

contest. Philips fit the 12 symphonies on to four mid-price CDs, whereas Teldec stretch them over six, the dubious bonus of Symphony No. 68, in a distinctly heavyweight reading, hardly compensating for the extra £18 or so outlay. RW

**M. Haydn** Symphonies—E, MH151 (P44); C, MH252 (P12); D, MH287 (P43); F, MH507 (P32). Oradea Philharmonic Orchestra / Romeo Rîmbu. Olympia Explorer Series © ① OCD435 (69 minutes: DDD)

For some five years, in his early twenties, Michael Haydn worked at the court of the Bishop of Grosswardein. Clearly he is still remembered there. The notes to this CD suggest that these symphonies belong to 1760-1, while he was still in Grosswardein (as Oradea was then called, as part of the Empire); but that is palpably false, unless Michael Haydn was stylistically some 20 years ahead of the rest of Europe. Never mind the date: it is the music that matters, and these symphonies, only one of them recorded before (P12, by the Franz Liszt CO under Rolla, these dated after 1777), are splendid examples of the classical style, fully on a par with all but the very finest of his brother's symphonies, inventive, witty and richly developed. The F major work that ends the disc is on a slightly lower inventive level, once past its vigorously argued opening movement, and the C major is not really exceptional, though there is a charming, pathetic A minor *Andante*, with dialogue for the oboe and the violins, and a cheerful, fanfarish finale. The D major, however, is a noble piece, its first movement full of interesting and well-developed ideas, its finale a fugato based on a theme consisting of four semibreves (D-G-F sharp-E), part of which Mozart once copied out, and which I have always suspected might have been an influence on the *Jupiter*; and the work in E has a first movement with broad and shapely lines and an attractive, playful secondary theme, a quite extended and warm *Andante*, a minuet with some pretty echo phrases for the flutes, and another specially fine finale, not actually fugal but constantly flirting with counterpoint. These last two are certainly products of the full classical era and could not have been written until the 1780s.

I do urge readers to try these pieces. The Oradea orchestra gives a perfectly adequate account of them, with some lively and vigorous playing; there are occasional minor imperfections, and more soft, relaxed playing would not have been out of place from time to time. But in general the conductor, Romeo Rîmbu, seems well attuned to the idiom of the music. The recording does not fall far short of Western standards. Recommended, then, with some enthusiasm. SS

**Hartmann** Symphony No. 4.

**Messiaen** *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*. Bamberg Symphony Orchestra / Ingo Metzmacher.

EMI © ① CDC7 54916-2 (63 minutes: DDD).

*Hartmann—comparative version:*

BRSO, Kubelik (5/90) (WERG) WER60187-50

*Messiaen—comparative versions:*

Domaine Musicale, Boulez (4/89) (ERAT) 4509-91706-2

Paris Orch, Baudo (3/92) (EMI) CDM7 63948-2

One of my favourite LPs from schoolboy and student years contained the somewhat unlikely coupling of Messiaen's *Et exspecto* (the Baudo performance now available on CD and listed above) and Honegger's Second Symphony (the one for strings, with trumpet at the end of the finale). Now here is Messiaen's wind-brass-and-percussion spectacular, curiously once again coupled with a 1940s central European symphony for strings.

State-of-the-art sound-quality is a huge plus for the Messiaen, conceived as it was for the acoustics of "cathedrals or mountain-tops", and the new recording certainly doesn't disappoint. But I have to say that the older EMI recording stands up remarkably well (and it is now attractively recoupled with Boulez's *Le soleil des eaux*, Koechlin's

*Bandar-Log*, and Messiaen's *Chronochromie*), as does the rather drier 1966 Boulez version (with an all-Messiaen coupling). Excellent though the Bambergers are, they miss out on the almost fanatical intensity which makes the two rival versions so compelling. The last movement conveys less sense of transcendental celebration, and throughout my breath remained untaken, my spine untingled.

Other things being equal the Hartmann Symphony would be a more than admirable companion piece, especially in as thoroughly prepared a performance as this. But the rival Wergo version under the distinguished baton of Rafael Kubelik is no less satisfying, and collectors seriously interested in this oasis of German symphonism in a barren age will surely want to have all eight symphonies contained in that set. The Fourth Symphony of 1947 is characteristically sinewy and highly wrought. Stylistically it stands roughly halfway between Bartók and Henze, with a level of craftsmanship and sophistication comparable to theirs, but lacking in the former's concentration. All too rarely does Hartmann settle on an idea for long enough to extract its full potential and imprint it in the listener's memory. Still, this is good musician's music, and what for some may be a falling between two stools may for others be the best of both worlds. This is certainly a rewarding context in which to encounter just a sample of Hartmann's output. DJF

**Hindemith** *Mathis der Maler*<sup>a</sup>. Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber<sup>b</sup>.

**Walton** Variations on a Theme by Hindemith<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>a</sup>Philadelphia Orchestra / Eugene Ormandy;

<sup>b</sup>Cleveland Orchestra / George Szell.

Sony Classical Essential Classics © ①

SBT53258; ① SBK53258 (69 minutes: ADD).

Item marked <sup>a</sup> new to UK, <sup>b</sup>from Columbia SAX2576 (7/65).

*Mathis der Maler*/Symphonic Metamorphoses—selected comparison:

San Francisco SO, Blomstedt (10/88) (DECC) 421 523-2DH

*Mathis der Maler*—selected comparison:

LSO, Horenstein (8/73) (R) (CHAN) CHAN8533

*Symphonic Metamorphoses*—selected comparison:

Phiharmonia, Järvi (1/90) (CHAN) CHAN8766

*Variations on a Theme by Hindemith*—selected comparison:

London PO, Latham-Koenig (4/93) (CHAN) CHAN9106

Although Ormandy's 1962 recording of the *Mathis der Maler* Symphony has taken three decades to reach these shores, this is on par for the Hindemith course. For such a prolific top-rank twentieth-century composer it is surprising how little of his large output is actually known (even more that several works, including some sonatas, have never been published). Ormandy's account left me less than thrilled; while it is certainly better focused as an interpretation than either Albert (on CPO) or Horvat (on Pilz) and not as wilful as Horenstein, too often the account sounds more like a run-through than a fully-fledged performance. The sound quality, especially in the bass registers, is rather thin, several passages losing weight as a result. Blomstedt is still the clear first choice with Hindemith's own 1934 recording (to be reviewed later) topping the archive stakes.

On the evidence of the *Symphonic Metamorphoses* Szell had a far surer feel for Hindemith's style and his version compares well with both Järvi and Blomstedt. The sound-quality for Szell shows its age when set against modern competitors but is never a problem, either here or in Walton's *Variations* (1962-3, one of his finest works). This latter has transferred most successfully to CD and overall it can stand alongside the Chandos version, where the couplings are the Viola Concerto (which Hindemith premiered in 1929) and the Sonata for Strings. Choice in the Walton as in the *Symphonic Metamorphoses* will be determined by couplings

and cost, but it is a shame about the lacklustre *Mathis*, which prevents an outright recommendation for this bargain-price disc. Guy Rickards

**Honegger** Symphony No. 2.

**R. Strauss** *Metamorphosen*, AV142.

**Webern** (trans. Schwarz) *Langsamer Satz*.

Seattle Symphony Orchestra Strings / Gerard

Schwarz.

Delos © ① DE3121 (71 minutes: DDD).

*Honegger—selected comparisons:*

Boston SO, Munch (6/55) (R) (RCA) GD60685

BPO, Karajan (6/88) (DG) 423 242-2GC

*Strauss—selected comparisons:*

BPO, Karajan (2/84) (DG) 410 892-2GH

BPO, Karajan (12/88) (DG) 423 888-2GGA

Staatskapelle Dresden, Kempe (12/92) (EMI) CMS7 64350-2

Both the Honegger (1941) and the Strauss (1945) come from the war years and it is only natural that, having recently recorded one masterpiece for string orchestra from that period (William Schuman's Fifth Symphony—7/93—also composed in 1945), Gerard Schwarz and the strings of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra should turn to these two works. There is no lack of atmosphere in the Honegger, though I could have done with slightly more sense of forward movement, both at the very opening, which is after all marked *crotchet=56* (and a slightly less headlong *Allegro* section), and in the slow movement. I felt the same on a second hearing. Nevertheless, the performance has great dedication and musical finesse and each phrase is shaped with imagination and musicianship.

In Schwarz's hands *Metamorphosen* runs to 32 minutes as opposed to Kempe at 25'08" and Karajan, whose timings varied from 26'40" on his pioneering 1947 Columbia 78rpm set with the Vienna Philharmonic (7/48—nla), to 26'08" in 1980 (reviewed in 1984) and 27'32" in 1969 (reissued in 1988), both with the Berlin Philharmonic strings. As most collectors know, statistics are deceptive and the present performance at no time seems slow or laboured. On the contrary, it is powerfully involved and involving, as well as finely shaped. There is both dignity and depth of feeling, too. So, while this interpretation may not displace either Karajan or Kempe (part of a three-disc set), it is very impressive indeed and is sumptuously recorded. The conductor's own transcription of Webern's 1905 quartet movement completes the disc and serves to enhance its Mahlerian overtones. A strong recommendation for the Strauss and for the Honegger, too, albeit not in preference to the classic 1969 Karajan and 1952 Munch accounts. RL

**Ketèlbey** British Light Music. <sup>a</sup>Slovak Philharmonic Male Chorus; Bratislava Radio Symphony Orchestra / Adrian Leaper.

Marco Polo © ① 8 223442 (74 minutes: DDD).

In a Monastery Garden<sup>a</sup>. The Adventurers. Chal Romano. Suite romantique. Caprice pianistique. The Clock and the Dresden Figures. Cockney Suite—No. 3, At the Palais de Danse; No. 5, Bank Holiday. In the Moonlight. Wedgwood Blue. Bells across the meadows. Phantom melody. In a Persian Market<sup>a</sup>.

*Selected comparison:*

Philh, Lanchbery (3/94) (CFP) CD-CFP4637

What a splendid CD! If there has been a disappointment with this enterprising series, it is that the quality of music and interpretation in some of the issues has not always maintained the high standard of the Haydn Wood CD in the first release (8/92). But no such problem here. The obvious favourites (*In a Monastery Garden*, *In a Persian Market*, *Bells across the meadows*) are played with a grace and sensitivity that never invites unfavourable comparison with earlier recordings of the same pieces. If others in the same somewhat maudlin vein (*In the Mystic Land of Egypt*, *In a Chinese Temple Garden*, *Sanctuary of the Heart*) are missing, it is to give us the opportunity to hear some of Ketèlbey's unjustly overshadowed compositions. And what delights there are!

**Gramophone** next month  
Studer and Hampson in  
songs by Barber