

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1953-54

Fifth Concert

REID
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Leader : DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor : SIDNEY NEWMAN

Solo Pianoforte :

MICHAEL LESTER CRIBB

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 28TH JANUARY, 1954

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. CONCERTO GROSSO IN G MAJOR (OP. 6, NO. 1) *Handel*
(1685-1759)

A tempo giusto—Allegro
Adagio—Allegro
Allegro

The twelve *Concerti grossi* of Op. 6 were composed in a month (September 29th to October 30th, 1739). As Romain Rolland has put it: "Times were hard—theatrical programmes and even concerts, were suspended for several months on account of the war and the extreme cold. Handel, to keep himself warm, wrote in eight days the little *Ode to St. Cecilia*; in sixteen days *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed Il Moderato* of Milton; in a month the *Concerti Grossi*." These latter are amongst his finest works; fresh in invention, gloriously robust and yet often subtle in detail. Not all of the rest emphasise the contrast of a *concertino* group with the *ripieno* or *tutti* as in this first concerto, where this classical principle of the *concerto grosso* is apparent at the outset and maintained in all the movements.

2. PIANOFORTE CONCERTO NO. 2 (OP. 21) *Klaus Egge*
"Symphonic Variations and Fugue upon a
Norwegian Folksong." (b. 1906)

(First performance in Britain).

Klaus Egge is the President of the Norwegian Composers' Guild. He received his musical education at the Music Conservatoire at Oslo as an organist, pianist and composer. In composition he was a pupil of Fartein Valen (the Norwegian apostle of the twelve-tone system) and later at the Berlin Hochschule. His major works include two symphonies, two pianoforte concertos, a violin sonata, the "Draumkvede" pianoforte sonata, a quartet, a piano trio, a wind quintet and a symphonic choral work, in addition to songs.

Egge is above all a contrapuntal composer. His harmonic language, resulting from the employment of unusual scale

patterns in building up a very full if not indeed thick polyphony, is fraught with considerable asperities. His rhythmical definition, however, gives not only clear cut lines but a remarkable driving force, as will be most readily appreciated in the great finale-fugue of this work.

This concerto, dating from 1944, consists of theme, seven variations and fugal-finale designed on a continuous plan. The theme (of sixteen bars), first heard on the violoncello, is repeated almost without change in Variation I (pianoforte melody) and II (first violins) in different contrapuntal textures. But, before Variation II, there intervenes a short, richly scored episode, and the extension of this variation in another such episode of development indicates the general principles upon which the symphonic structure of the whole is achieved. Variations III and IV begin to cast the theme itself into a form amenable to sterner contrapuntal treatment. Thereafter a moment of tranquil soliloquy leads into Variation V (Adagio molto espressivo). Variation VI, an Andante in 6/8 time with a modestly lively graceful rhythm, is extended on a ternary design, and with increased intensity breaks into Variation VII, Allegro assai (the brilliant scherzo in this design), culminating in a short, majestic and resounding cadenza from which begins the Fugue (Concertante contra fuga). Here, as elsewhere, the solo part is sometimes decoratively independent and sometimes an integral part in the fugue. Ultimately the theme itself strides grandly through the bass, full fathom five beneath the tempestuously exciting polyphony that overrides it.

INTERVAL

3. SERENADE FOR STRING ORCHESTRA (OP. 11) *Dag Wirén*
(b. 1905)

Preludium: Allegro molto
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Marcia

Dag Wirén is a Swedish composer. He studied at the Conservatoire in Stockholm and subsequently (as holder of a State Scholarship) at Paris. In 1939 he was appointed a music critic in Stockholm. His compositions include, besides several

chamber works, a symphony, a sinfonietta and a violoncello concerto. The Serenade (dedicated to the Stockholm Chamber Orchestra and published in 1939) is an attractive work of a fairly light character, which has already won favour in this country.

4. "MUSIC FOR STRINGS"

Bliss

(b. 1891)

Allegro moderato, energico—Meno mosso—

*Andante molto sostenuto—Poco allegretto—
Tempo I*

Allegro con spirito

This work was first performed at the Salzburg Festival of 1935 by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult. An earlier "Introduction and Allegro" for strings has since been withdrawn by the composer.

To the listener who is not already to some intent familiar with the idiom of this music, it may appear at first as having thrown over the ties of tradition. But though no claim could be made as to the work being grounded on one basic key, and at times the key centres change in a restless flow and ebb, key centres there are, and very clearly proclaimed and defined in broad contrast. The themes are distinctive and clearly contrasted, and the pattern of presentation as vivid and assured as any of the long established musical forms, and whatever the technical demands the handling of the strings is superb. In short, the greater my familiarity with this music becomes, the more I feel assured that in its freshness and vitality, its soundness of heart and limb, its depth of feeling and its delight in variety of colour, this music is amongst the finest achievements of our time.

S.T.M.N.