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NCCU STUDENT HEADING TO CARNEGIE HALL

DURHAM, N.C. – North Carolina Central University student Antonio Parker is not going to Disney World, but he is going to one of the most famous places in the world. Parker who says he is a “laid-back” person is one of 20 singers selected in an international competition that will take him from NCCU to Carnegie Hall in New York City. Parker will participate in a vocal improvisation seminar under the tutelage of acclaimed vocalist and ten-time Grammy Award winner, Bobby McFerrin. McFerrin will work with Parker and the others to create an “Instant Opera” that will be performed onstage at Carnegie Hall on May 2, 2008.

Parker, a Washington, D.C. native, is a junior majoring in Jazz Studies. He graduated from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts where he was introduced to jazz. Parker’s good friend and student, Dana Williams convinced him to come to NCCU to expand his musical acumen in a music program that is winning awards nationally and internationally. Parker has elaborated on his gospel background to classical, R&B and jazz. “I didn’t know how to breathe or elongate my phrasing. Now I know not to mix my idioms and not to limit myself to one genre,” said Parker.

That decision probably got him noticed by Bobby McFerrin and the others involved in the Instant Opera project. “Bobby McFerrin is the end all, be all—he is limitless. This is someone I admire,” said Parker. The student also sang the praises of the professors and instructors in the music department for encouraging him and pushing him. “I never really thought I could go this far. I am now thinking it’s possible to be a superstar.”

“Bobby McFerrin is one of the greatest vocal performers onstage today. For students to have access to a performer of his caliber is unprecedented. This is a great opportunity for Parker. We are very proud of the accomplishments he has made during his studies here at NCCU,” said Ira Wiggins, director of Jazz Studies.

Adjunct instructor, Lenora Helm says, “Antonio has a natural ear for jazz. Ira Wiggins and the rest of the faculty have nurtured him and the other students. They are blossoming and reaching beyond the boundaries.”

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