

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1966-67

EIGHTH CONCERT

THE AMPHION
WIND QUINTET

DAVID NICHOLSON *flute* PHILIP GREENE *clarinet*
MARGARET R. MONCRIEFF *oboe* JOHN DEAS *horn*
LAURENCE TAYLOR *bassoon*

THE
EDINBURGH QUARTET

MILES BASTER PHILIP CLARK
AUSTIN PATTERSON DAVID EDWARDS
with
MARIE DARE *double bass*

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 9th FEBRUARY, 1967

AT 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

1. CLARINET QUINTET IN A MAJOR (K.581)

Mozart
(1756-1791)Allegro
Larghetto
Menuetto (with two Trios)
Allegretto con Variazioni

Upon whomsoever the radiant light of this perfect work shines, let him remember with gratitude Mozart's friend and fellow Mason, Anton Stadler (1753-1812), the first notable clarinet player of Vienna, for whom Mozart composed both this quintet and the later Concerto in A. In a similar way a century later Brahms was inspired to compose his clarinet quintet and two sonatas by the artistry of Richard Mühlfeld of the Meiningen orchestra.

The luminosity of an A major chord always appears to be at its maximum when crowned with its fifth, as for example in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Mozart opens all the three movements which are in this key with such an effect. But most remarkable is the wide spacing of the strings in the very first chord, a position which affords room for perfectly rounded curves of contrary motion. The development section of this first movement provides the perfect rejoinder to anyone who ventures to hint that it is the function of that part of a sonata design to develop the main first or second "subject", for the fantasy of modulation upon which we here embark wells from the same spring as that which modestly interjected a gentle cascade of clarinet arpeggio between the lines of the opening melody with seeming unconcern.

The Larghetto in D major opens with a clarinet melody of great repose accompanied by muted strings. This gives place to expressive dialogue in a more ornate style between violin and clarinet, extended by modulation to form a contrasting central episode, followed by simple recapitulation and again the dialogue now fashioned more briefly into a coda.

The Minuet alternates with two Trios, the first in A minor for strings only in which the initial hints of canonic possibilities are not overlooked by the viola, the second in the major being led by the clarinet.

As every variation is itself a comment upon a theme we may forbear to add further variation. Suffice it to observe that there are five variations and a coda, that Var. III in the minor employs only the string quartet and the Var. V is an Adagio; and for the rest let us revel in the exquisite and adroit plunges and arpeggios of an art in which the clarinet is inimitable.

S.T.M.N.

2. WIND QUINTET, OP. 43

Carl Nielsen
(1865-1931)Allegro ben moderato
Menuet
Praeludium: Adagio -
Tema con variazioni

Nielsen composed this delightful and freshly coloured work expressly for the Copenhagen Wind Quintet in 1921-22, beginning the sketches for it whilst he was yet finishing the great Fifth Symphony. Whilst the tonal structure, as also the forms employed, are basically those of classical tradition, both the diatonic territory of keys and the processes of modulation are slanted and turned with characteristic intrusions of modality or of momentary chromaticism. The Allegro is a sonata form movement in E major, but with a recurrent leaning toward A major (already in the horn's restatement of the opening subject) and A minor territory, and both the Minuet and the final Variations formally adopt and adhere to A major as of right. The neatly pointed and graceful Minuet, mostly in duo for clarinet and bassoon or for flute and oboe, is offset by a somewhat roguish Trio in D minor and rounded by a short flourish of coda.

With the Adagio prelude the whole colour and style changes profoundly to that of deeply felt rhapsodic soliloquy, with the cor anglais replacing the oboe, amidst the florid scrolls of flute and clarinet. But this seemingly other world of 'tone poem' proves ultimately to be a foil to offset the serenely happy theme of the variations which themselves are to display an abundant measure of good humour, of caricature starring both individual instruments in solo exposure and seemingly also the personal traits of the original performers, and even a gloriously naughty tirade of a clarinet incensed by a rudely obtuse bassoon - all of which is interspersed with movements of sober reflection, of graceful charm, or of vivacious festivity. The theme which gives rise to this unexpected charade is indeed a quiet, joyful, religious melody from Nielsen's own group of 'Hymns and Sacred Songs', with simply diatonic harmonies, which in conclusion rehearses itself again in the guise of festal solemnity, marching its phrases from pianissimo to full blaze.

S.T.M.N.

 INTERVAL

3. NONET IN F MAJOR, OP. 31
for Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Double bass,
Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn and Bassoon.

Spohr
(1784-1859)

Allegro
Scherzo: Allegro
Adagio
Finale: Vivace

Spohr composed this work in 1813 at the behest of Johann Tost, the rich cloth merchant and patron of the arts to whom Haydn had dedicated three of his sets of quartets, and for whom possibly Mozart also wrote his last two string quintets. The Nonet (followed immediately by the composition of an Octet for String-quartet, Bass, Clarinet and 2 Horns) thus falls in date about midway between the Beethoven Septet of 1800 and the Schubert Octet, but whereas these are six-movement works stemming in certain respects from the earlier tradition of the 'serenade', Spohr adheres to the normal classical design of four movements only, though he enhances his quiet D minor Scherzo (that is forceful only in its sharply syncopated cadences) with two delightful Trios, the first a Haydn-like minuet for lightly accompanied solo violin, and the second an engaging mesh of falling and ascending chromatic lines for wind ensemble (with 'cello) on the motif known to all in the Minuet of Mozart's Jupiter Symphony.

Spohr, a superb violonist and composer for his instrument, also had a natural flair for instrumentation and great feeling for the character and tone colour of all instruments, both solo and in ensemble, and this whole work admirably illustrates those qualities. When using the wind ensemble in antiphonal alternation with the strings he frequently makes a quartet ensemble of the latter by use of double stopping (excluding his bass) or by quartet writing in which 'cello is tenor to the bass as in the very beautiful, warm melody that opens the B flat Adagio with such breadth. Whilst the opening Allegro is in the main a gentle, lyrical movement (it might even have been marked 'amabile'), it is spun through and through with the motif of the quiet turn with which its first theme opens; and it is this which (in diminution) provides the more vivacious concertante element exhibited in rapid alternation by the instruments but particularly the strings; and it is this motif that persists even around the rather Schubertian-like second subject with its engaging modulations.

The Finale is sheer fun, with all the merriment of a rondo-finale though it is in fact in sonata form; and with its second subject the wind show their wit and drollery with all the relish of operatic comedy.

S. T. M. N.