

• PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ROSSEN MILANOV, MUSIC DIRECTOR

2023-2024



Forward Into Light

FEATURING STEVEN BANKS

Opening Weekend | Forward Into Light

Saturday, September 9, 2023 - 8pm

Sunday, September 10, 2023 - 4pm

Richardson Auditorium

Welcome

A Message from Our Music Director



Dear Friends,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Princeton Symphony Orchestra's 2023-24 Season. Thank you for helping us to be more environmentally responsible by switching over to our new mobile-responsive digital program book. Now you can read Assistant Conductor Kenneth Bean's wonderful program notes anytime, anywhere in the days leading up to each concert.

I hope you will be inspired by this season's rich repertoire, the incredible artistic partners we will share the stage with, and the opportunity to hear unique and diverse musical stories. Among the many highlights, we look forward to presenting GRAMMY® Award-winning Metropolitan Opera star and Princeton University graduate, Anthony Roth Costanzo.

While I will be conducting the majority of the concerts, Kenneth Bean will be collaborating with guest soloist Jennifer Koh on the PSO's performance of Missy Mazzoli's new violin concerto, "Procession." We also look forward to a special guest conductor for this year's December 16 Holiday POPS! concert.

I hope to see you then and throughout the orchestral season at our beautiful and acoustically superb home at historic Richardson Auditorium!

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Milanov". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Rossen Milanov
Edward T. Cone Music Director

Program

FORWARD INTO LIGHT

ROSSEN MILANOV, Edward T. Cone Music Director

Rossen Milanov, conductor
Steven Banks, saxophone

Sarah Kirkland Snider (b. 1973)
Forward Into Light

Henri Tomasi (1901-1971)
Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra

- I. Andante et allegro
 - II. Final: Giration
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INTERMISSION

William Dawson (1899-1990)
Negro Folk Symphony

- I. The Bond of Africa: Adagio – Allegro con brio
 - II. Hope in the Night: Andante – Allegretto (alla scherzando)
 - III. O, Le' Me Shine, Shine Like a Morning Star!: Allegro con brio
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About the Artists



Rossen Milanov

Edward T. Cone Music Director, conductor

Internationally renowned conductor and Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO) Edward T. Cone Music Director **ROSSEN MILANOV** looks forward to collaborating in 2023-24 with

established and emerging artists of the orchestral world and helming the PSO's popular June performing arts celebration – The Princeton Festival.

Respected and admired by audiences and musicians alike, he has established himself as a conductor with considerable national and international presence. In addition to leading the PSO, Mr. Milanov is the music director of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, and chief conductor of the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra in Ljubljana. During his eleven-year tenure with The Philadelphia Orchestra, he conducted more than 200 performances. In 2015, he completed a 15-year tenure as music director of the nationally recognized training orchestra Symphony in C in New Jersey and in 2013 a 17-year tenure with the New Symphony Orchestra in his native city of Sofia, Bulgaria.

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.

Noted for his versatility, Mr. Milanov is also a welcomed presence in the worlds of opera and ballet. He has collaborated with Komische Oper Berlin (Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtzensk*), Opera Oviedo with the Spanish premiere of Tchaikovsky's *Mazepa* and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* (awarded best Spanish production for 2015), and Opera Columbus (Verdi's *La Traviata*). He has been seen at New York City Ballet and collaborated with some of the best-known choreographers of our time such as Mats Ek, Benjamin Millepied, and most recently Alexei Ratmansky in the critically acclaimed revival of *Swan Lake* in Zurich with Zurich Ballet and in Paris with La Scala Ballet.

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 adventurous programming of contemporary 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.



Steven Banks

saxophone

Saxophonist **STEVEN BANKS** is establishing himself as a compelling and charismatic soloist. In 2022, he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and was a chosen artist for WQXR's Artist Propulsion Lab. He was the first saxophonist to be awarded First Prize at the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. Critics have consistently recognized Banks for his warm yet glowing tone, well-crafted and communicative musical expression, and deft technical abilities.

Banks has appeared with The Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, Utah Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, and Aspen Festival Orchestra, and has enjoyed working with such conductors as Franz Welser-Most, Xian Zhang, Nicholas McGegan, Rafael Payare, John Adams, Peter Oundjian, Jahja Ling, Matthias Pintscher, Alain Altinoglu, and Roderick Cox.

In 2023 and 2024 Banks will premiere and tour with a commissioned concerto from Grammy-winning composer Billy Childs. The nine co-commissioning orchestras are the Kansas City Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, Chautauqua Institution, New World Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, and San Diego Symphony, with Young Concert Artists being the tenth partner in the consortium. The three movement, 20-minute concerto will explore aspects of the African American experience in America and takes inspiration from such poets as Nayyirah Waheed, Claude McKay, and Maya Angelou.

Banks' primary saxophone teachers have been Taimur Sullivan, Otis Murphy Jr., and Galvin Crisp. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, as well as a Master of Music degree from the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music.

Notes on The Music



Sarah Kirkland Snider

Forward Into Light

Sarah Kirkland Snider
(b. 1973)

Forward Into Light

Composed 2020

Composer's Note:

Forward Into Light is a meditation on perseverance, bravery, and alliance. The piece was inspired by the American women suffragists — Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Frances E.W. Harper, Ida B. Wells, Zitkála-Šá, and Mabel Lee Ping-Hua, to name but a few — who devoted their lives to the belief that women were human beings and therefore entitled to equal rights and protections under the law of the United States of America.

I wrote the music thinking about what it means to believe in something so deeply that one is willing to endure harassment, isolation, assault, incarceration, hunger, force-feedings, death threats, and life endangerment to fight for it. The music reflects what I imagine a suffragist's internal psychological landscape might have resembled: a struggle along the emotional continuum between hope and doubt, inspiration and exhaustion, faithlessness and resilience.

The piece was also inspired by the idea of synergistic interpersonal partnerships, which lay at the heart of the American women's suffrage movement. *Forward Into Light* opens with three motivic ideas: a pair of ascending sixth intervals in the violins, an undulating quintuplet figure in the harp, and a lyrical line in close canon led by the violas. The trio of ideas coax each other forward, tentatively at first, and then more urgently, as tremors of adversity intensify the stakes. New voices join the conversation, challenging and subverting the original ideas to explore new collaborative solutions, united in the search for a strength that only a defined, mutual purpose can yield.

Forward Into Light features a musical quote from "March of the Women," composed in 1910 by British composer and suffragette Dame Ethel Smyth. The anthem of the women's suffrage movement, "March of the Women" was sung in homes and halls, on streets and farms, and on the steps of the United States Capitol. The title of the piece derives from a suffrage slogan made famous by the banner that suffragist Inez Milholland carried while riding a white horse to lead the National American Woman Suffrage Association parade on March 3, 1913, in Washington, D.C.

Forward, out of error
Leave behind the night
Forward through the darkness
Forward into light!

Instrumentation – *two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, three clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, celesta, and strings*

Duration – *15 minutes*



Henri Tomasi

Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra

Henri Tomasi
(1901-1971)

Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra

Composed 1949

Henri Tomasi, a French composer, conductor, and prodigious artist of the 20th century, was born in the port city of Marseilles on August 17, 1901. Tomasi's journey from a young boy dreaming of seafaring adventures, in the vein of his uncles, to becoming one of the era's most distinguished composers, began under the watchful eye of his father, Xavier. Xavier, a flautist, bandleader, and Corsican folk song collector, recognized his son's potential and guided his early music education at the Conservatory of Marseilles, a path that eventually led Henri to the prestigious Paris Conservatory.

In Paris, Tomasi honed his craft under the tutelage of renowned music masters such as Philippe Gaubert, Vincent d'Indy, Paul Dukas, Paul Vidal, and Georges Caussade. His early affiliations with the avant-garde group Le Triton in 1922 solidified his reputation as an innovative composer and conductor. As his career progressed, he conducted numerous major radio concerts, operas, ballets, symphonic works, and festivals, with a particular affinity for French masters like Lalo, Saint-Saëns, Faure, d'Indy, Dukas, Debussy, and Ravel.

Tomasi's compositions, filled with mysticism, emotional intensity, brilliant orchestration, and an atmospheric style, show the profound influence of his travels and personal experiences. His musical work, a rich tapestry of oriental sounds, neo-impressionistic effects, quartal harmonies, jazz inferences, and isolated, highly chromatic sections, suggests an artist of enormous versatility and imagination.

Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra, composed in 1949, is comprised of two movements. Intertwined throughout are lyrical and intense moments that show a captivating dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra.

The work begins with a very lyrical andante section, which develops into an energetic allegro in a 5/4 time. Bi-tonality, a recurring feature in Tomasi's work, enriches this movement, creating an atmospheric soundscape that transports listeners to a beach with waves lapping on the shore.

The second movement, "Giration," keeps up the dynamic spirit of the first. The continually shifting meters and tonality heighten the feeling of imbalance and anticipation. This lively call-and-response section between the saxophone and the orchestra culminates in a poignant largo, subtly referencing the opening theme in inversion.

Tomasi's *Concerto Pour Saxophone Alto et Orchestra* is a testament to his unique ability to seamlessly integrate diverse influences and musical styles. His music resonates with the evocative sounds of distant lands, the emotional intensity of personal experiences, and the avant-garde spirit of his time. As we delve into this intriguing concerto, we embrace a world of vibrant colors, moods, and rhythms that underscore Tomasi's lasting legacy as a composer, conductor, and innovator.

Instrumentation – *three flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings, and solo alto saxophone*

Duration – *18 minutes*



William Dawson

Negro Folk Symphony

**William Dawson
(1899-1990)**

Negro Folk Symphony

Composed 1934

William Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* serves as a resounding testament to his cultural heritage, musical prowess, and lifelong dedication to uplifting African American folk music. Born in 1899 in Anniston, Alabama, Dawson exhibited early musical and academic talents, sparking a lifelong journey that would shape him into a monumental figure in the realm of music and education.

At Tuskegee Institute, founded by Booker T. Washington, Dawson received an extensive education that was a major factor in forming the foundation for his illustrious career. Post-Tuskegee, Dawson continued his academic pursuits, attending Horner Institute of Fine Arts and becoming the first Black student to earn a bachelor's degree there. Later he attended the American Conservatory of Music, where he earned a Master of Music degree in composition.

The journey of this composition started in Chicago's vibrant Black arts scene in the late 1920s. The culmination of Dawson's compositional ambitions, the symphony, premiered in 1934, received immediate acclaim, with audiences breaking traditional etiquette to applaud after the second movement and Black and white critics alike penning glowing reviews.

Despite its initial success, the symphony did not find a regular place in U.S. orchestras' rotations, largely due to the lack of a consistent champion and limited availability of scores and orchestral parts. However, the symphony, especially in its revised version after Dawson's African tour in the early 1950s, remains a seminal piece of African American classical music, gaining renewed attention in recent years.

In understanding the *Negro Folk Symphony*, I believe the title calls for a bit of exploration. For Dawson and his generation, the term "Negro" signified pride and respect. By the time of his death in 1990, popular tastes had changed. He saw "Black" as a color that was much too narrow to adequately represent his culture and heritage which he consistently celebrated through his music and teaching.

The "folk" in the title, meanwhile, alludes to Dawson's use of orally transmitted folk songs to construct a symphony for the concert hall, following in the footsteps of composers like Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Johannes Brahms, and notably Antonín Dvořák, who drew inspiration from their nations' folk music.

The symphony opens with a somber motive that Dawson, in retrospect, likened to the human link torn apart by the African slave trade, symbolizing the initial rupture from the African homeland. This recurring motive, sometimes heroic, sometimes foreboding, connects the three movements of the symphony, contributing to the narrative.

The first movement, "The Bond of Africa," is a vibrant celebration of African heritage, exuding rhythmic excitement and expert orchestral color. The second movement, "Hope in the Night," delineates the hope and longing of a people living in the shadow of their grim past. The final movement, "O Le' Me Shine, Shine Like a Morning Star!," signifies a renewal, transforming the themes of the previous movements and ending the symphony with jubilant, percussive colors that evoke the rhythms Dawson encountered in Africa.

Despite Dawson's regrettable underrepresentation as a symphonist, his legacy as a choirmaster and educator at Tuskegee Institute, and through his widely performed spirituals, has had a lasting impact. His *Negro Folk Symphony*, a profound composition that attempts to mend the fracture in the human bond caused by the transatlantic slave trade, stands as a monument to his dedication to African American culture, inspiring new generations to explore and celebrate the musical contributions of Black composers.

Instrumentation – two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, four clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings

Duration – 36 minutes

~ Kenneth Bean
Georg and Joyce Albers-Schonberg Assistant Conductor
Princeton Symphony Orchestra