

MUSICMAP NOTES

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Joseph Haydn: Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Hob. XV: No. 29 – before 1797

Even in his late piano trios, for all their creativity and mastery, Haydn remains stubbornly conservative in his use of the cello, mostly relegating it to doubling L.H. piano material. Mozart's mature piano trios, and even Beethoven's Opus 1 set of three, offered the cello considerably more scope, and all were composed prior to trio examined here.

Movement I – Ternary form, Poco Allegretto, 2/4, E-flat major

This first movement is fairly unorthodox due to its more relaxed tempo and especially for not being in sonata form. Instead it has a structure more typical of a slow movement.

Principal song: Rounded binary form

Part I (*a*): After a simple tutti E-flat chord held by a fermata, we are launched into a jaunty and infectious tune that will dominate and characterize this movement (a feature that might lead the inattentive or unwary to suppose this is a Rondo). The melody starts quite regularly with a 4-bar antecedent matched by a parallel consequent, but instead of ending, the consequent is then freely extended an extra 6 bars. The R.H. and violin sing the melody in quiet unison (not even an octave apart) over unobtrusive off-beat bass accompaniment (L.H. & cello). The basis of the tune is instantly-memorable, both melodically and rhythmically. It starts with a descending 5th that is then sequenced up a step. This opening counts out the beat in quarter-note rhythm, transitions to dotted 16th-notes that leap up and down in a generally rising motion, and then after a trill, concludes with graceful stepwise movement.

The ensuing consequent offers some effective variety by sequencing the second descending 5th higher than before (this time up a 4th), while the following dotted rhythm is now presented as a stepwise ascent. After the first two bars, the R.H. alone maintains the lead, as the violin slips into an accompanimental role. For all its charm, this has so far seemed like a very regular classical 8-bar period, so it is a nice surprise when it extends without a break into more unpredictable material featuring descending motion, more dotted 16ths, and a suave concluding flourish from the violin. The expected literal repeat is initiated by a nice rising run from the piano. This small gesture will assume greater importance and prominence over the course of the movement.

Part II (*b*): This contrasting section drifts us into minor with an expressive development of the *a* material...both the quarter-note opening and the 16th-note dotted rhythm are skillfully manipulated. Then comes a brief striking episode, during which the rhythm and harmony seem to grope softly and plaintively, with the off-beat element here in the upper voice. But quickly this gives way to further and more assertive manipulation of *a* motives as we work our way back to

the tonic and *a'*. This time, the *a* melody is heralded by a flashier lead-in run, while the tune itself rings out with stronger conviction as a result of *f* dynamics and the R.H. now doubling in the upper octave. But then the consequent drops back to *p*, and is significantly recomposed with the melody featuring off-beats, new harmony, and a general feeling of heading into fresh territory. The music rises to a note of triumph, followed by a quiet pause, and then a graceful conclusion. Part II is literally repeated.

Trio: E-flat minor (parallel minor)

Apart from the expressive effect of being plunged into this new minor key, the thing that really marks this trio is the dominance of the violin, which indulges in a poignant solo from beginning to end. It starts with a very recognizable quotation of the opening of the principal song, transmuted into minor with the signature falling 5ths sequenced up two additional times. Then the violin continues with legato 16th-note gestures that lead into a freer exploration of the established mood, all enhanced by a steady, lilting undercurrent of piano (and cello) accompaniment. The last 6 bars are marked by a brief crescendo to *f*, but this quickly dies down as we feel the magnetic pull of the home key starting to assert itself.

Principal song return:

Unlike the “da capo” return to the minuet in minuet & trio form, where both parts are played just as before but without the repeats, here the principal song is as long as it was originally and incorporates new scoring and decoration of the material.

Part I: The first time through, this is a literal repeat of *a*, but then for variety Haydn presents it to us again in decorated form. A small but significant detail is the omission in this case of the little initiating run, thus keeping it fresh for its impactful use in Part II ahead. While the violin faithfully reproduces the original melody, the R.H. now contributes an ear-catching counter-melody for the first part of the antecedent, and again for the consequent. Also, the lead in last part of the consequent (previously in the R.H.) is here given to the violin. This switch is maintained through the extension as the violin continues the original melodic line against a new piano part with syncopations between the two hands. Finally, the ending flourish that previously belonged to the violin is given a graceful new piano interpretation.

Part II: In contrast to Part I, all of this is given in a new presentation right from the start, but then this revised version is literally repeated. The first 6 bars sound much the same, but enhanced by new syncopations in the violin and the bass. Then a fresh triplet rhythm is introduced that soon transforms the remainder of *b* so that it sounds significantly recomposed, though adhering to the original length and harmonies.

a' - This is most satisfyingly heralded by the return of the lead-in run. The following *a* melody offers a fine, climactic effect by being presented now broken up into lively triplets itself. The mood is one of joyful brilliancy. Then, as before, the consequent is more tentative and subdued, but here still recast in triplets, and this dominant new rhythm will persist through all of the balance of *a'*. The following concluding material is quite altered in its effect not just rhythmically, but also by being more lightly scored. The literal repeat of Part II is given a second ending with a deceptive cadence that is strengthened by fermatas, providing a heightened sense of expectation before the ensuing...

Coda:

Part I: The first two bars give us the familiar opening of *a*, but in a distant key. Then the R.H. starts a flowing 16th-note rhythm that will continue at considerable length, against which the violin offers a stream of free melody. Before long, there is a touching excursion into minor, and the violin settles into regular 8th notes against the R.H.'s ongoing 16ths. This new violin line is in contrary motion to complementary 8ths in the bassline. Soon we can feel the pull of the E-flat tonic as the harmonies shift towards home, but the moment of return is delayed and enhanced by a nice teasing extension featuring a dominant pedal.

Part II: Here is our final helping of the tune that has dominated this movement. The antecedent is once again simple and straightforward...in fact a literal repeat of the original opening. But the consequent is freely derived from the *a'* version, and leads then to a new 10-bar extension that features brilliant 32nd-note downward runs traded between the R.H. and the violin. (These runs are actually more rhythmically complicated in that sometimes the legato groupings, instead of containing 8 notes, are divided into 9 or even 10, creating a subtle wave-like acceleration effect.) The final bars switch to tutti cadence chords, providing a *ff* and triumphant conclusion.

Movement II – Free aria design, Andante ed innocentemente (a little andante and innocently), 6/8, B major

The “innocent” style that Haydn refers to in his tempo designation is somewhat belied by the extremely remote key he has selected and the unconventional structure of this short movement. We have been thrust from the three flats of E-flat major to the five sharps of B major, a vast distance harmonically. After a very regular principal melody is presented, we continue with a developmental episode that we assume will be the trio of a ternary form. But instead of returning us to the home key and reprising the opening melody, Haydn just extends and extends this developmental material until this lovely-but-quirky “aria” concludes without resolution.

“The slow movement...is a slow-moving modulation from B major to E flat major by means of a plain two-part melody, another way of dramatizing a less complex form: here a simplicity of melody and a dramatic form combine to produce a sweetness rare in Haydn (or in any music, indeed).” (Charles Rosen)

Principal song:

8 bars (4+4), parallel period. This theme is first presented by the piano alone in ‘mezzo voce’. The R.H.'s vocal-style melody has a gently lilting character typical of the 6/8 meter, and this is reinforced by the L.H. adding spare harmonizations in a regular long-short-long-short pattern. The tune opens with a basic motive characterized by a distinctive rhythm. This motive recurs often over the course of the theme, and will also provide the essential material for most of the rest of the movement. A variety of elegant ornaments reinforce the music's vocal nature, and in fact, in England words were added to turn this into an actual song.

The 8-bar theme is then repeated in the same octave by the violin, hewing faithfully to the original line, while the piano lends a somewhat more animated accompaniment incorporating flowing 16th notes. Despite the richer sound of all three instruments (including some rare independent movement for the cello in the consequent), the mood is still very mild and subdued.

Free fantasy:

Part I: 4 bars (2+2). A switch to *f* and minor creates a strong contrast to everything we have heard so far. A new, more dramatic melody is sung by the violin over a steady oom-pah-pah accompaniment. The second two bars drop back to *p*, with a slight variation of this idea (and the violin taking up a counter-melody that the cello had just prior).

Part II: The principal song's basic motive now returns and is spun out into an extended modulatory passage. This begins with soft overlapping imitations between the R.H. and the violin. Then the two treble voices come together in unison, still repeating the motive, and building to a climax with a crescendo, all over a throbbing bass accompaniment. After a peak of intensity is reached, the music drops back down to *p* in preparation of...

Part III: We might reasonably be expecting a return to the home key and principal song at this point, but instead we hear the material of Part I of the fantasy, again loud and in minor. This starts in the same key as before, but now the R.H. has the melody, and the violin the counter-melody. The matching *p* continuation provides a surprise this time by modulating to E-flat major. This crucial moment, that brings us a glimpse of our distant home key for the entire trio, is set off as a piano solo.

Part IV: Based on the previous Part II, with its development and exploration of the basic motive, but this time the process is expanded and the harmonies are more chromatic, especially at the beginning. Here the peak of the crescendo is sustained by a fermata on an unstable harmony.

Part V: Starts with a free cadenza for R.H. in unmetered time. This too is set off at the end by a fermata-prolonged rest, then the strings rejoin for a series of gentle cadential harmonies that seem to foretell an optimistic close to all the recent drama. But this prospect is quickly undermined by a deceptive cadence and more searching, "noodling around" with the basic motive. The movement then ends with a final fermata on a fully-scored chord that leaves us hanging. We are very far from the original tonic of B major...instead what we have is a B-flat dominant chord. Conveniently, this is the chord that wants to resolve to E-flat, and thus this open-ended conclusion provides a neat segue to the start of the Finale, which is directed to follow without pause. (Attaching a seemingly-incomplete slow movement to an ensuing Finale in this way would be a favorite strategy of Beethoven's.)

Movement III – Finale: Allemande, Sonata form, Presto assai (very, very fast), 3/4, E-flat major

This rollicking movement provides the perfect exuberant antidote to the tensions and suspense we've just endured. Harmonically, the clear, bright E-flat major opening is just the sound we are longing for. In essence, the whole last part of the slow movement has played the role of a slow introduction to this one, launching it with enhanced brilliancy and maximum impact.

A note on Haydn's heading *allemande*: This word is the French adjective for "German." In this case, it should not be confused with the earlier Baroque *allemande*, a courtly dance in duple-meter. Instead, this designates a "German dance" (or "Deutsche") that, starting in the 1860s, referred to a rustic dance in triple-meter. Eventually this genre would subdivide into the ländler

and the waltz. Thus this movement has the character of a particularly lively dance in three-quarter time.

Exposition:

Main theme: Statement – Antecedent 8 bars (4+4), consequent 14 bars (6+8). The piano introduces this dance tune with the R.H. singing the melody over a regular waltz-style chordal accompaniment. The violin is relegated to a discreet counter-melody. The opening motive, which so strongly characterizes this theme, starts with a rising E-flat arpeggio that soon transitions to a flowing stepwise descent. Rhythmically, this is all an unbroken stream of 8th notes. In the second half of the antecedent, we hear this motive loosely sequenced upward. The following consequent seems at first to be a balanced and parallel one, in that it starts with a return to the motive at its original pitch-level, though slightly varied. But then the momentum of the material carries it into a freer and nicely unpredictable extension. From the start, the consequent is given an effective new sound by the strings taking over the oom-pah-pah accompaniment. Later, the violin has a more prominent melodic role before the theme ends with a clear closed cadence.

Counter-statement/Bridge – The antecedent is now presented *p*, with the R.H. faithfully repeating its original melody, while additional interest is provided by a new, freely imitative violin part. We only get the briefest hint of the consequent, however, before the music seamlessly morphs into what really is the start of the modulating bridge. This departure is signaled by a dissonant B-natural, repeated with obstinate syncopation by the L.H. The continuation of the bridge is wonderfully mercurial with its harmonic shifts and melodic freedom. An 8-bar (4+4) codetta restores a sense of greater stability in preparation for the...

Subordinate theme: This turns out to be a playful variation on the main theme, as is so often the case with Haydn. But before the familiar antecedent is heard in B-flat major (the expected dominant), a new 4-bar idea with flippant grace notes briefly disguises our old friend. The scoring draws on the counter-statement's R.H. lead with violin imitations. Further novelty is provided by the consequent, with the R.H.'s very free reworking of the basic motive. We still have a string of 8th notes, but now it starts with widely-spaced oscillation, followed by a chromatic ascent. This is repeated in sequence against lively violin counterpoint. This new consequent is also extended, and ends up lasting 11 bars before transitioning without a break into the closing material. During the extension, the violin contributes some short triplet-based ornaments.

Closing material: Statement – 13 bars (6+7). This has less of the effect of a clear theme, but it still suggests a mildly-irregular contrasting period. The antecedent features brusquely ascending, *f* 8th-note scales inverted from the basic motive. These scales are always juxtaposed with a chromatic motive in a distinctive quarter-note rhythm. The quieter consequent offers a gentle descending feeling that liltingly counts out the triple meter.

Quasi-counter-statement – This is a considerable expansion of what has just been presented. The beginning is based on the original antecedent, but this time starts *p*, with the rushing scales high in the treble register and descending. After a while, the scales are heard again in their original, more forceful rising configuration. All of this now lasts 22 bars as opposed to the 6 bars that inspired it. Finally, we hear the sweeter melody of the consequent, now acting as an effective cadence theme leading to understated *pp* concluding chords. This lilting theme is also

expanded and given a more memorable profile with a clear 4+4 feeling. The hushed ending provides an effective foil to the ensuing *f* start of the exposition repeat.

Development:

Part I: This starts with a piano solo, whose *mf* dynamic indication provides a gentler contrast from the *pp* just before. After 4 bars the strings join in, and soon the texture starts to thin out. The matter being developed is the 8th-note scale motive from the closing material, and both its descending and ascending versions are alternated and juxtaposed, coupled as usual with their rhythmic, chromatic anchor. A momentary relaxation sets up a *f*, tutti repetition of the same scale-based material, but as we would expect in the development section, we have moved on to new keys. Soon the process is brought to a pause with a fermata that will lead us to...

Part II: This playful section draws less obviously on themes from the exposition. Again it is initiated by a piano solo. During most of the passage, Haydn plays a nice trick with our rhythmic sense by superimposing a feeling of duple-meter. When the triple-meter has managed to reassert itself for 4 bars, we come to the final...

Part III: Retransition. This shortest section is entirely piano solo, and its regular 8th-note rhythm anticipates the approaching main theme. As we arrive at the dominant that will return us home to the tonic, we get one final reference to the closing material's chromatic motive.

Recapitulation:

Main theme: This is considerably rewritten and only the antecedent appears in relatively normal form, though using the counter-statement scoring featuring the violin imitations. Instead of a regular consequent, it soon morphs into a free new extension based on the familiar scales and chromatic motive from the closing material. There will be no counter-statement of the main theme, rather this extension soon slips into a recomposed (but clearly recognizable) version of the...

Bridge: Now the dissonant off-beat piano notes that initiate this are E-naturals rather than B-naturals. The bridge is the same length as before, and follows very much the same course.

Sub-theme: Usually the recapitulation of the sub-theme and closing material in a classical-era sonata form are especially faithful to the original presentation, except for the shift of key. Thus it is interesting how many changes we encounter in this case. For starters, the 4-bar introduction is noticeably altered in that what were before a series of strong repeated notes now are presented as a descending arpeggio. Still, the grace notes and scoring preserve much of the original character. In the exposition, the sub-theme then reverted to its version of the main theme, most radically changed in the new consequent. Therefore, it's a bit startling to instead encounter a literal repeat of the first 16 bars of the theme here, exactly as it appeared at the start of the movement. In this way, we get to hear the familiar main theme consequent that was suppressed earlier in the recapitulation. Of course, this all works very neatly as the sub-theme is supposed to be in the tonic key now. The next surprise is a playful, almost cadenza-like piano solo introducing a new idea spiced up by grace notes. Soon the strings rejoin for a moment of minor-key drama that quickly resolves into the lilting melody from the closing material. This is the simpler, more embryonic form of this passage. It is mildly whimsical of Haydn to end the

subordinate theme with it here, before the closing material has properly started, especially as it was always the second element (or quasi-consequent).

Closing material: As with the sub-theme, this is also freely altered and inextricably intertwined with what amounts to the coda. After the sense of one thing flowing seamlessly into the next that we've just been experiencing, this starts with a clean and definitive break. The familiar start of the exposition's closing material, with its rising scales and chromatic motive, is welcome in its regularity. But the original 6 bars of this are extended with the descending-scale version, and then some portentous unresolved chords prolonged by a fermata. Though the closing material has only just started, what follows is clearly more in the nature of a...

Coda:

Part I: Based on the closing material antecedent, but now the scales are turned into oscillating 8th-notes, paired with the identifying quarter-note motive. With its downward chromatic harmonies over a dominant pedal, this projects a soft, searching, troubled mood. Once again, we experience an unresolved ending, now a pregnant pause with a fermata.

Part II: Bright and *f*, this is a powerful contrast and offers a sense of culmination as it combines the main theme and closing material scales into a bustling and uplifting amalgam. Our enjoyment of this new evolution is brief however, as it soon leads to...

Part III, with the familiar cadence theme version of the lilting melody. After all the recent novelty, this rounds everything off with a simple and satisfying reminder of the exposition's close. Haydn is now quite finished however...he gives the conclusion additional weight by adding six bars with grace note figures (harkening back to the sub-theme intro), and the following cadence chords are enhanced by a brilliant trill.

“The last movement...is a German dance in rustic style with a grossly comic evocation of a village band; it is a difficult virtuoso piece for the piano as well as a form of low comedy for which the trio, more intimate than the symphony and less highfalutin than the string quartet, is particularly suited.” (Rosen)