

## Haydn and the String Quartet

Joseph Haydn was born on March 31, 1732 in the tiny village of Rohrau in eastern Austria near the Hungarian border, about 60 miles southeast of Vienna. His father was a wheelwright, village mayor, and enthusiastic folk musician; his mother had been a cook. He was the second of twelve children, six of whom survived childhood. Haydn's musical talents showed early and when he was five, he went to live with a relative in Hainburg, his father's native town. There he sang in the choir and received some musical training. When he was eight, he was taken to Vienna to be a choir boy at St. Stephen's Cathedral, one of the leading musical centers of Europe. There he studied singing and playing the violin and keyboard instruments. When he was seventeen, his voice changed and he was no longer able to sing high choral parts. He was dismissed from the choir and forced to earn a living serenading in the streets and giving music lessons. He met the great poet and opera librettist Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782), and through him he became valet and accompanist to the Italian opera composer Nicola Porpora (1686-1768) who taught him Italian and "the true fundamentals of composition". He studied hard, completing exercises in counterpoint from the textbook *Gradus ad Parnasum* by Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741) and studying the works of Carl Philip Emanuel Bach, a son of the famous Johann Sebastian Bach and a leading composer of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually, he obtained a position with the Freiherr Karl Joseph von Fürnberg (ca 1720-67). Then in 1759, he became Music Director to Count Karl von Morzin (1717-83), who was soon forced to disband his musical establishment. Finally, in 1761, Haydn became vice-Music Director to Count Paul Anton Esterházy (1711-62). When Prince Paul Anton died a year later, he was succeeded by his brother, Prince Nicolaus I (1714-90). On the death of the previous Music Director in 1766, Haydn was promoted to take his place, a position he was to hold for the rest of his life.

Many years later, Haydn told his biographer the story of how, in 1750, when he was 18, Freiherr von Fürnberg asked him to provide music for four musicians playing two violins, viola, and cello. More likely, this happened around 1757 to 1760, when he was 25 to 28, not 18. The quartets that he wrote in response to this request may or may not have been the first true string quartets; the dates of other possible early quartets are not known with enough certainty. They proved popular and circulated in manuscript in Austria and beyond. Eventually they found their way to Paris, Amsterdam, and London. Nine were collected and published, starting in 1764, in two sets of six each (filled out with the string parts of a symphony and two sextets for strings and horns). These sets are now known as Opus 1 and Opus 2 and they made Haydn famous throughout Europe without his realizing it. They are considered to be the oldest works by a known composer that have been in performance continuously from the day they first appeared to the present.

The Amsterdam publications included a tenth quartet, replacing the symphony Op. 1 No. 5, but it was missing in the versions that later became standard. It

wasn't until the 1930's that it was rediscovered and published as Op. 0.

All ten of these early quartets, which Haydn called "cassatio" and later "divertimento a quattro", are in five movements instead of the four that later became standard. The second and fourth movements are always minuets. Usually, the first and last movements are fast, with a slow movement in the center, but sometimes the first is slow and the middle is fast. The last movement is always fast.

When Haydn joined the musical establishment of the wealthy and powerful Esterházy family in 1761, his contract gave his employers ownership of everything he wrote, so he could not accept commissions or publish anything without permission. Prince Nicholas kept him busy writing trios for violin, cello, and his favorite instrument, the baryton (a sort of viola da gamba with sympathetic strings in the back) as well as symphonies, keyboard sonatas, concertos, and other works, including operas which were produced at the Esterházy court. Meanwhile, many other composers, such as the Italian Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805), who was in Vienna in 1760-1761 when he may have encountered Haydn's early quartets, and a number of Austrian composers, including Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809) (who later taught harmony and counterpoint to Beethoven) and Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739-1813) (who later played quartets with Haydn, Mozart, and another leading composer, Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-1799)) were also writing quartets.

It wasn't until about 1768 to 1770 that Haydn returned to the quartet genre with the set of six now known as Op. 9 and a second set, Op. 17, in 1771. It is not known how he came to write these quartets. One speculation is that the Prince and his concert master, Luigi Tomasini (1741-1808), heard the Op. 2 quartets of Luigi Boccherini on a trip to Paris and requested that Haydn write some of his own to be performed by Tomasini and the Esterházy musicians. For these quartets, Haydn dropped the second minuet. The first movement is usually *moderato*, but one quartet from each set starts with a slow movement and two more are *presto*. The second movement was always a minuet which was followed by a slow movement and a fast finale. One quartet from each set is in a minor key. The first violin tends to dominate.

Opus 20 followed in 1772 (the year of Symphony No. 45 in F-sharp Minor, known as the "Farewell"). Haydn was now 40 years old. These quartets all have an *allegro* or *moderato* first movement. The minuet is placed second in three and third in the other three. The last movements are still always fast, but in place of the more usual sonata form, three of the quartets end with fugues. Two are in minor keys and in four of the six, all of the movements share the same tonic, but in different modes. This set was a marked advance over the previous sets in terms of counterpoint, conversational style, and a creative approach to forms. They were still called "divertimenti a quattro", and they continued to be published in Paris, Amsterdam, and London, probably without the involvement or even knowledge of their composer.

After these eighteen quartets, Haydn was once again busy with other things, including a large number of opera productions.

In 1779, he signed a new employment contract. The clause that gave sole ownership of this works to his employers was dropped and Haydn quickly signed deals with the Viennese publishing firm of Arteria and the London firm of William Forster. A new set of quartets, Op. 33, followed two years later. Haydn's original plan was to sell manuscript copies to a limited number of subscribers before they were made available in print. He claimed that they were composed in a "new and special way". This has been the source of much argument among scholars. Some say it was just a clever advertising slogan, while others point to a shift to a lighter style. Still others suggest a new way of using motives derived from the accompaniment as themes. The fugal finales are gone; three last movements are rondos and two are sets of variations. The dance movements are now labeled scherzo or "joke", a term Haydn did not use in his later quartets even though many of the minuets are more "scherzo" in character than these scherzi. Beethoven frequently used the term in his own works. The second of the set is the famous "Joke" quartet and the third is the "Bird". Opus 33 is known as "Russian" (from the dedication of a later edition to the Grand Duke of Russia, later Czar Paul), or "Maiden" (from the picture on the cover of an early edition) quartets or as "gli scherzi".

The single, easy quartet of Op. 42 was probably written around 1784 or 1785. It was published by the noted publisher and composer Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754-1812), who often published sets of single quartets by multiple composers. He also commissioned Mozart's "Hoffmeister" quartet, K499. There is also a letter from Haydn in 1784 that refers to a commission from Spain for a set of three "easy" quartets, but it is not known whether this was one of them or whether the any of them were ever written at all. Op. 42 was the first quartet that Haydn called "quartetto" instead of "divertimento a quattro".

The next set of quartets, Op. 50, didn't appear until 1787. In the meantime, Haydn met Mozart (1756-1791) in Vienna and the two spent much time together along with Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (whose own single set of quartets was published in 1788) and Vanhal playing quartets and Mozart's string quintets. It was late in 1782, the year of Op. 33, that Mozart started work on the six quartets that he dedicated to Haydn. They were published by Arteria in 1787, "the fruit of a long and laborious study". They show many evidences of the influence of Haydn's Opp. 20 and 33, but are at the same time six highly original masterpieces.

Haydn's Op. 50, dedicated to Wilhelm II, King of Prussia and so nicknamed "Prussian", in some ways returns to the technical complexity of Op. 20; the last movements are all sonata-form except No. 5, which ends with a fugue. This is also the first quartet opus with all of the minuet movements placed third, a pattern that became the general rule for Haydn's later quartets; though not without exceptions. Number 6 of the set is the well-known "Frog" quartet.

After Op. 50, sets of quartets started appearing more frequently. The two sets of "Tost" quartets, the Op. 54/55 pair (1788) and Op. 64 (1790) were nicknamed after Johann Tost, Viennese merchant and former leader of the second violins at Eszterháza, whose violin technique is often said to have influenced the writing of the first violin part in these quartets. They were written more with the popular

market in mind than Op. 50 had been. These sets include the famous "Razor" (Op. 55 No. 2) and "Lark" (Op. 64 No. 5) quartets.

In 1790, Prince Nicholas Esterházy died. His successor, much less interested in music, disbanded the Esterházy musical establishment. Haydn was kept on as a composer, but with very limited duties. Almost immediately, the London violinist and concert promoter Johann Peter Salomon (1745-1815), showed up and signed an agreement for Haydn to visit London, which he did early the next year, crossing the channel on New Year's Day. There he arranged for public performances of some of the quartets of Op. 64.

Haydn returned to Vienna in July of 1792. The Op. 71/74 pair was completed the following year, dedicated to Count Anton Georg Apponyi (1751-1817). He returned to England in early 1794 but was back in Vienna to stay in the summer of 1795. In the following year, he started work on the first of the two great oratorios that would dominate the last years of his career, *The Creation* (1796-98) and *The Seasons* (1799-1801). Other than his last string quartets, he no longer worked on major instrumental pieces.

His best-known set of quartets, Op. 76, which includes the famous "Emperor", "Sunrise", and "Fifths" quartets, was commissioned by Count Joseph Erdödy (1754-1824) and completed in 1797. Another commission came in 1799, this time from Prince Franz Joseph Maximilian Lobkowitz (1772-1816), who also commissioned Beethoven's first quartets. Haydn finished two quartets that same year, but old age was starting to get the better of him and a planned third quartet was never completed. The two completed quartets were published as Op. 77. An additional two movements from an unfinished quartet in D minor, completed in 1803, were published in 1806; it is not certain whether this was to have been the third quartet of the Lobkowitz commission or was the result of some other commission. Haydn died on May 31, 1809 during the siege of Vienna by Napoleon's army. He was seventy-seven years old.

Ignace Pleyel (1757-1831), a former pupil of Haydn's and composer of a number of string quartets of his own, moved to France; in 1797, he gave up composition in favor of music publishing (and years later, piano building). In 1801, he published the parts for the complete set of Haydn's quartets, 80 in all (including the non-quartet works in Opp. 1 and 2; Op. 3, no longer thought to be by Haydn; and the quartet version *Seven Last Words* (as seven separate numbers); but omitting Op. 0). Later editions added Op. 77 and the incomplete Op. 103 as they became available. In 1802, he published miniature scores of four of Haydn's symphonies followed by miniature scores of all of Haydn's string quartets. Symphonies, string quartets, and other ensemble music commonly circulated, either in manuscript copies or in published editions, as sets of parts. These were the first miniature scores published, making these works readily available for study by musicians and music lovers alike. The opus numbers for all of Haydn's quartets, even when he arranged for their publication himself, were assigned by the publishers and so varied from edition to edition. Even the order of works within an opus frequently varied by publisher. Editors often altered Haydn's scores to make

them more "correct". Pleyel's editions became the basis for all the editions of Haydn's quartets until the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century when new editions based on original manuscripts and other early sources finally appeared.

## Opus 20, the "Sun" Quartets

"The next set of quartets was known to contemporaries by two titles: *die Grossen-Quartette* and *die Sonnen-Quartette*. Great they are and, even after op. 17, a sunrise over the domain of sonata style as well as of quartets in particular. Every page of the six quartets of op. 20 is of historic and aesthetic importance; and though the total results still leave Haydn with a long road to travel, there is perhaps no single or sextuple opus in the history of instrumental music which has achieved so much or achieved it so quietly." - Sir Donald Francis Tovey

Opus 20 was written at the end of a three- or four-year period during which Haydn also composed his quartets Opp. 9 and 17. The reason for their composition is unknown, but there is one interesting suggestion. In 1771, the year before Op. 20 appeared, a North German critic had lumped Haydn together with half a dozen other composers and complained of the "emptiness, the strange mixture of comic and serious, of the trifling and the moving" in their works and he went on to deplore their "great ignorance of counterpoint". This criticism must have stung Haydn deeply. In an autobiographic sketch written in 1776, Haydn said that his works were enjoyed everywhere except in Berlin, where "they are incapable of performing some of my works, and are too conceited to take the trouble to understand them properly". Op. 20 could have been a response to such criticism. A number of points support this. Three of the quartets end with fugues and counterpoint plays an important roll in all of them. There is certainly nothing in them that could be called empty. On the other hand, the mixture of comic and serious elements is quite blatant, particularly in No. 4; this was an important part of his style, so on that point there could be no compromise.

This interpretation could also explain certain curious details. Haydn marked certain passages in the fugues where the theme appears in inverted form with the inscription "al rovescio" (Italian, "reversed"), while a passage in canon is marked "in canone". In the third movement of No. 5, he put Baroque figured bass numbers under the cello part and wrote "per figuram retardationis" over the first violin part to indicate that notes required by the indicated harmonies are delayed by the figuration in the violin part. This would not mean much to the players, but it could have served to tweak the noses of his critics.

There are many interesting features of the set as a whole. It was normal for Haydn to write one quartet in each set of six in a minor key, but Op. 20 has two: No. 3 in G minor and No. 5 in F minor. It was usual for the slow movement of a sonata-type work to be in a contrasting key to the rest of the movements, usually the dominant if the key was major; but in each group of six, Haydn usually wrote one or two quartets with all the movements having the same tonic and with the slow movement in the opposite mode (e.g. a C minor slow movement in a C major quartet or a G major slow movement in a G minor quartet). Here, four of the quartets have the same tonic for each movement. Three of the quartets follow the

practice of Opp. 9 and 17 in putting the minuet in second place, but the other three place it third.

The standard sequence comes from the complete edition published by Pleyel and is based on the first Amsterdam and London editions. Haydn's personal catalog of his works lists them in the order 5, 6, 2, 3, 4, 1 relative to the standard order. This puts the three quartets with fugues in ascending order of the number of subjects at the beginning and the two minor-key quartets at the start of the first and second halves of the collection. Studies of the paper of the autograph manuscripts confirm that the first three were written on the same type of paper. This is the order that will be followed in the discussions of the individual quartets that follows. When Arteria published a two-part edition of Op. 20 in 1800 and 1801, supposedly with the composer's input, the sequence was 1, 6, 5, and 4, 2, 3, moving the minor key works to the ends of the two halves. The autograph manuscripts, which were collected by Johannes Brahms, are separate and unnumbered and so provide no clues to the intended sequence other than those derived from the paper on which they are written.

Early editions of Op. 20 were published in Paris (1774), Amsterdam (1779), and London (1778-1780). The nickname "Sun" quartets comes from the image of a sunburst-framed face, presumably meant to represent the god Apollo, on the title page of the Amsterdam edition.

The edition published by Arteria in 1800 and 1801 bore a dedication to Baron Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz, best known as a life-long close friend of Beethoven's and the dedicatee of his Op 95, *Quartetto Serioso*, and other works.

Whatever the reason for their composition, Haydn obviously took considerable care in writing these six quartets. He must have seen them as a musical calling card or resumé that would demonstrate his compositional skills and his imagination. His joy and sense of achievement at completing each of them can be gauged by the inscriptions he added at the end of each quartet. He normally ended his works with a simple *Laus Deo*, "Praise God", and this is the inscription at the end of No. 5. As he went on, the inscriptions became more elaborate. They are given below after the discussion of each quartet.

"With op. 20 the historical development of Haydn's quartets reaches its goal; further progress is not progress in any historical sense, but simply the difference between one masterpiece and the next. Not all the later quartets are equally valuable; inequalities of value are relatively more than less noticeable, and no later set of six quartets, not even op. 76 is, on its own plane, so uniformly weighty and so varied in substance as op 20." - Sir Donald Francis Tovey

## Opus 20 No. 5 in F Minor

This quartet, in a minor key and ending with a fugue on two subjects, was to have been the first in the collection according to Haydn's catalog. It is one of only two Haydn quartets (the other being Op. 55 No. 2, known, possibly incorrectly, as "The Razor") in the key of F minor. The tone is outwardly quite serious, learned, and a little old fashioned. It is one of two quartets in the set in a minor key and one of the four that maintain the same tonality for all the movements, as both the slow movement and the trio of the minuet are in F major. Except for the final fugue, the texture is dominated by the first violin.

**First Movement: Moderato.** The first movement is monothematic, being dominated by the opening motive with its repeated-note accompaniment. The transition begins with a suspension over repeated notes in the cello, followed by a return of the opening motive. The second group starts with a dotted note motive, but this is soon combined with the opening motive. The development is based almost entirely on the opening motive; the dotted note motive only appears combined with the opening motive. Development continues even into the recapitulation. Finally, after the repeat of the development and recapitulation, there is a coda that begins by combining the dotted note motive with the repeated note accompaniment of the first theme, followed by a very harmonically adventurous version of the transition and leading to a very dramatic ending.

**Second Movement: Menuet.** The dance movement is second, as it had been in all the quartets of Opp. 9 and 17. The minuet section has a second-time bar at the end of the second refrain which is actually the start of the trio so that on the repeat, the F minor final chord of the minuet is replaced by the F major of the trio.

The trio, like the minuet, is in rounded binary form. That is, the first refrain is repeated and modified to stay in the tonic key at the end of the second refrain, giving the effect of a miniature sonata form. In the minuet, the return of the first refrain is considerably recomposed; in the trio, it is transposed with some alterations and has a short coda added.

**Third Movement: Adagio.** The third movement, in F major, is considered to be one of the finest violin solos in the entire chamber music literature. The first violin essentially plays written-out elaborations of an eight bar siciliana melody, much like a Baroque-era violinist might have improvised on the written-out melody in the slow movement of a concerto or sonata. The siciliana was a dance in a lilting, dotted six-eight rhythm often associated with shepherds and the countryside. As a dance, it probably originated in Sicily in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was popular at the aristocratic courts in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Sicilianas were often used in the slow movements of sonatas and concertos but the most famous example was the aria "And he shall feed his flock" from *Messiah*. Haydn had written similar movements in both Op. 9 No. 1 and Op. 17 No. 1; comparing them shows how he advanced from opus to opus and especially how much more inspired Op. 20 was compared to the earlier quartets. He wrote one

more siciliana quartet movement: the last movement of Op. 33 No. 5 is a full-fledged set of variations on a 16 bar binary-form siciliana. This later movement so impressed Mozart that he wrote a similar finale for the second of his set of quartets dedicated to Haydn, K421.

The present movement falls into two halves, each with three repetitions of the melody. The first half ends with a coda in the dominant key of C major. This is repeated, transposed to the tonic, to end the movement. This makes the form similar to the special type of sonata form with only an exposition and recapitulation and no development that was sometimes used for slow movements.

Haydn underlines the Baroque qualities of the movement by adding figured bass numbers below the cello part in the fourth repetition of the melody and writing "per figuram retardationis" over the first violin part to indicate that the required harmonies were delayed by the elaborate figuration of the part. None of this would mean much to the players, and there certainly was no question of a keyboard or plucked string instrument accompanying the quartet. The most likely explanation for this whimsy is that it is a show of mock learning aimed at certain German critics.

**Fourth Movement: Finale. Fuga a 2 Soggetti.** Haydn wasn't the first to write a fugue for a quartet movement. In fact, Austrian Emperor Joseph II reportedly favored quartets in a very serious, learned style (and didn't care much for Haydn's quartets). Some of the quartets written for him were just a prelude and old-fashioned fugue.

The first of the three fugal finales of Op. 20 is very well-suited to the rest of the quartet. The main subject, with its long notes and wide intervals gives the exposition a very Baroque feel. It is markedly similar to fugue subject used by J. S. Bach, Handel (e. g. *And with His stripes*), and other Baroque composers. It also uses more fugal techniques such as inversion, canon, stretto, and pedal points than the other fugues.

The main subject enters first in the second violin, accompanied by the viola with the second subject, with its three repeated notes and descending scale. The first violin answers with the first subject in the dominant. The cello enters the first subject in the tonic. The viola answers with the first subject in the dominant. The exposition comes to an end with a final (truncated) tonic entry in the second violin.

Modulation is a key feature of the second section, which makes much of the second subject and a motive taken from one of the continuations of the main subject. One passage, labeled "al rovescio", has the second violin accompanying the first subject in the first violin with its inversion. The second section returns to F minor before ending with a dominant seventh chord following a cello pedal-point on C.

The third section begins with a series of stretto entries of the main subject accompanied by the second which is then presented itself in a series of stretto entries. After a pedal point on a low C, the cello makes a fortissimo statement of

the first subject (ending the sotto voce that was in effect until this point), followed a half-note later and two octaves higher by the same subject in the first violin; this is labeled "in canone". The movement ends with a general pause followed by a final statement of the first subject in the first violin.

***"Laus Deo"***  
***"Praise God."***

## Opus 20 No. 6 in A Major

Quartet No. 6 in the current numbering, ending with a fugue with three subjects, was listed second in Haydn's catalog. The opening measure of the first movement is actually a variation on the opening of the preceding F minor quartet. This underlines both the many similarities and the differences between the two works. Where the earlier quartet maintained a calm and serious demeanor, the present work is bursting with energy. The first movement of the F minor quartet was in a moderate common time; that of the present quartet is in a lively 6/8. The slow movement, in the dominant key of E major, is placed second instead of third; this was the first time that Haydn used this sequence in a string quartet, although this didn't become the standard order until Op. 50.

**First Movement: Allegro di molto e Scherzando.** The opening measure ties this quartet to the F minor quartet; but where the first movement of the earlier quartet was monothematic, the present quartet has no fewer than five themes and new material is introduced in the development, which is otherwise based mainly on the opening theme. Such a wealth of ideas is more commonly associated with Mozart than with Haydn. The second group starts unexpectedly in E minor, the dominant minor key, before turning to major. In the recapitulation, the restatement of the opening theme as well as the second group is given in A minor. Unlike the F minor quartet, where the recapitulation was expanded by continuing the development of the main theme, the recapitulation of the opening theme is here reduced from twenty-one to just eleven bars by reducing the restatement of the opening theme.

**Second Movement: Adagio.** The slow movement, now in second place, ambles along in a binary form. The first refrain is repeated with variations while the second refrain is only played once. The first refrain has a second theme which is recapitulated in the tonic in the second refrain, making a type of sonata form.

Carl Philip Emanuel Bach had published a set of six keyboard sonatas with varied repeats in 1760. Haydn may have been inspired by this to write this slow movement in sonata form with varied repeats, but where Bach had provided varied repeat of both halves of his sonata movements, Haydn only repeats the first half.

**Third Movement: Menuet.** In the minuet, Haydn plays a trick on the listener by using the opening phrase (which is a variation on the opening of the first movement) as the last phrase of the second refrain as if it was in rounded binary form, but this is followed by the end of the minuet and not the next phrase as an attentive listener (and Prince Nicolas Esterházy was certainly an attentive listener!) might expect. He used a more elaborate form of the same idea in the last movement of Op. 33 No. 3, the familiar "Joke" quartet, as part of the setup for confusing the listener about when the movement actually ends.

The trio section, in A major like the minuet, is a real trio, scored for the first violin, viola, and cello. The first three measures (not even the first phrase!) of the trio return in the second refrain, but they are followed by new material rather

than the rest of the first refrain; so, like the minuet, the trio isn't quite in rounded binary form either.

**Fourth Movement: Fuga con 3 Soggetti.** The final fugue continues the lighter and more energetic character of the rest of the quartet. In the exposition, the first violin begins with the first subject followed by the third subject (little more than a slow trill) and second (a descending scale). The second violin and viola follow with the second subject followed by the first and third subjects. In the cello, the first subject is followed by the second and third subjects. The exposition ends with a return of the first subject in the first violin.

The fugue continues with a "development" section which modulates before returning to end firmly in the A major tonic. The first subject is broken up into a number of sections that are presented in counterpoint with each other as well as with the other subjects, often given in stretto entries. At one point, a passage in the first violin and viola with the first subject in inversion and in stretto, is repeated by the second violin and cello, both passages being marked "al rovescio". The fugue concludes with a unison statement based on the first subject.

***"Laus Deo et Beatissimae Virgini Mariae"***  
***"Praise God and the Blessed Virgin Mary"***

## Opus 20 No. 2 in C Major

The first quartet of Op. 20 that Haydn entered in his catalog was in F minor, a key with four flats, the most flats of any key signature in the opus. The second quartet was in A major, a key with three sharps, the most sharps of any key signature in the opus; so it seems appropriate that the third quartet would be in C major, a key with no sharps or flats. The tonics of the first three quartets, F–A–C, form a major triad on F.

The last quartet of the first half of the collection is also the last of the three quartets with fugal finales and the one with the most subjects. Haydn wrote only one later quartet that ends with a fugue: Op. 50 No. 4. The equality of the voices in a fugue might seem ideally suited for the string quartet, but in fact the rigid rules of fugue do not go well with the conversational ideal of chamber music. In real conversations, the participants are never truly equal; one or two voices usually dominate the discussion. In spite of Beethoven's fugal quartet movements, the future lay in bringing elements of fugue into sonata-form. This was something that Haydn begins to explore in Op. 20, as can be seen in this and the other quartets.

After two somewhat old fashioned, first violin-dominated quartets, coming to the C major quartet is like falling through the looking glass into a whole new world.

**First Movement: Moderato.** Haydn starts by turning everything upside-down. The opening is scored for a trio: the melody is in the cello in a high range above both the second violin and the viola. (This creates an instability that will only be resolved by the last quartet in the opus. Quartet No. 2 is thus not a complete work in itself. This is echoed by the second movement which is also incomplete by itself and requires the third movement to reach completion.) This is repeated, transposed to G major with the violin taking the cello's part in a high register and with a correspondingly high second violin. After a full stop played in unison by all four parts, the theme starts again in C major and in the second violin, but it is cut off abruptly by the first violin. This kind of opening, with a theme given in the tonic, dominant, and tonic again is characteristic of a fugue, but no one would have mistaken this for a fugue.

At the start of the development, Haydn continues to explore the sound of the cello by giving it a series of bold statements spanning as much as two octaves, each answered by the first violin. This friendly rivalry ends with a musical handshake, a measure of playing in parallel at the octave. The opening theme returns, this time in the viola, beginning a series of stretto entries, another suggestion of fugal procedures.

The C major quartet is even more monothematic than the F minor; but, as in the A major quartet, the recapitulation is greatly reduced by eliminating repetitions of the opening theme: the first thirty-one and a half bars of the exposition are reduced to only eleven and a half bars.

**Second Movement: Capriccio. Adagio.** The C minor second movement takes us into the world of the theater. The first part is dramatic, with declamatory statements in unison alternating with solos for the cello and first violin and ending on a dominant G followed by a short rest. The second part is a lyrical, serenade-like aria for the first violin, also ending on a dominant G followed by a short rest. The players are instructed to go on to the minuet without a break.

**Third Movement: Menuet. Allegretto.** The minuet is in rounded binary form. The first refrain begins with a prolonged triad on C, over repeated C's in the cello. In the second refrain, the first violin accompanies himself with his open G string to produce a drone effect while the melody and its accompaniment in the second violin and viola emphasize half-steps. The opening refrain is repeated, followed by a coda to be played on one string over a sustained G in the second violin.

The drones suggest the music of the peasantry and the street musicians of Vienna, worlds Haydn new quite well. This might have been one of the things his critics objected to. Many years later, even one of the most high-minded and serious of all his quartets, the famous "Emperor" (Op. 76 No. 3), with its variations on Haydn's own hymn to the Emperor, included the sound of drones in its first movement.

The C minor trio is quite remarkable for its references back to both the drones and semitones of the minuet and also to the declamatory passages of the second movement. It begins with a cello melody that is actually a continuation of a figure introduced just before the end of the minuet section by the first violin and at the same time is based on the cello solo in the opening section of the preceding movement. The first refrain concludes with a passage of unison declamatory material, again recalling the second movement, and it ends on a dominant G as did both parts of the second movement. The second refrain continues with more unison declamation leading to a held G in the first violin accompanied by semitones in the second and the viola, ending with a final dominant G. The second refrain is not repeated and leads directly back to the minuet, where the movement at last finishes at the only tonic C cadence in either this or the preceding movement. This will be reached four times if all the repeats are taken.

**Fourth Movement: Fuga a 4tro Sogetti. Adagio.** This fugue on four subjects dances along in a steady eighth-note pulse in 6/8 time. The first violin leads off with all four subjects in order plus an additional statement of the chromatic first subject. Meanwhile, the viola enters with the second, third, and first subjects, followed by another statement of both the second and third subjects. The second violin comes next, with all four subjects in order. Finally after a delay, the cello comes in with only the first and second subjects.

The next section is very much like a development section. The subject are broken up into fragments that are played in various combinations with each other, modulating widely. Near the end of this section, there is a passage of stretto entries of the first subject with the first violin playing it in inversion against itself; Haydn marks this "al rovescio".

A pedal point in the cello on a low G marks the beginning of the last section,

which returns to the tonic C major tonality. Then the first part of the first subject (one note repeated, then a leap up and a chromatically descending scale) is heard twice in imitation by the cello and viola and then by the two violins. Sixteenth notes appear in the first violin and then spread to the other parts while the cello plays first just the descending scale, then the entire fragment in reverse. This is reduced to just its last notes (a leap down and a repeated note), and this is taken up by all the parts intermixed with cascades of sixteenth notes. All the subjects return again and the movement ends with a passage in unison based again on just the first measures of the opening subject

***"Laus Omnip. Deo – Sic fugit amicus amicum"***  
***"Praise God Almighty - Thus friend flies from friend."***

## Opus 20 No. 3 in G Minor

Just as the F minor quartet began the first half of the opus, this quartet in G minor was listed as the first of the second half, the first of the quartets that didn't end with a fugue. This is Haydn's only quartet in G minor (if we don't count the "Rider" (Op. 74 No. 4), which is really just in G) and it is the third of the four homotonal quartets of the opus, since the slow movement is in G major and all of the movements except the first end in G major.

The entire quartet is characterized by sudden starts and stops, interruptions, and unexpected shifts.

**First Movement: Allegro con spirito.** The first movement is almost entirely built from the opening seven (4+3) bar theme. The strong rhythmic drive is suddenly broken at the end of the transition by a figure made up of oscillating sixteenth-notes followed by two eighth-notes, a sixteenth-note descending scale, and a quarter note. A fanfare of repeated notes in all the parts leads to a rather skittish violin solo. Just before the end of the exposition, a shortened version of the interrupting figure returns.

In the development, the interrupting figure returns twice in its shorter version, each time interrupting the development of the opening theme. It is reduced to just two sixteenth-notes and two eighth-notes for a final comic appearance.

As in the F minor quartet, the development of the main theme continues into the recapitulation. The skittish violin solo is also extended. A final appearance of the interrupting figure leads into a coda (this time included in the repeat of the second half) based on the opening theme. At the end, there is a fortissimo run in the first violin up a sixth, from D to B-flat followed by the final chords, played piano.

**Second Movement: Menuet. Allegretto.** The proportions of both the minuet and trio are unusual. Both refrains of the minuet are unusually long: the first refrain is made up of two ten-bar phrases, ending on on the dominant, while the second refrain is 42-bars long. Together, they fall into a miniature sonata form. The trio has a first refrain is twenty bars long, but the second is only fifteen bars followed by four beats of rests before returning to the repeat of the minuet.

The whole of the minuet section is based on the opening five-bar phrase, starting with a leap from D to B-flat followed by a descent to a series of repeated notes. The leap recalls both the leap of a fifth at the start of the first movement (an interval that changes with each reappearance of the theme), but also recalls the fortissimo run at the end of the first movement, now an octave lower and not filled in. When this returns in the recapitulation, the interval is filled in and the passage is marked "con forza".

The trio is in E major $\flat$ . The first violin plays a flowing stream of eighth-notes over a lightly scored minuet accompaniment that only comes to a rest at the end of each refrain. The second refrain ends on a G major chord. There is no repeat, just a four beat pause before the minuet returns in G minor.

**Third Movement: Poco Adagio.** The third movement, in G major, starts out sounding like it might be a theme and variations, but this proves instead to be the first theme of a sonata-form movement. The transition starts after only three phrases and takes a completely unexpected turn: long, held notes in the upper three parts over a flowing sixteenth-note melody in the cello. The cello switches to an accompanying figure while the first violin plays a slow-moving theme of its own, followed by the cello melody. Soon a repeated-note fanfare in the first violin leads to a passage of bariolage in which the violin plays D alternately on a stopped G-string and open D-string. (It is bariolage that gives the "Frog" quartet, Op. 50 No. 6, its nickname.) This marks the end of the exposition, which is then repeated.

The development opens with the opening theme in the viola, followed by the cello theme. Then the cello repeats the opening theme in a high register, reaching above the second violin and viola. The cello theme makes an extended reappearance in the first violin. Both the first violin and the cello take up the opening theme, which is combined with the cello theme in the first violin. A return of the bariolage, now in the second violin, signals the end of the development.

The recapitulation begins, not with the opening theme, which does not appear again, but with the violin solo. This is followed by the cello solo and the bariolage again, this time in the viola. The third movement ends without a repeat of the second half.

The combination of themes in counterpoint and the exchange of material in this movement owes much to fugue.

**Fourth Movement: Finale. Allegro di molto.** Even though only three quartets in Op. 20 have fugues as their last movements, some writers refer to Op. 20 as having four fugal finales. The present high-spirited movement owes so much to fugal procedures that it might well be considered "fugal" even though it is clearly in sonata form. There is nothing like a fugal exposition, but the fugue-like opening motives are passed from part to part and are used in imitative passages and stretto, much like the subjects of a fugue would be treated.

The opening motive in the second violin, with its leap of a sixth, and its accompaniment in the cello, comes from the opening of the minuet. The following descent from B $\flat$  to F $\sharp$  comes from the cello part at the beginning of the first movement. The answer in the first violin is in two parts: the first a repeated note and a leap of a fourth and the second oscillating sixteenth-notes and two eighth-notes that are similar to the interrupting figure in the first movement. Virtually everything in the movement comes from these first few measures, much the way a fugue is constructed from its subjects, but with much more freedom.

**"Laus Deo et B.V.M. cum O.s St.s"**  
**"Praise God and the Blessed Virgin Mary with all the Saints."**

## Opus 20 No. 4 in D Major

The second quartet of the first half of the opus was in A major, considered by violinists to be an unfriendly key; the second quartet of the second half, the second quartet with a sonata-form last movement, is in D major, considered the key most friendly for the violin. Where the preceding G minor quartet was in a key with two flats and had a slow movement in a key with one sharp, this quartet is in a key with two sharps and has a slow movement in a key with one flat. Where the slow movement of the last quartet started out like a theme and variations before turning into something very different, the slow movement of this quartet is a real strophic theme and variations.

The courtly manners of the first two movements contrast sharply with the high-spirited fun of the last movements.

**First Movement: Allegro di molto.** Any 18<sup>th</sup> century listener might be puzzled: why start with a minuet? Multi-movement works never began with minuets. Like the slow movement of No. 3, which started out sounding like a theme and variations, but turned out to be in sonata form, the present movement starts out sounding like a minuet but actually proves to be in sonata form. The transition begins with a violent interruption. The minuet tries to continue, but is again interrupted. Eventually, the minuet takes on more qualities typical of a first-movement theme. After a somewhat shortened recapitulation, the movement ends with the same repeated D chords as it started, but now with F's in the viola to emphasize D major. Why would Haydn bring a minuet into a sonata-form movement? Probably because, as we will see, there is no true minuet in the minuet movement.

**Second Movement: Un poco adagio e affettuoso.** Here for the first time, Haydn writes a set of strophic variations as the interior slow movement of a multi-movement work. In each earlier group of quartets, at least one had had a first movement in variation form, a practice that only reappears twice in his quartets after this (Op. 55 No. 2 "The Razor" and Op. 76 No. 6). Mozart used this movement as the model for the variation movement of the A major quartet, K464 from the set of six that he dedicated to Haydn and which Beethoven in turn used as the model for his D major quartet, Op 18. No. 5.

The movement, in D minor, is Haydn's only set of strophic variations entirely in a minor key. It consists of a theme in simple binary form with both halves repeated, followed by three variations and a restatement of the original theme with a lengthy cadenza that develops ideas from the theme. The first variation is a duet for the second violin and viola; the second is a solo for the cello; and the third is for the first violin, which also dominates in the statements of the basic theme. The first four notes of the theme are also the first four notes of the next movement.

**Third Movement: Menuet alla Zingarese. Allegretto.** In the first refrain, the two violins and the viola and cello form two pairs that can't agree on where to put the accents. In the second refrain, the first violin and viola form a pair op-

posed to the second violin and cello that still can't agree. In the third bar, the two pairs start a canon with the second pair a quarter-note behind the first. The simple trio is another solo for the cello.

The academic explanation for the "minuet" is that the use of accents to shift the rhythm is a gypsy trait. The first violin part could be re-barréd in 4/4 time as a gavotte, which, like the minuet, was a French peasant dance that was taken up by the courts. Examples can be found in numerous Baroque suites, including those of J. S. Bach. On the other hand, what kind of dance could it be that has two or three strong accents in a measure? It sounds like the country gypsies are having trouble trying to dance a courtly minuet.

**Fourth Movement: Presto e scherzando.** The quartet ends with Haydn at his most unbuttoned, to use Beethoven's expression. There are some real gypsy touches here in the soloistic first violin part, chromatic melodies, slurred octave leaps, off-beat accents, and the appoggiaturas in the second violin.

The exposition introduces a number of ideas with a gypsy touch. In the development, a figure from the second group is passed from part to part before the cadence theme leads back to the recapitulation. In the recapitulation, the beginning of the cadence theme replaces the transition.

**"Gloria in excelsis Deo"**  
**"Glory to God in the Highest."**

# Opus 20 No. 1 in E-Flat Major

According to the catalog of works that Haydn kept for himself, the quartet now known as No. 1 was actually intended to be the last quartet of the set.

A score of this quartet that Beethoven made about 1793 to study (study scores had not yet been invented!) has survived. When, in the next year, he was asked to write quartets, he instead composed the string trios of Op. 9. His own first quartets date from 1798 but they show no obvious signs of influence from Op. 20 No. 1.

Finishing up a collection notable for its diversity, this quartet is a study in contrasts.

**First Movement: *Allegro moderato*.** A composer for orchestra can repeat a melody with different combinations of instruments; a string-quartet composer has only limited resources of color, but here Haydn demonstrates the variety of textures that can be achieved with four similar-sounding string instruments. All four possible trio and all six possible duo combinations are used (including all three possible "antiphonal" duos where two parts in unison are answered by the other two parts in unison). Of the four possible solos, only the viola is missing.

The first movement has much in common with that of the C major quartet, the last in the first half of the opus. The opening trio for violin, viola, and cello resolves the instability created by the cello-lead opening of that work (and thus reinforces the current work's positioning at the end of the opus). The second violin takes up the theme, transposed up a fifth (as in the earlier quartet) and the viola and cello switch roles. After a run up the scale for a solo second violin, a duo for the two violins is followed by the first of the antiphonal duos: a motive (which is actually a variation on the opening theme at the tonic) in the first violin and viola is answered by the second violin and cello. Finally, all four parts come together in unisons and octaves, a strong statement of unity in the face of all the different combinations preceding and to come.

The transition, made up in part of ideas from the first theme, features a sporadically accompanied solo for the first violin. In the opening theme, Haydn used overlapping phrases which contrast with the more disjointed ideas of the transition.

The second group begins with the second antiphonal duo: the two violins are answered by the viola and cello. This is followed by a short cello solo which is an expanded version of the little cello outburst at the end of the initial statement of the main theme. (In the development, this becomes the subject of a dialog between the cello and the first violin, similar to the violin-cello dialog in the C major quartet.) After a passage in four parts, there is a duet with the melody in the cello accompanied from below by the viola. The first violin takes up the cello melody while the viola continues its accompaniment. The exposition ends with a passage for the two violins in parallel, accompanied by the viola and cello, and finally an ascending passage in the first violin paralleled by the viola that leads back to the

opening or, slightly modified the second time, to the development.

After only three measures of development, Haydn surprises us with the opening theme in the tonic, this time for the two violins with cello accompaniment; but after two measures, it becomes apparent that we are still in the development. Towards the end of the development, the opening theme is presented in a passage of stretto entries (also a feature of the C major quartet). This is followed by the violin solo from the transition that leads, not to the second theme, but directly into the recapitulation.

In the recapitulation, the opening theme is reduced to a single statement followed by the third of the antiphonal duos: the first duo is repeated, but this time the second violin and viola are answered by the first violin and cello. In the second group, the cello-violin duo is turned right-side up: the viola now has the melody, accompanied from below by the cello and answered by the first violin, now accompanied by the second. This echoes the resolution of the present movement's resolution of the instability introduced by the opening of the C major quartet.

**Second Movement: Menuet. Un poco allegretto.** The contrasts continue in the minuet movement. The first phrase ascends, forte, in a jagged line that covers an octave and a fourth over a syncopated accompaniment in long notes. The second phrase, piano, ascends in a smooth line in the violin's lowest octave, with all four parts moving together in parallel.

The second phrase of the second refrain brings back the opening measures of the first refrain, transposed to B $\flat$ , the dominant of E $\flat$ ; but Haydn surprises with B $\flat$  minor! The next phrase puts this right by switching to B $\flat$  major.

The trio starts in the subdominant, A $\flat$ , before modulating back to E $\flat$ , and is a real trio for two violins and cello until the last phase of the second refrain. Then the viola joins in and the music returns to the opening of the minuet – but in F minor, the relative minor of A $\flat$ . Instead of E $\flat$  for the seventh of the scale, Haydn uses a variant minor scale with E $\natural$ , a note not found in either A $\flat$  or the home key of E $\flat$ ! The second refrain is not repeated, and is followed, after a long rest, directly by the E $\flat$  start of the minuet; a very jarring contrast indeed!

**Third Movement: Affettuoso e sostenuto.** The slow movement, in A $\flat$  major like the start of the trio, contrasts sharply with the rest of the quartet (and the rest of the opus!) by having almost no contrasts at all. It is in standard sonata form, but without any of the contrasts or drama that that would normally imply. Except for the violin solos that mark the ends of the exposition, development, and recapitulation and slight accents that mark the second theme, the entire movement is played mezza voce (dropping to piano and pianissimo at the very end) in a continuous eighth-note flow of very close four-part counterpoint. This unusual movement inspired Mozart in the A $\flat$  major slow movement of his own E $\flat$  major quartet, the third of the set he dedicated to Haydn (K482).

**Finale: Presto.** The runs, leaps, syncopations, light scoring, and dynamic contrasts of the finale are the exact opposite of the previous movement, a real celebration of freedom.

It is also a celebration of endings, certainly appropriate for the last quartet in the opus. The descending scale and two rising notes of the opening theme is a variation on the ending of the first movement. This opening idea is played by the two violins in parallel thirds and passes to the viola and cello an octave lower to lead into the transition with its leaps and syncopations. The second theme makes use of an ascending scale in the violins and more syncopations, countered by a descending scale in the viola and cello. The descending scale from the opening returns for the cadence theme.

An attentive listener might think that the players had accidentally taken one too many repeats: the first measures of the development are identical to the first measures of the exposition. After a couple of bars, a shift in tonality makes it clear that it is indeed the development, which omits the second theme altogether. The recapitulation is quite straight forward.

Haydn neatly wraps it all up in the last measures, which are virtually identical to the end of the first movement, bringing to a satisfactory conclusion both a quartet and an opus of extreme diversity and contrasts.

***"Soli Deo et cuique suum"***  
***"To God alone and to each his own."***

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