



Virginia Guitar Directors Association

NEWS



Glen McCarthy Receives VMEA Lifetime Achievement Award

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[https://www.viriniaguitardirectors.org/
executive-board](https://www.viriniaguitardirectors.org/executive-board)

Inaugural Middle School All-Virginia Guitar Ensemble

The VGDA is excited to present the first ever Middle School All-Virginia Guitar Ensemble! Middle School AVGE had been discussed within the VGDA leadership for a few years, but it would not be coming to fruition without the leadership of our out-going president William Hart Wells! Mr. Wells made a proposal to VMEA leadership and they were all in favor. What a legacy... thank you Hart for your service to VGDA!



About the conductor...

Dr. Kami Rowan is the Charles A. Dana Professor of Music at Guilford College, where she has taught since 1994 and built a nationally recognized classical guitar program within a liberal arts environment. Her students and ensembles have earned top honors at festivals and have performed throughout the East Coast and internationally. Alumni of the program have gone on to pursue advanced degrees in music as well as careers in teaching, performance, and recording. Since January 2025, Dr. Rowan has also served as Provost at Guilford College.

Dr. Rowan holds the DMA and MM degrees from Shenandoah Conservatory at Shenandoah University and a BM from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where she studied with renowned pedagogue Aaron Shearer. She also earned her North Carolina teaching certification through UNC Greensboro and previously taught in Guilford County Schools, where she helped launch Weaver Academy for Performing & Visual Arts and developed a comprehensive high school guitar curriculum.

A respected leader in guitar education, Dr. Rowan is frequently invited as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator for festivals and honor ensembles across the United States. She has conducted and adjudicated numerous middle and high school guitar ensembles in state, regional, and national guitar festivals. Mentoring young guitarists and music educators while advancing the role of guitar ensemble and orchestras is her passion.

Dr. Rowan serves on several nonprofit boards, including the Eastern Music Festival, Piedmont Guitar Society, and the United Arts Council of Greater Greensboro. She is the director of the United States Guitar Orchestra, which has performed at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, and on international tours in France, Spain, and Portugal. She also founded the Eastern Music Festival Guitar Program, now expanded into the U.S. Guitar Orchestra Summer Institute.

An active performer, clinician, guest conductor, and recording artist, Dr. Rowan also composes and enjoys travel and time with her family.

Middle School AVGE Audition Material: <https://www.viriniaguitardirectors.org/avge>

14th All-Virginia Guitar Ensemble

As we celebrate the birth of the new Middle School AVGE, it is hard to believe that some students who audition for this 14th AVGE were not even born in the inaugural year of the All-Virginia Guitar Ensemble. The AVGE was founded by the VMEA Lifetime Achievement Award winner Glen McCarthy in 2013. He organized the event for the first two years before passing it on to Kevin Vigil. Vigil organized the event from 2015 - 2023 and passed that leadership on to President William Hart Wells, who organized the event from 2024 - 2025.



About the conductor...

Well known as composer/arranger/guitarist/and music educator, Alan Hirsh currently resides in North Carolina where he served for 25 years as Music Director and Fine Arts Department Chair at Bishop McGuinness High School as well as adjunct guitar instructor at Wake Forest University. Alan is also the founder of the Piedmont Guitar Orchestra and actively directs festival guitar orchestras around the country, including at the Appalachian Guitarfest, the Greensboro Guitarganza, the Long Island Guitar Festival, the Virginia Music Educators Association and the Shearer Summer

Institute. Alan serves as Executive Director and Vice President of Education of the Aaron Shearer Foundation. He began a collaboration with world-renown pedagogue, Aaron Shearer back in the 1980's, composing music for the ground-breaking 1988 three-volume method series: Learning the Classic Guitar published with Mel Bay. He since continued his collaboration with Aaron (until his passing in 2008) as composer, author, and editor of the five-volume Alfred Music publications: The Shearer Method, a work representing Shearer's lifetime culmination of thought on how the guitar should be taught. His most recent 2 volume work—The Shearer Method Classroom Guitar Series is now available. He remains active as a composer, having written and arranged extensively for orchestra, band, chorus, guitar and guitar ensemble. Alan's many published works include Mel Bay publications of Twenty Etudes in Fixed Positions and New Music for Classic Guitar, Trio.

High School AVGE Audition Material: <https://www.viriniaguitardirectors.org/avge>

VGDA Officers Rotation

Starting in July, the current leadership will move on to new roles. If you've ever read the VGDA Bi-Laws, you would know that presidents have four stages. They serve as president-elect for two years, president for 2 years, vice-president for two years and then as a past president. Past presidents may stay on the President's Committee indefinitely as long as they attend at least one meeting per year. Here are the leadership changes:

- Dr. Matthew Dunlap will be President
- Aaron Kunk will be President-Elect
- William Hart Wells will be Vice-President
- Dr. Kevin Vigil will be Past President

As Aaron Kunk assumes the role of president-elect, he will no longer be the Middle School Representative. Our new Middle School Representative will be Jonathan McCormick. Christopher Cunningham will continue as Secretary and Kathy Robinson will continue as Treasurer.

A Note from the Soon to be Past President

Dear VGDA Members,

In 2015, Glen McCarthy passed the AVGE torch to me. This was my first step into leadership within VMEA. As the AVGE grew, VMEA leadership took notice and recognized that there was potential for guitar to have a seat at the table. I was asked to be chair of the VMEA Guitar Council, a role that I held from 2018 - 2022. During my time as chair, our council demonstrated that guitar deserved to be recognized as a legitimate part of VMEA. Thanks to the VMEA Executive Board members and the VMEA membership, the Virginia Guitar Directors Association was created and active as of July 2022. The VMEA leadership team asked me to serve as President Pro Tempore of this newly formed organization, a position that I held for two years until Hart Well became the first voted president of the VGDA.

It has been the honor of a life-time to serve guitar educators in Virginia for the last many years. With our third administration taking the helm in July, I am thrilled to see that we are successfully rotating our leadership. The VGDA is in great hands with our new president Dr. Matthew Dunlap, president-elect Aaron Kunk and vice-president Hart Wells. I would like to thank Hart Wells for his leadership over the last four years and I know he will be a great asset to President Dunlap as vice-president.

I would like to thank Kathy Robinson who served as treasurer when we were a council and continues to serve in the same capacity for VGDA. Christopher Cunningham has been a rock in our leadership team as well as he has served as secretary from VGDA's beginning.

Finally, thank you all for your support as we continue to elevated guitar education in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Peace, Love and Guitars,



Kevin Vigil, VGDA Past President

VGDA Notice

As our organization has steadily grown over the past several years, new opportunities and well, challenges, have been presented to our organization. As you all are aware, the VGDA does not charge a yearly membership fee for being a member of our organization. We have relied on donations to the organization as a means of generating funds in support of the All-Virginia Guitar Ensembles and for funding basic functions of the organization. Now we look to the future as we have been approached by school divisions and administrations about providing professional development supports to teachers of current and future programs. As costs have risen for materials and events in nearly all walks of life, our organization has come to understand to support our teachers and our students donations simply won't do that. To that end, the VGDA Board has voted unanimously to institute a yearly participation fee for school guitar programs, participating in various VGDA events such as All-District, AVGE and District Assessment events. This fee will be \$25 per program, at both the middle and high school levels. More information will be made available ahead of the start of the 2026/2027 school year.

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Virginia Guitar Director's Association

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Summer PD Opportunities



**Council for
Guitar Education**

The **NAfME Council for Guitar Education** has created a video series to support their Best Practices document. You can watch these openly or within the NAfME Academy. If you watch through the NAfME Academy, you can receive PD Points.

View the resources at:

<https://nafme.org/resource/nafme-council-for-guitar-education-best-practices-for-guitar/>

Teach Guitar Workshops hold sessions throughout the summer in many location. For dates and locations, go to: <https://teachingguitarworkshops.org/>

2026 GuitarCurriculum Teacher Summits will take place in two locations this summer. New York City from July 8 - 9 and Austin, Texas from July 22 - 23. For more information go to: https://austinclassicalguitar.org/gc_2026_summits/

The Leyenda Foundation is a unique convention as they promote “One Convention. Six Worlds of Music”. Within this convention is the “Come Together Professional Development”. This takes place from June 29 - July 2 at Oklahoma City University. Registration is FREE. For more information go to: <https://www.leyenda-foundation.com/>

Summer Student Opportunities

Shenandoah University Guitar Festival June 12 - 14
<https://www.su.edu/conservatory/conferences-institutes-2/guitar-festival/>

Summer Strings on the James! June 22 - 25
<https://sites.google.com/ccpsnet.net/summerstringsonthejames/home>

CCM Guitar Workshop at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music July 12 - 14
<https://www.cincinnati guitarsociety.org/ccm-guitar-workshop>

Stone Hill Guitar Academy July 6 - 10 from 9AM - 12PM at Stone Hill MS in Ashburn, VA
<https://sites.google.com/lcps.org/shga/home>

Greenville Guitar Festival presented by the Radius Guitar Collective August 7 - 9 in Greenville, NC.
<https://www.radiusguitarcollective.org/information>



AVGE Concert



Time to Eat!



Dunlap, Endo & Wells



Jackie Secoy Leading Uke Flash Mob



Open Mic Night



Speaking from the Hart