

Meet the 2026 Vernell Gregg Young Artists Competition Judges



Heejung Kang was born in Seoul, Korea, and studied at the Seoul Music and Art High School for musically gifted teenagers. She graduated with highest honors from the College of Music, Ewha Woman's University in Seoul and later at the same university she earned her master's degree in piano, receiving the Ewha Graduate Research Fellowship Scholarship. Completing her doctoral dissertation on Rachmaninoff, she received her doctorate in piano performance at the College of Music at the University of North Texas in 2004. In 2002, She made a recording of *Rediscovered Lieder and Piano Pieces by Kletzki, Oppel, and Schenker*, sponsored by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Jewish Federation, and College of Music at UNT. In December 2004, she performed music by Paul Kletzki, Reinhard Oppel, Arnold Mendelssohn and other composers live on Israel Radio.

In November 2005, she performed solo piano music by Heinrich Schenker at the inaugural meeting of the Korean Society for Music Theory in Seoul and premiered Kletzki's Sonata for Piano and Violin with Robert Davidovici on Korean National Radio (KBS FM1). Dr. Kang has recorded Reinhard Oppel's solo piano music for Toccata Classics in England, which was released in 2011. Currently a lecturer in piano at the University of North Texas, she teaches courses in piano literature, sight-reading, score reading, and keyboard harmony. She has been a judge for the Lewisville Lake Symphony Young Artists Competition since 2007. She is a guest member of Lewisville Lake Symphony Orchestra.



John Scott, Professor Emeritus of Clarinet at the University of North Texas, has performed with many orchestras and bands, and appeared as a recitalist and clinician throughout the United States and beyond. His performances include the Victoria Bach Festival in Texas, the New York University Contemporary Music Festival, and at conferences, workshops and recitals in places including Denver, Tempe, Lubbock, Salt Lake City, Victoria BC, Mexico City, San Juan (PR), Ostend, Stockholm, London, Madrid, Ho Chi Minh City, Saigon and Paris as well as in recitals throughout Taiwan and Japan. He has performed with Chamber Music International (Dallas). Recordings include *Birdsongs: Romantic Chamber Music of Arthur Bird*, *Equipoise* and *Wild Exotic Dances*. He performed and taught in music festivals in Taiwan, Japan and numerous other countries.

He was a member of the University of North Texas College of Music faculty from 1981 until 2018.

In addition to teaching and chamber music coaching responsibilities, he served as Chair of the Division of Instrumental Studies for 10 years, and Associate Dean for Admission for 15 years before returning to full time teaching in 2015.

He earned both Masters and Doctor of Music degrees in woodwind performance from Indiana University (Bloomington), where he was a clarinet student of Henry Gulick.

Former students hold positions in numerous orchestras, bands, schools, colleges and universities throughout the United States and abroad, in premier military bands in Washington, D.C. as well as in regional bands. Several have been winners, semi-finalists and prizewinners in the International Clarinet Association's Young Artist Competition and Orchestral Competition. Many have successful careers in music education, and others have established successful careers in medicine, law, technology, management, and sales. Musicians all.

He served as Music Review Editor and Advertising Manager for *The Clarinet*, journal of the International Clarinet Association. He is an artist-clinician for Buffet-Crampon and D'Addario and Company.



Clay Couturiaux is the Assistant Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of North Texas where he currently teaches orchestral conducting and is conductor of the UNT Concert Orchestra. The 2015–16 season marks Couturiaux's fourth season as Music Director and Conductor of the Richardson Symphony Orchestra and his twelfth season as Music Director and Conductor of the Monroe Symphony Orchestra in Louisiana.

Maestro Couturiaux has accumulated over two decades of experience conducting professional symphony orchestras and teaching at the university level. His career has taken him across the United States, Europe, and Asia including concerts with the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra, Ho Chi Minh City Symphony Orchestra, Milano Classica Orchestra da Camera, and National Taiwan Normal University Symphony Orchestra. Other professional conducting engagements include performances with the Abilene Philharmonic, Arkansas Symphony, Austin Symphony, Metropolitan Classical Ballet, East Texas Symphony Orchestra, Texas Chamber Orchestra, and Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra.

Further highlights include conducting the University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra in concert for an audience of 37,000 at Cowboys Stadium in a major collaboration with the North Texas XLV Super Bowl Host Committee, NFL Films, and Tim McGraw. He has also recorded with the UNT Chamber Orchestra on the Crystal Records label.

In addition to his professional schedule, Maestro Couturiaux regularly serves as a guest conductor/clinician, including concerts with several Texas All-Region Honors Orchestras.

In March 2013 the Northeast Louisiana Arts Council named Maestro Couturiaux the recipient of the Edmund Williamson Artist of the Year Award. The award is presented to an artist who the selection committee feels has made the most significant contribution to the improvement of the quality of life for Northeast Louisiana.

Dr. Couturiaux began his musical studies at the age of eight in violoncello and piano. He holds degrees in both conducting and violoncello performance from the University of North Texas. In addition, he developed his conducting skills at the world-renowned Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestra Musicians in Maine and at the National Arts Centre Conductors Programme in Ottawa, Canada. The long list of distinguished conductors with whom Couturiaux studied includes Anshel Brusilow, Jorma Panula, Michael Jinbo, Hugh Wolff, Neal Gittleman, Carl Topilow, and Harold Farberman.