

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

SEASON 1954-55

Third Concert

REID
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Leader: DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

Soloists:

DENNIS BRAIN

JOHN TAINSH

DR. MARY GRIERSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 1954

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME : ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

- I. CONCERTO GROSSO IN D MINOR *Ernest Bloch*
(b. 1880)
(for String Orchestra and Piano obbligato)

Prelude: Allegro energico e pesante

Dirge: Andante moderato

Pastorale and Rustic Dances

Fugue: Allegro

The impact of the eighteenth century concerto grosso can be observed in a great many modern works for string or chamber orchestra, and indeed in some works for full orchestral forces such as Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra. But none of them has so avowedly declared itself both in title and in style as this forthright "essay" of Bloch's composed in 1924-25. The word 'essay' is used advisedly, for this successful and deservedly popular work lies somewhat apart from the main current of Bloch's music which exhibits so intensely personal a style and a concern with "the passionate expression of human aspirations and frustrations." It has been well said that this Concerto Grosso shows that Bloch "can also take pleasure in music making for its own sake."

The pianoforte here is not a solo instrument but, as it were, a 'continuo' used with all the technical resource and power of a modern full-blooded grand pianoforte. The Prelude, true to its name, for all its power does not develop into a full-scale concerto movement. The two central movements owe more to the heritage of the nineteenth century orchestral suite than to the concerto style and tradition; but the Fugue exuberantly proclaims and proves the title of the work in undeniable terms.

2. SERENADE FOR TENOR SOLO, HORN AND STRINGS, Op. 31
(Composed in 1943)
Britten
(b. 1913)

PROLOGUE

PASTORAL (*Cotton*)

The Day's grown old; the fainting Sun
Has but a little way to run,
And yet his Steeds, with all his skill,
Scarce lug the Chariot down the hill.

The shadows now so long do grow,
That brambles like tall cedars show;
Molehills seem mountains, and the ant
Appears a monstrous elephant.

A very little, little flock
Shades thrice the ground that it would stock;
Whilst the small stripling following them
Appears a mighty Polypheme.

And now on benches all are sat
In the cool air to sit and chat,
Till Phoebus, dipping in the West,
Shall lead the world the way to rest.

NOCTURNE (*Tennyson*)

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

ELEGY (*Blake*)

O Rose, thou art sick;
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy;
And his dark, secret love
Does thy life destroy.

DIRGE (*Anon 15th century*)

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.
When thou from hence away art past,
To Whinny-muir thou com'st at last;
If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,
Sit thee down and put them on;
If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;
From Whinny-muir when thou may'st pass,
To Brig o' Dread thou com'st at last;
From Brig o' Dread when thou may'st pass,
To Purgatory fire thou com'st at last;
If ever thou gavest meat or drink,
The fire sall never make thee shrink;
If meat or drink thou ne'er gav'st nane;
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane;
This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte.

HYMN (*Ben Jonson*)

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.
Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close;
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.
Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night—
Goddess excellently bright.

SONNET (*Keats*)

O soft embalmer of the still midnight !
Shutting with careful fingers and benign
Our gloom-pleased eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine;

O soothest Sleep ! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities;

Then save me, or the passèd day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;

Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oilèd wards,
And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

EPILOGUE

INTERVAL

3. SERENADE IN E MINOR (Op. 20)

Elgar
(1857-1934)

Allegro piacevole
Larghetto
Allegretto

Nothing could better illustrate the renaissance of the string orchestra during the last thirty years or so and the position which that ensemble and its repertoire now hold in the concert world of to-day than the early history of this little masterpiece of 1892. It has been said that Elgar's public career began with the performance of his "Froissart" Overture (Op. 19) at the Worcester Festival of 1890. To us to-day it seems hardly credible that this Serenade of 1892, although published in the following year, should have had to wait until 1905 for a complete concert performance, the Larghetto alone having received two performances in the mid-nineties!

4. CONCERTO FOR HORN AND STRING ORCHESTRA

Gordon Jacob
(b. 1895)

Allegro moderato

Adagio—

Allegro con spirito, quasi presto

This concerto, composed early in 1951, was first performed by Dennis Brain with the Riddick String Orchestra at a Festival of Britain concert that summer. Though the title forbears to say so, it is in F major, with the Adagio in D minor (linked to the Finale by the undisguised Handelian formula of a Phrygian cadence). In short, though the first movement ends on an "uncommon" chord of F, the tonal scheme and the formal design of each movement in this engaging work are as abundantly clear as the most naive listener could wish.

There are no preliminaries. The horn enters immediately *in medias res*. Tutti intervene in brief episodic fashion. The busy rhythm of the opening gives place to a sustained smooth episode in which the strings introduce the second theme taken up by the horn. The development thereafter combines the material of both sections, the busy opening theme now gently rounded under the influence of the second whilst the latter in turn is flung into a veritable Coronation peal of bells. These transformations tend to recur in the recapitulation to the conclusion of a solo cadenza capped by a massive carillon of strings.

The Adagio is in simple ternary form (A B A), but the eloquent opening passage for violoncelli touched about by the other strings is to prove something more than a mere introduction to the main theme.

The finale is a gay vivacious rondo. Just before it takes leave of us in high spirits, its mind turns back with some emotion to the theme of the slow movement.

S.T.M.N.