



For Immediate Release

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Six Distinguished Conductors to Lead the 2021 NAFME All-National Honor Ensembles

*The Nation's Top High School Musicians to Perform in Six Ensembles
in Virtual Performances in January 2022*

RESTON, VA. (June 10, 2021) – In January, six award-winning conductors will lead the National Association for Music Education's (NAfME) premier All-National Honor Ensembles (ANHE) in master classes and virtual performances to take place January 22–24. NAFME is pleased to announce the return of both the modern band and guitar ensembles to the ANHE program.

The nation's most accomplished high school musicians will audition for the opportunity to rehearse and perform in a one-of-a-kind national music honors program. The students must first compete at their local, district, and state level to become eligible for this distinguished honor. In January, these exceptional musicians will gather virtually to showcase their expert musicianship and perform in online concerts celebrating music education and the arts.

The All-National Honor Ensembles consist of a concert band, symphony orchestra, mixed choir, jazz ensemble, guitar ensemble, and modern band ensemble, now in its third year. The concert band and symphony orchestra will each have approximately 120 instrumentalists, the jazz ensemble 20 instrumentalists, the mixed choir approximately 240 vocalists, the guitar ensemble 60 guitarists, and the modern band ensemble 20 musicians. Eligible students have qualified for their state-level honor ensemble program and competed against top students for a spot in these national honor ensembles. As many states do not have an All-State Guitar Ensemble, students who participate in their school's guitar ensemble program are permitted to apply for the All-National Guitar Ensemble. Similarly, as many schools do not have modern band ensembles, students are permitted to apply for All-National Modern Band if they are sponsored by a NAFME member. **The audition deadline is September 15, 2021, at 11:59 PM Eastern time.**

Ensemble members will perform under the direction of six of the most prominent conductors in the United States.



Travis J. Cross (he/him), professor of music at UCLA, will lead the **2021 All-National Concert Band**. At UCLA Cross conducts the Wind Ensemble, directs the graduate wind conducting program, and chairs the music department. He was also associate dean for academic mentoring and opportunity during the initial years of the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. Cross has conducted the UCLA Wind Ensemble at the California All-State Music Education Conference and College Band Directors National Association Western/Northwestern Division conference and prepared the band for centenary

performances of Leonard Bernstein's Mass with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Cross earned doctor and master of music degrees in conducting from Northwestern University and the bachelor of music degree *cum laude* in vocal and instrumental music education from St. Olaf College. His principal teachers were Mallory Thompson and Timothy Mahr. Cross has appeared as a guest conductor, composer, and clinician in nearly 40 states; internationally in Canada, China, Korea, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, and the United Arab

Emirates; as featured band clinician at the Texas Music Educators Association Clinic/Convention; and on several occasions at the Music for All National Festival and Midwest Clinic. [Read more about Travis Cross.](#)



LaSaundra Booth, a National Board Certified teaching artist, inventor, author, conductor, and arts administrator, will lead the **2021 All-National Symphony Orchestra**. She has 18 years of experience teaching and conducting orchestra at the elementary, middle, high, and collegiate level. All of her performing ensembles received superior ratings in adjudicated music festivals and competitions. Booth has a certificate in nonprofit management from Duke University, a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership, a Master's Degree in Music Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and a Bachelor of Music from North Carolina Central University. She studied with Dr. Timothy Holley, Alex Ezerman, Jesse L. Suggs, Jr., Kellie Keiser, and Jennifer Wernicke. Booth is a Sphinx LEADer (Leaders in Excellence, Arts & Diversity) who is known for anchoring discussions on how to make public school orchestra programs more equitable, diverse, and inclusive to all students. She has a successful history of establishing diverse, equitable, and inclusive programs at the elementary, middle, high school, and collegiate levels. [Read more about LaSaundra Booth.](#)



Geoffrey Paul Boers is the Director of Choral Activities and the Ruth Waters Professor of Music at the University of Washington in Seattle. He will lead the **2021 All-National Mixed Choir**. His focus on holistic learning has led him to develop mentorship groups for local cohorts of music educators across the United States and Canada. Most recently, he has created the Choral Literacies and Skills rubric, which is a system for development of choral musicianship, assessment, adjudication, and repertoire grading. He has conducted in many of the major concert halls across the United States and Canada, as well as concerts in Europe, Asia and Australia. He has the opportunity to work with thousands of singers of all ages and diverse cultures each year. He is well-known for innovative programming and finding ways to make choral performances meaningful and transformative to modern audiences. Geoffrey conducts the UW Chamber Singers, a choir of graduate and advanced undergraduate music majors studying choral conducting, vocal performance, music education, as well as many students from programs across campus. [Read more about Geoffrey Boers.](#)



Todd Stoll will lead the **2021 All-National Jazz Ensemble**. Stoll has taught young musicians at every level, from elementary school through college. His impact on public music education can be seen in his legacy at central Ohio's Westerville City Schools, where he served for 18 years as music teacher and for 10 years as music curriculum coordinator. He has also served as Ohio's president of the International Association of Jazz Educators and the inaugural chair of jazz events for the Ohio Music Education Association. In 2011, Stoll became the Vice President of Education at Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC) in New York City, which continues to afford him the opportunity to bring jazz education programs to thousands of people of all ages and socioeconomic levels. Since he joined the organization, JALC has produced more than 10,000 education events in the United States and around the world. Stoll holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from Miami University. He currently serves on the boards of the Jazz Education Network where he is President; the New York City chapter of Most Valuable Kids; and the NafME Music Education Policy Roundtable. [Read more about Todd Stoll.](#)



Olga Amelkina-Vera performs solo and as a founding member of Kithara Duo, her guitar duo with Fernand Vera. Kithara Duo has been invited to perform and teach at numerous festivals and universities throughout the country. She will lead the **2021 All-National Guitar Ensemble**. Olga holds a Bachelor of Arts degree Summa Cum Laude from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, a Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in guitar performance with a minor in music history from the University of North Texas, and a Masters degree in composition from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Her SMU thesis composition, *Submerged Worlds* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion, won the 2017-2018 American Prize in the instrumental chamber music division. She is in demand as an educator, conductor and artist-in-residence, frequently getting invitations to perform solo and conduct her music with guitar orchestras throughout the country. Most recent engagements include Florida Music Educators Association All-State Guitar Orchestra, Indiana University Guitar Ensemble Festival, Pacific Lutheran University Guitar Ensemble Festival, as well as residencies and guitar ensemble commissions for St. Louis Classical Guitar, Harrison School for the Arts in Lakeland, Florida, and Park View High School in Sterling, Virginia. [Read more about Olga Amelkina-Vera.](#)



Spencer Hale is the Senior Manager of Teaching and Learning at Little Kids Rock. Hale will lead the **2021 All-National Honor Modern Band**. They joined the team at Little Kids Rock in 2016 after teaching in New York City public schools. They co-authored the Modern Band Method Books Series, which was recognized as Best Method Book by SBO Magazine's 2021 Best Tools for Schools. In 2014, they began building a YouTube channel, [YouTube.com/SpencerCHale](https://www.youtube.com/SpencerCHale), to support their students' learning. The channel now features more than 300 educational videos and has grown to a global audience of more than 14,000 subscribers and more than 3 million views. Outside of their work in music education, Spencer performs in bands around New York City and records music at home, heavily

distracted by their two cats. [Read more about Spencer Hale.](#)

Read more about the NAFME 2021 All-National Honor Ensembles, guest conductor biographies, and how students may audition by visiting: nafme.org/ANHE and follow #ANHE2021.

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[National Association for Music Education](#), among the world's largest arts education organizations, is the only association that addresses all aspects of music education. NAFME advocates at the local, state, and national levels; provides resources for teachers, parents, and administrators; hosts professional development events; and offers a variety of opportunities for students and teachers. The Association has supported music educators at all teaching levels for more than a century. With more than 60,000 members teaching millions of students nationwide, the organization is the national voice for music education in the United States.

[Jazz at Lincoln Center](#) The mission of Jazz at Lincoln Center is to entertain, enrich and expand a global community for Jazz through performance, education and advocacy. We believe Jazz is a metaphor for Democracy. Because jazz is improvisational, it celebrates personal freedom and encourages individual expression. Because jazz is swinging, it dedicates that freedom to finding and maintaining common ground with others. Because jazz is rooted in the blues, it inspires us to face adversity with persistent optimism.

[Little Kids Rock](#) transforms lives by restoring, expanding, and innovating music education in our schools. Our network of thousands of K–12 teachers across 45 states leads a national movement that brings innovative and inclusive music education to students. Using genres including rock, pop, Latin, and rap, the Little Kids Rock program empowers teachers to build music programs as diverse as the kids they serve. Students see themselves reflected in their classes, which strengthens their connection to their school, their peers, and their community. Little Kids Rock also donates necessary instruments and curriculum, meeting a key need of many school music programs. The world of music expands through innovation. Little Kids Rock ensures that music education does as well. More than 500,000 kids currently participate in Little Kids Rock programs nationwide. Since 2002, the

organization has reached more than 1,000,000 students with highly inclusive and culturally relevant music education.

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