

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LAUNCHES FIRST FULL SEASON OF NJSO CHAMPS AT UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOL IN NEWARK EL SISTEMA-INSPIRED 'CHARACTER, ACHIEVEMENT AND MUSIC PROJECT' HAD SUCCESSFUL PILOT IN SPRING 2013



CHAMPS TO PERFORM AT NJSO FAMILY CONCERT ON NOV 30 AT NJPAC IN NEWARK

NEWARK, NJ (November 15, 2013)—Following a successful six-week pilot program last spring, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and University Heights Charter School (UHCS) in Newark present the first full school year of NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project)—an intensive education program inspired by the Venezuelan social change and music education program El Sistema. NJSO CHAMPS seeks to develop students' goal-directed behavior and skills to foster social and academic success, improving students' self-esteem, academic achievement and lifelong character traits like perseverance and leadership.

This school year, 50 UHCS students in grades four through seven are receiving intensive after-school instruction—including group string lessons and full ensemble rehearsals—for two hours per day, three days per week. Professional musicians serve as teaching artists, giving violin, viola and cello lessons. NJSO Education & Community Engagement Conductor Jeffrey Grogan leads orchestra rehearsals and concerts.

"A lot of people don't get to express themselves through an instrument—this gives me the opportunity to do that," says UHCS fifth grader Shantreea J., now in her second year in the program.

In a special performance, CHAMPS will join the NJSO on stage for Variations on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" at the NJSO Family concert "Shooting for the Stars" on Saturday, November 30, at 2 pm at NJPAC in Newark.

Parent Felicia Johnson, whose fourth-grade daughter, Shanasia, is in her first year of CHAMPS, says: “The program is just awesome because it takes our urban children and teaches them that there is something else out there. It teaches diversity, teaches our children that there is more to music than just the videos they see. They don’t know all the work that is put into these things—it starts here. Responsibility is just one of the things Shanasia is learning, and she is so excited about this. To be a part of something positive is a beautiful feeling, and that’s what she is feeling right now. I can’t wait [for CHAMPS’ performance at NJPAC]—I’m so excited. As a parent, to say my daughter has a violin concert is a ‘wow’ moment.”

“It is a testament to the hard work and discipline of the students—and to the amazing school culture at UHCS—that after only a few weeks of instruction, our CHAMPS are ready to take the stage with our Orchestra,” NJSO Vice President of Education & Community Engagement Marshall Jones Kumahor says. “By design, NJSO CHAMPS is about nurturing a community of young scholars and budding leaders, and the determination the students have already shown—both on and off their instruments!—is nothing short of inspiring.”

UHCS Executive Director Misha Simmonds says: “[CHAMPS] is an intense program; it’s the longest after-school program we have, and it’s through that commitment and duration that students are accelerating in their capacity to learn music. They’re learning not only the mechanics of the violin but also the notation, theory and history. There is also a big character-development piece that [helps students understand] how developing their skills on the [violin, viola and cello] can help them become better people. It’s difficult to learn an instrument. It’s something that requires perseverance and grit and coming back to it, practicing over and over. Students are already commenting that the confidence they have from persevering with [their instrument] is helping them in their classwork. It’s also helping them in their capacity to work with each other.”

Al T., a UHCS sixth grader now in his second year of CHAMPS, says: “[Teamwork] to me is very peaceful, because everybody is working together. Sometimes we’re off track, but we just correct it real quick.”

“The partnership with NJSO we have is really important for our students’ development,” Simmonds says. “It aligns so well with our mission for our students, which is to develop their character, scholarship and leadership. The El Sistema model the NJSO is using [in CHAMPS] really speaks to that whole child.”

Following the six-week pilot last spring, CHAMPS performed a feature piece alongside students in the Greater Newark Youth Orchestra at the NJSO youth-orchestra family’s concert in May.

Learn more and view a video of CHAMPS in action at www.njsymphony.org/champs.

The NJSO gratefully acknowledges NJSO CHAMPS donors for their generous support of this program: TD Charitable Foundation, The Leavens Foundation, Marjorie Bunnell Charitable Fund, Investors Bank Foundation, The Merck Company Foundation, Wells Fargo Foundation, the Turrell Fund, Victoria Foundation and an anonymous individual donor.

NOVEMBER 30 CONCERT

NJSO Education & Community Engagement Conductor Jeffrey Grogan leads the “Shooting for the Stars” NJSO Family concert on Saturday, November 30, at 2 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark. Family series artist-in-residence Ben Steinfeld—co-founder and artistic director of the critically lauded Fiasco Theater—hosts. Steinfeld, who has delighted NJSO family audiences in past seasons, brings his trademark humor and theatrics to the concert.

“Shooting for the Stars” features music from *Star Wars*, Holst’s *The Planets*, Strauss’ *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (featured in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*), Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 and Mozart’s Symphony No. 41—pieces well-known to children and adults alike. NJSO first violinist Darryl Kubian performs on the theremin—an unusual electronic musical instrument not often seen or heard in the concert hall—on *Star Trek Through the Years*. NJSO CHAMPS will join the Orchestra on stage for Variations on “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”

Interactive Pre-Concert Adventures begin at 1 pm in the Prudential Hall lobby; patrons can meet Grogan and Steinfeld at a post-concert event.

Tickets are \$10 for children and \$20 for adults, available for purchase online at www.njsymphony.org or by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476).

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey sponsors the 2013–14 NJSO Family Series.

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.

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

###