

An Unforgettable Evening: The National Chamber Orchestra Celebrates Its Inaugural Gala with a Night of Exceptional Music

Ferrandis, Chen, and Walton Bring a Sold-Out Black-Tie Evening in Potomac to Life

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, July 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the evening of Saturday, June 28th, the The National Chamber Orchestra (NCO) made its formal debut on the Washington cultural scene with a luminous Inaugural Gala in Potomac, Maryland. An evening of rare distinction of a black-tie celebration that brought together virtuoso artistry, warm community spirit, and the promise of an organization poised to become one of the region's most vital musical voices.



Maestro Julien Benichou

The night opened in festive fashion, with jazz pianist Ronald Trey Walton III setting an atmosphere of effortless elegance during the cocktail reception. A versatile musician, Walton moved through an evening of classic standards with the ease and ingenuity the genre demands, drawing guests into the celebratory spirit before a single note of the concert program had been heard.

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The formal concert that followed showcased French flautist Jean Ferrandis and pianist Hui-Chuan Chen in a program of breathtaking range. The evening opened with Debussy's *Syrinx*; a solitary, searching monologue for solo flute,

before expanding into the impressionistic splendor of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Beethoven's *Violin Sonata No. 5 in F major*, the “Spring” Sonata, followed with all the warmth and lyrical generosity its nickname promises, Ferrandis and Chen finding in its familiar

passages a freshness that they made entirely their own. The evening's concert closed in a spirit of unrestrained brilliance with Giulio Briccialdi's Fantaisie on themes from Verdi's La Traviata; a dazzling tour de force that brought the audience to its feet with resounding applause.

The Gala was hosted by Shahin Mafi, who guided the evening with grace and precision. The event served as NCO's signature fundraiser, supporting the orchestra's mission to present exceptional musical experiences

rooted in the finest professional talent across the Washington Metropolitan Area, the nation, and the international stage.

"This evening was everything we hoped it would be and more," said Maestro Julien Benichou, who co-founded the National Chamber Orchestra in 2022 alongside clarinetist YaoGuang Zhai. "Jean, Hui-Chuan, and Trey each brought something extraordinary to this room. That is exactly who we are as an organization, musicians in genuine conversation with each other and with their audience."

The success of the Inaugural Gala marks a milestone for an organization that has already distinguished itself in the Washington music community, and anticipation for NCO's upcoming season is high. Information on future performances and season programming is available at: www.nationalchamberorchestra.org.

About the National Chamber Orchestra

Founded in 2022 by Conductor Julien Benichou and Clarinetist YaoGuang Zhai, the National Chamber Orchestra (NCO) brings together the finest instrumentalists of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area for performances that emphasize intimacy, artistic excellence, and community engagement. NCO features principal players and section leaders from the region's most prestigious orchestras alongside distinguished soloists from across the globe, creating an immersive concert experience that invites audiences into direct dialogue with the music and with one another. Offering an intimate, immersive experience that invites audiences into direct dialogue with performers, NCO embraces this intimacy as both an artistic philosophy and a community building mission. These personal settings, shaped by musicians of diverse geographic and artistic backgrounds become a living conversation, where different musical traditions and interpretive approaches interact in real time. This amplifies the orchestra's inherently collaborative spirit, transforming each performance into a shared cultural exchange.



Guests at NCO Gala

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