

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

CHAMBER

SEASON 1953-54

Eighth Concert

THE NEW QUARTET

(OF EDINBURGH)

ROBERT COOPER

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

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REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 11TH MARCH, 1954

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

1. STRING QUARTET IN G (Op. 77, No. 1) Haydn
(1732-1809)

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Menuetto : Presto

Finale : Presto

The two quartets of Opus 77, Haydn's last quartets apart from the unfinished quartet of 1803, were composed in 1799 (a year after the completion of the wonderful group of six published as Op. 76) and dedicated to the Prince Lobkowitz to whom Beethoven dedicated so many of his greater works a few years later.

It was ever characteristic of Haydn to propose themes which appear to intimate a predictable career, but which in fact are found to develop upon a quite unpredictable course to unpredictable conclusions. So it is in this opening movement, where the first theme apparently invades the territory of the second, and this latter after enjoying ample room and a wide selection of keys in the middle section is content to leave only the legacy of its dancing triplet figure to preserve its memory thereafter.

The slow movement (E flat major) is remarkable in particular for the wonderful change of colouring which its opening melody acquires as it moves from the violin to the depths of the 'cello, and from near familiar keys to those undreamed of until the magic touch reveals how close they lie about the common way.

In his Op. 33 quartets Haydn had labelled his Minuets as Scherzi. Here he composes a veritable Scherzo with an astonishingly Beethovenian 'Trio' all to be played Presto, and somehow allows it to be labelled Menuetto. However he is not only the traveller to infuriate officialdom by omitting to strip old labels off his trunk. As for the Finale, it sounds like a Rondo, it behaves like a Rondo, and anyone with a latchkey can prove to you that it isn't. For my part I think it is what it sounds like.

2. STRING QUARTET IN E FLAT (Op. 12) Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Adagio non troppo—Allegro non tardante

Canzonetta : Allegretto

Andante espressivo—

Molto allegro e vivace

In none of his seven string quartets did Mendelssohn surpass nor indeed did he ever quite reach the level of that precocious masterpiece the Octet composed in 1825. But the best of the quartets do not deserve to fall altogether out of the repertoire. The E flat of Op. 12 composed in 1829, although the first to be published, is in fact a later, as it is also a maturer, work than the F minor of Op. 13. Formally, it has some unusual features—the manner in which the first subject of the Allegro re-appears in the original key to open the development suggests a false recapitulation, whilst the coda resumes a melodic episode from the development upon precisely the same ground as previously (F minor), and this same episode intervening twice in the course of the finale (which following upon the G minor Canzonetta and B flat major slow movement has adopted the exceptional starting point of C minor) is instrumental in steering that impetuous movement back to the opening theme and mood of the whole work—an interesting though not entirely convincing experiment in cyclic unity.

INTERVAL

3. STRING QUARTET IN C MINOR (Op. 18, No. 4) Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro ma non tanto

Scherzo : Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto

Menuetto : Allegretto

Allegro

The six quartets of Op. 18, dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz, were composed in the years 1798-1801. The C minor quartet is somewhat analogous to the D minor of Mozart's set of quartets dedicated to Haydn. The C minor key was employed by Beethoven for many works (pianoforte sonatas, string trio,

violin sonata, Symphony No. 5, and so on) which are closely akin in their general ethos and intensely emotional character. Here, in the opening theme, there is remarkable upwelling both of emotion and of melodic line, punctuated with ejaculatory chords which bring the violin sonata to mind. Yet these powerful emotions are offset with the quiet ease of a second subject as untroubled as that of the Jupiter Symphony.

There is no slow movement, but the most original Andante Scherzoso, exquisitely pointed and rougishly fugal, coupled with the succeeding Minuet with its compensatory serious vein of thought, contrives to suggest slow movement and scherzo all in one.

The last movement is a Rondo which is none the less perfect though it is frankly and naively sectional in construction. The fact is that if the happiest thoughts succeed one another in perfect sequence you may have a movement no less inspired than the most highly developed organic structure.

S.T.M.N.