

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1963-64

Fifth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Violin:

DAPHNE GODSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC
THURSDAY, 16TH JANUARY, 1964

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

PROGRAMME

1. OVERTURE: "MELUSINE"

Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Those who would know something of the half-mortal, half-fairy *Melusine* may pursue her either in the pages of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," or in the brilliant amusing essay which Sir Donald Tovey devoted to this overture. Those who would know more than a little must refrain from being over-curious of a Saturday, since on that day every week the lady suffered "a change into serpent or fishy form from the hips down." Her husband, in the end, yielded to his curiosity, whereupon she flew away in serpent form . . . But this is Thursday and we may safely turn to what Mendelssohn has to tell of that fairy tale in the beautiful overture which he himself rated so highly amongst his works. And by way of preface I quote the following from a letter to his sister, written in 1834, a few months after the composition of the overture. "I wrote this overture for an opera by Conradin Kreutzer which I heard . . . in the Konigstadter Theatre. The overture, I mean Kreutzer's, was encored, and I disliked it quite particularly, and also the rest of the opera, except Hahnel; but she was very engaging, especially in one scene where she appeared in her fish-form and combed her hair; whereupon I got a wish to make an overture, which people wouldn't encore, but would receive more inwardly, so I took what I liked of the subject . . ."

S.T.M.N.

2. SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN C MINOR (Op. 68)

Brahms
(1833-1897)

Un poco sostenuto—Allegro—Poco sostenuto
Andante sostenuto
Un poco Allegretto e grazioso
Adagio—Più Andante—Allegro non troppo ma con brio

Brahms was forty-three before he completed and made public his first symphony. He had composed many major orchestral works, or works involving orchestra, during the previous twenty years—the two Serenades (Op. 11 and 16) in the late fifties, the German Requiem, Rinaldo, the alto Rhapsody, the Song of Destiny and "Triumphlied" in the sixties and early seventies, the Variations on a Theme of Haydn in 1873, and before any of these the titanic D minor Pianoforte Concerto, upon which he worked from 1854-58 and which emerged from his initial concept of a symphony in D at a time when the massive strength and passion of his creative thought were such as had not articulated in purely orchestral terms and lay rather in an undifferentiated field the more readily accessible through his own massive and infinitely rich powers as pianist and composer in one. Reference to this Concerto is not irrelevant, for the first movement of the C minor symphony, conceived in the early sixties and played by Brahms to Clara Schumann in 1862 (when it began boldly at the Allegro without any preface), has, for all its rich maturity of orchestration, much of the same kind of massive and passionate utterance that transcends and compels the orchestra to its purpose.

That Brahms should have taken fifteen years before he felt ready to declare himself as a symphonist with the completed work was due not only to his rigorous

discipline and self-criticism as a composer, but no doubt also to the selfconsciousness imposed upon him by the special article which Schumann wrote proclaiming him before the world when he was but twenty-one years old, and thirdly (perhaps above all) to the depth of his own comprehension of the fundamental structural processes of creative thought of Beethoven and indeed of Bach too, and of the full aesthetic implications of these, which was at one and the same time a world of illumination for him and a load of responsibility for the integrity of a great composer, whose discreetly importuning and understanding friends were nevertheless looking to him with unabated though patient expectation. Even when he had completed the work some of his doubts remained unresolved. Clara Schumann said nothing of her reservations about the slow movement when Brahms played it to her in private, but he must have sensed what she felt or have found such doubts in himself, for he simplified its character by excluding the ardent and expansive digression that intervenes so soon within its melodic calm (and which is germane to the symphony as an essential legacy of the opening movement). All the first German performances and the three in England in 1877 adhered to this altered and simplified version, but on publication Brahms reverted to his first intentions, his doubts resolved. (The evidence for this is given in an article I contributed to the "Music Review" in 1948). Hermann Levi's expression of disappointment in the two middle movements as being, for all their great beauty, more suited to a Serenade than to a highly wrought symphony, no doubt was in some measure occasioned by that simplified version bereft of a part of its character so essential to the place of this E major Andante between the supercharged turbulence and might of the first movement (wrought of such abundance of polyphonic device and themes) and the fresh grace of the A flat Allegretto (with its contrasting grandeur of symphonic power, to which Levi must have been curiously blind). From thence the path to the full abundance and superb strength of ultimate supreme joy lies, much as it lies in the finale of the Schubert Octet, through solemn foreboding and the frenzy of agitating fears, until these are dispersed by the rays of hope that shine in the call of horn and flute, and the great song opens its heart to exultation.

S.T.M.N.

INTERVAL

3. VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 2 IN G MINOR, Op. 63

Prokofieff
(1891-1953)

Allegro moderato
Andante assai
Allegro, ben marcato

Composed in 1935, this Concerto shows the composer in his full maturity, giving those acid harmonies so characteristic of him, and using the orchestra as much for colour as contrapuntal collaboration. But it is the lyrical element in the work which is most stressed, long outpourings of legato melody, a style of concerto writing which is the extreme antithesis to all the other violin concertos of the period, Bartok, Berg, Stravinsky and Schoenberg.

The first movement has a very simple formal design, the various sections having an almost classical key system. It is within each section that the unexpected and sometimes abrupt changes of tonality occur. The first melody, for un-

accompanied solo violin, assumes a very important part in the movement, appearing in different guises in most of the development, with many colourful woodwind phrases, including one for flute and bassoon at a distance of three octaves. The return has this melody in the 'cello and bass.

The first part of the slow movement might be called a serenade, of which there are so many examples in opera, a long melody, quite vocal in character, with a pizzicato accompaniment. Indeed this operatic feeling of the melody is accentuated on its second appearance by the grandiose colour expressed by the orchestra. Again can be noticed the quick changes in tonality. The contrasting theme relies on florid decoration by the solo violin, the outline being supplied by a muted trumpet. The coda seems to be almost an afterthought, but it contains a masterly stroke—the solo violin takes up the pizzicato, the tune now being in the bass. Rarely has pizzicato sounded so effective in a solo. The last bar is quite an extraordinary duet for clarinet and bass. The movement is episodic, a little stiff in design, and there is a feeling of Schubertian discursiveness which is alien to most of the music of this period.

The finale says farewell to all the lyrical qualities, and is really a display piece for the violin, difficult, effective and well-written for the instrument. In place of the previous cantabile, the music is dominated by its rhythmic impulse, one section being in an unusual seven-four rhythm. Every movement contains piquant colours, but nowhere more startling than here in the repeat of the second melody, when the double-bass plays in octaves with the solo. The coda has the seven-four rhythm telescoped to five-four, with the bass-drum taking a very active part in the proceedings, and the concerto finishes with a real *tour de force* for the soloist.

J.F.

4. SCOTTISH DANCE SUITE

Thea Musgrave

(b. 1928)

1. Andante—*Giocoso*
2. Andante con moto
3. Tempo di Rumba
4. Reel

This Scottish Dance Suite (scored for full orchestra) was composed in 1959 and first performed under James Lockhart by the B.B.C. Scottish Orchestra. It presents an entirely different facet of the composer from that illustrated in the *Divertimento* for Strings recently performed at these concerts and from that of her larger works for full orchestra. The melodies used in the several movements are: (1) The original tune of "Robin shearin' haerst." (2) "The bonnie Earl of Moray" is set against a quiet contrapuntally embroidered texture of muted strings to provide the slow movement. (3) Another slow song "Ca' the Yowes" is set against the swaying asymmetrical pulse of the rumba. (4) The final reel rests upon the tune "The Fairy's Kiss," until "This is no my plaid" is introduced in alternation and combination with it. Ultimately all the tunes of the Suite (except No. 2) are brought together.

S.T.M.N.