

# ZEMLINSKY QUARTET

Winner of Bordeaux String Quartet Competition 2010

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*František Souček, Petr Strížek – violin, Petr Holman – viola, Vladimír Fortin – violoncello*

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Founded in 1994 while the members were still students, the **ZEMLINSKY QUARTET** has become a much lauded example of the Czech string quartet tradition. The Zemlinsky Quartet won the First Grand Prize at the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition in 2010. They have also been awarded top prizes at the Banff International String Quartet Competition (2007), Prague Spring International Music Competition (2005) and London International String Quartet Competition (2006), where they also received the Audience Prize. The Quartet was recipient of the Alexander Zemlinsky Advancement Award in 2008. Other notable prizes include Beethoven International Competition (1999), New Talent Bratislava (2003), Martinů Foundation String Quartet Competition (2004), and the Prize of Czech Chamber Music Society (2005). In the season 2016/17, Zemlinsky Quartet was appointed as the residential ensemble of the Czech Chamber Music Society.

The Zemlinsky Quartet performs regularly in the Czech Republic and abroad (Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Monaco, Luxembourg, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Canada, USA, Brazil, Japan, South Korea). Recent major appearances of the Zemlinsky Quartet include London's Wigmore Hall, Cité de la Musique in Paris, Library of Congress, Place des Arts in Montreal, Prague Spring Festival, and their New York debut on Schneider/New School Concerts Series. Their vast repertoire contains more than 200 works ranging from Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Dvorak to works by contemporary composers. The members of the ensemble also perform as soloists and are individual prize-winners of several competitions (Concertino Praga, Spohr International Competition Weimar, Tribune of Young Artists UNESCO, Rotary Music Competition Nürnberg, Beethoven International Competition, Kocian International Competition).

Since 2007, the Zemlinsky Quartet has recorded exclusively for the French record label Praga Digitals. Their first 4-CD set of Dvořák's early works for string quartet received the coveted French award, "Diapason d'Or" prize in March 2007. In 2014, the Zemlinsky Quartet became only the fourth quartet in the history to record the complete string quartets by Antonín Dvořák (four CDs, with all the middle and late quartets, recorded and released between 2012-14). In 2009, with cooperation of the Kocian Quartet, the quartet has recorded the complete works of Czech composer Viktor Kalabis (1923-2006), arguably the most influential Czech composer of the last half of the twentieth century. Other Praga Digitals releases include all the string quartets and early chamber music of Alexander Zemlinsky (2006, 2011), a 4-CD set of Schubert's early quartets (2008), a rare disc of Spanish music for strings (2012), two discs of Mendelssohn quartets (2010), works by Alexander Glazunov (2010), the famous quartets by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (2011), unknown but excellent piano quintet by M. Weinberg (in cooperation with the young Russian pianist Nikita Mndoyants, 2015), and two CDs in cooperation with Pražák Quartet of Mendelssohn's Viola Quintet Op. 18 and Martinů Quartet No. 1. Their first CD, released in 2003, contains works by famous Czech composers Dvořák, Janáček, Suk and Richter. Their CD of the complete string quartets of Josef Suk (released in 2004), resulted in an invitation to perform at the 2005 Prague Spring Festival where they have returned several times since. Their many recordings have received universal critical acclaim in such publications as *The Strad*, *Gramophone*, *Diapason*, and *Fanfare* magazines.

While students at the Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts Prague, the ensemble was coached by members of renowned Czech string quartets including the Talich, Prague, Kocian and Pražák Quartets. The ensemble also took part in several master classes including ProQuartet, in France and Sommerakademie in Reichenau, Austria where they were awarded First Prize for the best interpretation of a work by Janáček. From 2005 to 2008, the quartet studied with Walter Levin, the first violinist of LaSalle Quartet. Their recent mentor has been Josef Klusoň, the violist of the Pražák Quartet.

Between 2006-2011, the Zemlinsky Quartet were Assistant Quartet-in-Residence at Musikakademie Basel in Switzerland. Music education is an important part of their professional life and during their tours, the quartet is often invited to give master classes to students of any age. They also perform educational concerts for students. Recently, František Souček and Petr Holman have been appointed Professors at the Prague Conservatory.

Zemlinsky Quartet is named after the Austrian composer, conductor and teacher Alexander Zemlinsky (1871-1942), whose enormous contribution to Czech, German and Jewish culture during his 16-year residence in Prague had been underrated until recently. His four string quartets (the second one being dedicated to his student and brother-in-law Arnold Schönberg) belong to the basic repertoire of the ensemble. Since 2005, the quartet has maintained a special relationship with the Alexander Zemlinsky Foundation in Vienna.