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**COMPOSER PORTRAIT: FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN** (March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria – May 31, 1809, Vienna), Austrian composer who was one of the most important figures in the development of the Classical style in music during the eighteenth century. He helped establish the forms for the string quartet and the symphony.

### *Early years*

Haydn was the second son of humble parents. His father was a wheelwright, his mother, before her marriage, a cook for the lords of their village. Since Haydn early revealed unusual musical gifts, a cousin who was a school principal and choirmaster in the nearby city of Hainburg offered to take him into his home and train him. Haydn, not yet six years old, left home, never to return to the parental cottage except for rare, brief visits.

The young Haydn sang in the church choir, learned to play various instruments, and obtained a good basic knowledge of music. But his life changed decisively when he was eight years old. The musical director of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna had observed the boy on a visit to Hainburg and invited him to serve as chorister at the Austrian capital's most important church. Haydn's parents accepted the offer, and thus in 1740 Haydn moved to Vienna. He stayed at the choir school for nine years, acquiring an enormous practical knowledge of music by constant performances but, to his disappointment, he received little instruction in music theory. He had to work hard to fulfil his obligations as a chorister, and when his voice broke, he was expelled from both the cathedral choir and the choir school.

With no money and few possessions, Haydn at 17 was left to his own devices. He found refuge for a while in the garret of a fellow musician and supported himself 'miserably' with odd musical jobs. He meanwhile undertook an arduous course of self-instruction through the study of musical works – notably those of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach – and of leading manuals of musical theory. A fortunate chance brought him to the attention of the Italian composer and singing teacher Niccolò Porpora, who accepted him as accompanist for voice lessons and corrected Haydn's compositions.

With persistence and energy, Haydn made progress. He was eventually introduced to the music-loving Austrian nobleman Kari Joseph von Furnberg, in whose home he played chamber music. For the instrumentalists there he wrote his first string quartets.

Through the recommendation of Furnberg, in 1758 Haydn was engaged as musical director and chamber composer for the Bohemian count Ferdinand Maximilian von Morzin. Haydn was put in charge of an orchestra of about 16 musicians, and for this ensemble he wrote his first symphony as well as numerous divertimenti for wind band or for wind instruments and strings. These early musical compositions were still conventional in character, yet a certain freshness of melodic invention and sparkle marked them as the work of a future master.

### *Esterházy patronage*

Haydn stayed only briefly with von Morzin, as financial difficulties forced his patron to dismiss the orchestra. Soon Haydn was invited to enter the service of Prince Pal Antal Esterházy. The Esterházys were one of the wealthiest and most influential families of the Austrian empire and boasted a distinguished record of supporting music. Prince Pal Antal had a well-appointed orchestra performing regularly in his castle at Eisenstadt, a small town some 30 miles (48km) from Vienna. Because his aged music director was ailing, the prince appointed the relatively unknown Haydn to be assistant conductor in 1761. While the music director oversaw church music, Haydn conducted the orchestra and coached the singers in almost daily rehearsals; composed most of the music required; and served as chief of the musical personnel. Haydn carried out his duties extremely well and revealed tact, good nature, and skill in dealing with people. His employment by the Esterházy family proved decisive for his career, and he remained in their service until his death.

In 1766, Haydn became musical director at the Esterházy court. He raised the quality and increased the size of the prince's musical ensembles by appointing many choice instrumentalists and singers. His ambitious plans were supported by Prince Miklos, who, on the death of his brother in 1762, had become head of the Esterházy family. He was able to appreciate Haydn's musical contributions and created an atmosphere conducive to the development and maturing of Haydn's art. In addition to composing operas for the court, Haydn composed symphonies, string quartets, and other chamber music. The prince was a passionate performer on the baryton, and Haydn provided for his patron more than 150 compositions featuring this now-obsolete cello-like instrument.

Haydn served Prince Miklos for nearly 30 years. He frequently visited Vienna in the prince's retinue, and on these visits a close friendship developed between himself and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The two composers felt inspired by each other's work. Mozart declared that he had learned from Haydn how to write quartets and dedicated a superb set of six such works to his 'beloved friend.' Haydn's music, too, shows the impact of his young friend. The mature composer was by no means set in his ways; he was flexible and receptive to new ideas.

During the 1760s Haydn's fame began to spread throughout Europe. The Austrian and Czech monasteries did much to disseminate his church music as well as his symphonies, divertimenti, sonatas, and concertos. Aristocratic patrons in south Germany, Italy, and the Austrian empire assiduously collected his music, and their libraries would eventually become important sources for copies of his work.

The period from 1768 to about 1774 marks Haydn's maturity as a composer. The music written then, from the *Stabat Mater* (1767) to the large-scale *Missa Sancti Nicolai* (1772), would be sufficient to place him among the chief composers of the era. Among his other important works from this period are the string quartets of Opus 20, the *Piano Sonata in C Minor*, and the symphonies in minor keys, especially the so-called *Trauersymphonie in E Minor*, No. 44.

Haydn's professional success was not matched in his personal life. His marriage to Maria Anna Keller in 1760 produced neither a pleasant, peaceful home nor any children. Haydn's wife was a quarrelsome and bigoted woman who did not understand music and showed no interest in her husband's work. Her disdain went to the extremes of using his manuscripts for pastry pan linings or curl papers. Haydn was not insensitive to the attractions of other women, and for years he carried on a love affair with Luigia Poizzelli, a young Italian mezzo-soprano in the prince's service.

### **English period**

When Prince Miklos died in 1790, he was succeeded by his son, Prince Antal, who did not care for music and dismissed most of the court musicians. Haydn was retained, however, and continued to receive his salary. No duties were required of him, enabling Haydn to do whatever he pleased. After such a long time at the Esterházy court, however, the composer was eager to try a different way of life. At this point a violinist and concert manager, Johann Peter Salomon, arrived from England and commissioned from Haydn six new symphonies and 20 smaller compositions to be conducted by the composer himself in a series of orchestral concerts in London sponsored by Salomon. Haydn gladly accepted this offer, and the two men set off for London in December 1790.

On New Year's Day, 1791, Haydn arrived in England, and the following 18 months proved extremely rewarding. The many novel impressions, the meeting with eminent musicians, and the admiration bestowed on him had a powerful impact on his creative work. Indeed, it is doubtful that he would have become the great master he did were it not for the enormous stimulation provided by the English public. He was feted, lionised, and treated as a genius. The twelve symphonies he wrote on his first and second visits to London represent the climax in his orchestral output. Their virtuosity of instrumentation, masterly treatment of musical forms, and freely flowing melodic inspiration endeared the works to British audiences. Their

popularity is reflected in the various nicknames bestowed on them — e.g., *The Surprise* (No. 94), *Military* (No. 100), *The Clock* (No. 101), and *Drumroll* (No. 103).

In June 1792 Haydn left London for Germany. On his journey he stopped at Bonn, where the 22-year-old Ludwig van Beethoven was introduced to him, and it was arranged that the tempestuous young composer should move to Vienna to receive Haydn's instruction. In a letter of 1793 to Beethoven's patron, the elector of Cologne, Haydn stated that 'Beethoven [then aged 23] will one day be considered one of Europe's greatest composers, and I shall be proud to be called his teacher.'

Haydn's curiously cool reception on his return to Vienna in 1792 may have strengthened his decision to make a second journey to England in January 1794. The principal compositions of his second visit to London were the second set of *London (or Salomon) Symphonies* (Nos. 99-104) and the six *Apponyi Quartets* (Nos. 54-59). On his second London visit, Haydn reached even greater heights of inspiration, particularly in the last three symphonies he wrote (Nos. 102-104), of which the Symphony No. 102 in B-flat Major is one of the greatest of all symphonies. The British public no longer regarded him as a sensation but as an old and well-loved friend. King George III earnestly invited him to stay in England, but Haydn — for reasons that have never been made clear — preferred to return to his native Austria to serve the new head of the Esterházy family, Prince Miklos II.

### ***The late Esterházy and Viennese period***

While in London in 1791, Haydn had been deeply moved by the performance of George Frederic Handel's masterly oratorios. Deciding to compose in this genre, he obtained a suitable libretto, and, after settling in Vienna and resuming his duties for Prince Esterházy, he started work on the oratorio *The Creation*, the text of which had been translated into German by Baron Gottfried van Swieten. The libretto was based on the epic poem *Paradise Lost* by John Milton and on the Genesis book of the Bible. Composing the oratorio proved a truly congenial task, and the years devoted to it were among the happiest in Haydn's life. *The Creation* was first publicly performed in 1798 and earned enormous popularity subsequently. Haydn was thus encouraged to produce another oratorio, which absorbed him until 1801. A poem, *The Seasons*, by James Thomson, was chosen for the libretto and translated by van Swieten. The libretto allowed Haydn to compose delightful musical genre pictures of events in nature, and the oratorio was also triumphantly successful, both at the Austrian court and in public performances.

Haydn's late creative output included six masses written for his patron Miklos II; these are among the most significant masses of the 18th century. He also continued to compose magnificent string quartets, notably the six *Erdody Quartets* known as Opus 76. In 1797 Haydn gave to the Austrian nation the stirring song 'Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser' ('God Save Emperor Francis'). It was used for more than a century as the national anthem of the Austrian monarchy and as the patriotic song 'Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles' ('Germany, Germany above all else') in Germany, where it remains the national anthem as 'Deutschlandlied.' The song was so beloved that Haydn decided to use it as a theme for variations in one of his finest string quartets, the *Emperor Quartet* (Opus 76, No. 3).

'*The Seasons* broke my back,' Haydn is reported to have said; and indeed, apart from the last two masses of 1801 and 1802, he undertook no more large-scale works. During the last years of his life, his thoughts were constantly of death, and he felt himself incapable of further work. In 1809 Napoleon's forces besieged Vienna and in May entered the city. Haydn refused to leave his house and take refuge in the inner city. Napoleon placed a guard of honour outside Haydn's house, and the enfeebled composer was much touched by the visit of a French hussars' officer who sang an aria from *The Creation*. On May 31, Haydn died peacefully and was buried two days later.

### ***Works, development, and achievement***

Haydn was an extremely prolific composer. His total output includes 108 symphonies; 68 string quartets; 32 divertimenti for small orchestra; 126 trios for baryton, viola, and cello; 29

trios for piano, violin, and cello; 21 trios for two violins and cello; 47 piano sonatas; about 20 operas; 14 masses; and 6 oratorios. Haydn's achievement was long confused by the fact that an enormous number of works were wrongly attributed to him, and it was not until the 1950s that musicological research was able to pare this staggering amount of spurious attributions from Haydn's recognised output. Work on a definitive catalogue of his compositions continued into the late 20th century.

In his youth and early career, Haydn experimented with the prevailing stylistic trends. He was familiar with the pompous and complex idiom of the preceding Baroque period; he then adopted the light, gay, and elegant musical style that was popular at the time in Austria; and he was subsequently influenced by the strongly emotional and expressive style preferred by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and other north German composers. He eventually achieved his own distinctive musical identity by using some elements from all three of these styles simultaneously.

During the 1760s Haydn began to solidify and deepen his style. His new technique of working with small motifs to tighten the fabric of the sonata form turned the first movement of the sonata, quartet, and symphony into a little musical drama. In the period from 1768 to 1774 his music took on a deeper hue; the intellectualisation that had steadily increased throughout the 1760s at last found its natural outlet in the mid-1780s, when he seems to have regained the emotional strength that so much of his work had lost after the outburst of the early 1770s. His *Paris Symphonies* (Nos. 82, 83, 85, and 86; 1785-86) are miracles of beauty and formal perfection combined with great profundity, noticeable especially in the slow movement of No. 86 in D.

The London visits injected a new force in Haydn's music, but side by side with a greatly increased nervous tension his works began to take on an emotional depth often characteristic of the music of an ageing composer. Haydn began to explore new harmonic fields such as third-related keys, his interest in new harmonic structures being particularly apparent in the late piano trios. On his return to Vienna, he concentrated almost exclusively on vocal music and the string quartet. The last six masses he composed are pillars of symphonic strength and grandeur, ranging from the brightness of the *Missa in tempore belli* (1796) to the terse drama of the *Nelson Mass* in D minor (1798). Here the symphonic principles brought to perfection in the *London Symphonies* are brilliantly combined with older contrapuntal forms. Solo voices are blended with vocal quartet and choir, and there is a constant juxtaposition of the available forces. Haydn's last instrumental works were the six *Erdody Quartets* (Opus 76; 1797), the two *Lobkowitz Quartets* (Opus 77; 1799), and the *Unfinished Quartet* (Opus 103; 1803). In these works he brought the art of the quartet to a new pinnacle that was not to be equalled until the quartets of Beethoven in his maturity.

Haydn was a true representative of the Enlightenment. His optimistic approach to life; his striving for a balance between intellect and emotion; his sense of moderation, leading to the avoidance of strongly discordant moods; all these found superb expression in his music and were appreciated by his contemporaries. Music lovers also found irresistible the nobility and deceptive simplicity of his idiom, sparked by delightful outbreaks of humour. The gaiety and naturalness of Haydn's music held less appeal to the Romantic era of the eighteenth century, however, when dark, complex moods and ambivalent emotions were being explored in music. But in the 20th century there was a reevaluation of Haydn's work, and his outstanding thematic elaborations, the originality of his modulations, and the artistry and superb craftsmanship of his orchestration were again appreciated in full measure.