

THE ARTS

Edinburgh: Peter Mountain

By RAYMOND MONELLE

THE TWO rarities in Peter Mountain's violin recital at the Reid Concert Hall, Edinburgh, last night had much in common. Both Georges Enesco, the Rumanian violinist and composer who died in 1955, and David Dorward, an important Scottish contemporary, have a vein of rhapsodic melody which is nevertheless contained within powerfully controlled forms; both have a love of sheer sound; both are Romantics, thinking nostalgically of gipsy music or of the great outdoors with personal and intimate emotion.

There were even specific parallels, like the obsession with a single note in the second movement of Dorward's Violin Sonata, and the similar insistence on hammered notes, redolent of the cymbalom, in the slow movement of Enesco's A minor Sonata, Op. 75.

If the Dorward succeeded better than the Enesco, this was because Mr Mountain's intimate style, his dignified spurning of mere temperament and vulgar projection, caused the extrovert parts of the Enesco to lose point the "czardas" of the finale with its tense heterophony of "violin declamation surrounded by pianistic "wrong notes," is a vehicle for the Isaac Sterns of this world.

The opening Beethoven sonata (Op 30 No.2 in C minor) was no more than a programme-filler, the violinist being troubled by elementary faults like dubious intonation, the Adagio delivered in a heavy *espressivo* which made every phrase hang ponderously on the ear. Still, this concert, like French grand opera in the 1830's, was a good thing to turn up late for.

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1978-79

PETER MOUNTAIN *violin*
ANGELA DALE *piano*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 11 January 1979

BEETHOVEN 1770-1827
Violin Sonata in C minor, Op. 30 No. 2

Allegro con brio
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo—Allegro
Allegro

By 1802, Beethoven had already for several years been complaining in letters to his friends of his increasing deafness. In October of that year he wrote a most moving and courageous account of his condition, the so-called 'Heiligenstad Testament', in which he resolved to accept the challenge of fate. At this time too, as if to reinforce his resolution, he produced a number of important new works, among them the Second Symphony, the three violin sonatas Op. 30, the three piano sonatas Op. 31, and the Eroica Symphony. Of these, the funeral march of the Eroica and the second of the violin sonatas were written in what was to become his 'heroic' key, the key of the Fifth Symphony, the key of C minor. Of the three sonatas of Op. 30—dedicated to, no-one seems to know why, to Tsar Alexander I of Russia—the minor-key second sonata is by far the most intense and ambitious work. Its impact and originality lie especially in its two outer movements. The opening Allegro is one of Beethoven's grandest first movements to date. As later in the first Razumovsky Quartet, there is no repeat of the exposition; instead the opening theme, smoother and more expansive than at first, creeps in, after an enormous build-up, in E-flat major. The final Allegro is also much weightier than in any of his earlier works. The traditional rondo finale has here been discarded, and instead, Beethoven has written a stormy sonata-rondo, almost equal in intensity to the opening movement, and with a main theme in which the simplicity of melody and harmony is qualified by the subtlety and power of its dynamic markings.

DAVID DORWARD b. 1933
Violin Sonata Op. 70

This work (commissioned by Peter Mountain and dedicated to tonight's performers) was completed in March 1978. There are three movements. The first is a sort of modified sonata form. It has three elements, beginning with the melodic, played at the outset by unaccompanied muted violin. The oscillating notes in the second bar form the derivation of the second element,

introduced by the piano—a 'hazy and indistinct' ostinato murmuring. The third element, more stormy in nature, grows out of this.

The slow movement opens with the note F sharp clad in a variety of colours. The whole movement is permeated by this note.

The finale is more episodic in design, and is concerned with emphasising (among other things) the contrast between rhythm and melody. These aspects are stated separately, the first by piano alone, and the second by the violin in an unaccompanied cadenza, before being worked out together. The basic ideas refer back to the first movement, to which a direct reference appears at the end of the work.

The elemental sounds of nature—stillness and violence, high tones and low—were in my mind while writing the piece.

D.D.

GEORGES ENESCO 1881-1955
Violin Sonata in A minor Op. 75

Moderato malinconico
Andante Sostenuto e Misterioso
Allegro con brio, ma non troppo mosso

On many levels Enesco's life was an amalgam of extremes. Rumanian by birth and, like Bartok, heir to a rich musical folk tradition—a tradition to which the sensual gypsy violin is nowhere more indigenous—he nevertheless absorbed the culture of Vienna and Paris, London and New York, and became renowned for his wit, elegance and refinement. A child prodigy who learned violin from a Rumanian gypsy at the age of four, he soon turned to the classics; by the age of eleven he was already playing with the Vienna Philharmonic under Brahms and Mahler, and he was to earn his living as a virtuoso performer, the colleague and teacher of some of the most famous musicians of his day. An ardent admirer of Wagner, a lover of opulence, of the courtly and the sublime in art, he himself lived humbly, and aimed to compose music within the traditions of his native country.

He was a prolific composer, and none of his works more obviously illustrates the fusion of the native gypsy with the cultured and sophisticated musician than his third Violin Sonata in A minor, *dans le caractere populaire roumain*, written in 1926. While his musical idiom was never as ambitious or searching as

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Bartok's—his experiment with quarter-tones in his opera *Oedipe* (1932) is perhaps his only attempt at stylistic innovation—the Sonata comes closest in sound to the folk-inspired works of his Hungarian contemporary. His harmonic idiom is here at its most adventurous and uninhibited; its incisive rhythms and harmonic clusters are most redolent of the wild gypsy fiddler. R.McA.

Forthcoming Concerts:

Friday 12 January 1.10 p.m. **Reid Concert Hall**

An Organ Recital by Frederick Rimmer on the Ahrend Organ

BUXTEHUDE Passacaglia in D minor

ALEKSANDER GLINKOWSKI Passacaglia (1968)

FREDERICK RIMMER Three Pieces (1976)

HENRYK JABLONSKI Suita (1966)

Thursday 18 January

THE REID ORCHESTRA

KENNETH LEIGHTON *Conductor*

HAMISH MILNE *Piano*

HAYDN Symphony No. 12 in E

BRAHMS Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat

KURT WEILL Symphony No. 2

15 pence

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