

Pioneering Haydn On Record

An occasional series dedicated to commercial and live recordings of Haydn symphonies up to and including those of the first two complete cycles by Ernst Märzendorfer and Antal Dorati

by Christopher Howell

Symphony no. 22 in E flat major “The Philosopher” Hob. I/22 (1764)

Symphony no. 22 entered my consciousness early. As a teenager, my father took me to a concert in the BBC Maida Vale Studio in which Franz-Paul Decker conducted this and Bruckner 4. The BBC Programme Index tells me this was in 1969. I remember being struck by the strange sonorities of the gravely beautiful *Adagio* first movement, in which two horns and two cors anglais are joined by muted strings. The strings remove their mutes for the remaining three movements. These are a lively and terse *Presto* in sonata form, a minuet with a trio in which the horns and cors anglais combine – they had mainly alternated in the first movement – and a *Presto* finale in 6/8 time. The title was not Haydn’s own, but it appears on a manuscript copy from 1790 – well within Haydn’s lifetime. Only the first movement is at all philosophical in tone – on the strength of the finale it could just as well have been called “La Chasse” as the symphony which goes under that name.

A second version of the symphony was published during Haydn’s lifetime by the Parisian publisher Venier. The cors anglais are replaced by flutes while the opening *Adagio* and the minuet and trio are omitted. Sandwiched between the two remaining movements is an *Andante grazioso* which most scholars, including Robbins Landon, consider unlikely to be Haydn’s own work. The substitution of the cors anglais had a certain logic in that not every orchestra in those days had them available. It would be surprising to hear this version today except in the context of a project to record everything. Dorati duly provided it – in addition to the first version – and, as we shall see, Märzendorfer found a very odd solution indeed.

Two recordings appeared at about the same time in or around 1951. In the absence of a definite date for that by **Jonathan Sternberg** and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (HSLP 1109), it is difficult to say whether it preceded the version by Karl Haas, though it was the intention of the Haydn Society to concentrate on unrecorded symphonies. I fear it will not have furthered the cause of this work very much¹. The first movement is taken slowly and deliberately, eight-in-the-bar, the unphrased bass-line quavers trudging interminably while the horns are insecure in their higher flights. Under the circumstances, the absence of repeats is a boon. The second and fourth movements are more satisfactory, with a certain rough vigour that is not unbecoming and a degree of dynamic shading. The minuet is heavy-handed.

Karl Haas recorded his version on 4 July 1951 (Parlophone SW 8122-3)². The German-Jewish conductor and musicologist Karl Wilhelm Jacob Haas (1900-1970) came to England in 1939, a refugee from Nazi persecution. He founded the London Baroque Ensemble in 1941 and it continued to operate until 1966. It did not play only baroque music and it included some of London’s finest players of the day. It is at least possible that one of the horns here is Denis Brain, since he played with them regularly.

Haas’s first movement is in another world compared with Sternberg’s. Properly four-in-a-bar, the bass-line quavers are shapely and have a spring to their steady stride. The horns ring out nobly, the cors anglais

¹ Heard via a scratchy “as is” transfer on Internet Archive, but after a little work I produced results that I think can be fairly used to judge the performance.

² I am indebted to the Shellackophile blog (now accessible at Internet Archive), which offers an excellent transfer plus recording data.

intone gravely, the violins comment sweetly and serenely. The repeats would have been welcome, but the lengths of a 78 side would have prevented this. The second movement has eagerness and elegance, while not underplaying any minor-key episodes. Both repeats are played. The minuet is not substantially faster than Sternberg's but it has a smiling lilt. With glorious horns, the tempo sounds ideal in the trio. The finale, with both repeats, has abundant exuberance, the horns (French and English) clearly enjoying the hunt.

No contest, then? G. C. Burke's survey of recorded Haydn thought otherwise³:

"The skeletonised Haas *club intime* is numerically incapable of giving the deep throb needed⁴. Mr. Sternberg realizes the solemn apprehension of the first movement by playing it in tempo, while Mr. Haas's quicker speed must disappoint, and this to the decisive advantage of the Haydn Society, in spite of the customary Sternberg club-footed minuet against a Haas showing real vitality there ... it is a symphonic realization, and the other is not".

After a lull, the "Philosopher" did rather handsomely in the 1960s. First came **Max Goberman** with the Vienna State Opera Orchestra (HS1M/HS1S), part of his attempted complete cycle. Goberman's Haydn, as we have seen elsewhere in these articles, is tough and serious. His tempo for the first movement is not far short of Sternberg's, but he makes it work much better. His bass line has some shape and the horns are secure on their higher notes. All the same, the prospect of hearing both repeats at this tempo is not very enticing. Proof, maybe, that Haydn did not expect it to go so slow. Goberman very likely played the repeats, though the engineers lopped them off. I would also point out that the repeated phrases from bar 17 to bar 19 sound as if stuck in a groove at this tempo while they sound perfectly natural at Haas's tempo. Goberman is tersely energized in the second movement. He takes Haydn at his word over dynamics, playing a solid *forte* except in the few bars marked *piano*, while even Sternberg "edited" the music a little, with some *pianos* and *crecendos*. In theory, I would agree with Goberman. In practice, there is a lot of unrelenting *forte* with both repeats so we are back to the unanswered – probably unanswerable – question I have posed elsewhere. How far did Haydn, while not conducting in the modern sense, influence dynamics while sitting at his harpsichord? Goberman's minuet is somewhat faster than the other two, with a sturdy lilt. Moreover, it works well for the trio too. The horns are slightly less gorgeous than Haas's, but they are firm and true. In this movement, Goberman is my favourite so far. There is a lot to be said, as well, for his fiery energy in the finale, with both repeats, though I get the idea Haas's players are enjoying themselves more.

The Hungarian conductor **László Somogyi** (1907-1988) emigrated to the west after the Hungarian uprising and had a good career in the USA, including a period with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. He made some recordings for Westminster in the 1966, most famously the Dvořák Piano Concerto with Firkusny and Beethoven's Third Concerto and Choral Fantasia with the young Daniel Barenboim. His recording of Symphony 22 was set down on 31 May 1964 with the Vienna Radio Orchestra (Westminster WST 17095)⁵.

If nothing else, Somogyi takes credit for being the first to record the symphony with all repeats. Happily, there is much else besides. I have not mentioned so far the theory that the quaver bass line in the first movement represents the ticking of time as the philosopher meditates and debates on timeless matters, since none of the other performances particularly suggest this. Sternberg and Goberman, in particular,

³ High Fidelity November-December 1952, p. 71.

⁴ Whereas *The Record Guide* (Edward Sackville-West & Desmond Shawe-Taylor, with Andrew Porter and William Mann, Revised Edition, Collins 1955, p.350) felt that "the music profits by being confided to an orchestra of only sixteen players".

⁵ The transfer at Internet Archive evidently derives from a good copy and is very satisfactory.

evoke a weary pilgrims' march, Haas a more glad hearted one, anticipating Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony. Somogyi plays the quavers quite lightly, well phrased and well sprung at a tempo close to Goberman's. After a time, they become a constant background which we scarcely notice as we concentrate on the solemn pronouncements above. With careful handling of the dynamics, Somogyi makes sense of the repeated phrases I complained of under Goberman, and I did not find the repeats outstayed their welcome. Somogyi also adapts the dynamics cannily in the second movement, using full fortés sparingly. While thoroughly lively, the music sounds amiable, even ethereal, a vision of liveliness on a frescoed ceiling rather than the real thing. The minuet is slow, at around Sternberg's tempo, but Somogyi is able to give it a gentle lilt that justifies it, and he blends the horns and the cors anglais very well in the trio – in the other performances, the French horns tended to dominate. All the same, perhaps I prefer Goberman's tempo here. The finale is a poetical hunt, arriving from the distance, sometimes bursting into full view, sometimes disappearing into the woods. More than any other performance till now, Somogyi creates a whole out of this symphony. Rather than a solemn first movement followed by three jolly ones, we hear the philosopher meditating on profound matters, then entering into everyday life, though more as a student than as a participant. A highly imaginative and rewarding performance. There is, of course, no evidence that Haydn meant anything of the sort. However, in view of the work that has recently been done connecting some of these early symphonies with incidental music Haydn wrote for theatrical productions at the Esterhazy Court, perhaps, if the "Philosopher" label has any basis at all, we should be looking for a contemporary play about a philosopher.

Antonio Janigro's traversal with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra was set down on 22 June 1964 (Vanguard VSD 71126). This Milanese musician has made some notable Haydn recordings but, coming after Somogyi, I think he sells this symphony slightly short. His first movement is relatively forward moving, the bass line light on its feet. With gentle string playing in their responses, this sometimes has the air of a serenade. But I must say the French horns of this orchestra have made great strides since the Sternberg version. First repeat only. The second movement is brisk and bright, though Janigro pitches into the minor key music after the double bar impressively. Both repeats. The minuet goes at about Goberman's tempo, which is fine for me, but Janigro's lighter touch, however agreeable, again suggests that this symphony does not mean anything in particular for him. The finale finds him at his best, with brilliant horns at a racy tempo and both repeats, but this is one movement that everybody has done well so far.

Ernest Ansermet recorded the "Philosopher" in sessions with the Suisse Romande Orchestra from 19 to 22 October 1965. As we know from other Ansermet performances discussed in these articles, his Haydn is plain-speaking, but also acutely sensitive to the way in which tempo and harmonic movement are interrelated. On the face of it, his first movement goes at about Janigro's tempo – Ansermet, too, plays the first repeat only and takes just seven seconds more – yet his traversal has the gravity I found lacking with Janigro. In terms of actual effect, he is closer to Somogyi – his bass-line quavers tick away timelessly in the background while the French and English horns intone solemnly and the strings respond with a cool grace. Unlike the other performances, which treat the appoggiaturas in the descending-scale phrase at bars 14 and 16 as equal notes, Ansermet gives them an elegant Scotch-snap rhythm. Philologically, both would seem possible interpretations, though I find the smoother equal-note solution more suited to this context. Plain-speaking though he was, Ansermet allows some additional dynamics in the second movement, which is not dissimilar to Somogyi's. He, too, avoids having the orchestra play a full *forte* except at key moments and sets up a steady pulsation rather than a driving force. Both repeats. Ansermet's minuet is on the slow side, but his sense of rhythmic continuity keeps it afloat. In the finale, perhaps something more exuberant would not have come amiss – once again, he prefers a steady pulsation. As with so many Ansermet performances, the abiding impression is of truthfulness. It is more than the sum of its parts and, like Somogyi, he presents the symphony as a unified whole.

A dark horse in this particular race is the Provincetown Symphony Orchestra under **Joseph Hawthorne**. A little Googling reveals how Hawthorne (1908-1994) ran a small symphony orchestra – really a chamber orchestra – for summer seasons from 1955 to 1969 in this coastal resort town at the tip of Cape Cod, Massachusetts⁶. The musicians were professionals from major symphony orchestras around the USA who were idle during the summer break – Hawthorne himself had a winter job with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra and later in Chattanooga and Duluth. He had studied under Nadia Boulanger at Fontainebleau, France and at the Julliard School. His programmes were ambitious, running from the baroque to contemporary premières. An LP of uncertain date coupling the “Philosopher” with works by Vivaldi and Geminiani (Listening 660LA) seems to be the only aural testimony to this musical adventure⁷. It shows that the orchestra met good professional standards.

Hawthorne takes the first movement at about Ansermet’s tempo, though his ticking bass-line quavers sometimes intrude a little more than with the Swiss conductor. Like Ansermet, he treats the appoggiaturas in bars 16 and 18 as Scotch snaps. Neither repeat is taken. The second movement goes at a nicely relaxed tempo, again close to Ansermet or Somogyi, though Hawthorne is more vehement with the minor-key music immediately following the double bar. First repeat only. The minuet goes at a good tempo – similar to Goberman’s and Janigro’s and with a nice lilt, though the pace slackens slightly for the trio. The finale is one of the swiftest and provides a fine showpiece for the horns. Hawthorne makes a strong accent on the first and third bars of the opening theme, adding to the excitement. First repeat only. I could hardly advise readers to go to this scratchy old mono LP for a performance that beats all others, but I certainly enjoyed it.

Back to the discographic straight and narrow, **Raymond Leppard** recorded the symphony with the English Chamber Orchestra on 1st December 1968 (Philips SAL 3776). This LP, which also included Symphonies 39 and 47, was well-regarded in its day, though Trevor Harvey could “imagine playing of more subtlety of style”⁸. The conductor’s name has not been forgotten, so it is surprising that there has been no CD issue that I can trace. I am grateful to a member of a private discussion group who swiftly provided an excellent transfer.

Leppard is very successful in creating the impression of time inexorably ticking in the bass-line quavers of the first movement. He is also successful in matching the volume of the French and English horns’ questions and answers. Haydn marked them both *fortissimo* but a *fortissimo* from a cor anglais has many decibels less than a *fortissimo* from a French horn, at least on modern instruments. Leppard has the French horns play with a warm sonority but not too loudly, while the cors anglais push their sound as far as they dare. Even so, I wondered if there was some discreet help from the engineers. The violins phrase eloquently. The appoggiaturas in bars 16 and 18 are played as Scotch snaps, and made to sound rather finicky. First repeat only. The second movement goes at a lively pace, but the strong accent on the first beat of almost every bar had me thinking of the White Queen’s comment that “here, it takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place”. Was this what Trevor Harvey meant about a lack of subtlety? The minuet likewise suffers from a strong accent on the first and third bar of almost every phrase, producing an over-stylized effect. The excellent players see to it that the trio goes well. In the

⁶ <https://provincetownindependent.org/arts-minds/2020/11/05/provincetowns-forgotten-symphony-orchestra/>, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/627c3e272a03954cdcbda968/t/668976c76391ed4d05ff955f/1720284881150/Musical+Nostalgia.pdf>, <https://provincetownindependent.org/arts-minds/2022/01/05/delving-deeper-into-provincetowns-musical-history/>. Viewed 2 August 2026.

⁷ A transfer can be downloaded from Internet Archive.

⁸ *Gramophone*, March 1970 p. 1433. The *EMG Monthly Letter* of March 1970, on the other hand, recommended this “delectable issue” as their “record of the month”.

finale Leppard, like Hawthorne, puts accents on the first and third beats of the opening theme and obtains a lithe and vital performance. Here, at least, there is some subtle dynamic shading. Good as this is, I would have to place it behind Somogyi, especially, but also Haas and Ansermet.

One further recording appeared before the two complete cycles, by Hans Stadlmair and the Munich Chamber Orchestra (April 1970, Classic 991076), but I have been unable to hear this.

Märzendorfer's recording has five movements, so I hope it came with a note explaining how this came about. The first two and the last two movements make up the normal version. Placed between the *Presto* second movement and the minuet and trio is the "extra" *Andante grazioso* movement, generally not believed to be by Haydn, that appeared in the Venier edition. So you if you play movements I, II, IV and V, you get the original version. If you play movements II, III and V, you get the Venier version. Or not quite, since the Venier edition replaced the cors anglais with flutes. Märzendorfer here has the flute parts played an octave lower by the cors anglais. Programming the disc in this way is more easily managed on CD than on LP, but I suspect most listeners, even in the CD age, would simply play it through as a five-movement symphony.

As it happens, the spurious movement is the highlight of Märzendorfer's performance. He plays it tenderly, almost caressingly, though he cannot quite disguise the fact that the material is unmemorable, even wishy-washy in a way we do not expect from real Haydn.

For the rest, the performance is good, but not quite the best of Märzendorfer. In the first movement, which goes at a convincing tempo in the Haas mould, the ticking bass line does not quite retreat into the background, remaining obtrusive while the other instruments meditate above it. There is, of course, no proof for the theory that this bass line represents a ticking clock, but the performances that let it recede into the background are the ones that stay their length best – witness Somogyi who made the movement work with both repeats (Märzendorfer omits the second) and a quite slow tempo. Märzendorfer finds a middle way for the appoggiaturas at bars 16 and 18 – the first as a slowish Scotch snap, the others as equal notes. The second movement is lively in an agreeable sort of way. In spite of a touch of vehemence in the minor-key music after the double bar, Märzendorfer seems happy not to push his players too much. The minuet goes at a nice speed with a good lilt, but the trio adopts a slower speed. Beautifully played, but the trouble with playing trios slower than the minuet comes when you take up the minuet again. There is an unwelcome jolt here, especially since Märzendorfer does nothing to paper over the crack, such as making a brief pause before returning to the minuet, or easing back gently into the original tempo. The finale is neatly despatched but, as in the second movement, Märzendorfer seems unwilling to challenge his players and, as a result, does not challenge the best of the earlier performances either.

Dorati's performance has some unusual features. His first movement is among the slower ones, and he seems to be deliberately making the bass-line into a heavy trudge. The French horns separate their notes rather than play them legato to make a phrase. A few others have done this, but no performance I have heard has separated the cors anglais notes in this way. The players are made to rasp out their notes individually. Dorati succeeds in making their *fortissimo* match that of the French horns though, as with Leppard, I wondered if the engineers had helped. *Can* the cor anglais play this loud? Dare I say I find the effect rather ugly? Dorati also sees to it that the cors anglais, when combining with the strings, pierce through the texture abrasively. In other performances they blend into the texture. Dorati is manipulative over dynamics, moreover, with some sharp swellings in the strings, in bars 19 to 20, for instance. If the idea seems to be to be to create a bleak, harrowing experience, looking ahead to Shostakovich, then I suppose Dorati has succeeded in his intent. First repeat only. The second movement is incisively, even aggressively, played, with a biting accent on the first beat of almost every bar. As happened with Leppard,

the music is made to bite its own tail. The minuet is slow, strutting and stylized, with a preening accent on most first beats. Very tiresome. The finale rages at a tremendous pace. This is exciting, but why have the passage from bar 31, and consequently the long passage in the development from bar 54, played with slurred legato bowing when this is not written? Not for the first time with Dorati, I wonder what is the point of playing an Urtext edition if you are going to edit it to your own ends.

Within my cut-off date, then, one performance stands supreme – that of Somogyi.

However, if you want to hear what the Venier edition sounds like, with flutes replacing the cor anglais, then Dorati is your only man. The flutes sound quite enchanting, at least for a change, in what is here the first movement. Dorati takes a gentler, more graciously lyrical view of the music than before. He still sometimes over-accentuates the first beat of the bar, but not to such an extent. He is rather faster than Märzendorfer in the *Andante grazioso*, with the result that the music sounds a bit cluttered at times. His finale is swift as before, and he remains faithful to his legato bowings. The trouble is that the flutes, in this hunting finale, sound plain wrong. Still, a good performance if you want to know this version.

Four live/broadcast performances have come to light. **Sir Eugene Goossens** opened the inaugural concert of the 1952-53 Sydney SO season, on 29 October, with this symphony. The other works played were Brahms's First Piano Concerto, with Walter Gieseking, and Elgar's Falstaff. The recording has some distortion but is good enough to testify to the high standards Goossens obtained from this orchestra – the horns acquit themselves splendidly. The correspondent who sent me this tells me that Goossens also played Haydn's Symphonies 45, 55, 85, 86, 92, 94, 96, 97 and 104 in Australia, though 96 is the only other that has survived. A spot of Googling shows that he conducted no. 82 in Cincinnati On 23 and 24 October 1936. It appears that, while he was in one sense less assiduous in promoting Haydn symphonies than Beecham, he actually spread his interest more widely, not limiting himself to the last twelve.

Goossens takes the first movement quite broadly, but his attentive phrasing and constant dynamic variation always direct the ear onwards. First repeat only. His second movement is very fast indeed, terse and urgent and with abundant vitality. Here, too, Goossens edits the dynamics freely, unfolding the movement in a single sweep. Again, first repeat only. If this movement could be produced as evidence that old-style conductors were not always slow in 18th century music, the next movement rather conforms to our expectations that they will take minuets broadly, even pompously. Goossens's plastic phrasing, rather than any rhythmic buoyancy, saves the day. The finale, while not exceptionally fast, has dash and full-bloodedness, as well as careful dynamic shading. Both repeats are given. In spite of the slow minuet, I found this one of the more rewarding performances.

Retrievals from RAI (Italian Radio) have had mixed results. Considering the premises for the Orchestra Alessandro Scarlatti di Napoli della RAI – a chamber orchestra concentrating on the baroque and early classical repertoire – you might have expected them to delve into lesser-known Haydn far more than they actually did. However, from time to time RAI booked one of their habitual conductors for a Haydn foray in the studio. On 10 June 1962, it was the turn of **Pietro Argento** and the "Philosopher" Symphony. Though without an audience, this seems to have been a one-off run-through – the horns emerge creditably but not entirely unscathed. A retake or two would have done no harm.

The performance is rather interesting. I have written extensively about Argento⁹, but this particular performance was not available to me in 2016. Some modern HIP performers have wished to point out that the word *Adagio* etymologically derives from *adagio* – "at ease", so a composer who really wanted

⁹ http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2016/Jun/Forgotten_Argento.htm

a slow tempo would have written *Lento* or at least *Largo* (“broad”)¹⁰. Try telling that to Bruckner! Be that as it may, Argento’s first movement travels easefully at around 62 beats per minute, almost double Sternberg’s c.36 beats per minute. By most definitions of *Adagio*, Argento’s 62 is well within the outside limits, with Somogyi’s graver 46 at around the lower limit. But all these tempo markings are a matter of feeling rather than mathematics. An *Adagio* must *feel* slow – or should it feel “at ease”? How slow or fast it feels depends also on how many notes there are in each beat, so when there are two bass-line quavers in every beat throughout the piece, the *feeling*, when taken at Argento’s speed, is more like an *Andante*. Or is this a romantic idea? My own reaction is that, having adjusted to this speed – only fractionally faster than Haas, and about the same as arch-HIP-man Christopher Hogwood – it flows warmly and not superficially. I would have welcomed at least one repeat, though. The second movement goes at a nice pace, with some well-turned phrasing and the first repeat. The minuet trips along delightfully at a faster pace than any other heard so far. Very much to my taste, though I have an idea the horns would have preferred it a tad slower! The finale is neatly and swiftly despatched, again with sufficient dynamic shading to prevent it from sounding too uniform.

Somogyi showed that one way to present this symphony as a coherent whole is to bring gravity to the last three movements so that they follow on from the first. Argento shows that another way is to present a more easeful interpretation of the first movement so that a lighter touch in the remaining movements remains coherent. Somogyi probably presents the romantic view at its best. Argento’s performance, in spite of a few flaws, is an interesting anticipation of more modern attempts to rediscover the Haydn style. On a more personal matter, there usually comes a moment when, after listening to a Haydn symphony a number of times and in different interpretations, the music takes hold of me and runs through my head unbidden. For me, with this symphony, my Eureka moment came here, and the symphony has been haunting me – at Argento’s tempi. Make of that what you will.

I have already protested in these articles at the way in which SWR Music has made available a swathe of Haydn performances by the South-West German Radio SO under **Ernest Bour** without any information about dates. These are recordings that will primarily attract collectors who like to have these details. Bour conducted this orchestra from 1964 to 1979 so I am just assuming that his performance of Symphony 22 falls within my cut-off date.

Despite Bour’s considerable underground reputation, his Haydn has not done much for me so far, and I am afraid this one seems to me no more than a decent professional job. The first movement is not so very slow, but it is unvaried in phrasing and become tedious even without repeats. The second movement is nicely turned though again, unvaried. One repeat is enough. Best is the minuet, which trips along at quite a nice speed. The finale is neatly done at a good tempo but just goes through the motions. I find little engagement here.

1973 should be just outside my cut-off date, but the prospect of the Philadelphia Orchestra under **William Steinberg**, who opened his concert on 3 May with this symphony¹¹, was not to be resisted. This is, of course, late Steinberg. The year before he had relinquished his conductorship of the Boston SO, which had been dogged by ill health. In another two years he would resign even from his beloved Pittsburgh SO, though he still managed occasional appearances until 1978. That said, there is all the engagement here that I missed in Bour, and in many ways this performance is comparable to the Goossens – even down to distortion on the privately circulating off-air recording, though there may be better tapes around. It is also

¹⁰ A careful study of Corelli’s use of these terms in his op. 6 Concerti Grossi reveals much. The opening *Adagio* of no. 11 offers an interesting parallel to Haydn’s first movement.

¹¹ The other works played were Mozart’s 41st and Beethoven’s 7th Symphonies.

the only version in which a harpsichord is audibly present¹². The first movement is a broad procession, in which Steinberg's phrasing and dynamic control direct the attention towards the upper parts. First repeat only. The second movement, also with the first repeat only, is robust and strongly energized. The minuet is very slow and, as with Goossens, Steinberg makes it work with finely controlled phrasing. At this tempo, the Philadelphia horns can display their gorgeous tone in the trio to their hearts' content. The finale is surprisingly slow, but with power and dynamic control enough to make it clear this is a choice and not a matter of the ailing maestro tiring.

I am glad to have heard this impressively big, symphonic reading, which should have convinced the Philadelphia public that even early Haydn is not a "minor" composer compared with Mozart and Beethoven. I would be even gladder to hear a recording of it without distortion. But in the end I have to remain true to Somogyi as the finest commercial recording issued up to 1972, with "honourable mentions" for Haas, Ansermet and Hawthorne. I am glad to have heard Goossens and Steinberg, while Argento's unassumingly musical version remains a personal choice for an opposite view of the work.

Original version:

	I	II	III	IV
Sternberg	07:48 neither repeat played	02:56 1 st repeat only	03:37	02:38 1 st repeat only
Haas	04:52 neither repeat played	04:36 both repeats played	03:31	03:26 both repeats played
Goberman	06:41 neither repeat played	04:56 both repeats played	03:10	03:10 both repeats played
Somogyi	12:13 both repeats played	05:09 both repeats played	03:34	03:42 both repeats played
Janigro	06:22 1 st repeat only	04:21 both repeats played	03:07	03:16 both repeats played
Ansermet	06:29 1 st repeat only	05:05 both repeats played	03:24	03:39 both repeats played
Hawthorne	05:11 neither repeat played	03:17 1 st repeat only	03:10	02:08 1 st repeat only
Leppard	07:22 1 st repeat only	03:16 1 st repeat only	03:22	02:21 1 st repeat only
Märzendorfer	06:21 1 st repeat only	04:34 both repeats played	03:16	03:18 both repeats played
Dorati	07:49 1 st repeat only	04:41 both repeats played	03:38	03:11 both repeats played
Goossens	07:10 1 st repeat only	02:37 1 st repeat only	03:28	03:34 both repeats played
Argento	04:26 neither repeat played	03:15 1 st repeat only	02:51	02:18 1 st repeat only
Bour	05:11 neither repeat played	03:33 1 st repeat only	03:10	02:19 1 st repeat only
Steinberg	07:02	02:58	03:39	02:24

¹² The Sternberg recording actually credits a harpsichordist, Robbins Landon's first wife Christa Furhmann, but I cannot say I noticed her presence.

	1 st repeat only	1 st repeat only		1 st repeat only
--	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	--	-----------------------------

Venier Edition:

	I	II	III
Märzendorfer		02:23	
Dorati	04:49 both repeats played	01:56	03:13 both repeats played

Christopher Howell © 2026