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BRUCH

Violin Concerto No. 1
Scottish Fantasy

Arthur Grumiaux
New Philharmonia Orchestra
Heinz Wallberg

MAX BRUCH (1838-1920)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26

1	I	Vorspiel (Allegro moderato) –	7'45
2	II	Adagio	8'03
3	III	Finale (Allegro energico – Stringendo poco a poco – Presto)	7'14

Scottish Fantasy, Op. 46

4		Einleitung (Grave)	3'32
5	I	Adagio cantabile	4'58
6	II	Scherzo (Allegro) – Adagio –	6'18
7	III	Andante sostenuto	5'55
8	IV	Finale (Allegro guerriero)	7'54

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Total timing: 52'00

In 1883, Max Bruch boarded a New York-bound steamer departing from Liverpool, where he had been working as a conductor. During his American tour he would conduct various choral societies, but biographical material preceded his arrival in New York, making special mention of the first violin concerto: 'It may well be said that since Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto no other work of this kind has found and merited such a general friendly recognition.'

The work so caught the public imagination that it eclipsed the two other violin concertos he wrote – as well as a host of other pieces for violin and orchestra – with the exception, of course, of the *Scottish Fantasy*. The first movement is unusually entitled *Vorspiel* (prelude), and it segues into the heart of the work which lies in the justly famous central Adagio. The final Allegro energico, set up with an expectant tremolo in the strings, is Brahmsian in mood – indeed both Bruch's first and Brahms' only concertos were composed for the same violinist, Joseph Joachim.

Bruch's Fantasy Op. 46 has the full title 'Fantasia for violin and orchestra with harp, freely using Scottish melodies'; it is by no

means an incidental piece, but a full-scale concerto in symphonic four-movement form. Like his second violin concerto, it was composed for and dedicated to the violinist Pablo de Sarasate.

It begins in an intransigent E flat minor – in Bruch's own words, recalling 'an old bard contemplating a ruined castle, and lamenting the glorious times of old'. The Bardic associations are certainly strengthened by the prominent harp part.

The first of the Scottish folk songs is *Auld Rob Morris*, heard in the solo violin over arpeggios in the harp. Although both instruments are characteristic of folk music, Bruch's rich scoring ensures that the music remains firmly in his own style. The second movement (corresponding the symphonic scherzo) features the folksong *Dusty Miller*, it is first heard over a typically folkloric drone.

There is no break before the third movement, based on the tune *I'm down for lack of Johnnie*. It begins in unassuming fashion, low in the soloist's register with simple harmonies; the soloist then decorates a statement of the tune in the orchestra, leading to another duet with the solo harp.

The finale is marked Allegro guerriero, and begins with another duet between the two soloists. The harp remains prominent throughout the ensuing set of variations. The marking *guerriero* (warlike) is appropriate. The movement is based on Robert Burns' song *Bruce before Bannockburn*:

*Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie...*

*Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do, or die!*

Carl Rosman

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Cover photograph: Arthur Grumiaux (photo: Decca)
Eloquence (Australia) series manager: Cyrus Meher-Homji
Art direction: Chilu Tong