

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1957—58

Fourth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader : DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor :

SIDNEY NEWMAN

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY
CHOIR

Soloists :

THELMA GODFREY KATHLEEN JOYCE
MICHAEL GRIFFITH-JONES ROGER STALMAN

USHER HALL, EDINBURGH
THURSDAY, 5th DECEMBER, 1957

At 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME SIXPENCE

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1. OVERTURE : "The Consecration of the House" (Op. 124) *Beethoven*

This spacious overture was written to inaugurate the new Josephstadter theatre in Vienna in the autumn of 1822. (Beethoven used it again to open the concert on May 7th, 1824, at which the Ninth Symphony was first performed.) And most spacious it is, not only in design, but in its very spirit. From the first widely-spaced chords which set the quiet, solemn march upon its path, it is clear that we move in a world where simple things are to prove the profundity of their nature. No one could foretell the sequence of events that are so soon to bring us to the great conclusion of the matter, the exuberantly strong double fugue which is to plight its troth against the beat in the exercise of a strength that can stay the course beyond the race which it falls to most mortal fugues to run. The solemn march evokes a flourish of trumpet and drum beyond which one discerns a shadowy figure hurrying by (on the bassoons). At a more sober tempo a light fugato opens out to a trial of strength, only to yield to the unforgettable beauty of a quiet benediction from which, by steps at first tentative and then of ever-increasing assurance, the strings advance to proclaim the Herculean (and Handelian) labour of the day.

2. SELECTION from the Ballet Music, "The Men of Prometheus" (Op. 43) *Beethoven*

In 1800 Beethoven received a commission to compose the music for Vigano's ballet, which was produced the following year. Apparently only a rough account of general intention of that ballet has been preserved, and the printed score gives no indication of the action associated with each movement. According to Bekker, the play-bill informs us that it is a tale of "a lofty spirit who found the men of his day in a state of ignorance, and civilised them by giving them the sciences and arts. Starting from this idea, the ballet shows us two statues brought to life and made susceptible to all the passions of human life by the power of harmony."

The present selection is confined to those movements which it is thought can yield an effective sequence in concert performance, though no claim could be made that the association with the stage can be entirely ruled out of mind. The well-known overture is omitted as being redundant in this programme, as likewise the

rondo finale whose theme prompted the two great sets of variations (the Eroica finale, and the Pianoforte variations) which so far supersede its modest functions in this ballet.

- No. 1 Poco Adagio—Allegro con brio.
- No. 3 Allegro vivace.
- No. 10 Pastorale : Allegro.
- No. 5 Adagio—Andante quasi Allegretto.
- No. 8 Allegro con brio.

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY in D minor No. 9 (Op. 125) *Beethoven* ("The Choral Symphony")

- 1. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso.
- 2. Scherzo : Molto vivace, alternating with presto.
- 3. Adagio molto e cantabile, alternating with Andante moderato.
- 4. Finale : Presto alternating with quotations from previous movements *leading to* Allegro assai. Resumption of Presto and intervention of Baritone Solo followed by Chorale Finale (setting of Schiller's "Ode to Joy").

The main work of the composition of this supremely great symphony occupied the year 1823, but many ideas for its various movements (and indeed for another symphony) had occurred to Beethoven from as early as 1812, and quite clearly it was much in his mind in the years 1817-23. The idea of setting Schiller's "Ode to Joy" had occurred to him as a young man of twenty-three. Even in the summer of 1823 the setting of that Ode was a separate project, for at that time he sketched a theme for a D minor symphonic finale, which he used with some modification to an entirely different purpose in the A minor Quartet (Op. 132). Once he was convinced that the Ode could be associated with the fundamental experience of the three great symphonic movements he had composed, he had to wrestle with the problem as to how to bring about an effective and compelling transition into this song of ecstasy. It was all nonsense of Wagner to claim (for his own satisfaction) that Beethoven hereby proclaimed the ultimate inadequacy of purely instrumental music *per se* and the necessity of giving it the articulate freedom of the human voice. The moment at which Beethoven sets the whole train of events in motion with an inevitable outcome

is the moment that he hurls a cataclasm of cacophony at us following the reposeful ending of the sublimely beautiful Adagio, and answers this intrusion by instrumental recitative.

Beethoven does not set the whole of Schiller's Ode. He uses the first eight lines of each of the first three stanzas in continuity, and uses the final quatrains of three stanzas in the order of his own selection to make those great contrasting movements, the tenor's heroic song of victory, and the choral song of adoration.

In the first phase of these great variations, the ecstasy of this joy is caught in turn by soli and chorus.

Then follows the heroic march, with Tenor Solo and Male Chorus :

“ Glad as Suns his will sent flying
through the vast abyss of space,”

which culminates in a gigantic double fugue, which having run its race yields to the triumphant re-entry of the first song.

Now a new theme proclaims Man's faith in a loving Father and the instinct of adoration.

The two themes are then combined in a classical double fugue of overwhelming energy. Thereafter the mood alternates between the childlike joy of singing in simple roundelay, moments when the spirit of reverence and adoration sweep across the mind, and a frenzy of joy that can only blaze its way to the peaks of exhaustion.

S.T.M.N.

USHER HALL, WEDNESDAY, 5TH MARCH, 1958
at 7 p.m.

BERLIOZ—"DAMNATION OF FAUST"

Soloists :

RICHARD LEWIS APRIL CANTELO
BRUCE BOYCE

REID ORCHESTRA

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY CHOIR

Conductor : SIDNEY NEWMAN

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