



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Victoria McCabe, Communications and External Affairs Manager
New Jersey Symphony Orchestra
973.624.3713, ext. 234
vmccabe@njsymphony.org

Jeffrey T. Dinsmore, Marketing Manager
Opera New Jersey
609.799.7700, ext. 104
jdinsmore@opera-nj.org

Shelley Roberts, Director of Press Relations
New Jersey Performing Arts Center
973.297.5834
sroberts@njpac.org

www.njsymphony.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, OPERA NEW JERSEY AND NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER ANNOUNCE DENYCE GRAVES WITHDRAWS FROM *CARMEN* PRODUCTION FOR MEDICAL REASONS 'CARMEN OF A LIFETIME' KIRSTIN CHÁVEZ TO PERFORM TITLE ROLE

FRI., FEB. 5 IN PRINCETON
SUN., FEB. 7 IN NEW BRUNSWICK
FRI., FEB. 12 IN NEWARK

Newark, NJ—The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Opera New Jersey and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) announce that mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves has withdrawn from her *Carmen* engagements due to a direct order from her doctor to rest her vocal cords for six to eight weeks.

Graves said: "I am deeply disappointed to have to withdraw from Opera New Jersey's production of *Carmen*. I arrived in New Jersey on the tail end of a bronchial virus and rehearsed with my colleagues in anticipation of a wonderful run of performances. Frustratingly, the bronchial virus got worse over the past week, and my physicians have recommended that I come out of the production in order for my body to recover completely."

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The NJSO, Opera New Jersey and NJPAC are thrilled to announce that renowned mezzo-soprano Kirstin Chávez, dubbed “the Carmen of a lifetime” by *Opera News*, will perform the title role in the collaboration’s performances. “With her dark, generous mezzo, earthy eroticism, volcanic spontaneity and smoldering charisma, Chávez has it all, including a superb command of French and a sense of humor,” *Opera News* wrote of the mezzo-soprano’s Austria performance. Chávez has drawn acclaim for her *Carmen* performances with the New York City Opera, Opera Australia, Tokyo City Opera and other international opera companies.

Conductor Joseph Rescigno, who worked with Chávez when she performed the role of Octavian in *Der Rosenkvalier*, said of the mezzo-soprano: “She was absolutely wonderful. The role is incredibly difficult, and she showed up note-perfect. She is a fantastic musician and a great actress with a beautiful stage presence. I’m very excited to work with her again.”

Performances take place on Friday, February 5, (7:30 p.m.) at the Matthews Theatre Auditorium at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, Sunday, February 7, (3 p.m.) at the State Theatre in New Brunswick and Friday, February 12 (8 p.m.) at NJPAC in Newark. Tickets range in price from \$25 to \$125 in Princeton and from \$25 to \$109 in New Brunswick and Newark.

Tickets for all performances are available for purchase from the NJSO Box Office by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or online at www.njsymphony.org. Tickets for the NJPAC engagement may also be purchased through the NJPAC Box Office by phone at 1.888.GO.NJPAC (466.5722), online at www.njpac.org or in person at 1 Center Street in Newark.

Kirstin Chávez

Mezzo-soprano **Kirstin Chávez** is one of the most riveting and significant young artists performing today. In her 2008 debut at the Sidney Opera House with Opera Australia in her signature role as Carmen, critics called her “stunning in the lead role of *Carmen*, with a confident and earthy stage presence and rich powerful voice” and praised her “voice full of the requisite Bohemian fire and earthy sex appeal, a velvety mezzo in the same black and scarlet tones as her costumes ... she is disarmingly at ease in the role.”

Chávez has become one of the definitive Carmens of the day; she has performed the role in Bizet’s *Carmen* with Oper Graz, New York City Opera, Opera Australia, Tokyo City Opera and Minnesota Opera, as well as other opera companies worldwide.

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Career highlights include the title role in *Orfeo* and Sondra Finchley in Picker’s *An American Tragedy* at the Metropolitan Opera, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* with the San Diego, Santa Fe, Indianapolis and Orlando Operas and Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte* with the Orlando and Connecticut Operas. She has performed the role of Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Florentine Opera, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* with New York City Opera and the Opera Company of Philadelphia, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* with the Atlanta Opera and Jo in Adamo’s *Little Women* with Opera Pacific.

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra is comprised of some of the country’s finest musicians. The Orchestra is proud to have Jacques Lacombe as its Music Director Designate and Neeme Järvi as its Conductor Laureate. Artistic excellence, innovative programming and community engagement are hallmarks of its mission. To best serve the people of New Jersey, the orchestra brings its programs to seven different venues throughout the state. Education and outreach programs enrich the listening experience for children and adults alike. The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Broadcast Series, presented in part by the Merck Company Foundation, is a syndicated radio program broadcast regionally and throughout North America. Continental Airlines is the official airline of the NJSO.

For more information about the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, visit www.njsymphony.org or e-mail information@njsymphony.org. Tickets are available for purchase by phone 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or on the Orchestra’s website.

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra’s programs are made possible in part by The New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, along with many other foundations, corporations and individual donors.

Opera New Jersey

Opera New Jersey is recognized nationally as a leader among regional opera companies, providing high-quality opera performances and exceptional educational offerings. Opera New Jersey seeks to stimulate, promote and satisfy interest in opera, build a strong and diverse audience base for the art form and foster the development of emerging artists. Opera New Jersey has received three prestigious Citations of Excellence from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA). The Citation is NJSCA’s highest honor and recognizes arts organizations that “exhibit the highest standards of excellence in artistry, operations, governance, public benefit and fulfillment of areas of Council priority. Opera New Jersey is honored to be the recipient of multiple National Endowment for the Arts grants in recognition of its outstanding programming. For more information, visit www.Opera-NJ.org.

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center

New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), located in the heart of an emerging downtown Newark, New Jersey, is the sixth largest performing arts center in the United States. Home of the Grammy Award-winning New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, NJPAC has been widely cited as a catalyst in the revitalization of New Jersey's largest city, attracting more than 6 million visitors (including more than one million children) in its first 12 years of operation.

Programming has been made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts and by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

NJPAC is a wheelchair accessible facility and provides assistive services such as TTY ticket purchase, designated seating, Sennheiser infrared listening devices and seat cushions. For more information, visit www.njpac.org.

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