

Joseph Haydn: First Movements of Six Unnamed Minor Symphonies

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Of Joseph Haydn's 104 symphonies, only eleven are in the minor mode. Five of these are titled and six are not titled. Symphonies Nos. 34, 39, 52, 78, 80, and 95 are the six lesser-known symphonies without titles. These six works contain several examples of Haydn's unique style, humor, and compositional craft. In her article "Comedy and Structure in Haydn's Symphonies", Burstein describes comedy as the play on expectations.¹ What this means in regard to Haydn's symphonies is that it is not uncommon to surprise the listener with something unexpected, be it an unexpected pause, an unrelated key center, or a drastically contrasting second theme. These techniques are often used in the six movements to be discussed. The other style prevalent throughout these works is the musical *Sturm und Drang*, a style consisting of highly emotional material. Typical compositional devices used in this style are: minor mode, syncopation, extreme dynamic or timbral contrasts, string tremolo, and unexpected silence.² These two elements along with several others will be seen in the following discussion of the first movements of the six symphonies.

***Sturm und Drang* symphonies**

The symphonies written between 1768 and 1772 are often referred to as the *Sturm und Drang* symphonies. The most commonly discussed of these symphonies are Nos. 49 "La Passione", 26 "Lamentation", 44 "Trauer", and 45 "Abschieds", but Nos. 39 and 52 clearly fit in with these works. H.C. Robbins Landon discusses a few of the new techniques specific to these works.

¹ L. Poundie Burstein. "Comedy and structure in Haydn's symphonies." *Schenker Studies* 2. Ed. Carl Schachter and Hedi Siegel. (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 1999), 67-69.

² Carolyn D. Gresham. "Stylistic Features of Haydn's Symphonies from 1768 to 1772." *Haydn Studies; proceedings of the International Haydn Conference*, (Washington, D.C., 1975), 432-433.

One of the typical devices which crept into Haydn's language in the late sixties was the use of wide leaps in the melodic, sometimes in the leading motifs, as in Nos. 34/II, 39/IV or 49/II and sometimes within the main body of the movement as in m. 71ff of No. 49/IV. Haydn now emphasizes these leaps by longer note values, and so imparts to them a new momentousness and weight as one example from the development of No. 52/I will show.³

The following discussion of the two unnamed minor symphonies in the *Sturm und Drang* style will show how they use the minor mode and what the primary techniques of melodic development are.

Symphony No. 39 in G minor, dated in 1768, is likely the first of Haydn's symphonies in a minor tonality. H.C. Robbins Landon compares this symphony to Mozart's symphony in G minor, K. 183 and suggests that this Haydn symphony may have been the inspiration for Mozart's work. Both use two oboes and four horns, an uncommon occurrence of the period. In Haydn's symphony, two of the horns are in G and two are in B-flat. This is to aid the modulation to the relative major of the work and always have two horns in use. In the period, horns in G would have sounded harsh when played in B-flat, thus the horns in B-flat are used when in the relative major.⁴ The first movement of this symphony creates great tension through its repeated use of the first theme. The extra measure of rest between the two phrases of the first theme sets the tense atmosphere from the very beginning of the piece (example 1). This unexpected rest, although often used in Haydn's mature style, creates a sense of unease and uneasiness for the listener.⁵

³ H.C. Robbins Landon. *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*. (London: Universal Edition and Rockliff, 1955), 318.

⁴ *Ibid*, 293.

⁵ *Ibid* 294-295.

example 1: No. 39, first theme, first movement



Adding yet more tension is the monothematic nature of the movement.⁶ The material stated in the relative major is slightly different from the first theme, but the important aspects of the melodic material remain the same (example 2). The only difference between the two is the sixteenth-note descending scale runs every other measure.

example 2: No. 39, second key area, first movement

Allegro assai

p

extension of material

The most embellishment of this thematic material occurs at measure 40 as seen in example 3. The repeated-note motion in the first half of each measure remains, and appoggiaturas are added

⁶ H.C. Robbins Landon. *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*. (London: Universal Edition and Rockliff, 1955), 295.

to the second halves of the measures. This leads to the end of the exposition and sets the rest of the material on which the entire development is to be based.

example 3: No. 34 m. 10-14 melodic material



The rhythmic motives from the material in examples 1 and 3 make up the only rhythmic material for the development. This is the point at which the tension from the opening of the piece comes to full fruition when the two motives are sequenced through several key areas, and layered on top of each other contrapuntally. The first movement of this symphony is a prime example of Haydn's ability to maintain interest at a high level with the bare minimum of material.

Symphony No. 52 in C minor, composed in 1772, is a clear example of *Sturm und Drang*. It also represents a step forward in Haydn's efforts to unify the symphony in a minor tonality.⁷ The extreme contrast between the first and second themes creates a very tense and "stormy" atmosphere. The first theme is an aggressive, rhythmically simple, unison statement similar to the openings of Nos. 78 and 95 (example 4). Considerable tension is created in this theme through its persistent use of the leading tone and syncopation.⁸

example 4: No. 52, first theme. First movement.



⁷ H.C. Robbins Landon. *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*. (London: Universal Edition and Rockliff, 1955), 337.

⁸ David Schroeder. *Haydn and the Enlightenment: The Late Symphonies and their Audience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 77.

The second theme is a quiet, delicate, and light-hearted sounding dotted melody (example 5).

This strong and almost comedic contrast to the first theme is a technique often used by Haydn in his mature style.⁹ The two themes are used together in the development to create yet more tension by rapidly and unexpectedly changing between the two textures. This second theme does not act exactly as would be expected from a second theme. It is the first material in the new key area, and does not thoroughly profile the new key before moving elsewhere. This clearly is a structural theme, however, because of its ever-repeated use through the remainder of the movement, not to mention its restatement in the tonic minor during the recapitulation.

example 5: No. 52, second theme. First movement.



The exposition of this movement contains two non-structural themes, one in relation to each structural theme. The first non-structural theme (example 6) begins with a *Mannheim Rocket* moving the already stormy mood into an even less stable texture.

example 6: No. 52, non-structural theme 1, first movement.



⁹ David Schroeder. *Haydn and the Enlightenment: The Late Symphonies and their Audience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 77.

The second non-structural theme (example 7) holds more material in common with the structural themes than the first non-structural theme. The beginning is similar in nature to the first non-structural theme and the dotted rhythms falling on the strong beats are reminiscent of the second structural theme.

example 7: No. 52, non-structural theme 2, first movement.



The development in this movement, like No. 39, contains absolutely no material that has not already been heard. There are sudden and un-expected shifts between the various moods of the work. Fragments of the two structural and two non-structural themes are used interchangeably along side each other as well as contrapuntally.

Non-*Sturm und Drang* symphonies

The only obvious similarity between the symphonies from 1768 and 1772 and those composed after 1772 is the use of the minor mode. The minor symphonies after this period are not “stormy” by any means and generally modulate very quickly to the major mode and remain there through the end of the work. Another large difference is seen in the developmental style used in these works. The symphonies composed between 1768 and 1772 are not reliant on the

elaboration of thematic material in the development sections and rather relies on the fragmentation and repetition of previously heard melodic material. The use of minor mode in the later symphonies is used differently than it had been earlier as will be seen in the following discussion.

Symphony No. 34 in D minor, composed in 1776, is one of very few Haydn symphonies that begins with a full slow movement. The only other minor key symphony using a full slow first movement is No. 49 “La Passione.” The movement remains in the tonic minor for only a short period of time before a statement of the second in the relative major. It does, however, return to the tonic minor by the end of the movement. This does not happen in Nos. 80 in D minor and 95 in C minor. The use of D minor in this work does not contain any of the stormy nature of the symphonies between 1768 and 1772 but rather a somber *ombra* style. The first and second themes are somewhat similar to one another. The underlying melodic material in each is virtually the same; each begins on the tonic scale degree and move down stepwise to the dominant (example 8).

example 8: No. 34, underlying thematic unity

theme 1: Tonic leading tone submediant dominant

theme 2: Tonic lowered leading tone submediant dominant

The first theme structurally is 8 measures long, but does not appear in its full form until the recapitulation. During the first statement of the theme, the last measure is discarded in an elision to new elaborated material based on the theme (example 9).

The entire movement is reliant on the stepwise melodic motion of the two themes. Like Nos. 39 and 52, fragments of the first theme are stated several times throughout the development and are elaborated by the rhythmic motion taken from the second theme. A big difference between this movement and the first movements of Nos. 39 and 52 is the manipulation of thematic material within the development. Much of the material in the development is simply based on the fragmentation of the previously heard themes, as were the development sections of Nos. 39 and 52. The development, however, goes further and contains extra material derived from the themes but still contains the important underlying stepwise melodic motion. There is much rhythmic elaboration throughout the development in the first violins and, although some of the material may seem new, the same underlying melodic motion can always be found. Example 11 shows measures 56 through 61 as one example of the melodic use in the development. In the example, extra stems are used to show the selected melodic tones.

example 11: No. 34, underlying melodic unity in the development section. First movement m.56 - 61.

The image displays two staves of musical notation in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The notation consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with several notes marked with extra stems to highlight a specific melodic line. The second staff continues the melodic development, also featuring extra stems to show the underlying unity of the melodic motion.

Symphony No. 78 in C minor, composed in 1782, begins very similarly to both of the other unnamed C minor symphonies with a powerful unison statement. At this point in Haydn's symphonic output, a minor key is no longer filled with violently conflicting emotions. The use

of minor versus major is no longer an emotional concept and rather a coloristic one.¹⁰ This symphony, like Nos. 52 and 95, opens with a rhythmically simple, unison statement used contrapuntally later in the movement. There are two large differences between this movement and the first movements of Nos. 52 and 95. The second themes of both Nos. 52 and 95 have extremely contrasting from the first themes. The second theme of the first movement of No. 78 remains in the same mood as the first theme. The second major difference is in the use of the first theme in this movement (example 12).

example 12: No. 78, first theme. First movement.



The first theme plays a far more important role in the movement as a whole. It is re-visited far more often and used as a major source of counterpoint during the development. A non-structural or transitional theme appears in measure 17 (example 12b) and is used to modulate to the new key area and prepare us for the second theme. The contrapuntal use of this fragment is also used to foreshadow the contrapuntal importance of the development section.

example 12b: No. 78, non-structural theme. First movement, m. 17 - 20.



¹⁰ H.C. Robbins Landon. *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*. (London: Universal Edition and Rockliff, 1955), 391.

Similar to No. 34, the second theme of this movement (example 13) is easily relatable to the first theme through the underlying melodic motion. Both are based completely on descending half-step motion.



The simplicity of these two themes becomes very important during the development when they are used contrapuntally against each other (example 14). To begin the development, the first theme is stated in F major then suddenly pauses with a fermata. After the fermata, the development continues in D-flat major with a statement of the second theme. It is not uncommon of Haydn to visit distant key areas during his development sections. Also like No. 34, the development section of this work relies on more than mere fragmentation of the thematic material, although it does play a key role. The added motion to the important melodic tones from the structural themes is the other key element in the creation of material in the development.



Symphony No. 80 in D minor, composed in 1783/84, contains what is possibly the best example of Haydn’s humor within these six symphonies. Extreme thematic contrasts are discussed in relation to Nos. 52 and 95, but neither can compare the contrast within this movement. The opening is quite a stormy atmosphere, with the theme stated in the low strings under tremolo from in the high strings (example 15).

example 15: No. 80, first theme. First movement.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello e Basso. The second system includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello (Vc.). Dynamics include *f* and *ff*. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4.

The second theme does not appear where it would be expected and instead there are only more extensions of previous material. Just before the end of the exposition, the mood suddenly shifts to a comical waltz completely unrelated to anything previously heard in the movement (example 16). Landon describes this piece as a “mock-heroic symphony.”

The ferocious beginning cannot possibly prepare us for the waltz-like frivolity of the second subject. The violent contrast is carried a step further in the development, where statements of this waltz are separated by a tense extension of the first subject.¹¹

example 16: No. 80, second theme. First movement.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello e Basso. The second system includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature is D minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system shows the beginning of the theme with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system shows the continuation of the theme with a pizzicato (*pizz*) and piano (*p*) dynamic.

James Webster discusses the second theme of this movement.

In the first movement of No. 80 in D minor, the exposition, resolutely unstable up to this point, closes with a trivial-sounding, dotted rhythm dance tune in F, which seems completely out of context; it is not even a decent antecedent-consequent period. However, it immediately astonishes us across the double bar (and a two-bar G.P.) by dropping down a major third to the remote key of D-flat. Following a digression, it recurs in E-flat and is then fragmented and sequenced just as if it were a main theme. The dance tune soon reappears in A major [...] But just at the end of the exposition, it comes to a full stop and another two-bar G.P. and, in the best joke so far, again drops a major third, into the very key of F in which the development began! [...] Thus the entire

¹¹ H.C. Robbins Landon. *Haydn Chronicle and Works: Haydn at Esterháza, 1766-1790*. (London: Indiana University Press, 1978), 566.

development is based on this cheap tune. Not only does the process begin and end in the key of F, but the two drops of a third across the G.P.s create a circle of major thirds (F – D-flat, A – F).¹²

Symphony No. 95 in C minor (1791), like No. 34, is very quick to modulate to the relative major for a statement of the second theme. Unlike No. 34, however, this movement does not return to the tonic minor. The two themes of this movement are somewhat similar the themes of No. 52. Like No. 52, the first theme begins with a forte rhythmically simple unison opening. This theme moves on quickly, though, to a lighter dotted rhythm consequent phrase (example 17). The lengthy rest between the two phrases is something very commonly seen and has a similar effect the the opening of No. 39. This is also a great example of Haydn’s musical comedy. This powerful opening sets an expectation for the following material to just as aggressive like Nos. 52 or 78. The pause in the middle of the phrase creates even more tension because it is unknown how the material will continue. It may be expected that it will be more of the same texture as was the case in the opening of No. 39. Instead, the texture completely changes to something far less aggressive.

example 17: No. 95, first theme. First movement.



¹² 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), 167.

The second theme (example 18) is similar to the consequent phrase of the first theme. It is very light with a subtle dotted rhythm accompanied by horn fifths. Both the second theme and the consequent phrase of the first theme are made up primarily of fourths, fifths and seconds. This evokes an “outdoor” quality in the music. This is also an example of Haydn using a symphony beginning in the minor mode the same way that he would one beginning in the major mode. The melodic material, even that of the first theme still in a minor tonality, is just as lighthearted as any major-mode melody composed by Haydn.

example 18: No. 95, second theme. First movement.



Although this and the first movement of No. 52 are similar to each other thematically, the overall characters are quite far from one another. No. 95 does not contain the extreme contrasts or tempestuous nature found in No. 52. The opening theme of No. 95 is only used in an aggressive way at the opening of the piece. Any statement made later on is in a far lighter nature. This symphony, although in a minor tonality, is similar in nature to other “London” symphonies of the 1790s.

Joseph Haydn’s six unnamed minor key symphonies contain several characteristics typical of the rest of Haydn’s output, especially his named minor mode symphonies. Most of these six works are not performed very often. The form of the first movements is similar between

each of the six discussed. Each use the relative major as the second key area and return to tonic in the recapitulation. Most return to the tonic minor of the beginning of the work, but a few end up in the tonic major. The differences between these six works are the use of style, the structural elements in the thematic material, and the over all use of the thematic material. The primary difference between the *Sturm und Drang* symphonies and the non-*Sturm und Drang* symphonies is in the role of thematic material within the development sections. Nos. 39 and 52 from the *Sturm und Drang* period rely merely on the fragmentation and re-statement of previous material. In both cases, this is effective in creating even more tension in the moods of these works. The previously heard material refuses to stop in either of the works, pulling the listener even further into the already unstable moods. The development sections in the non-*Sturm und Drang* symphonies allow more development of the thematic material to occur. The development sections of these works rely mostly on the underlying melodic motion of the themes and create new material by elaborating on the few simple tones. Both means of development are equally effective, but for different reasons. Both styles of development are also examples of Haydn's ability to use very little material in the creation of a large, and fully coherent movement. The idea of fragmentation in the *Sturm und Drang* works is effective by means of pulling the listener further and further into the tense moods of the music. The melodic elaboration of the later symphonies creates new sounds that are still related to the previously heard material in the work. The new material seems familiar to the ear even if it may not have been previously heard. This is due to the unity of the underlying melodic elements, which generally remain exactly the same between the new and old material. These six symphonies, while greatly contrasting to one another, may still all be unified together not simply because of the minor tonality they all hold in common, but because of the acutely refined use of humor, development and texture used in each.

These six works may be lesser known, but are without question equal to the better-known symphonies of minor tonality.

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