

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1959-60

First Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 22nd OCTOBER, 1959

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

I. OVERTURE: "The Magic Flute"

Mozart
(1756-1791)

The fact that Schikaneder billed *The Magic Flute* as a "Grand Opera" provides a convenient excuse for refraining from classifying this immortal work under any other category. And as a grand opera it has a grandeur all its own, ranging from the most profound and moving solemnities to the most naively impertinent and ridiculous comedy, and yet preserving throughout so rare a beauty that one might almost say that it is never so sublime as when it is most ridiculous.

The overture boldly contrasts the solemn mysteries of the temple of Isis and Osiris with a movement of deliciously nimble-witted good humour, yet at the same time of powerful drive and with a sufficiency of fugato to persuade even a Papageno that wisdom can be gay. The fact that the lively and entertaining theme of this latter is almost identical with that of a Clementi Sonata which Mozart had heard nine years earlier, when the two composers competed before the Emperor Joseph II, serves only to show what virtue lives in magic flutes, and Clementi had not such a thing amongst his possessions.

SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN F

Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro con brio
Andante
Poco Allegretto
Allegro—un poco sostenuto

This is the most arrestingly romantic and at the same time the most compact in design of Brahms' four symphonies. The immediate challenge of the first three notes veering from major to minor is the predominant motive underlying the first movement. Straightway it evokes the passionate plunging theme of the violins which is to build such solid strength and yet on the other hand to relax with such tenderness before this most dramatic movement falls to a close. The second theme is a quiet and graceful pastorale whose pulse soon sets other delicate figures dancing to its measure. Yet this same pastorale theme is later provoked to assume a mood of passionate anger.

The simple beauty of the echoed song with which the C-major Andante opens, is instinct with solemnities which are soon to unfold in sombre grandeur, treading a path which leads through the shades of mystery and by the springs of the heart's warmth to the lasting serenity of journey's end.

The beautiful melody of the C-minor Allegretto is caressed by an accompaniment of exquisite sensitivity and enriched, as it recurs, by the fresh colouring of varied instrumentation. The middle section takes up a point of interruption and interprets this with a motif that forever leans athwart the beat.

The intensely dramatic finale opens in dark mystery and tragic foreboding, but is soon transformed to bitter strokes of anger showing the tremendous power which must be withstood or suffered to expend itself (despite the exuberant hopes of an early song of triumph) before the clouds of tragedy are at length dispersed, and that first vindictive theme of all now falls peacefully as a benediction upon the afterglow.

INTERVAL

3. "CORTÈGES" (Fantasy-Overture)

Alan Rawsthorne
(b. 1905)

Rawsthorne, whose second symphony received its première at Birmingham last month, came to the fore as a composer at the I.S.C.M. festivals in the two years immediately preceding the outbreak of war in 1939. Whilst serving in the army he was yet able to compose a number of important works, including the first pianoforte concerto and *Cortèges*, which was completed early in 1945, and produced at the Promenade Concerts that summer (and introduced to Edinburgh at a Reid Concert later that same year). It is scored for full orchestra with harp and a variety of percussion. The score was originally prefaced by the quotation of the last stanza of A. E. Houseman's poem entitled "Fancy's Knell" (from *Last Poems*):

"The lofty shade advances,
I fetch my flute and play:
Come, lads, and learn the dances
And praise the tune today.
Tomorrow, more's the pity,
Away we both must hie,
To air the ditty
And to earth I."

Here in the music we are made to feel that darker and more solemn shade beneath which none may

“ . . . lift with playing
From tree and tower and steep
The light delaying,
And flute the sun to sleep.”

Within the shadow cast by the funereal tones of a recurrent Adagio, the winding measures dance out their day, the motives turning upon themselves in unceasing variety of figuration, and even making a bold bid towards some festive pageantry. But they are never wholly carefree in the grey light which falls upon them.

4. NOCTURNE

Lennox Berkeley
(b. 1903)

Lennox Berkeley's *Nocturne for Orchestra* dates from the same year as Rawsthorne's *Cortèges* to which it provides an effective contrast of mood and style. It is sustained by a quiet lyricism which at moments swells or bursts suddenly into warmth and even passionate ardour. A large orchestra is employed, but with Gallic discrimination and economy. The style is already that of the mature composer who, having studied for some years in France as a young man, has assimilated many traits of French idiom in his own individual, sensitive and fastidious style.

S.T.M.N.

5. TWO SLAVONIC DANCES

Dvorák
(1841-1904)

Op. 46 No. 4 in F. Tempo di Menuetto
No. 1 in C. Presto