

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eric Jacobsen to Conduct Fauré's Requiem with the New Jersey Symphony

- Soprano Tiffany Townsend, baritone Reginald Smith Jr. and the Montclair State University Chorale join for Fauré's Requiem
- Program also features George Walker's *Lilacs* with Tiffany Townsend and Maurice Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*
- Eric Jacobsen to conduct
- March 30, 31 and April 2 in Newark and New Brunswick
- njsymphony.org

NEWARK, NJ– Eric Jacobsen will lead the New Jersey Symphony in Gabriel Fauré's choral-orchestral masterpiece Requiem on March 30, 31 and April 2 in Newark and New Brunswick with soprano Tiffany Townsend, baritone Reginald Smith Jr. and Heather J. Buchanan directing the Montclair State University Chorale. The program also features *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra by American composer and former Montclair, NJ resident, George Walker as well as French composer Maurice Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*.

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) was a French composer and pianist of the late Romantic era noted for his contributions to the development of French chamber music. Fauré's Requiem is a choral tour de force that is often regarded as one of the most serene and peaceful works in the genre. Composed between 1887 and 1890, the work contains seven movements that exude a sense of calm and tranquility, in contrast to the more dramatic and bombastic requiems of his contemporaries. Fauré's use of gentle melodies, rich harmonies and delicate orchestration create a work that is both hauntingly beautiful and deeply moving.

Originally commissioned in honor of Black tenor Roland Hayes, *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra composed by George Walker (1922–2018) is a setting of four stanzas from Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." Whitman's poem was an elegy to Abraham Lincoln, written in summer 1865, a few months after Lincoln's assassination. This work earned Walker the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1996 making him the first African American composer to win in the category.

Ravel's (1875–1937) *Le Tombeau de Couperin* four movement orchestral suite, which was arranged by the composer from the original six movement suite for piano that pays tribute to the French Baroque composer François Couperin. Each movement is dedicated to a friend or colleague of Ravel's who died in World War I, and the work as a whole is a tribute to the fallen soldiers. Ravel's use of Baroque forms and harmonies, combined with his unique impressionistic style, creates a work that is both elegiac and celebratory.

Performances take place at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark on March 30 at 1:30 pm, March 31 at 8 pm and at State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick on April 2 at 3 pm. Tickets are available online at njsymphony.org or by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476).

More information is available at <https://www.njsymphony.org/events/detail/faures-requiem>

Fauré's Requiem

Thursday, March 30, 1:30 pm | New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark

Friday, March 31, 8 pm | New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark

Sunday, April 2, 3 pm | State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick

Eric Jacobsen conductor

Tiffany Townsend soprano

Reginald Smith Jr. baritone

Montclair State University Chorale | Heather J. Buchanan, director

New Jersey Symphony

Ravel *Le Tombeau de Couperin*

Walker *Lilacs*

Fauré Requiem

Eric Jacobsen

Just 40 years old and already well-established as one of classical music's most exciting and innovative young conductors, Eric Jacobsen combines fresh interpretations of the traditional canon with cutting-edge collaborations across musical genres. Jacobsen is the Music Director of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, continuing to pioneer both orchestra's programming and community engagement in new and exciting directions. Jacobsen is artistic director and co-founder of The Knights, the uniquely adventurous NYC-based chamber orchestra, founded with his brother, violinist Colin Jacobsen. As conductor, Jacobsen has led the "consistently inventive, infectiously engaged indie ensemble" (*The New York Times*) at venues throughout New York City and surrounding areas, at major summer festivals, and on tour nationally and internationally. Under Jacobsen's baton, The Knights have developed an extensive recording collection, which includes the critically acclaimed albums *Azul*, with longtime collaborator Yo-Yo Ma, as well as a recent featuring Gil Shaham in performances of the Beethoven and Brahms Violin Concertos.

Tiffany Townsend

Tiffany Townsend has been praised for her "powerhouse soprano and expressive presence" (*The Wall Street Journal*). Her 2022–2023 season includes a return to LA Opera, where she sings Lucia (*The Rape of Lucretia*) and covers Julie (*Omar*) and Desdemona (*Otello*). Townsend also performs *Idleness* (*The Romance of the Rose*; world premiere) with Long Beach Opera and Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) with Wolf Trap Opera. In concert, she performs with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, and the National Orchestral Institute.

The 2021–2022 season included performances as Ines (Leonora cover) in *Il trovatore* (LA Opera) and Townsend's debut with Wolf Trap Opera, performing Barber's Knoxville: Summer of 1915. In 2020–2021, she made her LA Opera debut as Léontine (*The Anonymous Lover*), her Opera Grand Rapids debut as Katherine Tate (*Penny*) and received the Shoshana Foundation's 2021 Richard F. Gold Career Grant. Previously, Townsend was a Des Moines Metro Opera Apprentice Artist (Mimi cover, *La bohème*) and an Opera Philadelphia Emerging Artist (Princess Ninetta, *The Love for Three Oranges*). She has been with LA Opera since 2019. A native of Jackson, MS, she attended Millsaps College, The Juilliard School, and Curtis Institute of Music.

Reginald Smith Jr.

Grammy and Emmy-winning baritone Reginald Smith, Jr., the 2021 US representative at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, has been lauded as a "passionate performer" (*The New York Times*) with an "electric, hall-filling" (*The Baltimore Sun*), and "thrillingly dramatic" (*Opera News*) voice that is "one of the most exciting baritone

sounds to come along in years” (*Opera News*). Reginald, a native of Atlanta, Georgia, is a Grand Finals winner of the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and a graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio.

This season, Smith returns to the Houston Grand Opera as Pascoe in Ethel Smyth’s *The Wreckers* and makes debuts with the Santa Fe Opera as Scarpia in *Tosca* and Fort Worth Opera as Amonasro in *Aida*. In concert, Smith will debut with the San Francisco Symphony in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, with the Memphis Symphony in Brahms’ Ein deutsches Requiem, return to the New Jersey Symphony in Fauré’s Requiem and perform as the Grinch in holiday concerts with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra. He will also take part in a United in Song concert with the American Pops Orchestra, to be televised on PBS and appear in the Richard Tucker Music Foundation’s annual Gala in David Geffen Hall. Future engagements include a return to the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Houston Grand Opera.

Montclair State University Chorale | Heather J. Buchanan, director

Over the past 20 years the Montclair State University (MSU) choral program has been recognized for successful collaborations with world-renowned artists and celebrated professional musicians in national and international venues. Under the direction of Heather J. Buchanan, MSU choirs regularly appear with the New Jersey Symphony. Pianist Steven W. Ryan is the MSU choral accompanist.

MSU Chorale (symphonic choir) is the core curricular choral ensemble in the John J. Cali School of Music. Currently 130 voices strong, it comprises music students majoring in performance (vocal and instrumental), music education, music therapy, composition and musical theatre, as well as auditioned non-music majors. The Chorale’s longstanding relationship with the New Jersey Symphony includes masterwork performances of Beethoven Symphony No. 9, Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem*, Carmina Burana, and Howard Shore’s Academy Award-winning *The Lord of The Rings* Symphony.

Australian-born conductor Heather J. Buchanan, PhD, is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Montclair State University (MSU) where she conducts the Chorale (symphonic choir), University Singers, Vocal Accord, and Prima Voce. Choirs under her direction have won critical acclaim for their “heartfelt conviction” “grace and precision,” “vibrant sound,” “eloquence”, and for singing with the “crispness and dexterity of a professional choir.” During her 20-year tenure, MSU choirs have collaborated with world-renowned artists including Meredith Monk, Richard Alston Dance Company (UK), and VOCES8, and perform masterworks regularly with the New Jersey Symphony.

A licensed Body Mapping educator, Buchanan specializes in the teaching of this neuroanatomical technique for musicians and holds degrees from the University of New England in Australia, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, and the Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University in Australia. She is in demand as a guest conductor, somatic educator, and choral clinician in the US and abroad.

New Jersey Symphony

The Emmy and Grammy Award-winning New Jersey Symphony, celebrating its Centennial Season in 2022–23, is redefining what it means to be a nationally leading, relevant orchestra in the 21st century. We are renewing our deeply rooted commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by championing new, and often local, artists; engaging audiences for whom the inspiring depth and breadth of classical music will be new; and incorporating the broadest possible representation in all aspects of our organization—all to better reflect and serve our vibrant communities. Since 2021, Music Director Xian Zhang has worked together with composer, violinist, educator and social-justice advocate Daniel Bernard Roumain, the orchestra’s resident artistic catalyst, to offer programming that connects with diverse communities in Newark and throughout New Jersey.

Internationally renowned Chinese-American conductor Xian Zhang began her tenure as the New Jersey Symphony’s current Music Director in 2016. Since her arrival at the New Jersey Symphony, Zhang has revitalized programming

with an industry-leading commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in mainstage concerts. The centennial season opened in October with concerts featuring Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto with soloist Yefim Bronfman; Jessie Montgomery's *Banner*; Nimbus Dance performing original choreography to Copland's *Appalachian Spring Suite*; Strauss' *Burleske* for Piano and Orchestra with soloist Michelle Cann; Brahms' Fourth Symphony; and Dorothy Chang's *Northern Star*. The centennial season will conclude in June 2023 with Zhang leading the orchestra and violinist Joshua Bell in Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and a commissioned world premiere by Daniel Bernard Roumain.

For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, 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.

Press Contacts

New Jersey Symphony / Local Press

Sarah Hornblower, New Jersey Symphony, Interim Director of Marketing & Communications
973.735.1715 | shornblower@njsymphony.org

Geoffrey Anderson, New Jersey Symphony, Vice President of Marketing & External Affairs
973.735.1713 | ganderson@njsymphony.org

Kirshbaum Associates / National & Classical Music Press

Beverly Greenfield, Kirshbaum Associates, Director of Public Relations
bgreenfield@kirshbaumassociates.com

Shirley Kirshbaum, Kirshbaum Associates, President
917.331.1888 | skirshbaum@kirshbaumassociates.com

Connect with Us:

njsymphony.org

@NJSymphony on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [TikTok](#)

@NewJerseySymphony on [YouTube](#)

Email: information@njsymphony.org

###