

# Sonoma State receives \$12 million for Green Music Center

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## Largest donation in university's history allows for completion of concert hall, outdoor performance venues

ROHNERT PARK — Sonoma State University said today it had received a \$12 million gift for the [Green Music Center](#)<sup>[1]</sup> from Joan and Sanford I. “Sandy” Weill, the largest single cash gift in the university's history.

The gift will enable the university to complete the concert hall and adjoining lawn and commons venues in time for the 2012–13 performance season. A grand opening is planned for fall 2012.

“The Green Music Center will make a cultural difference for the people of this area and for students,” Mr. Weill, a former chief executive officer and chairman of Citigroup, said in an interview.

Included in the Green Music Center gift is a \$4 million dollar-for-dollar matching grant to fund the outdoor performance areas.

Part of the Weill gift is a \$4 million matching grant to fund construction of outdoor performance venues next to the concert hall. (click to enlarge)

The south end of the concert hall is designed with a back wall that can be fully opened onto a landscaped and terraced lawn, expanding the reach of the concert hall to an additional 3,000 guests.

An area directly to the east of the main concert hall will be transformed into Weill Commons, a 10,000-seat amphitheater for large-scale outdoor events.

“We are honored to join Donald and Maureen Green and the many other generous contributors who have stepped forward to help make this dream a reality,” they said.

The Weills said the breadth of financial and public support for the center was a key factor in their decision. “It showed the community cared,” Mr. Weill said.

The Weills said the gift had its roots in a meeting at a social gathering shortly after they purchased a home in Sonoma County. They were told about the concert hall and, after visiting it, asked world-renowned pianist Lang Lang come to up from the Bay Area to play there.

“I think the hall is extraordinary,” Mr. Lang said after playing. “I look forward to making the Green Music Center a regular stop on future world tours.”

Mr. Weill, current chairman of the board of Carnegie Hall, said the acoustics of the new concert hall sound like those of Carnegie. In addition to Mr. Lang, Mr. Weill also asked Carnegie Hall Executive and Artistic Director Clive Gillinson to visit the center before he and his wife made the decision to support it.

Initially, the Weills planned to make a \$4 million donation but were inspired to make a larger gift after seeing the rest of the grounds, according to the university. Mrs. Weill said in an interview that she remembered seeing ballet performances outside as a young girl and thought the planned lawn venue would be a good location for dance performances. For the past 10 years, Mrs. Weill has served as chair of the board of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Foundation.

Robert Cole has been appointed artistic consultant of the Green Music Center. He will work with Jeff Langley, the center's current artistic director and director of university's School of Performing Arts. Mr. Cole is an arts presenter and conductor and led U.C. Berkeley's Cal Performances for 23 years.

Santa Rosa Symphony, shown here in an earlier performance in the Green Music Center, will be the symphony-in-residence. (click to enlarge)

The Santa Rosa Symphony will be the music center's orchestra-in-residence.

The 1,400-seat concert hall was designed by William Rawn and acoustician Lawrence Kirkegaard. It is modeled after Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood Music Center in Lennox, Mass., and designed to replicate the intimate feeling and acoustics of Vienna's Musikverein and Symphony Hall in Boston.

Initially, the Green Music Center started as Donald and Maureen Green's dream to establish a choral recital hall on the Sonoma State campus. The concept expanded into a world-class arts center after university President Ruben Armijana, his wife, Marne Olson, and the Greens visited Tanglewood in the early 1990s.

"Where else but Sonoma County could the weather be more perfect, the scenery more striking, the local food and wine finer and more celebrated," Mr. Armijana said. "We hoped the community would embrace this project and it has. Donald and Maureen's leadership has been exceptional, and I am very pleased that we now have a full opening planned and that, very soon, this majestic new facility will be available to all."

The hall, lawn and commons will join the already completed state-of-the-art music education building, faculty offices, fine-dining restaurant and executive retreat center. When finally complete, the Green Music Center also will include the 250-seat Schroeder's Recital Hall, named by Jean Schulz, wife of the late cartoonist Charles M. Schulz.

The Weills have been committed for many years to education, health care, the arts and other social causes through their philanthropy and personal involvement.