

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 18th 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.

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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 opposed 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-barré 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."**