

FELIX MENDELSSOHN Symphony No. 3 in A Minor (Scottish)

Andante con motto – Allegro un poco agitato
Vivace non troppo
Adagio
Allegro vivacissimo – Allegro maestoso assai

When Mendelssohn made his first visit to London in 1829 he was only twenty, yet he was already a composer of renown. His *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture, a masterpiece of mature and imaginative perfection, was written at the age of seventeen. A year later he took up the cause of Bach's forgotten *St Matthew Passion*, and finally, in spite of every obstacle, conducted the first performance of this monumental work since Bach's death in 1750. This was in March 1829, and a few weeks later the triumphant Mendelssohn set off for London. He enjoyed an overwhelming success at a Philharmonic Society concert, conducting his First Symphony, and became the lion of London society. Later in the year he decided he must see more of Britain, so with his friend Karl Klingemann he made the famous journey to Scotland that was to result in two of his finest works, the *Hebrides* Overture and the 'Scottish' Symphony.

Edinburgh fascinated Mendelssohn, he was carried away by the 'half-ruined grey castle on the meadow, where Mary Stuart lived in splendour and saw Rizzio murdered', and it was actually in the Queen's ruined chapel that he found the inspiration for the 'Scottish Symphony'.

It was Mendelssohn's intention to recapture the mood that came over him as he stood by the broken altar at which Mary had been crowned Queen of Scotland. So the symphony opens with a slow, melancholy song introduced by wind and violas which is then taken up and developed by the rest of the orchestra. This is only a preface, however, to the first movement proper, which starts with an agitated melody for strings and clarinet in the style of the composer's 'Songs without Words'. It is elaborated on by the orchestra at length, with instrumental colouring that is unusually dense and sombre for Mendelssohn. The themes are appropriate to the idea of historic legends being narrated through the ages, and the tuneful sadness of the music befits memories of the ill-fated Mary. After considerable development we hear the recapitulation of this thematic material with the addition of a dreamy counter-melody given out by the 'cellos. The movement ends with a return of the melancholy tune of the introduction, which finally dies away as though shrouded in mist.

Immediately the second movement bounces in with more than a touch of Scottish colour, the clarinet beginning a delightful dance-tune against an effective string background. In the slow third movement Mendelssohn seems to be looking over his shoulder to the spirit of Beethoven. A gentle, song-like melody alternates with a more masculine march-like theme. Each time the first of these reappears it takes on a more elaborate guise, developing an almost *bel canto* expressiveness and warmth of feeling.

The tartan tang is re-introduced with a vengeance when the final movement bustles in. The brisk first theme is announced by violins against chords for violas, bassoons and horns, subsequently given to the wind, and then developed by the full orchestra into a more energetic section. Woodwind present the elegant second main melody, which has a curiously haunting appeal. These and subsidiary themes are developed with cunning resourcefulness and more methodically than was the case with the material of the first movement. The symphony ends with a sudden switch of mood: a new melody, in the style of a stately march, forms a grand apotheosis which, it has been suggested, describes the gathering of the Scottish clans. It has been criticised for being too blatantly ceremonial, but it certainly rounds off the work with flourish and expresses the sense of history that the composer genuinely experienced on his visit to Edinburgh.

Frank Granville Barker © 1975

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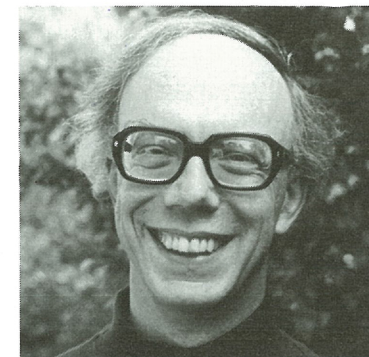
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Lionel Rogg

HOMAGE TO BUXTEHUDE – THE GREAT DANE

LIONEL ROGG has been acclaimed throughout the world as one of the leading performers of his generation. He has played in all the major cities of Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia and, more recently, in the USSR, Japan and South Africa, and is a regular guest of the Royal Festival Hall organ concert series in London.

Born in 1936 of Swiss parents, Lionel Rogg completed his musical studies at the Geneva Conservatory, where he obtained the First Prize with Distinction in Organ (1956), in the class of Pierre Segond. At the age of 25 he presented the complete organ works of J. S. Bach in ten recitals at the Victoria Hall, Geneva. These memorable concerts marked the début of an exceptionally brilliant career.

He now teaches at the Geneva Conservatory and is frequently invited to give master classes at universities around the world. His recordings are numerous and include three versions of the complete organ works of J. S. Bach. A brilliant improviser, Lionel Rogg has composed works for voice, chorus, organ, piano and chamber groups, and he is the author of a course in counterpoint.

Lionel Rogg's particular flair for the music of Buxtehude (born 350 years ago) prompts the theme for his classes and today's recital. In 1980 his recording of Buxtehude's complete organ works won the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis.

Programme

Samuel Scheidt *Cantilena 'Fortuna'*

Girolamo Frescobaldi Toccata nona del primo libro

Dietrich Buxtehude Prelude in D minor; – *Nun freut euch* – Ciacona in C minor

J S Bach Prelude and Fugue in D, S532

Lionel Rogg *Nun freut euch*

Chorale – Bicinium – Canon – Prestissimo – Récit – Passacaglia – Toccata

This recital is to be recorded by BBC Radio 3