
Next concert: Thursday 20 November

THE REID ORCHESTRA

EDWARD HARPER *conductor*

BEETHOVEN *Symphony no. 1 in C major*

WEBER *Five Pieces, opus 10*

STRAVINSKY *Suite, The Firebird*

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1975-76

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

Miles Baster Peter Markham

Michael Beeston Christopher Gough

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 27 November 1975

SCHUBERT 1797-1828

Quartet in E, D. 353

Allegro con fuoco

Andante

Menuetto: allegro vivace

Rondeau: allegro vivace

The E major quartet was probably composed by the nineteen-year-old Schubert in 1816, when he was still a teacher in his father's school. The lucid first movement begins with a typically powerful gesture, but it is the lyrical continuation of this and the carefree second theme which generate the short development. The innocent Andante has a complex rondo structure which belies its simplicity of effect; the minuet is really a scherzo, vigorous and rapid, its trio an ingratiating *Ländler*. The last movement is an untidy rondo in which the Haydnesque refrain stumbles into assorted impermissible keys.

BORODIN 1833-87

Quartet no. 1 in A major

Moderato—allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo: prestissimo—trio: moderato

Andante—allegro risoluto

Borodin finished his First Quartet in August 1879, as he was beginning work on the finale of Act I of *Prince Igor*; the picturesque moods of the opera are often reflected in the quartet.

A partly contrapuntal, but relaxed and tender introduction heralds the first allegro, which is based on a rapid cantabile figure resembling a motive from Beethoven's B flat Quartet, opus 130. This gives way more and more to chromaticism, until at the outset of the development it is heard with a chromatic countersubject. The Andante is related to the traditional *Song of the Sparrow Hills*, which lies behind some of the doleful Russian moments of *Prince Igor*. The middle section is a fugato. After the Scherzo, a quicksilver twinkle of short figures, the trio is presented in grotesque cello and violin harmonics. The slow introduction to the finale uses two figures from the Andante. The nervous, urgent theme of the Allegro is placed over a figure from the Andante, too. The movement is in A minor; the key of the first movement is only reached near the close, and the coda, a break-away *stretta*, harps on the figure from the Andante.

INTERVAL

BARTOK 1881-1945

Quartet no. 2, opus 17

Moderato

Allegro molto capriccioso

Lento

When Eric Blom included Bartók's first two quartets among his *Stepchildren of Music* (1926), considering the composer an unrecognized master of the quartet, Bartók was still virtually ignored as a composer of chamber music. It took the scandalous Third Quartet to awaken the public; yet Bartók's principles, as revealed in the later quartets, are already clear in the first two, especially this Second Quartet of 1917.

We are at first confronted by a mystery, a 'fiend hid in a cloud'; and this vaguely Hungarian figure in barren fourths is afterwards subjected to every kind of imaginative transformation, until five notes declaimed in a true unison (not in octaves) announce the bland folktune from which it was all derived, played by the violins with pizzicato accompaniment. This theme is the germ of the whole organism, and we have the illusion, not of an opening theme which is afterwards complicated by development, but of a nebula which gradually converges on its centre. The second movement is a frenetic dance in the manner of the *Allegro Barbaro* of 1911, its ferocious theme led ever forward into more perverse and fantastic forms, until at last it reappears in triple time. The last movement is a sphinx. Fragments from the first movement loom up dimly, always in their strangest versions, but a sour chorale played in fourths is the nearest it can get to lyricism. R.M.

Next concert: Thursday 4 December

THE REID ORCHESTRA

ALASDAIR MITCHELL guest conductor

MILES BASTER violin

MOZART Symphony no. 40 in G minor

ELGAR Violin Concerto in B minor