

PMEA Clinician Biographies

November 5, 2024

Mark Appiotti is originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He earned his Bachelor of Music Education degree from Mansfield University and a Masters Equivalency plus 30 graduate credits through the University of the Arts in Philadelphia by extension at Villanova University. Mark retired in 2023 from his thirty-five-year career as a music educator and band director having taught all levels of band from elementary through high school as well as strings from 4th - 9th grade and 7th - 9th grade general music. On two occasions, Mark was admitted to the "Who's who of American Teachers." For 28 seasons Mark was musical director and conductor of the Central Bucks Community Band in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. He is still active as a freelance musician, clinician, adjudicator, mentor with the Music Teacher Guild and has recently written and published a book for novice music teachers titled, *Balancing the Baton*. Mark and his bride of thirty-six years, Karen, live in Bucks County PA where they raised their six children.

David Bachart has been an educator for 26 years. He has taught in the Clark County School District in Nevada as well as in the Washington County School District in Utah. He has spent the past 21 years in the New Hope-Solebury School District teaching band at all grade levels as well as music technology, theory and music history.

Beth Beccone, CSTP is the Director of Sales and Marketing at Peak Group Travel. Beth joined Peak in 2019 after several years as a Festival/Event Director. She attended West Chester University of Pennsylvania, and was a member, and Drum Major, of the Incomparable Golden Rams Marching Band. She is the current President of the Band Chapter of the West Chester University Alumni Association, an alumni member of Tau Beta Sigma, and a member of the Board of Trustees for the Student Youth Travel Association Youth Foundation.

Aric Branchfield currently serves as an elementary instrumental music teacher in the Central Bucks School District who has over thirty years of experience teaching elementary band students. He received his bachelor's degree in music education from VanderCook College of Music in Chicago and hold's master's degree in Instructional Technology from St. Joseph's University.

In addition to teaching, he is also an active composer and arranger in the Philadelphia area. Over the past thirty years, he has composed and arranged music for groups throughout the country. Many of these works have been published by Southern Music as well as Ludwig Master's Music and have been performed at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago as well as the PMEA state conference. These pieces have been added to the prescribed festival and curriculum lists in many states including Texas, Ohio, Louisiana, North Carolina, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. He was recently recognized with a seventh Editor's Choice Award from the renowned music distributor J.W. Pepper for the piece *Journey to the Stars* presented by Ludwig Master's Music.

Dr. Whitney Covalle (PhD) is a singer, researcher, and choral music educator. Her research focuses on urban music education, the aural-oral tradition, and the intersection of race and teaching music. She is entering her second season as the conductor of T-VOCE (teen voices of the city), a free youth choir in Philadelphia in partnership with Singing City and Opera Philadelphia. She is also an Assistant Professor of Music Education at Montclair State University in New Jersey where she

teaches undergraduate and graduate preservice music educators. Her dissertation research on Philadelphia experts teaching Black Gospel music was recently published in Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education (2022). Previously, Dr. Covalle was a choir director in public schools and community music organizations in urban settings for 17 years, primarily in Chicago at Jones College Prep High School (Chicago Public Schools) and Uniting Voices Chicago (formerly Chicago Children's Choir). She has degrees from Michigan State University (BME), Westminster Choir College - Choral Emphasis (MME), and Temple University (PhD in Music Education) and the Urban Education Certificate from the College of Education and Human Development.

Courtney D'Aversa has been teaching elementary music in the Perkiomen Valley School District since 2008. She gained her Bachelor of Music Education from Westminster College in 2008, and her Masters of Music Education from West Chester University in 2013

Mrs. Virginia Herrmann is a recently retired director of orchestras, serving 25 years teaching in the Upper Dublin School District grades 3 through 12, as well as 10 years as a Strings Specialist in the School District of Philadelphia. Mrs. Herrmann served as director and coordinator of the UDSD Honors Orchestra as well as the UDHS Sophisticated Strings co-curricular performing ensemble which continue to perform at multiple community events in Upper Dublin. The 2019 and 2014 UDHS String Orchestras, the 2009 Upper Dublin String Quartet, and the 2007 UDHS Sophisticated Strings, were honored as featured performers under the direction of Virginia Herrmann at the PMEA annual State Conferences. With the assistance of the Sophisticated Strings, Mrs. Herrmann hosted the String Orchestra Festival Adjudication every March at UDHS for 10 years, and now serves annually as an adjudicator. Mrs. Herrmann is one of the founding members of the Montgomery County Honors String Orchestra dating to its inception in Fall 1998. Mrs. Herrmann has appeared as a guest conductor for 2023 PMEA D11 String Fest as well as the Bucks County, Berks County, and Pennsbury School District String Orchestra Days.

Tonia Asel Kaufman is the band director at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School in Plymouth Meeting. She proudly serves as a NAFME Equity Committee member, Institute for Composer Diversity Wind Band Co-coordinator, Mission Independent Percussion Ensemble Director, PMEA Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Coordinator, PMEA Mentor Teacher, and PMEA District 11 Vice-President. She was recently selected to be a member of the Phase 2 Cohort for the National Coalition for Arts Standards (NCAS) "Creating a Community for All Learners: Reimagining Standards-Based Arts Education for Equity & Inclusion" project focused on the reassessment of the National Arts Standards through the lens of culturally responsive teaching and student-centered instruction.

She was awarded a Pennsylvania Music Education Association Citation of Teaching Excellence and named a Colonial School District Master Teacher. She has been an adjunct professor of music education, teacher leader, music arranger, visual designer, jazz adjudicator, nonprofit board member, and jazz circuit administrator. Kaufman conducted various ensembles on the American Music Abroad Bronze Tour to Europe. She has presented sessions at regional and state conferences, and been a guest conductor in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

She is a Ph.D. student in Music Education with a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management at Temple University. She maintains National Board Certification in EA/YA Music and is a life coach. She loves teaching music and uses it as a vehicle to promote kindness and decency toward others.

Bret Mascaro recently retired as an adjunct professor and supervisor of student teachers at West Chester University. Previously, Bret completed a full career as a music teacher, band director, and Music Department Coordinator for the Methacton School District. During that time, Bret served as a PA Music Educators Association District President and Festival Coordinator and has twice been a clinician at the PMEA Conference.

Don Nguyen teaches general music, band, and a percussion ensemble at Upper Merion Area Middle School in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education, a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish, and a Graduate Certificate in ESL Teaching from West Chester University of Pennsylvania. He is certified to teach Music, Spanish, and ESL and is now completing his Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. He has presented national and local sessions on spreadsheets for educators, including one for the National Association for Music Education.

Dr. Elisabeth R. Sato is a music educator and violin performer. She holds a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in violin performance from the Esther Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University, a Master of Education in Music and Music Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a Doctorate in Music and Music Education from Teachers College. Elisabeth has held adjunct teaching positions at Middlesex County College and Teachers College, and has presented her work at the ASTA National Conference, ASTA/NJ, NAFME at Rutgers University, the NJEA Convention, and the NJMEA Annual Conference.

Elisabeth has been teaching in New Jersey public schools for eleven years. She is currently the Orchestra Director for grades 4/5 at the Martin Luther King Intermediate School in Piscataway, New Jersey. When she is not teaching, Elisabeth enjoys reading, traveling, cooking, and playing with her cat Friedrich.

Isaac Sattazahn is entering his second year as a music educator in the Norristown Area School District. After obtaining a B.M. in Music Education from West Chester University, he entered the field with an enthusiasm to share the joy of music with the next generation of students. He is excited to share with everyone at the PMEA District 11 Professional Development Day!

Rebecca Sensor has been a music teacher at DuBois Area Middle School since the fall of 2001. Her current duties include teaching 5th grade Rhythm and Movement classes and directs the 6-8 grade choirs. After regular school hours, she runs an after-school theater program where she directs the middle school musical and plays. She also co-directs ukulele and modern band ensembles. The DuBois Area School District has been recognized 5 times as a NAMM me Foundation's Best Communities for Music Education district. Rebecca is a frequent clinician and guest conductor.

Rebecca is very active in PMEA at the district, region, and state level where she is currently serving as State President-Elect. She is a member of the PMEA Mentor Program and is a trained presenter for PMEA's Model Curriculum Framework. She is also a PMEA Modern Band trainer and presented at the 2023 and 2024 Modern Band Summits in Fort Collins, Co.

Dr. Charles Speicher works for the Norristown Area School District where he teaches general music and chorus at Cole Manor Elementary School in addition to participating in the curriculum writing team for the district. During the summer he teaches for the New England Suzuki Institute in Maine as well as the Hartt School of Music Summer Institute with music history and theory courses for elementary through high school students and their families. Before getting into public education Dr. Speicher worked several years as the curriculum director to Little Kids Rock, as a freelance pianist and keyboard teacher in the North

Jersey Area, and taught a keyboard harmony class at Montclair University where he also was director of the Suzuki program during the late 90's and early 2000's.

Mrs. Lachele Nicole Vaughan started her musical career taking piano lessons and singing in her church choirs. She began to study music more seriously in high school by taking guitar, music theory, band, chorus to later become the first Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) All-State singer of Hatboro-Horsham High School by her junior year. By her senior year, she traveled to New York to sing in the PMEA All-Eastern chorus festival.

In 1995, Mrs. Vaughan began studying music education at Penn State University. While at Happy Valley, Mrs. Vaughan sang in numerous choirs, played in the campus band, and became the first student conductor of the Nittany Valley Children's Choir under the direction of Mrs. LuAnn Shafer. She also was the soprano soloist of a local church in State College. Mrs. Vaughan graduated with a B.S. in Music Education with a vocal emphasis and felt honored to be chosen as the soloist at her graduation in December of 1999.

For leisure, Mrs. Vaughan competed in the Miss America organization pageants. She eventually won the title of Miss Greater Juniata Valley in 1999 and moved forward to compete in the Miss Pennsylvania pageant. Her platform was Building Self-Esteem through the Arts which is still a focus near and dear to her heart.

In January of 2000, Mrs. Vaughan started her teaching career at Milton Hershey School. She taught PreK-5th grade general music, private vocal lessons, and directed the MHS gospel choir. In conjunction with teaching, Mrs. Vaughan found time to complete her M.Ed. at Penn State. Also while teaching, Mrs. Vaughan performed in local theaters. One of her favorite productions was playing Dorothy in The Wiz starring Sherman Hemsley (from the hit TV show The Jeffersons). She also has enjoyed singing with the Essence of Joy Alumni Choir, under the direction of Dr. Anthony Leach. On one of the EOJA tours, Mrs. Vaughan made her Eastern European debut on the stage of Smetana Hall in Prague singing "Summertime" from Gershwin's Porgy and Bess.

In 2005, Mrs. Vaughan started teaching in Lower Merion School District. She was the vocal music teacher, music director of shows, and a track coach for about 10 years. Welsh Valley Middle School is where she fell in love, dated, and married the love of her life, Kenny Vaughan. Fun fact: their middle school students set them up! They got married on 7/7/07 at 7:00PM and were quickly blessed with two amazing children, Ken III (16) and Leila Nicole (14).

Mrs. Vaughan has her own private music studio where she teaches beginner piano and voice lessons to 25 students ranging from ages 5-65. Her students endearingly call her "Ms. Lachele" and frequently have students land leading roles in their musicals and make their schools' select ensembles. Mrs. Vaughan has hosted PMEA songfests and has been a guest conductor for PMEA county choirs. Her most recent guest conducting appearance was for the 2022 PMEA Centre County Middle School County Choir Festival hosted by her good friend, Eric Brinser.

Mrs. Vaughan currently teaches middle school general music and chorus at Holland Middle School in Council Rock School District. She also directs the musicals at her school and has served on various committees within her school district. Just this summer, Mrs. Vaughan earned her Level 1 Kodaly certification and presented at the ACDA-PA summer conference.

Dr. Scott Watson is Associate Professor of Music at Cairn University (Langhorne, PA). For 35 years prior he was an instrumental and elective music teacher in the Parkland School District (Allentown, PA), first as high school Director of Bands, then as coordinator of the elementary band/strings program across the district. He is a frequently commissioned composer with more than 120 published pieces for band and strings at all levels that have been performed around the world at venues including the Academy of Music

(Philadelphia), the Midwest Clinic (Chicago) and the White House (Washington, D.C.). He is an exclusive composer/clinician for Alfred Publications and a contributor for their Sound Innovations band series.

Watson has presented numerous workshops/clinics for music educators, frequently serves as guest conductor/clinician for honor/festival bands, and is the author of the highly regarded music education text, *Using Technology to Unlock Musical Creativity* (©2011, Oxford University Press). To learn more, visit

www.scottwatsonmusic.com

Dr. Barbara S. Weikert enthusiastically serves as the Norristown Area School District music coordinator and liaison, teaching at her hometown middle school for over two decades. She is a National Education Association 2024 Global Learning fellow, a certified yoga instructor, and is a three time marathoner. Her doctoral dissertation explored job satisfaction and stress among principals. Barbara is a Fulbright fellow (Morocco 2022) is a Past President of the Pennsylvania Council for International Education (PACIE), and is a current board member for the Fulbright Philadelphia/Delaware Valley Chapter. She has taught for Cabrini University and Holy Family University and is the Middle School Professional Development Representative on the PMEA District 11 Board. Barbara believes that every person has a story to tell; listening, learning, and sharing, through music and the arts, is a purposeful way of connecting with our beautiful world.

James Westlake - We are a brass quintet made up of former and current music educators that performs in a variety of venues.