

Haydn's French reception between 1870 and 1914 reflects a central concern of the era's music criticism: the revival of a classical aesthetic within a post-romantic context. But which, or whose classicism was intended? Examination of contemporary French periodicals reveals a tension within the *élite* world of the concert hall: between the socially conservative advocates of Viennese classicism – Haydn's music representing the standard – and supporters of a nationalistic, culturally progressive *nouveau classicisme* designed to rejuvenate a specifically French style without merely imitating eighteenth-century forms.

While most scholars have located Haydn's reception in France logically on one side of this divide, sources suggest a more nuanced interpretation is needed. Concert reviews show that, while audiences enjoyed Haydn's music, many critics, habituated to Beethoven and Wagner, questioned the relevance of an "old-fashioned" style redolent of the defunct milieu of the *ancien régime*. Among the bourgeois concert-goers of the Third Republic, however, Haydn's music fired nostalgia for pre-revolutionary France, and triggered the projection of false memories of an aristocratic past that had never existed for their eighteenth-century ancestors. Combined additionally with literary and visual associations, Haydn's music strengthened constructs of republican French identity and historical validation for the new ruling class. Yet the tension between "classicisms" remained, as exemplified by the problematic results obtained by composers such as Debussy, d'Indy, and Dukas, who tried to integrate their respective styles with Haydn's in works commissioned by the Société Internationale de Musique for the composer's centenary in 1909.