

GEORGE BARATI

David C F Wright DMus

The Hungarian-born American cellist, conductor, and composer, George Barati, (real name, Gyorgy Braunstein), was born in Győr on 3 April 1913 and received initial training at the Győr Music School where he graduated in 1932. Thereafter he studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest graduating in 1935; and obtaining his teacher's diploma, in 1937 and artist diploma in 1938. From 1933 to 1936 he was a member of the Budapest Concert Orchestra, where he played under the most celebrated conductors of his era. He was a founding member and cellist of the Pro Ideale Quartet later known as the Westminster Quartet (1936-1939), and performed with Béla Bartók, Dohnányi, and other eminent faculty members at the Liszt Conservatory. While still a student he became principal cellist of Budapest Symphony Orchestra and the Municipal Opera orchestra from 1936-1938.



In 1939, George Barati emigrated to the USA, becoming a naturalized American citizen in 1944. He studied composition with Georges Cuvreur and Henri Switten at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey and counterpoint and composition with Roger Sessions at Princeton University between 1939 and 1943. He taught the cello at Princeton University in the same years. He also conducted the Princeton Ensemble and Choral Union from 1941 to 1943 and the Alexandria Military Symphony Orchestra in Louisiana between 1944 and 1946 and was a lecturer for the Army Engineer Corps.

George Barati moved to San Francisco in 1936 where he was a cellist of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra during the tenure of Pierre Monteux. He was also a member of the California String Quartet from 1946 to 1950. He also was the founding conductor and music director of the Barati Chamber Orchestra of San Francisco from 1948 to 1952 and also began to achieve recognition for his own compositions at this time.

From 1950 to 1968 George Barati was music director of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra and Opera. During this period he also began an extensive international conducting career that included guest and visiting conducting appearances with some 85 orchestras on five continents, including Japan, Europe, and Latin America. In 1968 he left Honolulu to become executive director of the Montalvo Center for the Arts and conductor of the Villa Montalvo Chamber Orchestra in Saratoga, California during 1968 to 1978. From 1971 to 1980 he was music director of the Santa Cruz County Symphony Orchestra in Aptos, California. He then was music director of the Barati Ensemble between 1989 and 1992.

In 1991 the George Barati Archive was opened at the University of California at Santa Cruz Library.

The year 1992 was distressing for him and his wife, Ruth. Their daughter Lorna died of breast cancer. She was 39 years old. His orchestral work Chant of Darkness was written to her memory.

In addition to his conducting career, George Barati was a juror for the Dimitri Mitropoulos Competition for Conductors from 1957 to 1970 and participated as a juror for both the Metropolitan and San Francisco Opera Competitions. His honours and awards include the doctor of music, *Honoris Causa*, from the University of Hawaii in 1955, Naumberg Award for Composition in 1959, the Ditson Award in 1962, and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1966.

Whatever one thinks of his compositions he was a splendid and sought after conductor much more

admired than some famous names. Solti felt inferior to him and said, "The only good thing about him is that he is Hungarian."

As a composer, George Barati wrote fine music in a modern European tradition. During his stay in Hawaii, he studied native melodic and rhythmic patterns of exotic South Sea Islands, and these found reflection in some of his works of the period.

His works include

- Symphony no 1
- Cello Concerto
- String Quartets 1, 2 and 3
- Sonata for violin and piano
- Configuration for orchestra
- Chamber Concerto
- Dragon and the Phoenix
- Clarinet Trio
- Violin Concerto
- Confluence for orchestra
- The Ugly Duckling for narrator and orchestra
- Piano Concerto
- Opera Noelani
- Ode :Waters of Kane
- Guitar Concerto
- Chant of Darkness
- Chant of Light
- Piano pieces
- Songs
- Chamber music

He died on 22 June 1996 in San Jose, California. He had been attacked eleven days earlier in the street by an unknown assailant and died of severe head injuries.

(713)

© COPYRIGHT David C F Wright DMus 1998 – This article or any part of it, however small, must not be copied, quoted, reproduced, downloaded or altered in any way whatsoever nor stored in any retrieval system. Failure to comply is in breach of International Copyright Law and will render any offender liable to action at law.