

# Expressions

Volume 3

**SJSU** | COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND THE ARTS

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## Globe-trotting with the Choraliers



*This issue of Expressions highlights some of the accomplishments of the School of Music and Dance as we take a look at the College's award-winning Choraliers, starting with student Christy Rohayem's description of her summer trip abroad with the choir. Following is a profile of the Choraliers' conductor, Dr. Jeffrey Benson. Also included with our new faculty introductions: is an interview with Dr. Fred Cohen, the new director of School of Music and Dance. And last, but never least, is an interview with the grande dame of the Choraliers, Dr. Charlene Archibeque, who has been helping the choir make music for over four decades.*

### Globe-trotting with the Choraliers

By Christy Rohayem, Music Education major

Out of all the choir tours I've experienced, the Choraliers' trip to Europe this summer was definitely one for the books. Having never been to England or France, I was very excited for the journey to begin. The churches we visited were breath-taking to look at, and even more beautiful to sing in, with remarkable acoustics. I probably took a thousand pictures of just the churches alone! I couldn't get enough. Some of the highlights of my trip were singing at the University of Oxford and in the ancient chalk caves at Taittinger in Reims. Other highlights included visiting the London Eye, London Bridge, the Tower of London, Notre Dame d'Amiens, and Notre Dame de Reims; champagne tasting at Taittinger; seeing the Eiffel Tower at night; and traveling by boat along the Seine. Not to mention the food. Once you've had a homemade croissant in France, Starbucks will just no longer suffice. I'm ruined forever.

Born and raised in the Bay Area, I've developed what some call "wanderlust." I have a strong desire to travel the world and experience different cultures, but as a working student it's difficult to travel as I'd like. As a credential student in Music Education, however,

being in Choraliers has given me the opportunity to see different countries and learn different languages. Not only did this tour open my eyes to so many new experiences, it allowed me to do so with many of my peers and best friends--plus, the new friends that I made along the way.

Our last concert on tour (and my last concert with the Choraliers) was at La Madeleine church in Paris, France. This is the church where composer Gabriel Fauré worked in the late 1800's. Not only were we singing in his church, we were singing one of his pieces, "Cantique de Jean Racine," in the place where it was most likely written. Out of all the amazing moments on this tour—and in my life—this performance is one I will never forget. Being part of the Choraliers and being able to join on this tour was a privilege and an honor. I am forever changed by this experience, and I'm extremely grateful and blessed by the gift of music that the Choraliers and this tour have brought me.

During this visit, Dr. Vanniarajan presented on his specialty of second language acquisition. Other faculty participants included Daniel Silverman on phonology and Roula Svorou on syntax and semantics. One of the great gifts of this award, however, is that *all* instructors in the department will play a role in working with their Pakistani cohorts, providing the entire LLD faculty an opportunity for professional enrichment and offering unique learning opportunities for their students.

Other benefits of the grant are that LLD has developed a synergetic relationship with the State Department, including consulting work on English as a Second Language. The Linguistics and Language Development faculty also have welcomed Fulbright scholars to campus who are working in their discipline. Activities like these are placing the department in a globally prominent position.

Some of the tasks the two cohort schools will be working on together are creating a written language and reference grammar for Pahari, a language from Kashmir. Other projects include revising curricula in linguistics and applied linguistics, research collaboration, and a faculty exchange to enrich both groups' outlook and an understanding of one another's culture. Lastly, our San José State team will seek to impart the concepts of American values and American culture to their Pakistani counterparts.

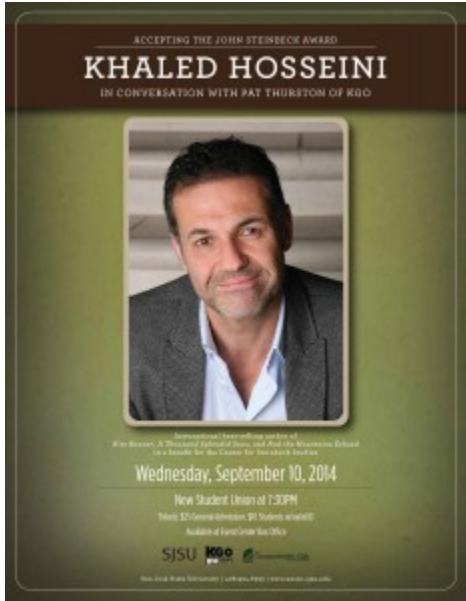
The backstory to this success is one of perseverance by Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan. He applied for the State Department grant last year but was turned down. Learning valuable lessons from that experience, he applied again this year and beat out numerous universities from around the nation. He feels SJSU was an attractive choice for the mission because our LLD program "has always believed in globalization. Our Applied Linguistics curriculum offers TESOL and a focus on World Englishes. We feel there is no one standard English; there are many, for example Standard American English, Standard Indian English, and so on. Each has its own flavor, and they must be recognized as equals."

Apparently this global and democratic perspective was attractive to the State Department's award committee, realizing that English—while becoming the lingua franca of the planet—needs skilled messengers to spread the word(s).

By Cathleen Miller

## Khaled Hosseini to Receive Steinbeck Award

**Media Contact:** Pat Lopes Harris, 408-924-1748



**SAN JOSÉ, CA** – Best-selling Afghan-American novelist Khaled Hosseini is the next recipient of the John Steinbeck Award: *In the Souls of the People*.

Join the **The Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies** for a special evening with the author at 7:30 PM, September 10 in the SJSU Student Union. Hosseini will sit down for an on-stage conversation with KGO Radio Host Pat Thurston. Tickets are on sale now at **Eventbrite** and the SJSU Event Center Box Office.

"I am greatly honored to be given an award named after John Steinbeck, not only an icon of American literature but an unrelenting advocate for social justice who so richly gave voice to the poor and disenfranchised," Hosseini said. "Both as a person and a writer, I count myself

among the millions on whose social consciousness Steinbeck has made such an indelible impact."

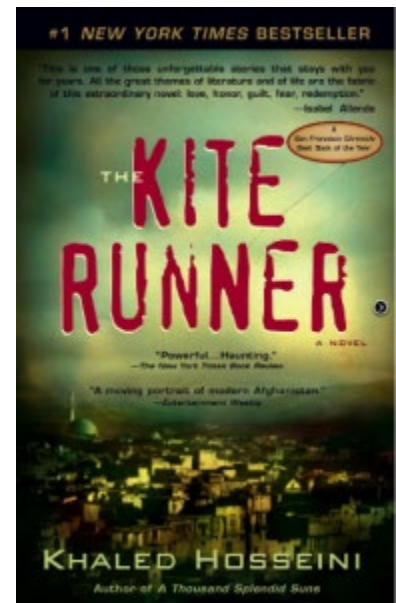
### The Steinbeck Award

Authorized by the Steinbeck estate, the Steinbeck Award is presented to artists and activists whose works exemplify the spirit of Steinbeck's social engagement.

Previous recipients include Joan Baez, Ken Burns, Dolores Huerta, Garrison Keillor, Rachel Maddow, John Mellencamp, Arthur Miller, Michael Moore, Sean Penn, Bruce Springsteen, and Studs Terkel.

"Like John Steinbeck, Hosseini has created powerful portrayals of those who are disconnected and dispossessed. Amir and Hassan, Mariam and Laila, Abdullah and Pari—those characters are well drawn and deeply felt," said Ted Cady, Steinbeck Center board member.

Hosseini is the author of three novels: *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013). Inspired by Steinbeck, Hosseini creates characters tested by political and economic turmoil of historic proportions. In Hosseini's case, it's the wars that have ravaged his native Afghanistan for far too long.



### Ties to San José State

Hosseini's ties to San José State run deep. He was introduced to "The Grapes of Wrath" as an Independence High School student. His teacher, Janet Sanchez, '73 English, will be in attendance when he accepts the Steinbeck Award. She mentored student teachers at SJSU for many years.

Hosseini went on to attend Santa Clara University and the University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine, but SJSU's role in providing opportunity to many first-generation college students stuck with him. The main character in *The Kite Runner* attends SJSU.

Professor of Communication Studies Matthew Spangler's adaption of the novel for the stage won five San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards in 2009. The **play is on tour** in the United Kingdom. The novel was the fall 2006 selection for the **SJSU Reading Program**.

"This tremendously powerful book raises questions about the capacity of human beings to destroy and redeem lives, and the actions that lead to both," Professor Elba Maldonado-Colon said.

### **A Line of Teachers**

At a private reception before the Steinbeck Award event, President Mohammad Qayoumi's wife, Najia Karim, will present Hosseini with her poem, "The Wrath of Grapes." Hosseini's mother was one of Karim's teachers when she was growing up in Afghanistan.

President Mohammad Qayoumi will formally introduce Hosseini to the audience. Both men have been active in efforts to aid their homeland. The **Khaled Hosseini Foundation** provides humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan by working with the United Nations Refugee Agency to build shelters for families.

"I've tried through the foundation to reach those people I've been writing about," Hosseini said in a video on the foundation's website. "I've chronicled their sufferings and their misfortunes...Those are real people and I've benefited from their stories so I have found it just and fitting that I should do something for them as well."

# H&A Student Showcase

October 10, 2014, 1-4:00 p.m.  
New Student Union Ballroom

In what other venue can you learn how to kill Styrofoam Man, catch a live performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, garner tips on traveling to Salzburg for the Global Citizenship Experience, listen to stand-up poetry performed with passion, and wrap it all up with a rollicking Dixieland band playing "When the Saints Go Marching In"?

If you are still stumped, relax...this is kind of a trick question, because all the above acts were presented last year on the SJSU campus at one exciting event. The Student Showcase is designed to provide a taste of all the exciting work happening in the College of Humanities and the Arts.

The good news is that it's happening again this fall. On October 10, just follow the crowd as they head to the New Student Union to witness the talented students of the Humanities and Arts demonstrate what makes our College unique. There you'll find the students and faculty from Art, Design, English and Comparative Literature, Humanities, Linguistics and Language Development, Music, Dance, Philosophy, Television-Radio-Film & Theatre Arts, and World Languages & Literatures.

This is a great opportunity to come and find out what students are learning in Humanities and Arts majors; meet faculty from across the College; and learn about student engagement and study abroad opportunities. It's also a great way to learn more about SJSU!

Dean Lisa Vollendorf extends a special invitation to all members of the SJSU community: Students, faculty, staff, and alumni are welcome to attend. She would like to welcome alumni and retired faculty back to campus so you find out what's happening today at your alma mater. This is also the perfect opportunity to say hello to your favorite professors and check out our brand new Student Union!

All events are free and open to the public. More information on the H&A College website.



# Humanities & Arts

October 10, 2014

1-4pm  
Student Union Ballroom

Free and open to the public.  
Light snacks will be served.

## Showcase

**SJSU** | COLLEGE OF  
HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

## Profile: Jeffrey Benson



### **Taking the Choral Program to New Heights: Dr. Jeffrey Benson**

*By Daniela Garza*

Since coming to San José State University in 2011, Dr. Jeffrey Benson has led what many might call a star-studded life. Benson, who earned his doctorate in choral conducting and music education from Florida State University, directs the Choraliers, an elite, audition-only chamber ensemble comprised of thirty-two undergraduate and graduate students. Last year, the ensemble was offered the opportunity of a lifetime: to perform onstage with the Rolling Stones.

"We got to be backstage with Mick Jagger," said Dr. Jeffrey Benson, Director of Choral Activities at San José State University. When the Rolling Stones needed vocal backup for their Northern California tour dates, they reached out to the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). The Stones "asked their buddies in southern California, 'Who's the best choice in northern California?' and the Choraliers were highly recommended."

The highly esteemed choral director received the call from London last April, a month before the Rolling Stones' "50 & Counting" tour hit California. He said, "We got the call saying, 'Come sing with us in Oakland and San José.'"

Benson, who has directed the Choraliers since 2011, announced the news to the ensemble at the next rehearsal. "The students were ecstatic," he said. "We were all on cloud nine." Together with the rock 'n' roll legends, the choir performed the classic hit "You Can't Always Get What You Want" twice, at the Oracle Arena in Oakland and at the SAP Center in San José.

Benson's reputation as a top-notch choir director precedes him. In November of last year, the ensemble sang at the SAP Center, where they performed with Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli, the best-selling classical musician of all time. The Choraliers and the Concert Choir, which Benson also directs, were invited to provide backup vocals for eight numbers and to perform a song of their own. The sixty-member choir sang in front of 30,000 people at Bocelli's sold-out concert.

The year 2014 already has seen the Choraliers performing on stage with Dionne Warwick and singing in ancient churches in England and France. The Choraliers went abroad this past summer for a two-week European tour, including London and Paris. "We rehearsed a lot for our sendoff concert in May," he said. "We were very excited to perform in Europe for our big tour."

Next up for the Choraliers? Spring 2015 performances at Carnegie Hall!

Sometimes, you *can* get what you want, but only with hard work and commitment. The Choraliers' success also is made possible by donations that support scholarships, tours, and travel. So moral may be that, by working together to support student success, all of us can get what we want!

## Profile: Charlene Archibeque



### Conducting the Choraliers

By Cathleen Miller

Dr. Charlene Archibeque was a leading choral conductor, yet she felt jealous of her male contemporaries. "Conducting is an all consuming occupation. And most men have somebody at home to take care of the house, the family, and daily living—whereas the woman conductor has to do everything for herself. In addition to having a full-time job and studying scores and rehearsing at night and going on tours and performance demands, you also have to cook and shop and keep house and raise your kids. I have many friends in the business and I was always jealous of the men who had their wives

or partners to choose their performance outfits, make the tour plans, and book the bus."

Dr. Archibeque's lack of a stay-at-home partner, however, hardly seems to have *crippled* her career. She has conducted in many of the major concert venues, including Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, the Berlin Philharmonic, and Royal Albert Hall in London. Considered one of America's foremost choral conductors and teachers, Archibeque served as director of choral activities at SJSU for thirty-five years. During her tenure, her choirs completed sixteen concert tours to Australia, Mexico, and throughout Europe; she also has presented choir clinics and conductors' workshops around the globe.

This prestigious career began at a time when there were few women conductors and grew out of Archibeque's early desire to be a music teacher. Her education took her beyond this initial goal when she realized how much she liked performing and the actual art of conducting. "I was the first woman to get a DMA (doctor of musical arts) in choral conducting in 1969. Back then there were very few women choral conductors at the college level."

Her advice to others who want to follow in her footsteps is characteristically no-nonsense: "You have to really love music and love teaching because you can't be a conductor without teaching at the same time. A lot of people believe when they become a conductor they're going to just wave their arms and make music. But you have to really have the mindset of a teacher and not waste people's time." She adds, "Be sure that your musical skills are top-notch. If you're not a great musician, then you shouldn't go into conducting."

When asked about the toughest part of her career at San José State, she admits it was attracting talented students because male choir directors tend to send their students to another male choral director. How did she get around this problem? "I always reached

out to the schools. To attract the talented students, I took my choir out on tour every spring to schools that had good choral programs. I took them to conventions where other students could see the quality of work we were doing at SJSU." This strategy worked: Dr. Archibeque helped put San José State University on the world map by winning seven international choral competitions with the famous SJSU Choraliers.

Now, by becoming a donor, she still is supporting the Choraliers, having endowed a scholarship in her name. As a former faculty member, Dr. Archibeque states, "I know firsthand what it means to a student to be able to stay in school or have to quit to work and support a family and pay the bills. You see it everyday. That's the reason I put my money in scholarships." She also would like to see funds available to endow the choral conductor's position to make it secure.

Dr. Archibeque has retired from SJSU, but her three and half decades as a Spartan gave her an informed perspective on the university. "There are very few problems that San José State has that money won't solve." We are grateful to Dr. Archibeque for her ongoing commitment to SJSU! She is an outstanding ambassador for the College of Humanities and the Arts and the university.

## Profile: Fred Cohen



**Fred Cohen, Director  
School of Music and Dance**

### ***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

Immediately before coming to SJSU I served as Professor and Director at the Schwob School of Music, Columbus State University (Georgia). Previous to that I served as Professor and Chair of the Cali School of Music, Montclair State University (NJ). I began my academic career at the University of Richmond, becoming Chair of the department in 1997.

### ***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

My wife, Judy, is a violist and an elementary school special education teacher. I have three daughters: Emily, Isabel, and Olivia. Emily is in graduate school in Philadelphia; Isabel works in San Francisco; and Olivia is in college, currently enrolled at the University of Ghana. I grew up in San Francisco, and I love the outdoors generally—hiking, especially—and all things cultural! And Philz.

### ***Why are you excited to be here?***

I grew up in the Bay Area and feel blessed to return home. San José State University has dramatically improved the lives of so many people—including some of my relatives—and I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to work with this extraordinarily gifted group of faculty and students, focusing on the challenges facing us this century. It's a great honor to be welcomed by this remarkable group of people at this extraordinary moment.

### ***What is your educational background?***

I grew up in the San Francisco Boys Chorus—I was a member for seven years and worked for the SFBC as a stage director for several more. I attended mostly public schools in SF, graduating Lowell High School. I went to UCSC as an undergraduate (to study psychobiology) and received my masters and doctorate in music composition from Cornell University. I've studied additionally at Stanford University's CCRMA and IRCAM.

### ***What do you enjoy about teaching?***

I am ever mindful and inspired by John Keat's 1819 note in a family letter, "Call the world if you please 'The vale of soul-making.'" Education is soul-making, soul-changing. In my opinion, the goal of education is to focus on challenging the minds of individuals to become active, to comprehend and become thoughtfully critical in a complex world. And I

am fairly obsessed with finding ways to educate myself, as well as exploring how teachers educate others. I strive to make my classroom a place where students Stop and Think, and where I offer a dramatic second chance to my all.

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

I have been active professionally as a bassoonist, conductor, and composer. Over time, I have gradually focused more and more of my efforts on composition, which has become increasingly meaningful, providing the greatest opportunity to express myself and comment on the world I inhabit. There is nothing more profound than writing a beautiful line, complementing it, and setting music aloft that enhances and reflects our world. Writing music awakens my soul, and I hope it has similar benefits for my listeners.

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

“My interest in making music has been to create something that does not exist that I would like to listen to. I wanted to hear music that had not yet happened, by putting together things that suggested a new thing which did not yet exist.” —Brian Eno

## Profile: Shannon Miller



**Shannon Miller, Chair  
Department of English and Comparative  
Literature**

### ***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

I came to San José State University from Temple University in Philadelphia, where I taught for 21 years and served as the department chair for six of those years. Like San José State, Temple is an urban university, a "state supported" institution (though that really just means very little state support). This was my second job, as I started my teaching career at a small school in Michigan, Albion College, where I taught for two years, and I also spent

a year at the University of Utah on a fellowship that had some teaching responsibilities.

### ***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

My husband and I are both from the Bay Area—I grew up in Marin and he grew up in a small town in Contra Costa County. Both of us are excited to be back in the region, and we are hoping that we can find time for some more hiking, camping in our Westfalia camper van along the North and Central Coasts, and doing some kayaking in the bay.

### ***Why are you excited to be here?***

I'm particularly looking forward to working with the faculty in my department and the students at San José State, who seem very committed to the institution and excited to begin or continue their education here. Having the campus located right in the middle of San José is particularly appealing, and I am hoping that the English department can continue to extend points of connection to employers and other arts agencies in the city and the region. This seems a great time to be joining San José State University as the California economy is recovering, and the state is making some needed investment into the CSU.

### ***What is your educational background?***

I attended school back East—I received my BA from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and then received my MA and PhD from UC Santa Barbara, places that are about as climatically distinct as two places can be in the continental US. My undergraduate major was in English, and my field of specialization is Renaissance Literature and Culture. I work on and teach sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literary and historical

texts as well as some Continental materials, and I have a particular interest in women writers in the Medieval through Renaissance periods.

*What do you enjoy about teaching?*

My favorite aspect of teaching is giving students the skills to undertake the learning process on their own, whether that is giving them the skills to tackle early modern/Renaissance poetry and prose, or helping them to define and successfully carry out their own research projects. One of the greatest, if also a little bittersweet, moments in teaching is when the students take over the classroom themselves, showing that they actually don't need your input—when they are working collectively as a group to improve their own projects.

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

I have enjoyed asking new questions of 400-year-old texts to reveal new aspects about them to students and fellow scholars alike. My recent work on John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and women writers of the seventeenth century posed a question no one had asked: What kind of possible cross-overs were there between this epic poem, viewed by many readers as misogynistic, and women publishing in the century during which *Paradise Lost* was published? What kind of influences might have flown in either direction? The effect of asking this question opened up the poem in new ways, particularly around the issues of the representation of gender, and altered our views of both these women writers and of Milton's poetry.

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

There are two:

"The likelihood of one individual being right increases in direct proportion to the intensity with which others are trying to prove him wrong."

—Mr. Jordon in Heaven Can Wait (1978)

"But when she saw them gone, she forward went,  
As lay her Journey, thro that perilous Pace,  
With stedfast Courage and stout Hardiment;  
Ne evil thing she fear'd, ne evil thing she meant."

—Description of Britomart, Martial Maid, in Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queene, Book 3 (1590)



## Profile: Richard McNabb



**Richard McNabb, Professor of English and Writing Programs Administrator  
Department of English and Comparative Literature**

***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

Long Island University in Brookville, NY.

***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

I am a CrossFit and TRX suspension addict. In addition to taking group classes daily, I am working on becoming a certificated instructor.

***Why are you excited to be here?***

I am excited to be part of the SJSU university-wide initiative (which includes writing across the curriculum, first-year writing, and Stretch) to improve student writing and the first-year learning experience.

***What is your educational background?***

I received a BA in Philosophy, an MA in English, and PhD in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Arizona, Tucson.

***What do you enjoy about teaching?***

Helping students achieve their academic and professional goals (a cliché, but true).

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

Dispelling the notion that arguments are just about winning a quarrel or a debate; arguments are more about expressing ideas clearly, logically, ethically, and persuasively.

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

"Don't raise your voice; improve your argument." Desmond Tutu, *Address at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Houghton, Johannesburg, South Africa, 23 November 2004*



## Profile: Thomas Moriarty



**Thomas Moriarty, Professor of English and Writing across the Curriculum Director  
Department of English and Comparative Literature**

***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

I was at Salisbury University in Maryland for twelve years before coming to San José State. I directed the Writing Across the Curriculum program at Salisbury, helped design the undergraduate major in Writing and Rhetoric, and even served as department chair for a year.

***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

I enjoy hiking, traveling, and exploring new places with my wife, Loren, as well as drinking good wine and eating new and interesting food. I also like to play golf (though not very well) and play the drums.

***Why are you excited to be here?***

I'm excited about being part of a group of people who are building innovative programs. There seems to be a lot of positive energy around the writing program in particular, and I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to make a small contribution to it.

***What do you enjoy about teaching?***

I like interacting with students—hearing their stories, working with them on their projects, talking to them about their writing, and seeing them grow as writers. Learning how to write well empowers a person, in both their professional and civic lives, and it's wonderful to be a part of that process.

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

The glamour and social prestige, of course. Whenever folks find out I'm an English professor, they always treat me special. Folks sitting next to me on airplanes always promise to watch their grammar, for example. They don't do that for just anyone.

Actually, I like how the field of writing and rhetoric looks at the production, interpretation, and circulation of texts—how people create texts and what those texts "do" in the world.

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

Have passion for what you're doing and love the people you know.

## Profile: Lordy Rodriguez



**Lordy Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Art**

### ***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

In terms of teaching, I was an adjunct instructor at Stanford University and UC Berkeley teaching painting and drawing. In my professional life, I've been able to produce solo shows at museums such as the Austin Museum of Art and the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, participate in biennials like the California Biennial in 2006 and the Istanbul Biennial in 2007, and I've been represented by Hosfelt Gallery in SF, Finesilver Gallery in Texas, and Clementine Gallery in New York.

### ***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

I am happily married to a wonderful nurse for ten years and I have two great kids. My eldest is named Ender, after one of my favorite sci-fi books as a teen, Ender's Game, and the younger is named Petra, after the stone city in Jordan.

Like most artists, I have a penchant for collecting things. Currently I'm collecting wind-up toys, and I have a respectable comic book collection. I love to garden and collect seeds that I find on walks that I eventually germinate. I'm extremely fastidious. I almost exclusively take in literature through audiobooks while drawing, and have an eclectic work history, which I would love to tell you more about someday.

### ***Why are you excited to be here?***

Being here at SJSU is a huge opportunity for me. Finally I get to center a class around ideas that artists are always thinking about. I do love drawing and painting classes, which I have exclusively done in the past, but it's like learning the vocabulary and grammar of a foreign language without ever having to actually use it in real time. To test it. To see if I "got it." The jury is still out and that's more than exciting—it's exhilarating.

### ***What is your educational background?***

I attended an arts magnet school in Houston, Texas called the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. I received my BFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York in 1999, and received my MFA from Stanford University in 2008. I would also say that I've been a student of YouTube and Wikipedia, but they lack the credentials needed to make it onto my CV.

***What do you enjoy about teaching?***

I think that all professionals in any field need to revisit some of the fundamental lessons that made them professionals. Teaching does that for me in two ways. The first way is through instruction. Figuring out how to explain something that I already know to someone new to it gives me a new way to understand it. I suppose truly understanding something is the first step in the ability to make others understand it, too. The second way is through the students' fresh take on the assignments. It's too easy to be insular in a studio practice, and student interaction excites the mind and challenges expectations despite the educational level of the student.

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

There are perks to being an artist. For one, there is not a standard model in which one can conform to as a practicing artist. Artists can play multiple roles in society: teacher, mentor, industrialist, non-profit, entrepreneur, shut-in, activist, average Joe, hobbyist, scientist, etc. Many others in other fields strive to be artists even if the profession isn't artistic. "My orthodontist is so good, he's really an artist." I can be anything I want to be, play any societal role, and still call myself an artist? What a weird idea.

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

Art is the one human activity that lacks any utility, but it does have infinite uses. The moment art conforms to a utility it becomes craft or advertisement. The act of making art unfettered by conformity is the most human act any person, animal, or robot can do.

## Profile: Cheyla Samuelson



**Cheyla Samuelson, Assistant Professor of Spanish World Languages and Literatures**

***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

Before coming to SJSU, I taught Spanish language classes at Merritt Community College in Oakland, CA. I'll miss my students there, but I hope to see some of them as transfer students at SJSU.

***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

I live with my family in Berkeley, and I love the diversity and physical beauty of the Bay Area. I enjoy hiking and mountain biking in California's many environments.

***Why are you excited to be here?***

I am excited to be part of SJSU's mission to provide education and training for a diverse student body. I also look forward to sharing my experience of the rich cultural and intellectual history of Mexico with my new community.

***What is your educational background?***

As an undergraduate, I studied philosophy and literature at Hampshire College, Spanish at the University of Northern Colorado, and Hispanic Languages and Literatures at UC Santa Barbara. My thesis project was on the contemporary writer Cristina Rivera Garza. Some of the best parts of my undergraduate and graduate studies involved living and studying at the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico City.

***What do you enjoy about teaching?***

I enjoy helping students to master new skills and to broaden their vision of the world. The feeling that we are working together to create something new is inspiring to me, and the success of my students gives me a sense of having helped them gain one step in their own individual journeys. As a teacher, I strive to respect each student, and to meet them where they are in their experiences and abilities.

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

My research focus is on contemporary Mexican literature. I especially enjoy traveling to Mexico, where I have been able to meet and interview some of the writers I admire.

Working on living authors is both challenging and inspiring, and gives me the sense of literature as a living process. I love finding new books!

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

"Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel." – Socrates.

## Profile: Andrew Blanton



**Andrew Blanton, Assistant Professor of Art  
Department of Art and Art History**

***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

I was in Dallas, teaching at the Art and Technology department at the University of Texas at Dallas.

***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

My wife and I are both active artists looking forward to participating in the Bay Area art scene. We frequently travel and show art internationally. For me, traveling—engaging in all forms of dialogue, whether it's artistic collaboration or otherwise—is something that I really enjoy.

***Why are you excited to be here?***

There are so many reasons I'm excited to be at San José State. I think there are some really great opportunities in the south bay with the rapidly developing technology scene and the strength of the student body. I am delighted to be joining an institution with a great track record of trailblazing in the arts and visualization. And I look forward to partnering with others working in the institution as well as the industry outside.

***What is your educational background?***

My educational path was somewhat unique. I studied classical percussion for my undergraduate degree. As a percussionist, I was looking for ways to expand my musical voice and started building software to act as a musical accompaniment. Through this process I found that I was dealing with vast amounts of streaming data, and this posed the question of representation of this data. At that point I started building systems that would not only manipulate live audio feeds, but also represent data feeds visually. I then was recruited to the University of North Texas to work in a transdisciplinary cluster (iARTA) of New Media Art, Music, and Computer Science where I earned my MFA.

***What do you enjoy about teaching?***

This is quite a large topic. Teaching offers so many potentials. Being able to inspire new ideas and creation from students is, for me, one of the greatest components of teaching. Being able to open new worlds to students and then being pleasantly surprised by their discoveries is a process that I never tire of.

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

Art is constantly blossoming. With the integration of technology, endless new potential is emerging every day. At times, it can feel so vast that I have megalophobic reactions to it. But at the same time, this is exactly what draws me to the challenge of dealing with the blending of classical arts (with its unique and rich history) with computation.

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

Well this is a really hard question, and I'm not sure I can think of one quote that I have always thought sums up any component of my life. However, "I have nothing to say, and I am saying it" (Jon Cage) feels appropriate.

# Profile: Nelson Wei Tan



**Nelson Wei Tan, M.F.A., Assistant Professor**

**Department of Design - Graphic Design**

***Where were you before coming to SJSU?***

Before this, I was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Indianapolis. Prior to teaching, I worked with various media production agencies producing television commercials and broadcast design projects.

***Tell us something about your personal life, such as your family or your interests outside of work.***

My wife and I tied the knot a year ago. We live with our two dogs and enjoy cooking and dining.

***Why are you excited to be here?***

Being here in Silicon Valley is exceptionally exciting. In the months being here, I have had the opportunity to meet quite a few innovative individuals. The vibe and synergy in the Bay Area is consistent to my own work.

It is also an honor to be able to work with world-class designers in the Department of Design at SJSU. The quality of work from the students speaks for itself. I look forward to working with the students to produce meaningful design projects that enrich their personal and professional endeavors.

***What is your educational background?***

I graduated from the State University of New York at Buffalo with a BA in Media studies, and an MFA in Communication Design. Additionally, I graduated from the Interactive Media Design program at Temasek Polytechnic, School of Design, Singapore.

***What do you enjoy about teaching?***

I enjoy working with students to develop interesting projects. I also take pleasure in working closely with my colleagues to develop and refine the curriculum. I actively participate in conversations with my peers from other institutions to keep up with the ever-changing design curriculum and pedagogy.

***What do you enjoy about being a specialist in your field?***

When I first graduated from college, there were no smart phones and tablets. Now, almost all designers are expected to be able to design content for these devices. To me, the most enjoyable part of being in my field is that I never stop learning. When I engage a design project, I am not just a designer in my own little space. I need to understand and work with a multitude of specialists. From PR to engineering, I never stop learning.

***Please give us a quote that sums up your personal, educational, creative, or scholarly philosophy.***

"If you think good design is expensive, you should look at the cost of bad design." – Dr. Ralph Speth, CEO Jaguar

## It's a Dean's Life Vol. 3



This month marks my second year at San José State. This summer, once I got over the usual end of year collective feeling of exhilaration and exhaustion, I took time to reflect on what I have learned and what we have accomplished together.

Much has happened at the university in the past two years. In our college, we have made great strides to come together to serve our students well, to improve our programs, and to devise new and creative ways to continue to adapt our programs and our teaching to a changing world.

As we are wont to do on anniversaries, I also have reflected on what I love about our college and about my job. It is true that a lot of the things that land on my desk don't have easy solutions. But I can say without cynicism or even a hint of irony that it is truly a joy to represent the college on campus and in the community and to frequently have the opportunity to talk about the accomplishments of our faculty, students, staff, and alumni.

I am thrilled that we have been able to foster more collaboration among our programs in the past two years. **The H&A Annual Student Showcase** is an important occasion for our students to put their skills and talents on display. Concrete benefits for us have included students, faculty, and staff from across the university learning about our creativity and success. Since launching the event, we have seen a real commitment to showcasing student and faculty work in all forms on the campus. One example that impacts all of us is the new Spartan Branding initiative spearheaded by Professor Chang Kim and his graphic design students. This year's **Student Showcase** will be held from 1-4pm in the New Student Union Ballroom. The event is free and open to the public.

Our commitment to collaboration in Humanities and the Arts also has helped us up our creative game and offer new and meaningful opportunities to students. The Steinbeck semester last spring was a moving testament to what we can do when we work together across our disciplines: an opera, a play, a read-a-thon, a book signing, and a canned food drive were all the result of our desire to find more ways to showcase the energy and creativity of our students.

In terms of the nuts and bolts of the work accomplished in the College, our strategic planning goals developed in 2012-13 continue to guide our work. Specifically, as an educational community, we are committed to:

1. Enhancing support for faculty, staff, and students
2. Improving visibility of the College
3. Strengthening global engagement opportunities

We have made great strides toward implementation of those goals by:

1. Increasing our hiring of tenure-track faculty

2. Securing generous donor support for a Global H&A Initiative to support high impact teaching and learning focused on global engagement and global citizenship
3. Sponsoring College Signature Events that foster collaboration among our various disciplines
4. Implementing a student internship-based Communications and Marketing Team that provides pre-professional opportunities for our students. The team designs our posters and our communications, including our newsletter. The team has allowed us to create robust student internship opportunities for writing, design, and programming to serve College-wide communications, social media, and web design.

This year we have three additional pieces to add to our implementation of our strategic plan:

1. Stretch English starts this year as the first year of a two-year transition away from strictly remedial or academic English toward a program that allows students to choose to take English 1A over two semesters. This is a powerful cohort model that has been proven effective across the country, and I am excited to be launching it here for our students.
2. We expect that our **Student Success Center and Internship Lab** will be up and running by Thanksgiving. This advising, career services, and internship lab will create a one-stop shop for all H&A advising support so faculty and staff have advisors who can support them with answers about how to navigate our complex system. We hope to have career services, internship coordination, internship opportunities, and advising all in the same space.
3. In collaboration with other deans, I also am rolling out a **Leadership Academy** this year. The purpose is to provide a professional development opportunity to full-time faculty who are interested in exploring leadership opportunities and learning more about the challenges facing higher education so they can be part of tomorrow's leadership solutions.

As we move into a new academic year, I take this opportunity to thank every single person who supports our programs and makes our work possible. From the staff who work long hours to prepare the campus for this year's 32,000 students to the faculty who have returned invigorated for another year of teaching to the alumni and supporters who believe in the College of Humanities and the Arts and in San José State University.

Sincerely yours,



Lisa Vollendorf, Dean