

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1955-56

Fourth Concert

REID
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Leader : Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor : SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Pianoforte

VERA HENDERSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 1st DECEMBER, 1955

At 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

I. OVERTURE : "THE WASPS"

Vaughan Williams
(b. 1872)

The overture and incidental music to Aristophanes' comedy "The Wasps" was composed for a performance of the play (in Greek) at Cambridge in 1909. This Overture has long been firmly established in the orchestral repertoire—the instrumental part of the incidental music, much less often to be heard, has recently been recorded by Decca with Sir Adrian Boult as conductor.

At the outset the busy buzzing of the wasps is heard—the wasps being those Athenian citizens who had an officious relish for serving in the law court for a suitable fee. Of the main themes of the overture, the first two represent the old Philocleon who did his duty in the courts whilst the younger men were away at the war. The broad generous tune of the second subject represents Bdelycleon his son, (the enemy of the demagogue Cleon), and his reconciliation with his father Cleon.

2. PIANOFORTE CONCERTO NO. 1

Alan Rawsthorne
(b. 1905)

Capriccio (Allegro molto)
Chaconne (Andante con moto)
Tarantella (Vivace)

Rawsthorne has written five concertos, two for pianoforte and one each for clarinet (1936), oboe, and violin (1947). This first pianoforte concerto was composed in 1939 for string orchestra with percussion, but in 1942 the composer reorchestrated the work using a full orchestra. The work was performed in that version by Phyllis Sellick at the last concert of the Reid Symphony Orchestra in the Spring of 1943. In this present performance the original string orchestral version is used.

3. SUITE : "LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN"

Ravel
(1875-1937)

1. Prélude
2. Forlane
3. Rigaudon
4. Mennuet
5. Toccata

This suite was originally composed for the pianoforte during the years 1914-17. In the pianoforte version, there is a further movement 'Fugue' following immediately after the Prelude, but this the composer omitted when transcribing the work for orchestra. Each of the original six movements was dedicated to the memory of a different man. The orchestral version constitutes a fascinating study in the difficult and fastidious art of transferring a characteristically delicate pianoforte composition into a perfectly sensitive orchestral medium.

INTERVAL

4. SYMPHONY NO. 3, IN A MINOR, "SCOTCH"

Mendelssohn

Introduction and Allegro Agitato—Scherzo assai vivace—
Adagio cantabile—Allegro guerriero and Finale maestoso.

"In the evening twilight we went to-day to the palace where Queen Mary lived and loved . . . The chapel close to it is now roofless, grass and ivy grow there . . . Everything around is broken and mouldering, and the bright sky shines in. I believe I found to-day in that old chapel the beginning of my Scotch Symphony." Thus wrote Mendelssohn from Edinburgh on July 30th, 1829 to his family in Berlin. The passage he noted down at that time consisted of the first sixteen bars of the Introduction. Six weeks later he writes from London, "The Scotch Symphony as well as the Hebrides story is gradually being built up." He was working on this symphony simultaneously with the composition of the Italian Symphony whilst on his Italian tour. But from Rome he writes in March 1831, "From April 15th to May 15th is the finest season in Italy. Who can blame me for not being able to transport myself into the Scotch-mist mood?" The work was not in fact finished until early in 1842 and received its first performance in Leipzig in that year.

Despite these references in his letters Mendelssohn gave no title to this symphony upon its appearance (nor indeed to the Italian). The score bears the simple designation, "Symphony in A minor dedicated to Queen Victoria," and bears a note to the effect that the movements must follow one another without a break. The indication of the scheme of the work as printed above is explicitly given in that author's note, and is remarkable in that it does not exactly reproduce the tempo marks prefixed to the several movements. "Tempo guerriero" (war-like), for example, gives a clue to the composer's intentions far more explicit than the "tempo vivacissimo" prefixed to that movement. But it was characteristic of Mendelssohn that he should insist that the music speak for itself without the aid of a Baedeker. And if anyone, through an immoderate surfeit of "Elijah," should be under the misapprehension that Mendelssohn would hardly be the person to relish his Scots Oats, he would do well to read the letters which the two vigorous and vivacious young Germans sent home. Mendelssohn was then twenty years of age. His companion was his close friend Klingemann, a young diplomatist attached to the Hanoverian Legation in London; a poet, a superb letter writer, and possessed of an intoxicating sense of humour. Mendelssohn freely indulged in his pursuit of pencil sketching in which he excelled, and it is hard to say whether his sketches or his letters afforded the greater pleasure. He concludes a vivid account of the view from Arthur's Seat, "Why need I describe it? When God Himself takes to panorama-painting, it turns out strangely beautiful." They saw the Highland pipers foregathered in the city for the annual competition, coming from church, "victoriously leading their sweethearts in their Sunday attire, and casting magnificent and important looks over the world." "From my earliest days," writes Klingemann, "I have confounded the Hebrides with the Hesperides; and if we did not find the oranges on the trees, they lay at least in the whiskey toddy." And of the famous visit to Fingal's Cave—"he is on better terms with the sea as a musician than as an individual and a stomach." No; these two knew how to acquaint themselves with life and land. "The longer and oftener we looked back," concludes Klingemann, as they leave the land where they had had weather to make the trees and rocks crash, the "bluer and more misty grew the mountains, at whose feet we had been lying, all deep shades of colour mingled, and we might have become Highland-sick and wished ourselves back had we not known that the reality within that mountain land was grey, cold, and majestic. It was a sweet farewell to the heights which we at once abuse and love."

S. T. M. N.