



PHCD 168

PAUL
HIINDIEMITHA
 - THREE PIANO SONATAS (1936) -
 Anatoly Sheludyakov, piano

- SONATA #1** 2:30
 1. Ruhig bewegte Viertel
 2. Im Zeitmass eines sehr
 langsamen Marsches 6:36
 7:19
 3. Lebhaft
 4. Ruhig bewegte Viertel,
 wie im ersten Teil 2:41
 7:15
 5. Leghart
- SONATA #2**
 6. Mässig schnell 3:19
 7. Lebhaft 2:04
 8. Sehr langsam-Ruhig-
 Rondo. Bewegt-Langsam 7:04
- SONATA #3**
 9. Ruhig bewegt 4:57
 10. Sehr lebhaft 3:05
 11. Mässig schnell 6:10
 12. Fuge. Lebhaft 5:04

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The Piano Sonatas of Paul Hindemith

Notes by Anatoly Sheludyakov translated by David Haas

Paul Hindemith is one of the “four pillars” that support the grand edifice of contemporary music, the other three being Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, and Bela Bartok. This is not to say that the “first prizes” of artistic quality belong only to them. The simple point is that their historical positions cannot be occupied by anyone else. Hindemith enters into the foursome as a logical theoretician and practitioner of a new system of tonal thought, a new – expanded - understanding of tonality, making him the inevitable antipode of Schoenberg with his serial organization of the chromatic scale.

New music is not new merely because it arrived in the recent past and took on superficial qualities and problems of the contemporary world. Rather, such music is new on account of its alternative means of organizing the musical material. Hindemith's system of expanded tonality is based on his capital theoretical achievement *The Craft of Musical Composition (Unterweisung im Tonsatz)*, which, in the most general terms, asserts that the basis for contemporary musical language is a system of chromatic tonality, in which all twelve pitches are considered to be scale degrees belonging to a single tonality. Among these twelve degrees some will be more or less distant from the tonal center, but the interval does not make some primary and others secondary as was the case with the common-practice major/minor diatonic system.

Hindemith's system is one of *chromatic modality*, at whose foundation lies a fixed and unchanging hierarchy of pitches, organized according to the distance from the fundamental tone and the strength or weakness of tonal relationships, which Hindemith considered to be a matter of fact established from time immemorial.

Hindemith based his examination of the relationships between pitches - both linear and harmonic (vertical) - on the acoustical phenomenon of difference tones. (When two pitches sound simultaneously, a third – lower - pitch arises. Its frequency is equal to the difference between the frequencies of the first two sounds, for which

reason it is called a “difference tone.”) The strength of a chord root is dependent on the difference tones involved. With this in mind, Hindemith was able to dispense with traditional views of chordal structure as something exclusively tertian. Consequently, chords could be structured from any interval. All intervals and chordal types were classified by him in special tables according to the degree of harmonic independence and definition in relation to other chords, as well as by the potentiality of their harmonic tension to be increased or reduced. This allowed Hindemith to establish the basis for a scale of consonance, i.e., of a harmonic “rise” and “fall”, depending on the degree of chordal consonance or dissonance.

The invention and establishment of the universal system summarized above was based - perhaps paradoxically so - on Hindemith's extensive study of medieval and renaissance music: Gregorian monody, the Franco-Flemish and Italian schools of polyphony, and Old German Lieder, i.e., of those musical cultures that existed prior to the emergence of a “normative” major-minor system.

The conscious return to elements of preclassical musical language, the restoration of tonality in an extended form, and a melodic linear polyphony of Bachian type all factored into Hindemith's insistence that the new music be regulated, its freedom tamed. By inventing a new system, Hindemith distanced himself from the avant garde of the 1920s, from all such future trends, and from hypertrophied Late Romanticism. Following this path, he formed a musical language reminiscent of the woodcut and print: sharply expressive, dynamic, efficient, spare and blunt, a language bereft of superficial concert hall effects and showy virtuosity. ”In his life and career, too, Hindemith resembled the traditional German type of Old Master, an artist in whom craft, technique, and creativity were inseparable, one known as “artigiano” and “artisan” in the Romance languages. The art of Hindemith is distinguished by its thorough mastery of craft and technique, benefiting from a knowledge of how instruments are played and how music is composed. In him, the composer and performer are united”. (Riemann Musiklexicon 12.Aufl., Bd.I Mainz, Schott 1959,S.797-800)

Extraordinary already on account of his intensive activity as composer, teacher, and performer, Hindemith was truly unique on account of his ability to play nearly every instrument.

Hindemith's works embrace all genres without exception and the list of works is enormous. There is music for the church and for broadcast media, music for children and for the operatic stage, for symphonic orchestras and for the cinema, works quite complex in form and works for absolute beginners, for the amateur and for the professional. Yet within this catalog, piano works occur in only a modest quantity. Among the list of piano compositions are four concertos with orchestras of varying instrumentation, the Suite "1922", *Tanzstücke*, the Sonata for Four Hands, the Sonata for Two Pianos, *Ludus tonalis* (exercises in counterpoint, harmony, and piano figuration), *We Build a City* (pieces for children), and, finally, three sonatas, which Hindemith composed in 1936. Each of these sonatas is distinct in musical content, but took shape under some degree of influence from the others, which can justify labeling them a sonata-trilogy.

The First Sonata is the most romantic in tone and the most comprehensive. In a prefatory authorial comment, Hindemith stated: "Friedrich Hölderlin's poem 'Der Main' was the stimulus behind the writing of this sonata." However, the programmaticism here possesses only a general character and the music itself is linked to the poem only in its emotional tone, which ranges from an unclouded agitation to the joy of poetic wandering and reminiscences of a distant youth spent along the banks of a quiet river. The sonata consists of five movements, of which the first and fourth are lyrical and may be viewed as a prelude and interlude in relation to the other three. The second movement is a funeral march, the third a bright scherzo, full of energy and bluster. The fifth movement is the Finale, the one movement to be composed in sonata form, suffused with optimism, light and the radiant energy of creation.

Modest in scope, the Second Sonata could be labeled a sonatina, thanks to the unpretentiousness and relative lightness of the material. The cycle of movements is classically formed: a sonata allegro, scherzo, and rondo, the last movement being preceded by a sad and pensive adagio (comparable to the introductory sections of some of

Haydn's sonatas). The orientation toward the Early Classical Period is evident in the sonata's general appearance and especially in the overtly Haydnesque theme of the rondo-finale.

The Third Sonata appears to combine traits of the previous two: the developmental quality and weight of the First with the laconism and brilliance of the Second. Here in a most concentrated aspect one finds Hindemith's rich thematicism presented in full. The sonata begins with a song theme cast in the rhythm of a Siciliana inspired by Early Romantic lyricism, yet intensified by an archaic modality. The center section has the character of an instrumental toccata, in which the tiny motives reminiscent of Scarlatti and of etudes perform the role of further intensifying the preceding, thus adding drama to the lyrical element of the first section. The sonata's second movement is a scherzo in the manner of Schumann: both dynamic and energetic.

Another type of theme appears in the third movement (a sonata form without a development). Here a march character is linked with a lyrical element, while the periodicity of the melodic couplets speaks to German Lied traditions. Archaic and austere musical material is used in the themes of the finale, which unfolds in the complex form of a double fugue, featuring separate expositions of the themes. With its firm and nearly fanatically obsessive ostinato, the first theme brings to mind the treatment of a fugue's theme as something to be boldly proclaimed and unwaveringly professed. Meanwhile, the very idea of the fugal finale is akin to the idea of a passacaglia, which does not suggest the growth and change of themes in various tonal and harmonic combinations, so much as their hymn-like affirmation.

In his instrumental works, Hindemith often utilizes polyphonic forms as core and culmination, most often in the final movements. More than any other composer of the twentieth century, he deserves respect for both resurrecting and reviving the old instrumental forms, the polyphonic ones in particular. While Stravinsky may be known as the first Neoclassicist, Hindemith is the most rigorous. Moreover, if Stravinsky "projected the past into the present" by stylizing a melody of the past or injecting one of his own themes with an extract of older music, then, by

the same token, Hindemith “projected the present into the past, uniting his melodies with form-shaping principles of ancient polyphony.” (R. Bauer, *Das Konzert* [Berlin, 1955], p. 655)



Anatoly Sheludyakov was born in Moscow where he graduated from the Gnesin's Musical Academy and completed his doctoral studies there under professor Anatoly Vedernikov. He also graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in the composition class of Tikhon Khrennikov. His compositions include *Variations for Orchestra*, *Ostinato for Orchestra*, *Suite for Oboe and Piano*, *Suite for Violin and Piano*, the Cantata *Brotherhood Song*, *Trombone Quartet*, six vocal suites and many others.

In 1977, Mr. Sheludyakov was the winner of the Russian National Piano Competition. He has performed solo concerts with orchestras, solo recitals, and chamber music performances in the most prestigious concert halls in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other major cities in Russia, USA, Germany, France, Italy, China, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Australia. He has recorded sixteen CDs of piano solo and chamber music and has performed on Russian Television and Radio. His repertoire includes the major works for piano, piano and orchestra, and piano chamber music of the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary periods.

In 1999 he was awarded the name “Honored Artist of Russian Federation”. Mr. Sheludyakov has been an assistant professor of piano at the Gnesin Institute of Moscow and maintained a private piano studio in Moscow. Along with being a pianist, Mr. Sheludyakov has substantial experience in singing (bass) and performance of authentic folk music as a soloist of the Pokrovsky Ensemble and as a church singer as well. Currently he is a Guest Artist at University of Georgia School of Music.