

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1969-70

Fourth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: MILES BASTER

Guest Conductor: JOHN FAIRBAIRN

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 27th NOVEMBER, 1969

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

Programme

1. SYMPHONY No. 36 IN C MAJOR ("LINZ"), K.425

Mozart
(1756-1791)

Adagio—Allegro spiritoso
Poco Adagio
Menuetto
Presto

On 30th October, 1783, Mozart and his wife reached Linz in the course of their journey back to Vienna after the two months' visit paid to Mozart's father and sister. Writing to his father on the following day, Mozart informs him "On November 4th I am giving a concert in the theatre here, and, as I have not a single symphony with me, I am writnig a new one at breakneck speed which must be finished by that time." It was finished and entered in his catalogue on November 3rd! (Presumably the Linz orchestra had scant opportunity on that occasion to prove itself an orchestra which had rehearsed!)

What sort of a symphony was it that Mozart wrote at breakneck speed? A work in the grand manner, big in design, extended in its paragraphing, characteristically succinct in the development of the first movement yet stretching out quite long limbs in the development of the finale without indulging in any great complexity, triumphantly resplendent with panoply of brass and drums, which it carries with dominant solemnity amidst the more tender and sensitive emotion of the Poco Adagio. If Mozart has elsewhere fashioned themes of greater intrinsic beauty and character, he has seldom displayed them on such broad lines. Tovey was somewhat impatient of those who claim that Mozart here modelled himself upon Haydn. Certainly the device of an Adagio introduction is used with altogether different effect than that of Haydn's usage—as Tovey says, here it is a portico whilst with Haydn it is usually a sort of tunnel leading one wonders where. But this was Mozart's first employment of such an introduction to a symphony, whilst with Haydn it was already a common occurrence (if anything in Haydn could ever be called common). There is a good deal of other internal evidence here that Mozart had been listening to Haydn. To admit this is not to deny the fact that the result is quite different from what we could look for from the older master.

S. T. M. N.

2. CONCERTO FOR SEVEN WIND INSTRUMENTS TIMPANI, PERCUSSION AND STRINGS

Frank Martin
(b. 1890)

Frank Martin, born in Geneva in 1890, is probably the most important figure among present-day Swiss composers. Recognition of his work in this country has come slowly and today his music is still not well known, as even the Gramophone companies have shown a reluctance to commit themselves fully to his music. The Reid Orchestra has performed the Etudes for Strings twice, and also the Concerto for Piano, Harp and Harpsichord with strings. His choral works in particular have been sadly neglected, and two works, the dramatic oratorio 'Le Vin herbé and the Passion 'Golgotha' deserve a hearing.

Early in his career he was much influenced by the music of Schoenberg and about 1930 he wrote several works in the twelve-tone system, but some of this output has remained unpublished, as he came to realize that such a system was foreign to his natural creative bent. He is reported to have said that while he came under the influence of Schoenberg, he opposed him with all his musical sensibility. However, gradually he found a way to adapt parts of the system to suit his own requirements, using serial elements while retaining tonal harmonic relationships. In this respect his individual approach to the system has much in common with one of his younger contemporaries, Hans Henze.

The Concerto to be performed this evening was composed during a sojourn in Amsterdam and completed in Geneva in 1949. It may be said to be characteristic of Martin in two respects, the long flowing melodic lines that develop contrapuntally, and the clarity and colour of the instrumental textures.

In the first movement each of the Woodwind have their own theme against a string background, but the Horn, Trumpet and Trombone first appear as a trio and only later do they have a solo entry, and the last of these, for trombone assumes great importance, as it is repeated to form a counterpoint in the recapitulation. All the melodies in this reprise are considerably curtailed and the entries telescoped, making an exciting climax to the movement. The coda settles to a more tranquil mood with the various melodies heard in combination. The Oboe opened the movement with a very rhythmic running figure but now closes it on a much more plaintive and subdued manner.

The Adagietto might be described as a dirge. In the relentless pounding of the pulse one is reminded of the slow movement of the Clock symphony by Haydn, and the repetitions of the first phrase sliding down a semitone or tone might be compared to the running down of a clock. The principal theme is varied on each entry, separated by contrasted themes for trumpet and bassoon, the latter theme to play an important part in the finale.

The final allegro has all the characteristics of a scherzo. The instruments are used more in contrasted groups with only on occasion a solo entry. The scherzo section ends with a cadenza for four timpani and side-drum during which the rhythm makes a subtle change to duple time for the trio section. This contains not only a rhythmically altered version of a theme in the scherzo, but also the bassoon theme from the second movement played by the strings in a totally different mood to the plaintive bassoon. The return to the scherzo is again most skilfully and subtly accomplished, the listener finding difficulty in pin-pointing the change. The excitement grows with the accelerando of the coda, the pedal F being most insistent, building up to a triumphant major triad.

J.F.

INTERVAL

Allegro

Moderato

Presto—Largo—Allegretto

The ninth symphony was completed in August 1945 and received the first British performance in London on 27th July, 1946, in which the writer was privileged to take part. Following the vast proportions of the seventh and eighth symphonies, this very terse, bright, and often witty work, scored for a modest sized orchestra, was a surprising development. He has not continued in this vein, as the succeeding symphonies have the proportions and instrumentation of the seventh and eighth symphonies. With the exception of Number 1 performed last season, this is the only other work by Shostakovich suitable for the resources of the Reid Orchestra.

The symphony has five short movements, the last three being played without a break. The first movement is orthodox in form but certainly not in orchestration, as for example the rather brash second subject played by piccolo, and on the return by a solo violin. The development has the first theme in augmentation, often by inversion, and also makes use of the piccolo theme with a tutti scoring. Except for this movement, Shostakovich makes less use of the percussion than in all his other symphonic music.

The very lyrical slow movement starts with a most expressive theme for clarinet, and continued by the flute and bassoon playing three octaves apart. The contrasting section is for strings using mainly minor triads. The return of the first theme is now given to the flute, followed again by the string ensemble, and as a coda the piccolo very softly gives part of the opening phrase.

Shostakovich has written many exciting scherzo movements and this one is no exception. Technically it is very difficult both for woodwind and strings. The movement is introduced by the woodwind, repeated by the strings, and then while the music is still spinning along, the trumpet plays a melody which could be from Italian Opera. This is taken up by other instruments before the return of the first theme. Gradually the music fades until only a held note in the strings remains. Trombones give out a solemn fanfare and as the chord fades to a whisper, the bassoon intones a sad melancholy melody. The trombones again give out their fanfare and now the bassoon is more passionate in its utterance, before subsiding softly and slowly. Suddenly, as if to suggest that what has been heard is only parody, the bassoon continues with a dance melody of the most flipant character. This is taken up by other sections of the orchestra, continuing with vigorous rhythm to the end.

J.F.