



Ryan Ellis
FIU Johnny Mercer Foundation Fellow (2014-2016)

Ryan Ellis received his Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Miami in 2000. Subsequently, he spent five years as the Director of Bands at Miami Southridge Senior High School before accepting the position of Choral Music Director at John A. Ferguson High School. His choir, The Falcon Singers, has performed throughout the United States with concerts in Washington D.C., Chicago, Atlanta, Orlando, and New York including two concerts at Carnegie Hall in 2009 and 2011 and one in DC's Kennedy Center in 2012. The group was invited to perform in the 2012 Olympic Games in London, but were unable to participate due to international travel regulations. In March of 2014, the Falcon Singers performed the world premiere "Nou Se Limye," by Haitian composer Sydney Guillaume in Carnegie Hall.

As a professional jazz pianist, Mr. Ellis has worked extensively in the Caribbean, Florida and Hawaii performing with a who's who of jazz including Kevin Mahogany, Eddie Jones, Paul Brown, Leon Foster Thomas, Bobby Ramirez, Ira Sullivan and Bobby Dukoff.



Odalys Cordero
FIU Johnny Mercer Foundation Fellow (2015-2017)

Odalys Cordero was born and raised in Miami, Florida. Involved in the performing arts since a young age, Ms. Cordero attended Magnet schools for music, studied the flute and received the Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Florida International University in 2007. Since then, she has been teaching in the Miami-Dade Public School system, founding several orchestral and choral programs in various elementary schools. Ms. Cordero is presently teaching at the Rockway Elementary and Pinecrest Elementary schools. She loves her work and is dedicated to her continued growth and mastering her craft.

Ms. Cordero's unit topic this year will be entitled "Radio Rockway." This unit will be based on experiencing and creating lyrics to different genres of music. Each class will take on the role of a radio station with an assigned genre. Through these radio stations, students will perform their compositions.



Carlos Hernandez
FIU Johnny Mercer Foundation Fellow (2015-2017)

Carlos Hernandez graduated with Bachelors in Music Education from Florida International University under the guidance of Dr. Cathy Benedict and Dr. Patrick Schmidt. Carlos is currently pursuing his Masters in Music Education with an emphasis in conducting at FIU. Carlos is certified to teach Music in grades K-12 and is currently working on getting his ESOL endorsement. During his undergraduate studies he was given the opportunity to participate in numerous outreach musical programs in his community, statewide and internationally in both primary and secondary musical settings.

Carlos is currently the Director of Bands at Coral Gables Senior High School and Ponce de Leon Middle School. In 2014 Carlos helped open a primary and secondary charter school in Pembroke Pines, FL called Renaissance Charter School at Pines where he taught K-4th General Music Teacher and was the Director of the Patriot Band. Carlos is primarily a conductor, saxophonist, clarinetist and most importantly an educator. Carlos feels teaching music should be about facilitating a welcoming and empowering environment where everyone can openly express themselves through multiple musical mediums; including the voice, body movements and musical instruments. Purposeful musical engagement, social mindfulness and cross curricular instruction are a few guiding principles in his conversations and engagements with students about and through music.

Unit Plan: Carlos is going to introduce his lessons in the secondary level and have students perform and create their own lyrics for some published and unpublished works. We hope to premiere an unpublished work from the GSU archive. We will also have students create their own movements and develop choreography for some silent film scores which will be associated with a live musical performance performed by high school students.



Ruth Clenton
FIU Johnny Mercer Foundation Fellow (2017-2019)

Ruth Clenton is a native Floridian who has had a passion for music and children since she was very young. Her first performance as a preschooler was a *hit*, and she went on to audition and be accepted to the Dr. Michael Krop High School music magnet program in 2002. Ms. Clenton majored in Music Education at the University of Florida for her undergraduate studies and graduated in 2010. She taught music and general education for four years in Broward County and Dade County public schools, and then decided to continue her growth as a music educator by pursuing a Master of Science in Music Education at Florida International University. Ms. Clenton has also presented to educators in Haiti several times as part of an annual educator conference with Projects for Haiti, Inc. The goal of these conferences is to inspire and empower Haitian and US teachers alike. She loves creating meaningful and memorable learning experiences for her students, and currently is the music teacher at Meadowbrook Elementary where she does just that.



Gianni Bolanos
FIU Johnny Mercer Foundation Fellow (2017-2018)

Gianni Bolanos is a musician and educator from Miami, Florida. He has been a musician since the age of six, and as a multi-instrumentalist, has had the opportunity to perform and work with various types of musicians and ensembles throughout his life. Mr. Bolanos has been teaching professionally for six years, and he is currently a graduate student in Florida International University's Music Education program, with a focus on Music Technology.

During and after college, Mr. Bolanos was very active within the marching band and music education community as a percussion, visual, and winds instructor for several programs in South Florida, including Palmetto High School and Mater Academy. In 2002, he became a founding member of Florida International University's marching band. He was a member of the band for three years under the direction of Dr. Greg Martin. In 2003 he had the opportunity to become a member of the Madison Scouts Drum & Bugle Corps from Madison, Wisconsin. After college, Mr. Bolanos spent some time working within the music business, producing and writing music for several local artists. He has also been an associate member of the Grammys since 2008.

In his previous position at Keys Gate Charter High School, where he spent four years, Mr. Bolanos built a highly active guitar program from the ground up. He is currently the Music Director at Pompano Beach High School, where he is the director of the Band, Choir, and Orchestra programs.

Claude Graham
FIU Johnny Mercer Foundation Fellow (2017-2018)

Claude Graham is a native of Miami, Florida where he graduated from Miami Northwestern Senior High. He received the Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from Florida A&M University, where he studied conducting under the legendary Dr. William P. Foster and Dr. Julian E. White. While an undergraduate student at Florida A&M University, he also studied composition, film scoring, and electronic music under Dr. Marty Robinson. Claude is currently working on his Masters of Science degree in Music Education at Florida International University.

Mr. Graham serves as band director of the Hallandale High School "Charger" Band. Prior to his appointment at Hallandale, Mr. Graham served as director of William M. Raines High School located in Jacksonville, FL. While in that position, the Raines Band performed for former Vice President of the United States, Al Gore. The Raines band also was asked to perform for a visiting president from Nairobi. Mr. Graham also served as band director of the "Superior-rated" Coral Glades High School Band and Orchestra located in Coral Springs, FL, as well as the Jefferson County Middle/High School band of Monticello, FL.

Mr. Graham is an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, Inc. He also is a member of the prestigious Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia music fraternity and Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity, Florida Bandmaster Association, National Association for Music Educators (formerly Music Educator's National Conference-MENC). He also held membership in the Florida Orchestra Association.