

Haydn Society of Great Britain



Newsletter No 1 – March 31st 2021

Welcome to our first Newsletter - on Joseph Haydn's 289th Birthday

With the exception of December, when the annual Journal is published, we hope to provide information about Haydn every few months giving news (not much of that about at the moment), a review of a recent Haydn recording and a tribute to an artist who has made Haydn recordings with a leaning towards recorded archives. We invite you to e-mail any comments you may have - and we may publish them in our 'Members Area' at the end of the Newsletter. Perhaps you might like to report a special performance that you have remembered, talk about a rare recording, or maybe there is a topic about Haydn that you would like to air. For example, maybe you have found the manuscript of Haydn's lost double bass concerto and want to tell us about it.

Our only news at the moment seems to be non-news! Unfortunately the **English Haydn Festival** - our important champion of Joseph Haydn's music - has for the second year had to abandon its plans. Our sympathy goes to those who work so tirelessly organising that annual Festival. Apart from an invitation to Friends and supporters to get together in the usual venue in Bridgnorth for two concerts on 11th September 2021, activities will be postponed until next year's Festival. This will run from Tuesday 8th June to Saturday 12th June 2022.

There are no concerts at the moment but the *London Haydn Project* led by Ben Palmer, who plans a comprehensive covering of Haydn's symphonies, is soon to resume.

In the recording field, the series comprising every Haydn Symphony, due to be completed in time for Haydn's 300th birthday, is still progressing. We have yet to hear any examples of this 'Haydn 2032' project led by Giovanni Antonini but we note with interest comments about one of the issues which give contrasting views - one says: "This series goes from strength to strength" another refers to the disc as: "A CD from Hell".

NEW RELEASE



***Joseph Haydn: String Quartets Op. 74 Nos. 1-3
& Folk Music from Scotland***

Maxwell Quartet

Colin Scobie: violin I (violin II in Scottish Folk Music)

George Smith: violin II (violin I in Scottish Folk Music)

Elliott Perks: viola Duncan Strachan: cello

Linn Records CKD 641 (81:52 mins)

Following their highly acclaimed début recording of Haydn's Op. 71 quartets, coupled with their own arrangements of Scottish traditional music (also on the Linn label, CKD 602) the Maxwell Quartet returns with the same formula for this CD.

Each of the six quartets begins with a 'call to attention' and from the opening chord of Op. 74 No. 1 the listener is immediately drawn into the warm, resonant and perfectly balanced sound of the Quartet. There is a freedom and energy in the Quartet's playing and first violin (Colin Scobie) includes some delightful ornamentation in the repeated sections of the Menuets and stylish cadenza-like flourishes at pause marks. All is done with natural flair. Ornamentation and grace-notes are part and parcel of Scottish fiddle and pipe music and the Maxwell Quartet's experience of playing traditional music shines through their performance of all three Haydn quartets.

The lively finale of Op. 74 No. 1 gives way to the first of three Scottish medleys in which George Smith takes the leader's chair. A chordal 'call to attention' similar to that which opened Op. 74 No. 1 provides the link to Nathaniel Gow's beautiful slow air

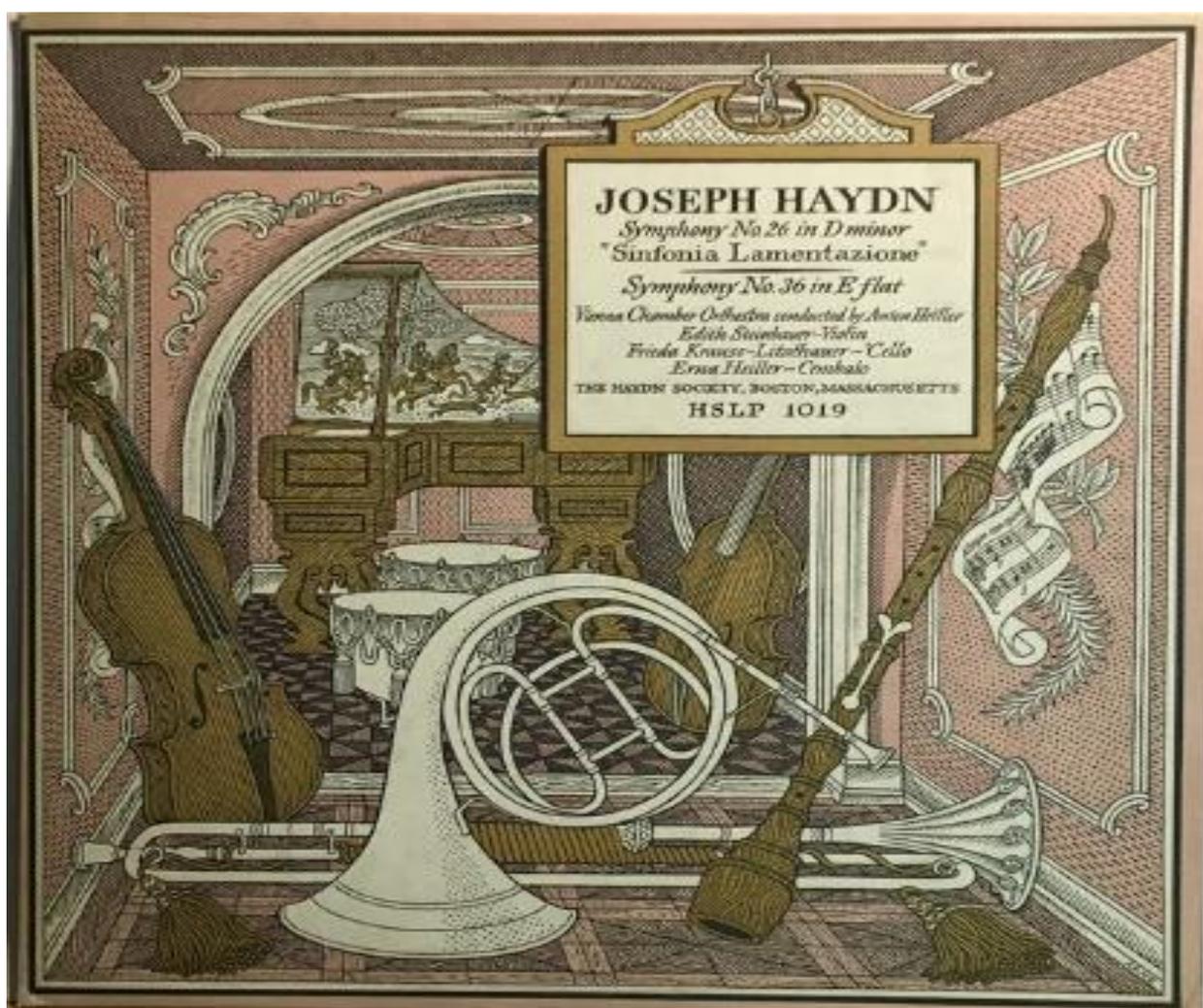
Coilsfield House and Niel Gow's lively rustic melody *Drunk at Night, Dry in the Morning*. The second medley features a haunting Gaelic song *Fear a' Bhàta* followed by the well-known Shetland jig *Da New Rigged Ship*. The third medley begins with *The burning of the Piper's Hut*, which recreates the sound of the pipes with drones, deft grace-notes and ornamentation. This is followed by two examples of fiddle music from the north-east of Scotland: William Marshall's strathspey *The Marquis of Huntly* and Isaac Cooper's reel *Miss Gordon of Gight*.

This CD is a real treat for Haydn enthusiasts and the quality of the recording by Linn Records is outstanding. There is an exciting freshness and spontaneity to the Maxwell Quartet's playing, and their folk arrangements, which are imaginative and beautifully crafted, are a perfect foil for the rustic, folk-like characteristics of Haydn's Op. 74 quartets.

Marjorie Rycroft

HISTORIC RECORDING PIONEERS

Anton Heiller



Anton Heiller (1923-1979) was a notable Austrian organist, composer and teacher. He made few recordings, his best known being his performances of the organ music of Bach but his association with Haydn Society recordings in the early days of LP showed him to have a deep understanding of Haydn's music. His performances of the two C major organ concertos with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra under Hans Gillesberger seem unsurpassed. Under the supervision of H.C. Robbins Landon, the orchestration is properly attended to, getting the requirements of trumpets, high horns and timpani right, an element essential to the structure of the music but often missing in later recordings. Bright, rhythmically exhilarating readings and the 1951 sound quality is more than adequate.

Examples of Heiller's understanding of Haydn's Symphonies are to be heard on three Haydn Society LPs. We must ignore Symphonies 83 and 84 - very poor sound, originally prepared for 78 rpm discs with numerous illogical *da capo* omissions made in order to fit the limited side lengths. The two LPs containing symphonies 26, 36, 52, 56 are a very different matter. These are now preserved on one CD by CRQ Editions revealing the surprisingly decent recorded quality of 70 years ago.

Heiller's interpretation of No.26 is gripping - the opening Allegro assai con spirito with its implication of the drama of the Cross is given almost reckless momentum and the angry slashing syncopations make a great dramatic effect. The soaring beauty of the oboes in the Adagio, which uses an ancient plainchant melody, is deeply moving. Interestingly Heiller chooses not to double them with the horns that were indicated for the final return of the melody - this adjustment allows the sense of plaintiveness to continue until the end. The uncompromising view of the final Minuet is very convincing.

No. 26 is the star of the show but the sturdy performance of No.36 is as good as any on disc and when we get to Nos. 52 and 56 we have examples of Haydn's typical use of horns in high C. In the lightly-scored No.52 one of them brightens the internal colouring while in the celebratory No.56, they both bring great excitement when playing at trumpet pitch supported by timpani. Most other notable interpreters of Haydn have made far more recordings but in these few early examples, Heiller sets a high standard not often subsequently surpassed.

Antony Hodgson

MEMBERS' AREA

Stephen Devereux writes to recommend a **YouTube** item showing the talented student Abeo Quartet working on Joseph Haydn's String Quartet in G Major, Op.76, No. 1, as part of a master class with the Juilliard String Quartet's Ronald Copes and Astrid Schween. To obtain, type *Juilliard Haydn Master Class* into You Tube.



Editorial address – Comment and enquiries about the Haydn Society and its activities are always welcome. Please write to the editor at: info@haydnsocietyofgb.co.uk