

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1962-63

*First Concert*

THE  
EDINBURGH QUARTET

MILES BASTER  
JULIAN CUMMINGS

BRIAN HAWKINS  
IAN HAMPTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
THURSDAY, 25th OCTOBER, 1962

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

## PROGRAMME

### 1. QUARTET IN B FLAT (K.589)

Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Allegro  
Larghetto  
Minuet  
Allegro assai

In the spring of 1789 Mozart journeyed from Vienna by way of Prague, Dresden and Leipzig to Potsdam, to try his luck with any patronage he might receive from Frederick Wilhelm II of Prussia. He seems after seventeen days at Potsdam to have returned to Leipzig for some days (the engaging Gigue for pianoforte which he wrote in the album of the Saxon Court-organist dated May, 1789, is a memento of that visit), and then returned to Berlin; but he was home again in Vienna early in June. He had written from Berlin that he enjoyed the King's favour, but the journey was in fact of little profit to him. Nevertheless it prompted the composition of his last three quartets intended for dedication to the King who was himself a keen violoncellist — and indeed if he could play the 'cello part of these quartets, must apparently have been no mean artist. The first of these quartets (D major, K.575) was completed within three weeks of Mozart's homecoming, but almost a year intervened before he brought himself to complete the second (this in B flat) and the third (F major, K.590) in May and June, 1790; but to that not very productive intervening year nevertheless belong at least three great works, the D major pianoforte sonata, the Clarinet Quintet, and *Così fan tutte* — also apparently the opening of an abandoned string quartet in G minor in a very different vein from the sunny light of these late quartets which so wonderfully transcend the spiritual depression he is known to have endured at the time.

In tribute to the King's own instrument the violoncello is given especial prominence — but a just balance in quartet ensemble necessitates that the "starring" of the 'cello should lead also to a "starring" of the viola, and consequently to a concertante inter-play of all the instruments. The texture is often extremely open and often maintained in two parts only, or in other extensive passages in three parts, as when the 'cello leads the opening melody of the Larghetto. All the instruments are used over a wide span, and the 'cello frequently in its high register.

A word may be added upon the finale. Mozart toyed with the idea of a set of variations for which he sketched a beautiful theme, but the movement he eventually chose is a sunny rondo, with the smile of Haydn's E flat quartet (Op. 30, No. 2) upon it, and a rondo which knows no rules except those of self-sufficiency, plus

the undoubted fact that the world can still look very beautiful when you look through your own legs.

### 2. QUARTET NO. 1

Michael Tippett  
(b. 1904)

Allegro — Lento cantabile — Allegro assai

The first of Tippett's three quartets was composed in 1935, but revised in 1943, the year after the completion of the second quartet in F sharp major. It is then in origin an earlier work than any of the works that first fairly established the composer's reputation, such as the Concerto for double string orchestra (1939), "A Song of Liberty" (1937) and "A Child of our Time" (1941), but the work as we know it is the mature revision of 1943.

The title names no key, but the first movement immediately establishes A minor harmonies, which issue in a clear A major tonality, and after the rich quiet cantabile of the slow movement in D flat major (the mediant major, i.e., C sharp), the finale with its impetuous cross-rhythms very positively (though however quietly at times) proclaims a bright A major. The movements are designed to follow one another without break.

The design of the opening movement is an exposition of a strong, athletic activity yielding to a melodic (A major) motif as its secondary subject. The resumed strenuous activity of the opening is linked to the development by a passionate recitative for cello evaporating into the quietude from which the development springs. The recapitulation is of regular pattern but throws the tonal emphasis upon D minor and a similar recitative links this to the slow movement.

No comment on the design of the other movements is called for apart from noting the fugal episode in the finale—a lengthy subject which, once given its answer, is permitted to relapse into the overriding *mobile perpetuum* of the whole.

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## INTERVAL

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### 3. QUARTET IN G MAJOR, Op. 161

Schubert  
(1797-1828)

Allegro molto moderato  
Andante un poco moto  
Scherzo : Allegro vivace — Allegretto  
Allegro assai

This great quartet, composed between June 20th and 30th, 1826, did not appear in print until twenty-two years after Schubert's death, when it was published as Op. 161, to be followed two years

later by the last and greatest of Schubert's chamber music compositions, the Quintet in C major with two 'cellos (Op. 163). Both works have much in common and much that distinguishes them from Schubert's earlier chamber music for strings. At the outset each shows the harmonic basis of Schubert's thought which is to result in many orchestral effects. Each, too, is remarkable for the fullness of the writing; the first movement of the earlier work indeed seems prophetic of the addition of other instruments to the quartet ensemble, for there are several passages which consist of true sextet writing such as will be found in Brahms, to which the four instruments are required to adapt their powers.

The G major quartet is of truly astonishing size, for Schubert claims space at each stage for the repetition, variation, and immediate "local" development of his themes.

The basic idea of the work as a whole is that proclaimed in the opening themes of the first and last movements, the conflict and synthesis of major and minor tonality. In the first movement, this opposition is reinforced by the dynamic contrasts of pianissimo and fortissimo with which the major-minor issue is largely equated. Again the major influence is lyrical, that of the minor inclines to impetuous gestures and energetic action.

The (Andante in E minor) is written in extended Lied form, the "song" and the "after-song" (here a dramatic episode of symphonic power) alternating in a scheme of five stanzas. The song melody of the 'cello itself foreshadows the alternating pattern of the whole movement.

The B minor Scherzo with its "all-over" rhythmic pattern defies description. To quote the thematic rhythm of the first two bars would explain the whole. To call this a "chattering" rhythm because it begins pianissimo would be to ignore the relentless force with which it soon hammers out its invincible will. But the Trio invites to less strenuous ways with the enchanting sway of its amiable Ländler valse.

The Rondo finale is as much a feat of endurance as a Kentucky running set, and its ample repetitions should be judged by their cumulative effect in protracting the excitement. If not a markedly subtle rondo, it is nevertheless an intoxicating dance.

S.T.M.N.