

NAXOS

Johann Baptist  
**VAÑHAL**

**Symphonies, Vol. 4**

**Symphony in E minor • Symphony in E flat major “La Tempesta”**

**Toronto Chamber Orchestra • Kevin Mallon**



## Johann Baptist Vaňhal (1739-1813) Symphonies, Vol. 4

Johann Baptist Vaňhal was one of the most popular and successful Viennese composers during his lifetime. History, however, has been unkind to his reputation, the result of irresponsible statements that were made by imaginative authors who were not acquainted with him or his circumstances. The general impression is that he was melancholy and depressed when, in truth, he appears to have been basically happy and personable. Wild claims have also been made that early in his career he was so overcome by madness caused by religious fervour that he burned some of his music. After that, the story goes, the quality of compositions deteriorated so much that he never realised the promise of his early works. The lie to this assertion is given by the splendid symphonies included here; his vitality and inventiveness are evident in all of them and illustrate why he was considered such an important exponent of the genre.

The *Sinfonia in E minor* (Bryan e3), is one of Vaňhal's earliest symphonies and may have been composed about 1760-62. The use of the minor mode is unusual for the time and shows that Vaňhal's fascination with the expressive possibilities of the turbulent minor-key style existed from the outset of his professional career. It permeates the entire first movement, the *Menuetto*, and most of the last movement, a lively *Contratanz* in which one might logically expect the brightness of the major mode.

The style of the opening bar in a symphony, whether it opens with a vigorous *forte* or a quiet, singing *piano*, does much to determine its effect. The former seems to be indicated by both of the sources used in the creation of the edition used here, but there is also stylistic evidence to suggest that this may be one of the first examples of Vaňhal composing a symphony with a quiet, singing opening that continues as sustained-style melodic material, a conscious move away from the *forte* rhythmic openings typical of his earliest works. Another interesting aspect of the *Sinfonia in E minor* is the canonic *Menuetto* which accentuates the severity of the minor mode. The *Trio*, however, is a perfect foil with its

gentle homophonic textures and prominent flute parts. Vaňhal's originality as a composer is also evident in his choice of finale, a *Contratanz*, a popular movement found in numerous serenades and divertimenti but lent an unusual character in this instance by being cast in the minor mode. Furthermore, the *pianissimo* ending of the movement enhances the sudden mood of E major that buoyantly energizes the final section of the *Contratanz*, and it brings the last movement, *Kehraus*-like, to its expected rousing conclusion.

The *Sinfonia in C major* (Bryan C1), composed between 1763-1765, must have been one of Vaňhal's best known symphonies because it is listed in six contemporary catalogues and eighteen manuscript copies of it survive. Furthermore, it was published in Paris and London, but, apparently, it was little known in Bohemia. The reasons for its popularity are not difficult to surmise. It is brightly and effectively orchestrated and at times Vaňhal even uses the wind choir independently of the strings to produce the full sound of the modern orchestra.

At this period of his career as a composer of symphonies Vaňhal was experimenting with structure. *C1*, for example, is one of a pair of symphonies (along with *A5*) whose first movements are based on a simple motive that is introduced in the first bar and extended into a three-bar 'theme'. Rather in the manner of a ritornello, this theme launches all of the major structural phases of the movement including both the development and recapitulation sections. The germ-motive is also used in developmental passages and as the basis for other figures. The movement has enough thematic components for a complete sonata form structure although it lacks the full-size *piano*-cantabile theme encountered in the composer's later symphonies. The movement, with its constant and resourceful employment of the opening motive, reveals Vaňhal's early interest in composing highly-organized music in the modern symphonic style. The remarkable second-movement *Andante* is canonic throughout with most of

the action occurring between the first and second violins. An interesting feature is that the points of imitation constantly change in diminution from three to two bars, to one bar, to  $1/2 + 1/2$  bar, and finally to a unison=octave in bar 17. The *Trio*, played by the strings, also has something special to offer; a rather long chorale-like melody with irregular phrases that looks as though it might be a chant melody rather like those occasionally employed by Haydn. If so, the source of the non-modal melody has not yet been identified. The finale is serious; playful but not tuneful because of the fragmentary nature of the melodic material. It is busy and in constant motion except for cadences at the ends of the exposition and development. The dynamics are interruptive and in spite of the fact that a large proportion of the movement is marked *piano*, there is no *piano-cantabile* melody. As it scampers to its conclusion, it is the perfect complement to the slow second movement and the chorale-style of the *Trio*.

The *Sinfonia in C major* (Bryan C17), is one of Vaňhal's later symphonies, composed in all probability between 1775 and 1778. It is listed in two eighteenth-century catalogues and seven manuscript copies of the work have been found in private archives, including Prince Esterházy's, which means that it was performed by Joseph Haydn.

The style of the symphony's first movement shows that it follows the tradition of the 'Overture style', i.e. predominantly *forte* and constantly moving, composed of short, active and fragmentary figures strung together in irregular phrases with limited contrast of *piano* or *cantabile*-style melodic material. The movement is based on two figures both of which are presented in the opening bar. A close derivative is also prominently featured in both the second movement and the finale, giving a cyclic effect to the entire symphony. Vaňhal's assured handling of the orchestra is evident in the variety of textures and sounds he employs in the course of the movement and above all in the detail of the orchestration. His sensitive orchestration is also evident in the enchanting *Andante* with its delicious use of the wind choir. The *Minuetto* and *Trio*, probably marked *Menuetto ma allegretto* in the original (meaning that it

was not to be performed slowly), is scored for full orchestra although the trumpets and timpani assume a subdued rôle so that the total effect is not as brilliant as it might have been had the trumpets played the complete melody line. In the *Trio* the flute is scored in the traditional manner by doubling the melody an octave higher than the first violin. The *Allegro molto* finale is rapidly moving and brilliant, an appropriate final movement for a C major symphony with trumpets and timpani. The opening two-bar *piano* motive provides the thematic basis for the entire movement. Vaňhal's ability to create large-scale musical structures out of so little material is one of his great strengths as a composer and in this he can be compared directly with Haydn. At times, however, his capacity for musical invention is if anything even more impressive and the references to important thematic material from the first and second movements in the finale of the symphony brilliantly emphasize the cyclic unity of the symphony and cannot have gone unnoticed by Haydn when he directed performances of the work at Eszterháza.

The *Sinfonia in E flat major* (Bryan Eb1), is unique among Vaňhal's works. The descriptive title *la Tempesta* which is written at the beginning of the last movement, together with its style and content, sets the movement and the symphony apart from any of Vaňhal's other symphonies. The *la Tempesta* finale (176 bars) can be analyzed as a movement in truncated sonata form. Its title, however, demands a more imaginative interpretation, and it is possible that it represents a storm in four episodes. The other three movements also differ from their counterparts in other symphonies and, together, they give the impression that the entire work may have been intended to represent a 'theme'. They do not have descriptive titles, but, like the finale, are treated differently from conventional sonata form; e.g. the mid-point repeat bars are lacking from both the first and second movements. Moreover, all movements prominently feature the rising semiquaver 'storm' figure from the finale which gives the entire work a cyclic sense. It seems that Vaňhal has composed a work that describes different aspects of the seasons. The bright, active mood of the first movement with its

constant motion of related figures and motives together with the rapidly rising semiquaver 'storm' figure prominently displayed, could represent the mood of spring. The intense minor mood of the second movement with its *siciliano* rhythm, *adagio* tempo, chromaticism, and slowly rising semiquavers, could suggest the languid mood of summer. Beginning *forte* with the same rapidly-rising scale passages as the first and last movements, the *Menuetto* is contrasted with its placid *Trio (piano)* whose murmuring arpeggio quavers are suddenly punctuated by two-bar *forte* interjections.

Many suggestions have been made regarding its programmatic intention. Could it be a winter day in which blustery winds are suggested by the *forte* running semiquavers of the storm-motive, while the *piano Trio* sections portray a lull in the action and the quiet quavers depict falling snow?

**Paul Bryan**

## **Toronto Chamber Orchestra**

The Toronto Chamber Orchestra plays on modern instruments and draws its players from the best orchestras in Toronto, with principal players from the Toronto Symphony, the Canadian Opera Orchestra, the Canadian Ballet Orchestra, Tafelmusik and Aradia Ensemble. Many of the players also play baroque instruments and all are well versed in stylistic issues from the 18th century to the modern day. As such, the orchestra's approach is to extend to all periods of music the transparency and purity of tone one achieves with period instruments. The orchestra has made fifteen recordings for the Naxos label.

### **Violin 1**

Paul Zevenhuisen  
(concert-master and solo violin)  
James Aylesworth  
Floortje Gerritsen  
Anne Armstrong  
Steve Marvin  
Chris Verette

### **Violin 2**

Cristina Zacharias  
Rachel Moody  
Patricia Ahern  
Marika Holmqvist

### **Viola**

Eric Paetkau  
Ivan Ivanovich  
Angela Rudden

### **Cello**

Katie Rietman  
Mary Katherine Finch

### **Double Bass**

J.Tracy Mortimore

### **Flute 1**

Leslie Newman

### **Oboe 1**

Kathy Halvorson

### **Oboe 2**

Brian James

### **Bassoon**

Nadina Mackie Jackson

### **Horn 1**

Wendy Limbertie

### **Horn 2**

David Haskins

### **Trumpet 1**

Norman Engel

### **Trumpet 2**

Andras Molnar

### **Timpani**

Edward Reifel

## Kevin Mallon

The Irish musician Kevin Mallon, now resident in Canada, is quickly developing a world-wide reputation. With an impressive background that includes conducting studies with John Eliot Gardiner, composition with Peter Maxwell Davies, with training at Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, and at Dartington College of Arts, he learnt his craft as a violinist with such orchestras as the Hallé and the BBC Philharmonic, and later as concert-master with Le Concert Spirituel and Les Arts Florissants in Paris. With these groups he has recorded extensively and toured the world. He has performed concerts all over Europe, including Vienna, London, Berlin and Paris, with appearances in Russia, the Baltic States, China, Japan, New Zealand, the United States and Canada.

Before moving to Canada to take up positions with the University of Toronto and the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Kevin Mallon was active in both his native Ireland and throughout Europe. He was conductor of the Irish Baroque Orchestra as well as the Musical Director of the Harty Ensemble in Belfast. He also conducted numerous orchestras and opera companies in Ireland, including the Ulster Orchestra, Castleward Opera and the National Chamber Choir.

Kevin Mallon formed and became the Music Director of the Aradia Ensemble in 1996. This vocal and instrumental group has achieved extraordinary successes. They have made numerous recordings for Naxos, all of which have received international praise. The ensemble was featured in 2000 at the New Zealand International Chamber Music Festival, and in 2003 at the Musica nel Chiostrò festival in Tuscany.

Although Kevin Mallon specialises in music of the Baroque period, he is in demand to conduct a wider repertoire. As part of his recording contract with Naxos, he is Music Director of the Toronto Chamber Orchestra, a group made up of some of Toronto's best orchestral musicians, with whom he has already made several recordings. In recent years he has also developed an association with the contemporary opera company Opera Anonymous, with which he has conducted Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and the early nineteenth-century opera *Lucas et Cécile* by the Canadian Joseph Quesnel. He has also conducted Toronto's Opera in Concert in a varied repertoire.

Engagements as a guest conductor have taken him to Finland, Sweden, Poland and the United States. He has recently taken up the position of Music Director of Opera 2005 in Cork, Ireland, conducting a series of operas as part of Cork's tenure as European Capital of Culture. This opera company has already achieved remarkable success and has twice been nominated for Best Opera Production in the prestigious Irish Times Theatre Awards. Also interested in Irish music, he is a member of the Toronto-based traditional group Dulaman. Kevin Mallon has made over forty recordings for Naxos in Baroque and Classical repertoire.

*The orchestral parts and scores of the following works are available from:*

**www.artaria.com**

*Sources*

The works on this disc, published by Artaria Editions, have been edited by Paul Bryan. The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

**Sinfonia in E minor (Bryan e3)**

Edited by Paul Bryan - Artaria Editions AE290  
Neuburg, Pfarrarchiv; Prague, Národní Muzeum:  
XXXIV E 62 (prov. Waldstein-Doksy)

**Sinfonia in C major (Bryan C1)**

Edited by Paul Bryan - Artaria Editions AE287  
Kromčírž, Archbishopric Castle Music Archive: IV  
- A 343; Lambach, Benediktinerstift: No.177;  
Kremsmünster, Benediktinerstift: H.36.358

**Sinfonia in C major (Bryan C17)**

Edited by Paul Bryan - Artaria Editions AE288  
Graz, Musikwissenschaftliches Institut der  
Universität (prov. Eibiswald): No.42;  
Kremsmünster, Benediktinerstift: H.36.354; Melk,  
Benediktinerstift: IV N 35

**Sinfonia in E flat major (Bryan Eb1)**

Edited by Paul Bryan - Artaria Editions AE289  
Regensburg, Thurn und Taxis'sche Hofbibliothek:  
Vanhal 38; Schlägl, Prämonstratenserstift: MS 378;  
Schlierbach, Zisterzienserstift: No.1075



The symphonies of Johann Baptist Vañhal are among the most important works of the classical period. Bold and imaginative, powerful and lyrical, Vañhal's symphonies are only now beginning to win wider recognition as the masterpieces they are. This recording features his early and highly prophetic *Symphony in E minor* as well as one of his later works, the brilliantly-scored *Symphony in C* (Bryan C17) which Haydn is known to have admired.

Johann Baptist  
VAÑHAL (WANHAL)

(1739-1813)

Symphonies, Vol. 4



<b>Symphony in E minor (Bryan e3)</b>	<b>15:19</b>	<b>Symphony in C major (Bryan C17)</b>	<b>15:49</b>
1 Allegro (molto)	3:36	9 Allegro	5:14
2 Andante	4:57	10 Andante	5:39
3 Menuetto and Trio	3:52	11 Menuet (Menuetto ma Allegretto)	2:11
4 Contratanz (Presto)	2:54	12 Allegro molto	2:46
<b>Symphony in C major (Bryan C1)</b>	<b>17:56</b>	<b>Symphony in E flat major (Bryan Eb1)</b>	<b>17:07</b>
5 Allegro	4:32	13 Allegro	4:33
6 Andante	6:23	14 Adagio	4:16
7 Menuetto and Trio	3:37	15 Menuetto and Trio	4:14
8 Allegro	3:24	16 Allegro "La Tempesta"	4:05

Toronto Chamber Orchestra  
Kevin Mallon

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(The Art Archive / Museum der Stadt Wien / Dagli Orti)

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