

## What's new at the PAC?



Photo courtesy of Jack Cashin

## The Metropolitan Opera hits the big screen

By Leon Koenen

New at the PAC are three additions that will greatly enhance the schedule and entertainment quality to be offered to patrons. One is a state-of-the-art, high definition projector. Another is a 40' X 20' screen that, when in place, covers the entire proscenium of the PAC stage.

To provide content for the projector/screen arrangement there are two satellite dishes that will receive, for live presentation or to be digitally stored for future presentation, entire concerts, events, and shows. This projector, screen and satellite trio was purchased by the Foundation for the Performing Arts Center through a grant from the Hind Foundation.

The projector is a Barco FLM R22, 22,000 lumens, and projects an image that is four times as bright as the previous digital projector used at the PAC. It is the only projector of this type and quality being used in San Luis Obispo. Images projected to the giant screen are provided exclusively by digital data rather than reel-to-reel film. This could include videos on generally available DVDs or Blu-ray.

Movie theaters and performance venues throughout the globe are just beginning the process of adapting to this new technology. The projector system has the capability of showing 3-D videos although the PAC needs to obtain additional equipment to make

Continued on page 3

## Deadle, deadle, deadle

By Leon Koenen

The scanners are now a matter of fact, though they will continually be a "work in progress." Usually, each time we are assigned to scan tickets we will take some time to recollect, acquaint and practice with the scanners. This is typical behavior when we occasionally work with "new fangled" technology.

During the past year, when scanners were being introduced, tested, scrutinized, criticized and analyzed, more information about this particular item was passed from ushers to floor captains to house managers than ever before in the brief history of the PAC.

This information was discussed in PAC Friends floor captain meetings, house manager meetings and steering committee meetings. This activity is called "problem solving" and has proven to be useful in adapting to the use of modern digital equipment.

If you would like to try your hand at using scanners to process tickets at the door, don't be shy about asking your house manager to assign you that task for your next show. The house manager will appreciate your interest.



Photo by Kingston Leong



## Front & Center By Nancy Cochran



Truly notable is that from our very first group of ushers, 64 people have been with the PAC the entire 15

years! These amazing volunteers were honored with a 15 years of service pin at the September refresher and their names appear on the Friends of the PAC website "honor roll."

The PAC is privileged to have five house managers who have also been with us a long time. Barbara Holcomb is our youngest, joining us in 2001 with Carol West, Marilyn

Pedroni, Nan Hamilton and Pam Clark here since 1996. Carol and Pam also started our Friends group back in the spring of 1996, serving on the first Steering Committee.

The inspiration and good will of our Friends of the PAC is why they stay, which is also my motivation and enjoyment in coming to work for the past 15 years – all of you!

# Volunteer Comments

## What delighted you most about Bill Cosby's performance?



Photos by Kingston Leong

**Kathy Callahan**

"His love of performing; the length of the show was timed and he was enjoying it so much he stayed on stage much longer."



**Leonor Focha-Davis**

"He blew his nose into a Kleenex and put it on the table; he said he knew sitting there would bother just the women in the audience."



**Wayne Gillmore**

"His stories about growing up reminded me of the escapades my brother and I had when we were boys."



**Jane Broshears**

"I worked the will call ticket door and was delighted at how many students waited in the 111 degree heat to get student rush tickets."



**Julie Martin**

"As much as I enjoyed laughing at Cosby's silliness...for me the best part was listening to the laughter of the student sitting next to me."

## DOWN MEMORY LANE Cups, get more cups

By Don Aronson

My wife Ann and I enjoyed many years of ushering at the then Cal Poly Theater. When the new center was in progress, Ann became part of the original usher's steering committee. They became the core of the first usher wave along with some of their spouses.

One of the first events at which we ushered was the Chris LeDoux concert. We were so protective of this magnificent new building that we didn't even allow water to be brought into the hall. Little did we know that one of the rituals of this cowboy performer and his fans was chewing tobacco...and spitting.

At first we rigorously enforced the no cup rule until we observed what these cups were being used for. We quickly changed course and provided all the Styrofoam cups we could find.

This performance was Pam Clark's introduction to life as a house manager.

By Pam Clark

Imagine the opening week of the long awaited Performing Arts Center – an idea whose conception was some 17 years earlier in 1979. What excitement!



**On opening night, ushers wore black pants, casual white tops and name tags on lanyards.**

What joy! We had this gorgeous center – a shining example of SLO culture and know-how. A Tribune reporter wrote of the ten-day opening festival, "so rich that it was enough to make any arts lover's heart beat a little faster" --- orchestral masterpieces, singers, dancers, circus acts, AND country music. Yes, popular country music performer, Chris LeDoux, was going to be in SLO and it was to be my first house manager experience!

Everyone backstage liked Chris...soft spoken, accommodating, a good artist to work with. But, we front-of-house folks could not imagine what would hit us as the doors swung open that night.

We watched in amazement as the cowboys strode into the lobby – boots, hats, and also what we didn't realize, chewing tobacco and flasks.

The music started, rocking the new acoustics to the fullest. Soon, very soon, I got a frantic report that those cowboys were spitting tobacco on our new floors. The nerve of them!

Apparently, those boys were equally appalled when we asked them to stop their chewing... after all it was a country western, barnstorming good time. Flummoxed as to what to do next, we quickly grabbed some Styrofoam cups and kindly asked them to spit into the

Continued on page 4

# Hats we wear

By Nancy Cochran

Let me introduce you to our fabulous and talented newsletter team. They have worn many hats throughout their lives and continue to try on new ones . . .

**BeJae Blake** was a Florida Cypress Gardens water skier, floozy, graphic designer, photographer, advertising assistant for The Tribune, travel bum, and a Cuesta College re-entry student striving to use good English. Today, BeJae is a life-long student of the arts, UNF college grad, publications manager for the student newspaper at Cuesta College, SLO Camera Club newsletter coeditor, represents the Photo Society on the SLO Museum of Art Board of Directors and PAC Friends floor captain and news editor.

**Don Aronson** was a church organist, vocal soloist, Lutheran college and Seminary graduate, Lutheran pastor, social worker, adoptions supervisor, drug and alcohol counselor. Today, Don is an usher and floor captain at the PAC and Festival Mozaic, French Hospital

volunteer, tenor with the Cuesta Master Chorale, Osher volunteer, assistant home gardener specializing in roses and bonsai, sometime cook and bottle washer, amateur photographer, husband, dad and grandpa.

**Leon Koenen** has worn many hats but most still fit and each is periodically removed from cerebral storage to be displayed on chosen occasions. Hard to believe but Leon was a high school dropout, deck ape, skivvy waver, enlightened under grad

who is a liberal, sparky wild-west gunslinger, union activist, programmer, Gymnasium Voderadska Profesor, scribe, raconteur of past times, and a performing arts advocate.

**Kingston Leong** was a Hawaiian beach boy, skin diver, and termite fumigation trouble shooter. He was, and still is, a perpetual student, Cal Poly professor, monarch biologist, entomologist, amateur birder, amateur photographer, professional father, and husband to lovely wife Carol.

**Below from left, Leon Koenen, Kingston Leong, BeJae Blake and Don Aronson in the newsroom...the closest coffee shop.**



Photo by Kingston Leong

## Cups, continued from page 3

little containers and, by the way, please take your feet off the seats. Not pleased, they sort of promised to be compliant. At intermission we were pretty sure there was some serious tipping of flasks in between the chewing, but we weren't prepared to frisk those cowboys, let me tell you.

After intermission, I slumped behind the podium checking my outline of duties and nothing seemed to apply to that evening...no polite talk in the lobby by sequin-clad ladies and dark-suited gentlemen; no calmly seated patrons or melodic music drifting up the stairs.

My first event as House Manager let me know I had a lot to learn. A bit shaken, I started my PAC career realizing that it would be quite a thrilling topsyturvy ride but, as I dared to hope, a wonderful kaleidoscope of talent and challenges and joyful days. It has been every bit of that and more.

## What's new, continued from page 1

this happen.

An ever-growing selection of live and recorded content will be "streaming" via satellite to audiences who frequent performing arts venues. As use of these high quality digital projection systems increase so will the selection, from classical to jazz to country to pop-rock to special interest events. Also, the Barco projector will provide backdrop for live stage performances, which will increase usage as our local presenters experiment with all of the possibilities.

This October through June 2011, Cal Poly Arts along with Opera SLO are presenting 12 operas live from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City that will be shown at the PAC.

On October 9, La Boheme was transmitted via the satellite from the Met and shown at the Cohan Center. The projected images show excellent detail and clarity on the 40'x20' screen

and the images are huge! The Met's film director is obviously an experienced professional. What we saw on our screen 3000 miles away was amazing. The performers were so close that you fully experienced the drama and emotion as well as voice, lyrics and story.

At every performance are the men and women of the PAC technical staff. Often invisible, they work backstage, in projection booths, behind audio consoles, aiming and focusing and adjusting. During the installation of the projector, screen and satellite dishes, they were present to learn proper set-up and operating procedures and are now well trained and responsible for calibration and maintenance of the equipment.

We will have many occasions to view performances produced for our new projector, screen and satellite system so please take advantage to enjoy these extraordinary opportunities!

# The big three; FPAC, PAC and clients

**1** By Leon Koenen

Attached to many of the usher's vests are black and gray buttons that state "ASK ME ABOUT 25." The number "25" refers to the years that the Foundation for the Performing Arts (FPAC) has been providing a very valuable service to our PAC. The FPAC is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation with the primary function of raising funds that will be used to maintain and augment the capabilities of the Center. The funds are provided by a multitude of generous contributors in SLO County and beyond.

The FPAC is one of the three organizations (Cal Poly, City of SLO, and FPAC) that raised money and support for the construction of the PAC. Recent funds provided by the Hind Foundation were used by the FPAC to purchase the projector/screen/satellite system described on the front page. FPAC donors, Bert and Candace Forbes, generously donated money to purchase and install our fantastic pipe organ. The FPAC also maintains an endowment fund used to insure the long-time stability and success of the PAC. And again, gifts provided by individual donors from our community are the major resource for the endowment.

The endowment fund remains intact and grows in value through the years while money earned on interest is used to provide maintenance and improvements. The Executive Director of FPAC is Cory Karpin and offices are located on Marsh Street in SLO. Visit the FPAC web site at [www.fpacslo.org](http://www.fpacslo.org) for more information.

**2** Of the "big three" organizations that provide support and management of the Performing Arts Center,

Nancy Cochran and the house managers organize and manage the 209 volunteer ushers at the PAC. Her office is located in the Cohan Center, within the Administrative area next to the Ticket Office. Ron Regier is the Managing Director of the PAC. Included in the PAC staff are numerous technical personnel that set up, operate and maintain the stage equipment, projectors, lighting, sound, backdrops, etc. Also, the PAC provides staff to operate the ticket office, oversee all managing operations, and to support some fund raising efforts for the Youth Outreach Program. The PAC is part of the Cal Poly Administration and Finance Department. Further information is found at [www.pacslo.org](http://www.pacslo.org).

**3** And last, but definitely not least, are the "clients" of the PAC. The clients are the presenters or entertainers that rent our performance halls. A list of 28 clients is provided on the [www.pacslo.org](http://www.pacslo.org) web site. Cal Poly Arts is the booking agent that negotiates the terms for the touring professional artists who are the largest group of performing artists.

Cal Poly Arts publishes an annual catalog of appearances for their season, which usually runs from September through May. Some of the major artists featured this season are Steve Martin, Bill Cosby, Taj Mahal and Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Cal Poly Arts negotiates the terms of each professional appearance which would include fees, resulting ticket prices,

appearance dates and special needs. CP Arts is affiliated with both the Cal Poly Liberal Arts Department and the Cal Poly Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non profit. Our PAC actually is used for about 150 shows a year. Typically, 40 to 50 shows are booked by Cal Poly Arts.

About thirty years ago representatives from the City of SLO, Cal Poly and FPAC founders started initial discussions about creating SLOPAC. During the discussions it was firmly determined that any community PAC must be a center that schools and local performance academies could rent for nominal fee. So, there are 27 other local "clients" who use the PAC for minimal fees to present performances.

The clients include Cal Poly Music Dept., Academy of Dance, SLO Symphony, Vocal Arts Ensemble, Opera SLO, SLO High School and many others. Each of these organizations determines their own ticket prices, sales and processing methods. The PAC is their rental hall.

Every time FPAC gets a grant to purchase and install new equipment they must contact PAC management and recruit the technical staff to help with installation, operation and maintenance of the equipment. Cal Poly Arts will eventually book acts and performers who will use the equipment. Cal Poly Arts will negotiate artist fees, determine ticket prices and the PAC will print tickets and provide the staff to work the show and provide a comfortable friendly venue for the customers. Marketing can be done by any of the involved organizations.

