REALITY CHECK

USC Thornton students have long moonlighted as performers in the background of high-profile television shows, but faculty conductor Larry Livingston steps out from the shadows in the USA Network’s new reality series, The Moment.

LOS ANGELES (May 30, 2013) – Look in the house bands of many of today’s biggest television shows like American Idol, The Voice, and Glee and you’ll find Thornton alumni and students performing for national audiences.

This Friday, former Dean and current Thornton faculty member Larry Livingston steps forward to take a lead role in a new unscripted series on the USA Network. The Moment, a show hosted by famed NFL quarterback Kurt Warner, gives ordinary Americans opportunities to realize their dreams and rewrite their life stories.

“The concept is to find an individual who is talented and dreams of a special future but is diverted either because of financial problems or family issues and is therefore unable to pursue that dream,” said Larry Livingston, chair of USC Thornton’s instrumental conducting program who celebrated his 25th year at the school in 2011. “They got Kurt Warner to host the show, and he is perfect because he was bagging groceries before he was in the Super Bowl. He is a rags to riches story.”

Livingston was the first music administrator accepted into the Harvard’s Executive Education Program. In 1988, he received the Alumnus of the Year Award from the University of Michigan School of Music, and is in high demand as a conductor around the world. He was selected to appear on The Moment after a long search by the show’s producers. Like many Thornton alumni and current students, he was also recently invited to appear on an episode of Glee.

“Glee, and gigs like it, are a reality check for our students,” Livingston said. “We spend a great deal of time focused on helping our students master their instruments, which is important, but we also need to teach them to look strategically at what it means to survive in our profession.”
On *The Moment*, Livingston puts this thinking into practice—something he has done throughout his career—but this time in front of a camera crew. For the final episode of the show’s first season, he works with aspiring conductor Phil Theodorou to help him prepare for an audition with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra.

“In the summer of 2011, while I was conducting as part of the Idyllwild Summer Music Festival, Charlie Ebersol—Dick Ebersol’s son—met with me in my office with another one of the organizers,” Livingston said. “The first person they found for the show was a conductor.”

Theodorou’s plan to become a conductor was derailed when his son was born with a learning disorder and he took a stable job teaching at a high school in Southern California to help support his family. It is a compelling story, but the team behind *The Moment* didn’t know the first thing about what it means to be a conductor.

“They told me, ‘We don’t know anything about conducting. What would you do?’” Livingston said. “So I gave them some ideas, and they called me two days later and asked to film the interview this time. Then they called once more and said that the network had agreed to support the show if I signed on.”

He did, and over the course of five months, Livingston worked with Theodorou to help prepare him for the audition. So how did it turn out? Livingston might be new to reality television, but he’s an old pro at not giving away a good ending. He demurred and, like a true teacher, focused instead on the lessons he was able to impart.

“It was a very interesting adventure into pushing for my own way of teaching while being pulled towards what the show’s producers wanted,” he said.

The final episode of *The Moment* will air on Friday, May 31st, at 11:00 p.m. on the USA Network.

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**About the USC Thornton School of Music**

For more the 125 years, the USC Thornton School of Music has prepared students to excel as performers, composers, industry leaders, and educators on stages and in studios 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 U.S.

By blending the rigors of a traditional conservatory-style education with the benefits of a leading research university, USC Thornton offers a curriculum designed to prepare students for successful careers in the 21st century.
USC Thornton brings together a stellar faculty chosen from a broad spectrum of the music profession and gifted students representing 40 countries. The school features legendary musicians and educators on its faculty, including internationally renowned performers, musicologists, and winners of prestigious 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 center. 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, Grammy Foundation, and The Recording Academy. Thornton students are also a constant presence in local classrooms, reaching out to the next generation of musicians.