

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OPENS 2013–14 SEASON WITH INNOVATIVE PERFORMANCE OF DVOŘÁK'S 'NEW WORLD' SYMPHONY PRESENTED WITH SPIRITUALS BETWEEN MOVEMENTS



GERI ALLEN DEBUTS NJSO COMMISSION IN PROGRAM CELEBRATING 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MLK'S 'I HAVE A DREAM'

Fri, Sept 27, at NJPAC in Newark

Sat, Sept 28, at the State Theatre in New Brunswick

Sun, Sept 29, at NJPAC in Newark

NEWARK, NJ (September 5, 2013)—Music Director Jacques Lacombe and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra open the NJSO's 2013–14 concert season on Friday, September 27, with "Promise of the New World" at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark. The concert program features renowned jazz pianist and composer Geri Allen in a program that pays tribute to the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. The NJSO will give the world premiere of Allen's *Stone & Streams*—an NJSO commission presented as part of the Orchestra's New Jersey Roots Project—featuring the composer as soloist and the Rev. Dr. M. William Howard Jr. as narrator. The program also showcases vocal ensemble Afro Blue, famed for reaching the final four on NBC's reality-show competition "The Sing-Off."

The program's centerpiece is Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World," which the NJSO will perform with spirituals sung in between movements. "Since I've known that symphony, I've always found it fascinating to find traces of spirituals in it. I don't know if the symphony performed next to spirituals has ever been done," Lacombe says. "It's a powerful thing to perform Dvořák's music back-to-back with some of the original inspirations that he had. Combining both worlds together is going to connect the two ideas artistically and politically and bring them closer together, which

in the end goes back to Martin Luther King's message of unity. [The concert] is all about aspirations and finding new ways of living together."

The program also features two works by Duke Ellington—*Three Black Kings* and *New World A-Comin'*. "When I started playing with the idea of commemorating the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's speech," Lacombe says, "I thought of Ellington's *Three Black Kings*, which includes a movement dedicated to Martin Luther King."

Entering its fourth season, the New Jersey Roots Project celebrates the music of composers who were born in New Jersey or whose time spent in the Garden State significantly influenced their artistic identity. Allen, a New Jersey native and Montclair resident, will perform the piano solo for the world premiere of *Stone & Streams*, which was inspired by King's message.

Performances take place on Friday, September 27, (7 pm) and Sunday, September 29, (3 pm) at NJPAC in Newark and Saturday, September 28, (8 pm) at the State Theatre in New Brunswick.

Opening Night Celebration festivities begin at 5 pm on September 27 at NJPAC. For event information and reservations, contact Alice Golembo, Senior Manager of Special Events, at 973.735.1729 or agolembo@njsymphony.org. For more information, visit www.njsymphony.org/openingnight.

THE PROGRAM

Opening Night: Promise of the New World

Friday, September 27 at 7 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Saturday, September 28 at 8 pm | State Theatre in New Brunswick

Sunday, September 29 at 3 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Jacques Lacombe, conductor

Geri Allen, piano

Reverend Dr. M. William Howard Jr., narrator

Afro Blue, vocal ensemble

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

ELLINGTON *Three Black Kings*

ALLEN *Stone & Streams* (World Premiere)*

ELLINGTON *New World A-Comin'*

DVOŘÁK Symphony No. 9, "From the New World"

* *Stone & Streams* is presented as part of the New Jersey Roots Project.

THE ARTISTS

Jacques Lacombe, conductor

A remarkable conductor whose artistic integrity and rapport with orchestras have propelled him to international stature, Jacques Lacombe has been Music Director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra since 2010 and Orchestre Symphonique de Trois-Rivières since 2006. He was previously Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and Music Director of orchestra and opera with the Philharmonie de Lorraine.

Lacombe has garnered critical praise for his creative programming and leadership of the NJSO. The Orchestra's acclaimed "Man & Nature" Winter Festivals have featured innovative programs, including a realization of Scriabin's "color organ." He created the New Jersey Roots Project, presenting music by New Jersey composers. *The New York Times* wrote that "It was an honor to be in the hall" for Lacombe and the NJSO's performance at the 2012 Spring for Music Festival at Carnegie Hall.

This season, Lacombe’s NJSO highlights include the world premieres of an NJSO commission by Geri Allen and a new work by Lowell Liebermann and the U.S. premiere of Tan Dun’s Earth Concerto. He conducts the Montréal, Québec and Columbus symphony orchestras, returns to the Opéra de Monte-Carlo for *La Favorite* with tenor Juan Diego Florez and leads Chausson’s *Le roi Arthur* in Strasbourg.

He has appeared with the Cincinnati, Toronto, Vancouver and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras, National Arts Centre Orchestra of Ottawa. He is a frequent guest conductor in France, Spain and Australia and has led tours and recordings with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

Opera highlights include all-star productions of *La bohème* and *Tosca* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, numerous productions with the Deutsche Oper Berlin and engagements with the Metropolitan Opera and opera houses in Marseille and Turin. He has recorded for the CPO and Analekta labels; he has recorded Orff’s *Carmina Burana* and Janáček’s Suite from *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the NJSO. His performances have been broadcast on PBS, the CBC, Mezzo TV and Arte TV, among others.

Born in Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Québec, Lacombe attended the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal and Hochschule für Musik in Vienna. He was named a Chevalier de l’Ordre national du Québec in 2012 and a Member of the Order of Canada in 2013—among the highest civilian honors in the country.

Geri Allen, piano

Geri Allen is the quintessence of what a present-day mainstream jazz pianist should be. Versed in a variety of modern jazz styles from bop to free, Allen steers a middle course in her own music, speaking in a cultivated and distinctive voice and playing with a spontaneity and melodic gift that transcends rote imitation.

Allen received her early jazz education at the famed Cass Technical High School in Detroit, where her mentor was trumpeter Marcus Belgrave. She earned her bachelor’s degree in jazz studies from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and then studied with bop pianist Kenny Barron in New York City before earning a master’s degree in ethnomusicology from the University of Pittsburgh. In the mid-80s, Allen formed an association with the Brooklyn “M-Base” crowd surrounding alto saxophonist Steve Coleman, appearing on several of Coleman’s albums. Her own first album, “The Printmakers,” showcased her more avant-garde tendencies.

Down Beat magazine critics’ polls named Allen the top Talent Deserving Wider Recognition among pianists in the 1993 and 1994. Her significant collaborators have included saxophonists Oliver Lake, Arthur Blythe and Julius Hemphill; trumpeters Lester Bowie and Wallace Roney and singer Betty Carter.

Notable recordings include “Etudes” with Charlie Haden and Paul Motia; “Life of a Song” with bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette (for Telarc); “Three Pianos for Jimi,” a tribute to Jimi Hendrix she recorded with two other pianists—brothers Mark and Scott Batson (for Douglas Records); and “Flying Toward the Sound,” a solo album celebrating the contributions and influence of Cecil Taylor, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock (for Motéma).

Allen lives in New Jersey and serves as an associate professor of music at the University of Michigan.

Rev. Dr. M. William Howard Jr., narrator

From his early life in Americus, Georgia, to the present, the Reverend Dr. M. William Howard Jr. has sought to apply his faith toward transforming the human condition. As the elected youth leader of the Sumter County (GA) Voters League in 1961, he was engaged in the first massive voter education and registration drive in Southwest Georgia. As a national staff member of the (Dutch) Reformed Church in America, Moderator of the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches, President of the National Council of Churches and President of the American Committee on Africa, Howard was deeply involved in human-rights campaigns throughout the world. In 1979, he ministered to U.S. personnel being held hostage in Iran.

He turned to more domestic concerns when he assumed the presidency of New York Theological Seminary, a graduate school devoted to leadership development for church workers in the New York metropolitan region.

Howard has been the pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Newark. Bethany Cares, Inc., founded shortly after his tenure began in 2000, is a community-development corporation that enhances the church's outreach capacity and serves families and young people from all walks of life.

Howard has served on the boards of the National Urban League, The Independent Sector and Children's Defense Fund, among others. He chaired Newark Mayor Cory Booker's transition team; he chaired the New Jersey Death Penalty Study Commission, which led to the state becoming the first to abolish the death penalty since it was reauthorized in 1976. He is a founding member of the Newark Community Foundation and chair of the Rutgers University Board of Governors. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has received numerous citations, awards, honorary degrees and keys to cities.

Howard is an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches and a graduate of Morehouse and Princeton Theological Seminary.

Afro Blue

Afro Blue, Howard University's premier vocal jazz ensemble, was formed by Professor Connaitre Miller in 2002. The group performs in a "vocal big band" style similar to Lambert, Hendricks and Ross; the Manhattan Transfer; New York Voices and Take 6 while adding their own unique sound. Since its inception, this dynamic jazz choir has quickly gained national attention; the group was selected to participate in NBC's reality-show competition "The Sing-Off," making it to the top four and becoming a fan favorite.

In 10 years, Afro Blue has received 11 *DownBeat* Magazine Student Music Awards. In June 2011, the Afro Blue Reunion Jazz Choir performed with the legendary Bobby McFerrin as part of the DC Jazz Festival. Afro Blue has participated in The Rosslyn Jazz Festival, several programs at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Celebrate Brooklyn concert series and a program commemorating the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

In 2012, Afro Blue received The Washington Area Musicians Association (WAMA) "Wammies" awards for a cappella ensemble and video. Recent and upcoming highlights include a tour to Cleveland, a performance with the National Symphony Orchestra, a jazz festival in Wyoming and a concert with Geri Allen at the historic Apollo Theatre in New York.

Afro Blue has released two recordings and appears with jazz violinist John Blake Jr. on "Motherless Child," which mines the rich repository of the African-American Spiritual songbook and contains new jazz arrangements of timeless and inspirational works.

High-resolution artist photos and bios are available at www.njsymphony.org/pressroom.

THE 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.

Under the bold leadership of Music Director Jacques Lacombe, the NJSO 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 the three-ensemble Greater Newark Youth Orchestras, school-time Concerts for Young People performances and multiple initiatives that provide and promote in-school instrumental instruction. The NJSO's Resources for Education and Community Harmony (REACH) chamber music program annually brings original programs—designed and performed by NJSO musicians—to a variety of settings, reaching as many as 17,000 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.

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra's programs are made possible in part by The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, along with many other foundations, corporations and individual donors. United is the official airline of the NJSO.

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