

## **Daniel Bernard Roumain to become New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Resident Artistic Catalyst**

- DBR to join NJSO's artistic leadership team through 2022–23 season
- Role encompasses commissions, performances, artistic and institutional advisory activities and engagement with education and community programs
- Position grew out of NJSO's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Roumain to open NJSO's 2021–22 season performing his *Voodoo Violin Concerto* with Xian Zhang at the podium
- NJSO to premiere two Roumain commissions over next two seasons
- Roumain to visit and coach NJSO Youth Orchestras ensembles, collaborate with El Sistema New Jersey Alliance, work with NJSO on educational film content
- Role to include position on NJSO's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee; appearances at board meetings; other institutional activities

NEWARK, NJ—The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra welcomes composer, performer, educator and activist Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) to its artistic leadership team as Resident Artistic Catalyst, a new role that will further the NJSO's leading commitment to transforming all aspects of the organization to meaningfully increase diversity, equity and inclusion.

Roumain will compose two commissions, perform with the NJSO as a soloist, advise on mainstage and chamber concert programming, engage with the Orchestra's education and community programs and participate in in-person and digital institutional activities throughout his tenure, which extends through August 2023.

The NJSO has commissioned Roumain to compose a new short-form work to premiere in the 2021–22 season and a longer work for the Orchestra's centennial in 2022–23. Roumain will perform as a soloist with the Orchestra—he will open the soon-to-be-announced 2021–22 season this fall with his own *Voodoo Violin Concerto*, with Music Director Xian Zhang at the podium. He will also appear with the NJSO Chamber Players in community performances.

Roumain will advise the NJSO on programming across mainstage and chamber music concerts; he will curate a series of performances by the NJSO Chamber Players.

This new role will see Roumain regularly engaging with the NJSO's education and community engagement programs. In visits with the NJSO Youth Orchestras, Roumain will offer coaching, masterclasses and conversations with student musicians. He will also engage with students of the El Sistema New Jersey Alliance.

As the Orchestra continues to develop its library of digital content for audiences of all ages, Roumain will work with the NJSO on creating educational film content that can be made available for educators and students across the state.

The NJSO is committed to institutional change to better reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. Roumain will become a member of the Orchestra's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee to advise the NJSO on ongoing and progressive activities to achieve that mission. This position has been made possible by the support of NJSO donor Judith Musser, a member of the Orchestra's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

Roumain says: "I am excited, honored, humbled and ready to collaborate with the legendary New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, as we move forward together within our work towards change, equity, community and innovation. Working closely with Maestro Xian Zhang (whom I consider a vital mentor and close friend), the staff, board and the exceptional

musicians of the orchestra, together we will unlock a world of new ideas and endless possibilities for the communities we will all serve and the continued success of the NJSO organization. Judith Musser is generous and correct, in that, the NJSO *is* a family, and my role is to earn their trust and respect in all that we do in the office, in the wings, on the stage, and with one another. After months of tragic death, fear and crisis, the NJSO stands committed to life, fearless imagination and the pursuit of our arts, for our community, in our time!”

League of American Orchestras President & CEO Simon Woods says: “The work in our field around equity, diversity and inclusion is both a moral imperative and critical to the future of orchestras. To bring the power of creative artistry together with the impetus for institutional change is an inspired and inspiring move on the NJSO’s part. We applaud them, and we applaud our friend—and League of American Orchestras board member—Daniel Bernard Roumain, on this exciting announcement.”

NJSO President & CEO Gabriel van Aalst says: “Daniel is an important artist driving necessary change in the orchestral world through both his music and his activism. The NJSO is committed to the vital work of becoming a more diverse, equitable and inclusive institution, and Daniel will be a key voice for the Orchestra as we work towards that mission both on stage and in the community.”

Co-creating with Roumain this NJSO leadership position is a continuation of the Orchestra’s relationship with the artist. The NJSO co-commissioned Roumain’s *Dancers, Dreamers and Presidents* in 2011, giving the East Coast premiere of the work and hosting the composer for visits with students in the Orchestra’s education programs.

The NJSO opened its 2020–21 virtual concert season with the world premiere of *i am a white person who \_\_\_\_\_ Black people*, an NJSO commission Roumain penned in 2020 in response to the “series of overlapping crises in our lives: a pandemic; a global fight for social justice; the effects and awareness of climate change; an array of economic collapses; and the tyranny of an electoral process under siege by a president and his party.”

Zhang says: “I am incredibly proud that Daniel has collaborated on the creation of this new role at the NJSO. Daniel has been a great friend to the NJSO since our co-commissioning of his groundbreaking work *Dancers, Dreamers and Presidents* in 2011. We now look to develop an even deeper relationship with him.”

Musser says: “Daniel Bernard Roumain is a multi-faceted, major musical talent who is joining our New Jersey Symphony Orchestra family. I am thrilled that I can help make this happen. When I listen to his music, I admire his variety, his ability to connect with the listener and his contemporary message. His presence will help our NJSO to continue to thrive.”

### **Daniel Bernard Roumain**

Daniel Bernard Roumain’s acclaimed work as a composer, performer, educator and activist spans more than two decades, and he has been commissioned by venerable artists and institutions worldwide. “About as omnivorous as a contemporary artist gets” (*New York Times*), DBR is perhaps the only composer whose collaborations span Philip Glass, Bill T. Jones, Savion Glover and Lady Gaga.

Known for his signature violin sounds infused with myriad electronic, urban and African American music influences, DBR takes his genre-bending music beyond the proscenium. He is a composer of chamber, orchestral and operatic works; has won an Emmy for Outstanding Musical Composition for his collaborations with ESPN; has been featured as keynote performer at technology conferences; and created large-scale, site-specific musical events for public spaces. DBR earned his doctorate in Music Composition from the University of Michigan and is currently Institute Professor and Professor of Practice at Arizona State University.

An avid arts industry leader, DBR serves on the board of directors of the League of American Orchestras, Association of Performing Arts Presenters and Creative Capital and the advisory committee of the Sphinx Organization, and he was co-chair of 2015 and 2016 APAP Conferences.

DBR most recently scored the film *Ailey* (d. Jamila Wignot), which premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2021. He also created the musical score for *The Just and The Blind*, a collaboration with spoken word artist and writer Marc Bamuthi Joseph, commissioned by Carnegie Hall; and a new work for Washington State University's Symphonic Band, *Falling Black Into The Sky*, based on the work of the artist James Turrell and his "light work" at Roden Crater.

### **New Jersey Symphony Orchestra**

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra connects with the people and diverse communities of New Jersey through the power of live symphonic music to inspire, entertain and educate. Internationally renowned Music Director Xian Zhang has garnered critical acclaim on the podium and has deepened the NJSO's commitment to presenting diverse voices that reflect the communities the Orchestra serves.

The NJSO embraces its legacy as a statewide orchestra through mainstage and chamber performances at venues across New Jersey, as well as partnerships with fellow Garden State arts organizations, universities and civic organizations. The Orchestra's education and community engagement programs promote meaningful, lifelong engagement with live music.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NJSO has made virtual performances and educational online programs available for free, reaching more than 10 million people across the Orchestra's digital channels. NJSO Concert Films pair world-class NJSO performances with stunning imagery of the people and cityscapes of New Jersey. The NJSO has presented innovative programs with fellow arts organizations, community ensembles and statewide partners. Musicians perform solo and chamber works from iconic New Jersey locations in NJSO Everywhere. NJSO at Home spotlights intimate at-home performances, instrument demonstrations, educational videos and hours of concert recordings.

The NJSO Youth Orchestras have not only continued virtual instruction but have introduced an entirely new dimension to the program. Students are working together on a yearlong creative composition project—a uniquely engaging opportunity for students to explore their own musical voices and shape new works that draw from all the genres that inspire them.

The Orchestra's online hub for free musical content is [njsymphony.org/virtual](https://njsymphony.org/virtual).

### **Connect with Us:**

Website: [njsymphony.org](https://njsymphony.org)

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: @NJSymphony

YouTube: [@NewJerseySymphony](https://www.youtube.com/@NewJerseySymphony)

Email: [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org)

*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 Director of Public Relations & Communications | 973.735.1715 | [vmccabe@njsymphony.org](mailto:vmccabe@njsymphony.org)

###