



# Paul HINDEMITH

## *Symphonic Metamorphosis*

**Paul Hindemith** (16 November 1895 – 28 December 1963) was a prolific German composer, violist, violinist, teacher and conductor. Notable compositions include his song cycle *Das Marienleben* (1923), *Der Schwanendreher* for viola and orchestra (1935), and opera *Mathis der Maler* (1938). He was taught the violin as a child. He entered the Hochschule Konservatorium in Frankfurt am Main where he studied conducting, composition and violin under Arnold Mendelssohn and Bernhard Sekles, supporting himself by playing in dance bands and musical-comedy outfits. He acted as concertmaster of the Frankfurter Museumsorchester from 1915 to 1923 and played in the Rebner string quartet from 1914 in which he played second violin, and later the viola. In 1921 he founded the Amar Quartet, playing viola, and extensively toured Europe.

***Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*** was composed in America in 1943. It was Hindemith's most popular work. The idea of composing this work based on Carl Maria von Weber's music. When he made a piano arrangement in March 1940 of the two pieces that would become movements 1 and 3 of the *Metamorphosis* (which in a letter of April 12, 1940 he described as "lightly coloured and made a bit sharper"), Massine expressed a preference for more strict arrangements of Weber. This was one reason the project fell through (Luttmann 2009, 335–36). After studying Weber's music, Hindemith watched one of Massine's ballets and disliked it, and so wrote the *Symphonic Metamorphosis* instead. The Andantino and Marsch were completed on June 8 and June 13, 1943, respectively, and the manuscript of the complete orchestral score is dated August 29, 1943 (Luttmann 2009, 335).

Although by its thematic material it belongs squarely in the European tradition, it was composed with the virtuosity of American symphony orchestras in mind, and was titled originally in English (Schubert 2001). Other hands later translated it variously into German as *Symphonische Metamorphose von [über/nach/zu] Themen Carl Maria von Webers*; two German editions mistakenly give the title in the plural, *Sinfonische Metamorphosen nach Themen von Carl Maria von Weber*, and *Sinfonische Metamorphosen Carl Maria von Weber'scher Themen*, though none of these German titles were sanctioned by Hindemith (Luttmann 2009, 335). They nevertheless have sometimes been back-translated into English as *Metamorphoses on Themes by ....* The work is also sometimes known in English as *Symphonic Variations on (or of) Themes by Carl Maria von Weber* but, despite the title's reference to "themes", the work incorporates material more broadly from whole works by Weber (Anderson 1996, 1). The *Symphonic Metamorphosis* is in four movements: 1. *Allegro* 2. *Scherzo* 3. *Andantino* 4. *Marsch*.

The Weber themes are taken from incidental music which Weber wrote for a play by Carlo Gozzi, based on the same Turandot legend, that later inspired Giacomo Puccini and others. Hindemith and his wife would play Weber's music for piano four-hands, and Hindemith used some of these little-known pieces—Op. 60/4 (no. 253 in the Jähns catalog of Weber's works) (first movement), Op. 37 (J. 75) (second movement), Op. 10/2 (J. 82) (third movement), and Op. 60/7 (J. 265) (fourth movement) for the themes of the other movements. Weber's piano duets were written around 1802–03, 1809, and 1818–19, his *Turandot* music in 1809.