

End Games: Beethoven's and Haydn's Play with Endings in their Op. 33 No. 2s

Both Beethoven's Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2 and Haydn's String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2 demonstrate playfulness far beyond the typical confines of eighteenth-century galant conventions. Although many scholars have addressed the conclusions to these works (Wheelock 1992, Levy 1995, Goeth 2013, Klorman 2013, Palmer 2015), no research has demonstrated how Beethoven's practical joke is both indebted to, and distinct from Haydn's famous gag. This paper demonstrates how Beethoven's "end game" is indebted to Haydn, but takes on a unique flavor in the hands of the budding romantic.

In these two endings, both composers play practical jokes on their listeners who cannot know when the piece will end. In Haydn's well-known string quartet, a series of pauses alternately create heightened anticipation for both the continuation of the entertainingly hackneyed rondo refrain and the quartet's conclusion. Haydn's "outrageous manipulation" (Wheelock 1992, 12) places the listener in "a slightly embarrassing situation" (Goeth 2013, 240) by creating an unpredictable series of specific expectations (Figure 1).

From the beginning of Beethoven's bagatelle, the downbeat is unclear (Examples 1a–b). This metrically problematic opening measure creates a narrative of Beethovenian conflict, borne out in quasi-mechanical alternation between the left and right hands as the metric ambiguity, sown into the fabric of the opening motive, is repeatedly tugged until it unravels into an awkward, and ultimately unresolved, spat between the two hands (Example 1c). This pervading intraopus conflict and the concluding "ensemble" argument comes from a simple motivic problem—a tempest in a teapot.

Both of these passages are excessive: they project a sense of redundancy and vacuity through the successive repetition of musical material that appears to have "gone on for too long" (Huron 2004, Sisman 1990, Palmer 2015). Haydn's excessive passages (in this work and others) are often sudden and surprising: there are no conspicuous intraopus cues to suggest the manner or extent of the surprising and excessive conclusion yet to come. Beethoven's excessive passage, on the contrary, presents a metrically ambiguous opening motive that returns often, introducing elements of increasing conflict and, eventually, absurdity into the unfolding intraopus narrative.

I conclude by discussing how both of these excessive passages create humorous effects by using the silence *after the end* as a punch line and I describe how these composers' different approaches to "excess" are emblematic of their individual rhetorical and discursive strategies.

Examples

Figure 1: Moment-by-moment reading of Haydn's String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, conclusion

Event (measures)	Resulting Expectation
153–54	Opening sentence will continue as before
155–56	Quartet has ended
157–60	Sentence is being broken up by rests: remainder of sentence will follow accordingly
161–64	Same as above
165–67	Quartet has ended
168–70	(Possibly) Something else will happen because instrumentalists are still holding their instruments in performance position
171–72	Sentence will be repeated again somehow
After the end of the score	More of the sentence will follow after this rest (perhaps of three measures like the preceding one)

Example 1a: Beethoven's Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 1-2

Scherzo
Allegro

p sf p
f

Examples 1b: Beethoven's Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 1-2: downbeat options

p sf p
f

Example 1c: Beethoven's Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 123-38

123

f p cresc.
forte
decresc. p