

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and Gallery Aferro partner for ‘Artist Box’ initiative

Gallery artists will attend NJSO performances at NJPAC, blog about their experiences throughout the season

Project will culminate in May 2015 with Gallery Aferro exhibit of works inspired by the artists’ concert experiences

NEWARK, NJ (October 8, 2014)—The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and Gallery Aferro will partner for Artist Box, a unique initiative that will bring artists from the Newark-based art gallery to NJSO performances in Newark throughout the 2014–15 season and culminate in May with a Gallery Aferro exhibit of works inspired by the artists’ concert experiences.

The NJSO will welcome 10 of Gallery Aferro’s artists to the NJSO’s 2014–15 Friday-night classical series at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark. The artists—Alex Cumming, Andrew Demirijian, Alexandra Desipris, Sophia Domeville, Dominique Duroseau, Jerry Gant, Sheikia S. Norris, Vaughn Spann, Amanda Thackray and Adrienne Wheeler—will enjoy the performances from seats in the audience. They will share content about their concert experiences on the gallery’s website, www.aferro.org, and the NJSO’s website, www.njsymphony.org, throughout the season.

“We are thrilled about our new partnership with Gallery Aferro for Artist Box,” says NJSO President & CEO James Roe. “A vital part of the Orchestra’s mission is collaborating with diverse organizations in Newark, and this project is an exciting way to explore the relationship between musical and visual arts and to engage with audiences and artists in new and thoughtful ways. We are looking forward to seeing the creativity of these talented artists as they respond to our performances this season.”

Gallery Aferro Director Emma Wilcox says: “It’s going to be so much fun. We are excited to see which great pieces of orchestral music will be inspire the Newark artists. All the artists are especially looking forward to the #OrchestraYou event in March.”

Cumming, an artist and musician in his early 20s who is part of Newark’s local Oculus Art Collaborative, says, “I really want to use this experience to integrate the different parts of the scene: the experience of music and the fine artists.”

The NJSO’s five-concert Friday-night series at NJPAC starts on October 10 with the Orchestra’s Opening Night program, *Carmina Burana*. Other series highlights include:

- The first performance of the 2015 “Sounds of Shakespeare” Winter Festival features interpretations of *Romeo and Juliet* by Tchaikovsky, Gounod and Prokofiev and the return of actors from The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, who will perform scenes from the Shakespeare tragedy. (Jan 9)
- Principal Flute Bart Feller solos in Mozart’s Flute and Harp Concerto. (Feb 27)
- Pianist Kirill Gerstein performs Bernstein’s Symphony No. 2, “The Age of Anxiety,” on a program that also includes Mahler’s Symphony No. 1, “Titan”; the NJSO’s second #OrchestraYou follows the performance. (Mar 13)
- Christoph König returns to conduct a Czech-inspired program of works by Dvořák, Ravel and Dohnányi. (Apr 24)

Full series information is available at www.njsymphony.org/subscribe/subscription/24.

THE ARTISTS

Alex Cumming is a young artist and musician with Oculus Art Collaborative, a collective of recent art-school graduates who regularly create experimental projects throughout the tri-state area. Cumming was raised in Essex County and works across media, including painting, sculpture, film, music and poetry, to explore ascetic and anarchist ideology.

Andrew Demirjian combines computer programming with audiovisual production to create experimental portraits that explore the relationships between psychology and time. Conceptual systems of juxtaposition, categorization and randomness replace conventional narrative arcs and character development. Demirjian draws upon his experience as a musician and filmmaker to produce interactions between sound and image that respond to and shape one another. His most recent work has been developing algorithms for audiovisuals that are inspired by organic systems and adaptive environments. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions and galleries including Rush Arts, the White Box gallery, Harvestworks, LMAK Projects, The Roger Smith Hotel and The Center for Book Arts in Manhattan. He has participated in international exhibitions in Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Korea, the Netherlands, Poland and Russia. Demirjian received a 2013 fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, fellowship from the MacDowell Colony, Puffin Foundation grant and Artslink grant, and he has been awarded artist residencies at Eyebeam Art and Technology Center, LMCC Swing Space, The Clocktower Gallery, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, SUMU, Diapason Gallery and CYLAND Media Art Laboratory.

Alexandra Desipris is a Newark-based artist of Greek descent whose work focuses on deconstructing and examining ritual, religion and ethnicity filtered through her own experience. An intense interest in liminal positions, binaries and our relationship to the unknown drives her work. Her youth spent in Byzantine-style churches is apparent in her limited palate of colors and extensive use of gold and gold leaf throughout her paintings and objects. She was an artist in residence at Gallery Aferro and has shown at various galleries throughout Newark, including the Gateway Project and Solos Project House.

Sophia Domeville is a Haitian-American abstract expressionist painter and a member of the Essential Elements Creative Collective currently in residence at Gallery Aferro. Her passion for giving back to the community includes workshop series taught for youth at Monroe College Bronx campus, Bergen Community College and Safe Space Organization in Queens. This year, Domeville introduced her new 12-week art program, "The Dreamers Project," a comprehensive program that combines art history, community activism, leadership skills and self-awareness through art. She is currently facilitating "The Dreamers Project" with the I Have a Dream Foundation scholarship program in Newark.

Dominique Duroseau is an emerging artist working across media in sculpture and printmaking. Her work approach bundles questions, by abstracting aspects of our lives through the manifestation of concepts and emotions. She is heavily inspired by two literary works: Jean Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos* and Etzer Vilaire's *Dix Hommes Noirs*. These writers embody existentialism and provide a direction, yet varied routes or paths emerge. Duroseau avoids literal depictions of gender, race and the use of color; specificity becomes a distraction to hinder insightful observations or our relationship with that which we observe.

Jerry Gant is a multi-disciplined visual fine artist, arts educator, activist and self-driven historian. Gant seeks to create work that reflects the human spirit of the community's people, while challenging conventional thinking. The Newark native has been a fixture on the arts and culture scene for more than 25 years. He has cultivated projects "outside the cube" to heighten the exposure of a fine art aesthetic in urban communities. Before there was a formal mural arts program in Newark, Gant was developing a repertoire of murals that could be viewed in every ward in the city. In the past decade, he has been commissioned to create permanent public artworks by Verizon, NJ Transit and the Trust for Public Land, with the latter featuring 13 sculptures installed at Nat Turner Park, the largest city-owned park in Newark.

Sheikia S. Norris, lyrically known as Purple Haze or Haze, was born in the birthplace of hip-hop, The Bronx. Currently a Newark resident, Haze challenges audiences with a natural ease and a voice that inspires audience movement and

positive thoughts. She is a member of the Essential Elements Creative Collective currently in residence at Gallery Aferro. Enthusiasts of the art form appreciate her energy, impeccable flow and clever deliverance of truth. Haze has mastered her own rich style of spitting lyrics with both power and substance. As the Hip Hop 101 Edutainment Program Facilitator & Recruiter for the Hip Hop Culture Center, a member of the Rhyme Like A Girl Collective (Freestyle Union) and up-and-coming curator for Hip Hop art and performance, Haze is a diversified talent poised for success in a host of arenas. She is recording her EP, "pH Balance," for a release this year.

Vaughn Spann was born in Orlando, Florida, and raised in Orange, New Jersey. He has used art to develop his own visual language defining his opinion on politics, pop culture and history. Growing up in various urban environments has sharpened his understanding of identity and social discourse, which is reflected within his work. Spann is a BFA candidate at Rutgers State University. His work has been shown at Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Newark Museum, Rupert Ravens Contemporary Gallery, Gallery Aferro and the annual Newark Open Doors.

Amanda Thackray is a New Jersey-based visual artist and Gallery Aferro artist-in-residence whose work focuses on drawings, prints, conceptual artists' books, installations and multimedia experiments. She is a Scholar of Advanced Studies of the Book at the Center for Book Arts in New York and the printmaking shop technician at Princeton University. Her work is most inspired by the human body and its relationship with the natural world. Indulging a deep connection with process and the ephemeral, Thackray's work is highly detailed, often utilizing minute repetitive mark-making techniques or actions. Thackray has attended residencies at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, VT, and the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, NY, where she garnered a book production grant; she was Printshop Coordinator at Pilchuck Glass School in Seattle, WA, in 2012. In addition to showing her work regularly in New York, New Jersey and nationally, she often curates shows and has lectured at the New Jersey Book Arts Symposium, Brown University and Women's Studio Workshop. Thackray's works are in more than a dozen national and international public collections, including those of the Newark Public Library, Yale University and Mediatheque Andre Malraux in Strasbourg, France.

Adrienne Wheeler is an artist, independent curator, arts educator and advocate for social justice. Her art provides a platform for expressing her discontent with injustices, particularly those affecting the lives of women and children. Informed by various Central and West African ancestral and spiritual practices and cultural traditions, she explores the role that these traditions (misunderstood, marginalized and often demonized) have played in resistance to the inhumanity of slavery and other forms of oppression. Her process involves collecting fallen timber with anthropomorphic and sculptural shapes, which when wrapped and bound with fabric or other materials are transformed into healing, guardian and carnival figures, as well as conceptual wall sculptures and site-specific installations.

GALLERY AFERRO

Gallery Aferro is a Newark-based nonprofit community arts organization founded in 2003 by artists Evonne M. Davis and Emma Wilcox. The gallery has received three consecutive Citations of Excellence from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and has been described by *Inside Jersey* as offering "a dizzying array of contemporary art." Funder Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has praised the gallery's "expansive vision, impact in Newark as well as regionally and even internationally" and its "exemplary mentoring opportunities for young artists." The mission of Gallery Aferro is to bring cultural education and aesthetic engagement with contemporary issues to all people equally and to create an environment where artists can gather and share physical and intellectual resources. The gallery offers an average of 12 to 15 rotating on- and off-site exhibitions of local, national and international artists annually; an array of events including screenings and artist talks; a year-round artist residency program; an expanding variety of educational offerings; a publication line; a gift shop and a public art initiative. This year, Gallery Aferro is renovating two additional adjacent 19th-century buildings on Market Street, an expansion that when complete will comprise a 90,000-square-foot cultural hub.

The gallery has occupied a leadership role in Newark's local arts community through its presentations of diverse artist concepts across media; despite being a fairly young organization, it has frequently served as the sole representation for Newark and New Jersey arts within larger national curatorial initiatives, including nationwide screening events in 2009 organized by PPOW gallery in New York and the Marfa Dialogues on Climate Change organized by Ballroom Marfa in

Texas with the support of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. A key strength of the gallery is its affinity for collaborations with a wide range of other cultural organizations and nonprofits such as the Newark Museum, Montclair Museum, Print Making Center of New Jersey, Aljira: a Center for Contemporary Art, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art and Center for Contemporary Art in Bedminster. More information is available at www.aferro.org.

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 NJSO Youth Orchestras, school-time Concerts for Young People performances and multiple offerings—including the El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project)—that provide and promote in-school instrumental instruction as part of the NJSO Academy. 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 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.

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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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