90th Annual Winter Conference

All-State Conductor and Composer-in-Residence Biographies



2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble Guest Conductor

Cindy Ellis, Miami Arts Studio

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Cindy Ellis as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble guest conductor.

Cindy Ellis is a Cuban-American choral conductor and jazz vocalist who serves both as the middle school choral director and a high school choral director at Miami Arts Studio, a 6-12 public performing arts magnet in Miami, Florida. Her award-winning ensembles have performed at major venues and events, including Carnegie Hall, ACDA Conferences (state, regional and national), and the 2022 Summit of the Americas, with students recording for the Latin GRAMMYs and American Music Awards and collaborating with artists such as Gloria Estefan and Jacob Collier, including during the latter's 2024-2025 world tours.

As a performer, Ellis has appeared at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, on *Saturday Night Live*, and at the BBC Proms in London. She holds Music Education degrees from Florida International University and the University of Missouri, contributes to music education publications, and is a guest clinician across North America.

Ellis was named Miami Arts Studio's 2025 Teacher of the Year and a 2025 and 2026 GRAMMY Music Educator Award Semifinalist. Her high school women's ensemble, Bellarmonia, was on the 2026 GRAMMY ballot for Best Choral Performance, performed at the 2026 TED International Conference, and toured South Korea with their viral arrangement of Jacob Collier's *Bridge Over Troubled Water*.



2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Instrumental Jazz Ensemble Guest Conductor

Dr. Molly Redfield, Folsom Lake College

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. Molly Redfield as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Instrumental Jazz Ensemble guest conductor.

Dr. Molly Redfield is an Assistant Professor of Music at Folsom Lake College (FLC). At FLC, Redfield is the Director of Jazz Studies and teaches applied lessons, improvisation courses, conducts the FLC Jazz Band, coaches multiple combos, and instructs courses in jazz history. Additionally, she is the Lecturer of Bass at Sacramento State University, where she teaches applied lessons in jazz bass, classical bass, and directs one of the combos. She has also served as an Assistant Professor of Jazz Studies at Louisiana State University.

Redfield holds both a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in String Bass Performance and a Master of Music in Jazz Studies from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a Bachelor in Music Education, classical bass, and Bachelor in Jazz Studies from California State University, Sacramento.

Some of Redfield's professional appearances include studio and live sessions with jazz and pop musicians Gerald Clayton, Ingrid Jensen, Carmen Staff, Allison Miller, Clint Holmes, and Kenny Rampton. She was the bassist with the GRAMMY-considered JOI Jazz Orchestra, GRAMMY-winning UNLV Wind Ensemble and UNLV Jazz Ensemble I. Her most recent recording with the JOI Jazz Orchestra, *A JOIful NoiZZ*, can be heard on all streaming services.

A few of the awards she has received for her playing and arranging include being a selected member of the 2022 Jazz Educators Network (JEN) Sisters in Jazz Collegiate Combo, earning the 2017 Outstanding Festival Soloist Award at the Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival, the 2016 Outstanding Collegiate Rhythm Section Performer award at the Reno International Jazz Festival, and a 2021 *DownBeat* Student Music Award for her vocal arrangement of *Moonglow*.

Redfield has made significant contributions to the jazz education community through various leadership and teaching roles. She serves as the scholarship representative for the California Alliance for Jazz and has served as the President-Elect for the Louisiana Association of Jazz Educators.

As an educator, Redfield has also been on faculty at the Monterey Next Generation Jazz Camp and Jazz Camp West. She was the invited guest conductor for the 2026 Northern California Band Association All-Northern California Honor Jazz Ensemble, 2026 Montana All-State Jazz Ensemble, 2024 Louisiana District VII Honor Jazz Band, and the 2023 Montana All-State Jazz Ensemble.

Additionally, she was the invited Artist-in-Residence for the 2024 First Honduras Double Bass Festival and invited faculty for the 2024 American-Costa Rican Bi-National Center's Promising Young Artists program. As a scholar, Redfield has presented her work at major conferences, including the Louisiana Music Educators Association In-Service, the JEN Conference, the Capitol Section California Music Educators Association In-Service, and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) Northwest Division Conference.



2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Wind Ensemble Guest Conductor

Dr. William Talley, Ohio University

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. William Talley as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Wind Ensemble guest conductor.

Dr. William Talley is the Director of Bands at Ohio University, where he directs the Wind Symphony and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in conducting and wind literature.

Talley received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he served as the Associate Director of the Eastman Wind Orchestra and the Assistant Director of the Eastman Wind Ensemble. In addition to his responsibilities with these ensembles at Eastman, Talley taught undergraduate conducting and served as the Assistant Director of the Eastman Harmonie. He also regularly conducted a variety of other ensembles at Eastman, including the ensemble OSSIA New Music and the Graduate Composer's Sinfonietta.

While a student at Eastman, Talley was a recipient of the Frederick Fennell Conducting Fellowship, the Walter Hagen Conducting Prize, and was the first recipient of the newly established Donald and Polly Hunsberger Endowed Conducting Scholarship. While in residence at Eastman, Talley concurrently served as the Director of the Wind Ensemble at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY.

Prior to attending Eastman and receiving a Master of Music degree in conducting from the University of South Carolina, Talley taught for 15 years in the Asheville City Schools in Asheville, North Carolina. In his time as a band director, Talley served as the president of the Western North Carolina Bandmasters' Association, and he also received the Award of Excellence from that organization.

He was the recipient of many awards and much recognition during his tenure at Asheville High School, including the WLOS Thanks to Teachers award, the WYFF Golden Apple award, and Asheville High School and Asheville City Schools' Teacher of the Year award for the 2013-2014 school year. Talley was a National Board-certified teacher for the last 10 years of his public school teaching career, and his high school bands repeatedly earned superior ratings at NC Concert Band Music Performance Adjudication and marching band contests. In 2013, the Asheville High School Marching Band, under his direction, performed for the 57th Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C.

Talley has served as a presenter, clinician and adjudicator across the country, in Europe, and in South America. He is also an active arranger and transcriber of music for wind ensembles. In 2019, his transcription of Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 7* was premiered by the Eastman Wind Ensemble, and his arrangement of *The Bond of Africa* from William Levi Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* was premiered by the Ohio University Wind Symphony in 2021.



2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State String Orchestra Guest Conductor

Adrian Slywotzky, Berklee College of Music

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Adrian Slywotzky as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State String Orchestra guest conductor.

Adrian Slywotzky is a prizewinner of the Atlantic Coast International Conducting Competition (Portugal, 2016) and the Audite International Conducting Competition (Poland, 2017). He was the Founding Conductor of the Yale Medical Symphony Orchestra and, from 2007 to 2010, Music Director of the New Haven Chamber Orchestra.

A sought-after educator, Slywotzky is on the conducting faculty at the Berklee College of Music. Previously, he was Director of Orchestras at the Crane School of Music and Associate Director of Orchestras at the University of Michigan. He has served as Associate Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras, as Teaching Fellow for the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, and on the faculty of the Conductors Retreat at Medomak. He has conducted regional high school festival orchestras in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. For five years, Slywotzky was Director of Instrumental Music at Hopkins School in New Haven, CT, and he has taught at Neighborhood Music School, Elm City ChamberFest, and the Southern Maine String Camp.

Slywotzky is a passionate advocate of contemporary music. As a conductor for Yale's New Music New Haven concert series and as the Director of the University of Michigan's

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Contemporary Directions Ensemble, he has led countless performances of contemporary orchestral works. He directed the premiere of Hugo Kauder's magnum opus, the opera *Merlin*.

Slywotzky holds degrees in orchestral conducting from the University of Michigan, where he studied with Kenneth Kiesler, and the Yale School of Music, where he studied with Shinik Hahm. As a violinist, Slywotzky has participated in festivals including Tanglewood Music Center, California Summer Music, and the Norfolk Contemporary Music Festival. He holds a B.A. in Architecture from Yale College, where he studied violin with Kyung Yu, and an M.M. in Violin Performance from the Yale School of Music, where he studied with Wendy Sharp.



2026 NYSSMA Conference All-State Treble Chorus Guest Conductor

Mary Biddlecombe, Vanderbilt University, Blair School of Music

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Mary Biddlecombe as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Treble Chorus guest conductor.

Mary Biddlecombe is a nationally renowned expert in choral music for developing voices, specializing in contextual music literacy, symphonic repertoire, and pedagogy through creative collaboration.

A member of the faculty at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music since 2012, she serves as Artistic Director of the Vanderbilt Youth Choirs (VYC) program and teaches collegiate classes in choral studies and music education.

Vanderbilt Youth Choirs tour annually and frequently collaborate with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. Performance highlights have included Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, and Leonard Bernstein's *Symphony No. 3, Kaddish*. Internationally, the VYC program has presented concerts in Budapest, Costa Rica, Ireland, Italy, and Prague. In addition to working with the VYC, Biddlecombe serves as Director of the Blair Academy, a comprehensive precollegiate music program serving approximately 800 families in the Nashville community.

Biddlecombe maintains a busy schedule conducting honor choirs throughout the country. Her unique approach invigorates students and enlightens choral directors on creative rehearsal techniques. The past several years have yielded statewide conducting engagements in Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, New Jersey, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. Regional credits include engagements with the Southwest and Southern Regions of the American Choral Directors Association.

In addition, Biddlecombe mentors collegiate students studying choral music education through their participation as teaching assistants in the eight graded ensembles of the Vanderbilt Youth Choirs program. She is also a co-founder of the Vanderbilt Choral Scholars, a biannual cohort of collegiate students who travel to the United Kingdom, engaging with cathedral youth choirs and boychoirs in Leeds and Liverpool.

Biddlecombe holds an M.M. in Choral Conducting from Florida State University and a B.M.E. from the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam. She enjoys singing professionally with Vocal Arts Nashville and with the all-volunteer Nashville Symphony Chorus under the direction of her husband, Tucker Biddlecombe, Director of Choral Studies at Vanderbilt.



2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Mixed Chorus Guest Conductor

Dr. Jason C. Tramm, Seton Hall University

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. Jason C. Tramm as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Mixed Chorus guest conductor.

Hailed as a "Conductor to Watch" by *Symphony Magazine*, Dr. Jason C. Tramm is widely recognized for his dynamic leadership in choral, symphonic, and operatic performance, as well as his deep commitment to music education.

Tramm serves as Associate Professor and Director of Choral Activities at Seton Hall University, where he conducts the University Chorus, Chamber Choir, and Orchestra, and teaches conducting. A dedicated educator and mentor, he was named Seton Hall's Faculty Teacher of the Year in 2017 and is frequently invited to lead clinics, workshops, and festival ensembles across the United States.

In addition to his academic work, Tramm maintains an active conducting career. He currently serves as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of MidAtlantic Artistic Productions, Artistic Director of Light Opera of New Jersey, Music Director for both the Taghkanic Chorale and Putnam Chorale, and General and Artistic Director of New Rochelle Opera. His work spans a wide range of repertoire, from standard choral literature to major symphonic and operatic works.

From 2008 to 2012 he served as Artistic Director of the New Jersey State Opera, where he collaborated with many of the world's leading opera artists. His 2009 PBS broadcast of *Verdi Requiem: Live from Ocean Grove* received an Emmy Award nomination.

Tramm has conducted throughout Europe, including engagements in Italy, Romania, Hungary, and Albania. He holds degrees from the Crane School of Music and the Hartt School, and he earned his Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting from Rutgers University, where he was awarded the Presidential Fellowship.

A passionate advocate for the next generation of musicians, Tramm is honored to work with the outstanding young artists of the 2026 New York All-State Mixed Chorus.



2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Symphonic Band Guest Conductor

Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant, University of Massachusetts Amherst

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Symphonic Band guest conductor.

Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant directs the Symphony Band, teaches conducting classes, and leads a graduate conducting seminar at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She also serves as Conductor of the Winchendon Winds and Assistant Director/Conductor of the Eastman Community Music School Summer High School Wind Ensemble Workshop.

Prior to her appointment at UMass Amherst, Bronnenkant taught basic conducting at Nazareth University and led the Hobart and William Smith Colleges Community Wind Ensemble as she completed a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Conducting degree at the Eastman School of Music. In her time at Eastman, she served as Assistant/Associate Conductor of the Eastman Wind Ensembles, Assistant Conductor and Teaching Assistant for the University of Rochester Wind Symphony, and Teaching Assistant for basic conducting classes. She was a Frederick Fennell Conducting Fellow and a finalist for the Eastman School of Music Teaching Assistant Prize.

Bronnenkant has had the opportunity to conduct premier ensembles such as the United States Army Band "Pershing's Own." A recipient of the American Prize Career Encouragement Certificate in wind conducting, she has also been invited to work with collegiate, K-12, and community ensembles across three continents on original and classic works.

As a composer, Bronnenkant wrote her first work for wind ensemble, *Symphony for Singer*, self-taught at 18 years old. Her first published work, *Tarot* (2021), was designated the runner-up in the 2021 National Band Association/William D. Revelli Memorial Band Composition Contest. The piece is based on original research on Gustav Holst and was presented as part of Bronnenkant's doctoral conducting recital and lecture presentation.

Bronnenkant holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music (D.M.A. Wind Conducting, '22), the University of Michigan (M.M. Wind Conducting, '19), Nazareth University (B.M. Music Education, '14), and the University of Rochester (B.S. Brain and Cognitive Sciences, '10). Her conducting mentors include Mark Scatterday, Michael Haithcock, Jared Chase, and Nancy Strelau, and she has taken composition lessons with Keane Southard, Nancy Strelau, Christopher Winders, David Liptak, and Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez. Bronnenkant is a member of Pi Kappa Lambda, Phi Beta Kappa, and Phi Kappa Phi, and she is an honorary member of Kappa Kappa Psi, Tau Beta Sigma, and Sigma Alpha Iota. Additional professional affiliations include the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP).



Guest Conductor

Dr. Régulo Stabilito, University of Hartford, Hartt School of Music

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Dr. Régulo Stabilito as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Symphony Orchestra guest conductor.

Dr. Régulo Stabilito is a Venezuelan conductor renowned for his dynamic leadership, dedication to the Latin American repertoire, and firm belief in music's transformative power. A product of Venezuela's acclaimed *El Sistema* and American academia, Stabilito began his conducting career under the mentorship of Maestro José Antonio Abreu, leading performances with major orchestras throughout Venezuela, including the Caracas Municipal Symphony Orchestra, the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, and the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra.

Stabilito serves as Director of Orchestras and Assistant Professor of Orchestra Studies and Conducting at the Hartt School of Music, University of Hartford. From 2022 to 2025, he served as Music Director and Conductor of the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association (ORCMA) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Stabilito has appeared recently as guest and cover conductor with notable ensembles such as the Hartford Symphony, Knoxville Symphony, Nashville Symphony, The Washington Choir, Washington Philharmonic, and the Caracas Municipal Symphony Orchestra. Deeply committed to his heritage, he co-founded the Latin-American Music Initiative (LAMI), which champions underrepresented Latin American composers through performance, education, and scholarship. In 2020, LAMI received the University of Michigan's EXCEL Prize for innovation in the arts.

Stabilito's previous conducting posts include leadership roles with the Ann Arbor Camerata, Spectrum Symphony Orchestra, and the University of Michigan's Campus Orchestras. He has also served as Visiting Director of Orchestral Activities at Appalachian State University and as Artist-in-Residence and Conductor of the Lee Symphony at Lee University in Tennessee.

Equally at home in opera and ballet, Stabilito made his operatic debut in 2015 with the Primo Casale Opera Company and the Caracas Municipal Symphony Orchestra. He has conducted several ballet productions with the Teresa Carreño Ballet Company and the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra. A regular guest at the *Festival Latinoamericano de Música* in Caracas, he has premiered numerous works across Latin America and maintains strong ties with orchestras in Venezuela and the broader region.

A passionate educator and advocate for music's social impact, Stabilito has led youth orchestras and *El Sistema*-inspired programs across the Americas and Europe. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in conducting from the University of Michigan (D.M.A. '21, M.M. '19), a master's degree from Simón Bolívar University, and a law degree from Santa Maria University. His principal mentors include Alfredo Rugeles, Kenneth Kiesler, Rodolfo Saglimbeni, Carlos Riazuelo, Manuel Hernández-Silva, Giancarlo Guerrero, and Eugene Rogers.

2026 NYSSMA® Conference All-State Symphony Orchestra



2026 NYSSMA® Conference Guest Composer-in-Residence

Steve Danyew, Frost School of Music, University of Miami

NYSSMA® proudly welcomes Steve Danyew as the 2026 NYSSMA® Conference guest Composer-in-Residence.

Steve Danyew's music has been hailed as "startlingly beautiful" and "undeniably well crafted and communicative" by the *Miami Herald*, and it has been praised for possessing "sensitivity, skill, and tremendous sophistication" by the *Kansas City Independent*. He is a composer who cares deeply about craftsmanship and is dedicated to creating art that reflects the beauty of the natural world and the human spirit.

Danyew is the recipient of numerous national and international awards for his work, and his compositions have been performed throughout the world in venues such as the Sydney Opera House, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. His *Into the Silent Land* was named the winner of the 2019 Walter Beeler Memorial Composition Prize. And an early work for orchestra, *The Night Eagle*, was awarded a prestigious BMI Composer Award. Five of his compositions for wind band are featured between Volumes 11 and 12 of *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band* (GIA).

In addition to composing, Danyew is a passionate educator who teaches composition lessons through his own private studio. He also teaches courses at the Eastman School of Music's Institute for Music Leadership, focusing on helping young musicians craft their own creative careers. Danyew is the contributing author for the second edition of Ramon Ricker's book *Lessons from a Street-Wise Professor: What You Won't Learn at Most Music Schools* (Soundown, 2018). He is also a frequent guest composer and lecturer at schools throughout the United States.

In 2020, Danyew and his wife, Ashley, created Musician & Co. to equip 21st-century musicians with the tools and education they need to be both artists and business owners. They offer business education, a resource library, a template shop, personalized career strategy sessions, professional writing support, and brand development for musicians who want to build and manage their own music careers.

Danyew grew up in New England, playing the saxophone and improvising on the piano. After a performance of his own work, the *South Florida Sun Sentinel* proclaimed him a "saxophone virtuoso par excellence, making the instrument sing as well as shout." Danyew performed as a saxophonist in the University of Miami Wind Ensemble under the direction of Gary Green, and this formative experience led him to begin composing works for wind band.

Danyew received a B.M. in Composition from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, where his primary composition teachers were Scott Stinson and Dennis Kam. In 2025 he was one of 100 Frost School of Music alumni awarded a Frost Centennial Medal in celebration of the school's 100th anniversary. He also holds an M.M. in Composition from the Eastman School of Music. Additionally, Danyew has served as a Composer Fellow at the Yale Summer Music School with Martin Bresnick, and as a Composer Fellow at the Composers Conference with Mario Davidovsky.

Learn about the National Association for Music Education Strategic Plan



MISSION

NAfME is a collaborative community that supports music educators and advocates for equitable access to music education.

VISION

NAfME is an association where all people are heard, seen, and feel they belong throughout their lifelong experiences in music.

Read the full Strategic Plan at bit.ly/StrategicPlanNAfME