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Cue the Operatic Hilarity: 'Albert Herring' at Princeton Festival

Fully Staged Performances On June 17 & 19 at Morven Museum & Garden



Shawn Roth (who plays Mr. Upfold), Eric Delagrang (Superintendent Budd), Joshua Stewart (Albert Herring), and Ann Toomey (Lady Billows) rehearse a scene for the Princeton Festival's production.

Photo: Carolo Pascale

By TAPINTO STAFF

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The Princeton Symphony Orchestra's full-length, fully staged production of Benjamin Britten's comic opera *Albert Herring* takes center stage at the Princeton Festival Friday, June 17, and Sunday, June 19, at 7 p.m. under the 10,000 square-foot performance tent on the grounds of Morven Museum & Garden.

Music Director Rossen Milanov conducts the orchestra and vocal artists from the U.S. and Europe performing alongside cast members with ties to the Princeton community. The opera is sung in English with English titles.

Britten's only comic opera, with libretto by Eric Crozier, is set in a small village in the English countryside. Village leaders choose Albert Herring to be May King when they can't find a girl virtuous enough to be queen. Just one drink breaks repressed young Albert out of his shell, causing hilarious mayhem. The production is directed by Richard Gammon with scenic design by Julia Noulin-Mérat contributing a Victorian teashop vibe, and period costumes designed by 17-year Princeton Festival veteran Marie Miller.

"I am very excited to perform Albert Herring in such a perfect setting," says Milanov, "I think this ridiculously funny production with an amazing cast is a perfect experience for both first-time opera goers and opera buffs."

Among the cast members are Joshua Stewart (Albert Herring), a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music who is now based in Europe; Ann Toomey (Lady Billows) a 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions national semifinalist; Mariana Karpatova (Florence Pike), a native of Bulgaria who made her recital debut at Lincoln Center and has since performed with companies including the Metropolitan Opera and Michigan Opera Theatre; Sienna Grinwald-Alves (Cis) and Alexandra Thomas (Emmie), both students at Rider University's Westminster Choir College; and Princeton resident Lewis Jacobson Wasden (Harry), who sings with the Princeton Boychoir, now part of Westrick Music Academy.

At 5 p.m. before each performance, Timothy Urban presents a talk titled "Under the Hood of Albert Herring" at Morven's Stockton Education Center.

Dismissed by some critics as having little substance, Benjamin Britten's comic chamber opera, composed in 1946-1947, has more to it than meets the casual listener. As the PSO website points out, "under, above, and even intertwined with the surface, one finds myriad references to other operas and musical styles, and it sometimes even seems Britten may be poking fun at himself."

Urban supervises and coordinates the undergraduate aural skills courses and teaches all Advanced Aural Skills sections at the Mason Gross School of the Arts. In addition, he teaches for both Westminster Choir College and Rider University's Graduate Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification Program.

The talks are free and open to the public. For more information, visit princetonsymphony.org/festival/community-programs.

Tickets for all Princeton Festival performances range from \$10 - \$130; ticket packages are \$18 and up. Call 609-497-0020 or visit princetonsymphony.org/festival.

