

NJSO welcomes Michael Cavanaugh for classic rock program featuring greatest hits of Elton John and more



Cavanaugh, original star of Broadway's *Movin' Out*, takes center stage
Program features 'Tiny Dancer,' 'Bennie and the Jets,' 'Rocket Man,'
'Live and Let Die,' 'Pinball Wizard' and more classic rock favorites

NJSO Accents include pre-concert sing-alongs

State Theatre co-presents New Brunswick performance

Sat, Nov 12, at NJPAC in Newark

Sun, Nov 13, at State Theatre in New Brunswick

NEWARK, NJ (October 6, 2016)—Broadway star Michal Cavanaugh, of *Movin' Out* fame, joins the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra for a program of hits from Elton John and other classic rock legends, November 12–13 in Newark and New Brunswick. Cavanaugh performs Elton John hits like “Tiny Dancer,” “Bennie and the Jets” and “Rocket Man,” as well as classics like “Live and Let Die” and “Pinball Wizard,” in a high-energy show led by frequent NJSO guest conductor and audience favorite Thomas Wilkins.

“Michael Cavanaugh with the NJSO: Greatest Hits of Elton John and More” is the first of five 2016–17 NJSO Pops programs. Performances take place on Saturday, November 12, at 8 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark and Sunday, November 13, at 3 pm at the State Theatre in New Brunswick. The State Theatre co-presents the November 13 performance.

In an interview with Cavanaugh, *Atlanta Magazine* traces the multitalented singer, musician and actor's love of classic rock: "1979 was an important year for Michael Cavanaugh. It was when the seven-year-old taught himself to play piano, attended his first rock concert (Kiss), and first heard the music of Billy Joel and Elton John. 'I remember hearing 'Honky Cat' and thinking it was the coolest thing ever,' he says.

"While most musicians outgrow their childhood tastes, Cavanaugh kept playing classic rock staples—as a teenager in his brother's cover band and in his 20s at an Orlando piano bar. In 1999 he was asked to perform in Las Vegas, where he caught the attention of Billy Joel. The two became friends, and soon after Joel hand-picked Cavanaugh for the lead in the Broadway musical *Movin' Out*, featuring some of the Piano Man's best-loved songs."

Cavanaugh went on to earn Grammy and Tony award nominations for his three-year stint headlining *Movin' Out*, and he has garnered rave reviews for his symphonic performances of classic rock hits. "Regardless of what Cavanaugh is singing, you have to hand it to him because these songs are iconic, but he is careful to give them his own interpretations vocally while paying homage to the original vocalist," *Maryland Theatre Guide* writes. "For those of us that remember the classic versions of these songs, Cavanaugh has reinvented them into something that ... improves upon the originals."

The NJSO holds a sing-along—one of the Orchestra's signature NJSO Accent events—of classic rock hits beginning one hour before each performance. The events are free for ticketholders.

TICKETS

Concert tickets start at \$20. Tickets are available from the NJSO online at www.njsymphony.org, by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or in person. The NJSO Patron Services 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, and concert Saturdays, 11 am to 5 pm.

Tickets for the November 13 performance are also available at the State Theatre New Jersey ticket office online at www.StateTheatreNJ.org, by phone at 732.246.SHOW (7469) or in person. The State Theatre New Jersey 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.

Full information on the NJSO's five-concert 2016–17 Pops series is available at www.njsymphony.org/pops.

CONCERT PROGRAM

Michael Cavanaugh with the NJSO: Greatest Hits of Elton John and More

Saturday, November 12, at 8 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Sunday, November 13, at 3 pm | State Theatre in New Brunswick

Michael Cavanaugh, vocalist

Thomas Wilkins, conductor

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

The November 13 performance is presented in collaboration with the State Theatre.

Additional information is available at www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/michael-cavanaugh-with-the-njso-greatest-hits-of-elton-john-and-more.

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—before both performances

Come early and sing tunes of Elton John and other classic rock favorites. Free for ticketholders.

Learn more at www.njsymphony.org/accents.

The Prudential Foundation sponsors NJSO Accent events in Newark.

THE ARTISTS

Michael Cavanaugh, vocalist

Michael Cavanaugh is the new voice of the American rock-and-roll songbook. A charismatic performer, musician and actor, Cavanaugh was handpicked by Billy Joel to star in the title role in the Broadway musical *Movin' Out*. He appeared in the show for three years and more than 1,200 performances, receiving accolades and both Grammy and Tony award nominations.

Cavanaugh began playing piano at age 7, and his first full-time gig was an extended engagement in Orlando, Florida, at a piano bar called Blazing Pianos. In 1999, he began playing at the famed New York, New York Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, which is where Billy Joel spotted him in February 2001.

With the close of *Movin' Out* at the end of 2005, Cavanaugh began touring in his own right, creating a show that reinterprets the modern pop/rock songbook. He made his orchestral debut in 2008 with the Indianapolis Symphony.

He continues to tour with that show, as well as with programs highlighting the songs of Elton John, Paul Simon, Neil Diamond and James Taylor. In October 2008, he signed with Warner/ADA to distribute his first album, *In Color*. More information is available at www.michaelcavanaugh.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, Buffalo, New Jersey and Utah, as well as 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, VA, Wilkins is a graduate of the Shenandoah Conservatory of Music and the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston.

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.

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

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Press Representative:

Victoria McCabe, NJSO Senior Manager of Public Relations & Communications | 973.735.1715 | vmccabe@njsymphony.org

State Theatre Press Representative:

Kelly Blithe, State Theatre Director of Communications | 732.247.7200, ext. 542 | kblithe@statetheatrenj.org

###