

## 6 | Haydn in Plain Sight: A Reception History of Matisse's *The Music Lesson*

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### Introduction: The Eavesdropping Musicologist

It is the winter of 2021. Like many parents around the world, I have donned the new hat of home-school administrator. My children are high-school age, so they resist oversight (as expected), but I have come to see that they do not need much (who knew?). My role is simply to find suitable remote-learning resources. Again, I am pleasantly surprised, and relieved: high-school level art history, for example, seems to be an especially engaging subject online, given the potential for abundant accurately coloured images, flexible user interfaces, and up-to-date critical content. This happy realisation hits me as I notice that the unfamiliar hat has slipped off the side of my head: I am no longer surveying the resources for the kids' sakes, but rather I am absorbed, of my own accord, in a lesson on Fauvism. *Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra)* of 1907, I read, 'shows how Matisse combined his traditional subject of the female nude with the influence of primitive sources' (Figure 6.1).<sup>1</sup>

An admirer of Matisse myself, I study the image, zoom in, zoom out, then follow the hyperlink to 'Primitivism'. There, I read that the 'primitive' qualities for which the Fauvists strove – purity, instinct, and close harmony with the natural and spiritual worlds – are stereotypes, and thus paradoxically problematic even when presented as positives (i.e. as antidotes to the detrimental effects of industrial society): 'Framing other cultures as "primitive" . . . helps to justify Western colonial practices.'<sup>2</sup> With my administrative purpose back in mind, I nod; this resource is a keeper. It displays a balance of formal and critical content – learning to look and learning to think – that I can endorse. My task accomplished (with the bonus of a quick refresher on Fauvism), I go back to my other job. I switch hats.

And yet. It is the winter of 2021. Like many employed people around the world, I work at home. My 'commute' is the centimetre distance that my

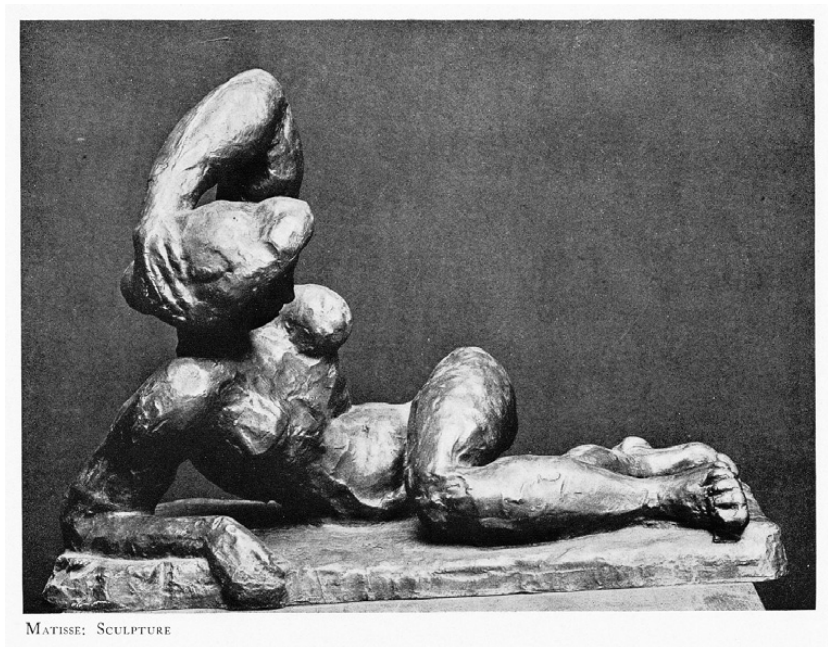
The inclusion of images in this chapter was made possible by the Claire and Barry Brook Fund of the American Musicological Society (AMS).

<sup>1</sup> Spivey, 'A Beginner's Guide to Fauvism'.

<sup>2</sup> Cramer and Brant, 'Primitivism and Modern Art'.



**Figure 6.1** Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, 1907, oil on canvas, 36¼" × 55¼" (92.1 × 140.3 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.228. Photography by Mitro Hood.



**Figure 6.2** Henri Matisse, *Reclining Nude I*, 1906–07. 13 11/16" × 19 3/4" × 11" (34.8 × 50.2 × 27.9 cm). *The Sun* (24 January 1915). Wikimedia Commons after 1 January 2025.

index finger travels to open a new application or browser window. This conflation of personal and professional space can be disorienting – not just for me, but apparently also for my computer, for on this particular day a keyword search intended to locate a planning document for the musicology seminar I am teaching lands me . . . back in home-school art history. Startled, I skim the freshly opened section of text adjacent to ‘Primitivism’ – namely, ‘Formal Harmony’.<sup>3</sup> It starts by introducing artist James McNeill Whistler, who, I read, often titled his paintings with words like symphony, harmony, or arrangement, and described his colour combinations in terms of musical keys. This explains how I accidentally ended up here, but I am nevertheless (or is it consequently?) lured in again. This time wearing my musicologist’s hat, I begin eavesdropping on art historians teaching high school students about visual art theory through musical metaphors.

This time, I wince. When we hear instrumental music, the authors assert, ‘we just appreciate the way the sounds create pleasing harmonies’. And then they ask: ‘Why should visual art not be appreciated in the same way?’<sup>4</sup> Yikes. No, this is not how my students and I would describe our appreciation of instrumental music, nor is it in accordance with the seminar notes I intended to open. Granted, this disagreeable passage appears in an introductory text, in the section on formalism, and the question the authors pose is rhetorical, which they answer instructively. Whistler, they explain, may have wanted to direct his viewers’ attention away from the subject matter and toward the materials and techniques (the strokes, balance, and colours), but appreciating art solely according to the formalist perspective – doing what Whistler claimed he wanted viewers to do – ‘impoverishes [art’s] richness and diminishes its important social roles’. We *could* analyse visual art exclusively in terms of its formal qualities, but in doing so we would overlook significant issues and questions that might also be raised by the work. So, what rubs me the wrong way is simply the art historians’ presumption of a monopoly on concern with broader social relevance – precisely the distinction they draw between experiencing visual art and experiencing music. When it comes to analysing music, they suggest, formalism is not just what is acceptable, it is all that is available.

The authors go on to extend this point to a particular image that depicts music-making. According to their subsequent discussion – still under the heading ‘Formalism’ – of Matisse’s *The Piano Lesson* (1916), ‘the nominal

<sup>3</sup> Cramer and Grant, ‘Formal Harmony’. <sup>4</sup> Ibid.

subject of a boy practicing the piano is just a pretext for showcasing a complex pattern of vivid colors against cool gray, and for contrasting rectilinear shapes with the swirling black tracery of the balcony railing and music stand' (Figure 6.3). There are no qualifiers like 'according to this way of thinking' or 'Matisse would have us believe'. Music-making is 'just' a 'nominal', ostensible subject – perhaps not even a subject at all, but a 'pretext' or excuse for applying paint in arrangements of colour and shape to canvas.

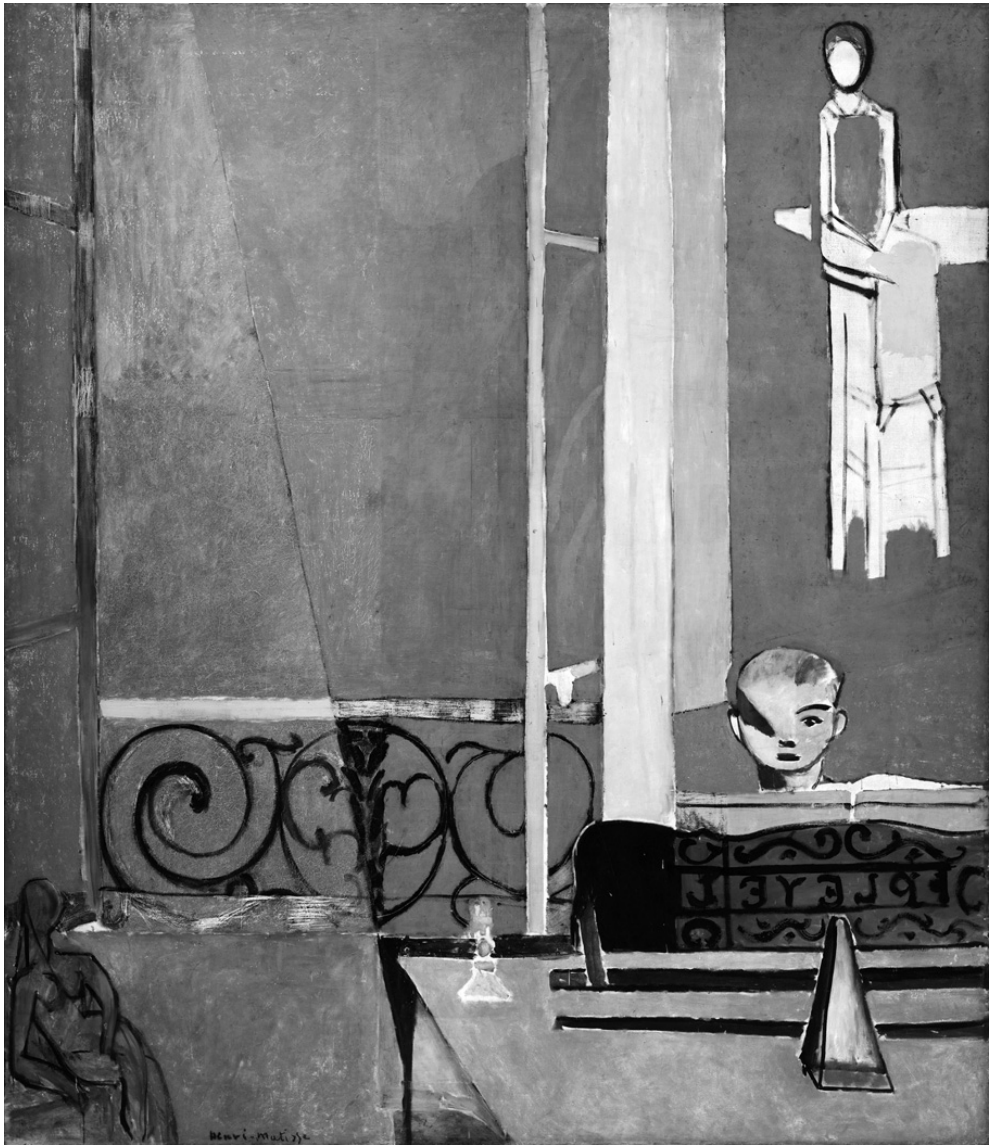
Elsewhere in the same resource, *The Piano Lesson* gets a chapter of its own, where it is described rather differently: it is important 'because of its biographical aspects, and especially due to its thoughtful iconography (symbolic content)'.<sup>5</sup> It is Matisse's son, Pierre, who sits at the piano, flanked on his right by a curvy, sensual emblem of abandon (Matisse's own *Decorative Figure*, 1908) and over his left shoulder by an angular figure representing discipline (Matisse's own *Woman on a High Stool* (Germaine Reynal), 1914).<sup>6</sup> Taken as a whole, it is stated, the scene is an allegory: art is the result of pairing imaginative licence with rational control.<sup>7</sup>

To support this reading, the authors introduce Matisse's later, similarly sized painting *The Music Lesson* (1917), which depicts the same scene but is much denser in content (Figure 6.4). Indeed, it includes the artist's entire family: daughter Marguerite and son Pierre at the piano, elder son Jean reading and smoking, and wife Amélie occupied with her sewing. Matisse's own violin lies in its case on the piano lid. In the garden outside, the *Blue Nude* (*Souvenir of Biskra*) lounges in lush, varied foliage above a pond; she is now in the form of a sculpture, Matisse's own *Reclining Nude I* (*Aurora*) (1907), vastly augmented in size (Figure 6.2). We can make out curtains, a radiator, even the decorative shape of the piano leg and the direction of planks on the floor. *The Music Lesson* is maximalist, whereas *The Piano Lesson* is abstract and minimalist, containing only what is essential – namely, the signifiers for licence and control. So why does *The Piano Lesson* include the swirly music stand and balustrade? Matisse scholar Jack Flam posits that Matisse aimed to lead the viewer's eye from right to left, starting with the reversed letters on the music stand, P-L-E-Y-E-L, then continuing to the similarly curving ironwork, which is 'an abstract expression or visual equivalent of the music (art) that is being produced'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Zucker and Harris, 'Piano Lesson' (as accessed 26 June 2022).

<sup>6</sup> [www.si.edu/object/hmsg\\_66.3450](https://www.si.edu/object/hmsg_66.3450); [www.moma.org/collection/works/79863](https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79863).

<sup>7</sup> Zucker and Harris, 'Piano Lesson'. <sup>8</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 6.3** Henri Matisse, *The Piano Lesson*, late summer 1916, oil on canvas, 8' ½" × 6' 11¾" (245.1 × 212.7 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. © Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

That is to say, in addition to presenting the allegory, Matisse is making an assertion about art being abstraction, and music is his metaphor for art, because music – this is the supposition – is the epitome of abstraction.



Figure 6.4 Henri Matisse, *The Music Lesson*, summer 1917, oil on canvas. The Barnes Foundation, BF717. © 2024 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Image © 2024 The Barnes Foundation.

So here, reader, it becomes clear what all of this has to do with *Haydn Studies*. Let us for the moment put aside the allegory and the metaphor. When I look at *The Music Lesson*, *my eye* – and I assume *yours*, too – does

not by *any means* continue in a straight line from the music stand. Rather, it takes a hard, ninety-degree turn: to H-A-Y-D-N.

And then we – we Haydn scholars and enthusiasts – ask: why Haydn? Why did Matisse indicate the composer? Was Matisse – or Pierre or Marguerite – a Haydn admirer? What did Haydn represent to Matisse? What is the significance of the score in understanding the painting as a whole? Is there a particular Haydn work that Matisse has in mind, or does this score stand in generically for Haydn's music? Or (à la Flam), does it stand in for music in general – in which case then, again, why Haydn?

These questions, though irresistible, may not be answerable, but I find that they make a fertile and fascinating starting place for considering Haydn reception of the past 100 years. In this chapter, I dive into the literature on Matisse, giving special attention to *The Music Lesson*. I consider how interpretations of the painting have changed over time, and how Haydn figures – or remains hidden – within them. I have allowed myself to modify my questions along the way. Importantly, though, I have, all the while, kept wearing the hat of the musicologist, and as such, I share 'findings' that range from critico-historical to methodological.<sup>9</sup>

A final anecdote:

It is the summer of 2022. Children (including mine) have returned to in-person school, and most public places, like art museums, are open. I am at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, one of the most important collections of early modern paintings in the world. Curator Martha Lucy and I are sitting (dutifully masked even though the museum is closed and no one else is in the room) in front of *The Music Lesson*. I ask her if visitors ever ask, 'Who is Haydn?' or 'Why did Matisse choose Haydn?' 'No, they don't,' she responds, 'no, that hasn't really happened.' When the museum is open to the public the next afternoon, I plant myself in front of the painting for the better part of an afternoon. I am eavesdropping again (now literally). I hear a few dozen conversations in front of the painting. No one mentions Haydn.

## First Commentaries

*The Music Lesson* was not the original title. Matisse dubbed and described the painting simply, and arguably more generically, *Family*. 'I've just done a large canvas measuring over 2 m by 2 m,' he wrote to painter Charles Camoin, 'it's

<sup>9</sup> On intersections between art history and musicology, see Shephard and Leonard (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*.

the one that was in my living room with Pierre at the piano – which I've reworked on another canvas, adding his brother, sister, and mother.'<sup>10</sup> However, when the work was first exhibited, at the Salon d'Automne of 1920, viewers noted – explicitly, if not approvingly – the musical subject matter, specifically the inclusion of 'HAYDN'. In a lengthy review for the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, critic Étienne Bricon complained:

The least viewed man at the Salon should be Mr Henri-Matisse – that is, if you respect the artist for having been a strong painter in the past – because his [painting entitled] *Family* calls out to you in incoherent messages [*gestes*]. A rebus where one seeks the radiator, the name of the manufacturer on a piano that descends vertiginously to the feet of the viewer, and [the name of] Haydn on a musical score.<sup>11</sup>

Bricon does not seem to object to Haydn the composer per se; rather, he objects to the word's appearance or the actual spelling out of a name itself. In this light, it seems significant that he compares the radiator to a rebus, a puzzle in which symbols or pictures stand for letters or words. Certainly, the radiator's coils are executed with special attention to light and shade, indicating shape and depth, while some other objects in the scene are rendered more flat. But is Bricon suggesting that one might perceive the radiator as reminiscent of three-dimensional block letters? What is more certain is his assumption that Matisse painted with intent to communicate, for the painting 'calls out' – and yet, alas, cannot be deciphered. Describing the piano as descending 'vertiginously' suggests that the messages are foisted experientially (like dizziness) on the viewer. Bricon goes on to indicate that the strange sense of scale is outlandish, even futuristic: 'perhaps', he continues with an implied eye roll, this is a 'work made for another place and time – for export, say, to Saturn or the Big Dipper'. He for one will not fall for the ruse: 'if the painter only wanted to play with us, in the end the joke is on him'. What's interesting about this sarcastic review is not so much that it is negative, but rather the suggestion, by a Matisse contemporary, that Matisse is communicating messages – messages that should be coherent, but are not. Other critics were admiring. The reviewer for *L'Art et les Artistes*, for example, wrote of 'a very fine Henri Matisse, very accomplished', depicting an 'interior enlivened with people, a man's figure admirably portrayed, all with an infinite delicacy of colours'.<sup>12</sup>

Matisse's dealer (and former student) Walther Halvorsen attempted, during and after the Salon exhibition, to sell *Family* to the American

<sup>10</sup> Elderfield, *Matisse*, 211 n. 1. My translation.

<sup>11</sup> Bricon, 'Le Salon d'Automne', 325–26. My translation; I am grateful to Timothy Freiermuth for his input.

<sup>12</sup> Anon. 'Premier coup d'oeil', 43–44. My translation.

attorney and collector John Quinn, known for his personal and professional support of modernist artists, writers, and publishers, and his role in staging the first major exhibition of modern art in America, the controversial Armory Show of 1913. Quinn became the owner of the aforementioned *Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra)* in 1920. Halvorsen and Quinn's agent, Henri-Pierre Roché, both report to Quinn that Matisse himself considered *Family* to be one of his favourites, indeed his 'most important'.<sup>13</sup> According to Halvorsen, it was 'typical' of one of Matisse's methods of working: quickly, 'in a burst of fiery inspiration'; in terms of style, it displayed 'an intimacy and a gentleness and a clarity of tone that are completely French'.<sup>14</sup> Quinn requested photographs; he was interested in 'only the very best examples of an artist's work'.<sup>15</sup> In a lengthy letter to Halvorsen the following year he concurred that the painting was 'important', and expressed his sincere regret that he could not afford to purchase it.<sup>16</sup>

*Family* ended up in the possession of another American, an arch-rival of Quinn: the larger-than-life, eccentric but brilliant Albert C. Barnes. Having developed a silver protein solution, Argyrol, that proved a highly effective antiseptic, Barnes became a millionaire by age thirty-five. Turning his attention to art, he ultimately amassed the most significant personal collection of modern European art worldwide in his home city of Philadelphia. Barnes purchased *Family* in Paris in July of 1923. A month later, he crowed to his dealer in Paris, Paul Guillaume: 'The big Matisse is hanging in my large hall and it is truly a very fine thing. I cannot understand the stupidity of French Museum authorities that permit paintings of that great character to go out of France.'<sup>17</sup> The following month, Barnes, now referring to the painting as *The Music Lesson*, wrote as follows to Scofield Thayer, editor of the modernist literary magazine *The Dial*:

The big Matisse 'Music Lesson' (about 9 feet by 7 feet) I think you saw at Paul Guillaume's last summer. I consider it so fine that I yielded to it without a whole lot of regret, the space in my hall previously occupied by a good Daumier and a good Cézanne. It is the best possible answer to the allegation that Matisse's late work is inferior to his earlier. I have also what everybody thinks is the best canvas Matisse ever painted; it is 'Bonheur de Vivre', painted about 1908 and it has been reproduced

<sup>13</sup> Henri Pierre Roché to John Quinn, 26 October 1920, John Quinn Papers, MssCol 2513, New York Public Library.

<sup>14</sup> Walther Halvorsen to John Quinn, 9 December 1920, John Quinn Papers.

<sup>15</sup> John Quinn to Walther Halvorsen, 17 November 1920, John Quinn Papers.

<sup>16</sup> John Quinn to Walther Halvorsen, 17 November 1921, John Quinn Papers.

<sup>17</sup> A. C. Barnes to Paul Guillaume, 23 August 1923, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives, Philadelphia.

many times before I used it in the catalogue which I sent you the other day. It is the same size as the 'Music Lesson' but, in my opinion, not as good as its later brother.<sup>18</sup>

Barnes's reference to Matisse's 'late work' presumably reflects his mistaken belief (soon corrected) that *The Music Lesson* dated from 1921. During this time, Matisse, based in Nice, was being criticised in some quarters for his perceived reversion to a more traditional style.

Already in these first commentaries we see kernels of what I will suggest are the major themes in *The Music Lesson*'s reception history. These include subject matter (sometimes including reference to Haydn and music-making), style in both technical ('delicacy') and national ('completely French') terms, and Matisse's working methods ('burst of fiery inspiration'). We also see the instinct to locate and interpret the work in terms of its place in Matisse's development, and, in particular, its relationship to *Bonheur de vivre* (Figure 6.5). Finally, we see the mixed but largely high regard in which the



**Figure 6.5** Henri Matisse, *Le Bonheur de vivre*, also called *The Joy of Life*, between October 1905 and March 1906, oil on canvas. The Barnes Foundation, BF719. © 2024 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Image © 2024 The Barnes Foundation.

<sup>18</sup> A. C. Barnes to Scofield Thayer, 24 September 1923, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives.

work was initially held – by knowledgeable critics, dealers, collectors, and the artist himself. These factors and the painting's sheer size make it reasonable to presume that *The Music Lesson* was destined for a high level of exposure at this early juncture.

Barnes's may be the least specific and informed of these first commentaries. But it was he who renamed the painting *The Music Lesson* – arguably the most influential moment of its early reception. *The Music Lesson* still hangs today in the Barnes Foundation. In the intervening decades, Barnes shared it with the world via two major publications, conscripted it as a vehicle for his idiosyncratic project in aesthetic education, and controlled access to it with infamous tightfistedness. It was Barnes who shaped, set in motion, and for several decades sustained how Haydn went hidden in discussions of *The Music Lesson*.

## Barnes: Hiding Haydn

### *Gallery as Laboratory*

In a scene from the 2010 HBO documentary *The Collector: Dr. Albert C. Barnes*, an animated silhouette of Barnes floats through murky brown space, as several of the paintings in his collection (by Picasso, Van Gogh, Renoir, and others) rotate around him. In the background music, an unnerving violin line conveys Barnes's disquiet, as he deliberates over how to verify the art's quality. 'It *should* be like chemical formulae', he reasons. Then, like a superhero, he shoots laser beams from his eyes, causing graphs, waveforms, geometric shapes, and complex mathematical calculations to overlay his paintings. The background music turns consonant. A narrator pronounces: 'Barnes was a scientist; he saw something to be solved, and he threw himself into solving it.'<sup>19</sup>

This is an amusing version of a trope found throughout the biographical literature on Barnes: his staunch devotion to the scientific method. Ira Glackens (son of the artist William Glackens) kicks off the tradition in 1957, writing that 'the scientific mind that had invented Argyrol was now bent on the scientific analysis of great paintings'.<sup>20</sup> Biographer Howard Greenfeld echoes the idea: 'Driven by a scientist's curiosity, [Barnes] now

<sup>19</sup> Jeff Folmsbee (dir.), *The Collector: Dr. Albert C. Barnes*, HBO documentary film (2010). Comments made by Derek Gillman, president of the Barnes Foundation, at 20:48, and Katy Rawdon, Barnes Foundation archivist, at 21:27.

<sup>20</sup> Glackens, *William Glackens*, 159–160.

wanted to learn not only what was good but also why it was good.<sup>21</sup> The words 'science' and 'laboratory' appear in titles of studies by Mary Ann Meyers and Claudine Grammont.<sup>22</sup> Richard Wattenmaker uses the metaphor in his introduction to the catalogue *Great French Paintings from the Barnes Foundation*.<sup>23</sup> Neil Rudenstine devotes a chapter of his study *The House of Barnes* to the idea of 'Science and Objectivity in Art', which he concludes by stating that Barnes 'wanted to achieve in the world of art the kind of finality that he believed could be attained in science. Perhaps as much as anything, he always desired closure. Ambiguity, irresolution, incompleteness, obscurity – these and similar "states" were difficult if not impossible for him to tolerate.'<sup>24</sup>

The idea that Barnes turned his gallery into a laboratory is grounded in Barnes's own words. In the preface to his first book, *The Art in Painting* (1925), Barnes states that his method 'comprises the observation of facts, reflection upon them, and the testing of conclusions, by their success in application'.<sup>25</sup> In 1929, he would give a similar (albeit cheekier) verbal account: 'It is not something that you can write out of your head. . . . You have to get your data. . . . I take the stenographer with me, and I get in front of a picture and I dictate, and when that stenographer falls over we get another one. . . . In the afternoon we correlate that and we go back the next day to see if it is right.'<sup>26</sup> Data collection involved the analysis of formal elements only. Viewers were required to ignore the subject matter lest its appeal (or not) occlude their ability to judge. In other (characteristically bellicose) words, 'a picture of a massacre and one of a wedding may be exactly the same type as works of art'.<sup>27</sup>

I find it easy to read Barnes's treatment of *The Music Lesson* as stemming from formalist commitments. In *The Art in Painting* he writes, for example, 'there is little tendency toward a conventional central mass with balancing features on the sides, though there are several areas in the canvas that may be selected as points about which the picture organizes, and from which units radiate with the production of a series of rhythms which vary in size, shape, direction of line, kind of color and degree of space'.<sup>28</sup> In *The Art of Henri Matisse* (1933), Barnes's analysis extends over nineteen paragraphs – a relentless barrage of description in terms of line, shape, and colour. There are some interesting speculations about influences, but these, too,

<sup>21</sup> Greenfeld, *Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> Meyers, *Art, Education, and African-American Culture*; Grammont, 'Matisse'.

<sup>23</sup> Wattenmaker, *Great French Paintings*, 13. <sup>24</sup> Rudenstine, *House of Barnes*, 107.

<sup>25</sup> Barnes, *The Art in Painting*, 9. <sup>26</sup> Greenfeld, *Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 154–155.

<sup>27</sup> Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 99. <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 501.

focus on formal features: a 'Hindu-Persian' miniature and a Japanese print are captioned 'similar distortion of perspective, and similar equality of foreground and background' as in *The Music Lesson*.<sup>29</sup> With more detail come more frequent references to the score – but none mentions Haydn. The 'green book on the piano' is described as a horizontal oblong that acquires a 'certain degree of vertical quality' from its 'internal pattern'; as a 'rhythmic note in relation to the color of the landscape'; as one of a 'series of closely-packed horizontal planes'.<sup>30</sup> However, the typescript draft and handwritten notes (by collaborator Violette de Mazia) for this passage do mention Haydn.<sup>31</sup> The deletion of Haydn's name was presumably made in the final version to further the overall goal of focusing attention on formal elements. 'Bent on the scientific analysis of great paintings' (to use Glackens's words as quoted above<sup>32</sup>), Barnes made Haydn disappear.

### *Gallery as Stage*

And yet, as I investigate correspondence and other documents in the Barnes Foundation Archive, I find entirely different facets of and preoccupations in Barnes's life. We might begin with 1916 to 1917, since that is when Matisse was painting *The Piano Lesson* and *The Music Lesson*. Albert Barnes and his wife Laura, season-ticket holders at the Philadelphia Orchestra, are hosting weekly musicales at their Philadelphia mansion. On 7 March 1917, Barnes writes to none other than Leopold Stokowski:

I remember that you said you would like to hear Novaes and that your work prevented you from hearing her some time ago. She plays again at my house on Sunday next, and we shall be very glad to have you and Mrs. Stokowski come about two o'clock. . . . There will be no other guests on Sunday except Mr. Besekirsky and Jean Verd, who play at my house on Saturday and are staying over night. I think that perhaps in the afternoon I can get them to play that wonderful Leuku [*sic*] Sonata.<sup>33</sup>

Brazilian pianist Guiomar Novaes would become one of the most acclaimed pianists of the twentieth century, but she was already a celebrity by the time of this private recital in Barnes's home. Russian violinist Vasily Vasil'yevich

<sup>29</sup> Barnes, *Art of Henri Matisse*, 270–271.    <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 391–92, 395, 396.

<sup>31</sup> Violette de Mazia, typescript and handwritten notes (1931), *Art of Henri Matisse Manuscripts*, Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>32</sup> Glackens, *William Glackens*, 159–160.

<sup>33</sup> Albert C. Barnes to Leopold Stokowski, 7 March 1917. Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives.

Bezekirsky was the child-prodigy son of the brilliant virtuoso violinist and composer of the same name. Other guests and correspondents included violinist Jacques Thibaud, pianist-conductor Ossip Gabrilowitsch, and his wife, contralto Clara Clemens. Barnes's circle was filled with musical luminaries.

Another frequent visitor was John Dewey, the internationally renowned educational reformer. Since at least 1915, Barnes engaged a student of Dewey, Laurence Buermeyer, to guide him in a study of philosophy and aesthetics, and at Buermeyer's suggestion Barnes enrolled in a seminar taught by Dewey at Columbia University. Dewey and Barnes became friends and it was partly through Dewey's encouragement that Barnes eventually elected to create a foundation with an educational mission instead of an art museum. Dewey also provided an impetus behind *Art in Painting*, conceived as the primary text for classes in the foundation's educational programme. Barnes hired Buermeyer to help write the book. *Art in Painting* was published a few weeks after the official opening of the foundation on 19 March 1925. Stokowski and Dewey were speakers at the opening ceremony.

I suggest that this pairing, Stokowski and Dewey, nicely captures the spheres of interest and influence in which Barnes was forging his own philosophy, identity, and work as he transitioned from scrappy scientist-entrepreneur to tremendously wealthy person to art collector. Attention to the musical sphere and the educational sphere provides a richer understanding of Barnes's influences, motivations, and actions – which will, in turn, shed light on the reception of *The Music Lesson* and even its significance for Haydn reception.

Barnes was exceptionally musical, and had been so all his life. He learned to play several instruments in his youth.<sup>34</sup> He continued to study music in Germany while training in chemistry.<sup>35</sup> He sang for money in beer gardens there and used his musical talent to subsidise his passage back to the United States.<sup>36</sup> Music was the common interest in his unlikely alliance with his wife, Laura.<sup>37</sup> Indications of an interest in education, meanwhile, date from around 1908. In the early days of prosperity for the A. C. Barnes Company, Barnes set aside two hours a day for workers to attend educational seminars; art and music were among the topics discussed.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Wattenmaker, *Great French Paintings*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Meyers, *Art, Education, and African-American Culture*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 10; Schack, *Art and Argyrol*, 40, 43; Greenfeld, *Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Greenfeld, *Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 12. Meyers, *Art, Education, and African-American Culture*, 13; Rudenstine, *House of Barnes*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Schack, *Art and Argyrol*, 98.

The serious turn to art collecting took place in 1912. That year, Barnes made his first trips to Paris to purchase art. (Coincidentally, 1912 was also when John Quinn started collecting modern art.)

The following year, Barnes began to write about art himself, publishing two articles, 'How to Judge a Painting' and 'Cubism: Requiescat in Pace', in the journal *Arts and Decoration*. Art historian Karen Butler has described these as setting out aesthetic ideas that remain constant in Barnes's later writings: appreciation for new art that demonstrates continuity with past art, emphasis on form over subject matter, and early appreciation of Matisse.<sup>39</sup> From my vantage point, however, I am struck foremost by their candour, for Barnes relates, with palpable relish, his exertion, steep learning curve, and hard-won achievements. He describes spending months at a time with a book on his lap and a painting propped up on a chair, hoping for a ray of insight. Occasionally, he says, he makes mistakes in what he buys, but this, too, is something that 'makes for interest'.<sup>40</sup> Here, Barnes exudes a level of comfort with messiness that is quite contrary to the portrayal by Rudenstine.<sup>41</sup> Also striking is how often Barnes refers to putting stock in personal instinct. He writes that his own 'formula' – importantly, he uses this word ironically, having just dismissed the very possibility of formulae – has simply been 'to buy a painting for what I think is in it'.<sup>42</sup> Arguably, he is describing the development of personal taste – but he simultaneously strives, scrupulously, to avoid saying so: 'it is not', he continues, 'a matter of taste but of education in the observer'.<sup>43</sup> Barnes's formalist aesthetic philosophy is not (yet) his own; here, he sounds like he is ventriloquising it. Meanwhile, Barnes offers what is essentially a manifesto – not on the scientific analysis of art, not even on aesthetics, but on collecting:

What are some of the pleasures? The least is the mere possession, the best, the joy that one can feel but not express to others; between these two extremes are pleasures that may be compared to the notes of a piano, limited in what can be produced only by the performer's skill and knowledge.<sup>44</sup>

Here, Barnes seems to 'drop the act' and express himself candidly, even confessionally. Here, a decade before the establishment of the foundation and the publication of its textbook *Art in Painting*, Barnes is anything but a fervent empiricist. He is a collector. Through collecting, he has a personal,

<sup>39</sup> Butler, 'Henri Matisse According to Dr. Barnes', 178–179.

<sup>40</sup> Barnes, 'How to Judge a Painting', 248. <sup>41</sup> See n. 24 and accompanying text.

<sup>42</sup> Barnes, "How to Judge a Painting", 246. <sup>43</sup> Barnes, 'Cubism: Requiescat in Pace', 123.

<sup>44</sup> Barnes, 'How to Judge a Painting', 248.

dynamic relationship with his paintings and their creators. Collecting brings him pleasure and joy, sensations that he can feel but not explain. And he uses a musical metaphor, the notes of a piano, to express his point.

In the fall of 1920 (when Matisse's agent is pitching *The Music Lesson* to John Quinn), Barnes writes to John Dewey's wife, Alice Dewey, that his life is focused on 'books, paintings, and music'.<sup>45</sup> He has a spectacularly colourful correspondence with Stokowski – deserving of a study in itself – in which he rails against the conductor's choice of soloists, the cello section leader, the programme annotator, and much of the repertoire – a 'surfeit of theatrical claptrap'. 'Why give us so much of the soul-stuff that nourishes the idle, the ignorant, the lazy, the debauché [*sic*] to whom in music the only thing is the cheap emotional orgy, "the dreamy reverie relieved by nervous thrills"?' he asks.<sup>46</sup> Barnes singles out Mozart's piano sonatas as a better offering for the Philadelphia public. This is because, he says, 'the surest way to confuse, mystify, and bewilder is to overwhelm the senses'.<sup>47</sup> In 1923, when Barnes gets to buy *The Music Lesson*, he is as musically active as ever. In February he advocates Darius Milhaud's *La Création du monde* to Stokowski, mentioning that he knows most of the members of 'Les Six'.<sup>48</sup> In April he complains to orchestra management about the size of hat worn by the season-ticket holder in front of him, threatening to remove it himself ('I'll do almost anything to hear the music I can't comfortably dispense with').<sup>49</sup> In October, by which point *The Music Lesson* was on display, Barnes hosts Stokowski for a lecture on Palestrina.<sup>50</sup>

This is the backdrop against which Barnes begins to shape his vision for the foundation: he is living a life passionately devoted to collecting art and equally to music. He is only beginning to actively seek a 'greater purpose' for it all. He purchases the property on which to erect the buildings in 1922

<sup>45</sup> A. C. Barnes to Alice C. Dewey, 20 September 1920, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>46</sup> A. C. Barnes to Leopold Stokowski, 18 October 1920, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives. The unattributed quote is from Santayana (originally 'drowsy', not 'dreamy'): Santayana, *Reason in Art*, 51. Barnes appears to have begun to write a treatise on music, based on Santayana: 'Music (Reason in Art)', c. 1920s, Early Education Records, Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>47</sup> A. C. Barnes to Leopold Stokowski, 25 October 1920, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>48</sup> A. C. Barnes to Leopold Stokowski, 27 February 1923, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>49</sup> A. C. Barnes to The Philadelphia Orchestra, 6 April 1923. Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>50</sup> 'Musical Afternoons Leopold Stokowski', Lecture Notes and Comments, 11 October 1923. Barnes Foundation Archives.

and writes to Dewey that he intends to 'turn the whole thing over to the public for educational purposes', with three days of public access and three days reserved for educational institutions each week.<sup>51</sup>

But something changes – drastically so. After 1925, access to the foundation is, in practice, strictly limited compared to what Barnes envisioned in 1922. Most applicants for admission are ignored; some receive a preprinted rejection card:

The Barnes Foundation is not a public gallery. It is an educational institution with a program for systematic work, organized into classes which are held every day, and conducted by a staff of experienced teachers. Admission to the gallery is restricted to students enrolled in the classes.<sup>52</sup>

Requests for reproductions are denied. *Art in Painting* is written – and, under the obvious influence of Buermeyer, it lays out a model of looking at art that uses a distinction between absolute and programme music as a 'clue' to the distinction between 'legitimate and illegitimate use of subject-matter'.<sup>53</sup> Soon, *Art in Painting* becomes the sacred text on which class instruction is exclusively based. The man who, a decade prior, compared the 'pleasure' and 'joy' of art to the spectrum of notes on a piano now speaks in narrow terms of 'systematic work'. A vision that still sounded expansive and welcoming in 1922 was, by 1925, parsimonious, guarded, and dissuasive.

The pivot takes place in 1923. Faced with an urgent need to legitimise his project, Barnes moves quickly. In March, he publicises in *The New Republic* the foundation's educational mission, reaching, in his haste, for the language with which he is still most familiar, the language of science: he uses the terms 'experiment' (three times), 'systematic means', and 'scientific approach'. Barnes also agrees to exhibit, from 11 April to 9 May, his recently acquired works at the Pennsylvania Academy. Writing the introduction to the exhibition catalogue himself, he strives to prepare the public, explaining that the living artists represented in the show stand for a continuation, not a break, with the past. But published reviews denounce the collection as 'incomprehensible', 'unpleasant to contemplate', even 'debased'.<sup>54</sup>

This is the context in which, two months later, Barnes sets sail for Paris, for the visit on which he buys *The Music Lesson*: a period marked by

<sup>51</sup> A. C. Barnes to John Dewey, 16 October 1922, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence, Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Greenfield, *Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 129. <sup>53</sup> Barnes, *The Art in Painting*, 49.

<sup>54</sup> Greenfield, *Devil and Dr. Barnes*, 94–95 and Meyers, *Art, Education, and African-American Culture*, 72–73 summarise reviews of the show.

urgency and defensiveness. Barnes needed a theory – both to justify his foundation and to prove himself to his detractors. Perhaps, as a highly musical person and music lover, he was drawn to the musical subject matter of the painting, but this happens also to be the very moment when it becomes advantageous to avoid talking about subject matter. Under intrinsic and extrinsic pressures, Barnes the joyful collector transforms (back) into Barnes the single-minded scientist. It is now, out of necessity, that the gallery starts to become a laboratory. This conversion process gains momentum until, in 1925, we see scientific objectivism – and, by extension, a dogma of absolute music – used in such a way as to erase the musical subject matter. Haydn disappears.

(Meanwhile, in the draft for *Art in Painting*, Barnes calls *The Music Lesson* Matisse's best recent work; in the published edition, he calls it Matisse's greatest work of all.<sup>55</sup> Barnes simply needed this to be true.)

Matisse's Haydn was hidden by Barnes: literally, through his limitations on access to the painting, and ideologically, through his grasping, somewhat clumsily, for an aesthetic programme that would suit his pressing need for legitimisation. A mix of factors were at play, including Barnes's pique born of eccentricity and insecurity, the influence of Dewey, and, paradoxically, Buermeier's aesthetics, which were based partly on a way of conceiving and talking about music as the model of abstraction. The gallery became a laboratory insofar as the laboratory was a stage on which Barnes could project a version of himself.

Barnes's acquisition of *The Music Lesson* marked the beginning of a long phase of relative obscurity for the painting, and near oblivion for Haydn's 'presence' in it. This, in turn, naturally meant fewer opportunities for viewers to consider the significance of Haydn for Matisse. And yet, until 1923, prerequisites had been in place for the opposite to happen. Before its acquisition by Barnes, *The Music Lesson* was on a course towards a high level of exposure and renown. Had the critical, academic, commercial, and popular reception continued to unfold the way it started, Haydn would have come up in those discourses to greater degrees. How might they have unfolded? What impact might they have had? We can only speculate. Some discussions might have continued in the vein broached by Bricon, asking questions about meaning: what did Matisse wish to say, and how did his inclusion of a score labelled H-A-Y-D-N help him say it? Other discussions might have perpetuated the nationalist terms suggested by Halvorsen in his

<sup>55</sup> Barnes, *The Art in Painting*, 501–2; 'Analyses – Matisse', draft, typescript, and carbon copies, corrected, c. 1924, *Art in Painting Manuscripts*, Barnes Foundation Archives.

description of the painting as 'completely French', which, in turn, could have invited, encouraged, and reinforced the Haydn-as-not-German strain of Haydn reception (on which more below). And what if *The Music Lesson* had ended up, as it almost did, in the collection of John Quinn? Quinn was a radical compared to Barnes. The purchase would have coincided with his legal representation in court of *The Little Review*, the avant-garde literary magazine brought to trial for publishing portions of James Joyce's *Ulysses* that were deemed obscene. Quinn believed that the publishers were being targeted on account of their radical politics and anti-war activism.

In this context, either through Quinn's own words or the assumptions and associations made by others, the reception of the painting might have gone in a more insurgent direction, emphasising what is bold and unconventional about the work. Had Quinn displayed it with *Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra)* (which, as already mentioned, he owned from 1920), this might have focused attention on the return of the *Reclining Nude* and inclined commentators towards interpretations of the latter painting in terms of her semiotic network of nature, fecundity, hedonism, primitivism, and so on. How might Haydn have been folded into such interpretations? Haydn as 'modern'? Haydn as evocative or symbolic of the retelling of timeless stories through a modern lens? Might it be a score of his oratorio *The Creation* on the piano (say, in an arrangement for four hands – the green colour, border, and capital-letter title format suggest an affordable Edition Peters)? Or, is Haydn a counterweight to the intuitive, impulsive, primeval nude?

Ironically, Haydn's presence in *The Music Lesson* could have been useful to Barnes, who, as we have seen, was intent on making the case that modernists built upon, rather than broke with, the past. Had he not become militantly (albeit awkwardly) committed to reading the painting exclusively in terms of formal features, he might have employed the Haydn score on the Matisse family piano as evidence that Matisse – modern artist par excellence – revered the old even as he ushered in the new. Similarly, the 'green book on the piano' lay ready to serve as a counterpart to the symbolic Mozart sonata that Barnes commended to Stokowski – classic, unlikely to 'confuse' the senses, and a paragon of absolute music – but went unmentioned and unused.

It is reasonable to assume that greater exposure for *The Music Lesson* would have led to a broader scope of interpretation, which would have fostered more exposure for Haydn, and, in turn, wider reflection of and influence on Haydn reception. But my aim in asking, and even beginning to

answer, what 'might have been' is not to offer a selection of hypotheses, for there is no testing or proof regarding an unrealised future. Rather, I seek to underscore the haphazard nature of what did, in fact, happen: a sequence of events that could have easily gone a different way. Haydn was received, or not received, in terms that were very specific to a certain place and moment.

### After Barnes: Haydn Hiding

One of the scholars Barnes prevented from seeing his collection was Alfred Barr, who would become the first director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1929 and, two years later, curator of its first-ever solo show – devoted to Matisse.<sup>56</sup> Twenty years after that exhibition, Barr published his monumental *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, the first comprehensive chronology of the artist's works. Matisse never warmed to Barr's endeavour (as Barr himself admits in his preface: 'problems of dating are for [Matisse] irrelevant if not pedantic'),<sup>57</sup> but Barr was intent on creating a cohesive, chronological narrative that would account for Matisse's traditional side while also promoting the artist's esteem among the art world's avant-garde. Barr's Matisse is forever pursuing modernism by nodding – but only nodding – to its antithesis: the soothing, the pleasing, the comfortable. Barr treats *The Piano Lesson* to a dedicated analysis opposite a full-page colour plate and concludes that 'no cubist ever surpassed the beautiful divisions, the grave and tranquil elegance of this big picture. Nor did Matisse himself.'<sup>58</sup> By contrast, he addresses *The Music Lesson* only in passing, in a chapter on 1916 and 1917. Despite the brevity of the period under review, and his admission that the artist himself did not remember the order of the works, Barr calls *The Music Lesson* a 'second version', in which the ur-structure is 'covered with a flesh of playful rococo curves'.<sup>59</sup> There is no mention of the (rectilinear) Haydn score – which arguably takes the place of the (curvy) candlestick.

After Barr, attention to *The Music Lesson* dries up for roughly two decades. In 1975, Jack Flam writes 'Matisse in Two Keys', in which (as mentioned in the Introduction) *The Piano Lesson* serves as a metaphor for the abstract nature of art. *The Music Lesson*, by contrast, depicts art reduced

<sup>56</sup> Barr visited the foundation twice as a student of Buermeier and once under a fake identity with a group of schoolteachers from Maine. Schack, *Art and Argryol*, 182–83.

<sup>57</sup> Barr, *Matisse: His Art and His Public*, 10–12.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 193–94. The letter to Camoin (see n. 10) came to light later.

to 'mere leisure activity, a pleasant way of passing an afternoon'; music-making, like (Amélie's) sewing and (Jean's) reading while smoking, represents 'bourgeois consumption of art on a secondary level'.<sup>60</sup> Notably, having absented himself from the family picture, Matisse resumes a more 'conventional' relationship with subject matter: he observes it. The opposition of banal domesticity indoors and voluptuous nature outdoors, paired with an unsettling tension suggested by spatial dislocations, disproportions, and compressed space, conveys Matisse's impatience with bourgeois existence and his longing for an escape. Flam does not explicitly mention the Haydn score, but for those readers who notice it, it is implicitly incriminated as bourgeois, an object of consumption, or a mere diversion.

The following year, *The Music Lesson* is discussed in an article by Theodore Reff, who traces the recurrence of the *Reclining Nude I (Aurora)* in Matisse's work over nearly two decades. Reff argues that no matter what new context she is placed in, she always retains her 'sensual, hedonistic spirit'.<sup>61</sup> *The Music Lesson* constitutes the 'most interesting recurrence of all':

In her indolent posture and pink nudity, the reclining woman forms an amusing foil for the fully clothed woman on the near shore of the pond, seated in a rocking chair and calmly sewing. . . . Finally, it is with the civilized, domestic world that [Matisse] identifies himself . . .

Here, Reff has come to the opposite conclusion from Flam. And it is precisely here, finally, that Haydn is mentioned, for Reff continues:

. . . by placing on the piano his violin and case – we know how fine a musician he was – and his album of Haydn. It is the serenely classical music of Haydn that he prefers to play, not the *Rites of Spring* [sic] demanded by the nude in the garden.<sup>62</sup>

Reff's Matisse 'records a moment of domestic security and contentment' and the Haydn score is explicitly marshalled as evidence. Matisse expresses this mood with 'playfulness', 'pictorial inventiveness', and 'wit'. If Reff is right, he has missed a bit of further supporting evidence – namely, the inclusion of the name of a composer so closely associated, in the popular imagination, with playfulness, inventiveness, and wit.

The 1980s saw the publication of two major but seemingly very different works of Matisse scholarship, by Pierre Schneider and Jack Flam. Continuing in the vein of Barr, Flam proceeds diachronically, connecting paintings to biography, with changes in one documenting changes in the

<sup>60</sup> Flam, 'Matisse in Two Keys', 85. <sup>61</sup> Reff, 'Matisse', 110. <sup>62</sup> Ibid., 114–15.

other. Schneider takes a synchronic approach: he quotes Matisse declaring 'you have one idea, you are born with it, and all your life you develop your fixed idea' – and takes him at his word.<sup>63</sup> Matisse's 'fixed idea' is, in Schneider's view, a spiritual one: transcendence of the real, and problematic, world. *Bonheur de vivre*, a scene evocative of a Golden Age, functions like a lexicon of Matisse's language of signs. It is a colourful picture of calm jubilation, a world of perfect harmony, a myth 'rooted in dreams'<sup>64</sup> – and, crucially, portions of it reappear (as we have seen) in other major works for the rest of his career.

Schneider treats *The Piano Lesson* and *The Music Lesson* together, in a chapter entitled 'The Family Prerogative'. Here he extends his theory of Matisse's 'fixed idea' to include a 'family-myth equation', a correspondence that equips Matisse to convey the scene from ordinary life in the same 'religious mode' as the mythological scenes *La Danse* and *La Musique*, themselves descended from *Bonheur de vivre*.<sup>65</sup> This is iconography at work: family represents origins – they are 'substitutes for the divine ancestors of the human race' – and domestic scenes thereby symbolise (albeit at a step or two removed) a mythic Golden Age. *The Piano Lesson* and *The Music Lesson* are examples of the family-myth equation. However, they also cause Schneider to accommodate some concrete biographical circumstances: 'Jean, Pierre, Marguerite, and Amélie would soon all be going their separate ways.'<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, in the latter painting,

[t]he realist solidity of the figures reveals [the children's] growing independence – their exteriority. They are closing up, shutting off access to the sacred origins which up until now they had so readily provided. The family and the Golden Age were now increasingly opposed to each other.<sup>67</sup>

'Reality and myth are divorced', Schneider continues, and the rupture is permanent. There would be no more combination of sacred myth with realism, of abstract images and naturalistic forms. *The Piano Lesson*, then, is the representative artwork of the 'family prerogative'; *The Music Lesson* marks its end.

Unlike Schneider, Flam is interested in connecting historical circumstances with stylistic development and therefore begins his discussion of *The Music Lesson* with the wartime context and a specific military disaster in spring 1917: 'By May, mutinies were breaking out in the French army, and the air was heavy with pessimism.' Flam also notes Matisse's attendance that same month at the premiere of Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau's

<sup>63</sup> Schneider, *Matisse*, 13. <sup>64</sup> Ibid., 242. <sup>65</sup> Ibid., 314. <sup>66</sup> Ibid., 330. <sup>67</sup> Ibid.

ballet *Parade*, speculating that Matisse 'must have been moved by the frenetic quality of the piece and by the violent reaction of the audience'.<sup>68</sup> But ultimately it is not so much history as biography that drives Flam's analysis. The war simply makes Matisse agitated; it threatens his household, so he rushes to make a portrait that fixes everyone together.<sup>69</sup>

For Kenneth Silver, however, the paintings' politico-historical context demands attention. His *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* details how an ideological – collectivist, nationalist, and patriotic – conception of art developed during and after the war, and how artists like Matisse countered accusations of individualism and elitism in their work. *The Piano Lesson* and *The Music Lesson* serve as a major case study, with the latter representing a 'decisive step back' to politically 'safer ground'.<sup>70</sup> Especially intriguing is the way Silver connects the depiction of Amélie sewing with the contemporary French *tricoteuse*, or knitter, a widely replicated and widely disseminated image, which Matisse would have known, representing French family values.<sup>71</sup> The Haydn score on the piano does not get the same genealogical treatment, but Silver sees it, too, as emblematic of Matisse's accommodation of ideological demands. The artist no longer invites or expects imaginative interpretations or metaphoric readings of his work. Rather,

we know by the sheet music now placed on the edge of the piano that what is being rehearsed is something classically sanctioned like Haydn. Everything is spelled out in *The Music Lesson*, comprehensible to even the most obtuse viewer. Matisse could hardly now be accused . . . of 'elitist' artistic practice, of putting a distance between himself and his public in 1917, for the painting sets itself apart from the various brands of modernism that the conservative press found objectionable.<sup>72</sup>

Likewise, 'soft tonalities and gentle curves of the *Music Lesson* would thwart any attempt to label it "Germanic"'.<sup>73</sup> Greater familiarity with Haydn's wartime reputation would have allowed Silver to make this point even more strongly, for the Austrian Haydn paradoxically represented patriotic French values in France.<sup>74</sup>

In 1993, after a highly controversial break of the Barnes Foundation's indenture terms, eighty-three pieces from the collection

<sup>68</sup> Flam, *Matisse: The Man and His Art*, 450.    <sup>69</sup> Herbert, 'Matisse Without History', 300.

<sup>70</sup> Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, 205.

<sup>71</sup> Gertrude Stein said Madame Matisse taught her to knit woollen gloves for soldiers. Escholier, *Matisse*, 96.

<sup>72</sup> Silver, *Esprit de corps*, 203–4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 204. This recalls Halvorsen's 'completely French' comment; see n. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Proksch, *Reviving Haydn*, 72–74.

toured Washington DC, Paris, Tokyo, Fort Worth, and Toronto. *The Music Lesson* was among them – and indeed appears to have been promoted as one of the show's stars. The exhibition catalogue includes a detail of the painting facing the first page of the preface, taking PLEYEL as its horizontal axis and Marguerite's face as the vertical axis. HAYDN is, therefore, brought squarely into view, front and almost centre. And yet, commentary in the catalogue itself consists of recycled material from Jack Flam in 1975:

*The Piano Lesson* was a kind of paradigm of the abstract musical possibilities of painting – a probing of limits. *The Music Lesson* signals a return to sensuality, to elaborate description of real light and real space, to sources – a new path for a painter who felt that his imagery had moved too far away from direct contact with nature and become too synthetic.<sup>75</sup>

HAYDN, despite the increased visual prominence, continues, even in this potentially watershed moment in the life of the painting, to languish.

It is a musicologist who calls for an update of Flam's now seemingly ubiquitous take. Gurminder Bhogal, in establishing that associations between the arabesque and music date back to the nineteenth century, points out that Flam anachronistically 'prolongs' these associations by applying them (noting the arabesque in the music stand and ironwork) to *The Music Lesson*. Bhogal offers instead a contemporary-to-Matisse reading of the arabesque as a nostalgic relic, an 'old and distant sign', a 'remnant of history'.<sup>76</sup> Straight lines contain the arabesques in *The Piano Lesson*, whereas *The Music Lesson* evinces their 'zealous return'.

Arguably, a more important turning point for *The Music Lesson* than its physical release from the four walls of the foundation would be the end, in 1991, of the prohibition of reproductions in colour of works in the Barnes collection. But while the original pinks, oranges, and greens shine forth in a handful of publications from around the turn of the millennium, none accompanies a significantly new interpretation of the painting, and none mentions Haydn.

In 2015, *The Music Lesson* graces, in full and accurate colour, the cover of Bryan Proksch's history of Haydn reception in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it is quickly dismissed as visual evidence of the contemporary association of Haydn with juvenilia and pedagogy that Proksch is documenting. Proksch writes:

<sup>75</sup> Flam in Wattenmaker, *Great French Paintings*, 261.

<sup>76</sup> Bhogal, *Details of Consequence*, 276–78.

It seems to have been the case that the use of Haydn's music for childhood pedagogy in turn perpetuated the dismissal of his music by learned musicians and critics, thereby forming a vicious cycle. Relative outsiders to the music world knew the instructional function of his music, as well. . . . In the Matisse painting, the instrument is as much a bourgeois status symbol as the painting on the wall and the statue in the garden. Haydn's music serves a similarly innocuous function, sitting on the piano as a hallmark of middle-class education, mediocre talent, and a questionable old-fashioned taste in music. It seems unlikely that the father, curled up with a good book and smoking his cigarette, would bother to look up for even a moment, let alone actively listen to the music being played. The reclining person outside (presumably the boy's mother) has been sufficiently bored by the lesson and the trappings of middle-class life as to fall asleep.<sup>77</sup>

Certainly – as Proksch so effectively demonstrates elsewhere in his book – there was a prevalent and strong association in the public imagination in early twentieth-century France between Haydn and elementary music education. Haydn as 'hallmark of middle-class education, mediocre talent, and a questionable old-fashioned taste' was a readily available interpretative framework for Matisse's public. But Proksch uses the painting to set up his description of an impending transformation in Haydn's reputation, for he continues, 'even as Matisse's paint dried, Haydn's music was undergoing a striking reevaluation'. Why is Matisse's painting read as emblematic of the negative view soon to be replaced? Given what we know (but Proksch does not seem to know) about the artist's connection to the scene and the figures within it (they are his family), it seems just as likely, if not more likely, that the painting partakes in the 'striking reevaluation'. If Proksch has been steered off course, perhaps this is a result of the title (or subtitle, as it appears in his caption), '*The Music Lesson*', which is a legacy not of Matisse but of Barnes. Perhaps it was Barnes who was subconsciously in thrall to the Haydn-as-teacher stereotype. What if he had chosen to name the painting, say, *Duet*?

*The Music Lesson* gets a fresh treatment in 2015, finally, in the three-volume compendium *Matisse in the Barnes Foundation*, edited by Yve-Alain Bois. This publication is, and will indefinitely remain, the authoritative account: it includes the components of a major scholarly catalogue (a comprehensive listing of technical notes, provenance, exhibitions, and references) and an extensive commentary, by Karen Butler, that synthesises scholarship to date and raises new angles from which to consider the painting and its significance. Chief among these is her consideration of an early version of *The Piano Lesson* (a highly detailed – that is, loaded with even more detail than *The Music Lesson* – preparatory sketch) and an early version of *The Music*

<sup>77</sup> Proksch, *Reviving Haydn*, 90–91.

*Lesson* (a photograph of the work in progress, revealing its under-drawing). Butler thereby abrogates the perennial question of whether *The Music Lesson* can be seen as a 'regression' on Matisse's part. Rather than move from order in *The Piano Lesson* to chaos in *The Music Lesson*, Matisse embraces both poles in both works. Even so, it appears (alas!) that Butler's renewed and refreshed attention to *The Music Lesson* comes too late for Haydn: the cycle in which dismissive reception begets more dismissive reception has solidified into truism. The score is mentioned, yes, but Butler only rehearses what is by now the conventional wisdom: Matisse has depicted a scene of 'cultured family domesticity', and this is made evident by the 'bourgeois connotations of the Pleyel piano and the Haydn score'.<sup>78</sup> Thus, even when the presence of the score is acknowledged or made 'visible', a refreshed interpretation of the function or meaning of the Haydn score remains hidden.

### Conclusion: Revealing Haydn

What I have offered here of *The Music Lesson* is a Haydn-focused reception history, not a reinterpretation. What would a reinterpretation involve? What would it take to reveal, recover, and recuperate Haydn in, and for, *The Music Lesson*? Some potential starting places for exploration have begun to suggest themselves, I think, through this look at the literature. Butler notes, for example, that in *The Piano Lesson* the candlestick stands at the canvas's vertical axis of symmetry; it 'acts as a center point, a kind of marker from which all other elements diverge, as if in centrifuge'.<sup>79</sup> I would ask, then, what might it mean that in *The Music Lesson* the place of the candlestick is taken by the Haydn score?

Proksch's work on early twentieth-century Haydn reception in France will be especially useful. Matisse interacted with Satie and, as Proksch notes, Satie was familiar with Haydn.<sup>80</sup> George Sand's serial novel *Consuelo*, in which Haydn plays a prominent supporting role, seems to have been well known among Satie's audience; perhaps this also extended to Matisse. We might think next of Proksch's work on the 1909 Haydn anniversary commemorations in France, especially (with the bold capital typeface HAYDN in mind) the set of *hommages* composed on the letters of the composer's name – a moment that indicates a counter-narrative to, or reversal of, dismissive Haydn reception of the late nineteenth century.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Butler, 'Music Lesson', 217. <sup>79</sup> Ibid., 218. <sup>80</sup> Proksch, *Reviving Haydn*, 111–12.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 70–89.

What about the way the N drips off the side? Is this evidence of quick execution, careless planning? The *simulation* thereof? Matisse had every opportunity to plan, as we see in the under-drawing, where the letters are also squished and out of order: HAYND.<sup>82</sup> How does all of this relate to the odd layout of PLEYEL in *The Piano Lesson*, where L is 'extra' – off the centre indicated by the arabesques and the tip of the metronome? This quirk – or is it a sign? – is corrected – or is it jettisoned? – in *The Music Lesson*. But scope for interpretive 'pleye' (Old English for 'play') remains.

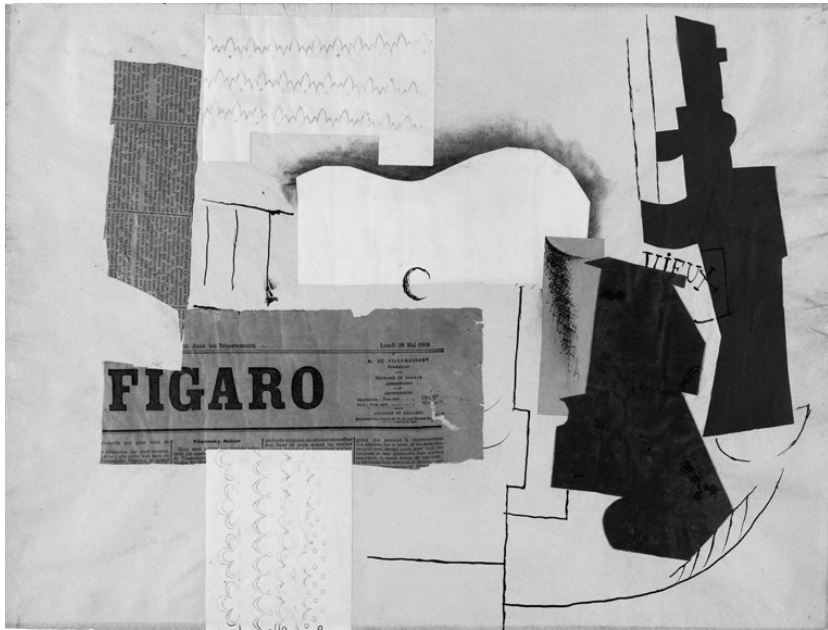
Another interpretive avenue is opened up when Butler notes how *The Music Lesson* indexes Matisse's lifelong dialogue with Picasso, first by responding visually to Picasso's famous *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, and second by incorporating the luxuriant foliage and the enlarged *Reclining Nude I (Aurora)* conflated with the *Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra)*, all of which recall the period in Matisse's career when he 'was leader of the avant-garde and was deeply embroiled in the rivalry with Picasso'.<sup>83</sup> As we have seen, *The Music Lesson* also references Matisse's *Le Bonheur de vivre*, which Butler notes is 'the picture that inaugurates the lifelong dialogue between Matisse and Picasso'.<sup>84</sup> If themes of dialogue and rivalry are at play here, it will be productive to think through the lens of Haydn's rivalry with Pleyel, or perhaps ways in which Matisse might ally himself, or be allied in the minds of his viewers, with Haydn in the timeless opposition of Haydn 'versus' Mozart. The right-angle juxtaposition of HAYDN and PLEYEL are reminiscent of *papiers collés* by Picasso (and others) that incorporate snippets of newspaper – for example the FIGARO of the newspaper *Le Figaro*, itself named after the character in the Beaumarchais play and Mozart opera (Figure 6.6).

Finally, it should be productive to think about John Elderfield's suggestion that Matisse has given the garden the appearance of a painted screen rather than a view of a garden, a work of art *about* a garden. The screen 'may be thought to conceal the reality of what is outside' – specifically, the war, or generally, everything 'troublingly external'.<sup>85</sup> The score makes an interesting counterpart, for (as Elderfield also notes) it was not just the sight but also the sound of war that plagued the Matisse household; the destruction of the French countryside was visible *and* audible. The score could be Haydn's *The Creation*, but it does not have to be. Music-making 'conceal(s) the reality of what is outside', too, blocking the noise; Haydn joins Matisse in creating a 'screen'.

<sup>82</sup> The under-drawing is pictured in Flam, *Matisse: The Man and His Art*, 460.

<sup>83</sup> Butler, 'Music Lesson', 221. <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>85</sup> Elderfield, 'Matisse's *Domestic Interiors*', 124–25.



**Figure 6.6** Pablo Picasso, *Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper*, 1913. Tate, purchased from Berggruen et Cie through the Princesse de Broglie and the Contemporary Art Establishment, Vaduz (Picasso Purchase Fund and Grant-in-Aid) 1961. Pierre Gaut (purchased from the artist during World War II); with Berggruen, Paris. © 2024 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Tate.

The Haydn score in *The Music Lesson* has a long history of hiding – not just within the busy visual texture of the painting, but also within a surrounding art-historical and critical literature that has not been inclined, or equipped, to reveal it. For related reasons, *The Music Lesson* itself has arguably been Matisse's 'most underestimated major painting'.<sup>86</sup> With the Haydn-focused reception history of *The Music Lesson* now elucidated, what might come next? What might happen when disciplinary eavesdropping shifts more fully to interdisciplinary engagement? It may be that, while in hiding, the Haydn score has been a 'most underestimated major' key – a key to interpreting Matisse's painting of 1917, and to understanding more than a century of response to both painter and composer.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 127.