

Mark Evan Bonds

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Revolutionary Ideals in Narratives of the „Farewell“ Symphony

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Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Revolutionary Ideals in Narratives of the “Farewell” Symphony

The finale of the “Farewell” Symphony is one of those pieces of music that demands interpretation. The gradual departure of the musicians, leaving an ensemble of only two solo violins at the very end, has spawned a number of widely differing explanations¹. And though these accounts differ considerably in their particulars, they almost all agree that the pantomime of the disappearing orchestra had a purpose: to send a message of some kind to Haydn’s primary audience, Prince Nicolaus himself. The earliest published account portrays the finale as Haydn’s reaction to a quarrel between the musicians and the house officers. Another interpretation casts this movement as Haydn’s response to the Prince’s alleged decision to disband the court orchestra, while still later accounts, including those by Georg August Griesinger and Albert Christoph Dies, claim that this was Haydn’s way of reminding the Prince that the end of the summer season at Eszterház was at hand and that the musicians, forbidden from bringing their wives and families with them that summer, longed to return to Eisenstadt. Griesinger explicitly contradicts the idea that the Prince had any notion of disbanding the Kapelle and claimed that his account of the episode came from Haydn himself. Yet Sigismund Neukomm, a pupil of Haydn’s in the late 1790s, would later claim that Haydn had told him that it was indeed the impending dismissal of the Kapelle for financial reasons that had led to this unusual finale, and Neukomm made a special point of noting that his personal communications with the composer had “occurred in a period earlier than the visits of my friend Dies, in a period when Haydn was strong enough to create his huge work, ‘The Seasons’”².

My purpose here is not to examine the merits of these differing accounts: barring the discovery of new documentation, we will probably never know with any degree of certainty either Haydn’s motivations or the Prince’s reac-

¹ Early and selected later explanations of the symphony’s unusual finale are summarized in Appendix One. See also James Webster’s survey of various accounts in his *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in his Instrumental Music* (Cambridge Studies in Music Theory and Analysis, 1), Cambridge 1991, pp. 114ff.

² Sigismund Neukomm, *Bemerkungen zu den biogr. Nachrichten von Dies* (1843), unpublished manuscript, quoted in translation in *Landon II*, p. 181.

tion at the work's premiere. Suffice it to say that each of these later reports has its strengths and weaknesses. The version transmitted by Griesinger and by Dies, for example, is supported by documentary evidence that the presence of Carl Wahr's acting troupe in 1772 had in fact made it impossible to house all the musicians' families that summer, and that the Prince did indeed forbid most of the musicians from bringing their families to Eszterháza that year. On the other hand, the Prince announced similar limitations for the summer of 1774 as well, and his schedule at Eszterháza in the early 1770s was not quite as regular as the accounts by Griesinger and Dies would have it. As for economic difficulties, there is no reason to think that Prince Nicolaus would have had any such reason to disband his orchestra at any point during his reign, particularly in the early 1770s, though it may be possible that these accounts telescope and exaggerate various dismissals, disciplinary measures, or what we would now call "salary adjustments" among individual members of the Kapelle.

Indeed, it is in the nature of anecdotes that various strands of a given story – a lack of housing, quarrels with house officers, economic downturns, and so on – become conflated over time. Anecdotes, after all, are rarely told the same way twice, and they have a tendency to take on a life of their own, independent of actual events or only loosely connected to them. Viewed from this perspective, the historical veracity of any given account becomes less important than the broader ideas it seeks to convey. Anecdotes, moreover, played an integral role in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biography, not so much because they related events that had actually occurred, but because they were seen as a means by which to reveal the character of the individual in question. In this respect, narratives of the "Farewell" Symphony loom particularly large in accounts of Haydn's persona, in part because they are told so often, and often at great length; and in part because they touch on an aspect of the composer's character that is otherwise at odds with the conventional image of him as a willing servant of the *a n c i e n r é g i m e* during his many decades of service to the Esterházy family. Just as the musical events of the "Farewell" demand interpretation, the personal motivations surrounding its composition demand a corresponding biographical interpretation as well, for this work, according to almost all the many narratives that surround it, represents a telling moment in Haydn's career: a direct challenge to patriarchal authority. From the late eighteenth century onward, narratives of the "Farewell" used this symphony to position Haydn within a historical line of composers who, like the musicians in the finale of the "Farewell" itself, gradually remove themselves from feudal service and establish their independence as professional musicians. The episode became, in retrospect, the first shot in a musical revolution of performers against their noble patrons.

I want to emphasize the words "in retrospect", for the evidence I want to

consider here spans more than a full century after the work's premiere. In one way or another, almost every one of these accounts portrays the "Farewell" Symphony as an act of protest by Haydn against Prince Nicolaus. Such accounts, in turn, are somehow compelled to reconcile the perceived revolutionary ideals of the work with a composer who was not, on the whole, considered a social revolutionary, and at a point in his career, moreover, in which he was still very much in servitude to a noble patron.

Haydn's condition of servitude occupies a central place in every biographical account of the composer and is made all the more important by virtue of his sudden leap to freedom in 1790. In September of that year, Prince Nicolaus died, and his successor dismissed all but a few of the musicians. A few weeks later, the violinist and impresario Johann Peter Salomon arrived at Vienna to announce that he had come to take Haydn to England. The scene, as related by Dies and others, plays out like a *deus ex machina* moment in an opera seria: Salomon descends from the clouds and transposes Haydn to freedom in London. Biographers have consistently emphasized both the suddenness and profundity of this change from a state of servitude to a state of personal liberty, first in London and then later back in Vienna. Indeed, histories of music routinely point to Haydn's career as the prime example of the transformation of the social status of composers in general toward the end of the eighteenth century, from liveried servants to independent artists. To be sure, Haydn maintained a degree of obligation to the Esterházy dynasty after 1790, but his relationship to the successors of Prince Nicolaus was fundamentally new and different, and the Esterházy's, accordingly, treated him with a degree of deference and respect that would have been almost unthinkable during the long reign of Prince Nicolaus.

One might say, then, that biographies of Haydn have routinely presented his life as a drama in two acts. Act One is servitude, Act Two is freedom. The "Farewell" Symphony thus presents a particular challenge to biographical interpretation: Haydn's biographers almost all suggest that ideals of independence had in fact been simmering just beneath the surface long before 1790. They also suggest an ideal of change more nearly akin to that of the American Revolution than the French, even if no one ever articulated the distinction in quite such explicit terms. But the contrast between these two revolutions is instructive, for what is at stake in all later accounts of the "Farewell" is not an overthrow of the existing order, along the lines of what would later happen in France, but rather a desire for independence, a creation of distance, a severing of ties. In the "Farewell" Symphony, the musicians make their point by physically removing themselves, one-by-one, enacting a withdrawal from princely oversight, both literally and figuratively. A long-suffering party, bound in service, seeks to go its own way, to liberate itself from the

master-servant relationship in which it has long operated and to realize, in the celebrated words of the American Declaration of Independence, “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”³.

And “happiness” is of course one of the most common if not clichéd terms by which later critics characterized Haydn. This is not the cosmic, communal joy of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony but rather the personal freedom to cultivate one’s own self to the fullest extent possible, freed from the shackles of servitude. Haydn’s longing for personal independence is in fact well documented – indeed, it is far better documented than that second-hand bedrock of virtually every subsequent biography, the statement reported by Griesinger and subsequently quoted over and over again by others, that Prince Nicolaus was satisfied with all the composer’s works.

If Haydn’s external circumstances were otherwise anything but splendid, they nevertheless provided him with the best opportunity to develop his multi-faceted talent. “My Prince was satisfied with all my works, I received applause, and as the director of an orchestra I could make experiments and observe what made an impression and what weakened one and thereby improve, add, delete, take changes. I was cut off from the world; no one in my vicinity could cause me to doubt myself and torment me, and so I had to become original”⁴.

In our own time, we have placed rather too much weight, I believe, on the quotation attributed to Haydn, a statement transmitted by Griesinger and by Griesinger alone and in a publication that did not appear until several months after the composer’s death. I do not mean to suggest that Griesinger fabricated these words altogether: Haydn’s statement by itself is easy enough to believe, for we know that he did in fact have an excellent orchestra at his disposal and that he ranked among the highest-paid of all employees at the Esterházy court. But the phrase Griesinger uses to introduce this oft-quoted statement is too often overlooked. When later biographers draw on this passage, they

³ The United States Declaration of Independence (1776): “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

⁴ Griesinger, AMZ 11 (19 July 1809), cl. 662 (re-published Leipzig 1810, pp. 24f): “Wenn übrigens Haydns äußere Lage nichts weniger als glänzend war, so verschaffte sie ihm dagegen zur Ausbildung seines vielseitigen Talents die beste Gelegenheit. ‘Mein Fürst war mit allen meinen Arbeiten zufrieden, ich erhielt Beyfall, ich konnte als Chef eines Orchesters Versuche machen, beobachten, was den Eindruck hervorbringt, und was ihn schwächt, also verbessern, zusetzen, wegschneiden, wagen; ich war von der Welt abgesondert, Niemand in meiner Nähe konnte mich an mir selbst irre machen und quälen, und so mußte ich original werden.’”

almost always begin directly with Haydn's words, omitting Griesinger's introductory comment about the composer's "external circumstances" being "anything but splendid" or "far from splendid" (nichts weniger als glänzend). The "äußere Lage" Griesinger cites relates more than anything else to the composer's condition of servitude, for in the paragraph immediately preceding his report of Haydn's statement, Griesinger had noted the following:

Haydn spent these thirty years [i.e., 1761–1790] mostly at Eisenstadt in Hungary with his Prince, and only during the winter did he come to Vienna for two or three months. He himself did not know how famous he was abroad, and he heard about this only occasionally from outsiders who visited him. Many of them, including Gluck, advised him to travel to Italy and France; but his timidity and his limited resources held him back, and whenever he happened to mention this to his Prince, the Prince would press a dozen ducats into his hand, and with that Haydn would each time let all such projects go by the wayside⁵.

In this sense, Haydn's observation about becoming original is part of an attempt to make a virtue out of necessity, in that he turns his geographic and social isolation to his advantage. That Griesinger makes any mention at all of Haydn's less-than-ideal situation is all the more remarkable when we keep in mind that his "Biographische Notizen" belong to that genre of reportage, extremely common in its time, in which an individual's life is presented in the best possible light, particularly if the subject has just died. (*D e m o r t u - i s n i h i l n i s i b o n u m .*) Griesinger's text is not a critical biography in any sense of the term, either in relation to its subject or its sources. It amounts essentially to hagiography, and the very fact that he alludes at all to the "anything but splendid" nature of Haydn's "äußere Lage" is telling in its own right, for we know directly from the composer himself that Haydn did indeed chafe under the strictures on his personal liberty during his years of service to Prince Nicolaus. As late as May 1790, for example, he wrote from Eszterház to Maria Anna von Genzinger in Vienna, lamenting his isolation and the Prince's refusal to allow him to travel to Vienna, even when the Prince himself was not in residence at Eszterház:

⁵ Griesinger, AMZ 11 (19 July 1809), cls. 661f (re-published Leipzig 1810, pp. 23f): "Haydn brachte diese dreyßig Jahre [1761–1790] meistens zu Eisenstadt in Ungarn mit seinem Fürsten zu, und nur im Winter kam er auf zwey bis drey Monate nach Wien. Er wußte es selbst nicht, wie berühmt er im Auslande war, und er erfuhr es nur zuweilen durch reisende Fremde, die ihn besuchten. Viele derselben, auch Gluck, riethen ihm, nach Italien und Frankreich zu reisen; aber seine Furchtsamkeit und seine beschränkte Lage hielten ihn zurück, und wenn er gegen seinen Fürsten ein Wort davon fallen ließ, so drückte ihm dieser ein Dutzend Dukaten in die Hand, und nun ließ er wieder alle solche Projekte fahren."

Oh! If only I could be with Your Grace for a quarter of an hour, to pour forth all my troubles to you, and to hear all your comforting words. I have to put up with many annoyances from the Court here which, however, I must accept in silence. The only consolation left to me is that I am – thank God! – well, and eagerly disposed to work; I am only sorry that despite this eagerness, Your Grace has had to wait so long for the promised Symphony, but this time it's simply bare necessity which is responsible, arising from my circumstances here and the present rise in the cost of living. Your Grace therefore mustn't be angry at your Haydn who, often as his Prince absents himself from Estoras, cannot go to Vienna even for 24 hours; it's scarcely credible, and yet the refusal is always couched in such polite terms, so polite in fact that I just don't have the heart to insist on receiving the permission. Oh well! As God pleases⁶!

A month later, still in Eszterház, he would write to Frau von Genzinger in the same vein: "Once again it has happened to me that I am compelled to remain at home", he laments. "Your Grace can image what I thereby lose. It is indeed sad always to be a slave; yet Providence wills it"⁷. Here, Haydn calls himself not simply a servant, but a slave. This is strong language.

When he writes to Frau von Genzinger from London in September 1791, however, Haydn strikes a very different tone. Having been in England for nine months, he steps back to contemplate his long years of service to Prince Nicolaus:

Oh, my dear and gracious Lady, a certain freedom tastes sweet indeed. I had a good Prince but was at times subordinate to base souls. I often sighed

⁶ Letter of 30 May 1790 to Marianne von Genzinger, in: Bartha, pp. 235f. (translation from Landon II, pp. 741f): "O könnt ich nur eine viertl stund bey Ihro Gnaden seyn, um meine widerwertigkeiten auszuschütten, und von Euer Gnaden Trost einzuhauchen, ich unterliege bey unser dermahligen Regierung vielen Verdriesslichkeiten, welche ich aber hier mit stillschweigen übergehen muß: der einzige Trost, so mir noch übrig bleibt, ist, daß ich gottlob, gesund, und thätige lust zur arbeith habe; nur bedaure ich bey dieser lust, daß Euer Graden so lang auf die versprochene Sinfonie warten müssen; es ist aber dissfals bloß eine gewisse Nothwendigkeit schuld draran, welche meine umstände und die dermahlige Theuerung verursachen. seund Euer Gnaden dertohalben nicht böse auf Ihren Haydn, der, so oft sich sein Fürst von Estoras absentirt, nie die Erlaubnuß erhalten kan, nur auf 24 Stund nach wienn gehen zu darfen; es ist kaum zu glauben, und doch geschieht diese weigerung auf die feinste arth, und zwar auf solche, daß ich ausser stand gesetzt werde die Erlaubnuß zu begehren. nu, in gottes Nahmen [...]".

⁷ Letter of 27 June 1790 to Marianne von Genzinger, in Bartha, p. 243: "Nun trifft es mich abermahl, daß ich zu Hauß bleiben mus. was ich dabey verliere, können sich Euer gnaden selbst einbilden. es ist doch traurig, immer Slav zu seyn: allein, die Vorsicht will es."

for release, and now I have it to some extent. And I recognize the benefit of all this, even if my mind is burdened with more work. The consciousness of not being a bonded servant compensates for all the toil. As dear as this freedom is, I nevertheless gladly long to be once again in the service of Prince Esterházy after my return, simply for the sake of my poor family⁸.

Once again we see a conflict between a longing for personal freedom and a concern for financial security, or at least the financial security of his family, by which Haydn no doubt meant his wife – for whom he was still financially responsible – and his younger brother, the singer Johann Evangelist, who remained on the Esterházy payrolls as a singer⁹. It is also entirely possible that Haydn felt the need to temper his enthusiasm for his new-found freedom with a declaration of allegiance to the Esterházy family, which was still providing him a pension. Haydn certainly knew that his letter might well be read by persons other than Frau von Genzinger.

News of Haydn's servitude and the restrictions on his freedom were circulating already during his lifetime and had made their way to London a full six years before he arrived there, at a time when Prince Nicolaus was still very much in good health. In January 1785, a London newspaper suggested that it would be a public service for someone to kidnap the composer and bring him to England, all in the cause of freedom:

There is something very distressing to a liberal mind in the history of H a y d n . This wonderful man, who is the Shakespeare of music, and the triumph of the age in which we live, is doomed to reside in the court of a miserable German Prince, who is at once incapable of rewarding him, and unworthy of the honour. H a y d n , the simplest, as well as the greatest of men, is resigned to his condition and ... is content to live immured in a place little better than a dungeon, subject to the domineering spirit of a petty Lord and the clamorous temper of a scolding wife. Would it not be an achievement equal to a pilgrimage, for some aspiring youths to rescue

⁸ Letter of 17 September 1791 to Marianne von Genzinger, in Bartha, pp. 260f.: "O meine liebe gnädige Frau, wie Süß schmeckt doch eine gewisse freyheit, ich hatte einen guten Fürsten, muste aber zu zeiten von niedrigen Seelen abhängen, ich seufzte oft um Erlösung, nun habe ich Sie einiger massen, ich erkenne auch die gutthat derselben ohngeachtet mein geist mit mehrer arbeits beschwert ist. das bewust seyn, kein gebundener diener zu seyn, vergütet alle mühe, allein so lieb mir diese freyheit ist, so gerne verlange ich bey meiner zurückkunft in fürst. Esterhazischen Diensten zu seyn, bloß meiner armen Familie wegen." The translation here differs from that given in CCLN, p. 118.

⁹ See Christine Siegert, *Joseph Haydn zwischen London und Wien – Aspekte der ersten Englandreise*, in: *Musiker auf Reisen. Beiträge zum Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christoph-Hellmut Mahling, Augsburg 2011, pp. 97–110.

him from his fortune and transplant him to Great Britain, the country for which his music seems to be made¹⁰?

We do not know the source of the information in this anonymous account, but the detail about the “clamorous temper of a scolding wife” suggests that it may have come from an eyewitness, perhaps one of the many visitors to Eszterház from abroad mentioned by Griesinger. In the true tradition of anecdote, the report reflects the concern of the person who is telling it, and personal liberty was an issue of widespread concern – not to mention action – in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the relationship between individual and monarch, servant and master, was becoming more and more a topic of conversation, not only in England but throughout the continent. The example of the American Revolution only added to the importance of this subject¹¹.

It is in this context that we can better understand the many and varied narratives about the “Farewell” Symphony in the closing decades of the eighteenth century. The theme of longing for personal independence is evident in the very first published accounts of the work, which appeared after a performance in the Concerts spirituel in Paris in 1784, which is to say, in pre-Revolutionary France. The first of these reports, the substance of which is attributed to a “celebrated virtuoso” now living in the French capital but formerly in the service of Prince Nicolaus, pits Haydn and his musicians against “house officers”, that is, against mid-level bureaucrats, not against the Prince himself. According to this report, Prince Nicolaus, the benevolent despot, reacts to the pantomime of the finale with wisdom and grace. He reproaches the musicians “avec sensibilité” for their manner of abandoning “such a good a master”, and the musicians “throw themselves at the feet” of the Prince and return to his service¹².

Post-Revolutionary narratives of the “Farewell” depict a far more confrontational moment between Haydn and the Prince. Indeed, almost all subsequent accounts emphasize – and take palpable delight in – Haydn’s audacity

¹⁰ The *Gazeteer & New Daily Advertiser* (London), 17 January 1785; quoted in H. C. Robbins Landon and David Wyn Jones, *Haydn: His Life and Music*, Bloomington 1988, p. 175.

¹¹ See Pierpaolo Polzinetti, *Italian Opera in the Age of the American Revolution*, Cambridge, 2011.

¹² *Journal de Paris*, 15 April 1784, p. 466: “Le Prince étonné, demanda à H a y d n ce que cela signifioit; H a y d n lui dit que ses Musiciens partoient, & que leurs voitures étoient prêtes. Le Prince eut la bonté d’aller les trouver, leur reprocha avec sensibilité la manière dont ils abandonnoient un si bon Maître; les Musiciens se jettèrent à ses pieds & rentrèrent à son service.”

to challenge authority, to cross the divide that separated the world of liveried musicians from the world of the nobility, often with amusing details. Albert Christoph Dies, in his account from 1810, turns the entire Eszterház court into a society of equals. At the end of the “Farewell”, according to Dies, the Prince announces to his retinue that: “If they [the musicians] all leave, we must leave, too.” Dies then has the Prince seek out Haydn and the members of the orchestra in an antechamber, where he says to his Kapellmeister: “Haydn, I understand; tomorrow the men may all leave”, whereupon, again according to Dies, the Prince “at once gave the necessary orders to hold at the ready the princely horses and carriages for their departure”¹³.

This truly is the world turned upside down: it reflects the wishful thinking of 1810 more than anything we might reasonably imagine to have happened in 1772. The Prince somehow understands the enigmatic pantomime at once, tracks down the missing musicians, and then grants their request outright without further inquiry or discussion. The entire scenario makes the musicians – the *m u s i c i a n s* – the driving force behind the schedule of the entire court. Anyone who has examined the surviving Esterházy documents from the 1770s will recognize at once the implausibility of Dies’ account, particularly the Prince’s reaction. As Gerhard Winkler has rightly observed, Haydn would have been sacked on the spot for impertinence had the situation played itself out as portrayed in these early accounts of the “Farewell” Symphony¹⁴. And yet the image of the “Farewell” as an act of protest and Haydn as a proto-revolutionary would be repeated again and again, and it would become ever more elaborate with time.

In his “Notice sur Joseph Haydn,” also published in 1810, the French critic Nicolas-Étienne Framery devotes no fewer than seven of 47 pages – some 15 percent of his book – to the “Farewell” Symphony¹⁵. He ascribes the work’s origins to an extended bout of depression – “black humor” – on the part of Prince Nicolaus. Haydn is deeply upset with the Prince’s indifference to each successive movement of his latest symphony (not the “Farewell”) but

¹³ Dies, p. 47: “Der Fürst stand nun auf, und sagte: ‘wenn sie alle weg gehen, so müssen wir auch gehen’. Die Virtuosen hatten sich indessen im Vorzimmer versammelt, wo sie der Fürst fand, und lächelnd sagte: ‘Haydn, ich habe es verstanden, morgen können die Herrn alle reisen,’ worauf er die nöthigen Befehle ertheilte, die fürstlichen Pferde und Wagen zu der Abreise in Bereitschaft zu halten.”

¹⁴ Gerhard Winkler, “Orchesterpantomime” in den Esterházy-Sinfonien Joseph Haydns, in: *Das symphonische Werk Joseph Haydns: Referate des Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Symposions Eisenstadt, 13.–15. September 1995*, ed. Gerhard J. Winkler, Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 113.

¹⁵ Nicolas Étienne Framery, *Notice sur Joseph Haydn*, Paris, 1810, pp. 15–22.

the composer manages to hide his vexation, even though by the end of the performance he wants to “smash his violin” and “tear the score into pieces”. After a sleepless night, Haydn resolves to confront the Prince directly. “Are you mad?” the chamberlain asks Haydn when the composer appears at the entrance to the princely apartments. “The prince is receiving no one at the moment, least of all you, because for some reason he is furious with you.” Haydn nevertheless gains access to the Prince. The two quarrel, and the Prince accepts Haydn’s resignation. The musicians, in sympathy with their Kapellmeister, draw up their own letter of mass resignation, which Nicolaus accepts on the condition that they remain in his service for an additional eight days. This brief period of time allows passions to subside on both sides and gives Haydn the opportunity to compose the “Farewell” Symphony for the occasion of one final concert. At the end of the performance, the Prince, having “overcome his pride”, seeks out the musicians, his “heart swollen” and his “eyes full of tears” as he cries: “My friends, my old friends! You abandon me thus? And why do you abandon me? As your prince, you know that I cannot ask for your forgiveness. I likewise am aware that in your noble quality as artists, you can no more ask me for my forgiveness. Is there not some means of reconciliation?” At this, Framery reports, the response of Haydn and all his musicians was to “fall at the knee of the prince, who received them in his arms. After that, everything was forgotten forever”¹⁶. Lest we dismiss this report as entirely fanciful, we should remind ourselves that much of Framery’s information on Haydn was given to him by Ignaz Pleyel, who had emigrated to Paris by this point but who had been a pupil of Haydn’s from 1772 until the late 1770s¹⁷.

It remained to Carl Ferdinand Pohl, the great nineteenth-century Haydn biographer, to examine the available documentary evidence in detail. Pohl was the

¹⁶ Framery, *Notice sur Joseph Haydn*, pp. 21f.: “Le souverain d’Esthérazy, dont la bonté naturelle avait vaincu la fierté, le coeur gonflé, se précipite dans la salle où s’était rassemblé l’orchestre, et, les yeux pleins de larmes : ‘Mes amis, leur crie-t-il, mes vieux amis! est-ce ainsi que vous m’abandonnez! Et pourquoi m’abandonnez-vous? Comme votre prince, vous sentez que je ne puis vous demander grâce; je sens également qu’en votre noble qualité d’artistes vous ne pouvez pas non plus me la demander: n’y aurait-il pas moyen de tout concilier, et de faire comme s’il ne s’était rien passé de part et d’autre?’ La réponse du maître et de tout son monde fut de tomber aux genoux du prince, qui le reçut dans ses bras, et tout fut à jamais oublié.”

¹⁷ For further thoughts on the role of melancholy in the origins and nature of the “Farewell” Symphony, see Melanie Wald, “‘Ein curios melancholisches Stückchen’: Die düstere Seite von Haydns fis-Moll Sinfonie Hob.I:45 und einige Gedanken zur Pantomime in der Instrumentalmusik,” in: *Studia musicologica* 51 (2010), pp. 79–90.

first to identify the directive that forbade the musicians, with only a few exceptions, from bringing their families with them to Eszterház in 1772, thereby giving support to Griesinger's version of the story; Pohl further rejected the theory that the Prince had been forced to economize, and he identified the conflict with house officers as an incident that had occurred at a later time. None of this very good historical work, however, prevented Pohl from out-doing Dies in the degree of detail he provided to describe the scene at the end of the premiere of the "Farewell". Pohl has the Prince grasp Haydn's hand and say to him: "I have seen through your intention quite well: the musicians long to go home. Very well, then. Tomorrow we pack up our things." In spite of having identified the relevant historical documents, then, Pohl still clung to the belief that the musicians could determine the timing of the Prince's departure from Eszterház. It was simply too good a story not to repeat. Pohl, like many other historians before and since, wants the story to be true, for it places both Haydn and the Prince in a positive light, thereby papering over the more serious aspirations of those in servitude over and against those in power. Pohl even adds this delicious detail: The musicians, anxiously assembled after the performance and awaiting their Kapellmeister, learn of their success from Haydn's eyes alone; he has no need of words to convey the success of his symphony, and the musicians, even the bachelors among them, gather to shake the composer's hand. Pohl ends his account by calling Haydn "a happy father among happy children!"¹⁸.

By this point, the story has become quite sanitized. The image of "Papa Haydn," the jovial and benevolent father, has supplanted the daring figure of protest, a figure more readily visible through earlier accounts of the "Farewell" than through later ones. Haydn's happiness is consistently portrayed as innocent, naïve, and child-like, in a word, domestic – all in stark contrast to the cosmic joy that pervades the end of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Yet both varieties of happiness, we should remind ourselves, ultimately hinge on the predicate of freedom. And within Enlightenment thought, freedom is

¹⁸ Pohl II, p. 57: "Die letzten Lichter erlöschen, die letzten Geiger gehen und auch Haydn ist im Begriff, ihnen zu folgen als der Fürst, der dem Vorgange anfangs befremdet gefolgt war, auf ihn hinzutritt, ihm gerührt die Hand reicht und mit den Worten anredet: 'Ich habe Ihre Absicht wohl durchschaut, die Musiker sehnen sich nach Hause – nun gut – Morgen packen wir ein.'"

"Im Vorsaaale aber harrete die Kapelle in banger Erwartung ihres Führers und als nun dieser unter sie tritt und sein leuchtender Blick ihnen den glücklichen Ausgang verräth – bedarf es noch der Worte die nun folgende Scene zu schildern, wie Alle, die Junggesellen mit inbegriffen, sich herzu drängen seine Hände zu drücken und Haydn selbst die Rührung kaum verbergen kann – ein glücklicher Vater unter glücklichen Kindern!"

what makes happiness possible, both on the universal and personal level¹⁹. For later generations, Haydn's message to Prince Nicolaus – even though first conveyed years before the American or French Revolutions had taken place – had provided a foreshadowing of the eventual liberation of musicians from a condition of servitude. Haydn is the pivotal figure in the perceived transformation of musicians from servants performing and composing on demand to independent artists free to move at their own will and to express their individual, personal emotions. For a time, at least, the “Farewell” Symphony was understood as a bold gesture of self-expression through music, a musical declaration of independence, as it were, a means by which an artist could sway the actions of a Prince. This in itself was a revolutionary ideal and one that would become a foundation of an important line of thought put into action later in the nineteenth century by the Saint-Simonians in France and by the New German School of Liszt and Wagner. Whatever the actual events on the ground at Eszterház in the autumn of 1772, the revolutionary ideals of the narratives behind the “Farewell” Symphony had accorded Haydn the status of a spiritual ancestor to those who believed that music could change the world.

Appendix: Early and Selected Later Reports of the Circumstances Surrounding the Composition and Premiere of Haydn's “Farewell” Symphony

Year	Source	Summary
1784	Anonymous, <i>Journal de Paris</i> , 15 April	According to a “celebrated virtuoso” now in Paris but formerly in the service of Prince Nicolaus, a quarrel between the musicians and house officers leads to the resignation of the musicians. They perform the symphony the day before their scheduled departure. The Prince asks the meaning of it all; Haydn replies that the musicians are leaving and that their carriages are waiting for them. The Prince reproaches them “avec sensibilité” for this manner of abandoning “such a good a master,” and the musicians “throw themselves at the feet” of the Prince and return to his service.

¹⁹ See James Parsons, “‘Deine Zauben binden wieder’: Beethoven, Schiller, and the Joyous Reconciliation of Opposites,” in: *Beethoven Forum* 9 (2002), pp. 1–53.

1784	Anonymous, <i>Mercure de France</i> , 24 April	“It is said” that the Prince wants to dismiss all but a few of the musicians; after a performance of the symphony, the Prince demands an explanation of “cette bizarrerie” and Haydn explains that it expresses the grief of those left behind, who are losing their comrades, and that the symphony also presents an idea of what the court’s music will sound like with only “a few violins.” “La plaisanterie fut goûtée, & les Musiciens conservés.”
1795	J. F. R. [= Johann Friedrich Reichardt?], <i>Wanderungen und Träumereien im Gebiete der Tonkunst: Tischgespräch über Kirchenmusik</i> , in: <i>Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks</i> , 2 October	The Prince becomes unhappy with the Kapelle and wants to disband it. Haydn knows how deeply the Prince is moved by music, however, and writes a symphony in which the musicians leave one by one, with only a solo contrabass at the end. The Prince relents and retains all the musicians. Haydn then writes another symphony in which the ensemble gradually grows during the course of the first movement, with the musicians entering one by one and lighting their candles just before they begin their parts.
1799	Anon., <i>Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung</i> , 2 October 1799	The Prince wants to disband the Kapelle for economic reasons. Haydn is the last to leave after the end of the symphony, and he does so “mit edlem Schritt.” The Prince “calls him back” and re-hires “most” of the musicians, who continue to serve “durch Einen Gedanken Eines Mannes, den aber die Vorsehung mit der Mitgift, die man Genie nennt, ausgerüstet hatte.”
1800	Christian Carl Oswald, <i>Beiträge zu Künstlerbiographien</i> (Leipzig)	Same basic account as that of the “ <i>Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit</i> ” 1795, which Oswald acknowledges as his source.
1801	C.A. Siebigke, <i>Museum berühmter Tonkünstler</i> , II (Breslau)	Siebigke acknowledges that his account is a paraphrase of the 1799 “AmZ” report.
1809	Johann Simon Mayr, <i>Brevi notizie istoriche della vita e delle opere di Giuseppe Haydn</i> (Bergamo)	Lightly paraphrases and largely translates the “AmZ” account of 1799.

1809	Georg August Griesinger, Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn, in: AmZ, 19 July	The musicians are without their families during the summer, and the Prince announces one autumn that he will extend his usual time at Eszterház “by several weeks”. The musicians turn to Haydn, who composes the symphony “die unter dem Namen der Abschieds-Symphonie bekannt ist.” The Prince and those present “understood the meaning of this pantomime at once,” and the Prince gives the command the next day to depart from Eszterház.
1810	Griesinger, Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn (Leipzig)	Same as Griesinger 1809, re-issued now in book form.
1810	Albert Christoph Dies, Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn (Vienna)	The basic outline of the account is the same as that found in Griesinger 1809 but with considerably more detail. The Prince decides to extend his usual six months in Eszterház by two months. The musicians turn to Haydn, who realizes that a conventional petition to the Prince would serve as little more than object of derision. Haydn takes refuge in his muse and writes a sextet in F-sharp minor that is also known as a symphony. As the musicians leave, “the Prince and all present fall silent in wonder.” A single violinist, Tomasini, remains. Haydn had chosen him because he was a favorite of the Prince and because the Prince would have to wait for him to finish playing (“weil [...] er durch die Kunst des Spielers gleichsam gezwungen wurde, das Ende abzuwarten.”) At the end, the Prince stands and says: “Wenn sie alle weg gehen, so müssen wir auch gehen.” The “virtuosos” have assembled in an antechamber in the meantime; the Prince finds them there and says, smiling: “Haydn, ich habe es verstanden, morgen können die Herrn alle reisen,” and he gives the necessary orders to hold at the ready the princely horses and carriages for their departure.

1810	Anonymous, “Anekdote von Haydn”, Vaterländische Blätter für den österreichischen Kaiserstaat, 30 January	The Prince wants to disband the Kapelle in 1772. Haydn is the last musician remaining: he bows and is about to depart, but “the good Prince” had “understood the composition.” “In großer Bewegung rief er aus: ‘Haydn! Es bleibt beym Alten.’”
1810	Nicolas-Étienne Framery, Notice sur Joseph Haydn (Paris)	The Prince is depressed, quarrels with Haydn, accepts his resignation and that of the musicians but insists that they all remain in his service an additional eight days, which gives Haydn time to write his symphony. At the end of it, the Prince seeks out the musicians, his eyes “full of tears,” and cries: “Mes amis, mes vieux amis! est-ce ainsi que vous m’abandonnez! Et pourquoi m’abandonnez-vous? Comme votre prince, vous sentez que je ne puis vous demander grâce; je sens également qu’en votre noble qualité d’artistes vous ne pouvez pas non plus me la demander: n’y aurait-il pas moyen de tout concilier, et de faire comme s’il ne s’était rien passé de part et d’autre?” Framery reports that at this, Haydn and the musicians all “fall at the knee of the prince, who received them in his arms.”
1810	Ignaz Ferdinand Arnold, Joseph Haydn (Erfurt)	The Prince wants to dismiss the Kapelle, either because of “Laune” or because of finances. The symphony’s “Wirkung war zu gut berechnet, um nicht vorausgesehen zu werden.” The Prince changes his mind, and he re-hires Haydn and “most” of the musicians.
1810	Joachim Lebreton, Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de Joseph Haydn (Paris)	Paraphrases the reports by Framery and Griesinger and invites the reader to choose between them, though Lebreton himself prefers the latter, adding that “ce qui n’est point douteux, c’est que l’ouvrage subsiste, et qu’il caractérise l’esprit d’Haydn”.

1812	Giuseppe Carpani, <i>Le Haydine</i> , Milan	Three versions, all of which Carpani says were reported to him by eyewitnesses to the event: (1) Haydn writes the work as a rebuke to his uncooperative musicians; the Prince and others are in on the joke and find it most amusing. (2) The Prince wants to disband the Kapelle but relents when he hears the symphony. (3) There is no room at Eszterház for so many “artisans and actors”, and the Prince forbids the younger musicians to bring their families; Haydn writes the symphony to remind the Prince of these “forced divorces,” and the Prince allows the musicians to visit their families.
1814	Stendhal, <i>Vies de Haydn, de Mozart et de Métastase</i> (Paris)	Not sure which of three explanations is true: (1) The work is performed without any prior rehearsal before the Prince, who is in on the secret and is amused by the confusion and embarrassment of the musicians. (2) The Prince wants to disband the Kapelle but relents when he hears the symphony. (3) Stendhal says he will refrain from relating the third explanation.
1828	Joseph Fröhlich, “Haydn” in: <i>Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste</i> (Leipzig)	The musicians are without their families one summer, and the Prince overstays his usual time at Eszterház. Provides a program for all four movements. “Dieser [Haydn] schrieb dann die bekannte Sinfonie aus Fis-moll, in welcher er im ersten Allegro 3/4 den Anmuth, den drängenden Wunsch, im Adagio con Sordini ihr leises Sehnen, im Menuett ihren feurigen Wunsch schilderte. Das Finale enthält wieder im Anfange den Ausdruck von Unmuth über die gefürchtete Verlängerung; leitet aber in ein Adagio 3/4 über, in welchem sich die Bitte der Heimathlustigen ausspricht.” The Prince gives the order the following day that all will return to Eisenstadt.
1843	Sigismund Neukomm, <i>Bemerkungen zu den biogr. Nachrichten von Dies</i> (MS)	Says that Haydn told him the Prince wanted to disband the Kapelle for economic reasons. Neukomm emphasizes that Haydn told him this “in a period earlier than the visits of my friend Dies, in a period when Haydn was strong enough to create his huge work, ‘The Seasons.’” [Landon II, p. 181]

1867	C.A. Ludwig, Joseph Haydn, Nordhausen	Quotes Dies at length, adding: “Was Bitten und Vorstellungen nicht vermocht hätten, das that die Kunst.”
1882	Carl Ferdinand Pohl, Joseph Haydn, II, pp. 55–58 (Leipzig)	The first attempt to evaluate various accounts critically. Documents the presence of the Wahrheit troupe and the shortage of housing for the musicians in the summer of 1772 but also adds many imagined details.
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1946	Karl Geiringer, Haydn: A Creative Life in Music (New York), p. 233	“From an artistic point of view this adagio ending [...] was even bolder than Haydn’s attempt to teach his inconsiderate prince a lesson.”
1956	Jan LaRue, A ‘Hail and Farewell’ Quodlibet Symphony, in: Music & Letters, pp. 250–259	“This work, typical of Haydn’s far-sighted originality, is the first example of the ‘walk-out’ strike (Musicians’ Union), a hundred and fifty years before this expedient became an effective tool of social and economic improvement.”
1978	Robbins Landon II, p. 182	“Haydn had won a diplomatic coup with his great new Symphony ...”

