

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **NJSO commissions new work for physically distanced orchestra and choir from José Luis Domínguez**

***Gratias Tibi* to share message of gratitude to frontline medical and service workers**

**Montclair State University Singers to join NJSO for virtual world premiere on June 8**

***Part of NJSO at Home***

NEWARK, NJ—In response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) global pandemic, and to express gratitude to frontline medical and service workers, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra has commissioned a new work, *Gratias Tibi*, for physically distanced orchestra and choir from José Luis Domínguez.

The Montclair State University Singers, longtime NJSO partners, will join the musicians of the NJSO for a virtual world premiere on June 8.

All performers will record their parts individually from home, and each part will be stitched together to create the finished work.

*Gratias Tibi*, which means “thank you” in Latin, offers a message of thanks to all frontline workers who have responded to this unprecedented emergency with bravery and compassion.

Domínguez says: “There are some situations that require true heroism. First responders, doctors, nurses and everyone on the front lines—they have the skills and calling and devotion to put themselves in harm’s way. They’re not with their families so that we can be with ours. They are fighting for us, and this hits really close to the heart.

“We say ‘thank you’ every day, but sometimes those same words become more meaningful because there is a sincere intention behind them that makes an entire world of difference. I thought the most honest thing to do with this piece was to write something as simple as ‘thank you’ in Latin to make it universal. The piece is written with a full heart and humble attempt to express that very special, profound gratitude.”

NJSO Music Director Xian Zhang says: “Throughout history, composers have responded to major events of their time, and José Luis’ new work speaks to this unprecedented moment. We have all been moved by the ways musicians all over the world have found new ways to connect us from afar, and we are so grateful for the courage and sacrifice of the brave frontline workers meeting the challenges of this pandemic. *Gratias Tibi* expresses all of these emotions through the universal language of music.”

Montclair State University Director of Choral Activities Heather J. Buchanan says: “This is a very special opportunity, and I’m grateful our students are able to collaborate with the NJSO on such a unique project. Service through music is a core value for the MSU choral program, and the message of this composition aligns beautifully for us. We’re all devastated by the loss of our live performances right now, but we’re honored to be part of a meaningful music project that allows us to express our gratitude to the frontline workers and first responders. Their dedication is our inspiration!”

NJSO President & CEO Gabriel van Aalst says: “We are so proud to premiere this timely, groundbreaking work from José Luis, a member of our NJSO family, with our longtime choral partner, Montclair State University. Connecting with our communities, commissioning new works from diverse composers and celebrating artistic partnerships are all key aspects of the NJSO mission, and through our Music and Wellness Program, we have seen the tremendous impact music has in healthcare settings. The opportunity to create music in response to this pandemic and sending this message of gratitude to frontline workers and first responders is incredibly meaningful to the Orchestra.”

“The COVID-19 shutdown yanked artists across the world off stage without warning,” says Anthony Mazzocchi, director of the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University. “Dr. Buchanan and her University Singers, alongside the NJSO, are developing something brilliant. These moments of beauty that rise from an awful situation give me so much hope for our art during an otherwise heartbreaking time. I can’t wait to witness the process and product of this partnership that we have valued so much through the years.”

Domínguez—a frequent NJSO summer parks and family concert conductor, and artistic director of the NJSO Youth Orchestras—is an accomplished composer whose works have been performed by some of the most important orchestras and ballet companies in South America. Ballet de Santiago premiered his most recent ballet, *La Casa de los Espíritus*, to acclaim in his native Chile.

For more on *Gratias Tibi*, visit [njsymphony.org/gratiastibi](https://njsymphony.org/gratiastibi).

The commission is an extension of NJSO at Home, the Orchestra’s efforts to share original video content and NJSO concert recordings on social media and the Orchestra’s website. During this time of physical distancing, NJSO musicians are sharing at-home performances, instrument demonstrations and insight into their lives.

Visit the online hub of NJSO at Home at [njsymphony.org/njsathome](https://njsymphony.org/njsathome).

### **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 and the NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles, led by José Luis Domínguez. NJSO musicians annually perform original chamber music programs at community events in a variety of settings statewide through the NJSO Community Partners program.

NJSO concert tickets are available for purchase by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or at [njsymphony.org](https://njsymphony.org).

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