

MUSIC

A Social Experience

Steven Cornelius

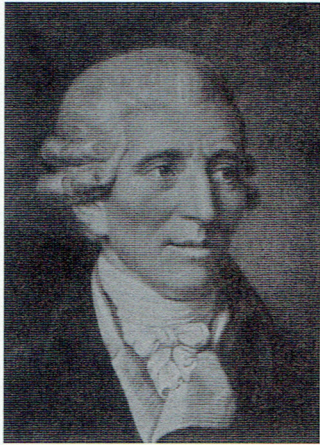
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MUSICAL LIVES**FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)**

I Franz Joseph Haydn.

Haydn's parents recognized his musical talents early. Because they could not afford to give him proper training, they sent the 6-year-old boy to live with a musical relative. When Haydn was 8 he became a choirboy at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.

Haydn spent most of his adult life working for the wealthy and prominent Esterházy family. As their employee, he was required to wear a servant's uniform and follow the family to their various estates. One of these was Esterháza, a mosquito-infested palace in rural Hungary. There Haydn was in charge of running the orchestra, playing chamber music for important guests, producing operas, and composing music. Although Haydn often felt isolated, the seclusion seems to have inspired him to creative heights.

In the last years of his life, Haydn became a free agent. He journeyed to London where his symphonies were performed at some of Europe's earliest public concerts. His music became wildly popular.

Franz Joseph Haydn, String Quartet in E-Flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2, "The Joke"

Franz Joseph Haydn had a keen wit. Often, his humor shone in his music. A prime example is the last movement of "The Joke" quartet. In order to "get" a joke, one has to understand its context. After all, humor functions by setting up, then breaking, expectations. Getting the humor in "The Joke" quartet requires that we understand the expectations of **rondo** form.

A classic rondo presents initial thematic material (A), which is followed by an "episode" of new material (B). The music then returns to the original A refrain before setting off in another episode (C). This process of alternating new and old continues throughout.

Thus, a rondo form with three episodes would be ABACADA.

The rondo in this quartet has just two episodes; thus, Haydn's audience would have expected the basic form to be ABACA, which it is, sort of. Once they knew what A sounded like, they would have felt confident in predicting how the movement would end. That's where Haydn decided to have a little fun. After the first phrase of the final A section, he inserts a **coda** (literally "tail")—an extra ending section. It begins as an *adagio* (slow section). Soon, we hear a bit of the A material—then a grand pause—then a little more of A. Another pause—more of A—pause—and finally the end of A. The movement has ended at last. Or so we think. . . .

LISTENING GUIDE

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PRESTO (LAST MOVEMENT) FROM STRING QUARTET OP. 33, NO. 2, "THE JOKE"

Composer *Franz Joseph Haydn*

0:00	A (REFRAIN): The A section has two ideas; a and b arranged as follows: a
0:06	a
0:12	b

(Continued)

LISTENING GUIDE (*Continued*)

0:28	a
0:34	b
0:50	a
0:57	B (EPISODE): This section modulates away from the home key.
1:25	A (REFRAIN): The refrain is back in the home key of E-flat. Notice that the “a and b” ideas do not repeat. a
1:31	b
1:48	a
1:54	C (EPISODE): This episode stays in the home key. Another joke—Haydn’s audience would have expected it to change keys.
2:23	A (REFRAIN): This very short refrain uses only one iteration of “a.”
2:31	CODA: The coda begins with a slow tempo—an adagio. Haydn then teases his audience by playing the “a” phrase again but interrupting it. Each interruption gets longer until the audience wonders when the piece will actually end. When he finally ends the phrase we are relieved. But stay tuned. The best joke is yet to come.

Niccolò Paganini, *Caprice in A Minor, Op. 1, No. 24*

Public concerts for a middle-class audience had only recently become the norm when violinist, guitarist, and composer Niccolò Paganini came of age. Music’s first “box office hit,” Paganini spent much of his life concertizing throughout Europe. One year alone he gave 151 concerts and traveled over 5,000 miles by carriage.

Tall, gaunt, and pale, with unruly shoulder-length black hair, the violinist gave a wraithlike appearance on stage. Women overcome with emotion wept when he played. Critics, perhaps jealous of the great performer’s charisma, remarked on the demonic quality of his appearance and unprecedented technical facility.

Paganini’s offstage life only added to his mystique. He earned a fortune performing but lost much of it gambling. A notorious womanizer of “hot Genovese blood” (a self portrayal), intrigues followed his every move. Unfounded rumors that a “crime of jealousy” had sent him to jail for 15 years (during which, conveniently enough, he learned to play the violin so well) both dogged and enhanced his reputation.

Paganini rarely published his own works, thus ensuring he would be their only performer. Indeed, he was probably one of only a few



1 Niccolò Paganini.

violinists at the time who *could* perform them. With long fingers and remarkable flexibility, Paganini’s violin playing astounded audiences. Often times he would dazzle them by playing entire works on only one string, fingers crawling up and down the violin’s neck with spiderlike dexterity.