

# FRIDAY FANFARE - AUGUST 22, 2025

# NEWSLETTER

**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY.  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

## DIRECTOR'S WELCOME



**Dr. Jenny Snodgrass** - [jennifer.sndograss@mtsu.edu](mailto:jennifer.sndograss@mtsu.edu)

What an incredible honor and privilege it is to serve as the Director of the School of Music at MTSU. From the moment I stepped onto campus for my interview in February 2025, I felt an immediate and profound connection to this exceptional community. Those two transformative days introduced me to passionate students eager to grow and dedicated faculty committed to teaching those students.

The overwhelming support and enthusiasm I received from current students and alumni when I announced my decision to join MTSU truly exemplifies the strength of our "True Blue" community.

I consider myself a teacher first and I find my greatest joy in those moments when knowledge clicks and students experience breakthrough discoveries. Supporting student success has always been my North Star, and in my administrative role, I am able to take this even further to help champion and guide my talented faculty, ambitious students, dedicated staff, and vibrant community with the same passion.

Thank you for the warm welcome you've already shown me. I am genuinely excited to begin this journey together as we write the next inspiring chapter for the MTSU School of Music. The future is bright, and I can't wait to see what we'll accomplish together. **Go Blue Raiders!**

## DIRECTOR'S ADVISORY BOX

Want to share an event coming up? Want everyone to know you released a new recording? Was your proposal accepted to a national conference and you want everyone to know but do not want to be "that" person? Have a concern about the SOM that you want to share? Do you want to give a shout out to someone in the hall who made your recital go smooth?

This is your one stop shop to share everything:  
[Director's Advisory Box](#)

## BLUE CARE FOLDER

As faculty and staff members, you may be the first to notice when a student is faced with a challenge in their academic or personal life. Often, there are indicators that a student is struggling long before a situation escalates to a crisis. To assist our students in maintaining their well-being and maximizing their intellectual growth, it is important to identify difficulties as early as possible. This informational guide is designed to assist you in recognizing and supporting students of concern.

More information is available in the  
[BLUE CARE FOLDER](#)

## STUDENTS: JOIN THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM!

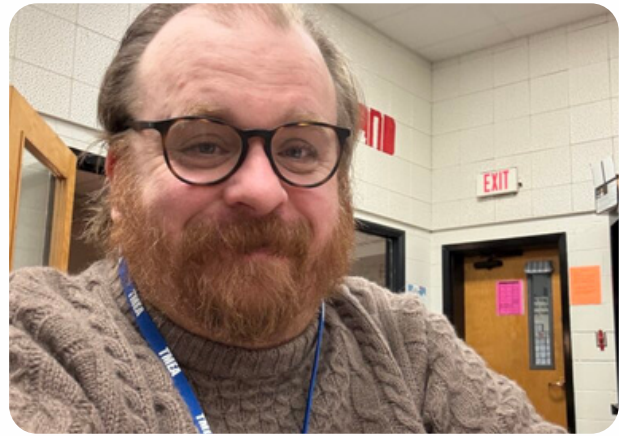
Do you enjoy creating videos and capturing the energy of live music? The School of Music is looking for students to join our Social Media Team! You'll work with Assistant Director Dr. Chris Combest to highlight ensembles, events, and the vibrant life of our school through engaging video content.

If you're interested, please fill out this form:  
<https://forms.office.com/r/Vjh3j4KN7g>

## STAFF FEATURE: CHRIS CLICK

In just a short time as our new Building Manager, Chris has already made a huge impact—updating the website, managing scheduling, clarifying the recital program process, and keeping so many things running smoothly behind the scenes. When a small electrical fire broke out in the band office last week, Chris jumped into action. Even the fire chief said, “That Chris, he saved you from lots of damage.”

Thank you, Chris, for your dedication and for always being the person we can count on!



## FACULTY SHOUT-OUTS!



Congratulations to MTSU School of Music Piano Faculty Member **Dr. Arunesh Nadgir**, who has been named the 2025 TMTA Teacher of the Year by the Tennessee Music Teachers Association. This honor recognizes his passionate, sensitive, and thoughtful musicianship, as well as his dedication to teaching and service. In addition to his teaching and performing, Dr. Nadgir has served the music teaching community as TMTA President (2023–2025) and as Chair of the MTNA State President’s Advisory Council (2024–2025).

Congratulations to percussion faculty member **prof. Julie Davila**, who has just completed her first season as the new DCI Judge Administrator! On August 9, she served as Chief Judge for the World Championship Finals in Indianapolis, leading the adjudication panel at one of the most prestigious events in the marching arts. Julie is a renowned percussionist, performer, and educator with decades of contributions to both concert and marching percussion. At MTSU, Julie is the arranger and instructor for the Band of Blue Drumline and teaches as an adjunct professor of percussion. Her teaching career also includes years as a high school percussion specialist in Nashville, where her ensembles consistently earned national recognition, including a WGI National Championship.



The MTSU School of Music is proud to celebrate Gyuhee Kim, our full-time staff pianist, who was awarded First Prize in the Collaborative Piano Division of the 2025 WPTA Singapore International Piano Competition. Ms. Kim is also an MTSU alum, receiving her MM in Piano Performance in 2025. This international recognition highlights her outstanding artistry and dedication to collaborative performance. Please join us in congratulating Gyuhee Kim on this remarkable achievement!



Congratulations to Tuba Faculty member **Dr. Chris Combest** on beginning his tenure as President of the Leonard Falcone International Euphonium and Tuba Festival!

This year marks the festival's 40th anniversary, a milestone for an event that has become one of the most respected gatherings for low brass musicians worldwide. The Falcone Festival brings together top performers, educators, and students, fostering artistic growth, celebrating excellence, and inspiring the next generation of euphonium and tuba players.

We are excited to welcome **Dr. Will Chandler** to the MTSU School of Music as our new Choral Director! Dr. Chandler will lead the Schola Cantorum and teach in our academic areas, bringing his passion for uniting singers and audiences through the power of music.

With experience as a conductor, educator, and scholar, he has led university and public school choirs, presented at national conferences, and is preparing for his Carnegie Hall debut in April 2026. We look forward to the expertise, energy, and artistry he will share with our students and community. Welcome to MTSU, Dr. Chandler!



MTSU alumni and faculty performed with the New Hampshire Music Festival. **Grace O'Connell**, trumpet (BM 2023) and **Tanner Antonetti**, trombone (BM 2014) performed alongside **Dr. David Loucky**, MTSU Professor of Trombone and Euphonium in the New Hampshire Music Festival in July 2025. Grace, a recent graduate of the Yale School of Music, performed as Guest Principal Trumpet, alongside Tina Erickson (Mr. Jack Daniel's Original Silver Cornet Band) and Wiff Rudd (Professor of Trumpet at Baylor University). Grace has been offered a two-year fellowship with Ensemble Connect of New York City, where she will serve as a teaching mentor in the city school music programs and perform recitals with the ensemble. Tanner Antonetti, who has been in the Virginia Symphony since 2018, is now a permanent member of the NHMF. Along with the Festival's orchestral performances, he performed on a chamber program with Wiff Rudd and Molly Norcross (Metropolitan Opera Orchestra). David Loucky has been Principal Trombonist with the NHMF since 1987. This season he performed the Bydlo solo from Pictures at an Exhibition on euphonium. In addition, he and Grace played a brass quintet program for the Festival's "Music in the Mountains" series.



Picture 1: (L to R) Tina Erickson, **Grace O'Connell**, Wiff Rudd  
Picture 2: (L to R) **David Loucky**, **Tanner Antonetti**, Don Robinson, Ryan Hayward

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



MTSU Trumpet alum **Grace O'Connell** has been selected to join Ensemble Connect, the prestigious two-year fellowship program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and the Weill Music Institute in partnership with NYC Public Schools!

A proud graduate of MTSU and Yale, Grace brings her dynamic spirit and artistry to this role, where she'll connect musical excellence with education, advocacy, and community leadership. As she puts it, "The trumpet is not afraid to be heard... which I feel represents my personality pretty accurately." Congratulations, Grace – we're so proud of you!



Congratulations to MTSU Alum **Benjimen Neal**, newly appointed Principal Librarian of the Jacksonville Symphony. An accomplished performance librarian, Neal currently serves as Head Librarian for the Aspen Music Festival and School and is a Library Fellow with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. His experience spans mainstage concerts, opera, musicals, and contemporary ensembles. An MTSU graduate in Music Industry and Clarinet, he brings outstanding preparation skills and deep repertoire knowledge to this vital role.

## STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



Congratulations to MTSU graduate student **Cassidy Van Amburg** for being selected to present at the Tennessee American Choral Directors Association State Conference. Her session entitled, "0 to 100: Strategies for Growing a Successful Choir Program" focused on recruiting choir members through community events, creative concerts, collaboration, branding, and student leadership. She currently serves as the Nolensville High School Choral Director. Cassidy is pursuing her MM degree in music education through the MTSU School of Music fully online graduate degree program.



The MTSU TEBA Chorale has been invited to join the University of Memphis TigerChor and ETSU's BucsWorth for a special interest session at the Southern Division ACDA Conference in March 2026! The session, "The Tenor-Bass Choir: A Tennessee Directors' Panel", will feature a rich conversation and shared performance led by **Angela Tipps** and fellow directors from across the state. It's a celebration of artistry, collaboration, and the unique power of the tenor-bass ensemble. We're honored to be part of this and hope to see many of you there!

# 2025 SCHOOL OF MUSIC FACULTY AND STAFF RETREAT



The Music Faculty and Staff held their annual retreat last week in SFA 117.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Monday, August 24th - Fall Semester Classes Begins!
- Week of August 24th - Ensemble Auditions in the School of Music (various locations).
- Thursday, August 28th - School of Music Convocation, 11:30am (Hinton Hall)

**MTSU KEYBOARD ARTIST SERIES**

# ADAM CLARK PLAYS RACH 3

in a new arrangement for piano and string quintet



**Friday, Sept. 12, 6 p.m.**  
**Hinton Music Hall**

**Free and open to the public**  
Featuring Andrea Dawson, Emily Walsh,  
Katja Yeager, Bryan Hayslett, and  
Tiffany Freeman

**PROGRAM**  
**Bach:** Piano Concerto in D Major  
**Rachmaninoff:** Piano Concerto No. 3  
in D Minor (arr. Sahun Hong)

STEINWAY PIANO GALLERY  
NASHVILLE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Ascend FRIENDLY PRESENTS MTSU Arts ART • DANCE • MUSIC • THEATRE

ENRICH YOUR LIFE Advance your skills College of Liberal Arts

I AM true BLUE

# LIBRARY ORIENTATION



**DATES** TUES, SEPT 2  
WED, SEPT 3  
THURS, SEPT 4  
FRI, SEPT 5

**TIME** 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
(counts as one recital attendance)

**LIBRARY ROOM 272**

ATTEND **ONE** OF THE ABOVE SESSIONS

The FRIDAY FANFARE is a weekly newsletter of the MTSU School of Music edited by Dr. Chris Combest - [chris.combest@mtsu.edu](mailto:chris.combest@mtsu.edu)

Want to see your event, faculty, student or alumni news featured? Submit it to the [Director's Advisory Box](#)  
To learn more about our programs and events at the School of Music, please visit [music.mtsu.edu](http://music.mtsu.edu).