

# FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Born March 31, 1732 in Rohrau, Lower Austria; died May 31, 1809 in Vienna.

## Symphony No. 93 in D major (1791)

PREMIERE OF WORK: London, February 17, 1792

Hanover Square Rooms

Joseph Haydn, conductor

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 22 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: pairs of flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings

When Haydn first arrived there, in 1791, London was one of the world's great cities of music. In addition to considerable activity at the traditional performance sites of church and court, London boasted a rich musical life: the city had nurtured opera since well before Handel settled there in 1710; it regularly enjoyed public concerts, including the "Bach-Abel Concerts" produced from 1765 and 1782 by Johann Christian Bach (Sebastian's youngest son) and Carl Friedrich Abel and the series run after 1786 by Johann Peter Salomon, who had enticed Haydn to visit London following the death of Prince Nicolaus Esterházy in September 1790; it kept busy a knowledgeable band of critics to report in the press on all important musical events; and it was home to a large and faithful body of discriminating patrons, both aristocratic and middle class, who eagerly supported a wide variety of worthwhile undertakings.

Haydn was swept at once into the artistic and social whirl of the capital upon his arrival. He was quickly befriended by an entire battalion of admirers from all social classes, including musicians, scholars, businessmen — even the royal family. He received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University in July 1791, had more invitations for dinners, parties, social engagements and weekends at Britain's best town houses and country manors than he could possibly accept, gave lessons to members of some of the city's finest families, and made so much money that, as he later told his biographer Griesinger, "My eyes popped out of my head." The focal point for the English mania surrounding Haydn was Salomon's series of Friday concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms, which ran from March 11th to May 16th that year, and featured a work by Haydn at every performance. The Symphonies Nos. 95 and 96 were composed in London in 1791 and first heard at the concerts that spring. The entire venture proved to be such a success that Haydn was easily convinced to stay for another season the following year, and to return again in 1794-1795.

For Salomon's 1792 concerts, which ran from February 17th to May 18th, Haydn composed four new symphonies — Nos. 93, 94 ("Surprise"), 97 and 98. The Symphony No. 93 was written during the fall of 1791, and Haydn tailored it carefully to the local taste after having observed his London patrons at close range the previous spring, weaving numerous crowd-pleasing effects into the music with his peerless technical mastery. The Symphony opens with a bold, *fortissimo*, unison summons from the entire ensemble immediately answered by a hushed, lyrical motive from the violins, a beginning whose effect on the audience, wrote the eminent Haydn scholar H.C. Robbins Landon, "would have been electrifying." So memorably melodic is the main theme of the movement's quick-tempo sonata form that it was fitted with English words by Catherine Winkworth in the 1830s as the hymn *Come My Soul, Awake, 'Tis Morning*. A bustling transition leads to the second theme, a legato melody supported by a delicate, music-box accompaniment (which comes delightfully close to a barnyard cackle when it is taken over by the bassoons for the flute's repetition of the theme). Considerable drama is built up in the development section around a tiny fragment common to both first and second themes until the music abruptly breaks off, apparently uncertain how to continue. After a few tentative attempts, oboe and violins try a bit of the second theme, but it is in the wrong key and the wrong place to begin a proper recapitulation, so the orchestra carries on with the development. Things soon get righted, however, everyone is allowed a big breath, and the recapitulation commences according to late-18th-century formal requirements. One of Haydn's innumerable subtle details is worth noting in the movement's closing pages: the bassoon gets to play a suave obbligato to the second theme's return, perhaps in atonement for its somewhat ungracious treatment the first time that melody was heard.

The *Largo*, another testament to Haydn's remarkable inventiveness even after having written nearly a hundred such works over more than three decades, is a formal hybrid of rondo and variation that takes as its theme an elegant melody initiated by a solo quartet before being taken over by bassoon and strings. The episodes separating the theme's returns, freely based on its motives, are expressive, harmonically adventurous and colored with the sonorities of the winds. This formal alternation of refrain and episode continues to what

would seem to be the movement's climax, the first time everyone in the orchestra gets to participate in the theme, but this magnificent sonority apparently so overwhelms the ensemble that it dissolves into uncertain gestures and silences. An outrageous *fortissimo* expostulation issued from depths of the bassoons restores resolve and moves the movement to a satisfying close. The audience at the premiere demanded the encore of both the first and second movements.

The *Menuetto*, with its catchy rhythms and rambunctious energy, is more rustic than courtly. The wind and drum fanfares of the central trio, which are perfectly balanced by gracious phrases from the strings, may have been Haydn's tribute to the British love of pomp and ceremony.

The finale is largely a developmental fantasy on the motive — a leap upward followed by a quick run back down the scale — that launches the movement. The only significant contrast is provided by a passage for oboe and bassoon whose character suggests the second theme of a sonata form, though its placement and the movement's proportions do not. This infectious movement, like the earliest ones, has several spots where it appears to get stuck only to recover with aplomb and good humor, qualities that bring to mind critic Bernard Jacobson's pithy summation of this incomparable composer: "A lack of appreciation for Haydn is a species of the inability to enjoy the good things in life."