

# Hey Kids, Meet Franz Joseph Haydn

Austrian Classical Era Composer (1732-1809)



**Franz Joseph Haydn** was born in the Austrian village of Rohrau. His childhood was an extremely musical one, singing together frequently as a family and with neighbors. At a very early age his parents, Mathias and Maria, recognized their son's musical talent and accepted an offer to allow schoolmaster and choirmaster Johann Matthias Franck to train young Franz as a musician.

In his teens Franz left the choir to begin working as a freelance musician and composing when he had time. His big break came when he was asked to be the court conductor for Prince Esterhazy, a wealthy Hungarian with an orchestra of his own. Haydn worked for the Prince for 30 years composing many symphonies and other works.

When the prince died Haydn decided to travel to London. When he arrived, he discovered that he was a famous composer with many of his compositions being performed and sold as sheet music for many years.

Perhaps more than any other music composer, Haydn is known for his wit. The most popular example is found in his Surprise Symphony when his light simple melody is suddenly interrupted by a loud chord, "surprising" the audience.

In May 31, 1809, Haydn died a happy man and a beloved composer. Considered to be one of the greatest composers of the classical era, he is referred to as the "Father of the String Quartet" and the "Father of the Symphony".

