

- The Company
- Mission Statement
- Ballet Master in Chief
- Dancers
- Orchestra
- Personnel
- Volunteers
- NYCB Alumni
- Repertory Index
- The Viewing Room
- Brief History
- NYCB Lyre
- Annual Reports
- Job Postings

Home > The Company > Repertory Index  
**Walton Cello Concerto**



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



**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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