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Thirty Years On: Reflections on Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony by James Webster

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Thirty Years On: Reflections on Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony by James Webster

By L. Poundie Burstein, Elaine Sisman, W. Dean Sutcliffe, and James Webster.

Editor's Note

Autumn 2022 marked the 250th anniversary of one of Haydn's most famous and storied works, the "Farewell" symphony. Volume 13 (2023) of *HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America* will be devoted to covering various musical, social, biographical, pedagogical, and performance aspects of this storied work.

It has been just over thirty years since James Webster published his influential monograph *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1991). To honor the anniversary of Webster's groundbreaking book, the *Encounters with Eighteenth-Century Music: A Virtual Forum* steering committee asked L. Poundie Burstein, Elaine Sisman, and W. Dean Sutcliffe to offer perspectives on the book, and James Webster to respond to their perspectives. The interesting online session occurred on Tuesday, October 18, 2022, and included a lively open discussion following the presentations and Webster's response. The three presenters and Webster graciously consented to publish their perspectives and response in this article to inaugurate the 2023 "Farewell" volume of *HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America*.

On behalf of the *HAYDN Journal*, I express my gratitude to Poundie Burstein, Elaine Sisman, Dean Sutcliffe, and James Webster for their presentations at the *Encounters* session and for putting their thoughts into the written form you see here. I also thank the steering committee and supporting societies of *Encounters with Eighteenth-Century Music: A Virtual Forum* (www.encounters.secm.org) — American Bach Society, American Handel Society, Haydn Society of North America, Mozart Society of America, and Society for Eighteenth-Century Music — for their past and continued work in organizing these informative online sessions.

Michael E. Ruhling

Editorial Director, *HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America*

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Reluctant Goodbyes and Joseph Haydn’s Hob. I:45/iii

L. Poundie Burstein

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Georg August von Griesinger claimed that Prince Nikolas and the others present at the premiere of Joseph Haydn’s Symphony in F-sharp Minor were able to immediately comprehend the work’s unspoken message.¹ But are we able to do so? Is it even possible to come close to understanding a work of art that was created a quarter of a millennium ago?

Coming to grips with Haydn’s music has long been complicated by the tradition of the composer’s reception, which has frequently colored and constrained reactions to his music. Haydn has often been portrayed as a genial master of the Classical style, a composer who developed fully only during his later years and whose music is imbued with elegance and grace, spiced with a touch of humor. Along these lines, pieces such as his Symphony in F-sharp Minor have repeatedly been depicted as expressing lighthearted jokes. Although not necessarily wrong, this popular attitude is at best too limiting, and James Webster rightly has long railed against it. As Webster notes, in earlier years — before the image of “Papa Haydn” burned itself into the popular imagination — musicians tended to take a much broader and more serious view of the composer and his music, including his F-sharp Minor Symphony. And we, too, might find it rewarding to view this symphony, along with much of Haydn’s other music, not simply as comic and amiable, but also as profound, perhaps even subversive. In this light, I propose the following reading of this symphony’s third movement. I offer this not as the only correct analysis of this composition, but as one possible reading of a rich work that welcomes various interpretations.

¹ Georg August von Griesinger, *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1810), 28.

Menuet

This movement's Menuet begins in a gentle, stately manner in the key of F-sharp. The sense of refinement here is soon rudely interrupted, however, by a *tutti* outburst on a D major triad (Example 1a). This sudden harmonic shift hearkens back to the first movement, where a passage in D major likewise entered suddenly on the heels of an F-sharp major chord (Example 1b). But whereas in the first movement, a violent passage ending on F-sharp was interrupted by a gentle passage in D major, the third movement reverses this situation with a peaceful passage in F-sharp disrupted by a violent entrance of D major, as though protesting against the dignified decorum that opens this movement.

Example 1. Joseph Haydn, Symphony in F-sharp Minor, Hob. I:45.

(a) Third movement, mm. 1–4.

The musical score for Example 1a shows the strings in 3/4 time. The first two measures are in F# major, marked *p* (gentle). The last two measures shift to D major, marked *f* and *tutti* (violent). A bracket below the staff indicates the transition from F# to D.

(b) First movement, mm. 106–109.

The musical score for Example 1b shows the strings in 3/4 time. The first three measures are in F# major, marked *ff* (violent), with a half cadence in B. The last two measures shift to D major, marked *p* (gentle). A bracket below the staff indicates the transition from F# to D.

The Menuet seems to regain its composure at the start of its second phrase (mm. 5–12), where the relatively tranquil opening mood returns. Things soon go awry, however, for this phrase does not proceed with “proper” metrical decorum, in the manner shown in the hypothetical recomposition of Ex. 2a. Instead, the metric frame of mm. 7–10 is shifted so as to produce a metric displacement

dissonance, as the violins seem to struggle to dance in time with the accompaniment (Example 2b).

Example 2. Third movement.

(a) Hypothetical recomposition of mm. 5–10, with rhythm in mm. 7–10 normalized.

strings *p* tutti *f*
(w/ 8ve doublings)

(b) Quotation of mm. 5–12, actual.

metric displacement dissonance
3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3
m. 11
appendix
strings *p* tutti *f* strings *pp*
(w/ 8ve doublings)

The sense of displacement intensifies at the end of this phrase, in mm. 11–12.

At this point, the violins seem reluctant to stop playing after the cadence has been reached, extending the phrase by means of a brief, strange appendix (Example 2b). Whereas typically an appendix reinforces the sense of closure at the end of a phrase, the enigmatic tag in mm. 11–12 seems to upset and “un-reinforce” the sense of closure. It is as though the violins refuse to accept that the phrase should have properly concluded in m. 10, as they meekly ramble on for a couple of measures longer.

A reluctance to finish at the proper time is suggested at the very end of the Menuet as well. The theme from the start of this movement boldly returns in the middle of the Menuet's second half.

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Haydn could have capped off this bold reprise with a bold appendix, thereby counterbalancing the strangely timid appendix that appeared at the end of the Menuet’s first half. But such is not to be, for here, too, the violins seem to overstay their welcome with a return of the meek, meandering tag (Example 3).

Example 3. End of Menuet, mm. 35–40.

(end of A' section)

m. 39

appendix

f

pp

tutti
(w/ 8ve doublings)

strings

As though unaffected by bold return of the main theme that precedes it, the meandering appendix returns verbatim.

Trio

The ensuing Trio likewise seems to refuse to finish on time, as it were. The Trio’s second half (Example 4) opens with a *Schlusssatz* (mm. 53–60) — that is, with a phrase that ends with a perfect authentic cadence that could have appropriately served as the conclusion of a large section. As Webster argues, the cadence that concludes in m. 60 is the “clearest and strongest” one witnessed thus far within the entire symphony.² As a result, this cadence arguably could have functioned as a fitting conclusion for the Trio. But that is not what happens in what Haydn actually wrote. Rather, in what Haydn composed, the music seems reluctant to let go at this point, as the *Schlusssatz* that ends in m. 60 is followed by yet another *Schlusssatz*, this time expanded and in a minor key (mm. 61–70).

Normally, when two successive phrases each end with a perfect authentic cadence in the same key, the second of the phrases reinforces the sense of closure that appeared at the end of the first phrase.

² James Webster, *Haydn’s ‘Farewell’ Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in his Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 69.

In this case, however, the shift to the parallel minor key in mm. 61–70 problematizes the sense of closure, owing to the disruption caused by the modal change. As Webster points out regarding this passage, “the non-congruence between these modal mixtures and the calm repetitions is itself destabilizing, and forestalls what otherwise might be a sense of resolution.”³ In all, the impression of finality produced by the cadence at the end of the first *Schlußsatz* is undone by the second *Schlußsatz*, so that the motion to the second perfect authentic cadence here actually delays the wrapping up of the Trio, instead of reinforcing it.

Example 4. Second half of Trio, mm. 53–76 (string parts only).

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the string parts of the Trio, mm. 53–76. Each system is labeled with a section title and a cadence type.

- System 1 (mm. 53–57):** Labeled *Schlußsatz* and PAC in F#. The music starts at measure 53 with a piano (*p*) dynamic. It features a series of chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. A perfect authentic cadence (PAC) occurs in F# at measure 57.
- System 2 (mm. 61–65):** Labeled *another Schlußsatz* (minor key, expanded) and 2nd PAC in F#. The music begins at measure 61 with a piano (*p*) dynamic, shifts to a minor key, and includes dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. A second perfect authentic cadence (PAC) occurs in F# at measure 65.
- System 3 (mm. 71–76):** Labeled *a third Schlußsatz!* (reprise/A' section? or appendix?) and 3rd PAC in F#. The music starts at measure 71 with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and returns to the home key. A third perfect authentic cadence (PAC) occurs in F# at measure 76.

As though realizing that the Trio should properly end in a major key and with a return of the opening melody, another *Schlußsatz* meekly enters in m. 71, this time presenting the opening measures of the main theme in the home key, as if to correct matters. But this thematic return is

³ Webster, *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony*, 69.

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both too little and too late. After all, a perfect authentic cadence in the home key has already sounded (twice!), and besides, this return of the main theme in mm. 71–76 is too short and half-hearted to sound like a convincing reprise within a rounded binary-form movement. Normally, the final reprise within a rounded binary form movement would be preceded by either an imperfect authentic cadence or a half cadence. Those familiar with this style should quickly recognize how odd it is to have the return of the main theme here preceded by a perfect authentic cadence, much less two of them. Furthermore, following the extended, 18-bar middle section (mm. 53–70), one would have expected an altered return of the entire A section (much as was the case at the analogous point of the Menuet), not merely its first six bars. In all, the Trio’s final phrase in mm. 71–76 sounds halfway between a reprise and an appendix; as Webster rightly observes, this passage “sounds more like a wistful recall than a form-defining reprise.”⁴ The resulting effect is somewhat akin to guests who refuse to leave when a party is clearly over, making feeble excuses so as to extend their stay.

Parting is such sweet sorrow

One wonders if during the premiere performance Haydn shot a sidelong glance to Prince Nikolas, as though to say, “does this music — which repeatedly seems to extend things past the moments they should be finished — remind you of any particular person who likewise extends things long past closing time?” And if Nikolas didn’t get the hint yet, surely he would have understood by the end of the symphony. Though known popularly as the “Farewell Symphony,” this work is perhaps better understood as the “Reluctance to Say Farewell Symphony,” a sentiment that arguably undergirds the entire work.

The impression of foot-dragging and hesitancy to depart is particularly evident within the symphony’s finale, especially if it is performed with the traditional pantomime. What is arguably most surprising regarding the symphony’s ending is not so much that most of the musicians leave before the end, but that most of the musicians seem to refuse to leave long after they should do so. Typically, a Presto movement that appears toward the end of a symphony drives to its final cadence in a rousing manner, and after this final cadence, all the performers bow and then leave

⁴ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 69.

the stage together. In this symphony, however, the performers seem reluctant to lead the Presto toward its proper conclusion in a timely fashion. Instead, they seem to get distracted in the middle of this movement’s recapitulation, procrastinating by lingering on a luxuriant Adagio, instead of getting down to business by bringing the movement to its expected, dramatic conclusion. Eventually, the members of the ensemble bit by bit start to take their long overdue departure from the stage, though some of them — especially those two pesky violinists! — don’t get the hint and continue to dawdle long past closing time.

In many of his other compositions, Haydn plays with the sense of closure, though rarely in as sustained and profound a manner as in this symphony. Although what results could be regarded as witty and humorous, it also could be understood as reflective. In art, as in life, we often struggle to end things, especially things that we enjoy — such as a relaxing summer vacation, or a lovely piece of music, or life itself. Much like Prince Nikolas, most of us at times seek to prolong life’s pleasures past their proper ending time, but ultimately we do so in vain. In examining the struggle against closure, Haydn’s Symphony in F-sharp Minor thus could be understood to poignantly reflect upon a vital aspect of the shared human experience.

The analysis I presented above was my own. In many ways, however, it was deeply influenced by James Webster. This influence was manifest not only in specific analytic details, but also in my attempt to emulate Webster’s general approach to Haydn and his music, which has exerted such a profound influence on me and so many others. Centrally important in this regard is his advocacy for a flexible, multivalent approach to analysis, along with his insistence that “analysis and interpretation — historical as well as hermeneutic — are ineluctably joined, as inseparable aspects of the understanding of artworks.”⁵ Although this approach often presents challenges for the analyst, such analytic flexibility surely is needed in dealing with a composer such as Haydn, whose works so wondrously balance convention and restraint with daring and passion.

⁵ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 6.

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Topical Thoughts on Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony at 30

Elaine Sisman

Columbia University

In the *Encounters with Eighteenth-Century Music* event at which I gave these (lightly revised) remarks, I spoke first, and as such introduced James Webster's book, *Haydn's Farewell Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style* with a well-deserved encomium. The most ambitious book about Haydn's music since H. C. Robbins Landon's *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn* nearly forty years earlier, it aimed to cut through facile periodizations of Haydn's style (many of them Landon's) and through less innocent periodizations of the eighteenth century, in order to demonstrate, through sheer detailed consideration of many works, that "in principle, all [Haydn's] works are mature."⁶ The book stood, at the end of a century full of condescension that persisted in seeing Haydn's musical language as a staging ground for Beethoven, as a major counterweight to received wisdom. It created and developed the concepts of through-composition and cyclic integration as monumental achievements that we owe to Haydn, not Beethoven, which means that the so-called Classical style, which Webster tried to replace, is entirely more dynamic than the conventional associations of its Enlightenment framing. That framing of course both shows and sows a misunderstanding of the Enlightenment, but that's for another time.

At a stroke Webster cut through all the immensely tedious time-lines showing the evolution of sonata forms. There is not a single analysis or contextualization in the book that has not been generative for future analysis, historiography, and considerations of musical style and value.

What Webster did after 1991 was to follow up some of the threads to which he could only allude: he made good on Haydn's own account of taking vocal music more seriously than instrumental by writing on the oratorios and sacred vocal music and the sublime and pastoral in the late 1990s, and he deepened his "historiographical conclusion" by looking at the long eighteenth century in several important studies of historiography around 2000. Though it's a shock to see 1780

⁶ H. C. Robbins Landon, *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn* (London: Universal Editions and Rockliff Publishing Corp., 1955), 366.

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revalorized in those studies after the book worked so hard to get rid of the “arrival” of “classical style” with the string quartets op. 33, I’m still a big fan of First Viennese Modernism. Without “classicism,” however, “Viennese” looks too localized. Might we think about Classical Modernity?

The rest of my remarks will take up one of the celebrated ideas in the book: “Every eighteenth-century [instrumental] work was composed and understood within a context of genre, *Affekt*, “topoi,” and rhetoric.”⁷ These presumed conventions help us to see not just what makes a work tick but also what makes it an outlier. Rhetoric subsumes the gestures and structures that make meaning. *Affekt* needs no index entry. Topics — even today, in the wake of much scholarship and the *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* — are fluid and, oddly, both real and fictional at the same time.⁸ Genre shouldn’t give us too much trouble in the world of symphonies and string quartets — until it does. These are constraints, in a sense, based on the shared understandings of performers and listeners. What escapes from them? I need hardly say that in the three decades since, every one of these has come in for some serious interrogation. And perhaps the contemporaneous meanings of these terms are not so self-evident.

I’ll start with two of them as they concern the “Farewell” movement, the finale, itself. First, genre: We actually see and hear the genre change from symphony to chamber music. This is a shock, in a symphonic “space.” In the finale’s Adagio, four violin parts are written out, uniquely in the symphonies, though with the doublings and departures there are never four independent musical lines. Once the winds and horns stop playing, there is a string septet, then sextet, then quartet, then duet. The soloistic sound dwindles. Does generic change thus become a topic?

⁷ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 226; these ideas are developed first in the introduction to Ch. 5, pp. 124–26.

⁸ Of the many scholarly explorations since Leonard Ratner’s *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), I mention only the encyclopedic work edited by Danuta Mirka, *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (New York, 2014). Their fictionality — after all, identifying topics is the work of modern scholars — renders topics appropriate for pondering the experience of contemporaneous audiences by putting topics in the minds of imagined listeners, as illuminatingly featured in Melanie Lowe’s *Pleasure and Meaning in the Classical Symphony* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2007).

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Second, the *Affekt* of the Farewell movement is by no means clear, judging from mixed contemporary responses. While two of Haydn’s early biographers Griesinger and Carpani talk about the piece as Haydn’s joke, Carpani extensively so (see below), late-eighteenth-century audiences either laughed heartily or were made unhappy.⁹ Webster notes the “interesting confusion (or dialectic) between ‘serious’ and ‘comic’ interpretations,” citing the comment in the *Mercure de France* that the finale’s Adagio was “a sad and lugubrious melody” (“un chant triste et lugubre”) but the nature of the departures was “a joke” (“plaisanterie”). Hedy Law’s recent book on pantomime sheds intriguing new light on the Paris premiere of the symphony on April 13, 1784, at which the musicians’ successive departures invited the audience to associate the work “symbolically” with the imminent departure of the Concert Spirituel from its longtime home in the Salle des Cent-Suisses before its move into a different theater (the Salle des Machines in the Salle du Château des Tuileries). Significantly, the Concert Spirituel had been opening its concerts with a Haydn symphony for some years, but this time the Haydn work was placed at the end, a fact emphasized by advance publicity. Law also cites a 1787 book about Parisian events, in which at the same performance the “audience laughed heartily at this joke” the symphony having become a “pantomime.”¹⁰ A countervailing tendency is revealed by Friedrich Rochlitz, whose footnote to an anonymous anecdote in his own *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1799 described an audience’s response to the symphony’s performance at the end of an institution’s final concert: at first the spectators found the musicians’ departures amusing, but soon “their hearts grew constricted and afraid.” After the sound became faint and died, the listeners left the hall “so quietly and so moved, it was as if for them all musical pleasure had died out forever.”¹¹ To these strands of “serious” reception, Melanie Wald adds Schumann’s much later comment (1838) that the symphony was a “curiously melancholic little piece,” and explores the discourse on melancholy as

⁹ Webster talks about this serious and comic reception on pp. 114–15; the reference to Griesinger’s *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn* (Leipzig, 1810) is on p. 115, n. 7.

¹⁰ Hedy Law, *Music, Pantomime and the Enlightenment in France* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Rochester: Boydell Press, 2020), 142–46. Indeed, the Concert Spirituel had known no other home since 1725. The 1787 source is Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret, *Tableau mouvant de Paris, ou Variétés amusantes*, 3 vols. (Paris: Duchesne, 1787), I: 205–207, cited on p. 143.

¹¹ “...da giengen die Zuhörer so still und gerührt hinweg, als wäre ihnen aller Harmoniegenuss für immer abgestorben.“ *AMZ* 2 (1799–1800), 14 (translation modified from Webster, 114).

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an avenue of approach, seeking to add new layers of meaning to Webster’s illuminating study.¹² The question of agency arises: whose melancholy? Law also raises the issue of agency: since the musicians are being directed from above, who is the agent of the pantomime?

Thus, the final Adagio of the “Farewell,” which JW calls an “apotheosis of ethereality” was a decidedly mixed bag in affect. The very simplicity, repetitiveness, and frequent cadencing of the musical material, needed to showcase the musicians, to allow them to conclude effectively, and not to detract from their departures, could be a blank screen for affective projection. The change in instrumental “state” opens up a whole panoply of possible humors, as the instrumental balance begins to shift. Haydn lets the musical and physical gestures speak for themselves, beyond what is inscribed at the end of each player’s line: “nichts mehr” in the autograph and “geht ab” in the parts. Not mentioned is Haydn’s (or any conductor’s) visual role as he directs from the violins. What does the audience see? Is he complicit? Stony? Aghast? In the performance of *Il Giardino Armonico*, the conductor Giovanni Antonini chooses the last of these options, miming shock and outrage.¹³ With larger orchestras, the string players leave more randomly, while the conductor may become progressively more unhinged — as did Daniel Barenboim with the Vienna Philharmonic in 2009.¹⁴ When the conductor is leading from the first violin desk, as with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg and the New Century Chamber Orchestra in 2013, she plays with focus, seemingly oblivious to the chaotic and mean-spirited departures of players who light up, chat and gesticulate, and otherwise create disruptions.¹⁵ But what *should* the players do, wink or grimace at the conductor or break decorum unobtrusively? What concert behaviors are expected of the audience? In the absence of a Prince, who is meant to be decoding the sudden access of solos and departures, the gradual thinning of texture and softening of dynamics? Who interprets the range

¹² Melanie Wald, “‘Ein curios melancholisches Stückchen’: Die düstere Seite von Haydns fis-Moll Sinfonie Hob. I:45 und einige Gedanken zur Pantomime in der Instrumentalmusik, *Studia musicologica* 51/1-2 (2009): 79–90.

¹³ Live performance on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMaM6ivx8X8>, accessed October 2022.

¹⁴ Live performance on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfdZFduvh4w>, accessed December 2022.

¹⁵ Live performance on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjFeDk6Kr3U>, accessed December 2022.

of meanings, and who determines whether the approach will elicit laughter or anxiety? There are no expressive markings to aid in interpretation.

Sometimes, however, Haydn does give specific verbal directions beyond tempo that concern affect, topic, and rhetoric. We have to take seriously the words he inscribed on his scores, and for the very reason that they rarely appear we should not assume that we know what they mean. As Leo Treitler discussed in his essay on Beethoven’s expression markings, the composer’s verbal instruction focuses the problem of language “applied” to music.¹⁶ In Symphony no. 46 in B major (1772), a work that Webster is at some pains to show forms a through-composed pair, even a kind of narrative, with the “Farewell” (267–87), the finale is marked “Presto e scherzando.” The meaning of scherzando seems self-evident — playful, jocose — but the term is infrequently seen in Haydn’s instrumental works, appearing for the first time in the finale of Symphony 42 (1771).¹⁷ Webster takes scherzando’s playfulness for granted and lets it pass with barely a comment. But there is an unusual pileup of scherzando movements within a year of the “Farewell”: not only Symphony 42 in 1771 and the finale of Symphony 46 in 1772, but also two in the string quartets op. 20: the finale of no. 4 in D major and the first movement of no. 6 in A major.¹⁸ Does “scherzando” always mean the same obvious thing? Is it a performance direction? an affect? a topic? Why are some quick movements with plentiful staccatos given that heading and others — seemingly just as playful and witty — not so marked?

More to the point, scherzando, as a humor-designator, might be what’s repressed in Webster’s larger purpose in rescuing Haydn from pre-classical and precursor hell and installing him as *the* agent of serious innovation in the 1760s and 1770s and beyond. The issue then is how to make a

¹⁶ Leo Treitler, “Beethoven’s ‘Expressive’ Markings,” *Beethoven Forum* 7 (1999), 89–111.

¹⁷ Tilden Russell finds it in Haydn’s milieu no earlier than about 1770, in the set of quartets by Romanus Hofstetter originally attributed to Haydn as op. 3. See his valuable dissertation, “Minuet, Scherzando, and Scherzo: The Dance Movement in Transition, 1781–1825” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1983),

¹⁸ I have found it later only in the unusual rondo finale of Symphony no. 66 (Scherzando e presto, c. 1775/76), the unusual rondo-variation middle movement of the piano sonata in C-sharp minor, Hob. XVI:36 (Scherzando, Allegro con brio, 1780), and the third movement of op. 64 no. 1 (Allegretto scherzando, 1790), Haydn’s first cantus-firmus variation movement.

Burstein, L. Poundie, Elaine Sisman, W. Dean Sutcliffe, and James Webster. “Thirty Years On: Reflections on Haydn’s *Farewell Symphony* by James Webster.”

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composer known for his wit, humor, and, yes, jokes, *that* serious innovator. Humor, writ large, is to me the one large elephant in the book. It has no index entry. Wit makes an appearance, of course, as a major keyword of the eighteenth century. Irony, always the classiest entry in the humor field, gets a bit more play: the discussion of the first movement’s D-major interlude appears in a section headed “the irony of melody” [39–45]. But Haydn’s relationship to the Laurence Sterne and Jean Paul rate only a single mention: “H’s musical persona...is irregular, eccentric, infused with *Willkür* (the willful arbitrariness and capriciousness beloved of the German Romantic ironists)... Not for nothing did turn-of-the-century critics compare him to great literary ironists like Sterne and Jean Paul.”¹⁹ Even in Webster’s witty analysis of the multiple thwarting of expectations in the finale of op. 54 no. 2,²⁰ he does not apply the supremely relevant concept of Jean Paul’s “annihilating humor” of the thwarted expectation. Webster does not want to “make light,” to misquote the title of Raymond Knapp’s eye-opening recent book on Haydn and camp.²¹

Jean Paul’s *Preschool of Aesthetics* (1804) used Haydn’s music to help define what he meant by humor as the “inverted sublime,” a key concept in his sketching out a “Romantic comic.”²² If the sublime inspires the gasp of awe in the face of the infinite, humor inspires the gasp of failed expectation, the sudden bump of the finite thrust into the infinite. Haydn’s “annihilating humor,” in Jean Paul’s words, can “wipe out” whole passages with a sudden modulation, a sudden pause, a shuttling between Presto and Andante. Jean Paul’s very successful novels, it must be said, with their repeating characters and appearances of the author, were masterpieces of through-composition and cyclic integration. Yet, as Triest noted in 1801, while in “fruitfulness of fantasy”

¹⁹ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 125.

²⁰ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 300–08.

²¹ Raymond Knapp, *Making Light: Haydn, Musical Camp, and the Long Shadow of German Idealism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018). Webster has a paragraph on Jean Paul and the inverted sublime in “The Creation, Haydn’s Late Vocal Music, and the Musical Sublime,” in *Haydn and His World*, ed. Elaine Sisman [Princeton 1997], 5–102, at 68–69).

²² Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Aesthetik* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1804; 2nd ed. 1813) §33; critical ed. Norbert Miller in *Werke* ser. 1, vol 5 ((Munich: Carl Hanser, 1963); trans. Margaret R. Hale [Higgonet], *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter’s School of Aesthetics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973).

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Jean Paul might be compared to Haydn, the novels were far more chaotic than Haydn’s “transparent presentation (*lucidus ordo*).”²³

Because I take a composer’s inscribed words very seriously indeed, I want to consider the possible range of meanings of “scherzando” around the time of the Farewell symphony from the perspectives opened up by Webster. The first of these is the “Presto e scherzando” written on the finale of Symphony 42, the year before the “Farewell.” This is by no means the first time that Haydn wrote a playful or humorous finale. Why heighten this particular movement with a scherzando inscription? In fact, what looks to Webster like an “easy” rondo²⁴ is not only Haydn’s first symphonic rondo-variation movement, but it also conceals a second episode — the C section, a minore — that in its second reprise not only breaks the eight-measure structure we’ve been hearing — string theme (A), wind episode (B), and varied refrain (A1) — but it more significantly calls attention to and renders metrically ambiguous its own final cadence in D minor. With its three-note motif, its pauses, its near-inaudibility, and its bare mid-register unison, it enacts its own “farewell,” if you will. And the coda, after a fully scored final refrain (A2), returns to these motifs, giving the minore a larger purchase on the movement as a whole. Far from referring to staccato and a light touch, “scherzando” here seems to mean “I bet you can’t figure out all the ways the movement is going to mess with you.”

The very next symphonic movement marked “scherzando” is the finale of the B major symphony, no. 46, which unprecedently brings back a sizable chunk of its minuet near the end of the finale, and which Jim brilliantly demonstrates forms a pair, narratively and otherwise, with the “Farewell.” But he is unwilling to extend the term to cover the “eccentricity” he finds in the movement, nor to the particular way the structural tonic is won and confirmed in the coda, which exceeds its “good joke in the prevailing ‘scherzando’ style.”²⁵ The analyst’s points are thus more significant than the composer’s signs. But if the “Farewell” Symphony is known by and nicknamed

²³ Johann Karl Friedrich Triest, “Remarks on the Development of the Art of Music in Germany,” serialized in *AMZ* 3 (“Bemerkungen über die Ausbildung der Tonkunst in Deutschland im achtzehnten Jahrhundert,” nos, 14–19 and 22–26, 1801), trans. by Susan Gillespie in *Haydn and His World*, 321–94, at 373.

²⁴ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 270–72.

²⁵ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 275.

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for its finale, frequently considered “scherzhaft,” and if it is the finale of Symphony 46 that emphatically demonstrates the linking of the two works, should not the term be adduced as a point of support in that linkage? In conjuring with reminiscence and narrative, music about music, Haydn’s irony, and in suggesting that the return is a narrative about the past, Webster does not consider that scherzando might actually be referring to the very fact of the finale’s coup de théâtre, its boundaries being penetrated by the Menuet. “Scherzando” might carry the weight of the formal punch, as in: “punchline’s coming...wait for it...” We can’t assume that “scherzando” is excluded from “deeper” meanings needed to prove that Haydn was a great composer right out of the gate.

The most extended quasi-contemporary consideration of the “Farewell” in the context of Haydn’s humor is Carpani’s *Le Haydine*. Carpani, who knew Haydn over a longer period than his other early biographers, chooses to place the “Farewell” at the end of a lengthy discussion of the “sapientissimi scherzi,” or “most wise pleasantries.”²⁶ He traces their history from a humorous fugue in the early seventeenth century by Merula (on a subject set to schoolboy Latin) through the Salieri’s fugal string-quartet scherzo — which are indeed hilarious, and which, after two Allegrettos, progress from “Allegro spiritoso e sempre scherzante” in no. 3, to “Allegro scherzantissimo” in no. 4.²⁷ The association of humor and fugue was longstanding, as was the incongruous humor of the canonic minuet. But Carpani returns his narrative to Haydn not with the learned style but with a recounting of anecdotes about the origins of the “Farewell” symphony. Possibly the compositional stance of the symphony is considered learned in some other way.

The op. 20 string quartets are known more for their three fugal finales than for their two scherzando movements. Op. 20 no. 6 in A major has Haydn’s only first movement with a

²⁶ Giuseppe Carpani, *Le Haydine* (Milan, 1812), Letter VII, 108–22.

²⁷ Antonio Salieri, *Scherzi strumentali a 4 di stile fugato*, ed. Renzo Sabatini (Diletto Musicale no. 67, Vienna: Doblinger, 1963). The works are undated; the autograph manuscript in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek has an end paper with Salieri’s Requiem of 1804, if that furnishes a clue. Salieri returned to humorous fugues, this time for voice, in his *L’Arte di ben cantare le Fughe*, published in the Wiener AMZ 2 (1818), in the Beilage after col. 356 (digitized at <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=amz&datum=1818&size=45>). The texts are pedagogical: the tenors begin singing “Tema,” the altos “Contretema,” and so on. See Warren Kirkendale, *Fugue and Fugato in Rococo and Classical Chamber Music*, 2nd ed. trans Margaret Bent and the author (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979), 49.

scherzando designation: "Allegro di molto e scherzando." William Drabkin calls it a "fiddle piece,"²⁸ while Webster connects its "tone" with the recognized "capricious" quality of the fugal finale,²⁹ an Allegro with turning and leaping figures marked "a tre soggetti" and, like the other two fugal finales in op. 20, "sempre sotto voce." But an opening movement in A major with a substantial amount of real estate in F-sharp minor might be worth thinking about with respect to other works of 1772, and its capricious aspects deserve more attention from a cyclic or even an opus perspective: in one passage (mm. 45–50) its leaping chromatic lines over a dominant pedal seem to refer to the fugal finale of op. 20 no. 2, and the slow movement of that quartet is titled "Capriccio."

In Op. 20 no. 4 in D major, the "Presto e scherzando" finale follows the topically rich and metrically off-kilter "Menuet alla Zingarese," which, as Catherine Mayes points out, demonstrates "subversive rusticity" in the prominent and persistent hemiola resulting from a duple-meter *verbunk* grafted onto a minuet. She suggests that the movement's title might be thought of as a performance indication: "Play this music like Gypsies would,' Haydn tells the performers."³⁰ The "scherzando" of the finale tells us to expect something unusual but conceals the fact that it too will be full of Hungarian idioms, like characteristic turning figures with offbeat accents, offbeat grace notes, and diminished fourths from the "Gypsy scale," in every part of the movement but the opening theme. Alerting the same players to wait for the punchline, the "scherzando" yields up its message soon enough. As Drabkin notes, the finale "completes the [G]ypsy program begun in the minuet."³¹ This sounds like a movement-pair to me, and the "scherzando" points the way, just as did the scherzando finale of Symphony 46 with its cyclic rhetoric point to the "Farewell." Op. 20 no. 4, then, contains a type of integrated cycle based on a characteristic topic.

²⁸ William Drabkin, *A Reader's Guide to Haydn's Early Quartets* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 81.

²⁹ *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony*, 295.

³⁰ See Catherine Mayes, "Turkish and Hungarian-Gypsy Styles," in the *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, 214–37, at 229.

³¹ Drabkin, *Reader's Guide*, 139.

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One last topical thought concerns Haydn and self-quotation. As Webster notes, Haydn apparently quotes the recognizable opening of the “Farewell” symphony in the first movement of Symphony no. 60, “Il distratto,” made up of theater music to the well-known play about an absent-minded man, and in the first movement of Symphony no. 85, “La Reine,” written for Paris only two years after the “Farewell” was premiered there.³² Self-quotation directed at an audience meant to recognize it is unusual in this period because the composer is referring to his own fame, rather than quoting the music of another more internationally famous composer like Gluck. (For example, Haydn quoted “Che farò senz’Euridice” from Gluck’s *Orfeo* at least twice, including in his own Orpheus opera, and the Dance of the Furies was quoted in an opera by Paisiello and a symphony by Boccherini.) To quote oneself implies a kind of understanding between composer and audience that they know his music and will enjoy recognizing it in a new and possibly inappropriate context. The *locus classicus* for self-quotation was Mozart in the banquet scene of the Act II finale of *Don Giovanni*, written a year after Haydn’s Symphony 85. As the Don’s house wind band entertains him at dinner, Leporello comments on “Non più andrai” from *The Marriage of Figaro*. Writing for Prague, where Figaro was still hugely popular, Mozart lets Leporello — played by the same bass who had sung Figaro — then deprecate it: “This one I know only too well!” By both parading and undermining his own piece, Mozart allows the audience to enjoy the reference, claim an identity as an in-the-know opera-goer, and establish fellow-feeling with the singer.

Haydn does a similar thing in those “Farewell” quotes, which are distractions with plausible deniability, but his real humble-brag is in the first aria of *The Seasons*, where Simon the ploughman extols his springtime work. Van Swieten had suggested that Simon should whistle a tune from a popular Viennese comic opera but Haydn refused, and instead had Simon whistle the theme from the mega-famous “Surprise” Symphony, no. 94. The whistling is set for piccolo, an instrument Haydn used here for the first and only time in his career. To enjoy a shared moment with the audience about their familiarity with your music means you are in touch with your own

³² Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 332.

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popularity, but you aren't displaying too much ego: Haydn shows how appropriate his tune is in the mouth of a ploughman, which sets his showing-off in a humble frame.

Is self-quotation a topic? A rhetorical gesture? A mode of self-ironizing? Certainly quoting the opening of the "Farewell" Symphony in a work that thematizes distraction, as in No. 60, suggests that the composer himself has gotten distracted.³³ Its quotation in the first movement of "La Reine" would also have created just that sudden "annihilation" described by Jean Paul: it follows a pause after a half cadence in the dominant with the shock of the wild opening tutti in the dominant minor. The recognition adds to the shock and serves as a reward to good concert-goers in the city where the symphony had been so popular. Haydn in the "wilderness" of Eszterháza could only imagine those crowds.

And that furnishes the link between a humor-designator like *scherzando* and self-quotation. *Scherzando*, as we have seen, suggests a way to put the listeners on notice and does not necessarily mean "just Haydn joking again." The word wouldn't have worked in the finale of the "Farewell" even if it worked extremely well in its mate, Symphony 46. Sometimes Haydn's "most wise pleasantries" demand our most serious attention.

And here to conclude I enjoyed a shared moment with the audience about their familiarity with your book, Jim, and about the importance of your scholarship to Haydn studies, to eighteenth-century studies, to Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and opera studies. I applaud the critical role you and your book on Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony have played over the past thirty years in recasting our understanding of the Classi... of the many radically and self-consciously modern aspects of the eighteenth century.

³³ Elaine Sisman, "Haydn's Theater Symphonies," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43 (1990), 292–352, at 312.

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Webster’s *Farewell*: Historiography and Analysis

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Re-reading Jim Webster’s *Farewell Symphony* book in its entirety for this auspicious occasion, I am struck by its intensity — even, one might say, an angry intensity that characterizes not just the book but of course also parts of the symphony that sits at the center of the book’s concerns. There was, after all, plenty to be angry about — or, if not that, then at least plenty to agitate about. The study’s final section, the “Historiographical Conclusion,” brings these concerns to a head, deconstructing much of the critical mythology associated with Haydn in particular and his era more generally. It is the explicit rebuke that the preceding close readings that make up the bulk of the book accomplish more implicitly. Among the targets are the organicist model as applied to Haydn’s creative career, whereby the music moves from immaturity via quest or trial or crisis to a period of maturity, a critical comfort zone in which we can relax, knowing that a style has reached its destiny.

Webster’s dismantling starts at the top, as it were, by taking on perhaps the most celebrated writer of the time on this music, Charles Rosen. It is respectfully done, noting that “when so brilliant a critic misreads so egregiously, some deep-seated bias must be skewing perception”³⁴ — in this case, a presupposition that immaturity must be found in works Haydn wrote before a certain date. Rosen’s critique focuses on what he sees as essentially rhythmic problems, problems of phrase rhythm and continuity. Webster counters by re-reading one of Rosen’s witnesses for the prosecution, so to speak. This is the first movement of *Symphony No. 43* in E flat major, and he shows that what Rosen takes to be a series of limp small-scale gestures at the outset — what are styled as “weak endings on the tonic”³⁵ — are in fact part of a coherent larger-scale plan.³⁶ As a

³⁴ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 340.

³⁵ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (London: Faber, 1971), 150. Cited in Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 336.

³⁶ To be exact, the coherence arises from local incoherence, a typically Haydnesque piece of musical misbehavior that challenges the listener. Webster catches the spirit of the opening in noting that the phrases “indeed circle around I⁶ ... they positively ruminate — *too long, too* demonstratively refusing to do anything; the longer they continue, the more

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reader of Rosen who had been somewhat traumatized by his take on Haydn’s earlier works, I found such a counterblast highly therapeutic — and of course this is just one localized instance of what Webster’s book accomplishes in its entirety.

The “Historiographical Conclusion” traces the development of such attitudes back to their founding fathers, in an account of the “tale” that Adolf Sandberger told of Haydn’s quest for perfection via the discovery of “thematische Arbeit,” and onto the embedding of the designation “Classical” or “Viennese Classical” into general discourse about the music of that time. Webster concludes that “the traditional concept of ‘Classical style’ is anachronistic, inherently ambiguous, and shot through with conservative aesthetic-ideological baggage.”³⁷ The force of this argument carries all before it, compelling not just in its own right but as a culmination of the preceding sections of the book. While this argument had great resonance in the scholarly climate of the time, how transformative has it been? In one respect “the devil that you know” has remained in place, in the form of the term “Classical.” While a post- or indeed anti-Austro-Germanic orientation is everywhere to see in present-day scholarship, the word “Classical” shows few signs of being abandoned. Maybe that was too much to ask. If, as Webster details, Sandberger’s influential writings may be deconstructed as narrative archetype, one might ask whether “fairy tales” — the stories we learnt when we were little — ever really go away.

So, Webster asks, what are the alternatives? Already in 1991 he was able to note a compensating emphasis on “the roots of late eighteenth-century music in Italian opera and the galant,”³⁸ as promoted by scholars such as Leonard Ratner and Daniel Hertz, but he is uneasy with the substitution: “more is found in Haydn’s and Mozart’s music,” he states, “than was dreamt of in

we precisely do expect meaningful change.” Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 339. As William Caplin notes in “The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57/1 (2004): 51–117, a first-inversion tonic harmony characteristically initiates a cadential progression at this time, thus pointing forwards to a predominant harmony rather than backwards to a root-position tonic; Haydn therefore constantly promises movement towards a proper cadence and constantly thwarts it.

³⁷ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 355.

³⁸ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 356.

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the philosophy of the galant.”³⁹ But this is to take “galant” in its narrower sense, as cognate with limited, not to say superficial, technical and expressive means. Evidently “galant” was not yet a dead metaphor as “baroque” already was at that time, the latter functioning as a more or less value-neutral tag for a stylistic orientation. “Galant” still carried associations of courtly restraint, and more broadly associations of emotional inauthenticity. Since that time the term has come more into its own, with Robert Gjerdingen’s book *Music in the Galant Style* having put it on the front page, as it were.⁴⁰ I am not sure, though, if it has quite lost its pejorative connotations. Even Gjerdingen’s study finishes with a virtual demonstration of how Mozart transcends, as it were, the roots of his invention in galant schemata.⁴¹

That book has provided the impetus for a theoretical orientation that has decidedly vaunted the Italianate roots of eighteenth-century musical culture, via not just schema theory but also the fields of partimento and solfeggio. One of the fascinations of re-engaging with Webster’s Farewell study is to read his analyses against the grain of such contemporary theoretical models. Webster’s efforts are devoted to ripping apart the image of Haydn as being in thrall to the careful, polished, symmetrical “perfection” that the notion of Classicism brings in its wake, and not just that, but the image of containment that also applies: tidy phrase structures, self-sufficient — as it were interchangeable — movement types playing their allotted role, and moderate musical conduct. The rough, untidy, sprawling first movement of the Farewell Symphony alone could hardly be bettered as a gateway to such revisionism. But throughout the book we find an emphasis on the open, the progressive, what is called the “inherently dynamic”⁴² nature of Haydn’s formal and expressive procedures. Haydn’s art, the author writes, “is based on freedom, irregularity [and] unpredictability.”⁴³ And the ground-breaking focus on through-composition shows how such

³⁹ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 357.

⁴⁰ Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴¹ See Gjerdingen, chapter 30, “Summary and Cadenza,” and the implication that Mozart transcends normal galant practice, as a “special case,” is bolstered by comparison with the music of Dittersdorf, who is described as “a reliable, centrist composer” (436) — not a very accurate description to those of us who know Dittersdorf’s music well.

⁴² Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 173.

⁴³ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 53.

traits apply on the largest scale; indeed, it is often some marked kind of irregularity or incompleteness that generates the most patent instances of through-composition as recounted by Webster.

On the other hand, more recent methods — not just schematic analysis, but also topic theory, for instance — are preoccupied with identifying closed units, and they aim to account for collective musical practice, rather than the individual intellectual property that Webster brings out so strongly in the case of Haydn. To a considerable extent, the more recent approaches may be described as concatenationist.⁴⁴ Like Webster, advocates of these approaches are clearly animated by a wish to demystify the repertory, to clear out old wood, but they go about it very differently. Concatenationism may simply entail focussing on the fine print, but it can be animated by a more overt revisionist agenda — in the case of Gjerdingen, for example, who denounces the search for “organic” wholes as anachronistic. From this perspective, composing at the time was more a matter of artful linking of pre-existing patterns.⁴⁵ But this doesn’t address the question of how individual units are controlled on the larger scale. That question does indeed become historically legitimate with the emergence in the eighteenth century of a “mixed style,” when within an individual movement musical shapes, textures and rhythms may change, often abruptly, at any time.

A more intriguing exercise, though, involves comparing like with like, reading Webster’s analyses of relatively smaller-scale phenomena in the light of the more recent methods. For example, Webster notes that the beginning of the slow part of the *Farewell Symphony*’s finale bears a strong resemblance to the opening theme of the earlier slow movement, as shown in the book’s Example 3.2. Not only are both set in 3/8 and A major, and both Adagios, but they have similar melodic

⁴⁴ The term concatenationism was coined by Jerrold Levinson in *Music in the Moment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) to encapsulate his argument that musical listening and understanding inhere more in matters of moment-to-moment succession than in the perception of larger-scale entities such as form.

⁴⁵ “Rather than failing to understand form, and being unable to articulate its ‘deeper’ secrets, galant composers and writers about music understood it very well. They understood the practical abilities of listeners to follow schemes of repetition, digression, or return, to attend to the rise or fall of melodic or bass progressions, and they understood that the real art of composition lay in guiding their patron’s and audience’s moment-to-moment experiences.” Gjerdingen, 424.

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and harmonic contours, as well as a “tendency towards short phrases.”⁴⁶ In keeping with his undoctinaire approach as well indeed as his commitment to progressive form, Webster then notes important differences that are in keeping with the Farewell Adagio’s role of reconciliation and liquidation. But what struck me was the similarity Webster noted in contour between the second halves of each of these Adagio themes. Both passages fall, as annotated in Example 3.2, from scale degrees 6 through 5 and 4 down to 3, and thence to 2. Reading it with later eyes, the upper-voice progression outlined by these respective second halves can be described as a Prinner, a schema that is characteristically placed within the second half of a larger statement.⁴⁷

Another case occurs in the account of Haydn’s Sonata No. 30 in A major, which, Webster notes, is the composer’s only entirely through-composed instrumental work in three or more movements.⁴⁸ He draws attention to a melodic pattern that features prominently in both the middle, Adagio, part of the work as well as the theme of the tempo di minuetto finale (Example 8.14 of the book). This involves a melodic progression from 5 to 4, plus another 4 that then moves to 3, spread evenly over four bars. The second version in the incomplete Adagio and then the version heard at the outset of the finale, just moments later, are still more closely related, since they first of all sharpen the fourth scale degree before lowering it thereafter.⁴⁹ These relationships are aurally striking, but they too can be subsumed under a schema, in this case the Sol–Fa–Mi. This voice-leading pattern is most commonly found at slower tempos, as in these instances, and often paired with the 1–2–7–1 bass that is found in two of the three passages highlighted in Haydn’s sonata.⁵⁰ So maybe a current reaction from the perspective of schema theory would be “oh, that’s just another Prinner,” or “oh, that’s just another Sol–Fa–Mi.”

⁴⁶ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 75.

⁴⁷ On the Prinner see Gjerdingen, 45–60. Both Haydn passages involve that characteristic variant whereby the Prinner pattern proper, descending from scale degree 6 down to 3, overshoots so as to finish on 2 over V.

⁴⁸ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 288.

⁴⁹ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 292.

⁵⁰ On the Sol–Fa–Mi see Gjerdingen, 253–262.

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I am of course caricaturing what one might call a nominalistic perspective, whereby to name or classify a phenomenon is to explain it — in the context of Webster’s book, to empty those phenomena of any local, particularized meaning. Webster himself might seem to counter such a stance when, in affirming the “eclecticism” of his working methods, he states that it “reflects my conviction that any global, theory-laden methodology applied to music like Haydn’s falsifies more than it explains.”⁵¹ And of course he counters such a stance not just in word but in deed, through a dazzling series of close readings. The analytical virtues of Webster’s *Farewell* book — rich and intense in tone, radical in its commitment not just to the finest details but to the task of explaining coherence beyond the level of the individual movement — are not just to be celebrated in their own right, but they might suggest some blind spots in current theoretical-analytical preoccupations.

⁵¹ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 251.

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Author’s Response

James Webster

Cornell University

First, I’d like to thank Michael Ruhling and his colleagues for putting this symposium together, and for thinking of Haydn’s “*Farewell*” *Symphony*... in this flattering manner. Likewise I’m grateful to Elaine Sisman, Poundie Burstein, and Dean Sutcliffe for their willingness to engage with it once again. As a matter of course their perspectives differ from mine, and the thirty-plus years since the book’s publication have witnessed material changes in everyone’s reception (including mine) of Haydn’s music and of his milieu, some of which are addressed in their comments.

In the interests of brevity, I will limit my remarks to two topics: first, my intentions with and hopes for the book; second, brief replies to my three interlocutors.

For what it’s worth, the reception of my book hasn’t precisely corresponded to what I was hoping to achieve. The overall topic is what I refer to as “through-composition” and/or “cyclic integration”;⁵² that is, multimovement works *as wholes*. I polemicize at length about the fact that most discussions, and especially analyses, of 18th-century music, including even Haydn’s, more or less ignore this aspect — a stricture that by and large still applies today. (Elaine and Dean are among the honorable exceptions.)

Dean Sutcliffe refers to what he calls my “angry intensity,” and not only in the historiographical conclusion, although it is most prominent there; similarly, Poundie Burstein describes me as having “long railed” against the “Papa Haydn” image. They do not exaggerate. Indeed I had (and have) a chip on my shoulder; I was making the best case I knew how for Haydn’s comprehensive genius, in all genres and periods, and not hiding my impatience with those who didn’t agree.

⁵² Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 6–9.

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During the session, his phrase “angry intensity” recalled Yeats’s “The Second Coming” to my mind:

... The centre cannot hold....

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.⁵³

although I would maintain that *my* intensity was precisely the corollary of my conviction! I think it fair to say that in general Haydn’s music is taken more seriously than it was thirty years ago, in many respects much more seriously, and that the book had more than a little to do with this change. In this respect I have nothing to regret.

In the preface I referred to the book as an “essay.” Admittedly, the concept might seem inappropriate with respect to the final product, but it does capture the underlying impulse — a single, consistently sustained argument — as well my original intention: to write a “slim volume” devoted to a single work and certain analytical issues it raised. Indeed it appeared as the initial volume in a newly launched *theory* series, Cambridge Studies in Music Theory and Analysis, edited by Ian Bent; and it contains a *lot* of dense, detailed analysis, not only in Part I (on the *Farewell* itself) but the more widely ranging Part II. It also contains a number of mini-treatises on general topics such as Schenkerian analysis, “multivalent” analysis,⁵⁴ thematicism,⁵⁵ the ways tonal relations help to organize multimovement works,⁵⁶ and more. The theory community, by and large, hasn’t given all this the kind of attention I had anticipated.

By contrast, the reception of the historiographical conclusion has been more nearly in line with what I was hoping. Perhaps I should have anticipated this (perhaps I did, unconsciously). Of

⁵³ During the online session I misattributed the phrase to T. S. Eliot; I thank Stephen Fisher for the correction.

⁵⁴ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 50–53, 67–70, 325–26, along with dozens of graphs discussed in detail.

⁵⁵ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 194–204.

⁵⁶ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 212–24.

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course, reception is unpredictable; least of all can it be predicted, let alone guided, by an author. I will return to this topic below.

I turn now to my three interlocutors, whom I again thank for their participation. In the interests of brevity I will comment on only one point made by each of them. I am particularly grateful to Poundie Burstein for agreeing to participate, who thus gives the lie to my complaint about the “theory community.” His fascinating analysis of the minuet and trio of the *Farewell* employs concepts and methods presented at length in his recent *Journeys through Galant Expositions*,⁵⁷ which I warmly recommend. I am glad that he notices the reversed *affect* of the D major outburst in m. 3, compared to the entry of the much-discussed interlude in the Allegro assai: there, a very loud F-sharp-major sonority (functioning as V of B minor) yields to a “gentle” D major; here, a “peaceful” F-sharp is interrupted by a “violent” D major. (Pedantic as always, I must correct his phrase “D major triad”; m. 3 is a dyad, comprising solely D and F-sharp.). I had of course emphasized the connection between the two harmonic successions (as well as other confrontations of the pitch-classes D and F-sharp in the symphony), but I didn’t mention the affectual reversal. Burstein then acutely relates the destabilizing function of the loud D to further phenomena of metrical and gestural “displacement,” including the resolving-but-not-resolving “appendix” for the violins alone.

As for his interpretative sally — that Haydn’s musicians “overstay their welcome” not only in the minuet and especially the trio, but even more demonstratively in the double finale (the musicians “get distracted ... procrastinat[e], ... dawdle long past closing time,” etc.) — I can’t entirely agree. It almost seems to read the entire closing Adagio as structurally superfluous! On the contrary: when the Presto breaks off it hasn’t reached closure either formally or tonally; on these levels additional music is, precisely, required. On the other hand I do agree that the simple nickname “Farewell” is inadequate, indeed misleading; Burstein’s suggested alternative, “Reluctance to Say

⁵⁷ L. Poundie Burnstein, *Journeys Through Galant Expositions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

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Farewell Symphony,” resonates nicely with mine, “Symphony of Longing” (for home): a finale in which “desire [is] gratified only in hope.”⁵⁸

Elaine Sisman focuses on the relative lack of attention to Haydn’s humor in *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*. It’s a fair comment, perhaps yet another aspect of my “angry intensity”: in my zeal to demonstrate Haydn’s genius and to rehabilitate his reputation, I naturally concentrated on “serious” works and aspects of style. (I’m not certain I was even conscious of the “omission” while writing.) On the other hand, I would be the last person to deny the importance of wit (the appropriate governing concept, if one doesn’t prefer the untranslatable German term *Laune*) and humor in Haydn, and have written about it often enough.

In any case the scattered documentation of the *Farewell’s* reception during the 18th century⁵⁹ was on the whole *not* as comic (there seems to be some confusion about this). I’m therefore not entirely persuaded of the force of Sisman’s linking of the symphony’s composition in 1772 to Haydn’s several uses of the term “scherzando” (etc.) around the same time (which is certainly true as far as it goes). I would however acknowledge a perhaps insufficient degree of attention to the dramatic aspect of the *Farewell* finale (Griesinger writes, “The prince and the audience at once understood the point of this *pantomime* [my emphasis]; the next day came the order for the departure from Eszterháza”⁶⁰). This is yet another respect in which the work departs from generic norms; indirectly, it relates it to the numerous symphonies from the mid- and late 1770s that feature “stagey” events or incorporate movements from Haydn’s operas.

⁵⁸ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 119.

⁵⁹ See Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 113–15.

⁶⁰ Griesinger, 28–29. Quoted in Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 1.

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Dean Sutcliffe generously assesses my historiographical conclusion — until he reaches the term/concept “Classical,” the linchpin of my argument: he questions how “transformative” the argument can have been, given that the term is still in widespread use. This may be true; however, the comment seems to me not to distinguish clearly enough between the terminological and the substantive domains (a point I have made in other contexts as well). At least in scholarly discourse, I believe, the term “Classical” is rarely encountered any longer without qualifying verbiage or scare-quotes (the familiar gesture corresponding to the latter is especially common in oral presentations). If fairy-tales rarely go away, as Sutcliffe suggests, they nevertheless can change: “Sandberger’s tale” of Haydn’s immaturity, struggles, and eventual triumph precisely in 1781 is scarcely told any longer.

Sutcliffe proposes *galant* as a viable alternative for later 18th-century style in general. He is of course correct to cite approaches that have developed within this broad context since the appearance of my book: notably partimento, as an educational method (and implicit theory); and musical topics and “schemas.” Both are strongly associated with Robert Gjerdingen’s *Music in the Galant Style*, and both exemplify a turn to a more nearly “Italianate” understanding of the century. (Haydn’s much-cited comment that he “finally learned the true fundamentals of composition from Porpora” in Vienna c. 1752–53 may have been referring not to Fux’s *Gradus ad Parnassum*, as had always been assumed, but to partimento theory and practice, in which Porpora was an expert, although there is no direct evidence, and Haydn’s intimate knowledge of and use of the *Gradus* is securely documented.) Sutcliffe concretizes this notion by pointing out that a number of crucial phrases in both *Farewell* Adagios can be analyzed as Primmers, one of the most common schemata; and analogously in other works. Fine! As a proponent of “multivalent” analysis, I can hardly object to the addition of a new, largely independent method (or parameter) for understanding Haydn’s music, even though, as has been said, “there is more in Haydn’s (and Mozart’s) music than is dreamt of in partimento philosophy.” This thought is perhaps as good as any with which to conclude.

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