, wie der Tontechniker sie während der ursprünglichen Aufnahmesitzung gehört hat. Für diese Serie von Living Stereo Wiederveröffentlichungen auf hybrid SACDs haben wir die originalen 3-Kanal Bänder verwendet, wann immer diese existent waren. Sofern nur in Stereo aufgenommen wurde, haben wir diese Bänder verwendet. Deshalb enthalten einige dieser SACDs nur

2-Kanal oder eine Kombination aus 2-Kanal und 3-Kanal Aufnahmen. Wir haben darum auch nur zwei oder drei der sechs auf einer SACD verfügbaren Kanäle benutzt, da dies die Vision der ursprünglichen Produzenten war.

Während des Remastering Prozesses dieser Bänder haben wir den Weg des Signals so kurz wie möglich gehalten. Eine analoge Studer-Aria Bandmaschine wurde durch hochwertige Siltech Kabel direkt mit speziell ausgewählten dCS Konvertern verbunden. Dieses DSD Datenmaterial wurde direkt auf die SACD kodiert. Dadurch ist der Konsument in der Lage, das Ergebnis dieser Konverter exakt so zu hören, wie wir es im Studio gehört haben. Das DSD Programm ist im Wesentlichen identisch mit den analogen Originalbändern. Was Sie hören sind genaue Kopien von jeder der historischen Aufnahmen—die pure Aufführung, präsentiert in ihrem ursprünglichen Glanz. Keine Aufbereitung der

Signale war erforderlich, um diese herausragenden Bänder zu „verbessern“.

Im Verlauf dieses außerordentlich reizvollen Projekts wurde Geschichte lebendig, während wir die Stimmen legendärer Tontechniker gehört haben, wie sie den Ort und das Datum der jeweiligen Aufnahmesitzung auf die Bänder gesprochen haben. Wir waren höchst beeindruckt, nicht nur darüber wie wenig die Originalbänder bearbeitet worden waren, sondern auch wie gekonnt die Tontechniker mit dem High-Tech Gerät ihrer Tage gearbeitet haben: einer Rasierklinge! Für eine neue Generation von Hörern glauben wir der Aufnahmetechnologie des 20. Jahrhunderts gerecht geworden zu sein, unter Verwendung der besten Remastering Technologie des 21. Jahrhunderts.

## NOTE TECHNIQUE

JOHN NEWTON, *SOUNDMIRROR INC.*

**D**epuis les tout débuts de l'enregistrement discographique, les ingénieurs rivalisent d'efforts pour que le son enregistré soit aussi immédiat et électrisant que le son naturel. Les premiers enregistrements électriques étaient réalisés avec un seul micro placé dans la salle pour une balance optimale. Le signal était transmis à un graveur, et, avec l'avènement de l'enregistrement magnétique, à un magnétophone monophonique ; une copie de cette bande magnétique était utilisée pour produire les microsillons que le consommateur écoutait chez lui.

Pour la stéréophonie, on a installé deux microphones dans la salle. Les signaux étaient transmis à un magnétophone stéréophonique, ce qui conférait un nouveau « relief » sonore à l'enregistrement écouté par le consommateur sur ses deux haut-parleurs. En positionnant des micros à gauche, au milieu et à droite

de la salle, les ingénieurs ont évolué vers un enregistrement à trois canaux leur assurant un meilleur contrôle de l'équilibre musical du mixage stéréophonique final. Ce procédé a souvent continué à être utilisé alors même que le CD remplaçait progressivement le disque noir.

Aujourd'hui, avec l'avènement du SACD et de la restitution multicanaux, l'auditeur entend les canaux gauche, central et droite exactement comme les entendaient les ingénieurs lors des séances d'enregistrement originales. Dans cette collection de rééditions « Living Stereo » sur SACD hybrides, nous avons utilisé les bandes originales à trois canaux chaque fois qu'elles existaient ; lorsque le matériau n'était enregistré qu'en stéréophonie, c'est cette bande que nous avons utilisée. Certains de ces SACD contiennent donc des enregistrements à deux canaux, ou une combinaison de

matériau à deux et trois canaux. Nous n'avons utilisé que deux ou trois des six canaux disponibles sur les SACD, car telle était la conception des producteurs de l'époque.

Lors du rematriçage des ces enregistrements, nous avons veillé à ce que le parcours du signal soit aussi court que possible. Nous avons directement connecté un magnétophone analogique Studer-Aria à des convertisseurs dCS spécifiquement choisis, au moyen de câbles Siltech haut de gamme. Ce matériau DSD est encodé directement sur le SACD. L'auditeur peut ainsi entendre la sortie de ces convertisseurs exactement telle que nous l'avons entendue en studio. Le flux DSD est essentiellement identique à la bande analogique. Ce que vous entendez est une copie fidèle de chacun des enregistrements historiques : l'interprétation à l'état pur, présentée dans sa splendeur

originelle. Aucun traitement du signal n'a été nécessaire pour « améliorer » ces bandes extraordinaires.

Tout au long de ce projet enthousiasmant, l'histoire est redevenue vivante pour nous grâce à la voix de ces ingénieurs de légende repérant verbalement les bandes en indiquant le lieu et la date de chaque séance d'enregistrement. Nous avons été très impressionnés non seulement par le petit nombre d'interventions sur les bandes originales, mais aussi par le talent avec lequel ces ingénieurs réalisaient le montage nécessaire à l'aide de l'outil de pointe de l'époque : la lame de rasoir ! Utilisant le meilleur de la technologie de mixage numérique du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, nous pensons avoir rendu justice au meilleur de la technologie d'enregistrement du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle pour une nouvelle génération d'auditeurs.