

VOiCE 2025 SCHEDULE

Friday, February 14

- 1:45 p.m. **Welcome**
(Lecture-Recital Hall, New Music Building)
- 2:00 p.m. **Compassionate Connection and Reciprocity in the Studio and Classroom**
(45 minutes) Presenter: Amy Catron
(Lecture-Recital Hall, Music Building)
- Researchers frequently cite dialogical and democratic learning as effective tools for engaging and empowering learners. Without connection, students might resist change. A framework of care that incorporates compassionate music teaching (Hendricks, 2018) alongside intentional listening, recognized as a radical act of care (Bylica, 2023), can foster reciprocity between experts and those seeking expertise. This presentation proposes methods for framing reciprocity in the studio to discover ways to connect and surpass expectations of creativity, responsibility, and performance.
- 2:45 p.m. **Break (15 minutes)**
- 3:00 p.m. **My Voice “Toolbox”**
(45 minutes) Virtual Presenter: Sophie Lair-Berreby
(Lecture-Recital Hall, Music Building)
- Explore a “voice toolbox” filled with tools inspired by vocal science principles, designed to guide singers toward practical, effective exercises in the voice studio. This program draws on 30 years of experience helping singers from diverse genres ranging from opera to bluegrass to develop a pragmatic and autonomous understanding of their voice. The session will outline key categories of exercises, explaining their purpose and effectiveness, and demonstrate how these foundational techniques promote vocal health and adaptability. Each tool is tailored to meet the unique needs of individual singers, offering a customized approach to mastering the art of singing.
- 3:45 p.m. **Break (15 minutes)**
- 4:00 p.m. **Yoga for the Stage: A 3-step process to get out of the head and into the body**
(45 minutes) Instructor: Cori Reece
(Choral Hall, Music Building)
- Participants will learn a condensed yogic philosophy, physical warm-up and vocal warm-up that will aid in their journey to finding who they are on stage and beyond.
- 4:45 p.m. **Dinner on your own**
- 7:30 p.m. **Guest Artist Recital**
Featuring: Julian Gargiulo, piano
with Nyla Thomas, soprano & Anne Katherine Ragsdale, piano
(Lecture-Recital Hall, Music Building)
- Renowned for his captivating blend of virtuosic piano artistry, witty humor, and innovative programming, Julian Gargiulo, also known as “The Pianist with the Hair,” has delighted audiences in prestigious venues worldwide. A Steinway artist, Julian is a dedicated educator, bringing classical music to life with a modern twist. Also featured on the program are MSU music graduate Nyla Thomas, former MSU faculty member Christopher Withrow, and current MSU faculty Jeanette Fontaine, Anne Katherine Ragsdale, and Roza Tulyaganova.

Saturday, February 15

- 10:00 a.m. ***Q & A Session: Building a Career in Music***
(45 minutes) Guest Artist: Julian Gargiulo
(Lecture-Recital Hall, Music Building)
- “Building a Career in Music” is a dynamic session designed to provide insights, strategies, and practical tips for navigating the diverse pathways to success in the music industry.
- 10:45 a.m. **Break (15 minutes)**
- 11:00 a.m. **Performance practice and vocal registration in Gustav Mahler’s**
(45 minutes) ***Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen***
Presenter: Christopher Withrow
(Lecture-Recital Hall, Music Building)
- Gustav Mahler’s *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, a late 19th-century orchestral song cycle, underwent revisions over a decade. The four-movement work, for baritone or mezzo-soprano, demands mastery of the secondo passaggio and smooth transitions into head voice. Due to its range, modern performances often use the H1/F1 resonant strategy. This study analyzes over thirty professional recordings to explore vocal registration, technical challenges, and Mahler’s intentions regarding timbral color and acoustic tuning.
- 11:45 p.m. **Lunch on your own**
- 1:00 p.m. **Sing with Your Feet: Rhythm Dance as a Tool for Teaching**
(45 minutes) **Balance and Movement in Opera Workshop**
Presenter: Bonita Bunt
(Choral Hall, Music Building)
- No tap shoes necessary! (Hard soled shoes recommended). This interactive workshop explores how tap encourages experiencing rhythm throughout the whole body by way of carefully cultivating balance and weight transfer, as well as building awareness of the core and limbs. Movements are analyzed in isolation as well as through connections in a body’s movement and balance while we learn how to Shim-Sham Shimmy!
- 1:45 p.m. **Break (15 minutes)**
- 2:00 p.m. ***Q & A Session: Life after Mississippi State University***
(45 minutes) Guest Artist: Nyla Thomas
(Lecture-Recital Hall, Music Building)
- “Life after Mississippi State University” explores graduate school experiences, transitioning into the professional world, and establishing a career as an educator in the arts.
- 2:45 p.m. **Closing Remarks**
(Lecture-Recital Hall, New Music Building)

BIOGRAPHIES



Dr. Jeanette Fontaine (VOiCE director), mezzo-soprano, serves as Associate Professor of Voice, Performance Area Coordinator, and Music Director of Opera at Mississippi State University. Her operatic roles include: Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Principessa in *Suor Angelica*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Nancy in *Albert Herring*, The Announcer in *Gallantry*, Dritte Dame in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Jenny in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. She has appeared as the mezzo-soprano soloist with the Starkville Symphony Orchestra for performances of Bach's *Magnificat*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Coronation Mass*, and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*.

Dr. Fontaine's research interests include the accessibility of Russian diction for undergraduate singers. She has presented lecture recitals on Russian diction with Dr. Roza Tulyaganova at many conferences, most notably in Vienna, Austria and Honolulu, Hawaii. Dr. Fontaine's students have been accepted to graduate voice programs at prestigious conservatories such as Eastman School of Music and Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

A native of California, Dr. Fontaine earned her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Alabama. An advocate for expanding the presence of classical music in the state of Mississippi, Dr. Fontaine has found her calling at Mississippi State University.



Dr. Roza Tulyaganova (VOiCE director), soprano, is a native of Uzbekistan. Since moving to the United States in 2000, she has traveled extensively, performing major and supporting opera roles in cities across the country. Dr. Tulyaganova completed her Master of Music degree at the Manhattan School of Music in 2007 and holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts from Stony Brook University. Before attending the Manhattan School of Music, Dr. Tulyaganova performed roles with many opera companies throughout the East Coast. These include Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi* with Mississippi Opera, Musetta in *La Bohème* with Cantiamo Opera Theatre in New York, and Micaëla in *Carmen* with the Brooklyn-Queens Conservatory.

Dr. Tulyaganova has directed multiple operas and operatic scenes. Most recently, she was the Assistant Stage Director to Thaddeus Strassberger at Bard College Summerscape Festival in New York for their production of *Oresteia* by Sergey Taneev. Mr. Strassberger also invited her to assist him in Ekaterinburg, Russia for the production of Phillip Glass' *Satyagraha*.

She has taught voice at Stony Brook University in New York; McLennan Community College in Waco, TX; and The Tashkent National Music College in Uzbekistan. Dr. Tulyaganova is currently an Associate Professor of Voice and the Director of Opera at Mississippi State University.



Dr. Bonita Bunt (presenter) has worked as soloist, stage director, and stage manager with opera companies, festivals, schools, and workshops. She recently joined the faculty of the University of Mississippi as Director of Opera and Assistant Professor of Music. Favorite roles include the Queen of the Night, Zerbinetta, Tytania, Edith in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Giannetta in *Elixir of Love*. Recent directing credits include *Alcina* and *La serva padrona* at the University of Mississippi, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *A Hand of Bridge*, and *Avow* for the University of Alabama, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Noah's Flood* for Opera Las Vegas, *A Grand Night for Singing*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*, for Voccalis Repertory, *Beauty and the Beast* for Red River Lyric Opera, and *Hamlet* for UNLV, sung to her own libretto. She holds a doctorate in voice from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, completed a graduate certificate in Vocology, and is a Licensed Body Mapping Educator.



Dr. Amy Catron (presenter) appears regularly as a soloist, chamber, orchestral musician, and clinician in settings throughout the United States, Europe, and China. She is the principal cellist of the Starkville Symphony Orchestra and associate principal cellist with the Illinois Symphony and Chamber Orchestra. Until 2023, she was the principal cellist with Sinfonia da Camera and Millikin-Decatur Symphony. She has appeared as a soloist with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra (Florida), the Illinois Symphony Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia da Camera, the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra, the Illini Symphony at the University of Illinois, Olivet Nazarene Symphony Orchestra, Millikin Wind

Ensemble, and with the Baroque Artists of Champaign-Urbana (BACH). Before moving to the Midwest, she was a member of the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra in Florida. She collaborated with the Akron and Canton Symphonies in Ohio and the Richmond Symphony Orchestra in Virginia.



Steinway Artist **Julian Gargiulo (performer)**, commonly referred to as "Pianist with the Hair" because of his distinctive look, is a renowned classical pianist, composer, and humorist who performs all over the world, in prestigious venues from New York's Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House and has been featured on Radio and TV stations in North America, Europe, and Asia, and most recently on BBC Radio 3 in London. His first recording for Deutsche Grammophon with violinist María Dueñas was released to wide acclaim earlier this year.

"Expect to revise any preconceived notions you have about classical music concerts." (Huffington Post)



Sophie Lair-Berreby (virtual presenter) has 30 years of experience in the professional care of the singing and speaking voice. She has been working with singers of the international scene as well as beginners in many cities in France, Belgium and in the US. After graduating as an Orthophoniste specializing in voice, in Lyon (France) under the mentorship of the celebrated Guy Cornut and his team, she went on to pursue a neuropsychological rehabilitation diploma at the Pitié-Salpêtrière school of medicine, in order to better understand cerebral plasticity, learning process and how to help people integrate new habits at a deep and sustainable level. She then practiced in Paris for 11 years, at her own private practice as well as at Elizabeth Fresnel's Laboratoire de la Voix, along with collaborating with other leading laryngologists of Paris and Lyon as well as with le Chœur de l'Opéra de Paris et l'Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Paris. She established her New York practice in 2008. Her clients include performers at l'Opéra de Paris, Salle Pleyel (Paris),

the Berlin Philharmonic, Le Théâtre de la Monnaie (Brussels), the Gran Teatre del Liceu (Barcelona), the Theater an der Wien, the Opera City Concert Hall and the Hakuju Hall (Tokyo), the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the Carnegie Hall, the Avery Fisher Hall, the Vivian Beaumont Theater, at Santa Fe Opera House, at the Glimmerglass Opera Festival, at the Opera Faber Festival (Portugal), and in jazz festivals and clubs (Nagoya Blue Note, Japan...) throughout the world. Her clients have also included students from the Manhattan School of Music, the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Opera and from Poly Prep High School in Brooklyn. A singer herself, in France with le Chœur de l'Orchestre de Paris and in New York with the Dessoff Choirs, as well as an acting student (The Barrow Group – The Upright Citizens Brigade Theater – Hélène Poitevin workshop), Sophie treats the entire artist — singing voice and speaking voice, performer and person — because all aspects are part of the instrument. Combining several approaches for a safe learning environment, she efficiently works with the specific needs of each individual client. She tailors her vocal approach in order to maximize positive results. She also helps singers with French diction. She is a member of The Voice Foundation (US), voicefoundation.org and Société Française de Phoniatrie (France), phoniatrie-laryngologie.fr



Anne Katherine Ragsdale (collaborative pianist) fell in love with the piano at a very early age. At the age of sixteen, Mrs. Ragsdale began studying piano with Dr. Joel Harrison, a professor at Mississippi State University, who exposed her to many new opportunities. Mrs. Ragsdale received a Bachelor of Music in Education, emphasis in Piano Pedagogy, from Mississippi State University. A very important aspect of her time at MSU was the privilege of studying piano pedagogy under Dr. Jackie Edwards, which greatly influenced her teaching career. Mrs. Ragsdale also attended Florida State University where she received a Master of Music in Performance in Collaborative Piano. While at FSU, she studied with Dr. Carolyn Bridger who stretched and inspired her even further. Since her collegiate days, Mrs. Ragsdale has worked for the Knoxville Opera Company and the University of Tennessee Opera Program as a coach and accompanist. Upon moving back to her home state of Mississippi, she served as an assistant professor of piano at Belhaven University and performed collaboratively with violinist, Xie Song, in the Jackson

metro area. She joined the staff at MSU in the spring of 2019. Mrs. Ragsdale spends much of her time performing with faculty, students and guest artists. She has come full circle in returning to Mississippi State University, her alma mater, which is very dear to her heart.



Cori Reece (presenter), Zwischen, holds a Masters in Voice Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Mobile as well as Bachelor of Arts from Mississippi State University. Her recent singing engagements include The Blessed Mother Immaculata, in the premier of “*Immaculata: The Passion of St. Maximillian Kolbe*,” Juliette in Gounod’s “*Romeo et Juliette*” and Dorabella in Mozart’s “*Così fan Tutte*.” She became 200-hour certified as a yoga instructor in 2021 and teaches yoga at MSU, Elements of Yoga and Bliss Yoga. Cori is particularly interested in how yoga has helped shape her as an artist and human being and how this influences her pedagogical perspective. Her upcoming singing engagements include the soloist in Marten Jansson’s “Requiem Novum,” and the soprano soloist in Vivaldi’s Gloria at Mississippi State University.



Nyla Thomas (performer) is a recent graduate of the Eastman School of Music, where she earned her Master’s Degree in Vocal Performance and Literature. During her time at Eastman, Nyla was an active member of the Black Student Union Association, served as a Graduate Assistant, and taught voice classes while participating in the Opera Department. Originally from Southaven, Mississippi, Nyla began her musical journey at a young age, singing at her church, Christ Communion Temple COGIC. She earned her Bachelor of Music Education from Mississippi State University (MSU), where she performed as a soloist with MSU's choral ensembles, MSU Opera

Workshop, Black Voices, the gospel group Vessels of Worship (V.O.W.), and the Loft Choir at First Presbyterian Church of Columbus. Nyla has recently performed several notable roles, including Stephanie in Jake Heggie’s *To Hell and Back*, Donna Elvira in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, and Mabel in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Pirates of Penzance* with the Golden Triangle Theatre Troupe in Columbus, MS. She also received the Link’s Scholarship Award and presented a recital of music that resonated with her. In the summer of 2021, Nyla participated in *Opera Viva!*, a week-long study abroad program for young artists in opera. There, she competed in the inaugural Italian Opera Aria Competition and was awarded second prize in the Collegiate Division. Currently, Nyla teaches Elementary music at Northside Elementary School in St. Louis, MO, where she is passionate about helping her students grow in their musical abilities. An aspiring international opera singer, she dreams of performing on the world stage while one day establishing a network of performing arts schools in Mississippi. Through these schools, she hopes to nurture the dreams of young artists and provide them with the opportunity to cultivate their talents in the performing arts.



Dr. Christopher Withrow (presenter) has been praised for “bringing masculine gravity both in voice and performance” to the stage. His “powerful stage presence” and “moving performance” has been seen throughout the United States with Opera Fairbanks, Townsend Opera Players, Northstar Opera Company, Modesto Symphony Orchestra, The University of Nevada, Las Vegas Opera Theater, Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra, The University of Alabama Opera Theatre, and other organizations. A native of Redding, California, Mr. Withrow has been seen in the title role in Gianni Schicchi, Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Gabriel von Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, and James Agee in the world premiere of Joseph Lander’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Concert works to his credit include Johannes Brahms’s *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Ralph Vaughan William’s *Dona Nobis Pacem*, Gabriel Faure’s *Requiem*, W. A. Mozart’s *Vesperae Solennes De Confessore*, J. S. Bach’s *Coffee Cantata*, Leonard Bernstein’s

Chichester Psalms, Felix Mendelssohn’s *Psalm 42*, and Robert Cohen’s *Alzheimer’s Stories*. Mr. Withrow holds a Bachelor of Music from California State University, Stanislaus, a Master of Music from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a Doctor of Musical Arts from The University of Alabama. Mr. Withrow was the 2019 Vann Vocal Institute winner as well as the recipient of a major scholarship from the McConnell Foundation.