

FRIDAY FANFARE - MARCH 20, 2026

NEWSLETTER


MTSU
*School
of Music*

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dr. Chris Combest, Assistant Director - chris.combest@mtsu.edu



We're back from Spring Break, and there's a clear sense of momentum across the School of Music. Rehearsal spaces are active again. Lessons and classes have settled back into rhythm. Students are preparing for performances, juries, and projects that will shape the end of the semester. It's one of those moments where the energy feels focused and forward moving.

That energy leads directly into one of our favorite opportunities to connect beyond campus. On Saturday, April 11, we will host the MTSU School of Music Alumni Reception during the Tennessee Music Education Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Resort. This gathering has become an important touchpoint for our community each year.

We look forward to reconnecting with alumni who are making an impact in classrooms and on stages across the region. We're also excited to introduce new members of our leadership team and continue building relationships that support our students and programs. Events like this remind me that our work is not confined to a single place. It carries outward through the people who pass through our halls and into the communities they serve.

If you plan to attend TMEA, I hope you'll join us. It will be a meaningful time to reconnect, reflect, and look ahead together. Join and invite others to our Facebook event at [THIS LINK](#)

MTSU CENTER FOR CHINESE MUSIC AND CULTURE

10th Anniversary Celebration Concert



FEATURING YAZHI GUO

A world-leading performer of Chinese wind instruments and a member of the Silk Road Ensemble



HAIQIONG DENG
Florida State University



YUXIN MEI
University of North Texas



JINGYI ZHAN
Shaanxi Normal University



BEITONG LIU
Bard College
Conservatory of Music

Saturday, March 21 • 7:30 p.m.

Hinton Music Hall, Wright Music Building, MTSU

With **MTSU Jazz Faculty**, **MTSU Chinese Music Ensemble** and alumni, and **Middle Tennessee Community Zheng Ensemble**

Led by **Mei Han**, Director, Center for Chinese Music and Culture

Presented by MTSU International Affairs, MTSU School of Music, MTSU Center for Chinese Music and Culture, and the Distinguished Lecture Fund



Center for Chinese
Music and Culture

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Office of
International Affairs

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I AM *true* **BLUE**.

NEW FACULTY: DR. MATT TAYLOR, CHORAL COND.

The MTSU School of Music is excited to welcome **Dr. Matt Taylor** as Director of Choral Activities, beginning this fall. Dr. Taylor will lead Schola Cantorum Chorale while teaching courses in Conducting and Choral Literature. He brings a strong record of work with singers at every level, along with a clear commitment to student growth and ensemble artistry.

Before joining MTSU, Dr. Taylor served on the faculty at Lipscomb University and spent five years as Associate Choral Director at Wando High School in Charleston, South Carolina. He remains active across the region as a conductor of honor choirs and as a guest clinician for school and church ensembles. He also serves as director of the Governor's School Chorale with the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts. Beyond the podium, he performs as a member of Vocal Arts Nashville and works as a double bassist in live and recording settings. His broad musicianship reflects a deep connection to both choral and instrumental traditions.

Dr. Taylor holds degrees from Samford University, Louisiana State University, and the University of Georgia. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Taylor to our community.



- Music at Middle living-learning community in Monohan Hall
- Music ensembles from symphony to salsa
- Competitive scholarships
- 36 full-time and 20 part-time faculty
- 10 undergraduate programs
- 7 graduate music programs
- 200+ music events per year
- University Honors College
- All-Steinway School

music.mtsu.edu

MTSU School of Music
Alumni Reception
at the 67th annual
Tennessee Music Educators Association
Music Education Conference

Saturday, April 11, 5:30–7:30 p.m.

Gaylord Opryland Resort
and Convention Center
Magnolia Mezzanine 2–4
2800 Opryland Drive, Nashville

Come by to meet
our new directors!

Bryan Braue, D.M.A.
Director of Athletic Bands and
Associate Director of Bands

Matthew Taylor, D.M.A.
Director of Choral Activities

Jennifer Snodgrass, Ph.D.
Director of the School of Music

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STATE UNIVERSITY.**
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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ACDA Invites you
to a delightful
Tea Party

Join us in discussing the
importance of easter in music
with a tea party!
Make sure to dress your
Sunday best!
SFA 211 at 6:00pm
March 23rd

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

The Middle Tennessee State University School of Music welcomed more than 70 prospective students to campus for our final scholarship audition day on Saturday, February 28th; each ready to share their talent and take the next step in their musical journey. The building was buzzing with activity. Faculty and staff worked behind the scenes to create a thoughtful and welcoming experience, while our student ambassadors helped guide visitors through the halls and share what makes our community special. The sunshine, the music filling the building, and the energy of students supporting one another made it a memorable day for everyone involved. Thank you to every student and family who joined us. We were honored to hear your music and spend the day with you.



MTSU KEYBOARD ARTIST SERIES

Sticks and Hammers
Saturday, April 4, 1:00 p.m.
Hinton Music Hall

David Viscoli and Daniel Rieppel,
pianos

Pedro Fernández and Erich Rieppel,
percussion

Performing Bartok's
Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion
and works by Cesar Bresgen and Samuel Robles

Free and open to the public
music.mtsu.edu/keyboardseries

STEINWAY PIANO GALLERY
NASHVILLE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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

ENRICH YOUR LIFE MTSU College of Liberal Arts

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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
ILLINOIS JACQUET JAZZ FESTIVAL
March 28th 2026

Featuring guest artists **Jesús Santandreu & Chester Thompson**

Schedule:

- 9:00 am – 12:30 Visiting ensembles perform
- 9:00 am – 12:30 MTSU and visiting combos perform
- 11:30 MTSU Jazz Ensemble 2
- 1:00 The Establishment Big Band
- 2:15 Jazz faculty clinic and Q+A
- 3:30 Guest jazz clinic by saxophonist Jesús Santandreu
- 4:30 Announcement of student and ensemble awards
- 5:30 Concert: saxophonist Jesús Santandreu with MTSU Jazz Ensemble I

\$10 Admission. FREE for MTSU students and faculty

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

For more information, go to:
<https://music.mtsu.edu/jazzfest/>

The MTSU School of Music is proud to present the outstanding student performers selected as finalists for the **2026 Tom Naylor Memorial Solo Artist Competition**. These musicians will take the stage to share an exciting evening of solo repertoire representing a wide range of instruments and musical styles. 2026 Naylor Finalists:

Undergraduate Finalists

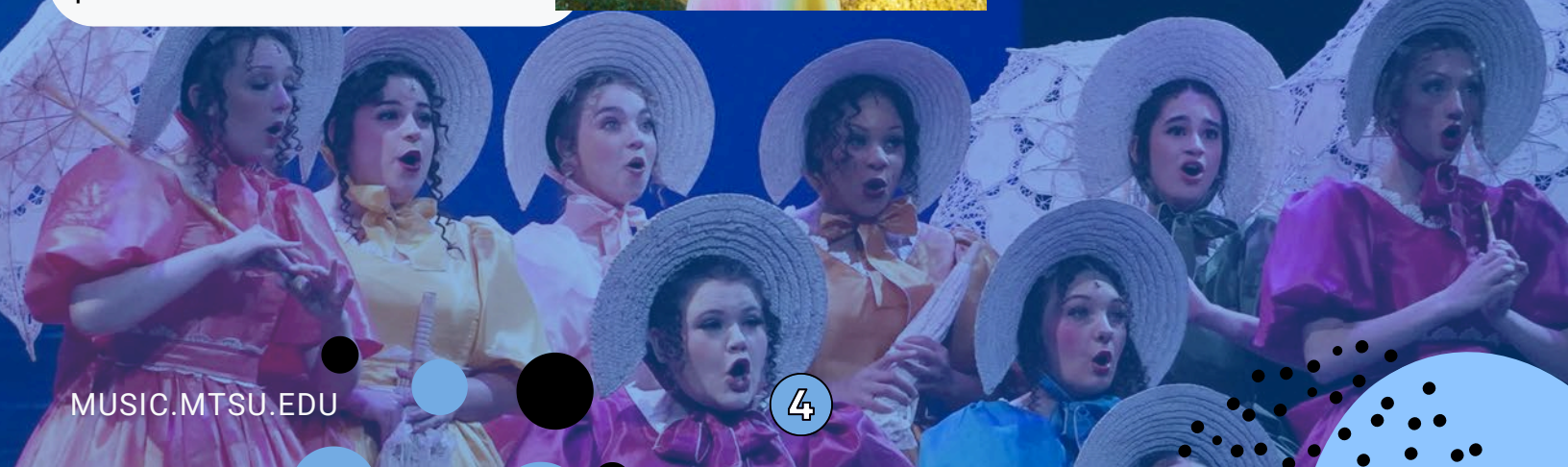
- Wyatt Crabill – marimba
- Jayden Po'e – viola
- Sam Miller – trumpet
- Nathanael Taylor – clarinet
- Grace Gonzalez-Whitten – flute
- Caitlin Clements – voice

Graduate Finalists

- Eric "Sully" Sullivan – clarinet
- Elizabeth Currier – harp

T. Earl Hinton Music Hall, MTSU
Sunday, March 22, 2026
7:00 PM

The Tom Naylor Competition honors the legacy of a beloved MTSU faculty member whose career was dedicated to supporting and developing young musicians. Join us as these finalists share their artistry in a memorable evening of performance.



FACULTY NEWS

Earlier this month, collaboration took center stage at the School of Music.

Dr. Reed Thomas led our Wind Orchestra in a performance of Friedrich Gulda's Cello Concerto, featuring **Dr. Bryan Hayslett** as soloist. The piece moves freely across styles, blending classical traditions with rock, jazz, blues, and even a spirited polka.



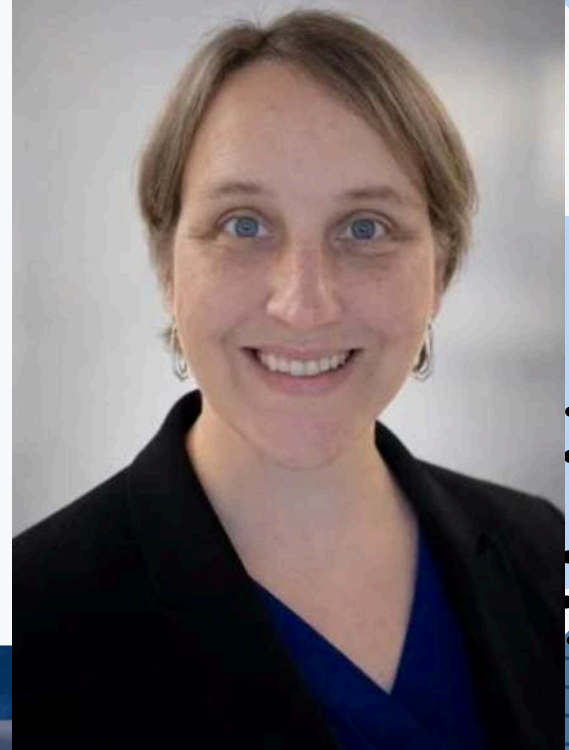
Dr. Jamila McWhirter recently served as choral clinician for the Music City Classic in Nashville. The Music City Classic is an adjudicated music festival designed for student ensembles from across the United States. Ensembles perform in professional, high-profile venues in Nashville and receive an on-stage clinic from national experts for immediate feedback in addition to recorded and written evaluation. Dr. McWhirter enjoyed working with and making connections with several choral ensembles from Jackson, Mississippi. She looks forward to working with more choral ensembles during the second weekend of the Music City Classic held in early May.



A few weeks ago, the Faculty Chamber Music Series: Stones River Chamber Players brought something special to Hinton Hall. *Rhythms of Place* was one of those programs that reminded us what live music can do when people lean in and take risks together. You heard it in the variety. The evening began with a thoughtful pre-concert talk by Josh Bedford, who did not just speak about the music. He stepped into it, appearing on stage in a theatrical role that set the tone for the night. We are am grateful for the artists who brought this program to life and for the audience who showed up ready to listen. We hope you enjoyed *Rhythms of Place* and are already looking ahead. See you next season!

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

MTSU School of Music alum **Sarah Ball McVey** has been named a semifinalist for the CMA Music Teacher of Excellence Award, a national honor that recognizes music educators who are making a meaningful impact in their classrooms and communities. Sarah teaches at Belle-Aire Elementary School in Tullahoma, Tennessee, where she inspires young musicians every day through creativity, care, and a deep commitment to music education. Her work reflects the powerful role that dedicated teachers play in shaping the next generation of musicians and music lovers. Congratulations, Sarah. We are proud to call you a Blue Raider and grateful for the difference you are making for your students and your community.



we're proud to celebrate **Joshua Busman** and **Sarah (Schneider) Busman**, two graduates whose work continues to shape musical life in meaningful ways. Joshua Busman graduated summa cum laude from the MTSU School of Music with a degree in Music Theory and Composition before continuing his studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he earned both his M.A. in Musicology and Ph.D. in Musicology. Today he serves as Associate Professor of Music and Assistant Dean of the Esther G. Maynor Honors College. His wife, Sarah Busman, is also an accomplished MTSU alum. She serves as Director of Community Engagement at the Arts Council of Fayetteville | Cumberland County and performs as principal flutist of the Fayetteville Symphony Orchestra. Sarah holds a BM from MTSU and an MM from the Peabody Conservatory. Through her work at the Arts Council, she helps lead programs that connect artists and audiences across the region, including public art initiatives, artist residencies, and community arts programming. Together, Joshua and Sarah continue to build vibrant musical and artistic communities in Fayetteville, North Carolina, while raising their two sons, Arthur and Simon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Friday, March 20 – Savannah Bennett Senior Piano Recital, 6:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Friday, March 20 – Besmond Arias Senior Saxophone Recital, 8:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Saturday, March 21 – HS Honor Clarinet and Flute Day, 8:00 am (Hinton Music Hall)
Saturday, March 21 – Chinese Music Event, 7:30 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Sunday, March 22 – Taylor Van Rychehem Graduate Recital, 3:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Sunday, March 22 – Benjamin Anderson Senior Recital, 5:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Sunday, March 22 – Naylor Competition Finals Recitals, 7:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Monday, March 23 – Henry Wright Junior Euphonium Recital, 6:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Monday, March 23 – Justin Averill Senior Tuba Recital, 8:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Tuesday, March 24 – MTSU Steel Drum Band Concert, 8:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Wednesday, March 25 – Sam Brooke Graduate Percussion Recital, 6:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Wednesday, March 25 – Charlie Pettyjohn Senior Tuba Recital, 8:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Thursday, March 26 – Cecelia Lovelace Senior Composition Recital, 6:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Friday, March 27 – Spencer Goad Senior Composition Recital, 6:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Friday, March 27 – Paul West Senior Composition Recital, 8:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Saturday, March 28 – Illinois Jacquet Jazz Festival, 8:00 am (Hinton Music Hall)
Saturday, March 28 – MTSU Illinois Jacquet Jazz Festival, 5:30 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Sunday, March 29 – Phi Mu Alpha Concert, 12:30 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Sunday, March 29 – Erin Seifert Senior Voice Recital, 3:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Sunday, March 29 – Abigail Miller Senior Voice Recital, 5:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)
Sunday, March 29 – Mitchell Elmore Senior Trombone Recital, 8:00 pm (Hinton Music Hall)



Abigail Miller, Soprano

Piano
Joseph Walker
Clarinet
Yassin Adams
Flute
Grace Whitten

Works by
Delibes
Donizetti
Liszt
Schubert

Senior Voice Recital

Sunday, March 29th 5:00 PM MTSU Hinton Hall



Charlie Pettyjohn
Senior Recital

Wednesday
March 25
@ 8 PM
Hinton Hall

Works by:
Gregson, Fritze,
Stevens,
Grant,
Salvig,
and Rush

Featuring
Gyuhee Kim

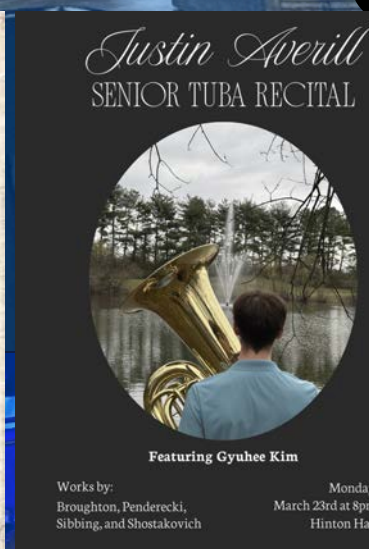


JOSEPH WALKER, PIANO

Jordan Mathis TENOR
Caitlin Clements SOPRANO
A JUNIOR RECITAL

FEATURING WORKS BY:
DONIZETTI, BEETHOVEN, SCHUMANN, SCHUBERT, WAGNER

SATURDAY APRIL 4th, 5:00 PM, HINTON HALL



Justin Averill
SENIOR TUBA RECITAL

Featuring Gyuhee Kim

Works by:
Broughton, Penderecki,
Sibbing, and Shostakovich

Monday
March 23rd at 8pm
Hinton Hall

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

Want to see your event, faculty, student news featured? Submit it to the [Director's Advisory Box](#)

Share your Alumni news at <https://forms.office.com/r/8Eu72excj6>

To learn more about our programs and events at the School of Music, please visit music.mtsu.edu.