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Summer 2015

## Expressions, Summer 2015 Mailer

San Jose State University, College of the Humanities and the Arts

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

# EXPRESSIONS

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AY2015-2016 Newsletter



**SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY**



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AY 2015–2016 Newsletter

**MAGAZINE DESIGN** Stephanie Dang

**EDITOR** Kaitlynn Magnuson

**COPY EDITOR** Barbara Alger

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Jésus Hernandez

Marissa McPeak

**SUPERVISOR** Lucy Yamakawa Cox

[sjsu.edu/humanitiesandarts](http://sjsu.edu/humanitiesandarts)

One Washington Square

San José, CA 95192-0088

[humanities-arts@sjsu.edu](mailto:humanities-arts@sjsu.edu)

408.924.4300

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## it's a DEAN'S LIFE

As I begin my fourth year in the College of Humanities and the Arts, I continue to be inspired by the magnitude and number of the successes I see around me every day. Our students, faculty, staff, and alumni are among the most talented and creative people in the region. Our successes speak for themselves: student Kourosh Ahari recently had his film *Malaise* selected for Cannes Film Festival, our Concert Choir and Choraliars traveled to Carnegie Hall, and talented alum Ryan Carrington was recently hired full-time at Santa Clara University. These are just a few of the accomplishments that we are proud to highlight in this year's print edition of *Expressions*.

These accomplishments affirm that the College of Humanities and the Arts is indeed "powering creativity" in Silicon Valley and beyond. Our approach to education aligns with

what students need to succeed in the twenty-first century workplace. We focus on innovation and collaboration, working side by side with students to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a fast-paced world. We are proud to touch the lives of every undergraduate student at the university.

Inspired by the talented faculty, staff, and students with whom I have the privilege to work, I continue to reach higher, seeking grant opportunities and industry partners to support innovative programming in humanities and the arts. Recent industry partnerships have led to rich opportunities for our students, including the ongoing interdisciplinary Intel Rapid Prototyping Competition and Microsoft Civic Technology Fellow opportunities at the Microsoft Foundation.

As these examples attest, the 3,800 majors in the College benefit from a collective commitment to high-touch, high-impact teaching and learning. We continue to innovate to expand their opportunities: our leadership in the Hammer Theatre Center 2.0 initiative with the City of San José and our new summer Master of Music degree are but two examples of the ways SJSU continues to respond to student and community needs.

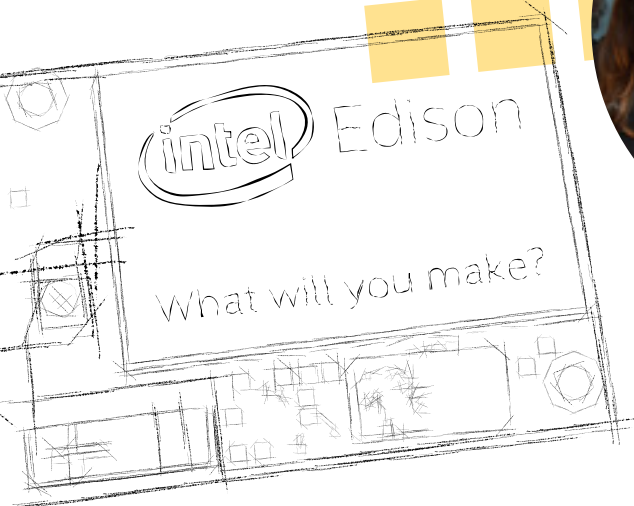
I hope you enjoy reading this publication and learning more about the people who make our College strong. If you like what you see and would like to stay apprised of our happenings, I invite you to sign up to receive our quarterly e-newsletters by sending an email to [HUMANITIES-ARTS@SJSU.EDU](mailto:HUMANITIES-ARTS@SJSU.EDU). Or you can visit our newsletter and hit subscribe at the bottom of the page: [HTTP://BLOGS.SJSU.EDU/HUMANITIES-ARTS/](http://blogs.sjsu.edu/humanities-arts/).

Everything you read about in our publications would not be possible without the support of generous donors and the dedication of an entire community of educators and other professionals who help make our students' dreams come true. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to learn more about the College and about how you can help us make students' goals become reality!

In gratitude,



Lisa Vollendorf, Dean



Team Ad Astra Solutions at RPC v1.0. Amanda Sharpe, John Hernandez and Karl Bradley Saclolo



Students working hard at the Intel Rapid Prototyping Competition.



Remi, designed by Shivani Aurora at RPC v2.0

# the CREATIVE ECONOMY

**SILICON VALLEY** boasts one of the strongest creative economies in the world, and SJSU's College of Humanities and the Arts is working diligently to bridge the industry-university gap and thus create new opportunities for teaching and learning. In turn, the college anticipates that its students will graduate fully prepared to enter the creative workforce and help make Silicon Valley's economy even stronger.

Innovation stands at the center of recent initiatives to enhance student collaboration across the university. One example is the Intel Rapid Prototyping Competition, an initiative co-sponsored by the College of Humanities and the Arts and the Charles W. Davidson College of Engineering. This program brings faculty from engineering and our Digital Media Art (DMA) program together to oversee interdisciplinary

student teams who use Intel's Edison technology to create new product prototypes. Competition judges have included representatives from Intel, Nixie, Indiegogo, Lemonstand, Manos Accelerator, and other companies. Professor Craig Hobbs, Director of SJSU's Learning and Games Initiative, continues to lead the effort to bring the university's arts and technology programs into conversation with technology firms in the Valley.

In the College of Humanities and the Arts, we know that innovation can make the world a better place. We are thrilled that DMA graduate student Shivani Aurora was named a Microsoft Civic Technology Fellow. This past summer, Shivani worked to enhance civic engagement through technology in downtown San José. This exciting opportunity was made possible by the Microsoft Foundation.



**PROFESSOR NELSON WEI TAN** joined SJSU in 2014 as an Assistant Professor of Graphic Design. Professor Tan has helped numerous design students develop innovative solutions that improve the student experience at the university. Similar to Professor Chang Kim's recent work with UCLA's Department of Emergency Medicine, this student-professor collaboration sought to leverage our students' creativity and skills to solve problems outside the classroom.

As the College seeks ways to implement our students' creative solutions to real-world problems, we also seek support to improve our labs and infrastructure. This year we plan to build a new student-designed space in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. Dubbed "The Hub", the new space will support innovation, collaboration, and writing.



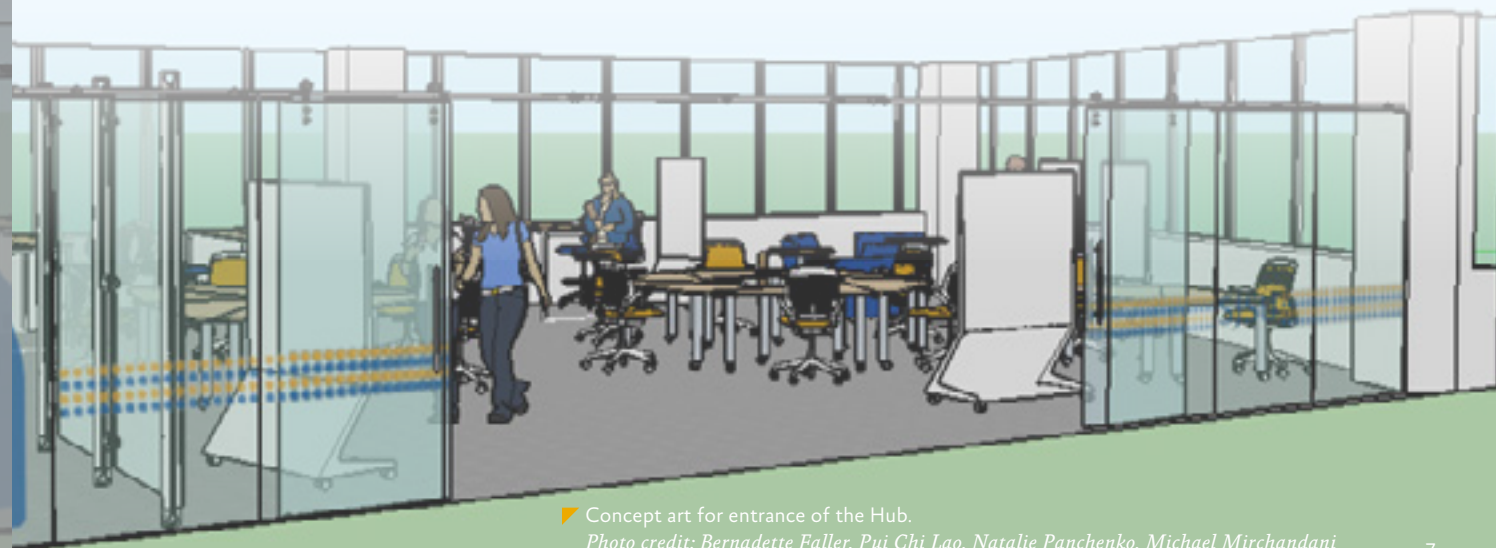
Tables in The Hub can be moved into different configurations to suit specific collaboration events.



Professor Nelson Wei Tan (bottom left) and his design students.

### WE SEEK PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

Our students need access to up-to-date technology and tools so they can be 100 percent prepared to contribute to Silicon Valley's creative economy when they graduate. "The Hub" will be our first collaborative space on campus and we are excited to be putting our students' ideas into action through all of these initiatives.



Concept art for entrance of the Hub.

Photo credit: Bernadette Faller, Pui Chi Lao, Natalie Panchenko, Michael Mirchandani

# HAMMER 2.0

## *downtown arts*

When the **SAN JOSÉ REPERTORY THEATRE** closed its doors in 2014, many community members worried about the fate of the iconic blue-box building and the future of the performing arts in downtown San José. Amid these concerns, the university has entered into an agreement with the city to operate the Hammer Theatre Center (affectionately known as “The Rep”) for the next three years. During that time, SJSU will be pursuing a financially sustainable model that allows the university to showcase high-quality arts programming while also helping to activate the economic corridors surrounding the Hammer.

The College of Humanities and the Arts is leading the charge with its Downtown Arts Hammer 2.0 initiative. Focused on building a Collaborative for Arts, Innovation, and Technology, we have plans underway to create programming in and around the Hammer Theatre Center. We look forward to working with the Downtown Association and other community partners to achieve the best possible results from this outstanding opportunity.





# ZOOT SUIT

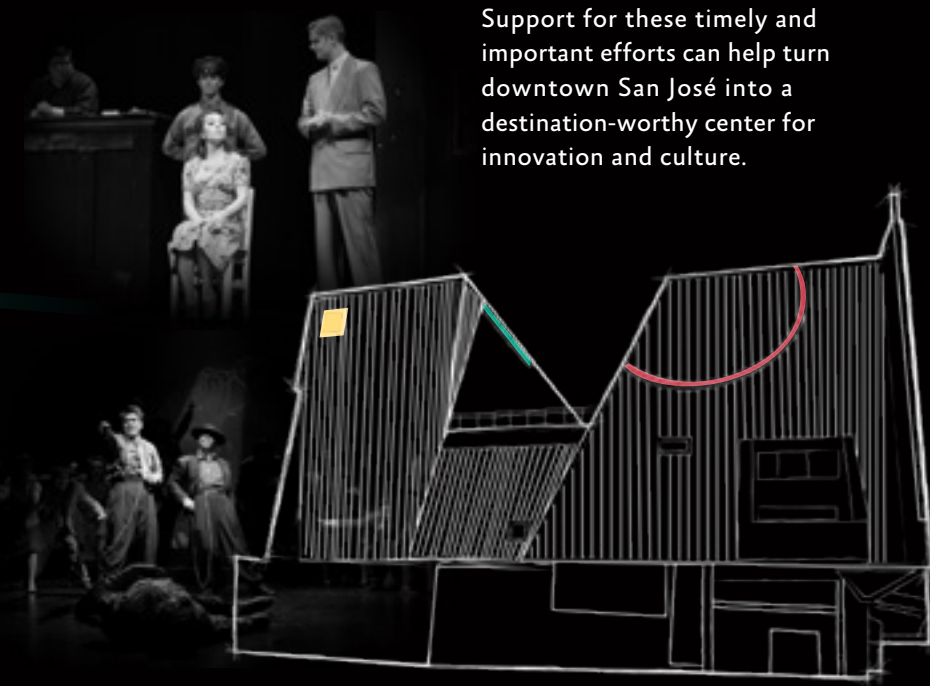
In the College of Humanities and the Arts, we believe that our programs are stronger when we have strong community partnerships. Perhaps nowhere has this been displayed more effectively than with our recent sold-out run of Zoot Suit. Our ties to the play run deep: playwright Luis Valdez is a graduate of the College and almost singlehandedly introduced Latino theatre to the broader public with the debut of Zoot Suit in 1978. The recent 2015 production, directed by Luis's son Kinan Valdez, featured SJSU students enacting the struggles of mid-twentieth century Latinos living in Los Angeles.



TJ Toribio (left) and Sedrick Cabrera (right) with Zoot Suit playwright Luis Valdez.

**THE DOWNTOWN ARTS HAMMER 2.0** initiative strives to link San José State University to the downtown community in new, meaningful ways, and to help the university deepen its impacts on the city in which we work and live. We already have big dreams for the initiative: outdoor performances, prototyping festivals, wayfinding competitions, and other programming focused on bringing arts, innovation, and technology to the downtown corridors that connect the university to other arts and culture institutions, as well as to downtown businesses.

Support for these timely and important efforts can help turn downtown San José into a destination-worthy center for innovation and culture.





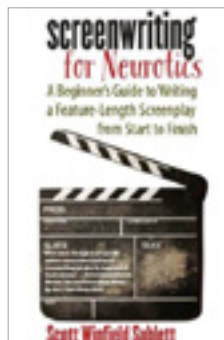
# NO WRITER'S BLOCK *at SJSU!*

The College of Humanities and the Arts is proud to offer students from across the university extraordinary opportunities to develop their writing skills. Now in its second year, Stretch English allows incoming students to choose whether to take freshman composition for one semester or two, depending on their self-assessed writing capabilities. Our new writing faculty — **CINDY BAER, RICHARD MCNABB, TOM MORIARTY,** and **RYAN SKINNELL** — are working diligently with faculty across the humanities to improve writing outcomes for the university.

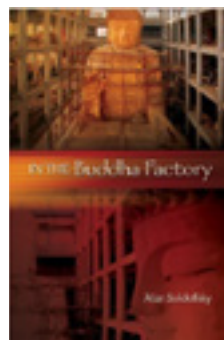
In the creative writing arena, our cup runneth over. Recent faculty publications include Nick Taylor's hard-boiled detective novel, *The Setup Man* (published under his nom-de-plume T. T. Monday), Scott Sublett's *Screenwriting for Neurotics*, and Alan Soldofsky's *In the Buddha Factory*. In addition, the most recent winner of the John Steinbeck Award, "In the Souls of the People" was author Khaled Hosseini, whose numerous contributions to humanity through art and community work made him a perfect choice.



▶ *The Setup Man*  
by Nick Taylor



▶ *Screenwriting for Neurotics*  
by Scott Sublett

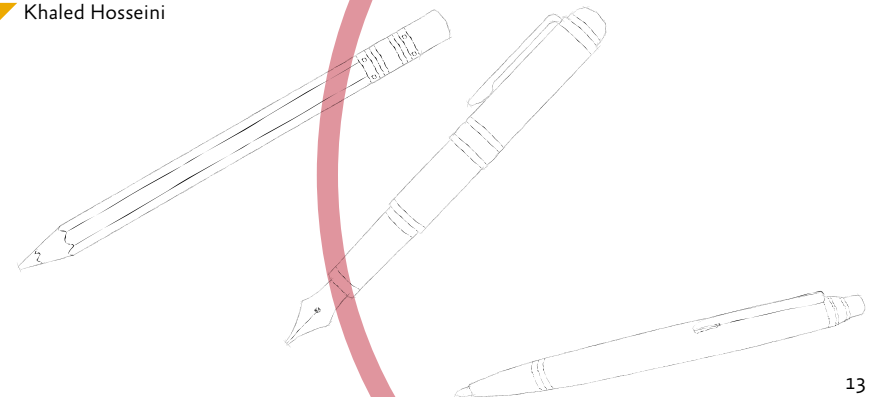


▶ *In the Buddha Factory*  
by Alan Soldofsky



© Elena Seibert

▶ Khaled Hosseini





▼ Cristina Garcia

SJSU has a long history of strong writing programs. Our student-run magazine, *Reed*, is the oldest literary journal west of the Mississippi. In addition, our Center for Literary Arts nurtures the entire community with an annual line-up of emerging and established authors. In 2015-16 the Center will be hosting novelists Chang Rae-Lee and Cristina García as part of their annual programming. Finally, our MFA program has graduated numerous successful authors, including Daniel Arnold, who has a new book of short stories titled *Snowblind*.



▼ REED Magazine cover

Our writing and literary arts programs touch the lives of more than **7,500** people annually through programs, courses, and publications. We invite readers to help us take writing and the literary arts to new levels by considering a donation to the Center for Literary Arts, the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies, our writing and humanities programs, or *Reed*.



At the **CSU 2015 MEDIA ARTS FESTIVAL**, our students once again earned top honors for screenwriting. We swept the top three spots: Michael Quintana took first with *White Rabbit*, Chau Nguyen took second with *Porcelain*, and Cassia Homann won third place for *EM*. This sweep was followed by MFA creative writing student Lauren Serpa's second place win for *Where We Start* in the Feature-Length


Screenplay category at the national Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts. In the same category, recent Radio, Television, Film graduate Risha Rose received an honorable mention for her screenplay *Dance With Me*. As if this weren't enough, in the Short Screenplay category, two SJSU students received honorable mentions: Rachel Compton for *Prosopagnosia*, and Kevin Briot for *When a Giant Falls*.

## reaching new heights in MUSIC AND DANCE

**THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE** is taking its programs to the next level of excellence. Under the direction of Dr. Fred Cohen, the school continues to engage with the music and dance worlds as broadly as possible, creating additional opportunities for students and forging strong ties to the local, regional, and national arts scene. The 2015-16 session features significant residencies with The Sphinx Virtuosi (fall) and the Catalyst String Quartet (spring), the nation's two leading Black and Latino classical ensembles.

The school also advocates for music in public higher education and PreK-12. For the first time in the school's history, it will present NPR's From the Top, the nationally syndicated classical music program featuring America's best pre-collegiate classically trained musicians. Other highlights include hosting CASMEC (California All-State Music Education Conference), CODA (California Orchestra Director's Association), and other regional and statewide music education organizations.

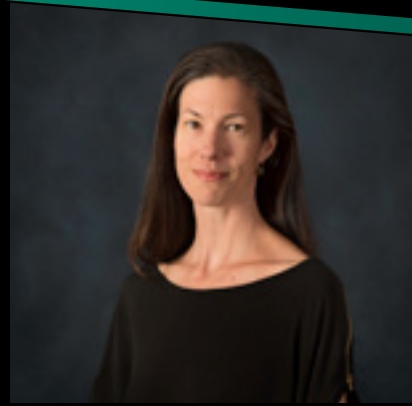
The jazz program continues to blossom, with Dr. Aaron Lington reaping the rewards of his 2014 Grammy Award, and our students benefiting from working with an artist who has been catapulted to the national scene. Enrollment in the jazz studies area is steadily increasing.



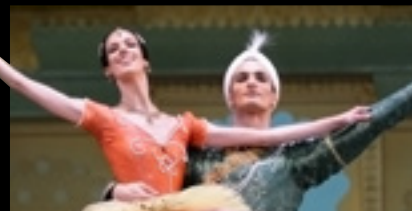
▶ Catalyst String Quartet



The choral program is thriving under **Dr. Jeffrey Benson**. In April 2015, Dr. Benson took the Concert Choir and Choraliers to Carnegie Hall — the trip of a lifetime for many of our vocalists, the majority of whom had never been to New York City and some of whom had never been on an airplane. In summer 2016, Dr. Benson plans to bring the Choraliers to San José’s sister city, Dublin, Ireland.



▶ Britt Juleen



▶ Irene Dalis (1925–2014)

We are delighted to welcome prima ballerina **Britt Juleen** as our newest full-time dance faculty member. As with the music program, the dance program is building strong ties with regional and national companies, producing substantial benefits for our students. Professor Heather Cooper has assumed leadership of the dance program, and under her guidance we anticipate considerable excitement as the dance program moves into the newly restored SPX Theater.

We were saddened by the passing of **Miss Irene Dalis** in winter 2014. An alumna of the school and beloved faculty member, she touched the lives of everyone who loves music in San

José. Miss Dalis was a moving force behind our Opera Workshop, and her legacy grows stronger each year under Professor Layna Chianakas. We honor Miss Dalis with the newly inaugurated Irene Dalis Award, given annually to an outstanding student in opera studies. Her legacy serves as a powerful reminder of the roles we play in the continued nurturing of programs devoted to educating future performers, artists, and audience members.

Donations to the School of Music and Dance by generous supporters help ensure that we will continue to educate students to promote artistic excellence for generations to come.



*join us*

for our fourth annual student showcase!

# Humanities & the Arts

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*thank you*

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**LISA VOLLENDORF**

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San José State University, One Washington Square,  
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[humanities-arts@sjsu.edu](mailto:humanities-arts@sjsu.edu)



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