



2026-2027 Iowa High School Musical Theater Award Adjudicators *Listed Alphabetically by last name.*

Janet Albanese | is a strong supporter of Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards and a native of Des Moines. Janet has worked professionally as a production manager and stage manager on both coasts. She has taught stage management to students in undergraduate programs and mentored young stage managers at a variety of professional theaters and academic programs. Janet brings over 20 years of experience working on productions from concept to realized design. She is passionate about communicating this collaborative experience to liberal arts students so they can grow in whatever capacity they are interested—as actors, designers, directors, or stage managers. Janet is the director of production and building services at Des Moines Performing Arts. Previously she has stage managed Iowa's longest running show, *Triple Espresso*, as well as shows around the country, including in Los Angeles and New York.

Kaya Baca | Kaya Baca, or Ms. Baca as her students call her, has been in musical theatre her entire life. Starting at age 6, she began performing for a ballet company, the first show being *Macbeth* as a witch. From then on, she learned to love being on stage, fighting through stage fright. Though there have been many challenges, Baca has fought through them to be where she is today. Now, she is the head of a theatre department and a Thespian Troupe.

Robert Barry | Robert Barry is a retired vocal music instructor from Sioux City, Iowa. He possesses a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Morningside University and a Master of Science in School Administration from Wayne State University. Bob spent 38 years teaching vocal and instrumental music in public and private schools in Northwest Iowa, as well as serving in acting and directing capacities in primary, secondary and collegiate settings. Bob has extensive experience as a performer, director, musical director and accompanist. His work extends to school and community theater productions, regional theater work at Lamb Arts Regional Theatre and professional productions with the Betty Ling Tsang Summer Theater Series at Morningside University. Bob maintains a private voice studio and mentors new choral conductors through the Iowa Alliance for Arts Education and the Iowa Choral Directors Association. He appears often as an adjudicator with the Iowa High School Music Association.

Sarah Kate Bode | (she/her) is a theatre artist and educator. She currently teaches theatre courses and directs, designs, and intimacy choreographs at both Des Moines Community College (Ankeny Campus) and GrandView University before returning to Iowa, Sarah Kate worked professionally in the Washington, DC region as a stage manager, teaching artist, and technician. She considers Shakespeare Theatre Company her "home theatre" but has also had the pleasure of working at a variety of other theatres, including The Kennedy Center, Imagination Stage, Synetic Theatre, and Constellation Theatre Company.

Sarah Kate earned her AA in Theatre at Iowa Central Community College, her BA in Theatre at the University of Iowa, and her Master's in Arts & Theatre Education from the Catholic University



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of America. She loves working with the next generation of performers and supporting them the best she can.

Wendy Bryce | Wendy Joy Bryce has been performing in theatre for over 40 years. She received her Theatre Major from Morningside University, and she has performed in many productions at the Sioux City Community Theatre, Lamb Regional Arts Theatre, New Stage Players, The Betty Ling Tsang Fine Arts Series, Shot in the Dark Productions, and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. Her specialty is in acting and directing, and she was an Iowa High School Speech Coach for over 13 years. During her time as a Speech Coach at Sioux City East, her team received the Critic's Choice Banners in Choral Reading, Radio Broadcasting, and Solo Mime. She also coached over 100 groups to the all-state speech festival. She currently is an IHSSA speech judge, and she also enjoys competing every August at the Iowa State Fair in the Husband Calling Contest! You can check out many videos on youtube.

John Busbee | John Busbee began his musical theatre career while attending the University of Iowa in Theatre and Theatre Design. He has served in variety of roles, having managed and performed in a national touring company he cofounded, performing to critical praise in leading roles in regional theater and musicals, to designing work at the university and professional level. He also has been reviewing theatrical productions for more than 25 years. He has coached musical theatre ensembles for IHSSA, with a majority of the ensembles achieving All-State. He later served as an All-State Critic. He co-founded the Cloris Leachman Excellence in Theatre Arts Awards in Greater Des Moines, serving as a judge for 9 years. Since 2007, he has produced a weekly arts and culture radio show that is anchored by the performing arts coverage and stories. He was awarded the 2014 Iowa Governor's Award for Collaboration and Partnership in the Arts.

Susan Cantine | Susan Cantine directed numerous musicals and variety shows in her 30+ years of teaching at Decorah High School. She worked closely with professional choreographer Valerie Williams from Ames on several of the musicals. In addition, She was Assistant to the Director for several Dorian Opera Theatre productions at Luther College. She coached both large group and individual events for the Iowa High School Speech Association and has been an IHSSA Hall of Fame member since 2005. She has been a critic judge several times at both Individual and Large Group Outstanding Performance Festivals .

After retirement from education, she became the Executive Director of the Brown Grand Theatre, a 100+ year old restored opera house, in Concordia KS. In retirement, she currently teaches online, volunteers, and dabbles in community theatre.

Dan Chase | Dan Chase holds a BME in music education from Iowa Wesleyan College, with graduate studies from the University of Northern Iowa, VanderCook College of Music, and Drake University. Over four decades, he has directed and performed in more than 70 dramas,



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comedies, and musicals, with favorite roles including Roat in Wait Until Dark, Carmichael in A Behanding in Spokane, and John Wilkes Booth in Assassins.

At Ankeny Community Theatre, Dan has directed Dial M for Murder (Cloris nomination, Best Play), Arsenic and Old Lace (Cloris nomination, Best Director), and An Enemy of the People (Cloris nominations, Best Play and Best Director).

He retired from a 27-year career as a high school choral director and 12 years performing with Jest Murder Mysteries alongside his wife, Carol Palmer. Dan continues shaping young musicians as an adjudicator for IHSMA and IHSMTA, and enjoys gardening and the occasional nap.

Stephanie Coble | has a Bachelors degree in Speech, Communications and Theater Arts Teaching from the University of Northern Iowa and a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership from Drake University. She has over 40 years of experience acting, directing children's theater, plays and musicals for schools, community theater and church productions. She has taught theater and speech and coached speech teams.

Stephanie enjoys being a judge for Iowa High School Speech Association, and an Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards Adjudicator.

Stephanie is the Innovation Program Officer for Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates, volunteers at her church First United Methodist, and is the Business Manager for the Hawkeye Community Theatre board in Ft. Dodge, Iowa. Stephanie traveling, sewing, photography, and spending time with family, especially all of their wonderful grandchildren.

Michelle Criss | As a judge for IHSSA and NSDA, Michelle has enjoyed experiencing the talent the Midwest youth hold. Last year, she had the opportunity to adjudicate for IHSMTA, and she looks forward to continuing to bring her experience to Musical Theater. Michelle also spends time as an amateur director for the Siouxland Homeschool Theater and looks forward to joining the directing team for the Penguin Project's production of Seussical the Musical this year. She has also been working to bring Shakespeare to Siouxland, and hopes to direct a summer production of A Midsummer Night's Dream next summer with New Stage Players.

Jim Cross | is a graduate of Greenville University, with a BA in Theatre with an emphasis in artistic direction. Jim Cross's career has including doing high school productions and community theatre in both Illinois and Iowa. In addition, he has been a speech coach for the Iowa High School Speech Association for over 10 years in the Riceville Community School District and more recently Northwest High School in Waukee.

Amy De Waard | Amy was active in musicals and singing in her elementary and secondary years. While her performing days are over on the stage, she can still be found performing in her



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preschool classroom, car and home. She loves to see high school kids shine and find their passion in the arts!

Peter Dean | Peter Dean is a local actor, director, IHSSA Large Group speech coach and Director at Dallas Center Grimes HS. He has performed with StageWest, Urbandale Community Theatre, Iowa Stage Theater Company and with the Des Moines Playhouse on both the main stage as well as in the children's theater.

Some of Peter's favorite roles to date have been Sharktooth in How I Became a Pirate (Dionysus Award winner), Cowardly Lion in The Wizard of Oz, Gaston in Disney's Beauty and the Beast and Sheriff Tom in Girls' Weekend and The Bachelorette Party (Girls Weekend 2). Most recently, he was co-director for the DCG production of Our Town.

Sabrina Duke | Sabrina Duke graduated from the University of Iowa with a BFA in Dance (choreography concentration) and BA in Theatre Arts (musical theatre track). Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, she began dancing and performing at the age of three and trained with Cleveland professionals Gladisa Guadalupe, Jamie Koeth, Leslie Varnick, Melanie Szucs, and Heidi Glynias. She participated in the Dazzle Awards (Jimmy Awards affiliate program) for all four years of high school. As an Iowa student, she performed in dance department shows including Dance Gala at Hancher Auditorium, Faculty/Graduate concert, was a member of the touring University of Iowa Dance Company and worked as a research assistant for dance historian Professor Rebekah Kowal. She played Atropos in the Theatre Arts department's production of String and choreographed their production of Something Rotten!. She now works for the University of Iowa as Senior Admissions Counselor and performs and teaches in the Iowa City area.

V~ Dumas-Wines | V~ Dumas-Wines began performing more than 70 years ago, and never stopped. She was a Master Teacher at The DM Playhouse and was a member of their professional troupe Actors On Tour. She has worked as an actor, director, acting coach, writer, and taught acting workshops all over Iowa. V~'s company Allegro Children's Theatre Productions produced plays around Central Iowa, many at the state Historical Building. For Allegro, she was producer, director, costumer, sound, stage manager, props, and, in a pinch, actor. She is currently writing a one-woman play. She last appeared in The Full Monty at Stephens Auditorium in Ames, and directed The Savannah Sipping Society, also at Stephens. She received Best Supporting Actress for IA/South Dakota Theater AACT/Fest for her roles in From The Window. Other credits include: Nunsense, The Cemetery Club, I Do! I Do!, Company, Zorba, The Wizard of Oz, Absurd Person Singular

David Felton | David Felton is an actor/stage manager/director in the Des Moines Theatre Scene. His directing has been nominated for Cloris Awards for both the 2022 production of "The Prom" at Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre and 2024 production of "Beetlejuice Jr." with Class Act Productions in Altoona. Some of his most recent work has been service as Assistant



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Director of "Crazy For You" at Des Moines Playhouse, as well as stage managing their productions of "Knuffle Bunny" and "Jersey Boys." When not working on stage, he enjoys seeing and reviewing shows for Broadwayworld Des Moines as a regional contributing editor, as well as judging for IHSSA, The Cloris Awards, and adjudicating for IHSMTA.

Eric Field | Eric is a school psychologist with previous experience teaching junior/senior high school English, Speech, and Drama for thirteen years; he has adjudicated for Iowa High School Musical Theatre Awards since 2022. Additionally, he is an educational consultant helping students transition into best-fit postsecondary options, including performing arts schools and conservatories. He received his Ph.D. from University of Iowa in 2025. He has also served as an actor, director, and stage manager for over 35 years in amateur and semiprofessional theatre. Favorite roles include Nathan Detroit (Guys and Dolls), Herman (Sweet Charity), and Mr. Boddy (Clue the Musical). Favorite directing credits include Guys and Dolls, Barry Manilow's Copacabana, My Fair Lady, Oklahoma!, and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.

Sarah Florian | has a Bachelor of Music with Emphasis in Business Studies with minors in Musical Theatre and Business Studies from Drake University. Sarah has spent a majority of her career in arts administration with roles at the Des Moines Symphony & Academy, Des Moines Performing Arts, and the Iowa Arts Council. During her professional tenure in the sector, she is most proud of managing the day-to-day operations of the Iowa High School Musical Theatre Awards and being part of the team that built this program into the statewide initiative it is today. While she has left the arts as a profession, you can still see Sarah singing with the Des Moines Choral Society or catch her performing in a musical around town. Most recent musical theatre credits include Kinky Boots (Pat) and A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder (Ensemble/Miss Barley), both at the Des Moines Playhouse.

Stefanie Ford | Stefanie Ford is an elementary art and music teacher from Exira-EHK. In high school Stefanie participated in large group and individual speech as well as all of the high school musicals. She was actively involved in community theatre and 4H where she continued to hone her skills. Once teaching, Stefanie certified to become a judge for the IHSSA and quickly found a love for judging large group and solo musical theatre. She has been judging for speech for over 10 years. She has co-directed school musical productions. She is also a season ticket holder for the Willis Broadway Series at the Civic Center allowing her years of seeing musical productions to refer to. She has a love of the arts and of arts education.

Denise Forney | Denise Forney is an active member of the central Iowa theatre community with extensive experience as an adjudicator, performer and arts advocate. She serves as Board President and an adjudicator for the Cloris Awards, celebrating excellence in community theatre throughout central Iowa. Denise is also a certified Iowa High School Speech Association (IHSSA) judge and has adjudicated musical theatre at both the Individual and Group State



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Speech contests. She has proudly served as an adjudicator for the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards, where she especially enjoys providing students with thoughtful, constructive and encouraging feedback.

A lifelong musician and vocalist, Denise has performed throughout central Iowa for many years and has a deep appreciation for musical theatre and the performing arts. She is passionate about encouraging young artists, celebrating their accomplishments and helping students grow in confidence, creativity and their craft.

Lynnea Fredrickson-Smith | Lynnea Fredrickson-Smith is a Forest City native and a passionate proponent of creating quality theatre in rural areas. She earned her BFA in Musical Theatre from Nebraska Wesleyan University and a BA in Theatre Arts at Bowling Green State University. In the summer of 2015 she organized and directed BrickStreet's revival production of Carousel. Since then she has directed six more musicals, acted in five productions, and has costumed dozens.

Jessica Fridley | Jess Fridley has been an adjudicator for the past 4 years. Although she has never found herself singing on stage, she is in her 10th year of teaching speech and drama. Fridley is well known as a judge for the IHSSA and NSDA for 13 years, encouraging students on and off the stage with constructive feedback and cheering students on through all levels of performance. When not teaching or judging, Fridley is often found on the football field performing and choreographing for different color guard groups around Iowa and Minnesota.

Peggy George | Peggy, a Mezzo-Soprano, is a Voice and Music Ed. grad of Simpson College and has done graduate work in Theater, Music and Education at U.N.I. She has taught Vocal/General Music in both public and private schools, as well as maintaining a private studio where she teaches Piano, Guitar, Voice, and Stage Dialects. She has performed in theatrical and choral productions in Des Moines, Indianola, Cedar Falls, Waterloo, Decorah, Amana, Dubuque and in summer stock theater at the Thunder Bay Theater in Alpena, Michigan. She has sung with the Waterloo Metropolitan Chorale and the Dubuque Chorale, at times, serving as alto soloist. With the latter, she toured eight foreign countries. Currently, she sings Alto 1 with DUCC, at Drake, wherein she will take part this year in a performance of Mozart's Requiem. Rounding out her experience, she has served on Lights, Props and Costume crews.

Kendra Gliem | Kendra Gliem is a current Education Director and Associate Artistic Director at the Waterloo Community Playhouse/ Black Hawk Children's Theater. She is a TheaterUNI alum and has over 10 years of theatrical experience, including acting, directing, teaching and devising various theater works. She has been involved with children's theaters such as The Rose Theater in Omaha, NE, and Missoula Children's Theater in Missoula, MT. Kendra is passionate about working with children to improve their craft and to create a safe space for children to express themselves creatively. Kendra has worked with children and adults of varying abilities and feels her time is best spent creating an inclusive theatrical experience. Kendra is thrilled to



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be adjudicating for IHSMTA again this year and cannot wait to see the talent that our Iowa's schools have to offer!

Michael Gookin | Michael Gookin is a seasoned educator with extensive experience in musical theater direction, vocal music direction, and production. With a background spanning over 10 years, he has worked both onstage and behind the scenes in community, educational, and semi-professional theater settings. His expertise includes vocal performance, acting, staging, and choreography at West Central Valley Schools (Stuart), Grinnell High School, American Gothic Performing Arts Festival (Ottumwa), Way Off Broadway (Fairfield), and Evelyn Gamrath's Summer Camp (Fairfield). He was featured as a solo pianist and musical theater accompanist for the Promising Artist of the 21st Century, a prestigious young artist program in Costa Rica. Michael has been a part of IHSMTA programming as a participant and accompanist since 2017.

Michelle Grob | I have acted in, directed, produced, and choreographed for 60+ productions in Children's theatre, MS and HS theatre, and three community theatre groups since 1993. I currently live in Pella, Iowa and I am the head director at PCM school district.

Adam Haselhuhn | Adam Haselhuhn is currently serving his third term on the Board of Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre (DMYAT). Previous acting credits include The Duke of Weselton in Frozen (Des Moines Playhouse), Sheldon in The Prom at DMYAT, Uncle Fester in The Addams Family (Cloris Award Winner), Charlie Brown in You're A Good Man Charlie Brown, Drake in Honk! (Cloris Award Nominee), and Eric Sheridan in Unnecessary Farce (ICTA Award Nominee) at Ankeny Community Theatre, Albert Peterson in Bye Bye Birdie at Urbandale Community Theatre, and he has directed and performed at Class Act Productions (CAP Theatre). Adam won a Cloris Award for Best Direction of a Musical for The SpongeBob Musical at DMYAT. He has won numerous awards for directing and writing in the 711 Theatre Competition and previously performed as CB in Dog Sees God at the Iowa Fringe Festival. He hosted the Cloris Awards in 2025.

Kenneth Hayes | Dr. Kenneth Hayes went to Northwestern College, Orange City, IA. While attending Northwestern College, he was awarded a theatre scholarship to study under Jeff & Karen Barker, where he performed in numerous plays and musicals. After graduating, Dr. Hayes was a high school business teacher, where he also served as the advisor/coach for the school plays, musicals, large group & individual speech. He is the author of several published monologues and continues to write scripts in his spare time. He has acted and directed in community theater plays and musicals with Orange City's Tulip Festival and Starfighter's Theatre in Anamosa. In 2000, Dr. Hayes became a principal and was awarded the Fine Arts Administrator of the Year by the Iowa High School Speech Association (IHSSA) in 2009. Dr. Hayes has served as a judge for the IHSSA for many years over the past two decades. He currently works at UNI.



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Laura Hinspeter | is the owner and instructor at L.A.H. Music Studio in Waukee, teaching private voice, piano and flute lessons year-round. She is an active music educator: clinician, adjudicator, and studio instructor. She has her Bachelor of Music Education from Wartburg College. Laura started her career teaching 6th-12th grade vocal music for the St. Ansgar Schools. Her career continued in the West Des Moines Schools where she taught 7-8 grade vocal music at Stilwell Junior High School (2001-2005). When at Stilwell her students sang on the east staircase at the Des Moines Civic Center before attending opening night of *Les Misérables*. Laura has been a member of the Iowa Choral Directors Association, an adjudicator for the Iowa High School Music Association and Iowa All-State Jazz Choir and serves as clinician and festival director throughout the state of Iowa. She has been a member of the IHSMTA adjudication team since 2016.

Sarah Hinzman | Sarah Hinzman is a native Iowan with a lifelong love of the performing and visual arts. Thanks to the mentorship of her outstanding arts educators in Iowa's public school system, she pursued a career in the performing arts. That career has lasted 20+ years, and given her opportunities to travel around the USA, and occasionally overseas, doing what she loves and was meant to do. She earned a BFA in Music Theatre from Viterbo University, a certificate from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, and an MFA in Directing from Florida State University. She also holds an MS in Leadership from Drake University. She currently directs, acts, and teaches in the Corridor area of Eastern Iowa.

Adam Hooten | Adam Hooten works as a Family Support Specialist with Families First Counseling Services, working directly with children and families throughout Northeast Iowa. He enjoys helping young people recognize their strengths, build confidence, and continue moving forward.

Outside of his work in social services, Adam is the founder and director of Wolfpack Theater Company in Waukon, Iowa, where he directs, produces, and choreographs productions primarily with middle and high school age performers. Working with young performers and watching them grow on their own theater journey is one of his favorite parts of theater.

Adam also serves as an IHSMTA adjudicator and IHSSA Speech judge, giving him the opportunity to see and support students and programs throughout Iowa.

Jennifer Kreider | Dr. Jenna Kreider is an Assistant Professor of Music (Voice) at Simpson College where she teaches both musical theater and operatic singing styles. Along with teaching, she has a career as a solo performer and has sung at opera companies and music festivals in the United States, England, and Austria. In 2022 & 2023, she won district regions of the Metropolitan Opera's Laffont Competition, and in 2023 she won second place in the Upper Midwest Region of the same competition. Jenna received her Doctor of Music and Artist Diploma from Indiana University, her Master of Music from Rice University in Houston, TX, and her Bachelor of Music from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ.



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Emily Kruse | is a development manager at Des Moines Performing Arts (DMPA). While growing up in Libertyville, IL, a northern Chicago suburb, she attended many performances at the Marriott Lincolnshire Theater in Lincolnshire and the Auditorium Theater in Chicago. She began playing French horn in fourth grade and was in the pit orchestra for her high school productions of MY FAIR LADY and INTO THE WOODS, the latter of which was selected for the Illinois High School Theatre Festival. Emily was a four-year member of the Hawkeye Marching Band and has continued to play her instrument since then. She is a season ticket holder at the Civic Center and donor to DMPA. Emily has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Iowa and a Master's Degree in Communication from the University of Dubuque.

Lissa Lane-Johnson | I have been performing on stage in one form or another since childhood. I first pursued a music career, working as a professional musician and singer for more than fifteen years. During this time I also taught ballet, jazz, and tap at a local studio.

In college, I studied theater, working in the costume department, designing for several shows. I also appeared in several productions. I began working with the Sheldon High School Summer Theatre program in 1991, eventually. During that time, I directed several musicals as well as plays. I was also lucky enough to be a speech coach for Sheldon High School.

Though I am now retired from the world of education, I am still involved in local theater as a director and actor. I believe my experience with music, dance, and theater, and particularly with high school, gives me a unique perspective when adjudicating.

Avery Lauer | Avery Lauer was born in Fort Collins, Colorado in 2000, was raised in Pleasantville, Iowa, and has been involved in the arts for a decade.

His theater work includes costume designs for Dog Sees God (italicize), Detroit '67, Eurydice, Do You Feel Anger?, and Indecent. His film work includes assistance on Landman (italicize), El Gato Negro, Horizon, and The Madison. Mr. Lauer has adjudicated twenty-five productions within two years of service to the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards program. He participated in the program as a student, and was invited to the Triple Threat program in 2018. In 2019, Lauer received the Technical Theater Scholarship from the IHSMTA, which is the highest honor the program awards to a designer. He lives in Los Angeles.

Carl Lindberg | Carl Lindberg is Professor and Chair of the Theatre and Acting Programs at Des Moines Area Community College. He also continues to work as an actor, director, and adaptor. He holds a B.A. in Acting from CSU Stanislaus and an M.F.A. in Directing from Western Illinois University. Acting credits include working on stage with companies including Steppenwolf, Iowa Stage, Lookingglass, Remy Bumppo, and more and working on screen in feature length and short films and regional and national commercials. He is represented by the Peak Agency. Carl directs locally for Shakespeare on the Lawn and has directed productions in Chicago, the greater Twin Cities, and Pennsylvania. He has additional training with



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Steppenwolf, Shakespeare and Co., and The Second City. Carl is proud to have served IHSMTA as an Adjudicator (since 2017), Triple Threat Coach, and on various Panels.

Amanda Lloyd | Amanda Lloyd is a theatre artist shaped by a lifelong immersion in community performance, beginning with ACTORS (Ames Community Theatre), where theatricality was woven into family life. Her work spans musical theatre, straight plays, directing, design, and arts education, informed by training at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, Iowa State University (BFA in Performing Arts: Acting and Directing), and The Stella Adler Conservatory of Acting's 2 year program in New York City. Amanda's studies integrated acting, directing, dance, choreography, voice, music theory, piano, technical design and more. She has contributed extensively to Des Moines and Ames theatre communities, with standout roles including Beebo Brinker with Stagewest at the Stoner Theatre and Hillary Clinton at Tallgrass Theatre. A dedicated educator, she has taught drama to all ages across central Iowa and continues expanding her pedagogical work while pursuing her master's degree in Theatre Education at the University of Northern Colorado.

Kristen McKnight-Taylor | Kristen McKnight-Taylor is a lifelong musician, educator, and theater enthusiast with a deep love for musical theater that began when she saw *Annie* as a child in Chicago. Originally from

Aurora, IL, she earned a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and Piano Performance from the University of Iowa. Kristen has taught piano privately around the US, and has also served as a middle school band director and choir/general music teacher. She has performed in pit orchestras on piano and French horn and served as music director for youth productions of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* and *Annie*. A proud parent of two Iowa high school

theater graduates, Kristen continues her artistic journey through adult tap dance and enjoys attending live theater whenever she can.

Tim McMillin-Robb | Tim McMillin, DMA, is Vice President of Development at Des Moines Performing Arts and Artistic Director and Conductor of the Des Moines Vocal Arts Ensemble, which he has led since 2008. He helped establish and now co-directs Simpson College's Master of Music in Choral Conducting program. Previously, McMillin served as Simpson's Director of Choral Studies and Chair of the Department of Music and directed award-winning high school choral programs in Minnesota. His musical theatre experience includes directing high school productions and performing with community theatre organizations. He also performed with and served as auxiliary chorus master and a member of the stage management staff for Des Moines Metro Opera. A frequent guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator, McMillin holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in choral conducting from Michigan State University and degrees in music education from the University of St. Thomas and Simpson College.



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Zoe Murphy | Zoe Murphy is a graduate of Simpson College with a bachelor of arts in Theatre Arts, and a minor in Arts Management, where she acted, designed costumes and lighting, and worked as the box office and lighting undergraduate assistant. She also holds a Masters in Library and Information Sciences, and during the day, she is the assistant youth and teen librarian at the North Liberty Library. In her free time she volunteers at theatres around the Eastern Iowa Corridor (Theatre Cedar Rapids, City Circle, & Giving Tree Theatre), where she fills a myriad of roles such as actor, spotlight operator, costume crew, backstage crew, and assistant stage manager.

Tatum Murphy | I have been in 22 shows (and counting) since starting in 2018 at age 12. I am now 20, go to Drake University for Vocal Performance, and continue doing shows when I can. I have music directed 4 musicals at CAP Theatre in Altoona and recently directed their spring play, J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan. I also started teaching voice lessons at Brock Family Music in Ankeny this August.

Katie Murphy | Katie Murphy is in her third season as an IHSMTA judge. She also has judged for the Cloris Awards for three seasons. Katie performed in musical theater in high school and studied vocal performance at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Since living in the Des Moines area, she has volunteered at CAP Children's Theatre in Altoona, serving as a member of the board of directors, including as president, and as a part of creative teams for multiple productions, twice as director.

Chris Nemec | has had a love for theatre since they were young participating in church and local productions. When they joined their high school's production of Crazy for You they fell in love with theatre and they learned they were going to be doing this theatre thing forever. Currently they work as school tour leader and apple seller at an orchard during the day. They also work with young students teaching the fundamentals of theatre through workshops in their local community. They love to participate and attend community productions and love to support students in theatre.

Daniel Oldenkamp | Daniel Oldenkamp earned his Vocal Music Education degree from Wayne State College. During this time Daniel worked both on stage as an actor and behind the scenes as a music director and sound designer. Daniel now serves as the director of vocal music at Westwood CSD in Sloan, IA. At Westwood, Daniel directs musical and madrigal productions, directs the middle and high school choirs, and directs a competitive show choir program. Daniel also critiques show choir programs across the state. Daniel has experience in directing, design, choreography, and acting. He is a lifelong performer most recently playing Joseph in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, a production in which he also music directed. Daniel now lives in Sergeant Bluff, IA with his wife and two cats. He loves being involved with multiple community theaters and choirs in the greater Siouxland area.



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Patricia Olson | Patricia Olson is a passionate musical theater adjudicator with an appreciation of the collaborative spirit of live performances. Patricia began her fine arts journey at Kee High in Lansing, Iowa. She is an IHSSA All-Stater in the category of Reader's Theater. Patricia demonstrated a commitment to excellence in the theater arts and was awarded membership in the International Thespian Society, Troupe 571. Patricia learned to be encouraging and give thoughtful feedback while acting as a Speech Sponsor at EACSD from 2012-2017. Patricia has been a certified judge with the IHSSA for the past twelve years. Patricia has adjudicated at least eleven musicals with the IHSMTA. Her goal as an adjudicator is to celebrate each performer's unique voice while helping young artists grow in confidence, craft, and the love of theater.

Cody Parmley | Cody Parmley is in his second year as the elementary music teacher at Harlan Community Schools. Before joining Harlan, he spent six years at Exira-EHK, serving as choir director, band director, musical director, speech coach and judge, and play director. He founded the school's theater program and directed 10 productions. In speech, he helped end a 10-year drought by supporting 10 entries that advanced to the IHSSA Individual All-State Festival.

Cody also serves on the Board of Directors for Harlan Community Theatre and enjoys being involved both on and off the stage. Most recently, he served as publicist for The Hunchback of Notre Dame and Steel Magnolias, focusing on advertising and visuals. He also portrayed Donkey in Shrek the Musical in the summer of 2025.

Cody is excited to celebrate the incredible work happening across Iowa and believes every program, big or small, deserves to shine. BE AMAZING!

Keegan Patterson | Keegan Patterson is an educator, actor and playwright currently living in Nevada, Iowa. He previously worked as an educator for Imagination Stage in Bethesda, Maryland and Compass Rose Theater in Annapolis. As an actor he's performed with Ames Community Theatre and Black Hawk Children's Theatre in Iowa, Capital City Fringe, The Greater U Street Theatre Group and Flying V Theatre in Washington, DC and was a regular member of AnyStage Theatre in Virginia. As a writer he has had several plays performed by Adventure Theatre MTC in Glen Echo, Maryland - and his play The Cranky Penguin was published by the theatre and is available for schools at Montgomery County Public Libraries.

Shawn Pavlik | Shawn Pavlik is a veteran performer from community theatres across the state of Iowa. He has performed in over 60 different productions both as an actor and a director at a dozen community theatres across Iowa, from LeMars to Cedar Rapids. He currently sits on the board for Carousel Community Theatre. Shawn teaches at Clarke High School in Osceola, and lives in Indianola with his wife, Laura.

Jacob Pedersen | Jacob Pedersen (Fort Dodge, Iowa) received his bachelor degree in K-12 Music Education from Buena Vista University and Masters of Music Education from the



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University of South Dakota. Currently, he is the director of Vocal Music and Humanities at Iowa Central Community College. He teaches music theory, individual voice lessons, and is music director for the Winter musical.

From 2015-2025, he had been the 9-12 vocal director at Odebolt Arthur Battle Creek Ida Grove School District. He directed concert choir, musicals, all-state singers, solo/ensemble contest, jazz choir, and show choirs. He volunteered as an assistant coach for both Large Group and Individual speech, working specifically with the musical theatre category.

Pedersen is an active participant in the Iowa Choral Directors Association, Iowa High School Music Association, and Iowa High School Speech Association. He has been music director for Comedia Musica Players (Fort Dodge, IA) and Cherokee Community Theatre (Cherokee, IA).

Michael Petkewec | Michael Petkewec has over 35 years working in theatre, the arts, and the non-profit sector. Michael has been an actor, director, costume and set designer, artistic director, executive director, and an arts administrator. He has directed shows in the Iowa City area and currently works as a Senior Program Specialist in the UI REACH Program at the University of Iowa. Michael has been an adjudicator for many years and is proud to continue working with high school students and the IHSTMA. He lives in Iowa City with his wife, Megan, who likes to see the shows with him as he adjudicates.

Kaya Reynolds | With a diverse background in the performing arts, Kaya brings over 15 years of dance and choreography experience and more than a decade of vocal performance in choirs, worship bands, and solo settings. Her experience has developed a strong understanding of movement, stage presence, musicality, and storytelling. She has also performed in theatrical productions and a variety of ensembles, including concert, honor, and municipal bands, deepening her appreciation for collaboration and musical interpretation. In addition, Kaya has owned and operated a photography business, developing a strong eye for composition, styling, and visual design. She is passionate about supporting the next generation of performers and enjoys encouraging young artists as they grow in confidence, develop their skills, and discover the joy of performing.

Emily Roeder | Emily Roeder serves as the Education Program Coordinator at Hoyt Sherman Place Foundation, where she coordinates engaging field trip experiences and leads Project Stage which provides the musical experience for DMPS northside theater programs. Her work focuses on creating meaningful opportunities for students to experience, explore, and participate in the performing arts. Emily previously worked as a music teacher with Des Moines Public Schools, bringing her passion for music and performance into the classroom. She studied music at Drake University and has continued to pursue her love of theater through a variety of community theater productions. Emily's theater journey began in high school in the Quad Cities, where she discovered a lasting passion for performing. Today, she combines her experience as an educator and performer to help inspire the next generation of young theater artists.



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Donna Scarfe | At 7, Donna was in the Helen Keller film, "The Miracle Worker". She has a Fulbright Fellowship for Ballet in Bucharest, Romania then choreographed and performed Liturgical Dance with the Epiphany Dancers in London. Actor/Interpreter/Stage Manager - Little Theatre of the Deaf (CT, Los Angeles). Performed with DM Playhouse, Stage West Theatre and the Repertory Theatre of Iowa. Founding member of the Iowa Stage Theatre Company, Donna acted in "Crowns", "A Christmas Carol" (10 years), "The Woman in Black" "God of Carnage", "Sense & Sensibility", "Our Town", "The Crucible", "Trouble in Mind" and "Grand Horizons". Shakespeare - "The Merry Wives of Windsor", "A Midsummer's Night's Dream", "Much Ado About Nothing", "King Lear", "Romeo & Juliet". Donna teaches hat classes yearly in CA, has an MA in Theatre/Deaf Studies and is owner/designer of Fyne Hats By Felicity creating Period and Contemporary hats selling at Renaissance Faires.

Nicole Schumacher | Let's go! Nicole is thrilled to be back as a part of this year's IHSTMA adjudication team and can't wait to see what the schools have in store for their programs. She is a return adjudicator with many years of experience with ISHTMA. There are no small roles in Nicole's eyes, and she loves to see everyone get their moment on stage to tell the story. Nicole sang throughout her youth and high school years, and she also performed vocally while attending Iowa State University. Now as an adult she enjoys singing with the Symphonic Choir in conjunction with Orchestra Iowa in the Cedar Rapids metro area. She encourages you all to get out there and share your gifts.

Eric Schutt | Eric Schutt is an active performer, director, stage manager, and teaching artist currently based in Iowa. He holds BAs in Theatre: Performance and Theatre: For Youth and Communities from the University of Northern Iowa. Since his graduation in 2024, Eric has had the privilege of working with many incredible companies, including Missoula Children's Theater as a touring actor/director, American Gothic Performing Arts for five seasons as an actor and stage manager, as well as Iowa Stage Theater Company, The Rose Theater, and the Waterloo Community Playhouse. Eric's journey in the theatrical arts began his freshman year of high school, so he fully understands and stands behind the importance of the arts to students and young adults. Eric is thrilled to be a part of the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards this year and is excited to celebrate the talents of Iowa's emerging artists!

Jenny Schwery | Jenny Schwery has spent the past 20 years working in public education, where she has had the privilege of working with students across a variety of ages and helping young people discover their interests, talents, and confidence. She is also a former employee of the Des Moines Civic Center, an experience that deepened her appreciation for the performing arts and the work that goes into bringing productions to the stage. While Jenny has never participated in a theatrical production herself, she is a passionate patron of the arts and regularly attends several live performances each year. Her combined experiences in education, the arts, and community engagement have given her a unique perspective and a genuine



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appreciation for the dedication, creativity, collaboration, and passion that students and educators bring to high school musical theater.

Bridget Grace Sheaff | Bridget's primary artistic practices are directing and playwriting. Her directing work has been seen across stages in Washington DC, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, Illinois, and Missouri. Her writing can be found on stages and in classrooms across the US and Canada. She currently works in development for Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines, Iowa. Bridget is a member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab 2019 and Directors Lab North 2022. BA 2014 summa cum laude, The Catholic University of America. www.bridgetgracesheaff.com

Sasha Smith | Starting at 10, Sasha Smith was thrust into the captivating world of music, drama, and spotlights known as theater. Now at 24 years old, she has performed in over 20 stage shows, danced in 16 recitals, and has performed in New York City twice. Sasha's theater background revolves mostly around her musical acting, however she also has experience in the technical side of theater with directing, building, choreographing, light/sound designing, and much more. Her most recent accomplishment is getting to perform in The Green Room 42 in New York City with The Onstage Collective after being trained by Broadway professionals.

Damon Stevens | Dr. Damon Stevens is an Assistant Professor of Music at Simpson College, where he music directs for Simpson Productions, teaches music history, and coaches voice. He has previously held faculty positions at Northern Kentucky University, the University of Nevada, Reno, and the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music.

An accomplished music director in both opera and musical theatre, Dr. Stevens' recent productions include THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF, SPEED DATING TONIGHT!, and LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, as well as the Cincinnati regional premieres of THE LIGHTNING THIEF and FREAKY FRIDAY. During his tenure at UNR, he served as Artistic Director of Nevada Chamber Opera and music director for the Nevada Repertory Company.

Dr. Stevens holds degrees from Arizona State University and the University of Cincinnati and has performed as a soloist and collaborative pianist throughout the U.S. and Europe in such diverse venues as radio, television, and concert halls.

Casey Tecklenburg | Casey Tecklenburg is the vocal music director at Peet Junior High School in Cedar Falls. He makes regular appearances as an actor, director, and pit musician for both the Waterloo Community Playhouse and the Cedar Falls Community Theater. Casey is passionate about fostering high-quality collaborative musical and theatrical opportunities for his students. Other projects include leadership responsibilities for the Dorian Summer Music Camps of Luther College as a head counselor, serving St. Patrick Catholic Church in Cedar Falls as organist, cantor, and choir section leader, and maintaining a curious menagerie of accordions.

Lainie Vansant | Lainie Vansant teaches directing and playwriting at the University of South Dakota. She loves writing and directing for young performers and has worked on a wide variety



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of productions ranging from serious, text-based dramas (Stop Kiss) to rollicking musicals (The Lightning Thief). She loves working with technicians and actors and seeing all the parts of a production come together to create theatre magic.

Libby Waterbury | Libby Waterbury is a seasoned actor, director, choreographer, and arts educator. She graduated with a degree in theater education from the University of Iowa where she also performed as Herky the Hawk. She also graduated from AMDA-NYC with an emphasis in musical theater performance. After touring nationally, she returned to Iowa to focus on growing youth theater here. She has choreographed dozens of musicals and marching band shows across the state, led high school speech and theater departments, and directed children's theater shows. Most recently, she has enjoyed watching her own children take to and fall in love with the stage.

Julia Weisshaar-Mullin | Julia Weisshaar-Mullin is a veteran music educator from southwest Iowa. She has degrees in music education from the University of Kansas with additional studies in theatre and vocal jazz, and a Masters of Music from Simpson College. Her varied and extensive performance and technical experience includes acting, producing and directing theatre in professional repertory, community and school settings in Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa - most recently music directing for the Des Moines Playhouse. She greatly enjoys collaborating with musicians and actors of all ages and ability levels. Her goal is to give each and every participant a sense of ownership in the creative process so they feel they are a valued, essential part of a cooperative artistic community. Julia also adjudicates for the IHSMA and IHSSA, teaches privately, and - as often as possible - plays weekend music gigs with her family.

David Wendt | has over 40 years of educational performance experience. He was a K-12 educator for 32 years where he coached Individual Events, Large Group and Debate. He also directed numerous high school productions. He acted, directed and produced community productions for two theater groups. He was inducted into the Iowa High School Speech Association Hall of Fame in 2016. After retiring from K-12 teaching, he was an Assistant Professor at Iowa Wesleyan University where he served as the Director of Writing Center and taught a variety of English, Communication and Theater courses for seven years. After IWU closed in May 2023, he returned to K-12 teaching at West Burlington High School where he teaches dual credit Freshman Composition, high school composition and speech courses.

Mitchell Widmer | Mitchell Widmer, baritone, is a native Iowan. In the fall of 2024, he originated the role of Tracy Bacon in the world premiere of Mason Bate's The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay, a coproduction with the Metropolitan Opera and Indiana University Opera Theater. He was also seen as Masetto in Don Giovanni with Opera Quad Cities. Mitchell has just recently received his doctorate from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Previously at Indiana University, he sang Mercutio in Gounod's Roméo et Juliette. Widmer earned a Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music. While there, he sang the



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role of Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*. Mitchell sang the role of Giorgio Germont in Verdi's *La Traviata* and Conte Robinson in Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* at the University of Iowa.

Valerie Williams | Valerie Williams started working in musical theater at age 12 and hasn't stopped since. Performing as a featured dancer in shows produced by both professional and amateur theaters, she toured throughout the Midwest, dancing, singing and acting in shows such as *Godspell* and *Company*. She became a choreographer and has since made dances for over 200 shows for professional theater, opera, community theater and high schools. Making the move to modern dance, she co-founded Co'Motion Dance Theater in 1978 as a professional modern dance company, and with that company and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company she has toured throughout North America, Europe and New Zealand. She believes the spirit of live performance makes the world a better place.

Micaela Wilz | I have been involved in theater for most of my life, with a particular love for musical theater. In high school, I was heavily involved in musicals and show choir, which gave me a firsthand appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and community that come with performing arts. While attending college, I continued my involvement in the arts by working at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, where I gained experience with the professional side of live performances and events. Today, I continue to pursue that passion as the Guest Services Manager at Des Moines Performing Arts, helping oversee front-of-house operations for Broadway productions, touring performances, and other events. My experiences as a student performer and now as a performing arts professional have given me a well-rounded perspective and a continued passion for supporting and celebrating young artists.

Landon Wood | Dr. Landon Wood is a seasoned educator and advocate for the performing arts. During his tenure as an educator he has always integrated the arts into his classroom. During high school he participated in the drama department's productions and speech. His speciality area being musical theatre and vocal performances. He also participated in many community theatre productions in Northeast Iowa. After graduating he became a speech judge and focused on improv and musical theatre. He proudly served as an adjudicator for the 24 / 25 season before Taking a year long sabbatical in Mexico. He is thrilled to be back helping keep the love of the arts and musical theatre alive in Iowa for the 26/27 season! Break a leg!

Nancy Wright | Nancy Wright has been a board member for the Mills Masquers Community Theater for over forty years. In that time, she has both acted or directed in numerous productions, including music direction. She enjoyed working with young people in the community theater production of *Finding Nemo JR* in the summer of 2026. Nancy is a retired public-school teacher in Glenwood and directs her local church adult choir. She plays the piano, organ, and flute. She enjoys sharing her expertise in performance by being an IHSSA speech contest judge as well as an IHSMTA adjudicator.



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Tyler Youngers | Tyler Youngers is an online course instructor and farmer. Prior to running his own company and farm, Tyler worked in the AEA system as a professional learning provider and consultant and before that Tyler taught at the secondary level. During his teaching career, he directed Fall & Spring play productions and served as an assistant speech coach. Tyler's background in musical theater started as a young man in community theater productions in his hometown of Sheldon, Iowa. He has gone on to perform in productions throughout high school, college, and in any community productions he can find. Tyler recently performed in "Playing Doctor" as Rob Brewster, "The Money in Uncle George's Suitcase" as Mitch Bryant, and "The Sound of Music" as Max Detweiler.

Tyler has his bachelor's degree in vocal performance from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota and currently adjudicates for the Iowa High School Speech Association.