



EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1975-76

THE REID ORCHESTRA

Miles Baster leader

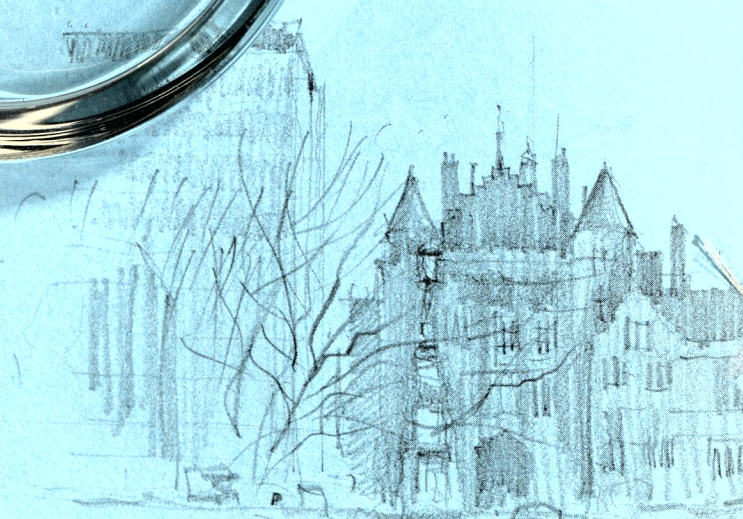
MICHAEL TILMOUTH

conductor

PETER EVANS

piano

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 16 October 1975



BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

Introduzione: Christus am Oelberge, opus 85

Beethoven's only oratorio was completed in 1802-3 though it was revised in 1811. It achieved a considerable success when it was first performed and remained a favourite work in England throughout the 19th century. The libretto, by Beethoven himself in collaboration with F. X. Huber, concerns Christ's agony in the garden, his arrest, the despair of the disciples and the subsequent confrontation with Peter. Its melodramatic quality and certain incongruous stylistic elements were early targets for criticism, however, and are no doubt the main reasons for its almost complete disappearance from the concert hall today. This is a pity for some passages are very fine indeed. Typically, for Beethoven achieved an assured technique with instruments much earlier than he did with voices, the orchestral introduction is among these. In a key he rarely employed, E-flat minor, it depicts the dark garden of Gethsemane where Christ is praying in agony. The orchestration is wonderfully effective, the incisive sounds of oboes and trumpets being discarded and the solemn tones of two trombones added. Beethoven's enharmonic changes that accompany the motive on the drums are pure strokes of genius. The piece would surely be heard much more frequently if Beethoven had not finished it on the dominant of C minor so as to lead straight into Christ's recitative. Tonight's performance is in a version with a concert-ending by the conductor.

MOZART 1756-1791

Piano Concerto in C major, (K.467)

[*Allegro maestoso*]

Andante

Allegro vivace assai

This, the third of Mozart's piano concertos in C major, was written in 1785 shortly after the completion of the quartets dedicated to Haydn and hard on the heels of the D minor piano concerto. All of these works are profound in expression; the surface may retain elements of a rococo façade but behind it there is a new substance, a new depth of thought that was to characterise Mozart's style in the majority of the works written in the remaining years of his life whether their vein was serious or comic. This is true in spite of a greater brilliance of style—and K.467 has the most taxing solo part so far in his piano concertos.

Yet Mozart's brilliance is no longer achieved by paying the price of superficiality. The *maestoso* of the first movement has richness behind its splendour, the gaiety of the last has muscle as well as rippling good humour.

Just how far Mozart outstripped even the most talented of his contemporaries may be seen by comparing the slow movement with that of Mysliveček's second concerto. Mozart expressed his approval of the Czech composer's work which was quite highly regarded in its day. Both movements share an accompaniment figure of pulsating triplets which supports a tender melody. But the subtlety and richness of Mozart's harmonic language ('several passages simply do not harmonise unless one hears all the instruments playing together' Leopold Mozart wrote somewhat uncomprehendingly) and the evocative quality of its melodic gestures simply have no parallel in the work of his lesser contemporary.

INTERVAL

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 6 in F major, opus 68

Pastoral-Sinfonie oder Erinnerung an das Landleben: Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei

Erwachen heiterer Gefühle bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande—

Allegro ma non troppo

Szene am Bach—Andante molto mosso

Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute—Allegro

Gewitter, Sturm—Allegro

Hirtengesang: Frohe, dankbare Gefühle nach dem Sturm—

Allegretto

Composers before Beethoven had often attempted to capture the sounds and feelings evoked by the natural world. Baroque attempts to do this may scarcely have been known to him but he was certainly acquainted with Haydn's *Creation* and *Seasons* and Benda's melodramas. He might even have encountered J. H. Knecht's *Tongemälde der Natur* whose programme anticipates that of the Pastoral Symphony, though its preoccupation with imitation rather than feeling and its naivety of utterance are worlds apart from Beethoven's conception. The current of thought in his day was moving away from the mere imitation of natural sounds and Beethoven's phrase 'more an expression of feeling than painting' reflects this.

There is a sublime simplicity about the Pastoral Symphony: its harmony and melody are uncomplicated and its harmonies move slowly. Paradoxically they were not achieved without immense labour on Beethoven's part as the copious sketches, many now in the British Museum, testify. The simplicity is in some ways deceptive, however. In the first movement Beethoven slips from B-flat major to D major, in the scherzo from F major to D major, allowing these keys to confront one another without any modulatory links. Even beneath the apparently straightforward and generally quiet exterior of this work Beethoven's exploratory mind continues its search for such new means of expression. M.T.

Next concert: Thursday 23 October

MORAY WELSH *cello*

ROGER VIGNOLES *piano*

SCHUMANN *Fünf Stücke im Volkston*, opus 102

BEETHOVEN *Sonata in A major*, opus 69

SHOSTAKOVICH *Sonata*, opus 40

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Miles Baster *leader*

EDWARD HARPER

conductor

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 20 November 1975