

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1966-67

*SECOND CONCERT*

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: MILES BASTER

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Violin:

MAUREEN SMITH

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 3rd NOVEMBER, 1966

AT 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

## 1. OVERTURE, "FIDELIO"

*Beethoven*  
(1770–1827)

"I have thought that the overture should prepare the spectators for the character of the coming action and give them an indication of its subject". Thus wrote Gluck in the celebrated preface to "Alceste". The ready acceptance of this ideal is so far from imposing any obligation upon us to tread our prosy path through "the argument" of "Paradise Lost", before we stand before the panorama of "Man's First Disobedience and the Fruit of that Forbidden Tree", that it may be held to absolve us from reading all synopses, *précis* and programme notes alike. Preparation does not imply a prevision of all that is to happen. What "preparation" has ever matched those words, "In the beginning.....", unless, perhaps, it be the prelude to Rheingold? And yet Wagner can take us through the streets and alleys of Nürnberg, as citizens long since familiar with the pomp of its guilds and the sauciness of its apprentices, without our guessing, as we enter the church, anything at all of what is to happen on that midsummer's eve and the morrow. Any prevision of the whole must be relatively if not entirely static, a tableau – or as the tutti to the concerto movement – if it is not to become a drama (or a concerto) in itself. How much more so if the beginning itself contains a mystery whose revelation belongs to the very essence of the drama.

For his opera Beethoven originally wrote, in 1805, the overture known as "Leonora" No. 2, which a year later he refashioned into the tremendous symphonic drama of "Leonora" No. 3. But such a path could never lead to the rising of the curtain upon the apparently innocent love-tangle of Act 1. In the subsequent composition of "Leonora" No. 1, Beethoven provided an overture that did not kill his first act. But it was the final revision of the opera in 1814 that evoked the perfect overture to the opera, which never for a moment belies the good-natured intimacy of the opening scene, even though it contrives to hint at the darkness of Florestan's dungeon and to plead mutely for his release.

S.T.M.N.

## 2. CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN IN D MINOR, OP. 47

*Sibelius*  
(1865–1957)

*Allegro moderato*  
*Adagio di molto*  
*Allegro, ma non tanto*

Composed in 1903 and revised in 1905, this Concerto is a fairly early work, written shortly after the second symphony. While in form, harmony and melody there is much that is characteristic of the composer at this period, there are also some unusual features which suggest that he wanted to write a popular concerto, a work that would not only be enjoyable to play, but would have an instant appeal to the audience. For example, the second theme of the first movement, with the very sweet melody in sixths for the solo violin, cannot be described as a typical Sibelius melody. It has a most brilliant and virtuosic solo part, and the orchestration is rich and full of colour.

The opening paragraph of the first movement is perhaps the most inspired part of the whole Concerto. The start by the tutti strings suggests the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto tuned a tone lower, but the very first note of the solo shows we are in a different age and atmosphere. The long meditative melody for solo violin is Sibelius at his best, but the rest of the movement, although having many arresting features, including an admirable cadenza before the recapitulation, hardly keeps up the level of the inspired opening.

The slow movement has a long melody, a little more sentimental than is usual in Sibelius, but giving the violin a wonderful opportunity for expressive legato tone. After a contrasted section, the orchestra takes up this melody with the solo contributing a counterpoint. However, the violin resumes the last phrase of the melody concluding with a short coda.

The feature of the finale is the rhythmic urge which pervades the whole movement. After the high spirits of the first theme, the excitement remains with the interplay between  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{6}{8}$  rhythms. Added to this is one of the most brilliant – and difficult – solo parts ever written for a string instrument. The total effect is indeed stimulating and designed to show the skill of the executant, as it should be in a "popular" concerto.

J.F.

---

## I N T E R V A L

---

## 3. SYMPHONY IN G MAJOR, OP. 88

*Dvořák*  
(1841–1904)

*Allegro con brio*  
*Adagio*  
*Allegretto grazioso*  
*Allegro ma non troppo*

Dvořák's penultimate symphony, his eighth, was composed during the late summer and early autumn of 1889, and was later inscribed: "For being admitted to membership of the Emperor Franz Josef's Czech Academy of Science, Literature and the Arts". Although not a new work at the time, it also served in June 1891 as one of Dvořák's 'exercises' when Cambridge University conferred on him the Mus.D., *honoris causa*. However, there is no hint in this symphony of anything specifically academic. On the contrary its freshness of invention, its attractive colouring, its thoroughly Czech spirit and the unorthodoxy of form of the first and last movements emphasise the composer's independence of thought.

Since he pictured the composer of this work as a busy man who travelled much, and who had "little time for second thoughts on anything", Julius Harrison showed himself quite unaware of the composer's struggles with his material. Dvořák was in fact compelled to shape and reshape the variation theme of the finale ten times before he was satisfied with it. Yet Harrison's misconception

draws attention to a most significant point: despite the self-criticism that accompanied Dvořák's creative work, it is miraculous that he was able to make his music sound so spontaneous.

As in so much of his music, the first movement effectively contrasts moods and colours. It was Dvořák's original intention to commence with the flute theme, but how greatly its brightness is enhanced by the noble 'cello melody in G minor that he decided must come before it. This minor melody recurs at key points in the movement, and most notably on the crest of the climax immediately before the recapitulation, when it is presented in all its magnificence.

The Adagio, although basically in C major, is overlaid at first with harmonic colouring that belongs more properly to C minor, but after a while ambiguity is cast aside and the shadows vanish completely. Presently the mood becomes menacing, but the storm passes and the idyllic mood returns. The charming Allegretto can be left to speak for itself, but the transformation of the trio theme in the coda should not be overlooked.

Following a summons to attention by trumpets, the 'cellos announce the finale's theme and the variations commence. Before long they are interrupted by an extended episode in C minor. The variations are resumed. The composer appears to regret having to part with his theme, but he does so finally with a gesture of defiance.

J.C.