

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1960-61

Fifth Concert

THE
EDINBURGH QUARTET

MILES BASTER
JULIAN CUMMINGS

BRIAN HAWKINS
IAN HAMPTON

Pianoforte :
KENNETH LEIGHTON

Double Bass :
ROY GWILLIAM

Pianoforte :
SIDNEY NEWMAN

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 26th JANUARY, 1961

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. QUINTET FOR PIANOFORTE AND STRINGS, OPUS 34

Kenneth Leighton
(b. 1929)

Allegro con moto
Adagio sostenuto
Scherzo—Prestissimo
Passacaglia—Adagio—Presto

This work was written during 1958 and 1959, in response to a B.B.C. commission for the 1959 Cheltenham Festival.

The texture is mainly contrapuntal, and when the treatment is not antiphonal, the piano is often given a single line within the string texture.

The first movement is modest in dimensions and its material (particularly the motto C D E flat D flat) is not fully worked out until the finale. The mood is one of restlessness (opening theme on unison strings) and the agitation grows through a transition passage, leading to a secondary idea marked 'più dolce e grazioso'. The middle section consists of a single extended paragraph in which counterpoint of rhythm adds to the feeling of development. An extended coda in moderate tempo returns to the restraint of the opening, using almost entirely the descending sequential figure of the second subject.

The slow movement is lyrical and elegiac. Solo 'cello announces the theme, and there is a contrapuntal middle section punctuated by a rhythmic figure (on the piano) which grows in dimensions as the movement proceeds.

The Scherzo is exuberant and rhythmic, with a Cantabile second theme heard first on the piano. In the middle section pizzicato strings accompany the rapid figuration on the piano and then vice versa. The Cantabile theme returns in triumph at the end.

The Passacaglia returns to the motive of the first movement, which is presented first in a series of entries on strings. Five variations follow, though the effect is one of a continuous paragraph, gaining in speed and tension all the time. The piano leads off in a final fugue and eventually against the fugal figuration (and in a different tempo) the piano introduces a slower tune, this time a majorish version of the motto. The chord of C major makes clear the basic tonality of the whole work.

K.L.

2. TERZETTO IN C MAJOR (Op. 74) (for two Violins and Viola)

Dvorák
(1841-1904)

Introduzione: Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto (E major)
Scherzo: Vivace (A minor)—Trio: Poco meno mosso
Tema con Variazioni: Poco adagio—Molto allegro—
Moderato—Molto allegro

There is a good deal of Dvorák's chamber music yet awaiting discovery by the public. This fine Terzetto (of 1887) has long been a happy stand-by for amateur quartet parties whose 'cellist has failed to arrive on time. But Trios and Duos exist in their own right and not merely to console those whose companions are liable to unfortunate misunderstandings with 'bus-conductors, and a healthy policy in chamber concerts will ensure to these no less than to those other nonconformists, the quintets and sextets, the public platform which is their due.

The origin of this Terzetto is engagingly recounted in the 1955 publication of the miniature score in the Artia edition, Prague. Apparently Dvorák, hearing a young amateur violinist, who resided in the same house where his own family dwelt, playing duets in partnership with his professional teacher, suggested that he himself would join them on the viola in a trio, for which purpose he composed this work in one week. It proved too difficult for the young amateur who was rewarded with a second simpler trio subsequently transformed into pieces for violin and pianoforte. But that is another story, and the C major trio remains as a fresh and spontaneous example of Dvorák's treatment of a new and unusual genre of chamber music.

INTERVAL

3. PIANOFORTE QUINTET IN A MAJOR (THE TROUT) Op. 114

Schubert
(1797-1828)

Allegro vivace
Andante
Scherzo: Presto
Theme and Variations: Andantino—Allegretto
Finale: Allegro giusto

In 1819 Schubert went on a summer holiday into Upper Austria with his friend Vogl, the Court singer. This quintet was composed at the request of a friend of Vogl whom Schubert then met and who took special delight in Schubert's charming little song

“The Trout,” which provides the theme for variation in the fourth movement of this work.

Although one recurring passage in the F major Andante brings a touch of Schubertian melancholy, the dominant note of the whole work is that of sheer joy and exquisite delight. The addition of the Double Bass to the string ensemble frees the pianoforte to a very large extent from the basic duties of accompaniment and allows it to trace intricate and airy lines of octaves in the high skies to an extent quite unparalleled in any other work. Only in one respect does the finale seem to fail in its cheerful task. The lack of any coda makes the end appear to be unduly sudden and in fact a trifle inconsequential.

S.T.M.N.