INTRODUCTION

The slow movement to Haydn’s Clock Symphony ticks happily away in a very genteel 18th-century fashion. You could easily leave it there, as an ornate timepiece in a stately home from centuries past. And yet, once you prise open the back to reveal the cogs and wheels that make up this intricate movement, it becomes immediately apparent why AQA have used it to represent the quintessence of the Classical style in their GCSE Area of Study 1 (Western classical tradition 1650-1910).

Aside from identifying the standard musical elements, the AQA specification also requires students to comment on:
- the effect of audience, time and place on how the study pieces were created, developed and performed.
- how and why the music across the selected areas of study has changed over time.
- how the composer’s purpose and intention for the study pieces is reflected in their use of musical elements.

This resource takes students into the 18th-century world of a jobbing Kapellmeister and his hectic life in an illustrious Austro-Hungarian court. It takes a deeper look at why Haydn ended up as ‘Papa’ of the symphony and at his travails along the way, before appreciating the final creative chapter of his ‘London’ symphonies in more detail, including their purpose, reception and how they build on earlier elements of Classical style.

The resource concludes with a bar-by-bar analysis of the slow movement from the Clock, highlighting the elements and musical vocabulary expected from students at this stage, as well as considering what might lie behind Haydn’s musical choices.

GETTING BEHIND THE WIG

We often appreciate great composers by looking at the culmination of their work, the stature they achieved by the end of their lives (or how tragically they missed out on it, in the case of Mozart and Schubert).

Haydn is a good case in point. Take this well-known portrait of him by Thomas Hardy from London’s Royal College of Music, painted during his first London visit in 1791. Here he was at the height of his renown, and very much the darling of the London musical scene:
It’s a flattering portrait, one that smoothes out his pockmarked skin, ennobles the nose that had been swollen by unsightly polyps, and re-scales the generous lower lip. The composer looks in the prime of his life.

How do we get students to lift that wig and see the man beneath? Listening to Haydn’s music can just reinforce the sheen of perfection around his image. If you were making a Hollywood script for his biopic, where is the jeopardy and conflict? It’s easy to assume his 104 (or 106, depending how you calculate) symphonies just flew off Haydn’s pen.

And yet it was far from plain sailing. Haydn’s achievements and large catalogue are testimony to his persistence and unwavering self-discipline. Perhaps it helps students to know that the great composer often faced very human struggles and temptations, and it was only by dint of incredibly hard work that he achieved what he did.

**Early struggles**

As a boy in the Hainburg music school, Joseph Haydn wrote that he received ‘more thrashings than food’. He was a keen, courteous and able chorister, but he could not escape the iron hand of 18th-century schooling.

As an early freelance musician, he had to spread his net wide and take on any work he could find, including teaching recalcitrant children, as he later recalled:

> ‘I had to spend eight whole years trailing wretchedly around giving lessons to children. Many a genius earning his bread in this miserable way comes to grief for lack of time for study, and this was unfortunately my own experience and I would never have made such little progress as I did had I not pursued my zeal for composition far into the night.’

That means that, after a busy day of peripatetic teaching, he would have to drag himself up five flights of stairs into his garret lodgings, grabbing a few odd scraps of cold food for sustenance, and then work into the small hours: transcribing and learning from other masters; doing exercises in counterpoint; and, of course, writing his own material.

**Getting to be Kapellmeister**

Initially, Haydn wrote light piano pieces to keep his aristocratic charges happy. Like Mozart (and indeed, many other composers), he hated having to churn out bonbons when he had far more substantial works in mind. His 20s, nevertheless, were taken up trying to survive as a jobbing musician. It was not until his 30s that Haydn was put forward for the role of Vice Kapellmeister in the Esterházy court.

The Esterházys were a fabulously wealthy Hungarian noble family. A salaried position in their employ must have felt like a big step up, despite what may seem a demeaning contract that required the musician, among other things, to:

- look after all the instruments, including their tuning.
- keep a library of all the manuscripts, mending parts and copying out new ones where necessary.
- report to the Prince twice a day.
- manage the court musicians, including their contracts and settling any disputes.
- write for every court occasion, whether in the theatre, salon or church.
- arrange and lead daily rehearsals and performances.
- coach the singers for forthcoming choral and operatic performances.

The list goes on. It was a tall order for any musician, and a miracle that Haydn didn’t burn out sooner from the stress of it all. Instead, accounts emphasise his even temper and good nature throughout.
Much of Haydn’s working life would have been absorbed in writing and staging operas to be put on at the Esterházy theatre. It would doubtless stun Haydn to find out today that, despite all his efforts in that arena, his many operas are largely overlooked.

Haydn stuck at the demanding role for 30 years, working under four Esterházy princes in succession, all of whom recognised his hard work and talents – although some more begrudgingly than others.

Paul Anton and Nikolaus Esterházy, his first two masters, were keen musicians. The latter, who was Haydn’s longest-serving employer, played an outmoded Baroque instrument called the baryton, a cross between a viola da gamba and a guitar. Haydn indulged this pursuit by writing chamber works for baryton, as well as even trying to learn it himself, practising late into the night (to the annoyance of his wife).

That ‘Papa’ epithet

Haydn’s work ethic seemed to be based on going above and beyond expectation. His industriousness and uncomplaining diligence in all aspects of his role soon earned him the respect of musicians in his care.

These talented instrumentalists and singers were drawn from Vienna, Italy and all the major musical centres in Europe, and they represented the cream of the crop. No doubt they were wonderful to listen to, but you can imagine the artistic sensibilities and egos involved. It required all of Haydn’s diplomacy and cheerful demeanour to keep this unruly ensemble in good spirits.

Haydn often found himself having to arbitrate in disputes over pay and conditions, sometimes leading to mediation with the Prince himself. A famous story is worth repeating here. When faced with an extended call of duty in Esterháza, the musicians started to rebel. They wanted to get back home to their family and loved ones. Haydn devised a playful, musical way of making their complaint clear to the Prince. He composed his *Farewell* Symphony, No. 45, in which the players are directed to take their leave in turn, leaving a couple of muted string players to snuff out the final candle. The prince took the point in good humour and granted them early leave.

These and other acts of support for his musicians ensured Haydn was seen as a father figure, a ‘papa’ of sorts—a champion of their causes.

A MODERN-DAY KAPELLMEISTER?

Which roles in the music industry today correlate to the duties of a Kapellmeister?

- Resident composer
- Copyist
- Librarian and curator of instruments
- Piano tuner
- Orchestral manager
- Human resources manager
- Producer and fixer
- Stage director
- Rehearsal pianist and repetiteur
- Conductor
- Financial officer
- Diplomat

The palace theatre could seat 400 people. There was also a sparkling grotto and puppet theatre.

Other anecdotes recount how he may have been a ‘papa’ in a more literal way as well. Are they just gossip?
This term of endearment has since been conflated with that of being the ‘father of the symphony’. This is slightly misleading. The Baroque sinfonia and its pre-Classical successors were the forerunners of the Classical symphony, but it’s fair to say that Haydn put his definitive stamp on the evolution and style of the four-movement form as we know it. Inspired by the innovations of the Mannheim school in particular, Haydn’s symphonies follow the same basic pattern:

- A first movement with a grand introduction (imagine a big sweep of stairs to a stately home), followed by a faster Allegro in sonata form.
- A second movement often in ternary form or a theme and variations. Subdominant and relative keys favoured.
- A minuet in triple metre and trio, each section in ternary form, repeated.
- A finale, either a rondo or a sonata rondo.

**An ‘illustrious idiot’?**

This was the uncomplimentary term used by Haydn’s biographer Giuseppe Carpani to reflect how, beyond his musical learning, Haydn remained remarkably uninterested in literary or cultural developments.

It’s true that Haydn’s library was slim and that he was a man of simple, modest pleasures whose favourite pastimes included walking in the countryside and duck-hunting. However, when he visited London, he showed an avid enthusiasm in noting down everything from details on nautical engineering to species of wild flowers. His narrow focus during his employ at Esterháza has probably more to do with a lack of time and opportunity rather than of intellectual curiosity.

Certainly as a musician, Haydn showed great curiosity and, as was typical of his conscientious approach, he taught himself with tutor books by Fux and CPE Bach, developing his abilities, his counterpoint, and his skills as a dramatist. In addition, Haydn’s influences include:

- The ‘galant’ style.
- Bach’s fugues.
- Italian opera, especially the fast-paced ‘opera buffa’.
- Vivaldi and the Venetian school, particularly the concerto grosso.
- In later years, the operas of Mozart.

Can students spot elements of the above in Haydn’s symphonies? The ornate melodies of the galant style, the wit and speed of an opera buffa and the sharp contrasts and drama of a Venetian concerto grosso?

**A gilded cage**

‘There was no one near me to torment me or make me doubt myself, and so I had to become original.’

This quotation from Haydn is often used to emphasise how free he was in the marvellous Esterházy palace to explore and establish his own style, blessed with excellent musicians and, on the whole, generous and artistically enthusiastic patrons. In this sense, Esterháza was a glorious laboratory where the composer could indulge his every musical whim.

And yet Haydn refers to Esterháza as ‘my desert’. Like the other musicians based there, he was estranged from cultural activities outside the palace and forced to live in splendid isolation. Esterháza was built deliberately close to marshy swamps, which was great for duck-shooting but for little else. The household was constantly beset with bouts of fever as a result. Haydn often writes of his sense of extreme loneliness, counting his true friends on the fingers of one hand.

It must have therefore been a tremendous sense of release to be sprung from that cage by a combination of circumstances. After Nikolaus’s death, Anton Esterházy disbanded most of the musicians, keeping only Haydn, his lead violinist and a small wind band. Haydn was retained on a pension and given much freer reign, so when the Bonn-based impresario Johann Salomon invited him to London, the ground was set.
THE LONDON SYMPHONIES

‘I am Salomon from London and I have come to collect you!’

This bold announcement from the impresario almost has the ring of the Commendatore’s entrance in Mozart’s Don Giovanni. There is something fateful, almost operatic, about Salomon’s intervention in Haydn’s life: it propelled the composer into the international limelight and the recognition he deserved.

London treated Haydn as a star, whereas in Vienna he was still sneered upon for his provincial ways. Once Oxford University had bestowed an honorary Doctorate of Music on the composer, even the Viennese elite had to redress their position.

The London symphonies comprise two sets of six symphonies, commissioned by Salomon for Haydn’s two visits to England:

- Nos 93-98 for the first visit in 1791-2.
- Nos 99-104 for the second visit in 1794-5.

The press reported a rapturous reception from London concert societies and audiences, praising the ‘grandeur of the subject and rich variety of the air and passion’, and calling the composer ‘wonderful’ and ‘sublime’.

The Clock Symphony was performed in the Hanover Square Rooms and was an immediate hit, with its two inner movements being encored at the first performance.

MARKETING PLOYS

Publishers in the 18th century showed early marketing flair in choosing catchy titles for composers’ works. Can students research why the following London symphonies were given their names?

- No. 94, Surprise
- No. 96, Miracle
- No. 100, Military
- No. 103, Drumroll

London’s classical turf wars

The music industry in London was more cosmopolitan and commercially orientated than on the continent. Producers and concert societies vied with each other for the most attractive composers and soloists. On several occasions, Haydn was approached by the organisers of the Professional Concert series with a handsome sum to encourage him to break contract with Salomon. Haydn, to his credit, kept his loyalty, even though he suffered some defamation in the press as a result. He wrote about these and other pressures when hurrying to keep to deadline on his final symphonies:

‘In order to keep my work to poor Salomon, I must be the victim and work incessantly, and I really am feeling the strain, my eyes give me most trouble and I have many sleepless nights, but with God’s help I shall get on top of it all.’

So, even when famous and enjoying new-found freedoms, Haydn kept to his impressive work ethic of former years.

A nice problem to have

Haydn’s first set of six London symphonies were a huge success, with many of the movements being encored and greeted with standing ovations. This, of course, raised the problem of how to follow up on the second visit, and to avoid the curse of the lacklustre sequel. Londoners particularly enjoyed the theatre of the SURPRISE
Symphony and were doubtless hoping for some more dramatic tricks in the next set.

Haydn obliged with the glitter and pomp of Symphony No. 100 (*Military*), which features percussion and effects from a Turkish marching band. The *Clock* Symphony, No. 101, has of course the quaint tick-tock of its slow movement to charm the listener. As with the other *London* symphonies, it shows the assured, mature symphonic style of a composer at the peak of his abilities.

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**A QUICK REVIEW OF THE CLASSICAL STYLE**

Before looking at the *Clock* Symphony in detail, students will need to be able to take a step back and place it within the context of the Classical style.

The Classical orchestra built on its Baroque predecessor by:

- losing the function of the continuo.
- expanding the number of strings.
- doubling the woodwind.
- adding clarinets, by the time of the *London* symphonies.
- having more versatile parts for the horns.

The overall style is characterised by its well-defined structures and forms, from periodic phrasing through to sonata form. Musical ideas are clearly shaped and grouped into melodic families (or 'subject groups', in the context of sonata form).

Homophony is favoured over polyphony, so rather than having everybody talking at the same time, a clear dialogue often emerges in the form of:

- conversations between different parts and instrumental families.
- debate and argument.
- dramatic rhetoric: question and answer, statement and counter-statement.

The overall principle is one of achieving balance within the material and the form. Listening to a Classical symphony often has an ordering effect on the mind, the equivalent of completing a crossword and sensing everything falling neatly into place.

Needless to say, much of the art of the composer comes in disrupting that order and going against the expectations of the listener. Haydn excelled at this, constantly delighting his audience (and players) with unexpected twists and turns.

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**EXPLORING HAYDN’S SYMPHONY NO. 101 IN D CLOCK**

**First, third and fourth movements**

The *Clock* Symphony opens in darkness. An Adagio introduction in the tonic minor to the first movement is filled with the tension of pauses, diminished chords, imperfect cadences and off-beat accents. Predictably enough, a cheerful Presto in D major takes over, skipping along in 6/8. The triadic shape of the first subject will be picked up in the slow movement. The development section shows how much Haydn’s early contrapuntal studies had paid off.

You get the sense that Haydn could write minuets and trios in his sleep (and probably had to, given his tight deadlines!). Yet there are subtleties in the third movement that let slip his understated genius: the cross-rhythms and displaced beats, for example, or the sharp dynamic contrast and the imaginative use of the timpani. The trio lulls the listener into a sense of peace before jolting them back with three bars of fortissimo, in a way that recalls the earlier *Surprise* Symphony. There are several held breaths in this section, as the music apparently peter out before being taken in a new direction.
The fourth movement is a sonata rondo that plays the usual Haydn trick of whispering the first idea before shouting out the next. It’s a tried and trusted technique for drawing the listener in. The writing for the strings and upper woodwind gives no quarter to the London players, who must have enjoyed the challenge. Listen out for a powerful ‘minore’ section followed by a nimble fugato. Haydn was showing there was life in the old man yet, silencing those critics in the London and Viennese press who had written him off as devoid of new ideas.

### The second movement

And so we come to the reason the Symphony has its name: its tick-tocking slow movement. What a piece of genius it was to have that tick-tock on a pair of bassoons as well, with pizzicato underneath to sharpen the profile.

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<tr>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Key or keys</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-33</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ternary form theme</td>
<td>G major</td>
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<tr>
<td>34-62</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Development of small ideas</td>
<td>G minor and B flat</td>
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<tr>
<td>63-97</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Theme in lighter variation</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-110</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Surprise episode in flattened submediant</td>
<td>E flat</td>
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<tr>
<td>111-143</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Theme in fullest variation</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144-end</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>Closing material over tonic pedal</td>
<td>G</td>
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The variations seem to nod to an earlier galant or rococo style, which is in keeping with the ornate quality of the melody with its double-dotted rhythms and the light dusting of counterpoint later on. Is Haydn using this retrospective style to give the sense of an antique clock, perhaps?

Despite the general air of politeness and decorum at the beginning, Haydn’s sense of humour breaks through in passages that are deliberately ‘un-clock-like’. Notice the accents on the weak beat in bars 11 to 14, for example, as if the pendulum has suddenly started swinging the other way.

Keeping the view wide, there are some other ideas to note:
- A tick-tock quaver pulse is present throughout, apart from the surprise general pause in bar 97.
- The phrase lengths are very varied and often uneven – again, rather ‘un-clock-like’.
- The dynamic structure of the episodes is perfectly balanced: soft-loud-soft-loud-soft.
- The ‘minore’ section shows what the composer is capable of, balancing four planes of sound.
- The movement is defined by its surprises rather than its predictability.

### PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

The clarinets – relative newcomers to the Classical symphony – are marked as being in B flat, despite the piece being in the subdominant key of G major. This is because their first entrance in the ‘minore’ section will be in G minor and then its relative major, B flat.
Both the flute and oboe have some lyrical high inverted pedal notes that recall Mozart’s style, for examples in bars 16 and 40.

To illustrate the differences between a historically informed performance and a more modern version, you could compare the openings to the stately Karajan interpretation and then the sprightly Norrington version. Norrington seems to drop any pretences of emulating a clock and takes the score at its word, rather than being led by the publisher’s sobriquet.

**ANALYSIS**
The following in-depth look at the writing uses the Dover edition (Symphonies 99-104), first published in 1999. The key elements are highlighted, together with some thoughts on why Haydn might have chosen them.

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<th>Commentary</th>
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| 1-10  | • Two five-bar phrases to begin, which is surprising. Aside from that, it is a Classically balanced antecedent-consequent phrase, moving through the dominant and back again.  
• The shape in bar 2 echoes the opening bar of the first movement’s Presto theme.  
• The melody is very much in the galant style: extremely elegant. You can sense that Haydn, ever mischievous, will want to disrupt the mood later. |
| 11-23 | • The B section of this initial theme, bringing in dynamic contrast. Is that the clock chiming on the second beat? A five-bar phrase is answered by an eight-bar one. Tonic-dominant harmony prevails. |
| 24-33 | • The flute reinforces the first violin line this time, and the phrase peaks in bar 30 before returning to pianissimo (where the bassoons, wisely, are dropped). |
| 34-39 | • The dramatic ‘minore’ section is typical Haydn, ingeniously picking up the descending dotted idea from bar 4 and extending it in a more polyphonic texture.  
• The sudden entry of brass and timpani must have jolted early listeners out of their chairs. Haydn hated his audience to fall asleep in slow movements (see also the Surprise Symphony).  
• Strong contrary movement in bars 37-8, with first and second violins (and flute/oboe) clashing against each other.  
• Cycle of 5ths here (Gm-Cm-F7-B flat) serves to modulate to B flat, the new key centre for the next 12 bars. |
| 40-49 | • This section is more harmonically stable, mainly alternating between B flat and F7, with a dialogue between the strings as the ‘tick-tock’ motif is recalled in the bass, this time with off-beat response in oboe and bassoon. Although busy, the texture is beautifully clear with each instrument having a distinct role. |
| 50-62 | • The loudest point in this section, with the dotted rhythmic motif returning in the wind. The falling broken chord in the first violins recalls the shape of bar 3, perhaps?  
• The second violins and violas continue the demi-semi movement from before. This is the most rhythmically interesting episode in the movement.  
• Strong movement through dominant relationships (B flat-G7-Cm in bars 51-53, C7-A7-D7 in 54-57) leads back to a pedal D. Notice how the harmonic pace is balanced: six bars of instability, then six bars of stability.  
• There is nice chromatic colouring over the dominant pedal, involving some minor 9ths and diminished 7ths in bars 57-59. |
| 63-97 | • The main theme returns in the lightest colours possible: a trio of flute, bassoon (a 10th below) and first violin in between, with some commentary from the oboe along the way. It’s the perfect antidote to the drama of the previous section.  
• The flute adds a charming countermelody in bar 73, as the dotted rhythmic motif returns.  
• The bassoon gives a new semiquaver version of the tick-tock in octaves in bar 82. |
| 98-110 | • After a surprise pause bar, where listeners might be preparing themselves for another ‘minore’ outburst, Haydn plays a harmonic sleight-of-hand, shifting to the flattened submediant, E flat. These shifts always have a softening effect – so the complete opposite to the dramatic tonic minor from before.  
• The E flat turns into a chromatic pivot to the dominant of D, via a classic augmented 6th chord in bar 105, reinforced by a subito forte and a horn entry.  
• After that sudden orchestral weight, the transition back to the main theme is done in the daintiest way possible – a single wandering tip-toe in the first violins (108-111). |
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| 111-143  | - The final iteration of the theme is, of course, the fullest and grandest, this time with sextuplet movement for extra flow.  
- One last surprise is delivered in bar 135 as the entire orchestra crashes in fortissimo after a decrescendo to pianissimo. The timpani have triplet flourishes here too, for extra pomp. |
| 144-end  | - The coda allows for a complete wind-down. Scales descend over a tonic pedal until the clock gives out its last tick-tock in half time. |