

THE CREATION OF HARMONIC TENSION IN THE  
FIRST MOVEMENT OF HINDEMITH'S SECOND PIANO SONATA

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by

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A MASTER'S REPORT

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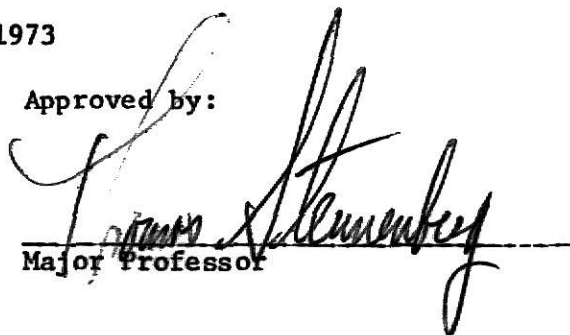
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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to study the creation of harmonic tension through the use of two types of analyzation - Hindemith's own Harmonic Fluctuation method which he presents in his text, The Craft of Musical Composition and the "long line of thought" method of analyzation detailed in advanced theory courses at Kansas State University. The Sonata for Piano, no. II qualifies as a typical work; it was composed one year before Hindemith completed his Craft of Musical Composition. This paper is, out of necessity, similar to a Master's report by James Earl Dilley entitled The Creation of Harmonic and Rhythmic Tension in the Sonate for Clarinet and Piano, First Movement, of Paul Hindemith due to the fact that only four years separate the dates of the clarinet sonata and piano sonata under discussion, and Hindemith's style does not exhibit a marked change during this period.

In An Introduction to Twentieth Century Music, Peter Hansen labels Paul Hindemith "an idealistic radical, a wild expressionist, an unemotional neo-classicist, a well-respected educator, and a reactionary."<sup>1</sup> Each of these roles apply to Hindemith at different times in his rich musical life. Born in Hanau, Germany in 1895, his early education led him to study string instruments and composition, and at the age of

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<sup>1</sup>Peter S. Hansen, An Introduction to Twentieth Century Music (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971, p. 249.

twenty he was already concertmaster of the Frankfurt Opera and violist in the Amar String Quartet. A complex musician who experienced every field of music from the most practical to the most theoretical, he entered the hectic musical life of post-war Germany after a year in the army in World War I.

From 1921 onwards, when his fame was first established, his name appeared annually at music festivals throughout Germany. He continued to play the viola in the Amar String Quartet until 1929 and performed solo recitals on that instrument with great mastery. (He appeared in London to give the first performance of William Walton's Viola Concerto in 1929.) He was appointed a professor at the Berlin High School for Music in 1927 and remained there until Nazi rule brought to an end his activities in Germany; his compositions, condemned as degenerate art, ceased to be performed there.<sup>2</sup>

Until this time Hindemith was known as the enfant terrible of the 1920's. His comparatively sharp, savage scores were regarded as the last word in acid dissonance and atonality even though he actually never composed atonal music. After the Nazi condemnation in 1933, he busied himself reorganizing musical education in Turkey. His interest in Turkey was due to his close friendship with the leader of his former quartet, a Turk named Licco Amar.<sup>3</sup> Also during this time he toured widely as a conductor and violist, making several trips to the United States, and he completed work on his theoretical treatise, The Craft of Musical Composition (1937).

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<sup>2</sup>Marion N. Scott, "Paul Hindemith," in Vol. IV of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. by Eric Blom (10 Vols.; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), p. 287.

<sup>3</sup>Harold C. Schonberg, The Lives of the Great Composers (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), p. 530.

In 1940 Hindemith became a professor of theory and composition at the School of Music at Yale University and remained there for thirteen years. He also taught at the Berkshire (Mass.) Music Centre (Tanglewood). After his tenure at Yale, he moved to Switzerland and began again his busy life of composing, conducting, teaching, and writing about music.<sup>4</sup> He accepted a post at the University of Zurich, where he remained until his death. The Bach Award of the City of Hamburg and the Balzan Award, the Italian counterpart to the Nobel Prize, were among the many honors bestowed on him. He devoted himself almost entirely to conducting during the last years of his life. His career ended as it started, as a performing artist, for he died on December 28, 1963 during a concert tour in Frankfurt, the location of many of his first great successes.<sup>5</sup>

Hindemith's compositions constitute a long and comprehensive list of works including large and small, serious and casual, difficult and easy compositions. Aside from sonatas for almost every orchestral instrument with piano, he wrote four sonatas for piano solo.<sup>6</sup> He wrote music for amateur groups on down-to-earth, timely subjects known as Gebrauchsmusik. This was music Hindemith hoped would ingratiate himself with music lovers who had been alienated by the complexity and dissonance of the early works.

Composers during the early part of the century lacked a systematic

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<sup>4</sup>Hansen, Twentieth Century Music, pp. 250-51.

<sup>5</sup>Otto Deri, Exploring Twentieth-Century Music (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 394.

<sup>6</sup>Hansen, Twentieth Century Music, p. 254.