

international CONNECTION

University of Southern California Office of International Services

Spring 2012, Vol. XXVII, No. 2

INSIDE

- 3 Loudia Laarman Q & A
- 4 USC Olympic hopefuls
- 6 Upcoming OIS events
- 6 Past USC medal-winners
- 7 Exchange visitor profile
- 8 USC photo montage

> (left to right) Chad Bobrosky, Stina Gardell, and Vladimir Morozov, USC swimmers hoping to compete in the 2012 Olympics.



Photo: Anna Wierzbowska

Cardinal and Gold

USC's international athletes are dreaming of Olympic success

by Oliver Riley-Smith

When the 2012 Olympics begin in London this summer, a host of USC international student athletes will be chasing medals. For some, it will be the pinnacle of their careers and the achievement of a lifelong dream. For others, it will be a validation of their decision to travel far from home to train in Los Angeles. For all, it will be an unforgettable experience.

"While watching the Olympics in 2000 I remember telling my grandmother that I would

someday win a gold medal," says Vladimir Morozov, a sophomore swimmer who will be representing Russia this summer. "I was 8 years old and had no idea what sport I was going to play, but I always liked racing. I loved winning. After winning small swim meets I began taking on bigger and stronger fields, but my ultimate goal was always to win Olympic gold."

Like Morozov, many other USC athletes had dreams of competing at the Olympics from an early age. Stina Gardell, a sophomore swimmer from Sweden, remembers watching Swedish swimmer Lars Frolander win gold at the 2000 Olympics when she was ten. "It was the first gold medal for Sweden in a long time," she recalls. Chad Bobrosky, a freshman Canadian swimmer, remembers watching Ian Thorpe dominate the

continued on page 2

Film School Confidential: international alumni makes movie magic

by Trisha Tucker

At age 14, Ose Oyamendan had a dream and a problem. He knew he wanted to spend his life making movies, but also that his traditional Nigerian family would never endorse such a career path.

"Where I come from, you want your kids

to be doctors, engineers," he says. "It's so you can tell people in church, 'My son's in medical school.'"

Oyamendan compromised by channeling his love of storytelling into a career in journalism. By his early twenties, he was working for a host of media outlets, including a large Nigerian newspaper, the Associated Press, and the BBC. Still, his passion for film never wavered, and in 1999 he decided to apply to USC's graduate

continued on page 3



"...it's a pressure cooker."

Cardinal and Gold

continued from page 1

same Olympics. "It's every little kid's dream to make it to the Olympics," says Bobrosky, "so to know all of those years of training were worth it would change me forever."

These athletes will be looking to follow in the footsteps of international USC alumni who won medals in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, including British sprinter, Natasha Danvers-Smith, who won bronze in the 400m hurdles,

"Even if you go to the Olympics once, you are regarded as an Olympian forever, which motivates me to be the best I can be," says Chad Bobrosky.

Ilse van der Meijden, who won gold with the Dutch water polo team, and Oussama Mellouli, a Tunisian who won gold in the 1500m swimming freestyle.

USC has long been associated with Olympic success. Student athletes from around the world come to take advantage of the world-class facilities and training the school offers.

"I wanted a change in my swimming and my life," explains Gardell, "so when I got the opportunity to come to USC and swim with the school team, with so many successful swimmers, while simultaneously getting an education at one of the world's best universities, I didn't need long to decide."

Bobrosky also admits that the "chance to train and compete in one of the most competitive environments in the world" drew him towards becoming a Trojan, though he admits that "living away from home most of the year has its hardships."

These Olympic hopefuls have had to make a major sacrifice, leaving behind friends and family to travel abroad to America. Gardell admits that although her family "is happy for me, I'm sure they miss me a lot. But my friends are mostly happy about having a free place to stay when they come to visit Los Angeles!"

The journey to the Olympics is not an easy one – years of training and battling to

overcome injuries have left these athletes hardened. Morozov remembers his grueling training schedule when he was young: "Most of my peers would hang out, play video games, and do nothing. I had to go to bed early to wake up for morning practice before school."

Bobrosky talks about the "stresses associated with swimming at a high level," including having to overcome mononucleosis during the summer of 2010, which

disrupted his participation at the Youth Olympics. Despite their determination, none of the three swimmers are guaranteed a place in the London games yet, though all are strongly expected to make the cut.

If they get to London, they may find themselves pitted against fellow Trojans. Gardell hopes to be in the same final as Katinka Hosszu, a Hungarian USC senior who has already competed at two Olympic Games, while Bobrosky is looking forward to competing against Dimitri Colupaev, a German sophomore who swims in many of the same events as him. And, it could be crushing to find that, having travelled so far, it is the person they train with on campus who beats them to the ultimate prize.

Whatever the outcome, the trio is going to make the most of the experience. "It is the highest level of competition and only happens every four years," says Gardell. "It's the best of the best and an honor to participate. Of course I'm going to be nervous, but I hope my experience at the World and European championships will help me."

"I plan to soak up the

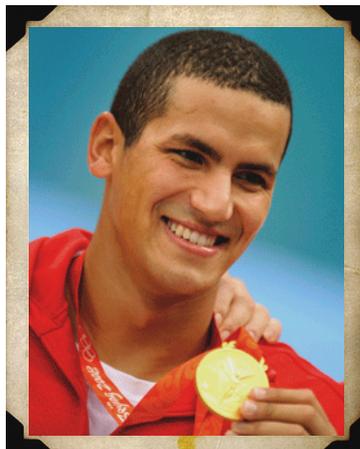
attention and maximize the experience," says Bobrosky. "The Olympics is the biggest, most competitive event in the sporting world. Even if you go to the Olympics once, you are regarded as an Olympian forever, which motivates me to be the best I can be."

For Morozov, he knows his family back home will be following the action. "Nationalists watch the Olympics to have a chance to be proud of their country for every medal won," he explains. "Children watch the Olympics and hope that one day they can stand on the podium singing their country's anthem and make their parents proud. Athletes watch the Olympics because it is a part of their lives. Everyone else watches because it is the most direct representation of success. At the Olympics, there is drama, there is glory, and there is so much action."

This summer, the whole world will be watching.

Good luck Trojans, fight on!

Oliver Riley-Smith is a third year Film Production MFA student from the U.K.



This year's Trojan Olympians aim to copy the feats of Oussama Mellouli (left) and Natasha Danvers-Smith (right), USC alumni who won medals at the Beijing 2008 Olympics.



Film School Confidential

continued from page 1



Photo: Anna Wierzbowska

Ose Oyamendan, in the School of Cinematic Arts courtyard.

program in Film and Television Production. He says he chose USC for one simple reason: "If you're Nigerian, you always want to go and do the best thing. And the film school here is the best."

Though Oyamendan was one of only two African students in his MFA program, he says, "I never thought of myself as an international student. When you're in film school you don't have time to think about where you're from. It's a pressure cooker."

His international status soon became the focus of some very important career advice. "Two professors pulled me aside one day and said that, over the next few years, the big directors in this town will not be American. They may live on Sunset Blvd., but they will prove themselves by making films in their home countries. And then they will be able to market themselves here."

The recent success of foreign-born directors with Hollywood production deals, including Mexico's Alejandro Iñárritu and Denmark's Nicolas Refn, bears out this prediction.

Since graduating in 2002, Oyamendan has been busy establishing his international career, just as his professors

advised. He currently has a slew of projects in various stages of production around the world, including a drama set in apartheid South Africa, a political satire set in Nigeria, and a documentary about the relationship between neighboring villages in Gaza and Israel.

His projects span nations, genres, and time periods, but they are all made possible by two things: the skills he honed at USC, and his international perspective that differentiates him from other up-and-coming filmmakers.

Oyamendan stresses that the development of these international projects is more than just a savvy career move, however. These projects give him a chance to tell important stories that remain largely unfamiliar in the West – tales of immigrants searching for a better life, and tales of Palestinians and Israelis who have "lost property and lost children and still want to make peace." These are stories that matter to Oyamendan, and thanks to USC, he's discovered that these stories can form the career of his dreams.

Trisha Tucker is an English Literature PhD student from Arizona.

Q & A: Olympic hopeful Loudia Laarman



running against the same people, and not a lot of people support track in my province. I came to USC to challenge myself athletically, and getting a scholarship gave me a great opportunity to do that."

Q: What are your chances of qualifying for London 2012?

A: "Going to the Olympics would be more of a privilege than an expectation. I still consider myself to be one of Canada's top female sprinters in the 100m and I believe that with my USC coach, I have a very good chance of qualifying."

Q: What would it mean to you to be able to compete at the Olympics?

A: "The thought of competing there makes everything I've done until now and the sacrifices I've made seem incredibly worthwhile. Not everyone gets the opportunity to be on the world stage at such a prestigious event and to say that I was there would prove to everyone what I am capable of doing. Not medaling at the 2012 Games wouldn't be upsetting for me, I think just getting to experience it for the first time would be wonderful."

Q: Why do you think the Olympics are still so special?

A: "We rarely get to see the payoff of the hard work that athletes put into their sport. Also, people are drawn towards competition. In the Olympics everyone has a team, so it's fun to see how your country measures up to the rest of the world. Watching someone from your country medal at the Olympics gives everyone a sense of pride to be a part of that country."

Loudia Laarman, a sophomore sprinter from Canada, hopes to compete at the 2012 Olympics.

Q: How did you get into sprinting?

A: "Growing up my brother was always the track athlete in the family. I played soccer. I'd go to all his competitions, make him lunches and cheer him on. One day I asked my dad if I could try track, and he threw me into a 1500m race—I was lapped several times and finished with the pity clap. It wasn't until my elementary school annual sports day that I realized I was any good."

Q: Why did you come to America to continue your training?

A: "I came to America for the opportunity to compete with and be surrounded by people who had the highest expectations and competitive drive. In Canada I was always



In Pursuit of Glory: USC Athletes going for gold in London



*Jenny Ozorai, Hungary,
sophomore hammer thrower*



*Katinka Hosszu, Hungary,
senior swimmer*



*Stina Gardell, Sweden,
sophomore swimmer*



*Viktor Fajoyomi, Hungary,
sophomore high-jumper*



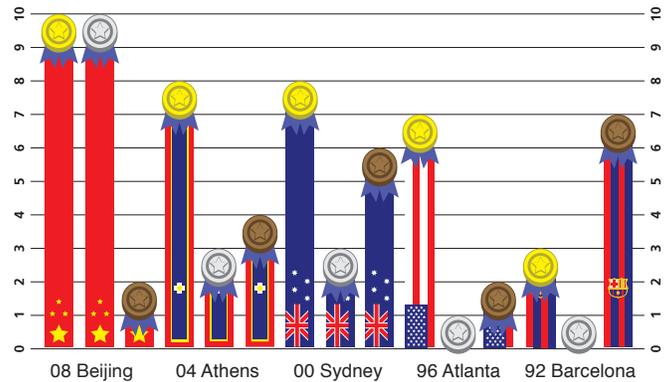
*Kristine Busa, Latvia,
senior javelin thrower*



*Dimitri Colupaev, Germany,
sophomore swimmer*

OLYMPIC STATS

USC medal count from last five summer Olympics:



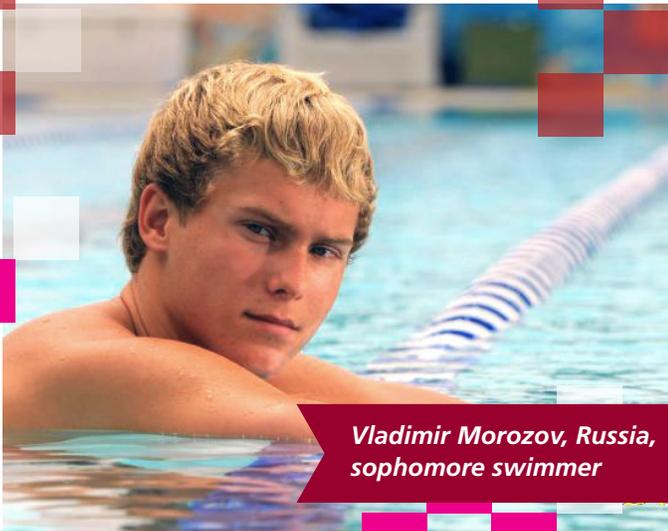
Top 5 countries (apart from US) represented by USC Olympians (# of athletes):



Top 5 sports represented by USC Olympians (# of athletes per sport):



Aaron Brown, Canada, sophomore sprinter



Vladimir Morozov, Russia, sophomore swimmer



Stina Gardell, Sweden, sophomore swimmer

Upcoming OIS events

by Elise Smith

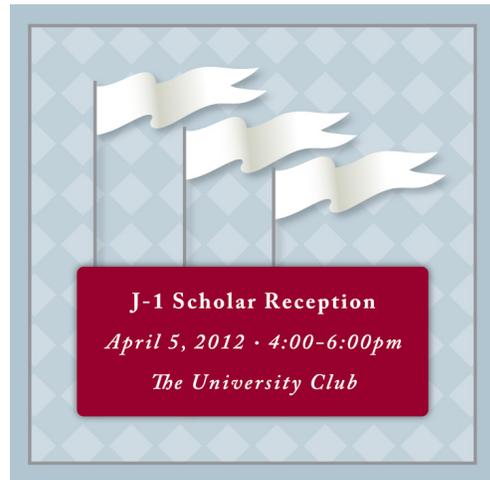
J-1 Scholar Reception: bringing the scholar community together

Take a short escape from the laboratory or library and join OIS for an afternoon of music, food, and conversation as we celebrate our J-1 scholars.

The entire J-1 community (scholars, staff and professors) is invited to attend as we show our appreciation for the scholars' contributions to USC. Please join us on April 5, 2012 from 4:00-6:00pm at the University Club.

This annual reception will feature international food from around the world, and also give scholars a chance to socialize with their peers outside of the classroom. Please come and enjoy the company of fellow Trojans!

Please email J-1 Student Assistant, Tim McBride at j1exchg@usc.edu, with questions.



OIS Graduation Reception: a toast to international graduates

Live music, gourmet food, and good company – the perfect ingredients for a wonderful reception!

The Office of International Services will honor and recognize our graduating international students at our annual graduation reception on April 27, 2012 from 3:00-5:00pm at the University Club.

Come let us congratulate our graduating students and mingle with supporters of the international student community. Please join us in recognizing the end of a great academic year for our students and our office!

Please email International Program Assistant, Elise Smith at elisesmi@usc.edu, with questions.



Elise Smith is an education M.A. student from Texas.



Past Masters:

USC international student legends who won Olympic gold

by Oliver Riley-Smith



Michelle Ford **(AUS, swimming, 1980)**

The only non-Soviet bloc swimmer to win an individual swimming gold at the Moscow Olympics for the 800m butterfly. The Sydney native accepted a scholarship to study communications at USC in 1983.



Rafael Osuna **(MEX, tennis, 1968)**

The most successful Mexican tennis player of all time, Osuna won doubles and singles gold at the Mexico City Olympics. His USC coach said "he moves on the tennis court like a god." In 1963, while still a Trojan, he was the number one player in the world. He was killed in a plane crash in 1969 at age 30.

Material Girl: the virtual reality of Ahyoung Choi

Exchange visitor profile

by Raquel Orellana

As one of the country's top research schools, it is not difficult to believe that USC's Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) is developing a Virtual Human. The idea brings to mind an image of frenzied scientists in white coats, sitting in dark labs crunching numbers all day.

When you meet Ahyoung Choi, however, it is hard to believe that such a normal looking girl, open, friendly, and easy to talk to, is part of the ICT team involved in such an innovative, groundbreaking project. As she carefully explains her work, "wow" is the only word that springs to mind.

Choi is a scholar from South Korea who is directly involved in ICT's most important project: the Virtual Human.

ICT works on creating "engaging, memorable, and effective interactive media that are revolutionizing learning in the fields of training, education, and beyond." The Virtual Human is ICT's groundbreaking attempt to make a difference in these fields. Choi explains that ICT "eventually wants to make virtual therapists or a virtual training system to train real people."

Two years ago, Choi spent a summer at ICT, where she recreated the Stanford Prison

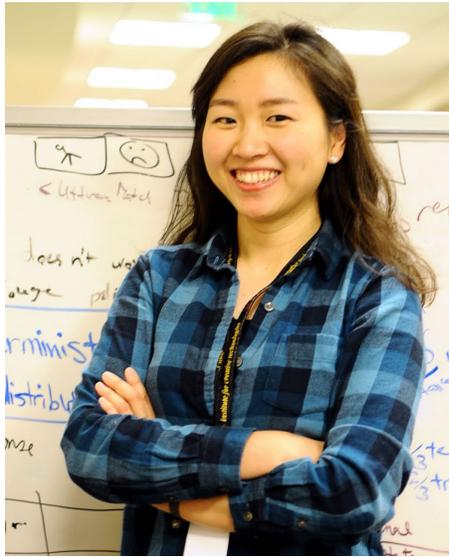


Photo: Anna Wierzbowska

Ahyoung Choi, a J-1 scholar studying at USC's Institute for Creative Technologies.

Experiment with one variation: the prison guards were virtual. The purpose was to evaluate whether people assigned the prisoner role would acquiesce to Virtual Humans playing the prison guard role, as had happened in the Stanford experiment when the guards were real humans. Choi's experience was so rewarding that she vowed to return to Los Angeles after graduating to continue where she had left off.

Returning to South Korea, she finished her doctoral degree in computer science, focusing on affective computing. As planned, she returned to ICT to apply her expertise, using computers to analyze and interpret human emotional states and physiological signs.

Choi explains that the creation of a Virtual Human is an interdisciplinary effort. Psychologists, communication specialists, computer scientists and other professionals all work together at ICT in four areas: creation of the body and face, language processing (ability to listen), modeling inside the agent (intelligence and cognition), and measurement of effects on humans.

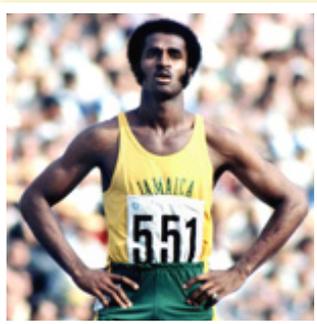
Choi works on the measurement of effects on humans. "I'm measuring the human's vital signals, such as heartbeat, skin conductance, and temperature. So from this I'm measuring how people feel while interacting with the Virtual Human," she explains. Her findings are used to make improvements to the Virtual Human prototype.

Choi has enjoyed her experience abroad so far, and wishes her stay in Los Angeles were longer. She enjoys having the opportunity to meet and work with people with different backgrounds and professional interests at ICT.

She also loves the lifestyle of a USC visiting scholar in LA. Living next to the beach, with year-round sunshine, and beautiful scenery, "It feels like I'm on a vacation," she explains.

Choi is doing important work for ICT by helping maintain the school's leadership in research, and she's enjoying every bit of it too.

Raquel Orellana is a first year Strategic Public Relations MA student from El Salvador.



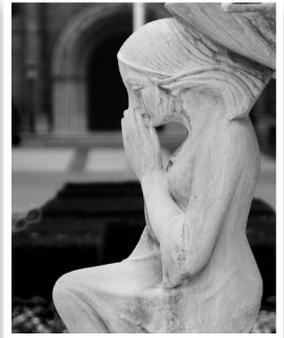
Don Quarrie (JAM, sprinting, 1976)

Five time Jamaican Sportsman of the Year, Quarrie won his only Olympic gold in the 200m at Montreal, one of four medals he won over three Olympics. There have been a number of reggae tunes titled 'Tribute to Donald Quarrie' in his honor.



Helene Mayer (GER, fencing, 1928)

Named one of the top 100 female athletes of the 20th century, Mayer was only 17 when she won her Olympic gold for the individual foil in Amsterdam. She later competed for Nazi Germany at the 1936 Olympics, despite having been forced to move to America because of her Jewish descent.



USC through the lens of photographer, Anna Wierzbowska, a senior International Relations student from Poland.

USC Student Affairs

Office of International Services
University of Southern California
Student Union 300
University Park
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0899

international CONNECTION

Spring 2012

Oliver Riley-Smith
Publications Editor

Anne Kaufman
Editorial Advisor

Denton Design Associates
USC Spectrum Design Studio
Graphic Design