

Expressions

Volume 6

SJSU COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND THE ARTS

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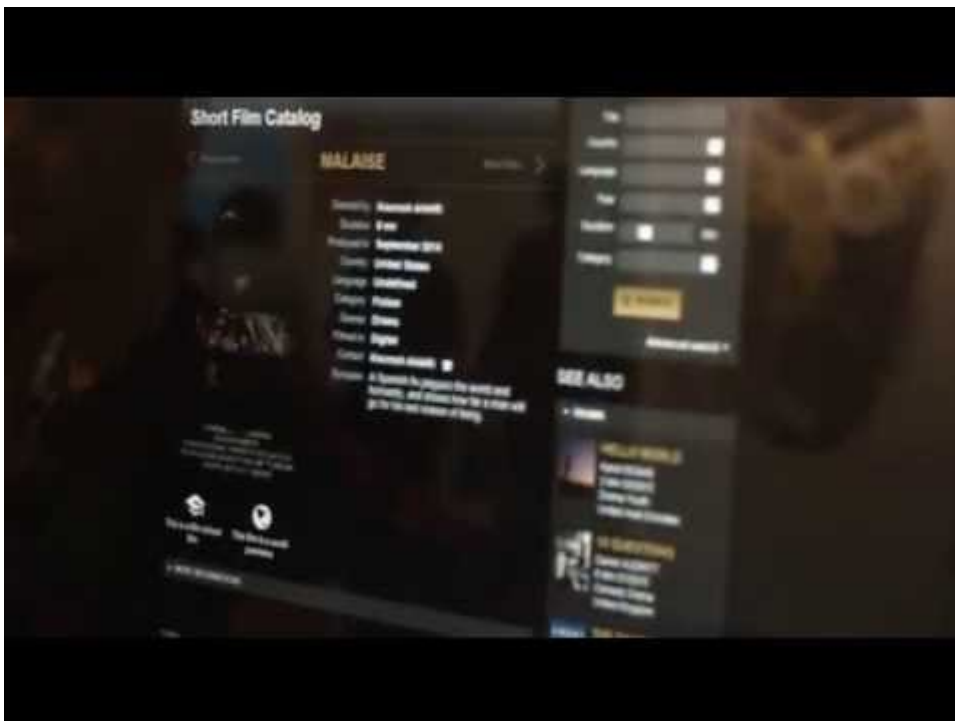
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Kourosh Ahari Video

Kourosh Ahari's short film, *Malaise*, won Best Picture at Campus MovieFest 2015. It will be presented at the Cannes Film Festival's Short Film Corner. You can view the movie below:



He chronicled his experience at the Cannes Film Festival, which can be seen below:



CSU Summer Arts Video

Chronicling the production, construction, and final showcasing of the hard work done by the students of the CSU Summer Arts Program 2015.



Luiz Valdez Video

Alumnus Luis Valdez returns to SJSU for a revival of his play *Zoot Suit*.



The Beethoven Center Turns Thirty

By Cathleen Miller

Imagine a lock of your hair having a life of its own—traveling from your head on your deathbed in Vienna to being clipped by a mourner as a remembrance...then, over a century later, carried as a treasured heirloom to an attic hideaway as the mourner's relatives tried to avoid the Nazi death camps...given to a kind visiting doctor to smuggle out and hide for safety...only to be discovered later by that doctor's confused wife after his death...eventually sold by the wife to Sotheby's...and finally winding up at San José State in King Library to reside coiled in a glass case as the most precious artifact in the campus's world-renowned [Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies](#).



The Beethoven Center, as it is commonly known, will be celebrating its thirtieth year on July 24, 2015 at a gala honoring [Dr. William Meredith](#), its founding director. Meredith was a young graduate student finishing his dissertation on Beethoven's sonatas at the University of North Carolina when he was invited to join SJSU. The impetus was a

donation by Ira Brilliant, a life-long music enthusiast who had amassed a collection of first-edition music scores of Beethoven's work.

When Meredith made his way to San José in 1985, he found an empty room and boxes of books and artifacts waiting to be catalogued. Luckily, the next year he was joined by the Center's curator, [Patricia Stroh](#). During the decades that followed they have overseen the growth of the Center's collection to 30,000 items, making it the largest repository of Beethoven materials outside of Europe.

When visitors walk into the space they are greeted by the beauty of handcrafted historical keyboards, the type used in Beethoven's time. Three fortepianos, a harpsichord, and a clavichord are on display.

Other noteworthy treasures on display include original letters in Beethoven's handwriting that would fetch between \$50,000 and \$300,000 in today's marketplace; most were a gift from Ira Brilliant. All other additions to the Center's collection have been funded through grants, donations, or support from the American Beethoven Society.



Dr. Meredith, as a leading scholar on the composer, edits the *Beethoven Journal*. One issue explored the mystery of a 13-page love letter penned by Ludwig to a woman known only as "Immortal Beloved." Much contention has existed amongst scholars as to the

identity of the letter's recipient, hovering around a list of likely candidates. (Meredith's favored suspect for "Immortal Beloved" is Bettina Brentano, a writer and social activist.)

Besides the Center's museum and journal, it offers numerous other gifts to lovers of classical music, helping to support the research of individuals ranging from Beethoven scholars around the globe to SJSU music history classes to elementary school students writing their first essay on the composer. A primary tool to aid all these groups has been the creation of the [Beethoven Gateway](#), a free digital database of information. The Center's staff also hosts a continuous stream of [events](#) and [exhibitions](#) on the fifth floor of King Library. Each spring they conduct the [Annual Celia Mendez Young Pianist's Beethoven Competition](#) for California high school students.



Meredith also plays the role of the sleuth, as do many serious scholars. Some of the strands of Ludwig van Beethoven's hair were analyzed to learn about his medical history. One theory that doctors proposed was that even on his deathbed the musical genius refused to take any opiates for pain, hoping to keep composing until he drew his last breath.

After thirty years directing the Center Dr. Meredith says, "The thing I continue to love about my job is when people walk through the door and get really excited. That's what makes it all worthwhile."

Donations from around the world support the Center and have helped make it one of the many centers of excellence at SJSU!

Screenwriting Success

by Cathleen Miller

While hundreds of people in the audience bit their nails in Los Angeles last fall—waiting to learn the result of the judging by Hollywood industry professionals—everyone knew that a San José State student would win the CSU Media Arts Festival Award for best feature-length screenplay. How did they know? Was the fix in?

San José State's RTVF faculty didn't need to fly to LA for the ceremony to know we would win the honors again, because the top three finalists were all our students. "And the winner is...first place White Rabbit, Michael Quintana, San José State University...second place, Porcelain, Chau Nguyen, San José State University... third place, EM, Cassia Homann, San José State University."

In February of this year, more good news for our screenwriting students followed: Lauren Serpa, who received her BA in RTVF from San José State and is currently an SJSU MFA creative writing student, won second place at the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts in the Feature-Length Screenplay Category for *Where We Start*. In the same category, recent RTVF grad Risha Rose received an Honorable Mention for her screenplay *Dance With Me*. In the Short Screenplay Category, two SJSU students received Honorable Mentions: Rachel Compton for *Prosopagnosia*, and Kevin Briot for *When a Giant Falls*.

Department of Television, Radio, Film and Theatre chair Dr. David Kahn notes: "Every year SJSU students win state and national-level screenwriting awards, competing against the top film schools in the country. Our students' success is a terrific acknowledgment of our departmental emphasis on tangible production and creative leadership."



According to screenwriting professor [Scott Sublett](#), this spate of success is not a random accident. Our sometimes budget-strapped state university has the best screenwriting program in the U.S., judging by our record of wins in major student competitions.

"Proof?" asks Sublett. For seven years running we've won first place in feature screenwriting at the CSU Festival Of Media Arts, which is open to all CSU campuses. For the last two years, we have taken first, second and third! More? In the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts, the biggest nationwide student screenwriting

competition held by the largest professional organization of RTVF programs, we've won first in Feature Screenwriting in three of the last seven years, and Best in Show in a fourth year."

BEA winner Lauren Serpa feels the root of her success can definitely be traced back to the classroom. "Professor Sublett can pinpoint areas of my scripts that need lots of work and convey those issues to me honestly and clearly. I've found that he's always right and that my scripts improve when I listen to his critiques. If you want to learn more about screenwriting and become a better writer, please buy his excellent book, *Screenwriting for Neurotics*."

Serpa is referencing her professor's course reader, which he refined during his two decades of teaching. The University of Iowa Press published Sublett's text last fall, keeping his tongue-in-cheek title.

Influential filmmaker Federico Fellini said the movie begins with the story, which places great emphasis on the quality of screenplays. In that case, some important films should be coming out of the scripts of our talented screenwriters, who will continue to bring glory to the university.

Stay tuned, because joining the screenwriting side of the credits is the program's hot production talent. The next issue of *Expressions* will feature a video from Kourosh Ahari, an RTVF student whose short film *Malaise* was just accepted to the Cannes Film Festival!

Stories in English

by Cathleen Miller

Summer is on the horizon, and if you are putting together a reading list with an SJSU flair, you can spend the entire season reading books penned by the alumni of our own creative writing program. Some of these authors studied in the Department of English and Comparative Literature as undergraduates; a handful dropped out because their literary careers took off and capsized their studies. And others were early pioneers in our MFA in creative writing. But considering the latter is barely a teenager at thirteen years on our campus, our student writers have published an extraordinary number of titles.



One of these authors, Daniel Arnold, will be returning to campus on May 4 to read from his new book of short stories, *Snowblind: Stories of Alpine Obsession*. *Snowblind* marks Arnold's third publication from Counterpoint Press and his first foray into fiction after two successful collections of adventure essays themed around mountaineering in California. In fact, the dual genre nature of San José State's MFA has produced writers with such fluidity in their career paths, as Dan attests: "The SJSU MFA program launched my writing career."

Lusting for a sizzling summer read? Bestselling author and MFA alumna Marina Chappie, writing under her nom de plume Marina Adair, has published ten romance novels in the last three years. Several specialize in love amongst the Napa Valley vineyards.

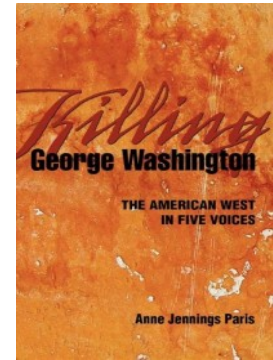
Also in popular fiction, alumna Kate Evans explores sex—lots of it—and the blurred worlds of gender and identity in two novels: *For the May Queen* and *Complimentary Colors*.



There is not one style that brands these emerging writers with an SJSU imprimatur, although Peter Malae did use San José as the setting for his first novel, *What We Are*. Publisher Grove/Atlantic also produced Peter's next work of literary fiction, titled *Our Frail Blood*. His short story collection, *Teach the Free Man*, prompted Russell Banks to note: "Malae is like a young Nelson Algren or Richard Wright, one of those writers who can hit with both hands."

Besides hitting your literary gut with both hands, our SJSU authors can help you with other matters in your life—from guns to roses. They've put their research and editorial skills to the test with such how-to titles as Lisa Francesca's *The Wedding Officiant's Guide*, an informative manual on conducting wedding ceremonies, and Erica Goss's *Vibrant Words: Ideas and Inspirations for Poets*, exercises to blast writer's block. Rob James has edited a series of five titles for Field & Stream and Outdoor Life, such as *The Total Gun Manual* and *The Total Fishing Manual*. He's currently pitching a homesteading manual based on his own adventures with farming in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

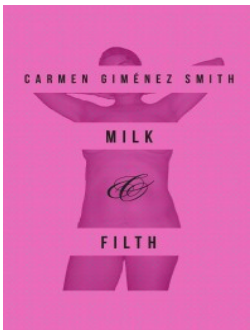
The plethora of poets coming out of our creative writing program covers the range of human experience...and sometimes non-human experience. [Neli Moody](#) sketches the cave paintings of Altamira in words (*After Altamira*). [Anne Jennings Paris](#) chronicles five characters on America's western frontier (*Killing George Washington*). [Mark Heinlein](#) delves into the chaos of living in this complicated world, yet reveals the luminous acts of intimacy squeezed between the drudgery and intensity of our daily lives. "Without the MFA program at San José State University," he admits, "*Everything We Call Ordinary* would never have been published."



Launching soon is *Imaginary Animal*, Rachele Escamilla's meditation on race, labor, sexuality, and memory centered on San Benito County, CA. She received her bachelor's degree at SJSU before she went on to graduate school and teaching gigs both in the U.S and China. But she notes that although early in her career, "My connections at San José State have outlasted my connections at any other institution thus far."

Another alumna of our undergraduate program, former poet laureate of Santa Clara County and current SJSU lecturer [Sally Ashton](#) works in a hybrid form that combines poetry and prose. She's published three collections: *These Metallic Days*, *Her Name Is Juanita*, and *Some Odd Afternoon*.

[Carmen Giménez Smith](#) writes lyric essays as well as verse, and is the author of two poetry collections and a memoir. Her most recent publication, *Milk and Filth*, was a finalist for the 2014 National Book Critics Circle Award.



Some of our creative writing pupils aren't satisfied to merely submit their work to others. Two members of my nonfiction workshop were so enamored with the weekly two-page assignments I gave that they started PushPen Press, a publishing company designed to share flash nonfiction with the world. Their first offering was *Two@SJSU*, but since then they've added several new titles. Not only have founders Jan McCutcheon and Spike Wong published pieces by several of our students—both past and present—the duo also put them to work.

Another alum who had previously edited the 100th anniversary anthology of the *California Writer's Club*, *West Winds Centennial*, is listed on PushPen's masthead as "Senior Editor Kelly 'Eagle Eye' Harrison."

When considered as a whole, one of the unifying themes of this group of SJSU authors is the voice of California, of the West. Their stories represent the cornucopia of cultures that makes up San José State—indicative of a place where 103 tongues may be heard on a walk across campus—but our students share all those stories in English.

Profile: Patricia Stroh

by Alia Mohammed



This year marks the Beethoven Center's thirtieth anniversary. For curator Patricia Stroh, the anniversary also marks nearly three decades of dedication, loyalty, and love for music. "It's amazing to me that we've reached thirty years," laughs Stroh. "It was a unique situation in that the Beethoven Center and I grew up together."

The Beethoven Center's exhibit space is full of finely polished vintage keyboard instruments. Stroh does not have much time to play these days because of a full schedule of events, exhibits, and tours, but when she does, her favorite pianos are the Dulcken fortepiano and the original English Broadwood piano. Lately she plays with a cellist, enjoying the difficulty of Beethoven's earlier sonatas for cello and piano. "It's a lot of fun," she says. "As a pianist I enjoy Beethoven's earlier works."

Stroh's love of Beethoven started early in her youth, around age twelve. "I fell in love with his music thanks to my mother, who belonged to a classical music record club." Her most memorable moments of playing the piano were those playing Beethoven's compositions.

Beethoven soon became her favorite subject, and with her master's degree in musicology and a library degree, her job as curator for the Beethoven Center could not have been a better match. As with many others, her love of Beethoven transfers over into present day collections, especially the special collections. San José State's Beethoven Center holds the most extensive special collection of Beethoven materials outside of Europe, including first editions, art works, manuscripts, and many other formats.

Stroh works with the collection, making it widely available to students and faculty by creating the Beethoven Gateway, an online database that holds scans of many of the Center's first editions and manuscripts. As curator for the Beethoven Center, she oversees the collection's protection and storage, as well as the quality of the information she provides on the database. But that's not all she does. This Beethoven lover not only provides resources for other music lovers, she also produces a column in the *Beethoven Journal*, where she shares the most recent books relating to Beethoven as well an auction report of items sold and for sale.

Despite the many years of challenging work, Stroh has never faltered in her love for Ludwig van Beethoven and the Center. "It has never become mundane, and I still wonder at my good fortune to have been able to work in an environment I love so much."

Well into her twenty-ninth year at San José State, she couldn't be more excited at how far the Beethoven Center has come. The thirtieth anniversary is a big one, and Stroh is thrilled to be here for this landmark on July 24, 2015.

“It’s special to see the Center grow and develop in this building [MLK Library].” Even as she faces this historic occasion she looks to the future, for there is a bigger, more exciting anniversary coming up in five years: the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth. “It’s exciting to think about how we will be involved in that.”

Profile: Scott Sublett

by Joshua Darrah



“You know, someday you could make a living at this.” Northwestern University student Scott Sublett found himself staring at this comment in Joseph Epstein’s undergraduate writing course. The theatre fanatic and future San José State screenwriting professor thought to himself: “Well, I don’t know how else to make a living, I guess I’ll be a writer.” Eventually, just as his renowned instructor predicted, Sublett would make a career out of writing. But, unbeknownst even to Scott Sublett himself, he’d also one day make a living out of teaching it.

When Sublett started school at Northwestern, he was a theatre major intent on becoming an actor. Feelings of inadequacy started when the Indiana native realized that his musical comedy approach to acting clashed with the method styles used by upperclassmen. Seeking a new, more practical direction, he ultimately (and admittedly ironically) joined the university’s Radio/Television/Film department. There he first discovered his passion for film and, specifically, for film history and criticism.

But it was not until years later when Sublett was working as a film critic for *The Washington Times* that his interest in screenwriting was sparked. The exuberant entertainment writer had grown tired of constantly criticizing work that he himself didn’t know how to do. Realizing that it was time for a change, Sublett enrolled in a screenwriting course to learn the craft that he so frequently critiqued. The impact of this course was life changing and provided him with a new mission: to become a screenwriter.

Soon after completing the class, Sublett quit his job at The Times and relocated to Los Angeles, where he was accepted into the prestigious UCLA graduate screenwriting program. After graduate school, the aspiring filmmaker worked as a script consultant in Los Angeles while attempting to sell his own spec scripts. After seven years laboring away in southern California, Sublett once again was prepared to do something new. He heard about a teaching position at San José State University, successfully interviewed for it, and thus began the current chapter in his varied career.

Much has changed in the eighteen years since Sublett started working in the Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre department. Regarding the screenwriting element of the department, Sublett says: “What was a quite undistinguished screenwriting program has evolved into, in many ways, a great one.” Perhaps nowhere else is the success of the program more evident than in the numerous awards that SJSU students have amassed over the years from various screenwriting competitions. Sublett attributes the ongoing success of San José State students to the teaching methods he and fellow screenwriting professors Barnaby Dallas and David Kahn utilize in the classroom, methods whose effectiveness have rendered the program one of the best in the country.

Sublett's passion for teaching screenwriting goes beyond the classroom, and recently manifested itself in the form of a how-to manual fittingly titled *Screenwriting for Neurotics*. Published in 2014 by the University of Iowa Press, the book is a product of the author's own discontent with the lack of decent screenwriting manuals available to students, some of which he labels as "downright dangerous."

The success of the book has prompted talks with his publisher about writing another about comedy. But for now, Sublett is focusing on his own dramatic writing. And yet, regardless of what literary path he takes, teaching comes first to the committed professor. Surely Scott Sublett's continuing devotion to the success of students will only further increase the visibility and respectability of San José State's highly esteemed screenwriting program.

Profile: William Meredith

by Chris Parker

Dr. William Meredith was born in New Jersey and grew up immersed in music from a young age—and has continued to immerse himself throughout his adult life as a mentor and educator.

As a child, he participated in the children’s choir in church and played in the school band. He began playing trumpet, then gradually made his way through the brass section down to tuba.



Learning piano as a teen, he was introduced to Beethoven’s work with the first movement of Moonlight Sonata. As he put it, “Beautiful, but nothing too difficult.” Even so, Beethoven’s works left a lasting impression on him and later became one of his primary areas of expertise.

Meredith continued to pursue his passion after high school, studying music education in Alabama and completing his graduate studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He supplemented this education by serving as choral conductor and soloist at nearby churches.

While studying in North Carolina, Meredith was awarded the German Academic Exchange Service Grant to gain firsthand experience with Beethoven’s handwritten works and archives in West Berlin and Bonn, Germany. This unique opportunity left Meredith with a deep appreciation for giving students the chance to study original sources in person, an idea that he would carry into his future roles in music education.

In 1985, he secured a faculty position and the directorship of the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies at San José State University. He moved to San José the day after turning in his dissertation on Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major (op. 109).

In 2015, Dr. Meredith marked his thirtieth year with the university, and he continues to have a profound impact on students and non-students alike. Since his arrival, he has helped shape the music education of San José State’s students, crafting the music history curriculum to best serve both the students and the material taught.

As director of the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies, Dr. Meredith oversees a collection of over 30,000 items, including scholarly works, first edition manuscripts, and five period instruments: one harpsichord, one clavichord, and three fortepianos.

Musicians are allowed to play on the instruments to further their understanding of the subjects and give new context to classical works. Meredith refers to these instruments as “little time machines” and cannot stress enough their importance to the Center. “You can hear them and see them,” he says.

Meredith currently organizes concerts and events for the Beethoven Center, including lectures and tours that are open to the public, in order to spread the richness of Beethoven's work and legacy with as many people as possible. He also edits the Beethoven Journal, a twice-yearly academic periodical featuring essays, reviews, auction reports, and current events for Beethoven lovers and scholars.

Meredith's warm, inviting personality lends a familiar and friendly air to his teaching, making the material seem much less intimidating to a casual audience.

When asked about stand-out moments in his thirty-year run with the Center and the university, Meredith responded, "Watching it all grow!"

For Dr. Meredith, "Inspiration happens every week." For San José State's students and faculty, and for visitors of the Beethoven Center, that inspiration has happened for three decades. This summer the Beethoven Center will celebrate thirty years of vibrant programming, and we ask you to support the Center and the gala event. Please [contact Dr. Meredith](#) or staff at the Center to learn more.

Profile: Scot Guenter

by David Gallo

After twenty-five years of tireless service to San José State University, Dr. Scot M. Guenter has been honored with the 2015 Distinguished Service Award. This prize signifies those who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to help the university grow and succeed.



Dr. Guenter has worked diligently to make the community at SJSU stronger because he believes a strong community will help create stronger students. In fact, Dr. Guenter is a renowned expert of sorts on community. He is a vexillologist, skilled and knowledgeable on the study of flags. Flags are a strong symbol of community and Dr. Guenter has spent years deciphering how they come to be and how they are used to motivate groups of people.

Guenter's unique knowledge has left him with a plethora of accomplishments and awards. He authored *The American Flag, 1777-1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification*; worked as a consultant for the Smithsonian; was employed by the U.S. government investigating the misuse of the Teamsters pension fund by the Mafia; started the *Raven*, a journal of vexillology that is still ongoing; was a Senior Fulbright Fellow at the National University of Singapore; and was presented the William Driver Award by the North American Vexillological Association an unprecedented three times.

Guenter's enthusiasm for flags is contagious; he is intrigued by the fact that flags are such a universal, common symbol that at times we may forget they are all around us and influencing us in different ways. Guenter knows that flags connect people in many different ways, and it is perhaps this knowledge that has helped him learn how to connect with others.

The scholar uses his gifts of humor and kindness as tools to find common ground with people. This has been particularly useful for him on his various travels around the world. Since the age of fourteen, Dr. Guenter has eagerly pursued any opportunity to travel abroad. He believes that everywhere he goes he has been able to meet new people mainly because he puts out nothing but positive energy. Once, he even was able to find common ground with a mugger who agreed to keep his eleven dollars in cash but return his wallet, I.D., and credit cards because Guenter explained to him what a hassle it would be to replace them.

Guenter encourages his students to become lifelong learners and positive members of their community. He believes that this is the key to creating a better world for all of us. Dr. Guenter says that although this work is hard—and even frustrating at times due to

the struggle of wrestling with the state budget—he believes in what SJSU is doing and what it can become. His dedication to students and institution alike has made him highly deserving of the 2015 Distinguished Service Award.

Profile: Charlene Archibeque

Last month we celebrated the cycle of giving and receiving at the College's [Annual Donor Recognition Reception](#). Dr. Charlene Archibeque remains one individual who has been on the giving end of this cycle for decades—as a professor, choir conductor, and now the donor of a scholarship in her name. Fellow professor emeritus Nils Peterson has penned a work discussing her other gifts in his ode to Charlene.

Owed to Charlene

by Nils Peterson

A small group I put together was asked to sing at a wedding at the Santa Clara Mission a few weeks ago. The bride and groom wanted us to perform a sacred piece in addition to our more secular music. I suggested *Sicut Cervus* by Palestrina. So, we learned it and sang it, and as I sang I was remembering performing it another time.



I sang for about ten years with the San José State Concert Choir. It rehearsed four days a week at 11:00 a.m., and my schedule was such that I could make three rehearsals regularly. Occasionally I would come in for the fourth. When it was possible, I even went on small tours around the state and I sang in all of the concerts near home. For some years, I knew more music majors than English majors.

Charlene Archibeque was the conductor and she was wonderful to sing for-- demanding, but she offered to us the reason for the demands, the consolations and rewards of great art. There is no place where a person of ordinary talent can go deeper into the greatneses of human creation than by singing in a good chorus with a good conductor. I would tell my English classes, "If I could get you to work as hard for me as the Concert Choir works for Charlene, you'd all get A's in my class and scholarships to Harvard."

Each year, when doing my Valentine's Day reading for the Poetry Center, I would ask Charlene's special group, The Choraliers, to accompany me. They were marvelous. One year they were going off to an international choral competition in The Netherlands and asked me to come along on the tour Charlene had put together to sharpen their skills before the competition and to bind the group even closer together. Not to sing, mind, but to fill out the tour bus. And so I went. I describe something of my feeling in a poem of mine called "In Verona." Here's part:

I careen about Europe from monument
to monument in a bus filled with young people.
Though we stop regularly for diesel oil,
it is clear that Eros drives us all. The bodies
of the young quiver with it. I've watched
their eyes caught up in lust glaze over

and become as blank as the passionate marble
we so dutifully seek out each day.

We went that year to Venice and somehow Charlene arranged for the group to give an impromptu, informal concert at St. Marks, the great cathedral where Palestrina worked and wrote music specifically designed for that space. We did not stand before an audience, but, rather, went up to the balcony, which was fitted under the dome above the square of the sanctuary. The inside of the cathedral looks as if it had been carved out of a great block of gold. It is one of those sacred spaces where sound is magnified and beautified.

That year in Concert Choir we had sung *Sicut Cervus* and so I knew it by heart; Charlene asked me if I'd like to join the Choraliers, and so I did with much gratitude. It was one of the great moments of my more than sixty years of singing. Our voices drifted down like a shimmering shower of gold notes upon the milling tourists below. The silence afterwards was golden too, as if the echoes of the notes were still resonating in the stones.

Two P.S.'s. At the end of my Valentine's Day readings, Charlene and I would sing that great duet "Wunderbar" from *Kiss Me Kate*. The audience loved it and I loved it too. I would tell my non-San José friends that I end my reading by singing a duet with a gorgeous six-foot blond. My friends were either envious or unbelieving. At Charlene's retirement dinner, her students asked us to sing it again, and so we did for the last time.

The second P.S. is that I'm now singing with the Symphony Silicon Valley Chorale, which began as an alumni choir started by Charlene. And so my gratitude goes on.

Oh well, a third P.S. Charlene's students asked me if I could write a poem to celebrate her at her retirement. Here it is.

"For Charlene"

Those ancients who heard the sweet sounds
of the planets' swing beyond the changing moon,
and the poet who wrote,
"From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began,"
knew something of music, how it surrounds us
impels us, how out of its cadences, something new
in us is born. So, we humans come together to sing.
We would do our best, but are not wise enough
to know what best can be.

So, bring on the conductor with her magic wand.
Let her be tall and graceful, yet stern as fate.
Let her ear be tuned to the planets
and her mind to what the words are saying.
Let her make us turn aside from the seduction of the good enough.
Let her make us lose ourselves in the music.

Stand straight. Out she strides on stage.
The audience applauds. She turns to us,
smiles, raises an eyebrow, a baton. We begin.

Profile: Cindy Baer

by Mariya Miksonova

"I give my students Play-doh because I want them to return to the joys of craft, of shaping matter into form. I want them to play with words like a fistful of dough." Professor Cynthia Baer aspires to break her students out of the mold of heavily-standardized academic English by fostering their unique writing styles, and allowing them to see components of the English language "as a set of tools, not rules."

Regarding her recent Outstanding Lecturer of the Year award, Baer states that she is extremely grateful for the faith placed in her by her colleagues, and by Lisa Vollendorf in particular. In terms of work, Baer believes that out of the five-year dossier she submitted, it was her work on Stretch English that allowed her to stand out. Stretch English is a recent program that expands the semester-long freshman English course into a yearlong course, allowing for more focused teaching. Given Baer's incredible attention to detail in the English language, it comes as no surprise that she stood out in this particular area. On her nomination for the award by Vollendorf, Baer says, "It is an honor to be recognized by an educator of her caliber and commitment."



Cynthia Baer entered San José State as a freshman in 1977, eventually beginning her career here at the age of 22 as a teaching assistant in English 1A. Today, she is at the rank of Assistant Professor, and still going strong. She feels a deep connection to San José State, and its example to Baer in her student years inspires her to do nothing short of her best: "If I am outstanding, it is because SJSU has made me so...this year as I watch my Stretch students stretch their way into college writing, I am grateful to be able to foster their dreams as so many of my SJSU professors and mentors helped to foster mine." The College of Humanities and the Arts is proud to have Dr. Baer on the faculty and to welcome her into her new role as an Assistant Professor with the title of Assistant Writing Programs Administrator and Stretch English Coordinator effective fall 2015.

It's a Dean's Life Vol. 6

April 2015

Spring is always a time for renewed energy, but this spring has brought a particularly high level of excitement in the College of Humanities and the Arts.



This month I will be traveling to New York City to see [Dr. Jeffrey Benson](#) conduct the Choraliers and the Concert Choir at Carnegie Hall. Professor and mezzo extraordinaire [Layna Chianakas](#) will accompany them. You can support the students by visiting SJSU's inaugural crowdfunding site: [Help the SJSU Choirs Sing at Carnegie Hall](#). This performance is just one of the many year-end events planned in the College. From numerous BFA exhibitions and final concerts to [Zoot Suit](#) and Opera Theatre's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, we have a plethora of cultural events for everyone. You can read the full schedule [here](#).

This trip comes in the midst of a whirlwind of opportunities for the College. Recent opportunities have helped me begin positioning the College to become a catalyst for stronger humanities and arts programming in San José and beyond:

Building Public Will for the Arts: Over the past six months, I have had the privilege of serving on the city of San José's [Building Public Will for the Arts](#) committee. This nationwide effort involved surveys and focus groups to determine the values people place on arts, culture, and cultural expression. The goal is to devise effective strategies for audience building and marketing for all arts and culture activities. The project was funded by the [Doris Duke Charitable Foundation](#) and numerous local partners in San José. The work was performed with local advisory committees under the leadership of the [Metropolitan Group](#), a social change marketing and research company.

Capacity Building Grant Awarded to College of Humanities and the Arts: In December 2014, we were awarded a [DeVos Institute for Arts Management](#) grant for building capacity in the arts. We now are part of a city-wide initiative to help San José and the region build greater capacity for effective fundraising, marketing, and audience-building across all arts sectors. The vision articulated in the grant is for the College to establish a Collaborative for Arts, Innovation, and Technology (CAIT). CAIT will be a platform for networking existing arts and culture organizations. The overarching goals include the use of a collaborative university-community model that aims to (1) raise the profile of arts and culture programming and organizations; (2) build audience for multi-modal arts programming; and (3) increase the visibility of SJSU as a center and catalyst for robust humanities and arts education, programming, and regional leadership. The College is at the center of these efforts, so please stay tuned for updates and opportunities for involvement.

ArtPlace Grant Application: The College has applied for a \$3 million [ArtPlace](#) grant that aims to use art as a mechanism for social and community change. [This is a highly competitive grant](#): only six will be awarded nationwide and only one in the state of California. If we are fortunate enough to be advanced to the next round, we will send a team to present our ideas for using art to impact social and community change throughout our region. This grant has amazing potential to infuse art throughout the strong community work we already do at SJSU through such diverse programs as all our extensive K-12 outreach, the [Marion Cilker Conference for the Arts in Education](#), [CommUniverCity](#), [Center for Community Learning and Leadership](#), [Cesar Chavez Community Action Center](#), the [Young Musicians Project](#), and [Steinbeck in the Schools](#), to name a few of the many ways in which SJSU faculty, staff, and students serve the broader community. We are fortunate to have the endorsement of the above-mentioned [Metropolitan Group](#) as part of our application.

In addition to these exciting opportunities, we also are in conversation with the [Knight Foundation](#) about how SJSU might move some of our arts and culture programming into downtown as a way to extend the university's reach and help raise the profile of downtown San José as an arts and culture destination.



Exploration of the university's efforts to extend our reach into downtown includes our recent response to the city of San José's Request for Interest (RFI) in the operation or co-operation of the Susan and Phil Hammer Theatre. President Qayoumi will be updating the campus about SJSU's response to the RFI as this process unfolds. You can read more about the public process concerning the future of the Hammer Theatre [here](#).

As you can see from this list of activities, I am committed to helping the College of Humanities and the Arts become a driving force for arts, culture, and education in San José and the South Bay. I am grateful to the many faculty and staff who have participated so far in making it possible for us to respond to the Hammer Theatre RFI, participate in the DeVos capacity building exercise, and put together a strong ArtPlace application.

Please stay tuned for updates and calls for participation as these projects unfold. Overall, these initiatives remind me on a daily basis that it is a joy to be in the position of helping raise the profile of the important, impactful work we do in the College of Humanities and the Arts. To all who both do and support that work, I thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Volledoy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Dean, College of Humanities and the Arts