



# Robert Greenberg

Historian, Composer, Pianist, Speaker, Author

## Music History Monday: An Anthem to Remember

Posted by Robert Greenberg on Monday, February 12th, 2018



On this day 221 years ago – February 12, 1797 – Joseph Haydn’s String Quartet in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3 received its premiere. The quartet’s nickname – “Emperor” – stems from the theme of its second movement, a theme composed a few months before the string quartet.

### Background

In 1761, the 29 year-old Joseph Haydn was hired as a musical functionary by the fabulously wealthy Esterhazy family of Hungary. 29 years later – on September 28, 1790 – Joseph Haydn’s boss and benefactor Prince Nicolas Esterhazy kicked the scepter and passed on to the great unknown. Nicholas was succeeded by his son, Prince Anton, who didn’t give a rat’s rump for music; one of Anton’s first acts as Prince was to dismiss almost all the musicians his father had hired. Haydn was granted a 1400 florin annual salary and sent on his way.



A portrait of Haydn by Thomas Hardy, painted in London in 1791

Was a grief-stricken Haydn left wondering what to do? No he was not. In fact, we can well imagine the spry, energetic Haydn doing some flying chest-bumps around the castle, jumping into some splits, hitting a moonwalk and then the rug for some one-handed pushups, because he was free at last!

Haydn left the Esterhazy castle for his house in Vienna, where the offers began to pour in. He had already turned down a number of such job offers when a stranger knocked on his door and introduced himself with these words: “I am Salomon of London and have come to fetch you. Tomorrow we will arrange an accord.”

And that they did. The deal Haydn and Salomon worked out was a sweet one: go to London for a year or two, earn the big ducats, write some music, get some performances, have a good time. Salomon paid Haydn 5000 florins upfront, this down payment alone being equal to 6½ years of his salary under Prince Nicholas.

Many of Haydn’s friends feared for his health; he was, after all, 58 years old and had never traveled anywhere further than western Hungary. Haydn, however, was thrilled at the prospect of his “most excellent English adventure”, so when a worried Mozart said to him:

“Oh, Papa, you have no education for the wide world and you speak so few languages,” Haydn confidently answered, “But my language is understood all over the world.”

Truer words have rarely been spoken. Haydn left Vienna on December 15, 1790 and returned 19 months later, on July 24, 1792. He had experienced such phenomenal success in England that a second such residency was called for, one that also lasted 19 months, from January 1794 until August of 1795.

Haydn’s two residencies in London were triumphs: triumphs for Haydn, triumphs for the English, and most importantly, triumphs for human culture, taken as widely as we please. Among other works, Haydn’s two trips to London saw the composition of his last twelve symphonies, collectively known as the “London” or “Salomon” Symphonies. They are, each of them, transcendent masterworks.

(Speaking of Johann Peter Salomon: for all of his many accomplishments, it was his coup in capturing Haydn that he is best remembered. Salomon is buried in Westminster Abbey; on the tablet that marks his tomb is inscribed: **“He brought Haydn to England in 1791 and 1794.”**)

For reasons both musical and personal, the English fell in love with Haydn. That’s because Haydn was not just a great composer but a genuinely lovable man: caring, generous, self-effacing, funny and boundlessly energetic; someone who had a kind word for just about everybody. (Except, most notably, his wife Maria Anna Aloysia Apollonia Keller, whom he referred to as the “INFERNAL BEAST” [Haydn’s caps]. Yes, I am aware that it takes two to make a bad marriage, but there are exceptions, and Haydn’s marriage was an exception. Maria Anna Haydn was, indeed, an INFERNAL BEAST.)

Haydn returned the love the English showered on him. He was awed by the size and bustle of London and was particularly taken by the extraordinary ceremony and pomp indulged by the English nobility and crown. (Let us not forget that Haydn composed 16 operas and he knew good theater when he saw it!)

### The Anthem

In particular, Haydn was enamored of the patriotic English anthem *God Save the King* (or queen, depending), a tune folks in the United States know as *My Country 'Tis of Thee*. On returning home to Austria, Haydn expressed the desire to create a like anthem for Austria, one that could:

“be used at festive occasions and show in full measure our respect, love, and devotion to our ruler, Emperor Francis II.”



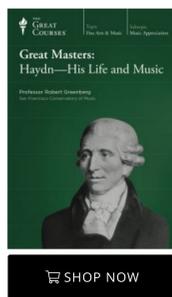
Haydn’s original, handwritten manuscript of *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser* (“God Save Emperor Francis”)

Haydn’s friend and benefactor Baron Gottfried von Swieten took Haydn’s wish to the President of Lower Austria, Count Franz von Saurau, who commissioned Haydn to compose a hymn to the poem *God save Franz the Emperor* by the poet Lorenz Leopold Haschka.

The hymn Haydn composed has become his single most famous composition. Haydn loved this hymn more than any other music he ever wrote, which is one of the reasons why he so proudly built the second movement of his String Quartet Op. 76, No. 3 around it.

According to Haydn’s servants, he played the hymn on the piano three or four times a day, every day, up until 5 days before his death on May 31, 1809. Thank goodness Haydn didn’t live to see what his beautiful hymn was destined to go through over the next 180 years; it would have broken his heart.

With various lyrics attached, Haydn’s hymn was the melody of the Austrian national anthem from 1797 until 1938. In March 1938, Nazi Germany marched into and annexed Austria, making it part of “greater Germany.” Thus the region formerly-known-as-Austria had to adopt the German national anthem as its own, an anthem established by the Weimar Republic in 1922 and entitled the *Deutschlandlied* (“Song of Germany”). Conveniently, that German national anthem *also* employed Haydn’s melody, though with different words, words made infamous during Hitler’s Third Reich (1933-1945): *“Deutschland, Deutschland über alles”* (“Germany, Germany above all else”).



With the war over, the victorious allies banned the *Deutschlandlied* and its performance became a punishable offence.

In 1949, the American, British, and French zones of German occupation became the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the Soviet zone of occupation was dubbed the German Democratic Republic (“GDR”; East Germany). With the establishment of these two states, the hunt for appropriate national anthems was on. In East Germany, an entirely new national anthem was created, entitled (appropriately enough) *Auferstanden aus Ruinen* (“Risen from Ruins”). In West Germany, it wasn’t until 1952 – after much wrangling by the Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer – that the Federal Republic adopted the third verse of the *Deutschlandlied* as its official national anthem.

In 1991, that third verse of the *Deutschlandlied* was declared the national anthem of a now reunited Germany. Thus Haydn’s hymn remains the melody of the German national anthem.

Unfortunately, Haydn’s melody is no longer associated with his beloved Austria. The post-war world wrestled with a difficult question: whether to consider Austria as having been a complicit partner of Nazi Germany or Nazi Germany’s first territorial victim. Not surprisingly, the Austrians preferred the latter scenario, and thus – given its association with Nazi Germany – abandoned Haydn’s hymn melody entirely. In 1946 Austria created a new national anthem based on music that was said to be by Mozart but was actually composed by one Johann Holzer (1753–1818).

[🛒 Learn More in Great Masters: Haydn — His Life and Music](#)

More Posts:

« Music History Monday: The Opera that Almost Wasn’t

Music History Monday: A Model Citizen »

Categories : Music History Mondays

Tags : Emperor Quartet, Haydn, Johann Peter Salomon, Joseph Haydn, London, Music History Monday, San Francisco Performances, String Quartet in C Major Op. 76 No. 3, The Great Courses

## EXPLORE

Search:

SEARCH

Podcast

SUBSCRIBE: 🎧 📺 📻 📧 📧 📧

Subscribe:

I consent to the storing of this data as outlined in the [privacy policy](#).

JOIN

Latest Tweets

Tweets by @rgreenbergmusic

Dr. Robert Greenberg @rgreenbergmusic  
#DrBobPrescribes Lambert, Hendricks & Ross!

The vocal ensemble that is Lambert, Hendricks & Ross grew from a long and storied tradition of vocal ensembles, going back over 500 years. The group was the brainchild of the American jazz singer Dave Lambert...



Jan 11, 2022

Don't miss a post - Subscribe Today:

Subscribe

