

The Enjoyment of **MUSIC**

SHORTER VERSION

Twelfth Edition

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The Ultimate Instrument: Haydn and the Symphony

"My Prince was always satisfied with my works. I not only had the encouragement of constant approval but as conductor of an orchestra I could make experiments, observe what produced an effect and what weakened it, and . . . improve, alter, make additions or omissions, and be as bold as I pleased."

—Joseph Haydn

KEY POINTS

- The **symphony**, a genre designed to demonstrate the expressive capabilities of a full orchestra, arose as one of the principal instrumental traditions during the Classical era.
- The heart of the Classical orchestra (about thirty to forty players) was the strings, assisted by woodwinds, brass, and percussion.
- Joseph Haydn wrote over 100 symphonies; among these, his last 12—the so-called *London Symphonies*—are his masterpieces in the genre.

In His Own Words

“A symphony must be like the world; it must embrace everything.”

—Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

The palette of tone colors available to a symphony composer is remarkable. Even the most complex synthesizers cannot match the nuance of live instruments, especially when they are combined by the dozens into a carefully coordinated unit—the orchestra. It was during the Classical era that the notion of the orchestra as the “ultimate instrument” began to develop, and composers sought to realize their greatest expressive potential through this medium, which remains to this day (even as it has changed over the centuries) probably the most versatile and powerful musical resource of the Western tradition. While you can hear orchestral sounds (often electronically manipulated) in television and film, experiencing a symphony orchestra in person is so much more compelling than hearing it on a recording. Witnessing the sonic and physical coordination and interaction between dozens of musicians is something you owe to yourself, now that you have learned (through LG 1 in Chapter 11) how to distinguish between instrumental timbres in an orchestra.

Early History of the Symphony

Overture

The **symphony**, which held the central place in Classical instrumental music, had its roots in the Italian opera **overture** of the early eighteenth century, an orchestral piece in three sections: fast-slow-fast. First played to introduce an opera, these three sections eventually became separate movements, to which the early Ger-

man symphonists added a number of innovations. One was the use of a quick, aggressively rhythmic theme rising from low to high register with such speed that it became known as a “rocket theme.” Equally important was the use of drawn-out *crescendos* (sometimes referred to as a steamroller effect), slowly gathering force as they built to a climax. Finally, composers added a dance movement, an elegant minuet.

The Classical Orchestra

The Classical masters established the orchestra as we know it today: an ensemble of the four instrumental families. The heart of the orchestra was the string family. Woodwinds provided varying colors and assisted the strings, often doubling them. The brass sustained the harmonies and contributed body to the sound, while the timpani supplied rhythmic life and vitality. The eighteenth-century orchestra numbered from thirty to forty players; thus, the volume of sound was still more appropriate for the salon than the concert hall. (We will hear a movement from Haydn’s Symphony No. 100 on eighteenth-century period instruments.)

Classical composers created a dynamic style of orchestral writing in which all the instruments participated actively and each timbre could be heard. The interchange of themes between the various instrumental groups assumed the excitement of a witty conversation; in this, the Classical symphony also resembled the string quartet.

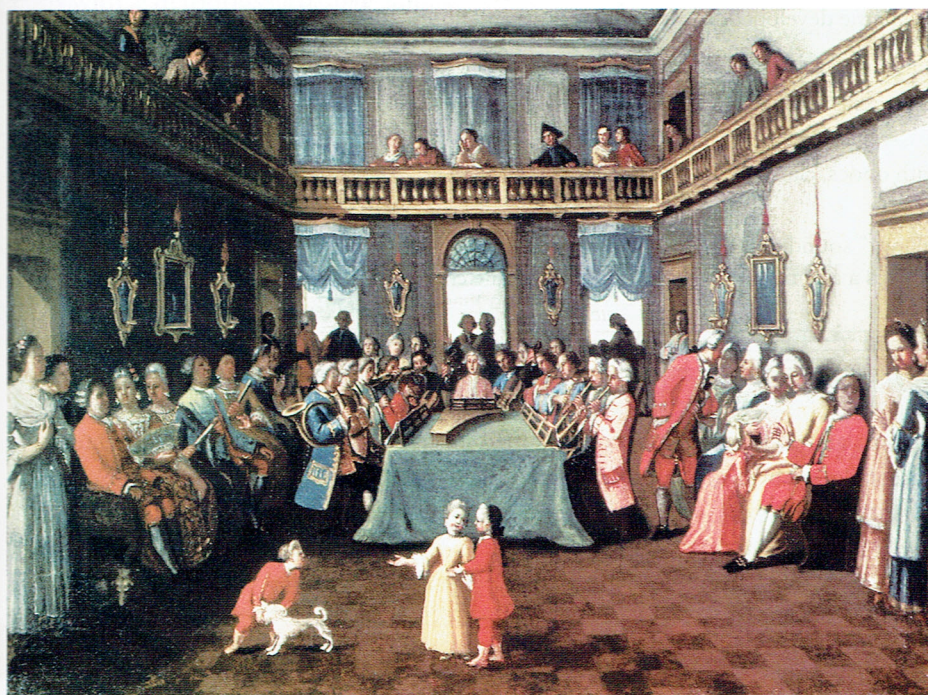
Haydn’s Symphony No. 100 (Military)

Joseph Haydn contributed well over 100 symphonies to the genre, establishing the four-movement structure and earning himself the nickname “father of the symphony.” His masterworks in the genre are his last set of 12, the so-called

In His Own Words

“Can you see the notes behave like waves? Up and down they go! Look, you can also see the mountains. You have to amuse yourself sometimes after being serious so long.”

—Joseph Haydn



Natural horns (without valves) and woodwinds are seen in this painting of a small orchestra performing in an eighteenth-century Venetian palace.

LISTENING GUIDE 19

Haydn: Symphony No. 100 in G Major (*Military*), II

DATE: 1794

MOVEMENTS: I. Adagio-Allegro; sonata-allegro form, G major
 I. **Allegretto; A-B-A' form, C major**
 III. Moderato; minuet and trio, G major
 IV. Presto; sonata-allegro form, G major

Second movement: Allegretto

What to Listen For

Melody Simple, graceful theme, in regular phrases.

Rhythm/meter Marchlike, regular duple meter.

Harmony Change from C major to C minor, then back to C major.

Texture Homophonic.

Form Three-part form, with varied return (A-B-A'); A is in binary form.

Expression Sudden dynamic contrasts.

Performing forces Large orchestra, including woodwinds, trumpets, French horns, and many percussion instruments.

0:00 **A section**—C major, rounded binary form $\parallel: a : \parallel b a : \parallel$

a = elegant, arched theme with grace notes; eight measures, with string and flute:



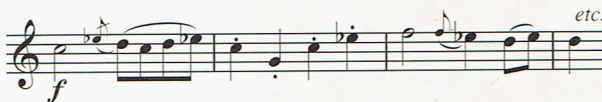
Repeated with oboes, clarinets, and bassoons.

0:29 **b** = eight+ four measures, theme developed from a, with strings and flute:



b + a phrases repeated with oboes, clarinets, and bassoons.

1:40 **B section**—C minor, “military” sound, with added percussion (triangle, cymbals, bass drum); begins with loud, C minor statement of a; mixes a and b themes with sudden dynamic changes:



2:45 **A section**—returns to C major, later adds percussion section; varied statements feature different instruments.

4:33 **Coda**—solo trumpet fanfare, followed by drum roll, leads to *fortissimo* chord in A-flat major; motive from theme a is repeated until full orchestra closing.

London Symphonies, commissioned for a concert series in London. These late works abound in expressive effects, including syncopation, sudden *crescendos* and accents, dramatic contrasts of soft and loud, daring modulations, and an imaginative plan in which each family of instruments plays its own part.

Haydn's Symphony No. 100, the *Military*, was first presented in 1794 during his second London visit and was received enthusiastically by the British public. Its nickname comes from the composer's use of percussion instruments associated with Turkish military music—namely the triangle, cymbals, bass drum, and bell tree (see p. 75). The work also features a solo trumpet fanfare, another colorful military effect. Haydn, as well as Mozart and Beethoven, knew of these new instruments from the Turkish Janissary bands that performed in Vienna; after many centuries of wars between the Austrian Hapsburg Empire and the powerful Ottoman Empire, cultural exchanges between these political domains allowed Western Europeans the opportunity to hear, and adopt, these exotic sounds.



The Main Hall of the Eszterházy Palace in Hungary, where the music master Haydn spent his summer months along with the court (eighteenth century).

The Second Movement: A-B-A'

Haydn's *Military* Symphony features a memorable second movement (LG 19) that combines the concept of variations with a simple three-part, or ternary, structure that can be diagrammed as A-B-A'. The graceful opening theme is heard in various guises that alter the timbre and harmony throughout. We are startled by the sudden change to the minor mode in the middle section, and also struck by the trumpet fanfare and drum roll that introduce the closing coda. The movement ends with a victorious *fortissimo* climax.

As you listen to the contrasting melodies and timbres of this movement, think again about the notion of conversation that we explored in Chapter 28. What can Haydn “tell” you when he has so many more sonic resources at his disposal?

CRITICAL THINKING

1. What contributions did Haydn make to the genre of the symphony?
2. How is this second movement similar to the second movement of the Haydn quartet examined in Chapter 28? How is it different?

YOUR TURN TO EXPLORE

Look for (ideally video) recordings of large instrumental ensembles from several varied traditions—Western orchestras, but also (for example) gamelan ensembles from Indonesia, a Vietnamese Nha Nhac performance, a big-band jazz group. How does the range/variety of timbres differ from ensemble to ensemble? How is each similar to and different from a Western orchestra?