

Fall 1994

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Recommended Citation

Anderson, Gene H. "Musical Metamorphoses in Hindemith's "March" from the *Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes* by Carl Maria Von Weber." *Journal of Band Research* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 1-10.

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**ANALYSIS: MUSICAL METAMORPHOSES IN HINDEMITH'S
MARCH FROM *SYMPHONIC METAMORPHOSIS OF THEMES*
BY CARL MARIA VON WEBER**

Gene Anderson

Four years after composing the *Symphonic Metamorphosis* in 1943, Hindemith approached his Yale colleague, Keith Wilson, to consider doing a transcription of the *March* for band. Assenting immediately, Wilson went over the score in detail with the composer, although it took thirteen more years to obtain an agreement from Hindemith's American and German publishers allowing him to begin the project. After almost two years of work, Wilson conducted the Yale Band in its premiere in March, 1962, only to receive a "blistering letter" from Hindemith's American publisher, Associated, declaring the agreement void and impounding the score and parts. The transcription remained inaccessible for eight more years until Associated was purchased by Belwin-Mills, who immediately published the work which meanwhile had become popular. While it is ironic and unfair that Wilson was forced to sell his rights to Associated for a "paltry sum" and has never received royalties,¹ his transcription endures as a model of its kind—as ideally suited for band as the original for orchestra.²

What little has been written about Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*—regarded in the literature as a relatively minor, albeit popular product of his post-*Mathis der Mahler* period—has been rather superficial and somewhat patronizing. The single analysis of the score in English declares it to be neither symphonic nor a metamorphosis:

...the "Symphonic Metamorphosis" hardly lives up to its title. There is little that can be said to be of a symphonic nature in the integral structure of its movements and the thematic metamorphosis which is implicit in its title, is severely limited.³

Although more charitable, German writers too have had difficulty agreeing upon the manner and degree of metamorphosis applied to von Weber's themes as suggested by the title, concluding the result to be less melodic variation than a kind of parody of each piece as a whole.⁴

From the composer we learn nothing about his approaches to the construction of this piece or about specific methods of musical metamorphosis. Hindemith, in fact, considered such knowledge useless, as he trenchantly observed in an early autobiographical note: "...for people with ears my things are perfectly easy to understand, so an analysis is superfluous. For people without ears such cribs can't help."⁵ Indeed, one is struck, not by the differences, but by the similarities between the *March* and its prototype, von Weber's *Marcia* from *Huit pièces* for piano duet, Op. 60, No. 7, composed in 1819.⁶ But while model and original essentially agree in matters of melody, harmony, rhythm, and form, closer scrutiny reveals the process of metamorphosis to extend beyond surface modifications of these elements to more subtle but basic transformations of timbre, harmonic function, and rhythmic proportion, which ultimately affect every level and component of the composition's structure.

Comparison of the opening measures of the *March* with von Weber's *Marcia* illustrates several procedures of change. Instead of two balanced, harmonically unambiguous, and rhythmically sequential phrases at the same dynamic level, Hindemith introduces drama and suspense by implying rather than stating harmonies, by lengthening certain rhythmic equivalents, and by adding dynamic variety. Moreover, not only are the lengths of Hindemith's measures 2-3 and measure 5 unpredictably out of balance with his measures 1 and 4, they are unequal to each other, making for asymmetric phrases of 6 and 5 beats respectively (Example 1).

The image contains two musical staves. The top staff is titled "Marche (transposed from g minor) bars 1-4." and shows a piano duet in 3/4 time. The bottom staff is titled "March, bars 1-5." and shows a piano duet in 3/4 time. The bottom staff is divided into four measures labeled "Motive x", "Motive y", "xl", and "yl". The first measure of the bottom staff is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The second measure is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The third measure is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The fourth measure is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The bottom staff also includes markings for "tr" (trill) and "rit" (ritardando).

Example 1.

These bars, in turn, provide the basis for pervasive and more comprehensive transformations. By embodying in microcosm its fundamental

ideas which recur periodically in altered guises and at formally strategic places throughout the piece, the Introduction functions as the key to Hindemith's *March*:

Formal Scheme

SECTION	Introduction			
SUBDIVISION	motive x	motive y	x1	y1
MEASURE	1	2	4	5
DOMINANT TIMBRE	trp/trb	hn/cym	trp/trb	hn/cym
DYNAMICS	f	p	f	p
KEY	b ^b minor			

A								
a		b		y2	y3	x2	a1	y4
6	10	14	18	21	27	34	38	45
ww	ww	ww	ww	hn	hn	trp/trb	ww	hn
p	mf	f	mf	p	cresc	f	f	p
b ^b minor								

B			A1				B1			Coda		
c	d	c1	x3	a2	b1	x4	c2	d1	c3	x5 + y5		
51	68	74	82	88	96	101	111	119	125	132	141	
hn	ww	ww	ww	trb	trb	ob/trb	brass	br	brass	hn/trp	br	
mf	f	f	p	mp	f	mf	f	mf/f	ff	ff	ff	
B ^b major			a minor				E ^b /B ^b	B ^b major				

The Introduction's most striking characteristic is the juxtaposition within each phrase of extreme rhythmic, dynamic, timbral, and tonal contrasts labeled on the Formal Scheme as Motives X and Y. By overlapping the conclusion of X with the entrance of Y, Hindemith achieves through *klangfarben* a musical metamorphosis not obviously derived from von Weber's theme. Thus the forceful opening figure (Motive X)—comprised melodically of perfect consonances, of the simplest texture, of uncomplicated timbre, uni-directional, unequivocally in B^b, resolutely in duple

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meter, and indisputably a fanfare—dissolves abruptly after one measure into its antithesis (Motive Y). The effect of successive differences might be described as the transformation from relative stability to instability, from clarity to ambiguity, from simplicity to complexity, from motion to rest, or, if a Manichean interpretation may be suggested, from light to dark.

Beyond the proximate modifications, the implied harmonies of bars 2-5 determine the basic structure of the piece by evolving gradually over the length of the work and achieving their final transformation at the end. Though the chord in bars 2-3 is a sounding D major triad, its inverted position and eventual resolution—emphasized by the enharmonic spelling of the chord third (G^b rather than F^\sharp)—reveal its actual function to be an embellished and prolonged upper neighbor to the F in bar 4. Initially the F is most likely heard as the root of the dominant, but the B^b and D^b s in the second half of the bar suggest its role to be the fifth of the minor tonic triad. While the status of F as a chord root is affirmed in the cadential harmony of bar 5—an inverted dominant seventh—the original status of the tonic B^b is transformed to an unresolved suspended dissonance (Example 2).

March, Harmonic reduction, bars 1-5.

Example 2.

The tension and unpredictability of the first five bars is relieved by the appearance of Theme A, whose rhythm, shape, and upper neighbor relationships (e. g., B^b to A in bars 7 and 9) derive from the Introduction, while the rhythm of its accompaniment is that of the theme's first two bars in diminution (Example 3). As in von Weber's original, the second half of

Example 3.

Theme A (measures 10-13) begins a modulation to the major submediant, G^b , which is expanded and completed in the first half of Theme B. The cli-

mactic G^b triads of bars 14-15, the first root-position major harmonies in the piece, represent an apotheosis of that pitch from bar 3 of the Introduction—an appoggiatura elevated to the level of a tonic (Example 4).

March, bars 14-17.

Example 4.

The emancipation of G^b from its former role is underscored by its exclusion from muted horn harmony that ends the fourth phrase, a metamorphosis of Motive Y from a sounding D major to a D^b minor chord with a written E in place of F^b (Example 5).

March, bars 21-25a.

Example 5.

Measures 6-26 can thus be viewed as an expanded transformation of the first three bars of the Introduction, whose chief distinction is the separation and independent development of G^b from its original harmonic context and function (Example 6).

March, Harmonic reduction, bars 6-21.

Example 6.

After the repeat of measures 6-26, Motive Y is extended and enhanced by woodwind and brass accompanying figures before leading to a truncated restatement of Motive X, with an inverted antiphonal woodwind response in place of the muted horns. The G^b in measure 35 is transformed

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here, however, into an F^b or the fifth of a B major triad, which usurps its original appoggiatura relationship to the dominant (Example 7).

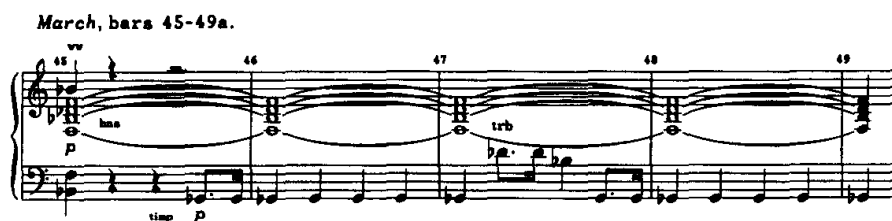
March, bars 34-37.



Example 7.

A culminating restatement of Theme A by the full band in measures 38-44 precedes a final modification of Motive Y in which G^b is banished from the horn harmony to the accompanying timpani, and which forms both the conclusion of Section A on the tonic minor and the transition to Section B in the parallel major (Example 8).

March, bars 45-49a.



Example 8.

Section B initiates an exchange of instrumental roles. The French horns, formerly an inactive respondent to the woodwinds and other brass, now have the theme (Example 9). Triplets in the accompanying woodwinds

March, bars 52-55.



Example 9.

replace the dotted rhythms of before. The trumpets and trombones, absent until measure 68, take over the role of accompaniment to a new idea assumed by the upper clarinets, flutes, oboes, and English horn. Temporarily silent, the horns re-enter to accompany a rhythmically displaced version of Theme C at measure 74.

Here at the midpoint of the *March* Hindemith reaches a climax of harmonic and rhythmic complexity. For the first half of the work the

prevailing harmonies had been major triads, minor triads, or major-minor seventh chords—I and II harmonies according to Hindemith's Table of Chord Groups.⁷ In measure 45 (see Example 8) a prolonged major-minor seventh is reached (Hindemith Group III) and in the first half of measure 72, a dominant augmented eleventh (Hindemith Group IV), the most dissonant chord of the piece (Example 10). Hence Hindemith adheres to his guidelines for "harmonic fluctuation," in which is recommended a



Example 10.

balanced rise and fall of harmonic tension throughout a piece.⁸ Correspondingly, in measure 123, the point comparable to measure 72 in the restatement of B in second half of the *March*, the augmented eleventh is replaced with a major triad or Group I harmony.

Rhythmic complications similarly accumulate and recede. In Section A, duple subdivisions prevail in both melody and accompaniment. In Section B, triple and duple subdivisions occur simultaneously between the melody and accompaniment, culminating in the rhythmic disjunction of measure 74 mentioned above. And like the fate of its harmonic counterpart, the augmented eleventh, this aspect of rhythmic complexity is neutralized by reversion to the original rhythm at measure 125 in the restatement of Section B.

A repeat of the Introduction forms the transition to a modified recapitulation. In keeping with a process of escalating complexity, the transformation of the Introduction is extreme—except for the melodic outline, everything of the original is reversed: whole and half notes substitute for halves and quarters; equal durations take the place of dotted values; quiet woodwinds replace loud brasses; static horn harmonies accede to synco-pated counterpoint in the low brass and string bass; the cymbal roll surrenders to a metrical series of repeated pitches in the timpani; a continuous timbre eliminates *klangfarben*. But most significantly for the process of the piece, the G^b —emancipated in bars 14-15 from the harmony of bars 2-3, transformed to F^b in bar 35, tangentially reintroduced into the harmony in bar 45—reasserts itself in its original location as a harmonic root in bar

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84. Its metamorphosis as G^b is complete (Example 11).

March, bars 82-87.

Example 11.

The procedure of reversal continues in the recapitulation beginning in measure 88, with an abrupt modulation to the leading tone minor and the theme switched from upper woodwinds (bar 6) to low brasses. Outside changes of instrumentation and key as well as some ornamental passages in triplets by the clarinets, bars 88-100 are a literal repeat of 6-18. At bar 101, however, the transition to the recapitulation of Section B is accomplished by a rising sequence constructed of Motive X in the woodwinds rather than the horn harmonies of Motive Y as previously (Example 12).

March, bars 101-105.

Example 12.

The sequence culminates in bars 107-10 with the rhythm of Motive X altered to extend over five beats rather than four and outlining first an F^b minor triad and concluding on a D dominant seventh—the metamorphosis of G^b to F^b has begun. Then, in the second half of bar 110 Hindemith jolts the listener with successive surprises: the first instance of absolute silence in the piece and the recapitulation of Theme B in the subdominant rather than the tonic (Example 13).

March, bars 107-110.

Example 13.

B^b reasserts itself as the tonic in bar 115 for the second half of the phase, but instead of repeating Theme C as before, a version of Theme D climaxing on F^b precedes the final statement in the tonic, beginning at bar 125. Thus concludes a tendency towards the dissolution of the dominant harmony initiated in the Introduction where its presence is implied but not explicitly stated. After the opening bars Hindemith uses the dominant to reaffirm the tonic only twice—in bar 72, embellished almost beyond the point of recognition as an augmented eleventh, and in bar 123, chromatically altered with only a trace of its function remaining.

It remains for the Coda to provide the final and most decisive metamorphosis of the *March*. From the alternating repetitions of Motive X in the trumpets and horns at bar 132 (Example 14) progressing to a frenzy of

March, bars 132-133.

Example 14.

development at bar 136, emerges an ultimate unison statement followed by a root-position D major triad in bars 140-41 (Example 15).

March, bars 140-144.

Example 15.

The equivocal identity of G^b in bar 2 has been finally resolved to an unequivocal F^b. With the instability stabilized, ambiguity clarified, complexity simplified, and darkness dispelled by light, the problem presented at the beginning of the *March* is solved. And by its solution the nature of thematic metamorphosis is finally clarified as a transformation not of appearance, but of character.

NOTES

¹ Letter from Keith Wilson, August 18, 1992

² Allowing for instances where the substitution of winds for strings would be obvious or predictable, Wilson's transcription is faithful to Hindemith's original orchestration with the exception of bars 45-49, where he employs French horns for the restatement of Motive Y rather than retain Hindemith's choice of flutes and clarinets. Since Hindemith's instrumentation does not preclude horns, this would seem to be a deliberate deviation by Wilson for purposes of coherence, thereby affiliating horns with Motive Y throughout the piece.

³ John Fenton, "Hindemith's Symphonic Metamorphosis," *Music Teacher* (February 1978), 19.

⁴ Wilfried Brennecke, "Die Metamorphosen-Werke von Richard Strauss und Paul Hindemith," *Schweizerische Musikzeitung*, 103/4 (1963), 201. In this article, which contains brief analyses of each movement of the *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, Brennecke surveys the question of metamorphosis versus variation in German writings about the piece. The author's section on the *Marsch* is entirely a comparison of its form with that of Weber's *Marcia*.

⁵ Ian Kemp, *Hindemith* (London: Oxford University, 1978), 7.

⁶ For this to have been a funeral march as some think, proof is lacking since the autograph is lost indicating the original title and tempo (Brennecke, 204-04).

⁷ Paul Hindemith, *Craft of Musical Composition, Book I: Theory*, Arthur Mendel trans. (New York: Schott, 1968). Hindemith's Table is in an appended chart at the end of the text in which chords are classified according to increasing levels of dissonance and stability: e. g., Group I—chords without a tritone, seconds, or sevenths; Group II—chords with a tritone but without minor seconds or major sevenths; Group III—chords without a tritone but with seconds or sevenths; Group IV—chords with a tritone, major sevenths, and minor seconds; plus Groups V and VI of dissonant chords with and without a tritone whose roots must be determined by context. The *March* contains no prominent harmonies of the latter two classifications.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 114-21.