

MUSE/IQUE 2026 season
WHERE THE HEART IS
250 Years of American Music and Innovation

LOOKING WEST
How the Myth of the Western Frontier Got its Start

Led by Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby
with Damon Daunno, Raye Zaragoza, Glynn Turman, and the MUSE/IQUE Orchestra

August 25 and 26, 2026
The Huntington

August 30, 2026
Skirball Cultural Center

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

Admissions available now at muse-ique.com

July 2026 | Los Angeles, CA - MUSE/IQUE presents **LOOKING WEST: How the Myth of the Western Frontier Got its Start**, led by Artistic & Music Director Rachael Worby with Damon Daunno, Raye Zaragoza, Glynn Turman, and the MUSE/IQUE Orchestra. There are four performances presented between August 25 and 30, 2026 at — and in partnership with — The Huntington and Skirball Cultural Center. Admissions available now at muse-ique.com.

How did the cowboy become one of the defining, most aspirational, most romanticized symbols of American culture? It's a symbol of freedom and of self-invention — and it spread, in part, through the uniquely mythologizing power of *music*. The “cowboy songbook” is composed of both authentic traditionals born on the range by real cowboys, as well as Broadway shows and popular songs and film scores that equally responded to and created the legend, the *idea*, of this Western hero. Music forged the myth.

LOOKING WEST is a musical map of that expansive frontier — a journey into the myth and the reality alike. The cowboy song became a genre unto itself, influenced by folk tunes from the Old World and developed under starry skies on lonesome nights. Home-cooked traditionals like “**Home on the Range**” and “**Happy Trails**” were popularized by real cowboys (Gene Autry) and self-made cowboys (Roy Rogers). The tradition migrated to the stage in popular musicals like *Oklahoma!*, and it was carried on by rock bands like the Eagles (“**Desperado**”) and folk

troubadours like Bob Dylan with his 1973 hit “**Knockin' On Heaven's Door**” — written, naturally, for a Hollywood picture. California’s Dream Factory, which truly codified the myth of the American West, yielded countless songs of roundups and rustlers and homes on the range, as well as stirring orchestral landscapes of the West like Elmer Bernstein’s ***The Magnificent Seven***. The rest of the world was captivated by these myths and responded with their own distinctive voice, iconically so with ***The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*** and the Italian westerns with their iconoclastic scores by Ennio Morricone.

Featuring the vibrant vocals of Damon Daunno, Tony nominee for his performance as Curly in the Broadway remounting of *Oklahoma!*; and Raye Zaragoza, whose album *Hold That Spirit* embodies her proud claim that the great Western songbook has roots in Mexican and Indigenous cultures. As she declares: “We were cowboys too!” Cowboy poetry and spoken word will be performed by Glynn Turman, the Emmy-winning veteran of stage and screen and real-life cowboy! — all backed by a murderer’s row band featuring Gabe Witcher on fiddle, Mike Witcher on Dobro, Andrew Synowiec on guitar, Ross Garren on harmonica and Alan Hampton on bass.

The cowboy is a myth that continues to inspire everyone from the Sons of the Pioneers to Beyoncé. The sound of the West is a frontier claimed by all, and its music is the stuff of legend.

About the artists

Damon Daunno (vocals) received Tony and Grammy nominations for his performance as Curly in Daniel Fish’s revival of *Oklahoma!* He can be seen in AMC’s *The Vampire Lestat*, and his television credits include *The Hating Game*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, and *Blue Bloods*. He originated the role of Orpheus in the off-Broadway production of *Hadestown* at New York Theatre Workshop. Damon has performed with orchestras throughout Russia and Europe; he is a multi-instrumentalist who has scored both features and short films. @damondaunno on socials

Raye Zaragoza (vocals) is a Los Angeles based singer songwriter whose music explores resilience, joy, and emotional honesty. *Paste* Magazine called her “one of the most politically relevant artists in her genre.” Her album *Hold That Spirit* features collaborations exclusively with female artists and celebrates strength and community. Passionate about Indigenous visibility, Zaragoza also writes for Netflix’s *Spirit Rangers*. Her music has appeared on *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Resident Alien*, *NCIS*, and more. @rayezaragoza on socials

Glynn Turman (performer) is an Emmy Award-winning actor who began his career onstage in 1959 in *A Raisin in the Sun* opposite Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee. He starred alongside Colman Domingo in both *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* and *Rustin*, and his many television credits include Ava DuVernay’s *Queen Sugar*, *Women of the Movement*, Guillermo del Toro’s *Cabinet of Curiosities*, *Black Cake*, and *Percy Jackson & The Olympians*. For his years of incredible achievements, he was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2025. @glennturman1 on socials

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

August 25, 7:30 pm

August 26, 7:30 pm

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

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

Admissions available now at 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 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.

KPFK is a Proud Media Sponsor

KPFK is a listener-powered, commercial free radio station in Los Angeles. We were the first full-time FM station west of the Mississippi powered entirely by listener donations. From the beginning, the mission was plain: serve peace, culture, and honest public conversation without compromise.

More about Looking West:

The American West is both a real place *and* a land of myth. Likewise, the music of the West rides a trail that winds between organic folk tunes, native rhythms, and pure Hollywood fantasy — a complex but delicious campfire stew of tradition and aspiration. Americans pressed westward to escape their old lives and reinvent themselves, embarking into a land long inhabited by indigenous tribes with their own rich musical history, and ultimately creating a legend of rugged frontier folk and cowboys with an enduring songbook and cinematic soundtrack that echoed around the globe as one of America's most potent cultural exports.

The cowboy song, at its heart, is about the cost of freedom — missing home, feeling lonely, surviving harsh elements. So why did the genre become such a romantic fantasy?

Perhaps because that very freedom is so desirable. To strike out on the “trail,” whether to drive cattle (earn a living) or rush for gold (achieve wildest dreams), carries as much hope and excitement as it requires sacrificing comfort and civilization. Cowboys found companions — in each other, in their trusty steeds, and in their songs — and fearlessly forged their own life path. Maybe that's why the cowboy became such a quintessential American archetype, embraced by children in make believe, artists of all kinds, and people everywhere in the world.

LOOKING WEST examines the history of the cowboy songbook through its most enduring ballads and anthems, and it traces the genre into popular music, Broadway, television, and Hollywood — where the myth really took hold and was carried on the wind. MUSE/IQUE offers a unique guide to this Western survey, with its special emphasis on storytelling — both from the stage in Rachael Worby's illuminating commentary, and in interactive Pop-Up Exhibits before the show — and in the company's vast experience revisiting and reimagining *all* of these varied musical traditions. The myth, and the music, have never gone away.