

## **ZEMLINSKY QUARTET**

**František SOUČEK - 1<sup>st</sup> violin      Petr STRÍŽEK - 2<sup>nd</sup> violin**

**Petr HOLMAN – viola,                      Vladimír FORTIN - violoncello**

Since its formation in 1994, the **ZEMLINSKY QUARTET** (formerly **Penguin Quartet**) has continued the deep Czech tradition of the string quartet. During its studies in the Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts Prague, the ensemble was coached by members of renowned Czech string quartets such as the Talich, Prague, Kocian and Pražák quartets.

Recent awards and prizes for the Zemlinsky include the Banff International String Quartet Competition 2nd Prize (September, 2007) and the Audience Prize of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition (April, 2006). Twelve months earlier, the Quartet became a prizewinner in the Prague Spring International Music Competition. It also won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize and the prize for the best interpretation of a work by Beethoven in the Beethoven International Competition (Czech Republic, 1999). The Quartet has been a semifinalist of prestigious string quartet competitions (Banff, 2001, 2004, and 2007; Geneva, 2001) and it won the International Tribune of Young Artists "New Talent 2003" (Bratislava). Zemlinsky Quartet became a finalist of the 2004 Concert Artists Guild International Competition (New York) and in the same year, it became the holder of the "Critic's Prize" in the Central European Festival of Concert Arts in Žilina (Slovak Republic). The quartet won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the 2004 Martinů Foundation String Quartet Competition in Prague and became the holder of the Prize of the Czech Chamber Music Society for 2005.

The Quartet has taken part in many master classes. In 2002, Zemlinsky Quartet participated in the Sommerakademie Reichenau (Austria), where it studied with members of famous string quartets and won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize for the best interpretation of a work by L. Janáček. In the years 2002-03, the Zemlinsky Quartet participated in the program of ProQuartet-CEMC (France). Both years, the ensemble studied in master classes with Paul Katz (Cleveland Quartet), and it also gave a concert in Fontainebleau with members of the Pražák Quartet. The members of the Zemlinsky Quartet also perform as soloists. They are prize holders of several individual competitions (Concertino Praga, Spohr International Competition Weimar, Rotary Music Competition Nürnberg, Kocian International Competition and others). The recent coaches of the quartet have been V. Bernášek, the cellist of the Kocian Quartet and J. Klusoň, the violist of the Pražák Quartet. At this time the quartet coaches regularly with W. Levin (LaSalle Quartet) in the Music Academy in Basel, where it also acts as his assistant quartet-in-residence.

The broad repertoire of the Zemlinsky Quartet contains works by many leading Czech and foreign composers, and also contemporary compositions. The group co-operates with the Czech TV and records regularly for the Czech Radio. The Quartet performs regularly in the Czech Republic and also abroad (Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Hungary, Slovakia, Brazil, Canada, United States).

In July 2007, the Zemlinsky was featured in the cast of acclaimed Irish playwright Brian Friel's play "Performances" for the North American premiere at the Janáček Festival sponsored by the Sembrich Opera Museum, Lake George, New York. The Quartet also appeared in concert during this festival as well as at Music Mountain, the oldest continuous summer chamber music series in North America. In summer 2006 Zemlinsky Quartet made its first United States tour including two performances at Music Mountain (broadcast throughout the US) and at the annual benefit concert of the Meadowmount School of Music (the performance was in honor of Judith "Mrs. G" Galamian who passed away in fall 2005.) In July 2004 the quartet gave a concert in the Festival Radio France et

Montpellier, broadcast live by Radio France and recorded by TV Mezzo. The Zemlinsky Quartet was featured at the 2008 Prague Spring Festival and in winter 2009 continues touring in North American and Europe and maintains its duties as assistant quartet in residence of the Music Academy in Basel.

The first CD of the quartet contains works by famous Czech composers Dvořák, Janáček, Suk and Richter, the second CD with the string quartets by Joseph Suk resulted in a recital of the ensemble at the 2005 International Music Festival Prague Spring. Both CDs garnered critical acclaim from *The Strad*. For Praga Digitalis (Paris) the Quartet has recorded „Dvorak Early Works for String Quartet“ (4 CD set 2007) ; „Schubert the First String Quartets“ (4 CD set 2008); and „Zemlinsky String Quartets Nos 1 & 3“ (2008). They have also recorded the complete quartets of American composer Frank E. Schmelzer (1927-2005) for a pending release. The Schmelzer quartets were recorded in Prague under the supervision of the composer shortly before his passing.