

PRESS RELEASE

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Pulitzer Prize Winner, Peter Balakian, in Reading & Conversation with San José State University President Mary Papazian

The Center for Literary Arts celebrates April, National Poetry Month, by bringing poet Peter Balakian to San José's Hammer Theatre (101 Paseo De San Antonio, 95113) on April 12 for a night of reading and conversation with Mary Papazian beginning at 7 PM.

On April 12, 2018, the Center for Literary Arts will conclude its 2017-2018 season with the third guest of its Pulitzer Series: Peter Balakian. Balakian is an American writer of Armenian descent whose works of poetry, prose, and translation have received international audience and acclaim. In 2016, Balakian won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his collection *Ozone Journal*, whose title poem recounts “the speaker's memory of excavating the bones of Armenian genocide victims in the Syrian desert with a crew of television journalists in 2009.” As the Pulitzer Committee calls it, *Ozone Journal* is a “montage” in which Balakian’s intimacy with language and circumstance metes a perfect expression of the poet’s ambition for his genre.

In 1989, Balakian wrote that “confessionalism could be successful only if the unveiling of the private life could achieve universality. The naked self and the representative nature of that self must constantly overlap...” Although Balakian was not addressing his own work at the time, *Ozone Journal* achieves his definition of successful confessionalism. Through personal, political, and historical specificity, Balakian’s poetry is transcendently narrative, while at the same time, it reminds the reader of their own humanity—their belonging and thus their responsibility to an animate universe.

The same holds true for Balakian’s memoir, *Black Dog of Fate*, which *New York Times* writer Lore Dickstein calls “at once a family memoir, a history of the extermination of Armenians in

Turkey, and the story of a young man's passage into adulthood and his sudden awareness of his ethnicity.” *Black Dog of Fate* won the 1998 PEN/Martha Albrand Prize for the Art of the Memoir and was a best book of the year for the *New York Times*, the *LA Times*, and *Publisher’s Weekly*.

Other works by Balakian include *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response* (a *New York Times* Notable Book and a *New York Times* Best Seller); his translation of Grigoris Balakian’s *Armenian Golgotha: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide* (a *Washington Post* book of the year); and *Vice and Shadow: Essays on the Lyric Imagination, Poetry, Art, and Culture*.

Balakian has received The Presidential Medal and the Movses Horanatsi Medal from the Republic of Armenia, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and The Spendlove Prize for Social Justice, Tolerance, and Diplomacy. He has appeared widely on national television and radio, and his work has been translated into a dozen languages and foreign editions. At Colgate University, Balakian is the Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities, a Professor of English, and the Director of Creative Writing.

After his reading, Balakian will be joined by San José State University President Mary Papazian. Holding bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in English from the University of California, Los Angeles, Papazian became SJSU’s 30th president in 2016. Papazian is firmly committed to student success; open, transparent and inclusive leadership; fostering a culture of curiosity and discovery; and building enduring campus and community partnerships. Papazian is notably responsible for the appointment of a chief diversity officer to lead a newly established campus Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Papazian is also of Armenian descent and an active member of the Armenian-American community.

For more event information, visit: [REDACTED]

To purchase tickets, visit: [REDACTED]

Copies of Balakian’s work and *Reed Magazine* will be available for purchase. Only attendees with VIP tickets will be granted access to the reception and book-signing with Balakian.