

# NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **New Jersey Symphony announces Colton Conducting and Orchestral Fellowships for the 2026–27 season**

NEWARK, NJ—After a national search and competitive auditions, New Jersey Symphony announces Ricardo Ferro as the Colton Conducting Fellow and cellist Rahel Lulseged and violist Rosa Ortega Iannelli as Orchestral Fellows for the 2026–27 season.

The New Jersey Symphony Colton Conducting and Orchestral Fellowship is an excellence-based program that provides opportunities for early-career orchestral conductors and musicians from underrepresented backgrounds to gain valuable professional experience as a foundation to propel their careers and be successful in the music industry. This initiative continues New Jersey Symphony’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Funded as part of a generous gift from Stewart and Judith Colton, they share “Talent is everywhere—opportunity is not. We are pleased with how the Colton Fellowships help close that gap and ensure the Symphony reflects the diversity and richness of the communities we serve. It has been our pleasure to create this fund that opens doors so that gifted musicians and conductors from underrepresented backgrounds can thrive, lead, and inspire the next generation.”

Ferro will work closely with the Symphony’s Music Director Xian Zhang, the orchestra’s Artistic Advisory Committee, Vice President of Artistic Planning, and artistic staff. With responsibilities that include rehearsing and conducting select performances, Ferro will also serve as cover conductor for Classical season programs, preparing scores to replace the scheduled conductor if needed. The role also includes conducting off-stage ensembles, serving as score reader for supertitles, listening to rehearsals and performances, and consulting on other artistic elements.

“Ricardo won us over from the moment he stepped on the podium with his, strong technique, exceptional communication skills, and his infectious love of music” says Interim Vice President of Artistic Planning Patrick Chamberlain. “I’m looking forward to mentoring him over the next season and seeing his continued growth as an artist. The

Colton Fellowship is the ideal next step for him to continue to hone his craft and will set him up well for what we expect to be a significant career.”

Ferro will also participate in planning meetings, media events, fundraising activities, administrative meetings, and educational and community engagement opportunities. Musician Fellows, Lulseged and Ortega Iannelli, will participate in New Jersey Symphony performances, receive mentorship, and engage with the community.

### **Ricardo Ferro**

Ricardo Ferro is a Venezuelan conductor, composer, and pianist based in New York City. His recent performance engagements include conducting appearances with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Tonkünstler Orchestra at the Grafenegg Festival in Vienna, and a conducting fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival, where he was named recipient of the Robert Spano Conducting Prize. A versatile artist, dedicated advocate of contemporary music, and vibrant musical personality, his additional composing engagements include premieres with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and the Canadian League of Composers.

Ricardo began his musical studies in Caracas as a pianist but was captivated early on by the world of orchestral music while attending rehearsals of Venezuela’s El Sistema program. Early in his musical upbringing, he also developed a passion for composition and improvisation, insights which inform his freedom and creativity on the podium.

Ricardo holds master’s degrees in Orchestral Conducting and Composition from the Juilliard School. Previously, he studied at the Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Toronto. With a deep sense of responsibility to foster social change through the music of our time, Ricardo collaborated, while still in his studies, with numerous organizations to commission works from emerging and established composers.

Additionally, he taught composition at El Sistema Toronto, helping to foster a new generation of musicians. Ricardo is a recipient of the Canadian Governor General’s Silver Medal, a prestigious award in recognition of the achievements of his academic years. He has worked as assistant and preparatory conductor to notable artists including Gustavo Dudamel, Barbara Hannigan, Markus Stenz, David Robertson, Earl Lee, Brad Lubman, and Louis Langrée.

### **Rahel Lulseged**

Born in Dallas, Texas with origins from Ethiopia, Rahel Lulseged started on cello at age 12 in the 6th grade, truthfully to visit Six Flags at the end of the year but instead found a real passion for music. She attended Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, after applying in secret from her parents. She later received her bachelor’s degree from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins

University, under the tutelage of Alan Stepanky with the Rose and Leon J. Neiburger scholarship, as well as the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Performing Arts Scholarship. She received a master's degree in Orchestral Performance at the Manhattan School of Music on a full tuition scholarship. Rahel toured Australia performing with Ms. Solange Knowles and performs on Broadway, most recently in *Schmigadoon!* and *Hamilton*.

### **Rosa Ortega Iannelli**

A violist, educator, and juggler, Rosa Ortega Iannelli hails from San Juan, Puerto Rico. An avid orchestral musician, Rosa enjoys performing regularly with Symphony of the Americas and numerous other ensembles in South Florida including the New World Symphony and NuDeco Ensemble. Rosa has toured with Bad Bunny as a member of the Philharmonic Orchestra Project, performing for over 700,000 people nationwide. Rosa received their Bachelor of Music in Viola Performance from Temple University, and both their Master of Music and Professional Performance Certificate from the Lynn Conservatory.

### **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](https://njsymphony.org) or our [newsroom](#) for press releases and photos.

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