

Program

William Walton: Viola Concerto

I. Andante comodo

II. Vivo, con molto preciso

III. Allegro moderato

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I

In 1928, the young English composer William Walton (1902–1983) was encouraged by conductor Sir Thomas Beecham to write a concerto for the legendary violist Lionel Tertis, known for his rich "Tertis Viola." Inspired by Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, Walton composed the piece during the winter of 1928–29 while staying with the Sitwell family on Italy's Amalfi Coast. However, when completed, Tertis rejected the concerto as "too modern."

The work was instead premiered in 1929 by Paul Hindemith, a prominent violist-composer whom Walton admired, with the Henry Wood Symphony Orchestra under Walton's direction. The performance was a success and marked a turning point in Walton's career, establishing him as one of Britain's leading composers.

The concerto unfolds in three movements. The first, *Andante comodo*, is introspective and lyrical, featuring a yearning viola melody that alternates between passion and restraint. The central *Vivo, con molto preciso* contrasts sharply with its rhythmic vitality and playful virtuosity. The final movement recalls the witty character of Walton's earlier works but also reveals a deep lyricism reminiscent of Elgar. Its culmination — a soaring, uncertain serenity — remains one of the most beautiful moments in Walton's music.

Although the concerto was widely acclaimed, Walton revised it in 1961, refining its orchestration and adding a harp. The revised version, premiered in 1962, is the one most often performed today文