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.

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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EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1972-73

THE REID ORCHESTRA
Miles Baster *leader*

KENNETH LEIGHTON
conductor

MANOUG PARIKIAN
violin

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 18 January 1973

BEETHOVEN 1770–1827

Overture *Leonore* no. 3

Fidelio reached the stage in its final form in 1814. The overture of that name was the fourth Beethoven had written for the opera, which had first been staged unsuccessfully at Vienna in 1805 under the title *Leonore*. The numbering of these overtures is curious and confusing: *Leonore* no. 1 was written for an abortive Prague production in 1807, *Leonore* no. 2 for the original Viennese performance. Beethoven composed the work we are to hear tonight for the Vienna revival of the revised score in 1806.

Leonore no. 3 is in a broad symphonic style, and makes use of melodic material from the opera. In the slow introduction, clarinets and bassoons refer to Florestan's Act II prison aria, while in the main Allegro, the melody of Florestan's and Leonore's duet of thanksgiving for salvation appears between the two offstage trumpet calls which herald the arrival of the Minister. The Presto-coda, led off by the violins, reflects the triumphant conclusion of the opera. N.M.

SCHUMANN 1810–1856

Violin Concerto

In kräftigem nicht zu schnellem Tempo
Langsam
Lebhaft, doch nicht schnell

The Violin Concerto was written in the autumn of 1853 for Joseph Joachim, who suggested emendations and alterations in the solo part. The work was probably the last which Schumann wrote before he lost control of his reason, and after his death Joachim was unwilling to play it, feeling that perhaps the composer would have wanted to alter it still further. When Joachim died the manuscript passed to his heirs and was deposited in the Berlin library with a proviso that it should on no account be published or performed until a hundred years after Schumann's death.

The story of the rediscovery and performance of the work is a long and complicated one containing evidence of communications with Schumann's spirit, as well as voluminous controversy and press correspondence from Eugenie Schumann and, among many others, Tovey, who brought the concerto to Edinburgh soon after its English première in 1937.

The main case for the work was in fact made by Tovey, who in a letter to the Times in 1938 says:

> 'To us there may be inequalities in Schumann's Violin Concerto; but the difference between these inequalities and those of some of his accepted works is a disputable difference of degree; and, whether from our own lack of sensibility or from a conviction that the historic evidence is irrelevant, we do not see anything morbid even in the inequalities. On the contrary, this concerto seems to me (speaking for myself as a musician) full of evidence that the brain is not the spirit; that Schumann fought for his sanity with heroic success as long as he had the endurance to write music at all; and that the obvious weaknesses of this concerto are far outweighed by the beautiful features which Joachim himself recognized.'

The concerto remains perhaps in a sense controversial, yet its subsequent history and performances by several distinguished artists prove surely that it is by no means negligible. On the contrary, as Brahms said of another last work of Schumann—'It speaks to us like a genius with friendly farewell in its parting flight, and we remember with honour and emotion the glorious man and artist.' K.L.

INTERVAL

BRAHMS 1833–1897

Symphony no. 1 in C Minor

Un poco sostenuto—Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio—Allegro non troppo ma con brio

This work is the prelude to mastery rather than its product. The mature Brahms is first heard in the second symphony, which dates from 1878, and embodies the composer's final realisation of the essentially lyrical nature of his gift. The first symphony, with its dramatic outer movements, can perhaps best be regarded as the musical summing-up of the preceding years, years which saw the production of the piano sonatas and variations, the first piano concerto, the first two string quartets and sextets, and the German Requiem.

The C minor symphony appeared when the composer was 43. The story of his twenty-year struggle to achieve it is too well known to bear repetition at length. It is sufficient to say that the first movement was virtually complete some 12 years before Brahms composed the remainder of the work in the period 1874–1876.

The slow introduction sets the mood of the first movement as a whole, which Brahms' friend Billroth characterised as 'a kind

of Faustian overture'—here are presented striving, tragic conflict and despair. The Andante and Allegretto provide some measure of relief and stability, but the atmosphere of gloom returns in the introduction to the finale. With the C major tune of the finale proper, however, a new mood of confidence is asserted. This eventually sweeps all before it in the enormous vigour of the coda. N.M.

Next concert : Thursday 25 January

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conductor

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 1 February 1973