UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1957—58

Sixth Concert

THE NEW EDINBURGH QUARTET

ROBERT COOPER — CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

ANNE CROWDEN — JOAN DICKSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 23rd JANUARY, 1958

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. QUARTET IN E FLAT (K.428) — *Mozart* (1756-91)

Allegro, ma non troppo
Andante con moto
Menuetto : Allegretto
Allegro vivace

" To my dear friend Haydn. A father who has decided to send his children into the wide world, thinks it best to entrust them to the guidance and protection of a famous man who fortunately happens to be his best of friends as well. Behold here, famous man and dearest friend, my six children. They are to be sure the fruit of long and arduous work . . ." Thus Mozart opened his dedication of the six quartets on their publication in September, 1785. They were composed over a period of three years—the completion of the first being dated Dec. 31, 1782, and that of the last Jan. 14, 1785, though an interval of about a year elapsed after the completion of the third (this E flat quartet) before Mozart resumed work upon the project. On publication in two books, each of three, this third quartet was placed fourth, presumably to bring the bright and gay ' Hunt quartet ' into place as a well-contrasted partner to the two more seriously-disposed quartets No. 1 in G and No. 2 in D minor.

Haydn himself composed no quartets after 1772 (the famous Op. 20 ' Sun ' quartets) until 1781 when his equally splendid set of Op. 33 appeared. Mozart as a youth had composed six quartets in 1773 closely modelled upon Haydn's Op. 20, and without doubt it was the appearance of Haydn's Op. 33 after nearly a decade which stimulated him to embark on his auspicious project. He was no longer the direct imitator, but though his style and technique were now mature and his invention gloriously inspired, he still owed an enormous debt to Haydn. For example there can be no doubt that in writing the wonderful A flat Andante of this quartet he had in mind the " Affetuoso e sostenuto " slow movement in the same key in Haydn's Op. 20, No. 1—a movement so richly and lastingly sustained that its very phrases are paragraphs. And where does the sturdy ' bray ' of this minuet come from if not from Haydn's Op. 33, No. 2.? As for the finale, both Haydn and Mozart had a glorious game playing rondos round overserious-minded analysts of later centuries, one of whom seems to have been so short of wind that he stood still and solemnly proclaimed that ' there is a one-bar pause in lieu of a development section.' Perhaps the minuet was intended for him!

S.T.M.N.

2. STRING QUARTET No. 2, Op. 17 — *Béla Bartók* (1881-1945)

Moderato
Allegro molto capriccioso
Lento

Bartok's second String Quartet—completed in 1917 when he was thirty-six and first performed in Budapest in the following year by the Quartet Waldbauer-Kerpely to whom it is dedicated—marks an important turning-point in his creative development. For it belongs to the very first works in which the fingerprints of Bartók's mature style become visible. An increasingly complex idiom of chromatic harmony is here (perhaps for the first time) applied to primitive melodic material of Hungarian peasant origin. Bartók's later obsession with tiny motif-particles rather than with elongated melodic paragraphs, but also his life-long aim at closest thematic integration can be noticed in the two slow flanking movements in which identical thematic cells are utilised.

The principal melody of the first movement, given to the first Violin and extending over bars 2 to 6 is a case in point. It presents, surely quite fortuitously, an almost complete twelve-note series (e-a-d-c sharp-g sharp-g natural-b flat-g double sharp-f sharp-f natural-e flat-d flat) but only its incipit of five notes, with the intervals of rising and falling Fourths, is turned into a determinant of the whole work. That five note incipit, which pervades the predominantly lyrical first movement as a kind of haunting bird-cry, returns later on to express the introspective gloom of the third movement (g sharp-c sharp-f-c-b flat, in bars 11 and 12). Quartet No. 2 is planned, like its predecessor Op. 8, in three movements of which only the initial one approximately conforms to the traditional pattern of Sonata-form. In it the cantabile subject (cue f) is only a subtle transformation of the initial five-note-motif and the effect of thematic contrast is shifted to the conclusion group, a three-note-motif and its inversion which, on the occasion of its recapitulatory return near the end of the movement, is presented as a product of bitonality. The melody in the upper strings, with its rising and falling Fourth and its quaint folk-tune-like flavour, progresses in A minor and D minor while its chordal pizzicato-accompaniment in the Cello sticks to A major and D major with gentle persistence.

As the first movement favoured the interval of the rising and falling Fourth, the second movement, a kind of primitive and ferocious Rondo, propelled by the irresistible momentum of its staccato rhythm (an unmistakable feature of Hungarian folk-dance !) seems chiefly determined by the Tritone and the minor Third. Their constant reiteration produces motif-patterns, and a kind of crude background harmony is being provided by a system of pedal-points (mainly utilising open strings). The savagery of this perpetuum mobile-like Scherzo reaches its climax in the final Stretta, relying entirely on a frenzied repetition of the three-note-motif, f sharp-f natural-d.

The reflective gloom of the final " Lento " comes as a shattering anti-climax. It functions as a psychological " flash-back " to the two preceding movements. However, the five-note " bird-cry " motif of movement 1 as well as the Tritone of the Scherzo now reappear in the weird elongation of a " slow-motion " picture. The falling Fourth again begins to dominate the music which, particularly in the *accellerando* of its final climax, seems to express the approach of some fatal and irrevocable event. The final ten bars, as it were, epitomize the fundamental tension of the whole work in its basic intervallic form. They present a succession of expressionless, disjointed major Thirds and Fourths, with the three-note-motif of the middle movement wistfully trailing off in the last utterance of the first Violin.

H.F.R.

INTERVAL

3. Quartet in G Major, Op. 161

Schubert
(1797-1828)

Allegro molto moderato
Andante un poco moto
Scherzo : Allegro vivace — Allegretto
Allegro assai

This great quartet, composed between June 20th and 30th, 1826, did not appear in print until twenty-two years after Schubert's death, when it was published as Op. 161, to be followed two years later by the last and greatest of Schubert's chamber music compositions, the Quintet in C major with two 'cellos (Op. 163). Both works have much in common and much that distinguishes them from Schubert's earlier chamber music for strings. At the outset each shows the harmonic basis of Schubert's thought which is to result in many orchestral effects .Each, too, is remarkable for the fullness of the writing ; the first movement of the earlier work indeed seems prophetic of the addition of other instruments to the quartet ensemble, for there are several passages which consist of true sextet writing such as will be found in Brahms, to which the four instruments are required to adapt their powers.

The G major quartet is of truly astonishing size, for Schubert claims space at each stage for the repetition, variation, and immediate " local " development of his themes.

The basic idea of the work as a whole is that proclaimed in the opening themes of the first and last movements, the conflict and synthesis of major and minor tonality. In the first movement, this opposition is reinforced by the dynamic contrasts of pianissimo and fortissimo with which the major-minor issue is largely equated. Again the major influence is lyrical, that of the minor inclines to impetuous gestures and energetic action.

The Andante (in E minor) is written in extended Lied form, the " song " and the " after-song " (here a dramatic episode of symphonic power) alternating in a scheme of five stanzas. The song melody of the 'cello itself foreshadows the alternating pattern of the whole movement.

The B minor Scherzo with its " all-over " rhythmic pattern defies description. To quote the thematic rhythm of the first two bars would explain the whole. To call this a " chattering " rhythm because it begins pianissimo would be to ignore the relentless force with which it soom hammers out its invincible will. But the Trio invites to less strenuous ways with the enchanting sway of its amiable Landler valse.

The Rondo finale is as much a feat of endurance as a Kentucky running set, and its ample repetitions should be judged by their cumulative effect in protracting the excitement. If not a markedly subtle rondo, it is nevertheless an intoxicating dance.

S.T.M.N.