

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1958-59

Sixth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Conductor: JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Solo Violoncello :
JOAN DICKSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 29th JANUARY, 1959
At 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. OVERTURE, "PROMETHEUS," Op. 43 Beethoven
(composed 1801)
2. SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN A MINOR, Op. 63 Sibelius
(composed 1911)

Tempo molto moderato, quasi adagio
Allegro molto vivace
Il tempo largo
Allegro

An apt title for this symphony might well be, *An essay on the Tritone*, or augmented fourth, as all the movements have this interval, in melody, harmony, contrast of triads, and modulation. It is interesting to speculate whether the composer, before writing the symphony, had the idea to link the movements by such a germ, or whether the organic growth of the first movement gave stimulus to the succeeding music. Except for the appearance of part of the first theme of the finale in the coda of the largo, there is no evidence of any thematic apposition between movements.

With the exception of the finale, the movements, in design, are terse to a degree seldom experienced in symphonic music, and the orchestration likewise, is so thin and naked, without a superfluous note, that often we appear to be hearing the skeleton of the music. The full tutti of the very moderate-sized orchestra is only heard occasionally for a few bars at a time, and the "Brass," bereft of the resonant support of high wood-wind, sounds quite harsh, indeed it snarls.

The opening introductory bars of the first movement immediately show the outline of the tritone, and there is a vagueness about the tonality, until the appearance of the theme, announced by a solo cello, and continued mainly by the string group. Brass chords begin a very short and sketchy second subject in a remote key, and this is joined to a variation of the cello theme, first in syncopation, and then in a fast triplet figure, so characteristic of Sibelius, and both formations make great play with the tritone. The return of the first subject is omitted, but the second returns in full, followed by a coda of five bars, with the tritone inverted.

The second movement, in F major, has the characteristics of a scherzo, but certainly not the shape. There is the suggestion of a trio in duple time, and a reprise that starts by giving the opening theme backwards, but after two false entries in foreign keys, it rights itself, and makes the expected return. Then, after a coda built up on a short phrase of the first theme, the music suddenly

moves at half the speed, and a variant of the melody, in two sections, is ushered in by the wood-wind. The many repetitions of this variant, with numerous augmentations, and diminutions, entirely alters the character of the movement, which had been at the beginning light-hearted and bright. Now there is a sombre, even tragic tone in the music, and it will remain so until the end of the symphony.

The largo shows the gradual evolution of two contrasted themes, although the first, a collection of wistful little phrases, shared by the wood-wind, never quite succeeds in building up into a long melodic line. It is heard in various rhythms, and also once as a counterpoint to the other theme. This second theme, first tried out in the horns, not only emerges with success, but indeed becomes the most sustained theme of the symphony.

The start of the finale is quite the reverse of the previous movement, as here the first theme is announced complete, and never appears again, except in short phrases. In spite of this unusual procedure, the movement can be described as in sonata form. The first group is much extended, with three distinct sections, the third of which has a sustained wood-wind counterpoint, hardly noticed at this stage, against the quicker moving main theme. However, it assumes a major role in the coda. The link before the second subject, contains chords in dialogue between wood-wind, and strings, reminiscent of the fifth symphony by Beethoven, but here the chords are a tritone apart, E flat and A. These chords find a common denominator in C, and become the basis on which are built the short themes of the second subject. The development is relatively short, and leads back to the exposition, without the first theme, but otherwise fully stated. The second subject is omitted, and the music leads straight into a powerful coda, with the themes all broken up into tiny fragments, of which the most persistent is the tritone figure. As the music gradually fades, the rising third in the flute, previously noted at the beginning of the movement as a relatively unimportant figure, now becomes, in dialogue with the oboe, the dominant feature of the coda.

3. DANCES OF GALANTA

Kodaly
(composed 1934)

Kodaly has not been a prolific composer, nor one who has had much popular appeal. The composition to be played this evening is only the second work to appear at these concerts, the *Psalmus Hungaricus* having been performed a few years ago, in collaboration with the University Musical Society.

Bartok and Kodaly became interested in the collecting of Hungarian folk-music at the beginning of the century, and their joint efforts have resulted in the preparation and printing of more than 3,000 melodies. These composers have been most insistent in

proclaiming that what they have collected, sifted, and edited, is the pure Hungarian folk-music, and bears no relation or resemblance to the Gipsy music of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, and Brahms' Hungarian Dances.

The Dances of Galanta was composed for the 80th anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic Society, in 1934. Galanta, where Kodaly spent part of his youth, is a town on the main Vienna-Budapest railway, and presumably he heard some of the dance tunes there.

There are five dances, prefaced by a lengthy introduction, and arranged progressively from slow to fast. It is not a pot-pourri, but a most artistic realisation of the melodies, with a suggestion of Rondo form, as the first dance is repeated after the second and third, and also in the coda.

INTERVAL

4. VIOLONCELLO CONCERTO IN B MINOR, Op. 104 *Dvorak*
(composed 1896)

Allegro

Adagio ma non troppo

Allegro moderato

This concerto is now so well-known that a precis of its form is unnecessary. A new complete edition of the works of Dvorak is in hand, and about a third of the music has already been critically reviewed, and published, including the cello concerto. Some interesting details have come to light, the most important being that the second theme of the slow movement is taken from a song, the first of a group of "Four Songs," Op. 82, composed a few years earlier. It was most unusual for Dvorak to use any previous material in his compositions, but evidence exists in letters written by the composer, that while working at the concerto, he received news of the death of a beloved relative, and felt compelled to insert this melody, which, with its associated words, fully expressed his emotions.

Most of the concerto was written in America during his last visit in 1904-5, and only the last sixty bars of the finale were added in 1906, after he returned home. It is the most romantic of all concerti, and although it is diffuse in form, the profusion of melodies, and the colourful orchestration, mitigate any impression of great length. The wood-wind especially play a prominent part, notably the duets for cello and flute. Although written in the most "bravura" style, there is no place for a cadenza, and Dvorak was very emphatic in stating that he would not have one, when the suggestion was made, before the first performance.

J.F.