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ROSSEN MILANOV
Music Director

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2020 - 2021

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HOME

Jessie Montgomery, composer

● 23 May 2021 ●

STRUM, SOSPIRI & SERENADE

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PRINCETON
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

2020-21

ROSSEN MILANOV, Edward T. Cone Music Director

Sunday May 23, 2021, 4pm
Virtual Concert

STRUM, SOSPIRI, & SERENADE

Rossen Milanov, conductor

Jessie Montgomery *Strum*

Edward Elgar *Sospiri*, Op. 70

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48
I. Pezzo in forma di Sonatina
II. Walzer
III. Élégie
IV. Finale (Tema Russo)

Orchestral works recorded at Morven Museum & Garden

Dates, times, artists, and programs subject to change.



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Princeton Symphony Orchestra



The Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO) is a cultural centerpiece of the Princeton community and one of New Jersey's finest music organizations, a position established through performances of beloved masterworks, innovative music by living composers, and an extensive network of educational programs offered to area students free of charge. Led by Edward T. Cone Music Director Rossen Milanov, the PSO presents orchestral, pops, and chamber music programs of the highest artistic quality, supported by lectures and related events that supplement the concert experience. Through PSO BRAVO!, the orchestra produces wide-reaching and impactful education programs in partnership with local schools and arts organizations that culminate in students attending a live orchestral performance. The PSO receives considerable support from the Princeton community and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, regularly garnering NJSCA's highest honor. Recognition of engaging residencies and concerts has come from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the PSO's commitment to new music has been acknowledged with an ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming and a Copland Fund Award. The only independent, professional orchestra to make its home in Princeton, the PSO performs at historic Richardson Auditorium on the campus of Princeton University.



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Music Director



Respected and admired by audiences and musicians alike, internationally renowned conductor and Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO) Edward T. Cone Music Director **ROSSEN MILANOV** looks forward to collaborating in 2020-21 with established and emerging artists of the orchestral world.

With an impressive pedigree, including positions at The Philadelphia Orchestra, he has galvanized the PSO with his energetic and exacting conducting. Mr. Milanov is also the music director of the Columbus Symphony

Orchestra, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, and newly appointed chief conductor of the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra in Ljubljana. He has established himself as a conductor with considerable national and international presence.

Mr. Milanov's programming at the PSO embraces the standard repertoire, rarities, and premieres, performed by superb soloists and featuring celebrated American composers. His exuberant and acclaimed performances are characterized by sharp musical intellect, poetic eloquence, and artistic ingenuity.

Mr. Milanov is deeply committed to music education, presenting Link Up education projects with Carnegie Hall and the Orchestra of St. Luke's and leading the PSO's annual BRAVO! concerts for thousands of school children. He was named Bulgaria's Musician of the Year in 2005; he won a 2011 ASCAP award for new music at the PSO; and he was selected as one of the top 100 most influential people in New Jersey in 2014. In 2017, he was recipient of a Columbus Performing Arts Prize awarded by The Columbus Foundation. He is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School.

A passionate chef, he often dedicates his culinary talents to various charities.

rossenmilanov.com

Photo credit: Stephen Pariser

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Princeton Symphony Orchestra

Rossen Milanov, Edward T. Cone Music Director

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Nell Flanders, Georg and Joyce Albers-Schonberg Assistant Conductor

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Sunday, May 23, 2021

VIOLIN I

Basia Danilow

Concertmaster

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Margaret Banks

The Yvonne Marcuse Chair,

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Linda Howard

Ruotao Mao

Cheng-Chih Kevin Tsai

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John Grillo*

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Chair***

VIOLIN II

Tina Bouey**/Dechopol

Kowintaweewat**

The B. Sue Howard Chair

Michelle Brazier

Cheng-Hsun Tsai

Carmina Gagliardi

HARP

André Tarantiles*

Anonymous Chair,

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*Principal player

**Guest principal player

VIOLA

Stephanie Griffin*

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Jacqueline Watson

Program Notes

One of the great delights of both Tchaikovsky and Elgar's music is the variety of beautiful sonorities they create with the orchestra. The magical celeste sound in the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* and the charming exchanges between winds and strings in the "Dorabella" movement of Elgar's *Enigma Variations* create strongly defined characters and sounds that delight the ear and the imagination. But the success of the orchestration depends on a foundation of compositional structure, and it is notable that these composers achieve equally striking effects using only the versatile sound of the string section. In *Strum*, Jessie Montgomery also masterfully uses the timbral contrasts of the strings, from the percussive, plucked and strummed sounds of pizzicato to the lush singing tone and choppy chords produced with the bow and the haunting coolness of the harmonics.



Jessie Montgomery

(b.1981)

Strum

Composed 2012

Composer, violinist, and educator Jessie Montgomery is the winner of both the Sphinx Medal of Excellence and the ASCAP Foundation's

Leonard Bernstein Award. She has just been appointed to a three-year term as Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Montgomery's music interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, language, and social justice, placing her squarely as one of the most relevant interpreters of 21st-century American sound and experience. Her growing body of work includes solo, chamber, vocal, and orchestral pieces, commissioned by such organizations as the Albany Symphony, American Music Festival, Chicago Sinfonietta, Joyce Foundation, National Symphony Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Sphinx Organization, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and Young People's Chorus of New York. The first recording devoted to her music, *Strum: Music for Strings*, was released by Azica

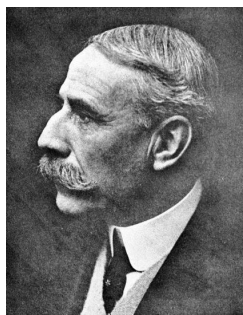
Records in 2015. She is currently a Graduate Fellow in Music Composition at Princeton University.

Strum is the culminating result of several versions of a string quintet I wrote in 2006. It was originally written for the Providence String Quartet and guests of Community MusicWorks Players, then arranged for string quartet in 2008 with several small revisions. In 2012, the piece underwent its final revisions with a rewrite of both the introduction and the ending for the Catalyst Quartet in a performance celebrating the 15th annual Sphinx Competition.

Originally conceived for the formation of a cello quintet, the voicing is often spread wide over the ensemble, giving the music an expansive quality of sound. Within *Strum* I utilized texture motives, layers of rhythmic or harmonic ostinati that string together to form a bed of sound for melodies to weave in and out. The strumming pizzicato serves as a *texture motive* and the primary driving rhythmic underpinning of the piece. Drawing on American folk idioms and the spirit of dance and movement, the piece has a kind of narrative that begins with fleeting nostalgia and transforms into ecstatic celebration.

-Jessie Montgomery

Instrumentation – strings Duration – 7'



Edward Elgar

(1857-1934)

Sospiri, Op. 70

Composed 1914

Edward Elgar composed *Sospiri* in 1914, on the eve of World War I. Though *Sospiri* was initially intended as a companion piece to his popular miniature *Salut d'amour* for violin and piano, Elgar switched to the string orchestra format as better suited to the piece's melancholy intensity. *Sospiri*, which means "sighs" in Italian, originally referred to the sighs of a lover, but it came to evoke a more general expression of sorrow and longing. Elgar achieves his signature



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bittersweet mood in this brief, gentle work through prismatic changes from minor to major and shifting tonal centers. After a brief introduction in D minor, the tentatively searching melody begins in the violins over a sustained, soft, chord progression, with each chord change brought into relief by punctuations in the harp. The second section of the piece, in F major, has a more impassioned and hopeful quality, though this soon melts back into the return of the first theme. The chordal accompaniment now takes on a shimmering quality through the use of the fluttering tremolo effect, and the melody, played in unison by the cellos and violins, has the dark richness of the alto voice. An abridged version of the F major section brings the piece to its peaceful conclusion. *Sospiri* is dedicated to Elgar's close friend William Henry "Billy" Reed, who was the concertmaster of the London Symphony Orchestra. Reed had assisted Elgar in revising the solo part of his violin concerto a few years earlier, and he is best known today as the author of the biography *Elgar as I Knew Him*.

Instrumentation – strings and harp

Duration – 5'



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

(1840-1893)

Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

Composed 1880

Tchaikovsky drew inspiration for his Serenade for Strings in C Major from the example of his musical idol, Mozart. This four-movement piece has the general outline of a symphony, but the title "Serenade" creates the expectation of a lighter character and a less rigorous formal structure. Many composers of the mid-to-late 19th-century embraced the form of the serenade, as it allowed them to write large orchestral works while avoiding the lofty expectations created by Beethoven's symphonic achievements. In addition to Brahms' two Serenades written in 1858 and 1859, Dvořák published a Serenade for Strings in 1877, and composers including Hugo Wolf, Ethel Smythe, and Edward Elgar also wrote in the genre. In 1880, Tchaikovsky was enjoying newfound freedom, having left both his teaching

Program Notes continued

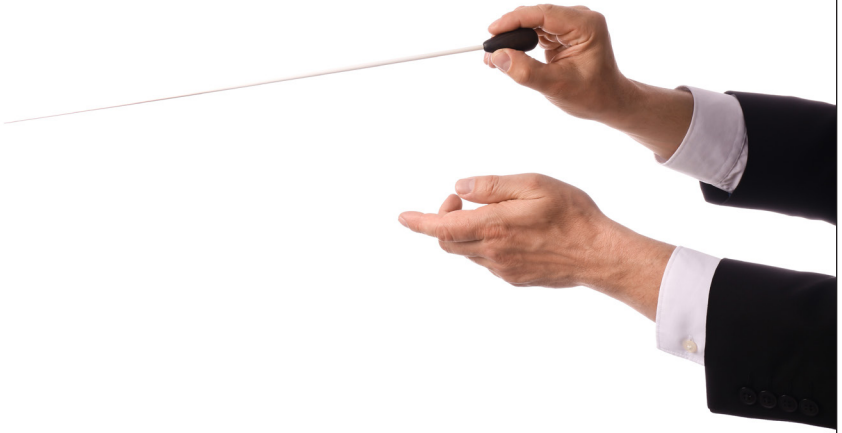
job at the Moscow Conservatory and his brief and miserable marriage. His work was increasingly recognized and performed abroad, and he had recently completed several major works, including the ballet *Swan Lake*, the Fourth Symphony, the opera *Eugene Onegin*, and the Violin Concerto. A generous stipend from his friend and patron Nadezhda von Meck relieved him of his financial worries, and he embarked on an itinerant existence, traveling through Europe or staying at the homes of friends and family in the Russian countryside. During this period, he turned away from the impassioned drama of some of his earlier works and explored genres such as the orchestral suite, in which simpler dance forms showcased his beautiful melodies and sparkling textures.

The first movement of the Serenade for Strings opens with a warmly expansive chordal introduction structured around a descending C major scale. We hear this material again both at the end of this movement and towards the end of the Finale, and it serves to frame and unify the piece as a whole. The lilting dance of the *Pezzo in forma di Sonatina* is filled with lively textural details, and its melodies and motives are tossed joyfully between the parts. In the second movement waltz we hear Tchaikovsky at his most sweet and graceful. After a more ardent contrasting B section in the minor mode, the waltz theme returns, with charmingly inventive accompanimental lines swirling around it. The third movement *Larghetto elegiaco* anchors the piece with its more introspective and somber mood, and a delicate transition passage leads into the exuberant Russian folk dance of the Finale.

Instrumentation – strings Duration – 30'

~Nell Flanders, Assistant Conductor
Princeton Symphony Orchestra

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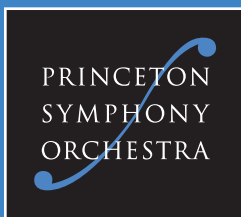
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