

# How was the piece received at its first performance?

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Explore the circumstances surrounding the composition of the last movement of the Drum Roll Symphony. How was the piece received at its first performance? Haydn wrote Symphony 103 (nicknamed the Drum Roll Symphony due to the long roll on the kettle drums at the start of the 1st movement) in the winter of 1794/1795 during his second visit to London. The success and popularity Haydn experienced in London during his first visit made him eager to return, along with the demand from Salomon that he should compose 6 new symphonies that Salomon himself would conduct in a series of concerts.

However this trip, which was planned to be in the winter of 1793, was postponed due to the reluctance of Prince Anton to let Haydn have a second leave of absence (during this time there was much unrest in Europe). Haydn contented himself to stay in Vienna for a while and finally left for London on January 19, 1794, arriving two days after the scheduled first concert Salomon had promised him. Haydn's visit to London was highly anticipated by the public and his fame meant he spent time in the highest of company including The Prince of Wales and the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester with whom he performed chambermusic.

These social events did not get in the way of his compositions and he produced a flood of music including his last 6 symphonies (it is thought that he had decided earlier that he would compose no more symphonies after his return to Vienna). This can be seen in Symphony 103 which was his penultimate symphony. While in his first visit to London he adjusted his style

to please the audience, he was now sure they were on his side and so his last six symphonies aimed to push his listeners.

They were more complex and overall were on a grander scale than his previous symphonies. Symphony 103 has many unusual features in it which shows Haydn's interest in exploring the boundaries of his composition. Symphony 103, like a lot of his other works, has influences from the traditional music he heard during his 30 years working as the Kapellmeister for Prince Esterhazy of Austria. During the summer the family, and so Haydn, would spend time in their summer palace of Esterhaza which was in Hungary on the border with Austria.

There, Haydn became hugely interested in the local traditional music as well as Croatian folk songs which he heard from people living in Croatian ethnic enclaves found on the east border of Austria with Hungary. These influences can be heard throughout the symphony, with the 3rd movement using some of the unusual Hungarian rhythms and the last being based on an old Croatian folk tune, which is first played by the violins after the horn opening, called " Divjcica potok gazi" which means " the little girl treads on a brook".

The song melody line Haydn's adaptation for his symphony While the earlier movements were meant to challenge the audience, the last movement of most of Haydn's symphonies was a lively, dance-like piece which would be light and undemanding (at least for the listener! ). Haydn clearly had this in mind when composing the last movement of this symphony as it is full of energy and variety with varying polyphonic and homophonic texture.

However he did still use new ideas such as giving the basses and cellos a separate line in some parts which had hardly been done before.

He also took advantage in using a clarinet which was a new instrument in that time and had only been used by him once before in symphony 102. This symphony was performed in the fourth of the Opera concerts on Monday 2nd March 1795. This was not where the symphony was originally meant to premiere as Salomon had planned it to be part of his own concert series however Salomon suddenly had to pull out of doing his own series due to being in financial disarray.

Be that as it may, he agreed to that Haydn could perform his new symphonies in the Opera Concerts, in which series he himself frequently appeared as soloist. The new concerts were arranged on the largest scale known at that time. The performances took place every two weeks starting on Monday 2nd February 1795 in the great new concert hall of the King's Theatre which seated 800 audiences, more than most of the other important concert venues. Viotti was the artistic director and Haydn shared the conductorship with Vincenzo Federici, who for three years had been accompanist at the Italian opera in London.

The orchestra led by the violinist William Cramer and comprised of no less than sixty players which was one of the largest orchestras seen in that day. Haydn himself was thought to have played the fortepiano in this premiere although this is now usually left out of performances. The piece was played, as requested by Haydn, in the second half so it could show its superiority

over the other works played in the concert. The symphony was a complete success as the Sun wrote " HAYDN's new Overture was much applauded.

It is a fine mixture of grandeur and fancy. " The Morning Chronicles reviewer also wrote " Another new Overture, by the fertile and enchanting Haydn, was performed; which, as usual, had continual strokes of genius, both in air and harmony. The Introduction excited deepest attention, the Allegro charmed, the Andante was encored, the Minuets, especially the trio, were playful and sweet, and the last movement was equal, if not superior to the preceding. " It is said that the second movement was even encored.

The symphony was later played again as it was so popular however before Haydn introduced to Vienna he made a cut in the final. This cut took away the modulation into C flat, which although stood alone in this movement, was hinted at in the 3rd movement. This cut made the Finale tighter and conductors have kept this cut in out of respect for Haydn. Overall though this symphony showed the genius that Haydn was in being able to turn a simple tune into a complex and demanding symphony and paved the way for him to be known as " the Shakespeare of music".