

March 13, 2027

7:30 pm

“Rising Stars and the Firebird Suite”

Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber

Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Scherzo (Turandot): Moderato – Lively*
- III. *Andantino*
- IV. *Marsch*

Second Place Concerto “Rising Stars” Winner

First Place Concerto “Rising Stars” Winner

INTERMISSION

Firebird Suite (1919 Version)

Igor Stravinsky (1882 - 1971)

- I. **Introduction**
- II. **The Firebird and its Dance**
- III. **Variation of the Firebird**
- IV. **The Princesses – Khorovod**
- V. **Infernal Dance of King Kashchei**
- VI. **Lullaby**
- VII. **Finale**

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Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber

Paul Hindemith (b. Hanau, Germany, November 16, 1895; d. Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, December 28, 1963))

- I. *Allegro***
- II. *Scherzo (Turandot): Moderato – Lively***
- III. *Andantino***
- IV. *Marsch***

Instrumentation for *Metamorphosis*: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets in B-flat, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns in F, 2 trumpets in B-flat, 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, snare drum, tambourine, triangle, Glockenspiel, bass drum, cymbals, small cymbals, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, tubular bells, tom-tom, small gong, wood block, tenor drum; violin I, violin II, violas, violoncellos, double basses. The work lasts 21 minutes.

Background

Hindemith's most popular work, both on record and in the concert hall, is probably tonight's work of *Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*, written in 1943. It takes melodies from various works by Carl Maria von Weber, mainly piano duets, but also one from the overture to his incidental music for *Turandot* (Op. 37/J. 75), and transforms and adapts them so that each movement of the piece is based on one theme.

Although by its thematic material it belongs squarely in the European tradition, *Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber* was composed with the virtuosity of American symphony orchestras in mind and was titled originally in English.

Composer Paul Hindemith wrote this piece based on music written by German composer Carl Maria von Weber in the 1940s. In 1943, at a time when German culture seemed to have been overwhelmed by barbarism, Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) paid homage to his great predecessor by turning some of Weber's four-hand piano pieces into the brilliantly elaborated, playful *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*.

Hindemith was born in 1895 near Frankfurt, Germany, the first child of Robert Hindemith, a painter and decorator, and his wife, Maria. Young Paul was taught violin as a child and entered the Frankfurt Conservatory where he studied violin, conducting and composition.

Called Dr. Hoch's Konservatorium – Musikakademie, this was a music academy founded in 1878. One of the distinguished piano teachers was Clara Schumann. It also had the world's first Jazz Studies program (founded in 1928) as well as an Elementary Music Department. Additionally, there were Ballet, Early Music, and New Music Departments.

Excelling in this school, Hindemith later studied viola, and even premiered William Walton's viola concerto. Toward the end of the 1930s, Hindemith made several tours of America as a viola and viola d'amore soloist. Hindemith founded the Amar Quartet, playing viola, and extensively toured Europe with an emphasis on contemporary music. His younger brother Rudolf was the original cellist.

Interestingly, the *New York Times* in a recent article (June 2026), pointed out another violist who became a composer. "After 14 years playing viola in the Berlin Philharmonic, Brett Dean was still writing for classical ensembles. Soon he was itching to compose full time. Dean is a rare case: the Berlin Philharmonic member turned composer. His music is performed frequently by the world's leading orchestras – including the one he left behind. Dean is now 'composer in residence' for the next season of the Berlin Philharmonic!"

As a composer, Hindemith became a major advocate of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) style of music in the 1920s, yet the Nazis banned his music in October 1936 even as the style was appreciated by them.

Other major musicians and composers were also treated poorly during this time including "Werner Egk, Kurt Weill, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Carl Off, Hans Pfitzner, Arnold Schoenberg, and Richard Strauss," writes author Michael H. Kater in his book *Composers of the Nazi Era – Eight Portraits*.

Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians reads, "In 1927, [Hindemith] had been appointed a professor at the Berlin High School for Music. Under the Nazi rule, however, these activities were brought to an end in Germany, and his compositions ceased to be performed there."

German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler defended Hindemith in a written document in 1934. Hindemith continued to teach at the Berlin Academy (aka the Berlin High School for Music). Later, "Finding the deck stacked against him, Hindemith took a temporary leave of absence from this 'Hochschule für Musik' and his duties were assumed by Max Trapp, which was the beginning of his leave-taking," writes Kater in his second book, *The Twisted Muse*.

Hindemith emigrated to Switzerland in 1938. "It was primarily Hindemith's conflict with the artistic policies of the Third Reich, however, that determined his decision to leave," writes Michael Steinberg in *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*.

Hindemith became a U.S. citizen in 1946, teaching at Yale University. He taught for ten years, mentoring 400 students, of whom 46 earned degrees, mostly in music theory. He had such notable students as Lukas Foss, Norman Dello Joio, Yehudi Wyner, and Samuel Adler. Additionally, among Hindemith's students were the future rocket scientist Wernher von Braun and the composers Harald Genzmer, Oskar Sala, and Robert Strassburg.

Hindemith also taught at the University at Buffalo, Cornell University, and Wells College. During this time, he gave the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard. [Boston Symphony Director] "Serge Koussevitzky summoned him to teach at Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony and its summer school program," adds Kater.

Hindemith returned to Europe in 1953, living in Zürich and teaching at the university there until he retired from teaching in 1957. He died in Frankfurt at age 68.

What to Listen For

The work was first performed on January 20, 1944, in New York City, with Artur Rodziński conducting the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. *The New York Times* described the piece as "a novelty ... [which] was one of the most entertaining scores that he has thus far given us, a real *jeu d'esprit* by a great master of his medium in a singularly happy mood."



Paul Hindemith

Second Place Concerto "Rising Stars" Winner

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INTERMISSION

Firebird Suite (1919 Version)

Igor Stravinsky (b. Saint Petersburg, Russia, June 17, 1882; d. New York City, New York, April 6, 1971)

- I. Introduction**
- II. The Firebird and its Dance**
- III. Variation of the Firebird**
- IV. The Princesses – Khorovod**
- V. Infernal Dance of King Kashchei**
- VI. Lullaby**
- VII. Finale**

Instrumentation of this suite: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets in B-flat, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 2 trumpets in B-flat, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (triangle, bass drum, xylophone, tambourine, cymbals), harp, piano, and strings. Duration is 22 minutes.

Igor Stravinsky was a Russian composer important in modernistic music of the 20th century. His *Firebird Suite* was one of three written for the Ballet Russe in Paris.

Igor Fedorovich Stravinsky was born in Oranienbaum, on the Gulf of Finland opposite Kronstadt in June 1882. He was baptized by the Russian Orthodox Church a few hours after his birth.

Author Eric Walter White states in his book *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works – Second Edition* that “The name ‘Stravinsky’ is thought to be derived from Strava, a tributary of the River Nieman in eastern Poland. The family is said to have moved from Poland to Russia sometime during the reign of Catherine the Great.”

White continues, “Igor’s father, Feodor, had a fine natural bass voice and studied at the Conservatory in St. Petersburg. Upon graduation, he went to Kiev where he was engaged as a first bass in the Opera House. Soon after arriving in Kiev, he married.

Igor was the third of a family of four boys (Roman, Yury, Gury, and Igor). He attended school in St. Petersburg until he was fifteen where he studied history, mathematics, Latin, Greek, French, German, Russian and Slavonic.

During the summers the family traveled; at one point they met Clara Schumann in Frankfurt among other musical notables. Igor loved music and regularly listened to his father practice his extensive operatic repertory. He was allowed to explore his father's music library where he later spent much time sight-reading many of his father's vocal scores as a young piano student.

Stravinsky also visited the Maryinsky Theatre, a historic opera house, where he saw many ballets by Tchaikovsky and Glinka. "At the age of nine, he received his first regular piano lessons," continues White. "He made considerable progress and was ultimately able to play the Mendelssohn *G Minor Piano Concerto*."

He also studied both harmony and counterpoint at this time. He regularly attended opera rehearsals and performances at the Maryinsky Theatre (five or six nights a week) where his father was performing.

"Despite his obvious bent for music, his parents refused to allow him to pursue a musical career and insisted on his going to St. Petersburg University," continues White. "One of his fellow law students at the university was Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov, the youngest son of the composer, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov."

Luckily, Igor was able to visit his friend and meet the composer. Rimsky-Korsakov advised him to continue his studies in harmony and counterpoint, in private lessons adding that he would always be ready to offer advice.

At this point, Igor's father passed away, and Igor became a regular visitor at the Rimsky-Korsakov home. Stravinsky then received regular instruction from the composer for over a period of three years – two (hour-long) lessons a week.

There is no doubt that Rimsky-Korsakov became a father figure to Igor; and when Rimsky-Korsakov died, Stravinsky deeply mourned him. In fact, according to Natia Boulanger, French music teacher, conductor, and composer who writes in her book *Lectures on Modern Music*, "Like any powerful personality, Stravinsky has absorbed and assimilated the most diverse and conflicting influences shown in *The Firebird*. For instance, in *The Firebird*, we even find traces of Rimsky-Korsakov from his own work, *Fireworks* (1908). There are also influences of Scriabin, Wagner, Debussy, and Schoenberg from their compositions found in Stravinsky's works."

What to Listen For

"The ballet is a fairy story composed after the Russian national fairy tale, the legend of the Firebird," writes White. The first performance was by the Russian Ballet in the Paris Opera House in June 1910. Stravinsky dedicated it to Rimsky-Korsakov.

“The story of the ballet deals with two types of magic beings: the glittering Firebird who plays the part of the good fairy, and the green-taloned ogre, Kashchei, the embodiment of Evil,” writes White. “Sergei Diaghilev, the Russian ballet impresario, wished to create a ballet by transforming material derived from ancient Russian legends and fairy tales for children into a subtler, more significant kind of fable intended to appeal to adult audiences.”

There are three suites of symphonic music (called concert suites) created from the complete ballet, *The Firebird*. The orchestra Stravinsky wrote for was large, which enabled him to indulge in every type of orchestral effect, and the instrumentation is particularly brilliant. (In fact, the music is so stunning that the suite was used as background music for the televised fireworks display on global television in many languages in Salt Lake City at the conclusion of the 2002 Winter Olympics.)

“The first concert suite is referred to as a symphonic suite and was designed in 1911. The orchestration is about same as in the ballet score. The duration is 21 minutes,” adds White.

“We are hearing tonight what is sometimes identified as the Second Suite from *Firebird*,” reads David Daniels in his book *Orchestral Music – A Handbook (Third Edition)*. This 1919 suite remains the most popular today.



Igor Stravinsky