

BRAHMS 1833–1897

Quartet Op. 51 No. 1

*Allegro*

*Romanze (poco adagio)*

*Allegretto molto moderato e comodo –*

*Un poco piu animato*

*Allegro*

Brahms' two quartets Op. 51 of 1873 appeared not only after the piano quintet, which at one time existed in a string quintet version, and the two sextets, but also after several destroyed quartets. This suggests he may have had some difficulty in reducing his large-scale textures to the limits of solo strings. However, in these works he succeeds in creating a texture of remarkable clarity although such passages as the coda of the outer movements involve considerable double-stopping and a tendency towards a more 'orchestral' sonority.

The first movement is tragic in mood with almost no relief from the feeling of agitation in the second subject. The Romanze is a more relaxed A flat major movement in simple ternary form with the first section beautifully varied on its return and a coda based mainly on the central passage.

Darker colours return in the subdued *scherzo* in F minor though contrast is provided by the picturesquely scored trio in the major key. The finale is short though not lacking in import. Tovey points out that an impression of finality is enforced by the fact that the opening figure of the finale is a compound of those of the Romanze and the first movement. Even if this was originally unintentional he feels that the allusion is made explicit in the last bars of this impassioned movement. L.C.

*Next Concert: Thursday 17 January*

THE REID ORCHESTRA

EDWARD HARPER *conductor*

COLIN KINGSLEY *piano*

MENDELSSOHN Overture 'The Hebrides' Op. 26

LISZT Piano Concerto No. 2 in A major

EDWARD HARPER Piano Concerto

COPLAND Music for the Theatre.

*15 pence*

*Printed by the University of Edinburgh*

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# EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1979–80

THE REID ORCHESTRA

Miles Baster *leader*

EDWARD HARPER

*conductor*

COLIN KINGSLEY

*piano*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 17 January 1980

MENDELSSOHN 1809–47

Overture *'The Hebrides'* Op.26

'In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, the following came into my mind there....'.

And here, in a letter home written in the middle of his tour of Scotland in August 1829, Mendelssohn writes down twenty bars of music which, on his return to Germany, he expanded into an overture originally called *'The Lonely Isle'*. This he re-wrote calling it *The Hebrides* and adding, on publication, the alternative title *'Fingal's Cave'*. The remote island of Staffa with its famous cave whose black columns moved Keats to observe that 'for solemnity and grandeur it far surpasses the finest cathedral', was clearly a place to stir the romantic imagination. However, Mendelssohn's music seems to reflect a more general seascape, the mood varying from the calm but vast swell of the Atlantic to the fury of the storm.

E.H.

LISZT 1811–1886

Concerto No. 2 in A major for piano and orchestra

'Ma seule ambition de musicien était et serait de lancer mon javelot dans les espaces indéfinis de l'avenir'. So, from Rome, wrote Liszt in 1874 to Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, reminding her of earlier times in Weimar when he had uttered such declarations of a romantic temperament, and Schumann's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* had published them.

But it was earlier still that Marie d'Agoult had helped to forge the *javelot*. Liszt became a French romantic in Paris, and always remained one. Slow to bring his major works to completion, he began to sketch ideas for this concerto some twenty years before its appearance in 1857; by then, his concert career over, Liszt was conductor, not soloist, at the first performance. It is a symphonic poem, owing nothing to the classical concerto, and everything to sheer originality and a composer's sense of timing.

C.K.

INTERVAL

EDWARD HARPER b.1941

Piano Concerto

Written in 1969 and first performed the following year by the same soloist, conductor and orchestra as tonight, this is the earliest of my works which I am still happy to have played. It came at the end of a period when I was preoccupied with various aspects of serial technique and I was pleased to discover that I could write quite freely on a serial idiom without any pre-determined note-rows. This gives the melodic and harmonic structures a spontaneity lacking in my earlier works – much of the music sounds improvisatory in character.

My Concerto is in one movement, lasting a little over ten minutes. It begins with quiet delicate passage-work in the piano which gives way to a simple chordal statement of a 'chorale'-like idea, which reappears at important structural points during the work. The piano then leads into a dramatic 'allegro' with vigorous exchanges between soloist and orchestra. At the climax of this, the 'chorale' idea appears quietly, high on the strings and the music gradually calms to the quiet middle-section.

Again the pianist begins to urge the music onwards and a long *crescendo*, rather like an accompanied cadenza, leads to the climax of the work, an extremely dramatic statement of the 'chorale' idea in the orchestra.

Recapitulation of most of the material takes place, the piano now a calming influence, though even at the quiet end there are reminders of more violent events.

COPLAND b.1900

Music for the Theatre

Written in 1925 and first performed in that year by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky (to whom this work is dedicated) this has remained one of Copland's best works, an individual fusion of all that was happening in Paris in the 1920's with the American jazz-idiom. The title refers to the character of the music – there is no story behind it.

The five sections are (i) Prologue (ii) Dance (iii) Interlude – *Lento moderato* (iv) Burlesque – *Allegro vivo* (v) Epilogue – *moderato*.

E.H.