

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1956-57

Sixth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader : DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor : SIDNEY NEWMAN

ROBERT COOPER JOAN DICKSON
HESTER DICKSON

THE REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 31st JANUARY, 1957

At 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. OVERTURE : " THE WATER CARRIER "

Cherubini
(1760-1842)

The three major injustices which Luigi Cherubini has had to suffer are these—first, to be dubbed a contemporary of Beethoven and left at that (though he was in fact ten years senior to Beethoven and was writing Italian operas when Beethoven was but a boy) ; secondly, that as librarian of the Paris Conservatoire he had the ill luck to get the wrong side of a difficult young student named Berlioz who had a flair for writing colourful memoirs ; and thirdly, that people with a notion that Cherubino should never be taken too seriously have become a bit confused as to Cherubini's claims to their attention.

If his Italian operas produced in Italy and London during the 1780's are relatively unimportant, this is not true of his French operas produced at Paris from 1788 onwards, of which *Lodoïska*, *Médée* and above all *Les Deux Journées* are pre-eminent. For a century he was remembered in the concert hall by the overtures of these and of *Anacréon*, and by the Masses which he composed in his later years after his appointment to the Chapelle Royale in 1816. *Les Deux Journées*, which later found an advocate in Mendelssohn at Düsseldorf in 1833, was given some broadcast performances by the B.B.C. a few years ago. [The first performance in England under the title "The Water Carrier" (German title—*Der Wasserträger*) took place in 1801, the year after the first production in Paris]. The naive listener could recognise in it a fine and moving opera, worthy of performance whether or no Beethoven had written *Fidelio*. In fact, one could do more justice to Beethoven by realising that Cherubini and Clementi were worthy of his regard than by supposing that he lived in a desert. It may be that Cherubini's six string quartets, which have probably not been heard since the days of Joachim, patently owe much to the impact of Beethoven—but perhaps it is time that we heard some of them !

Now, although there is a certain classical self sufficiency in Clementi's overtures, as distinct for example from the dishes of hors d'oeuvres with which Rossini often invited his opera audiences to commence their repast, nevertheless Cherubini's overtures remain as prefaces to operas and do not develop into true concert overtures or into something akin to symphonic poems as so many of Beethoven's overtures tend to do. Most operatic overtures only come fully into their own when the listener can anticipate the rising of the curtain afterwards—though the intrusion of Leonora No. 3 into the interval of *Fidelio* is nothing but an insult to both parties. We cannot, alas, invite you to witness Cherubini's opera but, if you find the overture impressive, perhaps you will feel moved to ask the B.B.C. to give it us again.

2. CONCERTO IN C MAJOR FOR PIANOFORTE, VIOLIN AND VIOLONCELLO (Op. 56)

Beethoven
(1780-1827)

Allegro
Largo—
Rondo alla Polacca

This concerto was written for the Archduke Rudolf soon after he had become Beethoven's pupil. It was probably finished in 1804 and for a few years may have been kept by the Archduke for his private use along with the excellent string players whom he maintained in his service. It was not published until 1807 and received its first public performance in 1808. But Beethoven had been trying to negotiate its sale to a publisher quite a year before the work was completed, and was at pains to impress upon Härtel that such a work would be something of a novelty. There was, of course, no novelty at that time involved in a double or triple concerto as such. Concertos and 'Concertante' works for two or more soli with orchestra were in fact so much in vogue at the time that in Whistling's Catalogue of Printed Music (2nd Edition) of 1828 the list, covering works of the previous 40-50 years, occupies six pages of close print. Almost everyone who fancied himself as a player wrote concertos, and concertante works for two or three string instruments, or for varieties of wind instruments, abound in numbers. But the pianoforte does not appear previously to have formed a part of such mixed ensembles. Mozart, who embarked upon an unfinished Concertante for Violin, Viola and Violoncello in the same year (1779) in which he wrote the splendid Concertante for Violin and Viola (K. 364), had also begun a Concertante for Pianoforte and Violin in the previous year. Hummel's Opus. 17 is a Concerto for Pianoforte and Violin, but I have not been able to ascertain whether this is anything more than a Duo-Concertante with the pianoforte doubling the functions of a protagonist and of the orchestra.

No, it certainly was something of a novelty ; and just possibly because it did not resemble any of Beethoven's solo concertos, many people have experienced disappointment in it, forgetting that on *a priori* grounds it was bound to be markedly different. It is not only that the space required for handling the material at all phases of the form has to be much increased to accommodate three soli as distinct personalities, but also that the language used must be sufficiently general in character to form a common factor to yield equally fruitful results on three diverse instruments, and at the same time to provide them with a common parlance that will unite them as a chamber music ensemble, without any sacrifice of their status as a concertante group. But if the language seems to be rather ordinary in comparison with his richer inventions, Beethoven's architecture is superb and highly imaginative—and all his thematic material shows its true qualities only in the variety of its handling in the course of two great movements. Between these two lies a richly expressive and melodious Largo, whose broad opening (with repetitions) leads us to expect a movement of some such proportions as that of the slow movement of the Pastoral Symphony, though it does in fact soon turn aside to prepare for the Polonaise finale.

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY No. 102 IN B FLAT

Haydn
(1732-1809)

Largo—Allegro vivace
Adagio
Menuetto : Allegro
Finale : Presto

This great symphony, unrivalled except perhaps by the so-called 'London' Symphony (No. 104 in D), belongs to the second set of six which Haydn composed for Salomon's concerts and is dated on the autograph 1794-95.

The Largo is a quiet sustained preface to the resplendent Allegro whose first theme it appears to foreshadow. This Allegro takes surprisingly little time to present the three ideas of which it means to treat—the first a tune which might easily go arondoino, the second merely a reiterated formula, and the third a sudden drama of violent ejaculations, rhetorical pauses, and a hushed aftermath. But the development is stupendous in scope, and also ultimately in its concentrated power. The dramatic ejaculations now show their power to evoke remote and magic realms ; pure formula is transfigured into a gigantic and rugged triple canon, whilst the tune can veer from dulcet innocence to Herculean strength on its way to reassert the original key and a recapitulation which still has surprises in store for those who can perceive how very unexpectedly the expected can happen.

The expressively ornate and richly coloured Adagio in F major was used by Haydn (transposed into F sharp) in his Pianoforte-Trio in F sharp minor. It is generally maintained, though I believe it has not been proved, that the symphonic version is the original. Tovey was of the reverse opinion. Whatever the truth of the matter, never did Haydn achieve such a miracle of supple rich orchestration as in this glorious moment for which he employs his full orchestra with his horns and trumpets muted.

The Minuet, with robust good humour, teaches those that must sneeze to sneeze on the beat. Its warmly melodious Trio is gilded with the lightest touches of the flute, appointed to no other task but this.

Once you let one of Haydn's rondo-themes out of the bag, the fun begins in true earnest. This is a kittenish theme, but as Tovey aptly remarks, "young tigers are also very charming as kittens!" We are in fact in for some pretty strenuous and notable adventures, though there's opportunity to crack plenty of jokes as we run. In the end the violins run out of breath and can only stammer, so everyone slaps them on the back and laughs "Let's call it a day."

S.T.M.N.