

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1964-65

REID MEMORIAL CONCERT

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: Dr. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Clarinet:

GERVASE DE PEYER

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 18th FEBRUARY, 1965

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

PROGRAMME

GENERAL JOHN REID

(born 13th February, 1721—died 6th February, 1807)

MINUET No. 5 in E FLAT

MARCH FOR THE 70TH REGIMENT, GENERAL TRYON'S

1. SYMPHONY No. 39 in E flat (K.543)

Mozart

(1756-1791)

Adagio: Allegro

Andante

Minuet: Allegretto

Finale: Allergo

The last three great symphonies, composed in close succession in the summer of 1788 (the G minor finished 25th July and the 'Jupiter' 10th August), exhibit much the same variety of distinctive orchestral colouring as the sequence of piano-forte concertos of 1786 (K.488 in A major, K.491 in G minor, and K.503 in C major). In each case the first acquires a specially rich hue from the use of clarinets and the exclusion of oboes, the second (taking the G minor symphony in Mozart's revised version) uses complete wind band, and the third reverts to the older tradition of classical symphonic orchestration with oboes dominant and clarinets excluded. Yet in none of his symphonies did Mozart embrace the full range of colour and tonal contrasts that full wind and brass sections allow, as he did with such symphonic mastery in the great C minor concerto.

The E flat symphony is gloriously rich in tone almost from first to last; in the massive resonance of its profoundly grand and spacious introduction; in the suave and mellow beauty of its first allegro where generous melody alternates with brilliant and virile tutti; in the warmth and deep resonance of strings unfolding the glorious melody of the Andante in A flat major, offset by contrasting tutti paragraphs of passionate strength, and hallowed by the unforgettable beauty of wind tone quietly building up tier upon tier. Rarely do minuets appear in such a blaze of light as that which wind and brass here shed upon the scene. By contrast the quiet trio glides upon the deep dark ripple of the second clarinet.

If ever a symphonic movement of Mozart's was a tribute to Haydn's humour and Haydn's economy, it is this finale. I should guess that both of them would have found such a word as 'monothematic' perfectly intolerable, but if anyone as he listened began to wonder "what have you?" I can see precisely how they would relish his intelligence even though the only answer given was an adroit 'cock o' the snoot' by flute, clarinet and bassoon. In this scene of lusty happiness and glorious digressions from familiar ways there is no room for personal susceptibilities, but there is room for Mozart to quote in the development from his G minor Quintet of the previous year—an astonishing hint that the G minor Symphony was already forming in his mind.

2. CLARINET CONCERTO No. 1 in C minor (Op. 26)

Spohr

(1784-1847)

Adagio—Allegro

Adagio

Rondo: Vivace

Not all, but a great many of the finest concertos owe their origin to the composer's interest in and admiration of the artistry and technique of virtuosi instrumentalists. Mozart's clarinet concerto of 1791 was, like the quintet, written for Anton Stadler: Weber's clarinet concertos and concertino were inspired by the impact of the splendid Munich player H. J. Bärmann in 1811. Louis Spohr, the great violinist-composer who at the time was director of the Duke of Gotha's court orchestra, met and heard Johann Hermstedt (1778-1846) in the winter of 1808 when the latter who was first clarinet in the nearby Sonderhausen court band (of which he subsequently became director) was paying a visit. Some few of the great virtuosi of wood-wind and brass instruments of the beginning of the nineteenth century had their early training in military bands (though academies too were beginning to play their part). Hermstedt, son of a soldier, had such a bandsman training. It was through his own initiative whilst stationed at Dresden that he developed his own virtuosity by listening to and modelling himself upon the finest singers and violinists whom he heard there. Spohr completed this first concerto in January 1809 and the first performance followed at Sonderhausen shortly afterwards. The three later concertos (1810, 1821 and 1828) and several chamber works were all composed for this great player.

The work is scored for normal symphony orchestra with exclusion of orchestral clarinets, and it will be noted that by using horns in E flat but trumpets in C Spohr achieves some very effective contrasts of tone colour in the scoring in the latter part of both first and last movements when themes are recapitulated in the tonic major. One may further remark that in his scoring for wind Spohr is as felicitous as Mozart. The A flat major Adagio is throughout an accompanied solo—virtually a chamber-music (quartet) movement for clarinet, violins and violoncello.

The solemn and pleading introductory Adagio introduces the main theme of the Allegro, indeed the germinal theme of the whole movement, for the second subject in happier lyrical vein takes the same motif as its starting point.

Of the engaging Rondo we learn from Spohr himself that he derived its melodies from the singing (to guitar) of a Spanish soldier who was quartered in his house.

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY No. 3, in A MINOR, "SCOTCH"

Mendelssohn

(1809-1847)

Introduction and Allegro Agitato—Scherzo assai vivace—Adagio cantabile—Allegro guerriero and Finale maestoso.

"In the evening twilight we went to-day to the palace where Queen Mary lived and loved . . . The chapel close to it is now roofless, grass and ivy grow there . . . Everything around is broken and mouldering, and the bright sky shines in. I believe I found to-day in that old chapel the beginning of my Scotch Symphony." Thus wrote Mendelssohn from Edinburgh on July 30th, 1829 to his family in Berlin. The passage he noted down at that time consisted of the first

sixteen bars of the Introduction. Six weeks later he writes from London, "The Scotch Symphony as well as the Hebrides story is gradually being built up." He was working on this symphony simultaneously with the composition of the Italian Symphony whilst on his Italian tour. But from Rome he writes in March 1831, "From April 15th to May 15th is the finest season in Italy. Who can blame me for not being able to transport myself into the Scotch-mist mood?" The work was not in fact finished until early in 1842 and received its first performance in Leipzig in that year.

Despite these references in his letters Mendelssohn gave no title to this symphony upon its appearance (nor indeed to the Italian). The score bears the simple designation, "Symphony in A minor dedicated to Queen Victoria," and bears a note to the effect that the movements must follow one another without a break. The indication of the scheme of the work as printed above is explicitly given in that author's note, and is remarkable in that it does not exactly reproduce the tempo marks prefixed to the several movements. "Tempo guerriero" (warlike), for example, gives a clue to the composer's intentions far more explicit than the "tempo vivacissimo" prefixed to that movement. But it was characteristic of Mendelssohn that he should insist that the music speak for itself without the aid of a Baedeker. And if anyone, through an immoderate surfeit of "Elijah," should be under the misapprehension that Mendelssohn would hardly be the person to relish his Scots Oats, he would do well to read the letters which the two vigorous and vivacious young Germans sent home. Mendelssohn was then twenty years of age. His companion was his close friend Klingemann, a young diplomatist attached to the Hanoverian Legation in London; a poet, a superb letter writer, and possessed of an intoxicating sense of humour. Mendelssohn freely indulged in his pursuit of pencil sketching in which he excelled, and it is hard to say whether his sketches or his letters afforded the greater pleasure. He concludes a vivid account of the view from Arthur's Seat, "Why need I describe it? When God Himself takes to panorama-painting, it turns out strangely beautiful". They saw the Highland pipers foregathered in the city for the annual competition, coming from church, "victoriously leading their sweethearts in their Sunday attire, and casting magnificent and important looks over the world." "From my earliest days," writes Klingemann, "I have confounded the Hebrides with the Hesperides; and if we did not find the oranges on the trees, they lay at least in the whiskey toddy." And of the famous visit to Fingal's Cave—"he is on better terms with the sea as a musician than as an individual and a stomach." No; these two knew how to acquaint themselves with life and land. "The longer and oftener we looked back," concludes Klingemann, as they leave the land where they had had weather to make the trees and rocks crash, the "bluer and more misty grew the mountains, at whose feet we had been lying, all deep shades of colour mingled, and we might have become Highland-sick and wished ourselves back had we not known that the reality within that mountain land was grey, cold, and majestic. It was a sweet farewell to the heights which we at once abuse and love."

S. T. M. N.