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3.26.22 • Mackenzie Melemed • 3.27.22

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# Princeton Symphony Orchestra



# 2021-22

ROSSEN MILANOV, Edward T. Cone Music Director

Saturday March 26, 2022, 8:00pm Sunday March 27, 2022, 4:00pm **Richardson Auditorium** 



#### **BRAHMS & SCRIABIN**

Rossen Milanov, conductor Mackenzie Melemed, piano

Alexander Scriabin

Piano Concerto in F-sharp Minor, Op. 20

I. Allegro

Ш Theme & Variations

III. Allegro moderato

INTERMISSION

**Johannes Brahms** 

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio non troppo

III. Allegretto grazioso (Quasi andantino)

IV. Allegro con spirito

Mackenzie Melemed's appearances this weekend are made possible through the generosity of Yvonne Marcuse.

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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# 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. Its flagship summer program The Princeton Festival brings an array of performing arts and artists to Princeton during multiple weeks in June. 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.



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#### Music Director



Internationally renowned conductor and Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO) Edward T. Cone Music Director **ROSSEN MILANOV** looks forward to collaborating in 2021-22 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, Milanov 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 *Mazzepa* and Bartók'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 choreographers 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! School Day concerts. 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.

rossenmilanov.com



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#### **Guest Artist**



Winner of The Juilliard School's 2019 Leo B. Ruiz Carnegie Hall Recital Prize, 2018 Arthur Rubinstein Prize, the Jade Medal at the 2019 China International Music Competition, and the first prize and chamber music prize at Finland's 2017 Maj Lind International Piano Competition, 26-year-old American pianist MACKENZIE MELEMED's international career continues to flourish. He has performed in venues such as The White House (2004-2008), Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Warsaw Philharmonic Hall, and the Helsinki Music Centre. He was recently named one of ten annual recipients of The

Juilliard School's Career Advancement Grant, and was a laureate of the 2021 American Pianists Awards of the American Pianists Association.

With the help of Diana Glimm, the Altson family, and financial support offered by The Juilliard School and the American Pianists Association, Melemed has commissioned a new Piano Concerto from Israeli-American composer Avner Dorman, to be premiered in May 2022.

In August 2020, Melemed moved to Finland, where he has established a new home base and launched his successful performance career. He has performed with the Jyväskylä Sinfonia, and gave a solo recital for the International Sibelius Festival in Lahti. His recent performance of Scriabin's Piano Concerto with Leif Segerstam and the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra was live-streamed on February 18th, 2021.

Recent seasons' concerti engagements included performances with the KBS Symphony Orchestra, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra in Beijing.

Melemed's discography features world-premiere recordings: Avner Dorman's "Three Etudes" on the Steinway and Sons label (2018) and Jeajoon Ryu's Piano Concerto with Ralf Gothóni and Sinfonia Varsovia on the Warner Classics label (2019).

Melemed is a recent graduate of the two-year Artist Diploma program at The Juilliard School with Robert McDonald and Emanuel Ax. Melemed also holds a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School. Former teachers include Dean Arvidson, Alexander Korsantia, Olga Rogach and William Smiddy.

Mackenzie Melemed is a Steinway Artist.

# Princeton Symphony Orchestra\_

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

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The B. Sue Howard Chair

Michelle Brazier

Tallie Brunfelt

Abigail Hong

Giancarlo Latta

Erika Hubbard

Cheng-Hsun Tsai

Carmina Gagliardi

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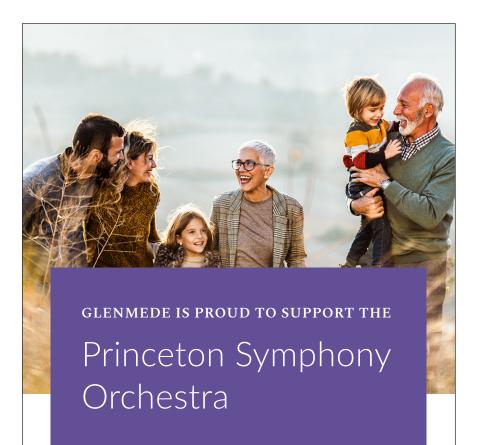
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\*Principal player
\*\*Guest principal player

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### Program Notes



# Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) Piano Concerto in F-sharp Minor, Op. 20 Composed 1896

Alexander Scriabin was born in Moscow, Russia. His father, Nikolai Scriabin, was a lawyer in the Russian consular service and his mother, Lyubov Petrovna Scriabina, was an accomplished concert pianist. As his father was often away on foreign business trips and his mother passed away of tuberculosis just after his

first birthday, he was raised by his grandmother, great aunt, and aunt. Although they coddled him beyond reasonable measure, they also strongly encouraged his study of music.

He was life-long friends with Sergei Rachmaninoff, alongside whom he studied composition during his teenage years at the Moscow Conservatory. Scriabin enrolled at 16 to study music theory and composition with Sergei Taneyev, a champion of his talents, and Anton Arensky, who had serious doubts about his ability. He also studied piano with Vasily Safonov.

Scriabin graduated in 1892 with the second-place medal in piano, not in the slightest a dishonor as Rachmaninoff took first place. He never actually completed his composition degree due to strong personality and musical disagreements with Arensky, whose signature is the only faculty signature missing from his diploma.

Scriabin's small stature and particularly small hands, which barely stretched an octave, were one of among the main reasons that his career as a concert pianist never really took off like that of his good friend Rachmaninoff. The bulk of his music is for piano, much like Rachmaninoff and Chopin. Early on in his compositional career, he was fascinated by the music of Chopin and he composed in forms similarly seen in the work of his Polish counterpart like polonaises, etudes, preludes, and mazurkas. He later developed his own musical style and identity. His music became very mystical and egocentric, as he developed somewhat of a god complex. His harmonic style became atonal in nature and mostly unintelligible – certainly well ahead of his time.

His Piano Concerto in F-sharp Minor, Op. 20 was written in 1896 and premiered in 1897. It was published in 1898, the same year he was appointed to a position on the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory. It was his first work for orchestra; although he wrote a Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra, the orchestra part was never realized, and the work remained an un-orchestrated

piano score. He wrote the concerto in about a week, although it took about another six months for him to complete the orchestration.

The piece was met with near disaster when Scriabin's publisher, Mitrofan Belyayev, sent the score to Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov for his assessment. Rimsky-Korsakov's judgment of the work was scathing. He had nothing but negative feedback, citing issues with its disordered nature as well as particular issues with the orchestration, a subject in which Rimsky-Korsakov was a recognized master. In a letter, Scriabin apologized profusely to Rimsky-Korsakov, and promised to thank him "by industriously exterminating my carelessness." He only made matters worse when he absentmindedly placed the letter of apology in an envelope meant for composer Anatoly Lyadov and Lyadov's letter in an envelope meant for Rimsky-Korsakov. Even after seeing the revisions made by Scriabin, Rimsky-Korsakov was still very displeased with the work calling it "filth" and saying "...I am in no condition to cope with such a mush headed genius."

Even with such a rough start, the concerto premiered with success and to great acclaim, although it has never been considered a staple in the piano concerto repertory. Despite his finding many faults with Scriabin's work, it should be noted that, while writing his memoirs, Rimsky-Korsakov rightfully allowed that Scriabin was a "star of the first magnitude."

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

Duration – 28 minutes



#### Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

Composed 1877

Johannes Brahms was barely 20 when Robert Schumann introduced him to the world in Europe's most popular music journal as "the one....chosen to express the most exalted spirit of the times in an ideal manner, one who [sprang] fully armed from the head of Jove....[A] youth at whose cradle the graces

and heroes of old stood guard." This high praise from the great maestro, as well as the high expectations that came with it, all but crippled Brahms as an orchestral composer. As a teen, Brahms wanted to be included amongst the great composers, and had long been inspired by the likes of Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Beethoven. He achieved almost overnight fame from the high praise in Schumann's article, but he felt burdened by the weight of his most

immediate symphonic predecessor, Ludwig van Beethoven. When asked about a forthcoming symphony, Brahms said, "You have no idea what it's like to hear the footsteps of a giant like that behind you."

Once it was written and premiered, after twenty years in the making, Brahms' first symphony was immediately recognized as the greatest symphony written since Beethoven's ninth symphony which was premiered more than fifty years earlier. After he realized the success of the work, he gained the confidence he needed to quickly write his Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73, which he completed about four months later.

He composed the Symphony No. 2 while on summer vacation in the tiny Austrian town of Pörtschach at Lake Wörth. After hearing it played at the piano, a friend of the composer responded by writing, "It is all rippling streams, blue sky, sunshine and cool green shadows. How beautiful it must be at Pörtschach!"

Brahms often joked around, giving blatant mischaracterizations about his new works. He wrote to his publisher about the second symphony saying, "It will at all events be a proper flop, and people will say that this time I took it easy," and, "The new symphony is so melancholy that you won't stand it. I have never written anything so sad, so minor-ish: the score must appear with a black border."

One conductor, in a letter to Brahms, asked the composer the reason for the timpani and low brass creating dark moments in the opening of the symphony, suggesting they be removed. In response Brahms wrote:

I would have to confess that I am, by the by, a severely melancholic person, that black wings are constantly flapping above us...It casts the necessary shadow on the serene symphony and perhaps accounts for those timpani and trombones."

He then quickly adds, "All this, and especially that one passage, I ask you not to take altogether too seriously and tragically!"

The mood of the second symphony can be described as "sunny" in its disposition. It is often referred to as his "pastoral" symphony, a reference to Beethoven's sixth symphony. While the second symphony does have darker moments, they are brief and add depth and meaning to the symphony, possibly suggesting that joy and beauty can exist in an imperfect world.

Instrumentation – two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings

Duration – 43 minutes

~Kenneth Bean Assistant Conductor Princeton Symphony Orchestra

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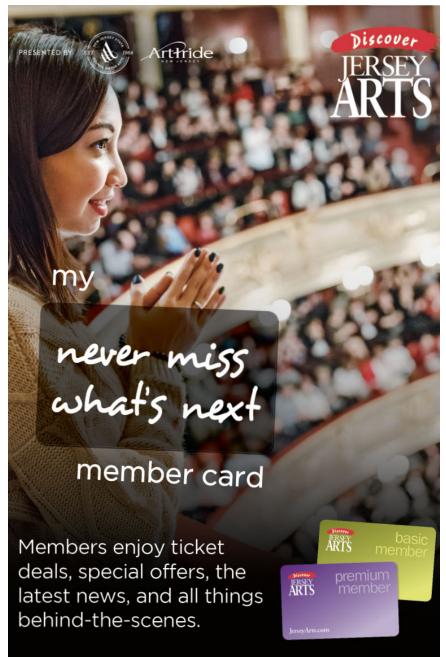
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