A THEME AND VARIATIONS

BY

JOSEPH HAYDN

Hoboken XVI, No. 27, mvt. 3, 1774–76

As chapel master to the Prince of Esterházy in western Hungary, Haydn served a provincial court where the galant style of music was clearly preferred. Some of his instrumental music was intended to be performed by the amateur musicians among the local aristocrats, the most important of whom was Haydn’s patron, the prince. The necessity of keeping this music within the technical grasp of amateurs sometimes prevented Haydn from exploiting the full potential of each instrument. He did not, for example, match Locatelli’s amazing passagework for the violin, or Scarlatti’s for the harpsichord. But Haydn still managed to impress and delight with a combination of impeccable craftsmanship (which he credited to his Neapolitan teacher Porpora) and the seemingly inexhaustible ability to arrange conventional schemata in novel configurations.

Like Somis and Dittersdorf (see chaps. 5 and 8), Haydn presented his movement’s theme in two repeated halves—the ubiquitous double-reprise form. The first half lasts eight measures (as it did in the movements by Somis and Dittersdorf), but the second half lasts eighteen, due not only to Haydn’s addition of a Monte but also to his restatement of all the material from the first half (indicated below by the boxes enclosing the Meyer, Prinner, and Cadence).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Schema</th>
<th>Key</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Half</td>
<td>Meyer</td>
<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prinner, modulating</td>
<td>G ▼ D</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cadence</td>
<td>D</td>
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In the list above, the braces linking the Prinner with the ensuing cadence are meant to show that Haydn melded these two schemata together. Somis, Dittersdorf, and Haydn all initiated a modulating Prinner in the fifth measures of their respective movements and cadenced in the key of the dominant in the eighth measures. As shown in example 10.1 (where each phrase has been transposed to G major for comparison), Somis simply presented a four-bar Prinner and used the High \# Drop to give closure to the first half of his movement. Dittersdorf began a two-bar Prinner (with a hint of a Fonte—here E minor then D major), extended its third stage, and then overlapped the end of the Prinner with the beginning of a two-bar cadence. Haydn began a four-bar Prinner but abandoned it as he switched onto the path of a two-bar cadence.

**Ex. 10.1** A comparison of mm. 5–8 in three movements
Haydn’s procedure was not uncommon. As we will see in chapter 11, on clausulae, the first two tones of the Prinner bass—fa–mi or ❶–❷—were often a cue to begin a cadence, and many galant composers responded to that cue. The schemata of galant phrases were not immutable objects of the real world that could be bolted together in only a certain way. They coalesced, evanesced, and mutated in response to a variety of cues that could easily lead down divergent paths. A successful chapel master needed to understand and exploit those cues, but he had great latitude in choosing the particular paths down which he would lead his listeners.

Haydn was a master at recognizing the possibilities for alternate paths, and each new variation on the theme provided him with new opportunities to demonstrate that mastery. For example, the bravura last variation (Var. IV) gave Haydn a chance to transform the final descending steps of a “regular” modulating Prinner (that is, ❸–❹–❷) into a descending, cadential run of sixteenth notes in which each new core tone is an octave lower than the previous one:

ex. 10.2 Haydn, Variation IV, m. 5

He had already transformed the melodic steps of the Meyer into descending scales in Variation II, where he also drew attention to the affinities between the first two stages of his theme’s Prinner and the Fonte. He did so first by altering his modulating Prinner to resemble an uncommon type of Fonte and then by giving the following Fonte the same figuration as the Prinner-Fonte, as if to reinforce the association (see ex. 10.3).

Practical constraints motivated some of Haydn’s alterations. In Variation III, which moves to the minor mode, he was forced to replace the main Fonte with a Monte because a Fonte’s “minor-then-major” modal change is not easily adapted to a minor key. But most of Haydn’s many alterations represent his great capacity for “invention,” an eighteenth-century approbation that signified the sanctioned exploitation of artful combinations—the a\_rs combin\_atoria. Each page of this technically easy but musically rich movement (ex. 10.4) is a small textbook of that art.
ex. 10.3  Haydn's gradual association of a Prinner with a Fonte

Theme, m. 5

Var. II, m. 5

Var. II, m. 9
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EX. 10.4  Haydn, Sonata (Hob. XVI, no. 27), mvt. 3, Presto (1774–76)

Theme

MEYER

PRINNER

CADENCE

FONTE

IV

V

MONTE

VI

CADENCE

MONT

MEYER

PRINNER

CADENCE
Music in the galant style
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Var. IV

MEYER

PRINNER

CADENCE

Meyer

PRINNER

CADENCE

FONTEN

DIATONIC MONTE

tr

CADENCE