

MUSE/IQUE 2026 Season
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THE SUN RISES IN HARLEM
Black Brilliance and the Harlem Renaissance

Led by MUSE/IQUE'S Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby
with Kecia Lewis, Sy Smith, Leo Manzari,
DC6 Singers Collective, and the MUSE/IQUE Orchestra

June 2 and 3, 2026
The Huntington

June 7, 2026
Skirball Cultural Center

Presented in partnership with
The Huntington, Skirball Cultural Center, and
East West Bank. KPFK is a Proud Media Sponsor.

Admissions available now at muse-ique.com

May 4, 2026 | Los Angeles, CA – MUSE/IQUE presents **THE SUN RISES IN HARLEM: Black Brilliance and the Harlem Renaissance**, led by Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby with Kecia Lewis, Sy Smith, Leo Manzari, the DC6 Singers Collective, and the MUSE/IQUE Orchestra. There are four performances presented between June 2 and 7, 2026 at, and in partnership with, The Huntington and Skirball Cultural Center. Admissions available now at muse-ique.com

The music of the Harlem Renaissance — a social and artistic movement of Black empowerment and brilliance in the 1930s emanating from the small neighborhood north of New York's Central Park — encompassed everything from red-hot jazz wailed by trailblazing bandleaders and players, to all-Black Broadway musicals, to the first classical music by a Black woman to be performed by a major U.S. orchestra. Timeless songs like "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Stormy Weather," and "They Can't Take That Away From Me" were carried on the searing, soulful voices of Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday, on the iconic instruments of Fats Waller and Louis Armstrong, and brought to life in legendary nightspots like the Cotton Club by bandleaders Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington.

They'll be brought back to radiant life by Broadway veteran Kecia Lewis, who won a Tony for her performance in Alicia Keys' *Hell's Kitchen*; Sy Smith, a five-octave R&B belter who recently portrayed Michelle Obama in *44: The Musical*; Leo Manzari, a gifted tap dancer who's been a

featured guest on *So You Think You Can Dance*; and DC6 Singers Collective, the genre-hopping vocal group recently heard in the Oscar-winning *Sinners*. All led by MUSE/IQUE's Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby, who says: "The artists, musicians, and thinkers of the Harlem Renaissance declared their brilliance in a way that forever changed American culture. The daring self-expression of these Black artists, and their pride in their identity, spread a message of hope and empowerment that continues to speak to us all."

From church pulpits to private homes and neighborhoods where Black Americans and queer folks alike felt safe, from smoky nightclubs to the stage and screen and well into the future, the musical sun that rose in Harlem is still shining bright.

About the artists

Kecia Lewis (vocals) made her Broadway debut at 18 years old in the original company of *Dreamgirls*, directed by Michael Bennett. Her other Broadway credits include *The Gospel at Colonus* (with Morgan Freeman), *Big River*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* (standby for Nell Carter), *Once on This Island* (OBC), *The Drowsy Chaperone* (OBC), *Chicago*, *Leap of Faith* (OBC), *Cinderella* (as Marie/Fairy Godmother), *Children of a Lesser God* (directed by Kenny Leon), and most recently her Tony-winning performance in Alicia Keys' *Hell's Kitchen* (directed by Michael Greif). @therealkecialewis on social media platforms.

Sy Smith (vocals) has proven throughout her career that an R&B artist can be progressive while remaining firmly rooted in tradition. Foremost a singer with a vocal range spanning five octaves, Smith has worked with Whitney Houston, GRAMMY-winning trumpeter Chris Botti and GRAMMY-nominated group The Foreign Exchange, among others. Her latest LP "Until We Meet Again" has drawn comparisons to Minnie Riperton and Deniece Williams. @syberspace on social media platforms.

Leo Manzari (tap dance) is a Lucille Lortel award-nominated tap dancer and recording artist. Manzari has headlined in the touring and Off-Broadway productions of *Maurice Hines is Tappin' Thru Life*, and featured Guest Star on *So You Think You Can Dance*, *The Mo'nique Show*, *The Kate TV*, *PBS NewsHour*, *Jerry Lewis Telethon*, ABC's *The View*, PBS' *Kennedy Center's 50th Anniversary*, and Dorrance Dance's *The Nutcracker Suite*. @leomanzari on social media platforms.

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.

THE SUN RISES IN HARLEM

Black Brilliance and the Harlem Renaissance

Presented in partnership with The Huntington, Skirball Cultural Center, East West Bank, and KPFK

***THE SUN RISES IN HARLEM* is led by Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby with Kecia Lewis, Sy Smith, Leo Manzari, DC6 Singers Collective, and the MUSE/IQUE Orchestra**

The Huntington, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino, CA 91108

June 2, 7:30 pm

June 3, 7:30 pm

Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N Sepulveda Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90049

June 7, 3:00 pm & 7:30 pm

Admissions available now at muse-ique.com

To learn more, please visit www.muse-ique.com/become-a-member.

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.

More about THE SUN RISES IN HARLEM

Harlem may be small, less than two square miles on the island of Manhattan, but by the 1920s it was a booming magnet for Black Americans who left Jim Crow South during the Great Migration — some 175,000 people — making it the largest Black community in the U.S. as well as the largest concentration of Black people in the *world*. Writers, poets, painters, and musicians were all drawn to this teeming garden of art and thought, and together they sparked off the Harlem Renaissance, a seismic moment in history that its founding philosopher Alain Locke called a “spiritual coming of age” in which African Americans transformed “social disillusionment to race pride.”

The hot neighborhood attracted, or was already home to, some of the most important pioneers and progenitors of music in the 20th century. It produced songs we’re still singing and records

we still spin, and it was the birthplace of many firsts for Black artists — not just in style and genre and commercial success, but also sexual expression and identity — which paved the way for the next century of advancement.

The Harlem Renaissance was, essentially, about reclaiming pride in Blackness, about shouting to the world what all of these great minds and voices had to say. It turned a page in the story of a people whose parents and grandparents had been enslaved, and it prophesied a future of civil rights progress and artistic ascendancy. Alain Locke and Langston Hughes, two writers who gave words to this movement, truly believed that *art* could improve the lives of Black Americans. MUSE/IQUE's **The Sun Rises in Harlem** shares that belief.

Many stars were born in Harlem. A 17-year-old Ella Fitzgerald, who was living on the streets at the time, stunned the audience at the Apollo on its very first Amateur Night. She did it on a dare from her friends and sang "Judy" (by Hoagy Carmichael and Sammy Lerner) — and this girl who had once snuck into Harlem ballrooms to hear music when she was a child instantly became a star, almost immediately singing at the Savoy with Chick Webb's band. Webb, who had come to Harlem from Baltimore, was a diminutive but highly talented musician who earned a spot as the Savoy's bandleader when he was just 20; his band played on Fitzgerald's hit record, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," which she co-wrote with composer Al Feldman.

The beating heart of the renaissance was arguably the Cotton Club, a segregated nightclub that only permitted white patrons but whose musical lifeblood was provided by longstanding bandleaders like Duke Ellington — a pianist from Washington, D.C. who became one of the most influential and important jazz composers of all time — and Cab Calloway, a singer from Rochester, New York, who left law school for the bright lights of Broadway. Before his orchestra got the gig at the Cotton Club, Calloway sang "Ain't Misbehavin'" in *Connie's Hot Chocolates*, an all-Black revue by composer Fats Waller; the Harlem son of a Harlem preacher, Waller accompanied his father's sermons on the harmonium as a boy before becoming a prolifically successful recording artist accompanying singers such as Bessie Smith.

Smith, who came to Harlem from Tennessee, earned the nickname "Empress of the Blues" and recorded hundreds of songs — like "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" — both as a solo artist and with jazz greats like Benny Goodman and Louis Armstrong. There were so many fierce, fearless women shattering the sound barrier in Harlem. Ethel Waters, who made her way to Harlem from Pennsylvania via Baltimore and the vaudeville circuit, became a star at the Cotton Club where she sang the Harold Arlen standard "Stormy Weather," then took Broadway by storm, smashing barriers as the first Black woman to share top billing and becoming one of the highest paid actresses anywhere on the stage. Another pioneer was Florence Price, a conservatory-trained composer who wrote four symphonies and a multitude of concert works and who, in 1933, became the first Black woman to have music performed by a major U.S. symphony orchestra.

And then there was Billie Holiday, who moved to Harlem at 12 with her single mother; Holiday lived a famously troubled life, but her pain was poured into works of art — most potently in

“Strange Fruit,” which she recorded in 1939, but also many recordings with Count Basie’s Band (as their first female singer), including “They Can’t Take That Away From Me” by the Gershwins. Holiday and Waters were both, like their musical older sister Ma Rainey, bisexual; the Harlem Renaissance and many of its nightclubs and neighborhoods were a haven for revolutionary queer artists.

Free expression, Black brilliance, an ignition of hot new musical styles and timeless songs — the influence and inspiration of the Harlem Renaissance can be felt all throughout the past century, and it still shakes and rattles modern ears and modern artists with its radiance.

Presented in Partnership with The Huntington

Founded in 1919 by Henry E. and Arabella Huntington, it supports research and promotes public engagement through its expansive library, art, and botanical collections.

Presented in Partnership with Skirball Cultural Center

Open to the public since 1996, the Skirball is one of the world's most dynamic Jewish cultural institutions and among the leading cultural venues in Los Angeles.

Presented in Partnership with East West Bank

The East West Bank Art Program began 20 years ago with a mission to foster greater cultural understanding, encourage meaningful dialogue, and help bridge the East and the West through the universal language of art.

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