

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

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

Symphony No. 22 in E-flat major, "The Philosopher" (1764)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Eisenstadt, Austria, 1764; Esterházy Palace; Franz Joseph Haydn, director

PSO PREMIERE: 11 November 1960; Syria Mosque; William Steinberg, conductor

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 16 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: two oboes, English horn, bassoon, two horns, strings and continuo.

Count Ferdinand Maximilian von Morzin, a member of the Imperial Treasury and the Privy Council, Governor of Znojmo in Bohemia and Haydn's first employer, went broke in 1761. He fired his band of musicians, and Haydn, his young music director, faced the dismal prospect of returning to the penniless existence he had endured for several years after Karl Georg Reutter had physically thrown him out of the St. Stephen's Cathedral choir when his voice had broken a decade before. Just at the critical moment, however, Paul Anton Esterházy, Prince of Galanta and one of the Habsburg Empire's wealthiest citizens, took Haydn onto his staff as Deputy Music Director. Haydn moved with his new wife, Anna Maria (whom he had married in secrecy because his contract with Morzin required him to be unattached), to the Esterházy's principal seat in the small town of Eisenstadt (pop. 2,500), some thirty miles south of Vienna and not far from Rohrau, the composer's native village. Haydn's immediate superior in the musical establishment was the aged and ill Gregorius Werner, who reserved responsibilities for the Esterházy's church music for himself; the duties of the palace's instrumental music fell to Haydn. Despite the fact that his wife turned out to be a shrew of Brobdingnagian proportions (Haydn referred to her, privately, as "The Household Dragon"), Haydn was happy at Eisenstadt. He enjoyed his work, was respected and well treated by his employer, got on famously with the musicians in his charge, and composed with ease. When Anton died in 1762, he was succeeded as Prince by his brother Nicolaus, who, with a view toward making his musical establishment better reflect the grandeur of the family's station, enlarged the orchestra and increased Haydn's duties. When Werner died in 1766, Haydn became the Esterházy's *Kapellmeister*; he was connected with the family actively and in retirement until he died 43 years later.

From the time he joined the Esterházy establishment in 1761 until the family's new palace, Esterháza, was constructed at the southern end of Neusiedler Lake just across the border in Hungary five years later, Haydn composed nineteen symphonies. Perhaps the chief characteristic of these works is their sense of excited experimentation, which they share with much of the instrumental music of that time of transition from the old Baroque style to the revolutionary language of late-18th-century High Classicism. Fugues and ritornellos and solo episodes and chorale preludes jostle for prominence with folkish melodies and diatonic harmonies and square-cut, sectional forms. Among the most interesting of these early symphonies is a series of six (Nos. 11, 18, 21, 22, 34 and 49, all composed before 1768, despite their numbering) which are indebted to the four-movement plan of the old Italian *sonata da chiesa* ("church sonata"). This genre, originally played by two violins and cello-harpsichord continuo, was developed around the middle of the 17th century as an adornment to religious services, and so was inherently given to a certain weightiness of expression: its movements were abstract rather than dance-like; it was imitative and complex in texture; and it began with a large slow movement of austere demeanor. Apropos of his own works in this style, many years later Haydn told his biographer Georg August Griesinger that "in his symphonies he often described moral character. In one of his oldest, which he could not precisely indicate to me, 'the idea predominated of God speaking to an unrepentant sinner, asking him to reform, but the sinner in his rashness heeded not these exhortations.'" It is not impossible that the work to which Haydn forgetfully referred was the extraordinary Symphony No. 22 in E-flat of 1764, which during its composer's lifetime had already acquired the sobriquet of "The Philosopher" for the austerity and formality of its opening movement. The style of this *Adagio* is reminiscent of the old chorale prelude, with the theme (which the late eminent Haydn scholar H.C. Robbins Landon thought might be a yet-unidentified church melody) presented antiphonally in long notes by paired French horns and English horns above a trudging string accompaniment. The Symphony is rounded out by a bubbling, sonata-form *Presto* movement, a well-mannered *Menuetto* and a hunt-inspired *Finale*, all of which remain in the tonic key of E-flat and all of which exploit the pungent sound of the English and French horns.