

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1961-62

*Sixth Concert*

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
THURSDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 1962

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

## PROGRAMME

### 1. OVERTURE: "THE WASPS"

Vaughan Williams  
(1872-1958)

The overture and incidental music to Aristophanes' comedy "The Wasps" was composed for a performance of the play (in Greek) at Cambridge in 1909. This Overture has long been firmly established in the orchestral repertoire—the instrumental part of the incidental music, much less often to be heard, has been recorded by Decca with Sir Adrian Boult as conductor.

At the outset the busy buzzing of the wasps is heard—the wasps being those Athenian citizens who had an officious relish for serving in the law court for a suitable fee. Of the main themes of the overture, the first two represent the old Philocleon who did his duty in the courts whilst the young men were away at the war. The broad generous tune of the second subject represents Bdelycleon his son, (the enemy of the demagogue Cleon), and his reconciliation with his father.

### 2. PRÉLUDE À L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE

Claude Debussy  
(1862-1918)

The size and composition of the orchestra required for most of Debussy's orchestral works has for some years regrettably prevented us from including any in the Reid Orchestra programmes, but in this centenary year we wish to contribute such share as is within our scope to the celebration of this consummate artist—a composer of the greatest originality and imagination. This Prelude, his first mature orchestral masterpiece, composed in the period 1892-94 and first performed in December 1894, requires no introduction to a concert audience today—save perhaps that on such an occasion as this we may remember that the plan which the composer originally set himself was to write a prelude, an interlude and a final paraphrase based upon Mallarmé's eclogue, of which only the prelude was completed.

### 3. SYMPHONY NO. 4 (OP. 63)

Sibelius  
(1865-1958)

Tempo molto moderato, quasi adagio  
Allegro molto vivace—Doppio più lento  
Tempo largo  
Allegro

Sibelius' Third Symphony (C major) completed in 1907 marked his break away from the romantic symphony, from luxury of scoring and from indulgently expansive protraction of design. Its concision, economy of means, clarity of scoring, are remarkable—but none of these, nor its bright optimism, could prepare Sibelius' followers nor audiences either in Finland or in the world at large for

the extraordinary condensation of musical thought, the novel concepts of orchestration or the psychological outlook of the Fourth Symphony which appeared in April 1911. Sibelius himself knew that it must prove a formidable challenge at a time when the musical world was so much intoxicated by the latest lavish luxuries of sound which Strauss and Mahler poured out. It was a conscious protest. He himself proclaimed it as such in writing to Rosa Newmann—"Nothing, absolutely nothing of the circus about it!" he added.

However, the really important point about this symphony is not its "protest" in 1911, but the guarantee it carried for Sibelius' personal development as a symphonist, his power to expand from condensed thought to broad design within one work as in the ultimately jubilant Fifth Symphony, or to concentrate complexity of thought as in the Seventh Symphony. Not only so, but much of the concentrated and deeply serious symphonic thought of the middle of this century stems ultimately from the bid made by this most impressive work of Sibelius. Yet never again did he proffer anything quite so succinct, so disruptive of the orchestral ensemble into its contrasted elements of strings, woodwind and brass, nor so challenging to the habits of ear and mind with regard both to formal design and to psychological developments.

One is to know from the broad span of the main solo 'cello melody near the outset, and from the tonal scheme of the whole that it is a Symphony in A—"minor" in its main stance of opening and conclusion, but "major" in the eventual repose of its first movement and in the predominant jubilation of its finale up to the sombre mood of its concluding phase. But this is to be wise after the event, and what one hears at the outset is a deep resonant "tritone motive"—ambiguously sounding like a Lydian (sharp fourth) to a major scale until it proves it is a sharp sixth to a Dorian minor scale (which was to have so telling an effect in the pine forests of "Tapiola"). The happy scherzo movement suggests a normal design—but well on in its course it flows suddenly into a sobered half-speed triple measure fraught with the strongest, almost painful stresses with recurring diminished fifths, tapering at the last suddenly to the timpani's vanishing point. The Largo has its warmth of passionate melody, but this only emerges from the transparencies of quiet contemplation and unpredictable ruminations. Only the finale brings a bigger sweep of design and an impetus that runs unthwarted throughout until colours are suddenly faded away into a monochrome of minor key at the last.

## INTERVAL

### 4. "PRINTEMPS": SYMPHONIC SUITE (in two movements) Debussy

For our second tribute to Debussy we turn back to a youthful work of some five to seven years earlier—a work somewhat seldom

to be heard (at least in Britain) and not to be confused with the mature *Rondes de printemps*, the third of the *Images pour orchestre*.

Debussy entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of eleven and his studies there continued eleven years. In 1883 he was *proxime accessit* for the coveted Prix de Rome which he won the following year with his cantata *L'Enfant prodigue*. Jean-Aubrey (writing in 1915) recounts an anecdote given by Laloy that before the prix de Rome Debussy when attending Ernest Guiraud's class (in advanced composition) had brought along a small score he had composed after Banville's *Diane au Bois*, upon which Guiraud remarked, "Well, all that is very interesting, but you must reserve it for later on or you will never get the prix de Rome."

Whilst residing and working as "prizeman" in Rome Debussy sent home the beautiful cantata for female voices *La Damaisselle élue* (finished in 1888) and this symphonic suite *Printemps* of 1887. This latter was adjudged too unorthodox to warrant performance, but Debussy refused to allow a performance of *La Damaisselle élue* unless *Printemps* were included in the programme. In consequence the first performance of *Printemps* seems to have taken place only in 1913, when the work was published by Durand, with dedication to the memory of Auguste Durand, contemporary of Franck and founder of the publishing house. Grove's Dictionary (5th ed.) notes that the orchestration was revised by Henri Büsser and presumably this is the published score we have though it bears no such acknowledgment. I mention the point since the scoring is somewhat exceptional in employing pianoforte (four hands) together with harp, and that pianoforte part is unusual in its relation to the solo instruments—for example doubling solo flute or oboe in quiet unison. One would much like to know how much of the general concept of the orchestration stems from the youthful Debussy.

The first movement is for the most part in a peaceful fluctuating mood at a very restrained tempo and with much quiet cantabile. The second, more composite in plan, moves from a quiet opening through more passionate themes to exhilarating animation and repetitive themes of dance measures with fine cumulative effect.

5. SLAVONIC RHAPSODY IN A FLAT, OP. 45, No. 3 (1878) *Dvorák*  
(1841-1904)

The title "rhapsody" has graced such a multitude of sins of the pot-pourri or "apples remind me of Eve—which reminds me of starlight—which reminds me it's time to stop" order of things, that a simple reaffirmation of the power and privilege of minstrelsy, proclaiming a theme of epic dignity, is at once a refreshing call to sanity. For to whatever lands or seas its theme may bring us, and however profuse the episodes which memory and the event may evoke, rhapsody must surely possess a special power to absorb, and indeed may itself be all absorbed in the enlargement of a single motif.

S.T.M.N.