UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1956-57

Fourth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader : DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN
Conductor : SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Violin
RALPH HOLMES

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 29th NOVEMBER, 1956
AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME : ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. Overture : " Fingal's Cave " — *Mendelssohn* (1809-1847)

In a letter headed " On one of the Hebrides : August 7, 1829," Mendelssohn wrote home : " In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, the following came into my mind there." He then gives 21 bars of music which approximate very closely to the opening of the overture which he was to complete in Rome in December of the following year and to revise in London in June, 1832, after his travels were over. No " Young Persons' Guide to Musical Experience on (or off) the West Coast " is needed by this familiar and ever impressive overture. But those who feel that their notions of Mendelssohn's personality are a bit obscured by Elijah, St. Paul and the Leipzig Conservatoire may care to know that they can find the most deliciously amusing and colourful bedtime reading in the letters which Mendelssohn and his companion, Klingemann, wrote home from Edinburgh, Abbotsford, Bridge of Tummel, the Hebrides and Glasgow, etc. In the boat off Staffa, they experienced much more than modulations rising by thirds — but I refer you to " The Mendelssohn Family—from letters and journals," by S. Hensel, Eng. Trans. Vol. I (1881).

2. Violin Concerto in D (Op. 77) — *Brahms* (1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace—
poco più presto

Brahms' violin concerto, dedicated to Joachim, was completed in 1878, the year after his Second Symphony. Fully twenty years separate it from his previous essay in concerto form, the D minor Pianoforte Concerto. It is, I feel, quite beyond my capacity to present any adequate idea of this glorious work in a short programme note. One may point to such features as the gloriously easeful arpeggio design of the opening theme (akin to that of the Second Symphony) or the fantasy-cadenza style of approach with which the violin enters upon its task, or the gloriously sustained paragraph of thirty bars of wind ensemble which unfolds the Adagio, or the exuberant trills with which the woodwind eventually cap the triumphant assertions of the Hungarian rondo-theme of the finale. But, however much one extends this selective process, one has not begun to get to the heart of this rich personality. I recommend my readers to turn to Tovey, and gladly lay aside my pen to take up my baton.

INTERVAL

3. " Siegfried Idyll " — *Wagner* (1813-1883)

Such is the title by which it has been known ever since it ceased to be the intimate family possession which it had remained for the first eight years of its existence. But, as Mr. Ernest Newman showed about twelve years ago in an extremely interesting article devoted to this work, the original title was " Triebschen Idyll," and in this beautiful and affectionate Christmas and birthday gift to Cosima in 1870, Wagner thought no less of their daughter Eva, then a little girl of two, than of their son Siegfried, born in June of the previous year a few days before Wagner finished the score of the opera " Siegfried." And if the child Siegfried is proclaimed both in tenderness and in triumph by that motive from the opera which carries the words " Siegfried, Hope of the World," the episode of the simple nursery song is a tender and playful thought for the girl. We learn that the tune with a simple harmonisation had been written by Wagner in an intimate diary on New Year's Eve of 1868. The naive words of this little lullaby run thus—" In the garden are two sheep, a black one and a white one ; and if the baby will not sleep the black one will come and bite it." And this little tale, as Mr. Newman shows, is clearly and charmingly narrated in the episode of the Idyll. But one motive at least can be traced to a yet earlier source, that which emerges at length from the beautiful tranquillity of the opening passages for string quartet. In 1864 when Cosima was still von Bülow's wife, Wagner had sketched her a string quartet in which this theme, subsequently employed in the opera, first appeared. The motive which accompanies it is that of the deep sleep laid upon Brunhilde by Wotan in the Fire Scene at the end of Walküre.

4. Symphony No. 4 in D Minor (Op. 120)

Schumann
(1810-1856)

Ziemlich langsam—Lebhaft—
Romanze : Ziemlich langsam—
Scherzo : Lebhaft—
Langsam—Lebhaft—Presto

Although it has been known since the date of its publication in 1853 as Schumann's Fourth Symphony, the D minor was in fact his second symphony. It was first performed in 1841 under the title " Symphonic Fantasy." Twelve years later Schumann re-orchestrated and to a slight extent recomposed the work, imposing upon it a thicker texture in conformity with his later " safety first " method of handling the symphonic orchestra. The original score was not published until 1893. In this present performance we are adhering to the revised version that is generally to be heard.

The symphony divides into the normal scheme of four movements, but these are closely connected with one another through thematic relationships, and the whole is designed to be performed without any break between movements. The introduction re-appears in A minor in the Romanze, and again in a major variant delicately adorned by solo violin ; and this latter device prompts the mood and treatment of the sensitive trio of the forthright Scherzo. The opening motive of the main first movement, which persists throughout so much of it, reappears in the finale. More important still is the first of two new themes which are first heard in the course of the development—the one in a vein of triumphant pageantry, the other a quiet *cantabile* which also dons a festive mantle in the jubilation which terminates the movement. It is the first of these two themes which with solemn portent heralds the way to the finale where it is to prove all triumphant in a highly imaginative movement which also embraces quiet passages of glorious poetry.

S.T.M.N.