

# HINDEMITH

## String Quartets • 3

### String Quartets Nos. 1 and 4

### Amar Quartet



## Paul Hindemith (1895-1963): String Quartets • 3

Like Louis Spohr (1784-1859), Paul Hindemith was a composer who was also an outstanding violinist and viola player who could have had a career as a soloist should he have aspired to it and who turned his attention anew to the medium of the string quartet. He was born in 1895 in humble circumstances in the small town of Hanau, just outside Frankfurt am Main and in 1908 started to study the violin at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. As early as 1915, as a nineteen-year-old, and having previously given a scintillating performance of the Beethoven *Violin Concerto*, Hindemith joined the prestigious Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra and the following year was appointed its leader. In spite of initial resistance from his father, he took up the study of composition, to see if he had any aptitude for it.

In 1921 Hindemith achieved his compositional breakthrough with three Expressionist one-act operas and the *String Quartet No. 3, Op. 16* [Naxos 8.572163], following which he left the opera orchestra and founded the Amar Quartet, named after its first violinist, and in which Hindemith moved over to the viola. As a driving force on the programming committee of the Donaueschingen Chamber Music Performances, whose fame and reputation he established, Hindemith exerted a decisive influence on the music of the Weimar Republic. In 1927 he was appointed to the Musikhochschule in Berlin but as early as 1933 his teaching activities were severely hampered by the Nazis. They forced him to take voluntary leave of absence from the Hochschule and first imposed a ban on radio broadcasts of his music followed later by a ban on performances.

In one of his most important works from this period, the opera *Mathis der Maler*, to his own libretto, he created a work in which he addressed the, for him, pressing issues of producing independent works of art in a totalitarian age. When Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels vilified Hindemith publicly as a “charlatan” and “atonal noise-maker” he was, to all intents and purposes, able only to give concerts abroad. In response to an invitation from the Turkish government Hindemith spent many months there as an adviser on the organization of Turkey’s musical life based on middle-European models. At the Nazis’ notorious Exhibition of Degenerate Music in 1938 Hindemith, as one of the few so-called “Aryan” composers, was derided as a “standard-bearer of musical decay”, so he emigrated, first to Switzerland, and in 1940 to the United States. He became an American citizen in 1946 and in 1955, as a token of appreciation

for his work, he was awarded honorary citizenship. Hindemith took one of the most prestigious composition classes at Yale University, even though he himself regarded composition as unteachable. From 1953 he taught also at Zurich University and moved permanently to Switzerland, settling in Blonay, a small municipality on Lake Geneva. Hindemith worked as a guest conductor of the most important orchestras in both the new and old worlds and also produced a cornucopia of further works, among them arguably his masterpiece, the opera *Die Harmonie der Welt* (The Harmony of the World). He died suddenly in 1963 in Frankfurt am Main.

Hindemith’s seven string quartets were produced in different phases of his rich compositional development, but without reflecting this growth in every detail. All these works testify not only to his inner familiarity with the way each instrument functions, but to the special requirements of public music-making and its uncertainties, or possibly the intervention of his routine as a performer tackling the challenges of soloist virtuosity.

With the *String Quartet No. 1, Op. 2* (1914/15), which was an impressive confirmation of his hoped-for compositional promise, Hindemith showed himself to be an inventive composition student of the rich chamber music tradition. With the *String Quartet No. 2, Op. 10* (1918) [Naxos 8.572163], Hindemith’s music became more unified, tighter, more straightforward, and was driven by a playful impulse which came across as spontaneous and direct. In the following three quartets, which were written between 1920 and 1923, Hindemith cultivated the style of the New Objectivity. This music is severely contrapuntal, simple and unadorned and it expands tonal relationships almost to breaking-point, unleashing a fury of music-making in readily-comprehensible forms.

Wollte Hindemith mit ungewöhnlich nüchternem Realitätssinn mit dem *1. Streichquartett* eine mögliche kompositorische Begabung erst noch erproben – er wird später die Meinung vertreten, dass die Lust, schöpferisch tätig zu sein, zumeist mit der Begabung dafür verwechselt werde – so komponierte er das *Streichquartett Nr. 4 op. 22* im November/Dezember 1921 in vollstem Bewusstsein seiner Begabung nach ersten großen, spektakulären Erfolgen. Freilich hatte sich sein Komponieren mittlerweile nachhaltig entwickelt. Folgt das *1. Streichquartett* noch einer Tendenz, die als „Steigerung des Hergebrachten“ beschrieben wurde, so teilte Hindemith über

das 4. Streichquartett selbst mit: „Es klingt fein und ist ganz einfach zu hören und zu spielen, worauf ich äußerst stolz bin“ und bekannte: „Ich konstatiere mit Befriedigung, dass meine Sachen besser und einfacher werden (wird auch Zeit)“. Das *4. Streichquartett* trägt denn auch eine Suitenform, zu welcher Hindemith die fünf Sätze abwechselungsreich locker reiht. Auffällig ist die schroffe Ausdrucksgestaltung. Gleich im ersten Satz steigert sich ein „sehr weich und innig“ zu spielendes Fugato zu einem tumultösen Ausbruch. Der rhythmisch fulminante folgende Satz trägt dann auf dem Höhepunkt sogar die Spielvorschrift „Wild“, während der 3. Satz als einer der

schönsten Sätze voll unsentimentaler Wehmut, die Hindemith überhaupt schrieb, „mit wenig Ausdruck“ vorzutragen ist. Ein knapper toccatenhafter, hoch virtuoser Satz leitet direkt zum Finale über, das eines der frühesten Beispiele für den „linearen Kontrapunkt“ repräsentiert: Jede Stimme wird extrem individualisiert und ist dennoch untrennbar mit den anderen verbunden. Uraufgeführt wurde das Werk am 4. November 1922 in Donaueschingen vom ursprünglichen Amar-Quartett mit Hindemith an der Bratsche. Es hat sich als das erfolgreichste aller sieben Quartette Hindemiths erwiesen.

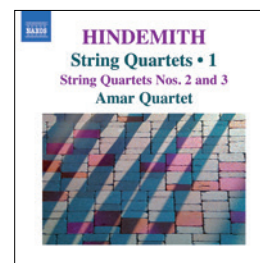
**Giselher Schubert**



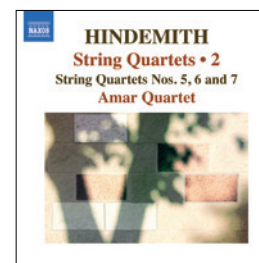
**Amar Quartet**

Named after its principal violinist Licco Amar, Paul Hindemith founded a quartet in 1922. On the occasion of his 100th birthday in 1995, the Hindemith Institute awarded the Zürich-based ensemble the historic name of the Amar Quartet, the members of which are Anna Brunner and Igor Keller (violins), Hannes Bärtschi (viola), and Péter Somodari (cello). During its studies with the Alban Berg Quartet, the Amar Quartet won numerous international awards, followed by successful débuts at famous concert-halls, as well as invitations to teach in master-classes. The ensemble has shown passionate engagement with the work of Paul Hindemith, and is increasingly making a name for itself in Switzerland, with events such as *Homage to Hindemith* and *Tonwort*, combining music and literature, with readings by poets and other writers.

**Also available**



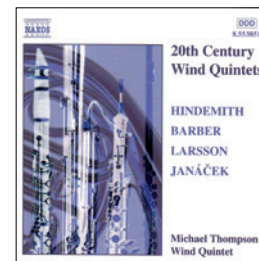
**8.572163**



**8.572164**



**8.570401**



**8.553851**

Hindemith's seven string quartets were produced in different phases of his compositional development, all reflecting the experience of being a distinguished and experienced string player. Influenced both by Brahmsian late-Romanticism and by the catastrophic events of the First World War, the imaginative *String Quartet No. 1* reflects his concern to extend but honour traditional forms. Cast in the form of a suite, the by turns tempestuous and beautiful *String Quartet No. 4* remains Hindemith's most popular and performed quartet. This is the third and final volume of a highly acclaimed cycle. 'As with the previous release in this series, the performances are all outstanding.' (*ClassicsToday.com* / 8.572164, Volume 2)

**DRS 2**

**Paul  
HINDEMITH**  
(1895-1963)

Playing Time  
67:23

## String Quartets • 3

### String Quartet No. 1, Op. 2 (1914-15)

**41:25**

- |          |                         |              |
|----------|-------------------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Sehr lebhaft</b>     | <b>15:13</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Adagio</b>           | <b>12:37</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Scherzo</b>          | <b>6:52</b>  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Ziemlich lebhaft</b> | <b>6:43</b>  |

### String Quartet No. 4, Op. 22 (1921)

**25:58**

- |          |   |             |
|----------|---|-------------|
| <b>5</b> | <b>Fugato: Sehr langsame Viertel</b>    | <b>6:37</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Schnelle Achtel. Sehr energisch</b>  | <b>5:09</b> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Ruhige Viertel. Stets fließend</b>   | <b>7:16</b> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Mäßig schnelle Viertel</b>           | <b>2:12</b> |
| <b>9</b> | <b>Rondo. Gemächlich und mit Grazie</b> | <b>4:44</b> |

## Amar Quartet

Anna Brunner, Violin I (Op. 22); Violin II (Op. 2) • Igor Keller, Violin I (Op. 2); Violin II (Op. 22)  
Hannes Bärtschi, Viola • Péter Somodari, Cello

Recorded at the Großer Saal, Radiostudio Zürich, Schweizer Radio DRS, Zürich, Switzerland, 6th-8th December 2009

A Co-production with Schweizer Radio DRS (Executive producer DRS 2: Christoph Keller)

Producer, engineer and editor: Eckhard Glauche • Booklet notes: Giselher Schubert • Cover: Paolo Zeccara

Publisher: Schott Music GmbH, Mainz