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THE
SORAYA

NEWS RELEASE

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"The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts on the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) campus has become a jazz destination for performers and Southern Californian audience members!" — Downbeat Magazine



LA's Premier Winter Jazz Festival Returns for its Fourth Season, Feb 1-20, 2025

***Exclusive Streaming & Single Tickets Available at
[TheSoraya.org](https://www.TheSoraya.org).***

(Los Angeles, CA) January 28, 2024 — The Soraya's signature festival, **Jazz at Naz, returns on Feb. 1 for a month of extraordinary performances from legendary masters such as 2024 Kennedy Center Honoree **Arturo Sandoval** and **Chucho Valdés**, to up-and-coming star saxophonist and five-time GRAMMY nominee **Lakecia Benjamin**, and current jazz masters **Christian McBride** and**

Jason Moran. Performances take place on both The Soraya's **Great Hall** mainstage with several performances onstage in the intimate only-at-The-Soraya **Jazz Club** — where audiences can enjoy food and wine along with fantastic jazz artists performing just a few feet away.

Following last season's sold-out concert with Aaron Tveit, **Pacific Jazz Orchestra** returns to The Soraya to kick off the month-long festival on Sat, Feb 1 with versatile Broadway sensation **Eva Noblezada** conducted by **Chris Walden**. Current double GRAMMY Award nominee saxophonist **Lakecia Benjamin** plays two nights, Wed & Thu, Feb 5 & 6 in the cozy onstage **Jazz Club** followed on Fri & Sat, Feb 7 & 8 by master of the upright bass, **Christian McBride** and his new quintet, **Ursa Major**. Pianist/composer **Jason Moran** returns on Thu, Feb 13 for a salute to Duke Ellington with **CSUN Jazz "A" Band**. Singer/songwriter **Kurt Elling** celebrates modern jazz pioneers Weather Report with Yellowjackets and special guest **Peter Erskine** on Sat, Feb 15. Closing out Jazz at Naz will be **Chucho Valdés: Irakere 50** with special guest **Arturo Sandoval**, and **Cimafunk**.

For story development and interview requests, please contact:

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- [CLICK HERE](#) to access your press kit for artist bios, photos, and more.

About Jazz at Naz

Now in its fourth season, the annual Jazz at Naz festival has been recognized as one of the best winter jazz festivals on the West Coast as well as the jazz epicenter in Los Angeles. Jazz at Naz has showcased major debuts for emerging artists such as two-time GRAMMY winner Samara Joy and created a home for the world's jazz legends such as John Pizzarelli, Branford Marsalis, Dianne Reeves, Chucho Valdés, and Charles Lloyd, and turned the spotlight on influential crossover artists such as Bobby and Taylor McFerrin, Diana Krall, Jon Batiste, Gregory Porter, Herb Alpert and Lani Hall.

Long before the 2011 opening of The Soraya, CSUN Jazz Studies was a national standard bearer – winning awards and training the next generation of artists. Since opening its doors, The Soraya has furthered CSUN's profile with a nonstop procession of jazz greats performing in both The Soraya's Great Hall and its innovative Jazz Club.

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The Soraya's main stage with 1,700 seats has become home to the Big Band sound with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Christian McBride, The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, Maria Schneider Orchestra, Vince Giordano & The Nighthawks, Buena Vista Social Club, and Delfeayo Marsalis' Uptown Orchestra.

Its pioneering 230-seat Jazz Club, a unique and intimate setting for jazz performances complete with food and drink, is built on The Soraya's main stage and has featured a wide breadth of talent, including Terence

Blanchard, Gerald Clayton, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Luciana Souza, Antonio Sánchez, Lisa Fischer, Booker T. Jones, Matthew Whitaker, and Vijay Iyer.

Since the inception of the festival The Soraya's multi-camera livestreaming expands availability for audiences around the world. The virtual streams feature behind-the-scenes content and backstage interviews with the artists, in addition to the complete concert.

About the Jazz at Naz Livestream

The Soraya's multi-camera **Jazz at Naz** livestreams will once again expand availability for audiences around the world. The virtual streams, available by purchasing a livestreaming pass, feature behind-the-scenes content and backstage interviews with the artists, in addition to the complete concert. Livestream passes are available for individual concerts or the entire festival.

All Jazz, Silver, Gold, and Platinum level Members who purchase Jazz at Naz tickets will automatically receive a link to access the Jazz at Naz livestream for all purchased concerts. Individual concert livestream passes are also available to purchase for \$19 per individual concert, or \$56 for a six-concert festival pass per household. Livestream passes are valid for 48 hours of viewing following the end of each night's performance.

About the Jazz Club

Alto Saxophonist and 2025 Grammy Award-nominee **Lakecia Benjamin** and her quartet **Phoenix** open Jazz Club on Wednesday, Feb. 5 and perform again on Thursday, February 6. Revered master of the upright bass **Christian McBride** and his new quintet **Ursa Major** take the Jazz Club stage from Friday, Feb. 7 through Saturday, Feb. 8.

You'll be right in the middle of the action in The Soraya's Jazz Club, an immersive experience, just feet away from some of the most innovative artists in their fields. Premier seating is available at tables near the stage with the opportunity to pre-order dinner (available for sale now with discounts to all Jazz, Silver, Gold, or Platinum Members). Jazz at Naz 2025 will feature a new menu by chef Jim Bonanno of Humble Bee Cafe with dinner and bar service beginning at 6:30 p.m. before every Jazz Club concert. Starting at 7 p.m. before every Jazz Club concert, the bar is open to all ticket holders, with a menu of bites and desserts.

About Dinner and Drinks in the Jazz Club

Chef Jim Bonanno, the owner of Humble Bee Bakery & Cafe, returns to The Soraya to create Jazz Club meals filled with local farm-to-table flare and creativity. Depending on what night guests attend, Chef Bonanno's menu will feature entrees including shrimp scallop étouffée, half pan-fried Cornish game hen, sweet potato gnocchi, beef braciola, northwest cioppino, vegetable lasagna, and more mouth-watering items that The Soraya is proud to offer in the Jazz Club between Feb. 5 and Feb. 8.

Please note:

- The menu will be different between the two shows, with one menu for Feb. 5-6 and another for Feb. 7-8. [To see the menu items for each night, click here.](#)
- Jazz club ticketing is available in two options. Premium tickets (table seating) are located near the front, just feet from the stage, and have the option to pre-order dinner for an additional \$60.
- Early access for table seating begins at 6:30 p.m. for meal and bar service.
- General admission seating begins at 7:00 p.m.

About Jazz at Naz in the Great Hall

The Jazz at Naz festival begins in the Great Hall on Saturday, Feb. 1, with **Pacific Jazz Orchestra** led by **Chris Walden** and featuring GRAMMY® Award-winning and two-time Tony-nominated Broadway and West End star **Eva Noblezada** (*Hadestown*, *Great Gatsby*, *Miss Saigon*). Pacific Jazz Orchestra returns following its sold-out Soraya debut that closed the 2023-24 Season with Broadway star Aaron Tveit.

In addition to Pacific Jazz Orchestra with Eva Noblezada on Feb. 1, American jazz pianist, composer, and educator **Jason Moran**, will return to The Soraya for the fourth time to perform Duke Ellington with the CSU Northridge Jazz “A” Band on Thursday, Feb. 13.

GRAMMY Award-winning jazz vocalist **Kurt Elling** will celebrate modern jazz act Weather Report with original band member and special guest **Peter Erskine** on Saturday, Feb. 15. The double feature will also showcase L.A.’s own Yellowjackets.

Afro-Cuban jazz legend **Chucho Valdés** brings his band Irakere back to life for its 50th anniversary on Thursday, Feb. 20, with special guest **Arturo Sandoval** and a special appearance by GRAMMY-nominated funk and hip hop musician, CimaFunk. Both Valdés and Sandoval were [recently recognized for their immense talents and contributions](#) to the music industry. Sandoval received the Kennedy Center Honor and Valdés was announced as a 2025 recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Fellowship (NEA Jazz Masters).

All Jazz at Naz performances, both in the Great Hall and in the Jazz Club, take place at 8 p.m. For tickets to Jazz at Naz visit thesoraya.org or call (818) 677-3000.

About Jazz Membership

- **JAZZ MEMBERSHIP:** The Soraya's new Jazz Membership gets you behind the velvet rope for the best jazz experience in Los Angeles. Receive exclusive priority access to prime seats for a festival that includes both the masters and the emerging greats. A local farm-to-table dinner from Humble Bee Café is also available to all Members for purchase with your Membership discount for our Jazz Club performances. Then rub elbows with the stars in the Jazz Lounge after the Great Hall concerts on our private Rooftop Terrace.

For Calendar Listings:

Pacific Jazz Orchestra with Eva Noblezada – Great Hall

Chris Walden, conductor

Sat Feb 1 | 8PM

\$55-\$158

Jazz Lounge Post Concert (Members Only)

Returning after their sold-out debut last season, Pacific Jazz Orchestra (PJO) opens the Jazz at Naz festival’s fourth season headlined by GRAMMY® Award-winning and two-time Tony nominated Broadway and West End star, Eva Noblezada. Following her riveting performances in London’s revivals of *Miss Saigon* and *Les Misérables*, she dazzled Broadway as Eurydice in the original production of the mega-hit *Hadestown* and is currently wowing audiences as Daisy Buchanan in the new Broadway musical adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*. On screen, she starred alongside Lea Salonga in *Yellow Rose* and voiced the lead role of Sam in Apple TV+’s *Luck*. Noblezada joins Hollywood veteran Chris Walden and 40 of the finest musicians in Los Angeles for a concert of jazz, Broadway, and pop songs hand-picked and newly arranged by Walden for his big band and Noblezada’s soaring vocals. The PJO concert in May 2024 was heralded as the “Best Jazz Performance” by San Francisco Classical Voice’s Reader’s Choice Awards.

[Lakecia Benjamin & Phoenix](#) — Jazz Club

Lakecia Benjamin, alto saxophone

Wed Feb 5 | 8PM

Thu Feb 6 | 8PM

\$65-\$85*

One of the most sought-after and revered saxophonists of her generation, Lakecia Benjamin was voted 2020 Downbeat Critics Poll Rising Star Alto Saxophonist and was nominated for three 2024 GRAMMY® Awards and is a current GRAMMY nominee. Benjamin is known for her charisma and for her inimitable skill of fusing jazz, hip-hop, and soul. This intimate onstage Jazz Club performance will be highlighted with selections from her four studio albums performed by her quartet, Phoenix.

“The alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin plays jazz that is sprinkled with the rich flavors of funk and soul—she’s a crafty traditionalist who remains in step with the rhythms of the young generation,” – The New Yorker

[Christian McBride & Ursa Major](#) — Jazz Club

Christian McBride, bass

Fri Feb 7 | 8PM

Sat Feb 8 | 8PM

\$65-\$85*

Revered master of the upright bass, Christian McBride is also the foremost master of finding new talent and surrounding himself with young musicians. His quintet, Ursa Major, is precisely that. Jazz Club audiences have a rare opportunity to be up close with the acclaimed bandleader, composer, and educator alongside his fresh crop of next-gen superstars.

[Jason Moran Plays Duke Ellington](#) – Great Hall

with the CSUN Jazz “A” Band

Jason Moran, piano

Thu Feb 13 | 8PM

\$42-\$95

Jazz Lounge Post Concert (Members Only)

Moran’s fourth Soraya appearance celebrates the Duke’s enduring legacy and his 125th birthday, a yearlong tour that started at the Kennedy Center, where he leads jazz programming. In addition to entertaining from the piano, Moran will lead a big band. For the occasion, he has invited CSUN’s award-winning Jazz “A” band to join him.

[Kurt Elling Celebrates Weather Report](#) – Great Hall

with Special Guest Peter Erskine

featuring Yellowjackets

Sat Feb 15 | 8PM

\$48–\$118

Jazz Lounge Post Concert (Members Only)

A double bill featuring two debuts! L.A.'s own Yellowjackets bring four decades and headline status to open the evening. "The standout male vocalist of our time" (*The New York Times*), Kurt Elling reimagines Weather Report songs with original band member Peter Erskine. Featuring works by Wayne Shorter, Weather Report is the defining modern jazz act of the 1970s and 1980s.

"...a perfectly combustible electric-acoustic outfit whose smart, often challenging and unpredictable compositions draw from fusion, postbop and contemporary jazz," – JazzTimes on Kurt Elling

Chucho Valdés: Irakere 50 – Great Hall

with Special Guest Arturo Sandoval

Guest Appearance by CimaFunk

Thu Feb 20 | 8PM

\$53–\$95

Jazz Lounge Post Concert (Members Only)

The 1973 band changed Latin music forever. Irakere lives again with two of its original band members, legends without equal - Chucho Valdés and Arturo Sandoval. Few American venues today can compare to The Soraya's history celebrating the musical greatness of Cuba.

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.

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