

DSU Music Program

Spring 2022 Newsletter – Volume 5 • Issue 1



Spring 2022 Music Program Events Schedule

- Thursday, February 10, TBD: Jazz Artist Anthony Branker Clinic (Virtual)
- Wednesday, February 23, 12:00 PM: Baroque Demonstration with Dr. Chen and Pat Neely (viola da gamba player, NYC)
- Wednesday, February 23, 4:00 PM: Black History Month Recital (Art Center Gallery)
- Tuesday, March 1, 11:00 AM: Performance Seminar (Art Center Gallery)
- Tuesday, March 1 All-Day: Theater Open House (tentative)
- Tuesday, March 1: Music Department Gala (tentative, evening)
- Wednesday, March 2: EH Theater Grand ReOpening Concert (tentative, evening)
- Thursday, March 17, 11:00 AM: Faculty Recital with Dr. Gazda and Dr. Chen (Art Center Gallery)
- Friday, March 18: Vocal Solo Festival (EH Theater)
- Tuesday, March 22, 11:00 AM: Voice Studio Class (EH 138)
- Tuesday, March 22, 2:00 PM: Baroque Demonstration with Dr. Chen and Natalie Kress (baroque violin, Juilliard alum)
- Tuesday, March 29, 11:00 AM: Performance Seminar (Art Center Gallery)
- Wednesday, March 30, 2:00 PM: Baroque Demonstration with Dr. Chen and Dr. J.B. Cerin (voice, Lincoln University faculty)
- Wednesday, March 30, 6:00 PM: Kaliyah Weldin & Dylan Bottomley Senior Recital (EH Theater)
- Saturday, April 2: Brass and Woodwind Day (EH Theater, EH 138, EH 141, EH 151)
- Tuesday, April 5, 11:00 AM: Baroque Demonstration with Dr. Chen and Eileen Grycky (baroque flute, University of Delaware faculty)
- Saturday, April 9 TBD: Spring Open House (Music Wing/Virtual)
- Tuesday, April 12, 11:00 AM: Performance Seminar (Art Center Gallery)
- Tuesday, April 12, 7:00 PM: Jaden Adkins, tuba, Senior Recital (EH Theater)
- Wednesday, April 13, 7:00 PM: Howard Evans, Jr., tenor Senior Recital (Art Center Gallery)
- Thursday, April 14, 11:00 AM Percussion Studio Seminar (EH Theater)
- Tuesday, April 19, 11:00 AM: Voice Studio Class (EH 138)
- Tuesday, April 19, 7:00 PM: Chloe Humphrey, soprano Senior Recital (Art Center Gallery)
- Friday, April 22, 7:00 PM: DSU Choral Concert (EH Theater)

Welcome New Faculty and Staff

Delaware State University has appointed Sidney Sessoms, Jr., as Interim Director of Bands, and Vincent Adkins as Interim Assistant Director of Bands. Mr. Sessoms attended DSU and then completed his Bachelor of Science in General Studies/Music at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and a Master of Music Education from Salisbury State University. Mr. Sessoms served as the Director of Bands at Lincoln University (MO), Clark Atlanta University and Livingstone College, the latter of which he also served as interim Chair of the Music Department. Vincent Adkins earned a Bachelor of Science in Music from Delaware State University in 1988 and a Master's Degree in Education Media Design and Technology from Full Sail University in 2009. Mr. Adkins has taught music and band to public school students for 32 years. He is also an instrumentalist in the Dover Symphony Orchestra, where he is also a Board member.



Sidney Sessoms, Jr.



Vincent Adkins



The Music Program also welcomes Dr. Joyce Chen as piano accompanist and adjunct faculty, teaching piano and a special music history class in Baroque music.

A native of Taiwan, Dr. Chen is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Music (Historical Musicology) and the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Humanities at Princeton University. As a performing artist, Dr. Chen is well-versed in harpsichord, organ, and piano. Dr. Chen is a recipient of the 2018 Individual Artist Fellowship (Emerging Professional) from the Delaware Division of the Arts. In May 2019, Dr. Chen was a featured solo performer of the Emerging Artist Showcase by Early Music America at the Bloomington Early Music Festival. Dr. Joyce Chen holds a D.M.A. degree in Harpsichord Performance from Stony Brook University and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from UC Berkeley. She has studied harpsichord with Charlene Brendler, Arthur Haas, and Davitt Moroney. She has an online following at her YouTube channel, where she uploads a weekly video of solo and/or chamber music performances, or tutorials relating to harpsichord constructions.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/JoyceChenMusic>

Amanda Sheriff, soprano, joined the DSU faculty as adjunct faculty in voice. Ms. Sheriff graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University with her B.M. in Music Education (2016) and M.M. in Vocal Performance (2018). Sheriff is currently a professional opera singer, in tandem with being an educator, and is slated to perform the roles of Norina (Don Pasquale) with Opera Delaware and Monica (Medium) with Baltimore Concert Opera in the fall of 2021. Amanda Sheriff was recently an Apprentice Artist at Des Moines Metro Opera where she performed Miss Lightfoot (Fellow Travelers) and covered the roles of Clarine and L'amour (Platée). Amanda spent the earlier part of 2021 as a Studio Artist at Florida Grand Opera. She performed the roles of Beatrice (Three Decembers), Babs (New York Stories), 1st Trio member (Trouble in Tahiti), and Célie (Signor Deluso). During the 2019/20 season, Amanda sang Pamina (Die Zauberflöte) and Little Red (Little Red's Most Unusual Day) with Opera Iowa's touring troupe. Amanda also joined DMMO as an Apprentice Artist for their all virtual season due to COVID-19. In 2018/19, Amanda sang Barber's Knoxville: Summer of 1915 with Stephen F. Austin State University Orchestra of the Pines, won Alumnus of the year, and spent the summer as an Emerging Artist at Seagle Music Colony performing the role of Susanna in (Le Nozze di Figaro).



Student News

Senior BA in Music major Jaden Adkins won the Music Teachers National Association State Solo Competition in the brass division. He will next compete in the Eastern Divisional round for a chance to compete in the National Finals to be held in Minneapolis in March. Jaden also participated in the Boysie Lowery Living Jazz Residency in Wilmington this past summer. The mission of the residency is to introduce a select group of young jazz students (ages 17-25) to an intense two-week residency focused on performing, composing/arranging, and improvisation that culminated in several semi-public performances, and a final public concert of student works.



Two current DSU students are working as assistant band directors at Smyrna High School, under the direction of DSU alumni Hakeem Nabi. Manny Scott, a senior Music Education major, serves as an Assistant Band Director in charge of percussion, and Sophomore Music Education major Zach Shane serves as an Assistant Band Director with marching band visuals and also handles administrative duties.



DSU music major Michael Wingate has been travelling all over the world competing in international beatbox battles. Under his stage name “Match”, Michael attended the Grand Beatbox Battle in Warsaw, Poland which is the largest international beatbox battle in the world. He entered the open competition on the last day and got through the pre-elimination stage and seeded 23rd out of about 300 beatboxers in the main elimination stage. Michael got to meet friends from around the world from the UK, Portugal, Japan, and Azerbaijan. Michael also travelled to Germany to compete in the Bayreuth Beatbox Battle. He was the only competitor representing America and competed against some of the top beatboxers from France and an Austrian national champion. Michael won third place which came with 150 Euros in prize money! He also travelled to Hawaii from December 10th-16th to judge a battle for the Hawaiian Beatbox Community and will be judging the Vancouver Beatbox Battle this coming February. Michael also recently won a spot for a beatbox competition in France this coming April, and his video tied with a beatboxer who is currently ranked 3rd in the world. He will be the only American in this battle as well!



Faculty News



On October 8 Dr. Frank Gazda presented a clinic titled “Brass Chamber Music” at the 2021 Delaware Music Educators Association conference. The clinic focused on incorporating small brass ensemble music into the junior high and high school curriculum. Dr. Gazda is a sought-after clinician who has been featured at state, regional, and national events including the New Jersey Music Educators Association conference, the National Association for Music Education Eastern Regional conference, and the International Trombone Festival. Dr. Gazda also presented two faculty recitals this semester. Titled “Slides” and “Valves”, the recitals featured Dr. Gazda (with Dr. Joyce Chen) performing on five different low brass instruments with accompaniment by piano, harpsichord, and electronics.

Dr. Carla Becker has been exceptionally active as a presenter and grant writer. Since the summer of 2021 Dr. Becker has presented: “Mindfulness in Music Education: A k-6th Grade Integration” Delaware Music Education Association Conference, “Culturally Self Representative Pedagogies: Even Before George Floyd” Critical Race Theory in Education, “What Higher Education Institution Can Learn from the HBCU Legacy” Society for Ethnomusicology International Conference, “Breathe and Mindfully Move: K-6th Music” Maryland Music Educators Conference, “Engaging with Social Responsiveness in Philosophy and Practice” Maryland Music Educators Conference, “Colonized Arts Education: Who is excluded?” International Society for Music Education-Africa. Zambia, Africa, Civil Responsibility: Pedagogies that Respond to Social Inequities in the Classroom” Education Student Lecture Series, Delaware State University, “History of African American Musicians in Country Music” Guest Musical Advisor for Viacom Company: Country Music Television, and “Popular Music Education and Critical Lyricism” Popular Music Education Conference: Detroit, MI-Chicago, IL.



Dr. Becker also has recently been awarded the 2021 Modern Band Higher Education Fellowship by the nonprofit Little Kids Rock. As a fellow, Dr. Becker traveled to Colorado State University to receive modern band professional development. In addition, she will be provided with curricular materials and instruments for the DSU music education program, including electric basses, guitars, drum set, keyboards, tech equipment and more. The nonprofit selected Dr. Becker for the fellowship based on her application and the Delaware State University Music Program’s “commitment to making Modern Band and culturally responsive, highly inclusive music education a part of course offerings for music education majors.”

Finally, Dr. Becker also received a 2021-2022 Delaware Division of the Arts “Artist Opportunity Grant.” She, along with Music Education Student Elijah Shy, is studying West African Drum Rhythms with Sanu from the Konkranan Drum and Dance Ensemble in the DC area. Dr. Becker and Elijah Shy will be presented a recital in January.



As members of The Capitol Brass, Dr. Frank Gazda and Dr. Patrick Hoffman performed for the Ordination and Installation ceremony of William Edward Koenig as Bishop of the Wilmington Diocese. The episcopal ordination was the first in the diocese since 1897 and attracted over 900 attendees, as well as 30 bishops and archbishops, Cardinals Wilton D. Gregory of Washington, and Timothy M. Dolan of New York. The ceremony was rebroadcast nationally on EWTN and can be viewed here:

<https://www.ewtn.com/tv/shows/cathedrals-across-america>



Dr. Derrick Thompson is a co-founder, with his fellow Teachers College, Columbia University cohort members Dr. Meagan Dissinger, Dr. Michael Fleischmann, Dr. Alex Fung, and Dr. Michael Mohammad, of “Research Riff”: A Music Education Micro Journal, which was piloted during the summer of 2021 and will be released as an online platform in 2022. Dr. Thompson was invited to serve as guest conductor of the Tri-School Choral Workshop on Friday, January 7, 2022. The event will be held at Wilmington Friends School in Wilmington, DE. He has also been invited to serve as guest conductor for the Virginia All-District XIII High School Choral event that will take place at Eastern View High School in Culpeper, VA, on Saturday, February 12, 2022.



On Saturday, January 8, Dr. Patrick Hoffman hosted the virtual Classical Café program through the Music School of Delaware. Titled “A Herd of Trumpets”, Dr. Hoffman, discussed the wide variety of trumpets that are in practical use today, and what the unique purpose each instrument fills. This program was presented in conjunction with Dr. Hoffman’s performance of his own transcription of the Vivaldi Oboe Concerto in D Major with the Wilmington Community Orchestra on January 28.

Alumni News

Eric Tsavdar (BA in Music Education, 2011) is the Choir Director at Selbyville Middle School and has begun his Masters in Music degree with a concentration in Music Composition at the University of Delaware. Eric has had arrangements published by the major music publishing company Hal Leonard and has composed original musicals. Eric has been very busy musically. You can read about some of his activities in newsletters Volume 4 issue 1, Volume 3 issue 2, and Volume 3 issue 1. When not composing Eric is very busy teaching and parenting (he and his wife and have twins!)



Grace Batten (Bachelor of Arts in Music, 2015) is the director of bands at Sussex Technical High School in Georgetown, DE. This past fall the Raven Nation Marching Band performed at the Milton Christmas Parade on December 1, the Georgetown Christmas Parade on December 2, the Millsboro Christmas Parade on December 4, the Rehoboth Christmas Parade on December 6, and the Greenwood Christmas Parade on December 10!

Hakeem Nabi (Bachelor of Arts in Music Education, 2017) has moved from his position teaching General Music at Clayton Intermediate School and is in his first year as Director of Bands at Smyrna High School. Hakeem teaches Marching Band, Symphonic Band, and Jazz Band. The Smyrna Marching Band Recently won 1st place in the Milford Community Parade in October and was awarded best appearing Marching Band. The Jazz and Symphonic Bands winter concert is on December 7th at 7:00



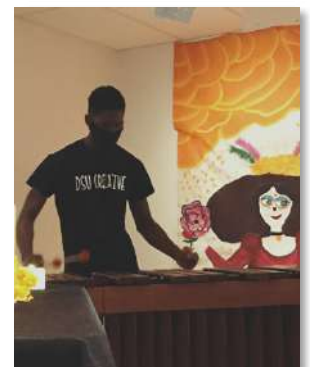
PM at the Smyrna High School Auditorium. Hakeem also teaches piano privately with students ages 6 through 12. He recently got married in October to another Hornet, Simone Johnson, who graduated from DSU in December of 2018.

Jalyn T. Robertson (Bachelor of Arts in Music, Vocal, 2016) has had the privilege of performing with legendary tenor Andrea Bocelli as a member of the NVOA Choir (NEWorks Voices of America), under the direction and leadership of Nolan Williams Jr. Jalyn was introduced to Nolan Williams Jr. by fellow DSU alumni Marcel J. Sawyer. While a part of NVOA, she has also done a number of concerts including a performance at the Kennedy Center with Chaka Khan. She has even had the opportunity to perform with her DSU voice instructor, Devin Mercer. Jalyn is a full-time Relationship Banker at JPMorgan Chase Bank. In addition to her classical performing, she is also the lead singer of the R&B/GoGo band "Positive Sounds".



General News

The Arts Center/Gallery (ACG) held a DSU Community Night at the Biggs Museum of American Art on November 9th. This event provided the DSU community with an opportunity to explore this cultural arts venue and current exhibitions. DSU's Music Program partnered with the ACG to provide a music component to Biggs Night. Senior BA in Music Education major Elijah Shy, percussionist and the student Jazz Combo (Jaden Adkins: Drums, Tyree Dennis: Sax, Rashawn King: Piano, Samuel Mace: Piano, Zack Papan: Guitar, Asad Williams: Bass) truly enhanced the evening with their performances. Thanks to DSU Music Faculty Dr. Carla Becker, Stephen Tipping and Marty Denson for their support of the event.



The University Choir returned to in-person rehearsal after an 18-month hiatus. Reaching the largest enrollment size since Dr. Thompson began as Director of Choral Activities, the ensemble is excited about returning to on-campus, in-person rehearsals and performances. The Choir is also excited to have Dr. Joyce Chen as their new accompanist. The University Choir presented its first performance on Friday, September 24, at the Annual President's Prayer Breakfast. In addition to several in person performances this semester, the choir also produced a virtual concert that can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGLYW8vio1c>



The Delaware Winds is a semi-professional wind ensemble that performs throughout the state and was invited to perform at the New Jersey Music Educators conference. They returned to the concert stage on November 2 after a year and a half long layoff due to the pandemic. Several DSU musicians were members of the ensemble for their return performance, including Dr. Frank Gazda, Dylan Bottomley (Senior MA in Teaching Major), Jaden Adkins (Senior BA in Music Major), and DSU Alumni Tyrell Butler (music faculty in the Capitol School District and at the Cab Calloway School). In addition to performing with the ensemble, Dylan Bottomley is the youngest member of the Delaware Winds Advisory Board.

DSU Alumni and a Guest Artist were invited to DSU for a Saturday's Music Education Series Workshop on November 6. The Music Education Program along with the Student Chapter of Delaware State University National Association for Music Education Presented DSU Alumni Mr. Von Morgan's clinic "General Music in K-6th Grade Education" and Mr. Clayton McIntyre from: "Little Kids Rock" presenting Create with Soundtrap.



Dr. Carla Becker formed a Student Jazz Combo beginning September 2021. The members are Jaden Adkins, Dylan Bottomley, Rashawn King, Sam Mace, Zachary Papan, Asad Williams, and Alyssia Woodward. They recently performed on campus with internationally known saxophonist Eric Darius. Mr. Darius, who is also a renowned songwriter and producer, took the first-floor stage in the MLK Jr. Student Center for an October 15 performance and jazz clinic. The large crowd was blown away by Mr. Darius' amazing performing and inspiring message.



On Saturday, April 2, DSU will host our annual Brass and Woodwind Day in the Education and Humanities Theater. Events will start at 1:00 PM. Special guests include Wayne J. du Maine, Dr. Brian Levels and the Brass Ensemble and Chamber Winds from the United States Naval Academy Band.

As a trumpeter, Wayne J. du Maine has performed and recorded with such ensembles as the New York Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and Orchestra of St. Luke's. He currently holds the principal chair with the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the American Composers Orchestra. He is Director of Brass Studies at New York University. Wayne has also been contracted to play many Broadway shows like Titanic, Music Man, Man of La Mancha, and The King and I. He has served as associate conductor for Fiddler on the Roof, the Lincoln Center production of South Pacific, and The Scottsboro Boys. Wayne can be heard on Prince's Newpower Soul recording.

Brian E. Levels is an accomplished national and international multiple woodwind specialist. A native of Texas, Brian earned a Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, and Doctor of Musical Arts in multiple woodwind performance from the University of North Texas. His national and international touring experience includes performances with 42nd Street, Aida, Hairspray, Ain't Misbehavin' and Legally Blonde. Other experiences include performing with the Grammy Nominated University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra and Wind Symphony, Paradigm Orchestra, Lyric Stage Orchestra, and Broadway tours of Porgy and Bess and Phantom of the Opera. Dr. Levels has performed with the Omaha Symphony Orchestra, The New Philharmonic at the Kaneko Center, Opera Omaha, Omaha Symphonic Winds, Creighton University, Hudson Chorale, and is currently the multiple woodwind specialist for the Colour of Music Festival Orchestra. He has served on the music faculties at the Omaha Conservatory of Music, Peru State College, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Dr. Levels is a freelance musician and teacher in New York City, currently teaching at Friends Seminary and Delaware State University.

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1.

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2.

Tell us what you have been up to over the years and we will feature you in future newsletters.

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Department Faculty & Staff:

Dr. Charlisa Edelin, Chair, Mass Communications, Visual & Performing Arts - cedelin@desu.edu

Mr. Vincent Adkins, Assistant Band Director
vadkins1@icloud.com

Mr. Nathan Ames, Adjunct Instructor, Guitar
nathanames@aol.com

Dr. Carla Becker, Assistant Professor, Music Education
cbecker@desu.edu

Dr. Raymond-Joseph Bohn, Adjunct Instructor, Bass
rayjbohn@gmail.com

Dr. Joyce Chen, Accompanist
cembalo0418@gmail.com

Dr. LaPointe Davis, Professor, Woodwinds
ladavis@desu.edu

Mr. Marty Denson, Production Coordinator and Adjunct Professor, Music Industry
mdenson@desu.edu

Dr. Frank Gazda, Professor, Low Brass
fgazda@desu.edu

Dr. Patrick Hoffman, Professor, Music Theory/Trumpet
phoffman@desu.edu

Mrs. Sara Hoffman, Adjunct Instructor, Music Theory/Horn - shoffman@desu.edu

Mrs. Inger Lawton, Secretary
ilawton@desu.edu

Dr. Brian Levels, Adjunct Instructor, Woodwinds
blevels@desu.edu

Dr. Mable Morrison, Associate Professor, Piano
mmorrison@desu.edu

Mr. Sidney Sessoms, Director of Bands
ssessoms@desu.edu

Mrs. Amanda Sherriff, Voice Instructor
sheriffamandaj@gmail.com

Mr. Lionel Thomas, Adjunct Instructor, Strings
violinel440@gmail.com

Dr. Derrick Thompson, Music Program Director and Choral Director
dthompson@desu.edu

Mr. Stephen Tipping, Adjunct Instructor, Percussion
stipping@desu.edu

Dr. David Tolley, Associate Professor, Music Industry
dtolley@desu.edu