

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CHAMBER CONCERTS

SEASON 1954-55

Third Concert

THE NEW
EDINBURGH QUARTET

ROBERT COOPER

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

ANNE CROWDEN

JOAN DICKSON

REID SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 1954

AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

PROGRAMME

QUARTET IN D MINOR (K 421)

Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro
Andante
Menuetto : Allegretto
Allegretto ma non troppo

This is the second of the set of six quartets which Mozart composed in the years 1782-85 and dedicated to Haydn. His indebtedness to Haydn at a much earlier period is very evident if one directly compares his last youthful quartets of 1773 (K 168-173) with those of Haydn's Op. 17 and Op. 20 published in 1771-72. But by the time Mozart wrote these mature quartets the influence of Haydn had been fully absorbed and transformed within his own personal style. This D minor Quartet, which, according to Constanza's account, Mozart composed during his wife's confinement, takes one's mind back to one of the youthful quartets of 1773, a work full of tragic feeling composed also in D minor—a key which Mozart employed very rarely outside the domain of opera.

Einstein, commenting upon the variations with which this quartet concludes, remarks that if Mozart did as Haydn had done in No. 5 of his recently published Op. 33 set, it was only "in ostensible 'homage' despite the noticeable relation of the themes," though he feels that the ethos of the movement derives from Gluck. Yet we have to go no further afield than Mozart's fine violin sonata in F major (K 377), composed a year or two earlier, to find a prophecy both of theme and of mood in the D minor variations which form its central movement. Nor indeed is the F major Andante of the quartet, that hangs so upon a sigh and is freely phrased into so many moments of silence, far removed from the tender Tempo di Menuetto movement which ends that sonata. If I have taken last things first this may not come amiss; for the attentive ear will perceive in the cry of the final cadence of all the same cadent octave with which this impassioned work opens *sotto voce*.

QUARTET

Robert Crawford

Moderato—animato
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo, Allegro—
Mesto

Robert Crawford was born in Edinburgh in 1925. He played the violin from the age of five and started to compose at the age of fifteen. Two years later he started studying with Dr. Hans Gal. He went to London in 1945, won a Composition Scholarship at the Guildhall School of Music where he studied with Benjamin Frankel, and also took up the viola. He returned to Edinburgh in 1949. His first work to be published (1951) was the Six Bagatelles for Piano.

The String Quartet was completed early in 1950 and, in the following year, had its first performance at the I.S.C.M. Festival at Frankfurt where it was played by the Berlin String Quartet. It was awarded a prize by the Scottish Committee of the Arts Council in connection with the Festival of Britain in 1951 and was published in 1953.

All the movements of the Quartet are largely based on the opening bars and, particularly, on a short figure of four notes which comes in the second bar and which is also the basis of the animato passages in the first movement. The last movement is the most extended and is a slow fugue entirely based on the four notes first heard on the viola in minims, which are later diminished to crotchets and to quavers. The 'cello twice enters with an augmentation of the subject in semibreves, as a contrast to this more rapid movement of the parts. After reaching a climax, the movement soon ends very quietly with a two-part canon.

INTERVAL

QUARTET IN E MINOR
" Aus meine leben "

Smetana
(1824-1884)

Allegro vivo appassionato
Allegro moderato a la Polka
Largo sostenuto
Vivace—Meno presto—Moderato

This great Bohemian nationalist was primarily a dramatic composer and a master of the descriptive tone poem. Smetana left only three chamber works, an early pianoforte trio and two quartets written towards the end of his life. He himself made it clear in one of his letters that he had "no intention of writing a quartet according to recipe and customary formulas . . . With me, the form of each composition is the outcome of the subject. Thus it is that this quartet has made its own form. I wanted to paint in sounds the course of my life."

The first quartet (E minor) was written in 1876 when Smetana retired for a while to the country, already afflicted by a distressing "singing in the ear" which was the first symptom of the deafness that so tragically affected his powers of concentration and invention in his last years. He himself has given us a fairly precise intimation of what this quartet purports to portray.

The first movement depicts his early love of art, his romantic spirit and unsatisfied yearnings. The second (a la Polka) recalls memories of his gay life in youth "when I used to write dance music and give it away right and left to other young folk." The Largo recalls "the bliss of my first love for a girl who later became my wife."

The Finale, which opens in a full orchestral manner exults in "the discovery of how to treat the national material in music, and the success of pursuing that course." Suddenly this exuberant vivacity is arrested. The long-drawn high E on the fiddle points the tormenting affliction of inexorable sound which had befallen him, and all that remains is the bitter-sweet of wistful reflection on things past.

(The second quartet in D minor composed in 1882-83 takes up the tale where the first left off. Smetana himself said of it that "it expresses the whirlwind of music in the head of one who has lost his hearing.")

S. T. M. N.