



Always Avant-Garde: USCD's 'new' ArtPower features sizzling October lineup

By Lonnie Burstein Hewitt 11:43 a.m. Sept. 11, 2015



Bang on a Can All-Stars will offer a performance of Brian Eno's ambient classic, 'Music for Airports,' 7:30 and 9 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 27 at San Diego International Airport's Terminal 2. — *Peter Serling*

Are you plugged into ArtPower? It's a 12-year-old program at UC San Diego that powers up the arts scene on-and off-campus by presenting innovative dance companies, musicians and movies from around the world and offering opportunities for audiences to interact with the performers.

Created by Marty Wollesen, who moved on to an East Coast position two years ago, ArtPower is now under the leadership of Jordan Peimer, former vice president of public programming at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles. Described by the LA Times as a "maitre-d' of culture," Peimer has worked with a number of arts organizations in Southern California, including the Getty Museum and the LA-based dance festival DanceWest. After taking the helm from interim director Kathryn Martin last October, Peimer spent his first few months just observing, watching performances and noting each audience's response. Though students make up about 40 percent of ArtPower audiences, the rest are from the outside community, with more than half of those coming from La Jolla and Del Mar.

"I gave myself three months to not book anything new," he said. "It was a little nervous-making!" But he learned a lot about what ignited people's interest, and in this, his first full season of programming, he's beginning to show what he learned.

So 2015-2016 includes chamber music for lovers of classical repertoire as well as those well-versed in cutting-edge sounds. And, remarking that audiences seemed more energized by dance programs that were strongly rhythmic, he's invited companies who bring Jamaican, Japanese and hip-hop moves into their mix.

The season opens Friday, Sept. 25 with UCSD's Pulitzer Prize-winning music professor Roger Reynolds and English violinist Irvine Arditti premiering their latest collaboration, *Shifting/Drifting*, a duet for solo violin and computer. Next up: the Oct. 9 screening of the season's first *Foovie* ("*Los Hamsters*," a Tijuana dark comedy that includes Mexican dinner at The Loft) and two car-based performances by Los Angeleno Greg Wohead ("*Hurling*" and "*The Backseat of My Car*"), in connection with La Jolla Playhouse's *WoW Festival* Oct. 9-11.

But October's hottest tickets are "Huang Yi & KUKA" at Mandeville Auditorium (Oct. 14, 8 p.m.), La Santa Cecilia at Price Center West Ballroom (Oct. 22, 8 p.m.), and Bang on a Can All-Stars playing Brian Eno's legendary "Music for Airports" at — where else? — San Diego International Airport (Oct. 27, 7:30 and 9 p.m.).

Huang Yi, an acclaimed Taiwanese dancer, choreographer and videographer, was included among *Dance Magazine's* "25 to Watch" in 2011. Now he has taken a robot by KUKA, manufacturers of industrial robots, and taught it to dance. After the performance, a groundbreaking partnership of humans and robot, Huang Yi will stay for an Art Talk, sharing some of his fascinating backstory with the audience.

La Santa Cecilia, an LA-based band named for the patron saint of musicians, combines Pan-American rhythms with klezmer, jazz, and rock 'n' roll. Hailed as "colorful," "passionate," and "really fun," they won a Grammy for Best Latin Rock in 2014.

And then there's "Music for Airports," created in 1978 by experimental musician/composer/record producer Brian Eno. A series of tape loops intended to be heard on a Walkman, or more recently, a smartphone, this is a mesmerizing piece of anti-Muzak, considered a classic of ambient music. "I always have it with me when I travel," Peimer said. "It just makes you feel good."

The New York-based Bang On A Can All-Stars recorded the piece in 1998, and have performed it live at airports and concert halls around the world. Peimer said he wanted to present it for years, and found the San Diego Airport Art Program coordinators willing and able. This will be its premiere at a U.S. airport.

Looking ahead, Peimer plans to expand ArtPower's global music programming to include Appalachian, gospel and soul music.

"American sounds are an important part of global culture, and often under-appreciated in this country," he said. He also hopes to bring in non-traditional theatrical experiences.

"I want to engage audiences with new work and have conversations around it," he said. "Not just by giving people what they want, but also by giving them things they don't yet know they want."

ArtPower presents its artists in various venues including (on UCSD campus) Mandeville Auditorium, Conrad Prebys Concert Hall, The Loft, and Price Center West Ballroom. Find the full schedule and tickets at artpower.ucsd.edu and (858) 534-8497.

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