

FRIDAY FANFARE - MAY 1, 2026

# NEWSLETTER

**MTSU***School  
of Music*

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dr. Jenny Snodgrass, Director - [jennifer.snodgrass@mtsu.edu](mailto:jennifer.snodgrass@mtsu.edu)

How does one even begin to write something to end a year like we have experienced in the School of Music?

One of the things I have loved most about our Friday Fanfares are the photographs. Week after week, they tell the story better than I ever could: the energy, the collaboration, the tireless, unguarded love of music and teaching that lives in this building. So I went back through my phone, month by month, from the day I arrived at MTSU all the way through today, looking for the moments that stopped me. I planned to share ten. I couldn't do it. There is simply too much good here.

**July 2025** In my first two weeks, I sat down with nearly every member of our faculty, one conversation at a time, to hear their stories and their hopes for this School of Music. I still have every single one of those notes. I always will.

**August 2025** Singing the alma mater together at opening convocation. That is the moment I understood the pride in the School of Music.

**September 2025** MTSU School of Music Alumni were everywhere... at marching band festivals, in the stands at football games, cheering on our band with a fierce devotion.

**October 2025** There's nothing better than watching our students pour themselves into making that day memorable and seeing the next generation of Blue Raiders at our recruiting table.

**November 2025** Representing the School of Music at NASM. I had a chance to talk with directors from across the country about our students' successes and the performances ahead. I was, and still am, so honored to be building on foundation set by those before me.

**December 2025** Staff Development day with good food, conversation and a viewing of *Wicked: For Good*. A reminder of what it looks like to choose kindness and substance over style.

**January 2026** The ice storm. We pivoted to online teaching almost overnight, and I was reminded just how hard it is to teach sight-singing through a screen. A quiet shoutout here to the percussion students who saved the day in the IRH. You know exactly what you did. So grateful.

**February 2026** Music Monday. Over sixty prospective students arrived on our campus, and one of the most unified days I have ever witnessed from a faculty and student body. Walking out to the steel drum band at the end of it felt like a perfect punctuation mark on something really special.

**March 2026** Traveling to the American Choral Directors Association conference with TEBA. They didn't just sound great, they represented us beautifully in every interaction. Some of the most meaningful conversations I've had all year happened on that bus on the way home. And Wind Ensemble, with Bryan Hayslett playing solo. The room was electric. I will carry that performance and that ensemble experience with me for a long time.

**April 2026** All things TMEA, from the booth to the alumni reception to the hallway conversations that somehow always end up being the most honest ones. There was a spirit in all of those rooms for what is happening at MTSU. The opera **Carmen**. If you were there, you already know. If you weren't, there are no words adequate to describe the talent on that stage.

And finally, the **Capital Campaign launch**. From the student performances to the stories about what a scholarship means in the life of a young musician, the difference between a dream pursued and a dream deferred. We are just getting started, and I cannot wait to see what we build together to support our students.

Running alongside all of it, every month without exception: **Donuts with Directors**. We started small, the room a little quiet. By the end of the year, we were filling the space and students coming in with ideas, with questions, with things they needed to say.

After the SOAL and TEBA concert last weekend, I sat quietly for a long time and just let myself reflect. And then SOAL began to sing one of my life theme songs, and I didn't make it through the first verse without a bit of tears.

In Dolly's words:

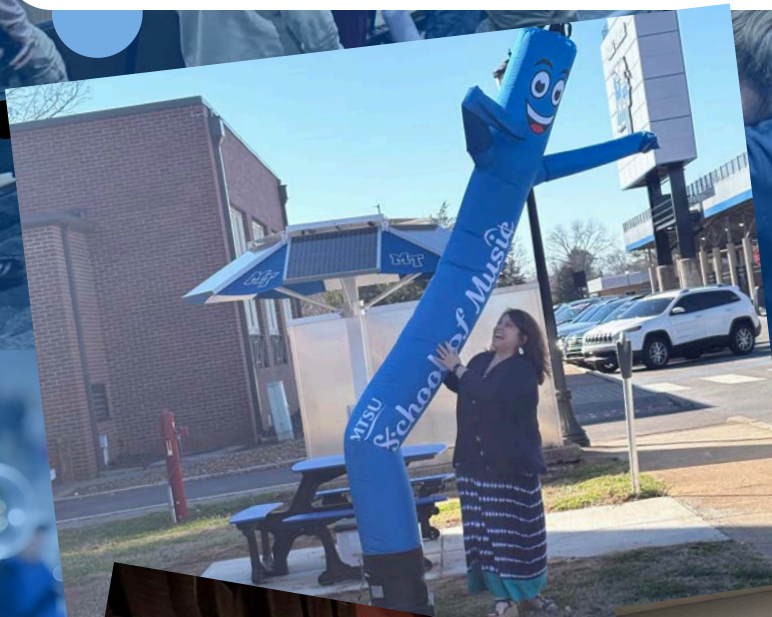
*'Cause I can see the light of a clear blue morning, I can see the light of a brand new day.*

*I can see the light of a clear blue morning*

*Oh, and everything's gonna be all right It's gonna be okay*

For a moment, SOAL reminded me that you can have joy and excellence. Kindness and ambition. That you can dream. You can build. And you can leave every single place better than you found it. Leave some light. The future is clear. The skies are blue.

Have a wonderful summer, and we will see you in August.



We're proud to celebrate a group of students whose next steps reflect both dedication and range. Each path looks a little different. That is part of what makes this moment meaningful. Together, they show the many directions where a music education can lead.

- **Yassin Adams** (BM, Clarinet) has been accepted to the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music to pursue a Master of Music on a full scholarship, beginning Fall 2026.
- **Justin Averill** (BM, Music Industry, Tuba) will attend the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music on a full assistantship.
- **Daniel Kuk** (Piano, Jazz Studies) has been accepted to the Manhattan School of Music with a full assistantship.
- **Will King** (BM, Instrumental Music Education; BM, Performance) will attend the Eastman School of Music to pursue a Master of Music in oboe performance.
- **Abigail Linville** (BS, Textiles, Merchandising and Design; minors in Entertainment Arts Design and Music Industry) continues to build a creative path that connects design and music.
- **Cecilia Lovelace** (Mezzo Soprano) will attend the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to pursue a Master of Music on near full scholarship.
- **Abigail Miller** (Voice, Soprano) will continue at the Peabody Institute to pursue a Master of Music in voice.
- **Emily Olson** (BS, Biochemistry; BS, Physics; minor in Music Industry) will attend Portland State University to pursue a PhD in chemistry.
- **Jayna Powell** (MM, Cello) will continue to the University of Houston to pursue a DMA with a full assistantship.
- **Mario Puentes** (BM, Bassoon) will attend the University of Kansas with a graduate teaching assistantship to pursue a Master's in bassoon performance.
- **Cade Spradlin** (Saxophone, Jazz Studies) has been accepted to the University of Miami to pursue graduate study in Ethnomusicology, with a full graduate assistantship.
- **Isaac Swinney** (BM, Performance, Trumpet) will attend The Juilliard School to pursue a master's degree in trumpet performance.
- **Erin Seifert** (Mezzo Soprano) earned first place in the Grace Moore Vocal Scholarship Competition, receiving a \$2,000 award, and will attend Indiana University to pursue a Master of Music in voice.
- **Taylor Van Ryckeghem** (MM, Piano Performance) has served as Adjunct Instructor of Piano at Vanderbilt University Blair School of Music since 2023 while completing their degree.

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# STUDENT NEWS



# THANK YOU

## See you in August!

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)

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