

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Symphony celebrates the Year of the Horse with its annual Lunar New Year concert

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony welcomes the Year of the Horse with its ninth annual Lunar New Year Celebration on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at 7:30 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. Seattle Symphony Associate Conductor Sunny Xia and Van Cliburn International Piano Competition Winner Haochen Zhang make their New Jersey Symphony debuts.

This festive tradition, perfect for families and first-timers, was introduced in 2019 by Music Director Xian Zhang, now in her 10th season with New Jersey Symphony.

This classical music fusion from the East and West features Li Huanzhi's *Spring Festival Overture*, Franz Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1, Choi Sunghwan's *Arirang Fantasy*, the traditional folk song "Hulunbuir Grassland" arranged by Anqi Wang, and Li Shutong's "Farewell Song" arranged by Nicholas Hersh. The performance also includes the *Voices of Spring* waltz by Johann Strauss, Jr., and Georges Bizet's energetic "Farandole" from *L'Arlésienne* and the cheerful children's chorus "Choeur des gamins" from *Carmen*.

The concert includes special appearances from Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus, Peking University (PKU) Alumni Chorus, and a performance by the Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team.

Ticket holders are invited to attend a free pre-concert Cultural Exchange Festival in the Prudential Hall lobby featuring performances, artisans, and artifacts from the Shanghai Museum. Gates Open at 6 pm. This event is co-curated by the Shanghai Museum and the Eastern Culture Exchange Association and supported by the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in New York.

Tickets starting at \$36 are available at njsymphony.org.

2026 Lunar New Year Celebration

Celebration of the Year of the Horse

Sunny Xia conductor

Haochen Zhang piano

Peking University Alumni Chorus | Emma Ge Yu, conductor

Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus | Rebecca Xiaoxing Shen, director

Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team

New Jersey Symphony

Li Huanzhi *Spring Festival Overture*

Franz Liszt Piano Concerto No. 1

Choi Sunghwan "Arirang Fantasy"

Traditional / Anqi Wang *Hulunbuir Grassland*

Li Shutong / Nicholas Hersh *Farewell at Long Pavilion*

Johann Strauss, Jr. *Voices of Spring*

Georges Bizet "Farandole" from *L'Arlésienne*

Georges Bizet "Choeur des gamins" from *Carmen*

Newark → Saturday, Feb 7, 2026, 7:30 pm, New Jersey Performing Arts Center

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Sunny Xia

Recognized for her innate musicality, compelling presence, and technical precision, conductor Sunny Xuecong Xia forges immediate and captivating connections with orchestras and audiences alike. These qualities have led to engagements across the globe. Xia joined the Seattle Symphony as the Douglas F. King Assistant Conductor at the start of the 2022-23 season and was quickly promoted to Associate Conductor. She leads the orchestra in a wide range of subscription, family, community, and education programs, collaborating with distinguished soloists such as Conrad Tao, Noah Geller, Mahani Teave, and Kerson Leong.

In previous seasons, Xia has conducted the world premiere of Angelique Poteat's *Dear Humanity* with the Seattle Symphony and Youth Chorus, the Celebrate Asia concert, and the Merriman-Ross Family Young Composers Workshop, featuring 10 world premieres. She has also assisted Dame Jane Glover at the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and appeared at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, where she led the world premiere of Marc Migo Cortes' *Dumka*. She has conducted productions of *La bohème* with Chandler Opera Company and assisted

in *Così fan tutte*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *The Juniper Tree*, *Le Rossignol*, and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*.

Equally at home in symphonic and contemporary repertoire, Xia has led works by Michael Abels, Katy Abbott, Quinn Mason, Gabriela Ortiz, Gabriella Smith, Tan Dun, and more. She has conducted ensembles such as the Cleveland Institute of Music New Music Ensemble, Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, MusicaNova Orchestra, and Seattle Symphony in dozens of world premieres.

Highlights of the 2025-26 season include subscription and special programs with the Seattle Symphony and this engagement with New Jersey Symphony.

Haochen Zhang

Since his gold medal win at the 13th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2009, Haochen Zhang has captivated audiences in the US, Europe, and Asia with a unique combination of deep musical sensitivity, fearless imagination, and spectacular virtuosity. In 2017, Haochen received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, which recognizes talented musicians with the potential for a major career in music.

Haochen has already appeared with many of the world's leading festivals and orchestras including the BBC Proms with Long Yu and the China Philharmonic; the Munich Philharmonic with the late Lorin Maazel in a sold-out tour in Munich and China; The Philadelphia Orchestra with Yannick Nézet-Séguin; the Sydney Symphony with David Robertson on tour in China; and the NDR Elbphilharmonie (Hamburg) with Thomas Hengelbrock on tour in Tokyo, Beijing, and Shanghai.

Highlights of this season include his recital debut at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, tours with the Munich and Hong Kong Philharmonics, and reengagements with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Melbourne Symphony. Haochen was appointed as Artist-in-Residence at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing which includes an Asian tour with the NCPA Orchestra and concerts of the complete Liszt and Rachmaninoff concertos.

In recent seasons, Haochen debuted with the New York Philharmonic, Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Swiss Romande Orchestra, Santa Cecilia Orchestra, Luxembourg Philharmonic, and Melbourne Symphony. He has performed with the Filarmonica della Scala, NHK Symphony Orchestra (Tokyo), and Staatskapelle Berlin, and toured Asia with The Philadelphia Orchestra. In October 2017, Haochen

gave a concerto performance at Carnegie Hall with the NCPA Orchestra (Beijing), which was followed by his recital debut at Carnegie's Zankel Hall.

Peking University Alumni Chorus

Peking University (PKU) Alumni Chorus was founded in 2008 and consists of former members of the PKU Student Choir and seasoned singers from the Chinese community in the Greater New York area. In the past 10 years, the ensemble has performed at every Chinese New Year concert organized by the PKU Alumni Association of Greater New York, as well as made appearances on major stages in New York such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, and Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center. In 2019, the chorus performed Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with other choruses at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle and Carnegie Hall. In February 2019, the PKU Alumni Chorus appeared in New Jersey Symphony's first Lunar New Year concert, making this season its eighth consecutive year of collaboration.

Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus

Founded in 2015 by violin educator and choir conductor Ms. Rebecca Xiaoxing Shen, the Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus has become an active presence in the community and has earned wide praise for its performances. From 2019 to 2025, the chorus was invited for seven consecutive years to perform with New Jersey Symphony at its annual Lunar New Year Concert. They also took part in the World Culture Festival in Washington, DC in 2023, and most recently won first prize in the group category at the US finals of the Global Elite Talent Competition.

Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team

The Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team was founded in 2014 by Peter Shen with the goal of using lion dance as a cultural ambassador to share Chinese traditions with the community. Combining both dance and martial arts, the team regularly performs at significant events such as Chinese New Year celebrations, National Day, and other important occasions.

The team's coach, David Shen, is a professional dancer and martial artist. He has choreographed many pieces for youth performers, tailoring each to fit the specific event and the needs of the group. The team performs at a variety of venues, including libraries, parks, schools, and senior centers, bringing its rich cultural heritage to diverse audiences.

New Jersey Symphony

New Jersey Symphony is a GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning orchestra. Under the direction of Music Director Xian Zhang, the Symphony performs more than 55 mainstage concerts across the state at venues in Newark, Princeton, New Brunswick, Red Bank, and Morristown, as well as at schools and public spaces statewide. Programming at the Symphony reflects an unwavering commitment to diverse communities throughout the state, while providing students unparalleled opportunities to achieve musical excellence through its Youth Orchestra and other education programs. In 2024, the Symphony announced it would continue to deliver its statewide activities from a new, permanent office, rehearsal, and concert space in Jersey City, set to open in 2027. For more information about New Jersey Symphony, visit our website at njsymphony.org or our [newsroom](#) for press releases and photos.

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Local press

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