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HAYDN'S APPROACH TO TEXT: AN EXAMINATION OF SELECTED LIEDER FROM HIS 1781 AND 1784 COLLECTIONS

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Despite their historical significance to the Viennese *Lied* before Schubert, the songs of Joseph Haydn have been largely neglected by performers and scholars alike. Overall, studies in music history and even Haydn scholarship, with a few exceptions, have failed to give these compositions more than a cursory mention.¹ His contribution to this genre includes two collections of German *Lieder* published by Artaria in 1781 and 1784, respectively, and the "English" canzonettas from the 1790s.

Haydn's interest in the German *Lied* began in the second half of 1781, the year in which he composed the famous Opus 33 string quartets. His *Lied* aesthetic of "variety, naturalness and ease of vocal execution,"² corresponds with the twin ideas of simplicity and accessibility that dominate the literary scene of the time. Most of the songs are simple strophic settings of Anacreontic texts with the piano accompaniment usually doubling the vocal lines. Griesinger, in his Haydn biography, notes:

Haydn sometimes said that instead of so many quartets, sonatas, and symphonies, he should have written more vocal music. Not only might he have become the foremost opera composers, but also it is far easier to compose along the lines of a text than without one. He complained, moreover, that our German poets did not write musically enough, for a melody that suits the first stanza will seldom do for the following ones...³

¹The are only two studies which discuss Haydn's *Lieder*: Irene Pollack-Schlaffenberg, "Das Wiener Lied von 1778-1789," *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 5 (1918): 97-151 and Peter A. Brown, "Joseph Haydn and Leopold Hofmann's 'Street Songs'," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33 (1980): 356-83. The first provides background information on the late eighteenth-century Viennese *Lied*; the second article examines three songs from Haydn's 1781 collection: *An Thyrsis*, *Trost unglücklicher Liebe*, and *Die Landlust*.

²H.C.R. Landon, *The Collected Correspondence and London Notebooks of Joseph Haydn* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1959) 28; hereafter: CCLN.

³G.A. Griesinger, *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn* (Leipzig, 1810) as translated by Vernon Gotwals in *Joseph Haydn: Eighteenth-Century Gentleman and Genius* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963) 63; hereafter: Gotwals.

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Elsewhere, Griesinger documents Haydn's complaint that German poets were "not careful enough in their choice of vowels."⁴ Clearly, these remarks indicate that Haydn was definitely aware of the expressive limitations of strophic form and that musico-poetic relations were an important compositional concern for him.

The present study investigates Haydn's approach to text by examining four songs from the two collections German *Lieder*, namely *Das strickende Mädchen* and *Die Verlassene* from 1781, and *Das Leben ist ein Traum* and *Lob der Faulheit* from 1784.⁵ Detailed analyses of these songs will consider how the harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and structural aspects relate to the poetic meter, rhythm, structure and textual imagery.⁶ A comparative appraisal of the analytical observations will provide a better understanding of Haydn's approach to text and changes in his compositional orientation between the 1781 and 1784.

I

The text to the first song *Das strickende Mädchen* is a German translation by J.G. Herder (1744-1803) of a Charles Sedley poem originally published in Thomas d'Urfey's *Wit and Mirth or Pills to Purge Melancholy* in 1719.⁷

Text

"Und hörst du, kleine Phyllis, nicht
Der Vöglein süßes Lied?
Sie singen, sie antworten sich,
Da mich dein' Antwort fliehet."

Translation⁸

"Little Phyllis, don't you hear
The little birds' sweet song?
They sing, they answer each other,
But your answer evades me."

⁴Gotwals, 63.

⁵This article is part of an ongoing investigation of Haydn's aesthetics, his musical personality and word-tone associations in his German *Lieder*. I would like to thank Dr. James Webster and Dr. Edward Murray for their comments.

⁶The discussion of the relationship between music and poetry will be limited to the first stanza in light of Haydn's comment that "the melody that suits the first stanza will seldom do for the following ones." Gotwals, 63.

⁷Marianne Helms, Kritischer Bericht, *Joseph Haydn Werke: Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Klaviers*, ed. Paul Mies (München: Henle, 1983) 50; hereafter: KB.

⁸English translations of the texts to *Das Strickende Mädchen* and *Die Verlassene* are by Andrea Folan, cd jacket notes, *Franz Joseph Haydn: XII Lieder für das Clavier, Arianna a Naxos*, Andrea Folan, soprano, Tom Beghin, fortepiano, Bridge Records 9059, 1995.

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Phyllis, ohne Sprach' und Wort,
Saß und strickte ruhig fort.

Phyllis, without speech or word
Sat and calmly knitted on.

The above stanza divides internally into an opening quatrain and a closing couplet. This division is apparent from the ab ab cc rhyme scheme, the quotation marks which punctuate the words of the unwelcome suitor, and the shift in the underlying poetic rhythm from iambic to trochaic. The alteration in poetic rhythm also emphasizes other aspects of the poem: first, it coincides with the change in the narrative tone of the text, i.e., the change from direct to reported speech, and secondly, the shift in rhythm turns the dramatic focus onto Phyllis and her reaction to the speaker.

Example 1a: *Das strickende Mädchen* (continued on next page)

Adagio

„Und hörst du, klei - ne

Phyl - - - lis, nicht der Vög - - lein sü - - ses

Lied? Sie sin - - gen, sie ant - - wor - - ten sich. da

mich dein' Ant - - wort flieht!

The musical score consists of piano accompaniment and vocal lines. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand. The vocal line is in a soprano range and includes the lyrics provided. The tempo is marked 'Adagio'. The score is divided into systems, with measures 3, 5, 9, 10, and 18 indicated at the beginning of their respective systems.

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Example 1a continued

The musical score consists of five systems of music. The first system (measures 15-17) shows a piano accompaniment with a fermata in measure 17. The second system (measures 18-22) is marked 'Allegro' and includes a vocal line with the lyrics: 'Phyl - lis, oh - ne Sprach' und Wort, saß und strick - te,'. The third system (measures 23-28) continues the vocal line with the lyrics: 'saß und strick - te ru - hig fort.' and includes a piano accompaniment with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The fourth system (measures 29-34) continues the vocal line with the lyrics: 'Phyl - lis, oh - ne Wort, saß und strick - te ru - hig fort.' and includes a piano accompaniment with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The fifth system (measures 35-38) shows the final piano accompaniment.

Haydn uses a fermata in m. 17 to emphasize the internal stanzaic division (see Ex. 1a⁹). The delineation between the quatrain and couplet is also indicated by the quickening in tempo from *Adagio* to *Allegro*, the change in accompanimental texture, and the melodic contour of the vocal line. The vocal line displays a close kinship between the poetic stresses and the musical rhythm (see Ex. 1b). By beginning the song on an upbeat, Haydn ensures that the stressed syllables fall on the strong beats within each measure, fitting the weak syllables in between.

⁹All musical examples in this article are taken from Joseph Haydn, *Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Klaviers*, eds. Paul Mies and Marianne Helms (München: Henle, 1982). Reprinted with kind permission from Henle Verlag.

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to Phyllis. In addition, the melismatic cells on the words "Phyllis," "Vöglein," and "süßes," lends a lyrical quality to the initial vocal phrase which captures the "pleading" tone in the speaker's voice, as well as the picture of the "birds sweetly singing." The antecedent portion of the second phrase (mm. 11-14) comes to a full close in m. 14 marking the end of the suitor's speech.

Haydn uses only the most basic elements of harmony and melody to establish the B \flat -major tonic in the piano introduction. The return of the opening measures with its triadic and ornamental melodic figurations in m. 14 is significant. First, its association with the imagery of the birds singing is clarified by the words of the two vocal phrases that precede it. Secondly, its movement into the higher registers could be interpreted as a musical characterization of Phyllis's evasion, especially since the piano interlude (mm. 14-17) does not cadence but comes to an abrupt halt in m. 17 over a vii^o₆/V. The interruption of the flowing narrative complies with the internal stanzaic division. Thirdly, the interlude punctuates the speaker's words just as the quotation marks did in the text. Haydn's strategic use of silence (m. 17) and the resumption of the same harmony (m. 18) before resolving it to the dominant prolongs the musical tension, by that reflecting the anxiety of the suitor. The Alberti bass, albeit a commonplace gesture in eighteenth-century keyboard compositions, suggests Phyllis's constant knitting.

The concluding section of *Das strickende Mädchen* provides a clear contrast to the opening section. Measures 18-39 employ more dynamic markings (note the *forte* in mm. 20 and 29, and the *piano* in m. 26 and 33), chromaticism in the piano interlude (m. 28), and textual repetition. The narrative tone of the closing couplet is expressed in the music by the primarily syllabic vocal line, beginning with the reiterated B \flat in m. 18. The declamatory text setting is also an effective characterization of Phyllis's stoic indifference which is accented by the repetition of the words "Saß und strickte ruhig fort" at a higher pitch (mm. 24-27) prior to its resolution to the tonic. In the piano postlude (mm. 34-39) we observe that the bass sustains a tonic pedal while the right hand returns to a continuous eighth note pattern—the former perhaps a reference to Phyllis sitting, and the latter to her knitting undisturbed.

Die Verlassene is the fifth song from the 1781 collection; it is also Haydn's first musical setting of a serious text. The poem expresses the woeful thoughts of a woman abandoned by her unfaithful lover. The text and translation provided below show that the poetic structure is an archetypal quatrain with an aa bb rhyme scheme.

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Text

Hör auf, mein armes Herz, so bang zu schlagen!

Er spottet deiner Leiden, deiner Klagen!

Er schloß durch Leichtsinn sich das Tor der
Reue,
Der Ungetreue!

Translation

Stop your anxious beating my poor heart!

He mocks your suffering your complaints!

By his levity he closed the door of regret,
The faithless one!

Example 2a: Die Verlassene

Adagio

The musical score consists of six systems of music. Each system includes a piano accompaniment (left and right hands) and a vocal line. The lyrics are in German. The tempo is marked 'Adagio'. The key signature has one flat (F major). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and accents. There are also some performance instructions like *[3]* and *(f)*.

Lyrics:

Hör auf, mein ar-mes Herz, so bang zu schla-gen!

Er spot-tet dei-ner Lei-den, dei-ner Kla-gen!

Er schloß durch Leicht-sinn sich das Tor der Reu-e, der Un-ge-treu-e!

Er schloß durch Leicht-sinn sich das Tor der Reu-e, der Un-ge-treu-e!

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The six-measure piano introduction begins with a unison descent of a G-minor triad spread over an octave, which chromatically resolves (m. 3) to a half-close on V (mm. 4-6). In addition to the strategic use of silences in mm. 1-2, the sharp dynamic shadings between *forte* and *piano*, together with rumbling semitone figurations in the low register evoke an extremely somber atmosphere foreshadowing the seriousness of the text that follows. The opening measures display an artistic economy, whereby Haydn endows a simple harmonic progression from the tonic to the dominant with textual significance.

Example 2b: Association between poetic stresses and musical rhythm in *Die Verlassene*

Hör auf, mein ar--mes Herz, so bang zu schla--gen!

Er spot--tet dei--ner Lei--den, dei--ner Kla--gen!

Er schloß durch Leicht--sinn sich das Tor der Reu--e,
Der Un--ge--treu--e!

Er schloß durch Leicht--sinn sich das Tor der Reu--e,
Der Un--ge--treu--e!

The methodical placement of the poetic accents on the strong beat of the measure can also be observed in this setting (see Ex. 2b). In accordance with the dictates of the iambic foot each vocal phrase begins on an upbeat. The choice of a three-beat measure for a two-beat iambic foot could have been metrically and textually problematic. Haydn sidesteps the problem by choosing a rhythmic profile that fits not only the poetic structure but the textual concerns as well. All textual accents are acknowledged by their placement within the measure. However, certain words with greater emotional significance (for instance "Herz," "schlagen," "Klagen," and "spottet") are highlighted in the music by use of *sforzandos*, ornaments or dynamic markings.¹⁰

¹⁰Note that in line 1, the tonal and durational accents correspond to the poetic accent on "auf" in the setting of the opening words "Hör auf." The poetic stresses on the words "Herz" and "schlagen" are emphasized by a *sforzando* marking and a mordent, respectively. Similarly in line 2, the verb "spottet" receives an additional emphasis with a *sforzando*; in contrast, "schloß" in line 3 receives only a strong

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Similar to *Das strickende Mädchen*, Haydn observes the external division of the opening quatrain which comprises two rhyming couplets. Each line of the couplet is set as a separate phrase punctuated by brief piano interludes. Haydn's treatment of the first two vocal phrases (mm. 6-9 and mm. 10-13) reflect the identical length and rhyme of lines 1 and 2. Note that both phrases begin with an interval of a perfect fourth, and end with the pitches B \flat -A mirroring the rhyming effect of the words "schlagen" and "Klagen." The association between the two phrases is strengthened further by their obvious rhythmic kinship and motivic connections. For example, the stepwise melodic descent on the last three pulses in m. 7 which is supported by ascending thirds in the bass, recurs at m. 11 in the second phrase. Likewise, the stepwise descent from E \flat to A is used to end both phrases.¹¹

The third phrase follows the same rhythmic profile as the preceding vocal phrases with the exception of the neumatic rhythmic cell on "Reue" in line 3. Haydn repeats the rhythmic cell for the setting of the last syllable "--treue" in line 4 which rhymes with "Reue" in line 3. Obviously, the poetic framework governs the rhythmic construction of the vocal line while the expressive aspects of the text influences the musical choices.

Haydn's sensitivity to the text is also evident in his tonal language and effective use of the accompaniment. The brief piano interjection, which follows the half-close of the initial vocal phrase, begins with an octave transposition of the opening interval D to G, moving quickly to the subdominant minor. The use of the *sforzando* on the high G and the change in register is dramatic and depicts the extreme emotions of the protagonist. In addition, subdominant harmonies in mm. 10-13 intensify the musical tension, complementing the melancholic thoughts of the protagonist in line 2.

The tonicization of the subdominant minor is rather unusual for *Lieder* belonging to the 1781 collection. Haydn generally prefers a traditional modulation to the dominant or mediant depending on whether the tonic is major or minor. In *Die Verlassene*, the expected shift to B \flat -major, which occurs in the third and fourth lines of the text, is conjoined with unusual prolongations of subdominant minor harmonies (mm. 18-22). Instead of functioning as a pivot chord, the prolonged C-minor harmonies create a tonal instability which reflects the intense feelings expressed in the text. Indeed, the twofold emphasis of C-minor is a striking aspect of this setting.

Despite the modulation to B \flat at the first setting of the final couplet, there is no cadence in mm. 14-18. As a result, the change to the major mode does not affect the seriousness of the text. Haydn employs textual repetition as a theatrical device to depict the emotional state of the

metrical placement.

¹¹See also the musical setting of the last couplet of the first stanza.

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protagonist. This is particularly noticeable in his treatment of the final phrase of the song (mm. 20-26). The phrase resembles the preceding phrase in the subdominant minor but comes to a dramatic halt in m. 23 over a diminished seventh chord. The final resolution to G-minor commences in m. 24 by way of the Neapolitan chord which adds a harmonic emphasis to the word "Ungetreue", thus drawing attention to the infidel who is the cause of the protagonist's grief.

II

In *Das Leben ist ein Traum* and *Lob der Faulheit* from the 1784 collection, we can immediately discern a difference in compositional procedures from the layout of the score. In contrast to all of the other Haydn settings which consist of only two staves of music, there is a separate staff for the vocal line in these two songs.

Das Leben ist ein Traum by J.W.L. Gleim (1719-1803), the text and translation of which is given below, first appeared in the *Göttinger Musenalmanach* in 1778.¹² The text focuses on the transient and elusive nature of human existence. Its reflective tone is a complete contrast to dramatic mood of *Die Verlassene* and the folk like simplicity of *Das strickende Mädchen*.

Text

Das Leben, ist ein Traum!
Wir schlüpfen in die Welt und schweben,
Mit jungem Zahn
Und frischem Gaum,
Auf ihrem Wahn
Und ihrem Schaum,
Bis wir nicht mehr an Erde kleben;
Und dann, was ist's? was ist das Leben?
Das Leben, ist ein Traum!

Translation

Life, is a dream!
We slip into the world and
hover,
With young teeth
And fresh palate,
On its illusion
And its foam,
Until we are not bound to the
earth anymore;
And then what is it? What is
life?
Life is a dream!

The systematic correlation between the individual poetic and musical accents is no longer a primary concern for Haydn in *Das Leben ist ein Traum*. Instead, he seeks to find a means of expression that displays a large scale coherence between poetic and musical structure. The piano introduction begins quietly with an arpeggiation of the Eb-major triad which blends in with the main body of the song. The tonic arpeggiation in m. 6 which is identical to m. 1, functions as

¹²KB, 58.

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both the resolution of the V^7 in m. 5, and as an elision that facilitates the musical continuity within the song. The initial vocal phrase "slips in" on the last beat of the measure, after the opening measure has been heard a second time. By compressing the elaborate figurations from mm. 3-4 into a single measure (m. 8) Haydn strengthens the association between the introduction and opening vocal phrase.

Example 3: *Das Leben ist ein Traum*

Largo

Das Le - - - ben, das Le - - - ben ist ein Traum! Wir
schlüpfen in die Welt und schweben mit jun-gem Zahn und fri-schem Gaum auf ih-rem Wahn und ih-rem
Schaum, bis wir nicht mehr an Er-de kle - - - ben;
und dann, was ist's? was ist das Le-ben? Das Le-ben, das
Le - - - ben ist ein Traum! Traum!

1. 2. 3.

pp

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In mm. 6-9, the vocal line is not restricted by the melody in the piano accompaniment; in fact, it is more independent since the rhythmic aspect is no longer bound to the poetic accent. This does not imply, however, that Haydn ignores completely all technical aspects of the poetic structure. New musical ideas are used to express each line of text but successive vocal phrases are not always separated by piano interludes—a feature that allows greater narrative continuity within the song. It is also important to note that according to the iambic meter the setting of each verse begins on the weak beat of the measure. The four iambic dimeter lines beginning with the words "mit jungem Zahn," are set as rising sequential motives moving up an octave from $E\flat^1$ to $E\flat^2$ (mm. 11-13). The similarity in musical sound produced by the motives in this phrase enhances the assonance in these lines. At the rhetorical question "und dann was ist's? was ist das Leben?," Haydn similarly enunciates each accented syllable with a systematic rise of pitch. The use of the minor $E\flat$ chord and the drop from $G\flat^2$ to A^1 underscores the coherence between the expressive content of the text and music. As before, the final resolution to the tonic occurs in the setting of the last line of the stanza.

Finally, we note that each stanza begins and closes with the sentiment "Das Leben ist ein Traum!" as though to reinforce the futility to seek an answer to the question "Was ist das Leben?" The circular arrangement of poetic thought is an notable aspect of this text, which Haydn observes by employing the music of the initial vocal phrase to conclude the song.

The final song under consideration is the setting of G.E. Lessing's (1729-1781) satirical poem *Lob der Faulheit* (see Ex. 4). The poem is perhaps the most unusual text in Haydn's *Lieder* collections because the vast majority of texts are either amorous, pastoral or reflective.

Text

Faulheit, endlich muß ich dir
auch ein kleines Loblied bringen!
O! Wie sauer wird es mir,
dich nach Würden zu besingen!
Doch ich mein Bestes tun:
nach der Arbeit ist gut ruhn.

Translation

Laziness, finally I must also bring you
a short hymn of praise!
O! how sour it becomes for me,
to sing your praise as you deserve!
But I will do my best:
after the work is done, one can rest well.

Haydn's choice of A-minor as the tonic for the setting of a text that is explicit in its comic intent is in itself a musical commentary on the underlying irony and wit. In addition, the use of chromaticism, sudden harmonic and melodic shifts are normally associated with serious settings such as *Die Verlassene*. Haydn's musical treatment of the words, "O! wie sauer..." can only be described as a stroke of genius. By using rests in the melody to separate the first four words of the line, the composer gives a stilted quality to the setting which suits the odd sentiments, particularly with the reference to "yawning" in line 3 of the following stanza. Although the setting follows the alignment of the textual and musical accents, the vocal phrases are not restricted to a single rhythmic profile as seen previously in *Die Verlassene*.

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Example 4: *Lob der Faulheit*

Andante

Paul - heit, end-lich muß ich dir
auch ein klei-nes Lob - lied brin-gen- O! wie sau - er
wird es mir, dich nach Wür-den, dich nach Wür-den zu be - sin -
gen! Doch ich will mein Be-stes tun: nach der Ar-beit ist gut ruhn.

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/A minor). The lyrics are in German. The first system covers measures 1-9, the second system covers measures 10-16, and the third system covers measures 17-24. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

The most unusual harmonic twist occurs toward the end of the song, when the music from mm. 4-6 is reprised in mm. 22-24 to the words "Würden zu besingen." Instead of resolving to the tonic A-minor, Haydn surprises us with a resolution to the tonic major triad, thereby postponing the final resolution to the tonic by way of bII to the closing measures.

III

Let us now consider Haydn's overall approach to text and address the changes in his compositional orientation between 1781-1784. Analyses of the songs illustrate the primacy of the musico-poetic relations to Haydn. This is hardly surprising when we consider the fact that Haydn devoted a considerable portion of his early career at Esterhazy to operatic ventures. One can discern operatic influences in the setting of a text like *Die Verlassene*. The interesting changes in harmony, dynamics and treatment of the vocal line to satisfy the demands of the text in *Die Verlassene* could have resulted in an extremely disjointed or sectional piece. Instead, the *Lied* remains a self-contained musical narrative held together by a simple rhythmic motif. In the two songs from the 1781 collection, *Das strickende Mädchen* and *Die Verlassene*, there is almost a restrained approach to text setting because of the composer's concentrated effort to maintain the association between the poetic stresses and the musical rhythm. For instance, in *Das strickende Mädchen* the poetic stress on the word "antworten" in line 3 falls on the syllable "-wort" even though the stress would usually fall on the first syllable. Obviously, Haydn's compositional choices were subservient to the poetic rhythm.

A marked change in compositional orientation is evident in both *Das Leben ist ein Traum* and *Lob der Faulheit* from the 1784 collection. Although the lines of poetry are still differentiated by the accompaniment, we observe the first glimpses of "through-composition" in these songs. The use of the term "through-composition" in this context needs to be clearly defined, since it is associated extensively with the formal practices of the nineteenth century *Lied*. When we consider the overall structure of the Haydn *Lieder*, one can distinguish two types of strophic settings, namely regular strophic settings and through-composed strophic settings. In regular strophic settings, there is a tendency to use the same musical material and ample text repetition; the accompaniment prepares the listener for the word-painting and the melody of the vocal line it precedes. The piano introductions of *Das strickende Mädchen* and *Die Verlassene* belong to this category. For instance, the image of the birds calling to each other in m. 10 (echoing thirds in the piano) precedes the setting of line 3 in *Das strickende Mädchen*. Similarly, the piano interjections in mm. 9-10 and mm. 14-15 prepare the listener for the changes in the subsequent vocal phrase.

In through-composed strophic settings, the changes in the music are handled differently. As noted earlier, in both *Das Leben ist ein Traum* and *Lob der Faulheit*, the vocal line no longer echoes the melody from the piano interludes but exhibits independence from the accompaniment. This allows Haydn to expand and explore the interpretive role of the piano. In *Das Leben ist ein Traum* the music changes for each line of the text, but the underlying accompanimental pattern in the bass (♭γ ♭γ ♭γ ♭γ) and the expansive melody sustain the reflective mood of the text. In contrast, in *Das strickende Mädchen*, there is a clear break in the musical narrative at m. 17, making the piece sectional. The eighth note figuration returns in the postlude over the tonic pedal; it attempts to return to the flowing narrative of the opening section.

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Studies in the past have generally overlooked and underestimated the close correlation between music and poetry in Haydn's *Lieder*. As a song composer, Haydn systematically crafted the conventions of the Classic period to his own ends and occasionally departed from those conventions to suit the needs of the text. Analyses of these settings have shown that Haydn produced *Lieder* which display—to quote his own requirements—"variety, naturalness and ease of vocal execution."