

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1965-66

Fourth Concert

THE
EDINBURGH QUARTET

MILES BASTER

PHILIP CLARK

AUSTIN PATTERSON

DAVID EDWARDS

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 1965

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

PROGRAMME

1. QUARTET IN G (K.387)

Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro vivace assai
Andante cantabile
Menuetto
Molto allegro

This quartet, completed on the last day of December 1782, is the first of the set of six which Mozart dedicated to Haydn and which he finished only in early January 1785, whereafter they were published as his Opus 10. Undoubtedly the appearance of Haydn's Op. 33 set of six in 1782 after an interval of about ten years since his last remarkable works in this genre (the so-called 'Sun' quartets of Op. 20) inspired Mozart to essay the medium afresh—and he himself had been prompted to model his youthful quartets very closely upon that challenging group of Haydn's works with which the sun had veritably risen over the horizon of the string quartet ensemble.

Music does not stay to be described—least of all the Molto allegro Finale of this work. By the time one has said that it combines fugato procedure with sonata form, displaying both its first and its second subjects in fugal exposition and immediately thereafter demonstrating how adroitly they combine, one has been already swept back and forth between the traditional extremes of learned music and the most irresponsible and irrepressible delights of 'opera buffa' which intrude at every point; and if the former takes the final curtain with a relish of stretto its final bow is yet graced with gentle harmony.

To what kind of work does this adroit manipulation of extremes provide so apposite a conclusion? Assuredly one that is buoyantly fresh, but with a gaiety shot through with a whimsy of chromatic plaint, and rather wilfully torn from moment to moment between dynamic exuberance and sudden reticence—a personality of such quick imagination as can seize upon a toy march and press it into instant service as a subject, and tip-toe to its cadences with Schubertian secrecy, can twist chromatic threads through its innocent Minuet with an almost naughty relish in confusing the accentuation in the cross-stitching, can turn the ensuing G minor Trio to a passionate prophecy of the pathos to be found in later and greater explorations of the evocative key, and that can catch the hint of C.P.E. Bach's prescription for extensibility and the noble simplicity of Gluck's spirit in raising a great arc to span the deep emotion of its C major Andante cantabile. The elements may be rich in variety, but the pervading ethos of the whole is unmistakable—and the synthesis lies in the sheer personality of Mozart.

2. QUARTET No. 2 (OP. 10)

Kodaly
(b. 1882)

Allegro
Andante (quasi recitativo)—Andante con moto—Allegretto
—Andante con moto—*leading to*
Allegro giocoso.

This quartet was composed in 1918 (eight years after the completion of the first quartet). The style may be described as basically that of musical impressionism stemming from Debussy but infused with greater harmonic astringency and radically transformed by the Hungarian temperament and the personal idiom of the composer.

The basic tonality of the work is D minor (Aeolian), the final cadence of first and last movements being D major. The first movement follows the general design of sonata form in the disposition of its material. The opening gesture quickly introduces the quiet florid theme of the first violin easily swinging about the open fourths and thirds which are germinal to the whole. The second theme (A minor) maintains its melody in sonorous sixths (or thirteenthths) on violin and 'cello in parallel, the concluding theme quietly restoring the mood of the first. A momentary passionate climax yields to the pianissimo new melodic theme of the middle section (violin, then viola). Tension quickly mounts to a second passionate climax from which a more or less regular recapitulation emerges. The coda inverts the opening gesture and develops the main motif and the concluding theme both passionately and quietly till they are smoothed into the stillness of the final cadence.

The slow movement forms a very extensive reflective interlude before the final Allegro giocoso which is a composite of a number of gay Hungarian folk-dance (or quasi folk-dance) melodies in the design of exposition, central episode, elaborated recapitulation and coda. The slow movement itself employs both a rhapsodic bird-like carolling of recitative alternately on violin and 'cello upon a background of suspended harmonies, and also more extensively a monotone parlando recitative which swells to expressive cadences of great pathos against a background of harmonic mystery. In the midst of this for a moment a far-off vision is caught of the dance that is ultimately to come.

INTERVAL

3. QUARTET IN A MINOR, OP. 132

Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Assai sostenuto—Allegro
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto Adagio—Andante—Tempo I—Andante—Tempo I
Alla marcia, assai vivace—Piu Allegro
Allegro appassionato—Presto.

The last five quartets of Beethoven are a world in themselves—not so much a world apart from the common world of man's experience, aspirations and the stresses of life, but a world of sublimation and transfiguration,

and of the reconciliation that a divine vision brings. Whilst each quartet of course stands as a work complete in itself, they nevertheless form a sequence of experience in that the E flat Op. 127 forms a portal of heavenly joy, and the F major Op. 135 as it were an epilogue, whilst both of these stand a little apart from the three central quartets which are linked by their response to one important challenge and which stand as three different but closely related revelations stemming from one sustained visionary experience. The true order of these three is, first the A minor Op. 132 completed before September 1825, secondly the B flat Op. 130 with the Grosse Fuge finale which Beethoven worked upon at the same time and finished (it is believed) in October, and thirdly the C sharp minor Op. 131, sketches for which were begun before Op. 130 was completed.

That thematic challenge in its starkest utterance forms the theme of the great fugue, that superhuman endeavour to which the ease and radiant beauty of the earlier movements are as it were the foothills of preparation for seeking the heights. Subsequently in the C sharp minor it is transformed into the mystical contemplation of the opening fugue, yet also inspires the turbulent resolution and heavy gravamen of the finale.

It is this theme, scrolled about itself in quiet mystic utterance of perfect symmetry, which is the starting point of the A minor; and this four-note motive (direct and inverted) underlies the first troubled and yearning melody of the Allegro, constantly informs the harmonic progressions and at times emerges from its inner mystical influence to forthright acclaim. Over against this lies the radiant beauty of the melodic second subject, carefully accompanied, and opening out a liberal expanse of major harmonies. Some commentators have referred to the form of this movement as consisting of three expositions. That is to try and account for it in terms of normal procedure, leaving anomalously a residue of all forefront and no aftermath. But that unsatisfactory explanation reflects the truth that there are three main phases, the second being a partly developed recapitulation on dominant tonality, and the third a more condensed recapitulation on tonic tonality with a coda that brings an intensified feeling of resolve. The major key brings complete and intimate joy in the second movement—an ever-repeated, treasured turn of phrase, and a trio of ethereal piping to a drone and of dance interrupted only momentarily by a formidable intrusion of the first motto theme.

No one knows whether, or if so how far, Beethoven may have progressed with this quartet before his serious illness of March-April 1825, but the profound slow movement is his avowed response to his spiritual experience of those months. It is entitled "A restored one's holy song of thanksgiving to the divinity, in the Lydian mode"—a very slow-moving mystical hymn (by its mode appearing to be poised between C and F major) in five lines each prefaced by a short phase of restrained polyphony. With this there alternates a joyous andante—a spring of new life, trilled and garlanded with ecstasy. As the hymn is repeated the polyphony becomes wonderfully developed in its expressive detail until at the last this overflows the hymn that persists in transcendental canonic form.

If the *Alla marcia* is a moment of unfettered joy, a turbulent recitative quickly reinvoles the unresolved challenge of the initial quest, and there follows a passionate and pulsing finale—a rondo in form (but was ever rondo more deeply concerned with the depths of human feeling) until at the last, and under the influence of the motivating 'motto theme' there comes ecstatic joy in the radiance of A major.

S.T.M.N.