Choral Group Invited to Perform at Emmys & Hollywood Bowl

The Northridge Singers, led by Professor Paul Smith, Make Their Mark on the Music World

Take it as a sign of just how high Cal State Northridge’s premier choral music ensemble, The Northridge Singers, has risen lately in the music world.

When conductor Paul Smith told his students last month that they had been invited to sing “America the Beautiful” as part of this year’s Emmy Awards finale on Sunday, October 7, no one thought Smith was kidding. Indeed, the unprecedented invitation was as real as the growing reputation of the Northridge program.

Although the planned Emmys ceremony was ultimately postponed because of the start of U.S. bombing in Afghanistan, the rehearsal tape of soloist Daniel Rodriguez, a New York police officer, backed by student choirs from Northridge, USC and Loyola Marymount was broadcast that night on national television.

(The rehearsal became the closing segment of an expanded “60 Minutes” news program aired on CBS in place of the Emmys, with anchor Dan Rather saying the performance proved “the voice and spirit of America still rings loud and clear.” As of this writing, the lineup for the latest planned Emmys event in November had not been set.)

The Emmy invitation capped a year in which several choirs of The Northridge Singers had just performed for the first time ever at the Hollywood Bowl, helping jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and the Los Angeles Philharmonic stage the West Coast premiere of his “All Rise” composition in mid-September.

The performance—just two days after the September 11 terror attacks on the East Coast—included a rousing rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner” that was broadcast nationally and internationally on cable news network CNN. Smith called the song’s performance “the most moving version I’ve ever heard.”

This spring, The Northridge Singers also were one of only six university choral groups from across the nation invited to perform at the national convention of the American Choral Directors Association—considered the absolute pinnacle of choral music—receiving standing ovations for each of their three performances.

“These events have been a great opportunity to demonstrate to worldwide audiences the quality that exists at Cal State Northridge,” said William Toutant, dean of Cal State Northridge’s College of Arts, Media, and Communication. The college houses Northridge’s Music Department, which is ranked among the best in the nation.

“This is an outstanding university and the Northridge Singers are one fine example of that,” Toutant added. “In his own right, Paul Smith is launching an international career as a choral conductor. He is becoming a major force in choral conducting.”

Smith came to Northridge in 1995 as an assistant professor of music after completing his master’s in music at USC. In his long performance career, Smith has been a featured soloist with such notable ensembles as the Roger Wagner Chorale, and served as assistant director of the Allert McNeil Jubilee Singers. While the modest-speaking Smith says The Northridge Singers “are on it. They’re really sharp,” it is also true the professor’s professional background and personal connections helped bring the university and its ensemble the Emmys show invitation and the Hollywood Bowl performance.

“I think it’s a wonderful lesson that we have committed ourselves to work so hard, and as a result, we’re getting these tremendous calls,” Smith said. 

Not only do the Northridge students sing with power and grace, but they also have the versatility to move from traditional to avant-garde to multicultural music.

The Northridge Singers are a 66-member ensemble selected at Cal State Northridge each year by audition. The group represents some of the most talented voice majors in the Music Department, and notably remains comprised mostly of undergraduate students. They meet with Smith as a class twice a week.

“The Emmys invitation was an honor and it was really great, because we’ve been working really hard,” said Bryant Mills, a 22-year-old tenor music major who has been a member for almost four years. “The program is flourishing and is getting better every year,” said Mills, who aspires to be a professional singer.

“I think The Northridge Singers are an incredible example of what the Northridge campus is all about,” in terms of students having exposure to great opportunities, added T.J. Harper, who is pursuing a master’s degree in music/choral conducting while serving as professor Smith’s graduate assistant. Harper added, “The fact The Northridge Singers are so accomplished and so professional—and have proven themselves time and again—is a testament to what’s happening in the Music Department and to Dr. Paul Smith. The opportunities here are just incredible.”

Two Cal State Northridge professors—Barbara Rhodes and Ronald Borczon—will be honored for outstanding community service by the Northridge Chamber of Commerce at its upcoming Lifesavers Awards dinner. The event will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 5, at The Odyssey restaurant in Granada Hills.

Rhodes, a Pan-African Studies professor, has spent most of the last 13 years building programs to mentor minority college students, assist pregnant minority teens, and establish leadership and advocacy training programs for young people from disadvantaged communities. Her outreach has touched and influenced young people from the North Valley to Compton.

Rhodes saw a need in the community and not only filled it, but did it at her own expense. She developed a program known as the Saturday Academy, in which Cal State Northridge students go into the community every Saturday to mentor and tutor high school and middle school kids who need assistance with everything from course work to life skills to helping plan for their futures.

Six years ago, the University recognized her efforts and successes by creating the Herman DuBois—Fannie Lou Hamer Institute, where Rhodes is the executive director.

Also being honored is Ronald Borczon, director of the University’s Music Therapy Clinic. Borczon’s community outreach continued on page 2.

Vol. 1 · No. 2 · November 2001
Northridge Named A Top Campus for Minority Students

University Ranks 20th in the Nation for Numbers of Bachelor’s Degrees Awarded Students of Color

California State Northridge has been ranked 20th in the nation in an annual rating of thousands of colleges and universities based on numbers of bachelor’s degrees awarded to minority students.

The ranking was compiled earlier this year by the magazine "Black Issues in Higher Education," which examined data for all institutions across the country that are eligible for federal financial aid funds.

Cal State Northridge ranked 20th in the nation in the total baccalaureate degrees conferred to minorities in the 1999–2000 academic year. CSUN awarded a total of 1,567 bachelor’s degrees to students of color, 607 to men and 960 to women. Those students accounted for 40 percent of the university’s graduates that year.

“We are honored to be recognized for our efforts in serving a diverse community,” said CSUN President Jolene Koester. “The faculty and staff at Cal State Northridge are proud of our diverse student body and the efforts we have made to ensure that we provide a quality educational experience for everyone.”

Six other Cal State system campuses also ranked in the magazine’s top 20 for numbers of baccalaureate degrees awarded to minority students, including Fullerton, San Jose, Long Beach, San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Black issues ranked institutions based on data supplied by the U.S. Department of Education. The ratings are based on the total numbers of degrees awarded in each category; the percentages of degrees awarded are provided for informational purposes. The magazine’s rankings for CSUN awarding baccalaureate degrees to students from minority groups included:

- 11th in the nation for the number of degrees awarded Hispanics (814 degrees, 20.8 percent of graduates)
- 31st for the number of degrees awarded Asian Americans (507 degrees, 12.9 percent of graduates)
- 62nd for the number of degrees awarded American Indians (25 degrees, 0.6 percent of graduates)

The magazine also ranked CSUN nationally in the numbers of minority students awarded baccalaureate degrees in specific academic fields:

- 8th for the number of degrees awarded in area, ethnic and cultural studies (39 degrees, 9.2 percent of graduates in that program)
- 14th in the degrees awarded in communications (87 degrees, 35.4 percent of graduates in that program)
- 15th for degrees awarded in education (121 degrees, 39.2 percent of graduates in that program)
- 15th in social sciences and history (222 degrees, 45 percent of graduates in that program)
- 26th for degrees awarded in the business management/administrative services (293 degrees, 8 percent of graduates in that program)

Athletics Department Urges Dropping Football After Season

Report to President Says Action Needed to Solve Recurring Athletics Budget Deficits

Facing athletics budget shortfalls that are heading toward nearly $1 million-a-year, the Athletics Department at Cal State Northridge has proposed a plan to restore its fiscal stability by discontinuing football as an intercollegiate sport after the end of this season.

The Athletics Department recommendation was contained in a report submitted to university President Jolene Koester by the faculty and staff at Cal State Northridge are proud of our diverse student body and the efforts we have made to ensure that we provide a quality educational experience for everyone.”

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Facing similar budget problems in 1997, the university then decided to discontinue four men’s sports other than football, but later rescinded that decision amid pledges of increased private support. In subsequent years, however, significant increases in private financial support for Northridge athletics have not occurred.

Other factors cited in the report are the university lacking appropriate football facilities and having little prospect of generating the private funds to build them. Northridge last year joining the Big West Conference, which no longer hosts football as a conference sport, and football hampering Northridge’s efforts to improve its gender equity in athletics.

If athletics’ report is accepted, Dull said the university would try to cushion the loss of its football team. Football players with athletics scholarships at Northridge could have those continued for the remainder of their eligibility or transfer elsewhere, while the coaching staff could remain employed through June.

Even without football, Northridge would continue to offer one of the broadest intercollegiate sports programs among comparable institutions, fielding 20 sports, 10 for men and 10 for women. The department had a $7.8 million budget last year and involves more than 500 student-athletes.

Because of football’s high costs and impact on gender equity, at least eight California universities have dropped the sport in the past decade, and more in prior years. Among those, NCAA Division I schools that ceased football in the 1990s included University of the Pacific (1996), Cal State Fullerton (1993) and Long Beach State (1992).

Northridge’s football program has struggled in recent season, the team posted a record of 4–7 overall and 2–6 in conference in its last season in the Big Sky Conference. At the end of last season, CSUN had a cumulative football record of 179–224–4.

Community Connection: Continued from page 1.

clients range from autistic children and children with Down syndrome to the survivors of severe trauma and rape. Some 50 to 60 clients per week are served in his program.

Borczon has provided music therapy to victims of the Oklahoma City bombing, the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado and at San Juan High School near San Diego. Most recently, he conducted a therapeutic drum session on campus to help students, faculty and staff and the Valley community express grief in remembering the victims of September’s terrorist attacks.

Each day, Borczon, the therapists and students at the clinic try to give people back their lives, using music to develop a relationship with their clients. Borczon says, "Through that relationship and music, we help our clients meet the goals they are trying to achieve in life, whether it's helping a child to talk or getting back into their lives after a severe trauma."
California State University, Northridge, President Jolene Koester, The College of Arts, Media, and Communication, and The College of Health and Human Development wish to thank the following donors for helping us exceed our goal during the CSUN Rising Capital Initiative to enhance our teaching facilities after the 1994 earthquake.

July 1, 1999–June 30, 2001

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November Calendar

The Associated Students Ticket Office in the University Student Union sells tickets to many events on campus, except for some held by outside groups. The ticket office is open from 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Mon.–Fri. For prices not given, call (818) 677-3983 or x2488.

Art and Exhibits

Admission is free unless otherwise specified.

▪ Earthlungs: Africa/China
Photographs by Alan Weissman, who contrasts the traditional and contemporary worlds in China and in southern Africa.
Through Sun., Dec. 23.
Performing Arts Center Gallery.

▪ Earthlungs: Africa/China
Performing Arts Center Gallery.

▪ Earthlungs: Africa/China
Performing Arts Center Gallery.

▪ Art Invitational
Fifth Annual High School Art Invitational
Mon.–Fri. For prices not given, call (818) 677-3093 or x2488.
The Associated Students Ticket Office in the University Student Union sells tickets to many events

▪ International Guitar Series
Performing Arts Center.

▪ CSU Media Arts Festival
Come see the best of the state’s young artists in this competition and showcase for film, video and media students from the 23-campus Cal State system.
Sat., Nov. 11, 7 p.m.
Campus Theatre in Nordhoff Hall and other campus venues. Free. Info: (562) 951-4060.

▪ American Musical Theatre Festival
Performing Arts Center.

▪ Sony Concert Hall: Alex Boye
Performing Arts Center.

▪ CSU Media Arts Festival
Performing Arts Center.

▪ CSUN Jazz “A” Band
Performing Arts Center.

▪ CSUN Youth Orchestra
Philharmonic
Performing Arts Center.

▪ CSUN Fall Opera
Performing Arts Center.

▪ The Eight Women
A Hungarian comedy presented by Thala Studio.
Performing Arts Center.

▪ Yoko Ono’s Sonic Rose Tour
Performing Arts Center.

▪ CSU Media Arts Festival
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