

Next Concert: Thursday 15 November

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

SCHUBERT Quartet in E flat major

ROBERT SIMPSON Quartet No. 7

BEETHOVEN Quartet Op. 131

15 pence

EDINBURGH
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

1979-80

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

Miles Baster Peter Markham

Michael Beeston Christopher Gough

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 15 November 1979

SCHUBERT 1797-1828

Quartet in E flat major, D. 87

Allegro moderato
Scherzo. Prestissimo
Adagio
Allegro

Written at the age of sixteen, the E flat quartet was probably Schubert's thirteenth essay in this medium. The experiments that characterise the earliest quartets are now left behind and, while the shadow of his predecessors, particularly Haydn, may still be sensed, the work shows the composer handling his instruments and material with a confident ease. Perhaps it was this maturity that attracted the publisher Josef Czerny who, in 1830, issued the work as Op. 125 No. 1. At that time it was only the second of Schubert's quartets to appear in print. T.M.T.

ROBERT SIMPSON b. 1921

String Quartet No. 7 (1977) (*First performance in Scotland*)

Tranquillo—Vivace—Tempo primo

This work was composed for the centenary of the astronomer Sir James Jeans and is dedicated to his widow, the organist and scholar Lady Susi Jeans; it was first performed by the Gabrieli Quartet at a special concert at Cleveland Lodge, Jeans's house in Dorking, in the music room designed by him. Astronomy is one of the chief interests of the composer, himself a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society.

The quartet is in one continuous movement and D is its tonal centre. Two elements in it are specially important (1) the interval of the perfect fifth and (2) the use of a rising (occasionally falling) line that passes across and through a held single note. This second idea can be heard right at the beginning, between the two violins, and when the other instruments enter they follow the same process a fifth lower. The music is quiet and mysterious, slow, and on a vast scale, as if contemplating the immensities of space, the macrocosmic aspects of the universe. Behind all this lie incalculable energies, within the atoms and fundamental particles that inform the whole, and this microcosmic aspect is reflected in the central region of the work, full of activity, arising of course out of the same basic materials. This part reaches a climax of a size and intensity rare in a string quartet and at its height the slowness and

vastness again become dominant; the music falls gradually back to its original contemplations, though nothing can be exactly repeated after the central experience. The work ends as it began with a plain unharmonized D. R.S.

INTERVAL

BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo
Allegro molto vivace
Allegro moderato
Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile
Presto
Adagio quasi un poco andante
Allegro

'You said in your letter that it should be an original quartet. I felt rather hurt; so as a joke I wrote beside the address that it was a bit of patchwork. But it is really *brand new*.'

(Beethoven to his publisher, 19 August 1826)

It is tempting to exploit fully the ambiguity of 'original' and 'brand new'. Many critics must have been conscious of this as they tried to explain for example: the seven movement outline of Op. 131; the fugal construction of its opening Adagio; the return of the fugue subject in the finale; the overall key scheme of the work—to name but four 'original' features.

But perhaps the 'patchwork' quip serves as a better introduction to the quartet. Was Beethoven merely joking or was his remark prompted by the diversity of the seven movements? Variety is certainly the work's most immediately striking feature: A *molto espressivo* fugue leads into a dance-like 6/8 Allegro; a searching set of variations (Andante), as diverse as any Beethoven wrote, is balanced by what Tovey called 'the most childlike' of scherzos (Presto). Both the third and sixth movements are brief linking passages. The former is an operatic recitative while the latter has the makings of a rich, lyrical Adagio until the last movement abruptly stems its flow. The finale itself is as full of drama as any sonata form scheme built on the contrast of keys and themes.

Surely no listener can be bored by such a kaleidoscope of invention—only puzzled perhaps that such a succession of

contrasting movements does not leave the impression of a 'patchwork' but rather the feeling of unity in diversity. Some of the 'original' features help to explain this sensation. Close analysis, some would argue, can reveal other subconscious links. But in the end it is our musical instincts that confirm this integration. No wonder Beethoven indicated that the piece should be played without a break. T.M.T.

Forthcoming Concerts:

Tuesday, 20 November

THE HEUTLING QUARTET

HAYDN Quartet in G major, Op. 77, No. 1

BERG Quartet Op. 3

REGER Quartet in F sharp minor, Op. 121

(This concert is presented in association with the Scottish German Centre.)

Thursday 22 November

CONCERT BY STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY
OF MUSIC

15 pence

EDINBURGH
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

1979-80

THE HEUTLING QUARTET

Werner Heutling Oswald Gattermann

Erich Bohlscheid Konrad Hesler

Reid Concert Hall, Tuesday 20 November 1979