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Drummond Young, Edinburgh

DONALD FRANCIS TOVEY

17th July 1875 — 10th July 1940

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

A Concert of Works for Strings, Pianoforte and Voice

BY

DONALD FRANCIS TOVEY

Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh

21st October 1943

John Fairbairn \ Douglas Dickson	. Violins
Hilda Young anismuch bez enome	. Viola Violoncello
Mary Grierson	Pianoforte
George Parker	Daritone

(i) Pianoforte Quartet in E minor. Op. 12.

Allegro moderato e sostenuto. Alternating with vivace. Finale—Largo.

All Tovey's chamber-music belongs to an early period, and the works on to-night's programme were written before 1900, when the composer was in his very early twenties. The pianoforte quintet was completed while he was still at Oxford, although it underwent some later revision. The toll of chamber-music is complete at Op. 30; later works include the Symphony in D major and the opera "The Bride of Dionysus," which occupied him, in the intervals of other work, over many years. His last work, the 'cello concerto—which is also one of his finest—only reaches Op 40, and was the sole big composition which he produced after coming to Edinburgh; it was written in 1934-5 when he was recovering from a severe illness. Other works which he had in mind included an "Overture to a Comedy," a second opera (to a text adapted from

Shakespeare), a third string quartet and a violin concerto. These unhappily never saw the light of day, although much of the material was in readiness. His habits as a composer were firmly rooted in classical practice, but he was no slavish follower of tradition, and his style from the outset was highly individual and unmistakable.

The first movement of the pianoforte quartet is in two contrasting and alternating moods; that of the opening theme, a lyrical melody with chameleon-like cadences which dissolve in all manner of surprising harmonic colours, and that of the vivace theme with its torrents of accompanying semiquavers and its impassioned sequels. The second movement is a set of five great variations on a very noble theme in E major. The variation-form was one which Tovey handled with great mastery and delight, and the conclusion to this movement, which keeps expanding in great starry vistas like the vaults of the sky itself, is particularly fine.

- (ii) Songs: (a) "The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest (Sir W. d'Avenant).
 - (b) "There be none of Beauty's daughters" (Byron).
 - (c) The Indian Serenade (Shelley).
 - (d) "Weep ye no more, sad fountains" (Anon).
 - (e) "My true love hath my heart" (Sidney).

GEORGE PARKER

There exist only two slender sets of six songs each, which were written for Sir Denys Bray, and published as Op. 2. As might be expected, the pianoforte accompaniments are extraordinarily rich, and the treatment of the words shows the finely sensitive feeling for declamation which came to full maturity in the opera.

(iii) Pianoforte Solos: Three Balliol Dances (arranged by E. Walker for pianoforte solo from the original four-hand version).

DR MARY GRIERSON

A set of sixteen dances, Op. 17, is Tovey's only published work for the pianoforte alone, and the original is written as a duet. The arrangement of the last three dances for two hands was made by Dr Walker some years ago and was approved by the composer, but remains unpublished.

The programme arranged and programme-notes written by Dr Mary Grierson

(iv) Pianoforte Quintet in C major. Op. 6.

Allegro maestoso.
Rondo—Allegretto moderato.
Largo appassionato.
Finale—Allegro largamente.

This is a work on a large scale, with four full-size movements, and remarkable for the way in which it exploits the sonorities of the five instruments. The first movement is in heroic mood, the foil to which is an almost wistful pathos which sets in with the viola theme. The clue to the second movement lies in the choice of the key of A flat, and the indication qualifying the tempo mark—"un poco giocoso e teneramente"; the gentle rondo theme mocks, delicately, at its own sentiments, and eventually, after several returns, vanishes like smoke into thin air.

The main theme of the third movement, in F minor, is a long and impassioned melody, which commences in sombre tones in the viola. A beautiful, consolatory major theme presently arrives in the pianoforte, but is soon overwhelmed. The movement reaches

a great climax of tragic intensity and dies away in exhaustion.

After the tragic slow movement in F minor, the return to C major with the swaggering and robust opening theme of the Finale, is like a return to normal everyday life. The movement soon develops uproarious high spirits and proceeds in a leisurely way to fill out a very large design, which is rounded off by an extremely spacious coda. This coda starts in a quicker tempo and develops a tremendous momentum which is intensified by the way in which the dynamics cause themes in the foreground suddenly to recede into remoteness, suggesting momentary glimpses of distant views as a landscape passes rapidly before one's vision. The end of the peroration comes with an outburst of almost Bacchanalian frenzy.

Programme—price sixpence.