PROGRAM NOTES by Paul Schiavo

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

March in E-flat major for the Royal Society of Musicians, H. VIII:3bis

Born: March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria
Died: May 31, 1809, in Vienna
Work composed: 1792
World premiere: Unknown, but probably spring 1792, in London

Like Mozart, Haydn was born in Austria. But whereas Mozart traveled widely, especially early in his career, Haydn spent most of his life in or near Vienna. For the bulk of this time he was employed as resident composer at the court of Nikolaus, Prince Esterházy, one of the leading peers of the Hapsburg Empire and a lover of music. During his three-decade tenure in that post, Haydn produced an enormous quantity of music, including more than 80 symphonies.

Although Haydn was sequestered for much of each year at the Esterházy palaces, his compositions became known and admired throughout Europe. Among the results of his growing fame was an invitation to visit London, which then, as now, boasted a lively concert scene. In 1791–92 and again in 1794–95 Haydn obtained leave from his duties to the Esterházy family and traveled to England, where he presented numerous concerts of his music. Received as a celebrated musician, he was feted by his colleagues and by the English aristocracy, and even dined with the royal family. The social whirl in which the composer found himself occasionally required the exercise of his talents. So it was that, in the spring of 1792, he wrote a March for the Prince of Wales as a tribute to the heir to the British throne.

Later that same season, Haydn was asked to contribute a piece to the yearly charity concert of the Royal Society of Musicians. This was a benevolent organization dedicated to caring for indigent musicians in their old age. Founded in 1738, it has enjoyed support from many famous composers, including Handel, Mendelssohn and Dvořák. The organization still exists and still upholds a tradition of commencing its annual charity concert with a march commissioned for the occasion. In order to provide such music quickly, Haydn revised his March for the Prince of Wales, adding strings to the original scoring for wind band, thereby creating a piece for orchestra.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR
A timpani exclamation heralds a robust fanfare that recurs throughout the piece, much in the manner of a rondo theme. Both this idea and those that follow rely heavily on woodwinds and brass instruments, a remembrance of the wind ensemble for which Haydn first wrote this march.

Scored for 2 flutes, 2 clarinets and 2 bassoons; 2 horns and 2 trumpets; timpani and strings.

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