

December 2, 1967

Mr. David C. McCormick  
1421 Grandview Drive  
North Manchester, Indiana 46962

Dear David:

As requested in your November 25, 1967, the following are the developmental circumstances which led to the Hindemith Symphony for Band. Areas of fuzzy recollection are indicated.

I had developed a sponsor to underwrite expenses of a 1951 Freedom Sings guest artist roster, and probably in late November 1950 had been making the agency rounds in New York, trying to book the most famous artists available for weekly appearances with the Band. Business wasn't too great.

The thought occurred that Hindemith might be coaxed into a guest Conductor appearance, so at the end of the week, when the agencies would be closed anyway, I took off for New Haven.

As a former student at the Yale School of Music, and as a gesture of courtesy to Hindemith's administrative boss, I proceeded first to Sprague Hall to see Dean Bruce Simonds, say hello, and inform him of my intentions. To clear the request, so to speak. Along the way, it dawned on me that Dean Simonds, although relatively little-known in the United States, was in fact a concert pianist of prodigious talent; he accepted the invitation to come.

The next day, I think, I went over to Hindemith's house to discuss the possibility of his appearance. A cold, gray day. He said he was much too busy to conduct, particularly at the time I wanted to book him, which was early in the season. He was becoming disenchanted with the United States, and confided that he would probably succumb to an offer from the University of Zurich, and at least spend alternate years at Yale and Zurich before ultimately leaving. My impression was American students did not arouse his enthusiasm.

The mood of the man was important. As I say, the weather was cold and gray; the living room was dark, and we sat quietly while he talked and reminisced, and sold himself the idea, piecemeal. We being Mrs. Hindemith and me.

He recalled being in the German Army - in a small military Band during World War I, as a combination bass drum and trombone player, and the times they had in those days. A while later, he asked if I could book him as guest conductor later in the series; the Serena had occurred to him. Mind, no promises, but just maybe. Then

after assurances the schedule would be altered to his availability followed a long interrogation about the Band; performer quality, instrumentation.

At the last, he ventured (again, no promises) that if he could squeeze the time, he might even write a little something. I remember his deep concern with the degree of skill of certain instruments; he was outlining ideas in his mind already.

This is a fuzzy area, but I believe we discussed his publishers, and his dissatisfaction with their work, particularly in London, because if he wrote anything a complex arrangement of handling it would be necessary, involving them, into which I would have to take part. At his end, he instructed me to keep in close touch with Mrs. Hindemith for developments.

At the close of this lengthy and gratifying visit he indicated that what he wrote would be dedicated to the Band.

I cannot recall if I returned to New York the following Monday or not, but it was within a very short time that he fixed two possible appearance dates, and that I was told by Mrs Hindemith that this thing was going to be a full Symphony.

Associated was flabbergasted about it. The American office was headed by a Vice President whose assistant was an old friend of mine, and they were deeply concerned about losing Hindemith. They thought I could help them keep him, and exerted pressure in various ways, in the belief I could or would persuade him. It was impossible to convince them the man sold himself the whole idea in progressive stages.

As you know, my releases during his appearances contained the phrase 'written and dedicated to The United States Army Band' or 'written and dedicated to Captain Hugh Curry and The United States Army Band' which is exactly what should appear on the printed score, and it was with surprise I have learned it does not. Perhaps the piqued publishers arranged it.

For what it is worth, I can assure you that the Symphony in B-Flat for Band was specifically written for this Freedom Sings performance by Captain Hugh Curry and the United States Army Band, and was intended to be so dedicated by the Composer.

Your last question is a little delicate. A relative of Mrs. Hindemith, Kleinwaechter, I believe, at the time was Austrian Minister here, and the post-concert reception was to be held at the Fort Myer Officer's Club. I was going to attend, but Captain Curry ran into a little static from a senior Officer about an NCO attending as a guest of an Officer's Club. After a quiet chat, we decided I had better be unavailable at that time.

