

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Symphony and The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey collaborate in an exploration of music inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony will perform four concerts celebrating the timeless tale of star-crossed lovers in a unique pairing of music from Russian masters. The program opens with Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture*, then actors from The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey (STNJ) join the stage for selections from Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Performances will take place Thursday, January 29, at 1:30 pm, Friday, January 30, at 7:30 pm, and Sunday, February 1, at 2 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark; and Saturday, January 31, at 7:30 pm at the Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank.

On the podium will be Music Director Xian Zhang, now in her 10th season with New Jersey Symphony, who shares, "I am thrilled to lead this program which showcases The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, adding an exciting new dimension to the experience of this dramatic score. New Jersey Symphony greatly values its work with partner organizations throughout the state, which creates a powerful connection to art that is unique to New Jersey."

Artistic Director of STNJ Brian B. Crowe adds, "Simultaneously epic and profoundly intimate, the tale of *Romeo and Juliet* has moved audiences and inspired artists for centuries. We are so proud to partner with New Jersey Symphony in this imaginative exploration of *Romeo and Juliet*, uniting the power of Shakespeare's beautiful language with the swelling grandeur of Prokofiev's stunning music."

The Thursday, January 29 concert at NJPAC in Newark 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 are available at njsymphony.org.

Romeo & Juliet

Featuring The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

Xian Zhang conductor

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey | Brian B. Crowe, director

Isaac Hickox-Young Romeo

Billie Wyatt Juliet

Jason Flamos lighting designer

New Jersey Symphony

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture*

Sergei Prokofiev Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*, Suites Nos. 1, 2, and 3

Newark → Thursday, Jan 29, 2026, 1:30 pm, New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Newark → Friday, Jan 30, 2026, 7:30 pm, New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Red Bank → Saturday, Jan 31, 2026, 7:30 pm, Count Basie Center for the Arts

Newark → Sunday, Feb 1, 2026, 2 pm, New Jersey Performing Arts Center

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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.

With New Jersey Symphony, Zhang has commissioned composers such as Wynton Marsalis, Jessie Montgomery, Qigang Chen, Chen Yi, Steven Mackey, Thomas Adès, Daniel Bernard Roumain, Christopher Rouse, Vivian Li, Gary Morgan, Christian McBride, Paquito D'Rivera, and Allison Loggins-Hull. She is also responsible for introducing its annual Lunar New Year celebration. Under her artistic leadership, New Jersey Symphony won two awards at the mid-Atlantic Emmy Awards in 2022 for their concert films, including *EMERGE* which was conducted by Xian Zhang, directed by Yuri Alves, and co-produced with DreamPlay Films.

As a guest conductor, Zhang appears regularly with Los Angeles Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra. Her Deutsche Grammophon recording with the latter (*Letters for The Future* with Time for Three, released 2022) won GRAMMY awards for Best

Contemporary Classical Composition (Kevin Puts' *Contact*) and Best Classical Instrumental Solo.

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.

Zhang previously served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales, the first female conductor to hold a titled role with a BBC orchestra. In 2002, she won first prize in the Maazel-Vilar Conductor's Competition. She was appointed New York Philharmonic's Assistant Conductor in 2002, subsequently becoming their Associate Conductor and the first holder of the Arturo Toscanini Chair.

Brian B. Crowe

In his 30th season with The Shakespeare Theatre, Artistic Director Brian B. Crowe's directing credits include Main Stage performances of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *A Midwinter Night's Dream*, *The Metromaniacs*, *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol* (2019), *Titus Andronicus*, *The Bungler*, *Coriolanus*, *Pericles* (2013), *Oliver Twist*, *Timon of Athens*, *The School for Wives*, *The Winter's Tale* (2008), *Henry VI: Blood & Roses*, *Julius Caesar*, *Love's Labour's Lost* (2004), *The Tempest* (2002), and *The Comedy of Errors* (2001). On the Outdoor Stage, Mr. Crowe directed *The Comedy of Errors* (2021), *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play*, *Love's Labour's Lost* (2015), *The Learned Ladies*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2007), and *The Taming of the Shrew* (2006). He has directed dozens of productions for the Theatre's education department. Other directing credits include Rutgers University, 12 Miles West, The Human Race Theatre Company, Dayton Playhouse, and the Act-Up Theatre Festival. He received BFA degrees in Directing and Acting from Wright State University and served on the Executive Committee of The Shakespeare Theatre Association.

Isaac Hickox-Young*

Isaac Hickox-Young is in his eighth season with The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. Company credits include *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Book of Will*, *A Midwinter Night's Dream*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *The Caretaker*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *SNUG*, *The Rainmaker*, and *Charley's Aunt*. For the company's educational touring program, Shakespeare LIVE!, his credits include productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Julius Caesar*. Regional credits include *Murder on the Orient Express* (Fireside Theatre); *The Wickhams: Christmas at*

Pemberley (Shaker Bridge Theatre); *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (The Argyle Theatre); *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival); *Romeo and Juliet* (Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival); and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Merry War Theatre Group). He is a proud graduate of the Acting Program at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

* Member of Actor's Equity Association

Billie Wyatt*

Billie Wyatt is in her seventh season with The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. Her company credits include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility*, *As You Like It*, *A Midwinter Night's Dream*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Twelfth Night*, *Florence and Mojo*, *The Metromaniacs*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *SNUG*, *Ken Ludwig's The Three Musketeers*, *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*, and multiple productions for Shakespeare LIVE!, the theatre's touring educational program. Her Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival credits include *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Tempest*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. Additional appearances include *Camille* and *Flyin' West* (Quintessence Theatre Group); *Julius Caesar* (Hamlet Isn't Dead); and *All's Well That Ends Well* (Oxford Shakespeare Workshop).

* Member of Actor's Equity Association

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation, serving approximately 75,000 adults and children annually. It is New Jersey's largest professional theatre company dedicated to Shakespeare's canon and other classic masterworks. Through its productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences.

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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