

“Iconic scoring at its most subtle and moving.” – *Film Score Monthly*

“Jason Moran [is] shaping up to be the most provocative thinker in current jazz.”
– *Rolling Stone*

Jason Moran Returns to The Soraya to Perform His Live Score of Ava Duvernay’s Groundbreaking Film *Selma*

Cheche Alara Conducts New West Symphony

Saturday, February 1, 2020 at 8PM

(Los Angeles, CA) December 20, 2019 – Director Ava DuVernay's *Selma* tells the story of the events leading up to Dr. Martin Luther King’s landmark 1965 march for voting rights – an event that forever changed history. In honor of Dr. King’s birthday and Black History Month, The Soraya will screen *Selma* on the large screen – with its score performed live by its composer, acclaimed jazz pianist Jason Moran – artistic director of Jazz at the Kennedy Center – with the New West Symphony conducted by Cheche Alara on Saturday, February 1 at 8:00pm at The Soraya.

Film Music Magazine noted about Moran’s astonishing first feature film score, “It’s an unstoppable sense of history-making that could perhaps only be captured by a musician so steeped in jazz and its cultural heritage.”

Tickets for *Selma* with Live Score by Jason Moran start at \$36 and are currently on sale at The Soraya, (818) 677-3000 and at TheSoraya.org.

About *Selma* and Jason Moran’s Film Score

Selma earned Golden Globe nominations for Best Film, Director, Actor, and song for “Glory” (by John Legend and Common, who also appeared in the film). “Glory” earned the Golden Globe and the Oscar for Best Original Song; additionally, the film established the career of actor David Oyelowo with his acclaimed portrayal of King.

DuVernay portrays the preternatural bravery and defiance of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights, a defining moment for the civil rights movement. Tapped to create a score for the 2014 film, Jason Moran captured the tension and drama surrounding the march, events that played out in public and frenetic behind-the-scenes negotiations at the highest level of government.

Crafting a striking orchestral work laced with the blues, Moran wrote themes that seemed to breathe with the film, somber, thoughtful, and redolent of the South. He and guitarist Marvin Sewell, a roots-to-avant-garde string wizard, accompany *Selma* offering an immersive experience of an inordinately powerful film.

A.O. Scott in *The New York Times* said, “Bold and bracingly self-assured ... Ms. DuVernay, in her third feature writes history with passionate clarity and blazing conviction. *Selma* is not a manifesto, a battle cry or a history lesson. It’s a movie: warm, smart, generous and moving in two senses of the word. It will call forth tears of grief, anger, gratitude and hope. And like those pilgrims on the road to Montgomery, it does not rest.”

Directed with passion and conviction by Ava DuVernay, written by Paul Webb, and starring a mesmerizing David Oyelowo, *Selma* relates one of the great American dramas: the tumultuous three-month period in 1965, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a dangerous campaign to secure equal voting rights in the South in the face of violent opposition. These epic marches led by James Bevel, Hosea Williams, Martin Luther King Jr., and John Lewis from Selma to Montgomery culminated in President Lyndon Johnson (Tom Wilkinson) signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the most significant victories for the civil rights movement. Other roles are played by Tim Roth as George Wallace, Carmen Ejogo as Coretta Scott King, and Common as Bevel.

Ava DuVernay has in short order become one of the most important film makers of our time: for her second feature film *Middle of Nowhere* she won the 2012 Sundance Film Festival directing award (United States, drama), the first black woman to win the award. With *Selma* (2014), DuVernay became the first black woman to be nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Director, and the first black female director to have her film nominated for the Best Picture Academy Award; her *13th* (2017) was nominated for the Best Documentary Feature Academy Award.

With *A Wrinkle in Time*, she became the first black American woman to direct a film to earn \$100 million domestically. The following year, she created, co-wrote, and directed the acclaimed Netflix miniseries “When They See Us”, based on the 1989 Central Park jogger case.

David Denby in *The New Yorker* said, “Directed with passion and conviction by Ava DuVernay and starring a mesmerizing David Oyelowo as King, *Selma* relates one of the great American dramas, how events in and around a small Alabama city forced this country to live up to its democratic rhetoric and ensure the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. You can be grateful that this momentous chapter in American history has been filmed at last.”

Chris Nashawaty in *Entertainment Weekly* said, “DuVernay has done a great service with *Selma*. Not only has she made one of the most powerful films of the year, she's given us a necessary reminder of what King did for this country...and how much is left to be done.”

Richard Corliss in *Time* magazine said, “This is the film of the year - of 1965 - and perhaps of 2014.”

Prefacing an interview with Moran, Daniel Schweiger wrote in *Film Music Magazine*: “In the civilly disobedient musical case of Martin Luther King Jr. the impact of *Selma’s* score comes from its subtlety of meeting racist fury with soft dignity, as the jazz, soul and spiritual rhythms of an oppressed black nation join hands with a measured symphonic approach, especially when detailing the movement’s effect on a troubled marriage through soft strings and piano. Yet this is also a soundtrack that truly knows when to raise its emotional fist to shattering orchestral effect – both in getting across King’s still unmet call for racial equality, as well as announcing an impressive new voice on the major scoring scene.

As heard in an astonishing Hollywood debut by Jason Moran, *Selma* mixes the inspirationally expected with equal innovation, from paranoid electronics to the handclap percussion of police beat-downs. It’s

an unstoppable sense of history making that could perhaps only be captured by a musician so steeped in jazz and its cultural heritage.”

Moran said, “*Selma* is a real comment on the relationships that rule the country, and how we relate to each other. There’s an indictment it imposes on all of us, the moment where King is giving a eulogy for the child that was murdered. He kind of indicts everybody, the people who aren’t a part of the marches. He indicts the clergy when he says, ‘Come on y’all. You see this is a problem for people.’ This film will hopefully serve as a template to show how the community that was around Martin Luther King Jr., and what we have to do now to move forward and progress. Not to just change laws, but to change peoples’ attitudes.

It has that kind of tension and history built into it, a process of exploring sounds from James Brown to today’s artists like John Legend and Common, who perform *Selma*’s end song “Glory.” So when I study jazz, I don’t just study just the music. I study its relationship where it was in the history. *Selma* is set in the 60s, when John Coltrane was about to make his most profound work ‘A Love Supreme,’ which is about the way he felt about the things that were happening with the civil rights movement, as well as the four girls who were bombed in a church. John made a piece about that, so our relationship to each other has always been extremely close. It’s daunting to think about that, but it’s also how I’ve been working for my entire life as a creative artist.”

A score can be of help, but it can also really strong-arm a theme. I didn’t want to necessarily do that here. ... On *Selma*, I was trying to give just a little, because my habit as a jazz player is to actually give you a lot (laughs)! But I had to resist the temptation, because the score needs to be “felt” more than “heard.” I was thinking of how the music would get us from place to place, and how it would help the audience breathe. And sometimes it needed to be big, to put us on a boat and take us across this bridge to arrive at Martin Luther King’s final speech.”

Calendar Listing for SELMA with live score by JASON MORAN

Date: Saturday, February 1, 2020 at 8pm

Venue: Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330

Tickets: **Prices:** Starting at \$36. Prices subject to change.
By Phone: (818) 677-3000
Online: TheSoraya.org

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Jason Moran – Pianist, composer, educator and curator – Jason Moran grew up in Houston, Texas, and has become established as one of the most original voices on today’s jazz scene, active not only in music, but also in visual arts, film, performance art, theatre and dance – and leading *Rolling Stone* to state that “Jason Moran is shaping up to be the most provocative thinker in current jazz.”

He has a keen and intensely personal insight into jazz history, bringing a contemporary response to the music of landmark figures – Thelonious Monk, Fats Waller and now James Reese Europe – as well as a series of groundbreaking projects that extend far beyond familiar jazz presentation. As an example, his installation piece for the 2015 Venice Biennale, *Staged* – a meditation on two bygone Manhattan jazz venues, the Savoy Ballroom and the Three Deuces club.

European audiences have experienced the range of Jason’s creative practice on a number of occasions over the past decade, including regular touring with his Bandwagon trio, which forms the core of the band for *The Harlem Hellfighters* project. *In My Mind*, Jason’s multi-media piece inspired by Thelonious Monk has also toured extensively since 2008, and his exuberant *Fats Waller Dance Party* band has also toured European Festivals in 2015.

He played a number of select concerts in duet with fellow pianist Robert Glasper in celebration of Blue Note Records 75th birthday; and his extraordinary commission for the 2016 Jazztopad Festival in Wroclaw, *Wind*, a visually stunning performance inspired by freedom movements and cultural resistance, had a second, acclaimed performance at the 2016 EFG London Jazz Festival.

His interest in visual arts is reflected by the afore-mentioned project at the Venice Biennale, and over the past year, he has performed in London with visual artist Arthur Jafa at the Serpentine Gallery, and at two sold-out events with long-time collaborator Joan Jonas as part of the major retrospective of Jonas’s work at the Tate Modern. He also has a longstanding association with innovative London-based record company and producer Vinyl Factory.

Jason Moran began his professional career playing with Greg Osby, and his debut recording on Blue Note Records, *Soundtrack to Human Motion*, was released in 1999 to great critical praise. The following year, *Facing Left* established his trio The Bandwagon, with bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits, and prompted JazzTimes Magazine to declare the album “an instant classic.”

Since his first album, Jason he has produced ten additional albums and six film soundtracks, including scores for Ava DuVernay’s films *Selma* and *13th*. In 2007, He was commissioned to create *In My Mind: Monk at Town Hall, 1959*, producing a critically-acclaimed multi-media performance investigating Thelonious Monk’s famous recording, Monk at Town Hall. Recent releases include *The Armory Concert* (2016), *Thanksgiving at the Vanguard* (2017) and *Bangs* (2017) under his own label Yes Records.

In 2010 Moran was awarded a MacArthur fellowship and in 2011 he was appointed Artistic Advisor to Jazz at The Kennedy Center, and subsequently made Artistic Director for Jazz, working closely with the Center’s staff to expand the breadth of its jazz programming, and emphasizing cross-genre collaboration

Ava DuVernay – Winner of the Emmy, BAFTA and Peabody Awards, Academy award nominee Ava DuVernay is a writer, director, producer and film distributor. Her directorial work includes the historical drama *SELMA*, the criminal justice documentary *13th* and Disney’s *A Wrinkle in Time*, which made her the highest grossing black woman director in American box office history. Based on the infamous case of The Central Park Five, “When They See Us” was released worldwide on Netflix in May 2019. Currently, she is overseeing production on her critically acclaimed TV series “Queen Sugar,” her new CBS limited series “The Red Line” and her upcoming OWN series “Cherish the Day.” Winner of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival’s Best Director Prize for her micro-budget film *Middle of Nowhere*, DuVernay amplifies the work of people of color and women of all kinds through her non-profit film collective Array, named one of Fast Company’s Most Innovative Companies. DuVernay sits on the advisory board of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and chairs the Prada Diversity Council.

Cheche Alara – A composer, arranger, producer, music director, conductor and virtuoso keyboardist—a skillset expansive enough to make him “one-stop shopping” for creatives. Among those who’ve availed themselves of Alara’s various abilities are Barbra Streisand, Natalia Lafourcade, Christina Aguilera, Mike Patton, Lady Gaga, Alejandro Sanz and Colbie Caillat.

He’s been brought in to produce Natalia Lafourcade’s Latin Grammy winning “Musas” Vol. 1 & 2, Thalia’s “Habitame Siempre” and Il Volo’s “Grande Amore”; served as Music Producer and Musical Director for the Grammys Premiere Ceremony, the Latin Grammys, and Person of the Year galas for Caetano Veloso, Shakira, Alejandro Sanz and Plácido Domingo; lead Mike Patton’s Mondo Cane orchestra, penning arrangements,

conducting and playing keys; and composing for projects like *The Titan Games*, (NBC) *Death by Magic* (Netflix) and *To Tell the Truth* (ABC). Barbra Streisand invited him to join *The Music, The Mem'ries, The Magic* tour as keyboardist—then tasked him to arrange and record the opening and closing sequences for the production of the tour's Netflix concert special.

Whatever the musical adventure, Alara brings something fundamental to the table beyond his considerable musical chops—a profound warmth and good humor that make him the guy that artists and musicians want in the room. And whether that room is a recording studio, a concert hall or a rehearsal space, what you get is a guy whose joy in creating music is utterly infectious, and whose generosity in composing, arranging and playing lifts up everyone in its presence.

Those qualities have helped him orchestrate moments, not just tunes—like pairing Luis Fonsi and Martina McBride at the Alma Awards, or spearheading a duet between Robbie Williams and Thalia. His musical sensibility is global, but so is his ability to connect and establish trust with creative professionals. They may bring him in for his chops, but they want him around for that essential *spark*.

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

The 2019-20 Season marks the ninth year for the award-winning Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts which has quickly become one of the cultural jewels of the greater Los Angeles region. Under the leadership of Executive Director Thor Steingraber, The Soraya continues to expand its programming and outstanding multidisciplinary performances. The Soraya presents a wide variety of performances that not only include new and original work from the Los Angeles region but also work from around the world appealing to all of LA's rich and diverse communities.

Located on the campus of California State University, Northridge, The Soraya's season offers a vibrant performance program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family, and international events that have served to establish The Soraya as the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley, and further establish itself as one of the top arts companies in Southern California. The award-winning, 1,700-seat theatre was designed by HGA Architects and Engineers and was recently cited by the Los Angeles Times as "a growing hub for live music, dance, drama and other cultural events."