

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CHAMBER CONCERTS  
SEASON 1966-67

SIXTH CONCERT

THE  
EDINBURGH QUARTET

MILES BASTER

PHILIP CLARK

AUSTIN PATTERSON

DAVID EDWARDS

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 12th JANUARY, 1967

AT 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

1. QUARTET IN A MAJOR (K. 464)

Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Allegro  
Menuetto  
Andante (Variations)  
Allegro

At the turn of the year 1784/85 Mozart made a sudden spurt to complete the set of six quartets he began in 1782 - indicative, no doubt, of a resolve to have the set ready against Haydn's arrival in Vienna in January. Thus this fifth of the set (dedicated to Haydn) was completed on 10th January only four days before the sixth. Barely a month later Leopold Mozart was writing Nannerl from his son's house his enthusiastic account of the first trial of the three new quartets and of Haydn's admiration.

It is a fact of more than incidental interest that Beethoven copied the finale of this quartet in score, at a time of course when nothing beyond the separate parts was published. For there can be little doubt, I think, that his admiration for that movement - doubtless indeed for the whole quartet - is to be detected in the A major "Allegro ma non tanto" of his Op. 132. Nor could one ask for a more instructive commentary upon the qualities of Mozart's quartet.

We find the same economy of material tending to the substitution of an "all-over" pattern for a complex of lively contrasts; the same rounding and overlapping of recurring phrases; the same tendency for the instruments to "pair off" in flowing lines of thirds or sixths; the same type of circling unison figures; the same kind of momentum as arises from the tetic stress of the phrase unit. In short every device is used which increases the sense of continuity.

It is characteristic of Mozart's use of A major that he usually begins his themes on the fifth (E), as in the first and last movements here. Furthermore not only are these two movements thematically related in a subtle way, but the Minuet is also intimately related to the first, the corresponding phrases of its main theme occurring in reverse order. The remarkable unity of conception of the whole work indeed is apparent not only in the sustained happiness deeply enriched with a sensitive chromaticism which is but the pain of ecstasy, but also in germinal development of its basic themes.

The D major Variations likewise attain a wonderfully satisfying unity of design, binding their rich inventive variety as one purposive whole movement. Yet the order of composition of the six variations was not that in which they were arranged for publication. Mozart wrote them in the order 1.2.3.6.5.4. The coda which continues the striking "drum tap" figure of the sixth variation was only written after Mozart had already added No. 5 to the set. The minor variation (No. 4) was a final afterthought.

The finale is a contrapuntal movement in sonata form in which the same material serves for both first and second subject. Indeed the conspicuous chromatic phrase with which it opens is seldom absent throughout, and from the development onwards two satellite counterpoints dance attendance upon its progress to the last light moment of the coda when it vanishes beneath the horizon. Only thrice is the pattern interrupted, in the codetta of each section where some whim of gallantry asserts itself much as it did with Domenico Scarlatti even in his most romantic movements, and in the development where a fine broad melody unexpectedly intervenes.

S.T.M.N.

2. QUARTET NO. 2 (1945)

Ernest Bloch  
(b. 1880)

Moderato  
Presto-Moderato-Allegro molto-Meno mosso-Allegro molto  
Andante  
Allegro molto-Passacaglia-Fuga-Epilogue (calmo)

Whilst it is true of the greater part of Bloch's music that, as Eric Blom has said, "there is in Bloch's creative equipment a certain preponderance of extra-musical thought over purely musical imagination," the observation is entirely inapplicable to this great quartet. The first three movements, whether in reflective fantasy as in the first and third movements or in the full vigour of impetuous rhythmical drive as in the second, adumbrate themes and the partial figures of themes which are to find their full significance and their full stature in the gigantic finale, which is the fulfillment of the whole. The relevance of much in the earlier movements is thus only fully revealed in the last.

For the analyst it is easier to identify some of the themes as first adumbrated in terms of their definitive forms and functions in the finale, but the true experience of the whole is that of the listener witnessing the progress of the music from first things to last things, catching glimpses of themes now tentative, now more clearly defined, now epitomised, now expanded and elaborated. Thus the very first decorative turn of the solo violin in its opening ruminative fantasy expands into a quiet sustained melody in the middle of the first movement, and reappears tentatively in the third movement, before it is blazoned out in the turbulently rhythmical opening of the finale and once again at the culmination of the fugue. The sighing sevenths twice heard in the first movement form a distinctive feature of the ultimate passacaglia-fugue subject, whilst the first ejaculatory phrase of the Presto delivers the opening of that subject, for the present employed under a number of guises, and this again is the main topic in the opening of the third movement. Nevertheless, each movement also contains material proper to itself, often of a sustained melodic character such as that introduced first by the viola in the Presto. The quiet melody in clear triple-measure introduced four times in the course of the third movement finds its apotheosis in the grand climax in which the final fugue culminates, when it succeeds the blazoned theme already mentioned and with its breadth and grandeur brings the great marathon of energy to the stance of a calm epilogue wherein this melody and the fugue are quietly entwined, and the ever-striving harmonies are at length resolved on a sure D major.

S.T.M.N.

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I N T E R V A L

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3. QUARTET IN C MAJOR OP. 59, NO. 3

*Beethoven*  
(1770-1827)

Introduzione: Andante con moto—Allegro vivace

Andante con moto quasi Allegretto

Menuetto: Gracioso—

Allegro molto

The whole character of this spacious and predominantly optimistic quartet derives, I think, from the kind of question raised at the outset in its remarkable slow introduction. The use of a comparatively short slow introduction to a main allegro movement, somewhat rarely employed by Mozart, became a standard procedure with Haydn in his later symphonies; but if it ever aimed further than an enlargement upon one's pleasurable anticipation of breaking away into the main matter in hand it was to strike a severely contrasting mood which would provide a foil to offset all that succeeded, as for example in Haydn's 'London' Symphony in D (No. 104) or in Mozart's so-called 'Dissonance-quartet' in C. Beethoven used the device fairly frequently, and in one instance, the 'Sonata pathétique', with a much closer degree of integration and with considerable extension of its impact upon the formal structure as a whole. Here for the first time in his quartets he uses the device, but to achieve a quite unique effect. For this introduction conveys the idea of pure indetermination and vacuum. But where Lear claimed that nothing comes of nothing, Beethoven resolves his vacuum with two syllables which immediately define key and rhythm from which all else flows expansively. If the freedom of the introduction is that of unoccupied void, the freedom of the allegro which emerges is that of a spirit exulting in the space which it can command. The very figurations of scale, arpeggio, trill and the harmonic formulae are those we associate normally with the final jubiliations of a movement rather than with its primary exposition.

The Andante in A minor prolongs a strain of lyrical melancholy that has remarkably close affinity to Schubert, not only in its essential character but also by reason of its extended murmuring cadances and the sudden illuminations of major tonality which shine upon its happier phrases.

The Minuet flows with easy grace, and its florid scales find even more scope for rearing great roomy stretches of simple harmonic grandeur in the F major Trio section. The whole serves as a spacious prelude to the ensuing finale — a fugue disposed as a sonata-form movement, or (as some might prefer to describe it) a sonata-movement which proclaims itself a fugue but with all rights reserved for its own vested interests in tonalities, *tutti*, second subject, etc. The concession it makes is that the highly infectious drive of the fugue subject shall be maintained 'in moto perpetuo' even when contrapuntal considerations have for a while gone by the board. In the development this raises a great arc upon a single string of each instrument in turn. But in all this thrilling scene of commotion perhaps the greatest joy is reserved for the second violin who serenely reiterates a simple motif of two notes borrowed from the counter-subject which has enhanced the way from the recapitulation.

S.T.M.N.