

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1962-63

First Concert

NORWEGIAN PROGRAMME

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Hardanger Fiddle:
MAGNE MANHEIM

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 18th OCTOBER, 1962
AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

THE NORWEGIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM

1. OVERTURE (Op. 2)

Edvard Fliflet Braein
(b. 1924)

Braein, who has come to the fore amongst the younger generation of Norwegian composers, comes of a family that have been musicians for several generations—his great-grandfather was a renowned fiddler, his grandfather an organist, his father, the late Edvard Braein, a composer, organist and conductor who did much for the cause of opera in Norway. This bright overture is a youthful work dating from 1948. The composer has written two symphonies (1950 and 1954), several other orchestral works, chamber music and songs.

2. PASSACAGLIA

Ludwig Irgens Jensen
(b. 1894)

(Introduction—Passacaglia—Fugue—Passacaglia—Coda)

Irgens Jensen has been called 'the humanist' among twentieth century Norwegian composers. His art has a strong classical foundation, a clear tonal logic, and such an admixture of harmonic and contrapuntal modes of utterance as perhaps suggests an affinity with Brahms, though the distinctive idiom is different. There is a fine variety of mood and colour but all within an over-riding seriousness of thought which seeks the culmination of its purpose in simple nobility and sober grandeur.

The *Passacaglia*, composed in 1926, won a prize in the international competition that marked the Schubert Centenary in 1928. The chief other orchestral works of this composer are the Suite *Partita Sinfonica* (performed at a Reid Concert in 1953), *Tema con variazioni* (1925, revised 1934) and the Symphony in D minor (1946; originally three movements, reduced later to two). His other works include an oratorio (or 'dramatic symphony') *Heimferd*, chamber music, songs and theatre music.

The fivefold design of the *Passacaglia* is shown above. The introduction presents a number of themes that are only developed later in the work; the passacaglia announces its theme unharmonised (cellos and bass-clarinet) and extends thereon a series of twelve variations; an intensely dramatic triplet fugue then intervenes which carries within it some of the earlier material and from this emerges a second passacaglia movement which combines most of the themes with which the earlier movements had been occupied and brings the chorale-like theme of the brass to its apotheosis before all quietyens to a distant ethereal chant in the coda.

3. "FOSSEGRIMEN" (a Dramatic Suite for Orchestra) Op. 21 with Hardanger Fiddle

Johan Halvorsen
(1864-1935)

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| 1. Fossegrimen | 2. Huldre's Dance (Sprite's Dance) |
| 3. Bridal March | 4. Melodrama and Aud's Song |
| 5. Fanitullen (Devil's Dance) | |

Halvorsen began his career as a violinist, orchestral leader at Bergen and for a while at Aberdeen. After periods of teaching and studying at Helsingfors,

Berlin and Liège, he became conductor at the Bergen Theatre and from 1899 onwards conductor at the National Theatre in Christiania (Oslo). His orchestral compositions include three symphonies, two Norwegian Rhapsodies (by which he is perhaps best known) and a violin concerto. He also composed much incidental music for the theatre. The Fossegrimen Suite is based upon the music to Sigurd Eldegard's folk-drama produced in 1905. Halvorsen, fascinated by the folk-dance music of his country, devoted much time and enthusiasm in the early years of the century to noting down the music played by well-known 'traditional' fiddlers, among whom Knut Dale ranked as a leading artist. Grieg's *Norwegian Peasant Dances*, Op. 72, are based on a collection of Halvorsen's arrangements of which the latter made him a Christmas present.

According to local tradition Fossegrimen is the water sprite living in the cascades near the hand-mill. The fiddler Myllarguten had met him once, and told of it to Knut Dale who later described the meeting to Halvorsen. Myllarguten waiting near the mill heard from below the bubbling waters the sound of 'Hallingslåtten' (dances). "Then it was that I heard the *slaat* which I have called 'Fossegrimen', for it was the Old Man of the Waterfall himself who played it for me. He appeared from beneath the waterfall wearing a golden crown, and he played on a fiddle so resplendent and beautiful that it blazed like the sun..." The tale goes that nobody except Myllarguten could hear the music as the waters foamed. Later he was able to play this music himself and nobody could equal him. His 'hallings' grew famous and often peasants forgot their dancing to listen to him in silence.

The ornate Hardanger Fiddle, which dominates the first, third and last movements as a concertante solo, has a high flattish bridge which allows the bow to play on two or three strings at once. Highly decorative sustained two-part music with drone effects below is given a special resonance by the four additional sympathetic strings passing under the finger board (as in the viol d'amore). The tunings of the fingered strings are very various—here (as most frequently) the lower string gives A (instead of G)—and in the frenzied Fanitullen for fiddles only which concludes this suite the orchestral fiddlers similarly retune their G string to A. Scottish fiddlers and pipers alike will find a tremendously exciting affinity to their own art (despite the distinctive idiom) in this highly ornate and vividly rhythmical music in which the Lydian mode (with sharp fourth but often with flat seventh) is so conspicuous.

INTERVAL

4. "LA ISLA DE LAS CALMAS" (Op. 21)

Fartein Valen
(1887-1952)

Valen is a solitary figure in Norwegian music—a dodecaphonic composer who developed his art independently of Schoenberg's serialism. He worked for long periods of his life very much in the atmosphere of a recluse living quietly on the family farm. He began as a 'late-romantic', but the first performance of Schoenberg's Second Quartet in 1912 proved a turning point for him. In the period 1907-1921 he published only four works but by the twenties he had established his own language and style and thenceforth his art developed as 'dissonant polyphony' in distinctively linear style, but independent of the basic formulae and procedures of strict serialism.

This peaceful and intimate lyrical work is a small example of his sensitive art at its best—a polyphony of four or five lyrical motifs interlacing and redeploying in the texture of a chamber orchestra composed of double woodwind, horn, and strings. Valen's larger compositions include four symphonies, two concertos and other orchestral poems such as *Sonetto di Michelangelo* and *Le cimitero marin*, besides chamber music and pianoforte works.

5. "ZORAHAYDA (Legend for Orchestra) Op. 11

Johan Svendsen
(1840-1911)

Svendsen, disappointed of becoming a concert violinist, quickly threw his whole enthusiasm into composition, receiving his training at Leipzig where he produced his first symphony whilst still a student. Thenceforth he made his career as composer and conductor, and being offered the musical directorship at the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, in 1883 the greater part of his working life came to be identified with Denmark rather than with his native land. His orchestral compositions include two symphonies, the four Norwegian Rhapsodies, and the popular *Norwegian Artists' Carnival* and *Carnival in Paris*.

Zorahayda (1872-3) is based on a Moorish legend published by Washington Irving in 1832. The beautiful Jacinta, forsaken by her lover, sits weeping by the alabaster fountain in a hall of the Alhambra. Suddenly within the waters appears the figure of a young woman in rich raiment adorned with sparkling jewels, and bearing a silver lute. She beseeches Jacinta 'why does she weep?' She tells her that she, Zorahayda the Sorrowful, has also suffered so. A Christian knight had won her heart and she had promised to go with him and be baptized—but hesitating had been kept back, a prisoner in the castle, and had died a heathen. Oh that Jacinta would break the curse and baptize her there and bring her peace. Jacinta, filled with pity, fulfils her request. Zorahayda's face is radiant with joy as she fades from sight, and Jacinta, finding the silver lute at her feet to reassure her that she has not dreamt, is herself now filled with hope and joy.

6. ELEGIAC MELODY (for Strings)

Odd Grüner-Hegge
(b. 1899)

A simple, richly expressive, short work composed in 1942 by the musician who is best known as a distinguished conductor. Grüner-Hegge was Musical Director of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra from 1945 to 1961 when he was appointed Director of the Norwegian Opera.

7. GALDRESLÄTTEN (Op. 20)

Harald Saeverud
(b. 1897)

(Symphonic Dance as a Passacaglia)

Saeverud was born in Bergen and lives on the west coast. His music is colourful, lively, and imaginative—and often brim-full of wit and humour as he is in person. He is today regarded as one of the most genuinely 'Norwegian' composers in idiom, though his steady stream of composition began rather in a late-Romantic vein before moving towards atonal experiment, and it was the experience of the second World War that brought out intensely the essential Norwegian in him in such works as *Siljusslätten* (Op. 17), *Galdreslätten* (1943) and the nationalist Ballad of Revolt (*Kjempeviseslätten*). These are all of an engaging popular character, but the more serious vein of his thought is to be found within his eight symphonies (notably the *Sinfonia Dolorosa*, No. 6, of 1942—the second of a great trilogy of symphonies) and in his concertos. He has written many smaller works, pianoforte pieces, etc., whilst one of his most arresting large scale works is his music to *Peer Gynt*, a challengingly new musical interpretation to contrast with Grieg's famous and long established masterpiece.

Several of Saeverud's works have been broadcast in Scotland, and Saeverud has visited and lectured in this University.

S.T.M.N. (with indebtedness to Kristian Lange)