

• PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ROSSEN MILANOV, MUSIC DIRECTOR



2026-2027



Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody

Dmitry Shishkin, piano

October 17 & 18

2026-27

ROSSEN MILANOV, Edward T. Cone Music Director



Saturday October 17, 2026, 7:30pm

Saturday October 18, 2026, 4pm

Richardson Auditorium

RACHMANINOFF'S RHAPSODY

Rossen Milanov, conductor

Dmitry Shishkin, piano

Joan Tower

Suite from Concerto for Orchestra*

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43

Dmitry Shishkin, piano

INTERMISSION

Béla Bartók

Concerto for Orchestra, Sz. 116, BB 123

- I. Introduzione: Andante non troppo - Allegro vivace
- II. Giuoco delle coppie: Allegretto - scherzando
- III. Elegia: Andante non troppo
- IV. Intermezzo interrotto: Allegretto
- V. Finale: Pesante - Presto

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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 (NJSCA), 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 regularly performs at historic Richardson Auditorium on the campus of Princeton University.

Music Director



Edward T. Cone Music Director

ROSSEN MILANOV looks forward to collaborating in 2026-27 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 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 Bartók'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 Artist



Silver Medalist at the XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition and winner of the 73rd Geneva International Music Competition, **DMITRY SHISHKIN** has earned international acclaim for his creative and individual approach to music. Critics have described him as an *"electrifying and flamboyant pianist, of great musical honesty and rigor."*

Dmitry Shishkin's recent highlights include a return to the Verbier Festival under M. Pletnev, performing Hummel Piano Concerto No. 2, performances with

the KBS Symphony Orchestra at the Seoul Arts Center, as part of their Great Pianists Series, a debut at the Hong Kong Sinfonietta with Alexander Kochanovsky, Santa Barbara Symphony, Bilkent Symphony, and the Real Orquesta Sinfonica de Sevilla, as well as a tour with the Taiwan National Youth Orchestra in Taiwan and Japan, playing Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3. He also performed recitals at Wiener Konzerthaus, Oporto Casa de Musica, Schloss-Elm, Seattle, Lakewood, La Jolla, Santa Barbara, Beaver Creek, Joplin, McCallum, Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangkok.

In the 2026-27 season, Shishkin returns to the Verbier Festival under M. Pletnev. Other appearances include a recital tour of South Korea with the KBS Symphony Orchestra, performances with the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic, Orquesta Filarmonica de Malaga, Orchestra de Minas Gerais, Puerto Rico Symphony, Princeton Symphony, Columbus Symphony, Budapest Festival Orchestra with Ivan Fischer, as well as Taiwan National Symphony under the direction of Jahja Ling. Shishkin will appear in recital at Taipei National Concert Hall, Newport Classical Music Festival, St. Ursanne Festival, and Luxembourg Philharmonic.

Frequently invited by prestigious Festivals, Dmitry has appeared at La Roque d'Anthéron, Dubrovnik Summer Festival, Radio France Montpellier Festival, Bergen Music Festival, the Chopin and His Europe Festival, and the Bergamo Brescia Music Festival.

Dmitry began his piano studies at the Gnssin Moscow School of Music with Mikhail Khokhlov, continued at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory under Eliso Virsaladze, and later studied at the "Vincenzo Bellini" State Conservatory in Catania with Epifanio Comis, and at the Hochschule für Musik in Hannover with Arie Vardi. He is currently based in Switzerland.

Photo by Alexandra Aksentieva

shishkindmitry.com

Program Notes



Joan Tower (b. 1938)

Suite from Concerto for Orchestra

Composed 1991, Suite 2024

Born in New Rochelle, New York in 1938, award-winning composer Joan Tower moved with her family to Bolivia at age nine, where her father worked as a mining engineer. She later returned to the United States to study music. Tower credits her years in Bolivia with influencing the Latin American rhythms in her music, while her father's profession inspired works such as *Copperwave* for brass quintet. In 1990, she became the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for *Silver Ladders*.

Tower's Concerto for Orchestra was written in 1991 as a co-commission from the St. Louis Symphony, Chicago Symphony, and New York Philharmonic. Conductor Peter Oundjian suggested a reduced orchestration of the work, which premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2025 as the Suite from Concerto for Orchestra.

The Concerto preserves Tower's characteristic virtuoso interplay, contrasting textures, and sense of ascent. Tower has described one of her trademarks since 1972 as "a theme or strong fragment that goes up," and the Concerto is filled with such gestures.

The Suite begins with an abbreviated introduction built around F-sharps across different orchestral timbres and registers, reminiscent of Schoenberg's *Klangfarbenmelodie* (sound-color melody), alongside C-naturals. Tower explains that the work's energy emerges from the contrast between large alternating chords and small, fast motives that gradually expand into larger textures. She emphasizes a strong sense of direction and ascent created through scales, tempos, rhythms, and dynamics.

The title Concerto for Orchestra inevitably recalls Bartók's famous work, also heard on this concert, but Tower resists that association. For her, the virtuosic passages are not merely displays of technical ability; they are structurally essential, emerging naturally from the music's accumulated energy.

Instrumentation – three flutes and two piccolos, two oboes and English horn, three clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, and strings

Duration – 12 minutes



Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Composed 1934

When one thinks of superstar violinists, Niccolò Paganini comes to mind. The Italian virtuoso revolutionized 19th-century violin playing, reaching technical heights giving rise to legends of him selling his soul to the devil. His 24th Caprice for solo violin, a theme and variations, became the foundation for works by composers from Liszt and Brahms to Andrew Lloyd Webber. Its simple harmonic structure makes it especially adaptable to variation.

Russian émigré Sergei Rachmaninoff composed his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* in 1934. Despite its title, the work is a theme and variations concertante piece, transferring the virtuoso role from violinist to pianist—quite literally, as the violins first play the theme. Rachmaninoff, who had fled Russia after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, had largely abandoned composition to pursue a career as a touring pianist for financial reasons. The *Rhapsody* was composed while living in Switzerland, though he finally settled in Beverly Hills. The Philadelphia Orchestra and the conductor Leopold Stokowski premiered the work with Rachmaninoff as soloist, and made the first recording in Camden, New Jersey.

The piece begins not with Paganini's theme but with its harmonic skeleton, much like the finale of Beethoven's *Eroica*. Listen to how this simple foundation is transformed throughout the variations. In the 7th variation, Rachmaninoff sneaks in his oft-quoted hellish medieval liturgical chant *Dies Irae* ("Day of Wrath"). The ominous presence of both themes grows until the 11th variation, when the music shifts towards what Rachmaninoff described as the realm of love.

That section culminates in the most famous and commercialized variation, the 18th. Rachmaninoff said of this variation: "This one is for my agent." The variations that ensue lead towards the close with jarring key changes, cadenzas, Paganini's defeat in variation 23, and a grotesque parody of the *Dies Irae*.

Instrumentation – two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings, and solo piano

Duration – 22 minutes



Béla Bartók (1881 – 1945)

Concerto for Orchestra

Composed 1943

On October 29, 1940, Hungarian Béla Bartók and his wife, Ditta Pásztory, arrived in New York, where the future initially looked bright. Finding this safe haven for his family was more important than any opposition to Hungary's rising pro-Nazi regime. Unfortunately, he found limited success as a performer in the United States due to his difficult repertoire and cold performance persona. He wrote to his son, "if things are bad everywhere, one prefers to be at home." Throughout his life, financial difficulties compounded bouts of ill-health.

Considered to be the father of ethnomusicology (the study of music within its cultural context), Bartók had, since 1905, devoted himself to transcribing the folk music of rural villages across Eastern Europe and Northern Africa. He sought to trace and learn from folk traditions' authentic musical elements in order to infuse them into his own music.

In 1943, after delivering lectures on "New Hungarian art music" at Harvard University, Bartók collapsed and was taken to Mount Sinai Hospital where he was diagnosed with leukemia. Hoping to help with his medical expenses, Hungarian-American conductor Fritz Reiner and violinist József Szigeti approached Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and champion of new music, about commissioning a new work. The commission was offered with the understanding that Bartók might be too ill to complete it; it was intended partly as financial aid for his final days. Bartók hesitated, but accepted on the condition that half of the \$1,000 fee (roughly \$18,500 today) be paid upon acceptance and the remainder upon completion.

During a stay at a private sanatorium at Saranac Lake in the Adirondack Mountains from August to October 1943, Bartók composed his *Concerto for Orchestra* in just fifty-four days. Despite his illness, he worked enthusiastically. The piece premiered in December 1944, performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The *Concerto* can be considered Bartók's "symphony," combining his life's work in folk-music research with late-Romantic formal structures. It is a "concerto" because every section of the orchestra is given virtuosic opportunities. It even has a few excerpts that are standard audition material for conductors! The work is organized as a large-scale arch, a form Bartók particularly favored: the outer movements share characteristics, while the

central *Elegia* serves as the work's "kernel." It is flanked by two intermezzi and two outer sonata-allegro movements, a form traceable to Haydn symphonies.

The first movement opens with a quotation from Bartók's opera *Bluebeard's Castle*, creating a hollow, brooding atmosphere. It is a quotation of a Transdanubian song, whose text recalls the grief of losing his mother in 1939:

From here is seen the graveyard's border
Where rests she who was the light of my eyes.
The grave holds her, whom I would hold.
Now only I know how thoroughly I am orphaned.

The movement then combines the fugato techniques of established musical tradition with peasant scales and irregular rhythms.

In the second movement, originally titled *Presentando le coppie* ("pairwise presentation"), a side drum acts as the master of ceremonies. Pairs of instruments are introduced, each with its own character and pitch interval. Following a brass chorale, the pairs seem to adopt one another's customs and manners.

At the center lies the *Elegia*, a quintessential example of Bartók's "night music": atmospheric textures evoking nocturnal natural sounds such as bird calls and rustling leaves, depicted by soft trills, glissandi (sliding notes), and rapid arpeggios. Its main theme, first heard in the violas, recalls the laments of Transylvanian funeral songs.

The fourth movement has been interpreted as a depiction of cultural impotence under authoritarian violence. A young lover, representing an idealistic nation, serenades his beloved before being interrupted by a drunken mob whistling a trivial melody (a quotation of Shostakovich's Seventh and Lehár's *Merry Widow*). Trombone glissandi suggest the mob's grotesque interruption, and their trails of violence. The lover cannot finish his song with a broken instrument, and his tears reduce him to silence.

The finale is a true orchestral tour de force. Listen to the electrifying timpani and basses in the opening seconds of the movement, shifting the meter beneath the perpetual motion of the violins. A trumpet introduces a fanfare that grows increasingly brilliant through successive brass entrances. A timpani glissando leads into a delicate passage reminiscent of Javanese *gamelan* music, followed by fugato writing and a return of the opening material. The music briefly becomes stagnant before a lone bassoon, beneath icy, whispering strings, propels the orchestra toward its bombastic and virtuosic conclusion.

Instrumentation – three flutes and piccolo, three oboes and English horn, three clarinets and bass clarinet, three bassoons and one contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, and strings

Duration – 37 minutes

~ Tomás García
Georg and Joyce Albers-Schonberg Assistant Conductor
Princeton Symphony Orchestra

Princeton Symphony Orchestra

Rossen Milanov, Edward T. Cone Music Director

ENDOWED IN PERPETUITY

Tomás García, Georg and Joyce Albers-Schonberg Assistant Conductor

ENDOWED IN PERPETUITY

October 17-18, 2026

VIOLIN I

Basia Danilow*

Concertmaster

The George W. Pitcher Chair,

ENDOWED IN PERPETUITY

Krzystof Kuznik

The Yvonne Marcuse Chair,

In Memory of Mark M. Rutzky

Qianru Elaine He

Cheng-Chih Kevin Tsai

Margaret Banks

Jennifer Ahn

Sam Parrini

Coco Ziyao Sun

Virgil Moore

Hava Polinsky

Julia Hwang

VIOLIN II

Emma Richman**

The B. Sue Howard Chair

Tara A. Pagano-Toub

Josephine Kim

Abigail Hong

Arthur Moeller

Cheng-Hsun David Tsai

Linda Howard

Rubi Lee

Yuyu Ikeda

VIOLA

Stephanie Griffin*

The Harriet & Jay Vawter Chair

Hannah Burnett

Chieh-Fan Yiu

Jacqueline Watson

Cameren Anai Williams

Madeleine Pintoff

CELLO

Chase Park**

***The Julian Grant & Peter Lighte
Family Chair***

Elizabeth Loughran

Jasmine Pai

Robin Park

Elizabeth Thompson

Nathan Whittaker

BASS

John Grillo*

***The Stephanie & Robert Wedeking
Chair***

Stephen Groat

Devin Howell

Jingwan Guo

FLUTE

Denis Savelyev**

The Lunder/Ezekowitz Family Chair

Hilary Jones

Kyungmin Eom



OBOE

Lillian Copeland*

The Cynthia & Rob Hillas Chair

Becca Nelsen

Gilles Cheng

CLARINET

Pascal Archer*

The Richard J. & Neil Ann S. Levine Chair

Paul Cho

Gi Lee

BASSOON

Brad Balliett*

The Cynthia & Rob Hillas Chair

Zach Feingold

Shelley Monroe

HORN

Steven Harmon*

The Dr. Michael L. Barnett Chair

Colin Weyman

Colby Kleven

Sylvia Beach

TRUMPET

Jerry Bryant*

The Donna & Donald Deieso Chair

Thomas Cook

Wayne Dumaine

TROMBONE

Connor Rowe*

The David A. Tierno Chair

Lars Wendt

The Lor & Michael Gehret Chair

Felix Padilla

TUBA

Jonathan Fowler*

The Liza & Schuyler Morehouse Chair

TIMPANI

Jeremy Levine*

The Anne VanLent Chair

PERCUSSION

Phyllis Bitow*

The Lunder/Ezekowitz Family Chair

Greg Giannascoli

Eric Borghi

Mika Godbole

HARP

André Tarantiles*

Anonymous Chair, given by a

PSO friend in honor of all parents

Margery Fitts

PIANO

Benjamin Pawlak**

*Principal player

**Guest principal player