

The Classical Style

broader strokes, while the expositions of the quartets imply a degree of complex harmonic tension that cannot simply be transferred to the tonic at the end of the movement. The themes of the symphonies, less fluid than those of the quartets, neither need nor support so much alteration, and it is the structures of the symphonic recapitulations which tend to differ from the expositions, and in ways that are dramatic and rarely ornamental. Even these dramatic changes are generally implied by the preceding development. It is the nature of these changes that allowed Tovey to claim that, given a page of an unknown work by Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven, one could tell whether it was from the beginning, middle, or end of a movement, something which could not be done with a page of Bach or Handel.

The classical style is a style of reinterpretation. One of its glories is its ability to give an entirely new significance to a phrase by placing it in another context. This can be done without rewriting, without reharmonizing, and without transposition: the simplest, wittiest, and most superficial form of this is an opening phrase which becomes a closing phrase as (one example from so many) in Haydn's Quartet op. 33 no. 5:

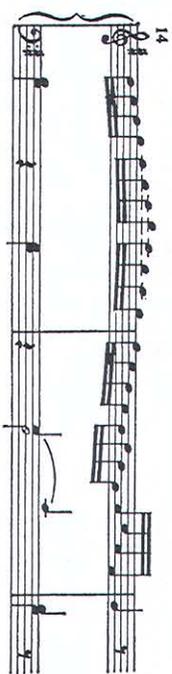


A more refined case of reinterpretation is a phrase in Mozart's Piano Sonata K. 283:

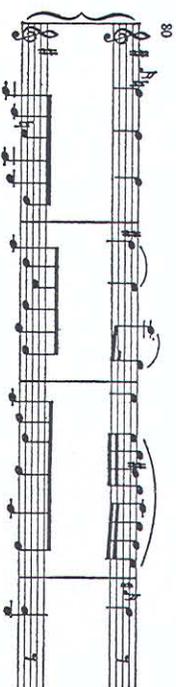


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which in the exposition is a modulation to the dominant, and in the recapitulation is a return to the tonic. In the exposition it is preceded by



where the strong tonic cadence makes what follows sound like a movement away from the tonic. The second time, in the recapitulation, it is preceded by



where the indecisive feminine cadence and the strong subdominant coloring now imply a return to the tonic. With this feeling for tonal coloring, we have arrived at one of the most important distinctions between the style of the three great classical masters and the preceding generations.

Mozart is the first composer consistently to use the subdominant with a full sense of its relaxation of long-range harmonic tension; he generally introduces it as a regular feature of the recapitulation immediately after the re-entry of the tonic. Haydn's practice was similar, but less consistent, and Mozart's sensitivity to large tonal areas remained unequalled until Beethoven.¹ Johann Christian Bach and the other composers Mozart followed show none of his feeling for the balanced relations between the main and subordinate tonalities in a work, and have generally nothing more than a sense of the tonic-dominant effect. C. P. E. Bach's horizon is wider harmonically, but his practice is incoherent: he is more interested in local effects—he delights in harmonic shock, as did Haydn; but Haydn knew how to weld his effects together, and his most disparate harmonies are not only reconciled but even explained by what follows as well as implied by what precedes. (The first composer with a fine ear for the more complex relationships is probably Scarlatti; the logic of his movement from one tonal area to another is generally impeccable, but the style remains unclassical in that the areas follow one by one and neither blend nor interact.)

The classical sensitivity to the secondary tonalities and their relation to the

¹ Beethoven often uses the subdominant at the opening of the development section (*Waldstein* Sonata, Quartet op. 18 no. 1); the dimensions of his developments are considerably larger than those of Mozart or Haydn, and he needs the momentary retreat before starting to build the climax.

tonic can produce moments of astonishing poetry. The opening theme of the *Eroica* Symphony is essentially a horn-call, but the horn is never allowed to play it solo until the recapitulation is under way: at this point the orchestra modulates from the tonic (E flat) to the supertonic (F) and the horn enters *dolce* with the theme, followed by the flute playing it in D flat major. Much of the sweetness and delicacy, and the air of stillness, come from the new keys as well as from the orchestration: D flat major, the key of the flat leading-tone, is heard as a remote and exotic subdominant, and Beethoven, in an extension of Mozart's practice, is using it exactly where Mozart always uses the subdominant. Most remarkable is that the F major is also heard as a subdominant: it not only leads to D flat major but is introduced itself by a Db, the unexplained dissonance in the main theme already played at the opening of the movement. Beethoven's practice here is different in range from Mozart's, but not different in kind, and Mozart was capable of effects of the same complexity. The emotional power is dependent on our hearing these phrases a few moments after the tonic has been re-established following the unprecedentedly long development section; as substitutes for the subdominant, the supertonic and the flatted leading-tone have a feeling of tranquility, while as remote keys coming at such a crucial moment they bring a tension to the heart of the stillness.

This complex, almost contradictory, emotion is another achievement of the style: it is not the kind of emotion that had changed since the early eighteenth century—Bach's sentiments were surely as complex as Beethoven's—but the expressive language. The affective character of a Baroque composition is much less complex; the emotion is sometimes deeply poignant, and it can attain an expansiveness that the classical style reaches with much greater difficulty, but it is generally more direct, and always more unified. The emotional complexity of the classical language is what makes the operas of Mozart possible. Even irony was possible in music now, as E. T. A. Hoffmann remarked of *Così fan tutte*. This complexity depends in large part on the classical harmonic relationships. The proto-classical composers—Rococo, mannerist, or early classical—increased the tension between tonic and dominant, and, for most of them, large-scale harmonic effects began and ended with that. It was Haydn and Mozart who took this tension, understood its implications throughout the entire area of harmony, the circle of fifths, and created a new language of the emotions.

The new emotional complexity entailed the use of contrasting themes and of themes in which a contrast was already built-in. The use of contrasting themes, however, has often been overemphasized: in a style essentially dramatic, and in which the different sections of a work are marked clearly enough for their proportions to be audible, it is only natural for melodies of differing character to occur. But the contrast of themes is not an end in itself, nor is the contrast of different sections of the movement. A fusion of dramatic

effect with a profound sense of symmetry and proportion demands an evident sense of the degree of tension and stability in each part of the work and a clear articulation of these parts, but this can be, and sometimes is, achieved without any contrast of character, either in the various themes or in the different sections of a movement. The first movement of Haydn's *Military* Symphony has two themes of much the same character, both jolly, and both fairly square in rhythm (the second has only a more popular style, and rounds off the form). Nor do the tonic and dominant sections of the exposition of this movement differ much in character, as the dominant section begins with the first theme played exactly as it was at the beginning (enabling Haydn, in the recapitulation, to omit the entire section in the tonic). The sections are articulated by orchestration and not by contrasting themes, as each begins with woodwinds alone, then continues with strings alone (or, in the dominant section, antiphonal strings and winds), and finally allows the full orchestra with timpani to be heard—a pattern that has a remarkable clarity. (In the recapitulation the pattern is reordered both for dramatic surprise and increased stability, as the opening woodwind section is followed immediately by the theme in the full orchestra, and only then by the antiphonal strings and winds.) Contrasting themes are, of course, an aid in articulating a structure; but it is the clarity of outline that is essential, and not the contrast. As for the dramatic effect of contrasting themes, the power of the same theme played in different ways is as great, if not greater, and it is through the transformation of themes and not their contrast that the classical composer affects us most.

It is for this reason that we can dismiss as merely quaint the observation that in sonatas the first subject tends to be masculine and the second subject feminine. The very terminology of first and second subjects is already distressing enough, although it has become so ingrained that it is now difficult to excise it altogether; calling them 'first' and 'second groups,' however, does not help much in identifying themes, when the same melody may appear in both groups. (I should prefer to speak of tonic and dominant areas in an exposition, always remembering that the composer has often created a no-man's land between the two.) In any case, the masculine-feminine distinction amounts to nothing more than the fact that the very opening of a sonata is most often more direct and more forthright than the later material—reasonably and naturally so, as the opening must define the tonality and the tempo, and create the energy to move to the dominant. This can be done with a non-'masculine' sounding theme: there are numerous examples from all three classical composers, especially Mozart. It has even been said that Mozart's F major Piano Sonata K. 332 starts with what would be a second subject in another composer's hands: I should like to see a sonata with a second subject that so firmly and irrevocably, although gracefully, defines a tonality. In Beethoven's op. 31 no. 1, both subjects seem to me equally masculine; op. 31 no. 2 has hermaphroditic subjects; and as for op. 31 no. 3, the first subject is decidedly the more feminine. So much for the sex of themes.

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Contrasting themes are, however, an inevitable, if not an invariable, part of the classical style. Perhaps even more significant are the themes of internal contrast, both rhythmic and dynamic. Before 1750, such contrast is almost always external—between voices, between different phrases, between separate orchestral choirs—and rarely internal, rarely within a melodic line. In classical melodies, however, internal contrast is not only frequent, but essential to the style, which relies so heavily upon dynamic inflection.

The need to reconcile dynamic contrast is as important and as typical as the contrast itself. This reconciliation, or mediation, takes many forms. One of the simpler ways to resolve a contrast of loud and soft is to follow it with a phrase that goes gradually from one to the other. In the opening phrases of the minuet from Mozart's Sonata K. 331:

the *crescendo* in measures 7 and 8 bridges the gap between the *forte* and the *piano* of the first four bars. It also prepares the more expansive and dissonantly expressive form of the downward scale motif; the *crescendo* is as much an element of continuity as of mediation. This reconciling of dynamic opposites is at the heart of the classical style, and is analogous to the mediation between two kinds of rhythm cited from Mozart's K. 271 on page 59. An entirely different way of resolving a dynamic contrast is shown in the *Jupiter* Symphony; the opening phrase

is played twenty measures later with a counterpoint

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that binds the two halves together; even though both parts of the phrase are now played *piano*, their appearance in this form so soon after the opening is to turn opposition into unity.

This synthesis is, in small, the basic classical form. I do not want to turn Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven into Hegelians, but the simplest way to summarize classical form is as the symmetrical resolution of opposing forces. If this seems so broad as to be a definition of artistic form in general, that is because the classical style has largely become the standard by which we judge the rest of music—hence its name. It is, indeed, clearly a style that is normative in aspiration as well as achievement. In the High Baroque, on the other hand, there is resolution indeed, but rarely symmetrical, and the opposing forces, rhythmic, dynamic, or tonal, are not very sharply defined. In the music of the generation of 1830, the symmetry is less marked or even evaded (except in academic forms, like the Romantic sonata), and a refusal of complete resolution is often part of the poetic effect. Not only, however, does the description fit the large classical form, but, as we have seen, the classical phrase as well: in no other style of music do the parts and the whole mirror each other with such clarity.

It is interesting to be able to document a composer's consciousness of this relation of large-scale form to phrase. Around 1793, Haydn wrote a Piano Trio in G minor for Prince Anton Esterházy which begins with a set of double variations. The second theme, in G major, is derived from the last phrase of the first theme, a procedure that Haydn often employs in sectional movements (particularly minuetts with trios) to tie them together, and which Brahms copied faithfully. The second variation of this second theme is a complete sonata movement, and it is amusing to see how Haydn expands a 20-measure theme into a larger work¹.

¹ I omit the violin and cello parts where they merely double the piano.

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Musical score for 'The Classical Style' featuring piano and violin parts. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes measures 3 through 7, with a measure rest in the violin part at measure 7. The second system includes measures 8 through 11, with a measure rest in the violin part at measure 11. The piano part features a melodic line with various dynamics including *mf*, *p*, and *cresc.* The violin part provides harmonic support with sustained notes and melodic fragments.

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Musical score for 'The Coherence of the Musical Language' featuring piano and violin parts. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes measures 9 through 11, with a measure rest in the violin part at measure 11. The second system includes measures 12 through 15, with a measure rest in the violin part at measure 15. The piano part features a melodic line with dynamics including *mf*, *p*, *cresc.*, and *f*. The violin part provides harmonic support with sustained notes and melodic fragments.

Last eight measures repeated with violin figuration in piano and then four measures of Coda

From this witty expansion it can be seen that sonata form is an immense melody, an expanded classical phrase, articulated, with its harmonic climax three-quarters of the way through and a symmetrical resolution that rounds it off in careful balance with the opening.¹ Haydn not only elongates and repeats elements of the phrase, he also amusingly magnifies four little thirty-second notes in measure 6 into eight full measures of virtuoso passagework to become a full new closing theme. The *sforzando* in measure 18 of the melody, the loudest chord of the unexpanded form, becomes a pedal point over the dominant in the sonata, replacing the alternative movement of the bass of the exposition; the accented $A\sharp$ in measure 6 of the theme becomes a little two-measure sequence.

The points of his theme that Haydn expands most significantly are the central modulation and the end. This corresponds to the historical development of the sonata, and explains the gradual increase of importance during the century of the 'development section' and the 'coda.' An expansion of the end of a phrase is the articulated form of an older technique, and the foundation of the cadenza; it is essentially the High Baroque method of expansion, which works by extending and developing the last few notes of the phrase. But the expansion of the *center* of the phrase is peculiar to the classical style, and is the key to its sense of proportion.

Most revealing of all in this central expansion is the elaboration of the initial subdominant harmony at the beginning of measure 11 of the theme into a full-scale modulation to the subdominant in the sonata. Haydn does this simply by sitting on the fundamental note of the chord for two measures. No more delightful audible and visible proof could be offered that a modula-

¹ In about the same year that Haydn wrote this trio, the most impenetrable, although most acute, of contemporary theorists, H. C. Koch, published a method for expanding an 8-measure *hourrée*-phrase into a sonata exposition (see L. Ratner, 'Eighteenth-Century Theories of Musical Period Structure,' *Musical Quarterly*, October, 1956). His methods are more pedestrian than Haydn's and less up to date. There is no reason to think that Koch knew Haydn's trio, or that Haydn had read Koch's book.

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tion is only the expansion of a chord, its transference to a higher level of the structure.

On this new level, the modulation naturally requires more elaborate resolution than a chord, and the succeeding measures of the little sonata form lead by way of a series of sequences back to the tonic area with a half-cadence on the dominant. The status of a subordinate tonality within any classical work is exactly the relation of its chord to the tonic triad.

No composer was a greater master of the expansion of the center of a phrase than Mozart, and in this less part of the secret of his breadth in dramatic writing. The string quintets offer perhaps the most impressive examples of this central expansion:

Adagio ma non troppo

The first measure offers a simple cadence, and the next five measures repeat it but expand the center into one of Mozart's most passionate and intense ideas. The intensity depends in part on the original cadence's presence as model: not only a resolution but a symmetry is implied, withheld, and then granted.

This passage from the slow movement of the G minor Quintet shows that the Neapolitan harmony (a minor second above the tonic) draws its pathos from being conceived as an expressive *appoggiatura*, again on the more powerful level of large structure. The B \flat of the cello in measure 62 appears in the place of an expected B \natural , and it demands resolution (like the first violin's F \flat): the anguish and the intensity come not only from withholding the resolution of the minor second, but from raising the cello astonishingly through B \sharp , C \sharp , and D \sharp to E \flat before letting it sink back into the cadence. The relations of note to chord to modulation are preserved at separate and articulated levels throughout the classical style. It is not until the nineteenth century that these levels are confounded, and one arrives with Wagner at the

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possibility of phrases which are tonally dissonant, but at the level of the chord and not only of the larger form.

This relation of modulation, chord, and note appears with great simplicity on the first page of Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata (the tonalities are again a minor second apart, and the work makes the most striking use of the Neapolitan throughout):

The alternation of the keys of D flat major and C major is followed by the laconic motto of the single notes D \flat -C in the left hand in measure 10, in which the *appoggiatura* which is the basis of the harmonic effect is presented thematically, its significance isolated and detached. The relation of individual note to modulation is further exemplified by the duration. The alternation of D flat major and C major takes almost four bars, the rhythmic motto based on the alternation of notes only two beats. The weight of harmonic significance is reflected in the length of the rhythmic units, and it would not be fanciful to consider the whole passage as an expression of the motto stated at its end.

This correspondence among the elements is, of course, characteristic of every style at its maturity: the extensible Baroque form is intimately related to the Baroque melody, which seems to generate itself, spin itself out to exhaustion; the rigid eight-measure phrase pattern of a good deal of Romantic music corresponds to the frequently obsessive use of one rhythm within the phrase. What is unique in the classical style is the clarity of the audible and symmetrical pattern given to the phrase and reflected in the structure as a whole. The audibility of the pattern depends on the way in which the motifs which make up the classical phrase are isolated and set in relief. The little four-note motto at the end of the example from the *Appassionata* Sonata is typical, and the thematic treatment of the four opening drum beats of Beethoven's Violin Concerto is perhaps the most spectacular instance of such high relief. It is fundamental to the compositional technique of Haydn and Mozart as well. The clarity of definition in their works requires just this separate and isolatable nature of the different parts of the phrase. What we call 'thematic development' today is generally the detaching of these separable parts and their arrangement into new groupings. This detachability, indeed, makes possible the high degree of characterization and contrast within the phrase itself.

The clarity of the phrase is not only reflected in the total structure but at the lowest level of detail as well. The most striking rhythmic consequence is the

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characterization and inflection of the individual beat. In the first half of the eighteenth century the beats are much more nearly equal in weight; the first, or downbeat, is somewhat heavier, and the last, or upbeat, is given importance by a slight lift: but the inequalities are never underscored. In a classical work, each beat in a measure has a distinctive weight of its own: in 4/4 time the upbeat has now a much greater weight than the second beat. It is understood that this new differentiation is not used relentlessly throughout a work of Haydn or Mozart but is present as a latent force, to be called upon as needed. A comparison of a minuet by Bach with one by Haydn will show what had happened in half a century:

a)

b)

* + Wind and Brass doubling

In the Bach the beats are almost exactly equal in weight: even the downbeat is given only slightly greater importance by the melodic pattern. But the sequence of strong, weak, and moderately strong is evident in every measure of the Haydn. The examples are tendentiously chosen to prove a point, of course, but they are not atypical. No minuet of Bach attains the strong characterization of the beat so clear in Haydn, while no minuet of Haydn reduces the beats to something so close to undifferentiated pulsation.

The life and energy of classical rhythm depends on this distinctive character—the possible isolation, in fact—of each beat. The hierarchy of weight resulting from this individualization is given dynamic form in these dramatic and witty measures from the slow movement of Haydn's Quartet in E flat op. 33 no. 2:

21

22

23

24

90

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The succession in measures 22 and 24 of *f*, *pp*, *p* is the classical gradation, and the brilliance of Haydn's dynamic conception comes from the fact that each successive stage is an echo of a beat and not a beat itself, so that the weight of the beat is felt in the silence and reflected in the sound.

The articulated movement between detail and total structure made possible that intimate relation between the material and the large-scale proportions of the 'sonata' style. For this reason, along with the ideal shape of the sonata, we must abandon any idea of second subjects, bridge passages, closing themes, and so on as determinants of the form. Not that they do not exist; they mostly do. But it is not abnormal or eccentric when Haydn dispenses with a bridge passage between the tonic and dominant in op. 33 no. 1; it would be eccentric only if the material demanded one.¹ The symmetry of sonata form which the nineteenth century tried to codify was in the eighteenth a free response to symmetrically ordered material, and the symmetry could take many forms, some of them surprisingly complex. That some form of symmetrical resolution was felt as essential to the sonata (and to almost everything else) is unquestionable: in the rare cases where the material implied either a markedly asymmetrical resolution, or a form (like that of the *Moonlight* Sonata) that is relatively unarticulated, the result was a Fantasy. But the structure of a Fantasy was no less strict than that of a sonata, equally bound by sensibility and not by formalities.

The kind of material impossible for the ordered resolution of the sonata may be seen in the opening of Mozart's C minor Fantasy K. 475:

Adagio

4

It is wrong to think only of the opening theme as the material of a work, and this Fantasy is created out of a much larger conception, but even in these

¹ See discussion of this point on page 116.

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few bars we can see the direction the music is taking. The phrases are as symmetrical as one could wish, but the abrupt, poignant changes of harmony destroy all the stability of the tonic, creating instead a mysteriously expressive atmosphere. With the stability of the tonic disappears any possibility of clear harmonic tension and thus any chance of clear resolution. We do indeed reach the dominant (G major) a dozen measures later

15

17

but it has become a remote foreign key. This music offers, within the classical style, no way of continuing without the introduction of new material, new tonalities, and new tempi. Even in this work, the final pages have a firm symmetry, with the tonic re-established dramatically and all the opening material repeated, but it is not possible to speak of symmetrical resolution of the first section. When the tension between tonic and dominant has been so weakened with no substitute offered, resolution loses its meaning. What the 'recapitulation' resolves is not the harmonic tensions of the opening, but the tensions set up by all the different tonalities in the course of the piece (which has six clearly distinct sections). The resolution is less like that of a sonata (except in its use of the same material) than of the final section of an operatic finale—although in no opera does Mozart ever weaken the tonic as he does at the opening of this work. This is not to say that the Fantasy is in any way unsuccessful; it is a magnificent piece, but for once we have a work that is truly abnormal by classical standards.

The unusual form of this work is explained by its purpose: it is not a separate piece but an introduction to a sonata and, brilliantly and tightly constructed as it is, it is intended to have something of the quality of an improvisation.¹ In K. 475, to give the effect of improvisation, the opening tonal

¹ The other C minor Fantasy by Mozart, K. 396, is quite different; it is not a Fantasy at all, but a slow sonata movement, unfinished, for piano with violin obbligato, although the idea of the obbligato was perhaps only introduced in the course of composition.

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firmness so characteristic of the period is deliberately weakened, and only gradually returns as the piece continues, finishing with a massive establishment of the tonic just before the final section. The form has a very subtle balance:

- I Tonic: C minor with the tonic weakened by immediate modulation, going finally to B minor
- II Dominant of the dominant: D major (since G major has been weakened, its dominant is used in its place)
- III Continuous modulation
- IV Subdominant of the subdominant: B flat major (used as subdominant in place of F major, by analogy with section II)
- V Continuous modulation, affirmation of C minor
- VI Tonic: C minor throughout

The symmetry is clear, as is the relation of the form to the use of tonic, dominant, and subdominant in the sonata. The music has the sound of improvisation and all the advantages of organized form: only in this way could it give such an impression of unity while sounding so rhapsodic.

This relation of the individual detail to the large form even in apparently improvisational works, and the way the form is shaped freely in response to the smallest parts, give us the first style in musical history where the organization is completely audible and where the form is never externally imposed. In the Baroque period, the form of the chorale prelude is decidedly imposed from without; it is not just that the counterpoint that accompanies the *cantus firmus* is generally inspired by the first phrase of the chorale, but that even in some of the greatest works of Bach we have, not a total conception, but a successive modification to respond to the changing phrases of the chorale. This is a way of writing that suits the additive nature of Baroque style: a building that has been conceived little by little, modified as it proceeds, may give an impression of unity in the end, but it is a different kind of unity from one designed as a whole and as a single form, although the former may be no less beautiful. The order of the canons in Bach's *Goldberg Variations* is not an audible one; that is, the idea of arranging them as canon on the unison, on the second, third, fourth, and so on, is mathematical rather than musical: this order, too, has its own beauty and gives pleasure, but not a specifically musical pleasure. Much has been written about Bach's musical symbolism, perhaps too much, but there is no doubt that a number of details in his work—the startling rhythmic and harmonic change in the chorale-prelude *O Lamm Gottes*, for example—demand a knowledge of their symbolism, and cannot be understood strictly musically. This is never true of Mozart, except in the operas, and even there musical considerations predominate: Figaro's chromatic moan about his twisted ankle is both a final

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cadence in C for one section and a modulation to F for a new beginning: the chromaticism has a musical function completely independent of the words. But the distinction between *legato* and *staccato* in 'Et in unum Deum' from Bach's *B minor Mass* is there to illustrate the difference in identity of the Father and the Son: it sounds charming in itself but it has no further musical consequence in the piece. Even the Baroque fugue, the freest and most organic of the forms of that period, sometimes has a structure that is not determined in a fully audible fashion: the form of a *ricercar* fugue, for example, is not dependent on the sound of its theme but on its capacity for stretti. Each stretto can, of course, be heard, but it is only latent when the theme is first played; the *possibility* of stretto is a fact, but not an audible one. It has been pointed out that the opening theme of the slow movement of Beethoven's F minor Quartet op. 95 can be combined with the fugato that forms the middle section of the movement, but that Beethoven does not take advantage of this. A Baroque composer writing a fugue would probably have been unable to resist the temptation.

The structure of a classical composition is related to the way its themes *sound*, not to what might be done with them. This principle of audibility even extends to the cancrizans, or backward version of a melody: in the finale of the *Jupiter* Symphony, the cancrizans may not be immediately clear as such, but at first hearing it sounds evidently derived from the main theme; and the fugue theme of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata finale has a shape so individual that one is always aware, when a performance reaches the cancrizans, which part of the melody is being played backwards—perhaps with the minuet of Haydn's Symphony no. 47¹ the only cancrizans of which this is so. In the late eighteenth century all extramusical considerations, mathematical or symbolic, have become completely subordinate, and the whole effect, sensuous, intellectual, and passionate, arises from the music alone.

This is not to say that extramusical considerations play no role in the classical style, but they do not play a determining role. Even politics can enter into music. When Don Giovanni welcomes his masked guests with 'Viva la libertà', the context does not specifically imply political liberty (or the opera would certainly have been banned at once). Coming after 'E aperto a tutti quanti' ('anyone is welcome'), the words have a meaning much closer to 'freedom from convention' than to 'political freedom.' However, this is to reckon without the music. Starting with a surprising C major (the last chord was E flat major), Mozart brings out the full orchestra with trumpets and drums *maestoso* in an exhilarating passage full of martial rhythm. In 1787, during the ferment that followed the American Revolution and preceded the French, an audience could hardly have failed to read a subversive meaning into a passage that may look fairly innocuous in the libretto, particularly

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after hearing 'Viva la libertà' repeated a dozen times with full force by all the soloists, accompanied by fanfares from the orchestra. Even here, however, there is a purely musical reason for this passage. It is the central moment of the first act finale, and Mozart's finales are conceived as complete movements in spite of their separate numbers, and begin and end in the same tonality, in this case C major. Just a few minutes before the entrance of the masked guests, there is a change of scene, and the C major needs a massive restatement to hold the finale together.¹ The section can be interpreted in purely musical terms (which again is not to deny the importance of the extramusical significance).

This musical independence illuminates the originality of classical comedy. Even humor becomes possible in music without outside help: the music of the classical style could be genuinely funny, not merely jolly or good-natured. Truly musical jokes could be written. There are jokes in music previously, but they are based on non-musical allusions: the Quodlibet of the *Goldberg* Variations is only amusing if one knows the words of the combined folk-songs; some of the popular atmosphere comes through, but without the words the effect is only one of grandiose good humor. The contrasts of dynamics and register in the 13th of the *Diabelli* Variations of Beethoven, however, are grotesquely funny by themselves with no outside reference:

¹ The finale then proceeds, in Mozart's usual fashion, to an intensification (for the attempted rape of Zerlina) by the dominant G major and a series of modulations, which is resolved by the subdominant and a final tonic section, a pattern harmonically close to sonata form.

¹ Quoted on p. 152.

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as is the following passage at the end of Haydn's Quartet op. 33 no. 3; the tempo is *Presto*:

It was, indeed, for passages like this that Haydn was attacked as a 'buffoon' by his contemporaries.

The buffoonery of Haydn, Beethoven, and Mozart is only an exaggeration of an essential quality of the classical style. This style was, in its origins, basically a comic one. I do not mean that sentiments of the deepest and most tragic emotion could not be expressed by it, but the pacing of classical rhythm is the pacing of comic opera, its phrasing is the phrasing of dance music, and its large structures are these phrases dramatized. This relation between the classical and comic styles was remarked by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who at the end of his life deplored the loss of the contrapuntal Baroque style, and added: 'I believe, with many intelligent men, that the present love for the comic accounts for this more than does anything else.'

If the taste for the comic in music grew in the second half of the eighteenth century, this was at least in part because the development of style had at last made a genuinely autonomous musical wit possible. The incongruous seen as exactly right, the out-of-place suddenly turning out to be just where it ought to be—this is an essential part of wit. The classical style, with its emphasis on reinterpretation, made a wealth of double meaning a part of every composition. Finally, the highest form of wit, the musical pun, came into being. In the finale of the D major Trio H. 7 by Haydn, the E_b as a dominant of A flat major is turned as a joke into the D \sharp which is the third of B major:¹

¹ I do not wish to suggest that any distinction between D \sharp and E_b was made by the late eighteenth-century composers. The joke would still be there if the note remained E_b and the key changed to C flat.

The Coherence of the Musical Language

The sharp distinction between tonalities in the classical style gives this passage its wit, along with the pause and the insistent repetition. Clarity of articulation is essential to this kind of comedy. The contrast between the melodic and accompanying parts in classical style (replacing the Baroque autonomy of the individual parts and the use of figured bass) allows us the delicious moment in Haydn's *Clock Symphony* when the accompaniment is transposed into the upper register:

where the double meaning is made even more evident by giving the figure to the solo flute and bassoon.

The comic becomes not only the characteristic mood of a work but often, particularly with Haydn, an essential technique. In the delightful B flat major Quartet op. 33 no. 4, the modulation to the dominant is a joke:

The musical score shows measures 12 through 16. The top staff is for Cello, and the bottom staff is for Cello. The middle staves are for Viola 1, Viola 2, and Cello. The music features a sequence of notes that are repeated in a different register, illustrating the concept of 'wit' in modulation.

If wit can take the form of a surprising change of nonsense into sense, a classical modulation gives a splendid formula: all we need, as here, is one moment when we are not sure what the meaning of a note is. Haydn sets up his joke by having the three little notes at the end of the phrase in bars 8-9 and 10-11 played in unison with no harmonies, and *piano*. Then the cadence, symmetrically repeated, seems to finish a section at the middle of bar 12—but the three notes occur inexplicably once more, still *piano*, still unharmonized, and played by the cello alone in its low register. It is not until the next chord that we understand why the little motif was left without harmonies: because the low D was to become the dominant of G minor, and thus to start the modulation to the dominant. Playing the three notes softly each time sets them apart, hides their true significance, and so contributes to the joke; indispensable, of course, is the irregularity of the phrase rhythm, particularly the last repetition of the little motif in the cello, and the tone of witty conversation that characterizes the thematic material. For a quick shift of context or a witty reinterpretation of a note, a dramatic and forceful modulation is also indispensable. In the Baroque style, the preference for continuity over articulation and the lack of clear-cut modulation leave wit little place except as a general tone or atmosphere in some very few works; the Romantic modulation, on the other hand, at times so heavily chromatic that the two keys blend into each other and often much slower and more gradual, nullifies the effect of wit altogether, and we return, with Schumann, to something resembling the Baroque good humor and air of jollity. The civilized gaiety of the classical period, perhaps already somewhat coarsened, makes its last appearances in the Allegretto of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, and in some of the movements of the last quartets. After that, wit was swamped by sentiment.

2

Structure and Ornament

The feeling for a closed, symmetrical structure, the central position of the most extreme tension, and the insistence upon an extended and complete resolution, together with a newly articulated and systematized tonality, produced a variety of forms, all with a right to be called 'sonata.' To distinguish them does not imply that they existed as norms or even as molds. They were only the result of musical forces and not to be identified with these forces themselves. For this reason, they should not be described too closely in the abstract, much less defined, or one would miss seeing how each of them could blend into the other, and how much freedom remained latent in these forms throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century.

1) FIRST-MOVEMENT¹ SONATA FORM falls into two sections, either of which may be repeated²: some symmetry between the two is essential but it is not very strictly defined. The movement begins by establishing a strict tempo and a tonic as frames of reference. The first section, or *exposition*, has two events, a movement or modulation to the dominant, and a final cadence in the dominant. Each of these events is characterized by an increase in rhythmic animation. Because of the harmonic tension, the music in the dominant (or second group) generally moves harmonically faster than that in the tonic. These events are articulated by as many melodies as the composer sees fit to use. The second section also has two events, a return to the tonic, and a final cadence. Some form of symmetrical resolution (called *recapitulation*) of the harmonic tension is necessary: an important musical idea played anywhere except at the tonic is unresolved until it is so played. The return to the tonic is generally (but not always) clarified by playing the opening measures again, as they are most closely identified with the tonic. If the return to the tonic is long delayed to heighten its dramatic effect (by modulating to other keys or by sequential progressions at the dominant), then the work has an extensive *development section*. The breaking of periodic rhythm and the fragmentation of the melody serve to reinforce the harmonic movement of this development. The harmonic proportions are preserved by placing the return to the tonic or beginning of the recapitulation no later than three-quarters of the way through the movement. The most dramatic point is generally just before (or, more rarely, just after) the return.

¹ This form may, of course, be used for second movements or finales, but it is most commonly associated with the more complex first movement.

² The second half was scarcely ever repeated alone, although the finale of the *Appassionata* is an exception, and similar forms may be found in the Mozart operas.