FORM-FUNCTIONAL AND TOPICAL SOURCES OF HUMOUR
IN CLASSICAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

by

James K N Palmer

B.Mus., McGill University, 2007
M.A., McGill University, 2009

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Music)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2015

© James K N Palmer, 2015
Abstract

Most of us can recall chuckling, or even laughing out loud, at a humorous musical passage and perhaps recalling how much that experience increased our enjoyment of the music. This study focuses on humour in the instrumental works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven: composers who have been singled out by contemporary and modern scholars for their ingenuity and mastery of the Classical style. In the most general sense, musical humour arises when composers play with established conventions of musical discourse by writing something incongruous according to the stylistic context.

Chapter 1 demonstrates how historical critics understood the role of contrast in examples of musical humour and wit. It then surveys many recent music-theoretical discussions of musical humour, before briefly introducing how elements of contrast, “valence shifts,” and “opposition” are involved in musical humour from the Classical period. This study’s analytical and theoretical approach to musical humour draws on recent studies of musical humour, form, and communication in the Classical style, as well as concepts from recent linguistic theories of humour.

Chapter 2 introduces the two primary strategies Classical instrumental composers employed to create musical humour: “opposition” and “excess.” Chapters 3 and 4 discuss a wide range of musical examples to explore how composers deployed formal functions and musical topics to produce humour. These discussions provide a sense of the wide range of effects that fall under the umbrellas of opposition and excess.

Chapter 5 concludes by briefly examining some performance applications of this study and suggesting some further potential sources of musical humour.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, James K N Palmer.
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Preface ................................................................................................................................. iii
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ vi
List of Musical Examples ..................................................................................................... vii
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. ix

1 Humour in Classical Instrumental Music: Introduction and Literature Review .......... 1
   Scholarship on Humour in Classical Instrumental Music ............................................... 4
   Theories of Humour ........................................................................................................... 22
   Three Methodological Points .......................................................................................... 29

2 Theoretical Framework ..................................................................................................... 33
   Some Preliminary Remarks ............................................................................................. 33
   Theoretical Model ............................................................................................................ 34
   Deployments of Formal Functions and Topics ............................................................... 38
   Opposition ......................................................................................................................... 43
   Excess ................................................................................................................................. 49

3 Humorous Opposition ...................................................................................................... 58
   Introduction to Opposition ............................................................................................... 58
   Examples of Humorous Opposition .................................................................................. 65
      Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 Il distratto, sixth movement ............................................ 65
      Haydn’s Symphony No. 67, third movement: a counterexample ................................... 72
      Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1, third movement .......................................... 75
      Mozart’s Serenade in D major, K. 250, first movement ................................................. 80
      Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 Il distratto, third movement ............................................. 87
      Michael Haydn’s Symphony in D major, Perger 13, third movement .......................... 99
      Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 “The Bird,” fourth movement ............................ 107
      Mozart’s Serenade in D major K. 250, third movement ................................................. 112
   Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 118

4 Excess ................................................................................................................................. 120
   Introduction to Excess ...................................................................................................... 120
   Narrative Excess ............................................................................................................... 127
      Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, fourth movement ............................................................... 130
      Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 “The Bird,” fourth movement ........................... 140
      Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 5 ............................................................................. 144
      Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, second movement ........................................................... 150
      Haydn’s Symphony No. 94, second movement ........................................................... 165
      Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2 ............................................................................. 170
List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Typical opposition ........................................................................................................ 59
Figure 3.2: Emotional valence and social status conveyed by musical topics ......................... 61
Figure 4.1: Moment-by-moment reading of Op. 33 No. 2, conclusion ........................................ 197
List of Musical Examples

Example 1.1: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 50 No. 2, i, mm. 196–224................................. 11
Example 1.2: Mozart’s Piano Sonata K. 279, i, mm. 10–16........................................... 15
Example 2.1a: Mozart’s Ein musikalischer Spaß, K. 522, iii, mm. 72–81 ......................... 36
Example 2.1b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, i, mm. 67–86........................................... 37
Example 2.2: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, iii, mm. 39–48........................................... 46
Example 2.3a: Mozart’s “Haffner” Serenade in D major, K. 250, iv, mm. 1–2................ 51
Example 2.3b: Mozart’s Piano Sonata in G major, K. 283, i, mm. 1–2.............................. 52
Example 3.1: Haydn’s Piano Sonata in G major, K. 283, i, mm. 1–2.............................. 63
Example 3.2: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, i, mm. 67–86........................................... 67
Example 3.3: Haydn’s Symphony No. 67, iii, mm. 15–46........................................... 73
Example 3.4: Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1, iii, mm. 86–101......................... 77
Example 3.5: Mozart’s Serenade in D major K. 250, i, mm. 267–83................................. 82
Example 3.6a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, iii, mm. 39–48........................................... 88
Example 3.6b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, iii, mm. 49–71........................................... 92
Example 3.7: Michael Haydn’s Symphony in D major, Perger 13, iii, mm. 78–83............. 101
Example 3.8a: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, iv, mm. 148–153........................... 108
Example 3.8b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, iv, mm. 15–37........................................... 110
Example 3.9a: Mozart’s Serenade in D Major K. 250, iii, mm. 1–9................................. 113
Example 3.9b: Mozart’s Serenade in D Major K. 250, iii, mm. 1–4, solo and first violins..... 114
Example 3.9c: Folk song opening.................................................................................. 114
Example 4.1: Mozart’s Piano Sonata No. 18 K. 576, i, mm. 28–34................................. 122
Example 4.2: Beethoven’s Symphony No. 6, i, mm. 13–30........................................... 124
Example 4.3a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 35–46........................................... 131
Example 4.3b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 161–70........................................... 134
Example 4.3c: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 198–221........................................ 135
Example 4.3d: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 218–“222”: recomposition.............. 135
Example 4.3e: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 221–32........................................... 136
Example 4.3f: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 221–26: autograph reproduced......... 137
Example 4.3g: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 222–“230”: recomposition............. 138
Example 4.4a: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 1–14................................. 141
Example 4.4b: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 166–70............................. 142
Example 4.4c: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 63–7 ............................................. 142
Example 4.4d: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 63–“72”: recomposition .................. 143
Example 4.5a: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 5, mm. 1–2 ......................................................... 146
Example 4.5b: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 5, mm. 58–65 ..................................................... 146
Example 4.6a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 1–8 ................................................................. 151
Example 4.6b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 27–30 ............................................................. 152
Example 4.6c: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 65–71 ............................................................. 153
Example 4.6d: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 73–81 ............................................................. 154
Example 4.6e: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 17–22 ............................................................ 156
Example 4.6f: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 48–55 ............................................................. 157
Example 4.6g: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 55–60 ............................................................. 158
Example 4.6h: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 76–81 ............................................................. 159
Example 4.7: Haydn’s Symphony No. 94, ii, mm. 9–16 ................................................................. 166
Example 4.8a: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 1–2 ......................................................... 171
Example 4.8b–e: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 1–2: downbeat options ....................... 174
Example 4.8f: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 1–16 ......................................................... 174
Example 4.8g: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 95–110 ..................................................... 175
Example 4.8g: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 123–38 ..................................................... 176
Example 4.9a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“21”: recomposition ............................ 183
Example 4.9b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“23”: recomposition ............................ 184
Example 4.9c: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“25”: recomposition ............................ 185
Example 4.9d: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“27”: recomposition ............................ 185
Example 4.9e: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 25–“29”: recomposition ............................ 186
Example 4.9f: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–28 (Haydn’s composition) .................... 187
Example 4.10a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, i, mm. 67–86 ............................................................. 190
Example 4.10b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, i, mm. 67–“86”: recomposition ............................ 191
Example 4.11a: Haydn’s Op. 33 No. 2, iv, mm. 1–8 ................................................................... 194
Example 4.11b: Haydn’s Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, iv, mm. 148–72 ..................................................... 195
Example 5.1: Mozart’s String Quintet K. 516, iv, mm. 39–58 ......................................................... 214–15
Acknowledgements

Many incredible people have positively influenced me and helped to shape my ideas during the course of researching and writing this dissertation. I would like to thank a few of those who have been the most crucial at various stages along the way and without whom this dissertation would not have been possible.

First, thank you to my advisors, Drs. William Benjamin and Alan Dodson for their patience, motivation, and brilliance. Thank you for challenging my ideas and encouraging me to build on and explore numerous avenues. Your knowledge, experience, and kindness have been invaluable.

Thank you also to the other member of my dissertation committee, Dr. Vera Micznik, who always provided precise critiques and a fresh perspective.

Thank you to my external examiners Drs. Poundie Burstein and Ryan McClelland for their productive critiques of my ideas and their organization and for helping to substantially improve my dissertation, even from afar.

Thank you to my other mentors, Drs. Richard Kurth, John Roeder, Hedy Law, and Gregory Butler for their knowledge and guidance at different stages in the dissertation process.

Thank you to my graduate friends and colleagues at the University of British Columbia, who were indispensable sounding boards and motivators throughout my degree. Thanks especially to Nancy Murphy, Grant Sawatzky, Tara Boyle, Tyler Kinnear, Chris Gainey, Scott Cook, Robin Attas, Chris Morano, Jonathan Easey, and Kimberly Beck Hieb. And a special thanks to Jennifer Paulson who shares my interest in musical humour and provided me with enthusiasm and inspiration at the very beginning of this project.

Thank you to all of my students at the University of British Columbia and Douglas College for keeping me dynamic, engaged, and inspired throughout my degree.

Thank you to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for financial support in the form of a Doctoral Fellowship.

Thank you Laura: without your constant love and support, this dissertation hardly seems possible.

And finally, thank you to my loving and encouraging parents and sister, whose talent for and love of music set me on this path in the first place.
to my wonderful wife, parents, and sister
1 Humour in Classical Instrumental Music: Introduction and Literature Review

Musical humour is one of the most novel and distinctive features of what we now call the Classical style. Many contemporaneous music theorists and critics were cognizant of the ways Classical composers played with stylistic conventions by incorporating sudden, incongruous shifts in affect. According to Felix Diergarten, the “juxtaposition of varying styles and gestures…is one of the most characteristic attributes of the Italian-influenced instrumental music of the 18th century.” The “unexpected twists” caused by these juxtapositions merited special attention from late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century writers, many of whom agreed that such departures from convention “should serve a humorous purpose.” For example, Johann Adam Hiller (1767) referred to the “odd mixture of styles, of the serious and the comic, of the lofty and the vulgar”; Heinrich Christoph Koch (1787) explained that, to depict an absent-

---

1 See, for example, Johann Georg Sulzer ([1792–94] 1967, see esp. “Witz”), Johann Adam Hiller ([1766–1770] 1970, 3: esp. 107), Heinrich Christoph Koch (1787, 2: esp. 40ff; English translation from Baker and Christensen [1995]), Friedrich August Weber (1800, esp. col. 143), Friedrich Rochlitz (1806, esp. col. 247), Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1807, esp. 725ff). See also Vasili Byros (2013), Danuta Mirka (2009), Felix Diergarten (2008), and Claudia Maurer Zenck (2008) for succinct surveys of these and other writers’ writings on the “broad aesthetic category” (Mirka 2009, 295) of humour. The first distinct treatment of “humour” appears in a discussion of the quality designated as “Comisch” in Sulzer’s Allgemeine Theorie de schönen Kunste (1792–94 [1761, 1: 485–86]), but “humour” is addressed by many of Sulzer’s contemporaries. For example, Johann Reichardt (quoted in Sulzer ([1792–94] 1967, 1: 485), remarking on a concert by Antonio Lolli, wrote that Lolli “was the first to show us that instrumental music by and for itself is capable of highest comical expression.” This positive view of musical humour gained currency in the writing of Weber (1800), Rochlitz (1805–6), and Michaelis (1807) who wrote about the comic or humorous in Leipzig’s Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung (see Mirka 2006, 295).

2 Diergarten (2008, paragraph 12). Diergarten (ibid.) notes that these juxtapositions were “especially true of Viennese instrumental music starting in the 1770s.”

3 Byros (2013, 240) explains that Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1788; 1801), Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1771; 1776; 1777; 1779), Johann Mattheson (1739), Johann Adolph Scheibe (1738–1740; 1745), and Koch “described a variety of techniques for playing with convention…which served to create unexpected twists” and highlights Koch’s fascination with the “unexpected” (das Unerwartet).


minded person, Haydn “connects sections which do not properly belong together”;\(^6\) Friedrich Rochlitz (1806) specifically noted Mozart’s “funny obligatory treatment of the low basses against the high notes of the wind or string instruments”;\(^7\) and Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1807) wrote,

> The departure from convention, the unusual combination of the strange and remote…at first presents the appearance of inconsistency. But since this…immediately ceases to be inconsistent in the greater context, this music conveys the impression of comedy and can make one laugh.\(^8\)

Each of these authors—like their early Enlightenment contemporaries in Germany—seems to view contrast as a crucial component of musical wit and humour.\(^9\) Furthermore, the idea that humour involves sudden, incongruous contrasts remains integral to modern scholarship on the subject.\(^10\)

Most concertgoers today can appreciate the overt humour of Mozart’s *Ein musikalischer Spaß* (a parody) or the second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93 (with its evocation of flatulence), but modern listeners are less likely to apprehend the more pervasive and subtle types of contrast to which eighteenth-century listeners were more closely attuned than most concertgoers today. But what were eighteenth-century listeners listening for? What sorts of norms and codes were their favourite composers using? How did these composers manipulate

---


\(^7\) “Mozart oft so überaus glücklich war, wie in der komischen obligaten Behandlung der tiefen Basse gegen die hohen Tone der Blas, oder Saiteninstrumente”). See Rochlitz (1806, col. 247; my translation).

\(^8\) Diergarten (2008, paragraph 13), quoting Michaelis (1807, 725ff).

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) See especially Wheelock (1992), Burstein (1999), Huron (2006), Mirka (2009) and Byros (2013). See also Elaine Sisman (1990, 312), who notes Haydn’s pervasive use of a “clash of styles” in Symphony No. 60 *Il distratto*. These and other modern writings are briefly examined below.
conventions in a way that might create humour? Like me, Vasili Byros seems particularly concerned with these questions and seeks to recover some of the communication we modern listeners appear to have lost.\textsuperscript{11} He explains,

What requires recuperation are not simply norms and genres as things in themselves, but also their customary usage, their interactions on numerous syntactic and semantic axes, how these norms are addressed to various audiences and subjected to compositional play, and how deviations from norms become a source of metaphoric forms of communication such as wit and humour.\textsuperscript{12}

If we can recover and understand Classical composers’ conventional usages and playful deployments of syntactic norms and semantic codes, we may be able to apprehend some of the metaphoric forms of communication that occurred between these composers and their listeners. The present study seeks to recuperate some of these usages and deployments, thus seeking to uncover how Classical composers (especially Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven) created humour in their instrumental music.

This dissertation concentrates on two compositional strategies through which contrasts in the domains of musical semantics (topics) and formal functions give rise to humorous effects in Classical instrumental music. In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of several recent contributions to the study of musical humour that have influenced my research. Next, I introduce some key terms and concepts from the theoretical literature on everyday verbal and situational humour. I conclude the chapter by explaining why I concentrate on topics and formal functions, how I define musical humour for the purposes of this study, and how I carried out the analytical survey upon which the central chapters of the dissertation are based.

\textsuperscript{11} See Byros (2013). The role of active listening in the construction of musical humour is also discussed in Walton (1993).

\textsuperscript{12} Byros (2013, 219).
Scholarship on Humour in Classical Instrumental Music

Interest in Classical wit and humour, and Haydn’s wit in particular, remains strong in recent scholarship. For example, Gretchen A. Wheelock’s seminal work, *Haydn’s Ingenious Jesting with Art* presents a broadly implicative and oft-cited discussion of Haydn’s wit as it pushes the boundaries of the Classical style.\(^{13}\) Beginning with the understanding of wit and humour suggested in eighteenth-century writings, she grounds her analytical framework in “a process of engagement in which the role of the listener is salient” and in which she seeks “to locate the strategies of musical jests.”\(^{14}\) Throughout the book, Wheelock’s focus is on Haydn’s string quartets and symphonies and their minuets and finales in particular. Her thoroughgoing discussion provides cultural and social contexts for carefully selected examples of Haydn’s wit and humour, but perhaps her greatest contribution is the incorporation of elements of communication and agency in Classical performance culture.\(^{15}\)

Wheelock’s and my approaches differ primarily in scope and methodology. Where Wheelock focuses her discussion on all manner of Haydn’s instrumental humour, I broaden my discussion to Classical instrumental composition as a whole to discuss Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. This breadth does not allow me to engage any specific composer with the level of detail Wheelock provides, but it does allow me to address similar strategies for creating humour across different Classical composers’ instrumental works. In addition, while Wheelock’s musicological bent provides a robust account of cultural contexts and meanings, my theoretical approach to musical humour aims to uncover an economical set of principles with relatively

---

\(^{13}\) Wheelock (1992).

\(^{14}\) Ibid., ix; x.

\(^{15}\) Klorman (2013) has thoroughly and expertly discussed the communicative importance of “agency” in the Classical String Quartet performance medium.
broad explanatory power. However, the role of musical topics and syntactic elements in producing contrast in examples of Classical wit and humour is a point of contact in our work. Throughout her book, Wheelock discusses ways in which “Haydn exploits the contrast of comic and serious styles.” I follow Wheelock as she recognizes topics “associated with [social] musical functions and genres of court, urban, and country life” and notes, “These and other traditional associations provided musical frames of affective and social reference in instrumental music.” Wheelock further emphasizes the importance of contrast and incongruity in producing “artful subversion” when she explains, “Constituting a ready lexicon of the familiar, such topics also provided opportunities for the subversion of traditional categories and hierarchies when used in incongruous combinations and contexts.” Another point of emphasis that I share with Wheelock is our awareness of, and reliance on, “the stability of syntactic and formal conventions that made certain sequences of events highly probable.” When employing such conventions for “paradoxical manipulation,” she writes, “The composer ensures maximum recognition of both the familiar and the strange as ‘united in a single assemblage.’” In addition to our shared emphasis on contrast and incongruity, Wheelock’s broad contextual approach and her rich musical discussions have been influential to the present study, especially in cases where we discuss the same passages.

16 See, for example, Wheelock (1992, 42–43) for her opening discussion of “abuses” of decorum and “contrast of comic and serious styles” in the second and third movements of Haydn’s Symphony No. 28.
18 Wheelock (1992, 203).
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., quoting Beattie ([1776] 1779, 320).
21 See Examples 3.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.11.
Wye J. Allanbrook’s writings on the comic in Classical music focus on characteristics of opera buffa that seemed to pervade instrumental genres.\textsuperscript{22} Allanbrook begins from the common notion that “comic opera is largely responsible for introducing the newfound power of contrast and counterstatement into Classic music” and notes that, while this statement is somewhat hyperbolic, there are some specific areas where it certainly applies.\textsuperscript{23} When writing on Mozart’s Piano Concerti, she focuses on manifestations of the comic in closing gestures and primarily invokes the old notion of a comedy as a work with a “happy ending.”\textsuperscript{24} Although her structural focus on comic endings does not directly inform the present study, her later work seeks to reclaim the musical surface as a worthy locus for musicological inquiry.\textsuperscript{25} Allanbrook is particularly interested in the role of topoi in Haydn’s and Mozart’s Classical instrumental works. And, while she does not discuss humour per se, we share some important notions on the comic role of topics. Most importantly for the present study, she observes, “Topoi articulate each other’s difference…by juxtaposition and opposition.”\textsuperscript{26} Allanbrook notes the importance of topical contrast where “absurd horn calls…mutate rapidly into a Turkish-style minore”\textsuperscript{27} in Haydn’s E-flat Major Sonata, Hob. XVI:52 and refers to these “contrasting topoi” as examples of “the kaleidoscopic expressive mutations that are a crucial element of [the Classical instrumental] style.”\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{22} See Allanbrook (1996; 2002).
\textsuperscript{23} Allanbrook (1996, 85).
\textsuperscript{24} See ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} See Allanbrook (2002).
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 214, my emphasis.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 210.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 215.
device” shared by both Haydn and Mozart. The role of topical contrast is crucial to both Allanbrook’s and my approaches to humour.

In an essay entitled “Comedy and Structure in Haydn’s Symphonies,” L. Poundie Burstein examines Haydn’s brand of wit and humour from a perspective informed equally by Schenkerian theory and analysis, and by scholarship on verbal and situational humour. In his analysis of the first movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 90, Burstein discusses ways in which “harmonic connections, motivic parallelisms, reversals of expectation, and conflicts between levels” give rise to humorous effects. Burstein also offers some general principles on what makes music funny. He writes, for example, “I find untenable the notion that humor results merely from the reconciliation of incongruities.” While he accepts the view that incongruity is a necessary condition for humour to exist in any medium (a view that is widely shared among humour theorists in linguistics), Burstein rejects the notion that incongruity could be a sufficient condition for humour in music. To clarify this point, Burstein offers a “humor equation”: he writes that humour arises through “the linking and contrasting of things that are somehow serious, sensible, logical, or ‘lofty’ with things that are trivial, silly, illogical, or base.” In other words, humour cannot occur without both “high” and “low” elements, a notion that echoes forward from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas about musical humour mentioned

---

29 Ibid., 207. Here, Allanbrook notes several “topical modulations” at the opening of Mozart’s Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331.


31 Ibid., 78.

32 Ibid., 69. Most modern humour theorists would agree with this statement. Burstein may have been the first music scholar to suggest that incongruity is not enough in describing musical humour, but he does not specify which authors have claimed that the reconciliation of incongruities is sufficient for humour in music.

33 Ibid., 68.
above.\textsuperscript{34} For Burstein, passages that only feature “low” elements are not funny, nor are those that mix elements lacking these connotations of “high” and “low.” My analytical orientation differs fundamentally from Burstein’s—my interpretations are based not on Schenkerian analyses, but rather on analyses of formal functions and topics—but I agree fully with Burstein’s argument that musical humour occurs when an incongruity involves a shift between the serious and the trivial, or the sensible and the silly.

The philosopher, psychologist, and founder of the International Society for Humor Studies, John Morreall holds that none of the three primary branches of humour theory— incongruity, superiority, or relief—is sufficient to account for humour.\textsuperscript{35} But, like Burstein and myself (and most modern humour scholars), Morreall’s ideas about humour lean heavily on incongruity theory. That is, they require the existence of incongruity in addition to other crucial components for humour to exist. For instance, Morreall explains that the “basic pattern of humour” occurs when “the playful enjoyment of a cognitive shift is expressed in laughter.”\textsuperscript{36} A cognitive shift is “a rapid change in our perceptions” and it is crucial for our recognition of humour. Cognitive shifts are Morreall’s way to account for the involvement of incongruity and usually “take us from what is ‘higher’ to what is ‘lower.’” He also notes (as Burstein does), “In general, the greater the contrast between the two states in the cognitive shift, the greater the possible amusement”\textsuperscript{37} and explains that the linguistic theorist Victor Raskin (to whom we return

\textsuperscript{34} See esp. pages 1–2.
\textsuperscript{35} See Morreall (2009). I provide a brief overview of these branches of humour theory on pages 23–30.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 49. Morreall (ibid., 39) also notes that laughter is a “play signal” that often results from humour: it is not required.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 51. See also Burstein (1998, 68).
below) understands such cognitive shifts to take place when one “set of background assumptions”—Raskin’s “script”—moves to an “opposed” one.\(^{38}\)

But Morreall differs from other authors when he explains that we can only experience such cognitive shifts as humorous when we enter a non-serious “play mode” where we are “disengaged from conceptual and practical concerns.”\(^{39}\) Morreall’s “play mode” is required for humour to exist, since “There is nothing automatic about enjoying cognitive shifts.”\(^{40}\) Furthermore, “cognitive shifts are potentially disturbing” in cases where we are puzzled, “momentarily disoriented,” and might even “see our lives as in danger.”\(^{41}\) But, according to Morreall, “We have several ways of taking a playful attitude toward problems rather than reacting with cognitive or practical concern. The most obvious is by fictionalizing them.”\(^{42}\) However, musical experiences do not seem to require this “fictionalizing” action because there are no real problems to begin with. In this way, listening to music, it seems, automatically places us in a kind of play mode within which we are free to playfully enjoy cognitive shifts at a composer’s whim. However, the way we construe the “highs” and “lows” Burstein refers to could be considered a kind of fictionalizing impulse as we connect sonically real, musical things to fictional ideas. Furthermore, while Burstein’s “humour equation” does not explicitly require our recognition of Morreall’s playful mode of (dis)engagement, Burstein’s requirement for contrast between the “lofty” and the “lowly” allows for Morreall’s fictionalizing impulse in a way that gets us into what might be considered an idiomatically musical play mode.

\(^{38}\) Morreall (2009, 51). See also Raskin (1985, esp. 81).

\(^{39}\) Morreall (2009, 50).

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 52, my emphasis.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 53.
In *Metric Manipulation in Haydn and Mozart*, Danuta Mirka is concerned with how these composers play with rhythm and meter. Mirka examines Haydn’s and Mozart’s chamber music for strings from a perspective informed both by historical writings on rhythm and meter and by recent scholarship including works by Christopher Hasty and Harald Krebs. Mirka presents a remarkably thoroughgoing, nuanced discussion of various kinds of rhythmic and metric play (e.g. fermatas, *imbroglio*, general pauses, syncopation). Toward the end of the book, Mirka takes a brief foray into Haydn’s (and to a lesser extent Mozart’s) metric strategies to show how “metric manipulations are related to…humor.” She approaches humour as a “broad aesthetic category” and often focuses on metric manifestations of comic “absent-mindedness”—an idea she draws from Friedrich August Weber’s writings.

Mirka is sensitive to musical topics throughout her analyses, even though they are secondary to metric issues. But rarely does she describe the role of topical contrasts alongside metric dissonances. Her discussion of a passage from the first movement of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 50 No. 2, however, is an important exception.

---

43 Mirka (2009).
45 Mirka (2009, 296).
46 Ibid., 295.
Example 1.1: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 50 No. 2, i, mm. 196–224
In the passage above, Mirka describes how two of the long-range metrical strands of the movement are juxtaposed to produce what Krebs would call “indirect displacement dissonance.”47 She distinguishes specifically between the learned style of the 6/4 meter (mm. 196–213 and 218ff)—the natural meter of Haydn’s theme—and the Ländler deployment of those same thematic motives recast in 3/4 (mm. 214–17).48 More importantly, for our purposes, she writes, “[I]n the most immediate context of the preceding canons this [Ländler] topic brings a dramatic contrast between high and low style.”49 Because Mirka’s focus is on long-range metrical strategies in this section, she does not delve into the potential repercussions of this high/low contrast, but this kind of topical juxtaposition and the notion that earlier motives may return in an anomalous (and humorous) guise later in the composition are crucial for the current study.50 Although my own approach centers on the analysis of formal functions and topics, metric manipulations contribute to the humour of some of the passages I discuss, and in such cases Mirka’s influence will be apparent. Furthermore, I admire Mirka’s command of historical sources and share her interest in forging connections between historical and modern theories, but theoretical writings from the eighteenth century play a more central role in Mirka’s project than they do in my own.

In “Multiple Agency in Mozart’s Music,” Edward Klorman explores Mozart’s chamber music dynamic with special attention to the agency (or personae) of individual instruments within a string quartet and the nature of their interaction.51 In particular, he argues that a chamber

47 Ibid., 273. See also Krebs (1999).
49 Ibid.
50 This narrative notion of a bizarre motivic return for the sake of humour is explored in Chapter 4.
music score, rather than acting as a text by a single agent (the “composer’s voice”), should be played in a manner similar to a theatrical script. According to Klorman, “Multiple agency…emphasizes that the musical fabric is produced through the interaction of all parts within the texture.” This, he says, corrects a common analytical tendency to present only a monolithic, external account of the score and he demonstrates that the interactive mode created by multiple agency can give rise to deeper listening engagement with numerous kinds of affects, including humour. His analytical approach focuses on the “various fictional personas that (usually) correspond to the individual players” and his analytical discussions offer “parallel multiple-analysis” to provide different composite parts—some “correct” and others “incorrect”—that ultimately enrich the listening experience. Although I will not be using this technique of parallel multiple-analysis in my examples explicitly, I will sometimes offer two interpretations of the same passage, each from a somewhat different analytical perspective. Even in such cases, my conception of the agency of musical communication is admittedly more conventional than Klorman’s, insofar as I almost always discuss jokes told to a non-performing audience by a single persona (whether embodied by a soloist or by an ensemble), and only rarely by one instrumentalist to his or her ensemble partners.

Modes of communication in music are also the focus of Byros’s “Trazom’s Wit,” an article that explores compositional play and discusses humorous utterances with an aim to recuperate a historical listening practice. Byros begins by discussing wit and humour from the

---

52 See Klorman (2013, 115). The notion of the “composer’s voice” is explored in Cone (1974).
53 Ibid., 131.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., Klorman’s parenthesis.
56 Byros (2013, 219). Byros’s thoughts on the recuperation of historical modes of listening are summarized above (see page 3).
perspective of historical writers,\(^5\) and continues his analysis by leaning on recent psychological and empirical discussions of expectation to clarify the important role of extramusical context and social situations.\(^6\) Byros is interested in the impact of numerous syntactic and semantic axes, and formal functions and topics are among these, but he focuses his analytical efforts squarely on \textit{galant schemata} and the ways in which they can “become a source of metaphoric forms of communication such as wit and humour.”\(^7\)

To address these syntactic and semantic interactions, Byros analyzes Mozart’s Piano Sonata in C Major, K. 279 by rigorously applying the “explicit and limited galant phrasicon,” which “allows for both blatant and more subtle tinkering with…syntactic properties.”\(^8\) He explains further that the use of this “phrasicon was seemingly a calculated strategy for adhering to the ‘popular style’ of which Leopold [Mozart] spoke.”\(^9\) That is, Classical composers deliberately engaged with this phrasicon and the galant schemata expounded by Gjerdingen represent one way for listeners (then or now) to “play the game,” so to speak. In the example reproduced below, Byros notes Mozart’s “impropriety at the level of formal functions,” when he follows the \textit{Quiescenza} schema with a hybrid \textit{Fenaroli-Ponte} to present “two conflicting suffixes.”\(^10\)

\(^5\) The distinction between these terms (wit vs. humour) is a complex subject, as their meanings were extremely unstable during the eighteenth century and were fraught with tension and ambivalence by the end of the century, as discussed in Wheelock (1992, ix; 3–54).


\(^7\) Ibid., 219. Byros engages explicitly with many of the schemata Gjerdingen (2007) defines and describes.

\(^8\) Byros (2013, 220).

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid., 228. As Byros points out, Caplin’s theory of formal functions would understand this as two “after-the-end” functions (see Caplin [1998, 15; 20]). Byros (ibid., 228) also notes that the ordering of these two schemata create a “syntactical elision at a broader level of syntax,” but I am primarily concerned with the more local clash presented Mozart’s anomalous juxtaposition.
That is, Mozart’s juxtaposition of these schemata is stylistically bizarre because both the 
*Quiescenza* and the *Fenaroli-Ponte* are post-cadential, harmonic-prolongational schemata, so
neither leads naturally to the other. Indeed, Byros precedes this example with several others by
Mozart’s predecessors and contemporaries that demonstrate how conventional usages of these
two schemata differ from Mozart’s. He explains that, while the *Quiescenza* behaves
appropriately (prolonging the goal tonic harmony of the *Grand Cadence*), the *Fenaroli-Ponte*
should prolong the goal dominant harmony of a half-cadential formula that does not precede it

---

63 See Byros (2013, 227).
here. Galant schemata rarely figure in the examples of humour I discuss, but Byros’ insightful incorporation of period sources (particularly Mozart’s letters), his attention to semantic and syntactic attributes, and his sensitivity to extramusical and social contexts have influenced my analytical discussions.

Like Byros’ article, Diergarten’s “At times even Homer nods off” provides a model for historically informed analysis as he uneartns Koch’s negative criticism toward Haydn’s use of “wit” (Witz) in Symphony No. 60 Il distratto. Although Koch does not refer to Haydn or to the symphony by name, Diergarten demonstrates how Koch’s description of the instrumental depiction of an absent-minded person (den Zerstreuten) clearly levels his criticism at Haydn’s composition. Koch’s polemic against this particular composition centers on Haydn’s “clash of styles,” which Koch claims are employed “without reason.” That is, Koch sees no reason suggested by the “inner nature of music” for such flippant employment of stark contrast and argues that only “external” or “mechanical” contrivances motivate Haydn’s stylistic clashes. Diergarten clarifies that Koch’s negative remarks make it clear that “Haydn’s Distratto goes against Koch’s aesthetic principles in a…general sense” and notes that these remarks also reflect the aesthetic principles laid out in Johann Georg Sulzer’s Allgemeine Theorie der schönen

---

64 I do, however, discuss Gjerdingen’s Prinner briefly in conjunction with Example 3.2.
65 See Diergarten (2008, esp. paragraphs 4 and 8), from Koch (1787). Although Symphony No. 60’s nickname often appears as the Italian Il distratto, its original incarnation as incidental music was written by Haydn to accompany Regnard’s French play, Le distrait. The accepted German equivalent was Der Zerstreute.
66 Diergarten’s (2008, paragraph 5) admirable sleuthing further reinforces this connection, noting that Koch’s paraphrase of Horace’s “at times even Homer nods off” strongly references an “important, recognized, and renowned composer”: Haydn is the clear choice in this case.
67 Ibid., paragraph 6.
68 Ibid., paragraph 4.
69 Ibid., paragraph 7.
This commentary illustrates a common attitude in music criticism of the time whereby “wittiness [is] detrimental to the purpose of music.” Indeed, Koch even warns that beginning composers should avoid this “malpractice [that] has tried to wangle its way into the world of music.” He continues: “This type of wit in music…is…as yet not sufficiently widespread as to cause great damage to the art,” but—perhaps unfortunately for Koch, Sulzer, and other critics who focused on the “‘annihilating’ effect of wit”—the witty style of composition of which they spoke (the style “filled not with feeling, but with playful entertainment [Spielwerk]”) became very popular in the late eighteenth century. Although critics like Koch and Sulzer worried witty techniques would undermine the “premise of aesthetic illusion” in music, Michaelis recognized the comic potential of such “departure from convention.” According to Diergarten, “‘witty’ music for [Michaelis] was characterized by the ‘unusual combination of thoughts,’ the juxtaposition of different topics and styles.” Michaelis, who lauds Haydn’s symphonies and string quartets in particular, explained, “The departure from convention, the unusual combination of the strange and remote…at first presents the appearance of inconsistency. But since this…immediately ceases to be inconsistent in the greater context, this music conveys the impression of comedy and can make one laugh.” Although Diergarten focuses on Koch’s criticism of Il distratto, his article evinces the contemporary clash in criticism exemplified by

---

70 Sulzer (1771–74).
71 Diergarten (2008, paragraph 4).
73 Ibid., 42; translation from Baker and Christensen (1995).
74 Diergarten (2008, paragraph 13).
75 Ibid., paragraph 4.
77 Diergarten (2008, paragraph 13).
78 Ibid., quoting Michaelis (1807, 725ff; my emphasis).
Koch’s pejorative view and Michaelis’ positive comments on wit or humour, as it derives from contrast.\(^{79}\)

David Huron’s *Sweet Anticipation* addresses elements of musical humour as it arises by thwarting expectations in particular ways. But Huron primarily examines the role of expectation in our music listening experience from an empirically and cognitively informed perspective that is linked to our more basic neurobiological experience of anticipation in general.\(^{80}\) He introduces the ITPRA (Imagination, Tension, Prediction, Reaction, Appraisal) theory as a means to discuss various relationships between statistically informed expectations about music and our emotional responses to it. But most importantly for our purposes, Huron differentiates between “what causes some thwarted expectations to elicit laughter rather than frisson” and notes that one “pivotal factor” is “the underlying extramusical context and social situation, which encourages or conditions a particular response.”\(^{81}\) He continues, “In the case of musical humor, the context appears to be overtly one of playfulness and parody.”\(^{82}\) According to Huron, playfulness may be signaled by “the interjection of ‘low art’ gestures into ostensible ‘high art’ contexts.”\(^{83}\) Since topics are the most salient signals for implications of “high” and “low” art, Huron effectively

\(^{79}\) Diergarten (2008, paragraph 13).

\(^{80}\) Huron (2006).

\(^{81}\) Byros (2013, 240n100; Byros’ emphasis and parentheses), quoting Huron (2006, 287). Other authors also discuss the role of topics in generating humour, based on the premise that, in Byros’ words “Musical topics were the extramusical contexts and situation-defining frame that ‘semanticized’ a particular figure for the attention, particularly if the figure is accompanied by a shift in topical discourse” (Byros [2013, 241]). For a similar claim, see Mirka (302–3).

\(^{82}\) Huron (2006, 288).

\(^{83}\) Ibid. Of course, the notion that contextually inappropriate compositional use of “high” or “low” elements can create humour resonates in the work of Byros (2013) and Diergarten (2008). Huron (2006, 288) also implies that a common source of parody is “the use of absurd sounds in an ostensibly normal musical context.” See Huron (2004) for a similar claim when he discusses humorous aspects of Peter Schikele’s (a.k.a. P. D. Q. Bach) compositions. The flatulent expulsion from the bassoons in the second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93 (discussed alongside Example 4.6) is an excellent example of this.
distances this humorous kind of playfulness from the other thwarted-expectation effects he describes.

In “Phrasemes, Parodies, and the Art of Timing,” the German musicologist Maria Goeth seeks to describe musical humour by drawing on theoretical models from linguistics. Goeth narrows her focus to compare two kinds of humour construction in music and in language: “humour through the dislocation of phraseme-like patterns, and humour through parody.” For Goeth, “the term phraseme is used for conventionalized expressions also referred to as idioms, collocations, fixed or set expressions.” After a brief, historical account of critical musical writing surrounding humour and the historical foundations of recent theories of verbal humour, Goeth discusses several humorous musical passages from well-known Classical works. Her approach is somewhat unusual because she pays particular attention to differences between music and language, while most authors tend to emphasize the similarities. She emphasizes two key differences between the two media: first, “the specific sonic qualities of music offer potentially humorous material that is not accessible to language” and second, “music [unlike language] depends on its development in time.” The specific sonic qualities she refers to are unusual instruments like Leroy Anderson’s typewriter, George Gershwin’s car horns, and the numerous other noises that occur in Spike Jones’ or Gerard Hoffnung’s musical parodies and, thus, are not within the realm of possibility for works from the Classical period. But Goeth allows for a similar effect to occur “when traditional instruments imitate sounds from the ‘real

84 Goeth (2013, 235).
85 Ibid., 237; Goeth’s emphasis. Goeth (ibid.) adds, “Expressions become phrasemes when they are widely accepted.”
86 Ibid., 235; my parentheses.
87 See ibid., 255. Goeth is referring to Leroy Anderson’s The Typewriter and George Gershwin’s car horns in An American in Paris.
world”—for example, the bray of a donkey in J. S. Bach’s *Fight between Phoebus and Pan* or Camille Saint-Saëns’ *The Carnival of the Animals*, or perhaps Haydn’s flatulent bassoon in Symphony No. 93. However, Goeth’s discussion of “music as an art of time” carries far more potential for discussing humour from the Classical instrumental period. For example, she explains that rhythm, meter, and tempo are important sources of musical humour, but not verbal humour. She notes, in particular, that humorous effects can come from standardized dance rhythms, metric deviations associated with “limping or stuttering,” “overuse of acceleration and deceleration, overexpansion, or static, quirk-like repetitions,” and “unexpected or excessively long or frequent pauses.” Although she notes only a few examples in passing, her explicit comments on such “timing” devices recognize music’s unique ability to create the kind of rhythmic and metric humour Mirka and (to a lesser extent) I discuss. Overall, Goeth’s linguistics-based approach to musical humour effectively addresses many links between mechanisms that create humour in these two media. First, although I believe the brevity of the chapter and its interdisciplinary orientation—which joins sophisticated ideas from linguistics with more rudimentary music-analytic procedures—necessitates some oversimplification, her mode of inquiry has nonetheless influenced my conception of the nature and limits of the music-language analogy. For example, she likens phrasemes in language to standardized cadential paradigms and, from this, it is perhaps not too difficult to imagine that higher-level musical processes (such as the formal functions and topics that I will discuss) might play a somewhat

---

88 Ibid. See Example 4.6 for my discussion of the bassoon expletive in the second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93.
89 See ibid., 255–56.
90 Ibid.
91 Goeth (ibid., 256) names the children’s song *My Hat it has Three Corners*, Bartolo’s rapid parlando passages in Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Flight of the Bumblebee*, but does not provide any further discussion or musical examples.
analogous role. Finally, although the mechanisms and strategies for creating humour that I describe in subsequent chapters cut across Goeth’s categories of “dislocation of phraseme-like patterns” and parody, her rigorous linguistic approach to musical humour has been valuable to the present study and returns in my analytical discussions.

The writings above each engage in different ways with aspects of musical contrast as a way to create witty or humorous musical events, whether through relatively broad discussions of Classical conventions, or through specific analyses that focus on elements in the musical surface or its underlying structure. Although we have noted that an incongruous series of events is by no means the only source of humour in any medium, some of the most fully developed theoretical models of humour take incongruity as their starting point. Incongruity-based theories of verbal humour seem most relevant to my aim of developing a theoretical model for sources of humour in Classical instrumental music, especially in light of the central role that incongruity plays in the remarks of eighteenth-century commentators on musical humour (Koch, Michaelis) and related insights from recent scholarship (most notably in the work of Burstein, Huron, and Goeth). Two other schools of thought in humour theory, centering on the roles of superiority and relief, may also be relevant to music in certain special contexts.\(^2\)

---

\(^2\) For overviews of these three branches of humour theory, see Paulson (2011, 12–13) and Morreall (2009, 1–26). For excellent summaries of humour research in the major disciplines (linguistics, literature, sociology, and psychology), see Raskin (2008) and Paulson (2011, 11–17).
Theories of Humour

Having briefly discussed several recent musical publications that have been influential to the present study, I will introduce some key terms and concepts from the theoretical literature on verbal humour. Linguistic theories of verbal humour are more advanced than humour scholarship on music and, like me, use incongruity as a point of entry. In general, these theories understand incongruity as Kant initially articulated it: a sign of thwarted expectation that comes from the introduction of surprising oddities into otherwise typical discourse. In Goeth’s words, “All psychological models of incongruity are based on the premise that humour derives from some clash between expectation/cognitive schemata and a new stimulus in a particular set of circumstances.” Some specific ways in which linguistic theories of verbal humour articulate these incongruous clashes can help to provide greater clarity and explanatory power when applied analogically to music.

---


94 See Kant’s Critique of Judgment (1951). For Kant, “there must be an element of the absurd in all that gives rise to a hearty laugh (…) Laughter derives from the sudden transformation of impatient expectation into nothing at all” (Dalmonte [1995, 172], quoting Kant [1951]). In his view, humour arises from a “sense of falling short of…expectations” (Dalmonte [1995, 173]). Dalmonte lays out the semiotic repercussions of “falling short of expectations,” saying, “Laughter would break out when the subject found something unexpected and stupefying in the object, that is when the correspondence between the object that is perceived and the subject’s schematic perception and judgment was broken: and this would only happen if the unexpected and surprising result were of a lower, more modest, less intelligent nature than the waiting had led the subject to expect or than the subject had imagined it would have been” (ibid., 172). See also Kierkegaard (2004), Bergson (1911), and Morreall (1983; 1987; 1989; 2009). Kierkegaard followed many of Kant’s ideas of incongruity closely, whereas Bergson and (much more recently) Morreall incorporated the concept of “incongruity” into their specific approaches to humour. For Bergson, incongruity is most manifest as the dissonance between the mechanical and living. This idea—his most influential—is borne out in the phrase most often translated as “something mechanical encrusted on the living” (“quelque chose de mécanique plaqué sur du vivant”) and is picked up by Levy (1992) and Dalmonte (1995). It would be an oversimplification to call Morreall an “incongruity theorist,” since he addresses many aspects of humour in his writings, but his thought and focus is clearly indebted to Kant.

95 Goeth (2013, 238).
A seminal work by Victor Raskin and subsequent writings by his student Salvatore Attardo are foremost among linguistic theories of humour and provide some basic tenets that effectively cross the conceptual gap between linguistics and music. Most importantly, Raskin’s seminal “Semantic-Script Theory of Humor” (SSTH) posits that humour arises from an incongruous “opposition” between overlapping “scripts.” Raskin defines a script as

[A] large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it. The script is a cognitive structure internalized by the native speaker and it represents the native speaker’s knowledge of a small part of the world.

According to Raskin, an opposition between scripts, or “script opposition” (like good/bad, life/death, obscene/non-obscene, money/no-money, or high/low stature), is required for a joke to be comprehended, since “the text of a joke [must be] partially or fully compatible with…two different scripts” and “the two scripts with which the text is compatible [must be] opposite.”

Raskin’s and Attardo’s theories currently enjoy such widespread appeal that “an instance of SO [script opposition] has become synonymous with an instance of humor” in the field of

---

96 See Raskin (1985) and Attardo (1994; 1997; 1998; 2001). These writings also discuss many aspects of humour that focus too specifically on verbal humour to be useful here. See Attardo (1994) for a summary of humour research in the field of linguistics.

97 Raskin (1985, 104).

98 Ibid., 81. Raskin also discusses specific kinds of scripts which he calls “macroscripts” and “complex scripts,” but which are too specific to the field of linguistics to be directly applicable here (see Attardo [1994, 200]). Paulson (2011, 14) also briefly discusses the role Raskin’s SSTH (and other linguistic theories of humour) can play in a study of musical humour.


100 Raskin (1985, 113–14; 127; quoted in Attardo [1994, 204]). The “high/low stature” opposition is particularly common and effective in music when it arises between Classical topics.

101 Ibid., 104; my parentheses.

102 Ibid., 99; my parentheses. More recently, Raskin and Attardo’s (1991) “General Theory of Verbal Humor” (GTVH) revised the SSTH to incorporate more of linguistics in general (see also Attardo [1994]). According to Paulson (2011, 14), “The GTVH broadens the central concepts of the SSTH beyond its purely semantic foundation, to include pragmatics, narrativity theory, and textual linguistics.”
linguistics. Put another way, “script opposition” is the specific way that linguistic theories of verbal humour “operationalize” incongruity. To better understand script opposition, consider the following verbal joke text:

There are two fish in a tank. One fish turns to the other and says, “Do you have any idea how to drive this thing?”

Here, the phrase, “There are two fish in a tank” evokes a typical joke text. That is, it communicates to the listener (or joke recipient) that there is a joke afoot. So we have “two fish in a tank.” For most of us, this likely paints a picture of two smallish imported exotic fish, perhaps one red and one blue, that reside in a tank (read: smallish aquarium), probably in someone’s living room. If the joke recipient is familiar with the most common semantic meanings of this opening phrase (i.e. they have a picture of two fish in an aquarium in their head), then when the joke teller continues, “One fish turns to the other and says, ‘Do you have any idea how to drive this thing?’” the listener will be surprised at the jarring improbability of the new “fish in a military vehicle” scenario because of the script opposition between “high and mighty military tank” and “lowly fish tank.” Although the semantic specificity that comes from

---

103 Triezenberg (2004, 412; my parentheses). The concept of “script opposition” has strongly influenced many other theories of humour, which articulate the concept in different ways. For example, Attardo’s “Isotopy-Disjunction Model” (or IDM)—which further formalizes, retools, and expands on Raskin’s “script opposition”—finds its derivations in Greimas’ notion of isotopy and is, for our purposes, too linguistically robust to be of any practical music-theoretic application. See Attardo (1994). Furthermore, the cognitive theories of “bisociation” that began with Koestler are too “speculative and psychological” for direct and specific application to musical analysis (or indeed to linguistics, as Attardo notes) because they lack reference to the explicit semantic information contained in a script or isotopy. Attardo (1994, 175) accurately notes that “script opposition,” the “Isotopy-Disjunction Model,” and “bisociation” theories are all “roughly coextensive” since they all represent a different descriptive viewpoint on a common semantic mechanism involved in any joke. In sum, due the degree of linguistic specificity in Attardo’s IDM and the speculative and psychological abstractions of “bisociation,” I use “script opposition” only, since it lies in a sort of Goldilocks zone of explanatory power: the concept is neither to psychologically abstract, nor too field specific.

104 See Canestrari and Bianchi (2013, 4).

105 This assumes that the listener wasn’t already made aware of this fact when the joke teller invariably opened with, “Hey! You wanna hear a joke?”
this verbal joke text surpasses any that could be produced in music, we can simplify this script opposition to one that occurs frequently in musical jokes: high/low stature. In other words, our recognition that the joke teller was referring to a “high” and mighty military tank opposes our initial expectation that the joke teller was referring to a “low” and unassuming fish tank. As we will see, composers use different strategies to produce similar script oppositions between “highs” and “lows” to create musical humour. Indeed, over three decades ago, Leonard Ratner specifically remarked on “what was probably the most profound stylistic opposition—the high versus the low.” Although “script opposition” (henceforth simply “opposition”) is not the sole requirement for musical humour, this powerful concept plays a crucial role in the present study as it articulates the incongruous clash of contrasting musical parameters in various contexts.

Raskin explains that, in a general sense, script opposition can occur between a “normal, expected state of affairs” and an “abnormal, unexpected state of affairs,” but both Raskin and Attardo note that different degrees of semantic specificity can create different “levels” of script opposition. In music, the distinctions between “levels of opposition” are not crucial, since they do not differentiate between those passages that are humorous and those that are not. But I differentiate between levels of opposition in my analytical discussions where possible, since

---

106 These compositional strategies for creating humour are introduced in Chapter 2 and discussed alongside musical examples in Chapters 3 and 4.
108 My use of “opposition” and the sorts of musical “scripts” that can be involved are explained in Chapter 2. Remarkably, Rochlitz may have provided the earliest mention of opposition with respect to musical humour when he wrote, “[P]urpose and means should oppose each other abruptly” (Zenck [2008, 56], quoting Rochlitz [1806, col. 7]). Arguably, Rochlitz (1806, col. 247; my translation and emphasis) also implied the idea of opposition when he wrote about the “comic treatment of the low basses against the high tone of the woodwinds or string instruments.” (In der komischen obligaten Behandlung der tiefen Basse gegen die hohen Tone der Blas, oder Saiteninstrumente).
109 Raskin (1985, 111). The normal/abnormal opposition is one of three general types of opposition. The other two types are “actual situation”/“non-actual, non-existing situation” and “possible, plausible situation”/“fully or partially impossible or much less plausible situation” (see ibid.).
more specific semantic implications (usually created by the extramusical associations of topics) can often yield more specific oppositions that enrich our understanding of the humorous effects that attend a particular example.\footnote{111} In the general case, Burstein explains, “seemingly pure silliness will almost inevitably be contrasted with an unnamed, general standard.”\footnote{112} But, as we will see, Classical composers can take advantage of more specific oppositions—most notably high/lowl stature and even non-excrement/excrement\footnote{113}—that fall under the umbrella of the more abstract scripts, good/bad and (even more abstract) normal/abnormal.\footnote{114} The basic tenets of incongruity theory in general, and “script opposition” in particular, delineate the sorts of things that create humour in Classical instrumental music, while different oppositions that occur at different levels of semantic specificity help to differentiate between the sorts of humorous effects that occur in different musical contexts.\footnote{115}

Superiority theory is the most ancient of the primary branches of humour theory. It can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle, but its strongest proponent was Thomas Hobbes.\footnote{116} In a nutshell, superiority theories hold that the subject of a joke will find humour in the feeling of

\footnote{111} The specific ways in which composers create different oppositions are introduced in Chapter 2 and expounded in Chapters 3 and 4.

\footnote{112} Burstein (1999, 70).

\footnote{113} See Attardo (1994, 204). For further examples of the non-excrement/excrement opposition, see Attardo (2001, 132) and the second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93 (I discuss this passage alongside Example 4.6).

\footnote{114} See Attardo (1994, 204).

\footnote{115} In addition, Attardo’s discussions of “joke similarity” and “joke difference,” as well as some general ideas about the function of a narrative in verbal joke communication have indirectly influenced my thoughts on musical humour, but these ideas do not manifest in the present study in an explicit manner. For the reader interested in pursuing these concepts further, please see Attardo (1991).

\footnote{116} See Hobbes (1840), Plato (1987) and Aristotle (Bremmer [1997]) are not explicit and clear about the specifics of humour, but “their comments are preoccupied with the role of feelings of superiority in our finding things funny” (Smuts [2006]). See also Feinberg (1967). Despite Feinberg’s overall focus on satire, his discussion of “slapstick” as a source of satirical humour refers to influences from both “incongruity” and “superiority” theory (1967, esp. 105; 211; 261). Feinberg does discuss “funny” humour in several locations in the book, but always with a literary approach that can only be analogically applied to the current study.
superiority she feels over the joke’s “target”—the guy who walked into the bar, for example. Superiority theory can also play an important role in musical humour since a fall from “high” to “low” stature can suggest elements of human error. In theater symphonies or other programmatic works that seem to follow or allude to a dramatic narrative containing specific instances of human error, composers can take advantage of similar instances in the accompanying drama to create musical humour that can be particularly overt and readily accessible to their audience. Superiority plays a role in a listener’s response to humour involving sudden shifts between implications of “high” and “low” social status, which I contend (following Burstein) are fundamental to humour in Classical instrumental music. But, while superiority may be necessary for our reaction to a shift between high and low stature, it is not fundamental to our perception of humour. In other words, superiority may amplify a humorous effect, leading to laughter at a “target,” but the humour itself is created by the incongruity and high/low shift.

Finally, relief theory plays a lesser, but more specific role in musical humour. This branch of humour theory was primarily articulated by Herbert Spencer and later, by Sigmund Freud and holds that the sense of relief or release that comes with the removal of a threat can lead to laughter—one possible physiological response tied to humour. In other words, “Release/relief theories perceive humor and laughter as a release of the tensions and inhibitions generated by societal constraints.” Although some modern humour theories include elements

---

117 “Target” is the accepted term used in linguistic theories of humour to refer to the “butt” of the joke. See esp. Raskin and Attardo (1991, 301–2) and Davies (2004, 377).

118 Of course, these moments can also be relevant to non-comic dramatic contexts, even of tragedy. The musical differences between humour and pathos or another complex of reactions can be difficult to tease apart, so this discussion is left to Chapters 3 and 4 where humorous passages are treated thoroughly.

119 Spencer (1883) and Freud (1960).


121 Carrell (2008, 313).
of relief theories, "‘pure’ relief theorists, explaining all of humor and laughter as release of
tension or ‘safety valve’, cannot be found anymore in humor scholarship." Relief theory plays
only a marginal role in this study, since it has no impact on my theoretical model and enters into
my analytical discussions in only a few examples that involve the removal of an implied threat.
That is, a relief response is only possible in instances of musical humour with very specific
deployments of certain topics, especially military or Turkish topics that seem to carry with
them—for Viennese culture at least—an initial threat of war that is then quickly removed.

Each of these three primary branches of humour theory can provide insights into musical
humour, but, like many modern scholars (especially Burstein, Morreall, and Raskin), I do not
believe any one of these branches is sufficient for explicating humour. In the present study, the
basic tenets of incongruity theory in general, and “script opposition” in particular, delineate the
sorts of things that can create humour in Classical instrumental music when they expose a shift
between “high” and “low” elements. But, for our purposes, a sense of superiority or feeling of
relief can only guide and/or amplify our reaction to musical humour. In general, elements of
“high” and “low” are what psychologists refer to as “valence.” However, a broader
understanding of the term as it applies to music allows it to engage not only extramusical
associations with “high” and “low” social status, but also implications of positive and negative
emotional valences, and “high” and “low” arousal levels of the sort discussed in perception and
cognition studies by Huron. Within a musical frame then, we can speak of “valence shifts”

---

123 See my discussions of Examples 3.7 and 3.8 for suggestions of how the relief theory of humour can play a role in music listening.
125 Huron (2006, 21–25) explains that the concept of “contrastive valence”—an influential factor in surprise, increased pleasure, and for creating unexpectedly positive outcomes like humour—suggests that (for reasons not yet
between implied “highs” and “lows” that are more idiomatic to the sorts of extramusical associations music can create.\(^{126}\) Such “valence shifts” allow us to say more about musical happenings and extramusical implications than adherence to the more psychological term “cognitive shift” grants us.

### Three Methodological Points

I will conclude this chapter by describing why I concentrate on formal functions and topics, how I define musical humour for the purposes of this study, and how I carried out the analytical survey upon which I have based the central chapters of the dissertation.

Like the linguistic and psychological theories of humour noted above,\(^ {127}\) I emphasize the interaction between syntax and semantics in the creation of humour. In the Classical style, formal functions are an important part of the musical syntax,\(^ {128}\) while topics are the only clear aspects of musical semantics.\(^ {129}\) Several other authors have mentioned the roles that formal functions and understood) an unexpected good outcome is actually experienced as *more positive* than an expected good outcome. This suggests that sudden valence shifts toward a positive emotion may produce a stronger affective punch of the sort that often creates humour. High and low arousal (or energy) levels are often associated with tension (see Huron [305–30]) and may be simply evoked by dynamics, rhythm, texture, melody, harmony, etc.\(^ {126}\) My understanding and application of the term valence shift is clarified in Chapter 2 and crucial to my analytical discussions in Chapters 3 and 4.

\(^ {126}\) My discussions of this aspect adhere closely to the theories of Caplin (1998) and Hepokoski and Darcy (2006). Of course, musical syntax also encompasses schemata (see Gjerdingen [2007] and Byros [2013]) and prolongational structure (see Schenker, Burstein [1999]; also Lerdahl and Jackendoff [1983]).


\(^ {128}\) Of course, the semantic content of music is far less specific and robust than the semantic content of language. See Agawu (1991, 33). See also Swain (1996).
topics can play in musical humour or wit, but no other extended study of musical humour focuses primarily on these two mechanisms.\textsuperscript{130}

As I noted above, syntactic aspects of verbal and musical humour both involve, in Goeth’s words, “the dislocation of phraseme-like patterns.”\textsuperscript{131} Dislocations of similar “conventionalized expressions” like formal functions in music certainly play a role in creating humour, but composers—unlike verbal comedians—also take particular advantage of proportionality to produce “implausible delays” or impressions of “excess.”\textsuperscript{132} As we will see, a composer’s proportional play in a passage can create different sorts of form-functional anomalies as they protract one section with excessive repetitions, while delaying an expected future event.\textsuperscript{133} But syntactical anomalies cannot tell the whole story of humour in any medium. In music, topics provide the semantic counterbalance and allow us to better interpret bizarre syntactical happenings according to the extramusical associations of the accompanying topics. While different musical contexts necessitate flexible interpretations and analytical treatments, we will see that humorous “script opposition” in music usually involves a sudden valence shift between implied “high” and “low” social status.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{130} For example, the role of formal functions in creating musical humour or wit is mentioned by Byros (2013, esp. 219), Goeth (2013, esp. 237–38 and 247), Levy (1992, esp. 239), Huron (2004), Sisman (1990, 320), Mirka (2009, esp. 309), Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, esp. 66–67), and Almén (2008, 169). The role of musical topics in musical humour is explicitly discussed in Byros (2013, esp. 219–20 and 240–43) and mentioned in Paulson (2011, 95–96 and 137–40), Agawu (1999, 156), Diergarten (2008, paragraph 13), and Sisman (1990, 320).

\textsuperscript{131} Goeth (2013, 235).

\textsuperscript{132} The idea of “implausible delay” is discussed in Huron (2004) and the term excess appears in writings by Sisman (1990), Dalmonte (1995), Goeth (2013), and Huron (2004).

\textsuperscript{133} The basic concept of excess is introduced in Chapter 2 and expounded alongside analytical examples in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{134} In subsequent chapters, I will also demonstrate that this high-to-low valence shift is often accompanied by a shift from negative to positive emotional associations.
In this dissertation, I adopt an inclusive definition of humour that encompasses effects that seem to have been designed to elicit a wide range of emotional responses, ranging from relatively mild amusement to uproarious laughter. These various emotional responses may lead to the impression that something is amusing, entertaining, jovial, jocular, comical, satirical, ironic, parodic, farcical, clever, crafty, or witty, but all of these fall across what I call the humour spectrum.

Several eighteenth-century authors tried to draw distinctions among these terms: “humour” and “wit” in particular. Some modern scholars have also attempted to distinguish between humour and wit. Wheelock notes the historical “ambivalence” of the term “wit,” while, in music scholarship in general, various usages of “wit” seem to span from barely a shade beyond the strictly conventional to the incredibly abnormal. In the present study, I follow Burstein’s understanding of the relationship between wit and things that are genuinely funny: “Wit is a kind of cleverness that uncovers and expresses paradoxical relationships between unlike things. Though witty statements can be quite funny, they are not necessarily so.” In other words, where wit is concerned, I am interested in those examples that seem intended to amuse, but not those that seem intended merely to impress. I contend that examples of this amusing kind of wit, along with the different humorous impressions listed above, can all be created by the same basic compositional strategies. In short, I contend that two compositional

---

135 See Wheelock (1992, 21) and Diergarten (2008, paragraph 12). See also Sulzer’s entries on *Witz* and *Laune* ([1792–94] 1967) and Michaelis (see Zenck [2008, 56; quoting Michaelis (1807, col. 726)]), who observed “das Launige (witty or jocular) in the character of particular rhythms or in the ‘unexpected entrance of certain voices or instruments.’”

136 See Wheelock (1992, 21–32). Wheelock begins by discussing the attempted differentiation of wit and humour in eighteenth-century English writings (1992, 21–28). She then notes, in a brief discussion of German music criticism on wit and humour (ibid., 28–32), that Sulzer’s relatively “benign formulation” of *Witz* and *Laune* in *Allgemeine Theorie* (1771–74, esp. “Witz,” “Laune”; see also “Lächerlich”) “echoes the sentiments of earlier English writers,” but does little to further differentiate between these nebulous concepts.

strategies (discussed in Chapter 2) account for a wide range of examples of musical humour in Classical instrumental music spread across the humour spectrum. I will occasionally distinguish between different humorous effects in passing during my analytical discussions in Chapters 3 and 4, but these effects did not factor into the design of my theoretical model.

My initial selection of examples of musical humour for this dissertation was informal and was based on my spontaneous experience of laughter or amusement in listening to certain passages, an experience informed by my familiarity with this music (as a listener and performer) and by my training in music history and theory. Of course, as a modern listener, my sense of humour is different from that of eighteenth-century listeners and composers. In an attempt to bridge this gap between historical and modern listening, I do not wish to rely solely on my own subjective judgments, but neither do I wish merely to choose examples that conform to a pre-existing theory (whether linguistic or musical). My solution has been to defer to the collective wisdom of my precursors by leaning toward examples they have discussed and also toward similar examples I have found. By emphasizing “classic” examples of musical humour, I can focus on explicating how these examples are funny, without worrying about whether or not they are funny.
2 Theoretical Framework

Some Preliminary Remarks

Classical instrumental works contain many humorous passages and events. This chapter discusses two important strategies for creating musical humour. I will refer to these as “opposition” and “excess.” I first explain how syntactic and semantic mechanisms (formal functions and musical topics) create the oppositions and valence shifts required for musical humour. I then discuss how composers deploy these syntactic and semantic mechanisms according to the strategies I call “opposition” and “excess” and comment on some emblematic examples by Haydn and Mozart by way of illustration.\textsuperscript{138}

The theoretical model outlined in this chapter emerged in the course of my research, which began with an extensive analytical survey of musical passages and works that have been described as humorous, witty, or funny in published literature, either from the period or from more recent scholarly commentaries. I have selected the remaining examples from works with passages similar to those recognized as humorous in the literature and which I find humorous. The subjectivity of these selections is balanced (at least in part) by the discursive similarities between these examples and those recognized as humorous by other scholars. The initial analysis that gave rise to my theoretical model relied heavily on my training in the analysis of Classical form and my familiarity with the harmonic, rhythmic, topical, and phrase-structural elements of the Classical style. All of the examples come from the Classical instrumental repertoire:

\textsuperscript{138} Opposition and excess are the respective focuses of Chapters 3 and 4.
somewhat comfortable and well-trodden analytical ground from which we may fruitfully discuss musical humour.

Theoretical Model

First, my analysis has shown that, in the instrumental music of the first Viennese school, two musical mechanisms—formal functions and topics—play a central role in the construction of musical humour, while other musical attributes (e.g. meter, harmony, texture, dynamic, articulation, etc.) tend to play a more peripheral role. Byros notes the importance of composers’ engagement with syntactic and semantic axes in “metaphoric forms of communication such as wit and humour”139 and Kofi Agawu specifically remarks on the importance of formal functions and topics and how they interact.140 I describe the roles of formal functions and musical topics below.

Second, I contend that two strategies for the deployment of formal functions and topics are especially prominent in the Classical instrumental style. I call these strategies “opposition” and “excess.” As we noted in Chapter 1, the general term “opposition” comes from linguistic theories of verbal humour. But the term is closely tied to notions of incongruity and (more generally) contrast. Both of these notions factor heavily in many scholarly musical discussions of humour.141 Although I borrow “excess” primarily from the writing of Sisman, Dalmonte, Huron,

---

139 Byros (2013, 219).
140 Agawu (1999, 156). See also pages 31–32 and 43–45.
141 See, for example, Burstein (1999) and Goeth (2013). See also Chapter 1, pages 23–27.
and Goeth my theoretical and analytical use of the term differs significantly. The strategies of “opposition” and “excess” are both described below.

Third, throughout this dissertation I understand “humour” to encompass effects of varying intensity and sophistication. These effects might elicit responses ranging from quiet amusement to boisterous laughter among listeners familiar with the idioms of the Classical instrumental style. As I outlined in the preceding chapter, “humour” in general is a problematic concept. Even in linguistics, where syntactic and semantic meanings are arguably more accessible and explicit than in music, “humour” has been notoriously difficult to pin down. In musicological literature, “humour” encompasses a broad range of effects from the amusing to the comic and from the witty to the absurd. For example, compare the grandiloquent whole-tone scale, the brazen pizzicato qua whoopee cushion, and the wilfully awkward trill-turned-tremolo in the violin cadenza from Mozart’s Ein musikalischer Spaß, K. 522 (Example 2.1a) to

143 According the linguistic scholar, Thomas Veatch (2004, 161), “Humor is an inherently mysterious and interesting phenomenon which pervades human life.” Furthermore, the existence of three often conflicting historical/methodological branches of humour introduced in Chapter 1—incongruity, superiority, and relief theories (see pages 23–30)—and, more recently, the diverging strands of incongruity theory in linguistics (see esp. Raskin [1985; 2008], Attardo and Raskin [1991], Attardo [1994; 1998; 2001], Davies [2004], Brock [2004], Veatch [2004], Norrick [2004], Veale [2004], and Morreall [2009]) point to the elusive nature of humour.
144 “Wit,” in particular, is ubiquitous in critical, musicological, and analytical literature on Haydn. See, for example, Tovey (1949; 1981), Wheelock (1992), Burstein (1999), Mirka (2009), and Hepokoski and Darcy (2006). Many other authors like Meyer (1959), James Webster (2004) and Agawu (1991; 2009) use “wit” in different ways. Still other scholars use “wit” in discussions of works by Mozart and Beethoven. Levy (1992), for example, discusses humour in two of Beethoven’s Op. 33 Bagatelles (see also Laul [2000]), while other authors—Lister (1994), Lowry (1974), and Godt (1986), for example—discuss humour in Mozart’s Ein musikalischer Spaß K. 522 and elsewhere. Since not all wit is humorous—some of it being merely clever without necessarily being funny or amusing—but some humour is witty, the same kinds of musical incongruity that create wit also often create humour. Thus, the examples of wit found in this study are only those that fall under the umbrella of humour.
Haydn’s compositional play in Symphony No. 60 *Il distratto*, where the subdominant is prolonged to the point of excess in order to delay the cadential dominant (Example 2.1b).\(^{146}\)

Example 2.1a: Mozart’s *Ein musikalischer Spaß*, K. 522, iii, mm. 72–78

\(^{146}\) Sisman’s article, “Haydn’s Theater Symphonies” (1990, 312) discusses this symphony at length: her analysis informs my discussion of this passage alongside Example 4.10. See also Perry-Camp (1979, 23).
The first excerpt is a blatant, almost slapstick, example of rampant virtuosity, while the second is a more controlled and measured deployment of sophisticated proportional play.\textsuperscript{147} Put another way, the former is as gag-like as the latter is sophisticated, but both are humorous.

Fourth, I contend that the mechanisms and strategies underlying these humorous effects are more or less the same across the humour spectrum for instrumental music in the Classical style. Thus, my analytical discussions in Chapters 3 and 4 address diverse examples of musical

\textsuperscript{147} The concept of “play with proportion” factors heavily into Goeth’s (247) discussion of humour in music where she invokes notions of “misproportion,” “oversize,” “excessive repetition.”
humour, but the mechanisms and strategies introduced here can help to effectively describe the humorous effects therein.

**Deployments of Formal Functions and Topics**

No matter how we choose to describe a passage—witty or humorous, sophisticated or gag-like—the musical mechanisms responsible for our recognition of a funny event or passage in the instrumental music of the first Viennese school remain essentially the same. This study focuses principally on two prominent syntactic and semantic mechanisms—formal functions and musical topics, respectively—with which innovative and playful Classical composers created humour. We can distinguish between humorous passages that arise from deployments either of formal functions, or of musical topics, and sometimes of both of these mechanisms in combination. But more specifically, my perspective is attuned to form-functional and topical deployments that appear incongruous according to their surrounding context. Put simply, I am interested in intentional lapses of musical continuity resulting from form-functional and/or topical attributes and implications that fly in the face of Classical stylistic conventions.

This focus necessitates, among other things, a careful application of modern theories of form\(^{148}\) and topics\(^{149}\) in order to forge a productive synthesis between these two large and complex areas of music-theoretic inquiry. We will see that, though topics and formal functions may seem to act alone in creating musical humour, musical humour is far more salient and

---


effective when they reinforce one another. But before we address how formal functions and topics can create humour in combination, we must look briefly at their individual effects.

My analysis of examples of musical humour in the instrumental music of the first Viennese school has shown that formal functions play an important role. Indeed, as we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, formal functions are a powerful syntactical force for creating humour. As William Caplin defines them, formal functions are syntactical phenomena informed most prominently by harmony, but also influenced and shaped by other musical attributes like melody and rhythm.\textsuperscript{150} In a Classical performance context, formal functions are expected to engage with one another in specific, stylistically appropriate ways. They follow a logical ordering from beginning to middle to end that listeners grow accustomed to and expect a composition to follow.\textsuperscript{151} When a composer disrupts the syntactical flow of a passage by excessively prolonging or dislocating an expected formal function, the unconventional progression will create an incongruity that the composer may then amplify with a concurrent harmonic, melodic, or metric surprise.\textsuperscript{152} As we observed in Chapter 1, an incongruity can create a humorous opposition when accompanied by a valence shift, and incongruities involving syntactical parameters often create the most conspicuous ruptures in the musical flow.\textsuperscript{153}

My analytical survey has also shown that, like formal functions, musical topics play a powerful role in creating musical humour. According to Byros, “Musical topics were the extramusical contexts and situation-defining frame that ‘semanticized’ a particular figure for the

\textsuperscript{150} See Caplin (1998).
\textsuperscript{151} See ibid. and Agawu (1999).
\textsuperscript{152} Goeth (2013), Hepokoski and Darcy (2006), and Agawu (1999) all use the term “dislocation” in various ways described below.
\textsuperscript{153} Chapters 3 and 4 will demonstrate, using counterexamples, that such incongruities do not necessarily create humour, but nonetheless mark passages or events with particular affective salience.
attention, particularly if the figure is accompanied by a shift in topical discourse."^{154} Topics are a powerful semantic force for creating humour and provide a vital counterpart to the syntactical force conveyed by formal functions. Like formal functions, Classical topics are expected to occur according to stylistic conventions, but, as Allanbrook notes, “we have not yet been able to contribute to a topical syntax…and I have some doubt that such a thing is possible.”^{155} But even if topics do not follow a stylistically defined syntax, a single topic’s most common semantic associations with social statuses or emotions tend to remain constant.^{156} Thus, while topics progress in no set order, they can still have a profound effect on the music because of their culturally construed, extramusical associations. Agawu even allows that “a change of topic can reinforce, highlight, or even constitute the primary oppositions within a narrative trajectory.”^{157} These associations, born as they are out of an “oppositional network of meanings,”^{158} allow uncommonly juxtaposed topics to elicit surprise and potentially humour.

The most salient extramusical references occur when a topic conveys particularly overt valence shifts: implications of “high” and “low” social status, “negative” and “positive” emotional valence, or “high” and “low” arousal.^{159} To be sure, not all topics convey strong associations with social status, emotional valence, or arousal level and those that may convey overt extramusical associations in one composition may be less clear in another context.^{160} But,

---

^{156} See esp. Hatten (2004b, 81).
^{157} Agawu (1999, 70).
^{158} Hatten (2004b, 81). See also, Almén (2008, 72–73).
^{159} The concept of “valence shift” is introduced in Chapter 1, pages 29–30.
^{160} As Wheelock (1992, 12) notes, it is even possible for topics, in specific contexts, to convey the reverse of their normal valence or social status associations. For example, Wheelock refers to the topic in the adagio coda opening in the finale of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2 “The Joke” as a “mock-serioso” because, despite its outward
when composers starkly juxtapose one topic associated with “high” social status (like a serioso) with another topic associated with “low” social status (like a musette), listeners will usually perceive a sharp contrast in numerous musical aspects (potentially harmony, melody, rhythm, mode, dynamics, instrumentation, timbre, articulation, etc.) and recognize an opposition (high/low stature) between the conflicting social implications. Likewise, when a composer shifts rapidly from a topic with “negative” valence (like Sturm und Drang) to another topic with “positive” valence (like pastoral), a topical opposition (negative/positive valence) is created from the valence shift. These kinds of valence shifts yield common oppositions like good/bad and can create humour. Furthermore, in passages where the topical oppositions negative/positive valence and high/low stature are used in combination (especially with a concurrent shift between implications of “high” and “low” arousal), they result in more conspicuous oppositions that tend to produce stronger affective potential and (often) funnier results than either of these shifts might produce on their own. As Burstein puts it: “The degree of humor directly relates to the degree of contrast between high and low elements, as well as to the persuasiveness with which the two are related.”

For example, a musette topic typically conveys positive valence (it moves at a moderately quick tempo, usually in a major mode) and low stature (it is associated with the pastoral, peasant appearance, its sarcastic effect projects the opposite effect of a typical (negative, high) serioso topic. This and other “mock” topics are discussed in Chapter 3.

161 Of course, not all topical oppositions will definitely create humour: for example, the valence shift between the minuet and trio in the third movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 67 (described alongside Example 3.3) creates both negative/positive valence and high/low stature oppositions, but is not likely to produce a humorous result. Lowe (1998) and Burnham (2005) discuss how motions to lower more popular styles (valences) occur often at different levels of structure in Haydn’s symphonies. Burnham (2005, 63), in particular, notes that symphonic finales commonly possess a “downhill trajectory” from higher to lower styles, while Lowe (2002) discusses the pivotal, and often ironic, role Haydn’s minuets play in the symphony cycle.

162 The notion of affect and the powerful role it plays in humour finds a particularly strong voice in the linguistic theorist Thomas Veatch (2004). According to Veatch, “Humor is affective absurdity” (ibid., 161).

life away from courtly life, especially because of its bagpipe-like, harmonically static drone bass), while *Sturm und Drang* typically conveys both negative valence (it usually moves rather violently through many chromatically-inflected keys, while being rooted in a minor key) and high stature (it has denser textures and more intricate counterpoint). If a *musette* suddenly appears on the heels of a *Sturm und Drang* passage, the rapid shift from a high, negative topic to a low, positive one will be a particularly effective source of affective potential and could create humour. The oppositions created by valence shifts like this are comparable to anomalous syntactical orderings of formal functions despite the lack of a topical syntax per se.

Though either two formal functions or two topics alone may be juxtaposed to create an opposition, they both influence the effect of humorous passages and are almost always intertwined. Since formal functions and topics rarely exist without the other, aspects of both must be addressed in a thorough musical analysis. Agawu remarks, “Since beginnings, middles, and endings are defined in terms of conventional harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic activity, the role of topoi needs to be understood in reference to these more primary dimensions.”

\[164\] That is, like formal functions, topics are parametric amalgams: they are the conceptual top of a bottom-up construction of individual musical dimensions that interrelate in innumerable ways. Oppositions between successive formal functions and/or between successive topics are therefore the result of contrasts between one or more constituent parameters: meters, melodic gestures, harmonies, textures, contrapuntal devices, dynamics, articulations, registers, timbres, etc. It is therefore crucial that my analysis account for the incongruous interactions between these lower-level parameters as they create higher-level incongruities between formal functions and topics. Since these “primary dimensions” (harmony, melody, rhythm, etc.) of topics and formal functions

\[164\] Agawu (1999, 156).
always occur together, composers can create more affective potential when these dimensions are used to create oppositions between two formal functions and two topics at the same time. This is more easily achieved with some topics than with others. According to Agawu, “It seems clear that in Classical instrumental music…certain topoi occur characteristically at beginnings of pieces, while others are used in closing situations.”\textsuperscript{165} Caplin provides some specific examples of topics that are commonly associated with specific formal functions of beginning, middle, or ending in Classical instrumental music, but recognizes that not all topics have these functional associations.\textsuperscript{166} For example, some common topical/functional affiliations are \textit{French overture} with beginning, \textit{Sturm und Drang} with middle, and \textit{lament} with ending.\textsuperscript{167} However, the topics generally referred to as “genre” or “style topics”—for example, \textit{aria}, \textit{sarabande}, or \textit{ombra}—frequently have no clear functional affiliation.\textsuperscript{168}

Having briefly discussed the affective potential of the primary syntactic and semantic aspects of music, we now turn to two qualitatively different kinds of humour that can emerge from the sorts of incongruous deployments of formal functions and topics seen above.

\textbf{Opposition}

The incongruities created by a composer’s anomalous use of formal functions and/or topics can cause many nuanced types of humorous effects, but all of these effects are borne out

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{165}] Ibid., 156.
\item[\textsuperscript{166}] See Caplin (2005).
\item[\textsuperscript{167}] Ibid., 115.
\item[\textsuperscript{168}] Ibid. The exception to this rule occurs when a topic has been used consistently alongside a particular formal function within a specific work. This kind of “intraopus affiliation” is suggested in conjunction with Example 3.5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
by two primary strategies. I call these “opposition” and “excess.” Examples of these strategies arise from different configurations of syntactic and semantic elements and create different perceptual effects. In their most basic senses, “opposition” creates the impression of a sudden and immediate pull in an unexpected direction, while “excess” projects a prolonged sense of vacuity and/or absent-mindedness followed by a sharp tug back to reality.

Oppositions engage expectations within the music’s discursive flow when one or more strange contrasts occur(s) between successive musical ideas. That is, oppositions occur when contrasting musical materials are juxtaposed to highlight syntactic and/or semantic contrast. Most oppositions foreground a local semantic clash between topics with opposed valences of some sort, a kind of contrast that engages local-level intraopus expectations—without any prior prompting or bizarre implications in the music—and is supported by music-syntactic parameters (formal functions, harmony, melody, meter, etc.). These characteristics cause these oppositions to jump suddenly out of an otherwise conventional musical context and present a clear punch line, whereas excess, by definition, requires time to be perceived (as we will see). Oppositions, therefore, feel more abrupt, even visceral, when compared to excess. The general impressions of oppositions are captured well by Wheelock: “[W]hen expectations are grounded as habits and tendencies in patterned motions and gestures, discontinuities of motion and disturbances in metric and phrase patterns can have a visceral impact.”

Hepokoski and Darcy are interested in this kind of opposition and explain how “displacement[s] of typical function[s]” (elsewhere, “modular dislocations”) are characteristic of

---

169 Huron (2004, 702) briefly discusses such “veridical” expectations. These might be thought of as expectations based on “intraopus style,” following Narmour (1992).

170 Wheelock (1992, 89).
Haydn and create impressions of “ideas in ‘wrong places’…and surprises of different kinds.”

While playing with syntactic expectations can create oppositions based on form-functional incongruities and can occur in different places, it is most common at beginnings and endings.

As I noted in the previous chapter, Agawu also recognizes the affective potency of playing with dislocation, but broadens its application to topics intertwined with formal functions: “dislocating a beginning topos from its harmonic attachment…is only one instance of the sort of play that lies at the heart of music of the Classical period.”

In the third movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 Il distratto (Example 2.2), an opposition occurs when a determined serioso shifts suddenly to a capricious musette.

---


172 As we will see it is this kind of opposition that occurs at the end of the first movement of Mozart’s “Haffner” Serenade in D, K. 250, where it lines up with a sudden shift in topical valence (see Example 3.5). Goeth (2013) uses “dislocation” in a manner similar to Hepokoski and Darcy: she privileges a focus on syntactic incongruities between “phraseme-like structures,” which are loosely analogous to formal functions in music. As we observed in Chapter 1 (pages 20–22), Goeth’s (ibid., 254) two “main analogies between humour in music and humour in language lie in their respective uses of dislocation of phraseme-like structures and of parody.” “Oppositions” (as I understand them) and “excess” cut across Goeth’s two analogies, but do not contradict them.


174 The humorous oppositions in this excerpt from the Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 and later in the third movement are discussed in detail in conjunction with Example 3.6.
The dogged *serioso*’s unison texture, minor mode emphasis (the opening minor third and the final semitone step from the submediant to the dominant), chromaticism, long note durations, *forte* dynamic, and relatively rapid implications of harmonic rhythm illustrate the topic’s associations of negative valence and high stature. Then, out of the blue, the meandering *musette*’s scalar motion, faster surface rhythm, *piano* dynamic, lighter articulation (staccato), and static (drone) harmony convey its opposing associations with positive emotional valence and lowly peasant life. Though the topics take precedence here, form-functional implications magnify the valence shift between the two topics by embodying the characteristics of each. That is, the resolute *serioso*’s functional initiation and half-cadential arrival project a form-functional progression that knows what it’s supposed to do, but appears to have overconfidently arrived at a half cadence too early. Immediately following this, the would-be functional ending—pre-empted by the *serioso*’s early dominant arrival—meanders absent-mindedly above the harmonic stasis of the minor(!) dominant, resulting in the *musette*’s ambivalent, and ultimately failed, attempt at a

---

175 Even its minor mode is undercut slightly by the first violin’s opening major tetrachord. There is no marked shift in arousal between the two topics.
functional ending. In the end, the high/low stature and negative/positive emotional valence shifts between the two topics may be more conspicuous, but the dramatic contrast between the *serioso*'s form-functional resolve and the *musette*'s lackadaisical prolongation of an impotent minor dominant adds an overt form-functional opposition to the pronounced valence shift between topics. Amazingly, as we will see, Haydn’s joke does not end here. Instead, having galloped comically right out of the trio’s starting gate, the music introduces further topical and form-functional oppositions as it progresses.

The opening of Haydn’s Trio (Example 2.2) presents a clear instance of valence shifts from negative to positive emotion and from high to low stature. Furthermore, this opening presents an overt form-functional opposition between a normative antecedent phrase (“business as usual”) and a failed continuation phrase, a function seldom found near the opening of a movement (“What the heck is this doing here?”). That is, Example 2.2 demonstrates the first and most common kind of opposition: it occurs when two topics and/or formal functions are juxtaposed, where one surprising and unexpected passage or event arrives just as the previous passage is completed. Though Chapter 3 will primarily discuss this most common kind of opposition, it will also examine the rarer second and third kinds of opposition. The second kind is similar to the first: the manner of immediate juxtaposition that creates the opposition remains the same, but I distinguish it here because the material involved—instead of being a new

---

176 My full discussion of this passage and subsequent passages is found in Chapter 3, pages 88–100 (Example 3.6).

177 Although this is a decidedly bizarre iteration of this combination of phrases, the actual eight-measure theme type is a common hybrid theme according to Caplin (1998, 59–61). Thus, larger idea is common, but the small-scale deployment is overtly anomalous.

178 See Examples 3.2, 3.3 (counterexample), 3.4, and 3.6a. Examples 3.6b and 3.7 feature both new musical material and overlap and are thus listed primarily alongside the third kind of opposition introduced below.
and surprising topic or formal function—is a returning motive from earlier in the same work.\textsuperscript{179} This motive returns in a manner similar to a quotation in language and, for Goeth, “context-quotation clash is one of the most common tools for parody construction in music.”\textsuperscript{180} The third kind of opposition occurs when, rather than immediately juxtaposing topics and/or formal functions to create an opposition, the opposition is created via topical and/or formal function overlap or complete superimposition.\textsuperscript{181} The essence of the three kinds of opposition that have humorous potential and are discussed in Chapter 3 may be expressed as follows:

1) Unexpected, immediate juxtaposition between a relatively normal topic/formal function and an abnormally contrasting topic/formal function that introduces \textit{new musical material}\textsuperscript{182}

2) Unexpected, immediate juxtaposition between a relatively normal topic/formal function and an abnormally contrasting topic/formal function that introduces \textit{returning musical material}

3) Unexpected \textit{overlap} or \textit{superimposition} of a relatively normal topic/formal function and an abnormally contrasting topic/formal function

\textsuperscript{179} See Example 3.5. Examples 3.8b and 3.9 feature both returning (or quoted) musical material and overlap and are thus listed primarily alongside the third kind of opposition introduced below.

\textsuperscript{180} Goeth (2013, 251).

\textsuperscript{181} See Examples 3.6b, 3.7, 3.8b, 3.9. These examples all feature overlap or superimposition and may employ either new or returning musical material to create the opposition.

\textsuperscript{182} This “new” material may have loose motivic ties to material earlier in the piece, but does not represent a salient return to that material.
Excess

Whereas the oppositions discussed above create humour with a sudden yank in a strange direction because of the immediate juxtaposition of contrasting musical topics and/or formal functions, an example of humorous excess can be broken into two components: (1) the schematic surprise of superfluous repetition, combined with the extent and manner of the delay of an expected future event; and (2) the often bizarre articulation of that later event. As we will see, both of these components of excess also feature “oppositions” to the extent that “excess” may also be considered a sort of “opposition complex.” But, due to the perceptual salience of the excessive component and because more than one opposition can occur, I call the overall strategy “excess” and will tease apart the effects and manners of operation of its two components and the oppositions involved in my analytical discussions in Chapter 4.

The first component of excess is often the most conspicuous and its effects have garnered the most scholarly attention. It involves a schematic surprise that comes from superfluous repetition—usually based on a relatively dull melodic-motivic idea—and the extent and manner of the delay of an expected future arrival—like a secondary theme, a recapitulation after a dominant lock, or a delayed dominant harmony (as in Example 2.1b).

The delay is perpetrated by musical material that is successively repeated to the extent that it appears to have “gone on for too long” or “exceeded its potential.” For Goeth, passages like these involve an element of “flaunting” that is crucial for constructing parody in music or language,183 and which makes these passages sound functionally redundant and motivically vacuous. Several other authors have referred in different ways to this excessive component. For

183 See Goeth (2013, esp. 247; 251).
example, Sisman, Dalmonte, and Goeth also refer to prolonged, repetitive effects as “excessive,” whereas Huron focuses on the “implausible delay” of an expected future event.  

The oppositions at work here are created between the implausible excess of the recurring material (mm. 72–82 in Example 2.1b) and the expectation that the music will somehow find its way back to discursive normalcy. One might go further to say that, in an excessive passage, potentially humorous oppositions arise because the expected return to normalcy represents a potential return to “high” musical discourse, while the continued delay of that return thwarts this expected return with continued “low” inanity. Put another way, the oppositions in an excessive passage occur not because of a shift from “high” music to “low” music (like those in the straightforward oppositions above), but between the expected “high” music and the actual “low” music that arrives instead—low, that is, not because of any topical association but because the resultant lack of proper continuity implies a vacuity of mind in blatant contrast with the mindfulness that the surrounding music presumably conveys. Thus, “the degree of humor directly relates to the degree of contrast between high and low elements,” but it is necessary to broaden this claim in discussions of excessive passages to include contrast between vacuity and substance. With this broader understanding, it becomes clear that the “extra” material heard in excessive passages is not simply humorous on its own: it is humorous because it contrasts with what we expected (and were denied) and, in terms of substance, with what surrounds it, and thus humour still arises via opposition in a more abstract sense. Furthermore, because there is no one specifiable point where the excessive material should have ceded to the expected later event, there can be no one specifiable location for a punch line when that expectation is thwarted. I will

---


discuss how there may be (and usually are) several possible locations where the implausible delay could have or should have given way to a different expected event (mm. 75 and/or 79 of Example 2.1b, for example), each of which can create an opposition. In each case, I will examine how numerous musical parameters conspire to produce such expectations, as well as the resulting oppositions when these expectations are thwarted.

In some cases, we will see how aspects of this material have been broached earlier in a work—sometimes in a manner that seems to suggest its return\(^\text{186}\)—and that at other times the material is essentially new. Whether or not the material is new, it will be made of relatively tame, pedantic, or even inane motivic ideas without apparent developmental potential. Composers dwell on (or “flaunt”) this material to achieve the impression of redundancy that is emblematic of these excessive passages. For example, the small-scale repetition and simple scalar motion in the melody, which normally should show some variety (see Example 2.3a), begin to sound redundant much sooner than any recurring repetition of the melodic material from Example 2.3b (a more typical Classical basic idea) could, since the latter contains much more registral, rhythmic, and harmonic variety than the former.\(^\text{187}\)

Example 2.3a: Mozart’s “Haffner” Serenade in D major, K. 250, iv, mm. 1–2

\[^{186}\text{Often, earlier iterations of the material that later becomes the focus of an excessive passage already “buck the trend” created a quasi-narrative in the manner suggested by Almén (2008, 172).}\]

\[^{187}\text{The opening four measures of K. 283 (Example 2.3b) are an excellent example of Gjerdingen’s “Meyer” schema, which brings an aura of galant erudition to this opening. See Gjerdingen (2007, 112).}\]
Excess usually takes advantage of such small-scale melodic-motivic and rhythmic repetition (or “noodling”), and harmonic stasis to produce its effect as quickly as possible. Byros (quoting Mirka) refers to the common impression created by this sort of repetition as “the mindless ‘repetition of a single figure taken from the stock repertory of eighteenth-century finger exercises.” When different musical elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, etc.) appear stuck, it is impossible for the music to make any headway and most other musical aspects become caught up in the excessive repetition. Though some minute elements of contrast may be introduced (subtly inflected alterations of dynamics or articulations occasionally occur), the static primary elements arrest any potential structural or form-functional change until the stasis is broken and the excessive passage ends. Thus, syntactical parameters drive this first component of an excessive passage. Semantic parameters (such as topics and their valences) are necessarily involved, but play an emphasizing, rather than a critical role in creating the excessive effect.

The second component of an excessive passage is the arrival of the event that ends the excess. This is the event that shunts the music back on track. The event brings the long-delayed formal function we expect, but because it does not arrive when we expect it, it is still surprising

---

189 Consider the dynamic change (decrescendo) in Example 2.1b. As a counterexample, in the introductory passage from Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony (detailed alongside Example 4.2) the composer uses adjustments in dynamics alongside changes in instrumentation to create a passage that, despite its much longer-than-normal dominant prolongation, manages not to sound excessive.
and can create humour. In cases where this later event is not bizarrely articulated, it serves primarily to focus the listener on the ridiculousness of the excessive material that immediately preceded it and is less likely to produce humour than the preceding excessive passage. That is, it lets us reflect on how unnecessarily protracted and therefore funny the preceding passage was by allowing us to compare it to a) what might have transpired without the excess and b) the relative normalcy of what surrounds it (see Example 2.1b, m. 83).\footnote{Wheelock (1991, 64; quoted in Diergarten [2008, paragraph 13]) explains that this effect “intensifies the aesthetic experience by drawing attention to the very act of perception itself.”}

More rarely, the later event will be particularly surprising and humorous because of both \textit{when} and \textit{how} it occurs. That is, in some cases, these later arrivals can be especially humorous because of an opposition they create when the expected formal function arrives in an inappropriate, “low” manner, instead of with a return to proper “high” musical discourse.\footnote{The best example of this type of surprising arrival is unquestionably the low bassoon interjection in the second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93 (see Example 4.6).} In other words, the opposition is not created between the delayed arrival and the preceding (excessive) passage, but between the discursively/rhetorically appropriate (“high”) version of the formal function we expected and the inappropriate (“low”) version we actually hear.

As we noted with the oppositions (denials of the expected and blatant contrasts with the surrounding context) created in the excessive component, this later opposition is also not created between two \textit{real} musical events or passages, but again occurs between the “high” music we \textit{expected} and the “low” music that arrives instead. Whether or not the end of an excessive passage brings a long-delayed and appropriate arrival or a long-delayed and inappropriate arrival, the end of the excess is always articulated by some kind of highly contrasting arrival which brings a sudden change in dynamic, texture, timbre, topic, and/or valence and has the
potential to create humour. In any case, the suddenness of the opposition is magnified by the sheer duration of the excessive passage that preceded it. Despite its often startling nature, this arrival is the only way to get the music back on track without ruining the humorous effect of the excessive first component: if the “flaunting” continued ad nauseam, the music would never end. That is, as surprising, bizarre, and funny as these arrivals may be, they are still retrospectively understood (in every case) to serve the syntactical function of the arrival we expected.

Moreover, the manner of this later arrival is crucial because the effect of the excessive passage would be drastically reduced if a composer chose to somehow artfully craft the end of an excessive passage into an effective beginning (or another formal function that would blend more smoothly into the subsequent one). Such an artistic, even ingenious, choice could perhaps “make sense” of the preceding passage, but, in so doing, could also detract from the humour of the excessive component. Still, while we must of course consider the effect of the later event’s arrival, the humorous potential of the preceding excessive passage is unnecessarily limited if we do not allow for the articulation of humour by the excessive, delaying material alone.

Since repetition is an integral part of music and musical listening, humorous excess is perhaps the most natural humorous outgrowth of such a repetition-heavy art form. In this sense, these passages engage directly with the extraopus’ context’s generic expectations and make light of the indispensable repetitive aspect of musical discourse. Furthermore, humorous excess occurs with only tenuous links to verbal joke telling because repetition is not idiomatic in

---

192 Margulis (2014, 1) puts it well in the opening of her recent book when she writes, “Music’s repetitiveness is at once entirely ordinary and entirely mysterious” and “Musical repetitiveness is so common as to seem almost invisible.”


194 In cognition studies, these extramusical or generic expectations are referred to as “schematic” expectations (as opposed to “veridical” (intraopus or in-the-moment expectations). See Huron (2004, 702; 2006).
language as it is in music.\textsuperscript{195} That said, the sense of “dislocation” of a future formal event, created by the unnecessary delay of the incessantly repeated excessive passage, is shared by many verbal jokes.\textsuperscript{196} Goeth also notes that this sort of musical excess engages a kind of proportional play that occurs commonly in verbal joke telling.\textsuperscript{197} Though she allows that “volubility itself can be funny” in some verbal humour, the excessively repeated section is rarely (if ever) humorous in and of itself; instead it usually operates as a kind of setup or preparation for a later punch line.\textsuperscript{198} In music, however, the better part of the humour comes from the superfluity of the expanded formal function and the delay itself—as projected by the redundant repetition of inane melodic-motivic material and harmonic stasis. This usually places the initial lapse into excess and the eventual arrival of the later event in an auxiliary role that supports and reflects back on the humorous effect primarily generated by the excessive passage and the delay it perpetuates.\textsuperscript{199}

In the passage shown earlier in Example 2.1b, Haydn repeats inane melodic-motivic material over a static subdominant harmony, creating an impression of excess and superfluity:\textsuperscript{200} the subdominant harmony, dull melodic neighbour motion, and repetitive rhythm contribute to

\textsuperscript{195} There are several notable quasi-analogues in verbal humour: Monty Python’s “Cheese Shoppe” sketch, for example. However, despite the repetition in this sketch, the humour itself arrives only when each “Do you have any…?” question is met with the answer “No” (in some form or other). This is not truly excessive in the same way and does not function in the manner of humorous excess in music since each of these individual question/answer portions results in a clear opposition when the Cheese Shoppe teller relates, surprisingly, that he doesn’t have any of that either. A rare example of true excess in the verbal domain is the “Kristen Schaal is a Horse!” sketch performed by Kristen Schaal and Kurt Braunohler: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lvd6MBsiDBo. This sketch is a fascinating anomaly, perhaps closely seconded by some comedy by Andy Kaufman.

\textsuperscript{196} See Goeth (2013, 246–47).

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{198} Goeth (2013, 256).

\textsuperscript{199} Chapter 4 discusses two examples where the second component is a much stronger agent of humour (see esp. Examples 4.6 and 4.7).

\textsuperscript{200} Perry-Camp (23) entertainingly refers to this as Haydn’s “expiring” melody.
the redundant and vacuous impression of the entire excessive passage from measures 71 to 82. Together these three musical parameters reinforce the impression that the music is trapped in a functional middle (you can almost hear the recording skip every four measures) as the subdominant stagnates, implausibly delaying the cadential dominant that is expected to bring about a functional ending. When the cadential dominant finally arrives, its full texture, fortissimo dynamic, and the resulting opposition (between “low” excess and “high” proper discourse) are startling, but it functions more as a rousing slap in the face than as a punch line: the funniest part is the excessive passage that leads to it.

Throughout Haydn’s excessive passage in Example 2.1b, I can’t help but laugh at the music’s unfortunate inability to move forward and can chuckle at the ineptitude of some fictitious composer, struggling orchestral ensemble, or (since this is a theater symphony) the absent-minded protagonist, Leander. As I noted above, however, we will see that other humorous examples exhibit a series of strange or puzzling cues early on that can engage a quasi-narrative unique to that composition, the obtuse culmination of which is humorous excess. Further examples have more fleeting notions of excess, or vary subtly in other ways.

Having introduced opposition and excess as the strategies by which composers employ form-functional and topical mechanisms to create musical humour, Chapters 3 and 4 examine various manifestations, organizations, and variations of these two compositional strategies and

---

201 “Implausible delays” are one of the nine categories Huron (2004, 701) uses to explain Peter Schickele’s humour.
202 A drastic shift from low to high arousal accompanies the shift between these implications of high and low stature.
203 As noted above, this “slap in the face” does not contribute to the excess of the passage, except to focus the listener on the preceding excess.
the manner by which formal functions and topics act to create humorous oppositions in Classical instrumental music.
3 Humorous Opposition

Introduction to Opposition

Oppositions occur when two musical events or passages with contrasting musical elements are juxtaposed in a manner that suggests stylistic impropriety. As Burstein explains, “If the contrast between high and low elements is strong enough, and these elements are linked convincingly through harmonic, motivic, or other structural means, then humor will result.”

Furthermore, when musical parameters contrast with one another and give rise to extramusical ideas, or scripts, that occur in immediate succession and are incompatible, valence shifts and humorous opposition will result. Precisely which parameters clash between these stylistically incompatible events or passages varies among examples of opposition, but in every case two scripts—usually implied by musical topics or formal functions—conflict with one another. Due to a heavy reliance on extraopus and extramusical contexts and their immediate, in-the-moment natures, the oppositions discussed below often create “gag-like” or “slapstick” humorous effects.

A simple diagram of a typical opposition is presented in Figure 3.1.

---

205 Burstein (1999, 72). Burstein (ibid., 72–76) demonstrates the subtle extent to which Haydn employs harmonic connections to produce humour in his discussion of a passage from the first movement of Symphony No. 78, how motivic parallelisms can link contrasting elements in a humorous way in his discussions of the first movement of Symphony No. 83, the fourth movement of Symphony No. 93, and how both harmony and motive are involved in creating humour in the fourth movement of Symphony No. 58. Burstein’s most extended analysis (78–81) shows how diverse compositional techniques in different combinations create humour through contrast in the first movement of Symphony No. 90.
Huron notes that when an expectation is thwarted (which, for the purposes of the present study, could potentially create an opposition), there are three different possible responses: laughter, frisson, and awe.\footnote{See Huron (2006, 25–26; 36–39). Morreall (1987, 188) similarly proposes “three different types of reactions to incongruity: Negative Emotion, Reality Assimilation, and humorous Amusement.”} He explains that one “pivotal factor” for the creation of humour specifically is the “underlying extramusical context and social situation.”\footnote{Byros (2013, 240; quoting Huron [2006, 287]).} Byros agrees with Huron’s claim and explains further, “In music, such [extramusical and social] contexts are provided by topoi, which clarify the overall mood or sentiment of a situation.”\footnote{Byros (2013, 240; Byros’ emphasis).} Thus, composers used topics to engage implicit extramusical contexts to predispose listeners toward humour. Topics can provide the contextual clarification that listeners need in order to apprehend the particular oppositions that attend humour, as opposed to other kinds of non-normative musical discourse (which might produce a different psychological and/or physiological result).

More so than other musical parameters, topics were particularly effective couriers of affect in the Classical period because Classical audiences were familiar with the meanings or
connotations of the topics of their time. For this reason, musical topics are usually the primary agents of humorous opposition and factor heavily into my analytical discussions below. However, topics are not always involved: as we will see, other more general or specific scripts—other semantic information that does not properly fall within the realm of Ratnerian topics—can perform a similar context-clarifying role. Furthermore, contrasts in other musical parameters can heighten the humorous effect. We will see that in many examples of humorous opposition, form-functional incongruities tend to play a supporting role to topics. Textural, metric, dynamic, timbral, melodic, and harmonic contrasts often play a peripheral role, reinforcing the oppositions that are most saliently effected by valence shifts between topics. Since these other parameters generally lack the extramusical affiliations of topics, they rarely play an establishing role in articulating humour. For example, a composer may awkwardly deploy formal functions (perhaps alongside an obtuse harmonic progression or sudden dynamic contrast) to reinforce a topical disparity, but the contrasts between topics usually produce the most salient incongruities in examples of humorous opposition.

Figure 3.2 provides a brief overview of the sorts of extramusical affiliations commonly evoked by a selection of musical topics. The x and y axes represent the continua for social status and emotion respectively, and the resulting quadrants are labeled according to the affects typically produced by the topics and common adjectives located within them.

---

209 The extent to, and manner in, which this is possible is clarified below.
210 Conversely, formal functions come to the fore in the examples of humorous excess discussed in Chapter 4.
Most Positive Emotional Valence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Social Status</th>
<th>High Social Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gag-like, ridiculous, country dances, Ländler, some Scherzi, contredanse, musette</td>
<td>sophisticated, brilliant, minuet, French overture, hunt, fanfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedestrian, Turkish</td>
<td>solemn, panicked, serioso, lament, Sturm und Drang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Negative Emotional Valence

The topics included in Figure 3.2 represent only a fraction of those available to Classical composers. Those included above were chosen because they are common, because many appear in the musical examples below, and because these—unlike many musical topics—tend more often to convey the relatively specific extramusical implications in the quadrants shown.

Whether or not traditional musical topics are involved, the most common oppositions that produce humour in Classical instrumental music imply extramusical opposition of high/low stature and/or negative/positive emotion. But these oppositions can also occur between more case-specific scripts like “the composition/not the composition” or, as in one example I will discuss, “non-excrement/excrement.”

---

211 Musical topics are italicized, while genres and adjectives appear in normal script.
212 See Ratner (1980) for a more comprehensive list of Classical topics.
213 See Example 4.6.
When we want to assess a composer’s creation of humour it is not only crucial to consider the valences (high/low and/or negative/positive) implied by the two scripts, but also the order of their presentation. This is an important consideration because humour is generally more effective when the emotional and status implications of the opposed topics shift suddenly from negative to positive and/or high to low, rather than the other way around. Huron discusses the psychological ramifications of changes in implied emotional valence, using the term “contrastive valence.” Contrastive valence occurs “where initially negative responses are supplanted by neutral or positive responses, with the limbic contrast leading to an overall positive affect.” He observes further, “negatively valenced feelings can form a backdrop against which positively valenced feelings seem even more positive.” This suggests that it is much easier to elicit humour when the topic shifts from a typically negative topic like a lament to a typically positive topic like a musette, rather than vice versa. Of course, many topics vary in their emotional implications. For example, in cases where a march topic is involved in an opposition, other musical parameters will provide the context to clarify what kind of march it is. That is, since a march nearly always suggests high social status, but may suggest positive or negative emotional valence, simple emphasis on the major or minor mode would likely clarify its emotional implications in such a case. Likewise, sections in a learned or regal topic may sound sombre, but can certainly be upbeat and cheerful under the right musical circumstances. Whichever social status and emotional associations a topic conveys, the strength of the humorous effect created will be related to the degree with which its associations create contrast, and therefore opposition.

---

215 Ibid.
216 Ibid., 366).
217 The musette is a particularly common topical source of humour, as we will see.
218 Caplin (2005) explores some of the limitations of these topical affiliations.
Some topics may have more “humorous potential” than others. In Goeth’s words, “styles or genres with strong emotional connotations such as laments, lullabies, marches or dances are predestined for parodic use.”

Furthermore, since all topics admit to some degree of variation in their emotional and social status associations, it is important to consider the musical context within which the composer deployed the opposed topics to best understand how their valences relate. For example, even a *serioso*—though “serious” by definition and almost invariably negative—can “flip” its implied valence in the hands of a Classical master. According to Wheelock, this is exactly what occurs in Example 3.1 below, where Haydn places “a somber intrusion, clearly at variance with the prevailing climate of the movement.” This *serioso* arrives in such a ridiculous and surprising manner that it becomes what Wheelock calls a “mock-serioso [whose] imposture is confirmed by the *presto* return of the theme.” In other words, the inappropriate musical context in which the *serioso* finds itself “flips over” its high and negative valence associations to become a low and positive parody of itself.

Example 3.1: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, iv, mm. 148–153

219 Goeth (2013, 252).

220 Wheelock (1992, 12). Almén (2008, 84) calls this adagio a “formal ‘roadblock.’”

221 Ibid. I return to examine this movement more closely in Chapter 4 (Example 4.11).
It is even more important for a composer to employ a topical shift that begins with implicitly “high” stature and ends with “low” stature than it is to proceed from implications of “negative” to “positive” emotion when he intends to create humour. For example, a learned or military topic that shifts suddenly to a musette or pastoral topic is more likely to create humour than when the same technique is performed in reverse. Sudden shifts from high to low topics may be more effective because of the human error suggested by the topically implied “fall from grace”: it is much easier to laugh at the country bumpkin at court than at the general who walks into a peasant’s circle.\(^{222}\) It would be very difficult for a composer to create a humorous opposition where a topic with extramusical affiliations of low social stature shifts to a topic with high stature affiliations. This is because, unless the composer performs the shift ironically, this will generally give an impression of improvement or an increase in social status: exactly the opposite from impressions conducive to humour. Most examples of humorous oppositions clearly portray valence shifts from negative to positive and high to low. However, we will also see examples where the valence implied by the topics appears to move “backward” from positive to negative (like the seriouso above). In such cases, the topic’s inappropriate treatment, informed by the surrounding musical context, prompts us to interpret a “flip” in its valence, creating a humorous opposition when the newly interpreted parodic version provides contrasting valence associations.

My analytical discussions below demonstrate how each humorous passage features the oppositions, negative/positive emotion and/or high/low stature. I begin with examples where

\(^{222}\) Humour created in this manner arises primarily through feelings of superiority. Of course, if the peasants show utter disregard for the honour of the general, perhaps even mocking his pretensions, a standard comic trope is engaged. But depicting this musically might well involve the general’s music being mocked by means of a topical transformation, resulting in a shift from serious to lighthearted, or high to low. Some potential influences of superiority and relief theories of humour are discussed alongside Examples 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8.
unexpected, immediate topical juxtapositions create humorous oppositions because of a shift from relatively normal discourse to relatively abnormal discourse made of new music material (opposition type 1). I then examine humorous oppositions that arise with an incongruous return to musical material heard before (type 2). Finally, I discuss examples where humorous oppositions arise because of a pronounced overlap or superimposition of contrasting musical materials (type 3). The examples below have also been organized to progress from relatively straightforward to more complex articulations of humour.

Examples of Humorous Opposition

*Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 Il distratto, sixth movement*

Our first example occurs in Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, originally written as a theater symphony to accompany Jean François Regnard’s play, *Il distratto*. This symphony provides a suitable starting point, since (according to James Webster) it is Haydn’s “most thoroughly programmatic composition.” Thus, we may expect Haydn to provide overt associations with the drama for which it was written. Sisman also examines passages from this symphony, noting “inappropriate treatments” which she considers the principal way that Haydn “makes known his theatrical intentions.” In several passages from this symphony, we will see that “Haydn’s extramusical associations [which] were an essential aspect of his art throughout his life” are made particularly accessible. In *Il distratto* Haydn alludes to the absent-minded protagonist

---

225 Webster (2004, 249).
(Leander) from Regnard’s drama in several different passages.\textsuperscript{226} Perhaps this pairing of symphony and drama freed Haydn’s hand to give us one of the most outrageous ruptures of convention to be found in the Classical instrumental repertoire.\textsuperscript{227}

Haydn emphatically conveys Leander’s absent-mindedness in the finale of this theater symphony when he abandons the declamatory opening \textit{prestissimo} for a two-measure grand pause, after which he instructs the violins to tune their low string from F up to G.\textsuperscript{228} Since the violins have not used their G string, it has not yet caused them any embarrassment, but Haydn’s performance direction makes it seem that they have just noticed their error (“Wait! Everyone stop!”), so they regroup to tune their strings. After the surprising interruption, the piece begins again (“okay, we’re ready now.”) without the four-measure introduction and continues relatively unhindered (see Example 3.2 below).\textsuperscript{229} In the words of a \textit{Presburger Zeitung} contributor, “The

\textsuperscript{226} Other passages from this symphony are examined alongside Examples 3.6 and 4.10.

\textsuperscript{227} According to Sisman, nearly every reference to Haydn’s \textit{Il distratto} being composed specifically for a play suggests that such a deliberate compositional pairing was rare (1990, 301). For example, she mentions briefly a record that a “new” (unknown) Mozart symphony was performed between acts of \textit{Die eingebildeten Philosophe} on July 26, 1785, but this symphony—like most performed in the theater—was not written specifically to accompany the drama (ibid., 300–1).

\textsuperscript{228} \textit{Die Violinen stimmen um von f auf g}.

\textsuperscript{229} There is a later hindrance which I will not discuss here, but which Wheelock (1992, 160) and Webster (2004, 245) have noted and discussed. That is, later in the movement Haydn includes a notably out-of-the-ordinary quotation of “The Night Watchman’s Song.” According to Wheelock (ibid.), its “appearance in the last movement of ‘Il distratto’ may be a musical comment on Leander’s wedding night, but the melody itself is a microcosm of both melodic and rhythmic irregularities heard throughout the symphony…[as it] effects a striking shift in mode, pace, and texture.” Webster (2004, 245) also remarks on the presence of “The Night Watchman Song” and discusses its inclusion in several works by Haydn: “two divertimenti (Hob. II:17 and 21), two baryton works (the trio XI:35 and the cassation XII:19 No. 2)...the piano sonata in C-sharp minor XVI:36 [and] the vocal canon ‘Wunsch’ (XXVIIb:43).” While Haydn’s “Night Watchman” quotation is surely added for comic effect (as Webster notes), it has (in my opinion) more an effect of general amusement or entertainment that I associate with Burnham’s (2005, 61) “clown stepping onstage” than with humorous opposition, per se. That is, it provides contrast at a point where we expect contrast, but does it in a slightly odd, somewhat sensible, and surely programmatic way.
musicians begin the piece with great pomposity and remember shortly that they have forgotten to
tune their instruments.”

Example 3.2: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, vi, mm. 1–36

This tuning interruption may be Haydn’s cleverest and most successful attempt to
represent the orchestra as the stage character Leander. The Preßburger Zeitung notes that in the
first performance, “[T]he finale had to be repeated in view of the insistent applause of the
listeners.” And another reviewer remarks on the effect of the opening on a Salzburg audience:
“The absentmindedness of the orchestra is surprising, amusing, a hearty good effect. One must
laugh out loud at the idea.” Indeed, the degree of stylistic incongruity in this example is

---

230 Preßburger Zeitung, 23 July, 1774; quoted in Wheelock (1992, 155; quoting Angermüller [1978, 88]). Winkler (2000, 103–16) also discusses the gag-like quality of Haydn’s tuning passage and relates it to the “surreal gags” that can be found in modern music.

231 Ibid.

232 Theaterwochenblatte für Salzburg no. 21 (27 January 1776); quoted in Wheelock (1992, 155–58). See Angermüller (1978, 90–92) for the complete review.
rivalled only by some passages in Mozart’s *Ein musikalischer Spaß*, K. 522. This joke is very accessible and seems straightforward, but many different facets of humour are in operation.

The tuning passage grants a funny, surprising, and jarring escape from the musical discourse proper and a sudden shift to what would normally occur *before* the performance. In her discussion of this opening, Wheelock explains, “Haydn breaks the musical frame with the shocking intrusion of ‘realism.’” In a way, Haydn’s notation for tuning is a kind of “extra-musical” reference, though not in the usual sense; we might call this a “work-extraneous” reference instead. That is, Haydn still references a phenomenon unique to the realm of musical performance (preparatory tuning), but this is not a musical occurrence that is ever a part of the composition proper, at least in the relevant historical context. When we listen to this opening, it is easy to perceive this humorous opposition. But the scripts suggested by the two opposing passages are unusual since one passage belongs to normative Classical discourse while the other forms no part of such a discourse. That is, since most examples of opposition we will see employ topics as the primary perpetrators of valence shifts, they illustrate a less radical and more common type of Classical gambit because both topics necessarily belong to normative Classical discourse when taken individually, but become abnormal due to the incongruous nature of their immediate juxtaposition. Here, although the work opens with a declamatory *fanfare* topic, the

---

233 Some comparable oddities in K. 522 occur in the violin cadenza at the end of the third movement, the horns’ parallel thirds passage in the second movement (mm. 17–20), or the polytonal cadence that concludes the serenade.

234 It is possible to think of this as another form-functional incongruity between “beginning” and “before-the-beginning” functions, but this misses the point.

235 Wheelock (1992, 155). The notion of a musical “frame” and this idea of an out-of-frame reference in Haydn is discussed by Webster (2004).

236 The idea that Haydn is referring to something outside of the composition proper, strongly suggests a connection to the work extraneous comic references of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. A proper exploration of the connection between Haydn’s musical techniques and Laurence Sterne’s literary ones lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Bonds (1991) and Irving (1984), who offer numerous insights on connections between Haydn and Sterne.
tuning interruption cannot properly be called a topic since there is no convention or precedent associated with this compositional maneuver. Since there can be no socially constructed topic for a musical utterance not normally heard within a composition, we might simply refer to this more general frame of reference as tuning.

Even without a stylistically established topic, however, the opposition is clear. There is a conspicuous valence shift between two higher-level scripts that we could call the composition and not the composition. The first script—the composition—is conveyed by the opening fanfare and Gjerdingen’s Prinner schema. Although the Prinner schema is most commonly a riposte rather than an opening gambit, Haydn’s artful pairing of the common galant schema alongside a declamatory fanfare topic clearly conveys the high social status associated with artful composition. By contrast, the second script—not the composition—conveys the low social status associated with the unprecedented, ludicrous notion that the orchestra has forgotten to tune and will immediately grab the audience’s attention. As Burstein notes, “Audiences tend to recognize only the lower side of the humor equation by focusing on the ridiculous.” This will inevitably be the case here—especially since the tuning follows such a raucous, “noise killer” opening—and, as always, it is the preceding “high” that throws sudden, conspicuous relief onto the ridiculous “low” that follows and produces the humorous opposition. In summary, the opposition the composition/not the composition creates a conspicuous valence shift from high to

---

237 Attardo (1996, 88) calls higher-level scripts like these, “complex scripts.”
238 See Gjerdingen (2007, 45). This Prinner is echoed in an entertainingly skewed way when Haydn quotes the “Night Watchman” song later in the movement. This passage is briefly discussed in footnote 229 above.
239 Ibid.
240 This sudden, unmitigated contrast flies in the face of the sorts of motivated, artful contrasts Koch prefers and would surely have seemed egregiously inartistic to him. See Diergarten (2008).
low stature to create humour and, although both scripts suggest positive emotional valence, the magnitude of the high-to-low stature shift easily produces a humorous opposition.

Perhaps the most likely “target” (or butt) of this joke is the absent-minded Leander. In this passage, Leander’s persona is like the many operatic characters Edward T. Cone calls “Petrouchkas, brought to life by the composer but thenceforth driven by their own wills and desires.” Klorman notes that these “Petrouchkas” are “able to act freely within the confines of the opera’s [in this case, the drama’s] fictional frame.” In this reading, the protagonist seems to start off on his merry way (a confident introduction and first phrase of the theme) before coming to a complete stop…he’s missing something……oh yeah! And the major blunder forces him to go back and start all over again. We do not have to look far into the drama of Regnard’s Il distratto for suitable analogues to this event. This serious error in the finale sounds as though Leander has botched a rather important event, but, according to the Pressburger Zeitung, the tuning interruption “is meant to show…the absentminded bridegroom tying a knot in his handkerchief in order not to forget his wedding.” Whether or not Haydn is depicting a deliberate reminder (as the Pressburger Zeitung suggests) or a forgotten event (as I find more likely), the interruption to the narrative and the resulting opposition create a palpable and highly effective joke.

243 Cone (1974, 23).
244 Klorman (2013, 121).
245 The only difference is that he does not re-perform the introductory measures.
246 See Sisman (1990, 318; my emphasis). According to Sisman (ibid.), “This detail from La Bruyère’s character sketch, absent in Regnard’s original play, is restored in the German text.” See Sisman (1990, 320) for a point form summary of the musical events she finds representative of Haydn’s musical interaction with characters or events in the play.
In addition, the clever manner in which Haydn allows the listener to change perspective on the music is of particular interest in this opening. That is, we can change our perception of the “target” of humour from Leander, as represented by the instruments, to either the performers or musical instruments themselves. Here, Haydn seems to cross a boundary between the extramusical and the intramusical when he represents Leander’s forgetfulness with perhaps the most embarrassing mistake on the part of the instrumentalists: they forgot to tune! This interpretation is only viable because the opposition the composition/not the composition engages “the music” in a more direct and absolute manner than most examples of opposition we will encounter. Goeth offers the following analogy, “If, in a theatre play, a prologue appeared unexpectedly after the beginning of the last act, an effect analogous to Haydn’s tuning joke might be produced.” But she notes that this analogy is weaker than it may seem, since “the course of a recitation is not to the same extent standardized as the course of a concert.” Thus, it is more crucial for humour in the musical medium that the tuning passage’s “mock dilettantism serves as a meta-commentary on musical incompetence” and that this meta-commentary arises due to the “ritualization” of contemporary performance practice. This particular opposition allows Haydn to draw the listeners into both the music and the drama in a unique and humorous way. For me, the resulting impression is akin to a screen actor turning suddenly to the camera.

---

247 Haydn also uses “mis-tuning” in the third movement’s strange Landler in Symphony No. 67 (see Example 3.3).
249 Ibid., 243.
250 Ibid., 241.
mid-scene and saying something like, “What’s my line?” except that the violins are the ones who have forgotten the compositional script.251

*Haydn’s Symphony No. 67, third movement: a counterexample*

In Haydn’s Symphony No. 67 we find sudden and stark contrast between a *minuet* and a *musette*: the kind of topical juxtaposition that often produces humour, but does not do so in this counterexample.252 While many of Haydn’s minuet movements contain somewhat bizarre musical events and passages, this particular movement’s contrast between the minuet and trio sections is one of his most pronounced.253 Haydn juxtaposes a full orchestral *minuet* with the muted *musette* found in the obbligato duet passage below.

---

251 A different take on this analogy might suggest the performers are the ones looking through the music, rather than Haydn. But, if we go one step further than the performance, we skip over the performers and find Haydn staring at us from behind the score (as I have suggested here).

252 Lowe (2002) discusses the ironic role minuets often play in Haydn’s symphonies and addresses their expressive repercussions.

253 Note that here, as elsewhere, I refer to “minuet” without italics when referring to the genre or form in general and “minuet” (with italics) when referring to the topic.
Haydn specifies in the score that the second violinist must tune the G string down a whole tone to F for the entire trio.\textsuperscript{254} This low F then serves as the drone for this strange musette, which is played with the first violin on one string entirely, the second violin with double stops for the drone bass, and both with muted strings throughout. Haydn also writes an extremely high first violin part for the small ternary A section and, with a mute on the E string, this produces an

\textsuperscript{254} "Violino II obligato ascorda la quarta corda mal tono fa." This is decidedly odd, but, as we learned in the finale of Symphony No. 60, Haydn is not afraid to play with “wrong” string tuning.
uncommon and striking violin timbre. Throughout the trio, Haydn has deliberately stretched the strings to their maximum ranges—further in the case of the second violin—and created a unique and sonically bizarre musette.

The effect of this passage, however, does not appear to be humour. That does not mean no one can find this clash between the preceding minuet and this musette funny, but it is far less likely to produce the same effect as the other oppositions we will discuss. Despite stark contrast between the minuet and musette in many musical parameters (e.g. texture, timbre, dynamic, tempo,\textsuperscript{255} articulation, range), humour is an unlikely result for a few reasons. As I hear it, the trio’s two muted violinists sound like they are playing in a distant field and lack the strong presence associated with the successful assertion of humour. Moreover, the “de-tuned” effect of the second violin does not create the humorous impression we observed when the violins in the finale of Symphony No. 60 were “re-tuned” because they exist in completely different musical contexts. Instead, these strings sound like they are calling from afar, harkening back to a previous event, or perhaps presenting a self-reflective comment on a typical musette. The unique sonic world Haydn creates here is a far cry from the innocent, upbeat musettes he often writes and the artistic, ethereal, even arcane impression created by this particular musette effectively quashes the topic’s typical “positive” emotional associations and “low” social status. This does not necessarily “flip” the musette to a tragic version of itself, nor does it suggest decidedly negative and high associations, but the jovial, folk-like quality of a typical musette seems to have been sucked out by its many uncommon attributes: two instruments only, muted strings, heavy

\textsuperscript{255} No tempo change is indicated in the score, but orchestras tend to drop the tempo slightly for this trio section.
double-stop drone, slower tempo, legato articulation, and extreme registers. In the end, the eerie musette conveys an otherworldly impression that certainly contrasts with the more normative, stately minuet that precedes it. But the contrasts do not create high-to-low stature or negative-to-positive emotion shifts. In other words, there are many musical parameters that contrast with one another in this counterexample, but it does not convey the potentially humorous oppositions negative/positive emotion or high/low stature because of the contexts within which the contrasts occur.

Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1, third movement

The third (scherzo) movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 18, No. 1 immediately establishes an energetic character indicative of his Classical influences (especially that of Haydn). This movement includes many awkward form-functional and metric anomalies and a general degree of hijinks not easily found outside Beethoven’s early scherzi. But these metric and form-functional anomalies are present primarily in the opening section of the ternary form. In the scherzo’s trio section, Beethoven limits the formal surprises to extensions and expansions, refocusing our attention on a bizarre and humorous opposition involving a shift to a new and strange sounding musette.

In this trio, two topics oppose one another with the help of a harmonic quirk. The trio begins with unison Cs that announce the hunt, but the hunt shifts quickly and unexpectedly to a musette. This sudden topical shift is amplified by stark contrast in many musical parameters: the

---

256 Of course, this effect can be augmented or diminished by performance choices: a slightly slower tempo for the trio (a feature of many recordings) can strongly effect the impression of distance and lack of presence, while a faster tempo (I have not encountered any recordings that have chosen this option) may allow for the possibility of humour.
dynamics shift from *fortissimo* to *piano*, the texture shifts from homorhythm to melody and accompaniment in five voices, staccato changes to legato, short durations are replaced by long durations, and the bass slides from C up to D-flat. The result is a particularly emphatic opposition between topics because of the overt, almost cartoonish display of the typical characteristics of each topic: the *hunt’s* unison declamation and octave leaps against the *musette’s* folk-like first violin runs above a D-flat drone. That is, unlike the strangely couched *musette* in the third movement of Symphony No. 67 above, Beethoven’s *musette* is emblematic of this common eighteenth-century topic.
Example 3.4: Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1, iii, mm. 86–101

The neighbouring V7s shown below measures 8 and 12 are understood to occur above the D-flat pedal.

257
The harmonic shift from an implied C root to D-flat generates perhaps the strangest contrast. That is, the other parameters shift drastically, but in more stylistically coherent ways. D-flat, however, is not expected as a harmony to follow C here.

Since the minuet’s home key is F major, the trio’s primary key is most likely to be F major, F minor, B-flat major, or D-flat major. Thus, we will most likely interpret the opening Cs as prolonging the dominant in the home key or its parallel minor. This “conservative” harmonic/tonal interpretation is represented by the Roman numerals marked under option “a” in Example 3.4.\(^{258}\) Another less likely interpretation might hear the opening C octaves as an emphatically presented and prolonged leading-tone upbeat to a new D-flat tonic when it arrives.\(^ {259}\) These “leading tones” can only be construed in retrospect, but that does not eliminate this listening possibility. This interpretation is consistent with the more “radical” listening shown in the harmonic progression marked “b” in Example 3.4.\(^ {260}\) Interpretation “b” takes intraopus context into account by recognizing that the new D-flat bass—perhaps after a few measures of D-flat—can be understood as the local tonic if the opening Cs are reinterpreted as leading tones in that key. However, even if we are temporarily satisfied with option “b,” we expect the D-flat harmony to move forward in the new key to confirm it with a cadence. The first and best place to move the harmony away from the apparent D-flat tonic is in measure 92, where the move would be supported by the virtuosic violin line’s strong-beat E-flats and G-flats. But no such change occurs. Instead, we are left with a meandering melodic line and a surprising musette that seems to come about via force majeure when the bass that should have changed harmony refuses to budge and maintains a D-flat drone. In the second half of the trio, the music returns to C major.

\(^{258}\) Here, I am referring to a “conservative” interpretation as opposed to a “radical” one from Imbrie (1973).

\(^{259}\) Hearing the Cs as a prolongation of the supertonic in B-flat, however, is even more unlikely.

\(^{260}\) See Imbrie (1973).
(at m. 138, not shown), so ultimately the entire trio prolongs the home key’s dominant. Along the way, this prolongation slips up, and seems to become stuck on, the flatted submediant. That is, the trio prolongs the dominant and the foreground never leaves the home key’s parallel minor.

In the end, neither of the harmonic options is particularly convincing. Instead, the bass line’s surprising and unrelenting D-flat thwarts a more conventional harmonic progression. That is, the fortissimo opening Cs in octaves certainly attract our focus (“Hey! Pay attention!”), but they are not stylistically odd. Likewise, the initial harmonic arrival on D-flat is relatively ordinary, since a D-flat harmony would be typical of F minor ($b$VI relationships are common in this repertoire). However, the bass’s continuing D-flat is so stubborn and unyielding that it arrests the harmonic progression and retrospectively focuses our attention on the bizarre connection between it and the preceding C. The tension between these two pitches in the bass is borne out in the material they support as their conflict amplifies the striking contrast between the serious, “high” stature and high arousal of the hunt topic and the interrupting, silly, “low” stature and low arousal of the musette. The social and emotional implications of the two topics clash and create oppositions between emotional implications and levels of society when the serious, high hunt shifts to the silly, low musette.

The implied social and arousal-based contrasts between topics are demarcated by dynamics, texture, articulation, and rhythm, and the uncertainty and apparent absent-mindedness of this passage’s forgetting about F minor (temporarily) pegs the hunt/musette opposition as a humorous one. The bass motion from C to D-flat is not funny in itself, but the treatment of D-flat as an unprepared and stubbornly naïve tonic determines the topically driven valence shift. That is, the quick slip up from C to D-flat and the stubborn D-flat drone are responsible for the harmonic and tonal uncertainty that drives Beethoven’s joke in this passage.
In this passage of the Scherzo’s trio, we can try to entertain different harmonic and tonal interpretations at different points, but none of them (including the “correct” one) effectively resolves the confusion until the definitive F-minor progression from measures 98 to 100.⁶⁻¹ That is, perhaps the best candidate for the “target” of Beethoven’s humour is his listener (as opposed to a character like Leander, or an instrument, or performer).⁶⁻² We might imagine Beethoven’s satisfaction at our ultimately futile efforts to make sense of his clever ploy in this passage: no matter how hard we try, we are unlikely to guess “correctly” at Beethoven’s harmonic trickery and the joke’s on us.

_Mozart’s Serenade in D major, K. 250, first movement_

Mozart’s Serenade No. 7 in D major, K. 250 is the largest symphonic serenade he wrote, and it is notable in that many movements contain humorous events.⁶⁻³ This “festive” serenade was the first of two serenades written for the Haffners,⁶⁻⁴ whom Mozart knew and had befriended, and was commissioned by Siegmund Haffner, the mayor of Salzburg, for the wedding of his daughter Marie Elisabeth Haffner to Franz Xaver Späth. The Loreto convent first performed the work on the evening of 21 July, 1776 (the eve of the wedding) in the

---

⁶⁻¹ In the following section, however (specifically mm. 120–22), C moves up through C-sharp (D-flat’s enharmonic equivalent) to D in a chromatic, yet conventional, harmonic progression that retroactively makes sense of the problematic D-flat in the trio’s opening. Respelling D-flat to C-sharp allows us to make sense of the pitch in the trio overall, but does not diminish the effect of Beethoven’s earlier joke.

⁶⁻² In Chapter 4, I discuss another example where Beethoven makes it nearly impossible to arrive at a “correct” interpretation of an incongruous passage.

⁶⁻³ Tovey refers to this work as the “largest of all [of Mozart’s] symphonic serenades, and something more” ([1935] 1981, 177). In this chapter we will discuss humour in only the first and third movements, though the fourth movement is particularly jocular and contains many isolated examples of humorous excess (especially where the rondo refrain is employed).

⁶⁻⁴ Ibid. The second “Haffner” Serenade in D Major, K. 385 was written for the coronation of Siegmund Haffner the younger (brother to Marie Elisabeth and friend of Mozart) and became Mozart’s famous “Haffner” Symphony No. 35 in D Major, K. 385 in a later incarnation.
summerhouse in the garden of the Paris-Lodrongasse, near the Mozarts’ house.\textsuperscript{265} The eight-
movement serenade totals over an hour of music and on the occasion was flanked by Mozart’s March in D Major, K. 249. Since the Mozarts knew the Haffners well, and given the Haffners’ roles as Salzburg benefactors, a wedding in the family would have been an excellent forum for festive music suitable for the convivial atmosphere desired at such events. Such music, especially if it were as long as K. 250, could hardly be entirely serious and still achieve the desired effect. Instead, a light-hearted, entertaining, and humorous musical demeanour would more effectively compliment the social situation. This is exactly the demeanour we find throughout K. 250.

The first movement follows sonata form with typically Haydnesque \textit{Sturm und Drang} features in the developmental core and is unremarkable formally, but Mozart endows the movement with a conspicuously pedestrian tone throughout. Stanley Sadie pointedly remarks, “It is hard to understand how a movement of such nobility can be built of material of no real distinction or individuality.”\textsuperscript{266} Indeed, the movement’s material sounds somewhat vacuous in general: it is filled with motives, the dullness or inanity of which is exceptional to the point that they become strange, allowing us to perceive an exaggerated degree of playfulness on the composer’s part,\textsuperscript{267} even though, in isolation, none of these motives is necessarily humorous.\textsuperscript{268}

\textsuperscript{265} See Eisen and Keefe (2006, 205) and Sadie (2006, 403).

\textsuperscript{266} Sadie (2006, 403).

\textsuperscript{267} Had this not been composed by a Classical master like Mozart, we might easily have associated some level of incompetence with the (at times) seemingly haphazard presentation of motives in this movement.

\textsuperscript{268} The exception to this is “one of Mozart’s most Rossiniian themes” (Tovey [(1935) 1981, 178]), which begins first in measure 80 and sounds excessive because of its motivic inanity. The (post-cadential) form-functional redundancy is conspicuous and definitely makes me laugh. The passage is full of dull, scalar motion and, while it is unnecessarily repetitive, its overtly playful character suggests more a kind of “clowning around” than the conspicuous and more jarring form-functional redundancies often found in Haydn and Beethoven’s excessive passages. This may be the best example of what we might call “Mozartian excess.”
The extent of Mozart’s playfulness helps to predispose listeners toward a humorous reaction to later events.

At the end of this movement, we find a humorous opposition that relies on form-functional implications and a bizarre use of the *coup d’archet* gesture. Mozart emphasizes the humorous opposition with a tutti rest immediately before the movement’s concluding gesture (see Example 3.5). This notated rest is longer than the two rests that occur before it in measures 273 and 275.

Example 3.5: Mozart’s Serenade in D major K. 250, i, mm. 267–83

---

269 Haydn is best known for the grand pause gambit, but he and Mozart both use it for humorous (or at least bizarre) ends in many works. Mozart’s most conspicuous uses occur in the finale of String Quartet No. 16, K. 428 (he also quotes Haydn’s “How do you do?” from the first movement of Op. 33 No. 5 in this “Haydn Quartet”) and the finale of String Quintet No. 5, K. 593. The most emblematic cases written by Haydn occur in the second movement of his Symphony No. 101 “The Clock” and many string quartets including: the second movement of String Quartet Op. 55 No. 2, the first movement of Op. 33 No. 3, the first movement of Op. 33 No. 5, the first movement of Op. 5 No. 3. Mirka (2009, 304) also discusses examples of Haydn’s and Mozart’s general pauses.
The earlier rests also occur in the middle of a cadential harmonic progression and, thus, could not have satisfactorily concluded the piece. The final rest, however, could mark a satisfactory conclusion to the movement. That it turns out not to be the end of the movement is incongruous with Mozart’s closing rhetoric and produces a humorous effect independent of the music that follows. Thus, the arrival of any further music after the apparent conclusion suggested by the rest presents a conspicuous and humorous incongruity.

With his “fake” ending, Mozart’s ploy is somewhat similar to Haydn’s well-known joke at the end of String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2. That is, both composers engage deliberately with the expected end of the movement. But whereas Haydn’s primary joke ends the piece earlier than expected (after the first two-measure idea of the rondo refrain), Mozart composes his joke by writing a protracted conclusion, adding extra material and ending it later than expected. But there are more factors in play than simply a surprise ending. Indeed, unlike the humorous oppositions we have seen so far, each of which has functioned entirely on extramusical associations borne out of topical contrast, Mozart’s joke features a topical dislocation that relies heavily on formal function.

The form-functional incongruity that arises is predicated upon the expectation that, in the unlikely event that the composer chooses to prolong the ending after the rest, the prolonging material will be post-cadential in nature and based on motivic material from the preceding measures. Neither of these expectations proves to be true. Instead, the final material is based on the thematic introduction and is, therefore, emphatically not post-cadential. That is, although the

270 We will observe more involved engagement with “the end of the composition” in Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2 (Example 4.8) and Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2 (Example 4.11).

271 Of course, the “joke” immediately before Haydn’s notated conclusion is nearly identical to Mozart’s: a rest that appeared to be the end was not the real ending. See Chapter 4, Example 4.11.
introductory material can be reinterpreted as post-cadential, it is imbued with a “beginning” function because its original (and only other) iteration was as an introductory idea. This notion is analogous to that of “classical conditioning,” which occurs in cases where “the more often the melody is heard with certain feelings evoked by the text, the more likely the music is to evoke those feelings independently of the text.” It is a relatively simple matter to replace the more straightforward relationship between melody and text that Goeth invokes here with the relationship between motive (or melody) and formal function. Thus, we may replace “feelings” with “formal function” in the quote above and “text” with “different musical parameters that convey the formal function (i.e. beginning placement, tonic prolongational, unison, etc.).” This allows us to interpret the form-functionally driven opposition that occurs between the “ending” function we expected and the returning “beginning” idea foisted into its position. The opposition is then further emphasized because the returning “beginning” idea does not relate motivically to any of the preceding post-cadential material. In addition, the effect is amplified by the mere existence of further musical material after what appeared to be the end.

Of course, transplanting formal functions in this way is often not humorous. One such example occurs in the opening movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93. Beethoven’s example is undoubtedly clever without being humorous: the final idea is motivically similar to the other closing material and all of Beethoven’s orchestral rests suspend the dominant (and thus are unable to suggest a possible conclusion for the work). There are many

---

272 This material also answers the question: “What does the Jupiter Symphony sound like upside down?”

273 Goeth (2013, 249).


275 Beethoven’s idea comes from the first measure of the main theme, instead of an introduction (since there is no introduction).
other examples where reuse of an opening idea occurs again without an explicitly humorous goal at the end of the composition. This relatively common technique is frequently described as “clever” or “witty,” but is not necessarily humorous.

Although the form-functional opposition is responsible for much of the surprise in the opening movement of K. 250, the primary source for humour is the specific material Mozart uses to recall “beginning” function. That is, this bizarre conclusion is not simply an incongruous reuse of just any introductory idea. Mozart’s ploy here is particularly effective because this specific introductory idea is a clear example of *le premier coup d’archet*, a topic and common musical gesture inextricably bound up with beginning rhetoric in French orchestral music of the period. Mozart found many French customs laughable and not the least ridiculous to him was their insistence on including *le premier coup d’archet* in symphonic works. In a letter to his father in 1778, Mozart wrote:

> I still hope, however, that even asses will find something in [Mozart’s symphony K. 297] to admire—and, moreover, I have been careful not to neglect *le premier coup d’archet*—and that is quite sufficient. What a fuss the oxen here make of this trick! The devil take me if I can see any difference! They all begin together, just as they do in other places. It is really too much of a joke.

Although Mozart wrote this letter around two years after the “Haffner” Serenade was written, he was undoubtedly aware of, and likely already held disdain for, this French habit. We may

---

276 The first movement of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 5 is one such example of this technique that is not particularly humorous.
277 See Levy (1995, 155) and Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, 66–67), for example.
278 Mozart often conveys his disdain for the French in his letters. In a letter to his father in 1778, for example, he writes of “French” singing: “And their singing! Good Lord! Let me never hear a Frenchwoman singing Italian arias. I can forgive her if she screeches out her French trash, but not if she ruins good music! It’s simply unbearable” (Anderson [1966, 2: 522]).
279 Ibid., 2: 553.
assume, therefore, that composing an extra such rhetorical flourish at the end of the work might have been particularly humorous to Mozart.

Apart from Mozart’s personal reasons for finding this humorous, a broader audience may also find his deployment of this technique humorous in K. 250 because of the opposition that occurs between the coup d’archet and the fanfare that precedes it. But the opposition Mozart sets up is not based on opposition between topics per se; rather it involves the way a conventional beginning, one that also happens to be used as such in this movement, supersedes what everyone will take to have been the ending. Initially, it also seems that the humour here is not predicated upon an opposition between high and low status, since both fanfare and coup d’archet are typically “high” topics. However, because Mozart deliberately and surreptitiously subverts the typical “beginning” usage of the coup d’archet and forces it into an “ending” role, he flips the usual “high” status of this topic to an opposed, parodic version of itself by using it in an inappropriate way (as Haydn did with the serioso in the finale of Op. 33 No. 2). According to Goeth, this kind of “context-quotation clash is one of the most common tools for parody construction in music.”

Put another way, by making the coup d’archet misbehave as an “ending” topic instead of a “beginning” one, Mozart recasts the would-be “high” coup d’archet in “low” light. Thus, the fanfare acts “appropriately,” but the misbehaving coup d’archet (or mock-coup d’archet) acts “inappropriately,” creating an opposition between “appropriate”

---

280 Goeth (2013, 251).
281 This notion of a “low” coup d’archet is bolstered by the comments in Mozart’s letter cited above. See Anderson (1966, 2: 522).
282 It is true that fanfares often occur with beginning function, but they are also frequently (and therefore appropriately) found at endings. According to Caplin (2005, 117), “[the fanfare’s] arpeggiated melodic configurations create a degree of harmonic stasis appropriate for a formal beginning. But the potential for fanfare motives both to ascend and to descend also makes them useful in other formal contexts.” Caplin (ibid.) also notes that “fanfare gestures seem frequently to lead to a cadence, especially in Mozart” and that the fanfare’s “more general characteristics” (as compared to the coup d’archet) give it more functional flexibility.
("high") and "inappropriate" usages of these topics.\textsuperscript{283} Mozart uses the tutti rest and form-functional opposition to amplify this valence shift. In the end, he makes the laughable French \textit{coup d’archet} more laughable by using the topic he sees as pretentiously and thoughtlessly overdone in its normal context in a concluding role where it \textit{never} belongs.

In this example, humour seems to occur on two levels. On a sophisticated level, Mozart’s clever use of the form-functional opposition—where the listener expects an “ending” function, but gets a “beginning” function in an “ending” role—"flips" the \textit{coup d’archet} from “high” to “low.” This forces a valence shift between the “low” \textit{coup d’archet} and the “high” preceding \textit{fanfare}: an unquestionably sophisticated maneuver. On a gag-like level, the tutti rest—Mozart’s “fake” ending—prompts a surprising slapstick effect when the “real” ending arrives.

\textit{Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 Il distratto, third movement}

We have already observed an example of Leander’s absent-mindedness in the finale of Haydn’s \textit{Il distratto}, where we heard the strings (or Leander) stop to tune \textit{after} the first phrase and restart the movement.\textsuperscript{285} In the third movement of Symphony No. 60, Haydn again suggests

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{283} The opposition here between “appropriate” and “inappropriate” is analogous to the common high-level script opposition between “normal, expected state of affairs” and “abnormal, unexpected state of affairs” (Raskin [1985, 111]).
  \item \textsuperscript{284} There is no clear shift between negative and positive emotional implications in this example, nor is one needed because of the strong high-to-low shift.
  \item \textsuperscript{285} We also briefly noted the first movement’s excessive subdominant prolongation in Chapter 2, Example 2.1b and will return to that example in Chapter 4, Example 4.10.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Leander’s absent-mindedness, this time with a profusion of topical juxtapositions that also create humour.\textsuperscript{286}

This minuet’s trio section exhibits some of the strangest topical juxtapositions in the symphony, each of which shifts suddenly to bizarre new material.\textsuperscript{287} The trio opens with an opposition between a sustained unison \textit{serioso} topic at a forte dynamic (mm. 39–42) and a harmonically static, melodically meandering, staccato \textit{musette} topic at a piano dynamic (mm. 43–48).

Example 3.6a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, iii, mm. 39–48

Though Classical composers often used the \textit{musette} topic to inject an element of quirkiness, this one is unmistakably odd; it sounds particularly ditzy when compared to the confident \textit{serioso} that precedes it, and in this sense it presents an emphatic antipode to what Charles Rosen calls

\textsuperscript{286} See pages 45–47 for a brief discussion of the passage from measures 39 to 48, which I discuss again here in a larger context and in more detail.

\textsuperscript{287} Topical anomalies in the other movements of the symphony are strange and quirky at times, but not overtly humorous like those in the third movement.
Haydn’s “heroic pastoral style.” Most notably, the *musette*’s aimless melody and harmonic stasis are particularly glaring sources of amusement. Sisman also finds the *musette* “unusually passive” because “[it] is the consequent of a particularly forceful unison opening, and [because of] its harmonic stasis, uniform scoring, and treble-dominated texture.” Here, Sisman implicitly acknowledges that the *serioso*’s ridiculous plunge into the *musette* creates a sudden valence shift from a high (*serioso*) topic to a low (*musette*) one. And, though both topics are set in the minor mode, a shift from a characteristically negative valence (*serioso*) to a characteristically positive valence (*musette*) is also apparent. Both of these valence shifts (high-to-low status and negative-to-positive emotion) occur in the directions that most frequently produce humour in Classical instrumental music.

Harmony and formal function once again play important roles here: since the opening four measures reached the goal of the dominant (or so we should assume at the arrival of the octave Gs), we expect a consequent phrase to provide an authentic cadence to the tonic C minor. But having achieved the dominant pitch in the fourth measure, the harmonic motion stops and stagnates on an inactive minor dominant. This lack of a balancing cadence is almost inevitable because of the *musette*’s counterintuitive position as an ending rather than—as would be typical—as a beginning. That is, Haydn has chosen to end the phrase with a *musette*: a topic that almost invariably employs a pedal or drone and cannot bring the necessary cadential closure.

---

288 See Webster (2004, 242) and Rosen (1972, 162–63).

289 Similarly incongruous *musette* passages where instruments seem to get “carried away” can be found in the fourth movement of Mozart’s String Quintet K. 516 (mm. 56–58), throughout the fourth movement of String Quartet K. 590, and in the first movement of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 20 No. 3 (mm. 24, 107, 145, 151, and 240). Haydn is also fond of writing string quartet cello parts that sound absent-minded (see esp. the second movement of Op. 77 No. 2 and first movement of Op. 33 No. 4).

290 Sisman (1990, 315). In the same discussion, Sisman also explains that, unlike in this trio, “Haydn [usually] played with such conventions [of phrase rhythm] in minuets…by an excess of activity, especially short motives in hemiola (e.g., String Quartet op. 33, no. 5).”
Perhaps due to the harmony’s functional impotence, the *musette*’s melody simply climbs upward, before wobbling its way back down toward the dominant, having apparently not found anything better to do. In addition, the *musette*’s ending function is completely ineffective. The first four measures achieve a half-cadence that suggests another four measures that we expect to end with a stronger cadence. Instead, we hear six measures that do nothing form-functionally useful: it is as if they assumed that the first four measures did everything required. The result is decidedly awkward, since these latter six measures exist merely to balance the duration of the opening phrase, all the while providing a surprising and unnecessary post-cadential function (technically, “after-the-end” rather than “ending”).\(^{291}\) The six *musette* measures are, therefore, completely harmonically static and form-functionally superfluous, their only *raison d’être* to achieve phrase-structural balance (which isn’t even accomplished, since the *musette* is two measures longer than the *serioso*).

The opposition that occurs between *serioso* and *musette* can, as usual, be interpreted fruitfully in different ways, but Haydn certainly invites us to hear the absent-minded Leander in the passages above. Indeed, Sisman singles out “juxtapositions of lyrical and martial/fanfare material” like those above as one kind of “inappropriate treatment” by which Haydn “makes known his theatrical intentions.”\(^{292}\) The sudden shift from a high and negative to a low and positive topic surely evokes an impression of absent-mindedness similar to other examples of humour in this theater symphony that also seem to depict the forgetful protagonist. Such a shift from “Leander the confident” to “Leander the absent-minded” is further emphasized by the sudden change from high arousal (*serioso*) to low arousal (*musette*). The topical shift might also

---


\(^{292}\) Sisman (1990, 320).
represent a fall in status or simply a human error without recourse to Regnard’s dramatic narrative. Either of these interpretations might be satisfactory, but, as we will see in the trio’s contrasting middle, the topical juxtapositions become increasingly oppositional and the possible connection between Regnard’s protagonist and Haydn’s compositional quirks becomes even more apparent.

Immediately after the bizarre valence shift in the trio’s small ternary exposition, another strange topical juxtaposition occurs: a minuet topic beginning in measure 49 abuts an implied march topic that begins with the anacrusis to measure 59. Although it would be incorrect to label the interrupting passage (mm. 59–62) as a typical march because of the triple meter, this passage’s dotted rhythms, unison voicing, and forte dynamic are all typical of the march topic.293

293 See Ratner (1980, 20). I have labelled this atypical topic, “march” (in quotations) in Example 3.6b. Monelle (ibid.) and (2000, 54–55) provides examples in Tchaikovsky’s fifth and sixth symphonies where march and waltz topics are mixed, but Haydn’s is the only Classical example I have encountered where a march implication occurs in a thoroughly triple-time movement. Monelle (2006, 115–16) discusses an example from Lully in which the opposite occurs: a triple-time intrusion (a measure in 3/2) occurs in a march that is otherwise in duple-meter.
The contrasting middle begins as a typical *minuet*, but its rather pedestrian melody and uninteresting supporting harmony border on dull (especially when considered alongside other Haydn minuets). And when the oboes repeat the last four measures in a functionally superfluous—and stylistically uncharacteristic—manner, the oboes bring with them yet another impression of absent-mindedness. That is, the oboes here are like “Carpani’s caricature of a
second-violin persona as an unimaginative character, capable of imitation, but not invention.”

Here, Haydn once again appears to be portraying Leander’s unfortunate affinity for losing track of what is supposed to happen next: in this case, the orchestra has completed a rather perfunctory sentence, but can’t seem to remember what to do next… The oboes, acting as an “avatar” for Leander (and his absent-mindedness) attempt to continue with an uncreative and pathetic-sounding echo of the preceding phrase that further stands out because it has no precedent anywhere in the movement. Fortunately for the orchestra and Leander (and humorously for us), the insistent and self-important march (skewed by the triple meter) cuts off the floundering oboes (m. 58), pulling everyone in a more serious direction, while making the unnecessary and puzzling oboe echo sound even more bizarre in hindsight.

But Haydn does not simply follow the minuet with the triple time march, he actually interrupts the minuet using a typical dotted anacrustic figure emblematic of the march topic. This interruption feature is further emphasized because Haydn writes a forte dynamic under the unison march entry and the oboes’ gesture remains at only piano, making it a far more salient and unusual elision than the preceding one in measure 56. The dynamic discrepancy—emphasized by the particularly distinctive dotted anacrusis—results in this rare example where, in a topical juxtaposition, an entering group of instruments actually completely drown out an already sounding group. Put another way, in this unusual phrase-structural elision, some

---

294 Klorman (2013, 113).
instruments do, in fact, complete their phrase, but the composer has deliberately skewed the ensemble balance to the extent that one group can become completely inaudible.  

Although the first phrase of the trio contains a *serioso* and *musette* that are immediately juxtaposed to create an opposition at the point where the switch occurs, the early arrival of the *march* topic before the *minuet*’s phrase is complete creates a conspicuous and startling overlap between topics in the trio’s contrasting middle.  

This “topical overlap” is far rarer in Classical instrumental music than the juxtapositions we have seen and here it creates an emphatic opposition between the quasi-serious *march* and the absent-minded *minuet*.

For me, this is the funniest opposition of the trio, but the topical shift appears to occur here *in reverse*. That is, the “low” (because of the absent-minded oboes) *minuet* is interrupted by a “high” *march*; this shift seems backward when compared to our previous examples where high topics have shifted suddenly to low ones. However, this “low-to-high” shift only occurs if we understand these topics in their typical forms: *minuet* in a major mode in triple meter; *march* in either mode in duple meter. While the *minuet* fits its surroundings, the *march* clearly does not belong here. Though the *march* seems to push forward confidently and unequivocally with all voices in unison and with typical grace-note rhythms, it is in 3/4 meter! The *march*—emphatic...

---

296 This depends, of course, on the performers’ choice regarding this effect. I believe the best choice for performing humour in this passage is to *almost* completely drown out the oboes as they finish. Most performances seem to allow the oboes to be heard relatively clearly to the end of their phrase, while a select few (my favourites) almost completely obscure their conclusion with the interrupting unison entry (listen, for example, to the recording by the Haydn Sinfonietta Wien under Manfred Huss [2010] for a particularly effective—if slightly on the slow side—example). Further discussion of this passage is presented in Chapter 5.

297 See Agawu (1991, 34) for his discussion of “topical overlap.”

298 One might interpret this *march* in a positive light right from the outset, but because of its interrupting or intruding role, my initial impression of this *march* is negatively valenced. However, this initial interpretation is playfully contradicted according to my subsequent explanation.

299 Both the *minuet* and *march* are “high” topics, so no obvious valence shift between social statuses occurs here. The particular social implications of this opposition are discussed below.
and proud as it may be—is clearly out of its element: this is minuet territory. If Haydn had wanted to more clearly evoke a march topic, he could have written this brief passage (mm. 59–62) in a more strongly implied duple meter (as he does in some of his other minuets). But had he done so, he might have distracted his listeners from the focus of the trio: the absent-minded musettes and the oboe echo. As if to clarify this focus (and the march’s very brief and ultimately inconsequential intrusion), Haydn over-writes the march’s fourth measure (m. 62) by eliding it with the first measure of the returning serioso and forcing the march from an implied four-measure hypermeter (typical of the march topic) to an apparent three-measure version. The result is a march that should be all about duple groupings skewed unnaturally into triple divisions at both metric and hypermetric levels.

Since the march is out of place, its normal affective impression can be turned on its head. That is, much like Haydn’s “mock-serioso” in the finale of String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2 (Example 3.1 above), we can interpret this march caricature as a “mock-march” because of its bizarre metrical setting. This reinterpretation of the march flips its associated social status from high to low. This flip clarifies the implied shift in social status between the two topics: now a high(er) minuet moves to a low(er)—due to its inappropriate usage—mock-march in 3/4. The mock-march appears initially to be interrupting the absent-minded minuet to get things back on track, but it also fails to do what it should. We are left with another humorous gag, albeit a clever one.

With the arrival of the trio’s small ternary recapitulation, we end up again at the opening serioso (beginning in m. 62), which is once again rendered ridiculous by the returning musette. This concluding musette does, at least, arrive on the minuet’s tonic C, but appears to do so with a perfunctory and premature “resolution” (again with the inconclusive scale degree five in the
upper voice) when the topics abut (m. 66). The implied half cadence (m. 65) leads to the meandering *musette*, altered this time from its opening incarnation as a stagnant and unnecessary minor dominant prolongation to a concluding one with an unnecessary and strangely post-cadential tonic extension. ¹³⁰ Like the first *musette*, this one is awkwardly and humorously forced into a phrase-ending position contrary to the phrase-beginning position in which we would expect to find a *musette*. ³⁰¹

By now, the ridiculous trio has run clumsily and humorously through a *minuet*, out-of-place oboe echo, 3/4 *mock-march*, overstated *serioso* recap, and stagnant *musette*, all in the space of 23 measures (mm. 49–71). ³⁰² With this many quick and jarring topical juxtapositions, the individual oppositions, though individually remarkable, seem less critical than the overall impression of memory failure throughout. In other words, while it seems the trio only needed to run a 100-meter hurdle, it managed to trip and half-fall over every single gate along the way. Finally, the event is over and we return to a more conventional, Classical minuet section. ³⁰³

As we observed in the oppositions Haydn created in the finale, there is a possible connection in this trio to specific dramatic events in Regnard’s play. These events, rather than flattening the narrative capacity of the trio’s many humorous oppositions, can enliven the topical interplay Haydn composed in this section. Elsewhere in the symphony, Haydn uses a French

---

³⁰⁰ For a different reading of the cadence structure here, see Burstein (2015), 16.
³⁰¹ There is certainly a degree of excess in these *musettes* that adds to the humorous oppositions.
³⁰² Remarkably, Koch (1787, 41) provides a very similar “recipe” for depicting absent-mindedness in instrumental music, where he asks: “‘How, for example, does the composer represent an absent-minded person in an instrumental piece?’ and answers: ‘He connects sections which properly do not belong together; he makes a triple rhythm [Rhythmus] where we expect a duple; without reason he alternates the minor mode with the major, and so on’” (quoted in Mirka [2009, 300; translated by Baker and Christensen (1995, 155)].
³⁰³ The minuet section has some oddities in it as well, however. The dotted *march* makes its first appearance in measure 24 and the absent-minded *minuet* is suggested from measures 25 to 29. But neither of these topics is nearly as emphatically or bizarrely employed as they are in the trio.
dance and other more serious topics to represent the sensible, courtly, gallant Chevalier: Leander’s dramatic antithesis. Here also, Haydn may be referencing the Chevalier and pitting his common sense and clarity of purpose against Leander’s absent-mindedness. Following this interpretation, the *serioso/musette* and *minuet/mock-march* juxtapositions can be heard as a dialogue between the Chevalier and Leander. We have seen a few ways Haydn has portrayed Leander’s absent-mindedness, but why not poke fun at the self-important Chevalier? Burstein notes, “Characters who intimidate us or whom we regard as powerful or exalted (such as politicians or clergymen) are prime material for humour. With such people, the serious aspect of the humor equation is so accentuated that comic contrast can easily be established.” So it is with musical topics: the more exalted a topic, the more easily it may be parodied, as Haydn does here by chopping a leg out from under the Chevalier’s “march.” In a nutshell, we might interpret the two examples above as involving Leander and Chevalier in the following situations: in the first example, the Chevalier makes a clear statement and Leander seems to lose track of what should occur, or simply does not understand; and in the second example, Leander begins on the right track, but seems to lose his way before the Chevalier (who does not belong here) interrupts by marching right through Leander’s nonsense to set him straight and get him back on track.

---

304 In this trio, we might even hear the Chevalier as one of Eero Tarasti’s “negactants”: an agent-antagonist that acts in opposition to the central work-persona. See Tarasti (1994). Klorman (2013, 147) discusses the role of “negactants” in Mozart’s string quartets.

305 This character-driven interpretation finds a precedent in Haydn’s own statements. That is, the “explicit connection [made by Forkel] of the theater style with moral sentiments finds an echo in Haydn’s statement to his biographer Griesinger that he often tried to portray ‘moral characters’ in his symphonies” (Sisman [1990, 310]).


307 Sisman (1990, 314) also observes in the second movement, “The parody of a French dance introduced in the development section probably satirizes the Chevalier.”
This back-and-forth is certainly entertaining, and it may well be what Haydn was getting at, but I find it less humorous than a reading that places the forgetful Leander alone with his thoughts. In such a reading of the trio, a confident Leander begins with a single thought and great clarity of purpose (mm. 39–42): “I know what I have to do!”; before forgetting how to proceed (mm. 43–48): “I’ve forgotten how to proceed…” Seeming to have lost his way entirely (on a minor dominant), Leander makes another attempt in the form of a minuet (mm. 49–55): “I can do it this time!”; but he can’t even hang onto this simple idea without getting distracted (mm. 56–58): “Hey, is that a bird?” He then rallies again defiantly, cutting off his distracted, absent-minded self (mm. 59–61) before he realizes that he’s on the wrong track again (the mock-march in 3/4 doesn’t work) and stumbles back to his first idea (mm. 62–65) when the mock-march unison melody elides awkwardly with the beginning of the returning serioso.

Whatever Leander (or Haydn) was thinking, there is clearly a back-and-forth between phrases and sub-phrases that succeed one another while failing to create any real musical progress (mm. 39–42, 49–55, 59–61, and 62–65), and those that clearly do not function appropriately (mm. 43–48, 56–58, and 66–71). This seems a fitting analogue to the distracted meandering of Leander’s inner monologue or the sorts of befuddlement he stumbles into throughout Regnard’s drama. Haydn pulls us through Leander’s confused wanderings using abrupt topical juxtaposition and overlap to create valence shifts and make jokes throughout the trio. This trio’s capacity to support different readings where topics correspond to the

---

308 Following this narrative any further into the small ternary recap is problematic since it is unlikely Leander would “remember” the small ternary recap, but the elision of the mock-march with the returning serioso suggests to me that Leander is stuck in an absent-minded loop and will never get it right. That is, it seems Haydn has built a trio that could almost be repeated again (though that would be painfully redundant). But, in the end, Haydn’s proper formal return to the small ternary recap seems to be one of ironic humour that comes with simply obeying a convention of small ternary form, rather than further portraying Leander’s absent-mindedness.
accompanying dramatic narrative make it a successful, appealing, and accessible source of humour.

**Michael Haydn's Symphony in D major, Perger 13, third movement**

In a vein similar to his brother’s approach to Regnard’s play, Michael Haydn composed his “Entr’actes” to Voltaire’s *Zaïre* to provide the drama with a musical introduction, interludes, and a conclusion. As his brother Joseph did in Symphony No. 60, Michael Haydn suggests characters from the drama with implied topical affiliations, and his idiomatic and emphatic use of the Turkish topic is of particular interest. The “Entr’actes” fulfill the same role as Haydn’s theater symphony and were later published as the five-movement “Symphony in D Major” that could be performed without recourse to Voltaire’s drama.

In the Adagio third movement, Michael Haydn composed drastic contrast between two topics, creating a jarring opposition. Since this movement is a typical variation form, it is particularly well suited to direct diachronic juxtaposition of musical topics when one variation moves to the next: few Classical forms so strongly imply topical change with the regularity found in variation forms.\(^{309}\) Rondo forms, for example, also have several relatively brief formal sections, but do not typically present such a variety of topics.\(^{310}\) While the “varied repetition”

\(^{309}\) As we have seen, however, the prevailing topic of a Classical minuet’s trio section usually contrasts with the prevailing topic of the minuet proper.

\(^{310}\) Rondo couplets are often differentiated topically from refrains, but the repeated refrains themselves tend to present less variety of topics. This topical contrast manifests most often as a character change occurring alongside a tonal/modal shift (i.e. to *minore* in major-mode rondos or *maggiore* in minor-mode ones). See Caplin (1998, 231–35).
often found in rondo refrains is not usually achieved via topical change, variation forms often lead the listener to expect that a new topic may occur with the beginning of a new variation. This is not always the case, but the way is paved for the composer to alter the topical underpinning of the theme from variation to variation. Michael Haydn takes advantage of the variation form in the Adagio movement of his Symphony in D (Perger 13) by playing with our expectations for topical change.

He begins with a theme that conveys aspects of learned style (florid counterpoint and steadily moving bass line) and fanfare (dotted rhythms, declamatory repetitions, and melodic arpeggiation), which create an introductory character that continues far into the movement. The overall result is a theme that sounds somewhat stilted, formalistic, and archaic (not galant), which, for the purposes of this discussion, I will refer to as the “conservative” style. Though we may think of “high” topics as those more ingeniously and creatively employed by Classical masters, this conservative style epitomizes (almost in caricature) the “high” social stature of the Viennese courts. Through the first three variations, the increasing virtuosity and contrapuntal richness repeatedly bolster the conservative style’s “high” status until the fourth variation brings an abrupt and unwelcome topical shift.

---

311 Varied refrain repetitions most often contrast in phrase-structure or thematic design where later refrains are often “abridged or incomplete” (Caplin [1998, 235]). For example, a small ternary form may return as a period or sentence only.

312 Topical change is not a requirement, but is certainly a likely possibility. Consider, for example, the nearly obligatory minore variation found in most Classical variation forms, which not only changes the tonality of the variation, but tends to alter other characteristics that influence the variation’s topic. See Caplin (1998, 218).
When the fourth variation begins (at the pickup to measure 81), the composer interjects an especially raucous and unruly Turkish topic. This sudden “out-of-character” variation, with its Turkish cymbals crashing in at a subito forte, intrudes on the conservative style (“business-as-usual”) and its piano dynamic.\footnote{Though many of the characteristics I associated with the conservative style remain in effect, the Turkish music undoubtedly eliminates the possibility of hearing this section as conservative when its (decidedly un-conservative) dense percussion and forte dynamic enter.} The rupture was so pronounced in performance that Leopold...
Mozart remarked on it specifically in a letter to his son in October of 1777: “Following a variation which was piano, there was one on the Turkish music, which was so sudden and unexpected that all the women looked terrified and the audience burst out laughing.”

The Turkish topic is particularly “unexpected” because, rather than reproducing the high level of topical diversity present in most variation forms, Michael Haydn reined in the topics up to this point in the movement by retaining the conservative style throughout each of the first three variations, varying it relatively slightly until the marked arrival of the Turkish topic. Because of the relatively unchanging conservative style up to measure 80, our normal expectations for topical change are somewhat suppressed by that point and we are less likely to expect a topical change—and certainly not such a drastic one—with the arrival of the next variation. Put another way, a listener familiar with the stylistic norms of Classical variation form would expect a topical change between some variations, but Haydn’s static topical employment within this movement treads on these expectations. SURPRISE! is the result of the sudden new topic, and it is exaggerated considerably by the magnitude of the shift.

The music’s sudden return to the original conservative style for the beginning of a fifth variation leaves the Turkish intrusion unreconciled in retrospect and heightens the ironic play between typical and atypical topical conventions in variation form. That is, instead of hearing topical contrast between successive variations, as we would in most variation sets, there is virtually no contrast between variations (only textural and timbral changes) until the Turkish fourth variation. This first topical contrast is further heightened because the Turkish fourth

---


315 Of course, the reverse is also possible: so much of the same topic in the opening three variations might suggest more potential for topical change, but there is still no way to expect the drastic contrast Michael Haydn presents here.
variation signals its arrival with the only anacrustic gesture in the movement so far (the *subito forte* pickup to m. 81)—to say nothing of the loud cymbals that enter on the following downbeat. Thus, while the audience politely waits for the next downbeat to bring about a new—and, based on the intraopus context thus far, largely similar and somewhat uninteresting—variation, this anacrusis creates an overlap between the two topics. The topical overlap brought in by the “early” *Turkish* ambush creates a particularly forceful opposition that threatens the stately, proper *conservative* style. But the *Turkish* topic retreats after only the A section of the theme, instead of completing the variation in its own idiom, and the music returns quickly to the original, *conservative* style.

As we have seen, juxtapositions of contrasting topics can produce oppositions and yield humorous results. Here, the “sudden and unexpected” entrance of the distinctly demotic *Turkish* band is particularly pronounced and incongruous because its affiliations with low status, negative valence, and high arousal so clearly oppose the high (if somewhat stilted) status, positive valence, and negative arousal of the preceding *conservative* music. In fact, Classical composers often employed the *Turkish* topic to create a specifically humorous effect because of its uniquely multivalent, evocative nature. And because this topic has clear extramusical associations with

---

316 The effect here is similar to the topical overlap between the *minuet* and *march* in the third movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 (see Example 4.7b).

317 After we hear both the A and B sections of the theme again in the original stately style, the *Turkish* music sneaks back in with another anacrustic gesture—this time a rapid crescendo *from piano to forte* in measure 104. This time only the theme’s B section is heard before the *Turkish* music returns again to the *conservative* style. Following this second *Turkish* intrusion, we hear the post-cadential area of the variation set with *Turkish* interjections of closing material derived from the theme. Ultimately, the *Turkish* music ends the movement along with the *conservative* style’s greater virtuosity and richer counterpoint. The concluding mix of styles is certainly strange, but creates an effect I associate with unresolved conflict of the marriage of *Zara* and *Osman*, rather than humour, per se. The simultaneous use of aspects from two different topics is similar to that found in the third movement of Mozart’s K. 250 (see Example 3.9a below), but, as we will see, Mozart’s composition creates a different effect.

318 See Monelle (2006, 117–23) for a concise discussion of “Turkish music.” See also Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, 397; 401).
both the exotic “other” and social conflict, it is uniquely poised to deliver an affective punch to the musical discourse.\textsuperscript{319}

The \textit{Turkish} topic’s special significance arose largely because the Turks had besieged Vienna in 1683 (fewer than 100 years before Leopold’s comment). According to Monelle, this topic carried “an aspect of fashionable orientalism in a Vienna released from the threat of invasion.”\textsuperscript{320} A better-known example of this phenomenon is provided by Mozart (though not in an instrumental work), who wrote to his father about the interpolation of the \textit{Turkish} topic in \textit{Die Entführung aus dem Serail}, explaining, “Osmin’s rage is rendered comical by the use of the Turkish music.”\textsuperscript{321} The medium of music (especially Classical music) was particularly well suited as an outlet for this humour, since it was one in which the high accomplishments of Viennese culture could be made to stand out against the low, boisterous, and easily parodied \textit{Turkish} idiom. Matthew Head notes that, in examples like these, “Sometimes the exotic and the humorous are indistinguishable.”\textsuperscript{322}

The audience’s laughter Leopold reported likely arose out of initial feelings of relief followed by those of superiority. The relief comes from the fact that the Turks no longer represented a threat, and superiority is created by virtue of the enemy’s defeat (and by not writing very good music) from the perspective of the eighteenth-century Viennese. A relief theorist like Freud would likely point to the act of laughing at the humour of a sudden, grotesque

\textsuperscript{319} For an excellent discussion of Haydn’s various compositional uses of the “exotic,” see Head (2005).
\textsuperscript{320} Monelle (2006, 6). See also Head (2000).
\textsuperscript{321} Anderson (1966, 769). This letter was written in 1781 and refers to the character from Mozart’s opera, \textit{Die Entführung aus dem Serail}, which was completed the following summer. Webster (2004, 245) notes that \textit{Turkish} elements were more commonly employed in operatic works than in instrumental ones. Mozart also runs the topic through increasing levels of impropriety in the seventh movement of his Serenade in B-flat, K. 361. Other examples of the \textit{Turkish} topic occur in Mozart’s Sonata in A K. 331, and Beethoven’s \textit{The Ruins of Athens}, and Ninth Symphony. See Monelle (2006, 6).
\textsuperscript{322} Head (2005, 83).
appearance of the Turkish topic as a way for the cultivated Viennese to slough off, and make light of, the buried tension once associated with the Turkish threat. A superiority theorist like Hobbes would likely propose that the audience’s laughter expresses feelings of superiority over a vanquished adversary. Thus, Leopold Mozart’s account of the listeners’ responses strongly suggests that the relief and superiority they experienced on the heels of sudden terror resulted in laughter at this juncture in the music. Although we noted earlier that laughter is not necessarily an indicator of humour (nor is laughter required to prove that something is humorous), it is likely an indicator in this example since—as we have seen—the high/low status opposition required for humour is created by the musical parameters mentioned above.

Many Classical composers engaged, therefore, in what could be called “racist” musical jokes. Racial humour appears to have been a particularly common manifestation of the common Classical valence shift from high to low status, especially when focused on the Turks, Balkans, or Hungarians. This fact should not be surprising to modern audiences, who know that many comedy acts once centered on the deprecation of other cultures (and some still do). In Michael Haydn’s “Entr’actes,” he first inserts the Turkish topic in a surprising location to create a racially charged topical opposition, unexpected within the intraopus context of the proper and stately conservative style perpetrated by the opening variations. He subsequently returns to the Turkish topic in order to get the most out of a comic device.

---

323 The psychological ramifications of relief and superiority have long been associated with both laughter and humour and the theories of Sigmund Freud, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Hobbes in particular (see Chapter 1, pages 27–29).


325 Webster (2004, 245) discusses the “deliberate invocation of ‘ethnic’ moods [which] is found primarily in two contexts: ‘Turkish’ elements in operas, and Balkan/Hungarian style in instrumental music” (an example of the latter “ethnic mood” is found in Example 3.8). Mirka (2009, 275) also mentions, “the mix of Gypsy and Hungarian national elements…behind the metrical dissonance in Haydn’s theme” from the finale of String Quartet Op. 55 No. 2. Elsewhere, Allanbrook (2002, 210) notes how “absurd horn calls…mutate rapidly into a Turkish-style minor” in Haydn’s Piano Sonata in E-flat Major, Hob. XVI:52.
Although the above interpretation of the Turks (Turkish topic) vs. the Viennese (conservative style) captures the startling effect of the initial Turkish entry, Michael Haydn may have been thinking of more specific programmatic elements. That is, when writing this theater symphony, he likely thought to include references to the story of Voltaire’s Zaïre, for which this symphony was written as accompaniment. As his brother Joseph did in Il distratto, Michael Haydn seems to have turned to musical topics to represent key characters in the play and, to some extent, the actions or events that involved them. We might, for example, suppose an affiliation between the conservative style and the female prisoner Zara (Zaïre). Likewise, the Turkish music could easily represent the Turkish sultan Osman. In this interpretation it is also possible to hear Michael Haydn’s later combination of different aspects of the two topics as the beginnings of the relationship between the two characters—a relationship as awkward and unlikely in real life as it is in the music Michael Haydn composed to represent it.

The shift between the conservative style (representing the Viennese) and the first Turkish invasion produced—at least according to Leopold Mozart—laughter at the surprising and humorous juxtaposition. In particular, the sociocultural significance of the Turkish topic brought the issue “close to home” for Haydn’s Viennese contemporaries and that part of the joke likely served to amplify their responses to the humorous opposition. But the topically driven opposition still produces humour in the manner of the preceding examples because of the sudden valence.

---

326 This requires a different reading of the conservative style I have associated with Viennese culture, since Zara (a Christian slave abducted as an infant) is definitely not Viennese. However, the peaceful and orderly nature of the conservative style fit well with Zara’s non-combative character.

327 As noted above, Mozart made the same logical choice in Osmin’s rage aria in The Abduction from the Seraglio five years later.

328 Note 315 above briefly describes the manner and effect of this later combination of topics.
shift (and topical overlap in this case) between the high status and low arousal of the conservative style and the low status and high arousal of the Turkish topic.

*Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 “The Bird,” fourth movement*

The finale of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 contains oppositions that occur between the rondo’s main thematic sections: the refrains and couplets. Like most rondo form movements, this finale fulfills the expectation that there will be tonal and modal variation between the refrains and couplets, but the contrasts between refrains and couplets here exceed stylistic norms. Similar to the sudden shift from minuet to march in the third movement of Joseph Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 or from conservative style to Turkish music in Michael Haydn’s Symphony in D, the emotional valence shifts in this movement appear to move suddenly from positive to negative. That is, Haydn’s minor-mode couplets in this piece provide drastic modal contrast that initially suggests a sudden move to a darker place. We will see, however, that Haydn treats these sudden minore sections in a manner similar to the topical shifts in Examples 3.6b and 3.7: though they initially appear to present a sudden fall toward the negative, they are perhaps best reinterpreted to represent the opposite. In the end, the sudden minore sections create humorous oppositions that can convey a sort of “empty threat.”
Example 3.8a: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 15–37
Though a tonal or modal change is expected after the conclusion of the rondo refrain (m. 22), the sudden shift to the Hungarian-sounding minore\textsuperscript{329} is rather abrupt—especially after such an innocent and cheerful refrain. Despite this abruptness, however, there is enough time for us to prepare mentally for this shift: there is a cadence on the downbeat of measure 22, and the quarter rest allows us to prepare for the change in tonality and character that our extraopus knowledge leads us to expect. Thus, this couplet in the relative minor is not particularly startling and, though it does imply a shift from high to low status, the extraopus expectation that comes from our knowledge of the topical changes that normally occur across formal boundaries in Classical rondos helps us to “make sense” of this shift. It is certainly possible that a listener may find this humorous, but I believe we are more likely simply to accept this downturn as an instance of Haydn’s general playfulness since a relatively pronounced degree of contrast is typical at this formal juncture.

But the second Hungarian couplet (beginning in measure 93) is considerably more startling and aggressive. Although the parallel minor is more common (and therefore somewhat more expected) for the second couplet,\textsuperscript{330} this second Hungarian arrival, unlike the first, interrupts the musical discourse. Unlike the first Hungarian couplet, which arrived more or less when it was supposed to (following the end of the previous section), this Hungarian intrusion is elided with the refrain’s concluding cadence, causing it to sound a measure early.

\textsuperscript{329}Webster (2004, 245) notes the ubiquity of such “Balkan/Hungarian” elements in Classical instrumental music, noting the “Gypsy rondo” from Piano Trio Hob. XV:25 and the slow movement of String Quartet Op. 54 No. 2. The third movement “all’Ungarhese” from Haydn’s Piano Concerto in D Major is similar in character to this Trio. The Hungarian character here is also very similar to the “alla Zingarese” (“in the Gypsy style”) minuet in the third movement of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 20 No. 4 (though the second of these contains additional conflicting metric implications typical of many of Haydn’s minuet sections).

\textsuperscript{330}Caplin (1998, 231).
Example 3.8b: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 86–102
Like Michael Haydn’s *Turkish* surprise and the *march* that interrupts the oboes in *Il distratto*, this interruption also presents an example of the type of opposition that involves topical overlap. All three of these involve the surprising introduction of a new, ostensibly negative (even threatening), military-type topic. Referring to the instrumental effect of this exotic element, Head remarks, “The fact that the ‘gypsy’ topic is one of disruption suggests both danger and the need for external control.” But all three of the examples have the threat removed by some silly or subversive aspect of that topic, effectively corrupting the negative emotional valence and rendering it inoffensive or ridiculous: in Michael Haydn’s *Entr’actes* it was the “empty threat” of a bygone enemy; in *Il distratto* it was the lopsided, 3/4 meter that skewed the *march*; and in Op. 33 No. 3 it is the inartistic (non-Viennese), noodly melody and drone bass that eliminate any threat or seriousness inherent to the interrupting topic.

Perhaps the most substantive difference between the nature of the opposition in Op. 33 No. 3 and that in the other two works just noted is that the topical overlap occurs at a point of elision in this quartet. That is, the overlap is not merely perpetrated by an anacrustic lead-in in the string quartet, as in the two symphonies. Instead, there is an entire surprising measure where the new Hungarian *minore* snuffs out the would-be continuation of the preceding major rondo refrain at the point of cadence; a cadence the refrain was allowed to complete before the first couplet, but not this time.\(^3\)

\(^{331}\) Head (2005, 85).

\(^{332}\) Elisions between the refrain and the onset of a rondo’s C section are relatively uncommon in Haydn’s compositions, but become somewhat more common in Beethoven’s rondos where they often seem to be used for dramatic (rather than humorous) purposes.
Mozart’s Serenade in D major K. 250, third movement

The foregoing examples have focused on humorous oppositions created by the direct juxtaposition or momentary overlap of contrasting musical parameters, but it is also possible for topics to be superimposed for a prolonged time span. Usually, when two or more topics seem to occur simultaneously, all but one can be easily explained away as a manifestation of certain facets or quirks of the prevailing topic. For example, the interrupting minore couplet in Op. 33 No. 3, with the simple addition of the minor third above the tonic, simply overwrites any impression of the preceding topic. Occasionally, however, each of two superimposed topics can convey its own identity strongly in different musical voices and it is difficult to arrive at an interpretation that can account for the roles of both topics under the umbrella of only one.

Superimposed topics can create humorous oppositions just like juxtaposed topics. But, where topics occur simultaneously, a thorough and multifaceted analysis of the various parametric cues in the surrounding musical context is especially crucial to establish an overall tone (e.g., corresponding to humour or tragedy).

Mozart humorously superimposes topics for a prolonged time span at the beginning of the third movement of his Serenade in D major, K. 250.³³³ This movement is the only one in the serenade composed in the minor mode. And, though modal variation is essential in a work of this length, composing a sombre movement for a wedding celebration is no easy task, if a composer wants to maintain the convivial atmosphere. According to Hermann Abert, “A serenade in a

³³³ The first and fourth movements of this serenade have several form-functional oddities, as well as motivic and harmonic redundancies that border on excessive. For example (as mentioned previously), the opening melody of the fourth movement’s refrain is extremely pedestrian and is revisited in its entirety a staggering number of times in this nine-part(!) rondo (this music is presented earlier in Example 3.1b, but has its melodic precursor in the first movement [see, for example, mm. 9–10]). The first movement also boasts some particularly dull accompanimental figures and an unbelievably trite post-cadential vamp (this first occurs in mm. 90–97, but returns often).
minor tonality is effectively a contradiction in terms, at least by the standards of the time, when such a piece was expected to be a celebration of an exuberant delight in existence.”\textsuperscript{334} Although Abert is referring to an entire serenade, the problem remains: how do you make a minor movement light-hearted? In the Classical era (and in tonal music to the present day) the minor mode is typically associated with the sad, melancholic, or tragic, none of which befits a wedding celebration.

Many scholars have commented on this minor movement as it “suddenly reveals the whole dark, pessimistic side of Mozart’s emotional life.”\textsuperscript{335} Others refer to this as the movement “where the pathetic appears with uncovered face.”\textsuperscript{336}

Example 3.9a: Mozart’s Serenade in D Major K. 250, iii, mm. 1–9

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example.png}
\caption{Mozart’s Serenade in D Major K. 250, iii, mm. 1–9}
\end{figure}

This movement accomplishes neither of these things for me. It is ridiculous and humorous from (and especially because of) its opening four measures onward. Balázs Mikusi explains, “Having

\textsuperscript{334} Abert (2007, 636).
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 358.
\textsuperscript{336} Massin (1959, 768; quoted in Mikusi [2006, 50]).
quoted all these venerable opinions [Massin, Abert, and others], I hardly dare write down that, when first hearing this movement at a concert, I burst out laughing. “I confess that I did not laugh at this on first hearing, but one can immediately sense that something is amiss. Mikusi explains that he laughed because the opening phrase is a minor-mode quotation of a folk song he had heard in his childhood (Examples 3.9b and c show Mozart’s opening melodic phrase and the beginning of the folk song).

Example 3.9b: Mozart’s Serenade in D Major K. 250, iii, mm. 1–4, solo and first violins

Example 3.9c: Folk song opening

Mikusi argues that Mozart and the Haffners would likely have known this tune, that a strikingly similar song was published in Augsburg in 1737, and even that the song’s protagonists (Philis and Damon) were “the typical protagonists of mid-eighteenth-century pastoral songs, which enjoyed great popularity throughout the German-speaking lands up until the 1770s.” Mikusi admits that he cannot prove that it was a well-known tune, but is certain that Mozart and company likely knew it or something like it.

---

337 Mikusi (2006, 50; my parentheses).
338 See Inke Pinkert-Sältzer (1997, 242). The text and music are both traditional.
339 Ibid., 51.
340 Ibid., 53.
341 It is particularly interesting that Mozart’s minor version is pitched in G minor, since nearly every version of this folk song I have found is pitched in G major. This might have made the change to minor all the more salient for Mozart’s listeners and also makes Mozart’s choice of this song seem more deliberate.
Mikusi’s argument for the quotation is sound, but he implicitly attributes his response to the quotation itself. A quotation is not humorous. But a quotation, when transplanted into another location can create an opposition with its new surroundings and can then create humour. I noted alongside Example 3.5 above that, according to Goeth, “context-quotation clash is one of the most common tools for parody construction in music.” But there, Mozart was quoting his own idea from earlier in the movement and reusing it later in a different form-functional guise. Here, by contrast, Mozart performs a more Ivesian quotation when he takes the well-known folk song and drastically changes its character and mode to fit his (humorous) purposes. That is, in this example, Mozart creates a humorous opposition by forcing a pastoral, major-mode melody into a minor-mode context throughout the first four measures.

After this humorous superimposition, measures 5 to 8 shift gears, leaving the pastoral influence behind, as any semblance of the folk song’s melody vanishes. But these later measures are certainly not free of impropriety and seem only to pay lip service to the A section’s formal design. That is, they contrast (unsurprisingly) with the opening four measures, but serve no clear functional purpose themselves: they are made of form-functionally superfluous material that appears interpolated between the opening four-measure phrase and the subsequent continuation phrase (mm. 9–12). We might interpret the two repeated attempts at stepwise descent accompanied by inner-voice chromaticism as an ironic reference to a lament topic that Mozart has oddly interpolated between the opening phrase and the subsequent continuation. That is, measures 5 to 8 seem to reference the sadness in joy of a wedding—a cliché that Mozart evokes here using very economical musical means. Thus, we might hear these maudlin gestures as the

---

342 Goeth (2013, 251).
343 Mozart performs a similar trick when he recapitulates the opening phrase of the final movement’s main theme in the minor, before “correcting” the mode to major for the second phrase.
wailing of a particularly emotional attendee and find humour in this exaggerated (albeit honest) response to the marriage in much the same way that we might laugh at a wedding scene in a movie where all the relatives are blubbing. But no matter how we hear measures 5 to 8, this material does nothing functionally necessary for the music and serves instead as a functionally ambivalent and perfunctory minor vamp that draws attention to the topical oddities of the humorous first phrase. Another oddity occurs when $b^2$ (mm. 5–8) is respelled as $^\#1$ (m. 9), producing an awkward, ponderous effect. This effect is most pronounced when perusing the score, but an attentive listener might well be surprised and puzzled by the A-flat/G-sharp respelling since the tendency of $b^2$ (as it must be heard upon arrival) to resolve downward is thwarted when it is recast as the upward-moving $^\#1$. That is, we expect the chord on the downbeat of measure 9 to be a diminished seventh chord applied to the subdominant and are likely to be surprised when the expected downward semitone resolution instead leads up by semitone, acting as a G-sharp diminished seventh chord applied to the dominant (A) of the home key dominant (D). Finally, measures 9 to 12 bring appropriate closure in the form of a half cadence before the minuet’s A section is balanced to 16 measures by a final four-measure post-cadential standing-on-the-dominant. The local strangeness of measures 5 to 8 does not (it seems to me) create opposition: they serve primarily to reflect back on and amplify the humour in the first four measures, while perhaps poking fun at the sadness that tinges many moments of happiness.

Humour (and indeed laughter) would have been a particularly likely outcome during the first performance of this piece because of the convivial social context and light-hearted atmosphere of the Haffner family’s wedding celebration, whose guests were well educated musically and would likely have reacted to the opposing social statuses suggested by the lowly
folk-song quotation and the otherwise high Classical style of composition (especially if they knew the folk song).

The opposition that arises here via simultaneous exposition of low folk-song quotation and minor-mode, even tragic, high Classical discourse is obviously related to the oppositions created by the sorts of successive (usually topical) juxtapositions above. In addition, the major mode of the original folk song and Mozart’s composition in the minor mode arguably create an implicit opposition between positive and negative emotional valence. For the purposes of this study, it is expedient to think of this superimposition as a prolonged overlap: a difference more in degree than kind. Goeth notes music’s particular propensity for this kind of parody: “Another reason why music lends itself well to parody is the fact that simultaneity is an integral part of its construction, with several layers being present almost at any point in a piece of music.”

Although Goeth is likely referring primarily to contrapuntal simultaneity in music, Mozart nevertheless takes advantage of music’s simultaneous nature to compose his joke.

In contrast to our other examples of oppositions, where there was always a specific locus of reinterpretation (or “punch line”) that we took for granted, there is no specific locus in this final example; no point where two contrasting musical frameworks dramatically butt heads with one another. Thus, the listener will not perceive humour until she recognizes the superimposition and reinterprets it as a humorous opposition at some point along the way. Assuming a listener picks up on the discrepancy mid-phrase, there may be a local punch line, but it will occur at different places for different listeners (if it is noticed at all). Of course, the lack of a single specific location for the maximum force of the opposition does not necessarily affect this

344 Goeth (2013, 254; Goeth’s emphasis). She also notes (ibid.) that this is one way in which humour in music and language differ, since “In spoken language, simultaneity causes confusion and incomprehensibility and is only sparsely used for special effects.”
passage’s ability to be funny, it simply means the placement of different listeners’ recognition of the opposition will vary.

Conclusion

Each of the examples above illustrates at least one humorous opposition created by incongruously deployed syntactic and/or semantic mechanisms. These mechanisms are most often musical topics in the examples above, but incongruous form-functional articulations are also involved. I also note the possibility for more general “frames of reference” that perform roles analogous to topics, but cannot properly be called topics because they lack precedent (e.g. Haydn’s “tuning” passage in the finale of Symphony No. 60). In every example I discuss, valence shifts occur when the music’s extramusical implications move suddenly from high to low social status, often with an accompanying shift from negative to positive emotion and/or high to low arousal. These shifts are brought about by sharp contrasts in other musical parameters (meter, dynamics, texture, timbre, melody, harmony, etc.). Each of these oppositions disrupts our listening experience when our musical or extramusical expectations are thwarted by the surprising successive or overlapped (or superimposed) arrival of contrasting new material or returning material (or external quotation).

I have occasionally reinterpreted the extramusical associations of the topics involved as ironic (or “mock”) inversions of their normal selves. For example, in the finale of Haydn’s Op. 33 No. 3, the minuet of Symphony No. 60, the first movement of Mozart’s K. 250, and the theme and variations of Michael Haydn’s Symphony in D (Perger 13) the surrounding musical context and the manner in which one of the topics was used led us to interpret its affective implications
as reversed. Thus, I label these topics as *mock-serioso* or *mock-march*, changing the effect of their opposition against a neighbouring topic. In these more complicated humorous articulations, as well as the other more straightforward situations, musical context plays an important role in guiding our interpretations, allowing the analyst to explain the elements of contrast at work and the listener to apprehend the humour therein.

Finally, although the examples in this chapter involve some clever or somewhat sophisticated compositional ploys, they tend to create an overall impression of gag-like or slapstick humour because they are highly localized and usually unfold through relatively straightforward compositional techniques. In the next chapter, I examine how composers generate more complex examples of musical humour in longer passages that produce more than one opposition and create an impression of excess.
4 Excess

Introduction to Excess

The second strategy by which Classical composers created musical humour is what I call “excess.”

As I explained in Chapter 2, a passage featuring this strategy can be broken into two components, each of which can produce oppositions. The first component features the surprise of superfluous repetition, combined with the delay of an expected future event (most clearly carried by its formal function). The humour that arises from the first component is still produced by valence shifts between contrasting elements. But, unlike in the juxtaposition of topics (and other scripts) we observed in Chapter 3, the oppositions in an excessive passage come from contrast between the expected “high” arrival of a later event and the actual “low” (redundant) reiterations of the same musical material. Furthermore, opposition is a local phenomenon, while excess is cumulative (it sinks in and intensifies over time).

The second component of excess is the articulation of the later event we expect. As we will see, humorous oppositions are not always created by the second component, but when they are, they resemble those in Chapter 3: the contrasts occur between two actual musical events or passages. The effect of the first component is to provide a prolonged sense of absent-mindedness or vacuity, before the second component presents a sudden jerk back to more normative discourse. The second component also cuts the tension that mounts as the excessive passage makes us wait longer and longer for the subsequent arrival, which is itself often experienced as a

---

345 As noted in Chapter 2 (esp. note 184), the concept of “excess” has been used by Sisman (1990), Dalmonte (1995), Huron (2004), and Goeth (2013, esp. 237–38 and 247) but I employ the term differently from these authors.

346 This aspect has been noted by several authors as variously “excessive” (Dalmonte [1995], Sisman [1990], Huron [2004]) or as a way of parodic “flaunting” (see Goeth 2013, 247; 251).
shock or incongruity. In a nutshell, both components can contain humorous opposition created by a valence shift from implied “high” to “low” stature and a noticeable departure from stylistic propriety. However, the manner by which these oppositions are created is more complex and relies more heavily on musical syntax than those we observed in the more straightforward oppositions in Chapter 3.

The discussions below examine several examples of humorous excess. These examples are divided into two types: (1) excessive passages that seem to be suggested by intraopus narrative sources and are retrospectively understood to set the stage for later anomalies, and (2) more flagrant excessive passages that have no clear intraopus precedents. In each example, I discuss the manner in which humour may be created in the first component at several possible locations, before addressing the nature of the second component’s return to normalcy.

In any example of humorous excess, the musical material is successively repeated to the extent that it appears to have “gone on for too long,” or “exceeded its potential.” Thus, in the clearest examples of humorous excess, the musical material is weak in melodic and/or harmonic interest and is reiterated to the extent that it gives an impression of vacuity or pedantry. Of course, simply repeating or prolonging something more than expected will not necessarily yield an incongruity. For example, a third iteration of a basic idea occurs occasionally in subordinate theme presentations and Mozart (in particular) often repeats post-cadential phrases or fragments many times. However, these further iterations of material are understood to be “extra” when compared to the most common stylistic norms for subordinate themes and closing sections, each of these phenomena occurs frequently enough that it is also understood to be stylistically

---

347 Caplin (1998, 99) notes the form-functional redundancy of this third basic idea. Caplin (ibid., 201) also considers “redundant repetitions” a kind of form-functional loosening technique.
appropriate. In Example 4.1, knowledge of the Classical extraopus context would likely prevent listeners from hearing an opposition between the normal and abnormal since extra repetitions can occur in Classical works, even if they are not the most common option. Example 4.1 clearly does not reach the point of excess: first, although the arpeggiated motive is repeated three times (mm. 28, 30, and 32), the pattern breaks at measure 33; and second, it travels harmonically through local tonicizations of A major, B minor, and E major, making it part of a conventional (not redundant) harmonic progression.

Example 4.1: Mozart’s Piano Sonata No. 18 K. 576, i, mm. 28–34

Furthermore, excess requires an unnatural degree of repetition in immediate succession: a composer’s repeated use of a motive at different, non-successive locations in a piece also does not create humorous excess. Indeed, the flexible use of a motive in different functional guises across a work or movement is typically considered artful when successfully employed.\textsuperscript{349}

\textsuperscript{348} In a local sense, such variations on typical formal organization may be considered a kind of second- or third-level default in the manner used by Hepokoski and Darcy (2006).

\textsuperscript{349} Haydn’s “How do you do?” motive from the opening movement of String Quartet Op. 33 No. 5 is a good non-excessive example of recurring (non-subsequent) reuse of a conspicuous motive.
Thus, we can only judge musical material to be excessive when each repetition serves the same functional, and therefore syntactical, role. This repetition is imperative for humorous excess because, in order for excess to be perceived within an otherwise normal musical discourse, the appropriate subsequent syntactical unit must be evaded, avoided, and implausibly delayed by the abnormal repetition.\(^{350}\) In other words, the next functional musical passage (e.g., recapitulation, cadence, new beginning, sequential repetition, etc.) must be expected and its arrival must be delayed for excess to be perceived. Almén notes a mode of listening commonly invoked by the sorts of comic irony involved in passages that I describe here as excessive: “We are listening within the frame of expectation: we anticipate what will happen based on our familiarity with causal, stylistic, generic, formal, semantic, and narrative conventions. When these conventions are subverted, we are surprised or disappointed.”\(^{351}\) Our “frame of expectation” is particularly influential where humorous excess is concerned because—unlike in the previous chapter where we enjoyed overt, actual opposition in the music proper—the oppositions in excessive passages are created between our expectations and what we actually hear. Although Goeth allows, “Volubility itself can be funny,”\(^{352}\) the syntactic redundancy of excessive passages is what causes us to perceive an opposition to our expectation for conventional Classical procedures. Put simply, an excessive passage creates humour when an expected, “high” arrival of the subsequent syntactic unit is contradicted by, and opposed to, the actual, redundant, “low” excessive repetitions we hear instead.

\(^{350}\) Huron (2004, 701) notes Schickele’s use of “implausible delays” in his musical jokes.

\(^{351}\) Almén (2008, 169; citing Foulke and Smith [1972: 860–64]). Almén (ibid.) also notes another mode where “we listen from without, expecting to be surprised and disappointed, and this adds a layer of complexity to how we listen.” He explains (ibid.), “These two modes of listening are not resolved, but are held in constant balance; ultimately, however, the ironic narrative structure tells us that we should not expect what we expected.”

\(^{352}\) Goeth (2013, 256; Goeth’s emphasis).

123
Some examples of prolonged repetition that meet these criteria, but are not necessarily funny, may occur to the reader. The dominant prolongation from the introduction to Beethoven’s Symphony No. 6 (Example 4.2) is one such example.

Example 4.2: Beethoven’s Symphony No. 6, i, mm. 13–30

Beethoven’s dominant prolongation has the repetition of a syntactical unit required for humorous excess, but the passage is not humorous because the influence of other musical aspects keeps the repetition from sounding inartistic and from opposing Classical conventions. Initially, the passage may appear excessive at one metric level (i.e. if the listener hears a series of one-measure extensions), but when other musical cues shift the listener’s attention to a different metric level, the repetition becomes stylistically appropriate.
For example, when measure 16 begins, it sounds like the fourth measure of a four-measure group that agrees with the prevailing phrase grouping before this excerpt. But when we first hear measure 17, we are most likely to hear the beginning of a series of one-measure fragments because of the stylistic tendency for fragmentation of previous phrase groups into shorter segments in dominant prolongations like this one. We also expect at least four measures of dominant prolongation before the main theme begins, but it was hardly necessary for each of these four measures to have been the same—in fact it would have been inappropriate. The catalyst for the apparent motivic fragmentation to one-measure units is measure 16, where something goes astray. That is, the four-measure group from measures 17 to 20, which is present (and marked by the arrival of the structural C5), is preceded by the early arrival of the dominant in measure 16, which replaces the expected dominant preparation harmony (perhaps an augmented-sixth chord or another predominant), producing an effect that could be called “harmonic syncopation.” Had Beethoven written a more protracted harmonic progression by inserting a predominant harmony in measure 16, he could have begun measure 17 (the expected

---

353 This prevailing grouping is represented (in Example 4.2) by a solid bracket above measures 13 to 15 (all measures are counted by their downbeats). This solid bracket becomes dotted where we shift to a new implied four-measure grouping, represented by the solid bracket beginning above measure 16 with the “early” arrival of the dominant. The new solid brackets (indicating four-measure grouping) take over until measure 25 where the syncopated grouping “resolves” back to the original grouping, as shown by the dotted bracket’s completion in measure 24 and the solid bracket beginning in measure 25. Put simply, the solid brackets represent what we are most likely to hear in real time, while the dotted ones track our departure from, and return to, the original four-measure grouping. The subsequent discussion in the main text details the musical signals that drive this interpretation.

354 These one-measure fragments are shown by smaller brackets in measures 16 and 17 (underneath the larger four-measure groups) and by dotted lines in measures 18 and 19 as focus shifts toward a four-measure grouping. This sort of fragmentation is common in post-cadential (or post-dominant arrival) dominant prolongations that conclude a transition. See, for example, Caplin (1998, 14 [ex. 1.4]; 70 [ex. 5.18]; 75).

355 This type of harmonic syncopation—where Beethoven “jumps the gun,” so to speak, with a goal harmony (sometimes in inversion) and then continues to prolong it—obscures the harmonic arrival and occurs in many of Beethoven’s other compositions. See, for example, measures 68 and 93 of the first movement of his Piano Sonata in G major, Op. 14 No. 2 (see Caplin [1998, 147; 155]) and the anacrusis to measure 16 of the second movement of the Piano Sonata in E-flat, Op. 31 No. 3 (see Caplin [2013, 224–25]). These three “early” dominant entries are examples of what Caplin (1998) calls a “premature dominant arrival” and are less jarring than that shown in Example 4.2 because they lack the same degree of hypermetric syncopation.
beginning of a new phrase group) with a stronger dominant arrival that accorded with the
beginning of the new group. Instead, the syncopating effect is created and further enhanced by
simply repeating the content of the anacrusis to measure 17 in each of the next four measures.
Attention to the four-measure level (and corresponding inattention to the repeated single
measures) is encouraged because the near-identity of measure 16 and the following measures
reinforce the hypermetric syncopation already present by virtue of the dominant arrival, an
arrival that supplants an expected half cadence in measure 17. Syncopation at the four-measure
level then continues in measure 20 with the early arrival of the dynamic climax (the forte
marking). Put another way, our attention is drawn to the syncopation in measures 16 to 20 by the
repetition of the one-measure figures, and remains drawn to it by the strange dynamics. The one-
measure repetition now forms the backdrop against which the four-measure group syncopation
takes cognitive precedence. The syncopation is resolved at measure 25 since that is where the
dynamics stabilize at piano and, more importantly, where the last downbeat is marked by
accompanying instruments and where a final four-measure rise through a sixth (C5 to A5) is
heard, retrospectively, to begin.

At no point in all of this is the repetition of the one-measure fragment irksome or
particularly amusing. Though one may hear a peasant-like naïveté that reinforces the symphonic
introduction’s pastoral topic, the one-measure fragment’s repetition primarily serves to establish
the syncopation and, once it achieves that end, recedes into the background of our attention. If it
had continued into measure 26 it may have become tiresome or excessive, but the context would
have to be different in order to produce humour.

Although we may find something humorous in other examples of extensive (especially
post-cadential) repetition by Beethoven, he effectively limits this passage to a series of
harmonically syncopated four-measure groups by directing us to listen at the four-measure rather than one-measure level. Beethoven’s distinctions between the four-measure groups add to this passage’s anacrustic tension, heightening our anticipation of the impending theme, rather than creating a humorous passage from a syntactical function made redundant by excessive repetition. There is certainly a lot of repetition in the general sense, but nowhere does an opposition arise between normal and abnormal discourse, nor is there a valence shift from implied high to low stature. In addition, the manner in which Beethoven connects this passage (the would-be excessive first component) to the following arrival of the exposition proper (the delayed event and second component) is characteristic of the style and not abrupt, despite dynamic, textural, melodic, and harmonic changes.

In contrast to Beethoven’s functionally effective and artful introduction, the following analyses discuss particularly anomalous and brazenly excessive examples of humorous Classical instrumental music. All of the following examples were composed by Haydn and Beethoven, who could be called the foremost proponents of Classical excess because of their penchant for such passages.356

**Narrative Excess**

In the first examples in this chapter, the first component of excess is foreshadowed by motivic cues that introduce a problem or conflict into the composition. In each of these examples, we will locate a motivic source for the later excessive passage and trace it through the

---

356 Mozart composed a few passages that exhibit some excess, but not to the same extent (i.e. they are not necessarily humorous in themselves). Some examples of a Mozartian kind of excess, which I do not engage here, can be found in the fourth movement of K. 250 (see Example 2.3a). In this movement, as elsewhere in Mozart, any impression of excess is secondary to simpler oppositions that are the primary sources of humour.
piece. These sources are introduced into the intraopus context relatively early and are revisited throughout the piece in an anomalous—i.e. metrically, harmonically, contrapuntally awkward—way, such that they “buck the trend,” disrupting the musical continuity. The motivic material then becomes associated with an element of awkwardness in the composition and suggests further awkwardness and humour when the material returns. For Almén, “a narrative must embody an initial conflict, transgression, or opposition among elements; this produces a disequilibrium that becomes a source of dynamism for the unfolding process.” In other words, by creating the possibility for further anomalies involving the same material, the composer opens a narrative pathway that leads (in these cases) to humorous excess later in the work.

The long-range planning required to create narrative pathways like those found below most often creates a more sophisticated humorous effect than we have seen so far. To balance this sophistication, the second component of excess often (though not always) offers a wrenching, gag-like punch line that can activate a sense of opposition related to those we observed in Chapter 3. The jarring arrival of this event can, in some cases, produce humour independently of the preceding excess that delayed it, but always manages somehow to get the music back on track.

Even with an ideal listener, however, the narrative’s trajectory—set up by the composer’s earlier anomalous use and reuse of the same motivic material—may remain detectable only in retrospect. According to Almén, “Clues to the presence of a narrative transgression are often hard to detect at first […] It is only later, when our expectations have been subverted, that we can

---

357 Almén (2008, 172) uses the same idiom to refer to disruptions of rhythmic continuity in Haydn.
358 Agawu (2009b, 275) provides this concise summary of Almén’s understanding of a musical narrative.
see to what extent this was both hidden and prefigured.”\textsuperscript{359} In other words, “Irony…tends to sneak up on the listener.”\textsuperscript{360} Since humour, by its very nature, requires reinterpretation of phenomena, it can be effectively created whether or not the listener apprehends the narrative setup for the eventual humorous outcome. That is, humour is the culmination of the earlier oddities, which need not appear humorous in themselves: the listener will make sense of the weird (later, humorous) event by virtue of what had been happening earlier. In other words, we retrospectively engage the intraopus narrative (created by motivic recurrences) as a source for the humorous excess that arrives later. And the affective success of that humorous event depends on its being related to the preceding oddities. In Almén’s words, “The eventual ironic reversal is all the more startling because the hints of its arrival have been submerged, awaiting a retrospective glance.”\textsuperscript{361}

Excess can occur in any location of any musical form, but tends to occur more frequently (or perhaps is simply more obvious) at especially volatile formal locations: locations that \textit{must} do something very specific if the composition is to adhere to stylistic conventions. In the first two examples, the excessive passages form the latter part of a retransition (specifically the dominant prolongation) before being punctuated by a surprising arrival of the recapitulation, for which they are retrospectively understood to have prepared the listener or “set the stage.” The retransition is one of the most specific and easily definable formal functions in Classical music. Retransitions return a composition to its home key, establish and reiterate the home key’s dominant harmony, and repeat musical ideas with increasing fragmentation. These features create smooth connections with, and momentum toward, a recapitulation, whose point of arrival

\textsuperscript{359} Almén (2008, 170).
\textsuperscript{360} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{361} Ibid., 173.
feels predictable and inevitable to an attentive listener.\textsuperscript{362} Retransitions, therefore, are particularly well suited for humorous excess.

In Examples 4.3 and 4.4, Haydn takes advantage of the Classical retransition’s inherent capacity to convey humour by throwing a wrench into the retransitional process, bending stylistic norms, thwarting listeners’ expectations, and turning the music into humorous diversion. Since it would be noticeably less effective to surprise listeners in the same way in different compositions (simply because their memory would largely eliminate the surprise), the manner in which Haydn creates humorous excess in these retransitions varies. But in every retransition below, the humour arises from some crafty compositional maneuver to delay the inevitable recapitulation with superfluous preparatory material. Furthermore, these examples of humour involve narrative precursors, such that the excessive material used to delay the recapitulation derives from ideas introduced earlier in the composition.

\textit{Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, fourth movement}

In the finale of Symphony No. 98, Haydn’s first compositional abnormality occurs in the expository transition.\textsuperscript{363}


\textsuperscript{363} Burnham (2005, 62–67) discusses several passages from this finale: he discusses the “comic effect” of the main theme, comic elements of contrast in measures 115 to 124, and “big arrivals [that] tend to be overdramatized in a manner bordering on parody.” That is, while I focus on a specific articulation of humorous articulation, Burnham’s discussion of the finale addresses what might be referred to as more general elements of the comic throughout the movement.
Measures 40 to 42 include three anacrustic one-measure segments that sound like three false starts played by someone who has entered early. Burnham recognizes that “these three isolated upbeats are as nothing compared to what’s in store for the big return to the theme later in the movement.”\(^{364}\) Associating this motive with “a kind of character tic that [is] isolated and exaggerated for comic effect,” Burnham also implicitly recognizes its narrative capacity.\(^{365}\) Wheelock refers to these false starts as “autonomous voices at odds with the communal authority of the full ensemble” and calls the entire movement “the instrumental equivalent of a comedy of manners.”\(^{366}\) Although I agree with Wheelock’s reading of this section, and most of her conclusions about the movement as a whole, her ex post facto analysis detracts somewhat from the guessing game and surprising outcomes of the false start gestures here and later in the movement. For example, she suggests that these gestures are early efforts to attain more solid

\(^{364}\) Ibid., 68–69.

\(^{365}\) Ibid., 68. Burnham (63) notes the common, and often comic, “downhill trajectory” of Haydn’s symphonic finales.

\(^{366}\) Wheelock (1992, 183). Wheelock also labels the location of the subordinate theme incorrectly: she claims it extends from measures 82 to 102, but that is all post-cadential material. The subordinate theme actually begins on a standing-on-the-dominant in measure 65 and arrives at a perfect authentic cadence in measure 86.
footing in F major, which has not been adequately prepared by the transition thus far and will need further transitional material before it is properly established.\textsuperscript{367} But when attentive listeners hear these anacrustic gestures in real time, they should expect a subordinate theme to begin in F major: I would expect them to be less concerned about the wellbeing of F major (especially after the strong F major dominant arrival in measure 36) and more interested in whether or not the music will escape this motivic stutter. We should expect a subordinate theme because our knowledge of extraopus context tells us that Haydn often wrote non-modulating transitions that continue normally to subordinate themes, especially in monothematic sonata expositions. When the next measure arrives, our expectation for a monothematic subordinate theme appears to be fulfilled. But after only two measures, the theme drops back to the register of the preceding transition and resumes the \textit{Sturm und Drang} topic with a brief tonicization of G minor.\textsuperscript{368} At this point, we can may look back to the “proposed medial caesura” brought about by the F major dominant arrival (m. 36) and recognize what Hepokoski and Darcy call “medial caesura declined,” after which the “new thematic module reinvigorates [transition]-activity.”\textsuperscript{369}

This return to transition function is a second surprise associated with the thwarted expectation of the subordinate theme’s arrival. When we take a closer look at the lead-in to the would-be theme (mm. 39–42), we notice that everything in the movement up to this point has involved measures grouped into twos and fours. Though there are four measures between the last F major chord (m. 38) and the beginning of the presumed subordinate theme (m. 43), it sounds

\textsuperscript{367} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{368} This jarring and entertaining return to \textit{Sturm und Drang} occurs in humorous alternation with thematic episodes in the development.

\textsuperscript{369} Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, 45–46). Here, Hepokoski and Darcy describe a somewhat similar passage from the finale of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 2—and a common compositional strategy for “medial caesura declined”—where there is a resumption of transitional rhetoric that “presses toward a V:HC [half cadence in the dominant key] caesura finally articulated in m. 50.”
like there are only three full measures because measure 39 sounds like a grand pause. That is, the next four-measure group begins when we hear the first of the false starts, rather than in the empty measure 39. Since the false starts are one measure long, the preceding music conditions us to expect two or four of them, rather than the three that we get. Thus, the start of the putative subordinate theme is experienced as either a measure late or, more probably, a measure early. But despite the surprising entrance of the would-be theme, we quickly reinterpret the grouping back to the original four-measure groups and understand the theme’s opening to occur on the downbeat of the first measure of a new group, rather than as the last measure of the preceding one: we get what we expect, but not when we expect it.

Although the surprises in this section might create humour, the problematic false starts are unlikely to produce humour at this juncture. Instead, the surprises caused by the three gestures establish their narrative, intraopus role as motivic signals for impending stylistic oddities. These false starts are recast in the subordinate theme’s closing section and in the coda, but their most humorous use occurs in the developmental retransition.

Symphony No. 98’s development is a unique episodic mishmash of fragmented melodic modules and convoluted tonal forays: it stretches the limits of a stylistically normative Classical development, even without the humorous retransition. It begins (surprisingly) by slipping up a minor third to tonicize A-flat major, and falls through F minor, before the solo violinist lapses back into an autonomous, out-of-place, and hesitant series of false starts. This time, the violin

---

370 Here again, the likelier grouping is represented with solid brackets above Example 3.4a and the interpretation based on the preceding grouping (which begins in the empty measure 39) is shown with dotted brackets until the grouping syncopation “resolves” back to it in measure 43.

371 This is much easier to accomplish here than in Beethoven’s dominant prolongation (Example 4.2).

372 Wheelock (1992, 185) calls this development “an entirely episodic and relaxed excursion, neither linear and cumulative in intensity nor exploratory of the materials it presents.”
begins with a metrically consonant four-measure passage (bracketed in Example 4.3b), but leads the orchestra on a tonal tangent toward distant keys of C-sharp minor and A major.

Example 4.3b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 161–70

This leads to a hapless episode and an entertaining juxtaposition of topics. Eventually, the development arrives at, and exaggeratedly prolongs the submediant’s dominant: a conventional goal toward the end of Classical development sections which, in this case, ends an implied (false) retransition. After this false retransition prolongs the wrong (the submediant’s) dominant, Haydn seems to start the development over again with a passage nearly identical to its opening: it’s as though he’s scrapped the whole thing and is going to try again. He doesn’t get very far before he stalls on the wrong dominant once more, but manages finally to arrive on the home key dominant (labeled “V (HK)” in m. 219).

\[\text{Example 4.3b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 161–70}\]

While one could argue that an opposition is created between the galant style and Sturm und Drang, I do not believe there is sufficient contrast or valence shift to create humorous oppositions between topics in this development, nor do I believe that Haydn plays up these juxtapositions to the extent that he does in humorous passages. An interested reader may wish to compare the topical contrasts in this development to some of those in the previous chapter, but this is not a comparison I will explore here.
Having reached the correct dominant, the composer need only write an appropriate prolongation of the dominant that leads to the recapitulation: it would be rather abrupt to begin the recapitulation here, as shown in the simple recomposition below (the vertical line above the score marks where 10 measures have been removed).

After the dominant arrival, an appropriate lead-in to the recapitulation seems to begin promisingly and enthusiastically. And after two two-measure groups, we expect further
fragmentation into a couple of one-measure groups. Instead, what we get is more easily read as
two more two-measure groups in which there is a recession in surface rhythm that undoes the
passage’s needed momentum and creates humorous excess.374

Example 4.3e: Haydn’s Symphony No. 98, iv, mm. 221–32

These groups sound distracted—as though they have lost track of what they were supposed to do.
In this sense, they recall the autonomous yet uncertain quality of the exposition’s false starts. At
the last minute, the music gathers itself up again in a desperate attempt at a half-measure pattern
that Wheelock calls, “at once teasing and urgent.”375 This time, it manages to lead into the theme
in a desperation indicated by the simple speeding up and (excessive) repetition that suggests an
inability to think of anything more artful.

Haydn had originally composed this section differently.376 As the autograph reproduction
shows below, he intended to use the false-start idea from the exposition and development at this
spot.377

374 Burnham (2005, 68–71) offers a somewhat similar discussion of this passage.
375 Wheelock (1992, 188).
376 See Wheelock (1992, 188–92).
The result is a rather tired reuse of an idea that quickly loses its charm. Presumably, Haydn recognized that this would have been less interesting and decided to alter the final version to include more excessive and panicked repetitions that “flaunt” all or part of this earlier motive.\textsuperscript{378}

In the revised version (Example 4.3e), the passage involves the consequences of detachment from the group—the autonomous waywardness—that we already saw in the expository false-start gestures but that, in the earlier passages, seemed mostly curious and perhaps faintly amusing. In other words, the earlier gestures set up this one: in the exposition, the autonomous voice comes in early in a way that betrays a misunderstanding of the metric hierarchy dictated by the ensemble; earlier in the development, the same voice corrects the metric dissonance, but seems to lose the tonal thread, meandering through the disconnected regions of the developmental core; and in the retransition, the opposition of autonomous individual voice and collective, symphonic voice causes the music to lose its own thread, and to be driven to desperation in an effort to get back on track. The result is a dominant prolongation that sounds not just a little lost, but \textit{incongruous} and \textit{excessive}. It then seems to make the best of a bad situation, perhaps even trying to cover up for the immediately preceding lapse.

Below is a shorter “normalized” version of the retransition that uses nearly identical material, but with more typical fragmentation.

\textsuperscript{377} See Landon (1981, 2: 365 [appendix IV]) for the autograph.

\textsuperscript{378} I noted in Chapter 2 (page 17) that Goeth (2013, 251) considers “flaunting” a common way to construct parody.
Since the recomposition has eight measures and Haydn’s version has ten, it seems that there are merely two extra measures. But the two measures we might have expected (mm. 226–27 in the recomposition) are replaced by four off-track measures in Haydn’s version (mm. 226–29 in Example 4.3e). The result, to my ears, is a cleverly crafted and amusing limp into the recapitulation.

Thus, Haydn’s earlier false start gestures also set us up for the humour of the retransition in a more general way: they lead us, according to intraopus context and the narrative pathway they open, to expect odd things to happen at a major formal juncture of the movement; in this case, as the music stands on the dominant preparing for a new beginning. If we take a comedy routine as an analogy, we notice that, because of a comedian’s timing and joke setup, we nearly always know roughly when the joke will happen because of other contextual information we have picked up from other comedians and from this particular comedian’s way of delivering a punch line. But the funniest jokes are the ones where we don’t know the punch line itself. Likewise with Haydn, we perceive the contextual cue provided by the coincidence of specific kinds of oddities at specific formal junctures, but we cannot know what strange new turn things will take at the next such juncture until it hits us over the head.

This assumes we understand Haydn’s measures 230 and 231 as functionally equivalent to measures 228 and 229 of the recomposition. These measures differ in rhythm only to keep the driving rhythmic character consistent in the recomposition.
My analysis of the excess in the finale of Symphony No. 98 has focused so far on a narrative pathway—opened by motivic awkwardness earlier in the work—that connects earlier events to later bizarre grouping implications involving “extra” measures in the movement’s development. Having now clarified the nature and manner of the excess in this passage, it remains to describe the humorous oppositions in play.

As already noted, any excessive passage creates the abstract opposition, normal/abnormal state of affairs. But the more specific opposition found here occurs between the (high) artful composition and the (low) parodic “flaunting” of that which does not seem to bear repetition. That is, the expectation that the repetitions will end and yield the next expected syntactic function—the recapitulation—is thwarted by the unexpected extra repetitions. Due to the two-measure groupings discussed above, the locations with the strongest expectations for the arrival of the recapitulation (and the resulting return to normalcy) are the anacruses to measures 226, 228, and 230. But, because the melodic D5s and E-flat5s in measures 228 and 229 are identical to those in the recapitulation’s anacrusis, our expectations are likely to be most focused at the anacrusis to measure 230. The implausible delay of the recapitulation brought about by the further repetition of these pitches (mm. 230–231) creates an opposition between the expected “high” return to normalcy and the actual “low” continuation of functional superfluity we hear instead. In the previous chapter, I often noted the powerful force musical topics play, but here, as in most examples of humorous excess, the opposition relies more heavily on the form-functional expectation for a new beginning that is set up by retransitional rhetoric.

Finally, we must note that the second component of the humorous excess in this development does not appear contrasting or jarring enough to produce humour: no clear valence shift is present to create an opposition between the retransition and the arrival of the
recapitulation. Indeed, there is no topical contrast whatsoever. To be sure, the recapitulation’s arrival is perhaps not a particularly convincing example of the sort of “high art” we often associate with Haydn, but neither is it opposed to the preceding material. In this excessive passage, only the first component of excess seems to produce humour: the second component—humorously delayed as it is by the first—serves primarily to return things to normal.

*Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 “The Bird,” fourth movement*

Haydn plays a similar game over a shorter time span in a retransition of the rondo-form finale of String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 “The Bird.” But here, Haydn’s humorous ploy is predicated on the excessive melodic emphasis on scale degree five. It is not surprising to find humour in this quartet, as it belongs to the opus subtitled *Gli scherzi,* but the retransition from this movement is perhaps the funniest in the Op. 33 quartets. As in Symphony No. 98’s finale, Haydn creates implications for future humour earlier in the movement. For example, the rondo refrain begins with an “unpromising beginning” on a poorly voiced tonic 6/4 and is internally repetitive to a degree not easily found elsewhere in Haydn.

---

380 Wheelock (1992, 111) briefly discusses some of this particular opus. My discussion of simple oppositions in this movement occurs in Chapter 3 (Example 3.8).

381 Of course, the finale of Op. 33 No. 2 takes the cake for the funniest movement (in its entirety) in the Op. 33 quartets.

382 Ibid., 108.

383 See Webster (1977) for his discussion of Haydn’s bass part-crossing and seemingly erroneous six-fours.
Clearly, the most notable irregularity is the ridiculous reiteration of G5. According to Burnham, this theme “comes on like a hyperactive clown” and the “combination of high energy and low stakes is funny.”\textsuperscript{384} We might also hear the G5 chirping its way through the movement’s melodic lines as a pesky pigeon that the first violinist can’t seem to dispatch.\textsuperscript{385} It is hard to overstate the impact of this pitch when it eventually forces the movement—and therefore the quartet—to conclude on a weakly voiced tonic with scale degree five in the upper voice.\textsuperscript{386}

\textsuperscript{384} Burnham (2005, 64). Burnham discusses this quartet briefly, but focuses on only the opening refrain and the coda.

\textsuperscript{385} Haydn may have acquired this “tic” from Mozart: the first violinist’s melody in the first movement of Mozart’s second string quartet (K. 155; 1772–73) also appears to be stuck on scale degree 5.

\textsuperscript{386} This is decidedly odd in the Classical style. To put this in an intraopus context for the Op. 33 quartets: the only other movement in any of the quartets that ends with an imperfect authentic cadence is the minuet of No. 5, and it ends with scale degree 5 in the upper voice.
Haydn’s excessive reuse of G5 creates many passages that might provoke a chuckle, but the first retransition contains the strangest and most humorous use of this intraopus irregularity.

This dominant prolongation features choppy staccato figures traded between instruments and a caricature of a typical call and response passage. Wheelock also notes the “ludicrous…extended mimicry between paired voices that makes a mockery of imitation and inversion as artful contrapuntal devices” in this movement. As the imitative figures ascend in this passage, the first four measures awkwardly trade the dominant triad’s chord tones before the annoying avian returns to superimpose the G5 on the F5 (the dominant seventh) in the final fragments.

---

Example 4.4b: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 166–70

Example 4.4c: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 63–72

---

Since the G5 never relents, the awkward and unsuccessful communication between the upper and lower “birds”—the sixth leap in the first violins and the harmonic second between the two violins are both awkward according to harmonic and gestural precedents set up in the movement so far—continues until they reach an apparent impasse, in the form of a grand pause. It is easy to imagine a different outcome, where the upper and lower voices cooperate in a more conventional manner. In the hypothetical recomposition below, for example, the G5 falls more naturally to the dominant seventh (F5), leaps of a third are retained, the harmonic second is removed, and the retransition concludes in a more stylistically appropriate fashion.

Example 4.4d: Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, iv, mm. 63–“72”: recomposition

Of course, this does not occur in Haydn’s version. Instead, the G5 saturates the retransition, delays the refrain’s return, prevents a smooth lead-in to the theme (which begins on G5), and forces the retransition’s concluding grand pause. Mirka notes that the grand pause was a common ploy by Haydn and that it “may portray the hesitation of an imaginary composer starting and stopping in an apparent lack of purpose and direction.” Mirka (2009, 300) discusses many examples of Haydn’s grand pauses. Perry-Camp (1979, 23) also notes, “The master of the humorous silence was Haydn.” Mozart was also drawn to these sorts of pauses (see Mirka [2009, 114]), but the most glaring instances in his music are composed in a clearly Haydnesque fashion. Compare, for example, Haydn’s String Quartet’s Op. 64 to Mozart’s String Quartet K. 419 (written only about six months later). See also Mozart’s K. 428, K. 464, and K. 465.
four-measure grouping and gives the returning theme some breathing room. It also gives the listener a moment to reflect on the preceding material, effectively punctuating the rather artless dominant prolongation and turning the retransition into a relatively subtle joke.\textsuperscript{389}

As in Symphony No. 98, an intraopus irregularity—here, the persistent and often awkward use of G5 as a cover tone—again pervades the movement. Haydn uses this motivic signal to effectively create, and prepare the listener for, humour in the retransition. Once again, the manner of the recapitulation’s delay creates an opposition between the syntactically informed expectation that the stylistically appropriate (high) recapitulation will arrive momentarily, and the continuing (low) clunky counterpoint and grand pause hiccup that occur instead. Furthermore, the arrival of the recapitulation, like that in Symphony No. 98, does not punctuate the passage by arriving strangely, nor does it present any topical (or other) contrast with the previous passage that could create a humorous opposition. Instead, although it sounds late, it acts more much appropriately than the preceding passage and gets the music back on track.

\textit{Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 5}

Retransitions are conducive to the sorts of syntactical delays necessary for humorous excess, but the most common harmonic occasion for excess is that of passage through the subdominant.\textsuperscript{390} According to Gjerdingen, the subdominant-prolonging “indugio” schema tends

\textsuperscript{389} Riepel (1752, 58) similarly remarks on the effects of sudden pauses.

\textsuperscript{390} To be clear, I mean IV, not the more general subdominant harmonic function, which I refer to elsewhere as “predominant.”
to exhibit a “playful tarrying” as “the listener is forced to linger in a busy stasis”\textsuperscript{391} until forward motion is restored by a cadential formula. And Burnham notes that the subdominant was “a favorite site for distraction in Haydn’s music.”\textsuperscript{392} This is perhaps because the subdominant, occupying a typical harmonic function of either an elaboration in a tonic prolongation or a predominant harmony, can play a uniquely “uncertain” harmonic-functional role depending on how it is approached. For example, after a first-inversion tonic chord, a listener should normally expect the subdominant to serve a predominant function.\textsuperscript{393} But following a root position tonic, the listener is unlikely to know whether the subdominant will move toward a cadential dominant or return to the tonic (especially if the phrase structure is unclear), unless the voice leading is particularly paradigmatic. Beethoven takes advantage of this ambivalent property in his Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 5 with an excessive prolongation of the subdominant.

In this Bagatelle Beethoven drastically expands the subdominant in a cadential progression before the final cadence by stubbornly reiterating its root and third in alternation between the right and left hands. This subdominant prolongation is introduced into the intraopus context much earlier in the piece and the motive’s halting and rigid nature is reminiscent of that in Haydn’s Symphony No. 98 and String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3 (Examples 4.3 and 4.4). From the first phrase, Beethoven sounds the subdominant root and third in alternation between the hands and already it has a halting effect, threatening to thwart rhythmic and harmonic progress in the theme. There is also inherent awkwardness in the original motive as each note seems to arrive in a jauntily haphazard fashion and the hands never manage to align.

\textsuperscript{391} Gjerdingen (2007, 273–75). The indulgio schema does not appear in the subdominant prolongations I discuss, but its contemporary use as a delaying technique in other works is noteworthy (see Gjerdingen [273–84]).

\textsuperscript{392} Burnham (2005, 67).

\textsuperscript{393} This is a very common progression for what Caplin (1998, esp. 61–62; ex. 5.6) terms “expanded cadential progression.”
Even though the figure conveys a halting impression each of the 11 times (including repeats) it occurs, listeners will still be surprised at the dramatic increase in awkwardness after all of these similar occurrences when it radically impedes the harmonic progress of the theme later in the piece (mm. 59–65).^{394}

There are a few ways to look at the intraopus “problem” (i.e. the source of waywardness that eventually leads to an excessive passage) in this Bagatelle. We might hear a registral disconnect arising as the range is drastically and suddenly thrown upward in the second measure, or we might hear the unnatural machinations of “something mechanical encrusted on the living”

^{394} This is especially true after hearing the drawn-out prolongation of the dominant in the small ternary’s contrasting middle section, or even the strangely minor-mode central section of the movement’s large ternary form.
in the artificial alternation between the left and right hands. Janet Levy writes, “Musical parodies often rely heavily on stylistic excesses that either are, or border on being, mechanical in their character.” And in her discussion of this passage, she notes its “suspended animation [where] we have the impression of something purely mechanical: while there is movement, there is no life.” With the rapid, evenly spaced alternations between hands, we might hear Beethoven “miming the mechanical” as he “keeps rigidly reiterating the same pattern beyond the limits of stylistic propriety.” We might even be tempted to hear a specific mechanical contraption like the “Panharmonikon”—a device invented by Johann Nepomuk Malzel to play military percussion—that, according to Dalmonte, Beethoven caricatures in Symphony No. 8.

While the mechanical characteristics of this passage are indisputable, I do not find humour in the mechanical nature of this passage. Of course, this does not invalidate Levy’s analysis, which expertly addresses nuances of Classical style and gesture alongside this passage’s mechanical rigidity. However, I find an interpretation of a more human conflict, which Levy associates with Tovey, to be more compelling when making a case for humour. Human narratives offer a more explicit connection between “high” and “low” elements. Here, we might interpret a human conflict between the As and Fs: perhaps two children trying stubbornly to upstage one another. Conflict is a common thread in Beethoven’s compositions and here its dramatization leads to humour, rather than transcendence or some other sort of climax.

---

395 Levy (1992), inspired by Bergson (1911), notes this mechanical aspect in several Classical instrumental works, including this Bagatelle.
396 Levy (1992, 244).
397 Ibid., 227.
398 Ibid., 230. In addition to discussing mechanical elements in witty passages, Levy (ibid., 233) also notes some associations with an “amusingly absent-minded character.”
399 Ibid., 236.
401 See Levy (1992, 226n5).
The conflict’s excess reaches its height in measures 61 and 62 where the argument grinds the cadential progression’s harmonic and rhythmic progress to a halt. Until now, the F6 has always had the last word, but here Beethoven creates the impression—using the intraopus context he has set up with motives heard earlier in the piece—that the As and Fs are both adamant about having the last word. The spat continues as it winds the music back up (mm. 62–65), so to speak, after having halted virtually all forward progress. Throughout this subdominant prolongation one gets the impression that the argument has devolved from a sort of “I’m right,” “No, I’m right,” to a full-fledged, “Am too!” “Are not!” With the crescendo and renewed rhythmic vigour in measures 63 and 64, this conflict becomes hilariously overstated and the hopeless battle only ends when the F6 “jumps the gun” and the A5 snatches the last word on the latter half of the second beat of measure 65.

Humorous opposition can arise at several junctions between measures 59 and 64 when the implied valence shifts between our (high) expectation of a relatively normal return to the opening material and the (low) excessive, motivically driven, subdominant prolongation that arrives instead. The additional intraopus incongruity—the bass’s F2 is followed by the high F6 instead of the A5, which came first in every other case—does not affect the excess or humour of the preceding measures, which were capable of creating those effects independently: it is easy to imagine this passage’s flagrant reiteration of the leaping gesture over the subdominant (mm. 59–65) being humorous without the bizarre, lop-sided return of the opening idea.

Furthermore, although the “resolution” of the conflict occurs in measure 65 by introducing a subtly amusing twist (A5 having the last word), the sense of a punch line created by a bizarre resolution of the conflict (component 2) is faint. Instead, if we keep in mind our analogy to the arguing children and imagine observing this ridiculous quarrel from the outside
(as we are doing when we listen to a performance), it is clear that by far the funniest part is the unrelenting stubbornness over the course of the argument, not the place where it is resolved. Even though the excessive passage is expanded across measures 59 to 65, the humour culminates somewhere between measures 61 and 64 since this is where humorous opposition created by the continuous small-scale repetition is most conspicuous.

From a simple notational point of view, this crescendo and accelerando passage is reminiscent of Haydn’s retransition in the finale of Symphony No. 98, but Beethoven achieves humour in a far more obvious and heavy-handed manner. In the end, the subdominant harmony is prolonged to the point of stylistic impropriety, while the A5 and F6 duke it out, desperately trying to upstage the other throughout this entertainingly stubborn conflict.

The sort of motivic, intraopus “cause and effect” Beethoven demonstrates here—where earlier motivic repetitions seem to beget further, more inventive ones—can be read solely as the culmination of those earlier (in this case, “halting”) tendencies. This purportedly objective stance is important of course, but a more subjective interpretation of the possible effects of these rare passages is often overlooked. In this Bagatelle, Beethoven likely included the halting motive early in the piece to prepare an intraopus context within which he could experiment later in the work (as does Haydn in Examples 4.3, 4.4, and 4.6). A listener very well acquainted with Beethoven’s music might recognize the implicit possibility for the further iteration of that “halting” motive to be even more halting in nature, but surely Beethoven surpasses that expectation with the passage from measures 59 to 65. Like a good comedian, Beethoven cues us to expect the unexpected, but we have no way of knowing what the unexpected will be. In this
case, we are greeted with a pleasingly humorous passage of a sort that, as some of my other examples demonstrate, is common in Beethoven’s and Haydn’s work.  

Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, second movement

In the slow second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, as in the foregoing examples, earlier oddities can be retrospectively viewed as sources of waywardness as they introduce the motivic material Haydn will later use for an excessive passage. In this case, the sources of waywardness are again present from nearly the beginning of the piece, and here, as in Beethoven’s Bagatelle No. 5, they culminate in an extraordinary prolongation of the subdominant.

Motivic waywardness is first suggested in the melody in measures 2 and 3 (see Example 4.6a), where Haydn skips to and from E5s that function as upper neighbours to the D5 that does not return in the melody until the next phrase (m. 6).  

---

402 As I mentioned earlier, the type of humorous narrative discussed here is much rarer in Mozart’s compositions.  
403 The E5 introduced in measure 2 does not resolve to D5 in measure 4 since it is metrically and harmonically weak: it is an ornamental upper third to the B5 that passes between C5 and A5.
Example 4.6a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 1–8

The voice-leading behaviour of this opening melodic quirk can be accounted for in the second violin line, where inner-voice E4s on the downbeats of measures 2 and 3 clarify the upper-voice E5s as octave doublings only and effect their immediate resolution to the D4 on the third beat of measure 3. This subtle opening awkwardness in the melody nevertheless begins a narrative process, whereby the E5 first present in measure 2 becomes increasingly resistant in its resolution to D5 over the course of the movement.\(^{404}\) Already in measures 28 and 29 the upper-neighbour E5 is more reluctant to resolve.

\(^{404}\) Naturally, the same delayed neighbour resolution occurs in the repetition of the opening period, beginning with the bassoon entry in measure 9—the E5 in measure 11 resolves to the D5 in measure 14.
Measures 28’s E5 resolves in the following measure, but is conspicuously sustained before that resolution, temporarily suspending all melodic motion. For an attentive listener familiar with Haydn’s compositional style, this more conspicuous prolongation of the upper neighbour might suggest future anomalous use of the E5 and its resolution.

This attentive listener might be less surprised, then, that when the consequent of the small ternary recapitulation returns in the large ternary form’s recapitulation, the same E5 is sustained for six beats instead of four.

405 All pitches in measure 30 are doubled in the winds and brass on beats one and two and are not included on their own staves in the example to save space.
Once the upper neighbour (mm. 66–67) resolves again to D5 (m. 67), some of the building tension seems to be released as the melodic line continues downward, accompanying the thematic material from the large ternary’s central section. This more stylistically appropriate continuation changes the character of the E5–D5 resolution and at last the neighbour note seems to have abandoned its stubborn reluctance to resolve. However, the comparatively long duration of the E5 in measure 66 prepares us for the humour that will occur in the coda, which attempts to solve the E5 “problem” once and for all.

---

406 This example is texturally reduced in measure 71 to save space. In the full score, the entire orchestra enters at a forte dynamic on unison Gs (except the bassoons, which double the second violins’ thirds).
Beginning in measure 73, E resolves to D, and does so again, and again, and again, and again, and again...need I go on? Apparently Haydn does: after seven E5–D5 resolutions, the E still seems not to be finished. Instead, we hear it stubbornly, but hesitantly, reiterated four more times at pianissimo with attacks every half note.
Here, we see Haydn’s penchant for unusually long prolongation of the subdominant. But, unlike the other examples of excessive subdominant prolongation I discuss, Haydn does not simply arrive on a clear subdominant before reiterating it for an excessive time span. Instead, he begins this excessive passage with the repetitions of 6–5 motion above the tonic in the violins, violas, celli, flutes, and oboes. The winds and strings trade this figure back and forth with increasingly long pauses between repetitions (mm. 75–77), until the thinning texture and decreasing dynamic eventually leave only the upper note at pianissimo (mm. 78–79). The lone sixth scale degree makes the harmony ambiguous and, though it came from a 6–5 motion over the tonic, it now suggests subdominant potential (as we should expect if the harmonic progression is ever going to get off the ground). But this potential subdominant arises awkwardly and lacks an explicit voice-leading connection to the preceding tonic, keeping its arrival and function in doubt. The static reiteration of the subdominant’s third (E5) continues, but still sounds like an abandoned remnant of the tonic rather than a chord tone of a stable subdominant harmony. The resulting harmonic uncertainty adds to the feeling of melodic stasis created by the reiterated E5, as well as that created by the loss of rhythmic momentum.

After the resolution from E5 to D5 has been problematized throughout the movement, it is tempting to posit a non-musical narrative to accompany the E5’s puzzling behaviour, especially involving the two passages (mm. 17–22 and 48–55) that switch to the minor mode. The first features a more or less standard shift from E to E-flat, perhaps pointing to a sixth scale degree that is uncertain how to behave (see Example 4.6e). Then, in the second passage, which starts and ends in G minor, an altogether normal shift to B-flat major (see Example 4.6f, m. 49) is suddenly contradicted by what appears to be a fresh move to E-flat (m. 50). But the B-flat is reinstated by way of a perfect authentic cadence (mm. 52–53), after the winds and the bass
cooperate to undo the putative E-flat tonic with some chromatic shenanigans that seem to hint at, but rapidly step back from, the dark possibility of F minor (m. 51). In effect, it sounds as if E-flat managed to get off its leash and threatened further trouble before some hasty maneuvers managed to bring it in line and back onto a familiar G minor path.

Example 4.6e: Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, ii, mm. 17–22
These more impulsive behaviours of E♭5, when considered alongside the protracted E5–D5 motions throughout the movement, point to the sixth scale degree’s general tendency—whether minor or major—to get unmoored from its surroundings and, as it were, to misbehave.

We might imagine that the home key’s sixth scale degree (E5 or E♭5) is stubbornly refusing to resolve normally to D5. And we might not be surprised when this leads to the incessant repetition of the goal D5 in the unnecessarily long post-cadential dominant prolongation in measures 56 to 60 (Example 4.6g)—nearly excessive itself.
This scenario allows us to return to the coda, already discussed as Example 4.6d, and provide the tongue-in-cheek program that it seems to demand. After what it must do—yield, however unwillingly, to the necessity of resolving to D5—has been hammered home, the stubborn E5 defiantly acts out once more (to our great amusement) in measures 73 to 80 (see Example 4.6d). In this excessive passage, we might again hear parents showing the E5 how to behave in measures 74 to 76. To which it responds, “No, I’ll do what I want,” or perhaps it just pretends it hasn’t heard. This failure to comply leads to a rude response (the bassoon borborygmus) and it is whisked home to an early bedtime.\(^{407}\) After all this the orchestra clarifies twice with something like, “and that was that.”

\(^{407}\) The humour that comes from the bassoons’ outburst is discussed below.
Another non-musical narrative has been suggested by Burnham and Burstein, both of whom read the diminuendo of the repeated 6–5 (or just 5) motion as lulling the music to sleep, thus leading the listener to expect a musical awakening. Of course, this hypothetical listener will not be disappointed when the ridiculously excessive passage culminates with the rude awakening provided by the bassoons’ surprising, fortissimo low C (m. 80). This reading is not far-fetched, but does not address the awkward voice-leading precursors to the otherwise isolated passage. Viewing this passage from an active listening standpoint—one that is attentive to the intraopus cues we have discussed—it is perhaps better understood as the same stubborn insistence on E5 that has perturbed the theme throughout the movement: to me, the E5 seems relentlessly insistent, rather than narcoleptic. Either way, the incongruous reiteration of E5 drains all of the music’s melodic and harmonic momentum. And just when there seems to be no end in sight, the bassoons’ flatulent assertion signals the passage’s dead end and—with the low C oddly clarifying the subdominant harmony—finally enables the orchestra’s completion of the harmonic progression. Having had enough of the stubborn E5’s resolute resistance to resolution, the orchestra (parents) again shows how E5 must go to D5 in the cadential idea (mm. 80–81).

---

408 See Burstein (1999, 67) and Burnham (2005, 68).
This passage’s ability to “stand alone” (like that in Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 5) has led others to discuss it in isolation, but the broader context discussed here allows us to trace the awkwardness of the continually delayed E5 resolution with a narrative that spans the movement until it culminates in a flagrantly incongruous passage of excess.

As usual, the point where the opposition occurs in this excessive passage will vary between listeners. However, it is most likely to occur somewhere in measure 76 or 77. During these two measures, the music shifts from “unusual yet stylistically appropriate” to “stylistically incongruous” and the thwarted expectation of the next harmony becomes particularly pronounced. It is during (or slightly after) this shift that we generally recognize a concurrent shift from the expected “high” return to normalcy and the actual “low” perpetuation of the syntactically redundant motivic repetitions that produce the humorous opposition. Measures 78 and 79 completely abandon stylistically normative discourse when they continue the hapless reiteration of E5.

This passage’s excess is sufficient to create humorous oppositions without the interrupting bassoons because the subdominant prolongation departs from typical Classical stylistic discourse in a conspicuously “low,” excessive manner that contrasts with the more typical “high” Classical discourse before it. To prove this, one can simply imagine this section without the bassoons’ interjection. But this example differs from those above because the primary (or most memorable) opposition is created by the second component of the passage. That is, so far all of our examples have foreground opposition(s) within the excessive first component, but the second component serves primarily to get the music back to discursive normalcy. In this example, however, the excessive component—while still ridiculous and humorous—pales in humorous effect when compared to the bassoons’ subsequent “bout of
flatulence” (Example 4.6h). In other words, the strongest humorous opposition (and any outbursts of laughter) in this passage does not originate primarily from the reinterpretation of the excessive passage’s delay of syntactical expectations, even though Haydn took the time to foreshadow the eventual incongruity by laying out a sophisticated intraopus narrative involving the E5 and D5 from the beginning. Clearly, this joke is all about a fart.

The bassoons’ “accident” on the downbeat of measure 80 creates a humorous opposition, which could in principle be perpetrated by many kinds of gross contrast, but the blatant effect of which is clearly the referential richness of the particular sound chosen here. Not only is gross and sudden contrast achieved, but it is also clearly accompanied by a shift from high to low. In Burstein’s words, “in Symphony No. 93, the crass sound of bar 80 is funny precisely because the sounds of the previous seventy-nine measures are so refined.” The two topics that contrast here are more properly frames of reference than Classical topics, per se. The movement’s predominantly pastoral topic does not change at measure 80, but more specific extramusical implications quickly switch on when the bassoons enter. For example, in accordance with Burstein’s and Burnham’s “falling asleep” narratives, we might call this opposition “asleep/awake.” But the real humour comes, as I have already discussed, from a far more ubiquitous and vulgar opposition that carries a similar impact with both Classical and modern

410 Ibid., 68.
411 The idea of a “frame of reference” was Arthur Koestler’s early articulation of what Raskin would later call a “script.” See Koestler, Act of Creation (1970).
412 This pastoral topic is especially clear in the main theme, the first measure of which resembles an alphorn tune from Rigi, Switzerland (originally in 6/8 time). Monelle (2006, 102) reproduces this tune and briefly discusses its use by Classical and Romantic composers (though he does not mention its use in this piece).
413 See again Burstein (1999) and Burnham (2005).
day audiences: “non-excrement/excrement,”⁴¹⁴ a subcategory within the common opposition, high/low stature. Of course, in this musical joke, the two frames of reference in opposition are musical sounds (spiritual) and bodily sounds (carnal or appetitive). If invoking this opposition in the context of high musical art seems farfetched, recall that this is one of the most common oppositions in verbal joke texts⁴¹⁵ and that there is plenty of historical evidence to show that toilet humour was extremely common in Classical Europe.⁴¹⁶

This opposition is easily and obviously evoked here by Haydn, since it is more overt than most (relying as it does on the distinction between musical and non-musical sounds). Furthermore, the opposition created by the surprising bassoon entry is emphasized by at least four musical parameters when it enters: register, texture, dynamic, and timbre. Each of these adds to the contrast, augmenting the effect of the opposition.

The extreme low register of the bassoon entry sticks out like a sore thumb. There has not been a single pitch close to this low since measure 72, where it was a G₁ played by the basses, and the voice leading and orchestration ensure that the earlier G₁ belongs with its surroundings. Haydn seems to have been careful to leave this range empty for the previous eight measures. He even indicates that only the cellos should play the C₄–B₃ descent in measure 76 to leave the two

⁴¹⁴ See again Attardo (1994, 204).
⁴¹⁵ Ibid.
⁴¹⁶ Mozart was particularly fond of toilet humour (see Anderson [1966, esp. 1: 500]) and rather entertainingly refers to “a little stomach-aria,” while writing to his friend Baron Gottfried von Jacquin (see Anderson [1966, 2: 903–4]). Mozart also wrote several vocal canons with scatological themes. The most well-known is Difficile lectu mihi mars (“Leck du mich im Arsch”). Karhausen (1993) notes that Michael Haydn also wrote a scatological canon called (hilariously), “Scheiß nieder, armer Sünder” (Karhausen translates it as “Shit fast, poor sinner”) and that “scatology was common in Mitteleuropa.” I have been unable to locate specific references in primary sources where toilet humour is associated with the bassoon in particular.
octaves above the bassoons’ pitch open.\textsuperscript{417} His avoidance of the low register before measure 80 lets the bassoons’ eruption ring clear and, more importantly, stand out as embarrassing and out-of-context.

Apart from being in an abnormally low register, the solo instrumental texture also reinforces the reference to flatulence by sticking out in an otherwise orchestral work. Since the bassoons sound as one, they also contrast with the immediately preceding ensemble duet over the excessive subdominant prolongation.

The \textit{fortissimo} dynamic adds another obviously out-of-context aspect to the mix. Before the bassoon enters, the prevailing dynamics are \textit{piano} and \textit{pianissimo} in the flutes/oboes and violins, respectively. Not only are the bassoons’ C2s marked on the opposite extreme of the dynamic spectrum, but Haydn also marks it \textit{a due}. Sounding as one, the bassoon doubling will not likely alter the \textit{solo} effect of the vulgar expulsion. Instead, any timbral mismatch between the two bassoons will more likely add to the vulgarity. Doubling the low C also further exaggerates the \textit{fortissimo} dynamic and creates stronger contrast with the preceding dynamics.

Finally, the bassoon timbre presents stark timbral contrast to the more acceptable (if sparse) orchestral texture that precedes it. The sudden introduction of an uncommon instrument or timbre is a common technique for Peter Schikele (a.k.a. P. D. Q. Bach), who (as Huron notes) “will mix some bizarre instrument with the conventional instruments of the classical orchestra.”\textsuperscript{418} To be sure, Schikele’s bizarre instruments are decidedly “unclassical” (they include the slide whistle, kazoo, shower hose, foghorn, and lasso d’amore, among others),\textsuperscript{419} but

\textsuperscript{417} Only the timpani approach this low range with G2s (mm. 73–75).
\textsuperscript{418} Huron (2004, 700).
\textsuperscript{419} See Schikele (1976).
in both P. D. Q. Bach’s compositions and Symphony No. 93, “the sound of the classical orchestra provides a foil against which the unconventional sounds appear especially incongruous.”\textsuperscript{420} Huron adds, “The sounds of the orchestra evoke conventional symphonic listening schemas,” and therefore, “The normal orchestral timbres may function like the ‘straight man’ in a comedy duo.”\textsuperscript{421} This “straight man” setup allows a sudden change in instrumentation and timbre to produce a particularly effective punch line.\textsuperscript{422} Although the contrast between normal and abnormal instruments is certainly stronger in P. D. Q. Bach than in Haydn, this bassoon soli is so evocative of a different sort of low wind that, for Haydn’s audience, it hardly sounds like bassoons at all and the sound flies in the face of Classical conventions of instrumentation.

Even when used more appropriately, bassoon timbres often evoke “low” social status (frequently symbolizing lowly peasants and entertainers), but here the bassoons evoke “low” status in a dramatically different manner. The bassoons play the root of an expected harmony, but in a way that does not befit proper, high musical discourse. Instead, the bassoons perform a \textit{musical} (high, spiritual) role in a very \textit{non-musical} (low, carnal) way, turning expected musical progress into a flatulent mishap. According to Jane Perry-Camp, “Of all the instruments in the standard orchestra capable of distinctive sounds and special effects the bassoon has been the scapegoat, or perpetrator (depending on viewpoint), of more jokes than any other instrument.”\textsuperscript{423} Finally, the bassoon is a particularly effective perpetrator of flatulence, since the rumble of its

\textsuperscript{420} Huron (2004, 700).
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{423} Perry-Camp (1979, 25). Perry-Camp (ibid.) also references the minuet recapitulation in Symphony No. 94 (not discussed here), where she explains that the return “is thrown of kilter by the insertion of two measures of comedy, one in the high register of flute and oboe, the other in the low register of cello and, naturally, bassoon.”
low register is unquestionably the best onomatopoeic reference to a fart available in the Classical orchestra.

Any one of these musical parameters Haydn employs could be surprising, but here Haydn expertly creates a humorous opposition using these parameters in a unique combination and context. In addition, the numerous parametric contrasts he offers between “lullaby” and “fart” are exaggerated to the extent that these contrasts surpass the oft-discussed “surprise” from his next symphony. A quick glance at the two scores shows that range and timbre disparities are considerably greater in Symphony No. 93 than those in No. 94. And, while the changes in textural density and dynamic are slightly stronger in No. 94, Haydn’s evocation of flatulence that follows on the heels of an excessive and tranquil lullaby in No. 93 is surely to produce a stronger humorous effect than the famous “surprise.” In fact, were it not sure to offend Viennese sensibilities, the earlier symphony could easily have been nicknamed Symphony No. 93, “The Fart.”

_Haydn’s Symphony No. 94, second movement_

In the first movement of the famous “Surprise” Symphony No. 94 (Example 4.7), Haydn uses numerous musical parameters to create stark contrast between two musical utterances. This contrast creates a valence shift that results in the “surprising” opposition.
In this well-known passage, a calm, innocent, strings-only melody (marked *pianissimo* and *pizzicato*) suddenly gives way to the full orchestral, *fortissimo* “surprise” (measure 16, beat 2). The absence of a particularly interesting melody, the static texture, and the pedestrian counterpoint all stand out when considered alongside Haydn’s other themes. The opening seems trivial against this extraopus backdrop and, lulling the audience into a sort of listening complacency, it allows for, and sets up, the hugely contrasting *fortissimo* that follows. There are some important similarities and differences between the more rudimentary “surprise” in Symphony No. 94 and the more cleverly contrived “fart” in No. 93.

The full orchestral, *fortissimo* “surprise” in Symphony No. 94 does not follow an excessive passage. A preceding excessive passage is not a requirement for humour, but the excess in No. 93 creates a very dull melodic/motivic state out of which contrast is easily created. Although the opening theme of the second movement of No. 94 is pedestrian for Haydn, the opening lullaby does not create the impression of superfluity, like the lullaby in No. 93. No. 94 does not produce this excessive effect for three important reasons. First, while its supporting harmony is rather dull, it is neither stagnant nor unclear. Second, the theme follows a predictable melodic arc and does not protract any element in order to implausibly delay a subsequent event and create excess. There is also no point(s) where we expect the music to move to the next event and are denied that expectation. One might argue that the absence of a particularly interesting
melody, the static texture, and the uninteresting counterpoint all stand out when considered alongside Haydn’s other themes. This argument has some merit: the opening could seem incongruously trivial viewed against this extraopus background, but it would be a stretch to perceive this opening theme’s somewhat limited potential as having “gone too far”—there is enough melodic activity to keep us interested.\footnote{Comparing this opening melody to any of the excessive passages in the previous chapter will clarify this point.} And third, no element of the opening theme has been prepared by an intraopus narrative that could then be emphasized (like the 6–5 motion in No. 93) because there has not been time to establish such a narrative. In summary, listeners are likely to notice that the opening of Symphony No. 94 is rather slow and a little boring, but the opening alone cannot create humour in the manner of the excessive passage in No. 93. Even though excess is not required for the famous “surprise” to be humorous, the lack of excess in the material preceding the surprise in measure 16 of No. 94 can weaken the contrast when it occurs.

In addition to the lack of pronounced excess, the surprise in No. 94 does not emphasize the registral distance between the preceding musical gestures to the extent that No. 93 does. The register of the opening theme of Symphony No. 94’s second movement falls well within the range that might be expected for a theme that begins as this one does, since the “surprise” only expands the theme’s range upward by a perfect fifth. In Symphony No. 93, however, the bassoon’s low C2 is well below the bassoon’s normal performance range—the bassoon having most recently played pitches two octaves above that C—and five octaves below the most recent oboe and flute pitches.

The timbral and textural surprise in Symphony No. 93 is also far more striking than that in No. 94. That is, although the fortissimo full orchestra chord in No. 94 is much fuller texturally
than the preceding string-only texture and creates an overt shift from low to high arousal, both of the textures are common at movement openings and are often juxtaposed (though not usually so starkly). By contrast, even though the sound approaching the bassoons’ interruption is entirely made by winds in Symphony No. 93, a solo bassoon interjection like this is never expected in Classical symphonies and bassoon solos are very uncommon in the genre.

Perhaps most importantly, the jarring effects in the two symphonies evoke different extramusical associations. As we have seen, the bassoons’ entry in Symphony No. 93 evokes the non-excrement/excrement opposition, which clearly accompanies a shift from high to low stature and creates humour. That is, even if the excessive 6–5 motions are relatively “low” by the standards of Classical instrumental music, the texture and timbre are still far more appropriate than the bassoons’ interjection. Implications of stature in No. 94 are not quite as clear. To be sure, the opening lullaby that precedes the surprise is artistic enough to conjure impressions of high stature (certainly at least as “high” as the 6–5 near-monotony that precedes the fart), but the degree of lowliness given by the subsequent surprise is not nearly as low (or rude, or vulgar) as that in No. 93. Although the metaphor of being awoken from sleep may be compelling for musical events like this one, it does not evoke a common humorous opposition, nor does it convey implications of high and low stature. The asleep/awake opposition is not as compelling as one closely associated with the truly vulgar implications of flatulence. For Burstein, Symphony No. 94’s surprise, “is incongruously funny not so much because it contrasts soft music with a loud sound, but rather because it contrasts a logically constructed passage with an illogically brusque event.” Additionaly, the sudden, full orchestra hit suggests a physical,

---

425 Burstein (1999, 76). Burstein (ibid., 76–78) examines different kinds of surprises in the finales of Symphonies Nos. 72 and 88 and elucidates more subtle harmonic surprises that create humour in the finale of Symphony No. 64 and the first movement of Symphony No. 55.
dynamic impact that has an effect like someone kicking the headboard. It is uncharacteristically raucous and inartistic and presents enough of the “low” side to create a valence shift from the preceding passage and produce a humorous opposition.

Finally, the effect of the return to more normal musical material after the surprises in both symphonies differs markedly. Whereas Symphony No. 94’s surprise continues forward as it should (returning to the opening material for a repeat of the phrase with no damage done), Symphony No. 93’s accident rallies the orchestra to do what it should have been doing long before (completing a cadential progression). Furthermore, the excessive, absent-minded material that led to the accident in No. 93 was a “problem” heard throughout the piece that led to the inevitable dead end on the subdominant. It seems in No. 93 that the music then returns to doomed motivic material, pretending that the disaster did not occur, and completing the phrase with the same motive, as if trying to save face after an incredible embarrassment. The embarrassment is funny in itself of course, but the attempt to pass it off as nothing certainly adds to the humorous effect. Thus, we notice that both symphonies seem to return to business as usual, but No. 94 lacks the humorous denouement achieved by No. 93’s face-saving return to the same “problem” motive in order to bring about the authentic cadence it originally set out to achieve.

Haydn’s differing deployment of excessive tendencies and contrasting musical parameters distinguishes between two apparently similar “surprises” in these examples and presents a stronger case for humorous opposition in the bassoons’ interruption in the second movement of Symphony No. 93. That is, while the full orchestral fortissimo in No. 94 contrasts markedly with the preceding lullaby, the “distance” between high and low status implications are not as pronounced as those in No. 93. In summary, No. 94’s surprise comes across as more of a
low-level prank, when compared to the cleverly executed excessive passage and subsequent outburst in No. 93. If, as Burstein notes, “The degree of humor directly relates to the degree of contrast between high and low elements, as well as to the persuasiveness with which the two are related,” then the degree of humour in Symphony No. 93 is considerably greater than Haydn’s better-known “surprise” in No. 94. In view of this, one wonders why all the fuss surrounding the “Surprise” Symphony’s surprise does not similarly attend the second movement of Symphony No. 93.

**Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2**

In Op. 33 No. 2, Beethoven sets up an intraopus narrative by once again introducing an awkward musical gesture early in the Bagatelle. As in Bagatelle No. 5, the left and right hands seem unable to agree, but in Bagatelle No. 2 this “ensemble” conflict creates (or perhaps stems from) metric ambiguity that becomes increasingly disruptive as the piece progresses. Furthermore, the excessive passage occurs here over the concluding tonic harmony, rather than over the subdominant.

Beethoven opens the piece with the metrically ambiguous figure, shown below.

---

426 Ibid., 68.
This opening figure allows the listener to entertain different potential downbeat locations, at least as far as the change of texture at the second measure’s downbeat. This textural change, along with the scalar descent in thirds in the left hand toward the third measure, makes a strong case for the 3/4 meter and downbeat placement. It is of course possible to hear unresolved metric conflict through the second and third measures, but I think most listeners will have largely ironed out the ambiguity suggested by the opening measure by then. Examples 4.8b–e show the potential downbeat interpretations after the first four beats.

When we take a close look at this opening gesture, we can see that it does not naturally “fit” in the 3/4 meter of Beethoven’s notation. Let us adopt, for the time being, a narrowly-
focused, “in the moment” context, or “radical” listening strategy,\textsuperscript{427} so we can address each of these opening beats in view of its downbeat potential. Approached in this way, the first attack will be heard as a downbeat (this hearing conforms to Beethoven’s notation, shown in example 4.8a).\textsuperscript{428} But when we hear the rest of the first beat, the dotted rhythm causes us to quickly abandon our initial interpretation since this extremely common anacrustic rhythm strongly prejudices us to hear the second notated beat as the (new) real downbeat—especially when beat two arrives with a \textit{sforzando} marking (this interpretation is shown in Example 4.8c). The \textit{forte} C2 on beat three introduces a metric “hiccup” of sorts, since it does not afford the same downbeat potential as the first two beats, but extends the metric ambiguity (see Example 4.8d): we are more likely to hear the low C as an “afterbeat” or as some kind of late bass accompaniment than as a downbeat. While it is certainly possible to interpret further metric ambiguity in the second measure and onward, the downbeat of the second measure is more likely to confirm the listener’s first downbeat hypothesis because of its return to the opening pitch, register, and dynamic and for the reasons cited above (see Example 4.8e). I will not discuss further impressions of metric conflict since we are primarily concerned with the awkward impression created by Beethoven’s placement of the anacrustic dotted gesture on the notated downbeat, the resulting implied downbeat on the second notated beat, and the left hand’s “extra” C2 that seems (in retrospect) to expand on the opening awkwardness.

Nothing I have noted so far rules out 3/4 meter in principle, but a listener is more likely to expect a continuation of 2/4 or 4/4 meter after the first two beats because the dotted upbeat

\textsuperscript{427} Imbrie’s (1973) “radical” listener is opposed to a “conventional” one.

\textsuperscript{428} This interpretation can partly be explained by Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s (1983, 76) “metric preference rule” number two, “strong beat early”: “Weakly prefer a metrical structure in which the strongest beat in a group appears relatively early in the group.”
figure evokes a *march* topic: a topic that clearly projects duple meter and suggests that the
downbeat would occur here on notated beat two. In fact, this implication makes sense of the
downbeat-like beat two (in m. 1), the afterbeat on beat three (however overly emphatic), and
another strong beat at the start of measure 2. Since this is not the “correct” interpretation,
according to Beethoven’s notation and because the piece eventually clarifies 3/4 meter, we might
interpret this opening as a kind of “march gone awry.” To put it another way, the music isn’t
listening to itself, so to speak. It might “hear” the opening event as a downbeat, with the
“intention” of proceeding in the triple rhythm of a *scherzo*. But a logical, yet contrary impulse
somehow emerges with the C2 on beat three, which “hears” the more obvious *march* with the
downbeat on the E5 (beat two). But the music’s principal consciousness (of itself) stubbornly
persists with its preferred *scherzo* option, making the low C sound ludicrously inflated (as a third
beat), while also balancing the insistent, dotted *march* figure with a calming, legato, *minuet*-like
gesture. Trying to sort out this confusion, we might hear 1) a *march* with the downbeat on the E5
abandoned after a single half measure, or possibly hear 2) the third beat as a metric or topical
“accident”—perhaps the extra left step of a rhythmically challenged soldier losing step with the
troop and causing the *march* venture to be prematurely abandoned. Rather than fixing this
accident, the awkward figure is emphasized by repetition throughout the piece. Later, it becomes
increasingly disruptive and even excessive.

This figure occurs many times in the opening sentence (Example 4.8f) and is greatly
exaggerated when the returning, dotted *march* figure leads to awkward alternations between the
right and left hands after the opening section’s final cadence (m. 16).

---

429 Other “marches gone awry” occur in other Classical works. See, for example, the third movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 *Il distratto* (Example 3.6) and the second movement of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 77 No. 2.
In fact, the low C’s off-beat entrance after the cadence (m. 16, beat 2) is far more disruptive than its strange arrival on beat 3 of measure 1. It now seems intent on turning beat two into the downbeat as it tries to steal the (notated) downbeat from the right hand, which sounds like a weak reiteration of the more accented chord on beat three of measure 15. We might imagine that the wayward component of the music’s will, responsible for hearing a march with the downbeat on beat two, has reconciled itself to the scherzo topic, but insisted that it accept beat two as the real downbeat. For now, however, the left hand’s insistence is just too little, too late.

The left hand’s stubborn streak sits out the minore and trio sections, which downplay the awkward figure, but it becomes even more exaggerated when the minuet returns (m. 95). Now, the insistent, dotted march figure is no longer balanced by the calming, minuet-like gesture from the opening. That is, beginning in measure 96, the pitch material from measures 2 to 4 seems to have become infected by the ensemble problem: at the opening the right and left hands played
these measures in homorhythm, but now they cannot seem to agree on where the individual beat is either (see Example 4.8g). The argumentative alternation between the hands again suspends clarity of the “correct” downbeat interpretation and even strengthens beat two’s continuing downbeat potential with the extra quarter-note chords in the right hand (mm. 98, 102, and 110).

Example 4.8g: Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2, mm. 95–110

The left hand’s original brand of stubbornness returns in measure 111 and by now the listener has a good idea that this problem will have to be solved, or else come to a head sometime before the piece concludes. The latter is exactly what happens when the post-cadential extension begins to repeat the cadential idea.
By measures 126 and 127 it seems as if the music is content to yield to its suppressed impulse and to allow beat two to become the downbeat. But this seemingly happy agreement is short-lived. In measure 131, both hands return to their stubborn insistence on having the last word, and no amount of arguing will solve the problem. A 2/4 or 4/4 march arises when the hands exchange blows in measures 131 through 135, but it vanishes again when they try to outwait each other at the end (mm. 135–37). The music has the bright idea that, by literally missing a beat (the second beat of m. 135), it reaffirms the scherzo project, albeit it with a downbeat on notated beat three, a compromise solution (neither beat one nor beat two having worked out). But the contrary impulse of a march with a downbeat on beat two suddenly remerges at the very end in the left hand, at which point the music throws in the towel. The result is the “ensemble’s” funny inability to appropriately conclude the piece. In the end, there is no way for the listener to conclusively determine the downbeat: it just isn’t clear.
The narrative I have suggested here—whereby the humour’s target is the conflict between the first or second beats as they (along with their conflicting implied march and scherzo topics) jockey for downbeat position in different ways throughout the Bagatelle—is one I can hear gathering steam throughout the piece. But I certainly do not think this is the only possible narrative for this Bagatelle. On the contrary, the stubborn back-and-forth between hands allows many different readings and possible targets for humour. We might, for example, hear the right hand as the offending party—and thereby view it as the target of the joke—at the end of the piece because it ruins the apparent march in measure 135; or we might hear a battle between chords and solitary pitches, in which case measures 96, 100, 104, and 106 are especially dramatized (see Example 4.8g). The point is not that one specific narrative is necessarily better than the others, but that (as is so often the case with Beethoven) a bizarre passage arises from an (intra)musical conflict that comes from a very simple motivic “problem”—a tempest in a teapot. Because these conflicts strongly suggest extramusical narratives involving a quarrel of some sort, it is helpful to imagine a shift of the target of humour from a musical idea to an extramusical (usually human) figure.

Making the “ensemble” the target (or “butt”) of the joke is the most sensible interpretation when describing this humorous passage with the score in hand, but it is more fruitful to view the listener as the joke’s target when we don’t consider Beethoven’s notation. From this vantage, the downbeat confusion created by the metric conflict between the two hands is foisted on the listener who—thanks to Beethoven’s craftily composed rhythmic interplay—cannot possibly reconcile the conflicting metric interpretations at the end of the piece. It is
impossible because no matter what kind of listening strategy we adopt—be it radical or conservative\(^{430}\)—the Bagatelle’s conclusion does not confirm it.

Beethoven has clearly left the listener in suspense as to where the real downbeat is located. He even notates a fermata over an extra whole rest after the end of the bagatelle—not a common marking for him—to suggest that the performer leave the listener with some lingering doubt about a possible resolution after the notated conclusion. But from measure 131 onward, it has become clear that there is no way to force this particular 2/4 march gesture into 3/4 time and project a clear sense of meter. Listeners are therefore left confused when the sound ceases and, if they are anything like me, will find humour in their fruitless efforts throughout the piece as they tried to “solve” the metric ambiguity that turned out to be impossible to solve conclusively. Referring to the end of Bagatelle No. 2, Levy notes, “when the gesture keeps going all by itself at the end of [the] passage, the effect is like that of a person who keeps dancing after the music has stopped.”\(^{431}\) But not only does the gesture keep dancing, we keep listening too: we realize that the joke’s on us when we discover that the implied “resolvability” of the metric conflict has all been an elaborate ruse.

This conclusion also creates a different kind of humorous excess from those we have seen above. This type of excess, characteristic of Beethoven (and present, but not as apparent, in Bagatelle No. 5), exhibits the frequent repetition of an oddity that seems to be the result of an

\(^{430}\) Imbrie’s (1973) notions of radical and conservative listening are helpful for sorting out some of the difficulty and, of course, enjoyment that comes with metrically ambiguous passages like these. In addition, Imbrie’s modes of listening are somewhat similar to the “naïve” and “skeptical” modes Almén (2008, 170) invokes for ironic narratives like this one. Of course, irony plays a role in the passages discussed in this chapter and I enthusiastically refer the reader who is interested in the various forms of ironic narrative to Almén’s insightful text. However, in the present study—which focuses here on specific motivic strands insofar as they are involved in musical narratives that set up later articulations of humour—I do not attempt to account for larger-scale ironic strategies, since my primary focus is on relatively local humorous oppositions.

inner conflict that has trouble getting resolved. Of course, the conflict is not the only thing going on in the composition, but it does seem to grab the reins at certain points where prolonged repetition results from the music’s effort to shake itself free of that conflict. The result is another intraopus narrative that leads to a subsequent humorous opposition based on the motivic material heard earlier, but in Beethoven’s Bagatelles it arises out of an impression of conflict.

I have discussed the conclusion to Bagatelle No. 2 in a manner similar to my treatment of the subdominant prolongation in No. 5, since it is possible in both compositions to hear a predetermined capacity for excessive repetition and conflict in earlier iterations of the same motive. But the humorous oppositions in No. 2 are harder to pinpoint than those in No. 5. In No. 5 we observed a span of excessive measures (59–64) that were most likely to create humorous oppositions from the valence shifts between our (high) expectation of a somewhat normal return to opening material and the (low) excessive, subdominant prolongation that arrived instead. Similarly in No. 2, measures 131 to 137 create humorous oppositions as the alternating hands prolong the final tonic. But, unlike in No. 5, the excessive repetition in No. 2 is delaying a different kind of future event: the end of the piece.

When we listen to the final excessive passage closely, we will likely expect the piece (or “the hands,” or “Beethoven”) to resolve the metric conflict and provide an appropriate final chord, perhaps with both hands together to clarify a downbeat. Measure 130 is the first reasonable place where this could occur. But it doesn’t. Instead, the stubborn argument continues and we are presented with many more left-right alternations, any of which might be the last, but none of which presents a conventional, satisfactory conclusion—even when the hands try mixing things up in measures 135 to 137. As the piece traipses on, it is hard to know where to strongly expect it to end, since the alternating hands toss the prevailing meter—and regular hypermetric
grouping—out the window quickly and unceremoniously. This produces no clear locations for humorous opposition between expected “highs” and actual “lows,” but sets up a strong punch line saved for later. That is, in the excessive passage from measures 131 to 137, we suspend disbelief and wait to see if the left and right hands can figure something out.

After treating us to a delightfully impossible guessing game, Beethoven’s real punch line arrives, not in the profusion of strangeness conveyed by the excessive component, but with the arrival of the end of the piece: the event that has been implausibly delayed. But the end of the piece is not marked by any musical utterance we might expect (e.g. a clear tonic chord, unison tonic, or other conventional concluding formula). Instead, the end of the piece is articulated only by silence, notated with a fermata over a rest: an unusual notation for Beethoven. Of course, we can retrospectively point to the low C in measure 137 and call it “the end,” but not until we are certain that a better candidate for “the end” does not follow it. Thus, it will not be until some point in notated measure 138—or maybe even an imagined “measure 139”—that we finally know the piece is over and can “get the joke.” We have to wait because our expectation of a “high” conventional (or ingenious) concluding maneuver is not thwarted by a “low” unsatisfactory and ridiculous de facto ending until we’re sure it’s all over. Once we know the piece has been unconventionally completed, the second component—here a surprising non-articulation rather than a bizarre articulation (and therefore an absence of resolution)—occurs and the shift from expected “high” to actual “low” creates a humorous opposition.432

432 We will see below that this is precisely the same effect Haydn takes advantage of at the end of his Op. 33 No. 2.
The foregoing excerpts (with the exception of Symphony No. 94) are emblematic of the kinds of techniques composers employed to create humour using an intraopus narrative.\textsuperscript{433} Whether the excessive passage occurs in a retransition (the finales of Haydn’s Symphony No. 98 and Op. 33 No. 3), over a prolonged subdominant harmony (Beethoven’s Bagatelle No. 5 and the second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93), or at the very end of the piece (Beethoven’s Bagatelle No. 2), the humour occurs following a series of wayward motivic sources and culminates in (1) an opposition between expected “high” return to normalcy and the actual “low” excessive reiterations that implausibly delay that return and sometimes (2) an opposition created by the manner of the delayed event’s arrival. These examples show that humorous excess can be a sophisticated type of musical humour and that it can be quite subtle. But, whether we can or cannot follow all of a composer’s subtle and sophisticated intraopus cues, the eventual excessive passage—and sometimes the arrival of a bizarre subsequent event—presents a stylistically anomalous and humorous payoff.

Unprepared Excess

When an excessive passage arrives without intraopus cues to warn us to “expect the unexpected,” so to speak, it is often more jarring, surprising, and generally more pronounced. Since there is no clear precursor to the excessive components of these humorous passages, the discursive incongruity does not clearly engage the intraopus context, but ruptures extraopus expectations. Furthermore, these unprepared excesses do not create the impression of

\textsuperscript{433} Other potential examples can be found in the third movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1, the finale of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 8, and the first movement of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 5 (to name a few).
sophistication that we generally attributed to the excessive passages discussed above. In other words, the following examples tend to sound more gag-like. There are also fewer examples of this type of humour in everyday verbal joke telling because the narrative “setup,” upon which verbal comedians rely, would be absent.\footnote{As I mentioned in footnote 195 above, a close analogue in modern comedy is the “Kristen Schaal is a horse” sketch, performed by Kristen Schaal and Kurt Braunohler. This analogy only works if this sketch is considered as the end of a longer show (which is normally how they have performed it), in which case the sketch sticks out like a sore thumb from the rest of the comedic performance. Much of Andy Kaufman’s comedic approach demonstrates the creation of humour through constant reiteration of something mundane or absurd to an unusual degree like simply singing the chorus along with a recording of the theme from “Mighty Mouse.” In Kaufman’s case, however, he rarely performs “normal” comedy beforehand, so the analogy to this kind of excess with an established style of music/comedy is less specific here.} Since the narrative preparation is missing in examples of unprepared excess, a composer must string together all of the excessive material in one long passage to be sure the listener notices its stylistic incongruity and can find it humorous. Due to its potentially dull effect, and the large span of musical material that needs to be allocated all in one place, rather than spread across the movement, this kind of excess is rarer in Classical instrumental music than its narrative counterpart.

\textit{Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, third movement}

The humorous excess in the retransition in the third movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 66 is unmistakable. As we saw in Symphony No. 98 and String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3,\footnote{See Examples 4.3 and 4.4.} retransitions are particularly well suited to humorous excess, and the retransition in this symphony’s minuet contains conspicuous excess as it stubbornly or absent-mindedly delays the recapitulation. But, while there were intraopus sources for the excessive passage in Symphony No. 98 and String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3, Haydn includes no such cues for the upcoming excess in this symphony. Here, Haydn excessively prolongs the concluding dominant harmony of the
small ternary form’s contrasting middle with a series of post-cadential gestures that each seem to prepare for the recapitulation, begging the recapitulatory anacrusis to enter on beat three. This retransition constantly plays with our expectations and presents several specific humorous oppositions when they are thwarted.

After the half cadence, there are many repeated post-cadential fragments that could lead satisfactorily into the minuet recapitulation. But before looking at the entire passage in detail, let us entertain some possibilities for the entrance of the recapitulation before we see how excessive Haydn’s version is. Examples 4.9a–e show recompositions of this section where the recapitulation has been simply pushed forward in time, thereby eliminating a portion of the excessive passage. No pitches have been added or changed: only a vertical line has been added above the score to show where I have removed some of Haydn’s “excess.” The first likely candidate for the recapitulation is the anacrusis to measure 21 (Example 4.9a shows the minuet from the contrasting middle’s half cadence).

Example 4.9a: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“21”: recomposition

This recomposition allows for a relatively standard four measures of post-cadential dominant prolongation (counting from the second measure of the example) and it somewhat predictably revisits rhythmic and melodic elements from the small ternary form’s contrasting middle. The pickup to measure 21 is therefore a likely location to begin the recapitulation, but this is not

436 The only exception to this is the lengthened F5 in Example 4.9e. This change is notated in the example and mentioned in the accompanying discussion.
where the recapitulation begins. When further retransitional material arrives instead, the substitution of the expected “high” recapitulatory arrival with the actual “low” retransitional continuation may produce a humorous opposition. Of course, we may also not be particularly surprised by the continuation of the retransition here, since it is relatively common for a retransitional dominant lock to continue for more than four measures. If our expectations are not thwarted, then the high-to-low valence shift will not occur here. Of course, our expectations for the beginning of the recapitulation become increasingly heightened as Haydn’s retransition rambles on.

Immediately following these first four measures, Haydn continues the retransition by revisiting the cadential triplet figure from the opening theme, fragmenting it and repeating it twice to add another two measures of post-cadential material. This might lead us to expect the recapitulation to begin immediately thereafter (that is, in m. 23) as follows:

Example 4.9b: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“23”:

Although this triplet figure occurred earlier in the movement, it was not “marked” for consciousness by any strange or non-stylistic usage that might have caused a listener to pay special attention to it. That is, this triplet figure turns out to be the germ of the excessive

---

437 The triplet figure (which first appears in measure 7) is used in a particularly Haydnesque fashion that does not inject any element of the absurd into the minuet. In fact, the only salient argument I find for any indication of forthcoming oddities is the normalness of the minuet to this point. This is perhaps slightly suspicious simply because Haydn toys with minuets more than any other Classical composer (but to claim it is somehow indicative of an intraopus narrative is a bit of a stretch).
passage, but the figure’s incongruous employment comes as a surprise that was not set up by the intraopus context.

Since these triplet fragments continue the two-measure grouping structure, recapitulating here also satisfies the established meter and hypermeter. But Haydn does not stop here. Instead, the already fragmentary melodic material is reduced to an inane repetition of pizzicato Fs in the first violin. We might guess that after two more measures of this inspired gesture the recapitulation could begin satisfactorily with the pickup to the following measure, as follows.

Example 4.9c: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“25”: recomposition

Stretching to the point of absurdity, an additional two measures would present another potential location for the beginning of the recapitulation.

Example 4.9d: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–“27”: recomposition
If you have found this discussion of the dominant prolongation to be excessive, I believe you have experienced a kind of analytical analogue to the real-time perception of a listener attentive to this passage. In fact, the retransition does not even begin after the two lone Fs in Example 4.9d. Instead, after the many metrically and hypermetrically appropriate possibilities I have shown, and the decelerating effect of the lone Fs, the violins finally play a longer F that seems destined to be held for two measures and to bring about the recapitulation (this hypothetical addition is shown under the bracket in Example 4.9e).

But after our expectations for the recapitulation have been thwarted so many times, the violins—apparently acting autonomously, like the soloist in Symphony No. 98—appear to have exhausted their patience and begin the recapitulation after only one measure (see Example 4.9f: Haydn’s composition).

---

438 Haydn uses increasingly quiet dynamic markings to amplify the humour in Symphony Nos. 60 and 93, as he does here. Of course, these decreasing dynamics do not create humour on their own, but Haydn in particular often used them to amplify humour in passages like these.
Example 4.9f: Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, iii, mm. 16–28 (Haydn’s composition)

Here, the autonomous violins finally resort—after 11 measures of post-cadential excess—to a double use of the falling third (F to D) that begins the theme. Upon hearing yet another F5 at the onset of m. 27, Haydn’s listeners must think, “There he goes again,” or “It cannot possibly go on like this,” which it finally does not. As we saw in Symphony No. 98, the violins give themselves a kick in the pants (the first F5 to D5 descent functions in that manner) and, by the seat of those pants, save the day.

With the “early” violin entry, Haydn creates a hypermetric joke by beginning a measure early. And the conspicuous rupture in the regular grouping creates an opposition when our “high” expectation that the recapitulation will begin after two further measures of excess (however implausible this may seem) is replaced by the “low,” ungainly arrival of the recapitulation. Once again, Haydn gives us what we expect, but not when we expect it.

In addition, we know precisely who the targets of Haydn’s joke are: the dancers. Whether or not anyone is actually dancing, metric or hypermetric surprises in a dance genre like a minuet

---

439 Dalmonte (1995, 73) notes similar impressions created by other examples of musical humour.
can create a “visceral impact,” according to Wheelock. Mirka also explains, “A missing beat in a minuet feels like stepping into a hole.” Even though Haydn’s recapitulation occurs in the right place in the notated measure (i.e. there is no single “missing beat”), it does not occur in the right place in the dance measure. In other words, in the typical, six-beat dance measure of the minuet, Haydn’s recapitulation enters mid-measure because it takes two measures for the dancers to complete their minuet step. In the end, the recapitulation’s entrance on dance beat four makes the dancers adjust for three missing beats and Haydn’s prank probably prompts some rather embarrassing bumping and stumbling.

*Haydn’s Symphony No. 60, first movement*

The excess in Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 occurs again over the subdominant—as we saw in Haydn’s Symphony No. 93 and Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 5. Since Symphony No. 60 was originally written as a theater symphony for Regnard’s *Il distratto*, the opening movement would have been performed in the manner of an overture before the play began. But clearly Haydn was already painting a musical picture of the drama’s absent-minded protagonist, Leander. Although Haydn, in this first movement, introduces many motives and musical topics that will play narrative roles or represent dramatic characters later in the

---

441 Mirka (2009, 297).
442 See Examples 4.6 and 4.5.
443 According to Sisman, “each movement after the overture was played before the movement it depicted” (1990, 312; my emphasis; quoting Green [1980]).
444 A contemporary of Haydn, Johann Adolph Scheibe (1745, 67; quoted in Sisman [1990, 304]) writes of symphonies matching emotionally (or topically) with the play they accompany: “All symphonies that are composed to a drama must relate to its contents and nature. Consequently a different kind of symphony is required by a tragedy from that of a comedy…. Opening symphonies must refer to the whole play and at the same time prepare for its commencement and thus harmonize with the first act…. The closing symphony must accord exactly with the close of the play, to emphasize the occurrences to the spectators. What can be more ludicrous, than that the hero loses his life in an unhappy manner and a merry, lively symphony follows?”
symphony, his musical portrayal of the main character—a man with his head in the clouds—in a cadential progression late in the movement’s continuous exposition, is a delightful example of the degree of excess Haydn was capable of creating. There are no hypermetric surprises or metric ambiguities in this passage; just an inane and absent-minded melody over other voices that create what we might be tempted to call a subdominant “pedal,” but are really just stuck.

This movement presents a continuous exposition that closely resembles Hepokoski and Darcy’s (2006, 60) “Continuous Exposition Subtype 2,” where there is an “early PAC in the new key [here, m. 61] followed by (varied) reiterations of the cadence.” A notable exception to this in Haydn’s exposition is the half-cadence in the secondary key (not expected in a continuous exposition) in measure 52. But this unexpected cadence subsequently spins out a seemingly post-half-cadential dominant lock into material that is then understood to prepare the first of many authentic cadences in the secondary key, thereby denying the potential medial caesura its typical, rhetorically charged “breath.” Perhaps Haydn’s cleverest contribution, however, is that part of the “problem” with the excessive subdominant prolongation is that, though it provides some balance in thematic character (presenting a modicum of apparent “lyricism” not present elsewhere in the exposition), it also drastically un-balances the exposition’s proportions. That is, this “mid-expositional expansion section…that keeps reopening seemingly closed authentic cadences through varied modular repetitions” (ibid.) presents an unnatural expansion of a single harmony internal to the already expansive (by nature of its cadential reiterations) “expansion section,” further skewing our proportional impressions of the entire exposition. One might argue that the continuous exposition form emphasizes the music’s wandering or assists in the creation of form-functional confusion, but the excess exists and is sufficient for humour independently of the exposition’s form.
Following a four-measure presentation, this excessive passage expands what might more typically have been a two-measure subdominant expansion, leading to the continuation’s cadential idea and perhaps yielding an eight-measure sentence. The hypothetical recomposition below shows the drastic compression (from 12 measures down to two) the subdominant expansion would have to undergo to conform to more typical stylistic constraints. This is easily achieved by removing 10 meandering measures and making a tiny alteration to the wandering melody (shown with a bracket over the two altered pitches in the first violin).
We can see, without recourse to the musical portrayal of Leander’s paralytic forgetfulness, that the first violins’ mindless reiteration of—and pedestrian chromatic neighbour motion around—E5 is incongruous and excessive. The accompanying root and fifth of the subdominant, sounded in constant eighths in the other strings, add to the gestural monotony. And Haydn’s “perdendosi” indication (starting at piano) emphasizes the melody’s superfluous wandering around E and the further melodic stagnation created by the subsequent sustained Es (mm. 79–82).⁴⁴⁶

As in each of the examples of excess above, “we become aware of the straightjacket we are wearing only when it is removed”:⁴⁴⁷ our “high” expectation for a future event is thwarted each time a two- or four-measure group leads us to predict the appropriate articulation of a root position dominant harmony and instead, we hear the same “low” stagnant material instead. In this particularly unusual and ludicrously extended example, there are 10(!) extra measures where we are frequently denied our expectations, creating valence shifts from high to low.

⁴⁴⁶ Recall that Haydn also used a decreasing dynamic to emphasize the excessive passages of Symphony No. 93, No. 66, and String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3.

⁴⁴⁷ Almén (2008, 173). Almén’s (ibid.) removal of the straightjacket is particularly apt here as we suddenly “shift from naïve to skeptical mode of listening.” For him, this shift “causes a retrospective reassessment that is the essence of irony” (ibid.).
After the expanded (excessive) cadential progression seems to have been completely arrested by the subdominant’s ostensible “pedal” and the long forgotten need for a melody, a sudden and full-textured fortissimo dominant seventh (m. 83) shouts, “HEY!” rousing the orchestra to complete the cadential progression and put an end to the meandering Leander.\textsuperscript{448} Sisman explains that the piece is “losing its way” here and that “Haydn brilliantly depicts absent-mindedness by derailing the purposeful forward drive of the music with an overly extended chord, a fade-out, and then a sudden self-recollection.”\textsuperscript{449} She continues, “Because the extended chord is C major, the tonic of the movement but here the subdominant of G, its excessive length creates a pun on its absolute and relative identity, inappropriate as a tonic and too prominent as a subdominant.”\textsuperscript{450} Some listeners may indeed find this clever harmonic pun and the abrupt textural and dynamic shift humorous as well, but this humour will be secondary to that produced by the excess of the preceding passage, which creates humour by implausibly delaying the subsequent harmony and does so independently from the subsequent sharp tug back to “reality.”

When we compare this humorous moment to that in the symphony’s finale,\textsuperscript{451} we notice of course that this movement’s joke comes from excess and the finale’s relies on a single opposition (part of a composition/not part of a composition). But the type of forgetfulness Haydn depicts also differs between the two jokes. In the finale, Leander starts off on his merry way (a confident introduction and first phrase of the theme) before coming to a complete stop...he’s

\textsuperscript{448} The same “joke” occurs in the home key in the recapitulation and a slightly altered version (missing the fortissimo surprise) is heard over the submediant in the development. The effect is similar in each case, but because listeners can expect the later surprises, this first is the most pronounced.

\textsuperscript{449} Sisman (1990, 312).

\textsuperscript{450} Ibid. It seems to me that perceiving this pun requires very attentive listening to perceive it in real-time since we have clearly been in the key of G major for quite a while. To do so, a listener (without perfect pitch) would need to presume, based on her Classical extraopus knowledge, that the major-mode first movement would modulate to the dominant key and that a harmonic prolongation of the new key’s subdominant would also be a prolongation of the original tonic.

\textsuperscript{451} See Example 3.2.
missing something……oh yeah! There was no way to push on without fixing the problem: he made a major blunder and is forced to go back and start all over. In the first movement however, the excess seems to suggest an absent-minded Leander who goes about his daily life and somehow loses track of a task (in the music: a cadential progression), before eventually, yet suddenly, remembering what he was supposed to do and managing to complete it (the cadence). Put another way, he seems to have been waylaid by his own forgetfulness in the first movement, but, thanks to sudden reminder, manages in spite of it and ends up only a little late: no harm done.

Without setting up an intraopus narrative to precede this inanity, Haydn introduces Leander’s proclivity for distraction with this flagrantly excessive subdominant expansion and a fantastically tedious chromatic neighbour motion.\textsuperscript{452} This passage is therefore similar to the one we observed in Symphony No. 94 (Example 4.7), except that the strongest humorous oppositions occur in different places. That is, the strongest humorous opposition in the “Surprise” Symphony was the surprising later arrival, while here in No. 60, the rousing slap in the face plays second fiddle to the outrageously excessive passage that precedes it.

\textit{Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2 “The Joke,” fourth movement}

Perhaps the most interesting and complex example of excess in Haydn’s work occurs at the end of the String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, “The Joke.” This well-known passage comes at the

\textsuperscript{452} Although the opening measures of this movement’s continuous exposition (not shown) are also centered on E with small-scale neighbouring motions to F and D, they do not create an intraopus narrative that conduces toward the subsequent excessive passage in Example 4.10a: their melodic oscillation around E seems insistent, rather than trapped, as it moves up to G and down to C. These opening measures provide only a motivic glimpse of a similar melodic tendency without ample time or a need to forecast the ensuing hilarity.
end of a five-part rondo form and plays with Haydn’s small ternary rondo refrain’s entertainingly hackneyed sentence (shown in Example 4.11a).  

Example 4.11a: Haydn’s Op. 33 No. 2, iv, mm. 1–8

But the coda that follows the final refrain is unusual in the extreme. It begins when the tempo and topic shift suddenly to an adagio serioso before popping joyfully back into a cheery presto that brings back the refrain head motive exactly as it had been before.

---

453 For Almén (2008, 82), the finale of Op. 33 No. 2 “can be read as an ironic narrative in which the formal paradigms of the Classical style itself are undermined.” He presents a compelling case for the movement as a whole, but, due to my relatively local focus on humorous oppositions at the end of this work, I do not explore Almén’s ironic narrative further.
Example 4.11b: Haydn’s Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, iv, mm. 148–72
Example 4.11b begins with the final chord of the refrain’s opening sentence, before the music falls into the slow passage that follows (m. 149). Slow codas are not standard Classical fare, but they certainly occur in other Classical works.\textsuperscript{454} This passage, however, is unusually brief and materially unprecedented: there is no slow introduction or comparable earlier material to which the music returns. Although the sudden arrival of this “mock-serioso” material is strange,\textsuperscript{455} its brief, slow, sombre interjection functions well as a comedic duo’s “straight man,”\textsuperscript{456} creating tempo contrast and helping to set the stage for the silly and unexpected return to the \textit{presto} opening sentence that follows.

The return to the refrain might not seem particularly strange at first. Perhaps it serves only to make up for the “damage” caused by the intruding \textit{adagio}? Maybe the \textit{adagio} was just a momentary blip and all will be well? If we know the piece, we know that this is certainly not the case, but on first hearing listeners might expect that this extra repetition of the refrain will continue normally and that it exists simply to make up for the conspicuous rupture caused by the sudden \textit{adagio}. What occurs instead is first surprising, then excessive.

When the opening idea begins again (m. 153) the listener expects to hear the entire sentence. But Haydn does not simply repeat the opening sentence: he interrupts each two-measure idea with a grand pause. After the first grand pause ends and the refrain material re-enters, listeners will expect the piece to conclude after a final, complete iteration of the opening sentence. However, the grand pauses make it impossible for the listener to know when the

\textsuperscript{454}The first movement of Mozart’s String Quartet No. 11 in E-flat Major, K. 171 is one such example.

\textsuperscript{455}Wheelock (1992, 12).

\textsuperscript{456}Huron (2004, 700). Huron’s notion of the “straight man” in Schikele’s humorous compositions was briefly discussed alongside Example 4.6 above.
quartet will ultimately end. A possible moment-by-moment hearing of the concluding presto is presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Moment-by-moment reading of Op. 33 No. 2, conclusion

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

Listeners who are acquainted with Classical norms and were attentive throughout the finale will likely expect the quartet to end after the final two-measure idea of the opening period (m. 168), especially since it is recomposed to provide stronger harmonic completion and because it is followed by a longer (three-measure) tutti rest: listeners will inevitably assume that the notated rest (which they cannot hear) represents the end of the piece. So the arrival of yet another
repetition of the opening two-measure idea (mm. 171–72) will be undoubtedly surprising, and likely humorous, because of the excess created by the presence of yet another unnecessary refrain. For Wheelock, “the joke of Haydn’s departing gesture is…not simply that the opening phrase contradicts presumed closure, but that this beginning implies a continuation of even more outrageous manipulation than those heard previously.”

Goeth notes that this places “the unprepared listener into a slightly embarrassing situation. He/she might have raised his hands to clap or even have started to do so when the movement suddenly continues.”

But the excess created by the chunks of refrain material, isolated between an uncharacteristic proliferation (even for Haydn) of grand pauses, creates further expectations and the potential for further humorous oppositions. In measures 171 and 172, as Figure 4.1 suggests, after the humorous shock of another new refrain beginning, listeners most likely expect to hear the entire opening period again. That is, as unlikely as it may seem, because Haydn has composed so many stylistic irregularities by this point, another repetition of the refrain—with four measures worth of rests between two-measure ideas—might seem like the most plausible continuation to some listeners. Instead, Haydn pulls the rug out from underneath us again, creating a punch line by using the excessively employed opening idea to end the quartet.

This unexpected ending, like the conclusion of Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2 (Example 4.8), uses the silence after the end as part of this punch line. Perhaps the most ingenious aspect of this device is that, because the preceding grand pause was three measures long (plus the rests on either side), the audience must wait three and a half measures (almost four seconds!) just to be

---

457 Wheelock (1992, 12). Wheelock’s comment is quoted by Levy (1995, 155–56) who also offers a brief discussion of this conclusion.

458 Goeth (2013, 240).

459 Listeners may also recall (after the end) that this is exactly what they expected might occur when measure 155 brought a grand pause (possible ending) rather than further refrain material.
sure the piece is actually over.\textsuperscript{460} This is assuming, of course, that the instrumentalists in a live performance are in cahoots and continue to act as though they might continue…

This famous joke merits a brief note apropos of performance since the physical performance of this quartet conclusion will have a profound impact on the location and strength of Haydn’s punch line. Perhaps the best strategy is for performers to act as though they will play further; at the very least, keeping their instruments suspended in a playing position after the final pitches. If the performers wish, they could keep their instruments up for several measures—at least three—to keep an audience of first-time listeners in suspense.

Of course, all of this assumes that the joke is on us, the listeners. While listeners have been my primary focus when examining humorous oppositions, it is also important to note the potential humour in this performance from the point of view of the quartet’s musicians. Klorman’s explicit focus on agency in the string quartet medium addresses this important aspect. With respect to this conclusion, he notes, “Haydn’s joke ending could be appreciated just as fully by the players themselves while sight-reading in the privacy of their own drawing room, with no audience present.”\textsuperscript{461} Klorman continues, “Upon reaching the quartet’s final measures, which end \textit{in medias res}, one could imagine the quartet’s players frantically flipping their pages, wondering if the remainder of the final phrase might be on the reverse side or on some misplaced page, only to realize, too late, that they had already reached the very end.”\textsuperscript{462} Klorman’s dynamic focus on the musicians allows a shift of perspective on Haydn’s joke that is particularly apt for this quartet’s conclusion. This shift lets us interpret the quartet members as the target of Haydn’s

\textsuperscript{460} Haydn makes his audience wait considerably longer than Beethoven did in Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2.
\textsuperscript{461} Klorman (2013, 105).
\textsuperscript{462} Ibid.
joke, but it is nevertheless important to allow (as Wheelock does) that this finale’s unique “comic gestures…exceed the frame of an exclusive conversation.”

These examples of unprepared excess create humour by using functionally redundant repetitions of a simple motive in one unprecedented, long-winded, excessive passage that delays an expected arrival. In Haydn’s Symphony No. 66, he delays the minuet’s recapitulation; in the first movement of Symphony No. 60, he delays the cadential arrival by stalling on the subdominant; and in the finale of String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, he delays the end of the piece. These examples exhibit humorous excess in its most concentrated form.

Conclusion

Listeners need not be very well versed in Classical instrumental rhetoric to apprehend the flagrant inanity characteristic of many examples of humorous excess. However, the greater a listener’s knowledge of the style, the more the humorous passage will stand out from the surrounding music. It is difficult to imagine, though, how even a listener with only a basic understanding of the style could fail to notice the emphatic and bizarre protraction of banality in Examples 4.9–4.11.

By contrast, some examples of excess—those that employ several motivic cues throughout a composition (4.3–4.6 and 4.8)—can be more difficult to apprehend. These examples contain a diversity of anomalous motivic material that creates a narrative thread the listener can follow, or recognize retrospectively, and is understood to pave the way for further, more bizarre anomalies later in the composition. Laying out this narrative pathway requires a

---

crafty ploy on the part of the composer and the result of this ploy is often a sophisticated joke that demands careful attention, understanding, and retrospection from the listener. Thus, the success of humour achieved in these compositions depends more greatly on the listeners’ familiarity with the musical context with which the composer is playing, not to mention a developed musical memory.

In all of the foregoing discussions of the first component of humorous excess, superfluous repetitions of certain musical (harmonic, melodic, dynamic, etc.) parameters create a passage or event that does not accord with Classical instrumental conventions, marking the excessive passage (or part of it) for special affective potential. In every case, the redundant repetitions stall forward progress and thwart our expectations of a “high” return to discursive normalcy with the “low” actuality of further superfluity. We have seen that every time the excessive material steamrolls over an expectation threshold, a high-to-low valence shift occurs and a humorous opposition can be created. As the music passes each of these opposition-creating thresholds, we are forced to create new expectations that typically represent an attempt to accord with a prevailing grouping structure and that will hopefully be realized. In other words, while playing this game of expectation with the composer, the listener recognizes the incongruity between what she expected the music to do and what actually happened and—if she is anything like me—will find these passages funny.

Many of the passages examined in this chapter also possess a humorous second component that articulates the return to more conventional discourse to end the excessive passage. That is, while excessive passages must always come to an end, we have observed different ways in which they may do so. Namely, there may be some kind of mildly entertaining metrically- or motivically-driven “hiccup” that gets the music back on track (as in Examples 4.3–
4.5), or there may be a more ridiculous arrival that articulates its own humorous opposition (as in Examples 4.6–4.11). The only difference between these later arrivals and the oppositions we observed in Chapter 3 is that those in this chapter occur on the heels of an excessive passage, which heightens our expectation for their arrival. In other words, the primary mechanisms (topics or other extramusical frames of reference) that produce the valence shifts in the second component of excess are the same as those we observed alongside the humorous oppositions in Chapter 3.

With so many form-functionally superfluous protractions of inanity, we might call Haydn the “father of musical excess” (and not pejoratively). Indeed, it seems that Haydn in particular deploys (and appears to relish) elements of functional redundancy in his compositions with a degree of artful whimsy that no other Classical composers seem to share. Of course, Beethoven’s contributions are also significant. He was certainly influenced by Haydn’s excessive motivic repetition, but approached the technique in a different way. As we have seen, Beethoven’s examples of humorous excess seem to rise from a source of musical conflict and tend to present more mechanical reiterations of shorter motivic fragments.⁴⁶⁴ That is, Beethoven’s excessive passages—like Haydn’s in Examples 4.3, 4.4, and 4.6—arise from some wayward or irksome “problem” injected into the intraopus context early in the composition and tend to create a more sophisticated impression.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ See again Levy (1992) for a study of aspects of the mechanical in Classical instruments works, including some by Beethoven.

⁴⁶⁵ This is arguably the case for the excessive passages in the scherzo from String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1 (mm. 86–101) and the conclusion of the finale of Symphony No. 8.
Conspicuously absent from my discussion of humorous excess are compositions by Mozart, who seems to have used this device relatively rarely. Instead, the humorous passages Mozart composed appear to be primarily predicated on oppositions like those discussed in Chapter 3. This does not make Mozart’s jokes less musically erudite, nor does it remotely demean his compositional ability. On the contrary, the difference in how they compose musical humour is merely one of many differences in the compositional approaches of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. While their various compositional proclivities drive the incredible diversity of humorous articulations in the examples we have seen, we have noted nevertheless that, where musical humour is the goal, the strategies of opposition and excess provide a consistent explanation for the different sorts of humorous punctuations composed by these Classical masters.

A notable exception to this is “Ein musikalischer Spaß,” K. 522. As I explained in chapter two, however, this piece is an outlier in many ways and will not be discussed here. The finale of Mozart’s String Quartet No. 18 K. 428 (where he quotes Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 5 and avails himself of numerous Haydnesque grand pauses) and the first movement of String Quartet No. 2 K. 155 (where the first violinist seems preoccupied with scale degree five in a manner reminiscent of Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3) have a similar kind of excessive character, but not to the same extent as we observed in the Haydn and Beethoven examples. A humorous example of excess by Mozart occurs in the “Bandl-Terzett” K. 441 (1783), a three-part song for soprano, tenor, and bass that was inspired by the time Constanze lost a ribbon and she, Mozart, and Gottfried von Jacquin had to chase after it (see Anderson [1966, 2: 903]), but as this example of excess occurs in a vocal piece and is largely perpetrated by the voices, it has no place in the current discussion. See also footnote 268.
5 Conclusion

"Three blokes walk into a pub. One of them is a little bit stupid, and the whole scene unfolds with a tedious inevitability."

This study has focused on two strategies Classical composers employed to create humour in their instrumental music. I have called these strategies, “opposition” and “excess.” The nature of the humorous articulations in Chapters 3 and 4 have variously highlighted how these strategies produce contrasts between semantic (topical) and syntactic (form-functional) elements. With an adaptable analytical lens focused on the most salient elements of contrast, I have tried to present thoroughgoing discussions of different humorous passages to clarify precisely which aspects are involved in humorous oppositions. I have also pinpointed specific locations where the valence shifts from high to low stature and noted shifts in emotional valence (positive or negative) and/or arousal levels (high or low) to illustrate their emphasizing role. Where appropriate, I have introduced more specific extramusical oppositions (like the composition/not the composition and non-excrement/excrement). Although a composer’s personal style necessarily influences his deployment of these strategies, the humorous examples we have seen can be explained according to humorous opposition and/or excess.

In discussing these compositional strategies for creating humour, I have also suggested how musical humour engages with intraopus and extraopus contexts, how it can focus the butt of a joke on a “target” (performers, listeners, and/or extramusical characters), how other musical parameters both play a role in creating humour, and how some examples of musical humour create more gag-like or sophisticated effects.

---

Other Potential Sources of Musical Humour

I have suggested that opposition and excess are the most ubiquitous and most effective strategies for creating or discussing most examples of successful musical humour in Classical instrumental music.\(^{468}\) But other quirky passages and entertaining oddities that could be considered humorous may require more sustained engagement with specific compositional mechanisms other than formal functions or topics, when these mechanisms do not play a primary role. Passages like these sometimes occur when composers focus on bizarre metric techniques or highly idiomatic instrumental writing that may require a different analytical vantage. In these cases, opposition and/or excess may not necessarily be the best way to approach a discussion of the musical humour therein.

Consider, for example, the impression of “early” downbeats Mozart creates in the second movement of String Quintet K. 516,\(^{469}\) the bizarre and entertaining metric peculiarities in several movements by Haydn,\(^{470}\) or the quirky relatively surface-level hemiolas found in works by

---

\(^{468}\) While my dissertation centers exclusively on instrumental music, a promising area for future research would be to investigate the possible role of opposition and excess in the operas of Mozart and his contemporaries. Such a project would contribute to a substantial body of recent scholarship on humour in eighteenth-century opera. See esp. Gallarati (1997) and Goehring (2004).

\(^{469}\) We might even call these “upbeat downbeats” given their placement on the established last beat of the measure. At their introduction (m. 4), however, they skew the metric regularity of the passage and briefly imply 2/4 time (this technique was surely adopted from Haydn, who incorporates implications of 2/4 into his 3/4 minuet movements elsewhere).

\(^{470}\) For example, the first movement of String Quartet Op. 20 No. 3 contains a strange 3/4 dance intrusion, as well as some weaker functional and (implicitly) topical non sequiturs (see esp. mm. 24, 107, 145, 151, and 240). The opening of Op. 33 No. 4 sports a half-measure metric shift in measures 4 to 7 where 1.5-measure ideas seem to push the bar line around. This opening oddity pales in comparison to the decisively odd cadential tag in measures 8–9, 10–11, 11–12, and 12–13. The last of these “tags” is perpetrated by only the cello, who continues to be a problem throughout the movement (see also Wheelock [1992, 103–11]). Similarly, in the first movement of Op. 64 No. 3 the downbeat sounds like it is on notated beat 2.5 (in 3/4) because of a strong sense of 6/8 meter at the opening. For a discussion of metric dissonance in this opening, see Mirka (2009, 180–82; 195–96). The exposition of the opening small ternary minuet in Op. 33 No. 5 is metrically bizarre in the extreme: strong implications of 2/4 mixed with 3/4 in the melody, followed by unclear metric implications, and measure-long, pre-cadential grand pause. 2/4 implications also occur in measures 12 to 16 of Op. 64 No. 3’s minuet movement (see also Mirka [2009, 62–3; 150]) and the opening (especially beginning in m. 5) of the minuet from Op. 77 No. 2. Similarly, Haydn’s minuet theme gets dragged into an implied 4/4 march in measures 8 to 14 and 26 to 32 of Symphony No. 65.
Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. These examples do not seem to exhibit strategies of opposition or excess, but they are another possible source of humour in the Classical instrumental idiom.

Mirka’s *Metric Manipulations in Haydn and Mozart* discusses many witty examples involving meter (including some of those mentioned above) and her overall approach is well suited to her focus on metric anomalies. Since Mirka’s excellent study has described many of the qualitatively different effects that arise from Haydn’s and Mozart’s employment of metric devices, the present study has not focused on this aspect of humour in Classical music. At the same time, I have been careful to account for metric anomalies where they aid in the creation of humorous opposition or excess.

Further research could be focused on the notion that a particular instrument or instruments might perpetrate jokes in more specific or peculiar ways. The example that springs to mind first is the embarrassingly flatulent bassoon in the second movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 93, but there are many similar scapegoats for humour in other Classical instrumental works. For example, recall the absent-minded oboes in the minuet from Haydn’s Symphony No. 60; or the flagrant excess of the violin’s virtuosity in the finale of Mozart’s K.

---

471 See for example, the opening of the minuet from Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2, the finales from Haydn’s String Quartet Op. 76 No. 4 (esp. mm. 22–24) and Mozart’s String Quartet K. 590, where the opening 16th-note figure becomes the focus of many entertainingly interpolated *musettes* where the descending-third hemiola figure occurs in different, often chromaticized, versions (see mm. 121–27 and throughout the development [esp. mm. 134–84]). Note also that the hemiola Beethoven uses in the Scherzo of Op. 18 No. 1 (1798–1800) in measures 143 to 145 is nearly identical to the one Haydn used in measures 22 to 24 of String Quartet Op. 76 No. 4 (1796/7) and that Mozart had written even earlier (1790) in the finale of String Quartet K. 590 (mm. 121–27 and 134–84).

472 See Mirka (2009).

473 See measures 56 to 58. A discussion of the humour perpetrated by the absent-minded oboes is given in Chapter 3, Example 3.6b.
and K. 590\textsuperscript{475} and at the end of the Scherzo from Beethoven’s Op. 18 No. 1;\textsuperscript{476} or the confused cello in the opening movement of Haydn’s Op. 33 No. 4\textsuperscript{477} and the second movement of Op. 77 No. 2.\textsuperscript{478} I have discussed some of these oddities when they were involved in humorous oppositions. But, considering the characteristic uses of individual instruments in specific Classical idioms, we may further presume that the instruments themselves could have had special tendencies to which Classical audiences were particularly sensitive. This seems particularly likely given the number of times Mozart’s *Ein musikalischer Spaß* uses the violin or horns in a counter-idiomatic manner as either perpetrators of, or “targets” for its jokes. A thorough study of specific instrumental idioms is needed to excavate the individual implications of contra-idiomatic instrumentation and its significance for historical audiences.\textsuperscript{479}

It is easy to speculate (and possibly to entertain doubts) about the extent to which present-day listeners can recuperate an understanding of Classical instrumental idioms—and for that matter topics, forms, and aesthetics in general. But, while there is no way to eliminate our cultural and historical distance entirely, deliberate and thoughtful study (of well researched scores and of the relevant historical work-specific background) and frequent listening (to a range of performances) can certainly aid in recovering a part of the lost information.

\textsuperscript{474} This is discussed in Example 5.1 below. See also Mirka (2009, 89; 152; 305).

\textsuperscript{475} Allusions to the excessively virtuosic (or absent-minded) violinist occur throughout this finale.

\textsuperscript{476} See measures 90 to 101 and 122 to 45.

\textsuperscript{477} The confused (late) cello is first heard in measures 12 to 13.

\textsuperscript{478} The cello enters in 2/4 at the pickup to measure 5.

\textsuperscript{479} Perry-Camp (1979, 25), for example, refers to the bassoon’s frequent role as “scapegoat,” but does not provide specific examples other than the third movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 94 and the second movement No. 93 (discussed previously alongside Examples 4.6 and 4.7). There is room for further study on this bassoon role and roles of other instruments in humour, but also as specific affective perpetrators in general. The goal of such a study should be, not to pigeon-hole specific instruments into specific roles, but to attempt to delineate certain roles for instruments that might be especially typical or emblematic of individual compositional styles, genres, or ensembles.
Performing Humour

Rarely in this study have I explicitly recognized the role of performance in creating musical humour. Performance plays a particularly important role in musical humour, only some of which can be recuperated from score study, whether informed by historical considerations or not. Thus, even if a score’s editor takes pains to reflect details of the composer’s notation that might conduce toward a humorous interpretation of the score data, it falls to the performer to make the humorous implications of the score come alive. Where humour is present—especially where it is subtle or sophisticated—from what is the performer’s role in communicating the joke?

I would argue, first, that the sort of analysis engaged in here ought to be undertaken (if only informally) by the performer, especially where the humour in question seems particularly sophisticated (and thus might likely be missed). Second, I encourage any attempt by performers to immerse themselves in the music’s social context, whether general or particular to the work being played. The effect of study along both of these lines is to excavate affective implications, and to target specific aspects of events or passages to increase their salience and “mark” them for humorous potential.\textsuperscript{480} This is only a starting point, however, for the performer’s delivery of jokes and their punch lines. Success in this domain requires exquisite timing and the subtle manipulation of dynamics and articulation. It may require a judicious use of body language. At all times it demands sensitivity to nuances of the Classical style and a willingness to adapt one’s approach to different musical situations.

A performance that does nothing more than follow the composer’s directions precisely may be adequate, or even ideal, for some humorous passages. Consider again Haydn’s “tuning”

\textsuperscript{480} See Beghin and Goldberg (2007) for excellent discussions of performing affects and rhetoric in Haydn’s compositions in particular.
in the finale of Symphony No. 60 (mm. 17–32). Haydn makes the incongruity of the tuning passage clear by separating it from the composition proper with two empty measures on either side. He also instructs the performers by including, “The violins should tune their instruments from F to G.” In this bizarre passage, despite its flagrant opposition with the surrounding music, performers need not take matters into their own hands. In fact, additional performance directions for this passage would likely hinder, rather than aid, the production of a humorous effect. It goes without saying that the performers should play *senza vibrato* in the retuning section (keeping to open strings and avoiding fingering the open-string pitch on an adjacent string), but realizing this “intention” hardly seems to demand any performer intervention at all, given Haydn’s performance instruction and the conspicuous likeness to preparatory tuning. For this example and some of the most barefaced examples of musical humour (like the conclusion of the opening movement of Mozart’s K. 250, the conclusion of Haydn’s Op. 33 No. 2, and virtually all of K. 522), following performance directions closely often provides the most humorous results.

By contrast, in most of the examples of musical humour I have discussed, small nuances in performance that are not conveyed by the score—whether obtained through analysis or by excavating aspects of its compositional and social history—will have a pronounced effect on conveying humour. More sophisticated humour—subtler oppositions and shorter excessive passages with intraopus narratives—benefits most from these kinds of humour-amplifying performance decisions. For example, Beethoven’s Bagatelles Op. 33, Nos. 2 and 5 exhibit humorous excess through intraopus narratives. In Bagatelle No. 5, the A5 and F6 call attention to themselves immediately since they have the longest durations so far, are preceded by rests,

---

481 This excerpt is discussed alongside Example 3.2.

482 These compositions were discussed alongside Examples 4.8 and 4.5, respectively. Levy (1992) also offers some discussion of performance aspects in these two bagatelles.
and are marked *sforzando*. This rhetorical emphasis can certainly be perceived from the opening if the pianist chooses simply to follow Beethoven’s notation. But, considering the intraopus narrative these pitches initiate and drive throughout the composition, some added emphasis accorded to them throughout the work can greatly add to the effect of humorous excess in measures 59 to 64 and to the perceptibility of the reversed arrival of the two pitches in measure 65. Since the motivic identities of the A5 and F6 are not defined by the part they play in a larger metric context, the performer can delay them slightly to add further rhetorical strength (in the same way an organist or harpsichordist might delay a pitch to provide emphasis in lieu of dynamic stress). This will “mark” the two pitches for greater affective potential as their humorous narrative unfolds. Of course, it is possible to overdo this effect to the work’s detriment: too much delay might seem like interpretive “hand-holding” or disrupt the music’s melodic or rhythmic flow. Jenő Jandó’s\(^{483}\) and Alfred Brendel’s\(^{484}\) recordings show how this kind of emphasis can be added effectively.\(^{485}\)

By comparison, the humorous excess in Bagatelle No. 2 seems to allow less room for performance interpretation if humour is the desired effect. Because the right-hand/left-hand alternation is based on, or at least engages with, 2/4 against 3/4 metric implications from the

---

\(^{483}\) I find Jandó’s (1991) emphasis on the F and A, while minimizing *rubato* elsewhere (especially in the later excessive passage from mm. 59–64), very effective.

\(^{484}\) Brendel ([1995] 2007) effectively highlights the F and A subtly at the beginning and allows the excessive passage (mm. 59–64) to run headlong into them. Rather remarkably, Levy (1992, 226n4) and I independently found Brendel’s interpretations to be particularly successful.

\(^{485}\) Compare these interpretations to the nearly opposite choices by Artur Schnabel ([c.1938] 2005) where, despite a great deal of *rubato* elsewhere, he does not seem to accord the high F and A with any extra significance. Furthermore, after the excessive passage near the end (mm. 59–64), the F is heard clearly and the A appears to blend easily into the following descending scale. Gould’s recording ([1975] 2007) is also less effective at creating humour because he downplays the importance of the F and A from the beginning, but when they arrive after the excessive passage they are so highly dramatized that humour is a very unlikely result. Richter’s recording ([c.1960] 2014) provides a good example of how quicker tempi, though often more effective at creating humour, do not always achieve a humorous end.
opening, any delaying emphasis added to either the opening E5 or C2 (or the alternating chords later on) will likely have a detrimental effect on the perception of humour when alternating metric perceptions and the right-hand/left-hand “argument” come to the fore at the work’s conclusion. Furthermore, any added dynamic emphasis or rubato tends to make the performance sound heavy-handed, unbalanced, or imprecise. In Bagatelle No. 2 then, unlike in No. 5, deliberate avoidance of these performance nuances seems the best choice, if the right-hand/left-hand squabble is to run its humorous course. It seems to me that the most effective way to bring out the humorous disagreement and the 2/4 vs. 3/4 flip-flopping is to de-emphasize any metric or tempo-based liberties one might be tempted to take in the final eight measures. For example, Jandó and Glenn Gould allow strong beats to remain unclear by avoiding any extra weight on the notated downbeats, allowing the listener to perceive this conclusion’s metric implications under their most transparently obfuscated (where we can take our pick of 2/4 or 3/4) rendering. This kind of “flat” performance is often the most effective for more gag-like humorous passages with conspicuous excess.

Performers can also amplify the contrasts that create valence shifts by emphasizing specific musical parameters on either side of an opposition. For example, the humorous

486 Jandó (1991) plays the entire Bagatelle with almost mathematical (but not un-musical) metric precision. This effectively allows Beethoven’s metric game to come to the fore throughout the composition, but especially at its conclusion.

487 Gould ([1975] 2007) very effectively allows Beethoven’s conflicting metric implications to sound. His artistic liberties—extra legati, pedal work, and rapid upward arpeggations near the end—could be viewed to detract from some ideal version of “Beethovenian humour,” but certainly do not preclude humour in general. In fact, Gould’s extra arpeggations near the end (mm. 131–35) effectively distract the listener from what would otherwise be a longer stretch of implied 2/4 meter, mixing up the metric implication even more effectively in my view.

488 Compare these recordings to that of Artur Schnabel ([c.1938] 2005) where his rubato early in the Bagatelle disrupts Beethoven’s metric implication (which I am arguing should be allowed to show its inherent conflict) and his emphasis on the left hand toward the end “flattens” the ambiguity between 3/4 and 2/4 to bias 2/4. This “flattening” effect would not be so pronounced at the end if the opening metric ambiguity had been allowed to shine through. Natasha Vlassenko (2013) also provides a demonstrably un-humorous interpretation: her rubato is so extensive that, despite a somewhat effective late-Romantic character, it quashes any of Beethoven’s notated metric conflict by adding far more of her own.
opposition between the *minuet* and *mock-march* that occurs in measures 49 to 61 of the third movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 60 can be greatly amplified with a few simple performance directions. To begin, I would recommend that the oboes perform their echo (mm. 56–59) with as much “absent-mindedness” as possible. That is, observing the *piano* dynamic and performing meekly and without confidence—despite the contrasting implications of this fleeting *fanfare* topic—will help to create an uncertain and apprehensive listener who is better “set up for surprise” when the *mock-march* blunders in. When the strings enter at the pickup to measure 59, there is no need to be shy about the *forte* since, in this rare example, it seems clear that Haydn intended the ensemble to overpower the oboe duet. Still, the strings will do this humorous opposition a disservice if they completely drown out the oboes. The goal, I think, should be to overpower the oboes as much as possible while still allowing them to remain barely audible. These performance choices (admirably achieved by Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Manfred Huss) will allow this highly dramatic and ridiculous topical overlap to reach its humorous potential.

As noted above, letting the music “speak for itself” (which is still a performance decision) may be the most effective way to bring out a passage’s humorous potential in some cases. Of course, we are speaking primarily about works that have a relatively clear humorous agenda. But if performers wish to bring out a humorous passage or event that is not conspicuous

---

489 See esp. Concentus Musicus Wien under Harnoncourt (1990), who perform the trio with great success: one must work very hard to hear the oboes conclude their line when the strings return with dauntless aggression. Harnoncourt’s decision to perform the trio at a much faster tempo than the minuet is also notable. The Vienna Haydn Sinfonietta under Huss (2010) also effectively creates humour in the trio, albeit with a remarkably contrasting approach. Huss directs a very slow, stately trio that draws out the absent-minded/distracted nature of the *musette* simply because it goes on for much longer. The stateliness of Huss’s trio also strongly juxtaposes impressions of high (because it is slow and stately) and low (because the *musette* is distracted for longer) stature. I urge the reader to listen to both of these recordings because they demonstrate the large amount of space within which performers can work and still produce a humorous result.

490 The Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orchestra under Fischer (1999) is considerably less effective at creating humour in the trio. The oboes are not nearly as effectively interrupted and can clearly be heard to finish as the strings enter almost tentatively at *mf* or *mp*, instead of bombastically and assertively as they do in the other recordings listed above.
on its own, they could play up the redundancy of an excessive passage with dynamic or tempo changes, or emphasize certain characteristics to widen the perceived opposition between the passages on either side of a valence shift. In a live performance, the soloist or ensemble might even wish to feign fatigue or boredom in an excessive passage or could contrive to appear shocked at the sudden arrival of an opposing topic. But smiling and winking at the audience might be pushing it.\textsuperscript{491}

Let us briefly consider a hypothetical performance of the opening of the \textit{allegro} finale to Mozart’s String Quintet K. 516 to show how this passage’s conflicting downbeat implications (whether the downbeat is heard on beat four or beat one) and arguably excessive violin virtuosity (from the pickup to measure 9 until measure 16) can be emphasized effectively.

\textsuperscript{491} That said, contemporary Classical keyboard performance practice suggests that performers were encouraged to engage directly with their audience and that keyboardists’ body language was an important part of conveying musical affects (see Beghin and Goldberg [2007, esp. 131–71]). Schiff (2009) discusses how modern audiences are reluctant to react to musical humour in performances of Haydn in particular.
Example 5.1: Mozart's String Quintet K. 516, iv, mm. 39–58
This passage is not likely ever to be rip-roaringly funny, but it suggests a somewhat humorous quality. But this humour could easily be missed in performance, to the detriment of the effect Mozart may have been trying to create. The most effective way to demonstrate the conflicting downbeat implications—not in themselves especially humorous, but important for setting the stage—at the allegro’s opening is simply to follow Mozart’s notation and allow the listener to
encounter the conflicting interpretations (as I advocated with respect to the conclusion of Beethoven’s Bagatelle Op. 33 No. 2). Likewise, I believe the best way to convey the glaring violin virtuosity of an absent-minded or over-zealous “folk-band leader”\(^4^9^2\) is to avoid tempering the subsequent 16\(^{th}\)-note flourishes with any freedom of tempo (except perhaps for a slight acceleration). That is, no tempo reduction should be introduced until Mozart’s *calando*, which—following the violinist getting carried away—suggests something like a reorienting “Oops…where was I?” from the fictitious folk-band leader. The opening matter is a simple one, but navigating the space between “folk-band musician” and “poor performer” is more difficult. While “playing badly” would surely be viewed as an over-performance of the folk-band leader impression suggested by Mozart’s notated score, an interpretation of this passage that is too tentative, on the slow side, or remotely reserved will not effectively convey the passage’s humorous potential. The goal, I think, should be to allow its inherent virtuosity to shine through with the cadenza-like impression Mozart appears to be aiming for by relaxing, perhaps taking the overall tempo up a notch, and definitely performing the *staccati*.\(^4^9^3\) In other words, the first violinist need not hold back and, if the music takes her, can feel free to let the music carry her toward a “less musical” interpretation—less musical given what might seem to be called for by the serious and proper character of the preceding *adagio*—without becoming completely carried away. Pinchas Zukerman and Jascha Heifetz do this effectively.\(^4^9^4\) Both performers (but especially Heifetz) and their colleagues take the *allegro* slightly faster than do other ensembles. Both achieve a sense of “scrambling” through the ascending runs (Zukerman very effectively

\(^{4^9^2}\) Mirka often discusses parody of folk-band musicians since it is instrumental for her theme of wit as “artful imitation of musical bungling.” See esp. Mirka (2009, 89; 152; 279; 304).

\(^{4^9^3}\) The “dry” impression created by *staccato* (even quasi-*spiccato* is effective here) in passages like this is particularly effective at creating the folk-band impression.

rushes his slightly), both land tentatively on the C-sharp and C-natural that follow, and both return suddenly and surprisingly to the opening idea. Markus Wolf’s interpretation of this section, as first violinist of the Alban Berg Quartet, is not particularly effective at conveying the impression of a runaway folk-band leader for precisely the reasons listed above: in my opinion, he performs too slowly, too cleanly, and too carefully to create the humorous effect Mozart implies.

Of course, simply applying these performance decisions that might help to induce humour in appropriate contexts to works where no latent humour exists—say, the slow, second movement of Mozart’s Piano Sonata in A minor, K. 310—could easily damage those works’ inherent qualities and detract from their overall impact. That is, despite a performer’s intent to create humour, contrived interpretations of many Classical works will be more prone to sounding “wrong” than “funny.” As always, it is important first to consider the intraopus and extraopus context of a passage before opting for a particular performance interpretation.

A Brief Recapitulation

The examples of musical humour this study has presented share many commonalities. Most come from passages in chamber music (especially string quartets), movements with quick tempi (often minuets), and the most commonly exemplified composer is Haydn. This much about musical humour in the Classical style is not news, but the specific musical—and to some

---

495 Sidney Griller is perhaps even more successful with the C-sharp and C-natural (playing them both shorter and more tentatively than Zukerman and Heifetz), but is less successful elsewhere. See William Primrose ([1964] 2003).

496 Wolf ([1988] 1996). In fact, every other performance of this cadenza-like passage I have listened to has not been effective in my view. This particular performance (and many others) also does not seem to observe Mozart’s “calando.”
extent psychological—strategies and mechanisms by which Classical composers could create successful jokes and push or surpass the boundaries of convention to create humour have (to my knowledge) not been discussed before. This discussion is crucial when we consider the number of times we have all chuckled or even laughed out loud at some particular event or passage in Classical music and perhaps recalled how much that experience increased, or was directly responsible for, our enjoyment of the music. Throughout this study, I have sought to include the most striking and emblematic examples of humour from the Classical instrumental style, but I have been unable to include all potentially humorous examples. The numerous experiences most listeners have had with quirky and memorable passages that they found humorous—sometimes on the first listening, but not infrequently also on a tenth—reaffirms the ubiquity and complexity of the phenomenon of humour in Classical music in particular.

The frequency of our reaction to humour in music can in part be explained by the conscious or unconscious process by which we ascribe human tendencies—most commonly human error or a fall in social status—to various passages or events that seem to conjure a particular narrative or scene. To this end, I have provided possible extramusical narratives that could represent one or more listeners’ interpretations of the human element normally associated with successful jokes. While a useful rhetorical device in any situation, these narratives do not make the music funny. Instead, they serve primarily to present the sorts of extramusical interpretations listeners tend to ascribe to incongruous musical situations simply to try to make sense of them. This process of making sense of an incongruous event or passage necessitates the act of reinterpretation that is crucial for humour.

This general process of (script) opposition (“Where’d that new idea come from?”), reinterpretation (“In what way do those things fit together?”), and re-cognition (“Oh! It works
like that! Haha!”) can create humour in the same way a verbal joke text can, provided there is a valence shift that accompanies the incongruity. In this way, humour arises from the act of reinterpretation whereby what is “wrong” is shown to be purposeful and thus made right. The act of reinterpretation in music or in verbal communication will occur between different possible scripts. Examples of such oppositional script pairs we have seen are “normal/abnormal state of affairs,” “high/low stature,” “the composition/not the composition,” and “non-excrement/excrement.” This game we play when trying to make sense of an incongruity between scripts leads us to an enjoyable and at times laughworthy musical encounter. Listening attentively and allowing ourselves to engage in this playful game with the composer and/or performer(s) can help to recover some of the historical and cultural distance between us and Classical listeners. And, if we are sensitive to the crafty endeavours of Classical composers and aware of the humorous potential of much of their instrumental repertoire, this kind of “listening for fun” can help us to recuperate ways of engaging with and enjoying this music that were native to original audiences and intended by the music’s creators.
Bibliography


Diergarten, Felix F. 2008. “‘At times even Homer nods off’: Heinrich Christoph Koch’s Polemic against Joseph Haydn.” *Music Theory Online* 14 (1).


Discography


