

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. 33 in C major Hob. I/33 (c.1760¹)

Symphony no. 33 has an earlier date than the number would suggest and is a “festive” symphony, in the suitably festive key of C major with trumpets and drums. The first movement is a forthright piece, extensively worked out for the period with several contrasting ideas in “second subject” territory. Not so festive is the second movement, an *Andante* in C minor for strings only, an old-fashioned piece relapsing into two-part harmony in several places, the first and second violins playing the same part while the violas double the cellos and basses an octave above. This is the sort of Haydn movement that logically needs a harpsichord to fill the inner harmonies. Not so festive, either, is the quirky, syncopated trio for strings only enclosed within the grandly strutting minuet. The finale is striking for the curious leaps in the main theme.

So far as I can discover, only one recording predated the two complete cycles – by **Arthur Winograd** and the Hamburg Chamber Orchestra. This was set down in 1957 (MGM E 3426, available in an excellent transfer from Forgotten Records FR 1606). I was not especially impressed by Winograd’s Symphony 46 with which it shared the disc, but here he was alone in the field for about fifteen years and provided a more than decent stopgap. The outer movements go with a solid vitality that suits the material and the minuet goes at a quite brisk pace that I like very much. The *Andante* sounds rather prosaic – I hope one of the other versions will find more poetry here. He plays the first repeat in the first movement, neither in the second and both in the last. The main problem is that, back in 1957, the trumpet and drum parts rediscovered by Robbins Landon and included in his 1963 edition were still unknown. No reconstruction here – the trumpets and drums simply do not play. The performance would have to be very much better than it is to persuade a listener to forgo these, having once heard them.

The trumpets and drums are splendidly assertive in **Märzendorfer’s** recording. Moreover, he is much more detailed in his response to each episode so that what, under Winograd, was reasonably enjoyable, becomes full of incident. He also gives only the first repeat. He takes a much slower tempo in the *Andante*, and plays the first repeat into the bargain, making a hushed, almost *religioso*, deeply-felt slow movement out of it. He is more ceremonial in the minuet, but the trumpets and drums justify this, and his drop to *piano* after the double bar is magical. The syncopations in the trio go beyond mere quirkiness – I almost seemed to hear a distant jazz band. The kangaroo leaps in the finale – though I suppose Haydn never saw a kangaroo – are vividly effective. Both repeats here. This is Märzendorfer at his very best.

¹ Date as of the Urtext edition edited by Robbins Landon and published in 1963. For the benefit of those who go to Wikipedia as their primary fount of information, the entry there cites Robbins Landon’s 1955 book *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn* as dating it 1763-1765, adding that “Although Haydn’s original timpani part has been lost, Robbins Landon has reconstructed it.” There is no reference in the 1963 score to the timpani part being an editorial reconstruction and Robbins Landon, in his later work *Haydn: Chronicle and Works Vol. I, Haydn: The Early Years 1732-1765, Thames and Hudson 1980*, p. 294, explains that “not so long ago, these attractive *clarino* and *tympano* parts were not yet discovered. Since then, we found them not only in the authentic Fürnberg-Morzin MS, but also in sources at Prague, Frankfurt-am-Main and (incomplete) in a source in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna”. It seems strange that the Wikipedia author was happy in 2026 to cite a 1955 work by Robbins Landon, ignoring the momentous research and writings of this author in subsequent years. Or maybe not so strange ...

Dorati has trumpets and drums, of course, but he or his engineers keep them firmly in their place. The oboes, on the other hand, ring through attractively. Dorati seems to be trying too hard in the first movement, worrying the music with sudden jabs and sallies. Märzendorfer has shown there is a happy medium between sailing through Haydn's original turns of phrase without apparently noticing them much, as with Winograd, and reducing the music to a series of brief melodic cells, as here. In the *Andante* too, Dorati, while taking a properly grave tempo, chops the music into tiny phrases, losing sight of the overall line. The stopwatch tells me this was slightly shorter than Märzendorfer, but it seemed much longer. First repeats only in both these movements. The minuet goes at a reasonable tempo, but is over-stylised, with a squeeze-box leaning on almost every first beat. The trio goes quite nicely. Dorati takes the finale relatively slowly, omitting the second repeat. By insisting on the comic aspect of every leap, he lays on the humour too heavily.

Märzendorfer stands supreme in this trio of performances, though, if you want to hear what the symphony sounds like without trumpets and drums, the Winograd is a decent affair.

	I	II	III	IV
Winograd	04:31 1 st repeat only	04:31 neither repeat played	02:47	04:00 both repeats played
Märzendorfer	04:37 1 st repeat only	07:29 1 st repeat only	02:57	04:01 both repeats played
Dorati	04:31 1 st repeat only	07:06 1 st repeat only	02:58	02:55 1 st repeat only

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