

Ernst Maerzendorfer and the First Recorded Cycle of Haydn Symphonies by Christopher Howell

If you want to raise my hackles, tell me the first complete Haydn symphony cycle was by Antal Dorati on Decca. I have returned to this question several times, so I may as well start by [quoting myself](#):

Haydn cycles have had a chequered history on disc. The first attempt, under Max Goberman, was brought short by the conductor's early death, while the first actually to be completed, under Ernst Märzendorfer, had such limited distribution that most people have never even heard of it. Even quite knowledgeable record collectors will usually tell you that the first complete cycle was that conducted by Dorati for Decca. Amusingly, while all through the early 1970s the pages of "Gramophone" and similar magazines were full of advertisements and fulsome reviews of the ongoing Dorati series, three miserable little lines in November 1972 on a full-page ad by the Musical Heritage Society (distributed in the UK by Oryx) announced the "Complete Haydn Symphonies (107)" on 49 LPs, by the Vienna Chamber Orchestra under Ernst Märzendorfer - and, while they were about it, also the "Complete Keyboard Works" played by Artur Balsam on 15 LPs. No review appeared in "Gramophone" but if memory serves me right, Anthony Hodgson dedicated considerable space to this cycle in "Records and Recording". Shortly after, Oryx faded from view as discreetly as it had arrived.

Just to add insult to injury, in that same issue of Gramophone that carried the Oryx advertisement (see following page)¹, Robert Layton, discussing the latest Haydn/Dorati volume in his Quarterly Retrospect, had this to say:

Some of these are new to the Gramophone: no. 37 in C ... and no. 42 in D, have not, I believe, been recorded before. This Haydn series is one of the most worthwhile ventures Decca or anyone else have undertaken in recent years ...²

I wonder what Robert Layton thought when he saw the Oryx advertisement only eight pages further on.

Possibly I am out of step in my belief that record reviewing is a form of musicology. According to my book, when a major project like a complete Haydn symphony cycle came up for discussion, readers needed to know what the alternatives were and whether it was worth making the effort to get them. Some mention was made of Max Goberman's recordings, which had covered 45 symphonies – approximately but not exactly the first 45 – when brought short by the conductor's untimely death. These were recorded on Goberman's own Library of Recorded Masterpieces label, but were briefly available on CBS during the LP era. They were issued on CD by Sony in 2015.

My intention, therefore, is to make belated amends, the more so since the Maerzendorfer cycle can now be had for download at minimal price³. It is notoriously difficult to find good pressings of the original LPs and, in general, those I have heard from this source are fair enough for the historically minded. If you want state-of-the-art digital sound, I suppose you would not choose Dorati either.

¹ Gramophone, November 1972, p. 881

² Gramophone, November 1972, p.873

³ <http://www.haydnhouse.com/Maerzendorfer%20Haydn.htm>



the musical heritage society new york

This famous Series, well known to American Collectors, is now available in leading Record Shops throughout Britain. (MHS and OR prefix, £2.39 Stereo)

THE RENAISSANCE

OR 352-354 DANCE OF THE RENAISSANCE & BAROQUE. Recorder, Siring and Brass Ensembles. Harpsichord. ACCADEMIA MONTEVERDIANA, London, Cond: Denis Stevens (3 LPs)

MHS 761 GOTHIC & RENAISSANCE DANCES played on Early Instruments.

MHS 1141 MUSIC OF THE LATE MIDDLE AGES & RENAISSANCE THE FESTIVAL CONSORT, SAN DIEGO.

MHS 1173 MADRIGALS & KEYBOARD MUSIC OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE. THE AMBROSIAN SINGERS.

HENRY PURCELL (1658-1695)

OR 420-1 THE COMPLETE HARPSICHORD MUSIC. Played by GERALD RANCK (2 LPs)

MHS 942-943 12 TRIO SONATAS (1683), Z.790-801. Carl Pini & John Tunnell, Violins; Harold Lester, Harpsichord; Anthony Pini, Cello.

MHS 944-945 10 TRIO SONATAS (1697) Z.802-811. Artists as above.

MHS 946 MUSIC FOR THE LONDON THEATRE Suites from Abdelazer, Amphitryon, Distressed Innocence, The Fairy Queen. ACCADEMIA MONTEVERDIANA.

THE KEYBOARD

MHS 925 Jean-Francois DANDRIEU: Harpsichord Works. Eiji Hashimoto, Harpsichord.

MHS 580 Muzio CLEMENTI (1752-1832): 4 Sonatas—Op. 26/1; Op. 40/2; Op. 36/1; Op. 50/3. ARTUR BALSAM, Piano

MHS 1071 ENGLISH HARPSICHORD MUSIC. Played by HILDE LANGEFORT

MHS 1207 Domenico SCARLATTI: 12 Sonatas. PAMELA COOK, Harpsichord

MHS 1208 Carlos de SEIXAS (1704-1742): 15 Sonatas PAMELA COOK, Harpsichord

MHS 862 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF KEYBOARD MUSIC from Virginals to Piano.

MHS 632 MOZART: Piano Music for Four Hands, Vol. I. K.594; K.358; K.497.

MHS 718 VOL. II: K.501; K.381; K.521. NADIA REISENBERG & ARTUR BALSAM, Piano.

Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681-1767)

MHS 629-30 TAFELMUSIK I AUSTRIA TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA
MHS 637-38 TAFELMUSIK II TRA VIENNA COND:
MHS 641-42 TAFELMUSIK III Dietfried Berner

MHS 743 OBOE CONCERTO: CONCERTO for 2 FLUTES: SUITE for RECORDER & STRINGS. AUSTRIAN TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA.

MHS 1072-1073 THE "PARIS" QUARTETS. Alice & Nikolaus Harnoncourt Ensemble

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

OR 201-249 THE COMPLETE HAYDN SYMPHONIES (107) THE VIENNA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, Cond: Ernst Maerzendorfer. (49 LPs)

OR 101-115 THE COMPLETE KEYBOARD WORKS ARTUR BALSAM, Piano (15 LPs)

MHS 826 Cassation in C: Quartet in D: Divertimento in F.

MHS 625 PIANO CONCERTO in C and VIOLIN CONCERTO in A. VIENNA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, C: Carlo Zecchi

MHS 880 SYMPHONY in B-flat and 5 Overtures. VIENNA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, C: Froschauer

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

OR 127-30 THE COMPLETE DANCES FOR PIANO
OR 255-58 JACQUES ABRAM, Piano (8 LPs)

MUSIC FOR GUITAR

MHS 565 GUITAR RECITAL by RODRIGO RIERA, I. Works include Dowland, Rameau, Scarlatti, Villa-Lobos, Frescobaldi & Riera.

MHS 672 RODRIGO RIERA RECITAL, II. Works by Bach, Albeniz, Sanz & Villa-Lobos.

MHS 890 J. S. BACH: Suite in G & WEISS: Chaconne in A. Fantasie in e. Suite No. 16. BRIGITTE ZACZEK, Guitar.

MHS 991 SPANISH GUITAR MUSIC—Milan, Mudarra, Narvaez. BRIGITTE ZACZEK, Guitar.

MHS 944-5 FLAMENCO RECITAL for TWO GUITARS by Mario & Manuel Escudero (2 LPs)

AMERICAN MUSIC

OR 262 ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN ORGAN MUSIC, Vol. I: The Eighteenth Century.

OR 263 VOL. II: The Nineteenth Century. Played by JANICE BECK.

MHS 1126 ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN COLONIAL CHRISTMAS MUSIC. THE BERKELEY CHAMBER SINGERS.

CHAMBER MUSIC

MHS 691 BRAHMS: 2 Sonatas for Viola & Piano, Op. 120, Nos. 1 & 2. Georg Schmid, Viola Magda Rusy, Piano.

MHS 923 BRAHMS: SONATAS FOR VIOLIN & PIANO, in G, Op. 78: in A, Op. 100. Ruben Varga, Vin, George Bennette, Piano.

MHS 934 BRAHMS: SONATA 3 in d, Op. 108/FRANCK: SONATA IN A. Varga, Vin; Bennette, Piano.

MHS 645 BOCCHERINI: String Quintets Nos. 11 in E: 16 in d: 43 in F. STRADIVARI QUINTET.

OR 272-274 J. S. BACH: 6 Suites for Cello Solo, BWV 1007-1012. NIKOLAUS HARNONCOURT, Cello. (Box set)

MHS 654 J. S. BACH: TRIO SONATAS, BWV 1036-1039, for Flutes, Violins, Cello and Harpsichord.

MHS 770 WORKS FOR FLUTE, PIANO & CELLO by Haydn, Richter & Kuhlau. TRIO ELVETICO.

MHS 804 VIVALDI: 6 Sonatas, Op. 1 for 2 Violins & Continuo.

MHS 819 CORELLI: 5 Sonatas for Oboes, Recorders Violin and Guitar.

MHS 964 MARAIS (1656-1728): Suites 1 in C, & 4 in D; Sonnerie de St Genevieve. HARNONCOURT ENSEMBLE.

MHS 1039 QUANTZ (1697-1773): 3 Sonatas in D, G, C for Flutes, Recorders and Continuo, and Duo in G, Op. 2/1.

MHS 1092 Heinrich BIBER (1644-1704): Harmonia Artificialiosa-Ariosa. Partitas 1, 3, 5, 6. HARNONCOURT ENSEMBLE.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

MHS 998 GABRIELLI (1551-1612): Works for Orchestra. COLLEGIUM MUSICUM RADIO VIENNA.

MHS 704 LULLY (1632-1687): Music to Plays by Molière. AUSTRIAN TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA.

MHS 886-8 WERNER (1695-1766): A Musical Instrumental Calendar. (12 Suites) VIENNA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA (3 LPs)

MHS 976 4 FLUTE CONCERTI: PERGOLESI, TARTINI, SAMMARTINI & VIVALDI. J-P. Rampal, Flute; SAAR CHAMBER ORCH., Cond: Karl Ristenpart.

MHS 574 BOISMORTIER (1691-1755): Works for Flutes. VIENNESE FLUTE ENSEMBLE.

MHS 962 A. SCARLATTI: Concerti Grossi Nos. 1, 2 & 3. Sonata in F. Sinfonia No. 12. VIENNA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA.

MHS 773 ALBINONI: Oboe Concerto, Op. 7/6; SAMMARTINI: Sonata in D for Flute & Orch.; VALENTINI: Oboe Concerto in C; VIVALDI: Recorder Concerto in C, P.440. VIENNA ORCH.

MHS 660 MUSIC BY THE GERMAN ARISTOCRACY: Frederic The Great, Amalie of Prussia, Ludwig von Hessen, etc.

MHS 737 MUSIC BY HABSBURG EMPERORS: Leopold I, Ferdinand III, Joseph I.

MHS 651 BOCCHERINI: 4 Symphonies, Op. 21, 1, 3, 5, 6. AUSTRIAN TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA, Vienna.

MHS 779 Karl STAMITZ (1749-1801): 3 Orchestral Trios, Op. 1, Nos. 1, 2 & 3. AUSTRIAN TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA.

MHS 726 3 PIANO CONCERTI: Dittersdorf, in A; Mozart, K.175; Haydn, in C. J. Abram, Piano. AUSTRIAN TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA.

MHS 635 WORKS for OBOE, FLUTE & ORCHESTRA, by Bellini, Gluck, Hasse & Pergolesi. AUSTRIAN TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA.

MHS 749 ORCHESTRAL WORKS by GLUCK, PICCINI, SALIERI & MOZART'S Symphony in B-flat, K.45a. AUSTRIAN TONKUNSTLER ORCHESTRA.

MHS 619 MASTERWORKS & THEIR TRANSCRIPTIONS: J. C. BACH: Sonata in D, Op. 5/2; MOZART: Harpsichord Concerto in D, K.107; MARCELLO: Oboe Concerto in D; J. S. BACH: Harpsichord (solo) Concerto No. 3 in D, BWV 974.

MHS 789 VIOLIN CONCERTI by FASCH; HANDEL; HEINICHEN; PISENDEL.

MHS 709 PIANO CONCERTI by D. V. PUCCINI (1771-1815); VIOTTI (1755-1824). Eugene List, Piano; VIENNA ORCH.

MHS 802 BEETHOVEN: Eighth Symphony; SCHUMANN: Fourth Symphony. ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA; Cond: Harold Farbermann.

Records available from all leading Record Shops. ORYX RECORDINGS LTD. Trade Distribution: LUGTON & CO. LTD., 209-212 Tottenham Court Road, LONDON W1A 2BN.

I shall not attempt a symphony-by-symphony discussion of the entire cycle, though I may expand this article from time to time. What you will find below are comparative reviews of twelve symphonies selected across the numerical spectrum, approximately the reviews that might have been written in the 1970s.

This latter point enables me to duck the issue that today, if you want a cycle on modern instruments, your choice might be neither Maerzendorfer nor Dorati, since later cycles by Adam Fischer and Dennis Russell Davies have been admired. Naxos has also put an inexpensive version of each symphony in the marketplace, a series rather than a cycle, since several conductors and orchestras are involved. If you want original instruments, oddly enough, none of the projected cycles were ever completed – the one that got furthest was Hogwood. At least one HIP version of each symphony has been made, nonetheless. Here, again, is possible scope for future expansion of this article.

But to return to our putative 1970s reviewer, were there other comparisons he or she might have made, apart from Maerzendorfer and Dorati? Of the symphonies I discuss below, Goberman had reached nos. 5, 9, 23 and 38. It would be interesting to see a complete list of previous recordings of Haydn symphonies. Armed with the three editions of WERM and a few other catalogues, I find that, of the symphonies I have chosen, no. 23 had been recorded by Wilhelm Leibner, no. 42 by Franz Litschauer, no. 75 by Leslie Jones, no. 84 by Anton Heiller, followed by Colin Davies and Ansermet, no. 89 by Hans Swarowsky. Most of these recordings would be hard to obtain today. Nos. 94 and 101 had obviously been recorded many times. This would seem to indicate that Maerzendorfer was first with nos. 56 and 62. If any reader knows of earlier recordings of these, I should be interested to hear from them. For the moment, therefore, I shall stick to my brief – comparisons of twelve symphonies in the performances by Maerzendorfer and Dorati.

But, before starting, everybody knows who Antal Dorati was, but who was Ernst Maerzendorfer? I have been here before too, reviewing one of Maerzendorfer's last acts – his distinguished contribution to Marco Polo's Johann Strauss I series. So I might as well [quote myself](#) again.

Though general collectors may know Ernst Märzendorfer only as the conductor of Nicanor Zabaleta's recordings of harp concertos by Boieldieu, Rodrigo, Reinecke and Mozart's flute and harp concerto (with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and Berlin Philharmonic respectively, DG discs issued in 1961 and 1963 that have been recycled and recoupled over the years) he has in fact had a long and distinguished career. Born in Oberndorf, Salzburg in 1921 he studied with Clemens Krauss and became first conductor of the Graz Opera in 1945. He was conductor of the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra from 1953-1958, became a permanent conductor of the Vienna State Opera in 1961 and has been a regular conductor of the Berlin State Opera since 1964. In 1999 he was made an Honorary Member of the Vienna State Opera and, though officially retired, still conducts there from time to time. If his career sounds to have been Austro-German-based, he has also made tours on both sides of the Atlantic, conducting, among other things, the first New York performance of Richard Strauss's Capriccio. His repertoire is wide, stretching from Cavalieri's Rappresentazione di Anima e Corpo to premières of works by Einem and Henze, and including on the way 20 operettas by Offenbach at the Salzburg Festival. As a recording artist, it seems to have been his fate to have worked mostly for rather obscure labels.



The only thing that has changed since I wrote this is the conductor's death in 2009 at the age of 88.

Why not an article in the "Forgotten Artists" series, rather than just Haydn? This may come in time – this article seems to be provisional in a number of ways. As things stand, the materials available are strongly imbalanced. All the Haydn symphonies and very little else. Apart from the Zabaleta concertos and the Mendelssohn Double Concerto with Eugene List and Carroll Glenn, there are a few glimpses, some more official than others, of Maerzendorfer conducting Austrian contemporaries (Rubin and Weishappel) and some operas (*Si J'étais Roi*, extracts with Rudolf Schock, 1960, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, in German with Rudolf Schock, *Faust*, with Bonisolti, Vienna 1972 and *Les Huguenots*, extracts with Gedda, Vienna 1973). Not really enough for a rounded picture. So, for the moment, here are the twelve Maerzendorfer/Dorati Haydn comparisons.

Symphony no. 5 in A opens with an *Adagio ma non troppo* that, in Maerzendorfer's hands, gives an impression of great sincerity. The high horn parts are secure. Under Dorati, this music seems a little more ordinary, even a little directionless at times. The overall line does not seem to interest him. The Philharmonia Hungarica horns are slightly less secure. Dorati has a harpsichord but, if you want this, you would surely want to hear it properly. Rather than a real presence, it adds a distant tinsel effect.

In the following *Allegro* movement, Maerzendorfer has splendid drive, but finds time for elegant relaxation without losing impetus. While Maerzendorfer's opening bars have a joyful swing, Dorati's sound more spiky than anything. His phrasing is fussy and, when he tries to relax, the music sags.

The Minuet goes with a nice lilt from Maerzendorfer. Here, even the Vienna horns are occasionally unfazed by the high tessitura required of them. Dorati is again too fussy in his phrasing to get a good swing. There is some lovely oboe playing in Maerzendorfer's trio, without overdoing the charm. This trio is very nicely sprung by Dorati too. The less soloistic treatment of the oboe part could be preferred by some for its greater integration. I found it a touch bland.

The *Presto* finale is vital from Maerzendorfer without being rushed. Dorati is vital too, but it is a tense briskness that comes across rather than a sense of enjoyment.

A clear win for Maerzendorfer in this symphony. He is much more likely to convince you that even this early work is a masterpiece.

In the first movement of **Symphony no. 9 in C**, Maerzendorfer stresses the *molto* aspect of Haydn's *Allegro molto* marking. Dorati is lively too, but with a little more bonhomie. In this case, his tendency to relax finds more variety in a not very varied movement.

Maerzendorfer's *Andante* is very nicely turned. Under Dorati, some fussy phrasing results in a lack of direction. Dorati repeats both halves, Maerzendorfer repeats neither of them. Maerzendorfer makes the music ear-catching enough to have you wishing he had included at least one of them. Dorati's less interesting performance makes you wish he had omitted at least one.

Maerzendorfer's Minuet is trenchant. He makes the most of the not very plentiful opportunities for dynamic shading. There is some lovely oboe playing in his Trio and he points up the bucolic colouring when the other instruments enter. Dorati's less forceful Minuet has a nice lilt and might be found preferable. The Trio is less characterized by Dorati, though he maintains his nice lilt. There is less contrast, therefore, between the Minuet and the Trio. Once again, Dorati has a harpsichord while Maerzendorfer does not but, as before, if you want this, you would presumably want to hear it properly.

On balance, Maerzendorfer seems preferable.

Maerzendorfer plays the opening *Allegro* of **Symphony no. 23 in G** with unflagging vitality, but still with time for dynamic shading. The oboes are pungently characterful, the horns well forward and joyous. He repeats both halves. Dorati is markedly slower, but buoyant. This is not one of his fussy performances and the long line is well held. He omits the second repeat and I must say that, at this slower tempo, we hear quite enough.

Maerzendorfer's *Andante* has a very alert, smiling grace. There is plenty of dynamic shading. He repeats both halves, but the music does not outstay its welcome. Dorati has more elegance but less twinkling humour. He does not play the second half repeat and, again, the music seems long enough in his performance.

The Minuet and Trio is one of Haydn's canonic ventures. Maerzendorfer gives it a firm tread without slogging. The canons are perfectly clear. Dorati gives the Minuet more of a strutting feeling, each canonic entry pointed almost to excess. His Trio is gentle and I must say he gives it more contrast with the Minuet.

The *Presto* finale is delicious in Maerzendorfer's hands, rather like an Irish jig. Dorati's tight phrasing and exaggerated dynamics just miss the "There was an old woman who ..." feeling we get from Maerzendorfer. Once again, he omits the second repeat, which Maerzendorfer includes. Dorati's missing repeats, even with his slower first movement, make his recording shorter by more than four minutes. He gives a perfectly good performance, but the symphony seems to have greater stature and interest under Maerzendorfer.

In the *Allegro di molto* first movement of **Symphony no. 38 in C** – nicknamed "Echo" – Maerzendorfer creates a wonderfully festive atmosphere with ringing trumpets. But he also phrases the softer moments beautifully without loss of drive. He repeats both halves. Dorati is less grandly festive but sets up an infectious, dancing rhythm. He omits the second repeat – I would have enjoyed it.

In the *Andante molto*, Maerzendorfer is poised and intimate, the echo passages delicately touched in. He makes no repeats. Dorati makes the first repeat. It is a measure of how much faster his performance is that, though he plays about 30% more music than Maerzendorfer, his performance is half a minute shorter even so. At this tempo, the music slithers away like water from a duck's back, the echo effects hardly making their mark.

Maerzendorfer gives the Minuet a gracious lilt. This symphony almost turns into an oboe concerto halfway through – it is thought that a virtuoso oboist was employed by Count Esterhazy while Haydn was in the middle of writing the work, so he decided to give him something to do. Maerzendorfer relaxes the tempo fractionally for the trio, so that his oboist can turn his phrase elegantly. Dorati has a perkier Minuet, but with a good lilt. He gives his oboist slightly less time to characterize.

The finale is marked *Allegro di molto*, but the oboe has a lot of notes to play so there is a limit to how fast it can go. Maerzendorfer manages a steady-footed joy, with some very perky playing from the oboist. Maerzendorfer repeats both halves. There is a cadenza marked for the oboe in the second half. The first time he gets just a brief flourish – as does Dorati's – but the second time the cadenza is extended. Delicious. Dorati is lively enough but a bit bland. He omits the second repeat. His performance of this symphony is shorter than Maerzendorfer's by four-and-a-half minutes.

Dorati's first movement shows how good he can occasionally be. But Maerzendorfer's first movement is equally good and so, with a whole movement thrown away uselessly by Dorati, there is no competition here. For the first time in my listening, I have come up against evidence that these Maerzendorfer recordings exist only in LP pressings, some of which are better than others. There is some distortion here, but not enough to prevent my enjoyment.

Symphony no. 42 in D is a remarkable work. The first movement, marked *Moderato e maestoso*, is characterized by acciaccaturas, chromatic passages and surprising twists in the recapitulation. Maerzendorfer seems to have all the space he needs to point these without losing momentum. Neither he nor Dorati play the second half repeat. Dorati is certainly appreciative of Haydn's originality, but at his considerably slower tempo the effect is didactic and laboured. In his hands Haydn, at this stage in his career, is made to sound as if he has a lot of original ideas but has not yet got his act together.

The second movement contains a lot of very florid writing, yet the marking is *Andantino e cantabile*. Maerzendorfer keeps it duly on the move, revealing an intimate, pastoral quality, especially when the woodwind enter. The curious harmony changes are registered with a sort of inner drama. The music acquires a degree of Gluckian sublimity. Here, too, Maerzendorfer and Dorati agree to play only the first repeat. Dorati, tempted I suppose by the florid writing, takes a much slower tempo – his performance lasts two minutes longer. It is beautifully phrased according to its lights, but the attention wanders.

In the Minuet, the clucking joy of the opening gives way to some almost threatening moments, nicely pointed by Maerzendorfer. The birdsong-like trills of the Trio preen themselves very nicely under Maerzendorfer, who has a delightfully bucolic bassoon in the second part of this section. Dorati shapes the music quite well, but, particularly in the Trio, his heavily accented first beat brings the music closer to rococo decorativeness. He has no bassoon in the Trio.

This latter point needs examination. At the beginning of the Minuet, Haydn prescribes for the bottom line of the score cellos, basses and bassoon. The orchestra also includes oboes and horns. At the beginning of the Trio, he states "Oboes and horns silent", and in fact writes no music for them. Dorati evidently interpreted this as meaning he wanted the Trio to be strings only. Maerzendorfer presumably felt that, if he did not write "bassoon silent", he wanted it to continue playing. Yet he is a little naughty, for he has the bassoon play only in the second part of the Trio. I do not know whether this was his own idea or that of the edition he was using. I have the Robbins Landon edition in front of me and I understand Dorati used it. Whoever had the idea of a sudden entry of the bassoon half way through the Trio, it is a delightful effect.

The Finale is a rondo, marked *Scherzando e presto*. It mostly calls for tiptoe pianissimo playing. Maerzendorfer achieves a controlled effervescence that explodes joyously at the end. Dorati is well pointed but misses Maerzendorfer's sense of delight and growth. After a while it just goes on.

If you hear Maerzendorfer's version, you will hear a marvellous symphony – and you will know it. You will hear a marvellous symphony if you hear Dorati's recording, too, but you may not realize it.

The *Allegro di molto* that opens **Symphony no. 56 in C** is a highly festive affair. Maerzendorfer emphasizes this by having the trumpets excitingly forward and the timpanist using what sounds like a hard stick. He also allows himself a certain flexibility – more than his wont – between forte and piano passages, though without losing the overall shape. *Ante litteram*, this is very much the approach I would expect from a more recent original instruments group. Dorati keeps his trumpets at a safe

distance and his timpani are scarcely in evidence even on headphones. He, too, allows a certain flexibility of tempo between forte and piano. Combined with a warmer acoustic, the result is elegant rather than fiery, but it is fine in its way. Both conductors make only the first repeat.

Maerzendorfer's *Adagio* is gravely expressed without getting becalmed – he achieves a serene flow. Dorati is a little more detailed in his phrasing – he has the first note of the recurrent opening phrase played staccato, which is not written but is plausible. But he avoids fussiness and he also achieves a serene flow. I would not know how to choose between them. Both conductors agree in playing no repeats – a “complete” performance of this movement would stretch beyond 14 minutes.

Maerzendorfer plays the Minuet with a mock-pompous strut and wide dynamic contrasts. This frames a graciously poised trio. Dorati is slower and smoother. His performance sags here and there, even sounding tired at times. His Trio is dull. At the end of Minuet, just before the trio is to start, there is a trumpet blooper that should have been corrected – indeed, it could be corrected even now since the note is correct at the end of the movement.

The *Prestissimo* finale has been likened to a tarantella. Maerzendorfer is exhilarating, very punchy and with extreme dynamic contrasts. The raw thwacks from his timpanist and the forward trumpet help to give the music a folkloristic, village festival air. Dorati is lively enough but keeps it all within strictly classical bounds. Once again, both conductors agree over repeats – they play only the first.

Despite a good *Adagio* from Dorati, this looks like another clear win for Maerzendorfer unless you actually prefer, for some reason, to have your trumpets and drums behave politely.

Maerzendorfer plays the *Allegro* first movement of **Symphony no. 62 in D** with a joyful verve. Dorati is fractionally slower and perhaps points better the proto-Beethoven changes of tonality in the development – Maerzendorfer does not try to make them sound like anything but Haydn. Both conductors make the first repeat only.

The second movement is marked *Allegretto* – a “little allegro”. With Maerzendorfer it is not really a slow movement at all – did Haydn ever say it was? At times it breaks into a merry little dance. Some have likened this movement to a barcarolle, perhaps after listening to Dorati's performance, which is gentle and restrained. I can see pluses either way, but is not Dorati's more of an andantino than an allegretto? Neither conductor makes either of the repeats.

Maerzendorfer gives a rather galumphing feel to the Minuet. In the Trio, he uses the syncopated rhythms to create a delightful stuttering feeling and has the bassoon to the fore, to bucolic effect. Dorati's Minuet is more formal but does not sag. In the Trio, he points the syncopations didactically with a sharp accent and sees we hear as little of the bassoon as possible.

In the quite elaborate *Allegro* Finale, Maerzendorfer handles very well the alternation between mock seriousness and good humour. The Scotch-snap rhythms are played for comedy, as are the off-beat chords near the beginning of the development. Rather unusually, he plays both repeats. Dorati omits the second repeat and it is a measure of how much slower his performance is that, while playing about 25% less music, he nevertheless takes more than a minute more over it. His phrasing is refined but the effect is reined-in and ultimately dull.

In short, Dorati has points in his favour in the first two movements, but his flat-footed finale rules him out of consideration.

Symphony no. 75 in D is the first of those examined to include two features with which Haydn is particularly associated – a slow introduction and a second movement in variation form. The introduction is marked *Grave* and Maerzendorfer is just that – grave but poised. In the following *Presto* he is exuberant with trumpets and drums well forward and what sound like hard timpani sticks. He finds drama in the development and plays just the first repeat. In the introduction Dorati gives an impression of less depth but he does create a good sense of mystery. His *Presto* is a little more formal than Maerzendorfer's – rather like an 18th century garden – but it is still lively and he creates, also here, a sense of mystery in the development. He, too, plays just the first repeat.

Maerzendorfer's *Poco adagio* is delicately poised. The fanfare interjections are perky rather than dramatic. He achieves a serene flow in the beautiful last variation. All repeats are given by both conductors. This time it is Dorati who gives an impression of greater depth – the theme is almost prayerful. His fanfares are less perky and by the end he seems to have insisted a bit too much on creating a proto-Mendelssohn *religioso* atmosphere. His last variation just misses the natural flow of Maerzendorfer's.

Maerzendorfer plays the Minuet with a gracious but also bucolic lilt. In the Trio, the Scotch snap rhythms create occasional integration problems between the strings and flute, which is well forward, but there is a nice lilt. Dorati's Minuet has Maerzendorfer's graciousness but less of his bucolic character. His Trio is better integrated and the phrasing is almost too cute, though it did bring a smile to my face.

Maerzendorfer's *Vivace* finale is lively and dancing with splendid vigour in the Hungarian-sounding minor-key passages. The droll ending is well handled. Dorati's finale also dances along merrily and is a little more refined orchestrally.

Very very marginally, I find Maerzendorfer's version more involving. This may be partly just an impression created by the closer recording and more forward wind, brass and timpani – it sounds a bit more like a “modern” performance. But there are points in favour of Dorati and, for the first time up to now, I would not pick a serious quarrel with anyone who actually preferred him.

With **Symphony no. 84 in E flat**, the third of the “Paris Symphonies”, we are on more regularly beaten terrain, though not so much as you would think back in the 1960s and 70s. Like no. 75, it has a slow introduction and a variation form second movement. Maerzendorfer gives a dignified account of the opening *Largo* and then proceeds to an *Allegro* that has a wonderfully dancing, merry spirit, yet which manages to be sublime at the same time. He plays the one written repeat – Haydn had by now mainly ceased to indicate second-half repeats in big symphonic movements. Dorati adds an air of mystery to the *Largo*. His *Allegro* seems a little reined-in at first but ultimately its bubbling good spirits win the day. He perhaps achieves greater songfulness and poetry in the development. The repeat is given.

The *Andante*, in Maerzendorfer's hands, is by turns sublime, tragic, graceful and grandiose, culminating in radiant pastoral poetry. There are a good many repeats and Maerzendorfer omits one of them. Dorati plays all repeats, yet his performance is shorter by more than a minute. He keeps the theme on the move with smart *sforzandi*. It sounds rather humdrum and, in the later stages, unduly busy.

Maerzendorfer gives the Minuet a sort of clod-hopping lilt – very fetching. The off-beat accents and the bird-calls in the trio are nicely pointed. Dorati is slow and mock solemn. This is the bewigged,

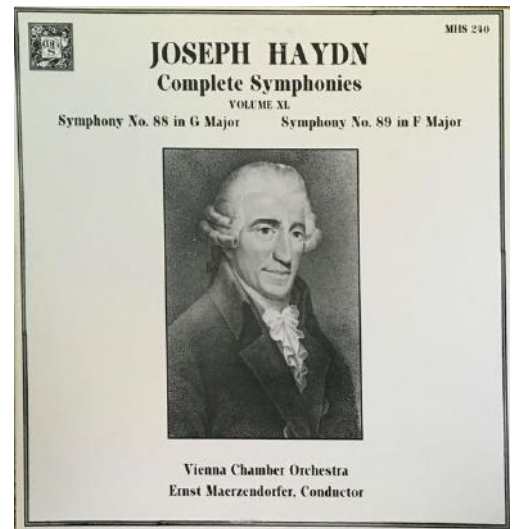
curlicued Papa Haydn of earlier legend. It becomes rather tiresome by the end – the smile on one’s face gets too forced.

Maerzendorfer’s *Vivace* finale is light and gay, though tough when required. Dorati is a bit more formal, but he is not heavy and he is good at suggesting a sense of mystery before the reprise. Both conductors make the repeat.

Dorati’s outer movements have points in their favour, but his middle movements rule his performance out of serious consideration.

Symphony no. 89 in F has no slow introduction and, contrary to what I said about Haydn not writing second-half repeats in first movements any more, here he has one. Neither conductor observes it, however. Maerzendorfer’s *Vivace* is strong and vital but with time for some perky elegance. There is plenty of drama in the development and also in the recapitulation, which springs quite a few surprises. At the beginning, this seems as if it might be one of Dorati’s fussily-phrased performances, but he soon settles into a bright and vital reading, if marginally less eventful than Maerzendorfer’s in the later stages.

Maerzendorfer plays the *Andante con moto* with a gentle lilt that accommodates the more expressive moments as well as the more dramatic middle section. Both conductors play all the repeats. Dorati is fractionally slower – just enough to sag here and there.



Under Maerzendorfer, the Minuet has a perky, quasi-military air. In the Trio he lets the Viennese players enjoy some schmaltzy upbeats – the effect is adorable. Dorati jabs at the *sforzati* of the Minuet exaggeratedly, seemingly doing them because they are there but without understanding the reason for them. They disturb the lilt of the music. His Trio is nice, if a shade more aristocratic, powder-puffed, than Maerzendorfer’s.

The *Vivace assai* finale is not too precipitate under Maerzendorfer, but is full of bright good-humour. There is plenty of energy in the minor-key sections. Dorati, very slightly slower, has a nice jaunty feeling. There is a question raised by the marking *strascinando* which Haydn puts over the upbeat to each forte return of the main theme. Maerzendorfer treats it as a jokey ritardando upbeat, and in fact the Italian word means “dragging” or “holding back”. Dorati, for some reason, thinks it means a portamento in the falling violin phrase but without a ritardando. The results, as well as the Italian dictionary, seem to give reason to Maerzendorfer. Dorati is splendidly animated in the minor-key section, however.

This is a symphony where you will not go seriously wrong with Dorati. Maerzendorfer has just that little bit of extra outdoor vitality and character, nonetheless.

So far, the symphonies compared have been among the less frequented ones, even those with higher numbers. It would be impossible to find a “rare” one from among the last twelve, obviously, and this is a case where a reviewer back in the 1970s would have had a wealth of alternatives to choose from. Not all the older versions had clean texts, though. We know that Robbins Landon was involved in the

Dorati cycle. Certain features of phrasing in **Symphony no. 94 in G** – the “**Surprise**” – show that Maerzendorfer, too, was using either the Robbins Landon or another suitably cleaned up edition.

Maerzendorfer’s *Adagio* introduction is very broad, building to a grand climax. The *Vivace assai* is punchy and dancing, but almost Beethovenian in its underlying strength. Dorati keeps the *Adagio* on a smaller scale, as if to avoid it becoming a statement in itself. The *Vivace assai* is decently lively but things sag occasionally in the quieter passages.

Maerzendorfer gives the *Andante* a gentle strut with a twinkle in its eye. He is stern and dramatic when it goes into the minor key and punchy in the military-style variation. Dorati shaves about a minute and a half off Maerzendorfer’s performance. This in itself does not matter, but the brisk effect does. His fortes in the first variation are muted, as if one surprise – not much of one anyway – had been quite enough. The overall effect is perfunctory.

Maerzendorfer gives a wonderful bounce to the Minuet and a bubbly grace to the Trio. Dorati’s Minuet is slightly faster. It has a fair lilt but sounds more ordinary, and the trio has no real character at his speed.

Maerzendorfer’s *Allegro molto* finale spins along merrily, with some splendid string articulation and he is also tough when needed. The timpani crash near the end emerges as the real surprise of the symphony. Dorati has plenty of vitality and is even a little hectic at times. He does not have Maerzendorfer’s lift in the figure accompanying the second theme. The timpani joke is disastrously smoothed out. In place of the sudden forte in the score, he precedes it by a mild unwritten crescendo, reaching only a polite mezzo forte. Did Robbins Landon not try to intervene?

The choice seems pretty clearly Maerzendorfer. Even if it had been much closer till the final bars, Dorati’s muffing of the timpani joke would have decided it – I could never live with that.

Symphony no. 104 in D – the “**London**” – opens with an *Adagio* introduction that creates a really profound effect in Maerzendorfer’s performance, with a pleading quality in the falling piano phrases. The *Allegro* is delivered with what we might call an unhurried vitality, assisted by forward wind and brittle timpani. As usual, Dorati keeps his timpani in their place but he, too, gives full expression to the *Adagio* and plenty of vitality to the *Allegro*.

Maerzendorfer gives an intimate, heartfelt account of the opening section of the *Andante*. He is grandiose in the fortes and creates a great sense of spaciousness in the last pages. Dorati’s slightly more brittle staccato gives a less songful effect. He is nevertheless not without feeling and he gives plenty of power to the forte passages.

The Minuet emerges under Maerzendorfer as a galumphing Landler, the trills sounding like open-hearted laughter. In the trio, he exploits to the full the woodwind colours and the rustic pizzicatos to transport us into a proto-Dvořákian world. Dorati is more formal – his dancers in the trio are courtly dancers.

Spiritoso is Haydn’s marking for the finale. Maerzendorfer gives it a wonderful *joi-de-vivre*, creating all the thrill of a live performance. Dorati’s has a slightly drilled feeling. Despite some nice touches in the gentler moments, he does not generate the same cumulative vitality.

I do not wish to imply that Dorati’s is less than an excellent performance. Indeed, as far as the first two movements are concerned I could be very happy with either. By the end, however, Dorati’s has

failed to distinguish itself from the many other excellent performances one has heard. Maerzendorfer, on the other hand, does produce that little something to raise him above the crowd.

I have felt increasing embarrassment as I worked through these twelve symphonies. The reader will have supposed by now that my primary intention was a Dorati-bashing rampage, and that I fitted my reactions to support my thesis. I can only ensure the reader that this was not so. I have, as my “Forgotten Artists” series shows, a tendency to sympathise with the neglected, and I did hope to discover that Maerzendorfer could hold up his head in Dorati’s company. I even anticipated finding that in some movements, if not entire symphonies, Maerzendorfer might even prove preferable. Instead, as the reader will have found, there is not a single symphony, and scarcely a single movement, of these twelve where Maerzendorfer does not appear, by a greater or a lesser margin, preferable. Perhaps sweet chance led me to Maerzendorfer’s twelve best performances, or to Dorati’s twelve worst. Perhaps I shall be back at a later date with twelve more, and prefer Dorati every time. But somehow I think not. The evidence here is that Maerzendorfer had Haydn in his bloodstream while Dorati was just doing a professional job. Doubtless in different composers – Tchaikovsky? Bartok? – it would be the other way round.

Just a last point about editions and repeats. We know that Dorati used the Robbins Landon edition. I think Maerzendorfer must have done too – as no. 94 shows, he certainly was not using the old Breitkopf parts. As to repeats, as reported above, neither conductor gives them all, with Maerzendorfer usually but not always providing the fuller version. It is known that Goberman, in his attempted cycle, played all repeats, but several were snipped off for commercial issue. Some of the middle-period symphonies, with repeats indicated for both halves in first movements, slow movements and often finales, would last between 35 and 40 minutes in a complete performance. A Haydn symphony extending beyond a single LP side would doubtless have been considered untenable in what was already a risky commercial enterprise – and that went for Decca, too. In the case of Dorati, I feel sure that such a well-travelled recording team would have decided *a priori* which repeats to omit. Did Maerzendorfer, like Goberman, play more than we hear on the LPs? As I understand it, only the LPs survive, nobody knows where the original tapes went. So this is a question that remains unanswered.

Christopher Howell © 2018