MUSIC IN THE WESTERN WORLD

A History in Documents

Selected and Annotated by

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Haydn's Reception in London

Haydn's two visits to England late in his career (1791–92, 1794–95) represent a bright culminating point in the story of the man's life; and since his last, and greatest, symphonies were composed to be performed in London (six for the first visit, six for the last), Haydn's connection with England also forms a vital chapter in the history of the symphony. In the present context we may, perhaps, concentrate on yet a third aspect of those visits: the emergence of the veteran composer (he was fifty-eight years old when he first went to London) from an appreciative, yet still essentially feudal society (see his original contract with his patron, p. 298) into the glare of public recognition of England's far more modern society. The aristocracy, to be sure, gave him a warm welcome. But it was his personal appearances at crowded concerts and the endless stream of rapturous prose—and verse—published in the daily papers that made this such an unusual experience for him. Concerts and newspapers were, of course, symbols of the importance of the middle class, which, on the European continent, even at this late date, had not yet acquired a comparable position. Our first excerpt is taken from a lengthy poem (doggerel, really) written—and published—by Charles Burney soon after Haydn's first arrival, in 1791. The fourth stanza is particularly noteworthy for its recognition of Germany's new-won hegemony in the realm of instrumental music—a preeminence for which Haydn was chiefly responsible.

Verses on the Arrival of *Haydn* in England PRICE ONE SHILLING

Music! The Calm of life, the cordial bowl,
Which anxious care can banish from the soul,
Affliction soothe, and elevate the mind,
And all its sordid manacles unbind,
Can snatch us from life's incidental pains,
And "wrap us in Elysium with its strains!"
To cultivated ears, this fav'rite art
No *new* delight was able to impart;
No Eagle flights its votaries durst essay,
But hopp'd, like little birds, from spray to spray.
At length great HAYDN'S new and varied strains

Of habit and indiff'rence broke the chains;
Rous'd to attention the long torpid sense,
With all that pleasing wonder could dispense.
Whene'er Parnassus' height he meant to climb,
Whether the grand, pathetic, or sublime,
The simply graceful, or the comic vein,
The theme suggested, or enrich'd the strain,
From melting sorrow to gay jubilation,
Whate'er his pen produc'd was Inspiration!

Haydn! Great Sovereign of the tuneful art!
Thy works alone supply an ample chart
Of all the mountains, seas, and fertile plains,
Within the compass of its wide domains.—
Is there an Artist of the present day
Untaught by thee to think, as well as play?
Whose hand thy science has not well supplied?
Whose hand thy labours have not fortified?—

Thy style has gain'd disciples, converts, friends,
As far as Music's thrilling power extends.
Nor has great Newton more to satisfaction
Demonstrated the influence of *Attraction.*
And though to Italy of right belong
The undisputed sovereignty of *Song:*
Yet ev'ry nation of the earth must now
To Germany pre-eminence allow
For *instrumental* powers, unknown before
Thy happy flights had taught her sons to soar.

Welcome, great Master! to our favour'd Isle,
Already partial to thy name and style;
Long may thy fountain of invention run
In streams as rapid as at first begun;
While skill for each fantastic whim provides,
And certain science ev'ry current guides!
Oh, may thy days, from human suff'rings free,
Be blest with glory and felicity!
With full fruition, to a distant hour,
Of all thy magic and creative pow'r!
Blest in thyself, with rectitude of mind;
And blessing, with thy talents, all mankind!

The concerts at which Haydn presented his symphonies (which the British at this time persisted in calling "Overtures" or "Grand Overtures"), marking the time and accompanying them from the harpsichord or piano, were faithfully described and reported on by several of the London dailies. Here are some excerpts. After the first concert (11 March 1791):

The First Concert under the auspices of HAYDN was last night, and never, perhaps, was there a richer musical treat.

It is not wonderful that to souls capable of being touched by music, HAYDN should be an object of homage, and even of idolatry; for like our own SHAKSPEARE, he moves and governs the passions at will.

His *new Grand Overture* was pronounced by every scientific ear to be a most wonderful composition; but the first movement in particular rises in grandeur of subject, and in the rich variety of *air* and passion, beyond any even of his own productions. The *Overture* has four movements—An Allegro—Andante—Minuet—and Rondo. They are all beautiful, but the first is pre-eminent in every charm, and the Band performed it with admirable correctness.

We were happy to see the Concert so well attended the first Night; for we cannot suppress our very anxious hopes, that the first musical genius of the age may be induced, by our liberal welcome, to take up his residence in England.

The symphony performed at that first concert was, according to Haydn scholar H. C. Robbins Landon, the "Oxford" Symphony, no. 92 (Haydn presented it at Oxford later that year, when he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Music). Here, next, are comments on the first performance of Symphony no. 94, known as the "Surprise," after the sudden crash in the slow movement, which, as we can see, caused quite a flutter the first time it was heard (23 March 1792):

Act 2d [i.e., the second half of the program] opened with a first performance of the GRAND OVERTURE composed by HAYDN for that evening.

The Second Movement was equal to the happiest of this great Master's conceptions. The surprise might not be unaptly likened to the situation of a beautiful Shepherdess who, lulled to slumber by the murmur of a distant Waterfall, starts alarmed by the unexpected firing of a fowling-piece. The flute obligato was delicious.

The "Clock" Symphony, no. 101, was completed during Haydn's second visit and first performed on 3 March 1794:

As usual the most delicious part of the entertainment was a new grand Overture by HAYDN; the inexhaustible, the wonderful, the sublime HAYDN! The first two movements were encored; and the character that pervaded the whole composition was heartfelt joy. Every new Overture he writes, we fear, till it is heard, he can only repeat himself; and we are every time mistaken. Nothing can be more original than the subject of the first movement; and having found a happy subject, no man knows like HAYDN how to produce incessant variety, without once departing from it. The management of the accompaniments of the andante, though per-

fectly simple, was masterly; and we never heard a more charming effect than was produced by the trio to the minuet.—It was HAYDN; what can we, what need we say more?

The "Military" Symphony (no. 100) was first performed on 31 March 1794, and again on April 7. It became Haydn's most popular symphony, thanks to the effect created by the second movement:

Another new Symphony, by Haydn, was performed for the second time; and the middle movement was again received with absolute shouts of applause. Encore! encore! encore! resounded from every seat: the Ladies themselves could not forbear. It is the advancing to battle; and the march of men, the sounding of the charge, the thundering of the onset, the clash of arms, the groans of the wounded, and what may well be called the hellish roar of war increased to a climax of horrid sublimity! which, if others can conceive, he alone can execute; at least he alone hitherto has effected these wonders.

H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, III: *Haydn in England* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1976), 32–35, 49–50, 150, 241, 247.

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Sonata Form and the Symphony Described by a Contemporary of Haydn

Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann (1756–1829) was a German-born, German-trained musician who plied his trade as organist and chapel master in England from 1782 until his death. He was also the author of a number of respectable technical treatises in the language of his adopted country. These culminated in 1799 with *An Essay on Practical Musical Composition*, which gives detailed instructions for composition in the older strict forms (fugue, canon) and somewhat more general ones for the more modern symphony, sonata, and concerto. At the beginning of our excerpt, Kollmann addresses himself to what today is generally referred to as "sonata form"—i.e., the form of "long movements" (typically, but not exclusively, the first) in symphonies and sonatas. In keeping with the views of his time, he sees the sonata form as a kind of expanded two-part ("binary") form and describes it solely according to its modulations. Later writers (beginning with Carl Czerny in the nineteenth century) have viewed the form as a three-part ("ternary") design to be described according to the