

## **Symphony No. 88 in G major**

### **FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN**

B. March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Lower Austria

D. May 31, 1809, in Vienna, Austria

*Circumstances surrounding the premiere are unknown.*

*Scored for flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings (approx. 20 minutes).*

Haydn's greatest fame as a symphonic composer rests with two sets of symphonies he composed for major foreign tours: the six *Paris* symphonies of 1785-86 and the 12 *London* symphonies of 1791-92 and 1793-94. But Haydn was not idle during the intervening years. He produced five splendid symphonies, of which No. 88 in G major was the first and one of the finest.

Haydn's Symphony No. 88 is scored for flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings. It was apparently composed in 1787, after Haydn had returned to Hungary from Paris and resumed his duties as Kapellmeister to Prince Nicholas Esterházy.

Coming at a fully mature period in Haydn's creative life, Symphony No. 88 stands comparison with any of its peers, including many of the *London* symphonies that followed. It opens with a simple but highly expressive introduction, imparting a sense of importance to the impending sonata movement. Indeed, the Allegro that follows is one of Haydn's most tightly-knit pieces, dominated by a steadily pulsing seven-note thematic motive that pervades almost the entire movement. It is almost as relentless as the famed "Fate knocking at the door" theme of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, although the spirit of this Haydn movement is far more optimistic.

Notwithstanding the tremendous energy generated in the first movement, the trumpets and timpani remain silent until the 41<sup>st</sup> measure of the second movement, when they periodically punctuate a lovely hymn with abrupt outbursts. Once again, this symphony seems to anticipate outbursts in future slow movements -- the crashing chords of Haydn's own "Surprise" Symphony and the kitchen band of percussion effects that bursts in upon his "Military" Symphony.

The Minuet is a typically good-humored Haydnesque experience, whose phrases are peppered with snappy ornamental turns. The trio section earned the German nickname, "Mit dem Dudelsack," because of the droning bagpipe effect of its bass line. For its part, the finale is one of many closing movements in Haydn symphonies that blend principles of sonata and rondo form, but its tight construction does not hamper the merriment that brings this symphony to a breathless conclusion.

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra last performed Haydn's Symphony No. 88 May 30-June, 2002, with Itzhak Perlman conducting.

DSO SHOP @ THE MAX RECOMMENDS:

Haydn, Symphony No. 88, Sir Colin Davis conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra  
Amsterdam, Pentatone 5186126.

*Program notes by DR. RICHARD E. RODDA.*