

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1958—59

Third Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: THOMAS MATTHEWS

Solo Pianoforte:

EILEEN RALF

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 13th NOVEMBER, 1958

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. DIVERTIMENTO IN B FLAT

Lennox Berkeley
(b. 1903)

Prelude
Nocturne
Scherzo
Finale

Lennox Berkeley sought his musical training in Paris under Nadia Boulanger (to whom he has dedicated this work). He has proved himself one of the most distinctive of the British composers who have sought to be stylistically free of German influences and likewise of the French impressionists. He is now a professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Apart from chamber music and solo pianoforte works, one may mention amongst his chief orchestral works a Symphony, Nocturne, two Pianoforte Concertos (one solo, one double) and Serenade for String Orchestra. The Divertimento is scored for double wind, horns and trumpets, one trombone, timpani and strings.

S.T.M.N.

2. SYMPHONY NO. 9 IN E FLAT, Op. 70

Shostakovich
(b.1906)

Allegro
Moderato
Presto—Largo—Allegretto

This symphony was completed in August, 1945, and received its first performance in Britain at a Promenade Concert in 1946. Judging by performances since then one gets the impression that certain symphonies of Shostakovich have much more appeal than others, these being Nos. 1, 5, 7 and 9. There is a striking similarity here to the popularity of the same numbers in the Beethoven symphonies.

The orchestra employed in this symphony is not large, unlike most of his other orchestral works, and can be described as modest in contemporary writing. Also it is much more terse than any other work he has written, with the exception of the 1st Symphony, and plays about twenty-five minutes. There are five short movements, the last three being played without a break.

The first movement opens with a very bright violin theme, and leads to an equally gay, almost cheeky, tune on the Piccolo with string pizzicato. The development contains much of the violin theme, often upside down, and when the exposition returns, it is

in a much varied form, with the piccolo tune appearing as a violin solo.

The second movement has a beautiful cantabile clarinet solo, which, after a contrasted section for strings, is repeated on the flute.

The Scherzo is a very brilliant and rhythmical piece of writing, rather Mendelssohnian in character. The woodwind lead most of the time, the trumpets attempting to make the occasion more solemn. In the short Largo section, a majestic introduction for brass leads to a very plaintive recitativo theme for bassoon, interrupted in the middle by a reassertion of the brass. Without a break the bassoon leads off into a sparkling and vigorous finale, which is always busy. It becomes quite boisterous, trumpets adding a touch of Italian opera with a tune that has served as a kind of ostinato bass to the second theme. However, in the coda the mood changes to a soft, faster and more serious treatment of the first theme, blown away finally by a flourish of the trumpet phrase.

J.F.

3. PIANOFORTE CONCERTO NO. 2 IN B FLAT, (Op. 83) *Brahms* (1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo
Allegro appassionato
Andante
Allegretto grazioso

For many people this is the greatest of all pianoforte concertos. It certainly is one of the greatest of Brahms' works by virtue of the beauty and variety of its many themes, and the richness of its orchestration, which is so fittingly matched with the brilliant and lovely writing of the pianoforte part. The unusual feature of the work is the addition of a Scherzo, making four movements in place of the customary three. And it is an unusual scherzo, which follows the powerful first movement in an unexpected minor key, and is characterised by an impassioned, almost tragic, mood.

The serenity of the opening of the slow movement, with the theme in the solo 'cello, makes a moving contrast with the scherzo, though even the slow movement has its moments of passion.

Gustav Holst—who "discovered" Brahms late in life—once said, à propos of the finale of the F major sonata for pianoforte and 'cello, "No-one but a very great composer could ever have written such a perfect last movement." The same might well be said of the very different finale to this concerto, in which the child-like grace of the music resolves all the stresses of the three preceding movements, and satisfactorily completes a great design.

M.G.