

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1957—58

Fourth Concert

THE NEW
EDINBURGH QUARTET

ROBERT COOPER

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

ANNE CROWDEN

JOAN DICKSON

with

Clarinet

Horn

RONALD MACKIE

KERR BORTHWICK

Bassoon

Contrabass

CHRISTINE MATHER

ROY GWILLIAM

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 21st NOVEMBER, 1957

At 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

SEPTET IN E FLAT, Op. 20

Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Adagio—Allegro con brio	Tema con Variazioni : Andante
Adagio cantabile	Scherzo : Allegro molto e vivace
Tempo di Menuetto	Andante con moto alla Marcia—Presto

Beethoven's Septet, composed in 1799-1800 and acclaimed at first performance in April, 1800, was the culmination of notable series of chamber works extending from 1782 to 1800 in which wind instruments were employed in a variety of different kinds of ensemble, whether in purely wind ensemble, or in combination with strings or pianoforte. The list deserves repetition, both to illustrate the extent to which Beethoven occupied himself with the problems of wind ensemble in those most interesting formative and inventive years, and as a reminder of a genre of works which we are perhaps apt to disregard in our appraisal of Beethoven's chamber music. Here is the catalogue :—

Octet for wind instruments (published only about 1834 as Op. 103)
Three duos for clarinet and bassoon
Trio for two oboes and cor anglais (published later as Op. 87)
Variations for the same
Sextet for wind
Sextet for strings and 2 horns
Quintet for pianoforte and wind Op. 16
Serenade for flute, violin and viola Op. 25
Trio for pianoforte, clarinet and violoncello Op. 11
Sonata for pianoforte and horn Op. 17

After this glorious septet Beethoven did not again use wind instruments in his chamber music. As Paul Bekker has pertinently said, Beethoven's chamber music for wind instruments was preparatory to his orchestral works—these compositions “came to an end as the symphonies began to appear. The concert of April 2nd, 1800, was at once an end and a beginning.”

The septet belongs to that general class of Divertimenti or Serenades which in the classical Viennese period had superseded the old Suite. This does not of course involve the preclusion of a first movement and slow movement (even a finale) of full sonata stature or intent, but it does involve an extension of the number of movements, two being from the category of Minuet—Scherzo. To separate these, dissimilar as they may be, Beethoven (and Schubert following his example) uses an Andante theme and variations. One always imagines that one knows exactly how Schubert's Rosamunde tunes go until his B flat impromptu sends one up another garden path. Similarly all who have ever practised Beethoven's Op. 49 Sonatinas will feel they know exactly how the Septet Minuet will go—until it doesn't. Except in the theme and in the fifth (final) variation-plus-coda the horn is not employed in

the fourth movement, where each variation illustrates a clearly defined pattern of string or woodwind ensemble ; but the horn has the honour of leading off the Scherzo—a symphonic scherzo in miniature—just as in the Trio the violoncello quite literally “rises to the occasion.”

The *alla Marcia* is but a brief introduction to the happy finale, which any wrong-headed analyst could prove to be not a rondo, were it not that the theme itself, the repeat and the violin cadenza and everything about it carry the absolute conviction that it is.

INTERVAL

OCTET IN F MAJOR, Op. 166

Schubert
(1797-1828)

Adagio—Allegro	Andante con Variazioni
Andante un poco mosso	Minuet : Allegretto
Scherzo : Allegro vivace	Andante molto—Allegro

The Octet written in 1824 marks the beginning of what we may call the mature and great period of Schubert's composition of chamber music. It was composed to the order of Count Ferdinand of Troyer, chief officer of the household to Archduke Rüdolph—Beethoven's patron. The count himself played the clarinet, and the claims of that instrument were very far from being neglected in the work that Schubert composed. The clarinet may be said to lead jointly with the first violin.

In composing the Octet, Schubert modelled himself to a large extent upon Beethoven's Septet, adding a second violin to the ensemble. The year 1824 was almost entirely devoted to instrumental composition and the Octet was one of the works by the composition of which Schubert himself said he was “preparing the way for his Grand Symphony”—that Symphony whose identity and existence are one of the most tantalising enigmas in musical history. The Octet does in fact contain a good deal of truly symphonic writing, though, with the exception perhaps of the introduction to the finale, the colouring always remains that of chamber music rather than that of the symphony orchestra.

The slow introduction, after firmly planting the key note F, unfolds to us at once the full measure of expressive chromaticism which is to haunt us throughout all the cadences of the first movement. We shall find these introductory bars returning in the course of the main movement at the moment of recapitulation, which effects a wonderful synthesis in recapturing the openings of the Introduction and of the Allegro in one moment. The introduction proceeds by a gently swinging rhythm in antiphon, until this breaks upon a sforzando climax, whereupon the first hints of a more sharply dotted figure are heard upon the clarinet and horn. This rhythm is to pervade the Allegro almost from beginning to end.

Through this rhythm the first and second subjects are intimately related. It pervades also those secondary themes which prolong (or, if you will, indefinitely postpone) the final cadence of exposition through a succession of captivating and even more elaborate temporary cadences. These latter, however, are rounded by a triplet figure that is as conspicuous throughout the movement as the dotted rhythm itself.

The slow movement in B flat (Andante) opens with an extremely beautiful melody upon the clarinet with a quietly flowing accompaniment of strings, drifting its way through a succession of chromatic harmonies. This melody, which seems to dwell upon the memory of Mozart, ends with a reflection of its own first phrase and as the violin quietly takes up the melody the clarinet continues beside it in exquisite duet.

The Scherzo is symphonic in character. With its swaying dotted rhythm, so typical of Schubert, it is probably familiar to all through the medium of military bands and heaven knows what other meddling medleys. The cool transparent string tone of the Trio brings a Haydnesque refreshment to all the tonguing and thumping of the Scherzo.

For the theme of his Variations, Schubert has chosen a melody which might well have been lifted out of his songs. Here again the violin and clarinet appear as co-equals. The subsequent adventures of this single-hearted and sunny melody through the seven succeeding variations are so easily traced that no account need be given.

The Minuet pleads to us much in the same way as the second subject of the slow movement. It is, however, the graceful lift of the secondary phrase (in itself only a bar long) which we hold longest in memory. It is from this that the Trio picks up the delightful song which it so naively sings ; and it is upon this phrase that the horn lingers in the coda.

From these tender memories we are plunged into dramatic realities. All Schubert's despair at his broken health and bitter disappointment at thwarted ambitions seem to be pent in the ringing cries which are hurled at us in the introduction to the finale amidst the turbulent muttering of the strings. But the mood quickly softens, and Schubert swings into such a marching song as could not fail to brave its way out of all troubles however great. And as this trills and sings its way unhesitatingly onwards exuberant vitality returns and many a light-hearted thought dances its way through the mind until one impertinent joke of the violins momentarily trips up the whole Wanderlied. In the development section the humcrour trills of the melody itself positively boil and bubble about us in ecstasy. But though one marches away from trouble, memory thereof may yet break through. And so those rending cries once more ring out. One brief moment only of hesitation, and Schubert marches on again with renewed zest and vigour.

S.T.M.N.