Artist Rich Black gives Berkeley’s UC Theatre a new mural

May 26, 2015 7:00 am by Frances Dinkelspiel
Rich Black spent Memorial Day weekend painting a mural on the front of UC Theatre on University Avenue, which is being restored into a music venue. Photo: Audrey Faine

Rich Black, the artist and muralist known for his high-impact art, has spent the last few days painting an eye-catching mural on the front of the UC Theatre at 2036 University Ave.

Black, who is probably best known for the murals adorning the front of the Ashby Theater (on Ashby and Martin Luther King Jr. Way), spelled out “SUPPORT” in huge yellow letters against a black background at the emerging UC Theatre. He interspersed the phrases “Employment,” “Education,” and “Music” in between the letters.

Black is the creative force behind all the marketing material, programs and literature produced by Berkeley’s Shotgun Players who are based at Ashby Stage. (Watch a Berkeleyside video about Black made in 2011.) He paints the entire wall of the theater every time it puts on a new production — adapting a design he has devised to promote the play to fit the large expanse of the building’s façade. He is also the author of the flipbook, “Futura, L’Art d R. Black”
Rich Black paints a mural on the UC Theatre on May 22, 2015. Photo: Melati Citrawireja

David Mayeri and the non-profit Berkeley Music Group are in the middle of remodeling the old movie theater on University into a 1,400-seat music venue. The $5.5 million renovation began in March and is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2015.

The new auditorium will have a state-of-the-art Meyer sound system thanks to Helen and John Meyer, who are big supporters of the UC Theatre project and have offered to do the work at a discounted price.

In addition to showcasing high-profile acts, the Berkeley Music Group plans to offer training and educational programs to area youth. (Thus the “education” tag in the mural). It also plans to hire locally.

The goal is for there to be 75 to 100 shows a year, according to Mayeri. He intends to bring in other kinds of performances, such as the Berkeley Symphony, a lecture series, occasional children’s performances and more. The group is still raising money for the project through its “Turn on the Lights” campaign.

Connect with the group behind the theater project on Facebook and Twitter.
Rich Black painting the mural. Photo: Melati Citrawireja
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