

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CHAMBER CONCERTS  
SEASON 1966-67

SECOND CONCERT

Violin

FREDERICK GRINKE

Pianoforte

KENNETH LEIGHTON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 27th OCTOBER, 1966

AT 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

1. SONATA IN A MAJOR

Preludio - Capriccio - Corrente - Adagio - Giga.

Vivaldi  
(1675-1741)

2. SONATA IN E MINOR, OP. 36A,  
for Violin and Pianoforte

Busoni  
(1866-1924)

I Langsam - un poco più andante - poco con moto - a tempo secondo -  
Tempo primo - Adagio.

II Presto.

III Andante, piuttosto grave, leading to

Chorale : Andante con moto

Var. 1 : poco più andante

Var. 2 : alla marcia, vivace

Var. 3 : lo stesso movimento

Var. 4 : Andante

Fugue : Tranquillo assai

Stretta : Allegro deciso

Coda : Più lento - più tranquillo - tempo del tema - adagio.

Busoni - always an acute self-critic - sometimes felt this work to be the first in which he found himself. It was written in 1898-1900, under the stress of the final illness and death of its dedicatee, Otokar Nováček (1866-1900), a celebrated violinist and composer and one of Busoni's closest friends.

The piano opens with chorale-like chords. The first subject presents two ideas: first, a yearning phrase confided to the piano and echoed by the violin; then a tranquil violin melody in the tonic major. A bridge passage is built out of the first of these ideas and leads to the second subject, played in the violin's sonorous low register, in the key of B flat. This second subject is chromatically related to the introductory chorale-phrase. The development covers three sections: the first treats the first subject in march-rhythm, in the key of B flat modulating to G; a central episode in E minor, which introduces a new dotted rhythm in a dramatic (almost Verdian) mood; and an improvisatory development of the second subject in harped chords on the piano, with brief cadential cadenzas on the violin. The recapitulation is announced by a dramatic tremolo statement of the opening chorale-phrase. The second subject is not recapitulated, because it appeared at the end of the development. A canonic coda (adagio) ends the movement.

A scherzo-tarantella follows, in rondo-sonata form. The rondo subject grows out of the central episode of the first movement.

The final movement is preceded by an elegiac prelude which contains a reminiscence of a melody from the scherzo-tarantella. A brief melodic cadenza on violin leads to the Bach Chorale, "How blest am I, O Friend of Souls, when in Thy Love I find my peace". This is presented in the piano's low register which opened the whole work. Each half of the chorale is repeated on violin. There are four variations: a pastorale, a Viennese march, a perpetuum mobile and an andante in the style of a chorale-prelude. Out of this grows a four-part fugue on the theme of the Bach Chorale. This is built up to a monumental climax which is maintained in a majestic statement of the chorale-theme on violin, against a perpetuum mobile two-part invention on the piano, with octave doub-

lings in the bass. This leads directly to an impassioned development of the prelude to the variations. When it abates, we hear a reference to the chorale-phrase from the beginning of the Sonata, followed by a quotation of the melody from the first movement. The prelude to the variations is again recalled, "as if in apotheosis" (the composer's own description). There is one final reference to the Bach Chorale, in a beatific atmosphere seldom found outside the works of Beethoven's last period. At the end we hear the opening chorale-phrase, this time in the major, marked "as if sacred", and the work ends with a simple perfect cadence.

Joseph Szigeti conjectures that Alban Berg's Violin Concerto, which also climaxes in a Bach Chorale, was influenced by this work.

Ronald Stevenson.

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INTERVAL

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3. VARIATIONS ON A PHRYGIAN THEME, OPUS 105

Rubbra  
(b. 1901)

This work was written for the fiftieth birthday of Frederick Grinke. As its name implies, the theme is quite simple, though extremely subtle in phraseology. Each variation (of which there are twelve plus a coda) exploits some aspect of violin technique, while following the general melodic shape of the theme. Chromatic inflexions appear (particularly in the beautiful slow variation 5) and impart an added expressiveness to a fine example in miniature of the composer's mature style.

K.L.

4. SIX MINIATURES FOR SOLO VIOLIN  
(1st Performance)

Elizabeth Maconchy

1. Preamble

2. Meditation

3. Roundabout

4. Dialogue

5. Lullaby

6. Badinage.

These little unaccompanied pieces were written for Frederick Grinke earlier this year. The pieces are for the diversion of the listener, but for the player they present a variety of technical points.

After the opening 'Preamble' a more serious 'Meditation' follows. In 'Roundabout' play is made with the several suggestions evoked by the title. 'Dialogue' starts as a logical argument - it becomes somewhat heated, but reason and good manners prevail. The 'Lullaby' was written for my grand-daughter, who characteristically wakes up more than once before finally falling asleep. 'Badinage' is teasing for the player, but makes a suitably lighthearted conclusion.

Elizabeth Maconchy.

5. NOCTURNE FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

*Kenneth Leighton*  
(b. 1929)

Written for Frederick Grinke in 1959, this piece was first performed by him with the composer accompanying in a B.B.C. broadcast. It is a somewhat atmospheric piece with a passionate middle section, and it has two distinct themes which undergo a good deal of transformation.

K.L.

6. SONATA IN D MINOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

*Brahms*  
(1833-1897)

*Allegro - Adagio - Un poco presto e con sentimento - Presto agitato.*

There is little to be said that is fresh about this, one of the greatest of many great Brahms chamber works. As Dr. Hanslick said, it is a work "of that sweet clear ripeness which only the union of complete mastery and undiminished invention with a harmoniously perfect insight into life can produce."

I would stress Hanslick's "perfect insight into life" because this sonata was composed in Brahms's middle fifties, and demonstrates the economy, and the mixture of sweetness and defiance, which can be found in so many great works written in late maturity. It is usual to mention the dominant pedal on which the whole ruminating development section of the first movement is constructed, and the coda which answers this with a long tonic pedal. But more meaningful perhaps would be to stress the marvellous exploitation of the dark tonality of D minor. While reminding us of Brahms's youthful and full-blooded concerto in the same key, this sonata contains a distilled essence of tragic undertones and a sinewy economy of texture which only come with advancing age and experience.

The same characteristics persist in the later movements. Absolute simplicity of structure, absence of development, and spare dimensions are the outward characteristics of a profoundly moving slow movement. The third movement avoids the title of Scherzo and is a late example of those Brahmsian movements which hide a faint undercurrent of tragedy and anxiety under a light-hearted yet restrained exterior.

The Finale is a kind of sonata-rondo. The noble second subject opens in C major, but after only three bars is permeated by minor chords and minor modulation. This is a clue to the whole movement (and perhaps to the whole work) which continually contradicts its moments of sweetness with the stark realities of human experience.

K.L.