

Spotlight 2025 Brass, Woodwinds, & Percussion Preliminary Judges

Dr. John Burdett is an Associate Professor, the Director of Music Graduate Programs, and Director of Music Education at Azusa Pacific University where he conducts the acclaimed APU Wind Ensemble and teaches graduate students pursuing the Master of Music in Conducting and the Master of Music in Music Education degrees. Dr. Burdett completed music education and conducting degrees at Azusa Pacific University and California State University, Los Angeles before earning the Doctor of Music Education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has published and presented his research at European and American conferences, including the International Society for Music Education, College Band Directors National Association, Spirituality and Music Education, and California Music Educators Association and contributed to the Peter Lang (Oxford) series. Dr. Burdett particularly enjoys engaging with high school and middle school students through conducting regional and state honor bands and orchestras in Texas and California and serving as an adjudicator with The Music Center of Los Angeles' Spotlight program - Classical Instrumental Division.

Dr. Susan Helfter is an artist-educator, known for her community engagement work through music. For 19 years, Susan was a faculty member and scholar in the Thornton School's Music Teaching and Learning Department at the University of Southern California, teaching a range of courses in community music, music in higher education, and pedagogy. She served as founding Director of the Thornton Community Engagement Programs, guiding the direction, design, implementation, and securing funds for the extensive community music programs. Expanding and extending this work, Susan has recently earned board-certification as a music therapist, and works with patients in mental health, hospital, and memory care settings. Susan has presented her work at conferences and events in North and South America, Europe and Asia. She has shared her scholarship in publications such as the *Journal of Research in Music Education, Music and Science*, and international scholarly handbooks published by Oxford and Routledge.

Amy Tatum obtained her Master of Music degree from USC's Thornton School of Music and a Bachelor of Music from Arizona State University. She is an in-demand performer and educator in the Los Angeles music community and principal flutist of the Santa Barbara Symphony. As a recording artist, her playing can be heard on hundreds of soundtracks for film, television, video games, and popular music. She has appeared as principal flute in over 30 performances with LA Opera and performs regularly with orchestras including the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, LA Master Chorale, Santa Barbara Symphony, LA Chamber Orchestra, Pacific Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, New West Symphony, and Long Beach Opera. Ms. Tatum believes fervently that arts education should be available to all who seek to make their voices heard. She shares this zeal with her students at LA City College, Mt. St. Mary's, and her private studio. She has appeared as lecturer and featured artist at Cal Arts University, Gwangju University, Kyungsoo University, and Scripps College.

Gary Woodward has had a multifaceted career at the highest level of performance in orchestral, chamber music, commercial recording, and musical theater. He has an over forty-year career as one of Los Angeles' most respected freelance flutists, twenty-five seasons as the Principal Flutist of the Los Angeles Opera Orchestra, and performances as principal with the LA Phil, LA Chamber Orchestra, LA Master Chorale, Orange County Pacific Symphony Orchestra, Pasadena Symphony, American Ballet Theater, Joffrey Ballet, and the Bolshoi and Kirov ballet companies. Mr. Woodward teaches at Azusa Pacific University and The Master's University. He teaches each summer at Northern California Flute Camp and joins the faculty this summer at Credo Flute. He is also the Choir Director at La Crescenta Presbyterian Church, where he serves as an Elder. Mr. Woodward holds degrees in music from USC and Chapman University.

Michael Davis* enjoys a diverse career both performing and teaching. As an orchestral musician, he has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, Santa Barbara Symphony, Santa Barbara Opera, New West Symphony, San Bernardino Symphony, Riverside Philharmonic, Long Beach Symphony, WildUp, the Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra, the Parch Ensemble, and the Philip Glass Ensemble. Mr. Davis can be heard on recordings with the Hollywood Epic Brass, Roger Reynolds, Irvine Arditti, Devendra Banhart, Megapuss, Little Joy, and The Jim Reynolds Band. He was a featured soloist in Frances Stark's 2017 staging of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Mr. Davis has taught for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's YOMP program, the Young Musician's Foundation, La Cañada Unified School District, and the Assistance League of Flintridge, and he has lectured internationally. He is currently the Music Director at the Sierra Canyon School and an adjunct faculty member of California State University, Dominguez Hills. Mr. Davis earned a Bachelor of Music from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and a Master of Music from the USC Thornton School of Music.

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