

# Renowned pianist Lang Lang will be first on Green Center stage

**New Year's Day announcement comes with a plea for more money**

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Photo by Beth Schlanker/The Press Democrat

**Don Green, right, joined by his assistant, Julie Floyd, listen to presentation about the acoustics of Weill Concert Hall during a reception at the Green Music Center on the Sonoma State University campus in Rohnert Park Sunday.**

Renowned Chinese concert pianist Lang Lang will perform on opening night at Sonoma State University's long-awaited Green Music Center in September, followed the next day by the Santa Rosa Symphony, college president Ruben Armiñana announced Sunday night.

The announcement, made during a New Year's evening reception in the center's restaurant, also included a familiar refrain from Armiñana about the \$120 million project which was first announced in 1997 with the promise of a \$10 million contribution by Telecom Valley pioneer Don Green. Armiñana told contributors, whom he called "investors," that more money is needed and they will be asked for additional support.

"We know who you are," he said. "We know where you live."

Attending the reception were Green and Joan and Sandy Weill, whose \$12 million gift, announced in March, ensured a fall 2012 opening for the music center.

"I think you will see Sonoma State grow and prosper" as the center attracts world-class musicians and large audiences to a varied program of music and dance, said Sandy Weill, a former chief executive of Citigroup and a nationally recognized philanthropist.

The Weills, whose primary residence is in New York, bought a 362-acre estate in the hills west of Sonoma for nearly \$31 million in 2010.

Lang, 29, a former child prodigy, will play at the formal opening of the 1,400-seat hall now named for Joan and Sanford I. Weill, on Sept. 29.

Santa Rosa Symphony, the music center's orchestra in residence, will perform on Sept. 30, led by music director Bruno Ferrandis, with appearances by former directors Corrick Brown and Jeffrey Kahane.

More details on the music center's inaugural season will be announced March 5.

Weill said he and his wife “absolutely fell in love with the place” after listening to Lang play there, at their request, at midnight trial run in late 2010.

The concert hall is now complete at a cost of about \$120 million, officials said Sunday night. About \$15 million more is needed to add an outdoor performance stage and to complete the adjacent Schroeder's Recital Hall.

In addition, Weill said, the music center will need to raise \$1 million to support the 2012-13 season, and \$3 million a year after that to underwrite a year-long arts and education program.

“That's our job,” said Weill, who is chairman of the Green Music Center Board of Advisors.

The center will become a “phenomenal destination” that serves Sonoma County, as well as Napa, Marin and San Francisco, Weill said.

Noel Byrne, an SSU sociology professor who did not attend the reception, said the need for ongoing support confirms calculations by him and other critics that the music center would not be self-supporting.

“We've felt it is reckless to impose this kind of a burden on this university,” said Byrne, a faculty member for 34 years, in a telephone interview.

Sonoma County lags far behind New York City as a home for “deep pockets,” Byrne said.

Sandy Weill has been chairman of the Carnegie Hall board of trustees for 30 years, and Joan Weill is chairwoman of the board of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Foundation.

The Weills, both classical music lovers, said previously they have donated \$800 million to arts, health care, educational and social service organizations.

The Tanglewood-style concert hall is unique in California's public education system, Weill said, because no other institution is going to come up with \$135 million.

“It's up to us to deliver the best quality program the place can handle,” he said.

Carnegie Hall and the San Francisco Symphony will both be involved in the music center's program, he said.