

MUSIC

a connecting thread

BY RACHEL BEAVER, SENIOR PUBLIC RELATIONS MAJOR, AND TRISNEY BOCALA, SOPHOMORE MASS COMMUNICATION MAJOR

Music transcends language, age, occupation, income, and gender. It breaks down barriers and stirs souls. The School of Music at Southern empowers music majors and minors to achieve excellence, while bringing together students from all areas of campus in its performance groups. Through these opportunities, thousands of Southern alumni have embarked on their careers better equipped for life.

8 VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLES give students at all skill levels an opportunity to participate

APPROXIMATELY **80%**

of ensemble participants are not music majors

SOUTHERN DISTRIBUTES AN AVERAGE OF **\$115,000** in music scholarships every year

STUDENTS EARNED **1,675** music credit hours this school year

"I believe that our God is a giving God, and we in turn have an opportunity to reflect His character when we give concerts and recitals. We go on stage and we give away the music so that others can be blessed and God can be praised."

– Peter Cooper, DMA, dean of the School of Music



Photo: Brian Pierce

"The greatest joy I find in being a musician is the opportunity to share with others what cannot be expressed through words."

– Daniel Esperante, senior music performance major



Photo: Tyler Thomas

TOURING CONNECTIONS

Southern's touring groups touch many lives. I Cantori, directed by Gennevie Brown-Kibble; the Symphony Orchestra, directed by Laurie Redmer Minner; and Wind Symphony, directed by Ken Parsons, travel extensively around the country and internationally. Brown-Kibble shared a memorable experience from a recent tour in Italy:

"After a delightful meal at a family restaurant in Rome, as we prepared to settle the bill, our group wanted to share a more heartfelt expression of our thanks. In the United States, we often sing 'We Thank You Our Friends' to the tune of 'Happy Birthday to You,' but what to sing in Italy? Then an idea came: During our last rehearsal before leaving Southern, we had hastily sung through an Italian folk song that could be used as an encore for our performances. The song contained no words of gratitude, but at least the language was Italian! So, while the family and servers were cleaning up, we began to sing. One by one the staff came out, faces beaming, and they remained until the song was finished before breaking into sustained applause. We were thrilled to learn that the song, 'Santa Lucia,' was a nostalgic portrayal of our waiter's hometown!"

CROSS-DISCIPLINE BENEFIT

While pursuing a degree in film production at Southern, Mark Comberiate, '15, also enjoyed singing in the university's choral ensembles. What he learned there has stayed with him, impacting his career as a film producer and director.

"I had the opportunity to be a part of many powerful moments, largely due to the effort and time the director, Gennevie Brown-Kibble, took to instill in us the core mindset behind each song," Comberiate said. "Whether in film or music, I believe successful directors first take time to make sure their team embodies the message they're working to communicate. Many people dismiss the arts as a hobby or elective to help fill out a resumé, but I have seen how they are vital tools for communication."

50

public performances on campus this school year

2

world-class organs at Southern

MUSIC AND THE HUMAN BRAIN

Music can have an incredible impact on the human brain. Matthew Tolbert, '01 and '05, associate professor of psychology at Southern, explained some of the many positive effects that learning and listening to music can have on people of all ages:

- Many people experience an emotional response to music; it stimulates the part of the brain that releases dopamine, which is a hormone associated with joy and pleasure. Studies have shown that babies who are exposed to music smile more and communicate better.
- Music is one of the few activities that utilizes a large number of areas in the brain. Playing an instrument is considered a whole-brain activity.
- Research shows that learning an instrument improves motor and reasoning skills, and children who learn a musical instrument before age 7 have increased cognitive function.
- Learning an instrument can also increase gray matter on the surface of the brain. Gray matter is responsible for making us who we are; therefore, music can even contribute to an individual's personality.
- Music therapy can be used to treat individuals who suffer from trauma or mental illness.

TRAILBLAZER

Unfazed by arbitrary barriers, Gale (Jones) Murphy, '76, is comfortable forging her own path. For example, as a music major at Southern, she found herself in the all-male choral ensemble, Die Meistersinger, as a pianist and lone female soloist.

More significantly, in 1974 Murphy made an impact on the entire student body after she was elected as the first female and first African-American Student Association president. Now living in Florida, she continues to use her talents to benefit others as a teacher, singer, pianist, and comedienne. ■



Photo contributed