



USC | THORNTON  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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# USC THORNTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC ANNOUNCES 125th ANNIVERSARY

**Largest Celebration in School's History to Span 125-Days and  
Spotlight all 16 of School's Departments**

**Other Major Announcements include  
Expansion of USC Thornton's Physical Facilities by 50%,  
Appointment of Several Outstanding New Faculty Members, and  
Launch of Four New Undergraduate Programs  
– Including Groundbreaking Popular Music Performance Degree –  
and a Revised Graduate Program**

**Anniversary Celebration to Feature  
more than 50 Special Events Including such Luminaries as Pop Legend Steve Miller,  
New Music Sensation Eighth Blackbird, Renowned Conductors Helmuth Rilling and  
Michael Tilson Thomas, Plus Opus 125 Faculty Recital, Special Opera Production, and  
USC Thornton Chamber Music Appearance at Festival in Missillac, France**

**USC Thornton is the Oldest Continuously Operating Cultural Organization in  
Southern California and One of Nation's Oldest Music Schools**

**Illustrious Alumni and Faculty Have Garnered Countless  
Grammy and Academy Awards over the Years**

(April 2, 2009 - Los Angeles, CA) The prestigious USC Thornton School of Music, long considered one of the world's leading music schools and noted for its broad spectrum of outstanding programs, renowned faculty and top-tier students, commemorates its 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with its most ambitious celebration ever, spanning 125 days and coinciding with the Fall 2009 semester. The anniversary also ushers in sweeping changes in the school's curriculum, faculty and facilities that will further bolster USC Thornton's reputation for excellence and innovation.

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The details of these groundbreaking initiatives, which impact every aspect of the School, have been announced by Dr. Robert Cutietta, Dean of USC Thornton and an internationally recognized expert in the field of music education.

They include the acquisition of several buildings on the USC campus that will increase the School's physical size by an astounding 50%, which is highly significant given USC Thornton's urban location in the heart of Los Angeles.

Cutietta also announced that USC Thornton adds this fall to its already diverse curriculum four new undergraduate programs. Among them is a groundbreaking Popular Music Performance degree, which is the first of its kind in the nation and will likely be emulated by other institutions in the future. Additionally, a new Bachelor of Arts in Choral Music becomes one of only three such programs in the nation. USC Thornton also introduces a Bachelor of Arts in Vocal Jazz for the first time, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Performing and Visual Arts Studies, an innovative interdisciplinary program among all five of USC's arts schools: School of Architecture, School of Cinematic Arts, Roski School of Fine Arts, School of Theatre, and Thornton School of Music.

At the graduate level, USC Thornton unveils a revised Doctorate in Music Education and a revised Doctorate in Sacred Music, both of which have been honed to ensure they continue to set the **bar** in these fields.

To accommodate these new programs and enhance existing ones, USC Thornton has made several major faculty appointments in recent years: acclaimed Grammy award winning saxophonist and Yellowjackets member **Bob Mintzer**, Bowen H. "Buzz" McCoy and Barbara M. McCoy Endowed Chair in Jazz; Motown songwriting legend **Lamont Dozier**, Popular Music Artist in Residence; *Washington Post* Pulitzer-Prize winning columnist **Tim Page**, Associate Professor of Musicology; President-Elect of the American Choral Directors Association **Jo-Michael Scheibe**, Chair of Choral and Sacred Music; leading opera star **Rod Gilfry**, Associate Professor of Vocal Arts and Opera; renowned violinist **Midori Goto**, Jascha Heifetz Chair in Violin and String Department Chair; and celebrated cellist **Ralph Kirshbaum**, Gregor Piatigorsky Chair in Violoncello.

Additionally, Cutietta announced that during USC Thornton's unprecedented 125-day anniversary celebration, the school will present more than 50 events showcasing each of the School's 16 departments. Festivities – which include concerts, special lectures, seminars, masterclasses, visual displays, opera productions, and interdisciplinary programs – begin on August 9, 2009 and culminate on December 11, 2009. The majority of these events are open to the public free of charge.

Among the numerous artists to be featured over the 18-week celebration are pop icon Steve Miller; contemporary music sensation Eighth Blackbird; internationally acclaimed conductors Helmuth Rilling

and Michael Tilson Thomas; classical guitar legends and USC Thornton faculty members Pepe Romero, James Smith, William Kanengiser and Brian Head; and jazz greats Alan Pasqua, Bob Mintzer, John Clayton and Peter Erskine, all of whom are also on USC Thornton's faculty.

"Thornton is the oldest continuously operating cultural institution in Southern California and is one of the oldest music schools in the country," states Cutietta. "The anniversary is a major milestone in the history of USC, the history of Los Angeles and the music world at large. As a model for other music schools since its inception and a pioneering force in the music industry, the impact of this institution over the past 125 years is immeasurable."

USC Thornton currently enrolls 1,072 students from 40 countries, and its illustrious alumni and faculty have been awarded countless Grammy and Academy Awards and serve as leaders in all facets – artistic, technical and business – of the music industry.

## **Details Announced**

### **USC Thornton Significantly Expands Classroom Space**

Over the next 24 months, USC Thornton's classroom, rehearsal and performance space will increase by 50% when three buildings – the three-story Marcia Lucas Post-Production building, the Carson Soundstage and the Harold Lloyd Soundstage, all formerly part of the USC School of Cinematic Arts, transition to USC Thornton's possession. Located adjacent to some of the School's current facilities, the three buildings, which were dedicated in 1984 and built around a central courtyard, will be repurposed for USC Thornton's unique needs. "Finding additional space in close proximity to Thornton has been one of our major priorities," says Cutietta. "We are grateful to USC and the Cinema School for the opportunity to utilize this facility. As we look to the future and the next 125 years, the space will enable us to expand our programs and help us keep competitive with other institutions." Given the school's urban location in the center of Los Angeles, increasing its size by 50% is particularly noteworthy.

### **Groundbreaking Popular Music Performance Degree Program Goes "Live" this Fall**

This fall, USC Thornton launches a Bachelor of Music in Popular Music Performance, filling a significant void in music education. *Prefixmag.com* states, "And so it begins: Just like film and critical studies departments became a staple of major universities by the 1980s, a major university has started a pop music program, the first of its kind."

The revolutionary program approaches popular music with the same discipline and rigor as the School does training students in classical music. Motown songwriting legend Lamont Dozier, with more than 54 No. 1 hits to his credit, is the department's first Artist in Residence. Songwriting and drum studies, taught in the School's new state-of-the-art Roland Drumlab, the first of its type in the world, are a part of the curriculum. Future graduates from the program may seek careers as artists, music directors,

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arrangers, songwriters or in other industry roles, according to Christopher Sampson, Chair of Popular Music, Associate Dean for External

Relations and noted blues and roots guitarist.

“We’ve had tremendous interest in the new program and have hand-picked an outstanding group of students for the first ‘class,’” says Sampson. “The audition process was amazing, we saw some great talent.”

### **Introduction of Three Additional Undergraduate Programs and a Revised Graduate Program to Further Augment Curriculum**

In addition to the Popular Music Performance program, USC Thornton introduces this fall three other new undergraduate programs as well as a revised version of a Doctorate program.

New at the undergraduate level are a Bachelor of Arts in Choral Music, one of only three such programs in the nation, a Bachelor of Arts in Vocal Jazz, and a Bachelor of Arts in Performing and Visual Arts Studies, an interdisciplinary program designed in collaboration with USC’s five arts schools (School of Architecture, School of Cinematic Arts, Roski School of Fine Arts, School of Theatre and Thornton School of Music) that takes advantage of USC Thornton’s home within a major research university, something many music schools lack.

“What is unique is that these degrees were designed to welcome transfer students from community colleges,” explains Cutietta. “This is very new for us.”

At the graduate level, USC Thornton debuts revised versions of a Doctorate in Music Education and one in Sacred Music.

“Both are built upon the school’s already well established programs in these fields,” Cutietta says. “But they have been updated to make them even more relevant to the workplace and academia, which many of our graduate students pursue.”

In fall 2008, USC Thornton added to its curriculum a Master of Specialized Journalism in Arts Journalism. Similar to the new Bachelor of Arts in Performing and Visual Arts, it is also an interdisciplinary program between USC Thornton and its five sister arts schools at USC.

### **Several Outstanding New Faculty Members Appointed**

In anticipation of the launch of the new programs noted above and to complement USC Thornton’s current list of stellar faculty, over the past two years the School has added several top new faculty to its ranks.

In the Jazz Department, acclaimed saxophonist and composer **Bob Mintzer**, top recording artist and member of the seminal Yellowjackets and Jaco Pastorius's fabled Word of Mouth Big Band, assumed the prestigious post of Bowen H. "Buzz" McCoy and Barbara M. McCoy Endowed Chair in Jazz in 2008. Grammy Award-winning drummer **Peter Erskine**, who has appeared on more than 500 albums and film scores and was appointed Assistant Professor of Jazz Studies in 2008, will do double duty teaching in both the Popular Music and Jazz programs.

**Jo-Michael Scheibe** (D.M.A '85), President-Elect of the American Choral Directors Association, returned to USC in Fall 2008 after a 15-year tenure as director of Choral Studies at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music, to chair USC Thornton's Department of Choral and Sacred Music, where he conducts the USC Chamber Singers, teaches choral conducting and choral methods, and supervises the graduate and undergraduate choral program.

Opera star, recitalist and concert artist **Rod Gilfry**, who performs on the world's leading stages, added to his resume in 2008 the role of Associate Professor of Vocal Arts and Opera at USC Thornton.

**Tim Page**, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the *Washington Post* and USC Thornton alumnus, was named Associate Professor of Musicology at both the Annenberg School of Journalism and the USC Thornton School of Music in 2008.

As noted above in the description of the Popular Music Performance program, **Lamont Dozier**, part of the icon Motown Holland-Dozier-Holland songwriting team, was appointed Artist in Residence.

The appointments include internationally acclaimed violinist **Midori Goto**, who was named Jascha Heifetz Chair of Violin and Chair of the String Department in 2007. As Department Chair, she follows in the footsteps of such legends as violinist Jascha Heifetz and violist William Primrose, and has already led the department into exciting new territory with such innovative projects as the interdisciplinary residency of the Tokyo Quartet in November of 2008, part of USC's Visions & Voices annual arts initiative.

Also bolstering the already esteemed string faculty was the appointment of renowned cellist **Ralph Kirshbaum**, who was appointed Gregor Piatigorsky Chair in Violoncello in 2008.

"Each of these people are absolutely at the top of their game," Cutietta states. "Their phenomenal professional experience and level of artistry is second to none, making them an invaluable asset to the family and our students."

### **Major 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events Detailed**

More than 50 events, including concerts, lectures and seminars are planned for USC Thornton's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the majority of which are open to the public free of charge.

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“Thornton has always been an active partner in the community,” notes Cutietta. “We specifically planned our 125<sup>th</sup> celebration with the community in mind and welcome the public to enjoy all that Thornton has to offer.”

The official launch of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration begins overseas when several noted USC Thornton Chamber music students, under the guidance of Peter Marsh, tour to France to participate in the prestigious Franco-Américaines De Musique De Chambre in Missillac, France from August 9-20, 2009. This is the eighth year USC Thornton has been invited to participate in the festival, which pairs USC’s most promising chamber students with accomplished students from the Paris Conservatoire for a week of rehearsals followed by a week of sold-out performances.

Locally, the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary kickoffs with a major all-night blowout on September 10, 2009, when USC Thornton throws open its doors to the public free of charge for the “party of the century” (and a quarter). With Klieg lights shining and toasts bubbling forth, Dean Cutietta hosts a dazzling reception on campus to celebrate the school’s remarkable history, its leading role in the music industry and its focus on the future. *The* place to be for friends and family of USC Thornton, as well as members of the community, the evening continues with a performance by the lauded USC Thornton Symphony Orchestra conducted by noted conductors Carl St.Clair at Bovard Auditorium followed by a rockin’ post-concert party at USC’s Alumni Park, which will be transformed into a chic nightspot with dancing into the wee hours.

Among the many other notable free events offered on campus during the 125-day celebration is a jazz concert on October 3, 2009, at USC’s Newman Hall headlined by legendary jazz artists and USC Thornton faculty members Alan Pasqua, a pianist hailed by *All•About•Jazz* as a “supernova” with “flat-out blistering skills as a pure player”; “exceptional” (*LA Weekly*) saxophonist Bob Mintzer; seven-time Grammy nominee bassist John Clayton; and drummer Peter Erskine, acclaimed for his “beautiful phrasing and unique dynamics” (*Modern Drummer*).

Two days later, on October 5, 2009, at Bovard Auditorium, acclaimed conductor and USC alumnus Michael Tilson Thomas, music director of the San Francisco Symphony who was named one of “America’s Best Leaders” for being a “musical maverick,” (*U.S. News & World Report*), conducts the USC Thornton Symphony Orchestra in a multi-media evening of music and recollections of his days at USC. He has designed this unique and very personal program specifically for USC Thornton’s anniversary celebration.

Eighth Blackbird, the contemporary sextet serving as artistic director of the upcoming Ojai Festival, brings its unique musical approach that “inhabits territory somewhere between classical gig, installation and physical theatre” (*The Guardian*) to USC Thornton for a special concert on October 16, 2009, at Newman Hall.

Other free programs include a recital featuring members of USC Thornton's acclaimed classical guitar faculty, on October 30, 2009, at Alfred Newman Recital Hall. Making the guitar strings sing are Pepe Romero, described as "soaring and virtuosic" (*New York Times*); acclaimed chamber artist James Smith, Chair of USC Thornton's Classical Guitar Department and member of the esteemed Bel Arts Trio, William Kanengiser, "who smashes the stereotypes of classical guitar" (*Knoxville News Sentinel*); and Brian Head, hailed as "incredibly intelligent and passionate about music" (Guitar Foundation of America).

During USC's homecoming weekend, internationally renowned conductor Helmuth Rilling leads a choral master class and guest conducts the USC Thornton's famed Choral Artists – a combination of the Concert Choir and the Chamber Singers – and the USC Thornton Symphony Orchestra on November 13, 2009, at Bovard Auditorium.

On November 15, 2009, at Newman Hall, the aptly titled "Opus 125 Concert" showcases the considerable talents of many of USC Thornton's illustrious faculty members from the jazz, opera and classical music departments performing music on the theme of 125. "We expect this to be one of the highlights of the anniversary," notes Cutietta.

A free three-day Chamber Music Marathon takes over the campus on November 30, December 1 and 2, 2009. From new cutting-edge chamber works to traditional repertoire, the festival offers something for everyone.

### **Charles Dickens Dinner Honoring USC's President Steven Sample and Opera Star Placido Domingo Plus Two Benefit Concerts Headlined by the Steve Miller Band Planned**

A pair of diverse fundraisers reflecting USC Thornton's considerable musical diversity is also planned as part of Thornton's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

Multi-Grammy Award-winning pop music group The Steve Miller Band – whose chart topping rock anthems include *Fly Like an Eagle*, *Jet Airliner*, *Take the Money and Run* and *Rock'n Me* – kicks it up with a pair of back-to-back fundraising concerts on October 22 and 23, 2009, at Bovard Auditorium. Christopher Sampson, Chair of the School's new Popular Music Department, Associate Dean for External Relations, notes, "We're so grateful to Steve for generously helping us to celebrate Thornton's anniversary and the launch of the new Popular Music Performance degree program." The concerts coincide with USC's Parents Weekend.

The final fundraiser, and the concluding 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event, is USC Thornton's annual "Charles Dickens Dinner." At the event, set for December 11, 2009, at the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, opera great Placido Domingo will be honored with the Legacy Award and USC President

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Steven Sample will receive the John C. Argue Medal of Honor. Gayle and Edward P. Roski, Jr., Chairman of the USC Board of Trustees, are

chairing the elegant holiday-themed black-tie gala.

### **Other Events Slated**

In addition to the events notes above, a comprehensive list of 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events is included in the press kit.

### **“18 for 18” Showcases School**

Separate from the individual events planned for USC Thornton’s 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the School premieres “18 for 18,” an 18-week/125-day long project in which each week will be devoted to showcasing one of the school’s departments and programs. It will include visual displays in the showcases located in USC’s Alfred Newman Recital Hall, one of USC Thornton’s key performance venues, as well as specially produced videos that highlight each week’s featured subject. Those videos will be displayed on the School’s website and on the School’s dedicated You Tube channel, located at [www.youtube.com/uscthornton](http://www.youtube.com/uscthornton).

“The goal is to celebrate *all* that is Thornton in a meaningful, educational and interesting way,” says Cutietta. “The scope of the school is so diverse, and we want to spotlight every facet.”

### **125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sponsors**

Major sponsors for the USC Thornton School of Music’s 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary include Flora L. Thornton, The Leo Buscaglia Foundation, and The Office of the President of the University of Southern California.

### **About the USC Thornton School of Music**

The University of Southern California’s Flora L. Thornton School of Music, founded in 1884, is the oldest continuously operating cultural institution in Los Angeles. It consistently ranks among the top one percent of the nation’s music schools and conservatories, with a unique combination of innovative programs such as popular music performance, recording science, and scoring for motion pictures and television, as well as a long and illustrious tradition of classical music performance studies in all major instruments. Featuring a student/teacher ratio of 6:1 and blending the rigors of a traditional conservatory-style education with the benefits of studying at a leading research university, USC Thornton offers students an unparalleled music education in a real-world context. Graduates consistently attain prominent positions with a multitude of major ensembles, recording studios and businesses in the music industry. In 1999, philanthropist Flora L. Thornton became the school's benefactor with a naming gift of \$25 million, at the time the largest such contribution to an American school of music.

Among the school's celebrated alumni are acclaimed conductors Michael Tilson Thomas and Grant Gershon; opera stars Marilyn Horne, Rod Gilfry, Jessica Rivera and Erica Miller; pop music great Herb Albert; film score composers James Horner, Jerry Goldsmith and James Newton Howard; noted video game composer Bear McCreary; composer and Presidential Medal of the Arts recipient Morten Lauridsen; leading jazz artists Lionel Hampton, Lee Ritenour, Tom Scott and Patrice Rushen; esteemed classical guitarist Christopher Parkening.

The School's many accomplished alumni performing with major orchestras include Michelle Kim, Assistant Concertmaster, New York Philharmonic; Owen Lee, Principal Bass, Cincinnati Symphony; Cynthia Phelps, Principal Viola, New York Philharmonic; Cheryl Staples, Associate Concertmaster, New York Philharmonic; Alan Baer, Principal Tuba, New York Philharmonic; Gene Pokorny, Principal Tuba, Chicago Symphony; Elizabeth Rowe, Principal Flute, Boston Symphony; Daniel Rothmuller, Associate Principal Cello, Los Angeles Philharmonic; Donald Green, Principal Trumpet, Los Angeles Philharmonic; Dale Hikawa Silverman, Associate Principal Viola, Los Angeles Philharmonic; and Ben Hong, Assistant Principal Cello, Los Angeles Philharmonic. Michael Ke Ma, Assistant Bassoon, Detroit Symphony; Norm Pearson, Principal Tuba, Los Angeles Philharmonic; and Larry Zalkind, Principal Trombone, Utah Symphony.

### **For Further Information**

For additional information about the USC Thornton School of Music, its 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary or its events, please call (213) 740-6935 or visit [www.usc.edu/music](http://www.usc.edu/music).

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**USC Thornton School of Music  
Partial List of 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concerts and Events  
Fall 2009**

**August 9-20**

USC Thornton Chamber ensemble members at Franco-Américaines De Musique De Chambre in Missillac, France

**September 10**

- 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration
- USC Thornton Symphony Concert
- 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary After Party

**September 24**

USC Thornton Chamber Orchestra Concert

**September 27**

USC Thornton Wind Ensemble Concert

**October 3**

USC Thornton Jazz Department Faculty Recital

**October 4**

Polish Music Center Paderewski Lecture Recital

**October 5**

USC Thornton Symphony Concert with guest conductor Michael Tilson Thomas

**October 9**

USC Thornton Baroque Sinfonia Concert

**October 13**

USC Thornton Contemporary Music Ensemble Concert

**October 14**

Jazz Honors Combo

**October 16**

Eighth Blackbird Concert

**October 22**

USC Thornton Chamber Orchestra Concert

**October 22-23 (Parents Weekend)**

Steve Miller & Friends Benefit Concert

**October 26**

USC Thornton Percussion Ensemble Concert

**October 27**

Koldofsky Memorial concert

**October 30**

USC Thornton Classical Guitar Department Recital

**November 1**

USC Thornton Wind Ensemble Concert

**November 2-3**

Pepe Romero Masterclasses

**November 4**

USC Thornton Concert Orchestra Concert

**November 6**

Apollo and Oriana Choir Concert

**November 7**

USC Thornton Composition Department Recital

**November 11**

USC Thornton Jazz Orchestra Concert

**November 13**

USC Thornton Symphony and Choral Artists Concert with guest conductor Helmuth Rilling

**November 15**

Opus 125 Faculty Recital

**November 17**

USC Thornton Contemporary Music Ensemble Concert

**November 18**

CreSCendo

**November 19-22**

USC Thornton Opera, *Ainadamar*

**November 30-December 1**

Chamber Music Marathon

**December 2**

Choral Gala Concert

**December 3**

USC Thornton Classical Guitar Department Recital

**December 11**

Charles Dickens Dinner