

FROM NUGENT HALL

by President John Garvey

Glorious Music

Each fall we open our academic year with the Mass of the Holy Spirit. I love to see our students, faculty, and staff gathered together to begin a new year with prayer. And each year I marvel at the beautiful music our choir provides for the Mass. This year the choir's rendition of Thomas Atwood's *Come Holy Spirit*, with sophomore Allison Verhofstadt's soprano solo, was glorious.

Listening to the choir reminded me of how fortunate we are at The Catholic University of America to have a music school that fills campus life with so much beauty. The Benjamin T. Rome School of Music has five choral ensembles, a symphony orchestra, and a wind ensemble. The talented men and women in these groups provide music for our liturgies that elevates our experience of the divine. Over the course of each semester these ensembles perform concerts that magnify and express our feelings of joy, hope, and even sorrow. The voice and musical theatre divisions of the School of Music present operas and musicals each year that receive critical acclaim. The school trains scholars in musicology who research the history of Catholic traditions and many other topics. And our composition students debut new original works each fall and spring.

The philosopher Étienne Gilson observed that through the fine arts "matter enters by anticipation into something like the state of glory promised to it by theologians at the end of time." I think this nicely captures what an extraordinary thing the students and faculty of the School of Music are doing on a daily basis. They transfigure the silent passage of time into something beautiful, something like heaven. Not surprisingly, that makes Catholic University a wonderful place to live and work.

But music is not just accompaniment to university life. The music school is integral to the University's goal of providing an education that forms the whole person. *Homo sapiens* may put us in our proper

taxonomic place. But it's not a full definition of what human beings are. Human beings are also making beings, *Homo faber*. We make some things because they're useful to us. But we make other things just because we recognize that it is good that they exist. Music is one of those things. Gilson again puts it well:

Art, like nature, abhors emptiness, because nature and art both want being to be. Everyone knows what impatience fills those who, in the silence of a concert hall, wait for the music to begin. They are waiting for a certain being to be.

The music school at Catholic University trains undergraduates and graduate students, majors and nonmajors in instrumental and vocal performance, in education, in theory and composition, and in sacred music. For the last three decades, the music school has also been home to the Latin American Center for Graduate Studies in Music, one of the most important centers of study of its kind in the United States. All of these programs train students to make beautiful things. In doing so, they prepare our students to live a fully human life.

Plans are afoot to celebrate the music school's golden anniversary in 2015. And so this issue of *The Catholic University of America Magazine* features profiles of four graduates of the Benjamin T. Rome School of Music (and choosing just four students was extremely difficult). I am delighted to see the diverse paths these graduates have taken since completing their studies at Catholic University, from teaching music to children in Afghanistan to performing with international opera companies. It is a testament to the strong foundation they received at Catholic University. But most of all I'm happy to see what beauty our music students are making in the world.

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