

# FRIDAY FANFARE - SEPTEMBER 4, 2026

# NEWSLETTER

**MTSU**  
School  
of Music

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dr. Chris Combest, Associate Director - [chris.combest@mtsu.edu](mailto:chris.combest@mtsu.edu)



The second week of classes is an interesting point in the semester. The excitement of the first few days is starting to settle, schedules are becoming more familiar, and the real pace of the academic year is beginning to emerge. For students and faculty alike, this is a good time to think intentionally about wellness before things get even busier.

In music, we spend a lot of time developing good habits. We practice fundamentals, build endurance gradually, listen carefully, and make adjustments along the way. Our personal wellness deserves the same attention.

This week, take a moment to notice your daily rhythm. Are you getting enough sleep? Are you eating regularly and drinking enough water? Are you finding time to move, step outside, or simply be quiet? Are you leaving any space between classes, rehearsals, lessons, meetings, and practice sessions to reset?

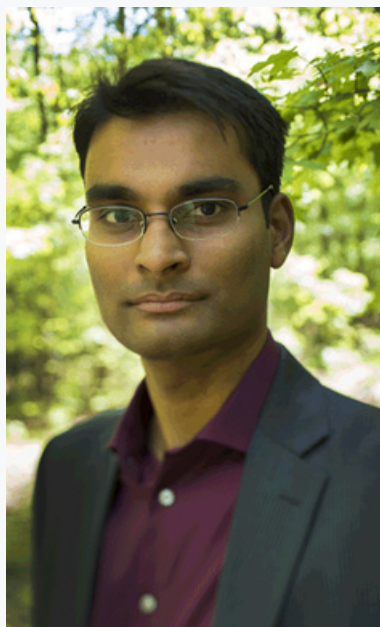
Wellness doesn't require a dramatic change. Often, the most sustainable choices are small ones: taking a short walk, putting your phone away during lunch, stretching between practice sessions, checking in with a friend, or protecting a little time each day that isn't connected to school or work.

Taking care of ourselves doesn't compete with productivity. It helps us learn more effectively, teach more thoughtfully, perform more freely, and engage more fully with one another.

This week's wellness challenge: Choose one 15-minute period each day to step away from work, school, practice, and your phone. Take a walk, sit outside, stretch, or simply be still. Notice how you feel afterward.

The semester is still young. Now's a great time to build a rhythm you can sustain.

## FEATURED FACULTY



**Dr. Arun Nadgir**, Coordinator of Keyboard Studies and Professor of Piano at MTSU, is an internationally active performer, teacher, and clinician who has appeared throughout the United States, South America, Europe, and Asia, including Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. Named the 2025 Tennessee Music Teachers Association Teacher of the Year, Dr. Nadgir is deeply committed to student success. His students have earned competition prizes and been accepted to leading music programs and festivals in the United States and Europe. He also served as President of the Tennessee Music Teachers Association from 2023 to 2025.



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# MTSU RHYTHM

**LIVE & LOCAL AT PUCKETT'S**  
**FEATURING MTSU STUDENTS**



**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22ND**  
**6:30-8PM**

**MTSU STUDENTS:**  
**FLASH YOUR STUDENT ID &**  
**GET 20% OFF YOUR ORDER!**

(EXCLUDES HAPPY HOUR, ALCOHOL, TAX AND GRATUITY.)



SCAN FOR MORE INFO!

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

One of our MTSU School of Music students is having quite a moment online!

Music student **Elliot Ragland** has gone viral with a beautifully unexpected performance of Radiohead on the musical saw, filmed outside a Waffle House in the rain. The reel has already drawn nearly 800,000 likes, along with thousands of comments from listeners around the world. It's a wonderful reminder that musicianship can show up anywhere, sometimes far beyond the concert hall. Elliot's creativity, personality, and willingness to make music in an unusual setting have clearly connected with people. We love seeing our students find their own voices, take creative risks, and share music in ways that reach new audiences.

[Check out the post HERE!](#)

Follow Elliot for more on Instagram [@elliotplaysthesaw](#)



Welcome back students, we're so glad you're here! Here are some shots from this past week.

Tuba Studio Class



SOMSAC



Faculty Unplugged



Piano Area



## FACULTY NEWS

**Dr. Mei Han**, Professor of Music and Director of the **MTSU Center for Chinese Music and Culture**, spent an inspiring week this summer as a faculty member for the Silkroad Ensemble's Global Musicians Workshop at New England Conservatory. Created by renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, Silkroad brings together artists and musical traditions from around the world. This year's workshop welcomed more than 50 musicians from 22 countries for a week of collaboration, rehearsals, workshops, and performances. Dr. Han worked closely with three small ensembles of emerging musicians whose backgrounds included Western classical, jazz, and traditional music from many cultures. She also led a workshop on Chinese music and shared her own musical journey, including how working across cultures and genres has shaped her growth as an artist. For Dr. Han, the experience was a powerful reminder of music's ability to connect people across cultural and musical boundaries. She especially encourages MTSU students and alumni pursuing careers in performance to consider applying for next year's Global Musicians Workshop. It is a valuable opportunity to encounter new traditions, expand musical perspectives, and develop the openness and versatility increasingly important to a professional music career.



This summer, **Dr. Will Perkins**, Head of the Voice Area and Assistant Director of the MTSU School of Music, presented at the national conference of the **National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS)** in San Antonio, Texas. His presentation, "Recital Glow-Ups: Bridging Tradition and Transformation," was selected from more than 200 submissions and explored creative ways to make classical voice recitals more engaging, relevant, and accessible for today's students and audiences. The conversation is continuing beyond the conference. Dr. Perkins and his co-presenter, Casey Joiner of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, have been invited to develop their presentation into an episode of the Vocal Fri Podcast, scheduled to air this spring.





From MTSU to Lima, Peru, School of Music alumnus **Ben Earl** (B.M., Music Education, 2024) continues to make music and meaningful connections beyond the classroom. This summer, Ben joined La Puerta Azul, a contemporary Christian Latin, pop, and jazz ensemble, for performances in Lima from June 9 through 23. Performing in the horn section, Ben helped bring the group's Cumbia-influenced sound to public squares, performance venues, and outreach settings throughout the community. Ben is currently in his second year pursuing a Master of Music in Saxophone Performance at East Tennessee State University. We are proud to see our alumni continuing to grow as musicians while using their artistry to connect with communities near and far.

- Congratulations to MTSU School of Music alumnus **Nate Paul**, who will join the faculty of East Tennessee State University this year as Adjunct Professor of Voice, with an emphasis in Musical Theatre! An award-winning music director, tenor, voice educator, and singing voice researcher, Nate has built a multifaceted career connecting professional performance, musical theatre, classical voice, vocal pedagogy, and voice science. Nate earned his Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from MTSU before completing a Master of Music in Voice Performance and Graduate Certificate in Vocology at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he is currently completing his Doctor of Music degree.



Congratulations to MTSU School of Music alumnus **W. Spencer Germany** (B.M. Vocal Music Education, 2021), winner of the 2026 Georgia American Choral Directors Association Choral Composition Competition! Spencer received this honor for his accompanied SATB work, Joy. The piece will be premiered this fall by the GA-ACDA Collegiate Honor Choir during the Georgia ACDA State Conference. Spencer currently serves as Choral Director at Central Magnet School in Murfreesboro and is pursuing his Master of Music in Choral Conducting at the University of South Carolina.

MTSU Alumnae Clarinetists **Elisabeth Jackson** and **Kristin Humphrey** have been working behind the scenes on a special project that brings together their shared passion for performance, teaching, and creative exploration. Drawing on experiences shaped at MTSU and beyond, they're combining their individual musical voices, pedagogical influences, and artistic perspectives to create something new while honoring the traditions and mentors who helped shape them.





# WIND ENSEMBLE

## Fall Concert



**Dr. Reed Thomas**  
Director of Bands  
Conductor

Hinton Hall  
7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Sept 10



**Program:**

Ignis Fanfare – John Cameron Wilson  
Guest Conductor, Dr. Heather Baker  
First Suite in E flat – Gustav Holst  
Concerto for Trombone – Tim Higgins

*Featuring:*

**Timothy Higgins**

Principal Trombone  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra



# CNAfME

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

*Get involved. Make music. Make a difference.* ♥



SEPTEMBER 14–18TH:

**CNAfME KICKOFF WEEK**



SEPTEMBER 18TH:

**FIRST CNAfME MEETING**

🕒 4PM | 📍 SFA 117 (CHORAL HALL)



OCTOBER 23RD:

**CNAfME MEETING**

🕒 4PM | 📍 SFA 117 (CHORAL HALL)



NOVEMBER 20TH:

**CNAfME MEETING**

🕒 4PM | 📍 SFA 117 (CHORAL HALL)

*We can't wait to see you there!* ♥



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## 2026 MTSU HIGH SCHOOL HONORS ORCHESTRA

NOVEMBER 13-14

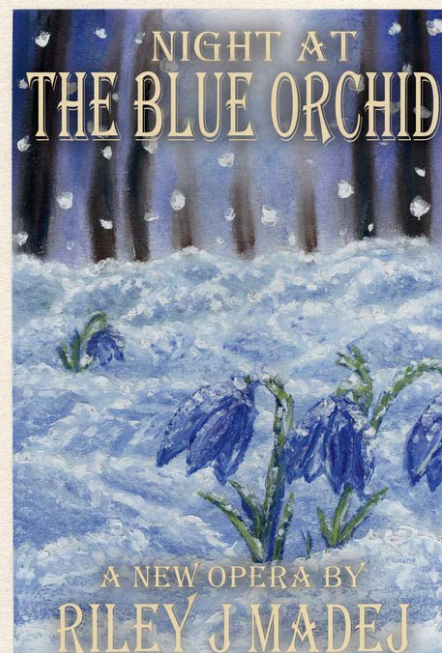
Apply now! Limited positions available!

Open by Audition to  
Students in the 8-12<sup>th</sup> grades

For Information and the On-Line Application  
<https://www.mtsu.edu/music/orchestra.php>



For more information contact:  
Dr. Carol Nies, Director of Orchestras  
MTSU School of Music  
carol.nies@mtsu.edu



*Lipton Reynolds*

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 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](http://music.mtsu.edu).

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