

# NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

**XIAN ZHANG** MUSIC DIRECTOR

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## ***STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* IN CONCERT TO FEATURE ICONIC SCORE PERFORMED LIVE TO FILM**

- Concert Features Composer John Williams' Complete Score from Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back Performed Live to Picture
- Conductor Constantine Kitsopoulos to lead the New Jersey Symphony
- [njsymphony.org](http://njsymphony.org)

NEWARK, NJ – The New Jersey Symphony will present the Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back in Concert featuring screenings of the complete film with Oscar®-winning composer John Williams' musical score performed live to the film. The concert will be led by acclaimed conductor Constantine Kitsopoulos.

Since the release of the first Star Wars movie over 40 years ago, the Star Wars saga has had a seismic impact on both cinema and culture, inspiring audiences around the world with its mythic storytelling, captivating characters, groundbreaking special effects and iconic musical scores composed by Williams.

Fans will be able to experience the scope and grandeur of this beloved film in a live symphonic concert experience when the Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back debuts on May 18–21.

Legendary composer Williams is well known for scoring all eight of the Star Wars saga films to date, beginning with 1977's Star Wars: A New Hope for which he earned an Academy Award® for Best Original Score. His scores for The Empire Strikes Back, Return of the Jedi, Star Wars: The Force Awakens and Star Wars: The Last Jedi were each nominated for Best Original Score.

Williams has won five Academy Awards, four Golden Globe Awards, seven British Academy Film Awards, five Emmy Awards and 23 Grammy Awards. With 51 Academy Award nominations, Williams is the Academy's most nominated living person and the second most-nominated individual in history, after Walt Disney. In 2005, the American Film Institute selected Williams' score to 1977's Star Wars: A New Hope as the greatest American film score of all time. The soundtrack to A New Hope also was preserved by the Library of Congress in the National Recording Registry, for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant." Williams was inducted into the Hollywood Bowl's Hall of Fame in 2000, and he received the Kennedy Center Honors in 2004, the National Medal of Arts in 2009, and the AFI Life Achievement Award in 2016. Williams has composed the scores for eight of the top 20 highest-grossing films at the U.S. box office (adjusted for inflation).

## **STAR WARS: EMPIRE STRIKES BACK IN CONCERT**

Thursday, May 18, 7:30 pm | May Performing Arts Center in Morristown

Friday, May 19, 8 pm | Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank

Saturday, May 20, 8 pm | New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark

Sunday, May 21, 3 pm | State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick

**Constantine Kitsopoulos** conductor

**New Jersey Symphony**

*Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back is produced under license by Disney Concerts in association with 20th Century Fox and Warner/Chappell Music.*

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### **About Disney Concerts**

Disney Concerts is the concert production and licensing division of Disney Music Group, the music arm of The Walt Disney Company. Disney Concerts produces concerts and tours, and licenses Disney music and visual content to symphony orchestras and presenters on a worldwide basis. Disney Concerts' concert packages include a variety of formats, such as "live to picture" film concerts and themed instrumental and vocal compilation concerts and range from instrumental-only symphonic performances to multimedia productions featuring live vocalists and choir. Current titles include the Star Wars Film Concert Series (Episodes IV-VII), Beauty and the Beast, The Little Mermaid, Fantasia, Pixar In Concert, The Nightmare Before Christmas, Alice In Wonderland, Frozen, Ratatouille, The Pirates of the Caribbean series (Episodes I-IV), and Silly Symphonies, which last year collectively accounted for over 400 performances in many of the world's top concert venues, including Lincoln Center, Royal Albert Hall, Sydney Opera House, Tokyo Forum and the Hollywood Bowl. Numerous new concert packages and touring productions from Disney's portfolio of studios, including Disney's feature animation and live action studios, Pixar, Lucasfilm and Marvel, are currently in development.

## Constantine Kitsopoulos

Constantine Kitsopoulos has established himself as a dynamic conductor known for his ability to work in many different genres and settings. He is equally at home with opera, symphonic repertoire, film with live orchestra, music theatre, and composition. His work has taken him all over the world where he has conducted the major orchestras of North America, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, and the Tokyo Philharmonic.

He is music director of the Festival of the Arts Boca and General Director of Chatham Opera. He is general director of the New York Grand Opera and is working with the company to bring opera, free and open to the public, back to New York's Central Park.

This season, Maestro Kitsopoulos will make his debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and will conduct return engagements with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Detroit, Phoenix, Houston, Vancouver, New Jersey, and San Francisco symphonies.

He has developed semi-staged productions of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*—for which he wrote a new translation—*Don Giovanni* and *La Bohème*. He has conducted numerous IU Opera Theatre productions; he was assistant chorus master at New York City Opera from 1984–89.

On Broadway, Kitsopoulos has been music director of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella*, The Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*, *A Catered Affair*, *Coram Boy*, Baz Luhrmann's production of Puccini's *La Bohème*, *Swan Lake* and *Les Misérables*. He was music director of ACT's production of Weill/Brecht's *Happy End* and made the only English-language recording of the piece for Sh-K-Boom Records.

## 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](http://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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