

Spirit

FACULTY & STAFF NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

VOL. 27 | No. 4

Lighting the Season in Song

By Thea Skokan ('22)

When cold air starts to sting rosy cheeks and bright orange leaves morph into swirling snowflakes – some might call it the holiday season. But

in the Gonzaga Music Department, it's more like the season of Meg Stohlmann.

Stohlmann, director of choral and vocal studies, leads the sleigh when it comes to the University's most iconic musical celebration – the Candlelight Christmas Concert.

The longstanding Gonzaga tradition includes “everyone,” says Stohlmann, meaning all three choirs under her direction, the Treble Choir, the Glee Club and the Concert Choir, and the University's only a cappella group, the Big Bing Theory. Outside of Gonzaga, she also oversees the Spokane Symphony Chorale and is helping to produce a number of its iconic holiday shows.

“Basically, anything that includes singing falls under my purview,” she laughs.

Needless to say, it's a busy time of year. Running from one rehearsal to the next, every day, with multiple performances of each show she directs, might all sound like too much for one person. But Stohlmann's passion for music was woven into her DNA.

Her mother studied music in college, and her father was a pastor. From a young age she performed in church and community choirs and took piano lessons, but she never thought of it as a career because it didn't seem “practical.” She joined the Air Force with the intention of going to medical school and served for five years before pivoting.

“I just couldn't kick the music habit,” Stohlmann says. So, she went back

to school to get a degree in music education, a master's in choral conducting and vocal performance, and then a doctorate in choral conducting. That led her to teach choral music education at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, and then eventually to Gonzaga, where she's held her position for the last four years.

It's a career path that's given her a unique and valuable perspective for students: “Do the thing that makes you happy and that you're passionate about and worry about the money later. I see a lot of students who are unhappy with what they're studying but feel like it's the right thing to do to be successful.”

She says the definition of success looks different for everyone.

“I changed my major three times to get where I am today. There is no straight path, and you need to be open to every opportunity and possibility that presents itself.”

Stohlmann is grateful to have ended up here, pursuing the one passion she just couldn't shake, as she prepares for her biggest performances of the year.

The Candlelight Christmas Concert has been a beloved part of the holiday season at Gonzaga for decades. Originally held in St. Aloysius then moved to Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center in 2019, the concert runs 90 minutes with no intermission, a full immersive experience that starts and ends in darkness. After the transition to the MWPAC, Stohlmann evolved the performance from the caroling service it once was without losing its original meaning.

“Music is a vital part of how we express ourselves, especially around the holidays,” she says. “It can really take you to a different place, just for a bit.”



It's the Holiday Spirit

Thanks to all who submitted favorite movies, memories and traditions

I spent four months in Germany after graduating college. It was in the Christkindlmarkt where I learned of a German tradition involving a pickle-shaped ornament. We hid the pickle ornament in the tree before the children woke up for Christmas presents. The first thing they did was search the tree for the cherished green ornament. The first one who found it got to open an extra present from Santa at the end. It was usually a game that the entire family could enjoy. My children now follow this tradition with their children – the start of a multi-generational tradition.

Ann Price

Budget and personnel officer, Center for Global Engagement



My mother had two brothers. The three families would go to Grandma Ann's house for Christmas Eve. At some point in the evening, my father, Uncle Tom or Uncle Frank would "accuse" Grandma Ann of forgetting a certain bottle of alcohol. Those men would leave together and drive off in one vehicle. Actually, they drove to each of their houses and placed all the presents under the Christmas trees. They played Santa for all the cousins going from house to house. They would eat Santa's cookies and drink the milk, and then they'd walk back into Grandma Ann's with at least one bottle of booze in a brown paper bag.

Mary Beth Charleboix

Grad program and collections specialist, Student Financial Services



In addition to watching the movie "Elf," my family has started incorporating "Spirited" into our must-see-annual-movie tradition. I also told my partner the other day that I would like to start a new family tradition by making (rolling and cooking) mass quantities of lumpia (Filipino eggrolls) and giving them away to friends and family. We'll see if that happens this year.

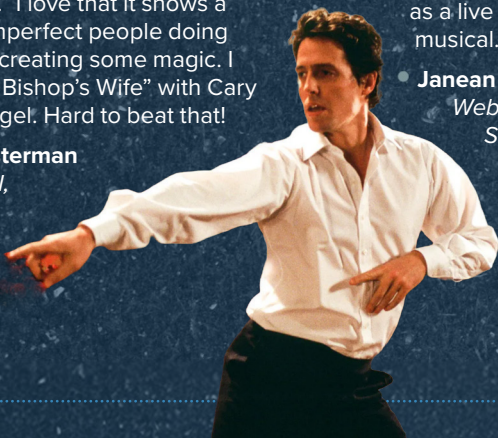
Joan Iva Fawcett

Dean for social justice leadership and community empowerment, Student Affairs

My favorite holiday movie has to be "Love Actually." I love that it shows a collection of imperfect people doing their best and creating some magic. I also love "The Bishop's Wife" with Cary Grant as an angel. Hard to beat that!

Rebecca Chesterman

IT technician III, Service Experience



Our annual must-watch is "A Charlie Brown Christmas." When our young adult comes home, it's "Love Actually." And she makes sure to watch "Home Alone" and "Home Alone 2" for her childhood nostalgia. We wind up watching at least parts of it too. In between, I am amazed at how much my husband enjoys the various Hallmark-style romcoms. On a side note – a Christmas movie I've never actually seen but WILL finally see this year: "Meet Me in St. Louis." I've only ever seen it as a live stage musical.

Janean Schmidt

Web and marketing specialist, School of Engineering and Applied Science



You and your family are invited to join

Dr. Katia Passerini

for the Gonzaga University

President's Christmas Party

DECEMBER 12, 4-7 P.M.

JOHN J. HEMMINGSON CENTER

Please join us for light refreshments and Christmas activities!

RSVP BY DECEMBER 10





CHRISTINA ISABELLI *Named Presidential Fellow*

Christina Isabelli, Gonzaga's associate provost for global engagement and senior international officer, has been named a 2025–26 Presidential Fellow by the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA), a highly selective program that pairs emerging leaders in international education with distinguished mentors.

Isabelli says the fellowship's focus on executive mentorship and strategic leadership "strongly resonated" with her. "I'm eager to learn how other institutions align global engagement with mission, policy and resource strategy," she says.

She will be mentored by a leader at Santa Clara University – a fellow Jesuit institution – an opportunity she calls "an invaluable lens for understanding how Jesuit institutions can collaborate and innovate globally while remaining grounded to their core values."

Joining Gonzaga in 2017, Isabelli has served as chair of Modern Languages and Literature, academic director for the Center for Global Engagement, and now oversees the University's global engagement strategy, including International Student and Scholar Services, the English Language Center and international partnerships.

Isabelli hopes the fellowship will help her strengthen Gonzaga's global engagement infrastructure, support faculty ideas for global learning and research, and further connect the University's work to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. She says the fellowship affirms Gonzaga's commitment to forming students and faculty "who think and act globally, rooted in Jesuit values of ethical leadership and service for the common good."

'We Were Born Ready' *Passerini delivers keynote at Women Lead*

Gonzaga's Women Lead program is celebrating 10 years of empowering women through education, mentorship and community. Founded in 2015 by Sherri Lynch and Rachelle Strawther, the program brings women together across disciplines and life experiences to grow as leaders rooted in Gonzaga's Jesuit mission.

This year's keynote speaker was President Katia Passerini – a moment of significance: "It was affirmation that change is happening. Women are now finding themselves in spaces previously only held by men."

During her keynote, Passerini spoke candidly about confidence, humility and the pressures many women feel in leadership. "I always feel inadequate and fear that I don't know enough, because, really, the more you know, the more you don't know," she said, calling it "perpetual curiosity." She encouraged women to take opportunities even when they don't feel fully prepared: "We are ready. We were born ready. Let's take those opportunities."

As Women Lead enters its next decade, it continues to build a community where women can discover their potential – now alongside President Passerini.

» Read the full story:
gonzaga.edu



Coffee with the President

Join us on **Thursday, December 11, 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.** in the John J. Hemmingson Center Jundt Lounge to enjoy a coffee with President Passerini. No RSVPs needed.

Staff Update Meeting

Learn about updates from the president's cabinet and other matters of institutional importance on **Wednesday, December 17, 2:30 p.m.** in the Hemmingson Ballroom.

CRAFTING THE FUTURE OF FOLEY

By Thea Skokan ('22)

Something exciting is happening in the basement of Foley Library. Tucked among the research materials and quiet spots for studying is the new Digital Scholarship Lab – a place to delve into your creative side and maybe even learn a new skill.

“It’s meant to be both fun and exploratory,” says Elizabeth Wawrzyniak, the digital scholarship and publishing librarian in Foley and a co-founder of the lab.

This new space features machines, technology and a dream lineup of crafting equipment ranging from a Glowforge laser printer for cutting and engraving, to a high-quality sewing machine – all available to students, staff and faculty.

Planning for the lab started in spring 2025, and after that “the whole thing came together pretty quickly,” says Wawrzyniak. She, along with faculty librarian Caitlin Bagley and a crew of student workers, teamed up with the NextGen Tech Bar and ITS to figure out exactly how they wanted the space to function. First things first – they made it a priority to fill in the gaps when it came to spaces for creation across campus. After some consultation, they discovered there was a lot of excitement around a sewing machine. It was added to the lab along with a button maker, a few more 3D printers and several high-performance computers complete with Photoshop and other software.

With some creative sourcing, the project came in under budget and even managed to put old furniture that’s been sitting in storage to use.

“We’ve been saying we ‘duct taped it’ together,” laughs Wawrzyniak. “We put a lot of stuff together in a way that was low cost and low impact on the library initially, because right now we’re in a trial phase and we want to prove that this is viable and useful to campus.”

Once they know it works, the team hopes to source funding to expand from alumni or local businesses.

The lab fits into a larger plan set in motion by Foley Dean Heather James, to transform the library into a space and a tool that can support the next few decades of academics at Gonzaga. This also happens to align with the University’s Strategic Plan, Action Four – re-imagining the learning environment. According to that

pillar, Foley is set to become an academic learning commons, a space for bringing faculty, staff and students together in collaboration, dialogue and mentoring.

And that’s just what Wawrzyniak and Bagley intend for the lab.

“We’re encouraging professors to incorporate the Digital Scholarship Lab into their classrooms and assignments,” Wawrzyniak says. “We want them to send their students here to utilize the equipment, and we’ll guide them through it.”

For staff, they encourage departmental trips – come check out the space and see how your team could utilize the equipment. Or stop by for personal use – work on a project you’ve always wanted to try but lacked the equipment for.

“The bar of entry is so low here, you can come and not know how to do anything and still use this stuff,” continues Wawrzyniak. “That’s what it’s here for and that’s what our student workers are here for, to help you get over that initial hurdle of trying something new.”

It does come at a cost – but the pricing structure is designed to keep the equipment accessible. For example, 3D printing starts as low as five cents per gram of plastic. Bagley stresses costs are essentially just to cover the price of the materials.

The Digital Scholarship Lab will officially launch in the spring, but it is available now on a trial basis every Friday through Sunday, 2-6 p.m. for personal, creative and experimental use. However, if you’d like to work on something outside of that time, Wawrzyniak says they’re happy to accommodate.



ZagAI

Bringing responsible AI to the classroom

By Amy Hyde, marketing administrative specialist, Institute for Informatics & Applied Technologies

As generative AI tools make their way onto campuses, faculty and students are grappling with how AI supports educational goals, rather than hindering them. Commercial AI platforms, designed for efficiency, often provide quick answers instead of fostering inquiry. They lack guardrails that help students learn responsibly, offer limited visibility for faculty into how students are using them, and can short-circuit the very critical-thinking processes universities strive to develop. In short, AI products built for mass consumption are undercutting the goals of educators and learners alike.

ZagAI was created to address these problems.

Developed by the Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology (IIAT) in partnership with Professor Chase Bollig (English) and Professor Shan Xiao (MIS), ZagAI is Gonzaga's custom-built AI learning assistant designed specifically for education. Unlike commercial tools, ZagAI uses the Socratic method – prompting students with questions, nudges and reflective tasks that help them deepen their thinking rather than receive ready-made answers. Faculty craft the assignment and define the learning goals, then ZagAI guides students through an exploratory process that supports intellectual curiosity and academic integrity.

This fall, ZagAI has been piloted in a small set of English courses, allowing the team to refine features, strengthen guardrails and study how students engage with AI-supported learning. Now, IIAT is preparing to expand the pilot to faculty across disciplines to broaden both the learning use cases and the platform's capabilities.

We're seeking AI-curious faculty interested in developing or adapting assignments to use with ZagAI during the spring semester. No technical expertise is required – just an openness to co-learn with students about the opportunities and limitations of AI in education.

OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED

- » Faculty in the School of Business Administration: Join us for an Informational Social on December 8 at 11:15 a.m. in the Jepson faculty lounge. Lunch provided.
- » All other faculty: Sign up for a hands-on demo and training in the IIAT HACLab (Herak 100) on January 8, 12:15–1:15 p.m.

Together, we can shape an AI-enhanced learning future rooted in inquiry, reflection and responsible innovation.



MOBILE ZAGCARDS

Gonzaga is transitioning to a mobile ZagCard in the new year, giving students, faculty and staff the ability to use their smartphones or smartwatches as their official campus ID. This upgrade delivers a faster, safer and more seamless experience while supporting Gonzaga's commitment to security and sustainability.

The mobile ZagCard offers instant access with a simple tap, eliminating the wait time and replacement costs of physical cards. Mobile credentials are also encrypted and protected by your phone's biometric and passcode security, so they significantly reduce the risk of fraud, ID sharing and misplaced cards. With more reliable door access and improved safety, daily campus life becomes easier for everyone.

According to Matt Eastman, project manager and Staff Assembly president, the move to mobile has been years in the making. Since 2022, Auxiliary Enterprises, Plant Services, Information Technology Services and Sodexo have collaborated on a multi-phase project that included extensive hardware upgrades, system integrations, business-case analysis, campus surveys, device testing and beta trials with students, faculty and staff. As older card readers naturally reached the end of their lifecycle, they were replaced with mobile-ready hardware – creating the perfect moment to adopt this forward-thinking solution.

Faculty and staff can expect fewer forgotten cards, ease of access, and a system that aligns with Gonzaga's Mission for responsible stewardship.

Look for an informational website with set-up instructions, FAQs and launch details.

If you try the recipe, don't forget to send your photos to spirit@gonzaga.edu!

Dessert of the Month

Pear Upside Down Cake

This recipe is really special to me. My mom taught my sister and I how to make this when we were just little kids, and now we take turns making it every year for either Christmas or Thanksgiving (or both! It's that good). I even pulled it out for the first holiday I spent with my boyfriend's family and almost four years later they still ask me to make it whenever they visit. So, I'm sharing my secret with the Gonzaga community. Take care of it and test it out on your own family! – *Thea Skokan*

Adapted from Love the Secret Ingredient website

For the Pears

4 Tbsp (½ stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
½ cup packed dark brown sugar
Pinch of kosher salt
2 ripe but firm pears, such as Bosc or Bartlett, peeled, cored and cut into thin wedges (about ⅓ inch thick)

For the Cake

2 large eggs
1 cup packed dark brown sugar
⅓ cup whole milk
1 tsp pure vanilla extract
1 tsp almond extract
12 Tbsp (1 ½ sticks) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
1 ½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
1 tsp kosher salt
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour

For the Glaze

¼ cup confectioners' sugar
1 Tbsp whole milk
¼ tsp almond extract

Instructions

Step 1 Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter the bottom and sides of a 9-inch round cake pan and line the bottom with parchment paper.

Step 2 For the pears: In a bowl, mash the 4 Tbsp butter with ½ cup brown sugar and a pinch of salt until combined. Spread evenly on the bottom of the prepared pan. Arrange the pear wedges in a circle over the mixture, filling any gaps with smaller wedges.

Step 3 For the cake: In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, brown sugar, milk, vanilla and almond extract. Whisk in the melted butter. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add the dry ingredients to the wet mixture and whisk just until combined.

Step 4 Pour the batter gently over the pears in the pan and spread evenly. Bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 50–55 minutes.

Step 5 Cool the cake in the pan for about 30 minutes. Run a knife around the edges to loosen, then turn the cake upside down onto a serving plate and remove the parchment paper.

Step 6 For the glaze: Whisk together confectioners' sugar, milk and almond extract until smooth. Drizzle over the cooled cake before serving.

**I recommend serving with some homemade whip cream or vanilla ice cream! To make whipped cream, put heavy whipping cream, a little powdered sugar and a dash of vanilla to a mixer and whisk on high until it turns fluffy and creamy.*

Noteworthy

New Hires

Alec Hopkins, custodian, Plant; **Anne Mari Petrino**, asst general counsel, General Counsel; **Bailey Sauls**, asst director for residence life, Housing and Residence Life; **Brice Yates**, director of harassment and discrimination prevent & Title IX coordinator, Inclusive Excellence; **Brooke Thompson**, asst women's rowing coach, Athletics; **Carly Ellis**, art technician, College of Arts and Sciences; **Christopher Adams**, custodian, Plant; **Janna O'Brien**, FXD budget asst, Center for Community Engagement; **Kristina King**, admissions application specialist, Graduate Enrollment Management; **Marli Krantz**, social media specialist, Marketing & Communications; **Meredith Hallinan**, annual giving program specialist, University Advancement; **Nathan Robbins**, security officer, CSPS

Position Changes/Promotions

Daniel Salazar, HVAC control technician, Plant; **Margaret Martens**, admissions specialist, School of Law; **Todd Ullrich**, manager of grounds and solid waste, Plant; **Joanne Barber**, FXD director of development, University Advancement; **Nicole Clute**, FXD leadership annual giving officer, University Advancement; **Ryan Malarkey**, FXD enrollment operations specialist I, Admissions; **Claudia Rios-Jordan**, MBA-AIE program coordinator, School of Business; **David Bowers**, custodian specialist floor tech, Plant; **Deborah Harmon**, FXD interim director of enrollment management operations, Admissions; **Enes Dautovic**, special services and warehouse operations manager, Plant; **Jolanta Weber**, acting dean, Gonzaga in Florence; **Mysti Reneau**, director and research compliance officer, Sponsored Research & Programs; **Scott Economu**, instrumentation specialist and CMR lab manager, College of Arts and Sciences; **Shaylynn Sapp**, technical analyst/project manager, Student Financial Services; **Traci Logan**, partner manager, Human Resources; **Emily Hunter**, FXD residence director, Housing and Residence Life; **Kayla Cartelli Rideout**, asst men's rowing coach, Athletics; **Raul Alvarez**, enterprise application developer II, ITS

Goodbyes

Christopher Adams, custodian, Plant; **Justin Jacobs**, asst baseball coach and director of operations, Athletics; **Olivia Bridston**, application administrator, ITS; **Rebecca Stockton**, asst director, Admissions; **Richard Van Hook**, warehouse supervisor, Plant; **Ann Marie Anderson**, communications officer, CSPS; **August Murphy-Beach**, systems data analyst, Institutional Research; **Dustin Gomez**, program asst, Foley Library; **Ellen Teerink**, program coordinator, Center for Student Involvement; **Eva Guzman**, FXD lab and field technician, College of Arts and Sciences; **Jacqueline Linder**,

program asst II, Center for Cura Personalis; **Karen Kaiser**, curator of education, Jundt Art Museum; **Macie Castrodale**, program coordinator, School of Law Admissions; **Andrew Johnson**, FXD assignments coordinator, Housing and Residence Life; **Cherie Christ**, assoc CIO of strategy and engagement, ITS; **David Sprague**, custodian, Plant; **Jacob O'Brien**, custodian, Plant; **Jacqueline Swanson**, FXD graphic designer, Marketing & Communications; **Jacqueline Van Allen**, director, Sponsored Research & Programs; **Jerad Sedar**, custodian, Plant; **Julia Bjordahl**, FXD director of operations, Office of the President; **KaLee Quanz**, FXD benefits and leaves specialist II, Human Resources; **Kara Moraski**, program coordinator, Center for Civil and Human Rights, School of Law; **Sarah Lawrence**, custodian,

Anniversaries

- 05** **Tammie Maple**, business and administrator services manager, Health and Counseling Services; **Laura Williams**, custodian, Plant
- 15** **Brian Michaelson**, asst men's basketball coach, Athletics

Around Campus

Events, celebrations and lectures of note this month

Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m. Spokane Jazz Orchestra brings A Motown Christmas featuring vocalist Kate Skinner | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

Dec. 20, 7:30 p.m. Campana Sobre Campana: Christmas in Mexico! with Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuéllar & Ballet Folklórico del Río Grande | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

Jan. 16, 7:30 p.m. The Julia Keefe Indigenous Jazz Ensemble brings a powerful evening of jazz rooted in Native and Indigenous traditions | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

Jan. 23, 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.; Jan. 24, 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.; Jan. 25, 2 p.m. Thumbelina is a fun and inspiring retelling of the classic tale created and choreographed by Gonzaga Dance, featuring Gonzaga's dance students alongside local youth dancers | Magnuson Theatre

Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m. Yagódy is a spell-binding journey through reimagined Ukrainian and Balkan folk music | Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

Jan. 31, TEDxSpokane offers a full-day lineup of local voices and thought-leaders sharing bold perspectives, stories, and ideas | Myrtle Woldson Center Performing Arts Center