

Meet the Guest Conductors for the 2026-2027 MSBOA All-State Program

High School Band – Damien Crutcher



Damien Crutcher is a native Detroiter and a graduate of Cass Technical High School who, as a music educator, conductor, and arts leader, has had an extraordinary impact on the cultural and civic life of his hometown. He is the co-founder and CEO of Crescendo Detroit, a nonprofit whose mission is to transform the lives of school children by engaging them in intensive instrumental music, vocal music, and dance programs that promote artistic excellence and character building.

Damien also serves as the Managing Director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Detroit Harmony Initiative. Through a collaborative

citywide effort, Detroit Harmony provides instruments to every K–12 public, private, and charter school student in the city who wants to learn to play music. To date, Detroit Harmony has provided more than 2,500 instruments to students across Detroit and Southeast Michigan, expanding access to music education and strengthening the region's creative ecosystem.

He holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Michigan State University and a master's degree in wind conducting from the University of Michigan. Damien studied horn with Bryan Kennedy and Doug Campbell and conducting with Dr. Ronnie Wooten and H. Robert Reynolds.

After graduating from the University of Michigan, Damien served as Director of Bands and Orchestra at Southfield Lathrup High School. Under his direction, the Southfield Lathrup ensembles—including the Lathrup Symphony Band—performed in San Francisco, Chicago, the Bahamas, at the White House, and at Carnegie Hall. Many of his former students are now professional musicians, music teachers, and artists across the country.

Damien, an honorary member of MSBOA, also serves as the conductor of the Farmington Concert Band, the Detroit Symphony's Civic Youth Symphony Band, and the Detroit Community Concert Band. He is a frequent guest conductor and clinician throughout Michigan and across the country. Additionally, he has conducted the Pacific Orchestra's Youth Wind Ensemble, the Detroit Chamber Winds, the Michigan State University Wind Symphony, and the University of Michigan Symphony Band.

In 2019, Damien completed Harvard University's Chief Executive Officer training as one of 50 arts leaders selected by National Arts Strategies Inc. In 2022, he received the University of Michigan's Christopher Kendall Award for his "exemplary contributions to community music

education.” In 2024, he was named a Kresge Artist Fellow. In 2025, he received both the Michigan State University College of Music Distinguished Alumni Award and the Marlowe Stoudamire Award for Innovation and Community Collaboration, presented at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s annual Classical Roots Celebration.

High School Full Orchestra – Jeffrey Grogan



Jeffrey Grogan is an internationally acclaimed conductor and music educator, recognized for his passionate dedication to young musicians and transformative work in music education. In the fall of 2025, he returned to Baylor University as the Mary Franks Thompson Professor of Orchestral Studies in the School of Music, coming full circle to the university where he taught from 1997 to 2002.

Grogan most recently served as Director of Orchestral Activities at Oklahoma City University’s Bass School of Music and Artistic Director of the Oklahoma Youth Orchestras. Under his leadership, both programs flourished, earning reputations for artistic excellence, collaboration, and community engagement.

His conducting career has taken him to many of the world’s great stages, including the

Musikverein in Vienna, the Sydney Opera House, Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik, and he has also conducted in Bangkok and Singapore. He has led performances at national festivals and collaborated with Gustavo Dudamel and the LA Philharmonic’s YOLA program at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

A committed advocate for music education, Grogan founded TeachMusic, a national initiative to recruit and support future music educators. This coalition, backed by over 40 leading music companies and organizations, addresses the growing shortage of music teachers nationwide. He is also a Yamaha Master Educator, chairs the Orchestral Committee of Music for All, and serves on advisory boards and committees of the Midwest Clinic, ASTA, and the League of American Orchestras.

Grogan has worked closely with composers such as Omar Thomas, Eric Whitacre, Amanda Harberg, Lowell Liebermann, and Scott McAllister, and with renowned performers including clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, flutist Stefán Ragnar Höskuldsson, violinist Sheryl Staples, the Canadian Brass, the Boston Brass, and the Ahn Trio. His recording of Mark O’Connor’s March of the Gypsy Fiddler, featuring the Ahn Trio and the New Jersey Youth Symphony, has been featured on classical radio stations nationwide.

Earlier in his career, Grogan spent more than a decade as Education and Community Engagement Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and directed three major youth orchestra programs in the New York/New Jersey region. He has also held faculty appointments at the University of Michigan and Ithaca College.

Whether in a rehearsal room or on a global stage, Grogan brings an infectious enthusiasm to every ensemble he leads. His return to Baylor marks a new chapter in a career defined by creativity, connection, and a deep belief in the power of music to shape lives.

High School Jazz Ensemble – Scotty Barnhart



Scotty Barnhart is an internationally acclaimed jazz trumpeter, composer, arranger, educator, author, producer, three-time Grammy Winner, and Director of The Count Basie Orchestra. Prior to being selected Director in 2013, he was its featured trumpet soloist for 20 years, and in 2015 was Executive Producer of A Very Swingin' Basie Christmas!, the very first Christmas recording for The Count Basie Orchestra. It went to #1 on the charts. Under his leadership, the orchestra won the Downbeat Magazine Readers Poll as the #1 Jazz Orchestra in the world for 2018, and their 2018 recording, All About That Basie, featuring special guest Stevie Wonder, was nominated for a Grammy for Best Large Jazz Ensemble. The orchestra's 2021 recording, Live at Birdland, produced by Barnhart, immediately became a #1 Best Seller on Amazon, and was nominated for a 2022 Grammy Award. Its 2023 release, Basie Swings the Blues, produced by Barnhart, features blues legends Buddy Guy, Bobby Rush, Keb' Mo', and George Benson, won a Grammy Award for

Best Large Jazz Ensemble in 2024. Their 2025 release, Basie Rocks!, also produced by Barnhart, was nominated for Best Large Jazz Ensemble for the 2026 Grammy Awards.

Scotty appears on three critically acclaimed recordings with pianist Marcus Roberts and over twenty others with artists as diverse as Tony Bennett, Diana Krall, and Ray Charles. He has performed with Frank Sinatra, Wynton Marsalis, Herbie Hancock, Quincy Jones, The Duke Ellington Orchestra, Nat Adderley, Aretha Franklin, George Clinton, Buddy Guy, Barbara Streisand, George Benson, and many others, been featured in the Asian Wall Street Journal, performed at The Academy Awards, and is in demand as a soloist, arranger, and lecturer on jazz history all over the world. In 2009, Unity Music released his solo CD, Say It Plain. It reached #3

on the Jazz Charts. He has also been commissioned to write arrangements for the former King of Thailand, The San Francisco Symphony, The Count Basie Orchestra, and many others.

Scotty is co-founder and Artistic Director of The Florida Jazz and Blues Festival, and Professor of Jazz Trumpet with tenure at Florida State University, where two of his former students won 1st place in the National Jazz Trumpet Competition. His groundbreaking book, The World of Jazz Trumpet – A Comprehensive History and Practical Philosophy, was published in December 2005 to rave reviews. The updated edition contains over 55 interviews with many of the most important jazz trumpeters of the last 100 years and is due for completion in 2026. He is a graduate of Florida A&M University with a degree in Music Education, and in 2017 he was honored as a distinguished alumnus with a permanent plaque and photo being placed within the Gallery of Distinction in the FAMU Department of Music. Barnhart has appeared as guest conductor and lecturer at such prestigious institutions at The Juilliard School of Music and others and is profiled in the book Trumpet Kings, which places him among the greatest jazz trumpeters in history. He was awarded the 2021 National Performance and Outstanding Leadership Award from The Newspaper Publishers Association of America, and the 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award from Florida A&M University. He was also the university's 2024 Commencement Speaker. He resides in Tallahassee, Florida.

Middle School Band – Arris Golden



Dr. Arris Golden is the Assistant Director of Bands and Associate Director of the Spartan Marching Band at Michigan State University. In this capacity, Dr. Golden conducts the Concert Band, teaches academic courses in conducting and marching band techniques, coordinates Spartan Brass, and is coordinator of the MSU Performing Arts Camps.

Before her collegiate appointments, Dr. Golden had a distinguished 18-year teaching career in the public schools of North Carolina. In her last public-school assignment, Dr. Golden conducted the premiere of three commissioned works that have become standards in the middle school band repertoire: “Kitsune: The Fox Spirits,” by Brian Balmages (2009), “The Machine Awakes” for young band and electronics by Steven Bryant (2012), and “The Cave You Fear” by Michael Markowski (2014).

Dr. Golden maintains an active schedule with engagements throughout the United States and internationally as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator. She has also shared presentations at the College Band Directors North Central Conference, the College Band Directors Athletic Band Conference, the Iowa Bandmasters Association Conference, the Midwest Band, and Orchestra Clinic, the Michigan Music Conference, the Music For All Summer Symposium, the North Carolina Music Educators Conference, the Missouri Bandmasters Association Conference, the Texas Music Educators Association Convention, Wisconsin Music Educators Convention, and the Virginia Music Educators Conference based on her research interests: undergraduate music education preparation, conductor decision-making, mindset in the music classroom, repertoire selection and programming, and the student teaching and mentorship experience.

Dr. Golden has worked with many notable composers in the preparation and performance of their works for the wind band medium. Recent and future artistic collaborations include Brian Balmages, David Biedenbender, Steven Bryant, Roger Cichy, Harrison Collins, Katahj Copley, Danielle Fisher, Tyler S. Grant, Michael Markowski, Tyler Mazone, Peter Meechan, Aaron Perinne, Alex Shapiro, Erika Svanoe, Omar Thomas, and Frank Ticheli. Dr. Golden's professional affiliations include the College Band Directors National Association and the National Band Association (NBA). She serves as a member of the William D. Revelli Memorial Composition Contest Committee and as Chairperson of the National Band Association's Music List Committee. A published author, chapters by Dr. Golden have been featured in *Women in Wind Band* (2023) and *From Our Eyes & Ears* (2021, 2nd Edition, in process).

Dr. Golden holds degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She completed the Doctor of Musical Arts in wind conducting from Michigan State University as a 2014 recipient of a Michigan State University Distinguished Fellowship.

Middle School String Orchestra – Tiffany Ou-Ponticelli



Tiffany Ou-Ponticelli is an orchestra director at Gunn High School in Palo Alto, California. Ms. Ou-Ponticelli holds degrees in Music Education from UCLA and the University of Michigan, and is currently pursuing her doctoral degree at Teachers College, Columbia University. In the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, she studied viola with Richard O'Neill and earned her teaching credential from the UCLA Teacher Education Program. Her ensembles at Gunn High School and previously at Fletcher Middle School consistently receive superior ratings at festivals. Under Ms. Ou-Ponticelli's direction, the Henry M. Gunn High School Orchestras have performed at conferences including the 2022 Midwest Clinic International Band & Orchestra Conference, the California All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC), American String Teachers Association National Orchestra Festival, and were named "Grand Champions" at the 2024 Orchestra Cup National Orchestra Championships.

Ms. Ou-Ponticelli currently serves as Immediate Past-President of the California Orchestra Directors Association (CODA) and served as Secretary of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) national Board of Directors from 2024-2026. She serves as Website Editor for California Music Educators Association (CMEA) Bay Section. She has held positions as CODA President (2021-2025), CODA All-State Orchestras Coordinator, CODA Secretary, CMEA Bay Section Orchestra Representative, and has served as a member of the American String Teacher's Journal Editorial Committee. Ms. Ou-Ponticelli has presented at state and national conferences including ASTA and CASMEC, and has been an invited guest conductor for county, state, and international honor ensembles. She was the recipient of the 2022 CMEA Bay Section Outstanding Orchestra Educator Award, and the 2023 CMEA State Richard L. Levin Orchestra Educator Award.

Ms. Ou-Ponticelli is an active clinician, guest conductor, violist, and vocalist in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to her orchestral background, she is a lifelong choral singer and performs as an alto with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Ms. Ou-Ponticelli holds a Level III Orff Certification and is an advocate for incorporating Orff pedagogy in the secondary ensemble setting. Her research interests include musical self-efficacy, championing diverse composers, humor and flow in rehearsal engagement, and solfège singing for instrumentalists.