

Paul Hindemith, “Shimmy” and “Ragtime” from *Suite 1922* for Piano op. 26 (1922)

Abstract

In these two movements, “Shimmy” and “Ragtime,” from a 1922 composition by Paul Hindemith, *Suite for Piano* (Op. 26), also known as *Suite 1922*, he showcases the strong jazz influence on his early works. For “Ragtime,” which Hindemith started to write in spring 1921, he took the Baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach’s C-minor fugue, from Bach’s *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I*, and reworked it in the snappier rag style that had already started to spread from America to Europe. Barely 26 years old at the time, Hindemith seemed to enjoy playing the *enfant terrible* by shocking the staid audiences at most classical concerts. Anticipating criticism, he prefaced his score: “Do you think that Bach is turning in his grave? He wouldn’t think of it! If Bach were alive today, he might perhaps have invented the shimmy, or at least incorporated it into respectable music” [as quoted by L.A. Philharmonic Director John Henken]. Hindemith not only composed music, but he also played several instruments and even dabbled in the visual arts, which he demonstrated by designing and drawing the cover of the sheet music for *Suite 1922*. As a composer who believed in both experimentation and the power of music to promote world peace, Hindemith drew the wrath of the Nazi regime after 1933. Within five years, he and his wife, Gertrud, went into exile, first in Switzerland and later in the United States, where Hindemith accepted a professorship at Yale University.

Source

Source: Paul Hindemith, *Ragtime* and *Shimmy* from *Suite 1922* for piano op 26, 1922. From *The Masters Write Jazz*. Piano compositions in the jazz idiom by Stravinsky, Hindemith, Gershwin, Copland, Milhaud, Tansman. Performed by Leo Smit. Dot Records (DLP 3111), 1958. Accessed via Internet Archive

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