On Sunday, April 14, a farewell concert at Disney Hall honors distinguished professor and composer’s 50+ years with USC, while showcasing USC Thornton musicians.

On Sunday, April 14, the USC Thornton Symphony returns to Walt Disney Concert Hall for an evening featuring Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as well as two works by Thornton composers, Frank Ticheli’s celebrated *Angels in the Architecture* with the USC Thornton Wind Ensemble, and Morten Lauridsen’s iconic *Lux Aeterna* with the USC Thornton Choral Artists.

With the performance of *Lux Aeterna*, the school will celebrate the retirement of Lauridsen, a USC Distinguished Professor of Composition and National Medal of Arts recipient, after 50 years at USC as both a student and longtime faculty member.

**Lux Aeterna**

Last year, when maestro Carl St.Clair programmed Lauridsen’s *Lux Aeterna* for the concert, he didn’t know the Distinguished Professor of Composition would be retiring in May. Without realizing it, St.Clair planned the perfect farewell concert to celebrate Lauridsen’s more than half a century with USC.

Before the end of the last century, Lauridsen became the most frequently performed American choral composer. And *Lux Aeterna* has been one of the most popular compositions in the repertory since its 1997 premiere — performed on average 75 times a year around the world.

“When you have someone with profound spirituality as Morten does, it’s only that kind of spirit which can reach into the heavens and bring us back those kinds of sounds and notes and musical beauty,” said St.Clair, the Artistic Leader and Principal Conductor of the USC Thornton Orchestras who is also Music Director of the Pacific Symphony. “Somehow or other Morten has, through his own personal spirituality, a free pass to heaven.”

Lauridsen’s talent as a composer has been recognized with some of the most prestigious honors in the field. In 2006, the National Endowment for the Arts named Lauridsen an American Choral Master. In 2007, he became the eighth classical composer to receive the National Medal
of Arts, honored “for his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power and spiritual depth that have thrilled audiences worldwide.” And in 2016, he was chosen from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers’ 600,000 members to receive the ASCAP Foundation Life in Music Award.

He believes USC shared in those honors. “That was a great reflection on USC,” he said, “because not only am I a professor, but I was educated here.”

**A Showcase of USC Talent**

The Disney Hall concert that takes place at 7:30 PM on April 14 will undoubtedly be an emotional one. It will also be a significant showcase of USC Thornton talent, with three student ensembles, four faculty ensemble leaders and two USC faculty composers in the spotlight.

Sharing the stage with St.Clair and the USC Thornton Symphony will be both the USC Thornton Wind Ensemble, directed by H. Robert Reynolds and Sharon Lavery, and the USC Thornton Choral Artists, led by Jo-Michael Scheibe. In addition to *Lux Aeterna*, they’ll perform another signature piece by a celebrated member of the USC Thornton Composition faculty: Frank Ticheli’s *Angels in the Architecture*, as well as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony.

“In Frank Ticheli and Morten Lauridsen, USC has been blessed with two incredibly treasured American composers,” said St.Clair who has worked with both composers as music director of the Pacific Symphony and Pacific Chorale and considers them friends as well as professional colleagues.

**Decades of Distinction**

Lauridsen celebrates more than 50 years with USC. A native of the Pacific Northwest, he came to USC Thornton as an undergraduate, studying with Ingolf Dahl, Halsey Stevens, Robert Linn and Harold Owen, whom he called “very fine and quite legendary composers,” as well as “a very distinguished group of people in piano, conducting and history.”

Lauridsen lives in both Los Angeles and Waldron Island off the northern coast of Washington, where he famously worked on many compositions “in a rustic waterfront cabin by candlelight on a 50-dollar spinet piano.” But many of his works were composed and premiered at USC.

“My very first choral piece was premiered by the USC Concert Choir back in 1965,” Lauridsen said. “It was the first piece I wrote. I conducted the premiere, and we went on tour, and then it got published, and it started my career as a composer. My relationship to the School of Music has been very, very close. They have not only premiered my choral works, they’ve premiered my songs and instrumental pieces.”

“USC provided me a platform from which to develop my career as a professor and as a composer,” Lauridsen said.

Lauridsen, who plans to reside permanently in his remote island home, will still have a full slate of musical activities on his plate during retirement, with performances, university
residencies and work as honorary artistic president of the Interkultur/World Choir Games. Plus, there is a biography in the works.

“It’s been a very full and wonderful association with USC all these years,” he said.

“And it’s especially nice ending this with a performance of Lux Aeterna under the great maestro St.Clair with the combined chamber singers and choruses and symphony of USC at Disney Hall.”

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**A Weeklong Celebration of Morten Lauridsen**

*Tuesday, April 9, 7:30 pm*

**Thornton Edge**

Newman Hall  
Free Admission

As part of the weeklong celebration of Lauridsen, new music ensemble Thornton Edge presents Morten Lauridsen's classic song cycle, *Four Lorca Songs*, in addition to two pieces by his faculty colleagues in the Composition program, Sean Friar’s *Dynamics* and Donald Crockett’s *And the River* as well as selections from Kate Soper’s *Only the Words Themselves Mean What They Say*.  

*Sunday, April 14, 7:30 pm*

**USC Thornton Symphony, Wind Ensemble and Choral Artists at Walt Disney Concert Hall**

Walt Disney Concert Hall  
$15-$46. For tickets, call (323) 850-2050 or visit laphil.com.

Carl St.Clair leads the USC Thornton Symphony in a performance at Walt Disney Concert Hall featuring Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as well as two works by Thornton composers, Frank Ticheli’s celebrated *Angels in the Architecture* with the USC Thornton Wind Ensemble, and Morten Lauridsen’s iconic *Lux Aeterna* with the USC Thornton Choral Artists.

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**About the USC Thornton School of Music**

For more than 125 years, the University of Southern California 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. For more information, go to music.usc.edu.