

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 the entire oratorio.

The performances will take place Friday, December 20, 2024, at 8 pm and Saturday, December 21, 2024, at 8 pm at Richardson Auditorium in Princeton; and Sunday, December 22, 2024, at 7 pm at Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark.

The concerts will be conducted by Jeannette Sorrell, founder and artistic director of Apollo's Fire. Joining the Symphony and Sorrell are guest vocalists: Sonya Headlam, soprano; John Holiday, countertenor; Ed Lyon, tenor; and Kevin Deas, 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 20, at 7 pm, audiences are invited to join Buchanan and the Montclair State University Singers as they lead a singalong of holiday songs and carols, including the famous "Hallelujah Chorus."

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

Jeannette Sorrell conductor

Sonya Headlam soprano

John Holiday countertenor

Ed Lyon tenor

Kevin Deas bass-baritone

Montclair State University Singers | Heather J. Buchanan, director

New Jersey Symphony

Princeton → Friday, December 20, 2024, 8 pm, Richardson Auditorium

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Jeannette Sorrell

GRAMMY-winning conductor Jeannette Sorrell is recognized internationally as one of today's most compelling interpreters of Baroque and Classical repertoire. She is the subject of Oscar-winning director Allan Miller's documentary, *PLAYING WITH FIRE: Jeannette Sorrell and the Mysteries of Conducting*, commercially released in 2023.

Bridging the period-instrument and symphonic worlds from a young age, she studied conducting under Leonard Bernstein, Roger Norrington and Robert Spano at the Tanglewood and Aspen music festivals; and studied harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam. She won First Prize in the Spivey International Harpsichord Competition, competing against over 70 harpsichordists from four continents.

As a guest conductor, Sorrell made her New York Philharmonic debut in 2021 to rave reviews, and quickly returned in 2023. She has repeatedly conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, Florida Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco and New World Symphony, and has also led the Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Opera St Louis with the St Louis Symphony, the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Ottawa), Calgary Philharmonic (Canada), Royal Northern Sinfonia (UK) and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León (Spain), among others.

In 2024, she makes debuts with the Baltimore Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall.

As founder and conductor of Apollo's Fire, she has led the renowned ensemble at London's BBC Proms, Carnegie Hall and many international venues. Sorrell and Apollo's Fire have released 30 commercial CDs, including 11 bestsellers on the Billboard classical chart and a 2019 GRAMMY winner. Her CD recordings of Johann

Sebastian Bach's *St John Passion* and Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* have been chosen as best in the field by the Sunday Times of London (2020 and 2021). Her Monteverdi *Vespers* recording was chosen by BBC Music Magazine as one of "30 Must-Have Recordings for Our Lifetime" (2022).

With over 14 million views of her YouTube videos, Sorrell has attracted national attention and awards for creative programming. She received an honorary doctorate from Case Western Reserve University and an award from the American Musicological Society.

Sonya Headlam

With a voice described as "golden" (Seen and Heard International), soprano Sonya Headlam performs music that spans centuries. Recent highlights include debuts with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa and the New York Philharmonic. In the 2022–2023 season, Headlam made several notable solo debuts, including with the Philadelphia Orchestra in George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*, her Severance Hall debut with conductor Jeannette Sorrell and Apollo's Fire and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the North Carolina Symphony. Headlam's repeated collaborations with Apollo's Fire, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and The Choir of Trinity Wall Street have played a significant role in her career.

Upcoming highlights of the 2024–25 season include Headlam's solo debut with the Summer for the City Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center singing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Exsultate Jubilate* and an aria from Joseph Bologne's *L'Amant anonyme*. Fall 2024, Headlam returned to the recording studio with the Raritan Players to record Trevor Weston's song cycle *Reflections*, a new commission. Additional highlights of the 2024–25 season include a meaningful return to her home state of Ohio to perform Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Akron Symphony Orchestra and her debut with the New Jersey Symphony, singing Handel's *Messiah*.

Equally at home on the opera stage, Headlam has delighted audiences with her portrayals of characters such as le Feu in Maurice Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Musetta in Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème*.

In 2024, Headlam premiered the role of The Caretaker in Luna Pearl Woolf's photographic oratorio, *Number Our Days* (conceiver, librettist David Van Taylor), at the Perelman Performing Arts Center (PAC NYC). She also joined the Bang on a Can All-Stars and Friends for their dynamic new interpretation of Steve Reich's legendary 1976 work, *Music for 18 Musicians*, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In 2021, she premiered Patricio Molina's spiritual song "Kecha Tregulfe" at Carnegie

Hall, marking the first performance of a song in the Mapudungun language on that stage. In 2023, Headlam was honored to be appointed as the Rohde Family Artist-in-Residence at the Chelsea Music Festival, where she performed a wide range of chamber music in non-traditional concert spaces, including a performance of Iman Habibi's beautiful and effervescent *Ey Sabā* with violinist Max Tan. Other important innovative contemporary projects include her involvement in Yaz Lancaster's song cycle *ouroboros*, produced by Beth Morrison Projects; a role in Ellen Reid's *dreams of the new world* with the Choir of Trinity Wall Street at the Prototype Festival; participation in Tyshawn Sorey's *Monochromatic Light (afterlight)*, directed by Peter Sellars at the Park Avenue Armory; and several performances of Julia Wolfe's *Steel Hammer* with the Bang on a Can All-Stars, including at MASS MoCA and Carnegie Hall.

John Holiday

Countertenor John Holiday has established himself as “one of the finest countertenors of his generation” (Los Angeles Times). His voice has been praised as “a thing of astonishing beauty” (New Yorker), “arrestingly powerful, secure and dramatically high” (Wall Street Journal) and “timeless” (Washington Post). Holiday's unique voice and powerful story have been the subject of profiles in The New Yorker, CNN's “Great Big Story,” Los Angeles Times and more.

Highlights for Holiday's 2024–25 season include a debut in the role of Farnace in *Mitridate, re di Ponto* at Boston Lyric Opera in a production by James Darrah, and his debut in the title role in Philip Glass' *Akhmaten* in a new Barrie Kosky production at Komische Oper Berlin. Holiday will return to the Bayerische Staatsoper in two titles: *Le Grand Macabre* in October and *Dido and Aeneas* in July 2025, and will embark on a tour of *Giulio Cesare* with The English Concert and Harry Bicket in the role of Tolomeo at venues including Carnegie Hall and the Barbican Centre. He will perform alongside the San Francisco Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony and the Apollo Chamber Players, and perform a solo recital at the Wolf Trap Foundation of the Performing Arts. He will also appear on NPR's “Tiny Desk Concert” series and on an episode of NPR's “Amplify with Lara Downes.”

An acclaimed concert singer, Holiday has performed at world-renowned venues such as Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, London's Barbican Center and the Philharmonie de Paris. His career highlights include a tour with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic; the Sorceress in Barrie Kosky's production of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and the world premiere of Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice* as Orpheus' Double at the Los Angeles Opera; the world premiere of Daniel Bernard Roumain's *We Shall Not Be Moved* with Opera Philadelphia and

the Dutch National Opera; title role in *Xerxes* at the Glimmerglass Festival; and Caesar in George Frideric Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* at Wolf Trap Opera. In addition to the traditional concert performances and recitals, Holiday has curated *The John Holiday Experience (JHE)* to showcase his affinity and talent for many different genres that includes classical, pop, jazz and R&B. He has performed the program on a national scale, bringing it to Dallas, Des Moines and Dayton, with plans to continue the eclectic evening of song in his upcoming seasons.

Outside of classical repertoire, Holiday excels in jazz, gospel and pop music, having opened for GRAMMY Award-winner Jason Mraz in concert. In 2018, Holiday sang the national anthem for his hometown team, the Houston Rockets, and in 2019, Holiday performed at the star-studded Ozwald Boateng Harlem Runway Show at The Apollo Theater, in a performance that was covered by Vogue, Forbes and CNN, and attended by celebrities Jamie Foxx, Idris Elba, Dapper Dan and others. Additionally, in 2019 Holiday performed Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" at the Apollo Theater Spring Gala.

Holiday has been the recipient of numerous major competitions and award programs such as the 2017 Marian Anderson Vocal Award; the 2014 Richard Tucker Foundation's Sara Tucker award; first place at the 2013 Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition, the 2012 Sullivan Foundation and the 2011 Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition; and third place winner in the 2014 OPERALIA competition. In addition, Holiday was selected among WQXR's prestigious 20 for "20 Artists to Watch," named one of BroadwayWorld's "New York Opera Gifts that Keep on Giving," nominated for "Newcomer of the Year" by the German magazine Opernwelt and listed as one of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts 100 honorees for 2018. In May 2023, Holiday announced his appointment as an associate professor of voice at the University of Maryland School of Music beginning in Fall 2023.

Holiday received a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, a Master of Music in vocal performance from the University of Cincinnati College – Conservatory of Music and the Artist Diploma in Opera Studies from The Juilliard School in New York City. Holiday grew up in Rosenberg, Texas, located near Houston, and attended the town's public schools.

Ed Lyon

Ed Lyon studied at St. John's College Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) and the National Opera Studio (NOS). He has a wide repertoire ranging from the baroque to contemporary music and has appeared in many of the world's leading opera and concert venues including the Royal Opera House (ROH),

Glyndebourne, Bayerische Staatsoper, Dutch National Opera, Teatro Real, Edinburgh, Aix, Salzburg, Holland and Aldeburgh Festivals and the BBC Proms.

Highlights have included the main role in Edison Denisov's *L'écume des jours* (Stuttgart Opera), Steva in *Jenufa* (Opera North), Lurcanio in *Ariodante*, Steurerman in *Der fliegende Holländer* and Walther in *Tannhäuser* (ROH), Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* (Scottish Opera), Jaquino in *Fidelio* (Madrid) and Alessandro in *Eliogabolo* for Dutch National Opera. Recent and future engagements include Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Don Gomez in *Henry VIII* (La Monnaie), Septimius in *Theodora* (Covent Garden and Madrid), Lurcanio (New Israeli Opera) and in a new production for Covent Garden, Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and the main singer in *Clorinda Agonistes* (The Grange Festival), Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*, the title role in *Orfeo* and Grimoaldo in *Rodelinda* for Garsington, Eduardo in *Ades' Exterminating Angel* (Salzburg Festival and Covent Garden), title role in *Candide* (WNO), performances worldwide of *The Diary of One who Disappeared* in a staged production with Musiktheater Transparent, Ferdinand in *Miranda* (Oper Köln). Concert work includes St. Matthew Passion with the Bach Choir and the 2024 Edinburgh Festival, St. John Passion with the RLPO, *War Requiem* with the NDR Hanover and the RLPO, a tour of Europe and the US performing Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra and Sir John Eliot Gardiner, *Missa Solemnis* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, *The Apostles* with the Hallé Orchestra and Sir Mark Elder, various performances of *Messiah* all around the world as well as many concert performances with leading orchestras and ensembles internationally. He has also given solo recitals at the Wigmore Hall.

His recording *17th Century Playlist* with the Theatre of the Ayre has received wide acclaim as has Malcom Arnold's *The Dancing Master* for Resonus Classics.

Kevin Deas

Kevin Deas has gained international renown as one of America's leading bass-baritones. He is perhaps most acclaimed for his signature portrayal of the title role in *Porgy and Bess*, having performed it with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Pacific Symphony, as well as the most illustrious orchestras on the North American continent and at the Ravinia, Vail and Saratoga festivals.

Deas' past season highlights includes performances of Joseph Haydn's *The Creation* with the Minnesota Orchestra; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Requiem with the Toronto Symphony, Eugene Symphony, Louisiana Philharmonic, Orchestra Iowa

and National Philharmonic & Chorale; Igor Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* with the Florida Orchestra; George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* with the New York Philharmonic; Camille Saint-Saëns' *Henry VII* with Odyssey Opera of Boston; Giuseppe Verdi's Requiem with the Orquesta Sinfonica de Minería and Rhode Island Philharmonic; Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Pacific Symphony and Bach Festival Society of Winter Park; and William Walton's *Façade* at the Virginia Arts Festival. He has performed selections from George Gershwin with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, selections from the musicals *Les Misérables*, *Show Boat* and *Ragtime* with Providence Singers, in "The Spiritual in White America," a presentation of black spirituals transformed for the white concert stage by Harry Burleigh and Nathaniel Dett, at the Phillips Collection and a Christmas concert with the Portland Symphony.

A strong proponent of contemporary music, Deas was heard at Italy's Spoleto Festival in a new production of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in honor of the composer's 85th birthday, recorded on video for international release. He also performed the world premieres of Derek Bermel's *The Good Life* with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Hannibal Lokumbe's *Dear Mrs. Parks* with the Detroit Symphony. His 20-year collaboration with the late jazz legend Dave Brubeck has taken him to Salzburg, Vienna and Moscow in performances of *To Hope!* He performed Brubeck's *Gates of Justice* in a gala performance in New York.

Deas recorded Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* (Decca/London) with the Chicago Symphony under the late Sir Georg Solti and Edgard Varèse's *Ecuatorial* with the ASKO Ensemble under the baton of Riccardo Chailly. Other releases include Johann Sebastian Bach's Mass in B Minor and Handel's *Acis and Galatea* (Vox Classics); Brubeck's *To Hope!* with the Cathedral Choral Society (Telarc); and Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* with the Virginia Symphony and Boston Baroque (Linn Records). *Dvorák in America* (Naxos), features Deas in the world premiere recording of Antonín Dvořák's "Hiawatha Melodrama" and the composer's own arrangement of "Goin' Home" with the PostClassical Ensemble.

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 and Eric Whitacre. Montclair choirs appear regularly with the New Jersey Symphony and have won critical acclaim for their "heartfelt conviction," "vibrant sound," being a "marvel of

diction, tuning and rhythm,” “eloquence” and for singing with the “crispness and dexterity of a professional choir.” Pianist Steven W. Ryan 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 NJ Symphony performances include Felix Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 3. (Lacombe), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Requiem* (Lacombe and Zhang), the US premiere of *Speak Out* (Zhang) and George Frideric Handel’s *Messiah* annually since 2014. They recorded Songs of Ascension with Meredith Monk and Vocal Ensemble on the prestigious European label ECM Records under legendary producer Manfred Eicher, which received a GRAMMY nomination in the Producer of the Year section. Their solo recording *I Sing Because* (March 2020) is available for digital download 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 musicians’ health advocate, she is in demand as a guest conductor, somatic educator and choral clinician in the US and abroad.

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*, 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 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 or email 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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