

Sonata for Four Horns

Concert Guide



St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra

Stéphane Denève : Music Director

Paul Hindemith

Sonata for Four Horns

Fugato. Sehr Langsam
(Fugue. Very Slow)

Lebhaft (Lively) **(2:47)**

Variationen über "Ich schell
mein Horn" (Variations on
"I Sound my Horn") **(7:38)**

First performance: 1953

Approximate duration: 15 minutes

Sonata for Four Horns was
recorded on March 21, 2021.

This concert is available at
slo.org/digital-classroom-2024.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was born near Frankfurt, Germany. Hindemith started playing the violin at a young age. He studied music at a conservatory, where he learned violin, conducting, and composition. Later on, he became a well-known music composition teacher at Yale University. Hindemith was renowned for his unique harmonies, and often wrote pieces for unusual combinations of instruments.

The Sonata for Four Horns was first premiered in Vienna, Austria, in June of 1953 by members of the Vienna Symphony. A sonata is usually a piece of music in three movements for solo instrument and piano. This piece is written for four horns, but it is in three movements like a typical sonata. The first movement is a fugue where each of the horns plays the theme one after another. In the second movement, the horns respond to one another in a lively dialogue. The third movement is based on an old German hunting song called "I Sound my Horn," and the horns perform a galloping rhythm throughout the movement.

Activities To Enrich Student Learning

- 1.** A fugue is a piece of music in which the theme—or main melody—is repeated over and over again by different instruments, sometimes layering the melody on top of itself. Listen to this [fugue by Johann Sebastian Bach](#). Use your ears and your eyes to see and hear each entrance of the original theme. Then, listen to the first movement of Hindemith's Sonata for Four Horns, and raise your hand each time you hear the opening theme played by one of the horns.
- 2.** This recording is a performance of the SLSO horn section playing chamber music without the full orchestra. Discuss the difference between chamber music and orchestral (or large ensemble) music. The four musicians already perform together a lot. How do you think this setting is different for them? For the audience, how does the experience of listening to chamber music differ from listening to an orchestra?
- 3.** Learn from the pros! Discuss how the experience of seeing and hearing the SLSO has informed your own music-making. What did you see or hear the SLSO musicians doing that you could strive toward, both individually and as an ensemble? What do you think it would take for you to perform with a professional music ensemble one day?
- 4.** Following the concert, complete the following statements: “I noticed...”, “I enjoyed...”, “I wonder...”.

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