

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Two Beethoven masterworks performed by New Jersey Symphony this spring

NEWARK, NJ—Ludwig van Beethoven’s iconic Fifth Symphony and his equally popular Symphony No. 6, “Pastoral” will have six performances between February 26 and March 29, 2026. Beethoven composed these symphonies in tandem, and both premiered at the same concert in 1808. An enduring example of the composer’s ingenuity and range of musical styles: the Fifth is legendary for its drama, while the Sixth presents a softer side of his music, an ode to life in the countryside.

Markus Stenz returns to take the podium for Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony paired with Richard Wagner’s Prelude to Act I of *Lohengrin*. Audiences will also hear Kevin Puts’ GRAMMY Award-winning concerto, *Contact*, composed for the genre-defying string trio, Time For Three.

Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 will take place on Thursday, February 26, at 7 pm at the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown, and Friday, February 27, at 7:30 pm and Sunday, March 1, at 2 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark. Prior to the Friday, February 27 performance, the New Jersey Symphony Next Gen program will host a happy hour event at Newark Local Beer at 5:30 pm. The Next Gen program is a membership program for young music enthusiasts between the ages of 21 and 40 to network with other passionate music lovers from across the state. For more information, visit njsymphony.org/nextgen.

On the podium for Beethoven’s “Pastoral” will be Music Director Xian Zhang, now in her 10th season with New Jersey Symphony. The program also includes two works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Divertimento in D Major and the composer’s only Clarinet Concerto. The orchestra’s Principal Clarinet Juan Esteban Martinez steps into the solo spotlight for this virtuosic piece.

Beethoven’s Symphony No. 6, “Pastoral” will take place Friday, March 27 and Saturday, March 28, at 7:30 pm at NJPAC in Newark, and Sunday, March 29, at 2 pm at the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown. Families can enjoy an interactive

one-hour concert on Saturday, March 28, at 2 pm at NJPAC with a pre-show Instrument Discovery Zone in the lobby. This will be a [Relaxed Performance](#), designed to accommodate the differing needs of patrons of all abilities, including individuals with autism, sensory sensitivities, or cognitive and physical differences. This concert supports New Jersey Symphony's mission to make orchestral music accessible to all by removing barriers often found in traditional concert settings.

Tickets available at njsymphony.org.

EVENT DETAILS AND ARTIST BIOS

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony

Time For Three Plays Contact

Markus Stenz conductor

Time For Three guest artists

Ranaan Meyer double bass

Nick Kendall violin

Charles Yang violin

New Jersey Symphony

Richard Wagner Prelude to Act I of *Lohengrin*

Kevin Puts *Contact*

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No. 5

Morristown → Thursday, Feb 26, 7 pm

Newark → Friday, Feb 27, 7:30pm | Sunday, Mar 1, 2 pm

[Event page](#)

Markus Stenz

Markus Stenz has held several high-profile positions including Principal Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and most recently Conductor-In-Residence of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. He was General Music Director of the City of Cologne and Gürzenich-Kapellmeister for 11 years, conducting Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Wagner's *Ring* cycle, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, as well as Janáček's *Jenůfa* and *Katya Kabanová* and Eötvös' *Love and other Demons*.

He made his opera debut in 1988 at Teatro La Fenice in Venice and, following highly successful concert weeks with the Orchestra, last season he conducted a new

production of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* and returns in the next two seasons for *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Lohengrin*. In 2018 Markus conducted Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten* at the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich and 2018 also saw the world premiere of György Kurtág's *Fin de partie* at Teatro alla Scala Milan where, he conducted Strauss' *Elektra*. This was followed by performances of *Fin de partie* for Dutch National Opera and its French premiere at Opéra National de Paris.

In 2023-24 Markus returned to Dutch National Opera to conduct *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, traveled to Hangzhou in China for *Die Walküre*, and conducted a special performance of György Kurtág's *Fin de partie* in the composer's hometown of Budapest before touring for performances in Hamburg and Cologne. He returned to Orchestre National de Lyon and, following a very successful debut with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra with Mahler Symphony No. 2 in 2022, he returned for Bruckner Symphony No 7. In Italy he conducts both Orchestra della Toscana and Fondazione Haydn di Bolzano, and further afield returns to New Jersey Symphony and makes his debut with Naples Philharmonic Orchestra. In Germany he will conduct programs with the MDR Sinfonieorchester, the Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, and the Staatskapelle Halle among others.

Recent symphonic highlights include his debut with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, multiple appearances with the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, and regular visits to three orchestras where he previously held positions: Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln. Further, he conducted the RSO Vienna, the Dresdner Philharmonie, and the Staatskapelle Weimar.

While with the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, Markus received the prize for 'The Best Concert Programme of the 2003-04 Season' as well as initiating a number of youth and educational projects such as 'Experiment Klassik,' '3. Akt,' and the concert live-recording project 'GO live.' His extensive discography includes many prize-winning recordings including the Gürzenich Orchestra's complete cycle of Gustav Mahler's symphonies with Symphony No. 5 receiving the German Record Critics' Award; Strauss' *Don Quixote* and *Till Eulenspiegel* both received unanimous critical acclaim, followed by an equally celebrated recording of Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* released in 2015, receiving the Choral Award at the 2016 Gramophone Awards. Markus Stenz studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne under Volker Wangenheim and at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. He has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester and the 'Silberne Stimmgabel' (Silver Tuning Fork) of the state of North Rhein/Westphalia.

Time For Three

GRAMMY and Emmy-winning ensemble, Time For Three (TF3), defies convention and boundaries by showcasing excellence across different genres, including classical music, Americana, and singer-songwriter. Their unique sound captivates audiences, immersing them in a musical experience that merges various eras, styles, and traditions of Western music. TF3, consisting of Charles Yang (violin, vocals), Nicolas “Nick” Kendall (violin, vocals), and Ranaan Meyer (double bass, vocals), combines their instruments and voices in a remarkable sound, establishing a distinct voice of expression that resonates with listeners worldwide.

TF3’s longstanding history of collaboration with contemporary classical composers continues to thrive. They have worked closely with esteemed artists such as Chris Brubeck and Pulitzer Prize winners William Bolcom and Jennifer Higdon. Their most recent commission, *Contact*, composed by Pulitzer Prize winner Kevin Puts, premiered with the San Francisco Symphony and The Philadelphia Orchestra in the summer of 2022. This extraordinary piece, alongside Jennifer Higdon’s Concerto 4-3, was released on Deutsche Grammophon under the album title, *Letters for the Future*. Conducted by Xian Zhang, the album’s exceptional quality propelled it onto the Billboard top 10 Classical Recordings charts. Additionally, it garnered a nomination for an Opus Klassik award and received a GRAMMY win in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo category.

Renowned for their charismatic and energetic performances, TF3 has garnered praise from respected outlets including NPR, NBC, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. They have graced illustrious stages such as Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, and The Royal Albert Hall, effortlessly adapting their inimitable and versatile style to intimate venues like Joe’s Pub in New York or Yoshi’s in San Francisco. TF3 was featured on the acclaimed “Night of the Proms” tour, sharing stages with renowned artists like Chaka Khan and Ronan Keating across several European countries. Their collaborations span a diverse range of artists, including Ben Folds, Branford Marsalis, Joshua Bell, Aoife O’Donovan, Natasha Bedingfield, and Arlo Guthrie.

TF3’s exceptional talents have earned them a GRAMMY win and also secured them an Emmy for “Time For Three In Concert,” produced by PBS. Their appetite for new experiences led them to collaborate with cellist and composer Ben Sollee, creating the soundtrack for Focus Features’ film *Land*, directed by Robin Wright. Premiering at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2021. TF3 teamed up with GRAMMY-winning songwriter Liz Rose and GRAMMY-winning producer Femke Weidema for

new recordings released by Warner Music. They also contributed to Summer Walker's R&B hit, Constant Bullsxxxt, showcasing their versatility across genres.

Time For Three's artistic achievements, fueled by their relentless pursuit of musical excellence, have solidified their status as a remarkable ensemble. Their GRAMMY win and extraordinary collaborations speak to their unwavering dedication to pushing creative boundaries and captivating audiences with their exceptional talent.

Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony

Xian Zhang conductor

Juan Esteban Martinez clarinet

New Jersey Symphony

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Divertimento in D Major, K. 136

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Clarinet Concerto

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No. 6, "Pastoral"

Newark → Friday, Mar 27, 7:30 pm* | Saturday, Mar 28, 7:30 pm

Morristown → Sunday, Mar 29, 2 pm

*The March 27 concert at NJPAC opens with a special performance by the New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra's Academy Orchestra.

[Event page](#)

Family Concert

Discover Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony

Xian Zhang conductor

Bill Barclay host

New Jersey Symphony

Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony No. 6, "Pastoral"

Newark → Saturday, Mar 28, 2 pm | [Relaxed Performance](#)

Discover the storytelling power of classical music! Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony was one of his only works that depicts very specific scenes and storylines, which we'll dive into measure by measure in this concert. Inspired by Leonard Bernstein's masterful way of putting young audiences at the center of music-making, this interactive concert will feature inside tips, listening cues, and fun facts that make for the perfect Saturday afternoon family outing! Tickets \$12-\$22

[Event page](#)

Xian Zhang

2025-26 marks the GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning conductor Xian Zhang's 10th season as Music Director of New Jersey Symphony, and her inaugural season as the Music Director of Seattle Symphony with whom she has been a long-term collaborator since her debut in 2008. Zhang has also been appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the NCPA Orchestra in Beijing, beginning this season. Following her tenure as Music Director of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano between 2009–16, she continues as their Conductor Emeritus.

2025-26 highlights include returns to Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony, and National Arts Centre Ottawa. In Europe, she returns to Netherlands Radio Philharmonic with a performance at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and makes her debut at Finnish National Opera conducting *Tosca*. This follows her huge success at The Metropolitan Opera in New York, where she recently conducted *Madama Butterfly* and *Tosca* to great acclaim. [Read full bio.](#)

Juan Esteban Martinez

A native of Colombia, Juan Esteban Martinez moved to the Dominican Republic at a young age, where he began to play the clarinet. He is a graduate of the Yale School of Music and the Peabody Conservatory of Music. In 2022, he was the first prize winner of Sphinx Orchestral Partners Auditions (SOPA) Excerpt Competition. Juan has appeared as a soloist numerous times with the National Symphony Orchestra of the Dominican Republic, making his official debut at the age of 15 performing Rossini's Introduction, Theme and Variations in a traditional concert that was live streamed on national television. He has been a featured soloist with the Caldas Symphony Orchestra in Colombia and the Coeur d'Alene Symphony. In 2019, he was selected by concert pianist Gabriela Montero to form the Gabriela Montero Ensemble, a group that went on to perform a program of Montero's original compositions at the prestigious Victoria Hall in Geneva, Switzerland. [Read full bio.](#)

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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