

“This hybrid of movement and apparatus is unlike anything you will see anywhere. Founder and Artistic Director Jacques Heim has imagined and brought to life a world unto itself.” – LA Dance Chronicle

The Soraya Presents the World Premiere of **DIAVOLO: *Existencia*, 30 Years After the Northridge Earthquake**

With music by Jazz Duo Thana Alexa and Antonio Sánchez;
Featuring aerial artistry by BANDALOOP with choreography
directed and performed by founder Amelia Rudolph.

Two World Premiere Performances: Wed, Jan 17 and Fri, Jan 19 at 8pm.
Tickets start at \$39 and can be purchased at TheSoraya.org.

(Northridge, CA) December 19, 2023 — On January 17, 2024, [DIAVOLO, Architecture in Motion](https://TheSoraya.org), and [The Soraya](https://TheSoraya.org) will present the world premiere of *Existencia*, a new work to commemorate the 30 years since the Northridge Earthquake struck California State University Northridge (CSUN), in 1994 — and event which was said to have been the worst natural disaster ever to hit a university campus in the United States.

Produced and commissioned by The Soraya, *Existencia* was conceived on behalf of the earthquake anniversary. Soraya Executive and Artistic Director Thor Steingraber invited DIAVOLO to create the work, marking the sixth collaboration between Steingraber and DIAVOLO Founder Jacques Heim.

The performance is a collaborative work featuring the cast of **DIAVOLO** performers, original musical score by and live stage performance by GRAMMY© Award-winning jazz drummer **Antonio Sánchez** and his wife, GRAMMY© Award nominee vocalist **Thana Alexa**, and aerial work choreographed by the vertical dance company **BANDALOOP**, performed by its founder **Amelia Rudolph**.

Existencia is an exploration of human resilience in the face of disaster, utilizing dance, aerial movement, music, and architectural design to share emotional themes and an uplifting story about disaster — and the human response. The performance will include collapsing towers, skateboard ramps and aerial choreography by Amelia Rudolph, whose dance company BANDALOOP, is well known for its vertical performances on buildings, cliffs and walls ([St. Paul's Cathedral London](#), [David Geffen Hall](#), [Mickey Beach](#)).

Much like the journey of the CSUN campus and surrounding communities following the 1994 earthquake, the loss and trauma of disaster turns to the important task of rebuilding, and in doing so, emerging stronger and better. And who better to tell this emotional story than **DIAVOLO**, the dance company that was based in the San Fernando Valley, on Parthenia Street, at the time the earthquake struck.

“When I considered this particular anniversary, I immediately reached out to DIAVOLO Artistic Director Jacques Heim who is one of the most creative individuals I know,” said Thor Steingraber, Executive and Artistic Director of The Soraya. “His personal relationship with the 1994 Northridge earthquake in many ways mirrors that of the beginnings of The Soraya which arose from the rubble created by that disaster. In that context, ***Existencia***, is our collaboration with Jacques and DIAVOLO, and his creative team, that offers both hope and a sense of unity and resilience and create a road map to the future.”

About DIAVOLO: *Existencia*, 30 Years After the Northridge Earthquake

Gravity betrays you and the ground beneath your feet is no longer reliable. Then what happens next? That’s the inspiration for *Existencia*, a new piece created by DIAVOLO. Produced and commissioned by The Soraya, this special event brings to bear the company’s athleticism and unique brand of spectacle, as well as its humanity and grace. Joining the performers onstage are aerialist Amelia Rudolph (founder of BANDALOOP), drummer Antonio Sánchez and vocalist Thana Alexa, creating a new score and soundscape in collaboration with DIAVOLO, also inspired by the Northridge Earthquake and the personal impacts of earthquakes on their own families in Mexico City and Croatia.

In January, 1994, California State University Northridge experienced what has been called the worst natural disaster ever to hit a university campus in the United States. What followed next was an extraordinary act of perseverance. Within two weeks, classes resumed in trailers and outdoor locations. Months later, degrees were conferred, and a little more than a decade later, the campus was restored, an even better version than it was prior to the earthquake.

In 1994, a fledgling dance company, DIAVOLO, had set up shop in Northridge, established by recent CalArts graduate, Jacques Heim. The company was inspired to meet the moment with daring and innovative works that celebrate the human spirit. In 2011, when The Soraya’s doors first opened, it would become the cultural heart of the vast region, and DIAVOLO would find a regular home there.

Now, DIAVOLO and The Soraya join forces again for the world premiere of *Existencia*. This new work is a reflection on how a community resets and evolves in the face of disaster. Far more than the destruction is the resilience, humility, and selflessness born from facing the unknown and wrestling with mortality.

For tickets and interview requests, please contact:

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- [ACCESS YOUR PRESS KIT HERE.](#)

For questions or ticket information, visit www.TheSoraya.org or call the Ticket Office at (818) 677-3000. Office hours are 11a-4p, Tuesday through Saturday.

About DIAVOLO & Jacques Heim, Founder and Artistic Director

DIAVOLO | Architecture in Motion®, the renowned Los Angeles-based dance company, was founded in 1992 by Artistic Director Jacques Heim, an inquisitive guy who combined his academic background in theater, film, and dance with a passion for architecture. Thanks to Heim and his talented crew of dancers, designers and engineers, the Company, for more than 25 years, has been applauded internationally for its ability to display surprising movement against a backdrop of elaborately designed space, all while entertaining audiences with what is, in fact, a new art form.

His skill in creating work that entertains is central to Heim’s artistic vision, one that combines elements of contemporary dance with martial arts, acrobatics, gymnastics, and hip-hop. Throughout the years, the Company has captivated audiences in 250 cities and 14 countries and has performed to sold out audiences throughout the U.S. International touring has included stops in Germany, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Holland, Austria, Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Columbia and Chile. DIAVOLO has also appeared at select corporate events and for special advertising and promotional engagements.

In 2017, DIAVOLO enjoyed an especially extraordinary season, highlighted by Heim’s creation of five new pieces for Season 12 of NBC’s hit series “America’s Got Talent.” One of the Top 10 contestants to reach the show’s finale at Hollywood’s Dolby Theater, the Company was seen by over 90 million television viewers.

Through The DIAVOLO Institute, the Company also provides educational and outreach programs for people of all ages and abilities as it seeks to share the power of dance as a means of social impact. Two such programs are T.R.U.S.T., an initiative tailored for schools that explores the necessity of teamwork; and The Veteran’s Project, a four-month workshop using movement as medicine, that DIAVOLO has replicated in cities across the U.S.

Anticipating an exciting future of continuing to impact audiences throughout the globe, DIAVOLO looks forward to touring new work; expanding its Board; undertaking more corporate and customized

commercial assignments; and reaching out to even more adventurous souls who want to join DIAVOLO on this marvelous journey.

About Antonio Sanchez and wife Thana Alexa

Antonio Sanchez: Born in Mexico City, four-time GRAMMY® Award-winner **Antonio Sánchez** began playing the drums at age five and performed professionally in his early teens in Mexico's rock, jazz, and Latin scenes. He pursued a degree in classical piano at the National Conservatory in Mexico and in 1993 enrolled in Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude in Jazz Studies.

Since moving to New York City in 1999, Sánchez has become one of the most sought-after drummers on the international jazz scene. Following 18 years and nine albums as one of the most revered collaborators with guitarist/composer **Pat Metheny**, he also has recorded and performed with many other most prominent artists like **Chick Corea, Gary Burton, Michael Brecker, Charlie Haden** and **Toots Thielmans**.

In 2014 Sánchez's popularity soared when he scored Alejandro González Iñárritu's **Birdman** or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) which fetched four Academy awards (including best picture) and for which Sánchez won a GRAMMY® award. Additional film and tv projects include EPIX network's *Get Shorty* and *Hippopotamus* among others. With more than a dozen recordings as a leader or co-leader, Sánchez's recent projects include the acclaimed epic *The Meridian Suite* and the star studded *Three Times Three*. He turned his upset over social injustice into a tribute to every immigrant's journey in his epic musical statement *Lines in the Sand*.

Sánchez is the recipient of four GRAMMYS®, three Echo Awards, Golden Globe and BAFTA nominations and has been thrice named Modern Drummer's "Jazz Drummer of the Year." He has been the covers of DownBeat, JazzTimes, JAZZIZ, Modern Drummer, Drum! and Musico Pro — among others. Sánchez's new album **SHIFT** (Bad Hombre Vol. II) on Warner Music features Sánchez playing virtually every instrument on the album — in addition to being its producer. *SHIFT* features Trent Reznor, Dave Mathews, Kimbra, Ana Tijoux, Meshell Ndegeocello and more.

Thana Alexa: Surprising is the word that perhaps best describes GRAMMY®-nominated vocalist and composer, **Thana Alexa**, an extraordinarily creative force in music. Her two-time GRAMMY®-nominated album *ONA* (self-release, March 2020) was inspired by the cross generational and cross-cultural stories of the Croatian women in her family and evolved into an exploration of the experiences of contemporary women everywhere. Her desire to create more female-focused projects has only grown from there, including her trio's 2022 self-titled album *SONICA*, an album fully engineered, mixed and produced by Alexa, released via Outside In Music together with GRAMMY®-nominated artist **Nicole Zuraitis** and first-call bassist, **Julia Adamy**.

One of Alexa's most important and ongoing collaborations has been with her husband, four-time GRAMMY®-winner **Antonio Sanchez**. Together they have recorded more than six albums with each other's respective groups, in addition to projects by other artists. After years of collaboration, they have teamed up to compose an original score for **DIAVOLO: Existencia**, a piece in which the drums, voice and physical movement are highlighted as the three most important forms of human expression to communicate the process of destruction, devastation, and community rebuilding.

During the 2020 Coronavirus lockdown, Alexa made headlines as a co-founder of what Rolling Stone called the first "virtual jazz festival" and fundraising initiative of the pandemic, **Live From Our Living**

Rooms, which contracted over 120 artists, raised over \$140,000, and helped facilitate grants to over 100 US based musicians in need.

Post pandemic, Alexa co-founded and is the artistic director of the **Ponta Lopud Jazz Festival** in Croatia, which seeks to connect the wealth of musicianship from the Balkans with some of the most well-known jazz artists from the U.S. and around the world.

About BANDALOO & Amelia Rudolph

Amelia Rudolph focuses on art's transformational and restorative nature to initiate a shift of perspective and ignite a sense of possibility. A director, choreographer, and performer, she is best known as the founder of the dance company BANDALOO, whose trailblazing fusion of postmodern movement, rock climbing technology, and a spirit of adventure is world-renowned. Seen by millions in various formats, including film, commercial, and social media, her work has been presented on **Great Performances/PBS, the David Letterman show, 20/20, Good Morning America**, the film *America's Heart and Soul*, and **CBS Sunday Morning**, among others. It has also been featured in many national publications, including the **Smithsonian Magazine, LIFE, and The New York Times Magazine**.

The foundational influence of mountain climbing and unconventional use of gravity distinguish her choreography, which plays out in site-responsive dances in natural and built environments. Her work celebrates the human spirit and often focuses on environmental stewardship and social justice. Amelia holds bachelor's and Master's degrees in Comparative Religion from Swarthmore College and the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, and in 2021, was awarded an honorary doctorate from 17, Instituto de Estudios Críticos, Mexico City. She has received over forty grants, fellowships, and commissions, is a recent CORO fellow, and serves on several boards in the field of the performing arts. To learn more, [click here](#).

An innovator in vertical performance, **BANDALOO** seamlessly weaves dynamic physicality, intricate choreography and climbing technology to turn the dance floor on its side, honoring nature, community, and the human spirit through perspective-bending dance. Founded by Amelia Rudolph in 1991 and now under the artistic direction of Melecio Estrella, BANDALOO re-imagines dance, activates public spaces, and inspires wonder and imagination in audiences around the world. The company trains dancers and youth at their home studios in West Oakland and on tour and has performed for millions of people in over 300 cities in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, and Asia. As creative and technical experts in vertical expressions steeped in its culture of safety, BANDALOO is sought after by institutional, civic, and corporate partners like Disney and IMAX to design unparalleled experiences for stages and screens. Upcoming BANDALOO collaborations include vertical movement and staging for *REDWOOD*, a new musical conceived by Tina Landau and Idina Menzel, premiering at La Jolla Playhouse in February 2024.

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

The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for The Performing Arts (The Soraya) is an award-winning, state-of-the-art 1,700-seat theatre designed and built by HGA Architects and Engineers and opened in January 2011 as the Valley Performing Arts Center (VPAC). Through a transformative gift by Younes and Soraya Nazarian the venue was renamed as The Soraya in 2017. Vibrant programming has served to establish The Soraya as the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley and its 1.8 million residents, and as one of the top arts and culture venues in Southern California. Since its inaugural season, The Soraya has presented over 500 artists and companies across the genres of music, dance, theater and film and is a highly in demand location for filming and rental events.

The Soraya's 2023/2024 Season boldly advances the expansive sound of orchestras both traditional and contemporary; the freestyle vibe of jazz; an array of dance luminaries, and a cultural bounty drawn from the musical well of global voices. The Soraya continues its vigorous commitment to innovating, excelling, and amplifying access by offering a wide variety of performances that reflect Los Angeles' many distinctive communities and featuring new and original work and artists from the local region as well as nationally and around the world.

Located on the vibrant campus of California State University Northridge (CSUN), The Soraya and the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication share an integral link that enhances student access and opportunities in the arts and performing arts. A \$5 million contribution from record producer and former California Lieutenant Governor Mike Curb was pivotal in ensuring the completion and opening of The Soraya in 2011. For his founding support and in acknowledgment of the integral relationship between the Mike Curb College and The Soraya, Mike Curb is recognized as one of The Soraya's Cornerstone Benefactors. This partnership fosters academic and artistic excellence, elevating the talents and the future growth of CSUN's students through master classes, student tickets, concerts of student ensembles, and students appearing alongside renowned artists such as Wynton Marsalis, Aida Cuevas, and Martha Graham Dance Company.

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

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