

PAUL HINDEMITH (1895-1963)

Five traits characterize the man Paul Hindemith: his extensive experience as a performing artist; his endeavors to bring contemporary music to a wider audience; his enthusiasm with education; his respect for, and active promotion of, early music; and his outstanding wit and sense of humor. Hindemith began as a violinist, being appointed concert-master at the Frankfurt Opera at age 19. Later he had a brilliant career as one of Europe's foremost viola soloists and founded the famous Amar Quartet, with whom he toured widely. Other instruments on which he was an accomplished performer include the viola d'amore, the piano and the clarinet.

Paul Hindemith's Duo Sonatas For Orchestral Instruments And Piano

In the course of Hindemith's development there were two phases during which he dedicated himself primarily to the composition of sonatas: the time from 1917 to around 1924, and the time from 1935 to the late 40s (and, for a few pieces, even beyond). Politically, the two periods seem to have much in common; they comprise the hardest years of World War I with its aftermath and the entire World War II, including the difficult years preceding its outbreak. In terms of the composer's attitude, however, the two periods could hardly be more different. When composing the earlier sonatas, Hindemith relies on the string instruments with which he was most familiar: the violin, viola and violoncello. His declared goal is to widen the "territory of expressive possibilities" by creating a number of works that explore not only different structures but also entirely different characters.

In a letter of 28 September 1918, Hindemith outlines his plan half seriously, half facetiously: *I want to write a whole series of such... small sonatas... Each is to have a character entirely distinct from the previous one, and a unique structure. I am*

curious whether in such a series I shall succeed in stretching the expressive possibilities—which, in this form and setting, are not all that large to begin with—and to push them against the horizon. Several years may pass until I complete this work, provided I live to see it completed. I think it will be an interesting task. I only pity the poor people who may, some twenty years from now, purchase tickets, lured by the following poster hung by two enthusiastic but no longer quite sound-minded musicians.

12 Sonata Recitals, 1 -12 February 1938

The program will consist of all small sonatas for piano and violin by P. H.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>E^b major</i> | 4. <i>Dorian</i> | 7. <i>“Mit dem Paukenschlag”</i> |
| 2. <i>D minor</i> | 5. <i>Variation on a Single Pitch</i> | 8. <i>In triple counterpoint</i> |
| 3. <i>without tonality</i> | 6. <i>F minor and A major mixed</i> | 9. <i>With Light and Colors, etc.</i> |

As the draft of the fictitious program shows, Hindemith's original plan had been to explore the various styles, structures and characters within an even more narrowly defined genre, that of the sonata for piano and violin. A year later, with the completion of his extraordinary sonata for viola and piano, this plan was obsolete, and further compositions carry the generic heading “Sonatas for String Instruments.”

By the time Hindemith returns to the composition of duo sonatas in 1935, his aesthetics has changed completely. He now operates from a firmly established stylistic basis and turns to ever new, even traditionally outlandish settings. Once again, Hindemith commits himself to realizing his approach in an extensive series of sonatas that eventually, with the double bass sonata of 1949 and the tuba sonata added six years afterwards, engages all string and wind instruments of the symphony orchestra in a dialogue with the piano.

The second movement incorporates two dance forms: a Minuet and a Gavotte. The moderately paced, graceful 3/4 motion that was characteristic of the Minuet during the time when it was the favorite court dance in central Europe governs the first section of the movement. It gives way to a livelier section that, with its 2/2 time and the half-bar upbeat that launches the theme, incorporates all the recognizable features of a Gavotte. The minuet then returns in a lovely paraphrase before the movement concludes with a partial quotation from the Gavotte.



The three fairly lighthearted dances in movements I and II are counterbalanced in the two different characters of movement III. Here, Hindemith finds the descriptive terms so important that he uses them as headings. The main body of this movement, very slow and solemn, is called *Trauermusik*, a term that literally translates as “Music of Mourning” but is usually rendered as “Funeral Music.”

There are three sections: a rhythmically defined opening strongly suggestive of a funeral march, a gently swinging middle section that might stand for a more reflective mood, and then a varied return of the funeral march. The second component of this movement, which follows after only a short hesitation, is related to the first both musically and spiritually. It quotes the chorale that Hindemith knew—and indicated—as “Alle Menschen müssen sterben” (All Humans Must Die). The well-known chorale tune, accompanied by persistent dotted notes that seem to pace the time allotted to each of us, develops in a single, powerful crescendo and subsequent diminuendo that further enhances the feeling of awe this movement inspires.

Sonata for Horn in F and Piano (1939)



The three movements of the horn sonata explore the entire spectrum of this instrument's expressive powers. In its exposition, the moderate first movement emphasizes smooth lines both emphatic and gentle before it adds more bouncy nuances and swift runs in the middle section and, especially, in the coda.

Movement II is a minuet in terms of character, in terms of form a rondo. Its calm three-four time allows characters as diverse as the traditional gestures of the court dance in the refrain, a sweeping tune imitated many times from voice to voice in the first episode, and a delicate filigree in the second contrast.

The finale is lively and assertive with a strong drive forward. Sudden rhythmic compression seems to imply that performers are becoming increasingly impatient, to the extent that they ignore the metric order. Even the inserted slow section, launched with a mellow tune, cannot keep the players in check. Very soon they start pushing the tempo forward, back to the lively pace in which the movement set out, while still caught in the thematic material of the slow section. Calm is restored once more, just in time for the return of the mellow tune, but as soon as that is over, there is no holding back. During the long coda, Hindemith admonishes his performers three times to get "broader" and "still broader," as if knowing about their reluctance to relinquish any of the energy expressed in this piece.

Sonata for Alto Horn and Piano (1943)

This piece is a jewel in many ways. Very few composers wrote for this forerunner of today's more sophisticated "French" horns; thus Hindemith's sonata enriches the repertoire of sounds and colors heard on our concert stages. What is more, Hindemith has succeeded in bringing out the rustic charm of the instrument in a very engaging work. The "sonata" is also special in that it seems modeled after an Italian suite. Finally, it is unique among all of Hindemith's chamber music works in that the musical performance integrates an element of spoken dialogue.

Of the four movements, the first is slow; its rhythmic pattern is reminiscent of a *Siciliano*—i.e. it swings gently in six-four time. The form is simple, the mood very relaxed and calm. There are two stanzas, each launched by the same short thematic phrase, and a third section that builds almost entirely on this theme, fragmenting it in the coda and finally putting it to sleep.

The second movement provides a lively contrast, particularly in its main theme, which is reminiscent of Hungarian Csardas rhythms. The form imitates a rondo, in that a recurring refrain alternates with various episodic material (A B A C A B' coda). As in most rondos, the "B" material keeps close to the mood of the refrain, while the "C" section contributes a noticeable contrast on as many levels as possible. The themes in B and B' are actually different in detail here but much related in spirit. For the long middle section, however, Hindemith has invented a unique device: a very distinct rhythmic pattern that allows innumerable modes of variation. This rhythmic pattern is first presented three times as a repeated-note sequence (to make it quite clear that the focus is rhythm and not pitch);





subsequently, it undergoes thirteen modifications in ever new melodic guises, a whole range of textures, and various harmonic settings—all this united in a large-scale increase and decrease of intensity.

Movements III and IV are connected in a special way. There is a slow musical section, a spoken dialogue, and a fast final section.

- * The slow section resembles a *Fantasia*: it is highly expressive, with perhaps even a sorrowful quality, and emphasizes pulse over metric order, freedom over constraint.
- * The dialogue verbalizes some of what one detects behind the music. The horn player reflects on the era of the “posthorn”—an instrument that, before trains and air planes, heralded the arrival of the mail carriage that brought both letters and visitors. He takes his instrument as a metaphor, expressing his regret for the unrushed attitude that pervaded the good old days. The pianist answers by cautioning against wholesale nostalgia, arguing that serenity and a meaningful life are for us to find or create, amidst past or present commotion.
- * Having said this, the pianist returns to the music, regaling us with just such a “commotion,” in the form of a particularly boisterous gigue in 3 x 3 very fast attacks per measure. Whether this section is a case for serenity remains open, but it definitely sounds like life at its fullest.

Sonata for Trombone and Piano (1941)

Like Hindemith's sonata op. 11/4 for viola and piano, this sonata is also conceived in only one movement. Where the viola sonata is a work built on the idea of variation, in which different themes interlock with one another throughout the otherwise distinctly different movements, the trombone sonata derives its unity from a musical frame around two songs.

The sonata begins and ends with a “majestic” section featuring three themes: a robust first theme characterized by syncopations over forceful dotted rhythms in the piano, a gentler secondary theme, and a short closing idea that reworks the expansive gestures of the main theme. The beginning—the opening bracket—is laid out like a sonata movement in which, after exposition and development section, the recapitulation is cut off soon after its inception. After the two intermittent songs, the closing bracket picks up part of the development and then provides a complete recapitulation followed by a coda. Between these brackets, Hindemith placed two songs; one graceful, the other rowdy. Each features four segments. In the graceful song, the original stanza and its variation are followed by a new arrangement of the stanza's material and rounded off by the variation of this new arrangement. In the rowdy song (Hindemith's title literally translates as “the bully-boy's song”), an original stanza is followed by a contrasting stanza, after which the original recurs varied and the contrast remains unchanged.

[A B C +]	Lied I	Lied II	[developmt + B C A]
developmt			



Sonata for Tuba and Piano (1955)

The sonata for tuba and piano, written 37 years after Hindemith embarked on the project to write duo sonatas for each orchestral instrument, completes the set. It was welcomed as an extremely important addition to the tuba repertoire and, together with Vaughan-Williams' tuba concerto of 1954, opened the flood gates for more compositions that explore this unique color.



Hindemith seems to play here with the topic of “collaboration” while retaining the highest degree of individuality for each player. During the outer sections of the sonata movement, the two instruments each identify with thematic material of their own. The tuba presents

the main theme in long, powerful notes that take large leaps; the piano provides the graceful and soft secondary theme. What is more, tuba and piano play in different meter almost throughout the entire movement. As a result, when the two instruments give up their thematic independence and imitate one another in the development section, each stubbornly keeps to its own ‘view’ of the rhythm. Well into the development, the tuba yields its triple time to the piano’s duple time, but reestablishes the friction long before the recapitulation.

Movement II adds yet another dimension to this collaborative independence. For most of the witty outer sections of the ternary form, one of the two instruments plays on the off beats, while in the middle section, the players seem to be chasing each other in a wild race.

Movement III, as in so many of Hindemith's sonatas the most substantial, encompasses a thematic first section, a *Scherzando*, a *Lento*, and a return of the thematic section. In the *Scherzando*, the piano's solo gets only two short acknowledgments from the tuba; by contrast, the *Lento* is kept in the form of a tuba *cadenza* with scant piano accompaniment. The reprise appears as a variation that contrasts the dark, melodious tuba line with high-registered, virtuoso piano figurations, combining individuality with cooperation in a particularly spectacular way.

Notes by Siglind Bruhn

PAUL HINDEMITH (1895-1963)

Five traits characterize the man Paul Hindemith: his extensive experience as a performing artist; his endeavors to bring contemporary music to a wider audience; his enthusiasm with education; his respect for, and active promotion of, early music; and his outstanding wit and sense of humor. Hindemith began as a violinist, being appointed concert-master at the Frankfurt Opera at age 19. Later he had a brilliant career as one of Europe's foremost viola soloists and founded the famous Amar Quartet with whom he toured widely. Other instruments on which he was an accomplished performer include the viola d'amore, the piano and the clarinet.

This series of four compact discs features 15 duo sonatas — five each for the various instruments of the woodwind, brass, and string families — as well as two cyclical works for solo piano.

Sonata for Trumpet and Piano (1939)

Charles Daval: *trumpet*, **Siglind Bruhn:** *piano*

1. Mit Kraft
2. Mäßig bewegt
3. Trauermusik. Sehr langsam—"Alle Menschen müssen sterben"

Sonata for Horn in F and Piano (1939)

Bryan Kennedy: *horn*, **Siglind Bruhn:** *piano*

4. Mäßig bewegt
5. Ruhig bewegt
6. Lebhaft

Sonata for Alto Horn (or saxophone) and Piano (1943)

Charles Daval: *alto horn*, **Robert Conway:** *piano*

7. Ruhig bewegt
8. Lebhaft
9. Sehr langsam
10. Lebhaft

Sonata for Trombone and Piano (1941)

H. Dennis Smith: *trombone*, **Anton Nel:** *piano*

11. Allegro moderato maestoso
12. Allegretto grazioso
13. Allegro pesante (swash buckler's song)
14. Allegro moderato maestoso

Sonata for Tuba and Piano (1955)

Fritz Kaenzig: *tuba*, **Siglind Bruhn:** *piano*

15. Allegro pesante
16. Allegro assai
17. Variationen. Moderato

Producer: Harry Sargous

Co-Producer, Audio Recording Engineer and Digital Mastering: George Faddoul

Tonmeister: Michael Webster

Project concept and program notes: Siglind Bruhn

Cover photography: Harry Sargous

University of Michigan School of Music Faculty and Alumni Soloists

This recording was made possible with generous support from the Office of the Vice President for Research and the School of Music, The University of Michigan.

Graphic production and audio duplication: World Class Tapes, Ann Arbor, MI 48108

For ordering info: Equilibrium, P.O. Box 305, Dexter, MI 48130 • <http://members.aol.com/equilibri>

© 1998 All Rights Reserved.

