

Weill

String Quartet Op. 8

Introduktion (Sostenuto
con molta espressione)—
Scherzo—
Choralphantasie

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Weill's Op. 8 is the second of his two string quartets, and was composed in 1923. Unlike its recently rediscovered predecessor—an ambitious four-movement work that strikingly anticipates certain aspects of Weill's mature style—it lies outside the main course of his development. Indeed, it has something of the character of marginal observations: each of its three movements (which are played without a break) paraphrases, expands, or comments upon material from earlier works. Thus the *Introduktion* derives its contrasting *agitato* section, and also part of its *tranquillo* coda, from the *Divertimento* Op. 5, while the *alla marcia* trio section of the *Scherzo* is closely related to a passage in the ballet score *Die Zaubernacht*. The concluding *Choralphantasie* employs the same method on a larger scale, for it is an elaborate re-working of the fugal and chorale ideas from the final section of the *First Symphony*. But whereas the symphony's conclusion has been both a religious and a social (revolutionary) statement, here the composer seems to concentrate on the spiritual world. The lyrical centre of the movement is a kind of disembodied duet accompanied by increasingly strange arpeggiated harmonies which finally 'resolve' into a recitative-like passage of pure meditation. Although various transfigured references to the work's opening theme imply a cyclic feeling, the movement ends with a statement of the chorale theme, now for the first time presented in block harmony.