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The Bridge Between Eras: How Haydn's Creation Oratorio Displays both Enlightened and Romantic Qualities

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The English Enlightenment was an ideological movement starting roughly in the mid-17th century that laid the foundations for 18th century Romanticism. The main premise was that all questions could be answered through reason or study of nature; this went on to influence many different fields of study, including religion, science, and the arts. The Enlightenment specifically influenced different branches of music such as performance venues, audience variety, compositional techniques, and orchestration. A prime example of the implementation of these musical practices influenced by the Enlightenment is in Joseph Haydn's *The Creation*, due to the biblical narrative, use of the Doctrine of Affections, and expanded orchestration. However, Haydn's *Creation*, while still adhering to the values and compositional elements of the Enlightenment era, also reflects the increasing drive towards Romanticism, to create a story of true human expression.

English Enlightenment originated from French Rationalism, a movement largely concerned with valuing reason and education above superstition. Enlightenment was a collective shift in ideology, and as such, was applicable to many different fields of study. Isaiah Berlin, in an attempt to clarify this matter, gives a general format for understanding The Enlightenment in his book *Roots of Romanticism*. As it was adopted by the English, Enlightenment has main premises: All true questions can be answered, answers can be found through knowledge, and finally that all answers must correlate and never contradict each other.¹ As a societal shift in consciousness, these premises were influential on many fields of study, such as religion, science, and the arts, leading to many different Enlightenment ideologies. No matter what interpretation of Enlightenment an individual followed, they believed that knowledge was good, and the key to attaining perfection. Nature became the favored metaphor for attaining perfection in the

¹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. David Rieff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 22.

Enlightenment era, as people saw nature as the ideal creation, and applied the idea of natural perfection to their work.

During the Enlightenment era, many countries experienced an emergence of the middle class. This was in large part due to the rising level of education, as public devotion to reason and inquiry combated superstition and illogical prejudice.² An increasing amount of the population became educated in languages, science, and the composition and appreciation of music. For that reason, great works of the opera and oratorio were then written specifically for the common masses instead of the upper echelons of society. With the rise of the middle class, music became more available, forcing composers to consider public opinions and expectations when making musical decisions.³ *The Creation* story in the book of Genesis was chosen because it is the joyous celebration of Man. Before the Enlightenment, it was more popular to dwell on topics related to the sinful nature of Man, such as Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*.⁴ The rise in education among a larger amount of the population made possible the Enlightenment's appeal to a wider demographic.

An area where Enlightenment had a profound impact was religion in that it shifted the emphasis on sin and the wretchedness of Man to the glory of God and all His creations.⁵ It is a common misconception that religion went extinct in the Enlightenment, as people began to place more in value science and the search for absolute answers. While this may have been true for some, Enlightenment thought fortified most of the public's faith. The strive for perfection became a sacred religious ideal; it was considered to be the best way to honor God. In addition,

² Daniel Hertz, et al., *Enlightenment*. (Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08841>.

³ Ibid., 2.

⁴ Nicholas Temperley, *Haydn, The Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 47.

⁵ Ibid., 15.

religious and secular communities alike began to focus on human stories rather than those depicting the mystical. Tales of unexplainable phenomenon were not as popular as ones about the triumphs of man, such as the biblical creation.⁶ The Enlightenment's effect on religion in turn impacted the developments in the sciences and the arts; specifically, music practices.

In this time, music came to be heavily influenced by societal trends, due to the systems of patronage shifting away from the church, to members of the secular upper class.⁷ Composers in this era used three musical techniques to convey simplistic emotions: acoustics, The Doctrine of Affections, and esthetics;⁸ these three techniques created music that captured the human spirit, while still deferring to the compositional strictures of previous music eras.

Public concerts were an invention of the 18th century, and large concert halls were built to produce the ideal acoustic setting for classical orchestras.⁹ These newly constructed national theaters served as the epicenter of societal growth and the development of a vernacular language. For this reason, the increasing middle class created large crowds seeking musical dramas that reflected their daily lives. As audience size grew, the size of the orchestra and its importance to the musical drama also increased.¹⁰ The orchestra became the main actor in the story being told, meaning that acoustics became more important when considering where a piece would be performed.¹¹ Acoustics contributed to a rebirth in public interest, with Rameau's invention of the

⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. David Rieff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 28-29.

⁷ Daniel Hertz, et al., *Enlightenment*. (Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online) , <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08841>.

⁸ Paul Henry Lang, "The Enlightenment and Music," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967), doi:10.2307/3031668, 95.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰ Emily I. Dolan, "The Work of the Orchestra in Haydn's Creation," *19th-Century Music* 34, no. 1(2010), doi:10.1525/ncm.2010.34.1.003, 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

modern harmony system in 1722.¹² The modifications made to concert halls reflected the changes in society, by accommodating for larger audiences and more detailed acoustical construction.

Enlightenment practitioners struggled on how to reconcile music with reason. The ability to capture the full range of human emotion, both pleasant and ugly, challenged the notion of answerable questions.¹³ While music critics believed that music was a medium whose meaning depended on association with the external world, there was disagreement on how to properly express emotions musically. One of the most prevalent techniques used to make this link was The Doctrine of Affections. The Doctrine gave musical pitches and ideals correlating sentiments, such as moods and actions. These guidelines affected how composers used intervals and embellishments, due to the desire to represent human nature in music. For example, to portray a happy emotion a composer would use a widened interval, and for sad emotions the interval would become narrow. The word *Dolor* or of great sorrow was represented by a chromatic half-step and by a sequence of falling fourths. Ornamentation was a common way to convey these moods, often leaving it up to musicians to improvise according to the established tone. Vocal music was the ideal conduit for this; it was important to composers because of the text and how it created moods more clearly than instrumental music.¹⁴ Haydn especially believed that vocal music was the best way to convey emotions to the listener.¹⁵

¹² Paul Henry Lang, "The Enlightenment and Music," *Eighteenth- Century Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967), doi:10.2307/3031668, 99.

¹³ Emily I. Dolan, "The Work of the Orchestra in Haydn's Creation," *19th- Century Music* 34, no. 1(2010), doi:10.1525/ncm.2010.34.1.003, 17.

¹⁴ Paul Henry Lang, "The Enlightenment and Music," *Eighteenth- Century Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967), doi:10.2307/3031668, 96- 104.

¹⁵ James Webster, et al., *Haydn, Joseph*. (Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/44593pg7> .

The Doctrine of Affections in the Enlightenment era was also used to depict nature. However, instead of depicting nature in full reality, Enlightenment composers sought to capture the ideal form of nature as seen by man. Nature's impurities and defaults were overlooked in their musical depictions, leaving only beautiful and perfect natural landscapes within the music. The perfection characteristics/ indicative of the Doctrine created a balance. between musical depictions of human emotion and the importance of mathematics to compositional practices. Because music is essentially measured motion, it imitates the emotion of the human soul, utilizing mathematical techniques to create evocative musical moments. This imitation stems from early French Enlightenment thinkers, but was appropriated extensively by English thinkers and musicians.¹⁶

The end result of the Doctrine of Affections was the creation of esthetics, or the underlying guidelines for musicians and composers in this class of creation.¹⁷ By constructing unique acoustic opportunities, and achieving the perfect balance between nature and science through The Doctrine of Affections, the appropriate Enlightenment esthetic could be reached. This ultimate esthetic was only achieved by the listener understanding the underlying message that was being portrayed. This esthetic was only realized if it engaged the listener, painting a picture of human nature in a way that was mathematically perfect and comprehended by the audience members. Audiences did not simply want to be given an easily understood resolution, however, as their improving education allowed them to recognize and understand wit and subtly within the work's central message; this humorous display was a compositional style Haydn

¹⁶ Paul Henry Lang, "The Enlightenment and Music," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967), doi:10.2307/3031668, 96-103.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

avored in his own works.¹⁸ The desired esthetic therefore valued comprehension won through careful thought, giving audiences a chance to mildly exercise their increasing intellect.

While *The Creation* was influenced by the Enlightenment, it also drew inspiration from the Romantic era. It is therefore important to understand the differences between The Enlightenment and Romanticism, as well as where they overlap. Both movements idealized nature, but conceptualized it in different ways. Enlightenment valued beauty and perfection, while Romanticism embraced the impurities found within nature as metaphors for emotions of chaos and grief; these values were musically realized through tonality. The Enlightenment set standardized formulas to convey to the listener an underlying message, giving the conveyance of emotion a mathematical quality. The Romantic era, while still using specific techniques to convey emotion, expanded beyond the mathematical characteristics of the Enlightenment to fully achieve the sublime. Haydn's *The Creation* is an Enlightened piece due to its plot and stylistic choices; however, this piece also alludes to the Romantic era to come, through moments using innovative compositional techniques. There are substantial examples of the influence both of these movements had on Haydn's compositional process throughout the work.

One of the most obvious examples of Enlightenment in *The Creation* is the libretto, and its strategic selection of plot line. The story begins with the creation of the world, and ends specifically before the arrival of original sin and the serpent's temptation of Eve. As mentioned above, the Enlightenment brought about a fascination with stories that detailed the triumphs of man, rather than their sinful nature.¹⁹ Ending the oratorio before original sin emphasizes the

¹⁸ James Webster, et al., *Haydn, Joseph*. (Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/44593pg7>.

¹⁹ Nicholas Temperley, *Haydn, The Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 47.

positive qualities of creation, and specifically of man's important role, seemingly untainted by the sin removed from the story in its musical form.

Another compelling Enlightenment influence is the orchestration of the piece, which lends itself both to larger and smaller orchestras.²⁰ Although it was premiered with a larger sized orchestra typical of the Enlightenment era, Haydn was careful to score the piece so that it could be played by smaller ensembles and still capture the same drama and Affekt. In this way, *The Creation* is accessible to all manner of ensembles, aristocratic or middle class audiences. This intentional orchestration of the piece indicates Haydn's Enlightenment views, as the access to knowledge and culture for all classes was an important proponent for any Enlightened artist.²¹ Haydn was able to compose in this manner because of the nature of the modern orchestra, which had grown exponentially throughout the Enlightenment. Woodwind technology had been advanced to the point that more instruments than ever before contributing the the fullness of texture in *The Creation* that allowed for the sonoric chaos and light chords. In addition, Enlightenment values of knowledge and excellence meant that every member of an orchestra was a learned musician, allowing Haydn to write to his fullest capacity. By spreading spreading important chord tones throughout the different instruments, insured a full rich texture for larger orchestras and small alike.

The role of the chorus within the Enlightenment was loosely based on the role of the chorus in works like Handel's *Messiah*, but more focused on unifying the chorus with the orchestral drama to create an overall Affekt.²² The chorus operates as the main narrator

²⁰ Emily I. Dolan, "The Work of the Orchestra in Haydn's Creation," *19th-Century Music* 34, no. 1(2010), doi:10.1525/ncm.2010.34.1.003.

²¹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. David Rieff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

²² Emily I. Dolan, "The Work of the Orchestra in Haydn's Creation," *19th-Century Music* 34, no. 1(2010), doi:10.1525/ncm.2010.34.1.003, 12-13.

throughout the creation, detailing the events of the creation while the orchestra creates the picture through expressive tonalities. A prime example of this is chorus number 7, “Let There be Light”. The chorus and orchestra begin by trading moments, with the orchestra setting the scene and then the chorus singing A Capella. Towards the end of the piece they join together in a joyous celebration of light and the creation of the world.²³ This is indicative of Enlightened and Romantic thought because Haydn is using both choral and instrumental music to achieve his grand Affekt. It does not fall in either category specifically; if it were enlightened, the chorus’s would be more central to the drama than the orchestra and vice versa. Instead Haydn has utilized both to capture the Affekt in different ways, indicating that he was not only an Enlightened thinker, but also thinking towards the future of music and pushing the practice forward into the next greatest development.

Imitation of nature is apparent in Enlightenment era compositions because of the value placed on nature, as it represents the existence of perfection. There are numerous musical examples of this imitation in Haydn’s *Creation*; specifically through the use of tone painting. When God creates various animal species in No. 21, Haydn uses the solo voice and orchestration to imitate the specific animal before it is announced by Raphael. The striking A-flat played by the trombones and contrabassoons in m. 8 alludes to the roar of the lion described in m. 13 (see Ex. 1). The ascending movements in the string parts in mm. 13-16 coincide with the leap of a tiger described in mm. 17-18 (Ex. 1). The sudden change in meter and tempo also show the imitation of a quick stag and a stammering horse.²⁴ Rapid 16th-notes in mm. 54-56 show the fluttering movements of insects. The chromaticism used in the final adagio section of the music

²³ Ibid., 7-8.

²⁴ Nicholas Temperley, *Haydn, The Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 67-68.

shows the slow inching movements of the earthworm in mm. 58-65. (Ex. 2). No.3, ‘The Elements’, sung by the character Uriel, foreshadows Romantic ideas to come by deviating from conventional Enlightened stylistic and compositional practices. The use of poetry based text as opposed to biblical text best showcases the importance of nature and beauty, concepts related to Enlightened values. Some of the compositional tools used to convey these themes utilize a Romantic era style. For example, use of illustrative passages helps avoid a strong cadence, which was extremely uncommon in this era. Strong cadences were considered another reflection of nature’s perfection.²⁵ This avoidance of cadential points causes the listener to feel unsettled, not giving them a sense of closing, but instead beginning another illustrative passage. The formal structure is then disrupted and exhibits the Romantic era notions starting to take shape in this late part of the era.²⁶

There are other instances where Haydn shows a lack of adherence to previously standardized formal structures. In his da capo arias there are some instances where the text has a larger effect on the music’s form than the musical norms established by the Enlightenment.²⁷ Da capo arias at this time were beginning to lose popularity, as Romantic composers pushed themselves to write more complex music without obvious repetition. For example, in No 19 ‘terzetto’, Haydn uses strophic form to set the first two stanzas, as they both serve to set the scene and are not the climax of the poem. By the third stanza he adds musical flourishes in the flutes and the first violins in mm. 149-196 to represent the emergence of Leviathan, the apex of the poem. Text painting, while used sparingly in the Enlightenment, was much more elaborate in the Romantic era because of the new importance the instrumentalists had in conveying the

²⁵ Paul Henry Lang, “The Enlightenment and Music,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967), doi:10.2307/3031668, 96.

²⁶ Nicholas Temperley, *Haydn, The Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 67-68.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

message of the text. Haydn's use of it here and throughout the piece displays his forward thinking musicality, as he is displaying Romantic tendencies despite not being active during the official Romantic era. The text in No. 19 is more lyrical because it is poetry rather than biblical text, which offers more opportunity for orchestral embellishment. In No. 2 in the second A section in m. 96 sounds similar to a sonata form recapitulation. More importantly there is a new thematic material where he changes the vocalization, tempo, and function of the cadence. The cadence, for instance, can be heard functioning as a dominant in mm. 46- 49 of the first section, and later as the tonic in measures 101- 104 of the third section.²⁸ These abnormal musical elements show expression beyond the standardized forms of the Enlightenment. These small moments of abnormality add up to showcase Haydn's inclination towards more progressive compositional techniques, utilizing his orchestra and tonality in ways that were more indicative of the Romantic era.

The Enlightenment era had an enormous impact on compositional practices. The societal focus on reason, answerable questions, and thoughtful inquiry lent itself to music; reason was expressed through perfect tonalities, and thoughtful inquiry was depicted through detailed, lengthy pieces such as oratorios and symphonies. Human emotion were explored in music, but only those emotions that could be depicted through perfect intervals. Specific tones came to mean certain things through the invention of the Doctrine of Affections, regimenting music to fit within the strict ideals of the Enlightenment. These techniques are expertly showcased within Haydn's *The Creation* oratorio, as its plot, musical structure, and orchestration strongly exhibit the ideals of the Enlightenment. However, because Haydn was active during the end of the Enlightenment era when notions of Romanticism were born, his style fluctuated between the two

²⁸ Ibid., 74.

ideologies. In addition, the conditions of his employment kept him isolated entirely with his orchestra, allowing him to create organic content, by utilizing his orchestra in ways that most composers in the Enlightenment era would not be able to.²⁹ *The Creation* truly muddies the line between the two eras for this reason, as it was written towards the end of his career and showcases some of his most innovative techniques. It is in essence an Enlightened piece of music, but it is also not without elements that foreshadow a new musical era, as composers moved away from the perfect and focused on expressing more complex and convoluted emotions through compositional techniques. *The Creation* is a prime example of history escaping the restrictions of eras; there is never an exact moment when one era neatly transitions to the other. Instead, artists and philosophers push the bounds of an established ideology until something new is born. This format of history allows for the existence of pieces like *The Creation*, as it can be placed with in one era technically but still reflect the changing standards and unique innovations that took place as society moved forward.

²⁹ James Webster, et al., *Haydn, Joseph*. (Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/44593pg7> .

Example 1

Zahl, grown. Vor Freu.de brüllend Cheer-ful roaring

mit Kontrafag.

steht der Lö. we da. stands the tawny lion.

“Haydn: Creation.” Kirkby, Johnson. *Academy of Ancient Music*. Christopher Hogwood. Joseph Haydn. Print.

Example 2

In lan-gen Zü-gen kriecht am Bo-den das Ge-würm.
In long di-mensions creeps with si-nuous trace the worm.

fz pp

“Haydn: Creation.” Kirkby, Johnson. *Academy of Ancient Music*. Christopher Hogwood. Joseph Haydn. Print.

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Berlin, Isaiah. *The Roots Of Romanticism*. Edited by Henry Hardy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Print.

Edited minimally by Henry Hardy, this transcript of Isaiah Berlin's lectures on Romanticism given in 1965 maintains a conversational tone, while providing an extensive explanation on the subject of Romanticism, and other related subjects. Berlin considers Romanticism to be an all-encompassing and influential movement for the culture and society of Western Europe; it spans such a vast number of disciplines that it is difficult to define. He determines the foundation of the Romantic process to be the Enlightenment, a similarly broad-reaching movement involving a radical transformation in society's communal consciousness, and awareness of disciplines such as politics, ethics, philosophy, and music. Berlin limits his discussion to evaluate the movement's development during 1730- 1760, in order to observe what he argues are the most influential parts in the development of the ideals of Romanticism; specifically when thinkers questioned the Enlightenment, such as the philosopher Johann Georg Hamann. Isaiah Berlin was a highly educated philosopher, who dedicated a large portion of his career as a historian of ideas to the study of Romanticism; he was consequently well-versed in many other thinking movements related to the subject. His work provides us with a well-rounded explanation of what the Enlightenment was, and what it eventually became.

Dolan, Emily I. "The Work of the Orchestra in Haydn's *Creation*." *19th-Century Music* 34, no. 1 (2010): 3-38. doi:10.1525/ncm.2010.34.1.003.

Dolan is Professor of Music at Harvard University, and specializes in Enlightenment and early Romantic musical aesthetics. She specifically writes about the orchestration of specific pieces reflect these aesthetics. In this article she examines Haydn's *Creation* and the changing role of the orchestra in the classical era. During this time, Dolan argues, the orchestra evolves from a blunt instrument of technical prowess to a community of individual instruments, all capable of creating the desired Affekt. Dolan uses several key moments within *The Creation*, such as the light chord towards the beginning of the work, to emphasize her thesis. This piece will pair nicely with the "Enlightenment in Music" article by Paul Henry Lang, because where he talks about general trends in music during enlightenment, Dolan provides the evidence for it within Haydn's creation. We plan to use this article to further prove how central the Enlightenment was in Haydn's *Creation*, specifically the orchestration and Affekts it creates.

Heartz, Daniel. "Enlightenment." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed November 29, 2017,

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08841>

Heartz is an American musicologist who studied at Harvard University and is Professor of Music at the University of California. Heartz's article on the Enlightenment explains how music was influenced by the ideas of beauty and expression. Heartz explains the history of how the Enlightenment ideals were formed. Art, Italian opera, voice, and instrumental music were all influenced by humanitarian ideals of society like expression, the concept of human souls, musical pleasure, rational thinking and counter-cultural fashion. This source is helpful because it

provides information about Handel, Haydn, Bach, and Mozart and the Enlightenment ideas influenced their music.

Lang, Paul Henry. "The Enlightenment and Music." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967): 93-108. doi:10.2307/3031668.

Lang, an American musicologist, was born in Budapest, Hungary and went to Cornell University to receive his doctorate in musicology. Lang provides information about the Enlightenment realization that music and its origin are from speech. Music during the Enlightenment was influenced by the doctrine of the affections resulting in specific musical concepts that composers followed to emphasize different emotions. These concepts dealt with intervals and words. Each of the tones and words conveyed a different type of expression. This article provides information about the tones and words that convey certain emotions. When looking at *The Creation*, we can see how Haydn used these new Enlightenment musical concepts, like the doctrine of the affection, in his music.

Temperley, Nicholas. (1991) *Haydn, The Creation* /Cambridge ; Cambridge University Press. Print.

This book is a small companion to *The Creation*, and gives excellent background information by examining the social and religious implications surrounding the work and how they shaped the music. Details are given on the libretto, composition, performance, reception, and design of the Oratorio. The book specifically mentions that *The Creation* is thought to be the essence of the Enlightenment thought as it pertains to religion, comparing it with Bach's Passions to explore how man is depicted in a more positive light. This book demonstrates that the Enlightenment influenced Haydn in his composition, while also giving helpful insights to the piece as a whole.

Webster, James. "Haydn, Joseph." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed December 4, 2017.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/44593pg7> .

James Webster, Professor of Music from Cornell University with a specialization in the music of Haydn and the Classical era, presents an explanation to the compositional style of Haydn, as well as what extra-musical subjects affected its development. Using musical examples and Haydn's personal correspondence, Webster demonstrates the joint use of both the 'high art' and buffa- like genres, which manifest in contrasting compositional styles characteristic of Haydn's work. He argues that no other composer is able to incorporate such contrasting styles as successfully as Haydn. These examples provides an explanation of how Haydn's compositions related to the aesthetics of that time period, which in turn are directly related to the Enlightenment. The article will provide examples of where the Enlightenment directly affected Haydn's output as a whole.