

Expressions

Volume 18

SJSU COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND THE ARTS

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SJSU Performs Broadway Hit In the Heights

By Aaminah Baloch

The Department of Film and Theatre and the School of Music and Dance collaborate for the first time in more than 20 years to bring Lin-Manuel Miranda's award-winning production, *In the Heights*, to the Hammer Theatre. Thanks to generous donations, access to the original Broadway set, and the hard work of many, SJSU is putting on a show true to Miranda's first Broadway hit. And, along with bringing world-class theater to San José, *In the Heights* is giving students hands-on experience in the staging and production of a major Broadway play.



In the Heights tells the story of a Hispanic-American neighborhood of Washington Heights in New York City. The characters are relatable and charming, full of triumph and angst as they struggle to achieve the elusive American Dream. And while Miranda's show is representative of his Latino background, it's also universal.

"Here are these people who exist everyday on the street. They fall in love, they fall out of love, they have problems, they have celebrations—it's a human story," says Director Buddy Butler.

Miranda's show is the perfect fit for not only SJSU students, but for San José and the larger Bay Area community. "It's a show that continues our commitment to diversity," adds Butler. "I wanted to find a play that would speak to that diversity and also give voice to the unrepresented voices out there."

In addition to appealing to various cultures, the production also reaches out to students with different interests. Many were attracted to Miranda's modern, hip-hop take on traditional theatre. "What really interested me was that it was written by Lin-Manuel Miranda," says Theatre major Jordan Celestino. "Being on stage singing is cool, but you never really get to rap on stage."

Students like Celestino are involved in all areas of the production, from singing and dancing on stage to creating costumes. Music students will be performing in the live orchestra while theatre students are even getting the opportunity to work as assistant stage managers.

The production is the perfect opportunity for students to be exposed to the challenges and rigors they will face as working professionals. Theatre student Shaelan Barber, for example, is learning to juggle different parts of her life with *In the Heights*. She meets

the cast for rehearsal five nights a week and works a 32-hour job while also being a full-time student.

"A lot of people don't get this opportunity, so I'm trying to take out of it as much as I can," says Barber. Despite her overwhelming schedule, she is excited to be a part of the production.

The collaboration between departments has allowed students to round out their skills. "I'm not much a dancer, but when I got an ensemble I had to learn these dances," says Barber. "The first day we learned the dance, our legs hurt so bad. But it was a pain that you felt really good about. We were getting something done. That's what I've loved about it."

Not only are students learning new skills, the collaboration has given them the opportunity to work with industry experts. William Corkery, a senior Theatre Arts major, enjoys the challenge of working at a professional level: "The more perfection that you demand out of people, the better you get."

Other students agree and are encouraged by the experience. "I feel like we sound really good in such a short amount of time, which is amazing," says Jordan Celestino. "I think that's just because of how Jesse works—and what he brings to the table makes us want to bring more."

Jesse Sanchez was the musical assistant for the national tour of *Hamilton* and worked with the original creative team from both *Hamilton* and *In the Heights*. He is currently the vocal consultant in the production and has been teaching students the score.

"We've done five vocal rehearsals and we've learned mostly every note on the page," says Sanchez. "They've come prepared—it's a pretty all-star team. We all understand all of our parts and how we fit in this really big pie."

Sanchez isn't the only professional in the production. Students have been introduced to experts in all areas, from actors to sound technicians. For example, the main character is played by guest artist Oklys Pimentel, who has previous experience with the role in another local production. And some professionals are alumni of SJSU, like Jennifer Wong the stage manager. Additionally, students will get the opportunity to learn how to mix sounds by Anthony Sutton, Hammer Theatre's seasoned technician, as the play will take place in the theatre's main auditorium.

"The Hammer is creating huge opportunities for our students, for our faculty, and for our community," says Barnaby Dallas, the show's producer.

The partnership between SJSU and the Hammer Theatre has certainly raised the bar.

"Film & Theatre has done some things at the Hammer, and Music and Dance has done some very exciting things," adds Fred Cohen, conductor and chair of the School of Music & Dance. "But we've never worked together on a music theatre piece as popular as this. It's very exciting."

In the Heights will start Friday, April 27 at 7 pm at the Hammer Theatre. For tickets and more information, visit www.hammertheatre.com or call (408) 924-8501.

For the summer edition of *Expressions*, we will be featuring more photos and videos of the performance.

SJSU Celebrates Frankenstein's 200

By Simon Tran

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* turns 200 this year, and the *Frankenstein* Bicentennial Celebration is uniting SJSU, Santa Clara University (SCU), and University of San Francisco (USF) to celebrate the novel's legacy. *Frankenstein* has sparked important debates throughout its long history and is especially relevant to the Silicon Valley because it dares to test the limits of science and the ethics of technological advancement and human innovation.

At the helm of the *Frankenstein* Bicentennial Celebration are SJSU's Dr. Katherine Harris, SCU's Dr. Kirstyn Leunar, and USF's Dr. Omar Miranda. For this celebration, these professors aim to highlight student contribution and collaboration.

"One of the things we have to do is answer what it is to be a team rather than a group," says Harris. "It's not about divide and conquer, but collaborating to increase the amount of intellectual ideas."

SJSU students are participating in the *Frankenstein* Bicentennial Celebration in a number of ways. In Harris' English 10: Great Works of Literature, students are in charge of running the Bicentennial website, re-examining Dr. Victor Frankenstein through a mock trial with the help of the debate team, and hosting a film festival showcasing films related to the core themes of *Frankenstein*. In addition, her English 100W class will be curating a *Frankenstein* exhibit with help from the King Library.

Harris has also reached out to other faculty members to participate in this celebration. Lower-division GE English classes are teaching *Frankenstein* and related works. Dr. Edwin Sams' English 22: The Graphic Novel class will be studying *Destroyer*, a graphic novel based on *Frankenstein* that handles contemporary issues of race and class. Students in Dr. Mark Thompson's English 110: Visual Rhetoric and Documentation Design will create promotional flyers for the bicentennial.

Plans are also underway to increase involvement from students all over campus for fall 2018. Students from the Department of Film and Theatre will be participating in the *Frankenstein* Radio Play with guidance from Director Buddy Butler.

Harris hopes to include *Frankenstein* into the ENGL 1A curriculum, introduce the novel to incoming students through the Summer Reading Program, and work with students outside of the college.



Collaborations with SCU and USF students have also started. So far, students and faculty from SCU and USF can make comments and initiate discussions on the *Frankenstein* Bicentennial Celebration website. They can also attend and participate in public events affiliated with the *Frankenstein* Bicentennial. Harris hopes to expand upon cross-campus collaboration in the upcoming months.

“The Silicon Valley has access to a diverse group of students with an abundance of knowledge,” says Harris. “They have all this information that can cross-pollinate. They just don’t know it yet.”

This is only just the beginning. Students can expect more events and other opportunities to contribute to the *Frankenstein* Bicentennial Celebration.

For more information about this celebration and related upcoming events, visit <https://frankenstein200yrs.wordpress.com>.

Graphic Design Ranks Top 50

By Olivia Lee

Join us in congratulating SJSU's Graphic Design Program, which has scored top marks in *Animation Career Review's* 2018 Graphic Design School rankings. Our program is ranked within the top 7% nationally among all design schools; top 5% among public colleges; and in the top 10 design programs in California.

Rankings are made based on the program's academic reputation, admission selectivity, depth and breadth of the program, value as it relates to tuition and indebtedness, and geographic location. For a small program embedded within a public school, SJSU's Graphic Design Program is doing extremely well, competing with larger art schools in the Bay Area, such as the California College of the Arts (CCA).



Part of the program's success is due to its strict admission requirements. Students who want to be in the Graphic Design Program must first enroll in the BA Design Studies Major. During students' sophomore year, the program reviews their portfolio and selects around 25 out of 100–120 students to continue to the BFA Graphic Design Program. After this secondary admission, students must pass portfolio reviews (in addition to completing their units) every semester if they hope to graduate from the program.

"This system lets us see the pool of people who are interested in graphic design," says Professor Chang Kim, Program Coordinator of the Graphic Design Program. "We are highly selective. And our rigorous portfolio reviews retain the quality of the program."

A main philosophy of the program is to help students overcome new challenges and achieve goals through developing their own resolutions.

"Even if we rely on our past experience, memories/database and knowledge to start with a concept, our wonderfully provocative intuition along with experimental and innovative spirits allow us to deal with such challenges," says Professor Kim



He consistently reminds his students that to be a great designer, they must retain “curiosity, passion, challenge, motivation, seriousness, imagination, fun and humor,” and they need “to learn the appropriate design processes through various experiments with a high level of craftsmanship.”

Another strength of the program is its emphasis on learning the fundamentals of graphic design. Professor Julio Martinez, a SJSU alumnus and instructor, noted that he

understood the core theories of design more than some of his coworkers when he first started working. His education at SJSU helped him build a strong foundation in design, giving him an advantage in the field.

“The one thing this program is known for is typography—a foundation of design,” says Martinez. “Typography is the one aspect that designers never spend a day away from. No matter what you’re doing, you’re always working with type. And we take typography more seriously here and offer many courses to make sure students have a more robust training.”

Martinez has worked for Pentagram (the multibillion international design company) and now owns Studio 1500, a design firm in San Francisco. His experience in the field has allowed him to work with and observe graphic designers fresh out of various local art programs.

“The Academy of Art focuses on making things look more polished, and CCA focuses on experimentation—and I’m simplifying them to a great degree—but where we come in is that our program does a little bit of both,” says Martinez.

Alumnus Andy Tran also points out the versatility of the program.

“Our program offers a solid foundation in Swiss style (the “International Typographic” style) of graphic design,” Tran says. “Once students have mastered the foundation courses, they experiment and explore new ways to push the boundaries of their unique voice in graphic design.”

Their observations are reflective of the classes taught in the program. For instance, the DSGD 150: Senior Studio Thesis Project is a course developed by Professor Kim in which students choose their own topic/theme to research and then create design outcomes based on their research. This course follows the methodologies of the master’s degree thesis project, where students must develop a design interest with the guidance of three thesis advisors.

“We are confident that we have educated our students very well through all the coursework within the BFA curriculum,” explains Kim. “But students need their own special characteristic and voice in design.”

Students have worked on theses that range from hyper-theoretical, such as a virtual interface for Tesla, to projects that are personal, like developing an app to help family members manage their illness and medications.

Another important class is DSGD 127: Design Practicum, where students work on real projects commissioned by an industry client, such as Samsung, Cisco, Cooliris (Yahoo), and the Hammer Theatre. Students must exercise their practical skills and design according to the clients' requirements because the companies drive the content of the class.

Members of the faculty work hard to connect students with the local industry and international graphic designers because they believe in collaboration with diverse people in art, design, and technology to create effective visual communication.

As a result, the Graphic Design Department partners with local companies such as Adobe Systems, Apple, Sony, Hewlett-Packard, Electronic Arts, Intel, Facebook, and LinkedIn. These companies seek out SJSU's design students for internships, summer work programs, and opportunities for research and sponsored projects.

Also, in the last few years, Professor Kim has collaborated with other faculty and students from NEO, a graphic design student association, to coordinate unofficial summer design workshop trips. These trips are specifically customized for design students: they attend design exhibitions and workshops of schools in different countries, visit world-famous design studios, and learn about the history and culture of international designs. Past trips to Europe and Asia have been funded by students and faculty themselves—but despite the cost, many students have found the trip worthwhile.

An upcoming SJSU event that epitomizes the faculty's effort to go beyond the classroom is the Granshan Conference. Granshan is a non-profit organization made up of professional type designers who design non-English, non-Latin scripts, such as Armenian, Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, Hebrew, Korean, Japanese, Thai, and more. The organization's focus is to broaden the foundations of design to include non-Latin cultures. Professor Kim, who is also a board member and coordinator of the event, has written a grant to host their annual conference here at SJSU. With the support of Dean Miller, the conference will take place in Hammer Theatre over a period of five days this summer.

"This is another great opportunity for students to connect with international designers and participate in workshops with them," says Professor Kim. Through this conference, he hopes that students will be further exposed to design in a global context.

From providing students opportunities outside the school to maintaining and updating the rigorous curricula, the faculty of the program consistently go above and beyond their roles in the classroom. And their efforts are recognized by the students in the program.



"I go to Connie (Department Chair of the Design program) for a lot of career advice. And Chang is always super easy to talk to and open about his experiences," says Lena Yen, President of the NEO. "The professors are a source of our encouragement."

The College of Humanities and the Arts congratulates the Graphic Design Department for its achievements. We thank the professors for their dedication and know the program will continue to build its quality and reputation.

To see the rankings, visit [Animation Career Review](#).

For more information on the Granshan Conference, visit <http://www.granshan.com/> or email Professor Chang Kim at chang.kim@sjsu.edu.

Profile: Rhonda Holberton

By Simon Tran



Rhonda Holberton joins SJSU as the newest faculty member of the Digital Media Arts program in the Department of Art and Art History. She received her BFA at the California College of the Arts and her MFA at Stanford University.

Before becoming a teacher, Holberton was a mechanical engineer managing a small team to install public art pieces. This job ultimately inspired her to become an educator because she realized she liked teaching her team.

Holberton has taught classes at Stanford University and CSU East Bay. Her students examined the usage of data as an art medium,

how material can store data, and the discourse of human bodies in art. Holberton's decision to come to SJSU was driven by the school's culture.

"It's important to me that SJSU is a state school because it gives back to the community," says Holberton. "I also really like the students here. They are inquisitive and bright. They are real artists and technologists."

Her curriculum is a reflection of her own art. Holberton is an accomplished Oakland-based artist who uses technology and other multimedia platforms to represent the human body.

"In my art, I explore the politics of the body in relation to technology. I spend a lot of time on my computer. I want to talk about the life that we all live," explains Holberton.

As an educator, Holberton brings her art into the classroom. She incorporates technology in her curriculum to bring attention to how integrated technology and multimedia are in society.

"The most important thing I can do as an educator is to show students how to look critically at the world around them and make connections between things that are seemingly incompatible," says Holberton. "This outlook can be used in not only art, but in our daily lives as well."

Profile: Julia Swan

By Aminah Baloch

San José State University welcomes Professor Julia Swan to the Department of Linguistics and Language Development!

A lover of language, Swan took her first linguistics class at Indiana University and gained a master's degree in French Linguistics. She continued her education at the University of Chicago, where she gained her PhD in General Linguistics and spent much of her time researching African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

Swan comes to SJSU with a plethora of teaching experience, both as an ESL instructor and as an assistant professor of sociolinguistics from Reed College. Her expertise allows her to teach a variety of general-level classes in LLD, such as Introduction to Linguistics; Nature of Language; Culture, Language & Ethnicity; and Language Variation.

Teaching at SJSU is perfect for Swan because she was raised to value education. She admires SJSU's service to the community and is aware of the powerful role education plays in a person's life.

San José's cultural and linguistic diversity was also a reason Swan chose to teach here. Swan has been continuing her research on language patterns. Her work with Californian and Canadian vowel shifts has led to an invitation to submit a written work from the Linguistic Society of America. In the future, she would like to study the uniqueness of San José's diversity and its impact on language.

Overall she enjoys researching language change and social motivation for language change, and is excited to bring her research skills to faculty and students.

"It's important for me to help students recognize variable patterns in language use and how they correlate in social phenomena," says Swan. Her goal is to raise students' awareness of these processes happening all around them and to empower them to make their own analyses and insights.



Profile: David Yee

By Olivia Lee

The College and the Department of Design congratulate Professor David Yee for becoming a full-time faculty member in the Animation/Illustration Program.

Despite his new position, Yee is no stranger to the department. In 2001, Yee received his undergraduate degree at SJSU in Graphic Design, specializing in animation/illustration. Since 2007, he has been a lecturer here, teaching classes ranging from basic drawing to beginning animation to storyboarding.

In addition to teaching, Yee held many positions in the art department at George Lucas' visual effects company, Industrial Light Magic (ILM). Directly out of college, he became a production assistant, collaborating with various concept artists on the film *Van Helsing* (2004). Yee gained valuable insights as he helped design the movie's creatures and the world they live in. Yee also worked on the licensing and marketing team of *Star Wars Episode 3: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) and became the marketing art director for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015).

Yee has also spent time as a freelance artist in the video game industry and as a digital artist for Apple Inc. As he worked professionally,, he simultaneously studied in the University of Hartford's animation program, where he received his MFA in 2014.

Despite his wealth of professional experiences, Yee is continually drawn back to the classrooms at SJSU. Having been both a student and a teacher here, Yee is impressed with the quality of the design program.

"For a small, public university program, we crank out a lot of really good artists. And we compete with some of the big, private art schools in terms of getting our students jobs in the industry," says Yee. "My goal is to contribute to the growth of this program."

Yee's decision to transition from working in the studio to teaching in the classroom is largely because of the students—and the simple fact that he loves being here.

"This is a skill-based major," says Yee. "You can talk about art and drawing all you want, but unless you sit down and practice, you're not going to get the results you want—so our students work really hard. They put tons of hours, practice, and passion into their work."



David feels a deep sense of satisfaction when students apply the theories they learn to their art. He wants to help them achieve their professional goals just as his education propelled him towards his own career.

It's a Dean's Life Vol. 18

Spring is a time for collaboration across departments in our college, with the City of San José, and with downtown venues and foundations.

The departments of English, Philosophy, and Chemical and Mechanical Engineering will be sponsoring our biggest spring event: celebrating our Frankenstein Bicentennial initiative. This initiative, the focus of one of *Expressions'* articles, links us with universities across the region and the county that are also exploring the significance of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* over the course of 2018.



Panels on “Deep Humanities” and a public talk by Martin Ford on May 1 will intersect the humanities into the possibilities but also threats of artificial intelligence, as well as the growing discussion around the absence of diversity within the use of analytics—analytics that are now controlling our finances, our economic opportunities, even policing practices. Data, humanities argue, does not live outside the issues of bias, and we need to be central in these conversations within the Silicon Valley.

As Victor Frankenstein shows us, lack of restraint and an absence of serious ethical questions around building technology have unanticipated, unintended, and potentially devastating consequences.

The College of Humanities and the Arts will be collaborating with the Tech Museum and the Knight Foundation to present Martin Ford, author of *The Rise of the Robots*. His free, public lecture on “Disruptive Technology: Do Robots Want Your Job?” will take place at the Tech Museum of Innovation in downtown San José on May 1 at 7pm.

The Hammer Theatre continues to be a site of exciting artistic collaboration. The departments of Film and Theatre and the School of Music and Dance are mounting Lin-Manuel Miranda's first musical, *In the Heights*. Our students along with community artists will present a musical that speaks to the issues of cities, diversity, and belonging—the perfect musical for our own community. This production, which one of our articles covers in this issue, runs at the Hammer from April 27 to May 6.

Some of our most exciting programming is produced by our students in the performing and fine arts. Check out SJSU student productions in our “SJSU Presents” series at the Hammer Theatre. Additionally, we are introducing exciting new programming such as the National Geographic Live series in our “Hammer Speaks” series this spring.

In the *National Geographic Live* series, photojournalists present their photographs, stories, and amazing accounts of our interrelated, global challenges of conservation and climate change.

The recent "In Search of Big Cats" featured National Geographic photographer Steve Winter who talked about snow leopards in Tibet, tigers in India, and our own beloved P-22, the California mountain lion who lives in Los Angeles' Griffith Park. Series like these bring us the diverse, high-quality programming that is the marker of the Hammer Theatre.

The collaborations across areas of study have also been supported by the Knight Foundation. Richard Prum, author of *The Evolution of Beauty*, will be speaking about his recent exploration of Charles Darwin's theories, one that integrate biology, the history of science, aesthetics, and gender in exciting ways. A professor and curator at Yale University, as well as a former MacArthur fellow, Richard Prum will be speaking in the Hammer4 Theatre space on May 14.

Look for other Knight-sponsored speakers this fall, including Cordelia Fine, who recently won the Royal Society of London's award for the best book of popular science with *Testosterone Rex*. She will speak on discourses of gender in the Silicon Valley on October 8, of interest to both our university community and the region.

So much of this collaboration is happening between our students and our amazing faculty. Please meet three of our new faculty in this issue, two from the fine arts—Rhonda Holberton in Art and David Yee in Design—and one in the humanities field of linguistics, Julia Swan. Building our tenure-line faculty numbers is one of our highest priorities, as we connect our innovative faculty with our students.

Please join us in some of these wonderful collaborations this spring and fall, whether that means enjoying the amazing products of our student artists or attending challenging lectures and programming that speaks to our local and or global issues.

Please see <https://frankenstein200yrs.wordpress.com/upcoming-events/> for film festivals, lectures, and more details about "Deep Humanities" on May 1.

Be sure to check out the new website for the Hammer Theatre at hammertheatre.com.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Rhonda Holberton', written in a cursive style.