

**Paul HINDEMITH**  
(1895 – 1963)

*Trauermusik (Music of Mourning)* [1936]

Langsam  
Ruhig bewegt  
Lebhaft  
Choral

The German theorist, teacher, violist, conductor, and composer Paul Hindemith was one of the most central and influential figures in music between World War I and World War II. Born near Frankfurt, he moved with his family to the city in 1902. It was here, in 1904, that Hindemith began taking violin lessons and, in 1909, he became a scholarship student at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. Although he had written some compositions, Hindemith began formal study of composition at the Conservatory. He was forced to leave the conservatory in 1917 after being called up for military service and spent most of his service as a member of a regimental band that was stationed about 3 kilometers from the front line. After returning from the war, Hindemith took to the concert stage and, in 1923, was invited to join the administrative committee of the Donaueschingen Festival. In 1924, he married Gertrud Rottenberg, the daughter of the conductor of the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra, and, 3 years later, he received an appointment as Professor of Composition at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. Hindemith was opposed to the rise of Nazism and eventually became at odds with the regime, especially for his refusal to deny friendship with a number of Jewish artists and writers. Early in 1934, the Nazi party began a campaign to discredit Hindemith, which culminated in a boycott of the composer's works announced by the Kulturgemeinde in November of that year. However, as the boycott of his music was not endorsed by the music division of the Nazi party until 1937, Hindemith was allowed to not only continue teaching but also to undertake a series of concert tours abroad, and to have his music published. However, in 1937, Hindemith left Germany for Switzerland, and in 1940 came to the U.S. After a series of lecture and teaching engagements which had been arranged by friends, Hindemith took a position at Yale University, teaching composition, and became an American citizen. After retiring from Yale in 1953, he took up permanent residence in Switzerland where he remained active as a conductor. He became ill in November of 1963 and was transferred to a hospital in Frankfurt, where he died of acute pancreatitis.

In January of 1936, Hindemith traveled to London to perform the premiere of his third viola concerto, *Der Schwanendreher* with the BBC Symphony. On January 20, two days before the concert was scheduled to take place, King George V died and Hindemith, along with Adrian Boult, conductor of the BBC Symphony, and Edward Clark, head of the BBC Music Department, scrambled to find an appropriate replacement for the concerto, which was considered an inappropriate performance choice under the circumstances. In a letter, Hindemith described what transpired: "We debated for hours, but no suitable piece could be found, so we decided that I should write some funeral music myself ... a studio was cleared for me ... and from 11 to 5 I did some fairly hefty mourning." Hindemith completed the work in 6 hours, prepared the score and parts for performance, practiced the solo viola part (he was the soloist), and premiered this new work less than 2 days after its composition.

OF NOTE:

The "heart" of the work is undoubtedly the last movement which is an exposition of the German chorale *Fur deinen Thron tret ich heimit (Here I stand before Thy throne)*. The movement is constructed as an alternation between the phrases of the chorale and intense reflection by the soloist. Hindemith thought the Chorale "very suitable for kings." He later discovered that the melody was also known throughout Britain as the church hymn "The Old Hundredth."