

With a Song in their Hearts

BY JULIE RIGGOTT

As it celebrates its 125th anniversary, the USC Thornton School of Music continues its trailbreaking ways by introducing a new program in popular music performance, a genre that includes basically everything on the radio today: pop/rock, folk/rock, R&B/urban, Latin/salsa, blues, country and more.

LIKE FRANZ SCHUBERT'S Eighth or Anton Bruckner's Ninth, the USC Thornton School of Music is an unfinished symphony. The composition began in 1884, and over the past 125 years, accomplished students, faculty and alumni have been adding to the score, building and solidifying the school's reputation as one of the country's finest institutions of music education. It consistently ranks in the top 1 percent of music schools and conservatories nationwide.

The difference between this symphony and the great unfinished works of Schubert or Bruckner is that the school is a continually evolving piece, never meant to be finished. USC Thornton and its creative composers are using this milestone to plan for the next 125 years.

"This whole anniversary is about the future and what we do to prepare the school for 2134, which is our 250th anniversary," says an enthusiastic Robert Cutietta, who has been dean of USC Thornton for the past seven years. New developments include increasing

the school's physical size by 50 percent; adding several new distinguished faculty members, including a Pulitzer Prize winner and internationally renowned performers; inaugurating four undergraduate programs – including the high-profile popular music performance program – and announcing that the school's \$125 million capital campaign goal has been exceeded. "All of the new curricula have been timed to unveil during our 125th anniversary celebration," Cutietta says, "as a statement that, yes, we've been great for 125 years, and we are full speed ahead, folks."

USC THORNTON HAS BEEN known for years as a premier nurturer of classical musicians, with faculty that have included such luminaries as Jascha Heifetz, Gregor Piatigorsky, Eudice Shapiro, William Primrose, Gwendolyn Koldofsky, Ingolf Dahl, and Eleonore and Alice Schoenfeld, along with modern-day artists and teachers such as Midori Goto, Stephen Hartke, Morten Lauridsen, Daniel Pollack, Pepe Romero and Carl St.Clair. Since its inception in the early 1900s, the USC Thornton Symphony has been a visible artistic presence in the Los Angeles music community, as have the



Singers Rozzi Crane, left, and Meghan Mahowald, bassist Nick Campbell and drummer Logan Shrewsbury in a studio classroom. Photograph by Mark Berndt