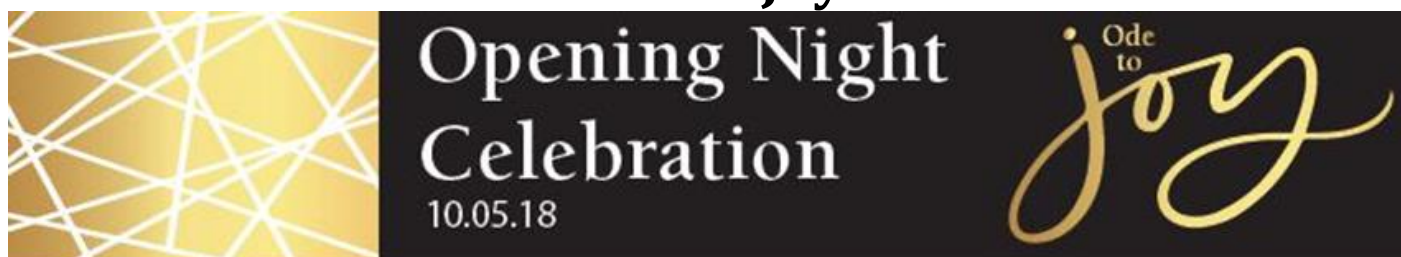


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NJSO presents 2018 Opening Night Celebration: Ode to Joy



Gala honors Nariman Farvardin, President of Stevens Institute of Technology,
and Florence Johnson, NJSO Community Relations Liaison

Xian Zhang conducts Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Kate Whitley's *Speak Out*

Fri, Oct 5, at NJPAC in Newark

NEWARK, NJ—The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra celebrates the joys of giving, diversity and the state's remarkable communities at its Opening Night Celebration on October 5 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. The gala, which kicks off Music Director Xian Zhang's third season at the helm of the NJSO, honors two outstanding community members—Stevens Institute of Technology President Nariman Farvardin and NJSO Community Relations Liaison Florence Johnson.

The opening-weekend concert program, led by Zhang at 7:30 pm, pairs Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the US premiere of Kate Whitley's *Speak Out*. The NJSO celebrates the voices of its own communities through Newark Voices—a community choir based in Newark that will join singers from Montclair State University for Beethoven's masterwork.

The gala evening includes a pre-concert cocktail party with hors d'oeuvres and an open bar at 5:30 pm; a post-concert dinner offers opportunities to meet and mingle with Zhang, musicians and special guests. Complimentary valet parking will be provided for all gala attendees. *The gala is sponsored by Investors Bank.*

All proceeds from the gala event will support the NJSO as it enriches lives through its artistic, music education and community engagement programs.

NJSO President & CEO Gabriel van Aalst says: "Our opening gala is a true celebration of community, and we are proud to honor two of New Jersey's finest influencers in Dr. Nariman Farvardin and the NJSO's own Florence Johnson. These two individuals are pillars of their respective communities; they have fostered collaboration and inspired new audiences to experience the arts in our great state."

"Stevens' partnership with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra over the last two years has truly enriched not only the lives of the extended Stevens community, but has also enhanced the arts and culture of Hoboken and the region," Farvardin says. "The OnStage at Stevens program adds an important dimension to the vibrant campus life of our premier technological research university. I look forward to continuing and expanding the partnership between Stevens and the NJSO in the years to come."

Johnson says: “Of all the awards I have received over the past three decades, I value this special recognition the most. I am being honored for doing what I truly love—spreading the good news about our great symphony orchestra, a precious gem in our community. Music inspires us; it gives us hope for the future and joy in our hearts. We must all continue to keep this joyous spirit going throughout our great city of Newark and state of New Jersey.”

The NJSO repeats the concert performance on October 6 at 8 pm at State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick and October 7 at 3 pm at NJPAC. Concert tickets start at \$20 and are available for purchase at njsymphony.org or 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476).

INDIVIDUAL EVENT TICKETS

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 October 5 concert.*

Sponsorship and Dinner Table packages ranging from \$2,000 to \$25,000 are also available. For more information, please contact Laura Bessey, NJSO Manager of Special Events, at lbessey@njsymphony.org or 973.735.1729.

Full gala information is available at njsymphony.org/openingnight.

GALA HONOREES

Dr. Nariman Farvardin, President of Stevens Institute of Technology

Nariman Farvardin is the seventh president of Stevens Institute of Technology. Under his leadership, Stevens undertook the development of a 10-year (2012–22) strategic plan entitled The Future. Ours to Create., setting a vision for Stevens to become “a premier, student-centric, technological research university.” The implementation of the strategic plan has resulted in a remarkable university-wide transformation, including a dramatic ascent in rankings and stature, enrollment growth, improved student success, alumni engagement, philanthropic support, modernized and expanded IT and campus infrastructure, and strengthened financial profile.

Farvardin has spearheaded and launched a number of signature programs and initiatives during his tenure at Stevens, including the university’s 2015 first-place win in the highly competitive US Department of Energy Solar Decathlon, the President’s Distinguished Lecture Series, which brings to campus distinguished thought leaders in science and technology; OnStage at Stevens, an exciting performing arts series featuring members of the NJSO; the Stevens Venture Center; Stevens Connects, a community outreach partnership in Hoboken; and several other programs to increase and support talented, underserved and underrepresented minority students at Stevens. Under his leadership, the School of Technology Management has been transformed into a comprehensive and AACSB-accredited School of Business, and a review and reorganization of the School of Systems and Enterprises has been completed. In 2015, Stevens announced its most ambitious fundraising campaign in history, The Power of Stevens, which has raised more than \$164 million toward an upwardly revised December 2018 goal of \$200 million.

Florence Johnson, NJSO Community Relations Liaison

Perhaps no one embodies the spirit of community more than Florence Johnson, who has tirelessly devoted her life to promoting the arts to the Greater Newark area and has worked with the NJSO for more than 18 years. Johnson received an NJSO award for the Development of New Audiences. She is a wonderful advocate for the NJSO programs and concerts, reaching many local businesses, churches and schools. One of her greatest joys in life is bringing new audiences to hear the Orchestra for the first time. Each year, she coordinates free transportation services for the elderly from local senior housing sites for the NJSO’s annual summer parks concert in Newark’s Branch Brook Park, substantially increasing the event’s attendance year after year.

Johnson was also a property manager for 21 years; during that time, she assisted with the management of six multi-family and retirement sites within the Greater Newark area. She has served on numerous committees throughout her life. She was appointed chairperson for the Newark Senior Citizens Commission, elected to the East Orange City Council and worked as commissioner for the East Orange Housing Authority and Historical Society. Johnson also served on the Board for the YWCA of Essex & West Hudson, which is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

CONCERT PROGRAM

Zhang Conducts Beethoven 9

Friday, October 5, at 7:30 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Saturday, October 6, at 8 pm | State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick

Sunday, October 7, at 3 pm | NJPAC in Newark

Xian Zhang, conductor

Mary Elizabeth Williams, soprano

Elizabeth Bishop, mezzo-soprano

Lorenzo Decaro, tenor

Reginald D. Smith Jr., baritone

Montclair State University Singers | Heather J. Buchanan, director

Montclair State University Chorale | Heather J. Buchanan, director

Newark Voices | Heather J. Buchanan, conductor

New Jersey Youth Chorus | Trish Joyce, artistic director

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

KATE WHITLEY *Speak Out* (US Premiere)

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9, "Choral"

Learn more at njsymphony.org/beethoven9.

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.

Music Director Xian Zhang—a "dynamic podium presence" *The New York Times* has praised for her "technical abilities, musicianship and maturity"—continues her acclaimed leadership of the NJSO. 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 State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick, Count Basie Center for the Arts 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; NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles, led by José Luis Domínguez; and El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project). NJSO musicians annually perform original chamber music programs at community events in a variety of settings statewide through the NJSO Community Partners program.

For more information about the NJSO, visit 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.

PRESS CONTACT

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

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