

2021 WINTER CONFERENCE

December 2-5, 2021 – Rochester, NY



85th Annual Winter Conference All-State Guest Conductors & Composer-In-Residence



2021 NYSSMA® All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble **Diane Abrahamian,** **Eastman Community Music**

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Diane Abrahamian as the guest conductor for the 2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State

Vocal Jazz Ensemble.

Diane Abrahamian is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music where she received her BM and MM in Music Education with a focus on Voice, Piano and Conducting. Diane is a five-time nominee for the GRAMMY Music Educator Award and has been selected as a Quarter-finalist, as well as a Semi-Finalist (recognized as one of the top 25 music educators in the United States). The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra also recognized Diane's contributions to music education with the Outstanding Music Educator Award.

Diane is on the faculty of the Eastman Community Music School where she is a Sr. Associate Voice Instructor and a specialist in Jazz and Contemporary music. Diane was an adjunct Professor in the Musical Theatre Department at Nazareth College from 2016 - 2018. She is a frequent guest conductor for state and all-county choirs (traditional and jazz) and presents workshops on vocal jazz, improvisation, vocal technique, choral rehearsal techniques and sight singing. From September 1981 - June 2016, Diane was the Vocal Music Director at Penfield High School where she conducted the PHS Chorale, Concert Choir, Jazz Choir, Jazz Factory and Uptown Express (men's choir), taught four levels of Voice Classes and was the Vocal Music Director for the musical theatre productions. Diane was also the Vocal/Classroom Music Coordinator for the Penfield Central School District. Diane's choirs have been invited to perform at local, state and national music conferences.

Several of Diane's students and Jazz Choir received Downbeat magazine's prestigious Downbeat Awards for outstanding performances. Diane's voice students have been finalists in the American Songbook Competition and the Jimmy Awards for Musical Theatre. Diane and her students have performed with some of the world's leading jazz artists including Jon Hendricks, Regina Carter, Eddie Daniels, Darmon Meader, Tia Fuller, Sean Jones, Terell Stafford, Russell Malone, Kevin Mahogany, Jeff Tyzik, Jake Shimabukuro, Stefon Harris, Claudia Acuna, James Carter, Clark Terry, Randy Brecker, and Wycliffe Gordon. Many of Diane's former students are performing professionally in

the field of musical theatre, jazz, opera and contemporary pop music. One of Diane's former students has performed regularly with Bette Midler as one of Bette's Harlettes (backup singers). Many others have performed in shows on Broadway and in Broadway touring companies including Kinky Boots, Rent, The Color Purple, The Wedding Singer, Legally Blonde, Jekyll and Hyde, White Christmas, Xanadu, 42nd Street, Dogfight, Million Dollar Quartet, Civil War, Ragtime, Grease, Company, How to Succeed In Business, Stand By Your Man, The Wild Party, Flashdance, The Sound Of Music, Hairspray Live, Once On This Island, Fiddler On The Roof, and Come From Away.

Diane is the Vocal Jazz Review Editor for The New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) publication, The School Music News. She is a member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), National Association for Music Education (NAFME), New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA), Jazz Educator Network (JEN) and American Choral Directors Association (ACDA).



2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Instrumental Jazz Ensemble **Jim Pugh, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Jim Pugh as the guest conductor for the 2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Instrumental Jazz Ensemble.

Pugh is a distinguished trombonist, composer and educator. The inspiring virtuosity and incredible versatility he has demonstrated during the course of his career has caused Pugh to be often honored as the "musician's musician." Whether he is performing as a concerto soloist in a symphonic setting, recording and touring with legendary artists in the fields of classical, jazz, and rock, or bringing forth his own exciting new compositions that expand the role of brass in contemporary music, his creativity knows no boundaries.

Pugh began studying piano at age five and trombone at age 10. After studies with the legendary Emory Remington at the Eastman School of Music, he toured extensively as lead and solo trombone with the Woody Herman Orchestra and with Chick Corea before settling down in New York City.

He became New York's top-call freelance trombonist for film scores, records, and music for television and radio advertising; over the past 30-plus years he has lent his special talent to more than 4,000 recording sessions.

His trombone can be heard in recorded collaboration with leading classical and popular artists and orchestras, such as Yo-Yo Ma, Steely Dan, Eos, Concordia, St. Luke's Orchestra, André Previn, Paul Simon, Barbara Streisand, Tony Bennett, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Pink Floyd and Frank Sinatra.

Pugh has been called on to add his solo trombone to feature film soundtracks, including *A League of Their Own*, *When Harry Met Sally*, and *Meet Joe Black*, and on hit Broadway cast recordings *City of Angels*, *Fosse* and *Victor/Victoria*. Since 2000 he has been the solo trombonist with the seminal jazz/rock group Steely Dan, both recording and touring.

In 2003 Pugh "re-premiered" Nathaniel Shilkret's *Trombone Concerto* to a sold-out audience at Carnegie Hall with Skitch Henderson and the New York Pops Orchestra. This mid-20th century masterpiece, originally written for Tommy Dorsey, can be heard in its first recording, along with Pugh's own *Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra* and Jeff Tyzik's *Trombone Concerto*, on his Albany Records CD "X-Over Trombone" (TROY926).

Pugh is the only recipient of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences Virtuoso Award for Tenor Trombone, awarded after being voted Tenor Trombone MVP by the New York recording community for five years.

His original music and arrangements can be heard on National Public Radio (Morning Edition, Weekend Edition, Performance Today), in film scores and jingles, on record and, since 2009, on the Tony Awards TV broadcast. His composition, *Lunch with Schrödinger's Cat*, received a Lincoln Center premiere in 1989 by Marin Alsop and the Concordia Chamber Orchestra.

Pugh premiered his *Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra* in May 1992 with the Williamsport Symphony. It received its New York premiere in March 2000 with soloist Joseph Alessi and the New York Philharmonic, Leonard Slatkin conducting. Peter Ellefson, Professor of Trombone at Indiana University, recorded the piano reduction version on his CD *Pura Vida*.

A founding member of the Graham Ashton Brass Ensemble, several of Pugh's compositions can be heard on the group's CDs, *The Graham Ashton Brass Ensemble Plays the Music of James Pugh and Daniel Schnyder* and *Scenes of Spirits*, both available on the Signum label. Cherry Classics Music publishes Pugh's compositions for brass.

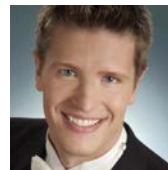
In 2005, Pugh was appointed Distinguished Professor of Jazz Trombone at the University of Illinois. Under his guidance, the University of Illinois Jazz Trombone Ensemble has won the National Jazz Trombone Ensemble Competition four times (2012, 2014, 2017, 2020) and the Kai Winding Jazz Trombone Ensemble competition twice (2012, 2017).

In partnership with Cherry Classics Music, a number of selections from the Ensemble's unique, student-composed and/or -arranged library have been made available to the public. Students of Pugh's have gone on to active

careers playing in New York, Chicago, Las Vegas, Richmond, New Orleans, and Washington DC, the military (Navy Commodores), in writing (US Marine Band — chief arranger), and in teaching (University of New Orleans, Bradley University). Prior to his appointment at Illinois, he taught at SUNY-Purchase College, the University of the Arts (Philadelphia) and at New York University.

Pugh appears frequently at schools and universities throughout the country as a guest artist/clinician and has been a clinician/soloist at numerous Eastern Trombone Workshops (now the American Trombone Workshop) and International Trombone Festivals. Though he currently performs on a BAC custom trombone, he was instrumentally in the development of small-bore instruments for both the Edwards and S.E. Shires Instrument Companies. A multi-decades-long close association with David Monette resulted in Monette's development of the Monette TS6 and TS11 tenor trombone mouthpieces.

Pugh is also a consultant for the Facet Mute Company. Not formerly a fan of mutes, he now enjoys stuffing anything made by the Facet Mute Company into his bell. He endorses all of these products and uses BAC horns, Monette mouthpieces and Facet mutes exclusively.



2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Mixed Chorus

Dr. J.D. Burnett, University of Georgia

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. J.D. Burnett as the guest conductor for the 2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Mixed Chorus.

Burnett enjoys a varied career as a conductor, singer and teacher. He is Associate Professor of Music and Associate Director of Choral Activities at the University of Georgia (UGA) Hugh Hodgson School of Music where he conducts the Men's and Women's Glee Clubs and the UGA Choral Project and also teaches courses in choral literature and conducting. Additionally, he is Artistic Director and Conductor of the Kinnara, a professional chamber choir based in Princeton, NJ.

Formerly, he served as Assistant Director of the Dallas Symphony Chorus, conducted the New Jersey Youth Chorus Young Men's Ensemble, was Associate Conductor of the Masterwork Chorus of New Jersey, and was Acting Director of Choral Activities at Montclair State University.

His earlier posts include Interim Director of Choral Activities at San Jose State University, Artistic Director of the New Jersey Chamber Singers, Music Director of the Houston Masterworks Chorus, and founder/conductor of Men's Consort Houston. Burnett taught on the choral music faculty at Kingwood High School in suburban Houston. He also served as Choral Editor at McGraw-Hill, Inc. Burnett did undergraduate study at Stanford University and Oklahoma State University. He holds advanced degrees in choral conducting from Westminster Choir College and the University of North Texas.

As a professional choral singer, Burnett has performed seasons, concerts and recordings with the Stillwater Chamber Singers, Cantare Houston, The Santa Fe Desert Chorale, The Robert Shaw Festival Singers, Fuma Sacra, the Choir of Trinity Church Wall Street, the Oregon Bach Festival Chorus, and Conspire.



2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Symphonic Band

**Dr. Russel C. Mikkelson,
The Ohio State University**

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. Russel C. Mikkelson as the guest conductor for the 2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Symphonic Band.

Mikkelson was appointed Director of University Bands at The Ohio State University (OSU) in 1998, where he serves as Professor of Music (Conducting), Area Head of Conducting and Ensembles, conducts the Wind Symphony, chairs the graduate conducting program, and oversees all aspects of the university's band program.

Under his direction, the OSU Wind Symphony has performed at the 2003 and 2015 College Band Directors National Association Conventions, the 2014 CBDNA North Central Conference, at the Ohio Music Educators Association Conventions seven times, and has recorded six CDs: *Network* (Naxos 2016), *Rest* (Naxos 2012), *Southern Harmony* (Naxos 2009), *Winds of Nagual* (Naxos, 2007), *Jubilare!* (Mark Records, 2003) and *Sounds, Shapes and Symbols* (Mark Records, 2000).

In a review of the *Southern Harmony* recording, *Fanfare* magazine proclaims, "The Ohio State musicians play their collective hearts out, and conductor Mikkelson shapes the music with a loving hand, wringing every last drop of emotion out of the music. If this does not give you goose-bumps, nothing will."

A staunch advocate for the creation of new works, Mikkelson chairs the Big Ten Conference's Commissioning Project, serves on the American Bandmasters Association Commissioning Committee, the New Works Committee for the College Band Directors National Association, and has instituted a program of regular commissioning projects for the Ohio State Bands.

He has received praise from composers Leslie Bassett, Krzysztof Penderecki, John Corigliano, Michael Colgrass, Joseph Schwantner, Aaron Jay Kernis, Jennifer Higdon, Gunther Schuller, Augusta Read Thomas, James Stephenson, and Michael Daugherty, among others, for his musical realization of their compositions. Corigliano wrote, "Russel Mikkelson is a conductor who really understands my music, and that's rare."

Mikkelson is Past President of the North Central Division of the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA), Past President of the Big Ten Band Directors Association, a member of the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE), NAFME, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Beta Mu, and is a duly elected member

of the American Bandmasters Association.

An enthusiastic advocate of public school music education, Mikkelson has conducted all-state bands, festivals, and honor bands across the United States and internationally. Most recently he was invited to serve as conductor and clinician of the Taiwan Music Teachers Wind Ensemble and Conducting Symposium at the National Sun Yat-sen University in Sizihwan, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Additionally, Mikkelson serves as Music Director and Conductor of the professional Newark-Granville Symphony Orchestra, as well as the Heisey Wind Ensemble, a highly skilled community band.

He is recipient of The Ohio State University School of Music Distinguished Teaching Award and the Distinguished Scholar Award, in addition to serving on the editorial board of the *Journal of Band Research*. He has published articles in *The Instrumentalist* and *The Journal of the Conductors Guild*, and as a composer/arranger, is published through C. Alan and Daehn Publications. Previous posts include the State University of New York at Fredonia, Stevens Point Area Senior High School (WI), and Kickapoo High School (WI).



2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Rachel Dirks, Kansas State University

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. Rachel Dirks as the guest conductor for the 2021 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Sym-

phony Orchestra. Dirks, Director of Orchestral Studies at Kansas State University, enjoys conducting the KSU Symphony Orchestra, as well as teaching graduate and undergraduate string education courses and applied cello. Along with her work at Kansas State, Dirks has been invited to collaborate with orchestras and honor ensembles throughout the United States, most recently in Georgia, Nevada, Oregon, Nebraska and New York.

As a featured clinician she has been invited to present for numerous music education conferences, including the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, the National Association for Music Education (NAFME), and the International Society for Music Education.

In addition to her work as a conductor and clinician, Dirks has spent the past four years researching the intersection between adolescent mental health, music educator well-being, and the music classroom. She currently serves on the national ASTA committee on health and wellness and has published works in a variety of journals, digital forums and books.

Dirks holds cello performance degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and Bethel College, and a Ph.D. in music education, with an emphasis in orchestral conducting, from the University of Kansas. Throughout her experiences as a musician and educator, her fundamental goal is to encourage musicians to seek and create community through music.



**2021 NYSSMA® Conference
Composer-in-Residence
Dr. Viet Cuong, University of Nevada –
Las Vegas**

NYSSMA® is pleased to welcome Dr. Viet Cuong as the 2021 NYSSMA® Conference Composer-in-Residence.

Called "alluring" and "wildly inventive" by *The New York Times*, the "irresistible" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) music of American composer Viet Cuong (b. 1990) has been commissioned and performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sō Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Atlanta Symphony, Sandbox Percussion, Albany Symphony, PRISM Quartet, Orchestra of St. Luke's, and Dallas Winds, among many others. Viet's music has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, and Library of Congress, and his works for wind ensemble have amassed hundreds of performances worldwide, including at Midwest, WASBE, and CBDNA conferences. He was recently featured in *The Washington Post's* "21 for '21: Composers and performers who sound like tomorrow."

In his music Viet enjoys exploring the unexpected and whimsical, and he is often drawn to projects where he can make peculiar combinations and sounds feel enchanting or oddly satisfying. His recent works thus include a percussion quartet concerto, tuba concerto, snare drum solo, and, most recently, a concerto for two oboes. This eclecticism extends to the range of musical groups he writes for, and he has worked with ensembles ranging from middle school bands to Grammy-winning orchestras and chamber groups. Viet is also passionate about bringing different facets of the contemporary music community together, and he will have opportunities to do so with an upcoming concerto for Eighth Blackbird with the United States Navy Band. He recently began his tenure as the California Symphony's 2020-2023 Young American Composer-in-Resi-

dence, where he and the symphony will develop three new orchestral works together over three years.

Viet is currently on the music theory and composition faculty at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He holds degrees in music composition from the Curtis Institute of Music (Artist Diploma), Princeton University (MFA), and the Peabody Conservatory (BM/MM). His mentors include Jennifer Higdon, David Serkin Ludwig, Donnacha Dennehy, Steve Mackey, Dan Trueman, Dmitri Tymoczko, Kevin Puts, and Oscar Bettison. During his studies, he held the Daniel W. Dietrich II Composition Fellowship at Curtis, Naumburg and Roger Sessions Fellowships at Princeton, and Evergreen House Foundation scholarship at Peabody, where he was also awarded the Peabody Alumni Award (the Valedictorian honor) and Gustav Klemm Award.

A scholarship student at the Aspen, Bowdoin, and Lake Champlain music festivals, Viet has been a fellow at the Orchestra of St. Luke's DeGaetano Institute, Minnesota Orchestra Composers Institute, Mizzou International Composers Festival, Eighth Blackbird Creative Lab, Cabrillo Festival's Young Composer Workshop, Cortona Sessions, and Copland House's CULTIVATE workshop. Viet has held artist residencies at Copland House, Yaddo, Ucross, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and at Dumbarton Oaks, where he served as the 2020 Early-Career Musician-in-Residence. His music has been awarded the Barlow Endowment Commission, ASCAP Morton Gould Composers Award, Theodore Presser Foundation Award, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Composers Award, Cortona Prize, New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, Boston GuitarFest Composition Prize, and Walter Beeler Memorial Prize.