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A “Rosary” Symphony? The Impact of Haydn’s Religious Faith on His Symphonies

by Henry G. Stratmann, MD

I. Introduction

Except for two journeys to England in the early 1790s, Joseph Haydn’s life and work were confined to a small area around Vienna, the capital of the primary domains ruled by the strongly Catholic Habsburg dynasty. Catholicism’s influence in this region was culturally and politically ubiquitous. Everyday life was structured around the rites, practices, and beliefs of the Church, particularly reception of the sacraments. Besides public Masses culminating in the Eucharistic Sacrament celebrated in a church, Catholic tradition includes prayers that can be recited in private by a single worshipper. Many reflect that religion’s veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM)—in Christian belief the mother of Jesus Christ.¹ Of course, music was a major part of the Mass in Habsburg Vienna in the late 18th century, despite some reduction to its opulence during the 1780s as decreed by Joseph II. Composers of the day also frequently set prayers devoted to the Blessed Virgin, including the “Ave Maria,” “Stabat Mater,” “Salve Regina,” and “Ave Regina Caelorum.”

The principal personal devotional activity venerating the Blessed Virgin Mary was praying the Rosary, which includes 53 recitations of the “Ave Maria” said with a string of beads used to keep track of the standardized order of prayers that make up that devotion.² Haydn was a “cradle Catholic”—baptized in infancy and practicing that faith throughout his entire life, and was especially devoted to Mary.³ According to Haydn biographer Georg Griesinger, Haydn prayed the Rosary to inspire his musical creativity: “If my composing is not proceeding so well...” Griesinger reports Haydn to have told him, “I walk up and down the room with my rosary in my hand, say several Aves [the “Ave Maria”], and then ideas come to me again.” Likewise he reports, “Never was I [Haydn] as devout as

¹ Charles Herbermann, ed. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1913), Vol. 13, 459–72; David Wyn Jones, ed. *Oxford Composer Companions: Haydn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 37–39.

² Herbermann (Vol 13), 184–89; Berard Marthaler, ed. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd Edition (New York: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), Vol 12, 373–76; William Storey, *The Complete Rosary* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2006). For readers not familiar with the structure of the Rosary, see Hugo Hoever, ed., *Saint Joseph Daily Missal* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1957), 1316–18.

³ See H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976–80), Vol. 4, 439, 526; Wyn Jones, 38–39. Note that the BVM is specifically thanked at the end of the autographs for Haydn’s string quartets Op. 20, No. 3 (*Laus Deo et BVM: cum S^o S^{to}* “Praise to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the Holy Spirit” and Op. 20, No. 6 (*Laus Deo et Beatissimae Virgini Mariae*/ “Praise to God and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.”

when composing 'The Creation.' I knelt down every day and prayed to God to strengthen me for my work. When I felt my inspiration flagging, I rose from the piano and began to say my Rosary. I never found that method to fail."⁴

The following points regarding the Rosary are relevant to what will be discussed later:

1. Unlike the Mass and individual prayers, which were commonly set to music, the Rosary is only spoken. This reflects its predominant use in an individual rather than social setting. An exception to this is Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber's late 17th-century "Rosary" or "Mystery" sonatas. These pieces are meditations for solo violin and basso continuo on each of the fifteen Mysteries then associated with the Rosary. It is uncertain, however, whether they were meant to accompany the actual saying of one.
2. The Rosary is a quiet, meditative prayer. It is simple in structure and highly repetitive—traits consistent with its function of helping to contemplate what the believer would consider divine Mysteries. It also lacks drama, with little contrast in the individual prayers said.
3. The Rosary's strong association with the BVM is reflected in the prayers said with it. Numerically the "Ave Maria" dominates all others, recited 53 times, whereas there are only six each of the "Pater Noster" and "Gloria Patri." The Joyful Mysteries are devoted solely to the BVM. The Crucifixion part of the Sorrowful Mysteries includes contemplation of the BVM's presence at the foot of the Cross (John 19:25–27). Three of the Glorious Mysteries also involve the BVM.
4. The Rosary is long for a personal prayer, typically taking fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. To prevent it from becoming rote recitation of many "Ave Marias," etc. requires the individual to mentally withdraw from the world and look inward those many minutes.
5. Today the Rosary is commonly said in the vernacular. Haydn, however, used the Latin versions of its prayers, e.g. "Ave Maria" instead of the English "Hail Mary."

I will present evidence that, besides praying the Rosary to aid in his composing, Haydn used that devotion as inspiration for the slow movement of his Symphony No. 54 in G Major, composed in 1774 among his more famous minor-mode "Sturm und Drang" symphonies.⁵

⁴ Vernon Gotwals, *Joseph Haydn: Eighteenth-Century Gentleman and Genius* (Madison WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 53–55.

⁵ See Landon (Vol 2), 266–393; H. C. Robbins Landon, *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn* (London: Universal Edition, LTD. and Rockcliff Publishing Corporation, 1955), 273–98; William Grim, *Haydn's Sturm und Drang Symphonies: Form and Meaning* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); Abigail Chantler, "The 'Sturm und Drang' Style Revisited," in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 34/1 (2003): 17–31.

II. Haydn's Personal Religious Beliefs, and Sacred Vocal Music

Griesinger reports:

Haydn was very religiously inclined, and was loyally devoted to the faith in which he was raised. He was very firmly convinced in his heart that all human destiny is in God's guiding hand, that God rewards the good and the evil, and all talents come from above. All his larger scores begin with the words "In nomine Domini" and end with "Laus Deo" or "Soli Deo gloria" (respectively, 'In the name of the Lord', 'Praise to God', and 'To God alone the glory'). . . . Without speculation about the principles of faith, he accepted the what and how of the teaching of the Catholic Church. . . .⁶

Griesinger confirms that the composer's faith emphasized the positive, focusing on praising God for creating humanity and all the good things He had bestowed on it. "In general, his devotion was not of the gloomy, always suffering sort, but rather cheerful and reconciled..."⁷ This unwavering faith is a product of Haydn's formation. He spent his first six years with his devoutly Catholic family, and ages eight to seventeen as a chorister at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, where he was both exposed to and participated in the religious music performed there. The young Haydn also received instruction in his religion and was required to perform the standard duties of a Catholic, such as attending Mass. Haydn's nearly thirty-year tenure at Eisenstadt and Eszterháza under the patronage of Esterházy Princes Paul Anton (1761-1762) and Nicolaus I (1762-1790) also placed him in an environment where following the fundamental practices of his faith was expected. Such outward strictures were absent during his two journeys to predominantly Protestant London in the early 1790s. However, neither while abroad nor after his final return to Vienna in 1795 did he ever indicate he was not a devoted Roman Catholic.⁸

This image of religious simplicity is complicated by the presence of other social influences during Haydn's lifetime. The latter corresponded with the myriad political, scientific, and philosophical ideas

⁶ Gotwals, 53–55.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ James Van Horn Melton, "School, Stage, Salon: Musical Cultures in Haydn's Vienna," in *The Journal of Modern History* 76 (2004): 251–79; Shawn Eaton, "How the Composer's Worldview Shapes Musical Meaning: Haydn's 'Creation' and the Enlightenment," *Artistic Theologian* 5 (2017): 17–57; Maria Hörwarthner, "Joseph Haydn's Library: Attempt at a Literary-Historical Reconstruction," in *Haydn and His World*, edited by Elaine Sisman, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 395–461; Mark Berry. "Haydn's 'Creation' and Enlightenment Theology," in *Austrian History Yearbook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 25–44.

characterizing the "Enlightenment."⁹ Those included a general distaste for and even outright hostility towards institutional religion, with the Roman Catholic Church coming under particular criticism. Enlightenment thought stressed natural theology and human reason over supernatural dogma. One common expression of this was "Deism," where contradictory to Roman Catholic teaching, God was limited to essentially being only the great Creator and Architect of the world, not actively participating in it through revelation, miracles, or listening to and answering humankind's prayers.¹⁰ However, some Enlightenment ideals more consistent with his core belief system may have influenced Haydn.¹¹ While the role of God as Creator is directly celebrated in *The Creation*, the oratorio's depiction does not preclude Him from participating in human affairs later. *The Seasons*, although lacking many specific Catholic elements, emphasizes the secular blended with the sacred, e.g. its peasants pausing in their everyday activities to sing praise to God and appeal for His help, but they are not shown going to Sunday Mass. Their sung prayers seem directed to the Father alone, with no reference to the triune God.

Haydn's musical career began and ended with the composition of Catholic religious vocal works. It is thought to have started with his *Missa brevis* in F Major (Hob. XXII:1, c. 1749), and closed with the *Harmoniemesse* (Hob. XXII:14, 1802). However, the total body of sacred music he wrote is small compared to prominent Catholic contemporaries. Anthony van Hoboken's catalogue lists his sacred compositions in only four of its 31 categories. Category XX includes several versions of *The Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross*, and the "Marian" (referring to the BVM) *Stabat Mater*. Category XXI has his three oratorios—*The Creation*, *The Seasons*, and the earlier *Il ritorno di Tobia*. Category XXII holds fourteen Masses. Category XXIII includes about 30 miscellaneous sacred pieces, including several more Marian works—e.g. three settings of the "Salve Regina"—and at least six works now thought to be by other composers. Some early organ concertos (Hob. XVIII:1–2, 5–6, 8, 10) were likely composed for performance during church services.¹²

Haydn's positions specifically required secular music in abundance. During his earliest years as a freelance composer and employment by Count Morzin (c. 1758–1760), Haydn was overwhelmingly required to write secular rather than sacred works. During his first five years with the Esterházy

⁹ William McDonald, ed. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), Vol. 5, 435–43.

¹⁰ Peter Gay, *Deism: An Anthology* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Inc., 1968).

¹¹ Eaton, 17–57; Berry, 25–44.

¹² Landon (Vol 1), 198.

family he served as Vice-Kapellmeister, in charge of non-sacred music. His elderly predecessor, Gregor Werner, continued to serve as Kapellmeister and was responsible for the sacred variety. When Werner died in 1766, Haydn was promoted to Kapellmeister and gained the freedom and responsibility to write religious music. The first fruit of his new situation was the large-scale *Missa Cellenis in honorem Beatissimae Virginis Mariae* (Hob. XXII:5), dedicated to the BVM. "For years Haydn had obviously longed to get his teeth into church music, and in some respects the inordinate length of the 'Missa Cellenis' of 1766 reflects his frustrations at the years of forced inactivity in this field."¹³

However, Nicolaus I was much more interested in having him continue to write secular music like symphonies and many works for the idiosyncratic instrument the prince played, the baryton.¹⁴ Though Haydn was able to compose a smattering of Masses and other religious music during the next sixteen years, further efforts were strongly discouraged due to the political and cultural reforms begun by the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II. An imperial decree in 1783 drastically curtailed the use of orchestral music during church services—thus limiting the demand for Masses and other religious works until, following the emperor's death (1790), those restrictions were lifted. That helps explain why, after his *Missa Cellenis* (Hob. XXII:8) of 1782, Haydn wrote no more liturgical music during the remainder of his employment with Nicolaus I, who also died in 1790 not long after the emperor.¹⁵

His stays in Protestant England also provided no impetus for him to compose Catholic religious works. However, after his permanent return to Vienna and now finally free to write whatever he wished, from 1796 to the end of his composing career in 1802 Haydn wrote his valedictory large-scale works in the genre of sacred music. Those included the *Te Deum* No. 2 (Hob. XXIIIc:2), the last six Masses (Hob. XXII:9–14), *The Creation*, and *The Seasons*. That great focus on religious works, after achieving overwhelming success with his secular instrumental music, also suggests the expression of a pent-up need to cap his life by expressing his Catholic faith.

In comparison, during his much shorter life Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote about the same number of completed Masses as Haydn but an overall larger number of sacred works, as well as seventeen instrumental "Church Sonatas" for organ and orchestra played during Mass. Michael

¹³ Landon (Vol 2), 230; Calvin Stapert, *Playing before the Lord: The Life and Work of Joseph Haydn* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 72.

¹⁴ Stapert, 65–68, 71, 81.

¹⁵ Landon (Vol 2), 555–56.

Haydn's output of sacred music dwarfs his older brother's.¹⁶ The Sherman/Thomas catalog of his works includes well over three hundred pieces of religious music.¹⁷ The older Haydn's smaller amount of sacred music compared to Mozart and brother Michael's is due in part to their relative circumstances, with the sacred music requirements in Salzburg being more central to the city's activities.

III. Haydn and the Sacred in His Early Symphonies

Restrictions on writing religious works might help explain the genesis of some symphonic movements which included sacred music references, written by Haydn over roughly ten years starting about 1764. The first two movements of Symphony No. 26 in D minor (1768?), the so-called "Lamentation" Symphony, include religious music: its opening Allegro assai con spirito incorporates an old plainchant involving the Passion of Christ, and the second movement, an Adagio in F Major, includes a "Lamentation" chant (from the Old Testament "Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah") his audience would recognize.¹⁸ The first movement Allegro of Symphony No. 30 (1765) uses an "Alleluja" melody based on Gregorian chant.¹⁹ Both symphonies were suitable for performance in either an Esterházy palace or a church.²⁰ Symphony No. 26 would be appropriate for Good Friday, and No. 30 for an Easter service.

Griesinger describes another way the composer expressed his spiritual side:

It would be very interesting to know from what motives Haydn wrote his compositions, as well as the feelings and ideas that he had in mind and that he strove to express through musical language...he said that he oftentimes had portrayed moral characters in his symphonies. In one of his oldest which, however, he could not accurately identify, the dominant idea is of God

¹⁶ Bruce C. MacIntyre, "Michael Haydn's Early Masses and Their Viennese Context," in *HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America*: Vol. 9, Article 3.

¹⁷ Charles H. Sherman and T. Donley Thomas, *Johann Michael Haydn (1737–1806): A Chronological Thematic Catalogue of His Works* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Landon (Vol 2), 291–95; Landon, *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*, 286–91.

¹⁹ A. Peter Brown, *The Symphonic Repertoire*: Vol. II, *The First Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony* (Indiana University Press, 2001), 96. Haydn uses this same melody in the first movement of one of his many trios for baryton, viola, and cello, Hob. XI:64. Allusions to religious music are also found in other Haydn symphonies. The Trio section of No. 45 quotes another "Lamentation" melody (Webster, *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 67. The opening of the slow introduction for No. 103 includes the first several, highly recognizable notes of the *Dies irae* Gregorian chant.

²⁰ Daniel Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740–1780* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995), 287–90,

speaking with an abandoned sinner, pleading with him to reform. But the sinner in his thoughtlessness pays no heed to the admonition.²¹

A commonly proposed candidate for that unidentified work is the opening Adagio of Symphony No. 22 in E-flat, "The Philosopher" (1764). It is one of a small number of symphonies in *sonata di chiesa*, or "church sonata" form, with a complete opening slow movement. Such works were continuing the tradition of slow-fast-slow-fast order of movements in Baroque instrumental pieces written for church services. However, as early as the time of Arcangelo Corelli in the late 17th century and throughout the Baroque period, that format was also used for purely secular works, e.g. most concertos by Georg Philipp Telemann, or sonatas for solo instrument(s) and basso continuo.²² This suggests that by Haydn's time the slow-fast-slow-fast order of movements may not have had a direct association with or intention for church services at all.

With two exceptions (both c. 1758),²³ Haydn's typical "chiesa" pattern of movements was slow-fast-minuet-fast. The slow initial movements of works in that form—Nos. 5, 11, 21, 22, 34, and 49—consistently use wind instruments, while most of Haydn's symphonies at that time with slow second movements are for strings alone. The two opening slow movements of Symphonies No. 5 (Adagio, *ma non troppo*) and No. 11 (Adagio cantabile), both written between 1757 and 1760, do not seem to have a clear-cut "first movement" character. If each work were played reversing the order of their initial slow and following fast movement, both the "right" and "wrong" way of playing them would sound valid. Overall, except for their use of wind instruments, they seem similar to slow movements that were placed second in other symphonies written about the same time. Not so with the later four works—Nos. 21 (1764), 22 (1764), 34 (1765–66), and 49 (1768); their first movements are marked Adagio, with no qualifiers for the tempo as in Nos. 5 and 11, and have a distinct "opening" character that would sound misplaced if their initial two movements were reversed.²⁴

No. 21's opening Adagio is through-composed and has an indistinct formal character that does not fully correspond to sonata or other conventional forms of the time.²⁵ The candidacy of No. 22's

²¹ Gotwals, 62.

²² See, for example, Corelli's 48 trio sonatas (two violins and basso continuo) Op. 1 through Op. 4, as well as the trio sonatas of Antonio Vivaldi's Op. 1 and the violin sonatas of his Op. 2.

²³ Symphony No. 18 in G is in three movements with a format of slow-fast-tempo di minuetto, and Symphony No. 15 in D has a slow-fast-slow opening movement followed by minuet-slow-fast movements.

²⁴ Brown, 94.

²⁵ Landon (Vol. 1), 565.

Adagio for being the Divine dialogue cited previously is enhanced by its unique orchestration for solo pairs of horns and cor anglais with muted violins—the only time he uses the latter in church sonata form symphonies. The opening movements of Nos. 34 and 49 are both in minor keys—respectively, in D minor and F minor. They differ, however, in two important ways. When played as Haydn indicated, with repeats of both large sections observed, the opening movement of No. 34 takes roughly as long to play as the next three movements combined. Also, the latter are all in D Major and secular rather than sacred in character. All four movements of No. 49 have F minor as their tonic, and the work is not as frontloaded by its own long initial movement as No. 34 is. However, despite individual differences the opening Adagios of Nos. 21, 22, 34, and 49 each have a distinctly serious and contemplative character. The nicknames of “The Philosopher” for No. 22 or “La Passione” (the Passion of Christ) for No. 49 did not originate with Haydn but reflect the perceived character of the music. Nonetheless, the opening movement of No. 22 sounds at least consistent with that possible Divine discussion. Similarly, based on their overall tragic mood, all four movements of No. 49 could serve as the musical centerpiece of a Good Friday service. The dark, somber Adagio of No. 34 followed by three successive ones in bright D Major might be Haydn’s depiction of the despair of the Crucifixion transfigured into the joy of the Resurrection.²⁶ No. 21’s main theme sounds based on or composed in the style of a chorale melody.²⁷

IV. Haydn and the Sacred in Later Sturm und Drang Symphonies

“In view of the somewhat subterranean nature of the melodies in Nos. 26 and 30, and the latter’s outwardly ‘unreligious’ style, as well as Haydn’s stories of ‘moral characters’ and his lifelong faith, it seems likely that there were other religious symphonies, whose associations (or hidden borrowings) have not yet been identified.”²⁸ The opening Adagios of Nos. 21, 22, 34, and 49 in particular have a meditative character consistent with being “religious symphonies.” Slow movements in particular from other symphonies would also be, if similarly religious in tone, potential candidates for use in church despite being in the second rather than opening position. Giuseppe Carpani, another early biographer, states that Haydn symphonies in G Major, D Major, and C minor were employed for this purpose. However, he did not specify which ones in those keys were used. Another late-18th century

²⁶ Hertz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740-1780*, 281, 285–294.

²⁷ Landon (Vol 1), 565; Brown, 86–87.

²⁸ Webster, “Extramusical Associations,” *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 225–49.

writer describes hearing a movement from a D Major Haydn symphony in church, but again without identifying which one. Playing movements from symphonies either before or during a Mass was a well-established tradition in the 18th century.²⁹ Thus, Haydn could also demonstrate his religious feelings by playing suitable movements from symphonies in that setting without direct citations of sacred music or that were not from works in *sonata di chiesa* form.

Some symphonic slow second movements Haydn wrote in the early 1770s show similar characteristics to the opening Adagios of Nos. 21, 22, 34, and 49. Prominent among them are those in Symphonies Nos. 43, 44 (both 1771), 45, 46 (both 1772), 54, and 56 (both 1774). All use muted violins, creating a softer orchestral sound with a limited range of dynamics—never too loud and rarely changing suddenly—and each uses obbligato wind instruments. However, with one exception (a solo bassoon in No. 56) they still exhibit the common orchestration of the time with pairs of oboes and horns, employed sparingly in providing contrasting timbres to the dominant strings. The later six Adagios are all in sonata form, with both large sections marked with repeats. Based on their subtle sound, length, and particular interplay between winds and muted violins, “Emotionally, they require tremendous concentration on the part of player and audience, and probably for this reason they were abandoned in the next period. Full of delicate emotion and intricate passage work for the violins, they are often of great length, leaving the listener exhausted.”³⁰

Besides the general similarities just described, each movement has its own distinctive features. The slow movement of No. 46 is the only one in a minor key (B minor), with the tempo *Poco adagio*. No. 44 has a lyrical, resigned quality that makes the probably apocryphal story about Haydn requesting it to be played at his own funeral seem plausible even if not true. No. 43's Adagio has an overall mood that is difficult to describe. It is the only movement in any Haydn symphony set in the uncommon key of A-flat major. In Christian Schubart's book *Ideas toward an Aesthetic of Music* (1806), the affective association of that key in late 18th century was “death, the grave, putrefaction”—which might help explain its selective use.³¹ The slow second movement of No. 45, the “Farewell,” is rife with tonal ambiguities, shifting quickly between major and minor.³² As noted previously, the slow

²⁹ Neal Zaslaw, “Mozart, “Haydn and the Sinfonia da Chiesa,” in *The Journal of Musicology* 1/1 (1982): 95–124; Hertz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740–1780*, 285–94.

³⁰ Landon, *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*, 322.

³¹ Schubart, *Ideen Zu Einer Ästhetik Der Tonkunst* (Vienna: J. V. Degan, 1806), 378.

³² Webster, *Haydn's “Farewell” Symphony*, 57–64.

movement of No. 56 prominently features a solo bassoon, removed from its usual *col basso* function.³³

The second movement of No. 54 is a very slow Adagio assai. If played with both repeats, it is not only up to three times as long as the shortest of these six movements (No. 46) but probably has the longest playing time of any movement in his symphonies.³⁴

V. Haydn and His Audience for "Sacred" Symphonic Slow Movements

Along with personal religious motivations for writing "sacred" or "prayerful" slow movements, Haydn presumably was confident that his small, noble audience would respond positively. Overall, the consistently subdued sound (courtesy of ubiquitous muted violins with intermittent use of winds) and meditative nature of these six slow movements, matching in many ways those opening Adagios of the four "church sonata" symphonies described previously, suggests the possibility that Haydn desired they convey a sacred or "prayerful" character, requiring "...tremendous concentration on the part of player and audience..." for what was ostensibly entertainment for his aristocratic patron. According to Haydn, "My Prince was content with all my works, I received approval...."³⁵ Nicolaus I was a musical connoisseur who was, along with other noble guests, the initial audience for symphonies. Those individuals likely would have recognized and appreciated the originality and creativity that Haydn poured into all those works, and recognized something of the sacred, prayerful character of those slow movements. Contrary to Landon's opinion, the first listeners to those six adagios probably would have been capable of providing the necessary musical concentration and not be "exhausted" by them. Haydn's original listeners would also have been in no rush to get through slow movements, having both the time and inclination to savor their sound and rhetoric.³⁶ Moreover, the muted (both

³³ The last movement of Symphony No. 45 "Farewell" also contains solo bassoon material, but only a very brief passage in the last movement to draw attention to that player before he exits.

³⁴ Landon (Vol 2), 308. A performance by Christopher Hogwood that plays both repeats clocks in at 17 minutes 51 seconds. A live performance (March 2021) by Giovanni Antonini and the Basel Chamber Orchestra also plays both repeats, but it runs about 15 minutes 35 seconds. My thanks to Robert Spruijtenburg for graciously providing me with a video of that performance and for his comments on this article. A performance by Antal Doráti and the Philharmonica Hungarica with no repeats takes about 11 minutes; doubling that number to correspond to taking both indicated repeats would make it the slowest—truly Adagio *assai*—and longest of those performances, at around 22 minutes.

³⁵ Gotwals, 17.

³⁶ This unhurried attitude towards listening to symphonies at Eszterháza apparently extended to other genres too. "Haydn's operas move slowly; everyone at Eszterháza had unlimited time, especially Prince Nicolaus, 'for whom nothing was too long'..." Landon (Vol 2), 513.

figuratively and literally), contemplative, meditative nature of those particular symphonic adagios was perfectly in keeping with their Catholic background. They would have been both used to and comfortable with Sunday church services lasting well over an hour. That liturgy would be accompanied by suitable prayerful music, which might have included those six movements. Even when not played in a religious setting, their devotional nature would still be recognized.³⁷

Some overtly sacred works strengthen the case for an association between the slow tempo of these symphonic movements and the spiritual. Haydn's earlier *Stabat Mater* (Hob. XXa:1, 1767) is a long, intensely devotional Marian work depicting the sorrows of the BVM during her Son's crucifixion. Its thirteen movements are dominated by slow tempos. Only six are a Moderato or faster, and the work ends with a movement that is marked Largo assai.³⁸ The original, orchestral version of Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross*, composed in 1786 on a commission originating in Cádiz, Spain, also illustrates this. It was commissioned to be performed as meditations for a Good Friday service in which the bishop would preach about the New Testament "Last Words" spoken by Jesus Christ while on the Cross. Eight of its nine movements—an *Introduzione*, seven "Sonatas" corresponding to each of the "Words"—have slow markings Adagio, Grave, Lento, Largo; only the concluding *Il terremoto* depicting the earthquake that occurred just after Christ's death (Matthew 27:51) is marked with a fast tempo (Presto e con tutta la forza). The result is a purely instrumental masterpiece written explicitly for the purpose of meditation, contemplation, and prayer that is not only based on a text but incorporates the latter into the music itself.

Haydn famously commented on the challenge of composing such a work: "It was no easy task to compose seven adagios lasting ten minutes each [per the terms of the commission], and to succeed one another without fatiguing the listeners..." The composer also took the advice of a priest he knew who advised him to "...take the first [Latin] words of the text and write a melody to each that should be the leading feature of each movement."³⁹ Despite each movement of *The Seven Last Words* lasting for no more than about ten minutes, the work still required the church's congregation to focus and

³⁷ Zaslav, 95–124.

³⁸ Stapert, 74–81.

³⁹ Webster, *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony*, 231–32; Landon (Vol 2), 616; James MacKay, "Tonal Diversity and Formal Variety in Haydn's Seven Last Words," in *Haydn and His Contemporaries*, edited by Sterling Murray (Ann Arbor, MI: Steglein Publishing, Inc., 2011), 56–75; Richard Will, "Preaching without Words: Reform Catholicism Versus Divine Mystery in Haydn's *Seven Last Words*," in *The Characteristic Symphony in the Age of Haydn and Beethoven* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 83–128.

concentrate on over an hour of music, and with its readings, probably well over two hours for the entire service. That total playing time makes the up to twenty-two minutes or so of No. 54's Adagio assai seem short by comparison. This further illustrates how audiences steeped in the tradition of Catholic liturgical services were thus prepared to appreciate those six symphonic Adagios without becoming "exhausted."

VI. Haydn's "Rosary" Symphony?

It is over two centuries too late to ask Haydn about the possible devotional purpose of the slow movements in those six late *Sturm und Drang* symphonies. However, given their serene, unrushed, contemplative nature, particularly when played at the tempos and with the repeats the composer indicated, it is plausible they were meant to evoke the sacred in a secular work. Moreover, there is specific evidence that the slowest and longest of those adagios, from Symphony No. 54 in G Major, is connected to a specific Catholic devotion—the saying of the Rosary.

A purely speculative observation is that unlike the other symphonic adagio movements which are generally shorter, the up to twenty-two minutes or so it takes to perform this movement approximates the time it might have taken Haydn to recite the Rosary. Its hushed quietude (virtually all of it is marked piano or pianissimo, with only a few scattered measures of forte—which, for the muted violins, is still not very loud) creates an atmosphere more suited for a chapel than a concert hall, and also appropriate for saying a private prayer like the Rosary. Given Haydn's special devotion to the BVM and his habit of praying the Rosary to stimulate musical inspiration, it would be logical for him to depict or at least refer to that personal form of prayer in his music. Similarly, his original, Catholic audience was just as familiar with the Rosary as he was and thus may have connected it and this movement. Its very slow tempo is a good match for the equally unrushed progression from one individual prayer (e.g. each "Ave Maria") to the next while saying the Rosary. Based on that experience, those listeners would be attuned to both the Rosary's and the music's deliberate, meditative pace.

That movement contains frequent runs of triplet figures in sixteenth notes, beginning in mm. 5–6, , with triplet figures played in the second violin part ten times at the end of each of its two sections (mm. 47–48, and mm. 135–136). Thus, the "perfect" number ten is coupled with the number of "Ave Maria" prayers recited in each of the five decades of the Rosary. Another potential "numbering" point is that the dynamic level of the entire movement rises above piano (very briefly on each occasion) only

six times—the number each of “Pater Noster” and “Gloria Dei” prayers said in the Rosary. Those six occasions consist of only ten measures out of a total of 137—all ten marked forte, except for one between piano and forte due to its being part of a crescendo that begins piano in the preceding measure. Note again this numerical connection of ten measures to each decade of “Ave Marias” that are said in that devotion. The measures involved, with all but m. 115 marked as a full forte, are:

1. m. 27.
2. mm. 40 and 41.
3. m. 94.
4. m. 107
5. mm. 111 and 112
6. mm. 116 and 117, with a crescendo marked in m. 115; m.114 is marked piano, and m. 116 forte.

Thus, m. 115 is somewhere between piano and forte.

A distinctive feature in the second section of the movement is also explained by a connection to the Rosary. “Toward the end of the second part, there is a crescendo and a full stop on a six-four chord; whereupon to our astonishment, there is a full-fledged cadenza for the two violins. (Were they soli, perhaps, in Eszterháza? Haydn and the leader Luigi Tomasini?)”⁴⁰ After a quarter note pause and a single quarter note in the bass line, the muted first violins begin a cadenza-like theme marked piano. From there on the rest of the movement is marked either piano or pianissimo. After four measures played by the first violins alone, the muted second violins enter (m. 122) with an independent line. The passage for this pair ends at m.134, with the lower strings then entering and the two violin lines trilling together in thirds on a half note before the winds return to end the movement quietly.

While most recorded performances play this section of music using the entire first and second violin sections, Ádám Fischer and the Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orchestra instead use (as Landon suggested) two solo violins in an instrumental dialogue. The potential Marian connection between that passage and saying the Rosary is that the first half of the “Ave Maria” alludes to two important dialogues in the Gospel of Luke. The opening of that prayer is:

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.”

⁴⁰ Landon (Vol 2), 308.

This, with the exception of the name "Mary," is taken from Luke 1:28. They are the first words uttered by the Archangel Gabriel to the BVM at the Annunciation—which is also the first Mystery of the five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Those words begin the dialogue between Gabriel and the BVM that finishes with her acceptance (Luke 1:38) of the offer presented to her to become the mother of Jesus Christ—"Let it be done to me according to your word."—and thus the Incarnation.

The Ave Maria continues:

Benedicta tu in mulierbus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

The phrase "Blessed are you among women" is not only the continuation of Gabriel's words, but also the first words spoken by the BVM's cousin Elizabeth, pregnant at that time with the son who would become John the Baptist, after the BVM goes to visit her. This meeting is known as the Visitation and is the second of the five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Elizabeth then continues (Luke 1:42) with, except for the specific reference to Jesus at the end, "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb." This leads to a dialogue between those two women, with the BVM's reply (Luke 1:46-55) being what became another important prayer associated with her: the "Magnificat." Thus, whether played as sections or soloists, that passage could reflect those two sacred dialogues within the "Ave Maria" and the prayer's crucial role in the Rosary. Since the cadenza is played twice if the second part of the movement is repeated, as Haydn indicated, the first time represents the dialogue between Gabriel and the BVM, and the second time the one between the BVM and her cousin Elizabeth.

VII. Three Marian Movements

Besides such indirect ones, there are direct links between No. 54's Adagio assai and Haydn's devotion to the BVM and the Rosary. The third Sonata of *The Seven Last Words*, marked Grave, depicts (John 19:26) the crucified Jesus Christ telling the BVM, who is standing at the foot of the Cross, "Woman, behold thy son." In Latin, this is *Mulier, ecce filius tuus*. As noted earlier, the composer wrote the music opening each Sonata to match the Latin text for that Word. However, in this third one, before presenting his word-based theme, Haydn opens with two introductory measures played by the full

orchestra. The first of those two measures consists of two repeated half notes (Example 1). The second measure has the same notes for all parts written as a whole note with a fermata. Perhaps Haydn meant those first two notes to symbolize the pair of primary figures standing beneath the Cross. In John 19:26-27 these are the BVM and "the disciple whom he [Jesus Christ] loved," the latter being traditionally identified as the titular author of this gospel, the Apostle John:

"Therefore, when Jesus had seen his mother and the disciple he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold thy son.'

Next, he said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother.' And from that hour, the disciple accepted her as his own."

The prolonged whole note in the second measure may thus depict Jesus Christ Himself within that Passion scene. Example 1 shows the first violin and horn parts of this Sonata's first seven measures.

Example 1. *The Seven Last Words*, Sonata III, mm. 1-7.

Musical score for Example 1, showing the first seven measures of Sonata III. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features two staves: Horns I/II and Violin I. The first two measures show a half note G4 and a half note E4. The second measure has a whole note G4 with a fermata. The third measure is a whole rest. The fourth measure is a whole rest. The fifth measure is a whole rest. The sixth measure is a whole note G4. The seventh measure is a whole note E4. Below the Violin I staff, the words "Mu-lier, ec-ce fi - lius tu-us" are written under the notes.

The notes used to fit the words "Mulier, ecce filius tuus" are in mm. 3–6. Compare mm. 3–7 with the corresponding ones (mm. 1–5) in the Adagio assai of No. 54. Examining their scores and listening to them shows the music in the overtly Marian movement of *The Seven Last Words* is only a slight variation of that in the symphony (Examples 1 and 2).

Both works begin with the same downward pattern of two notes a third apart in their first measures (second violins in the symphony, first violins in the later work), repeated a whole step lower in their next measures. The next two measures of each movement also have a similar sound. In No. 54, the first violins take over from the second violins and complete the theme in mm. 3–4. To make these similarities clear, Example 3 shows those first and second violin parts, and the third staff shows them combined with the relevant ones (mm. 3–4) of the first violin part, transcribed down an octave.

Example 2. Symphony No. 54, II, mm. 1-5.

Example 3. Symphony No. 54, II—modified per text.

In the later work's Grave the same overall pattern is used. Even more strikingly, each theme ends with two horns playing the same four repeated notes in octaves (Examples 1 and 2). Example 4 compares mm. 3 through 6 of the Grave (top staff) to the combined (violins I and II) theme of No. 54 (bottom staff).

Example 4. The Seven Last Words (top) versus Symphony No. 54, II (bottom)

Overall, the similarities in music and structure present in the openings of those two movements is so striking that it would be difficult to dismiss them as mere coincidence.

Just as the Grave of *The Seven Last Words* uses a Marian quotation as the basis for its theme, Example 5 shows how the opening words of the "Ave Maria" can be fitted to the first four measures of No. 54's Adagio assai.

Example 5. Words of the Ave Maria fitted to Symphony No. 54, II

VI. I
a plen-a Dom-in - us te - cum

VI. II
A - ve Ma - ri - a, gra - ti

There is another symphony in which Haydn may have fit a musical theme to a text. Symphony No. 64 (c. 1773) has the nickname "Tempora mutantur," because that title is found on authentic manuscript parts for it.⁴¹ Those words refer to a well-known epigram:

Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis quomode?

Fit semper tempore peior homo.

"The Times are Chang'd, and in them Chang'd are we.

How? Man, as Times grow worse, grows worse, we see."

It has been suggested that the rhythm of the fourth movement's theme corresponds to the poetic meter of the first line of that epigram,⁴² although this association has also been disputed.⁴³ Thus, the words of the poetry might be sung to that theme—as has been postulated here regarding the Adagio assai of the roughly contemporaneous No. 54, and which is overtly done in the Sonatas of *The Seven Last Words*.

⁴¹ Landon (Vol 2), 306.

⁴² Jonathan Foster, "The Tempora Mutantur Symphony of Joseph Haydn," *Haydn Yearbook* 9 (1975): 328–329.

⁴³ Elaine Sisman, "Haydn's Theater Symphonies," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43/2 (1990): 292–352.

There are other points of convergence between the second movement of No. 54 and Sonata III. Both employ two of the slowest tempo markings Haydn ever used—Adagio assai for the symphony, Grave for the later work. Another is that the latter, too, is related to the Rosary: the fifth Mystery of the Sorrowful Mysteries is the Crucifixion, the subject of Sonata III and other movements of *The Seven Last Words*. Haydn could have seen a clear symmetry between a movement inspired by and invoking the Ave Maria of the Rosary (Symphony No. 54, second movement) with one overtly referencing the presence of the BVM at the Crucifixion (*The Seven Last Words*, Sonata III). The former describes the very beginning of Jesus Christ's life—the Incarnation—after the BVM's acceptance of her role as His mother. The latter depicts her helplessly watching Him die. Using similar themes in both pieces of music would highlight this connection.

Writing the slow movement of No. 54, as well as those of the five other symphonies mentioned previously, to express religious devotion might also be related to a serious event in the composer's life not long before he wrote them. Landon says, "Haydn seems to have become seriously ill in 1770."⁴⁴ He speculates that the *Salve Regina* in G minor, Hob:XXIIIb:2 (1771) was written to thank the BVM for his recovery. All six of those symphonies with meditative, prayerful slow movements were composed from 1771 to 1774—and thus in the wake of that recovery. Therefore, it is plausible that those works, along with the more obvious *Salve Regina*, were written as votive offerings to the BVM.

Given the immense amount of music he wrote, Haydn's use of two similar themes might be coincidental. However, that would raise the question why one clearly Marian piece would be linked to that particular symphonic slow movement—unless he had already dedicated the latter to the BVM, by way of a connection to her greatest devotion and for which he had a special love, the Rosary. Another objection to this hypothesis is that only the Adagio assai movement of No. 54 seems to partake of any possible religious or Rosary relation. The other three movements sound secular. However, so do the succeeding three of No. 34 with its D minor, intense opening slow movement, or the final two of No. 30, whose first movement has a direct religious connection. Moreover, Haydn had no issue with combining both the secular and the sacred in a single work. The *Missa in Tempore Belli*, Hob. XXII:9 combines the sensuous and the sacred,⁴⁵ as does his incorporation of music from Adam and Eve's duet in *The Creation* describing purely earthly love into the Gloria of his duly nicknamed

⁴⁴ Landon (Vol 2), 168, 250; Stapert, 83–84.

⁴⁵ Landon (Vol 4), 168–172; Daniel Heartz, *Mozart, Haydn and Early Beethoven 1781–1802* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009), 568.

Schöpfungsmesse, Hob. XXII:13.⁴⁶

There is another indication that the Adagio assai of Hob. I:54 and the Grave from *The Seven Last Words* are both "Marian" movements. The opening of another clearly Marian work, the *Salve Regina* in E Major, Hob. XXIIIb:1 (1756), has a "virtually identical beginning," with a similar and distinctive pattern of falling thirds, as the Grave of *The Seven Last Words*.⁴⁷ That same pattern of notes is also seen in No. 54. All three works have similarities too in the bass parts of their opening measures. Example 6 shows this in the corresponding two measures in each of these three works. The opening measures of all three show the same pattern of repeated falling thirds in the violin parts, either followed by an "answering" bass note or, in the case of the *Salve Regina*, preceding it. The fact this musical "fingerprint" appears in two overtly Marian works, as well as that symphonic Adagio assai, further indicates the latter is also a Marian piece.

No. 54 is also unique among Haydn's symphonies in that on two later occasions he significantly enlarged its original orchestration and even added additional music.⁴⁸ It was originally scored for his standard ensemble of paired oboes and horns, bassoon, and strings. In subsequent stages he not only added a slow introduction to the work's first movement but also ultimately expanded its instrumentation to that of an early "London" symphony, including two flutes, a second bassoon, two trumpets, and timpani. One reason he did this might be solely practical—adapting an earlier work for a larger orchestra that became available, such as during his London sojourns. However, in that final, enlarged orchestration Haydn notably left the second movement unchanged. If the latter were indeed Marian/Rosary music for which he held a personal attachment and devotion, surrounding it with an increasingly majestic orchestral sound in those other three movements would make sense, to better glorify that special Adagio assai and its Heavenly dedicatee even more.

⁴⁶ Landon (Vol 5), 201; Hertz, *Mozart, Haydn and Early Beethoven 1781-1802*, 652–53.

⁴⁷ Hertz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740-1780*, 242; Hertz, *Mozart, Haydn and Early Beethoven 1781–1802*, 345

⁴⁸ Brown, 153.

Example 6.

a. Salve Regina in E Major

b. The Seven Last Words, Sonata III

c. Symphony No. 54, II

A major point of similarity between that Adagio assai and the Adagios of Nos. 22, 34, and 49 is that, like them, it is the symphony's emotional and devotional centerpiece and shares their trait of taking roughly the same amount of time to play as each work's other three movements combined. Moreover, like those earlier adagios, the meditative mood of No. 54's second movement would be suitable for performance in church and thus tie it to the more general tradition of using symphonic movements there. It and perhaps other movements from No. 54 might even be the "G Major" symphony cited previously as performed in church, although given the large number of symphonies Haydn wrote in that key this is more speculative.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Zaslav, 95–124.

In summary, No. 54's Adagio assai has the meditative nature of sacred music and is thematically linked to a pair of Marian works. Many formal characteristics including its length, the dialogue-like cadenza ending it, etc. can be connected to Haydn's devotion to the BVM and habit of saying her greatest devotion, the Rosary. Based on all these factors, it is therefore reasonable to nickname Hob. I:54 the "Rosary" Symphony.

VIII. Haydn's Post-*Sturm und Drang* Symphonic Slow Movements

Symphony No. 54's Adagio assai represents both the zenith of and a cul-de-sac in Haydn's use of that particular type of symphonic second movement. Its combination of a very slow tempo taking many minutes to play, spiritual tone, muted violins, and sonata form with two large repeated sections is, with the possible exception of No. 56 (both from 1774), never seen again. Later works use some but not all of these features. For example, the Adagio cantabile of No. 68 (1774–75) is structurally similar. Its music is at times lyrical, elegant, or comical—but not meditative or prayerful. The Largo of No. 64 and Adagio of No. 67 (1775–76) are more contemplative. Like the six slow movements previously reviewed, as well as No. 68, they use muted violins. However, both have significantly shorter playing times than No. 54's Adagio assai largely due to No. 64's second movement being through-composed and No. 67's, while in sonata form, repeats only its first section.

Less than ten years after No. 54, Haydn stopped using muted violins in his symphonies, ending with the Andante sostenuto from No. 77 (1782). The Andante of No. 83 (1785) is the last second movement using sonata form with both sections repeated. Later Haydn slow movements typically use other forms such as single and double theme and variations—e.g. No. 85 (1785) as an example of the former, and No. 103 (1795) of the latter; ternary form, such as No. 92 (1789); or rondo-like hybrids such as Nos. 86 (1786)⁵⁰ or 101 (1794).⁵¹ They also often have tempos faster than Adagio, such as the Andante of No. 94 (1792) and Allegretto of No. 100 (1794). A likely reason for such changes is that, from around No. 71 (1779) onward, the composer wrote symphonies with a much bigger and broader audience in mind and for performance in concert halls much larger than the more intimate chambers at Eszterháza. Instead of his listeners being essentially limited to a small, private coterie of noble Catholic connoisseurs, new symphonies could be and were addressed to a much wider, international,

⁵⁰ Landon (Vol 2), 612.

⁵¹ Landon (Vol 3), 569–71.

and diverse public. The members of that larger and more diverse audience practiced (or not) different religions, had varying degrees of musical literacy and tastes, and encompassed anyone who could afford to hear his music performed. This concept of writing music not only for its intrinsic aesthetic and artistic qualities, but also based on who was going to hear it, was a common thread throughout Haydn's career.⁵²

Thus, the generally "livelier" and more popular nature of many later symphonic slow movements can be explained at least in part as a response to the preferences of that overall less contemplative, heterogeneous crowd. But when the composer did write adagios and largos in later symphonies, he developed new techniques to keep that highly varied audience interested and not "exhaust" them as, Landon suggests, that previous style might. To do that, Haydn lavished particular care on truly slow second movements. His challenge was to satisfy not only the more musically astute among them but also those who, in the absence of something overtly striking or novel, might be prone to lose interest or even become so relaxed that they might fall asleep during them. The Andante of No. 94 may represent his most direct "solution" to that latter issue, but slower tempos required other methods. One way to do this was to keep his adagios and largos significantly shorter than the longest of those written in the early 1770s. Besides expanding the types of forms used, later adagios and largos also employ a wider range of dynamics and instrumental color. Haydn's last symphonies were written for orchestras nearly three times greater in size than the small, private one of up to about twenty-four players employed by Nicolaus I. He expanded their orchestration by adding obligato flutes, bassoons, and clarinets to the ubiquitous oboes and horns. In addition, the previously very rare use by him or other contemporary composers of trumpets and timpani in symphonic slow movements (e.g. the Adagio di Lamentatione fifth movement of Haydn's No. 60 of 1774, or Mozart's Poco Adagio in K. 425 from 1783) became standard practice. The composer introduced novel instrumental colors too, such as beginning the Largo of No. 88 (1787) with a solo oboe and solo cello playing the main theme in octaves, as well as having trumpets and timpani enter unexpectedly for the first time in the middle of that movement. The Largo cantabile of No. 93 (1791) opens seriously with two solo violins, a solo viola, and a solo cello—a string quartet—presenting the primary theme. However, it ends with a very deliberately coarse, one-note fortissimo interjection by two bassoons. Other original and striking instrumental effects, such as the *sul ponticello* (playing near the bridge) technique he specifies for the

⁵² James Webster, *The Cambridge Companion to Haydn* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 30–44; David Schroeder, *Haydn and the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 91–104; Sisman, 292–352.

violins during a long passage in the Adagio *ma non troppo* of No. 97 (1792), or the muted trumpets and muffled timpani in the Adagio of No. 102 (1794), are also used.

Adagios in the "Paris" symphonies and beyond may include music that is poetic and meditative—but not specifically religious. They seem designed to appeal to listeners for whom familiarity with the intimate, deliberate pace of personal Catholic worship like saying the Rosary (i.e. No. 54's Adagio *assai*) was foreign. Those movements can, at times, sound prayerful without actually being prayers. Symphonies Nos. 98 (1792), 99 (1793), and 102 are especially good examples of that latter approach. The first two are hymn-like, the third proto-Romantic in its lush theme and orchestration. No. 98's Adagio is also special for being only one of two "London" symphonies (the other being No. 95, from 1791) with a second movement that does not use trumpets and timpani. It begins with a theme reminiscent of "God Save the King" (or, in the United States, "America") and may quote music by the recently deceased Mozart (e.g. the Andante of K. 551), whom Haydn was mourning at the time.⁵³ The serious, spiritual nature of the opening slow movements of his early symphonies in church sonata form and the Adagios of No. 54 and other five described before is also recaptured in some of the slow introductions that begin all but two—Nos. 89 (1787) and 95—of his post-"Paris" symphonies.⁵⁴ The mysterious, introspective Adagios that open Nos. 92, 99 (1793), 101, and 103, as well as the Largo of No. 102, in particular continue to convey the meditative, prayerful tone projected by their slow movement ancestors of years past. In short, having essentially exhausted the possibilities of one particular style, Haydn pursued other equally fruitful but different ones—another example of the ever-changing, kaleidoscopic nature of his genius in all of the major genres of music he pursued.

IX. Conclusion

Symphonies Nos. 43 through 46, 54, and 56 are all rich, full-fledged, variegated masterpieces. The Adagios of those six works hold musical riches that might take effort to extract. However, a motivated individual will hopefully learn to appreciate the contemplative, meditative, prayerful frame of mind they reflect. Even without any actual desire for a religious experience or, in the case of No. 54, knowing what the Rosary is, one can still enter the celestial world that Haydn encapsulates in those slow movements. Gustav Mahler famously said, "A symphony must be like the world. It must contain

⁵³ Landon (Vol 3), 533–34.

⁵⁴ Hertz, *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School 1740–1780*, 285–94.

everything." In those Adagios, Haydn strives to go beyond this world and into the next, with music reaching ever upwards for the transcendent, yearning to catch a glimpse of what he and the faithful hope to experience in Heaven for all eternity.

Abstract

Despite expressing a strong religious faith throughout his life, Haydn's secular music far outnumbers his sacred works. Certain symphonies, however, include either allusions to religious themes or project what can be interpreted as a devotional mood. Specifically, some unusually long symphonic slow movements during Haydn's "Sturm und Drang" period may be orchestral depictions of a meditative, contemplative, prayerful state of mind. They likely reflect the particular practices of Roman Catholic belief and worship that were a pervasive part of the culture in which Haydn lived his entire life and also part of his personal belief system. The Adagio assai of his Symphony No. 54 is the longest of these movements when it is played at the tempo the composer specified and with the repeats indicated for its two large sections observed. This movement may in particular have been inspired by, intended to accompany, or perhaps depict the saying of a major Catholic devotion, the Rosary, whose recitation Haydn is known to have used to inspire his musical creativity.

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