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The Company

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Music

Concerto for Violacello and Orchestra (1956) by Sir William Walton



Credit >

Choreography

Peter Martins

Premiere

January 22, 1999, New York City Ballet, New York State

Theater

Original Cast

Alexandra Ansanelli, Miranda Weese, Damian Woetzel

Average Length

29 min.

A mysterious and dramatically intense ballet for three dancers — a man and two women — Walton Cello Concerto contains a series of solos, pas de deux and pas de trois that are by turn dreamlike, elegant and fiery. The ballet, danced on a stage bathed in blue light, is filled with striking images, including a recurring motif of the women falling or bending backward over the man's outstretched arms. English composer Sir William Walton (1902-1983), considered one of the 20th-century's finest melodists, created works noted for their vivid harmonies and rich orchestrations. Educated at Oxford, he was a member of the Sitwell Circle, and his first important work was the witty and jazzy Facade (1922), written to accompany the recitation of poems by Edith Sitwell. Among Walton's orchestral, chamber and choral works are the Viola Concerto (1929), Belshazzar's Feast (1931), one of the most powerful choral works ever written, and the Violin Concerto (1939). His cool and serene Concerto for Violacello and Orchestra (1956) is filled with rich colorings, with a scherzo of quicksilver brilliance and slow and lyrical first and third movements. Walton also wrote song cycles, opera and film scores, including those for Henry V (1944), Hamlet (1947), Richard III (1955) and The Battle of Britain (1969).

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- Peter Martins

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