

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Symphony announces 2025–26 season

**Performances around the state: Newark, New Brunswick,
Princeton, Morristown, and Red Bank**

MUSIC DIRECTOR XIAN ZHANG'S 10TH SEASON

Celebrating masterworks

Opening night (Oct 10–12)

Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, Joyce Yang, piano
Dvořák's Symphony No. 8

Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (Nov 6–9)

Tito Muñoz, conductor; Michelle Cann, piano
Carlos Simon's *Zodiac* & Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement

Randall Goosby Returns (Jan 8–11)

Barber's Violin Concerto

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (Feb 26–Mar 1)

Markus Stenz, conductor
Kevin Puts' *Contact* featuring Time for Three

Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra (Mar 12–15)

Ruth Reinhardt, conductor (New Jersey Symphony debut)

Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony & Mozart's Clarinet Concerto (Mar 27–29)

Prokofiev & Strauss (Apr 10–12)

Francesca Dego, Violin

Mozart's Requiem (Apr 16–19)

Season Finale (June 4–7)

Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22, Emanuel Ax, piano
Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*

PREMIERES & COMMISSIONS

Northeast premiere by **Carlos Simon** (NJ Symphony Co-Commission) (Nov 6–9)

World premiere by **Allison Loggins-Hull** (NJ Symphony Commission) (June 4–7)

JOSHUA BELL, FIRST SEASON AS PRINCIPAL GUEST CONDUCTOR

Mendelssohn's Fourth Symphony, "Italian" (May 14–17)

SPECIAL EVENTS

TwoSet Violin in a special pre-season event (Oct 5)

Original presentation of *Romeo & Juliet* with music by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev, featuring

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey (Jan 29–Feb 1)

Singer-songwriter **Ben Folds** with the orchestra (Jun 13–14)

GUEST ARTISTS (* INDICATES DEBUT)

Time for Three* in Kevin Puts' *Contact*

Conductors **Conner Gray Covington***, **Constantine Kitsopoulos**, **Tito Muñoz***, **Anthony Parnther***, **Ruth Reinhardt***, **Markus Stenz**, **Sunny Xia***

Pianists **Emanuel Ax**, **Michelle Cann**, **Eva Gevorgyan***, **Joyce Yang**, **Haochen Zhang***

Violinists **Joshua Bell**, **Francesca Dego***, **Randall Goosby**

HOLIDAY EVENTS & FAMILY PROGRAMMING

Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* with **New Jersey Ballet**

at **Mayo Performing Arts Center** in **Morristown** (Dec)

Handel's *Messiah* with the **Montclair State University Singers** (Dec 19–21)

Lunar New Year Celebration concert with **Peking University Alumni Chorus** (Feb 7)

Expanded **Discover concert series** for young people (Nov 8, Mar 28)

Movie nights with the Symphony performing the score live:

Disney's *Fantasia* in Concert (Oct 23–26);

Elf (Dec 6–7); and **Star Wars: *The Last Jedi*** (May 29–31)

SUMMER CONCERTS IN JERSEY CITY

New Jersey Symphony is planning to present free summer chamber music concerts outdoors and in public plazas as well as a full-orchestra summer parks series performance in Jersey City.

2025–26 season listing

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony announces its 2025–26 season, Music Director **Xian Zhang**'s 10th season with the Symphony. This season, the Symphony presents over 55 mainstage programs in five New Jersey cities, premiering new works and revisiting beloved selections from the classical canon. Throughout the season, the Symphony welcomes renowned guest artists and conductors and partners with other New Jersey cultural institutions to develop original interdisciplinary programs. The

Symphony also offers a variety of education and community-oriented programs in the concert hall and beyond to bring music to communities in Newark and around the state while offering a variety of concerts designed to encourage new audiences to experience the Symphony. Also planned for this summer are outdoor concerts featuring selected members of the orchestra in chamber music settings as well as performances by the orchestra. Summer concerts take place throughout the state, including in Jersey City where the Symphony continues work on its new venue, tentatively slated to open in 2026.

Approaching her 10th season with the symphony, **Zhang** says, “Working with this orchestra has been a delight, and we continue to make exciting plans for the coming years. This season, we look forward to revisiting some of the greatest symphonic music ever written, allowing the orchestra to shine. We’ll be exploring new works and partnerships as well, including a world premiere from Resident Artistic Partner Allison Loggins-Hull and a presentation of *Romeo & Juliet* with The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. I’m also pleased to welcome two fellow women guest conductors to the podium this season—Sunny Xia and Ruth Reinhardt.”

New Jersey Symphony’s President & CEO, **Terry D. Loftis**, adds, “I am thrilled to be joining this dynamic organization, which continues to perform symphonic works throughout the state while also offering community programs in medical facilities, libraries, and schools; the Symphony also provides opportunities for young people in historically marginalized communities to discover and participate in classical music.”

Xian Zhang’s 10th anniversary season celebrates musical masterworks alongside premieres and music by living composers, with renowned guest conductors and artists.

SEASON OVERVIEW

A complete chronological list of concerts is available [here](#).

- **Opening weekend: Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto with Joyce Yang, piano (Oct 10–12)**

To kick off the official start of the New Jersey Symphony season, GRAMMY-nominated pianist **Joyce Yang** joins Music Director Xian Zhang and the Symphony to perform one of Tchaikovsky’s most beloved works, his Piano Concerto No. 1. The program begins with Jessie Montgomery’s *Hymn for Everyone* and closes with Dvořák’s celebratory Symphony No. 8.

- **Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* (Nov 6–9): Northeast premiere of Carlos Simon’s *Zodiac***

This program of music by American composers is conducted by **Tito Muñoz**, who makes his New Jersey Symphony debut. The program includes the

Northeast premiere of Carlos Simon's *Zodiac* (a New Jersey Symphony co-commission). **Michelle Cann** joins the orchestra for Florence Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement and George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Closing out the all-American program is Aaron Copland's Suite from *Billy the Kid*.

- **Randall Goosby Returns (Jan 8–11)**

Violinist Randall Goosby returns to New Jersey Symphony by popular demand in Barber's hauntingly beautiful concerto. This American classic is flanked by two remarkably timely romantic European works: Sibelius's *Finlandia*, written as a call to courage when Finland wrested itself from Russian rule, and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2, "Ukrainian." Xian Zhang conducts.

- **Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (Feb 26–Mar 1)**

Renowned German conductor **Markus Stenz** leads the orchestra in one of the most well-known orchestral works of all time, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Also on this program, GRAMMY-winning ensemble **Time for Three** joins the orchestra to perform Kevin Puts' *Contact*. The program opens with Wagner's Prelude to Act I of *Lohengrin*.

- **Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra (Mar 12–15)**

Conductor **Ruth Reinhardt**, who begins her tenure as music director of the Rhode Island Philharmonic this season, leads the Symphony in one of Bartók's most popular works, the grand, five-movement Concerto for Orchestra, as well as Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 with pianist **Eva Gevorgyan**. Also on the program is Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances*.

- **Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony & Mozart's Clarinet Concerto (Mar 27–29)**

Just in time for the arrival of spring, Xian Zhang conducts Beethoven's Sixth (perhaps best known as his "Pastoral") Symphony. The first half of the program is devoted to Mozart: his Clarinet Concerto featuring the Symphony's Principal Clarinet Juan Esteban Martinez and Divertimento for strings.

- **Xian Conducts Prokofiev & Strauss (Apr 10–12)**

Xian Zhang brings two epics to life: Prokofiev's tour-de-force Concerto No. 2 featuring the young Italian-American violinist **Francesca Dego**, and Richard Strauss's *A Hero's Life*. The concert opens with Webern's *Im Sommerwind*, a lush hymn to the charms of summer, written just before his turn to atonal composition.

- **Mozart's Requiem (Apr 16–19)**

Xian Zhang conducts what is arguably one of the most revered pieces of music in the classical canon: Mozart's Requiem, a dramatic meditation on death that the composer did not finish before he passed. Joining the symphony are soprano **Mei Gui Zhang**, mezzo-soprano **Taylor Raven**, tenor **Eric Ferring**, bass-

baritone **Dashon Burton**, and the Symphony's longtime collaborator, **Montclair State University Chorale**. This all-choral program also features Fauré's Pavane with and Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*.

- **Season Finale (June 4–7): A Mozart masterpiece and a world premiere**

New Jersey Symphony's 2025–26 season concludes with Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22, performed by one of today's great pianists, Emanuel Ax. On the same program is the **world premiere** of the latest New Jersey Symphony commission by flutist and composer Allison Loggins-Hull, who serves as the Symphony's Resident Artistic Partner. In that role, she partners with artistic leadership and adds her unique perspective and experiences to the artistic planning process. She will also collaborate with the New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra on composing a work that the students will present next season. The Youth Orchestra will celebrate its 35th anniversary in the upcoming season.

Joshua Bell's first season as principal guest conductor (May 14–16)

- Joshua Bell makes his first appearance as principal guest conductor of the New Jersey Symphony. He leads the orchestra in two works by Mendelssohn, *The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave)*, and the tuneful Symphony No. 4, "Italian." Also, on the program is Édouard Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*, in which Bell will perform as soloist while leading the orchestra. Bell has had a long and fruitful relationship with the Symphony over the last three decades; in the fall of 2023, he led the Symphony as soloist and conductor for the first time, a collaborative musical week for both Bell and the orchestra's musicians that sparked the idea for this continued partnership.

Special events

- **TwoSet Violin in a special pre-season event (Oct 5)**

World-famous YouTube classical music comedy duo TwoSet Violin takes the stage with the New Jersey Symphony for a wide-ranging night of musical comedy! Violinists Eddy Chen and Brett Yang will take their unique brand of musical comedy to a new level in this performance, with the backing of a full symphony orchestra.

- **Romeo & Juliet, a collaboration with The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey (Jan 29–Feb 1)**

In their first collaboration in ten years, the Symphony and **The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey** offer an original music & theater presentation of **Romeo & Juliet**. The program includes excerpts of the play interspersed with selections from both Tchaikovsky's and Prokofiev's versions of *Romeo and Juliet*.

- **Singer-songwriter Ben Folds (Jun 13–14)**

Emmy-nominated singer-songwriter-composer Ben Folds joins the New Jersey Symphony for a performance of music from across his career. Widely regarded as one of the major musical influences of our generation, Folds' body of genre-bending music includes pop albums with Ben Folds Five, multiple solo albums, and numerous collaborative records. His latest album, 2023's *What Matters Most*, is a blend of piano-driven pop rock songs, while his 2015 Concerto for Piano and Orchestra soared to #1 on both the Billboard classical and classical crossover charts. He released his first Christmas album in 2024, and last Fall recorded a live album slated for release in 2025 with the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) at The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, where he served for eight years as their first artistic advisor.

Holiday events and family programming

- **Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* with New Jersey Ballet at Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown (Dec)**
- **Handel's *Messiah* with the Montclair State University Singers (Dec 19–21)**
- **Lunar New Year Celebration Concert with Peking University Alumni Chorus (Feb 7)**
- Expanded **Discover Concert Series** for Young People (**Nov 8, Mar 28**)
- **Movie nights** with the Orchestra performing the score live: **Disney's *Fantasia* in Concert (Oct 23–26); *Elf* (Dec 6–7); and *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (May 29–31)**

Supporting and nurturing the next generation of musicians, conductors, and composers

- In addition to offering free concerts and community programs throughout New Jersey, the New Jersey Symphony is committed to developing and nurturing the next generation of musicians, composers, and conductors. Through the **New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra**, it gives qualified middle- and high-school students—especially Black and Latino youth in the Greater Newark area—unparalleled opportunities to achieve personal and musical excellence. The Symphony's **Colton Conducting Fellowship and Orchestral Fellowship** support early-career Black and/or Latino musicians and early-career conductors representing populations that have historically been underrepresented on the podium. The Symphony's annual **Edward T. Cone Composition Institute** is a tuition-free program that supports a small cohort of emerging composers (selected through an application process) who have their music performed by the New Jersey Symphony and participate in comprehensive career development sessions.

About New Jersey Symphony

New Jersey Symphony is a GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning orchestra. Under the direction of the Music Director Xian Zhang, the Symphony performs more than 55 concerts at mainstage venues across the state, including Newark, Princeton, New Brunswick, Red Bank, and Morristown, as well as 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 2026. For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit our website at njsymphony.org or our newsroom for press releases and photos.

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The New Jersey Symphony Family Concert: A Music Discovery Zone performances of Discover Rhapsody in Blue and Discover Beethoven's "Pastoral" are presented in NJPAC's Prudential Hall.

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The April 18 and May 16 performances are presented in collaboration with the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

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Theatre New Jersey.

The June 14 performances of Ben Folds with the New Jersey Symphony is presented in collaboration with State Theatre New Jersey.