

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1958—59

*First Concert*

THE NEW  
EDINBURGH QUARTET

ROBERT COOPER

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

ANNE CROWDEN

IAN HAMPTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 23rd OCTOBER, 1958

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

## PROGRAMME

### I. QUARTET IN B FLAT, OP. 18, No. 6

*Beethoven*  
(1770-1827)

Allegro con brio  
Adagio ma non troppo  
Scherzo  
Adagio ("La Malinconia") leading to Allegro.

Beethoven's early chamber-music frequently appears with several works grouped under one opus number, *e.g.*, Op. 1, Op. 12 and Op. 18. The opulence of the Quartets of his middle period, and the lofty grandeur of the later works, tend sometimes to obscure the great qualities of the earlier compositions. The six Quartets of Op. 18 exhibit in great diversity the full range of true quartet style—a range only later extended by reason of the extension in range of the composer's thought and inspiration.

On the cheerful nature of the first movement the second group of themes throws only momentary shadows, and the leisurely sequences of the development culminate in a characteristic passage of poised suspense awaiting the recapitulation. The Adagio—a simple ternary movement—is richly scored, each theme being given fresh ornamentation on its recurrence. The Scherzo expresses its high spirits in syncopation throughout, and the tiny trio is led by the first violin with a light dancing figure. The Finale begins with an Adagio introduction surprisingly entitled "La Malinconia," but it is surely a melancholy more capricious and whimsical than deep-seated. It is followed by the main part of the movement in the gayest of spirits and of a simple structure; and the happy mood is only momentarily interrupted by a fragmentary recollection of the opening "melancholy."

### 2. QUARTET IN F

*Ravel*  
(1875-1937)

Allegro moderato  
Assez vif—très rythmé  
Très lent  
Vif et agité

This work was written in 1902—the year in which Debussy produced "Pelleas et Mélisande"—when Ravel was twenty-seven years of age. It is dedicated to "mon cher maitre, Gabriel Fauré," and, if any influence is traceable in the style, it is surely that of the fastidious elegance of that composer.

The first movement opens with a flowing melody containing in its first bars a figure which, if not quite an "idée fixe" keeps finding its way into later movements. The second theme, of which two bars would identify the composer, is scored two octaves apart with light accompaniment. A fine flow of melody carries the development to a big climax after which the recapitulation follows quite in the classical tradition, with, however, the adroit management of the second theme which, although given a quite different harmonic slant, reappears at exactly the original pitch.

The second movement exhibits a wealth of devices exploiting the possibilities of colour obtainable from four strings—ranging from the guitar-like pizzicato of the opening to the variety of effects displayed in the muted middle section. In hesitant mood the third movement begins, bringing with it presently soft reminiscences of the opening theme of the Quartet. An expressive theme appears in the viola and as it dies away, the little figure steals in again and the mood of hesitancy returns. A new theme emerges in the second violin, and leads eventually to an impassioned climax. The climax subsides and the first movement figure combined with fragments of the opening of the movement intervenes, leading to the recapitulation. The fourth movement vigorously dispels the langours of the third with a 5/8 figure in persistent double-bowing. The second group of themes are derivatives of themes from the first movement—the "cyclic thematic development" which Ravel used in several of his chamber-music works. After the recapitulation a short brilliant coda concludes the work.

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## INTERVAL

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### 3. QUARTET IN D MINOR

*Schubert*

("Death and the Maiden")

(1797-1828)

Allegro  
Andante con moto  
Presto.

Schubert wrote this, his best-known Quartet, at the age of twenty-seven—exactly the same age as was Ravel when he wrote his sole work in the medium. (Beethoven was only a year or so older when he composed his Op. 18.) His grand-niece wrote that "Franz Schubert was one of the happiest of mortals that ever lived"; he had "a genius for happiness." But at the time when this Quartet was composed he wrote "I am the most unhappy and wretched creature in the world"; he was, in fact, suffering from ill-health and depression of spirits. Nevertheless, the view

that this Quartet expresses Schubert's "obsession with the idea of Death" seems somewhat limited. It is possibly true that the Variations dominate the whole work and that there is a singular unity of purpose throughout the Quartet. But surely the greatness of its tragic and dramatic musical qualities is the outcome of the profound genius that could, at the age of seventeen, express in music with penetrating understanding the pathos of "Gretchen" and the tragedy of the "Erl-könig." The finale is actually said by some to contain in the cantabile theme (in the second violin) a direct quotation from the latter song. Whether this is intentional or not may be argued; musically, the effect of the contrast between the slower-moving theme and the tarantella-like energy of the main theme, is, like everything else in the work, unanswerably true.

M. G.