UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

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With Heart and Hope

Believing there is magic on stage, and transformative power in exposure to the arts and new ideas, UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures will produce a full season of events for 2020-21. The new lineup was crafted with careful respect for artists and audiences, and with utmost attention to public health.

“Safety is our number one priority, and we are paying close attention to CDC, state, local and university guidelines to inform our decisions,” said Celesta Billeci, Miller McCune Executive Director of Arts & Lectures. “It’s been a wild ride, but we are lucky to have the support and trust of this community and an incredibly nimble staff who sprang into action to figure out how we could make this work. I’m excited about the season ahead. We have had the opportunity to think outside the box and explore new technologies, and in some cases, we are able to present people who wouldn’t have been able to be with us in person. So this has opened up a lot of unexpected possibilities.”

When the pandemic forced A&L to cancel its spring events, for instance, acclaimed musical group Brooklyn Rider met with students over Zoom, incorporating messages from composers whose music they were performing. “So not only did students get to learn about an innovative and unique project directly from the minds that came up with it,” Billeci said, “but they also got to learn from Pulitzer Prize winning composers and to see first-hand how these collaborations come to be.

“The pandemic has made us focus on how we serve our community and ask, ‘What are the ways in which we can continue to support people who depend on us?’” she

added.

Offering free and discounted tickets for many events to UCSB students, the new A&L season is built around five types of experiences:

• House Calls, a series of virtual events that bring thinkers and creatives into your living room, will feature author Cheryl Strayed in conversation with Pico Iyer, Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Jason Isbell and comedian Mike Birbiglia, among others.

• Fanless Concerts will stream live, digital exclusive performances — from Santa Barbara venues — by some of the world's best musicians, such as the Danish String Quartet.

• Live On-stage Events, the in-person occasions that A&L has been knocking out of the park for decades, are set to begin in February 2021. The robust slate of offerings — music, dance and lectures — includes cellist Gautier Capuçon and pianist Yuja Wang, Chef Jose Andres, The Joffrey Ballet and novelist Barbara Kingsolver.

• Race to Justice, a new series this season, will engage leading thinkers, activists and creatives — including Ibram X. Kendi, author of "How to Be An Antiracist,"

Ta-Nehisi Coates, Sister Helen Prejean, and Alvin Ailey Dance Theater — to expand our understanding of racism and how race impacts society. Aiming to look at racism from every angle, from abolition and underlying conditions to reparations, criminal justice and more, A&L is partnering with a number of UCSB departments, including the Department of Black Studies, to ensure that the series is wide-reaching and cross-disciplinary.

• Education and Community Engagement, a pillar of Arts & Lectures, is manifested in Access for ALL, a suite of programs that brings dynamic opportunities to classrooms, campus and the broader community — from K-12 to lifelong learners — by way of masterclasses, panel discussions and lecture-demonstrations.

"A&L has always worked to build a more connected, thoughtful and compassionate community," said Billeci, "and we're doubling down on those efforts at a time when parents, teachers and students could all use a little more help being educated, entertained and inspired.

“What I love most about this season is that it offers hope when we need it most,” she continued. “As a planet, as a nation and as a community, we are going through a lot. I look at this season with a sense of excitement for what’s on the horizon: the ingenuity of establishing a virtual event series when many other performing arts centers are going dark; the in-depth exploration of Race to Justice; serving our community through outreach; the mind-blowing range of talent. I have been revisiting a phrase from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whom we were lucky to present on the A&L stage several years ago. He said, ‘Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.’ This season brings me the light through the darkness.”

Due to the ongoing uncertainties around COVID-19 — and seeking to put patrons at ease about buying tickets — A&L has updated its exchange and refund policies for the 2020-2021 season. Anyone planning to attend an event who feels sick, or is uncomfortable attending, can receive a full refund up to 5 p.m. the day of the event. Tickets can also be exchanged for another event in the same season (some exclusions apply).

In addition, A&L has contingency plans for myriad situations that could arise due to the pandemic, including event cancelation and converting live events to livestreaming. All of those details can be found in their FAQ for the 2020-21 season.

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.