
Next concert Thursday 10th November St Cecilia's Hall

MICHAEL LESTER-CRIBB *piano*

MOZART Fantasia and Fugue in C, K394

NIELSEN Three piano pieces, op. 59 (posth.)

CHOPIN Nocturne in C minor, op. 48 No 1

BLISS Sonata for pianoforte

SCHUBERT Sonata in G, op. 78

Admission free

EDINBURGH
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

1977-78

THE REID ORCHESTRA

Miles Baster *leader*

MICHAEL TILMOUTH

conductor

DENIS MATTHEWS

piano

Printed by THE SUMMERHALL PRESS LIMITED
12a West Newington Place Edinburgh (031-667 5506)

McEwan Hall, Thursday 17 November 1977

STERNDALE BENNETT 1816-1875

Overture, 'The Naiads', op. 15

FIELD 1782-1837

Piano Concerto No. 3 in E-flat major

Allegro moderato
(Nocturne in G)
Rondo: *Tempo di Polacca*

INTERVAL

BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, op. 37

Allegro con brio
Largo
Rondo: *Allegro—Presto*

MENDELSSOHN 1809-1847

Incidental music from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

Scherzo
Intermezzo
Nocturne
Clowns' Dance
Overture

To pit the musical productions of the first half of the nineteenth century in the British Isles against those of Germany in the same period may seem to be inviting a comparison of a rather ludicrous and presumptuous sort but it need not be entirely unprofitable. Sterndale Bennett's was certainly a slender talent on which to pin faith in the hopes for a revival of British music and if there were such hopes they were premature. His early promise was nurtured in Mendelssohn's Leipzig and encouraged by the warmth of Schumann's advocacy and friendship. But his creativity was stifled by the dreary state of the musical life in England to which he returned, coupled perhaps with an over conscientious performance of the duties which came his way as conductor of the Philharmonic Society, Principal of the Royal

Academy of Music and Professor of Music at Cambridge. (He might have had the chair at Edinburgh too but Pierson was preferred.) Yet we ought to remember some of these activities with gratitude: it was Bennett, for example, who founded the Bach Society and gave the first performance in England of the St. Matthew Passion.

'The Naiads' (1836) was the fruit of a visit to the Rhine gorge with its Lorelei associations, and perhaps returned the compliment already paid to this country by Mendelssohn in his 'Hebrides' overture. Mendelssohn had a considerable affection for 'The Naiads' and it remained in the repertory of the Gewandhaus concerts for the next twenty years, a success greater than it ever achieved in England.

The Leipzig connection brought dubious benefits to British composers but the musical interchange between Britain and the continent was not totally one-sided as the example of Field shows. Clementi is said to have starved John Field whom he employed to demonstrate the qualities of the pianos in his London show-rooms. Nevertheless, Field dedicated his Third Piano Concerto to Clementi though whether from gratitude or out of relief at having escaped the clutches of his task master it is hard to say. Most of Field's concertos and nocturnes, which were to have a marked influence on the development of piano writing, belong to the period beginning in 1803 when he left Clementi's London sale rooms to conquer the fashionable salons of Moscow and St Petersburg. The Third Concerto was published in 1816 so that it was probably written only about ten years later than Beethoven's in C minor.

Nowhere does Field exhibit Beethoven's superb control of musical structures though whether their contemporaries felt this is an open question: ironically it is the Polacca of Field's concerto, a period piece which cries out for the kind of tonal contrasts which were second nature to Beethoven, which enjoyed popular favour both as a separate movement and in a piano solo arrangement. But Field's ideas, especially in the first movement, can be striking and forward-looking in piano style and they certainly found a receptive ear in Chopin.

But it was English literature rather than British music which elicited the most considerable response from European composers with Shakespeare, Scott and Byron well to the fore among the literary influences which shaped the imagery of Romantic music. Mendelssohn's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' score consists of mood-creating entractes and a series of melodramas (firmly in the tradition deriving from Benda) in which all the

fairy scenes are suspended in gossamer webs of sound lending them an unreality vividly matching Shakespeare's fantasy. Of the entractes the Scherzo sets the scene for 'Over hill, over dale' of Act II, and the Intermezzo reflects the passionate pursuits of the confused lovers though it ends with the assembly of the rude mechanicals and Bottom's 'Are we all met?'. After Puck has squeezed the antidote into the lovers' eyes so that 'all shall be well' they sleep to the strains of the Nocturne, and after the play of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' Theseus opts for a bergomask ('The Dance of the Clowns') rather than a tedious epilogue from the hempen home-spuns. It may seem perverse to put the Overture last in this sequence but in fact Mendelssohn himself brings the score full circle by setting the whole of the last scene as a melodrama based on music from the Overture. Its last quiet lyrical phrase brings Oberon's peace to the silent chambers of Theseus' palace and Puck steals through the last four chords to bid good-night and 'restore amends'.
M.T.

Next Concert: Thursday 24th November St Cecilia's Hall

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

HAYDN Quartet in D major, op. 76 No. 5

TIPPETT Quartet No. 2

SCHUBERT Quartet op. 161 in G major

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STRING ENSEMBLE

directed by MILES BASTER *violin*

JOHN GOULD }
LORNA DUNBAR } *violin*
ELIZABETH ROBINSON }
PAMELA MARKS }

PAULA SNYDER }
COLIN SCOTT } *viola*

ALAN JOHNSON }
STEPHEN CARPENTER } *violoncello*

BOYD POMEROY *double bass*

LEON COATES *harpsichord*

St Cecilia's Hall, Thursday 8 December 1977