

• PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ROSSEN MILANOV, MUSIC DIRECTOR

2025-2026



The Harpsichord & Stravinsky's Pulcinella

Mahan Esfahani, harpsichord March 7 & 8

2025-26

ROSSEN MILANOV, Edward T. Cone Music Director

Saturday March 7, 2026, 7:30pm

Sunday March 8, 2026, 4pm

Richardson Auditorium

THE HARPSICHORD & STRAVINSKY'S *PULCINELLA*

Rossen Milanov, conductor

Viet Cuong

Extra(ordinarily) Fancy
Concerto for Two Oboes

Lillian Copeland, oboe

Erin Gustafson, oboe

Julian Grant

Vaudeville in Teal
for harpsichord and small orchestra

WORLD PREMIERE

(Commissioned by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra)

1. Curtain
2. Tarantella
3. Threesome
4. Fairies
5. Spiel
6. Follies

Mahan Esfahani, harpsichord

INTERMISSION

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.



Igor Stravinsky

after Giambattista Pergolesi
Libretto by Léonide Massine

Pulcinella (complete ballet)

1. Ouverture: Allegro moderato
2. Serenata: Larghetto
3. Scherzino
4. Allegro
5. Andantino
6. Allegro
7. Ancora poco meno
8. Allegro assai
9. Allegro
10. Allegro
11. Allegro
12. Presto
13. Largo
14. Allegro alla breve
15. Tarantella: Allegro moderato
16. Andantino
17. Allegro
18. Gavotta: Allegro moderato
19. Vivo
20. Tempo di minué
21. Allegro assai

Aubry Ballarò, soprano

Nicholas Nestorak, tenor

Hunter Enoch, bass-baritone

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

with additional support for the world premiere of *Vaudeville in Teal* from
Thomas Bieler, Sue Howard, Dr. Ferris Olin, Dr. Philip Wey, and an anonymous donor.



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Music Director



Edward T. Cone Music Director

ROSSEN MILANOV looks forward to collaborating in 2025-26 with established and emerging artists of the orchestral world and helping 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 *Mazepa* 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.

Guest Artists



Whether in the realm of re-establishing the harpsichord's presence as a significant concerto instrument with leading orchestras of the day, working with electronics and new media, or playing some of the first harpsichord recitals in such places as China, **MAHAN ESFAHANI** has established himself as a new pioneer of his instrument.

Following studies in musicology and history at Stanford University he completed his studies with Zuzana Růžičková in Prague. He was the first and only harpsichordist to be a BBC New Generation Artist (2008-2010), a Borletti-Buitoni prize winner (2009), and a nominee for *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year (2014, 2015, and 2017).

His richly-varied discography includes ten critically-acclaimed recordings for Hyperion and Deutsche Grammophon – garnering one *Gramophone Award*, two *BBC Music Magazine Awards*, a Diapason d'Or and 'Choc de Classica' in France, and two ICMA's. For BBC Radio 3, Esfahani recently recorded a three-part series entitled *The Alternative Bach* exploring rare recordings and interpretations of J.S. Bach's music. This goes alongside his ongoing cycle at the Wigmore Hall in which he performs the entire collection of J.S. Bach's works for keyboard.

In 2022, he became the youngest recipient of the Wigmore Medal, in recognition of his significant contribution and longstanding relationship with the Hall. Born in Tehran in 1984 and raised in the United States, he lived in Milan and then London for several years before taking up residence in Prague.

mahanesfahani.com

Photo of Mahan Esfahani by Kaja Smith



JULIAN GRANT is a composer, writer, educator, music journalist, and broadcaster. He has composed 20 operas of various lengths and sizes which have been performed by English National Opera, The Royal Opera, Almeida Opera, Mecklenburgh Opera, and Tête-a-Tête, and has won the National Opera Association of America's New Opera prize and been nominated

for an Olivier Award.

In 2012, his Cultural Olympiad commission *Hot House*, devised by Gareth Malone, was premiered at the Royal Opera House. His chamber opera, with librettist Mark Campbell *The Nefarious, Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare*, a co-commission with Music Theatre Group and Boston Lyric Opera, premiered in Boston November 2017, and was nominated for an International Opera Award in 2018. During the pandemic he wrote a Suite for Solo Viola; a chamber opera commissioned by the Harvard Musical Association for the 50th anniversary of Emmanuel Music - *Salt*; and *Scarlatti in Soweto*, a further commission from Buskaid after the widely performed *Sancho's Dance Mix* (2014). *Jump Cuts* was premiered by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra in 2022, and he recently completed *Vaudeville in Teal* for harpsichord and small orchestra for Mahan Esfahani.

From 2002-07, he was director of music at St. Paul's Girls' School, London, a post previously occupied by Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams. In Hong Kong, he hosted a classical music radio show. He has lived in Tokyo and Beijing, where he worked with the Beijing New Music Ensemble and attempted to master the Yang Qin (Butterfly Harp).

He currently lives in Princeton and New York and has an ongoing relationship with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra.



LILLIAN COPELAND holds the Cynthia & Robert Hillas Principal Oboe Chair with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra. She is a New York-based freelancer who plays with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and American Ballet Theatre, among others. She is also principal oboe of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa Cruz, CA. Lillian earned her DMA from Rutgers University and teaches at NYU, Montclair State University, and the preparatory divisions of Juilliard (MAP),

Manhattan School of Music, and Mannes.

Oboist **ERIN GUSTAFSON** enjoys an active freelance career in New York City, appearing regularly with the American Symphony Orchestra, New York City Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera and The Knights. She has formerly held positions with the St Louis Symphony, the Oregon Symphony, and the Grand Rapids Symphony.

Gustafson grew up in the Pacific Northwest and enjoys spending time walking NYC, spending time with her family, and working to rescue and foster rescue cats.



In the 2025–2026 season, **AUBRY BALLARÒ** makes her Asian debut as Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Musica Viva Hong Kong, marking an important milestone in her growing global career. She begins the season as Micaëla in *Carmen* with Opera in the Park Portland and the soprano soloist in Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder* with the Chautauqua Symphony. Later in the season, she debuts

with Portland Opera as Musetta in *La Bohème*, performs Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra, and returns to Opera Columbus in a co-production with the Columbus Symphony as Violetta in *La Traviata* and with the symphony as the soprano soloist in Orff's *Trionfo di Afrodite*.



NICHOLAS NESTORAK is a tenor on the rise since joining the Metropolitan Opera roster in 2021 and making his highly anticipated Met début as Pang in their lavish production of *Turandot*. Also at The Met, he has covered Pang, Tanzmeister in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Bardolfo in *Falstaff*, and Spoletta in *Tosca*. He returns this season as the Second Priest in the holiday presentation of *The Magic Flute*

and covering the Waiter in *Arabella*.

Additional engagements last season included Goro in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera San Antonio and Austin Opera. Mr. Nestorak also took his acclaimed Spoletta to the Princeton Festival's *Tosca* and joined Opera Maine to portray Beadle Bamford in *Sweeney Todd*. This season, in addition to the Met, he portrays Ralph Rackstraw in *HMS Pinafore* with Opera Grand Rapids. In concert, he will be heard as the tenor soloist for Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* with Princeton Symphony Orchestra, as well as two rarely heard works, Dvorak's *The American Flag* and Orff's *Trionfo di Afrodite*, with Columbus Symphony.



Bass-baritone **HUNTER ENOCH** is making his mark on stages across the United States with his "big, ringing voice and magnetic stage presence." Last season, Mr. Enoch made his *début* with San Diego Opera singing Germont in *La traviata*, of which The San Diego Union-Tribune raved, "... Hunter Enoch was outstanding... Enoch has a huge and perfectly pitched voice that easily fills the 3,000-seat Civic Theatre and his performance of the beautiful second-act aria "Di Provenza il mar" was a show highlight." He returned to the Dallas Symphony Orchestra for *The Ring Cycle* under the baton of Maestro Fabio Luisi, singing Donner in *Das Rheingold* and covering Mark Delavan's Wotan in performances of *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, and *Siegfried* after singing Donner and covering Wotan in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* the previous spring. He also made his role *début* as Sweeney Todd with Holy City Arts & Lyric Opera, performed as the bass soloist for Mozart's *Requiem* and *Solemn Vespers* at Carnegie Hall, and joined D.C. Choral Arts at the Kennedy Center for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. This season, Mr. Enoch joins Opera on the James to sing Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* and the South Dakota Symphony for *Messiah*.

Program Notes



Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

Extra(ordinarily) Fancy

Composed 2019-20

Composer's Note:

During the Baroque era the double oboe concerto was somewhat of a genre, especially among Italian composers. Alessandro Marcello wrote two, Antonio Vivaldi wrote four, and Tomaso Albinoni—who seemed really taken by oboe—wrote eight. Over the last few years, I too have grown to adore the instrument. In fact, I've become such an admirer of the oboe and other double reed instruments that in 2017 I wrote a piece for double reed sextet called *Extra Fancy*. The sextet is an exploration of "extra fancy" techniques that these instruments can produce, particularly multiphonics. Multiphonics are produced when the performer uses a technically incorrect fingering to create a distorted, complex sound with two or more pitches. Multiphonics can sound bizarre (if not foul) to some listeners, but I've always found them to be enchanting and, for lack of a better term, misunderstood.

Though the pieces don't share any musical material, I think of *Extra(ordinarily) Fancy* as a bigger and better sequel to the sextet. In addition to similarly exploring the melodic potential of various multiphonics, the concerto also works as a whimsical exploration of duality; while one oboist is focused on sounding ordinarily fancy, the other oboist is determined to prove the extra fancy virtues of multiphonics. After a short Vivaldi-esque introduction that establishes the main melodic ideas of the piece, the oboists go at it. They mock each other, squawk at each other, and even talk over each other. The orchestra observes and joins in as the oboists continually bicker back and forth, all culminating in a reconciliation where the once-hesitant oboist learns (and even enthusiastically performs) a few multiphonics alongside the other oboist.

This piece was commissioned in 2019 by the Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra and is dedicated to oboists Robert Walker and Laura Arganbright.

~Viet Cuong

Instrumentation – one flute, one clarinet, one bassoon, two horns, one trumpet, one trombone, percussion, harpsichord, strings, and two solo oboes

Duration – 10 minutes



Julian Grant (b. 1960)

***Vaudeville in Teal* for harpsichord and small orchestra**

Composed 2025

Composer's Note:

Vaudeville in Teal for harpsichord and small orchestra consisting of strings, bass clarinet and bassoon, was commissioned by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra. A loose set of variations, it is in six continuous movements and, as its title might suggest, is a ragbag of differing moods and sensations, like a variety of acts in a vaudeville. Predominantly playful and light-hearted, it has unexpectedly deeper and darker moments.

The work is dedicated to my husband, Peter Lighte.

~Julian Grant

Instrumentation – one bass clarinet, one bassoon, strings, and solo harpsichord

Duration – 23 minutes

Continued...



Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Pulcinella

Composed 1919-20

When *Pulcinella* premiered in Paris in 1920, audiences expected something bold from Igor Stravinsky. Only seven years earlier, he had shaken the musical world with *The Rite of Spring*, and listeners were primed for another shock. What they encountered instead was music that sounded strikingly rooted in the 18th century. Based on works attributed at the time to Giovanni Pergolesi, *Pulcinella* was unlike anything Stravinsky had previously composed. Its elegance, clarity, and wit were not a retreat from modernism, but the beginning of a new artistic direction that would profoundly shape the next phase of his career.

The project originated with Sergei Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballets Russes and one of Stravinsky's closest collaborators. In the aftermath of World War I, Diaghilev sought ballets of smaller scale and lighter character, works that could appeal to audiences weary of spectacle and excess. His search led him to a collection of baroque manuscripts preserved at the Naples Conservatory, many of which were then believed to be by Pergolesi, though later scholarship revealed a more complicated authorship. From this material emerged a ballet inspired by commedia dell'arte, centered on Pulcinella, the mischievous and quick-witted Neapolitan trickster.

Stravinsky approached the idea with some hesitation, uncertain whether he could engage convincingly with such historical material. Curiosity soon replaced reluctance. Rather than rewriting the music wholesale, he retained its melodic contours and harmonic foundations, filtering them through his own modern sensibility. Scored for a compact ensemble and three vocal soloists, the music sparkles with unexpected instrumental colors, rhythmic bite, and subtle harmonic shifts. What appears simple and graceful on the surface is quietly transformed into something vivid, ironic, and unmistakably Stravinskian.

Stravinsky later described *Pulcinella* as an epiphany—the moment he

discovered that the past could serve not as a constraint, but as a source of creative freedom. This realization marked the beginning of his neoclassical period, a stylistic path he would continue to explore for decades. The ballet, choreographed by Léonide Massine with sets and costumes by Pablo Picasso, became a fully integrated artistic statement. Its playful reimagining of the 18th century through a modern lens was greeted at its premiere as both unexpected and invigorating.

This performance presents *Pulcinella* in its complete original form, as conceived for the ballet stage in 1920. All of the instrumental movements are included, along with the vocal numbers for soprano, tenor, and bass that play a central role in shaping the work's character and dramatic continuity. Two years after the ballet's premiere, Stravinsky arranged portions of the score into a concert suite, selecting eight movements that have since become familiar in the symphonic repertoire. Heard complete, however, *Pulcinella* reveals a broader expressive range and a more continuous theatrical design than the suite alone can convey.

One of the defining features of *Pulcinella* is its sense of musical disguise. Just as the characters of commedia dell'arte appear behind literal masks, Stravinsky cloaks his modern musical language in the dress of the 18th century. Beneath the surface charm lie rhythmic surprises, asymmetrical phrasing, and harmonic twists that quietly undermine expectations. These moments of imbalance and wit expose the composer's contemporary voice peeking through the historical veneer.

More than a clever reworking of old material, *Pulcinella* played a decisive role in reshaping musical aesthetics in the early 20th century. Its approach to form, balance, and reinvention influenced composers such as Prokofiev, Ravel, and Hindemith, and offered Stravinsky a new way forward after the radical experiments of his earlier years. With *Pulcinella*, Stravinsky did not merely borrow from the past—he transformed it, revealing how tradition itself could become a vehicle for innovation.

Instrumentation – two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, one trumpet, one trombone, strings, solo string quintet, solo soprano, solo tenor, solo bass

Duration – 40 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

March 7-8, 2026

VIOLIN I

Basia Danilow*

Concertmaster

The George W. Pitcher Chair,

ENDOWED IN PERPETUITY

Krzysztof Kuznik

The Yvonne Marcuse Chair,

In Memory of Mark M. Rutzky

Christophe Koenig

Cheng-Chih Kevin Tsai

Ruotao Mao

Margaret Banks

Hyojin Kim

Sage Park

VIOLIN II

Sam Parrini**

The B. Sue Howard Chair

Yuyu Ikeda

Virgil Moore

Linda Howard

Roni Shitrit

Cheng-Hsun David Tsai

VIOLA

Stephanie Griffin*

The Harriet & Jay Vawter Chair

Hannah Burnett

Beth Meyers

Jacqueline Watson

Chieh-Fan Yiu

CELLO

Alistair MacRae*

*The Julian Grant & Peter Lighte
Family Chair*

Elizabeth Loughran

Iona Batchelder

Jasmine Pai

BASS

John Grillo*

*The Stephanie & Robert Wedeking
Chair*

Dan Hudson

Stephen Groat

FLUTE

Sooyun Kim**

The Lunder/Ezekowitz Family Chair
Hilary Jones



OBOE

Lillian Copeland*
The Cynthia & Rob Hillas Chair
Erin Gustafson

CLARINET

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

BASSOON

Brad Balliett*
The Cynthia & Rob Hillas Chair
Zach Feingold

HORN

Colby Kleven**
The Dr. Michael L. Barnett Chair
Martina Adams

TRUMPET

Jerry Bryant*
The Donna & Donald Deieso Chair

TROMBONE

Connor Rowe*
The David A. Tierno Chair

PERCUSSION

Greg Giannascoli**
*The Lunder/Ezekowitz Family
Chair*
Jeremy Levine

KEYBOARD

Benjamin Katz**

*Principal player

**Guest principal player