



# CONVERGENT WINDS

MUSIC OF PAUL HINDEMITH

ALEXA  
STILL

ROBERT  
WALTERS

RICHARD  
HAWKINS

GEORGE  
SAKAKEENY

JAMES  
HOWSMON

CONVERGENT WINDS:  
MUSIC OF PAUL HINDEMITH

Alexa Still, flute  
Robert Walters, oboe and English horn  
Richard Hawkins, clarinet  
George Sakakeeny, bassoon  
James Howsmon, piano

**Sonata for Flute and Piano (1936)**

|   |                       |      |
|---|-----------------------|------|
| 1 | Heiter bewegt         | 5:13 |
| 2 | Sehr langsam          | 4:59 |
| 3 | Sehr lebhaft - Marsch | 4:49 |

**Sonata for English Horn and Piano (1941)**

|   |                  |      |
|---|------------------|------|
| 4 | Langsam          | 3:07 |
| 5 | Allegro pesante  | 1:30 |
| 6 | Moderato         | 1:57 |
| 7 | Scherzo, schnell | :48  |
| 8 | Moderato         | 2:14 |
| 9 | Allegro pesante  | 1:40 |

**Sonata for Bassoon and Piano (1938)**

|    |                            |      |
|----|----------------------------|------|
| 10 | Leicht bewegt              | 2:10 |
| 11 | Langsam. Marsch. Pastorale | 5:49 |

**Sonata for Oboe and Piano (1938)**

|    |                       |      |
|----|-----------------------|------|
| 12 | Munter                | 4:08 |
| 13 | Sehr langsam. Lebhaft | 8:33 |

**Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1939)**

|    |                           |      |
|----|---------------------------|------|
| 14 | Mässig bewegt             | 4:52 |
| 15 | Lebhaft                   | 3:03 |
| 16 | Sehr langsam              | 6:44 |
| 17 | Kleines Rondo, gemächlich | 2:37 |

|    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 18 | <i>Echo</i> for Flute and Piano (1942) | 1:08 |
|----|--|------|

TOTAL: 65:21

## THROWN TO THE WINDS

**Paul Hindemith** (1895-1963) started his career as a violinist, and by age 20 he was appointed concertmaster of the Frankfurt Opera. He later became one of the greatest solo violists of his time, but he was also more than competent as a pianist and clarinetist. He used to brag that he could play any instrument in the orchestra with a little practice. Later in life, he became a sought-after conductor.

But Hindemith was, first and foremost, a prodigiously gifted and prolific composer. He burst on the scene in the years following World War I as the most brilliant member of his generation in Germany. He was known for writing with ease and great speed; the complete catalog of his music numbers more than 200 titles.

At the beginning of his career, Hindemith made his reputation with a triptych of expressionist operas and other works that were shockingly modern at the time. Later he found his way to a personal brand of neoclassicism, without giving up the modernistic aspects of his style. Rejecting atonality and dodecaphony—the most important compositional innovations of the day—he reformed tonality instead, using the twelve tones not “in relation only to one another,” as Schoenberg did, but rather “in relation to a central tone.”

As a practical musician, Hindemith was concerned that some instruments did not have enough solo literature written for them. He decided to remedy the situation, and over the years he composed sonatas for every single member of the string, woodwind, and brass families—and even a sonata for solo harp. The five sonatas for woodwind instruments and piano—in the order

of composition: flute, bassoon, oboe, clarinet, and English horn—were written between 1936 and 1941. In 1942, Hindemith composed the short *Echo* for flute and piano as an epilogue of sorts, returning to the instrument that started the cycle.

The consistency with which Hindemith pursued his sonata project is all the more remarkable if one thinks of the series of upheavals that life visited on him during those years. The earliest work on this CD, the flute sonata, was written during a year in which Hindemith's position in Nazi Germany became increasingly untenable. The Nazis had banned performances of his music and attacked him personally because his wife had Jewish ancestry. The Hindemiths finally left Germany in 1938 and, for a while, lived in a small village high in the Swiss Alps. This was the period during which the oboe, bassoon, and clarinet sonatas were composed. In 1940, the Hindemiths immigrated to the United States and remained there until 1953. The sonata for English horn and *Echo* were written in America, after Hindemith had become a professor at Yale University.

In conceiving this extensive cycle of sonatas, it was important to Hindemith to make sure that each work was recognizably a sonata in the traditional sense—that is, it had to contain recognizable movement types (*allegro*, *adagio*, *scherzo*), with memorable musical themes introduced and developed in each movement. Hindemith's sonatas fulfill all of these requirements, yet they do so in a very personal way. They continue the Romantic sonata tradition without sounding the least bit romantic. Although we find clearly established keys such as B-flat major and D major, these keys are not defined in the traditional way, using the fifth degree of the

scale as the principal away-from-home destination. Instead, using all twelve tones “in relation to a central tone,” they place those central tones in totally unexpected contexts involving distant harmonies, only to return “home” at the end of the movement if not sooner.

Likewise, Hindemith treats the traditional movement types in entirely nontraditional ways. A lively tarantella finale, which may have roots in Schubert, may suddenly turn into a stately march, as at the end of the flute sonata. Different genres—such as a slow movement, a march, and a pastorale—may be combined in a single movement, as in the work for bassoon. Or an entire work may be played without pause, with different segments embodying different movement types, alternating and returning in varied forms, as in the sonata for English horn. No two sonatas have the same movement structure or dramaturgy. And it goes without saying that each sonata is completely idiomatic for the instrument for which it was written, playing to the strengths and special virtues of each. Although the pieces are by no means easy to play, the emphasis is not on breathtaking virtuosity but on structural clarity and musical cohesion. The learned composer used a great deal of chromatic counterpoint, which allowed him to combine rigor and freedom, creating solid and compelling musical edifices in each work.

In the first movement of the **Sonata for Flute and Piano** (1936), Hindemith’s unique way of mixing traditional and nontraditional elements is clearly on display. A symmetrical, quasi-classical melody is developed in a distinctly nonclassical way, quickly diverging from the B-flat major opening to distant keys, with some thematic imitation and subtle rhythmical irregularities. Motives grow organically and return in a more or less classical

fashion, but then, unexpectedly, a brand-new, songlike theme appears in a slower tempo to close the movement.

The expansive lyricism of the second movement arises from a single melodic cell of just a few notes. By contrast, the last movement unites thematic materials of dissimilar character. The dashing tarantella theme and the songlike episode that follows it conform to a traditional rondo scheme, but then the rondo is suddenly brushed aside by a lively march, full of unusual twists and turns, giving the sonata an ending that is grandiose and witty at the same time.

The low timbre of the English horn is normally associated with melancholy moods, and certainly no German composer could ever forget the “sad melody” featuring the instrument in Act III of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*. Thus, it is entirely fitting that Hindemith’s **Sonata for English Horn and Piano** (1941) should begin with a slow section and a pensive theme that picks up momentum only gradually. The uniqueness of this sonata lies in the way this slow opening is combined with a series of interlocking sections with contrasting characters: the slow introduction, in C-sharp minor, is followed by a fast dance in 3/8 time in the distant key of F major, then, in turn, by a return to the initial key in a slower tempo, another fast movement (a scherzo) in F, a return of the slower section, and a return of the dance. All these various sections are played without a pause so that the sonata is really in a single movement; the interplay of their respective recapitulations creates a complex whole in which the sections alternate, rather than succeed one another.

The two sonatas written in 1938 are similar in that each is in two movements, and in both, the second movement subdivides into a number of

contrasting sections, combined in all kinds of intricate ways. The **Sonata for Bassoon and Piano** (1938) opens with a gently undulating theme in 6/8 time, which dominates the entire, predominantly lyrical first movement. The second movement begins extremely slowly, with an intense *cantabile* (“singing”) melody that suddenly turns into a lively march. We have already encountered a march at the end of the flute sonata, but this one is more elaborate, with a lot of counterpoint in its development. It also includes its own middle section or trio (a movement within a movement within a movement, as it were); when the march melody returns, its march character is almost completely dissolved in the expanded counterpoint. To make things even more complex, Hindemith weaves reminiscences of the trio into this modified march. The march is not the last word this time, as it was in the earliest piece: Hindemith circles back to the gentle 6/8 rhythm of the first movement and ends the sonata with a peaceful pastorale.

The first movement of the **Sonata for Oboe and Piano** (1938), *munter*, is faster and more cheerful than its counterpart in its companion work. It is characterized by a curious polyrhythmy: In the oboe part, every fourth eighth-note is accented, while in the piano part, the eighth-notes are grouped in threes. For all the harmonic and rhythmic novelties, however, the movement respects classical sonata form to a T. The second movement begins with a lyrical oboe theme marked *sehr langsam* (“very slow”), eventually interrupted by a *lebhaft* (“lively”) section that begins with the same three notes as the slow melody. After an eventful development, the opening material of the movement returns, but then the tempo becomes *lebhaft* again. This time, the theme is turned into a fugue, enlivened by rhythmic games similar to those

of the first movement. A new theme, first introduced by the unaccompanied oboe, is repeated a number of times, with ever richer harmonies culminating in a series of powerful concluding chords.

The **Sonata for Clarinet and Piano** (1939) is the only one in the set to consist of four self-contained movements; it is also the longest of the sonatas and the most classical in its layout. Surprisingly, each of the four movements ends softly, as if the composer wanted, each time, to retract the growth and expansion of the musical material that has taken place previously. The songlike melodies of the first movement, in moderate tempo, end on an even slower and dreamier note. The march-like second movement (another march, even if it is not labeled as such) takes an unexpected turn when its melody disintegrates at the end. Instead of the long legato lines found in the slow movements of the other sonatas, this time we hear an intensely dramatic melody, rhythmically intricate and spanning a wide range; it starts from the clarinet’s lowest register and rises more than two octaves. A “Little Rondo” serves as the concluding movement—playful and witty—with a more melodic episode followed by the surprising final return of the rondo theme.

**Echo** (1942), as its title suggests, is based on the idea of the flute and the piano repeating each other’s motifs. This cheerful miniature is an elegant sendoff for this remarkable series of woodwind sonatas. —*notes by Peter Laki*

## ALEXA STILL



Born in New Zealand, Alexa Still won the New York Flute Club Young Artist Competition and the East and West Artists Competition while she was a graduate student at Stony Brook University. At age 23, she became principal flute of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. After appointments at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, she joined the Oberlin Conservatory faculty in 2011.

An avid performer, Still has appeared in countries across Europe, Asia, South America, and North America. Notable performances include the Australian and American premieres of Matthew Hindson's *House Music*; John Corigliano's *Pied Piper Fantasy* with the Colorado Music Festival, Albany Symphony, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic for Corigliano's 70th birthday celebrations; and several world-premiere performances including Valerie Coleman's *Elegy* at the 2014 National Flute Association convention.

Still has released more than 15 solo CDs, including a 2004 collection of concertos that caused *Fanfare* to exclaim: "You just won't hear better-sustained flute playing on disc." Her 2014 premiere recording of Hindson's *House Music* is available digitally on Oberlin Music. She is past president of the NFA and regularly contributes articles to flute journals across the globe. When her flute is in its case, Still is an avid motorcyclist, and she shares a daughter and two dogs with her husband.

## ROBERT WALTERS



A fourth-generation college music professor, Robert Walters has taught at Oberlin Conservatory since 2006 and was appointed professor of oboe and English horn in 2010. His students have secured solo positions in leading orchestras across the United States. Since 2004, Walters has been the solo English horn player of the Cleveland Orchestra, with which he premiered Bernard Rands' *Concerto for English Horn* in November 2015, a commission

honoring Oberlin Conservatory's 150th anniversary.

Prior to his arrival in northeast Ohio, Walters was the solo English horn player of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. As an oboist, he performed and recorded frequently with the Philadelphia Orchestra and with James Levine and the Met Chamber Ensemble at Carnegie Hall. He has appeared as guest soloist with the Chicago Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Beijing Radio Symphony, and other orchestras. Among numerous festival appointments, Walters has spent five summers with the Marlboro Music Festival and has served as an artist faculty member of the Aspen Music Festival and School.

A native of Los Angeles raised in Lincoln, Nebraska, Walters is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and Columbia University, where he earned an MFA in poetry. He studied with Richard Woodhams (principal oboe, Philadelphia Orchestra) and John Mack (principal oboe, Cleveland Orchestra).

## RICHARD HAWKINS



Richard Hawkins made his solo debut on four subscription concerts at the Kennedy Center with Mstislav Rostropovich and the National Symphony Orchestra in 1992. He has since given more than 50 performances of featured clarinet works with orchestra. His first teaching position, at the Interlochen Arts Academy in 1993, set a new career direction and instilled a dedication to educating the world's finest young clarinetists.

Hawkins has performed with the Bogota Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Tucson Winter Music Festival, and in recitals and master classes throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. His double CD release on Oberlin Music, *A Place Toward Other Places*, features works by Elliott Carter, William Albright, Benjamin Broening, and Aaron Helgeson. He has been a member of the Oberlin Conservatory faculty since 2001, and his former students hold prestigious positions in orchestras and teaching institutions worldwide.

In addition to teaching and performing, Hawkins has long pursued a passion for instrument design, including instruments for the G. Leblanc Corporation and his own line of clarinet mouthpieces, which have become among the most widely favored products in the industry. Since 2007, he has proudly performed on the Backun MOBA clarinet made of cocobolo with a G Model Richard Hawkins mouthpiece and Légère Signature reed.

## GEORGE SAKAKEENY



George Sakakeeny is professor of bassoon at the Eastman School of Music and emeritus professor of bassoon at Oberlin Conservatory, where he served for 28 years. Three major works for bassoon and orchestra have been written for him: Libby Larsen's *full moon in the city* (2013) Peter Schickele's Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra (1998), and Alexander Blechinger's *Fagottkonzert* (1997).

Sakakeeny has taught master classes at the Paris Conservatory, Rice University, Tokyo University of Fine Arts, and the Juilliard School, and held long-term residencies at the Shanghai Conservatory, Central Conservatory, Seoul National University, and the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et Danse of Lyon. For seven years, he served as guest bassoon professor for El Sistema. Many of his former students hold positions in symphony orchestras, universities, and chamber groups throughout North and South America and the Far East.

Sakakeeny can be heard on Blechinger's *Fagottkonzert* recording on the Harmonia Classica label, the Villa-Lobos Duo with oboist Alex Klein as part of the International Double Reed Society's 25th anniversary CD, and his 2015 recording of four modern works for bassoon and orchestra on the Oberlin Music label, *full moon in the city*. He is the author of the iBook *Making Reeds Start to Finish with George Sakakeeny*.

## JAMES HOWSMON



James Howsmon has collaborated on more than 1,000 recitals in North America, Europe, and Japan, and has performed with principal players of every major American orchestra. In recent seasons, he has played in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. (at the Kennedy Center), Philadelphia, Dallas, Montreal, and Minneapolis. Highlights include performances of Stravinsky's *Les Noces* with the Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Boulez; an

ongoing series of the complete Mozart sonatas for piano and violin with violinist Marilyn McDonald; and performances of Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* with the prominent Dutch bass-baritone Robert Holl. Howsmon is a frequent performing artist on Oberlin Conservatory's stages, recently playing Poulenc's *Aubade* with the Oberlin Sinfonietta and Messiaen's *Couleurs de la Cité Céleste* with the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Howsmon is professor of instrumental accompanying at Oberlin Conservatory, where he oversees the instrumental collaborative activities of the school's 100 piano majors. He is also on the faculty of Credo, a summer chamber music program held on Oberlin's campus. From 1999 to 2006, Howsmon served on the piano faculty of the Brevard Music Center. He has given guest master classes in accompanying and chamber music at the Juilliard School, Cleveland Institute of Music, Interlochen Arts Academy, Arizona State University, University of Colorado, and the University of Alabama, among others.

**OBERLIN MUSIC** is the official record label of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. It celebrates the artistic vision and superlative talent of Oberlin's faculty, students, and alumni—on campus and on tour. Essential to this mission is Clonick Hall, a superior recording facility dedicated to capturing studio sessions in the heart of the conservatory. Oberlin Music titles are available on CD and digital channels worldwide. For more information, visit [oberlin.edu/oberlinmusic](http://oberlin.edu/oberlinmusic).

**OBERLIN CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC**, founded in 1865 and situated amid the intellectual vitality of Oberlin College, is the oldest continuously operating conservatory in the United States. Recognized as a professional music school of the highest caliber, it was awarded the National Medal of Arts, the country's highest honor given to artists and arts patrons.

**LABEL DIRECTOR:** Michael Straus

**EDITORIAL DIRECTORS:** Cathy Partlow Strauss and Erich Burnett

**PRODUCER:** Paul Eachus

**AUDIO ENGINEER:** Andrew Tripp

**AUDIO EDITING:** Andrew Tripp and Paul Eachus

**MASTERING ENGINEER:** Paul Eachus

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:** Ryan Sprowl

**ARTIST PHOTOS:** Jennifer Manna & Tanya Rosen-Jones

**DEAN OF THE CONSERVATORY:** Andrea Kalyn

**Recorded in January and September 2015 and April and May 2016 at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.**





OBERLIN MUSIC