

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1958—59

Second Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: HANS GAL

Solo Pianoforte:

FRANCIS BAMBERGER

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 30th OCTOBER, 1958

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. OVERTURE TO "A Midsummer-Night's Dream"

Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

The music of Mendelssohn's adolescence is an unsurpassed marvel of early mastery, and two works of his teens stand out among his highest creative achievements—the Octet for string instruments, and this overture, written at the age of seventeen with the intention of a concert overture. It was obvious to include it when, sixteen years later, he was commissioned to write incidental music to Shakespeare's play, and for this he also used some episodes of the overture as a quarry.

It is unnecessary to look for programmatic suggestions in a work of such impeccable formal integrity. But it is easy to see that the whole world of Shakespeare's play, as conceived by the mind of a young romantic, is reflected in a musical pageant of fairies, goblins, romance and horseplay; and with some imagination one might even hear the roar of the lion in a spectacular entry of the ophicleide, an obsolete brass instrument of the eighteen-twenties, now generally substituted by a bass tuba.

2. PIANOFORTE CONCERTO

Hans Gal
(b. 1890)

Allegro energico e brillante
Adagio
Allegretto vivace

Written in 1948, this work had its first performance in the following year in Bournemouth by Iso Elinson, Rudolf Schwarz conducting, and it has had a number of performances since both in this country and abroad. As a concerto in the proper sense, it puts the soloist into the centre of the stage right from the beginning—without the traditional "tutti"—and keeps him in the lime-light throughout, with the orchestra as a closely associated partner in a symphonic tissue.

The first movement follows in a general sense the outlines of a sonata form, replacing, however, the traditional recapitulation by an elaborate solo cadenza and extended coda. The second movement is largely lyrical, the pianoforte alternating with a kind of solo concertino formed by a flute, an oboe, a violin and a 'cello who open the movement. In the finale, the rondo subject suggested

by the tutti is instantly opposed by another, more dancelike counter-proposal of the soloist, and throughout the movement a kind of thematic duality decides the formal development which, after another cadenza episode of the pianoforte, culminates in a stretta coda.

H.G.

INTERVAL

3. ITALIAN SERENADE (ORCHESTRAL VERSION)

Hugo Wolf
(1860-1903)

Solo Viola: CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

Wolf first conceived this composition as a string quartet. He began it in 1887, the year when his first songs were published; but when he resumed work upon it some years later he chose a wider scope of colouring through the medium of a small orchestra. Only one movement and some sketches of another two were ever completed, and Wolf had already turned back again to the idea that the string quartet was the most suitable medium for what he wished to realise. After his death the orchestral version of this single movement was published, revised by Max Reger, whose contribution however was confined to minor details of editing, and it became known and widely acclaimed long before the string quartet version, published simultaneously, won a place in the affection of all chamber music lovers which it is not likely to lose. "Throughout his career as an artist," writes Aber, "Hugo Wolf was possessed by the desire to compose an instrumental work in which he could express his passionate love for the life and landscape of the south." Although only this one rondo movement was completed, how surely he has achieved his ideal.

S.T.M.N.

4. SYMPHONY No. 4 in B flat, Op. 60

Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Adagio, leading to Allegro vivace
Adagio
Allegro vivace (Scherzo and Trio)
Allegro ma non troppo

Situated between such peaks as his Third and Fifth Symphonies, Beethoven's "Fourth" seems to be a little neglected, compared with those more awe-inspiring neighbours. But its crystalline purity of form and style has always made it dear to the

connoisseur who loves Beethoven's idyllic, serene, emotionally restrained music as much as the heroic, monumental side of his character.

The slow introduction, mysterious and puzzling, keeps the listener guessing what kind of emotional climate he has to expect; it is like groping through a dark fog, till, with a sudden dominant, the light breaks through. But it exposes, with a descending third in sequence, a kind of germ motive which dominates the following, very lively allegro, giving a start to its first subject and opening the second one, in a rhythmical diminution, like a mockery of the solemn steps of the introduction,

The emotional climax of the symphony is its large Adagio, a purely lyrical piece of concentrated expressiveness, the symphonic construction of which is hidden behind an incessant stream of melody. The Scherzo plays an amusing kind of shuttlecock with different groups of instruments interrupting and intercepting each other. In the trio section—it comes twice between recapitulations of the scherzo—the chief intruder is the first violin who seems to interrupt a quietly-flowing melody of the wind instruments with an ever-recurring question: "Is your psalmody really necessary?" But the real fun starts in the Finale, a kind of perpetuum mobile of rumbustious semiquavers which, however, leaves room for an extraordinarily expressive little phrase that makes its entry instantly after the first bustle. The humorous scramble is not without touches of mischief—and the bassoon will be lucky if he is not tripped up at a certain moment.

H.G.