

# NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **New Jersey Symphony receives \$1.5 million to continue Colton Fellowship through 2028**

NEWARK, NJ – The New Jersey Symphony is thrilled to announce that it has received a generous donation of \$1.5 million from Stewart and Judith Colton to continue providing professional development opportunities to musicians and conductors from historically marginalized backgrounds.

Launched in 2019, the Colton Fellowship for orchestral musicians has been a vital program for the New Jersey Symphony to provide opportunities for talented early-career orchestral musicians from Black and Latino communities to gain the valuable professional experience and exposure that is often a prerequisite for success in the music industry.

Building on the success of the Fellowship for orchestral musicians, the Symphony is excited to announce that the opportunity is being expanded to include a conductor. The New Jersey Symphony Colton Conducting Fellowship is an excellence-based program designed to support early-career orchestral conductors representing populations that have historically been underrepresented on the podium. Past staff conductors of the New Jersey Symphony have gone on to launch successful careers in music, including Gemma New, who was recently named Artistic Advisor and Principal Conductor of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

The Fellowship also provides professional development funds to be used for national auditions, leadership development, professional learning, chamber music programming and design. A relocation stipend will be made available.

"As a leading arts organization in New Jersey, it is our duty to champion inclusivity in the arts. Programs like the Colton Fellowship strengthen our commitment to showcasing diverse voices on stage," says Xian Zhang, Music Director of the Symphony. "I am thrilled we will be able to foster the talents of emerging conductors of underrepresented backgrounds. This will be a true testament to our commitment toward creating a more equitable community in classical music."

All Colton Fellows perform in New Jersey Symphony concerts, participate in educational programs and engage in community programs alongside their colleagues in the orchestra.

"We are thrilled to be able to continue the Colton Fellowship for the next five years, thanks to this incredible donation," said Gabriel van Aalst, President & CEO of the New Jersey Symphony. "The Colton Fellowship has become an essential part of our mission to support the development of emerging artists and to inspire and engage our communities through music. We are grateful to Judy and Stewart for their generous support and their belief in the future of classical music."

The Symphony has a long history of championing diversity, equity and inclusion in the orchestra field. In 1968, Henry Lewis became the first Black music director of a major American orchestra when he was appointed as the director of the New Jersey Symphony. Amidst the escalating fights for freedom in the late 1960s, Lewis was determined to stand against racial oppression by launching the orchestra's summer concerts in Newark, dedicated to the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – a tradition the Symphony still holds today. The legacy of Lewis' stand lives on in the Colton Fellowship: Lewis was a critical figure in paving a path for people of color, especially conductors, to concert stages in America.

The New Jersey Symphony will begin accepting applications for the Colton Conducting Fellowship for the 2023–24 season in the coming months. Interested applicants can find more information on [njsymphony.org/colton](https://njsymphony.org/colton). The tenure of the current Colton Musician Fellows violinist Jesus Saenz and cellist Max Oppeltz continues through 2023–24 season.

## **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](https://www.njsymphony.org) or email [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org). Tickets are available for purchase by phone 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or on the Orchestra’s website.

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