

The Soraya's 2026-27 Season Includes Major Debuts, New Works, and the Return of the Jazz at Naz festival

Audra McDonald

Snarky Puppy

Emmet Cohen

Dance Theatre of Harlem

National Symphony Orchestra

National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine

Plus, the Sixth Annual Jazz at Naz Festival Featuring

Terence Blanchard, Ravi Coltrane, Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra,

José James, Alfredo Rodriguez Band, Pedrito Martinez,

Hamilton de Holanda Trio, Emmet Cohen Trio, Ekep Nkwelle,

Linda May Han Oh Quintet, Sara Serpa, and Melissa Aldana

and The Soraya's New Program Featuring

Jacob Jonas The Company and Delirium Musicum

(Los Angeles, CA) Mar 12, 2026 – Six prominent debuts will be among the 40-plus performances to be featured in the **The Soraya's 2026-27 Season**, highlighting the performing arts center's ongoing commitment to the breadth and excellence of its programs. Additionally, The Soraya's Great Hall will welcome world-class symphony orchestras as well as jazz greats, offerings that have defined the venue since it opened 15 years ago. The full season schedule of performances will be announced on May 7, 2026.

Executive and Artistic Director Thor Steingraber shares his thoughts about the Soraya's artistic future, "The Soraya's reputation, both for excellence and innovation, has been earned over the past 12 years and rewarded with growing loyalty from audiences from the vast and vibrant communities of Los Angeles. The current season and the one preceding have seen record attendance and earned record revenue. It was my foremost intention, before stepping down at the end of this season, to ensure continuity during this transitional time."

The Soraya's 2026-27 Major Debuts

Audra McDonald—winner of an Emmy Award, two GRAMMY Awards and a record-setting six Tony Awards—will make her debut at The Soraya on Apr 3, 2027. Described by *Time* magazine as “the greatest living stage actor,” McDonald most recently headlined the Broadway revival of *Gypsy* in her Tony nominated role as Mama Rose (2024-25). Currently, McDonald can be seen in Julian Fellowes’ historical drama “The Gilded Age” on HBO.

Since winning their first of five GRAMMY Awards in 2014, **Snarky Puppy** has become one of the most in-demand ensembles of their generation, with bassist Michael League leading a collective of 20 musicians who rotate through their ranks, in ever-changing fresh combinations. The announcement of their Soraya debut on October 3, 2026, aligns with another milestone, as Snarky Puppy is the cover feature of February’s issue of *DownBeat* magazine, demonstrating the band’s widely recognized talent.

Emmet Cohen found a defining expression that jazz is fundamentally about communication and connection when he created “Live from Emmet’s Place” as an intimate weekly livestream from his Harlem apartment during the 2020 lockdown. Now with over 100 million views, the series has grown into an ongoing cultural ecosystem—one that reflects Cohen’s vision of jazz as a living, participatory art form. On Feb 20-21, 2027, Cohen performs with his trio and vocalist **Ekep Nkwelle**, who has become a dynamic force in today’s jazz scene and has been leaving her mark on some of the most renowned stages around the world.

Renowned in the ballet world, **Dance Theatre of Harlem** makes its debut at The Soraya with the Los Angeles premiere of Robert Garland’s *Higher Ground* (2022) on Nov 14, 2026. *Higher Ground* is a joyous, critically acclaimed piece that combines classical ballet and vernacular Black dance to sharpen the social commentary found in six influential Stevie Wonder songs from the 1970’s.

Symphony Orchestras at The Soraya

Two major orchestras will make their debuts at The Soraya in 2027. The National Symphony Orchestra is based at The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC which will shut down for renovation beginning the summer of 2026. The orchestra will tour the United States in 2027 and make its debut at The Soraya on Apr. 29, 2027, with Music Director Gianandrea Noseda on the podium and violin soloist Ray Chen.

Considered one of the finest symphony orchestras in Eastern Europe, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine with conductor Volodymyr Sirenko and featuring pianist Antonii Baryshevskyl will make their debut at The Soraya on Jan 23, 2027, with a Liszt Piano Concerto, Beethoven, and Silvestrov.

Says Steingraber, “We welcome these two great orchestras, each confronting critical challenges at home. The National Symphony Orchestra has been forced out of The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., during a suddenly announced two-year closure. In war-torn Kyiv, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine perseveres through severe conditions during the past four years of war and strife, while continuing to act as musical ambassadors for their nation. We celebrate these two beacons of art and light.”

Jazz at The Soraya

In 2025, *DownBeat* magazine named The Soraya as one of the “World’s Great Jazz Venues,” and its annual Jazz at Naz festival is featured in the magazine’s yearly “not to miss” guide. In its brief five-year history, the festival has featured a who’s who of jazz greats and debut artists alike. This season The Soraya will join the centennial of John Coltrane and Miles Davis’ birth with a festival opener headlined by two of the most esteemed jazz artists: **Terence Blanchard + Ravi Coltrane** on Feb 11, 2027. The two modern-day giants have deep lifelong relationships with the artists they honor and have come together in a once-in-a-generation partnership both to pay tribute and to continue the spirit of creativity and innovation. A Soraya favorite, the **Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra** will follow with special guest **José James** on Feb 13, 2027. The concert will bring to the stage a project that John Clayton is currently collaborating with James on to write arrangements for a new album paying tribute to the music of Frank Sinatra.

Then The Soraya’s stage will transform into its intimate Jazz Club for the final three concerts with **Alfredo Rodriquez Band featuring Pedrito Martinez**; and opener the **Hamilton de Holanda Trio** on Feb. 17-18, 2027; the **Emmet Cohen Trio** with rising star vocalist **Ekep Nkwelle** on Feb. 20-21, 2027; and then the festival wraps up with the **Linda May Han Oh Quintet** featuring saxophonist Melissa Aldana and vocalist Sara Serpa on Feb 24-25, 2027.

Steingraber reflects, “In the months after the pandemic, many jazz venues in Los Angeles remained shuttered. The launch of The Soraya’s festival was meant to provide a lifeline to jazz artists who had been relegated to home recordings and online performances. The festival is scheduled during Black History Month to further underline the cultural and musical contributions of jazz artists from all races and nations. Every year since, the festival has grown, and it is now one of the largest winter festivals to feature such a variety of performances. The Soraya’s commitment to jazz has been rewarded with a growing audience and a jazz scene in Los Angeles that is gaining new life, as a number of new venues and festivals have emerged.”

The Soraya’s Original Programs

In March, two Los Angeles companies will collaborate on a double-bill of groundbreaking works. **Jacob Jonas The Company** & Etienne Gara’s chamber ensemble **Delirium Musicum** will each present monumental works. Choreographer, filmmaker, and artistic director **Jacob Jonas** will expand his piece *River*, and Delirium Musicum founder and violinist **Etienne Gara** will premiere his first-ever piece composed for movement, *As Eternity Flows*, complete with musicians, dancers and soloist **Shu Kinouchi**.

Both artists figured prominently in The Soraya’s pandemic-era programming. The Soraya joined Brooklyn Academy of Music, Stanford Live, and Chicago’s Harris Theater to commission Jacob Jonas’s global project, [films.dance](#), which garnered viewers world-wide, receiving more than ten million views across 45 short films. Meanwhile Etienne Gara and fellow musician YuEun Kim hit the road in a 1971 VW bus for six months traversing the west coast from Mexico to Canada, to bring live music to essential workers during the pandemic. The Soraya commissioned the resulting video series, [The MusiKaravan](#) project. The San Francisco Classical Voice’s Audience Choice Award named Best Streaming Series of 2020 - 2021.

The collaboration between these two burgeoning artists, Jonas and Gara, is the final of Steingraber's newly commissioned projects, and will be the first to be funded by the newly established **Thor Steingraber Fund for Artistic Innovation**.

Since Steingraber assumed leadership of The Soraya in 2014, The Soraya has produced **more than 120 original programs - commissions, premieres, or newly produced programs**. Steingraber built The Soraya's reputation as an organization that supports deep and creative relationships with multi-disciplinary artists, many from Los Angeles. A number of these performances have gone on to tour venues around the U.S. and internationally.

Complete 2026-27 Details

The Soraya will announce the full 2026-27 Season of performances on **May 7, 2026**. Following the announcement, the rollout of a ticket package presale for Members will begin. Single tickets will open to Members on June 17 and open to the general public on July 15.

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."

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 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.

The Soraya's main stage with 1,700 seats has become home to the Big Band sound with 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, 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 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.

2026-27 Season Classical Orchestra Repertoire

National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine

Jan 23, 2027

Antonii Baryshevskyi, piano

BORTNIANSKY: *Il Quinto Fabio* Overture

LISZT: Piano Concerto No. 1

SILVESTROV: *Silent Music*

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 5

National Symphony Orchestra

Apr 29, 2027

Gianandrea Noseda, Music Director and conductor

Ray Chen, violin

ROSSINI: *William Tell* Overture

BARBER: Violin Concerto Op. 14

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op 68 "Pastoral"

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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