

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
CHAMBER CONCERTS

Season 1953-54

FIRST CONCERT

THURSDAY, 29th OCTOBER 1953

at 7.30 p.m.

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THE NEW QUARTET

(OF EDINBURGH)

ROBERT COOPER

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

ANNE CROWDEN

JOAN DICKSON

PROGRAMME

PRICE 1s.

PROGRAMME

1. QUARTET IN A (K 464) - - - - - Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Allegro  
Menuetto  
Andante (Variations)  
Allegro

In 1782, after a lapse of nine years since the composition of the last of his youthful quartets (inspired by and modelled upon Haydn's Op. 20 "Sun Quartets"), Mozart began the composition of the set of six quartets which upon publication in 1785 he dedicated in the warmest terms to his 'dear friend Haydn,' whose Op. 33 "Russian quartets" (1781) almost certainly prompted the undertaking. Although Mozart could write in April 1783 "I have been composing six quartets," he did not in fact complete the set until January 1785. This A major quartet, fifth of the set, was finished only four days before the completion of the last (C major). A few days later, the whole set was performed for Haydn 'and other good friends' and in the following month Mozart's father, Leopold, was present at a private performance of the last three when Haydn was moved to make his now famous declaration of his admiration of Mozart. Perhaps the most significant tribute paid to the craftsmanship of this quartet lies in the fact that Beethoven made a manuscript score of its finale. Indeed, has not also Mozart's minuet a remarkable affinity of spirit not to say even of idiom with the A major 'Allegro ma non tanto' of Beethoven's Op. 132? The comparison at least serves to emphasise the characteristics of this quartet which most clearly distinguish it from Mozart's other quartets—the constant use of brief idiomatic phrases in such a way that subtle contrapuntal devices and rapid interchange of instruments all combine to yield a surprisingly simple melodic continuity.

The Andante is a remarkably mature example of variation form which develops far beyond the simpler devices of ornamental figuration. Having regard to the unity of design and the structural continuity which it exhibits, one is somewhat surprised to find on examining the autograph score that the variations were in fact composed in the order 1, 2, 3, 6, 5, 4, the extensive coda being written after No. 5, and the whole plan made clear by the composer's numbering and insertion marks.

2. QUARTET in F minor (Op. 5) - - - - - Carl Nielsen  
(1865-1931)

Allegro non troppo ma energico  
Un poco adagio  
Allegretto scherzando  
Finale: Allegro appassionato

Only within the last few years have the symphonies of Carl Nielsen begun to receive serious attention in this country. It is as a symphonist that he is rightly proclaimed in the title of Robert Simpson's recent study of the composer (Dent 1952). But, especially in his earlier years, Nielsen devoted himself to chamber music to a not inconsiderable extent. The published works include four string quartets, a wind quintet and two sonatas for violin and pianoforte.

The F minor quartet, Op. 5 (composed 1890), although the earliest to be published, was preceded by the G minor (which was published after revision as Op. 13) and by two youthful essays in this genre of his student days. The originality of his mature symphonies of the second and third decades of this century is hardly to be expected in these earliest quartets wherein the major influences upon his style would appear to have been Brahms and Dvorak, and where the forms employed are somewhat conservatively classical. This, however, is not to deny this work its own qualities and personality, and the comment is offered only to prepare the listener whose introduction to Nielsen may have been in terms of the fourth symphony (The Inextinguishable) for the experience of a comparatively youthful work of an altogether different outlook.

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INTERVAL

3. QUARTET in G major (Op. 161) - - - - Schubert  
(1797-1828)

Allegro molto moderato  
Andante un poco moto  
Scherzo: Allegro vivace — Allegretto  
Allegro assai

This great quartet, composed between June 20th and 30th, 1826, did not appear in print until twenty-two years after Schubert's death, when it was published as Op. 161, to be followed two years later by the last and greatest of Schubert's chamber music compositions, the Quintet in C major with two 'cellos (Op. 163). Both works have much in common and much that distinguishes them from Schubert's earlier chamber music for strings. At the outset each shows the harmonic basis of Schubert's thought which is to result in many orchestral effects. Each, too, is remarkable for the fullness of the writing; the first movements of the earlier work indeed seems prophetic of the addition of other instruments to the quartet ensemble, for there are several passages, which consist of true sextet writing such as will be found in Brahms, to which the four instruments are required to adapt their powers.

The G major quartet is of truly astonishing size, for Schubert claims space at each stage for the repetition, variation, and immediate "local" development of his themes.

The basic idea of the work as a whole is that proclaimed in the opening themes of the first and last movements, the conflict and synthesis of major and minor tonality. In the first movement, this opposition is reinforced by the dynamic contrasts of pianissimo and fortissimo with which the major-minor issue is largely equated. Again the major influence is lyrical, that of the minor inclines to impetuous gestures and energetic action.

The Andante (in E minor) is written in extended Lied form, the "song" and the "after-song" (here a dramatic episode of symphonic power) alternating in a scheme of five stanzas. The song melody of the 'cello itself foreshadows the alternating pattern of the whole movement.

The B minor Scherzo with its "all-over" rhythmic pattern defies description. To quote the metric rhythm of the first two bars would explain the whole. To call this a "chattering" rhythm because it begins pianissimo would be to ignore the relentless force with which it soon hammers out its invincible will. But the Trio invites to less strenuous ways with the enchanting sway of its amiable Ländler walse.

The Rondo finale is as much a feat of endurance as a Kentucky running set, and its ample repetitions should be judged by their cumulative effect in protracting the excitement. If not a markedly subtle rondo, it is nevertheless an intoxicating dance.

S. T. M. N.