

News Release



Legendary Professor Gives \$3 Million for New Symphonic Hall

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OCTOBER 29, 2012 -- Alice Schoenfeld, holder of the Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld Endowed Chair in String Instruction and a professor of violin instruction and performance for more than half a century at the USC Thornton School of Music, has committed \$3 million to create a new symphonic hall for the school, to be named for her and her sister, Eleonore, who was the holder of the Gregor Piatigorsky Chair in Violoncello and a USC Thornton professor from 1959 until her death in 2007. As the Schoenfeld Duo, the sisters were internationally renowned classical performers and for decades toured the world's great music halls.



The 3,700-square-foot Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld Symphonic Hall was dedicated Oct. 28. A campus open house and student concert will be held today.

"Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld have shown a remarkable commitment to the students of our Thornton School of Music," said USC President C. L. Max Nikias. "Through their dedication as teachers, and their generosity as philanthropists, they have nurtured some of the greatest musicians in the world, while creating an extraordinary legacy for themselves and for USC Thornton."

USC Thornton Dean Robert Cutietta said, "It's time the USC Thornton Symphony and Wind Ensemble have a custom designed space where they can rehearse. These two ensembles are recognized as among the best collegiate groups in the country and it is essential that we have a dedicated orchestral rehearsal hall."

This gift from Alice Schoenfeld represents significant support for the Campaign for the University of Southern California, a multi-year effort to secure \$6 billion or more in private philanthropy to advance USC's academic priorities and expand the university's positive impact on the community and world. A key component of the campaign is a goal to raise \$1 billion for immediate support for capital projects.

The facility, which was previously used by the USC School of Cinematic Arts, has been redesigned with the aid of an acoustician and is the first dedicated orchestra rehearsal hall in the Thornton School of Music's long history. The school was founded in 1884 and consistently ranks among the finest conservatories and schools of music in the world. Graduates of the school attain positions with major orchestras, ensembles, recording studios and music industry firms and perform on stages and in studios around the world.

The newly refurbished hall has complete audio and video recording capabilities, as well as new lighting and suspended flooring for sound isolation. The hall also has a flexible acoustic design suited for large performing groups such as the symphony and wind ensemble. Cutietta said he believes USC is the only university in the nation with orchestral recording capability of this quality.

He pointed out that the Schoenfeld sisters are legendary performers and teachers who are recognized worldwide but especially in the Thornton School. "If we combine their careers, these two sisters have taught for over 100 years in the Thornton School. They exemplify all that is great in our school," he said. "We still feel the loss of Eleonore but celebrate Alice daily."

Alice Schoenfeld, who energetically continues to teach violin students and chamber music groups, said she gave the gift to the school because she and her sister made their home at USC Thornton. "I thought I'd leave a legacy," she said. "I'd like to perpetuate the name of my sister, as she was very active here for so long," said Schoenfeld. "As chair of the strings department, she was teaching, coaching chamber music and giving faculty concerts. She was also the director of the annual Piatigorsky Seminar from 1979 until she passed away, where she would get great, great performers to hold master classes every day, including eminent cellist Janos Starker, who presented the Eva Janzer Memorial Award Grande Dame du Violoncelle from the University of Indiana in 1993 to her."

Home for both Schoenfelds at USC Thornton has been the school's strings department, one of the strongest in the world. Currently, the chair is Midori Goto, holder of the Jascha Heifetz Chair in Violin. Other department professors holding chairs include Ms. Schoenfeld; Ralph Kirshbaum, holder of the Gregor Piatigorsky Chair in Violoncello; and violinist Glenn Dicterow, holder of the Robert Mann Chair in Strings and Chamber Music who will join USC in fall 2013.

Alice Schoenfeld said she watched the hall's construction this summer, and pronounced it "very beautiful." The acoustics are still being tested," she said. "But I went to observe rehearsals recently, and it sounds very good. People are very happy when they have beautiful surroundings."

Schoenfeld still practices between two and four hours each day, and takes her commitment to students seriously. "Who carries most of the load in a university?" she asks. "It's the dedicated teacher. My sister and I have outstanding students working all over the world – in Shanghai, in Germany, in Britain, in Australia, practically everywhere.

"I give students more than I have to do," she said. "I give long lessons, get them ready for their concerts and take a personal interest in them."

Her students reciprocate, with flowers and heartfelt thank-you notes. She shared one from current violin performance student Michelle Tseng, who wrote: “My time here with Professor Schoenfeld has been priceless. She is such a loving, unbelievably devoted and nurturing teacher and human being, and I am so thankful for the experience of being in this studio and learning from such an inspiring woman and violinist.”

Tseng performed at the Oct. 28 dedication, along with former students of Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld, all of whom are now world-renowned artists.





Alice Schoenfeld / Photo by Ian Evenstar

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