

• PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
ROSSEN MILANOV, MUSIC DIRECTOR

2025-2026



**Beethoven & Grieg**

Michelle Cann, Piano

February 7 & 8

# 2025-26

ROSSEN MILANOV, Edward T. Cone Music Director



**Saturday February 7, 2026, 7:30pm**

**Sunday February 8, 2026, 4pm**

Richardson Auditorium

## BEETHOVEN & GRIEG

**Kenneth T. Bean**, conductor  
**Michelle Cann**, piano

**Jessie Montgomery** *Records from a Vanishing City*

**Edvard Grieg** *Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16*

- I. Allegro molto moderato
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato

## INTERMISSION

**Ludwig van Beethoven** *Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36*

- I. Adagio molto - Allegro con brio
- II. Larghetto
- III. Scherzo: Allegro
- IV. Allegro molto

*This concert is made possible through the generous support of Jay Vawter.*

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Assistive listening devices and large print programs are available in the lobby.

No one will be admitted during the performance of a piece. No audio or video recording or photography permitted. Dates, times, artists, and programs subject to change.

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Made possible by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.



# Music Director

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Edward T. Cone Music Director

**ROSSEN MILANOV** looks forward to collaborating in 2025-26 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 and the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra.

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 has collaborated with Komische Oper Berlin (Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtzensk*), Opera Oviedo with the Spanish premiere of Tchaikovsky's *Mazzepe* and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* (awarded best Spanish production for 2015), and Opera Columbus (Verdi's *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto* and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*). 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.

# Conductor

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**KENNETH T. BEAN** is a distinguished conductor recognized for his clarity, precision, and artistry on the podium.

Currently, Kenneth serves as the Georg and Joyce Albers-Schonberg Assistant Conductor of the Princeton Symphony Orchestra, where his responsibilities include leading the Symphonic Orchestra of the Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey. He also currently serves as assistant conductor of Symphony in C where he co-directed the Symphony in C Summer Music Camp and served as the founding music director of the Symphony in C Youth Orchestra, leading the ensemble from its inception in 2014 through the 2023–24 season.

Kenneth is also the founding Director/Conductor of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra Music Institute's Young Musicians Debut Orchestra, a role that underscores his dedication to nurturing young musicians and fostering orchestral excellence at the pre-professional level.

Kenneth has collaborated with some of the country's most esteemed musicians, including violinist Jennifer Koh, cellist Thomas Mesa, Philadelphia Orchestra Concertmaster David Kim, and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra Principal Trumpet Billy Hunter. His guest conducting engagements have included appearances with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Princeton Symphony Orchestra, Symphony in C, Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, Oberlin Sinfonietta, and the American Repertory Ballet, where he conducted the world premiere of Ethan Stiefel's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Beyond his work on the podium, Kenneth is a passionate advocate for equity in music education. As Co-Founder/Associate Director of The Primavera Fund, he has played a crucial role in mentoring and financially supporting young musicians from underrepresented communities, ensuring they have access to the resources necessary to pursue professional careers in classical music. In addition, Kenneth serves as Director of the Junior Session at Kinhaven Music School, where he has long been a transformative presence since joining the faculty in 2000.

Kenneth holds a master's degree in music education from Jackson State University and a bachelor's degree in trumpet performance from Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

# Guest Artist

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Lauded as "exquisite" by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and "a pianist of sterling artistry" by *Gramophone*, GRAMMY® Award-winning pianist **MICHELLE CANN** is one of the most sought-after artists of her generation. Recent engagements include appearances with Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, and Orquestra Sinfônica Municipal de São Paulo. She is a recipient of the Sphinx Medal of Excellence and the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award, and she served as the inaugural Christel DeHaan Artistic Partner of the American Piano Awards.

Highlights of Cann's 2025-26 season include appearances with the Colorado Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, and Ireland's National Symphony Orchestra. She also performs the world premiere of a new piano concerto by Valerie Coleman with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. Her recital appearances include Stanford Live, Music Toronto, Chamber Music Detroit, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Spivey Hall, and a recital tour in China.

Recognized as a leading interpreter of the piano music of Florence Price, Cann performed the New York City premiere of Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement with The Dream Unfinished Orchestra in 2016. Her recording of the concerto with the New York Youth Symphony won a GRAMMY® Award in 2023 for Best Orchestral Performance. She won a GRAMMY® Award in 2025 for *Beyond the Years: Unpublished Songs of Florence Price*, recorded with soprano Karen Slack, which features 19 unpublished songs composed by Price. Her acclaimed debut solo album *Revival*, featuring music by Price and Margaret Bonds, was released in 2023.

Cann holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music and an Artist's Diploma from Curtis Institute of Music. She joined the Curtis piano faculty in 2020 as the inaugural Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies, and she is on the piano faculty of the Manhattan School of Music.

*Listen now to Michelle Cann's solo album Revival, Music of Price and Bonds, by scanning the QR code below using the camera on your mobile phone.*



*More information at: [curtis.edu/revival](http://curtis.edu/revival)*

*Follow Michelle Cann on Instagram: [@amicelleacann](https://www.instagram.com/amicelleacann)*

*Michelle Cann's photo by Steven Mareazi Willis*

# Program Notes

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## Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

### *Records from a Vanishing City*

Composed 2016

#### Composer's Note:

*Records from a Vanishing City* is a tone poem based on my recollections of the music that surrounded me as I grew up on Manhattan's Lower East Side in the 1980s and 1990s. Artists, truth seekers, and cultures of all kinds defined our vibrant community. The embracing diversity burst out with an effortless everydayness in block parties, festivals, and shindigs of every sort. Partly because my parents were artists – but also because I just couldn't help it – I soaked up all that surrounded me: Latin jazz, alternative rock, Western classical, avant-garde jazz, poetry, and Caribbean dance music, to name a few.

A year before completing this work, a very dear family friend passed away and it was decided that I would be the one to inherit a large portion of his eclectic record collection. James Rose was one of the many suns in the Lower East Side cosmos who often hosted parties and generous gatherings for our extended artist family. His record collection was a treasure trove of the great jazz recordings of the 1950s, 1960s and beyond – he was mad for John Coltrane, but also Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman, as well as traditional folk artists from Africa, Asia, and South America.

In the process of imagining this piece, I came across a particular record: *Sanza and Guitar – Music of the Bena Luluwa of Angola and Zaire* (Lyrichord Stereo, 1974) – part of a series of productions during the time when U.S. record companies had taken a particular interest in traditional music from the African continent. Side A, track 3, titled "Birth Song" and sung in call-and-response by a women's chorus, rang with an uncanny familiarity in me as it shared melodic contours with a song my mother sang to me as a child "Lullaby for Jessie" (transcribed by my father Ed Montgomery, and published in *Broadside Magazine*, #151, May 1984). The poignant connection between the lullabies, a gentle cooing and coaxing of new life, cycling through longing and loss become synchronized in this work. An adaptation and hybrid of these two lullabies connects each of the three main sections of *Records from a Vanishing City*.

This piece is dedicated to the memory of James Rose.

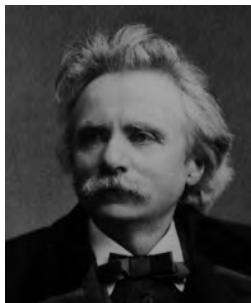
~ Jessie Montgomery

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*Instrumentation – one flute, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings*

*Duration – 13 minutes*

*Photo of the composer by Jiyang Chen*



## Edvard Grieg **(1843-1907)**

### Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16

*Composed 1868*

Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor, written in 1868, remains his most celebrated orchestral work. Composed at age 25 during a peaceful summer in Søllerød, Denmark, the concerto reflects a particularly joyful chapter in Grieg's life. He had recently married his cousin, Nina, and the couple had

just welcomed their daughter, Alexandra. Although Alexandra tragically died in infancy, the period of her birth was filled with warmth and creative energy for the composer.

Grieg was deeply influenced by Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto, not only in key and structure, but in character. Grieg had attended a performance by Clara Schumann while studying at the Leipzig Conservatory, an experience that left a lasting impression. Still, Grieg's concerto is uniquely his own, marked by its infusion of Norwegian folk elements and melodic inventiveness.

The concerto opens with a dramatic timpani roll and sweeping piano flourish—one of the most famous openings in classical music. The first movement alternates between virtuosic passages and lyrical themes, including a second subject introduced by the cellos with gentle warmth. Franz Liszt, after playing through the concerto in Rome, enthusiastically endorsed it and encouraged Grieg to continue on his creative path.

The second movement adagio opens with muted strings and is often associated with the tenderness Grieg may have felt toward his newborn daughter. The piano responds with elegant, heartfelt lines, gradually building to a serene climax.

The finale bursts forth with the spirited rhythm of the halling, a Norwegian folk dance. A contrasting lyrical theme, introduced by solo flute, returns triumphantly at the end, now transformed into a sweeping, orchestral conclusion.

## Program Notes *continued*

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Grieg revised the concerto throughout his life, with the final version completed shortly before his death. Today, it remains a beloved staple of the concert repertoire—praised for its blend of virtuosic drama, national character, and emotional depth.

*Instrumentation – two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, strings, and solo piano*

*Duration – 30 minutes*



### Ludwig van Beethoven **(1770-1827)**

#### **Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36**

*Composed 1802*

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 2* may never have achieved the same level of popularity as the revolutionary *Eroica* or the brooding *Fifth*, but its innovation, vitality, and humor make it a critical turning point in Beethoven's artistic evolution and a unique treasure in the symphonic repertoire.

Composed during the summer and fall of 1802, most of the Second Symphony was written while Beethoven was staying in Heiligenstadt, a village just outside Vienna. Sent there by his doctor to rest and preserve what remained of his hearing, Beethoven instead spiraled into a period of intense personal despair. The result was the *Heiligenstadt Testament*, a heartbreakingly honest letter addressed to his brothers that outlines his despair over his growing deafness and his feelings of isolation. Though never sent, the letter was found among his belongings after his death and remains one of the most revealing documents of the composer's inner life.

Yet despite the torment Beethoven experienced during that time, *Symphony No. 2* is among his most extroverted works. There is no audible trace of the sorrow that marked its genesis; rather, it is brimming with invention, rhythmic vitality, and sly humor. This disconnect between Beethoven's suffering and the exuberance of his music speaks to his ability to transcend circumstances through sheer creative will. As he wrote in the *Heiligenstadt Testament*, "Only my art held me back. It seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had produced all that I felt was within me."

The Second Symphony premiered on April 5, 1803, at a monumental concert organized by Beethoven. The event also featured the premieres of his *Christ on the Mount of Olives* and the third piano concerto, with the composer as

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soloist. Reviews were mixed—some complained of excessive novelty, while others hailed its imaginative power. One reviewer compared the finale to “a wounded dragon... lashing its tail,” a description that may reflect the piece’s energy more than any actual menace.

The symphony begins with a lengthy *Adagio molto* introduction—unusually expansive for its time—that is regal and exploratory. It builds suspense and energy through shifting harmonies and dynamics, culminating in a burst of momentum as the *Allegro con brio* launches. The first movement’s main theme, bouncing with playful insistence, is driven by a five-note upward turn that becomes a structural anchor. The mood is boisterous and witty.

The second movement, *Larghetto*, is lyrical and elegant, though with an undercurrent of restlessness. Its warm melodies and gentle orchestration conjure nocturnal serenity, with subtle surprises like offbeat accents and harmonic turns. It is perhaps the most Mozartian of Beethoven’s slow movements, though its emotional complexity already looks toward Romanticism.

The third movement is Beethoven’s first symphonic *Scherzo*, replacing the traditional minuet with something more kinetic and unpredictable. Rhythmic jolts, dynamic leaps, and sudden silences give it a mischievous character. The trio section provides contrast with a rustic dance-like passage featuring playful exchanges between winds and strings.

Then comes the raucous *Allegro molto* finale—a high-spirited and comedic *tour de force*. It opens with a cheeky two-note gesture (likened to a musical “hiccup”), followed by a series of galloping themes, surprising modulations, and sudden pauses. Beethoven builds a massive coda from seemingly incidental material, giving the movement cumulative energy. It is a finale full of surprises, and it’s where the composer’s humor truly shines.

In retrospect, *Symphony No. 2* occupies a fascinating place in Beethoven’s output. It both closes the chapter on his early Classical period and foreshadows the groundbreaking work to come. Within a year, Beethoven would complete the *Eroica*. But here, in the D major symphony, we find a composer stepping into the fullness of his powers—confident, bold, and bursting with ideas.

*Instrumentation – two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings*

*Duration – 32 minutes*

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

# Princeton Symphony Orchestra

**Rossen Milanov, Edward T. Cone Music Director**

ENDOWED IN PERPETUITY

**Kenneth Bean, Georg and Joyce Albers-Schonberg Assistant Conductor**

ENDOWED IN PERPETUITY

**February 7-8, 2026**

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## VIOLIN I

Ruotao Mao\*\*

### **Concertmaster**

*The George W. Pitcher Chair,*

ENDOWED IN PERPETUITY

Tara A. Pagano-Toub

*The Yvonne Marcuse Chair,*

In Memory of Mark M. Rutzky

Sam Parrini

Cheng-Chih Kevin Tsai

Emma Meinrenken

Margaret Banks

Tiffany Chang

Erica Tursi

Linda Howard

Yuyu Ikeda

## VIOLIN II

Cameron Chase\*\*

*The B. Sue Howard Chair*

Josephine Kim

Elliott Davis

Arthur Moeller

Carlos Rafael Martinez Arroyo

Cheng-Hsun David Tsai

Theo Espy

Sage Park

## VIOLA

Stephanie Griffin\*

*The Harriet & Jay Vawter Chair*

Hannah Burnett

Jacqueline Watson

Chieh-Fan Yiu

Bethlehem Hadgu

## CELLO

Alistair MacRae\*

*The Julian Grant & Peter Lightfoot*

*Family Chair*

Elizabeth Loughran

Iona Batchelder

Robin Park

Jasmine Pai

Jumi Lee

## BASS

John Grillo\*

*The Stephanie & Robert Wedekind*

*Chair*

Dan Hudson

Devin Howell

Jingwan Guo



## **FLUTE**

Sooyun Kim\*\*

*The Lunder/Ezekowitz Family Chair*

Hilary Jones

## **OBOE**

Erin Gustafson\*\*

*The Cynthia & Rob Hillas Chair*

Gilles Cheng

## **CLARINET**

Pascal Archer\*

*The Richard J. & Neil Ann S. Levine Chair*

Gi Lee

## **BASSOON**

Brad Balliett\*

*The Cynthia & Rob Hillas Chair*

Zach Feingold

## **HORN**

Steven Harmon\*

*The Dr. Michael L. Barnett Chair*

Jonathan Clark

Colin Weyman

Stephanie Fritz Ferguson

## **TRUMPET**

Jerry Bryant\*

*The Donna & Donald Deieso Chair*

Thomas Cook

## **TIMPANI**

Jeremy Levine\*

*The Anne VanLent Chair*

\*Principal player

\*\*Guest principal player