

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1953-54

Fifth Concert

THE NEW QUARTET

(OF EDINBURGH)

ROBERT COOPER

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

ANNE CROWDEN

JOAN DICKSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

AT 7.30 P.M.

THURSDAY, 21ST JANUARY, 1954

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. QUARTET IN G MAJOR, OP. 54, NO. 1

Haydn
(1732-1809)

Allegro con brio
Allegretto
Minuet: Allegretto
Finale: Presto

During his last two or three years at Esterhaza (i.e. after the so-called 'Oxford Symphony' of 1788) Haydn wrote no symphonies until he embarked upon the great series of Salomon (or 'London') Symphonies in 1791. But in the years 1789-90 he published the twelve quartets of Ops. 54, 55 and 64. This G major quartet, first of that splendid series, is predominantly brilliant in character. In the first movement, the initial material is treated so expansively that the quieter contrasting motif is reduced to a transitory codetta or epilogue. Complete contrast to this exuberant brilliance is afforded by the quiet Allegretto in C major—a movement in full sonata design in which a quiet triplet pulse is sustained almost without ceasing beneath the exquisite violin melody, whilst the harmonies hang arrested in their course, and likewise through the wonderful modulations which at length flow out of these. A sturdy minuet is partnered by a trio of great delicacy and nuance poised upon the ostinato motif of the violoncello. The Finale is a rondo of brilliant gaiety and humour that has no need to borrow a match off any chance episode to illuminate the versatility of its own innate wit.

2. QUARTET IN A MINOR

William Walton
(b. 1902)

Allegro
Presto
Lento
Allegro molto

Although Walton is best known as an orchestral composer, it should not be forgotten that one of the most remarkable works of his youth, dating in fact from his middle teens, was a bold and original Pianoforte Quartet (subsequently published under

a Carnegie award). A string quartet was performed at the Salzburg Festival of 1923, but has remained unpublished. The A minor Quartet was completed in 1947, and received its first performance by the Blech Quartet.

The first movement is laid out, broadly speaking, on the lines of sonata form. The opening viola melody (with its attendant counterpoint on the second violin) receives its full counterstatement before more alert rhythmical figures, introduced sporadically, develop into the vigorous momentum of the second section. The initial melodic and contrapuntal figures reappear quietly in C minor, and with mounting intensity break out into a vigorous fugal development (opening in F minor) which regains but overruns the original key, and it is not until much further discursive and plastic development abates that the recapitulation opens quietly, with much varied detail.

The Presto is a sharply pointed and intensely rhythmical scherzo (in a speedy triple measure), which after the repetition of its first main section plays engagingly with such rhythmical devices as augmentation of its curt germinal motif.

The slow movement opens with quiet sustained harmonies that carry only a hint of the melodic richness to which this freely rhetorical and rhapsodic movement is to attain.

The first stark utterance of the finale makes apparent the rhythmical shock-tactics which pervade the greater part of the movement. But to these there is abundant lyrical relief in the central episode.

INTERVAL

3. QUARTET IN E FLAT MAJOR (OP. 51)

Dvorak
(1841-1904)

Allegro ma non troppo
Dumka: Andante con moto—Vivace—Tempo I
—Presto—Vivace
Romanze: Andante con moto
Finale: Allegro assai

This, the third of Dvorak's eight published quartets, dates from 1879, at which time Dvorak's chamber music was beginning to receive recognition outside Bohemia. The prevailing mood of the first movement is that set by the suave mellow

sounds of the opening theme, although abundant latent energy is soon released by excitement of the little dactylic motif which adorns the first melodic phrase, so that the second theme becomes a veritable dance.

The principle of the Dumka is the alternation of pathos and quiet rhapsody with outbursts of rhythmical vigour of a scherzo-like vivacity. Here the opening melody (G minor) with its thrummed pizzicato accompaniment has already found relief and ease in alternation with a quiet major episode, before it abandons itself (in note and in deed) to a vivacious scherzo in the major key. But as these alternations are thereafter re-enacted the tables of tonality are turned upon this scherzo.

The Romanze in a nocturne-like manner sustains and freely elaborates a single melodic conception throughout, but illuminates this with magically sudden changes of light and harmonic colouring that lie about the pivot of B flat and G major.

The Finale with the frankest gaiety confesses itself to be in a syncopated mood. One is prepared for the lyrical episode in which this high spirited rondo finds relief, but much more contrapuntal excitement lies beyond this than one at first surmises.

S. T. M. N.