UCSB Announces Campaign for Arts & Lectures

Drive to Raise $20 Million Begins February 21

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It’s been a wild ride for the culture industry over the past decade. Previously entrenched media such as broadcast television and radio, the DVD and the CD, and even that long-standing bastion of cultural identity, the book, have all taken hits as digital delivery systems continue to compete in a cascade of new platforms, technologies, and media experiences. In the long run, the outcome of these multiple paradigm shifts is anyone’s guess, but for the moment, there is actually a clear winner — live performance. Nothing — not HD, not 3-D, and not even Heavy D — can compete with the physical presence of a living, breathing artist. And that’s what UCSB Arts & Lectures excels at, bringing the greatest artists, writers, musicians, and performers in the world to Santa Barbara and putting them within reach of our community. That’s why now, for the first time in its more than 50 years of existence, Arts & Lectures is reaching out to the community at large to grow its donor base through the Campaign for Arts & Lectures, which officially kicks off today, Thursday, February 21.

Speaking on behalf of the organization that she has helmed since 2000, A&L director Celesta Billeci outlined some of the reasons that this campaign, the goal of which is to raise $20 million, needed to happen now.
1. To Keep Arts & Lectures Accessible: “Most of the artists we bring need to be subsidized,” said Billeci. “Ticket sales alone don’t cover the cost. Rather than raise prices, we’d like to continue doing things in a way that makes it possible for as diverse a group of people as possible to attend. Many of our public lectures, such as the upcoming appearance by Jorge Castañeda, are free, and a public outreach component requiring that artists work with local schools or with students here on campus is written into every contract. We feel that for Arts & Lectures to be truly meaningful, we need to maintain a broadband audience, and for that we need money.”

2. To Keep the Programming Great: Billeci acknowledged, “We are expected to bring in some big stars,” but she added that “the real star of Arts & Lectures is the program — the whole range of things we do, coupled with the great audience that we attract.”

3. To Maintain the Intensity: As an illustration of just how potent the program really is, the Campaign for Arts & Lectures starts with a two-week festival, featuring appearances by everyone from physicist Brian Greene and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis to cartoonist and author Lynda Barry and classical pianist Jeremy Denk. For more information, call (805) 893-3755 or visit artsandlectures.sa.ucsb.edu.