

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Xian Zhang conducts Holst's *The Planets* with New Jersey Symphony

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony presents Holst's *The Planets*—An HD Odyssey with Music Director Xian Zhang conducting.

The four performances will take place Thursday, January 30, 2025, at 7:30 pm, at State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick; Friday, January 31, 2025, at 8 pm, at New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark; Saturday, February 1, 2025, at 8 pm, at NJPAC in Newark; and Sunday, February 2, 2025, at 3 pm, at Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown.

Opening the program is Caroline Shaw's *The Observatory* originally premiered by Xian Zhang with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 2013, Shaw became the youngest composer to receive the Pulitzer Prize in music. Also in the first half is Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, which draws inspiration from George Meredith's 1881 poem of the same name. The piece was originally composed for violin and piano in 1914 and was later reworked for violin and orchestra.

The second half of the program is devoted to Gustav Holst's *The Planets*—An HD Odyssey, a spectacular presentation of Holst's cosmic masterpiece accompanied by breathtaking images of modern space exploration that showcase our solar system in a film by Duncan Copp, in cooperation with NASA and Jet Propulsion Laboratories.

Nancy Zhou is set to appear in Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*. Holst's *Planets* will also feature Montclair State University Prima Voce, under the leadership of director Heather J. Buchanan.

On Friday, January 31, at 6:30 pm, the Symphony will host a Next Gen cocktail hour at Newark Local Beer prior to the performance. The Next Gen program is a free membership program for young music enthusiasts between the ages of 21 and 40. More information on the Next Gen program: njsymphony.org/nextgen.

A Classical Conversation will take place on Saturday, February 1, at 7 pm at NJPAC and Sunday, February 2, at 2 pm at Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown, prior to each performance. Concertgoers will be able to learn more about the music performed from Symphony musicians, guest artists and other engaging insiders.

Holst's *The Planets*—An HD Odyssey **New Jersey Symphony Classical**

Xian Zhang conductor

Nancy Zhou violin

Montclair State University Prima Voce | Heather J. Buchanan, director

New Jersey Symphony

New Brunswick → Thursday, January 30, 7:30 pm, State Theatre New Jersey

Newark → Friday, January 31, 8 pm, NJPAC

Newark → Saturday, February 1, 8 pm, NJPAC

Morristown → Sunday, February 2, 3 pm, Mayo Performing Arts Center

Caroline Shaw *The Observatory*

Ralph Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending*

Gustav Holst *The Planets*—An HD Odyssey

More information on concerts and tickets: njsymphony.org/events.

About Xian Zhang

2024–25 marks 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, National Arts Centre (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.

About Nancy Zhou

Lauded as one of today's probing musical voices, Nancy Zhou harbors a robust presence that seeks to invigorate appreciation for the art and science of the violin. Her thoughtful musicianship resonates with a global audience in such a way that brings her on stage with leading orchestras and performing artists around the world.

Zhou has collaborated with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Würzburg Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony; Shanghai and China National Symphonies and Hong Kong Philharmonic; San Diego and Kansas City Symphonies, among others. Alongside projects as a soloist, she harbors keen interest in chamber music and music education. She has performed for the Tanglewood, Verbier, Ravinia Festivals and devotes time to a studio as well, teaching students across the globe and presenting masterclasses on fundamental training and cultivating mindful awareness critical to performance.

In recent seasons, Zhou has often championed works outside the traditional oeuvre. In collaboration with the New Jersey Symphony and conductor Xian Zhang, she presented Zhao Jiping's first violin concerto at Alice Tully Hall. Zhou gave the premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Gran Cadenza* for two violins with Anne-Sophie Mutter across the US. Zhou toured China performing concertos in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, Hohhot and Kunming. She performed Chen Qigang's *La joie de la souffrance* with the Rogue Valley Symphony and commissioned a work by Canadian composer Vivian Fung for violin and electronics, exploring the intersection of various art forms and, indeed, music and culture. Zhou recorded her debut album for Orchid Classics featuring solo violin repertoire including Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin. The record will be released in June 2025.

American-born, Zhou commenced violin studies with her father, later studying with Miriam Fried at the New England Conservatory while simultaneously pursuing her interest in literature at Harvard University. She is additionally an Associated Artist at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel.

About Montclair State University Prima Voce | Heather J. Buchanan, director

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. 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.” Prima Voce is an extracurricular SSAA project choir with membership drawn from University Singers, Chorale and alumnae. Their previous New Jersey Symphony collaborations include Mahler’s Symphony No. 3 and Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Pianist Steven W. Ryan is the Montclair choral accompanist.

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 60 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 diversity, equity and inclusion while providing students across the state unparalleled opportunities to achieve musical excellence through its Youth Orchestra and other outreach 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.

Connect with us

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

###

Local press

Ali Harrison, New Jersey Symphony, Communications Manager

aharrison@njsymphony.org

Geoffrey Anderson, New Jersey Symphony, VP of Marketing & External Affairs

ganderson@njsymphony.org

National & classical music press

Shirley Kirshbaum, Kirshbaum Associates, President

skirshbaum@kirshbaumassociates.com

Beverly Greenfield, Kirshbaum Associates, Director of Public Relations

bgreenfield@kirshbaumassociates.com

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.