

Franz Josef HAYDN
(1732-1809)

Symphony No. 104 in D Major, Hob. I:104

Adagio; Allegro
Andante
Menuet: Allegro
Finale: Spiritoso

To say that Franz Josef Haydn was a prolific composer would seem to be a monumental understatement. The catalog of his works occupies nearly 40 pages in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians and highlights include more operas than Puccini, more string quartets than Mozart and Beethoven combined, divertimenti, overtures, sonatas, and concerti in almost infinite variety, 32 pieces for mechanical clocks, and 104 symphonies. Born in the small Austrian village of Rohrau, he was sent, at the age of 5, to Vienna to live with an uncle and learn the violin, clavier, and kettledrum. Three years later, he became a chorister in St. Stephen's Cathedral, staying there until age 17 (sacked, purportedly, for cutting off the pigtail of a fellow chorister). After a period of near destitution, the young Haydn was engaged as music teacher to the 10 year old daughter of a wealthy neighbor. Impressed Haydn's playing, the neighbor introduced the young man to the musical world of Vienna. On May 1, 1761, he went to work for the Esterházy family, remaining in their employment for the next 30 years, while writing many of his instrumental compositions and operas for performance at their vast summer palace, Esterháza. When the Esterházy's curtailed their musical activities in 1790, Haydn was known throughout Europe and was widely considered the greatest living composer. The German-born violinist and international impresario, Johann Salomon, persuaded Haydn to travel to England, where Salomon commissioned a series of twenty concerts, each to include a first performance of a new composition. Two trips to London during the 1790s resulted in two sets of six symphonies each that remain centerpieces of the orchestral repertoire. Haydn ceased composing in 1803, after which he prefaced his correspondence with the text "Gone is all my strength; I am old and weak." He died in Vienna on May 31, 1809 – two weeks after Napoleon's army seized the city.

Haydn's greatest fame as a symphonic composer rests with two sets of symphonies that he composed for major foreign tours: the six Paris symphonies of 1785-1786 and the 12 London symphonies of 1791-1792 and 1793-1794. The *Symphony No. 104 in D Major* was composed in the spring of 1795 for his second series of concerts in London and premiered at the King's Theater on April 13, 1795. A contemporary review claimed that Haydn, "rewarded the good intentions of his friends by writing a new [Symphony] for the occasion, which for fullness, richness, and majesty, in all its parts, is thought by some of the best judges to surpass all his other compositions." Likewise, London's Morning Chronicle praised both the symphony and its performance: "This wonderful man never fails . . . and the various powers of his inventive and impassioned mind have seldom been conceived with more accuracy by the Band, or listened to with greater rapture by the hearers, than they were this evening."

OF NOTE: Despite a difficult start in life and an unhappy personal life, Haydn was once able to say of himself, "A secret feeling within me whispered: 'There are but few contented and happy men here below. Grief and care prevail everywhere; perhaps your labors may one day be the source for which the weary and worn, or the man burdened with affairs, may derive a few moments' rest and refreshment.'"