

"One of the world's great jazz venues," – DownBeat Magazine

The Soraya Kicks Off Jazz at Naz with a Duke Ellington Celebration!

Gerald Clayton's *Sacredness*, a tribute to Ellington's *Legendary Concerts for Sacred Music*, features four 2026 GRAMMY® Nominated Artists

Saturday, Jan. 31 at 2 p.m.

Tickets start at \$59, Livestream Passes are \$19.99 and are now available at TheSoraya.org.



(Los Angeles, CA) Jan. 15, 2025 — The fifth annual **Jazz at Naz** festival begins at The Soraya on Jan. 31 with *Sacredness*, led by 2026 GRAMMY® nominated Music Director/composer/arranger **Gerald Clayton**, choral ensemble Tonality, and vocalists **Michael Mayo** and **Christie Dashiell**. Internationally acclaimed and much sought-after educator, choreographer, and performer, **Josette Wiggan** rounds out the principal cast to bring dance into this celebration of **Duke Ellington's *Concerts of Sacred Music***. Less than 24 hours after their *Sacredness* performance, on Feb. 1, the principal cast will find out if they've won a GRAMMY in their nominated categories. Please read more about the artists [here](#).

A 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, and Herb Alpert and Lani Hall. It's now recognized as one of the best winter jazz festivals on the West Coast and The Soraya is recognized by *DownBeat Magazine* as one of the top jazz venues in the world and a "jazz destination for performers and Southern Californian audience members alike since its opening."

"Ellington's *Concerts of Sacred Music* have inspired me for many years, and I have been seeking the right opportunity and the ideal artist to lead this important work," said Thor Steingraber, Soraya Executive and Artistic Director. "Gerald Clayton is the perfect artist for this large collaborative endeavor. He brings a mix of respect for Ellington's original and a vision to expand and embellish, bringing the work into our morning era. This is a monumental project with a group of generational artists."

The Soraya's Great Hall, with 1,700 seats, hosts larger events in the festival and in the past has presented Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Christian McBride, The Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, Maria Schneider Orchestra, Vince Giordano & The Nighthawks, Buena Vista Social Club, Delfeayo Marsalis' Uptown Orchestra, and more. For opening night of the 2026 festival, **Gerald Clayton** and the cast of *Sacredness* will perform in the Great Hall on Jan. 31. Additional events in the Great Hall include ***Love Inside Out: Valentine's Day with Veronica Swift with the Pacific Jazz Orchestra*** (Feb. 14), ***Preservation Hall Jazz Band*** (Feb. 18), and ***Alonzo King LINES Ballet: Ode to Alice Coltrane*** (Feb. 21).

Livestream Select Jazz at Naz Events

The Soraya's Jazz at Naz festival offers viewing opportunities for those who may not be able to enjoy the events in person. Since the inception of the festival The Soraya's multi-camera livestreaming and on demand playback has expanded availability for audiences around the world. Livestreams feature behind-the-scenes content and backstage interviews with the artists before and after the show and at intermission — in addition to the complete concert.

Livestream passes are available for \$19.99 per concert or \$59 for a streaming package to enjoy select streamed performances. Following the live event, on demand viewing is also available for 48 hours. All in-person ticket holders to Jazz at Naz events will automatically receive a link to access the Jazz at Naz livestream for the concert(s) they attended.

FOR CALENDAR LISTINGS

Great Hall Events (1,700 seats): Jan. 31 | Feb. 14 | Feb. 18 | Feb. 21

- ***Sacredness (Jan. 31)*** — The Soraya has assembled a company of musicians who are entirely 2026 GRAMMY® nominees — pianist and music director Gerald Clayton, L.A.-based gospel choir Tonality, and jazz vocalists Christie Dashiell, and Michael Mayo. Opening The Soraya's 5th-annual

Jazz at Naz festival, Clayton brings us *Sacredness*, his rendering of the work Duke Ellington considered his most important, the three Sacred Concerts that were performed between 1965 and 1973 in cathedrals and churches in San Francisco and New York City. Ellington evoked a Cotton Club revue meets the African American Church that has endured as nondenominational and universal. Clayton brings Ellington's daring masterpiece into the present day with original arrangements, tapper/choreographer Josette Wiggan, an all-star jazz big band, and new spoken word creations. *Tickets \$59-\$117; 15th Anniversary Closing Party + concert ticket \$300*

For story development and interview requests:

- Marie Estrada – Soraya Marketing & Communications Specialist (marie.estrada@csun.edu)
- Gary Murphy – Soraya PR Consultant (garymurphypr@garymurphypr.com)
- Click [HERE](#) for your press kit, complete with photos, and press releases.

About Jazz at Naz

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. Now, the annual Jazz at Naz festival has been recognized as one of the best winter jazz festivals on the West Coast and The Soraya is the only L.A.-area performing arts center to be recognized by *DownBeat Magazine* in 2025 as one of the top jazz venues in the world and a "jazz destination for performers and Southern Californian audience members alike since its opening."

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The Soraya's Great Hall, with 1,700 seats, has become home to the Big Band sound with Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra featuring 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 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, and Vijay Iyer.

Since the inception of the festival The Soraya's multi-camera live streaming has expanded 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 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 that opened in 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. The Soraya is located on the campus of California State University Northridge, the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley.

Executive and Artistic Director Thor Steingraber, in his 12th year leading the organization, sums up what makes The Soraya a central piece of Los Angeles arts and culture. "At The Soraya, we hold a high standard of excellence for every performance from a vast array of artistic disciplines, and we hold steadfast to our commitment to the value and impact of the performing arts in community-building, for the Valley's 1.8 million residents and beyond."

The Soraya's 2025-26 Season is a journey through the expansive sounds of orchestras, the freestyle vibes of jazz, the innovations of dance luminaries, and a vast array of global voices. The Soraya continues its vigorous commitment to excelling, innovating, and amplifying access for Valley residents, students, and arts lovers across Southern California.

What: *SACREDNESS – Gerald Clayton Honors Duke Ellington's Concert of Sacred Music*

When: Jan. 31, 2 p.m.

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

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