

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra announces 2016–17 season of classical, pops, family programs Next Music Director Xian Zhang joins the NJSO



Orchestra welcomes Zhang with gala concert event on Nov 5 at NJPAC

Season opens with violinist Sarah Chang performing Piazzolla and Ravel works

Pinchas Zukerman joins NJSO for three-program Winter Festival

Blockbuster season finale features Yefim Bronfman performing Brahms

Guest artists include Kirill Gerstein, Inon Barnatan, Jennifer Koh, Stewart Goodyear

Pops series features *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Bugs Bunny at the Symphony* screenings

**NJSO Edward T. Cone Composition Institute continues partnership
with Princeton University, Edward T. Cone Foundation**

NJSO performs in six venues across the state

NEWARK, NJ (February 17, 2016)—The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and next Music Director Xian Zhang announce the Orchestra's programs for the 2016–17 concert season, Zhang's first at the helm of the NJSO. Fulfilling its mission as a statewide orchestra, the NJSO brings subscription programs to venues in Newark, New Brunswick, Princeton, Morristown,

Red Bank and Englewood, with 14 weeks of subscription classical programs, five pops weekends and three family concerts, as well as special concerts.

Zhang says: “The 2016–17 season—my first as music director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra—is colorful and exciting, and I take great pride in it. The season features a lot of big orchestral works and powerful soloists. I think each program has to stand very strongly by itself; each piece of a concert must be strong, interesting and attractive to the audience.”

Season highlights include Zhang’s first concerts as NJSO Music Director, featuring a trio of Tchaikovsky scores: Symphony No. 5, Piano Concerto No. 1 and Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*. The Orchestra celebrates the new music director’s arrival at a gala event at NJPAC in Newark on November 5, when Zhang conducts a program featuring Beethoven’s Triple Concerto, Haydn’s Symphony No. 102 and Adagio from Piano Trio No. 40 and Strauss’ Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*. Special event packages include a pre-concert cocktail party and a post-concert gala dinner.

Press are anticipating Zhang’s first season with the NJSO. WQXR placed her arrival in New Jersey in the top two of its classical stories to watch in 2016. *The New York Times* calls Zhang “a fast-rising Chinese American star,” and The Bergen Record writes: “When Xian Zhang, newly appointed conductor of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, takes up the baton for her four-year term in September, she will bring a résumé matched by few in her field. And a back story matched by no one.”

The Star-Ledger writes: “Her last performances with the orchestra in May drew raves, including from our own critic, who wrote that Zhang ‘infuses scores with vitality and detail.’” In its rave review of that appearance, the paper called Zhang “a thrilling leader who has already established a strong rapport with the orchestra. ...What can [hold an audience] is the way that Zhang infuses scores with vitality and detail and the highly engaged playing of the NJSO.”

Zhang conducts seven classical subscription weeks, leading the Orchestra in masterworks and gems of the repertoire. She cites as particular favorites a November program of linked works by Haydn and Beethoven and an April program featuring Ravel’s *Bólero*, Vaughan Williams’ Tuba Concerto, Saint-Saëns’ *Carnival of the Animals* and Tan Dun’s Internet Symphony No. 1, “Eroica.”

The season features works that will be new to NJSO audiences. The Orchestra performs for the first time Tan Dun’s Internet Symphony No. 1, “Eroica”; Lilburn’s *Aotearoa Overture*; Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* and Vaughan Williams’ Tuba Concerto.

Other highlights include Grieg’s Piano Concerto, Tchaikovsky’s Serenade for Strings, Mendelssohn’s “Italian” Symphony, Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*, Handel’s *Messiah*; Beethoven’s Third and Seventh Symphonies and Violin Concerto and Schubert’s Ninth Symphony, “Great.”

WINTER FESTIVAL

The 2017 Winter Festival focuses on the musicianship of the legendary violinist and conductor Pinchas Zukerman. Serving as the Festival’s Artistic Director, Zukerman solos in some of the repertoire’s most prized works by Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Bach across three performances in all six of the NJSO’s halls across the state; he also conducts the Orchestra in the festival’s bookends, with Venezuelan conductor Christian Vásquez leading the middle program. Offstage, Zukerman will mentor young musicians through an innovative residency with the NJSO’s education and community engagement programs.

Zukerman says: “In a festival, you can experiment with different centuries of music in a very short time. I’m delighted to be coming to work with the NJSO to make music all around the state. In a concise three weekends, we will present great music [of different eras] in concerts across New Jersey. Working with the NJSO gives the opportunity to tour the state, and I think bringing music to the people, instead of the other way around, is important and an incredible journey.”

OPENING & CLOSING WEEKENDS

For the season’s opening weekend, NJSO favorite Sarah Chang brings her “characteristic athleticism and firepower” (*The Star-Ledger*) to a sparkling pair of showpieces—Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* and Ravel’s *Tzigane*. The program also features Bernstein’s *On the Town: Three Dance Episodes* and Copland’s *Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes*.

The blockbuster season finale features Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony and pairs Zhang and pianist Yefim Bronfman for Brahms' Second Piano Concerto. "Fima [Bronfman] has such power," Zhang says, "and I am looking forward to finishing the season with him. Shostakovich's Fifth is a fantastic, fulfilling symphony."

GUEST ARTISTS

The NJSO welcomes an international roster of guest artists in the 2016–17 season, including violinists Sarah Chang and Jennifer Koh and pianists Yefim Bronfman, Kirill Gerstein, Inon Barnatan and Lukáš Vondráček. Guest conductors include Teddy Abrams, Gemma New, Hans Graf and David Danzmayr.

Continuing the Orchestra's tradition of highlighting its own musicians, Concertmaster Eric Wyrick and Principal Cello Jonathan Spitz perform Beethoven's Triple Concerto with pianist Pedja Muzijevic; Principal Tuba Derek Fenstermacher performs Vaughan Williams' Tuba Concerto.

POPS

The NJSO's five-concert pops series in Newark and New Brunswick includes screenings of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Bugs Bunny at the Symphony* with live orchestral accompaniment; Broadway veteran Michael Cavanaugh (of *Movin' Out* fame) performing Elton John and classic rock hits; a Valentine's "Dancing & Romancing" program featuring song and dance standards from the golden age of Hollywood musicals, and a celebration of Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong's best duets. The NJSO's Red Bank pops series expands to three concerts, including the *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, "Dancing & Romancing" and "Ella & Louis" programs.

FAMILY

NJSO Education & Community Engagement Conductor Jeffrey Grogan and Associate Conductor Gemma New lead the Orchestra's three-concert family series in the Victoria Theater at NJPAC in Newark; each concert has two showtimes and features special pre-concert events designed to bring young concertgoers closer to the music and music makers.

COLLABORATIONS

The NJSO partners with the Montclair State University Singers for Handel's *Messiah* and welcomes Princeton Youth Ballet for a dance-inspired family concert. The Orchestra presents programs in collaboration with NJPAC, the State Theatre and McCarter Theatre.

NJSO EDWARD T. CONE COMPOSITION INSTITUTE

The Orchestra continues the NJSO Edward T. Cone Composition Institute—a partnership between the Edward T. Cone Foundation, Princeton University and the NJSO. Promising graduate-level composers will have their work rehearsed by the NJSO and guest conductor David Robertson, participate in master classes with Institute Director Steven Mackey and receive feedback from NJSO musicians. The Institute will provide sessions with industry leaders in publishing, licensing, promotion and music preparation to give participants a foundation for a successful career in composition. It concludes with an NJSO performance of the participants' works.

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: 2016–17 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

- **Xian Zhang’s first concerts as Music Director:** Xian Zhang arrives with a bouquet of Tchaikovsky scores, sure to showcase her “dynamic presence” (*The Cincinnati Enquirer*) and the Orchestra’s artistry. The program features Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 5, Piano Concerto No. 1 and Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*. Oct 27–30.
- **Gala Celebration to Welcome Xian Zhang:** Celebrate a new chapter in the NJSO’s history, welcoming next Music Director Xian Zhang at a gala event at NJPAC in Newark. Zhang conducts a program featuring Beethoven’s Triple Concerto, Haydn’s Symphony No. 102 and Adagio from Piano Trio No. 40 and Strauss’ Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*. Special event packages include a pre-concert cocktail party and a post-concert gala dinner. Nov 5.
- **Opening Weekend:** NJSO favorite Sarah Chang brings her “characteristic athleticism and firepower” (*The Star-Ledger*) to a sparkling pair of showpieces—Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* and Ravel’s *Tzigane*. The program also features Bernstein’s *On the Town: Three Dance Episodes* and Copland’s *Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes*. Sep 23–25.
- **2017 Winter Festival: Pinchas Zukerman—Performer. Mentor. Legend.** The 2017 Winter Festival focuses on the pure and glorious musicianship of the legendary Pinchas Zukerman. Serving as the Festival’s Artistic Director, Zukerman solos in some of the repertoire’s most prized works and also conducts the Orchestra. Offstage, his devotion to mentoring young musicians is personified by an innovative residency with the NJSO’s education and community engagement programs.

Week I – Zukerman Plays Tchaikovsky. Zukerman captivates with both bow and baton in a richly melodic program featuring Tchaikovsky’s *Sérénade Mélancolique*, “Melodie” from *Souvenir d’un Lieu Cher* and Serenade for Strings, as well as Mendelssohn’s “Italian” Symphony. Jan 13–15.

Week II – Zukerman & Beethoven’s Violin Concerto. Few can surpass Pinchas Zukerman in Beethoven’s sole violin concerto: he imbues every phrase with singing tone and heartfelt expression. Jan 20–22.

Week III – Zukerman Performs Bach. A thread of bold innovation runs through Bach’s Second Violin Concerto, Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* and Beethoven’s “Eroica” Symphony, bridging three musical eras. Pinchas Zukerman is the soloist in Bach’s brilliant concerto. Jan 26–29.

- **Great works of the repertoire:** The 2016–17 season includes masterworks and gems of the classical repertoire, including Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony, First Piano Concerto and Serenade for Strings; Ravel’s *Boléro*; Brahms’ Second Piano Concerto; Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony; Grieg’s Piano Concerto; Rachmaninoff’s Second Piano Concerto; Mendelssohn’s “Italian” Symphony; Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*; Copland’s *Rodeo*; Handel’s *Messiah*; Beethoven’s Third and Seventh Symphonies and Violin Concerto and Schubert’s Ninth Symphony, “Great.”
- **Works new to the NJSO:** The season features works that will be new to NJSO audiences. The Orchestra performs for the first time Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* (Sep 23–25), Lilburn’s *Aotearoa Overture* (Oct 6–9), Tan Dun’s Internet Symphony No. 1, “Eroica” (Apr 7–9) and Vaughan Williams’ Tuba Concerto (Apr 7–9).
- **Performances statewide:** Fulfilling its mission as New Jersey’s state orchestra, the NJSO presents classical subscription programming at NJPAC in Newark, the State Theatre in New Brunswick, Richardson Auditorium in Princeton, Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown, Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank and bergenPAC in Englewood. The Orchestra performs pops concerts at NJPAC, the State Theatre and Count Basie Theatre and presents family concerts at NJPAC.
- **Collaborations:** The NJSO partners with the **Montclair State University Singers** (Handel’s *Messiah*, Dec 16–18) and welcomes **Princeton Youth Ballet** for a dance-inspired family program (May 20). The Orchestra presents programs in collaboration with **NJPAC** (Handel’s *Messiah*, Dec 18); the **State Theatre** (“Michael Cavanaugh with the NJSO: Greatest Hits of Elton John & More,” Nov 13; “*Raiders of the Lost Ark* with NJSO,” Jan 8; “Dancing & Romancing,” Feb 12; “Ella & Louis,” Apr 23; “Warner Bros. presents *Bugs Bunny at the Symphony*,” June 4) and **McCarter Theatre** (Handel’s *Messiah*, Dec 16).

- **NJSO Edward T. Cone Composition Institute:** The Orchestra continues the NJSO Edward T. Cone Composition Institute—a partnership between the Edward T. Cone Foundation, Princeton University and the NJSO. Promising graduate-level composers will have their work rehearsed by the NJSO and guest conductor David Robertson, participate in master classes with Institute Director Steven Mackey and receive feedback from NJSO musicians. The Institute will provide sessions with industry leaders in publishing, licensing, promotion and music preparation to give participants a foundation for a successful career in composition. It concludes with an NJSO performance of the participants’ works. July 11–16.

GUEST AND FEATURED ARTISTS

The NJSO welcomes world-class soloists—superstars, rising young virtuosos and gifted players from the Orchestra itself—to headline its concert programs.

Guest artists:

- “No question, Ms. Chang is a phenomenon,” *The New York Times* wrote of **Sarah Chang**. The violin superstar opens the NJSO season with a pair of showpieces—Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* and Ravel’s *Tzigane*. Sep 23–25.
- *The Chicago Tribune* calls **Yefim Bronfman** “a marvel of digital dexterity, warmly romantic sentiment and jaw-dropping bravura.” He closes the NJSO season with Brahms’ Second Piano Concerto. June 8–11.
- *San Jose Mercury News* writes that violinist **Jennifer Koh** “combines a questing spirit with tonal refinement and a kind of fearless virtuosity.” She returns to the NJSO for Sibelius’ Violin Concerto. May 11–14.
- Praised as “alarmingly gifted” by *Classical Review*, pianist **Kirill Gerstein** scales the towering peak of the “Rach 2,” one of the most loved concertos in the repertoire. Feb 23–26.
- *The Chicago Tribune* deems pianist **Inon Barnatan** “one of the rarest things nowadays, an intellectual virtuoso who is also a poet.” Barnatan returns to the NJSO for Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21. Nov 26–27.
- **Lukáš Vondráček**, who *Stuttgarter Zeitung* calls “one of the greatest pianistic talents of our times,” takes on Shostakovich’s intense First Piano Concerto. Mar 23–26.
- NPR writes: “**Teddy Abrams** is a fresh face in the classical music world.” The 28-year-old Louisville Orchestra music director conducts the NJSO’s opening weekend featuring Chang. Sep 23–25.
- “**Simon Trpčeski** is a remarkable pianist, smartly blending restraint, sense of tonal color and knowing when and how much to unleash bravado, in measured doses,” *The Los Angeles Times* writes of the pianist who performs Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto on Xian Zhang’s debut program as NJSO music director. Oct 27–30.
- *The Boston Post* hails **Stefan Jackiw** for playing that is “striking for its intelligence and sensitivity.” The violinist returns to the NJSO for Prokofiev’s Second Violin Concerto. Apr 27–30.
- *The Los Angeles Times* calls pianist **Stewart Goodyear** “a phenomenon.” Goodyear joins the NJSO for Grieg’s Piano Concerto. Oct 6–9.
- **Gemma New** “is unusually good. She conducted with total assurance and understanding,” *Christchurch Press* writes of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra music director. She conducts a program of Grieg and Sibelius (Oct 6–9), pops performances featuring song and dance standards of the golden age of Hollywood musicals (Feb 10–12) and a family concert featuring Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* (Feb 11).

NJSO artists:

- Concertmaster **Eric Wyrick** and Principal Cello **Jonathan Spitz** perform Beethoven’s Triple Concerto with pianist Pedja Muzijevic. Nov 3–6.
- Principal Tuba **Derek Fenstermacher** performs Vaughan Williams’ Tuba Concerto. Apr 7–9.

NJSO POPS

The NJSO performs a five-concert pops series on Saturday evenings at NJPAC in Newark and, in collaboration with the State Theatre, on Sunday afternoons at the State Theatre in New Brunswick. The Orchestra expands to three pops concerts on Friday evenings at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank.

- **Michael Cavanaugh with the NJSO: Greatest Hits of Elton John & More:** From classic Elton John hits “Tiny Dancer,” “Bennie and the Jets” and “Rocket Man” to classic rock favorites like “Hotel California” and “American Pie,” Broadway star Michael Cavanaugh entertains with a high-energy show that will have you singing along! *Maryland Theatre Guide* says, “For those of us that remember the classic versions of these songs, Cavanaugh has reinvented them into something that improves upon the originals.” Nov 12–13 in Newark and New Brunswick. *The Nov 13 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre in New Brunswick.*
- **Raiders of the Lost Ark with NJSO:** Indiana Jones is heading for New Jersey in January with his whip, his hat and a live orchestra! John Williams’ epic score—performed live by the NJSO—enhances the on-screen action as Indy (Harrison Ford) goes on a quest to recover the legendary Ark of the Covenant and save the world in this timeless classic from Steven Spielberg. Jan 6–8 in Red Bank, Newark and New Brunswick. *The Jan 8 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre in New Brunswick.*
- **Dancing & Romancing:** The timeless elegance and romance of the golden age of Hollywood musicals will sweep you off your feet with song and dance standards inspired by Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly and “the queen of tap dancing” herself, Eleanor Powell. You’ll be dancing cheek to cheek by the time the concert is over. Feb 10–12 in Red Bank, Newark and New Brunswick. *The Feb 12 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre in New Brunswick.*
- **Ella & Louis:** Byron Stripling and Marva Hicks’ chemistry lights up the stage as they take you through the most famous duets and solos recorded by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. From “Love is Here to Stay” to “Just One of Those Things” and highlights from Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, they recreate one of the most memorable collaborations in music history while capturing everyone’s hearts along the way. Apr 21–23 in Red Bank, Newark and New Brunswick. *The Apr 23 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre in New Brunswick.*
- **Warner Bros. presents Bugs Bunny at the Symphony:** Bugs Bunny is back and better than ever! Celebrate **Looney Tunes** and its legendary stars, including Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Sylvester, Wile E. Coyote, Road Runner and, of course, our very favorite “wascally wabbit.” Enjoy classics including *Long-Haired Hare* (in its first East Coast concert appearance on the big screen), *What’s Opera, Doc?* and *Baton Bunny*, alongside new Warner Bros. 3D theatrical shorts *Coyote Falls* and *Rabid Rider*. Kids of all ages will enjoy hearing the extraordinary musical scores performed live and perfectly in-sync with all the on-screen action. June 3–4 in Newark and New Brunswick. *The June 4 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre in New Brunswick.*

NJSO FAMILY SERIES

The young and the young at heart will enjoy discovering the instruments of the orchestra, great stories told through music and rich orchestral repertoire featured in this magical and interactive series, which the NJSO presents on Saturday afternoons in the Victoria Theater at NJPAC in Newark. *The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey presents the NJSO Family Series.*

- **Pirates on the High Seas:** Ahoy, matey! Join the NJSO as we set sail on a swashbuckling, sea-faring odyssey, navigating uncharted waters from dawn ‘til dusk. We’ll keep our eyes peeled for sea monsters, brewing storms and pilfering pirates as we explore Hans Zimmer’s *Pirates of the Caribbean*, Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* and Richard Rodgers’ *Victory at Sea*, so come armed with a spirit of adventure—and maybe an eye patch! Nov 26.
- **Peter and the Wolf:** Introduce your family to all the characters of Prokofiev’s classic tale! The duck, bird, cat, wolf, hunters, Peter and his Grandfather are each represented by a specific theme and instrument, making this a wonderful introduction to the instruments of the orchestra, as well as a charming story. Feb 11.
- **Let’s Dance:** Who doesn’t love a dance party? Whether you turn pirouettes, do some stepping or tap your way across the kitchen, there’s plenty of rhythm to get your feet moving. Princeton Youth Ballet joins the NJSO on stage as we turn up the volume and dance the afternoon away to the sounds of Tchaikovsky, Bernstein and more. May 20.

Pre-Concert Adventures—specially created interactive programs perfect for the whole family—are an opportunity to learn more about the music, participate in fun activities and play games in the NJPAC lobby an hour before each concert.

NON-SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS

- **Handel's *Messiah*:** One of the most magnificent achievements in music, Handel's *Messiah* is an annual holiday season must for music lovers everywhere. Hearing its perfection is always a moving, emotional and resonant experience. George Manahan conducts the masterwork in Princeton and Newark. Dec 16 & 18. *The Dec 16 performance at the Richardson Auditorium in Princeton is presented in collaboration with the McCarter Theatre; the Dec 18 performance is presented in collaboration with the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.*

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Named “a vital, artistically significant musical organization” by *The Wall Street Journal*, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra embodies that vitality through its statewide presence and critically acclaimed performances, education partnerships and unparalleled access to music and the Orchestra's superb musicians.

The NJSO welcomes new Music Director Xian Zhang in the 2016–17 season. The Orchestra presents classical, pops and family programs, as well as outdoor summer concerts and special events. Embracing its legacy as a statewide orchestra, the NJSO is the resident orchestra of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark and regularly performs at the State Theatre in New Brunswick, Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, Richardson Auditorium in Princeton, Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown and bergenPAC in Englewood. Partnerships with New Jersey arts organizations, universities and civic organizations remain a key element of the Orchestra's statewide identity.

In addition to its lauded artistic programming, the NJSO presents a suite of education and community engagement programs that promote meaningful, lifelong engagement with live music. Programs include school-time Concerts for Young People performances, NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles and El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project). The NJSO's REACH (Resources for Education and Community Harmony) chamber music program annually brings original programs—designed and performed by NJSO musicians—to a variety of settings, reaching as more than 22,000 people in nearly all of New Jersey's 21 counties.

For more information about the NJSO, visit www.njsymphony.org or email information@njsymphony.org. Tickets are available for purchase by phone 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or on the Orchestra's website.

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PRESS CONTACT

National & NYC Press Representative:

Dan Dutcher, Dan Dutcher Public Relations | 917.566.8413 | dan@dandutcherpr.com

Regional Press Representative:

Victoria McCabe, NJSO Communications and External Affairs | 973.735.1715 | vmccabe@njsymphony.org

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