

Franz Joseph Haydn (hi-duhn) 1732-1809

Franz Joseph Haydn, father of the symphony, close friend and teacher of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and for a brief time, teacher of Ludwig van Beethoven; was the first of the great classical composers. The term "classical music" refers to music written between the years 1750 and 1825. Because much of the musical activity of the three great classical composers—Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven—centered around Vienna, Austria, the classical period is often called the Viennese-Classical period as well. At the beginning of the classical period, musicians were dependent on wealthy citizens and the church; musicians were considered servants to them. Gradually this changed and by 1800 composers were writing primarily for the general public.



Franz Joseph Haydn was born on March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, an Austrian village near Vienna. His father wanted him to study music, and so young Haydn was sent to live with a cousin in Vienna when he was six years old. By the time he was eight, Haydn sang soprano in the St. Stephen's Cathedral choir in Vienna. Everyone who heard him sing praised his voice. Even the Empress Marie Theresa remarked upon the beauty of Joseph's singing. For nine years, Joseph sang in the choir at St. Stephen's and when his voice began to change during his teenage years, Joseph earned his living playing in an orchestra and accompanying singers and violinists on the harpsichord. By the time Joseph was twenty-seven years old, he was well-known throughout Vienna.

After many years of hard work, Haydn was hired to be the music director and composer for the Bohemian Count Ferdinand Maximilian von Morzin. The von Morzins had their own orchestra as did many wealthy nobles of their day. It was for this family's orchestra that Haydn wrote his first symphony. Hungarian Prince Paul Esterházy, a nobleman from one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Europe, was sitting in the audience when this symphony was performed. Prince Esterházy was charmed by Haydn's music and when the von Morzins could no longer afford to pay their musicians, Prince Esterházy asked Haydn to join his court and work for him.

So in 1761, when Haydn was twenty-nine, he joined the Esterházy service and became an assistant conductor of the orchestra. Two years later, Haydn was

made conductor. As the Esterházy's loved music, Haydn was kept very busy. Haydn had considerable freedom in writing music, but whenever the Esterházy's requested specific types of compositions, Haydn had to produce them. He was required to be present twice a day to receive orders and it was his duty to be in charge of all the music at the Esterházy court. During his thirty years with the Esterházy's private orchestra it became one of the finest in its time; publications of Haydn's compositions gained the family much fame throughout Europe. It was at the Esterházy estate where Haydn wrote *The Toy Symphony* for children, whom he dearly loved. While Haydn had no children of his own, he wished to write for children a symphony in which toy instruments were used. When Prince Nikolaus Esterházy died in 1790, Haydn was dismissed by Esterházy's son. In gratitude of his thirty years of service, Haydn was given a lifelong pension.

After leaving the Esterházy's home, Haydn visited London and gave a series of concerts. There he also wrote the *London Symphonies*—his last twelve symphonies—which include the famous *Surprise Symphony*. Because the English people were so honored and enthusiastic to have Haydn working in London, Oxford University conferred on him an Honorary Doctorate of Music.

Haydn composed more than one hundred symphonies. Although he did not write the very first symphony, he is called "the father of the symphony" because he developed the symphonic form to perfection, carefully defining and arranging it. The combination of instruments Haydn used in his symphonies became the basis of today's symphony orchestra. In addition to his works for a full orchestra Haydn also wrote over eighty string quartets (compositions for two violins, a viola, and a cello). Some of Haydn's popular quartets include *The Bird*, *The Sun Quartets*, and *The Emperor*. He also composed numerous concertos, sonatas, operas, and oratorios. Two of his most famous oratorios are *The Creation* and *The Seasons*.

On March 27, 1808, a great concert was held to celebrate Haydn's seventy-sixth birthday. It was little more than a year after this honorary event that the Austrian composer of "The Emperor's Hymn," Austria's national anthem, died in his sleep May 31, 1809.