

Meridian Music of the Week!

Issue No. 36

Each week ALL our children will be listening to a piece of classical music as part of our music lessons. We'll be talking about it in class and discussing what we like, what we don't like and what it makes us think or feel.

Parents/carers/family - why not join in and listen for yourself at home! All music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.

This week's music...



Three musical JOKES by Franz Joseph Haydn

Symphony No. 94 ('Surprise') (1791)

String Quartet Op.33 ('Joke') (1781)

Symphony No. 45 ('Farewell') (1772)

'Surprise' Symphony on YouTube - [HERE](#)

'Joke' String Quartet on YouTube - [HERE](#)

'Farewell' Symphony on YouTube - [HERE](#)

For our last 'Meridian Music of the Week' of this term, we'll listen to THREE different musical pieces by one of the greatest composers ever, Franz Joseph Haydn. They all have something in common – Haydn's musical sense of humour!

It's easy to think that all classical music is serious and written by serious composers. Well, a lot of it is! But lots of old composers also liked to have fun with their music – and the famous Austrian composer Haydn loved to play musical jokes on people. It's not a surprise that he was great friends with **Mozart** who also loved to have fun with music (remember him playing piano upside-down and blindfolded?)

Haydn lived a long life, 77 years, and spent a lot of that time in England where he was very popular in his time. He wrote so much music during his life that when he tried to make a list of all his work, the list was 123 pages long! He wrote over 100 symphonies, 19 operas, 44 piano sonatas and 115 religious masses for the church. Most of his music WAS serious, but I've chosen three pieces which show Haydn's more light-hearted side.

The first one, the second **movement** (section) of 'Symphony No.94', is often called the 'surprise' symphony. Haydn wrote it while he was performing concerts in London. If you listen to the YouTube link above, you'll hear a quiet, simple tune played gently on the strings. You might even recognise it. However, listen until 47 seconds – and you'll get a surprise! The violins and cellos are playing **pianissimo** (very quietly) and **pizzicato** (plucking the strings rather than bowing them). Then suddenly, out of nowhere, there's a single **fortissimo** (very loud) note from the whole orchestra including a huge 'bang' on the **tympani** (drums). You can imagine an audience being very startled by this as nobody would be expecting it! The music then immediately goes back to its quiet **dynamic** with only the strings playing. This really loud note only appears once and is then never played again for the rest of the 5 minutes of the music.

When he was an old man, someone asked Haydn if he had done this on purpose to wake up any people in the audience who might be snoozing during his music. Haydn said it wasn't to wake people up – but just to make them hear something new and different from what

they were used to hearing. I'm not sure I believe him though. I think he just wanted to make sure no-one was nodding off at his concert!

The blue circle shows the instruction for the strings to play pianissimo, the red circle shows the sudden, fortissimo 'surprise' note!

The second piece is the final movement of a **string quartet** (two violins, a viola and a cello). It's a light and jolly tune which is played at a **presto tempo** (a fast speed) and for the first 2 minutes there doesn't seem anything unusual about it. But, after that, Haydn starts to play a trick on the listener. The violins stop and you think the music has finished. But it hasn't! It starts again! Then there's another pause. Is it finished now? No! It carries on again. There are more and more long pauses but just as the audience think it might be time to clap – the tune comes back again. You get so used to this 'stopping/starting' trick that when the music finally DOES finish, it comes as a bit of a surprise. Haydn just wanted to confuse his audience so they wouldn't know when they were supposed to applaud for the end of the piece.

Part of the 'Joke' quartet. You can see four different 'G.P.' signs. This stands for 'General Pause' where the musicians stop – then start again.

The third piece, the 'Farewell Symphony', is one of his most famous musical jokes – and there's a true story behind it! Haydn used to work as the royal Master of Music for a Prince who was known to be quite selfish and self-important. One summer the Prince had hired Haydn and an Austrian orchestra from Vienna to play music for him at his castle in Hungary. They had to work hard making music for the Prince and they had to stay the whole summer in his cold, holiday castle, leaving their wives and families at home. But at the end of the summer, the Prince delayed going back to Vienna and the musicians in the orchestra began to get quite grumpy. Their rooms in the castle were freezing cold and they were missing their families.

Haydn didn't want to complain directly to the Prince, so instead he wrote a new piece of music for the orchestra to play for the Prince one night. And he hoped the Prince would get the point!

To show the Prince they were eager to leave the castle and go home, as the music was coming to an end, one by one, the orchestra players would blow out the candle on their music stands, gather their instrument and music up and then tiptoe off the stage. Slowly but surely, the orchestra, little by little, simply disappeared! By the end of the music, only Haydn and one other violinist was left, playing almost in darkness.

The Prince understood what Haydn was getting at and a couple of days later, he allowed his orchestra, and Haydn, to go back home to Vienna. This time Haydn's musical joke definitely got the result he wanted!



A violinist leaves the stage during a performance of the 'Farewell' Symphony.

Haydn became so popular with the musicians he worked with that they called him 'Papa Haydn' and the name stuck with him for much of his life. Great composer, great guy and great sense of humour. Farewell Haydn!

Haydn Fun Facts

1. Haydn joined the Vienna Choir when he was only 5 years old. But when he was 16 his voice changed and he had to leave. But not before he had cut off the pigtail of another choirboy's wig with some scissors. He got caned in public for being so naughty!
2. Sometimes Haydn's symphonies got nicknames that weren't anything to do with his musical jokes. One of his symphonies was called the 'Miracle' symphony because, at its first performance, a huge, glass chandelier fell from the ceiling onto the audience! Fortunately, no-one was injured – so they called it a 'miracle'.
3. Haydn loved working in London - and made lots of money doing it. In one year, he earned as much money in London as he had in TWENTY years as the selfish Prince's Master of Music!



Haydn's wife, Maria Anna Aloysia Appollonia.

4. Haydn's wife was famous for being very unpleasant. Her name was Maria and everyone said she was ugly, quarrelsome, stupid, unmusical and terrible at housekeeping! She thought Haydn was wasting his time writing music and used pages of his music to curl her hair with and line pastry dishes. He once called her 'that infernal beast'!
5. The selfish Prince, Haydn's boss for many years, didn't just get him to write music for him. Haydn had to live above the stables in the servants' quarters, act as the Prince's librarian, mend any of his broken musical instruments, tidy the musician's uniforms, give voice lessons and write reports on musicians who missed off work. Once, when the queen was visiting the Prince's castle, he even made Haydn go out in the fields and shoot some grouse for the royal banquet!

6. Haydn was great friends with Mozart and they used to play jokes on each other. Once, Mozart bet Haydn that he could write a piece of music that Haydn couldn't perform on the piano. When Haydn looked at the finished music, he started to read it through – but stopped suddenly in the middle of a page. There was a note that was supposed to be played in the **middle** of the piano, at exactly the same time as his right hand was supposed to be playing at the top, high end of the piano and his left hand at the bottom low end. 'Nobody can play that!' grumbled Haydn – but Mozart pushed him off the piano stool to show him how. When Mozart got to the impossible note in the middle of the music (and the middle of the piano), he leaned over and played it with his nose! Haydn laughed and saw the funny side. But he also joked to Mozart 'With a nose as big as yours, it becomes a little easier!'



Haydn and Mozart writing music together.

Listen & enjoy...

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher

