



June 15, 2022

## A Big Tent on Grounds of Morven Showcases Princeton Festival's Range



**SUMMER MUSIC: Maestro Rossen Milanov and the Princeton Symphony Orchestra acknowledged the applause after a recent performance at the Princeton Festival.**

*By Anne Levin*

The Princeton Festival's ambitious 2022 season, most of which is taking place under a 10,000-square-foot tent on the grounds of Morven, is midway through its run of classical music, jazz, opera, and more. So far, so good, said Marc Uys, the executive director of the Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO), which merged with the Princeton Festival earlier this year.

"It was a lot of work to get ready, and we did it with minutes to spare on opening night," Uys said this week. "We had perfect weather and an extraordinary performance by Storm Large. It was so amazing to see so many happy faces, and that has been the pattern since

then. The atmosphere is incredibly relaxed, which is exactly what we wanted.”

In previous years, the festival presented events at multiple venues throughout town. Consolidating most of the performances in the tent, under one “roof,” (a few Baroque concerts are across the road at Trinity Episcopal Church) is a good thing, said Uys. But the variety of offerings means the seating configurations have to be frequently changed. Opera needs one setup, chamber music needs another. The PSO, cabaret, and jazz nights require still other settings.

“It’s a lot, but we have a terrific team of ushers and crew,” said Uys. “We have hired them for the season, from all over. A number of them are members of the Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey (YOCJ), and they will be on stage for the final concert.”

That event is June 25, when PSO Music Director Rossen Milanov leads the orchestra in a “Family Pops” concert, performing side-by-side with the YOCJ, led by Kenneth Bean. The 7 p.m. program includes orchestral works by Handel, Rossini, Brahms, and Grieg, plus patriotic music by Hailstork and Sousa. The Youth Orchestra will play Dvorak’s “New World Symphony.”

Families arriving early can visit the instrument petting zoo, which includes a huge keyboard, make-your-own instrument stations, and “boomwhackers,” soft, pitched tubes that make sounds when you hit them (or each other). “We thought we’d close up the festival with something that creates the most relaxed atmosphere, for families,” Uys said.

On June 24, the PSO appears with Broadway’s Sierra Boggess, who will sing her favorite songs from such shows as *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Music Man*, *Guys & Dolls*, *She Loves Me*, *My Fair Lady*, and *The Little Mermaid*. “She has sung with us before, and those concerts were the highlights of my time in Princeton,” said Uys. “She’s an extraordinary musician, and a real mega-star. We’re just thrilled she’s able to join us again.”

Preceding the final weekend, the festival presents the Baroque ensemble The Sebastians on June 16, Time for Three on June 21, pianist Aaron Diehl with his early jazz trio on June 22, and the Festival Chorus on June 23. All performances are at 7 p.m. Visit [princetonsymphony.org/festival](https://princetonsymphony.org/festival) for details.

“We certainly hope we can repeat this in future years,” said Uys. “That’s the plan. It depends on strong support from the public, which has been challenging in the last couple of months — marketing something that didn’t exist yet. But feedback from the opening weekend is of great excitement, and hopefully it will continue. Right now, there is obvious potential for this to grow from where it was and be extraordinary for Princeton.”

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