

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1978-79

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

Miles Baster Peter Markham
Michael Beeston Christopher Gough

with
KAREN VAUGHAN *harp*
BARBARA GASKILL *flute*
ALISON WALLER *clarinet*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 19 April 1979

Edinburgh Quartet

TO INCLUDE Ravel's Introduction and Allegro in the same concert as Bax's Harp Quintet is hard luck on Bax. But, out-classed though it was, the British work had a thoroughly attractive airing in Edinburgh last night. The interweaving of string and harp tone, the moments when the cello rose poetically to the surface, and the little harp solos so beautifully placed within the music's single-movement structure, all contributed to the success of the performance.

Certainly Karen Vaughan and the Edinburgh Quartet played it as if they loved it, though later, with Barbara Gaskill (flute) and Alison Waller (clarinet), they played the Ravel as if they loved it even more. Coming after an unsteady account of Beethoven's Serenade, Op. 25, for

flute, violin and viola, which captured little of the score's leisurely charm, the Ravel brought with it a welcome sense of release.

The harp's first entry, rippling through the wistful melody for strings, set Ravel's masterpiece serenely on its course. True, the Reid Concert Hall added nothing to the atmosphere of the performance, but the romance of the music — now veiled, now glistening — came across all the same. The concert, which opened with Haydn's D major Quartet, Op 33, No. 6, was the first of a series of spring events at Edinburgh University. Next Thursday the St Cecilia Singers and Reid Orchestra will present a new Missa Brevis by Raymond Monelle.

CONRAD WILSON

Edinburgh University Concerts

Thursday 19th April 7.30 p.m.

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

with
KAREN VAUGHAN *harp*
BARBARA GASKILL *flute*
ALISON WALKER *clarinet*
Works by Haydn, Beethoven, Ravel
and Bax.

REID CONCERT HALL

Admission Free

HAYDN 1732-1809

String Quartet in D, Op. 33 No. 6

Assai

Andante

Scherzo Allegro

Finale Allegro

This is the last of the six quartets which Haydn wrote in 1781 ('in a new and special way') and which were so admired by Mozart.

The first movement contains unusual formal features. There is little differentiation of first and second subjects and only the last part of the exposition recurs for a development section, which includes extensive treatment of the initial material.

A hint of the character of the 'seven last words' of 1785 is contained in the last movement, which is in D minor. A brisk Scherzo and Trio is followed by a Rondo, employing a theme with only one recurring episode in the tonic minor. Lively decoration of theme and episode occurs during the movement.

ARNOLD BAX 1873-1953

Quintet for harp and strings

This quintet is in one extended movement containing two main subjects. Cobbett points out that this melodious composition conceals much textural ingenuity under a deceptively straightforward outline. He continues, 'Especially worthy of note are the veiled and mysterious passage leading into the recapitulation and the characteristic harmonies of the conclusion'.

Much of Bax's large output seems to have fallen into neglect. He comes at the end of the romantic tradition and much of his music has that air of 'Celtic twilight' which so captivated his imagination, but which has less appeal nowadays. The dense and cloudy nature of the texture of his symphonic music is another factor in the decline of his once-high reputation. However, his excellent melodic gifts should ensure a permanent place in the repertory for some of his chamber music notably the sonata for viola and clarinet and this quintet.

INTERVAL

BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

Serenade in D for flute, violin and viola, Op. 25

Entrata. Allegro

Tempo ordinario d'un Minuetto

Allegro molto

Andante con Variazioni

Allegro scherzando e vivace

Adagio—Allegro vivace disinvolto

Although not published until 1802 with the opus number 25, it seems likely that this had been written very much earlier; probably before the *Serenade for string trio Op. 8* of 1797.

Apart from the Andante con Variazioni which consists of three melodically decorative variations of a theme in simple binary form the work is an essay in ternary structures, while the second and fifth movements having one trio section, the first, third movement has two. The final Allegro has a large main section, itself of ternary design, which appears before and after a short central episode in the subdominant key. The composition is in a relaxed and engaging idiom, with the Allegro molto movement alone hinting at the dramatic element which pervades so much of Beethoven's music from the time of his earliest works.

RAVEL 1875-1937

Introduction and Allegro

Ravel's 'Introduction and Allegro', written in 1905, shows the composer's inspiration at its height. The slow, mysterious opening is one of the most atmospheric passages in all music and Ravel uses melodic fragments from bars three to five of this introduction to form the basis of the main subject of his Allegro, which opens with the solo harp. The second subject appears on flute and clarinet, in octaves and is derived, in its turn, from the main subject, whilst a lilting version of the introduction forms a subsidiary idea. Exhaustive treatment of the themes follows in the development section, with the texture becoming increasingly full until a dramatic harp cadenza heralds the recapitulation, after which the work ends with a short but brilliant coda.

L.C.

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