

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1968-69

Sixth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: MILES BASTER

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Soloist:

HESTER DICKSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 30th JANUARY, 1969

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

Programme

1. OVERTURE: "EGMONT" (Op. 84)

Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Goethe was twenty-six years old when, just before leaving his native Frankfurt for Weimar in 1775 he began his drama "Egmont." His various attempts to complete the drama during the next eleven years proved abortive, and it was not until 1787 that he succeeded in the task. The first four acts bear the character of wilful untamed youth. The fifth act, however, is very much less concrete and vivid than its predecessors, deserting the real world for an idealistic and visionary sphere; and it is significant that it is only in this last act that he expressly summons the musician to his aid.

The music which Beethoven composed to this drama in 1810 goes appreciably further than the three indications given by the author in the stage directions. Here we are not concerned with Beethoven's moving settings of Clärchen's two songs (which Goethe probably intended should be sung quite simply "in character" without accompaniment) nor his four impressive entractes of which Goethe wrote (in 1821), "It was a happy thought to commentate the music for Egmont with brief interpolations so that it can be rendered as an oratorio." What is of vital significance to the character of Beethoven's overture is that the last scene of the play proceeds from "melodrama" (i.e. words spoken to a background of music) to "a symphony of victory" as Egmont is led to the scaffold—the moral victory which prophetically emblazons the political victory of the liberation of the Netherlands from oppressive Spanish domination. Here as in the Leonora overtures, Beethoven reaches the ultimate triumph of the drama in the overture itself.

2. PIANOFORTE CONCERTO IN B FLAT (K456)

Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro vivace
Andante un poco sostenuto (Variations)
Allegro vivace (Rondo)

This concerto composed in late September 1784 comes fifth in that prolific series of eleven pianoforte concertos which Mozart composed within scarcely more than two years, beginning with the E flat (K449) written for Barbara Ployer in February 1784, and continuing with the many written expressly for his own performance at his "academies" (public subscription concerts), and stretching to the great C minor (K491) of March 1786. This, the third of Mozart's four B flat concertos, was it seems composed by him for the blind pianist Maria Theresia Paradis (b. 1759) to take with her on a foreign tour which was to take her to Paris. Like its immediate predecessors composed for himself in the spring (the D major and the well known G major) and its immediate successor the F major (K459) of December, it is in

the "style galant"; in fact it shares with these others the same hall-mark rhythm of that style in their opening themes. Moreover it uses the same instrumental resources as its immediate neighbours, with a wind section of flute, oboes, bassoons and horns, which Mozart had handled with such beauty and subtlety of ensemble in the G major, and which here once again forms such effective contrast of tone and piquancy in alternation with the strings or pianoforte, and in various patterns of ensemble with them.

Less well known perhaps than the majority of Mozart's concertos it certainly merits no neglect. It is a gay, bright work, and of exquisite workmanship as its vivacious first movement and spirited rondo finale exhibit with relish; but its slow movement is something more than this. In the previous concerto (G major) Mozart had used variation form for his finale, as he did once again later in the C minor. Here he uses it for his slow movement—a theme in G minor in two repeated sections, with five variations of which the last is extended into a coda. The theme, on strings with touches of woodwind, has a most effective a-symmetry in its phrase rhythm, a first half of 8 bars matched by a second half protracted to 13 bars. The pianoforte has the first decorative variation almost to itself. In the subsequent variations repeats are themselves varied, with alternations between wind ensemble and pianoforte with the strings. The third variation brings *tutti* strength alternating with eloquent solo, leading to the fourth variation in the major key (again the exquisite contrasts of ensemble) and finally with the fifth variation the theme returns on the orchestra (without repeats) accompanied throughout by the pianoforte, ending in tender exchange of phrases in the reposeful coda.

The first movement calls for no further comment but that Mozart with his accustomed largesse gives his soloist her own "second subject" in addition to that proposed and repeated by the orchestra. Likewise in the rondo the solo, having led at the start, has its own re-entry theme after the first tutti, and it is with this that later Mozart effects the recapitulation after the middle episode (that had explored the far off wonderland of B minor!), reserving the rondo theme's reappearance until after the cadenza.

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY No. 3, IN A MINOR, "SCOTCH"

Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Introduction and Allegro agitato—Scherzo assai vivace—Adagio cantabile—Allegro guerriero and Finale maestoso.

"In the evening twilight we went to-day to the palace where Queen Mary lived and loved... The chapel close to it is now roofless, grass and ivy grow there... Everything around is broken and mouldering, and the bright sky shines in. I believe I found to-day in that old chapel the beginning of my Scotch Symphony." Thus wrote Mendelssohn from Edinburgh on July 30th, 1829 to his family in Berlin. The passage he noted down at that time consisted of the first sixteen bars of the Introduction. Six weeks later he writes from London, "The Scotch Symphony as well as the Hebrides story is

gradually built up." He was working on this symphony simultaneously with the composition of the Italian Symphony whilst on his Italian tour. But from Rome he writes in March 1831, "From April 15th to May 15th is the finest season in Italy. Who can blame me for not being able to transport myself into the Scotch-mist mood?" The work was not in fact finished until early in 1842 and received its first performance in Leipzig in that year.

Despite these references in his letters Mendelssohn gave no title to this symphony upon its appearance (nor indeed to the Italian). The score bears the simple designation, "Symphony in A minor dedicated to Queen Victoria," and bears a note to the effect that the movements must follow one another without a break. The indication of the scheme of the work as printed above is explicitly given in that author's note, and is remarkable in that it does not exactly reproduce the tempo marks prefixed to the several movements. "Tempo guerriero" (warlike), for example, gives a clue to the composer's intentions far more explicit than the "tempo vivacissimo" prefixed to that movement. But it was characteristic of Mendelssohn that he should insist that the music speak for itself without the aid of a Baedeker. And if anyone, through an immoderate surfeit of "Elijah," should be under the misapprehension that Mendelssohn would hardly be the person to relish his Scots Oats, he would do well to read the letters which the two vigorous and vivacious young Germans sent home. Mendelssohn was then twenty years of age. His companion was his close friend Klingemann, a young diplomatist attached to the Hanoverian Legation in London; a poet, a superb letter writer, and possessed of an intoxicating sense of humour. Mendelssohn freely indulged in his pursuit of pencil sketching in which he excelled, and it is hard to say whether his sketches or his letters afforded the greater pleasure. He concludes a vivid account of the view from Arthur's Seat, "Why need I describe it? When God Himself takes to panorama-painting, it turns out strangely beautiful." They saw the Highland pipers foregathered in the city for the annual competition, coming from church, "victoriously leading their sweet-hearts in their Sunday attire, and casting magnificent and important looks over the world." "From my earliest days," writes Klingemann, "I have confounded the Hebrides with the Hesperides; and if we did not find the oranges on the trees, they lay at least in the whiskey toddy." And of the famous visit to Fingal's Cave—"he is on better terms with the sea as a musician than as an individual and a stomach." No; these two knew how to acquaint themselves with life and land. "The longer and oftener we looked back," concludes Klingemann, as they leave the land where they had had weather to make the trees and rocks crash, the "bluer and more misty grew the mountains, at whose feet we had been lying, all deep shades of colour mingled, and we might have become Highland-sick and wished ourselves back had we not known that the reality within that mountain land was grey, cold, and majestic. It was a sweet farewell to the heights which we at once abuse and love."

S. T. M. N.