

Paul Hindemith's

# WE'RE BUILDING A CITY

CHILDREN'S OPERA



HUB CITY  
**OPERA AND DANCE™**  
COMPANY NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ



Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

**Hub City Opera and Dance Company**

in collaboration with

**Bartle Elementary School Highland Park  
Highland Park High School**

present excerpts from

Paul Hindemith's  
**WE'RE BUILDING A CITY**  
WIR BAUEN EINE STADT

Sung in English

Libretto by Robert Seitz

English Translation by Geroge List

**Thursday, December 6, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.**

Highland Park High School  
102 North 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Highland Park, NJ 08904

Stage Director

Set Designer and Charge Scenic

Music Director

Assistant Conductor

Production

Lighting and Sound

Annamaria Stefanelli

Rory Angelicola

Benjamin T. Berman

Andrew Macirowski

Annamaria Stefanelli

John Gaertner

## CAST

### PLAYERS (in alphabetical order)

Baker, Thief  
Traffic Cop  
Plumber, Thief and Einstein  
Clark Gable and Policeman  
Mayor, Toscannini and Noble Garbage man  
Grocer, Doctor and Lou Gehrig

Delya Chiu  
Darwin Javier  
Maeve McInerney-Liu  
Sebastian Romanoschi  
Béla Tomahatsch  
Stephen Zhang

### ORCHESTRA (in alphabetical order)

Conductor and piano  
Percussion  
Cello

Benjamin T. Berman  
Evangelo Kambitsis  
Jacob Sohn

A special thank you to Ms. Lenora Iglesias and her 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Art Class for making the signs for each child's profession.

### Art Students:

Dana Abo Nouh	Jordan Harrison
Menna Amin	Madeline Hulme
Yadiel Baez	Evangelos Kambitsis
Ashley Chavez	Amy Li
Jesus Chavez	Mairen Martinez-Lopez
Isaac Chen	Abdul Mosalim
Felipe De la Cruz	Simone Wechsler
Alissia Dumitru	Amy Wu
Max Fan	Liam Young
Keira Graf	

## SYNOPSIS

A dark, open clearing. A young boy is searching for something and it becomes clear when he calls his friends and he plants a flag on the ground that the children are planning something special.

Immediately they declare, "Let's build a brand new town," and the children proceed to build their own city. As the opera progresses, we learn of all the important elements that are added as they craft their town, from the actual buildings to the occupations they give themselves. There are even cops and robbers in this city, famous people like Lou Gehrig and Clark Gable and even traffic jams.

When all is complete the children once again declare their happiness at having built their own town, where adults only play a minor role.



Paul Hindemith around 1930

## ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

This production, like the opera, has been about community and bringing many people together to “build an opera.”

Firstly, it has been such a pleasure to work with everyone on this project, from the staff at the Highland Park Schools and the teachers, to the lighting and custodial staff at the high school, and my colleagues at Hub City Opera, including our music director Benjamin Berman. A special thank you to Dr. Scott Taylor, Superintendent, and Mr. Anthony Benjamin, principal of the Bartle School. Most importantly are the students of Bartle Elementary School, who worked hard and whose enthusiasm to take on an opera is inspiring. (A special thank you to their parents — thank you for allowing them to participate and supporting them through the process.)

As I studied the score and researched the music I was struck at how well the composer, Paul Hindemith, created a platform where the children’s creativity and excitement was the driving force behind the work. As a matter of fact, when composing **We’re building a City (Wir bauen eine Stadt, 1930)**, Hindemith would go each day to the Berlin school where the first performances were taking place and “make a note of the children’s suggestions.” He found them to be his hardest critics also!

Our production emphasizes the creativity and enthusiasm of the children. Everything that happens is because of them, so our set designer, Rory Angelicola, and myself, chose to have them literally build their city in front of us piece by piece. I was also fortunate to have the 5th Grade Art Class participate in the opera, and make the signs that denote the various professions in the city. Everything in the city is bright and energized, just like the children that created it.

Though We’re Building a City is not very long, it is about community, cooperation and fun. I hope you enjoy the opera as much as we did putting it together. We are very grateful to the Highland Park School System for trusting us with this project.

**Bravo to our students!**

—Annamaria Stefanelli, 2018

## ABOUT WE’RE BUILDING A CITY

**Paul Hindemith** was a German composer, who was born on November 16, 1895, in the town of Hanau, Germany. Hanau is a transportation hub, with an important railroad station and a port on the river Main; and it was also the birthplace of the brothers Grimm, who wrote many famous fairy tales we still read today. This was a very technologically savvy time. In the same month that Hindemith was born, the first ever film was shown at the Berlin Wintergarten Theater, X-rays were discovered, and the first patent for an automobile was granted in the USA. As a child, the young Paul became an accomplished musician on multiple instruments, including the clarinet, the piano, the violin, and viola. Throughout his life he kept a special relationship with amateur musicians and students, for whom he composed many of his pieces. He was an idealist, and a visionary, and he challenged the rules of Romanticism in music. By the 1930s Hindemith was established as “the most accomplished and versatile performer-composer of his time” (The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians).

When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, Hindemith publicly ignored dictates of the regime, by working with Jewish musicians at a time when Jews were banned by the government from attending certain music schools. In fact, the piece we are performing tonight, **Wir bauen eine Stadt** in the original German, was first performed in a collaboration with the Jewish Cultural Society. Almost immediately the Nazis sought to discredit him, and by 1937, Hindemith had decided to leave Germany for Switzerland, to ultimately settle in New York City in 1940.

**Wir bauen eine Stadt**, or in English, **We’re Building a City**, is a short piece: only about 20 minutes long. Hindemith excelled at short pieces, in a genre called Chamber Music, whereas other composers made their name in much larger musical productions, such as symphonies. These pieces appealed to amateur musicians, and in fact Hindemith once wrote, “The performing amateur who seriously concerns himself with musical matters is quite as important a member of our musical life as the professional.” Hindemith valued the talent of amateurs and the contributions of very young performers, as the rich and complex music in this opera attests to. In other words, this piece isn’t simplistic or all too easy to learn!

## ABOUT WE'RE BUILDING A CITY

continued

Hindemith loved motoric rhythms, which are repetitive notes, often written as eighth notes in this opera, to project a pulsing or electric sound in the music. Perhaps this is due to the incredibly scientific time he was born in, or maybe he was inspired by the noisy passing trains and boats in his hometown. Notice that when the music depicts the children in the act of building, it sounds like construction vehicles in motion. The composer also loved to play with dissonance, especially with unique combinations of his original melodies.

Perhaps you hear that the tunes in this piece are often strange, and don't sound like what we expect in classical music, such as a sonata by Mozart or a string quartet by Beethoven. We call Hindemith "modern" for this reason. Nevertheless, Hindemith was rooted in the same tradition as Mozart and Beethoven, and was an important teacher who passed on this music to the younger generation. In the German musical tradition, pieces of music are often called "thematic." This means that there is a musical idea that is heard throughout a musical evening and gets developed along the way. Think of the main "theme" from Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> symphony. Our opera has thematic development, too. The overture to *We Are Building a City* turns into the music for the Traffic Cop at the end.

Paul Hindemith died on December 28, 1963, a month and two weeks after his 68<sup>th</sup> birthday. This was only 2 days before the worst traffic jam in history, in Boston. Perhaps this happened because Hindemith was not around to install his "traffic cop" to teach Bostonians that "red means stop! Green means go!" Or perhaps it's because the city wasn't built and run by children, the way it should be, in an ideal world.

— Benjamin T. Berman, 2018





Enrique Granados'

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OPERA (1915)

# GOYESCAS

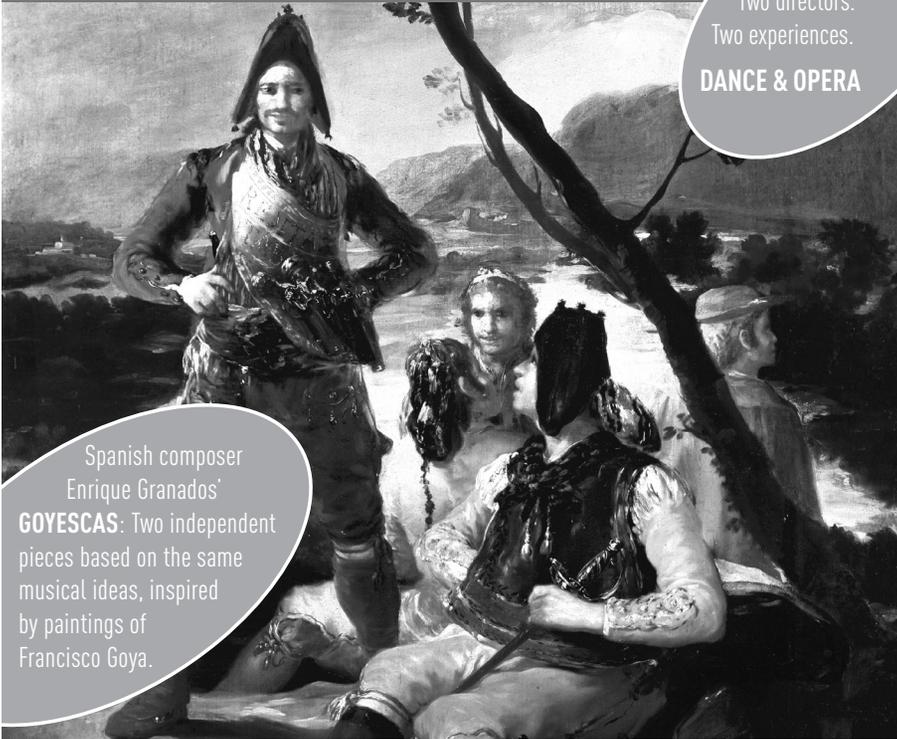
*A story about passion, class,  
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**Hub City Opera and Dance Company** provides the Central Jersey community with a fresh view on opera and dance, bringing together singers, dancers and visual artists of all ages to create something new. Our productions will introduce audiences to musical works which they may not have seen before — at least not in this fashion.

Hub City Opera and Dance Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation of The State of New Jersey. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by the law.

**Please consider making a one-time, or monthly recurring, tax-deductible donation to benefit the Hub City Opera and Dance Company.**

Go to our web page [www.hubcityopera.org](http://www.hubcityopera.org), or mail a check to:

Hub City Opera and Dance Company, Inc.  
68 Lawrence Avenue, Highland Park, NJ 08904

**THANK YOU.**

If you want to know more, please contact us:  
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