

Georg Wilhelm Rauchenecker was born in Munich on 8th March 1844, the son of a town musician and wellknown trumpeter. After thorough training in his hometown (piano and organ, violin, counterpoint), he was engaged as first violin at the Grand Théâtre in Lyon at the age of only sixteen. During the following years he worked as orchestral conductor in Aix and Carpentras, finally being appointed first opera conductor and Conservatoire director in Avignon. Expulsed from France owing to the Franco-Prussian war, he settled in Zurich as a music teacher in 1870. The Zurich violinist Oskar Kahl introduced him to Richard Wagner, who then lived in Tribschen near Lucerne. On Christmas Day 1870, Rauchenecker was among the fifteen musicians to first perform, in honour of Cosima Wagner's birthday, the composition later known as the "Siegfried Idyll".

In 1873, after a short stint in Lenzburg, Rauchenecker was elected by the general assembly of the Musikkollegium as musical director to Winterthur. In 1873 already he laid the groundwork for the formation of a mixed choir and the creation of a music school. On the 17th of December Rauchenecker gave a first example of his versatile gifts: in the first subscription concert he appeared as conductor of the mixed choir, leader of a string quartet, pianist and composer ("Two Characteristic Pieces for violin and piano").

In 1875 Winterthur was able for the first time to engage a "professional" orchestra. Among 404 (!) appearances by the orchestra during its first season, we note the charity concert of 23rd February 1876, which included a performance of Rauchenecker's Symphony in f minor. In the press Rauchenecker's Symphony – which a few years later was to earn him an appointment in Berlin – was very well received: "*The Symphony is noble in content throughout, showing a right grasp of the new school and masterly development. ... The whole instrumentation and lay-out of this composition reveal deep understanding and a brilliant gift for portrayal.*"

The 1879/80 festivities marking the 250th Jubilee of the Musikkollegium were the climax of Rauchenecker's years in Winterthur. The "popular musical director", a thoroughly trained, highly gifted yet extremely modest artist, appeared as choir and orchestra conductor and as composer as well: composed expressly for the Jubilee, his "Symphony composition in the style of an Overture" was praised as a "*brilliant and lively work*". "*This composition proved once again Rauchenecker's vocation as a composer, already revealed in earlier works for orchestra, voice and chamber music*". Soon afterwards tensions arose

between Rauchenecker, apparently dissatisfied with the fee received for the Jubilee, and the board of the Musikkollegium. Though he had been criticized before, this had been restricted on the whole to the running of the music school and to his teaching activities. In 1880 Rauchenecker's position was fundamentally challenged, his relationship with president Geilinger, to whom a few years before he had dedicated the 1st String Quartet (Amadeuss BP 1015) being described as "intolerable". In 1883 both parties considered cancelling the working contract: Rauchenecker asked for "three weeks in which to consider ..., to come to a definitive decision re giving his notice", while on the other hand in July 1883 could only prevent the resignation of three board members by deciding "in the point at issue between Mr. Rauchenecker and the Kommission, to positively support the latter's point of view". Rauchenecker went to Berlin in the autumn of 1883. He stayed only a year in Berlin, then moved to Barmen, and later to Elberfeld, where he worked as musical director until his death on 17. July 1906.

While the composition of chamber music, songs, choral works, instrumental concerti and symphonies began during his Winterthur years, he turned to the stage as well during the last two decades of his life he composed nine operas, of which four were performed in Barmen, Elberfeld, Koblenz and Düsseldorf. Rauchenecker seems to have kept in contact with Winterthur all the same. Although he could not take time off to follow an invitation to the 275th Jubilee of the Musikkollegium. When Rauchenecker died in 1906, Winterthur honoured him with performances of his f minor Symphony and of his Piano Concerto in b minor. The soloist was the composer's daughter, Helene Rauchenecker.

After the republication of his c minor String Quartet in 1997, which was first printed in 1875, Amadeus now presents his Sixth String Quartet in E flat major from the only surviving manuscript. The undated work would seem to have been written between 1890 and 1895. The quartet is a festive hymn to the last gleams of late romanticism. Through theatrical expressiveness, a broad melodic stream embedded in contrasting dynamics, and sometimes bizarre tonality shifts, every movement witnesses the author's commitment to eternal tonality. Thanks to his ingenious inventiveness, if nothing else, the work can stand in its importance among the great quartet creations of the late 19th century. It remains to hope (and to demand) that in not too distant future Rauchenecker's creation will be included in the standard repertoire.