

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1962-63

Seventh Concert

THE
EDINBURGH QUARTET

MILES BASTER
JULIAN CUMMINGS

BRIAN HAWKINS
IAN HAMPTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 7th FEBRUARY, 1963
AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

PROGRAMME

1. QUARTET IN A MAJOR, Op. 55, No. 1

Haydn
(1732-1808)

Allegro
Adagio cantabile
Minuet
Finale: Vivace

Haydn's Op. 54 and Op. 55 Quartets (each a set of three) were published in 1789, and Op. 64 (a set of six) in the following year. All belong to his full maturity and were dedicated to Johann Tost, a respected cloth merchant whom Haydn also had empowered to arrange for the publication of his symphonies Nos. 88 and 89 in Paris. These quartets come therefore some few years after the completion of Mozart's six quartets dedicated to Haydn. It may be that the subtle chromaticism which emerges from time to time in these works owes something to Mozartian influence. The more characteristic development of Haydn himself lies however in the thematic concentration and economy—the Adagio notably is based upon one theme—and in the unexpected and bold contrapuntal development of the rondo-finale in which two strong new motives are introduced to produce invertible counterpoint with the rondo motive. Both these methods are to be found employed in a number of movements within these twelve 'Tost Quartets.' There is also a not infrequent exploration of the violino primo into the very highest register—as here in the Trio to the Minuet when the melodic lead is taken by the second with the leader spattering light staccato figures in the heights and plunging to an answering legato with the full warmth of *sul una corda* on the lowest string.

2. LYRIC SUITE

Berg
(1885-1935)

1—Allegretto giovale
2—Andante amoroso
3—Allegro misterioso—Trio estatico
4—Adagio appassionato
5—Presto delirando—Tenebroso
6—Largo desolato

The music of Berg has so far found greater favour with the general public than that of either Schönberg or Webern. The intense and often neurotic nature of its expression shows it clearly to be a late development or extension of the great German Romantic tradition; and for Berg, expression and communication are always at the very root of his art, and never lost in the wilderness of pretentious technical and aesthetic theories so characteristic of music both in his time and in ours.

Apart from a setting of a poem by Theodor Storm, completed a few weeks before, the Lyric Suite (of 1925-26) is the first work in which Berg used strict serial technique, following the example of Schönberg, who had reached his final synthesis of serial principles in 1923. Yet it is characteristic of Berg that the technique is here

applied in a highly individual and fairly loose manner; and also that this very important technical innovation has little or no effect on the expressive quality of his music. Indeed, as the title of the work suggests, the lyrical nature of Berg's earlier style returns here, enhanced and intensified by the quartet medium.

Strict serial technique is used in the first and last movements, and also in the main part of the third and the middle section of the fifth. Elsewhere the style is free, though the thematic material is often based on variants of the original tone-row. Each successive movement utilizes material from that preceding it, and before the climax of the last movement the opening bar of *Tristan* appears in the form of Klangfarbenmelodie—the melodic line being fragmented and divided between the various instruments. The fourth movement also culminates in a double quotation from the *Lyric Symphony* by Zemlinsky, a now almost forgotten work in the Mahlerian tradition and full of nostalgic longing for death and annihilation.

The sanguine first movement is in sonata form, without a development section, and in the manner of a prelude. Like most of Berg's movements it demonstrates the composer's desire to impose a clear and simple design on his highly complex language. There is an opening introductory bar, a first subject (leaping and rhythmic) a bridge passage (alternating pizz. and arco.), and a more lyrical second subject marked *un poco piu tranquillo*.

The second movement (Andante amoroso) is in a more nostalgic and wistful vein, and uses Rondo form. There are two episodes, the first in Ländler style, the second more menacing and fantastic, characterized by a repeated-note figure on the viola.

Movement III is a mysterious and highly imaginative Scherzo, canonic in design, and using a host of instrumental devices to achieve an extremely original texture. The Trio estatico bursts like an explosion of tightly pent-up feeling, only to be followed by the frantic hush of the first section, now repeated backwards i.e. in exact retrograde form.

The fourth movement seems to be the emotional climax of the work and, in spite of its use of canon, is somewhat rhapsodic in design. It contains quotations from the second and third movements, as well as the above mentioned Zemlinsky quotations. Nowhere is Berg's passionate intensity given more powerful and compelling expression.

The fifth movement, another Scherzo, is remarkable for its instrumental resource. It has two Trio sections (Tenebroso) which consist of held chords, played in various ways against a background of flautando harmonics—one of the boldest examples of experimental sonorities in modern quartet writing.

The weary despair of the finale is a kind of summing up not only of this work, but of a whole phase of twentieth century music. The coda section in particular, with the gradual fading-out of the four instruments until only the monotonous reiteration of two alternating notes persists on the viola, leaves one with an indelible impression of an intensely moving artistic experience. K.L.

INTERVAL

3. QUARTET IN F MAJOR, OP. 59, No. 1

Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro

Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando

Adagio molto e mesto—

Allegro (Theme Russe)

Beethoven's three quartets (Op. 59), composed in 1806, were dedicated to Count Rasumofsky, Russian Ambassador to the Austrian Court, in whose house they received their first performance.

The largeness of design and of the musical thought that inspires it is immediately apparent in the great sweep (of 19 bars length) of the initial theme which mounts from the dolce cantabile of the violoncello to the peak of a tutti fortissimo. Everything is roomy and large—the transition, the second subject and, above all, the development which opens as though repeating *da capo*, but opens out into new territory of immense breadth which embraces an unforeseen fugato derived from a figure of the main theme. Copy-book analysts might quarrel as to the precise point of the recapitulation for the reason that it is reached by a resumption of the subsidiary part (20th bar) of the main theme before it actually happens; but for the listener there is no doubt at all, when the grip of fortissimo is released.

The Allegretto Scherzando is a scherzo of an unusual type which Beethoven first explored in the C minor Quartet of Op. 18. Commentators have tended to emphasise the fact that it is a scherzo in sonata form and one writer has claimed that nearly everything is duplicated in it—two first subjects, two transitions! But anyone with a grain of humour (or of commonsense, which is or ought to be the same thing) will perceive that the delicate impertinence of such a scherzo theme has an inalienable right to all the privileges of expected and unexpected re-entry that belong to a rondo, whether or no it bothers about rondo-form. And, if there is both delicate humour and tremendous latent power in the initial drum-tapping of the 'cello, there is also in it the capacity to evoke a new lyricism as it approaches the recapitulation.

The gloriously sustained Adagio is a movement of profound sorrow, but the emotion is much deeper and much richer than pure melancholy. At the last, it resolves not in any final cadence but on a tone of expectation which with the free spill of cadenza (or fantasy) bridges the way to the finale. This is based as a starting point upon a Russian folk melody announced by the violoncello. Folk-song melodies are by nature designed to make for cumulative effect by repetition. Beethoven shows his realisation of that essential fact both in the E minor Quartet (Op. 59, No. 2) and also here. For, although this movement is in sonata form and for large stretches concerned with strenuous tutti utterances, the coda, with its lingering thoughts, reminds us of the special effect made by the recurrences of this melodic theme.

S.T.M.N.