

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1963-64

First Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Pianoforte:

ALASDAIR GRAHAM

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 17th OCTOBER, 1963

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

PROGRAMME

1. SYMPHONY IN B MINOR (" Unfinished ")

Schubert
(1797-1828)

Allegro moderato
Andante con moto

These two perfect and universally treasured movements need no introduction, and the benediction of beauty bestowed on us by the radiance of the E major slow movement is of infinitely greater value than intriguing speculation about the reasons for the incomplete or uncompleted design of the whole. But a brief historical note may interest those who wish to satisfy a natural curiosity after the day is done.

Schubert scored these two movements in October 1822 (not 1826 as inadvertently noted in Tovey's *Essays*), but it is not yet quite a hundred years since the very existence of the work first became known to the world when Schubert's friend the Graz musician Anselm Hüttenbrenner who had had it in his possession for a full forty years, and had apparently made a pianoforte duet arrangement of it in 1853, somewhat reluctantly handed it over to Johann Herbeck for performance in 1865. The score had seemingly been given by Schubert to Anselm's brother Josef for transmission to Graz in acknowledgement of his election as an honorary member of the Graz Musical Society, which took place in May 1823.

A facsimile of the full score and of the first sketch of the work in pianoforte score was published in 1923 by the Drei Masken Verlag of Munich. The first three pages of the sketch are not extant, but from the second occurrence (recapitulation) of the second subject of the Allegro onwards the sketch is complete, extending to the complete first section (120 bars) of the third movement (Scherzo) in outline (and with a good deal of the substance) and also the melodic line only of the first sixteen bar section of its G major Trio. There the sketch breaks off, a third of the way down a right hand page. In orchestrating from his sketch Schubert not only amended and elaborated but sometimes recomposed, and the process is most interesting to follow. The last (left hand) page of the full score is filled with the first nine bars of the Scherzo, i.e. it leaves the second phrase already begun and tied over presumably to a right hand page no longer extant.

In a lengthy article in "The Music Review" Vol. 3 (1942), Dr. T. C. L. Pritchard argues that what we possess is not an "unfinished" but an "incomplete" symphony—in short that Schubert finished it (the title page is dated 30th October, 1822) and that Hüttenbrenner lost the rest of the folded loose sheets of the unbound score, as his brother Josef was responsible for the loss of whole acts of two of Schubert's operas. (His servants, like Charles Lamb's maid, had a taste for kindling the fire with manuscripts!) It is, however, difficult to believe in face of the evidence of the incompleting sketch that Schubert finished both the Scherzo and a Finale of which there is no trace at all. Some have thought he found the Scherzo and Trio not going to his liking and lost interest in it. Tovey on the other hand is enthusiastic about the promise of these, though it occurs to me to wonder whether perhaps Schubert became conscious that from his fifteenth bar his invention for a while ran on the path where Beethoven's Rondo of the Fifth Pianoforte Concerto had already travelled. Of all explanations advanced, none is so extravagant as the film of some years ago which with romantic disregard for all the evidence depicted Schubert tearing his score in two as a result of an unhappy love affair at Esterhaz. It may well however have been, as many believe, a personal crisis that led to Schubert's forsaking the work, for before the end of the year he had contracted that mortal disease of which he eventually died, and after recovering from his first desperate illness he may well have felt unable to look back to it.

2. PIANOFORTE CONCERTO NO. 2 IN A FLAT

John Field
(1782-1837)

Allegro moderato
Poco Adagio
Moderato innocente

Field made his debut as a concerto soloist at the Rotunda in Dublin (his native city) at the age of ten, playing a concerto of his master Tommaso Giordani. Two years later he made his London debut, his father (a theatre violinist) having moved there by way of Bath. For the next five years Field was an apprenticed pupil of Clementi, and, it seems, a salesman-demonstrator of the virtues of Clementi pianofortes, in which capacity he developed his original improvisatory art. In February 1799 he played a concerto of his own 'composed for the occasion' at a benefit concert for G. F. Pinto, the versatile grandson of the violinist Tommaso Pinto, who for two periods in his career was a leading musician in the St. Cecilia's Hall concerts in Edinburgh. Field's concerto, which was well received, was almost certainly his first in E flat, which for slow movement has an Air Ecossais—variations upon "Within a mile of Edinburgh Town". This work already shows an original and highly personal pianoforte style and technique, a romantic disposition and prophetic touches of nineteenth century pianistic colour.

In 1802-3 Field accompanied Clementi on his business tour (as publisher and pianoforte manufacturer) through Paris and Germany to Russia. On Clementi's return Field settled in St. Petersburg where he became a fashionable and successful pianoforte teacher and performer. In 1822 he moved to Moscow. Western Europe knew him only by reputation and through the praise of concert artists returning from their tours in the east, until he himself reappeared by invitation of the Philharmonic Society of London in 1832. A brilliant reception followed in Paris and likewise in an extensive European tour which included Italy and Vienna, from whence he returned to Moscow.

Field has had lasting recognition as a precursor of Chopin on account of his eighteen Nocturnes of which the first few appeared in 1814 and 1817. His three early sonatas dedicated to Clementi may not deserve resurrection, but his great reputation as a concerto composer during the first half of the last century deserves some inquisitive response beyond the confines of a few private devotees, and happily the first three of his seven concertos are now available in score in the Musica Britannica Series (Vol. XVII, 1961). This second concerto—an altogether bigger, more elaborate and virtuosic work than the first—is conjectured to have been composed not long after he settled in Russia. Although it had great popularity, no claim is made that it is necessarily the finest. Some hold No. 4 in E flat in highest esteem: others consider No. 6 in C the most beautiful as it is indeed technically the most difficult. (Not unnaturally the 'Storm Concerto' No. 5 in C made a tremendous sensation in its day when 'programme' music was still a comparatively novel indulgence).

If Field can be somewhat self-indulgent as regards length in his main outer movements (though his modulations are fresh and his formal designs are by no means stereotyped) he is curiously content with very small scale slow movements—sometimes the suggestion of a quasi-nocturne as here (the E major Larghetto of No. 6 is in fact the Sixth (F major) Nocturne), sometimes indeed no middle movement at all (though it may have been that he improvised a solo movement to fill the position).

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN D MAJOR

Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

Preludio (Moderato—Allegro—Moderato)
Scherzo (Presto)
Romanza (Lento)
Passacaglia

Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony, dedicated to Sibelius, received its first performance in London in June 1943. The following note, written for the first Edinburgh performance by the Reid Symphony Orchestra in January 1944, would require revision and additions if it were to be brought up to date. The long contemplated 'morality' opera 'Pilgrim's Progress' completed in 1948-49 was produced in April 1951, and the extent of common ground between it and the Symphony could then be studied. Meanwhile the Sixth Symphony, composed in the years 1944-47 and first performed in April 1948, had thrown down a challenge no less formidable than that of the Fourth though differing in nature and emphasis. Yet perhaps my original short note may serve to show the spirit in which one first received this work—a spirit unassailable by the powers of onslaught or the frozen wastes of anaesthesia.

The years immediately before the outbreak of this war wrung from Vaughan Williams in his F minor Symphony a cry of burning indignation that the world should already be ensnared in the toils of impending conflict. The new symphony, completed after three years of war, speaks peace; not, I feel sure, because it attempts to prophesy what the world may achieve, but because it reveals the inward peace and serene joy to which a life enriched with abundant wealth of experience as a creative artist has attained. The reflective character of his music has in general been so predominant that we may too easily forget the gaiety, the engaging wit of 'poisoned kisses', the unpredictable turbulence of two or three exceptional works, the power of his apocalyptic vision, the splendour of his great hymns of praise and many another quality. This symphony is indeed reflective, even quite literally in the sense that it looks back—not in order to ponder again the things that have been, but rather to bring us by familiar ways to a country not unknown but transfigured indeed and illumined by a joy so abundant and yet so serene that it is all pervading. I can only liken what I experience in this final passacaglia to that which abides with one throughout and long after the singing of that unending joyful and profoundly mystical carol "Tomorrow shall be my dancing day . . . to lead my true love to my dance".

The composer has intimated that "Some of the themes of this symphony are taken from an unfinished opera 'The Pilgrim's Progress', but except in the slow movement the symphony has no dramatic connection with Bunyan's allegory". The slow movement (Romanza) bears the quotation—"Upon that place there stood a cross and a little below a sepulchre". Then he said "He hath given me rest by His sorrow and life by His death".

S. T. M. N.