

# Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra

October 24, 2020 | 7:00 PM

Stilian Kirov, Conductor

George Walker

*Lyric for Strings*

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

*Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48*

- I. Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo – Allegro moderato
- II. Valse: Moderato – Tempo di valse
- III. Élégie: Larghetto elegiaco
- IV. Finale (Tema russo): Andante – Allegro con spirito

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## Program Notes

### **George Walker**

1922-2018

#### *Lyric for Strings*

A string of firsts dominated George Walker's long life and career. He was the first African American graduate of the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music with a dual diploma in both piano and composition. In 1945, he was the first African American to debut with a solo recital at Manhattan's Town Hall and the first to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra as the soloist for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3. In 1950, he became the first African American artist to sign with a major artist management company, and he spent the next several years playing a string of high-profile concerts in nearly every European capital. In 1956, Walker became the first African American to graduate with a doctoral degree from the Eastman School of Music. In 1961, he was hired by Smith College where he became the first tenured African American faculty member in any department. And finally, in 1996, Walker was the first African American to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music in recognition of his composition *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra. At his death in August 2018, Walker was one of the most decorated and revered composers in American history.

*Lyric for Strings* was composed when Walker was only 24 years old, but it has remained one of his most enduring compositions. The sound, structure, and instrumentation of the piece are all clearly inspired by the famous *Adagio for Strings* composed by Walker's Curtis Institute classmate Samuel Barber in 1936. Walker first conceived the music that became *Lyric* as a middle movement for his first string quartet and originally titled it "Lament" in dedication to his grandmother who died the year prior. The piece fluidly and dramatically alternates between lush harmonies and stark solo passages which showcase the range of sounds possible in the string orchestra. In an interview not long before his death, Walker commented: "I never played a string instrument, but somehow strings have always fascinated me." In *Lyric*, we hear the beginning of this life-long fascination.

### **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

1840-1893

#### *Serenade for Strings* in C Major, Op. 48

Tchaikovsky intended the first movement to be an imitation of Mozart's style, and it was based on the form of the classical sonatina, with a slow introduction. The stirring 36-bar Andante introduction is marked "sempre marcattissimo" and littered with double-stopping in the violins and violas, forming towering chordal structures. This introduction is restated at the end of the movement, and then reappears, transformed, in the coda of the fourth movement, tying the entire work together.

On the second page of the score, Tchaikovsky wrote, "The larger number of players in the string orchestra, the more this shall be in accordance with the author's wishes."

The second movement, Valse, has become a popular piece in its own right.

The Serenade was given a private performance at the Moscow Conservatory on 3 December 1880. Its first public performance was in St Petersburg on 30 October 1881 under Eduard Napravnik.

Tchaikovsky was an incredibly prolific composer and one the most popular Russian composer of all time. His music has always had great appeal for the general public in virtue of its tuneful, open-hearted melodies, impressive harmonies, and colorful, picturesque orchestration, all of which evoke a profound emotional response.

~Program notes courtesy of South Carolina Philharmonic

Stilian Kirov  
*Music Director*

***Violin I***

Azusa Tashiro, Concertmaster  
Elizabeth Huffman, Assistant Concertmaster  
Brian Ostrega  
Maria Arrua  
Janis Sakai  
Cristina Buciu  
Elizabeth Choi

***Violin II***

Linda Veleckis Nussbaum, Principal  
Anna Carlson, Acting Assistant Principal  
Caroline Slack  
Linda Lager  
Samantha May  
Nina Saito  
Kristen Wiersum  
Steve Winkler

***Viola***

Matt Barwegen, Acting Principal  
Oana Tatu, Acting Assistant Principal  
Scott Dowd  
Rebecca Swan  
Bonnie Yeager  
Loretta Gillespie

***Cello***

Jake Hanegan, Principal  
Emily Mantell, Acting Assistant Principal  
Mara McClain  
Ingrid Krizan

***Bass***

Joseph Krzysiak, Acting Principal  
Phillip Serna, Acting Assistant Principal  
Alison Gaines

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