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EDINBURGH
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

1972-73

Music by
SCHUBERT
and
SCHOENBERG

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Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 8 March 1973

CAROLYN COXON *soprano*
ROBERT BATEMAN *baritone*
EDWARD HARPER *piano*

Philip Greene *clarinet*
Terence Newcombe *bass-clarinet*
Edna Arthur *violin*
Katherine Kerr *viola*
Keith Glossop *cello*
Giulio Romano *mandolin*
Philip Batten *guitar*

directed by
EDWARD HARPER

SCHUBERT 1797–1828

A group of songs

SCHOENBERG 1874–1951

Das Buch der hängenden Gärten
(Stefan George)

This song cycle stands at the end of a rich tradition of *lieder*, stretching from Schubert through Schumann, Brahms, Wolf and Strauss. The idea of setting a group of poems reflecting different aspects of the same basic idea has a number of distinguished predecessors including Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Die Winterreise*. But, while there is much in the work that is traditional in conception, the songs represent for Schönberg a renunciation of one of the most fundamental compositional principles, that of key structures, and a searching for a new way of organising sound.

'In the George *lieder* I have succeeded for the first time in approaching an ideal of expression and form that had hovered before me for some years. Hitherto, I had not sufficient strength and sureness to realise that ideal. Now, however, that I have definitely set out on my journey I may confess to having broken off the bonds of an outlived aesthetic.'

These words, from a note Schönberg wrote for the first performance of the songs, show how significant a place the cycle

occupies in his output. Most of the songs were written in 1908, the year of the 2nd Quartet, and as with that work, show a fascinating balance between old and new sounds. Common chords, dominant sevenths and ninths appear with the newer 'atonal' sounds: the whole tone scale, simultaneous major and minor thirds and chords of the intervals of the fourth and augmented fourth. All are blended into a harmonic language of great richness and expressiveness. At the same time a certain discipline is imposed on the material by Schönberg's contrapuntal skill in using the same motifs throughout a piece, but subject to constant variation. Against the piano writing, the highly chromatic voice part moves with varying degrees of freedom, sometimes supported by the accompaniment, but more often independent of it.

As a poet George was much influenced by the French symbolists and his refined, atmospheric and richly symbolic verse was found highly suitable for musical expression by Schönberg and his circle. The mood of most of the cycle is subdued, brooding, yet with sudden, passionate outbursts. The combination of intense, sensual feeling with the most delicate impressionistic effects makes this one of Schönberg's most impressive works.

INTERVAL

SCHOENBERG

Serenade opus 24 (1923) for
seven instruments and baritone voice

March
Minuet
Variations
Sonnet 217—Petrarch
Dance-scene
Song without words
Finale

The publication of this work, together with the Five Piano Pieces, opus 23, marked the end of a long silence for Schönberg. During this time he solved several compositional problems which had faced him from about 1908 onwards, notably the problem of writing extended, purely instrumental works in his new idiom. But the development of the 12-note method which is hinted at in opus 23 and 24 and fully expressed in the Piano Suite opus 25 is not, from the listener's point of view, the most striking thing about these works. What is most striking is the contrast between

the type of material and the formal structures used in these works and those found in his earlier period. All the works at this time are based very firmly on classical, eighteenth century forms: this work, the Piano Suite opus 25, The Wind Quintet opus 26, the Suite opus 29, the Third Quartet opus 30. In these works are found sonata forms, rondos, gavottes, minuets, sets of variations, and, most importantly, they can be heard as such. The highly romantic melodic lines of his earlier period are replaced by clear-cut, precise, highly stylised themes and motifs based on eighteenth century melodic types. This could be said to be Schönberg's 'neo-classical' period (it is interesting to compare him with such composers as Stravinsky and Ravel at this time).

The Serenade is one of Schönberg's most immediately attractive works, full of vitality and wit in its lively movements, lyrical and restful in the slower ones. The scoring contains many engaging effects, with great use being made of the mandolin and guitar. The movements balance each other in pairs; the two dance movements, placed second and fifth: the two slow movements, one a set of five contrasted variations and coda on a theme given out by the solo clarinet, the other a gently expressive 'Song without Words'; and two lively outer movements, based on the same material. At the centre of the work is the setting of Petrarch's Sonnet 217 in which the poet launches an impassioned address to his loved one. Towards the end of the Finale there is a passage containing simultaneous quotations from earlier movements; as Schönberg says 'a sort of conference of the instruments on the question of what actually ought to be played at the end of the Serenade'.
E.J.H.

Next concert: Thursday 26 April

THE AMPHION QUINTET

ROBERTO GERHARD Wind Quintet (1928)

MOZART Serenade in C minor K.388

ELLIOTT CARTER Eight Études
Fantasy

RICHARD STRAUSS Sonatina No. 1 in F (1943)

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THE AMPHION WIND QUINTET

David Nicholson *flute* Margaret R. Moncrieff *oboe*

Philip Greene *clarinet* Melville Jerome *bassoon*

Richard Thomas *horn*

and WIND ENSEMBLE

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 26 April 1973