



Date: December 22, 2025

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NEW WEST SYMPHONY ANNOUNCES 2026 SEASON AND RECEIVES NEA GRANT
FOR AMERICA250 PROJECT**

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — New West Symphony announced its 2026 season and confirmed it has been awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as part of **Celebrating America250: Arts Projects Honoring the National Garden of American Heroes**.

The 2026 season coincides with the semiquincentennial of the United States, marking the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Throughout the year, the Symphony will present performances reflecting the nation's cultural evolution, pairing American classics with cornerstone works of the symphonic repertoire.

The season opens with Rachmaninoff's **Piano Concerto No. 2**, and goes on to feature music by **Beethoven, Bernstein, Rachmaninoff, Copland, Handel, Gershwin, Brahms**, and others. The season also includes works connected to American opera and musical theater traditions that shaped America's artistic voice, with music by **Stephen Sondheim, Leonard Bernstein, and John Adams**. By popular request, cirque performers return to the stage, combining American orchestral favorites with feats of strength and agility. Musical styles rooted in American culture—including **jazz, blues, and gospel**—are featured throughout the season, which concludes with ***Too Hot to Handel***, a gospel and soul reinterpretation of Handel's *Messiah*.

As part of its America250 programming supported by the NEA, New West Symphony is collaborating with the **Ronald Reagan Presidential Library** on a new symphonic work that sets President Ronald Reagan's most influential speeches to music from his Hollywood films, including *King's Row*, *This Is the Army*, as well as songs he loved. The project will be presented June 27, 2026, at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

NEA Senior Advisor **Mary Anne Carter** said, "As our nation approaches its 250th anniversary, the National Endowment for the Arts is honored to support communities across the country in recognizing the individuals whose contributions have defined our history. New West Symphony's project in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area plays a significant role in commemorating these heroes' legacies while affirming the enduring role of the arts in shaping America's future."

“Collaboration with the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library has been central to shaping this work,” said **Natalia Staneva**, chief executive officer of New West Symphony. “Their partnership ensures that the artistic process is deeply informed by history and context.”

“From the moment I heard the opening fanfare of Erich Korngold’s score to the film *King’s Row*, featuring a young Ronald Reagan, I sensed there was a powerful story waiting to be told,” said **Michael Christie**, artistic and music director of New West Symphony. “Telling that story through music—much of it connected to Reagan’s life in the Conejo Valley, where the Symphony serves its community—felt both natural and meaningful. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library has been an essential partner in this journey, serving as an early home for the Symphony during the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting our *Global Sounds, Local Cultures* online festival. Over time, our shared work has led us toward America250 and the creation of a new piece inspired by Aaron Copland’s *Lincoln Portrait*, reflecting the eras President Reagan lived through and preserved through extraordinary audio and visual history.”

SEASON AT A GLANCE — NEW WEST SYMPHONY 2026

Happy 250th Birthday America!

Featuring Rachmaninoff & Gershwin

Sat, Jan. 24, 2026 • 7 p.m. — Thousand Oaks (BAPAC)

Sun, Jan. 25, 2026 • 3 p.m. — Camarillo (RCPAC)

Conductor: Michael Christie

Soloist: Harmony Zhu, piano

Mozart & American Voices

Sat, March 7, 2026 • 7 p.m. — Thousand Oaks

Sun, March 8, 2026 • 3 p.m. — Camarillo

Conductor: Michael Christie

Featured Artists: Angels Vocal Art; New West Symphony Chorus

Bernstein, Brahms & Blues

Sat, April 11, 2026 • 7 p.m. — Thousand Oaks

Sun, April 12, 2026 • 3 p.m. — Camarillo

Conductor: Michael Christie

Soloist: Tai Murray, violin

Beethoven & Copland

Sat, Oct. 3, 2026 • 7 p.m. — Thousand Oaks

Sun, Oct. 4, 2026 • 3 p.m. — Camarillo

Conductor: Francesco Lecce-Chong

Featured Artists: Pacific Festival Ballet; Los Robles Children’s Choir

Symphony Goes to Cirque

Sat, Nov. 7, 2026 • 7 p.m. — Thousand Oaks

Sun, Nov. 8, 2026 • 3 p.m. — Camarillo

Conductor: Michael Christie
Guest Artists: Troupe Vertigo

Too Hot to Handel — The Gospel Messiah

Sat, Dec. 5, 2026 • 7 p.m. — Thousand Oaks

Sun, Dec. 6, 2026 • 3 p.m. — Camarillo

Conductor: Michael Christie

Featured Artists: New West Symphony Chorus; Alfreda Burke, soprano; Rodrick Dixon, tenor

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support give Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, and arts organizations across the country, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's diverse cultural heritage, and promotes equal access to the arts nationwide.

The NEA was named a key partner in President Trump's Executive Order 13978, "Celebrating America's Birthday," which calls for the establishment of the National Garden of American Heroes. The National Endowment for the Humanities is supporting the design and creation of the statues that will make up the garden. The 50 NEA-supported arts projects honor individuals highlighted through a range of artistic disciplines.

ABOUT NEW WEST SYMPHONY

Founded in 1995, New West Symphony is a professional orchestra drawing its musicians from the rich talent pool of the greater Los Angeles region. The Symphony is the resident company of the Bank of America Performing Arts Center in Thousand Oaks and also performs at the Rancho Campana Performing Arts Center in Camarillo. In addition to its six-concert Masterpiece Series, New West Symphony serves the community through education and engagement programs including Symphonic Adventures, the Music Van, and the Laby Harmony Project.

ABOUT MICHAEL CHRISTIE

Michael Christie is artistic and music director of New West Symphony and a widely respected conductor known for his dynamic programming and commitment to contemporary and American music.

Christie has conducted many of the world's leading orchestras and opera companies, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and English National Opera. His repertoire spans symphonic masterworks, new music, opera, and interdisciplinary collaborations.

An advocate for music education and community engagement, Christie is recognized for creating programs that connect music with history, storytelling, and civic life. His work with New West Symphony emphasizes artistic excellence, collaboration, and meaningful connections between music and the communities it serves.

ABOUT THE 2026 SEASON

New West Symphony's 2026 season celebrates America's semiquincentennial with performances that reflect the nation's cultural evolution, artistic variety, and shared history. Featuring symphonic masterworks, American classics, cirque collaborations, and gospel traditions, the season explores how music has shaped—and been shaped by—the American experience over 250 years.

For tickets and information, visit **newwestsymphony.org**.

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