



NEWS RELEASE

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“(‘Rhapsody in Blue’) is a fixture of American culture,”
— CBS Sunday Morning, Oct 2024

Conrad Tao and Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra Offer a *Rhapsody in Jazz* to Honor the Centenary of Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” Conducted by Christopher Rountree with Musicians from Wild Up

Sat, Nov 16 at 8pm;

Tickets Starting at \$60 Are Now on Sale at [TheSoraya.org](https://www.TheSoraya.org).

(Los Angeles, CA) October 30, 2024 —One hundred years after its 1924 premiere, **George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue”** is new again. The Soraya celebrates one of the classics of American music with *Rhapsody in Jazz* as it recreates the rarely performed original version of the rousing and raucous classic, originally composed for a jazz band, not the orchestral version more commonly performed. Conductor **Christopher Rountree** leads the swinging ensemble, with **Conrad Tao** at the piano, and the **Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra** with musicians from **Wild Up** rounding out the evening. Additionally, Tao will perform a solo set on the piano that includes the virtuosic Gershwin Preludes. The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra will also add a swinging set of tunes both by Gershwin and his contemporaries.

With its opening clarinet glissando, bluesy piano riffs, and syncopated rhythms, Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” quickly became an American masterpiece and audience favorite. “Rhapsody in Blue” has seeped into every corner of our lives,” said Soraya Executive and Artistic Director Thor Steingraber. “We wanted our Gershwin celebration to be special, and this coming season’s centenary celebration of Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” was the ideal occasion to welcome back pianist **Conrad Tao**. He will preside, soloing the original 1924 jazz arrangement of “Rhapsody in Blue” and join forces with Los Angeles-based Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, conductor Chris Rountree, and musicians from Wild Up. I think *Rhapsody in Jazz* is the most exciting original programs of the season.”

For a [video “Directors Selects” interview with Conrad Tao](#), and a [feature interview](#) with writer Kirk Silsbee, visit www.TheSoraya.org.

For story development and interview requests, please contact:

- The Soraya Communications Associate Marie Estrada (marie.estrada@csun.edu)
- PR Consultant Gary Murphy (Garymurphypr@garymurphypr.com)
- Click [HERE](#) to access your press kit.

About “Rhapsody in Blue”

“Rhapsody in Blue” is a musical composition by George Gershwin, known for its integration of jazz rhythms with classical music that premiered on February 12, 1924, as part of bandleader Paul Whiteman’s “An Experiment in Modern Music” concert at New York’s Aeolian Concert Hall. The composition, perhaps Gershwin’s most famous, is one of the most performed of all American concert works, and its opening clarinet solos is one of the most recognized musical passages in the world. Used in films and TV, most notably the visually and aurally striking opening of Woody Allen’s 1979 film *Manhattan*, and United Airlines use of the music in its advertisements since the 1980s greatly expanded its global popularity.

About Conrad Tao

Conrad Tao has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer and has been dubbed “the kind of musician who is shaping the future of classical music” by *New York Magazine*, and an artist of “probing intellect and open-hearted vision” by *The New York Times*. Tao has performed as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Boston Symphony. As a composer, his work has been performed by orchestras throughout the world; his first large scale orchestral work, “Everything Must Go,” received its world premiere with the New York Philharmonic, and its European premiere with the Antwerp Symphony, and he was the recipient of a New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award, for Outstanding Sound Design / Music Composition, for his work on “More Forever,” in collaboration with dancer and choreographer Caleb Teicher. He is also the recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and was named a Gilmore Young Artist—an honor awarded every two years highlighting the most promising American pianists of the new generation. For full bio, go to TheSoraya.org.

About Christopher Rountree

Whether presenting his beloved chamber group Wild Up in a museum bathroom or leading the country’s most renowned ensembles through new music’s most exciting works at the world’s greatest concert halls, Rountree is the linchpin between orchestral music and the future of performance. Rountree founded the renegade twenty-four-piece ensemble Wild Up in 2010. The group’s eccentric mix of new music, pop, and performance art quickly jumped from raucous DIY bar shows to being lauded as the vanguard for classical music by critics for *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and public radio’s *Performance Today*. Now an institution in its own right, the success of Wild Up has led Rountree to collaborations with Björk, John Adams, David Lang, Scott Walker, and many of the planet’s greatest orchestras and ensembles. A seventh-generation California native descended from Santa Cruz County sheriffs, Rountree lives in Los Angeles. For full bio, go to TheSoraya.org.

About the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra

In 1985, Jeff Hamilton joined bassist John Clayton and saxophonist Jeff Clayton to form the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. Together with an all-star lineup of Los Angeles-based musicians, the big band received an enthusiastic response from reviewers and fans. For full bio, go to TheSoraya.org.

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 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 2024-25 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.

Calendar Listing

**What: *Rhapsody in Jazz*
 CONRAD TAO & CLAYTON-HAMILTON JAZZ ORCHESTRA
 Christopher Rountree, conductor with musicians from Wild Up**

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of the rousing and raucous classic, originally composed for a jazz band, not the orchestral version more commonly performed. Conductor **Christopher Rountree** leads the swinging ensemble, with **Conrad Tao** on the piano, and the **Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra** with musicians from **Wild Up**.

Date: Sat, Nov 16 at 8PM

Tickets: \$48-\$108

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

Website: www.TheSoraya.org

Ticket Office: 818-677-3000

Soraya Press Contacts

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