

2020 Spotlight Classical Instrumental Preliminary Panels

Brass, Woodwinds & Percussion Panel

Dr. John Burdett is the Director of Instrumental Studies, Director of Bands, and Director of Graduate Music Education at Azusa Pacific University, where he leads the band division and teaches graduate students pursuing the Master of Music in Conducting. Previously, Dr. Burdett has held tenure track and adjunct appointments teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in conducting, music education, and ensemble direction at Mt. San Antonio College, Cal Poly Pomona, California State University, Fullerton and California State University, Los Angeles, among others. Dr. Burdett completed music education and conducting degrees at Azusa Pacific University and California State University, Los Angeles and earned a Doctorate of Music Education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He conducts, plays and records throughout the Los Angeles area and has toured in the U.S. and Japan with a variety of classical, jazz and commercial ensembles, and was founding Music Director and Conductor of the Southern California Philharmonic.

Dr. Susan Helfter is an artist-educator known for her community engagement work through music. At the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, Dr. Helfter is an Associate Professor of Practice, Chair of the Music Teaching and Learning Department and Director of the Thornton Community Engagement Programs. As a hornist, Dr. Helfter is a past winner of the Canadian National Music Competition and in her role with the Thornton Community Engagement Programs since 2004, she has been responsible for the direction, design, implementation and funding of these extensive music programs. Her current musical interests and pursuits lie in community and musician self-actualization through musical engagement, with research topics of musician identity, musician as facilitator and community partnerships. Dr. Helfter is called upon regularly by professional arts organizations to lead masterclasses, workshops and contribute to the development of young and emerging musicians.

Sandy Kipp Iles, flutist, is a freelance performer, music educator, and Cal State Northridge faculty since 1997. She started her private flute studio in 1979. In addition to teaching Flute Performance, Ms Iles has taught Music History, Appreciation, Entrepreneurship, Pedagogy, Fundamentals, Chamber Music and Wind Masterclass. She was an active member of the Music Teachers' Association of California for 15 years and was the Associate Music Contractor for the De Crescent and Rotter Music Contracting, working as a contractor in the motion picture recording industry. Ms. Iles is the founder and director of the Sterling Flute Choir and previous conductor of the Discovery Players Flute Ensemble. She has performed with the LA Opera, Long Beach Symphony, Pacific Symphony, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Opera Pacific, Pasadena Symphony, Moscow Ballet Orchestra, and New West Symphony, among others. Ms. Iles is currently writing several flute method and etude books, and developed the California Music Merit Program (CMMP) for dedicated flute students committed to achievement. She is the Event Coordinator for the annual CSUN Flute Fest and presents seminars on Professional Development.

Piano Panel

Dr. John Burdett is the Director of Instrumental Studies, Director of Bands, and Director of Graduate Music Education at Azusa Pacific University. Previously, Dr. Burdett has held tenure track and adjunct appointments teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in conducting, music education, and ensemble direction at Mt. San Antonio College, Cal Poly Pomona, California State University, Fullerton and California State University, Los Angeles, among others. Dr. Burdett completed music education and conducting degrees at Azusa Pacific University and California State University, Los Angeles and earned a Doctorate of Music Education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He conducts, plays and records throughout the Los Angeles area and has toured in the U.S. and Japan with a variety of classical, jazz and commercial ensembles, and was the founding Music Director and Conductor of the Southern California Philharmonic.

Susan Kim-Pedroza has been on the adjunct faculty at Long Beach City College since 2012, and performs throughout southern California. She attended the Manhattan School of Music, and University of Southern California where she obtained a Master's Degree in Piano Performance. Susan is active serving as an adjudicator for piano competitions, and auditions throughout Southern California. She has served as the Regional Southern California Junior Bach Festival Chairperson; CAPMT Concerto Competition Chairperson; Recording Secretary (2007-2009) & Treasurer (2009-2011) for the Music Teachers Association of California, North Orange County Branch; and Director of West Coast Conservatory, Fullerton California (2006-2011).

Dr. Louise Thomas is the Associate Dean for the College of Performing Arts and Director of Keyboard Collaborative Arts at Chapman University. She studied at Trinity College in Dublin and at the Hochschule für Musik in Hannover, Germany, and received her Doctorate of Musical Arts in piano performance from the University of Southern California. Louise Thomas has concertized extensively in her native Ireland and throughout Europe, North America and Asia at such notable concert venues as the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire in Moscow, the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing and Carnegie Hall in New York City. Dr. Thomas has made CD recordings in Germany, at the Banff Center for the Arts in Canada with the Irish Contemporary Music group Nua Nós, and has made numerous radio and TV broadcasts.

Strings Panel

Ken Aiso is on the violin & viola faculty at Loyola Marymount University and La Sierra University. Prior to taking up these positions, Mr. Aiso was based in the United Kingdom, performing with leading period instrument ensembles and chamber orchestras such as Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and giving solo and chamber performances in many European countries, the US and Japan. He is a prize winner of Long Thibaud International Competition in Paris and International Music Competition of Japan in Tokyo. Mr. Aiso graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in London where he was made an Associate. His violin teachers include Kazuki Sawa, Chikashi Tanaka, Eduard Schmieder, Erich Gruenberg as well as studying in masterclass by Ivry Gitlis, Ruggiero Ricci, Ida Haendel, Herman Krebbers, Abram Shtern and Aaron Rosand. He currently performs with Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra.

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Dr. Moni Simeonov is Director of String Studies at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University at Long Beach. He also serves on the university's violin faculty. Mr. Simeonov is currently pursuing doctoral studies at USC's Thornton School of Music where he studies with Midori and serves as Adjunct Instructor of Violin and Chamber Music. An active member of the IRIS Chamber Orchestra, Mr. Simeonov also performs with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Opera, Master Chorale, Ensemble San Francisco, and serves as the acting Concertmaster for the Sacramento Philharmonic. His doctorate studies include minor fields in Viola Performance, Schenkerian Analysis, Japanese Language, as well as an emphasis on the interpretation of Balkan folk music.

Dr. Leif Woodward received his Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Southern California where he received the Colburn Foundation Scholarship for studies in Early Music. A graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Dr. Woodward has studied cello with renowned teachers Ronald Leonard, Clive Greensmith, and Jean-Michel Fonteneau. He performs with numerous organizations such as: Los Angeles Musica Angelica, American Bach Soloists, Angeles Consort, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Pacific Chorale, Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra, Santa Barbara Symphony and Tesserae. Dr. Woodward appears at the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival, Carmel Bach Festival, and Corona Del Mar Baroque Festival as well as on the chamber music series at the John Paul Getty Museum and Villa, Norton Simon Museum and Sundays Live at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He is currently on Faculty at Mount Saint Mary's University.