

USC Thornton

School of Music

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USC THORNTON SYMPHONY PERFORMS AT WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL UNDER THE DIRECTION OF USC PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR CARL ST.CLAIR JANUARY 27, 2013 AT 2PM.

Concert features soprano Angela Brown, baritone Kevin Deas and the USC Thornton Concert Choir under the direction of Cristian Grases

St.Clair also takes on a newly expanded role as Artistic Leader of USC Thornton School of Music Orchestras

(Los Angeles, CA) – The USC Thornton School of Music celebrates Principal Conductor Carl St.Clair’s expanded role as Artistic Leader of the Thornton School of Music Orchestras in a very special performance featuring Maestro St.Clair leading the USC Thornton Symphony on January 27, 2013 at 2PM at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Featured works are Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess Suite* and Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The *Porgy and Bess Suite* features soprano Angela Brown, baritone Kevin Deas, and USC Thornton choral faculty member, Cristian Grases, who prepared the USC Thornton Concert Choir. This special program is representative of St.Clair’s newly expanded appointment as Artistic Leader of the USC Thornton School of Music Orchestras bringing first rate guest artists and inspired programs to the students, and giving them the chance to perform in one of the world’s greatest halls.

St.Clair describes the concert program in his own words: “Both Angela and Kevin deliver the roles of Bess and Porgy in such a deeply heartfelt and authentic way that I wanted our students to experience their profound musical souls, and the interpretations which rise from within them. Interestingly, both Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* and Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* were composed in the same year, continents and cultures apart. These two masterworks express in the most basic of human feelings; love, longing, elation and tragedy, in such distant musical languages, yet capture those powerful emotions in their own special way so vividly. Combining these two works, especially back to back without intermission, will offer the audience and our students a juxtaposition of musical worlds not often experienced in the concert hall.”

Soprano Angela Brown makes her Walt Disney Concert Hall debut with this performance and states, “I am very excited to work with Maestro St.Clair again, as we first worked

together in Germany with Kevin (Deas) on this work and he was so wonderful to work with. He knows this piece like the back of his hand so there is no guessing. It is great to be in the hands of someone who really knows the music. Also having sung several different roles in the complete *Porgy and Bess*, I love singing the suite as it gives me a chance to sing arias from all of the different characters including the famous and beautiful ‘*Summertime*.’ “

At the start of the 2012-2013 season, St.Clair began to take his artistic vision to greater heights through his newly expanded appointment as Artistic Leader of USC Thornton Orchestras. St.Clair, a strong visionary for innovative programming and music education, is working closely with the school and fellow faculty members to carefully choose the repertoire, guest conductors and artists, and also to oversee educational goals for the overall orchestral program at USC. “I could not be more excited about Carl having a greater presence in our school,” says Robert Cutietta, Dean of the USC Thornton School of Music. “He is already putting his artistic “stamp” on our orchestra. Our students love working with him and rise to new artistic heights every time he is on the podium.”

On his new role, St.Clair states, “The difference in my new role is that I will be doing more than just conducting and teaching, I will be creating the season and the musical diet for a particular year for the students through choosing the guest conductors and artists, programming and integrating my philosophy of what is more important for them to take away from the educational experience. I am really excited about working more closely with the faculty, especially my fellow conductors, to develop the education outlets and be a bigger part of the USC Thornton School family.” The January 27 is part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s *Sounds About Town* series. This performance is one of four concerts St.Clair will conduct with the USC Thornton Symphony this season.

“A major objective of the Los Angeles Philharmonic is the nurturing of tomorrow’s performers by providing opportunities for premiere youth ensembles such as the USC Thornton Symphony to perform in Walt Disney Concert Hall. The *Sounds about Town* series provides that possibility and we are delighted to welcome the return of these talented young players”, said Deborah Borda, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

This concert has been made possible in part by the Flora L. Thornton Foundation, the Henry Family Fund, and sponsored by Classical KUSC 91.5 FM.

Tickets are \$34.50-\$45 and can be purchased through the LA PHIL website at www.laphil.com or by calling the box office at 1(323)850-2000.

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CONCERT DETAILS:

January 27, 2013, 2PM
USC Thornton Symphony
Carl St.Clair, *principal conductor*
Angela Brown, *soprano*
Kevin Deas, *baritone*
USC Thornton Concert Choir, *Cristian Grases, director*
GERSHWIN *Porgy and Bess Suite*
PROKOFIEV *Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64*

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Carl St.Clair is internationally recognized for his distinguished career as a professional conductor and master teacher. He has had a continuing relationship with the USC Thornton School of Music for over 20 years. Since the 2005-06 season, he has been principal conductor of the USC Thornton orchestras and a faculty lecturer in conducting. This season marks his 22nd year as music director of the Pacific Symphony, an organization he has helped morph into the largest United States orchestra formed within the last 40 years. As a renowned member of the Southern California music community, St.Clair is known for distinguished musicianship, passion for music education, commitment to outstanding educational programs, and innovative programming.

From 2008 to 2010, St. Clair was general music director of the Komische Oper Berlin. During his tenure he led acclaimed productions of *La Traviata*, the world premiere of Cristian Jost's *Hamlet*, as well as the heralded new production of *Lear* by Aribert Reimann, one of Germany's most distinguished composers. Leading to his appointment in Berlin, from 2005 - 2008, St.Clair was general music director and chief conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle (GNTS) in Weimar, Germany, where he conducted and recorded Wagner's complete Ring Cycle to great international critical acclaim. St.Clair was the first non-European to hold his position at the GNTS, one of the oldest European orchestras. He was the principal guest conductor of the Radio Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart from 1998-2004, where he successfully completed a three-year recording project of the eleven symphonies of Heitor Villa-Lobos, the only such cycle in existence. He has also appeared with orchestras in Bulgaria, Portugal, Switzerland, Israel, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Brazil, Mexico and summer festivals worldwide.

St.Clair maintains a strong commitment to the development and performance of new works by American composers, leading many critically acclaimed recordings, including two piano concertos of Lukas Foss on the Harmonia Mundi label. Other orchestra commissions that were subsequently recorded include Richard Danielpour's *An American*

Requiem (Reference Recordings) and Elliot Goldenthal's *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio* (Sony Classical with Yo-Yo Ma). He has also commissioned composers William Bolcom, Philip Glass, Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli and Chen Yi, Curt Cacioppo, Stephen Scott, Jim Self, Christopher Theofandis, Michael Daugherty and James Newton Howard.

In addition to the orchestras he has conducted abroad, St. Clair has been guest conductor with orchestras throughout the U.S., including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, (where he served as assistant conductor from 1986 to 1990), New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Los Angeles Philharmonic as well as the San Francisco, Seattle, Detroit, Atlanta, Houston, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver symphonies among many others.

Angela Brown personifies the ideal American dramatic soprano: sheer vocal power; luxurious finesse; shimmering, high pianissimos; and a charming personality larger than life. Her highly successful Metropolitan Opera debut in 2004 sparked a media excitement with reviews from The New York Times: "*At last an Aida,*" the Associated Press: "*she combines a potent, dusky lower register with a striking ability to spin out soft high notes of shimmering beauty. There's no doubt her voice is powerful enough for Verdi,*" CBS Evening News: "*the future of opera has arrived,*" and features on the front page of The New York Times and in Oprah Magazine, Essence Magazine, Ebony Magazine, Classical Singer, Reader's Digest, and Psychology Today. In fall 2009, Angela received the Governor's Arts Award from the Governor of Indiana, a Spirit of the Prairie Award from Conner Prairie in Indiana, and was inducted into the Indianapolis Public Schools Hall of Fame. Miss Brown is a trailblazer on a mission to bring operatic and classical vocal performance to a diverse audience. Her witty and inspired recital program titled "Opera... from a Sistah's Point of View" dispels the myths of opera through lively commentary on opera plots and characters, show-stopping arias, poignant art songs and moving spirituals. A live performance of "Opera... from a Sistah's Point of View" was recorded in October 2010 at the Musical Arts Center of Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University, Miss Brown's previous solo appearances include: Metropolitan Opera; National Opera of Paris; Bilbao Opera, Spain; Teatro La Fenice; Opera Company of Philadelphia; Cincinnati Opera; Opera Pacific; Florentine Opera; Indianapolis Opera; Michigan Opera Theatre; Dayton Opera; Florida Grand Opera; The Philadelphia Orchestra; Auckland Philharmonia; Latvian National Symphony; Festival of St. Denis, France; Indianapolis Symphony; Cincinnati Pops; Brevard Festival Orchestra; Roanoke Symphony; El Paso Symphony; Knoxville Symphony; Chautauqua Institution; the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Angela has performed in recital throughout the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Africa.

Kevin Deas has gained international acclaim as one of America's leading basses. Lauded for his "burnished sound, clarity of diction and sincerity of expression" and "fervent intensity" by *Chicago Tribune* critic John von Rhein, Deas has been called "exemplary" (*Denver Post*), "especially fine" (*Washington Post*) and possessing "a resourceful range

of expression" (*The Cincinnati Enquirer*). He is perhaps most acclaimed for his signature portrayal of the title role in *Porgy and Bess*, having performed it with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco, Atlanta, San Diego, Utah, Houston, Minnesota, Baltimore and Montreal symphonies and the Ravinia and Saratoga festivals. Next season is full of prestigious engagements including: Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* at the Berkshire Choral Festival; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the National Arts Centre Orchestra; *Messiah* performances with the Kansas City Symphony; National Philharmonic and Seattle Symphony; and the concert version of *Porgy and Bess* with the Vancouver Symphony and Milwaukee Symphony. In summer 2012, he performed Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Pacific Symphony, selections from *Porgy and Bess* at the Moscow International Performing Arts Center and the Vail Music Festival and *Missa Solemnis* at the Berkshire Choral Festival. Other recent highlights include the New York Philharmonic in *Ravel's L'enfant et les sortilèges* under Lorin Maazel, the world premiere of Derek Bermel's *The good Life* with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Leonard Slatkin, and Hannibal Lokumbe's *Dear Mrs. Parks* with the Detroit Symphony. Other recent engagements include: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony under the baton of Daniel Barenboim with Filarmonica della Scala in Accra celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of Ghana; Copland's *Old American Songs* and Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* with the Chicago Symphony; *Messiah* with the Cleveland Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic and Handel & Haydn Society; the opening performance at the Newport Jazz Festival with the Dave Brubeck Quartet; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Colorado Symphony and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra; and performances of Brubeck's *To Hope!* in Salzburg and Vienna.

Cristian Grases joined the USC Thornton Faculty in the Fall 2010 semester as Assistant Professor of Choral Music and Conductor of the USC Thornton Concert Choir. Born in Venezuela, he studied in Caracas with María Guinand and Alberto Grau, and in the USA with Jo-Michael Scheibe and Josh Habermann. Dr. Grases currently serves as chair of the Ethnic and Multicultural Repertoire and Standards Committee for the Western Division of the American Choral Directors Association, and is a member of the board of directors of the International Federation of Choral Music. Dr. Grases has participated in numerous festivals, workshops, and events as a guest conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and conducting pedagogue in North and South America, Europe, and Asia. He has published numerous articles and compositions and has won awards for his conducting and choral works. Among them is the prestigious award for the arts in Venezuela, "Orden José Félix Ribas" for artistic merit, and first prize at the *Emerging Composer Competition* at Yale University for his work *Visiones del Llano - 2. Amanecer*. Dr. Grases has been commissioned to write for several prestigious organizations such as the Piedmont Children's Chorus and the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and his works have been performed by the Los Angeles Master Chorale. This season Dr. Grases has been invited to guest conduct in California, New Mexico, Canada, and Israel.

USC Thornton Symphony

The USC THORNTON SYMPHONY, under the direction of principal conductor and artistic leader Carl St.Clair and resident conductor Sharon Lavery, is highly praised as one of the leading university orchestras in the nation. This is exemplified by the prominent guest conductors who have led the symphony, including Thomas Adès, James Conlon, Jorge Mester, Helmuth Rilling, Gerard Schwarz, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Joseph Silverstein, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Michael Tilson Thomas, and John Williams, to name a few. The orchestra has also showcased some of today's most notable artists, such as Sarah Chang, Lynn Harrell, Yo-Yo Ma, Midori, Itzhak Perlman, Pepe Romero, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Isaac Stern, and André Watts. Prior conductors of the USC Thornton School orchestras include nationally acclaimed conductors and pedagogues Sergiu Comissiona, Dr. Walter Ducloux (St.Clair's former teacher), Ingolf Dahl, Yehuda Gilad, Henryk Górecki, Jung-Ho Pak, Daniel Lewis, Larry Livingston, and Larry Rachleff. The orchestra has performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and throughout the Los Angeles region to wide acclaim. When St.Clair isn't providing artistic direction and conducting the orchestra, he is the Music Director of the renowned Pacific Symphony in Orange County. Lavery is also the Music Director of the Downey Symphony. In contrast to the fixed performance ensembles at most music schools, the USC Thornton orchestra members rotate between various ensembles, multiplying students' opportunities to experience everything from symphonic and opera orchestras to chamber groups. Through this unique performance training system, students are prepared to play any position in their sections in various settings. Our illustrious strings, winds, and percussion faculty work closely with Mr. St.Clair and Ms. Lavery, thus allowing players numerous challenges as they prepare and perform the masterpieces of all historical eras and styles, including new music.

USC Thornton Concert Choir

Under the direction of Cristian Grases, the USC THORNTON CONCERT CHOIR is one of the auditioned choral ensembles at USC. Founded by John Smallman in 1934, Concert Choir has had a legacy of important conductors amongst which we can highlight Charles Hirt and James Vail; and important professionals such as Nick Strimple and Morten Lauridsen have been a part of it as students. Concert Choir prepares three to four programs a year and performs both on campus and in other venues around the Los Angeles area. Occasionally Concert Choir joins forces with the USC Thornton Chamber Singers to perform major choral-symphonic works. After a very successful performance of J.S. Bach's Mass in B Minor under the direction of Maestro Helmuth Rilling in 2009, Concert Choir and Chamber Singers will perform Stravinski's Symphony of Psalms in April 2013 together with the USC Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Carl St. Clair. Concert Choir will also perform at the First United Methodist Church in San Diego and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

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 from around the globe. Founded in 1884 and today the oldest continually operating cultural institution in Los Angeles, the Thornton School consistently ranks among the nation's top music schools and conservatories.

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.

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 hub. Every week, our 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®. Our students also are a constant presence in local classrooms, reaching out to the next generation of musicians. For more information please visit www.usc.edu/music or call (213) 740-3233.

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