



## UCSB Arts & Lectures Presents Another Dazzlingly Diverse Season

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Granada Theatre, Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara, California is not the sleepy town that many outsiders assume. On the contrary, it offers a more diversified and sophisticated array of cultural events than most communities of its size. Thanks to UCSB Arts & Lectures, the University of California's outstanding presenting organization, both the scholarly and residential population benefit greatly each year from a broad spectrum of hot-topic academic lectures as well as dance, music, and theatre performances, ranging from innovative, cutting-edge companies and ensembles to high-profile, beloved traditional institutions.

A typical weekend in Santa Barbara, as exemplified by the last few days in April of this year, toward the end of the 2011-2012 season, could delight the most gourmet and gourmand of cultural palates, regaling audiences with world-class modern dance, classical and bluegrass music. The historic Granada Theatre in downtown Santa Barbara was full to capacity three

nights in a row with enthusiastic sell-out crowds for performances by the Mark Morris Dance Group, the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields under the leadership of violinist Joshua Bell and Steve Martin, accompanied by the Steel Canyon Rangers.

The beauty of experiencing such iconic and legendary artists in this particular setting (beyond the obvious aesthetic allure of the theatre itself) lies in the sense of intimacy that the performers both create and cultivate, basking in the wholehearted appreciation of an educated public lacking the jadedness of its counterparts in other cities. Mark Morris, the incorrigible *enfant terrible* of the modern dance world, seemed totally at home with the audience in a lively and provocative Q&A session following a stimulating evening of repertory classics. The following night, eternal *Wunderkind* Joshua Bell displayed an unusual informality and warmth, particularly after being presented with a lavish bouquet of roses onstage by an attractive young UCSB coed. On the final evening of the weekend, the Renaissance man of popular culture — comedian, actor, writer, composer, and musician Steve Martin — achieved a rapport with his adoring fans that could be better likened to the happy homecoming of a local hero than the glitzy glamour of a celebrity visit. (Indeed, Martin maintains a preferred residence in Santa Barbara, perhaps an acknowledgement in itself of the sophistication of the community.) It was a rare treat to hear a sampling of original compositions by the virtuoso banjo player and singer, backed masterfully by the arguably top young bluegrass band in the country, and punctuated by spontaneous bursts of stand-up comedy.

The upcoming 2012-2013 season promises at least as much excitement and fulfillment, thanks to UCSB Arts & Lectures' staunch commitment to artistic excellence. The first event is none other than a rare solo appearance by the great Elvis Costello, back by popular demand — yet another testimony to the privileged intimacy of Santa Barbara performances. Shortly thereafter, the “poet of the piano,” Murray Perahia, will give a recital of some of the classical masterpieces for which he is renowned, ranging from Haydn to Chopin. In between, the acclaimed Aspen Santa Fe Ballet will launch the dance series with its much-awaited Santa Barbara debut performance. Other companies to follow include Akram Khan, Shen Wei, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and Compagnie Marie Chouinard, leading up to the season's culmination with a return of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Eclectic tastes will be whetted and titillated by the San Jose Taiko drummers, Laurie Anderson, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Jogia Hip Hop Foundation, Cirque Ziva, Knights with Wu Man, Afro-Cuban All Stars, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Ukelele Orchestra, among many other events.

In the conventional classical sphere, Murray Perahia will be followed by pianist Jeremy Denk and a bevy of violinists, featuring Joshua Bell, Leonidas Kavakos, and Jennifer Koh. The series will be rounded out with appearances by rising trumpet star Alison Balsom with the Scottish Ensemble and the Boston Handel and Haydn Society.

Lectures will range from comedy to science to politics, including Santa Barbara favorite, David Sedaris, the ever-popular Neil deGrasse Tyson, and best-selling author and Emmy award-winning talk host Rachel Maddow.

The season will close with an unusual musical celebration coinciding with a special Andy Warhol photo exhibition at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum at UCSB. Titled "Warhol's World in Song: Musical Snapshots from the 1960s," the performance will include arias and duets from the American Songbook by Bernstein, Sondheim, and others, interspersed with readings from Warhol's personal diaries.

UCSB Arts & Lectures truly offers an embarrassment of riches to the Santa Barbara community, and one is led to wonder if cultural appetites could be better sated anywhere else.