

EDINBURGH  
UNIVERSITY  
CONCERTS

1972-73

THE REID ORCHESTRA

*Miles Baster leader*

EDWARD HARPER

*conductor*

ANGELA BROWNRIDGE

*piano*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 23 November 1972

TIPPETT b.1905

Concerto for Orchestra

*Allegro*

*Lento*

*Allegro molto*

This work was commissioned by the Edinburgh International Festival 1963 and first performed in the Usher Hall in that year. The music consists of strongly contrasted and mostly unrelated groups of ideas. These ideas are all highly individual and easily recognisable, and retain their identities throughout the movements. As the music progresses, however, the lengths, juxtapositions and combinations of these ideas are constantly varied, so that the relationships between them are always in a state of fluctuation, this fluctuation being the music's 'development'.

The individual characteristics of the various ideas are emphasised by the orchestration, since each idea is associated with a particular orchestral colour, and retains this throughout. Indeed, the actual thematic material is directly inspired by whichever instrumental group is being used. For instance, the first movement begins with a lyrical passage for flutes and harp, then one for tuba and piano and then one for three horns. These three ideas are then briefly combined. Three more ideas follow, the first for timpani and piano, the second for woodwind (but not the flutes or clarinets), the third for trombones and percussion. These are combined, as the first three had been. And then, in a slightly faster tempo, come three further ideas, 1) piano and xylophone, 2) clarinet, bass-clarinet with piano, 3) two trumpets and percussion. These are then combined. The opening flute and harp idea returns, and the music concerns itself with all nine ideas in various combinations, the equivalent of a development section. Such is the richness of invention of this score, further description of the events found in it would serve only to distract and possibly bewilder the listener.

The slow movement, given to the strings with harp and piano, is full of long, intense melismatic lines, broken up by sombre chords for double-basses, piano and harp. It is interesting to note that the composer stipulates a smaller string body than normally used in a full orchestra, because it is never pitted against the wind and brass in the conventional way, but always functions as a self-contained unit. The strings had not been used in the first movement and the full orchestral resources are only used in the last movement, a vigorous and colourful finale.

E.J.H.

IRELAND 1879-1962

Piano Concerto

*In tempo moderato*

*Lento espressivo*

*Allegro: Allegretto giocoso*

John Ireland will probably be best remembered as the composer of piano miniatures and the song *Sea Fever*, and as the teacher of Alan Bush, Humphrey Searle, Bernard Naylor, and of course Benjamin Britten. Although these names link him firmly with contemporary British musical life, it is hard to realise that Ireland lived into the 1960's: his music seems to reflect a different age, a different world from that which we know today. Certainly changes in musical fashion have denied us performances of scores such as *The Forgotten Rite*, *Mai Dun*, the *Satyricon* Overture, the *Phantasy* Trio and the two violin and piano sonatas, all of which are among the most powerful and technically assured ever penned by an English composer. Ireland's early studies under Stanford at the Royal College of Music explain the assurance, and his pre-occupation with atmosphere and sense of place perhaps accounts for the unique nostalgia, romantic intimacy and impressionistic warmth which pervade his work.

The piano concerto of 1930, with its colourful and idiomatic instrumental textures, shows Ireland at his orchestral best. It also shows us that Ireland was first and foremost a pianist-composer. The predominance of the solo instrument is never in doubt, and the convincing keyboard style combines fluent lyricism with rather angular and percussive elements.

In the same way that this music can be called 'nostalgic', so the composer's formal methods can be characterised as 'retrospective'. Thematic ideas are sometimes restated in unexpected places, giving unity and illuminating the new context in which they appear. This happens not only with the gentle string theme which opens the work, but also with the repeated-note figure, first appearing in trumpet and clarinet, that introduces the second thematic group in the first movement. They and their derivatives appear in both the second and third movements.

The first movement is in a broad romantic sonata style, the second movement is a lyrical intermezzo, and the finale a rondo with a cheerful swaggering tune.

N.M.

INTERVAL

MENDELSSOHN 1809-1847

Symphony No. 3 in A minor (Scottish)

*Andante con moto—Allegro un poco agitato*

*Vivace non troppo*

*Adagio*

*Allegro vivacissimo—Allegro maestoso assai*

The moods and colours of much of this symphony stem from Mendelssohn's visit to Scotland in 1829, when, with his friend Carl Klingemann, he went on a walking tour of the country, including a visit to Staffa, the inspiration for the *Hebrides* overture. He began the A minor Symphony in Rome the following year, but the very sensitivity to his surroundings which had fired him to start the piece prevented him from continuing it: 'The finest season of the year in Italy is from the 18th of April to the 15th of May. Who can wonder that I find it impossible to return to my Scottish, misty mood? I have therefore had to lay aside the Scottish symphony for the present. . . .' His next symphony was the *Italian*, and the A minor symphony was not completed until 1842. The first performance was in Leipzig in March of that year, and later Mendelssohn performed it in London at a concert of the Philharmonic Society. It was a great success and Mendelssohn felt encouraged to dedicate the work to Queen Victoria, a tribute which the Queen graciously accepted.

The symphony has its critics, but undoubtedly contains in all its movements much of Mendelssohn's very best music. The composer's ability to combine truly Romantic sensibility with a classical feeling for form is particularly apparent in the sombre first movement and the richly expressive Adagio. The Scherzo, which comes second, is a perfect example of a type of movement Mendelssohn made entirely his own. E.J.H.

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*Next concert : Thursday 30 November*

JOAN DICKSON *cello*

HESTER DICKSON *piano*

BACH Sonata in D major, BWV 1028

PIZZETTI Sonata

BEETHOVEN Twelve Variations on a theme  
from *The Magic Flute* opus 66

BARBER Sonata

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THE REID ORCHESTRA  
*Miles Baster leader*

KENNETH LEIGHTON  
*conductor*

MANOUG PARIKIAN  
*violin*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 18 January 1973