

SCHOOL OF MUSIC rhythms

VOLUME 45 / FALL 2026 / [MUSIC.UNI.EDU](https://music.uni.edu)



Inside this issue

/ Music Ensembles on Tour

/ 75 Years of Jazz

/ Suzuki Celebrates 50 Years

Contents



4

Music Ensembles on Tour



7

75 Years of Jazz



10

Suzuki School Celebrates 50 Years

From the Director.....	3
Jazz Notes.....	6
Community Outreach.....	9
World Music.....	11
New Music at UNI.....	12
Opera News.....	13
Scholarship Benefit Concert.....	14
Student Awards and Honors.....	16
Student Spotlights.....	18
Guest Artists.....	20
Emeritus Faculty News.....	21
Faculty News and Activities.....	22
Faculty Spotlight.....	24
New Hires and Retirements.....	25
Alumni News and Updates.....	28
Alumni Spotlight.....	29
Spotlight Series 2026-27.....	32
From the Foundation.....	33
Opportunities to Give.....	34

rhythms

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

MUSIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Volume 45, Fall 2026

Published by the UNI School of Music
for its alumni and friends

Caroline Francis, executive editor

Melinda Boyd, director

Tammy Hook and Kelsey Williams,
contributing editors

Funds for this publication are provided by the
UNI School of Music and the UNI Foundation.

Design assistance and project direction for this
publication was provided by Michaela Kendall,
UNI College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences.
Photography provided by students, faculty, and
the Office of University Relations.

The School of Music resides within the
UNI College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences,
Mary Black, Dean.

The University of Northern Iowa is an equal
opportunity educator and employer with a
comprehensive plan for affirmative action.

MUSIC.UNI.EDU



FROM THE **Director**

For 150 years, music-making has been an integral part of campus life at UNI. Whether that is in a choir or a band, an orchestra or a chamber group, an opera performance or the ringing of the bells on the campanile, in an increasingly fractured and chaotic world music-making inherently fosters a sense of community and belonging.

UNI's sesquicentennial year reminds us that history and tradition are important. The School of Music proudly stands as one of the cornerstones of that history and tradition.

Imagine a campus without music: football games without the Panther Marching Band; commencement without "Pomp and Circumstance"; musical theatre without music; the holiday season without the Varsity

Glee Club variety show; the "Alma Mater" without its melody. The arts are far more than just the shiny veneer on a vibrant and thriving campus – they are essential to our identities as human beings, to our spirits and our souls as a society capable of expressing the entire range of human emotions.

In the year ahead, we look forward to celebrating the arts on campus through two notable collaborations with the Department of Theatre. UNI's sesquicentennial celebrations will conclude during the week of Homecoming, which includes an arts showcase on the stage in the magnificent Catherine Cassidy Gallagher Great Hall in the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center (October 8, 2026). UNI alum Joel Waggoner will emcee this event and collaborate with Theatre to present a scene. The evening will feature the world premiere of a work commissioned by the UNI sesquicentennial planning committee: Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, UNI Emeritus faculty, has composed *Ager et Lux*, setting poetry by Iowa poets including Meskwaki poet Raymond Youngbear. *Ager et Lux* will be performed by UNI Choirs and the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra. In April 2027, TheatreUNI and the School of Music will come together to present three performances of Stephen Sondheim's delightful musical *Into the Woods*.

Around and in between these two major events, the School of Music will continue our many festivals, Spotlight Series concerts, faculty and student recitals. Whether you are a music major, a student in another department, a parent or grandparent, a Cedar Valley resident, or just visiting from out of town, the School of Music is the university's front porch: our doors are open, everyone is welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melinda Boyd". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Melinda Boyd
Director and Professor

On the Road Again

Music Ensemble Tours



UNI Wind Ensemble goes to Scotland

As other students were preparing for a quiet spring break, the members of the UNI Wind Ensemble were packing their bags and heading to Scotland for a spring break tour. Under the direction of conductor Danny Galyen, the group departed Cedar Falls on March 12, headed for their first stop in Edinburgh. After arriving in Edinburgh, students enjoyed a walking tour of the city, the Royal Mile and St. Giles Cathedral. The first performance of the tour was a shared concert with the Midlothian Community Concert Band at Greyfriars Kirk on March 14.

The group headed to Perth next, where they spent the day sightseeing, followed by a special evening performance on March 15 at the close of the national Scottish Concert Band Finals. From Perth, the ensemble spent a day traveling through Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, on their way to Fort William. On the morning of March 17, UNI students

and faculty boarded the West Highland Line for a scenic train ride from Fort William to Mallaig for some sightseeing. That evening, the third performance of the tour brought the group to Lochaber High School where they offered a concert in collaboration with the high school's Wind Band, Jazz Band and Bagpipes.

After heading back to Edinburgh, March 18 and 19 were filled with cultural exchange and exploration, including visits to Stirling Castle, Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace and a Scottish Folklore show. The Wind Ensemble presented one final performance, "Music from the Heartland," on March 20 at Greyfriars Kirk, where donations were collected for the local Grassmarket Community Project. Following their final performance in Scotland, the group packed their bags and headed back to campus on March 21, carrying once-in-a-lifetime memories with them.



UNI Cecilians go to Ireland

Not far from their fellow School of Music friends in Scotland, the UNI Cecilians spent spring break touring internationally to Ireland. The choir spent their first few days in Dublin, Cork and Cobh, where they spent time sightseeing and offering their first concert of the tour. They also spent a day near Killarney taking in beautiful views between rehearsals and performances. A visit to Blarney found members of the Cecilians stopping into Horgan's of Blarney for a bit of shopping and an impromptu performance for shoppers and staff. Other performances on the tour included a mass at Holycross Abbey on March 15, and a March 16 performance at Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin.

Reflecting on the tour, UNI student and Cecilians member Grace Dinneen noted, "I think being given the opportunity to tour with an ensemble is such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! Not only do we get to further our community of the ensemble, but we also get the chance to make and share music with people from all over the world! The memories I've made on the Cecilians tour I'm confident I'll cherish for many years to come!"

Varsity Glee Club goes to Spain

Later this spring, as many students were packing up their dorm rooms and heading into summer vacation, members of the Varsity Glee Club were packing their bags for an incredible 10-day journey to Spain, led by conductor John Wiles. The choir spent six of their ten days performing masses and concerts. On May 21, the Glee Club sang at Mass for San Igluesia St. Agustin at Santiago de Compostela, immediately followed by singing ten masses on May 22 for over 14,000 people on the Feast of Santa Rita. On May 23, the group traveled to Ribera de Arriba for Asturias International Festival and a performance at Casa de la Cultura. The next day was spent traveling to Oviedo for sightseeing, cultural exchange and a performance at Auditorio Príncipe Felipe. After a day of rest and exploration, the Glee Club traveled to Burgos where they offered a performance at Catedral de Burgos on May 26. The final performance of the tour was just northeast of Madrid in Alcalá de Henares at the Parroquia Santa María la Mayor, marking an exciting end to an incredible journey. The Glee Club tours every other year, and funds raised from ticket sales for their popular Christmas Variety Shows help to fund their travels. Brothers, sing on!



Jazz Division Updates



This year marked the 75th Anniversary of Jazz at UNI, a history stretching back to the first Jazz at the Commons (JATC) concert in 1951. Many of our events this year were tied to that celebration. Jazz Band One's performance on September's Scholarship Benefit Concert featured "Where or When," played on the first JATC concert in 1951, and "Old Man River," performed at JATC in 1952. February's Sinfonian Dimensions in Jazz (SDIJ) Concert, the direct descendant of JATC, welcomed many alumni back to campus to participate in events including two alumni jazz ensembles (led by Paul Clark and Dr. Robert Washut), a reception, and an epic jam session hosted by The Octopus on College Hill. Jazz Band One premiered a special commissioned piece written by Dr. Washut entitled "Sinfonian Soul: A Legacy."

The Jazz Division welcomed several outstanding guests this year: the Zacc Harris Group (in cooperation with the Hearst Center for the Arts), saxophonist Dave Bixler's Trio Incognito, and trombonist Nick Finzer, who appeared as guest soloist with the big bands at Waterloo East High School. In February, we welcomed back a frequent guest, drummer, composer and goodwill ambassador Matt Wilson, whose joyous energy and long-standing history with the program made him the ideal artist to feature on our 75th SDIJ celebration.

As always, individual student success was a big part of our year. Several students played their final degree recitals: Sean Kiefer and Vincent Valadez (BM in Jazz Studies) and Anna Godtland (MM in Jazz Pedagogy). In addition, Sean racked up several national awards for both his trumpet playing and his compositions (see page 18).

In the fall semester, program director, Professor Christopher Merz, was on sabbatical to work on his project, "Arranging the Music of Phil Haynes for Large Jazz Ensemble." The goal was to complete six of ten scores in time for performance on Jazz Band One's spring concert in April. Haynes performed the six pieces with Jazz Band One, and also participated in a seminar for students in Arranging II, where he offered his unique perspective on arranging.

This marks Merz's 24th and final year as Program Director. He will step aside in fall 2026, and Dr. Michael Conrad will take the reins. We are very excited to see the direction the program takes under his leadership. Merz will return to Jazz Band Two, where he served as director from 2000-2002.



75 Years of Jazz

As noted above, February 2026 marked the 75th anniversary of jazz at UNI, which began in 1951 with an event called Jazz at the Commons, organized by the men's music fraternity Phi Mu Alpha. This event blossomed into Sinfonian Dimensions in Jazz and eventually aligned with the Tallcorn Jazz Festival, which brings close to 1,500 high school student musicians to our campus each year. Our 75th anniversary celebration coincided nicely with UNI's 150th anniversary and gave us the opportunity to dig into the rich history of the university as a whole, and the development of our outstanding jazz program on this campus in particular.

The alumni reception in the new Marquee Lounge at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center was a joyful gathering of people sharing memories about their time as young musicians in the UNI jazz ensembles. Everyone loved seeing the old photos, newspaper articles, LP records and other artifacts shared by Rod Library's archives that help tell the story of jazz at UNI.

The evening concert began with a set that included a brand-new piece called "One Swell Foop" by UNI alumnus Troy Thompson, which was followed by an assemblage of amazing trumpet soloists organized by student Sean Kiefer for his arrangement of Tom Harrell's "Evoorg."

Next to take the stage were two alumni jazz ensembles filled with musicians whose time at UNI spans seven decades: the UNI Generations Jazz Band directed by Paul Clark (UNI alumnus, prolific composer, retired music educator, JEI Hall of Fame inductee), and the Bob Washut Legacy Band, directed by Bob Washut (UNI Professor Emeritus, legendary jazz musician and educator). The concert then featured UNI Jazz Band One with SDIJ guest artist Matt Wilson (Winner: Drummer of the Year, Record of the Year; Jazz Journalists Association). Matt's spirit, humor and incredible musicianship made it such a special night for the student musicians and the audience alike, concluding with the world premiere of a Bob Washut composition that was commissioned to celebrate the occasion.

Following the concert, multiple generations gathered at the Octopus on College Hill for a jam session that went into the wee hours of the night. Among many highlights was Matt Wilson's vocal rendition of "I Remember You," performed while wearing a full-size panther mascot head.

Thanks to all who helped us celebrate this anniversary! We're proud of the rich, strong history of jazz at UNI, and are excited for the very promising future of the program.

Editor's note: thank you to Chris Merz and Mike Conrad for their 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

This past year, the UNI Community Music School reached an important milestone: its 20th anniversary! Celebrating two decades of meaningful music-making and community impact, what began as a small program serving just 30 students has grown into a vibrant hub of musical activity, now engaging learners of all ages through private lessons, group classes and ensembles. This evolution reflects both the community's strong interest in music education and the ongoing dedication of the school's faculty and staff.

Today, students study piano, voice and band instruments under the guidance of a talented instructional team that includes many UNI music students serving as teachers and assistants. These emerging educators gain valuable hands-on experience while helping to foster a supportive, dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

Collaboration, connection and access remain central to the Community Music School's mission. In addition, private lessons, group classes, ensembles and camps provide meaningful opportunities for musicians at every stage. Programs such as Piano for Adults and Music for Little Mozarts offer welcoming entry points for beginners, while ensembles like the Children's Choir, CommUNI-Horn and New Horizons Band bring musicians together in shared musical experiences.

Summer offerings, including Camp Musicmania, gave young musicians a creative and engaging space to explore music through hands-on activities, collaborative performance and guided instruction. Throughout the year, recitals and performances showcased student growth, built confidence, and celebrated achievement.

As it begins its third decade, the UNI Community Music School continues to strengthen its role as a vital cultural resource—expanding access to music education, fostering connection and enriching the musical life of the community.

Spectrum Project

The UNI Spectrum Project continued its tradition of creativity, inclusion and community collaboration this spring with its 2026 production Dream Explorers. Held on April 19, the performance featured 34 performers and involved more than 50 University of Northern Iowa students who served as buddies, directors, musicians and support staff.

This year's production centered around the idea that dreams are not always something we already know, but often something we discover through exploration, creativity and trying new things. Through music, movement, storytelling and visual art, performers explored new possibilities, celebrated individuality and supported one another.

A highlight of this year's project was the collaboration with local guest artist Noelle Sampson, who led interactive art activities for performers and buddies. The show was also accompanied by a live faculty band from the UNI School of Music featuring Caroline Francis, Jonathan Schwabe, Luke Sanders, Josh Hackanson and John Wiles, whose energy and musicianship helped bring the performance to life.

The Spectrum Project continues to create meaningful artistic experiences for children and young adults of all abilities while providing UNI students with valuable experiences in inclusive arts education and community engagement.

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



UNI Suzuki School Celebrates 50 Years

Dr. Suzuki's method was controversial at first. What could possibly happen when you put tiny instruments in the hands of young children? If they can learn to talk before they learn to read, they can learn to play an instrument before they can read music. With parent involvement and trained instructors, learning takes place by listening, imitating and repeating with positive reinforcement. Martha Holvik learned of the Suzuki method from Doris Preucil in Iowa City who had started a school there. She introduced the idea of starting a similar project at UNI and talks began with former School of Music director Ron Ross. In 1976, with one tiny student and one very small violin, the UNI Talent Education Program began.

Over the past 50 years the Suzuki School has evolved, gone through several name changes, and inspired and nurtured thousands. During those years, the School has offered a variety of instrument instruction including violin, viola, cello, string bass, piano,

harp, guitar and clarinet. There have been student and faculty recitals, large all-school concerts, summer camps, numerous outreach performances, guest clinicians and master classes, collaborations with the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony, the School of Music and Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, music history and theory classes, two advanced performing groups (Fiddlesticks and Cello Choir), special events, and the development of the Northern Iowa Junior Orchestra (NIJO) and Northern Iowa Youth Orchestra (NIYO) for pre-college aged students. The Suzuki School also served as a training opportunity for prospective string teachers.

This year, under the direction of administrator Suzanne Bullard (MM '04), the School welcomed two new staff members: Mia (Craig) Hagarty (BM '03), violin and music conductor of NIJO, and Jacob Giddens (BM '23),

guitar, and participated in the Live Purple Give Gold campaign. In addition to their annual activities, Suzuki students performed with the OK Factor and Blue Violin, and 80 orchestra members performed during the annual tours to six locations.

During 2026, the School continues its tradition of excellence celebrating their 50th anniversary with special events. Four alumni performed with current staff on the Suzuki Faculty Recital in February, twenty-five returning students and teachers joined the Spring Concert performance in May, and in September Fiddlesticks will be guests of the School of Music Benefit Concert.

Thank you, Dr. Suzuki and Martha Holvik. Congratulations staff and students for making 50 memorable years!

Editor's note: thank you to Cathy Craig for her contribution of this article.

World Music at UNI



UNI's world music program continues to thrive as a dynamic center for global artistic engagement, hands on learning, and community connection. Through three active drumming ensembles—the West African Drum and Dance Ensemble (WADE), Kaji Daiko Taiko Ensemble, and Brazilian Samba Ensemble—the program provides accessible, immersive experiences in music traditions from around the world while enriching cultural life across campus and the Cedar Valley.

This spring was especially vibrant for WADE, highlighted by the residency of a distinguished guest artist and master drummer from Ghana, Attah Poku. During his April visit, Attah led masterclasses in drumming, dance and song that were open to the entire UNI community, creating an energizing cross cultural exchange. His collaboration with WADE culminated in a powerful, joyous joint performance at the ensemble's semester-end concert in Bengtson Auditorium on April 28.

Beyond this capstone event, WADE remained highly active throughout the semester, presenting several additional performances for both the School of Music and broader Cedar Valley audiences. These events showcased the ensemble's growing musicianship and its commitment to sharing West African artistic traditions with the community.

The Kaji Daiko Taiko Ensemble had a dynamic spring season, presenting three performances that highlighted the power and precision of Japanese drumming. The group performed at the Office of International Engagement's Japan Fest in Maucker Union, bringing high energy taiko drumming to a large community audience. They also contributed to the School of Music's Percussion Ensemble concert and performed at a multicultural gathering for UNI student organizations. With additional community events planned for fall 2026, the ensemble is poised to deepen its outreach and educational impact.

The Brazilian Samba Ensemble continued to serve as a vibrant ambassador for global music traditions. After performing in the 2025 UNI Homecoming Parade, the ensemble is preparing to return in 2026, bringing high energy Brazilian percussion to thousands of attendees. Throughout the semester, the group also performed for multiple School of Music, broader UNI and Iowa percussion community events, bringing the infectious rhythms of samba to audiences across campus and northern Iowa.

A core strength of the world music program is its accessibility. All three ensembles are open to students of any major, and no prior musical experience is required. This inclusive structure ensures that global arts engagement is available to all UNI students, not only those pursuing music degrees.

Editor's note: thank you to Staci Toma for her contribution of this article.



New Music at UNI Thrives

The 2025–2026 academic year was an especially active one for New Music at the University of Northern Iowa, highlighting the many ways faculty, students and guest artists bring the music of living composers to campus. Through performances, festivals and collaborative projects, contemporary music remained an important part of UNI's musical life throughout the year. Here are some highlights:

In fall 2025, UNI presented its New Music Festival 2025, featuring four concerts that explored a wide range of contemporary works and artistic perspectives. The festival welcomed guest duo Ligament, featuring soprano Anika Kildegaard and double bassist Will Yager, as well as guest composer Jean-François Charles. Their performances and residency activities created opportunities for students and audiences to engage with contemporary repertoire and creative practice.

Also in fall 2025, UNI hosted the Iowa Composers Forum 2025 New Music Festival, directed by Daniel Swilley. The festival brought together faculty, students and guest artists in performances of new works and collaborative projects. Faculty performers included Matt Andreini, Brett Copeland and Hannah Porter-Occeña, while student ensembles such as the Northern Iowa Flute Choir, Violette Quartet, The Calzones and Bells Brass participated alongside guest artists including Ester Lamneck, Jessica Saunders and others. The festival reflected the collaborative spirit that supports new music activity across campus and the diversity of compositional voices in the state of Iowa.

In spring 2026, the New Music Ensemble premiered our first ever Minutes Project (Studio Minutes 2026). Built around the theme Seasons, the project invited members of the

composition studio and New Music Ensemble to create miniature works of one minute or less. Students (composition majors and non-music majors) as well as faculty participated in the project which resulted in fourteen short pieces or "moments" that showcased the variety of compositional voices and musical ideas being explored at UNI. The performance highlighted both experimentation and collaboration while giving students an opportunity to share newly created work. It was such a great experience we plan to take up the project again next year.

Together, these events demonstrate the continued energy and creativity surrounding New Music activities at UNI.

Editor's note: thank you to Daniel Swilley for his contribution of this article.

Opera at UNI



What better way to celebrate 150 years of UNI than by throwing a party? And what better party than Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*!

This spring, the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra and UNI Opera joined forces to present Act II of Strauss's beloved operetta in a vibrant celebration of music, theatre and collaboration. Overflowing with champagne, disguises, flirtation and comic chaos, *Die Fledermaus* brought together student singers, instrumentalists and dancers in a production that embraced the work's wit, theatricality and joy. The performance served not only as a celebration of UNI's 150th anniversary and UNI Opera's 75th anniversary, but also as a reminder of the power of live performance to bring communities together through laughter, artistry and shared experience.

In addition to *Die Fledermaus*, this year, the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Erik Rohde, performed a season of wide-ranging music, including a collaborative performance of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 with the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony in March, and a joint concert with Cantorei in November. They also performed Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, works by Edward Elgar, Ethyl Smyth, and Jaylin Vinson, and an early clarinet concerto by Molter with faculty artist Amanda McCandless. The symphony capped off the year with their annual celebration of music from the Star Wars films by John Williams on May 4th.

Led by Kate Saulsbury and Matthew J. Schulz, UNI Opera's 2025–2026 season continued to expand opportunities for students to explore a broad and diverse

range of operatic repertoire. In the fall, the ensemble presented an opera scenes program featuring works performed in Czech, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, spanning centuries, giving students the opportunity to develop their artistry across multiple languages and musical styles. Through performance, collaboration and creative exploration, UNI Opera remains committed to cultivating imaginative, artist-centered experiences that prepare students for the evolving world of classical music and lyric theatre while continuing to build a vibrant and growing operatic community at UNI.

Editor's note: thank you to Matthew Schulz, Kate Saulsbury and Erik Rohde for their contributions to this article.



45th annual Scholarship Benefit Concert

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

*Please join us for the University of Northern Iowa School of Music's
45th Annual Scholarship Benefit Concert!*

*Friday, September 25, 2026, 7:30 p.m.
at the Gallagher Bluedorn*

We're thrilled to welcome you back to the mainstage at the Gallagher Bluedorn for the 45th Annual Scholarship Benefit Concert: Something Old, Something New! 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, UNI Choirs, and the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, as well as featured guests, soloists 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 11, 2026.

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

Thank you to the "Special Donors" from the 2025 Scholarship Benefit Concert

Impresario Circle \$5,000 or more

Randy Hogancamp & Jane Whitehead
Elly Stettler Leslie

President's Circle \$2,500-\$4,999

Bonnie & Mark Farland

Dean's Circle \$2,000-\$2,499

Huajun Zhang

Director's Circle \$1,500-\$1,999

Dorothy Glascock

Underwriters \$1,000-\$1,499

Patricia Geadelmann
James L. Wright

Guarantors \$500-\$999

Dr. Angeleita Floyd & Dr. Scott Cawelti
Kwei & Ray Huang
Cecile Johnson
Martha Kroese
Marleta Matheson
Dan & Harriett McMahon
Dayton-Schmitt Fund
Jan & Steve Moore
Laverne Puetz
Terry & Ann Seliga
Terry & Janice Yarns

Patrons \$300-\$499

Larry & Jackie Betts
R.B. Campbell
Albert & Cathy Humke
Myron W. Mueller
Ron & Jane Ross
Mary Schlicher
Arlo & Sue Sime
Jeff & Jean Triplett

Benefactors \$150-\$299

Kevin Bales & Nan Serck
Jeff Brich & Jean McDonald
Steve & Gerry Chamberlin
John & Carolyn Christman
Cordell & Jennifer Cremers
Mary Franken
Gary & Kristin Griffin
Jacqueline Halbloom & Scott Murphy
Noreen Hermansen
Brad & Sandy Jensen
Leon & Linda Kuehner
Sara & Rod Lair
James McCutcheon
David & Claudia Meyer
Susan Rider
Rhonda & Warren Schroeder
Mike & Rita Waggoner
Robert & Katherine Washut
Tom & Red Wells
Stephen & Victoria West
Tom & Linda Wiles

Student awards



Bethany Winget



Abby Wendland

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 2025, the School of Music hosted the Instrumental Concerto Competition contest. Seven finalists competed in a live performance held at the Gallagher Bluedorn on Oct. 28. **Bethany Winget** was selected as the winner of the competition, with **Camille Balleza** and **Martin Hachmann** receiving honorable mentions.

Bethany Winget is a third-year flute performance and performing arts management double major studying with Hannah Porter-Occea. She has performed at UNI with the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, the UNI Wind Ensemble, the Selah Flute-Clarinet Duo, the UNI Flute Choir and the Violette Flute Quartet. When not fluting at UNI, she works as a marketing and public relations intern at the Civic

Music Association in Des Moines. Her former teachers include Grace Peterson and Erika Leake McKnight.

Abigail Wendland was named the 2026 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. 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. Wendland is a senior at UNI majoring in music education and studying flute with Hannah Porter-Occea. Abby is a Presidential Scholar and is dedicated to leadership. In her time at UNI, she has been involved in numerous ensembles and student organizations.

Wendland was also awarded the Mary Ann Bolton Undergraduate Research Award runner-up for her submission, "The Music Education Gender Divide at the University of Northern Iowa." She was honored at a reception on campus in May. To learn more about the Mary Ann Bolton awards, visit library.uni.edu.

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

Bethany Winget, flute, was awarded the top honor of the Charles and Marleta Matheson Award.

Elizabeth Stanish, clarinet, won the Curtiss-Fullerton Award and the People's Choice Award. Stanish is a junior at University of Northern Iowa, studying clarinet performance under Amanda McCandless. While at UNI, she has performed with the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, UNI Clarinet Choir, a UNI wind quintet, Selah Flute-Clarinet Duo and was a 2025 concerto competition finalist. She is also a member of the 34th Army Band, is



Elizabeth Stanish



Martin Hachmann

School of Music students earn high Honors

With the long list of awards and honors that School of Music students earned this year, it may come as no surprise to learn that many of our students are part of the Honors & Scholars Program at UNI. The Honors & Scholars Program at UNI aims to offer a more challenging, rewarding and engaging experience to UNI students, through advanced coursework in liberal arts and other curriculum as well as a final senior thesis/project. The School of Music is proud to congratulate our Honors & Scholars Program students and those who have earned a place on the dean's list or as a Presidential Scholar this year. Scholars are as follow:

Honors & Scholars Program Students:

Camden Bennett, Adrian Benson, Chloe Berns-Schweingruber, Ale Cabello, Kristen Engelhardt, Zach Helle, Jacob Herring, Hope Jones, Riana Kraft, Riley Kruse, Collin Meinert, Elliana Minter, Janie Owens, Finn Riley, Dora Roorda, Spencer Schnetzer, Abby Wendland and Bethany Winget.

Presidential Scholars:

Camden Bennett, Chloe Berns-Schweingruber, Kristen Engelhardt, Collin Meinert, Elliana Minter, Janie Owens, Dora Roorda, Abby Wendland and Bethany Winget.

active in the student organization CATS - Connecting Alumni to Students, and studies piano under Vakhtang Kodanasvhili.

Martin Hachmann, double bass, claimed the Myron and Ruth Russell Award. Hachmann is a junior music education student and double bassist at UNI. In addition to his studies as a future educator, he also has experience as a freelance musician. He participates in curricular ensembles like UNI Jazz Band One, the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, and jazz combo, and has also played with ensembles such as the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony and the Iowa Jazz Composers Orchestra, along with many other groups across Iowa.

Music major **Sean Kiefer** won a Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award for his composition "Postcard." Kiefer also received two Downbeat Awards in spring 2026: original composition – college/undergraduate (large ensemble) for his work "Shattered Sky" and jazz arranging – college/undergraduate for his arrangement

"O Christmas Tree." Learn more about Sean on page 18.

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

The School of Music would also like to congratulate the School of Music students who appeared on the fall 2025 and spring 2026 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 each of you on your excellent work!

Editor's note: thank you to Erik Rohde, Sara Blessing and Brenda Hackenmiller for their help with and contributions to this article.

Student Spotlights

It's always remarkable and worth celebrating when a student at UNI moves on to continued education at one of the world's most elite, top-tier institutions – but when two exceptional, award-winning trumpet performance students are headed to the same spot, it's well worth highlighting what makes these two so special. Learn more about recent graduates Megan Bennett and Sean Kiefer as they prepare to continue their studies at the Eastman School of Music in the fall.



Sean Kiefer

Sean Kiefer spent his early years in Martensdale, Iowa, and moved to Cedar Falls in 2017. At UNI, he dual-majored in general economics and jazz performance, and studied with Randy Grabowski, Scott Hagarty and Michael Conrad. He played in Jazz Band One and Two, a handful of jazz combos, Wind Ensemble and the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra. His favorite courses throughout his time in the School of Music were his jazz major courses (arranging, composition, improvisation, history) and Counterpoint Survey with Dr. Harlow.

Looking back on his time at UNI, Sean said, “My favorite part of studying at UNI was meeting so many amazing people. Through all that UNI had to offer, I met, and still am connected with, amazing students, faculty, guest artists, staff and alumni.

The culminating moment that brought all of these groups together was the 75th Tallcorn Jazz Festival. Seeing all of the current students and faculty, guest artists, judges and the overwhelming number of alumni made me reflect on how grateful and lucky I am to be at UNI. It is a privilege and honor to be at an institution that supports, promotes and fosters relationship building at such a high level!”

An award-winning student arranger and composer, Sean immersed himself in the UNI culture and took advantage of all that the School of Music had to offer. “The incredible faculty and facilities make UNI an amazing place. When auditioning at different grad schools across the country, it put into perspective how good we have it at UNI. There aren't a lot of places with such high-quality facilities, such as the beautiful Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, or faculty that truly care about their students.”

“During my time at UNI, the students and faculty have been most influential on my growth. The faculty always promoted and nurtured my personal growth, which has led to me having incredible opportunities. The individualized attention and kindness I received made my desire to learn even bigger! My peers also provided me with a high level of kindness and creativity that I couldn't get from anywhere else. Studying alongside a group of talented people has pushed me to grow and create life-long friendships,” Sean noted.

Sean will begin graduate studies at the Eastman School of Music this fall, studying jazz composition. He's also looking forward to summer 2027, when he and his fiancé Kate will be married.



Megan Bennett

Megan Bennett is from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and dual-majored in trumpet performance and music education at UNI where she studied with Randy Grabowski and Scott Hagarty. Megan has been a member of the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, the Panther Marching Band, jazz combos, the Biscotti Brass Quintet and Jazz Band One and Two. Reflecting on her time at UNI, Megan noted, “My favorite course was trumpet seminar. Dr. Grabowski always found ways to keep the class interesting and engaging, pushing us to explore the creative side of trumpet playing while also sharing meaningful lessons about musicianship, history and personal growth beyond the instrument. Some of my greatest memories were in this class, a highlight being the Trumpet Olympics!”

Megan has participated in numerous performance competitions both at UNI and nationally. “I’ve really enjoyed the opportunity to perform a wide variety of repertoire on

stage, and the preparation process has helped me grow significantly as a musician,” Megan stated. Recent notable achievements include a third-place finish in the International Trumpet Guild Solo Division Competition and winning the Fort Dodge Concerto Competition.

Megan’s UNI journey is part of a larger family tradition. Her father, Bryan Bennett, also studied with Grabowski at UNI, and, Megan says, “a highlight of my time at UNI was sharing my senior year in the music program with my younger sister, Emma Bennett. We had a great year together and I know she’ll go on to do great things at UNI!”

Beyond family, Megan credits the School of Music faculty with bringing her to this point in her career. “My favorite part about studying at UNI has been the opportunity to work with the incredible faculty,” Megan said. “What stands out most is how invested the faculty are in their students. They consistently create opportunities for us to grow as musicians and to apply what we’re learning in real-world performance settings. Dr. Grabowski is the reason I chose UNI, has been one of the most influential people in my life, and has been a part of my trumpet journey from the very beginning! I still remember my very first lesson and studio performance all the way back in 2014 as a little timid 6th grader. Through the years, he has helped shape who I am, making me the more confident, hardworking and mindful individual I am today. I’m grateful for all he has done for me and I’m honored to have been one of his last students during his teaching career at UNI. I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr. Hagarty for his time and support in helping me prepare for my auditions. The UNI trumpet studio is in great hands!”

Megan will be attending the Eastman School of Music, pursuing a master’s degree in trumpet performance. She hopes to eventually earn her doctorate in trumpet performance, and to teach trumpet at the collegiate level alongside playing in an orchestra.

Congratulations on your outstanding achievements at UNI and beyond, and best of luck in your future, Sean and Megan!



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.

2025-2026 Guest Artists

FALL 2025

Karel Keldermans, carillon; Los Llaneros; Sean Hamilton, percussion; Cehuai Zhang, saxophone; Aliyah Danielle, horn; LIGAMENT duo; Jean-François Charles, composer; Ashley Kelly, saxophone; Jan Schnell, lecturer; Karen Black, lecturer; Carol Teare, lecturer; Nathan Montover, lecturer.

SPRING 2026

Martin Gelwasser, trombone; Caleb Lambert, trombone; Sayyod Mirzomurodov, clarinet; Mariya Akhadjanova, piano; Mark Urness, double bass; Matt Wilson, drums; Quince Ensemble; Carol Wincenc, flute; Charles Barland, organ; Mary Beth Orr, horn; Craig Hultgren, composer; Leander Star, horn; Dan Hinman, trombone; Taylor Hicks, tuba and euphonium; Attah Poku, percussion; Karel Keldermans, carillon; Guy Yehuda, clarinet; Andrew W. Parker, oboe.

Thank you to our supporters

Guest artist funds for 2025-26 were supported in part or in full by the:

- Esther Bley Rinker Endowed Fund
- Carol Froning Deppe Fund
- 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/Cawelti School of Music Enrichment Fund
- William P. Hansen Endowment for Bands
- Donald Hudson Endowed Fund for Musical Excellence
- Joyce Gault Piano Concert Series
- Spotlight Series patrons
- UNI College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences
- UNI School of Music

The School of Music continues to extend its gratitude for these contributions.

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.

Rebecca Burkhardt

Burkhardt's original work Ballet for Cello and Orchestra premiered at the Quad Cities Symphony Orchestra in March 2026, with Hannah Holman as cellist. She was excited to share that, "there were LOTS of UNI music grads in attendance and playing in the orchestra" at the event. In fall 2025, Burkhardt was inducted into the School of Music's Curtiss-Fullerton Hall of Fame and recognized for her substantial contributions as an educator, conductor, composer and mentor. Burkhardt also began serving on the board of American Women Heroes Onstage (americanwomenheroesonstage.org), and continued work on a commissioned piece which will be premiered at the Sesquicentennial Arts Showcase at UNI in October.

Randy Grabowski

Randy sent an update, sharing, "Upon disengaging from UNI, Karen and I moved to Star, ID - a small, growing community in the Treasure Valley that includes Boise. Together, we have enjoyed walking, cooking, gardening, reading, learning, a little bit of traveling, the awesome blue skies and the overall mild weather. Personally, I have enjoyed gigging a lot more in a wide variety of groups including the Boise

Modern Jazz Orchestra, Sun Valley Ballet, Boise Philharmonic, Brass Band of the Treasure Valley and the Boise Polka Projekt!"

Michelle Swanson

Michelle Swanson is thoroughly enjoying retirement and staying actively engaged in the work and passions she loves. She is deeply grateful to the many former students who have reached out—whether through email or by meeting for coffee when passing through town—and values those continued connections. Family life remains full and joyful. Her daughter, Elizabeth, was married in August and lives in Ohio, and her son, Matthew, is serving as a missionary in Southeast Asia. Michelle remains busy volunteering in her community, including accompanying often, volunteering regularly at the Northeast Iowa Food Bank, and also working some fun odd jobs! She also continues to teach online for Liberty University, working with doctoral students in music education. Swanson also plays keys and sings with her church worship team, participates in several Bible studies, and appreciates having time to pursue the activities that bring her the greatest fulfillment.

Bob Washut

Bob sent us an update, as well. "I decided to stop performing due to some health issues but am still quite active in the jazz composing and arranging arenas. I received several commissions, including a piece to feature guest artist Matt Wilson at the 75th anniversary celebration of SDIJ in February. In November, I served as guest composer in a mini-residency at Georgia State University. I was an adjudicator/clinician for the Southeast Polk jazz festival and the Lincoln High School (Sioux Falls, SD) jazz band. Kate and I travelled to Austin, New York City, Miami/Florida Keys, and Boise, where I connected with alums Myron Peterson and Nicole Molumby at Boise State University. I also traveled recently to Boulder, CO, to visit distinguished UNI jazz alum and Hall of Fame member, Paul McKee, who sadly passed away shortly thereafter. And, yes, golf is still a passion, scores notwithstanding."

See the Snapshots feature on page 38 for a photo update.

Faculty Activities

Matthew Andreini, assistant adjunct professor of percussion

- / Premiered Daniel Swilley's "Operative MS39" for marimba and electronics at the Iowa Composers Forum.
- / Hosted the "Past, Present and Future" Percussion Ensemble event which brought alumni, high school students and current students together to participate in a mass percussion ensemble.
- / Performed a collaborative recital of tuba/percussion music at ITEC - Midwest Regional Tuba/Euphonium Conference.

Korey Barrett, professor of vocal coaching and collaborative piano

- / Returned as music director, head vocal coach and continuo player to Opera Neo in San Diego, CA for the company's 15th season. Performances include productions of Vivaldi's *Arsilda*, Rossini's *Il turco in Italia* and the American premier of the recently re-discovered *Fausto* by Louise Bertin. He also performed in the Gallagher Bluehorn with Heartland Marimba in their recent collaboration with Bel Canto Cedar Valley and the Metropolitan Chorale in Jenni Brandon's *Death Valley Symphony*.

Ann Bradfield, professor of saxophone

- / Traveled with four students to perform at the International Navy Saxophone Symposium at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA.

Michael Conrad, associate professor of jazz studies/music education

- / Performed in John Beasley's GRAMMY-winning MONK'estra

at Dizzy Club in New York City with John Pattatucci, Rudresh Mahanthappa, Kendrick Scott and Conrad Herwig, among others.

- / Completed commissioned works for the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra ("Concerto for Jazz Trombone"), Stegreif ("Escape Valse"), and Ballard High School ("Ollie and Sterling").

Kevin Droe, associate professor of music in music education

- / Celebrated 20 years at UNI.
- / Presented at TEDxUniversity of Northern Iowa 2025 a talk titled, "Music Education is Stuck in the Past—Here's How We Fix It." TEDxUNI was a powerful day of ideas, inspiration and connection. Under the theme "Creating Tomorrow," the event explored how innovation, vision and collaboration can shape a brighter future.

Danny Galyen, professor of music, director of bands

- / Taught the Conducting Workshop at the Academia Diesis in Almeria, Spain.
- / Appeared in Romania in November as a guest conductor and returned in April as adjudicator for a regional wind band competition.
- / Led the UNI Wind Ensemble on a concert tour to Scotland. For more on the tour, see page 4.

Scott Hagarty, assistant professor of trumpet

- / Won the audition for principal trumpet of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra. Highlights of the first season included Sibelius 2nd Symphony

and Tchaikovsky's 4th Symphony.

- / Worked with over 150 high school trumpet students through a combination of individual lessons, on-campus events, high school visits, clinics and adjudicating.
- / Invited to perform a new Sonata for Trumpet and Piano by composer Douglas Hedwig at the Eastman School of Music for the International Trumpet Guild Conference.

Randall Harlow, professor of organ and music theory

- / Enjoyed a week-long artist residency as part of the Registri Organ Festival in Venice, Italy, composing and performing an organ art concert on a historic 1745 Italian organ.
- / Completed a musicological article, "Tracing, Transposing and Exposing Sound and Movement Ecologies: Toward a Posthuman Musicology of Multispecies Musicking" for the journal *Music and Nature*.
- / Taught an innovative new music theory seminar, "Posthuman Musicking: transposing knowledge through artistic research," exposing students to leading-edge transdisciplinary musicology.

Suzanne Hendrix, associate professor of voice and vocalogy

- / Performed the role of Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* with Waterloo Community Playhouse.
- / Performed the role of Mère Jeanne in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* with New Orleans Opera in March 2026.

Christopher Merz, professor of jazz studies

- / Won a Jazz Road Tours grant for the Shorter Stories Midwestern tour July 17-22, 2025.
- / Awarded a sabbatical in fall 2025 for the project “Arranging the music of Phil Haynes for Large Jazz Ensemble.” The six scores completed on sabbatical were performed with the composer on April 17, 2026.
- / Concluded his 24th and final year as Director of Jazz Band One. In the fall, Mike Conrad will be leading the program.

Michelle Monroe, associate adjunct professor of voice

- / Performed as alto soloist for Handel’s *Messiah* in Hancher Auditorium with University of Iowa Choirs and Orchestra, December 2025.
- / Performed with the Five Cities Baroque Festival in Illinois, June 2026.
- / Performed the role of Zanetto in Mascagni’s *Zanetto* with the American Center for Puccini Studies, November 2025.

Hannah Porter-Occeña, associate professor of flute

- / Finished 12th season with the Topeka Symphony (TSO) and 7th season with the Colorado MahlerFest Orchestra as principal flutist and was featured with the TSO on Alyssa Morris’ woodwind quartet concerto *Tlapalli Tlahuilli*.
- / Performed a live on-air recital for Kansas Public Radio on November 21, 2026.
- / Completed *ConcerTea for Two* album and started a new solo flute album project.

Matthew Ransom, assistant adjunct professor of bassoon

- / Commissioned and premiered “Take Three” by Philip Wharton at the International Double Reed Society Conference in Indianapolis.
- / Performed “Bassoonium” with the UNI bassoon ensemble and the bassoonists at Waverly Shell-Rock High School in collaboration with the Waverly Shell-Rock High School Band.
- / Co-hosted UNI Double Reed Day with Heather Petyon, bringing oboists and bassoonists from across the state to campus for a day of performing and masterclasses.

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

- / Appointed assistant conductor and operations manager of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony, which he guest conducted in February 2026.
- / Collaborated with members of the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra in performances of *The Great Comet of 1812* with TheatreUNI.
- / Collaborated with Quince Ensemble on a premiere recording of William Thomas McKinley’s *Ten Medieval Songs*, to be released in 2027.

Maddy Tarantelli, assistant professor of instruction in horn

- / Celebrated the Lawrence Graduate Bayreuth Tuben Quintet Album release *Do You See, Do You Not See* in November 2025, and Tennessee Tour in March 2026.
- / Premiered “Transliminal Messaging” composed by Jennifer Oliverio commissioned for the UNI

Horn Studio and premiered at UNI Horn Day 2026.

- / Performed at Colorado Mahlerfest May 2026, principal horn on world premiere of Steve Elcock’s Symphony No. 1.

Staci Toma, assistant adjunct professor of percussion

- / Received the International Excellence Award from the UNI Office of International Engagement, which honors individuals who have made exceptional contributions to international education, intercultural understanding, and global experiences that directly benefit the Cedar Valley community within and beyond academia.
- / Contributed to the revival of the Iowa Day of Percussion for the Iowa Chapter of the Percussive Arts Society as Treasurer, and as a featured clinician for West African Drum & Dance.
- / Hosted Attah Poku, a master drummer from Ghana, for community clinics and as a featured guest artist for the World Music Club and West African Drum/Dance Ensemble

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

- / Celebrated 15 years at UNI.
- / Led the Cecilians and Varsity Glee Club on international tours. See more on page 5.

Faculty Spotlight

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Maddy Tarantelli



Maddy Tarantelli is Assistant Professor of Instruction in Horn at the University of Northern Iowa. Tarantelli has performed extensively with Utah Symphony and has performed with many of the orchestras in Iowa, Utah/Idaho, and Fountain City Brass Band. They held positions at Interlochen Arts Camp and Utah Valley University.

Maddy currently serves as a board member and musician of the Lawrence Graduate Bayreuth Tuba Quintet and has performed/recorded in the US, Canada, and this summer in Poland with the tubens. They served as president from 2023-2025 and currently serves as secretary. Tarantelli has also performed section and principal horn with Colorado Mahlerfest since 2024. Tarantelli is a founding member of Trilogy Brass with Dr. JoDee Davis (UMKC) and Dr. Jennifer Oliverio (Missouri Western SU). Trilogy has performed recitals across the Midwest and at the International Women's Brass Conferences. Maddy is also part of the founding cohort of the Coalition of Musicians for Ethical Change.

Maddy has contributed to the International Horn Society's publication *The Horn Call*, International Symposiums, and regional workshops. They received grants from the American Scandinavian Foundation and UMKC Women's Council to pursue independent study in Norway. Maddy has served on the board of directors for Audition Mode Horn Seminar (alum 2016) alongside Denise Tryon and Karl Pituch from 2017-2024. Maddy spent their summers teaching theory and performing with faculty ensembles at Interlochen Arts Camp from 2015-2017. They aged out of DCI in 2011 playing mellophone with the Glassmen Drum & Bugle Corps.

In Iowa, Maddy has continued the UNI tradition of horn choir by revamping the Community Horn Choir. Members include UNI alumni, current students, high school students, community members, and professional hornists in Iowa where anyone is welcome to participate.

Tarantelli's pedagogical influences include formal study with Marty Hackleman, Sam Pilafian and Kirsten Bendixen-Mahoney. Additional influences include Denise Tryon, Julie Landsman and Frøydis Ree Wekre.

Dr. Tarantelli will be traveling to Krakow, Poland to perform with the LGBTQQuintet at the International Horn Society's 58th Symposium. They will also be traveling to the quintet's lodge nestled in the Adirondacks of New York State to host the group's inaugural Parallel Play retreat open to horn players 18+. Tarantelli has served on faculty at UNI since fall 2023 and enjoys working with students, staff and faculty alike for their work ethic, student-centeredness and genuine care for one another. "I feel at ease being myself around my colleagues and students," Tarantelli said. "The culture here is special and it was palpable during my interview; I consider it an honor to contribute to that culture while helping students realize their musical dreams."

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 exceptional faculty and staff members as they retired in 2025-26: Jeff Brich and Steve Carignan celebrated retirement this year.



Jeffrey Brich, tenor, has distinguished himself in a broad spectrum of literature, performing with versatility and ease in orchestral, opera and recital venues. His strong creative service to the UNI School of Music was marked by memorable performances with the UNI Lyric Theater, the Faculty Chamber Music Series, Iowa Composer's Forum and the Cedar Valley Chamber Music Festival. Professionally, he has performed roughly twenty roles in opera and oratorio, including frequent performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Mozart's *Requiem*, singing with orchestras in Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Peoria and Cedar Rapids. Some of his latest endeavors include soloing in the Peoria Bach Festival, the Cedar Rapids Opera production of Strauss' *Salome*, Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Mendocino Music Festival, and a concert version of the first act of Wagner's *Die Walkure*. As a tenor-in-residence, Jeffrey has performed with David Aiken Production's national tour of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and later with the

Indianapolis Opera Touring Ensemble. He has appeared as soloist in the Bethany College Messiah Festival in Lindsborg, KS, and in Mozart's *Requiem* at Bradley University in Peoria. Jeffrey served as Assistant Professor of Instruction in Voice at UNI. He holds degrees from the University of Iowa (BM) and the University of Northern Iowa (MM) and has earned several competitive honors. He resides in Cedar Falls, Iowa with his wife and two children, where he also maintains a thriving private voice studio.



After more than 26 years of leadership at UNI's Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, **Steve Carignan** retired from the role of executive director in January 2026. Carignan had led the Gallagher Bluedorn since its earliest days, helping guide the center from an ambitious vision to a premier performing arts venue serving the Cedar Valley and the state of Iowa. When the facility opened in 2000, it marked a transformational moment for the university and region. Over the next two and a half decades, Carignan expanded programming, strengthened educational outreach and deepened community engagement, solidifying the Gallagher Bluedorn's role as a cultural cornerstone.

During his tenure, Carignan also oversaw a significant renovation and expansion project, modernizing the venue and improving accessibility, amenities and gathering spaces for both patrons and performers. These enhancements have ensured the center can continue to serve future audiences and host high-caliber artists for decades to come. "Our facilities have changed and grown, but the mission has always remained the same – to bring people together through the arts," said Carignan. "It's been an honor to work alongside such dedicated staff, artists, supporters and community members who believe in the power of live performance. I am incredibly proud of what we've built together." In addition to presenting national touring acts, Broadway productions, symphonies and renowned performers, Carignan emphasized the importance of educational and community programming. The Gallagher Bluedorn has provided countless opportunities for UNI students through internships, performances and hands-on learning, while also offering outreach programming that introduces thousands of young people to the performing arts each year.

Every End is a Beginning

New Hires and Retirements in the School of Music

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



UNI is pleased to welcome **Anne Lefter** as the new executive director of the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. Lefter brings more than two decades of leadership experience in performing arts administration, venue management and community-engaged programming.

Lefter recently served as the inaugural director of the Goldfarb Center for Performing Arts at Western Illinois University, where she led the strategic planning, operational launch and artistic vision of a new 100,000-square-foot, \$119 million facility. Prior to that, Lefter spent 22 years at the Community College of Baltimore County as Director of the Arts, where she provided executive leadership for multiple performing arts venues across three campuses.

“Anne is a dynamic and visionary leader whose experience aligns well with the mission of the Gallagher Bluedorn,” said Mary Black, dean of the UNI College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences. “Her proven ability to connect artists, students and communities, along with her expertise in managing large-scale performing arts centers, will strengthen the GBPAC’s role as a vibrant cultural destination for our campus and the region.” Lefter holds a PhD in Theatre Studies from Cornell University and a bachelor’s degree in Theatre Arts and English Literature from the University of Minnesota, Morris.



Jaime Marie Webb, soprano, is Assistant Professor of Instruction in Voice at UNI. She has captivated audiences across the United States and internationally, appearing at distinguished venues including Carnegie Hall, Salle Gaveau and the Teatro Ángela Peralta, and has performed with companies and festivals such as Cedar Rapids Opera, Annapolis Opera, Charlottesville Opera, Opera Omaha and more.

Webb’s operatic repertoire reflects a wide range of lyric coloratura roles, demonstrating both comedic agility and lyrical depth. Her signature roles include Violetta (*La traviata*), Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) and more. In concert, she has been invited to interpret Manon (*Manon*), Konstanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), the Controller (*Flight*) and others. Her work also extends into musical theatre, with roles including Christine Daaé (*The Phantom of the Opera*), Marian (*The Music Man*), Philia (*A Funny*

Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum) and more. Webb is also a champion of new work, having premiered dozens of compositions and collaborated extensively with living composers.

As a committed artist-educator, Webb’s teaching emphasizes healthy vocal production across languages and repertoire, with particular attention to the cultivation of individual artistic identity and sustainable technique rooted in practical voice science. Prior to joining UNI, she served on the voice faculty at Luther College.

Webb is Founder and Artistic Director of QueerPOPERA, an organization dedicated to expanding LGBTQ+ representation in opera, particularly in the Midwest, and is co-librettist of *A Bridge Between*. A sought-after panelist and lecturer-recitalist, she has presented at conferences including Opera America’s Teaching Artist Network, Iowa Musicology Day, the Omaha Conservatory of Music & Wellness Festival and the Georgia Women and Girls Conference.



Julia Sakharova is the newly appointed Assistant Professor of Instruction in Violin at UNI as well as the Concertmaster of Orchestra Iowa. Sakharova is an internationally established concert artist, known for her performances as a soloist, orchestra performer and chamber musician. Sakharova was a member of the nationally recognized and critically acclaimed Arianna String Quartet and served on the music faculty at the University of Missouri St. Louis.

At the age of eight, Sakharova made her solo orchestral debut with the Moldova Philharmonic Orchestra. She has since appeared on numerous stages including Alice Tully Hall, Steinway Hall, Carnegie Hall and the Library of Congress. She has performed in many festivals, recitals, tours and competitions across her native Russia, Western and Southern Europe, Japan, South America and the United States, and has earned top prize in multiple competitions.

After graduating from Moscow's prestigious Central Special Music School under the renowned Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Sakharova moved to the U.S. to continue her education at Oberlin College. A year later she made her West Coast solo debut at the Getty Center with composer and conductor John Williams and the Oberlin Orchestra. Julia earned a master's degree from the Juilliard School, and a certificate for orchestral performance from the Manhattan School of Music.

Sakharova has been a dedicated educator, conducting masterclasses at the University of Iowa School of Music, Alabama School of Fine Arts and Birmingham Southwestern College. She has also taught, appeared on stage and been artist-in-residence at numerous camps, festivals and universities, and was the recipient of the Artist Teacher Award from the American String Teachers Association.



Kylie Little is a passionate violist, chamber musician and educator. As a dedicated teacher of violists and violinists of all ages, her pedagogical method emphasizes the shared human experience through musical collaboration, connection and healthy approaches to music-making supported by a strong technical foundation. Kylie is excited to start her role as Assistant Adjunct Professor of Instruction in Viola at UNI in fall 2026. She also teaches at the Marion Music Academy in Marion, Iowa and has her own viola/violin studio.

A dedicated chamber musician, Kylie has performed on the Burlington Lunchtime Chamber Music Series, a sextet concert presented by the Iowa City Philharmonic, and filled in as violist for the Iowa-based Oak Quartet, in addition to being a member of several string quartets over the past ten years. Both chamber and orchestral engagements have allowed Kylie to perform across

the United States, in Europe and in Asia. As an inaugural member of the University of Iowa's Dunn Graduate String Quartet, Kylie helped develop a music-therapy informed program intended for those living with memory loss and their caregivers.

An active performer in the community, Kylie holds positions as principal violist of the Southeast Iowa Symphony Orchestra and section violist in the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony while actively subbing with other local orchestras. Kylie completed her doctoral coursework at the University of Iowa under the tutelage of Christine Rutledge. She earned her Masters of Music from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign while studying with Liz Freivogel of the Jupiter String Quartet and her Bachelors of Music from Northern Illinois University with Anthony Devroye of the Avalon String Quartet. In her free time, Kylie enjoys reading, cooking, and exploring new places.

The School of Music wishes to congratulate Jeff and Steve on their retirement, and to welcome Anne, Jaime, Julia and Kylie!

Alumni Update



1970s

'71 E. Beth Gilbert, BM, Plymouth, MN, retired from University of Wisconsin-Superior in 2017 after serving as Professor of Piano. Gilbert was also inducted into the UNI School of Music Curtiss-Fullerton Hall of Fame in 2017.

1980s

'80 Mark Byers, BM, Spencer, has directed church choirs for decades and even performed a rendition of Neil Young's "When God Made Me" at a church service. That took some adjusting and him playing the harmonica. He is looking forward to life in Spencer and getting back to playing guitar.

'80 Laura Leonberger, BM, Waikoloa, HI, retired after 23 years at Wells Fargo. After a few years enjoying retirement, it was time to volunteer and use her finance and music skills. In July 2025, she was elected treasurer to the board of directors for the Kamuela Philharmonic Orchestra, bringing classical music to the people of the island of Hawaii.

'83 Randy Atkinson, BM, MM '89, Iowa City, celebrated 42 years of marriage to Kathy and recently moved to Iowa City to be closer to children and grandchildren.

'86 Dwight Pittman, MM, Ballwin, MO, retired from performing in the St. Louis area, previously taught electric and upright bass at Lindenwood University, taught music and double bass and directed jazz combos at St. Louis Community College, taught music at St. Charles Community College, and repaired stringed instruments for local and regional music stores.

1990s

'91 Ann Osborne, BM, Urbandale, retired after the 2023-2024 school year after 32 years of teaching orchestra in Iowa public schools. She is now "granny nanny" to her two grandchildren, and life is good!

'94 Tim Crumley, BA, Marion, performed four sold-out shows in Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska with the world renowned vocal jazz quartet New York Voices. The Voices are touring the world in 2026 for their final year of performing. See Snapshots, page 38.

'95 Michelle (Most) Jamieson, BM, Meadow Vista, CA, earned a DMA in Music Education from Boston University in August 2025. The doctoral dissertation title was "The impact of mindfulness on the eudaimonic well being of music education."

2000s

'02 Molly Stehn, BM, Kirkwood, MO, joined the Bach Society of St. Louis as principal singer in the chorus. She is an associate professor of counselor education at Texas A&M University Texarkana.

2010s

'13 Brian Martin, BM, Dedham, MA, released his first big band album as composer/bandleader entitled "Old Home/New Home." The album received a 4-star review written by All About Jazz's Jack Bowers, and features three UNI alumni – Rick Stone (lead alto), Antonio Garza (lead trumpet) and Nolan Schroeder (lead tenor), as well as many other top level musicians from the New England jazz scene.

'16 Mason Meyer, BM, Sioux Falls, SD, is an assistant vocal music director at Roosevelt High School (RHS). He earned a Master of Music in choral conducting from Florida State University College of Music in May 2020. Additional highlights include the premiere of original setting of Cantate Domino by RHS Chorale in fall 2022, member of Transept – an American Prize winning choral ensemble based in Sioux Falls, being elected region representative for South Dakota American Choral Directors Association and being elected region choral representative for South Dakota High School Activities Association.

2020s

'20 Dakota Andersen, BM, Minneapolis, MN, released his debut album of original vocal jazz compositions entitled *Switchgrass* in spring of 2026. The album is available on all streaming platforms and on CD and vinyl through dakotaandersen.com.

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!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

JoDee Davis

In spring 2026, UNI alum JoDee Davis (UNI '80, '85) celebrated her retirement after 39 years in higher education, the last 25 as professor of trombone at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Conservatory. She performs regularly as an extra with the Kansas City Symphony and is a member of the Trilogy Brass Trio and Crossroads Trombone Quartet. Davis has also served on the faculties of Kent State University and Eastern Washington University. Formerly principal trombone of the Spokane Symphony and second trombone of the Santa Fe Opera, she has performed with a number of other orchestras including the Akron, Canton, and Youngstown Symphony Orchestras in Ohio, and the Spoleto Festival Orchestra in Charleston, SC, and Spoleto, Italy.

She has presented solo recitals and master classes throughout the United States and has performed and given clinics at the International Trombone Festival, the American Trombone Workshop, the Midwest Clinic, and the Ohio, Texas, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Illinois Music Educators Conferences. She was a member of the highly acclaimed trombone quartet PRISMA, which performed at the first International Women's Brass Conference in St. Louis, the Arizona Low Brass Symposium, and International Trombone Festivals in Cleveland, Minneapolis, Las Vegas and Feldkirch, Germany. In 2011, Davis was an adjudicator in the prestigious Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. In Nov. 2013, she presented a recital and master classes at the Musik Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Trossingen. Davis was invited to conduct the International Women's Trombone Choir at the 2024 International Trombone Festival at Texas Christian University.

Davis's students hold university positions throughout the United States and in public and private schools throughout the country. The UMKC Trombone Ensemble, under Davis's direction, has won Honorable Mention in the International Trombone Association's Emory Remington Trombone Choir Competition and made its second appearance at the Missouri Music Educators Association Conference in Jan. 2024. The ensemble has toured in the St. Louis area and performed on a program of the St. Louis Low Brass Collective.

Davis received the UMKC Conservatory's Muriel McBrien Kauffman Excellence in Teaching Award in 2015 and the Kauffman Excellence in Service Award in 2021. She was awarded a 2017 University of Missouri Research Board grant to commission and record new music for trombone and piano. She has two solo recordings on the Albany Records label: *In the Moment* (2001) and *The Voices of Air* (2020). In 2025, she was awarded the International Trombone Association's Neill Humfeld Award for Excellence in Trombone Teaching.

Davis holds the Doctor of Music in brass literature and performance from Indiana University where she studied with Dee Stewart, and the Master of Music in trombone performance and the Bachelor of Music in music education from the University of Northern Iowa, where she was a student of Jon Hansen.

Reflecting on her time at UNI, JoDee noted, "I cherish my time at UNI, where I had the opportunity to work with world-class faculty and play in fine ensembles such as the Wind Symphony and UNI Orchestra. UNI was a great fit for me: a challenging yet friendly environment that was supportive and vibrant. I met many students who are great friends and colleagues to this day. And the greatest gift I received was instruction from my trombone professor Jon Hansen, a superior teacher who became a cherished colleague and friend. Kudos to the UNI School of Music for all that it has become and all that it will accomplish in the future!"

We're proud to congratulate JoDee on her extraordinary career and we wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement!

Photo by Andrew Schwartz

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 Emeritus faculty member **David Rachor**. Dr. David J. Rachor, esteemed bassoonist, scholar and pedagogue, died on September 14, 2025, leaving behind a distinguished legacy in the world of performance, pedagogy and historical research. A devoted teacher and internationally recognized expert on the bassoon, Dr. Rachor inspired generations of students and colleagues through his artistry, scholarship and deep commitment to research and teaching.

Dr. Rachor joined the faculty of the University of Northern Iowa School of Music in 1989, serving with distinction until his retirement in 2014, when he was named Emeritus Professor. During his tenure, he established himself as a dedicated educator whose students went on to successful careers as performers, teachers and scholars. His influence extended internationally through his appointments as Visiting Professor of Bassoon and Baroque Bassoon at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Lyon, and the École Nationale de Musique in Aulnay-sous-Bois. Prior to his years at UNI, he taught at Tennessee Technological University, where he earned tenure in 1987. A versatile performer, Dr. Rachor appeared with numerous modern and period ensembles. His orchestral affiliations included the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra (Principal Bassoon for 17 seasons), the Waterloo–Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra, the Kansas City Chamber Orchestra, and the Des Moines Metro Opera Orchestra. His passion for historical performance practice led to engagements with renowned period-instrument groups such as Le Concert

Spirituel (Paris), Grands Hautbois (France), the Lyra Baroque Orchestra (Minneapolis), the Milwaukee Renaissance Band, and Bartholomew Faire (Tempe, Arizona).

Dr. Rachor's scholarly work significantly advanced the study of historical bassoons and their acoustical properties. He presented papers at major international conferences, including meetings of the Galpin Society, the American Musical Instrument Society, and the COST FP1302 WoodMusICK Project. His collaborations with physicist Dr. Bryant Hichwa (see davidrachor.com) produced essential studies on the acoustical modeling and performance characteristics of Baroque and Classical bassoons, contributing substantially to the understanding of regional and chronological variations in historical instrument design. Dr. Rachor's educational background reflected his deep commitment to the study of music performance and history.

He earned the Doctor of Music degree (with distinction) from Indiana University, where he also completed the Master of Music in Bassoon Performance. He pursued advanced study in Baroque bassoon at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris and held Bachelor of Music degrees in Saxophone Performance and Music Education from Vanderbilt University's George Peabody College. His dissertation, *German Bassoon Tone Hole Dimensions*, remains a valuable resource for scholars and instrument makers. Beyond his professional achievements, David was devoted to his family. He is survived by his beloved spouse, Dr. Sharon Hansen (UNI Music Professor 1986-1994); his brother, Richard (Meridy) and their

children; his daughter, Stephanie (Jon); and his two grandchildren, Haley (Patrick) and Ryan, in both of whom he took special pride. David was an avid traveler who delighted in exploring the natural world, from the Pacific Ocean to the Black Sea. He was a much-loved husband, brother, father, grandfather, uncle, friend, professor, mentor, scholar, researcher, bassoonist and period-instrument specialist, among his many attributes. Throughout his career, Dr. Rachor exemplified the highest standards of artistry, discipline, scholarship, and mentorship. His contributions to the performance and study of the bassoon, both modern and historical, have left a lasting impact on the field. He will be remembered for his warmth, intellect, curiosity and passion with deep gratitude and love by his family, students, colleagues, and the international music community.

The Dr. David J. Rachor Endowed Bassoon Scholarship has been established in honor of Dr. Rachor. To contribute or to learn more, call 319-273-7727.

The School of Music was also deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Jim Lubker. Dr. James (Jim) Lubker, PhD, died on June 13, 2026 in Cedar Falls. Lubker served as Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders (1995-2009), Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts (1995-2005), and interim Executive Vice President and Provost (2005-2009) at UNI. He was awarded Emeritus status in 2010. Jim was a stalwart supporter of the arts and the School of Music, and his legacy continues to have a lasting impact at UNI.

'48 Rosie (Maiden) Bolstad, BA, died 6/23/2025 in Bremerton, WA.

'53 Dean Kool, BA, died 11/9/2025 in Sylva, NC.

'53 Yvonne (McCandless) Weideman, BA, died 3/9/2026 in Vinton, IA.

'57 Mary (McClure) Roberts, BA, died 8/31/2025 in Carroll, IA.

'58 Kay Zeller, BA, died 6/27/2025 in Newport Beach, CA.

'61 Richard Sorenson, BA, died 3/24/2026 in Salem, OR.

'68 John Petersen, BA, died 10/9/2025 in Raleigh, NC.

'72 Connie (Andersen) Bengtson, BA, died 12/3/2025 in Charles City, IA.

'72 Pam (Miller) Herzberg, BA, died 4/15/2026 in Des Moines, IA.

'72 Edward Martin, MA, died 12/27/2025 in Clarksville, MO.

'78 Connie (Diekmann) Duchman, BM, MA '86, died 3/26/2026 in Cedar Falls, IA.

'80 Paul McKee, BM, died 4/28/2026 in Broomfield, CO.

'89 Doris (Adolphs) Heerts, BM, ASC '94, died 9/17/2025 in Grundy Center, IA.

Editor's note: Thank you to Amy Mohr for assistance in gathering information for this and the entire Alumni News article.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Spotlight Series

2026-2027 Performances

Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Band

Danny Galyen & Justin Mertz, conductors
Friday, October 2, 2026
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

UNI Choirs

John Wiles & Sara Blessing, conductors
Sunday, March 7, 2027
4 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Jazz Band One & Jazz Band Two

Christopher Merz & Mike Conrad, directors
Friday, October 9, 2026
7:30 p.m. Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall

Jazz Band One

Mike Conrad, director
Friday, April 23, 2027
7:30 p.m. Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall

UNI Choirs

John Wiles & Sara Blessing, conductors
Friday, October 30, 2026
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Symphonic Band

Justin Mertz, conductor
Tuesday, April 27, 2027
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra

Erik Rohde, conductor
Sunday, December 6, 2026
4 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra

Erik Rohde, conductor
Wednesday, April 28, 2027
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

UNI Holiday Concert

Featuring UNI Choirs & Jazz Band One
John Wiles & Mike Conrad, conductors
Monday, December 7, 2026
7:30 p.m. CCG Great Hall, GBPAC

Wind Ensemble

Danny Galyen, conductor
Monday, May 3, 2027
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.



FROM THE UNI Foundation

The School of Music stands apart for many reasons. Nationally recognized for excellence, it is one of only a select number of accredited music programs in the nation through the National Association of Schools of Music. Here in Iowa, we prepare more music educators for the state's schools than any other college or university. Our alumni have achieved distinction across the globe as performers, composers, conductors, educators, writers and arts leaders, extending UNI's influence far beyond our campus.

million has been directed toward scholarships, \$8.27 million has supported programs and initiatives, and more than \$2 million has established professorships that help attract and retain exceptional faculty. Perhaps most significantly, donors have created 49 new endowments totaling \$11.7 million. These endowed gifts will provide support in perpetuity, ensuring that future generations of students will continue to benefit from the same transformative educational experiences that have defined the School of Music for decades.

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.

A Legacy of Excellence, A Future of Opportunity

As I write this article, we are in the final months of our sesquicentennial celebration and the Our Tomorrow Campaign. While 2026 marks 150 years of the University of Northern Iowa's history, it also brings two additional milestones worth celebrating. This year, the Campanile reaches its 100th anniversary, and the UNI-Dome celebrates 50 years as two of the university's most recognizable landmarks. Both structures have become enduring symbols of UNI and help make our campus unique and special. Those same words—unique and special—come to mind when I think about the School of Music.

Yet, what truly makes the School of Music special is not found in rankings, statistics or accolades. It is found in our people. For generations, our faculty have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to helping students discover their potential, develop their talents and achieve their goals. They invest their time, expertise and passion into every student who enters our classrooms, rehearsal halls and performance venues. They mentor, encourage, challenge and inspire, creating an environment where students can thrive both as musicians and as individuals.

That commitment to excellence has shaped the School of Music's legacy, but it has also been strengthened by another group of dedicated supporters—our alumni and friends. The opportunities available to our students today would not be possible without philanthropic support. Throughout the Our Tomorrow Campaign, more than 1,800 alumni and friends have invested nearly \$13.9 million in the future of the School of Music. Of that total, \$3.57

These remarkable investments are more than numbers on a page. They represent opportunities for students to pursue their dreams, perform at the highest levels, gain life-changing experiences and prepare for meaningful careers in music and education. To all who have contributed to the School of Music, thank you. Your generosity is making a lasting difference, and your belief in our students is helping to shape the future of music education and performance at UNI.

As we celebrate our university's historic milestones and look toward the future, we are grateful for the many individuals who continue to make the School of Music such a special place. Together, we are building on a proud legacy while creating new opportunities for generations to come.

Dan Breitbach

Senior Director of Development
College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences



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 2025-2026:

See page 15 for Scholarship Benefit Concert donors.

Zoe Abrahamson	Jessica Crouch	Kevin & Liz Graves
Peter Adamson	Christine Dale & Clair Franzen	Pamela Griffel
Donna & Chad Adelmund	George & Dawn De Bord	Brenna Griffin Burnett & John Burnett
Jason & Jennifer Allen	Gerald & Connie Deaver	Gowri & Sanjay Gulwadi
Aaron & Dani Anderson	Donna Degenhardt	Joel & Linda Haack
Shelli Andreski	Brad & Terri Dehoff	Nancy Hagen
Joel Andrews	Carol Deppe	Mark & Sharon Hannasch
Randy & Kathy Atkinson	Roberta K. Deppe & Andrew Stephen Gibson	Daniel K. Hanson
Pamela Baker	James Dewit	Maureen & Leonard Hanson
Mike Barr & Jill Brees Barr	Neil & Merna Donald	Andrew T. Haring
Jason Bauer & Tamara Veenstra	Mattie Dooley	Mary Harken
Elaine & C. Russ Baughman	Levi & Julie Dressler	Jackie Harrill
Mary Baumgartner	David & Lonna Drewelow	Michael & Patricia Harrington
Doris Beck Sjolund	Kevin & Michelle Droe	Tia Heien
Bruce & Ruth Bengtson	Annastasia M. Dunnwald	Louis R. Hellwig
Lori A. Blauwet	LeLoie Dutemple	Janet Henderson
Paul & Missy Boeke	Willa Eacret	Linda Hockett
Brian & Holly Boerhave	Patrice Ewoldt	James & Jennifer Hoelscher
Sara & Jeff Borland	Mark & Bonnie Farland	Randy Hogancamp & Jane Whitehead
Melinda Boyd	Brannon Fells	Cheryl Holub
Walter & Teresa Brandt	Therese Fetter	Nicki & Brian Inman
Dan Breitbach	Dana & Jay Firkins	Austin Jacobs & Hannah Howland Jacobs
Ruthellen Brooks	Dr. Angeleita Floyd & Dr Scott Cawelti	Allan & Julee Jacobson
Kenneth Bruner	James & Judy Fogdall	Rich & Dee James
Maxine Buhr	Marlys Folkers	Aaron Janaszak
Suzanne Bullard & Tim Purdum	Patricia Iris Foorman	Diane Jepsen
Jason & Stacey Burmeister	Stephen Fortgang	Jim & Wendy Jermier
Tamarra Byrd	Debra Frahm-Reichow & Dr. Al Reichow	Emma Kacer
R.B. Campbell	Ann Francis	Lilly Kallenberger
Joyce Capps	Caroline & Justin Francis	Ned & Rachael Kelly
Milianna N. Carlson	Dr. Mary Franken	Vey L. Kidney
Logan Chaloupka	Jennifer & Troy Garrett	Beth & Scott Kirkevold
Carolyn Christman	Patricia Gadelmann	Kennedy Kisling
Paul & Jeri Clark	Kori & Melissa Gevaert	Michael & Emily Kisling
Kathleen Coffin	Ron & Betty Giddings	Joseph Kopacz
Laura Comstock	Jim A. Girres	David & Jane Krutzfeldt
Dorie Coughenour	David & Jaymee Glenn-Burns	Deanna Larson
Cathy Craig	Cynthia Goatley & Rebecca Burkhardt	Chad & Sally Lee
Saylar & Tracy Craig	Alex Goodman	Gracie S. Lee
Nick Croston	Tim & Marcia Gracey	William Lee

Thank you to the following supporters, who gave to the School of Music in 2025-26:

Lucille Lettow
Brandie Lien
Andrea & Michael Lindsay
Lauren Lorentzen
Chris Lorenz
Julie Lowell & Jay Lees
Eric & Heather Lukes
Brice K. Lund
Erin Martin
Marleta Matheson
Mary L. Mauer
Tony & Luann McAdams
Tony McAvan
Patricia McClure-Anderson &
James Anderson
Suzanne McDevitt
Neal & Diane McIntosh
Omar Mena
Christopher Merck
Todd & Lynette Meyer
Anthony James Michael
Kathryn Mikesh Houser & Ray Dennis
George Miller
Karen & John Miller
Betty Mitchell
Daniel & Linda Mixdorf
Juan Morales
Colleen & Jarvis Mulholland
Alexis Munsell
Thomas Nass
Thomas & Lynn Nehls
Wendy & David O'Connor
James Oleson
Janet Olsen
Janice Olsen
Sarah & Todd Parsons
Matthew & Blair Patterson
Annette Pease
Gary A. Peters
Michael D. Peterson
AJ Plummer & Marta Petermann

Stanley & Patricia Podhajsky
Hannah Porter-Occeña & Ryan Occeña
Morris Pounds
Wayne & Lauren Prime
James L. & Bonnie L. Raasch
Michael & Linda Reberry
Dennis & Julie Reidel
Ben Richardson
Haley Roorda
Janice Rosauer
Ronald Ross & Jane Mullens Ross
Laurie & Terry Routt
Julie Sandell
Marlene Schmidt
Lance Schmitt
Alan & Dana Schmitz
Anna Schuessler
Gary D. Seaberg
Jonathan Seaberg
Stephen Seaberg
Mary Ellen Settle
Tom & Jane Shea
Dee Silver, MD
Carole Singleton Henkin
Nathan Smith
Scott & Claudia Smith
Warren Snook
Jacob Snyder
Philip & Sachi Snyder
Richard Allen Sorenson
Mitchell & Katherine Sparks
Elizabeth A. Stanish
Amanda Staver
David & Karen Takes
Phil Tetzloff & Linda Holvik
Timothy & Christina Thompson
Meredith & Conner Tipping
Joan Trapp
Michael Tuftee
Tyler Tweeten

Brett Umthun & Megan
Assenmacher-Umthun
Dianne Van Gorp
Gayle Van Hooser
Abby Voshell
Olivia Walley
Acelia Watts
Jacqueline & John Weaver
Elizabeth Weimer
Hunter L. White
Lucille Whitehead
Robert & Rachelle Wiersma
Virginia Wilber & Matthew Gibbon
John Wiles
Bruce & Catherine Wilson
Rebecca & Travis Wilson
Bryant D. Wright
Debra Yellick Manly
Rachelle C. Yousefi
Anonymous Donors

Corporate Sponsors, Funds and Trusts *(includes matching gifts and in-kind donations)*

Charlotte & William Hinson Charitable
Foundation
Foster Family Charitable Fund
GoDaddy for Good
Hatfield Revocable Living Trust
Hurban Family Fund
IBM Corporation
Intel Foundation
James L. Wright Revocable Trust
Koch Construction
Lynne Suzanne Trapp Fuller Trust
Patricia L. Geadelmann Revocable Trust
Pella Corporation
Presser Foundation
Raytheon Technologies
The Siders Foundation
Thrivent Financial
Winston & Emma Lou Mettke Fund
Xcel Energy

Editor's note: thank you to Mindy Schlader for her help with this article.

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
4025 Bartlett
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.
- \$ _____ **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, and guest artist funding.
- \$ _____ **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.
- \$ _____ 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.

My (or my spouse's) company, _____ (name), will match my gift.
☐ (Please contact your HR office for details and matching gift form to be submitted with payment.)

Type of Payment:

☐ Check: enclosed, payable to the UNI Foundation ☐ Credit Card: please charge my card
☐ Please complete card information below.

☐ One time gift amount _____ or ☐ contribute monthly \$ _____ beginning (mo/yr) ____/____

Signature (required) _____ Date _____

Credit card information will not be kept on file 100745

Charge my: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express _____

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

////// Snapshots



Over 100 high school students gather on the Gallagher Bluedorn stage for the All-State Strings Workshops, Oct. 2025.



Alum Tim Crumley (right) takes a bow after a performance with New York Voices.



Several Emeritus members gathered for a visit in Cedar Falls, fall 2025. Pictured (L to R) Marilou Kratzenstein, Diane Vallentine, Robin Guy, Jonathan Chenoweth, John Vallentine, Scott Cawelti, Jane Whitehead, Randy Hogancamp, Marleta Matheson and Angeleita Floyd.



Faculty artists (L to R) Erik Rohde, Vakhtang Kodanashvili, Amanda McCandless and Jamie Clark following their performance of Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time," Nov. 2025



School of Music faculty and staff gather for a photo at the fall back to school retreat, Aug. 2025



Faculty artist Mike Conrad leads a student group in rehearsal for a video recording project, May 2026.



Members of the UNI student chamber group Violette Quartet perform in Des Moines at UNI Day at the Capitol, March 2026.



School of Music
115 Russell Hall
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0246



rhythms SCHOOL of MUSIC

 UNISchoolofMusic

 @unischoolofmusic

 @UNI_SOM

MUSIC.UNI.EDU