

The Oakton Classic 2024 Judges Bios

Paula Hales currently lives in Clayton, NC where she serves as band director at Rolesville Middle School. She has performed in WGI with Northern Nash HS and in DCI with the Cadets 94-95. Mrs. Hales has been active in the Marching band community as both member, staff, and director since 1990. She has been an adjudicator in visual and music effect and performance since 2010 in North Carolina and Virginia.

Mrs. Hales received her Bachelor and Masters of Music Education degrees in 1997 and 2006 from East Carolina University and School administration certification in 2021 from Gardner-Webb University. She achieved National Board Certification in Music education in 2007 and she attended the first DCI Judging Symposium in the summer of 2021. She maintains professional affiliations with MENC and NCBA Central Eastern District associations and has been named Teacher of the Year at her school for 2014. On a personal note, she is a proud mother of four wonderful children, Alex age 24, Matthew, age 22, Maddie, age 21, and Darryn, age 17. She would also like to thank her husband, Allen, and her father, Wayne, for their love and support.

Andrew Barberi, Color Guard Judge is from Pensacola, Florida where he first got introduced to the marching arts at Milton High School. After high school, Andrew continued his marching arts career at Spirit Drum and Bugle Corps in 2009, and The Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps from 2010-2012. Andrew was a member of Northeast Independent World 2010 and Braddock Independent World 2012, both WGI Independent World Class top five finalists. Andrew was a member of the WGI Advisory Board in 2013 and 2014. He has directed, taught, and choreographed for several of the country's top Color Guard programs including; Nease High School - 2012 WGI Scholastic Open Bronze Medalist, Chotawhatchee High School - 2013-2014 WGI Scholastic World Class Finalist, and UCF Pegasus World. Andrew has also been involved in some of the country's top marching ensembles including; The Bluecoats Drum and Bugle Corps - 2016 Drum and Bugle Corps World Champion, Cedar Ridge High School, Round Rock High School, and Cedar Park High School - All Bands of America National Finalists. Most recently, Andrew was the Director of Color Guards at Westlake High School in Austin, Texas, from 2016-2021. Under Andrew's leadership the program's three color guards were a consistent TCGC State Finalist, WGI Regional Finalist, Bands of America Regional Finalist, and UIL State Qualifier. Andrew currently resides in Washington D.C., where he is the Director of Operations for the ITS America.

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Tony Robinson, Individual Music Judge

A 1982 graduate of Western Carolina University, Mr. Robinson began his teaching career as assistant band director and choir director at Enka High School in Asheville, N.C. In 1984, he became band director at his home school, Pisgah High School, in Canton, N.C.

In 1987, Mr. Robinson accepted the position of Director of Bands at Cary High School. During his 13-year tenure, the Cary Band continued its strong tradition of excellence by winning numerous marching band, concert band, jazz ensemble, percussion ensemble and winter-guard awards, grand championships and many class honors in guard, drum-major and percussion.

The Cary Bands performed in the 1998 New Year's Day Parade, in London, England, as well as giving a concert performance in Wembly Hall. In April 2000, the Cary Bands were invited to return to Europe, performing a 10-day tour of concerts in Bruges, Belgium, Le-Touquet and Paris, France.

In 2000, Mr. Robinson started the band program at Wakefield Middle School in Raleigh, N.C. From its first year enrollment of 80 students, the band grew to over 225 members earning Superior and Excellent ratings at N.C. Musical Performance Assessments during his 10-year tenure.

From 2010-23 he was the Instrumental Director at the 500 student Franklin Academy Charter High School in Wake Forest, NC. He conducted the Concert Band, 2 Jazz Ensembles, 2 Percussion Ensembles and piano class. The band began with 27 members and grew to over 90 members. The Franklin Academy Band Ensembles are the 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2022 Music in the Parks, Williamsburg, V.A. Spring Grand Champions.

Mr. Robinson has earned Teacher of the Year honors at both Cary High School and Wakefield Middle School. He has been recognized as both a semi-finalist and a finalist for the Wake County Public Schools Teacher of the Year, Wake County PTA Teacher of the Year and recipient of the NC Central District's "Award of Excellence".

Mr. Robinson was the Conductor of the Triangle Youth Symphony, Philharmonic Association, from 1997-2010. He also serves as adjudicator for marching band, concert band and winter-guard competitions in NC, TN, SC and Virginia. He is a career long member of NCMEA, NC Bandmasters Association, Atlantic Indoor Association and East-Central District Band Directors Association.

Mr. Robinson retired in June of 2023 after a 40-year career as a music educator for the North Carolina Public Schools.

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Paul Dembowski, Ensemble Visual Judge is the Business Manager for the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Apex Arts Magnet program where he supports the operations of the program of choice serving over 400 students throughout the county. He previously served as the Assistant Principal at Studio 39 and was for 11 years in a similar role as the Apex Arts Department Chair and Magnet Site Coordinator at Broadneck High School in Annapolis, MD.

He is also the conductor of the Anne Arundel Community College Concert Band in Arnold, MD where he serves as the music director for an ensemble of students, educators, professional and accomplished amateur musicians from throughout the Washington, DC and Baltimore metro areas. The band was selected by audition to perform for the 2017 and 2024 Maryland Music Educators Association Annual Conference.

Dembowski received a Bachelor of Music Education from Longwood College and a Master of Music with a concentration in wind conducting from James Madison University. He also holds a certificate in studio production from the Berklee College of Music and has taught courses on that subject at Towson University. He also completed a graduate certificate in Educational Leadership from Towson.

Dembowski previously served on the music faculties of Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, MD, Spotswood High School in Rockingham County, Va., and Riverheads High School in Augusta County, Va. His ensembles consistently received superior ratings in local and regional festivals, and numerous awards for marching, concert, and jazz performance.

Mr. Dembowski has performed with several orchestras and wind ensembles including the Roanoke Symphony, Waynesboro Symphony, Prince George's Philharmonic, Annapolis Chamber Orchestra, McLean Symphony, Capital Wind Symphony, and National Concert Band of America. He currently serves as the principal tuba of the Naptown Philharmonic Orchestra and the director of the Benfield Brass Band, both in Annapolis, MD.

He resides in Annapolis with his wife, Lynda, a member of the United States Naval Academy Band.

Greg Thomas, Ensemble Music Judge

Gregory P. Thomas is a recognized leader in the field of Instrumental Music Education in Virginia. He is a Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors Association Hall of Fame Inductee and led one of the state's most comprehensive and successful High School band programs from 1993-2019. Mr. Thomas received his bachelor's degree and Master of Music Education Degree from Virginia Commonwealth University. He taught for 34 years in the Albemarle County Public Schools, including 26 years as the Band Director at Albemarle High School. He is currently on the Faculty of James Madison University where he conducts the Jazz Band, teaches Instrumental Arranging, Improvisation and supervises student teachers. Under his direction, the Albemarle High

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School Band was recognized seventeen times by the VBODA as a “Virginia Honor Band.” The Albemarle High School Jazz Band was a three time finalist at the Savannah Jazz Festival and a 10 time winner of the Chantilly Jazz Festival. He has presented multiple times at the State VMEA conference on the subject of creativity in the instrumental ensemble. Mr. Thomas is a member of VMEA, VBODA, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and is in demand as an adjudicator and clinician around the state of Virginia. Mr. Thomas has been an active performer all over the United States, and has performed with Dee Dee Belson, Big Ray and the Kool-Kats, Gladys Knight, the Temptations, and other national and regional acts. His true pride, however, is his wife of 37 years, Veronica Price-Thomas, and their three children: Price, 36, Lauren, 32, and Carmen, 27.

Matt Liner, General Effect Music Judge

A graduate of Appalachian State University, Matt Liner is currently in his 26 th year of teaching and is the band director at Oak Grove Middle School in Davidson County, North Carolina. Ensembles under Mr. Liner’s direction have received consistent superior ratings at the district/region concert and jazz band evaluations. Each year, numerous students from his program regularly qualify for membership in county, district, region and all-state honors concert band and jazz band ensembles. His students have also had regular participation in the district solo and ensemble music performance adjudication. Mr. Liner has had the honor of conducting several honors jazz/concert band clinics and has adjudicated marching and concert band competitions/festivals/MPA’s across the southeast. Matt has also had the privilege of instructing three ensembles that have performed at the North Carolina Music Educator Association Annual Professional Development Conference. In 2011 Mr. Liner was selected as the Band Director of the Year by the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Band Directors Association. He is also the 2013-2014 recipient of the Northwest District Bandmasters Association Award of Excellence and the 2019-2020 recipient of the North Carolina Music Educators Association Jazz Section West Region Educator of the Year. Matt has served as a member of the board of directors for the Northwest District Bandmasters Association, most recently as the association’s chairperson.

Mr. Liner has also served as the chairman of the North Carolina Band Directors Association Marching Band Committee. Matt is a past-chairman for the North Carolina Music Educators Association Jazz Section and is also a past region four representative on the executive board of directors of the American School Band Directors Association. Mr. Liner’s professional affiliations include the National Association for Music Education, North Carolina Music Educators Association, North Carolina Bandmasters Association, Pi Kappa Lambda, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and the American School Band Directors Association.

Mr. Liner’s hobby of gardening has grown into a small business. He is the owner operator of Sinfonia Gardens, a perennial nursery that specializes in growing, propagating, and selling Iris. Matt peddles his perennials at local farmers markets on Saturdays in the Spring and Summer, and his iris are also available for purchase on Etsy. Matt, his wife Laura, and their seven-year-old daughter Naomi, reside in Lexington, NC with their cats Prince, and Rose.

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Jerry Philp, Individual Visual Judge

Jerry Philp is in his 20th year of teaching and is the director of bands at Skyline Middle School in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He designs drill for several high school programs across the mid-atlantic region and works specifically with the Virginia Honor Band Harrisonburg High School Marching Band, the 500 strong James Madison University Marching Royal Dukes, and is co-director for the WGI medalist JMU Nuance Winterguards. His drill has been featured in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and on CollegeMarching.com. He has helped write and stage over 150 marching arts productions and judged over 75 marching arts contests. As a judge he is WGI certified in general effect, and appears regularly with shows in the Atlantic Indoor Association, Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors Association, and the Virginia Marching Band Cooperative.

Steve Dailey, Percussion Judge is the Director of Bands at Rachel Carson Middle School in Herndon, VA. Mr. Dailey holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Michigan State University and a Master's degree in conducting from Baylor University. During Mr. Dailey's 14 years of teaching, he has had the privilege to teach band students ranging from beginning band through college in Texas, Indiana, and Virginia.

Prior to Carson Middle School, Mr. Dailey was the Director of Bands at Osbourn Park High School, where he led the program to its first Virginia Honor Band designation since 1995. During his time as the Assistant Director of Bands at Baylor University, Mr. Dailey served as the Director of the Baylor Concert Band, the Associate Director of the Golden Wave Band, the Director of the Courtside Players, and Lecturer in Conducting. Mr. Dailey is the recipient of a Sudler Shield from his time working with the BOA Grand National Finalist "Castle Marching Knights" and has presented at professional development conferences locally and nationally.

As a performer, Mr. Dailey is a proud alumnus of the Michigan State Drumline, Northcoast Academy, the Glassmen Drum and Bugle Corps, and the Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps. Mr. Dailey's percussion arrangements for high school marching bands have been performed in high school and college football stadiums across the country. Mr. Dailey lives in Burke with his wife and three children.