

Kansas State University School of Music, Theatre, and Dance



Littrell, Maullar and Uthoff set to retire

Expert faculty are the heart of the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance. At the end of the semester, we are saying goodbye to three members who have shaped performing arts at Kansas State University over the course of their careers. Their contributions will be sorely missed by students, faculty and staff. Dr. David Littrell (31 years), Marci Maullar (30 Years) and John Uthoff (42 Years) are leaders in their fields and each has amassed a list of illustrious achievements. We encourage you to read more at <http://www.k-state.edu/orchestra/faculty-biography/littrell.html>; <http://www.k-state.edu/theatre/faculty/stagemanagement/maullar.html>; and <http://www.k-state.edu/theatre/faculty/designtech/uthoff2.html>.

Dr. David Littrell is a University Distinguished Professor of Music at Kansas State University where he conducts the University Orchestra and teaches or plays the cello, baroque cello, double bass, and viola da gamba. As a reflection of his interest in the music education of young people, he is the Director of String Fling, an annual event at Kansas State that attracts 650 string students from Kansas. He founded the Gold and Silver Orchestras in 1989, which includes 90 Manhattan area string students in grades 4-12.

The K-State Chamber Orchestra toured England and Scotland in March 2008 and Ireland in 2011 and 2017. During his sabbatical in 2010, he performed solo cello recitals in churches and cathedrals throughout England.

The Gold Orchestra toured England in 1997, Seattle and British Columbia in 1999, performed at Carnegie Hall in 2001 and 2006, participated in the ASTA National Orchestra Festival in Dallas in March 2004, and toured Memphis and Nashville in 2012. It appeared at The Midwest Clinic in 1992 and 2010.



Marci Maullar, John Uthoff and David Littrell

Littrell twice received the Stamey Undergraduate Teaching Award at K-State. In 1994 the Kansas Chapter of the American String Teachers Association awarded him the Certificate of Merit. He was the national president of the American String Teachers Association in 2002-2004 and planned ASTA's first stand-alone conference held in March 2003. He was named Kansas Professor of the Year in 2007 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Littrell adjudicates solo and orchestra contests and is a clinician and conductor throughout the United States. Littrell will retire from Kansas State University in June 2018 after 31 years at K-State, 31 years as the Director of String Fling, and 28 years as the Orchestra conductor.

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From the Director



Dear Friends and Alumni:
Greetings from the Kansas State University School of Music, Theatre, and Dance! I hope this newsletter finds you with warm weather and blue skies!

The highlight for me this semester was our Second Annual Scholarship Extravaganza. Our students performed in front of a large

audience of supporters of the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance and shared their experiences at K-State and gratitude for the scholarship support that they have received. Because of philanthropic giving of our many supporters, the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance was able to provide more than \$500,000 in Undergraduate Scholarships and Graduate Support in the 2017-18 academic year.

During our scholarship event, I shared our school’s mission: The School of Music, Theatre, and Dance develops creative leaders and critical thinkers through:

- Student-centered education in the performing arts
- Flexible, multi-disciplinary curriculum
- High-quality performance, research, and outreach

In fulfilling this mission, the school is graduating the next generation of professional performing artists.

Through our programs, all K-State students, regardless of major, will become problem solvers who with empathy and a broad perspective will lead their communities and their colleagues to make the world a better place. In my comments to the audience of the extravaganza, I said

“Our students will be the music teachers for this state, the director or set designer or actor that you will see in one of the professional theatres in Kansas City. They will be your church organist and music director. They will lead your grandchild’s dance studio. They will also be the engineer who figures out how to make sure your street doesn’t flood during spring storms, the physician who guides your loved one through a health crisis. Business leaders are looking for creative problem solvers who can work with others. . . welcome to Performing Arts 101.”

I am so proud of our students, alumni, and faculty, as they share their artistic process and performance, making a tremendous impact. Your continued support changes lives here at K-State and transforms the city of Manhattan, the region, the state of Kansas and the nation!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Ward, DMA
Director
School of Music, Theatre, and Dance

Join us at K-State for spring events!

Springdance: April 6–7
McCain Auditorium
Tickets: www.ksu.edu/mtd/tickets or 785-236-8638

Inn-Dependent: April 12–15
Purple Masque Theatre
National award-winning student-written musical
Tickets: www.ksu.edu/mtd/tickets or 785-236-8638

In-A-Chord: April 18
University Christian Church, Manhattan
\$5 presale/\$8 at the door

She Kills Monsters: April 19–21 and April 26–29
Mark A. Chapman Theatre, Nichols Hall
Tickets: www.ksu.edu/mtd/tickets or 785-236-8638

Rhapsody V: April 20–22
Victoria, Dodge City and Wichita
www.kstaterhapsody.com for locations and tickets.

Music Faculty Recital/Konza Winds: April 23
All Faiths Chapel
No admission charge

K-State Orchestra: April 24
McCain Auditorium
Farewell concert for David Littrell
No admission charge

University Band Concert: April 26
All Faiths Chapel
No admission charge

K-State Collegiate Chorale, Collegium, and Women’s Choir Spring Concert: April 27
All Faiths Chapel
No admission charge

Music Faculty Recital/Faculty Brass: April 30
All Faiths Chapel
No admission charge

Tributes to retiring faculty *(Cont. from pg. 1)*

Former student Miranda Grummon (1999) said that K-State Orchestra was “home” for her.

“Dr. Littrell was an integral part of that. He was tough. He had high expectations,” she said. “Thank you, Dr. Littrell, for influencing countless numbers of students with your talent, your teaching, and your dedication to the craft. I will be forever grateful for the experience, and for your friendship to this day. You are one in a million.”

Marci Maullar is retiring after 30 years with K-State Theatre, having served for 25 years as Managing Director and Marketing Director. As Head of Stage Management, she supervises and advises student stage managers for all productions. She teaches stage management, theatre management, regional theatre and fundamentals of acting.

Maullar became a member of the graduate faculty in 1989 and serves on the Provost’s Distinguished Lecture Committee.

Prior to her career at K-State, Maullar was managing director for professional theatre companies in Colorado, Ohio and Massachusetts. She was also a general manager at the prestigious Williamstown Theatre Festival where she produced several world premieres including John Guare’s Moon Over Miami (starring Nathan Lane, Jim Belushi, Glenn Headley and Julie Haggerty); noted political novelist/satirist, Christopher Buckley’s play, Campion; as well as the directing debut of Oscar-winning actress Joanne Woodward with a production of Golden Boy (starring Dylan McDermott from the ABC series, The Practice).

Maullar received a grant from the Kansas Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts for a summer project, Making Art, Making Peace, which used theatre as a means to teach conflict resolution to at-risk teens. She is Vice President of the not-for-profit organization, Side by Side, Music and Theatre. Before management, Maullar was an actress in stock and in New York City where she created the role of Taddy Jo in the original cast of The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas at the renowned Actors Studio.

Former student Tim Aumiller (1994) said Maullar was a mentor to him who provided many opportunities for growth.

“It was during my first experience doing KSU Summer Theatre that I saw another side of Marci,” he said. “I had gone home in between weekend runs of *Lone Star/Laundry and Bourbon* to see my father in the hospital, having no idea that I would be attending his funeral later that week. When I returned, Marci opened her home to me

and the cast and allowed all of the awkward moments to exist just as they were. I will never forget the compassion she showed me. I feel so fortunate to have had Marci as a mentor as I began my career in the theatre and so grateful to have remained her friend through these many years.”

John Uthoff is concluding a 42-year career with K-State Theatre, retiring as Associate Professor and Head of Lighting and Sound. In this position, he is in charge of all lighting and sound designs for all departmental productions and supervises students in these areas. He teaches fundamentals of stage lighting, theatrical sound design, advanced stage lighting and concepts of theatre production.

Uthoff has served as lighting designer, scenic designer, sound designer, or technical director of more than 200 productions. These include musicals, dance concerts, operas, original scripts and many plays. He is also interested in international design, and was involved with World Stage Design in Toronto, and has studied productions in Russia, Estonia, Finland, the Czech Republic and Canada. He has attended the Prague Quadrennial and arranged for visiting designers from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Canada.

Uthoff served as President and Immediate Past President of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) and was its liaison to the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). He is a Fellow of the Institute and has been awarded the Joel E. Rubin Founders’ Award by USITT as well as the KCACTF Golden Medallion.

JoJo Percy (2004) credits Uthoff’s influence and support in her career choice.

“I am now a tenured professor at Baylor University, and I strive to mentor my students the way John mentored me through the design process,” she said. “One of my favorite class projects as a student was the Light Design to Music and I also use this project for my own students. John Uthoff was a wonderful mentor. He let me make mistakes; learning and exploring different ways to accomplish beautiful stage compositions. I loved having him sit beside me in tech and give me notes to nudge me in the right direction, without dictating the design. John challenged me artistically and helped to shape my artistic style. He also emulated how a great theatre collaborator works with the team.

“Thank you so much, John, for inspiring my career choice and helping me grow as a theatre artist. Happy retirement!”

Students and alums making us proud



Quartet members (l to r) are: Adam Lechner, Brittney Davis, Anna Marie Wytko (Associate Professor of Saxophone), Jacob Wright and John Ashburn.

The Kansas State University Saxophone Quartet received 2nd Place at the Music Teachers National Association Collegiate Chamber Music Competition (West Central Division) in January at the University of Iowa. With the exception of one ensemble, all competing ensembles consisted of saxophone quartets. The KSU Saxophone Quartet was the highest-scoring saxophone quartet out of all saxophone quartets that competed from states within the West Central Division.

MTNA is known for being a highly competitive and prestigious competition event for saxophone quartets from around the country.

Students from K-State Theatre attended the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for Region 5 in Des Moines, Iowa in January.

A number of K-State students were recognized for their achievements during the festival. Morgan Sterrett, senior in theatre, was recognized for her performance in



Morgan Lynn Sterrett

will represent Region 5 in the National Musical Theatre Intensive Fellowship and audition for a full scholarship to the Open Jar Institute, New York City’s most Broadway-integrated actor training

Musical Theatre Intensive Showcase and as a soloist. She will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in April for the weeklong National Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Sterrett, who also was a nominee for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship, will represent Region 5 in

program. The institute provides select students intensive one-on-one training with Broadway performers, directors, choreographers, agents and casting directors.

Also earning recognitions were Chelsea Turner, junior in American ethnic studies, who was a nominee for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship; and Donovan Watts, junior in theatre, received honorable mention in dramaturgy and performed in the 10-minute protest play “Ignorant Silence.” Michael Duncan, sophomore in theatre, performed in the 10-minute play “The Volcano Play” and was a nominee for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship; Sterling Oliver, junior in theatre and applied music, participated in the music composition intensive and was a nominee for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship; Hunter Nelson, senior in English and theatre, received honorable mention in the dramaturgy category; and Ceslie Parker-Waller, junior in theatre, Wichita, performed in the 10-minute play “Colored Water.”



Dr. Julie Yu conducts at the concert in Dallas.

Music grad Josh Taylor brought some K-State magic to the First Presbyterian Church in Dallas in January. Josh, who serves as director of worship and music for the church, invited the Collegiate Chorale to be part of the dedication ceremony for the recently renovated sanctuary. Dallas-area alumni hosted chorale members, who performed with the church choir and a professional orchestra before an audience of almost 1,000. The concert was also broadcast by a Dallas NPR station.

The KSU Band program had a very busy break and is looking forward to a busy spring. The Cactus Bowl trip for the PRIDE was a huge success, and made use of the new equipment truck that K-State grad Eric Stonestreet had made for the band. Thank you, Eric! The 25th Annual

Concert Band Clinic welcomed more than 700 high school students, 85+ band directors, and seven honor bands to a weekend of rehearsals, clinics and performances. Special guests the “Moanin’ Frogs” brought the house down with their performance on Friday evening. This sax sextet specializes in chamber music with a “twist” and is hugely popular across the country. The KSU Wind Ensemble has been invited and will perform at the Kennedy Center on April 17 as part of the International Music Festival’s concert finale in Washington D.C. The trip will include an additional concert at the Navy memorial and a clinic by the conductors of the U.S. Marine Band “The President’s Own.” The ensemble will also tour the Marine band barracks and Sousa Band Hall.



Students of the Dance Program Sierra Burnett, Allison Griffin, Jenna Henderson, Emma Hochman, Sarah Pitzer, Hailey Price, and Jazmin Royg will present two pieces of choreography at The American College Dance Association conference in March. They will perform “With Eyes Closed (What Noise Becomes),” a creative research project which explores media saturation and its effects on sleep, dreams, and memory consolidation, choreographed by faculty member Stephen Loch. Students will also perform “Jitterbugs” choreographed by faculty member Kate Digby. Of the seven dancers, all five Arts and Sciences students received the Student Research Travel Award.

Allison Griffin, senior, said she is looking forward to the conference. “I am excited for the opportunity to grow as a dancer through meeting and learning from a variety of other creative artists. I am looking forward to sharing and experiencing dance with the expectation of gaining new perspectives that may influence my future endeavors as a dancer.”

The Bassoon Studio at K-State recently held “Bassoon Afternoon 2018” at McCain Auditorium. Our student attendees ranged in age from 5th grade to high school. The conclusion of the day was a performance of chamber



works by participants who were coached that day, the KSU Bassoon Ensemble and one large group work playing Wildcat Victory.

This event serves as a support for young bassoonists, a teaching opportunity for KSU students, and recruitment opportunity for the Bassoon Studio. Most participants do not have private lessons and this event fosters engagement and growth with this unique instrument.

Our studio fundraiser is the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance black fleece jacket that will go toward equipment and repair costs. Order anytime online, at our studio website: <http://www.kstatebassoon.com/> or email Dr. Susan Maxwell at suemax@ksu.edu. Cost of the jackets is \$45 and the sizing runs about one size large.

Violist Elizabeth Tobald (B.M. 2017) is pursuing a Performer’s Certificate at the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver. She attended the Castleman Quartet Program in Fredonia, New York for the second time last summer.

Violinist Christina Minton, junior in violin performance, attended the Conservatory Audition Workshop in Burlington, Vermont last summer.



Elizabeth Tobald

Faculty represent K-State throughout the U.S. and abroad

Dr. Anna Marie Wytko, Associate Professor of Saxophone, presented guest artist concerts and master classes at numerous conservatories throughout Italy in notable cities such as Milan, Florence, Perugia, Bologna and Venice.

Wytko also performed as concerto soloist with the West Valley Symphony of Arizona on two major concert series. She presented music by American composer John Williams and Argentine Tango Master Astor Piazzolla.



Amanda Arrington, guest artist Madeleine Mitchell and Cora Cooper

Nov. 2-9, 2017. Two guest artists were featured in recitals: Ting-Lan Chen (University of Nebraska at Kearney) performing a program of American music, and Madeleine Mitchell (Royal College of Music in London) playing all British music. Cooper’s students began the week with a studio recital of British and American music, and several performed in a master class with Mitchell. Their teacher, in addition to organizing the week, had the pleasure of performing Judith Weir’s violin duos, Atlantic Drift, and Rebecca Clarke’s beautiful Nocturne for two violins and piano, on Mitchell’s recital along with pianist Amanda Arrington.

Jerry Jay Cranford, Assistant Professor of Theatre, has been invited to teach workshops on preparing for college and careers in theatre for Musical Theatre Kansas City and for Crane River Theatre in Nebraska. He will spend the summer choreographing Sister Act the Musical for the New Theatre in Kansas City, directing Newsies the Musical for the Rose Theatre in Omaha, choreographing Goosebumps the Musical for the Coterie Theatre in Kansas City and directing and choreographing the Kansas City premiere of Newsies the Musical as well as Hairspray the Musical for the 8,000-seat Kansas City Starlight Theatre.

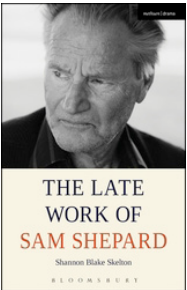
Sally Bailey, Director of Drama Therapy for K-State Theatre, was a symposium organizer for the American Alliance of Theatre in Education on Best Practices in Inclusive and Accessible Theatre, held in Louisville, Kentucky in February. The symposium was organized by the Accessible Theatre Special Interest Group which Bailey co-chairs. Short workshops introduced symposium attendees to different methods for making programming and theatre education inclusive to participants with different kinds of disabilities and other best practices for auditions, rehearsals, and performances. Bailey presented a short workshop on finding strengths in students with disabilities.

The highlight of the weekend was a sensory-friendly and fully accessible matinee of Hamlet presented by Stage One. The play was cut to an hour and a half for young audiences. Sensory Friendly performances are designed to help audience members with autism and other sensory integration disorders enjoy a performance that might be otherwise overwhelming. For instance, loud sound effects are played softly, house lights are not turned down all the way, and sudden lighting effects are toned down. Accessible performances offer large print programs and audio description for visually impaired audience members, audio enhancement, live captioning, and sign language interpreting for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Julie Pentz, Associate Director for Dance, is pictured with Dena Rizzo (left), queen of hip hop, at the Showstopper Dance Competition in Nashville. Pentz is judging seven regional dance competitions throughout the country this spring.



Dr. Shannon Blake Skelton’s “The Late Work of Sam Shepard” was published in hardback (and then paperback in late 2017) by Bloomsbury/Methuen. It received favorable reviews and was a bestseller on Amazon (Theatre Criticism category) following the death of Shepard in 2017. Skelton is an instructor in theatre. One reviewer noted: “Skelton explores less considered areas, and, in giving thoughtful and nuanced consideration to this late period, he stakes out important ground. The Late Work of Sam Shepard provides important context for a full understanding of the body of work.” -Harvard Review



Is freedom really what we think it is? Can one person be free if others are not?



A \$15,000, two-year National Endowment for the Arts Art Works grant will help **Kate Digby**, Assistant Professor of Dance in the Kansas State University School of Music, Theatre, and Dance, explore these questions as she develops “Search for Simurgh,” an immersive, interactive and interdisciplinary performance installation. The project is in posthumous collaboration with, and in tribute to, artist and writer Roya Movafegh, who escaped Iran during the revolution and passed away after a brief battle with cancer in 2015. Movafegh’s experience as a child refugee led her to question ideas of freedom in the West, and her experience with life-threatening illness prompted deeper exploration of the concept of freedom.

Digby often spoke with Movafegh about the disorientation she felt when she arrived in North America as a child and the inequalities and contradictions she observed in a “free” society. Movafegh channeled those ideas into her creative work.

“In 2010, Roya wove these concerns into a tale of mythological characters on a quest to save a dying forest, and we began exploring how to turn it into an interactive performance installation,” Digby said.

The vision for the project is for audience members to enter the performance space and interact with dancers, touch-sensitive sculptural elements, and other digital media, including output from audience members’ and dancers’ autonomic nervous systems generated through the integration of biosensors. Using high-tech medical research equipment and knowledge from healing and artistic practices will create an aesthetic experience that engenders authenticity and empathy.

For assistance with the project, Digby has turned to the research-creation collective Performance, Art, and Cyber-Interoceptive Systems, or PACIS, which aims to develop new and novel interfaces that integrate complex physiological data in performance and computational art contexts. PACIS collaborators on “Search for Simurgh” include playwright/director Erika Batdorf, pioneer of a technique that helps performers sense their own autonomic nervous system processes while performing; computational artist Mark-David Hosale; and applied-science artist Alan Macy, founder and R&D director of BIOPAC Systems, an equipment developer for life science research and education academic communities. Additional partners include story consultant/dramaturg Myriam Rafla and refugee advocate Omar Khan.

“It is an incredible gift to be working with artists,

scientists and activists who are all committed to using technology to enhance connection and authenticity. By hooking up audience members and performers to biosensors measuring their heart rate and breath rate and then amplifying these signals through theatrical lighting and sound, we aim to bring the inner felt experience of individuals out into the communal space where it can be shared,” Digby said.

— By Sarah Hancock



Pianist E. J. Choe, soprano Jumi Kim, trumpeter Craig B. Parker

Mummy and Sister for trumpet, soprano, and piano, written by Korean composer Young Jo Lee and dedicated to Dr. Parker. Assisting performers were soprano Jumi Kim and pianist E. J. Choe. On January 21 at that same conference, he performed Jhula Jhule for trumpet and piano by Indian-American composer Reena Esmail (who was visiting composer at KSU last semester). The collaborative pianist on that performance was Ko Eun Lee who played a recital and gave a master class at KSU in March 2016.

Parker arranged the fall 2017 KSU residencies of trumpeter/composer Allen Vizzutti and composer Reena Esmail. On November 29, he premiered Esmail’s Khirkiyann (WIndows): Three Transformations for Brass Quintet, a work that he commissioned, with the KSU Faculty Brass Quintet.

Parker organized the concert in memory of former KSU music faculty member Bruce Gbur that was presented at Manhattan’s First Congregational Church on December 12. With pianist Slawomir Dobrzanski, he premiered Elegy for trumpet and piano by KSU graduate Daniel Baldwin, a work composed especially for that occasion.

Dr. Frank Tracz, Director of Bands and Professor of Music continues to travel the country guest- conducting and adjudicating bands of all ages. He will be guest conducting in Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, Missouri, Texas, Illinois, and Washington D.C. Dr. Tracz will be teaching in Oregon, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Colorado.

Research news

Dr. Phillip Payne and Dr. Frederick Burrack recently published an article titled “Predictive Ability from ePortfolios of Student Achievement Associated with Professional Teaching Standards: An Exploratory Case Study” in *Research & Issues in Music Education*: Vol. 13 : No. 1, Article 6. Available at: <https://ir.stthomas.edu/rime/vol13/iss1/>

Dr. Frederick Burrack recently published a chapter titled “Teaching resource guide: Pastime with good company” in *Teaching Music through Performance in Band* (ed. Miles, R), GIA Publications: Chicago, IL.

In March of this year, several music faculty will present at the National NAfME Music Research and Teacher Education Conference in Atlanta. **Dr. Frederick Burrack** will present a session on “The Implications of Using Model Cornerstone Assessments in K-12 Music Classrooms for Music Program Leaders”; and along with **Dr. Jeffrey Ward**

and **Dr. Phillip Payne** will present a session titled “Understanding Relationships Between Student Achievement and Self-concept of Music Teaching in Written and Oral Communication, Critical-thinking, Diversity Skills, and Professional Integrity.”

Julie Pentz, Associate Director for Dance, contributed an article to the website of the National Dance Educators Organization on “Discovering Undergraduate Research Opportunities: Your Passion, Your Community, Your Significance.” Hannah Yeoman, senior in Dance and Wildlife Conservation with an emphasis in Biodiversity and Conservation, contributed to the article.

Dr. Craig B. Parker presented his paper, “Japanese Elements in the Compositions of Alan Hovhaness,” at the Composition in Asia conference in Tampa in January. This was an expansion of the paper that he presented at the 20th quinquennial conference of the International Musicological Society in Tokyo last March and at the 16th annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts & Humanities in Honolulu in January.

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