

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)



Born: 1732 (Rohrau, Austria)
Died: 1809 (Vienna, Austria)

FAST FACTS

- Learned music as a choirboy in Vienna
- Dismissed from the choir for playing a practical joke on another choir member
- Wrote, performed, and organized music and events for Prince Paul Anton Esterházy
- Is known for his sense of humor that is very clear in his music

Joseph Haydn began his long musical career in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, where he successfully auditioned into the choir. In the early 1700s, choirboys received a well-rounded education, so Haydn became proficient at singing, harpsichord, and violin. When he turned 17, his voice changed, so he left the cathedral choir to study music even further, realizing that he had received little training in the fundamentals of music. He studied and mastered music theory, the music of other composers, and took music composition lessons from a famous Italian composer and teacher. Haydn is also rumored to have been dismissed due to a practical joke he played on one of the other members of the choir.

After his departure, Haydn struggled to support himself through part-time teaching and even street-serenading. He also performed freelance work for the chapel in Vienna, and filled in as an extra musician at balls that were given for orphaned children. Haydn began to gain a reputation, however, through his independent music studies and performing career.

In 1761, Haydn entered the service of Prince Paul Anton Esterházy in Hungary. Haydn was required to compose music at a rapid pace, and to perform his works in concerts weekly, and to assist with chamber music concerts that took place nearly every day. He produced many of his 104 symphonies and other works in this position. When Haydn became lonely or restless, he traveled to Vienna to spend time with his friends, one of whom was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Haydn and Mozart expressed mutual admiration for each other's work and talent. During his travels, Haydn also became acquainted with the famous composer Ludwig van Beethoven, who cited Haydn as much of his inspiration in his own compositions.

Haydn died in 1809 of old age, but to overwhelming reception. His sense of humor in his music and talent for writing music that he knew Europeans would enjoy made Haydn greatly loved in his time and into the future.

Let's Listen!



- Haydn's *Symphony No. 94* is called the "Surprise Symphony" – see if you can guess why ([click here](#))!
- Haydn's *String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2* is known as the "Joke" because it contains surprising musical features: [click here](#).