

Three Times London

Thursday, May 14, 2026 · 11:00 · Musikverein

Riccardo Muti, conductor

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	HAYDN 1732–1809 <i>Symphony No. 102 in B-flat major, Hob. I:102</i>	28'
2	HAYDN 1732–1809 <i>Symphony No. 103 in E-flat major, Hob. I:103 ('Drumroll')</i>	30'
3	HAYDN 1732–1809 <i>Symphony No. 104 in D major, Hob. I:104 ('London')</i>	28'
TOTAL MUSIC		86'

Joseph Haydn

1732–1809

Symphony No. 102 in B-flat major, Hob. I:102

THE COMPOSER

Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in the Lower Austrian village of Rohrau, the son of a wheelwright, and rose from rural poverty to become the most famous composer in Europe. After years as a chorister at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and a precarious freelance youth, he entered in 1761 the service of the immensely wealthy Esterházy princes, for whom he would work for nearly three decades, much of it at the remote palace of Eszterháza in rural Hungary. There, as he later put it, he was 'cut off from the world' and 'forced to become original'. Out of that isolation came the body of work that effectively defined the Classical style: he is rightly called the father of both the symphony and the string quartet, having brought each to maturity over a long, experimental career of more than a hundred symphonies and almost seventy quartets. Genial, witty, and deeply professional, Haydn was admired across Europe, befriended and influenced the young Mozart, and taught the young Beethoven. After his prince's death in 1790 he travelled twice to London, where his late 'London' symphonies and the oratorio *The Creation* made him a celebrity. He died in Vienna in 1809, having lived through, and shaped, an entire era of music.

ABOUT THE WORK

By the time Haydn wrote his *Symphony No. 102*, he was the most famous composer in Europe and the toast of London. The twelve 'London' symphonies (Nos. 93–104) were composed for two extended visits to the English capital, in 1791–92 and 1794–95, arranged by the

28 minutes

violinist-impresario Johann Peter Salomon, who lured Haydn from his long service to the Esterházy court with the promise of a paying public and an orchestra larger and more brilliant than any he had known. No. 102 belongs to the second London journey: completed in 1794, it was first heard at the King's Theatre on 2 February 1795.

It is one of the grandest and most tightly argued symphonies Haydn ever wrote, even though it is the only one of his last five symphonies without a nickname to make it famous. In fact it was cheated of the best nickname of all. At its premiere a chandelier fell from the ceiling during the finale, yet nobody was hurt, reportedly because the audience had pressed forward to get a closer look at Haydn. The incident was later confused with the premiere of Symphony No. 96, which is why that work, and not this one, is known as the 'Miracle'. What No. 102 lacks in fame it makes up in sheer symphonic command: a slow introduction of mysterious gravity, a first movement of relentless rhythmic drive, and a finale of dazzling wit.

Haydn had by now perfected the public symphony as a form of theatre. Writing for a sophisticated paying audience rather than a private court, he learned to combine learned counterpoint with broad, immediately graspable gestures: sudden silences, surprising harmonic turns, jokes timed with an almost comic precision. No. 102 deploys all of these at the highest level. Its orchestration is full and bright, with prominent trumpets and timpani, and in the slow movement Haydn reached for an unusual coloristic effect: muted trumpets and muted timpani that lend the music a veiled, otherworldly glow. The result is a symphony of monumental ambition that never loses its sense of delight, the summation of decades of patient invention now poured out for the most appreciative public Haydn had ever met.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement opens with a slow introduction (Largo) of bare, sustained sound, a single held note blossoming into searching harmony, before the Allegro vivace bursts in, lean and propulsive, built from a deceptively plain little theme that Haydn drives forward with tireless energy and unexpected contrapuntal turns.

The Adagio is the symphony's secret jewel. The same music also exists as the slow movement of Haydn's Piano Trio in F-sharp minor, Hob. XV:26; here he clothes it in muted trumpets and veiled drum-taps, producing a hushed, almost hymn-like serenity. Listen for the way the sound seems to come from behind a gauze.

The third movement is a robust, swinging Menuetto, with a quieter, more serious Trio at its centre before the dance returns. The finale (Presto) is Haydn at his most exhilarating: a fleet rondo whose chattering main theme is tossed around the orchestra, punctuated by abrupt pauses and false endings that keep the audience guessing right up to the brilliant final chord.

Joseph Haydn

1732–1809

30 minutes

Symphony No. 103 in E-flat major, Hob. I:103 ('Drumroll')

THE COMPOSER

Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in the Lower Austrian village of Rohrau, the son of a wheelwright, and rose from rural poverty to become the most famous composer in Europe. After years as a chorister at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and a precarious freelance youth, he entered in 1761 the service of the immensely wealthy Esterházy princes, for whom he would work for nearly three decades, much of it at the remote palace of Eszterháza in rural Hungary. There, as he later put it, he was 'cut off from the world' and 'forced to become original'. Out of that isolation came the body of work that effectively defined the Classical style: he is rightly called the father of both the symphony and the string quartet, having brought each to maturity over a long, experimental career of more than a hundred symphonies and almost seventy quartets. Genial, witty, and deeply professional, Haydn was admired across Europe, befriended and influenced the young Mozart, and taught the young Beethoven. After his prince's death in 1790 he travelled twice to London, where his late 'London' symphonies and the oratorio *The Creation* made him a celebrity. He died in Vienna in 1809, having lived through, and shaped, an entire era of music.

ABOUT THE WORK

The 'Drumroll' Symphony, No. 103, is the penultimate of Haydn's twelve London symphonies and one of his boldest. It was first performed at the King's Theatre in London on 2 March 1795, during the second of Haydn's triumphant English sojourns, with the composer himself at the fortepiano, sharing the direction of an orchestra of about sixty players with the violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti. By this point Haydn was almost sixty-three, world-famous, and writing with the freedom of a master who knew exactly how to surprise the most attentive listeners.

The symphony takes its nickname from its astonishing opening gesture: not a chord, not a melody, but a solo roll on the timpani. It is an inspired piece of theatre. The roll emerges from silence, and out of it grows a dark, slow introduction, grave and questioning, before the music breaks into the sunlight of the Allegro. The drumroll is more

than a stunt: its shadow returns at a crucial moment near the end of the first movement, when the solemn introduction unexpectedly reappears, knitting the whole span together.

No. 103 shows Haydn's late style at full stretch: the fusion of folk-like directness with the most sophisticated structural thinking of the age. The slow movement is a double set of variations on two contrasting themes, one minor and one major, both of which have been traced to Croatian folk songs Haydn may have known; the finale is a glittering tour de force that opens with a horn call and is built almost entirely from a single theme. Throughout, the scoring exploits the brilliant London orchestra: prominent clarinets (a relatively new addition to Haydn's palette), gleaming brass, and those famous timpani. Together with its companions, No. 103 helped define what a symphony could be, the model that Beethoven would inherit and transform a few years later: the public symphony raised to the level of high art.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Everything begins with the drumroll. Listen for how it rises out of nothing, then gives way to a hushed, ominous introduction whose slow theme will return, transformed, much later. When the Allegro con spirito arrives it is buoyant and dancing, and its surprise comes near the close, when that grave opening music suddenly resurfaces before a brisk final dash.

The Andante is a set of double variations alternating a minor-key tune with a brighter major-key one; follow how Haydn re-dresses each return with fresh orchestral colour, including a lovely violin solo and warm woodwind writing.

The Menuetto is sturdy and broad, with a graceful, almost rustic Trio. The finale (Allegro con spirito) is the most ingenious of all: it opens with a single horn call, and from one simple theme Haydn spins an entire movement of relentless, joyous momentum, the idea chased through every section of the orchestra until it blazes home.

Joseph Haydn

1732–1809

Symphony No. 104 in D major, Hob. I:104 ('London')

THE COMPOSER

Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in the Lower Austrian village of Rohrau, the son of a wheelwright, and rose from rural poverty to become the most famous composer in Europe. After years as a chorister at St Stephen's Cathedral

28 minutes

in Vienna and a precarious freelance youth, he entered in 1761 the service of the immensely wealthy Esterházy princes, for whom he would work for nearly three decades, much of it at the remote palace of Eszterháza in rural Hungary. There, as he later put it, he was 'cut off from the world' and 'forced to become original'. Out of that isolation came the body of work that effectively defined the Classical style: he is rightly called the father of both the symphony and the string quartet, having brought each to maturity over a long, experimental career of more than a hundred symphonies and almost seventy quartets. Genial, witty, and deeply professional, Haydn was admired across Europe, befriended and influenced the young Mozart, and taught the young Beethoven. After his prince's death in 1790 he travelled twice to London, where his late 'London' symphonies and the oratorio *The Creation* made him a celebrity. He died in Vienna in 1809, having lived through, and shaped, an entire era of music.

ABOUT THE WORK

Symphony No. 104 is the last symphony Joseph Haydn ever wrote, the final word in a form he had done more than anyone to shape across more than a hundred works over four decades. Composed in 1795 and premiered at the King's Theatre in London on 4 May of that year, it is the twelfth and crowning member of the 'London' set. Although all twelve were written for the English capital, it is this one, by a quirk of nicknaming, that bears the title 'London' alone. Haydn directed the premiere, in a concert of his own music, and noted with satisfaction in his diary that he had made 4,000 gulden that evening: 'such a thing is possible only in England.'

That Haydn should close his symphonic life here, at the height of his fame and powers, lends No. 104 a valedictory grandeur. It distils everything he had learned: the symphony is broad, confident, and superbly balanced, with a richness of orchestration (full woodwind including clarinets, bright brass, timpani) that reflects the splendid London band at his disposal. Like several of its companions it opens with a slow introduction, here a stern, almost tragic fanfare in D minor that makes the warmth of the ensuing Allegro all the more radiant.

The symphony is also a meeting of high art and popular song. Its finale is built on a swinging tune that has been heard as a London street-vendor's cry ('Hot Cross Buns') and, by the Croatian scholar Franjo Kuhač, as 'Oj, Jelena', a ballad sung by the Croats around Eisenstadt, where Haydn had lived. Neither origin is certain. It is set over a drone that evokes a bagpipe or hurdy-gurdy: the learned symphonist tipping his hat to the music of the street and the village green. After a lifetime of innovation, surprise and wit, Haydn signs off with a

dance everyone could hum, lifted to symphonic dignity. It is a fittingly generous farewell from the composer who, more than any other, taught the symphony to speak to a whole public.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The symphony opens with a grave, arresting introduction (Adagio) in D minor, a unison fanfare and a brooding answer, before the Allegro arrives in radiant D major, its graceful main theme launching a movement of poise and quiet mastery. Notice how much Haydn builds from a single, songful idea.

The Andante is broad and serene, a long-breathed melody that Haydn interrupts midway with surprising minor-key storm clouds before the calm returns: a reminder that even in his last slow movement he kept the power to unsettle.

The Menuetto is vigorous and full-bodied, with sudden accents and a jaunty Trio led by oboe and bassoon. The finale (Spiritoso) is the famous one: listen for the rustic tune over its sustained drone, sounding like a bagpipe under a folk dance, which Haydn then develops with all his contrapuntal cunning. The seed of the whole movement is sown in those first bars, and from that humble song Haydn builds a jubilant, swelling close: the last page of his last symphony, and one of the great farewells in music.

FURTHER READING

ACCESSIBLE **The Life of Haydn**

David Wyn Jones, Cambridge University Press 2013

A concise modern life of Haydn, with a full account of the two London visits that produced the last twelve symphonies.

ACCESSIBLE **Haydn: His Life and Music**

H. C. Robbins Landon, David Wyn Jones, Indiana University Press 1988

Two Haydn specialists combine a life with a survey of the music, including the 'London' Symphonies Nos. 102 to 104.

DEEPER **The Cambridge Companion to Haydn**

Caryl Clark, Cambridge University Press 2005

Scholarly essays on Haydn's world and music, including his symphonies and his reception in London.

SOURCES

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2. Die Philharmoniker mit Hell-dunkel-Spielen bei Papa Haydn, Der Standard. <https://www.der-standard.at/story/3000000320747/die-philharmoniker-mit-hell-dunkel-spielen-bei-papa-haydn>
3. Symphony No. 102 (Haydn), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._102_\(Haydn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._102_(Haydn))
4. Symphony in B flat major, No. 102, Hungarian National Philharmonic (Filharmonikusok). <https://www.filharmonikusok.hu/en/muvek/b-dur-szimfonia-no-102/>
5. Haydn's Symphony No. 102 in B-flat Major (programme note), Boston Baroque. <https://baroque.boston/haydn-symphony-102>
6. Symphony No. 103 (Haydn), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._103_\(Haydn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._103_(Haydn))
7. Haydn: Symphony No. 103 (The Drumroll) (programme note), Burgess Hill Symphony Orchestra. <https://www.bhso.org.uk/work/haydn-symphony-no-103-the-drumroll-2/>
8. Symphony No. 104 (Haydn), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._104_\(Haydn\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._104_(Haydn))
9. Haydn: Symphony No. 104, 'London' (programme note), The Cleveland Orchestra. <https://www.clevelandorchestra.com/works/haydn-symphony-no-104-london>
10. Symphony No. 104 in D major, 'London', Joseph Haydn, Hollywood Bowl. <https://www.hollywoodbowl.com/musicdb/pieces/3916/symphony-no-104-london>
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12. Biography, Riccardo Muti (official site). <https://www.riccardomuti.com/en/biografia/>
13. The Life of Haydn, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9781107610811>
14. Haydn: His Life and Music, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9780253372659>
15. The Cambridge Companion to Haydn, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9780521541077>



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<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/wp-2026-05-14-muti>

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