

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Symphony returns with its holiday tradition: Handel's *Messiah*

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony will present three performances of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*. The Symphony will perform all three parts of the oratorio.

The performances will take place Friday, December 19, 2025, at 7:30 pm and Saturday, December 20, 2025, at 7:30 pm at Richardson Auditorium in Princeton; and Sunday, December 21, 2025, at 7 pm at Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark.

The concerts will be conducted by Anthony Parnter, music director of California's San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra. Joining the Symphony and Parnter are guest vocalists: Caitlin Gotimer, soprano; Maria Dominique Lopez mezzo-soprano; Orson Van Gay II, tenor; and Shyheim Selvan Hinnant, bass-baritone. Singing the choral sections are the Montclair State University Singers, under the direction of Heather J. Buchanan.

Preceding the performance on Friday, December 19, at 6:30 pm, the audience is invited to enjoy a festive array of holiday songs and carols from the Montclair State University Singers and Heather J. Buchanan.

Handel composed the famous oratorio in just 24 days. *Messiah* was premiered in Dublin, Ireland, in April of 1742. The performance of this masterpiece became an annual tradition in London after 1750 and has been performed countless times by orchestras and choruses around the world since.

Handel's *Messiah*

New Jersey Symphony Holiday Tradition

Anthony Parnter conductor

Caitlin Gotimer soprano

Maria Dominique Lopez mezzo-soprano

Orson Van Gay II tenor

Shyheim Selvan Hinnant bass-baritone

Montclair State University Singers | Heather J. Buchanan, director

New Jersey Symphony

Princeton → Friday, December 19, 2025, 7:30 pm, Richardson Auditorium

Princeton → Saturday, December 20, 2025, 7:30 pm, Richardson Auditorium

Newark → Sunday, December 21, 2025, 7 pm, Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart

Anthony Parnter

American conductor Anthony Parnter is in his sixth season as music director of California's San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra and was recently praised as the "quintessential L.A. musician of our day" by the *L.A. Times*. As conductor of the Gateways Music Festival Orchestra, whose members hail from leading orchestras nationwide, Parnter led its sold-out Carnegie Hall debut, showcasing the world premiere of *I Can* by five-time GRAMMY Award-winner Jon Batiste.

A master of multiple genres, Parnter has conducted many of the world's preeminent artists, from Joshua Bell, Lynn Harrell, Jessye Norman, and Frederica von Stade to Imagine Dragons, John Legend, Avenged Sevenfold, Wu-Tang Clan, Metro Boomin, and Rihanna. Parnter's recent conducting engagements include the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Los Angeles Opera, Music Academy of the West, Sydney Symphony, and the Chineke! Orchestra (UK), with whom he debuted at the BBC Proms.

Dedicated to amplifying traditionally underrepresented voices, Parnter has reconstructed and performed orchestral works by Margaret Bonds, Duke Ellington, Zenobia Powell Perry, Florence Price, William Grant Still, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He also led LA Opera's world premiere of Tamar-kali Brown's oratorio *We Hold These Truths* and Long Beach Opera's revival of Anthony Davis' Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Central Park Five*. For his extensive championing of works by Black, Latino, and women composers, Parnter was profiled in 2015 as a "Local Hero" by Los Angeles' PBS SoCal/KCET. He was also featured in a *New York Times* profile for his New York Philharmonic debut.

One of today's top film conductors, Parnter helms recording sessions for multiple international feature films and television series. Recent projects include *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Encanto*, *Transformers: Rise of the Beasts*, *Nope*, *Creed III*, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*, *The Ice Age Adventures of Buck Wild*, *Tenet*, *American Dad!*, *Oppenheimer*, *Turning Red*, *Star Wars: The Mandalorian*, *Star Wars: The Book of Boba Fett*, and *League of Legends*.

Caitlin Gotimer

"Caitlin Gotimer, in the title role, delivered an object lesson on the art of classical singing ... negotiating the most intricate ornamentations and sustained, high-flung passages with equal agility ... this soprano has yet to disappoint ... displaying a voice of truly heroic proportions—seemingly with the greatest of ease, but the amount of talent and study involved in creating such an impression boggles the mind" (*OnStage Pittsburgh*).

In the 2025-26 season, Ms. Gotimer reprises the title role in *Tosca* at the renowned Glyndebourne Festival under Robin Ticciati; she makes a thrilling debut at the Royal Danish Opera, singing Nedda in *Pagliacci* under the baton of Giulio Cilona; makes her role debut as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* with North Carolina Opera; and joins the roster at The Metropolitan Opera to cover Mimì in *La bohème*. In addition to her concerts with New Jersey Symphony, she also appears at the Megaron Mousikis in Athens for a special performance of Rufus Wainwright's *Dream Requiem*.

Recent operatic credits include *La Madre (La Fiamma)*, *Donna Anna (Don Giovanni)*, and the title role in *Silvana* for Deutsche Oper Berlin; Nedda (*Pagliacci*) for Pittsburgh Opera; Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*) at the Aspen Music Festival as a Renée Fleming Artist; Juliette (*Roméo et Juliette*) and Mimì (*La bohème*) for Arizona Opera; and Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) for Dallas Opera. She has also covered Musetta (*La bohème*) at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival, the title role in *Suor Angelica*, and Giorgetta in *Il tabarro* in a high-profile production led by Carlo Rizzi for Opéra national de Paris.

Equally at home on the concert stage, Ms. Gotimer has performed Handel's *Messiah* with the Santa Fe and Idaho Falls Symphonies, Mozart's *Requiem* at Québec's Festival Songe d'été en musique, and Bach's *Missa Brevis* with Binghamton University.

A 2023 Operalia finalist and winner of multiple national and regional competitions, Gotimer is a graduate of the Marion Roose Pullin Arizona Opera Studio and Pittsburgh Opera's residency program. She holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and Binghamton University.

Maria Dominique Lopez

Praised as “a rich-voiced mezzo” (*Operawire*) and “a real tour-de-force” (*Splash Magazines Worldwide*), Mexican-American mezzo-soprano Maria Dominique Lopez has sung operatic roles and symphonic works throughout the US and Europe, in addition to recording vocals for independent films and major motion pictures (including the Golden Globe and Academy Award®-winning Disney•Pixar film, *Coco*).

Recent stage appearances include Houston Grand Opera’s *Opera to Go!*, Arizona Opera (Third Lady, *The Magic Flute*; Bonita, *Arizona Lady*), The Phoenix Symphony (Vaughan Williams’ *Magnificat*), Opera Memphis (Third Lady, *The Magic Flute*), Pacific Opera Project (Madam Flora, *The Medium*; Mercédès, *Carmen*; Masetta, *La bohème*), the world premiere at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts of Jenni Brandon’s *3 Paderewskis*, the premiere of Mark Weiser’s *The Place Where You Started*, New Opera West (Cybil, Celka Ojakangas’ *Mirror Game*; Jenny, Ben Stevenson’s *Recovered*; Sara, Jeremy Rapaport-Stein’s *The Moose*), Southeast Symphony (Mahler’s Symphony No. 2), Angels Vocal Art (Principessa, *Suor Angelica*), and LA Opera Connects (Waitress/Angela, the world premiere of GG Gallegos’ *Another Perfect Day*; Rosina, Eli and LeRoy Villanueva’s *Figaro’s American Adventure*).

Ms. Lopez lives in the Los Angeles area and owns her own reiki healing practice, Ascending Arts. She is a Senior Fellow in the Eric Fütterer Vocal Studio of Academy of Advanced Vocal Technique, and studies shamanic and energy practices with Shaman and Reiki Master, Jamie Jones.

Orson Van Gay II

Orson Van Gay II has captivated audiences in classical and contemporary opera and concert hall performances with his charisma and “fine heroic tenor” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*). He has garnered acclaim for roles in his home of Southern California and across the US, with *Broadway World* declaring, “his sound was fluent and his high notes golden.”

Recent opera appearances include the role of Raymond Santana in the world premiere of Anthony Davis’ *The Central Park Five* (winner of a 2021 Pulitzer Prize)

with Long Beach Opera. He made his debut in two roles with Pacific Opera Project as *The Athlete* in the West Coast premiere of *I Can't Breathe* and as Rodolfo in *La bohème*. Other roles include Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*) with the Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice (NY), Vitaliano (*Guistino*) with Long Beach Opera, Danilo (*The Merry Widow*), and supporting roles with the LA Philharmonic (*Fidelio*) and LA Opera (*Il trovatore*).

Mr. Van Gay has sung extensively with the LA Opera's "Connects" series which explores the connections between music, wellness, and recovery. He also debuted the role of Bernard Curson in the world premiere of Vid Guerrerio's *Figaro 90210* with the company and sang Ramerrez in Lee Holdridge's *The Prospector*. Other operatic roles include Alfredo (*La traviata*), Ben (*The Night of the Living Dead*), and the title roles of *Candide* and *Orpheus*.

Equally at home in the concert hall, he joined the California Philharmonic Orchestra in celebration of Leonard Bernstein's 100th anniversary, performing in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, "Chorale," at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Mr. Van Gay has also appeared at Carnegie Hall in a recital with Wang Wei.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Vocal Performance from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. In December 2023, he released his debut classical album, *Colors of a Lyric*, a curation of arias that capture the warmth and stratosphere of this rising star's vocal spectrum.

Shyheim Selvan Hinnant

Hailing from Woodbridge, Virginia, Shyheim Selvan Hinnant is a multi-disciplinary artist who puts the "tone" in bass-baritone. As a singer, songwriter, actor, and electric bass player, he has dedicated his life to creating art and inspiring others. He received a Master of Music degree from the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. Before pursuing his master's, Shyheim earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from Virginia Commonwealth University. He also earned a certificate of completion from the Conservatorio di Milano's Erasmus program.

Currently, he is pursuing a Master of Musical Arts degree from Yale University under the tutelage of mezzo-soprano Adriana Zabala. His favorite roles include Simone (*Gianni Schicchi*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Colline (*La bohème*). He recently completed a residency with Des Moines Metro Opera as an apprentice artist, where he premiered the role of Clarence in Damien Geter's *American Apollo* and covered the role of First Nazarene in Richard Strauss' *Salome*.

As a commercial model and actor, Shyheim has worked for various clients including UNO!™, Facebook (Meta), Away Travel, AllBirds, and Intel. In 2022, Shyheim starred in Christian Osagiede's short film *Hunted*, which was a finalist in Dolby's Finish the Script filmmaker competition.

In his free time, he writes alternative R&B music under the alias of Shy Lennox. His smooth sound and creative work have been increasingly recognized and featured in *AfroPunk*, *Lyrical Lemonade*, *The Commonwealth Times*, *Ink Magazine*, *RVA Magazine*, and in various online publications. Shyheim's debut single "afterblunts," has gained over five million streams and over 50,000 monthly listeners.

Shyheim currently resides in New Haven, Connecticut where he sings as the bass-baritone section leader and soloist for The Congregational Church of New Canaan. He also teaches both virtual and in-person voice lessons and tutors music theory and mathematics.

Montclair State University Singers | Heather J. Buchanan

Under the direction of Australian-born conductor Heather J. Buchanan since September 2003, the Montclair State University choral program has been recognized for successful collaborations with world-renowned artists and celebrated professional musicians in national and international venues, including Meredith Monk, Richard Alston Dance Company (UK), VOCES8 (UK), and Eric Whitacre. Montclair choirs appear regularly with the New Jersey Symphony and have won critical acclaim for their "heartfelt conviction," "and vibrant sound," being a "marvel of diction, tuning, and rhythm," "eloquence" and for singing with the "crispness and dexterity of a professional choir." Pianist Gregory Stout is the Montclair choral accompanist.

University Singers, Montclair's flagship choir, is an elective mixed-voice ensemble comprising undergraduate and graduate students with a passion for choral singing. Previous New Jersey Symphony performances include Felix Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 3, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Requiem*, the US premiere of Kate Whitley's *Speak Out*, and George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* annually since 2014. They recorded *Songs of Ascension* with Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble on the prestigious European label ECM Records under legendary producer Manfred Eicher, which received a GRAMMY Award nomination in the Producer of the Year Category. Their solo recording *I Sing Because* is available on Spotify and iTunes.

Established in 1908, Montclair State is a Research Doctoral Institution ranked in the top tier of national universities, with 13 degree-granting colleges/schools serving more than 24,000 undergraduate and graduate students. At Montclair's John J. Cali School of Music, students study with a world-class faculty drawn from the finest musicians and scholars in the New York metropolitan area and beyond. Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities Dr. Heather J. Buchanan holds degrees from the University of New England (Australia), Westminster Choir College of Rider University (USA), and the Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University (Australia), and is a Licensed Body Mapping Educator. A vibrant teacher, dynamic performer, and passionate health advocate for musicians, she is in demand as a guest conductor, somatic educator, and choral clinician in the US and abroad.

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 2026. For more information about New Jersey Symphony, visit our website at njsymphony.org or our newsroom for press releases and photos.

Connect with us

Follow NJ Symphony on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [X](#), and [YouTube](#)

###

Local press

Geoffrey Anderson, New Jersey Symphony, VP of Marketing & External Affairs
ganderson@njsymphony.org

New Jersey Symphony's programs are made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, along with many other foundations, corporations, and individual donors.

NJ.com + JerseysBest.com: Proud 2025-26 season partner and media sponsor of the New Jersey Symphony.