

# Composers of Great Band Works

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## Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)

### Lifeline

- born in Hanau, Germany (November 16), the oldest of three children.
- began music lessons at age 9, learning to play the violin and the piano.
- at 13 was awarded a violin scholarship to attend the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt.
- a few years after entering the conservatory, he began studying composition.
- was 17 when the first formal performance of one of his works was given.
- at 20, accepted professional employment with the Frankfurt Opera as first violinist.
- had his works first published at the age of 21.
- was drafted into the German army for service in World War I (age 21).
- at 28, he married Gertrud
- was appointed professor of composition in the Berlin Musikhochschule at age 31.
- at 41, his famous treatise on harmony, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, was published.
- at 41 he resigned from the Hochschule due to increasing censorship from the Nazi regime; moved to Switzerland.
- at age 44 he moved to the United States, taking a teaching position at Yale University.
- moved back to Switzerland at age 57, teaching at the University of Zurich.
- retired from teaching at age 61, but remained active as a conductor.
- died peacefully and with his wife beside him in Frankfurt, Germany at age 68.



### Anecdotes and Trivia

- his father (Robert) struggled to earn a living as a house painter, moving from town to town in search of work.
- Paul, his sister Toni, and the youngest sibling Rudolf were treated harshly by their father.
- an amateur zither player Robert insisted that all three children study music.
- when finances permitted, the children were taken to the opera; on the way home, the father would question them about the performance, often slapping them if their answers were not pleasing.
- as a youth, Paul was intensely shy about his talents and would visit several different stores purchasing only small amounts of manuscript paper for fear that someone might suspect that he imagined himself to be a composer.
- in his late teens, he wrote short comic plays for private performance with friends; many of these plays reveal a difficult domestic life dominated by music and the constant exhortation to practice.
- while students, Paul and his brother performed in taverns and cinema houses to earn money for their studies.
- in the Germany army he was assigned to play the bass drum with a military band.
- during his first trip to the US, he visited the Cotton Club in New York to hear Duke Ellington.
- his works for band helped convince other composers to accept the concert band as a valid medium for serious music.
- he enjoyed helping his wife with housework, especially using the vacuum cleaner because of the various rhythm and pitch variations it would create.
- especially enjoyed hiking, drawing, and making homemade Christmas cards.



### Works for Band

*Concert Music for Band, Op. 41* (1926)

*March from Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*

(1943; at the request of the composer, this work was transcribed for band by Keith Wilson)

*Symphony in B-flat* (1951)

### Sources

*Paul Hindemith: The Man Behind the Music* by Geoffrey Skelton (1975)

*The Music of Paul Hindemith* by David Neumeyer (1986)