



Friday, October 6, 2023, 7:30 PM  
Saturday, October 7, 2023, 7:30 PM  
Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

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# Princeton University Orchestra

**Michael Pratt**, Conductor

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#### **About the Department of Music:**

The Department of Music at Princeton University provides its undergraduates—whether they major or minor in Music—the opportunity to learn from a world-renowned faculty of scholars and composers. Performance opportunities include student-led and departmental ensembles like symphony orchestras, multi-genre choruses, jazz, contemporary music, African music, steel band, laptop orchestra, and much more, and students have access to private instrumental and voice lessons from eminent performing artists. The graduate program offers two distinct and prestigious Ph.D. programs in composition or musicology; graduate students receive fully-funded, immersive experiences conducting research, advancing their craft, and collaborating with faculty within Princeton University’s inspiring, interdisciplinary campus.

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## PROGRAM

**MYKOLA LYSENKO**  
(1842- 1912)

*Elegie*  
Version for orchestra by Vsevolod Sirenko and  
Hobart Earle

**DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH**  
(1906-1975)

Concerto No. 1 for Cello Op. 107  
Allegretto  
Moderato  
Cadenza  
Allegro con mot

**Aster Zhang '24**, Cello

*Intermission*

**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**  
(1873-1943)

Symphonic Dances Op. 45  
Non allegro  
Allegro con moto  
Lento assai, Allegro vivace

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

### **LYSENKO'S ELEGIE**

Mykola Lysenko was born into a wealthy and cultured family in 1842 in Hrynky, then a part of the Russian empire, but now modern-day Ukraine. His first teacher was his mother, and at the age of nine, his parents put him in boarding school in Kyiv to continue his musical studies. His later education took him to Kharkiv Gymnasium, where he studied natural sciences, and later back to Kyiv University to continue to study both composition and science.

Early in his life he developed an intense interest in Ukrainian music and literature, and was one of the first ethnomusicologists—he gathered a collection of Ukrainian folk songs, which he drew on as material for his original compositions. He became an ardent Ukrainian nationalist. Even after he was lauded as being a leading figure in Ukrainian letters, he suffered from persecution by the Russian government, which actively tried to squash Ukrainian patriotism; a ban was even laid on the Ukrainian language in print in 1876. Lysenko set all his vocal music in Ukrainian and refused to allow it to be translated. Tchaikovsky became an admirer of Lysenko's opera *Taras Bulba*, and wanted to produce it, but Lysenko refused to allow it to be performed in Russian.

In later life Lysenko founded the Lysenko Music Academy in Lviv, which is still in operation. He died in Kyiv in 1912.

Elegie is an arrangement by Vsevolod Sirenko and Hobart Earle '83, of a solo piano work Op. 12, No. 3, and was performed by Maestro Earle and the Odesa Philharmonic in Berlin within the last year.

**-Michael Pratt**

### **SHOSTAKOVICH'S CELLO CONCERTO NO. 1**

Dmitri Shostakovich is one of the great contradictions of Soviet-era music. His actions, vis-à-vis the purge of artists taking place in the Soviet Union during the prime of his career, have here been labeled as heroically defiant and there as cowardly. His compositions straddled the worlds of a burgeoning interest in re-adopting classical styles during the mid-20th century and a move towards atonalism and other unconventional tonalities that flowered towards the end of his life. He tried desperately to toe the line of discretion, subtlety, and safety in artistic expression, yet his outbursts — at different times despondent, horrified, rageful, jaded — reveal themselves as a theme that runs through his music.

I say all this not to suggest some undue influence of Stalinism as a defining feature of Shostakovich's music. His Cello Concerto No. 1, in particular, was composed in 1959, six years removed from the death of Stalin himself. It was largely influenced by his contemporary Sergei Prokofiev's "Sinfonia-Concertante," which used the cello in similarly idiomatic styles: unprecedentedly long and virtuosic cadenzas, cross-string polyphony, and a focus on the juxtaposition between grotesque and lyrical.

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These traits appear at length in Shostakovich's work, but it distinguishes itself in numerous ways. The concerto is scored for a small orchestra — a single french horn, often in intimate dialogue with the cello part, makes up the entire brass section — breaking with the large-scale orchestra precedent set in the Romantic and post-Romantic periods. Breaking with the conventional three-movement structure, the concerto's third movement out of the four is a cadenza written for solo cello alone.

The first movement of the concerto, too, diverges from the norm in being brief — at just around six minutes — but, functionally, it operates in a conventional way, focusing on the exposition of two primary themes in sonata form. Shostakovich is well-known for his “D-S-C-H” musical motif, which is derived from his initials; the iconic four-note theme that opens the concerto is not quite this as it appears more clearly in his String Quartet No. 8, but it bears key similarities. The second theme, in alternating duple and triple meter, ascends up the cello's A string, eventually reaching stratospheric ranges in which the cello shrieks a panicked tune, scarcely a melody. The first movement culminates in a duet between the solo cello and the french horn, where the cello's double-stop ostinato grounds the second theme as it is played in the horn part.

The second movement is the longest of the four, and explores a somber theme that meanders eventually into a disjointed waltz that borders on grotesque; this then collapses into a wailing lament in the solo cello that soars over densely textured octaves in the orchestra. A timpani hit abruptly jerks the listener back into the first theme, and the opening cello line is reprised, but played entirely in harmonics. The cadenza that follows develops themes from the first and second movements and transitions *attacca* into the final movement, which is the shortest of the four and the most frenetic. Buried, yet forming the foundation that bookends the movement, is a brief and subtle parody of the Georgian song “Suliko”, which was a favorite song of Stalin and played on many state broadcasts of the Soviet Union. In the last moments of the concerto, the “Suliko” quote is repeated, but cleft in half, in that the strings play the first half of the quote while the second half is played by woodwinds and solo cello. The concerto ends with seven consecutive timpani strokes.

Shostakovich talks in jokes and overblown clichés a lot. He plays caricatures, adopts sardonic airs, darts around from theme to theme. Couched in the cello concerto, though, is something very somber and very real, which is at its most clear in the heights of the second movement but in fact pervades the piece from beginning to end. To be honest, I don't think I could tell you in words what this piece is “about,” or “means,” to me. (I tried, specifically in these program notes, and I'm having a hard time.) However, I think that what Shostakovich is trying to say is easy to understand.

**-Aster Zhang '24**

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## RACHMANINOFF'S SYMPHONIC DANCES

Rachmaninoff composed Modern music that sounds like Romantic music. He was, as my teacher Richard Taruskin put it, “not Modern, and loving it.” A restless sort buffeted by world events, he lived in Moscow, Dresden, Villa Senar in Switzerland, New York City and Beverly Hills (in a four-bedroom, four-bedroom house on Elm Drive that currently lists for ten million). During his last twenty-five years he composed relatively little – just six of his 46 major works. He concertized and earned the reputation of an all-conquering virtuoso.

He sold a lot of tickets to his concerts but was no fun to be around. He towered and glowered. He had “a huge, pale, and homely face – like the face of Abraham Lincoln,” according to a reporter who tried to interview him in Minneapolis but couldn’t owing to the composer’s “very bad” English.

He was deeply nostalgic and morbidly obsessive, interested in ancient chant, Dante, Edgar Allen Poe, bells. He was a supreme melodicist, among the most gifted of all time, and he considered that gift at times a curse, since what he considered to be his most significant works were overshadowed by the hits. He emerged from a Russian musical context that championed accessibility, beauty, and heart-on-sleeve lyricism. Snobby musicologists dismissed him as a peddler of kitsch. A case in point is his most famous short piece, a Prelude in C# Minor, which he was obliged to encore every night as a performing pianist. He hated it.

But the hits kept coming and he had to keep playing them to pay the mortgage. The hits also kept coming because his aesthetic was one that required the creation of music of instant, direct appeal, contra dissonance, experiment, formalism, contra Symbolism (except for its exoticism) and Expressionism, in keeping with the sentiments of the solo voice singing a line of chant or a song about abandonment.

But composing was nonetheless hard. He took rejection extremely badly, and after the failure of his First Symphony of 1897 sank into deep depression and writer’s block that supposedly required a hypnotist to cure. In 1900 in Moscow, Nikolay Dahl commenced a treatment program for Rachmaninoff involving hypnotherapy and psychotherapy. It cured the composer, who dedicated his Piano Concerto No. 2 (1901) to Dahl (and what a concerto that is, especially the second movement, an epoch of sentimentality, the very apogee of emotion, its big tune recycled in films like *Brief Encounter* and *Bridget Jones’s Diary*).

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Rachmaninoff's orchestral works, including his Symphonic Dances, are historical summaries, efforts, in music, to think about the whole of Russian history, the entire 1000-year-plus sweep of it: Orthodox religion, the feudalism of Kyivan Rus, the folk fare, the admixture of peoples west, east, south, and north, the grief, the fear. People refer to Tchaikovsky as spiritual sufferer, an artist who liked to expose his soul, as it were. Rachmaninoff, in contrast, is seen not as his own confessor, but as Mother Russia's confessor: hence the archaic sounds (related to liturgical chant), the fondness for bells, the "epic" narrative moments, the borrowings from Russian salon songs, and, of course, the independent melodic writing: those tunes that he alone wrote, but that we think (or what to think) come from the rich black soil of the Eurasian steppe. These are the clichés, but there is perhaps some truth to them. I would add that, for all the richness of Rachmaninoff's orchestrations, he privileges monophonic textures, one line at a time, and the gloominess of those lines has been allegorized as nostalgic longing, nostalgia, perhaps, for some primal loss, loss of something he (or Russia, or music) never had in the first place.

The Symphonic Dances is the only score he composed in the United States. It turned out to be Rachmaninoff's last work. He imagined it as ballet, or suite of dances, and pitched it to choreographer Michel Fokine, but Fokine died before plans developed. The first movement features saxophone – the part was written in consultation with a Broadway composer, Robert Russell Bennett – and intricate string playing, for which Rachmaninoff sought advice from Fritz Kreisler. (The "ephemeral phrasing" confused the conductor of the Philadelphia premiere, Eugene Ormandy.) The coda of the movement quotes Rachmaninoff's ill-fated First Symphony, a demon he was still trying to exercise in 1940. The middle movement is a waltz in 6/8 time, an increasingly anxious affair that leads to a devastating third movement with lurid special effects: rattling bones in the xylophone; bells tolling midnight; groans; rustles; quotations from Russian Orthodox chant and the *Dies irae* of the Catholic tradition; and a reference to Rachmaninoff's choral masterpiece, his *All-Night Vigil*. The score has something to say about World War II and everything to say about death. Rachmaninoff wrote "I thank thee, Lord," on the final page of the manuscript and, as Fiona Maddocks notes, instructed the tam-tam to resound after the rest of the orchestra has stopped, "its own moment of dying glory."

**-Simon Morrison**

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## ABOUT

### **PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ORCHESTRA**

The Princeton University Orchestra was born in February 1896, with a concert by professional musicians. The modern history of PUO begins with the appointment of the orchestra's present music director, Michael J. Pratt, in 1977. Through the fifties and sixties, the ensemble shrank down to as few as thirty students amid "music-is-better-seen-than-heard" mentalities in music academia, as well as insufficient rehearsal and performance spaces on campus. Following Pratt's appointment to the orchestra's podium, this downward trend quickly reversed itself into an upwards explosion. In 1984, the orchestra's home, Alexander Hall, was renovated from a large auditorium into a professional-grade concert hall. Additionally, unprecedented interest in music performance among students, coupled with growth in the overall undergraduate class size and the development of Princeton's dedicated extracurricular hours (two hours every weekday during which classes are forbidden from meeting), allowed PUO to quickly expand into the large symphonic orchestra of over 100 students that it remains today.

In response to students in the orchestra expressing a desire to continue as musicians after their studies at Princeton, Michael Pratt established the Music Department's Certificate Program in Music Performance in 1990, and he was a major architect in the general integration of performance into Princeton's wider curriculum. Undergraduate musicians in the Music Performance certificate receive complementary lessons and are eligible to spend a semester abroad studying at the Royal College of Music, which has been named one of the top music conservatories in the world. Following the creation of a strong music performance program, the conductor noted a significant upswing in Princeton University applicants with exceptional musical talent and interest, which in turn allowed the Princeton University Orchestra to grow into an even stronger ensemble, able to tackle any piece in the classical repertoire. In 2018, there were enough applicants to the incoming class alone to fill multiple large symphonic orchestras.

Nowadays, the orchestra is recognized for its musical excellence, named in an independent survey as one of the top then college-age orchestras in the United States.

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## **MICHAEL PRATT**

The 2023-2024 season marks 46 years since Michael Pratt came to Princeton to conduct the Princeton University Orchestra— a relationship that has resulted in the ensemble's reputation as one of the finest university orchestras in the United States.

He is credited by his colleagues and generations of students in being the architect of one of the premiere music programs in the country, Princeton's certificate Program in Music Performance (now the Music Minor in Performance), Pratt has served as its director since its inception in 1991. The international reputation the Program has earned has resulted in Princeton's becoming a major destination for talented and academically gifted students. Pratt also established a partnership between Princeton and the Royal College of Music that every year sends Princeton students to study in London. He is also co-founder of the Richardson Chamber Players, which affords opportunities for top students to perform with the performance faculty in chamber music concerts.

Over the years, Pratt has guided many generations of Princeton students through a remarkable variety of orchestral and operatic literature, from early Baroque Italian opera through symphonies of Mahler to the latest compositions by students and faculty. He has led the Princeton University Orchestra on eleven European tours. Under Pratt the PU Orchestra has also participated in major campus collaborations with the Theater and Dance programs in such works as the premieres of Prokofiev's *Le Pas d'Acier* and *Boris Godunov*, a revival of Richard Strauss's setting of the Molière classic, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and a full production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with all of Mendelssohn's incidental music.

Pratt was educated at the Eastman School of Music and Tanglewood, and his teachers and mentors have included Gunther Schuller, Leonard Bernstein, Gustav Meier, and Otto Werner Mueller.

In March 2018 Michael Pratt was awarded an honorary membership to the Royal College of Music, London (HonRCM) by HRH The Prince of Wales. At Princeton's Commencement 2019 he was awarded the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching by President Christopher Eisgruber.

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## **ASTER ZHANG '24**

Cellist Aster Zhang has performed as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral musician at venues across the nation and worldwide, including Carnegie Hall, the Tanglewood Music Festival, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Liszt Academy, and the Vienna Musikverein. She is currently a cellist in the Princeton University Orchestra and in Opus. Aster is an alumna of the Aspen Music Festival and the National Symphony Orchestra Summer Music Institute, in which she was a fellow and principal cellist. Previously, she attended the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and the Philadelphia International Music Institute, where she was a winner of the concerto competition.

Aster's special interests include the Pokémon video game franchise, niche perfume, origami, pour-over coffee, long coats, and pasta. Her current independent research focuses are the market design of online secondhand luxury fashion, fundamentals analysis of corporate fixed income markets, fraudulent trading in NFT markets, and femininity and gender performance in Russian opera.

Aster currently studies cello with Alberto Parrini and conducting with Michael Pratt at Princeton University, where she is a member of the Class of 2024 completing an A.B. in Economics with certificates in finance, applied mathematics, cello performance, and conducting. She has previously studied with Nayoung Baek, Darrett Adkins, Mihail Jojatu, Eugena Chang, Greg Beaver, and Tracy Sands.

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## PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ORCHESTRA

### Violin I

+Melody Choi  
+Haram Kim  
Nina Shih  
Soonyoung Kwon  
Kelly Kim  
Elinor Detmer  
Tienne Yu  
Miriam Waldvogel  
Evan Zhou  
Andrew Liu  
Daniel Lee  
Kodai Speich  
Eleanor Clemans-Cope  
Isabella Khan  
Natasha Wipfler-Kim  
Yuri Lee  
Victor Chu

### Violin II

^Amy Baskurt  
James Han  
Shannon Ma  
Abigail Stafford  
Andi Grene  
Andrew Chi  
Jeremy Kim  
Anthony Zhai  
Kyle Foster  
Ian Barnett  
Andrew Park  
David Opong  
Isabelle Tseng  
Katherine Monroe  
Grace Opong  
Allison Jiang  
Luca Stewart

### Violas

^Albert Zhou  
Andrew Jung  
Georgia Post  
Hannah Su  
Angelica She  
Jason Seo  
Alena Zhang  
Dhyana Mishra  
Trey Hydock  
Beth Meyers  
Dorothy Junginger \*

### Violoncello

^Brandon Cheng  
Aaron Dantzler  
Rachel Chen  
Rebecca Cho  
Will Robles  
Matthew Kendall  
Roger Brooks  
Alexandra Ebanks  
Elliott Kim  
Katherine Lee  
Jack Gallahan

### Contrabass

^Cara Turnbull  
Abhi Bansal  
Tendekai Mawokomatanda  
Bernie Levinson  
Jack Hill

### Flutes

^Heidi Gubser  
^Kate Park  
Anna Solzhenitsyn  
^Alessandro Troncoso  
Albert Zhou  
Audrey Yang \*

### Oboes and English Horn

Anya Anand  
^Daniel Choi  
^Claire Kho  
^Abigail Kim  
Sarah Choi \*

### Clarinets

Naomi Farkas  
Jacob Jackson  
^Daniel Kim  
^Dongkon Lee  
^Kevin Mo  
Kyle Tsai \*

### Bass Clarinet

Nirel Amoyaw

### Saxophone

Isaac Yi

### Bassoons

^Eleanor Ha  
^Annie Jain  
^Christopher Li  
Dirk Wels

### French Horns

^Spencer Bauman  
^Clara Conatser  
Ian Kim  
Sophia Varughese

### Trumpets

Matt Cline  
^Nicholas Lorenzen

### Trombones

^Artha Abeysinghe  
Chris Cheong

### Tuba

Wesley Sanders

### Harps

Leila Hudson  
Chloe Lau

### Timpani

Kerrie Liang  
Andrew Tao  
John Wallar

### Percussion

Shivam Kak  
Jake Klimek  
Louis Larsen  
Ian Chang  
Malik Resheidat  
Milo Salvucci

### Keyboard

Milo Salvucci

### Orchestra Committee

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