

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1962-63

Fifth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor : SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Violoncello:

JOAN DICKSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 17th JANUARY, 1963

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

PROGRAMME

1. OVERTURE: "Béatrice et Bénédict"

Berlioz
(1803-1869)

Allegro scherzando—Andante un poco sostenuto—Allegro

Berlioz composed this *opéra-comique* in two acts in 1860-2, shortly after the completion of *The Trojans*, in response to a commission from the Baden-Baden opera house where it received its first performance (in German translation) in 1862. Berlioz wrote his own libretto based upon Shakespeare's *Much ado about Nothing*.

The overture which admirably introduces an audience to the extravagant bickerings of the lovers, derives its lively mood and material from the Scherzo-Duetto finale (tempo di valse) where the protagonists gaily proclaim that "if Love is a will-o'-the-wisp flame that attacks the fool and renders him mad, yet it's better to be mad than just a fool. We'll give our hands in pledge today—and we can be at loggerheads again tomorrow!" But the fact that they are indeed lovers is underlined in the contrasting Andante which derives from Scene 3 of Act II where Beatrice, agitated by the thought of the dangerous risks of armed service, discovers her true feelings for Benedict.

S.T.M.N.

2. VIOLONCELLO CONCERTO in B minor, Op. 104

Dvorák
(composed 1896)

Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Allegro moderato

This concerto is now so well-known that a précis of its form is unnecessary. A new complete edition of the works of Dvorák is in hand, and about half of the music has already been critically reviewed, and published, including the cello concerto. Some interesting details have come to light, the most important being that the second theme of the slow movement is taken from one of his songs, the first of a group of "Four Songs," Op. 82, composed a few years earlier. It was most unusual for Dvorák to use any previous material in his compositions, but evidence exists in letters written by the composer, that while working at the concerto, he received news of the death of a beloved relative, and felt compelled to insert this melody, which, with its associated words, fully expressed his emotions.

Most of the concerto was written in America during his last visit in 1904-5, and only the last sixty bars of the finale were added

in 1906, after he returned home. It is the most romantic of all concerti, and although it is diffuse in form, the profusion of melodies, and the colourful orchestration, mitigate any impression of great length. The wood-wind especially play a prominent part, notably the duets for cello and flute. Although written in the most "bravura" style, there is no place for a cadenza, and Dvorák was very emphatic in stating that he would not have one, when the suggestion was made, before the first performance.

J.F.

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY No. 2 in D

Sibelius
(1865-1958)

Allegretto—Poco Allegro
Tempo Andante ma rubato
Vivacissimo—Lento e suave—tempo primo—Lento, *leading to*
Finale: Allegro moderato

Probably most of Sibelius' admirers will readily agree that his first Symphony of 1898, splendid work and arresting first symphony that it is, shows Sibelius under a strong influence of Tchaikovsky—and no mean influence to pride oneself on, especially in respect of maintaining invention in essentially orchestral terms with no thought of treating the orchestra as a medium into which preconceived ideas have to be transmuted.

This intrinsically orchestral character is conspicuous in all his symphonic works—who could think of any Sibelius symphony in which the timpanist was not one of the most important participants, or of any symphony in which the whole sequence of thought is not influenced by the distinctive varieties of tone which are inalienable from the brass-ensemble, or by the range of woodwind tone from the richest lyricism to the most acrid and pungent intrusions? But this Second Symphony of 1902, whilst still here and there betraying the Tchaikovsky influence—perhaps rather in a few more fulsome moments of emotion than in language and style—does show forth the essential Sibelius in an astonishing way. There is little that any listener could find abstruse, though there runs through the work that characteristic antithesis between almost naive optimism and cheerful simplicity on the one hand, and disturbing or outright sinister repercussions, which at times can amount to strident intrusions of great complexity and intensity.

The gentle joyfulness of the Allegretto may be swept away for a while in the strepitoso and contrapuntal clamour of the Allegro;

but even here there are broad melodic themes, and excitement brings further simple gaiety in its wake. The slow movement is very diverse in character. The sombre theme first heard above an ostinato figure of pizzicato basses and 'cellos is worked up into an agitated allegro, soothed to an exquisite melodious chant, fortified by stern massive episodes (reminiscent of Bach in his most complex treatment of the Sarabande), and broadened into a warm expressive cantilena, seemingly endless.

The vigorous chatter of the scherzo is relieved with episodes of unforgettably beautiful melody upon the oboe, which in the second instance expands with a grand crescendo into the triumphant finale. This at the last develops into one of the finest passages of cumulative power ever created.

S.T.M.N.