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Opera Gala combines song, dance, multimedia and a live orchestra

Keith Hamm
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An expression of art greater than the sum of its creative parts will take the stage on three consecutive occasions, both on and off the UC Santa Barbara campus, as the departments of music and of theater and dance join forces for Opera Gala.

Under the artistic direction of international award-winning soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, who has been head of the UCSB Voice Program since 2021, student singers will share the opera stage with dancers choreographed by lecturer Christina McCarthy and a contemporary multimedia piece by João Pedro Oliviera, the Corwin Chair of Composition and a 2023 Guggenheim Fellow.

Oliviera's accompanying visual work, entitled "Daniel's Prayer," is an excerpt from his award-winning multimedia opera "The 70th Week," based on the Book of Daniel and its mysterious biblical prophecies of cosmic and political upheaval.

Performing to works by Gluck, Handel and Mozart, the first two concerts will take place off campus; hosted with piano accompaniment on May 15 at the Casa Dorinda

retirement community in Montecito, and on May 16 at the Ventura College of Performing Arts, with its live orchestra of faculty and guest artists under the direction of Brent Wilson, a conductor and stage director at UCSB and Ventura College. Also with the live orchestra and dancers on May 17, Opera Gala closes at UCSB's Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall.

"We are thrilled to extend Opera Gala to various venues, allowing access to diverse audiences, fostering collaboration among our talented students, faculty, guest performers and creative teams to enhance our outreach and strengthen relationships within our community," Bayrakdarian said.

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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.