



TENNESSEE ARTS ACADEMY

CELEBRATING **40** YEARS OF SERVICE
TO ARTS EDUCATORS
1986 • 2026

July 12–17, 2026 HOSTED ON THE CAMPUS OF
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



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The Premier Teacher Training & Professional Development Institute for K–12 Arts Education

The TAA Summer Institute is hosted by and in partnership with the College of Liberal Arts on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University, in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

The Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation receives a direct appropriation grant funded by the State of Tennessee.

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Significant sponsorship, scholarship, and event support for the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation in 2026 is generously provided by:

The American Snuff Company Charitable Trust; Madeline Bridges, in memory of David Bridges; Marion and Stephen Coleman; Commercial Bank and Trust Company; Rena Ellzy; Morel Enoch; Dianne Evans; First Community Bank; The Fott Family, in memory of Solie Fott; Germantown Performing Arts Center; Dorothy M. Gillespie Foundation; HCA Healthcare Foundation; HCA Healthcare/TriStar Health; Kimberly Heimert; Kem Hinton, in memory of Solie Fott; James R. Holcomb; Patricia A. Hudson; INSBANK; Lingner Gift Fund, in memory of Marilee Stites; Ludus; Leah Tolbert Lyons; Flowerree W. McDonough; Karen and Ron Meers; Michael Meise; William Rollins Fund for the Arts of The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee; Amy Savell, in memory of Sara and Las Savell; SmartBank; Tennessee Book Company, in memory of Cavit Cheshier; Theatrical Rights Worldwide; Jeanette and Bill Watkins; Talmage Watts; and Wilson Bank & Trust.

The Tennessee Arts Academy is funded in part by Metro Arts / Nashville Office of Art + Culture.

WELCOME

From the Governor of Tennessee



Dear Educators,

On behalf of the great state of Tennessee, it is my honor to welcome you to the 2026 Tennessee Arts Academy Summer Institute. We are so fortunate as a state to have a nationally recognized program for professional development in arts education.

As you gather this year, I am sure you will enjoy interacting with colleagues as you further develop your abilities to instruct students in music, theatre and dance, and the visual arts. The people of our state are known around the world for their creative talents. Your participation in TAA will help build upon this legacy and advance the next generation of Tennessee artists.

Thank you for all that you do to inspire creativity and a love for the arts in our students. Maria and I send our best wishes for an exciting and enriching event.

Sincerely,



Bill Lee

From the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education



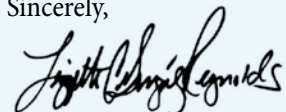
Arts Educators and Administrators,

Welcome to the 2026 Tennessee Arts Academy Summer Institute! As the Commissioner of Education in Tennessee, I hope you are thrilled to access a wealth of resources and supports designed to help you develop your skills and knowledge in the arts. I hope your time at the Arts Academy is spent investing in professional growth, enhancing skills, expanding knowledge, and deepening your understanding of the arts, thereby enriching the lives of students and contributing to the overall quality of arts education in Tennessee.

We are grateful for educators' commitment to enhancing the quality of arts education in Tennessee as it is an essential component to ensure all students receive a well-rounded education in our state. We thank you for joining such an incredible community, and I look forward to working with you to help ensure that our students have access to the highest quality of arts education possible.

Thank you for the continuous effort of pouring into Tennessee students.

Sincerely,



Lizzette Reynolds
Commissioner of Education

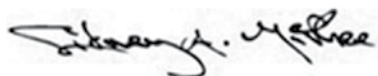
From the President of Middle Tennessee State University



Welcome to Middle Tennessee State University!

We are so pleased for you to join us on the beautiful campus of Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). With outstanding academic programs in the visual and performing arts, MTSU has a long-standing reputation as one of the leading destinations for arts education in the region. The arts are thriving at MTSU, and your presence here plays a tremendous part in that.

Through our partnership with TAA and the Tennessee Department of Education, MTSU affirms its commitment to the accessibility of arts and arts education for everyone in our community. Thank you for sharing your passion, skills, and abilities with the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. May your time on our campus be refreshing and inspirational as you interact with talented peers and learn from gifted instructors.



Sidney A. McPhee
President, Middle Tennessee State University

- 4** Faculty
- 8** Core Workshop Sessions
- 13** Interludes
- 23** Musings
- 25** Performances
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FACULTY

Loneka Wilkinson Battiste

Music: Elementary/Lower Middle



Loneka Wilkinson Battiste, associate professor of music education at the University of Houston, is an international scholar with more than twenty years of teaching experience in school and community settings. Her work has been published in *Choral Journal*, *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, *Journal of General Music Education*, *Proceedings of the International Society for Music Education*, and *Toward Equity in Music Teacher Education*. She has been a featured clinician for the Texas Music Educators Association conference and was the featured mini-conference presenter for the Organization of American Kodály Educators national conference in 2022. She has given speeches and papers in Accra, Ghana and in the Brazilian states of Pernambuco, Paraíba, Ceará, and Bahia. Her work focuses on supporting both enriching and affirming experiences for all students. She received her PhD in music education from Louisiana State University.

Candido Crespo

Visual Art: Upper Middle/Secondary



Candido Crespo is more than an artist; he is a storyteller, an educator of eighteen years, and a devoted father whose work pulses with the vibrancy of everyday life. A graduate of The State University of New York at New Paltz and at Stony Brook, Crespo spent years refining a multidisciplinary approach that dances between the precision of drawing and the tactile, layered worlds of printmaking and collage. Today, his practice is a celebration of the human experience. Whether through the athletic energy of his *Hoop Screams* series, the cultural resonance of the *Vejigante* mask, or his intimate explorations of *Fatherhood*, Crespo's work invites the viewer to find joy in the complex. Beyond the studio, he

is a catalyst for community. Through his creativiDAD project, he empowers fathers and male guardians to embrace creativity as a vital parenting tool, proving that art isn't just something you look at—it's something you live.

Sheila Daniels

Theatre: Upper Middle/Secondary



Sheila Daniels, a multi-disciplinary theatre-maker based in Seattle, is an associate professor at Cornish College of the Arts at Seattle University. She teaches directing, acting, and devising. Her theatre credits include directing at Seattle Rep (*Indecent*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*), ACT (*The Wolves*, *The Ramayana*), Strawberry Theatre Workshop (*Lydia*, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*), Seattle Shakespeare Company (*A Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*, *Macbeth*), Seattle Children's Theatre (*Jackie & Me*), and Intiman Theatre (*A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Crime and Punishment*), where she served as associate director under Bart Sher from 2007-2009. Her devising work has been commissioned by Tacoma Museum of Glass, UMO Ensemble, and her own company, Baba Yaga. Productions in 2026 include *Gypsy: A Musical Fable* with Cornish and Jiehae Park's *The Aves* at ACT Theater. Daniels is in the multi-year process of making the documentary *Hidden Bodies: Stereotyping and Shaming of the Femme Body in American Theater*.

Elizabeth Dunn-Ruiz

Theatre: Elementary/Lower Middle (Arts Integration, Creative Drama, and Movement)



Elizabeth Dunn-Ruiz is a full-time lecturer in the Graduate Program in Educational Theatre at The City College of New York. She is a board member of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, a new teacher mentor with the Arthur Miller Foundation, and a freelance curriculum writer, consultant, teaching artist, and dramaturg focused on new play development. She holds degrees in creative writing from The New School, in urban and multicultural education



from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and in English literature from Hunter College. She completed two years of studio training in the Experimental Theatre Wing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Dunn-Ruiz taught at Bronx Community College, taught English at South Bronx High School, and co-founded Bronx Theatre High School, where she served as artistic director and teacher of performance. She also taught and worked as a master teaching artist for Roundabout Theatre Company, including six seasons as playwright mentor for the youth ensemble.

Lynnette Gilbert

Visual Art: Upper Middle/Secondary



Lynnette Gilbert is an associate professor of art education at Arkansas Tech University and the director of the Windgate Summer Art Launch Program for Arkansas art educators. She received her doctorate at the University of Houston and has twenty-three years of teaching experience, including sixteen years teaching art in secondary schools in Tennessee and Texas. Throughout her career, she has presented sessions locally, regionally, and nationally, including at the National Art Education Association, the Texas Art Education Association, and at the Kent State Symposium where she presented *Textures: The History and Art of Black Hair*. She also has been published in the *Journal of Folklore and Education* and *Panorama*. Her goal and platform are creating a

space for more distinctive voices in the field of art education. Her artwork reflects the beauty, strength, and value of black women through her bold use of colors, play of pattern, textures, and mixed media.

Alan Hawkins

Theatre: Upper Middle/Secondary



Alan Hawkins is an improviser, educator, and author with more than twenty years of experience in teaching and directing. He has trained at many of the nation's leading improv institutions,

including the Second City Conservatory and Musical Conservatory in Los Angeles, the iO West program, the Chicago ComedySportz Training Center, and the Annoyance Theatre. Since 2004, he has taught improv and theatre, developed curriculum for high school instruction, and served as a teacher and director at the Chicago Teen Comedy Fest. Hawkins is an ensemble member and instructor at Unexpected Productions in Seattle, where he teaches improvisation, including his signature "Improvising in the Style of Shakespeare" workshop series. He is the author of *You Can't Learn Improv From a Book*, a resource designed to help drama teachers introduce and strengthen student improvisation. Hawkins's teaching emphasizes emotional honesty, active listening, and expressive storytelling, assisting educators to empower students to create bold, connected, and imaginative work.

Frank Juárez

Arts Leadership and Administration



Frank Juárez is an award-winning art educator, curator, and arts advocate based in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Known for his commitment to elevating contemporary art and supporting Wisconsin

artists, Juárez has spearheaded numerous initiatives, including the Midwest Artist Studios Project and the 365 Artists 365 Days Project. In addition to his roles as art department chair at Sheboygan North High School, publisher of *Artdose Magazine*, and editor-in-chief of *SchoolArts* magazine, Juárez has curated exhibitions and juried art shows

throughout the Midwest. He is a national teacher leader in the National Art Education Association's Connected Arts Networks, and the recipient of their National Teacher Leadership Award. Juárez previously served as the chair of the National Art Education Foundation. His dedication to art education and advocacy has earned him numerous additional accolades, making him a pivotal figure in Wisconsin's art community.

David H. Knapp

Music: Upper Middle/Secondary



David H. Knapp is assistant professor of music education at Florida State University, where he also earned his doctorate. His research and teaching focus on removing barriers to

participation in music education. He teaches courses in digital music making and modern band with a focus on diverse and accessible teaching practices. Knapp's research has been published in the *International Journal of Community Music*, *Music Education Research*, *Research Studies in Music Education*, and the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*. Prior to his teaching at Florida State University, he served on the music education faculty at Syracuse University. While there, he began the Music in the Community program, a collaboration with community partners to establish lab spaces throughout the community. This work helped him to earn the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Unsung Heroes Award in 2022, presented by Martin Luther King III.

Erika Knapp

Music: Elementary/Lower Middle



Erika Knapp is assistant professor of music education at Texas Woman's University, specializing in elementary and choral music education. She received her doctorate at Michigan

State University in East Lansing, Michigan, and taught elementary and secondary general music and middle school choir for thirteen years. Knapp has presented for many national and international venues, where she focuses on

inclusive practice and empowering educators to create joyful musical experiences. She is an Orff pedagogy teacher-trainer for the American Orff-Schulwerk Association and teaches level I and II courses across the United States. Her research interests include music for students with ability differences, teacher professional development, and equity in music education. She has published research in the *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, *Music Education Research*, *The International Journal of Music Education*, *Psychology of Music*, *Music Educators Journal*, and *The Orff Echo*.

Ashley Laverty

Theatre: Elementary/Lower Middle
(Arts Integration, Creative Drama, and Movement)



Ashley Laverty is the founding artistic director of Kerfuffle, a theatre and dance company that creates original performances for children up to age six. Under her leadership, Kerfuffle

has partnered with many arts and non-arts organizations to bring aesthetically exciting, engaging, and accessible theatre experiences to children around the country in museums, libraries, parks, and community centers. She has more than twelve years of teaching artist experience, specializing in early childhood drama. In Chicago, Laverty is proud to be a teaching artist with Lifeline Theatre, Writers Theater, Imagine Theatre, and the Stage School. She has led professional development workshops focusing on integrating drama in early childhood with educators across the country. Laverty holds a degree in theatre for youth from Arizona State University and a degree in theatre arts from Point Park University's Conservatory of Performing Arts.

FACULTY

Andrew McMasters

Arts Leadership and Administration



Andrew McMasters is an actor, director, author, and entrepreneur with more than thirty years of experience in the arts. He is a co-founder of a non-profit theatre that he managed

for twenty-five years and has worked for multiple Fortune 500 companies including Amazon, Microsoft, GE, Hasbro, Google, Valve, Nike, and Apple. McMasters serves as a lead training designer and facilitator for his company, ImprovMindset, which provides leadership development and presentation support all over the world, as well as training for team building. Known for fostering safe yet challenging learning environments, he pushes leaders to deepen self-awareness, lead with purpose, and stay agile under pressure. As the parent of two teachers, McMasters is dedicated to experiential learning, providing opportunities for self-discovery, and driving innovation in our everyday lives. His book *Listening Without Agenda* is available online and in bookstores everywhere. His website is www.ImprovMindset.com.

Catie Nasser

Visual Art: Elementary/Lower Middle



Catie Nasser is an art educator, art therapist, and visual artist who has been working with children in the arts for more than twenty years in public, private, and therapeutic settings. She

is a veteran elementary art teacher of the Middleton Public Schools and, in 2021, was named the Massachusetts Elementary Art Teacher of the Year. Nasser teaches a range of fine art mediums that incorporate arts integration, social emotional learning, and project-based learning. She loves showing young artists how to take their creativity to new levels with animation, robotics, kinetic sculpture, and coding. Nasser is committed to using art to help youth find

their voice and fully express thoughts and ideas. She has presented at both state and national conferences for the Art Education Association. She has appeared as a guest in several podcasts such as *Everyday Art Room*, *The Creativity Department*, and *Get a Cue*. Nasser is also an adjunct faculty member with the Art of Education University.

Scott Rush

Music: Upper Middle/Secondary



Scott Rush is the team lead for the Habits series published by GIA Publications, Inc. and currently serves as the conductor of the Charleston Wind Symphony. He is a

graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music and the University of South Carolina and is the former director of bands at Wando High School in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. Under his direction, the Wando Symphonic Band performed at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic and were Grand National finalists. Rush is active as a conductor, clinician, and adjudicator throughout the United States and Canada. He is the author or co-author of eighteen books, some of which include: *Habits of a Successful Band Director*, *Habits of a Successful Musician*, *Habits of a Successful Middle School Band Director*, and *Habits of a Significant Band Director*. In 2010, Rush was elected to the American Bandmasters Association, and he currently serves as past president of the Servant Leadership Association for Music.

James Savage, Jr.

Theatre: Upper Middle/Secondary



James Savage, Jr. is an associate professor at Ohio Northern University and an associate teacher with the Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium. He has performed Off-Broadway, regionally,

and internationally. Some favorite highlights include *Henry V*, *Richard II*, and *Hamlet* at the American Globe Theatre; *Doubt*, *Everyman*, and *Murder in the Cathedral* at the Black Orchid Theatre; and *Your War'try Grave* at

La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club. He co-created and performed a solo show titled *8x10* (about solitary confinement in the United States prison system) in New York City and at the Cincinnati Fringe Festival in 2017, and he played Odysseus in *The Odyssey* at the Hydrama Theatre on the island of Hydra in Greece. Savage has taught at The New School for Drama, the New York Film Academy, and New York University Steinhardt. He also contributed two chapters in the Routledge book titled *Michael Chekhov and Sanford Meisner: Collisions and Convergence in Actor Training*.

Joel Scholten

Visual Art: Elementary/Lower Middle



Joel Scholten is an elementary art educator, curriculum designer, and practicing artist based in Omaha, Nebraska. He earned a degree in art education from Northwestern College in

Iowa and a master's degree from Concordia University in Nebraska. Scholten strives to help students experience art in meaningful and deeply personal ways, introducing them to diverse contemporary artists and showing them how art can communicate story, message, and meaning. He has worked with learners of all ages in communities ranging from Seattle to Iowa and Nebraska. In addition to classroom teaching, he has contributed to art education through his work with The Art of Education University, where he supports the development of the FLEX curriculum. As an artist, Scholten works primarily in encaustic and mixed media. Drawing inspiration from everyday life and the natural world, his art explores visual storytelling through the balance of control and chance.

Thomas J. Standish-Rinn

Music: Upper Middle/Secondary



Thomas J. Standish-Rinn serves as assistant professor of choral music education at Texas State University and artistic director of the Austin Gay Men's Chorus. He holds a PhD in music education

from the University of North Texas, a master's of music education from Florida State University, and a bachelor's of music from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Prior to his current appointment, he spent twenty years as a high school choral director. Standish-Rinn's research focuses on music teacher education, social media in music education, teacher retention, and effective instructional strategies. His work has been published in the *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, the *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*, and the *Journal of Research in Music Education*. A past president of the Texas Choral Directors Association, Standish-Rinn currently chairs the University Scholastic League Choral Sight-Reading committee and serves nationwide as a choral clinician, guest conductor, adjudicator, and presenter.

Thomas Sturgill

Visual Art: Trio Track



Thomas Sturgill is a conceptually driven interdisciplinary artist and educator. He was born and raised in Pound, Virginia, a small company town whose heyday had long passed. Sturgill

earned his undergraduate degree in sculpture from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 2002, and went on to receive a master's degree in interdisciplinary arts from Carnegie Mellon University in 2006. His work has been shown both nationally and internationally, and he creates both solo and collaborative projects. Sturgill is a founding member of the artist collective Pulled Resources. In his personal practice, he has been exploring object and human relationships, creating surprising and sometimes confusing

experiences that reflect his everyday entanglement with things. He currently lives and works in Nashville, Tennessee, where he serves as assistant professor of sculpture and chair of fine arts at the Watkins College of Art at Belmont University.

Terlene D. Terry-Todd

Theatre: Elementary/Lower Middle (Arts Integration, Creative Drama, and Movement)



Terlene D. Terry-Todd is a dancer, actor, choreographer, and professional teaching artist with more than forty years of experience. A leading movement arts integration specialist, she presents

nationally and internationally. Terry-Todd currently serves as a master teaching artist with Wolf Trap Education and has received numerous awards for her choreography, arts contributions, and work with children with special needs. She holds a degree in physical education from Hampton University, a master's in curriculum and instruction from the University of Northern Colorado, and a master's in dance history and choreography from American University. Terry-Todd has taught at both Howard University and American University and has been a guest choreographer for the University of Delaware's Sharing Our Legacy Dance project. She also served Fairfax County Public Schools as a certified dance and adapted physical education specialist. A strong advocate for wellness, Terry-Todd created the Healthy Choice series for children, beginning with *Sweetie's Healthy Start*.

Sara Womack

Arts Leadership and Administration



As the supervisor for general and choral music, dance, and theatre for the Cobb County School District, Sara Womack is filling her district with arts-rich schools by providing opportunities

for student engagement, building the capacity of teachers, and partnering with community organizations to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality, sequential arts education. Previously she

served as an elementary music teacher in Birmingham, and as the fine and performing arts coordinator for Atlanta Public Schools. Womack has earned three degrees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and an EdD in music education from the University of Georgia. She achieved National Board Certification in Early and Middle Childhood Music, served as president of the Alabama Music Educators Association and the Southern Division of the National Association for Music Education, and currently serves the Georgia Music Educators Association as president-elect.

Melissa Roth Young

Music: Elementary/Lower Middle



Melissa Roth Young is a graduate of Baylor University and the University of North Texas. With more than thirty years of teaching experience, she is currently a PhD

music education fellow at the University of North Texas. She previously served as the choir director at Haggard Middle School in Plano, Texas, and was co-director of the Plano Children's Chorale. Choirs under her direction have consistently received awards at concert and sight-reading contests, as well as distinctions at local choral festivals. She has served in regional, state, and national offices for numerous organizations related to music education and is also a part of the choral track faculty for the Southern Methodist University Kodály Certification program. She is a sought-after clinician and adjudicator and is published with Alliance Music Publications, Carl Fischer, and Melissa Roth Young Music. She lives in Richardson, Texas, and sings with the First United Methodist Church Richardson Chancel Choir and the Summer Women's Chorus of Plano Civic Chorus.

MUSIC CORE WORKSHOP SESSIONS

ELEMENTARY/LOWER MIDDLE MUSIC

Daily Core Classes

Every day, participants will attend each of the classes listed below.

The Black Musical Aesthetic in Elementary General Music **Instructor: Loneka Wilkinson Battiste**

The Black Music Aesthetic (BMA) is heard in gospel choirs, New Orleans second lines, rhythm and blues, jazz, pop, and more. BMA encompasses structural characteristics and musical processes common to Black music and permeates the international musical landscape. In these sessions, participants will learn about BMA and explore practical ways to infuse it into their pedagogy through singing, playing instruments, line dancing, hand games, and stepping. These techniques will offer tools to create enriching, affirming, and joyful experiences for all students.

Embracing the Process: Cultivating Joy and Student Agency in the Music Room **Instructor: Erika Knapp**

What happens when teachers trust the process and their students? These sessions will explore Orff-Schulwerk-inspired approaches that are active and playful, and will focus on student voice and choice in the elementary music room. Through movement, singing, speech, and instrumental play, participants will experience and reflect on pedagogical strategies that build genuine student agency. Leave with renewed inspiration, practical tools, and a deeper understanding of what it means to let children truly lead their own musical learning.

Building Blocks and Building Bridges: Developing Part-singing **Instructor: Melissa Roth Young**

This session will help educators deconstruct song literature of various genres to discover the musical building blocks of their classroom culture. Using examples from folk, classical, and pop music to examine building blocks of rhythm and pitch patterns, students can build bridges to new, unexplored



musical forms and genres. Participants will be creating unique song and choral arrangements appropriate for their student populations based on part-work development.

UPPER MIDDLE/ SECONDARY MUSIC

Daily Core Classes

Participants will follow either the vocal or instrumental track and attend two of the three classes listed below each day.

Turn Up the Creativity: Digital Music in Your Classroom **Instructor: David H. Knapp**

This course is intended to help teachers implement a curriculum for digital music making in their classrooms. It does so by giving teachers the tools to create music digitally using the web-based platform Soundtrap. It also will give teachers the opportunity to imagine what their digital music lab might be. Participants will be asked to reflect on their experiences as a learner and make transfers to the classroom. An important thread throughout is the joy of music making. At the end of this course, the presenter hopes that everyone has experienced this joy and will want to create the same experience for their students.

Teaching Strategies that Lead to Artistic Music Making **Instructor: Scott Rush**

A strong pedagogical and musical foundation is essential to the artistic development of young musicians. While the goal is for students to develop a lasting love for music, achieving that outcome requires intentional structures, strategies, and systems. TAA Summer Institute sessions will explore approaches that cultivate artistry in the ensemble setting. Participants will examine the framework of rhythm vocabulary development, aural literacy, and the components of playing to strengthen music literacy and expressive performance. The sessions will also examine culture-building strategies that foster trust, engagement, and a shared commitment to excellence.

Special thanks to the 129th Army Band of the Tennessee National Guard for its assistance in providing personnel to perform with the TAA instrumental music participants. The band has a long and distinguished history serving Tennessee and the United States in peacetime and during armed conflict. It has performed for presidents, at two world fairs, and overseas. The 129th Army Band is headquartered at Houston Barracks in Nashville, Tennessee, and is led by Chief Warrant Officer Billy Stepp and First Sergeant Tim Keyser.

Trust & Inspire: Engaging and Empowering Your Singers **Instructor: Thomas J. Standish-Rinn**

Traditional command-and-control conducting often limits singers' musical growth and engagement. Drawing on Stephen Covey's "Trust & Inspire" leadership model, participants will explore ways to transform a rehearsal into a space of collaborative music-making. Through introspection, collaboration, and hands-on practice, educators can develop essential facilitative leadership skills, including reflective questioning and guided problem-solving. The sessions will address student-centered rehearsal techniques, pathways to lasting musicianship, and strategies for building ensemble culture. Participants will leave empowered to shift from controlling performances to cultivating musical independence and ownership in the singers under their care.

CORE WORKSHOP SESSIONS THEATRE & DANCE

ELEMENTARY/LOWER MIDDLE THEATRE & DANCE

Focus Areas: Arts Integration, Creative Drama, and Movement

Daily Core Classes

Every day, participants will attend each of the classes listed below.

Fun with Phonics and Reader's Theatre Instructor: Elizabeth Dunn-Ruiz

In this interactive arts integration workshop series, participants will engage in a sequence of activities using theatrical teaching strategies to deepen students' phonemic awareness, enhance their understanding of spelling rules, syntax, and grammar, and improve fluency. A unique approach to Reader's Theatre that works for students at all levels will be considered.

Picture Books as a Devising Tool for Creative Drama Instructor: Ashley Laverty

Educators in this session will jump into devising while using a picture book as source material. Participants will use their bodies, voices, and imaginations to explore book adaptation, physical devising techniques, and writing activities to use with students in the elementary grades.

Movers and Shakers Instructor: Terlene D. Terry-Todd

Participants will explore how to use creative movement and gesture to teach students to tell a story, enhance understanding of concepts, and provide an opportunity for creative exploration, collaboration, and application. Throughout the workshop basic movement fundamentals will be utilized that help to create and enhance STEM lessons throughout the entire curriculum.

UPPER MIDDLE/ SECONDARY THEATRE & DANCE

Daily Core Classes

Every day, participants will attend each of the classes listed below.

Dynamic Bodies, Dynamic Space: Generating Character and Relationship Work Through Movement for Actors and Directors Instructor: Sheila Daniels

Participants will be asked to dive into physical explorations of characters from an established text, then move into exploring relationships between characters. Geared towards inspiring students to make specific, dynamic choices that come from their bodies and impulses, this work aims to create vivid characters and relationships in staging tied to both text and subtext.

Improvising in the Style of Shakespeare Instructor: Alan Hawkins

Participants will explore the core tools of improvised Shakespeare using language, emotion, and physical storytelling to build rich scene work. Through hands-on exercises, participants will learn techniques they can apply directly in their own classrooms.

True Actions & Radiant Gestures Instructor: James Savage, Jr.

Participants in these sessions will be introduced to fundamental tools from Sanford Meisner and Michael Chekhov. By blending their two techniques, a richly layered, holistic acting process can be cultivated that helps actors find their authentic voice, build presence, and reduce self-consciousness. These combined tools lay the foundation for strong scene and monologue work and help students move beyond realism into multi-dimensional artistry.



VISUAL ART CORE WORKSHOP SESSIONS

ELEMENTARY/LOWER MIDDLE VISUAL ART

Daily Core Classes

Participants will attend each workshop listed below for two consecutive days and a summary workshop for both sessions on Friday morning.

Make It Move

Instructor: Catie Nasser

In this workshop, participants will explore how physical movement can become a dynamic element of art-making. Through paper engineering, automata, simple mechanical systems, and linkages, participants will experiment with motion, structure, and interaction while gaining practical strategies to bring kinetic concepts into the art classroom.



Teaching Toward Independence: Scaffolding Creative Choice in the Art Room

Instructor: Joel Scholten

These sessions are designed to help elementary art teachers build confident, creative classrooms through intentional structure, meaningful choice, and authentic contemporary art integration. Participants will explore how lesson design and classroom systems work together to support student independence. Teachers will experience the strategies as learners, experimenting with materials and reflecting on processes. Participants will leave with concrete strategies, ready-to-teach project ideas, and a clearer framework for designing art experiences that feel both supportive and creatively free.

UPPER MIDDLE/ SECONDARY VISUAL ART

Daily Core Classes

Participants will attend each workshop listed below for two consecutive days and a summary workshop for both sessions on Friday morning.

From the Block to the Booth

Instructor: Candido Crespo

Transform the art classroom into a creative engine where art meets entrepreneurship. In this hands-on workshop, educators will master the tactile art of printmaking while developing a blueprint for launching successful student-led craft fairs. By bridging the gap between fine art and the “maker economy,” participants will learn how to help students value their work, understand marketability, and gain real-world business experience.



Beyond the Press: Mixed Media and Non-Traditional Printmaking

Instructor: Lynnette Gilbert

Participants will create visual narratives through portraits or figurative studies with a beautiful fusion of drawing, collaging, and mono-printmaking. The workshop will explore the vibrant painting style of artist Sam Gilliam and the bold drawing, layering, and printmaking concepts of Delita Martin and Favianna Rodriguez. All that is required is an expressive spirit and space to create; no press is required.

The Tennessee Arts Academy Visual Art Content Area is sponsored by a generous gift from the Sandra Schatten Foundation.

ARTS LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION

Overview

Arts Leadership and Administration participants will experience unique daily core sessions and seminars throughout the week, visit classes in various TAA arts content areas, engage in daily guided discussions and explorations, and intersect with TAA Summer Institute attendees during all Interlude and plenary sessions.

Monday Daily Core Sessions

Listening Without Agenda: Practical Steps for Effective Listening

Core Instructor: Andrew McMasters

This workshop helps educators strengthen classroom connection and communication by practicing the skill of listening without agenda. Through interactive exercises, educators will explore how to be more present, responsive, and adaptable with students, parents, and colleagues. Participants will also gain practical tools to build trust, encourage engagement, and create a more supportive learning environment.

Tuesday: Core Session I and II Core Content Visits

Participants will select two core classes from visual art, instrumental music, choral music, theatre, or arts integration to visit and to experience the TAA Summer Institute learning process in action.

Tuesday: Seminar Session III Core Content Visit Reflections Seminar Leaders: Amanda Galbraith and Laurie Melnik Allen

During the afternoon session, participants will reflect on discoveries made during the core content class visits and discuss how those insights inform future plans and actions.

Laurie Melnik Allen is the Lyndhurst Chair of Excellence in Arts Education and professor of practice in theatre education at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, where she oversees the UT system's only K-12 theatre certification pathway.



Wednesday Daily Core Sessions Preserving Your Students' Creative Integrity and Legacy

Core Instructor: Frank Juárez

Every student's work of art has an untold story. Students perform and display art in classrooms, common areas, and in the community. What happens after a performance or a piece of art is created? Where does it go, or how does it live? Attendees will learn how to preserve their students' creative integrity and legacy by understanding the role that art plays in society, considering misconceptions that exist in the public's eye, and asking how a policy can impact and influence the preservation of students' rights, which further protects students' artistic contributions.

Thursday Daily Core Sessions Collective Action: Building Capacity Together to Enact Change Core Instructor: Sara Womack

Working together through collective action helps teachers and leaders strengthen their practice and advocate effectively for music and arts programs in a changing educational landscape. Learn practical strategies and engage

in applied practice leading to greater student engagement in music and arts classrooms. Hear directly from educators who have successfully built support among colleagues, administrators, and community members.

Friday Daily Core Sessions Connect and Reflect Core Instructor: Amanda Galbraith

This summary session invites participants to reflect on key content examined during the week and explore strategies for meaningful implementation and integration. Through hands-on activities, participants will collaborate with colleagues, build on shared learning experiences, deepen their understanding of new ideas and approaches, and connect these insights to their ongoing professional practice.

TRIO TRACK CORE WORKSHOP SESSIONS

Overview

Trio Track provides a daily multidisciplinary experience in three distinct arts areas. Participants will attend the same core class in each content area the entire week, allowing complete immersion in one topic for each arts discipline.

ELEMENTARY/LOWER MIDDLE TRIO TRACK

Daily Core Classes

All participants will attend the music and visual art classes listed below. K–3 teachers will attend the Movers and Shakers class and 4–6 teachers will attend the Picture Books class.

Music: Trio Track

Embracing the Process: Cultivating Joy and Student Agency in the Music Room
Instructor: Erika Knapp

What happens when teachers trust the process and their students? These sessions will explore Orff-Schulwerk-inspired approaches that are active and playful, and will focus on student voice and choice in the elementary music room. Through movement, singing, speech, and instrumental play, participants will experience and reflect on pedagogical strategies that build genuine student agency. Leave with renewed inspiration, practical tools, and a deeper understanding of what it means to let children truly lead their own musical learning.

Theatre/Arts Integration: Trio Track (Grade Level: 4–6 Teachers)

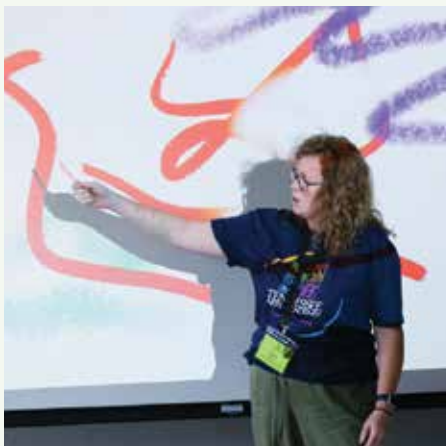
Picture Books as a Devising Tool for Creative Drama
Instructor: Ashley Laverty

Educators in this session will jump into devising while using a picture book as source material. Participants will use their bodies, voices, and imaginations to explore book adaptation, physical devising techniques, and writing activities to use with students in the elementary grades.

Theatre/Arts Integration: Trio Track (Grade Level: K–3 Teachers)

Movers and Shakers
Instructor: Terlene D. Terry-Todd

Participants will explore how to use creative movement and gesture to teach students to tell a story, enhance understanding of concepts,



and provide an opportunity for creative exploration, collaboration, and application. Throughout the workshop, basic movement fundamentals will be utilized that help to create and enhance STEM lessons throughout the entire curriculum.

Visual Art: Trio Track

Teaching Design and Artmaking in Context
Instructor: Thomas Sturgill

Participants will explore strategies for helping students understand creative work as shaped by cultural, historical, social, and material conditions. This workshop introduces approaches that connect studio practice to real-world contexts, encouraging students to think critically about meaning, audience, and purpose while developing their own artistic voice.

UPPER MIDDLE/ SECONDARY TRIO TRACK

Daily Core Classes

All participants will attend the music and visual art classes listed below. Middle school teachers will attend the Improvising class and high school teachers will attend the Dynamic Bodies class.

Music: Trio Track

Turn Up the Creativity: Digital Music in Your Classroom
Instructor: David H. Knapp

This course is intended to help teachers implement a curriculum for digital music making in their classrooms. It does so by giving teachers the tools to create music digitally using

the web-based platform Soundtrap. It will also give teachers the opportunity to imagine what their digital music lab might be. Participants will be asked to reflect on their experiences as a learner and make transfers to the classroom. An important thread throughout is the joy of music making. At the end of this course, the presenter hopes that everyone has experienced this joy and will want to create the same experience for their students.

Theatre: Trio Track (High School Teachers)

Dynamic Bodies, Dynamic Space: Generating Character and Relationship Work Through Movement for Actors and Directors
Instructor: Sheila Daniels

Participants will be asked to dive into physical explorations of characters from an established text, then move into exploring relationships between characters. Geared towards inspiring students to make specific, dynamic choices that come from their bodies and impulses, this work aims to create vivid characters and relationships in staging tied to both text and subtext.

Theatre: Trio Track (Middle School Teachers)

Improvising in the Style of Shakespeare
Instructor: Alan Hawkins

Participants will explore the core tools of improvised Shakespeare using language, emotion, and physical storytelling to build rich scene work. Through hands-on exercises, participants will learn techniques they can apply directly in their own classrooms.

Visual Art: Trio Track *Teaching Design and Artmaking in Context* Instructor: Thomas Sturgill

Participants will explore strategies for helping students understand creative work as shaped by cultural, historical, social, and material conditions. This workshop introduces approaches that connect studio practice to real-world contexts, encouraging students to think critically about meaning, audience, and purpose while developing their own artistic voice.

Interludes provide TAA Summer Institute participants with cross disciplinary training. Multiple workshops in each content area are open to everyone. Interludes occur from 2:30 to 3:15 PM, Monday through Wednesday, and from 2:55 to 3:40 PM on Thursday. TAA participants are expected to attend one interlude each afternoon. The day of the week each session is taught is listed under the course title. Biographical information on the instructors appears under the descriptions listed below or in other sections of the program book.

GENERAL INTEREST INTERLUDES

Balloons in the Classroom

Presenter: Sam Cremeens (Thursday)

In this interlude, Sam the Balloon Man (aka Sam Cremeens) will demonstrate the value of using balloons in the classroom, especially in the visual and performing arts. Discussion will include instruction on how to twist a balloon dog (we all have to start with the basics) and how to use balloons as a performing tool.

With more than twenty years' experience as a balloon entertainer, Sam the Balloon Man is one of Nashville's premier balloon artists. He performs at more than three hundred events every year and travels the world as a renowned balloon art instructor. He has received multiple multinational awards for his

work, both as an artist and a performer. Sam the Balloon Man will also perform during the TAA Arts Expo on Thursday.

Restorative Yoga

Presenters: Tam Duong and Suzanne Jene (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday)

Discover the benefits of yoga for stress relief, self-care, and overall well-being. Use this practice session to rest and renew your mind and body through long holds in restorative poses and breathwork.

Suzanne Jene and Tam Duong are contract instructors with MTSU Campus Recreation.

ARTS LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION RELATED INTERLUDES

IDEAL Leadership

Presenter: Leah Tolbert Lyons (Monday)

There are many leadership models circulating in the public imagination, and oftentimes the need for effective leadership remains unmet. Looking beyond titles and the pursuit of prominence, this session provides practical advice for each individual to lead where they are and meet the needs of those they serve.

Leah Tolbert Lyons is the dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Middle Tennessee State University.

Revisions to Tennessee Academic Standards for Fine Arts

Presenter: Atticus Hensley (Tuesday)

Revised standards for fine arts will take effect in the 2028-2029 school year. This session will provide a review of significant changes.

Atticus Hensley is the fine arts manager for the Tennessee Department of Education.

AI and Creativity Conversation

Presenter: Bradley Foust (Wednesday)

This will be an opportunity to contribute to the ongoing conversation about AI, creativity, and arts education. Bring questions, knowledge, and experiences as participants will examine how AI is shaping instruction, policy, and creativity in arts education and beyond.

Bradley Foust is the district fine arts supervisor for Bartlett City Schools in Bartlett, Tennessee, and is an online instructor of music history and appreciation for Southern New Hampshire University.

The Power of Connection: Building a School-Centered Arts Education Ecosystem

Presenter: Jaclyn Rudderow (Wednesday)

Save The Music Foundation's grassroots approach in communities across the United States encourages partnership and connection with school arts programs at the center. This



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interlude session will share a community-centered model and resources to help arts educators uplift and strengthen programs.

Jaclyn Rudderow serves as the senior director of school programs for Save The Music Foundation, leading the foundation's programmatic efforts in communities across the country, including in Nashville and Memphis.

TAA Arts Rich Schools of the Year Panel Discussion

Presenters: Jim Holcomb and Representatives from the 2026 TAA Arts Rich Winning Schools (Thursday)

The TAA Arts Rich Schools Program and Awards celebrates and recognizes innovative and resourceful schools that provide arts-rich educational curricula and programming for their students and communities. TAA Foundation Board member Jim Holcomb will moderate a panel discussion featuring the 2026 TAA Arts Rich Schools of the Year winners. Audience questions will be encouraged.

Jim Holcomb spent twenty-four years in the classroom, both in Tennessee and Mississippi, as an instrumental and vocal music teacher. For twenty-one years he served as supervisor of music and dance programs for Memphis City Schools. In retirement, Holcomb has remained an active professional musician and performer, as well as a brass instructor at the Bellevue School of Performing Arts in Memphis. Holcomb is the secretary for the TAA Foundation Board of Directors.

MUSIC RELATED INTERLUDES

This Joy That I Have: Centering Black Joy in Artistic Experiences **Presenter: Loneka Wilkinson Battiste (Wednesday)**

The presenter is often asked how to teach Black music, be true to the history, and also stay within government mandates to avoid oppressive topics. Battiste has developed ways to contextualize Black artistic experiences while bringing balance to the conversations surrounding them. After defining Black joy,



she will share examples of real applications and hope that attendees will leave inspired, enlightened, empowered, and equipped to lead more impactful artistic experiences.

Creating a Culture of Excellence **Presenter: Bene Davis (Monday)**

This session will explore the key ingredients for building lasting excellence in a band program from fundamentals to high school mastery. Topics include setting expectations, daily drills, beginner instruction, advanced rehearsal techniques, personal growth, and relationship building.

Bene Davis holds degrees from Northern Arizona University and has forty years of teaching experience as a high school and middle school band director. Davis is an active clinician, adjudicator, and published composer with compositions available through Alias Press and Twin Towers Music Publications.

Elementary: Instrumentally **Presenter: Tony Hartman (Monday)**

Experience a practical framework for normalizing instrument use in the elementary music room. Through the lens of Kodály-inspired teaching and Orff-influenced activities, participants will explore

how to use instruments in purposeful ways. The activities are appropriate for students from kindergarten through sixth grade.

Tony Hartman teaches music to students in elementary grades and is also the director of Steel de Boro, a steel pan program for students from fourth to sixth grade. He teaches at Middle Tennessee State University and has presented numerous sessions around the country. Hartman has compositions published through Row-Loff Productions and was recognized as a CMA Music Educator of Excellence.

Beatmaking Bootcamp **Presenter: David H. Knapp (Monday and Wednesday)**

Participants in this session will learn to make beats using the accessible online platform Soundtrap. They will select from favorite genres and create their own track using scaffolded exercises suitable for learners at every level.

Every Body, Every Mind: Designing Educational Experiences for Neurodivergent Learners **Presenter: Erika Knapp (Wednesday)**

Classrooms are filled with diverse thinkers, movers, and creators, and teaching can reflect that. This session will explain what it means to design truly accessible experiences for

neurodivergent learners across disciplines. Participants will examine how environment, instruction, and relationships shape belonging. Teachers of music, dance, theatre, or visual art will leave with practical strategies for seeing every student's potential.

Habits of a Significant Music Educator

Presenter: Scott Rush
(Wednesday)

The Habits Synergy Model focuses on how knowledge, communication, systems and processes, heart energy, and effectiveness create synergy to produce a successful music educator. In this session, Rush explores how musical and personal significance lasts for generations when the social, emotional, cultural, and musical needs of all students are met.

Arts Academy Chorale

Presenter: Thomas J. Standish-Rinn
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Please join other participants as the Arts Academy Chorale prepares a program of music to be performed at the TAA Finale luncheon on Friday. The Arts Academy Chorale performs under the direction of Thomas J. Standish-Rinn, the TAA Summer Institute secondary choral instructor.

Keep Them Singing! Through the Voice Change and Into the High School Choir

Presenter: Gary P. Wilson
(Monday)

Encouraging boys to sing as they navigate their voice change is one of the most challenging tasks a choral music educator must face. This session will provide some basic research on the changing voice and vocal exercises to help the singer find and develop his "new" voice. Also included will be advice about finding literature that works, ways to adapt literature, and some tried-and-true literature that has worked for the presenter.

Gary P. Wilson is the director of choirs at Hendersonville High School in Hendersonville, Tennessee. He is active as a clinician and adjudicator and has conducted honor choirs

and festival choirs throughout the United States. Wilson is a respected scholar and the first recipient of the doctor of musical arts degree in choral conducting from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Tales to Tell, Songs to Sing: Building Community Through Folk Song Collecting

Presenter: Melissa Roth Young
(Wednesday)

This session will explore music collected from both student and teacher cultural exchanges. Every teacher and student represents and lives in multiple cultural environments including family cultures, heritage cultures, community cultures, and school cultures.

THEATRE AND DANCE RELATED INTERLUDES

Theatre Curriculum Caring and Sharing: Kindergarten Through Sixth Grade

Presenters: Nancy Beard and Michelle Howell
(Wednesday)

In this interlude, kindergarten through sixth grade teachers will be encouraged to share their favorite classroom activities, teaching tips, and theatre lesson plans with

other teachers from across the state. Theatre facilitators Nancy Beard and Michelle Howell will lead the session.

Nancy Beard recently retired from the Shelby County School District where she worked with English language learners. Prior to this, Beard used the Orff approach to teach music in the Memphis and Shelby County schools. She has also taught band, chorus, and general music in Illinois and Kentucky.

Michelle Howell currently serves as the librarian, tech coach, and STEAM support for Union Elementary STEAM and Demonstration School in Gallatin, Tennessee. She brings the arts into the library through lessons connecting curriculum and research. Before becoming a librarian, Howell was a classroom teacher.

The Audacity of a Howler Monkey: The Basics of Audio Software for Sound Design

Presenter: Andy Bleiler
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Do you want to know how to use audio editing and playback software to design and play sound for a show? The presenter will demonstrate free audio editing software, explain how to use it to create sound cues, and how to use Qlab (also free) to arrange and run sound cues for a production.

Andy Bleiler is a passionate arts educator and artist whose career has spanned more than thirty-five years. He serves in many roles for the



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Lipscomb University Department of Theatre and Department of Cinematic Arts. Bleiler holds degrees from Drake University, Concordia University, Lipscomb University, and a master of fine arts in design and technical production from the University of Memphis.

Casting the Soul

Presenter: Sheila Daniels
(Monday and Wednesday)

This workshop will explore an approach to casting that challenges directors to examine their own biases. Through her years as a director and educator, Daniels has noted how rarely the actual texts and songs in theatre create types. Rather, directors have relied on societal norms and the histories of productions to create them. Based on work in the classroom, she offers a deceptively simple approach to inclusive casting by unpacking biases without shame-based fear.

From Painting to Performance: Using Fine Art in the Elementary Theatre Classroom and Theatrical Teaching Strategies in the Art Room

Presenter: Elizabeth Dunn-Ruiz
(Monday and Wednesday)

Educators can incorporate multiple modalities into their teaching. In this interactive workshop, participants will examine works of art and create movement, story, and visual art in response to what they see. Through a series of activities, participants will focus on the skills of close looking, giving and receiving feedback, revising, and sharing original work with clarity and confidence.

Back to Basics! All About Basic Hand Stitches

Presenter: Leni Dyer
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Hand sewing is fundamental and necessary when working with costumes, props, or scenery. This session will cover the types of stitches used for certain projects and different types of thread and needles. The workshop is critical for teachers involved in technical theatre or actors who want to broaden their experiences.

Leni Dyer is an associate professor and costume designer in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Austin Peay State University. Dyer's professional career has taken her all over the United States and the world. With costume history and research as a strong interest, she had the opportunity to tour mainland China as an education delegate with the People to People Ambassador Programs.

Get an Edge: What Are Professors Looking for in a College Audition?

Presenter: Anna Filippo
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Why are colleges still using the audition process? Because it's all we have! There is an art to audition techniques that will help students get noticed, and it begins before they walk into the room. Learn common audition mistakes and how to prevent them. Attendees will also explore ways that students can make connections with adjudicators that exhibit professionalism, work ethic, and collaboration.

Anna Filippo is currently the executive director for the Tennessee Theatre Association. She received her doctorate in theatre from the

University of Georgia and has taught college theatre since 1989. Some of her professional work includes producing and directing historical outdoor dramas and musicals outside of Nashville.

The Art of Framing

Presenter: Israel Garcia
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Framing shapes the way audiences experience a story. In this hands-on workshop, participants will explore the fundamentals of composition, camera placement, and visual storytelling to create more impactful and cinematic images. Through real-world examples and practical demonstrations, attendees will learn how to use framing to guide attention, convey emotion, and strengthen narrative meaning. This session is open to beginners and experienced filmmakers.

Israel Garcia is a filmmaker with more than twenty years of experience in the industry. A former professor at Middle Tennessee State University, he is the owner of Bad Iguana Productions. Jelly Roll is one of his clients.

From Imagination to Action: Character Development in the K-5 Classroom

Presenter: Cat Glidwell
(Tuesday and Thursday)

In this energetic, hands-on workshop, participants will explore how movement, voice, imagination, and play can transform simple ideas into fully realized characters. Using interactive theatre activities and creative storytelling exercises, this session will focus on engaging character-building techniques that help young imaginations move from "who are they?" to "what happens next?"

Cat Glidwell is an experienced educator and passionate theatre professional with eleven years of teaching experience and over twenty-five years of artistic practice. She currently serves as the arts and outreach manager at the Center for the Arts in Murfreesboro. Glidwell has a background in theatre management from New York University and holds certification in Shakespeare from Oglethorpe University and the Stella Adler Studio of Acting.

Giving the GO: Calling Cues for Performance

Presenter: Kate Goodwin
(Tuesday and Thursday)

As part artistic interpreter and part air traffic controller, stage managers are the ultimate logistical coordinators when they bring all of the production elements together and call cues. This workshop will look at the vocabulary and process of recording and calling cues for a performance and how teachers can empower their students to learn this skill.

Kate Goodwin is an associate professor of theatre education and stage management at MTSU and is the director for the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts. In addition to being a lifelong educator, she has a master of fine arts degree from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in stage management and has served as a stage and production manager for numerous organizations.

Get Up and Play: Games for the Elementary Theatre Classroom

Presenter: Rachel Hansen
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Participants will learn a variety of games and activities to engage, educate, and inspire some of the youngest theatre learners. Class



exploration will include transition games, ensemble-building activities, physical and vocal technique exercises, and more.

Rachel Hansen is a teaching artist at Little Blue Theatre Company and a theatre educator with Williamson County Schools. She has extensive experience working with young performers in children's theatre programs.

The Physical Story of the Scene

Presenter: Alan Hawkins
(Monday and Wednesday)

Participants will explore how movement, physical intention, and imaginative object work can enhance creative expression across the arts. This concentrated session will demonstrate how physical choices shape meaning, define environment, and deepen emotional connection. Educators from any discipline will leave with adaptable tools that support spatial awareness, creative exploration, and embodied storytelling in the classroom.

New High School Edition Scripts from Theatrical Rights Worldwide

Presenter: Jim Hoare
(Wednesday)

In this session, all participants will receive complimentary musical scripts while exploring new releases from Theatrical Rights Worldwide (TRW). Featured titles include new school editions of *Pirates! The Penzance Musical*, *Boop!*, *Jersey Boys*, *The Hello Girls*, and *The Olympians*, along with TRW favorites such as *All Shook Up*, *Bright Star*, *The Addams Family*, *Big Fish*, and *Ring of Fire*. Questions and concerns about the theatrical licensing process will also be addressed.

Elementary and Middle School Scripts from Theatrical Rights Worldwide

Presenter: Jim Hoare
(Thursday)

In this session, participants will receive complimentary musical scripts while exploring TRW's *Young@Part* musicals for middle schools and *Younger@Part* titles for elementary schools, as well as TRW Plays, including *Shakespeare Young@Part*. Licensing expert Jim Hoare will describe the benefits and creative opportunities

of producing a *Young@Part* production. Featured titles include new releases such as *The Olympians*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Imaginary*, alongside TRW favorites like *The Addams Family*, *All Shook Up*, *Miss Nelson is Missing!*, and *The Wind in the Willows*. Questions and concerns about the theatrical licensing process will also be addressed.

Jim Hoare is the executive vice president at TRW and has presented workshops throughout the United States and United Kingdom. In recognition of his impact on theatre education, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York State Theatre Education Association. Hoare is the author of Your High School Improv Show Playbook and Your School Theatre Director's Playbook.

"Yes, And...": The Power of Improv

Presenter: Kim Jackson
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Unleash your creativity, boost your confidence, and learn to think on your feet! "Yes, And..." is a fast-paced, high-energy introduction to the core philosophy of improvisation and how it sets us up for success in all aspects of work and play. In this interactive workshop, participants will dive into the fundamental rule of improv: accept what your partner gives you ("Yes") and add something new to the story ("And"). No experience required!

Kim Jackson is the executive director at the Chattanooga Theatre Centre. A classically trained theatre performer and a proud member of SAG-AFTRA, she currently serves as a Wolf Trap Teaching Artist with Arts-Based Collaborative at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and as a member of the Kennedy Center's Partners in Education Program.

Theatre Curriculum Caring and Sharing: Seventh Through Twelfth Grade

Presenters: Jennifer Keith and Pollyanna Parker
(Monday)

In this interlude, upper middle school and high school educators will be encouraged to share their favorite classroom activities, teaching tips, and theatre lesson plans with

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other teachers from across the state. Theatre facilitators Jennifer Keith and Pollyanna Parker will lead the session.

Jennifer Keith is the founder of the Grassland Middle School drama program in the Williamson County Schools. In 2014, she was named Grassland Middle School Teacher of the Year, and in 2022, was named as a Tennessee Excellence in Education award finalist. Keith is an avid traveler who regularly brings global experiences back to her students and curriculum.

Pollyanna Parker was inducted into the Tennessee High School Speech and Drama League's Hall of Fame in 2010 and is a past recipient of that organization's Ruby Krider Award for Outstanding Theatre Educator of the Year. Parker recently retired after teaching for thirty years in the Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools.

Page to Stage: Bringing Classroom Texts to Life **Presenter: Cassie LaFevor** **(Tuesday)**

This session will include ways to incorporate the arts into classroom lessons to create meaningful experiences. Using the story examples of *Velveteen*, *A New Musical*, and

the *Breman Town Musicians*, educators will explore strategies connected to state standards that will make any story come alive for students. Participants will compare different versions of the stories, engage in various foundational literature and storytelling strategies, and identify meaning in visual elements.

Arts and Science: A Perfect Partnership **Presenter: Cassie LaFevor** **(Thursday)**

This session will use works of art on the Tennessee Performing Arts Center's Season for Young People (including *Mister C Live! Vol. 2 – The World In Motion – Newton's Laws* and *DINO-LIGHT*) to bring science to life in new and memorable ways. Participants will learn new strategies for connecting students with STEAM concepts and engaging them in scientific theories. Participants will create their own inventions and hypotheses, tell stories with color and light, and learn new retention techniques.

Cassie LaFevor is an arts educator at heart and has experience working with students from young children to adults. Currently in her eighteenth year at the Tennessee

Performing Arts Center, LaFevor serves as senior director of education enrichment, managing both the Season for Young People and the Spotlight Awards programs. She is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University with a degree in speech and theatre.

Collaborating with Gestures **Presenter: Ashley Lavery** **(Monday and Wednesday)**

Participants will work together as an ensemble to create a short collaborative poem performance using gesture work and "I Am" poems. The session will integrate writing and movement exercises that can be adapted for learners of any age.

Color Theory in Lighting **Presenter: Catherine M. Pratt** **(Tuesday and Thursday)**

Color is one of the most powerful qualities used in design. In this session, color will be explored through the lens of the lighting designer, showing participants how color can evoke various moods, emotions, and atmospheres. The presenter will explain why color is used in lighting and share approaches for including color in theatre work.

Catherine M. Pratt serves as the lighting coordinator faculty at Middle Tennessee State University. She holds degrees from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Mount Marty University. Pratt has been involved with numerous theatre groups around the country.

Knaps & Knocks: Basic Stage Combat Techniques and Safety Practices **Presenter: James Savage, Jr.** **(Monday and Wednesday)**

This fun session focuses on safe, effective unarmed combat and teaches participants to execute slaps, punches, hair-pulls, and knaps. The session concludes with pairs choreographing a thirty-second, high-stakes fight sequence.





Invent a Play in 30 Minutes

Presenter: Jason Sebacher
(Thursday)

Looking for a way to get students started with playwriting? This workshop introduces a process for generating characters, conflicts, and dramatic moments. The session offers a practical classroom exercise that will help students move from idea to stage and discover the basic structure behind many powerful stories. The activities shared are appropriate for theatre classrooms in middle and high school.

Jason Sebacher is a playwright, educator and the founder of Gitelman & Good Publishers, a company dedicated to publishing exceptional new plays and musicals for high school, college, and community theatre stages. He works with playwrights and theatre educators to develop plays that challenge and inspire student performers.

Fundamentals of Dyeing: Easy Fabric Dyeing Processes and Safety

Presenter: Katie Sellers
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Dyeing fabric can be used in theatre settings in a variety of ways to enhance design and to help tell a story. It can also be an enjoyable group project. This session will cover fabric dyeing safety, as well as several dyeing methods and their applications.

Katie Sellers is the costume shop supervisor for the MTSU Department of Theatre and Dance. She is a tailor, designer, and dyer and has worked in costuming and theatre for more than twenty-five years.

How to Get Published

Presenters: Marisa Smith and Peter Kraus
(Wednesday)

Ever wondered how you can become a published author? Why should your book be published when there are already similar books on the market? These questions and many more can be answered by Marisa Smith and Peter Kraus, publishers at Smith and Kraus Publishers, the largest publisher of trade theatre books in the United States since 1990. Find out how an idea can become a reality between two covers, discover whether an agent is necessary and how to find one, and learn how to write a book proposal and show that you are the ideal author.

Marisa Smith is a co-founder of Smith and Kraus Publishers, an award-winning playwright, and currently serves as a consultant for the company.

Peter Kraus is president of Smith and Kraus Publishers and also a musician and certified sommelier.

Simple Movement Experiences for Classroom Management

Presenter: Terlene D. Terry-Todd
(Monday and Wednesday)

In this highly participatory workshop, participants will learn a variety of innovative classroom management techniques that can be used as part of every teacher's toolkit. A sampling of unique strategies will include imaginary travel, imagination box, simple chants, and transition and focus exercises.

Soft Skills and SEL: The Hidden Value of Theatre Games

Presenter: Matt Webster
(Wednesday)

Matt Webster will lead participants through a handful of classroom theatre games and activities in order to cultivate the vocabulary for both soft skills (communication,

leadership, and creative problem solving) and social emotional learning. Participants will be encouraged to suggest games and activities from their own classrooms. This hands-on workshop is appropriate for teachers in grades kindergarten through twelve with an emphasis on grades six through twelve, though it is easily adaptable for the kindergarten through grade five curriculum.

Matt Webster is an educator who has been teaching students and theatre teachers for more than thirty years. He is the education consultant for the Drama Teacher Academy and an adjunct professor at Winthrop University. Webster is also the author of the book Methods of Teaching Theatre: A Teacher Toolkit, an award-winning playwright, prolific actor, and director.

Theatre Connections

Presenters: Theatre Core Faculty
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Core theatre instructors will be in their classrooms to answer specific questions about their sessions and to provide one-on-one time with participants who desire additional information about theatre-related issues or arts-education concerns.

VISUAL ART RELATED INTERLUDES

The Art of Caricature

Presenter: David Arnold
(Thursday)

This interactive drawing workshop will touch on the basics of depicting a live subject as a caricature. It will focus on the step-by-step process of creating a reasonable cartoon likeness of the subject. At the session, all participants will get a workbook, which will allow them to continue honing their skills on their own.

David Arnold has been a caricaturist, based mainly in Nashville, Tennessee, for more than forty years. He learned his craft while in high school so he could work a summer job at Opryland USA theme park from 1974

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to 1980. Through his company, *Caricatures, etc.*, Arnold provides art entertainers, such as caricature artists, face painters, balloon artists, and magicians, to the public.

Wearable Art in the Classroom: Headpiece Design Lab

Presenter: Lindsey Bailey
(Wednesday and Thursday)

Unleash creativity in this hands-on design lab and craft a unique headpiece from start to finish. Experiment with fabrics, wire, beads, and embellishments to explore wearable art and personal expression. No prior experience is needed—just curiosity and a willingness to create. Designed with educators in mind, this session offers a flexible, classroom-ready lesson that can be easily adapted.

Lindsey Bailey has spent nearly three decades using art as a bridge between people, cultures, and communities. Having taught in schools and community organizations across six countries, her work is rooted in the belief that creativity thrives through imagination, collaboration, and human connection. Originally from Texas, Bailey brings both academic depth and global experience to her practice.

From Chaos to Calm: Songs, Games, and Tricks to Pull Out of Our Hats

Presenter: Michelle Carneal
(Tuesday and Wednesday)

The creative arts environment is unique because while teachers encourage students to express themselves, they need to maintain classroom control. The presenter will share many activities for behavior management with art students in elementary grades. Attendees will leave the interlude with several fail-proof songs and games and will be encouraged to share ideas as well.

With more than two decades of experience in elementary education, Michelle Carneal has enjoyed teaching art to children from pre-kindergarten through elementary grades. Carneal has degrees from Middle Tennessee State University and Austin Peay State University. Most of her teaching career has been spent at Stuart-Burns Elementary School in Dickson, Tennessee.



Tiny Art, Big Connections

Presenter: Candido Crespo
(Monday)

Artist trading cards are miniature works of art (only 2.5 x 3.5 inches) designed for one thing: swapping. In this fast-paced session, participants will create a series of “micro-masterpieces” using a variety of mixed-media materials and then trade them with fellow educators. It’s part networking, part creative play, and everyone will leave with a curated, pocket-sized gallery of original art.

Basquiat Self-Portraits and Visual Poetry

Presenter: Felicia Faniola-Gregory
(Wednesday and Thursday)

In this session, participants will hear a brief presentation on the 1980s graffiti artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. Using a mat board and lined writing paper, they will prepare the surface and then draw a cartoon-style or very simplistic facial self-portrait. Around the image they may write personal phrases or draw pictures to create an individualized collage.

Felicia Faniola-Gregory is a self-professed “jill of all trades, master of none.” She dabbles in photography, painting, murals, crafting, songwriting, and acting, among other artistic

endeavors. Faniola-Gregory is currently the art teacher at St. Mary’s School in Johnson City, Tennessee, and serves on the Johnson City Public Arts Committee.

Monotype-ish Printmaking

Presenter: Lynnette Gilbert
(Monday)

If a person loves printmaking but they don’t have a press, ink, or plexi-glass, what can they do? Participants in this session will produce monotype-ish prints without a press or printing ink! A non-traditional printmaking process will be explored that uses permanent markers to create prints infused with patterns and bold colors.

Sharpie Marker and Alcohol Painting on Ceramic Tiles

Presenter: Teresa Grooms
(Monday and Tuesday)

Transform ordinary ceramic tiles into stunning works of art. Using just Sharpie markers and rubbing alcohol, participants can create vibrant, one-of-a-kind marbled designs that are perfect for custom coasters, gifts, or creative backgrounds for landscapes and abstract artwork. Simply color your tile, add a few drops of alcohol, and watch

the colors blend into beautiful patterns right before your eyes. This fun project is appropriate for all skill levels.

With thirty years of experience in Tennessee education, Teresa Grooms is a visual art teacher at White House Heritage High School. Her instruction emphasizes innovative ideas, unique materials, challenging artistic processes, and mindful art lessons that encourage creativity, exploration, and meaningful student engagement.

Dorothy Gillespie: Painter and Sculptor—What Stimulates, Motivates, and Propels a Creative Person to Do What They Do?
Presenter: Gary Gillespie Israel (Tuesday and Wednesday)

As the son of famed artist Dorothy Gillespie, Gary Gillespie Israel travels around the country giving talks about his mother's extraordinary life as a painter and sculptor and shares his plans for preserving his mother's art and legacy.

Gary Gillespie Israel is the president of the Dorothy M. Gillespie Foundation, a non-profit organization whose mission is to support artists, initiatives, and institutions that embody the same innovative, inclusive multidisciplinary approach that Dorothy Gillespie exemplified in both her art and philanthropic endeavors.

From Vision to Wall: Creating Collaborative School Murals
Presenter: Emily May-Ragland (Wednesday and continued on Thursday)

This interlude is designed for educators who want to bring collaborative murals to their schools and communities. Participants will learn the full mural process, from brainstorming ideas and organizing student involvement, to planning materials, timelines, and installation. Additionally, attendees will work together to create a collaborative pop-up mural during the workshop. This activity will inspire school pride and engage student creativity and community connection through large-scale public art. Participants should plan to attend both sessions.

Emily May-Ragland is an artist and educator with eight years of teaching experience and a passion for making creativity part of everyday life. She has designed and painted numerous murals that bring together bold color, storytelling, and community pride, both inside of schools and in public spaces. She has also headed several school collaborative murals incorporating students' ideas.

How to Integrate English Language Arts and Math with Visual Art
Presenter: Dale Mays (Tuesday and Wednesday)

Imagine transforming a classroom into a vibrant art studio where English language arts and math skills soar through the power of visual art. If teachers stop teaching subjects in isolation and start fostering deep, multi-sensory literacy skills, then they can foster creative expression and critical thinking. Attendees will see how intentional integration can turn standard lessons into memorable masterpieces.

Dale Mays is a passionate, veteran educator with thirty-six years of experience inspiring students through the integration of arts and academics. She holds degrees from Syracuse University, the College of New Rochelle, and the College of St. Rose. Mays began a career in corporate America, working as a marketing analyst and a buyer before becoming an educator.



Ideas to Expression
Presenter: Paige Medlock (Tuesday)

In this workshop, Paige Medlock invites Visual Art Recognition Day (VARD) students to explore the creative process through hands-on art making and guided discussion. Students will experiment while learning how artists develop ideas and express meaning in their work. Emphasis is placed on observation, critical thinking, and building confidence in personal artistic voice. This session is open only for VARD high school and middle school student artists.

Paige Medlock teaches art education courses, supervises student teachers at Middle Tennessee State University, and holds advanced degrees in visual culture from the University of Aberdeen and the University of Stirling. She creates large-scale stained-glass installations internationally and presents widely on how art education can support healing, well-being, and personal transformation.

Paper Cutting
Presenter: Catie Nasser (Monday)

Paper cutting is a rich art form filled with historical and cultural traditions. In the class, students will learn various paper-cutting techniques and styles using both an X-Acto knife and scissors. Participants will learn how to transform an image or an illustration into an original work of art.

Creative Classroom Swap Shop
Presenters: Virginia Nix and Christopher Taylor (Monday)

Participants will bring an art room "greatest hit" and get ready to trade inspiration at the Swap Shop. Each person will share a tried-and-true lesson while discovering a variety of fresh, engaging projects from fellow art teachers. Expect practical takeaways, creative twists, and ready-to-use ideas that can be adapted to individual needs.

Virginia Nix is a TAA facilitator and teaches at Kenrose Elementary in Brentwood, Tennessee. Nix developed the STARS Elementary Exhibition, which recognizes

INTERLUDES

elementary school artists from across the state. She was named the Tennessee Art Education Association Elementary Art Educator of the Year in 2022.

Christopher Taylor is an artist and art teacher who works at Fall-Hamilton Elementary School in Nashville. His teaching style is a constructivist pedagogy, in which he encourages his students to learn through experimentation. As an artist, his work deals mainly with social justice issues and personal experiences.

Stenciled and Subtracted: Color Layering with Gelli Plates **Presenter: Joel Scholten** **(Monday)**

Gelli plate printmaking offers an accessible and rich way to explore process, layering, and visual decision making. In this session, participants will experiment with simple stenciling and subtractive techniques to create dynamic prints built through multiple layers of color on a single surface. Emphasis is placed on responsiveness rather than pre-planning, allowing imagery to evolve organically as each layer is added or removed. This hands-on experience is well suited for second grade through adult learners.

Using Your Art Expertise to Create a Student Based Enterprise **Presenter: Amy Scott** **(Wednesday)**

Discover ways to use your expertise in art to create a meaningful Student Based Enterprise (SBE) experience in your school. Participants will learn how Prescott South Middle School operates a silk screen SBE. Discussion topics will focus on ways to brainstorm ideas to pitch to your principal, fundraising strategies, and new business organization models.

Amy Scott is a middle school arts teacher at Prescott South Middle School, a STEAM school in Middle Tennessee. She has sixteen years of experience teaching in public schools from grades kindergarten through twelve. Scott has been teaching a class for the past five years that helps students to run a Student Based Enterprise.

Twist and Dye **Presenters: Kim Shamblin and** **Ken Snyder** **(Thursday)**

Step into a kaleidoscopic world where ordinary fabric transforms into a vibrant masterpiece, creativity knows no bounds, and every twist and swirl of color tells a story. Session participants are requested to bring an item they own to tie-dye during the workshop.

Kim Shamblin is a retired art teacher who taught in West Tennessee for twenty-eight years and now resides in northern Louisiana. She has been a part of TAA for more than twenty years and serves as the TAA Connections liaison. Shamblin is an avid quilter and uses her art background to teach other quilters a variety of fabric and design techniques.

Ken Snyder has more than thirty years of experience teaching art to students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. He has participated in TAA for more than twenty-five years and served as a TAA facilitator for more than a decade.

Breaking Down the Brushstrokes **Presenter: Gregory Steele** **(Tuesday)**

Join featured TAA artist Gregory Steele in an immersive workshop that explores how his work evokes memories and emotions. Participants will see how layered strokes, subtle textures, mastered techniques, and intentional gestures can suggest moments that feel both personal and universal.

Through live demonstration and hands-on use of the artist's preferred tools and materials, participants will practice creating marks that feel both expressive and personal.

Pottery Make and Take, Plus Free Curriculum for an Entire Year! **Presenter: Rebecca Walther** **(Monday and Tuesday)**

Tired of the old standard coil pot, slab box, and pinch pot? This session will provide a fabulous full year of cool, forward-thinking projects for all levels of ceramic classes. Attendees will receive a list of more than thirty project ideas with a rubric. Additional tips and tricks will be shared, including easy wheel clean up and studio rules that work.

Rebecca Walther is currently teaching visual art at Smyrna High School in Rutherford County, Tennessee. Walther's gifted education endorsement combined with her experience in curriculum modification for adult education students gives her a unique approach to visual art instruction. Her goal is to provide all students with the opportunity to engage in a positive visual art experience.

Visual Art Studio Connections **Presenters: Visual Art Core Faculty** **(Tuesday and Thursday)**

Visual art participants may use this open studio time to continue creating, talking with their core instructors, or networking with fellow teachers about issues and concerns related to the arts and arts education.



Musings is a time of thoughtful inspiration and introspection built into the heart of the busy TAA Summer Institute daily schedule. All participants assemble to think about the role of the arts in education and in life. At each Musings session, an individual who is significantly involved in the arts acts as a muse and leads the group in examining the richness and depth that the arts add to the lives of all people. All musing sessions will take place in the MTSU Tucker Theatre, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building.

Eli Yamin

Monday • July 13 • 1:20 PM



Eli Yamin (“Dr. E”) is an internationally renowned pianist, composer, and educator, and is co-founder and managing and artistic director of Jazz Power Initiative (JPI), a twenty-two-year-old nonprofit. The organization transforms lives through jazz arts education and performance. His work combines jazz, theatre, and performance to engage young people and expand

access to arts education, particularly in African American and Latin American communities central to jazz’s origins. Yamin has performed at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and the White House, and has toured more than twenty countries as a cultural ambassador for the United States. He is the creator of three original jazz musicals for youth performers who perform alongside professional musicians—*Nora’s Ark* (about climate and social change), *Holding the Torch for Liberty* (about women’s suffrage), and *Message from Saturn* (about the healing power of the blues)—which have been staged in four languages across five countries and fourteen states, with performances in New York at Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazzmobile/Summerfest, and Lehman College. Yamin has released multiple recordings spanning jazz and blues and has collaborated with numerous artists including Illinois Jacquet and Claire Daly, whose album *Swing Low* is on display at the William J. Clinton Presidential Library.

Yamin holds degrees from Rutgers University, Lehman College, and Stony Brook University, and is a Steinway Artist. He is a lifelong educator who was mentored by a host of master artists including Barry Harris and Mercedes Ellington. Yamin has brought jazz education to more than 9,000 youth and 1,000 artists and teachers worldwide through JPI and the Jazz Power Institute for Artists and Educators. At Jazz at Lincoln Center, he designed and led the Middle School Jazz Academy for a decade and trained more than one hundred musicians as cultural ambassadors

through the United States Department of State. He also created *Syncopated Leadership*, an arts-based leadership workshop experienced by more than 2,500 professionals, and his instructional work has reached millions online. Yamin is the author of *So You Want to Sing the Blues: A Guide for Performers*, published in partnership with the National Association of Teachers of Singing. In 2024, he received the award for excellence in jazz education from the American Academy of Teachers of Singing. He was named a 2026 Manhattan Jazz Hero by the Jazz Journalists Association.

The appearance of Eli Yamin is made possible by a generous gift from the Country Music Association Foundation.

Joyce J. Scott

Tuesday • July 14 • 1:20 PM



Joyce J. Scott works across media, confronting racism, sexism, violence, inequality, oppression, and injustice, while also engaging beauty, spirituality, nature, and healing. Her work explores the complex tapestry of collective history and unearths universal truths. She is best known for her mastery of the off-loom peyote stitch, a free-form glass bead weaving technique that merges beads, blown glass, and repurposed objects with autobiographical, sociological, and political themes. Born in Baltimore to parents from North Carolina—sharecroppers and descendants of enslaved people—Scott began her career creating fiber works, including clothing, jewelry, shoes, and quilts, while experimenting with loom-constructed textiles. In the late 1970s, she turned to beads, drawn to their ability to capture light and blend color beyond traditional painting. She learned the peyote stitch from a Native American bead artisan, a technique that would define much of her work. By 1997, Scott expanded into printmaking, producing hundreds of works with ateliers, including Goya-Girl Press and Pyramid Atlantic, and later with Sol Print Studios and Goya Contemporary. In 1999, she held a landmark solo exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art, becoming the first Black female artist to receive this honor.

In 2016, working with Gary Garrido Schneider and Amy Raehse, Scott began developing her largest exhibition at Grounds For Sculpture in New Jersey. It opened in 2017 and featured historic and recent works, including two large-scale, site-specific sculptures focused on Harriet Tubman. Scott’s exhibitions and contributions have continued into the 2020s, including significant retrospectives and solo presentations. In March 2024, she opened a fifty-year traveling retrospective, *Joyce J. Scott: Walk a Mile in My Dreams*, co-organized by the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Seattle Art Museum. Scott is a graduate of

the Maryland Institute College of Art and the Instituto Allende in Mexico and has received numerous honorary degrees from California College of the Arts, New York University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Baltimore. Her work is held in major collections worldwide, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Seattle Art Museum, the Chrysler Museum of Art, the Toledo Museum of Art, and the National Gallery of Art.

The appearance of Joyce J. Scott is made possible by a generous gift from the Hays Foundation, established by Marlene and Spencer Hays.

Marc Shaiman

Wednesday • July 15 • 1:20 PM



Marc Shaiman is an award-winning lyricist, composer, orchestrator, and performer who has successfully created music and lyrics for television, films, recordings, and theatre since entering show business at the age of sixteen. He has earned seven Oscar nominations for *Mary Poppins Returns*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Patch Adams*, *The First*

Wives Club, *The American President*, and *South Park*; a Tony Award for *Hairspray*; two Emmy Awards for *The Oscars with Billy Crystal* and *Only Murders in the Building*; and two Grammys for *Hairspray* and *Some Like It Hot*. Shaiman has co-produced and arranged award-winning recordings for music icons such as Bette Midler, Harry Connick Jr., and Mariah Carey, including the Grammy-winning recordings *The Wind Beneath My Wings* and *From a Distance*. Other performers with whom he has collaborated in concert, cabaret, film, and television include Will Ferrell, Kristin Chenoweth, Eric Clapton, Diane Keaton, Steve Martin, Barbra Streisand, Queen Latifah, Robin Williams, Eddie Murphy, and Robert De Niro.

At the legendary after-party for *Saturday Night Live's* (SNL) 40th anniversary, he jammed with Taylor Swift, Paul McCartney, and Prince and “completely lost his mind.” His television ventures include “The Sweeney Sisters” on SNL and countless award and talk show appearances with Billy Crystal, Neil Patrick Harris, Nathan Lane, and Martin Short, the Emmy-winning *SNL 40th*, and *The Kennedy Center Honors*, for which he arranged and performed in tribute to his friend Billy Crystal. His most cherished achievement for television is his collaboration with Bette Midler for her Emmy-winning appearance as Johnny Carson's final guest on *The Tonight Show*.

In 2014, Shaiman and Scott Wittman, his collaborator in the musical theatre world, were celebrated by the New York Pops with a spectacular concert at Carnegie Hall. Shaiman was honored with the Ambassador Award by the Society of Composers and Lyricists in December 2018, the Icon Award at the Guild of Music Supervisors Awards in February 2019,

and an Outstanding Career Achievement Award from the Hollywood Music In Media Awards. Shaiman is also a *New York Times* bestselling author after the recent publication of *Never Mind the Happy: Showbiz Stories from a Sore Winner*. Born and raised in New Jersey, he currently lives in New York with his husband Lou Mirabal.

The appearance of Marc Shaiman is made possible by a generous gift from Tennessee Book Company, in memory of Cavit Cheshier.

Betsy Wolfe

Thursday • July 16 • 1:50 PM



Fresh from her celebrated run as Madeline Ashton in the hit Tony-nominated musical *Death Becomes Her*, Betsy Wolfe continues to be one of Broadway's most admired leading ladies. Most recently, she earned wide critical acclaim starring as Joy, the title role in the new musical *Joy*. She previously wrapped her acclaimed tenure with *✶ Juliet*, as Anne Hathaway, where her performance was nominated for the 2023 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a

Musical. Wolfe is well known for her starring turns as Jenna Hunterston in the Tony-nominated *Waitress*, Cordelia in the Broadway revival of *Falsettos*, and Cathy in the celebrated off-Broadway revival of *The Last Five Years*. Other Broadway credits include *Bullets Over Broadway* (Ellen), *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Rosa Bud), and *Everyday Rapture*. Her screen credits include the holiday film *Estella Scrooge: A Christmas Carol with a Twist*, the indie comedy *First One In*, and a guest-starring role on the CBS series *Instinct*.

Wolfe made her Metropolitan Opera debut in *Die Fledermaus* and has appeared as a guest artist with more than sixty symphony, pops, and philharmonic orchestras across the United States and worldwide, including the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The New York Pops, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. She has collaborated with The New York Pops and played to sold-out crowds at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center with their *Broadway Today* and *Women of Note* concerts.

Originally from California, Wolfe received a degree in musical theatre from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. At age twenty she made her Carnegie Hall debut with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra under Maestro Erich Kunzel. Wolfe quickly moved on to star as Rona Lisa Peretti in the San Francisco and Boston companies' productions of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Soon after, she made her Broadway debut in the revival of *110 in the Shade*. Wolfe performed her one-woman cabaret show *All Bets Are Off* to sold-out crowds at 54 Below in New York City, as well as in Las Vegas, San Francisco, New Orleans, and more.

Wolfe is also the founder of BroadwayEvolved, a groundbreaking training program for the next generation of performers, now in its eighth year.

The appearance of Betsy Wolfe throughout the week is made possible by a generous gift from Thane Smith, in memory of Pat Smith.

Young Concert Artists on Tour

Cello, Piano, Saxophone Concert
Sunday • July 12 • 4:00 PM
MTSU Tucker Theatre, Boutwell
Dramatic Arts Building

Young Concert Artists on Tour features three extraordinarily talented musicians: cellist James Baik, saxophonist Estel Vivó Casanovas, and pianist Zhu Wang. Their program for TAA will include solo works, duets, and trios. TAA is honored to host this one-of-a-kind concert spotlighting these rising, world-class artists. Here is more about each performer.



Cellist **James Baik** has been described as an artist with “undeniable authority” and “a real warmth emerging in lyricism” by Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* after his astounding performance at the 2021 Queen Elisabeth competition. First prize

winner of the 2023 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions and recipient of the Paul A. Fish Memorial Prize and the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Prize, Baik is a Young Concert Artist Jacobs Fellow. He has recently appeared as soloist in *Beethoven's Triple Concerto* with the Mobile Symphony alongside artists Benjamin Baker and Chaeyoung Park, and in Shostakovich's *Cello Concerto No. 1* with the Hamilton College Symphony Orchestra. Upcoming highlights include his debuts at the Kennedy Center and at New York's Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center, as well as a return to Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall for the Young Concert Artists season finale.

Estel Vivó Casanovas is a saxophonist from Barcelona, Spain, currently based in Rochester, New York. She has performed as a soloist at Carnegie Hall and with the Symphony Orchestra of the Terrassa Conservatory. A multi-award-winning musician, her achievements include first prize at the 2024 Manhattan International Music Competition and first prize at the 2023 International



Saxophone Academy, among other national and international prizes. She is a winner of the 2025 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. Casanovas is also a researcher. Her current project, “Masked

Dissonance: Avant-Garde Music as a Subtle Resistance in Francoist Spain,” examines how experimental music developed within the cultural and political context of the Cold War and mid-20th-century Spain. She is now pursuing her doctor of musical arts degree in saxophone performance at the Eastman School of Music under the mentorship of professor Chien-Kwan Lin.

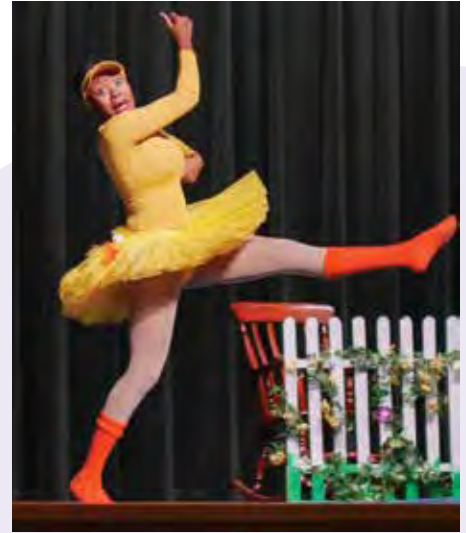
Praised by the *New York Times* as “especially impressive” and “a thoughtful, sensitive performer,” pianist **Zhu Wang** won first prize at the 2020 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. He has earned top honors at the Zhuhai International Mozart Competition, Manhattan



International Music Competition, Hilton Head Young Artist Piano Competition, and Juilliard's Gina Bachauer and Mieczyslaw Munz Competitions.

Celebrated for his “technical mastery and deep sense of lyricism” by the *Durango Herald*, Wang has appeared at major venues including Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, the Kennedy Center, Caramoor, and the Morgan Library & Museum. Internationally, he has appeared at the Berliner Philharmonie, Warsaw Philharmonic, and Shanghai Concert Hall, and at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall with Randall Goosby. A native of Hunan, China, Wang holds degrees from The Juilliard School and Curtis Institute of Music and is currently pursuing a master's degree at Juilliard under Emanuel Ax and Robert McDonald.

The performance by Young Concert Artists on Tour is made possible by generous gifts from the Country Music Association Foundation; Amy Savell, in memory of Sara and Las Savell; and Talmage Watts.



New Ballet Ensemble

Peter and the Wolf
Monday • July 13 • 11:30 AM
MTSU Tucker Theatre, Boutwell
Dramatic Arts Building

New Ballet Ensemble's lively production of *Peter and the Wolf* takes the traditional musical tale and introduces audiences to the instruments of the orchestra, and also to five distinct dance disciplines including ballet, modern, jazz, character, and hip-hop. Composed by Sergei Prokofiev, *Peter and the Wolf* follows a young boy named Peter (depicted by strings) who ventures into a meadow despite warnings from his grandfather (bassoon) about a dangerous wolf (French horn). Along the way, Peter encounters several animals, each represented by a different instrument in the score, including a bird (flute), a duck (oboe), and a cat (clarinet). When the wolf appears and captures the duck, Peter cleverly devises a plan to trap it with the help of the bird. Using a rope, Peter captures the wolf, and soon hunters arrive (to the sound of timpani and bass drum) to take it away. Instead of killing the wolf, Peter insists it be brought to the zoo in a triumphant procession. As they all head off, the duck can be heard quacking inside the wolf's stomach, for, in his hurry, the wolf had swallowed her whole. Blending humor, tension, and adventure, *Peter and the Wolf* celebrates courage, quick thinking, and the expressive power of music and dance. New Ballet Ensemble's engaging performance is geared to elementary school students but is designed to be enjoyed by audiences of all ages.

PERFORMANCES

About New Ballet Ensemble and School



New Ballet Ensemble and School was founded in 2002 and has developed into a robust, nationally recognized organization centered on placing teaching artists in schools, providing holistic after-school programming, and using dance and culture as mechanisms for change. In addition to immersing students in high quality classical ballet training, New Ballet incorporates multicultural dance genres into students' instruction and dance repertoire. This unique combination of diversified techniques and cultural emphasis informs New Ballet's engaging and distinctive performances. Alongside a rigorous dance education, New Ballet is committed to whole child development, combining arts and creativity with academic support, family engagement, and access to wellness services. Recognizing the country's best creative youth development programs, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities awarded New Ballet with the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award in 2014, presented by then-First Lady Michelle Obama.

The performance of Peter and the Wolf by New Ballet Ensemble and School is made possible by a generous gift from Jeanette and Bill Watkins.

The 129th Army Band of the Tennessee Army National Guard

Instrumental Music Concert

Wednesday • July 15 • 11:30 AM
MTSU Tucker Theatre, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

The 129th Army Band has a long and distinguished history of service to Tennessee and the United States in peacetime and during armed conflict. The group traces its lineage back to the earliest units of the Tennessee Militia that protected the early colonial settlements and routed the British at the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780. Since its inception, the 129th Army Band has proudly represented the state of Tennessee and the Tennessee Army National Guard. From playing at two world's fairs to



marching in a presidential inaugural parade, the 129th Army Band has been called on to perform countless times across the globe. On two occasions, they played for the United States ambassador to Columbia, South America. Additionally, they performed in Izmir, Turkey, in support of NATO and have relieved numerous active-duty bands at such places as Fort Monroe, Virginia, the United States Military Academy at West Point, and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. The 129th Army Band was one of two reserve bands called to active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm. In more recent years, the 129th has sent music performance teams to perform at the United States embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria. The 129th Army Band's most rewarding job, however, is supporting the troops and families of the Tennessee National Guard. Without question, the 129th has established itself as a premier National Guard band and will continue to perform at the highest level of professionalism every time they are called upon to represent the state of Tennessee and the United States of America. The 129th Army Band is headquartered at Houston Barracks in Nashville, Tennessee, and is led by Chief Warrant Officer Billy Stepp and First Sergeant Tim Keyser.

About the Conductor



Chief Billy Stepp is a distinguished educator and leader with more than twenty-eight years of experience in the Tennessee academic system. Throughout his extensive career, he has held a variety of pivotal roles, ranging from band director to director of schools. In addition to his civilian leadership, Chief Stepp serves as the Commander of the 129th Army Band based

in Nashville, Tennessee. In this capacity, he oversees the musical proficiency and operational readiness of a premier unit that provides support for military ceremonies, official functions, and public performances across Tennessee and abroad.

The performance by the 129th Army Band of the Tennessee Army National Guard is made possible by a generous gift from HCA Healthcare Foundation.

Betsy Wolfe DOMINO

Musical Theatre Performance

Wednesday • July 15 • 8:30 PM
MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

Fresh from her celebrated run as Madeline Ashton in the hit Tony-nominated musical *Death Becomes Her*, Betsy Wolfe continues to be one of Broadway's most admired leading ladies. Most recently, she earned wide critical acclaim starring as Joy, the title role in the new musical *Joy*. She previously



wrapped her acclaimed tenure with *Juliet*, as Anne Hathaway, where her performance was nominated for the 2023 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical. Wolfe is well known for her starring turns as Jenna Hunterston in the Tony-nominated *Waitress*, Cordelia in the Broadway revival of *Falsettos*, and Cathy in the celebrated off-Broadway revival of *The Last Five Years*. Other Broadway credits include *Bullets Over Broadway* (Ellen), *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Rosa Bud), and *Everyday Rapture*. Her screen credits include the holiday film *Estella Scrooge: A Christmas Carol with a Twist*, the indie comedy *First One In*, and a guest-starring role on the CBS series *Instinct*.

Wolfe made her Metropolitan Opera debut in *Die Fledermaus* and has appeared as a guest artist with more than sixty symphony, pops, and philharmonic orchestras across the United States and worldwide, including the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The New York Pops, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. She has collaborated with The New York Pops and played to sold-out crowds at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center with their *Broadway Today* and *Women of Note* concerts.

Originally from California, Wolfe received a degree in musical theatre from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. At age twenty she made her Carnegie Hall debut with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra under Maestro Erich Kunzel. Wolfe quickly moved on to star as Rona Lisa Peretti in the San Francisco and Boston companies' productions of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Soon after, she made her Broadway debut in the revival of *110 in the Shade*. Wolfe performed her one-woman cabaret show *All Bets Are Off* to sold-out crowds at 54 Below in New York City, as well as in Las Vegas, San Francisco, New Orleans, and more.

Wolfe is also the founder of BroadwayEvolved, a groundbreaking training program for the next generation of performers, now in its eighth year.

The appearance of Betsy Wolfe throughout the week is made possible by a generous gift from Thane Smith, in memory of Pat Smith.



Nashville Children's Theatre

Seussical the Musical

Thursday • July 16 • 11:20 AM
MTSU Tucker Theatre, Boutwell
Dramatic Arts Building

Dive into the fantastical world of Dr. Seuss in whimsical excerpts of *Seussical the Musical*, where beloved characters and stories intertwine in a vibrant tapestry of music and imagination. From the loyal Horton the Elephant, who hears a faint cry for help on a speck of dust, to the mischievous Cat in the Hat guiding us through unexpected adventures, this musical brings to life tales like *Horton Hears a Who!*, *Gertrude McFuzz*, and *The Cat in the Hat*. With a dynamic score blending pop, gospel, blues, and R&B, audiences of all ages are invited to explore themes of friendship, loyalty, and the power of "thinks." Whether you're young or young at heart, this production promises a heartwarming experience that celebrates the unique qualities in each of us. The score and book for *Seussical the Musical* were written by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, with

co-conception by Eric Idle. The musical is based on the works of Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss.

About Nashville Children's Theatre

Nashville Children's Theatre (NCT) is the oldest professional children's theatre in the United States and one of Nashville's most treasured arts institutions. Founded in 1931, it has spent more than ninety years inspiring generations of young people through the magic of live theatre. Located in the heart of Nashville, the theatre produces a vibrant season of professional productions designed especially for young audiences and families, welcoming more than 100,000 students, teachers, and patrons each year. Known for its high-quality storytelling, imaginative staging, and educational impact, NCT presents a wide range of productions, from beloved classics and literary adaptations to world premieres and contemporary works. The theatre's mission is to spark imagination, develop empathy, and create community through extraordinary shared experiences. Nashville Children's Theatre creates artistic experiences for everyone. Theatre can change the world, one person at a time. Performances and classes are designed to help children process real-world situations and build a foundation of empathy for their relationships and actions.

The performance of Seussical The Musical by Nashville Children's Theatre is made possible by a generous gift from Thane Smith, in memory of Pat Smith.



SPECIAL EVENTS

OVERTURE Sunday Evening Opening Celebration And Reception

Sunday • July 12 • 4:00 PM

The Tennessee Arts Academy Summer Institute opening convocation, Overture, provides participants with the first of many dazzling performances, a preview of the week ahead, and an opportunity to meet this year's outstanding faculty and fellow classmates. The Summer Institute kicks off its 2026 session in the MTSU Tucker Theatre with a performance by Young Concert Artists on Tour, featuring cellist James Baik, saxophonist Estel Vivó Casanovas, and pianist Zhu Wang. Afterward, participants will be treated to an elegant buffet reception in the MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom, with music by the Jaimee Paul Jazz Ensemble. Our artists for this event also include Robert Thompson (Duo Sudeste), guitar (in the MTSU Tucker Theatre lobby prior to the opening session), and David Arnold, caricature artist (in the MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom).

The opening night TAA Celebration Reception Buffet is generously sponsored by the Dettwiller Foundation. The opening night reception performers are generously sponsored by Madeline Bridges, in memory of David Bridges; Marion and Stephen Coleman; and James R. Holcomb.

TAA ART EXHIBITION OPENING, ARTIST TALK, AND RECEPTION

Monday • July 13 • 4:30–6:30 PM
Todd Art Gallery (MTSU Todd Hall)

My View: Midwest Memories by Gregory Steele

July 7–August 1, 2026

About Gregory Steele's Artwork

From a peaceful lake to the hills of southwestern Wisconsin to a brooding storm over an Iowa farm, Gregory Steele creates oil paintings with a depth that pulls the viewer into the paintings. He has experimented with

different styles of art, including abstract and non-objective paintings in colored inks or oil, and silk screens on aluminum, but he has always come back to landscapes. Regardless of style, his main objective has been to create a four-dimensional image on a two-dimensional surface.

Steele's paintings are a blend of light and shadow, using both impressionism and realism to invite the viewer into the painting. People often say that they feel as if they could walk into the painting. Steele frequently adds a surprise, such as an animal or an object that appears to be left behind. He has said, "In this world of turmoil and pressure, I paint peace. I paint the places I have been. Places that people would like to be. The scenes I paint are those that bring back memories. Using a mixture of realism and impressionism, I create paintings that draw the viewer into the image."

About the Artist

Gregory Steele was born in Morrison, Illinois, and attended a two-room rural school for four years. He decided to become an artist when, in first grade, his teacher held up a drawing of



his and explained that it was done correctly. With only a few art courses in high school and college, he is primarily a self-taught artist. At the age of eighteen, Steele began selling cartoons to newspapers. He then worked for advertising agencies as a designer and illustrator, and later as a freelance illustrator for many companies including John Deere, Nissan, and Yamaha. His work was primarily illustration done with pen and ink, wash, tempera, oil, acrylic, and computer-generated images. In 1992, he began to focus on his passion for painting and gradually dropped his commercial clients.



Gregory Steele. Soaring On Thermals, 2017. Oil on board, 22 x 28 in.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Since 1969, he has lived in Davenport, Iowa, because of its proximity to the Mississippi River. Both the river and the surrounding landscape have been a big influence on his art.

Steele is a Midwesterner who believes the Midwest offers a rich assortment of landscapes and people that deserve to be painted. His work has been featured in many galleries and shows throughout the Midwest, and in Palm Beach, Chicago, and New York. His artwork has been on display at the United States Embassies in Uzbekistan and Kuwait, and in the Iowa Governor's mansion. He is a signature member of the National Oil and Acrylic Painters' Society.

Artist Talk with Gregory Steele

Monday • July 13 • 5:15 PM

**Todd Art Gallery
(MTSU Todd Hall)**

Reception music provided by Jacob Hendley, guitarist (Todd Art Gallery).

My View: Midwest Memories is co-sponsored by the Middle Tennessee State University College of Art and Design and is made possible by generous gifts from Rena Elzy; The Fott Family, in memory of Solie Fott; Flowerree McDonough; and the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation.



Gregory Steele. *The Conversation*, 1996.
Oil on board, 16 x 20 in.



Best of the Best, *East TN*
Evie Farr, (8th grade student, Episcopal School of Knoxville, instructor Jessie Winston). *Clown*, 2025.
Mixed Media, 13 x 10.5 in.

VISUAL ART RECOGNITION DAY ART CRAWL AND EXHIBITION OPENINGS

Tuesday • July 14 • 11:15 AM–1:15 PM
**Todd Art Gallery & MTSU Todd Hall
First Floor Galleries**

On Tuesday, as part of Visual Art Recognition Day, TAA Summer Institute participants, faculty, and guests will take part in the annual TAA Art Crawl from 11:15 AM to 1:15 PM. Visual art student winners whose works are featured in the *Best of the Best Student Art Exhibition* will stand in front of their artwork to offer commentary and answer questions. The four art exhibitions on display are located in Todd Hall on the MTSU campus and are listed in this Special Events section.

TAA Visual Art Recognition Day is made possible by a gift from the William Rollins Fund for the Arts of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee.

Connections, *Third Place*
Tina Atkinson (Percy Priest Elementary).
Snowball Fight, 2026.
Stoneware Clay, 6 in.



Best of the Best, *Middle TN*

Madeline Robertson (12th grade student, Merrol Hyde Magnet School, instructor Sonya Coley). *Spoons*, 2025.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 in.



Tennessee's Best of the Best Student Art Exhibition

July 7–August 1, 2026

MTSU Todd Hall, First Floor Galleries

The Tennessee Arts Academy is pleased to offer a student art exhibit as part of its summer enrichment experience. *Tennessee's Best of the Best Student Art Exhibition* is a collection of the best pieces in various media by student artists from the three grand divisions of the state. The students whose work will be featured have won college scholarships for their achievements and have had their work exhibited in museums throughout the state of Tennessee.

Connections: Tennessee Art Education Association Member Exhibition

July 7–August 1, 2026

MTSU Todd Hall, First Floor Galleries

The Tennessee Arts Academy is very proud to exhibit the work of practicing artist-teachers alongside the exemplary work created by their students. *Connections: Tennessee Art Education Association Member Exhibition* is a juried show featuring the work of kindergarten through higher education art educators from across Tennessee.

SPECIAL EVENTS



STARS, Best of Show, 3-5
Madelyn Bureson (5th grade student, Hardin Valley Elementary, instructor Jessica Petree Armstrong). Untitled, 2025. Painting.

STARS: State of Tennessee Art Review and Showcase Exhibition

July 7–August 1, 2026
MTSU Todd Hall, First Floor Galleries

The STARS exhibition showcases the talent and hard work of teachers and art students from kindergarten through fifth grade from across Tennessee. The 2026 exhibition was initially held at the Tennessee State Museum. The Tennessee Arts Academy STARS exhibition features the first-place winners at each grade level as well as the Best of Show winners.

Tennessee's Best of the Best Student Art Exhibition and Connections: Tennessee Art Education Association Member Exhibition are co-sponsored by the Tennessee Arts Academy and the Tennessee Arts Education Association and are presented in partnership with the Middle Tennessee State University Department of Art and Design.

The STARS exhibition at the Tennessee Arts Academy is sponsored and organized by the Tennessee Art Education Association and co-sponsored by the Tennessee Arts Academy. The exhibition is presented in partnership with the Middle Tennessee State University Department of Art and Design.

Special thanks to Jimmy Mumford, MTSU Department of Art and Design Chair; Eric Snyder, MTSU Gallery Coordinator; Rick Rishaw, MTSU Gallery Preparator; and to Jim Dodson, the founder and creator of the Best of the Best and Connections exhibitions.

My View: Midwest Memories

by Gregory Steele

July 7–August 1, 2026
Todd Art Gallery (MTSU Todd Hall)

STUDENT AND TEACHER ARTIST RECOGNITION CEREMONY AND RECEPTION

Tuesday • July 14 • 5:00 PM
MTSU Todd Hall, First Floor Galleries

The Tennessee Art Education Association along with the Tennessee Arts Academy will recognize the students and teachers who participate in the *Best of the Best*, *Connections*, and *STARS* exhibits. Winners receive certificates and cash awards, as well as the art exhibition booklet that includes all the artists' works. A reception with refreshments follows the ceremony.

The Reel Deal: Food, Film, & Filmmakers

Tuesday • July 14 • 5:45 PM
MTSU Tucker Theatre, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

This special "classic cinema" event features a screening of the award-winning film *Dead Poets Society*, followed by a virtual "Talk Back" session with the Oscar-winning writer of the film, Tom Schulman. Pizza, popcorn, and pop will be served at 5:45 PM. The movie starts at 6:15 PM. Enjoy tasty snacks, connect with lively conversation, and let the film spark new ideas for your own creative work!

About *Dead Poets Society*

Released in 1989, *Dead Poets Society* stars Robin Williams as an unorthodox English teacher who inspires his students to think independently and embrace the power of poetry. Set in a rigid prep school, the film explores courage, creativity, and the risks of



Connections, First Place
Jin Powell (2J's Studio). Native American Girl, 2025.
Wood carving, rope, fabric and acrylics on birch wood panel, 24 x 32 x 3 in.



Best of the Best, East TN
Nayumi Rei Testa (11th grade student, Roane County High School, instructor Natascha Hudson). Rose, 2025.
Drawing, 18.75 x 15.75 in.

self-expression—offering a lasting reminder to arts educators of the profound impact teachers can have on students' voices and lives. Its message continues to resonate in classrooms where imagination and authenticity are encouraged. The film won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay (Tom Schulman) and was nominated in three categories: Best Film, Best Actor (Robin Williams) and Best Director (Peter Weir).

About Tom Schulman



Tom Schulman won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for the film *Dead Poets Society*, starring Robin Williams. He also wrote *What About Bob?*, *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, *Medicine Man*, and *Holy*

Man. He was an executive producer for *Indecent Proposal* and *Me, Myself & Irene* and recently wrote and directed the movie *Double Down South*. Schulman, who was born and raised in Nashville, attended Montgomery Bell Academy and graduated from Vanderbilt University with a degree in philosophy. He studied at the University of Southern California graduate school of cinema, with Jack Garfein at the Actors and Directors Lab in Los Angeles, and with director Joan Darling. He directed the Actors Studio's first west coast production, Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. Schulman served on the board of directors and then as vice president of the Writers Guild of America, West, and was the president of the Writers Guild Foundation, on whose board he currently serves.

The Reel Deal is generously sponsored by The Fott Family and Kem Hinton, in memory of Solie Fott; and Michael Meise.

Visitors' Day

Wednesday • July 15
8:00 AM–5:00 PM
MTSU Campus

Wednesday is the official TAA Summer Institute Visitors' Day. The invited guests include arts organization directors, college and university professors, political dignitaries, TAA Foundation Board members, local school

system officials, Tennessee Department of Education administrators, and many others from across the state. Some visitors may wish to participate in the classes, and all are invited to sit in on any of the day's activities.

Visitors' Day at MTSU has been made possible by a generous gift from the Dettwiller Foundation.

Bravo! The Tennessee Arts Academy Awards Banquet and Performance

Wednesday • July 15 • 6:30 PM
MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

On Wednesday at 6:30 PM, participants and guests will gather for the TAA Summer Institute's annual awards banquet and performance. This night is designed to honor and reward the hard work and artistic talents of arts teachers from around the state. Upon entering the MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom Foyer, guests have the opportunity to get their photo taken while listening to the music provided by members of the 129th Army Band Instrumental Combo, courtesy of the Tennessee Army National Guard. Inside the ballroom, an elegant dinner will be served, with music provided by Brennan Villines on piano. After dinner, the TAA Distinguished Service Award will be presented to Marc Shaiman, in recognition of his extraordinary talent and artistry. The TAA Lorin Hollander Award will be given to Talmage Watts and Debbie Greenspan for their lifelong service as arts leaders and advocates. The TAA Arts Rich



Connections, Honorable Mention
Melody Weintraub, (University of Tennessee).
Daydreamer, 2025. Acrylic, 20 x 20 in.

School of the Year Awards will be presented to Bearden High School, Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts - Middle School, and Idlewild Elementary School. The evening concludes with a performance by Broadway leading lady Betsy Wolfe, starring in *Domino*, under the musical direction of Steven Jamail.

Bravo! The Tennessee Arts Academy Awards Banquet is generously sponsored by a gift from Middle Tennessee State University. The appearance of Betsy Wolfe and Steven Jamail is made possible by a generous gift from Thane Smith, in memory of Pat Smith. The 2026 TAA Arts Rich Schools of the Year Awards are generously sponsored by Pinnacle Financial Partners.



Best of the Best, West TN
Josh Lundy (8th grade student, St. George's Independent School, instructor Allison Webb). Abstraction of Nature, 2025. Photography, 11 x 14 in.



STARS, Best of Show, K–2
Mabel Foltz (2nd grade student, Christ Presbyterian Academy, instructor Farris Parker).
Spring Rainbow, 2025. Painting.

SPECIAL EVENTS

TAA Arts Expo, Vendor Fair, and Artist Market

Thursday • July 16

11:45 AM–1:45 PM

MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

TAA Summer Institute participants and arts teachers from across the state are invited to attend the TAA Arts Expo, Vendor Fair, and Artist Market on Thursday in the MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom. The Arts Expo and Vendor Fair include display booths from leading music, theatre, and visual art vendors as well as colleges and arts-related organizations. Concurrent with the Vendor Fair, the TAA Artist Market features a variety of art, crafts, and jewelry offered by talented artists, artisans, and Summer Institute participants. The Arts Expo will be enlivened with tuneful music by the Zicky Hart and Daniel Kuk Duo on saxophone and piano and balloon artistry by Sam Cremeens. Snacks to be served include pretzels, popcorn, popsicles, and plenty of sweet treats.

The TAA Arts Expo, Vendor Fair, and Artist Market is generously sponsored by INSBANK.

Alumni Day and Ice Cream Social

Thursday • July 16 • 5:15 PM

MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

All TAA Alumni Association members are invited to the TAA Summer Institute to attend the day's activities. At 5:15 p.m. the



Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation hosts its annual Ice Cream Social. Alumni Association members, and all participants who donate to or win a bid in the TAA silent or online auctions, receive a special invitation to attend this yummy event in the MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom. Susan Ramsay and Friends playing hammered dulcimers will offer entertainment for the occasion.

The Academy Ice Cream Social is generously sponsored by the TAA Foundation Board of Directors.

Finale

Friday • July 17 • 11:30 AM

MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

The TAA Finale Luncheon brings together the diverse experiences of the TAA Summer Institute, reinforces the importance of arts

education, and honors individuals who help make TAA what it is today. Accordionist Alex Shor will perform during the meal. The Joe W. Giles Lifetime Achievement Award, annually given to one Tennessean for achievement in the field of arts education, will be presented to Susan Ramsay, longtime Middle Tennessee music educator. After lunch, awards will be presented to the 2025–2026 TAA Teacher Heroes. The final performance of the week, featuring the Arts Academy Chorale, and composed of TAA Summer Institute participants, will be conducted by Thomas J. Standish-Rinn. As the week's activities conclude, TAA Executive Director Frank Bluestein will present the "Final Coda." His message is meant to inspire and challenge each person to use the knowledge and experience gained during the TAA Summer Institute to make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of the students they teach.

The TAA Summer Institute Finale Luncheon is generously sponsored by a gift from the Jackie Jensen Hart Foundation.

The Arts Academy Chorale performance is generously sponsored by Ludus.



Susan Ramsay

Joe W. Giles TAA Lifetime Achievement Award

Finale Luncheon

MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

July 17 • 11:30 AM



For more than four decades, Susan Ramsay has distinguished herself as one of Tennessee's most influential music educators, teacher trainers, performers, and arts advocates. A graduate of Peabody College, she later earned a master's degree in music education from Middle Tennessee State University and completed certification in both Kodály and Orff-Schulwerk methodologies. Ramsay taught middle and elementary school students in Cheatham County and

the Franklin Special School District for thirty-two years. She directed award-winning choirs and started an Elementary Mass Choir Festival in 1987, an event that still flourishes today. She mentored thirty-one student teachers and helped establish Franklin Elementary School as a Tennessee Arts Commission Arts Honors School. In 2002, she became the first teacher in Tennessee to earn National Board Certification in Early and Middle Childhood Music. She was named Franklin Special School District Teacher of the Year and, in 2016, was inducted into the Tennessee Music Educators Association Hall of Fame.

Beyond the K–12 classroom, Ramsay has devoted her career to training and inspiring fellow educators. For more than a decade, she taught music education courses at Belmont University, Vanderbilt University, and Middle Tennessee State University. As an Orff-Schulwerk teacher trainer for eighteen years, she introduced hundreds of teachers to the Orff approach through certification courses across the country. A highly respected clinician and presenter, Ramsay has led workshops and conference sessions throughout the United States, including presentations for national conferences of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association, the Organization of American Kodály Educators, and the American Choral Directors Association. A gifted performer as well as educator, she played for many years as a clarinetist with the Nashville Wind Ensemble and also appeared with the Lipscomb and Vanderbilt orchestras. She is also widely known for her engaging storytelling performances, sharing stories at festivals, school programs, and community events throughout the region. Her service to the profession has included leadership roles in numerous organizations and long-standing involvement with the Tennessee Arts Academy, which she has faithfully supported and attended since the Academy's inaugural year.

Marc Shaiman

TAA Distinguished Service Award

Bravo Awards Banquet and Performance

MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

July 15 • 6:30 PM



Marc Shaiman is an award-winning lyricist, composer, orchestrator, and performer who has successfully created music and lyrics for television, films, recordings, and theatre since entering show business at the age of sixteen. He has earned seven Oscar nominations for *Mary Poppins Returns*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Patch Adams*, *The First Wives Club*, *The American President*, and *South Park*; a Tony Award for *Hairspray*; two Emmy Awards for *The Oscars* with

Billy Crystal and *Only Murders in the Building*; and two Grammys for *Hairspray* and *Some Like It Hot*. Shaiman has co-produced and arranged award-winning recordings for music icons such as Bette Midler, Harry Connick Jr., and Mariah Carey, including the Grammy-winning recordings *The Wind Beneath My Wings* and *From a Distance*. Other performers with whom he has collaborated in concert, cabaret, film, and television include Will Ferrell, Kristin Chenoweth, Eric Clapton, Diane Keaton, Steve Martin, Barbra Streisand, Queen Latifah, Robin Williams, Eddie Murphy, and Robert De Niro.

At the legendary after-party for *Saturday Night Live's* (SNL) 40th anniversary, he jammed with Taylor Swift, Paul McCartney, and Prince and “completely lost his mind.” His television ventures include “The Sweeney Sisters” on SNL and countless award and talk show appearances with Billy Crystal, Neil Patrick Harris, Nathan Lane, and Martin Short, the Emmy-winning *SNL 40th*, and *The Kennedy Center Honors*, for which he arranged and performed in tribute to his friend Billy Crystal. His most cherished achievement for television is his collaboration with Bette Midler for her Emmy-winning appearance as Johnny Carson's final guest on *The Tonight Show*.

In 2014, Shaiman and Scott Wittman, his collaborator in the musical theatre world, were celebrated by the New York Pops with a spectacular concert at Carnegie Hall. Shaiman was honored with the Ambassador Award by the Society of Composers and Lyricists in December 2018, the Icon Award at the Guild of Music Supervisors Awards in February 2019, and an Outstanding Career Achievement Award from the Hollywood Music In Media Awards. Shaiman is also a *New York Times* bestselling author after the recent publication of *Never Mind the Happy: Showbiz Stories from a Sore Winner*. Born and raised in New Jersey, he currently lives in New York with his husband Lou Mirabal.

2026 ACADEMY AWARDS

Talmage Watts & Debbie Greenspan

TAA Lorin Hollander Award

Bravo Awards Banquet and Performance

MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom

July 15 • 6:30 PM



Talmage Watts and Debbie Greenspan credit their education in public schools with igniting the spark that lit their passion for music.

Talmage Watts received a degree from Peabody College (now Vanderbilt University) and began a career as a music educator. He directed bands at McMurray Junior High School

(now McMurray Middle) and Hillsboro High School, where he worked with Joe Giles, who would later become founder of the Tennessee Arts Academy. Watts played trumpet professionally and later joined the faculty at the University of South Alabama. After twelve years of teaching, he changed careers and earned his law degree at the University of Alabama School of Law. Watts spent thirty-five years as a trial and appellate attorney and concluded his career with a thirteen-year stint in the Tennessee Attorney General's office. He was a member of the bar of both the Tennessee and the United States Supreme Court. Needing a musical outlet, he sang with the symphony chorus in New Orleans, where he met his future wife, Debbie Greenspan. He then sang for fifteen years with the Nashville Symphony Chorus, served as its president, and sang twenty-five productions with the

Nashville Opera Association. When his long-time friend, Joe Giles, asked him to become involved with the newly formed Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation (TAAF), Watts wrote the original by-laws for the organization, joined the board, and served as its first president. For the last thirty-two years, he has held numerous TAAF roles, including assistant secretary and on-call legal consultant.

Debbie Greenspan discovered her love of singing and performing at age ten, when she participated in a scene from *Carmen* presented to her classmates. She sang in choirs throughout her school years, winning a place in all-state choruses and first-place awards in solo and duet vocal performance competitions. Her passion for singing persisted in college, and as a senior in nursing school, she won a position in the chorus of the Fort Worth Opera Company's production of Bernstein's *Mass*. While pursuing her now fifty-year career as a nurse and nurse practitioner, she sang in the symphony choruses of Indianapolis, New Orleans, and Nashville, and the opera choruses of the New Orleans and Nashville opera companies. Greenspan served as a cantorial soloist at two different synagogues in New Orleans and was the soprano quartet soloist for Congregation Micah in Nashville for twenty years. She served as president of both the New Orleans and Nashville symphony choruses and as a member of the first board of directors of the Tennessee Arts Academy.



2026 TAA Arts Rich School of the Year Awards

Idlewild Elementary School

2026 TAA Arts Rich Elementary School of the Year Award

Bravo Awards Banquet and Performance
MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom
July 15 • 6:30 PM



Idlewild Elementary School is guided by their motto, “Children First, Excellence Always.” Idlewild continues to excel as a Tennessee STEAM-designated school and a 2025 Top Magnet School of Excellence. Its Science and Technology Optional Program in Midtown Memphis provides a rigorous, creative learning environment for students from more than twenty-eight zip codes across the Mid-South. Whether enrolled from the neighborhood or transferring from other areas, all students participate in the Optional Program. Teachers and staff support a child’s academic and personal growth, encouraging achievement at the highest levels. Community partnerships include St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Memphis Zoo, Dixon Gallery & Gardens, Brooks Museum of Art, and a decade-long, side-by-side concert collaboration with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. Idlewild fosters an inclusive culture where students share diverse cultures, ideas, and perspectives in safe, nurturing classrooms. Students engage in activities, including Rock Band, Chorus, Vinyl Club, Orff Ensemble, and Making Musicals. Competitive teams in robotics, chess, and mathematics have earned regional and national recognition. Students have succeeded in district and national contests, including the Memphis-Shelby County Schools Holiday Card Contest and the Stax Music Academy Mic Drop Songwriting Competition. Faculty members have earned honors such as West Tennessee Art Educator of the Year and CMA Music Teacher of Excellence. With 123 years of proven excellence, Idlewild’s holistic, differentiated, and rigorous approach to teaching and learning continues to develop every student’s talent, intellect, creativity, and character.

and acceptance into a specific arts discipline. The school provides ten arts concentrations in which students may major. Middle school students quickly develop a sense of belonging and support, surrounded by administrators, faculty, and fellow students who share their dreams and passions. As sixth graders, students discover their passion and spend many hours in and out of school rehearsing, performing, and learning from certified teachers who are also practicing artists. While development in the arts is at the core of CCA’s mission, students also pursue a rigorous academic course of study in which the arts continue to play a role in each student’s growth. As a Level 5 Reward School in the state of Tennessee for the past four years, CCA uses interdisciplinary projects and performances across arts and academics that leverage students’ artistic passion to support academic success and prepare them for life beyond middle school. The dedicated administration and faculty believe “Every day at CCA, a Star is Rising.”

Bearden High School

2026 TAA Arts Rich High School of the Year Award

Bravo Awards Banquet and Performance
MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom
July 15 • 6:30 PM



Bearden High School has proudly served the Knoxville, Tennessee, community since 1939. Bearden has earned a longstanding reputation as the school families choose when they want their children to experience exceptional arts education within Knox County Schools. A comprehensive, four-year high school enrolling approximately 1,900 students, Bearden serves a diverse student population representing thirty-nine languages and a variety of cultural backgrounds. At the heart of the school’s identity is a commitment to meaningful and rigorous artistic opportunities for all students. Through the Knox County Schools’ 865 Academies model, students begin in the Freshman Academy before entering one of three career-themed academies, including the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Arts (STEM-A) Academy. Bearden students participate in arts programming in music, theatre, visual, and media arts, consistently earning recognition at regional, state, and national levels. They have represented Bearden in museums and on prestigious stages, including Carnegie Hall and the Jimmy Awards on Broadway. Partnerships with universities, professional artists, and community organizations extend learning beyond the classroom and provide authentic artistic experiences. A recipient of the U.S. News Silver Award, Bearden consistently produces U.S. Presidential Scholars, National Merit finalists, and National Merit Scholarship recipients. Recent graduating classes have earned nearly \$40 million in scholarships and contributed approximately 31,000 hours of community service. With award-winning arts programs, strong academics, and a culture that values creativity, leadership, and growth, Bearden empowers students to succeed beyond high school.

Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts - Middle School

2026 TAA Arts Rich Middle School of the Year Award

Bravo Awards Banquet and Performance
MTSU Student Union Grand Ballroom
July 15 • 6:30 PM



Chattanooga High Center for Creative Arts - Middle School (CCA), a magnet school of creative and performing arts, is located in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and serves

students in grades six through twelve. CCA is a school built on the belief that the arts and academics would come together to create a safe space where “dreamers” could learn and grow artistically and academically. Students begin their journey at CCA through audition

2026 ACADEMY AWARDS

Arts Leadership Award of Excellence is presented to an individual or group who has achieved a unique milestone in the arts that deserves recognition and honor.

Distinguished Service Award is presented to an American whose work stands as a monument to the importance of the arts in the lives of all people.

Joe W. Giles Lifetime Achievement Award is conferred on a Tennessee teacher whose life's work is widely acknowledged to have positively influenced the role of the arts in education, thereby benefiting the students of Tennessee's schools.

Lamar Alexander Founder's Award of Distinction is presented to an individual whose meritorious accomplishments in the fields of education and the arts have profoundly impacted American culture and life.

Distinguished Service Award

1994 Charles Strouse, Broadway composer
1995 Charles Fowler, arts educator, writer, and advocate
1996 Jerome Lawrence, playwright
1997 Lorin Hollander, concert pianist and philosopher
2000 Scott Ellis, Broadway theatre director
2000 Mary Costa, opera singer
2001 Sheldon Harnick, Broadway composer
2001 Tina Packer, Shakespeare actor and director
2003 Bob McGrath, singer and host of *Sesame Street*
2005 John Simon, author and arts critic
2005 Dean Pitchford, songwriter, lyricist, screenwriter, and director
2006 Andre Thomas, choral conductor
2007 Joe DiPietro, Broadway playwright and lyricist
2008 Henry Krieger, Broadway composer
2011 Marvin Hamlisch, composer and pianist
2012 Richard M. Sherman, composer and lyricist
2013 Marc Cherry, Hollywood writer and producer
2014 Rupert Holmes, Broadway playwright, composer, and lyricist
2015 Richard Maltby Jr., director, lyricist, producer, and writer
2016 Audrey Flack, painter and sculptor
2016 Andrew Lippa, composer, lyricist, performer, and writer
2016 Doc Severinsen, musician and bandleader
2017 Christopher Durang, playwright
2018 Tony Walton, scenic and costume designer
2019 Jeff Calhoun, director and choreographer
2022 Harolyn Blackwell, opera singer and Broadway performer
2023 David Yazbek, composer, lyricist, performer, and writer
2024 Jerry Zaks, Broadway director
2025 Victoria Clark, Broadway actor, director, and educator

Joe W. Giles Lifetime Achievement Award

1995 Joseph Edward Hodges, Crossville
1996 Freda Kenner, Bells
1996 Sue Blass, Jackson
1997 Elizabeth Rike, Knoxville
1997 Celia Bachelder, Kingsport
1998 James Charles Mills, Johnson City
1998 Gene Crain, Memphis
1999 Patricia Brown, Knoxville
2000 Robert Pletcher, Nashville
2000 Kathy Hawk, Kingsport
2001 Tommie Pardue, Memphis
2001 Tully Daniel, Memphis (awarded posthumously)
2004 Marilyn duBrisk, Greeneville
2004 Bobby Jean Frost, Nashville
2005 Nancy Boone-Allsbrook, Murfreesboro
2005 Sally Crain Jager, Cookeville
2006 Michael Combs, Knoxville
2006 Jean R. Thomas, Chattanooga
2006 Mitchell Van Metre, Knoxville
2007 David Logan, Johnson City
2010 James R. Holcomb, Memphis
2011 Flowerree W. (Galetovic) McDonough, Knoxville
2011 Joe W. Giles, Nashville
2012 Richard Mitchell, Knoxville
2013 Carol Crittenden, Nashville
2014 Fred Patterson, Knoxville
2015 Gregg Coats, Memphis
2016 Ted Rose, Lebanon
2017 Margaret Campbell-Holman, Nashville
2018 Linda Wilson Miller, Paris
2019 Donna Anderson, Knoxville
2022 Madeline Bridges, Nashville
2023 Melody Weintraub, Memphis
2024 Blanche Pope Tosh, Memphis
2025 Ronald S. Meers, Murfreesboro

Lorin Hollander Award is given to a Tennessean whose influence has benefited arts education in general and/or the Tennessee Arts Academy in particular. This award is named in honor of internationally renowned concert pianist Lorin Hollander, a special friend of the Academy.

Partner in the Arts Award honors an individual or business whose generosity and support have contributed in sustained and significant ways to the success of the Tennessee Arts Academy's mission.

Spirit of Tennessee Award recognizes an individual or group whose work exemplifies the highest standards of artistic endeavor and brings positive recognition to the place of the arts in the lives of Tennesseans.

Lorin Hollander Award

1994 Cavit Cheshier, education executive
1995 Steven Cohen, Tennessee state senator
1996 Nellie McNeil, teacher and advocate
1997 Tom L. Naylor, music educator and administrator
1998 T. Earl Hinton, music educator
1999 Jane Walters, educator and arts advocate
2000 Martha McCrory, music educator
2001 Solie Fott, music educator
2008 Jeanette Crosswhite, arts education administrator
2013 Pat and Thane Smith, arts advocates
2014 Cindy Freeman and Michael Meise, music educators and arts advocates
2019 Bill and Jeanette Watkins, arts leadership and education advocates
2022 Marion and Stephen Coleman, music educators and arts advocates

Spirit of Tennessee Award

2000 Wilma Dykeman, writer
2001 Jim Crabtree, theatre director and writer
2002 Alice Swanson, arts education administrator and advocate
2003 George Mabry, choral conductor
2006 Dolph Smith, visual artist
2009 George S. Clinton, Hollywood film composer
2009 Jackie Nichols, theatre administrator
2009 Michael Stern, symphony conductor
2010 Cherry Jones, Broadway actress
2015 Charles Brindley, visual artist
2022 Aaron Lazar, Broadway, film, and television actor

Lamar Alexander Founder's Award of Distinction

2013 Senator Lamar Alexander, United States senator
2014 Douglas Henry, Tennessee state senator
2017 Bill Haslam, Tennessee governor
2018 Mark Norris, Tennessee Senate majority leader

Arts Leadership Award of Excellence

2013 E. Frank Bluestein, Germantown
2015 Music Makes Us, Nashville
2016 Belmont University, Nashville
2023 Tiffany Kerns and CMA Foundation, Nashville

Partner in the Arts Award

2008 Steve Spiegel, president of Theatrical Rights Worldwide

TAA ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

E. Frank Bluestein

Executive Director/Theatre Director



E. Frank Bluestein is the 1996–1997 Disney National Performing Arts Teacher of the Year and the 1994 Tennessee Teacher of the Year. *USA Today* named Bluestein as one of the top forty

teachers in the United States in 1998. Up until his retirement, he served as chairman of the Germantown High School Fine Arts Department and as executive producer for the school's three-million-dollar, Emmy Award-winning television studio. Bluestein is a past winner of the American Theatre Association's John C. Barner Award and has served as an arts advisory panelist for numerous organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the Tennessee Arts Commission. He spent several years as director of shows at Opryland, USA, and most recently wrote and directed the national touring production of *Beale Street Saturday Night* starring blues legend Joyce Cobb. In 2013, Bluestein was inducted into the Educational Theatre Association's Hall of Fame in Minneapolis, and in 2021 he was named by Tennessee governor Bill Lee as a recipient of the Tennessee Governor's Arts Award, Tennessee's highest honor in the arts.

Amanda Galbraith

Arts Leadership and Administration Director



Amanda Galbraith is a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. For eighteen years, she served as an art educator with Bartlett City Schools in Tennessee.

Galbraith has served on the Tennessee Department of Education's subject matter expert committee, two standards revision committees, a textbook and instructional

materials advisory panel, and numerous curriculum-development teams. She received the Tennessee Art Education Association's West Tennessee Art Educator of the Year award in 2011 and 2013 and the Higher Education Teacher of the Year in 2025. In 2019, Galbraith was named the Tennessee Art Education Association's Art Educator of the Year. She also received the University of Tennessee's Chancellor's University Engagement award in 2026.

Kami Lunsford

Director of Educational Programs and Events



A former middle school choral and theatre director in Knoxville, Tennessee, Kami Lunsford helped thousands of students to find personal success and belonging. Her ensembles performed in nine states

alongside artists like Chris Blue and Wilco. She was the Tennessee Teacher of the Year in 2021, twice named Knox County Schools Teacher of the Year, and was inducted into the University of Tennessee's Educator Hall of Honor. She has been a consultant and panelist for the United States and Tennessee Departments of Education, the Smithsonian Institute, and the Country Music Association. Lunsford served for four years on the TAA Foundation Board as TAA Alumni Association president. She hosts the *TAA Talks* podcast and oversees year-round TAA programs, including the Arts Rich Schools Program and Awards. Lunsford credits TAA and the exceptional teachers in her rural, West Tennessee upbringing for her passion to change lives through arts education.

Connie Marley

Music Director



Connie Marley is retired after teaching twenty years at Freedom Middle School in Franklin, Tennessee. During her successful tenure at the school, her choirs consistently won superior ratings at local

and state choral festivals. Each year, her students were well represented in honor choirs at the local, regional, and national levels. Prior to her time in Franklin, Marley held teaching positions in Georgia, Texas, and the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. Marley is also a past president of the Middle Tennessee Vocal Association and has served the organization in several other capacities.

Jerry Monds

Director of Outreach Services



A passionate advocate for arts education, Jerry Monds serves as director of outreach services for the Tennessee Arts Academy. Prior to joining the Academy full-time in 2026, he served as music

teacher and choral director at Oak Hill School in Nashville for twelve years. With more than eighteen years of experience in music education, Monds has played a key role in developing and revising school curriculum, promoting school-wide initiatives, assisting theatrical productions, and nurturing a lifelong love of music. He also served as a TAA music facilitator for eight years before transitioning into his current role. Monds holds a bachelor's degree from The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and a master's degree in music education from Middle Tennessee State University. Beyond his teaching career, he has served as a children's choir coordinator and Sunday school music teacher, as well as an assistant soccer coach. He and his wife, Becky, have three children.

TAA ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Susan Ramsay

Director of Information Services



Before her retirement in May of 2008, Susan Ramsay was a music specialist at Franklin Elementary School in the Franklin Special Schools District and was named Teacher of the Year for that system. She has received National Board Certification in music and holds degrees from Peabody College and Middle Tennessee State University. Ramsay is past president of the Middle Tennessee Orff-Schulwerk Association and the Middle Tennessee Elementary Music Educators Association and has served as regional representative on the National Board of Trustees for AOSA. She has presented at Orff and Kodály national conferences and for the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). She maintains an active schedule of performances as a storyteller and as a musician, and has been connected with the Tennessee Arts Academy since its inception.

David Reynolds

Visual Art Director



David Reynolds is a visual art educator currently teaching in the Franklin Special District in Franklin, Tennessee. He earned his degree in art education from Middle Tennessee State University and began his career in the Williamson County School System. He has served as commissioner for the City of Franklin's Public Arts Commission, marketing and promotion chair for the Tennessee Art Education Association, and visual art facilitator for the Tennessee Arts Academy. As an actor, Reynolds stars as

the creative and curious Mr. Doodad in CoComelon's *The Melon Patch*. As a freelance graphic designer, Reynolds has created design work for Hallmark, Purity Dairies, and Dixon Ticonderoga Company. He executed a full graphical re-branding of both the Tennessee Art Education Association in 2023 and the Tennessee Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance in 2024. In addition to his service in the visual arts, Reynolds can be found many Sundays as a featured vocalist at the Church at Station Hill.

TAA Professional Services Personnel

Melody Hart

Financial and Business Director



Melody Hart earned a bachelor of music degree in bassoon performance from Ball State University. After graduation, she moved to Nashville and worked for Badger-Bogle, Architects as an executive assistant and bookkeeper from 1993 to 1998. She then joined her husband, photographer Scott Schrecker, as office manager and bookkeeper for his business. In 2010, Hart began working for the Tennessee Arts Academy. Before moving to Nashville, Hart played bassoon for several city orchestras in Indiana. She later performed in various concerts with the orchestra at Belmont University. In her spare time, she continues to play bassoon in church ensembles in the Nashville area and enjoys traveling, baking, and spending time with Scott and their children, Sammy and Scotty, who have frequently assisted as staff members during the annual TAA Summer Institute.

Ashley Abbink

Administrative Support Specialist



Ashley Abbink joined TAA in 2024 after working for Nashville-based visual artist Anna B. Webb of HeArt of Nashville. Originally from Colorado Springs, Colorado, Abbink earned a bachelor of music in commercial voice and songwriting from Belmont University. Outside of her work at TAA, she is an active singer-songwriter who has been featured on the Amazon Music show *Breakthrough*. Her livestream musical performances have often been featured among a very select group of broadcasts highlighted directly on the Twitch homepage, and she has been a member of their invite-only program, *The Collective*. Locally, Abbink performs throughout the Nashville area and sings in the choir Nashville in Harmony.

Jennifer Vannatta-Hall

MTSU Campus Coordinator



Jennifer Vannatta-Hall is a professor of music education at Middle Tennessee State University where she currently serves as the director of the MTSU Center for Teaching & Mentoring. She holds degrees from Middle Tennessee State University and received her doctorate from the University of Illinois. She has almost thirty years' experience as a professional educator and taught kindergarten through eighth grade music in both Rutherford County and Franklin Special School Districts. Vannatta-Hall has presented workshops and conference sessions all over the United States and was a visiting professor of music at Hangzhou Normal University in China in 2019. She frequently conducts and adjudicates choral festivals. She is certified through the master level of the

TAA ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Orff-Schulwerk approach to music education, the Smithsonian Institute's World Music Pedagogy, and Modern Band/Music Will. Her book, *Music Teaching Self-Efficacy in Early Childhood Teacher Education*, was published in 2013.

Savannah Aiello

Director of Production Management and Technical Services



Savannah Aiello has worked in education for over a decade, serving Williamson County Schools as a digital learning designer and speech and theatre teacher at Ravenwood

High School in Brentwood, Tennessee. Aiello has also performed and worked with local children's theatre groups in the area, including Bravo Creative Arts Center and Williamson County Star Bright Players. She currently serves as technical director at Independence High School and assists with Thescon, the state high school theatre conference. Aiello is also an active artist member of Pull-Tight Players in Franklin, where she frequently stage manages, music directs, and serves as the tech committee co-chair. Aiello graduated from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and lives in Franklin with her husband Sean, who is an attorney and a Williamson County Commissioner.

Sybil Levine

TAA Foundation Grant Writer



Sybil Levine is a Nashville native, a string musician by nature and nurture, and an avid contributor to the nonprofit sector. An Oberlin College graduate, Levine writes grants for nonprofits

that have yielded millions in funds for various clients including individual donors, private foundations, and state and federal entities. Levine has contributed to the financial stability

of her clients, whose areas of advocacy include the arts, arts education, mental health and wellness, restorative justice, healthcare, homelessness, and more.

TAA Founding Directors

Joe W. Giles

TAA Founder and TAA Dean Emeritus



Joe Giles is founder of the Tennessee Arts Academy and former director of the Arts Education Program of the Tennessee Department of Education. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in music education from Austin Peay State University and has done additional study at Peabody College, Middle Tennessee State University, and Fisk University. Giles is past president of the Southern Division of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and of the National Council of State Supervisors of Music. He taught music in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools for twenty-two years, has taken choral groups on concert tours in Europe, and has received gold and silver medals in international music festivals.

Madeline Bridges

Founding TAA Music Director, Project Director and TAA Consultant



Madeline Bridges is professor emerita of music in the School of Music at Belmont University, where she taught music education and music theory.

For fifteen years, she served as School of Music associate dean for academic studies. Bridges also served for twenty-nine years as program director of the Nashville Children's Choir. She holds numerous music degrees including an EdD in music education from the University of Alabama. Bridges taught music and music education in classrooms from kindergarten through the graduate level and is past president of both the Tennessee Music Education Association and the International Board of Directors of Choristers Guild. She is a member of the Tennessee Music Education Association Hall of Fame and a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tennessee Chapter of American Choral Directors Association as well as the Joe W. Giles Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tennessee Arts Academy. Bridges currently serves on the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation Board of Directors.



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Dianne Evans, Patricia Hudson,

Marissa Toothman

TAA Ambassadors

Gina Miller

Travel Coordinator

Scott Schrecker

TAA Photographer

Jesse Strauss

Grant Consultant

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*Special thanks to Eric Snyder and Rick Rickshaw
for their assistance in coordinating the TAA
visual art exhibitions.*

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Ella Herrenbruck, Niki Scheinberg,

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Production Coordinator

TAA Facilitators

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Virginia Nix

Kim Shamblin

Ken Snyder

Christopher Taylor

Theatre

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Michelle Howell

Jennifer Keith

Key McKinney

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Michelle Tripp

Arts Leadership and Administration

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Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation Board of Directors

Multiple events throughout the week have been made possible by the generosity of the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation Board of Directors: William H. Watkins, Jr. (President), Bud Akers, Joey Beckford, Chuck Blackburn, Madeline Bridges, Nicole Briones, Stephen Coleman, Rena C. Ellzy, Kimberly Heimert, Brandon Herrenbruck, James R. Holcomb, Patricia A. Hudson, Brad Hurley, Leah Tolbert Lyons, Flowerree W. McDonough, Ron Meers, Michael Meise, Jeff Myrick, Diana K. Poe, Wayne Qualls, Jim Rieniets, Thane Smith, Michelle Tripp, and Talmage Watts.

The Wednesday morning TAA breakfast is generously sponsored by the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation Board of Directors.

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO ARTS EDUCATORS 1986 • 2026

With the release of *A Nation at Risk* in April 1983, Americans became increasingly interested in education reform. In Tennessee, that emphasis took the form of Governor Lamar Alexander's Better Schools Program, through which new tax dollars and expanded state programs were instituted.

For the first time, the Tennessee Department of Education began to play an active role in promoting the importance of the arts as an integral part of the education of all students. When a panel of prominent arts educators was convened to establish priorities, they included the importance of creating ways to train teachers in the effective use of new state curriculum frameworks in the arts.

In 1984, Joe Giles was appointed to the newly created position of director of arts education for the state of Tennessee. Using the style of ancient Greek learning centers as his model, Giles conceived the idea of using the appropriated state funds to create a unique, modern-day "Academy" that would help raise teaching standards among arts educators across Tennessee.

During the summers of 1985 and 1986, pilot programs were introduced in all three grand divisions of the state. Teachers flocked to the free weeklong events in which nationally known arts educators came to Tennessee and, using the new arts frameworks as their guide, provided stimulating and intensive training for teachers of art and music.

From the beginning, a conscious decision was made that the Tennessee Arts Academy would be the top-of-the-line program in professional development for teachers of the arts. Each year the faculty, performers, and speakers have been chosen by applying stringent standards of personal and

professional excellence, thereby ensuring that Tennessee's teachers will not only acquire knowledge but will be inspired and renewed in their efforts to fulfill the mission of educating the whole child.

After two years of remarkable success, it was decided to institutionalize the summer program. The campus of Belmont University was chosen as a permanent home to develop the newly named Tennessee Arts Academy. Cynthia Curtis, then professor of music education at Belmont and now retired dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, was selected as the Academy's first dean. The Academy began with workshops in music and art and, in 1988, was expanded to include theatre. Several years later, classes in school administration were added, which eventually evolved into the arts leadership and administration track.

In the early 1990s, the first musers were invited to join the Academy faculty, the Arts Academy Chorale was made a permanent feature of the Academy week, and the Academy awards were created. In 1998, the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation was created to help financially support TAA. Jeanette Crosswhite assumed the role of Academy dean in 2000 and Arts Academy America was established in 2002, giving arts teachers from outside Tennessee the opportunity to become full participants in the Academy experience.

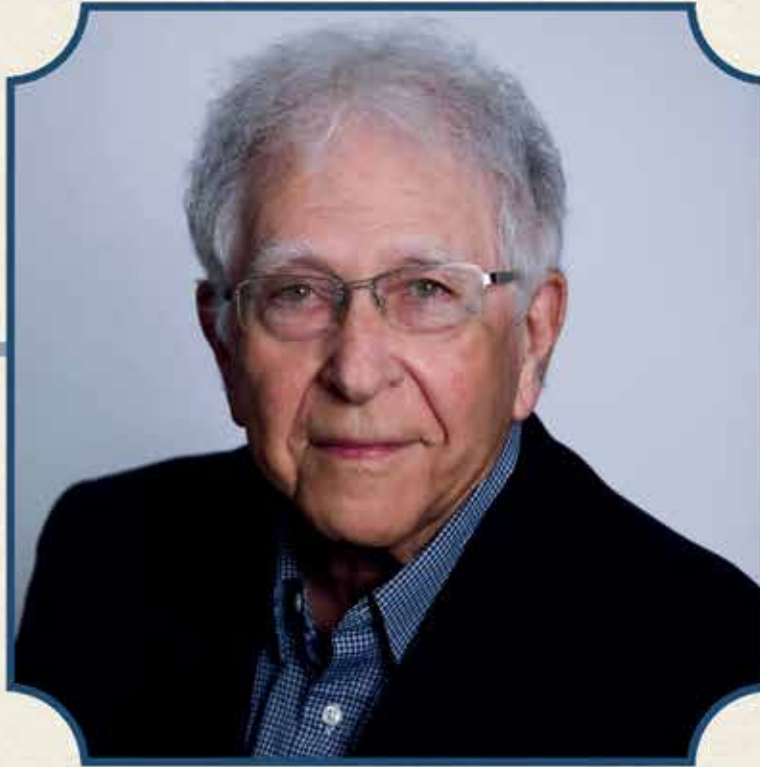
In 2008, the TAA leadership torch was passed to Madeline Bridges and Frank Bluestein. Many innovative ideas and events were incorporated into the daily schedule, including professional, teacher, and student art exhibitions; a multidisciplinary Trio Track; the TAA Arts Expo, Vendor Fair, and

Artist Market; Visual Art Recognition Day; and arts integration, creative drama, and movement classes. All of these new features have become program mainstays.

In response to the COVID crisis, the Academy went virtual in both 2020 and 2021. In 2022, the first TAA Virtual Winter Retreat was held as a way to help Academy participants refresh their skills, reenergize their spirits, and reconnect with faculty and colleagues. In 2024, the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation officially merged with the Tennessee Arts Academy and moved into new offices in downtown Nashville. The TAA Arts Rich Schools Program and Awards was initiated, along with mentorship opportunities, teacher recognition programs, and many networking and outreach events. In 2025, Middle Tennessee State University became the host campus for the newly renamed TAA Summer Institute, and the TAA Master Class Series was created. With the addition in 2026 of the TAA Open House Performance Showcases initiative, the Tennessee Arts Academy has truly become a year-round resource for arts educators.

Backed by forty years of growth, innovation, and unwavering commitment, the Tennessee Arts Academy remains this country's leading model for K-12 professional development in music, theatre, dance, visual art, and arts leadership. Since its inception, Academy programs have positively impacted more than three million students via the thousands of teachers and administrators who have participated in its training opportunities. Most importantly, the Academy's influence continues to grow as its lasting benefits reach classrooms across Tennessee and throughout the nation.

A Lifelong Champion
of the Arts



SOLIE FOTT

August 26, 1929 - April 6, 2026

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SOLIE FOTT

Solie Fott was a devoted Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation Board member whose leadership, advocacy, and vision helped guide and strengthen our organization for decades. His impact on arts education, and more broadly on the music and cultural life of Tennessee, leaves a legacy of inspiration that will resonate for years to come.

From the Board of Directors of the
Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation

A LEGACY OF SONG AND SERVICE



David Bridges

October 14, 1946 - April 6, 2026



IN LOVING MEMORY OF DAVID BRIDGES

David Bridges was a cherished friend of the Tennessee Arts Academy whose expertise, wisdom, humor, and steadfast support enriched TAA for many years. Throughout his distinguished career as an educator, composer, musician, and mentor, he inspired countless lives throughout Tennessee.

From the TAA Staff and
the TAA Foundation Board of Directors

TENNESSEE ARTS ACADEMY FOUNDATION

The Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation (TAAF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The TAAF Board of Directors believes that when educators have access to the Tennessee Arts Academy's extensive year-round programs and resources, they return to their classrooms better equipped, inspired, and empowered to serve their students, elevate achievement, and create meaningful, lasting change in schools throughout Tennessee.

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TENNESSEE ARTS ACADEMY 2025–2026 ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The TAA Alumni Association is open to all graduates and supporters of the Tennessee Arts Academy and includes a variety of member benefits.

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Salutatorian

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Jennifer Wolfe

Magna Cum Laude

Donna Anderson
Michael Aymett
Nancy Beard
Russell Bennett
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Robert Neumeyer
Violet Newborn
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Marlana Nyholt
Carrie Perkins
Sunday Perkins
Eliza "Beth" Perthel

Rheatta Petty
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Meghan Pinkston
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Lorna Pyka
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The Romeo and Juliet Project:

February - March 2027

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Eliza Pagelle in *Hamlet*, 2024.

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by contacting Sarah Hankins at
sarahhankins@tnshakespeare.org or
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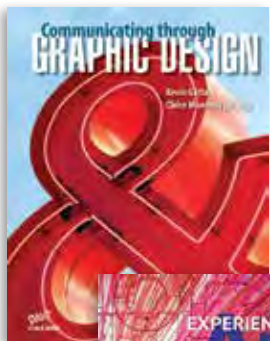
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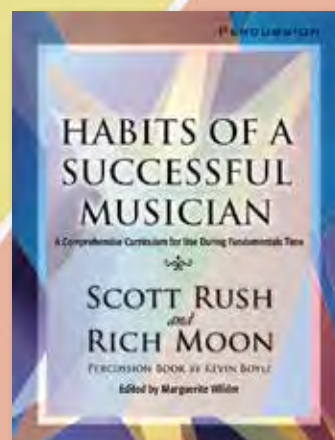
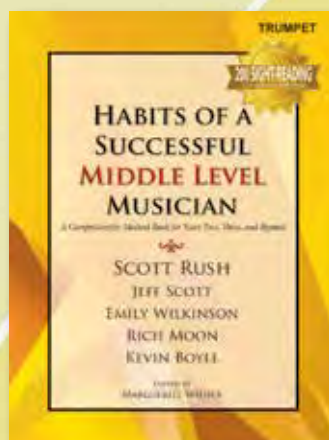
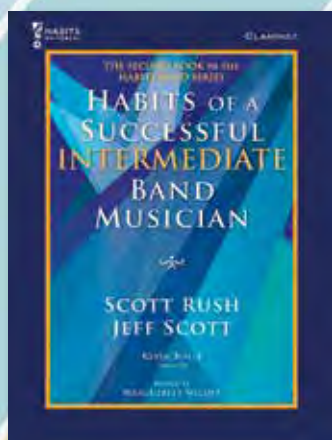
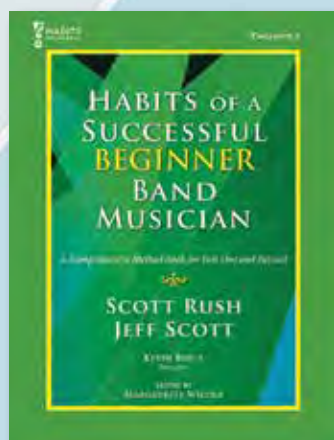
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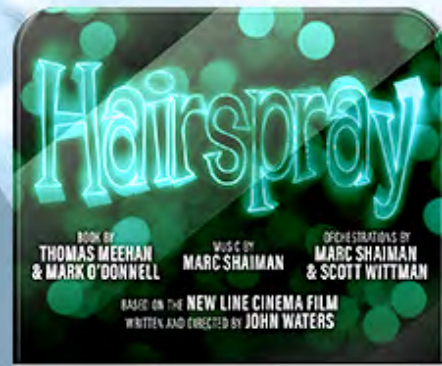
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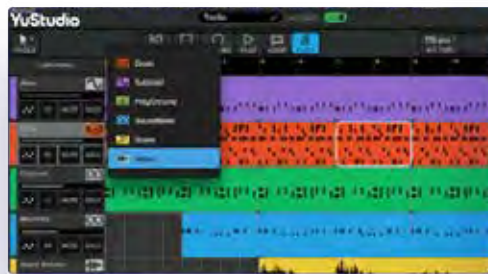
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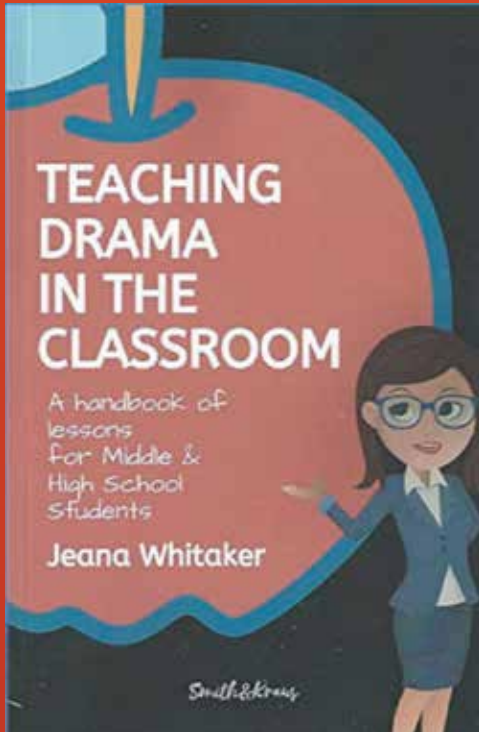


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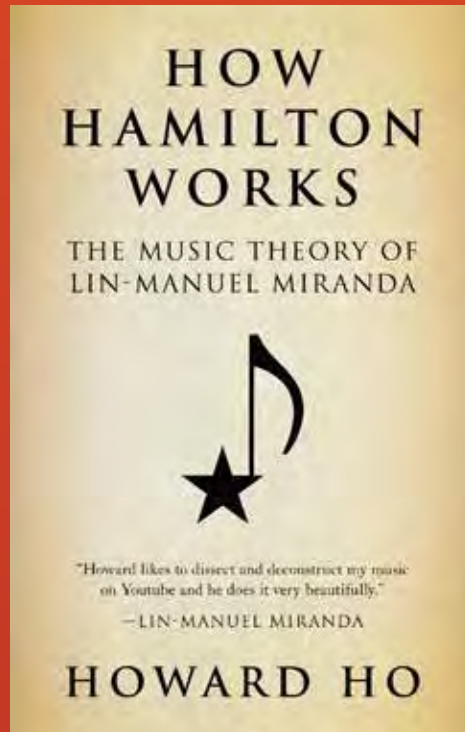
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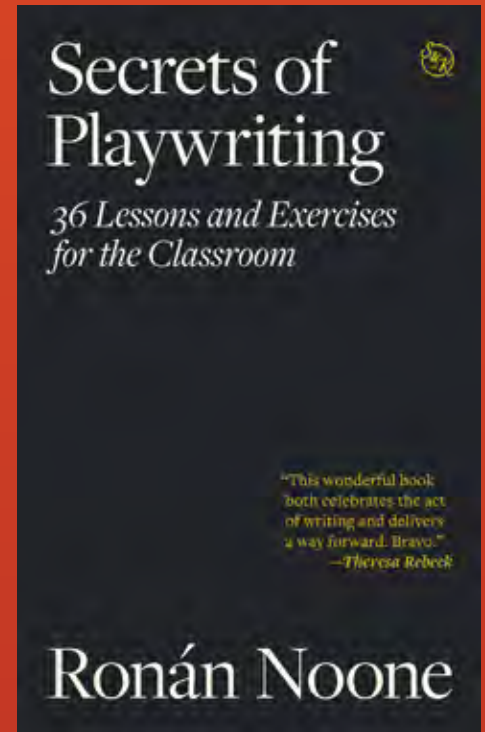
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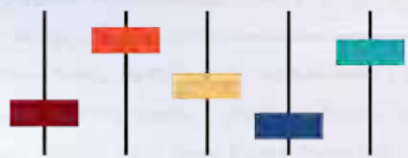
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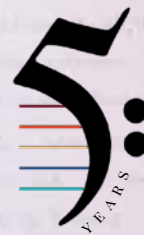
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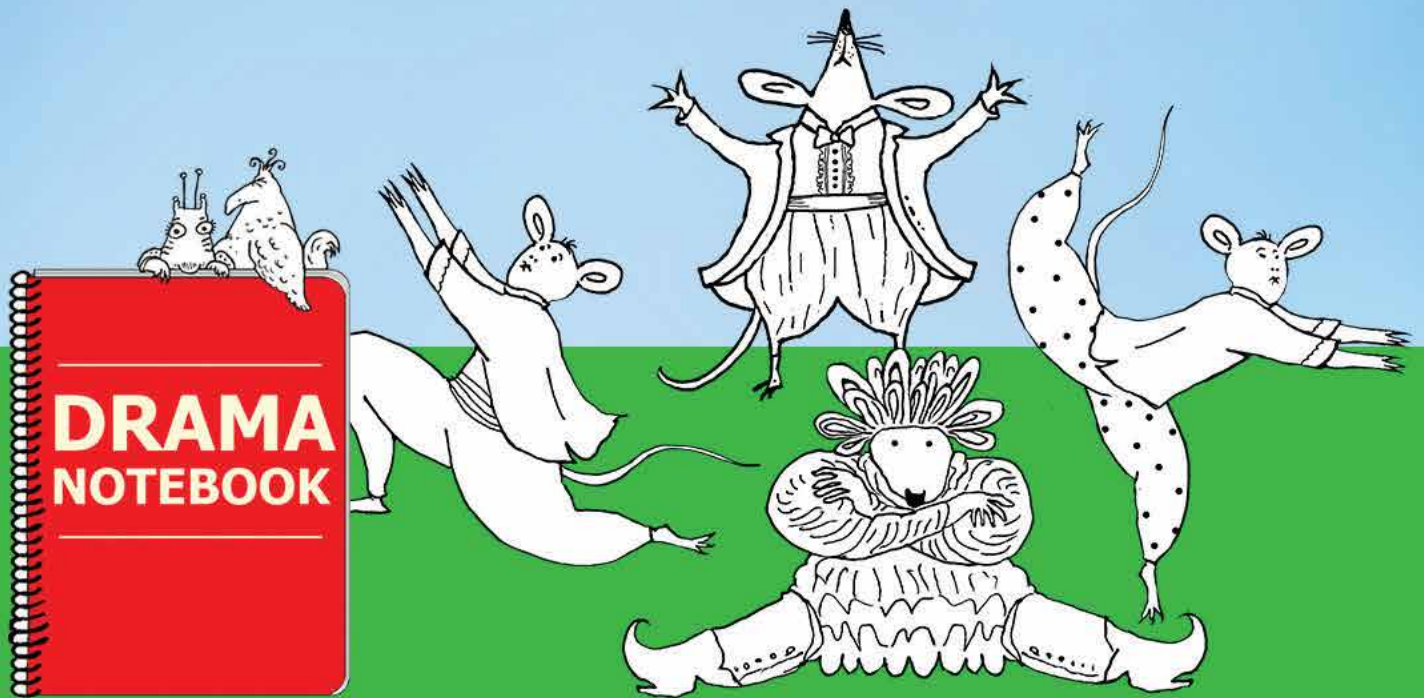


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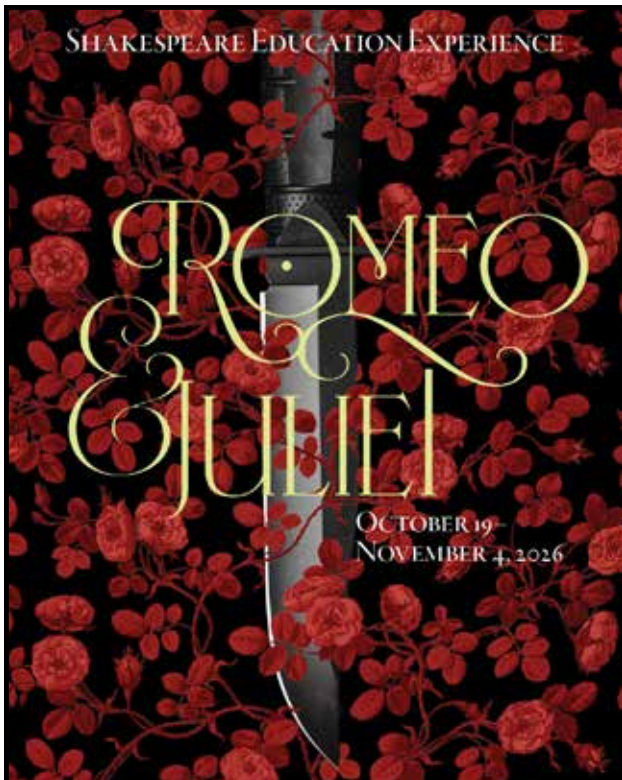
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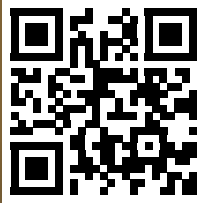
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Knox County Schools

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Rosa Palacios

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Memphis, Tennessee

Elizabeth "Betsy" McClain

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Hamilton County Schools

Naomi Pugh

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