

Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 45 (Farewell) in F-sharp Minor

Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

Symphony No. 45 in F-sharp minor, was composed by in 1772. It is particularly noteworthy that the symphony (along with others of this Sturm und Drang period of Haydn's career, such as Nos. 39, 44 and 49) is written in a minor key, which was highly unconventional for the time. The symphony is one of Haydn's better-known works from this period. Nickname (Farewell)

It was written for Haydn's patron, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, while he, Haydn and the court orchestra were at the Prince's summer palace in Eszterhaza. The stay there had been longer than expected, and most of the musicians had been forced to leave their wives back at home in Eisenstadt, so in the last movement of the symphony, Haydn subtly hinted to his patron that perhaps he might like to allow the musicians to return home: during the final adagio each musician stops playing, snuffs out the candle on his music stand, and leaves in turn, so that at the end, there are just two muted violins left playing. Esterházy apparently got the message: the court returned to Eisenstadt the day following the performance.

The first movement of the work is a turbulent affair in F-sharp minor, an extremely unusual key to use at the time of the work. It opens in a manner typical of Haydn's Sturm und Drang period, with descending minor arpeggios in the first violins against syncopated notes in the second violins and held chords in the winds. The movement can be explained structurally in terms of sonata form, but it departs from the standard model in a number of ways (just before the recapitulation, for example, new material is introduced, which might have been used as the second subject in the exposition in a more conventional work).

The second, slow, movement in A major is also in sonata form. It begins with a relaxed melody played by muted violins, featuring a repeated "hiccuping" motif. The mood gradually becomes more somber and meditative with an alternation between major and minor modes, resembling many similar passages in the later work of Schubert. There follows a series of dissonant suspensions carried across the bar line, which are extended to extraordinary lengths by Haydn when the same material appears in the recapitulation. James Webster (see reference below) hears this music as programmatic, expressing the yearning for home.

The following minuet is in the key of F-sharp major; its main peculiarity is that the final cadence of each section is made very weak (falling on the third beat), creating a sense of incompleteness.

The last movement begins as a characteristic Haydn finale in fast tempo, written in sonata form in the home key of F-sharp minor. The rhythmic intensity is increased at one point through the use of *barriolage* in the first violin part. The music eventually reaches the end of the recapitulation in a passage that sounds very much as if it were the end of the symphony, but suddenly breaks off in a dominant cadence.

What follows is a long "coda" — essentially a second slow movement — which is extremely unusual in Classical symphonies and probably sounded very surprising to the Prince. This is written in 3/8 time and modulates from A major to F-sharp major, during which time the musicians take their leave. The ending is a kind of deliberate anticlimax and is usually performed as a very soft *pianissimo*.

This final adagio includes a bit of stage business, several of the musicians are given little solos to play just before departing. The order of departure is: first oboe and second horn (solos), bassoon (no solo), second oboe and first horn (solos), double bass (solo), cello (no solo), orchestral violins (solos; first chair players silent), viola (no solo). The first chair violinists remain to complete the work.