
This short (6' or so) piano trio was written by the Estonian Arvo Pärt in memory of his friend the Russian violinist Oleg Kagan. Kagan is particularly renowned for his chamber music partnership with his wife, cellist Natalia Gutman, and pianist Sviatoslav Richter. Kagan had become seriously ill with cancer in 1989 and died a year later aged 43 in Munich. 216 years earlier in the same city, the 18-year-old Mozart had written his Piano Sonata in F K.280. Its Adagio, in the form of an F-minor Siciliana (illustrated), has an extraordinary tragic power emphasised by poignant use of the semitone interval of a minor second (as in the opening three notes). Pärt's reworking of the Mozart Adagio is respectful and moving. Much of it is an arrangement for the trio of selections from the original - the violin is given a particularly moving episode. But Pärt also adds a brief introduction and briefer coda of spare string chords to the main body of the work, which is overlaid with an occasional interjected commentary, exploiting the minor second to sharpen the intensity of a powerful piece.