



THEATER

Carpenter Center releases roster for its new season

By Richard Guzman

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Yes, there will be acrobatic dogs.

But there's so much more that will make up the new season at the Carpenter Performing Arts Center in Long Beach, including a Native American blues and soul singer, a comedy ballet company, Grammy-nominated singers and a rockabilly veteran, to name a few.

"What I'm really excited about is that I feel like the diversity of our series really reflects the diversity of our community," said Megan Kline Crockett, interim executive director for the Long Beach venue.

Tickets for the 2017-18 season go on sale Monday with the 25 acts coming to the Carpenter Center presented in several distinct series through next year.

Starting things off as part of the Wit and Wisdom Series on Sept. 16 is comedian Sandra Bernhard in a show that blends comedy, music and political satire.

Other Wit and Wisdom performers include NPR host Garrison Keillor on Oct. 14 and The New Yorker staff writer and CNN legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin on Jan. 27.

Among the four acts in the Sunday Afternoon Concert Series is a May 6 show by Ranky Tanky, a South Carolina quintet that performs music of the Gullah culture from the Sea Island region of the United States.

"They are just incredible musicians. ... Everything

they do has a new twist on it," Crockett said. "When I saw them in New York, no one was able to sit down."

A highlight of the more intimate Cabaret Series will be Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist Rene Marie, whose style is reminiscent of Ella Fitzgerald. She'll perform two shows Nov. 8-9.

The Dance Series, meanwhile, should prove popular this season thanks to performances by Jessica Lang Dance on Oct. 17 and Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo on Jan. 20 and 21.

While the respected Jessica Lang Dance company elevates the form by blending classical ballet into contemporary works that highlight the beauty of the work, the "Trocks" rip up in a hilarious way. The all-male company dress as ballerinas to put on a show filled with parody, physical comedy and impressive dance moves.

"They are phenomenal dancers," Crockett said. "They dance on-point and they are hilarious. They are funny, they are true athletes, true dancers."

The Wow! Series meanwhile is meant to attract families to the Carpenter Center with performances that include the return of "Chris Perondi's Stunt Dog Experience," on March 18.

But before the pooches take over, Momix, a company of "dance illusionists," will start the Wow! Series on Nov. 18.

"They use their bodies as props," she said. "They use light, they use shadow, they

use humor, and it's just really incredible visually to see."

The season includes several single events, such as concerts, talks, musicals and plays.

Among the concerts will be a show by former Stray Cats upright bassist Lee Rocker on March 17 and Native American blues and soul singer Martha Redbone on April 26.

Crockett noted that her show marks the first time a Native American musician is headlining at the Carpenter Center.

"She is just an incredible musician," Crockett said. "It's just a really fun, rousing beautiful music and great storytelling."

To purchase tickets and for a list of all events, call 562-985-7000 or www.carpenterarts.org.





THOMAS R. CORDOVA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Megan Kline Crockett, interim executive director of the Carpenter Performing Arts Center, as they announce its 2017-2018 season. Tickets go on sale Monday.