

## The Soraya Joins Forces with *The New York Times* at “A New Climate”

Wednesday, October 12 at the  
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco

Excerpts from The Soraya’s *Treelogy* to be performed

Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter **John Branch**, The Soraya’s Executive and Artistic Director **Thor Steingraber** and Composer and Environmentalist **Gabriella Smith** featured on the panel

[Can Art Save Us? The Creative Response](#)

(Los Angeles, CA) Sep 7, 2022 — Technology has transformed our lives, but despite its many promises, it hasn't yet saved us from the perils of a warming climate. Shifts in society have often come from art, but will they be able to mobilize change this time around? Pioneers in technology, business and the arts will gather this October in San Francisco to examine our collective response to the climate challenge.

*The New York Times* will host [“A New Climate,”](#) a live in-person event on Wednesday, October 12 at the Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco. **The Soraya’s** Executive and Artistic Director Thor Steingraber and composer and environmentalist Gabriella Smith join tech leaders, engineers, storytellers, musicians, and food innovators to participate in the day-long event which will preview extended excerpts of each of The Soraya's *Treelogy’s* three musical pieces ahead of its official world premiere in February 2023. “A New Climate” participants include Brad Smith, President and Vice Chair of Microsoft; Linda Zhang, Chief Engineer at Ford Motors; and Ethan Brown, Founder and CEO of Beyond Meat, amongst others.

Commissioned by The Soraya at CSUN, *Treelogy* is a musical portrait of California’s Redwood, Sequoia and Joshua Trees. The three pieces are created by Gabriella Smith, Grammy Award-winning composer Steven Mackey, and Los Angeles-based Grammy Award-winning jazz composer Billy Childs. [“A New Climate”](#) will preview extended *Treelogy* excerpts of each music piece performed by Delirium Musicum. This will be the very first time the pieces have been

performed, ahead of the February 23, 2023 premiere and subsequent tour to additional California State University Campuses.

"They're among the world's oldest living things. The climate crisis is killing them." That was the title of John Branch's 2020 article in *The New York Times* about the Coastal Redwoods, Giant Sequoias and Joshua Trees that perished in the deadly California wildfires that year. Steingraber was inspired by Branch's piece to commission ***Treelogy***, a three-part musical reflection in response to the fires. What does this musical response to journalism say about the role of artists in a challenge as far reaching as the climate crisis?

"With the magnitude and frequency of climate crises, everyone has a role in creating solutions, and we cannot rely on policy-makers and journalists alone to inspire change," said Steingraber.

"Musicians are able to play a unique role by appealing to our hearts with a sense of beauty and dignity. California's beloved trees deserve that, and in celebrating them, we aim to inspire urgency and perseverance, and to overcome the growing sense of helplessness. These trees are the backdrop of our lives, and the postcards of California, emblematic to the world of our great state and its natural wonders. The Soraya has brought together artists who share this vision - violinist Étienne Gara and the three composers. While they are all busy artists internationally, each also has deep California roots. Like me, they were inspired by the reporting by *The New York Times* journalist John Branch in his 2020 coverage of the California wildfires. It is our goal that each of the three tree species receive a very distinct musical treatment from the three composers."

Pulitzer-winning journalist John Branch documented the destruction of three of California's beloved tree species: The Giant Sequoia, the Joshua Tree, and the Coastal Redwood. Many of the trees had perished in the first of a series of deadly wildfires in the state and it was clear the trees were now in the fight of their lives. Since Branch's reporting, California's extreme wildfires have continued to grow, as have the calls to protect the beloved symbols of California, the ancient trees that stand in their path.

### **About Thor Steingraber**

**Thor Steingraber's** artistic career spans more than 20 years, directing at major venues from Lincoln Center to theaters in Europe and Asia. Los Angeles has long been his artistic home where his work for Los Angeles Opera could be seen at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion from 1994 to 2008. Steingraber also taught and directed at Yale School of Music, Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, and the Curtis Institute. Since his appointment as Executive and Artistic Director of the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya) in 2014, Steingraber has brought acclaim to the 1700-seat venue. Located in the heart of the San Fernando Valley, The Soraya has come to be known as home to many Los Angeles artists and arts organizations, and Steingraber's lifetime experience as a producer has brought to The Soraya some of the most innovative and diverse programming in the region. Steingraber is a

graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School and was its first Fellow for Arts and Culture. He was subsequently Vice President of two of the nation's largest performing arts centers –The Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, and The Music Center in downtown Los Angeles, where he was responsible for opening Grand Park and establishing the vision that has made the park vital to LA as the home to its many celebrations and holidays.

### **About Gabriella Smith**

Composer and Environmentalist **Gabriella Smith** is a composer and environmentalist. Her music comes from a love of play and connecting listeners with the natural world. Recent highlights include the Los Angeles Philharmonic's performances of "Tumblebird Contrails," conducted by John Adams and "Breathing Forests" conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen. She recently recorded her first full-length album, "Lost Coast," at Greenhouse Studios in Iceland.

Additional Links:

- [Treelogy Press Kit](#)
- [The Soraya and Sustainability](#)
- [About the Treelogy Composers](#)

### **About the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)**

Located on the vibrant and diverse campus of California State University in the heart of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, the **Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)** continues its vigorous commitment to innovating, excelling, and amplifying access by offering a wide variety of performances that reflect LA's many distinctive communities and featuring new and original work from the Los Angeles region as well as artists from around the world.

The Soraya's 2022-23 season offers a joy-filled reunion featuring a vibrant program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family, and international events that will further establish it as one of the top arts companies in Southern California that uplifts and inspires its audiences.

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