

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1959-60

Second Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Violin:

RALPH HOLMES

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 5th NOVEMBER, 1959

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

I. OVERTURE: "CORIOLANUS" (Op. 62)

Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Although it was for a German play by a contemporary writer, Collin, that Beethoven wrote this overture, the listener will be better advised to remember Shakespeare's drama, and need not deplore the fact that Collin's play is unknown to him. If a programme note is required it is ready to hand in Shakespeare's verse; but any who are familiar with Wagner's prose writings will know his study of this overture to be amongst his most inspired writings. More briefly, he sketched the same argument in his article on Beethoven which marked the centenary of the composer's birth: "If we call to mind the impression left upon us by the Coriolanus of Shakespeare's drama, and retain such details of the complicated action only as were impressive with regard to the chief character, the single figure of a Coriolanus defiant will arise before us, in conflict with an inner voice, which, again, in person of his mother, speaks louder and stronger to his pride; and the dramatic development will appear to consist in the mastering of his pride by that voice, in the breaking of the defiance of his extraordinarily powerful nature."

"Beethoven chose for his drama these two chief motives only, and they induce us to feel the essential nature of those two characters more distinctly than any conceptional presentation thereof."

2. VIOLIN CONCERTO in D (Op. 61)

Beethoven

Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto
Rondo: Allegro

The autograph was inscribed by the composer "Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement, primo violino e direttore al teatro a Vienne dal L. v. Bthvn, 1806." Franz Clement (1780-1842) for whom this great concerto was expressly composed and who gave the first performance on 23rd December, 1806, was a very fine violinist and a very considerable musician (able, it is recounted, to make a pianoforte score of Haydn's *Creation* from memory after hearing the work a few times, with no aid but the libretto!) He had been in London as a boy prodigy in the early nineties, and on returning to

Vienna had been appointed solo player to the emperor and conductor at the Theater an der Wien. According to Czerny, Clement gave the first performance only two days after the concerto was completed. The grain of salt that must season this impressive utterance is provided by the autograph itself, which shows clearly that Clement contributed much to the detailed shaping of the solo line, and that the composer worked with close regard to his chosen artist.

It is one of the most spacious concertos in all musical literature, perhaps we may say the most spacious by reason of the over-all quietness and serenity of the work, the ample room it holds for melodic repetition, whether simple or varied, and the fact that moments of strength and tensivity are resolved in breadth and a far-sighted ease of mind. The *Larghetto* in its simple extension of peaceful variation brings this divinely peaceful mood almost to the point of contemplative inactivity, but the link to the Rondo provides both a practical solution to this dream-like condition and at the same time enhances the very nature of the Rondo itself, that its most significant and telling moments are those when its constantly recurring theme falls into the rhythmic sway of its simple but infectious melody.

INTERVAL

3. ADAGIO and FUGUE for Strings, in C minor (K.546) *Mozart* (1756-1791)

On the same day (26th June, 1788) on which Mozart entered the completed Symphony in E flat (K.543) in his own thematic catalogue, he also entered three other small works recently finished, one of which is this Adagio, noted by him as "A short Adagio for 2 Violins, Viola and Bass, for a Fugue which I wrote some while ago for two pianofortes." The fugue (which he now set out in score for strings—with indication that contrabasso was intended in addition to violoncello) was composed in December, 1783, (K.426) and is the last of a series of works composed at various times during 1782-83 which were primarily prompted by van Swieten's introduction of Mozart to a substantial number of works by north-German composers, in particular J. S. Bach and Handel, and which were in some measure fostered by Constanza's love of fugues. Pianists will do well to take a leaf out of Mozart and play a transcription of this fine adagio as a preface to 'their fugue.'

4. SYMPHONY No. 39 in E flat (K.543)

Mozart

Adagio Allegro

Andante

Minuet: Allegretto

Finale: Allegro

The last three great symphonies, composed in close succession in the summer of 1788 (the G minor finished 25th July and the 'Jupiter' 10th August), exhibit much the same variety of distinctive orchestral colouring as the sequence of pianoforte concertos of 1786 (K.488 in A major, K.491 in C minor, and K.503 in C major). In each case the first acquires a specially rich hue from the use of clarinets and the exclusion of oboes, the second (taking the G minor symphony in Mozart's revised version) uses complete wind band, and the third reverts to the older tradition of classical symphonic orchestration with oboes dominant and clarinets excluded. Yet in none of his symphonies did Mozart embrace the full range of colour and tonal contrasts that full wind and brass sections allow, as he did with such symphonic mastery in the great C minor concerto.

The E flat symphony is gloriously rich in tone almost from first to last; in the massive resonance of its profoundly grand and spacious introduction; in the suave and mellow beauty of its first allegro where generous melody alternates with brilliant and virile tutti; in the warmth and deep resonance of strings unfolding the glorious melody of the Andante in A flat major, offset by contrasting tutti paragraphs of passionate strength, and hallowed by the unforgettable beauty of wind tone quietly building up tier upon tier. Rarely do minuets appear in such a blaze of light as that which wind and brass here shed upon the scene. By contrast the quiet trio glides upon the deep dark ripple of the second clarinet.

If ever a symphonic movement of Mozart's was a tribute to Haydn's humour and Haydn's economy, it is this finale. I should guess that both of them would have found such a word as 'monothematic' perfectly intolerable, but if anyone as he listened began to wonder "what have you?" I can see precisely how they would relish his intelligence even though the only answer given was an adroit 'cock o' the snoot' by flute, clarinet and bassoon. In this scene of lusty happiness and glorious digressions from familiar ways there is no room for personal susceptibilities.

S.T.M.N.