

Beethoven's Haydnesque Heritage: Echoes of Haydn's Opus 17 and 20

String Quartets in Beethoven's Opus 18

(Proposal, International New Beethoven Research Conference, Vancouver 2016)

Though Beethoven famously claimed that he had learned nothing from Haydn, his early essays in the string quartet often suggest otherwise. Beethoven's indebtedness to Haydn is less overt than his oft-cited modeling of Mozart (Beethoven's String Quartet in A Major, Opus 18, no. 5 bears a striking resemblance to Mozart's K. 464 in the same key, as noted by Jeremy Yudkin and Joseph Kerman): he is indebted to Haydn in more subtle ways. Beethoven borrows tonal, textural, and characteristic ideas/procedures from various Haydn works: not directly modeling on him, but using a Haydnesque idea as a jumping-off point, which he then develops in his distinctive manner.

This study will examine matched pairs of quartet movements in Beethoven's Opus 18 (published in 1801, as his first period neared its conclusion) and Haydn's Opus 17 and 20 (published in 1771 and 1772, during his Sturm und Drang period). Many of the movements that share the same key resemble each other in other ways. The opening of Beethoven's String Quartet in C minor, opus 18, no. 4, features a florid violin line over a pulsating eighth note cello part, much like Haydn's Opus 17, no. 4 in the same key. The same quartet's second movement, a sonata-form fugato in C major, texturally echoes both the first movement invention and the fugal finale of Haydn's Opus 20, no. 2. Beethoven's Opus 18, no. 3 in D major, first movement, has an anomalous expositional tonal plan that closely mimics Haydn's Opus 17, no. 6. Moreover, its finale, though in a

different meter from its model, shares many features with the Haydn's Opus 17, no. 6, Finale (emphasis of parallel thirds, use of melodic inversion, and a folk-like coloration).

To conclude, these similarities suggest that though Beethoven avoided modeling overtly on Haydn in his Opus 18 quartets (possibly spurred on by the rivalry between them), he nonetheless mined a lot of the same musical territory in these quartets that Haydn had done previously in his Opus 17 and 20. Whether deliberately or subliminally, Beethoven betrayed himself as "Student of Haydn" by pursuing similar compositional strategies as his erstwhile teacher in these early quartets, and by finding similar musical solutions. Beethoven's musical indebtedness to Haydn is thus greater than is usually acknowledged, and looking for models for Beethoven's procedures in Haydn's works could fruitfully be explored in other genres as well (particularly the piano sonatas, piano trios and symphonies).