

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1961-62

Second Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Pianoforte:

PETER WALLFISCH

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 2nd NOVEMBER, 1961

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE, Op. 80

Brahms
(1833-1897)

In 1876 the University of Cambridge proposed to confer the Honorary Degree of D.Mus. upon Brahms and Joachim. Brahms in accepting the invitation apparently did not realise that it was necessary for him to be present in person to receive the degree on the prescribed date in May, and in the event he neither came nor received the degree as did Joachim. The occasion nevertheless was marked by the first performance in England of Brahms' First Symphony (as yet in MS.) under Joachim's conductorship (in respect of which some readers may care to follow up the evidence I adduced some years ago in 'The Music Review' that the slow movement as then performed differed very considerably from the definitive version published a few months later).

In March 1879 the University of Breslau conferred on Brahms the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Brahms composed this Festival Overture in acknowledgment thereof (not of course as an exercise for the degree) and it received its first performance at Breslau in January 1881 together with its very unlike twin, The Tragic Overture, which had been given its premiere in the previous month by the Vienna Philharmonic.

The work is a splendid blend of humour, high spirits, festivity and solemnity. A number of student songs have their role to play. Solemnity first appears with the melody *Wir haben gebauet ein stattliches Haus*, good humour finds its opportunity in *Was kommt dort von der Höh'* for leading the bassoon out of the narrower path of academic virtue, whilst at the last full festivity is realised in solemn grandeur by *Gaudeamus igitur*.

S.T.M.N.

2. PIANOFORTE CONCERTO No. 1 in D minor, Op. 11

Kenneth Leighton (b. 1929)

Allegro vivissimo
Largo
Allegro molto

This concerto was written during the summer of 1951 in Rome, and was first performed by the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra with the composer as soloist. Later broadcasts were given in this country and on the continent with Peter Wallfisch. In 1959 the work was

revised and re-scored, and it is the more recent version that is being played tonight.

As one might expect from the circumstances of its composition the work's main characteristic is youthful, sunny exuberance. The piano does not play so dominant a role as in most classical concertos, and quite often accompanies the orchestral argument. In form the concerto aims at clarity, and the first movement, though it runs a straight course from first bar to last, has two main subjects (the second more lyrical than the first), a development and a recapitulation, which comes as the resolution of a central climax.

The slow movement is by contrast elegiac and romantic. The characteristic shape of the main theme (heard on solo horn at the outset, and consisting of twelve different notes) is C sharp, D and C natural. This is hammered out at the climax of the movement. A secondary melody is heard first on solo flute, and expands right through to the recapitulation.

The finale is a Scherzo-like movement in 3-4 time, with a short clearly-defined main subject played quietly by the soloist at the opening. The cheeky second subject appears first on the oboe, and is later joined by two further themes of a strongly rhythmic character. The only extended cadenza in the work comes after the recapitulation, and leads into a fugal coda.

K.L.

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY No. 2 in D major (Op. 73)

Brahms

Allegro non troppo
Adagio non troppo
Allegretto grazioso (quasi Andantino)
Allegro con spirito

Brahms' second symphony followed very closely upon his first, the completion of which had been delayed over a period of fifteen years. With the impression of that great tragic yet triumphant symphony fresh in their minds, Brahms' friends were prepared by him for this altogether different experience by such remarks as, 'The new symphony is so melancholy that you will not be able to bear it'

The broad theme of the opening, on horns and woodwind, is punctuated by a bass motive which is to prove of great importance

both in its own right and also in the themes, eloquent, solemn or playful, which are derived therefrom. It is only after the glorious melody of the 'second subject' (on cellos and violas) that the movement springs to resolute action and foreshadows the full measure of the power it wields in the development. Relaxation brings the reprise stealing upon us unawares, because what was previously given in succession is now entwined in simultaneous statement. In the coda a very expressive horn solo opens the way to an aftermath of ever increasing ease and tranquillity, and tender playfulness at the last.

The glorious 'cello melody which opens the slow movement is rich in phrases which may be extracted and considered on their own. The design, or rather the emotional range, is to prove rather more complex than that melody would suggest; wavering counterpoints bring mystery, and composure is not regained in the gentle syncopation of the contrasting theme. It is the simple childlike preoccupation of four rising notes which turn and turn again to the summit of their gentle slope which is to cast out doubt; and glorious things are to follow from this simple absorbing pleasure.

The tender tunefulness of the Scherzo which will go off of a sudden into the most delightful pranks of tempo has made this movement a first favourite.

The Finale is to prove brilliant and festive, yet not forgetful of a generous heart and a tender sympathy. But it delights at first to make a stage secret of its high spirits.

S.T.M.N.