

Symphony No. 103 in E \flat major

by Joseph Haydn

The “Drumroll” Symphony

Introduction and Overall Vision

By the time when his patron of 28 years (Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy) died, in September 1790, Haydn's fame had already spread across Europe. This fame contributed to Haydn becoming one of the most sought-after composers of his day. Johann Peter Salomon, an English virtuoso violinist, composer, and impresario, commissioned Haydn to write two sets of six symphonies. These twelve symphonies (No. 93 to 104), traditionally referred to as the London Symphonies, or Salomon Symphonies, are considered to be the crown examples of Haydn's symphonic output (Webster, 2020) and prime examples of the classical symphonic form. The first series of concerts in London took place during the years 1791-92 and correspond to the “London” Symphonies Nos. 93-98. It was for the second series of concerts, the 1794-95 season, that Haydn composed Symphony No. 103 in E-flat, the “Drumroll”, which would be premiered on March 2nd, 1795. Many of these symphonies have nicknames, somehow related to the musical content. Examples include the “Surprise” (No. 94) because of sudden loud “noises” and surprising harmonies in the slow movement, or the “Clock” (No. 101) because of the constant “ticking” sound of the regular rhythm in the second movement.

Despite a few exceptions, Haydn began to expand the orchestral forces to include two of each wind instrument from Symphony No. 99 in E-flat major (1793) onwards. The dimensions of the individual movements were also enlarged, and hence, the form itself. Most of these late symphonies begin with slow introductions that preface the Allegro sonata form. These were self-contained entities that point beyond themselves to the main body of the movement. Other general traits of these late symphonies, all present in Symphony No. 103, are the increasing expressivity of the wind writing and the increased autonomy of the cello writing from doubling the bass which, together with the increased number of wind instruments, contributed to changes in sonority with denser textures and a more grandiose overall sound.

The timpani solo that opens the first movement gave Symphony No. 103 the nickname “the Drumroll”. The introduction that follows is also unique in the sense that the theme is stated in unison by the low strings and bassoon, and eventually taken up by the violins. Noted music analyst Donald Tovey (Tovey, 1935, p. 171) has made the point that:

“The contemporaries of Beethoven must have forgotten the darkness of Haydn's introductory theme if they thought Beethoven's genius more eccentric than that shown in this opening. Perhaps, however, they had become accustomed to make too much allowance for Haydn's notorious humour when such awe-inspiring tones came to their ears. And indeed, it is true that when this introduction has come to its deepest gloom cheerfulness arises notes out of its last“.

The majestic introduction then gives way to folk-like rusticity in the *Allegro*. The sombre introduction returns just before the end of the movement as if to dispel all gaiety, but only momentarily as the *Allegro* resumes to finish the movement.

The Andante movement is a variation consisting of two themes in two keys (C minor and C major), both with a shared melodic F-sharp (raised fourth degree of the scale). When this is heard in the C major theme, it alludes to the Lydian mode which probably suggests a folk origin for the melody.

Andante

Violin



The image shows two staves of musical notation for a violin part. The top staff is labeled 'Violin' and the bottom staff is unlabeled. The music is in 3/4 time and C major. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a prominent F-sharp (the raised fourth degree of the scale) appearing in the second measure of each staff. The first staff ends with a double bar line, and the second staff continues the melody and also ends with a double bar line.

Example 1 - Excerpt of the C Major theme of the Andante.

The key of E-flat returns in the Minuet. The F-sharp of the previous movement returns briefly (with an enharmonic equivalent of G-flat) as a subsidiary key. This harmonic treatment is a fine example of Haydn's long-range attempts to integrate all movements into one organic whole.

The fourth movement, a quasi rondo-sonata form, begins with a brief horn call which, upon repetition, becomes a counterpoint to the principal subject stated in the first violins. Hadow (Hadow, 1897) postulates that this brisk melodic theme was drawn of the Croatian folksong "A little girl treads on a brook".

The movement is a display of Haydn's contrapuntal craft. By using motivic developments of both the folk-like melody and the horn call, he creates the illusion of a rondo-sonata form.

Comparison of Haydn's 4th movement theme with the Croatian melody "A little girl treads on a brook"

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Violin I' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Croatian melody'. Both are in 2/4 time. The Haydn score is in G major (one sharp) and the Croatian melody is in E major (two sharps). Red vertical boxes highlight specific rhythmic patterns in both staves, and blue boxes highlight similar melodic contours.

Analysis of the First Movement

Here is a schematic overview of the entire movement in *Table 1*¹

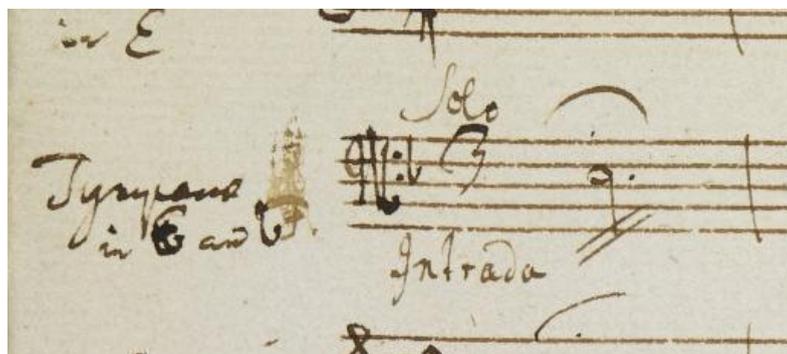
Measures	Section	Thematic Material
1	Drumroll (<i>suspended note or small cadenza?</i>)	
2 – 13	Introduction (<i>Adagio</i>)	i
14 – 25	<i>Re-statement</i>	i'
26 – 39	<i>Transition (to a "wrong" tonality)</i>	t
40 – 48	Exposition (<i>Allegro con spirito</i>) <i>First Theme</i>	A
48 – 60	<i>Transition I</i>	T
60 – 79	<i>Secondary theme 1 (in the dominant)</i>	B
80 – 94	<i>Secondary theme 2</i>	B'
	Development	
94 – 104	<i>fugato</i>	D
104 – 112	<i>With new counterpoint</i>	
112 – 131	<i>In diminution</i>	D'
132 – 143	<i>stretto</i>	
144 – 153	<i>In a different tonality: D-flat major</i>	D"
154 – 159	<i>re-transition</i>	
	Recapitulation	
159 – 167	<i>First Theme</i>	A
167 – 179	<i>Transition I</i>	T
180 – 188	<i>Secondary theme 2</i>	B'
189 – 201	<i>New transition/preparation</i>	T'
	Coda	
202 – 213	<i>1st Coda section=Adagio (reprise)</i>	C=i
214 – 220	<i>2nd Coda section (as 74 – 80 in E-flat Major)</i>	c'1=b3
220 – 229	<i>3rd Coda section</i>	c'2-cadence

As stated, the symphony starts with the longest of Haydn's symphonic introduction, containing more measures and beats than any of his other ones. This *Adagio*

¹ For the purpose of this analysis, the score used is the typeset copy by the Center for Computer Assisted Research in the Humanities (CCARH), produced in 2007, which is available to download at <https://ks.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/5/51/IMSLP28916-PMLP07584-haydn-sym-103-ccarh.pdf>

introduction exercises an unusually great influence on the *Allegro con spirito*. Introductions often show motivic connections to the *Allegro* sections. However, this symphony is one of the first examples where the introduction is heard again in an abbreviated form in the *coda*. Some authors even claim that the introduction to No. 103 is the first in the symphonic literature that is presented at its *original* tempo, albeit in an abridged version, near the end of the *Allegro* (mm. 202-213). Thematic material from the Introduction also appears briefly, in rhythmic diminution, in places of the *Allegro*: mm. 74-75 and 214-215; and during the development at mm. 112-114. One other curiosity pointed out by some authors is the similarity of the beginning of the *Adagio* with the Gregorian *Dies Irae*, (Schroeder, 1985, p. 71) which might be fortuitous but nevertheless establishes a rather sombre atmosphere.

The *Adagio* introduction, *I*, is preceded by a timpani roll. Haydn used suspended notes or chords to begin some of his symphonic introductions. In this, however, the use of the timpani alone for this purpose is an innovation. This drumroll raises some interesting interpretational questions. Should it be performed as a simple drumroll? At which dynamic intensity? Could Haydn have intended for a small introductory solo on the tympani finishing with a roll on the E-flat? The autograph manuscript leaves some doubts because of the “intrada” and “solo” indications that preceded the E-flat roll. These doubts are further emphasized by the fact that, according to his biographer Griesinger, Haydn was actively pursuing ways to surprise the English audience in his symphonies (Gotwals, 1968, p. 33).



While more traditional interpretations lean towards a roll performed with different choices of dynamics, some modern interpretations allow for some improvisational liberty to the timpanist. The roll leads to a sombre melodic line presented by the cellos, string basses, and bassoons.

Adagio.

The score shows the first phrase of the Introduction in E-flat major, 3/4 time. It begins with a piano introduction marked 'p' and 'trem.' in the left hand. The right hand plays a melodic line starting on G4, moving stepwise up to D5. The piece concludes with a perfect cadence in E-flat major.

Example 4 - First phrase of the Introduction: i1

The introduction *I* unfolds in three phases: mm. 1-13, 14-25, and 25-39. The first phrase, *i1*, is a twelve-measure phase prefixed by the famous drumroll. This can be further divided in two sub-phrases: the first ending with a suspensive cadence and the second with a perfect cadence in E-flat. The second section, *i2*, has the same melodic material as *i1* but with textural, harmonical, and orchestrational variations. After the first clear affirmation of the E-flat tonality in mm. 13 with a perfect cadence, the theme is repeated with variation in mm. 14-25. Here, the original bass melody now appears in the treble instrument with an accompaniment of off-beats:

The score illustrates the second phrase of the Introduction, measures 14-25. The melodic material from the first phrase is repeated, but the texture is varied. The original bass melody now appears in the treble instrument, accompanied by off-beats in the bass. The dynamics are marked 'p' (piano).

Example 5 – Second phrase of the Introduction: i2

While the off-beats provide a clear harmonic underlay which the first statement did not have, the cadential points in mm. 18-19 and mm. 24-25 are harmonically the same as in mm. 6-7 and 12-13 respectively. There is however a tonicization of F minor in mm. 22 which Haydn will repeat later.

The last phrase, *i3*, is a transition for fourteen measures that leads, in a rather inconclusive way, into C-minor. In mm. 28 we see the same tonicization of F minor used in mm. 22. However, it now acts as a preparation of a modulation to C minor which develops from mm. 30 and ends with octave Gs in mm. 39, the dominant of the “supposed” C minor.

Example 6 - Third phrase of the Introduction: *i3*

The unity of this introduction is partially maintained by an almost continuous quarter-note pulse. The dynamic marking is mostly *piano*, with *sforzandos* and a *diminuendo* only appearing in the last five measures. This is the only Haydn symphonic introduction to end on a “wrong dominant”.

Furthermore, Haydn uses several elements of the introduction in the rest of the movement. He employs the melodic elements of the introduction in all of the themes (which is unusual because of the different characters between the themes) and constantly plays around with the chromatic elements that appear in the introduction. Most notably, the introduction is repeated in an abridged version at the end of the *Allegro*.

The exposition begins in E-flat Major, creating a striking harmonic shift from the end of the introduction. This is further reinforced by the metric instability generated by starting the *Allegro* with an anacrusis.

finishing with a diminished 7th chord that resolves to a cadential 6/4 in B-flat. **b3** has six measures which concludes this section.

Example 9 - Excerpt of the Secondary theme 1 (starting on mm. 60), showing the phrase **b1** and the beginning of **b2**

This then leads to a Secondary Theme 2, **B'**, which has a more melodic character and harmonic stability. The new theme, which begins in mm. 80, is derived from the interval of a 6th, an interval from the introduction theme, and the scale fragment of **T**. This section can be further divided into **b'1** with four measures, **b'2** also four measures and **b'3** which is the conclusion of this Secondary Theme 2.

Example 10 - Excerpt of the Secondary theme 2 (starting on mm. 80), showing the phrase **b'1** and the beginning of **b'2**

This Secondary Theme 2 is also in the dominant with the phrase **b'1** finishing on a half cadence in F Major (mm. 83) and both **b'2** and **b'3** ending with the perfect cadences in B-flat. The last phrase, **b'3**, is also orchestrated in tutti, in typical classical style, to reinforce the conclusion of the exposition.

Measure 94 marks the beginning of the development which is divided in three sections. The first section, **D**, can be divided in two phrases. **d1** is a *fugato*, based on the first motif of **A**, finishing with an ostinato on the 2nd violins that connects with the entrance of the 1st violins on mm. 100. This signals the beginning of **d2**. While in **d1** the development is achieved through *fugato*, in **d2** it is generated by two canonic sequences, presented simultaneously, based on motifs of **A**. The first sequence has the 1st violins against cellos, and the second has the flutes and 2nd violins against the 1st oboe and violas.

Example 11 - Excerpt showing the ostinato in the 2nd violins that "bridges" **d1** with **d2** and the canonic exchanges that characterize the second phrase of **D**.

The cadence at the end of **d2** (mm. 112) is a half cadence in C-minor. Haydn also signals the end of this first development section with a "dramatic" pause which further emphasizes the suspended nature of the half cadence. This is a device that he will use again later.²

² One might argue that the use of these fermatas throughout the movement (mm. 39, 112, 131, 159, 201) might be a rhetorical device related to the opening drumroll. These fermatas tend to emphasise the disruptive effect of dominants that do not immediately resolve to their tonics (except in the case of mm. 159). The development is remarkable not only because the manipulation of the themes are done in some surprising ways, with great emphasis in some and omission in others, but also because Haydn consistently brings the music to a kind of standstill before continuing along in somewhat unexpected harmonic paths.



Example 12 - The last measures of **d1** (mm. 111), showing the end of the suspended cadence in the dominant of C-minor, followed by the fermata and the introduction of the second developmental section **D'**, in E-flat Major.

The second development section, **D'**, is built with harmonic complexity through the rhythmic diminution of the introduction theme, *i*. The first phrase, **d'1**, starts at mm. 112 and goes until mm. 120, finishing with a modulation to F-minor.

d'2, which starts in mm. 121, is a rather natural evolution from **d'1** but with some canonical characteristics and a clear emphasis on the dominant of F minor. This is reinforced in mm. 123 to 125 by a pedal in the basses. Haydn interrupts the development once more, after (Somfai)r having clearly established F minor, with a fermata at the end of mm. 131. This is again a disruptive element which he uses to "jump", rather surprisingly, to D-flat. The last phrase of this second developmental section, **d'3**, starts at mm. 132, with a pedal in the dominant of D-flat which will characterise the entire phrase. The initial motif of **A** is now transformed to a whole-tone instead of a semitone. It is passed around, first in the strings and later in the winds. During this phrase Haydn hints at a conclusion or retransition by arriving at a B-flat chord in the second inversion in mm. 138 and an E-flat chord in mm. 140. However, he goes on a detour with a sequence of descending thirds (E-flat, C, A-flat, F, D-flat) using the violas, 2nd oboe, second clarinet and again the viola. He then arrives at yet another section of the development.

The image shows a musical score excerpt for Example 13, spanning measures 135 to 143. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Flute (Fl), Oboe (Ob 1-2), Clarinet (Cl 1-2), Bassoon (Fag 1-2), Cor (Cor 1-2), Violin I (Vln1), Violin II (Vln2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello/Double Bass (Vc+Cb). The second system includes parts for Flute (Fl), Oboe (Ob 1-2), Clarinet (Cl 1-2), Bassoon (Fag 1-2), Violin I (Vln1), Violin II (Vln2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello/Double Bass (Vc+Cb). The key signature is B-flat major. The score is marked with dynamics like 'p' and 'Solo'. Red circles highlight specific notes in the Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Viola parts, and a red oval highlights a note in the Bassoon part. The Viola part also has a red circle around a note. The Vc+Cb part is marked 'Bassi pizz.' and 'p'.

Example 13 - Excerpt of the d'3 phrase with the highlighted descending thirds sequence that prepares the change to the last section of the development, **D''**

D'', the last section of the development, starts at mm. 144 with a presentation of the **B'** theme in D-flat Major. There is a prolongation in the second phrase of the theme that serves as the conclusion of the development that finishes in mm. 159, on the dominant of E-flat Major. This prolongation shows a “real sequence” of three fragments, starting at mm. 149, with a harmonic progression through D-flat Major, E-flat minor, and F minor. A fermata suspends the development half-way through mm. 159 but this time, dare I say surprisingly, Haydn starts the recapitulation on the “correct” tonic with the anacrusis to mm. 160!

This recapitulation does not have any modulation throughout. The first part, the return of **A**, is a faithful repetition of the beginning, and connects again with the transition **T**. However, there is a modification in the last three measures to emphasise the cadence in mm. 178 to 179.

Haydn then goes straight into Secondary Theme 2, **B'** skipping Secondary Theme 1, which might suggest the importance of **B'** as the “proper” secondary theme of the movement. This return of **B'** uses both **b'1** and **b'2** but the third phrase, again in tutti, is a transition that prepares the *Coda*. By emphatically introducing the note C-flat, Haydn creates a cadenza-like passage which inevitably suspends, again with a fermata, on a diminished-seventh chord. Here there is a small detail of orchestration; only one woodwind, the 1st clarinet, joins the violas by playing the diminished 5th of the chord. In mm. 202 to 213, we hear the previously mentioned reprise of the introduction, **i**, with the drumroll included. This ends with a perfect cadence which marks the return of the *Allegro con spirito*. This *Allegro* is another *Coda* section, **C'**, that begins with a restatement of the **b3** thematic material in E-flat major. One might argue that the reprise of the *Adagio*, in the recapitulation, takes the place of section **B**, not only because this secondary theme is not present in the recapitulation but because the thematic material that follows the reprise of the *Adagio* is similar to that which closed the **B** section in mm. 74 to 80.

Allegro con spirito.



Example 14 - “recapitulation” of the **b3** material used in E-flat major, as part of the final cadence

After this reuse of the **b3** material Haydn brings the movement to an end with a concluding cadential section, **c'2**, from mm. 220 until the end, based on the first motif of the main theme.

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