

# NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## New Jersey Symphony presents Opening Weekend with Xian Zhang conducting *Scheherazade*

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony presents the 2024–25 season’s Opening Weekend of classical concerts with Music Director Xian Zhang conducting three performances.

The performances will be Friday, November 1, 2024, at 8 pm, at Richardson Auditorium in Princeton; Saturday, November 2, 2024, at 8 pm, at Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank; and Sunday, November 3, 2024, at 3 pm, at New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

Mexico City native Gabriela Ortiz’s flashy orchestral showpiece *Kauyumari* will appear on the program. Returning favorite Inon Barnatan will then join the Symphony to perform Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 17. The program closes with Rimsky-Korsakov’s masterwork, *Scheherazade*—a work known for its unique orchestration and immersive musical storytelling.

A Classical Conversation will take place prior to the performances on Saturday, November 2, at 7 pm at Count Basie Center for the Arts and Sunday, November 3, at 2 pm at NJPAC. Concertgoers will be able to learn more about the music performed from Symphony musicians, guest artists and other engaging insiders.

### **Xian Conducts *Scheherazade***

#### **Opening Weekend | New Jersey Symphony Classical**

**Xian Zhang** conductor

**Inon Barnatan** piano

**New Jersey Symphony**

**Princeton** → Friday, November 1, 8 pm, Richardson Auditorium

**Red Bank** → Saturday, November 2, 8 pm, Count Basie Center for the Arts

**Newark** → Sunday, November 3, 3 pm, New Jersey Performing Arts Center

**Gabriela Ortiz** *Kauyumari*

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** Piano Concerto No. 17

**Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov** *Scheherazade*

More information on concerts and tickets: [njsymphony.org/events](https://njsymphony.org/events).

### **Xian Zhang**

2024–25 will mark the GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning conductor Xian Zhang’s ninth season as music director of the New Jersey Symphony. Starting in 2025–26, Zhang will also hold the role of music director at Seattle Symphony. Zhang holds the position of conductor emeritus of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, having previously held the position of music director between 2009–2016.

The 2024–25 season sees Zhang return to the Metropolitan Opera in New York to conduct David McVicar’s acclaimed production of Puccini’s *Tosca*.

Zhang is in high demand as a guest conductor, appearing regularly with Philadelphia Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic, returning to both in 2024–25. Her recording with Philadelphia Orchestra and Time for Three, *Letters for The Future* (released 2022 on Deutsche Grammophon), won multiple GRAMMY Awards in the Best Contemporary Classical Composition (Kevin Puts’ *Contact*) and Best Classical Instrumental Solo categories.

Following a successful collaboration at Tanglewood Festival 2023, Zhang returns to Boston Symphony Orchestra this season. She remains a favored guest of the Orchestra of St Luke’s and recently stepped in for their Brahms *Requiem* concert at Carnegie Hall. Other 2024–25 highlights include Montreal Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, NAC Orchestra, Belgian National Orchestra and Milan Symphony Orchestra.

Zhang continues to enjoy good relationships with many leading orchestras worldwide, including London Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, Houston Symphony, St Louis Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra DC and Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse.

Zhang previously served as principal guest conductor of the BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales, the first female conductor to hold a titled role with a BBC orchestra and principal guest conductor of Melbourne Symphony 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.

## Inon Barnatan

“One of the most admired pianists of his generation” (*New York Times*), Inon Barnatan has received universal acclaim for his “uncommon sensitivity” (*The New Yorker*), “impeccable musicality and phrasing” (*Le Figaro*) and his stature as “a true poet of the keyboard: refined, searching, unfailingly communicative” (*The Evening Standard*).

As a soloist, Barnatan is a regular performer with many of the world’s foremost orchestras and conductors, and he was the inaugural Artist-in-Association of the New York Philharmonic. Equally at home as a curator and chamber musician, Barnatan is music director of La Jolla Music Society Summerfest in California, one of leading music festivals in the country, and he regularly collaborates with world-class partners such as Renée Fleming and Alisa Weilerstein. His passion for contemporary music has resulted in commissions and performances of many living composers, including premieres of new works by Thomas Adès, Andrew Norman and Matthias Pintscher, among others.

A recent addition to Barnatan’s acclaimed discography is a two-volume set of Beethoven’s complete piano concertos, recorded with Alan Gilbert and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields on Pentatone. In its review, *BBC Music Magazine* wrote “The central strength of this first installment of Inon Barnatan’s piano concertos cycle is that, time and again, it puts you in touch with that feeling of ongoing wonderment.”

Born in Tel Aviv in 1979, Inon Barnatan started playing the piano at the age of three, when his parents discovered his perfect pitch, and made his orchestral debut at eleven. He studied with some of the 20th century’s most illustrious pianists and teachers, including Professor Victor Derevianko, Christopher Elton and Maria Curcio, and the late Leon Fleisher was also an influential teacher and mentor. For more information, visit [inonbarnatan.com](http://inonbarnatan.com).

## About the 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.

Internationally renowned Chinese American conductor Xian Zhang began her tenure as the New Jersey Symphony’s current music director in 2016. Since her arrival, Zhang has revitalized programming with an industry-leading commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in mainstage concerts. Since 2021, 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. In 2024, Allison Loggins-Hull succeeds DBR as the orchestra's next Resident Artistic Partner.

In the 2024–25 season, the New Jersey Symphony will present Billy Childs' *Diaspora*, Daniel Freiberg's *Latin American Chronicles*, Allison Loggins-Hull's *Can You See?* and Qasim Naqvi's *God Docks at Death Harbor*. Classical favorites on the season include Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, "Choral," Gustav Holst's *The Planets*—An HD Odyssey and Igor Stravinsky's Suite from *The Firebird*. Artistic partnerships include Paquito D'Rivera and his quintet, as part of the TD James Moody Jazz Festival; Nimbus Dance performing with *The Firebird* and *God Docks at Death Harbor*; Montclair State University Chorale performing on three programs; as well as Peking University Alumni Chorus and Starry Arts Children's Chorus appearing on the Lunar New Year Celebration concert with Xian Zhang.

For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit [njsymphony.org](https://njsymphony.org) or email [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org). Tickets are available for purchase by phone 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or on the Orchestra's website.

*The 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.*

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