

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR



New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Press Contact:
Victoria McCabe, NJSO Senior Manager of Public Relations & Communications
973.735.1715 | vmccabe@njsymphony.org

State Theatre New Jersey Press Contact:
Kelly Blithe, State Theatre New Jersey Director of Communications
732.247.7200, ext. 542 | kblithe@statetheatrenj.org

www.njsymphony.org/pressroom

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Valentine's-weekend NJSO pops concerts feature song-and-dance standards from Hollywood's golden age



Broadway veterans Joan Hess and Kirby Ward perform classics inspired by Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly and Eleanor Powell

Gemma New conducts

NJSO Accents include pre-concert sing-alongs

State Theatre New Jersey co-presents New Brunswick performance

Fri, Feb 10, at Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank

Sat, Feb 11, at NJPAC in Newark

Sun, Feb 12, at State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick

NEWARK, NJ (January 10, 2017)—The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra presents song-and-dance standards from the golden age of Hollywood musicals in a Valentine's-weekend pops program, February 10–12 in Red Bank, Newark and New Brunswick. Broadway veterans Joan Hess and Kirby Ward join the Orchestra and guest conductor Gemma New, performing classics inspired by Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly and Eleanor Powell.

Performances take place on Friday, February 10, at 8 pm at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank; Saturday, February 11, at 8 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark and Sunday, February 12, at 3 pm at the State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick. State Theatre New Jersey co-presents the February 12 performance.

Hess and Ward have earned acclaim for their “seemingly limitless gifts” (*Gazettes – Long Beach*) in their duo orchestral performances. *Las Vegas Review-Journal* called the pair “prolific,” writing: “Hess and Ward sang and danced their way through a nearly two-hour show and did so flawlessly ... The energy generated on the stage was palpable.”

The Buffalo News writes that Ward “dance[s] like Astaire ... His partner, Joan Hess, matched his grace and energy. She might even be a better dancer than Ginger Rogers.”

The NJSO holds a sing-along—one of the Orchestra’s signature NJSO Accent events—of love songs from Broadway, film and beyond beginning one hour before the February 11 and 12 performances. 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 February 12 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

Dancing & Romancing

Friday, February 10, at 8 pm | Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank

Saturday, February 11, at 8 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Sunday, February 12, at 3 pm | State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick

Joan Hess, vocalist and dancer

Kirby Ward, vocalist and dancer

Gemma New, conductor

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

The February 12 performance is presented in collaboration with State Theatre New Jersey.

Additional information is available at www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/dancing-romancing.

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, Feb 11, and Sun, Feb 12, before the concert

Come early and sing favorite love songs from Broadway, the movies and beyond. Free for ticketholders.

Learn more at www.njsymphony.org/accents.

The Prudential Foundation sponsors NJSO Accent events in Newark.

THE ARTISTS

Joan Hess, vocalist and dancer

Joan Hess most recently played the role of the wealthy and hilarious Tanya in *Mamma Mia* and Jessica (the “Leggy Blonde”) in HBO’s award-winning comedy series “Flight of the Conchords.” Prior to that, she had the great fortune of playing the role of Billie Dawn in Garson Kanin’s classic play *Born Yesterday*.

Hess also appeared on Broadway in *Crazy for You*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and *Bells are Ringing*. She appeared at Lincoln Center in *Dessa Rose* and in the first national tours of *Sunset Boulevard*, *Crazy for You*, *42nd Street* and *Beehive*.

Regional theater credits include *Gypsy*, *The 1940s Radio Hour*, *Hot Shoe Shuffle*, *Swingtime Canteen*, *Hello Dolly*, *The Taffetas*, *Crazy for You*, *Annie*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Grand Hotel*, *Closer than Ever*, *Sweet Charity*, *Bon Voyage* and the world premiere of *La Vie en Bleu*, among others.

Hess has performed with numerous symphonies around the world, including those of Houston, Atlanta and Detroit; Philly Pops and Hong Kong Philharmonic, among many others. In 2002, she sang at the World Economic Forum following then-New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s address.

Kirby Ward, vocalist and dancer

The quintessential song-and-dance man, Kirby Ward has entertained the world over, performing for queens, presidents, first ladies and dignitaries on nearly every continent. Ward has been seen on Broadway in Hal Prince’s *Show Boat*, *Woman of the Year* and *Never Gonna Dance*; in the off-Broadway revivals of *Cocanuts* and *Company* and on London’s West End in *Crazy For You* (Olivier nomination). He garnered critical acclaim for his direction and choreography of *Dames at Sea*, *The Jazz Singer* and *Grease*.

As an actor he has played every Billy and Bobby from *My One and Only* to *42nd Street*, with a couple of Dons and Toms thrown in. Exploring roles beyond the song-and-dance motif has led Ward into such shows as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *School for Wives*, *They’re Playin’ Our Song* and *Evita*.

Recently, his original short film, *Down in the Mouth*, received the award for best short film at the Kent Film Festival in Connecticut. On television, he has appeared on “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit,” “General Hospital” and “The Tonight Show.”

Gemma New, conductor

Sought after for her insightful interpretations and dynamic presence, New Zealand-born conductor Gemma New is music director of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra in Ontario, Canada, and resident conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

She maintains a close relationship with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, where she served as associate conductor, and Chamber Orchestra of San Antonio. This season, New also enjoys guest engagements with the Malmo SymfoniOrkester in Malmo, Sweden; Orlando Philharmonic; Orchestra of St. Luke’s and Manitoba Chamber Orchestra in Winnipeg, Canada.

A former Dudamel Conducting Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, New has led youth, school and community programs with the LA Phil, and she has assisted its Music Director Gustavo Dudamel, Conductor Laureate Esa-Pekka Salonen and other guest conductors. She is also founder of the Lunar Ensemble, currently in its seventh season. New holds a Master of Music degree in orchestral conducting from the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, where she studied with Gustav Meier and Markand Thakar. She graduated from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, with a Bachelor of Music (Honors) in violin performance.

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 New Jersey 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). NJSO musicians annually perform original chamber music programs at nearly 200 community events in a variety of settings through the NJSO’s REACH (Resources for Education and Community Harmony) program. The Orchestra’s ECE programs annually serve more than 60,000 New Jerseyans in nearly 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 NEW JERSEY

The State Theatre New Jersey 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 New Jersey’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 New Jersey Press Representative:

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

###