

# ZEMLINSKY QUARTET

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## BIOGRAPHY 2015/2016

*František Souček, violin*

*Petr Střížek, violin*

*Petr Holman, viola*

*Vladimír Fortin, violoncello*

Since its founding in 1994, the Zemlinsky Quartet has become a much lauded example of the Czech string quartet tradition. Most recently, the quartet has won the 1<sup>st</sup> Grand Prize in the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition (2010). It also enjoyed a string of top prizes in the Banff International String Quartet Competition (2007), Prague Spring International Music Competition (2005) and London International String Quartet Competition (2006), where it was also awarded the Audience Prize. They have been the recipient of the Alexander Zemlinsky Advancement Award, marking only the fourth time the prize has been awarded by the board of the Alexander Zemlinsky Foundation that includes Christoph von Dohnányi and James Levine. 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).

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 Wigmore Hall (London, 2012, 2014), Cité de la Musique (Paris, 2010, 2012), Library of Congress (2009), Place des Arts (Montreal, 2009, 2012), Prague Spring Festival (2005, 2009, 2011), and their long-awaited New York debut on Schneider/New School Concerts (2009). The repertoire of the ensemble is far ranging containing more than 200 works by many leading composers, including contemporary music. The group has made many recordings for Czech Radio. The members of the ensemble also perform as soloists and are prizewinners of several individual competitions (Concertino Praga, Spohr International Competition Weimar, Tribune of Young Artists UNESCO, Rotary Music Competition Nürnberg, Beethoven International Competition, Kocian International Competition).

Since early 2007, the Zemlinsky Quartet has recorded exclusively for the French record label Praga Digitals. Their very first 4-CD set recording (early works for string quartet by Antonín Dvořák) received the coveted "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 were published in 2012-14). In 2009, in cooperation with Kocian Quartet, the quartet has recorded the complete works of Czech composer Viktor Kalabis (1923-2006, arguably the most influential Czech composer of the latter 20<sup>th</sup> Century). Other Praga Digitals releases include all the string quartets and early chamber music by Alexander Zemlinsky (2006, 2011), a 4-CD set of early quartets by Schubert (2008), a rare disc with Spanish music for strings (2012), two discs of Mendelssohn quartets (2010), works by A. Glazunov (2010), the famous quartets by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (2011), and two CDs in cooperation with Pražák Quartet containing Mendelssohn's viola quintet op. 18 and Martinů quartet No. 1. The first CD of the quartet (2003) contains works by famous Czech composers Dvořák, Janáček, Suk and Richter. Their second CD, complete quartets by Josef Suk (2004), resulted in a recital of the ensemble in the 2005 Prague Spring Festival. The recordings of the Zemlinsky Quartet have received universal critical acclaim (The Strad, Diapason, Fanfare, Gramophone, ...).

During its early years while studying in 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 Quartet. The ensemble also took part in several master classes (ProQuartet, France; Sommerakademie Reichenau, Austria – 1<sup>st</sup> prize for the best interpretation of a work by Janáček). The recent tutor of the quartet has been Josef Klusoň, the violist of the Pražák Quartet. During 2005-08, the quartet studied with Walter Levin, the first violinist of LaSalle Quartet.

In 2006-11, the Zemlinsky Quartet acted as assistant quartet-in-residence at Musikakademie Basel (Switzerland). During its tours the quartet is often invited to give numerous master classes to students of any age, and it also performs in school concerts. Recently, František Souček and Petr Holman have also been appointed as professors of 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 stay in Prague was underestimated for decades. 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, Vienna.

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