



Johann Baptist  
**VANĀHAL**  
Symphonies, Vol. 5

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice  
Michael Halász



## Johann Baptist Vaňhal (1739–1813)

### Symphonies, Vol. 5

Johann Baptist Vaňhal was one of the most important contemporaries of Haydn and his symphonies in particular were widely admired throughout Europe. He was also a prolific composer in other genres. He published a large corpus of chamber works, including trios, string quartets, sonatas and other solo keyboard works, and although he worked for most of his long and productive career as an independent artist, he also composed an extensive body of sacred works among which are some of the most impressive and ambitious settings of the Mass written in the late 18th century.

Vaňhal was born in the Bohemian village of Nechanicz into a family living on the estate of Count Johann Ernst Anton Schaffgotsch. Music was an important part of the education of children in Bohemia during the 18th century and in his early years Vaňhal had singing lessons and learned to play wind and string instruments. He moved to Marschersdorf to further his general education, which included learning German, and studying organ there with Anton Erban. In his teens he was appointed organist at Opocžno and became choir director in Nemyčevs in the district of Jičín, where he received violin training with Mathias Nowák. Vaňhal appears to have started composing around this time, but these works have either not survived or remain unidentified.

Under the patronage of Countess Schaffgotsch, Vaňhal moved to Vienna in the early 1760s. The exact date of his arrival in the imperial capital is unknown but he was certainly there by 1763, when he played in the first violins in a performance of Gluck's *Orfeo* at the Burgtheater. One of the other violinists in the orchestra was Carl Ditters (later Baron von Dittersdorf) who claims in his autobiography to have been Vaňhal's teacher. It is highly doubtful that Vaňhal had composition lessons with Ditters but it is possible that Ditters, arguably the finest violinist in Vienna, gave him violin lessons and introduced him into the right musical circles. What, if anything, Vaňhal was composing at this time is unknown since he does not appear to have made any impact in Vienna as a composer until the second half of the 1760s. Indeed, the earliest extant copy of one of Vaňhal's compositions is dated 1768, but from that point he erupted onto the scene as one of the most remarkable composers of his generation. The music historian Dr Charles Burney later reported that Vaňhal's symphonies were known in England before those of Haydn.

Vaňhal unsurprisingly attracted the attention of an important patron, Baron Issac von Riesch of Dresden, who wanted to establish his own Kapelle and thought Vaňhal the ideal person to engage as Kapellmeister. He persuaded Vaňhal to accept his financial support and go to Italy, at this time considered something akin to a finishing school for composers, where he could not only experience at first hand all the latest musical developments, particularly in opera, but also mix with leading musicians, writers and members of the intelligentsia. This would give him the final polish necessary to take on the role of Riesch's Kapellmeister. Vaňhal spent the period from May 1769 to September 1770 in various Italian cities where he met prominent composers including Christoph Willibald Gluck and Florian Leopold Gassmann. During this same period, as Professor Paul R. Bryan observes, he was also able to contemplate the heavy demands of the position in Dresden for which he was being prepared – and his enormous debt to Baron Riesch. On his return to Vienna, however, he declined Riesch's offer and instead resolved to work as an independent artist. Bryan hypothesises that the root of this decision lay in his birth as a bonded servant to Count Schaffgotsch. Having purchased his freedom through talent and hard work, he revolted against the idea of being beholden to a patron. As an independent artist he exercised control over his own destiny and, to a large extent, this can be seen in the music he wrote. His understanding of the significant changes occurring in the Viennese musical world is evident in his shift in focus away from genres like the symphony, which was closely associated with the nobility, in favour of works that could be performed by the growing number of accomplished amateur musicians in Vienna and elsewhere. Publication was the key to reaching this market and Vaňhal proved as adept in his dealings with publishers as he was at understanding changing musical fashions.

Of all the instrumental genres in which Vaňhal composed, only the symphonies and string quartets have been thoroughly investigated. But a thorough examination of all the sources for his symphonies is hampered by the simple fact that there are (with one exception) no autograph scores and therefore no indisputable way to prove that he wrote the symphonies that have survived. Establishing reliable composition dates for the majority of the works is also highly problematic. Halvor Hosar's important re-evaluation of the evidence relating to Vaňhal's arrival in Vienna and his invisibility as a composer until 1768 suggests that Bryan's dating of the composer's earliest symphonies is likely incorrect. In some ways this makes his achievement as a symphonist even more remarkable since it means that his output of around 77 symphonies was produced over a shorter period, perhaps little more than twelve years.

Vaňhal's symphonies exhibit an unusually high degree of stylistic change over that period, a characteristic he shares with both Haydn and Dittersdorf. Most of these works adopt the four-movement cycle that came to dominate the late 18th-century symphony and in general there is a gradual increase in the length of the individual movements and the melodic material from which they are constructed. The influence of the sonata-allegro form, whose influence can be detected in most of the individual first and last movements of the early works, gradually becomes the clearly-guiding formal principle in the later ones. A few movements of the earliest symphonies are simple and tuneful, but a serious mode soon enters, imparted by their construction from motivically re-used materials along with the tonal construction and the development section typical of the sonata principle. The three symphonies featured on this recording illustrate very well Vaňhal's strengths as a composer of symphonies with their sophisticated mastery of musical structure, imaginative and colourful handling of the orchestra, dramatic flair and profusion of attractive and memorable themes.

One group of Vaňhal's symphonies deserves special mention: those written in minor keys. Although a number of composers wrote minor key symphonies in and around Vienna in the late 1760s and early 1770s, including Haydn, Dittersdorf and Ordóñez, Vaňhal's works are particularly impressive and have garnered a good deal of scholarly attention. The *Symphony in F minor* (Bryan f1) is one of Vaňhal's finest symphonies and its tonality is one that was loaded with expressive significance for 18th-century composers. The origins of the work are unknown although its compositional finish and technical sophistication led Bryan to believe that it was composed c. 1773–74 and is thus one of the composer's later works. Its appearance in Supplement XI 1776–77 of the Breitkopf catalogue and the Quartbuch catalogue, a manuscript catalogue of an unidentified collection from the area around Melk Monastery in Austria compiled c. 1775, suggests that the work may have been reasonably well disseminated but it was not published in the composer's lifetime and only two sets of manuscript parts have been identified. Its scoring with four horns is also unusual and Vaňhal ensures that he can derive the maximum value from his extended forces by employing multiple crooks. In addition to employing a pair of horns in F, he also crooks one horn in A flat and one on C, thus enabling him to use the horns in the tonic, dominant and relative major. The first movement of the symphony is also unusual in that the cello and double bass have independent parts instead of being scored in octaves as was customary at this time.

*Symphony Eb4*, composed c. 1771–72, is an impressive four-movement work scored for Vaňhal's customary forces of two oboes, two horns and strings. The work appears to have circulated quite widely and like *Symphony f1* it was advertised in the Breitkopf catalogue (Supplement X 1775) and was part of the collection associated with Quartbuch (c. 1775). A printed edition was issued in Paris by the Bureau d'abonnement as No. IV of *Quatro sinfonie concertanti*. Two of the surviving manuscript copies of *Symphony Eb4* are attributed to Joseph Haydn, which tells us a good deal about the reputation of both composers at this time.

On the evidence of the surviving copies of *Symphony C7b*, composed c. 1771–72, it was one of Vaňhal's most popular and widely known symphonies. It was issued in at least six printed editions and significant number of manuscript copies are also extant. Not all of these copies attribute the work to Vaňhal: Haydn is named as the composer in several of the printed editions and at one point there were plans to include it in the first *Haydn Ausgabe* until the weight of evidence persuaded Eusebius Mandyczewski that the work was probably by Vaňhal. The symphony was one of several of the composer's works performed by Haydn's orchestra at Eszterháza and presumably under his direction. *Symphony C7* is unusual in that it exists in two forms. *C7a* is a *pasticcio* version created by the Parisian publisher Bailleux and consists of the first movement of *C7b* in combination with other movements drawn from *Symphonies C8* and *E3*. The authentic version of the work, *C7b*, is presented on this recording and is based on a set of parts from the Clam Gallas collection now held in the Czech Music Centre in Prague.

In the middle decades of the 18th century a number of multi-movement instrumental genres flourished alongside the symphony and the concerto. The most ubiquitous of these was the divertimento, but other works, which were also composed for single players, were described variously in contemporary sources as cassations, concertinos and even partitas. All these genres were fluid in structure, some being cast in three movements while others might have five or more movements including two minuets. While some works styled concertino employ a modified ritornello structure and clearly exploit the contrast between solo and tutti sections, others have no such association with the formal principle that above all others governs the 18th-century concerto and utilise instead first-movement formal structures familiar to us from the symphony. Unsurprisingly, some of these works were occasionally mislabelled as symphonies. The present work, although it is not preserved in such a copy, is listed in the Quartbuch and, as is the case with a number of works in this catalogue including several divertimenti and concertini by

Vaňhal's important Viennese contemporary Leopold Hofmann (1738–1793), it was assumed by virtue of its context to be a symphony by the pioneering Haydn scholar Jens Peter Larsen. On Larsen's authority it was included among Vaňhal's authentic symphonies in Paul Bryan's thematic catalogue albeit with the caveat that the work is 'really a kind of Concerto Grosso'.

Cast in five movements and scored for solo oboe, two horns and violin, viola, cello and violone concertati, the *Concertino G5* is a finely wrought work that illustrates well Vaňhal's gift for attractive and inventive instrumental writing. The violone part in particular contains some very virtuosic writing, and reminds one that he composed one of the best-known double bass concertos of the period. Given the difficulty of the part, it is hard to imagine that Vaňhal wrote it for anybody other than a player whose skill was well known to him such as Friedrich Pischelberger.

**Allan Badley**

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**Musicians on *Oboe Concertino in G major, Bryan G5* 12–16**

**Vojtěch Podroužek, Oboe**

**Jan Karas, Horn I • Magdaléna Kutišová, Horn II**

**Libor Ježek, Violin • Pavla Honsová, Viola**

**David Matoušek, Cello • Petr Kupčák, Double Bass**

## Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice



The Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice is valued for its stylistic interpretations and the extraordinary quality of its orchestral sound, and it is rightly ranked amongst the world's leading representatives of Czech musical culture. It often performs at the most prestigious festivals in the Czech Republic and venues throughout Europe such as the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, the Herkulesaal and the Gasteig, Munich, the Musikverein, Vienna, the Brucknerhaus, Linz, and the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg among many others. Outside Europe the orchestra has performed in Japan and toured extensively around America. The first principal conductor, Libor Pešek, quickly raised the orchestra to a high standard, and subsequent principal conductors have included Marco Armiliato and Mariss Jansons. The orchestra has also welcomed numerous world-renowned soloists such as Isabelle van Keulen, Vladimir Spivakov, Ludwig Güttler, Radek Baborák, Gábor Boldoczki and Sergei Nakariakov. Aside from concerts, the orchestra regularly engages in operatic and theatre projects and has recorded dozens of successful albums on record labels including Naxos, ArcoDiva, Supraphon, Classico, Monitor-EMI and Amabile.

www.kfpar.cz

## Michael Halász

Michael Halász's first engagement as a conductor was at the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz, Munich, where, between 1972 and 1975, he directed all operetta productions. In 1975 he moved to Frankfurt to work as principal Kapellmeister with Christoph von Dohnányi, and here he conducted the most important works of the operatic repertoire. Many engagements as a guest conductor followed and in 1977 Dohnányi took him to the Staatsoper Hamburg as principal Kapellmeister. From 1978 to 1991 he was GMD (general music director) of the Hagen Opera House and in 1991 he took up the post of resident conductor at the Wiener Staatsoper for 20 years. Michael Halász's recordings for Naxos include ballets by Tchaikovsky, operatic excerpts of Wagner, symphonies by Beethoven, Schubert and Mahler, Rossini's overtures, three volumes of Liszt's symphonic poems (the latter critically acclaimed by the *Penguin Guide*), *Fidelio* (8.660070-71), *Don Giovanni* (8.660080-82), *Le nozze di Figaro* (8.660102-04), *Die Zauberflöte* (8.660030-31), and a pioneering recording of Schreker's opera *Der ferne Klang* (8.660074-75). He has also recorded Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* and *Orfeo* (8.550766), Richard Strauss's *Le Bourgeois Gentlehomme* (8.553379), Rubinstein's *Don Quixote* (8.555394) and, for Marco Polo, ballet music by Rubinstein (8.220451) and Schmidt's *Symphony No. 1* (8.223119).

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

**www.artaria.com**

*Sources*

The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

**Symphony in F minor (Bryan f1)**

Edited by John Yarbrough – Artaria Editions AE501  
Prague, Národní Muzeum (XXXIV B 287);  
Regensburg, Fürst Thurn und Taxis'sche  
Hofbibliothek (Vaňhal 40)

**Symphony in E flat major (Bryan Eb4)**

Edited by John Yarbrough – Artaria Editions AE502  
Prague, Národní Muzeum (XLVI E 6)

**Symphony in C major (Bryan C7b)**

Edited by John Yarbrough – Artaria Editions AE503  
Prague, Národní Muzeum (XLII E 13)

**Concertino in G major (Bryan G5)**

Edited by John Yarbrough – Artaria Editions AE504  
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin –  
Preußischer Kulturbesitz (M 5567)



Johann Baptist Vaňhal was one of Haydn's most important contemporaries. His symphonies in particular were widely admired throughout Europe, with music historian Dr Charles Burney reporting that Vaňhal's symphonies were known in England before those of Haydn. The finely wrought works in this recording include the *Symphony in F minor*, considered one of his best in this genre, and the *Symphony in C* which was highly popular in its day. All of these works illustrate Vaňhal's sophisticated mastery of musical structure, imaginative handling of the orchestra, and a profusion of memorable themes.



## Johann Baptist VAÑHAL

(1739–1813)

### Symphonies, Vol. 5

#### **Symphony in F minor, Bryan f1**

**16:29**

- 1 I. Allegro moderato
- 2 II. Cantabile
- 3 III. Allegro molto

5:21

5:19

5:48

#### **Symphony in C major, Bryan C7b**

**17:01**

- 8 I. Allegro molto
- 9 II. Andante molto
- 10 III. Menuetto I–II
- 11 IV. Allegro

6:44

4:30

2:19

3:26

#### **Symphony in E flat major, Bryan Eb4**

**21:23**

- 4 I. Allegro
- 5 II. Andante scherzando
- 6 III. Menuetto I–II
- 7 IV. Allegro molto

7:31

5:07

3:29

5:14

#### **Oboe Concertino in G major, Bryan G5**

**24:02**

- 12 I. Allegro moderato
- 13 II. Minuetto: Moderato
- 14 III. Adagio
- 15 IV. Minuetto: Moderato
- 16 V. Finale: Allegro

4:25

3:24

7:51

3:27

4:51

#### WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

**Vojtěch Podroužek, Oboe 12–16 • Pavla Honsová, Viola 2**  
**Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice**  
**Michael Halász**

This recording is dedicated to the memory of Professor Paul R. Bryan (1920–2021) who devoted much of his long and distinguished career to championing the works of Vaňhal and played a vital role in the planning of this series of recordings.

Recorded: 5–9 October 2020 at The House of Music Pardubice, Czech Republic • Producer: Jiří Štílec (ArcoDiva Management)

Engineer: Václav Roubal • Booklet notes: Allan Badley • Publisher: Artaria Editions

Cover: *View of Vienna from the Belvedere* (1758–61) by Bernardo Bellotto, il Canaletto (1721–1780)

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