

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Broadway, film and TV star Norm Lewis headlines 'Music of the Night' NJSO POPS concerts



**Lewis to perform songs from famous Broadway roles including music from *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Porgy and Bess***

**Lewis replaces Cheyenne Jackson as April POPS headliner**

**Apr 16 is Spring into Music Gala at NJPAC in Newark**

**NJSO Accents include Saturday Night Out, dancing, sing-alongs**

***State Theatre co-presents New Brunswick performance***

**Fri, Apr 15, at Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank**

**Sat, Apr 16, at NJPAC in Newark**

**Sun, Apr 17, at State Theatre in New Brunswick**

NEWARK, NJ (March 8, 2016)—Broadway, film and television star Norm Lewis headlines NJSO POPS programs featuring music from his famous theater roles and album, April 15–17 in Red Bank, Newark and New Brunswick. Lewis—who replaces previously announced singer Cheyenne Jackson, who was forced to withdraw for scheduling reasons—has

garnered critical and audience acclaim and made history as Broadway's first African-American Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera*. Frequent NJSO guest conductor and audience favorite Thomas Wilkins conducts.

Performances take place on Friday, April 15, at 8 pm at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank; Saturday, April 16, at 8 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark and Sunday, April 17, at 3 pm at the State Theatre in New Brunswick. The April 17 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre.

*The New York Times* praised Lewis' history-making turn in *The Phantom of the Opera*, writing that Lewis' "sonorous baritone has been among the most reliably impressive voices on Broadway for many years now. In his big solo 'The Music of the Night,' Mr. Lewis's supple phrasing and power combined to gorgeous effect. His Phantom is imposing in his willfulness, as his lustrous voice comes booming down from the heavens, and touching in his energetic but unrequited love for Christine."

*The Hollywood Reporter* hailed the actor's "multidimensional" performance in the Broadway production of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* opposite Audra McDonald: "this is a man who literally grows in stature and strength before our eyes, as if nourished and emboldened by love. His 'I Got Plenty of Nothing' is an explosion of sheer joy that almost blows off the roof."

In these NJSO POPS concerts, Lewis performs music from *Phantom*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Les Misérables* (he appeared as Javert in a West End production and in *Les Misérables: The 25th Anniversary Concert*, which aired on PBS) and other Broadway shows; he also performs songs from his debut album, *This is The Life*.

NJSO Accent festivities include Saturday Night Out—the Orchestra's annual post-concert champagne and dessert reception for ticketholders who are LGBT community members and friends—on April 16. Other Accent events include pre-concert festivities beginning one hour before the April 16 and 17 concerts: patrons can dance to the live big-band sounds of Nostalgia before the April 16 concert and join a sing-along before the April 17 concert. Additional information about this season's NJSO Accent events is available at [www.njsymphony.org/accents](http://www.njsymphony.org/accents).

## **TICKETS**

Tickets start at \$20 and are available for purchase online at [www.njsymphony.org](http://www.njsymphony.org), by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or in person. The NJSO Patron Services and Sales office is located at 60 Park Place, 9th floor, in Newark; tickets are available by phone or in person Monday–Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

Tickets for the April 17 performance are also available from the State Theatre ticket office online at [www.StateTheatreNJ.org](http://www.StateTheatreNJ.org), by phone at 732.246.SHOW (7469) or in person. The State Theatre ticket office is located at 15 Livingston Ave in New Brunswick—hours are Monday–Friday, 10 am to 6 pm; Saturday, 1 to 5 pm, and at least three hours prior to curtain on performance dates unless otherwise specified.

To purchase tickets including the April 16 Saturday Night Out champagne and dessert reception, use promo code SATURDAYOUT. An add-on price for ticketholders is available by calling NJSO Patron Services at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476).

## **SPRING INTO MUSIC GALA**

The NJSO hosts its annual Spring into Music Gala on Saturday, April 16, at NJPAC in Newark. The event includes cocktails, dinner, a silent auction and the NJSO POPS concert. The gala honors [outgoing NJSO Board Co-Chairs Ruth Lipper and Stephen Sichak Jr.](#) and PSEG Chairman, President and CEO Ralph Izzo. All proceeds from the gala event will support the NJSO as it enriches lives through its artistic, music education and community engagement programs.

More information about the gala is available at [www.njsymphony.org/spring](http://www.njsymphony.org/spring).

## **CONCERT PROGRAM**

### **Music of the Night: Norm Lewis with the NJSO**

Friday, April 15, at 8 pm | Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank

Saturday, April 16, at 8 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Sunday, April 17, at 3 pm | State Theatre in New Brunswick

Norm Lewis, vocalist

Thomas Wilkins, conductor

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

*The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey is concert sponsor of the April 15 concert. The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation is concert sponsor of the April 17 concert. The April 17 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre.*

Additional information is available at [www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/music-of-the-night](http://www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/music-of-the-night).

## **NJSO ACCENTS**

Designed to inspire audiences, NJSO Accents are pre- or post-concert events that complement the concert experience and provide audience members with more opportunities to personally connect with the music and music makers.

### **Pre-Concert Festivities—Sat, Apr 16, and Sun, Apr 17, before the concert**

Arrive an hour before the concert starts and enjoy pre-concert entertainment and activities. Patrons can dance to the live big-band sounds of Nostalgia before the April 16 concert and join a sing-along before the April 17 concert.

### **Saturday Night Out: An LGBT Event—Sat, Apr 16, after the concert**

Spend an evening with friends and enjoy the sounds of the NJSO, followed by a champagne and dessert reception for ticketholders who are LGBT community members and friends. Concert tickets purchased using promo code SATURDAYOUT include the reception. An add-on price for ticketholders is available by calling Patron Services at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476). [More information.](#)

Learn more at [www.njsymphony.org/accents](http://www.njsymphony.org/accents).

*NJSO Accents in Newark are generously sponsored by the Prudential Foundation.*

## **THE ARTISTS**

### **Norm Lewis, vocalist**

In May 2014, Norm Lewis made history as *The Phantom of the Opera*'s first African-American Phantom on Broadway.

He was recently seen on PBS in the Live From Lincoln Center productions of *Showboat* with Vanessa Williams, *Norm Lewis: Who Am I?*, *New Year's Eve: A Gershwin Celebration* with Diane Reeves, *American Voices* with Renée Fleming and the PBS special *First You Dream—The Music of Kander & Ebb*. His additional television credits include "Chicago Med," "Gotham," "The Blacklist" and "Blue Bloods," as well as in his recurring role as Senator Edison Davis on the hit drama "Scandal."

Lewis received Tony, Drama Desk, Drama League and Outer Critics Circle award nominations for his performance as Porgy in the Broadway production of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*. Other Broadway credits include *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Les Misérables*, *Chicago*, *Amour*, *The Wild Party*, *Side Show*, *Miss Saigon* and *The Who's Tommy*. On London's West End he has appeared as Javert in *Les Misérables* and *Les Misérables: The 25th Anniversary Concert*, which aired on PBS.

Off-Broadway, Lewis has performed in *Dessa Rose* (Drama Desk nomination, AUDELCO Award), Shakespeare in the Park's *The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Drama League nomination), *Captains Courageous* and *A New Brain*. His regional credits include Porgy in *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* (A.R.T.), *Ragtime*, *Dreamgirls* (with Jennifer Holliday), *First You Dream*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Fantasticks*.

On film, Lewis has appeared in *Winter's Tale*, *Sex and the City 2*, *Confidences* and *Preaching to the Choir*; he appears in the upcoming film *Magnum Opus*.

Lewis' solo debut album, *This is The Life*, is available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and [cdbaby.com](https://www.cdbaby.com). For more information, visit [www.normlewis.com](http://www.normlewis.com).

### **Thomas Wilkins, conductor**

Thomas Wilkins is music director of the Omaha Symphony, principal conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and the Germeshausen Family and Youth Concert Conductor chair with the Boston Symphony. Past positions have included resident conductor of the Detroit Symphony and the Florida Orchestra (Tampa Bay), and associate conductor of the Richmond Symphony. He also has served on the music faculties of North Park University, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Virginia Commonwealth University.

During his conducting career, he has led orchestras throughout the United States, including those in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Rochester, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Dallas, Houston, Baltimore, New Jersey, Utah and San Diego, and the National Symphony in Washington, DC.

His commitment to community has been demonstrated by his participation on several boards of directors. Currently, he serves as chairman of the board for the Raymond James Charitable Endowment Fund and as National Ambassador for the non-profit World Pediatric Project.

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, Wilkins is a graduate of the Shenandoah Conservatory of Music and the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston.

### **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 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 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](http://www.njsymphony.org) or email [information@njsymphony.org](mailto: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.*

### **STATE THEATRE**

The State Theatre is a premier nonprofit venue for the performing arts and entertainment. The theater exists to enrich people's lives, contribute to a vital urban environment and build future audiences by presenting the finest performing artists and entertainers and fostering lifetime appreciation for the performing arts through education. The State Theatre's programs are made possible in part by funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and contributions from numerous corporations, foundations and individuals.

### **PRESS CONTACT**

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