



**Marc Coppey & The Zagreb Soloists:  
Cello Concertos by J. Haydn and C. P.  
E. Bach**

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[Fanfare](#) (Jerry Dubins - 2016.06.01)

This seems to be Haydn month, for this is the fourth release of Haydn works I've received for review in this issue (see also an album of Haydn opera overtures with Michael Halász and the Czech Chamber Orchestra on Naxos; an album of Haydn symphonies and a violin concerto with Harry Christophers and the Handel & Haydn Society on Coro; and a disc of Haydn string quartets with the Maggini Quartet on Claudio). Haydn's cello concertos are staples of the repertoire; the Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, less so, though I've remarked in the past on what a real beauty it is.

Now in his mid-40s, Strasbourg-born cellist Marc Coppey has received positive notices in these pages, mainly in recordings of chamber works for cello and piano or as a participant in string quartets and string quintets. But I note from his discography that he has also recorded Bach's solo cello suites for Æon in 2003, a set which does not appear to have been sent to the magazine for review.

I'll be brief: Coppey's Haydn is for those who like it rough. No doubt part of the problem is the recording, which captures Coppey's cello up close—too close—revealing the gruff and grainy sound of bow on strings. But Coppey bears as much, if not more, of the responsibility for the aggressive approach that crunches and breaks chords, chops phrase endings, and whips individual notes into submission. I find it hard to listen to playing like this without gritting my teeth. Those who prefer their Haydn performed in a manner informed by period practice, even if realized on modern instruments, are not likely to appreciate Coppey's heavy vibrato, bowing methods, and exaggerated Romantic gestures.

Over the years, I've heard recordings of these concertos by Jacqueline du Pré, Yo-Yo Ma, Mischa Maisky, Antonio Meneses, Truls Mørk, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Mstislav Rostropovich, Daniel Müller-Schott, János Starker, Jan Vogler, and probably half a dozen more. Some I've liked better than others; but my favorite, at least of the D-Major Concerto, which I don't believe has ever been transferred to CD, is a 1953 London mono LP recording by Pierre Fournier with Karl Munchinger conducting the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. The performance may not be to the taste of those who prefer period instruments or at least a period-informed style of playing, but for me Fournier captures the aristocratic elegance of the work as does no one else I've heard.

The Zagreb Soloists, founded in 1953, is the same ensemble previously known as I Solisti di Zagreb that made a number of recordings for Vanguard under one-time conductor Antonio Janigro. Here led by cellist Marc Coppey, it is encouraged to sound like him—loud, slapdash, and coarse. Any of the above-named cellists and their orchestras is preferable to Coppey and the Zagreb Soloists in these Haydn concertos. For the C. P. E. Bach Concerto, I'd recommend Truls Mørk with the

semi-period instrument Les Violons du Roy (see 35:2), Raphael Wallfisch with the Scottish Ensemble (33:5), or Timothy Hugh with the Bournemouth Sinfonietta (not reviewed but very good).

If Coppey were a young artist just starting out, I'd say that with additional study and maturity he'd refine his technique and musical judgment, but, as noted above, he's now in his mid-40s; behavior patterns are firmly established and difficult to change. Perhaps he's more at home in the Romantic repertoire he has recorded, such as Grieg, Richard Strauss, Maurice Emmanuel, and Théodore Dubois. On evidence of this release, Haydn and C. P. E. Bach are not Coppey's bailiwick.

