University Music Class Room,

EDINBURGH.

FOUR HISTORICAL CONCERTS.

CONCERT II.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1903.

A Concert of Wind-Instrument Chamber Music.

Performers :—

The Queen's Hall (London) Wind-Instrument Quintet :— Messrs ALBERT FRANSELLA (flute), DÉSIRÉ LALANDE (oboe), MANUEL GOMEZ (clarinet), E. F. JAMES (bassoon), and A. BORSDORF (horn).

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAMME.

It is an extremely rare phenomenon to meet with a programme entirely made up of wind-instrument chamber music. Even when combinations of wind-instrument players give concerts, they usually associate to themselves at least a pianist, if not also some bow-instrument players. Why is that so? Why do they not follow the example of string-quartet parties? Is it the consciousness of the limitation of wind-instruments in compass and tone-production, and the fear of not being able unaided to interest the audience for a whole evening? If a reason at all, this can only be a minor reason. The main, the real reason, is the paucity of the literature. Even the making of a programme of chamber music for mixed instruments, among which wind-instruments predominate, offers considerable difficulty. In this case, however, the difficulty arises from the diversity of the combinations of instruments employed, not from the scarcity of the material available for selection. But in the case of pure wind-instrument chamber music, the programme maker is brought face to face with a dearth that approaches absolute destitution. Let us try to realise the experience of such a would-be programme maker.

The three great classics engage, of course, our attention first. And what do we find? Of Haydn we have nothing at all, for the *Feldpartien* (the open-air partitas) for wind-instruments—for instance, for two clarinets, horns, and bassoons—are lost. With Mozart we fare better, there being among his works as many as eleven compositions of the kind in question: six Divertimenti for two oboes, two horns, and two bassoons; two Serenades for two oboes, two clarinets, and two bassoons; two Divertimenti for two oboes, two clarinets, two cors anglais, two horns, and two bassoons; one Serenade for the same instruments, with the addition of two more horns, a double bassoon, and a double bass. Beethoven's works for wind-instruments are less numerous, but still considerable. They comprise the Octet, Op. 103, and a Rondino for two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons; the Sextet, Op. 71, for two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons; the Trio, Op. 87, for two oboes and cor anglais; and three Duos for clarinet and bassoon. Of Schubert we have only a

Minuet for eight and a *Trauermusik* (funeral music) for nine wind-instruments. Weber, Hummel, Cherubini, Spohr, Mendelssohn, and Schumann have left us nothing. For Cherubini's Marches for wind-band, Spohr's Nocturno for wind and Turkish band, and Mendelssohn's Overture, Op. 24, for wind-band, lie outside the scope of our present inquiry. Lower down in the ranks of composers we meet Dittersdorf (1739-1799), with a Divertimento for two oboes, two clarinets, and one bassoon; Ignaz Pleyel (1757-1831), with a Serenade for eight and nine instruments, a Sextet, and three pieces for six instruments; Gyrowetz (1763-1850), with a Serenade for two clarinets, two horns, and one bassoon; Kozeluch (1752-1814), with pieces for two oboes (or flutes), two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons, and a double bass *ad libitum*; Franz Danzi (1763-1826), with three Quintets for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon; and Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754-1812), with a Partita, Variations, &c., for eight and six wind-instruments. Still lower down we meet the fluent and indefatigable E. L. Jadin (1768-1853) and J. Küffner (1776-1856), the former with Sextets for two clarinets, horns, and bassoons, and the latter with pieces for two clarinets, one flute, one horn, and one bassoon, and other combinations; the French bandmaster L. Javrault (early 19th century), with six Sextets for clarinet, flute, oboe, horn, and two bassoons, and Trios for clarinet, horn, and bassoon; the French oboe virtuosi, Gustave Vogt (1781-1870), and Henri Brod (1801-1839), the former with three Nocturnes for flute, oboe, horn, and bassoon, and the latter with three Quintets for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon; and the German clarinet virtuoso, F. X. Wolf, with two Serenades for two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons, and two Quintets for two clarinets, two horns, and one bassoon. Who the Panizza was who published a Sextet for one flute, two clarinets, two horns, and one bassoon, I don't know. Christian Rummel (1787-1849), who composed Quintets for cor de bassette, cor anglais, clarinet, flute, and bassoon, and for cor de bassette, clarinet, oboe, horn, and bassoon, was the grandfather of the pianist Franz Rummel, and conductor at Wiesbaden for twenty-six years. Two notables omitted here shall get their due farther on.

It must be confessed that chamber music for wind-instruments is an unknown territory that still awaits its explorer. But to a large extent, I am afraid, it is a submerged territory. Much of what once flourished must have experienced the fate of the dead cities of the Zuyder Zee, and even a worse fate, that of utter oblivion of its very existence. *Harmonie*, as the French and Germans called it, that is, music for wind-instruments alone, distinguished from military music by the absence of instruments of percussion (a distinction, however,

probably oftener ignored than observed), greatly in favour in the 18th and the early 19th century, consisted for the most part of arranged music, chiefly no doubt operatic. Musical advertisements and catalogues, as well as statements by contemporaries, support this view, which is strikingly and delightfully illustrated by Mozart in the second act of his dramatic *chef d'œuvre*, where Don Giovanni's musicians (two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons, the most complete and a very common combination) entertain him at dinner with three extracts from popular operas of the day, one from *Le Nozze di Figaro*. But although, undoubtedly, the arrangements enormously outnumbered the original compositions, we may safely assume that the musical conductors of the princes and lesser nobles who had wind-bands in their service provided largely for their *répertoire*, of which, however, comparatively little was printed, and much less than a tithe has come to our knowledge.

The two composers omitted in the above ennumeration were reserved for separate notice, because they deserve special attention, both being distinguished composers of chamber music in their time, and one of them the most prolific of all composers in the department of wind.instrument music, and at the same time the only considerable composer who in this department produced the best of his works. My allusion is to Anton Reicha (1770-1836) and George Onslow (1784-1852). Neither of them is a genius of the first rank, but both of them were men of distinguished talent and masters of their art, and, moreover, interesting characters. Onslow, born in France, and resident in that country, except for some years of his childhood spent in England, was of English descent on the side of his father, a son of the first Lord Onslow, and French on the side of his mother, who was connected with the Brantôme family. Being wealthy he was never under the necessity of making his living by music, which, indeed, he first took up as an amateur and not very seriously. His teachers in pianoforte playing were Hüllmandel, Dussek, and Cramer, his teachers in composition Reicha and the classics, whose works he assiduously studied. Although he composed operas and symphonies, it was his chamber music that made him famous—chiefly his string quintets and quartets, more especially the former. But notable are also his chamber music for mixed instruments, among which there are compositions for wind and other instruments, and a Quintet, Op. 81, for wind-instruments alone (flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon). Profundity of any kind need not be sought in Onslow's music. His was rather a cold than a passionate nature. What won the esteem and applause of musicians and public was the ease, purity, and elegance of his style. It has been truly said that

his chamber music comes near the best that had been written in the *genre* by the great masters. In short, the excellent qualities of his works explain and justify the popularity they enjoyed in his day. As to the present-day neglect, it is explained, but not quite justified, by the negative qualities.

Reicha, born in Bohemia, educated in Germany, a colleague of Beethoven's in the Bonn orchestra, self-taught as a composer, settled, after a stay of some years at Hamburg, Paris, and Vienna, in the French capital. His reputation as a theorist and teacher of composition was very high and undisputed. The same cannot be said of him as a composer. Although he had a strong creative impulse, and was lacking neither in diligence nor ambition, he did not attain Onslow's popularity and the unreserved approval which the critics bestowed on that master. Inequality, disproportionateness, and straining after originality were reproaches often levelled at him. Even the severest critics, however, treated him with the greatest respect. Although, like Onslow, he wrote operas and symphonies, he was, also like Onslow, most successful in chamber music. According to universal opinion, he was most successful of all in his Quintets for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon, of which he wrote no less than four times six, Op. 88, 91, 99, and 100.

Among later wind-instrument chamber music we find a Nonet by J. Rheinberger, Octets by Franz Lachner, C. Reinecke, Th. Gouvy, and Saint-Saëns, Septets by Vincent d'Indy, G. Pierné, and Soga, a Sextet by Ch. Lefebvre, and Quintets by Lefebvre, Taffanel, and Sobeck.

A scanning of the above enumerations will show that there was a lull in the production of wind-instrument chamber music in the post-Beethoven age and a revival in recent times: and, further, that France takes a much larger share in the production of wind-instrument chamber music than in any other kind of chamber music. These facts may make us reflect as to the application of the law of demand and supply to this phenomenon.

Programme.

ANTON REICHA (1770-1836):—

Quintet, Op. 88, No. 2, in E flat major.

(*a*) Lento and Allegro moderato.
(*b*) Menuetto.
(*c*) Poco Andante, grazioso.
(*d*) Allegretto.

GEORGE ONSLOW (1784-1852):—

Quintet, Op. 81, in F major.

(*a*) Allegro non troppo.
(*b*) Scherzo.
(*c*) Andante sostenuto.
(*d*) Allegro spirituoso.

CHARLES LEFEBVRE (*b.* 1843):—

Suite, Op. 57.

(*a*) Canon.
(*b*) Allegretto scherzando.
(*c*) Allegro leggiero (Finale

GABRIEL PIERNÉ (*b.* 1863):—

Pastorale, Op. 14, in A minor.

EMILE PESSARD (*b.* 1843):—

Prélude et Menuet des Petits Violons.

DATES AND PROGRAMMES OF THE FOUR HISTORICAL CONCERTS.

November 18, 1903.—A Recital of Original Pianoforte Duets, interspersed with Songs by Adolf Jensen. Performers: Mr ARTHUR DACE, Mr FRANCIS GIBSON, and Miss MARION RICHARDSON.

December 16, 1903.—A Concert of Wind-Instrument Music. Performers: The Queen's Hall (London) Wind-Instrument Quintet—Messrs A. FRANSELLA (flute), D. LALANDE (oboe), M. GOMEZ (clarinet), E. F. JAMES (bassoon), and A. BORSDORF (horn).

January 20, 1904.—A Liszt Pianoforte Recital, illustrative of the different classes of the Master's Music for Pianoforte Solo. Performer: Mr PAUL DELLA TORRE.

February 4, 1904.—The Waltz from the 18th to the 20th century. Performers: An Orchestra of Thirty Players from THE SCOTTISH ORCHESTRA, conducted by Professor NIECKS.

FREDERICK NIECKS,
Reid Professor of Music.