

Instrumental Music in an Age of Sociability

Sociability may be a key term of reference for eighteenth-century studies as a whole, but it has not yet developed an especially strong profile in music scholarship. Many of the associations that it brings do not fit comfortably with a later imperative of individual expression. W. Dean Sutcliffe invites us to face up to the challenge of re-evaluating the communicative rationales that lie behind later eighteenth-century instrumental style. Taking a behavioural perspective, he divides sociability into ‘technical’ and ‘affective’ realms, involving close attention both to particular recurring musical patterns and to some of the style’s most salient expressive attributes. The book addresses a broad span of the instrumental production of the era, with Haydn as the pivotal figure. Close readings of a variety of works are embedded in an encompassing consideration of the reception of this music.

W. DEAN SUTCLIFFE is Professor in the School of Music at the University of Auckland, and co-editor of *Eighteenth-Century Music*, published by Cambridge University Press. His research interests focus on the eighteenth century, and publications have covered composers such as Domenico Scarlatti, Scarlatti’s Spanish contemporary Sebastián de Albero, Boccherini, Mozart, Manuel Blasco de Nebra and above all Haydn. His most recent large-scale publication is an edition of the three string quartets Op. 42 by Adalbert Gyrowetz (2017). He was awarded the Dent Medal for 2009 by the Royal Musical Association.

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W. Dean Sutcliffe

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Instrumental Music in an Age of Sociability

Haydn, Mozart and Friends

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University of Auckland



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Preface

This study aims both to define and to defend a strain of Western art music that achieved particular prominence in the latter part of the eighteenth century. I have encapsulated it under the rubric of sociability, a widely understood shorthand for certain developments that characterized the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, but not a term that has often featured more than incidentally in music scholarship. I aim to show how a sociable ethos informs not only the general affective character of this repertory, but also the precise ways in which music could be shaped by composers and received by listeners.

Why should this sociable strain need defending? If it often prompted reactions ranging from incomprehension to indifference to hostility from the listeners and critics of the time, it has, equally ironically, continued to do so up to the present day. This may seem a far-fetched claim when some of the most illustrious composing names in the canon were operating at this time. Yet a great deal of the literature has implied that the accessible character of galant musical language was an obstacle to true creative expression: that the ‘real music’ was somehow to be found behind or beyond the everyday pleasantries that formed the communicative surface. As will soon become clear in Chapter 1, I believe that an imperative of ‘expression’ controls such discourse, and we might ask – not just of this repertory, incidentally – just what we mean by expression, and just how it relates to the listening experience. We might want, for example, to ponder the thoughts of Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis when she writes, in *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014):

I would submit that interest is an important part of our emotional response to music, and that repetition facilitates the interest response. To my knowledge, the notion of interest as an affective response to music has not been deeply explored. Much has been made of emotional responses to music that entail sadness or happiness or some such feeling, yet often my own involvement with a piece, although deeply engaged, consists not of such feeling-states, but rather of a kind of committed and sustained interest. (18)

If this is not exactly the line of thinking I will be emphasizing – though in Chapter 3 I do specifically consider interest’s evil twin, boredom –

Margulis's cognitive approach offers another point of departure when we consider what makes for 'interesting' music. In addition, her perspective is clearly not confined to the eighteenth century, and I would like to note here what I will go on to say at greater length in what follows: that my focus on sociability should not imply that such a perspective has no relevance for other (Western) musical idioms. It may indeed prove to be a particularly rewarding means of reorientation for later eighteenth-century music, but there is a counterbalancing danger of reification – that my study will simply end up reinforcing prevailing views about the 'complacency' and 'lightness' of the style.

However, I don't want to start rehearsing all the arguments that are about to be launched. Any reader will surely end up agreeing that these are expounded at sufficient length in what follows – and besides, a preface should not be a way of making good any flaws in the substance of what succeeds it. I should signal here, though, that I confine my attentions almost entirely to instrumental music, both for reasons intrinsic to the topic and also on logistical grounds. The amount of musical material on which I could draw for this study was already just about limitless, and I have tried to avoid concentrating on any particular genre. I have also, it will be apparent, not confined myself to the usual handful of composers who normally figure in accounts of the era. I have been given a very generous allowance of music examples, but there are many movements I discuss where no score has been provided. In all such cases I have tried to describe them in such a way that the accounts will still make sense in the absence of visual evidence.

A few other logistical matters should be mentioned. I have aimed to give the dates for all works mentioned in the book, which are dates of composition where securely known or, if not, dates of publication. Where I use the simple terms 'quartet' and 'sonata', these refer to the string quartet and solo keyboard sonata unless otherwise qualified. And I should clarify a larger-scale matter that might cause confusion. The term 'galant' functions as a value-neutral description of the musical style that prevailed for most of the eighteenth century, up to the last decades, where most of my interest has been concentrated. The dread word 'Classical' appears only in (scare) quotes.

This book has been a long time in the making. I have given many conference papers and other presentations relating to my subject from 2005 to the present, and I draw on a number of these throughout the book. In addition, at various times I draw on previously published material, acknowledged in all cases through footnotes at the relevant point of the

text. This material derives from the journals *Eighteenth-Century Music*, *Journal of Musicological Research*, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, *Music & Letters* and *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association*, and from the books *Haydn and His Contemporaries II: Selected Papers from the Fifth Biennial Conference of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC, 13–15 April 2012*, ed. Kathryn Libin (Ann Arbor: Steglein, 2015); *Instrumental Music in Late Eighteenth-Century Spain*, ed. Miguel Ángel Marín and Màrius Bernardó (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2014); *SECM in Austin 2016: Topics in Eighteenth-Century Music II*, ed. Janet K. Page (Ann Arbor: Steglein, 2019); *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet*, ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia*, ed. Caryl Clark and Sarah Day-O’Connell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); and *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). I am grateful to all the publishers and presses who allowed me to reuse and/or adapt my thoughts. I should like to thank the University of Auckland and, in the earlier days of the project, the University of Cambridge for support towards attendance at conferences and other events. Many thanks are also due to those bodies that granted me subventions to cover some extra publication costs: the University of Auckland, once more, the Society for Music Theory and the Margarita M. Hanson Endowment of the American Musicological Society, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. I am also grateful to all those who have responded positively to both publications and presentations: no author can have too much encouragement. I did not inflict the following chapters on anyone, since by the time they were in a fit and final state, it really was time to go public, after such a long gestation. I would also like to thank Kathryn Puffett and Gordon J. Callon for setting the music examples, Victoria Cooper, Eilidh Burrett, Lisa Sinclair and Kate Brett of Cambridge University Press for all their help, and my copy-editor Barbara Wilson. Finally, thanks and much love to my partner, Geoff, and to my late parents, Patricia and Bill, who started it all off, and were the most encouraging of all.

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