

Josef Haydn (1732-1809) String Quartet Op 71 no 2 in D (1793)

Adagio - Allegro

Adagio

Menuet & Trio: Allegro

Finale: Allegretto – Allegro

Haydn's six "Apponyi" quartets (Ops 71 and 74) were written in 1792 & 1793 between his two extended visits to London. Prince Nicholas Esterházy, Haydn's patron, to whom he was devoted, had died in the autumn of 1790; his successor, Prince Anton, did not care for music and disbanded the Esterházy orchestra, for whom Haydn had composed for the previous 30 or so years, but kept Haydn on full pay with only nominal duties. Haydn was thus free to apply for leave to accept Johann Peter Salomon's offer to spend a year in London (against Mozart's advice, who thought the 58 year-old master too old for such jaunts). Its crowded, vibrant musical scene challenged and exhilarated Haydn, and his six new "London" symphonies, written for a larger orchestra, hall and audience than at Esterházy, were a sensation. Haydn returned home in the summer of 1792, to a Vienna without Mozart, who had died in December just short of his 36th birthday.

The eponymous Apponyi, Count Anton Georg, was a relative of the Esterházy's, and paid Haydn 100 ducats for the privilege of having the six quartets publicly dedicated to him. The quartets of the set have a power and brilliance that reflects Haydn's experience with the London orchestras and his intention to take the quartets back to London on his return. As Rosemary Hughes says, this afternoon's quartet is perhaps the most orchestral of the set with its rushing semiquavers and angular octave leaps.

"How many slow introductions are there amongst all the great quartets of Mozart and Haydn?" asks Hans Keller in *"The Great Haydn Quartets"*. Answer - just one each: Mozart's "Dissonance" quartet of 1785, and today's Haydn, composed 8 year's later. The opening *Adagio* sets up the motif of an octave downward leap (*) which then appears at the opening of the following *Allegro* sprightly passed up the quartet. Octave leaps in distant harmonies add brilliance to the movement. "It is as if Haydn were pushing open a door through which Beethoven might pass" (Rosemary Hughes).



The dream-like *Adagio* leads to a *Menuet* that is again built on octave descents, first arpeggiated in the cello, and then rapidly flourished by the first violin. The laconic trio is contrastingly restful, built on moves of just a single tone or semitone. The *Finale* is a set of variations on a simple theme, using a variety of Haydn's witty tricks, and finishing with a rollicking increase in speed.