

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

CHILINGIRIAN STRING QUARTET

Levon Chilingirian, Violinist

Louise Williams, Violist

Mark Butler, Violinist

Philip De Groote, Cellist

Tuesday Evening, October 16, 1990, at 8:00
Rackham Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

Armenian Suite Aslamazian

Hoy, Nazan (Dear Nazan)
Al ayloughes (My red scarf)
Kele-kele (Walk-walk)
Yergink ambel a (It is cloudy)
Shogher tchan (Dear Shogher)

String Quartet No. 4 in C major Bartók

Allegro
Prestissimo, con sordino
Non troppo lento
Allegretto pizzicato
Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

String Quartet No. 15 in G major, D. 887 Schubert

Allegro molto moderato
Andante un poco moto
Scherzo: allegro vivace
Allegro assai

The University Musical Society expresses thanks to the Edward Mardigian Foundation for partial underwriting of this concert by the Chilingirian String Quartet.

This concert is presented as part Armenian Odyssey II, a festival celebrating Armenian culture at The University of Michigan.

The Chilingirian String Quartet appears by arrangement with Herbert Barrett Management, Inc., New York City.

Armenian Suite

SERGEI ASLAMAZIAN (1897-1978)

Sergei Aslamazian was the founding cellist of the Komitas Quartet, which was established in 1925 and named after the Armenian composer Sogomon Komitas. Komitas, who lived from 1869 to 1935, was a pioneer of national folk music and studiously collected folk materials from the Armenian people around the turn of the century. Komitas published numerous papers dealing with the subject and also composed original music based on Armenian motives. Regarded as the founder of scientific Armenian musicology, the works of Komitas were published in a collected edition on the centennial of his birth.

Aslamazian remained a cellist with the Komitas Quartet for 50 years, during which he wrote for the ensemble a number of short pieces based on folk materials collected by Komitas. These pieces were played mostly as encores during the many concerts the Quartet gave both in the Soviet Union and abroad.

In these short pieces, Aslamazian preserved the Middle Eastern flavor and maintained the character of the original Armenian melodies by relying mostly on extended drone tones and limiting his harmonic language to occasional lingering chordal movements and simple imitative counterpoint, rather than exploiting the polyphonic possibilities offered by four independent voices.

Published in 1934 and 1950 as the *Armenian Suite*, Aslamazian's arrangements depict a variety of moods; each is limited with textural characteristics, timbral idiosyncrasies, and unique scoring. The melodic material is generally divided between the first violin and the cello, while the remaining two instruments supply an inventive backdrop, occasionally imitating native instruments — such as the crisp beat of the *dap* (circular frame drum), the whistling intonation of the *shvi* (duct flute), and the grainy tones of the *kamancha* (spiked fiddle). These miniatures were composed by a master in full control of his métier.

Quartet No. 4 in C major

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881-1945)

Bartók's six string quartets are among the highest achievements in twentieth-century music and — like the sixteen quartets of Beethoven and the fifteen of Schubert — cover the whole span of the composer's creative output. In addition to the surviving six quartets, Bartók composed (and later suppressed) a quartet as early as 1899, and shortly before his death was known to be planning and sketching a seventh quartet. For Bartók, the string quartet remained the vehicle for his deepest and most personal thoughts and feelings. Each of the six published quartets epitomizes, to some extent, a phase in the composer's development, and there is little in the whole body of his music that cannot be found microcosmically in the six quartets.

Bartók was an ardent student of folkways; indeed, he regarded his analytical studies of popular melodies as his most important contribution of music. From researchers in Hungarian and near-Eastern folk music came his broadened concepts of instrumental color and tonality and the kind of melodic and rhythmic patterns that he used. Yet, in fashioning his creations, Bartók strove for formal symmetry and thematic unity, and a good many of his quartet movements are cast in the classical sonata form (A-B-A).

Bartók wrote his Fourth Quartet in 1928, dedicated to the Pro Arte Quartet and first performed at the Festival of Liege and Brussels in 1930. Of the Quartet No. 4, James Goodfriend writes:

The single year that passed between the composition of the Third Quartet and the Fourth was the briefest interval separating any pair of Bartók's six. Only three compositions intervened: a set of rondos on folk tunes for piano, and the two rhapsodies for violin. Coming so close upon one another, there is an expected similarity of style in the two quartets, but there are some striking differences as well. One finds a certain overcoming of the harshness and austerity of the earlier work, a certain relaxation in the handling of

materials, a greater variety of emotional pitch, and the first signs of the dry humor that was to find its way into many of Bartók's later works. Instrumentally, the Fourth Quartet exhibits new ways of writing for the strings. Formally, it is cast in a new shape.

The "arch form," which Bartók evolved for the Fourth and Fifth Quartets, was a novel answer to the architectonic problems that fascinated the mature composer. The Quartet No. 4 contains five movements, of which the first and the fifth are related; the second and the fourth are related; and the third stands alone as a central unit, the "keystone" of the arch. The relationships are both of theme and of mood — but one must keep in mind that they are relationships, not identities. As if to further intensify the arch, the central movement is itself in A-B-A form.

The Quartet opens with a sonata-form movement, and the initial rising half-tone of the first violin acts as both a seed for future growth and as the semaphore that signals the start of the development section and the start of the recapitulation. A strong rhythmic figure in the cello is also marked for development, and an enumeration of the variants that Bartók successively draws from this figure would stagger the imagination. The related fifth movement, in A-B-A form with a coda, focuses on several of these variants, not immediately perceivable for what they are until about the middle of the movement, when the original germ motive suddenly appears and dominates the music until the close.

The second and fourth movements are both scherzos, though neither is designated as such by the composer. Both are in scherzo-trio form, and both share an opening theme: a simple rising and descending pattern, chromatic in the second movement, diatonic in the fourth; and a trio idea. The second movement is played throughout with mutes and, marked *prestissimo*, it rushes past like an unearthly whirlwind. The fourth movement is written entirely in *pizzicato*, including not merely the expected plucking, but also arpeggios, chords, guitarlike strumming, and a hard snapping sound — for which Bartók had to invent a new musical sign — produced by making the string rebound off the fingerboard.

The third movement, the core of the work and the only slow movement out of the

five, exhibits two moods that have become known as virtually Bartókian trademarks. The outer sections, under alternately non-vibrato sustained chords, feature long-lined rhapsodic, florid and almost oriental melodies in the cello, the so-called "tarogato melodies," named after an ancient Hungarian woodwind instrument. The central section is a "night music," an evocation of natural evening sounds, in this case almost unquestionably birdlike twitterings. The brief coda of the movement superimposes the latter idea over the cello "tarogato melody."

String Quartet No. 15

in G major, D. 887

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

The boy knows everything already; he has been taught by God." The boy was Franz Schubert, just entering his teens, and the speaker was the piano master of the Imperial Seminary in Vienna, where Schubert was a pupil from the age of 11 to 16.

God had help. Schubert's father had put a violin into his hands at age eight, and his brother Ignaz had begun to teach him piano at about the same time. Family quartet sessions became a twice-weekly affair — Ignaz and brother Ferdinand playing violins, Franz viola, and Schubert *père* cello. Small wonder, given Franz Schubert's extraordinary gifts, that quartets entered into his bloodstream. He began writing them for home consumption at about age 13, and continued — with a couple of four-year intermissions — to write them to the end of his life. While several of the earliest are lost, the published *oeuvre* consists of 15, encompassing the years 1812 to 1826.

Perennially broke, Schubert made two attempts in 1826 to get regular employment. He was turned down for both, but appears to have been undaunted. Early in the summer, he went to Währing, on the outskirts of Vienna, for a change of scene, and in a brief ten days, June 10-20, set down on paper the G-major String Quartet. There is some question as to whether even a composer of Schubert's facility could have composed such a score in so short a time; it is probable that

preliminary work had been done, though no sketches exist.

The G-major is the composer's most concentrated and highly organized quartet, and the fact that it stands, chronologically, between the D-minor Quartet ("Death and the Maiden") of 1824 and the great C-major Quintet of 1828 can only hint at what might have come in the years ahead, had Schubert lived to anything approaching old age.

The first movement owes its almost unremitting tension to the persistent tremolo that underlines the jagged and piercing first subject; the intensity is momentarily relieved by a winsome little dance in lilting rhythm. These two subjects are the main concern of the movement, colored throughout by the interplay of major against minor.

The spacious, dark-hued slow movement promises a kind of overcast serenity as

the cello opens with a long, flowing theme. But the calm is shattered by the harsh intrusion of much more threatening and unsettled events — startlingly reminiscent of the first movement (even the tremolos return).

The deft Scherzo, with its quicksilver coloring, might have pointed the way for Mendelssohn; the Trio, in which the cello sings a folklike song, establishes a moment of peace — rare in this quartet.

The finale is an expansive rondo that continues the ambiguity of major vs. minor. It seldom breaks the cantering pace of its 6/8 meter and incorporates some lovely dancing episodes. The movement brings this probing and adventurous work out into the sunlight at last.

— Shirley Fleming
Editor in Chief, Musical America

About the Artists



One of the preeminent ensembles of Europe, the Chilingirian String Quartet was formed in London in 1971, with Sigmund Nissel of the Amadeus Quartet as mentor. Word of the new quartet spread rapidly, and within a short time the Chilingirian was acclaimed by London's critics as an ensemble that would have a major impact on the world of chamber music. BBC and World Service broadcasts were soon followed by invitations to the Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, and Bath Festivals and to the most important cities

throughout Western Europe. Today, the Chilingirian is one of the most active string quartets on the international scene, with its tours to 30 countries on six continents. In addition to extensive nationwide tours of the British Isles and annual series of concerts in London's Wigmore and Queen Elizabeth Halls, the Quartet makes regular visits to all of Europe's major halls, including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Munich Herkulesaal, Zurich Tonhalle, Vienna Konzerthaus, and Stockholm Konserthuset, as well as to Paris, Rome, Berlin, and Salzburg. The ensemble has returned over and over to the Edinburgh, Bath, Flanders, and Copenhagen Tivoli Festivals, the Cheltenham, and London's South Bank Festival and BBC Promenade Concerts. Tours of Australia, New Zealand, South America, Africa, and the Far East make the Quartet equally well known in the southern hemisphere.

The Chilingirian Quartet made its New York debut in 1976 and since then has made 16 tours of North America, performing in more than 50 major cities that include New York, Boston, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans, Houston, Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto.

Television and radio broadcasts throughout Europe, for National Public Radio in the United States, and for other leading organizations complement the Quartet's work for the BBC. A special television documentary profile was transmitted in Britain during 1985, and BBC-TV has recorded the Chilingirian's performances of Haydn, Schubert, and Bartók.

The Chilingirian Quartet's recordings appear on the EMI, RCA, CRD, Chandos, and Nimbus labels and include a full selection of classical, romantic, and modern repertoire. Their recording of the six Mozart quartets dedicated to Haydn was voted Best String Quartet recording by critics of the prestigious magazine *Gramophone*. Recordings of the three great Schubert quartets, the quartets of Debussy, Ravel, and Elgar, Mozart's Clarinet Quintet and Oboe Quartet, and Schubert's Quintet and Octet have achieved best-seller status. Premier recordings of the three quartets by the Spanish child-prodigy Arriaga (who died in 1826, ten days before his 20th birthday), rarely-heard works by Swedish composers Johan Fredrik Berwald (1787-1861) and Johan Wikmanson (1753-1800), as well as the virtuosic quartets by Austrian Erich Korngold (1897-1957) have claimed a place in the libraries of record collectors. The six Bartók quartets and his piano quintet, with the late pianist Steven De Groote, have been recently released on Chandos, and the complete Dvořák series is now under way.

In 1986, the group was appointed the first ever quartet-in-residence at the Royal College of Music in London, a homecoming for the College's graduates Levon Chilingirian, Mark Butler, and Philip De Groote. Prior to that, the Quartet had been in residence at the University of Liverpool.

This evening's concert marks the Ann Arbor debut of the Chilingirian String Quartet.

Armenian Odyssey II

The University Musical Society is pleased to present the Chilingirian String Quartet as part of Armenian Odyssey II, a festival at The University of Michigan celebrating Armenian culture, history, archaeology, music, and art. Events will include two major exhibitions, a day-long symposium, museum lectures and talks, and an Armenian film series, all open to the general public free of charge.

At the Kelsey Museum (434 S. State St.) is an exhibition entitled "Dangerous Archaeology: Francis Willey Kelsey and Armenia (1919-1920)." Artifacts, archival documents, and photographs present a collage of archaeological, humanitarian, and political issues surrounding an extended expedition through Europe and the Near East, undertaken by Professor Kelsey of The University of Michigan. The exhibition focuses on the ways in which Kelsey's archaeological activities in Asia Minor were intensified by his interest in the circumstances of the Armenian communities of the southern region of Cilicia. This exhibition runs through February 1991, enhanced by a series of lectures on archaeology and Armenian art.

Professor Kelsey's interests and expertise were not confined to archaeological expeditions and the Latin Department that he headed — he also served as president of the University Musical Society from 1891 to 1927, and his fundraising efforts led to a new building and expanded faculty for the School of Music, then operated by the Musical Society.

The second exhibition, at the Museum of Art (525 S. State St.), focuses on the works of the great Armenian-American sculptor, Reuben Nakian, and runs through November 23, 1990. The centerpiece of the exhibition, on loan from the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Garabed Belian, is Nakian's seven-foot bronze of the *Denial of St. Peter*, along with a number of smaller bronzes inspired by classical myths. Also, a sampling of priceless Armenian rugs from the Gregorian Collection will be on display during the year. On October 21, Dr. Belian will give a gallery talk on "Nakian."

October 27 features a symposium: "Before the Lamp Darkened: Armenian Life in the Late Ottoman Empire." For 500 years, the majority of the world's Armenians lived within the Ottoman Empire, and much of the history of Armenian life and society under the Turkish regime in that period remains unwritten. With the aid of six scholars, three of them from The University of Michigan, the symposium will attempt to reconstruct a small part of that long-forgotten heritage.

For complete information about Armenian Odyssey II, call the Armenian Studies Program at 747-2237.

The Culture of the Armenians

One of the oldest continuously existing civilizations in the world, the Armenians were first mentioned in the sixth century B.C. Their homeland is situated in the region of eastern Anatolia, the highlands of the Armenian plateau centering on Lake Van, the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates, bordered on the north by the Little Caucasus. After a thousand years sharing the paganisms of Iran and Greece, the Armenian kingdom converted to Christianity in 314, the first state to adopt officially the Christian faith. With the invasions of Arabs in the seventh century, and later the Mongols, Seljuk and Ottoman Turks, Armenia became an isolated outpost of Christendom on the borders of the Islamic world. The medieval kingdoms fell one by one until the last, Cilician Armenia, succumbed in 1375. No Armenian state existed until the re-establishment of independence in 1918. From late 1920, a small part of historic Armenia formed the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. Almost half of the world's Armenians today live outside of the Armenian state, the descendants of those forcibly dispersed by the Ottoman genocide of the Armenians in 1915.

Armenian culture and music, like the social structures and political forms of classical and medieval Armenia, have been amalgams of eastern and western traditions. Hellenistic temples, like that at Garni in Soviet Armenia, share space with unique Christian churches whose iconography and architectural styles are related to those of Byzantium and neighboring Georgia. With the invention of the Armenian alphabet in the early fifth century A.D., Armenians developed an expressive literature that extolled the virtues of their rulers and warriors, their saints and martyrs. Beginning with the Bible, clerics translated classical texts from Syriac, Greek, and Latin and recorded their own versions of the origins and history of the Armenians. Their works were illustrated with miniature paintings, an art that reached a height of originality and narrative power in the Cilician period. The unique melodic patterns of Armenian folk music, its metrical designs and lively rhythms, distinguish themselves from neighboring traditions and even find their way into the more melismatic lines of the church music.

Both in Armenia itself and in the diaspora, culture and language bind the nation together. The Armenian Apostolic Church acts as spiritual home, a substitute state for the Armenians outside Armenia. Living with the memory of near extinction and faced by the ever-present possibility of assimilation into larger societies, Armenians have worked to preserve their traditions and to expose them to other peoples. Like other small nations, they share the insight of Czech writer Milan Kundera that "a small people can disappear and knows it."

— Ronald Grigor Suny, *Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History*, U-M, and Armena Marderosian

Join Us!

October 19 After the all-Russian concert by the Leningrad Philharmonic is the Season Opening Celebration continuing the Russian motif — a Zakuski Table, balalaika music, and a silent auction! For information, call 93-NOTES. *Underwritten by Society Bank.*

October 30 A Philips Pre-concert Presentation before the Perlman/Zukerman duo recital, given by photographer David Smith at 7:00 p.m. in the Rackham Building (free admission): "A UMS Photo Retrospective." *Underwritten by Philips Display Components Company.*

"Desert Island Discs"

Co-produced by the University Musical Society and Michigan Radio, "Desert Island Discs" is now in its second season of Saturday morning broadcasts, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Each program features a distinguished local "castaway" guest who is asked, "If you were stranded on a desert island, which five recordings would you like to have with you and (most revealingly) why?" Interviewers are Joel Seguine, WUOM station manager and Ken Fischer, UMS executive director. Tune in WUOM-FM, 91.7, Ann Arbor; WVGR-FM, 104.1, Grand Rapids; or WFUM-FM, 91.1, Flint.

October 20 William Hennessey, Director, The University of Michigan Museum of Art

October 27 David Siglin, Director, The Ark