

## **DER SCHWANENDREHER: PAUL HINDEMITH'S VIOLA CONCERTO AND ITS EARLY MUSIC INFLUENCES**

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**SUMMARY.** It is well known that much of Hindemith's work is significantly influenced by early music, and Hindemith's compositional style is marked by his use of fugue, ostinato, choral, canon, variations, and cantus firmus techniques. Thus, *Sonata No. 5 for viola* from cycle *op. 11* or the *Sonata for viola op. 31 No. 4*, but also the *Concerto for viola and small orchestra "Der Schwanendreher"* are eloquent examples. The first part of this study highlights the musical personality of Paul Hindemith in the socio-political and cultural context of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century along with some particularities of his compositional style. I emphasize his interest in and closeness to the music of the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque eras and the influence that these particularities had on Hindemith's musical thinking and compositional style. The second part includes the analysis of the *Concerto for viola and small orchestra "Der Schwanendreher"* in which I have highlighted some of the elements taken from the style of the aforementioned eras that inspired him to compose this work.

**Keywords:** Paul Hindemith, *Der Schwanendreher*, early music.

### **I. Paul Hindemith and his music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

After Max Reger's death in 1916 and the end of the First World War, Hindemith became Germany's most important avant-garde composer, turning to post-Romantic elements in his early works and later to expressionist modes of expression. He left the experimental style early on and moved closer and closer to the neoclassical style, not in the manner of Prokofiev and Stravinsky, but with contrapuntal writing closer to that of Bach

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and Reger. This style can be recognized in the series of chamber works composed between 1922 and 1927, entitled *Kammermusik*. Each of these works is dedicated to different ensembles, some even with an unusual composition<sup>2</sup>. The 1930s brought a change in Hindemith's vision, with him composing less for chamber groups and more for large orchestral ensembles. The opera *Mathis der Maler*<sup>3</sup> was preceded by a symphony of the same title from which some passages appear in the opera either as instrumental interludes or elaborately developed as vocal scenes.

An important aspect characterizing Hindemith's musical thinking materialized in the series of works inspired by the current *Gebrauchsmusik*<sup>4</sup>. The simplicity of this type of music can be found in the Renaissance or the chamber genre of the Baroque. The term, however, is characteristic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and illustrates a type of neoclassicism in which old forms and genres are created using modern techniques<sup>5</sup>. The trend promoted by this concept in post-war Germany aimed to simplify technique and style to the point of making it accessible to non-professionals and to increase the degree of culturalization of society. Thus, as the most important exponent of this genre, Hindemith composed works for children, youth groups, novel instrumental ensembles, instruments with modest literature, music for plays, radio, and various other purposes. Examples are the music for Bertolt Brecht's<sup>6</sup> cantata *Der Lindberghflug (The Lindbergh Flight - 1928)*<sup>7</sup>, intended for radio broadcast and composed in collaboration with Kurt Weill<sup>8</sup> or *Trauermusik*<sup>9</sup> - suite for solo viola and string orchestra - composed by Hindemith for the funeral of King George V of Great Britain.

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<sup>2</sup> *Kammermusik No. 1*, for example, is composed for flute, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, harmonium, piano, string quintet and percussion; the *No. 6* is a concerto for *viola d'amore* and chamber orchestra, *viola d'amore* - an instrument not used since the Baroque, but on which Hindemith was a virtuoso performer.

<sup>3</sup> *Mathis, the painter* - composed between 1933 and 1935 and inspired by the life of the painter Matthias Gruenewald.

<sup>4</sup> *Utilitarian music* - a movement that emerged as a reaction against the complexity and intellectual character of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century music, which made it inaccessible to non-professionals. On the other hand, it sought to endow culture in general with a utilitarian functionality.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/art/Gebrauchsmusik> [accessed on 23.08.2024]

<sup>6</sup> Poet, theater man, promoter of the epic movement in theater.

<sup>7</sup> 1929, according to other sources:

<https://www.kwf.org/media/drew%20writings/program%20proms%20700725%20web.pdf> [accessed on 23.08.2024]

<sup>8</sup> Kurt Weill (1900-1950) - German composer, creator of social musical satire with Bertold Brecht and advocate of the *Gebrauchsmusik* concept  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kurt-Weill> [accessed on 23.08.2024]

<sup>9</sup> *Trauermusik* – the work consists of 4 movements among which the last is the most elaborate.

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Hindemith uses a unique system in his work, at once tonal and non-diatonic. His music is centered on a tonic and migrates from one tonal center to another freely using all 12 sounds of the chromatic scale. Based on this system, Hindemith also classifies chords according to the degree of dissonance, whether they suggest a tonality or not. Last but not least, it is worth mentioning the aspect of his melodies that do not have a definite major or minor character. As novel as this system invented and developed by Hindemith may be, it retains a strongly classical characteristic, namely that dissonances always resolve into consonances. Thus, most of his works begin in the consonant field, evolve into a strong dissonance, and end in the most consonant way possible<sup>10</sup>. These are some of the elements that we will find in the analysis of *Der Schwanendreher*.

At the same time, after the war, Hindemith's interest in the violin waned and he concentrated almost exclusively on the viola, both as a performer and through compositions dedicated to the viola. Moreover, in 1922, he rediscovered the viola d'amore, very popular in the Baroque period, an instrument that fascinated him<sup>11</sup> and led to Hindemith's interest in early music increasing through his exploration and interpretation of the repertoire<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, Hindemith also devoted himself to the study of old treatises to deepen this style<sup>13</sup>. Beginning in 1927, he gave a course in performance practice on historical instruments using the instrument collection of musicologist Curt Sachs, kept at the Berlin Academy of Music. After settling in the United States in 1940, he continued his teaching at Yale University and shortly afterward became director of the Collegium Musicum. His connection with Emanuel Winternitz<sup>14</sup> allowed Hindemith and his students to play on instruments in the Metropolitan Museum's collection. The Collegium Musicum under Paul Hindemith's direction became an institution of significant importance in the performance and promotion of early music.

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<sup>10</sup> Examples: *Konzertmusik op. 48* for viola and chamber orchestra or *Konzertmusik op. 49* for piano, brass and harp, *Konzertmusik op. 50* for brass and string orchestra (this was also the last work to receive an opus number).

<sup>11</sup> Winkler, Heinz-Jürgen. 'Fascinated by Early Music: Paul Hindemith and Emanuel Winternitz', *Music in Art*, vol. 29 no. 1/2, 2004, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Heinz-Jürgen Winkler. "Fascinated by Early Music: Paul Hindemith and Emanuel Winternitz", *Music in Art*, vol. 29, no. 1/2, Research Center for Music Iconography, City University of New York, 2004, p. 16 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41818748> [accessed on 29.08.2024; 5.09.2024]

<sup>13</sup> Hindemith, Paul - *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>14</sup> First curator of the musical instruments department at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He was appointed to this position in 1949. He designed and supervised the construction of the AndreMertens Galleries for Musical Instruments, which opened in 1971, and in 1973 was appointed curator emeritus.

Influenced by the experience he gained, his creation confirms the hypothesis that Hindemith regarded early music not only as an object of study but as a source of inspiration and stimulation for the modern musician, to whom he opened and broadened his perspectives. He said: "To the performers, the immediate contingency with this music will open up new horizons."<sup>15</sup>

Hindemith's interest in early music flourished in the new post-war social context. The connection to the values of that period with which he was deeply attracted was also to some extent due to his inner structure. Eckhart Richter says: "It was the low-brow streak in Hindemith's nature which partially explains his affinity for early music. His simple nature allowed him to relate to the light-hearted and improvisational style of early music, yet he had the technique of a virtuoso and the training of an elite musician. There was something minstrel-like in the characteristically casual pose which he assumed when playing not only the *vielle* but also the violin and viola [...] down-to-earth with improvisatory approach [...]"<sup>16</sup>.

In the same post-war period, Bach's influence on musical thought surpassed that of Beethoven, Bach once again becoming the symbol of tradition in music: "Bach becomes a prototype for a general trend in 1920's aesthetics, one that has frequently been encapsulated in the slogan Back to Bach"<sup>17</sup>. Hindemith is linked to Bach not only through the influences we find in his compositions but also through the repertoire he tackled in his solo career. Often, both in his formative years and later as a professional performer, Hindemith included works by Bach in his repertoire. Performing them, however, required serious skills in studying and understanding the language. His volume *The Craft of Musical Composition*<sup>18</sup> contains many of his analyses of Bach's music. In his compositional work, Bach's influence can be seen strongly in the *Kammermusik* series, composed between 1924 and 1927 (Nos. 2-7), which bears similarities to the *Brandenburg Concertos*. They are concertos for piano, cello, violin, viola, viola d'amore, organ, and small instrumental ensemble, along the lines of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*. While in exile in the United States, Hindemith composed *Ludus Tonalis (The Tonal Game)*, a series of 12 fugues preceded by a *Prelude* and followed by a *Postlude*. In *Ludus Tonalis*, each fugue is composed with one

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<sup>15</sup> Richter, Eckhart. "Paul Hindemith as Director of Yale Collegium Musicum", in *College Music Symposium* vol. 18, no. 1, 1978, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Richter - p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> Hinton, Stephen. "Hindemith, Bach and the Melancholy of Obligation", *Bach Perspectives* vol. 3, University of Nebraska Press, 1998, p. 138.

<https://books.google.ro/books?id=BKMx7o0Gty4C&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<sup>18</sup> First published in 1940, republished in 1984 by Schott.

of the 12 sounds of the chromatic gamut as the tonal center, and the postlude mirrors the prelude. The source of the work is also Bach, most frequently associated with *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*, but Steve Schwarz has another opinion: "Hindemith composed the work as a kind of *summa* of his theories of tonality and aesthetics. He very clearly wants us to consider the score as a modern equivalent of Bach's *Art of the Fugue*."<sup>19</sup>

Over almost 20 years, between 1919 and 1937, Hindemith composed his most important works for the viola repertoire, 4 concertos, 3 piano sonatas, and 4 solo sonatas, as well as a concerto and 2 sonatas for viola d'amore and piano. Many of these works integrate typical aspects of early music, formal structures, contrapuntal techniques, or melodies from the Medieval, Renaissance, or Baroque periods, confirming the influence that the study and performance of that repertoire had on his compositional style and musical thinking. The final movements of the *Sonata for solo viola op. 11 no. 5 (Im Form und Zeitmaß einer Passacaglia)* and the *Sonata for solo viola op. 31. No. 4 (Tema mit Variationen)* foreshadow this trend and illustrate the composer's preoccupation with the Baroque style. The closeness to this style can also be seen in his stage appearances as a performer, with Bach's *Ciacconna in D minor* and works by Vitali, Biber, and Reger often being included in concerto programs. Inspired by Bach's works, Hindemith's aim was not to copy structures or elements of Bach's language, but to pay homage to Bach's genius and the masterpieces of his creation.

Fig. 1

It may be that Hindemith was an academician, but that is not necessarily a derogatory word. Bach, for instance, was an academician. And while it is, of course, fruitless to compare the two men, there was something of Bach in Hindemith. For Hindemith composed prolifically in all forms, was a technical master, an expert instrumentalist, a teacher and an all-around musician. And, like Bach, Hindemith had a utilitarian, nonromantic view about music.

Excerpt from *Paul Hindemith*, New York Times, Dec 30, 1963, p. 20,  
author unknown<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Schwartz, Steve - preface to the CD *Paul Hindemith - Piano Music; Ludus Tonalis/Suite "1922"*, John McCabe, Hyperion CDA 66824 60:13

<http://www.classical.net/music/recs/reviews/h/hyp66824a.php> [accessed on 25.08.2024]

<sup>20</sup> <https://briannar.medium.com/what-struck-me-about-this-excerpt-was-aaron-coplands-connection-between-composers-paul-hindemith-ce8ff1355c52> [accessed on 24.08.2024]

Taking into account what Paul Bekker<sup>21</sup> said in 1921, namely "the young composers should not simply resurrect the «old polyphonic art» but should consider «a new, elementary breakthrough of the polyphonic musical concept»"<sup>22</sup>, Hindemith combines the old forms with elements of modern language in a manner that quickly established him as a leader of the modern German school of composition<sup>23</sup>. His music is sober, and balanced, fitting into the neoclassicism of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A polyphonist par excellence, an anti-romantic, and a follower of the "back to Bach" conception, Hindemith, through his immense activity, contributed to the development of music, bringing his name among the great representatives of 20<sup>th</sup>-century art. However, Hindemith's style should not be assessed univocally as neoclassical, but rather as a style of synthesis essentially generated by his anti-romantic convictions.

## II. *Der Schwanendreher* - Concerto for viola and small orchestra

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century finds the viola still in the shadow of many other instruments in terms of qualities as a solo instrument. Viola literature, consequently, is still rather poor. Hindemith's desire to enrich the concerto repertoire for this instrument materializes in the composition and performance of his own works to promote the instrument's qualities. The installation of the Nazi regime in Germany after 1930 and the attacks that targeted him led to a decline in his commitments and forced him to move his musical activities abroad<sup>24</sup>. Thus, the premiere of *Der Schwanendreher*, composed in 1935, a *concerto for viola and small orchestra*, was scheduled for January 22, 1935, in London. The death of King George V canceled the premiere. In place of the viola concerto, Hindemith performed, as a tribute to the King, *Trauermusik* for viola and orchestra<sup>25</sup> featuring motifs from the *Mathis, the Painter* symphony<sup>26</sup>, as well as from the concerto *Der Schwanendreher*<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Bekker (1882 - 1937) - one of the most influential music critics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>22</sup> Johann Buis. "Early music and Paul Hindemith in the United States: A Centenary Evaluation", *College Music Symposium* 36, 1996, p. 29

<https://symposium.music.org/36/item/2122-early-music-and-paul-hindemith-1895-1963-in-the-united-states-a-centenary-evaluation.html> [accessed on 24.08.2024; 30.08.2024]

<sup>23</sup> Browne, Arthur G. "Paul Hindemith and the Neo-Classic Music", *Music and Letters* 13, no. 1, 1932, p. 47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/726549> [accessed on 28.08.2024]

<sup>24</sup> Schubert, Giselher. The preface to the score of *Der Schwanendreher Concerto for viola and small orchestra*, Ernst Eulenburg edition, London; B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz, 1985.

<sup>25</sup> It was composed in a few hours, especially for the occasion.

<sup>26</sup> Composed in 1934.

<sup>27</sup> Steinberg, Michael. *The concerto: A Listener's guide*, Oxford University Press, USA, 1998.

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Postponed for several months, the first public performance of the concerto took place in Amsterdam on November 14, 1935, under the baton of Willem Mengelberg<sup>28</sup>.

Hindemith composed this work for solo viola and an orchestra in a small and unusual composition: two flutes, an oboe, two clarinets, a bassoon, three horns, a trumpet, a trombone, timpani, harp, and a string section of four violins and three double basses. The reason for not including violins and violas in the string section was to emphasize the sound of the solo viola so that it could be heard clearly and loudly enough. Comparison with Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6* is immediately obvious, given the influence Bach's work had on Hindemith's compositional style. Also, the structure of the instrumental apparatus paired with the 2 solo violas in this 6<sup>th</sup> Brandenburg concerto, namely 2 viola da gamba, cello, violone, and harpsichord, excluding the high register instruments, provided a solution whereby the viola, a middle register instrument, could be emphasized. Last but not least, the reduced size of the orchestra shows similarities with the ensembles of the Renaissance and Baroque eras, allowing for an atmosphere of closer, freer, and perhaps even less formal collaboration.

**Fig. 2**



The most important element of early music inspiration in this concerto is the four old German folk songs that Hindemith used as sources. The title of the concerto is chosen after the one that appears in the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement: *Seid ihr nicht der Schwanendreher?*<sup>29</sup> *Der Schwanendreher* translated means *The Swan Spinner*, a meaning supported by a drawing made by the composer himself and referring to medieval cooks who left it to their helpers to spin roast poultry on a skewer.

***Der Schwanendreher* - drawing by Paul Hindemith<sup>30</sup>**

<sup>28</sup> Paulding, James E. *Paul Hindemith: A Study of His Life and Work*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Iowa, 1974, p. 217.

<sup>29</sup> *Aren't you the swan spinner?* or *Are you not the organ grinder?*

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.hindemith.info/en/life-work/biography/1933-1939/work/orchestral-works/> [accessed on 13.08.2024]

On the other hand, if we consider the note at the beginning of the score, a note that also belongs to the composer, the title can be figuratively translated as *The organ grinder*<sup>31</sup>: "A minstrel joins a happy gathering and displays what he has brought from distant lands: serious and joyful songs closing with dance. By his inspiration and skill, he extends and decorates the melodies like a regular minstrel, experimenting and improvising. This medieval picture was the basis for the composition"<sup>32</sup>. Both the meanings attributed to the title and the melodies and texts of the songs underlying the three movements place the concerto in the inspirational area of the medieval period and, in addition, illustrate the programmatic character of each movement and the concerto as a whole.

The 4 songs are taken in this concerto from Franz Magnus Böhme's<sup>33</sup> *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*<sup>34</sup>. The volume contains over 660 old popular songs and texts dating from the medieval period, accompanied by explanations and commentaries by the author. The four songs that Hindemith used in the concerto are: *Zwischen Berg und tiefem Tal*, a song reworked in the first movement; *Nun laube, Lindlein, laube* and *Der Gutzgauch auf dem Zaune sass*, both used in the second movement and *Seid ihr nicht der Schwanendreher* in the third, which also gives the concerto its title.

The first song *Zwischen Berg und tiefem Tal* has its origins in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to Böhme's commentary on this song, the text dates from around 1500, and the melody seems to belong to a certain Oeglin and was composed in 1512<sup>35</sup>. Böhme also points out that there is no firm evidence that the melody and text are thought to be thought of together, a common practice in medieval repertoire being to associate several texts to the same melody. The melody of the second song, also dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century,

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<sup>31</sup> Andrieș, Vladimir. "Concertul pentru violă și orchestră Der Schwanendreher de P. Hindemith: Particularități compoziționale" ("Der Schwanendreher concerto for viola and orchestra by P. Hindemith: compositional particularities"), *Scientific Yearbook: music, theater, fine arts, no. 1-2 (8-9)*, 2009, ISSN 1857-2251, p.15. ([https://revista.amtap.md/wpcontent/files\\_mf/15629230112\\_Andries\\_Concertulpentruviola\\_siorchestraDerSchwanendreherdeP\\_Hindemith\\_particularitaticompoziționale.pdf](https://revista.amtap.md/wpcontent/files_mf/15629230112_Andries_Concertulpentruviola_siorchestraDerSchwanendreherdeP_Hindemith_particularitaticompoziționale.pdf)) (accessed on 20.08.2024)

<sup>32</sup> Paul Hindemith - *Der Schwanendreher (Konzert nach altes Volksliedern für Bratsche und kleines Oechester)*, B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz, 1936

<sup>33</sup> Franz Magnus Böhme (1827 - 1898) - German teacher, composer and folklorist.

<sup>34</sup> Böhme, Franz Magnus. *Altdeutsches Liederbuch: Volkslieder der Deutschen nach Wort und Weise aus dem 12. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert (Collection of old German songs with texts and melodies from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century)*, Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig 1877 ([https://books.google.en/books?redir\\_esc=y&hl=ro&id=rgYJAQAAMAAJ&q=zwischen+ber+g+und+tiefen+tal+#v=snippet&q=zwischen%20berg%20und%20tiefen%20tal&f=false](https://books.google.en/books?redir_esc=y&hl=ro&id=rgYJAQAAMAAJ&q=zwischen+ber+g+und+tiefen+tal+#v=snippet&q=zwischen%20berg%20und%20tiefen%20tal&f=false)) [ccessed on 13.08.2024, 22.08.2024]

<sup>35</sup> Böhme - *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*, p. 256-257.



appears in several collections of songs<sup>36</sup> with an anonymous author. The third song deals with a theme frequently used by the German poets of the Middle Ages, namely birds<sup>37</sup>. The fourth song, *Seid ihr nicht der Schwanendreher*, seems to have challenged Hindemith the most, inspiring him to compose the last movement of the concerto and ultimately giving the concerto its title. In his collection, Böhme places the origin of this song in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and describes it as dance music<sup>38</sup> or a musical joke<sup>39</sup>. The dance character of this song inspired Hindemith to adopt *the theme with variations* form in this final movement of the concerto.

The melodies are used either as quotations<sup>40</sup> throughout the work that become constituent parts or as paraphrases, extended developments through different ways of using pre-existing music. The first movement of the concerto is structured based on three segments: an improvisatory introduction, the actual body of the movement organized in sonata form, and the *Coda* in which the material of the introduction is varied. The outline of the form is as follows:

**Table 1**

|        | Introduction |          |          |               | Sonata form  |              |              |          |          | Coda      |          |            |
|--------|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Bar    | 1 – 34       |          |          |               | 35 – 184     |              |              |          |          | 185 – 215 |          |            |
| Motifs | <b>a</b>     | <b>b</b> | <b>c</b> | <b>b var.</b> | <b>d(T1)</b> | <b>e(T2)</b> | <b>f(ep)</b> | <b>d</b> | <b>e</b> | <b>a</b>  | <b>f</b> | <b>d+e</b> |
| Bar    | 1            | 11       | 20       | 29            | 35           | 62           | 88           | 125      | 152      | 185       | 194      | 208        |

### The outline of the form

The movement emphasizes different types of melodic material, from improvisatory to cantabile and concertante notated in small, italicized font. Thus, the improvisatory character is found in motives **a** and **c** and occurs in the solo part reflecting the main character, the musician, who narrates the events of his journey. The cantabile one, **b**, is inspired by the folk song *Zwischen Berg und tiefem Tal* (*Between mountains and deep valleys*) and is

<sup>36</sup> One of them is *Musae Sioniae* by Michael Pretorius, the song is mentioned in volume 7, cf. Lee Soomi - *Musical borrowing in four works for viola from the 20<sup>th</sup> century repertoire*, PhD thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2010, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> In this case, the cuckoo is discredited for its habit of laying its eggs in another bird's nest (Böhme. p. 259)

<sup>38</sup> In all likelihood, the dance-like character of this song inspired Hindemith to adopt *the form of the theme with variations* in this last movement of the concerto.

<sup>39</sup> Böhme - p. 396-397.

<sup>40</sup> In the sense that the composer treats them as ready-made themes and not as a source of inspiration to generate his own themes.

usually played on wind instruments, while the concertante-like ones, **d**, **e**, and **f**, depict the heroes the musician meets on his journey.

At the beginning of the movement, we already have the first element of baroque inspiration. The improvisatory solo segment introduces the audience in the story of the concerto, and its placement at the beginning, before the actual discourse of the movement, may be an allusion to the *Adagio* preceding the *Fugue* in Bach's *Sonata I for solo violin*. We find the same melodic material as a cadenza at the end of the movement, before the *Coda*, in a more restricted development. The segment is built of chords and double notes on the tonic and 6565ujdominant pillars, predominantly dotted rhythm and *lamento-like* intonations<sup>41</sup> emphasizing the dramatic character.

### E.g. 1

**Langsam** (♩ etwa 60)

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of the first movement of the Viola Concerto by Paul Hindemith. The score is in 4/4 time and marked 'Langsam' (slow) with a tempo of approximately 60 beats per minute. It features a solo for the Viola (Bratsche) and piano accompaniment (Klavier). The Viola part begins with a melodic line characterized by dotted rhythms and lamento-like intonations, with several triplets and a circled 'A' marking a specific measure. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and double notes on the tonic and dominant pillars.

### Intro viola at the beginning of the first movement (Paul Hindemith - Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt.I, bars 1-10)<sup>42</sup>

The introduction unfolds on the trajectory of an arc that prepares the entrance of the orchestra with the enunciation of the folk song used in the first movement and intoned by the wind instruments. The melody of the folk song is inserted into the melodic-harmonic texture throughout measures 11 (letter A) to 33 (sonata-like middle section) being placed in the middle

<sup>41</sup> Andrieș - p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> The musical examples in this study are taken from B. Schott's *Sohne* edition, 1936, piano reduction.

register. In this orchestral context the English horn and the trombone take the place of the tenor voice and is emphasized by its longer durations.

Fig. 3

The image shows a musical score for a trombone part, labeled 'dor. tr.' at the top left. The score is written on three staves in a single system. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first line of music corresponds to the lyrics 'Zwischen berg vnd tie / fem tal, da leit ein frei / e'. The second line corresponds to 'straf / sen: wer sei / nen bu / len nit ha / ben mag,'. The third line corresponds to 'der muß in fa / ren laf / sen.' The word 'der' is highlighted in yellow in the original image. The music consists of a single melodic line with various note values and rests.

**Zwischen Berg und tiefem Tal**<sup>43</sup>

Hindemith invests this folk song with the qualities of a *cantus firmus* which will form the basis of the polyphonic elaboration and succeeds not only in realizing the idea of separating the melody from the rest but also in suggesting the image of traveling "between a mountain and a deep valley". The theme of the folk song used as a source appears fragmented in the flute, oboe, and clarinet in the development at measure 96 (letter K), where the viola provides a discrete accompaniment with a melodic wavy line in *pp*, and at measure 109 (letter L) in the trombone line, accompanied by the viola in *pizzicato* chords. In the *Coda*, at measure 194 where the viola again accompanies with an *obbligato-like* line, the folk song is retuned entirely by oboe and clarinet. Unusually, Hindemith does not directly involve the viola in the enunciation of this theme, but only in supporting it with the accompaniment.

The sonata-structured middle segment begins at measure 35 with an energetic and vigorous first theme, characters suggested both by the tempo indication, *Mäßig bewegt, mit Kraft (Allegro moderato, con forza)*, and by the writing itself. This theme retains the punctuated rhythm of the introductory segment and adds to the tense character.

<sup>43</sup> Böhme - *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*: song no. 163, p. 257.

## E.g. 2

Mäßig bewegt, mit Kraft ( $\text{♩} = 100$ )

**Theme I in sonata segment (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. I, bars 34-37)**

The bridge does not bring its thematic material, but it will create a dense melodic-harmonic fabric from which the dialog between the viola and the orchestra will emerge, the latter using mainly the melodic motif of the main theme stated in different keys.

The second theme (measure 62/letter F) has a lyrical and whimsical character in stark contrast to the previous discourse. In the exposition, the second theme undergoes a tonal treatment in contrast to the reprise where it will be enunciated only once and only by the viola. To this theme is added a rhythmic-melodic figure with the appearance of a *motif* and signal-like character. This *motif* will be present at the end of the movement, retaining the signal character.

## E.g. 3

**Leitmotif with signal character (Paul Hindemith, Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. I, bars 86-87)**

The development begins with a rhythmic segment in which the pulsation of the triplets in ascending and sequential motion produces an accumulation of tension. Surprisingly this will not culminate in force, as it is conducted, but with the calm and serene emergence of the folk melody that gives the title to the first movement of the concerto.

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E.g. 4

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the viola part (top staff) and piano accompaniment (bottom two staves). The viola part begins with a melodic line, while the piano accompaniment provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation. The second system continues the development, featuring a prominent melodic counterpoint in the viola part and a more complex piano accompaniment with triplets and other rhythmic patterns. Dynamics range from *pp* to *f*. A circled 'K' is placed above a measure in the upper right section of the score.

**Accumulation of tension that generates the melody of the folk song in trombone part (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. I, bars 90-98)**

The theme of the folk song is vividly explored, to penetrate the listener's memory, on different groups of wind instruments and in different keys, while the viola superimposes a contrasting melodic counterpoint line. In measure 108, the melodic counterpoint changes to a chordal counterpoint, and later (measure 119) the viola returns to a new melodic counterpoint from the main group theme, anticipating the reprise. It should be noted that Hindemith does not elaborate on a broad development, but instead combines the tonal development of the folk song theme with the contrapuntal one.

The reprise does not bring essential changes of content concerning the exposition, but only in the order of enunciation. Thus, the first theme appears first in the orchestra with a preview-like appearance, preparing the viola. The second theme will also be enunciated in reverse order to the exposition and will not even generate the dialog of *motif*. Instead, there is a developmental character to this section that compensates for the minimized dimensions of the sonata form development section. The processing of the melodic motives belonging to both themes creates a conflictual atmosphere that will only be defused by the appearance of the introductory segment having the same improvisatory-cadential character. Note that each theme or thematic motif is treated and developed through contrapuntal techniques.

The *Coda* brings to the foreground excerpts from the thematic material of the two themes together with the *leitmotif* figure, over which the viola intones a new discrete contrapuntal line.

The slow movement of the concerto borrows two medieval folk songs: *Nun laube, Lindlein, laube!* (*Bend now, little linden, bend!*). In other sources, the following translation appears: "Turn green, little linden, turn green!"<sup>44</sup> and *Der Gutzgauch auf dem Zaune sass* (*The cuckoo sits on the fence*). The form adopted is A - B - A, and the borrowed songs serve as thematic material corresponding to each section. The outline of the form looks like this:

Table 2

| Section       | A       |        | B       | C      |         |
|---------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| Melodic motif | a       | b      | c       | b var  | a var   |
| Content       | prelude | song I | song II | song I | prelude |
| Bar           | 1       | 35     | 72      | 194    | 217     |

### The outline of the form

The discourse opens with an original theme, intoned by the viola and subtly accompanied by the harp. This timbral and orchestral arrangement emphasizes the expressive character of the prelude. The contrast with the tense and dramatic finale of the first movement is sharply delineated, and the punctuated, typically Sicilian rhythm adds a discreetly dance-like touch.

E.g. 5

Sehr ruhig (♩. etwa 40)

### Sicilian-looking theme (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. II, bars 1-6)

The tempo changes at measure 35 (*Langsam*) sets the stage for the introduction of the folk melody. Hindemith configures this folk melody (e.g. 8) in a chorale-like manner in the orchestral compartment.

<sup>44</sup> Andrieş - pp. 18-19.

Fig. 4

175. Nun laube, Lindlein, laube!

mixol.

Nun lau = be, lind = lein, lau = be! nicht län = ger ichs er = trag:

ich hab mein lieb ver = lo = ren, hab gar ein trau = rig tag.

**Nun laube, Lindlein, laube!**<sup>45</sup>

Viola inserts melodic motifs from the initial theme between the choral phrases, creating the impression of comments (e.g. 9). Thus, the two themes, Hindemith's and the borrowed one unfold in a kind of alternation of two superimposed planes of sound. On the reprise of section **A**, these two melodic motifs will overlap concomitantly, Hindemith using the folk melody as a *cantus firmus* over which he counterpoints with his theme.

E.g. 6

Langsam *p* *pp* *mf*

frei

Langsam *p* *mf*

frei *p* *mf*

Langsam

**The orchestral chorale in dialog with solo viola comments (Paul Hindemith –  
Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. II, bars 35-52)**

Note that this segment has a polymetric structure: the orchestral part is written in 2/4 and the viola part in 6/8.

<sup>45</sup> Böhme - *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*, song no. 175, p. 265.

The **B** section of the movement is constructed in a *fugato* manner, as indicated by the composer. The energetic theme quotes the folk song *Cuckoo sits on the fence*, exposed in turn by all the woodwind instruments, and is accompanied by the same counter-subject throughout. The subject and counter subject are presented in different tonal and timbral juxtapositions.

Fig. 5

**167. Kuckuk.**

jon.

Der gutz-gauch auf dem zau-ne saß, der gutzgauch auf dem  
zau-ne saß, — es reg-net fer und er ward naß, — es  
Oberstimmen.  
reg-net fer und er ward naß. Guckguck! guckguck! guckguck!

***Cuckoo sits on the fence*<sup>46</sup>**

E.g. 7

Fugato (♩ = 108) „Der Gutzgauch auf dem Zaune saß“

(F)

*mf*

The theme of the *fugato* section is taken identically from the folk song (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. II, bars 73-86)

Several aspects characterizing this *fugato* are noteworthy. Thus, the theme gradually diminishes in the number of measures, a procedure frequently encountered in Hindemith's compositions of this kind. Then, the

<sup>46</sup> Böhme - *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*, song no. 167, p. 259.

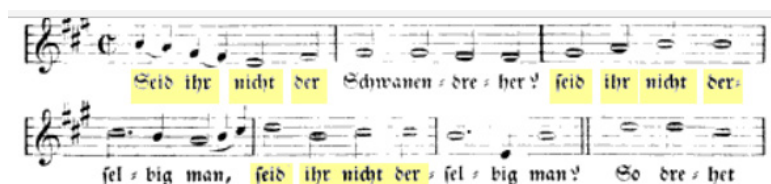


alternation of major and minor modes, is unusual for Hindemith, given that his system does not emphasize any outlined modal tendencies<sup>47</sup>.

The reprise of section **A** begins with a segment in which the folk melody is present in choral writing, followed by a segment in which the lyrical theme is superimposed. This type of writing emphasizes the cyclical character of the part, and the procedures Hindemith used are eloquent examples of the influence of early music in a modern style of writing.

The last movement of the concerto is in the form of a *theme with variations*, a form with ancient traditions that have been found in music since the Baroque period. The chosen theme has a dance character - the folk song *Seid ihr nicht der Schwanendreher?* (*Are you not the organ grinder?*).

Fig. 6



***Seid ihr nicht der Schwanendreher?***<sup>48</sup>

There are, however, several different opinions regarding the formal structure of this part. Thus, Abraham Veinus<sup>49</sup> considers that the theme develops 7 variations followed by a Coda, David Ewen<sup>50</sup> delineates only 5 variations, while other sources<sup>51</sup> reflect 12 variations elaborated on the principle of the rondo form by alternating orchestral variations fulfilling the chorus function with those of the solo part acting as episodes. At the same time, the grouping of the variations shows some similarities with the sonata

<sup>47</sup> The subjects appear in alternating major and minor keys, the modes being extremely strongly outlined. The first exposition of the subject is in F major, followed by C major, then G minor and F major again.

<sup>48</sup> Böhme - *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*, song no. 315, p. 396.

<sup>49</sup> Veinus, Abraham. *Victor book of concertos*, Simon and Schuster Publishers, New York, 1948, pp. 195 - 196.

<sup>50</sup> Ewen, David. *Music for the Millions - The Encyclopedia of Musical Masterpieces*, Van Doren Press, 2007, p. 286.

<sup>51</sup> Habšudová, Aneta. "Paul Hindemith's viola concerto *Der Schwanendreher*", dissertation paper, Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, Brno, 2021, p.21 [https://is.jamu.cz/th/le3k8/Plny\\_text\\_prace.pdf](https://is.jamu.cz/th/le3k8/Plny_text_prace.pdf) [accessed on 31.08.2024] or as William E. Runyan wrote in 2017 <https://www.runyanprogramnotes.com/paul-hindemith/der-schwanendreher> [accessed on 31.08.2024].

form. Thus, the lyrical middle section (*Ruhig bewegt*), framed by the opening in *Mäßig schnell* and *Zeitmass wie früher*, creates the image of a tripartite discourse of this part, based on the fast-slow-fast succession. This type of architecture is also found in other works, an example being Liszt's *Sonata in B minor*. Variation IV also brings a different and well-defined thematic element in the key of D major which can be considered as the second theme of the bithematic sonata, especially since it is taken up again in variation XI in the opening key of C major.

The formal scheme of the part revealed from both perspectives is as follows:

**Table 3**

| Section | Exposition   | Development | Cadenza   | Reprise | Coda  |
|---------|--------------|-------------|-----------|---------|-------|
| Content | theme+v.1- 4 | v. 5-6      | v. 7      | v. 8-11 | v. 12 |
| bars    | 1 - 126      | 127 - 189   | 190 - 209 | 210-288 | 289   |

**The formal scheme of the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement (Tema con Variazioni)**

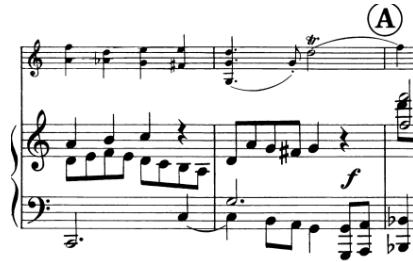
The theme of the German folk song is partially enunciated by the orchestra at the beginning of the part and then fully exposed by the solo viola from the seventh measure on. The writing is dense in chords and double chords, but very comfortable - demonstrating a very good knowledge of the possibilities of the viola and instrumental technique.

**E.g. 8**

Mäßig schnell (♩ = 100)

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system is in 2/2 time and features a dense texture of chords and double chords in both hands. The second system continues the piece with similar harmonic density and includes dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p'.

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**Theme taken from a folk song, partly for orchestra, entirely for solo viola (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. III, bars 1-12)**

The first variation includes the typical processing of the theme in the solo part while the orchestra schematically marks the harmonic skeleton. Variations 2 and 3 entrust the theme to the orchestral section in an integral enunciation, giving the viola a design based on arpeggios and complex rhythm characterized by virtuosity. In these two variations, Hindemith employs the play of timbres, registers, and tonalities as a variational procedure, leaving the theme intact in the cello and double bass score in the second variation and giving it to the woodwinds in the third.

The fourth variation, as I have already mentioned, brings a new, very well-shaped sound material which, from the sonata form perspective, can be considered as the secondary theme of the exposition.

**E.g 9**

**Var. 4**



**New thematic material possibly corresponding to Theme II in sonata form (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. III, bars 103-110)**

Of course, according to all the rules of sonata form, it should be found in the section designated as development (variations 5 and 6), but here the discourse keeps the variational elaboration so that it only works elements from the folk song theme (e.g. 10) and elements related to the *leitmotif* of the second movement (e.g. 11).

E.g. 10

**The 5-note motif from the theme at *Lebhafter* (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. III, bars 154-157)**

E.g. 11

**Varied *leitmotif* from movement II here in *p* (Paul Hindemith – Viola Concerto *Der Schwanendreher*, mvt. III, bar 164-166)**

The seventh variation (4 m. before P - 4 m. before Q) is a cadential moment of the movement due first of all to its virtuoso aspect, then to the fact that the orchestra only emphasizes the initial motive of the theme, the rest of the thematic material dissolving in the improvisation of the solo viola. The following variations (8, 9, and 10) are typical variations that rework the thematic material both in the orchestral score (the horn exposes the theme in Bb major - variation 8, and the woodwinds take it in C major - variation 9) and in the viola score (variation 10) which keeps the key of C major, but the rhythm is enriched. The dialogue-like writing also makes this variation reminiscent of *concerto grosso* with the alternation *tutti - soli*.

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The newly formed theme in the fourth variation is re-exposed in C major - the basic key - in the eleventh, giving the sonata form that reprise aspect, while the last is the most complex and elaborate. The compressed elaboration of several melodic motifs of the theme through different procedures, from explicit enunciation to subtle insertion into a dense rhythmic-melodic and harmonic-modal fabric of the constituent sounds of the theme, reveals a conclusive character of this variation that I have considered *Coda* regardless of whether the form is a theme with variations or a sonata. The initial motif of the theme consisting of the five sounds in descending motion is obsessively insinuated into the fabric of the whole musical becoming a motif of the variation and of the movement in permanent support of the memory of the thematic material processed but at the same time in constant competition. The concerto ends with this motif stated *secco* and unequivocally.

Hindemith employs a wide diversity of variational techniques including: diversified meter, mode shifts, complicated rhythms, ornaments, double chords, chords, scales, arpeggios, and thematic transformation procedures. Variations are of several types: the typical ones, generated by the processing of thematic elements (var. 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10), those in which the theme remains explicitly expressed, in a quotation-like formulation, over which one or other of the dialoguing voices superimposes new sound material (var. 2, 3, 8, 12) or those in which the variational process itself generates new thematic material (var. 4 and 10).

## Conclusions

Despite the complex language and modern means of expression, Hindemith succeeds in this concerto in creating evocative music, with melodies both expressive and plastic, with harmonies both traditional and novel, with a robust yet elastic rhythm. The presence of elements and techniques specific to early music is evident and at the same time subtle in every movement of the concerto. In the first, it is noticeable that the solo viola score never once features the source song, but always presents contrasting material each time the folk song melody is enunciated by the orchestra. Under the composer's note at the beginning and the text of the song, it is obvious that the orchestra reproduces the image of mountains and valleys, and the viola that of the character - the musician on his journey. In addition, the free character of the viola's score suggests the improvisatory manner of the minstrels' music of the old times. In the second movement, we find *cantus firmus-like* melodic lines that integrate the source songs into themes if we take as an example only the opening segment (*Wie am Anfang*). In the final movement, Hindemith adopts different variational techniques specific to the

Baroque and Classicism. One of them is the technique of motivic variation, which in this final part of the concerto is reflected in the descending 5-sound motif taken from the source song as the basis for the variational processing. The motive frequently appears as 'quoted' in variations, in the original, inverted, mirror, and different keys.

*Der Schwanendreher* concerto for viola and small orchestra has become a landmark work in the viola repertoire and belongs to the triad of great concertos alongside William Walton and Bela Bartok. The program notes, the text of folk songs musically described by orchestration or the deliberate use of early forms establish a significant link to the music of the past throughout the work. What sets it apart, however, is how Hindemith has managed to bring together compositional styles and techniques specific to the Renaissance or Baroque with the musical expression of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hindemith not only masked elements of early music under a complex orchestration but succeeded in making them essential to the work as a whole.

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