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About the Cover . . .

by

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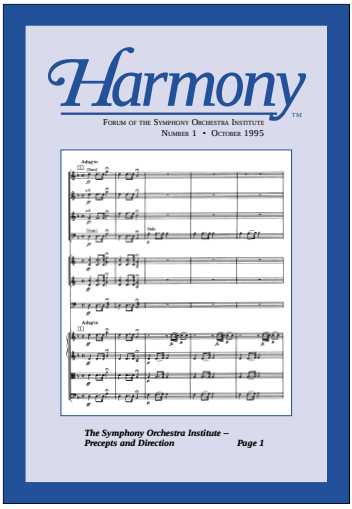

Did you recognize the opening bars of Franz Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 104 in D major (the so-called *London* Symphony)? We chose this score because it is the final symphony by the man known as the father of the form—the last word in the most prolific symphonic career ever known. Written 200 years ago, this symphony stands at the pinnacle of that first great period of orchestral music. Like all towering masterworks, it provides an unusual vantage point: one can glance back over the complicated, somewhat obsure, and difficult birth of the form—it was the Italian opera overture, or *sinfonia*, that gave us our word "symphony"—and simultane-ously look forward a mere five years to Beethoven's first effort in the form he would make his own.

During his long life (particularly by 18th-century standards) and rich career, Haydn witnessed the amazing transformation of the orchestra from a private court jewel to an institution dedicated to a large paying public. In his early years as *Kepellmeister* to the Esterházy family, Haydn served as conductor, music director, artistic administrator, personnel manager, librarian, and resident composer all rolled into one. But by the 1790s, when Haydn traveled to London at the invitation of the great impresario Johann Peter Salomon, an ambitious concert-organizer and true businessman, the world had changed.

Symphony No. 104 was performed for the first time in May 1795, at a special benefit concert that was the big event of the London season. The orchestra was 60 strong, a luxury Haydn particularly enjoyed after years of working with small provincial ensembles. He rejoiced over the box-office receipts (the concert was unusually lucrative), and delighted in reading a review of the concert—which, of course, proclaimed his genius—in the *Morning Chronicle*.

Although Haydn has come down to us as "Papa Haydn" and as the "Father of the Symphony," he cannot honestly be credited with inventing the symphony. More

than any other composer, though, he laid the foundation for symphonic music as we know it today. He inherited a relatively lightweight form and transformed it into one of the most expressive, flexible, and important forms in Western art. In his last symphonies, he began to write for the modern orchestra—pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, plus timpani and strings. His symphonic career, more than 30 years long, changed the face of music.

Phillip Huscher is the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.