

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1963-64

*Fourth Concert*

THE  
EDINBURGH QUARTET

MILES BASTER  
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REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
THURSDAY, 21st NOVEMBER, 1963

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

## PROGRAMME

### 1. STRING QUARTET IN D. Op. 71, No. 2

*Haydn*  
(1732-1807)

Adagio—Allegro  
Andante cantabile  
Minuet: Allegro  
Finale: Allegretto—Allegro

In 1772 Haydn's Op. 20 quartets had appeared—a veritable sunrise, and these evoked from Mozart (still in his teens) a remarkable set of six highly imitative essays in the genre. When after ten years Haydn's next quartets (Op.33) appeared they evoked from Mozart, now at the dawn of his full maturity, the inimitable set of six quartets which he completed only after nearly three years of intense productivity and which he dedicated to Haydn. By the time that a further ten years had elapsed the miracle of Mozart's decade of masterpieces was already tragically closed, and Haydn's incredibly fertile production of symphonies, quartets, and of a whole host of other kinds of music had made him world famous, and had brought him to London for the composition and performance of the first series (Salomon) of his London Symphonies. The six string quartets of this time are the two sets of a three apiece which constitute Op.71 and 74, all composed in 1793. In general recognition they have suffered rather unjustly in comparison both with their predecessors the Op.64 set and with their great successors the Op.76 set of 1796, which followed after the return from the second London visit. In fact only "the Rider" (the G minor Op.74 No. 3) can be said to be really well-known. All the more therefore one welcomes the opportunity to hear this lively and inventive example from a group which Hans Geiringer regards as being peculiarly influenced by Haydn's symphonic preoccupations around the time of its composition. That general influence one may admit, but Geiringer is perhaps too ready to overlook the transformation of symphonic into chamber music utterance both in intricacy of ensemble and in the technical adroitness demanded of the several instruments.

Haydn has begun to indulge a fancy for prefacing his main thesis with a brief slow introduction. Sometimes this is a fairly substantial introduction, at other times in the quartets it may be simply a small handful of arresting chords or even a single ejaculation. Here it is a four bar phrase which might have turned to a full scale adagio did it not prefer to turn to an allegro at once vigorous in gesture and gloriously expansive in its paragraphing, yet capable of arresting its impetus on the sudden to tip-toe Mozart-fashion into the gayest tunefulness.

The Adagio is a maturely elaborated example of a basically simple type of movement often enjoyed by Haydn and Mozart in their earlier works—the accompanied cantabile melody, which inevitably evokes suggestions of the serenade.

The sturdy Minuet is contrasted with a quiet gliding trio—evocative indeed, for one feels certain that in some little-known symphony one has met with precisely this unusual experience. And sure enough you will find it in the Trio of the remarkable B major symphony No. 46 (of 1772).

All rondos play on one's expectations—that is their nature; but this finale plays havoc with its own expectations. Having gone no further than to deliver itself of an allegretto refrain, episode and return of the refrain, it suddenly has second thoughts about the speed at which its creator meant it to go about its business, and having made amends by throwing off the refrain again at a lively Allegro it quickly scampers off the scene with a brilliant air of "See you another day".

### 2. STRING QUARTET IN G MINOR, Op. 10

*Debussy*  
(1862-1918)

Animé et très décidé  
Assez vif et bien rythmé  
Andantino doucement expressif  
Très modéré—Très mouvementé et avec passion

This quartet, numbered I by the composer but the only one he wrote, was composed in 1893, four years after César Franck's great quartet in cyclic form, and ten years before Ravel's quartet. Debussy wrote no other chamber music until the last years of his life when he produced the three sonatas in a consciously new style. The quartet is contemporary with the famous "Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune", which marks the first full flowering of impressionism in Debussy's art.

Debussy was not within the entourage of Franck's pupils and disciples, and indeed many of the Russian nationalists such as Borodin were more congenial to his artistic outlook than were any contemporary French composers. Nevertheless, Franck's conception of cyclic form had a marked influence upon the structure of this quartet which in turn so clearly influenced Ravel. Debussy's second movement (the 'scherzo', though not so named) is pervaded by an ostinato motif (lyrically expanded to form the contrasting section) which is a compact variation of the decisive main theme of the first movement, and in both forms this material plays a very prominent part in the finale. Only the exquisitely beautiful slow movement (Andantino) in D flat major lies altogether outside this associative thematic territory. But, if I have emphasised the origin of Debussy's thematic and formal structure, it should be added that the style and the harmonic language are essentially personal to Debussy, and the work justly ranks as one of the most original and historically most important works in the chamber music of the last seventy years.

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## INTERVAL

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### 3. STRING QUARTET in B flat, K. 458 (The Hunt)

*Mozart*  
(1756-1791)

Allegro vivace assai  
Minuet: Moderato  
Adagio  
Allegro assai

It must be a great many years since the ceremony of hunting the fox in England accorded that long-suffering animal the privilege of being woken from his lair with a truly musical fanfare of horns playing in parts—if indeed he ever did enjoy the honours accorded to the buck on the continent. It may be partly owing to its nickname that this quartet has managed to herald its way to the forefront of popular favour amongst those ten of Mozart's twenty-seven quartets which are 'famous' and mature, and all of which, with this exception must be content to be known by their K. identity numbers. But since the title holds we may turn it to our own advantage. If there is anything which this music and hunting share in common it is the desire to protract the exquisite business as long as possible. The ingenuity of Mozart in elaborating and prolonging his cadences, and indeed in managing to live some of his adventures over again, is never lacking in resource. Surprisingly before the beginning of the development the hunt springs a new hare—

a new easy-going tune—"and that too they left behind" and never gave it another thought. But at the end the greatest fun begins when these four jovial huntsmen fall to hunting one another in close stretto before calling it a day with a formal cadence.

Although a famous remark of Haydn's would suggest that he despaired of ever writing a really original Minuet again, yet the diversity exhibited in the eighty-six minuets of his quartets alone is truly astonishing, and Mozart is no less ingenious in the variety he achieves within the limiting conditions of that movement. Here what impresses one most is the extraordinary continuity of the Minuet and Trio alike, even from the first phrase, ten bars long, with its heavy accents forestalling the beat.

The slow movement is a broad adagio, and what contributes notably to its breadth is the slowly mounting violin arpeggio which sustains the motion across the wide spaces that lie between its phrases. But the truly magic moments come in the relaxed dreaming of the second subject when we feel ourselves drifting down some infinite vista of thought tenderly touched with a subtle chromaticism.

When Mozart first embarked on his finale, he pictured it as a rather conventionally contrapuntal presto in white-note notation (not altogether remote from Fux's *Gradus*), but in a trice his humour saved him; so starting afresh he gave full rein to the vein of droll humour provided by a twist of cadence. The theme has been said to be related to a folk song, and one of its relatives surely appears in the finale of the Concerto for two pianofortes (K.365). As for the cadence joke (which Mozart makes his instruments repeat over and over again in high good humour), it was repeated by Beethoven in the rondo of his fourth pianoforte concerto. (Beethoven of course would have said that he had it straight from his pianoforte's mouth—such is the way of jokes!). But nothing can be more frustrating than a guide to lively humour—and I forbear to say more.

S.T.M.N.