

# UCSB DEPARTMENT of MUSIC

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / MAY 4, 2016

## **UCSB GOSPEL CHOIR CELEBRATES 25 YEARS WITH REUNION CONCERT**

*Director Victor Bell invites notable alumni and guest artists to join UCSB's renowned Gospel Choir in concert*

SANTA BARBARA, May 4, 2016—The UCSB Gospel Choir celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> year with a reunion concert on Friday, June 3, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in UCSB's Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall. The choir, directed by Victor Bell, will perform alongside guest artists and former directors Dr. Diane L. White-Clayton and Pastor Jimmy Fisher.

The program will highlight songs from the past 25 years, including original material by Dr. Diane White and Jimmy Fisher, with performers ranging from alumni to current students. An unprecedented event, the stage will be full of musicians and singers coming together once again to sing of God's goodness and reminisce over the many wonderful experiences shared in the UCSB Gospel Choir.

Guest artist Dr. Diane L. White-Clayton holds a Ph.D. and MA in Music Composition from the University of California Santa Barbara, and a BA in music from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, with emphases in Composition, Voice, and Piano. As a Rotary Scholar, she studied classical piano at the École Normale de Musique in Paris, performing solo Gospel concerts throughout Europe as an Ambassador of Goodwill.

Dr. White-Clayton travels extensively as a vocalist, pianist, composer, conductor, workshop clinician, and speaker. She has held numerous positions at universities, colleges, and churches across the country including Artistic Director with the Washington Performing Arts Society; Artist-in-Residence and Assistant Director of African-American Student Development at Appalachian State University; Artist-in-Residence at Westmont College; Composer-in-Residence at Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Scholar-in-Residence at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa; and Choral Conductor at the New Christ Memorial Church under legendary Gospel great, Pastor Andraé Crouch. She is on the faculty of Loyola Marymount University as well as Choral Conductor at the 6,000-member Faithful Central Bible Church in Inglewood, California, under the headship of internationally esteemed Bishop Kenneth C. Ulmer, where she founded the acclaimed Sacred Praise Chorale. She also works as a Vocal Workshop Clinician with the Disney Performing Arts Conservatory in Anaheim, and is the Artistic Director of the famed Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers.

Possessing a three-and-a-half octave range, Dr. White-Clayton weaves her high operatic soprano voice with her soulful gospel roots in her self-produced recordings. As a composer, her works have been performed across the globe at such venues as the John F. Kennedy Center, Air Canada Centre, and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. Whether arrangements of African or Korean folk song, atonal classical works, inspiration sacred pieces, or her much-celebrated arrangement of the Hatikvah, her compositions and performances demonstrate a mélange of the power of gospel music, the technique of classical music, and the colors of jazz.

Jimmy Fisher serves as the Pastor of Worship for the Faithful Central Bible Church in Inglewood, CA. For the past 23 years, Mr. Fisher has led the mega-congregation in praise and worship under the awesome leadership of Bishop Kenneth Ulmer. With spiritual sensitivity and a joyful heart, he ushers God's people into His presence. Combining contemporary Christian worship with soulful gospel melodies, Mr. Fisher continues

to exalt the name of the Lord and edify the Body of Christ. With the release of his live worship album, *Jimmy Fisher & Contagious Praise*, his passion for worship and skillful songwriting have been used to bless men and women around the country. The release of their sophomore project entitled *Tabernacle Worship Volume I*, initiated a series of worship albums that span the diverse landscape of worship styles and began a revival in authentic worship. As a current reoccurring musical guest on Trinity Broadcast Network's "Praise The Lord" programs, Jimmy Fisher & Contagious Praise are now ushering a global congregation into God's presence through their exciting worship style and original songs.

As a renowned songwriter, Mr. Fisher is most known for his well-beloved song "Glory To Your Name," featured on Byron Cage's debut album (Gospo Centric Records/Sony Music). He is also known for his remake of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," featured on Faithful Central's Live album (Integrity Gospel Records). In addition to being the Pastor of Worship, Mr. Fisher travels across the country leading worship for various conferences such as Global Pastor's Network, Willow Creek Leadership Conference, Youth for Christ, and Promise Keepers. His ministry in worship has also taken him overseas to Soweto, South Africa, Namibia, London, England, and Riga, Latvia. Speaking at worship conferences and pouring into worship leaders are the heart of his ministry. Mr. Fisher's sincere passion for worship and heart for God allows believers the freedom and encouragement to express their personal worship as he leads them into God's presence.

Victor Bell's unique gifts of writing, teaching, and directing make him stand out with respect among his peers. His gift has allowed him to move beyond the church walls and into many fields, such as TV and film. He served as a music consultant for Stan Lathan (TV director, *Sanford & Son* and *Fresh Prince*) for such TV shows as *The Steve Harvey Show* (whenever Steve appeared to be playing the piano it was Victor behind the scenes playing), *Cedric The Entertainer*, *Bernie Mac Show*, *Method & Red*, *All of Us*, *Key & Peele*, and most recently, *The Soul Man*, featuring Cedric the Entertainer & Niecy Nash. He was also musical guest and director for the wedding of actor Blair Underwood.

Mr. Bell's professional choir, Victor Bell & Halel, was founded in 1995. Reminiscent of the early Kirk Franklin & The Family, the choir was formed after Mr. Bell received instruction from the Lord to form a singing aggregation that would cause men and women to bless Him. Recently, Victor Bell & Halel was featured on the new Oxygen network hit show, *Fix My Choir*, with Michelle Williams (Destiny's Child) and renowned gospel star Deitrick Haddon. The group was received with rave reviews, and won first place in the choir competition.

The choir's new single, "I'll Bless Him," was produced by Shavoni Parker, (Kirk Franklin, Yolanda Adams, Prince of Egypt), with stellar musicians such as Patrick Bolton, Gordon Campbell, Robert JJ Smith, Big Jim, (BET, *Sunday's Best*) Donald Hayes, and Erik Walls.

Under the direction of Mr. Bell, the UCSB Gospel Choir presents highly anticipated performances each quarter and is regularly featured in numerous community events and university celebrations. The Gospel Choir recently produced a CD entitled *Praise Party on the Yard* and has been featured on the WB sitcom *The Steve Harvey Show*.

Mr. Bell is the founder and Senior Pastor/Teacher of Praise House Worship Center in Los Angeles, CA, and is a tenured professor in the Department of Music at UC Santa Barbara. He is married to Ronette Bell, and together they have four beautiful children.

**UCSB Gospel Choir 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion Concert.** Friday, June 3, 2016. 7:30 p.m. UCSB Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall. Tickets: general (\$15), non-UCSB students with ID (\$10), UCSB students with ID (\$5), children under 12 (FREE). Tickets may be purchased at the door, at the AS Ticket Office window (UCEN Room 1535, across from Corwin Pavilion), online at [www.music.ucsb.edu](http://www.music.ucsb.edu), or by calling the AS Ticket Office at (805) 893-2064.

### **About the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music**

From an institution that began life dedicated to training the next generation of music educators, to what is now a fully established research and professional graduate program, graduates of the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music have distinguished themselves both nationally and internationally. Many have gone on to teaching, either privately or in outstanding secondary school positions, and in more recent years, graduates have joined the faculties of major colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. A number have become widely recognized and published scholars; some are now prize-winning and frequently performed composers, while others are writing for television and film. Alumni are also establishing fine reputations as conductors of orchestras, opera, and choruses. Graduates of the instrumental programs have gone on to solo and orchestral careers with leading orchestras, and our singers can be heard in opera companies around the world.

With over 200 events presented annually, the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music offers something for every music lover. The department boasts 26 unique performing ensembles, each with a quarterly concert calendar. Chamber music, large ensembles, opera, contemporary groups, world music, and jazz ensembles make up the department's rich performance calendar, along with lectures, master classes, and presentations from the ethnomusicology, musicology, theory, and composition programs. For a complete listing of performances and lectures for the quarter, please visit the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music website, at [www.music.ucsb.edu](http://www.music.ucsb.edu).

For additional information, photos, or to request an interview with an artist, please contact Adriane Hill at [ahill@music.ucsb.edu](mailto:ahill@music.ucsb.edu) or (805) 893-3230. To sign up for the Department of Music's newsletter, please [click here](#). Follow the Department of Music on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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