

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1969-70

Fifth Concert

REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: MILES BASTER

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Violoncello :

JOAN DICKSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 15th JANUARY, 1970

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME TWO SHILLINGS

Programme

1. OVERTURE: "DER FREISCHUTZ"

Weber
(1786-1826)

The first performance of this opera at Berlin in 1821 forms one of the great landmarks in the domain of dramatic music. Romantic opera was established with an unquestionable masterpiece. German opera was shown to be able to hold its own against the all-prevailing Italian opera; and a musical dramatic language and, above all, a novel and remarkably colourful orchestration, both of great originality, proclaimed an art which was to have a very great influence upon the German opera of the future.

Although the opera is of the "sing-spiel" type, in that much of the action is carried on in spoken dialogue, Weber achieved an extraordinary sense of unity by his skilful use of significant recurring motifs. It is the orchestra which shows where the scene lies, what things are afoot, what fears and hopes lie within the minds of the characters. And seldom has any overture so completely summed up what the music alone can tell of the action of the opera.

Max, once the finest marksman, is in despair at the mysterious loss of his skill. Caspar, who has sold his soul to the fiend Samiel, and can only free himself by finding another victim, recounts his secret to Max—that by calling upon Samiel in that accursed and haunted spot, the wolf's glen, on the night of the moon's total eclipse, it is possible to cast seven "free-bullets" which can never miss their mark. Caspar does not reveal that Samiel guides the seventh bullet as he wishes. Max reluctantly consents to go through the gruesome experience. At the subsequent shooting contest Max's bride, Agathe, would have proved the victim of his own seventh bullet, but a saintly hermit protects her, and it is Caspar who falls, a victim to his own plot. Max confesses his guilt and is pardoned.

2. VIOLONCELLO CONCERTO (1940)

Hindemith
(1895-1963)

Allegro moderato
Andante con moto—Allegro assai—Tempo I
Allegro marciale

Hindemith's first violoncello concerto was one of a number of works for chamber orchestra, but this full scale concerto written in the first year of his settling in the U.S.A. is with a fully weighted orchestra. It was first performed at Boston in 1940 by Piatigorsky. It was performed at the Edinburgh Festival of 1955 by Mainardi with the composer conducting.

The massive orchestral statement at the opening (somewhat akin in effect to that of Brahms' double concerto) compact as it is, yet introduces three motives which are early distinguishable for their rhythm, notably a bold triplet motion, and the shapely dotted rhythm in sequence, both of which are to play so large a part in subsequent events. The solo, entering early on the scene, brings an entirely different generous cantabile melody which is taken up by woodwind and the horn. Only at the climax of this does the solo address itself rhetorically to the orchestral theme before expanding melodically in extenso (and with varying ensemble) upon the

dotted-rhythm theme. This culminates in a tutti where the cantabile theme is blazoned forth several times, at length leaving the stage bare for an eloquent solo cadenza which precedes the resumption of the foregoing. The eventual coda brings the contrapuntal combination of themes and the opening orchestral tutti theme prominently to the fore.

The middle movement opens as a quiet lullaby (9/8) with solo accompanied by pizzicato strings. Suddenly the clarinet breaks away into a saltarello-like scherzo fleeting at three times the speed, which becomes increasingly forthright and powerful before the solo takes it up with engaging canonic interplay between various instruments culminating in a very powerful tutti. The final phase of the movement brings the resumption of the lullaby melody on the woodwind with the violoncello quietly flitting against it with the unremitting scherzo until at last the solo succumbs to the slow measure.

The finale is a march, opened by woodwind and percussion, then taken up boldly by the horns amidst a spatter of woodwind delight. The solo on entry first indulges in passage-work decorations of the more lyrical phrases of the march theme before addressing the whole theme with full flourish of decoration, and so to the full band. New melodies succeed, the first emotionally rhetorical, the next trimly marching, the third more lyrical; and this fades away into the Trio section based on 'an old march' where all sorts of quiet percussion enjoy themselves in setting the background to the wind-band joined at times by the muted 'cello. This miniature parade is terminated by the resumption of the full orchestra ushering in a much varied reprise, and a final celebration at quickened speed, dominated by the solo against orchestral interjections, whether light or massive.

INTERVAL

3. SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN E MINOR (Op. 98)

Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo
Andante moderato
Allegro giocoso
Allegro energico e passionato

On a previous occasion I wrote of this symphony that "to attempt to declare in a few lines the tragedy writ large, the compassion, the humour 'grim and gay' and the philosophy of this monumental work would be to attempt the impossible." To this I will only add two further remarks.

In a note to his agent a few days before the first performance under the composer in October, 1885, von Bulow wrote: "Just back from rehearsal. No. 4 stupendous, quite original, quite new, individual and rock-like. Incomparable strength from start to finish." This is my precedent for being sparing of words.

But whilst the profound use of passacaglia (terse variation) form in the finale is no longer a stumbling-block to any, I have known more than one person puzzled by the diversity of scene and event—a certain digressive tendency, in the first movement. Those heraldic imaginings whose glint is as that of things that emerge from the profoundest depths of Rembrandt, are yet to shine forth revealed in all their splendour. And it is no less purposeful than the design of a great novel by Tolstoy or Dostoevsky which with fresh chapters plunges the reader into strange scenes and new events with a purpose which can only gradually be revealed.

S.T.M.N.