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DIANE WITTRY RECEIVES USC THORNTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC’S OUTSTANDING ALUMNUS AWARD

Presented annually at USC Thornton’s Honors Convocation, the Outstanding Alumnus Award is conferred upon a Thornton graduate whose artistic or scholarly accomplishments reflect the ideals of the school and further the art of music.

LOS ANGELES (April 23, 2013) – On Thursday, May 16, the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music will present the Outstanding Alumnus Award to acclaimed conductor Diane Wittry as part of the School’s Honors Convocation. She will also address the USC Thornton graduating class the following day during the official Commencement Ceremony.

Wittry, who graduated with honors from USC Thornton in 1983 and earned a Master’s from the school two years later, is an esteemed music director, guest conductor, composer, and author.

Past winners of USC Thornton’s Outstanding Alumnus Award have included 2007 National Medal of Arts recipient Morten Lauridsen; Grant Gershon, music director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and resident conductor of the Los Angeles Opera; the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet (LAGQ); conductor Michael Tilson Thomas; and opera star Marilyn Horne, among many others.

“We are thrilled to celebrate Diane Wittry with the Outstanding Alumnus Award,” said Robert Cutietta, Dean of the USC Thornton School of Music. “Her work as a conductor, music director, composer, and author is a perfect example of how her entrepreneurial spirit has led to a successful career, serving as a model for others to follow.”

Wittry currently serves as the music director of the Allentown Symphony Orchestra, where she has championed an exciting, innovative programming style for concerts of all types. She was recently named the artistic director for the U.S. as part of the International Cultural Exchange Program for Classical Musicians through the Sarajevo Philharmonic. She also serves as the
Diane Wittry Receives USC Thornton’s Outstanding Alumnus Award

Diane Wittry received USC Thornton’s Outstanding Alumnus Award, recognizing her contributions to the field of music and her exceptional work as an artistic director for Pizazz Music, an ensemble known for bringing classical music to people in original ways.

At Thornton, Wittry studied with Daniel Lewis and was the recipient of a conducting fellowship from the Aspen Music Festival. Her other teachers and mentors include fellow Thornton alum Michael Tilson Thomas, Gustav Meier, and Jorge Mester.

“I really enjoyed my experience,” said Wittry. “The conducting program was one of the top four programs in the country and nationally recognized. Getting into that program was, for me, life-changing. It was the moment where I said, OK, I’m really going to do this. I still stay in touch with Dan Lewis. He’s just a wonderful mentor and person.”

In addition to her work as a conductor and music director, Wittry is also a noted author. _Beyond the Baton; What Every Conductor Needs to Know_ offers a comprehensive roadmap to a successful career as a conductor. Published by Oxford University Press, the book was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 2007.

“I wanted to write the book that I wished someone had given me when I got out of school that would tell how not to make all the mistakes that I made or saw my friends make,” Wittry said. “We were trained really well to become musicians and to play in orchestras, but we were not taught to be community leaders and to understand the larger role of a music director within an arts organization. The book helps with that area of our training and has become a standard for the conducting industry.”

A second book, _Baton Basics; Communicating Music Through Gestures_, has recently been accepted for publication by Oxford.

Wittry’s ongoing success is a testament to her resilience and ambition. “It’s difficult to be a musician these days,” she said. “For that one violin opening in a major orchestra, you might have 300 people apply—of which most of them can all do the job and play the excerpts. You can’t get discouraged. You can only be as good as you are at that moment, and then work to become better in the next moment.”

More information about Diane Wittry is available at her website: [www.dianewittry.com](http://www.dianewittry.com)

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**About the USC Thornton School of Music**

The USC Thornton School of Music brings together a stellar faculty chosen from a broad spectrum of the music profession and gifted students representing 40 countries, from Ireland to Czechoslovakia to Brazil.

By blending the rigors of a traditional conservatory-style education with the benefits of a leading research university, USC Thornton offers an impressive range of performance opportunities and a curriculum designed to prepare students for successful careers in the 21st century. The
Thornton School presents more than 500 concerts each year and is the only music school with a weekly radio broadcast in a major media market featuring student performances.

For more than 125 years, Thornton has prepared students to excel as composers, industry leaders, educators, and performers in studios and on stages around the world. Founded in 1884 and today the oldest continually operating cultural institution in Los Angeles, USC Thornton is internationally recognized as one of the finest conservatories and music schools in the United States.

The USC Thornton School boasts legendary musicians and educators on its faculty, including internationally renowned performers and musicologists, and winners of prestigious awards and hundreds of Academy- and Grammy-awards.

Located in the heart of Los Angeles, USC Thornton offers students every advantage of studying, performing, and networking in the world’s most vibrant music industry hubs. Every week, students engage with leading professionals in all aspects of the music, recording, and entertainment industries, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, LA Opera, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Grammy Foundation, and The Recording Academy. Thornton students are also a constant presence in local classrooms, reaching out to the next generation of musicians.