

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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Jerron "Blind Boy" Paxton performing at The Loft. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

ArtPower Brings Together Diverse Artists and Audiences

In the coming months, UC San Diego students and audiences will have the chance to see dance troupes from Korea and Israel, musicians from Colombia and France, films from Japan and Spain and a dynamic selection of performing artists from throughout the U.S. It's the 13th season of ArtPower at UC San Diego, and the organization is putting its heart into bringing together diverse performers and audiences.

"We have made a much more conscious effort to make sure that as many different groups are recognized and included in our programming as possible," said Jordan Peimer, executive director of ArtPower. "It is part of making sure the university is a welcoming place and that people feel they and

their cultures are valued here.”

Dedicated to engaging students of all majors and backgrounds with the arts, ArtPower at UC San Diego builds creative experiences in music, dance, film exhibition and food to inspire and ignite dialogue between artists, students, scholars and the community. The program is known for providing special opportunities such as pre- and post-performance “ArtTalk” discussions, K-12 matinees, student-only workshops, reduced price student tickets and more to help make the performing arts accessible for all audiences.

About 30 percent of ArtPower’s audience members are students, whereas most universities with similar kinds of programs have about 10 to 15 percent student participation, noted Peimer.

This year, ArtPower has added new programming and partnerships to further engage UC San Diego’s diverse campus community.



Upcoming ArtPower Performances

- Jan. 27, 8 p.m., Chamber Music: Ensō String Quartet
- Feb. 3, 7 p.m., Foovie (Food and Movie): The First Movie
- Feb. 9, 8 p.m., Jazz: Charenee Wade
- Feb. 14, 6:30 p.m., Film: Lula Del Ray
- Feb. 24, 8 p.m., Global Music: Thalma & Laércio de Freitas

ArtPower performances take place at various locations on the UC San Diego campus. For event details, tickets and the full season schedule, visit artpower.ucsd.edu.

American Routes, a new series focused on the varied American musical landscape, kicked off in October with a performance by the Texas-based gospel group The Jones Family Singers, who showcase the connections between rock, soul and gospel in their unique style of music. The series picked back up in the New Year with the multi-instrumentalist and storyteller Jerron “Blind Boy” Paxton. Paxton, who played to a packed house at The Loft on Jan. 12, is regarded for his ability to transform traditional blues, folk, country and jazz into the here and now. Next up is a performance on April 27 by Aoife O’Donovan, Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge, a show curated to showcase daring contemporary songwriters and their acoustic innovations.

“The American Routes series was conceived as a reminder that America is not a monolith, but rather that the American culture is made up of those of our immigrants,” said Peimer. “Gospel, blues and bluegrass have strong roots in Europe and Africa, and something as quintessentially American as the banjo has as its forefather the West African *n’goni*. By showcasing the roots of the music, the series allows ArtPower to help create the kind of environment where everyone’s contribution is valued.”

For its Global Music Series, ArtPower is putting the spotlight on Latin America, offering a broad overview of some of the diversity of styles in Latin music. The series opened in October with the world-renowned Latin orchestra, ¡Cubanismo!, which is known for its dance tunes that recall the *descarga* (jam) tradition developed by Cuban jazz players of the 1940s. In April, ArtPower will present Tribu Baharú, an Afro-Champeta music crew from Colombia’s Caribbean coast. Champeta (originally a term that refers to a fisherman’s knife) is a dance music influenced by Colombian folk music, Congolese *soukous*, Haitian *kompas*, *zouk*, calypso, *mbaqanga*, *soca*, rap and reggae. The band’s mission is to convey the joy of Afro-Colombian culture through exuberant dance and change negative perceptions of Champeta culture by sharing positive messages through music.

Tribu Baharú is also one of ArtPower’s Innovators in Residence, which means that in addition to performing at UC San Diego, they will be on campus and in the classroom engaging with students, through workshops, open-rehearsals and other activities.

“Students will be able to work and learn closely alongside these artists who are so eager to expose young people to their music and culture,” said Molly Clark, associate director of artistic planning and education at ArtPower. “Our Innovators in Residence are here to inspire cross-cultural collaboration and promote a better understanding of cultures other than our own.”

That’s one of the qualities that sets ArtPower apart: audiences are not passive observers, Clark added.

Within the campus community, ArtPower is collaborating with academic departments, the International Center, the campus community centers and other units in an effort to reach more students and deepen their intellectual engagement with the arts.

“Partnering with an academic department helps to add context for the performances and help prepare audiences for the experience,” said Clark.

For its March 9 presentation of the Seoul-based Bereishit Dance Company, ArtPower is partnering with the Transnational Korean Studies Program at UC San Diego. The dance company is known for approaching traditional Korean culture from a contemporary perspective, an approach that audience members will have the chance to further explore during a post-performance ArtTalk with the dancers.

Similarly, for its May screening of “The Spirit of the Beehive,” considered one of the greatest Spanish films of the 1970s, ArtPower has tapped into the expertise of the Spanish program in the Department of Literature.

“ArtPower is a tool to help students learn different things and to learn differently,” said Peimer.

“Whether it is students in a master class from a touring artist, or engineering students learning about robotics through an on-stage performance, ArtPower enhances the cultural life of the university and provides new and often unexpected experiences.”

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