

**Alexander von Zemlinsky (1871-1942) Clarinet Trio in D minor, Op. 3 (1896)**

*Allegro ma non troppo*

*Andante*

*Allegro*

Zemlinsky was born in Vienna of a Slovak father and Sarajevan mother, and studied at the Vienna Conservatoire. In his early twenties his chamber work was performed at the Wiener Tonkünstlerverein. After the première of his String Quintet in 1896, Brahms criticised Zemlinsky for his harmonic recklessness and tonal inconsistency. Zemlinsky took Brahms's criticisms to heart in composing the Clarinet Trio; Brahms approved of the work and recommended that Simrock publish it.

That same year Zemlinsky became friends with a young cellist in the orchestra that he conducted – Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg dedicated his Op 1 lieder to him and wrote his first string quartet under his guidance. In 1901 Schoenberg married Zemlinsky's sister Mathilde. The previous year, Zemlinsky, in the wake of the artist Gustav Klimt, had become infatuated with his pupil Alma Schindler. She admired his 'virtuoso hands' but taunted him for being short and ugly, and married Mahler instead. This rejection had a profound effect on Zemlinsky: as Tom Lehrer sang “The loveliest girl in Vienna / Was Alma, the smartest as well. / Once you picked her up on your antenna, / You'd never be free of her spell.” Zemlinsky's post-Alma music, including his *Lyric Suite* and the cathartic opera *Der Zwerg* (*The Dwarf*, based on Oscar Wilde's short story *The birthday of the Infanta*), became even more emotionally charged.

From 1903, Zemlinsky taught orchestration at the Schwarzwald school, where his pupils included Berg and Webern; he later, privately, also taught Korngold. In 1904, with Mahler's support, Zemlinsky and Schoenberg founded the *Vereinigung Schaffender Tonkünstler* to promote new music in Vienna. For a few months in the summer of 1908 Mathilde left Schoenberg for a young Austrian painter Richard Gerstl, precipitating Schoenberg's first atonal composition. Zemlinsky was never won over to atonalism, following a creed that he had set out in a 1901 letter to Schoenberg: ‘A great artist, who possesses everything needed to express the essentials, must respect the boundaries of beauty, even if he extends them far further than hitherto’. Zemlinsky's composing career was fitful, but he exerted a major influence as a conductor, championing Mahler and conducting a *Figaro* in Prague that was for Stravinsky the most satisfying operatic performance he had ever heard. The *Anschluss* forced Zemlinsky to emigrate to New York, where in 1939 he suffered a stroke; his death three years later went almost unnoticed.

The Clarinet Trio of 1896 shows the influence of Brahms both in its form and its content, but with added fin-de-siècle energy, develops the brooding intensity of the opening theme, contrasting its strong passions with a lighter, altogether more optimistic and calmer (*Ruhig*) motif. The three instruments weave around each other in the beautifully rhapsodic *Andante*, interrupted briefly by a *Fantasia* section. The last movement's energetically optimistic rondo is only briefly interrupted by memories of the previous movements before dismissing their concerns with a cheerfully peremptory flourish.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for the Bb Clarinet, marked 'Allegro ma non troppo' and 'mf'. It shows a melodic line in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a half note D5. The bottom staff is marked 'Ruhig', 'mf', and 'dolce'. It shows a more complex melodic line in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a half note D5. There are triplets of eighth notes and sixteenth notes indicated by '3' above the notes.