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The *Litaniae Lauretanae* derive their name from their association with the *Casa Santa* at Loreto. From the end of the 13th century the shrine was much visited by pilgrims, and it is supposedly due to them that a local litany was carried to other parts of Europe. Its simplicity and expressiveness, and its devout confidence in the Blessed Virgin's mediation made it the best-loved of all litanies, and in 1587 Pope Sixtus V officially incorporated it into the liturgy of the Roman Church. Until the early 19th century the text was frequently set, particularly by composers in the greater churches and monasteries of Southern Germany and Austria.

This is Mozart's second setting, composed for performance in Salzburg in May 1774. Predictably, he concerns himself not at all with the traditional plainsong of the litany, and very little with its responsorial form. Instead he divides the text into four major sections, which, with the exception of the *Agnus Dei*, are composed into classically-proportioned sonata movements.

Since the accession of Hieronymus Colloredo as Archbishop of Salzburg in 1772, Mozart had been required to compose his liturgical music in a concise and declamatory symphonic style: contrapuntal artifice and Italianate *cantabile* were alike displeasing to the archiepiscopal ear. It seems likely however that the Loreto Litany was designed for one of the smaller Salzburg churches where Colloredo's taste did not prevail. Only in the Allegro of the Kyrie is the conciseness of Mozart's new liturgical idiom in evidence. In the *Sancta Maria*, and especially the *Agnus Dei*, his lyrical style is at its most luxuriant and operatic; while in the *Regina Angelorum* the cool brilliance of the solo vocal writing and the conspicuously unprayerful choral refrains of '*Ora pro nobis*' are straight from the world of the instrumental concerto. D.R.B.K.

*The John Currie Singers is supported by The Scottish Arts Council, The Musicians' Union, The Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust, The Corporation of Edinburgh, The Corporation of Glasgow, The Performing Right Society (whose contribution is made possible by its composer members foregoing part of their royalties).*

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Next concert : Thursday 3 December

The Reid Orchestra  
Kenneth Leighton *conductor*  
John McCabe *piano*

Holst  
Egdon Heath

McCabe  
Piano Concerto opus 43

Hindemith  
Symphony, 'Mathis der Maler'

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# University of Edinburgh Concerts

1970-71

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

Miles Baster, Austin Patterson  
Victor Manton, David Edwards

Thursday 10 December  
Reid School of Music

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DVORAK 1841-1904

**Quartet in C major, opus 61**

Allegro

Poco adagio e molto cantabile

Scherzo: Allegro vivo

Vivace

VAGN HOLMBOE (b. 1909)

**Quartet no. 6, opus 78**

Lento - Allegro con fuoco

Molto vivace

Adagio e piano

Allegro spiritoso

Interval

BRAHMS 1833-1897

**Quartet in B flat, opus 67**

Vivace

Andante

Agitato: Allegretto non troppo

Poco allegretto con variazioni

After the Viennese violinist Joseph Hellmesberger introduced **Dvorák's** E flat string quartet to his native city, he asked the composer to write a work especially for his quartet. While at work on his opera *Dimitrij*, Dvorák noticed in the newspaper that his new quartet would be played on 15 December (1881), only a few weeks ahead, but at that time he had not written the new work. He finished his C major quartet, his eleventh in this genre, five weeks before the date announced, but the concert did not take place, perhaps because concert life in Vienna was upset by the fire at the Ringtheater. It is highly probable that the Heckman Quartet's performance at Cologne eleven months later was the first.

A commission from Vienna was of considerable importance to Dvorák, a fact that may help to explain why he wrote a work which is rather more classical in style than the previous quartet. Nevertheless it remains a distinctly Czech work. Like Schubert, Dvorák delighted in changes from major to minor. The clear C major of the first bars is immediately obscured when the third and sixth notes from the

scale of C minor appear. Since this duality of mode is so soon established, it seems perfectly natural that the second subject should appear in E flat major, even though it conforms to orthodoxy by reverting later to the normal key. There are surprises in store in the recapitulation. Instead of making for the principal theme we are taken directly to a subsidiary idea. The restatement of the main theme is not omitted, but comes in the unexpected key of a A major, after which the second subject follows perfectly naturally in the tonic key.

The yearning spirit of the first part of the F major slow movement, which is temporarily interrupted by a restless and rhythmically angular motif, finds solace later in a peaceful melody in D flat major. In the second half of the *poco adagio* these ideas return with quite different scoring. The complexity of rhythm and texture of this movement is without parallel in Dvorák's chamber music. The last two movements do not require detailed discussion, but it should be noted that the chief theme of the *Scherzo* stems from the second bar of the opening movement. The main theme of the finale, which suggests the *skocna*, a lively Czech leaping dance (compare Smetana's *Dance of the Comedians*), is a transformed version of an important theme in Dvorák's cello Polonaise. J.C.

Danish music made its first impact on the musical world in general in the work of Carl Nielsen who can be said with justice to be one of the most important symphonic composers of recent times.

Less well known in other countries outside Denmark is the music of **Vagn Holmboe** who although now in his sixties represents a more recent generation of Danish composers who were able to absorb some of the more striking discoveries in the field of European music. A prolific composer of orchestral and chamber music, his style seems to lean towards contrapuntal and linear expansion, and he was influenced earlier in his career not only by his predecessor Nielsen but also by Bartók. Indeed like Bartók he studied for a time the folk music of south east Europe.

The 6th quartet is however a recent work, dating from 1961, and seems to show the composer's constant preoccupation with large-scale symphonic forms approached through the traditional media of variation and counterpoint.

The first movement consists of five main sections which alternate between *Lento* and *Allegro con*

*fuoco*. But the material of the whole movement arises clearly out of the opening 12 bars and demonstrates a quite individual approach to the principle of constant variation. There is no strict serialism here, but a freer application of certain serial features, in particular the unity of vertical and horizontal factors. For instance the opening contrapuntal intervals of the *Lento* transform themselves into a single line of melody at the opening of the *Allegro*. The melodic and harmonic style has strong tonal associations, but one also notices the predominant intervals of the third (major plus minor) and the fourth, which also appears in the introduction in the form of superimposed fourths. It is really the predominance of these melodic and contrapuntal elements which lends an extraordinary and very individual kind of unity to the whole work.

There is a certain Bartókian energy and drive in the *Molto vivace* with its short opening motives (repeated notes) which are developed by expanding phraseology. But quite quickly one realises that this apparently new material is in fact a transformation of the opening motive of the work, and this becomes ever more clear as the movement progresses.

The *Adagio* is perhaps the most moving part of the work, and the viola begins with another transformation of the basic material, lyrical, expansive and yet beautifully controlled. This is taken up in a fugal manner by the other instruments, with constant rhythmic variation, but as the title of the movement suggests, there is little rise in dynamic levels, and the ghostly version in harmonics of the basic shapes, which appears towards the end, confirms the impression of suppressed emotion and mystery which the movement as a whole conveys.

The final *Allegro* can also best be described as a series of continuous and constant variations of the basic intervals, but here at the opening the melodic shapes are fragmented into two, three and four-note motives which in a way seem to return to the essence of the musical thought. There is a muted and mysterious middle section in which the shapes are expanded into more continuous fast semiquaver figurations, but for the most part the movement seems to aim at a concentrated fragmentation of the basic material.

Although not strictly serial the work as a whole shows a powerful command of the most prominent features of serialism, and indeed of 20th century style in general - constant variation combined with the utmost concentration on a few intervals. K.L.