SAN LUIS OBISPO – Composer and pianist Jon Jang will headline Cal Poly’s annual Jazz Night concert at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 22, in Harman Hall in the Performing Arts Center.

The concert will be the send-off concert and fund-raiser for the University Jazz Band #1’s tour of China -- the first international tour by a Cal Poly jazz band.

The group will become international ambassadors of jazz when it travels to China in June for a series of concerts in Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou, according to Cal Poly jazz studies director Paul Rinzler.

In Beijing, they will perform at the Now nightclub in the renowned "798" building in a Soho-style district of contemporary art, architecture and loft culture. In Shanghai, the band will perform at the La Maison club in the trendy Xin Tian Di area. Also included will be joint performances with college ensembles in Hangzhou and with the Beijing Contemporary Music Institute, which has been compared to the Berklee School of Music in Boston, one of the great jazz schools in the United States.

"Many people in China are very curious about jazz and things American," Rinzler said. "These performances give the Cal Poly Jazz Band the chance to inspire a new and eager audience for jazz on the international scene."

"Jon Jang has broken barriers and genres as a composer, pianist and artistic director of ensembles in developing original works noted for their compelling mix of different influences and sounds," according to the new music nonprofit organization “Other Minds.”

As a composer, Jang has received commissions from the Library of Congress, the Kronos Quartet and Chanticleer. He has also received major grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Meet
The Composer, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Creative Work Fund and Creative Capital.

As a pianist and artistic director of ensembles, Jang's ensembles have toured at major concert halls and music festivals in China, South Africa, Europe, Canada and the United States. Four months after the elections to end apartheid in South Africa, Jang the first musician from San Francisco to be invited to perform in the Arts Alive Festival in Johannesburg.

Last year, Jang and Jiebing Chen gave a special performance for Chinese President Jiang Zemin at a private luncheon hosted by Willie Brown, then mayor of San Francisco.

Cal Poly’s University Jazz Band #1 will perform three movements of Jang's suite "Tiananmen!": "Great Wall/Gold Mountain," "Come Sunday, June 4, 1989," and "Fifth Modernization." The movements incorporate elements of Chinese music into a big-band setting.

Also appearing at Jazz Night will be the University Jazz Band #2; Cal Poly Vocal Jazz, directed by Music Professor Thomas Davies; and the Cal Poly Jazz Combo, directed by Rinzler.

Jang will also present a free jazz clinic at 3:30 p.m. May 22 in Room 216 in the Davidson Music Center on campus.

Tickets to Jazz Night cost $5 to $15. They can be bought at the Performing Arts Ticket Office 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call SLO-ARTS (756-2787).

Jazz Night is sponsored by Cal Poly’s Music Department, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Instructionally Related Activities program. For more information call the Music Department at 756-2406.

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