

Franz Joseph Haydn
Symphony No. 98 in B-flat

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN was born at Rohrau, Lower Austria, on March 31, 1732, and died in Vienna on May 31, 1809. He composed this symphony in 1792 and led the first performance on March 2 that year in London, at the Hanover Square Concert Rooms.

THE SCORE OF HAYDN'S SYMPHONY NO. 98 calls for one flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, solo keyboard, and strings. Ton Koopman conducts from the harpsichord at these performances.

THE HARPSICHORD USED AT THESE CONCERTS—a 1984 Hubbard owned by the BSO, and which was built with the support of Marilyn Brachman Hoffman—is a French double-manual harpsichord after Henri Hemsch, c. 1750.

From a report on "Concert- and Theatre-music in London" printed in the *Berlinische Musikalische Zeitung* on June 29, 1793:

The best concert in London is that of which Salomon is the entrepreneur, and which is, therefore, known as Salomon's Concert. The orchestra consists of 12 to 16 violins, 4 violas, 5 violoncellos and 4 contrabasses, flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns, trumpets and kettledrums—about 40 persons in all...The music sounds, in the hall, beautiful beyond any description...Salomon was always a good interpreter, but now one can say that he is superb. Perhaps, however, the presence of Haydn, who has been here the last two Carneval seasons and personally conducted his symphonies at Salomon's concerts, is in part responsible. In each concert two, often three Haydn symphonies are played. Madame Mara sings two arias; Signor Bruni, a castrato from the Italian opera here, the same; Viotti or Salomon plays a violin concerto. There is usually, besides this, a concerto for oboe, flute, harp or violoncello—a Concerto Grosso, or a quartet. The whole concert is in two parts, beginning at 8 o'clock in the evening and lasting until 11 or half-past 11....

By the time Haydn came in person to London, his music had been known there for some twenty years; the city's public was altogether ready to take him to its heart, and a favorable reception was assured. Freed from bondage by the death in September 1790 of Prince Nicholas Esterházy ("...it is a sad thing always to be a slave," Haydn had earlier written his friend and confidante Marianne von Genzinger, wife to Prince Nicholas's physician), the composer was just ready to accept a post with King Ferdinand of Naples and fulfill a lifelong ambition to see Italy when, that December, the London impresario Johann Peter Salomon appeared on his doorstep. Haydn responded favorably to Salomon's direct approach, and to the lucrative offer that came with it—payment for six symphonies (the ones we know as 93-98), a share of the concert profits, and an additional payment granting the English copyright to Salomon (Haydn thereby retaining the rights for copying and publication on the continent). Following a portentous parting from Mozart ("I fear, father, this will be our last meeting," said the younger to the elder composer) and a seventeen-day overland journey, he and Salomon crossed the Channel together, arriving in Dover on New Year's day of 1791.

That initial London visit, encompassing two musical seasons—the first ending in June 1791, the second running from February until June 1792—with time to travel and "draw breath" in between, found Haydn caught up in a steady stream of social as well as professional obligations. London musical life was very different from that on the continent, where aristocratic patronage held sway. Here, besides Salomon's own subscription series, there were William Cramer's rival Professional Concerts, numerous musical societies, opera at Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the Pantheon. Haydn was wined and dined from the start. He renewed acquaintance with old friends, established new ones—among them, Dr. Charles Burney, whose *General History of Music* is still a valuable source of information, with whom Haydn had previously corresponded, and who was instrumental in Oxford University's conferring upon the composer an honorary doctorate in July 1791—and somehow made the time during all this to write a considerable quantity of music.

There were more directly personal matters as well. Haydn was still salaried as Kappellmeister of Eszterháza, and his evasion in 1791 of an urgent request from Anton Esterházy, Nicholas's successor, to return there, was a matter of some concern. In December 1791 came the news of Mozart's death, and Haydn was beside himself with grief. An old infatuation with Luigia Polzelli, a mezzo-soprano whose husband had been a violinist at Eszterháza, was rekindled (through correspondence) when word of the husband's death reached Haydn in London; Haydn's wife played a part in the subsequent flare-up. And then followed his meeting and relationship with Rebecca Schroeter, later described by Haydn as "an English widow in London who loved me, who although she was sixty at the time, was still a beautiful and lovable woman, whom I would very readily have married if I had been free then."

Haydn left London on June 23, 1792. When he returned to England in February 1794, it was for the concerts at which his last six symphonies (nos. 99-104) were introduced, but only symphonies 99-101 were actually given under Salomon's auspices: the final three "London" symphonies were heard at Giovanni Battista Viotti's Opera Concerts, at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, Salomon having discontinued his own series when wartime circumstances—these were the years of the French Revolution and the subsequent war between France on one side, Britain and Austria on the other—made bringing over adequate talent from the continent exceedingly difficult.

The first performance of the Symphony No. 98—billed on the program as "New Grand Overture M.S....HAYDN" (M.S. tells us it was played from manuscript)—opened the second part of the 1792 season's third Haydn-Salomon concert, on March 2, 1792, at London's Hanover Square Rooms. As reported by the composer in his own journal, the first and last movements were encored, not only at the premiere, but also when the work was repeated, "by desire," a week later, on which occasion it was also "most loudly applauded."

As nearly always in his twelve London symphonies (the sole exception being No. 95), Haydn begins with a slow introduction—in this case, a somber, broad, minor-mode Adagio, fraught with portentous pauses, that is a version of the music we soon hear as the movement's main theme. In both the introduction and the start of the Allegro, the tune goes to strings alone, thereby reinforcing the connection. Once Haydn starts filling in the orchestral texture, the mood becomes one of unconstrained festivity, the composer seizing every possible opportunity for contrasts of instrumental color (note his typically brilliant use of woodwinds, and the ear-catching fanfares for brass and drums), texture, accent, and joyous contrapuntal elaboration.

A long lineage of annotators, among them Donald Francis Tovey early in the twentieth century and Michael Steinberg more recently, has viewed Haydn's slow movement, with its resemblances to the *Jupiter* Symphony's Andante, as a memorial to Mozart, who died on December 5, 1791, not long before the elder composer began work on his Symphony No. 98—even though, as annotator John N. Burk already pointed out when writing about the piece for Serge Koussevitzky's 1948 BSO performances, "[Tovey] would have had considerable difficulty in proving that Haydn had ever seen that score." Yet listening to Mozart's slow movement in immediate juxtaposition to Haydn's Adagio drives the point home: not only do they share the same key (F major), but also the mood and shape of their themes (Haydn's at the same time suggesting a somber take on "God save the King"), and an overall architectural scope that for Haydn (perhaps in tribute to Mozart) is more fantasia-like, more free-flowing, than his more formally structured theme-and-variation slow movements (which the slow movement of Symphony 98 both is and is not).

The minuet and Trio are typically Haydnesque in invention. The generally boisterous minuet manages to be simultaneously jaunty and weighty. The Trio, with its reduced instrumentation (flute, oboes, solo bassoon, and strings, with no brass or drums), and noteworthy for its gentility of phrasing, is lyrical and pensive.

The finale is not only Haydn's largest but also (by general consensus) his most ambitious; Michael Steinberg calls it "the biggest and most adventurous in any Haydn symphony." As always he is a master of unexpected continuations and contrasts; and his use of the woodwinds for color, punctuation, and commentary—a hallmark of his ever-evolving symphonic style—is as strikingly evident here as it has been elsewhere throughout the work. The form is a sort of reconceived sonata-rondo, but it's after the double-bar, following the repeat of the exposition, that the real surprises happen, starting with a solo (and there'll be more to come) for the concertmaster, who would have been Salomon himself. For the movement's closing section, Haydn actually slows the tempo somewhat (his marking is "*più moderato*," "more moderate"), but then his introduction of scurrying sixteenth-notes has the music sounding and moving even faster than it had done previously, with fanfares from the brass further enlivening the texture.

Even with all this, it's what happens just moments before the end that would most have delighted his audience, and surely Salomon as well. In keeping with the practice of the time, and as noted in the advertisements for these concerts, Haydn would have been conducting from the keyboard, and he now provides a brief solo for himself—described by a contemporary witness as "a Passage of attractive Brilliancy...which the Writer of this Memoir remembers him to have executed with the utmost Accuracy and Precision"—following upon which the music hurtles to its close, finishing with the closest an orchestra can get to some knowing winks.

Marc Mandel

THE FIRST BOSTON SYMPHONY PERFORMANCES of *Haydn's Symphony No. 98* were on December 15 and 16, 1905, with *Wilhelm Gericke* conducting, subsequent BSO performances being given by *Serge Koussevitzky* (April 1948), *Thor Johnson* (July 1955 at Tanglewood), *Charles Munch* (October 1960, in Boston, Wellesley, Cambridge, Detroit, and Ann Arbor), and, most recently, *Michael Tilson Thomas* (October 1969 in Boston, Villanova [PA],

Carnegie Hall, and Boston again, followed by three further Boston performances in December and January 1970, and a Tanglewood performance on July 19, 1970—the BSO's last performance until this season).