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ROSSEN MILANOV
Music Director

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2020 - 2021

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HOME

7 March 2021 ● Alexander Boldachev

PUCCINI & RESPIGHI

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PRINCETON
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

2020-21

ROSSEN MILANOV, Edward T. Cone Music Director

Sunday March 7, 2021, 4pm
Virtual Concert

PUCCINI & RESPIGHI

Rossen Milanov, conductor
Alexander Boldachev, harp

Ottorino Respighi Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite III
 Italiana
 Aire di Corte
 Siciliana
 Passacaglia

Alexander Boldachev *Triomphe de la Musique*

Bedřich Smetana *The Moldau*
Arr. Hanuš Trneček

Astor Piazzolla *Libertango*
Arr. Boldachev

Alexander Boldachev *Dei sub numine viget*

Giacomo Puccini *I Crisantemi*

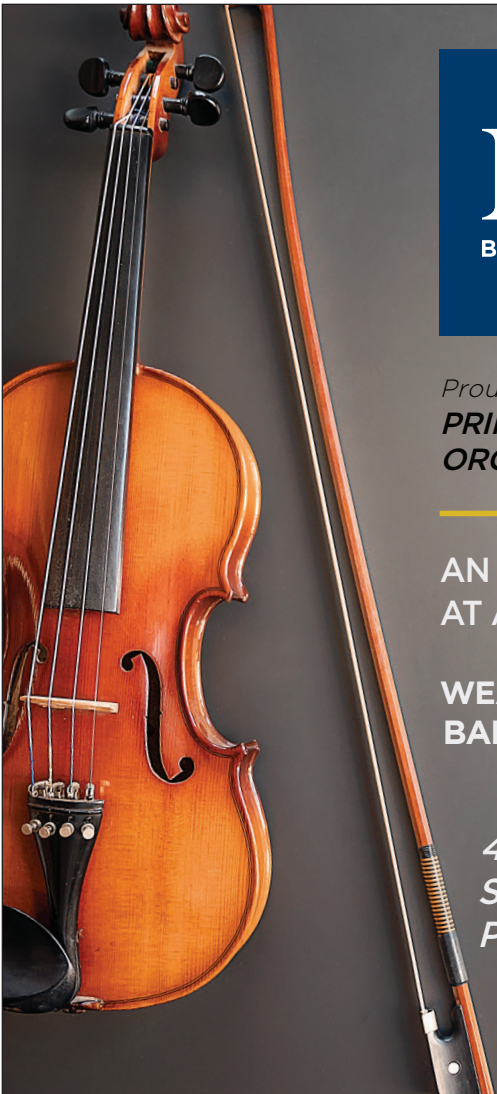
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Princeton Symphony Orchestra



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.

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

Guest Artist



Harpist **ALEXANDER BOLDACHEV** is hailed for his “absolutely thrilling” performances (Bachtrack). He has been breaking the mold of the 21st-century harpist with unprecedented virtuosity on both the concert pedal harp as well as the Salvi Delta electric harp. He is the official artist for Salvi Harps, guest artist of Bolshoi Theater, and founder of the Harp Festival Zurich. Following his solo debut at age eight, Alexander began his international career as a soloist, chamber musician, and composer, bringing the harp to new audiences throughout 35 countries

and five continents. As an arranger, his extensive compositional activity concentrates on expanding the harp repertoire by means of transcriptions of major orchestral works, popular hits (by Queen, The Beatles, Nirvana, Adele), and excerpts of movie music (*Star Wars*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Spirited Away*, and James Bond films). Besides more than 200 arrangements, Alexander’s unique compositions include programmatic works for

harp and orchestra, theatrical works featuring harp, choir works, and film music collaborations. As a harp pedagogue, he has led masterclasses at The Juilliard School, Royal Academy of Music, Toronto Royal Conservatory, and other music schools around the world.

alexanderboldachev.com

“In the twenty-first century, the harp serves as a voice of the past and the future, breaking stereotypes and erasing the boundaries between us.”

— Alexander Boldachev



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Rossen Milanov, Edward T. Cone Music Director

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Program Notes



Ottorino Respighi

(1879- 1936)

Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite III

Composed 1931

Ottorino Respighi is best known today as the composer of the three symphonic tone poems that make up the Roman Trilogy: *Fountains of Rome*, *Pines of Rome*, and *Roman Festivals*. These virtuosic showpieces, notable for their brilliant orchestral colors, were widely performed during Respighi's lifetime under the direction of such noted conductors as Toscanini, De Sabata, and Karajan, and they remain standards of the repertory today.

Respighi grew up in an artistic and musical family in Bologna and studied the violin, viola, piano, and composition at the Bologna Conservatory. In 1900 he traveled to Saint Petersburg to play in the Italian opera orchestra of the Imperial Palace, where he studied with composer and master orchestrator Rimsky-Korsakov. Moving to Rome in 1913, Respighi taught composition at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, which he directed from 1923-26. In addition to his many accomplishments as a performer and composer, he spoke eleven languages fluently and pursued a lifelong interest in musicology with a focus on Italian music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Many composers in the early 20th century were inspired by the clarity and lightness of early music. They composed works based on older melodies which they modernized through the use of contemporary instrumentation, harmonies, and textures. Famous examples of this approach include Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite*. Respighi transcribed many older works for modern instruments, and he also incorporated the melodic contours, church modes, harmonies, and dance rhythms of these earlier styles into his original compositions. The three suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances*, composed between 1917 and 1931, fall somewhere between transcription and original work. Each suite is based on a curated selection of melodies taken from different baroque guitar or

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lute pieces. While the first two suites are orchestrated for full orchestra, the third, which is on today's program, is restricted to only string instruments. This limited palette of orchestral timbres contributes to the darker colors of this suite and its more somber tone.

Each suite of *Ancient Airs and Dances* has four movements, rather than the more typical five or six movements of the baroque dance suite. The first movement of Suite III is in a graceful, elegant character, with pizzicato in the strings that is reminiscent of the plucked instrument origins of the melody. The second movement is a collection of short airs by the late 16th-century Burgundian lute player Jean-Baptiste Besard. This movement begins and ends with the same sorrowful tune, framing a collection of light, rustic dances and a warmly expressive song. An anonymous siciliana melody, with its typical gently swaying rhythm, is the basis of the third movement. The music gradually increases in complexity and virtuosic intensity before returning to the intimacy of the opening. The last movement, Passacaglia, is surprisingly dramatic and forceful compared to the previous movements. Though based on a piece for baroque guitar by Italian composer Ludovico Roncalli, the rich string sonority of the last movement achieves a colossal sound more akin to that of a pipe organ than a guitar, providing a grand conclusion to the suite.

Instrumentation – Strings Duration – 19'



Alexander Boldachev

(b. 1990)

Triomphe de la Musique

Dedicated to the Foundation Banque Populaire

Composed 2018

"This is my own composition dedicated to Marc Chagall and based on his painting 'Triomphe de la Musique.' This composition shows the main role of music in the world of art." –Alexander Boldachev

The *Triumph of Music* mural hangs on the south side of the lobby of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, with its companion mural,

The Sources of Music, hanging beside it, to the north of the grand staircase. The murals were installed in 1966, and at 30' by 36', they are the largest works Chagall painted, easily visible from the plaza outside.

Instrumentation – Solo harp Duration – 3.5'



Bedřich Smetana
(1824-1884)

The Moldau

(arr. Hanuš Trneček)

Composed 1874

Composer Bedřich Smetana began his compositional career in the mid-19th century during a period of growing Czech nationalism. Smetana gave voice to the Czech people's pride in their culture and history and their drive for independence from the Austrian Empire with his operas set to Czech texts and his set of six symphonic tone poems, *Má Vlast* (*My Homeland*). The Moldau (Vltava) is the second piece in the set, and it paints a vivid picture of the Moldau river's path from its source to the Elbe river.

Smetana wrote the following description of the work:

The composition describes the course of the Vltava, starting from the two small springs, the Cold and Warm Vltava, to the unification of both streams into a single current, the course of the Vltava through woods and meadows, through landscapes where a farmer's wedding is celebrated, the round dance of the mermaids in the night's moonshine: on the nearby rocks loom proud castles, palaces and ruins aloft. The Vltava swirls into the St John's Rapids; then it widens and flows toward Prague, past the Vyšehrad, and then majestically vanishes into the distance, ending at the Labe (Elbe, in German).

Instrumentation – Solo harp Duration – 8'

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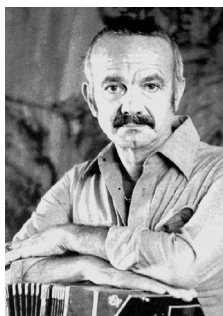
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Astor Piazzolla

(1921-1992)

Libertango

arr. Alexander Boldachev

Composed 1974

Libertango is one of Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla's most famous and beloved works. With its energetic, driving ostinato rhythm and soaring melody,

it is a tango that has spun off the dance floor and into the concert hall.

A child prodigy on the bandoneon, Piazzolla performed as a young man with Aníbal Troilo in one of the the great Orquesta Típicas of the golden age of tango in Buenos Aires. Piazzolla's musical interests extended far beyond tango, leading him to study composition with Alberto Ginastera and eventually winning him a scholarship to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Boulanger encouraged him to focus on tango in his composing, and he went on to revolutionize the genre, incorporating aspects of jazz and modern classical composition to create tango nuevo. Piazzolla recorded *Libertango* in Milan in 1974, and the title reflects his intention to liberate tango music from its traditional restraints. In contrast to the traditional tango orchestras, Piazzola's ensembles often had no vocalist and included new instruments such as the electric guitar and drum set.

Instrumentation – Solo harp Duration – 4'

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Alexander Boldachev

(b. 1990)

Dei sub numine viget

(Under God's Power She Flourishes)

Improvisation inspired by the motto of Princeton University

Composed 2021

"My schools never had any motto and I think it's very important to send people to a big life with the right parting words and philosophy. This is improvisation and transmits my emotions in real-time."

—Alexander Boldachev

Instrumentation – Solo harp Duration – 3'



Giacomo Puccini

(1858 –1924)

I Crisantemi

Dedicated to the memory of Amedeo di Savoia, Duca d'Aosta

Composed 1890

The title, *I Crisantemi*, refers to chrysanthemum flowers, which are the traditional flower of mourning in Italy. Puccini said that he composed the work in a single night in response to the death of his friend Prince Amedeo, Duke of Aosta.

From the outset of this elegy, Puccini creates a mood of anguished grief through his choice of the tonality of C-sharp minor. String instruments resonate most freely and openly in major keys such as G and D, so the key of C-sharp minor naturally produces a dark, melancholy sound from the ensemble. *I Crisantemi* opens with a lone note in the lowest voices, followed by weighty chords that shift in chromatic motion as if moving

against great resistance. When the chords resolve, the first violin section emerges with a searching melody, interrupted at several points by the same struggling chromatic chord motion. The climax of the opening section comes with a powerful cry of protest from the ensemble in rhythmic unison, before the music subsides back wearily to its sorrowful questioning.

The texture and harmony of the middle section are more static, hovering around the new key center of F-sharp minor. This section features a lightly fluttering accompaniment in the violas/second violins, which supports a forlorn melody in the first violins. The cellos join the violins when this melody appears a second time, but the added voice only increases the feeling of desolation. The middle section concludes with a beautifully delicate passage, in which the violins play staccato sixteenth notes and tiptoe quietly away.

The return of the opening material features the same pulling and pushing of the tempo that occurred in the beginning. The dynamic range moves from a whisper to a full voiced cry, filling the music with drama and pathos. This emotional intensity is part of what makes Puccini's writing style so well suited to opera and what makes it deeply satisfying to play.

Puccini himself clearly saw the operatic potential of this material, since he used the two main themes of *I Crisantemi* in his opera *Manon Lescaut*, which had its premiere in 1893 and was his first unequivocal success. *Manon Lescaut* was the work that established Puccini's reputation as the successor to Verdi, poised to carry the flame of Italian opera forward into the 20th century.

Instrumentation – Strings Duration – 6.5'

~Nell Flanders, Assistant Conductor
Princeton Symphony Orchestra

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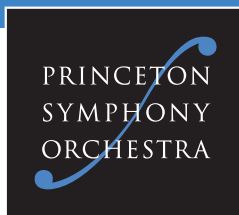
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