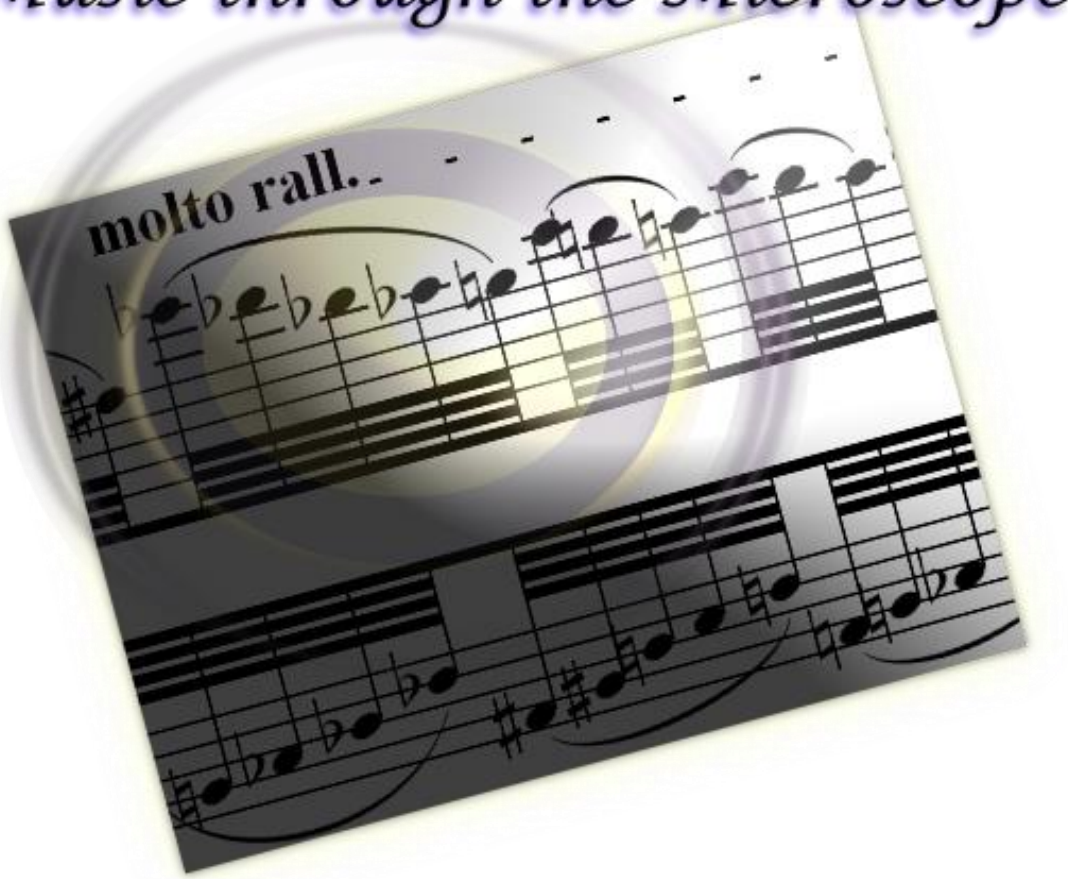
Music through the Microscope



Joseph Haydn

Symphony 26 Movement 1

A musical analysis

Introduction

This document is a detailed analysis of Haydn's Symphony number 26 Movement 1. The purpose of this analysis is to aid the study of the work by isolating aspects of structure, melody and melodic development, harmony, orchestration techniques, texture and phrasing.

This study is not a critique of the composer and does not seek to explore the cultural, contextual or historical aspects of the music.

If some of the illustrations appear too small then a free copy of the illustrations can be downloaded as a PDF file from:

http://nickredfern.co.uk/Music_through_the_Microscope.htm

Sources

The score from which the analysis is derived was taken from The New Anthology of Music published by Edition Peters for Edexcel. However the copyright restrictions have required me to illustrate the work from a short score transcription and from public domain scores downloaded from **IMSLP** at **http://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page**.

Nick Redfern January 2014

Instrumental forces

Haydn's early symphonies are characterised by a limited instrumental timbre but it is imperative not to consider these works to be constrained by a lack of timbral variety through poor artistry. Haydn was simply making use of an available and conventional instrumental ensemble. Indeed Haydn is crafting a mode of orchestral expression which was to become the foremost mode of musical expression in the Classical period and beyond. This is not merely proto-symphonic writing but a highly innovative, urbane, spectacular, crafted and fully rounded orchestral composition.

Oboes

There are two oboes whose function is both melodic and harmonic. The range is two octaves from middle C, the lowest note on the Classical oboe. This range is typical of the era.

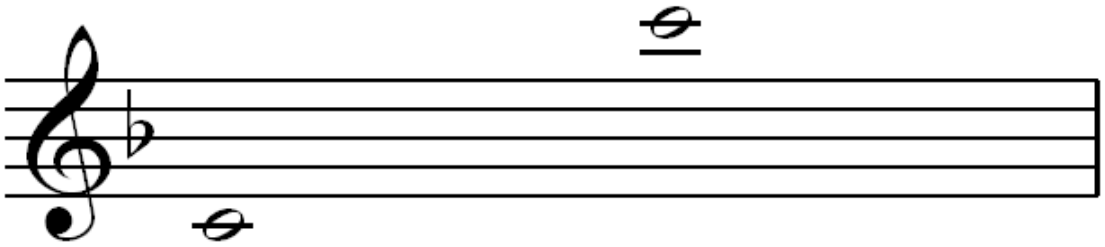


Figure 1 oboe range

In the 1st Subject the oboes work intrinsically with the 1st and 2nd violins to achieve maximum weight for this most boisterous of melodic themes. The 1st Subject is phrased in a 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 pattern which reveals some very cunning and idiomatic differentiation between the strings and double reeds.

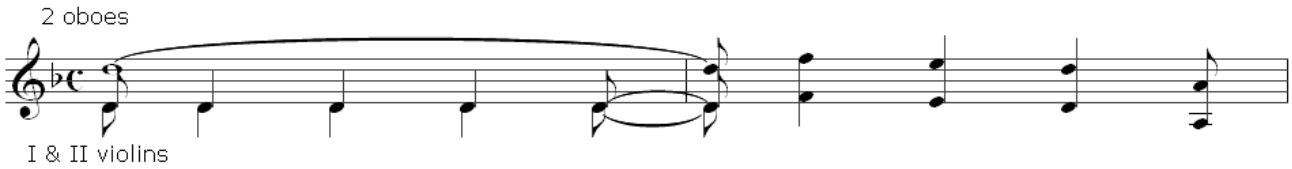


Figure 2 oboes and violins bars 1 to 2

The oboes sit an octave above the 1st and 2nd violins, which are in unison. There are two interesting points of idiomatic consideration. Firstly the oboes are required to sustain the D whilst below the violins, an octave below, articulate the characteristic syncopation of the 1st Subject. The sustained note is much more in keeping with the Classical oboe's natural mode of articulation. The second idiomatic consideration is that the violins are required to double stop D both as an open string and fingered on the G string below to gain maximum volume and sonority. As is evident, this cannot be achieved in the strings on the B flat of bar 3 but can be achieved on the A of bar 5. Here the A is articulated on the open A string and fingered on the D string below.

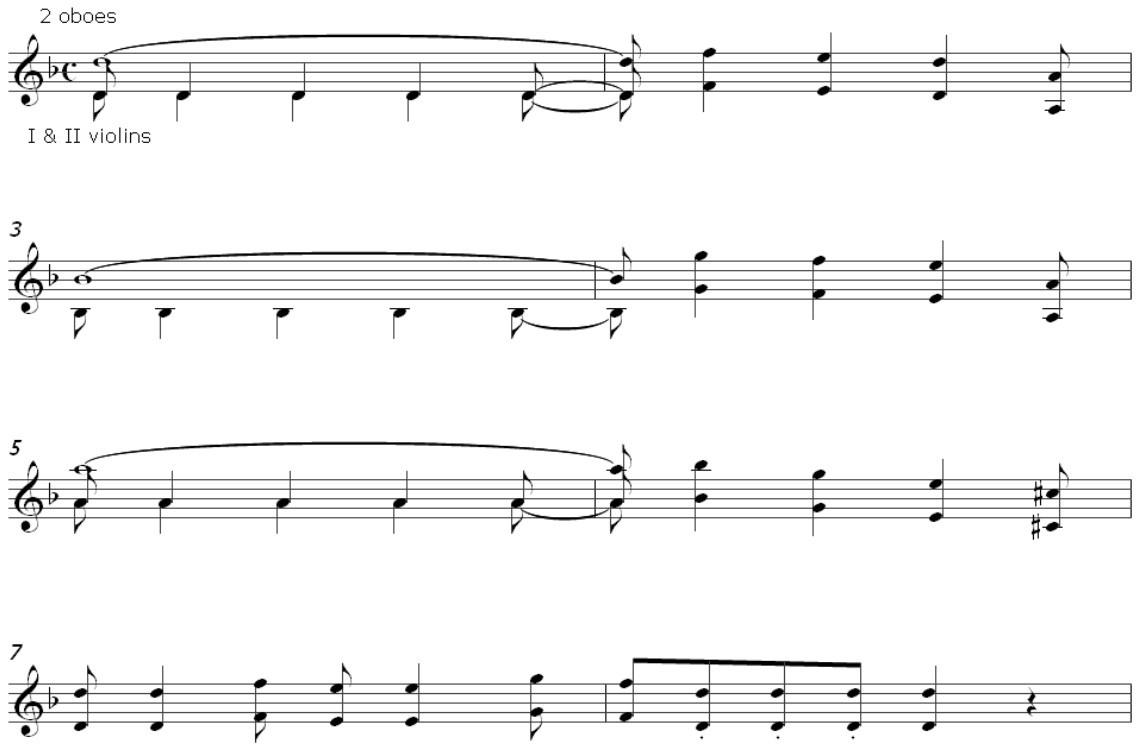


Figure 3 oboe & violins bars 1 to 8

Given the restricted instrumentation of the ensemble such considerations are vital to the success of the work in terms of dramatic impact, dynamics and sonority. Where the 1st and 2nd violins are in unison the oboes are placed an octave higher where their characteristic double reed sonority is able to shine.

In the 2nd Subject from bars 17 to 42 the 1st oboe is doubled in unison with the 2nd violins. Where the 1st Subject is a wholly original idea conceived for orchestral instruments, the origins of the 2nd Subject lie in the human voice, the melody being derived from a Gregorian plainchant. The inherent simplicity of the theme, its highly conjunct shape and narrowly defined range is ideal for the oboe's expressive tone. Where performance details are scant

it is clear that the few staccatos and slurs are vital in defining the characterisation of the melody.

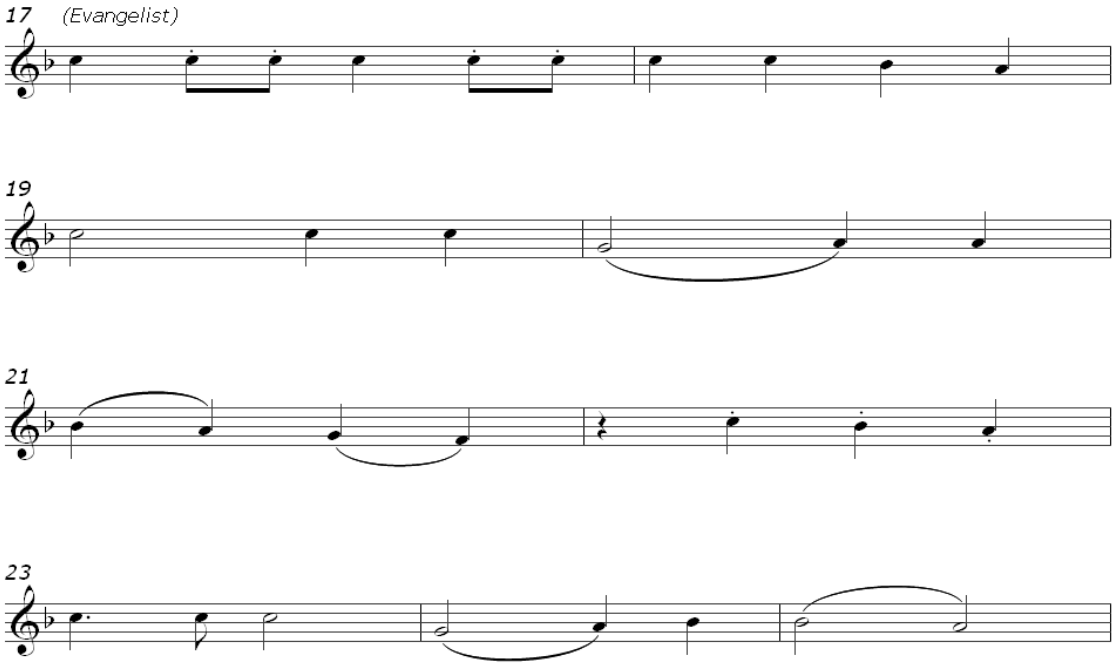


Figure 4 1st oboe 2nd Subject bars 17 to 25

The exact nature of the melody will be explored later; however the sheer restriction of the melodic range is indicative of its liturgical and vocal origins. Here the 2nd oboe in isolation reveals its music to be of a secondary nature to that of the 1st oboe.

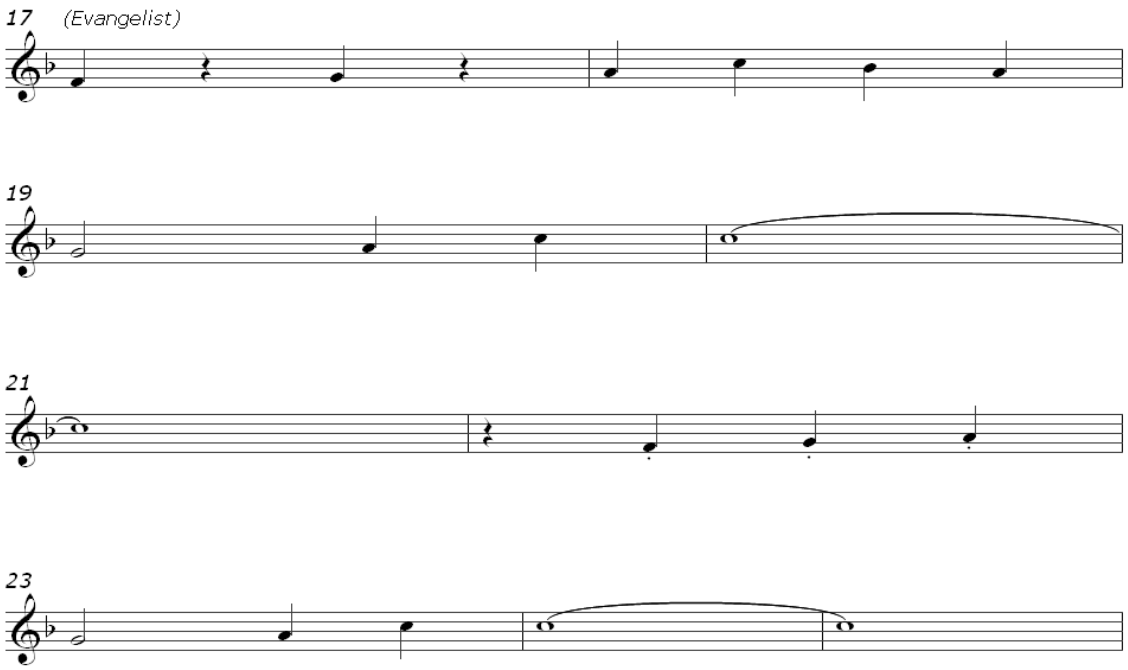


Figure 5 2nd oboe 2nd Subject bars 17 to 25

A closer inspection of both oboe parts reveals how they cross quite freely in an often claustrophobic and dissonant manner. However, the skill of Haydn in realising the sonic nature of both oboes lies in their relationship to the strings.

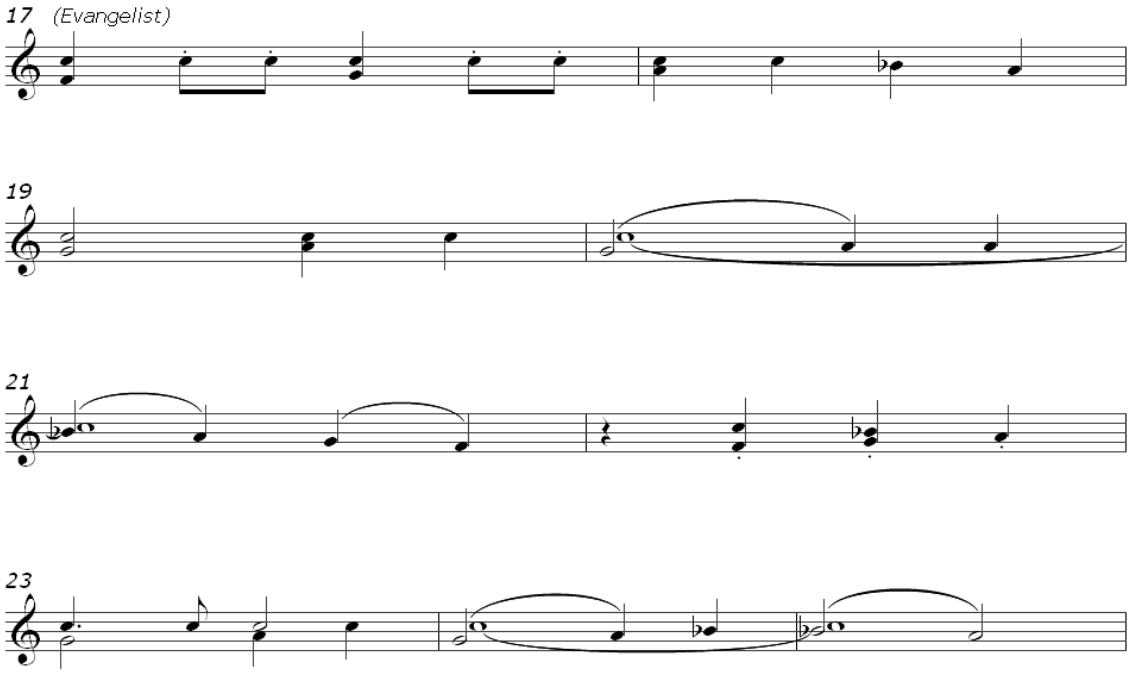


Figure 6 oboes 2nd Subject bars 17 to 25

The 1st oboe (upper voice) is doubled with the 2nd violins which ensure sonic differentiation between the two oboes. Therefore, their close proximity does not result in confusing or distorting the principle melody of the 1st oboe. The 2nd oboe, when not doubling the melody of the 1st, has a clearly defined harmonic relationship with the strings.

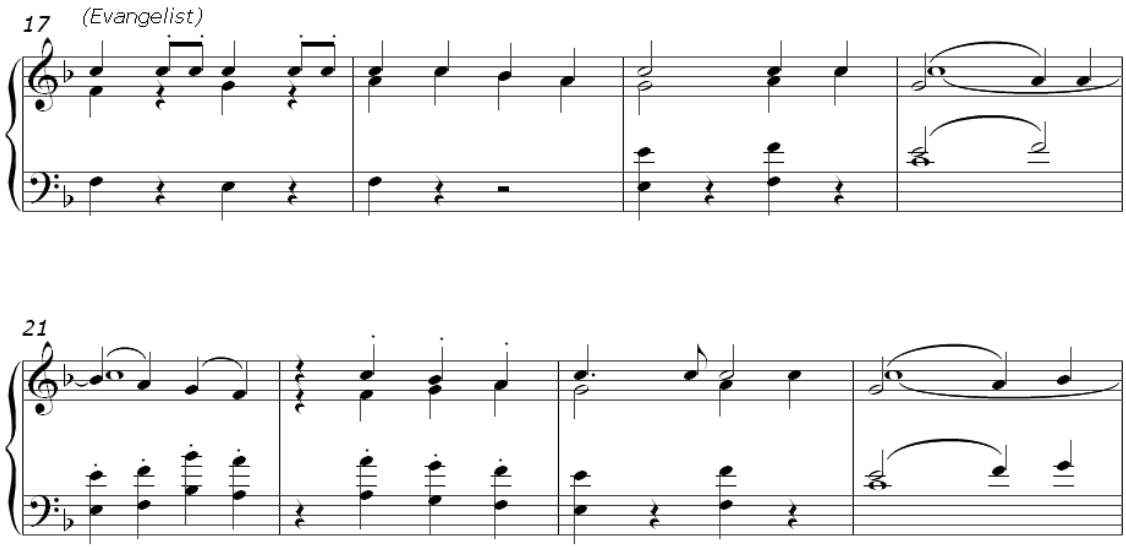


Figure 7 2nd Subject oboes and strings, excluding 1st violins

The central section of the 2nd Subject from bars 26 to 31 reveals the Gregorian chant melody at its most disarmingly simple. The 1st oboe is again doubled in unison with the 2nd violins to maintain timbral differentiation with the 2nd oboe. This part of the oboe's tessitura is rich and expressive and Haydn clearly has placed the oboes within this octave to best suit their sonority.

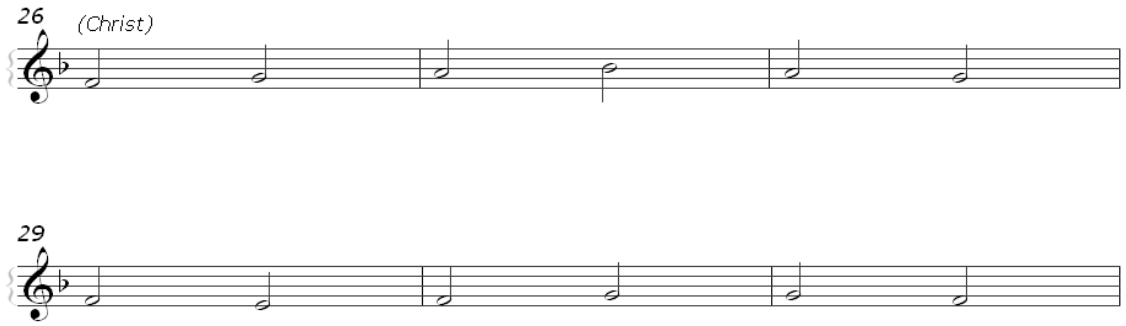


Figure 8 1st oboe 2nd Subject bars 26 to 31

Here both oboes remain in close proximity but, as before, the unison doubling of the 1st oboe and 2nd violins allow for an effective timbral

differentiation. Note how the 2nd oboe (lower voice) is given an F pedal, the tonic of the 2nd Subject, before blatantly crossing the path of the 1st.

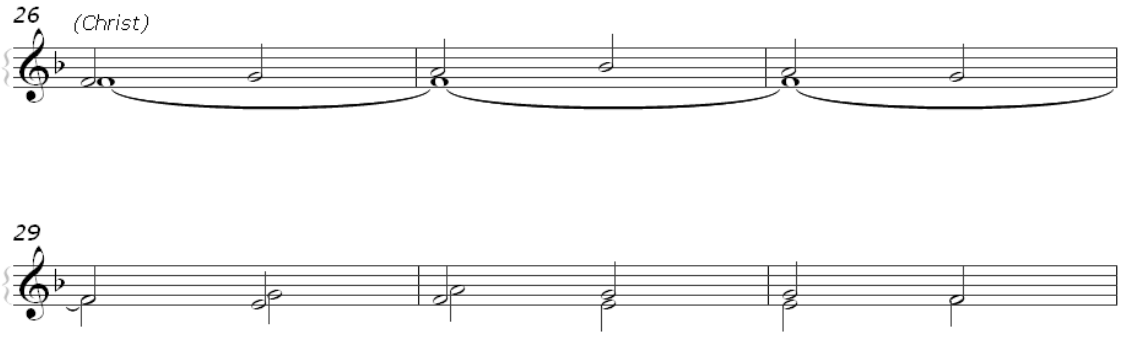


Figure 9 both oboes 2nd Subject bars 26 to 31

Bassoon

The bassoons are never allowed an independent presence throughout the Movement; their function is simply to bolster the sonority of the 'cellos and bass, whose presence in tern is also greatly enhanced by doubling in unison and octaves with the violas. In his 23rd Symphony Haydn employs the bass instruments in the same, undifferentiated manner.

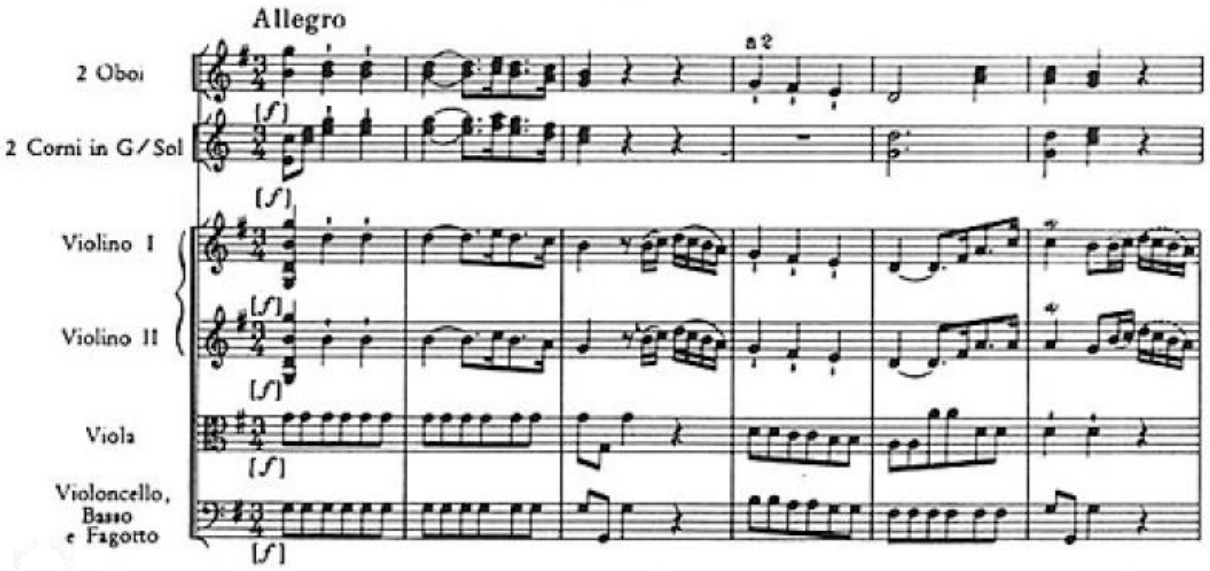


Figure 10 Haydn Symphony 23 Exposition