UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1961-62

First Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Bassoon:

CHRISTINE MATHER

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 19th OCTOBER, 1961

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. CONCERTO GROSSO in B flat Op. 6 No. 7 — *Handel* (1685-1759)

Largo—Allegro
Largo e piano
Andante
Hornpipe

Nowhere in the many broad spaces which open the vista to work after work in Handel is there a greater resonance of deep warm string tone than in this opening Largo. It leads to a sequence of movements which exhibit the string orchestra (the concerto grosso) as an unbroken entity, without any differentiation into contrasting groups of concertino (solo ensemble) and ripieno as is the case in many of the twelve highly differentiated Concerti Grossi of Opus 6 which Handel composed within less than a month in the autumn of 1739. The ensuing Allegro is a fugue which with great virility demonstrates the two times table with a forthright recital of one note, and smacks off the high notes of its subsequent ejaculations with a relish equal to that of the man that can ring the bell with the hammer at the fair-ground. The G minor Largo is expressive melody richly clad in polyphonic accompaniment. This resolves into a liberally tuneful Andante of so engaging and expansive a character that it is easy to understand how Samuel Butler could be 'mad about' Handel. Someone should write a thesis on the Hornpipe to explain how the "tiddle om-pom-pom" of current legend ever succeeded to the virile syncopations in triple measure which the eighteenth century knew. Which of them I wonder built the wooden walls of Britain?

2. CONCERTO FOR BASSOON in B flat — *Gordon Jacob* (b. 1895)

Allegro
Adagio
Rondo: Allegro giocoso

Common rumour has it that Gordon Jacob has written concertos for every instrument deserving a place in the sun. That may be an exaggerated estimate, but it bears testimony to his extraordinary gift for handling one instrument after another with the surest touch and the fullest relish of the character and virtuosic capacity of each—and in almost every case the instrument has been given the setting of a string orchestra and the work has the acceptable currency of that healthy commerce which today pertains to a chamber music career.

The Bassoon concerto, composed in 1947 for Archie Camden, is scored for strings with percussion ad lib. (quite an assembly of percussion in fact). I regret indeed that we have to forego this embellishment. But Dr. Jacob is a realist no less than Mozart, Moscheles and John Field who catered for some of their concertos to be given with strings alone.

3. ETUDES pour orchestra à cordes — *Frank Martin* (b. 1890)

Ouverture: Adante con moto
Etude I: Tranquillo e leggero (pour l'enchainement des traits)
Etude II: Allegro moderato (pour le pizzicato)
Etude III: Molto Adagio (pour l'expression et le "sostenuto")
Etude IV: Allegro Giusto (pour le style fugué—ou "chacun et chaque chose à sa place")

Every musical study worthy of concert performance is at once both a study in techniques and a study in compositional ideas relevant to these. The genre belongs for the most part to solo instruments—and in the orchestral field one more frequently meets 'Sketches' (with the emphasis upon the compositional ideas) than Studies avowing their concern with particular techniques—though many a commissioned work or orchestral tribute has been composed expressly to show a fine orchestral ensemble to full advantage.

In this highly original work composed in 1955-56, Switzerland's foremost composer pays his personal tribute to the justly renowned Basle Chamber Orchestra and its inspiring conductor Paul Sacher to whom the work is dedicated. The style and manner of each movement is most clearly pronounced—and is technically intimated in the composer's own headings. No further introduction is necessary but to remark that Etude III is scored for violas and 'cellos only in four part chorus, and that the final Etude parades 'le style fugué' in an initial freely scherzoso setting, but develops therefrom a large and brilliant scheme of double fugue, wedding the same with a quasi chorale-like melody most characteristic of the composer's distinctive idiom.

INTERVAL

4. SERENADE FOR STRING ORCHESTRA (Op. 46) — *Hans Gál* (b. 1890)

Amabile con moto
Scherzino: Prestissimo
Cavatina: Lento cantabile
Rondo: Allegretto giocoso

This F Major Serenade of 1937 is a smaller and more intimate work than the composer's later 'Music for Strings', bringing that freshness, and ease, and light sparkle and rich melody which combine to make a true mood of serenade. The essence of larger forms is adroitly condensed—so that each is an epitome enriched with quick touches of nuance and with discursive elaboration appropriately reduced to the smallest dimensions. Indeed the art which achieves such happy miniatures is in no way less than that which essays larger designs.

5. Music for Strings

Bliss
(b. 1891)

Allegro moderato, energico
Andante, molto sostenuto (Poco Allegretto)
Allegro molto

This splendidly virile and tensely alert work—and yet at the same time generously romantic too—is amongst the finest achievements of Sir Arthur Bliss whom we are proud to claim as an Hon. Doctor of Music of this University. It was first performed at the Salzburg Festival of 1935 by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Dr. (now Sir) Adrian Boult in a programme of British music.

The general principle of sonata form governs the first movement. The first four bars of its energetic theme contain the three elements that permeate the larger part of the movement—the alert spring of the opening gesture, the quick flow of action that streams out of this, and the marked triplet kick of rhythm that punctuates this and which enlivens much of the subsidiary developments that follow. With an outward sweep of the hand all this animation is swept into the ground and the air cleared for the grand polychordal theme which provides the first major contrast. The Elgarian sonority of the first theme is then developed in rich legato tone—but yet stronger contrast ensues in the sighs and delicate graces of gentle chamber music ensemble of transparent textures before the main theme addresses itself with ever increasing intensity and indomitable persistance to a recapitulation, wherein a double outward sweep of arms now plants that polychordal grandeur in full dimension at one stroke. The movement finds repose however in an eloquent coda of relaxed tension in which foreshadowing of the ensuing Andante is mingled with the dissolving energy of the initial motif. The basic ethos of the Andante is of a calm radiance—a quiet swinging motion to a slow pulse, but the emotional undercurrent is strong and warm, and wells through this to many an overpowering climax. Midway in its progress the movement adopts a new tempo and a new flowing arpeggio-like theme which, yielding on occasion to a memorable homophonic theme of simple utterance, now tranquil, now tremendously forthright, carries the movement to completion through a complex of mood and association, both lyrical, rhapsodic and mystic.

The finale opens with a terse aphorism which twice evokes a restrained rejoinder from solo violas and 'cellos in chorus, before it wins its way to build up the impasse of chordal structure which resolves into the movement proper—a gigue? Perhaps! and with something of the pleasurable fugato answerings that stem from the gigue tradition—but this movement too has its bold contrast, here a strongly rhythmical complex of twos and threes blazoning out A major in its full glory; and from these two sources stems all that follows.

S.T.M.N.