

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Michael Stern to Conduct World Premiere of *Five American Portraits*  
Commissioned by Orchestra Lumos  
April 18 & 19, 2026, at The Palace Theatre in Stamford, CT**

**Collaborative Work Was Composed by Clarice Assad,  
Liam Cummins, Quinn Mason, Nicky Sohn, and Christopher Theofanidis**

**“America 250” Concert Also Features Beloved Works by  
Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland Plus the Orchestra Lumos Debut of the  
Sensational, Young Pianist Jason Mhoon Performing  
George Gershwin’s Timeless *Rhapsody in Blue***

STAMFORD, CT (March 23, 2026) — To mark America’s 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Stamford, Connecticut-based **Orchestra Lumos** and its **Music Director, Michael Stern**, will give the world premiere on April 18 and 19, 2026, of *Five American Portraits*, a work commissioned by the Orchestra exploring individuals and phenomena that left an extraordinary and indelible mark on our nation. The five American composers selected for the project are **Clarice Assad, Liam Cummins, Quinn Mason, Nicky Sohn, and Christopher Theofanidis**.

The premiere is part of [America 250](#), a program highlighting iconic works by American composers of earlier generations who also took their inspiration from aspects of our country. Three Dance Episodes from *On the Town* is Leonard Bernstein’s concert adaptation of music from his hit Broadway show about American sailors on 24-hour shore leave in New York City. Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* suite arose out of his historic collaboration with choreographer Martha Graham and depicts pastoral and Shaker themes. And *Rhapsody in Blue* represents George Gershwin’s early foray into blending concert music and the American art form of jazz, marking the Orchestra Lumos debut of the sensational, young pianist **Joshua Mhoon**.

Stern, who spearheaded *Five American Portraits* and has worked closely with the commissioned composers, invited each to write a short piece about a person or entity who, in their view, has influenced our country’s trajectory and contributed to the American story. Once the individual

works were completed, Stern determined the performance order and asked the composers to create additional, interstitial music so that the five movements could be performed as one cohesive work.

The commission is made possible by the Orchestra Lumos Commissioning Club, a consortium of more than a dozen donors who have been involved from the beginning of the project.

“The original premise of the piece was to commission a new work to commemorate our country’s 250<sup>th</sup> birthday. But our commissioning club quickly realized that it wouldn’t be as compelling to represent the breadth of America’s story with just one voice. That thought sparked the idea of inviting a range of composers — of different ages, backgrounds, and individual stories —to approach their part of the work from a personal perspective,” said **Michael Stern**.

Stern continued, “I asked each composer to write about something or someone meaningful to them that had, in their view, contributed significantly to the narrative of our country. It was so interesting to me that not one of them selected what we might call ‘the usual suspects,’ such as traditional political or historical figures. What emerged through their lenses was a beautiful collection of portraits which reflects musically the ideal of E Pluribus Unum — the core value of our Great American Experiment.”

The movements of *Five American Portraits* are:

- I. **Christopher Theofanidis:** Rachel Carson—*Scientist Poet*
- II. **Nicky Sohn:** Disney—*Is this the Happiest Place on Earth?*
- III. **Clarice Assad:** Harry Houdini – *The Illusionist*
- IV. **Quinn Mason:** Echoes of the *Forgotten Americans*
- V. **Liam Cummins:** Howard Zinn—*A People’s History*

*Five American Portraits* will receive an encore performance on July 15, 2026, in Breckenridge, Colorado by the National Repertory Orchestra, where Michael Stern serves concurrently as music director.

Full concert details follow on page 3. Composer statements may be accessed [here](#).

[America 250](#)  
[Orchestra Lumos](#)

Saturday April 18, 2026 at 7:30pm

Sunday, April 19, 2026 at 3:00pm

The Palace Theatre, Stamford

Michael Stern, *conductor*

Joshua Mhoon, *piano*

Leonard Bernstein: Three Dance Episodes from *On the Town*

Aaron Copland: *Appalachian Spring* Suite for Orchestra

Clarice Assad, Liam Cummins,

Quinn Mason, Nicky Sohn,

Christopher Theofanidis: *Five American Portraits* (World premiere, Orchestra Lumos Commission)

George Gershwin: *Rhapsody in Blue*

**Behind the Baton:** *Music Director Michael Stern offers a deeper look into the music and introduces guest artists at a **pre-concert conversation** one half hour prior to each Orchestra Lumos performance in the upstairs lobby of The Palace Theatre.*

**After Hours:** *Music Director Michael Stern moderates an interactive **post-performance** conversation with guest artists and audience in the lower lobby café following each Saturday evening Orchestra Lumos concert.*

Visit [orchestralumos.org](http://orchestralumos.org) for artist statements, bios, videos, and more information about the concert.

*Five American Portraits* is made possible by Orchestra Lumos's Commissioning Club: Jane and Stephen Alpert; Mimi Cohen; Aaron Gillies and Russell Jones; Stefania DiGiuseppe and John Charles Jove; Maria and Alan McIntyre; Diane and Steve Parrish; Barbara Scheulen and Edward Stanford; Michael Stern; Betsy and Michael Stone; Norma\* and Donald\* Stone; and Lisa and Paul Welch.

*The America 250 concerts are dedicated with deep affection to the memory of Louise B. Stern who was a champion and friend of Orchestra Lumos for many years.*

*Joshua Mhoon is Orchestra Lumos's 2025/26 Stern Young Artist.*

*Michael Stern is The Parrish Chair Music Director of Orchestra Lumos.*

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*This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.*

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## **About Orchestra Lumos**

Based in Stamford, Connecticut, Orchestra Lumos is the preeminent orchestra serving Fairfield County and representing the region beyond its borders. Led by Music Director Michael Stern, the Orchestra presents exceptional musical experiences, from awe-inspiring concerts with world-renowned soloists to family-friendly programs that captivate all ages. The Orchestra performs five main-stage subscription concerts annually at its home base, the historic Palace Theatre, and reaches audiences through dozens of intimate performances in smaller spaces and hands-on education programs in venues from Rye, New York to Bridgeport, Connecticut, including local libraries, schools, museums, breweries, places of worship, and community centers. Visit [www.orchestralumos.org](http://www.orchestralumos.org) to learn more, or follow on social media: [@orchestralumos](https://www.instagram.com/orchestralumos)

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