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Images available upon request

**USC THORNTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC AT THE FOREFRONT OF STUDIES ABOUT
THE ROLE THAT MUSIC PLAYS IN CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

New faculty, new research, and a partnership with the USC Brain and Creativity Institute has the USC Thornton School of Music set to become a leader in studies about the role of music in childhood development

Los Angeles, CA (February 14, 2013) – Recent announcements have positioned the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music as a leader in research about the role that music plays in childhood development.

This fall, USC Thornton announced that Peter Webster, professor emeritus and director of the PhD program in Music Education at Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music, will join the Thornton faculty in Fall 2013.

“Peter Webster is an acknowledged leader in the area of musical creativity in children,” said Robert Cutietta, Dean of the USC Thornton School of Music and the USC Glorvya Kaufman School of Dance. “We are thrilled to welcome him to Thornton.”

In July, USC Thornton announced a groundbreaking new partnership with the USC Brain and Creativity Institute (BCI) led by Hanna and Antonio Demasio, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association (LA Phil), and Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA) to investigate the emotional, social, and cognitive effects of musical training on childhood brain development.

Beatriz Ilari, assistant professor of Music Education at USC Thornton, and Assal Habibi of the USC Brain and Creativity Institute, designed the five-year project, which will give USC researchers an opportunity to provide new insights and add rigorous data to an emerging discussion about the role of early music engagement in learning and brain function.

“I’ve been doing research with children for more than 10 years, but this opportunity to research the brain is new to me. The exchange has been very rich and very interesting,” said Ilari, who joined the Thornton faculty in 2011. “Habibi is a neuroscientist and pianist who also worked with children, and with Antonio and Hanna Demasio’s encouragement, we designed the study. Our goal is to look at a population that would represent Los Angeles and seldom appears in music psychology and science literature.”

The research team began working with students in September 2012. USC neuroscientists and music educators at Thornton will track students in the Heart of LA’s Youth Orchestra (YOLA). The project, which began with students who are about six years old and encountering musical training for the first time, will provide critical data on how intense music training affects brain development in children, as it actually happens.

“With the new study, new faculty, and the new partnership with the USC Brain & Creativity Institute, the Music Education program is poised for spectacular growth,” said Cutietta. “Thornton is in a great position to lead the research of childhood musical development for years to come.”

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About the USC Thornton School of Music

The University of Southern California 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. More at usc.edu/music, or call (213) 740-3233.