

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra appoints Gabriel van Aalst President & CEO

van Aalst was previous Chief Executive of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields

NEWARK, NJ (June 30, 2016)—The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra announces Gabriel van Aalst as its new President & CEO, beginning in October 2016. van Aalst joins the NJSO from his position as Chief Executive of the renowned UK chamber orchestra the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (ASMF), where, among his chief responsibilities, he oversaw artistic planning and operations for the organization.

NJSO Board Co-Chair David Huber says: “Gabriel impressed us with his strong leadership of one of the world’s most beloved classical institutions, his passion for the art form and his genuine commitment to engaging with audiences and communities—a pillar of the NJSO mission. The institutional command and ideas that Gabriel brings to the President & CEO position pair well with the artistic vision and gifts Xian Zhang brings as our next Music Director. We are thrilled to welcome him to New Jersey.”

In his time at ASMF, the world’s premier chamber orchestra, van Aalst worked closely with Music Director Joshua Bell and Principal Guest Conductor Murray Perahia. He grew the orchestra’s artistic activity in the UK and abroad, increasing its profitability, fundraising and marketing profile. He spearheaded plans for Sir Neville Marriner’s 90th birthday celebrations that included fundraising, a return to the mainstage of the BBC Proms after a 20-year absence, a weeklong celebration of the orchestra on Classic FM and live stream of the gala concert. He delivered a budget surplus and developed the orchestra’s Sound Future campaign. Other initiatives he oversaw included spearheading a three year residency for the Orchestra at Bravo! Vail Festival and a website redesign giving access to the orchestra’s extensive back catalogue through Spotify integration. He grew the orchestra’s education program by initiating relationships with tertiary institutions, producing open rehearsals internationally and introducing a series of family concerts to complement the orchestra’s London season.

van Aalst says: “I’m tremendously proud to join the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra at this incredible time, with Xian Zhang taking over as music director. The combination of Xian and the fantastic musicians of the Orchestra is certain to ensure a future of artistic excellence. This Orchestra means so much to so many audiences and communities in New Jersey, and it commits with passion to its mission to serve the whole state. I am eager to become part of this thriving arts community, and I look forward to visiting all of our performance venues and engaging with our audiences and donors across the Garden State.”

Board Co-Chair Linda Bowden says: “Gabriel embraces the idea of collaborative spirit that has always been a hallmark of the NJSO and, with his appointment, the NJSO is well positioned to move forward with a strong leadership team. The Orchestra continues to reach new artistic heights and deepen its roots in its communities; Dave and I are proud to continue the legacy of our outgoing Board Co-Chairs, Ruth Lipper and Stephen Sichak Jr., whose devotion to and stewardship of the NJSO have made it an institution attractive to talent as invigorating as Gabriel and Xian.”

Zhang, whose tenure officially begins in the 2016–17 season, says: “Gabriel impressed me with his deep musical knowledge, and we share a belief in bringing great music and education programs to communities across the state. I am very much looking forward to working with him when we both make New Jersey our home this fall.”

Prior to his ASMF tenure, van Aalst served as Orchestra Manager of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Australia’s national touring orchestra. He collaborated on digital initiatives including the Virtual Orchestra Project, an educational initiative that brought an interactive cross-platform experience to those living in remote and regional locations both across Australia and internationally; the project was a finalist in the SXSW Interactive awards. He produced and delivered more than 120 international performances each year, managed the establishment of the Niseko Winter Music Festival and Tarrawarra Music Festival, managed a period of peak recording activities, oversaw the operational tour budget, served as touring production manager and supported the development of strategic planning.

He was the associate producer for Andrew McKinnon Presentations for four years, managing performances for the production company’s theatrical tours of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, developing business plans and marketing campaigns.

van Aalst holds a Master of Arts degree in cultural and creative industries from King’s College in London; a Bachelor of Arts degree in communication, media arts and production and Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Technology in Sydney; and a Bachelor of Arts in performance studies from the University of Sydney. He plays piano and violin and was Principal Second Violin in the Sydney Youth Orchestra, where he also represented the musicians on the board.

van Aalst takes the helm of the NJSO as Zhang’s arrival attracts renewed attention on the Orchestra’s dual mission of artistic excellence and engagement with communities across the state. Reviewing Zhang’s first appearance with the Orchestra since her appointment as music director, *The New York Times* wrote: “The dynamic performances [Zhang led] proved that hers is a name worth memorizing. On the podium she is a pint-size bundle of energy, conducting with feet firmly grounded and big, purposeful motions of the torso and arms. In brief remarks from the stage, she also showed herself to be a natural communicator, brimming with enthusiasm and humor: a good choice for this orchestra, which takes its ambassadorial role seriously with concert series offered across the state and numerous outreach initiatives. The orchestra is also stocked with excellent players, and there were moments during Friday’s program when the sound reached a fullness and polish that would be the envy of better-known ensembles on the other side of the state lines.”

The NJSO’s lauded education and community engagement programs continue to grow. The top two ensembles of the NJSO Youth Orchestras made their Carnegie Hall debuts in the youth-orchestra program’s 25th-anniversary season; the El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS gave performances across the state with its fellow El Sistema New Jersey Alliance programs. This season, the Orchestra piloted—and then expanded—a Music and Wellness Program with multiple corporate partners, bringing chamber music to patients and families in hospital settings.

The NJSO President & CEO Chair is graciously underwritten by Ruth C. and A. Michael Lipper.

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 welcomes new Music Director Xian Zhang in the 2016–17 season. The Orchestra 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, NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles and El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project). 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 more than 22,000 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.

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