

# Master of Ceremonies

## Charles Hart

Charles is excited to be back at Benton to emcee this year's Touch of Class! He would like to thank Benton Community High School for inviting him back and is looking forward to an exciting, talent-filled day. Charles is a 2018 graduate of Xavier High School, where he was involved in many activities, including show choir, bowling, and speech. He has fond memories of performing in show choir and competed at Touch of Class in the past.

Charles graduated from St. Ambrose University in 2022 with a degree in Radio/TV Broadcasting. After spending several years in the Quad Cities, he moved back home and now works as an Anchor, Producer, and Reporter at KCRG-TV9 News in Cedar Rapids. He loves his career and being in front of the camera.

Outside of work, Charles enjoys spending time with his fiancée, Ava, as well as his family and friends. He also enjoys golfing and bowling. He's excited for today's competition and wishes all the groups the best of luck!



## Solo Judge

## Amy Hanisch

Amy Hanisch taught elementary music in the Cedar Rapids Community School district for 37 years. She teaches a music methods course at Coe college where she also supervises music student teachers. She has directed numerous honor choirs through the Iowa Choral Directors Association. Amy is in her 27th year of directing the children's "Discovery Chorus" that sings with Orchestra Iowa. She is excited to listen to some talented singers today!



# Judges Panel

## Pete Eklund



Dr. Peter A. Eklund is the Immediate Past-President of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln faculty and he divides his time among four other important roles: conductor, guest lecturer, editor (his own choral series with Santa Barbara Music Publications, Colla Voce, and Hal Leonard), and teacher/mentor (with numerous former students performing professionally on both US coasts: Broadway, Lincoln Center, TV, and Oscar winning movies - and everywhere in between), and he is Professor of Music, Co-Chair of the Voice/Choral Area, and the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where he heads the Masters and Doctoral choral conducting programs, conducts the nationally recognized University Singers, and conducts the nationally renowned University of Nebraska Varsity Men's Chorus (both national NAfME-selected performance ensembles, and almost 50 state, regional, and national ACDA honor-invited performances. And he occasionally directs the University's show choir that he created, Big Red Singers, as needed. However, his greatest role of all in life is that of husband to Teresa and father of their four sons: Ben, Bryant, Brady, and Brantley.

Peter A. Eklund annually conducts instrumental and choral ensembles in Western Europe and throughout North America and has conducted his choirs in many of the world's greatest performance venues including, Carnegie Hall (numerous times), Washington DC's Kennedy Center, the National Cathedral, Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, Christ Church in Oxford, St. Paul's Cathedral in London, Mozart's Salzburg Cathedral (where he conducts yearly), Paris's Notre Dame (conducted yearly before the fire and will return when reopened), St. Stephen's in Vienna, St. John the Divine and Alice Tully Hall in NYC, the abbey church of St. Hildegard von Bingen, and in other famous cathedrals, abbeys, and performance halls in Prague, Liverpool, Edinburgh, LeMans, Milan, Cambridge, Munich, New York, Chicago, London, Coventry, Canterbury, Chartres, Reims, Rouen, Mt St. Michel, Lucerne, Strasbourg, Paris, Stratford on Avon, Bratislava, Rome, Florence, and Verona. Most importantly, in his first teaching job, in Iowa City, he survived being the teacher of a 7th grade student named John Hayden.

## Craig Engstrom

Craig Engstrom is an alumnus of Luther College with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education and he holds a Masters Degree from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in Educational Professional Development. Engstrom began his teaching in 1988 with a career in choral music with the School District of St. Ansgar, Iowa. Following that, he and his wife Denise moved to Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, where he spent the next 30 years teaching choral music before retiring in 2021. While in Fort Atkinson he conducted three concert choirs and directed two co-curricular competitive show choirs. Additionally, he directed the school's musicals each fall and was heavily involved in community theatre.

Nothing is more important to Craig than his family. His wife Denise and three children; Brittany, Hannah-Mae, and Ian are the lights of his life. In Craig's free time he enjoys time with friends, traveling, and time with his grandchildren Kaleb, Brynnlee, and his newest grandson, Brecken. For just over 10 years, Craig has been a travel agent with Marvelous Mouse Travels; a privately owned agency based out of North Carolina. He specializes in anything Disney, Universal. He also works with all cruise lines, river cruises, and all inclusive resorts. He is excited to remain a part of the show choir community as an active judge and clinician throughout the Midwest.



# Judges Panel

## Dr. Gerald Kreitzer

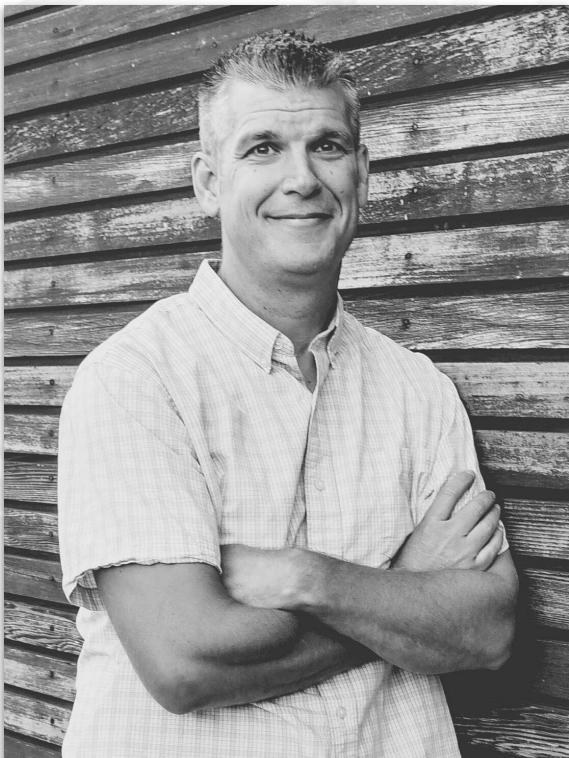
Dr. Kreitzer is in his 15<sup>th</sup> year as Director of Music Activities at Mount Mercy University, and is Artistic Director of the Cedar Rapids Concert Chorale in Cedar Rapids, IA. He earned his D.M.A. in Choral Conducting at the University of Iowa, his Bachelor of Fine Arts and Masters in Music degrees from the University of South Dakota. He is the recipient of the IHSMA National Federation Outstanding Music Educator State Award (2016), the Outstanding Music Educator Section IV (IA, IL, WI, MI, IN) (2017), and the National Citation of the National Federation in 2018. He is also a member of the O'Gorman High School (Sioux Falls, SD), Cedar Rapids Washington High School, and the Midwest All-Music Association Hall of Fames.

At Mount Mercy, he directs multiple choral ensembles, initiated the University Band, and organizes the Summer Academy which features an All-State Choral Workshop and offerings for music educators. He also teaches Conducting and Choral Methods and Materials.

Dr. Kreitzer spent 22 years as Director of Choral Music at George Washington High School and was Director of Orchestras at Washington High School in 2012-13. Before his tenure at George Washington High School, Dr. Kreitzer served on the faculties of the University of South Dakota (Vermillion) and the University of Northern Iowa (Cedar Falls). In addition, he was a professor at Indian Hills Community College (Ottumwa, IA) and taught at Clear Creek and LaSalle High Schools.

Dr. Kreitzer is a Past President of the Iowa Music Educators Association, a member of ACDA, MENC, and IBA. Among many musical involvements, Dr. Kreitzer was the Musical Director of the Metropolitan Chorale in Cedar Falls/Waterloo, IA, Musical Director of the Black Hills Playhouse, is the Chorus Master for Cedar Rapids Opera Theater productions. Dr. Kreitzer directs the Chancel Choir of First Congregational Church in Cedar Rapids, and is a frequent guest conductor, clinician and adjudicator.

Dr. Kreitzer and wife Kelley are parents of four wonderful daughters, grandsons Titus, Jack, Silas and Joseph, and granddaughters Marielle, Eliana and Isla.



## Hersel Cremeans

Hersel Cremeans (sounds like Hershel) has 27 years of experience in choral education. Under his direction his show choirs and concert choirs have won multiple awards including Indiana State Championships. He is a full time clinician and custom arranger for his own company, On Key Productions. Hersel is a sought after clinician. He loves working with students from around the country, challenging them to find their best performance and discover how to create a significant experience for themselves and their group. He has been writing custom arrangements (both concert literature and show choir) for 18 years and his work can be heard at most show choir contests. If you are interested in learning more check out his website [www.onkeyproductions.net](http://www.onkeyproductions.net). Hersel and close friend Jarad Voss just started their own summer camp - Show Choir Indy. The goal is to give kids an in person fun, positive and challenging intensive workshop. Be looking for more information at [www.showchoirindy.com](http://www.showchoirindy.com). Hersel has been married to his best friend, Kelly, for 27 years. Together they have two amazing children, Emma (20) and Ace (16). They reside on the west side of Indianapolis. You can frequently find Hersel & his children building Lego. The kids love them almost as much as he does! As a family they attend a local church and are active on the worship team and in children's and youth ministries. Hersel is very excited and honored to join the judging panel today. Now turn off your cell phone, sit back and enjoy these amazing performers!

# Outstanding Performer Judge



## Ella Hayden

Ella Hayden is in final semester at Wartburg College as a music education and music therapy student. She is a proud member of the Wartburg Choir, where she continues to grow as a musician and leader.

Ella, a Benton Community alum, was an active participant in the music program, cultivating her passion for the arts. She now directs the Cedar Valley Show Choir Camp each summer, inspiring young performers in the area.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with friends and family, traveling, and getting out on the golf course. She is very excited for the competition ahead and wishes every group the best of luck!

# Instrumental Judge

## Mike Meyer

Mike has been a successful music educator for 18 years in a variety of settings. His career began in Minnesota, his native state, where he earned a BA of Music Education from the University of Minnesota-Morris where upon graduation he began directing at Wabasso Public School in Wabasso, MN. Three years later, Mike, and his wife Kati, moved to Iowa where Mike has since held positions at Anamosa High School, Lawton-Bronson Jr/Sr High School, and Smart Intermediate. Mr. Meyer is currently the high school band director at Benton Community School. He takes great pride in being a builder of programs through positive leadership and strong student relationships, and feels he has helped revitalize the music programs under his care throughout his career thus far.

Mike was first introduced to the world of show choir upon moving to Iowa. During his tenure at Anamosa High School, Mike directed a show choir band for five years. While not currently directing a show band, he applies this experience to serving as an active show band clinician.

Mike resides in Hills, IA with his wife Dr. Kati Meyer, Assistant Professor of Music at University of Iowa, and their cat Ella.



# Critique Judges

## Rachael Wragge

Rachael Wragge is currently in her 21st year as a music educator. During her tenure in the classroom, she has had many successes in all levels of music education having taught K-12 general and choral music, as well as serving as a cooperating teacher to more than 15 collegiate pre-service music educators. She is grateful to have spent time directing curricular choirs, jazz choir, and show choirs while in the Riverside Community Schools (Oakland-Carson-Macedonia), Lewis Central Community Schools, and Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools systems before taking her current position as the choral director at South Sioux City High School. Ms. Wragge also directs three choirs outside of school hours serving as both the adult and youth choir director at First Presbyterian Church in Sioux City and the artistic director of an adult choral ensemble, Salus. Rachael enjoys working with students from across northwest Iowa in her private voice studio and spends time on the other side of the podium as a member of the Missouri River Choral Society, a Sioux City-based vocal ensemble under the direction of Dr. John Flanery. She serves as an adjudicator for the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Music Associations, as well as many regional show choir competitions and is a proud member of NaFme, ACDA, and currently serves as the President-Elect for the Iowa Choral Directors Association.



## Shawndell Young

Shawndell Edward Young is a visionary singer, songwriter, and educator from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, known for blending technical mastery with soulful expression. Holding degrees in music, education, the arts, and business, he brings a rare combination of creativity, discipline, and leadership to every stage and classroom.

An accomplished artist, Shawndell has extensive experience as a conductor, producer, vocalist, pianist, songwriter, and concert producer. A gospel recording artist, he released *The I Can Project* (2008) and the EP *God Will Do* (2016), showcasing his soulful, faith-driven sound. He has performed as a background vocalist for renowned artists including Sylvia McNair, Janis Siegel, Ricky Dillard, and Chance the Rapper.

His versatility extends to cinematic and video-game music, contributing live performances to soundtracks for *The Legend of Zelda*, *Castlevania*, *Final Fantasy*, and *Game of Thrones*. A proud voting member of the Grammy Recording Academy, Shawndell has contributed to multiple Grammy Award-winning projects.

Shawndell serves as Vocal Music Director at McKinley STEAM Academy, Adjunct Professor of Music at Mount Mercy University, and Founder/Artistic Director of YoungCo. LLC, which provides educational programming and music production services. He views his musical gift as a divine calling and uses his voice and vision to inspire and uplift communities.

