

*Piano Recital
by
Dennis Matthews
12.1.69*



1732 1960



Manoel
Theatre

CREMONA

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THE BRITISH COUNCIL

PRESENTS

A PIANO RECITAL

by

DENIS MATTHEWS

AT THE

MANOEL THEATRE

SUNDAY, 12th JANUARY, 1969, at 6.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME

Suite No. 2 in G minor

PURCELL

Prelude — Almand — Courante — Saraband.

The lady who rashly discerned Handel's influence in Purcell's music summed up the once-prevalent British diffidence in matters of art. Handel was only ten when Purcell died and did not set foot in England until fifteen years later. Purcell's eight harpsichord suites are slight, maybe, but characteristic in flavour and freshness. The pathos of Dido's Lament echoes in the Almand and Saraband of the G minor Suite.

Sonata in A minor, K310

MOZART

Allegro maestoso.
Andante cantabile con espressione.
Presto

The A minor Sonata dates from Mozart's second visit to Paris in 1778 — an unhappy time, clouded by the death of his mother, while in musical circles the wonder-child of former years now found himself struggling for recognition. The choice of a minor key heralded Mozart's most personal and dramatic style. He saw, as no-one else, the effect of pathos in turning consoling themes back into the minor as a movement progressed. The andante, in full sonata-form, has tragic undercurrents beneath its lyricism, and the finale pursues a restless course with just one brief episode — a musette-like theme in A major — to belie its minor ending.

Sonata in C, opus 1

BRAHMS

Allegro.
Andante.
Scherzo: Allegro molto e con fuoco.
Finale: Allegro con fuoco.

By the age of twenty Brahms arrived on Schumann's doorstep 'fully armed', as the latter put it. His three early sonatas are remarkably mature and remarkably Brahmsian. Yet, despite his classical leanings, he never followed up this form, turning instead to variations and, eventually, to shorter piano pieces, mostly intermezzi. The symphony was his goal, and there are already

orchestral strivings in the sonatas, especially in the turmoil of the development sections. In opus 1 the influence of Beethoven shows at once, but the lyrical Brahms shines through too, in the short andante with its adaptation of a **Minnelied**, in the trio of the scherzo, and in the two episodes of the finale. The finale, incidentally, shows a surprising, temporary, allegiance to the Lisztian ideas of unity by recalling the sonata's opening theme in a new rhythmic form.

— INTERVAL —

Rhapsody

JOHN IRELAND

The leading figures in the modern British renaissance — Elgar, Vaughan Williams, even Walton and Britten — have paid scant attention to the solo piano, and it is a little sad that two prolific keyboard-writers, Bax and Ireland, should have gone out of favour because they composed, quite naturally for their time, in a high romantic idiom. Ireland, who died in 1962, wrote his *Rhapsody* during the first world war. It rotates on an energetic theme offset by free lyrical episodes, and has, true to its title, an improvisatory character. A cadenza towards the end explores delicate as well as sonorous pianistic effects.

Sonata in A, D664

SCHUBERT

Allegro moderato.
Andante.
Allegro.

The grand scale and 'heavenly length' of many of Schubert's piano sonatas do not apply to this, the 'little' A major, written in 1819. The opening is a song miraculously conceived pianistically, with just one outburst of dramatic octaves to make the return the more welcome. The andante is touchingly simple, yet subtle in its dialogue between the hands and its minor-major alternations; while the finale whirls the work away in the happiest of dances.



Denis Matthews

DENIS
MATTHEWS

DENIS MATTHEWS was born in Coventry in 1919, lived in Leamington Spa, and was educated at Warwick School. His parents, though not professional musicians, encouraged his interest in music, and after his first hearing of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, in 1931, he became determined on a musical career. He studied the piano locally and dabbled in composition. In 1935 he won the open piano class at the Leamington Festival and was advised by Harold Craxton to enter for a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London. This he won, studying piano with Craxton and composition with William Alwyn. During his studentship at the Academy he had several works performed, broadcast and published, but his love of the classics, especially Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, led him to concentrate on performance.

Since 1945 he has been a regular soloist with all the British orchestras, playing in twenty seasons of Promenade Concerts, and three times for the Royal Philharmonic Society, with Beecham, Barbirolli, and Rudolf Kempe. He also played concertos with the Czech Philharmonic and the Hamburg Radio orchestras on their London visits. In 1950 he was invited to play the whole of "The Well-tempered Clavier" at the Vienna Bach Festival, since when he has made many tours overseas. He has performed in Western and Eastern Europe, Africa, America, the Middle East and the Far East, Australia and New Zealand. In 1964 he made a world tour, and in 1968 a six-week one of Latin America with the Halle and Barbirolli.

His interest in the wider sphere of music has made him in great demand for lectures and lecture recitals. Since 1942 he has broadcast talks on music, on subjects ranging from Beethoven's quartets to Wagner and Sibelius.

His autobiography, "In Pursuit of Music", was published in 1968, and he has contributed a volume on Beethoven's piano sonatas to the BBC Music Guides. He has recorded for Columbia, HMV, and Vanguard.

