

MMTA 2025 Conference Speaker List



STANISLAV KHRISTENKO Described as a “poet of piano” by *Le Soir (Belgium)*, Ukrainian-born American pianist Stanislav Khristenko has performed in some of the world’s major concert halls. He has been praised for “emotional intensity”, “charismatic expression”, “palette of touches”, “solid” and “precise technique” by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post and Miami Herald*, *The Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine* and *El Pais*.

Khristenko has appeared as a piano soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra, National Orchestra of Belgium, Phoenix Symphony, Liege Royal Philharmonic, Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as Bilbao, Madrid, Tenerife, Puerto Rico, Richmond symphony orchestras, among others. His performance highlights include solo recitals at Carnegie Hall, Vienna Konzerthaus, Palais de Beaux-Arts in Brussels, as well as performances with orchestras in The Berlin Philharmonie, Seoul Arts

Center, Prague Rudolfinum, Moscow Conservatory Great Hall, among others. Khristenko’s performance as a piano soloist with The Lviv National Orchestra of Ukraine in Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall has been chosen as one of 15 highlights of the 2022/2023 Carnegie Hall season by *The New York Times*.

His recordings were released on Steinway & Sons label (“*Fantasies*”, “*Romeo and Juliet*”), Naxos (“*Soler Sonatas*”), Oehms (“*Krenek: Piano Works*”), and Toccata Classics (“*Ernst Krenek Piano Works: Volume One*”, “*Ernst Krenek Piano Works: Volume Two*”). He is a Steinway Spirio Artist with a significant presence in the Spirio recording library. Khristenko is a prizewinner of numerous piano competitions including Gold Medal at Cleveland Piano Competition, First Prize at Maria Canals Piano Competition, Second Prizes at Isang Yun and Takamatsu Piano Competitions, and Fourth Prize at Queen Elisabeth Music Competition. In the United States, he also received First Prizes at Bosendorfer, Jose Iturbi, Virginia Waring, and Wideman Competitions, among others. He has been on the jury panel of many international piano competitions.

In his hometown in Ukraine, Khristenko co-founded music festival KharkivMusicFest that presented world’s top classical musicians as well as unique projects including Festival Orchestra, classical music conference, Children’s Orchestra, artist-designed pianos for interactive public display. As a Music Director, he founded Nova Sinfonietta Chamber Orchestra of Ukraine that performed works of over 40 composers in its first three seasons.

Khristenko gave his first piano solo recital in Kharkiv Philharmonic Hall at the age of 11. He graduated from Moscow Chopin College and Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, where he studied with Vera Gornostaeva. In 2008, he moved to the United States to study with Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He also completed Postgraduate Artistic Training in Orchestral Conducting at The Chopin University in Warsaw, Poland and Short Course in Orchestral Conducting at The Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England.

In 2024, Khristenko was appointed Assistant Professor of Piano in the Michigan State University College of Music. Stanislav Khristenko is a Steinway Artist.



BRIAN SHEPARD is Chief Executive Officer of Music Teachers National Association. Shepard first began his career at MTNA in 2003 as the Director of Marketing and Public Relations. In 2008, as a result of his successes in marketing the programs and services of MTNA, he was promoted to Chief Operating Officer. During his tenure as COO, Shepard has increased the association's operational efficiencies, overseen the expansion of MTNA's in-person national events, grown current revenue streams and introduced new ones to further the organization's mission. In addition to his work at MTNA, Shepard serves on several other nonprofit boards and committees. From 2009 to the present, Brian has served in multiple leadership roles with the American Classical Music Hall of Fame, including Board Chair and Professional Organizations Advisory Council Chair. He currently serves the Hall of Fame as Board President. Since 2013, he has been a member of the CCMpower Board, having held the positions of Treasurer, Harmony Fund Co-Chair, Awards Committee Co-Chair, Board Development Committee Co-Chair and Membership Committee Co-Chair. Shepard has also served on the Cincinnati Opera Sales and Marketing Committee and was President of the Middletown Music Club for three years. Shepard is also an accomplished musician who performs frequently for church and community programs as a pianist, vocal soloist and choral conductor. A graduate of Miami University of Ohio, Shepard holds degrees in marketing and music education. He was named an MTNA Foundation Fellow in 2010.



Julian Avendaño is a Colombian pianist and educator currently pursuing a Master's in Piano Performance with Lori Sims at Western Michigan University. He holds a Bachelor's in Piano Performance and a Master's in Instrumental Pedagogy from the National University of Colombia, where he studied under Mac McClure. Julian has appeared as a guest artist at events such as the XXXVIII Festival Internacional de Piano UIS and Sewanee OperaFest 2022. He has performed solo and chamber music across Colombia and the U.S., and participated in festivals in Colombia, Brazil (FEMUSC), and the U.S. (Sewanee, Brevard). He currently teaches piano at Crescendo Academy in Kalamazoo. Passionate about Latin American and Spanish music, he incorporates this repertoire in performance and as a teaching tool with his students.



Jacob Bleeker is a rising clarinetist in Michigan's classical music community. He began his performance career as principal clarinetist of the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and the Michigan Youth Arts Festival and was also a concerto competition winner with the Grand Rapids Symphonic Band. While attending Grand Valley State University, Bleeker won a national audition for the Pierre Monteux Orchestral Training Festival as well as the 2018 Grand Valley State University Concerto Competition. After the pandemic, Bleeker continued his undergraduate studies closer to home at Central Michigan University, where he was named winner of the 2024 Nixon Woodwind Competition and the 2025 Central Michigan University Chamber Music Competition. Bleeker is currently pursuing a master's degree in clarinet performance at the University of Michigan, where he studies with Professors Chad Burrow and Daniel Gilbert. His former teachers include Dr. Arthur Campbell and Dr. Kennen White.



Sara Boyd is a multifaceted music educator, deeply passionate about fostering musical growth in students of all ages. Sarah owns Piano Vine Studio, est. 2010, where she employs an audition-based approach to piano instruction, both in person and online. She is the Lead Teaching Artist for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, she develops curriculum, conducts teacher workshops, and engages with Detroit's public preschool classrooms. In 2010, she founded Hummingbirds Music Together, bringing early childhood music education to numerous families in her community. Sarah is actively involved with the Gordon Institute for Music Learning and recently joined as a faculty member. She also holds a Graduate Certificate in Injury-Preventive Well-Coordinated Keyboard Technique from Salem College with Dr. Barbara Lister-Sink and a Master in Music Education from Eastern Michigan University where she was a student of Dr. Garik Pedersen. In addition to her professional pursuits, Sarah enjoys making music with her husband, Ryan, and their four children.



David Brickle serves as Assistant Professor of Music at Milligan University teaching piano and music theory. David has performed widely throughout the continental United States, Puerto Rico, and internationally in Spain and has appeared in a variety of broadcasts including National Public Radio's "Performance Today," and ETV Radio's "On the Keys." David has been a featured guest artist in numerous concert series including the Lander University Emerging Keyboard Artist Series, Oklahoma Baptist University's Digby Bell Memorial Recital, the Festival of Keys, the Southern Exposure Concert Series, and the South Carolina Governor's School Discovery Summer Music Program. He has also performed as a concerto soloist with the Anderson Symphony Orchestra and as a keyboardist for the Chautauqua Music School Festival Orchestra. After winning first prize in the South Carolina MTNA competition two years in a row and receiving honorable mention at the southeastern division level, David has also twice been a finalist at the Chautauqua International Piano Competition. He was selected as a winner of the Roundtop Festival Institute chamber music competition and as the winner of the Chapman/Neesen competition. David completed his Doctor and Master of Music degrees in piano performance at Florida State. While at FSU, he also completed the Specialized Study Program in Pedagogy of Music Theory. David holds a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance from the University of South Carolina. He regularly serves on the faculty of Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Michigan and has previously taught at the MasterWorks Festival and the FSU Summer Piano Institute and Piano Camp.



Greg Cervený is a music software developer based in Midland, Michigan. He has co-founded music startups incubated at Stanford's StartX Accelerator and developed interactive tools in collaboration with organizations such as Chamber Music Detroit and The Royal Conservatory of Music. His artistic practice includes electro-acoustic performance, sound art, and experimental media, with recent features at SPLICE Institute and CITR's 24 Hours of Radio Art, as well as recognition as a SEAMUS CREATE Grant recipient. Greg currently works with Hooktheory, where he helps build accessible, popular-music-based theory tools for musicians and educators.



Chia-Ying Chan, Originally from Taiwan, pianist Chia-Ying Chan is acclaimed for her vibrant and sensitive artistry. As a soloist and chamber musician, she has performed throughout Taiwan, the U.S., and Europe, with appearances featured on The Grand FM 101 (Canada), WILL FM 90.9 (USA), and Radio Taiwan International.

Chan has won top prizes in both national and international competitions. Recent highlights include a performance with Sinfonia da Camera under Ian Hobson, the 21st Century Piano Commission Recital at Krannert Center, and a solo recital at the 2024 Piano Technicians Guild conference. Her debut album on Centaur Records earned critical praise, with Classical Music Sentinel describing her as “a highly sensitive artist... a musician to watch and follow.”

A dedicated chamber musician, Chan co-founded the Amosa Duo with clarinetist Gary June and the Brickle & Chan Piano Duo. She has appeared at major venues such

as the PianoForte Foundation (Chicago), the National Recital Hall (Taipei), Oakland University, and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp.

Chan currently serves on the piano faculty at Saginaw Valley State University. She has given masterclasses and lectures in the U.S. and Taiwan, and presented a webinar series in China. She is vice president of WPTA USA–Illinois, co-chair of the Chambana International Music Competition, and a frequent competition adjudicator.

Her students have earned top honors in national and international competitions and gained admission to institutions including UIUC, Interlochen Arts Academy, and Beijing Normal University. She holds a DMA and Artist Diploma from UIUC, MM from the Cleveland Institute of Music, and BM from the National University of Tainan.



JUSTIN COLWELL, began playing the piano at age four and has enjoyed making music as a collaborative artist, music director, and occasional composer ever since. Recent projects include a debut solo album *the fires & the river: piano music for modern dance* (2021), collaboration on the piano duo accompaniment for *Side by Side by Sondheim* with Grand Valley State University Opera Theatre (2021), performances of the Brahms and Mozart requiems in chamber orchestration with Grand Rapids Community College choirs (GRCC, 2023-24), and VoxGR's holiday concert *VOXmas* (2024).

Today, Justin's work revolves around performing and teaching music in community spaces in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He currently serves as the Faculty Accompanist

at GRCC and Music Director at All Souls Community Church of West Michigan. With his spouse Melia, he co-owns Yellow Door Music Studio and Joyful Sounds Music Studio, offering comprehensive music education services to families in the region. His teaching specialties include collegiate group piano and private piano for intermediate students and adult beginners. He serves on the board of Piano Teachers' Forum of Grand Rapids. Justin holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance & Humanities from Indiana Wesleyan University (piano studies with Phoenix Park-Kim, conducting studies with Jason Thompson) and a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory (piano studies with Robert Weirich). Justin lives with his spouse, two children, and two cats in Grand Rapids' West Sides.



Don Crafton is the Founder and President of SightReadingFactory.com, a leading web-based platform that helps musicians improve their sight reading through automatically generated, customizable exercises. He received his bachelor's degree in music education and performance from The Catholic University of America and his master's degree in orchestral performance from The Manhattan School of Music. Mr. Crafton has taught band, orchestra, and music theory in school systems across Maryland, Virginia, and New York. As a bass trombonist, he performs regularly with the Savannah Philharmonic and the Hilton Head Orchestra, and has also played with the Syracuse Symphony. He previously taught low brass at Hamilton College. Through his work with Sight Reading Factory, Don has combined his passions for education, technology, and performance to support music educators and students around the world. As a clinician, he has presented numerous workshops nationwide on music literacy and the innovative tools available through Sight Reading Factory.



Joshua DiMercurio has played the piano for 12 years with 3 years of teaching experience. He has studied under multiple teachers, including Kevin Sayers and Lucile Elmore. In 2024, he completed a certification in Music Learning Theory (Piano Level 1) from the Gordon Institute of Music Learning. He is mentored by Sarah Boyd, the lead Teaching Artist of the DSO. His areas of expertise include classical, traditional, pop, theory, technique, and teaching based on the Music Learning Theory by Edwin E. Gordon. He opened his piano studio in January of 2022. He teaches music classes at a homeschool organization, Juniper Classical, and teaches Early Childhood Music Classes. He plays solos for parties, church, solo/ensemble at competitions, accompaniment, and worship teams. Mr. Josh strongly advocates a sequential movement-based approach to learning music, believing that the student's first instrument is their body and voice. Students develop their ability to think musically and apply that to their performance pieces. Mr. Josh individualizes his approach to determine the best teaching style for each student based on their specific goals and needs. He also holds a professional membership with the Michigan GIML Chapter.



JOHN ELLIS, Professor of Piano, is director of Graduate Studies in Piano Pedagogy and administers the Piano Pedagogy Laboratory Program. He is in demand, nationally and internationally as a master class clinician, adjudicator, and lecturer on piano pedagogy. His travels have taken him to the University of South Florida, the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland, and Hawaii. Ellis speaks regularly on pedagogy topics to teachers' groups throughout Michigan and the United States. At the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, he was given the 2024 Harold Haugh Award for excellence in studio teaching. As a pianist, he has performed as soloist, lecture-recitalist, and collaborative artist. He has recorded the solo piano music of Arthur Cunningham. As a scholar in the field of pedagogy, Ellis combines music theory, musicology, and the humanities with the more traditional pedagogical methods. His book, *The Pedagogical Writings of Marguerite Long: A Reassessment of Her Impact on the French School of Piano*, was published by IU Press in 2024. He has published articles on Long as well as on the history and curriculum of the progressive Metropolitan Music School in *American Music Teacher*. He has also worked with the Musical Signification Project of the International Congress on Musical Signification (ICMS)

since 1996, presenting papers on musical meaning and pedagogy. At the University of Michigan, he has previously served as Chair of the Piano Department and Associate Dean for Productions, Programs and Partnerships.



TRINITY FAN is pianist, composer, educator, and artist based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She has been a top prizewinner of several competitions including YoungArts, Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), Camerata Artists International Competition, and more. In 2025, Trinity won first prize in the Rosamund P. Haeberle Competition, and Honorable Mention in the Michigan MTNA Young Artists Piano Competition. In 2024, she was awarded Second Prize in the MTNA Composition Competition. Trinity studied composition with Shuyu Lin, Corey Chang, and Wong Chun Wai. She was also a finalist in the 2022 Spotlight International Piano Competition, where she was awarded the Audience Prize. Previously, Trinity was a student of Edward Auer at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and recently graduated from the University of Michigan with a master's in Piano Performance and Pedagogy under Christopher Harding, where she will continue her

doctorate studies. Trinity is also studying jazz improvisation with Andy Milne.

Aside from performing, Trinity has taught piano for 8 years. She is a former faculty member of IU's Young Pianists Program and is currently a Graduate Student Instructor at the University of Michigan, and teaches at SMTD's Piano Pedagogy Laboratory Program.



Equally at home in solo and collaborative music, pianist **GJERGJI GAQI** maintains an active performing career throughout North America and Europe. Gaqi's latest pedagogical research on various topics has brought him to present sessions at the Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Virginia Music Teachers Association conferences. Dr. Gaqi studied piano and chamber music at the International School of Chamber Music "Trio di Trieste" in Duino (Italy), while completing the bilingual International Baccalaureate diploma. He was a winner of the Colby Concerto Competition and a Summa Cum Laude graduate of Colby College with a major in Music and a minor in Economics. As a Walgreen scholar, Gaqi received his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in piano performance at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, with additional

studies in chamber music and jazz piano. Dr. Gaqi is currently Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, with previous appointments at Tyler Junior College, Siena Heights University, College of the Mainland and Brazosport College. He is currently the Composition Competition Coordinator for the Arkansas State Music Teachers Association, having formerly served as president of the East Texas Music Teachers Association and chair of the ETMTA Helen Elbert Collaborative Music Festival. In addition to being a sought-after masterclass clinician and adjudicator, Mr. Gaqi is co-founder and Artistic Director of the Settenote Online Piano International Competition.



Sam Harris is a Minnesota native who is currently pursuing his Master of Music in Piano Performance at Western Michigan University under Lori Sims. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from St. Olaf College where he studied with Christopher Atzinger. Sam attended the Brevard Music Center Summer Festival in 2024 and 2025, where he studied with Yu-Lien The and Norman Krieger. In 2023 he attended the Bowdoin International Music

Festival where he studied with Julian Martin and Itzhak Rashkovsky. In the summer of 2025, Sam will be in residence at the Krzysztof Penderecki Summer Academy of Music in Krakow, Poland, under the mentorship of Andrzej Pikul. In an effort to reflect his own African American heritage, Sam regularly includes pieces by African American composers in both his solo and chamber repertoire. Sam is passionate about teaching students of all ages, which serves as the driving force for his career in music.



DR. KARA HUBER has performed across North America, Europe, and Australia, including lauded solo appearances at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Piano Virtuoso Series at the Canadian Opera Company, the Rising Stars Piano Series in Southampton, New York, and the Steinway Series at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Huber has received numerous prizes and awards for her performances, including the Audience Favorite Award in the Cincinnati World Piano Competition. A graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy, where she studied piano with Michael Coonrod, Huber received additional training at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music with Awadagin Pratt and the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music with John Perry and Leon Fleisher. Huber completed a DMA in piano and conducting at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, served on the faculty of the University of Louisville School of Music, and is currently the Marjorie Wood Drackett Piano Chair at the Interlochen Arts Academy.



Dr. Gary June is a clarinetist and educator based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he is Visiting Professor of Clarinet at Grand Valley State University. He also teaches clarinet at Grand Rapids Community College and has previously served on faculty at Saginaw Valley State University and North Central College. As an orchestral musician, he is Principal Clarinet of the Holland Symphony Orchestra and the 2nd/Eb clarinetist of the Flint and Saginaw Bay Symphony Orchestras. He likewise regularly plays with orchestras such as the Grand Rapids Symphony, the West Michigan Symphony, and Sinfonia da Camera. As a committed educator of primary and secondary-aged students, he has a thriving studio of young clarinetists, and he spends summers teaching and playing at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp.

Gary June is also an active chamber musician and soloist. As a member of the Amosa Duo, he has given recitals at universities throughout the United States and at the PianoForte Foundation in Chicago, IL. In 2018 the Amosa Duo toured many of Taiwan's most prestigious concert halls, including the National Recital Hall in Taipei. As a member of Grand Valley's faculty wind quintet, Grand Valley Winds, he traveled in July 2018 to the Czech Republic to perform as the featured ensemble in the Janáček Music Festival. Other recent engagements include serving as Guest Artist at Kansas State University's Clarinet Day and performing Debussy's *Première Rhapsodie* with the Holland Symphony Orchestra, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* at the Saugatuck Chamber Music Festival, and faculty recitals at GVSU, SVSU, and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp.

Dr. June has given master classes at universities such as the Janáček Conservatory and Ostrava University in the Czech Republic, the National Tainan University in Taiwan, the University of Colorado-Boulder, Kansas State University, Northern Illinois University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Austin Peay State University. He holds degrees from Grand Valley State University and the University of Colorado-Boulder, and

completed his Doctorate of Musical Arts at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he wrote his thesis on contemporary Finnish clarinet music. His principal teachers include Dr. Arthur Campbell, Daniel Silver, and J. David Harris.



DR. HYEMIN KIM is a versatile performing artist and esteemed educator who serves as a faculty member in Collaborative Piano at Interlochen Arts Academy. As a featured soloist and recitalist, Kim has performed with several orchestras, including the Philharmonische Solisten Bratislava (Mozart Hall, Wiener Konzerthaus, Austria) and Benzie Area Symphony Orchestra (Corson Auditorium, Interlochen, MI). She has also performed extensively across the U.S., Austria, and Korea, appearing at the Youngsian Grace Hall, Daejeon Culture and Art Foundation (Korea); Bad Goisern Landesmusikschule, Landesverband Steiermark, Grazer Landesmuseum (Austria); the American Protégé Foundation (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall) (U.S.). Kim has been recognized with numerous accolades in international piano competitions, including the Internationaler Wiener Pianisten-Wettbewerb, where she received a Schubert Special Award; the Vienna Grand Prize Virtuoso Competition; the Concorso

Internazionale di Esecuzione Musicale “NUOVI TALENTI” - Città di Spinea; the Tadini International Music Competition; the Concorso Internazionale - Città di Ischia; Fanny Mendelssohn International Competition; Franz Liszt Center Piano Competition, and American Protégé International Competition.

As an active chamber musician, Kim has become a sought after collaborator. She was invited as a pianist at the Styrian Chamber Music Festival (Graz, Austria), and the Music House Museum (Acme, MI) has been organizing Hyemin Kim’s Concert Series “Classical Voyage”. Dr. Hyemin Kim holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance, as well as her second Doctorate in Collaborative Piano from Michigan State University; a Master of Music and Postgraduate Diploma from Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Graz, Austria; and a Bachelor of Music from Kookmin University, South Korea. Currently, Dr. Kim serves as a committee member in Inclusive Teaching at The Piano Conference: NCKP 2025 and teaches at Blue Lake Arts Camp as a Piano Instructor.



Hailed as a “sensitive partner” by the *New York Times*, pianist **Christina Giuca Krause** enjoys a diverse musical career as a pianist and educator. She has performed on stages including New York’s Carnegie Weill and Steinway Recital Halls and Preston Bradley Hall in Chicago. She served on the music staff of the Houston Ballet, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Chicago Opera Theater, alongside collaborative pianist positions at Chicago Lyric Opera’s Ryan Opera Center and Northwestern’s Bienen School of Music, among others. She has performed at

festivals including the Music Academy of the West, Aspen Music Festival, Prussia Cove (England), and most recently, the Saugatuck Chamber Music Festival.

Christina is passionate about championing the music and stories of today. As the pianist winner of the Marilyn Horne Song Competition in 2017, she premiered “These Strangers” by Jake Heggie. She helped bring new operas to life, including Terence Blanchard’s *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis). She is a founding member of piano duo 4x5, with composer/pianist Benjamin Krause. They were guest artists at the Oregon Bach Festival Composers Symposium in 2016 and 2021, and performed at the 2019 MTNA National Conference in Spokane, WA. From 2019-2022, Christina was the Artistic Director of LYNX Project, a Chicago-based organization that amplifies diverse voices through new song commissions and educational programming. Under her leadership, LYNX released its first album and grew its songwriting program, *Composition of a City*, which now reaches more than 700

students.

Christina holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and Rice University, and a postgraduate fellowship from the Bard College Conservatory. She is the Coordinator of Collaborative Piano at Hope College in Holland, Michigan.



Composer and pianist **Benjamin Krause** creates music that freely draws upon varied sound worlds, characterized by its visceral rhythmic energy and colorful, impressionistic harmonies. Described as “immediately appealing...inventive” (*EarRelevant*), and “potent” (ICareIfYouListen.com), his music has been performed by the Houston Symphony, Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, Atlanta Chamber Players, and Philadelphia’s Network for New Music, among other leading ensembles and organizations. He has received a Copland House Residency Award, the Houston Symphony Emerging Composer Award, a Presser Foundation Award, and was named the Distinguished Composer of the Year by

the Music Teachers National Association in 2019. His work has been supported through residencies at the Ragdale Foundation, Brush Creek Arts Foundation, and at the Hambidge Center for Creative Arts, where he was awarded a Distinguished Artist Fellowship. Other honors include recognition from the RED NOTE Music Festival; the Indiana State Contemporary Music Festival; and the National Association of Teachers of Singing. Significant recent commissions include those from the Atlanta Chamber Players, Kalamazoo Symphony Artist-in-Residence Ensemble, Fox Valley Symphony, , and Lutheran Summer Music Academy.

Krause earned degrees in music composition from Rice University (DMA) and the University of Oregon (MM). As a student at the American Conservatory of Fontainebleau, France, he was awarded the Prix Marion Tournon Brandy; he has also been in residence at Brevard Music Festival, the Oregon Bach Festival Composers Symposium, and the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Institute, where he has served as Composer-in-Residence. He lives with his wife (pianist Christina Giuca Krause) and son in Holland, Michigan, where he teaches composition and theory at Hope College.



Dr. HELEN MARLAIS teaches piano in a joy-filled, practical way. She has given hundreds of presentations and master classes, and has created 200+ piano books to support piano teachers as they guide their students to playing well, which includes the innovative and state of the art technique of the Succeeding at the Piano method.



TRISTAN MCKAY, PhD is a pianist, educator, and writer based in Detroit, Michigan. Celebrated for his “dramatic” and “assertive” playing (New York Times), he has premiered dozens of new solo and chamber works at iconic venues including Carnegie Hall, The Apollo Theater, The Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center, National Sawdust, Symphony Space, and Pittsburgh Opera.

Tristan currently runs an online piano studio for students of all ages. His prize-winning students have received State Awards and Regional Gold Medals from the Royal Conservatory of Music as well as outstanding marks from local organizations. Tristan is currently on faculty at the State University of New York at New Paltz, and also serves on the Board of Directors for the Metropolitan Detroit Musicians League and the Michigan Music Teachers Association, where he was recently appointed Historian. Equally dedicated to writing about the music of our time, Tristan published a monograph entitled *The Semiotics of Open Notations: Ambiguity as Opportunity* (Cambridge University Press). As a contributing writer for The Seattle Symphony for the past two seasons, he has created program notes for artists including Sir Stephen Hough, Emanuel Ax, Bruce Liu, Joe Hisaishi, and Yulianna Avdeeva. He is also a music

critic for I CARE IF YOU LISTEN, an award-winning hub for living music creators.

Tristan is a graduate of New York University (PhD, BM) and Manhattan School of Music (MM), where he studied with Marilyn Nonken, Anthony de Mare, and Christopher Oldfather.



CATHERINE MCMICHAEL, pianist, is an award-winning composer, arranger, performer, clinician and teacher in Saginaw, Michigan. Her degrees from the University of Michigan are in piano performance and chamber music. She is the pianist for the Saginaw Bay and Flint Symphony Orchestras, Ann Arbor based River Raisin Ragtime Revue, accompanies the Saginaw Choral Society and directs Bells on High at First United Methodist Church of Saginaw. Her compositions are represented by five publishers and have been played on all seven continents by orchestras, bands, vocal and handbell choirs and chamber ensembles of all types; performed by professional touring artists, university faculty and students, avid amateurs and young musicians. Catherine and her violinist husband Rod Bieber have two adult children, Meredith, Physical Therapist in training, photographer and world traveler; and Nathan, Nashville studio violinist, conductor and composer's assistant. Catherine is available for commissions for any instrument or voice. Contact her via www.catherinemcmichael.com.



Joy Morin, MM, is a pianist, piano pedagogue, and composer recognized as an authority in music learning and piano pedagogy. She currently serves as Secretary for the Gordon Institute for Music Learning (GIML) and member of the Committee for Young Musicians (Birth to Age 9) for the Frances Clark Center. Her leadership experience includes serving as Teacher Education Chair of MichiganMTA, Vice President for Membership of OhioMTA, and participating on various conference planning committees. She is Director of Music at Holy Faith Church (Saline, Michigan)

and teaches all ages at her independent piano studio near Ann Arbor. Joy has presented at numerous regional and national conferences and authored articles for *Piano Magazine*, *Clavier Companion*, *American Music Teacher*, and her blog at ColorInMyPiano.com. As a composer, she has created several pedagogical works, including *Incidental Music for Piano*, *Composition & Improvisation Prompts for Piano*, and *Keys at Play: 88 Progressive Pieces for Pianists of All Ages*. She creates educational resources at colorinmypiano.com/shop and is founder and host of *Retreat at Piano Manor*, a professional development retreat for piano teachers (pianoteacherretreat.com). Joy holds two certifications from the Royal Conservatory of Music and multiple certifications in both piano and early childhood music from GIML. She earned her Master of Music in piano performance and pedagogy from Central Michigan University (Mount Pleasant, Michigan) and a Bachelor of Music from Hope College (Holland, Michigan). Her teachers include Adrienne Wiley, Andrew Le, Adam Clark, and Mary Scanlan.



DEREK KEALII POLISCHUCK is Professor of Piano and Director of Piano Pedagogy at the Michigan State University College of Music. Originally from San Diego, he earned his Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance from the University of Southern California, where he studied with Daniel Pollack.

An acclaimed recording artist, Polischuk's 2013 solo album *Terra Incognita* drew wide critical praise for its nuanced interpretations and thoughtful programming. His 2024 release *Many Hands* features works by women composers and collaborative performances with his MSU students, reflecting his commitment to inclusive programming and community-building through music.

Polischuk is a passionate advocate for inclusive music education, and he regularly presents at national and international conferences around the world. He is the founding director of *Celebrating the Spectrum*, a summer festival for advanced pianists

on the autism spectrum. The program reflects his deep commitment to creating meaningful musical opportunities for all students, with a focus on artistic excellence and neurodiversity.

His contributions to pedagogy are also reflected in his book *Transformational Piano Teaching*, published by Oxford University Press, which explores equity, embodiment, and artistry in the piano studio. At MSU, he has received multiple honors, including the Curricular Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Award, the Excellence in Diversity Award, and the Teacher-Scholar Award.

Polischuk's work as a performer, educator, and advocate continues to shape a more expressive and inclusive future for classical music and piano education.



American pianist **Holly Quist** has performed, collaborated, and taught within communities throughout the U.S., Ireland, and Italy. She recently finished completing a Doctor of Musical arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she studied piano under Christopher Taylor, and piano pedagogy under Dr. Jessica Johnson. Today, Dr. Quist teaches as a professor of music at Fort Lewis College, where she teaches music theory, music history, and piano.



Lauren Shult is a student at Western Michigan University (WMU) studying music therapy and piano performance. She has studied under both Dr. Yu-Lien The and Professor Lori Sims. During her time there, Lauren has served on the executive boards for the collegiate Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) and Student Music Therapy Association (SMTA) chapters. In 2024, she attended the Brevard Music Center Summer Festival where she studied with Professor Jihea Hong-Park. Lauren taught piano at Crescendo Academy of Music in Kalamazoo, MI and has an interest in exploring teaching for neurodivergent students. She often works collaboratively with choirs, instrumentalists, and vocalists. She is currently a music therapy intern at University Hospitals in Cleveland, Ohio.



JIWON SIM, a pianist from South Korea, recently earned her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano performance from Michigan State University, where she studied under Dr. Derek Kealii Polischuk. During her doctoral studies, Sim was awarded a full graduate assistantship. Sim appears on the recording *Many Hands* (Blue Griffin Records), a piano ensemble project featuring works by women composers. Through this project, she was first introduced to the music of Marie Jaëll, which became the focus of her doctoral research, aiming to rediscover and share Jaëll's contributions to piano performance and pedagogy.

Sim previously completed her Master of Music degree in piano performance at Indiana University, where she studied with Norman Krieger and was awarded multiple scholarships. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Ewha Womans University in Seoul, Korea, graduating with honors while studying with Yoon-bo Jung and Yoon-Jung Song.



Parker Sturgill is a musician and student currently pursuing a degree in Music Education at Western Michigan University. At Western, he studies piano under Yu Lien The as well as Audio Technology under John Campos. Parker also serves on the executive board for the Music Teacher's National Association (MTNA). Before starting his studies at WMU, Parker's experiences with music have been broad and motivated by a raw, passionate love for Music and the people who make it. His interests are broad: Ranging from live performances with his band *Andrea Doria*, where he writes and arranges original music, to working at *Csipke Tabor*, a Hungarian Folk Music and Dance Camp that takes place every summer in Michigan. Parker hopes to combine his love for recorded music, its history and practices, with the

discipline of collegiate music making. Bringing an attitude of academic curiosity and unfiltered enthusiasm for the art form of music.



MELISSA ESPINDOLA TERRALL is an award-winning Oregonian pianist. In 2023, she received a prestigious Fulbright grant to study abroad in Mexico City. In collaboration with Mexico's Conservatorio Nacional de Música, Melissa researched Mexican classical piano repertoire, audited courses on Mexican music history and literature, and presented lectures and master classes. In the spirit of cultural exchange, she curated a

program of piano works by composers from Mexico and the U.S., performing at such venues as the iconic Chapultepec Castle.

Since returning to Oregon, Melissa has established her private piano studio in Oregon's capital and joined the adjunct teaching faculty at Linfield University. Alongside her passion for teaching, Melissa is an active performer. Recent concerts include recitals of Mexican music at Chemeketa Community College and Portland State University; a live feature on All Classical Radio; and a concerto performance at St. Paul's Episcopal in Salem. Additionally, Melissa has collaborated with violist Dr. Christina Ebersohl to record an album featuring Egyptian composers. The duo also performed concerts in Egypt and Illinois as part of this groundbreaking project.

Melissa frequently speaks at conferences on topics ranging from performance anxiety to piano pedagogy and Mexican music. She has presented for the Oregon Music Teachers Association, the Texas Music Teachers Association, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign School of Music, and the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy. Melissa holds degrees in piano performance from the University of Kansas and Portland State University.



Pianist **TIAN TIAN** began her training at the age of four in her native China. Upon arriving in the United States, she quickly began amassing top prizes at national and international competitions. She received degrees from the Juilliard School and Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of renowned pedagogues such as Robert McDonald, Nelita True and Logan Skelton. Tian has presented solo concerts across the US, Canada and China. She has also appeared in music festivals such as Piano Texas, the Gilmore Festival, and Summer Courses with Arie Vardi (Germany). An avid chamber musician, Tian has performed with the Juilliard Quartet, Imani Winds and toured in the US, China, and Korea as a member of the Studzinsky Trio. Tian currently serves on the faculty of Oakland University as Associate Professor of Piano and Area Coordinator. Her in-depth analysis of technique and

charismatic teaching style have made her a frequent guest speaker at numerous teachers' groups and earned her the title of Honorary Professor at ten different universities in China.



ZHAO WANG, Chinese-born pianist currently is the Assistant Professor of Piano and Collaborative Piano at Central Michigan University School of Music. An avid soloist and collaborative musician, Wang has performed in cities throughout Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Canada, the United States, Japan, Thailand, and China. She frequently collaborates in concerts and recordings with renowned university faculty and members of major orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Boston Symphony Orchestra. In recent seasons, Wang has performed at the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, the Interlochen Center for the Arts, the Henri Selmer Summer Academy, the Thailand International Composition Festival, and has toured with CMU School of Music faculty members in cities in China.

A dedicated educator, Wang has taught and adjudicated at international piano festivals including the European Summer Piano Academy and Orbifold International Piano Festival and Competition, as well as serving as a regular piano faculty member at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. She has also given master classes in universities and conservatories throughout China and the U.S. Dr. Wang received her degrees in Piano Performance, Collaborative Piano, and Piano Pedagogy from Eastman School of Music and Michigan State University.



ADRIENNE WILEY is currently Professor of Music at Central Michigan University where she teaches and administers the piano pedagogy program at the bachelor's degree level, teacher applied lessons, and teaches class piano. Dr. Wiley received her bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance from the University of Kansas, and her doctor of musical arts in piano performance and pedagogy from the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Wiley's dual focus on performance and pedagogy keeps her active in both areas: she maintains an active performance career as a soloist, collaborative pianist, and also gives workshops, presentations, and lectures at the state, regional, national, and international levels.

In her spare time, Dr. Wiley has authored articles that have appeared in the American Music Teacher Magazine, Keyboard Companion, Clavier magazines, and the Clavier-Companion (Clavier and Clavier-Companion are now PIANO). In addition, she is a frequently invited reviewer of piano music and books for the Music Teachers National Association's American Music Teacher magazine and the PIANO, and recently joined the PIANO as a staff reviewer. Her CD of piano works by women composers for one hand has been released through Centaur and is streaming on platforms.



DR. TENNILLE WOODWARD is an award-winning educator, leadership coach, and systems strategist with over 20 years of experience spanning K–12 classrooms, school leadership, and district administration. She is a certified member of the Maxwell Leadership Team and President of Grow Lead Empower, where she equips educators and organizations to lead with clarity, build strong systems, and create exceptional outcomes.

Dr. Woodward holds a doctorate in Education Systems Improvement Science and has led leadership development initiatives across public schools, higher education, and the arts. As a lifelong advocate for the power of music and creativity in education, she brings a unique perspective that bridges instructional excellence with strategic leadership. Her work focuses on helping educators grow their influence—whether in classrooms, studios, or communities—by aligning their values, vision, and daily practices.

Known for her calm, confident style and ability to turn big ideas into action, Dr. Woodward inspires educators to lead from where they are and create environments where both teaching and leadership thrive.



NING ZHANG, a violist pursuing a Bachelor of Music at Central Michigan University (anticipated graduation December 2025), has performed at the Tianjin Concert Hall in China and been featured in the Tianjin Jinwan Evening Newspaper. A recipient of the CMU International President's Award and the José Luis Maúrtua Orchestra Strings Scholarship, she has served as principal violist with the CMU and Tianjin Conservatory orchestras. Ning has delivered solo performances at CMU's Honors Convocation, faculty-nominated showcases, and international festivals. She is an active member of the Tianjin Musicians Association Viola Committee and has participated in masterclasses with the Dover Quartet and Harlem Quartet.