

**Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)**  
**String Quartet No. 2, “Intimate Pages.” (1928)**

At the age of 73, Leoš Janáček’s deep friendship with Kamilla Stösslová had become an ardent passion. From the time they first met in 1915 the aging composer was hopelessly smitten, but it was only after years of unflagging devotion that she began to respond to his feelings. Although Kamilla seems never to have shared the old man’s deep ardor it did nothing to diminish his constancy or depth of emotion.

From their first meeting no single work was untouched by Janáček’s feelings for Kamilla. These same feelings became a driving creative force inspiring some of his finest music. The works written between 1919 and 1925 elevated Janáček to a composer of international stature. He confessed in a letter to Kamilla: “For the last eleven years, and without even suspecting it, you have been my protectress from every conceivable point of view. Wherever there is warmth of pure sentiment, sincerity, truth and ardent love in my compositions, you are the source of it!” Among the works composed during this time were three operas including “The Makropulos Affair,” The wind sextet “Youth,” the Concertino for piano and chamber ensemble and the two string quartets.

The quartets are remarkable for their wonderful fusion of all the elements of the composer’s personal style: his use of Moravian folk idioms, rhythms that imitate speech inflections, sudden extremes and their stirring declaration of youth. Janáček embraced this philosophy in his later years: “Youth is eternal! Life is young! I am not afraid to live. Life is beautiful!”

Although both quartets are dramatic and intimately expressive, it is the second quartet that is the most deeply personal. As Janáček wrote to Kamilla “Before I composed only from things remembered, not directly experienced feeling. This piece was written in fire. Earlier pieces only in hot ash.” The work was originally called “Love Letters,” but this was later changed to the more obscure “Intimate Pages.” Even without a knowledge of the background one can sense the great inspiration and pure emotion present here. The work is filled with great poignancy and fertile ideas. Janáček’s own words are its epitaph: “Oh, it’s a work as if carved out of living flesh. I think I won’t write a more profound and truer one.”