

# Bios

## **KU Jazz Singers**

The KU Jazz Singers are the premier vocal jazz ensemble at The University of Kansas, with a history of excellence beginning in the 1980s and recently revived under the direction of Kerry Marsh. This DownBeat Award-Winning ensemble aims to be a leader in the educational vocal jazz community, embracing a diverse and challenging repertoire, spanning traditional standards to modern pop arrangements with a wide range of musical influences. Dedicated to musical excellence and artistic expression, the group takes pride in contributing to the vibrant jazz culture at KU and beyond.

## **Kerry Marsh**

Kerry Marsh is an arranger and publisher specializing in music for vocal jazz ensembles. KerryMarsh.com features a large and varied catalog of music performed regularly around the world. Kerry proudly serves on the Jazz Studies faculty at his undergraduate Alma Mater, The University of Kansas, directing the KU Jazz Singers and Vocal Jazz Lab. His tenure at the University of Northern Colorado and Sacramento State saw his ensembles and individual students win 29 Down Beat Student Music Awards. Kerry's innovative work extends to performances and recordings with his partner, Julia Dollison, notably on their acclaimed album 'Vertical Voices: The Music of María Schneider.' His expertise is also sought after as an adjudicator and clinician nationwide, having contributed to high-profile projects including collaborations with Ben Folds. Kerry graduated in 2000 from the University of Kansas with a B.M.E. in Music Education and in 2003 with a Master of Music in Jazz Studies from the University of North Texas.

## **Afro-Cuban Ensemble**

The Afro-Cuban Ensemble is the newest ensemble in Jazz Studies at KU. The group focuses on researching and showcasing music originating from the traditional folkloric styles of the African diaspora and the developments in Cuban music. This ensemble presents a repertoire that includes traditional rhumba styles, along with popular genres like salsa, son, mambo, merengue, and bembé. They incorporate elements of jazz harmony and engage in extensive conversational interplay during their performances.

## **Brandon Draper**

Brandon Draper was thumping his leg in the crib and began lessons at age 5, sitting in with his dad's bands at 9, touring at 14. His extensive professional resume includes performances with both the New Mexico and Santa Fe Symphony Orchestras and the Kansas City Symphony. Draper has performed and/or recorded with Ottmar Liebert, DJ Logic, Donna Summer, Mary Wilson, Mose Allison, Steve Coleman, Rahim Alhaj, Mike Moreno, Bobby Watson, and Kevin Hays. He toured the U.S. with L.A. based live-tronica pioneers Particle 2011-2015. He is the founder of the acclaimed children's interactive music program Drum Safari™ that has served children, families and schools throughout the US since 2005. At KU, Draper teaches jazz drums, audio production in Film, First Year Seminar Fellowship, and is the director of Music Enterprise Certificate combining music business and entrepreneurship. He is on the board of directors of the Kansas Music Hall of Fame, KJHK, and endorses Zildjian, Vic Firth, Meinl, and Audix Microphones.

## **KU Symphony Orchestra**

The [Symphony Orchestra \(KUSO\)](#), is one of the outstanding collegiate orchestras in the country. It is the flagship orchestral ensemble in the School of Music and the central ensemble for majors in the string area. Membership of KUSO is largely comprised of music majors, however it is open to all qualified students at the university, regardless of major, via successful audition at the beginning of each semester.

## **Creston Herron, Conductor**

Creston Herron is the newly appointed Director of Orchestral Activities for the University of Kansas. He has had a distinguished career as a conductor, educator, and performer. Prof. Herron is in high demand as a guest conductor and clinician and has worked with regional and All-State ensembles in numerous states and has served on the faculty of several prestigious summer music festivals. He is also a dedicated pedagogue who enjoys working with current and future educators and young performers across the country. Prof. Herron has received numerous awards and recognition for his work in music education. He is also an accomplished violinist and has performed with several notable world renown and grammy award-winning artists during his career. Creston Herron resides in Kansas City with his wife, orchestra director Dawn Herron and their three children.

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## **KU Chamber Choir**

KU Chamber Choir is the flagship choral ensemble at the University of Kansas. Comprised of music majors and selected non-music majors, the choir studies and performs choral literature of the highest caliber from the Renaissance times until our days. The choir has been conducted by several great artists over the years, including James Ralston (1960-1993), Simon Carrington (1994-2001), John Paul Johnson (2002-2008), Paul Tucker (2008-2020), and Eduardo García-Novelli (since 2021). Most recently, KU Chamber Choir garnered international recognition by winning the prestigious Preveza International Choir Competition in Preveza, Greece, in July 2023.

## **Eduardo García Novelli, Director**

Dr. Eduardo García-Novelli is the Director of Choral Studies at the University of Kansas. He holds two undergraduate degrees from his native Argentina, a Master's from Westminster Choir College and a DMA from the Moores School of Music, University of Houston. Dr. García-Novelli held faculty positions in Texas and Wisconsin before coming to KU. In 2019 he led Carthage Choir to win the prestigious Spittal Choir Competition in Spittal, Austria. Last summer he led KU Chamber Choir to win Preveza International Choir Competition in Greece, where the choir also received a special prize for best programming and he received a special prize for best conductor.



## **KU Jazz Ensemble I**

KU Jazz Ensemble I, directed by Dan Gailey, is the flagship ensemble within the Jazz Studies Program at The University of Kansas. The program has received 31 DownBeat Student Music Awards, including Jazz Ensemble I's 2023, 2021, 2019 and 2015 awards in the Graduate Division for Best College Big Band in the United States or Canada, and their Outstanding Performance Awards in the same division in 2022 and 2017. In April 2022, the band was one of 10 college jazz ensembles invited by Wynton Marsalis to compete in the Rudin Jazz Championship at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City, where they were selected as one of 5 finalists for the evening concert. The ensemble also performed at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City with internationally acclaimed vocalist Deborah Brown in 2016, and toured Europe with Ms. Brown in 2018, performing 10 shows in 13 days that included appearances at three of the world's most prestigious jazz festivals — the Montreux Jazz Festival, Umbria Jazz, and the Jazz À Vienne Festival. The band will return to Europe in July 2024, with performances at Umbria Jazz and the San Sebastian (Spain) Jazz Festival, among others.

## **Dan Gailey, Director**

Dan Gailey is the Director of Jazz Studies and Professor of Music at the University of Kansas, where he directs KU Jazz Ensemble I. He was named to a coveted Chancellor's Club Teaching Professorship at KU in 2017. Dan is the recipient of the 1996 IAJE Gil Evans Fellowship, presented to an emerging jazz composer from an international field of candidates. Under his direction, the KU Jazz Studies Program has been the recipient of 31 DownBeat Student Music Awards, including Jazz Ensemble I's 2023 award for Best College Jazz Ensemble in the Graduate Division. The Dan Gailey Jazz Orchestra debut CD *What Did You Dream?* was released in 2010 on Origin/OA2 Records and features all original compositions by Dan, several of which are published through [iJazzMusic.com](http://iJazzMusic.com). The CD spent almost 2 years on the JazzWeek Radio Airplay charts, and received very favorable reviews from JAZZIZ, JazzTimes and Cadence magazines, among others. Dan has directed all-state high school jazz ensembles in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas and Washington, along with the 2015 NAfME All-Northwest Jazz Ensemble and the 1996 National Band Association National High School Ensemble. Dan is also on the Board of Directors for Jazz Education Abroad, a non-profit organization that presents educational workshops and festivals throughout the world with emphasis in Asia and the Middle East.