

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1958-59

Sixth Concert

PIANOFORTE RECITAL

KENNETH LEIGHTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY, 1959

At 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. ENGLISH SUITE IN G MINOR.

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande (avec les agréments)
Gavottes I and II
Gigue

Bach.
(1685-1750)

2. SONATA IN E FLAT (No. 49).

Allegro
Adagio Cantabile
Finale

Haydn.
(1732-1809)

This fine sonata is one of the last group of five, which are the peak of Haydn's achievement in the form. He started to compose the work in 1788 for his friend and admirer Marianne Genzinger, but it was not completed until 1790, during the difficult and lonely period after the death of Prince Esterhazy. It was at this time that Haydn wrote the beautiful slow movement which he mentions in one of his letters as being "full of significance."

The first movement is full of fine material, and one may note in the second subject how the Alberti Bass becomes in Haydn's hands a supple and extremely effective instrument of expression. The development section ends with a dramatic and mysterious transition, which must (one imagines) have made a considerable impression on the young Beethoven.

The slow movement is unsurpassed in Haydn's keyboard works. It is in fact an almost unending melody of bewitching tenderness, and in the variations one hears Haydn's embellishments at their most expressive and meaningful.

3. BALLADE IN F MINOR (OPUS 52).

NOCTURNE IN B MAJOR (OPUS 62, No. 1).
POLONAISE IN F SHARP MINOR (OPUS 44).

Chopin.
(1810-1849)

These three works belong to Chopin's last and greatest period (1841-1849). Like all the products of these years, they are distinguished by their harmonic subtlety, and by the accumulation and

elaboration of devices already familiar in the earlier works. The last of the four Ballades is particularly remarkable for the subtlety of its form, as well as of its harmony, containing as it does elements of variation, rondo and sonata.

The B major Nocturne is unparalleled in the genre for the richness and delicacy of its ornamentation, particularly in the final section; and the return to the tonic near the end is one of the most beautiful examples of Chopin's astonishing originality and harmonic daring.

The Polonaise in F sharp minor sweeps along with unrelenting energy and power, and has an epic grandeur which makes it the equal of the great A flat Polonaise and the Polonaise-Fantasy. The trio section is in the form of a Mazurka, and the purely rhythmic section before the Mazurka is one of the most audacious and prophetic passages in all Chopin.

INTERVAL

4. VARIATIONS (OPUS 30).

Kenneth Leighton.
(b. 1929)

Introduzione. Canzonetta. Ninna-nanna. Toccata.
Notturmo. Valzer. Fanfara. Interludio. Fuga.

This work, written in 1955, was the composer's first essay in serial technique. The tone row is worked out strictly, but without (for the most part) losing a sense of tonality. The row is stated simply in its four possible forms in the Introduction, and then treated in various types of rhythm and figuration. Not that these facts have any real importance. The piece was performed several times before anyone realised it was "serial" at all.

5. SONATA (1926).

Bartók.
(1881-1945)

The Sonata is one of the finest achievements of Bartók's middle period. The first movement follows the rough design of sonata-form, but the material consists mainly of short rhythmic motives which are handled with extreme concentration. The middle section in particular is remarkable for its clear and masterly combination of the various themes, and as a whole the movement has a grandeur and power without parallel in twentieth century piano music.

The slow movement hides an intense expressiveness behind its stark exterior, and has a close relative in the finale of the second quartet. The opening repeated E's (heard always in Bartók's familiar device of the semitone within a whole-tone) recur at intervals throughout the movement with an almost hypnotic effect.

The Finale is full of exuberance and rhythmic excitement. The opening theme is in the manner of a Hungarian folk-song in unequal rhythm, and comes back at intervals in a rondo-like structure. What is not so immediately apparent is that the episodes themselves are variations of the theme, which is exploited all the way with astonishing resource and originality.

K. L.