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Interpreting the Mourning Process

Through Hindemith's *Trauermusik*

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Interpreting the Mourning Process
Through Hindemith's *Trauermusik*

by

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Report

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Abstract

Interpreting the Mourning Process
Through Hindemith's *Trauermusik*

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Supervisor: David Neumeyer

Paul Hindemith traveled to London in 1936 intending to give the British premiere of his concerto for viola and chamber orchestra titled *Der Schwanendreher* on 22 January. The premiere – and much else – was put into question a few minutes before midnight on 20 January 1936, however, when King George V passed away. The next day, Hindemith worked from 11:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. composing *Trauermusik [Music of Mourning]* for solo viola and string orchestra as a tribute to the recently deceased King of England. Thus, the circumstances surrounding the compositional origin of this piece invite a discussion of mourning in both a historical and musical context.

In this paper, I will touch on issues such as how mourning defines us as humans and how emotions associated with mourning can be represented in music and experienced by the listener. I will illustrate how mourning helps us to understand the meaning of *Trauermusik* when it was written and first performed in 1936, following the death of

King George V. To do this I will use Maurice Blanchot's ideas from his *La Communauté inavouable*, specifically his discussion of how death and mourning help to both define humans and bring them together into a community. Having established this critical framework, I will then provide a hermeneutic reading of *Trauermusik*, using analytical insights based on Hindemith's use of the 0167 pitch collection as my evidence. At the heart of my thesis is the belief that combining both historical insights and detailed analytical knowledge of *Trauermusik* will heighten the listener's experience of the piece to a greater extent than either perspective could on its own.

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Interpreting the Mourning Process Through Hindemith's *Trauermusik*

Scott C. Schumann

In the fall of 1935, Paul Hindemith composed a concerto for viola and chamber orchestra titled *Der Schwanendreher: Konzert nach alten Volksliedern für Viola und kleines Orchester,*[1] which he premiered on 14 November 1935 in Amsterdam.[2] Not long after, he traveled to London, intending to give this work its British premiere on 22 January 1936 at the Queen's Hall with Adrian Boult and the BBC Symphony. *Der Schwanendreher* was programmed alongside Schoenberg's *Pelleas und Melisande* and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.[3] The concert program – and much else – was put into question a few minutes before midnight on 20 January 1936, however, when King George V passed away. As an artist's response to this event, Hindemith put his concerto aside, and between 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on 21 January 1936, wrote a new piece to commemorate the king's death. This composition, entitled *Trauermusik [Music of Mourning]*, was for solo viola and string orchestra: it was premiered the following day, 22 January 1936 in the same venue where *Der Schwanendreher* was to have been heard.

The circumstances surrounding the compositional origin of *Trauermusik* invite a discussion of mourning in both a historical and musical context. In this paper, I will touch on issues such as how mourning defines us as humans and how emotions associated with mourning can be represented in music and experienced by the listener. I will illustrate how mourning helps us to understand the meaning of *Trauermusik* when it

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[1] Giselher Schubert, Preface to the score of *Der Schwanendreher*, trans. Penelope Souster (London: Ernst Eulenburg Ltd., 1985), IV.
This is also discussed in Hans Kohlhase, "Einleitung," in *Paul Hindemith: Sämtliche Werke*, Series III, vol. 4: *Bratschenkonzerte* (Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1997), IX.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Music This Week," *The Times*, January 20, 1936, 20.

was written and first performed in 1936, following the death of King George V. To do this I will use Maurice Blanchot's ideas from his *La Communauté inavouable*, specifically his discussion of how death and mourning help to both define humans and bring them together into a community. Having established this critical framework, I will then provide a hermeneutic reading of *Trauermusik*, using analytical insights based on Hindemith's use of the 0167 pitch collection as my evidence. At the heart of my thesis is the belief that combining both historical insights and detailed analytical knowledge of *Trauermusik* will heighten the listener's experience of the piece to a greater extent than either perspective could on its own.

Hermeneutics of Mourning: Philosophical and Historical Contexts

That *Trauermusik* could serve as an act of mourning in the immediate context of its

production seems unequivocal.[4] As I will describe, King George V's death brought the

English people together through the loss of this great leader. Throughout his reign

(1910–1936), the King led England through some of England's greatest social and

political challenges of the early twentieth century. Soon after rising to power, King

George V solved the nation's budget crisis by reforming the House of Lords through the

Parliament Act of 1911, resulting in a more efficient legislative process.[5] Later, when

WWI broke out in 1914, the King was particularly remembered for making a number of

"morale-raising visits and public appearances"[6] which helped unite the country during the

conflict. Furthermore, when the Great Depression hit England in 1931, King George V

combined the Labour, Conservative, and Liberal parties into the National Government as

a way to more effectively handle the financial crisis.[7] Given the monarch's service to his

country, it stands to reason that the English people would grieve over his death. The

premiere of *Trauermusik* thus served as one way for the people of Britain to unite as a

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[4] One could of course argue that had Hindemith not been in London to premiere *Der Schwanendreher*, the King not died suddenly, and had the resources of the BBC not been available to him the next day, *Trauermusik* may have never been written; at least not in the way that it exists as we know it. This list could be extended to include other factors, such as the point to which Hindemith's musical language had developed at that point, his ability to compose a work of this magnitude in such a short time, the people of England being so willing to let him perform such an act, etc. What is important to remember about this list is simply that there were a number of factors that led to the composition of this piece that support an interpretation of it as a work of mourning in a more immediate sense, as they all led to the composition of the work as we know it today.

[5] Geoffrey Alderman "George V" The Oxford Companion to British History. Ed John Cannon. Oxford University Press, 2009. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University of Texas - Austin. 20 April 2011 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t110.e1799>

This bill "destroy[ed] the Lords' power of veto over money bills, and severely restrict[ed] their ability to delay other bills," which helped improve the efficiency with which the government could run.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Jan Palmowski. "George V"A Dictionary of Contemporary World History. Oxford University Press, 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University of Texas - Austin. 20 April 2011 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t46.e906>

community through the mourning process over the loss of their leader. Before considering the historical implications surrounding Hindemith's composition, I will turn to philosophical notions of the relationships that death creates for humans both in the physical and metaphysical domains, and how this affects our experience of the mourning process.

Maurice Blanchot was a 20th-century French novelist and literary critic whose writings inspired such philosophers as Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes.[8] Blanchot's model of community confronts our experiences surrounding death and as such is appropriate here. The first part of Blanchot's book *La Communauté inavouable* (*The Unavowable Community*) offers a discussion of death, specifically regarding the relationship formed between humans in a community when we witness other's deaths, given our knowledge that one day others will watch us die. This passage from the end of this section of Blanchot's book summarizes many of his thoughts:

> Now, 'the basis of communication' is not necessarily speech, or even the silence that is its foundation and punctuation, but the exposure to death, no longer my own exposure, but someone else's, whose living and closest presence is already the eternal and unbearable absence, an absence that the travail of deepest mourning does not diminish.

In other words, our knowledge of the fact that all life is finite forms the basis of communication, and hence, our relationships with others. Blanchot goes on to say:

> And it is in life itself that that absence of someone else has to be met. It is with that absence – its uncanny presence, always under the prior threat of

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8 "Maurice Blanchot." *Britannica Book of the Year, 2004. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 25 Mar. 2011.

a disappearance – that friendship is brought into play and lost at each moment, a relation without relation or without relation other than the incommensurable (concerning which there is no ground to ask oneself if one has to be *sincere* or not, truthful or not, faithful or not, given that it represents the always prior absence of links or the infiniteness of abandonment).[9]

The "basis of communication" to which Blanchot refers is an essential bond created in a community through the interplay between personal and intersubjective experiences of death. Given this bond's representation of two extremes (presence and absence), it is in constant fluctuation; our interactions with others are defined by our knowledge of death as the inevitable end (absence) and appear throughout our lives (presence) at the root of relationships with others.

Blanchot's discussion of death as a factor in forming a community, however, only deals with relationships formed in the physical present. As such, his discussion of mourning, presence, and absence does not account for all of the possible ways in which our relationships formed with others through death can unfold. By restricting his discussion to the physical realm, Blanchot does not take into account the possibility of metaphysical relationships that can be formed in relation to the deceased in order to keep their memory alive, abstractly preserving their presence in the physical world.[10] In his essay "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," Jacques Derrida discusses his view on the metaphysics of death and mourning, positing at least three possible relationships that we can formulate with authors and their texts. The author can already be dead when we first

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[9] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1983), 25.

[10] In fact he flat out refutes this possibility in *La Communauté inavouable*.

read their work, they can be living while we are reading their work, or they can die after

we have read their work. Derrida adds that he had only written about authors who fell

into the first two categories until Barthes' death:

> But what I thought impossible, indecent, and unjustifiable, what long ago
> and more or less secretly and resolutely I had promised myself never to do
> (out of a concern for rigor or fidelity, if you will, and because it is in this
> case *too* serious), was to write *following the death*, not after, not long after
> the death *by returning* to it, but just following the death, *upon or on the
> occasion of the death*, at the commemorative gatherings and tributes, in
> the writings "in memory" of those who while living would have been my
> friends, still present enough to me that some "declaration," indeed some
> analysis or "study," would seem at that moment completely unbearable.
> But then what, silence? Is this not another wound, another insult?[11]

Though Derrida makes a good point regarding the pain involved in writing about the

death of an individual immediately afterward, the two questions posited at the end of this

passage encapsulate perfectly why it is important to do what he has done. We extend that

here to what composers such as Hindemith have done.

Pain, then, is an integral part of the mourning process; one that must be

confronted in order to properly memorialize the individual. As Sarah Webster Goodwin

and Elisabeth Bronfen express it, "mourning can be seen as analogous to representation,

in that both gestures deny a loss they are simultaneously forced to acknowledge."[12] This

emotional conflict between acknowledgement and denial is what causes so much pain

during the mourning process; this pain, however, is also a necessary step in preserving

the memory of the deceased. If we merely acknowledge the death without also denying

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[11] Jacques Derrida, "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," in *The Work of Mourning*, ed. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 49-50.

[12] Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Webster Goodwin, Introduction to *Death and Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 13.

it, the memory of the deceased simply slips away. On the other side of the coin, if we completely deny the death without acknowledging it, the memory of the deceased is lost to our denial of death's reality, or inevitability. Thus, to memorialize an individual properly, we must accept the pain of loss and confront the emotional conflict between acknowledgement and denial, thus allowing the memory of the deceased to live on through us: only then can we accept the finality of death and its consequences, allowing us to break out of the cycle of the mourning process.

To summarize this discussion, we may begin by stating that presence can be used here to describe life as a concrete form of being. Death would then evoke absence, representing the logical opposition to life as a distinct form of non-being. For Blanchot, our recognition that the inevitable conclusion to presence is absence is what forms a community and bonds humans together. Given these terms, the presence of an absence highlights our acknowledgement of someone else's death, which is a metaphysical concept that ties in to Derrida's, Goodwin's and Bronfen's discussions of the mourning process. When we mourn someone's death we recognize their absence but simultaneously long for their presence, thus opening an emotional gap that both creates the pain that Derrida refers to, but that also allows for the memory of the deceased to live on through our longing for their impossible presence. The final possibility – the absence of a presence – can thus be described as our denial of death's inevitability; our knowledge of the death creates a similar emotional gap, but our inability to accept the death as final attempts to hide this pain. While this action may seem to work on the surface, it in fact creates even deeper emotional scarring as the ineffectual attempt to

conceive of the absence as a presence intensifies the impossibility of our longing for the return of a lost one.

Now if the "basis of communication" is in part due to our relationship with others through death and mourning, then it is certainly appropriate to take a brief look into the historical context of King George V's death to show the conditions in which Hindemith composed *Trauermusik*. The January 22, 1936 issue of *The Times* was filled with telegrams from such countries as Canada, France, Germany, and The United States, offering their condolences both to the people of England in general, and to Queen Mary in particular. Foreign countries showed gestures of sympathy for England's great loss, such as Germany flying the flags at their government buildings at half-mast.[13] There was also a great deal of attention paid to the mourning at home in England: "The vast community of lands and peoples united under the British Crown is one in its loss and one in its grief to-day."[14] The reaction on both the local and international levels following King George V's death confirms that he was a prominent and well-respected world figure in 1936.

It was in this context that Hindemith began to write *Trauermusik*. Though Hindemith certainly had his own interpretation of the work's meaning, the people of England who heard the piece at the premiere took *Trauermusik* as a tribute to King George V. Considering the above evidence regarding how death and mourning affects us

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[13] "Herr Hitler's Message: Deep Grief," *The Times*, January 21, 1936, 12.
The last paragraph of this article states that "Flags are flying at half-mast on the President's Palace, the Reich Chancery, the Foreign Office, and the Reichstag building as an expression of mourning."

[14] "King George V," *The Times*, January 21, 1936, 13.
Several other sections of this edition of *The Times* contain tributes to the King, such as "Death of the King. A peaceful ending at midnight. Royal family's long vigil. Parliament to meet this evening," "Crowd's anxiety," and "Music and parties cease," just to name a few prominent examples. These passages, along with the others mentioned above, represent how deeply affected the people of England were at the loss of their king.

as humans and as a community, as well as the fact that King George V was a prominent figure whose death affected people across the world, it stands to reason that most pieces written in this context could easily be interpreted as a tribute, regardless of the composer's intent for the work's meaning. Thus I will illustrate that interpreting the meaning of a piece composed and premiered under these conditions reaches beyond the composer's intent, taking into account issues such as the metaphysics of mourning and how the community of listeners could have received and interpreted the music, deepening the work's potential for meaning at the time of its premiere to the British people who would have heard it.[15]

The significance of the historical associations provoked by the piece's extremely short gestation period will illustrate how it served as a work of mourning in the context of when it was written: "there was something Mozartian about the affair," stated Werner Reinhart to Gertrud Hindemith.[16] Hindemith himself took the time to reflect on this act of composition the day after he performed it with the B.B.C. Orchestra:

> As I read in the paper yesterday, I was assigned a studio, some copyists were stoked up, and then, from 11 to 5, I did some heavy mourning. It turned out a nice piece, in the general direction of *Mathis* [the opera *Mathis der Maler]* and the *Schwanendreher,* with a Bach chorale at the end (*Vor deinen Thron Tret ich hiermit*—very suitable for kings), which it turns out that every schoolchild in England knows, something I only found out afterwards. Maybe you know it too; it is called "the old hundred" or something like that.[17]

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[15] "The Proclamation of the King," *The Times*, January 22, 1936.

This section of *The Times*, as well as the section on January 23, 1936, entitled "B.B.C. Orchestra: Funeral Music by Hindemith," confirms that the premiere of *Trauermusik* was broadcast live over the radio. The fact that the concert was broadcast over the radio means that the music had the potential to reach more people than those present in the hall, thus expanding the audience that would have heard the piece.

[16] Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 213.

[17] Heinrich Strobel, *Paul Hindemith* (Mainz: Schott, 1948), quoted in Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 213.

The implications of writing this "Music of Mourning," particularly in such a short time span are numerous and multivalent, so for the sake of clarity I will only focus on what I take as the most salient issue: how this piece can be interpreted as a tribute to King George V. The act of writing a musical memorial itself is a task that many composers have undertaken, but the fact that Hindemith wrote and premiered the work within forty-eight hours of the King's death represents a decidedly short time to write a piece than was typical even for this particularly facile composer. This brief compositional time span afforded Hindemith the opportunity to capture "on the spot," as it were, the mournful emotions that took place immediately following the death of King George V, not just in England, but around the world.

Hindemith made no explicit statement that he knew the monarch personally, or – apparent from the flippant "heavy mourning" – that he even intended to pay tribute to him with *Trauermusik*. Regardless of Hindemith's compositional intentions, however, it is clear that the British people took *Trauermusik* as an homage to the recently deceased king:

> Dr. Boult conducted an excellent performance of Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, and this was followed by the Funeral Music composed for the occasion by Paul Hindemith. This short elegiac piece for viola and strings is to be gratefully accepted as a tribute to our late King from a distinguished visitor who had come here to introduce another work at the Queen's Hall concert. Herr Hindemith himself played the solo part, which is woven into the simple texture of the work.[18]

The preface of *Trauermusik* bears the following inscription: "This piece was written in London on 21 January 1936, the day after the death of King George V of England, and was performed for the first time on 22 January at a memorial concert by the English Radio (BBC), the composer appearing as soloist."

[18] "B.B.C. Orchestra: Funeral Music by Hindemith," *The Times*, January 23, 1936.

In other words, regardless of what Hindemith intended the work to mean, the people of England took it to be a tribute to the death of their King. Thus, the manner in which the British community came together through the pain felt over King George V's death allowed them to interpret *Trauermusik* as a piece written to commemorate the loss of their great leader.

Hindemith's Compositional Process: Analytical Hermeneutics

Now let us turn our attention to the music itself in an effort to understand how

Trauermusik's construction can play into our interpretation of the work's meaning. I will

argue that an analysis of the music reveals a dichotomy between acknowledgement and

denial, represented by the use of the consonant intervals of the 0167 pitch collection

(P4/P5) alongside the dissonant intervals (+4/°5/m2). This musical conflict will prove

useful in determining how to interpret the manner in which Hindemith represented the

emotional conflict inherent to the mourning process in this piece.

In his article "Tonal, Formal, and Proportional Design in Hindemith's Music,"

David Neumeyer discusses several ways in which Paul Hindemith "used planned and

often symmetrical tonal designs…"[19] in his works around 1940 and after. To this effect,

Neumeyer illustrates the tonal and formal designs of a number of Hindemith's works and

class projects from when he was on the faculty at Yale between 1940–1953, showing

how these formal designs helped organize the large-scale structure of his compositions.

Neumeyer cites Eckhart Richter's summary of Hindemith's method of composing pieces

in this manner (as taught in classes at Yale):[20]

1. General determination of character and function
2. Master plan of formal design, including overall shape, number and character of sections, changes in mood or tempo, rhythmic character, texture, and degree of activity
3. Plan of "basic tonalities of each section and their relative degrees of tonal stability and complexity"
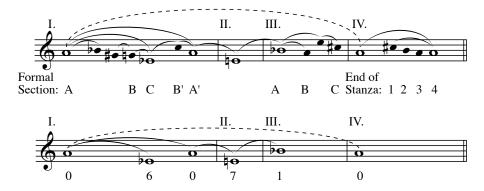4. Specific thematic material[21]

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[19] David Neumeyer, "Tonal, Formal, and Proportional Design in Hindemith's Music," in *Music Theory Spectrum* Vol. 9 (Spring, 1987): 94.

[20] Eckhart Richter, "Glimpse into the Workshop," in *Hindemith Jahrbuch* 6 (1977): 122.

[21] Neumeyer, "Tonal, Formal, and Proportional Design," 96.

This procedure not only offers insight into the manner in which Hindemith's pieces were composed during this period but can also help guide our interpretation in relation to the compositional processes at work. For example, by reversing the compositional process outlined above, we can begin by identifying the themes used in a given work (step 4), analyze how these themes are harmonized and organized with one another in the note-to-note details of a given section (step 3), and then determine how these are organized on a larger formal, or underlying structural manner (step 2). These three steps account for all (or most) of the technical information in a given work. Step 1 is of the utmost importance here, as the goal of this paper is to demonstrate the work's character and function as a work of mourning. Statements about the character or function of the work will be more informed, of course, if the first three steps are carried out in enough detail.

The formal structure of Hindemith's *Trauermusik* is underlain by an 0167 pitch collection, specifically the pitches A-B-flat-E-flat-E (see Example 1). As the two levels of design in Example 1 suggest, Hindemith uses the 0167 pitch collection not only as the underlying harmonic structure but also as the way to organize more local melodic/thematic material.

Example 1: Formal design and use of 0167 pitch collection in Trauermusik. The bridge form of the first movement presents a tonal dichotomy between A and E-flat (0 and 6), while movements two and three illustrate a conflict between E and B-flat (1 and 7). Movement four reintroduces the original pitch level A (0) to round out the piece tonally.

In the following sections, taking the multi-level treatment of 0167 as my analytical evidence, I will interpret Hindemith's use of this particular pitch collection as indicative of the work's preoccupation with the mourning process. First I will provide a more detailed analysis of the use of 0167 in the work's first three movements, after which I will provide a hermeneutic reading of this part of the work. As I pointed out above, Goodwin and Bronfen have stated that one of the integral parts of the mourning process is that it "den[ies] a loss [that it is] simultaneously forced to acknowledge."[22] This combination of acknowledgement/denial evokes a specific type of emotional pain that must be kept alive in order to keep the memory of the deceased from slipping away.

The interplay of consonance and dissonance in the 0167 pitch collection, the perfect fourth and fifth juxtaposed with minor seconds and tritones, can be interpreted as a representation of the mourning process itself, the more tonal intervals (P4/P5, associated with tonal centers A and E) standing for acknowledgement, and the dissonant

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[22] Bronfen and Goodwin, Introduction to *Death and Representation*, 13.

intervals (+4/^{o}5/m2, associated with tonal centers E-flat and B-flat) embodying denial. This interplay of acknowledgement/denial manifests itself musically in the opposition of consonance/dissonance in the first three movements of the work, with the fourth depicting ultimate acceptance of death's finality. I will argue that this manifestation of emotional conflict in the music itself is a feature that can be experienced by the listener and thus plays a large role in revealing how this work can represent the same meaning in both the context of its initial premiere and at later points in time.

Structural Significance of the 0167 Pitch Collection

The 0167 pitch collection has received a great deal of attention in music scholarship,

specifically with regard to its symmetrical properties and to the ways that the collection

has been utilized in the music of twentieth-century composers, most notably Béla

Bartók.[23] Hindemith was certainly familiar with Bartók's music and its processes, but he

makes use of the 0167 pitch collection in ways that are quite distinct. While Bartók

exploited 0167 for its symmetrical properties (particularly in his *Fourth String Quartet* of

1928),[24] in *Trauermusik*, Hindemith uses the collection's various tonal/non-tonal

components (P4/P5 vs. +4/°5/m2) to evoke the emotional conflict between

acknowledgement/denial inherent to the mourning process. Furthermore, he uses these

segments of the 0167 collection as the basis for all levels of the musical material: the

melodic material, the overall harmonic organization of phrase-to-phrase successions, and

the deepest level of harmonic organization that governs the individual movements.

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[23] This collection was first referred to as "cell Z" by Leo Treitler in his article "Harmonic Procedure in the "Fourth Quartet" of Béla Bartók" in *Journal of Music Theory* Vol. 3., No. 2 (Nov., 1959), pp. 292–298. Since then, it has received considerable attention from Elliott Antokoletz, first in his dissertation, "Principles of Pitch Organization in Bartók's *Fourth String Quartet*" Pd.D diss., City University of New York, 1975. A selection of this dissertation also appears as "Principles of Pitch Organization in Bartók's *Fourth String Quartet*" (selections) in *In Theory Only* Vol. 3, No. 6 (September, 1977), 3–22. Antokoletz also discusses this collection in great detail in his book *The Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990). Benjamin Suchoff also discusses the Z cell in his book *Béla Bartók: A Celebration*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004). Both Suchoff and Antokoletz discuss the collection in their collection of essays *Bartók Perspectives: Man, Composer, and Ethnomusicologist.* ed. Elliott Antokoletz, Victoria Fischer, and Benjamin Suchoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Their articles, respectively, are "The Genesis of Bartók's Musical Language" (pp. 113–128), and "Organic Expansion and Classical Structure in Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion" (pp. 77–94). Other notable studies of this particular collection include Richard Cohn's article "Inversional Symmetry and Transpositional Combination in Bartók," in *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 10, 10th Anniversary Issue (Spring, 1988), 19–42, as well as John K. Novak's article "The Benefits of "Relaxation": The Role of the "Pihenő" Movement in Béla Bartók's *Contrasts*," in *Bartók Perspectives: Man, Composer, and Ethnomusicologist.* ed. Elliott Antokoletz, Victoria Fischer, and Benjamin Suchoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 95–109.

[24] Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music* (Upper Saddle River, NK: Prentice Hall, 1998), 123–136.
As Antokoletz describes, Bartók used 0167 ("Cell Z") along with 0123 ("Cell X") to form an "axis of symmetry" around which the rest of the music could unfold. For example, Z1/7 (G-sharp–C-sharp–D–G) shares a C-sharp/D axis with X0 (C–C-sharp–D–E-flat), around which other pitch collections could unfold.

Let us begin by discussing two harmonic components of the 0167 pitch collection.

Here is the pitch level of the 0167 pitch collection that is used most often in *Trauermusik*

(see Example 2):

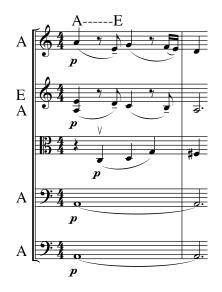*Example 2: The most common pitch level of the 0167 collection utilized in Trauermusik*

The components of this pitch collection that immediately stand out are the dissonances of

the two minor seconds (D-sharp/E, A/B-flat) and tritones (D-sharp/A, E/B-flat). These

dissonant intervals give this particular collection a harsh quality that certainly evokes the

feelings of denial, rejection, and anger that correlate to the non-tonal pitch material

throughout *Trauermusik*. On the other hand, two consonant intervals are also at work

here: the perfect fourth (E/A) and the perfect fifth (E-flat [enharmonically respelled D-

sharp]/B-flat). These intervals correspond more to the tonal material associated with one

trying to accept someone's death; in two stages, representing either acknowledgement of

death's reality (tonal center of A and E) or denial of death's reality (tonal center of B-flat

and E-flat). Though the fourth and fifth are tonal intervals, they appear within the

context of the 0167 pitch collection, meaning that the intervals associated with

acceptance are imbricated with those that represent pain, suggesting again that the

mourning process necessarily involves pain and suffering. Considering all this, the

manner in which Hindemith employs the 0167 pitch collection on both the immediate
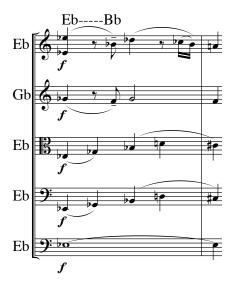
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musical level and the deeper structural level can be regarded as an exemplary rhetorical depiction of the mourning process.[25]

The tonal components of the perfect fourth and fifth have immediate consequences for the melodic material employed throughout the first three movements.[26] The opening sonority of the piece is built on an open fifth A-E, which only becomes a minor triad on beat two when the violas enter on C (see Example 3). Hindemith chose to emphasize the perfect fifth by leaving out the third of the chord until the second beat of the measure, thus giving the perfect fourth and fifth of the 0167 pitch collection structural significance by its presence as the first sonority of the piece. The first violins confirm this harmonic significance melodically when they play the first two notes of the melody, A-E, or a descending perfect fourth. Though these may seem to be insignificant details at first glance, a look ahead into section C of the first movement confirms the significance of these particular intervals (see Example 4). In this instance, the first two pitches of the melody in the first violins are E-flat-B-flat: the perfect fourth from the underlying 0167 progression.

[25] This traditional juxtaposition of expressive and symbolic roles for perfect fifth and tritone may seem a bit old-fashioned for a composer in the 1930s, but it is consistent with Hindemith's practice throughout his career.

[26] As I will explain later, the fourth movement represents a different stage of the mourning process than the first three; thus, the fourth movement does not exhibit the emotional conflict, or the 0167 pitch collection, found throughout the first three movements of the work.

Example 3: Mvt. I, mm. 1–2 (A Section)

Example 4: Mvt. I, mm. 20–21 (C Section)

The connection between the beginning of the piece and the beginning of section C is confirmed by the pitch content of the first violins in section C: see Example 5, where the first and last pitches of each melodic statement are members of the 0167 pitch collection. Each statement of the melody outlines the tritone inherent to this collection; though this is essentially the same melody from the opening of the movement, the final tone has been raised by one semitone in each instance, thus creating a chromatic descent between three adjacent semitones, as well as a melodic outline of a tritone rather than a perfect fifth. The alteration of this final pitch accounts for both the minor second and tritone intervals inherent in the 0167 pitch collection, giving the melodic material in section C a more strained sound (see Example 5). Raising the final pitch also employs a transformation of the material on the structural level, demonstrating a shift in emotional quality from acknowledgement to denial. This change is further supported by the fact

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that the tonal center of A in the opening material has shifted to E-flat by the C section, two tritone-related members of the underlying 0167 pitch collection.

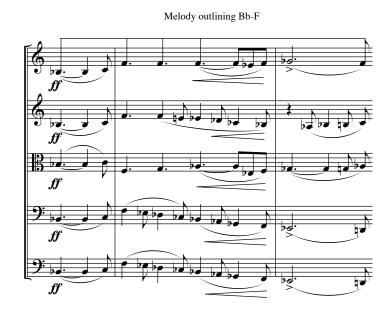*Example 5: Mvt. I, mm. 20–25, First Violin Melody*

The melody used throughout the second and third movements outlines a perfect fifth (E–B and B-flat–F, respectively), and is based on principles similar to the melody used in the A and C sections of the first movement (see Example 6). Taking the cello's pedal E and the first violin and viola's lilting accompanimental figures, the second movement begins in E minor. As mentioned above, the A-E dyad of the underlying 0167 collection corresponds to the tonal music utilized in the piece: the tonal music in the first movement was based in A, while the tonal music in the second movement is based in E. Thus, this movement employs tonal implications both melodically on the immediate surface level and within the larger context of the underlying 0167 collection.

Example 6: Mvt. II, mm. 37–39

Several similarities can be noted between the second and third movements. The beginning of the third movement utilizes the melody from the second movement, albeit at the pitch level B-flat–F, or a tritone below the previous movement (see Example 7). After this unison opening, the accompaniment supporting the melody in the first violins becomes more contrapuntal, creating a thick, heavy texture that makes this much different from the quiet, sparse, reserved introduction to the second movement. The third movement, then, is in two distinct 0167 relationships; (1) the initial B-flat belongs to the larger underlying collection (A-B-flat-E-flat-E); (2) the P5 outline B-flat–F creates a more immediate relationship with the E–B melody in the second movement (E-F-B-flat-B). The melodic material used in these two movements is altered in a similar way to the

material from the first movement, representing the emotional shift from acknowledgement to denial inherent to the mourning process.

Melody outlining Bb-F

Example 7: Mvt. III, mm. 49–51

Section B in Mvt. III (mm. 60–68) exhibits the soloist playing short melodies, interspersed with orchestral responses based on the movement's melody (at this point in Mvt. III, the melody is back in E; the tonal center in which the melody originally appeared in Mvt. II, and the tritone relation to B-flat, the opening tonal center of Mvt. III). The 0167 collection is used more melodically here; by having two voices arranged as a P4 expand in opposite directions by a semitone to a P5, the 0167 relationship between them is highlighted. Hindemith leads into the first measure of section B in this way, employing the expansion of the two tonal intervals of the piece's underlying 0167 collection; the P4 B-flat-E-flat (D-sharp) to the P5 A-E (see Example 8).

Example 8: Mvt. III, mm. 59–60

The solo viola's interjections in section B of mvt. III also use 0167 in this way. The second of these interjections shows the viola beginning on a low C ascending one octave via F and G, after which it moves directly into an arpeggiation of a G-flat major triad in root position, resolving back to F on the downbeat (see Example 9). Taking the G-C dyad into consideration with the G-flat-D-flat outline of the triad, we see that this represents an expansion from a P4 to a P5, highlighting 0167. The soloist's third interjection illustrates a similar pattern, beginning with a P4 C–F expanding into a P5 C-flat–G-flat (see Example 10). The direct juxtaposition of these tritone-related pitch collections illustrates a structural conflict between distantly related pitch material, but more importantly reflects the heightened emotional conflict prevalent throughout the piece as a whole and the third movement in particular.

Example 9: Mvt. III, mm. 63–64

Example 10: Mvt.. III, mm. 65–67

Hermeneutic Significance of the Underlying 0167 Collection

So far I have illustrated how the 0167 pitch collection governs the harmonic and melodic details of the musical surface. Now I will turn to a brief discussion of how the 0167 collection organizes the underlying harmonic structure of the work as a whole, and how this can be interpreted in light of the mourning process that this piece represents. The large-scale harmonic organization was shown in Example 1 above. The first movement begins and ends in A, with a brief internal departure to E-flat. The second (E) and third (B-flat) movements are linked, as they utilize similar melodic content, and the fourth movement returns to A. Two aspects of this harmonic organization stand out; first, the sense of cyclic completion generated by the fourth movement's return to A, and second, the fact that E-flat is not treated with the same level of prominence as the other three pitches of the 0167 collection: it provides contrast with A in the first movement, but never receives a complete movement of its own. One can reasonably ask why Hindemith does not utilize E-flat as prominently as the other three pitches of the 0167 collection at the deepest structural level of the work? The reason is twofold. First, by returning to A in the fourth movement, rather than modulating to E-flat, as the 0167 collection would imply on a structural level, the music achieves a sense of return. That is relevant because returning to the same pitch center of the opening implies the cyclic nature of the mourning process achieved after the subject accepts the death as final. After this acceptance, the mourner's life essentially returns to the way that it was before the death, but the absence of the deceased marks them with a type of incompleteness. I will explore this question further in my discussion of the fourth movement below, but here it can be

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said that even after we have accepted the death of an individual, we are still marked by their absence (incompleteness). After the mourning process is complete, vestigial pain from that process remains with us when we think back on those who have died.

Acceptance of Death's Finality in Mvt. IV

If the underlying harmonic structure of the work can be seen as cyclical, it can also be

viewed as dialectical. While the tonal centers A and E underlie the tonal/consonant

material, E-flat and B-flat are associated with chromatic/dissonant music. The fourth

movement, however, reintroduces A as a tonal center, but it occurs in a more

chromaticized form than it did in the first movement: its tonality has been tinged with the

dissonance found earlier in the piece. Similarly, while the subject goes through the

mourning process as a means to acknowledge the death and ultimately achieve closure

regarding the loss, putting the death behind them, the living are forever marked by this

incompleteness that results from the absence of the deceased. In this way, the mourning

process allows us to come to terms with death, but not without marking us along the way,

leaving us forever changed by the presence of the absent deceased.

In keeping with the representation of the mourning process, the fourth movement

occurs after the formal grieving is complete (represented in Mvt. I–III), symbolizing

one's ultimate acceptance of death's finality. Unlike Mvt. I–III, the fourth movement

does not embody the 0167 pitch collection on the local level.[27] Rather, it realizes the

final stage of the structural 0167 pitch collection; on one level this "carefully maintain[s]

control of the tonic degree in the two outer sections," which, as Neumeyer points out, is a

feature "typical of Hindemith in this period."[28] On another level, as the conclusion of the

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[27] The one exception to this occurs at the end of the first phrase, in which the music shifts from G major to C# major in a manner analogous to examples 8–10.

[28] Neumeyer, "Tonal, Formal, and Proportional Design," 100.

structural 0167 pitch collection, this movement's return to tonic signifies a conclusion to the work.

This movement is written in an entirely different character from the rest of the piece, which fact at first suggests something supplementary to the rest of the composition. The tune of the "Old Hundredth" is the primary melodic source rather than one of Hindemith's own making, and allows for a range of ways in which the listener might interpret the music. Even if Hindemith had intended to use the chorale in the spirit of "Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit," it can be assumed that the English audience would have associated the chorale with "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow."[29] Rather than focusing on the specific lyrics of each text, however, the general mood of each will be sufficient to distinguish between possible interpretations of *Trauermusik*. Also, the harmonic conflict embodied is that of the major mode in the string orchestra vs. the minor mode in the viola soloist. These conflicts found in the harmony and the text are of a different nature than those of the previous three movements, illustrating that we are always imprinted with the presence of an absence of those deceased that we knew in life.

The chorale tune remains in the first violin throughout, while the other instruments in the orchestra provide harmonic support. The harmony utilized throughout the fourth movement is not tonal in an obvious, traditional sense, but it is certainly far more tonal than much of the music in the previous three movements. The first phrase begins on an A-C-sharp dyad, implying A major, culminating on a C-sharp major triad.

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[29] While there are several other possible texts that could be mapped on to this chorale, these are the two most relevant to the given context, given Hindemith's indication of "Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit" in the score, and the English people's knowledge of the chorale through the context of either the Anglican or Protestant church.

The second phrase begins in C-sharp minor, concluding on a B major triad, the third phrase starts in F# minor, finishing on an A-E open fifth, with the final statement beginning and ending in A major. These cadences on major triads, however, are all complicated by the viola soloist who plays short cadenzas over the sustained triads in the parallel minor mode to the given major triad held underneath. These elements do not affect one another: the chorale continues throughout in the major mode, and the viola soloist continues to play in the minor mode.

Determining how to properly interpret these features of the chorale is complicated by the fact that either text could be called on to help interpret musical meaning. While both texts carry religious implications, the overall tone and message of each is quite different, and could lead to different interpretations of the last movement depending on which is considered. The text of "Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit" (see Figure 1) is a personalized plea to God, coming from someone who has already passed away and is addressing the Lord; the use of the pronouns "I" and "me" supports this claim. In the case of *Trauermusik*, it can be assumed that Hindemith is using this text to represent King George V's ascent to heaven and judgment before God. The use of words such as "humbly beg," "merciful face," and "poor sinner" sound as though the individual is pleading with the Lord, almost groveling for His forgiveness and acceptance. What clearly distinguishes this text from the one found in "Praise God, From Whom all Blessings Flow," is that the former ends in a more negative, ambiguous manner. The final plea of "do not turn your face away from me, poor sinner" is never answered as the chorale ends after this phrase.

Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit
O Gott und dich gemütig bitt:
Wend dock dein gnädig Angesicht
vor mir, dem armen Sünder nicht.

(Thus I come before your throne
Oh God, and humbly beg:
Do not turn your merciful face
Away from me, poor sinner.)

Figure 1: Text for "Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit," and translation

On the other hand, the English text to "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow" (see Figure 2) is a more communal worship of the Lord, asking all beings on earth and in heaven to praise God. The fact that the first word of every stanza is "praise" sets the tone of this text apart from the other, defining it more as an outward form of praise than a personal form of repentance. The text also focuses more on God than on the individual, as opposed to the text Hindemith presumably had in mind when composing the piece. Thus, one could interpret the English text to represent feelings of community and praise, ending in a more positive manner than the German text (see Figure 1).

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.[30]

Figure 2: Text for "Praise God, From Whom all Blessings Flow"

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[30] Though multiple versions of this text exist (perhaps most notably the one that starts "All People That on Earth Do Dwell"), as well as multiple verses for each text, they all carry with them the same general meaning. For this reason, I have restricted my discussion to the first verse in both cases in order to simplify my discussion.

While both texts could conceivably work with the given music of the fourth movement on their own, it would seem as though both play a part in governing the meaning of the music. While Hindemith says he was unaware that the English people knew the tune beforehand, he must have been aware that there were several texts that go along with the melody of the "Old Hundredth," given the hymn's rich British history. Though the Frenchman Louis Bourgeois composed the melody for the 1551 edition of the Genevan Psalter,[31] William Kethe (an Englishman) wrote the text soon after in 1560-61.[32] Several sources point to the hymn's history and use in England from the late 16th century onward,[33] some as well known as Shakespeare.[34] Thus, the notion that Hindemith explicitly composed this movement to represent only the spirit of "Für deinen Thron tret

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[31] James J. Fuld, *The Book of World-Famous Music: Classical, Popular, and Folk, 5th Edition Revised and Enlarged* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000), 409–410.

[32] Ibid.

[33] A history on the use of the "Old Hundredth," which points to its English use in particular throughout, is given in Rev. W. H. Havergal, *A History of The Old Hundredth Psalm Tune, with Specimens* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1854). This early source points to a number of contexts in which this hymn appears, from its creation for the Geneva Psalter all the way through the first half of the nineteenth century, pointing to its popularity in a multitude of settings. A short history of the hymn's genesis and some of the first sources that it appears in thereafter is given in John Julian, ed., *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), 43–44. Other later sources also point to this hymn's popularity: for example, C.S. Phillips, *Hymnody Past and Present* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), 289. This appendix lists the "Old Hundredth" as one of the "English Hymns in Common Use Based on the Psalms," and also briefly discusses the origination of the hymn by Bourgeois and Kethe (p. 133). A history of the hymn's creation, as well as a mention of its use in modern times "To this Anglo-Genevan Psalter several psalms and tunes in use to-day may be traced, notably 'Old Hundred,' both the tune, as we know it, and the words beginning, 'All people that on earth do dwell,'" appears in David R. Breed, *The History and Use of Hymns and Hymn-Tunes* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903), 58. A history of the hymn's creation, as well as a mention of its reference in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597) is given in Benjamin Brawley, *History of the English Hymn* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1932), 39–40. Similar references are given in more modern sources as well: James J. Fuld, *The Book of World-Famous Music: Classical, Popular, and Folk, 5th Edition Revised and Enlarged*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000), 409–410. Also, Nicholas Temperley, assisted by Charles G. Manns and Joseph Herl. *The Hymn Tune Index: A Census of English-Language Hymn Tunes in Printed Sources from 1535 to 1820*, vol. 1 "Introduction and Sources," (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 35. The multiple references to this hymn in these early sources as well as it being cited in modern sources is evidence of its use throughout England's history, and makes the idea that Hindemith did not know the tune before 1936 problematic.

[34] Fuld, *The Book of World-Famous Music*, 409–410.

Fuld points to the fact that "Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597) states, 'They do no more adhere and keep place together than the *Hundredth Psalm* to the tune of *Green Sleeves*.'" This same reference is also discussed in Brawley, *History of the English Hymn*, 39–40. The use of this reference in the popular context of a Shakespeare play suggests that the hymn would have been known by a good number of people.

ich hiermit" is problematic. He must have been conscious of the fact that the tune could embody multiple meanings, which he would have been cognizant of when he was composing this movement. In fact, given the hymn's extensive history (particularly its English history), I would go so far as to suggest that Hindemith purposely chose this hymn, in part given the text's meaning, in part as a friendly gesture to the English people during their time of mourning King George V's death. In order to discern the possibilities of this combined meaning, I will now break away from the explicit lyrics of both sets of text and focus more on their general tone and how these two different texts can be applied to the music in the movement.

In terms of the fourth movement, the tone of "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow" more easily maps onto the chorale setting of the tune in the string orchestra. The overtly positive message of this text fits the major-mode setting of the "Old Hundredth," and the repetition of the word "praise" seems to refute the minor-mode interjections of the soloist, reinforcing the peaceful quality of the music. This text and the setting of the chorale also correlate to the notion of acceptance of the consequences of death, particularly due to the fact that the text ends definitively by praising the Holy Trinity, and that the music ends definitively on an A major triad. The fact that this music is so different from everything that has come before it as well as the idea that it is placed at the end of the piece, elevates the status of the fourth movement, suggesting that acceptance is one of the final, and perhaps most important stages in the mourning process.

Even after we accept someone's death, however, some vestigial pain will most likely arise when one thinks back on the deceased. In his discussion of representations of death and mourning, Richard Stamelman states that "[t]he emptiness left by the absence of a beloved is filled with the grief that loss creates."[35] In other words, emotions such as grief fill the absence of the deceased after they are gone, allowing us to become connected to their death indefinitely through the mourning process; every time that we think back on the deceased, the pain of the loss may return. In the case of *Trauermusik*, we have determined that the first three movements depict emotional struggle and that the fourth movement represents acknowledgement of the consequences of death. This means that the major/minor conflict that was most pronounced in the diatonic vs. chromatic material has now lessened in the final movement to diatonic music of the same tonal center, but in different modes (major vs. minor). Thus we can say that the soloist's interjections supply the conflict between the two emotions, though the fact that the chorale continues for one phrase after the soloist is done playing suggests that the peace found in coming to terms with the consequences of death is stronger than the pain one feels when looking back on the deceased.

It is in this light that the soloist's interjections in the fourth movement can be interpreted as embodying the sorrowful character of the text that Hindemith intended to be used with the piece. There are several levels of separation between the soloist and the string orchestra that suggest this separation in the character of the text. The strings are muted while the soloist is not, the soloist plays mostly in a higher register than the

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[35] Richard Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling: Representations of Death and Absence in Modern French Poetry* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 13.

orchestra, culminating in the highest note utilized in the work (C6), and the orchestra plays mostly in major while the soloist plays exclusively in minor modes. Also, the ambiguous nature of the German text's ending is reflected in the way that the viola soloist's music does not resolve on its own terms; its final resolution is elided with the final stanza of the orchestra, suggesting that the sorrowful character of the viola solo has conceded to the peaceful character of the orchestra. Thus, the fourth movement still embodies the emotional conflict between acknowledgement and denial, though the music is more heavily weighted towards the meaning of the English text, and the peaceful emotions it represents.

Conclusion

The audience that heard *Trauermusik* at the time of its premiere undoubtedly already had

a strong emotional sense of community invoked through death and mourning after King

George V passed away, and the musical features themselves coming fresh to their ears

certainly had the potential of creating a direct affective response. After the premiere, as

time wears on, the work still held the potential for emotional response, but this response

would fluctuate depending on the individual listener's knowledge of the work's context

regarding King George V's death. The historical context can be understood, though it

can no longer be *experienced* in the same way as the listeners did in 1936; our knowledge

of historical and analytical features can heighten the way that we listen to the piece, but

not to the same degree as those who would have heard this music in its original context.

We must keep in mind, however, the fact that the emotional conflict between

acknowledgement and denial inherent to the mourning process is represented in the music

itself at all structural levels, and as such, is capable of eliciting an emotional response

through careful listening. This multi-level representational feature of the work provides

listeners with the means for experiencing the emotions inherent to the mourning process,

and we can conclude that combining historical insights and detailed analytical knowledge

of *Trauermusik* will heighten the listener's experience of the piece to a greater extent than

either perspective could on its own. This combined historical and analytical knowledge

allows us in turn to understand Hindemith's tribute to the memory of King George V as

an emotionally effective music of mourning not only at its initial premiere on January 22,

1936, but also throughout time after the first performance.

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