

Program notes: Barber Adagio for strings
SAMUAL BARBER 1910 - 1981

Adagio for strings

Only rarely has it happened this century that a piece of music appears whose context is so consistently expressive, its climaxes so telling, its proportions so right, its message so clear and convincing, that the musical public accepts it at once and wholeheartedly.

Such a piece is Samuel Barber's "Adagio for strings", which is the composer's arrangement of a movement from his own string quartet. On completion of the work in 1937 Barber submitted the score to Toscanini for consideration, who returned it some time later without comment, much to Barber's disappointment. Only later did he learn that the maestro had been so impressed that he had memorized the entire work.

It received its first performance, under Toscanini, on November 5th 1938. The Adagio has since become a classic of American music and has been played at numerous memorial concerts, including that of Barber himself. More recently it has been used in the soundtrack of the film "Platoon".

By Richard Thompson. Used with permission of The Brandon Hill Chamber Orchestra of Bristol, UK