



## SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE CITY OF SAN JOSÉ EXTEND OPERATING AGREEMENT OF HAMMER THEATRE CENTER FOR 35-YEAR PERIOD

**SAN JOSÉ, CA** (June 25, 2020) – The City of San José and San José State University have agreed to a new contract that allows the university to continue operating the Hammer Theatre Center for up to 35 years. The theatre, which is owned by the City of San José, is a state-of-the-art performance venue located in the heart of downtown San José at 101 Paseo De San Antonio.

In March, San José City Council voted unanimously to proceed with the contract, which builds on a successful partnership initiated in 2016. San José Director of Cultural Affairs Kerry Adams Hapner told the Council, “This has been such a successful model in so many ways.” She says, “We are looking forward to continuing a fruitful partnership that increases the cultural vibrancy of the downtown and brings long-lasting benefits to the city and SJSU.”

San José State has signed the agreement, which allows SJSU to operate the Hammer for the next fifteen years with additional options to renew through the year 2055. “This contract allows the Hammer Theatre to bring high-quality arts programming to San José for decades to come,” said College of Humanities and the Arts Dean Shannon Miller. “It also gives our music, theater, and dance students the opportunity to perform on the Hammer’s professional stage, and connects our campus community to the cultural and economic corridors throughout the downtown area.”

Formerly the home of San José Repertory Theatre, the architecturally striking, bright blue building sat vacant from June 2014 until SJSU took the helm in early 2016, investing approximately \$2 million to renovate the facilities. “One of the hallmarks of the Hammer has been the diversity of our programming,” said Hammer Executive Director Christopher Burrill. “We have been attracting new audiences with a wide range of interests - not only theatre lovers, but also fans of dance, music, film, live talks, and much more, with programs that speak to all sectors of our multicultural community.”

For the past four years, the 528-seat theatre has presented an array of offerings including outstanding professional productions, community-based works, SJSU shows, and concerts, as well as dance, music, talks, film screenings—even live aerial performances with dancers suspended outside, scaling the sides of the iconic blue building. In addition to a complete renovation of the stage, and updated audio and lighting equipment to reflect the latest technology, an upstairs rehearsal space was transformed into Hammer 4, a black box theatre space designed for intimate productions such as Hammer’s “Black Cab Jazz” collaboration with San José Jazz.

In the last season, the Hammer presented nearly 200 events, drawing more than 57,000 audience members. From jazz performances to mariachi extravaganzas, the popular *National Geographic*

*Live!* speaker series to the acclaimed *National Theatre Live* film screenings, Cinequest film festival presentations, ballet and modern dance shows, kid-friendly performances, live art and more, the Hammer's mission is to serve the community through artistic and educational programming that express the unique characteristics and diverse cultures of Silicon Valley. *The Mercury News* raved, "It's safe to say San José State has exceeded anyone's expectations for the reactivation of the theater and have kept it as a vital community asset. That is certainly worth applauding."

On June 15, 2020, the Hammer announced its plan to invest in additional technology to create a studio-quality, high-definition, multi-camera video environment that will allow the theatre to offer its audiences live stream events to view from home. These tech upgrades provide the Hammer the opportunity to offer high-quality alternatives for the short term — while large public gatherings are prohibited by COVID-19 — and long term — for those who may not be able to attend a live event in person for accessibility reasons. To help with the effort, the Hammer has launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise \$30,000 to pay for the refit of the theatre and to offer live stream content from its stage. For more information visit: [power.sjsu.edu/hammertheatre](http://power.sjsu.edu/hammertheatre).

### **About San José State University**

*The founding campus of the 23-campus California State University system, San José State provides a comprehensive university education, granting bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in 145 areas of study with an additional 108 concentrations — offered through its nine colleges.*

*With approximately 35,000 students and nearly 4,370 employees, San José State University continues to be an essential partner in the economic, cultural, and social development of Silicon Valley and the state, annually contributing more than 7,000 graduates to the workforce. The university is immensely proud of the accomplishments of its more than 220,000 alumni, 60 percent of whom live and work in the Bay Area.*

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### **Media Contacts:**

#### **San José State University**

Robin McElhatton  
O: 408-924-1749  
E: [robin.mcelhatton@sjsu.edu](mailto:robin.mcelhatton@sjsu.edu)

#### **Hammer Theatre Center**

Steph Keay, Carla Befera & Co  
O: 650-327-1200  
E: [steph@cb-pr.com](mailto:steph@cb-pr.com)

### **Photos:**

High-res photos available for download at: <http://cbpr.co/press/hammerextension/>