

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Xian Zhang conducts New Jersey Symphony's 2025 Lunar New Year Celebration

NEWARK, NJ—New Jersey Symphony will present a special performance for the 2025 Lunar New Year Celebration ringing in the Year of the Snake. Music Director Xian Zhang will conduct the performance on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 7:30 pm at New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

First developed by Zhang in 2019, the Lunar New Year Celebration weaves together the best in classical music from the East and the West. Zhang leads a program that includes Li Huanzhi's *Spring Festival Overture*, selections from Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23, *Arirang*, "Yuan Ri," "The Red Dragonfly" arranged by Nicholas Hersh and Puccini's "E Lucevan le stelle" from *Tosca* and selections from *Turandot*.

Min Kwon and Michael Fabiano are set to perform, with special appearances from Starry Arts Children's Chorus and Peking University (PKU) Alumni Chorus, which consists of former members of PKU's student choir alongside singers from the Chinese community in New York and New Jersey. The evening will also feature a performance by the Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team.

Earlier this year, the Symphony held a composition competition and invited New Jersey-based composers of all backgrounds, ages and ability levels to submit their own solo piano arrangement of the Korean folk song *Arirang*. Patricio Molina, the winner of the competition, will have his arrangement performed at the concert by pianist Min Kwon. Leading up to the performance, Molina will also participate in at least one workshop with Kwon.

All ticket holders are invited to attend a pre-concert Cultural Exchange Festival in the Prudential Hall lobby that will feature artisans and performers from Prince Kung's Palace Museum in Beijing. Gates will open at 6 pm.

2025 Lunar New Year Celebration with Xian Zhang Celebration of the Year of the Snake

Xian Zhang conductor

Min Kwon piano

Michael Fabiano tenor

Peking University Alumni Chorus

Starry Arts Children's Chorus | Rebecca Shen, director

Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team

New Jersey Symphony

Newark → Saturday, January 25, 7:30 pm, New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Li Huanzhi *Spring Festival Overture*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Selections from Piano Concerto No. 23

Traditional arr. Patricio Molina *Arirang*

Traditional "Yuan Ri"

Traditional arr. Nicholas Hersh "The Red Dragonfly"

Giacomo Puccini "E Lucevan le stelle" from *Tosca*

Giacomo Puccini Selections from *Turandot*

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 Min Kwon

Korean-born American pianist Min Kwon excels in a versatile career that encompasses concerti, solo recitals and chamber music appearances, while in high demand around the world as pedagogue, arts advocate and administrator. She has held professional engagements in over 60 countries on seven continents and all 50 US states.

Professor of piano at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University since 2002, Dr. Kwon is also the founder and director of the Center for Musical Excellence (CME), a non-profit dedicated to mentoring and supporting gifted young musicians. To date, CME has awarded 12 international performing arts grants, each up to \$10,000 and currently features 20 young artists on the 2019 CME Young Artists Roster. CME's alumni/ae list includes more than 100 young artists from 22 countries. As artistic director of *Music Made Here*, a concert series inaugurated in 2018 and *CME in Harding Homes*, Kwon brings world class talent to intimate venues. She has also served as co-director of *Vienna ConcertoFest*, a two-week festival that provides extraordinary opportunities for young artists to appear as soloists with the Viennese International Orchestra in prestigious venues in Austria.

As soloist, Kwon has performed extensively in Europe, North and South America and Asia, with such orchestras as Philadelphia, North Carolina, Atlanta, New Jersey and Fort Worth, Aspen Festival Orchestra, Orquesta Estauado Mexico, Orquesta Sinfónica Venezuela, Wiener Residenz Orchester, Bacau Philharmonic, as well as all major orchestras in Korea on several nationally televised concerts. Since her Avery Fisher (now David Geffen) Hall, Lincoln Center debut in 1992 with the Juilliard Orchestra, she has appeared with many of New York's leading ensembles, including New York Classical Players, Manhattan Chamber Orchestra and the New York Sinfonietta. Among the distinguished conductors with whom she has collaborated are James Conlon, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Alan Gilbert, Vaktang Jordania, Gerhardt Zimmerman and Xian Zhang.

As recitalist, Kwon has performed at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, where she returns each year as artistic director of critically acclaimed, themed concerts featuring Rutgers pianists. Additionally, she has appeared in such major cities as Boston, Copenhagen, London, Madrid, Paris, Philadelphia, Rome, Seoul, Singapore and Sydney. *The New York Concert Review* wrote of her Weill Recital: an "impassioned performance, in full technical command, she allowed for both simplicity and opulence, and the results were gratifying. . . Ms Kwon made the trek with enviable ease and calm but gave plenty of horror-film drama amid booms of sonic thunder and pianistic lightning."

An avid chamber musician, she has performed in numerous duo and chamber recitals around the world, from Stavanger Concert Hall in Norway, Tartu Festival in Estonia, Sony Convention in New York, IMF Conference in Davos, Switzerland to recent appearances in New York, Madrid, Rome, Curaçao, Malaysia, Vienna, Prague, Luxembourg and Serbia. Festival performances include Aspen, Ravinia, Caramoor, Cape & Islands, Colmar (France), Freiburg (Germany), Kuhmo (Finland) and AMEROPA (Prague). With her sister, violinist Yoon Kwon (first violin at the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra), she has given over 200 recitals on Community Concert Tours (CAMI) and has collaborated with principals of the Chicago Symphony, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Paris and the Czech Philharmonic. She has also produced and performed in chamber music concerts with 10 principals of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Recent season chamber music partners include the Shanghai String Quartet, Harlem String Quartet, Jason Moran, Fred Hersch, Robert McDuffie, Cho-Liang Lin, Paul Neubauer, Arnold Steinhardt and Sara San't Ambrogio.

In addition to her collaboration with Yoon Kwon on concert tours, the duo made a recording for RCA Red Seal/BMG in 1996 as the first Koreans to do so in the Company's 100-year history. Kwon also recorded *Schubert and Liszt*, released by MSR Classics, which received a GRAMMY Award (David Frost, Best Producer of the Year, 2009). *The American Record Guide* called this album "a full conquest of the music's temperament and technical demands." With Viennese pianist and conductor Robert Lehrbaumer, she recorded four-hand music of Schubert for MSR. Her solo album, *Dance!*, to be released in March 2019, features works by 19 composers spanning 300 years. A recent release, *CME Presents: Piano Celebration*—for which she was producer, artistic director and performer—celebrates composers and pianists from 17 countries. Its solo and four-hand piano music emphasizes the cultural cross-pollination that influenced such diverse composers as Barber, Rachmaninoff, Poulenc, Earl Wild, Brahms, Milhaud, Piazzolla and Lecuona.

Dr. Kwon has led master classes worldwide at Shanghai and Beijing Central Conservatories, Hong Kong University and HK Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore National University, Royal College of Music in London, Kuhmo International Music Festival in Finland, Perugia Festival in Italy and the Vianden Festival in Luxemburg. She

has also taught in Spain, Denmark, Austria, Korea and in the US, numerous universities and conservatories, including Juilliard, Mannes School of Music and New York University.

Kwon holds Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Music degree from The Curtis Institute of Music, completing post-doctoral studies in Salzburg. From 2015–2018, she served on the Juilliard Council as the first and only alumnus/a to be invited. She counts among her teachers and mentors Eleanor Sokoloff, Martin Canin, Leon Fleisher, Hans Leygraf, Dorothy DeLay, Jerome Lowenthal and Leif Ove Andsnes. Kwon is a Steinway Artist.

About Michael Fabiano

Born in Montclair, New Jersey, this tenor of Italian descent attended the University of Michigan and the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. He was the recipient of the 2014 Beverly Sills Artist Award and the 2014 Richard Tucker Award, Fabiano is the first singer to win both awards in the same year.

Of his important performances, he has sung Don José in *Carmen* at the Festival d'Aix-Provence with direction by Dimitri Tcherniakov, the title role of *Poliuto* at the Glyndebourne Festival and his debut as Calaf in *Turandot* with direction by Ai Weiwei in Rome. He has also performed extensively at the Metropolitan Opera, the San Francisco Opera, the Teatro Real of Madrid, the Berlin Staatsoper, the Teatro Liceu, the Vienna Staatsoper, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Royal Opera House in London, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Teatro San Carlo in Naples and the Paris Opera.

About Peking University Alumni Chorus

Peking University (PKU) Alumni Chorus was founded in 2014. It consists of former members of PKU Student Choir and seasoned singers from the Chinese community in Greater New York area. In the past nine years, the ensemble has performed at every Chinese New Year Concert organized by PKU Alumni Association of Greater New York, as well as made appearances at major stages in New York area such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center and Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center. In 2019, the chorus performed Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with other choruses at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle and Carnegie Hall. In February 2019, the chorus appeared in the New Jersey Symphony's first Lunar New Year concert. This year marks as the seventh consecutive year of collaboration between the chorus and the NJ Symphony.

Conductor and pianist Conrad Chu has served as our chorus conductor since 2016. He earned his master's in orchestral conducting from Mannes School of Music. He has built a reputation as an artist equally well-versed in opera, orchestral and choral repertoire, with a strong affinity for contemporary styles.

About Starry Arts Children's Chorus

In 2015, violin educator and experienced children's choir conductor Rebecca Xiaoxing Shen founded the Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus. The chorus regularly performs at a variety of community events, including at libraries, nursing homes, care centers and multicultural festivals, earning widespread praise. From 2019 to 2023, the chorus was invited to collaborate with the New Jersey Symphony for five consecutive years, performing at the Lunar New Year Celebration Concert at NJPAC, where they received enthusiastic applause at each performance. In September 2023, they were invited to perform as part of a thousand-person choir at the "World Culture Festival" in Washington, DC. Most recently, the chorus won first place in the group competition at the Global Elite Talent Competition, which concluded in January 2024.

About Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team

The Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team was founded in 2014 by Peter Shen with the goal of using lion dance as a cultural ambassador to share Chinese traditions with the community. Combining both dance and martial arts, the team regularly performs at significant events such as Chinese New Year celebrations, National Day, and other important occasions.

Our coach, David Shen, is a professional dancer and martial artist. He has choreographed many pieces for our young performers, tailoring each to fit the specific event and the needs of the group.

Over the years, our team has performed at a variety of venues, including libraries, parks, schools, senior centers and other locations, bringing our rich cultural heritage to diverse audiences.

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.