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SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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Marching Band's Canine Member



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rhythms SCHOOL OF MUSIC

MUSIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Volume 44, Fall 2025

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for its alumni and friends

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FROM THE **Director**

2024-25 was another incredibly busy year for the School of Music, full of challenges, opportunities for change and memorable music making! Festivals and recruiting activities brought more than 3,000 prospective students to campus, all the large ensembles performed multiple times in the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, while guest artists, faculty and student recitals ensured that audiences had plenty of events to choose from. All around us, the world seems to be shifting, but we remain steadfast in our mission: to provide world-class educational and musical experiences for our students and our community, and to foster an environment that is supportive and welcoming for all.

In fall 2024, the Panther Marching Band made national news headlines when they took to the field at the UNI Dome. Not only did the band look fantastic in their new uniforms, but they also had a unique new member in their midst. Winnie, a golden retriever service dog, joined the band so that her human, Gabi Riessen, could participate fully in PMB activities. Winnie has her own uniform (including a hat) and, most important, hearing protection. Gabi's story is one of resilience and persistence, and the power of music to provide a collective sense of belonging.

At the end of the spring 2025 semester, we bid a fond farewell to three retiring faculty members: Dr. Randy Grabowski, Professor of Trumpet (39 years), Dr. Robin Guy, Professor of Collaborative Piano (35 years), and Dr. Jonathan Schwabe, Professor of Music Theory and Composition (33 years). Together, their remarkable careers represent more than a hundred combined years of amazing artistry and commitment to student success. We wish them well on the next phase of their life journeys. With change comes new opportunities. In September 2024, we welcomed a new piano technician to our staff. Caleb Bendull brings a wealth of experience in tuning, repair, and inventory management. Dr. Scott Hagarty joins us in August 2025, as Assistant Professor of Trumpet. Dr. Hagarty is a graduate of UNI and a former student of Dr. Randy Grabowski.

With UNI's sesquicentennial just around the corner, the School of Music will launch its next Amplify initiative, entitled "Our History," at the Scholarship Benefit Concert in September. A select group of students has been scouring the Rod Library Special Collections, gathering stories and images that document 150 years of music making on this campus. Founded in 1876 as the Iowa State Normal School, music activities were first housed in the department of art. From the remarkable history of the Cecilians (started in 1888) and the Ladies Band (1907-1930) to a timeline of UNI band directors since 1890, and everything in between, we have a lot to celebrate!

Melinda Boyd
Director and Professor

On the Road Again

Music Ensemble Tours



The UNI Panther Marching Band marched its way to England on New Year's Day to take part in the London New Year's Day Parade. 130 Panthers marched through London's West End District performing Pitbull's song "Fireball" in front of thousands of people in person and on television.

"They had a great time," said Justin Mertz, UNI band director. "They were really good and we're very lucky here at UNI. We have a very good band. We have a big band ... and our students perform extremely well. It's not hard for

them to sort of look around and take in the atmosphere around them and understand the kind of eyes that are on them in person and on the cameras."

The band prepared for the performance throughout the fall semester, and tour planning took place over the course of the past two years. In November 2023, parade chairman and founder Bob Bone and Duncan Sandy's, senior patron and the former lord mayor of Westminster, personally delivered the message to the band that they would play for the London festivities.

"We're just trying to give our students the highest level of opportunities we can and represent UNI everywhere and wherever those things are," said Mertz. In the future, he hopes to take the band to Asia for an international performance and to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City.



Watch and listen to the PMB's performance at the parade here!



In early March, the UNI Varsity Glee Club set out on a journey to Norman, OK, to sing at the National Seminar for the Intercollegiate Music Council (IMC) Tenor-Bass Choral Consortium at the University of Oklahoma. Glee Club members performed several works over the course of the three-day event and were also able to visit local eateries and sights in the area.



Watch and listen to the Glee Club's performance of UNI Emeritus Professor Nancy Cobb's work *Evening* at the Consortium here!



As many students were packing up their dorm rooms and heading into summer vacation, members of Concert Chorale were packing their bags and stretching their legs for an incredible journey to serve as the invited chorus in residence for the Feast of St. Rita in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, led by conductor John Wiles. “The Feast of St. Rita was an extraordinary experience,” one member noted. St. Rita is the patron saint of people in impossible circumstances, and the church in Santiago held ten masses on her feast day, May 22. The church was packed for all masses, with over 14,000 in attendance throughout the day, and the UNI choir sang at all ten. The archbishop of Santiago presided over the final mass, which included a special ceremony at the end where he offered the UNI singers their own pilgrim shells which he blessed and gave to them. In addition to the May 22 performances, the choir members performed at several churches along the pilgrimage path they walked - Portuguese Way, or Camino Portugués, with several days reaching over 30,000 steps and 14 miles of travel from May 24-29.



Watch and listen to the Concert Chorale in a snippet from their spring break tour here!

Editor's note: thank you to Justin Mertz, John Wiles and PMB and Choirs social media teams for their help with this article.



The campus was getting quiet in mid-March as students headed home for spring break, but members of the Concert Chorale were packing up and hitting the road for their national tour. Stops on the tour included Williamsburg, IA, Knoxville, TN, Blacksburg, VA, Raleigh, NC, Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh, PA. Choir members performed and participated in clinics at each stop and even had the opportunity to enjoy some down time on the road, with several stops at sight-seeing spots, and a visit to Hollywood in Tennessee.



Watch and listen to the Concert Chorale in a snippet from their spring break tour here!



Support dog takes the ranks among Panther Marching Band

When you see the Panther Marching Band, you may notice an unfamiliar face — or snout, rather — on the field. Decked out in PMB gear in the frontline is a golden retriever, Winnie. In spite of the loud musical ensemble around her, Winnie stays calm and collected, as her human, sophomore Gabi Riessen, carries out her duties in the percussion section.

Riessen has had Winnie, her service dog, for about 18 months. A transfer majoring in elementary education from Denison, Iowa, Riessen began her college journey with Winnie at a school out of state. As a self-proclaimed “fine arts kid,” she wanted to participate in band and theater in college but was met with obstacles at her first

school because she uses a service dog. After her freshman year, Riessen chose to transfer to UNI where two of her friends attended school. Their experience gave Riessen hope that she would get the full college experience she craved at UNI.

“One of my best friends, Ren — she’s on the color guard team, and she told me about how much she loved it and how amazing Director Justin Mertz is,” said Riessen. “So, she gave me his email,

and I reached out to him to see if being in the band with my dog could even be a possibility, and we met and talked about it. I think he’s more excited to have a dog in the band than I am.”

Even though Mertz quickly agreed to let Riessen participate, there was some uncertainty about what she would and wouldn’t be able to do with Winnie.

“When I came in, we weren’t sure if I was going to march or if I was just



going to be in the frontline,” she said. “Mertz said, ‘Let’s try it,’ and we did. Usually, Winnie isn’t spatially aware of things. But when we would march forward and backward, she picked it up no problem. Honestly, I think she’s a better marcher than me. She’s just really good at adapting to any situation I put her in.”

To protect her hearing, Winnie wears headphones while Riessen and her

fellow PMB players perform. With time, Riessen believes Winnie has not only adapted to being an unofficial member of Panther Marching Band but has also come to crave the extra attention.

“There’s so many people watching her, and she eats it up,” said Riessen. “She loves the attention. Every time I would walk by, the whole student section would ask, ‘Can I pet your dog?’ She just likes feeling helpful and useful.”

Winnie helps Riessen navigate her postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), which causes her to pass out without warning. While Riessen has a hard time determining when a fainting spell is coming on, Winnie is trained to pick up on changes in her owner that precede fainting. By being alerted to these changes, Riessen is able to get to a safe spot to avoid hurting herself. Winnie then lies beside Riessen and protects her.

Unlike with other service dogs, Riessen does not mind if people pet Winnie. Her dog comes with her to class, and Riessen allows her professors to pet her dog so Winnie feels comfortable around them.

“If we’re not doing anything, I’ll let them pet her because she deserves to be a dog and to have fun because I would hate for her to just be so structured that she misses out on that,” she said. Often, Winnie just sleeps through Riessen’s classes.

Riessen developed POTS about two years ago. When she heard about a litter of golden retriever puppies being born in her hometown, she jumped at the chance to get a pet that would become her service dog. Riessen went to visit the litter of puppies set on coming home with a boy dog. At

the time, there were two puppies left: Winnie and her brother.

“When I met with their owner, he said the girl puppy is very shy and doesn’t like many people, but Winnie immediately went over to me and sat in between my legs and wouldn’t leave,” she said. “The guy immediately grabbed the papers for her even before I fully decided because he knew she chose me. I, of course, chose her because we had this connection from the beginning, and even though I was set on a boy, she was my soul dog.”

Riessen then sought the assistance of a trainer in Omaha. After working with Winnie for a few sessions, the trainer released Winnie to Riessen to finish training.

For Riessen, Winnie is so much more than a pet. She provides her with a sense of normalcy that she questioned she would be able to have in college.

“Winnie has made it where I can be like a normal person again,” said Riessen. “I can do band, because she’ll let me know if I’m okay, and I can go to my classes. Before her, we didn’t know if college was going to be an option.”

Riessen is grateful for the support not only that Winnie provides, but also the support she has received from the UNI community as a whole.

“I’m not gonna lie, I cried after the first couple days of being here, because I’ve never felt so welcomed before,” she said. “Obviously, I don’t have a visible disability. So, some people look at me and wonder why I need a dog. At UNI, I walk around and everyone gets excited to see a dog. It just makes me feel good. I belong here.”

Editor’s note: thank you to Anna Flanders for her contribution of this article.



Community Outreach

Our community outreach programs continued to explore new and innovative ways of bringing music to their students this year.

Community Music School

The UNI Children's Choir (UNICC) was thrilled to be invited to be a featured performance group at the Midwest Children's Choir Festival, hosted by the Ames Youth Choir in Ames, IA, on March 28. The Midwest Children's Choir Festival was established in 2000 to provide young singers in Iowa an opportunity to hear and perform with nationally and internationally acclaimed choirs and performers. As a featured performance group, UNICC was one of three choirs to perform during the concert's first half. For the concert's second half, our choir members joined a festival choir of over 200 singers of mostly 5th- to 7th-grade students from 15 schools, to perform five pieces at Stephens Auditorium at Iowa State University.

The overall preparation for and performance at the festival was a fantastic opportunity for our young singers. Choir members worked hard to learn all of their pieces. With tremendous support, they were able to raise funds to cover the costs associated with attending the festival. In preparation for their festival performance, the UNICC gave a special performance for the residents at Pinnacle Specialty Care in Cedar Falls, IA.

Spectrum Project

This year marked the 10th anniversary of the Spectrum Project, a unique and inclusive arts program housed within the UNI School of Music. Since its founding in 2015, the Spectrum Project has provided over 200 children with disabilities from across the Cedar Valley the opportunity to engage in music, movement, drama, and art alongside college students from UNI, Allen College, and Hawkeye Community College.

The 2025 season concluded with the production A Decade of Magic on April 6 at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. The performance highlighted the many ways

the Spectrum Project has made an impact, featuring seven performers who have been part of the program since its inaugural year. The audience was filled with families, friends, and community members who came out to celebrate and support our incredible performers. To cap off the season, the 4th annual Spectrum JamFest was held on May 17 at River Place Plaza in downtown Cedar Falls. Featuring over 40 youth and school bands, the outdoor concert raised over \$5,000 to support future performers. Headlining the event was Mandy Harvey, who also gave guest performances at local schools, inspiring students and audiences alike with her story and music.

Suzuki School

The Suzuki School welcomed a new violin/viola instructor and added 14 new students this year in violin, cello, and guitar and four new students to the Northern Iowa Junior and Youth Orchestras. Suzuki students performed at Artapalooza in September, at Prairie Stone in December, and before two Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony concerts in March, while Violin Instructor Bethany Washington, Director Suzanne Bullard, and Suzuki Coordinator Cathy Craig performed for the Prairie Rose Montessori School in May.

The orchestras had an outstanding year ending with tours in April to perform at Cedar Falls High School, St. Patrick School, Denver Community School, AGWSR Middle School, Grande Jivante in Ackley, and South Winneshiek Middle School in Ossian. The Youth Orchestra also joined the School of Music's Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra to perform at their final concert in May.

The Suzuki School will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026. Interested alumni (both former students and staff members) are welcome to participate in the 50th year events.

Editor's note: thank you to Heather Hamilton, Kevin Droe and Cathy Craig for their contributions to this article. contributions to this article.



Be Our Guest

A look back at our visiting artists

This was a fantastic year in the School of Music, filled with exceptional guest artists and clinicians visiting and sharing their talent and experience with School of Music students and faculty. Through hands-on masterclasses, thrilling performances, and interactive discussions, these inspiring guests and masters of music offered students a world of opportunity to find out why choosing music is truly a rewarding path.

Guest artist funds for 2024-25 were supported in part or in full by the Esther Bley Rinker Endowed Fund, Carol Froning Deppe Fund, Jonathan Thull Family and Friends Voice Endowment, Florence Christianson Endowed Fund, Dorothea and Robert Dean Endowed Visiting Artist Fund, Charles and Marleta Matheson Endowed Artist Fund, Dr. Berdena J. Nelson Beach Ph.D. Visiting Artist in Residency Endowment, Geraldine Bradley Quasi-Endowed Music Fund, Floyd School of Music Enrichment Fund Joyce Gault Piano Concert Series, Spotlight Series patrons, the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences, and the UNI School of Music. The School of Music continues to extend its gratitude for these contributions.



Alan Dunbar, baritone



Libby Larsen, composer

2024-2025 Guest Artists

FALL 2024

Mark Stevens, piano
Nick May, saxophone
Evergreen & Oak Trio
Extra Añejo
Allison Adams, saxophone
Parrish Trio

Elizabeth Robinson, flute
Scott Sutherland, tuba
Karel Keldermans, carillon
Randall Faust, horn
Gregory Williams, viola
Cassius Goens III, drums
Katie Ernst, bass

SPRING 2025

Alexander W. Ravitz, bass clarinet
Scott Flavin, violin
Sean Kleve, marimba & harpsichord
Crystal Rebone, double bass
Miguel Etchegoncelay, conductor
James Thompson, conductor
Nora Tycast, conductor
John Clayton, composer, arranger, bass
Libby Larsen, composer
Alan Dunbar, baritone

The LGBTubenQuintet
Brisa de Paula, bassoon
Rob Scheps, saxophone
Teale Burford, conductor
Mariachi Reyes del Oeste
Justin Cook, trombone
Kimberly Cole-Luevano, clarinet
Jessica Danz, horn
Makayla Rassmussen, bassoon
Karel Keldermans, carillon
Kristina Caswell MacMullen, conductor
Lucas Borges, trombone
Tom Curry, tuba



AMPLIFY ALUMNI

The School of Music launched the Amplify: Alumni project in 2024-25. The Amplify: Alumni initiative aimed to highlight the many achievements – past, present and future – of UNI School of Music alumni. The amazing impact of the performers, educators, innovators and artists who attended the UNI School of Music can be felt around the globe, and we wanted to celebrate their accomplishments. Over the year we shared some of the stories, professional contributions and exciting projects of UNI alumni.

Though the series wrapped up in May, our alumni continue to do amazing things and create a lasting impact and legacy in their fields of work and lives. You'll certainly see us continuing to share those success stories in our Rhythms newsletter and on our social media channels in the future. Look back through the year of highlights at music.uni.edu/amplify-alumni.

The School of Music has chosen to amplify other important aspects of our program in an ongoing series in the years to come. The focus for 2025-26 will be **Amplify: Our History**, and will focus on our rich traditions and past innovations, while tying into the celebration of UNI's sesquicentennial commemorating 150 years of transformation and impact.



Save the Date!

Please join us for a sesquicentennial celebration, including several special events hosted by the UNI School of Music.

September 26, 2025

44th annual Scholarship Benefit
Concert: "Our History"

September 28- October 4, 2025

UNI Homecoming Week

February 19-20, 2026

75th Anniversary Tallcorn Jazz Festival and
Sinfonian Dimension in Jazz Concerts

March 2026

50th Anniversary of the Suzuki School at UNI

Visit 150.uni.edu to keep up on events and information related to our 150th anniversary at UNI.



Mariachi in Iowa

Cultural Representation and Community in Music Ensembles

The Mariachi genre is a style of music that originated in Western Mexico. A standard ensemble normally includes guitar, violins, trumpets, guitarrón, and vihuelas. Musicians can be seen wearing *trajes de charro*, associated with the Mexican cowboy, which is associated with the Western region.

In 2011, Ruben Newell noticed that there was a disparity between the students at Denison High School and the participants in the band. He traveled to Las Vegas to learn about the performance of Mariachi music and brought back what he knew to the first Mariachi group in Iowa, 12 eighth-grade students.

The program grew and grew with overwhelming community support and now houses four groups. Denison hosts the largest Mariachi band festival in the state, this year with four other high schools busing students in to learn from a hired clinician and perform to a sold-out audience for almost two hours. Newell states that he knew that the creation of the

program would “touch a note (pun intended), but [he] was not ready for the impact that it would have.”

Student interest in Mariachi has prevailed over the years in Denison. Speaking to three Denison High School alumni, all three remarked how impactful their Mariachi experience had been to their lives, impacting their career choices and their perception of cultural representation in small-town Iowa.

The School of Music was proud to host Newell and Mariachi Reyes del Oeste from Denison on campus at UNI in late March 2025. The group offered a free concert performance at Russell Hall and participated in a Q&A session with UNI students and the community. Members of UNI’s Mariachi Panteras were also in attendance and are excited to continue building a relationship with the Denison group.

Editor’s Note: thank you to Geneva Bell, biology major, UNI class of 2025, for her contribution to this article.

Jazz Division Updates



Guest artist John Clayton



**'How We Got Here' album
by Levi Temple**



**'Gestures' album from
UNI Jazz Band One**

The Jazz Division welcomed over 50 students to campus for Combo Camp 2024, an education and recruiting event held annually since 2001. This was followed in February by our other major recruiting event, the Tallcorn Jazz Festival, which set a record for participation with 72 bands.

In September, Jazz Band One collaborated with the Iowa City High School jazz band, under the direction of UNI alum Aaron Ottmar, on the Scholarship Benefit Concert. In November, all three jazz bands traveled to West High School in Waterloo for an outreach concert. Jazz Band One collaborated with the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra later in the month for a program of works by faculty members Jonathan Schwabe and Michael Conrad and UNI alum Jon Snell. Snell and fellow UNI graduate Dakota Andersen were featured as performers on the program. In December, Jazz Band Two collaborated with the UNI choirs for the annual Holiday Concert. A student combo traveled to Des Moines in March to perform at Southeast Polk and Valley High Schools, and The Cave (owned by UNI alum Nic Leo). Jazz Band One performed as the featured band at the Iowa Jazz Championships in Ames in front of over 1,000 students in April.

The Jazz Division welcomed several other guests to campus this year: Tallcorn artist John Clayton (bass, composer – February), Rob Scheps (saxophone – March), Bethany Elle (voice – April), Gabe Scheid (UNI alum, saxophone – April), and Wave Cage

(featuring UNI alumni Ryan Garmoe, Chris Jensen, and Nolan Schroeder--April), who presented in both the Jazz Composition class and an informal concert in the Jazz Studio.

Jazz Band One had two opportunities to record this year. In March, the band traveled to Catamount Studio to collaborate with vocalist Bethany Elle on four selections. In May, the band tracked a new full-length release, documenting nine compositions and arrangements by four different student writers.

Several students earned recognition this year. Junior trumpeter and composer Sean Kiefer was recognized for excellence several times this year. In the summer, he was selected as a member of the Telluride Jazz All-Stars. He was the Fullerton-Curtiss Award Winner at the 2025 UNI Emerging Artist Competition, and the Undergraduate winner of the 2024 Iowa Composers Forum prize. He also won 2nd Place in the ASMAC Bill Conti Big Band Arranging Competition, 3rd Place in the ASMAC Van Alexander Arranging Competition, and 3rd Place in the Tom Williams Jazz Division at the 2025 National Trumpet Competition. Sophomore trumpeter Eric Torneten was awarded 2nd place in the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra's Young Artist Competition. In May, senior Levi Temple released his second album of original compositions for jazz sextet, *How We Got Here*. The album features an all-UNI cast of players including alumni Tyler Utter (saxophone), Oisin Leopold (keyboards), and Jackson Schou (drums) along with Sean Kiefer (trumpet) and Vincent Valadez (bass).

Editor's note: thank you to Chris Merz for his contribution of this article.

44th annual Scholarship Benefit Concert

Our History



Please join us for the University of Northern Iowa School of Music's
44th Annual Scholarship Benefit Concert!

Friday, September 26, 2025, 7:30 p.m.
live in the Gallagher Bluedorn

We're thrilled to welcome you back to the mainstage at the Gallagher Bluedorn for the 44th Annual Scholarship Benefit Concert: Our History! We're planning an evening of exceptional performances by UNI faculty and students, featuring a wide range of works, composers and performers aimed at highlighting the unique history and story of the School of Music, while continuing to build on that legacy into the future.

The concert will include performances by the UNI Wind Ensemble, Jazz Band One, Cecilians, Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, UNI Opera, as well as featured soloists and more. Repertoire will include selections from Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Arturo Marquez's *Conga del Fuego Nuevo*, and more.

Please join us for this exciting event and help to support student scholarships at UNI's
School of Music!

Becoming a Special Donor

The Scholarship Benefit Concerts have been raising scholarship funds for exceptionally talented music students and students in need since 1982. In addition to the income from tickets sales for the concerts, we have developed a network of community, small business, corporate, and university-related donors. The extent of this support has been most gratifying to the students and faculty at UNI's School of Music.

To allow us to continue the support we have provided in the past, please consider becoming a special donor*. Donor categories are as follows:

Impresario Circle

\$5,000 or more

President's Circle

\$2,500-\$4,999

Dean's Circle

\$2,000-\$2,499

Director's Circle

\$1,500-\$1,999

Underwriters

\$1,000-\$1,499

Guarantors

\$500-\$999

Patrons

\$300-\$499

Benefactors

\$150-\$299

To become a special donor, contact the School of Music office #115 Russell Hall by calling (319) 273-2024 or visit music.uni.edu/sbc. The final date for adding names to the special donor section of the acknowledgement pages of the benefit concert virtual program is Friday, September 12, 2025.

**All contributions and ticket costs for the Scholarship Benefit Concert are tax deductible.*

Thank you to the "Special Donors" from the 2024 Scholarship Benefit Concert

Impresario Circle

\$5,000 or more

Randy Hogancamp & Jane Whitehead

President's Circle

\$2,500-\$4,999

Elly Stettler Leslie

Director's Circle

\$1,500-\$1,999

James L. Wright

Huajun Zhang

Underwriters

\$1,000-\$1,499

Dorothy Glascock

Dianne L. Phelps

Dr. Paul & Carole Rider

In appreciation of Dr. Bob Washut &

Thomas Barry

Guarantors

\$500-\$999

Greg & Joan Ebeling

Bonnie & Mark Farland

Patricia L. Geadelmann

José Herrera

Kwei & Ray Huang

Cecile Johnson

Marleta Matheson

Dan & Harriett McMahill

LaVerne Puetz

Terry & Janice Yarns

Patrons

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R.B. Campbell

Angeleita Floyd & Scott Cawelti

Barb Hamilton

Albert & Cathy Humke

Martha Kroese

David & Cindi Mason

Jan & Steve Moore

Myron Mueller

Ron & Jane Ross

Benefactors

\$150-\$299

Joan & Andrew Ackerman

Kevin Bales & Nan Serck

Jackie & Larry Betts

Steve & Gerry Chamberlin

John & Carolyn Christman

Cathy Craig

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David & Claudia Meyer

Scott Murphy & Jacqueline Halbloom

Susan Rider

Lauri & Adam Riss

Mary Schlicher

Mike & Rita Waggoner

Matt & Tonya Wagner

Kelly Wells Sittig & Erek Sittig

Victor & Sandra Wong



Tess Lorraine



Abby Wendland



Sean Kiefer

Student Awards

The UNI School of Music proudly recognizes last year's competition winners and acknowledges the many honors and awards that our students have earned.

In fall 2024, the School of Music hosted the Instrumental Concerto Competition contest. Five finalists competed in a live performance held at the Gallagher Bluedorn on Nov. 5. **Tess Lorraine** was selected as the winner of the competition, with **Camille Balleza** and **Megan Bennett** receiving honorable mentions.

Tess Lorraine is a third-year percussionist at UNI. She has performed with the UNI Symphonic band, UNI Wind Ensemble and the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, as well as municipal bands in the area. She is currently working to finish her Music Education Degree.

Lauren Geerlings was named the 2025 Presser Scholar Award winner in February. The Presser Foundation

supports undergraduate students across the country committed to advancing music through their studies. The prestigious Presser Scholar Award is granted to an outstanding music major in their junior year. Selected by the music faculty, the Award recipient shows a high level of academic and musical accomplishment and embodies the qualities of leadership and citizenship. The Presser Scholar is one who has grown individually and who has contributed earnestly to the success of the School of Music. The Award is an honor and the recipient will be known as a Presser Scholar during their senior year. Geerlings is a senior at UNI studying violin and oboe performance under the direction of Nash Ryder and Heather Peyton. She is currently involved in numerous ensembles and student organizations. To learn more about Lauren, see student spotlight on page 18.

In April, the Emerging Artist Competition was held live in the Gallagher Bluedorn.

Abby Wendland, flute, was awarded the top honor of the Charles and Marleta Matheson Award. Abby is a junior instrumental music education major at the University of Northern Iowa. Throughout her tenure at UNI, she has served in the Symphonic Band, Wind Ensemble, and the Panther Marching Band. Abby is a Presidential Scholar and is dedicated to leadership. Most recently, she has served as President of UNI Ballroom/Swing, Vice President Ritual of Sigma Alpha Iota - Alpha Upsilon, and is a drum major for the Panther Marching Band.

Sean Kiefer, trumpet, won the Curtiss-Fullerton Award. Kiefer is an award-winning jazz trumpeter and composer/arranger currently studying jazz at the University of Northern Iowa, under Dr. Michael Conrad and Chris Merz. He has performed at the local, state, and national levels, including a residency with the all-stars at the Telluride Jazz Festival and a semifinalist appearance at the 2025 National Trumpet Competition. He has also had his compositions/arrangements praised by organizations including Downbeat Magazine, ASMAC and ISJAC.



Lauren Geerlings



Mac Brandt

School of Music earns high Honors

Scholars Program students and those who have earned a place on the dean's list or as a Presidential Scholar this year are as follow:

McCaffrey Brandt, double bass, claimed the Myron and Ruth Russell Award and the People's Choice Award. Brandt is a junior at UNI studying Music Education and Double Bass under Dr. Will Yager. While at UNI, he has performed with the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony, Bel Canto Cedar Valley, Wartburg Community Symphony, Fort Dodge Area Symphony, and others. He has also participated and finished as a semi-finalist in the 2023 and 2024 UNI Concerto Competition.

Several School of Music students were recognized at the Student Leadership Awards in 2025. Cecilians member **Emily Reeser**, an elementary education major from Cedar Falls, was this year's winner of the Beverly Funk Barnes Student Excellence Award. This award recognizes students who continually create new value through dedication, passion and creativity for the benefit of UNI. Reeser has gone out of her way to make students feel like they belong in the UNI family and impacted the greater Cedar Valley community. Music

major **Micaiah Krutsinger** received the Outstanding Student Leader Award, an award given to graduating seniors who have demonstrated dedication and leadership through their involvement in one or more campus activities. Panther Marching Band member **Lydia Welch** received the Outstanding Officer in a Student Organization Award. This award recognizes a student organization officer who provides exemplary service, commitment, and strong leadership to their student organization and UNI.

Music major **Megan Bennett** finished third in the Ryan Anthony Memorial Trumpet Competition (Solo) held at the International Trumpet Conference in Salt Lake City, May 2025.

Music major **Sean Kiefer** advanced to the finals (Jazz Division) and finished third at the National Trumpet Competition held at Texas Christian University in March 2025.

Honors & Scholars Program Students:

Adrian Benson, Chloe Berns-Schweingruber, Carissa Blumka, Ale Cabello, Laura Carrico, Emily Clouser, Jack Deahl, Kristen Engelhardt, Sam Heerts, Jacob Herring, Hope Jones, Riana Kraft, Ethan Labby, Kyle Langston, Finn Riley, Dora Roorda, Spencer Schnetzer, Abby Voshell, Abby Wendland and Bethany Winget.

Presidential Scholars:

Chloe Berns-Schweingruber, Laura Carrico, Kristen Engelhardt, Sam Heerts, Dora Roorda, Abby Wendland and Bethany Winget.

The School of Music would also like to congratulate the **School of Music students who appeared on the fall 2024 and spring 2025 dean's list**. To be included on the list, a student must have earned a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale, while taking at least 12 hours of graded work during the semester.

Congratulations to all of our award-winning and honor-earning students!

Lauren Geerlings



Lauren Geerlings is a violin and oboe performance double major from Sioux City. Lauren studies violin with Nash Ryder and oboe with Heather Peyton. She has performed with the UNI Wind Ensemble, The Petrichord String Quartet (which she co-founded), Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra where she served as concertmaster as well as Principal Oboe depending on the concert, and has been featured in concerts with the UNI Varsity Glee Club and UNI Concert Chorale while at UNI. "Picking a favorite course is difficult," she said, "but I would say my favorite course ended up being Oboe and English Horn Reed-Making."

During her time at UNI, Lauren has been involved in numerous student groups on campus, including Sigma Alpha Iota Alpha Upsilon Chapter, where she served as Corresponding Secretary and President, the UNI Student Support Team and Peer Educator for AT and SS levels two and three, UNI Student Advisory Board as head of the strings department, and the UNI School of Music Student Stagehands, where she served as co-supervisor for two years.

When asked about her favorite part of studying at UNI, Geerlings said, "I benefited a LOT from forming relationships with the faculty at UNI and having numerous opportunities to work with them and ask questions. The faculty are truly spectacular, and they all want to see their students succeed, and will assist in any way they can to make sure that happens." After graduating from UNI, Lauren will be attending the Miami Classical Music Festival as an orchestral fellow, as well as moving to Cincinnati where she will be attending the Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music in the fall of 2025 to pursue a masters in violin performance.

Congratulations on your outstanding achievements at UNI and best of luck in your future, Lauren!

A lesson in Musical History

During her senior year, Lauren worked with Dr. Alison Altstatt on a project where she connected with a UNI alum to perform and record an early composition. "Dr. Altstatt received contact from Harriet Goodman's daughter, Roxy, asking if she knew of any students who would be interested in performing one of Harriet's early compositions titled 'Rhapsodie for violin and piano,'" Geerlings, said. "I was thrilled when Dr. Altstatt asked if I would participate, so I conducted an interview aimed at understanding more of Harriet's background and musical upbringing."

Harriet Goodman, b. 1931, is a 1974 UNI alum and former professor of Educational Psychology and Foundations from 1980 until 1987. Harriet began studying the piano at the age of 8, and later into her early teens began studying privately with composer and pianist Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Tedesco was a native of Florence, Italy who later fled to the United States via sponsor and violinist Jascha Heifitz amidst the rise of the Italian racial laws and antisemitism in Europe. He became a prominent figure in film-score composition, especially once he signed a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Some of his most famous pupils include Herman Stein, Jerry Goldsmith, John Williams, and more. In Geerlings' interview with Harriet when asked what garnered her interest in composition, Harriett stated, "My musical notation probably dates from some of that [studying with Mr. Tedesco] because I was very precise and very careful in writing the notes." Harriet also grew up with a strong musical background, as her father was a professional violinist and violist in major film orchestras such as the Universal Studios Orchestra, Hollywood Bowl Symphony, and more. Harriet says, "My mom and I went to all the operas and operettas that my dad played in... growing up it was just part of my life. So as a result, as an adult, I have retained an interest and love for music, mostly classical music, that remains with me today." Her composition, titled "Rhapsodie for Violin and Piano," was written at the age of 16 and dedicated to her father as a birthday present. Geerlings and her fellow UNI student Tyler Snodgrass brought Goodman's work to life.



Listen here

Emeritus Faculty Activities

The School of Music is always excited to hear from our exceptional retired faculty and staff. We continue to see the lasting effect of their years of dedication and service to our students, and are happy to bring you news on their current projects and travels.

David Buch – David wrote to us with an update. “This year we dealt with challenging health issues, but we are hanging tough. I served as consultant for a performance and new recording of Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*, incorporating the Viennese performing materials I rediscovered in 1999. Martin Wåhlberg will conduct the *Okester Nord* in Oslo, Norway. The recording will be on the French label Aparté. My article in Spanish, “Observaciones sobre arrastres ligados, mordentes y mariposas,” will appear in the journal *Roseta - Revista de la Sociedad Española de la Guitarra 19-20 (2024-2025)*. I have been invited to give a presentation at the Symposium on Music, Sound, and Antisemitism scheduled for May 28-29 and June 3-4, 2025, in New York. I’ve been asked to co-author a book for The Mozart Society of America on an important Viennese theater that closed in 1801. Quite a task! The opera that I rediscovered in 1996, *The Philosophers’ Stone* (1790, with contributions by Mozart) will return to its hometown Vienna in December 2025, at the historic Theater an der Wien, the last location where it was produced in 1803. I continued serving on the doctoral committee of José Luis

Maldonado, a candidate in musicology at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.”

Jean McDonald – We heard from Jean this summer, with a busy update. “With my feet more firmly planted in retirement, I am enjoying the process of reinventing daily life and broadening my service to the community in which I have long lived. Throughout the summer, I plan to continue serving the Executive Committee for Cedar Valley Blue Dot, lend support to Indivisible Black Hawk County, Black Hawk Democrats, and engage in committee work with other Cedar Valley organizations in the interests of activism and advocacy. I continue to be an Elder at Cedar Heights Community Presbyterian Church and participate in music ministry throughout the year. In all of these activities, I am humbled by the richness of our community, and the vastness of our human resources — meeting new people is my greatest pathway to lifelong learning. As planned, retirement did not bring an end to teaching, and I am grateful to see two students embarking on summer adventures at Santa Fe Opera and Bayreuth Festival. The beat goes on!”

Michelle Swanson – Michelle also shared an update, noting, “I have tremendously enjoyed my first year of Emeritus status! Emails and coffee dates with former students have most definitely been a highlight! Another highlight was a travel adventure to Turkey and Greece. We spent two weeks exploring the ruins of ancient Biblical cities and visited five of the seven churches in Revelation. I travel

between Iowa and Arizona quite often. Volunteering has taken up a large amount of my time. I am now the Board Chair for the Northeast Iowa Food Bank. My husband, Chad, and I are also the Campaign Chairs for the Food Bank’s Capital Campaign. I spend a lot of time speaking to service groups in the 16-county coverage area. In Arizona, I volunteer at a residential school for students in need. I have also been substitute teaching in both Iowa and Arizona, and I am teaching online as an adjunct professor for Liberty University. I’m both volunteering and working for the Iowa Alliance for Arts Education. I conducted an honor choir of 5th and 6th grade students (in Iowa) for ICDA. It has been an amazing first year of ‘retirement’ Those that know me know that I am not one to sit still very long! I sure do appreciate getting to do the things I love, but on my own schedule.”

Bob Washut – Bob sent us an update, as well. “I completed commissioned compositions for the Waverly Community Symphony, the Cedar Falls Municipal Band, and the Marion High School Jazz Ensemble. In addition, I assembled a unique acoustic ensemble called Extra Añejo that premiered five new compositions. The ensemble was comprised primarily of UNI faculty and alums (including Todd Munnik-accordion, Mike Conrad-conductor/piano, Matt Glascock-cello, Bob Dunn-guitar, Matt Andreini-percussion, and Simon Harding-woodwinds). Played a lot of golf and traveled to Jekyll Island, GA, Ireland and London, New York City, and Charleston, SC.”

Faculty Activities

Alison Altstadt, associate professor of musicology and music history

- / Published the article “Zur mittelalterlichen Musik aus dem Frauenkloster Preetz” (“On the Medieval Music of Kloster Preetz”) in *Kloster Preetz im Mittelalter: Beiträge zu Geschichte, Kunst- und Musikgeschichte* (Kloster Preetz in the Middle Ages: Studies in History, Art- and Music History.) This volume commemorated the September 2023 conference at which fourteenth-century music manuscript fragments discovered by Altstadt in 2008 were formally repatriated to the cloister from the University of Würzburg.
- / Published the article “A Cistercian Processional from the Lower Rhine, University of Iowa, Rita Benton Music Library, Canter Rare Book Room M2 1496.6 1475” in *Traditions, Memory, and Community in Western Chant and its Books in Memory of Michel Huglo* (Brepols, forthcoming).
- / Presented papers at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society (Chicago, IL) and at the conference: *Leading Women in Medieval Religious Communities* (London, England).

Matthew Andreini, associate adjunct professor of percussion

- / Performed as a guest soloist with the Wind Ensemble at the University of Szeged in Szeged, Hungary.
- / Released “Tapestry,” a full-length CD featuring works from various commissions, collaborations, and consortiums of recent years.
- / Performed guest “Skin and

Bones” recitals with Anthony Williams at West Virginia University and Ohio University.

Korey Barrett, professor of vocal coaching and collaborative piano

- / Returned to Opera Neo in summer 2025 in his capacity as co-founder, head vocal coach, and continuo player. The company, in its 14th season, returned to Budapest in May for a second co-production with the Hungarian State Opera (Haydn’s *Armida*). In San Diego, productions of Vivaldi’s *Moteczuma* and Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore* and a variety of concerts round out the remainder of the season.

Ann Bradfield, professor of saxophone

- / Named Region 3 Director of the North American Saxophone Alliance.
- / Presented a recital with the UNI Faculty Saxophone Quartet.
- / Performed and taught a master class at the North American Saxophone Alliance Region 3 Conference in Brookings, SD.

Michael Conrad, associate professor of jazz studies/music education

- / Released the Mike Conrad Trio’s second album, “Pretzel Letters,” with album release concerts in Chicago, Cedar Falls, Davenport, and at the Iowa City Jazz Festival.
- / Led the Iowa Jazz Composers Orchestra (IJCO) in performances at Noce (Des Moines), Cedar Falls High School, and Kirkwood Community College (Cedar Rapids), and completed a

collaborative recording project with the IJCO and Gabriel Espinosa.

- / Received the 2024 UNI Outstanding Teaching Award.

Danny Galyen, professor of music, director of bands

- / Conducted the Virginia All State Band (April 2025).
- / Guest conducted the University of Gyor Symphonic Band and the Tatabanya Symphonic Band, Hungary (May 2025).
- / Guest conducted of the University of Szeged Symphonic Band, Hungary (November 2024).

Randy Grabowski, professor of trumpet

- / Performed as a soloist at two faculty recitals, a faculty chamber music recital and as soloist with the UNI Wind Ensemble, Cedar Rapids Municipal Band (IBA Convention), and wcfssymphony.
- / Appeared as Principal Trumpet on all wcfssymphony performances, as well as a performance with Orchestra Iowa, with the wcfssymphony brass quintet and with Metropolitan Chorale.
- / Served as Lead Trumpet for Mannheim Steamroller, Hunter Fuerste’s American Vintage Jazz Orchestra, and Rod Pierson Big (and Not So Big) Bands.

Randall Harlow, professor of organ and music theory

- / Published the article, “Hyperorgan: Contending with the Present and Assembling Futures through Organ Art” for the British



Institute of Organ Studies Journal.

- / Completed the chapter, “Organ in the Anthropocene” for the upcoming Oxford Handbook of Organ Performance and Improvisation.
- / Premiered from Amsterdam on June 6, 2025 the groundbreaking Global Hyperorgan composition, Aulos, by Cornell University composer Kevin Ernste, an intercontinental work featuring real time collaboration between performers in Amsterdam, Los Angeles and Australia.

Tyler Hendrickson, assistant adjunct professor of viola

- / Served on multiple committees for the Hardanger Fiddle Association of the Americas including Bylaws Revision Committee, Young Hardingfele Scholarship Committee, 2025 Workshop Committee, and the Balchen/Hegge/Skjervheim Scholarship Committee.

Andrea Johnson, associate professor of piano pedagogy

- / Appeared as guest performer and/or master teacher at South Dakota State University and Luther College’s Dorian Keyboard Festival 2024.
- / Presented at Music Teachers National Association Conference 2025 on composing bespoke backing tracks for student piano recitals using Ableton Live.
- / Selected to present at the “S” Word Symposium on Stanislavski at the University of Malta, November 2025.

Justin Mertz, associate professor of

music, associate director of bands

- / Led the Panther Marching Band on tour where they performed in the London New Year’s Day Parade on national and international television.
- / Released an album on Mark Records: “Fantasia!” With the Syracuse University Wind Ensemble, as conductor.

Christopher Merz, professor of jazz studies

- / Selected to receive the 2024-2025 Regents Award for Faculty Excellence, recognizing his “sustained record of excellence across the spectrum of faculty endeavors.” See more about Merz on page 23.
- / Awarded a sabbatical for fall of 2025 to arrange the music of Phil Haynes for large jazz ensemble.
- / Led Jazz Band One as the featured ensemble at Iowa Jazz Championships in Ames in April.

Michelle Monroe, associate adjunct professor of voice

- / Performed as alto soloist with Rochester Symphony and chorale on Haydn’s *Paukenmesse*, April 12, 2025 (Rochester, MN).
- / Performed as mezzo-soprano soloist with the NISO Orchestra on *Raspberry Island Dreaming* during the UNI New Music Festival, February 27, 2025.
- / Performed as mezzo-soprano soloist with the MET Chorale on *Alzheimer’s Stories*, November 17, 2024.

Heather Peyton, associate professor of oboe and music theory

- / Gave 30 performances including a faculty oboe recital, a performance as soloist with the Iowa Chamber Music Collective, and performances with the WCF symphony, Orchestra Iowa, the Wartburg Community Symphony, and the Metropolitan Chorale.
- / Presented at the College Music Society National Conference in Washington D.C. on Incorporating Mindfulness and Wellness into the Applied Studio and Classroom.
- / Presented masterclasses, reed making classes, and oboe repair classes for middle and high schools in Iowa as well as an oboe masterclass at Wartburg College. Adjudicated the Wartburg Community Symphony Concerto Competition and the UNI Emerging Artist Competition.

Hannah Porter-Occeña, associate professor of flute

- / Co-premiered *Pathways of Desire* for solo flute by Reena Esmail, and gave US premieres of two orchestral works with the Topeka Symphony.
- / Was featured in an Artist Interview in the April edition of *The Flute View* magazine.
- / Finished recording works for *ConcerTea for Two*, an album of concertos in their flute and piano reductions.

Faculty activities continued on next page.

Faculty Activities

Matthew Ransom, assistant adjunct professor of bassoon

- / Appeared as Principal Bassoon with Orchestra Iowa, and Contrabassoon with the Des Moines Symphony.
- / Gave educational concerts that introduced the bassoon to 3rd graders at every elementary school in Cedar Rapids.
- / Hosted guest bassoonists Carlos Lopez and Shawn Seguin for masterclasses at UNI.

Erik Rohde, assistant professor of music, director of orchestral activities

- / Hosted composer Libby Larsen on campus for a multi-day residency in February.
- / Released a debut recording in April of music by Minnesota composers with the Winona Symphony Orchestra and Clara Osowski, mezzo-soprano and Alan Dunbar, baritone featuring music of Libby Larsen, Reinaldo Moya, and Katherine Bergmann (Navona 6708).
- / Conducted premiere recording sessions of William Thomas McKinley's work *Poem of Light* in Prague in June.

Maddy Tarantelli, assistant professor of instruction in horn

- / Hosted and performed with the Lawrence Graduate Bayreuth Tuba Quintet at UNI in February which included a new music reading session, performed as the featured ensemble for the New Music Festival, and a master class with the horn studio.
- / Led the UNI Horn Studio in a performance at the IHS Mid-North Conference held at the University of Iowa March 2025.
- / Celebrated the success of UNI Horn Day featuring guest artist Jessica Danz, the principal horn of the Utah Symphony.

John Wiles, professor of choral conducting, director of choral activities

- / Led the Varsity Glee Club in an invited performance in March at the Intercollegiate Men's Chorus National Seminar hosted by the University of Oklahoma.
- / Led the Concert Chorale on a national performance tour, appearing in Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania.
- / Coordinated members of Concert Chorale as they served as the invited chorus in residence for the Feast of St. Rita in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Anthony Williams, associate professor of trombone

- / Presented a clinic at the 97th Iowa Bandmasters Conference in Des Moines, IA. *Letting Your Work Slide the Right Way, Teaching Young Trombonists.*
- / Presented guest recitals and masterclasses at Ohio University and West Virginia University with the Skin and Bones trombone/percussion duo (March 2025).
- / Performed as trombonist with MJ The Musical and Some Like it Hot National Tours, and as lead trombonist with the Four Tops.
- / Presented a faculty recital that included the premiere of a newly commissioned work for trombone, piano, and percussion by Jorge Sosa.

Will Yager, assistant adjunct professor of string bass

- / Joined the ensemble loadbang and violinist Miranda Cuckson for the world premiere of Michael Hersch's *that I wanted to find you here* (Columbia University, December 2024).
- / Performed in the soprano/double bass duo LIGAMENT in spring residencies at the Peabody Conservatory and University of Iowa Center for New Music.
- / Gave a solo recital of new works for double bass at the International Society of Bassists' Convention (Florida State University, June 2025).



Christopher Merz, Professor of Music, has served as Director of Jazz Studies and Director of the award-winning UNI Jazz Band One at the University of Northern Iowa since 2002. Under his direction, the band has traveled to South Africa, Cuba, and Thailand, and has recorded 16 CDs and five digital albums featuring many original compositions and arrangements by student and faculty writers.

The 2024-2025 recipient of the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence, “recognizing his sustained record of excellence across the spectrum of faculty endeavors,” he has also received the School of Music’s John L. Baker Faculty Development award (2016), and the CHFA University Book and Supply Outstanding Teaching award recognizing excellence among tenure-track faculty (2006). He is a Past

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Christopher Merz

President of Jazz Educators of Iowa (JEI), and a member of their Hall of Fame (2015), as well as the Community Jazz Center of Des Moines Hall of Fame (2023). During his first year at UNI in 2000, he founded the UNI Combo Camp, an annual event for high school jazz students and music educators which has served well over 1,000 students to date. He was awarded a professional development leave for the fall semester of 2025 to arrange the music of drummer Phil Haynes for large jazz ensemble.

His recording credits include Steve McCraven, Darius Brubeck, John Rapson and Jon Snell, as well as his own projects; Counterculture, the Chris Merz/Bob Washut Duo, The X-tet, and Equilateral. His 1997 release with the X-tet, *Mystery is My Story*, prompted Dave Brubeck to write, “I am very pleased with this wonderful band. Naturally I would admire a group like yours that, to me, is a grand extension of what we were doing...when we were the ‘new thing.’” These days he can be heard with the Iowa Jazz Composers’ Orchestra led by colleague Mike Conrad, the soul jazz sextet Big Fun led by Iowa jazz legend Steve Grismore, and his own current bands, Christopher’s Very Happy. Band and Shorter Stories, which celebrates the music of master composer Wayne Shorter. An accomplished composer/arranger for large jazz ensembles, Merz has received commissions from university and high school big bands throughout the country, and is published through iJazzmusic, UNC Jazz Press and ejazzlines/Walrus. He is also a highly sought after guest soloist, clinician and conductor at university and high school jazz festivals nationwide and is endorsed by D’Addario and TM Custom tenor saxophones.

Every End is a Beginning

New Hires and Retirements in the School of Music

This year the School of Music celebrated the influential careers of three exceptional faculty members as they retired in 2024-25: Randy Grabowski, Robin Guy and Jonathan Schwabe all celebrated retirement.



Randy Grabowski celebrated his retirement at the conclusion of the spring 2025 semester, having served as professor of trumpet at UNI for 39 years. Grabowski has created a satisfying life of trumpeting, teaching, and learning. He served as Professor of Trumpet at the University of Northern Iowa School of Music where he collaborated with colleagues in exciting chamber music adventures and endeavored to inspire new generations of inquiring musicians. An active, versatile performer and principal trumpet of the wcfssymphony, Grabowski has taken his love of performing to venues across the U.S., Europe, Canada, and South America. He counts performances at the Britt (OR) and Spoleto (Italy) festivals as being especially memorable, and shows Sammy Davis, Jr., Shirley MacLaine, and the Chestnut Brass Company as particular highlights.

A veteran of the Lake Tahoe/Reno showrooms and an advocate for whatever music is in front of him at the moment, Dr. Grabowski has two degrees from Indiana University and one from the University of Nevada-Reno. In his spare time, he fancies spending time with his family, gardening, walking, cooking, reading, and learning.



Robin Guy celebrated her retirement from UNI at the end of spring 2025, having served as Professor of Collaborative Piano for 35 years. Robin also formerly served as Chair of the Keyboard Division. Her collaborative artistry can be heard on seven compact disc recordings produced by Vienna Modern Masters, Albany, Capstone, Innova, and Mark Records, listed below. Her recording *Love Rejoices* with tenor Daryl Taylor on songs of H. Leslie Adams was listed as the first (non-alphabetical) “2001 Critics’ Choice citing...the best recording of the exiting year” by *American Record Guide*. Additionally, the Innova release *pause and feel and hark*, on which she recorded Jeremy Beck’s “Black Water” with soprano Jean McDonald, was recognized by Gramophone Magazine as “[one of the] best new recordings from North America.”

Her performance highlights include international festivals in South America, performances in Russia, concerti with the Detroit Symphony Chamber Orchestra and the Duluth-Superior Symphony among others, and appearing on *A Prairie Home Companion* with Garrison Keillor. Dr. Guy spent many summers performing and teaching piano and collaborative artistry at the world-famous Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan. She is active as an adjudicator for state auditions and festivals. Her degrees are Bachelor of Music Education, summa cum laude, from Baldwin Wallace College (University) Conservatory, Master of Music from Baylor University, and Doctor of Musical Arts from The University of Arizona, where she met her husband, guitarist Todd Seelye.



Jonathan Schwabe celebrated his retirement from UNI at the end of spring 2025, having served as Professor of Theory and Composition for 33 years. Schwabe's works have been premiered at the Spoleto Festival, the Eastman School of Music, the Society of Composer's Midwest Festival, the Conductor's Institute, and the Midwest Band and Orchestra Festival. His orchestral work *As I Remember* was performed at the Kennedy Center in the summer of 1999 and has received numerous subsequent performances in the United States and Europe.

In 2000 and 2004, his operas *The Hard Years* (in collaboration with librettist Beth Webb Hart), and *The Sojourner* (based on the Carson McCullers short story) were premiered at the Maude Powell Music Festival under the direction of Kevin MacMahon. In 2007 he composed songs for the musical comedy *The Bake Shop Ghost* in collaboration with author Jaqueline Ogburn.

His principal teachers include Samuel Adler, John Anthony Lennon, and Dick Goodwin. He has participated in masterclasses with David Diamond, David Amram, and Karel Husa among others. His music is published by Musikverlag Bruno Uetz and Alafia Press.



While we say “see you soon” to these remarkable faculty artists, we are excited to welcome a new faculty member who will begin their UNI journey this year.



Scott Hagarty will join the School of Music faculty as Assistant Professor of Trumpet at UNI in fall 2025. Prior to accepting the position at UNI in 2025, Dr. Hagarty was Associate Professor of Trumpet at Tennessee Tech University and Del Mar College. Dr. Hagarty earned a Bachelor of Music Education degree with a minor in jazz studies from the University of Northern Iowa, Master of Music degree in trumpet performance from Yale University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in trumpet performance with a secondary area in music theory from the University of Minnesota.

An active performer, Dr. Hagarty was principal trumpet of the Bryan Symphony Orchestra and a member of the Brass Arts Quintet, both in residence at Tennessee Tech. He was also a member of the Southern Stars Symphonic Brass Band, based in Crossville, Tennessee. He was previously a member of the Corpus Christi,

Victoria (TX) and Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestras and has performed with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, Oak Ridge Symphony, Tennessee Philharmonic, Mid-Texas Symphony, Orchestra Iowa and the Rochester Symphony (MN) among others across the United States. As a chamber musician he was a member of the Corpus Christi Brass Quintet, Aurora Brass Quintet and the Del Mar College Faculty Brass Trio. He has performed as a soloist and chamber musician at several national and international music conferences and festivals including the Tennessee Music Educators Association Conference, Texas Music Educators Association Convention, Texas Jazz Festival, Big 12 Trombone Conference, International Trumpet Guild Conference, College Music Society Southern Region Conference, and the Cedar Valley Chamber Music Festival.

The School of Music wishes to congratulate Randy, Robin and Jon on their retirement, and to welcome Scott to his new position!

Alumni Update



1950s

'58 Annie Zeller, BA, Huntington Beach, CA, had opportunities like playing organ for Pratt Creek Presbyterian in Vinton and teaching music in La Mirada, CA thanks to her BA in piano from Iowa State Teachers College. She taught for the Air Force in France and elementary school in Fountain Valley, CA. She earned a master's degree from the University of San Francisco and enjoys teaching at her church's SACI program.

1980s

'83 David Schroeder, BM, New York, NY, has been the director of jazz studies at NYU for 16 years and chair of the department of music for three years. He has presented lectures/performances around the world to music students and jazz fans, and has published two books of jazz artist interviews. He also hosts a popular jazz interview series on YouTube.

'87 Craig Miller, BA, Bernalillo, NM, leads worship for the recovery ministry at the Albuquerque West Campus of Sagebrush Church and leads worship at the Santa Fe campus. He has been a worship pastor for 23 years. He also has a music business where he performs two to three nights a week singing and playing acoustic guitar, classical guitar, ukulele, mandolin and cigar box slide guitar.

'89 Jack Jean, BM, Smyrna, GA, retired spring of 2025 after 36 years as a high school band director.

2000s

'01 Nino Sanikidze, MM, Houston, TX, was a head coach for the Domingo

Colburn Stein Young Artist Program with the Los Angeles Opera before moving to Houston to join the faculty at Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. She is also a faculty artist at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, CA.

'02 C. David Rutt, MM, Forest City, was inducted into the Central Lee Community School District Fine Arts Hall of Fame.

'03 Lisa Schmitz, BA, Ames, is a communications specialist with the Iowa State University News Service team.

'06 Brenda Liddle, BM, Marshalltown, is the 6-12 grade band director at East Marshall Schools.

2010s

'13 Milianna Carlson, BA, Story City, started teaching piano after graduating from UNI. She originally started teaching three students, and is proud to celebrate her 11th year of teaching with an average of 55 students per year, ranging from as young as five years old all the way through adults. She continues to stay musically active in the Story City area, accompanying school programs, contests and musicals, and accompanies on organ and piano at Immanuel Lutheran Church. Music is a part of Milianna's daily routine she doesn't know what she'd do without it!

'19 Lexi Forstrom, BM, Cedar Rapids, has been teaching band at an international school in Yantai, China, for the past four years. She was hired to pioneer a band program which has been an adventure. In a city of six million people, the school has the

only formal school band program. Acquiring resources has been quite a challenge in this area, but the results have been priceless. Students now have the opportunity to learn to play band instruments for the first time, and they are building a band culture in the school. She hopes each student takes their love for music with them in their future as they spread around the world. She loves living in China! The people, the food and the fascinating culture make life an adventure every day. She previously didn't realize there were many opportunities to live and teach abroad as a musician, but is finding that there are so many opportunities across the world!

'19 Ashley (Richardson) Wright, BM, Hubert, NC, was married to Austin Wright (UNI '17), on August 7, 2019. See more in the alumni spotlight section of this publication.

2020s

'20 Jotham Polashek, BM, Ames, serves as the elementary orchestra teacher at Ames Community School District.

'23 David Phetmanysay, BM, Waterloo, presented at the fall 2023 DePaul Musil Symposium discussing former CSO composer in residence John Corligiano's Symphony No. 1 and the historical aspects of Chicago during the AIDS Crisis. He volunteers for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and was the social media content creator for the College Night in November 2024. He provided original photography coverage during the CSO student event and works as a freelance photographer helping musicians obtain headshots and portraits for professional use.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Austin and Ashley Wright

Austin and Ashley Wright have served as clarinet players in the United States Marine Corps for the past several years. Austin grew up in Independence, IA, and graduated from UNI with a Bachelor of Music degree in clarinet performance in 2017. He went on to complete a Master of Music degree in clarinet performance from the University of Missouri in 2019. Ashley, originally from Webster City, IA, graduated from UNI with a Bachelor of Music in instrumental music education in 2019. Both Austin and Ashley

studied with Dr. Amanda McCandless at UNI. Austin and Ashley got married in August 2019. Ashley noted, "Having a spouse that's also an alumnus of UNI is the best because we can share our love for Panther Country!" After Austin's successful audition for the Marine Corps, the couple moved to South Carolina where Austin pursued a career as a military musician and Ashley began her career as a high school band director. After seeing the unique opportunities given to Austin through the Marine Corps, Ashley

decided to take an audition and joined the military alongside her husband in 2022. Currently, they are both stationed in North Carolina. Austin (now a Sergeant) and Ashley (now a Corporal) get to do what they love by traveling the world together, playing their clarinets and serving their country.

We're proud to congratulate Austin and Ashley on their extraordinary accomplishments and look forward to cheering them on in their future endeavors!

Submit Your Updates!

Thank you to all who e-mailed or wrote to Alumni News. If you wish to contribute to the next issue, **please complete and return the form in the center of this magazine.** We look forward to hearing from you!

Final Cadence

We were sad to hear of the passing of our past graduates and friends.

We send our sympathies to their families.

The School of Music is mourning the loss of former faculty member **Graeme Cowen**, who passed away on Nov. 2, 2024. Graeme began teaching at the University of Northern Iowa in 1976. While at UNI, he completed his Doctor of Music degree in Choral Conducting through Indiana University. He was promoted to Associate Professor of Music in 1983 and shortly thereafter he was the very first recipient of the Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award in the field of choral music by the American Choral Directors Association. After 11 years at UNI, he went on to teach in many colleges and universities and conducted several choral ensembles and church choirs. Graeme was a very gifted musician and influenced and shaped the lives and careers of many singers over the years. He was known for his outstanding musicianship, exacting expectations of his choirs and students, and his intense love of music. He will be greatly missed.

'45 Val (Fairley) Phillips, BA, died 7/26/2024 in Eagle, ID.

'51 Margaret (Pfeifer) Good, BA, died 2/27/2025 in Leesburg, VA.

'52 Patricia (Eastman) Foorman, BA, died 3/10/2025 in Encino, CA.

'54 Anna Marie (Tabbert) Catt, BA, died 12/5/2024 in Independence, IA.

'54 Jim Maltby, BA, died 11/27/2024 in West Des Moines, IA.

'54 Beverly (Winkleman) Mawdsley, BA, died 2/1/2025 in Yuma, AZ.

'54 Betty (Norris) Mitchell, BA, died 7/1/2024.

'56 Bud Boughton, BA, died 9/27/2024 in Wichita, KS.

'62 Paul Haendler, MA, died 11/21/2024 in Norway, IA.

'64 Keith Peterson, BA, died 5/20/2024 in Story City, IA.

'65 Phyllis Nickson, BA, died 12/9/2024 in Oxted, United Kingdom, .

'65 Marlys Rechkemmer, BA, MA '71, died 6/26/2024 in Green Valley, AZ.

'66 Bob Iverson, MA, died 6/17/2024 in Alexandria, MN.

'68 Douglas Herbon, BA, MA, '73, died 2/17/2025 in Cedar Falls, IA.

'69 Frankee (Horn) Oleson, BA, died 7/12/2024 in Ames, IA.

'70 Lee Buchholz, MA, died 12/4/2024 in Washington, IA.

'72 Nancy (Lackore) Kaduce, BA, died 9/29/2024 in Storm Lake, IA.

'72 Curtis Schroeder, BA, died 4/29/2025 in West Des Moines, IA.

'73 Frank Hoskins, BA, died 12/10/2024 in Des Moines, IA.

'74 Chuck Chihak, MA, died 3/22/2025 in La Crescent, MN.

'78 Ronald Oppedahl, BM, died 7/19/2022 in San Pedro, CA.

'79 Karla (Klaner) Voss, BM, died 10/6/2024 in Cedar Rapids, IA.

'98 Wendell Allen, BA, died 7/23/2024 in Ogden, UT.



A message from the UNI Foundation

The School of Music is one of the finest programs in the Midwest because of our faculty, staff and students. In the 11 years that I have served as a development officer for the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences (CHAS), I've been blessed to work with many of the School of Music faculty. Several things resonate with each of them: their professionalism, their passion for working with students and their joy when graduates do well in life. I believe it's a trademark of UNI in general and this is a major reason why I love working here.

Recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty and students does not happen without the loyal support of so many alumni and friends who have generously donated, and continue to donate, to either scholarships or program support. And I'm not just talking about big gifts. A wonderful example of the impact of many smaller gifts is the outpouring of support to the SOM Scholarship Benefit Concert. Each year many of you help raise several thousand dollars in scholarship support. You help make it possible for our faculty to recruit and retain outstanding students.

On the larger gift side, I have had the pleasure of working with a number of donors who not only love music but understand how important music is, and the arts are, to our quality of life. They have the means to make larger gifts, they want to ensure that the quality remains high for generations to come, and at the same time, they

want to honor the rich history of the UNI School of Music. To that end, they have established endowed funds and/or have made provisions in their will to provide support to the School of Music.

My message today is simple: maintaining a high-quality program, as is the School of Music, requires ongoing financial support. If you are already doing so, thank you and I hope you will continue supporting us. If you currently are not a donor and appreciate what the School of Music provides for you, our students and our communities, I encourage you to consider becoming a supporter.

My role in the UNI Foundation is to strengthen relationships between the university and our alumni and friends with the hope that by doing so, they will feel more connected and give back in some way. If you are passionate about ensuring a program of the highest quality, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions about supporting the School of Music. I can be reached at (319) 273-7727 or by email at dan.breitbach@uni.edu.

On behalf of our faculty, staff and students, thank you for your interest in our School of Music.

Dan Breitbach

Senior Director of Development
College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences

Wish to create a legacy that will benefit UNI School of Music students? Contact Dan Breitbach in the UNI Foundation to learn more about how to plan and make your gift (319) 273-7727.



Opportunities to Give

There are over one hundred individual funds that are open and eligible to give to, if you are interested and able to support the School of Music. With funds dedicated to specific instruments, majors, ensembles and more, you are sure to find a way to direct your gift exactly where you'd like it to go. Here is a sampling of opportunities in need of your support.

Myron E. Russell Quasi-Endowed Scholarship – (210237-20)

Supports scholarships for all music students.

School of Music Benefit Concert Endowed Scholarship – (210276-30)

Supports scholarships for all music students.

Robert Dean Memorial Endowed Scholarship – (211036-30)

Supports scholarships for instrumental education majors.

Musical Excellence Endowed Scholarship – (212373-30)

Supports scholarships for all music majors.

Voice Performance Scholarship – (212512-21)

Supports scholarships for vocal performance majors.

A. John Holstad Endowed Piano Scholarship – (212964-30)

Supports scholarships for piano students.

Jim Coffin Endowed Jazz Scholarship – (213154-30)

Supports scholarships for jazz students.

School of Music Development Fund – (220431-21)

Supports hosting alumni and friends, retirement and award activities of faculty/staff, and developing new contacts for the School, etc.

Charles and Marleta Matheson Endowed Scholarship and Artists Fund – (220469-30)

Supports scholarships for all music students.

Thomas Capps Memorial Jazz Endowed Scholarship – (220811-30)

Supports scholarships for jazz majors.

Dorothea and Robert Dean Endowed Visiting Artists/Scholarship Fund – (221751-30)

Supports hosting guests and visiting artists and scholars in the School of Music, as well as scholarships for all music students.

Choral Enrichment and Opportunity Fund – (222925-21)

Supports scholarships, and expands support to touring choirs and choral programmatic needs.

Schultz Studio Fund – (223215-21)

Supports necessary upgrades and refurbishment of the Schultz Recording Studio.

Thank you to the following supporters, who gave to the School of Music in 2024-25:

See page 15 for Scholarship Benefit Concert donors.

Zoe Abrahamson	Kathleen Coffin	Nancy Hagen
Steven & Lori Adams	Laura Comstock	Jacqueline Halbloom & Scott Murphy
Peter Adamson	Amy Conklin	Heather A. Hamilton
Donna & Chad Adelmund	Jesse Coughlin	Daniel K. Hanson
Barb & Bob Albin	Michael & Joleen Cox	Andrew T. Haring
Aaron & Dani Anderson	Nick Croston	Jackie Harrill
Kimberly Bahr	Julianne & Matthew Davis	Ivy M. Hemmer
Chadwick & Savannah Barlow	Ron & Bitzie Decker	Jeffrey Hermanson
Kelly & Bryan Barlow	Sandra & Larry Delfs	Marilyn Hill
Jason Bauer & Tamara Veenstra	Carol Deppe	Charlotte & William Hinson
Doris Beck Sjolund	Susan Deppe	Linda Hockett
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David Boyer	Betty Fischer	Deanna Johnson
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Zach Bromwich	Angeleita Floyd & Scott Cawelti	Paul & Mary Jungblut
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Sean Clarke	Samantha & Brett Gutknecht	Jessica J. Lieb
Dot Clausen	Joel & Linda Haack	Suzy Lowe

Thank you to the following supporters, who gave to the School of Music in 2024-25:

See page 15 for Scholarship Benefit Concert donors.

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James Anderson
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School of Music Contribution Form

If you would like to support a music student and/or School of Music, please fill out the form below and return it to:

UNI Foundation Financial Services
121 Commons
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0239

Name _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____ Preferred phone ☐ home ☐ cell ☐ business

☐ Please check if new address, phone or e-mail.

I/we would like to support the following fund(s).

- \$ _____ **Myron E. Russell Quasi-Endowed Scholarship – (210237-20)**, supports scholarships for all music students.
- \$ _____ **School of Music Benefit Concert Endowed Scholarship – (210276-30)**, supports scholarships for all music students.
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- \$ _____ **A. John Holstad Endowed Piano Scholarship – (212964-30)**, supports scholarships for piano students.
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- \$ _____ **Choral Enrichment and Opportunity Fund – (222925-21)**, supports scholarships, and expands support to touring choirs and choral programmatic needs.
- \$ _____ **Schultz Studio Fund – (223215-21)**, supports necessary upgrades and refurbishment of the Schultz Recording Studio.
- \$ _____ Other fund, not listed here. Please list name and fund number (if known) or description here: _____



Online: If you prefer, you may give via the UNI Foundation at music.uni.edu/give or by scanning this QR code:
This will take you to a secure site with several funds choices, or you can enter your own in the "Other" section.

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2025-2026

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Spotlight Series

Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Band

Danny Galyen & Justin Mertz, conductors
Friday, October 3, 2025
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Jazz Band One & Jazz Band Two

Mike Conrad & Luke Sanders, directors
Friday, October 10, 2025
7:30 p.m. Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall

UNI Choirs

John Wiles & Sara Blessing, conductors
Sunday, October 19, 2025
4 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra & Cantorei

Erik Rohde & Sara Blessing, conductors
Friday, November 7, 2025
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

UNI Holiday Concert

Ftg. UNI Choirs and Jazz Band One
John Wiles & Mike Conrad, conductors
Tuesday, December 9, 2025
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

UNI Choirs

John Wiles & Sara Blessing, conductors
Sunday, March 8, 2026
4 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Visiting High School Bands & UNI Wind Ensemble

Danny Galyen, conductor
Tuesday, April 16, 2026
Visiting bands: 6 p.m., Wind Ensemble: 7:30 p.m.
CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Jazz Band One

Christopher Merz, director
Friday, April 17, 2026
7:30 p.m. Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall

Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra & Opera

Erik Rohde, conductor
Friday, April 24, 2026
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Symphonic Band

Justin Mertz, conductor
Monday, May 4, 2026
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Tickets for individual concerts will be \$17 for adults, \$7 for non-UNI students (with school ID). UNI School of Music is proud to offer free admission for UNI students with a current ID, thanks to the Panther Pass program.

Tickets are available by calling (319) 273-4TIX or visiting unitix.uni.edu. Tickets may also be purchased at the door. For more information, call (319) 273-2028..



Suzuki School students in group rehearsal, December 2024



School of Music faculty and staff gather for a photo at the fall back to school retreat, August 2024



Bonnie Alger (UNI '10) and Naima Burrs (UNI '18) were two of thirteen conductors to be featured in a photo series, coordinated by conductor Erin Freeman, highlighting women conductors in the Washington D.C. area. (Alger - 5th from left, and Burrs - 5th from right) Photo credit: Melody Yazdani.



September 2023 Repatriation from the University of Würzburg to Kloster Preetz of fourteenth-century music manuscript fragments discovered by Dr. Altstadt in 2008. (L to R: Dr. Alison Altstadt, Prioress Erika von Bülow, Dr. Andreas Haug, Professor Emeritus, Würzburg University Institute for Musicology)



Alum Foteini Angeli conducts the Wind Ensemble at the 43rd Annual Scholarship Benefit Concert, September 2024



School of Music
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