

Broadway Superstar Sutton Foster Joins Musical Forces with the Pacific Jazz Orchestra and Conductor Chris Walden to Open The Soraya's 2026-27 Season

Sat, Sep 19 at 8pm; Limited Tickets Available starting at \$79 at [TheSoraya.org](https://www.thesoraya.org).

(Los Angeles, CA) August 18, 2026 – Since winning her first Tony Award for the title role in Broadway's *Thoroughly Modern Millie* in 2002, **Sutton Foster** has become one of the industry's most celebrated performers. For one night only, Foster makes her Soraya debut with the **Pacific Jazz Orchestra**, a 40-piece big band and string orchestra led by seven-time GRAMMY®-nominated conductor **Chris Walden**, in an evening of Broadway favorites and beyond. The concert will feature new arrangements created by Walden specifically for this performance.

"I can't imagine a more joyful way to open our season than with this special evening of music featuring Sutton Foster, Chris Walden, and the Pacific Jazz Orchestra," said Executive and Artistic Director **Chad Hilligus**. "Sutton and Chris have been working together to create a one-of-a-kind debut performance for The Soraya, and I know our audiences will love it."

About Sutton Foster

A fixture on Broadway, **Sutton Foster** has originated numerous roles in notable musicals including *Shrek the Musical*, *Mel Brooks' Young Frankenstein*, and *The Drowsy Chaperone*, as well as bringing her signature comedic leading lady talents to major revivals such as *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Music Man*, and *Anything Goes* for which she won her second Tony Award. Sutton led the critically acclaimed TV Land series "Younger" and the beloved ABC Family series "Bunheads," and has released three solo albums in addition to her 11 cast albums.

About Pacific Jazz Orchestra

The **Pacific Jazz Orchestra** embraces and reflects the diverse and enthralling soundscape of Los Angeles, where the ensemble was born, bred, and resides. The ultimate cross-over sensation is a unique combination of a jazz big band with a string section. The result is a group comprised of

powerhouse L.A. studio musicians who deftly navigate musical styles ranging from jazz, Latin, soul, and R&B, to pop, musical theater, symphonic, and cinematic soundtracks.

Founded in 2022 by seven-time GRAMMY®-nominated composer/arranger/conductor Chris Walden, Pacific Jazz Orchestra has garnered critical acclaim for thrilling performances that “entertain, inspire, and enrich” (*Variety*). As artistic director and conductor, Walden creates a melting pot of original music and unique arrangements for every show, each with a specific theme, distinctive jazz flair, and lush orchestrations.

The ensemble is also noted for its ambitious collaborations with a wide range of guest artists, among them acclaimed singer/songwriter Rufus Wainwright, singer/actress Katharine McPhee, GRAMMY®-winning vocal group TAKE 6, and Tony Award-winner Aaron Tveit. Other projects have featured eminent violinist Caroline Campbell, celebrated saxophonist Ben Wendel, GRAMMY®-winning artist Ledisi, R&B/soul singer Adam “AeJaye” Jackson, vocal stylist Sheléa, and veteran blues and funk singer Billy Valentine.

Pacific Jazz Orchestra presents an annual concert series at various Southern California venues and has toured to Japan with its 18-piece big band configuration. It is LA’s first resident jazz orchestra since 2006, when the Henry Mancini Institute closed its doors after an acclaimed ten-year run. A 501-(c)(3) non-profit organization, recognizes the Herb Alpert Foundation for its ongoing leadership support. Major funders for Pacific Jazz Orchestra include GRoW @ Annenberg Foundation; the Alesia Alpert Family Foundation; the Natalie Cole Foundation; the Ella Fitzgerald Foundation; and Anonymous. Its Advisory Board Members include David Foster, Quincy Jones (in memoriam), Monica Mancini, Alan Bergman (in memoriam), Rickey Minor, Harvey Mason Jr., and Ledisi.

About Chris Walden

Seven-time GRAMMY-nominated composer/arranger **Chris Walden** is the founder, artistic director and conductor of Pacific Jazz Orchestra. Hailed as a “distinguished conductor” (*Audio Media International*) and “gifted and well-connected arranger-composer” (*Santa Barbara Independent*) who pens “exquisite string arrangements” (*The Arts Desk*), Walden “has built an illustrious career working behind the scenes with some of music's biggest names” (*Grammy.com*).

He has scored more than 40 feature and TV films and written more than 1,500 orchestral and big band arrangements for such artists as John Legend, Michael Bublé, Aretha Franklin, Paul McCartney, SEAL, Stevie Wonder, Rihanna, Barbra Streisand, and Josh Groban. He has also collaborated as an arranger and bandleader with jazz artists Diana Krall, Herb Alpert, Michael Brecker, Arturo Sandoval, and the Count Basie Orchestra and served as the lead arranger for the Academy Awards, Kennedy Center Honors, American Idol, and even the Super Bowl, arranging Jennifer Hudson’s National Anthem performance. In addition to working closely with producers

David Foster, Tommy LiPuma, and Phil Ramone, Walden's credits include conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, Holland's Metropole Orkest, Boston Pops, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, and WDR Big Band Cologne, among others.

The German-born musician, who performs on trumpet and flugelhorn as well, composed music for German films and TV before emigrating to Los Angeles at the age of 29. Walden, who lives in Los Angeles, has served as trustee on the national board of the Recording Academy and past president of the American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers (ASMAC).

About The Soraya

The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya) is one of Los Angeles' most prominent performance venues, recognized globally as the intellectual and cultural hub of the San Fernando Valley and its 1.8 million residents. The stunning, architecturally significant building was designed by HGA Architects and Engineers and launched as the Valley Performing Arts Center in 2011. In 2017, a transformative gift from Los Angeles residents and philanthropists Younes and Soraya Nazarian resulted in the venue being renamed The Soraya.

Today, The Soraya remains committed to innovation and amplifying access by presenting diverse performances representing LA's many distinctive communities, along with new works from local and international artists.

The Soraya's 2026-27 Season continues its journey by presenting the world's finest symphonic orchestras, innovative dance companies, the freestyle and vast vibes of jazz, innovations of dance luminaries, and as always, a vast array of global voices.

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 opportunities in the arts and performing arts. This partnership fosters academic opportunity and artistic excellence, elevating the talents of CSUN's students. A \$5 million contribution from record producer and former California Lieutenant Governor Mike Curb was pivotal in ensuring The Soraya was completed and opened 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.

The relationship between The Soraya and the Mike Curb College continues to grow, with robust offerings for students through master classes, student tickets, concerts of student ensembles, and students appearing alongside renowned artists such as jazz legends Wynton Marsalis and Jason Moran, Queen of Ranchera music Aida Cuevas, superstar violinist Joshua Bell, and the Martha Graham Dance Company whose Centennial Celebration was launched at The Soraya in 2025.

Calendar Listing:

What: Broadway Superstar Sutton Foster with the Pacific Jazz Orchestra and Conductor Chris Walden

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

Website: www.TheSoraya.org

Tickets: Tickets range from \$79 to \$249 and can be purchased by visiting TheSoraya.org or by calling (818) 677-3000. The Soraya is located on the campus of California State University, Northridge (CSUN), 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, CA 91330-8448, at the corner of Nordhoff and Lindley.

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