

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1961-62

Fourth Concert

VIOLIN

DAPHNE GODSON

PIANOFORTE

KENNETH LEIGHTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 7th DECEMBER, 1961

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. SONATA No. 1 in G minor for Unaccompanied Violin *J. S. Bach*
(1734-1782)

Adagio
Fuga
Siciliano
Presto

Bach's three Sonatas and three Partitas for solo violin, like most of his secular instrumental music, date from the Cöthen period (1717-23). Prince Leopold himself is known to have been an accomplished violinist, but the sonatas were probably written for Joseph Speiss, his chief solo player.

The distinction between Sonata and Partita had been developing during the previous century, and found its complete establishment in the *sonata da camera* and *sonata da chiesa* of Corelli. The former, with its predominant dance forms, supplies the model for Bach's Partitas, and the *sonata da chiesa*, with its more intellectual forms, that for the Sonatas.

The "beautiful and impassioned Adagio" (as Spitta called it) reminds one of the great organ Fantasia in the same key. Its magnificent contours suggest the polyphony of keyboard style, while at the same time exploiting the free and sensitive expressiveness of the stringed instrument.

The problem of suggesting fugal counterpoint on the solo violin is superbly solved in the second movement, a fugue on one of Bach's powerful repeated-note subjects; and the episodes in running semiquavers enhance the return of the subject.

The Siciliano was a common dance-form in the vocal music of the eighteenth century and often appeared as a slow movement in instrumental music. The present example departs from usual practice by being in the relative major, and by having a fairly contrapuntal texture.

The final Presto is in binary form and maintains a continuous flow of brilliant semiquavers.

2. SONATA in E flat, Op. 12, No. 3 *Beethoven*
(1770-1827)

Allegro con spirito
Adagio con molt' espressione
Rondo—Allegro molto

The three early violin sonatas (Opus 12) were published in 1799 and dedicated to Salieri. They follow the three-movement scheme found in the larger sonatas of Mozart and spring directly out of the eighteenth century; yet what energy, originality and spaciousness they contain!

The E flat sonata is the largest of the group, and its opening movement is remarkable for the brilliant and elaborate nature of the piano part, particularly in transition and development. One might also mention the short but beautiful episode in C flat major just before the recapitulation—an early instance of a key relationship of great expressive importance for Beethoven.

The C major Adagio is one of the finest of Beethoven's early slow movements. A slow descending arpeggio begins the great arc of noble melody, and yet it is not until the middle section (a continuation of the theme on violin, accompanied by soft murmuring arpeggios) that we feel the full intensity and mystery of the vision.

The Rondo is irrepressible and easy to follow. It is full of glorious tunes, and one should not miss the fine vigour of the second episode (in E flat minor) or the exciting canonic climax over a dominant pedal in the coda.

INTERVAL

3. SONATA No. 1 in F minor

Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Andante assai
Allegro Brusco
Andante
Allegrissimo—Andante

This Sonata (dating from 1946) is generally regarded as the finest of Prokofiev's chamber works. The first movement opens with a slow hymn-like theme of extreme simplicity, containing however a subtle rhythmic ambiguity. This might be described as the "motto-theme" of the work. Its first three notes (F C F) are heard erupting in the bass during the gentle middle section, and it also returns at the end of the last movement, emphasising the dark intensity of the work as a whole. At its recapitulation in the first movement it is presented in a texture of startling beauty—bell-like descending chords accompanied by rapid muted scales on the violin.

The Allegro in C major has great rhythmic energy and follows the design of classical sonata form. The three accented Cs of the first theme insist on breaking into the more tranquil sections, and the second subject is a fine heroic tune, very characteristic of Prokofiev, with its unpredictable modulations.

The lovely Andante shows how Prokofiev can make something intensely original out of the simplest material. Against an arpeggio accompaniment based on triads and their inversions the violin sings a melody of great tenderness, beautifully moulded and sustained. The middle section is more rhapsodic and

mysterious, but preserves the characteristic chromatic shiftings of the main subject.

The first theme of the finale uses unequal rhythm in a most original manner, though its shape is purely diatonic. As in the second movement, its rhythmic drive gives way to a second theme, touchingly simple in the way that Prokofiev can be without a trace of banality. There follows a vigorous and exciting discussion of the first subject material, with further eruptions in the bass, this time of the three repeated notes from the second movement. The climax is one of the most moving in modern chamber music; the descending chords of the first movement return on the piano, now with the repeated accents of the second movement to emphasise them, while against this the violin continues its dancing 5/8 theme. This quiets into a restatement of the beautiful texture of the first movement (muted scales on violin), and finally Prokofiev glances back to the innocence of the finale's second subject.

4. ROMANCE, Opus 23

Szymanowski
(1882-1937)

POLONAISE BRILLANTE, Opus 4

Wieniawski
(1835-1880)

Szymanowski's music is unfamiliar in this country, though his two violin concertos are heard occasionally. This Romance dates from 1912, and makes a good illustration of his early style. He began by writing in a Chopinesque manner and was later attracted by Debussy, Scriabin and Richard Strauss. Oriental elements are also found in his works, and in his final years he drew on Polish folk music for inspiration. He used polytonality and came near to being atonal, but remained to the end a "late romantic." The Romance shows in particular the influence of late German romanticism on his work.

Henri Wieniawski was one of the most eminent of nineteenth century violinists. He spent most of his life as a travelling performer, and seems to have belonged to the true line of romantic virtuosi. When touring America with Rubinstein, the latter's name appeared on the posters in larger type than Wieniawski's. As a result they played the "Kreutzer" sonata more than seventy times in public without ever speaking to one another.

K.L.