

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1955-56

Sixth Concert

THE NEW
EDINBURGH QUARTET

ROBERT COOPER

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

ANNE CROWDEN

JOAN DICKSON

with

NANNIE JAMIESON (Viola)

FARQUHARSON COUSINS (Horn)

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 2nd FEBRUARY, 1956

At 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born 27th January, 1756. Died 5th December, 1791.

PROGRAMME

1. STRING QUINTET IN G MINOR (K. 516)

Allegro

Menuetto. Allegretto.

Adagio ma non troppo

Adagio—Allegro

It is natural that this quintet and the G minor symphony should be associated in our minds, for not only have both the same prevailing emotion, which Abert writing of the quintet describes as "the resignation of despair, a struggle with destiny," but there are also many details of theme and treatment which are common to both. But whereas the symphony, finding some measure of consolation and strength in its middle movements, renews the conflict with desperate intensity at the end, the quintet, more deeply involved in the emotional struggle which is sustained with only partial relief through four movements, ultimately finds once more the joy of life in its rondo finale. There is a good deal of truth in Abert's observation that the struggle with destiny "does not, as with Beethoven, carry with it from the outset the certainty of victory, but rather expresses a self-tormenting surrender to the inevitable. The joy of life in the finale celebrates no Beethovenish triumph over a previous struggle with fate, but is of purely artistic origin; it is the pressure of inner creative power which stirs the artist and simultaneously raises his vitality." This appreciation throws perhaps too great an emphasis upon resignation. For this work is far from presenting the somewhat pathological case of such a work as the Pianoforte Rondo in A minor, which for all its beauty is a trifle too indulgent over its own tearfulness. On the contrary the struggle here is passionate, and it is the emotional conflict and no exigency of form which determines the many vital developments. Very possibly the ultimate happiness attained might have been revealed as the prize of victory rather than as the gift of compassionate gods to one who has endured to the end if it were not for the tendency of Mozart's creative power to polarise his thought into opposite or complementary ideas. Thus from the one birth two stars sprang as Heavenly Twins to shine beside each other in the musical firmament, but not of like image as are most earthly twins. For the C major quintet (finished a month earlier) has a spacious repose, an architectural strength and unthwarted happiness, which are inevitably denied to its brother.

In the statement of the opening theme the instruments divide into two groups, contrasted in register and colour, the first viola doing double duty. The theme

is broken into short fragmentary phrases bound together by an accompaniment of repeated notes whose quiet obstinacy persists throughout the greater part of the movement. As without intermission the rising sixths of the second subject raise their repeated cries, persisting still in G minor, it becomes more than ever clear that the emotional conflict centres in the inescapable oppression of that pathetic key. The sixths widen to poignant ninths, and for a moment the spell seems to be broken by an effort which leaves violin and 'cello in unaccompanied dialogue. But a moment later the relentless repetition of the accompaniment closes in again. Nor has the gaining of B flat major brought more than qualified ease. Figures of the first theme recur with increasing persistence, and passionate accents remind us that G minor is very near at hand. At length the questioning arpeggio pauses for answer to the enquiry whether it shall return to retrace the whole of its unprofitable path as Mozart directs, and then extends the question as to what lies before. At once the long lines of the violins point descent to the dark region of E flat minor, and from now on the development (one of Mozart's finest inspirations, for all that it is short) is based entirely upon the second subject. The instruments over-reach one another in a succession of poignant minor ninths (compare the finale of the G minor Symphony) until the increasing complexity is broken and solved upon a dominant pedal with magnificent effect.

The recapitulation brings a further development of the theme through the intrusion of the second violin upon the counter-statement. But the main problem is whether the second subject will succeed in raising itself to any small measure of new freedom, or capitulate to the traditional claims of a G minor to which it has already conceded so much. In the coda, for all the intensity of the first moment, neither subject has the strength left for further effort and each in turn quickly falls to pieces through sheer exhaustion.

The Minuet maintains the same anguished rise and fall of melody, 'though strength is added to its broken phrases by massive chords defiantly flung out of a breathless despair. Yet it is the tender, pathetic cadence and the nuance of its repetition which lives in the memory, to be transformed in a magic moment into the major key (Trio) with wonderful effect, bringing "some little joy" 'though it be tender and wistful.

In the E flat Adagio, the instruments are muted. The expectation of a simple harmonised melody is not realised, for the theme is a complex of several sections, at moments so tentative as to fall silent altogether. The contrasting secondary material brings both a quickening of the pulse and a darkening of the colours as the falling melodic lines of the violin reawaken the sense of tragedy, and although this is soon magically dispelled in the major variant which follows yet it is only at the very last that, in a brief coda, a sense of complete and untroubled happiness is felt.

The prolonged Adagio introduction to the finale (a unique occurrence in Mozart) is almost a movement in itself. Whatever hopes the preceding movement may have held out, we find that despair has but increased. Once again with quiet obstinacy the repeated notes return accompanied by a fatalistic ostinato motive in the bass, and amidst this scene the violin piteously and with impassioned phrases seeks alone for some escape. Suddenly we find that all obstruction has mysteriously vanished, and after a moment of hesitation all enter upon the new-found freedom with a rondo of unsullied happiness. Here the very themes of the earlier movements, the questioning arpeggio, the crying sixths, are utterly transformed. Rondos are apt to infect themselves so that even their subjects become little rondos before they have embarked upon their formal adventures. Here in addition Mozart inserts a subsidiary section of some size and importance before the first episode, recalling the Trio of the Minuet. The second episode (in C major) will be recognised by all who are familiar with the better known Pianoforte Concerto in A.

2. QUINTET IN E FLAT (K. 407)

for Horn, Violin, Two Violas and Violoncello.

Allegro

Andante

Allegro

When Mozart settled in Vienna in 1781, he soon renewed acquaintance with Ignaz Leutgeb whom he had known as first horn player to the Archbishop of Salzburg. Leutgeb was now keeping a cheesemonger's shop and playing the horn as he had occasion. He was a considerable artist and, some few years earlier, had given concerts in Paris. Mozart treated him with the broadest Salzburgian humour, pulled his leg incessantly and indeed bullied him, all in good humour. For Leutgeb he wrote his four Horn Concertos, a Concertante Rondo and this Quintet, which he himself called "das Leitgebische."

This quintet is rather in the nature of a concertante for horn in a setting of chamber music. The only instruments used in a solo capacity are the horn and the first violin. With the choice of a string ensemble comprising two violas, Mozart is able to achieve some beautiful sonorities and to keep the body of his string tone below the solo horn. It is generally conceded that the Andante is the finest and most sensitive of these three movements. The finale is a sturdy Rondo of a trim design.

INTERVAL

3. STRING QUINTET IN C (K. 515)

Allegro

Menuetto : Allegretto

Andante

Allegro

The C major Quintet is a complete antithesis to the G minor. A spirit of radiant and untroubled happiness pervades it; not the majestically confident optimism of the "Jupiter" Symphony with which Mozart offset the turbulent G minor symphony in the following year but, though a gentler and more intimate spirit than that, yet one which is generously expansive in nature and in utterance. The only tinge of emotional disturbance is in the Trio of the Minuet. The Andante in F major is an accompanied lyrical duo for first violin and first viola. In feeling and indeed in some turns of phrase it is remarkably prophetic of the spirit which prevails in the Temple of Isis and Osiris in the *Magic Flute*. ("In diesen heiligen hallen"). The final Rondo is sheer joy, but there are such subtle riches to be found here that it is far from being simple-hearted.

S. T. M. N.