

KURT WEILL

QUODLIBET (Suite from 'Magic Night')

In the summer of 1922, Kurt Weill was commissioned to write a score for a dance-mime to be presented in Berlin during the following Christmas season by Vladimir Boritch's children's theatre. The scenario for this work, which was named 'Zaubernacht' or 'Magic Night,' was by Boritch himself. The score involved a small chamber orchestra and soprano solo. The following year Weill arranged a suite for full orchestra to which he gave the title 'Quodlibet,' signifying that it was not a suite in the normal sense, but rather a re-composition which united various and often widely separate sections of the score according to purely musical considerations. The work was first performed in Dessau in 1923, and was one of the few works of the younger generation to be performed by the great conductor Weingartner.

The suite consists of four movements, and begins, like the ballet, with the *Andante* music for the appearance of the Fairy. In the following *Allegro*, she brings the toys to life, and in the concluding *Andante*, bids the sleeping children (who own the toys) farewell. The second movement contains among other things a galop for four little horses, and a dance for a Jack-in-the-box. The third movement opens, *misterioso*, with the entry-music for a bear. After some striking instrumental recitatives there is a short funeral march for a doll. The final movement begins with an *Allegro* for the bear, who runs amok, and continues with a march for a tin soldier. Other events include a *furioso* dance for a witch, and finally there is a *molto vivo* chase, and a can-can as the bear is hunted down.

Although Weill's early music has been unjustly neglected, and its vital connection with his later works overlooked, listeners familiar with his style will detect many characteristic fingerprints in the Quodlibet—for instance in the march music, where the influence of Mahler (from whom he learnt so much) is discernable.

The Suite has the subtitle 'Eine Unterhaltungsmusik' (roughly, 'entertainment music') and in accordance with its origins is lighter and more frankly charming than most of the music that Weill was writing at that time.

FRAUENTANZ

Frauentanz was written during a short holiday in the North German town of Heide during July 1923. Like the Quodlibet-Suite it is, apart from the final song, very much in the nature of a relaxation, celebrating the summer of young love. It was first performed in Berlin early in 1924, and later the same year it was heard at the ISCM Festival in Salzburg. The conductor on both occasions was Fritz Stiedry.

David Drew (London)
