

The subject of my research is the Opus 33, a set of six quartets composed by Joseph Haydn in 1782, because this cycle – as its contemporary reception proved – meant a real turning point in the development of quartet literature. After its publication by Artaria in Vienna the series became popular and many editions (Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris, Lyon and London) were issued in the following year. Its rapid spread, the increasing public awareness and success was due to the printed editions and various appreciative criticisms and encomiums (Johann Friedrich Reichardt, Carl Friedrich Cramer, Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach). In 1782 and 1783 a quartet was formed especially for playing certain quartets of opus 33 in public and private houses, concert halls and palaces in several cities all over Germany thus contributing to building up Haydn's reputation as a composer.

The set received a number of “nicknames” over the years, none of which came from the author. The name “Gli Scherzo” in certain quartets refers to themes called “scherzo” substituted for the traditional minuet movement; the “Maiden” quartets stems from the drawing of an attractive young woman that appeared on the title page of the Amsterdam edition; the “Russian quartet” refers to a private performance (1781) at an apartment where Grand Duke Paul of Russia and his wife were also present.

Quartets, of course, had already been composed throughout Europe and Haydn himself had composed six cycles (op.1, 2, 3, 9, 17 and 20) prior to opus 33. However, the appearance of Op.33 - according to Laszlo Somfai's apt wording - is “the exceptional moment in the history of string quartet genre setting the classic model of string quartets”. It is noticeable indeed that the cycle became an “exemplum classicum” a classical example because after the appearance of the series “there was a dramatic increase in the number of those composers who either debuted op.1 quartets or dedicated their quartets to Haydn, or simply introduced themselves as ‘Haydn's disciples’”. (Ludwig Finscher)

However, this success was not what aroused my interest, but Haydn's controversial and much quoted letter, in which Haydn boasted about his pieces saying they were “a new and entirely special kind”. This statement has been explained in two ways by his contemporaries and in music literature. According to some, it was only a part of Haydn's “gimmick” in order to sell his new cycle; while others are convinced that since Haydn had planned the Op.33 String Quartet series consciously and systematically for such a long time (almost ten years elapsed between the previous Op.20 quartet cycle and the Op.33) that the end result could be described proudly and

confidently as “new” and “up to something special”. So my goal is to answer this question by taking into consideration the professional, social and personal circumstances of life that affected (or might have affected) the creation of the “new and unique style” of Op.33.

The *Introduction* of my thesis also defines the dilemma outlined above; however, it makes it clear that the thesis seeks to answer basically two questions:

1. Can Op.33 really be called a radically new series, and if so, what makes the style new?
2. What is the reason of it became “*exemplum classicum*” (the “classical example”) soon after the release of these six string quartets?

The chapter about “*the biographical precedents of the birth of the Op.33 cycle*” gives an overview of the circumstances and events that influenced Haydn’s professional development during the twenty years that elapsed between 1761 - when the composer signed a contract to work for the Esterházy family - and also the period when the Op.33 cycle was born. We get the picture that Haydn - who was not a servant, but a functionary at the Prince’s court - was highly appreciated both professionally and financially at the Esterházy residence. We can also find out what the contract obliged him to do, what pieces he composed during this period of time, and what size and professional level the orchestra was at that was placed at his disposal to perform his completed works.

Since my thesis is about a cycle written for *string quartets*, in the chapter entitled “*the string quartet genre’s development and the Op.20 quartets cycle*” I consider it important to summarize the development process of the quartet genre up to the formation of Op.33 quartet. This includes not only the similar works of masters (G. Ph. Telemann, K. Dittersdorf B. Vanhal, etc.) preceding Haydn, but even Haydn’s cycles prior to Op.33. It is clear that in his early career Haydn composed his quartets (Op.1, 2, 3) mostly on the basis of contemporary patterns and only later started experimenting and looking for new ways, so typical of him and his originality. In this process the op.9 already has a perceptible shift, Op.17 represents an individual concept and sound and Op.20 shows a mature Haydn style.

I firmly believe that the development of his “new and unique style” of Op.33 cycle which appeared in 1782 was due to Haydn’s close relationship with the opera genre; that was the most decisive factor as it is discussed in the chapter entitled “*the effect of the opera genre*”.

After 1766, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy’s musical interests increasingly turned towards the opera and (prose) stage works and away from instrumental and chamber music. Haydn, as a Kapellmeister, was obligated to fulfill the wishes of his prince master. His main tasks became composing operas and even substitution arias to insert into the operas of other composers, training singers and conducting Singspiels, etc. Haydn’s backbreaking workload including a huge range of responsibilities is shown in the first half of the chapter.

The stage (whether in prose or opera) is a genre based on dialogues that form the plot. All the actors have clearly shaped characters like a young girl, a rich but aging man in love wishing to get married or a clever, smart maid etc. These **musical characters** are the essential links that connect stage music and purely instrumental music of the 18th century composers. With the help of these themes a talented composer can accentuate particular traits of characters in an incredible way. We feel the instrumental music of this era is “speech like”, because it complies with the standards of the theatrical genre such as sharply distinct themes (the main theme, by-theme, closing theme, etc.), preparation, rise, conflicts, unexpected twists, solutions, etc.

The intense connection with the genre of opera is present in Haydn’s earlier music as well; for example in the Op 20. series in 1772 (ten years prior to Op 33). The slow movement called *Capriccio* in Number 2, C major quartet of this cycle is analysed in several examples of music sheet in the second half of the chapter focusing on its similarity to the opera genre.

The next chapter presents “*the circumstances of the creation of Op.33 cycle*”, from which we learn that, as his contract was renegotiated in 1779, Prince Nikolaus no longer prohibited Haydn to write for others and sell his work to publishers. By that time the composer was connected with Artaria & Co. company in Vienna, which had agreed to publish and distribute his works. In 1781 they agreed on publishing his new Op.33 quartet cycle, but nearly at the same time, in January 1782, he sold the works to J.J. Hummelo, who published sheet music in Berlin and Amsterdam. Haydn, however, still not satisfied, on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1781 wrote eight or nine letters (two of these have remained) in which he offered handwritten copies of his new series of

quartets to music fans and sponsors for purchase, asking six ducats for each piece. (The starting point of my paper is Haydn's famous phrase, taken from the above mentioned letters, in which he describes his works as "new and entirely special".)

Haydn's plans fell through when the Artaria company began to advertise the new series too soon, at the end of December. Angry letters were exchanged between the composer and the owner of the company, but the quarrel soon died away.

At the end of the chapter I will present the origin of the various nicknames of the cycle.

According to László Somfai an extremely rare phenomenon of "strict order" can be observed in the structure of Op.33 cycle, and this is presented in the chapter entitled "*The structure of the cycle*".

There are no known manuscripts originating from Haydn describing the sequence he intended the quartets within the cycle to be in. Two contemporary editions (Artaria / Vienna, and Pleyel Sieber / Paris) are arranged differently (A. van Hoboken is based on the Catalogue of the latter).

Considering the order of movements, the layout of Pleyel and Hoboken list seems more logical than that of Artaria's. The former reveals the "sign of outstanding creative consciousness, the almost geometrically planned balance rate which is expressed by the *order, tempo, tone* and *meter* relationship and of which versatile order can by no means be random" (Somfai László). This is shown in more detailed in this chapter.

The longest chapter of my thesis is the "*Work Analyses*" and essentially consists of four parts. In these four parts (the first one following Artaria's order) I analyse the whole cycle in detail, movement by movement, illustrating it with the help of several music sheet examples, starting with the first movement, then the slow, the Scherzo and finally the Finale movement.

By the detailed analysis of his movements we can have insights into Haydn's composing workshop. We can get some ideas about his tremendously rich, witty, almost inexhaustible musical fantasy, which was characteristic of the forty-year-old composer, and which he handled with exceptional elegance and ease.

In this brief summary I cannot undertake a detailed presentation of the works (the extent of the chapter entitled *Analysis* contains 73 pages and 120 music sheet examples), only the common characteristic features of each movement can be summed up.

Although each quartet of the set begins with a movement in sonata form, a closer look shows how distinct these forms (perfectly refined by Haydn) are. As we analyse the six initial movements, the most striking phenomenon is their thematic reticence. Haydn was able to create perfect sonata themes from only a few small motivic units; for instance, the first movement of the C major quartet is based on two themes, in the initial movement of E-flat major we can discover only a single theme, while the initial movement of the B minor contains no unit that could be called a motive.

The second commonly observed feature is that the ratio of the sonata form units changes. Previously the extent of the exposition and the development sections were roughly the same. In the Op.33, the scale of the development section increased gaining considerable weight in function and significance.

The third important novelty is the transformation of units and characters, some of which may even disappear in a sense. It is hard to determine where a theme begins or where the transformation ends as they organically fit together unnoticed.

The slow movements are the most versatile pieces of the cycle from the formal aspect. While the first movements are all written in sonata form, the slow ones (except for two similar movements) represent different musical forms.

Haydn played a number of stringed instruments well; first of all the violin, the viola and even the baritone horn. In order to perform his quartets brilliant musicians were at his service; especially L. A. Tomasini, whose great ability and brilliant virtuosity inspired Haydn's violin concerto. The violin concerto type units are still very common in the previous string quartet cycles, in which the second violin - viola - cello ensemble accompanies the first violin. By the time the Op.33 cycle was created, the relationship among the four musical instruments drastically changed in the fast movements: the voices become equal, however, the slow movements are still noticeably created for Tomasini. Five of the six movements (except for the E-flat major's Largo) were based on the first violinist's "aria".

As mentioned earlier, the structure of the cycle is created with conscious purpose. It is clear from the table on page 24 of my dissertation that slow movements do not necessarily follow first movements. Their place is always determined by the internal balance of the given quartet. Wherever they may be, the slow movements (should they express introversion or on the contrary

self-revelation and emotions) by all means are positioned as a kind of opposition to the fast movements.

The appearance of the **Scherzo** movement is the most important novelty of Op.33. The word *scherzo* (meaning: joke, playfulness) being used as title might have surprised even his peers, but as evidence of positive reception the name *Gli Scherzi* stuck (not by Haydn) to the cycle. Haydn's earlier works occasionally used this term, but never as a title. In most cases they were used as instructions on character (e.g. *Scherzando Allegretto*).

All the Scherzos of Op.33 are in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, have the same rate of bars and have similar key arrangement to that of three-piece minuets. An important difference is, however, that although the movement has an ABA form, the beginning of the middle part has no *Trio* notice. It becomes clear that the composer handles the three distinct episodes as *one* large unit, more than in the case of the traditional Da Capo minuet form. Although these movements clearly bear the characteristics of minuet style, the new title ("joke, playfulness") provides countless opportunities to freely restructure the movement. Haydn made use of these opportunities for true musical play; he gave the strict dance form (with an inimitable musical humour and mastery of compositional solutions) exceptionally witty and humorous characteristic features.

Haydn returned to the Trio Minuet expression in the cycles following Op.33 Quartet, and never used the word *scherzo* as a title again. For his part it was merely a bold idea and its brave and ingenious experimentation. Apparently his contemporaries and followers did not consider the title *Scherzo* to have been the most significant feature of the cycle either. This is proved by the fact that Mozart wrote *Minuets* in his six famous quartets (1785) composed for Haydn.

**Finales** in the Op.33 cycle also exhibit a wide variety of forms, although they can be made into three groups: 1, variation (G major) and twin variation (D major); 2, sonata (B minor) and sonata-rondo (C major); 3, two rondos (E flat and B flat major). The appearance of the rondo finale is a novelty in itself, as Haydn applied the rondo form as a finale in Op.33 for the first time in his life.

According to László Somfai "the *ending* is particularly suited so that Haydn can play a trick on the audience". Although the new solution for "farewell" (when the piece ends by descending to a *pianissimo*) had already been applied to previous string quartet cycles, the ingenious solutions in Op.33 far outweigh them. He causes surprise either with his inimitably

brave humour using orchestration effects (e.g., sudden changes of bar lengths in the B-flat finale, the ending of pizzicato, and the coda form in the E-flat major finale), or with the amazing, full of twists solutions in the recapitulations (e.g., C major finale).

Before briefly summarizing what innovations and specialties the Op.33 cycle includes, we have to state that Haydn dedicated his opus composed and published in a “new and unique style” not to snobs but to savvy experts and art lovers, and he was aware that his potential customers would immediately notice the insincerity in case his self-confident assertion was incorrect.

The most significant innovation, which appears in Op.33 first and clearly indicates the opera effect, is the changes in the relationship between the first violin and the other instruments. These quartets no longer characterized by the structure where the first violin’s melody is accompanied by the other three instruments; instead, we hear four equal voices, shifting between melody and accompaniment. Accompaniment and melody swap places unnoticed sometimes, so that one cannot determine where a new phrase starts. Consequently the four instruments behave as if they were participants of a lively conversation, or even actors of a theatrical scene in an opera.

A no less important novelty is that Haydn hardly uses any transitional sections: the closures of longer periods already include the continuation. Themes with no transitions are well integrated into the structure of the piece, which is one of the main features of this series.

One new element is the experimentation with scherzos as dance movements, as well as using rondos as finales.

Last but not least, we will look at the new way he uses opposing keys as a specialty, in which respect Haydn cannot be considered a pioneer (think of C. Ph. E. Bach’s daring twists). Still we can say that Haydn was one of the most modern composers of his time.

“Exemplum classicum” is the title of the last chapter of my dissertation, which discusses how Op.33 became shortly after its appearance a *classical example* respected throughout Europe.

We can trace Haydn’s (who was constantly seeking new ways) style development easily through his string quartets. The fact is that he created the “prototype” of classical quartets with the Op.33 series and it was not without precedents. In his oeuvre, this cycle was preceded by six

quartet series. If we compare these quartet series, we can see a continuous development which is presented in the second part of the chapter.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my summary the success and rapid spread of Op.33 cycle was due to the following factors: rapid succession of printed editions and various appreciative criticisms and encomiums etc. The popularity of the cycle is also indicated by many (nearly thirty) transcripts that were generated by the different pieces of Op.33 for a variety of musical ensembles.