

Who's Who?

Panelists and Clinicians at the 2025 Symposium



Rodney Winther is Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where he served as Director of Wind Studies and Professor of Music for 14 years. Prior to teaching at CCM, he taught at Ithaca College from 1982 – 1997, where he was Director of Bands and the first permanent conductor of the IC Wind Ensemble. His frequent appearances as guest conductor and clinician have taken him to 38 states, over 75 college and university campuses and many overseas countries, including England, Ireland, Malaysia, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Venezuela and Canada.

He has been blessed to have worked with many of the world's finest wind bands and ensembles, including the Eastman Wind Ensemble, eightblackbird, Summit Brass, Royal Northern College of Music Wind Orchestra, the U.S. Navy Band, the U.S. Naval Academy Band, members of the U.S. Coast Guard Band, Taiwan Wind Ensemble, Kent Youth Wind Orchestra (England), The World Youth Wind Symphony (Interlochen), the Taller para Banda del Tachira (Venezuela) and the National Youth Wind Orchestra of Great Britain. In 2014 he was awarded a Fulbright Senior Scholar grant to Taiwan by the U.S. Department of State, where he taught at Shih Chien University in Taipei for six months.

His passion in music has been wind chamber music, which ultimately resulted in his writing *An Annotated Guide to Wind Chamber Music* (Warner Bros./Alfred). His program at CCM included 2 full-time chamber

ensembles: Chamber Players and Chamber Winds, both of whom presented 6 concerts a year. His ensembles have performed at many significant conferences and conventions, including the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic (twice), CBDNA National Conference (twice), WASBE Convention (twice), National MENC Convention, and numerous Ohio State (OSMEA), NYSSMA and NYSBDA conferences. He has been the recipient of many honors and awards, including being selected to the "Order of Manuel Felipe Ruzeles", which is the highest award possible for cultural contributions to the state of Tachira in Venezuela. He was elected into the American Bandmasters Association (ABA) in 2011.

His professional life was always centered around his students and their careers, and he is equally proud of their accomplishments. Professor Winther's students are leaders in music education, and teach at public schools, colleges and universities across the United States and abroad.

He and his wife, Marilon, currently reside in Greensboro, North Carolina, where she is an accomplished artist and painter. Rod continues his musical work conducting the River Landing Ringers, a handbell ensemble of 14 wonderful ladies who keep him on his toes. Most recently, he has begun a series of talks that precede concerts by the Greensboro Symphony. He is also in the process of establishing a concert series for the residents of River Landing that would feature recitals given by performance majors from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro.

Zachary Arenz is the 2024 New York State Teacher of the Year. He has been a music educator in the Rochester City School District since 2013 and previously at the International English School in Eskilstuna, Sweden. While growing up on Long Island's East End, he never questioned his calling to music education. He earned both his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the State University of New York at Fredonia.

His teaching philosophy is rooted in a love for



music and a commitment to his students' and colleagues' well-being, meaning his impact goes far beyond the classroom. His approaches use music as the foundational tool to help others navigate emotions, build resilience, and cultivate community.

As an advocate for intentional restorative and social-emotional learning practices in all classrooms, Zach is known for creating safe and inclusive spaces where all are able and encouraged to thrive.

In his role as a teacher leader, from mentoring teaching candidates to facilitating workshops focusing on educator resiliency, Zach is committed to the growth and development of all educators. Further dedicated to service in learning, Zach's involvements extend beyond the walls of his school. He is a practicing musician in the Genesee Valley Wind Ensemble and serves on the committee for Belonging, Equity, Diversity, and Representation for the New York State School Music Association.

Zach's dedication to his practice and his community has made him a respected leader in the field of education and his commitment to fostering positive and inclusive environments continues to shape the future in countless ways.

Amy Hoxie has been teaching since 1993. Although she has experience at all levels of vocal and instrumental music instruction, most of her career has been directing elementary instrumental music. In her time as an instrumental director, she has had several elementary bands perform and receive Gold Awards at NYSSMA Major evaluation festivals, operated a student brass quintet for public performances, and had elementary bands travel for special performances. Amy currently directs the 4th and 5th grade instrumental ensembles in Sherburne. In addition to her du-



ties at school Amy directs the Sidney Community band, is Co-conductor of the Catskill Valley Wind Ensemble and performs with the Leatherstocking Jazz Ensemble, Well-Tempered Brass Quintet and Hartwick College Wind

Ensemble.

While maintaining memberships with NYSSMA and NYSBDA, Amy also represents music students from the state of New York as the Government Relations Chair for select Chenango, Madison and Broome County schools. The position provides the opportunity to speak with New York State Senators and Assemblymen at their offices in Albany.

Amy holds an Associate degree in music from Onondaga Community College, a Bachelors of Music in Music Education from Ithaca College and a Masters of Music from Ithaca College.

When not teaching, performing or directing, Amy enjoys the outdoors and time with friends.



Michael Struzik is a 1988 graduate of the Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam. As of June, 2021, he is a retired music teacher from the Brighton School District near Rochester. His responsibilities at Brighton included directing the Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band, and Jazz Band, as well as

teaching brass and percussion lessons to students in grades nine through twelve. He taught music theory and advanced placement music theory. In addition, he directed the pit orchestra for the annual spring musical. Mr. Struzik also served as a music facilitator for the district.

Mr. Struzik has conducted All-County and honor band festivals in several counties in New York State as well as the state of Virginia. He is a past recipient of the University of Rochester's Excellence in Secondary Education Award. He is also the 2011 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the New York State Band Directors Association. In 2019, he received the Helen Hosmer Excellence in Teaching Award from the Crane School of Music. In 2020, he received the Excellence in Music Education Award from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. Mr. Struzik is an All-State certified adjudicator, and is also an adjudicator for major organization festivals. Since 2017, he has served NYSSMA as the Adjudication Festival Committee band chair.

During the summer, he teaches at Crane Youth Music in Potsdam, New York. Mr. Struzik is a free-lance musician in the Rochester area, and performs regularly with the Orchestra of Northern New York, Northern Symphonic Winds, and the Penfield Symphony Orchestra. He is a member of NYSSMA, NAFME, the International Trombone Association and has served on the executive board of the New York State Band Directors Association in a variety of positions, currently as their Executive Director. He is also a Past-President of the Monroe County School Music Association. He is currently enjoying his current position as the student teaching facilitator for the Rochester and Buffalo areas for the Crane School of Music.

Mr. Struzik lives in Webster, New York with his wife Katie and enjoys spending time with his two grown sons Christopher 29, and Matthew 25, and their new grandson Charlie!

Dan Shaut is Director of Bands at Highland High School where he directs the high school concert band and jazz ensembles and created a Music Industry class. In addition, Shaut founded and is director of Bridge Arts and Education, a music education non-profit based in the Hudson Valley. As artistic director of Bridge Arts, Shaut has founded the Hudson Valley

Youth Jazz Orchestra, the Bridge Arts Community Jazz Band and Jazz Lab and an annual weeklong summer jazz program. Participating students in the Bridge Arts Jazz program have studied and performed with GRAMMY award winning jazz musicians including; Terrell Stafford, Chris Vadala, Gary Smulyan, John Mosca, Conrad Herwig, Melissa Gardiner, Dennis Mackrel, Steve Wilson, Jim Snidero, and Veronica Nunn.



Shaut served as adjunct professor of music at the College of St. Rose in Albany for 12 years and, for 15 years, in the same capacity at SUNY Ulster. For 5 years he directed the SUNY Ulster Jazz Ensemble. He has taught music majors and minors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Shaut has been selected by the music educators associations of Dutchess, Orange, Seneca-Tompkins, Sullivan, and Ulster Counties to lead workshops for music educators or direct honor youth ensembles. During 2023 and 2024 Shaut appeared on the faculty of the Bard Conservatory Summer Camp. For over a decade, Shaut has been on faculty at his alma mater for the Ithaca College Summer Music Academy. At SMA he has taught saxophone lessons and masterclasses, improvisation and songwriting workshops, co-directed the jazz ensemble and, in 2017, directed the Wind Ensemble.

He spent three years as a freelance musician and continues to perform professionally. Following a North American collegiate search, he was selected as a member of the Walt Disney World Saxophone Quintet in 2001, and spent that summer performing in Orlando. In summer 2002, he was the tenor sax soloist with the award-winning Starlight Orchestra at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg (VA). As a member of the Maryland

Saxophone Quartet, he toured Brazil in summer 2003, where he performed with Dale Underwood. He has performed with Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons as well. He appears on a 2005 recording by composer and trumpeter Rusty Detric, a 2014 CD by Sax Life entitled “The Saxophone and The Drum” and a 2015 album called “Jazz for Christmas Time” recorded by the Napoli/Shaut Sextet. For the past decade Shaut has performed with GRAMMY nominated American roots band, “Professor Louie and the Crowmatix.” In summer of 2024 Shaut arranged a horn chart, performed and soloed on Professor Louie’s latest album In 2022 Shaut began performing with the Roland Vazquez Band (an Afro-Latin Jazz Fusion Band) and in a rock band “Backyard Fire” led by his kids (ages 13 and 10.) In summer of 2024 Shaut also recorded albums with Sax Life and The Jim Perry Big Band. The albums will be released in 2025.

Allyson Keyser is a tenured Professor of Music at SUNY Schenectady County Community College where she instructs the trumpet studio, coaches brass ensembles, teaches core music classes, directs the Wind Ensemble, and is the Winds and Strings



Department Chair. Dr. Keyser received her bachelor’s degree in music education from Virginia Commonwealth University and her M.M. and D.M.A. in trumpet performance with a cognate in instrumental conducting from the University of North Carolina at

Greensboro, where she was the trumpet teaching assistant.

In 2017, Dr. Keyser won the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. Prior to her appointment at SUNY Schenectady, Dr. Keyser taught trumpet, theory, aural skills, and coached brass ensembles at Virginia Commonwealth University as a sabbatical replacement for her former professor, Rex Richardson. Dr. Keyser currently performs as principal trumpet and assistant conductor of the Capital Region Wind Ensemble. She leads the SUNY Schenectady Concert Brass Quintet, plays principal trumpet with Albany Pro Musica, is a member of the Schenectady-Saratoga Symphony, and often performs with the Albany Symphony, Glens Falls Symphony, and Saratoga Voices among many other fine ensembles in the area. She recently performed with the Lake George Music Festival Orchestra and performed and recorded a new work with the American Modern Ensemble on Albany Records

Dr. Keyser often presents trumpet clinics and conducting workshops at K-12 schools, universities, and music conferences across NY state. Additionally, she presents topics to area music programs on audition preparation, performance anxiety, programming, and alternative careers in music. She performs as an active freelance musician and maintains a trumpet studio of all ages and levels in the Capital Region of New York. Her specialty is working with students who have technical or physical challenges on their instruments, helping them learn to play with ease, and removing roadblocks so that they can fully enjoy the process of making beautiful music with confidence.

**Syracuse Youth Wind Symphony
Erin Althen and Greg Borsz, Directors**

The SYWS’s mission is to provide an inspiring musical home to the most exceptional high school woodwind, brass, and percussion student-musicians from across Central New York. Musicians will perform a transformative and diverse repertoire of Wind Band music within an ensemble culture that embodies and celebrates connection, collaboration, belonging, musician-leadership, joy, and excellence in music-making. The SYWS seeks to augment, support, and serve our musicians’ outstanding school music education programs with its presence and outreach. The SYWS will

be conducted and directed by Ms. Erin Althen, Band Director at Westhill High School, and Mr. Greg Borsz, Band Director at West Genesee High School.



Erin Althen is a music teacher, performer, conductor, clinician, and author whose life's work is sharing music with students in a way that they connect to the most fulfilling, authentic, and light-filled expression of their being. Ms. Althen is in her twenty-second

year teaching in the Westhill Central School District in Syracuse, New York, where she serves as the Westhill High School Director of Bands and Chair of the Fine Arts Department; conducts the WHS Wind Ensemble, Jazz Lab, Percussion Ensemble, Pit Band, and Pep Band; advises the Tri-M National Honor Society for music; co-advises the Westhill Musical Leadership Academy; and coaches chamber music ensembles.

Ms. Althen is the founder and co-conductor of the Syracuse Youth Wind Symphony; co-founder of the Central New York Music Teacher Mentoring Program, and co-authored *The Sight Reading Book*, a series of 21 sight-reading books carefully aligned with state-specific criteria. Ms. Althen maintains a private flute studio and has performed on flute and piccolo with various music educator wind bands and orchestras. She is active as a clinician and guest conductor and has led honor ensembles and presented clinics to music educators at County, State, and National conferences.

Ms. Althen is the proud recipient of the New York State Band Directors Association (NYSBDA) Outstanding Band Director Award, National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) New York State Outstanding Music Educator Award, the Westhill Staff Recognition Award and Yearbook Dedication, and is deeply honored to have been named as one of 25 Semifinalists for the 2025 Grammy Music Educator Award. Ms. Althen holds bachelor's and master's degrees in

Music Education with Performance Honors in Flute from Syracuse University's Setnor School of Music, and is a graduate of the Farmington Public Schools, in Farmington, Connecticut.



Greg Borsz is in his nineteenth year as a music teacher in the West Genesee Central School District. At West Genesee, Mr. Borsz is the Director of the High School Wind Ensemble, Concert Band, and Jazz Ensemble, as well as a brass lesson teacher at the High School and Camillus Middle School. Greg has previously been the West Genesee High School Symphonic Band and West Genesee Middle School Jazz Band Director.

For the past eighteen years Greg has served as an Assistant Director of the West Genesee Wildcat Marching Band. In 2024 Greg was named the Camillus Optimist Teacher of the Year at West Genesee High School. Prior to teaching at West Genesee Mr. Borsz spent six years as the Band Director at Corning-Painted Post East High School where he was named as the inaugural winner of the Rainbow Award for Excellent Teaching. He is currently in his second season as Co-Conductor of the Syracuse Youth Wind Symphony, an honor ensemble consisting of high school students from schools across Central New York. Greg has performed as a trombonist with the Utica Symphony, Southern Tier Symphony, Central Winds, Central Winds Jazz, Pinnacle Brass, SYTRUS Brass, and the Sam Pallet Band. Mr. Borsz has guest conducted and adjudicated across New York State. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam and a Master's degree in Music Education from Ithaca College.

Emma Gierszal (she/her) is the Assistant Professor of Percussion at the Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam. She has finished coursework for her DMA in Percussion Performance and Literature at the Eastman

School of Music and holds an MM degree and an Arts Leadership Certificate also from Eastman. Her BM degree in Music Education is from Furman University.



Emma is a versatile musician dedicated to sharing new musical experiences with others. She taught the percussion studio, ran the IPEC 2022-winning percussion ensemble, and instructed World Music at Furman University in spring 2024. While in Rochester NY, she enjoyed teaching percussion at the Hochstein School of Music and served as an adjunct percussion lecturer at Nazareth University. She was frequently on stage with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra while continuing to perform with the Eastman Percussion Ensemble and her trio, 3D Percussion. Some of her notable performances have been Viet Cuong's quartet concerto, *Re(new)al*, in front of the Albany Symphony Orchestra and premiering Austin Keck's *Evanescence* with the Eastman Percussion Ensemble at the IPEA International Percussion Competition in Shanghai. Taking an interest in Rochester's local music scene, she served as the President of the Board for the chamber ensemble, fivebyfive, and has published an Eastman Case Study about the ROCmusic Collaborative.

Emma has participated in competitive orchestral and contemporary music festivals, including the Lucerne Festival Academy in 2023, Grafenegg Academy in 2021 and 2022, the National Repertory Orchestra in 2021 (where she had the privilege of performing in front of the orchestra), and the Chautauqua Summer Music Festival in 2019. In 2018, she was honored to receive the Mary Ann Starring Memorial Award and perform at Sigma Alpha Iota's national convention. Emma is a proud Malletech Artist.



Kris Gilbert received her Bachelor's in Music Education from the Crane School of Music, her Masters of Music Composition from Binghamton University and her Certificate of Advanced Study in College Teaching from SUNY-Potsdam. She has been teaching for 27+ years in the

southern tier of New York and currently teaches 6-12 modern band, co-teaches high school band and chorus, basic rock, 6-8 chorus and directs the high school musical for the Windsor Central School District. Previously she taught all levels of band, marching band, jazz band, AP music theory, music production, junk percussion and modern band. Kris directed the Zone 15 Inaugural NYSSMA Area All-State Modern Band in 2023 and the Zone 5 Area All-State Modern Band in 2024, and will be leading the inaugural NYSSMA All-State Modern Band in 2025. She is an active clinician and has presented at many state, national and international conferences. She is the founder and director of the Southern Tier Youth Wind Ensemble and serves as the 1st VP of Broome County Music Educators Association.



Miles DeCastro is the instrument repair technician at The Crane School of Music, State University of New York at Potsdam, where he teaches courses in instrument repair technology and is responsible for the repairs, maintenance, and inventory of over 1,200 instruments. Outside of Crane he also runs his own woodwind specialty shop called North Country Winds. Prior to joining Crane in July of 2016, he was the general manager at Bridgepoint Music in Menlo Park, CA from 2012-2016, and was a repair technician at Maytan Music Center in Reno, NV from 2008-2011.

Prof. DeCastro has been an active member of the

National Association of Professional Band Instrument Repair Technicians since 2007. He recently completed his third term as president of NAPBIRT and has presented clinics on the topic of instrument repair technology in 21 states and three continents.

Miles is a Straubinger Certified Technician, Yamaha Certified Sales Professional, graduate of the Yamaha Service Advantage Program, and he has studied instrument repair and design with Morrie Backun. He serves on the Vendors' Forum Committee of The International Clarinet Association and is also a member of NAFME, NAMM, and NASA (the saxophone one, not the outer space one).

Miles holds a degree in Music Education from Mansfield University, a Certificate in Band Instrument Repair Technology from Renton Technical College, and an MBA from Clarkson University.

Mr. Greg Evans and the Binghamton University Harpur Jazz Ensemble



Greg Evans, is an Assistant Professor of Music at The State University of New York at Binghamton, where he serves as the Director of Jazz Studies. He has diplomas from Ithaca College (M.M.) and the Manhattan School of Music (B.M.).

Evans is a passionate and captivating performer, pedagogue, and com-

poser. He plays in Broadway shows, orchestras, wind ensembles, and a diverse collection of chamber groups that speak a myriad of musical dialects. He performs in concert halls, festival stages, recording studios, nightclubs, barns, living rooms, and prisons. These experiences speak to the nature of percussion: that groove, the inherent feel-good element of all music, can be found anywhere, experienced by anyone, and is for everyone.

Sought after for his buoyant, joyous, and love-filled groove, Evans has performed in multiple national tours, music festivals, and is a frequent featured performer and clinician. He also sustains an active freelance schedule having appeared with many artists including Jonathan Batiste, Benny Benack III, Terence Blanchard, Chick Corea, Joey DeFrancesco, Kurt Elling, Robin Eubanks, Jimmy Heath, Clyde and Gracie Lawrence, Branford Marsalis, John Pizzarelli, Dave Samules, and Allen Vizzutti.

**Southern Tier Concert Band
Mr. Robin Linaberry, Conductor and Mr. Barry Peters, Associate Conductor**



Robin Linaberry is a multi-faceted musician, highly regarded for his work as a teacher, conductor, educational mentor, and clinician. He retired from fulltime work after thirty-five years of teaching, including work at all levels from Elementary to collegiate and adult. As Director of Bands for Maine-Endwell High School, his

groups consistently earned the "Gold" and "Gold with Distinction" ratings in NYSSMA festivals, and superior ratings in festival performances in the U.S. and Canada. He supported the development of future educators by hosting and mentoring more than thirty Student Teachers. He held adjunct positions at Binghamton University, Ithaca College, and Broome Community College (SUNY-Broome), and now works

frequently as a guest conductor of honor groups and as a clinician/consultant. In the past year, Mr. Linaberry has presented sessions at the state music conferences in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Maine, and Delaware.

He is the New York state Chairperson for The National Band Association, conductor of the award-winning Southern Tier Concert Band, and Head Director Emeritus for American Music Abroad European tours. A published author, Mr. Linaberry's work has been featured in MEJ, The Instrumentalist, SBO Magazine, The NBA Journal, The Maine Motif, NAFME's "Music In A Minuet" blog, and others. His most recent project is the popular resource text, "Strategies, Tips, and Activities for the Effective Band Director," published by Routledge (2021).

Mr. Linaberry's recognitions have included the "NYS-BDA Outstanding Retired Band Director Award"; the BCMEA "Distinguished Service Award"; the "NYS-SMA Outstanding Contribution to Music Education Award", along with the Maine-Endwell Schools' "Founder's Day" Award and the district's peer-elected "Golden Apple Award" for excellence in teaching. He was awarded the "Nationally Registered Music Educator" status by MENC, and "The ASBDA-Stanbury Award" for both New York and for the Northeast United States. He was a nominee for the GRAMMY Music Educator Award and was the first of five "Excellence In Education" honorees featured on WBNG-TV in Binghamton NY. Under his baton, the Southern Tier Concert Band – adults from the Binghamton NY region – was chosen as the winner of 2014's "The American Prize in Wind Ensemble Performance: Community Division." Robin served as the national Band Mentor in the original MENC's "Ask the Mentor" program. He is consistently lauded for the effectiveness of his engaging rehearsal strategies.

Robin lives in Owego, NY with his wife and best friend, Patty, an inspirational and highly-respected elementary school teacher. They are blessed with two children, three beautiful granddaughters, and four dogs (including two Nederlanse Kooikerhondjes and a Stabyhoun).

Barry Peters is a native of Pennsylvania. After graduating high school in the Allentown, Pa. area, he attended Mansfield University where he received a B.S. in

Music Education in 1970. He earned a M.M. in Music Education from Ithaca College in 1972.



Mr. Peters teaching career began in Troy, Pennsylvania in 1970 and he moved to New York where he taught in Hammondsport, Canandaigua, Liverpool,

and Union Endicott until his retirement in 2002. He was the band director and marching band director in all of these schools. His bands performed at NYSSMA and New York State Field Band Association competitions along with many band pageants, college bowls, professional football games, and local competitions. His bands received numerous honors including many gold with distinction ratings from NYSSMA and two first place championships with NYSFBA. His private students performed in local all county, area all-state, and conference All-State ensembles. Many of his private students have gone on to teach, conduct and perform to this day.

Since 1997, Mr. Peters has been the conductor of the Binghamton Youth Symphony. The orchestra has been a featured performing ensemble at the NYSSMA Winter Conference. The ensemble has also played concerts in the Washington, D.C. and Boston areas. In addition, the orchestra has commissioned and premiered several works by local composers. The orchestra is seen on local TV during the holiday season.

His guest conducting experience has included many county, area all-state, and honor bands and orchestras in New York and Pennsylvania. He has also been a guest conductor at the Mansfield University Summer Music Camp, the Eastern U.S. Music Camp at Colgate University, and the New England Music Camp. He is currently serving as associate conductor of the Southern Tier Concert Band.

As a performer, Mr. Peters has performed as principal

trumpet with the Corning Philharmonic and the Elmira Symphony. He currently performs in the Ithaca Concert Band, the Vestal Community Band and the Southern Tier Concert Band. He has also performed with the B.C. Pops, the Southern Tier Wind Ensemble, Downtown Singers Orchestra, European Brass, EPAC, Summer Savoyards Orchestra, Cider Mill, and several local big bands. He is also a frequent trumpet soloist for St. Patrick and St. Thomas churches in Binghamton, NY.

He has been a member of the New York State Band Directors Association Board of Directors, the Mansfield University Alumni Board of Directors, the Binghamton Community Orchestra Board of Directors, the Southern Tier Concert Band Board of Directors, the Binghamton Harmony Club Board, and the Executive Committee of the New York State Field Band Conference. He has been a certified NYSSMA adjudicator since 1978 and continues to serve as an adjudicator for numerous band and orchestra major organizations and solo and ensemble festivals throughout New York. He also served as the marching band chairman for NYS-SMA.

In 2005, The New York State Band Directors Association named Mr. Peters the recipient of their Outstanding Retired Band Director Award. This is an honor given to someone who has had a noteworthy career and continues to contribute to the band movement after retirement. The Mansfield University Alumni Association honored him in 2010 by awarding him their Distinguished Educator Award. This is presented to a University graduate who has had outstanding achievement in the field of education.

Since his public school retirement in 2002, Mr. Peters has served as an adjunct faculty member in the School of Music at Ithaca College where he continued to work until 2017. While at Ithaca, he supervised student teachers and also taught various classes in the music education department. He has also served and continues to serve as a guest clinician for bands and orchestras throughout New York State.

Presently, Mr. Peters lives in the town of Owego with his wife Joanne. His four children and two grandchildren continue to make his life busy and rewarding.



Erin Cole Steele is the Director of the Division of Education and Senior Educational Clinician for Conn Selmer Inc. Erin also serves as a Clinical Assistant Professor at Arizona State University's School of Music. Previously, Erin was the Director of Bands at Tapp Middle School in

Cobb County, Georgia (1995-2017), where she was named Teacher of the Year. Under her leadership, the Tapp Band received numerous accolades, including performing at the 58th annual Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic. During her tenure at Tapp, she commissioned four pieces of music, including Robert W. Smith's "The Great Locomotive Chase," Frank Ticheli's "Simple Gifts-Four Shaker Songs," Samuel R. Hazo's "Ascend," and was part of consortium commissioning Eric Whitacre's "The Seal Lullaby." Erin is a contributing editor for Hal Leonard's Essential Elements for Band. She has written chapters for three editions of the GIA publication series Teaching Music Through Performance and most recently wrote a chapter for the book Rehearsing the Middle School Band. Erin is an active guest conductor and speaker. She has presented sessions at the Midwest Clinic on several occasions as well as state and international conferences. She has been the guest conductor for numerous All-State and regional honor bands, appearing in over 30 states. She served as the conductor for Youth Bands of Atlanta from 2011-2017 and a conductor for the "Encore" Music Camp for several years. She was the founder and administrator of the Cobb County Summer Band Camp in Georgia. Erin has served as a clinician for the Music for All Summer Symposium and is currently on the teaching faculty and executive director for The Conn Selmer Institute. Erin Cole Steele earned her bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Georgia in 1995. While at the University of Georgia, she played cello, flute, and piccolo in the University Symphony Orchestra, chamber groups, Symphonic and Concert Bands, and the Redcoat Marching Band.

Erin's professional affiliations include Phi Beta Mu, Sigma Alpha Iota, and the National Band Association,

for which she was awarded the Citation of Excellence three times (2015, 2008, and 2003).

As a passionate supporter of school music programs, she continues to remain active in instrumental classrooms throughout the country and enjoys traveling for guest conducting and speaking engagements. Erin now resides in Scottsdale, Arizona where she and her husband Andrew enjoy hiking and biking on the weekends.



Steve Wilson has attained ubiquitous status in the studio and on the stage with the greatest names in jazz, as well as critical acclaim as a bandleader in his own right. A musician's musician, Wilson has brought his distinctive sound to more than 100 recordings led by such celebrated and

wide-ranging artists as Chick Corea, George Duke, Michael Brecker, Dave Holland, Dianne Reeves, Bill Bruford, Gerald Wilson, Maria Schneider, Joe Henderson, Charlie Byrd, Billy Childs, Karrin Allyson, Don Byron, Bill Stewart, James Williams, and Mulgrew Miller among many others. Wilson has seven recordings under his own name, leading and collaborating with such stellar musicians as Lewis Nash, Carl Allen, Steve Nelson, Cyrus Chestnut, Greg Hutchinson, Dennis Irwin, James Genus, Larry Grenadier, Ray Drummond, Ben Riley, and Nicholas Payton.

Starting his formal training on saxophone in his native Hampton, Virginia, Wilson also played oboe and drums in school bands while performing in various R&B/funk bands throughout his teens. After a year-long stint with singer Stephanie Mills he decided to major in music at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, where he performed and/or studied with Jimmy and Percy Heath, Jon Hendricks, Jaki Byard, John Hicks, Frank Foster and Ellis Marsalis. During those years he was also in constant demand for recording studio work, and as backing musician for touring shows such as The Four Tops and Sophisticated Ladies. Landing a chair with O.T.B (Out of the Blue), a sextet of promising young players recording on Blue Note Records, Wilson moved to New York in 1987

and the following year toured the U.S. and Europe with Lionel Hampton. Becoming a first-call choice for veteran and emerging artists alike, Wilson was the subject of a New York Times profile "A Sideman's Life", highlighting his work with Ralph Peterson, Jr., Michele Rosewoman, Renee Rosnes, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Joanne Brackeen, The American Jazz Orchestra, The Mingus Big Band, The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, Leon Parker, and Buster Williams' Quintet "Something More". In 1996 he joined the acclaimed Dave Holland Quintet, and from 1998-2001 he was a member of Chick Corea's Grammy winning sextet "Origin".

Cited by his peers in a New York Times poll as one of the artists most likely to break out as an established leader, Wilson recorded four CDs - New York Summit, Step Lively, Blues for Marcus and Four For Time - on the Criss Cross label. He then recorded two projects for Chick Corea's Stretch Records label - Generations, his multi-generational quartet with Mulgrew Miller, Ray Drummond and Ben Riley -- and Passages which features his long-time musical partners Bruce Barth, Ed Howard and Adam Cruz, and special guest Nicholas Payton. Containing nine original compositions Passages established Wilson as a leader whose vision reveres the past, creates a soundscape of the present, and reaches toward the future.

In 2003 Wilson's recording Soulful Song was released on MAX JAZZ launching the label's Horn Series. It features special guest vocalists Rene Marie, Carla Cook, and Phillip Manuel and issues forth a powerful and provocative performance from these dynamic and versatile artists. As Wilson explains, "It's a tribute Black radio, as it was called then, that was particularly inclusive in its programming and a galvanizing force in the community. On the same station one could hear R&B, jazz, blues, gospel, comedy, local news and affairs, and social commentary". In addition to new original material the program includes arrangements of songs by Stevie Wonder, Chick Corea, Abbey Lincoln, Gil Scott Heron, Earth, Wind & Fire, Patrice Rushen, and The Staple Singers.

In 2009 Wilson was a member of the Blue Note 7, an all-star septet assembled to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Blue Note Records. The project culminated in a successful 50-city tour of the U.S., and their recording Mosaic. Also that year Wilson made his orchestral debut performing Heitor Villa Lobos' Fantasia for Soprano Saxophone and Chamber Orchestra with the Vermont Mozart Festival Orchestra. By popular

demand he returned to the VMF in 2010 performing a commissioned work Sweet For Duke for Saxophone & Chamber Orchestra by Jonathan Ragonese.

In February 2011 Wilson celebrated his 50th birthday with a six-night engagement, leading six different bands at Jazz Standard, NYC's premiere jazz club. The all-star line-up included Mulgrew Miller, Bruce Barth, Karrin Allyson, Lewis Nash, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Carla Cook, Geoffrey Keezer, Christian McBride, Linda Oh, Ed Howard, Adam Cruz, Diane Monroe, Joyce Hammann, Nardo Poy and Troy Stuart. In a major interview feature preview, the Wall Street Journal proclaimed, "The Sideman Becomes the Star." The WSJ article by award-winning journalist Larry Blumenfeld added, "Mr. Wilson is essential to this city's jazz landscape." Since the 1990's Wilson has been regularly cited in the Downbeat Magazine Critics and Readers Polls in the soprano and alto saxophone categories. The Jazz Journalists Association nominated him for Best Alto Sax Player in 2008, and for Best Soprano Sax Player in 2010. His work in film has included being artistic consultant to Harvey Keitel for "Lulu On The Bridge" as well as being featured on the soundtrack.

An in-demand and passionate educator Wilson is an Associate Professor of Music at City College of New York, and on faculty at the Juilliard School. He has been artist-in-residence and/or guest artist at University of Oregon, University of Maryland-College Park, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Delaware, Lemoyne College, North Carolina Central University, Bowling Green University, Lafayette College, University of Northern Colorado, SUNY New Paltz, Florida State University, California State University at Stanislaus, University of Manitoba, Hamilton College, Old Dominion University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and for the award winning arts organization CITYFOLK in Dayton, Ohio. With the support of friend and mentor Dr. Billy Taylor, Wilson has been a frequent guest performer/educator at The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. He has been a featured performer, panelist, and clinician at conferences of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Chamber Music of America, and International Association of Jazz Educators. Wilson was honored with the Marc Crawford Jazz Educator Award from New York University 2001 and the Virginia Jazz Award 2003 Musician of the Year presented by the Richmond Jazz Society, recognizing his outstanding service in the advancement of jazz and education in

their respective communities. He is an active mentor in the nurturing and promotion of his former students' emerging careers who have performed with The Count Basie Orchestra, Johnny Mandel, Beyonce Knowles, Roy Hargrove, and many others.

Wilson's current projects reflect his multifaceted artistry, versatility, and associations with some of the most highly regarded artists on the scene. His quartet Wilsonian's Grain, which consists of Orrin Evans, Ugonna Okegwo, and Bill Stewart or Clarence Penn, has been featured on NPR live from the Kennedy Center and the Village Vanguard in New York City, and headlined at the prestigious Detroit Jazz Festival in 2011. Wilson is one-half of two dynamic duos, "Musical Dialogue" with renowned drummer Lewis Nash, and in another with pianist Bruce Barth as documented on their recent recording "Home" on the We Always Swing label. He co-leads an elegant trio with pianist Renee Rosnes and bassist Peter Washington, and with composer/arranger David O'Rourke has a repertoire as soloist with strings. Wilson is touring member of the Grammy-winning Maria Schneider Orchestra, the Billy Childs Quartet, Christian McBride & Inside Straight as well as McBride's Grammy-winning Big Band, and the Buster Williams Quartet.



Mr. Dragovich was a band director for the Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools for thirty-three years, twenty-nine spent as director of bands at George W. Hewlett High School. Under his direction, the Hewlett bands received numerous awards and recognitions. Both the

Hewlett High School Wind Ensemble and Concert Band received gold ratings at NYSSMA Festivals, the Hewlett Marching Band received a first place award in the NYC Columbus Day Parade and the Hewlett Jazz Orchestra performed at many jazz festivals and conferences including the 2014 NYSSMA Winter Conference. All of his high school ensembles toured on a regular basis and performance destinations included Walt Disney World, Montreal and Quebec Canada, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Carnegie Hall and Puerto

Rico. During his public school tenure Mr. Dragovich served as a cooperating teacher to over forty college students, all of whom are enjoying careers in music education.

Mr. Dragovich received his bachelor's degree in Music Education with a concentration in Percussion from Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus. Upon graduation Mr. Dragovich was offered a graduate assistantship to continue his studies at LIU, where he graduated with a master's degree in Music Education. He went on to serve on the music faculty of LIU Post teaching percussion methods for thirteen years. Mr. Dragovich also studied at Hofstra University where he received a master's degree in Wind Conducting. While attending Hofstra he served as the graduate conducting associate to both the Hofstra Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band. Upon his graduation Mr. Dragovich joined the Hofstra faculty and taught both brass and percussion methods on the graduate and undergraduate level for nine years. As a conductor Mr. Dragovich has commissioned and conducted the world premieres of numerous works written for both symphonic band and jazz ensemble. Guest soloists with his ensembles include Stanley Drucker, Joseph Alessi, Mike Davis, Cecil Bridgewater, John Riley, Jack Schatz, Dave Pietro, Pete McGuinness, Jim Snidero and Mike Carubia, to name a few. As a performer Mr. Dragovich has always maintained an active schedule and has worked with many entertainers and jazz artists including Billy Eckstine, Jerry Vale, the Four Freshman, Clem DeRosa's Mighty Swing Machine, Ray Alexander and the Four Aces, in addition to various bands, orchestra and theater productions in the metropolitan region, including his own 17 piece jazz orchestra.

At present Mr. Dragovich is Director of Bands at Five Towns College where he directs the college wind ensemble and jazz orchestra. He also conducts the Nassau Suffolk Jazz Band, is an adjudicator for Music in the Parks, Festivals of Music and the Long Island Music Festival while serving as a guest clinician for Educational Tours, Inc. He is a member of the Board of Directors for Best Bands and Choirs International and the American Chamber Ensemble. Mr. Dragovich works as a BOCES Artist in Residence and serves as the state treasurer for the New York State Chapter of the Percussive Arts Society and is the percussion editor for the School Music News, a publication of NYS-SMA. He is also a co-director of Percussion on The

Sound (POTS!) A pre-collegiate program for percussion students and presents a week-long residency each summer at Five Towns College. Mr. Dragovich continues to be in demand as a guest conductor, clinician and performer while maintaining his own teaching studio specializing in concert percussion, drum set, and instrumental conducting. He presently resides in Amity Harbor, NY with his wife Mindy where he enjoys cycling, gardening and being Izolda's grandpa!



Andy Kittleson has served as the NYSSMA Manual Chairperson since 2023. He also is an All-State Brass adjudicator, serves as the Treasurer of the Wayne County Music Educators Association and conducts the Kodak Concert Band as well as the Webster Village Band. Andy currently works in the Wayne Central School District in Ontario, NY as the 7th and 8th grade band director.