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Eighteenth-Century Music in a Twenty-First Century Conservatory of Music or Using Haydn to Make the Familiar Exciting

by Mary Sue Morrow

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I. Introduction

Teaching the history of eighteenth-century music in a conservatory can be challenging. Aside from the handful of music history and music theory students, your classes are populated mostly by performers, conductors, and composers who do not always find the study of music history interesting or even necessary. Moreover, when you step in front of a graduate-level class at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, *everybody* in the class is going to know *all* about the music of the eighteenth century: they've played Bach fugues and sung in Handel choruses; they've sung Mozart arias and played Haydn string quartets or early Beethoven sonatas. They have also been taught to revere these names as the century's musical geniuses, but quite a number of them will admit that they are not very interested in eighteenth-century music, particularly the music from the late eighteenth-century: It is too ordinary and unexciting; it all sounds alike; it is mostly useful for teaching purposes (definitely the fate of Haydn's keyboard sonatas and, to a degree, his string quartets). Even those who are fans of Haydn and Mozart know mostly the late works, and they nearly always attribute the superiority of their music to their stylistic innovations and their refusal to follow convention, unlike their lesser contemporaries, who simply plodded along, steadily churning out reams of conventional drivel. I exaggerate, of course, but only a little bit.

My goal in the courses I teach is to shake up their view of late eighteenth-century music. I want to help them recalibrate their ears, which—as I typically say—have been polluted by the likes of Mahler and Bruckner. I want to teach them how to listen for the small things—the play of texture, the turns of phrase, the delays of cadence, the unexpected

chromatic slips—that give the music its charm. I also try to show them just how profoundly music and society and politics were interwoven in the eighteenth century, and just how different eighteenth-century attitudes toward music were from our own, even though we think we understand the music because we have made it so much a part of our own world. And finally I want to demonstrate that a great deal of excellent, effective music was written by composers other than the two B's, two H's and an M. In the latter quest, my task has been made much easier by the astonishing number of high quality CDs and DVDs of "lesser known" composers that have been appearing over the past ten or twelve years, such as symphonies by Giovanni Battista Sammartini and Antonio Rosetti, concertos by Pietro Locatelli, cantatas by Alessandro Stradella, sacred music by Leonardo Vinci, and especially the DVDs of the operas of Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, Jean-Jacque Rameau, Baldassare Galuppi, and François-Joseph Gossec. It has been my experience that you cannot convince anyone—particularly performers and conductors—of the value and pleasure to be found in the operas of Antonio Salieri or Vicente Martín y Soler, for example, with a badly staged, badly acted, out of tune performance. They just won't believe you when you say that, when properly staged and well sung, modern audiences can enjoy and appreciate them just as their eighteenth-century counterparts did.

II. Teaching Techniques: General Eighteenth-Century and Haydn Courses.

However, even with good performances, my first task is always to coax my students into recalibrating their ears to adjust to eighteenth-century styles, and I have explored a few techniques that have turned out to be effective. In my seminar-style classes I have made use of Bob Gjerdingen's schemata theory.¹ We look at the basic schemata that he identifies in *Music in the Galant Style* and spend some time identifying them, both by looking at scores and by listening to examples. Some of the schemata—like the galant *romanesca* or the *Do-re-mi*—are easy to spot immediately, while others—like the *Fonte*, *Monte*, and the various forms of the *Meyer*—can be harder to remember and identify

¹ Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

securely. But the exercise gets them to listen in a different way and to pay attention to those small things so easily missed. Then I will have each of them compose a short sixteen-measure piece using three or four different schemata and play (or have them played) in class. That, in combination with the study of the schemata used by composers like Mozart and Haydn underlines how essential these conventions were for *all* eighteenth-century composition and helps them see the originality in the ways composers manipulated, exploited, and disguised those conventions. It also helps to explain how and why eighteenth-century audiences continually demanded—and got—new compositions. These compositions rested on a secure underpinning of conventional patterns that allowed for a great deal of variety, a combination of familiarity and difference that the audience could hear and appreciate (think of romantic comedy movies, which all have the same basic plot).

To help my students *hear* that, I will also do some guided listening that has nothing to do with formal structures or harmonic analysis, but rather with the expectations that the composer is creating and whether they're satisfied, or delayed, or thwarted entirely. To do that I simply ask them to listen for moments of closure and *what has led up to them*. Is there a long preparation and prolonged tension before it arrives, or does it arrive with little fanfare? If tension is prolonged, what contributes to the prolongation? One of my favorite pieces to use for this is the first movement of Haydn's String Quartet in D Major, Op. 50 no.6, known as "The Frog" for the bariolage in the last movement. It provides both an example of an unexpectedly quick closure—the opening begins more or less *in media res* and crashes into a I:PAC in bar 4. The opposite occurs after the primary area closes with another I:PAC in bar 16 before unleashing the transition, which manages to delay the V:PAC (EEC) until bar 48 of a 54-bar exposition. Once the students have focused on the small feints and deceptions Haydn contrives in this exposition, they begin to see and appreciate subtleties they had not noticed before. When we do get down to the analytical details, I rely heavily on the flexible approach found in James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's *Sonata Theory*, whose description of the various types and sections of sonata form, especially the continuous exposition, makes analysis of Haydn's sonata movements much easier.

Though most of my courses are designed to make students familiar with the lesser-known figures of the century, I have found I can also shake up their listening habits quite effectively in my two Haydn classes, one devoted to his string quartets and the other to his symphonies. These classes have a seminar-style format, are limited to fifteen students, and are almost entirely discussion based. We proceed chronologically so that we can observe the unfolding of Haydn's style, focusing on his choice of movement types and movement patterns, his techniques for creating drive and tension, his procedures for creating expectations and then fulfilling or subverting them, and the role of texture and sonority, both structural and in pure sonic play. But of course we cannot cover every single piece, so for the pieces not discussed in class, I assign each student a selection of works (spaced over three assignments) for which they prepare a summary following the template I provide (see Table 1). After the submission of each assignment, I arrange their summaries into a single, chronologically-ordered file and post it to Blackboard. By the end of the semester students will have a snapshot of each quartet or symphony, and will have been motivated to do their best work as it will be seen by all. Providing the template insures that certain conventions underpin their various approaches; thus analytical chaos is reduced and the means reinforces the purpose of the assignment.

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Table 1: Symphony # XX in B-flat.

Date	Movement	Key	Meter	Form	Orchestration
17XX	Allegro	D	C	Type 3 Continuous	2 vln, vla, b, 2 ob, 2 hn
	Largo	b	2/4	Variations	2 vln, vla, b, fl
	Menuet	D/d	3/4	ABA	2 vln, vla, b, fl, 2 hn
	Presto	D	3/8	Type 2 Continuous	2 vln, vla, b, 2 ob, 2 hn

- 1) Circumstances of Composition
- 2) Goals
 - a) Overall and/or individual movements
 - b) Strategies to achieve goals
 - c) Treatment of conventions
- 3) Formal considerations
 - a) Degree of functional delineation and how achieved or blurred
 - b) Degree to which expectations are created
 - c) Type and degree of disruptions (metric, harmonic, dynamic, etc.)
 - d) Interaction of secondary with primary parameters
- 4) Topics
- 5) Orchestration
- 6) Favorite spots, delicious moments, weird things

III. Reconsidering the Eighteenth-Century Work/Composer Narrative.

Haydn's music, particularly his symphonies and string quartets, also provides fodder for discussions of style and genre conventions during the last four decades of the eighteenth century. As I have argued elsewhere in connection with the symphony,² our concept of what a string quartet or a symphony "should" be has definitely been shaped by the late works of Mozart and Haydn and the early ones of Beethoven. I have found, however, that having models in mind often prevents students from listening to Haydn's early works on their own terms because they have been taught (as I was) to look for "progress" and for the "development" of a genre or style, words that carry connotations of "becoming better" in this context. With this subconscious teleological bias, Haydn's early quartets and symphonies are bound to sound "primitive," and our instinct in listening to them is to look for hints of the composer's "more mature" music. Neither his early nor his late works benefit from this approach, as the later ones are generally slotted in to the narrative of the symphony and string quartet toward Beethoven. In fact, the continuity of his output in these two genres presents an excellent opportunity to guide students toward a different narrative, one that will allow them to enjoy and appreciate even the earliest, ostensibly "primitive" works.

For example, during the 1750s and 1760, the composition of symphonies exploded across much of Europe as composers exploited the possibilities of the orchestra, which by this time had coalesced into the string-based with winds ensemble described by John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw in *The Birth of the Orchestra*.³ The possibilities for the number and type of movements ranged from two or three up to six or more (with the one-movement opera sinfonia emerging only in the 1770s). Haydn, like other composers, was experimenting with a variety of movement configurations during the 1750s and

² See chapter 2, "Historiography of the Eighteenth-Century Symphony," in *The Eighteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. Mary Sue Morrow and Bathia Churgin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 18-39.

³ John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw, *The Birth of the Orchestra: History of an Institution 1650-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

1760s (see Table 2).⁴ One way of reframing the discussion about the emergence of the four-movement F-S-M-F configuration is to ask the students some probing questions: What advantages did this configuration offer? What might have been lost in the later near-slavish adherence to it in the last quarter of the century? How did changes in compositional style and techniques make a six-movement symphony problematic? Why might a composer like Christian Cannabich (1731–1798), who had written almost exclusively four-movement, F-S-M-F symphonies in the early 1760s, turn to the three-movement F-S-F pattern for the rest of his career (with one exception—a symphonie concertante)?⁵ Even if we cannot establish definitive answers for each of these questions (though one suspects the ultimate preference for the F-S-M-F stemmed from Haydn's renown, as David Wyn Jones has argued),⁶ they help us to rethink the teleological narrative.

Haydn's string quartets also can engender productive discussion of how genres are defined. Many of my students are surprised to learn that Op. 33 was the first time Haydn designated the opus as "Quartets," thus abandoning the "Divertimenti" designation of the Opp. 1, 2, 9, 17, and 20. Moreover, the individual works in Op. 1 and Op. 2 are in five movements with two minuets (F-M-S-M-F) and offer very little in the way of "conversation among four reasonable gentlemen," a quotation that most seem to know.⁷ Then are they actual quartets? Though musicologists have worked through these questions at considerable length (and eventually answered "yes"), the finer details of the discussion—understandably—have not filtered down into most undergraduate

⁴ The order and dating of these symphonies follows A. Peter Brown's Table II/3: Attempted Chronology for Haydn's Symphonies in *The Symphonic Repertoire*, vol. II, *The First Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert*.

⁵ Jean K. Wolf, "Christian Cannabich," in *The Symphonic Repertoire*, vol. I: *The Eighteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. Mary Sue Morrow and Bathia Churgin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 364–68.

⁶ David Wyn Jones, *The Symphony in Beethoven's Vienna* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁷ See Maria Rika Maniates, "Sonate, que me veux tu?": The Enigma of French Musical Aesthetics in the 18th Century, *Current Musicology* 9 (1969): 117–140.

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Table 2: Haydn's 1750s and '60s symphonies movement configurations.

Number	Date	Movements
1	b. 1761	F-S-F
37	b. 1758	F-M-S-F
18	b. 1761	S-F-M
2	b. 1761	F-S-F
15	b. 1761	(SFS) -M-S-F
4	b. 1761	F-S-F
10	b. 1761	F-S-F
32	b. 1761	F-M-S-F
5	b. 1761	S-F-M-F
11	b. 1761	S-F-M-F
33	b. 1761	F-S-M-F
27	b. 1761	F-S-F
107A	b. 1761	F-S-F
20	b. 1761	F-S-M-F
108B	b. 1761-c. 1763?	F-M-S-F
17	b. 1761-c. 1763?	F-S-F
19	b. 1761-c. 1763?	F-S-F
25	b. 1761-c. 1763?	(SF)-M-F
3	b. 1761-c. 1763?	F-S-M-F
16	b. 1761-c. 1763?	F-S-F
14	b. 1761-c. 1763?	F-S-M-F
36	b. 1761-c. 1763?	F-S-M-F
6	1761	(SF) -S-M-F
7	1761	(SF) -F-M-F
8	1761	F-S-M-F
9	1762	F-S-M
40	1763	F-S-M-F
12	1763	F-S-F
13	1763	F-S-M-F
72	1761-1765	F-S-M-F
21	1764	F-S-M-F
22	1764	S-F-M-F
23	1764	F-S-M-F
24	1764	F-S-M-F
34	1765	S-F-M-F
30	1765	F-S-F
29	1765	F-S-M-F
31	1765	F-S-M-F
28	1765	F-S-M-F
39	ca. 1766-1772	F-S-M-F
35	b. 1767	F-S-M-F
38	b. late 1768	F-S-M-F
59	ca. 1766-1772	F-S-M-F
49	b. 1768	S-F-M-F
48	b. 1769	F-S-M-F
58	ca. 1766-1772	F-S-M-F
26	ca. 1766-1772	F-S-M
41	b. 1768-1771	F-S-M-F
44	ca. 1766-1772	F-M-S-F
52	ca. 1766-1772	F-S-M-F
43	ca. 1766-1772	F-S-M-F
42	b. 1771	F-S-M-F
45	1772	F-S-M-(FS)
46	1772	F-S-M-F
47	1772	F-S-M-F

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survey courses, so that revisiting those very issues with graduate students can be for them an eye-opening experience.

Finally, Haydn's very life story provides a sweeping view of the social and cultural changes in music culture during the eighteenth century. From the discovery of his musical talent in childhood, his years as a choir boy at St. Stephens's Cathedral in Vienna to his eventual position as Kapellmeister at one of the greatest courts in Europe, his life exemplifies one of the best possible career paths for an exceptional composer born into the early eighteenth-century Northern European musical infra-structure. But beginning with the renegotiation of his contract in 1779, he began to traverse the territory of the free-lance music culture, in which composers and other musicians did not always have the job and financial security that a good court position could provide. Instead they had to support themselves by publishing compositions aimed at the growing dilettante market and/or by organizing and giving public concerts for their own benefit. Having a full understanding of the benefits of court employment helps to erase the concept of Haydn as a submissive court servant, in contrast to Beethoven the independent giant, who allegedly guarded his independence but was certainly hoping for an appointment at the court of the Archduke Rudolph. Helping my students to understand this reframed narrative can also help them to rethink their assumptions about eighteenth-century music in general and Haydn in particular. That, I think, is a good thing.

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Abstract

Teaching eighteenth-century music effectively, particularly at a conservatory where the students are quite familiar with the music of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, can prove challenging when you introduce less familiar material—the early works of Haydn and Mozart, for example, or the works of just about any other composer active during the century. I have found that recalibrating the students' ears to recognize and appreciate the small things—the play of texture, the turns of phrase, the delays of cadence, the unexpected chromatic slips—help them appreciate its charm. Haydn's music in particular lends itself to such listening, and his life story provides opportunities to discuss the role that music played in society, the changes in musical infrastructure over the course of the century, and how a musical trajectory of the late eighteenth-century could be constructed without reference to the traditional "Haydn leads to Mozart leads to Beethoven-as-teleological-goal."