

# **MSOL Connect Event**

## **String Spirit:**

**A Return to Live MSO Performance!**

September 23, 2021

# String Spirit

- A Quick History of String Orchestras and their Music
- Our 3 Works in that Context
  - Elgar
  - Tchaikovsky
  - Poulenc w/ Greg Zelek
- Q&A

# Where did this come from?

- String Orchestra music generally comes from 3 major trends
  - Continental Europe: Baroque through Romantic
  - England: Baroque through 20th Century
  - Europe: Late 19th/Early 20th Centuries

# Where did this come from?

- Continental Europe: Baroque through Romantic
  - The **ripieno concerto**
    - Vivaldi, Bach, more
  - By the end of Classic period, orchestral work had either:
    - Added winds/brass and become **symphonies**, or
    - Remained with strings alone and moved in a less serious direction
      - **Serenade, Divertimento, Suite**
      - Even the occasional string symphony was a lighter affair
  - In the Romantic, the titles stuck around but the character had changed somewhat

# Continental Tradition: Some Examples

- **Bach** Brandenburg No.3
- **Mozart** Eine Kleine Nachtmusik
- **Rossini** String Sonatas
- **Mendelssohn** String Symphonies Nos.1-12
- **Dvořák** Serenade for Strings
- **Grieg** Suite from Holberg's Time, 2 Elegiac Melodies
- **Janáček** Idylls, Suite for String Orchestra
- **Nielsen** Little Suite
- **Sibelius** Romance
- **Suk** Serenade
- **Weiner** Divertimento Nos.1-2
- **Wren** Serenade for String Orchestra

# Where did this come from?

- **England: Baroque through 20th Century**
  - String Consort
    - Purcell and friends
  - Almost nothing for 150+ years (England's music scene was odd for a while there...)
  - Concept revived in the late 1800s as part of the national English composition school
    - Also part of the emerging school music world
    - Holst, Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Finzi
    - Represents a higher proportion of works because England did not have the firm roots of full symphonic instrumentation as they did on the continent

# English Tradition: Some Examples

- **Purcell** Fantasias for Viols
- **Parry** Lady Radnor's Suite
- **Elgar** Serenade for Strings
- **Delius** 2 Aquarelles
- **Vaughan Williams** Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis, Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus
- **Holst** St. Paul's Suite, Brook Green Suite
- **Finzi** Romance for Strings
- **Britten** Simple Symphony, Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge
- **Rutter** Suite for Strings

# Where/When did this come from?

- **Europe of the late 19th/early 20th Centuries**
  - Some composers used the sound of strings alone to evoke “olden” in music (Neo-Classicism)
    - Respighi, Stravinsky, Bloch
  - Some composers explored the sound colors of strings
    - Bartok, Pärt, Webern
  - After WW I, some composers used strings alone because it was easier to fill a string orchestra than one with solo winds/brass.



# Late 19th/Early 20th: Some Examples

- **Bloch** Concerto Grosso No.1 & No.2
- **Respighi** Ancient Airs and Dances No.3
- **Bartok** Divertimento for String Orchestra
- **Stravinsky** Concerto in D
- **Webern** 5 Movements for Strings
- **Hindemith** Fünf Stücke für Streichorchester
- **Pärt** Fratres, Summa, Silouan's Song, etc.

# Some Cross Pollination/Others

- **There is some overlap between these categories**
  - Some English composers worked in both the British nationalist realm and the continental Romantic world
    - **Samuel Coleridge** Taylor Novelletten
  - Other English composers doubled in the British realm and the Neo-Classical realm
    - **Warlock** Capriol Suite
  - What about American composers?
    - Most American composers of the late Romantic/early Modern followed the continental model
      - **V. Herbert**: Serenade, **W. G. Still**: Danzas de Panama, **A. Foote**: Serenade

# Our 3 Works

- The MSO program this weekend consists of 3 works, one from each of our categories
  - Elgar from the English tradition
  - Poulenc from 20th Century Europe
  - Tchaikovsky from the continental tradition
- Check out Mike Allsen's fantastic program notes and his pre-concert discussion

# Our 3 Works

- **Elgar**

- Composed 1905 for the newly-created London Symphony Orchestra
- Scored for solo string quartet and string orchestra
- Single movement, around 13:00



# Our 3 Works

## ● Tchaikovsky

- Serenade composed in 1880, one of the his most cherished works
  - “The larger the number of string musicians, the closer to the wishes of the composer” written in hand on [manuscript](#)
    - Oddly, it often is performed by chamber orchestras--so MSO’s large string section will be a welcome treat!
  - Started as a symphony or string quartet, then a suite, then a serenade
  - 4 Movements
    - Pezzo in Forma di Sonatina
    - Valse
    - Elegia
    - Finale: Tema Russa



# Our 3 Works

- **Poulenc (1899-1963)**

- Born Paris, largely self-taught
- Becomes member of famous “Les Six”
- Earlier works are secular and light-hearted, later works more religious
- Often considered a neo-classicist
- Died of heart attack 1/30/63. Funeral is simple at his request: the only music was Bach
- Organ Concerto composed 1936-38, premiered 1939



# Our 3 Works

- **Poulenc Concerto**
  - Scored for solo organ, timpani, and strings
  - Soloist this weekend is

Greg Zelek



# Q & A

- Please unmute if you have a question.
- If you feel more comfortable, type into the Chat.
- Greg & I will answer all of your questions!



# Coming Soon to an **INBOX** Near You...

- You will be receiving an email from the MSOL
  - Link to these [SLIDES](#)
  - Link to the [Spotify playlist](#)
  - Link to recording of tonight's presentation
- Also my email if you have any follow up questions or comments
  - [smkurr@gmail.com](mailto:smkurr@gmail.com)

## Up Next:

- Live music from the MSO!

# Thank you!

These slides were created by Steve Kurr for the Madison Symphony Orchestra League Connect Events. Please direct comments and questions to [smkurr@gmail.com](mailto:smkurr@gmail.com).