

# In the footsteps of Joseph Haydn in Vienna

FROM THE OLD UNIVERSITY TO HAYDN'S FINAL RESTING PLACE

A CITY WALK BY ANNA EHRLICH

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**DURATION:** (AS FAR AS HAYDN'S RESIDENCE, WITHOUT VISITING HIS TOMBSTONE): APPROX. 1 ½ HOURS.

The first part of our walk takes us through the old city, which was once surrounded by mighty city walls.

## Joseph Haydn's last celebration

On March 27, 1808, everybody who was anybody flocked to the new assembly hall of the university, now the seat of the **Academy of Sciences** on Dr. Ignaz Seipl Platz. They gathered there to celebrate the 76th birthday of Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) with a performance of his oratorio "The Creation". To the sound of great rejoicing, the old master was carried into the ceremonial hall in a sedan chair – the composer found his last public appearance very fatiguing. Amongst the guests was Haydn's former pupil Beethoven, who at the time could not have guessed that one of his works – "Wellingtons Sieg in der Schlacht bey Vittoria" – would have its first performance here in 1813. (Beethoven conducted this performance, but due to his deafness he was only able to appreciate the audience's thunderous applause from their clapping movements.)<sup>1</sup>

## The "Anker" Clock

We leave the assembly hall and take one of the two streets that run to the right and left of it to Luegerplatz, and then cross Rotenturmstrasse. After a few steps and we find ourselves on **Hoher Markt**. It is well worth spending a quarter of an hour here at twelve noon: on a bridge above your head is the "Anker" Clock, designed by the painter Franz von Matsch and named after the Anker insurance company. Every day at noon, the clock presents a historic spectacle. To the sound of organ music, twelve personalities and couples from the pages of Austrian history parade slowly

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<sup>1</sup> The magnificent ceremonial hall of the Academy of Sciences can be visited from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. unless an event is taking place (please ask the porter).

past the large glass window, each of them symbolizing an hour. The second last figure, representing the eleventh hour, is Empress Maria Theresa with her husband Emperor Franz I. As a boy, Haydn frequently sang for the royal couple in the chapel of the Imperial Palace and Schönbrunn Palace chapel. Now as a grown man, he follows her as the last figure in the procession, originally to the sound of the Emperor's Hymn which he composed for Maria Theresa's grandson. Following the downfall of the monarchy, for political reasons this tune was replaced by the melody of "The heavens are telling the glory of God" from The Creation (No. 13), although this somewhat disturbs the musical balance of the whole.

### St. Stephen's boys' choir

As soon as the last notes have died away, we return to Rotenturmstrasse, turning right onto Stephansplatz, to the west portal, the main entrance to **St. Stephen's Cathedral**. The buildings opposite (today the middle of the square) included the house of the cathedral's musical director, where the boys of the cathedral choir were accommodated. Joseph Haydn was one of them for nine years. In 1740 the young boy from Rohrau was entrusted to the musical director and composer Georg Reutter the Younger (1708–1772) to be trained: later he was followed by his younger brother Johann Michael. Life as a choirboy was varied: the choir not only sang in the cathedral, but also at the celebrations of the aristocracy and the imperial court.

An anecdote has it that the young Haydn was beaten at Schönbrunn at the behest of Empress Maria Theresa for climbing around on the scaffolding there. The boys received nothing apart from the praise heaped upon them for their singing, as well as violin and piano lessons, board and lodging. When Joseph Haydn's voice broke in 1749 and he was no longer able to sing in the choir, he found himself quite alone in the big city again, and often had no idea how he should earn a living.

### Wedding and marriage

The cathedral is also linked to a later chapter of Haydn's life: on 26 November 1760 it was here that he secretly married Anna Maria Aloysia Keller, a wigmaker's daughter from Vienna. He was actually in love with her younger sister Therese, but in 1756 she joined the Clarissine convent of St. Nicholas in Vienna.

It is hardly surprising that his was an unhappy marriage: *"My wife was unable to bear children, and I was therefore less indifferent to the charms of other women,"* was one of the few comments Haydn later made about his marriage. The lady was said to have been uneducated, with no understanding for her brilliant husband, and was also a spendthrift, so that he even once described her as a "hellish beast".

### Haydn and Mozart

Behind the cathedral we find a passageway to Domgasse, where we find ourselves just a few steps away from **Mozarthaus Vienna**, a recently established new museum.<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart lived here very comfortably and happily from September 29, 1784 till April 24, 1787. He received many visitors. In 1785 his father Leopold was his guest for over two months, and was present when Joseph Haydn came to pay his respects. The latter assured him on this occasion:

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<sup>2</sup> Mozarthaus Vienna: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. daily, reduced admission with the Vienna City Card. The Vienna Mozart centre covering over 1,000 square meters.

*"I tell you before God, as an honest man, that your son is the greatest composer whose person and name I know. He has taste, and in addition to this superb composition skills."*

At this time Haydn had recently completed his string quartets opus 33, the "Russian" quartets. These inspired Mozart to write six string quartets dedicated to Haydn. The two composers enjoyed the ties of friendship and mutual admiration, and inspired one another in their work.

## Hard years of youth

Returning to Stephansplatz, we cross Graben and up Seilergasse as far as Kupferschmiedgasse, where we turn left onto **Neuer Markt**, which looked completely different in Haydn's time. The "Mehlgrube" – a very fashionable place of entertainment on the site of today's Hotel Ambassador – offered Haydn and other unemployed musicians an opportunity to earn a little money, especially during Carnival. There they played for the festivities of the aristocracy: because of the noble lineage of the patrons, these events were often derisively referred to as "ancestry balls".

We now make a brief leap in time from Haydn's needy young years to his years of fame and glory. From 1792 till 1797, Haydn lived in one of the finest houses on the square, the **Hoföbsterisches Haus** on the right, which stood on the site of no. 2 and was demolished in 1894. A memorial plaque reminds us that it was here that he composed the **Emperor's Hymn**. The end of the square was once dominated by Palais Schwarzenberg, where Haydn's "Creation" was first performed with overwhelming success to a select audience on April 30, 1798.

But now back to the year 1750, when the homeless Haydn was still trying to eke out a living. With the help of the court poet and librettist Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782), a friend secured the melancholy young man an introduction to the opera composer and singing teacher Nicola Antonio Porpora (1686–1768). We now follow the two men on their way there through Plankengasse and Stallburggasse, walking with them through the Michaeler passage, which leads from Habsburgergasse to Michaelerplatz. Our path takes us past the **Grosses Michaelerhaus** next to the church, where the grateful Haydn slept in a miserable garret for the next five years in Porpora's service. It was unheated, and so rundown that the snow even blew in through the leaky roof - but at least there was a piano: *"I could work on my worm-eaten piano, and was as happy as a king."*

An additional story was subsequently added to the house, and the garret no longer remains, with only a memorial plaque to remind us of it. Haydn later admitted that he had "greatly profited in singing, in composition and in Italian whilst with Porpora" who had given him "the real fundamentals of musical composition". Metastasio also lived in the same house, and it was he who helped Haydn perfect his knowledge of Italian, and also gave him many useful contacts. At Metastasio's insistence, Haydn was even permitted to give piano lessons to his jealously guarded protégé, the celebrated composer and singer Marianna Martinez (1744–1812).

During the course of his lifetime, Haydn set many of the court poet's texts to music, so he is also depicted alongside Salieri and Mozart on the monument to him in the Church of the Minor Friars. However, Metastasio was not buried there, but in the crypt of **St. Michael's Church**, where his tomb can be found in the left transept.

Yet another memorial plaque tells us that Haydn played Vienna's largest baroque organ in this church in 1749 at the age of seventeen. At the time Haydn lived from giving lessons, coaching

singers and playing for the church services on Sundays and religious holidays. For 60 gulden a year, he was engaged by the Brothers of Mercy in Leopoldstadt, where he had to play for the eight o'clock mass. At ten o'clock he then played in Count Haugwitz's chapel, and at eleven o'clock he sang mass in St. Stephen's Cathedral for 17 kreuzers.

### Musical director to the Esterházy family

There is no evidence that Haydn had any contact with the aristocratic Esterházy family whilst he was still living at Michaelerhaus, although the widowed Princess Maria Octavia (1683–1762) lived on the first floor of the building. She was the mother of Prince Paul Anton and Prince Nikolaus Joseph, whom Haydn served as musical director from the year 1761. If we now walk a few steps down Kohlmarkt, turning left into Wallnerstrasse, we soon find ourselves in front of **Palais Esterházy**, where Haydn was a frequent visitor in later years. After the death of Prince Nikolaus Joseph, the orchestra was disbanded by the unmusical Prince Anton. His celebrated musical director was given a handsome pension, and took a room with Johann Nepomuk Hamberger, a court official residing on Wasserkunstbastei (now Seilerstätte 19/Fichtegasse 2). Beethoven visited Haydn here only a few times for music lessons. The house is no longer standing today: not far from here, though, at Seilerstätte 30, is the fascinating, interactive **House of Music**.<sup>3</sup> On the third floor you will find a documentation room with souvenirs of Haydn. It is well worth a visit.

But now let us return to Palais Esterházy with its beautiful courtyard: the princely family resided here in wintertime. After the death of Prince Paul Anton, the Esterházy orchestra was re-established by Prince Nikolaus. The orchestra was again headed by Haydn, who had made two journeys to England in the mean time and acquired a house in Vienna's Gumpendorf district. The prince's personal physician, Peter Leopold Genzinger, was married to Marianne Kayser, a gifted pianist with whom Haydn shared an intellectual friendship. He was often a guest at her salon at Schottenhof. Incidentally, behind the palace on Haarhof is the entrance to the Esterházy cellars. Haydn, now a musician of world fame, was a frequent patron, as he was a wine connoisseur and was partial to a glass from time to time.

We now return to Michaelerplatz, passing through St. Michael's gate to enter the **Imperial Palace**. On the left of the entranceway, you will see a grated window with theatrical masks above it. These remind us of the old Imperial Palace Theater, which stood on this site till 1888. It functioned as a theater, an opera house (premieres of three Mozart operas, performances of Haydn's operas) and a concert hall. The Emperor's Hymn was played here for the first time on February 12, 1797 to commemorate the birthday of Emperor Franz II. The German national anthem uses this melody to this day.

*Are you perhaps feeling a little weary by now? Let's take a seat for a while at one of the cafés in the Imperial Palace and take some refreshment before we leave the inner city! The second part of our walk takes us out into the suburbs.*

### Haydn monument and Haydn House

We now walk to Heldenplatz before crossing Ringstrasse. The monument to Empress Maria Theresa surrounded by her advisers and generals was created by Kaspar Zumbusch and unveiled in the year 1888. To the left of the empress we also see her personal physician Gerhard van Swieten,

<sup>3</sup> House of Music: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. daily, reduced admission with the Vienna City Card. Vienna's interactive sound museum.

and behind him in high relief the composers Gluck, Haydn, and Mozart as a child. We now walk past the Museum of Fine Arts to Babenbergerstrasse and on up Mariahilfer Strasse heading out of town to Mariahilf Church (no. 63).

In front of the church is Josef Natter's **Haydn monument**, financed by donations organized by Haydn's admirers and unveiled in the year 1887. The figure of Joseph Haydn is extremely expressive: almost lifelike and somewhat astonished, he gazes down at the hectic comings and goings of the modern shopping street at his feet. Moving on out of town we reach Esterházygasse, which leads down to Esterházy Park, where a relict of the World War II still stands: the flak tower that now houses the "House of the Sea". This is where the summer palace of the princely family once stood, and Haydn was also in their service here. Since there is nothing left of this beautiful palace today, let us continue down Mariahilfer Strasse to Webgasse without making this detour. We turn left into this street and walk down it until we get to Schmalzhofgasse, where we turn right and then left: we now find ourselves in Haydngasse.

In Haydn's time the street was called "Kleine Steingasse". Haydn bought house no. 78 (now no. 19, "**Haydn House**"<sup>4</sup>) in the suburb of Obere Windmühle from master weaver Ignaz Weissgram because of its "lonely and peaceful location". Haydn added the second floor and moved in only in the summer of 1797 after his second journey to England. His niece Ernestine Loder, his cook Anna Kremnitzer and his secretary and copyist Johann Florian Elssler, father of the celebrated dancer Fanny Elssler, all moved in with him. Haydn's wife no longer lived with him, as he found accommodation for her with Anton Stoll, a school teacher in Baden, until her death. He never visited her, only traveling to the spa resort of Baden for the opening of her last will and testament on March 22, 1800.

## Death and burial

Haydn survived his wife by nine years. He died in this very house – now a fascinating museum – on May 31, 1809 during the French occupation of Vienna. Napoleon was a great admirer of his, and mounted a guard of honor. All the French officers were amongst the mourners in the long procession at Haydn's funeral. The procession wound its way from Haydn's Residence Schmalzhofgasse and then down either Webgasse or Stumpergasse to Gumpendorfer Strasse and the **Church of St. Aegydt** (corner of Brückengasse, memorial plaque), where the body was carried round the church three times before the funeral service. Haydn was then taken down Brückengasse and over the river Wien and along Bräuhausgasse to the lines and Hundsturm Cemetery, the nearest public graveyard. The cemetery was closed in 1873 and all that remains is the little Haydn Park on Gaudenzdorfer Gürtel, where an inconspicuous tombstone in a piece of wall can still be seen to this day.

Haydn's body was exhumed in the year 1820, and reburied in the mausoleum of the "Mountain Church" ("Bergkirche") in **Eisenstadt**. The body was reunited with its skull in the year 1953, but that's another story ...

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<sup>4</sup> Haydn House: daily except Mon 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 2 - 6 p.m. (closed on Jan. 1, May 1, Dec. 25), reduced admission with the Vienna City Card.

*Scharlatane" and other titles). Together with a dedicated team of guides, she regularly offers carefully researched city sightseeing tours and theme trips under the title of "Wienführung – Vienna for Bright People". Private tours and sightseeing trips by coach by arrangement. (www.wienfuehrung.com) Last update: January 2020*

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