

## 1 The consequences of presumed innocence: the nineteenth-century reception of Joseph Haydn<sup>1</sup>

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### 1 The Haydn paradox: from engaged affection to distant respect

The mystery that plagues the contemporary conception and reception of Haydn and his music has a long and remarkably unbroken history. Perhaps Haydn experienced the misfortune (an ironic one when one considers the frequency of premature deaths among his great contemporaries or near contemporaries) of living too long. Years before his death in 1809 he was considered so old that the French and English had already presumed him dead in 1805.<sup>2</sup> Many wrote condolence letters and a Requiem Mass was planned in Paris. Haydn's music was both familiar and venerated. Raphael Georg Kiesewetter (1773–1850), writing in Vienna in 1846, reflected the perspective of the beginning of the nineteenth century in his *Geschichte der europäisch-abendlaendischen oder unsrer heutigen Musik*. Haydn had 'elevated all of instrumental music to a never before anticipated level of perfection'. Haydn had a 'perfect knowledge of instrumental effects' and with Mozart (for whom Haydn was the 'example and ideal') created a 'new school which may be called the German or . . . the "Viennese" school'. Theirs was the 'golden age' of music. Most significantly, Haydn's instrumental works represented the standard of what was 'true beauty' in music.<sup>3</sup>

Lurking beneath Kiesewetter's praise of Haydn (and his discreet expressions of doubt about the novelties of Haydn's successors, including

<sup>1</sup> This essay is an expanded and revised form of my essay entitled 'The Demise of Philosophical Listening', in Elaine Sisman, ed., *Haydn and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 255–88. I am deeply indebted to the invaluable criticism and assistance of Elaine Sisman and Irene Zedlacher, and to the encouragement of Dean Sutcliffe and the writings of James Webster.

<sup>2</sup> Karl and Irene Geiringer, *Haydn: A Creative Life in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 182–3.

<sup>3</sup> 2nd edn (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1846), pp. 96, 98.

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Beethoven), particularly in the notion of ‘true beauty’, was a not atypical late eighteenth-century engagement, on the part of connoisseurs of music, with the philosophical quest for a true, valid and therefore objective aesthetic experience and criterion of aesthetic apperception. The *locus classicus* of this concern is Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, first published in 1790. Kant defined taste as the ‘faculty for judging an object in reference to the imagination’s *free conformity to law*’.<sup>4</sup> For Kant, the ‘peculiar feature of a judgement of taste’ was ‘a subjective agreement of the imagination and understanding – without such an objective agreement as there is when the representation is referred to a definite concept of an object’. This notion of an ‘agreement’, or, as Paul Guyer has termed it, a ‘harmony between imagination and understanding’, had particular relevance for the perception and judgement of music in the eighteenth century. Kant expressed explicit caveats about music as an art form in terms of music’s weaknesses *vis-à-vis* the ‘culture’ and ‘expansion of the faculties’ that ‘concur in judgement’. Yet it is precisely instrumental music, absent from any claims to representation, narration and description, as in many Haydn quartets, trios, sonatas and symphonies, that provides the ideal case for the ‘agreement’ between imagination and judgement. Music becomes the perfect vehicle for the cultivation and display of taste. In turn, taste, that special merger of imagination and understanding, in the case of music lends ‘rightful authority’ to the person who possesses it over mere fashion and general opinion.

Kant argued that instrumental music can ‘communicate universally’, in part because of the necessity of music having a mathematical form. Music functions under rules that are essentially mathematical in their character, in view of the absence of aesthetical ideas in music that ‘are concepts or determinate thoughts’. Music becomes an ideal example of aesthetic formalism. The mathematical character of music itself is not the cause of the enjoyment of music but is its ‘indispensable condition’, since it permits the unique ‘animation of the mind’ along with emotions and pleasures that harmonize understanding and imagination.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 173–4. I am indebted to Paul Guyer’s excellent discussion of these issues in his *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 79–96.

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As will become apparent later on, this elegant and clear construct of what it meant genuinely to respond to, appreciate and judge music was not unique to Kant. Rather, Kant's formulation brought an elaborate and extensive eighteenth-century philosophical tradition of speculation on the character and impact of music to its conclusion. That tradition ran parallel with an eighteenth-century aristocratic sensibility that connoisseurship of music was a genuine display of distinction. With the passing of Kieseewetter's (and also Beethoven's) generation during the first three decades of the nineteenth century – a generation comprised of individuals born around 1770 who came to maturity before the end of the century – this decidedly refined notion of musical connoisseurship and taste, which involved a high order of rational mental functioning as well as a powerful imagination and capacity for discernment, had become anachronistic.

This is evident not only in the writings of philosophers but among writers on music. Friedrich Rochlitz (1769–1842), who belonged to Kieseewetter's generation, in his 1824 book directed at the lay public, *Für Freunde der Tonkunst*, took special pains to praise Haydn as the most original and the richest composer, even when compared with Beethoven, precisely on the grounds of Haydn's command of the formal game of altering rhythmic patterns, accents and combinations in instrumental music. Citing the quartets, Rochlitz underscored Haydn's appeal precisely to the intellect, the understanding and therefore to the joys of the imagination triggered by the spontaneous recognition of the inventiveness and ingenuity contained in the structural and formal procedures of music.<sup>6</sup> With the decline in the prestige of the many varying forms of philosophical listening, the expectation that the pleasure of music involved some sort of objective harmonizing of rational thinking and the capacity for personal subjective musings disappeared. As a consequence, Haydn's place in history and the repertory changed. A genuine respect for him remained, but Rochlitz's and Kieseewetter's form of affection and regard, particularly Kieseewetter's idea that Haydn's instrumental works were 'true beauty' concretely realized, vanished.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Rochlitz, 'Der Componist und der Gelehrte: Ein Gespräch', in *Für Freunde der Tonkunst*, IV, 3rd edn (Leipzig: Carl Cnobloch, 1868), pp. 254–6.

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Compare, for example, Adolph Kullak's treatise *Die Aesthetik des Klavierspiels*, first published in 1860 and then, from 1876 on, reprinted in four editions well into the twentieth century. This book was arguably the most widely read and influential book on piano teaching and playing of the nineteenth century – the dominant enterprises of the musical profession and public of the age. Kullak repeats the view that came to pervade the nineteenth-century opinion of Haydn in the years after the death of Beethoven. According to Kullak, Mozart, and subsequently Beethoven, followed a 'path opened by Haydn'. But they achieved greater perfection. By that Kullak meant that Mozart and Beethoven realized a 'spiritual importance' inherent in music. Haydn failed to take the next logical step from his own remarkable innovations, which was a 'psychological' one. This would have led him to strive for a profundity that his music never achieved. Haydn's music lacked the 'inner seriousness', the 'dark and demonic' and the 'interior depth of mood' characteristic of Mozart and Beethoven.

Haydn's music was therefore 'untouched by the hardships of mature life'. His music was childlike, natural, full of joy, naïve, happy. Haydn's ideal of beauty had once been innovative in that it mirrored a new sense of freedom. It emerged out of Haydn's rejection of past constraints, including religious dogma, and a 'crystallized canon of old ideas'. Yet despite its novelty and natural 'freshness', Haydn failed to realize the immanent power of his own formal innovations and remained tied to a superficial notion of symmetry, proportion and evident harmony. The ambitions and virtues held in high regard by Kiewewetter had been transformed into evident limitations. Haydn's greatness, although uncontested, lay primarily in breaking the new ground on which Mozart and Beethoven could develop.<sup>7</sup>

As the nineteenth century progressed, despite the myriad of conflicts and quarrels about music and its character, Kullak's version of Haydn's place in music history and his conception of the virtues and shortcomings of Haydn's music not only became unexceptional, but it remained at once strikingly stable and uncontroversial. Perhaps the most dramatic and influential statement of the standard view of Haydn (from which Kullak doubtlessly drew) was contained in Franz Brendel's *Geschichte der Musik in*

<sup>7</sup> See Martin Gellrich's introduction to Kullak, *Die Aesthetik des Klavierspiels* (Regensburg: Con Brio, 1876; rpt 1994) and the text, p. 21; also the 4th edn, ed. Walter Niemann (Leipzig: C. F. Kahnt Nachfolger, 1905), pp. 21–2.

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*Italien, Deutschland und Frankreich*, first published in 1852. Brendel was nearly forty years younger than Kiesewetter and was a contemporary of Schumann and Mendelssohn. He became the editor in 1845 of Schumann's influential *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Brendel (a decade older than Kullak) began with the premise that Haydn was 'Mozart's predecessor'. Haydn opened up the 'modern age' and his work was 'the soil' from which Mozart came. Haydn was an example of how historical necessity worked through an individual. He emancipated musical art from tradition and authority. Instrumental music, which Haydn developed, marked the first incarnation of the freedom of the spirit through music in modernity.

Haydn, however, was a man of order and convention whose interior genius was limited by his exterior self-presentation and modesty. The outer forms of his being remained decisive in his creative work. Therefore his forms were left without 'being filled with a corresponding content'. His world view, when compared with that of Mozart and Beethoven, was the least developed and least diverse. His capacity to imagine love – the crucial source of musical inspiration – and the feminine was inferior to that of Mozart and Beethoven. Haydn's essential practicality limited his expressive capacity. He revealed a 'teasing retreat' from conflict in life. He was therefore the master of the joke and adept at conveying moods. Mozart commanded irony, and Beethoven, owing to the immense pain of his life, was the composer of profound humour.

If Beethoven could be compared to Schiller and Jean Paul and Mozart to Goethe, Haydn was closest to Wieland. Haydn mirrored purity, nature, innocence, childhood. In the end, he was capable of engaging love only as an abstract cosmic and universal idea, as the force uniting the opposing elements that create chaos. Mozart individualized love and rendered it a subjective experience. Unlike Beethoven, Haydn did not penetrate any of the contradictions of the world, least of all in love; contradictions are, at most, merely alluded to on the surface of his works.<sup>8</sup>

Little within this picture has changed since Brendel's time. In contemporary concert life, we notice many versions of annual 'Mostly Mozart' festivals and weekend-long 'Beethoven Experiences'. Two popular Hollywood films have been made on the lives of Mozart and Beethoven.

<sup>8</sup> Brendel, *Geschichte der Musik in Italien, Deutschland und Frankreich*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Matthes, 1855), I, pp. 300–5, and II, pp. 28–51.

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There is no 'Mostly Haydn' series being planned and no film under contract. Of the massive output of music Haydn left behind, only a small fraction appears regularly on modern concert programmes. When a Haydn work is programmed, it is rarely as the main event.

The Haydn 'problem' bequeathed by the last century to our own was perhaps best expressed during the first decade of the twentieth century in two anecdotes recounted by the legendary conductor Felix Weingartner. He described his encounter with Joseph Joachim when, in 1907, as part of the preparation for the upcoming centennial Haydn activities, they were both invited to sit on the advisory committee of the Breitkopf & Härtel complete Haydn edition. Weingartner had had little prior contact with Joachim, who was suspicious of Weingartner's Wagnerian and Lisztian sympathies. None the less, at the meetings Joachim (then a man of over seventy, who would die later that year) more than once took Weingartner's hand and asked, 'Truly, was not Haydn indeed a *great* man?'

That Joachim's affectionate question might well have been apt in the climate of a century ago can be gleaned from Weingartner's second anecdote. When the centennial Haydn celebrations took place in Vienna in 1909, he, as Mahler's successor at the Imperial Opera, was asked to programme something that could be part of the Haydn anniversary. Weingartner expressed his dismay that the Festival Committee failed to grasp the brilliance of his idea that a new production of Mozart's *Magic Flute* would be the ideal tribute. Not accepting the fact that Haydn was 'everything but a dramatic composer', they insisted on a Haydn opera. Weingartner's approach mirrored the nineteenth-century notion that Haydn's imposing significance and achievement were most evident in his role as the indispensable intermediary step to Mozart and Beethoven.<sup>9</sup>

## 2 The nineteenth-century consensus

The history of the critical and cultural reception of music remains inextricably bound to shifting conceptions within history of what, in the final analysis, constitutes the work of music. Indeed, continuities and major

<sup>9</sup> Felix Weingartner, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Zürich: Orel Füssli, 1929), II, pp. 70 and 202.

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shifts in reigning attitudes about music alter the course of compositional ambitions; they also force a reconstruction of the narrative of music history.<sup>10</sup>

The starting-point for Haydn as a composer was the eighteenth-century strategy best articulated by Kant that might properly be termed ‘philosophical listening’. However, the later part of the century, during Haydn’s most celebrated and productive periods, witnessed the articulation of the early Romantic emphasis on music as an aesthetic experience in real time tied to the imagination and the nearly inarticulate inner self – a concept best described in the late eighteenth-century writings of such early Romantics as Jean Paul and Wackenroder. After Haydn’s death, by the mid-nineteenth century – the era of Brendel and Kullak – a move beyond the early Romantic notions was well under way. Although ‘music as experience’ retained its prestige with particular composers and sectors of the public, later in the century the emphasis shifted to an allegiance to music as text, to the printed score, which became analogous to a book that might be sampled, read, studied and returned to at will. The character of this approach to music demanded of the listener and amateur a novel but commanding self-conscious awareness of history, tradition and precedent. An attitude towards music as a mirror of the historical moment, representative of the generation of Eduard Hanslick and Johannes Brahms, was not uppermost in the early Romantic enthusiasm for music.

Despite such shifts in fundamental expectations and norms of reception over the nineteenth century, the critical response to Haydn’s music – whether understood as a performed event or as a text to be studied and re-read – did not change. The significant disputes during the nineteenth century involving musical taste and culture altered the view of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, but not the understanding of Haydn. In the case of no other major composer was there so little evolution, so much consistency, so little genuine shift in aesthetic judgement and response.

<sup>10</sup> See Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); *Die Theorie der Rezeption: Rückschau auf ihre unerkannte Vorgeschichte* (Constance: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1987); and Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), for the most recent and frequently cited introduction to the historical and philosophical issues.

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Consider, for example, the contrast between the changes in the reception of Mozart's music and the stasis in attitudes towards Haydn. In the 1881 revision of his classic 1854 tract on music's inherent autonomy, *On the Beautiful in Music*, Eduard Hanslick used the change in Mozart reception, and thus in the representation of Viennese Classicism itself, as a way of strengthening the anti-Wagnerian argument that emotion could not serve as the essential content of music. Whereas a few generations earlier Mozart's symphonies had been seen as vehicles of 'vehement passion, bitter struggle and piercing agony' that contrasted with the 'tranquillity and wholesomeness of Haydn', the two composers had now become amalgamated as part of an 'Olympian Classicism'.<sup>11</sup> Mozart, once favoured by the early nineteenth-century Romantics, had become more like Haydn. By the end of the nineteenth century, this distanced image of Mozart was abandoned again, as witnessed by the Mozart revival of the *fin de siècle*.<sup>12</sup> But Haydn stayed in the same place.

Throughout the nineteenth century, no one sensed a need to challenge the predominant view of Haydn's music. The perception of Haydn as innocent, naïve, cheerful, healthy, supremely well-crafted but essentially entertaining and emotionally distant, if not irrelevant, displayed a tena-

<sup>11</sup> *Vom Musikalisch-Schoenen: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Dietmar Strauss (Mainz: Schott, 1990), pp. 31–3. The fact that Mozart's music permitted a variety of subjective responses that varied over time was evidence, according to Hanslick, that music was objective: that there was no inherent emotional meaning to the work of music itself. Implicit in this argument was Hanslick's criticism of modern Wagnerian emotionalists, who, as they relentlessly pursued contemporary musical fashion, either lost or never possessed the capacity to grasp the visceral intensity that Mozart might properly inspire. Hanslick may have been aware that during the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in France, Mozart's symphonic music was considered inferior to Haydn's and certainly subordinate in importance to Mozart's operas. Despite this Parisian preference for Haydn, Berlioz had little use for him, and could barely sit through a performance of one of his symphonies. See Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris 1834–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 84–93.

<sup>12</sup> See Gernot Gruber, *Mozart and Posterity*, trans. R. S. Furness (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994); also Heinrich Schenker, 'Ein Wort zur Mozartrenaissance' (reprinted from the *Neue Revue*, 1897), in *Heinrich Schenker als Essayist und Kritiker*, ed. Hellmut Federhofer (Hildesheim: Olms, 1990), pp. 252–6.



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cious constancy after its first appearance in the age of early Romanticism. E. T. A. Hoffmann had set the stage with his claim that ‘Haydn’s compositions are dominated by a feeling of childlike optimism . . . a world of love, of bliss, of eternal youth . . . no suffering, no pain; only sweet, melancholy longing for the beloved vision’. In this sense Haydn becomes the basis upon which ‘Mozart leads us deep into the realm of spirits’. And, of course, Beethoven ‘sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain and awakens the infinite yearning which is the essence of Romanticism’.<sup>13</sup> This interpretation was reinforced by Carpani’s epistolary Haydn biography of 1812,<sup>14</sup> and from the evident restraint and caveats in Stendhal’s version of Carpani a decade later.<sup>15</sup> These two writers compared Haydn to a master genre or landscape painter – to Claude Lorrain, the great seventeenth-century painter – whose canvases, despite their virtues, did not provide the beholder with an evident subjective viewpoint or the self-conscious opportunity to invent a passionate, interior response. By 1812 Haydn already seemed distanced and historical to a new generation. The isolated individual placed within the landscape and the outer world, the figure to be found or implied in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, was absent from a conception of landscape painting associated with Haydn. While Beethoven would be routinely linked with Friedrich, Haydn would be compared instead with Tintoretto (as he was by Schumann)<sup>16</sup> or (stylistically) with David; he would not be compared with Delacroix. One explanation for this was offered by Adolf Bernhard Marx, who pointed to Haydn’s relative monothematicism, as opposed to the greater dialectical tension of

<sup>13</sup> Cited from the essays on Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony and Beethoven’s instrumental music, in *E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Musical Writings*, ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 97–8 and 237–8.

<sup>14</sup> *Le Haydine, ovvero lettere su la via e le opere del celebre maestro Giuseppe Haydn* (Milan: C. Boccinelli, 1812).

<sup>15</sup> See the excellent introduction and edition by Richard N. Coe of Stendhal, *Lives of Haydn, Mozart and Metastasio* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1972). For a good but brief context for Stendhal see Robert Alter and Carol Cosman, *A Lion for Love: A Critical Biography of Stendhal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eisman, I, 1827–1838 (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), p. 281, took this comparison from Carpani, in Stendhal, *Lives of Haydn, Mozart and Metastasio*, p. 141.

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contrasting themes in the sonata forms of Mozart and Beethoven later favoured by Romanticism.<sup>17</sup>

Critical comparisons of Haydn to a distant but honoured precursor such as Lorrain or Tintoretto allowed nineteenth-century composers and commentators to lavish praise on Haydn's technical command and his role in the development of instrumental music, particularly the sonata, quartet and symphony. Yet Haydn was condemned to a form of aesthetic and cultural irrelevance. Where the Bach revival led to a reevaluation of Bach as a figure at once historical and contemporary, Haydn served throughout the nineteenth century as a merely historical one. He was the acknowledged master, the father of autonomous instrumental musical discourse. Meanwhile, his music was said to be bereft of profound emotional inspiration or narrative significance.

The search for meaning in Haydn did not get very far beyond formalism. Schopenhauer may have been inspired by Haydn's music to discover the possibilities of self-referential meaning, autonomy and significance in music, but he overlooked Haydn's overt attempts to convey extra-musical meaning. Johann Friedrich Herbart rejected altogether the significance of the text in *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, declaring, 'fortunately, [Haydn's] music needs no text; it is mere curiosity that impels us to know what he has tried to illustrate. His music is simply music, and it needs no meaning to make it beautiful.' An admirable but bloodless notion of formal perfection was conceded, but that was all.<sup>18</sup>

Haydn conceivably could have provided a rallying point for mid-century proponents of so-called absolute music, the ideal of purely musical meaning. Indeed, to them Haydn's consummate craftsmanship was preferable to fashion and philistinism. In comments made in 1839, Schumann hailed 'Altwater' Haydn as welcome relief from 'this chronically diseased era of music', in which one only rarely could be 'inwardly satisfied'. Haydn, whose music offered satisfaction because of its conservative integrity, provided relief from a painful awareness of inadequacy by being 'clear as sun-

<sup>17</sup> *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, 5th edn (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879), III, pp. 595–6. Thanks to Scott Burnham for the reference.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Peter le Huray and James Day, eds., *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 454.