

MTVA Choral Festival 2016

Judges

Dr. Jamila McWhirter

Dr. Jamila L. McWhirter serves as professor and coordinator of undergraduate and graduate music education studies at Middle Tennessee State University. She holds three degrees in choral music education from Southwest Baptist University (B.M.E.), Central Missouri State University (M.A.) and the University of Missouri (Ph.D.). Before coming to Murfreesboro, Dr. McWhirter taught choral music and served as a fine arts department chair in the public schools of Missouri. She also served as adjunct faculty for Central Missouri State University, Stephens College, Missouri Baptist University and the University of Missouri – Columbia.

She serves as a presenter, clinician, guest conductor, and adjudicator throughout the United States. Her music education research has been published in the Journal of Research in Music Education and presented at numerous national music education conferences. Her latest music education research is under active commission from Oxford University Press with publication forthcoming.

Dr. McWhirter has adjudicated the prestigious national Festival of Choirs in Kansas City on two separate occasions. This spring she will also return for a second time as an adjudicator for Performing Arts Consultants Festivals. Over the years her choirs and voice students have been selected for many honors, including national American Choral Directors Association conferences and state music education association conferences. Her choirs have been selected for Carnegie Hall performances on three separate occasions. She is the founding director of the Murfreesboro Community Men's Chorus (MCMC) who most recently performed in Carnegie Hall in May, 2015.

She currently serves on the national board of the Keep Singing Project and as the Society for Music Teacher Education Tennessee State Chair. She is also beginning work for the Tennessee Board of Education as a reviewer for the Tennessee Fine Arts Standards Revision Committee. Previously she served as the Tennessee Music Educators Association (TMEA) Higher Education Chair (6 years) and as the TMEA Collegiate Advisor (3 years), which included founding, initiating, and organizing the Tennessee All-Collegiate Choir, All-Collegiate Band, and All-Collegiate Orchestra. She also served as the Middle Tennessee Vocal Association Collegiate Chair for several years. Before coming to Tennessee, she served on the boards of the Missouri Choral Directors Association, Missouri Music Educators Association, Missouri Fine Arts Academy, and festival rating committees for the Missouri State High School Activities Association.

Dr. McWhirter has been named numerous times to Who's Who in America, Who's Who Among American Women, Who's Who Among America's Teachers, Who's Who in American Education and the National Chancellor's List. She has also been honored as one of the 100 Most Beautiful People of Murfreesboro by the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She is in her 27th year of teaching and 11th year at MTSU.

Dr. Jennifer Vannatta-Hall

Dr. Jennifer Vannatta-Hall is currently an Assistant Professor of Music Education at Middle Tennessee State University, a position she has held since August 2010. She received a Bachelor of Music degree from Middle Tennessee State University in 1998. She taught pre-K through eighth grade general music and directed choirs in Rutherford County for two years. She then served as middle school general music teacher for the next three years in Franklin Special School District, where she conducted choirs and led the musical theatre program for fifth through eighth graders. She also served as associate director of the Tennessee Choral Academy, conducting five choirs ranging in age from eight to eighteen.

After teaching in the public schools for five years, Vannatta-Hall returned to MTSU and graduated with a Master of Arts in Music Education in 2004. She was hired as full-time faculty for the MTSU School of Music for the 2004-2005 school year, where she taught music methods courses and conducted the MTSU Women's Chorale. She then completed her doctoral coursework in music education at the University of Illinois and graduated with a Doctor of Education degree in August 2010. She is certified through the master level of the Orff-Schulwerk approach to music education as well as the Smithsonian Institute's World Music Pedagogy.

Vannatta-Hall has presented at workshops and conferences all over the United States. She conducts and adjudicates choral festivals. Her research interests include early childhood music teacher education and secondary general music. She also serves as Conductor of the Ethos Children's Choir, an auditioned community choir for children in grades two through six. She and her husband Scott make their home in Murfreesboro with their son Preston and daughter Piper.

Mrs. Angela Tipps

Angela Tipps conducts the Women's Chorale, teaches choral conducting, and oversees the music appreciation classes at Middle Tennessee State University's School of Music. She is the organist and director of music at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Murfreesboro and is the founding director of the Nashville Chamber Singers.

With degrees from MTSU and Scarritt Graduate School, Ms. Tipps maintains an active schedule as conductor and clinician. She has conducted the Virginia All-State high school choir and the Governor's School for the Arts. In April she will present a workshop on concert programming at TMEA. Ms. Tipps has served as president of the Tennessee chapter of the American Choral Directors Association, and her choirs have performed for TMEA and ACDA conferences.

Sightreading: Mr. James Wells

James Wells serves as the Director of Choral Music at Brentwood United Methodist Church near Nashville, Tennessee.

Mr. Wells has spent the last 20 years in public school education and church music. He is the co-director of the Nashville Children's Choir at Belmont University along with his good friend and mentor Dr. Madeline Bridges. In his public school teaching experiences, Mr. Wells taught general music, treble and youth choirs, percussion ensembles, and directed musical theater productions.

Mr. Wells is a frequent guest director for festivals, mass choirs, and honor choirs around the southeast. He received his music training at MTSU and Belmont with undergraduate degrees in Music Ed. and Voice Performance and a Masters Degree in Music Ed.

At Brentwood UMC, Mr. Wells has recently moved from the role of Director of Youth and Children's Music, to now oversee all the choral programs of the church. Brentwood is a large congregation and has over 600 choir participants yearly.

James has been married to his wife Amy for 21 years and has two daughters. Emily is 14 and a freshman in high school. Molly is 18 and a freshman at Mississippi State University.