

THE *Current*

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Hot, Fresh and Poppin'

Rodney DuPlessis was on the spot. He had been named artistic director for UC Santa Barbara's third annual Summer Music Festival and he needed a headliner. And not just an artist or group that would take the stage on campus, but one that would also perform works written by graduate students in the school's [Department of Music](#).

DuPlessis, himself a UCSB graduate student in music composition, made a wish list and started reaching out. He quickly hit pay dirt: The Los Angeles Percussion Quartet, a Grammy-nominated contemporary ensemble that's among the most respected in the business.

"I still can't believe that worked out," DuPlessis said. "LAPQ was at the top of the wish list. They are incredible performers and they play a lot of vital new music written by composers who are actually alive."

The festival continues to build on its mission to bring contemporary music — something of a rarity in America's concert halls — to a wider audience, said Adriane Hill, marketing and communications manager for the music department. It was a challenge DuPlessis embraced.

"My biggest hope and my guiding principle in making the program for the festival was for people to come for one event that they're excited for, and stay for something else that they don't know much about," he said. "I love introducing people to new ideas and artforms. So I hope everyone finds something they really want to see in the program, but I also think they'll end up finding a new appreciation

for another kind of music they aren't familiar with. Plus, it's free! What do you have to lose? Try something new. You might get your mind blown."

LAPQ and a diverse roster of acts will perform Friday and Saturday, Aug. 17 and 18, at several venues at UCSB. It kicks off with an interactive multimedia exhibition in the Digital Arts & Humanities Commons in Room 1410 of the Music building.

The festival is free and open to the public. It's sponsored by the UCSB Office of Summer Sessions and co-presented by the UCSB Art, Design & Architecture Museum, Department of Music, Division of Humanities & Fine Arts and MultiCultural Center.

Violist Jonathan Morgan, a UCSB alumnus and founding member and executive director of the Now Hear Ensemble, will be the first artist on stage. Morgan, who has played with multiple orchestras, will perform Friday at 3:30 p.m. in the campus's Art, Design & Architecture Museum.

Rounding out the day is Santa Barbara-based Mariachi Las Olas at 5:30 in the MultiCultural Center and the Graduate Student Showcase concert at 7:30 in Karl Geiringer Hall.

On Saturday, Margo Halsted, a UCSB associate adjunct professor and carillonist, will give the first of two carillon concerts in Storke Plaza from 10:30 to 11 a.m. The Children's Concert, featuring Mariachi Las Olas de Santa Barbara, follows at 11 a.m. in the Music Bowl. Halsted will perform her second carillon concert at 3 p.m. At 3:30 the Adelfos Ensemble, a choir with a broad repertoire, will sing in the Art, Design & Architecture Museum. Gamelan Sinar Surya, based in Santa Barbara, performs at 5:30 in the Music Bowl, and LAPQ caps the festival with a show at 7:30 in Karl Geiringer Hall.

In addition, LAPQ will perform works written by three UCSB composition graduate students — DuPlessis, Mason Hock and Marc Evans.

"It's an amazing opportunity for our students," Hill said.

DuPlessis, who called organizing the festival "a monumental undertaking," said the festival offers a unique opportunity for the public as well. Most music events are centered around a particular genre, but Friday and Saturday's festival defies category.

“I wanted to carry on the tradition of multicultural and interdepartmental celebration from previous years,” DuPlessis explained. “I think the eclectic nature of the festival is one of its most important and defining characteristics. Sure, it’s a political choice, but it’s also an artistic one. Juxtaposition makes things interesting and I think hearing all of this wonderful music from different parts of the world, different aesthetics, different time periods, all next to each other, makes for a really compelling recontextualization.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.