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EDINBURGH
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

1974-75

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

Miles Baster Austin Patterson
Michael Beeston David Edwards

Printed by THE SUMMERHALL PRESS LTD
12a West Newington Place, Edinburgh

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 17 October 1974

HAYDN 1732-1809

Quartet in D minor, Opus 9, No. 4

Allegro moderato

Menuetto-Trio

Adagio cantabile

Presto

Haydn's earlier quartets—say those before Opus 64—are more honoured by historians than by frequent public performances. Such neglect is undeserved, for maturity of thought in the medium was already evident by Opus 33 and certain works written even earlier show how rapidly Haydn had mastered its problems. The quartet concerts this year will survey chronologically a series of quartets in minor keys from Opus 9 to Opus 50. The selection is artificial to some extent since major tonalities are more characteristic of the classical era than minor, but justified by the fact that minor keys rarely failed to elicit a compelling utterance from the composer.

Tovey found Opus 9, No. 4 (c1769) 'a work unquestionably great as a whole'. Gone already is the divertimento-like structure of Opus 1 and 2 in favour of a four-movement scheme; texturally the instrumental parts are treated with much greater equality. The first movement opens in a dark and sombre manner subsequently giving way to brilliant triplet figuration: the movement was surely in Mozart's mind when he wrote his D minor quartet, K.421, which shares its mood as well as certain features of figuration. The minuet continues the serious tone and its concluding bars may be a deliberate reminiscence from the first movement. The trio takes its title literally but distributes the three-part texture ingeniously between the two violins, the first double-stopping throughout. The long cantilena of the slow movement is rendered more interesting by Haydn's variation of accompanying figurations in the lower parts. At the close there is a pause for a cadenza, but such concertante elements were permanent features of Haydn's symphonic and chamber style, not necessarily signs of an early work. The finale is a witty conflation of polyphonic and homophonic elements, an excellent conclusion to a work not merely full of promise but full of real achievement too.

M.T.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN b.1913

String Quartet No. 2 in C, Opus 36

Allegro calmo senza rigore

Scherzo: Vivace

Chacony: Sostenuto

The best-known of Britten's chamber works, the Second Quartet was composed in homage to Henry Purcell, and had its first performance on 21 November 1945, the 250th anniversary of Purcell's death. In keeping with its commemorative function, the mood of the work is reflective, sombre and often intensely dramatic; formally, it makes insistent use of classical conventions. The first movement is a sonata structure. Its three main thematic ideas, announced at the outset in immediate succession, are developed in the rest of the exposition section. The development section proper is then in the nature of a free fantasia. The second movement is a Scherzo in structure rather than mood. It derives its rather eerie wildness from obsessive ostinato figurations and dramatic contrasts of *fortissimo* and *pianissimo*. In the final Chacony, a nine-bar theme, stated in unisons, is followed by 21 variations. The variations, divided into four sections by solo cadenzas, 'review the theme from (a) harmonic, (b) rhythmic, (c) melodic and (d) formal aspects'.

All three movements are in the key of C, the first and third in the major and the second in the minor.

R.McA.

INTERVAL

DVORAK 1841-1904

String Quartet in A flat major, Opus 105

Adagio non troppo—Allegro appassionato

Molto vivace

Lento e molto cantabile

Allegro, non tanto

Dvořák wrote practically the whole of this work when in a particularly happy frame of mind. Having given up his New York post, he was able for the first time for four years to celebrate Christmas at home surrounded by his children, and that meant a great deal to him. This was his fourteenth and last string quartet. The inherent interest of the individual strands, and the frequently changing colours and textures that are conspicuous in

so much of Dvořák's chamber music, are partially explained by the fact that the composer was a string player. He played the viola.

Points to observe in the first movement are the contrasting, yet interlinked, limbs of the first subject, and the intensification in the recapitulation, due to the omission of the first subject. The scherzo is one of Dvořák's most inspired furians. In the Lento variation technique is brought into play, and in the sonata form finale, following Schubert's example, Dvořák utilized three distinct subjects.

The Rosé Quartet gave the earliest known performance in Vienna on 10 November 1896.

J.C.

Next concert: Thursday 24 October

THE REID ORCHESTRA
EDWARD HARPER *conductor*

BORODIN Symphony No. 3 in A minor
J. S. BACH arr. WEBERN Six-part Ricercar
from the 'Musical Offering'
WEBERN Variations, Opus 30
MENDELSSOHN Symphony No. 5 in D

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GENTLE FIRE

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 31 October 1974