

IOWA

SCHOOL OF

MUSIC

2025 MAGAZINE



MAKING THE CONNECTION

Visiting Hancher Artists Inspire
School of Music Students

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MUSIC

2025 MAGAZINE

EDITORS

Jen Knights
Tammie Walker

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Rob Cline
Leah B. Grout Garris
Clara Jarecke
Alicia Maiz-Alonso

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jason Smith
Justin Torner
Tim Schoon

DESIGN

Creative Mellen

ON THE COVER

Grammy-winning composer, violinist, and educator Jessie Montgomery interacts with students during a PUBLIQuartet improvisation workshop with the UI String Quartet Residency Program. Photo by Jason Smith.

CONTACT INFORMATION

School of Music
93 E. Burlington Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52242
319-335-1603
music@uiowa.edu

The University of Iowa is a charter member of NASM (National Association of Schools of Music), accredited since 1928.

National Association of Schools of Music
11250 Roger Bacon Drive, Suite 21
Reston, VA 20190-5248
(703) 437-0700
info@arts-accredit.org

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 From the Director

GREETINGS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA SCHOOL OF MUSIC!



Every year, this magazine offers a window into the vibrant work of our students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

But this issue is extra special: It's focused on collaboration, which is what truly makes our community unique. Whether it's on stage, in rehearsal, or in creative partnerships across disciplines, we believe that **the spirit of collaboration** is what shapes every achievement at Iowa.

This year's cover story, "Making the Connection," highlights our ongoing partnership with Hancher Auditorium. You get an inside look at how the world-class artists who join us on campus bring fresh perspectives and energy to our learning environment. From master classes to joint performances, these encounters not only inspire students but also remind us of what's possible when artistic paths cross.

Inside these pages, you'll also find stories about our connections with international institutions, community partners, and guest artists that help stretch our creative boundaries. In addition, you'll read updates on initiatives like:

- **New Work City**, which brings music, dance, theatre, and technology together
- **Music & Medicine on Mondays**, which connects musicians and healthcare professionals in a podcast format to improve well-being through the arts
- **Our new Collaborative Piano program**, which prepares pianists to serve as musical partners

Finally, we celebrate meaningful milestones, such as new faculty, retirements, and national honors. These achievements are possible only through a continued commitment to supporting and collaborating with one another.

Our students, staff, faculty, alumni, donors, and friends are indispensable partners in our journey. Your support energizes our work and keeps the music flowing.

Best wishes from all of us at the School of Music for a creative year ahead—one that's full of joyful collaborations, partnerships, discoveries, and connections.

Stay well and stay in touch,

Tammie Walker, D.M.A.
Director, School of Music

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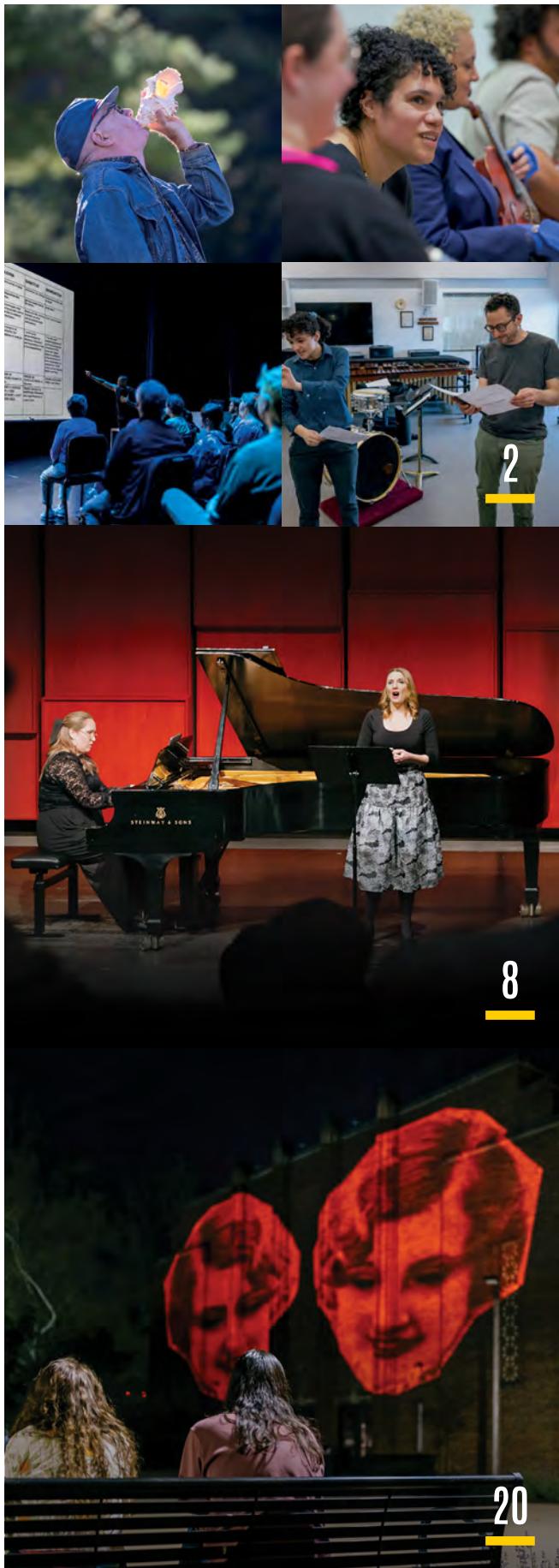
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MAKING THE CONNECTION



MUSICIANS ARE NATURAL COLLABORATORS. Any time two or more rehearse, step on stage, or head to the recording studio together, they are engaged in a communal activity—a give and take from which everyone performing (as well as everyone listening) benefits.

That's the nature of a collaborative endeavor—and the spirit underpinning the relationship between the School of Music and Hancher Auditorium. Each academic year, artists who are performing at Hancher also visit the Voxman Music Building to share their artistry, expertise, and experience with student musicians. Often, visiting artists and student musicians perform together as well.

Visiting Hancher artists inspire School of Music students

Accomplished musicians remind students, *"You can do it, too."*

BY ROB CLINE

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR, PERFORMING ARTS AT IOWA

"Our collaboration with Hancher means that our students regularly rub elbows with some of the most amazing artists of our time," says School of Music Director **Tammie Walker**. "And these artists are so generous with their time and talent. You can just see the spark of inspiration on the faces of the students. I've seen these artists encouraging students to be bold and embrace their craft and their creativity."

The entwining of the work of the University of Iowa's performing arts center and its performing arts academic units might seem obvious and effortless. But, just like breathtaking musical performances result from sustained practice and preparation, connecting visiting artists with students is something of an art, too.

Top left: Dan and Claudia Zanes teaching a workshop with students in Professor Kirsten Nelson's Music Foundations in Therapy class, Spring 2023. Top right: Ann Howard Jones (1964 BM, 1966 MA, 1984 DMA) moderating a Creative Matters discussion during a residency with The Crossing chamber choir, Spring 2025. Right: Jessie Montgomery interacts with students during her residency alongside the PUBLIQuartet as part of the UI String Quartet Residency Program, Fall 2024.





Percussion student Ani Perez-Brennan workshopping one of her original compositions with Third Coast Percussion ensemble member Robert Dillon, Spring 2024.

A Longstanding—and Expanding—Partnership

The connection between the School of Music and Hancher Auditorium used to be more than one of philosophical alignment. It was physical. From 1972 until the devastating flood of the Iowa River in 2008, Hancher Auditorium and the Voxman Music Building were, in fact, a single complex. This arrangement naturally lent itself to a range of collaborations. Hancher artists visited Voxman classrooms for master classes, and students performed on the original Hancher stage and were enraptured by world-class performances by the artists they hoped to become. The shared real estate led to real opportunities for both sides of the house.

While Hancher Auditorium was rebuilt near the site of the original, the Voxman Music Building is now located in downtown Iowa City. But while the physical proximity of the two has been stretched to a little over a mile, it is arguable that Hancher and the School of Music have never been more intertwined.

The reason? The UI's creation of the Office of Performing Arts and Engagement and launching of the Performing Arts At Iowa initiative in 2023. The initiative brings together the School of Music, Department of Theatre Arts, Department of Dance, Hancher Auditorium, and the Performing Arts Production Unit in a collaborative endeavor dedicated to fostering student success, building an artistic community on campus and beyond, and sparking innovation in the arts. Among the many positive outcomes made possible by this robust collaboration is a deepened connection between Hancher artists and students and faculty in the School of Music.

Opera bass-baritone Davóne Tines leading a master class on creative process with music students in Stark Opera Studio, Spring 2025.





Steven Schick presents *A Hard Rain: The Case for Complex Music* in Voxman Music Building, Fall 2024. Schick will be awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the University of Iowa during spring commencement ceremonies in 2026.

Many Points of Connection

Over the last two academic years and now into a third, School of Music students have worked with and learned alongside Hancher composers-in-residence (including Caroline Shaw, Jessie Montgomery, and, in 2025-2026, Gabriel Kahane), as well as an array of world-class vocalists and instrumentalists who create and perform music in a variety of styles and configurations.

Take, for example, the Fall 2024 visit by famed percussionist and UI School of Music alumnus **Steven Schick** (1976 BA, 1978 MA). An Iowa native, Schick is a champion of contemporary percussion music and has commissioned or premiered more than 150 new works.

Over the course of his weeklong residency on the University of Iowa campus and in the community, Schick led master classes, gave public lectures and a recital, and performed concerts with School of Music's exceptional Iowa Percussion ensemble led by **Dan Moore** and the sinfonietta from the Center for New Music led by **David Gompper**. To cap off the engagement, nearly 100 percussionists traveled from across the Midwest to participate in a performance of John Luther Adams' epic environmental piece, *Inuksuit*, across the street from Hancher in City Park. All residency events were free and open to the public.

"Many of our students achieve success in their chosen field yet few have attained the level of influence on the musical world as Steven Schick," said Moore, the percussion area head in the School of Music. "To have him return to Iowa and share his experiences with current students is a tremendous gift, especially from the creator of an entire genre of musical performance who describes himself as a 'typical Iowan, raised on a farm in the north-central part of the state.' There isn't a more powerful message of 'You can do it, too,' than that."

Ani Perez-Brennan, a School of Music student who is currently completing a clinical internship for her Music Therapy BM at the Niles Township District for Special Education in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, confirmed the impact of Schick's week on campus.

"The Steven Schick residency was a highlight during my time at Iowa. Performing *Inuksuit* in City Park with 100 peers, colleagues, alums, and fellow percussionists from across the Midwest was such a unique experience. Schick's residency was a great representation of the wide scope of ways a guest artist can influence students. He was extremely approachable during his residency and made time to give me advice on a composition idea I had. He emphasized the importance of musical curiosity and 'knowing your purpose' in regard to writing and performing new music, a lesson I kept in mind after his residency. This idea I brought to Schick came into fruition just a few months later, as a fully fleshed snare drum composition I hope to self-publish soon."

A Commitment to Excellence

[In a conversation](#) with Walker while he was on campus, Schick reflected on his time as a student at the university.

"The best thing I got from the University of Iowa was a commitment to excellence on the most microscopic detail ... You owe it to the score, the composer, the piece, the art form, and yourself to do it right ... When I came to Iowa City, it was like landing in fifth-century BC Athens ... [P]eople were thinking, they were doing, there was philosophy, there was action. It was all of the above. And that was just because I was a resident of the state and I went to the state school, and it is the single greatest professional bit of good fortune I've ever had."

"I was thrilled when he said those things about his time in the School of Music," Walker later said, "because his experience as a student is certainly in keeping with the experiences we offer our students today. We pride ourselves on being an 'all-of-the-above' program."

Professor Dan Moore, area head for percussion, was one of nearly 100 percussionists to take part in the epic *Inuksuit* performance, led by Steven Schick in City Park in Fall 2024.



An aerial view of the Fall 2024 *Inuksuit* performance, which dispersed percussionists and audience members throughout City Park.





Steven Schick activated the City Park performance of *Inuksuit* by blowing air through a conch shell, surrounded by audience members and fellow performers.

A Homecoming Focused on the Future

In that same conversation with Walker, Schick shared some of the wisdom he provided to students.

"I said everyone is interested in finding a life in music, but what if I could guarantee you that you would have one? Because, frankly, you already have a life in music. You are already employed as a T.A. You already have a career. You already are working in music. You are adults, and you're doing it. So, first of all, acknowledge that.

"Secondly, that means that the more important question, rather than, 'How do I make a life in music?', is 'What kind of life in music do I want?' Seeking a spiritual rather than a career quest, the closer you will come to actual success in the thing you care about."

Schick framed music-making as far more than a potential career choice.

"[M]aking music is fundamentally a moral act," he says, "It's fundamentally an act about responsibility to the future. Because, if you make music of any historical age, but especially contemporary music, you're imagining an audience in the future that will care enough about us to wonder what kind of art we made."



UI STRING QUARTET RESIDENCY PROGRAM



Beth Oakes

UI School of Music Professor **Beth Oakes** had a vision for a program that would feature exceptional visiting string quartets while enriching the studies of all kinds of musicians in the School of Music.

"I envisioned intense experiences that offered students a chance to really focus and learn," she explains, "and then return to normal life for a while." She made this first-of-its-kind model a reality as the director of the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program (UISQRP).

With Oakes at the helm—and with Hancher as a partner—the UISQRP brings several nationally recognized string quartets to campus for extended residencies each year. The members of the quartets work directly with string students, but they also provide opportunities for all SOM students to benefit from their time on campus. These moments of connection and learning often help students imagine new possibilities for their future as musicians.

"The caliber of the groups that come for the residencies is incredible," said violinist **Renée Santos** (2024 BM and current MA student in Strings area). "We are given so many opportunities to work with them individually and in a chamber music setting."

With at least four quartets visiting the School of Music every year, Oakes estimates that the average School of Music student gets to work with between 16 and 20 groups—each with a different perspective and innovative approach to chamber music—by the time they graduate. "I attended a conservatory, and the kind of music experiences my students are getting here surpass what I had in school," she says.

To learn more about this year's UISQRP residencies, visit uisqrp.music.uiowa.edu.



Strings MA candidate Renée Santos (center) playing her violin as violinist Serena Canin instructs her during a master class with the Brentano String Quartet, Fall 2022.



Sphinx Virtuosi violinist Celia Hatton instructs students in Beth Oakes' Chamber Music Residency Program course during the group's Hancher residency in the School of Music, Fall 2023.



Top: The Crossing and UI choir Kantorei performed *Voyages* #3, #4, and #5 by Robert Convery together, directed by Donald Nally, February 2025. Bottom: Members of the chamber choir The Crossing presented a joint solo recital with Q+A session as part of their Hancher residency. Left to right: Anika Kildegaard (2020 MA), Rebecca Myers, Maren Montalbano, and Michaël Hudetz.

Crossing Paths with The Crossing

Schick is not the only former School of Music student to work with current students in recent years.

Anika Kildegaard (2020 MA) is a soprano in the acclaimed chamber choir The Crossing. While The Crossing was on campus in February 2025 to perform music by yet another School of Music alum—Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **David Lang** (1980 MA)—in collaboration with the UI choir Kantorei, Kildegaard and other members of the ensemble engaged with students in master classes, coaching sessions, and workshops. For Kildegaard, who also performed a solo recital during the residency, the connection extended beyond the classroom.

"After the recital ... I had a student come up to me to say, 'Any chance we can have coffee?' " Kildegaard said during [a conversation about the residency](#). "I'm like, 'Yes, this is it. This is the cool thing—that, yes, you can have access to me while I'm here!' And I think that's really important for what The Crossing can bring when we're in residence here."

The Art of Making It All Happen

"We want to be sure we engage artists who enhance the work that School of Music faculty members are already doing," says Hancher Director of Programming **Aaron Greenwald**. "That means we have many conversations about who might be a good fit and really bring something of value to the students."

Because the School of Music offers an array of areas of study, there are plenty of conversations to be had. Which string ensembles might be a good match for the String Quartet Residency Program? Who can bring knowledge and energy to the jazz program? What might a collaboration look like with the vocal department or the symphony orchestra or the brass area or the music therapy program?

Often those conversations are between the Hancher programming and engagement staff and School of Music faculty members. But both of those groups are deeply interested in hearing a third voice: that of the students.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC / HANCHER RESIDENCIES FOR 2025-26

Gabriel Kahane

Composer-in-residence and Performer

Harlem Quartet and Imani Winds

String Quartet and Woodwind Quintet

Camille Thurman

Saxophonist

Isidore String Quartet

Attacca Quartet

String Quartet

Jeremy Denk

Pianist, Memoirist, and Librettist for SOM's Fall 2025 Opera

Voces8

Choir

Minnesota Orchestra

Dig Deeper

Each QR code / link below takes you to a video featuring the inspiring story of a Hancher residency experience with that guest artist.



Jessie Montgomery



Steven Schick



The Crossing

"This year, after their Saturday night performance at Hancher, members of the Minnesota Orchestra spent Sunday with our students," Walker says. "That idea came from our School of Music Student Advisory Council, and it is exciting to see it come to fruition with the help of our Hancher partners."

Collaboratively identifying and then programming the best artists for residencies in the School of Music requires significant advance planning, with dialogue often beginning more than a year before a given artist arrives on campus. By the time an artist is on the ground in Iowa City, a detailed—and often quite ambitious—schedule is in place to ensure their time is meaningfully spent and that as many students as possible can benefit from the visit.

"Taking care of the visiting artists so they can focus on their interactions with students—and, of course, on their Hancher performance—is the highest of priorities for us," Greenwald explains.



Iconic opera soprano Renée Fleming (far left) led a panel discussion, *Music and Mind*, on research at the intersection of arts, health, and neuroscience in October 2024. She was joined by (left to right) Bruce Gantz, MD, UI professor of otolaryngology, Music Therapy Associate Professor Abbey Dvorak, grad student Sun Joo Lee (2025 Music Therapy PhD), and Chris Petkov, PhD, professor of neurosurgery. Fleming performed at Hancher to a sold-out crowd the following evening.



Ann Howard Jones and voice faculty members Elise DesChamps and David Meyer met with Renée Fleming during her Hancher residency. Jones founded the Larry G. and Ann Howard Jones Vocal Ensemble Residency Program in the School of Music.

An Inspiring Collaboration

As this academic year's residencies get underway, planning has already begun for future collaborations as the School of Music and Hancher Auditorium continue to prioritize student experiences that enrich their education and their lives. Meanwhile, there are, no doubt, current School of Music students who will one day return to campus as Hancher artists, sharing their artistry and inspiring young musicians dreaming of their future.

"Artists-in-residence give music students another reason to continue their journey with creativity, curiosity, and determination," says Perez-Brennan. "We study music because we love it, and because we want to keep it in our lives, whether we pursue music through performance, education, or other means. As a student in the Iowa Percussion Studio, it was inspiring to hear Schick talk about his experience at the University of Iowa. Seeing someone like him, who came from a similar background and studied in the same program, go on to make such a significant impact in the music field is really inspiring. It made me feel like my dream of pursuing music professionally was not far out of reach." ■



Steven Schick (1976 BA, 1978 MA) will be recognized with an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree during University of Iowa spring commencement ceremonies in 2026.

Schick is currently Distinguished Professor of Music and Reed Family Presidential Chair at the University of California—San Diego.

One of the highest honors the university can bestow upon an alumnus, the Honorary Degree recognizes individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary achievement over an entire career in scholarship, education, artistic creation, social activism, human rights, innovation or invention beneficial to society, and/or humanitarian outreach.

“By honoring Steven Schick in this way,” says School of Music Director Tammie Walker, “the University of Iowa is not only recognizing a singular alumnus who has made extraordinary contributions to music and society it is affirming the UI’s own legacy as a place where visionaries are nurtured, where experimentation is encouraged, and where the future of the arts is shaped.”



NEW COLLABORATIVE PIANO DEGREE PROGRAM **OPENS DOORS** FOR MUSICIANS

More than 20 years in the making, the School of Music is expanding opportunities for pianists drawn to partnership and ensemble work—and the musicians who depend on them.

BY LEAH B. GROUT GARRIS

For decades, as music students prepared for performances and lessons, the same scene played out across the School of Music: Phones rang, emails flew back and forth, and text messages piled up as everyone tried to find piano accompanists. For many, finding someone who could play beside them was almost as difficult as mastering the music itself.

“It’s been a constant problem,” says Director Tammie Walker. “We don’t have enough accompanists. Students have had to pay peers, ask around the community, or hire someone to make their lessons and performances work.”

Now, a new degree program is changing that reality and expanding career possibilities for pianists. More than 20 years in the making, the School of Music is unveiling its new graduate program in collaborative piano—more historically called piano accompaniment.

The terms “accompanist” and “collaborative pianist” have overlapping meanings but also represent a significant distinction in their perceived role. An accompanist historically suggests a supportive, secondary role, while a collaborative pianist emphasizes equal partnership in the music-making process. “Collaborative piano” is the more modern term, often used in academic and professional settings to imply a higher degree of shared artistic input, interpretation, and teamwork between the pianist and the other musicians.

New Degree Pathways for Pianists

Collaborative piano programs train pianists to work with soloists, chamber groups, large ensembles, and all types of voice and instruments.

Unlike solo pianists, who shape and perform music independently, collaborative pianists adapt in real-time as they become musical partners, supporting everything from opera rehearsals and performance juries to string and brass chamber performances.

The UI’s new program offers master’s and doctoral pathways, meeting demand for highly sophisticated pianists drawn to partnership and ensemble work.

“This has been a long time coming, and something we’ve wanted to offer for decades,” explains Walker. “We were very fortunate to have a wonderful team of four full-time piano professors teaching solo piano and pedagogy at Iowa for many years. After a recent retirement, we wondered: ‘Is this the time to pivot and bring in a collaborative piano professor?’”

Across the School of Music, the answer to that question was a unanimous “yes.” And what made all the difference in turning this vision into reality was garnering external support. When donors Dr. Jo Ann Benda and Dr. Charles Platz stepped forward to endow the position, the long-awaited vision was finally a possibility.

When Experience Inspires Action

Benda and Platz—both retired medical professionals, music lovers, and longtime supporters of the School of Music—knew how much skilled accompanists matter. Their years of singing in church choirs, University of Iowa choral ensembles, and now with Oaknoll's Oaknotes Choir have shaped their understanding of what a great collaborative pianist brings to the table. In rehearsals, they've watched pianists instantly adjust their playing to whichever part is struggling, nudging altos back into tune or giving basses an extra bit of support, all while making the choir sound its best.

“The accompanist is so important when it comes to making a choir or other musicians sound good,” says Platz. “Not every pianist is trained for this kind of collaborative work.”

When Walker identified collaborative piano as an educational priority for the school, Benda and Platz knew they wanted to help fill the gap they'd witnessed firsthand. Their gift made it possible to offer collaborative piano degrees.

“We didn’t even know collaborative piano was a specialty,” Benda explains. “We thought anyone who majored in piano learned how to do this. It seems like a basic part of music until you realize how much nuanced skill and specialized training is required.”

For them, supporting the program is personal. Benda describes music as an anchor that has grounded her in every season of life. Whether she was singing campfire songs in the backseat of the family car as a child or harmonizing in a choir as an adult, music has given her an escape: a place to unwind from the stress of school or working in the medical field. Platz discovered his love of singing later in life, taking vocal lessons for the first time in his 60s. Now, music is something they share together.

(L-R) Henrique Rabelo, DMA student in piano performance, onstage with I-Ling Emily Ho, DMA student in flute performance and piano performance, Spring 2025; Carson Parker, BM student in piano performance, rehearsing with Johnson County Landmark jazz ensemble, Fall 2023; Hsin-Hui Liu (2022 DMA) performing with the Tremble Clefs choir conducted by Anelise Gebard, MA student in Music Therapy, at the Spring 2025 American Music Therapy Association Midwest Regional Conference.



Continuing to Build Musical Partnerships

The impact of the new program echoes through every studio, rehearsal, and performance space in Voxman Music Building. Instead of scrambling to find a willing and available pianist, students will have more direct connections to peers and instructors who are rigorously trained for collaborative music-making.

“Collaborative piano students will be working with all our School of Music students. They may be playing for trumpet lessons, then maybe a voice recital,” Walker describes.

The launch of the program carries another landmark, too: It’s the first time in the School of Music’s 125-year history that a faculty position has been endowed, signaling new possibilities for the future.

A national search is under way to fill the tenure-track faculty position in collaborative piano. The person who fills this role will play a crucial part in leading the program, teaching collaborative piano courses, coaching chamber music, and collaborating with other faculty members in performances, instruction, and recordings.

“This is one of the most practical and marketable degrees we can offer,” says Walker. “Everyone in the School of Music is behind it. The addition of this program deepens our commitment to chamber music, which has long been ingrained within the School of Music. It’s like the last puzzle piece we were waiting on to offer a comprehensive chamber music experience.” ■

@uiowamusic

Follow us on Instagram and Facebook/Meta to catch updates about our new assistant professor of collaborative piano!

Digital Extra

Read more about the rich history of chamber music at the University of Iowa in the 2023 issue of *Iowa Music Magazine*.





When Music and Medicine Meet: Inside a Collaborative Podcast

BY LEAH B. GROUT GARRIS

THE FIRST MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH HAS TAKEN ON NEW MEANING within the University of Iowa community: It's when a new episode of Music and Medicine on Mondays (M+M+M) goes live on YouTube, fostering conversations and connections between the arts and health.

The collaborative video podcast series, which began in 2023, brings faculty, students, and professionals from the School of Music and UI Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine together to explore how musicians can play (and stay) healthy.

Creating a New Kind of Collaboration

Dr. Henry Hoffman, a UI otolaryngology professor and clinician—as well as a longtime guitarist—is the driving force behind M+M+M. Thanks to strong relationships he helped forge between the School of Music and Carver College of Medicine, the two were already intertwined. For example, during the pandemic, he worked closely with the School of Music and bioaerosol scientists to study air movement in Voxman Music Building spaces so musicians could rehearse and perform safely.

To bring his vision for the series to life, he tapped talent within the School of Music: **James Edel** (2005 BA), sound engineer and music production manager, and **Ryan Nguyen** (2022 BA), video producer and AV electrics coordinator.

"I love music, and this experience has exceeded all expectations in terms of being able to learn more about it," Dr. Hoffman explains. "I get to tailor what I discover about music and serve the greater good by sharing the knowledge I gain."

Edel and Nguyen use their technical expertise to turn conversations and performances into a polished, professional-quality video series.

"More fine-tuning goes on every time," says Nguyen. "For instance, I recently learned a new way to record that allows us to show more creative expression and technical expertise, so we incorporated that. We're always trying to find better ways to make the videos more enjoyable."

A Growing Library of Music and Medicine Resources

The M+M+M series carries a simple message: When musicians and medical experts learn from one another, their work reaches farther. With more than 20 episodes produced so far, podcast topics have included:

- [Music therapy for Parkinson's disease](#)
- [Performance anxiety for musicians](#)
- [Hand and wrist health for oboists](#)
- [Embouchure dystonia in brass musicians](#)

While a full episode can be 30 minutes or longer, the videos are also broken into smaller segments called "Shorts" to make the content accessible. For instance, a 60-second video Short called [Settings for Fender Telecaster Guitar](#), which is part of the [Guitar Playing, Part 1: Health Considerations](#) episode, has garnered well over half a million views on YouTube.

A Platform for Dialogue and Discovery

"Our goal is to make sure the production process doesn't get in the way of the people we're highlighting," says Edel. "We want to present everyone in the best light possible, but in a way that looks and feels natural."

M+M+M is a powerful example of what happens when creative and clinical minds get to connect. By showcasing these collaborations and making their insights accessible, Dr. Hoffman and his team hope to inspire musicians and medical professionals to put greater focus on the art and science of staying well. ■

Digital Extras



Where to Watch:

New podcast episodes debut on the first Monday of each month.



Iowa Head and Neck Protocols Website

RAISING EVERY VOICE: BRINGING ART AND SCIENCE TOGETHER

BY LEAH B. GROUT GARRIS

The new **Midwest Voice Symposium** creates space to explore and celebrate the **intersection of voice medicine, therapy, science, and art.**

WHEN PERFORMERS, SCIENTISTS, AND CLINICIANS GET TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER, every voice gains strength—and every idea becomes more dynamic. But what does this look like in practice? And what makes it possible? True collaboration takes intention, creativity, and a shared space where these worlds can come together.

That collaborative spirit was on full display last November at the inaugural Midwest Voice Symposium, hosted by Eric Hunter, professor and chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD), and **David Meyer**, assistant professor and voice area co-head in the School of Music.

“The art and science of the voice requires an interdisciplinary approach, and that’s an area where Iowa is uniquely successful,” explains Meyer. “CSD and the School of Music have a long history of rich collaboration. Together, we are leaning in to the collaborative nature of caring for and training voice.”

Voices Converge at Iowa

Voxman Music Building served as the meeting ground for the symposium, uniting diverse disciplines that shape the power and possibility of voice.

“We have one of the highest concentrations of voice expertise anywhere in the world, especially considering the smaller population

size of the state, particularly when it comes to training, pedagogy, health, and applications for singers or occupational voice users,” says Hunter. “In many ways, Midwest Voice is less about inventing something new and more about rekindling and carrying forward the legacy that already lives here.”

At the event, music students sat shoulder to shoulder with speech therapists. Opera singers exchanged notes with medical professionals. Researchers and performers studied the latest techniques, pedagogy, therapy, and technology. In total, more than 70 people traveled from across the country to share their research and interdisciplinary work. Others joined online for discussions and presentations.

Growing the Midwest Voice Community

The decision to hold the symposium again in 2025 was a direct result of last year’s success.

This year’s event, held Nov. 1, 2025, welcomed keynote speakers with cross-training in voice science and performance. The lineup included leaders like Dr. Katherine Verdolini Abbott, professor of communication sciences and disorders at the University of Delaware, and Dr. Thomas L. Carroll, director of the voice program at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and assistant professor of otolaryngology at Harvard Medical School.



Denise J. Jamieson, MD (right), UI vice president for medical affairs and Tyrone D. Artz, dean of the Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine, attending Midwest Voice with Christopher I. Petkov (left), UI professor of neurosurgery and vice chair for research.

It also featured:

- **Voice assessment** and screening opportunities
- **Pre-conference meetings** for attendees to discuss their programs
- **One-on-one sessions** with voice scientist Dr. Christian Herbst
- **Live music** and a preview of an upcoming opera production

Throughout it all, Hunter and Meyer explain, students are at the center. They volunteer, attend, and even co-present with faculty in biomedical imaging research, pedagogy sessions, and performance-related studies. Midwest Voice is just one more way Iowa students can present, perform, and connect with professionals outside the classroom.

“Our hope is that Midwest Voice becomes a place where voice professionals come together to exchange ideas, showcase innovations, and build community,” explains Hunter. “We want the symposium to honor Iowa’s legacy in voice while setting the stage for the next generation of discovery and artistry.” ■



Digital Extra

Learn more about Midwest Voice and view this year's full agenda at midwest-voice.org.uiowa.edu.



TURNING BORDERS INTO BRIDGES THROUGH *Global Music Partnerships*

Bilateral agreements between the School of Music and other top global music programs expand opportunities for students and faculty to exchange ideas and perform with one another.

BY LEAH B. GROUT GARRIS

Sometimes, true connection needs no translation. Music is a universal language, building bridges that bring artists together from every corner of the world through collaborative performance and learning.

Moments like these are born from the School of Music's commitment to building relationships with top global music schools through bilateral partnerships. These formal collaborations connect Iowa music students to their global peers so they can work alongside international colleagues, take part in faculty exchanges, and engage in joint masterclasses and creative performances.

As **Ksenia Nosikova**, piano professor and co-head of the piano area, explains: "We're bringing together people of different cultural backgrounds, upbringings, and schools, and uniting them through the common good: music."

Here's a look at the value some of our partnerships bring.



Mahidol University

📍 Thailand

When School of Music students and faculty joined Mahidol University for the International Viola Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, in June 2023, they immersed themselves in Thai musical traditions and shared their own contemporary works, from the chamber music of composer Hans Gal to innovative new compositions. The partnership continues to grow, stretching Iowa's reach and deepening students' love of music and its global language.

Since August 2023, we have been committed to creating exchange programs that foster teaching, performance, and research collaboration between the School of Music and Mahidol University.



Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance

📍 Israel

In April 2023, the School of Music welcomed the world-renowned Meitar Ensemble and a host of Israeli guest composers to launch a landmark collaboration with the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance (JAMD). Nearly half our students and faculty joined their Israeli counterparts on campus for the Festival of Contemporary Music from Israel: It was a week packed with well-attended concerts, seminars, and hands-on masterclasses. The festival's nine performances featured 35 works of contemporary music, including premieres and pieces that showcased students from both institutions.

The event marked the beginning of an ongoing exchange between the School of Music and JAMD. "The impact on our students and faculty cannot be overstated," explains **David Gompper**, professor of composition and director of the Center for New Music. "The music-making during that week was at a very high level, and many of our graduates were affected positively."



(L-R) Professor David Gompper; Amit Dolberg, Meitar Ensemble pianist; Russell Ganim, UI associate provost and dean of international programs; Pierre-André Valade, Meitar Ensemble conductor



Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music

📍 Thailand

As part of an ongoing collaboration with Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music (PGVIM), **David Gompper**, professor of composition and director of the Center for New Music, took the Center for New Music Ensemble on tour in Thailand in May 2025.

"We performed a concert of contemporary music, including my own *Butterfly Dance*," he explains. "We also performed another program that included my *Star of the County Down* for violin and piano." These performances not only strengthen the connection between Iowa and PGVIM but also offer students a deeper understanding of Thai musical culture and contemporary composition.



Royal Danish Academy of Music

📍 Denmark

Flute Professor **Nicole Esposito** and flutist Ulla Miilmann from the Royal Danish Academy of Music (RDAM) have enjoyed several years of collaboration and exchange. "Ulla was a guest at the University of Iowa Summer Flute Intensive, and I twice visited the Royal Danish Academy of Music for flute master classes," explains Esposito.

Trading ensemble experiences and pedagogical approaches that benefit musicians on both sides, their ongoing partnership introduces School of Music students to new teaching styles and performance opportunities. For example, flutists **Elizabeth Salerno** (2018 BM) and **Gregory Bardwell** (2020 BM, 2022 MA) both spent time at RDAM, participating in classes and master lessons with Miilmann as part of their graduate studies.



UI Professor Nicole Esposito instructing a student in the Royal Danish Academy of Music



RDAM Associate Professor Ulla Miilmann leading a flute workshop at the University of Iowa



Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte

📍 Brazil

Every two years, Iowa musicians join the Festival de Piano de Natal: Conexões Pianísticas in Brazil, which blends North American and Latin American traditions. A joint initiative of the School of Music and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), the inaugural event was held in 2023. It brought faculty and students from UFRN and the University of Iowa together in Natal, Brazil, for a week of performances and collaborative projects.

The second festival, held in August 2025, focused on chamber music collaborations between faculty and students from both universities. "Collaboration extended far beyond scheduled events, as students and faculty practiced together, rehearsed side by side, shared meals, and explored Natal's cultural life," says **Ksenia Nosikova**, piano professor and co-head of the piano area. ■



Digital Extra

Watch brilliant performances by UI students and faculty from the 2023 Making Connections Piano Festival in Brazil



Reflections from Recent Graduates

BY ALICIA MAIZ ALONSO

VIOLIN DMA STUDENT AND GRADUATE ASSISTANT FOR PERFORMING ARTS MARKETING



Sam Hoying

2025 BM, 2025 BA

BEFORE COMING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, SAM HOYING was immersed in music at Aurora High School in Illinois. "I loved being in band, choir, jazz band, musicals—basically all things music," he recalls. His early experiences with music and teamwork set the tone for his time at Iowa.

The University of Iowa was the first college Sam visited, and the experience left a lasting impression. "I was really impressed with the School of Music professors I got to meet and, obviously, the gorgeous School of Music building," he says. The ability to pursue dual majors in music education and oboe performance made the decision to enroll even clearer.

Favorite courses included symphony band, marching band, symphony orchestra, and opera. "I absolutely love making music in an ensemble and being able to make music with friends and professors," Sam explains. One standout memory was performing with the concert band in Ireland, combining oboe and voice in a setting he describes as unforgettable.

Sam was also surprised by the range of opportunities within the School of Music. "I was able to participate with and learn from so many different people and get a variety of perspectives about music," he adds. Professors like **Dr. David Cyzak**, visiting assistant professor of oboe, and **Dr. Eric Bush**, director of the Hawkeye Marching Band, were especially influential. "They taught me that music is so much more than what is just written on a page. Music exhibits memories, interactions, and experiences you share with others that will last a lifetime," Sam reflects.

Now the band director at Beckman High School in Dyersville, Iowa, Sam encourages future students to fully engage in the School of Music. "Get involved, seek opportunities to collaborate with others, and do not be afraid to ask for help."



BEFORE COMING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, WILL YAGER was based in East Tennessee, where he was born and raised. After completing his MM degree, he spent four years building a successful freelance career. He performed with multiple orchestras, toured with his jazz trio, and taught at several colleges. Still, the constant travel began to take its toll. As Will explains, "I gradually began to feel creatively bankrupt as the grind of commuting so much for work took its toll on me."

A chance decision to attend a summer festival focused on contemporary chamber music changed everything. Inspired by the experience, he knew he needed time and space to study the repertoire more deeply. "Going back to school for a DMA seemed

like the best way to do that," he recalls. A former teacher recommended Iowa for its strong Center for New Music, directed by Composition Professor **David Gompper**. When he discovered that prominent double bassist **Volkan Orhon** was an Iowa music professor and head of the strings area, it made him even more interested in the program. Receiving the Iowa Performance Fellowship confirmed his decision.

At Iowa, Will found an environment that pushed his artistry forward. Studying with Professor Orhon provided four years of dedicated mentorship, while Professor **Beth Oakes'** chamber music program shaped chamber music into a central part of his artistic identity. With Dr. Gompper and the Center for New

Will Yager

2021 DMA



Renée Santos

2024 BM

WHEN RENÉE SANTOS FIRST CAME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA as an undergraduate, she couldn't have guessed she'd be back again, this time for her master's as a member

of the Dunn Graduate String Quartet. "I earned my Bachelor of Music here at Iowa," she shares, "and returned for my master's when I was offered a position in the quartet!"

Her decision to study at Iowa was shaped by the people who inspired her early musical journey. "I came to Iowa for my professors, **Dr. Scott Conklin** and **Dr. Réne Lecuona**. I met them separately when I was in high school, and when I found out they were faculty at the same school, it felt like a sign!" she recalls. The Chamber Music Residency Program also played a big role in her choice. "I love chamber music, and that program was another big reason why I chose to come."

Throughout her studies, the UI Symphony Orchestra and the Chamber Music Residency Program have been central to her experience. "They've given me the chance to work with incredible musicians and composers like Wynton Marsalis, Caroline Shaw, Jessie Montgomery, the Brentano Quartet, and the Takács Quartet," she says. "I've learned so much about leadership, communication, and venturing outside

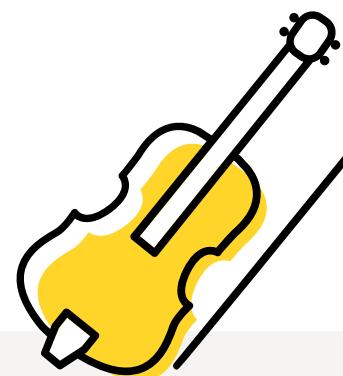
my comfort zone, and, of course, I've spent countless hours making music with my friends."

Renee's favorite memories at Iowa are a blend of musical milestones and personal celebrations. "My best musical memory here is serving as concertmaster of UI Symphony Orchestra for Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*," she says. "And my best personal memories come from celebrating with my friends after recitals and concerts."

When it comes to mentors, one person stands out above all: **Beth Oakes**, director of the Chamber Music Residency Program. "I want to be her when I grow up!" Renée says with a laugh. "Her organization, her love of chamber music, her positive attitude, and her cute outfits are just a few things I hope to emulate. She's taught me to never let logistical difficulties get in the way of accomplishing something."

Her advice for future students at the School of Music is equal parts practical and genuine: "Say yes to musical opportunities that scare you. Conversely, say no when you already have enough on your plate."

Now in the final year working toward her master's degree in music performance, Renée continues to grow as a musician and collaborator. She has a creative side outside of music as well—she once considered studying creative writing and has had her short stories and poetry published in Iowa literary magazines.



Music, he premiered new works and gained frequent solo performance opportunities. One unforgettable highlight was celebrating his 30th birthday by performing Rebecca Saunders' *Fury II* with the Center for New Music ensemble.

Collaboration was key in his time at Iowa. His duo LIGAMENT with **Anika Kildegaard** (2020 MA) was born in the Iowa chamber music program and has since grown into a professional ensemble now in its fifth season. "Having two years in that program allowed us to develop as a duo, establish a repertoire, and make ourselves ready for life as an ensemble post-graduation," he says of LIGAMENT. His improvising trio Wombat, also formed with fellow Iowa alumni

Justin K. Comer (2014 MA) and **Carlos Cotallo Solares** (2019 PhD), continues to perform regularly.

Mentors across the School of Music left a lasting mark. Associate Professor **Jean-François Charles** became a key collaborator in multiple contexts, and composition visiting faculty **Josh Levine** (2015-2018) and **Sivan Cohen Elias** (2018-2021) each wrote pieces for Will's dissertation that he still performs today. "The mentorship I received at Iowa extended far beyond lessons, it created relationships that continue to enrich my career," he reflects.

Since graduating, Will has freelanced extensively on the East Coast and now teaches double bass at the University of Northern Iowa. He encourages future students to be proactive in shaping their own paths: "Some of the most exciting things I did during my time at Iowa were optional recitals or extracurricular projects. Don't wait for someone to give you permission; if you have an idea, do it."

And outside of music? Will laughs, "If you ever want to play baseball, give me a shout! I have enough equipment to outfit a whole team."



Avery Arens

 2025 BA

GROWING UP IN CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA, AVERY ARENS was deeply immersed in music from a young age, participating in the marching band, concert band, jazz band, and choir at Xavier High

School. Her path to the University of Iowa took an unexpected turn during the COVID years, when she discovered the organ program. "I emailed my audition during the COVID years, not thinking any music professor would give me the time of day, so it was shocking when Dr. Hand emailed me back," she says, recalling the fateful message from Professor **Gregory Hand**. Once she toured campus and learned about the organs and fellow musicians she would work with, she didn't need to think about it more: The University of Iowa was the place.

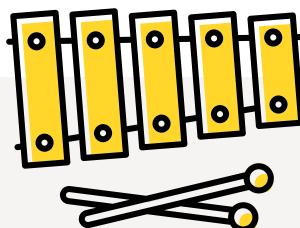
"Also, I wanted to double major, and knew the journalism program at Iowa was tops in the country. Thankfully, Dr. Hand has a program where it's possible to major in something completely different than the organ and be successful!"

Her time at Iowa was marked by unforgettable experiences in both academics and ensembles. Joining the Hawkeye Marching Band (HMB) and Pep Band (IPB) was a highlight: "Not only did I have the chance to travel all over the country for games in Dallas, Orlando, Nashville, New York, and Indianapolis, to name a few, but I also made lifelong friends. Some of my best memories are the trips I

took with the HMB and IPB!" Her most fulfilling musical achievement came during her senior recital. "That was easily the most nervous I've been before a performance, but the support I received from my organ studio, especially my fellow graduating seniors, was amazing. Considering how I had never touched an organ four years prior, finishing a 45-minute organ recital by myself was one of the most rewarding feelings I've ever felt!" She also discovered the strength of the School of Music community: "Whether it was a bad practice session or a bad grade on your Music Theory II quiz, there was always someone to talk to. Having that support was everything, and it motivated me every day!"

Mentorship from Professor Hand played a critical role in her growth. "I've never had a professor who challenged me more, and it paid off in the best way. While there would be ups and downs, Dr. Hand kept pushing me to be a great player and great leader. The advice he gave me in my lessons, I use in my daily life." Her advice to future students emphasizes balance and dedication: "Be mindful of your mental health, but also, be sure to push yourself. You get better or you get worse; you never stay the same. Showing up daily to practice multiple hours a day can be tiring, but it's so rewarding in the final performance. Also, be sure to find a balance. Finding a club or activity outside the SOM can give you a much-needed break from practicing that your mind will welcome."

Since graduation, Avery has brought her skills and energy to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where she works at Dakota News Now. Music continues to play a role in her life through daily piano practice, while she explores the city's coffee shops, restaurants, and neighborhoods.



BEFORE COMING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, MCKENNA BLENK had already enjoyed a variety of experiences in music education and performance. She earned her bachelor's degree in music education from Appalachian State University and went on to pursue a master's degree in percussion performance in Missouri. Her journey to Iowa began with a campus visit.

"I decided I wanted to study at Iowa after a visit up to Iowa City to meet with a few of the professors and attend a concert," she recalls. "The energy and interactions from students and faculty during my visit, as well as the

added bonus of the option to do a recording project for my DMA thesis, made it clear that Iowa was the place to be."

At Iowa, McKenna's experiences were rich and varied, but one stood out above the rest: directing the All-University Steel Band. "Being able to create music with students from all different majors, not just music, was very special," she says. "This ensemble was a prime example that anyone can play music, and I really enjoyed being able to write and

McKenna Blenk

 2025 DMA



Nathan Carterette

 2025 DMA

FOR PIANIST NATHAN CARTERETTE, life has always been a blend of performance, curiosity, and reinvention. Long

before he became a student at the University of Iowa, Iowa City already felt like a second home. He had performed in 2013 and 2014 at the Englert Theatre, including a performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. So when he later moved to Iowa City with his partner, who began working at University of Iowa Health Care, the transition felt natural. Between travels as a freelance pianist and maintaining his growing network of collaborators, he already had deep connections within the local arts community.

Then the pandemic changed everything. "When the coronavirus shut everything down, I lost two years of schedule and decided to try and get a doctorate degree," Nathan recalls. "I did not know when or if any of those scheduled events would return. I knew many faculty at the university and thought it would be good to learn from them about higher education." Drawn to Iowa's reputation for academic rigor and musical excellence, he decided to pursue the Doctor of Musical Arts degree.

Among the most transformative experiences, he notes, were the research seminar classes. "Although I love to write, I had to learn how to write in a more academic fashion, and many of my attempts were rejected," he says. "That made a big difference in being able to

finish my dissertation." The process tested his discipline but also sharpened his focus and determination, qualities that continue to guide his work today.

Nathan's fondest memories at Iowa center on collaboration and community. "The chance to meet many talented and enthusiastic people" stands out most clearly. One highlight was organizing a two-piano concert with fellow DMA students **Klyde Ledamo** (2025 DMA) and **Neil Krzeski** (2025 DMA), performing Brahms' *Haydn Variations*, Liszt's *Totentanz*, and John Adams' *Hallelujah Junction*. "It was exciting for everybody," he recalls.

Though pursuing a doctorate had never been part of his original plan, Nathan discovered he already possessed the skills and motivation to succeed. "I had never considered getting a doctoral degree," he says, "but I discovered I already had the materials in hand to do it with a very strong sense of purpose and determination." He credits Piano Professor and School of Music Director **Tammie Walker**—also his advisor—for her steady guidance and perspective. "I learned it's more than just the work you are doing, there's a whole system involved. So engage that system."

After graduation, Nathan moved to Las Vegas, where he now teaches at the Nevada School of the Arts and works as the director of music at Christ Episcopal Church, which has the largest pipe organ in Nevada. He encourages students to work hard and practice as much as possible. In his free time, he even used skills from his doctorate to learn card counting at blackjack in Las Vegas.

arrange tunes that the students were excited to come in and play every day." Another unforgettable highlight was performing an entire concert of Caroline Shaw's music, with the composer herself sitting in the front row, thanks to a Hancher residency in the School of Music with Shaw and Sō Percussion.

"Being able to play one of her pieces I had arranged for percussion with her watching? Top 5 moment of my life so far."

McKenna also discovered that "Iowa Nice" is real. "I truly met some of the nicest people at Iowa," she says. "Whether they be students, colleagues, professors, or

community members, everyone was kind and supportive and made my time at Iowa so enjoyable." Among those who shaped her time most was **Dr. David Gompper**, composition professor and director of the Center for New Music, whom she describes as her most influential mentor. "As an original member of the David Gompper Fan Club, he gave me and others so many different opportunities and once-in-a-lifetime experiences with the Center for New Music, like our trip to Thailand. I learned effective ways to lead a rehearsal, saw the ins and outs of 'new music,' and got to perform some of the most outrageously difficult but rewarding pieces in his ensemble."

Today, McKenna lives in Denver, Colorado, where her day-to-day revolves around percussion. She teaches lessons at Denver Percussion, performs with the Denver Nuggets Skyline Drumline (NBA) and Colorado Avalanche Celly Squad drumline (NHL), and serves as Percussion Director for Legend High School. Outside of music, she shares her life with Soca, her energetic three-legged dog who, as she proudly notes, "will run to me if I play a soca rhythm on the drumset." McKenna also recently released her first album of new and commissioned works titled *Invitation to Be*.



MUSIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN A JOURNEY OF EXPLORATION FOR COMPOSER JASON WISE, a path that led him from the Appalachian Mountains to the University of Iowa. Originally born in England, Jason spent his early adult years in North Carolina, where he was finishing up his bachelor's degree in music composition at Appalachian State University.

He decided to pursue graduate study at Iowa because of the creative opportunities and support for composers. "I decided to study at Iowa because of the resources available to student composers, such as the JACK Quartet readings, new music concerts, and guest artist seminars," he explains. "Also, being able to help with the New Music Ensemble and later help teach music theory courses was something I felt passionate about coming out of my undergraduate program."

"My private composition lessons were insightful and allowed me to think about music creation differently," Jason says, reflecting on lessons with Associate Professor **Jean-François Charles** and Professor **David Gompper**. "I was exposed to varying ideas and philosophies around composition, and I am deeply grateful. Within the world of art where creation can be a sort of mystical force that wins and fails depending on the moment, having different outlooks is important. I have left the program feeling more confident, creative, and empowered in my art."

One of Jason's favorite memories at Iowa was performing bass trombone in the orchestra. "One of the concerts we performed was a children's Halloween concert," he recalls. "I dressed as Dracula, and everyone was in costume as well! The kids had such a great time interacting with us, and everyone in the orchestra loved their energy."

Jason Wise

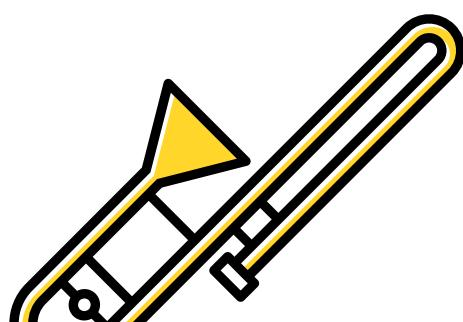
 2025 DMA

Jason also shared that one of the most meaningful lessons he learned during his time at Iowa was about artistic identity. "I quickly discovered the other composers' music and styles at Iowa, which can be intimidating at first. I immediately compared my work to my peers," he says. Jason shared that, although his music matured throughout the program, he remained true to his own artistic identity and personal taste, while still learning from the unique styles of his peers and mentors.

He describes Dr. Gompper as one of his most influential mentors: "I worked closely with Dr. Gompper through the New Music Ensemble and through our composition lessons together. I admire his pure honesty, intelligence, and artistic excellence. Dr. Gompper challenged me not to take shortcuts or easy outs in my music, and I am glad he did."

Since graduation, Jason has moved outside of Iowa City and started a new job as a restaurant manager while continuing his work as a composer. He has been finishing a lengthy chamber orchestra piece titled *Boone*, inspired by his old college town in the Appalachian Mountains. The work is part of doctoral conducting student **Sam Chen's** dissertation project, which features compositions by several Iowa composers.

Jason's advice for future students at the School of Music is simple: "Challenge yourself creatively. Whether you are a composer, performer, or producer/engineer, have a personal project you are passionate about and do it! Use this as an opportunity to collaborate and push your boundaries."





Peter Grubisich

 2018 BM, 2023 DMA

A TWO-TIME GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, PETER GRUBISICH has built a career shaped by curiosity, creativity, and community. Originally from New Lenox, Illinois, he came to Iowa to pursue his undergraduate degree in percussion performance and went on to complete a master's degree at the University of South Carolina. He then returned to Iowa to pursue the DMA, drawn by the recorded thesis option, the supportive environment, and the opportunity to continue studying with Professor **Dan Moore**.

"As an undergraduate, I was attracted to Iowa because of its vibrant campus life and relative affordability," Peter recalls. "But what really made the difference was meeting Dan Moore during a campus visit. He took an hour out of his day to sit with me and my parents, to talk not only about the percussion program but also about who I was and what I hoped to achieve as a musician. It meant a lot that he seemed genuinely interested in me. It made me confident I would receive the individual attention I was looking for."

Among the many experiences that shaped Peter's time at Iowa, the Iowa Steel Band had the biggest impact. Having arrived with no experience playing steel pans, he discovered an unexpected passion that would become a defining part of his artistic identity and open numerous career opportunities. "Steel pan has since become one of the most important components of my artistry," he says. Graduate musicology courses with Associate Professor **Nathan Platte** were also thought-provoking, offering new ways to understand how art and society shape one another. Playing with the Center for New Music challenged Peter both technically and creatively, while performing in the Iowa Symphony Band under Professor **Mark Heidel** (director of bands) was a source of inspiration and camaraderie.

One of Peter's favorite memories from Iowa was the Spring 2018 Iowa Steel Band concert featuring guest artist Andy Narell, a world-renowned steel pan musician and composer. The ensemble spent a

semester preparing a program of Narell's original music, including a world premiere. The concert's success led to a summer collaboration recording *Jungle Music*, an album that remains one of Peter's most treasured accomplishments and a meaningful conclusion to his undergraduate studies.

Reflecting on his years at Iowa, Peter describes the experience as "a steady broadening of perspectives, a slow, often uneven process toward becoming a more open, inquisitive, and empathetic person." He credits many faculty mentors for this growth, especially Dan Moore, whose creativity and guidance helped bring out that same creative spark in all his students. Assistant Professor **William Menefield** changed the way Peter thought about improvisation and jazz, while Nathan Platte modeled the scholarly ideals of inquiry, dialogue, and truth through knowledge.

Today, Peter serves as assistant professor of percussion at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, New Mexico, a role that feels like a perfect fit. "I'm extremely happy to have the opportunity to mentor a new generation of students," he says. "I wouldn't be where I am without the connections I made and the education I received at the University of Iowa. I had no idea where this journey would lead when I first chose Iowa over a decade ago, and I'm grateful for every experience along the way."

When asked for advice to current and future students, Peter offers thoughtful guidance: "Pursue your craft diligently and with passion, but remember that music exists to enrich our lives, not dominate them. Read widely, engage with different perspectives, and be kind to yourself when an honest effort comes up short. Life is short, and college is even shorter, so be present and enjoy the moment."

As a fun fact, he adds: "I haven't owned a TV in over two years. Best decision ever." ■





NEW WORK CITY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, CREATIVITY ISN'T JUST ENCOURAGED—it's woven into the very fabric of our history. Did you know that our tradition of artistic innovation stretches all the way back to 1897, when the first creative writing class, "Verse-making," was offered? Fast forward to 1940, and Iowa became the first university in the nation to award a Master of Fine Arts degree, pioneering the way for artists across disciplines to push boundaries through original work.

This spring, our vibrant culture of creation took a bold leap forward with the launch of New Work City, an exciting initiative spotlighting the imaginative and collaborative energy of our students across music, dance, and theatre. Initiated by Associate Professor **Mary Beth Easley**, who chairs the UI Department of Theatre Arts, New Work City is more than a series of performances—it's a celebration of the creative process itself.

CELEBRATING THE ENDLESS CREATIVITY OF OUR STUDENTS

BY JEN KNIGHTS

"At Iowa, new work is at the heart of everything we do," says Easley. "From composers and choreographers to playwrights and designers, our students don't just perform—they invent. New Work City helps us share that magic with the wider community."

At the end of each semester, New Work City brings fresh, original performances to life. The series features everything from concerts by the School of Music's renowned Center for New Music Ensemble to dance thesis performances by MFA candidates, and the ever-popular New Play Festival from the theatre department. What's more, many of these projects showcase exciting interdisciplinary collaborations, blending movement, sound, and storytelling in innovative ways.

This spring, Voxman Music Building came alive with premieres of new compositions from School of Music students performed by guest artist LIGAMENT—a dynamic duo featuring UI alumni **Anika Kildegaard** (2020 MA) and **Will Yager** (2021 DMA).

Students' digital projects projected on the exterior of the UI Theatre Building, May 2025.

Guest artist LIGAMENT—UI alumni Anika Kildegaard (2020 MA) and Will Yager (2021 DMA)—perform new student compositions in Voxman Concert Hall, May 2025.



"The creation of new work, as well as the reinvention, reinterpretation, and modernization of existing work, is at the core of the School of Music's curriculum," says Professor **Tammie Walker**, director of the School of Music. "This spirit of discovery guides our daily work in the classrooms, rehearsal rooms, studios, and stages, and we are excited to see this shared priority highlighted across all performing arts units through New Work City."

Elsewhere in New Work City, a captivating site-specific dance thesis by **Sophia McLaughlin** (2025 MFA) led audiences through the scenic trails of Iowa City's Hickory Hill Park, offering a truly immersive experience. And in a dazzling blend of art and technology, students from music, dance, and theatre teamed up to transform the Theatre Building's exterior into a glowing canvas with their "Digital Graffiti" projection project.

André Perry, executive director for Hancher Auditorium and the Office of Performing Arts and Engagement, summed up the vibe saying, "The University of Iowa is a place where artists find their voice. That's what we do. On this campus, in this city, you're going to get exposure to so many different kinds of art. Our students are a major part of our area's creative environment. They work with their classmates and faculty mentors every day and, through residency programs, they are in conversation with visiting professional artists almost every week of the semester. They build on those experiences to make their own revelatory work."

New Work City highlights the endless creativity and impressive skills of UI students who are on the cusp of launching their artistic careers.

"Our students' work is fresh and new, often reflecting emerging moments in our culture," Perry adds. "Sometimes the work soars and sometimes it's messy: like all art. That risk and the rare rewards are all part of the process. Ultimately, our students are trying to build something better than what's come before. They bring such vibrancy to our field." ■

Digital Extras

To see the full lineup of New Work City events, visit performingarts.uiowa.edu.



Video of Sophia McLaughlin's Dance MFA Thesis performance in Hickory Hill Park



View performances by the UI Center for New Music

Introductions to New Faculty

BY CLARA JARECKE

UI SECOND YEAR STUDENT MAJORING IN ENGLISH & CREATIVE WRITING

Q&A



“

...our community is a thriving space for innovation, creativity, collaboration, and dreaming without limits.”

Jamie Clark

Visiting Assistant Professor, Cello

Q: What was your musical journey before coming to Iowa?

A: Music had a way of finding me when I was young, even if I had other plans. A series of very fortunate (and seemingly happen-stance) moments led to me pursuing music degrees at institutions where I was studying with profoundly inspiring mentors and beside contagiously passionate friends. I attended the Eastman School of Music (BM) and the New England Conservatory (MM + DMA). Before moving to Iowa City, I served as the professor of cello and coordinator of chamber music at Stetson University in Florida for five years.

Q: Where do your musical interests lie? Who are your musical inspirations?

A: To me, music is one of the greatest sources of awe on our planet. It communicates every dimension of what it means to be a human being, through a medium that is so exquisitely beautiful, one can spend a lifetime studying it and never fully understand it. I love that music connects us deeply with one another, even if we do not share a spoken language. Music enables us to make beauty of our pain, to know that we are never alone, and it unites us beyond all forces that attempt to separate us.

Q: What brought you to Iowa?

A: I moved to Iowa City in Fall of 2024 to teach at both University of Iowa and University of Northern Iowa. After five years of living apart for positions in higher education, my husband Kenny Lee (director of orchestras) and I are thrilled to call Iowa City our home.

Q: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A: Teaching is a sacred gift in my life. The mentors I had completely transformed how I see the world through their dedication, generosity, humility, professionalism, and love. The visceral energy, musical vulnerability, and overwhelming sense of imagination they bring to their music-making lives in me every day I touch my own instrument. I consider it a profound honor and joy to pass this on to future generations. All students I work with have miraculous gifts within them, and it is a privilege to help them become the fullest versions of themselves. I often feel that I learn just as much, if not more, from them as they do from me.

Q: What are you looking forward to this school year?

A: I am deeply excited and grateful to be part of the University of Iowa School of Music. The students are radiant, kind, and hungry to learn; my colleagues are inspiring, engaging, and collaborative; and our community is a thriving space for innovation, creativity, collaboration, and dreaming without limits.

“ ”

Keely Futterer

Visiting Assistant Professor, Voice

Q: What was your musical journey before coming to Iowa?

A: I have been primarily working as an opera singer all over the USA with some jaunts to China and Italy. I've been so fortunate to sing with great companies such as Minnesota Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Glimmerglass Festival, Erie Philharmonic, and National Symphony Orchestra, to name a few! It's a part of my career that I am still getting to continue, even as I jump back into academia here at Iowa. Before that, I was working on my MM in Voice, and then a DMA and a second MM in Opera Stage Directing, all at the Eastman School of Music. Back in yesteryear, I started my undergrad as a double major in bassoon and voice at Arkansas Tech University, before graduating with my BA in Voice and a minor in theater. I grew up in a musical family (both of my parents were collegiate instrumental professors) and I was lucky to have an equal background in vocal music, dance, theater, and instrumental music (bassoon and cello) throughout most of my childhood and early adulthood. In the tradition of the family business, my husband is also an opera singer (an incredibly talented tenor). A tenor and soprano married ... is there anything more dangerous?

Q: Where do your musical interests lie? Who are your musical inspirations?

A: The area where I grew up had a lot of musical diversity, so my personal musicianship was/is influenced by that exposure to bluegrass, jazz, gospel, sacred harp, classical, music theater, rock ... I was really so lucky to have had such an array of styles at my fingertips. That being said, I am more focused on opera/art song overall, with a particular emphasis on the bel canto genre. I love the freedom of virtuosity and expression that is afforded to the singer during this era, as well as the conversational nature among the orchestra, singer, and audience. My main focus in any of my performing is communication. Inspirations are many and varied, but the tops are: Maria Callas, Mariella Devia, June Anderson, Anna Moffo, Jacqueline du Pré, Martha Argerich, Shirley Verrett, Frank Sinatra, Dolly Parton, Ella Fitzgerald, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Keely Shaye Smith (especially since we share a name!), and my family.

I felt that everyone at Iowa was committed to educating the modern musician, raising the bar with research, yet still trying to meet the students as human beings.”



Q: What brought you to Iowa?

A: Lots of little things but overall, wanting more balance in life. I love performing, but I have missed teaching and experiencing music outside of myself. So, I had been looking for an opportunity to teach again, but really no place had clicked until I interviewed here. I felt that everyone at Iowa was committed to educating the modern musician, raising the bar with research, yet still trying to meet the students as human beings. That is something I think is rare and really solidified my decision to join in the fun!

Q: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A: I am not reinventing the wheel here, but, to me, there is something so beautiful as a teacher, student, and performer in contributing to the ever-evolving art form and world through education: to take our own experience (education, career, life, etc.), give it to the next generation, and then watch how it grows. Not every student will be a "big name," I'm certainly not a "big name," and many of my teachers and the people who inspired me most were not "big names," yet we all contribute to the breadth of knowledge in the music world, and we all keep it alive. So, for me as a teacher, I enjoy capital "E" Education, because it is the result of generations of small moments of connection, creativity, research, and inspiration that keeps things movin' and shakin'!

Q: What are you looking forward to this school year?

A: Being a part of this community! I grew up, literally, in the music department at Arkansas Tech where my parents taught and, for me, being back in a music department feels like home. I am truly looking forward to connecting to and being the best teacher I can be to my students, learning from my colleagues, and continuing to grow.



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...when the choir is locked in, the music comes alive, and you can feel the room change: Those are the moments that keep me coming back."

Q&A

Alex Koppel

Visiting Assistant Professor & Associate Director of Choral Studies

Q: What was your musical journey before coming to Iowa?

A: My path into choral music started almost by accident—I took a community college musicianship class thinking it would be an easy 'A,' since I had grown up as a pianist. Instead, I met Cheryl, the choir director, who pulled me into the choral ensembles and opened my eyes to music I now can't imagine living without. At Cal State Fullerton, I learned what it meant to take music seriously as a profession, and, later, teaching junior high and high school choirs taught me how powerful it is to build community with singers of every level. I then went on to graduate degrees at San José State and Indiana University. Both gave me the chance to dive deeply into the art of conducting and refine my artistic style and vision.

Q: Where do your musical interests lie? Who are your musical inspirations?

A: I'm especially drawn to the big choral-orchestral works. There is something about that scale of sound and collaboration that feels both thrilling and deeply human. I love the challenge of working with choirs at the highest level, but what keeps me coming back is the way music creates connection between singers, audiences, and communities. Beethoven has been a lifelong inspiration for me—many of my instincts as a musician were shaped at the piano, playing through his sonatas. I also find myself returning often to the choral writing of Britten and Pärt ... music that shows how intimacy and clarity can move people just as deeply.

Q: What brought you to Iowa?

A: For me, it was the chance to work with such wonderful colleagues and students, in a place that feels both welcoming and inspiring. The Voxman Music Building is incredible—it's the kind of space that makes you want to make music! And Iowa City itself has such a creative energy that it felt like a great place to put down roots.

Q: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A: What I enjoy most is the connection with students and being able to share something I find so valuable with people who care about it too. I love the process of making music together and working toward those moments when everything just clicks ... when the choir is locked in, the music comes alive, and you can feel the room change. Those are the moments that keep me coming back.

Q: What are you looking forward to this school year?

A: I'm looking forward to making great music with the choirs and getting to know a lot of new names and faces along the way. We have some incredible repertoire lined up, and I can't wait to dig into it together. More than anything, I'm excited to see how the groups grow over the year and to share what we create with the community.

Matthew Landon

Adjunct Instructor of Guitar

Q: What was your musical journey before coming to Iowa?

A: I grew up in a musical family and played many different instruments as a kid before finally settling on guitar as a teenager. I performed in punk bands throughout high school, then fell in love with jazz and decided to pursue higher education in jazz guitar. After earning my BM and MM in jazz studies, I spent years honing my skills by performing many different genres in many different settings and eventually realized that I love sharing knowledge, so I decided to pursue education. In addition to the University of Iowa, I have taught guitar at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, Coastal Carolina University, and Kirkwood Community College.



Q: Where do your musical interests lie? Who are your musical inspirations?

A: All over the place! I'm interested in jazz, blues, rock, folk, bluegrass, punk, country, hip hop, soul, pop, R&B ... I just love music in all forms. Some of my biggest musical inspirations are John Coltrane, Wes Montgomery, Charles Mingus, Lenny Breau, Thelonious Monk, Wayne Shorter, Conor Oberst, and Bob Dylan.

Q: What brought you to Iowa?

A: I grew up in Iowa. I'm from a river town called Burlington and, after being away for 16 years, decided to move back last year.

Q: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A: I love connecting with students and facilitating "lightbulb moments" in their growth and development. Seeing a new concept finally click for a student is something that I'll never get tired of!

Q: What are you looking forward to this school year?

A: I'm looking forward to getting to know my students and witnessing their continued growth.



Seeing a new concept finally click for a student is something that I'll never get tired of!"

Q&A



I'm looking forward to students' special lightbulb moments in lessons and the successes they reflect upon after a full semester or year of study, when they begin to imagine what more they are capable of."

Q&A

Stella Roden

Visiting Assistant Professor, Voice

Q: What was your musical journey before coming to Iowa?

A: I came from a musical family, so I took piano lessons and sang in the choir throughout secondary school. My sisters and I sang together at home and in church. During the summer breaks in high school, I attended the Governor's Magnet School for the Arts in Norfolk, Virginia, which was held at Old Dominion University. I gained excellent pre-college training there and went to James Madison University to complete a Bachelor of Music Education. Later, I became more serious about performance and finished an MM at the New England Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts, and later a doctorate from the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut. My first interview after completing the doctorate landed me a job in Missouri, where I came from to teach in Iowa.

Q: Where do your musical interests lie? Who are your musical inspirations?

A: My musical interests lie in American and Spanish, Catalan, and Portuguese art songs. I am committed to exploring vocal music that reaches beyond the traditional literature taught in most universities. Highlighting lesser-known American, South American, and Iberian vocal repertoire offers students a broader perspective and range of expressions.

Q: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A: I love watching students develop as singers and artists. Ultimately, I relish seeing how their love of singing inspires, heals, and supports them in all areas of their lives.

Q: What are you looking forward to this school year?

A: I'm looking forward to students' special lightbulb moments in lessons and the successes they reflect upon after a full semester or year of study, when they begin to imagine what more they are capable of.

Q&A

Margaret Rowley

Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology

Q: What was your musical journey before coming to Iowa?

A: While I loved music as a young child, it was a Shostakovich string quartet that really did me in. I followed the path of my own instrument (flute) through bachelor's and master's degrees in performance, and along the way discovered ethnomusicology—a kind of methodological marriage between anthropology and musicology—and was hooked. Although I started a doctorate in flute performance, I couldn't shake the feeling that ethnomusicology was where I really wanted to be, writing and thinking about the people who make sound and music, why they do it, and what it does for them. I started my PhD at Boston University and was very fortunate to be able to do my research in Senegal, on the west coast of the African continent. After I finished my graduate work, I taught at Widener University for two years before (excitedly) joining the musicology faculty at the University of Iowa.

Q: Where do your musical interests lie? Who are your musical inspirations?

A: On my own playlist are a lot of artists who inspire me: Thione Seck, Aby Ndour, Youssou N'Dour, Baaba Maal, Mouhamed Niang, Fatou Guelw, Aïda Samb, and Coumba Gawlo, all Senegalese artists and musician/poets. I get a lot of inspiration from music scholars—fellow ethnomusicologists and others—who are writing on the edges of sound studies. Their work is prodding at what we assume about music and sound, what it communicates, who it affects. I'm particularly interested in posthumanism, which asks what we can learn by listening to other-than-humans. But, then again, on the human side of things, one of my mentors (Fallou Ngom) has this concept of "music-derived literacy," and it makes me wonder about the possibilities of sound: What do people in different places learn with or through sound or music?

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I'm looking forward to soaking in all the writing that happens in Iowa City.”



Q: What brought you to Iowa?

A: There are many reasons that I was thrilled to make this move, including a fantastic College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, great interdisciplinary ties between departments, and really incredible research coming from the musicology area. I'm also excited to be in such a writing-focused place. I love to read (inside and outside academia), and I like experimenting with ethnographic writing, so I'm looking forward to soaking in all the writing that happens in Iowa City. Finally, it's been particularly joyful for me to be in a large school of music at a public university, which reminds me of my own music education; it feels like coming full-circle.

Q: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A: I think every educator loves an "aha" moment where it's clear that things are clicking for a student. Beyond that, though, I love learning who students are individually. I like to work with students' passions and interests to build projects that are meaningful and exciting, and that challenge them to become better listeners to themselves and others.

Q: What are you looking forward to this school year?

A: I'm so excited to go to as many readings and concerts as I can and really soak up what Iowa City has to offer. I'm already learning with my students and digging into my own research; I'm in the early stages of planning my next trip to Senegal and am already looking forward to doing research, eating really great food, and soaking in some incredible sounds. ■



2024-25

Faculty & Staff Awards



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Dr. **KSENIA NOSIKOVA**, professor of piano and piano area co-head, was awarded the 2024-25 College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Collegiate Teaching Award, presented each year by CLAS to faculty who demonstrate outstanding performance in the classroom, laboratory, or studio. The award recognizes faculty members who stimulate and satisfy their students' desire to learn, develop innovative and effective methods of presenting the most current and exciting knowledge in their disciplines, and fostering productive and generous mentoring relationships with individual students.



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Dr. **ABBEY DVORAK**, associate professor of music therapy, was named the 2025 Williams-Cannon Faculty Fellow through the Iowa Neuroscience Institute. Her work focuses on neurodegeneration research, and the award will support her ongoing work with the Tremble Clefs-Iowa group, created by 2025 Music PhD grad **SUN JOO LEE**, and advance critical research on the effectiveness of music therapy intervention for people with neurodegenerative conditions and their families. The Tremble Clefs group, originally funded by a Community Engagement Grant, supports individuals with Parkinson's disease through the power of music—completely free of charge.



Visiting Assistant Professor of Oboe **DAVID CYZAK** received a Career Impact Award from the UI Pomerantz Career Center—a special, student-nominated honor recognizing instructors or mentors who make a meaningful impact on their students' career development and preparation for post-graduation success.



[WATCH VIDEO](#)



World-renowned bass-baritone vocalist **SIMON ESTES** (1986 BM) has received the University of Iowa Distinguished Alumni Award—the University of Iowa's highest honor! Estes came to the University of Iowa intending to study medicine, but he soon discovered a love for music that launched an extraordinary career, including performances at the Metropolitan Opera, stages around the world, and major events like the Olympic Games. He later returned to Iowa to teach vocal performance, continuing to make a positive impact through his artistry. Throughout his career, Estes has supported many humanitarian causes, raising millions through his foundations for scholarships, preventative health, and other initiatives.



WEN CHIN LIU-YOUNG (2024 DMA, choral conducting) made her conducting debut at Carnegie Hall on May 24, 2025, leading a performance of Mozart's *Vesperae solennes de confessore*, K. 339, featuring over 100 singers, New York-based soloists, and the New England Symphonic Ensemble. Dr. Liu-Young currently serves as artistic director of Heritage Chorale and adjunct lecturer at Benedictine University.

JASON LEE (2024 BM, Piano Performance), received first prize for his arrangement of the Iowa Fight Song, submitted to the Big Ten Academic Alliance Piano League for its Fall 2024 fight songs competition.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)



Emeritus faculty member **STEVE GRISMORE** (1985 BM, 1990 MA) was inducted to the Jazz Educators of Iowa Hall of Fame, an honor that recognizes individuals who have created new directions and significant curricular contributions to jazz education in Iowa. The award was presented at the All-State Jazz Concert in May 2025.

This summer, a brand new Steinway D concert grand piano arrived at the School of Music Recital Hall! School of Music piano faculty Dr. **RÉNE LECUONA** and Dr. **ALAN HUCKLEBERRY**, along with piano technician Jeremy Herrera, traveled to the Steinway factory in New York with Ryan West (president of West Music) to hand-select this incredible instrument. The remarkable acquisition was made possible by a generous estate gift from **EDNA LENICEK** (1937 BM, 1938 MA), a proud alumna from Fairfax, Iowa, who was a lifelong friend of **HIMIE VOXMAN**, director of the School of Music from 1954 until 1980 and namesake of the Voxman Music Building.

WATCH VIDEO



In the Steinway & Sons showroom. (Left to right) Jeremy Herrera, Alan Huckleberry, Réne Lecuona, Ryan West.



Leaving the magnificent Steinway factory and showroom following the tour and selection process. Pictured, left to right: Jeremy Herrera, Lily Herrera, Heather Huckleberry, Frederic Huckleberry, Ethan Intriligator, Gabriel Intriligator, Alan Huckleberry, Réne Lecuona, Sonya Lecuona, Lily Shirzad, and Ryan West.

2024-25 Milestone Anniversaries

Thank you for your years of service!

Many of our dedicated staff and faculty celebrated significant work anniversary milestones this year. Their hard work, passion, and commitment to excellence have shaped the lives of countless students in the School of Music and the university community at large.



(Left to right) Réne Lecuona, John Winget, Scott Conklin, Spring 2025.

35 YEARS

RÉNE LECUONA, Piano Professor and Piano Area Co-Head

30 YEARS

JOHN WINGET, IT Support Consultant

20 YEARS

SCOTT CONKLIN, Violin Professor

MARIAN WILSON KIMBER, professor of musicology, is the incoming editor of the *Journal of the Society for American Music*. Wilson Kimber will serve in the position for two years, helping produce eight issues of the leading American music journal in the field of musicology. She has previously served on the Society of American Music's board and was the program chair for its national conference in 2020. Wilson Kimber is working with Wendi Griffiths, DMA student in voice, who will serve as assistant editor. Griffiths's position is one of several assistantships sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences designed to give graduate students professional experiences.



In Summer 2024, Associate Professor **MARY COHEN** (music education area head) participated in the Fellowship for Qualitative Research hosted by the UI's Public Policy Center, which has since been renamed the Center for Social Science Innovation. Her research, conducted in

collaboration with the Linn County Juvenile Detention Center, explored the idea of using music-making as an avenue for diverting young people from incarceration and creating solidarity with young people who have had adverse experiences within the legal system.



LEARN MORE



ALICIA RAU (2001 BA, Music and Anthropology), was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Children's Music Album for her work on the album *Creciendo* with her band Lucy Kalantari and the Jazz Cats. The album was also nominated for Album of the Year in the 40th Premios Soberano in the Dominican Republic. Why is Alicia called the "Trumpet Chick" at RAGBRAI? Scan to find out!

Retirements



LOU CRIST (1960 BA, 1981 MA), the Golden Voice of the Hawkeye Marching Band, 1980-2025

RACHEL JOSELSON, Associate Professor of Voice, 1997-2025

TIMOTHY STALTER, Professor and Director of Choral Activities, 1999-2025

STEPHEN SWANSON, Professor of Voice, 1994-2025

MARGARET WENK-KUCHLBAUER, Dance/Opera Scenery and Costume Designer, 1981-2025



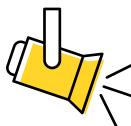
Professor **DAN MOORE** (percussion area head) was named the Roger and Lynn Van Vreede Percussion Program Director Chair at Birch Creek Music Performance Center in Door County, Wisconsin. Awarded through their Lifetime for Education Fund, the chair recognizes Dr. Moore's 26 years of leadership as a faculty performer and program director for the Birch Creek Percussion, Steel Pan & World Music Program.



READ AND WATCH



2025 Music Therapy PhD grad **SUN JOO LEE** was featured in the 2025 Dare to Discover banner campaign by the UI Office of the Vice President for Research, a campaign that highlights scholars who are engaged in promising research, scholarship, and creative activities. Her work, which explores the effects of therapeutic group singing for people with Parkinson's disease, was also featured in *Iowa Magazine* this spring.



DURING THE 2024-25 ACADEMIC YEAR, we hosted three important professional conferences here in the Voxman Music Building:

1. Midwest Voice Symposium (November 2024)
2. The American Music Therapy Association Midwestern Regional Conference (February 2025)
3. The International Horn Society Mid-North Horn Workshop (March 2025)



2025 DMA graduate **KATELYN PETERSON** has joined the faculty at Wichita State University School of Music faculty as an assistant professor of choral music education and associate director of choral activities.

IN MEMORIAM



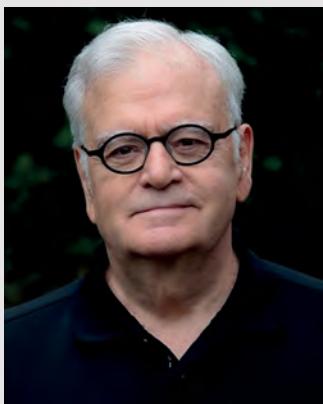
Lawrence Fritts

(December 31, 1952 - January 18, 2025)

Professor Emeritus **LAWRENCE "LARRY" FRITTS**, brilliant composer, teacher, and musician, passed away at the age of 72, in Iowa City, with his loving wife, artist Sue Hettmansperger, by his side. Larry's remarkable life was shaped by a passion for music, an empathic dedication to teaching, and an enduring spirit that never wavered.

Larry was a professor of composition at the University of Iowa, where he taught for over two decades before retiring in 2019. He directed the University's Electronic Music Studios from 1994, fostering a generation of talented musicians and composers with his insightful guidance.

Larry was a gifted composer, known for his adventuresome and groundbreaking works that often blended traditional instruments, voice, and electronics. His compositions were performed worldwide and can be found on labels including Albany, Innova, Frog Peak, SEAMUS, and Tempo Primo. His innovative work extended beyond music composition; in 1997, he created the University of Iowa Musical Instrument Samples Database, a no-cost pioneering collection of downloadable orchestral instruments recorded in an anechoic chamber that continues to serve musicians and composers today.



Wallace Chappell

(August 8, 1941 - April 14, 2025)

WALLACE "WALLY" CHAPPELL was the director of Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa from 1986 to 2001, during which time he was recognized as one of the top 10 university presenters by *International Arts Manager* and commissioned over 50 new works. His vision brought a rich diversity to Hancher's programming, a legacy that continues to this day. Wally's leadership extended beyond Iowa as he took on roles in some of the nation's most prestigious arts organizations.

In New York City, he served as the executive director of the American Ballet Theatre and later as the executive director of the Paul Taylor American Dance Company. Wally was a passionate educator and mentor, teaching theatre and arts administration at UCLA, the University of Minnesota, and here at the University of Iowa. He inspired a new generation of artists and arts administrators, imparting his wisdom and fostering a love for the arts in countless students and professional colleagues in the arts.



LISA NEHER (2016 DMA) was named the 2025 Composer of the Year by both the Oregon Music Teachers Association and the Iowa Music Teachers Association. Dr. Neher's powerful, climate-conscious works will represent Iowa and Oregon in the national 2025 Distinguished Composer of the Year Award competition, hosted by the Music Teachers National Association.



MARIA TORRES MELGARES, DMA

saxophone student, was the only saxophonist selected (out of more than 170 applicants) to compete in the semi-finals of New York's prestigious Young Concert Artists 2024 Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. Maria's incredible talent and artistry earned her a spot among 37 elite musicians advancing to the semi-final round.



SAYYOD MIRZOMURODOV

won first place in clarinet performance for the 2025 Virtuoso Music Competition, presented by the Charleston International Music Competition.



In 2024, composer and conductor **AARON PERRINE** (2014 PhD) was elected into membership of the prestigious American Bandmasters Association, which recognizes outstanding achievement among concert band conductors and composers.



Aaron Perrine (middle) joins Dr. Myron Welch (left), former director of bands at Iowa, and Dr. Mark Heidel (right), current director of bands at Iowa, as an ABA member.



When **DELBERT "DEL" DISSELHORST** (professor of organ in the School of Music, 1970-2008) passed away in 2022, he left a transformative legacy through his estate, providing financial support for 13 area nonprofits. His significant gift to the United Way of Johnson and Washington Counties enabled the organization to purchase permanent office space on the south side of Iowa City, as well as supported technology, branding, and program investments to strengthen its future impact. The new office space, named in Del's honor, was dedicated this summer, with Dr. Tammie Walker and many other University of Iowa representatives in attendance at the celebration. ■

Digital Extras

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Watch concert recordings and stories any time at youtube.com/@IowaSchoolofMusic

You can find Digital Extras throughout this issue of Iowa Music Magazine, connecting you to additional content online that will enhance your enjoyment of reading our annual update on life in the School of Music.

Scan them one by one as you read—or access them all in one digital home, on the Rita Benton Music Library website!



PERFORMING ARTS AT IOWA

MUSIC

THEATRE ARTS

DANCE

HANCHER

PRODUCTION

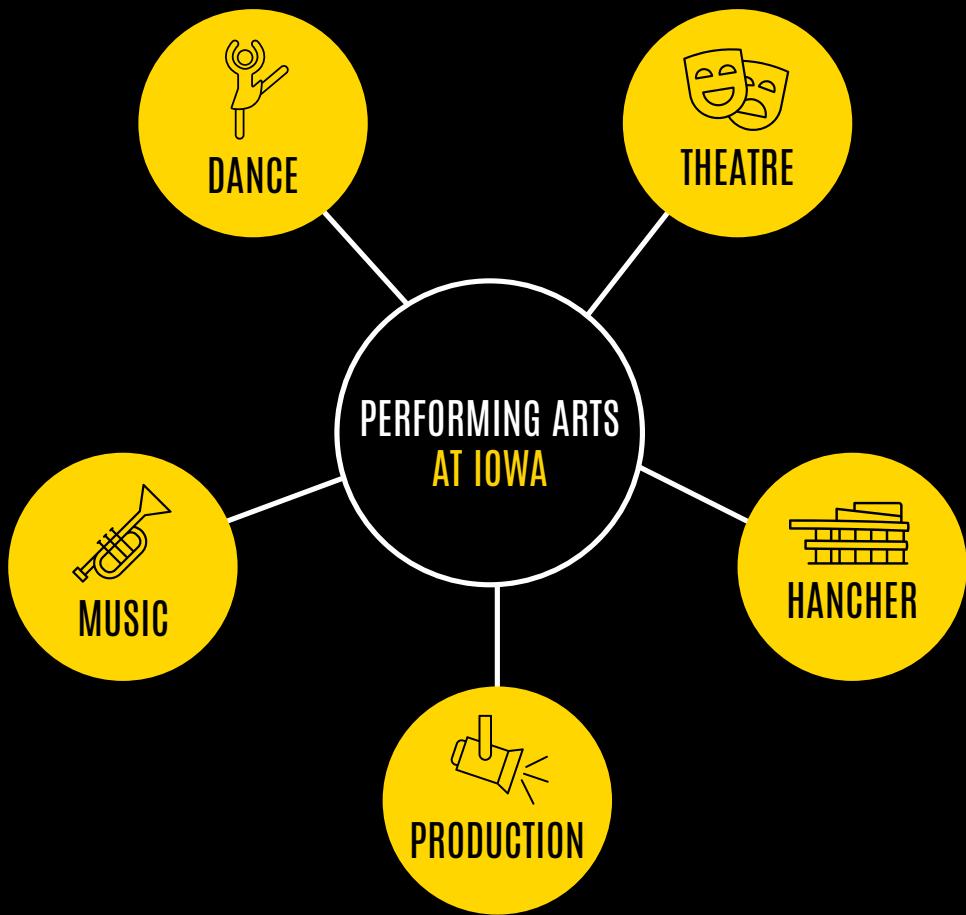
A spirit of creativity, collaboration, and exploration lives at the heart of our performing arts activities at the University of Iowa. **The School of Music, Department of Theatre Arts, and Department of Dance** have drawn talented students and exceptional faculty to Iowa City for decades.

The dedicated, experienced professionals in our **Performing Arts Production Unit** not only make campus performances possible (and spectacular) but also provide deep learning experiences for university students who gain the skills necessary to succeed in their chosen field—even if that field is not in the arts.

Hancher Auditorium contributes to the university's robust performing arts culture by welcoming artists from around the country and the world to perform for and create with those on campus—as well as K-12 students and people of all ages in the wider community.

Together, these five units pursue the vision of Performing Arts at Iowa: building a first-choice, destination performing arts campus at the University of Iowa.

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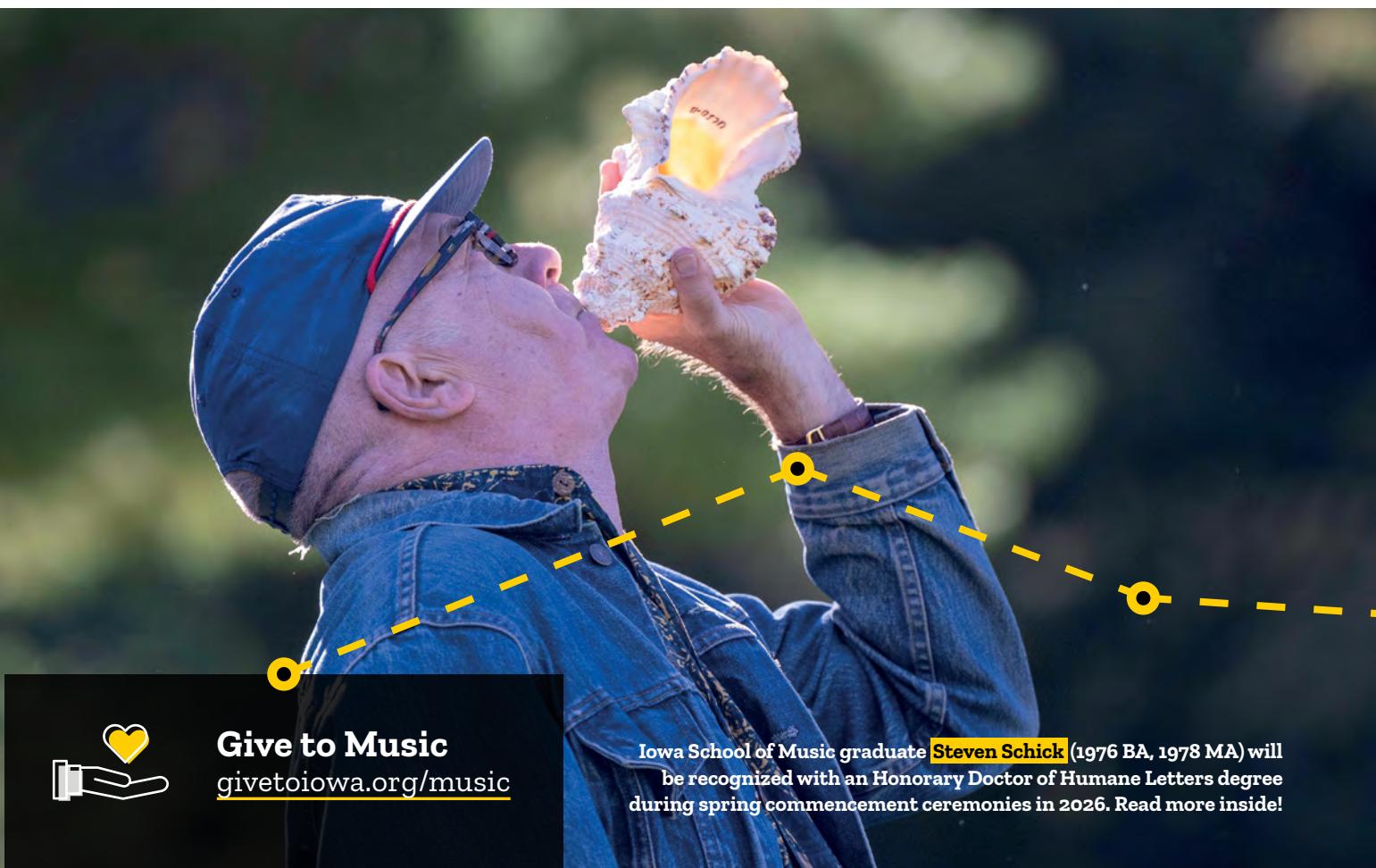


IOWA

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School of Music

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Iowa City, Iowa 52242

A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a blue baseball cap and a denim jacket, is shown from the chest up. He is blowing into a large, light-colored conch shell held in his right hand. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery. A yellow dashed line with circular markers follows the path of the sound waves emanating from the shell.



Give to Music
givetoiowa.org/music

Iowa School of Music graduate **Steven Schick** (1976 BA, 1978 MA) will be recognized with an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree during spring commencement ceremonies in 2026. Read more inside!