

MUSE/IQUE 2026 season
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DEFIANTLY JONI
A Singer/Songwriter Bares Her Soul

**Led by Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby
with Chris Pierce, Effie Passero, the DC6 Singers Collective, and the MUSE/IQUE
Orchestra**

July 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, and 19, 2026
Mark Taper Forum
Presented in partnership with Center Theatre Group

Admissions available now at muse-ique.com

June, 2026 | Los Angeles, CA - MUSE/IQUE presents **DEFIANTLY JONI: A Singer/Songwriter Bares Her Soul**, led by Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby with Chris Pierce, Effie Passero, the DC6 Singers Collective, and the MUSE/IQUE Orchestra. There are seven performances presented between July 11 and 19, 2026 at the Mark Taper Forum, in partnership with Center Theatre Group and proudly sponsored by Classical California. Admissions available now at muse-ique.com

“I’m not a joiner,” Joni Mitchell once said. “I’ve never been a joiner.” Indeed, Joni Mitchell has only ever been *defiantly* herself — fiercely independent, a singer who sings and a writer who writes like only Joni Mitchell, who even plays chords of her own invention, who bucked genre and used a folk guitar merely as a means to be what she always was: a poet, a jazz composer, and a painter.

Mitchell was part of a fertile folk scene at a particular place and time, namely Los Angeles in the late 1960s and ’70s, and she was also in a tradition of classical art songs and jazz. But she blazed her own eccentric trail, writing stream-of-consciousness confessions in a musical style that defied easy categorization. With her singular voice and raw honesty, she both transcended and heavily influenced the stars who orbited around her — among them Graham Nash, James Taylor, Carole King, Neil Young, and David Crosby. When he heard Mitchell’s 1971 album *Blue* for the first time, Crosby recalled, “I felt like quitting the business and becoming a gardener.”

DEFIANTLY JONI is an intimate tribute to her unique genius — as well as a testament of the cultural milieu and musical streams that fed into her art and then poured out of Laurel Canyon and into a surplus of other genres and artists. That confluence can be felt in the song “Circle

Game,” which featured Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young on backing vocals during a time when she was living with Nash in the same house that inspired *his* song, “Our House.” Mitchell’s chemistry with James Taylor played out in the song “A Case of You” from her zenith 1971 album, *Blue*. “Love is touching souls,” she sang, “surely you touched mine, ’cause part of you pours out of me in these lines from time to time.” In a Los Angeles canyon in the early 1970s, so many stars were touching, harmonizing, forming constellations — and yet Joni Mitchell remained, as she sang it, a “lonely painter”... defiantly herself.

About the artists

Chris Pierce (vocals) has been a singular voice in American roots music for more than two decades. Over the course of eight solo albums, many side projects, and more guest appearances than most could do in one lifetime, his powerful songs have given voice to the voiceless and shed light into dark and hidden corners of the American dream. His new record *Songs for the Heavy Hearted* releases 8/21.

Effie Passero (vocals) is a singer/songwriter based in Puerto Vallarta, MX. After appearing on *American Idol*’s revival in 2018, she has received multiple accolades nationwide. Now a staple member of Postmodern Jukebox, she has performed worldwide from the Sydney Opera House to Royal Albert Hall. Her debut album *Grace* will be released in its entirety early 2027.

@effiepassero on socials

DC6 Singers Collective (vocals) are a Los Angeles-based ensemble with roots in a cappella, gospel, doo wop, and R&B, but they fuse styles to transcend boundaries. They have collaborated with global music legends such as CeCe Winans, Lady Gaga, John Legend, Michael Bolton, and institutions like the San Francisco Symphony and LA Opera, and were recently heard on the Oscar-winning soundtrack for *Sinners*, performing at this year’s Academy Awards. @dc6singers on social media platforms.

DEFIANTLY JONI

A Singer/Songwriter Bares Her Soul

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Mark Taper Forum, 135 N. Grand Ave., Los Angeles CA 90012

Saturday, July 11 and Sunday July 12 at 5:00pm

Thursday, July 16 and Friday July 17 at 7:30pm

Saturday, July 18 at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

Sunday, July 19 at 2:30pm

Admissions available now at [muse-ique.com](http://www.muse-ique.com)

To learn more, please visit <http://www.muse-ique.com/membership>.

MUSE/IQUE membership begins at \$350 and MUSE/IQUE members receive complimentary admission to all MUSE/IQUE events.

Admission for non-members starts at \$75 for a single admission or \$100 for a trial membership with admission for two people.

MUSE/IQUE is a member-supported, nonprofit performing arts organization that creates transformative musical adventures and illuminates the music that shapes our lives. By reimagining the traditional format of the live classical orchestral experience, **Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby** seamlessly blends musical performances with researched curation. Their mission is to build empathy and expand imaginations through transformative live events and strong partnerships with fellow nonprofit organizations in Pasadena and the greater Los Angeles area.

Presented in Partnership with Center Theatre Group

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation's preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles' leading not-for-profit theatre company, which, under the leadership of the Brindell & Milton Gottlieb Artistic Director Snehal Desai, Managing Director / CEO Meghan Pressman, and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, programs the Mark Taper Forum and the Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. Center Theatre Group is one of the country's leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics, and circumstances to serve Los Angeles.

Founded in 1967, Center Theatre Group has produced more than 700 productions across its three stages, including such iconic shows as *Zoot Suit*; *Angels in America*; *The Kentucky Cycle*; *Biloxi Blues*; *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*; *Children of a Lesser God*; *Curtains*; *The Drowsy Chaperone*; *9 to 5: The Musical*; and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*.

CenterTheatreGroup.org

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More about Defiantly Joni:

"I have always thought of myself as a painter derailed by circumstance," Joni Mitchell once told the *Toronto Globe*. The legend, born Roberta Joan Anderson, began in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan — a chilly and unlikely place for the future of folk music, and a stifling one for a girl with an artist's vast imagination. Life kept throwing potential limitations in her path: at eight she contracted polio and was confined to a hospital for several months, sealed off from her family and unable to use her legs. Yet she willfully "came back a dancer," and she ran toward the arts. Her first piano teacher would rap her knuckles with a ruler when Joni tried to improvise — i.e., *compose original music* — so she rebelled, forgoing a formal musical education and eventually teaching herself guitar. "I have more of a painter's ego or approach," she said, "which is to make fresh, individuated stuff that has my blood in it and on the tracks."

The budding painter indeed went to art school in Calgary, but very soon she began painting with metaphors and harmonies, sliding into the burgeoning stream of folk music simply because, in the 1960s, "it was easy to get into," Mitchell said. "You could play for three months and become a professional." When she became pregnant in her early 20s, she was faced with an impossible dilemma — ultimately deciding that she had to choose her music career over motherhood. At the same time she also tried the typical path of making music as a duo, with a man who offered to help raise her baby before going back on his promise. It was in this sad season that Mitchell wrote "Little Green" about the daughter she gave up for adoption, and "Both Sides Now" about the pains of leaving childhood for the hard, messy world of adulthood. "Bad fortune changed the course of my destiny," Mitchell said. "I became a musician."

Another subversive musician from a snowy climate, Bob Dylan, revealed to her that "poetry and song could be the same thing," and Mitchell was radically inspired to write personal storytelling songs — confessional poetry addressed directly to one person, as opposed to the classic pop lyrics of 1940s crooner songs. Mitchell loved the Great American Songbook — she's recorded a definitive cover of the Gershwin classic "Summertime" along with many jazz standards — but this more diaristic playbook "was the key," she explained. "*Now we can write about anything.*" What she *didn't* want to give up was the harmonic and melodic flower garden of classical and jazz music, and so she converged these streams of European and Black American influence into a river distinctly her own.

She found her way to California and to Laurel Canyon, where she quickly emerged as one of the leading lights in a brilliant folk scene that included Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young — several of whom she romanced. They were all talking, and singing, to one another, organically evolving a movement that Mitchell was both at the very heart of and yet one that she felt was too narrow for her artistic ambitions. "I've got a painter's eye for innovation in a business that thrives on second and third-generation copycats," said Mitchell (who painted her own album art). "I've got the wrong mentality for the game."

"Also," she added, "I dislike being pigeonholed. I make unorthodox music, so that creates marketing difficulties for me. And there are prejudices levied at me because of my interest in

jazz." Shortly after releasing her landmark album, *Blue* (which David Crosby considered "the best singer-songwriter album that ever got made"), Mitchell began evolving her self-excavating compositions even more into jazz — "a kind of music," as the *New York Times* put it, "that allowed her, later in her career, the true freedom she always desired." She expanded her vocabulary and her band, made an homage to Charlie Mingus, and sang with Herbie Hancock — who praised Mitchell as a "risk-taker."

Joni Mitchell weathered the storms of celebrity and commercialism, of changing fads and a fickle industry, always remaining true to her own wandering artistic compass. And when, in 2015, her life was massively disrupted by a brain aneurysm rupture, she slowly, valiantly recovered... stunning the world in 2022 when she appeared on stage with Brandi Carlisle, one of her countless acolytes, at the Newport Folk Festival — where she sang through her timeless catalog in a voice, deepened with age and seasoned with a lifetime of pain and evolution and hardwon love, but still undeniably, *defiantly Joni*.