

IOWA ALL-STATE MUSIC FESTIVAL
November 19–21, 2026
IOWA STATE CENTER – AMES, IOWA
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

80th ANNUAL ALL-STATE MUSIC FESTIVAL SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 19–21

The Iowa High School Music Association and the Iowa Music Educators Association will present the **80th Annual All-State Music Festival Concert** on **Saturday, November 21, 2026**, beginning at **7:30 p.m.** in **Hilton Coliseum**, Iowa State University, Ames. The concert will feature the **All-State Band, All-State Chorus, and All-State Orchestra**, bringing together 1,100 of Iowa's most accomplished high school musicians.

Conductors for this year's festival include:

ALL-STATE BAND: DR. CYNTHIA JOHNSTON TURNER serves as Dean of the Faculty of Music at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. An internationally active conductor and educator, she previously served as Director of Bands and Professor of Music at the University of Georgia and Director of Wind Ensembles at Cornell University. At Georgia, she conducted the Hodgson Wind Ensemble, led graduate conducting programs, and oversaw the university's comprehensive band program. Her ensembles have performed at major professional conferences and participated in international service and performance tours. Johnston Turner has guest conducted professional ensembles, university groups, and honor bands throughout North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. She actively champions new compositions and innovative approaches to teaching, rehearsal, and community engagement.

ALL-STATE CHORUS: DR. CHRISTOPHER ASPAAS serves as Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Music at Texas Christian University, where he conducts the Concert Chorale and Frog Corps and oversees the graduate choral conducting program. Under his leadership, the Concert Chorale has performed at national and regional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association and conventions of the Texas Music Educators Association. Aspaas previously served on the faculties of St. Olaf College, Central Washington University, and Mount Holyoke College. He has conducted All-State choruses across the United States and international honor choirs in Australia, Canada, Germany, China, and Oman. An accomplished composer and arranger, he has produced more than 60 choral works, many of which have been featured in All-State performances and at major professional conferences.

ALL-STATE ORCHESTRA: WES KENNEY serves as Music Director of the Fort Collins Symphony and is Professor Emeritus at Colorado State University, where he served for 20 years as Director of Orchestras and chair of conducting studies. His honors include the grand prize at the 2007 Varna International Conducting Competition in Bulgaria, multiple American Prize awards, and the Ernst Bacon Memorial Prize for excellence in the performance of American music. Kenney also served for 10 seasons as Music Director of the Denver Young Artists Orchestra, leading performances at Carnegie Hall, international tours, and a concert at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. His extensive guest conducting career includes professional orchestras in the United States and abroad, along with opera, ballet, and musical theater productions. A dedicated educator, he has led numerous All-State orchestras and was named Educator of the Year by the Colorado chapter of the American String Teachers Association.

The festival's **1,100 student musicians** will gather in Ames **November 19–21** at the facilities of the Iowa State Center for intensive rehearsals in preparation for the Finale Concert in Hilton Coliseum. Their participation reflects exceptional musical achievement, months of individual preparation, and the support of music educators, families, schools, and communities throughout Iowa.

Students from schools in your area will be selected through the statewide audition process, with district auditions taking place October 24. Contact your local school music director(s) following auditions for information about participating students.