

PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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THE PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
and
THE PRINCETON PUBLIC LIBRARY
present

“The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant”

A special family event
featuring
ROSSEN MILANOV, narrator
SYLVIE WEBB, piano

PRINCETON, NJ, April 13, 2010 ... In 1940, composer Francis Poulenc was working on his music in the French countryside when Sophie, a very young relative, plopped her copy of “The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant” on his piano and demanded, “Play this!” He began to improvise tunes for each sequence in the book, and since that day, children throughout the world have been delighted by Poulenc’s beloved “keyboard narration” of this literary classic.

On May 15 at 2 p.m., the Princeton Symphony Orchestra brings Babar, Celeste and their family to musical life with a 45-minute performance of Poulenc’s piano arrangement of **“The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant”** in the Community Room of the Princeton Public Library, 65 Witherspoon St. The **free** event, with Sylvie Webb on piano, will be narrated by conductor Rossen Milanov, the PSO’s new Music Director.

Composer Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), who was also an accomplished pianist, based “The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant” on the series of books written and illustrated by Jean de

Brunhoff during the 1930s. In the original book, the orphaned Babar leaves his jungle home and is raised by an elegant old lady in the city to eventually become the wise ruler of an elephant kingdom. During the early 1960s, Poulenc asked Jean Françaix to orchestrate his piano work. The resulting version uses the orchestra to “paint” scenes from the book: flutes for birds, trumpets and slow piano for elephants, and sometimes tuba for Babar.

This mini-concert offers an overview of the PSO’s extensive education partnerships with local schools and previews “**BRAVO! Tells Tales,**” the PSO’s May 18 concert for schoolchildren at Princeton University’s Richardson Auditorium, which includes a full orchestral performance of Poulenc’s “The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant” and Gioachino Rossini’s Overture to “William Tell.” These orchestra performances will be heard by 2,500 local schoolchildren who participated this year in BRAVO! workshops sponsored by the PSO and designed to educate children about the instruments of the orchestra. “BRAVO! Tells Tales” will be conducted by Mr. Milanov and feature Michael Boudewyns and Sara Valentine as narrators in “Babar.”

About Rossen Milanov, PSO Music Director

Rossen Milanov’s place as “one of the most promising figures in the upcoming generation of conductors” (*The Seattle Times*, February 2009) has recently been recognized with his appointment as Music Director of the Princeton Symphony Orchestra. This season, he makes a series of international debuts, including performances conducting the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington), the Rochester Philharmonic, the Hyogo Symphony (Japan), the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, and the China Philharmonic. He continues to serve as Artistic Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts and is Associate Conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

A committed supporter of youth and music, Mr. Milanov is Music Director of the New Symphony Orchestra (Bulgaria) and Symphony in C, one of the USA’s leading professional training orchestras. He has led a tour with the Australian Youth Orchestra, concerts with the Aspen Chamber Symphony, and was Music Director of the Chicago Youth Symphony from 1997 to 2001.

Mr. Milanov studied conducting at the Juilliard School, where he received the Bruno Walter Memorial Scholarship; the Curtis Institute of Music; Duquesne University, and the Bulgarian National Academy of Music. He has received the Award for Extraordinary Contribution to Bulgarian Culture, awarded by the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture. In 2005, he was chosen as Bulgaria's Musician of the Year.

About Sylvie Webb, pianist

Sylvie Webb holds a Gold Medal from the Conservatoire National de St. Germain-en-Laye (France). Among other awards, she received a Prix d'Excellence from Paris Regional School of Music and a First Prize from the Union des Conservatoires des Hauts-de-Seine. Besides solo and chamber music recitals in France and in the tri-state area, she performed with the Westminster Community Orchestra and the Manalapan Battleground Symphony. Most of her time is devoted to teaching and coaching chamber music. She often serves as an adjudicator for many prestigious competitions. On the Westminster Conservatory Faculty since 1993, she maintains a private piano studio in her Princeton home.

About the BRAVO! program

At the heart of the Princeton Symphony Orchestra's offerings is its highly praised education program, **BRAVO!**, which brings the excitement, magic and brilliance of live orchestral performances to thousands of school children. **BRAVO!** establishes PSO musicians in teaching partnerships at more than 30 public, private and special need schools throughout Central New Jersey. The program sends the orchestra into the community, where professional musicians engage with children, teachers and parents. All these services are provided without charge. Other **BRAVO!** projects include master classes for gifted high school instrumentalists and **Listen Up!**, a series designed to engage middle-school students to create art in response to what they hear at PSO concerts.

Please visit our website at www.princetonsymphony.org or call the PSO at (609) 497-0020.

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