

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Symphony Debuts One-of-a-Kind Opera Short Film Starring Monét X Change

Newark, NJ - The New Jersey Symphony hosts the premiere of a new opera short film, *Opulent*, starring Monét X Change, the first two-crown winner in the history of the hit television reality show “RuPaul’s Drag Race.”

Directed by Dan Graziano, New Jersey Symphony’s Digital Content Media Manager, the short film stars Monét X Change, a classically trained bass-baritone, performing three famous works for voice with the New Jersey Symphony Chamber Players. Each aria is specifically chosen to represent Monét’s journey to combine the arts of drag and opera.

In addition to the musical accompaniment, the pieces feature the artwork of Rafael Cuello, illustrating the journey many go through to find their true colors. Cuello wears multiple hats. He is the Creative Director and Principal Consultant of Out Agency, a powerhouse based in Newark, NJ and also co-founder of Artfront Galleries, which activates vacant spaces in Newark commercial districts with pop-up galleries, allowing artists to feature and sell their works.

The *Opulent* short film includes the arias “Vecchia zimara, senti” from Puccini’s *La Bohème*, “O Isis und Osiris” from Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, and Schubert’s *Death and the Maiden*.

Born in New York City, Monét X Change earned the Miss Congeniality Title during season 10 of “RuPaul’s Drag Race” and was the first queen of color inducted into the Drag Race Hall of Fame after winning “All-Stars” Season Four. In addition, Monét has released numerous singles including “Beyoncé” and “Soak it Up,” both of which have more than one million streams on Spotify, and in 2019 released the EP *Unapologetically*.

The New Jersey Symphony Chamber Players are Adriana Rosin, violin; Bryan Hernandez-Luch, violin; David Blinn, viola; Ted Ackerman, cello; Lawrence DiBello, French horn; Michael Baker, trumpet; Wayne Dumaine, trumpet; Brad Ward, trombone;

and Derek Fenstermacher, tuba.

The *Opulent* short film premiere event is Wednesday, October 11, 2023, at 6 pm at Newark Local Beer. The event is free with registration available online at njsymphony.org. The event will include the director and other artists in the short film. Monét X Change will not be present at this event.

Opulent also premieres free on-demand through the New Jersey Symphony's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/NewJerseySymphony) that same evening at 8 pm.

This project was made possible by a Special Initiative grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Opulent

New Jersey Symphony Virtual

Starring Monét X Change and the New Jersey Symphony Chamber Players

Monét X Change bass-baritone

Adriana Rosin violin

Bryan Hernandez-Luch violin

David Blinn viola

Ted Ackerman cello

Lawrence DiBello french horn

Michael Baker trumpet

Wayne Dumaine trumpet

Brad Ward trombone

Derek Fenstermacher tuba

Newark → Wednesday, October 11, 6 pm, Newark Local Beer

Online → Wednesday, October 11, 8 pm, New Jersey Symphony YouTube Channel

Schubert/arr. Daniel Stepner; adapted by Robert Wagner *Death & the Maiden*

Puccini/arr. Robert Wagner "Vecchia zimarra, senti" from *La Bohème*

Mozart/arr. Arthur Frackenpohl "O Isis und Osiris" from *The Magic Flute*

More information on concerts and tickets: njsymphony.org/events

Rafael Cuello

Step into the vibrant world of Rafael H. Cuello, a visual virtuoso and curator hailing from the artistic hub of Newark, New Jersey. For over 25 years, he has wielded the power of graphic design and curation to illuminate the tapestry of LGBTQ+ experiences, environmental concerns, social justice, Latinx heritage, and public health issues.

Rafael's craft goes beyond art; it's a movement. Specializing in crafting communities through the magic of art, he co-founded the non-profit Artfront Galleries in 2016. Picture this: citywide pop-up galleries in vacant commercial spaces that burst to life, becoming epicenters of engagement, education and empowerment. Here, underprivileged communities are welcomed into a world of enriching cultural experiences, fostering a platform for emerging and established artists to showcase and sell their masterpieces. It's more than just art, it's a transformative social and educational tool, breathing life into urban landscapes.

Having made Newark his home in 2012, Rafael has curated an impressive array of over 45 shows throughout New Jersey, leaving an indelible mark on the artistic landscape. But that's not all—Rafael wears multiple hats. He is the Creative Director and Principal Consultant of Out Agency, a powerhouse based in Newark, NJ.

Out Agency is the epitome of LGBTQIA+ Safe Space Design, content creation, and capacity building, championing the cause of inclusion and creating safe havens for all. Rafael H. Cuello isn't just an artist; he's a visionary, a catalyst for change, and a beacon of creativity in a world that needs it most.

New Jersey Symphony

The Emmy and Grammy Award-winning New Jersey Symphony is redefining what it means to be a nationally leading, relevant orchestra in the 21st century. The Symphony is renewing its 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 a new experience; 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. In its second century of bringing concerts to the people of New Jersey, the Symphony will present audience favorites in 2023–24 including Dvorak's "New World" Symphony, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, violinist Joshua Bell leading the orchestra in Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto and pianist Daniil Trifonov playing Gershwin's Concerto in F. New Jersey Symphony co-commissions include works by internationally-renowned living composers: Anna Clyne's *ATLAS* and Jessie Montgomery's *Snapshots*. Composers Rob Kapilow and Daniel Bernard Roumain will present world premieres.

For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit www.njsymphony.org or email 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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