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Paul Hindemith's Cello Concerto (1940): A Short History and An Ongoing Personal Quest Toward Its Comprehension, Mastery, and Performance

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PAUL HINDEMITH’S CELLO CONCERTO (1940): A SHORT HISTORY AND AN ONGOING PERSONAL QUEST TOWARD ITS COMPREHENSION, MASTERY, AND PERFORMANCE

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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by
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ABSTRACT

I was introduced Paul Hindemith’s Cello Concerto (1940) in 2015, my first year as a Doctoral Student. Admittedly, this piece was not very attractive to me. However, I tried to embrace this work, and experience it as a new adventure in ear training, technical challenge and style. Several weeks later, after many frustrating hours of practice, I closed this music because so many elements of this composer’s sound were unfamiliar and foreign to me, to which I could not easily relate. Even though I had listened and examined this work for these initial weeks, I felt horribly under-prepared, musically to approach this piece and do it any kind of justice.

Now, I have returned to this piece to try to overcome the difficulties I faced earlier in my studies. I am curious to see, after three years here, mainly working on compositions that are more traditional and limited in harmonic and cellistic scope, where do Hindemith and I stand. The aim of this project is to discuss the challenges, both aurally, and mechanically that this work poses, to me at least. The first chapter will present a brief history of Hindemith, and his general compositional style. In the second chapter, I will present my personal story, my approach to solving some of the works demands and how I attempt to process the strange melodic and harmonic structures found within this piece. Perhaps some of these discussions may assist others if similar difficulties are found.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: THE PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this project is to deepen my understanding of Paul Hindemith’s Cello Concerto (1940), and to give my first performance of this work. When I began my doctoral study three years ago, I spent two or three weeks attempting to get inside this work. Having not had much background in twentieth century compositions, and particularly with this level of technical complexity, the prospect seemed daunting. Due to the difficulties I faced, a program of other works shortly after was substituted for this piece at that time, but my resolve to play it never subsided. Now, three years later, this performance serves as a personal challenge or test to my increased awareness in problem solving on the cello, exposure to a new and foreign (to me) tonal language etc. As I am aware that all works one ever performs are always works-in-progress, I am ‘checking in’ on this particular work, on my way out.

In these past years I have learned certain tricks and have had some experiences that have led me to feel more confident to approach this mammoth work. This paper will include a combination of examples from the concerto explained, those that have demanded the most work from me, or those that demonstrate the difficulties I have personally dealt with. Hopefully, some of my findings may prove helpful to others attempting the same. Mostly, I will focus on the cellistic issues attached to this concerto, but will also discuss Hindemith’s use of harmony, and lyric style, that which I initially found very confusing, and am now enjoying with a certain degree of comfort.

Chapter one will present a brief history of Hindemith’s life and career, focusing on Hindemith’s musical personality and his immigration to the United States. I believe that studying a composer’s background makes performers understand their music more easily. I will discuss the circumstances and timing surrounding the phase of Hindemith’s life that produced the Cello Concerto (1940). Additionally, I will present Hindemith’s compositional style, which has particular inherent difficulties for me. Not many cellists choose to play Hindemith’s Cello Concerto (1940) because beyond its many technical challenges, unfamiliar sounds, unexpected harmonic shifts, and so forth, it is a work that requires more than a few
hearings to become close to, or at least I found it so. In spite of this, I personally have enjoyed the process so far, and I believe that more cellists should take the plunge.

In the second chapter, this study will detail my personal story with Hindemith’s Cello Concerto. It has been a long journey from my first semester of DMA until now with my last lecture recital. The story will discuss how my attitude as a performer of this ‘new’ piece changed, what kind of technical problems I had and what theoretical knowledge I found necessary to improve my playing. My journey to master this cello concerto is not a short-term goal, but something I have held in the back of my mind since the first attempt, three years ago. I will examine Hindemith’s Cello Concerto not in a conventional analytical sense, but from this performer’s perspective. Although the concerto is usually played with an orchestra, I will play it with a piano reduction. A reduced piano score will be used for exemplifying certain points.

Lastly, towards the problems of practical performance, I will humbly suggest efficient and helpful solutions, specifically, how to maneuver more readily in high register positions, and architecture needed to execute this angular, yet lyrical phrasing.

Hopefully, this study will encourage and inspire other cellists to perform Hindemith Cello Concerto.
CHAPTER 2. A BRIEF HISTORICAL STORY OF PAUL HINDEMITH

In 1895, Paul Hindemith was born in Hanau, Hesse-Nassau and died in Frankfurt, 1963.¹ Hindemith was not born into a music family, however, his father encouraged his children to be educated as professional musicians.² Hindemith was gifted in musical ability, which could not be hidden from the world. He was a talented violinist at Hoch’s conservatory.³ According to the Karlsruher Tageblatt: “Hindemith’s playing is marked by serenity, utter flawlessness in fingerings and bowing techniques, a convincing noblesse of tone, thrilling élan and profound intimacy.”⁴ He was employed at Frankfurt opera orchestra as a concertmaster when he was only 19 years old.⁵

After World Word I started in 1914, Hindemith was nervously imagining serving in combat, and because he was 22 years old, it was highly possible for him to be called into the army. By 1917, Hindemith had begun service as a soldier in Frankfurt. His army life was unsatisfying and unstable in the barracks. He tried to move to a military band, but it was not easy to make this change. In 1918, he was moved to France and still tried to transfer to the band. Finally, one day, he got an opportunity to play a drum and showed his musical ability on that instrument. Hindemith received compliments on his performance, but even though he continually endeavored to transfer to the military band, his chance disappeared. His time in the army was not very useful and he had a negative view of war. His experiences in the army changed his musical tendencies, which steered towards a more violent style of composition.

His personality was somehow straightforward and precise. He did not much pay attention to the audiences, which means he did not care about whether people liked his

⁴. Ibid.
⁵. Foundation Hindemith, “Opera and Concert.”
music or not. He cared about technical expertise that all artists are required to achieve. According to Hindemith, if artists are not strong technitions, there are not able to be artists. \(^6\)

At the beginning of 1919, he was released from the army. \(^7\) When he returned to Germany, the musical atmosphere was slightly changed. At the Frankfurt Opera, the concert programs were from composers who had a pre-war reputation. Hindemith returned as the concertmaster, and began playing violin with his first string quartet, the Rebner string quartet. Later on, he requested to switch instruments from violin to viola, thus, he became a violist. Hindemith met a pianist, Emma Lübbecke-Job. They played Hindemith’s own “Piano Quintet” together. She accompanied Hindemith for his E flat violin and viola sonatas. According to her, “Italian opera melody, Slav rhythms and impressionistic sounds have not been completely assimilated and made his own. But the composer’s remarkable melodic invention, his surprisingly assured mastery of form and the powerful impetus of his works entitle us to speak of a creative talent far beyond the average.” \(^8\) Hindemith had a conflict with the Rebner string quartet because he preferred to play adventurous repertoire that the other players did not want to perform. After he departed the string quartet, Hindemith joined other string quartets, which had many concerts in Europe, and he composed many creative pieces.

Hindemith was not only a talented performer, but also a rising composer in 1919-1922. His compositions contained various styles and combinations. For example, *Kammermusik* No. I has a jazz style and Hindemith truly composed his famous song “Das Marienlebe” in a polyphonic style. His compositional styles were readily performed and published in Europe and the United States.

In 1933, the Nazis came to power. Josef Goebbels was the leader and founder of Reichsmusikkammer, the Nazi institution that covered music, theatre, and cultural activities. They silently suppressed “degenerate music,” which referred to atonal music, jazz, and

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\(^7\) Ibid.,55

\(^8\) Ibid.,57
music by Jewish and foreign composers. The institution seriously interfered in concert programs and with artists traveling to other cities. Hindemith was not too worried about himself because “he was neither a half nor any other fractional Jew.” Nevertheless, “music critics and politicians with a nationalistic orientation began to attack Hindemith” because of his un-German attitude and his character as a creative musician. His one-act opera, “Sancta Susanna” was supposed to be performed in Dresden, but it was cancelled due to suppression by the Third Reich. Even though Hindemith was threatened in this dangerous situation, he continued to play in chamber ensemble music with his friends, “Simon Goldberg and Emanuel Feuerman, who were branded as Jews. His wife Gertrud was also considered half-Jewish.” In Hindemith’s Jewish association issue, he was not free to present his musical abilities as the Nazis suppressed his music. Nevertheless, his response was to continue being a musician. In 1934, Wilhelm Furtwängler who was a conductor at the Berlin Philharmonic premiered Hindemith’s Mathis der Maler symphony that was well reviewed and acclaimed, however controversally in a newspaper. The conductor tried to defend Hindemith’s case, which spread by the newspapers, and continued to champion his cause and his talent. After the huge issue in Hindemith’s life, he decided to leave the city and move away from the national socialists. The Hochschule, where Hindemith taught classes allowed him to leave Berlin so Hindemith went to Lenzkirch in the Black Forest with his wife, Gertrud.

In 1935, Hindemith and his wife went to Ankara in Turkey because he was invited to create new musical curriculums in the Turkish Ministry of Education with Cevat Bay. Although he did not plan to stay permanently, he did not miss the chance to experience the life of a music teacher. At that time, Turkey was adapting to the new western culture based

10. Ibid.,106
on traditional education. Hindemith’s duties created an important combination between the new style of music and traditional music. He enjoyed life in Turkey and produced practical music for Turkish musicians. On May 1935, he returned to Germany and focused on composing. Hindemith always planned creatively in his musical works. He tried to set up a relationship between composers and listeners, which means listeners should consider the composer’s thought, not only listen to the music. Surprisingly, Hindemith’s music was not banned in Germany, and his music was played more, including the Mathis der Maler Symphony. Hindemith traveled to Turkey several times to support the music education there while he still composed and played in Europe.  

In 1936, Hindemith was invited to play his own works at the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Festival in Washington. It was his first time visiting America. He briefly lived in Switzerland before moving to the United States in 1938. In 1940, Cameron Baird, who was the head of the music department in University of Buffalo, New York, invited Hindemith to teach at the university. In the same year, he taught at Cornell University, Wells College, and the Boston Symphony summer school at Tanglewood.

From 1940-53, Hindemith was on the faculty of Yale University, which gave him his American Citizenship. After the World War II, he traveled more freely than before, having many concerts and teaching opportunities in Europe. He also got a chance to teach at University of Zurich in Switzerland. In 1953, he settled in Switzerland, and lived as a theorist, conductor, composer and teacher like he had in the United States. On December 28, 1963, he died of pancreatitis.

Hindemith influenced future generations as both a composer and theorist. His most notable books are The Craft of Musical Composition, Traditional Harmony, and Elementary  

Training for Musicians. Hindemith’s musical system emphasized understanding and analyzing the harmonic structure of music and a broad reaching into music genres. In 1937, when Hindemith wrote The Craft of Musical Composition, he still had difficulties with the Nazis, so he could not be a more creative musical composer.

As a composer, Hindemith experienced a severe political situation and limited compositional freedom under Nazis. He had a conflict in his mind. According to Hindemith, “Anyone who is familiar with the development of music after the First World War will find step by step in these pages, which are intended to afford entrance to the newly won territory, traces of struggle with external circumstances as well as of that inner strife whose aim is the perfection of one’s own work.”

Hindemith’s system of tonal relationship is unique. As Skelton describes it, “it is based on vibrations, liberated those notes which have no place in the diatonic scale from their subservient position as passing notes and given them a legitimate place of their own in what, with his usual flair for the revealing analogy, he describes as his ‘tonal planetary system’, each note in his chromatic scale revolving around the sun of the central tonic at a distance established by its degree of relationship. The result of this arrangement, he claims, is that it frees the composer from ‘the tyranny of the major and minor’.” The dominant feature of Hindemith’s system was the triad, which “formed of the notes with the closet relationship to the tonic in the overtone series.” According to Hindemith, “Music, as long as it exits, will always take its departure from the major triad and return to it.”

Hindemith’s compositional style is complicated because musicians need to consider various aspects of his music. To understand Hindemith’s composition features, Skelton states that, “Music arises from the combined effect of at least two tones. The motion from

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21. Ibid., 144
22. Ibid., 146
one tone to another, the bridging of a gap in space, produces melodic tension, while the simultaneous juxtaposition of two tones produces harmony. Intervals formed by the connection of two tones, is the basic unit of musical construction."²⁴

Lastly, Hindemith’s system emphasized, “The key and its body of chords is not the natural basis of tonal activity. What nature provides are the intervals. The juxtaposition of intervals, as of chords, which are the extensions of intervals, gives rise to the key. We are no longer the prisoners of the key. Rather, we now have a free hand to give the tonal relations whatever aspect we deem fitting. The different harmonic tensions, which we need for this purpose, are indicated by the ranking of the interval values.”²⁵

Hindemith composed in many genres such as opera, ballet, orchestral, and chamber music that have entered the standard repertoire.²⁶ While the composer also wrote many well-known sonatas. He wrote comparatively fewer concertos, including concertos for piano, violin, and clarinet. His three cello concerti are quite different. The first cello concerto in E-flat major, Op. 3 (1915-1916) is called a student concerto because it is well designed for students to improve their technique.²⁷ Hindemith composed Op.3 at 21 years old when he was a music student himself. This music is quite challenging to play but an important piece to know. If students try to play the Cello Concerto, Op.3, they should make an effort to play the different style of each movement and challenging techniques. The second cello concerto (1925) is Opus 36, No. 2 in his chamber work, Kammermusiken. It is an ensemble piece, which contains a cellist and ten different instruments. Also, this piece requires cellists and the performers to have a Neo-Classical style and an independent melodic line.²⁸ Lastly, Hindemith composed his Cello Concerto (1940) in Lenox, Massachusetts in only 4 months. Serge Koussevitzky conducted the cello concerto with Boston Symphony and Gregpr

²⁴. Ibid., 148
²⁵. Ibid., 149
Piatigorsky premiered this piece at Sanders Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on February 6th, 1941 with a full orchestra. The combination of sounds between cello and the full orchestra is one of the outstanding features of this piece.
CHAPTER 3. A CELLIST’S PERSONAL LONG JOURNEY

I encountered Hindemith’s Cello Concerto (1940) in my first semester of 2015. I was really enthusiastic to learn this piece. This was my first experience with twentieth-century music or the composer, Paul Hindemith. I read and listened to the concerto several times before I practiced. I thought that reading the music briefly and listening to the music many times would help before practicing.

After a few frustrating weeks like this, it was mutually decided that this piece should wait awhile, and that there were other more suitable works that could be studied in the meantime to try to strengthen the ear, and further organize the hands. That day, I cried in front of my professor during the lesson. I had many different emotions after the lesson because the concerto made me feel incapable and I was disappointed to feel like I was unable to surmount the problems related to this piece at that time. Despite my frustration, I decided that I would return to play the concerto before I graduated from this school. While several semesters passed, I went through fundamental ear training, theoretical approaches, and learned to reason my way through many musical and instrumental challenges in other repertoire that I studied.

During my first semester with Hindemith’s cello concerto, I recognized how I have to approach not only this concerto but also cello playing in general. I personally think that every performer has their own learning style, methods, and practice habits. Like all performers, I also have my own personal style of playing. My attitude in my first attempt at playing Hindemith’s Cello Concerto was like that of making a new friend, with whom I needed to spend a great deal of time to get to know. Simply, I thought I could play Hindemith’s Cello Concerto with my limited practice technique and a dose of ear training. I thought if I repeated the difficult parts many times, most of the technical problems would disappear, merely through repetition. However, my shallow ideas made practice more difficult. I did not understand his composition style, I did not possess adequate cello technique, nor the theoretical approach necessary to play this work yet. When I first listened to this concerto, it
was a very unfamiliar in style, musical language, and even was challenging rhythmically to me.

3.1 Graphing and Mapping on The Fingerboard

I needed to begin to consider this graphing, or mapping of the fingerboard in order to securely attempt to find my way around this piece. First off. I needed to become aware of a proper hand formation, one that simply used one finger on the fingerboard at a time, without the unconscious extra fingers resting somewhere on the fingerboard without necessity. I had thus far not been aware that it only takes a single finger to play a single note—that the only time that more than one finger should be stopping a note would be during the performance of double stops. That being said, I began to realize the following:

1. That the left hand has certain limitations and that extension was almost never necessary to move from note to note.

2. In the first four positions, the most natural spacing of the fingers was to simply train each finger to find semi-tones. That is to say, if 1\textsuperscript{st} finger played B natural on the A string, the second should fall on C natural, the 3\textsuperscript{rd} on C sharp, and the fourth on D. This was, and is a comfortable distance, without extensions, for any hand, large or small, so it is a system that is universally convenient and acceptable. This four-finger pattern could transpose and find any group of four notes up to the end of fourth position, before new distances and intervals would be assigned.

3. From the fifth position forward, the fourth finger becomes less useable, so we enter the three finger positions, which until the thumb is raised and included, get us around the middle range of the fingerboard. The most comfortable intervals are generally a half or whole step from 1\textsuperscript{st} to 2\textsuperscript{nd} finger, and a half, or whole step from 2\textsuperscript{nd} to 3\textsuperscript{rd} finger, with the resulting total distance being a major 3\textsuperscript{rd} in the hand. The various combinations of half step plus half step, half step plus whole step, whole plus half step, and
whole step plus whole step all are in common usage in this concerto, as well as in many other works. What is most important to remember is that one finger to the next always needs to transfer the intensification and that we never leave the formerly used finger on the fingerboard once the new finger has reached its target.

4. In thumb position, it was explained, that the thumb and third finger most often frame an octave. The thumb rests on two strings so that octaves are formed from the lowest pitch with the thumb, to the highest pitch played with the 3rd finger on the next higher string. The most comfortable distances for the fingers between are those that perform a one octave major scale:

- Thumb to first finger, whole step
- 1st finger to 2nd, whole step
- 2nd finger to 3rd, a half step
- 3rd to the thumb on the next string, whole step

This pattern repeats on the next string and the octave scale is completed. As the 2nd to third finger general find a whole step to be less comfortable, this major scale does not make this demand on the hand, so it is a fast, relaxed and agile pattern, as long as all the fingers are lifted one after the other.

3.2 Intonation, Hearing Problems and Solutions

At the beginning of playing Hindemith’s Cello Concerto, my greatest challenge as a string player is intonation, plain and simple. I personally also had hearing problems with this piece. When I saw this concerto, I knew what each note was, however, I was not sure how to play those notes in tune. Also, I listened to the music while looking at the piece; however, it was still a very unfamiliar style to me. In my younger years, I studied tonal works by Beethoven, Elgar, Schumann, etc, whose pitches and harmonic structures seemed somewhat inevitable. These composers did not present me with strange and unexpected
tunes of harmonic, or melodic events, therefore, my comfort and familiarity with atonal structures, did not have the same chances at development.

Most classical and romantic cello concertos are written in an easily recognizable key and use chord progressions that are easily understood by the ear. Hindemith’s use of harmony is often, to me, ambiguous, and initially, without the benefit of a pianist to rehearse with, I was reliant on my own ear and practicing devices to make sense of his melodic, and harmonic relationships.

There were still several parts of this concerto that sound unusual. This became clearer and clearer as I spent more time with Hindemith’s concerto. This was among the first pieces I had performed without a key signature, which was initially disconcerting. The work itself is not atonal and in fact, many triads, cadences, and lyric moments exist in its phrases, however they are often sharply contrasted by seemingly clashing accompanimental harmonies, and odd arrangements of the phrases, somehow less predictable.

Figure 1. Hindemith’s Cello Concerto 1st movement cello and piano chords mm. 13-15

Figure 2. 2nd and 3rd movements - no key signature & unconventional chord progressions mm. 1-3
What I was discovering was that it would not help to read through these pages without understanding what the harmonic implications were, even if they were ambiguous, and hidden. I needed to try to group pitches into families of triads, or scales that could then have a tuning reference on the cello, such as the tuned open strings, harmonics, etc., something I could trust more than I could trust myself, or my own ear. It was and is not either acceptable, nor helpful to simply declare that this music sounded ‘strange’ to me. I needed to get to the root of the problem, and find reliable and systematic ways of resolving my aural doubts.

The notes here imply the triad of B flat major and then, A flat major, at least for a few beats, then leading to G, F#, G, Ab, A, Bb, B natural, etc. eventually arriving in what seems a C tonic, however without a third.

As a rule, I have learned that the semitones that exist between notes can fall into two categories: The first is the semitone type that has names of different notes (ex. F sharp to G
natural), or (D flat to C natural). Most often, these are semi-tones that can be played closely, and are resolving into the non-chromatic pitch. Hindemith’s musical line is full of such pitches, and relationships. As the diatonic pitches can never be altered, and must always correspond to the tuning of the cello and its harmonics, it is the ear of the performer that must determine how closely the other pitches in between can be placed to create scales that are consistent in their intervals and therefore in tune.

The second types of semitones are those that use the same note name (F to F sharp, or E to E flat). These are most often semitones that define and change the mode of the given group of notes surrounding, either from minor to major (C, E flat, G) or (C, E natural G) etc. It is in these cases where a slightly larger distance between the diatonic pitch and the chromatic pitch can tolerate a slightly larger distance. This helps define the shift in mode.

As a rule, when the flat note is functioning as a tonic of the triad, (Bb, or Ab), these are flat pitches that cannot be played too flatly, or they will not align and form well tuned scales with the diatonic pitches. It is wise to ‘consult’ the diatonic pitches to find the placement of the chromatic pitches, even if they are not the first note played. To do the opposite, and trust that the Bb, or Ab, we are starting the figure with a risk that may not result in a well-tuned phrase.

What one can count on in any piece is that the diatonic pitches, C, D, E, F, G, A, B can be directly found in the tuning of the instrument itself. These are the pitches we tune the instrument to, A, D, G, C. It is the pitches found between, written in sharps and flats that present the choices of how high, or low to place them for their tuning to be compatible with the diatonic pitches. Depending on the function of these sharp and flat pitches, they may lean in one direction or another, upward or downward.

Once it has been determined what the tonal, or triadic relationship is for any given series of notes, we can then begin to place and glue down the pitches surrounding as well. Since Hindemith moves around the harmonic field rather freely, these choices necessarily in a constant state of decision.
3.3 Shifting Problems and Solutions

From the outset of this concerto, I realized that I was going to need to learn a new system of shifting from place to place on the fingerboard. Regardless of the size of the interval, I realized that I was not always having success in this area. As the graphing and mapping on fingerboard rules, my teacher also explained to me that the fingerboard is somewhat like a graph. That any two notes on the fingerboard can be connected through various possible means. That leaping from place to place, and simply relying on repetition and hope was no longer going to be an acceptable practice. Even the opening leap of the perfect fifth from D to A can be shortened by the first finger’s travel from D to F sharp, easily then within reach of the A with the third finger. Of course that (A) can easily be located if the third finger simply moved forward to the harmonic (A). But, what about all the other intervals that do not include a harmonic pitch, soon to be encountered in this work, many of which are dissonances. In cello playing, thumb is zero, index is first, and second is middle finger etc.

Figure 5. Leaping D to A in fingering m.11

Figure 6. Shifting at the opening part mm. 1-17
In the simple phrase of a previous page, there lies an opportunity to explain and implement some of these practices. The opening interval can be reached securely by shifting the first finger from D natural to F sharp, and the A natural is then well within a reachable distance. This spacing is then reused from note 2 to 3, which is actually F sharp. With first finger now on F sharp, shifting this finger back to D places the 3rd finger in position to find the E (note 4), where the hand remains for the notes E, D (1) and G. The C natural following is best located through the movement of the 1st finger upwards a whole step to A. After the rest, the same logic applies to this part of the phrase.

In below the simple phrase, the G (with 4th finger is in position already) and can simply shift to an A natural harmonic to then reach the high C natural with the third finger. This eliminates to mystery of that note’s location.

Figure 7. Shifting in 1st movement mm. 24-28

The next position change requires the location of the B natural on the A string. Presently with only the 3rd finger on C sharp, it can be used as the auxiliary finger, or reference, if the shift back to C sharp is practiced, and then the first finger is simply substituted instead for a B natural.

Figure 8. Shifting in 1st movement mm. 29-32

In the second movement, this slow expressive melody can apply the same procedure. If the first finger is starting the phrase on the E natural, it should practice moving forward to F sharp, and then measuring from there the distance to the G sharp, rather than just leaping forward. The next note being F sharp will also benefit from this orientation.
Rule number one of string playing is that in 99% of the cases, we should arrive with the left hand before we articulate any sounds with the bow arm. So, with first finger on F sharp, now we can locate a 1st finger on B natural, before changing the bow. Theoretically, it should be equally possible and simple to move to any note, even a much larger distance, as long as that note is felt, heard, and sensed before committing to it with a bow change. Once the bow has articulated the ‘new’ note, there is no turning back, so finding each new arrival point at the end of the previous bow is what is safest at all times.

This process is called “anticipating shifts,” by placing them before the bow change. This is opposed to “delayed shifts” that happen after the bow change and usually include a more audible connection to the listener. This type of position change is desirable on infrequent occasions when the notes are highly expressive, and desiring a more singing connection. If we would use this technique too often, the phrases would seem overly affected and the clarity of the intervals would suffer.

The example below from the third movement demonstrates another left hand issue, that of playing fifth successively. In general, one’s left hand should always maintain an angle to the fingerboard that is inclined slightly upward. This enable the hand to climb from the early four finger positions to the three finger positions, and ultimately into a two string thumb position without altering the angular relationship to the fingerboard on the way. If each single
note has a separate angle, the location of pitches becomes chaotic, with exceptions, and unique angles forming in every situation.

![Figure 10. Shifting in 3rd movement mm. 28-33](image)

When double stops are performed, we must make exceptions for this rule. The angle of the left arm and the hand, must compromise to find the most relaxed position to reach and tune more than one pitch. Perfect fifths are often idiosyncratic and require a certain amount of flexibility and discovery. The opening of the final movement of the concerto features this interval many times, and although the fifths are separate, or broken, the hand stops the two notes together, even though they are played at the same time. So, after the opening D, A fifth, we soon need to tune, (D, A), (C, G), (E flat, B flat), (D flat, A flat), (F, C), (E flat, B flat) in this way. The arm must remain flexible to find these positions effortlessly. Any one of these fifth should be created by the weight of the arm, and the recognition of the particular angle that tunes them. If done properly, this should not produce any strain on the fingers or the arm, and should become a position natural as any other.

In the cadenza, Hindemith notably includes a lengthy and complex (40 measure) cadenza in the middle of the first movement. To this point, his melodic construction has remained linear, without much use of double-stopping. In the cadenza this is not the case. Beginning on a pedal C natural at the bottom of the cello, the writing quickly becomes more dissonant and dramatic, requiring pyro techniques and ear training challenges that feature repeated use of minor seconds, sevenths (major and minor), fifths and sixths, written in a mixture of enharmonically presented clusters.
Figure 11. Cadenza mm.1-45

This is where the real mapping and understanding of how one might execute bizarre hand positions is put to the test. There are numerous occasions where the distances and double stops can be approached with a certain digital logic that will assist in the general location, placement and tuning.

Below the score, the leap here to the Bb is a small one, but one that shows us that that particular note, when approached from below, can be cleanly encountered through a
‘bridge’ created by the first finger on G natural, a minor third below. This technique, of bridging this distance can be sequenced anywhere on the instrument. What essentially happens is that the 1st finger outlines a position where it rests, and the third finger is therefore a given. The same would work on up the fingerboard from A-C, A sharp to C sharp, B to D, C-E flat, C sharp to E natural etc. Many examples of such a ‘set up’ in the left hand exist in the entire cello repertoire. In this cadenza, this trick will be used multiple times.

Figure 12. Bridging in Cadenza mm.1-25

Measure 6 uses the thumb as the translator from its previous station on E natural to a new stop on F sharp (moving upwards by a whole step) and therefore creates the Perfect 4th relationship to the B natural with 3rd finger, the normal, natural spacing from thumb to third finger found in the major thumb position scale. This should also always be a ‘give’ and can be easily sequenced and used anywhere on the instrument, i.e., F sharp to B, G-C, G sharp to C sharp, A, to D, A sharp to D sharp etc. These are the distances that we need to
know well, to rely on. We need to know the aperture of this thumb-third finger relationship at all registers of the cello and on all strings. Only then can it become a reference for all music performed. Keeping this octave in the hand provides the basic foundation of multiple related fingering patterns and scales within the octave. That seems to be what many of Hindemith’s phrases count on, this form of location.

Being a violinist and a violist himself, Hindemith did not write things that could not be played. He may have stretched the envelope in the use of double-stopping dissonances, there may be more sevenths alone on this page than any other work in the cello repertoire. He knew well that this is not unplayable, simply unusual.

In the middle of measure 11, a high Ab must be securely reached. Again, bridging the distance with the first finger on F natural allows a safer and solid stepping stone to this climactic arrival. Measure 22, does the same from 1st finger on Eb at the end of the triplet on beat four. If the first finger only moves forward to G natural, the Bb is eagerly awaiting its placement as a result. It is important to note at this point that these bridge-notes, or auxiliary notes should not be retained in the hand once the ‘target’ note has been reached. To do so would create excessive contact with the fingerboard. As the 3rd finger is ultimately the note that will sound, and the other preceding 1st finger, or thumb is only transitional, this finger should only act in passing, and substitute the 3rd finger. It brings the 3rd finger into easy striking range of the needed note, but the third finger must still measure accurately the distance from the first finger for the particular register involved.

There are too many individual cases of this type of maneuver to mention without getting boring, but the technique is invaluable to assisting in position changes that the performer can hear, but quietly and subtly to greater assure success in these moments. Keeping more than one finger on the string at once is detrimental to vibrato, relaxed and stable hand positions, sensitivity towards each fingers’ true ability (without a secondary crutch). This, incidentally is even a misconception regarding the use of the 4th finger. Many teachers advocate placing the third finger beside the fourth to strengthen it when used.
This brings about a whole other discussion, but briefly, I can say that if the weight of the left arm is relaxed and is transferred to, and connected to the hand at all times, then it is not the finger’s responsibility to be ‘strong.’ Each finger is an extension of the arm, and must feel itself to be just that. Therefore, there is not a need to believe that the fourth finger cannot stop the string as well as any other finger. It must train itself to act independently and to count as one more half-step in a handful of half-steps, each assigned to a single finger. I.e. 4\textsuperscript{th} position on the A string: 1\textsuperscript{st} finger E natural, 2\textsuperscript{nd} finger F natural, 3\textsuperscript{rd} finger F sharp, 4\textsuperscript{th} finger G. Plain and simply, these are the most comfortable distances that the fingers can play in a single hand position. Of course not all music falls into this convenient pattern, but it is important as often as possible to allow the hand to feel as relaxed as if this were the case. I will demonstrate some of these examples in the lecture part of my presentation.

\section*{3.4 Intonation Problems in Chromatic Passages and Solutions}

Hindemith’s phrases can often be highly chromatic, as in the example below. One must find the proper spacing of the chromatically altered notes in such a way that does not disturb the diatonic pitches within. Our instruments are tuned A, D, G, C. These pitches will never change, nor will B, E, or F natural. We consult these open strings and harmonics to see if we are applying our fingers in agreeable places with these notes. They are our reference points. All the sharp and flat notes in between are somewhat subjective, and in certain circumstances placed a bit higher or lower to express shifts in mode, from major to minor, or the reverse. When many chromatic pitches occur within a short range of notes, we must find a compatible distance for them, and make certain that they are able to equally accept the diatonic pitches when they sound.

As I already mentioned the two types of semitones that occur in music: Those that have a different note name, i.e., F sharp to G, or E flat to D, or those that have the same note name as in F to F sharp, or E to E flat. Those that have a different name can sometimes be placed slightly closer to lean upwards, or downwards and feel better in this way. Those with the same letter name are generally expressing the difference between or implying a change of mode, i.e., C, E, G = C major and C, E flat, G = c minor. In the right
voicing, and with subtlety, these differences can enhance the beauty of our playing. Done to extreme however, this can sound out of tune.

Figure 13. Chromatic passage in 1st movement mm. 20-28

In the phrase below, we can see that both types of semitones are present. Some are of different note names, and some are the same. We must take this into account when we look to divide the whole steps that surround them, never allowing the diatonic pitches to be altered in the process. Checking in with the open strings along the way can guarantee us that we are still on track.

Figure 14. Different semitones in 1st movement mm. 20-21

Figure 15. Different semitones in 2nd movement mm. 152-159
Figure 15 outlines an octave position that does not conform to the normal spacing of the major scale in thumb position. This makes it necessary to reassign different distances to the fingers within the octave. In m. 152, the third finger to the second (B back to A) now needs to become a whole step. In the normal octave, these two fingers play a comfortable half step. This new spacing is less familiar to the hand, however nonetheless playable. In m. 153, the half step will occur between the thumb (F sharp) and the first finger (G natural). In total the hand is still basically framing the same distance, however the arrangement of these first notes is something other than the standard major scale intervals.

When the above phrase arrives on the D string, E, D, C sharp, B, (mm. 152-153) the distances are arranged whole step, half step, and whole step. This is confusing, but it is what is necessary to play and understand here. The next measure simply reuses these distances, but not in consecutive order. The measure 153 of the example, beginning with the high D natural, more naturally finds these pitches because they more closely stick to the spacing of the D major scale with a semitone between fingers 2 and 3 (which is more comfortable). Each of the following measures can be plotted to make the arrangement of the fingers most comfortable. Shifting the thumb from A to B will allow me to begin the fourth measure’s D with the second finger, the distance from B to E will therefore be the standard perfect fourth that is part of the octave measure.
The 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} movements of chromatic scales are similar with the scales in 1\textsuperscript{st} movement. However, the notes with certain accidentals are indicated irregularly again. I had some fingering tension to play because I did not release my fingerings, which means I had to play with an individual fingering for each note.

3.5 Appropriate Bow

So far, I have only mentioned issues pertaining to the left hand orientation of this work. As I have mentioned, this has been the bigger challenge for me. Hindemith’s melodic construction presents phrases in long-bowed lyric lines as well as “marcato” like strokes that must be aware of the part of the bow they best sound, and create the heaviness, and verticality that they inherently possess. When lyric, Hindemith as a composer creates beautiful singing melodies, if at times jagged, or mysterious in direction, they nonetheless allow the cello to sing and express its best voice. Other times, his phrasing makes use of shorter mechanical strokes, which require little bow, but repeat themselves, remaining economically near the frog, or talon of the bow, they are able to utilize the whole arm in a unified fashion, somewhat non legato in style. As much of the first and third movements act in this way, this is an important stroke to learn. It is applicable everywhere in the cello literature, from Bach’s Cello Suites, through the Classical period, on to Scherzo movements in Brahms, and just about any twentieth century work as well.

What I am finding in the styles, and articulations of this concerto, are tools that have since installed themselves in appropriate ways throughout the literature. So, even if Hindemith’s cello concerto continues to haunt and plague me until the end of my life, it is fertile ground for discovery and study of many contrasting sounds, values, and patterns that are prevalent in all of music.

I also discovered that there was a certain balance required between the two arms in certain passages. As I climbed higher on the fingerboard, it felt more comfortable to move slightly further from the talon so that the hands would not be too close together. Of course, as the string length got shorter, it was/is necessary to adjust the contact point, ever closer to the bridge. But even this could create a certain feeling of tension if the bow remained at the
closest point to the talon. In the third movement rehearsal number 52 to 54 seemed to benefit from finding such a contact point.

Figure 18. The contact bow in 3rd movement mm. 52-60

The passage moves (mm. 52-58) for 7 bars in quarter beats (2 eighths per bow in pp). It then arrives at a separate eighth note pattern, still in pianissimo. This stroke must be lighter and more delicate and it is here that the passage reaches its highest register. In the sixth bar, the pattern changes to require the last two beats to be on a V (up bow). If one is too close to the talon before this, the bow will not have the necessary room to play those two beats up-bow when they arrive.

At the same time, these notes change string frequently in an awkward way. In situations like this, playing too far from the talon can also create difficulty because the further one plays from the talon, the greater distance the right arm must travel to create the arc from string to string. That is to say, that the ‘turning radius’ is closest at the beginning of the bow, and increases as we move towards the tip. Therefore, a passage with frequent string changes will not usually be best played too far out on the bow.

In a similar manner, certain upward shifts benefit from a certain placement or bow direction. When the bow is being pulled to the right (down bow) and the simultaneously the shifting is moving upward, often this “similar motion’ can feel freer than “contrary motion” created if the shift upward played in the “up bow” direction. This is not to say that all ascending position changes must occur on down bows, however it was helpful for me to
recognize this sensation in isolated incidences. A simple example of this was recurrent in the
Cadenza's opening measures where a leap upward (first) to B flat, then to B natural felt
awkward on an up bow until moved adequately a small distance from the frog.

Figure 19. The contact point of bow in cadenza mm. 1-7

Figure 20. The contact point of bow in cadenza mm. 1-31

Above the figure, this eliminated the sense of the hands crashing into each other in contrary
motion. Subsequently expressive leaps to the highest points of the cadenza always felt
better a safe distance as well: from the Db to Ab (mm10-11), Eb to Bb at the measure
indicated “Lebhaft.” The measure before the “ruhig’ (m. 30 in the cadenza) is an octave leap
from F# to F# which always felt natural occurring in similar motion on a down bow.
Throughout the concerto the increased awareness of economizing with the bow became more and more obvious and helpful. Although the opening lines of the cello part are a lyric cantabile style, the arrival at the triplets in mm. 22-23 of first movement (figure) necessitated the use of small bows at the frog, not only due to the notes’ need to change strings frequently, but to achieve the appropriate shortness, clarity and articulation.

This brevity of stroke was helpful later on in many passages in faster tempi in the 2nd and third movements. Overspending the bow only produced less clear results, seemed to slow me down, and did not produce as clear sounds, or the rhythmic impulses in the phrasing that were required.

The opening of the third movement moves in bow strokes that are described as ‘non-legato.’ That is to say, they are placed closely to the frog, because the pairs of eighth notes in fifths change string every other note, and they must have a strength and separation between the pairs of notes that defines the beats well. It was here that I discovered that we must be conscious of which muscles our right arm is engaging to create which sounds.

As we begin each bow stroke at the frog, the whole arm is engaged, unified and begin to pull the sound in the down bow direction. As we approach the middle of the bow, depending on one’s arm length. The forearm will need to open, or extend to maintain a straight trajectory of the bow. All the while, the general level of the arm is being elevated so...
that by the time the tip of the bow is reached, the arm is in its highest position. I should
mention that the shoulder should remain relaxed and low during this process. There is never
a need to raise the shoulder. Doing so creates a loss of circulation in the arm and eventually
leads to strain and injury.

![Figure 22. The contact point of bow at the frog in 3rd movement mm. 1-37](image)

What we notice is that in creating this ‘counter-clockwise’ revolution with the right
arm playing a simple whole bow on the same string, the right arm has an appropriate height
for each part of the bow, frog, middle, tip, and everywhere in between. Therefore, once it has
been decided that the bow will execute certain notes at the frog, the height of the arm is
naturally in its lowest position. Next, we must pay attention the direction of the circle needed
to connect notes on different strings. As the passage in fifths begins on a lower string
moving to a higher string (most of the time) attention must be paid to the circular or curved
connection between the two strings involved in the bow direction that the notes are traveling.
This direction will change, depending on the respective notes involved, and so must the
circular connection to connect them. At times, the movement from lower string to higher may
be in counter-clockwise (on the up bows) and at times clockwise if the patterns reverse.
More simply put: Low string to higher string, up-bow to down-bow will require the right arm to
elevate and rotate in a clockwise direction. Its reversal, down-bow to up-bow (low string to
higher string) would create a clockwise rotation.
Attention to these changes can help facilitate the performance of such situations. Generally speaking, the level, or height of the right arm is lowest on the C string, (as it is closest to the right arm) and is higher when playing the A string, which lies across the body of the cello, and must be reached. This distance can be minimized by adjusting the angle of the cello itself. When prolonged passages in the treble region occur, it is natural to bring the A and D string closer to the center of our body, closer to the bow arm, so that the natural weight of the arm can apply itself comfortably to the bow. Conversely, when playing on the lower strings, moving the G and C strings closer to center (slightly away from the bow arm) will create greater freedom, balance and strength. Thus, all four strings can actually feel rather similar.

I also became aware of the need to look for symmetry in the planning of the bows. The simplest example of this was at the opening of the slow movement. The opening measures sing in unequal lengths of bow, that is, 2 beats, followed by one beat, one beat, then 20 beats again. In order to play this as smoothly as possible, one could play a full bow on the first note (dotted half note), perhaps a half bow for the next two notes (dotted quarter length), and then from the tip, a full bow on the fourth bow (again a dotted half unit). Prior to this realization, I would probably have tried to use my full bow at all times, which would likely have been more than necessary on the shorter units of bow needed. In this fashion, there can be a steady rate of bow expended for those measures. As the fourth bow also includes a slight crescendo, saving a bit at the beginning of this V (up bow) allowed for more expression and crescendo. This technique of adjusting bow speeds within the same bow was in and of itself something that I have learned to apply to create greater inflection and dynamic transformation within all lyrical playing.
We can use the bow in limitless creative ways, but it is also important to let the bow do what might be obvious to some, when such situations arise. To create a crescendo, increasing the speed of the bow will help. Decrescendo will naturally occur if we slow down the bow. This is not the only way to achieve these dynamic changes, of course sound increases as we move closer to the bridge, and decreases as we move away. And a combination of these techniques can often work well. Regardless, we must have plans for every bow we draw. What will its goal be, to increase, or decrease. Where will it ultimately arrive? Will its arrival place be exactly where one needs to be to perform the next task. Being in the right place at the right time is essential, or little can function at its best level. This 'mapping of the bow' is a great challenge and beauty, and facilitates the performance of each measure to the next. We must put everything in its proper place, balance, and sound.

3.6 Solutions for Several Parts

One passage in the concerto demanded a solution I had never encountered before. This passage in triplets requires every sixth note to be an open A string. Continually lifting the hand off of the fingerboard presented difficulties in returning to exactly the same pitches afterwards. It was suggested that placing the thumb underneath the fingerboard in these high positions would allow stability and keep the hand in contact as well as bowing with the instrument, as if I were playing in the lower positions.
The above passage from mm 142-153 is in a different way confusing to both the eyes and the ears. It is confusing because one does not often encounter so many different pitches in a single phrase, with some notated in flats, and others in sharps. The downbeat of measure 143 is written D sharp. In the next beat, Hindemith writes an E flat (the enharmonic equivalent). These pitches must sound exactly the same, despite their respelling. This is in some way misleading, and requires us to understand that sharps are not necessarily higher than their flat enharmonic equals.
This is one for the metronome. Divided in three big half-note beats, it is a study in ambiguity. Beginning on a quarter note rest, the following beats create a rhythm based on triple sixteenths, then eighths, then quarter note triplets that is a specimen unlike anything I had ever seen in a cello concerto prior to Hindemith’s.

I must say that Hindemith’s use of rhythm is unique in last moment of the 1st movement. The opening motive played by the orchestra in 3/2 is in and of itself a puzzle toward the cadence.

Figure 27. Reused rhythm in later of 1st movement mm. 204-212
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

Paul Hindemith’s Cello Concerto (1940) offered me an opportunity to learn new technical skills and exposed me to musical elements, with which I personally have had problems. Recognizing my own challenges and difficulties allowed me to experiment through this piece and confront these difficulties. The suggestions and solutions I have made in this document are what have helped me arrive closer to a confident performance of this work. This project does not include a full analysis of the piece. However, it contains a cellist’s personal journey with Hindemith’s Cello Concerto, her efforts, and bittersweet feeling in her last semester of DMA study. Although there are many dissertations and written documents about Paul Hindemith and performance practices, I hope that this written document will be yet another useful resource for performers of Hindemith’s Cello Concerto.

In the process, I believe that I grew considerably in my technical understanding of the cello, and therefore am now closer to giving a convincing and musically sound performance of this monumental work for cello. The techniques I have acquired in my study of this work are no different than I would apply to any other work for the cello. From the earliest Baroque Suites through the great works written in the 20–21st centuries, cello playing poses the same problems. Our success depends on the organization of our ideas, body movements, ear training, and the dissection of every phrase we play in search of its simplest components and performance.

This concerto may always be an enigma in certain ways, and I consider every work that I study to be a work-in-progress for life. We are constantly developing, reinventing, searching, experimenting and changing our ideas and approaches to many things. The prism of this Concerto, allowed me to attempt to apply many general elements of cello playing to a work that, at first, I believed to be far above my comprehension. I believe that through the intensive return to this work, many things have now become easier for me, and I felt compelled to share these ideas with other cellists whom may have a similar experience.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Eunbi Kim is originally from South Korea. She earned a Bachelor of Music at Chonnam National University (2010), and Master Degree at University of Oklahoma (2015), where she was a student of Dr. Jonathan Ruck. She earned her doctoral degree in cello performance with Professor Dennis Parker at Louisiana State University, where she held a teaching assistantship. She completed her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in May of 2018.

She had experiences to take a masterclass with Gary Hoffman and Helga Winold at LSU during her school years. She attended any other instruments’ masterclasses as well. Lastly, she is a chamber music lover and orchestra as well. She has been playing with many other chamber groups in South Korea and United States. Her passion of orchestra playing is still on going to learn many repertoires at everywhere.