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Rhythms

Music at the University of Northern Iowa

Volume 41, Fall 2022

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

I look forward to sharing some of the accomplishments that were achieved by students and faculty in the School of Music during the previous academic year, featured in this edition of Rhythms!

As many have stated, trying to move operations back to a more normal setting came with its own challenges. While the majority of live performances resumed, the number of interruptions due to individual or clusters of COVID cases presented new challenges. As any musician will understand, suddenly having an unexpected hole in an ensemble at concert time can have a significant impact. Classes were often disrupted in the same manner by student or instructor cases. In perhaps the most extreme case, less than a week before leaving on a European tour, the ensemble’s director tested positive and was not able to travel with the group. One of our newest colleagues stepped in to cover until the ensemble’s regular conductor could join the group midway through the tour.

In another example, we had three ensembles on tour in Greece, Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary at the same time. At one point, we had students quarantined in 3 different countries! There were enough music faculty on the trips that allowed for individual faculty to stay with the clusters of students to assist and make sure everyone got home safely – which they did! Even this challenge was overcome and all ensembles had highly successful tours with some outstanding performances along the way!

Whenever situations arose, someone stepped in to help, because as the saying goes, “The Show Must Go On.” The various challenges gave the School of Music the opportunity to demonstrate how to work as an ‘ensemble cast’ and ensemble skills are what we do best!

As you will see in the following pages, the show DID go on with many outstanding performances and events. Of particular interest were the launch of two new concert series in the School of Music. One was the New Music Festival which is planned as an annual event and had its first highly successful presentation this year. The other is the Joyce Gault Piano Recital Series which is funded by a generous gift from Margaret Bradford. Margaret was a community member who was interested in studying piano and Joyce took the time to give her piano lessons – for 16 years! Margaret honored the gift of Joyce’s time, expertise and passion to share with others the joys of music-making through this gift in her memory. We look forward to many years of terrific piano recitals like the ones offered this year as part of the Joyce Gault Piano Recital Series.

As you know, the Campanile and its Carillon are central to the image and spirit of UNI. They will turn 100 years old in 2026, just a few years from now. As hard as it is to imagine, after two years under construction, August 2022 represents the first time that we have owned a full-size practice carillon. Members of the UNI Guild of Carillonneurs can now practice without having a large portion of Cedar Falls listening in! The beautiful new practice carillon will be enjoyed by students for generations to come.

With each year, we see some changes in our personnel. This year there was significant turnover in our office staff. Three of our staff took advantage of opportunities for advancement on campus and we have been joined by excellent new colleagues who you will be introduced to in the coming pages.

Like so many public institutions, the School of Music and UNI are facing challenges in a rapidly changing higher education landscape. These range from changing demographics impacting the incoming classes to financial strains brought on by many factors including the pandemic. Regardless, the School of Music will continue to be successful because of our ‘ensemble cast’ approach. We also rely on you, our friends and supporters as part of our ‘ensemble.’ We greatly appreciate the continued support you offer in so many ways and look forward to continue earning that support going forward!
On the Road Again:

Music Ensembles Tour Europe

After many postponements and a rollercoaster of emotions surrounding international travel and COVID-19, our music ensembles were thrilled to be able to hop a plane and tour again. Many of the challenges and surprises are outlined in our Director’s letter (see page 2), but that didn’t stop our students from having exceptional, life-changing music-making experiences.

The Cecilians and Varsity Glee Club traveled to Greece, while the Wind Ensemble embarked on a tour through Prague, Vienna and Budapest. Choir performances were held in Nauplion and Athens, including concerts at the Ark of the World and the Athens War Museum. The Wind Ensemble performed at Suk Hall of the Pardubice Conservatory in Czechia, VHS Rudolfsheim-Funhaus in Austria, and University Concert Hall, Széchenyi University of Győr and Mako at the Hagymaház (Onion House) Theatre in Hungary.

Graduate student Keegan Hutchinson shared, “After waiting two years for this trip, one bachelor’s and one master’s degree later, I was beyond excited to hear that the trip was back on.” Recent UNI graduate Jaime Krankavitch, a returning member of the Cecilians, agreed, “When the trip was canceled in 2020, it was devastating. I am so thankful for Dr. Kotsonis and all those involved in getting us to travel this year.”

“Greece was beautiful in its rich history and architecture,” Jaime continued. “It was a true honor experiencing it all in person. Though, singing and sharing music with Greek singers was the greatest opportunity of all.”

“Being able to share our music and love for music with people across the world brought an overwhelming sense of joy to us all and it was an opportunity that will stay with us all forever,” Hutchinson said. 

Editor’s note: thank you to Amy Kotsonis, Danny Galyen, Keegan Hutchinson and Jaime Krankavitch for their help with this article.
Standing at the center of campus, the Campanile is at the heart of our shared UNI experience. For many, the Campanile is synonymous with Campaniling, the tradition of gathering on Friday night of Homecoming at the base of the tower to kiss your significant other — maybe even a stranger — at the stroke of midnight. Campaniling embodies the excitement of the UNI experience and the joy of gathering together to celebrate our pride in being Panthers.

But the significance of the Campanile to the University of Northern Iowa goes beyond any singular tradition. Throughout nearly 100 years, the Campanile has served as a living memorial to all that we hold dear: an expression not just of our joy, our love and our pride for UNI, but also our hunger for change and even our sorrows. The Campanile has been the gathering place for everything from graduation portraits and marriage proposals, to political protests and vigils for friends and fellow Panthers whom we have lost.

And through it all, we’ve experienced the constant ring of the carillon, the instrument contained within the belfry of the Campanile. Carillonneurs from across the world have traveled to our campus to play the bells. Today’s School of Music students who form the UNI Guild of Carillonneurs have the unmatched opportunity to do the same, experiencing one of the oldest and largest instruments in existence.

Fall 2021 brought an exciting, new opportunity for our students in the Guild of Carillonneurs: a chance to learn and to practice. In late September, a new practice carillon was installed in Jebe Hall at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. The instrument is entirely handmade by the Meeks, Watson & Company, bell founders and carillon builders from Georgetown, Ohio. The instrument took a little more than two and a half years from order to final delivery. It will be a great addition for our carillon performers so that they can develop and refine their skills before performing at the top of the Campanile for everyone to hear!

Did the Campanile or carillon play a part in your UNI story? Join us in supporting the Campanile fundraising campaign. This effort will bring the first capital improvements to the Campanile in nearly 30 years, and the first upgrades to the carillon since 1968, when the instrument was updated from a 15-bell chime to a 47-bell carillon. The project consists of two main components: restoring the carillon and reviving the Campanile Plaza.

Editor’s note: thank you to Nicholas Fisher, Hillary Oberle and Jeff Funderburk for their contributions to this article.

To find out more about the campanile and carillon renovation, visit:  
ourtomorrow.uni.edu
New Music Festival

The UNI School of Music held its second annual New Music Festival March 10-12, 2022.

The festival featured guest composer and performer Molly Joyce, and accordionist Branko Džinović as well as UNI faculty and student performers.

The festival included three concerts and two composition seminar lectures. All events were free and open to students as well as the UNI and Cedar Valley community. From electronics-inspired songs to virtuosic tour-de-force new music, the festival concert performances spanned a dazzling array of artistry, aesthetics and appeal, and offered a thrilling celebration of new music on the UNI campus.

The festival was coordinated by UNI faculty artists Sang Koh, assistant professor of violin, Kramer Milan, former instructor of percussion, and Daniel Swilley, assistant professor of music.

Reflecting on the uniqueness of the festival, in relation to the usual works studied and performed in the School of Music, Koh said: “While it is important to know where we have been, it is just as important to appreciate where we are so that we can gain glimpses into what is possible in the future.”

The New Music Festival samples the music of today to give audiences insights into the immense potential of music going forward, particularly when it can be created, shared, and enjoyed by anyone,” Swilley added. “The music of our time does not enjoy the same level of exposure as the music of centuries past. It is commonplace to attend concerts where not a single piece on the program was composed in the last 50 or even 100 years. We need events like the New Music Festival to showcase the vibrant and diverse output of living composers! We need the art of our time - the art generated by the human condition of our time.”

Milan agreed, adding: “There simply has never been this assembly of performers, composers, and artists together in a room. Music for voice, electronics, accordion, large and small ensembles alike, and music never before heard. This festival has something for everyone.”

Editor’s note: thank you to Sang Koh, Daniel Swilley and Kramer Milan for their contributions to this article.

New Music Ensemble Launched at UNI

The 2021-22 academic year was the first year of the New Music Ensemble (NME) at UNI. The NME launched in the fall semester as an instrumental ensemble option for students requiring no audition or previous new music experience. NME is focused on the music of our time and related practices: Sound Painting (a live-composing sign language),free improvisation, contemporary playing techniques, non-traditional scores (graphic and animated scores as well as game pieces), open instrumentation works, student composed works, commissioned works, and standard contemporary literature.

While no dedicated NME concerts were scheduled this year, it was still a busy year. The NME performed on both fall and spring Student Composer’s Concerts, the UNI 2022 New Music Festival, and on a student composer’s senior recital.

In the fall, the ensemble held an open recording session/concert to record student composed and commissioned works. In the spring, NME hosted New Music Festival guest artist Branko Džinović who presented on and workshopped free improvisation sessions. In addition to many Sound Painted works, the NME performed works by Robert Gross, Levi Rees, Tom Johnson, Caleb Self, and Tristan Perreault.

The goals for NME are to increase literacy and engagement with contemporary music and provide students experience with preparing and shaping works that don’t have a performance practice.

To that end, the group commonly discusses and experiments with how to maximize clarity and balance, as well as provide trajectory for the works they are preparing. In Sound Painting and free improv, the ensemble discusses approaches to organizing a composition or session to increase coherence, ensemble interactivity, and provide a narrative for the work. This collaborative approach to music-making yields an ever-increasing musical sensitivity, maturity, and awareness in the ensemble which is amazing to observe. Students show both comfort and command of their musical contributions as ensemble members and as conductors/Sound Painters.

Plans for the future focus on keeping the quality of music, engagement, and student experience high, as well as increasing awareness in the community about the ensemble. Dedicated concerts are scheduled for both fall and spring in 2022-23. These will be joint concerts with the Laptop Ensemble (another new ensemble on campus). The ensemble also plans to contribute to the 2023 New Music Festival, and to continue collaboration with the composition studio, providing opportunity for both student performers and composers to collaborate in the creation of new works.

Editor’s note: thanks to Daniel Swilley for his contribution of this article.
After a year of presenting concerts only through pre-recorded and livestreamed online performances for all of 2020-21, UNI Opera students and faculty were thrilled to return to the stage and to perform for live audiences in 2021-22.

The season opened with Glitter or Gold? – a new spin on the traditional opera aria concerts where the audience chooses which piece each artist will sing. Upon arrival at the November performances, audience members were given the opportunity to vote on the piece they wanted each artist to sing.

The concerts served as a fundraiser for UNI Opera as well, and audience members who saw their favorite piece as an option for a singer and wanted to increase the odds of it being selected to perform were able to purchase additional votes to tip the scales, while supporting the UNI opera program.

Immediately following the arias concerts, opera and orchestra students began work preparing for a series of late January performances of Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas.

This was the first full production by UNI Opera on the Gallagher Bluedorn main stage since 2018.

Audiences raved about the performances of this classic work, which recounts the legendary story of the widowed Queen of Carthage and her Trojan guest, Aeneas.

Later in the spring, the second annual In the Studio performance was held. In the Studio celebrates art and music, and the inspiration and connectedness found between the two.

Opera Director Richard Gammon worked with students to select works, then each performer was asked to select a piece of art that they felt resonated with their aria.

UNI Gallery of Art Director Darrell Taylor assisted students in viewing and selecting works from the UNI collection either found in the gallery or in the collection database.

Able to present this year’s event live and in-person in the UNI Gallery of Art, student musicians and Taylor introduced each piece with a brief discussion of the artwork selected – why the singer selected the piece, the meaning and connection to their aria, and the relevance to the story they were telling with their performance.

The final opera performances of the year were offered in early May, with the presentation of Mozart and The Guise, an all-Mozart program.

When asked, “Why Mozart?” graduate opera student Gabbi Flannery noted: “Mozart is known for creating elaborate opera plots, including elements of misinformation or trickery, and commenting on societal morality. From our program, Mozart conceals vital information in Die Zauberflöte to confuse both his protagonists and his audience. Mozart employs disguises as major plot elements in The Marriage of Figaro and Così fan Tutte. The characters from The Impresario, based on individuals Mozart knew from Court, try to conceal information from other characters to preserve their reputations. Mozart ends Don Giovanni by sending his central figure into hell for his lawless lifestyle. The excerpts on this program present elements of Mozart’s elaborate plots, trickery, and moral commentary in differing genres, demonstrating Mozart’s expansion of operatic story telling.”

Glitter or Gold? and In the Studio will return in 2022-23, along with a fall opera workshop performance, and the spring world premiere of a newly commissioned opera The Beehive.

To learn more visit opera.uni.edu.
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. We were thrilled to be able to host more guest artists on campus in-person again, after several semesters of connecting only online and at a distance. Through hands-on master classes, 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.

**Fall 2021**

Yu-Fang Chen, violin
Karel Keldermans, carillon
Jacob Tews, viola
icarus Quartet
David Earll, tuba
Sam Keehn, trombone
Scott Muntefering, lecturer

**Spring 2022**

Francisco Javier Gutierrez Juan, conductor
Erin Holmes, conductor
Tom Bankert, conductor
Phil Pierick, saxophone
Melissa Aldana, saxophone
Gene Pokorny, tuba

The Neave Trio
Molly Joyce, composer and performer
Branko Džinović, accordian
David Higgs, organ
Winston Choi, piano*
Jennifer Wharton, trombone
Jan Berry Baker, saxophone
Rebecca Burkhardt, conductor
Anthony Padilla, piano*
Amadi Azikiwe, violist, violinist and conductor
Daniel Rowland, tuba
Karel Keldermans, carillon
Jamie Lipton, euphonium
Kenneth Thompkins, trombone
Zoran Jakovcic, viola

* These concerts, along with performances by faculty artists Andrea Johnson and Vakhtang Kodanashvili, were featured on the newly launched Joyce Gault Piano Concert Series. To learn more about the series and its origin, see the Director’s letter on page 2. The series will return in 2022-23!

Guest artist funds for 2021-22 were supported in part or in full by the Joyce Gault Piano Concert Series Fund, the Dorothea and Robert W. Dean Visiting Artist Fund, the Howard and Mary Easter Quasi-Endowment, the Charles and Marleta Matheson Endowed Scholarship/Artists Fund, the Beach Guest Artist Fund, the Florence Christianson Scholarship, Spotlight Series patrons, the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences and the UNI School of Music. The School of Music continues to extend its gratitude for these contributions.
How do you capture the majesty of the unknown, the companionship of a team, and the excitement of new discoveries with a 60-second music clip? This is the question UNI School of Music alumni Dino Kudic ('22) tried to answer.

Since 2019, teams of undergraduate science majors from the Departments of Biology, Chemistry and Biochemistry, and Earth and Environmental Science have been scientifically exploring Wind Cave cavern in Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota as part of a NASA funded research project. Along with the science team, students from the UNI Department of Communication and Media followed the science teams to film and produce a series of mini-documentaries. Team members spent as long as seven hours underground alternating between crawling through tight passages and walking through large chambers to better understand the environment that allows life to thrive in the deepest parts of the cavern.

As the production of the mini-documentaries began to wind down in the fall of 2021, a few final touches were needed, including adding music that would both capture the spirit of the films, but not overwhelm the story. Enter UNI music major: Dino Kudic.

While the power of the internet has made it possible for thousands of artists to release copyright free music for exposure, the Wind Cave media team wanted to keep the films a UNI feature. As luck would have it, one of the science team members knew of Kudic’s work and connected him with the media team. The result: a series of short films produced by UNI students, on science being done by UNI students, featuring music composed by UNI students highlighting the talents of five different departments/schools in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Science. In total, Kudic scored seven different short films that are now featured on the Astrobiology Underground YouTube channel.

Most compositions UNI music majors are requested to write need to be able to stand on their own as a body of work. Scoring a piece of music to a film presented a unique set of challenges. When asked about his process, Kudic said he would start by first watching the six-to-eleven-minute video multiple times to get the feel for the video and the individual film needs for music. Where a video felt like it needed a 30-second music piece, he would craft a short piece that could be introduced, played, and concluded that would be enjoyable to listen to without overshadowing the action in the video.

From short “plucky notes” to embody the dripping water from the cave ceiling to grand orchestra sounds to capture the spirit of adventures hiking through the Black Hills, Kudic produced a wide range of mini-musical marvels that deftly capture Wind Cave National Park. When asked about any recommendations for others composing soundtrack music, Kudic commented “[The composition] can’t be all about the music. It’s there to support the video.”

In a field where compositions have to balance between forgettable ‘background music’ and overly developed themes that distract from the viewing experience, Kudic’s work is a beautiful example of what it means for a piece to be both memorable as a music piece and supportive as a film score. The film viewer is left with both the visual memory of the story and a short earworm that lingers after, making the impact of the collaboration a more memorable experience. This weaving together of music, media, and science into one project is a true showcase of the talents that all UNI students have.

Editor’s note: thanks to Dr. Joshua Sebree for his contribution of this article.
With COVID-19 fears and restrictions fading, the 2021-2022 school year was a busy one.

At the end of the last school year, Jazz Bands One and Two, along with each of its six combos, went to the studio to produce a recording documenting their work from the previous year. That recording is now available on Bandcamp.

In addition, the student combo Bad News (Tyler Utter, Johnny Hartleip, Luke Sanders, Max McBride, Michael Gedden and Jackson Schou) released a full-length recording entitled We Get That a Lot, featuring seven original compositions.

In summer 2021, the Iowa Jazz Composers’ Orchestra (IJCO), led by Michael Conrad, recorded an EP, The Fertile Soil, documenting Conrad’s four-movement suite by the same name. Also featured as soloists on that recording are UNI faculty members Anthony Williams and Christopher Merz. The Bad News and IJCO albums are available wherever digital music is distributed.

In October, Dr. Conrad was back in the studio, this time with his trio including bassist Katie Ernst and drummer Cassius Goens. The trio also stopped by campus for a performance and workshop in the Jazz Studio. Continuing our series of runout concerts to Waterloo high schools, the three student big bands visited East High School, where Jazz Band One was joined onstage by six East High student soloists.

The spring semester started off with a visit from the quartet, Facing West, in February, followed by the Tallcorn Jazz Festival and Sinfonian Dimensions in Jazz (SDIJ) concerts. SDIJ artist, tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana, gave two outstanding clinics to festival participants, in addition to soloing with Jazz Band One on four of her original compositions (arranged by Jim McNeeley) and an arrangement by Bob Washut.

In April, Jazz Band One hosted Grammy award-winning composer, arranger and pianist John Beasley for a three-day residency funded by the James Coffin Visiting Jazz Artist fund.

A highlight of this event was a seminar for the eleven students in the Arranging II class, several of whom submitted scores for Jazz Band One to read for Beasley’s comments. Also included on the seminar was an original composition by recent graduate Max McBride (MM in Jazz Pedagogy ’21) which the band was unable to perform last year. The visit culminated with a concert by Jazz Band One featuring Beasley’s compositions and arrangements. The concert also included premiers of both McBride’s composition and an arrangement of “Bye Bye Blackbird” by Jazz Band One’s lead trumpet player, James Mons.

Ending the year, Jazz Band One recorded four selections in the Jazz Studio for release in the fall, and traveled to Des Moines to perform for a full house at the Iowa Bandmasters’ Convention. In the audience were many UNI graduates who are now successful music educators around the state.

In May, we said goodbye to graduate students Luke Sanders and Kyle Punt, who completed the requirements for the MM in Jazz Pedagogy degree. Luke will join the faculty at Wartburg University in the fall, while Kyle will be writing and recording his first solo album and studying saxophone and mouthpiece repair. Best of luck!

Editor’s note: thanks to Christopher Merz for his contribution of this article.
The Suzuki School celebrated 46 years at UNI and continued to provide quality string instruction to area students regardless of the pandemic challenges. The School was able to offer in-person or virtual group and individual lessons options this year to students from numerous northeast Iowa communities.

Students performed on stage in Bengtson Auditorium for the fall and spring recitals and on Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center main stage for their spring concert for the first time in two years.

The Northern Iowa Youth Orchestra (under UNI alumnus John Chiles) and Northern Iowa Junior Orchestra (under UNI alumnus Todd Williams) enthusiastically returned to weekly rehearsals and brought their music to four schools and one retirement resident facility during their spring tours, and presented local concerts in Davis Hall. The program for the youth orchestra included a composition from local composer and UNI graduate Denzel Washington, *Lost Heroes of the American Revolution*. Washington traveled with the orchestra to give audiences insight into his composition.

In addition to their special guest, the youth orchestra also included a performance by the Suzuki School’s Verismo (chamber music program) scholarship quartet.

Our community outreach programs continued to explore new and innovative ways of bringing music to their students this year. Read more about the Suzuki School, UNI Community Music School, and Spectrum Project here!
Spectrum Project

For the second year in a row, the Spectrum Project provided live virtual online sessions through its program Spectrum Project Connections. Performers and buddies were able to collaborate on music, dance, drama and art activities through a series of six online and interactive sessions offered from February through April 2022.

Each week performers explored a different theme that allowed them to use their creativity to do new things – like spending a February session using their imagination to leave freezing Iowa and vacation on a beach. Each connection included music, dance and art activities specially designed by UNI student directors for virtual experiences.

In May 2022, the Spectrum Project presented the first-ever Spectrum JamFest. The JamFest was held at the River Place Plaza in downtown Cedar Falls and included live performances by 24 local bands from eight eastern Iowa schools, as well as headliners The Schmidt Brothers.

Emcee Gary Kroeger and the JamFest staff helped guests to learn more about the Spectrum Project, while a raffle, silent auction and some generous donors helped to raise funds for the program’s future.

Spectrum JamFest will return on May 20, 2023, and the Spectrum Project will be returning to in-person rehearsals in spring 2023. Registration opens October 1 at SpectrumProject.org.

Community Music School

This past year, the Community Music School was honored to be one of the 113 arts and cultural organizations in Iowa to receive an American Rescue Plans arts grant, with support from Arts Midwest and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Titled “Reinvigorating the UNI Community Music School,” the funds received were used to support salaries for directors, teachers, and accompanists of ensembles and group activities that were most negatively affected by the pandemic.

Each of these programs add to the cultural richness in the Cedar Valley through public performances, workshops and camps. During the past year, the Community Music School programming reached members in over 20 cities and communities in Iowa, with over 200 participants.
Join us for the UNI School of Music’s 41st annual

Scholarship Benefit Concert

Friday, September 23, 2022, 7:30 p.m.
Live on the Gallagher Bluedorn main stage

We’re thrilled to welcome you back to the main stage at the Gallagher Bluedorn for the 41st Annual Scholarship Benefit Concert: An American Portrait! We’re planning an evening of exceptional performances by UNI faculty and students, featuring works by American composers and arrangers, highlighting the unique and diverse landscape of American music.

The concert will include performances by the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, UNI Opera, Wind Ensemble, Concert Chorale, and Jazz Band One, with featured faculty artists Jeff Brich, Suzanne Hendrix-Case, John Hines, Andrea Johnson and Jean McDonald.

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

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. To become a special donor, contact the School of Music office at #115 Russell Hall by calling (319) 273-2024 or visiting music.uni.edu/sbc.

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All contributions and ticket costs for the Scholarship Benefit Concert are tax deductible.
Thank you to our donors
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Congratulations to all of our award-winning and honor-earning students!
School of Music Earns 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 follows:

Honors & Scholars Program Students:
Marcos Antunez, Carissa Blumka, Emily Clouser, Jetta Colsch, Max Coon, Zoe Fiddelke, Emma Gardner, Emma Hawkinsion, Riley Jermer, Elias Phipps, Alayna Ringsby, Rylee Scheel, Aidan Shorey, Morgan Stumpf and Rachel Vaughan.

Presidential Scholars:
Jetta Colsch, Emma Gardner and Alayna Ringsby.

The School of Music would also like to congratulate the School of Music students who appeared on the fall 2021 and spring 2022 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, and congratulations to all of our award-winning and honor-earning students!

Editor’s note: thank you to Ann Bradfield, Heather Peyton, Brenda Hackenmiller and Ben Thessen for their help with and contributions to this article.

Ben Thessen

Ben Thessen is a Music Technology major with a minor in Jazz Studies from Indianola, Iowa. Ben studies trumpet under Dr. Randy Grabowski, but also spent several semesters studying organ under Dr. Randall Harlow. He has performed with the UNI Wind Ensemble, as well as UNI Jazz Band One, and was also a musician in the pit orchestras for UNI Theater’s productions of Cabaret and Cinderella.

When asked about his favorite course, Ben said, “that would likely either be Trumpet Seminar with Dr. Grabowski, or the Music and Technology course taught by Dr. Funderburk and Prof. Shortway.”

During his time at UNI, Ben was also active in Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, serving as the chapter’s Fraternal Education Officer, the UNI Guild of Carillonneurs, as an active performer, The School of Music Advisory Board, as the Music Technology Representative, as well as various chamber ensembles and small groups.

“I think that my favorite part about studying at UNI has been experiencing the musical community here,” Ben noted. “Through the friends that I have made at UNI, I have been able to experience so many different types of music that I never knew existed. I have so many memories of hanging out in the music buildings between classes or late at night with my friends, talking about some aspect of music theory, or composition, or just musicians that we liked and why we enjoyed them. Becoming friends with all of these great musicians has been an incredibly educational experience for me, and I’ve learned just as much from the people in the School of Music as I have from the actual classes.”

While Ben has learned and grown thanks to many teachers and friends at UNI, one in particular made the biggest impact. “Dr. Grabowski has by far been the most influential person during my time at UNI. He is an incredibly thoughtful and understanding person, and he truly cares deeply about each and every one of his students. He made me feel like part of a community from the moment I first stepped in his office, and the lessons that I learned from him have made me a better musician. But more importantly, [those lessons] have helped make me a more well-rounded version of myself. It isn’t much of a stretch to say that I would be a completely different person had I not met Dr. Grabowski.”

Following his graduation in 2022, Ben plans to pursue a job in the music technology field, ideally somewhere in the Midwest. He also plans on maintaining an active performance schedule, and hopes to be involved with local community bands and other groups.

Student Spotlight

Ben Thessen

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Our recent graduates are doing amazing things! Many are continuing on to further study, while others have already assumed teaching or other professional positions throughout Iowa, and as far away as California and Colombia. We are so proud of all that these students are achieving and we wanted to share some of the most recent news with you.

Moving on to further study:

Foteini Angeli, MM ’22, pursuing a DMA in conducting at the University of Nebraska

Ricky Latham, BM ’22, pursuing an MM in clarinet performance at Bowling Green State University

Joley Seitz, BM ’22, pursuing an MM in voice performance at UNI

Molly Thomas, MM ’22, pursuing a DMA in piano performance and pedagogy at the University of South Carolina

Music Education:

Jack Dunning, BME ’22, teaches band and jazz at Clinton Middle School

Abby Flint, BME ’22, teaches general music at Edgewood Colesburg Elementary School

Ellie Hahn, BME ’22, teaches orchestra at Central Middle School

Madeline Marsh, BME ’22, teaches K-12 vocal music in Dunkerton Community School District

Greg Novey, BME ’22, is the 5th-12th grade band director at North Linn

Luke Sanders, MM ’22, teaches at Wartburg College

Irene Swanson, BME ’22, teaches 5th grade band and 1st-5th grade general music at Windom Area Elementary in Windom, MN

Colton Whetsone, BME ’20, will move from Clinton Middle School to Winterset Middle School where he will teach 5th and 6th grade band

Music Industry Professionals, Interns and Award Recipients:

Mackenzie Dugger, BM ’20, graduated with an MM in flute performance from the University of Kansas; won principal flute with the Salina Symphony Orchestra

Jovon Eborn, MM ’22, is the Company Coordinator with the Des Moines Metro Opera

Gabbi Flannery, current MM student, sang in masterclass with Renée Flemming, June 2022; will sing the role of Musetta in La Bohème this summer at Bay View Music Festival in Michigan

Leah Gibbons, BME ’22, received the Purple and Gold Award for Meritorious Achievement

Athena-Sadé Whiteside, MM ’21, was selected to participate in the Young Artist Program with Cedar Rapids Opera

Mason Bush BME ’25, Nic Englin BME ’22, Calista Rowe BME ’25, and Emalee Warren BME ’24, were recipients of the CHAS-HFA David Wright Sands Scholarships

Emily Paul, BA, BM ’24, was the recipient of the CHAS-HFA Clippinger-Ferrier Scholarship

Joley Seitz, BM ’22, sang in a 2022 masterclass with Renée Flemming, and received the Purple and Gold Award for Conspicuous Achievement

Brandon Whitish, MM ’22, was selected to participate in the Young Artist Program with Cedar Rapids Opera

Mason Bush BME ’25, Nic Englin BME ’22, Calista Rowe BME ’25, and Emalee Warren BME ’24, were recipients of the CHAS-HFA David Wright Sands Scholarships

Editor’s note: Thank you to Melinda Boyd, Amy Mohr and the School of Music faculty for their help with this article.
Andrea Johnson is the Assistant Professor of Piano Pedagogy at the University of Northern Iowa where she coordinates the group piano and piano pedagogy programs. Andrea obtained her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy degree at the University of Oklahoma in 2019 where she also served as Instructor of Piano Pedagogy from 2018-2019. Her primary teachers include Jane Magrath, Barbara Fast, Claire Wachter, David Riley, Susan Chan, and Leonard Richter. Andrea also holds degrees from the University of Oregon, and Portland State University.

Andrea has enjoyed collaborative performances with faculty members at the University of Northern Iowa and University of Oklahoma and her recent invited solo and collaborative performances include Portland, Eugene, Bend, and Monmouth, Oregon, Pullman, Washington, Norman, Oklahoma, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Denton, Texas, Tucson, Arizona, and Athens and Nafplion, Greece. In May of 2022, Dr. Johnson traveled as the piano accompanist and solo performer with the UNI Cecilians Choral Group to Greece.

“My three years of teaching at UNI have been marked with challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Johnson noted. “I’ve been so impressed by the flexibility, understanding, resolve, and grit demonstrated by our student body, faculty, and administration at UNI. I’m fortunate to call myself a member of this academic community. Panther Proud!”

Dr. Johnson’s publications have been accepted in nationally and internationally distributed academic journals, as well as local music teacher association outreach journals. An article based on her dissertation entitled “The Acting System of Konstantin Stanislavski as Applied to Piano Performance” was recently published in the Piano Pedagogy Forum Online Journal and the MTNA eJournal.

Andrea recently conducted a study in collaboration with University of Northern Iowa Kinesiology professor Terence Moriarty which was accepted for publication in Frontiers in Psychology spring of 2022. An abstract and poster presentation of Dr. Johnson and Dr. Moriarty’s research findings were recently accepted at the National American College of Sport Medicine Annual Meeting and World Congress in June 2022.

Andrea presents nationally and has most recently been invited to present at the Music Teachers National Association Conference, National Center for Keyboard Pedagogy Virtual Conference, College Music Society Southern Regional Conference, Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Conference (GP3), South Carolina Music Teachers Association State Conference, and the National American College of Sport Medicine Annual Meeting and World Congress.

Committed to local outreach, Andrea regularly serves as an adjudicator and she has served as President of the Northeast Iowa Music Teachers Association from 2020-2022, and as an executive board member of the Iowa Music Teachers Association.

In her spare time, Dr. Johnson enjoys performing in local theater, and recently appeared in a production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center.

A private piano instructor, Dr. Johnson maintains a private piano studio with students in Waterloo and Cedar Falls, Iowa.

“I love the flexibility in my research and scholarship here at UNI,” Andrea said. “From performing solo piano works by living composers of color to research in collaboration with the kinesiology department, I have found support for all my varied interests at UNI. I look forward to further performances of musical works which celebrate the rich diversity within music as well as continued collaborative research in the field of kinesiology studying exercise and its positive effect on musical performance.”

Editor’s note: thank you to Andrea Johnson for her help with this article.
Faculty Activities

Alison Altstatt, associate professor of musicology/music history
- Led international workshop on medieval chant manuscript fragments for DACT (Digital Analysis of Chant Transmission), a partnership project funded by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

Korey Barrett, associate professor of vocal coaching and collaborative piano
- Celebrated his 10th anniversary as head vocal coach at Opera Neo in San Diego with productions of Le nozze di Figaro and Serse.
- Continued in the role of head vocal coach over the summer as Opera Neo embarked upon a new collaboration with the Hungarian State Opera and Orchestra in Budapest in a co-production of La finta giardiniera before returning to San Diego for a production of Ariodante.

Melinda Boyd, associate professor of music history, associate director of undergraduate studies
- Created and taught a new upper-level/graduate course: Music and Politics, Protest, and Social Justice.
- Served as external reviewer for The Journal of Artistic Research (Australia).

Michael Conrad, assistant professor of jazz studies/music education
- Released the Iowa Jazz Composers Orchestra recording of the “Fertile Soil Suite” (digital audio and video) in December of 2021. The entire suite was presented at the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and Composers Symposium in Austin, TX in May of 2022, and part IV, “Flyover,” earned a SONIC Award.
- Completed commissioned works for Georgia State University, The Greeley Philharmonic, and the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony.
- Performed on piano or trombone for over 60 professional performances locally and regionally.

Danny Galyen, professor of music, director of bands
- Led the Wind Ensemble in a European Tour that included performances in the Czech Republic, Austria, and Hungary.
Robin Guy, professor of piano
• Performed Mozart Piano Concerto in d Minor, K. 466 with the Northern Iowa Youth Orchestra and collaborated with mezzo colleague Michelle Monroe to premiere and record Jeremy Beck’s Four Songs.
• Co-chaired the Iowa Music Teachers Association conference at UNI, performing in the All-Stars Recital with her piano colleague Dr. Suzanne Torkelson from Wartburg and presenting on Piano Collaboration assisted by colleagues, Dr. Jean McDonald, mezzo and Dr. Erik Rohde, violin.
• Adjudicated Northeast Area MTA Scholarship Auditions and IMTA auditions for the Ankeny/Des Moines center.

Randall Harlow, associate professor of organ and music theory
• Performed his programmatic concert, “Meditations on the Anthropocene” at Arizona State University in Feb., 2022.
• Embarked in June, 2022 on a three-month residency in Amsterdam to develop the Global Hyperorgan, part of a Fulbright Global Scholar Award.

Suzanne Hendrix-Case, assistant professor of voice and vocology, graduate studies coordinator
• Performed in the “Suzanne Sings” concert for Cedar Rapids Opera with Sean Botkin and Anthony Williams. They performed the live debut of Nancy Cobb and Melinda Boyd’s Emma’s Adventures in Zoomland as well as operatic selections.
• Won a Grammy award for her involvement in the Metropolitan Opera’s recording of Philip Glass’s Akhnaten on which she can be heard singing the role of Sotopenre/ Daughter #6.

Michelle Monroe, instructor of voice
• Appeared as Ruth in The Pirates of Penzance with Cedar Rapids Opera in June 2022.
• Performed as the alto soloist in Elijah with the Sioux County Oratorio Chorus and Northwestern a cappella chorus in April 2022.
• Performed as Maddalena in Central City Opera’s production of Verdi’s Rigoletto in July 2021.

Hannah Porter Occéa, assistant professor of flute
• Won the 2021 Mu Phi Epsilon International Competition. Created in 1964 as the Sterling Staff Competition, the Mu Phi Epsilon International Competition offers the winner the opportunity to be presented in concerts and recitals by chapters of Mu Phi Epsilon for a period of two years.
• Published urtext edition of Sonata in D, op. 94 by Prokofiev.
• Released a new album titled Confluence, available on Amazon, Spotify and more.

Michelle Swanson, assistant professor of music education
• Conducted the Iowa Choral Directors’ Association 5th and 6th grade Honor Choir in Northwest Iowa.
• Hosted four music education workshops attended by students, alumni and current music educators from around the state.
• Published an article relating musical concepts and an original composition to literature, specifically Jacqueline Woodson’s The Year We Learned to Fly.

Theory Faculty Develop New Tools for Students

The cost of college textbooks has continued to increase much faster than inflation over the past generation. As a result, more and more university faculty have been looking for ways to break free of the textbook industry, and universities have been increasingly providing the funding necessary for faculty to make free and open learning materials for their classes, so-called Open Educational Resources (OERs).

In September 2021, music theory professors Randall Harlow, Heather Peyton, Jon Schwabe and Daniel Swilley were awarded a Regents OER Grant to create free, customized learning materials for the UNI School of Music four-semester core music theory and musicianship curriculum, replacing current required textbooks and saving new music majors in excess of $240. The Regents OER Grant is a statewide initiative made possible by the CARES Act passed by the US Congress in 2020.

Since fall 2021, the music faculty have been developing a new online OER that more thoroughly integrates written theory and musicianship training than current textbooks. The new materials will not only save students money, but will be customized specifically for the UNI School of Music and will allow students to connect new theory knowledge with singing and listening skills in a holistic and inviting way. Additionally, the modular structure of the OER will allow the theory faculty to adapt these new materials as they explore changes to the curriculum to make the core music theory and musicianship classes more inclusive of students coming from diverse musical experiences. The new OER will save students money, provide a better learning experience, and help prove that anyone, regardless of musical experience or skill, can come to UNI to gain the skills and drive necessary for a rewarding career in music.

Editor’s note: thanks to Randall Harlow for his contribution of this article.

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New Beginnings

We are excited to welcome new staff and faculty who begin their UNI journey this year, as well as one staff member whose role has changed.

Dr. Victor Acevedo
Undergraduate Program Coordinator and Advisor

Dr. Victor Acevedo has been on faculty in the School of Music, teaching theory courses since 2012. During that time, he also began advising undergraduate students. In 2021, his role changed to advising full-time when he accepted the position of Undergraduate Program Coordinator and Advisor.

A native of Puerto Rico, Victor received his BM in Music Education (Cum Laude) from the Inter American University of P.R. Dr. Acevedo received his MA and MFA degrees in Clarinet Performance, and a PhD in Music Education from The University of Iowa. While at The University of Iowa, he studied conducting with Dr. William LaRue Jones and conducted the University of Iowa Chamber Orchestra. Dr. Acevedo’s research interests include Music Perception and Cognition. In his dissertation, Dr. Acevedo took a developmental approach to study how children from different age groups listen to music and how they arrive to their preference decisions based on their perceptual, cognitive, and affective capacities.

Prior to joining the UNI faculty, Dr. Acevedo was clarinet instructor at Grinnell College. In addition, he held a position as lecturer of Music at Cornell College. During his appointment at Cornell College, Dr. Acevedo taught clarinet, music education courses, and supervised music student teachers.

Sara Hunter
Secretary III

Sara Hunter joined the School of Music as Secretary III in the Russell Hall office in September 2021. Originally from Cedar Rapids, Sara moved to the Cedar Valley area in 2015. She enjoys scrapbooking, crafts, outdoor activities, music and spending time with her family. She currently resides in Waterloo with her husband, two boys, and four furry children.

Kelsey Williams
Secretary II

Kelsey Williams joined the School of Music as Secretary II in the Russell Hall office in January 2022. Originally from Cedar Falls, she graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Iowa. After 12 years working and singing in Chicago, Kelsey and her family are thrilled to be back in the Cedar Valley.
Percussionist Josh Graham currently serves as Instructor of Percussion at the University of Northern Iowa, and is also percussionist with F-PLUS (fplusmusic.com) and the Zafa Collective. Primarily active in the creation of new works for percussion in both solo and chamber music contexts, Josh has commissioned and premiered chamber works by George Tsontakis, Jessie Montgomery, Marta Ptaszynska, Charles Peck, Emma O’Halloran, Matthew Ricketts, Matthew Barnson, Dave Hollinden, and Liza Sobel Crane, among many others. He made his concerto debut in 2014 at the Aspen Music Festival with Steve Mackey’s “Micro-Concerto,” and has commissioned or premiered new solo works by Lera Auerbach, Thomas Kotcheff, Katherine Pukinskis, Jose Miguel Arrerano, and Griffin Candey.

Josh has performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, Harris Hall (Aspen, CO), the Detroit Institute of Art, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, the Milwaukee Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Constellation, the Polish Consulate of Chicago and at dozens of universities.

In addition to his duties at the University of Northern Iowa, he serves on the faculty at the Music Institute of Chicago. He has previously taught courses at Northwestern University and the University of Michigan and served on the faculty of Triton College, Roosevelt University, and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp.

Josh holds degrees from Central Michigan University (BM), The University of Michigan (MM), and the University of Illinois (DMA). He is proud to endorse Vic Firth sticks and mallets, Marimba One instruments, Zildjian Cymbals, and Black Swamp Percussion Instruments.

Josh Graham
Instructor of Percussion

Violiast Tyler Hendrickson is a dedicated teacher and performer who is committed to helping all students achieve their fullest potential. He has been regularly praised for his ideas and understanding of pedagogy, leading to regular presentations with the Iowa String Teachers Association, the American String Teachers Association, and the Suzuki Association of the Americas. He was appointed as the Instructor of Viola at the University of Northern Iowa in 2022.

Hendrickson is a champion of music from the neglected corners of the classical tradition. This included the North American debut of the Viola Sonata by John Blackwood McEwen, and a 2019 tour featuring three mostly forgotten works from the 1919 Berkshire Competition. He has recently joined the Music by Black Composers project as a viola specialist, as they work to bring a graded curriculum of viola music from an underrepresented group of composers.

An avid chamber musician, Hendrickson was the founding violist of the Spiritooso String Quartet and helped to establish the Hilltop Chamber Music Series in Greenwich, CT.

Dr. Hendrickson is a product of the Preucil School of Music, where he received much of his pre-college training. He holds a BA in Music from Luther College, a MM from Wichita State University, and a DMA from the University of Iowa. Principal instructors include Christine Rutledge, Catherine Consiglio, Catharine Carroll-Lees, and William Preucil, Sr. Hendrickson performs on a copy of a Camillo Camilli viola completed by Arwed Harms in 2002.

Tyler Hendrickson
Instructor of Viola

Cellist Isidora Nojkovic is an active soloist, chamber, and orchestral musician. She has a passion for contemporary music and commissioning, having premiered over 50 works, and is one half of the contemporary violin/cello duo Orbit.

As an orchestral musician, she performs regularly with the Vancouver Opera, Vancouver Symphony, Illinois Symphony, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony, and the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra, among others. She was a member of the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra from 2013-2015.

Isidora has performed in chamber music festivals around the world, including the Lucerne Festival in Switzerland, Harpa Music Festival in Iceland, Ottawa Chamberfest, Belgrade International Cello Festival, Scotia Festival of Music with Lynn Harrell in Canada, and Spoleto Festival USA. She performs regularly with Vancouver’s Turning Point Ensemble, and has completed two tours with Lincoln Center Stage, performing in twenty-two countries as part of a piano quintet.

Isidora graduated with a master’s degree from Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Philippe Muller. Other former teachers include Paul Marley (University of Ottawa) and Audrey Nodwell (Vancouver Academy of Music). She is very excited to be the new Instructor of Cello at UNI for 2022-23.

Isidora Nojkovic
Instructor of Cello
Emeritus Faculty Activities

The School of Music is always excited to hear from our exceptional retired professors. 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.

David Buch – David wrote to us with an update. “On June 23, 2021 I gave a presentation on Zoom for an international meeting of scholars sponsored by the Guitar Foundation of America. I published an article ‘On the Need for a Scholarly Edition of Tárrega’s Complete Works’ in Soundboard Scholar 7. I am also preparing my edition of the piano-vocal score of the collaborative opera (including Mozart) ‘Der Stein der Weisen’ (Vienna, 1790) for A-R Editions. Publication is scheduled for fall 2022. On March 23, 2022, I gave another presentation sponsored by the Guitar Foundation of America. In other news, my spouse Lucy is now in the degree program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, making the transition from medicine to painting. How’s that for retirement?”

Rebecca Burkhartd – After relocating to Santa Fe, New Mexico, post-retirement, Dr. Burkhartd returned to Cedar Falls in the summer of 2021 to serve as musical director for the stage premiere of fellow Emeritus professor Nancy Hill Cobb’s new musical The Suffragist. Rehearsals and performances were held in the Gallagher Bluedorn and featured Tony-nominated actress Nancy Opel alongside a stellar cast which featured several School of Music alumni. She returned to Iowa in November to conduct the 75th Anniversary Concert of the Iowa All State Orchestra. She and the students performed works by Marilyn Shrode, Florence Price, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson and premiered a new work by Iowa native, Michael Daugherty. At the invitation of Dr. Erik Rohde, she returned to UNI in March to conduct a “final” concert with the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, which was cancelled due to COVID in April of 2020. She continues to compose and guest conduct, enjoying her new home in Santa Fe.

Bruce Chidester – Bruce wrote to celebrate, “Just another wonderful year, living in Texas. Karen continues to enjoy playing bridge three to four times a week as well as helping out with the popular Card Making Club. My days are now spent servicing my two web sites: trumpetensemblemusic.com and thetrumpetblog.com. When we first relocated to the Denton, Texas area, I began to establish the instrumental program here at Robson Ranch. Our activities now include several chamber ensembles and a full dance band as well as other ensembles. Now that these activities are up and running, I have begun to focus more on my two websites and have established current followers in over one-hundred and twenty countries. Retirement is highly underrated!”

Bill Shepherd – Donated over $6,000 in trombone music to the UNI trombone studio. Dr. Anthony Williams assisted with the transfer and will coordinate the use and plans for the music in the near future.

Bob Washut – Bob checked in this past summer, sharing that he is, “Still writing music, playing some gigs, and doing some clinician work, with some travel sprinkled in. Played 110+ rounds of golf the last two years and plan to keep the streak intact this year.” Bob’s composition Three Vibes for Four Vibrationists, a sax quartet commissioned by the New Third Stream Quartet, was recorded in June, and his work Air and Funk, a piece for two flutes and flute choir commissioned to honor the legacy of Angeleita Floyd, was recorded in August.
The School of Music always loves to hear from our graduates. Success stories, new projects and career or performance highlights are all welcome and celebrated!

Alumni Updates

1970s
‘71 Steven Ainsworth, BA, MA ’75, Pensacola, FL, entered his 51st year of teaching music to students. He is an adjunct professor at Pensacola Christian College.

1990s
‘94 JC Sanford, BA, Northfield, MN, released his new CD *Imminent Standards Trio, Vol. 1* on Shifting Paradigm Records on 7/23/2021. It features Sanford on trombone, Jeff Bailey on bass, and Phil Hey on drums and was funded by a Creative Support Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

2000s
‘02 Mark Scheffer, BM, BA ‘04, Sioux City, serves as senior researcher at the Baha’i International Community United Nations Office.

2010s
‘10 Nicki (Vallentine) Davis, BM, MM ’12, Cedar Falls, received the Phillip Sehmann Excellence in Teaching Award for the elementary level by the North East Iowa Bandmasters Association. She is the band director for Hansen, North Cedar and Lincoln Elementary schools.

Alumni Spotlight: Mark Scheffer

We always love to learn about the interesting and unique paths that our alumni take in their careers and Mark Scheffer (UNI ’02) is a perfect example of an unexpected and remarkable journey.

Mark Scheffer currently serves as senior researcher at the Baha’i International Community United Nations Office. In this capacity, he develops policy positions and formal statements to UN fora and other international processes. Thematic areas he follows include social and sustainable development, climate and environmental issues, poverty eradication, and global citizenship.

Mr. Scheffer has contributed to a variety of edited books, journals, and other publications. He regularly serves on delegations attending UN functional commissions, such as the Commission for Social Development, Commission on the Status of Women, and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. He also collaborates with field practitioners and subject experts around the world.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies and a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of Northern Iowa. He has lived and worked in Eswatini, southern Africa, and the Pacific islands of Samoa. He is currently based in western Iowa in the United States.

Reflecting on his time at UNI, Mark said, “I continue being grateful for getting a degree in music. In some ways I still identify as being a musician, before almost any other identity. I taught guitar lessons in Swaziland (now Eswatini), played in a jazz duo in the islands of Samoa, and played bass for a number of years in the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra, where I live now. I still instinctively analyze chord progressions in music I hear and though my wife (also a musician) and I never pushed them towards it, I’m very happy that both my children are involved in band and orchestra in school and both are music theory nerds.” Scheffer continued, “Not everyone will end up playing or even teaching music for a living, but studying it for a period of time can add much to a lifetime.”

We’re proud to congratulate Mark on his extraordinary accomplishments and look forward to cheering him on in his future endeavors.
We were sad to hear of the passing of our musical colleagues and past graduates. We send our sympathies to their families.

'41 Jane (Hofler) Ruby, BA, died 5/5/2022 in Des Moines, IA.
'42 Eleanor (Sparks) Heisey, BA, died 5/3/2022 in Raytown, MO.
'43 Virgie (Mosby) Granger, BA, died 4/25/2022 in Decorah, IA.
'55 Marilyn (Sheeley) Mehlhaus, BA, died 11/11/2021 in Waterloo, IA.
'57 Carolyn Eggleston, BA, died 2/11/2022 in DeWitt, IA.
'57 John Jones, BA, MA '65, died 3/2/2022 in Green Valley, AZ.
'58 Betty (Olinger) Winder, BA, died 4/24/2022 in Cedar Rapids, IA.
'59 Karen Bartachek, BA, died 6/13/2021 in Maquoketa, IA.
'59 Paul Lundberg, BA, died 5/5/2022 in Indianola, IA.
'60 Hal Holmstrom, BA, died 10/9/2021 in Minburn, IA.
'61 Beverly (Koch) Hogle, BA, died 3/22/2022 in Eldora, IA.
'67 Thomas Philips, BA, died 8/20/2021 in Port Lavaca, TX.
'68 Marcia (Davis) Snook, BA, died 8/7/2021 in LaPorte City, IA.
'68 Diane (Robertson) Wirkler, BA, MA '75, died 8/29/2021 in Delhi, IA.
'71 Doug Shaffer, BA, died 12/23/2021 in Janesville, IA.
'78 Mike Michalicek, BA, died 10/22/2021 in Cedar Falls, IA.
'79 Jay Luebbers, BM, died 9/16/2021 in Minneapolis, MN.
'79 Lori (Kerr) Nelson, BM, BA '85, died 10/22/2021 in Waterloo, IA.
'85 Bruce Gramowski, BM, died 7/16/2021 in Carlisle, IA.
'87 Susan Strunk Pearson, BA, died 6/11/2021 in Winter Haven, FL.
'94 Laura (Halffield) Chesher, MM, died 7/17/2021 in Winona, MN.

Editor's note: Thank you to Amy Mohr for assistance in gathering information for this and the entire Alumni News article. Further thanks to Jennifer Rieck for her contribution.
Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Band  
Danny Galyen & Justin Mertz, conductors  
Thursday, September 29, 2022  
7:30 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

Jazz Band One & Jazz Band Two  
Christopher Merz & Michael Conrad, directors  
Wednesday, October 5, 2022  
7:30 p.m. Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall

Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra  
Erik Rohde, conductor  
Thursday, October 13, 2022  
7:30 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

UNI Choirs - Family Weekend Concert  
John Wiles, conductor  
Friday, October 21, 2022  
7:30 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

UNI Holiday Concert  
Ftg. Concert Chorale, Cecilians and Jazz Band One  
Tuesday, December 6, 2022  
7:30 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

UNI Choirs Concert  
John Wiles, conductor  
Sunday, March 5, 2023  
4 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

Wind Ensemble  
Danny Galyen, conductor  
Tuesday, April 11, 2023  
7:30 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

Jazz Band Two  
Michael Conrad, director  
Wednesday, April 19, 2023  
7:30 p.m. Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall

Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra & Concert Chorale  
Erik Rohde & John Wiles, conductors  
Thursday, April 20, 2023  
7:30 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

Jazz Band One  
Christopher Merz, director  
Friday, April 21, 2023  
7:30 p.m. Bengtson Auditorium, Russell Hall

Symphonic Band  
Justin Mertz, director  
Wednesday, April 26, 2023  
7:30 p.m. Great Hall, GBPAC

Tickets for individual concerts will be $15 for adults.

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.
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.

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Supports scholarships for all music students.

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Robert Dean Memorial Endowed Scholarship – (211036-30)
Supports scholarships for instrumental education majors.

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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 performance 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.

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$ _______ 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.

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Snapshots

The Panther Marching Band performing at the 2021 Bands of America event.

Alumni Joe Finnegan, Jack Jean, Gabe Schott and Sam Nau met up at the Rose Bowl parade; each of their bands will perform in the 2023 parade.

Music student Joley Seitz performing in master class with Renée Fleming.

UNI Brass students participating in a master class with Gene Pokorny.

Alumnus Rishi Kolusu at the Rose Bowl Parade, where he led his Waukee High School band in performance.