

In a trawl through some of the best Haydn recordings extant, **Alexander Letvin** finds that the master has never been so royally served

And finally to three pianists who are, as yet, not household names but who command no less respect than those who are. Little known on this side of the Atlantic, Jane Coop is an immensely accomplished Canadian pianist who is also a musician to her fingertips, and a very sentient and insightful one too, to judge from her well-planned Haydn recital on the Canadian Skylark label [8501CD]. To say that her playing is self-effacing is inadequate. To describe it as simple is to over-simplify. To call it straightforward is a cop-out. But to describe it adequately is exceptionally hard. Polished, authoritative, impeccably musical, conspicuously intelligent, unshowily perceptive. All of these, yes. Unrhetorical, too. And demanding. In her interpretative restraint she requires the listener to meet her half-way (her insights and analytical perceptions are not offered on a platter). She presents Haydn unadorned, and unconcealed. By concentrating so purely on essentials, she removes all barriers between listener and composer so that one loses consciousness of an interpreter at all. This is artful playing of exceptional honesty.