

To the Editor:

In his article “Dancing to Haydn’s Fiddle,”¹ Ira Braus relies on misrepresentation—attributing judgmental epithets and analytical assertions to me that I neither made nor implied—in arguing a case for alternative ways of hearing apparent metrical conflict or implied meter change.² When stripped of gratuitously off-the-mark paraphrases from my article,³ most of his interpretations seem unexceptionable and need no additional comment.

But there is one instance that calls for reexamination. The second reprise of the Trio from Haydn’s early String Quartet op. 2, no. 4 (ex. 1), may be played in a way that preserves some sense of a regular 3/4 time, as I believe Braus may be advocating, but I do not think this can be done without imposing accentuations in performance that contradict patterns of surface rhythm, melodic contour, and harmony that confirm an implied duple meter (either 2/4 or compound 4/4), as indicated by my brackets above the score.

If I understand his argument, Braus’s case for recognizing a persisting triple meter in this passage hinges in part on the action of inner voices, and he asks, “Must violin 2 accent the octave-doubled resolution of the appoggiatura F-E \flat [in m. 10], since it happens to fall on the ‘downbeat’ of Grave’s second 4/4 measure?” (34). I would suggest that the F is not reasonably heard as an appoggiatura unless completely isolated from its context (which requires us to hear it as the seventh of a V⁷/ii that resolves when the harmony changes) and that to perform the first beat of m. 10 as if it were an accented downbeat is to ignore the salient harmonic rhythm of the passage. Braus goes on to

¹Ira Braus, “Dancing to Haydn’s Fiddle,” *Indiana Theory Review* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 25–35.

²Braus’s misstatements, most of which I assume will be easily identified by anyone who reads my article, include the following: “Grave portrays Haydn as a wag” (25); “the hemiola chain Grave describes” (27); “Grave’s syncopations” (31); “Grave[’s suggestion of] . . . metrical jokes [as] ingenious buffoonery” (35).

³Floyd Grave, “Metrical Dissonance in Haydn,” *Journal of Musicology* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 168–202.




describe the parallel he detects between the progression $V^7/ii-ii_4^6$ in m. 10 and the progression to a tonicized IV in m. 12, so that there “is really a simple parallelism of 2 + 2 in mm. 9–12, thanks to metrically parallel ‘tonicizations’ of ii and IV” (35).

Example 1. Haydn, String Quartet op. 2, no. 4, mvt. 4, Trio, mm. 9–13

Here Braus’s harmonic parallelism neither vitiates the implied duple meter nor strengthens a triple interpretation: according to a duple interpretation, both alleged tonicizations come on metrically strong beats, whereas the notated triple meter displaces both to the second beat of their respective measures (after a syncopated harmonic rhythm, which the duple interpretation resolves).

Moreover, it must be clear that C minor in m. 10 is tonicized far more assertively than E-flat in m. 12 (assuming that we can reasonably speak of a tonicized E-flat at all). The preparatory V/ii , beginning on the upbeat of m. 9, extends for five beats, the resolving ii lasts for three, and the lower parts emphasize the punctuation with two beats’ rest. Braus’s second tonicization, by contrast, occurs in the midst of an uninterrupted progression whose goal is the V on the downbeat of m. 13. I would argue that the most plausible parallelism is between the two

events that I have marked with brackets and arrows below the score: an antecedent subphrase in which V/ii leads to ii, followed by a harmonically directed, consequent subphrase leading to a cadence on V on the downbeat of m. 13. Only the implied duple interpretation I have indicated will place both cadences on parallel downbeats. (The effect of a cadence on ii is weakened, but not denied, by the voice crossing and the resulting $\frac{6}{4}$, and Braus's commentary on this occurrence seems unnecessarily obscure: "Why does Haydn bother to cross the voices at all? Because he does not want us to hear a $\frac{6}{4}$; the harmony moves from $V^7/ii \rightarrow ii6/4$ linearly, not functionally" [34].)

Braus proceeds to argue that a duple interpretation "makes inconsistent violin 1's  rhythm by prematurely reversing the pattern to  from beat 1 of the 4/4. If the music is played audibly in 3/4, however, the germinal rhythm will carry into the second reprise" (35). This statement is incomprehensible, since nothing in my analysis even remotely suggests a pattern reversal. Persistence of the anapestic  from the first reprise into the second is germane to the perception of an implied meter change and to the apparent topical allusion to a bourrée. The pairs of eighth notes, introduced in the opening measures of the Trio as an upbeat figure, will indeed retain their upbeat status through the opening measures of the second reprise if a change of meter is recognized. By contrast, performers who attempt to impose a persisting 3/4 in these measures may cause a pattern reversal, since the figure will appear on the downbeat (m. 10) and the middle of the measure (m. 11) in addition to the upbeat.

When Braus proposes that "conventional analysis has predisposed us to hearing these dissonances as complication (anomaly) instead of complexity" (35), I believe he has missed a basic point: implied meter changes are inherently neither complex *nor* complicated, but must be judged in accordance with the context in which they occur. He continues by claiming that "such analysis indeed tricks one into missing the full texture of the joke, so as to countenance a blatantly absurd thesis—bourrée invading a minuet—rather than savoring a sublime punchline—the lopsided periodicity heard from confounding line and chord" (35). In a footnote, he adds that "Haydn's interest in the bourrée (or in any Baroque dance save the minuet) was probably

marginal, even for a joke. He lacked Mozart's stylistic distance in these matters" (n. 12). What I said was that "the second reprise has transported us effortlessly from one ballroom dance to another."⁴ Braus's image of an invading bourrée may or may not be absurd, but the metaphor of invasion is his, not mine, and the references to "trick" and "joke" are also not mine. Braus's claim notwithstanding, we cannot know whether Haydn was consciously alluding to a bourrée dance topic or not, and given the availability of stylistic evidence from many sources, we cannot exclude the possibility that contemporary performers and listeners might have recognized such an allusion.

In his final paragraph, Braus attributes to me the suggestion that "Haydn's metrical jokes are ingenious buffoonery" (35), but I did not speak of jokes, metrical or otherwise; neither did I mention or imply buffoonery, ingenious or not. And when he closes with the sentence "In the right hands, philosophy can be funnier than vaudeville," I have no idea what he intends to mean. Neither of us is really talking about philosophy, funny or not, and my article makes no reference whatsoever to vaudeville in any sense of the word. Possibly intended as a rhetorical flourish, the sentence recalls the misstatement with which Braus began: "Floyd Grave portrays Haydn as a wag who tricks us into hearing meters other than the written one" (25).

Over the years, critics have called Haydn a wag, or words to that effect, and indeed there are instances of metrical dissonance (notably those discussed by Janet Levy⁵ and Gretchen Wheelock⁶) that can be played for humor. But I don't find humor paramount in most of the examples I cited. No perusal of my text could reasonably lead a reader to assume that I did, and I thus find Braus's preoccupation with jokes,

⁴Grave, 185.

⁵Janet M. Levy, "'Something Encrusted on the Living': A Source of Musical Wit and Humor," in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, edited by Wye J. Allanbrook, Janet M. Levy, and William P. Hahrt (New York: Pendragon Press, 1992), 225–56.

⁶Gretchen A. Wheelock, *Haydn's Ingenious Jesting with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992).

tricks, wags, buffoonery, funny philosophy, and vaudeville both disturbing and unexplainable as a context for his critique.

Portrayal of Haydn, as a wag or otherwise, is simply not what my article was about. As I emphasized (pp. 200–201 and the related footnotes 37–41), metrical dissonance is not especially common in Haydn’s instrumental music—certainly not common enough to furnish a basis for portraying the composer’s character, temperament, or musical personality. If anything, I may have erred on the side of sobriety in emphasizing compositional strategies in which metrical dissonance reinforces other sources of goal-directed movement with specific structural consequences.

To speak of tricking the listener, as Braus insists on doing, is to misunderstand the point: a successfully executed metrical dissonance (as opposed to metrical ambiguity or metrical confusion) is no less readily understood for what it is—a certain contradiction of an established consonant framework—than a dissonant pitch in the course of a tonally coherent phrase. In neither instance is the composer necessarily trying to trick the listener, but may merely be utilizing available resources in an effort to achieve syntactic clarity, emphasis, or originality within given stylistic constraints.

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