Teaching Topics with Haydn (alongside that Other Guy)

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Abstract

A generation after Leonard Ratner introduced the concept of topics to eighteenth-century music scholarship, J. Peter Burkholder’s 2006 revision of Grout/Palisca’s *A History of Western Music* made teaching topicality more widely accessible in undergraduate music history. Welcome as this excursion into the topical universe may be, Burkholder’s exploration of topics is limited to the music of Mozart. Indeed, undergraduates working primarily with this text (as do many) could easily get the impression that topical play is Mozart’s game, and Mozart’s alone. In this essay I make a case for teaching Haydn’s topical art alongside that of Mozart. Topics discussed include the *alla turca* style, the Hungarian-Gypsy style, fantasia, *ombra* and *tempesta.*