

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1959-60

Fourth Concert

VIOLA

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

PIANOFORTE

KENNETH LEIGHTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 10th DECEMBER, 1959

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

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| 1. | LA CALIFORNIENNE
THE WISCONSONIAN (from <i>Quatre Visages</i>) | <i>Milhaud</i> |
| 2. | LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN
Prelude
Fugue
Forlane
Rigaudon
Menuet
Toccata | <i>Ravel</i> |
| 3. | SUITE FOR VIOLA AND PIANO
Lento—Allegro
Allegro Ironico—Grave
Lento
Molto Vivo | <i>Bloch</i> |

I N T E R V A L

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| 4. | SERENADE IN A
Hymne
Romanza
Rondoletto
Cadenza finala | <i>Stravinsky</i> |
| 5. | QUADERNO MUSICALE DI ANNALIBERA
Simbolo
Accenti—Contrapunctus primus
Linee—Contrapunctus secundus (Canon contrario motu)
Fregi—Andantino amoroso e Contrapunctus tertius
(Canon cancrizans)
Ritmi—Colore—Ombre
Quartina | <i>Dallapiccola</i> |
| 6. | FANTASIA ON THE NAME BACH
(for Viola and Piano)
Adagio sostenuto
Allegro ritmico
Chorale
Fugue | <i>Kenneth Leighton</i> |

The items in this programme cover the period from 1917 to 1955 and demonstrate some of the main trends in 20th century musical style. The Bloch suite is perhaps the work which has its roots most firmly in the romantic tradition; but even here the harmonic and melodic style looks to the future. In the other works one finds one of the most characteristic (if not the fundamental) aim of music in this period—that of embodying the expression more closely in the actual form. Symptomatic of this is Ravel's use of the old dance forms, the references to 18th century classical style in Stravinsky's *Serenade* and the use of the strictest contrapuntal devices in *Dallapiccola*. The partiality for Baroque forms in Hindemith, in Italian music of the period, and in so many other composers, is followed too in the *Viola Fantasia*.

Le Tombeau de Couperin was Ravel's last big work for the piano and is beautifully clear and pure in style—a worthy tribute to Couperin and the clavichinists. The Prelude has a continuous flow of triplet semiquavers and is of great harmonic simplicity; only towards the end is the music allowed to rise to a finely controlled climax, which quickly subsides into the modal theme which pervades the whole movement. The Fugue is one of Ravel's most perfect inspirations, with clear three-part writing limited almost entirely to the narrow treble register of the piano, and a remarkably subtle and original use of fugal devices, such as stretto and inversion. The Forlane is a kind of jig, of ancient Italian origin; but Ravel's example, with its piquant harmony, is more plaintive than jolly, more stately than boisterous. The boisterousness is reserved for the Rigaudon—full of the diatonic discords that Ravel delighted in. The Minuet is an excellent example of Ravel's wonderful melodic gift, while the Toccata is one of the best (if not the best?) modern example of this type of writing. What a host of weaker descendants stem from this brilliant piece of virtuoso writing!

The *Suite* for viola and piano (or orchestra) by Bloch dates from 1918 and is full of the exotic exuberance of his middle style. Slow rhapsodic sections alternate with forceful rhythmic ones and bitonal dissonance abounds in the expression of the composer's very individual racially-inspired lyricism. The music grows by means of a constant transformation and expansion of a handful of short motifs; in the first movement the most important of these is a descending three-note figure, which appears after the opening introduction and a pause—where the music is marked *Meno Lento*. This forms the basis of the Allegro section, together with a second theme, characterised by Bloch's familiar combination of semitone and minor third. The second movement has quickly alternating sections of Allegro Ironico and Grave, while the third consists of a yearning melody of great beauty—again built out of the motifs presented in the first movement. The style of the Finale is more diatonic (or rather pentatonic) and has a new rhythmic theme (in

folksong style) which is extended into long paragraphs, and finally rises to a great climax, where the tempo slackens and the theme of the first movement returns.

The *Serenade* was written in 1925, at a time when Stravinsky had taken up the career of solo pianist and had already composed (in the previous year) his concerto and sonata for piano. The four movements of the *Serenade* were intended to represent some of the aspects of the 18th century festivals, when patron-princes commissioned *Nachtmusik* in the form of suites and other pieces. The opening Hymne, with its grand opening and characteristic use of dissonance within a diatonic framework, represents "a solemn entry"; the Romanza is "a solo of ceremonial homage paid by the artist to his guests"; while the Rondoletto and Cadenza Finala illustrate a dance, and a kind of "ornate signature with numerous carefully-inscribed flourishes." The tonal basis of the work is the note A, which one particularly hears at the end of each movement—sometimes in a cloud of overtones, obtained by depressing the keys without striking the strings.

Dallapiccola wrote his *Quaderno Musicale* in 1952 for his (then) nine-year-old daughter, Annalibera; and the work was later transcribed for orchestra in the form of Variations. Like almost all this composer's mature music, it uses a twelve-note row as a basis, though in the first movement the row throws up the Bach motif, which is the "symbol" of the work. This is music of such deep intensity of feeling, and such subtlety of rhythm and colour, that one hesitates to play it in the concert hall. Though superficially influenced by Schönberg, the idiom is characteristically Italian, with its clarity, precision and sensuous melodic line. As always in Dallapiccola, when the construction of the piece is most strict and complicated (he is never obscure), the feeling is most intense; and certainly the Andantino and the final Quartina are examples of Dallapiccola's work at its most inspired.

Fantasia on BACH for viola and piano was written in 1955 and is dedicated to Watson Forbes, who first performed it in that year. It also won the Harry Danks viola prize. The four movements are played without a break and the whole of the material is derived from the BACH motif.

K.L.