

The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music

**Q & A with Christopher Waterman
Dean, School of the Arts and Architecture (UCLA Arts)**

Question: Receiving a gift of this size, the largest to the arts in UC history, brings with it a set of responsibilities to the intended beneficiaries, the University, and the broader arts community. How will UCLA Arts meet this responsibility and extend the benefits of this gift as widely as possible?

CW: In receiving this wonderful gift, we feel a keen sense of responsibility. This is really an extension of the sense of responsibility we always feel toward our students and the broader public. When you are in the business of educating the next generation of artists, arts scholars, and teachers of the arts, you work hard every day to create and sustain a context for creative exploration, collaboration and performance. That is a complex job, but it is also one that we eagerly embrace, given the importance of the arts in our society.

One thing is certain: the Herb Alpert Foundation's generous gift signals to the academic and arts communities that UCLA's music programs are entering a new era. We believe that the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will inspire other institutions, scholars and philanthropists as well.

Q: As a "School of Music for the 21st Century," what will The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music add to the study of music? What was missing that will now be possible?

CW: UCLA has been teaching music for almost 100 years, since its beginnings as the Southern Branch of the University of California in Los Angeles (Vermont Avenue campus downtown). In 1919 the Department was established. In the 1960s, UCLA played a pioneering role in offering students the opportunity to study and perform the music of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Today, as we near the end of the first decade of the new century, our commitment to creating a more progressive, diverse and inclusive approach to music education is laying the groundwork for the next 100 years of music at UCLA.

Unlike traditional university-based music programs, The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will not be a "conservatory" of European music's past, but will be a laboratory and forum for the study and performance of music in all its astounding worldwide diversity, including the many varieties of music that flourish in our own city and region. We will continue to study and perform the great works of the European tradition, but with an eye toward exploring the contemporary situation and significance of that repertoire in an age of global musical interchange.

Q: Los Angeles is sometimes called “the creative capital of the world.” Do you subscribe to that line of thinking, and how does UCLA fit into that picture?

CW: There is no question that Los Angeles is a world-class cultural center, teeming with artists and musicians who are creative innovators in their fields. It is also among the most dynamic and diverse cities in the world. The kinds of musical encounters, conversations and debates that go on every day in our city offer an unparalleled context for making and learning about music, and we intend to take full advantage of these opportunities. Herb Alpert is a product of this very milieu and surely he would have become a different person, and a different artist, had he been raised in a less cosmopolitan and exciting place.

UCLA is a microcosm of our urban environment, with top-tier students, world-renowned faculty, and a global sensibility. We believe the last two letters in our name – L.A. – are just as important as the first two. We are very much an influence on, and a product of, the city that we call home, and The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will provide us with new opportunities to engage the cultural and musical landscape of Los Angeles and southern California

Q: With its confluence of cultures, languages and influences, why is UCLA an appropriate place for The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music?

CW: The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will elevate to a new level the work we have pioneered and practiced for decades, crossing bridges, blending cultures, and breaking down boundaries. Building on a foundation of excellence, a commitment to diversity, and a preference for flexibility over formality, UCLA is well prepared to make use of this forward-looking gift, and to chart new directions for musical study and performance in American higher education.

Q: Aside from the size of this gift, why is it significant for UCLA Arts, the University, and the city more broadly?

CW: The magnitude of the gift will allow us to do many new things that will benefit our students. What is even more remarkable is that the core values that informed Herb Alpert’s decision to make a major gift are so consonant with our own aspirations. When someone of Herb’s stature starts thinking about his legacy, and can be brought into a discussion about shared vision and interests, something magical happens. This gift is additionally significant because it establishes a dynamic enterprise that will adapt to changing circumstances in ways we cannot now foresee with absolute clarity.

Q: Herb Alpert has a long history of giving to UCLA; how does this gift add to his legacy at the University and build on your shared vision for what music and arts education can be?

CW: Our relationship with Herb goes back to 1969, when he made his very first gift to UCLA. In addition, he and Lani have given generously to our Music Partnership Program, which provides musical education at local schools and nonprofits. Many

UCLA students have also benefited from the Herb Alpert Jazz Studies Scholarships and the Mimi Alpert Feldman Awards, which provide much needed financial support for students, allowing them to spend more time on their artistic pursuits.

Q: Where do you see the new School of Music in two years, five years, ten years? What's the overall vision?

CW: Before I discuss our longer-term vision, let me tell you what's going to happen right away, because there is tremendous excitement about getting started. The school's inaugural year will be 2008, and we have just announced our inaugural director, Professor Timothy Rice. An interdepartmental faculty panel will also be convened before the end of this year to begin considering curricular revisions and an implementation strategy. By the end of next year, the school's administrative structures will be in place, including student and faculty councils. Faculty will be formulating new curricular strategies and the first group of Herb Alpert Scholars will be named.

Within two years, our intention is to offer courses that integrate the study of world music, Western classical music, popular music, jazz and other genres; to create a concert calendar that includes coordinated academic offerings; to facilitate students who want to craft an interdisciplinary specialization rather than a traditional one, and to make sure there are courses and faculty to support that initiative. I envision team teaching, the creation of initiatives that broaden students' understanding of the links between music and other disciplines (for example, medicine, the humanities, and international studies), and opportunities for students to learn about the music business and related professions.

As for the longer term, we have dreams and ambitions for the school, but what our programs look like in five or ten years will depend in significant degree on the evolution of music making and consumption, on the shifting global market for music, and developments in music technology and media. The main drivers of programmatic change will of course be our students and faculty, as well as UCLA alumni and other individuals in the community who will choose to involve themselves in this exciting project. We would defeat the very purpose of the school if we tried to decide today what it was going to look like in 2012 or 2017. But let me say this: the curriculum, the people and the facilities will be world-class. We will attract the best, and train the best. The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will create an environment where our scholarly and artistic achievements will reach new levels of excellence, stretch the conceptual boundaries of teaching and learning beyond where they have gone before, and solidify our position at the vanguard of musical study, performance and exploration worldwide.

Q: What does Herb Alpert mean to the world of music? Where can you see his artistic legacy in the current music scene?

CW: My first paid gig as a bass player was in 1967, when I was 13 years old. The venue was a junior high school cafeteria in Florida, and the band was a Tijuana Brass "cover band," which played enthusiastic, though less than virtuoso renditions of the hit recordings of Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass. So I have a very personal connection to those recordings, and to other great music released over the years by A&M Records.

Much more recently, I was delighted to listen to the remix of Herb's "Whipped Cream" album, which took samples from the original tracks and placed them in new sonic contexts made possible by digital recording, demonstrating the continued relevance (and hipness) of Herb's musical conception. When you add it all up—his chart successes, his accomplishments as a trumpeter and singer, producer and entrepreneur, and his deep commitment to philanthropy in the arts—there can be no doubt that Herb Alpert has exerted a profound cultural influence in our time. I see The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music as a celebration and an extension of his unique personal and creative trajectory.

Q: What will The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music contribute to university-level music education?

CW: The gift will support the formal alignment of three departments (Ethnomusicology, Music and Musicology), and of music expertise scattered elsewhere across campus, creating a "musical think tank" where ideas mix, collide and coexist, creating something bigger and more important than the mere sum of their parts. What each Department brings to the table is remarkable. All of them, already renowned in their own right, will become part of something even grander, the shape of which will be determined by the students and faculty themselves.

For example:

- The Department of Ethnomusicology is the only one of its kind in the U.S. and the most prestigious program in the world for the study of diverse musical cultures. The department is also home to UCLA's excellent jazz program.
- The Department of Music boasts a roster of internationally acclaimed performers and composers from the Western classical tradition and the only accredited music education program in the University of California system.
- The award-winning faculty of the Department of Musicology teach and conduct research on jazz, heavy metal, techno, musical theater and other forms of popular music as well as European classical music.

Each of these departments is already excellent. Working together, they are in a unique position to create a compelling new paradigm for the study of music that can inspire students and faculty throughout the school, the university and, I believe, the music and academic communities in Los Angeles and beyond.

Q: What does it mean to UCLA Arts to receive \$30 million for scholarships and programs?

CW: One of the biggest challenges in any nonprofit setting is securing dollars that can be directed to the core mission of an organization. This gift not only supports our mission but also spurs it forward, encouraging us to formalize and accelerate our commitment to rethinking music and musical education in the setting of a first-rate research university. Having the resources to attract and support the most talented and committed students, researchers, scholars and performers through scholarships and faculty support will help us to ensure the success of this ambitious endeavor for generations to come.

Q: It's been said that this gift is not about a "thing," but about "an idea." How would you describe that idea?

CW: In my view the big idea that has brought UCLA together with the Herb Alpert Foundation around this project has two foundations: first, the notion that music is a vitally important part of what it is to be human, across all historical periods and cultures; and, second, that the best way to appreciate this fact is to approach the field with an open mind and open ears. Music is at the same time very individual—think of the stunning talent of a Mozart, a Ravi Shankar, or a Miles Davis—and very general, in that the members of all human societies are born with the ability to appreciate and make music. Music is a powerful and mysterious part of our species's adaptive tool kit, a potent medium for expressing emotions and identity, and a channel for communication between culturally-diverse communities. Any approach to music education that ignores these facts is doomed to become increasingly irrelevant in the years to come.

The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will be all about such ideas, about dreams, about previously unimagined pairings, experiments and partnerships. Music exists inside each of us, in our minds and our bodies, and the musical expression of each culture and era is the foundation upon which we can come to a better understanding of each other and ourselves. This requires a commitment to bringing forward and reinvigorating the best of the musical past, and at the same time having the courage to traverse old boundaries in search of new sounds, ideas and experiences. These are ideas whose time has come – and in The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music they will find their perfect home.

Q: The gift has been called "revolutionary." Can you describe why that is the case? How will The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music change musical education at UCLA and elsewhere?

CW: The notion that popular music and world music, digital music and jazz are mere diversions, satellites orbiting around the great masterworks of European classical music, is still predominant in many conservatories and some academic circles. But from our perspective, living, working, studying and performing in Los Angeles, all of these forms have played important roles in the evolution of our musical culture. We appreciate the masterworks of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and other geniuses who worked within the Western tradition. But we do not think that it makes sense to push 95% of the world's music to the side and then claim that you are teaching about "music." The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music will be a vital public forum for exploring the full range of human musical expression and for understanding the role that music may play in our future.

Q: Who will be the biggest beneficiary of this gift?

CW: Current and future generations of students, who will then extend the benefit to the larger population, as they push the boundaries of musical study and performance.

Q: Why is now the right time for UCLA Arts to receive a gift of this size and implement the programs and approaches it entails?

CW: Coming on the heels of the close of the record-breaking Campaign UCLA, and a year after the opening of the Eli & Edythe Broad Art Center, the establishment of The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music is further evidence that there has never been a better time to give to UCLA, to study at UCLA, to become part of the UCLA family. Embracing tradition and leading innovation are the hallmarks of the university and, with the new UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, UCLA Arts will continue to be at the forefront of that movement.

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