

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Renowned conductor Xian Zhang debuts as New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Music Director at venues across the state



***New York Times* calls Zhang ‘a good choice for this orchestra’**

***Star-Ledger* hails her musicianship and talents as ‘communicator and leader’**

Debut program features trio of Tchaikovsky scores, Oct 27–30

Second weekend features Beethoven, Haydn and Strauss works, Nov 3–6

Gala Celebration welcomes Zhang to NJSO on Nov 5 at NJPAC in Newark

Zhang conducts seven programs in debut season

NEWARK, NJ—Internationally renowned conductor Xian Zhang makes her debut as the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra’s 14th Music Director at venues throughout the state across two weekends, October 27–November 6 in Newark, Princeton, New Brunswick, Morristown and Englewood. The NJSO hosts a special gala celebration to welcome its new artistic leader on Saturday, November 5, at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

Zhang has garnered acclaim for her rapport with the NJSO since her first guest appearance in 2010. Of the April 2016 performances that previewed her tenure with the Orchestra, *The Star-Ledger* wrote that Zhang “won over the crowd with both her remarks and her musicianship. And like any good trailer or overture, it left you wanting more. ... A good music director isn't just a conductor; she’s also a communicator and a leader.”

WQXR placed Zhang's arrival in New Jersey in the top two of its classical stories to watch in 2016. *The New York Times* hailed Zhang's most recent "dynamic performances" with the NJSO, writing that she "proved that hers is a name worth memorizing. On the podium she is a pint-size bundle of energy ... [S]he also showed herself to be a natural communicator, brimming with enthusiasm and humor."

In her first concerts as NJSO Music Director, Zhang conducts a trio of Tchaikovsky scores—Symphony No. 5, Piano Concerto No. 1 and Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*—October 27–30. Pianist Simon Trpčeski joins the Orchestra for Tchaikovsky's concerto.

Performances take place on Thursday, October 27, at 1:30 pm at NJPAC in Newark; Friday, October 28, at 8 pm at the Richardson Auditorium in Princeton; Saturday, October 29, at 8 pm at the State Theatre in New Brunswick, and Sunday, October 30, at 3 pm at the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown.

Zhang leads a program featuring Beethoven's Triple Concerto, Haydn's Symphony No. 102 and Adagio from Piano Trio No. 40 and Strauss' Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, November 3–6. The Beethoven concerto features NJSO Concertmaster Eric Wyrick, Principal Cello Jonathan Spitz and pianist Pedja Muzijevic.

Performances take place on Thursday, November 3, at 7:30 pm at bergenPAC in Englewood, and Saturday, November 5, at 7:30 pm and Sunday, November 6, at 3 pm at NJPAC in Newark.

The Orchestra celebrates the Music Director's arrival at a gala event at NJPAC in Newark on November 5; event packages include a pre-concert cocktail party and a post-concert dinner, with opportunities to meet Zhang, musicians from the Orchestra and other special guests. More information on the gala is available at www.njsymphony.org/xiangala.

"To say I am excited for my first season as Music Director of the NJSO is an understatement," Zhang says. "In addition to leading this exceptional Orchestra, I look forward to getting to know our audiences and supporters. I'll be conducting the NJSO in works by my favorite composers, including Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Strauss [on these debut programs]. My first concerts in this very colorful season feature big pieces for the orchestra, like Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. I also look forward to showcasing the talents of musicians from within the Orchestra, as well as established and rising-star soloists."

In its September cover story, *Princeton Magazine* heralds the conductor's arrival as Music Director as "the beginning of a new era in the history of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra."

TICKETS

Concert tickets start at \$20 and are available for purchase online at www.njsymphony.org or by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476). More information on gala event packages for the November 5 cocktail party and dinner is available at www.njsymphony.org/xiangala.

THE PROGRAMS

Xian Zhang Debuts as Music Director

Saturday, October 27, at 1:30 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Friday, October 28, at 8 pm | Richardson Auditorium in Princeton

Saturday, October 29, at 8 pm | State Theatre in New Brunswick

Sunday, October 30, at 3 pm | Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown

Xian Zhang, conductor

Simon Trpčeski, piano

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

TCHAIKOVSKY Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*

TCHAIKOVSKY Piano Concerto No. 1

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 5

Full concert information is available at www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/xian-zhang-debuts-as-music-director.

Bank of America is Concert Sponsor of the October 29 performance.

Zhang Conducts Beethoven & Haydn

Thursday, November 3, at 7:30 pm | bergenPAC in Englewood

Saturday, November 5, at 7:30 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Sunday, November 6, at 3 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Xian Zhang, conductor

Pedja Muzijevic, piano

Eric Wyrick, violin

Jonathan Spitz, cello

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

HAYDN Adagio from Piano Trio No. 40

BEETHOVEN Triple Concerto

HAYDN Symphony No. 102

STRAUSS Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Full concert information is available at www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/zhang-conducts-beethoven-haydn.

GALA CELEBRATION TO WELCOME XIAN ZHANG

Be part of an exceptional celebration to welcome Xian Zhang as Music Director of the NJSO! Enjoy a cocktail party with bountiful hors d'oeuvres and an open bar before the Beethoven & Haydn concert on Saturday, November 5, and savor a delectable dinner after the performance, with opportunities to meet Xian, musicians from the Orchestra and other special guests.

CELEBRATE THIS NEW CHAPTER IN THE ORCHESTRA'S HISTORY.

COCKTAILS & CONCERT TICKET: \$280* per person (includes a tax-deductible contribution of \$90)

Pre-concert cocktail party, concert seating and valet parking.

COCKTAILS, CONCERT & DINNER TICKET: \$780* per person (includes a tax-deductible contribution of \$485)

Pre-concert cocktail party, concert seating, gala dinner and valet parking.

**Discounted tickets are available for patrons who already have tickets to the Nov 5 concert.*

For more information, please contact Laura Bessey, NJSO Manager of Special Events, at lbessey@njsymphony.org or 973.735.1729. Additional information on the gala is available at www.njsymphony.org/xiangala.

NJSO ACCENTS

Inspired by the concerts and 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.

Make Your Own Music—Thu, Oct 27 before the concert

Arrive early and sing along to the melodies of Cole Porter, prior to a program of Tchaikovsky, who also knew a thing or two about great tunes. Free for ticketholders.

Russian Poetry Reading—Sat, Oct 29, and Sun, Oct 30, after the concert

Savor an evening of Tchaikovsky's music plus a rare opportunity to hear poems of his favorite poet, Alexander Pushkin, and more, both in the original Russian and English translation. Victoria Juharyan was a sensation at readings in 2015; she reprises her role here. Free for ticketholders. More information is available at www.njsymphony.org/concerts-events/accent-events/russian-poetry-reading.

Talkback: Vienna, City of Dreams—Thu, Nov 3, and Sun, Nov 6, after the concert

All three of these concerts' composers found inspiration and magic in the city of Vienna. Radio personality Naomi Lewin takes us to this enchanting city to find out why. Free for ticketholders.

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

ZHANG'S DEBUT SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the music director's first season include performances of Elgar's *Enigma Variations* and, with Kirill Gerstein, Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto; Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and, with Lukáš Vondráček, Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto; and Schubert's Ninth Symphony, "Great," and, with Jennifer Koh, Sibelius' Violin Concerto. She also leads a program featuring Ravel's *Bóléro*, Vaughan Williams' Tuba Concerto with Principal Tuba Derek Fenstermacher, Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* and Tan Dun's Internet Symphony No. 1, "Eroica."

Zhang closes her first season at the helm of the NJSO with a blockbuster finale that pairs Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony with Brahms' Second Piano Concerto featuring pianist Yefim Bronfman.

Full series and schedule information is available at www.njsymphony.org/subscribe. The full season calendar is available at www.njsymphony.org/events.

MUSIC DIRECTOR XIAN ZHANG

Conductor Xian Zhang begins her critically anticipated tenure as NJSO Music Director in the 2016–17 season. Zhang is internationally renowned for "dynamic performances [that prove] hers is a name worth memorizing" (*The New York Times*) and "dynamism, agility and precision" (*The Telegraph*). WQXR placed her arrival in New Jersey in the top two of 2016's classical stories to watch, and *The Star-Ledger* calls the conductor "a thrilling leader who has already established a strong rapport with the orchestra."

Zhang has served as Music Director of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi since September 2009, with highlights including their televised debut at the BBC Proms in 2013 with Joseph Calleja. This season, Zhang takes on the position of Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales (BBC NOW), thereby becoming the first female conductor to hold a titled role with a BBC orchestra.

A regular conductor with the London Symphony and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras, Zhang's recent highlights include debuts with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg and Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España, as well as performances with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, BBC NOW at the BBC Proms and Orchestre National de Belgique, where she will appear again this season.

Recent operatic performances include a return to English National Opera conducting *La Bohème* and her debut with Den Norske Opera conducting *La Traviata*. Following Zhang's hugely successful production of *Nabucco* with Welsh National Opera in 2014, which subsequently transferred to the Savonlinna Festival, she returned 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 and the Beijing and Guangzhou symphony orchestras. A champion for Chinese composers, she conducted Qigang Chen's *Iris Devoilee* with the BBC NOW and National Centre for the Performing Arts, where she will return in 2017. She led the world premiere of Qigang Chen's *Luan Tan* with the Hong Kong Philharmonic—a work commissioned by the orchestra—and the West Coast premiere of Tan Dun's *The Triple Resurrection* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Working with young talented musicians continues to play a major part in Zhang's life. She has been Artistic Director of the NJO Dutch Orchestra and Ensemble Academy since 2011, and last summer she made her 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.

Learn more about Zhang at www.njsymphony.org/zhang.

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. In the 2015–16 season, Orchestra musicians performed at nearly 200 events, reaching more than 34,000 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 at 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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