

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1964-65

*Seventh Concert*

THE  
MARGAND QUARTET

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THE  
EDINBURGH QUARTET

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IAN HAMPTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
THURSDAY, 25th FEBRUARY, 1965

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

## PROGRAMME

### I. SEXTET No. 2 IN G MAJOR, Op. 36

*Brahms*  
(1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo  
Scherzo. Allegro non troppo—Presto giocoso  
Poco Adagio  
Poco Allegro

In all that Brahms wrote there is no work so ethereal as this sextet. This is all the more remarkable since the increased number of instruments might be expected to militate against rather than facilitate the transparency of the instrumentation. In the widely circling first movement the harmonies and indeed the tonalities revolve about a central spun thread of two notes. Of course the texture richens and deepens as the dynamics rise from tranquillity to an intense blaze, but the whole has the spaciousness of that mansion

“ . . . . . where those immortal shapes  
of bright aerial Spirits live inspear'd  
In Regions milde of calm and serene Ayr.”

The profoundest remark that has been made of the scherzo is that it is “ a study of childhood worthy of Haydn, Wordsworth, or even life itself.” It is simple in speech and subtle in nature, very sensitive and a little plain-tive, something between laughter and tears. All this is portrayed in a miniature sonata movement in G minor, with clearly contrasted themes and a quiet little coda in a manner that fills one with wonder. But high spirits burst out in the trio with romp and dance. How true to life is the unaccountable behaviour which finally flings off the little coda in a sudden animato.

Yet more profound than all else in this work are the variations which form the slow movement. The theme (in E minor) consists of three phases—statement, contrast and re-statement. Until the third variation there are no repetitions, but in the last three variations it is repeated in two unequal sections. The most prominent features of the theme are: firstly, the two fourths with which it opens and which relate it both to the first movement and to the glorious slow movement of the double concerto: secondly, the ambiguous use of both major and minor effects of harmony, and thirdly, the line which is doubly sketched below the theme, giving the unique effect of a drawing with all its approximation sketches left showing without erasure. These chromatic lines account for the first variation, and their import is fully explored in the very expressive anti-phonical variation that follows. The third variation rises in wrathful vigour, and this persists in the fourth. The link of a few quiet bars leads into the fifth and last variation in the major, where, in proportions twice as big, all the commotion of the skies settles into a cloudscape standing motionless and golden pale before a sun which yet hesitates to sink.

An oblique approach is made to the last movement. The brief prelude also provides the transitional motive from the first subject, childlike and tuneful, to the second which wales in fifths after the manner of the

Mastersingers' apprentices. An innocent fugato and a little Beethoven-like antiphony form the development of a movement that is supremely happy throughout, and which only reveals the full measure of its brilliance in an animato coda.

### 2. STRING QUARTET

*Raymond Loucheur*  
(b.1899)

Raymond Loucheur, who was born at Tourcoing, was awarded the premier Grand Prix de Rome in 1928, and it was at Rome in 1930 that he composed this quartet. His other compositions include two symphonies, various smaller orchestral works, a violin concerto, two concertinos (trumpet, and percussion), and chamber music. He has led a distinguished career in the service of the Conservatoire National, as professor, inspector, inspector-general for musical education in the lycées and colleges of France, and finally from 1956 to 1962 as Director of the Paris Conservatoire.

The following note (printed by permission) serves as a brief introduction to a work which it is believed has not hitherto been heard in Britain.

**I Soliloque.** Le violoncelle expose une longue phrase, nostalgique, puis angoissée. Les trois autres instruments entrent en jeu, accentuant l'intensité, l'âpreté du discours. La résignation, le calme s'imposent peu à peu et un “ largo ” très développé termine cette première partie dans un climat de tendresse inquiète.

**II Divertissement.** Le second mouvement requiert un style d'interprétation nettement inspiré du jazz et, plus exactement encore, du “ blues ”. Le compositeur a fréquemment recours à l'unisson de deux instruments, de telle manière qu'il en résulte des timbres mixtes évoquant le saxophone.

**III Final.** Alternance de traits sautillants, ironiques, et de périodes énergiques, massives. Episode central mystérieux, d'où émergent de furtifs sons harmoniques. Après une brève réexposition, la tension monte, définitivement, et le quatuor s'achève, en force, sur un vigoureux rappel du thème initial.

## I N T E R V A L

### 3. OCTET IN E FLAT (Op. 20)

*Mendelssohn*  
(1809-1847)

Allegro moderato, ma con fuoco  
Andante  
Scherzo; Allegro leggierissimo  
Presto

Probably the vast majority of us did as children precisely what St. Paul has described us as doing, but when Mendelssohn composed this octet at the age of sixteen he was either a man or possessed by some god. Indeed the only thing to regret is that in later life he should ever have concerned himself with trying to describe what St. Paul himself did! Neither Mozart nor Schubert achieved a masterpiece of such magnitude at this age.

Mendelssohn sets himself a far more difficult problem than Spohr by taking his eight instruments in the one mass. He revels in the wealth of resonance which this inevitably implies, and yet he varies the quality and patterns of his texture with infinite resource. He was of course no chicken at sixteen. He had written eleven "Symphonies" for strings, two symphonies for full orchestra (of which the second became his "Symphony No. 1"), an unpublished string quartet, and three published Pianoforte Quartets, the earliest of his pianoforte pieces, and an opera. Nor is it remarkable that he should be completely assured in his writing for strings—he played the violin himself and was excellently taught by Eduard Rietz (a former pupil of Rode) to whom he dedicated the Octet. Nevertheless one can but marvel at the technique of his handling of this large ensemble (for which he had no model to follow), and even more at the breadth and depth of his invention, suggesting the stature of a man of uncommonly rich experience.

Without the aid of musical type one can hardly attempt an analysis which would do justice. It is better to recommend anyone who is moved to excitement on hearing this work to buy a pocket score, carry it about for a month and read it on every possible occasion. (It is high time that miniature scores were sold in railway stations!) With what serene joy Schubert would have heard the simple but radiant second-subject of this first movement, or Mozart the quiet stretto-like building-up of the entries in the slow movement! Yet never for a moment is Mendelssohn other than himself, and nowhere else is he quite so profoundly unconventional in his treatment of classical forms as in these first two movements. The miracle of the gossamer-light scherzo is the more easily remarked because it is his first supreme achievement in a type of movement in which he had already begun to exercise himself, and which he was to enjoy on so many future occasions. As Edinburgh audiences well know, he used this movement in an orchestrated and considerably revised version to replace the minuet of his "Symphony No. 1" at its London performance in 1829. That revision was so adroit that one needs to be on one's guard against supposing that when the octet-players pursue a different course they have merely gone wrong!

The finale begins as a fugue, leading from the bottom upwards. It is thought to be kind to say that as a boy of sixteen Mendelssohn failed to realise that two 'cellos and two violas within a pretty confined range are unlikely to make all the notes sound as clear as they look on paper. Personally, I should despair of life if ever it were accepted that music should sound like print! This is much more than a fugue, but the vigorous energy released at the opening is a current running almost without interruption through the whole gigantic movement, accumulating one or another counter-subject as it goes, and these in their turn activated into intricacies of vigorously independent counterpoint. And if, early in the train of events, emphatic unisons rather obviously stamp their way about for a spell, it is not at all so obvious what innumerable things are going to attend upon these stampings in their later occurrences, including the scherzo itself, deftly caught back into the run of events by the inexhaustibly lively fugato.

S.T.M.N.