

WIENER PHILHARMONIKER

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

28 minutes

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 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.

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

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

30 minutes

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.

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')

28 minutes

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 Lon-

don 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.'

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.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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

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