

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BBC National Orchestra of Wales names next NJSO Music Director Xian Zhang its Principal Guest Conductor



Zhang becomes NJSO music director, assumes BBC NOW guest position in September 2016

NEWARK, NJ (December 1, 2015)—The BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales (BBC NOW) today announced that internationally renowned Chinese-American conductor Xian Zhang—the NJSO’s next music director—has been appointed BBC NOW’s Principal Guest Conductor, effective September 1, 2016, for an initial three year period.

During Zhang’s three-year term as BBC NOW’s principal guest, she will conduct the orchestra in annual concerts at BBC Hoddinott Hall, St David’s Hall and Brangwyn Hall, with repertoire featuring Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Rimsky Korsakov and Berlioz in her first season. BBC NOW will also perform at the BBC Proms under Zhang’s baton during her tenure and embark on an “On the road” tour around Wales.

Zhang begins her tenure as NJSO music director in September 2016. She will lead the NJSO in seven subscription classical programs in the 2016–17 season and nine classical programs in subsequent seasons.

A BBC NOW press release announcing its appointment quotes Zhang and BBC NOW leaders:

Zhang: "I'm so excited to be working with BBC National Orchestra of Wales; they are a fantastic group of musicians who genuinely love making music and are a natural team. They have some exceptional qualities that have really impressed me. The first thing we ever worked on together was Ravel's Bolero, it was so precise, with the right colour and texture—I was really speechless after the first reading! Under the strong leadership of Lesley Hatfield, the musicians rehearse in such a disciplined manner that is not often seen. It's a great pleasure to make music with them and I very much look forward to further developing our relationship in my new role with BBC NOW."

BBC NOW Director Michael Garvey: "I am thrilled to be welcoming Xian Zhang to the BBC NOW family as Principal Guest Conductor—bringing yet another exceptional artist to work with us, continuing our commitment to artistic excellence across Wales and further afield. Our recent concerts with her, in Swansea and the BBC Proms, were so energised, balanced and refined; we knew that an appointment would be the perfect fit. We look forward to seeing her back in Cardiff in September."

BBC Wales Director Rhodri Talfan Davies: "BBC NOW have had an incredible year, and to top it off we are now announcing this exciting appointment. I'm confident that alongside Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård and our dedicated musicians, Xian's creative input will ensure many more memorable moments in the coming seasons."

BBC Radio 3 Controller Alan Davey: "Following her stunning performance at this year's BBC Proms in July, I'm delighted we have booked Xian Zhang for BBC NOW. She is a talented conductor who can bring her passion to bear at an artistically exciting time for the orchestra. The BBC Performing groups are in rude health and their role in the BBC Radio 3 family is essential, where they form the backbone of our concert broadcasts. I'd like to welcome Xian Zhang, and look forward to hearing her first BBC NOW concerts with us."

XIAN ZHANG and the NJSO

On November 16, the NJSO announced that Xian Zhang would become the Orchestra's next music director in September 2016 for a four-year term, succeeding NJSO Music Director Jacques Lacombe, who departs the Orchestra in June 2016 following a critically acclaimed six-year tenure. Zhang next appears with the NJSO in April, leading performances of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony and Barber's Violin Concerto with Jennifer Frautschi April 7–10 in Newark, Red Bank and Morristown.

View press features and social media reactions at www.njsymphony.org/about-njso/newsroom/in-the-news/next-music-director-xian-zhang-press-and-social-media.

For more information on the NJSO's next music director, including a digital press kit with high-resolution photos, visit www.njsymphony.org/zhang.

Full concert information for Zhang's April appearances with the Orchestra is available at <http://www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/zhang-conducts-tchaikovsky-4>.

XIAN ZHANG

Xian Zhang, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra's next Music Director, has served as Music Director of the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi since September 2009; highlights of her tenure include the orchestra's televised debut at the BBC Proms with Joseph Calleja in September 2013 and taking part in EXPO in May 2015. Zhang will become Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales in September 2016.

Zhang next appears with the NJSO in April, leading performances of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony and Barber's Violin Concerto with Jennifer Frautschi in Newark, Red Bank and Morristown. She will take the helm as the NJSO's 14th music director in the 2016–17 season, leading the Orchestra in seven subscription classical programs.

A regular conductor with the London Symphony and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras, Zhang's recent highlights include her return to the BBC Proms with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, as well as performances with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Gothenburg Symphony orchestras. This season, she debuts with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg and Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España, and she returns to the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and Orchestre National de Belgique. Zhang continues to work frequently in North America; recent performances have included a week of Chinese New Year concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

This season's operatic performances include a return to English National Opera for *La bohème* and her debut with Den Norske Opera conducting *La traviata* in January. Following Zhang's hugely successful production of *Nabucco* with Welsh National Opera in June 2014, which subsequently transferred to the Savonlinna Festival, she returns to the festival in summer 2016 to conduct *Otello*, marking her debut with the opera company itself.

Zhang frequently returns to her native China, where she is a regular conductor with the China Philharmonic, Beijing Symphony and Guangzhou Symphony. A champion for Chinese composers, she recently conducted the world premiere of Qigang Chen's *Luan Tan*—a Hong Kong Philharmonic commission. She also conducted Qigang Chen's *Iris Devoilee* with the National Centre for the Performing Arts and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, as well as Tan Dun's *Resurrection Concerto* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, last season.

Working with young talented musicians continues to play a major part in Zhang's life. She has held the position of Artistic Director of the NJO, Dutch Orchestra and Ensemble Academy since 2011, and this summer, she made a hugely successful debut with the European Union Youth Orchestra, conducting them in Grafenegg, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rheingau and Bolzano.

Born in Dandong, China, Zhang made her professional debut conducting *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Central Opera House in Beijing at the age of 20. She trained at Beijing's Central Conservatory, earning both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees, and she served one year on its conducting faculty before moving to the United States in 1998. She was appointed the New York Philharmonic's Assistant Conductor in 2002, subsequently becoming their Associate Conductor and the first holder of the Arturo Toscanini Chair.

BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS OF WALES

The BBC National Orchestra of Wales is one of the United Kingdom's most versatile orchestras, with a varied range of work as both a broadcast orchestra and the national symphony orchestra of Wales. The Orchestra's adventurous programming is driven by the artistic team of Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård, newly appointed Principal Guest Conductor Xian Zhang (from September 2016), Conductor Laureate Tadaaki Otaka and Composer-in-Association Huw Watkins.

Part of BBC Wales and generously supported by the Arts Council of Wales, BBC NOW is Orchestra-in-Residence at Cardiff's St David's Hall and presents a season in Swansea. They perform a busy schedule of live concerts, touring throughout Wales and the UK. Almost all of their performances can be heard on BBC radio. Regularly invited to perform at festivals throughout the UK, BBC NOW appears biennially at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and in several concerts annually at the BBC Proms. Autumn 2015 saw one of its most ambitious tours to date, as the Orchestra spend three weeks in South America, including a community residency celebrating the 150th anniversary the Welsh settlement in Patagonia and concert performances in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

Learning is at the heart of the Orchestra's work. In 2014, BBC NOW was seen on cinema screens across the UK, as part of the BBC's landmark Ten Pieces project, inspiring children to get creative with classical music.

From its base at BBC Hoddinott Hall in Wales Millennium Centre, the Orchestra continues its work as the UK's foremost soundtrack orchestra, working with programs including "Doctor Who," "Hidden Kingdoms" and "The Crimson Field."

BBC National Chorus of Wales was formed in 1983 and has developed into one of the leading large mixed choruses in the UK. While preserving its amateur status, the Chorus works to the highest professional standards under its Artistic Director Adrian Partington, achieving enviable critical acclaim and enjoying a close performing relationship with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

The ensemble champions works by leading Welsh composers, including William Mathias and Alun Hoddinott, and has premiered major works by Daniel Jones, John Tavener, John Hardy, Gareth Glyn, Karl Jenkins and Mark Bowden. For more information, visit www.bbc.co.uk/now.

BBC NOW PRESS CONTACT

National & NYC Press Representative:

Rebecca Driver Media Relations | 020 7247 1894 | rebecca@rdmr.co.uk | emily@rdmr.co.uk

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 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 and multiple offerings—including the NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles and El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project)—that provide and promote 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.

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.

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

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