

= String Quartets , Op. 50 (Haydn) =

The String Quartets , Op. 50 (Hob . III / 44 @-@ 49 , L. 36 @-@ 41) , were composed by Joseph Haydn in 1787 . The set of six quartets was dedicated to King Frederick William II of Prussia . For this reason the set is commonly known as the Prussian Quartets . Haydn sold the set to the Viennese firm Artaria and , without Artaria 's knowledge , to the English publisher William Forster . Forster published it as Haydn 's Opus 44 . Haydn 's autograph manuscripts for Nos. 3 to 6 of the set were discovered in Melbourne , Australia , in 1982 .

Each of the six quartets in the set has four movements , and in each case the movements are ordered in a conventional fast ? slow ? minuet ? fast sequence .

The set was Haydn 's first complete set of quartets since the Opus 33 set of 1781 . While the Opus 33 set was apt for broad public consumption , the Opus 50 set is more serious and experimental . It is perhaps because of the Opus 50 's intellectual character that other sets among Haydn 's mature quartets have received more attention from performers .

= = History = =

Haydn conceived of what became Opus 50 set in a letter to the publishing house Artaria in 1784 , although he then put the project on hold for the Paris symphonies and The Seven Last Words of Christ . He started work in 1787 , composing the first two quartets in February . In April , Haydn received a letter from King Frederick William II of Prussia , praising Haydn for the copies of the Paris symphonies that he had sent . The letter enclosed a golden ring . Haydn sought to return the favour by dedicating the Opus 50 set to the King , and Artaria acceded to Haydn 's request to do so .

The history of the publication of Opus 50 set betrays one of the more remarkable examples of Haydn 's financial and commercial impropriety . Haydn hurriedly completed the set by September 1787 , when he sent the fifth quartet to Artaria . Meanwhile , in August , he had offered the set to the English publisher William Forster , who duly printed the six quartets before Artaria did . Haydn was deceiving both publishers : the offer to Forster was unbeknown to Artaria , while Haydn misled Forster into believing that no @-@ one else had been offered the set . Artaria learned of the Forster deal but published the set anyway , in December 1787 , as Haydn 's Opus 50 .

In 1982 , the original autograph manuscripts of the Nos. 3 to 6 of the set were discovered at a festival arranged in Melbourne , Australia , for the 250th anniversary of Haydn 's birth . After a concert at the festival , the manuscripts were presented in a plastic shopping bag to the conductor Christopher Hogwood . The Haydn scholar Georg Feder , who was visiting Australia at the time , then verified the scores to be the authentic original manuscripts of the four quartets . It emerged that the woman who presented the manuscripts to Hogwood had inherited them , through successive generations , from an English colonel who had purchased them at an 1851 auction before emigrating to New Zealand . The colonel 's heirs were evidently unaware that they owned the only original versions of the quartets in Haydn 's pen . Until the 1982 discovery , publishers had been working from incomplete or non @-@ original editions .

= = Overview = =

The six quartets in the set are :

Quartet No. 36 in B @-@ flat major , Op. 50 , No. 1 , Hob . III / 44

Quartet No. 37 in C major , Op. 50 , No. 2 , Hob . III / 45

Quartet No. 38 in E @-@ flat major , Op. 50 , No. 3 Hob . III / 46

Quartet No. 39 in F @-@ sharp minor , Op. 50 , No. 4 , Hob . III / 47

Quartet No. 40 in F major (" Dream ") , Op. 50 , No. 5 , Hob . III / 48

Quartet No. 41 in D major (" The Frog ") , Op. 50 , No. 6 , Hob . III / 49

In Haydn 's previous two sets of quartets , the Opus 20 (" Sun ") and Opus 33 (" Russian ") , he adopted a variety of cyclical structures . But in the Opus 50 set , each quartet follows a four @-@ movement fast ? slow ? minuet ? fast sequence . The set is also characterised by a high degree of

monothematicism (the use of a single theme within a movement) . In a number of movements , including sonata form movements and minuets and trios , Haydn eschews presenting a second and contrasting theme and instead elects to explore the full potential of the primary theme .

The set 's dedicatee , King Frederick William II , was a capable amateur cellist . The set contains a number of striking passages for the cello , including in its opening of the first movement of No. 1 and its leading passages in the slow movements of Nos. 2 and 3 .

= = Opus 50 , No. 1 = =

The first quartet of the set , in B @-@ flat major , is numbered III / 44 in the Hoboken @-@ Verzeichnis catalogue . Its movements are :

Allegro

Adagio non lento

Menuetto : Poco allegretto

Finale : Vivace

The first movement is in cut common (2 / 2) time . It starts with the cello , alone , playing eight quarter notes on the same B @-@ flat . It is not until the third measure of the movement that the violins and viola enter . The cello 's eight throbbing notes act as more than an introduction . They reappear at critical junctures throughout the movement , including at the beginning of the development and recapitulation sections , illustrating that they are part of the movement 's primary thematic material . The melody that follows the eight cello notes is echoed in Beethoven 's String Quartet No. 1 (Op. 18 , No. 1) .

The second movement is in E @-@ flat major and strophic form , with a statement of a theme followed by three variations (the second of which is in E @-@ flat minor) and a coda . Haydn used a similar design for the slow movement of the Opus 20 , No. 4 quartet . In 1793 the poet Gabriele von Baumburg set the movement 's theme to words , for inscription on a monument honouring Haydn in the composer 's home town of Rohrau , Austria .

The third movement , a minuet and trio , features motivic elements that hark back to the previous two movements . In the trio , Haydn uses off @-@ beat entries and second @-@ beat sforzandos to disrupt what would otherwise be a regular and conventional triple metre .

The fourth movement , in sonata form but with characteristics of a rondo , is replete with Haydnesque false recapitulations and conclusions . In one example , the music lands in the tonic at the end of the recapitulation and apparent coda , and is followed by two measures of complete silence , creating an illusion of finality . However , the main theme is then reprised , and the real conclusion to the work follows some 20 measures later .

= = Opus 50 , No. 2 = =

The second quartet of the set , in C major , is numbered III / 45 in the Hoboken @-@ Verzeichnis catalogue . Its movements are :

Vivace

Adagio cantabile

Menuetto : Allegretto

Finale : Vivace assai

The first movement is in 3 / 4 time , hitherto uncommon among Haydn 's opening movements . In this movement , Haydn departs from the monothematic approach that characterises many of his other sonata form movements in the set . The exposition presents two clearly distinct themes : the first in the tonic and the second in the dominant .

The second movement , in F major and marked " adagio cantabile " , commences with the statement of the primary theme by the second violin , before it is taken up by the first violin in the ninth measure . The first violin part enjoys a move into a high register in the movement 's central section as well as an elaborate solo passage towards the end of the movement . The movement 's central section also features a five @-@ measure passage of sixteenth notes for the cello , perhaps

specially written for the opus 's cellist dedicatee .

The opening measure of the minuet , after an upbeat , is a descending C @-@ major triad (G @-@ E @-@ C) played by the first violin . The trio inverts this opening with an ascending triad (C @-@ E @-@ G) played by the second violin .

The finale is in sonata form . It features significant developments of a simple motif , and considerable dialogue between the four parts . The finale also contains a high degree of chromaticism , a feature that links the four movements of the work . The musicologist W. Dean Sutcliffe points to the recurrence of C ? at key points in each movement , serving at different times to create dissonance , to commence modulation (music) away from the tonic , or , as in the case of the finale , as a device for inflection .

= = Opus 50 , No. 3 = =

The third quartet of the set , in E @-@ flat major , is numbered III / 46 in the Hoboken @-@ Verzeichnis catalogue . Its movements are :

Allegro con brio

Andante più tosto allegretto

Menuetto : Allegretto

Finale : Presto

This is a concise work , in terms of its duration , the economy of thematic material presented , and also the narrow registers within which the four parts operate . The first movement is in 6 / 8 time and a monothematic sonata form . The development and recapitulation sections feature an example of Haydn 's musical jokes . In this case he tinkers with the movement 's sonata form by reference to an historical variation of it . The recapitulation starts only with a statement of the second phrase of the movement 's theme , which is in the dominant . This would have been a common technique earlier in the eighteenth century that , in this instance , is liable to confuse the unknowing listener looking for the statement of the first phrase of the theme in the tonic . It is not until 27 measures later that the listener is presented with a more emphatic reprise , which is actually a coda . The coda involves the statement of the main theme in the tonic that the listener might have been expecting , and it does so after two measures of pointed silence .

The form of the second movement , an Andante in B @-@ flat major , is indefinable . The movement involves elements of a theme and variations , but also has characteristics of both a ternary form movement and a rondo . Unlike a conventional theme and variation movement , the minor mode variation is placed immediately after the statement of the theme ; normally , the minor mode theme would be held back for later in the movement . The second variation involves very little actual variation , and is closer to a literal re @-@ statement of the theme that one would see in ternary form or a rondo . Also unconventionally , the second and third so @-@ called variations are separated by an eight @-@ measure free @-@ form passage . The cello enjoys a prominent role throughout the movement , with the viola often substituting as the bass accompaniment . The cello also presents the movement 's opening theme .

The one exception to the compactness of the quartet comes in the minuet . The minuet 's first half is a standard 12 measures , but the second half is an unusually long 44 measures and involves harmonic excursions deep into the flat @-@ side keys . The trio echoes the first and fourth movements by commencing with a B ? upbeat leading to an E ? .

The finale completes the interconnectedness of the work with a theme audibly similar to those of the first movement and the minuet and trio . The movement is the most economical of all : the exposition and development commence with nearly identical passages and conclude in exactly the same way .

= = Opus 50 , No. 4 = =

The fourth quartet of the set , in F @-@ sharp minor , is numbered III / 47 in the Hoboken @-@ Verzeichnis catalogue . Its movements are :

Allegro spiritoso

Andante

Menuetto : Poco allegretto

Finale : Fuga , allegro molto

This is the only quartet of the set in a minor key . Haydn employed F @-@ sharp minor as the home key of only three of his known works : this , his Symphony No. 45 (" Farewell ") , and his Piano Trio No. 40 (Hob . XV / 26) .

The first movement 's exposition commences in the tonic of F @-@ sharp minor , before modulating to the relative major of A. After a long development section , the recapitulation both arrives and concludes in F @-@ sharp major . Sutcliffe argues that the perfunctory major @-@ key conclusion is not a " happy ending " but an " uneasy truce " that paves the way for the remainder of the quartet , the finale of which concludes in a minor key .

The second movement continues the major @-@ minor tussle that pervades the work as a whole . It is in double variation form , with the first theme in A major and the second theme in A minor . Again the movement ends abruptly , with an A @-@ major chord .

The relationship of the minuet (in F @-@ sharp major) and the trio (in F @-@ sharp minor) continues the overall tension between major and minor . The minuet features a startling harmonic shift : its second half is suddenly interrupted by a fortissimo D @-@ major chord , far remote from the home key , before a chromatic passage leads back to the dominant of C @-@ sharp major . The trio is linked to the minuet by the rhythmic similarities of their opening motifs .

The finale is a fugue that builds on motifs presented in the earlier three movements . The musicologist Donald Tovey , writing in 1929 , described the fugue as " tragic " on the scale of Beethoven 's String Quartet No. 14 (Op. 131) , although Sutcliffe argues that the movement is more strained and discomforting than tragic .

= = Opus 50 , No. 5 (" The Dream ") = =

The fifth quartet of the set , in F major , is numbered III / 48 in the Hoboken @-@ Verzeichnis catalogue . Its movements are :

Allegro moderato

Poco adagio

Tempo di Menuetto : Allegretto

Finale : Vivace

With its 2 / 4 time signature , pulse occurring on the eighth notes , and " allegro moderato " tempo , the metre of the first movement is a throwback to an earlier and simpler style of opening movement . It begins with a simple duet between the two violins , before a second subject area that involves rapid sextuplets . The movement continues to feature subtle textural conversation between the violins , viola and cello that is not resolved until the coda .

The second movement , in B @-@ flat major , is in two parts : an exposition and a recapitulation . The first violin plays the leading role throughout , although the movement is characterised by rich textures between the four parts created by compositional devices such as contrary motion . It is this movement that gives the Op. 50 No. 5 the nickname of " Der Traum " , or " The Dream " .

The minuet is in F major , but it is not until well into its second half that a strong chord in the tonic arrives . Once again among the Opus 50 minuets , Haydn is unsettling harmonic conventions . Haydn also toys with metre towards the end of the minuet : it moves into , and concludes , essentially in duple time . The trio follows , and its theme almost identical to that of the minuet , albeit in a minor key and played by all four parts in unison .

Sutcliffe refers to the finale as the " one disappointing movement " of the Opus 50 quartets , arguing that it is " too straightforward structurally " , lacks " internal tension " , and might have been the product of the composer 's rush to finish the work , which was holding up publication of the whole set .

= = Opus 50 , No. 6 (" The Frog ") = =

The sixth and final quartet of the set , in D major , is numbered III / 49 in the Hoboken @-@ Verzeichnis catalogue . Its movements are :

Allegro

Poco adagio

Menuetto : Allegretto

Finale : Allegro con spirito

Haydn 's choice of D major for this quartet , with the second movement in D minor , optimises the use of open strings and allows for the work to be the loudest and most grandiose of the set . The first movement opens peculiarly : the first violin starts on an E , and proceeds to play a four @-@ measure phrase that concludes with a D major chord . The use of a closing phrase to start the movement is the first of a number of unsettling incidents in the movement . The exposition withholds the expected cadence to the dominant almost until the exposition ends . And the movement itself has a tentative pianissimo ending that serves more as a link to the D @-@ minor Adagio than a proper conclusion .

The Adagio is in sonata form and presents a single theme . While the exposition modulates to a re @-@ statement of the theme in F major , the recapitulation modulates to D major . The movement ends in that key , pianissimo , with a segue (an explicit direction given by Haydn to avoid too long a pause between the movements) to the D @-@ major minuet .

The minuet is the shortest among those of the Opus 50 , but the trio features an exceptionally long second section , which uses drifting melodies , a fermata and a pair of two @-@ measure pauses to create a sense of timelessness . Neither the minuet nor the trio reaches a proper conclusion , and in this they continue a feature of the first two movements . The minuet ends with a perfunctory repetition of its main theme and the trio draws out its final cadence with a chromatic passage marked " diminuendo " . Again , Haydn reinforces the interconnectedness between the movements with an explicit direction to the performers for an immediate segue from the reprised minuet to the finale .

The finale brings out Haydn 's playfulness . Persistent bariolage pervades the movement ; the sound effect created resembles that of a croaking frog , and is what earned the quartet its nickname . But the movement is no mere auditory joke . It contains important thematic connections to the earlier movements that , aside from the explicit segues between movements , result in a significant degree of cyclic integration . The most important thematic connection is that the closing @-@ phrase opening of the first movement reappears in the finale in a modified form : it no longer stands alone , but as the second part of an eight @-@ measure phrase that forms the movement 's secondary theme . Presented in this context , the ambiguity inherent in its appearance in the first movement is resolved .