

Noteworthy

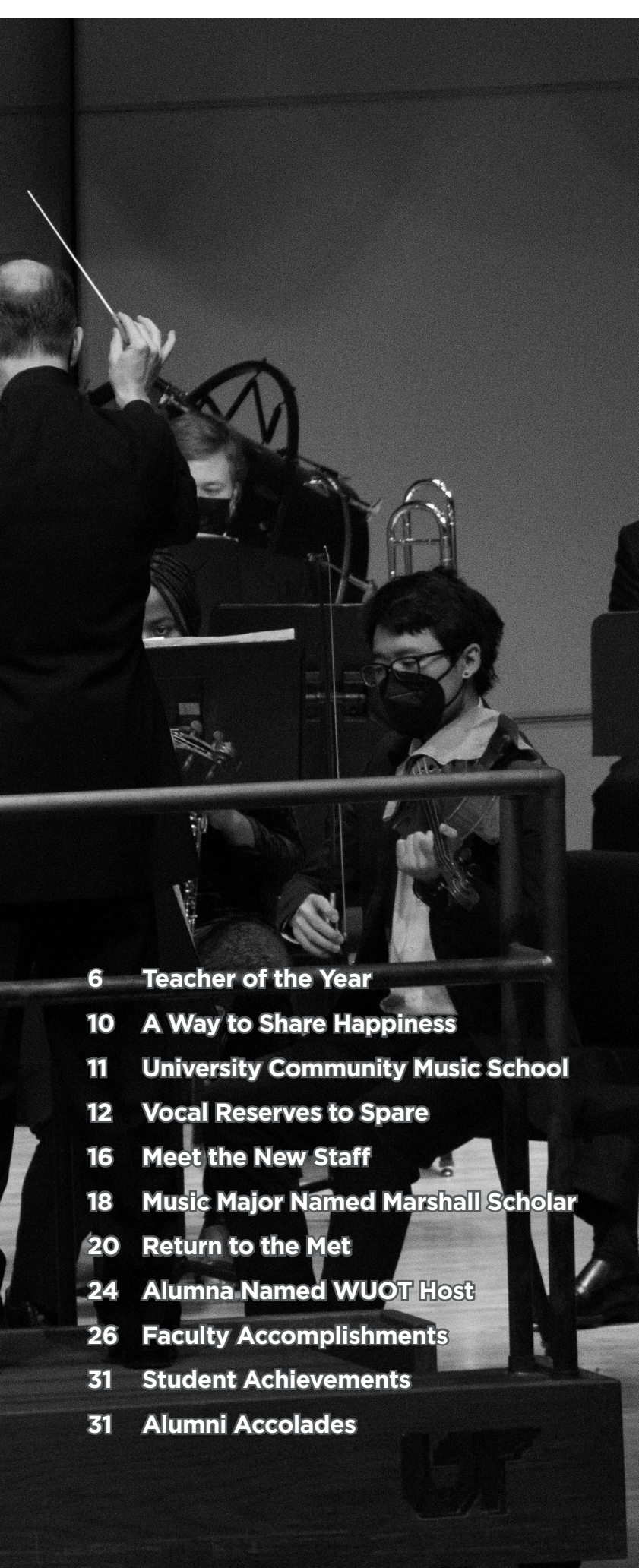
The University of Tennessee School of Music, 2022





The UT Symphony Orchestra performs in the James R. Cox Auditorium with soloist Steven Tenenbom.

Photo by Logan Judy



- 6 Teacher of the Year**
- 10 A Way to Share Happiness**
- 11 University Community Music School**
- 12 Vocal Reserves to Spare**
- 16 Meet the New Staff**
- 18 Music Major Named Marshall Scholar**
- 20 Return to the Met**
- 24 Alumna Named WUOT Host**
- 26 Faculty Accomplishments**
- 31 Student Achievements**
- 31 Alumni Accolades**



From the Director

Transitions.

We've all made them in our lives, some more joyful than others.

Since March 2020, the entire world has been in transition. Isn't it interesting what a virus can bring? Work from home. Wear a mask. Stand six feet apart. Curbside pickup. Cocktail parties on the internet. Meet via Zoom (I still think of the Brady Bunch!)

Some transitions are gentle, others not so much. Either way, they promote and often demand change. Change that none of us who have lived through this pandemic will ever forget.

I can tell you even more so than ever this year that you need to be incredibly proud of your School of Music—our outstanding students, faculty and staff. We have weathered and continue to weather the storm, hoping, like everyone else, that nonpandemic days are ahead. We have learned a lot by living through this part of history.

Some of the transitions will stay, others are fleeting, but the constant is that music, and the arts, in general, persevere. What is new? We already knew that. No pandemic will ever change that.

Jeffrey Pappas
Director of the School of Music

P.S. We are publishing *Noteworthy* later than usual this year because we will be transitioning in 2023 to an August publication. We will reflect on the previous academic year and look ahead to the new one. Be on the lookout for it!

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*Photos by Logan Judy,
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ESTER SHOT





A blurred photograph of a classroom. In the center, a teacher in a purple shirt is pointing at a whiteboard. Several students are visible, some in blue shirts. The room is decorated with framed pictures and an American flag. The text 'TEACHER OF THE YEAR' is overlaid in white on a dark grey semi-transparent rectangle.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

By Brian Canever | Photos by Steven Bridges, University of Tennessee



T

he hour before the announcement felt like one of the longest in Kami Lunsford's life. A 2006 University of Tennessee, Knoxville, alumna, she sat beside her husband, surrounded by blue, white, and gold balloons in the library of Karns Middle School. A livestream from the Tennessee Department of Education played on a laptop computer as Lunsford and eight other finalists logging in from around the state waited.

The speaker on-screen quoted from an essay Lunsford, a 16-year music teacher at KMS, had submitted, and the video cut to Tennessee Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn in the hallway outside the library doors. Lunsford shook her head. It couldn't be. In an instant, Schwinn was through the door naming Lunsford the 2020–21 Tennessee Teacher of the Year.

"Thank you so much," Lunsford said to the camera, tears welling in her eyes, her voice breaking with emotion. "If you're a teacher watching, this isn't special. We are all working hard. Keep doing what you're doing. We're going to change the world."

Lunsford, who received a \$3,000 check from the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents as part of the award, is only the fourth music teacher since 1968 to win Tennessee's highest award for teaching excellence. She is the fourth UT education graduate to be named Teacher of the Year since 1990—the earliest year for which the Office of Professional Licensure in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences has records.

"Every teacher should get this award this year," Lunsford told the

Knox County School Board and Superintendent Bob Thomas at an October 2020 ceremony honoring her achievement. "We should be riding around on school buses, knocking on doors, and giving out checks."

It's a staple of the approach Lunsford takes to both education and life. In 16 years, she has grown KMS's choir to reach thousands of students, launched shows and concerts that have become a community staple, and taught everyone from professional singers to students now working as educators across the state.

Born and raised by a single mother in a churchgoing family in Trezevant, Tennessee, a town of less than a thousand people in rural Carroll County, Lunsford was giving 30-minute lessons for \$5 to residents of all ages by the time she was in eighth grade. High school teachers noticed her talent and drive. As long as she was willing to put in the work, the world was hers, they told her.

"It didn't matter that I was living in a tiny town, raised in a single-parent home, a girl, or whatever," Lunsford says. "They made me believe I could do anything."

After graduating from West Carroll High School, Lunsford arrived at UT as a pre-law major. She wanted a practical degree that might help provide for a family one day. Those first weeks, she felt like a tiny fish swimming in a giant ocean. After joining the Pride of the Southland Band, she immersed herself in the School of Music. Inspired by her own teachers, she switched her major to music education.

"At UT, your professors care about you," Lunsford says. "In the

School of Music, the culture was ‘Kami, I didn’t see you in class today’ or ‘Kami, you need help on this—when can we meet?’ That’s how I do business in the middle school.”

Fay Adams (’72), a piano instructor at UT for 44 years before retiring in 2016, taught pedagogy to Lunsford. Adams was immediately taken by Lunsford’s work ethic and personality. “Infectious,” she remembers it. “She got things done.”

Colleagues and former students saw Lunsford’s all-in approach firsthand after she was hired at Karns Middle.

“Kami is 100 percent one of the reasons I love choir,” says Hannah Berkley (’17, ’19), who earned a bachelor’s degree in music education and a master’s in choral conducting from UT.

Berkley, now the choir director at South-Doyle High School in Knoxville, had been part of Lunsford’s first class in 2006, the ones she calls “my babies.” Berkley remembers the talent show Lunsford launched, which continues 16 years later, and which country singer Emily Ann Roberts—who was runner-up on the ninth season of NBC’s *The Voice*—credits with launching her career.

“It may sound silly, but winning that talent show in the 7th grade lit a fire in me and made me want to perform everywhere I possibly could,” Roberts says on her website.

In 7th grade, Berkley’s choir class took a field trip to RCA Studio B in Nashville, where they recorded two songs—“Tennessee Waltz” and “God Bless the USA”—singing in the same room where Dolly Parton and Johnny Cash had once sung.

“For a lot of us, it was our first time leaving Karns,” Berkley says.

Over the years, Lunsford’s students have performed in nine states and extensively throughout Tennessee, including at Graceland. Their last field trip before the school year moved online in the spring was to perform the national anthem at Thompson-Boling Arena on February 27, 2020 as the Lady Vols defeated Mississippi, 77–66, in women’s basketball.

This fall, she has adapted her choir classes and performances for a COVID-19 world. Her ensembles—one for advanced singers and others for theater and CODA, a mishmash of learning instruments

like the bass guitar and singing harmonies and solos—meet online after school, where in-person and virtual students can interact. She keeps drumsticks and a ukulele at her kitchen table for her livestreams.

In the School of Music, the culture was ‘Kami, I didn’t see you in class today’ or ‘Kami, you need help on this—when can we meet?’ That’s how I do business in the middle school.

“Kami has shown, with the technology she’s brought in, the way she’s inspired kids, she can make the rubric fit whatever the reality is,” says Terri King (’79), who was Lunsford’s student teaching supervisor and left her position at Farragut Middle School in 2008 to become Lunsford’s co-teacher at Karns for her last six years before retiring.

Lunsford doesn’t teach for the honor or the recognition. She was as excited to make the state’s top nine as she was to win. All nine finalists serve on the Tennessee Teacher Advisory Council for the 2020–21 school year, providing feedback and informing the work of the state education department.

For Lunsford, what matters most has always been her students.

“I’ve got to exhaust everything I can to get them the resources they need to build the life they want,” she says. “What am I doing if I’m not doing that?”





“A WAY TO SHARE HAPPINESS”

Jack Fellers’s Joyful Pursuit of Excellence in Piano Performance Endowment provides funds for students’ special opportunities.

Story by Brooks Clark | Photo Courtesy of Jack Fellers

“When I was a kid I couldn’t wait to get to the band room,” says Jack Fellers. A band director named Bill Dunagan had come to the public high school in tiny Columbiana, Ohio, where he revived a moribund program, got Fellers excited about the French horn, and guided the band to superior ratings at state festivals. “I would have gone into music in a heartbeat,” he says. His dad, Francis, a purchasing agent at the Franklin Furniture Company, and mom, Katherine, insisted that he not become a musician.

At Bowling Green State University, Fellers played in the concert band on his way to his chemistry degree in 1963. While there, he made the fourth French horn chair in the Toledo Orchestra. After graduating from Bowling Green, it took him only three years to complete his PhD in the University of Akron’s Institute of Polymer and Sciences and Engineering. “I’m not a patient person,” he says, laughing. “I like to say I once prayed for patience but I got really upset when it took so long to arrive.”

While working at Ford Motor Company’s research center in Dearborn, Michigan, Fellers played in an amateur orchestra for a year or so. In 1971 he joined the University of Tennessee’s Department of Chemical, Metallurgical, and Polymer Engineering as an assistant professor. (The department became the Department of Materials Science and Engineering in 1984.)

During his decades of teaching at UT, he and his wife, Betty Jo, raised four children, all of whom have a penchant for music. “I joked that I gave all my kids an audition before they came home from the hospital,” says Fellers. The oldest, Laura McElroy, started as a piano major at UT but ended up becoming a pharmacist. Michael, a guitarist, plays “House of the Rising Sun” with his dad on piano. Jill played viola in high school. Her twin, Joanne plays piano.

Fellers joined the UT School of Music Advisory Board in 2001 and served as president. Before he retired from teaching in 2004, he took up the piano. “The piano faculty let me take lessons,” says Fellers, “and David Northington took me as his student. I was very impressed with the quality of the teaching in the piano group, and the relationships they established with the students were everything they should be. They had a great manner and they really cared about the students.”

In 2006, Fellers established the Joyful Pursuit of Excellence in Piano Performance Endowment. “I was in a position to give,” says Fellers. “I said to David, ‘What I want you to do with this money is—if these kids have worked hard and want to go someplace and be in a competition, and they need travel money for a hotel or plane ticket, that’s what this is for.’ Over the years I’ve gotten a number of thank-you notes from graduate students.”

Sadly, Betty Jo died in 2010. Several years thereafter, Fellers began volunteering as a piano teacher at the Joy of Music School, where he has served as a board member for six years and board president for the past two, continuing to teach two students over Zoom during the pandemic.

Some five years ago, Fellers saw a concert in Madisonville, Tennessee, of a reconstituted Four Freshmen, whose four-part harmony had inspired Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys among many others. The show led Fellers to pick up his trumpet. “Be patient with yourself and try it,” he told himself.

“It turned out to be just absolutely another dimension in music that’s been really wonderful for me,” he says. “I completely enjoy it.” Fellers has played in a swing band in Tellico Village, Tennessee, and in the house band at his church.

In 2020, Fellers added an estate gift to his endowment. “I’m

a gratitude-inspired 80-year-old,” he says. “I talked with someone responsible from estate planning and reflected on my life. I have a sense of gratitude at being able to be involved in the program. The faculty worked with me, and the Haslam building has elevated the school to a unique position. I wanted to take the profound joy and happiness that I’ve had throughout my life through music and pay it forward. I want that money to feed and enable our kids’ dreams. In ‘A Man Becomes his Dream,’ the philosopher Howard Thurman writes of the power of dreams, how they can take hold in an

individual, become contagious, and, ‘If the embodiment takes the form of an institution, it means that at the center of the institution there is a living, pulsing core which guarantees not only flexibility but also a continuous unfolding in an increasing dimension of creativity.’ I want our institution to be all that to our musicians.

“I’m a happy person, and that’s a way to share happiness. In the best of worlds, someone else will read this and say, ‘I should do that too.’”



Consider that you are a working professional in a nonmusical field. You’re perfectly content with your professional career, but you really appreciate the arts, and you want to appreciate them more. You’d like to get access to the high-quality education of a professional music school to learn piano, but you aren’t pursuing a degree.

Or perhaps you’re the parent of a child who is progressing rapidly, and you’re looking for opportunities to help them reach their full potential. Your child is too young to be a college student, but you want them to have access to the high-quality education of the university.

Enter the University Community Music School (UCMS).

“The UCMS allows any person, regardless of age or prior musical background, to experience music education from the University of Tennessee,” said Megan Foster, director of the University Community Music School and first-year coordinator in the School of Music. “It allows us to open our doors as a school of music, bringing world-class instruction to a much larger portion of our community.”

A new initiative that launched in fall 2021, the UCMS provides the opportunity for students of all ages and abilities outside

of the university to take private lessons at the School of Music, fostering lifelong music appreciation. Students enroll in noncredit courses, taught by School of Music faculty and graduate students, providing those in the community with access to high-quality musical instruction. At launch, the UCMS offers lessons in piano and guitar but anticipates adding more areas in the coming semesters, including flute, violin, and percussion.

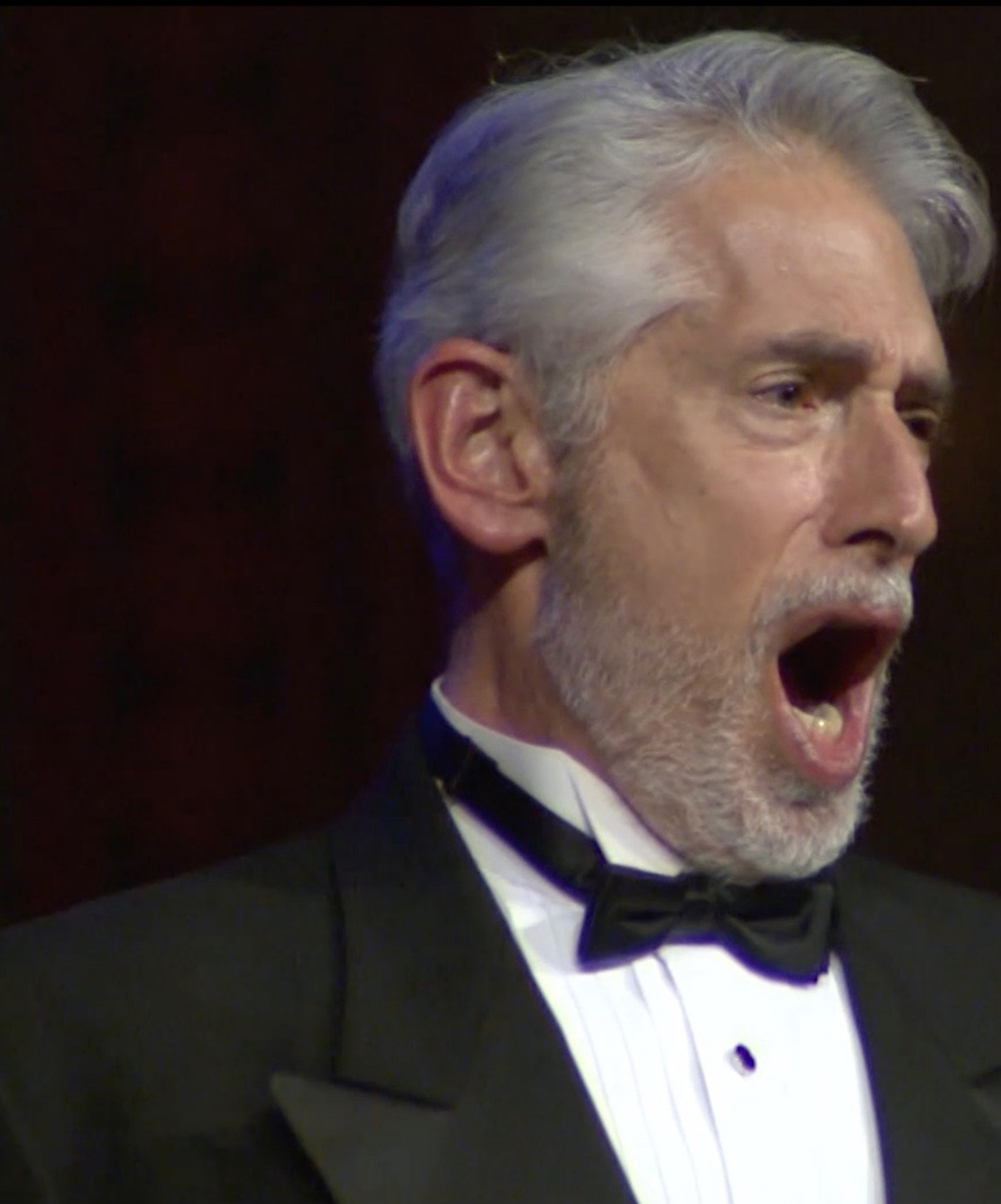
“We take very seriously the role of the university as a land-grant institution, and our responsibility to Tennessee that naturally flows from that,” said Jeffrey Pappas, director of the School of Music. “This is not just another course offering, but a way for us to develop relationships with the Knoxville community. Through the Community Music School, we will foster music appreciation and expand access to music education for the entire community.”

Development of the UCMS began in January 2020, born out of a desire to broaden the teaching reach of the School of Music’s high-quality music instruction. While the school welcomes young students, lessons are not restricted to those who fit that description—those of any age with an interest in music are welcome as well, and current enrollees already reflect that breadth of opportunity.

UCMS instructors for fall 2021 were all faculty members, but graduate students will soon be added. This will widen the array of offerings for enrollees, as well as enhancing the education of and practical experience of current School of Music students.

Foster said, “This will provide our current students with teaching opportunities—valuable experience that helps them grow both musically and personally. We’re excited to see the UCMS grow, hopefully past just private music instruction, to provide group lessons and academic course offerings in the future.”

More information can be found on the School of Music website at music.utk.edu/UCMS.



VOCAL RESERVES TO SPARE

By Brooks Clark | Photos Courtesy of Andrew Wentzel



When Andy Wentzel first explored the idea of joining the faculty at UT, he and his wife, mezzo-soprano Karen Nickell, were living in a cabin in the northern Catskill Mountains of New York. He was making the long commute to the Metropolitan Opera, where he had sung for the past 10 years.

“Karen and I were on the road all the time, and we had a toddler, Forrest,” he says. “We needed to make a change. We could either go sing in Europe or find something different.” He saw the job description for a professor of voice at UT. “They were looking for someone with performing experience who could come and re-energize the program,” he remembers. “The description of the job was me.” Wentzel knew two people on the search committee, but that was no surprise. As one of the most active bass-baritones in the nation, Wentzel had performed with opera companies and symphonies all over the country and knew people everywhere.

He started at UT in January of 1996 and set about assembling a team to grow the opera program, attract young singers, redouble the program’s relationship with the Knoxville Opera, and revitalize the Knoxville Opera Studio.

In 2001, when George Bitzas retired, Wentzel took over singing the national anthem at football games. A tenor, Bitzas had wowed crowds for 29 years with such vocal

flourishes as hitting a high B-flat. “As a bass-baritone,” says Wentzel, “I felt that my job was to be a song leader, to encourage 100,000 people to feel that they can sing along to the national anthem.”

Wentzel sang at every game for 19 seasons—except one, when he was singing Berlioz’s *Damnation of Faust* with the Montreal Symphony in Carnegie Hall. He definitely noticed the recognition that came with the gig. “You can sing all over the world,” he says with a smile. “You can sing at the Metropolitan Opera. But sing the national anthem in Neyland Stadium, and now you’re somebody.”



From Indiana to the Metropolitan Opera

Wentzel was born in Mishawaka, Indiana, where his dad, Kenneth, was a Congregational minister. His mother, Connie, was a gifted writer and musician. When Wentzel was in elementary school, the family moved to Rockville, Maryland. “It became my childhood home,” he remembers. “National Symphony members would come to our school, and we’d go to children’s performances at Constitution Hall. My mother sang with the National Cathedral Choral Society.” In his high school years, the family moved to Kingston, Rhode Island. Wentzel went to Middlebury College in Vermont—“sang in just about everything they had available”—and graduated in 1973 with a degree in American literature. He earned his master’s degree in voice performance from the University of Southern California in 1978.

Wentzel and Nickell met in the summer of 1985, when they were both singing in Henze’s *The English Cat* in Santa Fe. New Mexico is the Land of Enchantment, but Wentzel had to work to get the enchantment going. She had sung *La Tragédie de Carmen* at Lincoln Center when only 22. He had been singing in St. Louis. “At first she wanted nothing to do with me,” says Wentzel. “In time, she agreed to give me a shot.”

The make-or-break date began with cocktails and watching the sun set over the desert at the home where he was staying. They dined at a remarkable restaurant, watched a flamenco troupe at a club led by Wentzel’s friend Maria Benitez, then sat in a Ten Thousand Waves hot tub watching the stars. “I realized that I’d met a person who was very different from anyone I had ever known,” he says. “She changed my life.”

That year Wentzel debuted at the Metropolitan Opera, appearing over the years in *Roméo et Juliette*, *Billy Budd*, *I Puritani*, *Rigoletto*, *La Fanciulla del West*, *Turandot*, *Manon*, and *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, to name a few. In 1994, a *Washington Times* review of his Banquo in *Macbeth* at the Capitol Theatre lauded his “flexible but powerful voice” with “vocal reserves to spare and total abandon in his phrasing.”

A Committed Teacher

“When I came to UT,” says Wentzel, “faculty members rarely traveled or performed internationally. But the person hiring me said, ‘We want you to maintain an international profile.’ That meant I had to go away sometimes, but they trusted in me to still be a committed teacher. Now in the School of Music, that’s

what is expected of performing faculty. When they perform, they are spreading the word. Everywhere you go, people say, ‘You are working at the University of Tennessee.’”

The relationship with the Knoxville Opera continued to grow over the years. Wentzel eventually chaired its Artistic Committee, was named an honorary director, and sang many roles, including Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Comte des Grieux in *Manon*, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Padre Guardiano in *La forza*

“It’s the striving for excellence, to have the discipline that’s required to pursue classical singing. It’s marketable and desirable to other industries.”

del destino, Colline in *La Bohème*, and Don Giovanni in *Don Giovanni*. He served on the artistic staff as the vocal instructor of the Janiec Opera Company at the Brevard Music Center for seven summers beginning in 2013 and continues to serve as an adjudicator for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

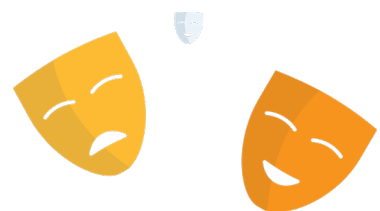
Wentzel is proud to have retired from the School of Music at a time of growth and promise. “This faculty is a wonderful faculty—young, vibrant, engaged, creative, theoreticians, musicologists, composers.”

In retirement, he has joined a hiking group and gets into the Smokies once or twice a week. “If students call me, I can occasionally work with them.” But he misses the daily interactions.

“I am proud of all of my students,” he says, “and not just those making a living performing. It’s the striving for excellence, to have the discipline that’s required to pursue classical singing. It’s marketable and desirable to other industries.”

“When students talk about the impact that studies with me had, a common thread is that they learned how to be better all-around citizens and how to be the best and strive for excellence. It means a lot to me that they felt that way. I felt that I was always in their corner. We had an environment where we could support each other and be good colleagues.”

“When I consider my years at UT, I am proud to take ownership of all of the work that was put in. I leave feeling real satisfaction for all that we accomplished.”



Meet the New Staff



Sarah Bunn

Administrative Support Assistant

With a hand in several crucial elements of School of Music operations, Sarah Bunn works as the administrative support assistant. Her tasks include providing administrative support for graduate studies, aiding with event planning, assisting with managing academic records, and processing key requests for the Natalie L. Haslam Music Center.

She comes to the School of Music with a background in music education, music therapy, and mental health counseling. Given her background working in the crossroads between music and health and well-being, she appreciates the value of music, and the opportunities that she will have to contribute to the creation of more music and the mentorship and education of more musicians. She holds two master's degrees—one from Appalachian State University in music therapy, and another from the University of Tennessee in clinical mental health counseling.

She says, "I look forward to working with the wonderful students, faculty, staff, and community at the University of Tennessee. I am especially enthusiastic to be back in a musical environment where I get to support fellow musicians in their academic and professional endeavors."



Dave Conte

Piano Technician

As the only piano technician, Dave Conte is responsible for keeping approximately 125 pianos maintained and ready for use. Conte completed his technical training at the University of North Texas College of Music, where he received his degree in piano technology.

Prior to his arrival at UT, Conte owned and operated a respected private tuning service and rebuilding operation where he was in practice for more than 28 years. He has studied with Steinway and Sons, and with Yamaha, where he completed their training as an independent and graduated at the top of the class. At Baldwin Piano, he received the coveted Concert and Artist Certification and maintained the artist pool pianos for the south-central region. He was also a Petrof Piano dealer and concert technician, and trained with Bösendorfer, Seiler, C. Bechstein, Kawai, and other manufacturers, and was on call at various performance venues including the Dallas Opera, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Van Cliburn Piano Competition, Fort Worth Opera, and for various artists, including: Vladimir Viardo, Michael Feinstein, Bruce Hornsby, Dongni Xie, Neil Diamond, Dino Kartsonakis, Dan Fogelberg, John Tesh, and B.B. King.

He is also a Registered Piano Technician with the Piano Technicians Guild, and has become PTG certified as a tuning and technical examiner for the Registered Piano Technician exams. Continuing his passion for teaching, Conte became an instructor in piano technology at Tarrant County College which required developing the curriculum for the class he taught there. He also founded the North Texas School of Piano Technology which was operating as one of the last brick-and-mortar hands-on piano academies left in the United States until his departure to serve at UT.

He says, "One part of being at the School of Music that I'm really looking forward to is passing along what has been so generously given to me. Teaching and mentoring has been a key part of my professional life, and I'm eagerly anticipating contributing to those same endeavors here."



Logan Judy

Communications & Marketing Associate

With a background ranging from news writing to social media management to graphic design, Logan Judy comes to UT from Purdue University, where he spent five years working in higher education marketing. He holds a bachelor's degree in public relations from Purdue University, and is also a part-time graduate student in UT's advertising program.

Following his graduation from Purdue, he first worked as a marketing professional for the Columbian Park Zoo in Lafayette, Indiana, which included planning the annual 5K run and "Boo at the Zoo" events, as well as social media, photography, and website maintenance. After the zoo, he went back to Purdue University as an employee, where he worked for five years in two positions—first as communications specialist for the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences, and then as the communications manager for the Honors College. In both positions, he managed a wide variety of communications responsibilities, including social media, website development, event planning and marketing, email communications, press releases, the production of an alumni magazine, and at the Honors College, managing a budget and supervising a small team.

"I'm very passionate about great storytelling, and the University of Tennessee School of Music has a wide variety of very compelling stories to tell," he says. "I'm both eager and excited for the opportunities that I will have through this position to be a part of that process."



Eric Retterer

Technology Assistant

Eric Retterer is an Alaskan-born percussionist with a passion for contemporary music and the collaborative arts. Having studied and trained at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Arizona State University, he actively pursues the creation and proliferation of new music through numerous commissions and forming chamber ensembles that champion modern works. Retterer has performed at major music festivals throughout the United States, Canada, and Sweden, including the Knoxville Big Ears Festival and Nief-Norf Summer Festival.

Retterer taught as the director of percussion studies at his alma mater in Alaska as well as at UT as an interim lecturer. His artistic work has increasingly integrated music technology, marrying its wide range of tools to the expansive world of sounds offered by the percussion family. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shuttering of live performances, Retterer has continued to explore the ways in which technology can cast light on veiled sonic landscapes not usually featured on the concert hall stage. He rejoined UT earlier this summer in a new technology position that draws upon and shares his artistic experience with the School of Music in a supportive role, aiding in the development of innovative projects for both students and faculty.

"Prior to working full-time at the School of Music, I was already impressed by the industrious spirit of its artistic culture. Now as part of that culture myself, it's been exciting to discover that the reason that spirit is so palpable is because it's reflected in each member of the school—there's an ambitious enthusiasm grounded in a shared sense of community that underpins every interaction and collaboration, making it a compelling environment in which to work and bolster my ingenuity."



MUSIC MAJOR NAMED MARSHALL SCHOLAR

*by Lacey Wood
Photo by Lindsay Tucker*

UT announced the selection of Elise “Josie” Campbell as a 2021 Marshall Scholar, a prestigious designation awarded to no more than 50 US students each year to pursue graduate studies in the United Kingdom. Campbell graduated in 2021 with a degree in music performance and a minor in Africana studies. She is the first UT student to receive the award since 1983 and only the third since it was launched in 1953.

Campbell intends to use the award to pursue a two-year Master of Music degree in cello performance at the London conservatory. She has also been invited to intern with the famed Chineke! Foundation to support her music goals, which include performing with professional

“I want other children, especially those who may not have access to music education, to experience the power music possesses.”

chamber music groups and leading a nonprofit organization focused on creating more opportunities for musicians and composers who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color by providing minority children from underprivileged communities with free music lessons, instruments, and mentorship programs, and facilitating community performances.

“I am deeply honored and humbled to represent UT next fall as a Marshall Scholar,” she said when chosen. “I am excited that this opportunity will allow me to be immersed in such a rich musical culture, while simultaneously working to diversify the classical music world,” said Campbell, a first-generation college student from Kennesaw, Georgia.

“Personally, music has changed my life in many ways; it has allowed me to express myself and connect and make art with other people,” said Campbell. “I want other children, especially those who may not have access to music education, to experience the power music possesses.”

Provost John Zomchick celebrated Campbell’s award, saying, “We are thrilled at Josie’s selection as a Marshall Scholar and proud to see her exemplify the Volunteer spirit in her ambitions to bring the gift of music to underprivileged communities. The scholarship will

provide her with a fantastic opportunity to continue to grow and develop her talents. Josie’s success will be a beacon for all Volunteers by showing how we can all do big things.”

Campbell, a recipient of the School of Music’s Kline and Presser Scholarships, co-founded UT’s Black Musicians Alliance, which in February produced “Black & Boujee,” a concert celebrating Black students, musicians, performers, and composers. She serves on the UT School of Music Diversity Task Force and the Dean of Libraries’ Student Advisory Committee. She has held leadership positions with UT’s Black Student Union and Women’s Coordinating Council. Campbell studies under Professor of Cello Wesley Baldwin and, in recent years, has been selected for numerous summer music institutes including NYO2 and Sphinx Performance Academy, and, in 2020, the National Symphony Orchestra’s Summer Music Institute, which had its final performance at the Kennedy Center canceled in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She teaches cello at Knoxville’s Joy of Music School, which provides free music lessons to financially disadvantaged and at-risk children and youth. She works as a rehearsal assistant with the Knoxville Symphony Youth Orchestra.

“The past four years Josie has synthesized her passion for classical music and advocacy with this enormous capacity to lead and inspire others,” said Andrew Seidler, the university’s director of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships, which oversees nomination and preparation of UT candidates for the Marshall and other nationally competitive awards, such as the Rhodes and Fulbright. “It’s thrilling to see such a special person recognized in this way and to think about all the good she’s bound to do.”

The Marshall Scholarships were created to strengthen the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom and enhance scholars’ intellectual and personal growth. Past award recipients include multiple Supreme Court justices and Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners. Each Marshall Scholar must hold a first degree from an accredited four-year college or university with a minimum GPA of 3.7 when they take up their scholarship. They receive university fees, cost-of-living expenses, academic, research, and travel grants, and airfare.





RETURN TO THE

Story by Logan Judy | Photos

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JURN EMET

s Courtesy of Murrella Parton



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School of Music alumna Murrella Parton ('15) has won a distinct honor—to reach the final stages of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition twice.

The Metropolitan Opera's Laffont Competition, previously known as the National Council Auditions, is a highly competitive nationwide competition featuring the best young opera singers in the country. Parton took her first step onto the Metropolitan opera stage in 2019, when she reached the semifinals. In 2021, she proceeded one round further, being named a finalist. Of the 10 finalists, only five are named winners. While the performances were virtual this year due to the pandemic, semifinalists and above typically perform in-person at the Met. But while the virtual nature of the event meant she didn't step onto the stage itself, she said that it resulted in greater access for her friends and family.

"The audience was multiplied by hundreds beyond the people who would normally see those performances," she said. "I received messages from people I hadn't spoken to since high school. Prior to this year, the audience would have

to buy a ticket and fly to New York. It gave the competition a lot of accessibility that it had never had before."

When you sit down and talk with Parton about opera, accessibility is a theme that comes up again and again. The pandemic has brought to the fore a lot of interesting ideas about expanding the reach of and access to opera, she says, a shift that she believes will have industry-wide effects beyond the pandemic. There has been a recent surge in the creation of new, smaller opera companies, and the venues that opera takes place in are expanding as well.

"It's really forcing us to rethink what opera is," she said. "Opera does not have to be in a 4,000-seat house with a 40-piece orchestra. I've been to a couple of operas in much smaller, more intimate venues like bars and warehouses. I think the entire idea of what our field is will have to change."

That shift is one that Parton is taking an active role in. While she has sung on stages such as the Met, the Houston Grand Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago, she also takes pride in working with regional opera companies, and the opportunities that work presents.



for the artform: the way opera allows her to communicate with the audience.

“I have found in performing that there is this moment that happens where a connection is formed between you and the audience,” she said. “When that connection is formed, language barriers do not exist. You’re not drawn into the lighting or the costume; it is truly, solely about communicating something to the audience. It’s very fulfilling, not in an egotistical way, but in being able to make a human connection to people in a room—nothing exists in that moment except the people you’re communicating with.”

When asked what advice she has for current students, she says, “Never go into a room unprepared. You get hired for your voice. You get rehired because people like to work with you and you’re prepared. You have to be able to bring something to the table that is your own artistry.”

Nothing exists in that moment
except the people you’re
communicating with.

“I have learned that in order to be happy, I have to be making art that fulfills me,” she said. “That does not necessarily mean I have to be working for a specific company or in the biggest opera house.”

Parton was not always interested in opera. She was drawn into it after an opera director came to her high school and persuaded her that she was a skilled singer. She came to the University of Tennessee as an undergraduate, but did not initially complete the program. Then, she had what she describes as a transformative experience that inspired her to continue her higher education journey, all because of a commercial.

“I was recovering for six weeks following a knee surgery, and this commercial came on,” she said. “The music was Barber’s Adagio for Strings and I remember sitting there and weeping and thinking, ‘How can something this intangible create such a visceral response? If I have the ability to be a part of something like this, then I have to.’”

She returned to the University of Tennessee shortly afterward to complete her music education degree. Once back on campus, she was recruited into participating in the Opera Theatre program, and then discovered that she loved the process of developing the show, including all of the behind-the-scenes production elements. As she gained more experience, she discovered another layer to her love

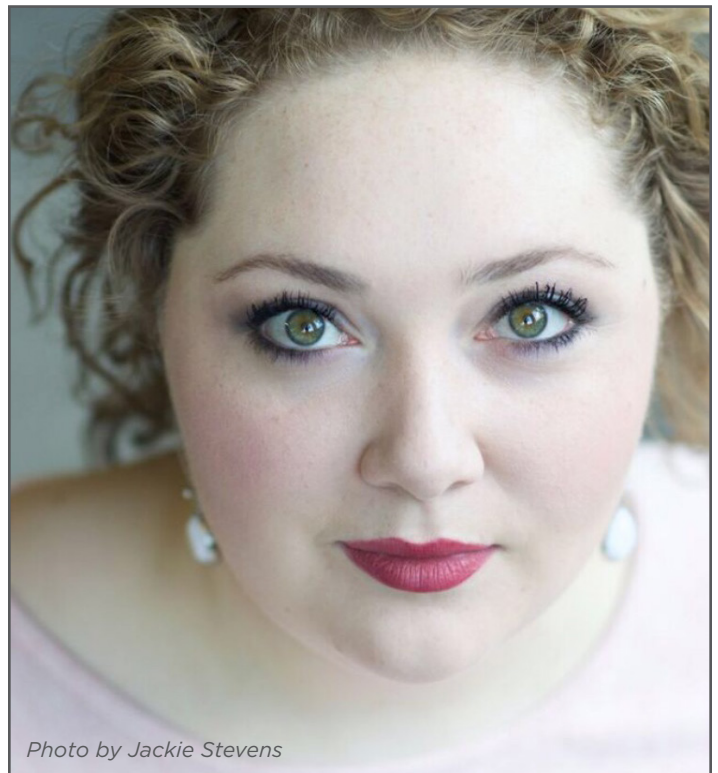


Photo by Jackie Stevens

ALUMNA NAMED HOST OF WUOT'S AFTERNOON CONCERT

By Brooks Clark

In May, WUOT—the National Public Radio station licensed to UT—named Clara Prinston host of its Afternoon Concert classical music series.

“As a violinist since the age of five and the youngest in a musical family, Clara has lived her life surrounded by the arts and especially classical music,” said Director of Music Todd Steed. “She started as our weekend host in 2018 and has since become a crucial member of our team.”

“My constant exposure to classical music affects the way I approach programming and choose my music,” said Prinston. “Still, even after all this time, I’m still discovering the music for myself and my listeners.”

Prinston graduated from UT in December 2020 with degrees in linguistics and applied music—violin. The linguistics major came about because her mother suggested she look into it. “There are many overlaps between language and music,” said Prinston.

Born in Bensalem, Pennsylvania, Prinston moved with her family when she was six months old to Gressier, Haiti, where her father, Jerome, and mother, Paulette, served as missionaries on and off for 25 years. “Political unrest led them to move to Knoxville,” said Prinston.

Jerome, who received his bachelor’s degree from Johnson University in Knoxville, is now a professor of Bible and education there. He also plays the cello. “He led my two older siblings and me into playing instruments,” said Prinston. One of her sisters, Haniska, plays viola. The other, Welbie, plays the violin. Paulette is now a construction project coordinator for UT Facilities Services.

On arriving in Knoxville at age six, Prinston took violin lessons for 12 years from UT School of Music Professor Miroslav Hristov. She graduated from the L&N STEM Academy in Knoxville’s old L&N Station. “It was the best thing my parents could have signed me up for,” she said. “I loved the location. It was an immersive experience. The teachers were amazing.” She also played in the L&N orchestra.

Starting her first year at UT, she studied first under Hristov and then Violin Lecturer Geoffrey Herd and played in the UT Symphony Orchestra. She co-founded and served as co-president of the Black Musicians Alliance, bringing awareness to underrepresented composers, performers, and musicians to the UT School of Music community and the



Photo Courtesy of Clara Prinston

“Still, even after all this time, I’m still discovering the music for myself and my listeners.”

Knoxville community at large. “The idea was for musicians to have a space for each other,” said Prinston, “to talk about musicians that we don’t know and to be where our hearts were—in the community, doing outreach work.”

In February 2020, Prinston and BMA co-president and co-founder Josie Campbell (see page 18), joined Knoxville Symphony Music Director Aram Demirjian and Bulgarian-American violin virtuoso Bella Hristova on the Tennessee Theatre stage for a talk before Hristova’s performance of the Florence Price Concerto No. 1. They talked about the music and answered audience questions, notably about the significance of featuring a long-neglected piece by a female African American composer.

“Oh, my gosh,” said Prinston, “to be able to do that in the presence of Bella Hristova, who had such a huge influence on me—it was very impactful, affirming, and humbling.”

Prinston got a shot at being WUOT’s weekend host thanks to a friend. “Monday Night Improvisations host Ben Hall and I went to high school together,” explained Prinston,

“and we kept up that friendship through college. When the opportunity came up, Ben gave my

name to Todd Steed.” Prinston interviewed with Steed, did sound checks, and started the job as a sophomore.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Prinston, like other WUOT personnel, was deemed essential. She continued to come in to the station to do her weekend broadcasts and occasionally fill in for the morning or afternoon concerts. “I am so grateful and feel so blessed that I was able to continue working on air during that crazy time,” she recalled.

When the previous Afternoon Concert host left in January, Prinston started filling in. “It was a natural transition for me, since I’d subbed for morning and afternoon concerts before,” she explained. “When the job was officially posted, I applied for it and was adamant that I wanted the job.”

Prinston still plays her violin on a freelance basis, including in Marble City Opera production of *Tosca* at Saint John’s Episcopal Cathedral in June.

“I feel like I’m still reflecting on my time as a student at UT,” she said. “I’m very grateful for the community I’ve built here at UT. I feel that the School of Music is in a very special position now, as it is making strides with diversity, equity, and inclusion. Not to mention the beautiful facilities and outstanding faculty. I believe that it’s on its way to being a nationally and internationally recognized music school among public universities. I really look forward to the school’s future.”

Afternoon Concert airs from 1 to 4 p.m. each weekday on WUOT, 91.9 FM.



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- Mary Costa
- Christopher Cox and Vasilia E. Panagakos
- Andrea E. and Don Richard Cox
- Andrew James Crowell
- David Harlan Crumpton

Faculty Accomplishments

Wesley Baldwin (cello) performed at the Wintergreen Music Festival in chamber music and, in the orchestra, as the principal cellist of the Wintergreen Festival Orchestra. His colleagues there include members of the Atlanta and Dallas Symphonies and faculty from the Hartt and DePaul Schools of Music.

Kevin Class's (piano & opera) composition "From Last Year...." a song-cycle for soprano and piano, with text by UT's Rebecca Parr, was featured on various online venues as the subject of a short documentary and interpretive film by Filipina director Alegria O. Ferrer. The project was developed as a partnership between the UT School of Music and the University of Philippines College of Music (both institutions with which Class is associated). The roughly 40-minute film includes commentary by Class about the composition of the work, as well as background information on the poetry by Parr. Filipina soprano Stefanie Quintin-Avila collaborated with Class via the exchange of recordings between Knoxville and Manila in producing the world-premiere virtual performance of this work, which was then treated to artistic filmmaking by Ferrer. This film and performance premiered on March 25, 2021, on the L'Atelier Class YouTube channel.

During the summer, Class traveled to Europe to conduct two opera productions. Returning to his position as conductor of the Berlin Opera Academy, Class conducted Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* in Kandersteg, Switzerland (where Berlin Opera had moved their productions due to COVID-19 restrictions in Germany) with stage director Rebecca Jo Loeb of the Metropolitan Opera. Following five weeks in Switzerland, Class then took up duties as conductor and music director for the inaugural season of the Saluzzo Opera Academy in Italy. There he conducted a production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, directed by Nina Brazier of Opera Frankfurt. In both academies, he conducted international casts and orchestra in the productions, and led a series of orchestra/conducting masterclasses.

Abby Fisher (percussion) received the 2022 Ann and Steve Bailey Opportunity Grant. The funding will support coaching and mentorship sessions with Boston-based percussionist, composer, public artist, educator, and arts entrepreneur Maria Finkelmeier, along with hands-on experience with her team MF Dynamics in creating large-scale performative art.

Nathan Fleshner (composition) is a co-editor on a forthcoming book from Routledge/Taylor & Francis Publishers, *Music in the Wake of COVID-19: Challenges, Adaptations, and New Practices*. His chapter in this volume is titled, "Music Analysis Through Crisis: Mahler, COVID-19, and the Music Theory Classroom."

Jon Hamar (jazz/bass) recorded an album in June 2021 with singer Jack Jones and organist Joey DeFrancesco in Los Angeles. The album features the Clayton Hamilton Jazz Orchestra with strings. Arrangements were written by John Clayton.

Hillary Herndon (viola) received a grant from the Sphinx Venture Fund, a fund that invests money in a wide variety of music areas to aide in transforming the future of cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion in the arts. The fund seeks to invest \$1.5 million over five years.

Miroslav Hristov (strings) received the 2021 UT Alumni Association's Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award. He also received the 2020 UT Chancellor's Excellence in Teaching Award.

Chih-Long Hu and **Miroslav Hristov** recorded and released a four-volume CD compilation of Beethoven's *Ten Sonatas for Violin and Piano* on the Chaorphilia label in Taiwan. The US release is expected by early 2022.

They also performed three back-to-back recitals in Taipei, Taiwan, in December 2020 in celebration of Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday. These performances were done alongside members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

James Marvel (opera) directed Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Medium* for New Orleans Opera in February 2021.

Faculty Accomplishments

Marvel also directed Moteverdi's *Poppea* for the Festival of International Opera in the summer of 2021.

Rachel May Golden (musicology) published *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song* with Oxford University Press.

Barbara Murphy (music theory) was honored with the Interdepartmental Collaborative Scholarship and Research Award from the UT College of Arts and Sciences. Murphy and Jacob Levy, associate professor of psychology, worked together on several collaborations examining the intersection of psychology and music pedagogy. To date, their collaboration has led to one published paper, two paper presentations at national conventions in music, and two poster sessions at national conventions in psychology.

Eric Reed (jazz/piano) recently wrapped shooting for a film called *Babylon* starring Brad Pitt, Jean Smart, Eric Roberts, Tobey Maguire, and Margot Robbie. Reed will appear on the soundtrack and on film.

Reed also produced for and recorded with Grammy-winning gospel music artist John P. Kee.

David Royse (music education) presented the collegiate session, "Legal Issues for Beginning Music Teachers," during April's 2021 NAFME Eastern Division Virtual Conference.

Andrew Sigler's (composition) music was performed at the University of South Florida International New Music Festival and the National Association of Composers, USA (NACUSA) National Conference in the spring of 2021. His work for wind ensemble, "Dr. Smart," was a finalist for the American Prize in the Professional Wind Ensemble division, and he was an ASCAP Plus Award recipient. Sigler presented virtual lectures on his music at the University of South Florida International New Music Festival, the NACUSA festival, and California State University, Stanislaus. Sigler was also elected president of NACUSA in 2020.

Jorge Variego (composition) published *Composing with Restraints* with Oxford University Press. The project was partially funded by UT and the Swedish Arts Grants Committee.

Additionally, his multimedia piece "BLINK" was commissioned and premiered by the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra with Maestro Aram Demirjian during its 2020-21 concert season. The piece celebrates the uniqueness of the "synchronous fireflies" that occur every year at the Smoky Mountains National Park. "BLINK" will be performed by the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra in its 2021-22 season with Maestro Dan Allcott.

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Charlene A. Harb
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2021 Honors Convocation Awards

2021 Student Research Contest in Music

First place: Paul Roysse for “Tragic Contours: A Tripartite, Generalized Approach to Narrative Analysis”

Second place: Zachery Coffey for “Technologically Mediated Religio-Musicality in the Time of COVID-19: Church Elders’ Anxiety, Music’s Familiarity, and New Paths of Communal Service”

Third place: Nicolette Caswell for “Examining the Spacey Kacey’s Fanbase Commitment”

College Music Society David Kushner Student Composition Contest

2021 winner: Hyowon Bong for “4 & 5”

Student Ambassadors

2021–22: Paul Davis, Carolyn Gahan, Jackson Guthrie, Karagen Peck, Kadijah Tinker, Madison Joy, Jasmin Power

Outstanding Graduating Seniors

Chosen by the faculty in their individual areas, recipients must have a 3.5 GPA, show professional promise, and have made a significant overall contribution to the program.

Cade Botts (BM) theory & composition
Josie Campbell (BM) string performance
Joanna Chih-An Lin (BM) keyboard performance
Timothy Guinn (BM) music education
Ben Hall (BM) studio music & jazz
Sarah Troy (BM) brass performance
Rylee Worstell (BM) voice performance

Gerald W. Barnes Fund for Excellence in Woodwind Award

Established by the Arkansas Community Foundation to reward excellence in woodwind studies.

Darius Edwards

Presser Scholar

Presented annually to a music major who is a rising senior with a high grade point average and at least one-third of his or her classes outside the field of music. The award is voted on by the faculty.

Zachary Miller

Pi Kappa Lambda Honor Society

The only music organization recognized by the Association of College Honor Societies. Dedicated by its founders to the fostering of scholarly interest in the theoretical and historical aspects of music and to the pursuit of eminent achievement in performance, composition, music education, and research.

2021 New Members: Kristen Barrett, Hyowon Bong, Adia Idena Evans, Cornelia Lotito, Timothy Pope, Whitney Wells Rorabaugh, Jeremy Simmons, Karen Wemhoener, Jackie Yong,



Ben Cooper (MM, tuba performance) won the “Tuba+” video competition, as part of the International Tuba/Euphonium Association’s virtual international conference in May 2021. He arranged, performed, and recorded “Play that Country Tuba, Cowboy.” The song was originally performed by Stan Freese on the variety show, *Hee Haw*.



WATCH:

F. Lamar Jordan, Jr., and Dena R. Jordan
Eunsuk Jung
Randall Kerns
James E. Key, Jr. and Vickie Key
Glorietta Klarich
Katherine Bell and Lowry Blair Kline
Elisa Catherine Koehler
Aldis and Susan Lapins
Catherine F. Leach and Doc Severinsen
Theresa M. Lee and Jacob F. Love
Tracy M. and Michael Lindsey
J. Ford and Malinda Carlen Little
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Nakia Anngentan Mitchell
Brent W. and Judy Moore
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E. Jay and Joanne Riggins Mounger
Eric Donald and Sarah Myracle
Abigail Naifeh
Cecily Janice Nall
Milton H. Nelson and Marsha Gail Preslar
David B. and Stephanie B. Northington
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Jeffrey Louis and Joni Pappas
Jonathan Parker
Deneil C. Patel
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To learn how you can support the School of Music, contact Chris Cox, director of development, at **865-974-2365** or **ccox@utfi.org**.



Alumni Accolades

Brandon Smith (MM, tuba performance, '18) was appointed Artist-in-Residence at Valdosta State University and Principal Tuba of the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra.

Wayd Odle (MM, vocal performance, '20) was named Resident Artist at Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

Cornelia Lotito (MM, vocal performance, '21) was named Resident Artist at Indianapolis Opera.

Adia Evans (MM, vocal performance, '21) was named Resident Artist at Columbus Opera in Ohio.

Oleksiy Hamov (Artist Certificate, Violin, '16) was appointed Concertmaster of the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra.

Yu-Ting Huang (MM, violin performance) was appointed to the violin faculty of Pierce College in Puyallup, Washington.

Aaron Hunt's (MM, composition, '20) work "Finding the Right Words" for marimba and electronics was purchased for performance by the Helsinki Philharmonic for its spring chamber music series. His orchestral work, "Dancer on High Wires," could not be performed by the orchestra this season due to COVID-19 restrictions but will be performed at a later date.

Student Achievements

Jonathan Bradshaw (BM, tuba performance) was a fellow at the 2021 Sewanee Summer Music Festival

Logan Clark (MM, tuba performance) was a performer at the 2021 Pokorny Low-Brass Seminar.

The UT School of Music's Aulos String Quartet was named one of seven finalists to compete in the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) national string competition. The quartet featured four undergraduate students: **Kristen Barret** (violin), **Becky Hearn** (cello), **Samantha Hearn** (violin), and **Zach Miller** (viola).

Samantha Hearn, Kristin Barrett, Zachary Miller, and Diego Nuñez received scholarships to attend the Heartland Chamber Music Festival in Kansas City, Missouri. They received coaching from New York Philharmonic Concertmaster, Frank Huang, while participating in the festival. Three of the students (Samantha Hearn, Zachary Miller, and Diego Nuñez) were selected to perform live on national public radio.

Cullen Burke (composition) performed on the CD project *Goes Free* by the Domino Ensemble, alongside faculty member Jorge Variego.

William S. and Elisabeth Rukeyser
Sharon Elaine Russell
Alice Schoo-Jerger and Christopher Allan Jerger
Lisa M. Scrivani-Tidd and Roderick J. Tidd
Alan K. and Sally Sefton
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