

HKDSE Music – Listening (Form 4)
Week 5 – Classical String Quartets

🎵 Haydn, String Quartet No. 62 in C major, Op. 76 No. 3 “Emperor”, Hob. III: 77

Second Movement – Theme and Variations

Main theme (bars 1–20)

Main theme

Poco adagio; cantabile **II**

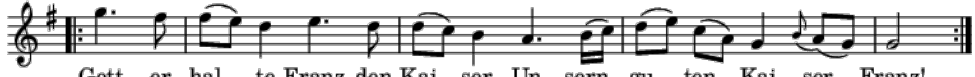


- The **principal/main melody** is performed by the **first violin**.
 - The second violin provides a supporting melodic line in **similar motion**.
 - The viola fills in the harmony, while the cello provides the bass line to the entire **homophonic texture**.
- The theme consists of four phrases, each ending with a cadence. The first two phrases are the same, hence resulting in a AABC structure.
 - Phrase 1 & 2 (A): ends on an **imperfect cadence** (half cadence)
 - Phrase 3 (B): ends on a **perfect cadence** in the *dominant* key
 - Phrase 4 (C): ends on a **perfect cadence** in the *tonic* key (home key)

Phrase 1 (A) 
Gott er - hal - te Franz den Kai - ser, Un - sern gu - ten Kai - ser Franz!

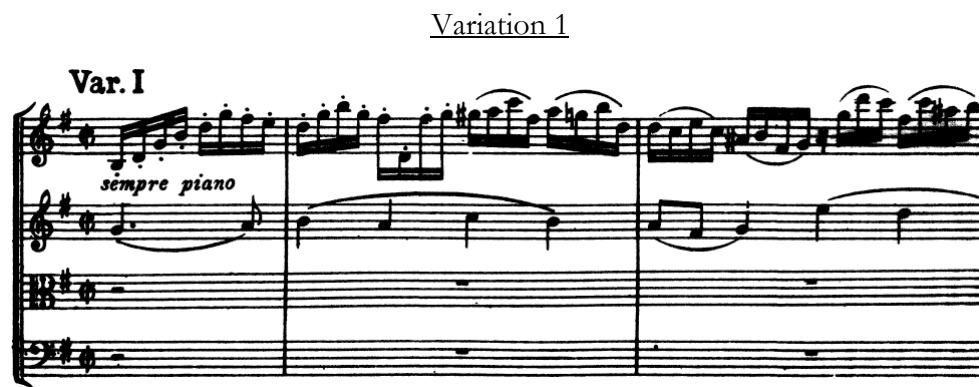
Phrase 2 (A) 
Lang - e le - be Franz der Kai - ser, In des Glück - es hell - stem Glanz!

Phrase 3 (B) 
Ihm er - blü - hen Lor - beer - rei - ser, Wo er geht, zum Eh - ren - kranz!

Phrase 4 (C) 
Gott er - hal - te Franz den Kai - ser, Un - sern gu - ten Kai - ser Franz!

- This theme is based on *Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser* (“God Save Francis the Emperor”), a song composed by Haydn in 1797 for Holy Roman Emperor Francis II. It later became the national anthem of Germany.
- The last phrase is the **climax** of the entire theme, with the melody reaching the highest note G throughout the entire theme. Haydn places multiple *sforzandos* to the beginning of the slurs to heighten the excitement. This phrase is repeated one more time in both the original song and Haydn’s arrangement.
- The **main theme** (or sometimes called **variation theme**) will be taken as the basis for the subsequent variations, which may alter its melody, harmonic progression, mode (major or minor), rhythm, tempo, dynamics, arrangement of instruments, accompanimental figuration, or even the form of the theme. New materials may sometimes be added to later variations.

Variation 1 (bars 20–40)



- The main melody from the theme is played by the **second violin**, in the original register.
- The first violin, in its higher register, plays a decorated **countermelody** in semiquavers. It features ascending and descending **arpeggio** passages, with occasional **wide leaps**. The articulation alternates between **staccato** and **legato** bowing.
- Articulation markings are missing from bars 30 onward. The performer is expected to supply the articulations according to the ones given by composer in the previous passage.
- Viola and cello remain silent (*tacet*).

Variation 2 (bars 40–60)

Variation 2



- The main melody is played by the **cello**, one octave lower than the original.
- The second violin accompanies the main melody in similar rhythm and contour.
- The first violin provides a **countermelody**, which is characterized by its **syncopated rhythm**. This countermelody exemplifies what is referred to as “**obligato accompaniment**”, a compositional technique invented by Haydn where the accompanimental figuration is derived from, or based on, certain motivic cells or melodic fragments from the theme. Here the syncopated descending two-note figures in the first violin (G–F# and E–D) imitates the turn figure in the cello (B–A and C–B).

Variation 3 (bars 60–80)

Variation 3



- The theme is here picked up by the **viola**, in the original register.
- The texture becomes **polyphonic** in this variation, with each instrument plays an independent melodic line of equal prominence against the main melody of the viola.

- This variation maintains a thinner accompaniment with occasional rests from different parts. The accompanying melody is characterized by **syncopation**.
- Unlike the theme and the first two variations, where the first phrase is exactly repeated after the first appearance, the repeated phrase is slightly altered by swapping the accompaniment among the different instruments.

Variation 4 (bars 60–80)

Variation 4



- The theme returns to the **first violin** in the final variation.
- The theme is **reharmonized** (i.e. substitution of one chord by another). Most notably, minor triads are introduced to replace the original major chords in the opening phrase, and many secondary dominants are used as well.
- The theme is **transposed** up an octave after the first phrase.
- Movement ends with a cadence decorated by a fully diminished seventh chord over the tonic pedal.

