

Antal Dorati on Joseph Haydn: 'Great Talent to Great Genius'

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By Paul Hume

Ask Antal Dorati why Joseph Haydn is being honored with a three-week festival at the Kennedy Center and he has a firm and convincing answer.

"His time has come. And it is not so late as it may seem. Mozart came on like a boy genius—a comet. Beethoven was a revolutionary, a fighter." There was a reflective pause for a moment, and then the music director of the National Symphony, who is also serving as music director of one of the biggest one-man music festivals in history, went on.

"Haydn was a man who lived a life that went from great talent to great genius. He planted, the fruit ripened, then he harvested. He began as a servant—again Dorati stopped briefly—"Is it coincidence that he wrote his greatest works after he finished serving—when he became a free man? I do not know. I do not think so."

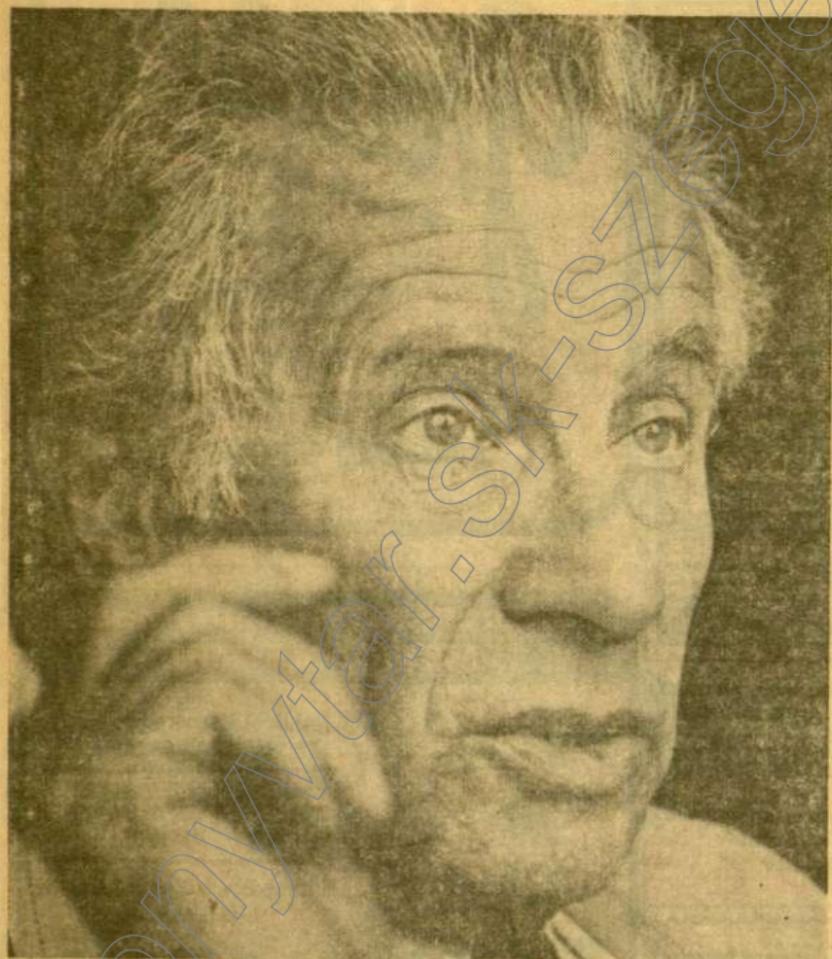
Antal Dorati has a special place in the present world-wide sweep of Haydn's music that is now going on, of which the Kennedy Center is one example. He has already, through a continuing series of recordings, conducted more Haydn music than any other conductor. Asked for verification of this, he grinned happily. "Yes. Two men have conducted this much Haydn. I am the other one."

Haydn of course conducted all of his own music. In the decades during which he served the princes of the Esterhazy family at Eisenstadt in Austria, he conducted his symphonies, operas, and concertos as he composed them. When he left Esterhazy, for the first of two triumphant tours to London, his contract in that city, with the impresario Salomon, specified that he should conduct the six new symphonies he had written for the tour.

Dorati has now completed recording all of the symphonies in an unprecedented series whose sales have already entered their second million. They have also, despite Dorati's modest observation that he is "not an award collector," won seven of the world's outstanding awards for recordings. The latest of these, given earlier this month, was the prestigious Montreux Prix Mondial.

With the symphonies behind him, Dorati has now also recorded the piano concertos with his wife, Ilse von Alpenheim, as soloist. She has also recorded the earlier concertos for fortepiano with a chamber orchestra without conductor. Dorati has also finished the other instrumental concertos, those for violin, cello, trumpet, and organ.

The latest chapter in the recordings is the project that will eventually bring to discs all the Haydn operas. The first of this series, "L'Infedelta Premiata" is already completed. The



By Gerald Martineau--The Washington Post

Antal Dorati: "Only two men have conducted this much Haydn. I am the other one." Haydn, of course, was the first.



others will be done over the next six or seven years.

With an almost impish grin, Dorati admitted to writing a Haydn hoax, "just for fun." "The Decca people are so delighted with the way their Haydn records are doing that I decided to surprise them."

"I wrote a finale for a Haydn symphony. One theme is based on the notes D-E-C-C-A, and a second theme on my own initials, A-D. I worked it all out well, I think, and we (the orchestra with which he was then recording) played it through just for fun. I signed it with an anagram of my name, 'Arnaldo Tati.' Then I wrote a little article about having 'discovered' it. The Decca people wanted to go ahead and record it, but I said no."

His thoughts once more back on Haydn the composer, Dorati said, "Brahms was very much influenced by Haydn. Beethoven, too. Actually Beethoven was influenced by him far more than by Mozart." He added, "Haydn was wonderfully generous of course in speaking of both Mozart and Beethoven. He wrote that letter to the Elector of Bonn praising Beethoven, and still the Elector refused to give Beethoven a penny more."

It seemed natural to ask Dorati if there were still Haydn works for him to record. "Yes, there are the 24 minuets which he wrote in 1792 after his first trip to England. He wrote them for a Redoutenball. I have just recorded them. Then there are five or six overtures—not the opera overtures which will of course come with the operas. Then I think I will have finished all of the orchestral works. There are chamber things, of course, and I have offered to consult about them, but they would be done without a conductor."

Suddenly, a special enthusiasm lighted up his face again. "I must tell you about the narration that Marian Anderson will read during our performance of 'The Seven Last Words.' You know I was wondering what text to use. (Haydn wrote the music to be played during the Three Hours Devotion on Good Friday in the Cathedral of Cadiz, and whatever text was read between the seven movements has not survived.)

"Well, it seems like a small miracle. Just on the day that I was in Paris to rehearse the Messiaen 'Transfiguration' for a performance with a French chorus in Stockholm, I saw an announcement of 'The Seven Last Words' that evening to be given in St. Sulpice. So—I had rehearsed five or six hours, but I was not tired, and I went to hear it.

"And the text was wonderful. It was written by a French priest named Georges Durand in Marseilles. So I called to Bernard Lefort, the director of the music festivals in Aix-en-Provence, who wants me to do a Haydn Festival there next year, and I asked him, since Aix is so near to Marseilles, to find this priest and to get permission from him to use this text here in our festival on Oct. 7 when Marian Anderson will narrate. And we got the permission to use it." It is out of a lifetime of that kind of experience that Dorati is prepared tonight to open history's greatest Haydn festival.