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# grains of time

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY



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*As one of only two a cappella ensembles associated with the Music Department at NC State, the Grains of Time are the University's premier men's a cappella group. NC State University is a nationally recognized leader in science and technology education with historic strengths in agriculture and engineering.*



2010-2011 Press Kit

For more than four decades, the Grains of Time have been part of NC State's campus life. Performing a wide variety of music with the use of just eight men's voices, the group remains one of a kind when compared to most collegiate a cappella groups. Bridging contemporary collegiate a cappella with that of professional groups, they create a performance style that lends itself to both excellent musicianship and showmanship, and all without any outside directors, funding, or even a formal music major. Though officially styled as NC State University's premiere men's a cappella group, to their loyal fans they are known simply as "the Grains."

The earliest roots of the Grains can be traced back to 1966, when a "NCSU Men's Quartet" was formed as a subset of the Varsity Men's Glee Club. At the time the Glee Club was the only choral group on campus, whose student population was largely male. By 1968 second-year director Milton Bliss quickly saw the need for a smaller, more contemporary styled and elite vocal group to supplement shows performed by the Glee Club, particularly on the annual spring tour. In November of that year, the new group held its inaugural auditions and took on eight members including two guitar players. By spring this new group, then known as the N.C. Statesmen, made its debut on the 1969 Concert Tour, performing then-popular songs "Up, Up and Away" and "What Now My Love."

After several months, the group looked to revise its name, and while rehearsing in Thompson Theatre came up with two ideas: "Grains of Sand" and "Sands of Time." Neither title truly pleased every member, so the group combined the two to become known as "Grains of Time." Over the next several years the Grains traveled with the Men's Glee Club to local high schools and colleges, and also competed in several intercollegiate competitions, finishing as high as second place. During the 1970s and 80s, the group continued performing pop, oldies, country, and barbershop

pieces occasionally with the use of guitars before becoming exclusively a cappella in the mid 1980s. The Grains still perform a staple piece from this era, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" ("Swing Down Chariot") to this day.

The 1990s saw many new strides for the now all-vocal group. In 1993 the Grains held their first concert in Stewart Theatre, now a bi-annual event, and released their first album, "Forever Unplugged." Over the next few years the Grains traveled to Europe, Canada, and many US states on their annual tour and performed the National Anthem for such notable franchises as the Atlanta Braves and even the Golden State Warriors.

Recent years have brought many significant developments for the Grains, beginning with three international tours capped off by a trip to the finals of the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella (ICCA) in 2003. Alumnus Mark Hines won best arrangement for his version of "Homeward Bound," a traditional Irish folk tune. In 2004 James Wallace introduced vocal percussion on the song "Celebrate," creating a more contemporary performance style that continues today. Current member Ryan Riddle is just the third percussionist in the history of the group.

Today, the Grains still draw their members from the NC State Chorale and Men's Choir. The Grains traditionally hold a large on-campus show twice annually in a packed Stewart Theatre, and perform at Commencement in the RBC center each semester. You can still catch them occasionally on campus at various functions such as West Campus Jam, the Unity Concert, open house, and of course sorority functions. With the tremendous growth of the university and the prospect of a music major just a few years away, the future for the Grains promises to remain strong in its fifth decade of existence.

## Booking Information

The Grains may be available to perform for you and/or your company at ceremonies, celebrations, private parties, athletic competitions, and many other events. Our rates are flexible to your specific budget and time allocation.

For performance inquiries, contact:

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For general information, contact:

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For further press information, contact:

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Write to us at:

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“[The] Grains of Time has made musicianship its priority. Attention to dynamics, line shaping, passionate deliveries, and a sensitive, tight blend is always present. The group sounds rock solid.”

- *Kimmie Raschka Sailor, in a review of our album True, 2006*

“All of the legislators were quite impressed with their performance, and the governor and I both appreciate your efforts in getting them to us.”

- *Mrs. James E. Holshouser, Jr. in a letter to Mr. Milton Bliss*

“If an energetic, interactive show designed to please all ages and musical tastes [don't] get you out to see the Grains tonight, perhaps the added bonus of aesthetics will.”

- *Meredith Richbourg, Staff Writer of the NCSU student paper, The Technician*