

Georg Wilhelm Rauchenecker was born in Munich on 8 March 1844, the son of a town musician and well-known 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 before 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. He immediately 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 finally able to engage a "professional" orchestra. Among 404 appearances by the orchestra during its first season, we note the charity concert of 23 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 1879/1880 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 *Symphonic 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 his first String Quartet (Amadeus BP 1015), being described as "intolerable." In 1883 both parties considered cancelling the employment contract: Rauchenecker asked for "three weeks in which to consider [...], to come to a definitive decision re giving notice," while on the other hand the resignation of three board members in July 1883 could be prevented only by deciding "in the point at issue between Mr Rauchenecker and the committee, to support the latter's point of view." In the autumn of 1883 Rauchenecker received an appointment in Berlin. He stayed only a year here, 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, when he composed nine operas, of which four were performed in Barmen, Elberfeld, Coblenz and Düsseldorf. Rauchenecker seems to have kept in contact with Winterthur nonetheless. He was unable to take time off to accept an invitation to the 275th Jubilee of the Musikkollegium in 1904. However, 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.

Rauchenecker's third String Quartet was composed in 1879 in Winterthur, and premiered there in his January 1880 charity concert. The last known performance was in Elberfeld in 1911. The press reported that the manuscript had been found again, quite by chance, in the possession of a "Strasbourg acquaintance." This was the homeopath Otto Schönebeck, a close friend of Rauchenecker's and the librettist of many of his operas. The manuscript then disappeared again, to be discovered a hundred years later by the composer's great-great-grandson in the estate of Schönebeck's heirs. Following the concert, the *General-Anzeiger* wrote: "The new quartet possesses very significant qualities, and we consider it the best of Rauchenecker's quartets. The strongest proof of its worth is the fact that it could be performed after a Beethoven quartet without comparing badly." Frank Rauchenecker