

# Jane Frazee Distinguished Scholar-Artist Series

Saturday, July 11, 2026, 1:00-4:30 p.m.

Brady Educational Center Auditorium (BEC 120) ~ Reception to follow

*The 2026 distinguished scholar-artist is Dr. Christopher Azzara, Eisenhart Professor of Music Teaching and Learning at Eastman School of Music*

## Creativity at the Core of Music Teaching and Learning

Improvisation in music is the spontaneous expression of meaningful musical ideas—it is analogous to conversation in language. Key elements of improvisation include personalization, spontaneity, interaction, and being “in the moment.” Interestingly, we are born improvisers, as evidenced by our behavior in early childhood. Improvisation enables musicians to express themselves from an internal source and is central to developing musicianship in all aspects of music education. Using repertoire as a foundation, Azzara will provide practical, accessible ideas for learning to improvise and will explore relationships among music listening, improvising, reading, and composing. With an understanding of how these skills are related, participants will be introduced to techniques designed to: (a) improve musicianship; (b) develop improvisation skills in a variety of musical styles; (c) include improvisation as an integral part of teaching and learning; (d) gain deeper understanding of music literature, and (e) assess student learning.



**Dr. Christopher Azzara**

*Pianist, arranger, author, and educator, Christopher Azzara has made important contributions to advancing the understanding of creativity and improvisation in the music learning process. Teaching and performing internationally, he is the author of numerous articles and books, including “Developing Musicianship Through Improvisation” and “Jump Right In: The Instrumental Series.” His musical arrangements for instrumental and vocal ensembles are available through Oxford University Press and GIA. Azzara’s research and publications are concerned with meaningful relationships among listening, creating, improvising, reading, composing, and analyzing music in vocal and instrumental settings. In 2023, Dr. Azzara was named Eisenhart Professor of Music Teaching & Learning, the oldest endowed professorship at the Eastman School of Music.*  
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