

Sharing their voices



The Clark College Concert Choir visits the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music in 2015, where they performed for Dr. Christian Grasses, *center, blue shirt*, the conductor of the school's concert choir. *Photo: April Duvic.*

Traditionally, the week after spring quarter ends is a time for students to rest and recover from the academic year. But not for the members of the Clark College Concert Choir, who spent four days performing and learning during an end-of-the-year trip to Los Angeles.

The trip, whose destination changes each year, is an annual tradition—a time for choir members to show off what they've learned over the past year and to get a chance to experience performing in front of new audiences. Last year, students traveled to New York to perform near the grounds of the former World Trade Center; the year before that, they visited San Francisco together with the Clark College Concert Band. This year the choir traveled by themselves. The trip, which is funded in part through the Associated Students of Clark College and in part through private fundraising by participating students, ran from June 21 to June 24.

The choir performed three concerts while in Los Angeles, the first of which was in the afternoon on the day they arrived. It was a community service outreach at the Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital and Care Facility, providing a Father's Day concert for residents and their families and the staff at the hospital.

"The response from those in attendance was wonderful – the vets really appreciated having the choir perform," said choir

director April Duvic. "The students made such an amazing connection after they sang by going out into the audience and talking with the residents who attended the concert. It was life-changing for our students who had never had the opportunity to reach out and connect with vets like that before."

The choir also visited the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music for a two-hour clinic with Dr. Christian Grases, the conductor of that school's concert choir and an assistant professor in its department of choral and sacred music. They performed the Venezuelan folk song "Mata del Anima Sola" for him, in honor of Dr. Grases' home country.

"Dr. Grases was able to impart incredible knowledge and really fire the choir up," Duvic said. "He was amazed that the choir was from a two-year college. He enthusiastically invited the Clark College Concert Choir students to consider applying to USC and auditioning for the music department."

The third and final official concert of the trip was hosted by All Saints' Episcopal Church in East Los Angeles. The performance was attended by the church's youth group and many members of the congregation and neighborhood, as well as by three Clark College alumni who live in the city. After the concert the youth group had an opportunity to talk with choir members about attending college and about the various educational plans the Clark students are pursuing.

"It was a positive experience for the Clark students to be able to talk about their college experience and encourage the church's youth to go to college," said Duvic. "The applause and standing ovation the choir received was a great way to end our tour."