

Piano Works of Franz Joseph Haydn

Analytical Views in Style and Structure

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ABSTRACT

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) in one of the most influential musical composers in the eighteenth century Classical period. His is also considered the historically transitional figure between late Baroque and Classical, or the forerunner of the Classical period. His is a prolific composer who wrote tremendous amount of music in wide variety of genres such as Symphonies (more than a hundred), String Quartets (almost 70), String Trios (almost 30), Piano Sonatas (52), Piano Variations and Character Pieces, Instrumental Concertos, Instrumental Chamber Music in various combinations, Oratorios and Operas. His musical contributions in establishment of genre and form have earned him the titles “Father of the Symphony” and “Father of the String Quartet”. He also adopted the principles and styles of symphonies in his piano writing, particular in his development of the form of piano sonatas. The typical structural format he applied in his piano sonatas includes, sonata contains multiple movements (usually three to four), first movement is in Sonata Allegro form that contains multiple contrasting themes, second movement is a slow three-part A-B-A form, third movement (if there is one) is a fast Minuet in the meter of three, and the last movement is a fast movement either in Sonata Allegro or Rondo structure. The ideas he established in piano writing became fashionable in the late eighteenth century that was admired and followed by many master composers of later generation such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). His concept of applying strict structure in music writings has tremendously inspired many neoclassic composers in the twentieth century. In the category of piano works, he not only composed a great deal amount of works for piano, his piano works are considered the most important standard repertoires in the piano literature, and they are extremely appropriate to be utilized as teaching materials as well as concert performing program. In this article we will discuss the composer his life, style of his piano works, as well as the detail theoretical analysis by studying the best-known representative from his late piano works “Variation in f minor Hob. XVII: 6”.

Keywords: *Franz Joseph Haydn, Piano Works, Classical Music, Haydn’s Piano Music, Haydn’s Piano Variations in F Minor Hob. XVII: 6, 18th Century Music, Piano Variations, Variations*

1. HIS LIFE

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was born at Rohrau, a little village in the eastern part of Austria near the Hungarian border. He received his first musical training in playing violin and harpsichord from his uncle Johann Matthias Frankh, the schoolmaster and choirmaster in Hainburg, with whom he went to live at the age of six. Since then Haydn never again live with his parents. Two years later he moved to Vienna and became a choirboy at the Cathedral of Ft. Stephen in Vienna, where he received a great deal of practical musical experience but was given no systematic instruction in theory. He studied

counterpoint by himself, using Johann Joseph Fux’s (1660-1741) *Gradus ad Parnassum* (written in 1725, translated as Steps to Mastery), meanwhile he gradually made himself known to influential people in Vienna and received a few lessons in composition from a famous Italian composer and a teacher Nicola Porpora (1686-1768). In 1758, he was appointed the position of music director of the chapel of Count von Morzin (Joseph von Furnberg, 1717-1783), a Bohemian nobleman, for whose orchestra Haydn wrote his first symphony and by the year of 1761, he was taken into the service of Prince Paul Anton Esterhazy (1711-1762), head of one of the wealthiest and most powerful Hungarian noble families, a man devoted to music and a bountiful patron of the arts.

The following year Paul Anton died and was succeeded as head of the Esterhazy domain by Nikolaus I, Prince Esterhazy (1714-1790), the man for whom Haydn worked for nearly thirty years [1].

1.1. List Of His Significant Musical Works

Haydn was an extremely prolific composer, and his quantity of musical works probably exceeds any other master composers in the music history. His total musical output includes 108 Symphonies, one of which (number 106) is lost and one of which (number 105) is actually a Symphony Concertante, 68 String Quartets, 32 Divertimenti for small orchestra, 126 Trios for baritone, viola, and cello, 29 Trios for piano, violin, and cello, 21 Trios for two violins and cello, 52 piano Sonatas, 20 Operas, 14 Masses, 6 Oratorios, and 2 cello Concerti. With such large amount of refined musical output as well as the establishment of format of Symphonies and String Quartets, Haydn has earned him the titles of “Father of the Symphony” and “Father of the String Quartet” [2].

2. HIS KEYBOARD WORKS

In his lifetime, Haydn composed fifty-two sonatas, a few Theme and Variations as well as some character pieces entitled Capriccio, Arietta, Fantasia, Adagio, and Allegretto. The major compositions of Haydn’s keyboard works are cast in sonata form, although his earlier works still show strong Baroque influence by adopting two-part binary form in his writings. The sonatas, nevertheless, may be taken to represent the composer’s development from his early years through 1794, the date of the final three sonatas being fifteen years before Haydn’s death [3].

2.1. The Structure And Style Of His Keyboard Music

The most common structural plan Haydn adopted in his piano sonatas usually contains three movements (with a couple of works of exception that has only two movements). Initially the typical layout of sonata movements as: first movement is an Allegro with multiple contrasting themes, which at the time the term Allegro was understood to mean not only a tempo, but also some degree of “working out”, or development, of the theme. Followed by a middle movement, most frequently a slow movement, an Andante, Adagio or a Largo, or less frequently a Minuet or Theme and Variations. A closing movement was usually an Allegro or a Presto, often entitled Finale, and its form was often a Rondo (layout of ABACA) or Minuet [4].

In his keyboard writing, he often used folk-like melodies marked by diatonic-ism and simplicity. To the left hand, he usually assigned accompaniment figures. Ornamentation, especially in slow movements, was used as a means of compensation for the lack of sustained tone in the instruments of the period. Brilliant passages exhibit

instrumental rather than vocal characteristics, with arpeggios and broken chord figurations being prominent. Repetition and sequence are used more often than actual development [5].

2.2. Piano Works In Various Stages

The earlier sonatas, a group of about twenty written for the harpsichord, are in the *gallant* style. It wasn’t until 1771 with sonata No. 20 that Haydn used dynamic markings, suggesting that the music could be played on a fortepiano (a new keyboard instrument invented in the early eighteenth century, became popular by middle eighteenth century that are allowed to deliver various levels of dynamic volumes based on the weight touch of the keys from players). These earlier works were labeled *partitas* in many instances by the composer himself and were probably used by Haydn as teaching pieces for students [6].

The next group of sonatas, again a group of about twenty sonatas written in the late 1760s and early 1770s, is representative of period of artistic change, often referred to as Haydn’s *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress, means extremes of emotion) period. In this period, since the new invention of pianoforte enable to produce sound with more variety in volumes and colors, his writing had become more musically passionate and expressive with more expanded structure.

The final group of sonatas, about twelve written between 1780-1790, shows the mature composer writing with assurance in his style, now totally refined and matured. His last three sonatas, written in 1794, are well-known virtuosic master works that represents the monumental achievement of the composer’s late mature years, and are considered the best ever written in the Classical piano literature.

2.3. The Editions Of His Keyboard Music

The number of sonatas attributed to Haydn has varies. The Breitkopf und Hartel “complete” sonatas was based on the catalogue that was prepared by Gottfried Christoph Hartel (1763-1827) for the publication of the complete works of Haydn between 1800 and 1806. This published edition contains thirty-four sonatas. Almost a century later Breitkopf und Hartel published the sonatas in a collected edition that was edited by Carl Pasler. This edition contained fifty-two sonatas and made reference to an additional eight “lost” sonatas [7].

In 1957, Anthony van Hoboken (1887-1983, Dutch musical collector, bibliographer, and musicologist) took over the Breitkopf und Hartel edition and published a Haydn catalogue. Works were given Hoboken numbers, often abbreviated on programs of performances simply as Hob. Numbers. In 1963, Universal Edition published the work of Christa Landon (1921-1977). Landon

presented yet another chronology of the sonatas, one that rearranges the Pasler-Hoboken numbering. Since, however, the Pasler-Hoboken list is most often included in programming the works [8].

3. THW ANALYSIS OF THE VARIATIONS IN F MINOR, HOB. XVII: 6

The Andante with Variations in f minor (Hoboken 17/6), also known as *Un Piccolo Divertimento*, composed in 1793 and is among his most popular piano works. This f minor Theme and Variations were composed by Haydn under the inspiration or impact from the death of his close female friend Maria Anna von Genzinger (1754-1793) in the January of 1793 [9].

3.1. Musical Content And Features

This f minor Variations are a set of Double Variations, that contain two themes with totally independent musical characteristics and contents. The first theme is in 2/4, an andante funeral March in f minor, followed by the contrasting secondary theme in F major that is more highly ornamented and elaborated. The entire work contains two Variations of each theme and an extended coda. The thematic idea of first Variation is base on the main theme, characterized by a syncopated half-step melodic progression with transitional fast running scales in between phrases. Compare the Variation one with the theme, Haydn remains the basic melodic outline but rephrases the theme to become more agitated and elaborated. Also this Variation requires hand-crossing technique in some places that is musically and technically more challenging for the performers.

The second Variation uses a more contrapuntal texture with some virtuosic elements, and the rhythmic pacing is getting faster as well. Right hand contains a great deal of rapid scales of thirty-second notes on top supported by the left hand accompaniment as the theme, that are simple steady broken chords in the value of the eighth. In this Variation, Haydn demonstrates the music writing that is complex and sophisticated with the strong influence or inspiration of Baroque Toccata. The scale pattern form the right hand is showy, expressive and improvisation-like, typical melodic patterns and features by the composer that are commonly used in some of his other works, and such idea of melodic pattern also shows clear connection with the arias of the Neapolitan operas in the seventeenth century [10].

As soon as Variation two finished, it goes directly to the famous showy transition. The opening materials of the transition is very similar to the original funeral March theme except a few minor melodic changes, but instead of resolve to the tonic chord as the opening, this time Haydn used harmonic progressions of chromatic manner connecting the music to a new section that is virtuosic, dramatic and cadenza-like. The transition is a long

extensive developmental passage (about 60 measures), that almost take more than one fourth of the entire duration of the work. Structurally the transition is considered the center focal point as well as a climax of the whole piece, technically the section has many rapid finger works from the right hand as well as rhythmically irregular grouping for both hands (for example right hand fast scale of nineteen notes placed against a quarter, eighth rest, dotted eighth and a thirty-second chords from the left hand) that requires both technical and emotional capacity from the performers.

The fantasy-like coda is introduced by abrupt and unprepared modulations that contain traces of the theme and proceed with bold harmonic invention. This Variation in f minor is so well written both structurally and musically. Haydn is good at writing such genre by connecting several Variations from different musical characters and expressions into a continuous master work. He commanded a full complement of moods and emotion in this work, from the joyous and gay to the tender and passionate. One has to possess not only a solid technique but a great deal of the imagination and sensitivity to interpret his music with depth and maturity. Although this f minor Variations may not be the most frequently played classical repertoire in the history of piano literature, it definitely deserves more attention from every performers for its extraordinary musical quality.

4. CONCLUSION

Haydn is best known for his establishment of structures in the symphonies in the eighteenth century classical period, and such concept of musical format also applied to many other genres such as instrumental sonatas as well as instrumental chamber works. This structural tradition became a significant principle adopted by other composers in the Classical period, such as Mozart and Beethoven as well as composers in the nineteenth century, such as Schumann and Brahms, even in the beginning of the twentieth century, composers like Ravel, Hindemith, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev still admired such structural frame in their music writings [11].

In the field of piano music, he is probably the most prolific composer in the Classical period. When studying his piano works, one often compares his musical style with other Classical master composers Mozart and Beethoven. Although their piano works are considered the most substantial standard repertoires for most of the conservatory-trained pianists, each composer has his own unique style of compositional approaches and musical expressions. Mozart is a genius composer in writing Operas, so he is an expert in utilizing the dramatic effects as well as melodic features of arias into his piano writings. Beethoven is an experimentalist in handling structural forms, thus he often took a further step from the standard Classical structure into a new, more flexible vehicle that can best serve his musical needs. Haydn, compared to

the other two, is more traditional in treating structure, and he seemed pretty satisfied creating his musical ideas under such strict formats. Some people might think that Haydn's piano works do not stand out as much as the music by Mozart and Beethoven in terms of the characteristics of the musicality, or his music often been commented as less appealing compare to Mozart and less showy compare to Beethoven [12]. However, in the perspective of piano education, Haydn's piano pieces are frequently used as teaching materials since the concept of structures and techniques from his writings is much more approachable and clear for students who are not yet experienced in playing music from the Classical era. For more advanced pianist, Haydn's piano music requires high level of technique and control to achieve the clean, articulated sounds and phrases that needed in the interpretation of his piano works. Therefore, Haydn's piano music has its own unique place in the history of piano literature and it will still remain its significance for any professional pianists, music educators and those who enjoy classical music. For those who study the style of music in high Classical period, Haydn's music will always be the most substantial collection of literature that represents the highest musical achievement in the eighteenth century music society.

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