

**Two First Symphonies: October 2021**  
Program Notes by Music Director Thomas Heuser

The crackling sound of a unique 1915 Gramophone recording features the composer **Edward Elgar (1857-1934)** conducting the lush orchestral version of his *Liebesgruß*, also called *Salut d'Amour* or "Love's Greeting," a love song originally written for violin and piano in 1888. The German title by the English composer had a French dedication, "à Carice," and was given as an engagement present. The dedication lovingly combines the two names of his fiancé, the author Caroline Alice, and coined the name they would give to their daughter when she was born two years later. Love is palpable in this music, and we play it for our returning audiences as a gesture of love and gratitude in these challenging times. The simple and graceful melody reminds us why we love music.

One hundred years after Elgar's engagement, a Black American composer returned from South America on a Fulbright Scholarship and published his First Symphony in 1988. **Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941)** grew up in New York state, and holds degrees from Howard University, the Manhattan School of Music, and Michigan State University. An admired teacher and prolific composer, Dr. Hailstork is currently a professor of music and Composer-in-Residence at Old Dominion University in Virginia. The First Symphony is described by the composer as an "early work," primarily in the Neo-Classical style, with crisp, often syncopated rhythms and clear melodic themes. Much of Hailstork's music channels his African American ancestry, including many spirituals, but here the First Symphony is rather focused on showcasing expert orchestral techniques, and the result is a passionate and intricate work that seems almost cinematic at times, notably in the Symphony's slow second movement.

The early First Symphony of Dr. Hailstork was published when he was 47 years old, versus the First Symphony of **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)** which was premiered at age 30 in 1800. Mozart premiered his First Symphony when he was 9 years old, and Johannes Brahms famously waited until age 43 to debut his landmark First. These symphonic offerings don't stand alone of course; each composer had written earlier works that influenced the more substantial offering of a full Symphony. In the case of Beethoven, he only began publishing his works after he had become famous as a virtuoso in Vienna, so that he could dedicate his works to famous princes and courtly patrons. With financial success assured, he was emboldened to take Haydn's Classical model in new directions. Unexpected harmonic arrivals, punching accents, and whirling virtuosity are already apparent in his First Symphony, which are trademarks that become even more pronounced over the course of his 9 symphonic masterpieces.