

The Jazz Authority Members:

Michael Sommerness



Michael Sommerness is currently in his 20th year instructing bands in the Brainerd Lakes Area, having taught 17 years for the Pequot Lakes School District and now as the Associate Director of Bands at Brainerd High School. His responsibilities include teaching the BHS Symphonic Band, 9th Grade Varsity Bands as well as co-teaching Concert Band, Jazz Ensembles, BHS Marching Band, Pep Bands and Acoustic Guitar. He received his B.S. in Instrumental Music Education from St. Cloud State University and his M.S. from Southwest Minnesota State University. Mr. Sommerness holds memberships in NAFME, and MMEA. As a performer, Mr. Sommerness is an active saxophonist in various jazz ensembles in the area including the Lakes Jazz Authority, the Rusty Crayfish Brass Band and the Josh Duffee Big Band.

Apart from teaching and performing, Mr. Sommerness enjoys canoeing, camping, fishing and woodworking. He lives in Breezy Point with his wife, Jennifer and has two kiddos: Bug - a senior at Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and River - a senior at Pequot Lakes High School.

Gunnar Kuehl



Gunnar Kuehl (pronounced KEEL) is a double bassist and bass guitarist hailing from Nisswa, MN. Gunnar is returning to the Minnesota Music Educator's Convention where he once upon a time performed in the MMEA All State Jazz Band. Gunnar studied at Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL, and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy with Business/Economics, as well as a Music Minor. He performs regularly with The Jazz Authority, the Heartland Symphony Orchestra, and his local church. As an applied bass teacher Gunnar spreads his love for upright bass throughout the Brainerd Lakes Area and beyond. Gunnar also is as passionate about jazz education as he is performing. The line of students waiting to try an upright jazz bass and/or speak with a jazz bassist after The Jazz Authority brings residency 'Jazz Festivals' to schools is always the longest-even longer than the drumkit line!

Gunnar's theory focus, combined with his desire for ensemble edification, makes him one of the most competent, in-demand and enjoyable professional musicians to work with. In his free time Gunnar enjoys hiking and spending time on Minnesota's beautiful North Shore of Lake Superior and discussing the intersection of existentialist philosophy and practical theology. Gunnar lives in Baxter, MN with his wife Sarah.

Chris Fogderud



Christopher Fogderud is currently in his 16th year as Director of Bands at Brainerd High School. His responsibilities include teaching the BHS Wind Symphony, Concert Band, Jazz Ensembles, AP Music Theory as well as the BHS Marching Band and Pep Bands. He received his B.A in Music Education from Gustavus Adolphus College and his M.M. with a concentration in conducting from The American Band College of Sam Houston State University. He has served as clinician and guest conductor for MSHSL music contests and MBDA honor bands. Mr. Fogderud holds memberships in NAFME, MMEA, MBDA, Phi Beta Mu and has served on the College Board's Instructional Design Team in AP Music Theory.

As a performer, Mr. Fogderud is an active musician in area jazz groups, including The Jazz Authority & the Rusty Crayfish Brass Band. He is assistant conductor and principal trumpet of the Heartland Symphony Orchestra. He has also performed frequently with the Lakes Area Music Festival. As an active composer of liturgical jazz music, Mr. Fogderud has written, arranged and performed jazz music for church services in the Brainerd Lakes Area.

Apart from teaching and performing, Mr. Fogderud enjoys golfing, reading, running, and hanging out with his two cats, Louis and Dizzy. He lives in Brainerd with his wife, Sarah and their two children: Harrison (6) and Grace (3).

Joe McGown, J.D. (Counsel)



Joe McGown started playing guitar at a young age. He developed as a musician by listening to a variety of styles and artists and picking out songs by ear. That experience, a primarily aural approach to music with a written focus later, has proven invaluable over the years as he continues to hone his musical skills. Counsel performs regularly in The Jazz Authority and enjoys the challenge of making music with such an exceptional group of musicians.

Counsel believes that it is important to constantly be improving, simultaneously, one's musical ear and musical reading skills. McGown's philosophy is that 'Music is a Lifelong Journey.' Counsel is a professional musician performing consistently on guitar, piano and vocals. Joe also plays alto saxophone in the semi-professional community band, The Central Lakes Wind Symphony at Central Lakes College. Counsel is also an attorney. McGown spent over two decades working as a Public Defender, a 'gig' he resumes during slower booking periods. Counsel focuses primarily, on his musical interests. Counsel resides in Brainerd, MN and enjoys traveling to the mountains when not making music or helping vulnerable people who cannot afford representation.

McGown received his Bachelors of Political Science from UCLA and Jurist Doctorate from the U of M-Twin Cities. Counsel also has a deep and gracious heart for young musicians and relishes when The Jazz Authority brings residency 'Jazz Festivals' to a large, or group of, schools.

Preston Weber



Preston Weber serves as Minnesota State College Faculty at Central Lakes College in Brainerd, Minnesota, where his duties include teaching a variety of music and music production courses & ensembles. At CLC, Preston co-wrote a new Music Technology degree with Jonathan Laflamme that is Open-Sourced and fully accredited. He performs on saxophone regularly with The Jazz Authority & Rhapsody Jazz. Preston earned a M.M. degree in Conducting and a B.M.E from the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. Prior to his work at Central Lakes College, Preston taught as a Graduate Assistant at the U of M, Holdingford Public Schools in Holdingford, MN, and at Hill-Murray School in Maplewood, MN.

Preston conducted the Crosstown Community Band in Minneapolis for several years, performing free concerts at a variety of community and cultural events. He also performs occasionally on drum set and oboe. Preston is principal oboe in the semi-professional community band, The Central Lakes Wind Symphony and lead alto and assistant drum kit in the semi-professional big band, the Central Lakes Jazz Orchestra at Central Lakes College.

Preston believes there are three important tenets to music education. Music education is for all people, music education is one of the best ways to develop the whole person, and music's artistic value connects people through the sharing of vulnerability and emotion.

Growing up in Pierz, MN, Preston values family and time going on adventures with his wife

and children. He is passionate for learning about all things, especially music and the universe.

Dr. Lara Moline



Dr. Lara M. Moline is a graduate of the University of Wyoming. She received her Bachelor degree of Music Education, with a Vocal Emphasis in 2007. She continued her studies with the late Dr. Stephen Zegree at Western Michigan University, obtaining a Masters degree of Vocal Performance, Jazz Studies in 2009. Lara graduated with a Doctor of Arts degree from the University of Northern Colorado, in Choral Conducting, with an emphasis in Vocal Jazz and Music History. Her dissertation, *Vocal Jazz in the Choral Classroom: A Pedagogical Study*, discusses the need for the vocal jazz style within the choral classroom, introduces transitional elements that are accessible to choral directors of any level, & involves an observational curriculum study. Lara has since presented her dissertation research at the Jazz Educators Network Conference, Wyoming Music Educators All State Conventions (2021), Minnesota Music Educators Conference, and Minnesota American Choral Directors Association Fall Conference (2022).

Lara is a sought-after guest adjudicator, clinician, and conductor. As an adjudicator and clinician, she has worked with students from middle school to college levels in solo voice, small voice ensembles, & large vocal ensembles in both traditional and vocal jazz idioms since 2014.

As the Assistant Professor of Voice & Choral Music Education at St. Cloud State University, Lara conducts all choral ensembles, teaches contemporary and classical voice lessons, & instructs music education & aural theory courses. Lara regularly performs as a solo artist (jazz and popular styles) around the Central MN area & with groups The Jazz Authority, Jazz Sophisticate, & Radio Nation.

Dr. Terry Vermillion



Dr. Terry Vermillion has performed with the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Brass, Boston Brass, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and the Minnesota Orchestra to name a few. He has been a featured soloist for Milhaud's *Concerto for Percussion and Small Orchestra*, Rosau's *Concerto no. 1 for Marimba and small orchestra*, Saint Saens' *Introduction, Rondo, et Capriccioso*, a variety of xylophone ragtime arrangements, Ian Krouse's *Cronica*, and Jennifer Higdon's *Percussion Concerto* and received a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Study Grant to study with ECM recording artist Peter Erskine. Other awards include Downbeat magazine's Jazz Instrumental Soloist Outstanding College Performance Award, Grand Prize in the Rocky Mountain Concerto Competition, the 2010 Bruce and Dee Pearson Faculty Excellence Award, the United Arts of Central Minnesota Outstanding Educator Award for 2010, and a Carnegie Hall performance in 2012 with SCSU's Trio Lorca.

Dr. Vermillion teaches the Percussion Studies curriculum at St. Cloud State University where he teaches Applied Percussion, Arts Entrepreneurship, World Drumming, and directs the Contemporary Music Ensemble. He also oversees the David Swenson Foundation Scholarship program

and the David Swenson Foundation Guest Artist Series. Dr. Vermillion received his B.M. from the University of Montana, M.M & D.A. from the University of Northern Colorado.

Dr. Vermillion has always been attracted to improvised music, where great musicians create music in the moment as if it were flowing from their inner self. His studies of the amazingly complex traditions of Western contemporary music, Indonesian gamelan, Brazilian samba, Afro-Cuban rumba, and the world of jazz and popular music confirm this belief.

Jonathan S. Laflamme



Jonathan was inspired to start playing trumpet at age seven & had the great blessing of studying under the professor of trumpet emeritus at St. Scholastica (MN) & UWS, Earl Salemink, Robert Baca at the UW-Eau Claire, & Dr. Allen Moore at SCSU. Jonathan used his trumpet as his primary teaching tool throughout his career as a high school band director in Pierz and Little Falls, MN, where his concert, jazz, & sports bands received regional, state, & even national recognition under his tutelage. Jonathan's bands have toured and performed in 14 countries. Currently, Jonathan works as the Director of Instrumental Music at Central Lakes College, where he directs the Wind Symphony, Concert Winds, Jazz Orchestra, Jazz Collective and Brass Choir. He works beyond his campus in Brainerd, MN into over thirty Minnesota high schools through

the College in the Schools Program. Since coming to CLC in 2018, The Music Department has more than doubled its offerings and increased the number of performance ensembles from five to eleven. Jonathan also teaches applied brass, jazz improvisation and conducting lessons & teaches music education. During the Pandemic, Jonathan wrote a new music degree that is entirely open-sourced, accredited and boasts being the most affordable music degree in Minnesota (i.e., lowest tuition, no course materials cost, and local low cost of living). Jonathan co-wrote, with Preston Weber, a Music Technology Degree at CLC that began this fall.

Jonathan also works as an adjudicator/clinician, locally, nationally & abroad through the MSHSL & Music Festivals & Tours Unlimited. Jonathan's music education success has been recognized as Minnesota's Representative in the 2019 edition of School Band & Orchestra Magazine's annual "50 Directors from 50 States Who Make a Difference." Jonathan was signed as a Trumpet Artist by XO Professional Brass and 'Music Accessories' Artist by Hercules, both members of the K.H.S. International Family of Brands. He's been blessed to perform and guest conduct abroad and stateside with amazing musicians exponentially more talented and noteworthy than himself.

Jonathan's musical compositions have been premiered by the Army Band, and featured as Google's 'Top Ten Events to Attend on Veterans Day.' Jonathan received a B.M.E. from the University of Wisconsin, Eau-Claire, a M.M. in Instrumental Conducting from St. Cloud State and will complete his D.M.E. from Liberty University in 2024. Jonathan maintains an active performance schedule in four jazz groups & as a freelance classical, symphonic and liturgical soloist and singer. His favorite field in music is education, a life-philosophy fostered by his mentor-the late Dr. Rik Hansen. Jonathan also finds inspiration in nature through archery hunting, fishing, and all types of skiing & travel. Most of all, Jonathan enjoys time with his wife, Alicia, and three children: Elise, Noelle & Sean.

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