



The United States Army Field Band

Woodwind Ambassadors Bio
January 5, 2020
Word Count: 737

The Musical Ambassadors of the Army
Washington, DC

THE WOODWIND AMBASSADORS

The Woodwind Ambassadors is one of The U.S. Army Field Band's longest-running educational outreach programs, performing for music students ranging from pre-school to postgraduate. In addition to formal recital performances at colleges and Universities throughout the nation, the Woodwind Ambassadors introduces students of all ages to the instruments and literature of the wind quintet through educational programs, ensemble coaching, and masterclasses. Along with performing standard works from the wind quintet literature, the Woodwind Ambassadors also frequently present lesser known duos, trios, and quartets as part of these programs.

Originally from Columbus, Ohio, **Staff Sergeant Jennifer Zhou** began her flute studies at age six. Prior to joining The U.S. Army Field Band, she performed with various ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, New World Symphony, and "The President's Own" United States Marine Band. SSG Zhou received her Master of Music degree from Rice University and her Bachelor of Music degree with a Performer's Certificate from The Eastman School of Music. She has participated in music festivals such as Spoleto USA, National Repertory Orchestra, Music Academy of the West, Schleswig-Holstein, Zermatt, Youth Orchestra of the Americas, and the Aspen Music Festival. Her teachers include Bonita Boyd, Leone Buyse, Beth Owen, and Martha Aarons.

Staff Sergeant Amy Houck is a native of Katy, Texas, and currently the oboist with the Woodwind Ambassadors. Before joining The United States Army Field Band in 2018, she performed as a substitute with the Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Toledo Symphony, Harrisburg Symphony, and the Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra. SSG Houck holds a Master of Music degree from DePaul University and a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music. Her principal teachers include Eugene Izotov and Richard Killmer. SSG Houck has attended music festivals such as the Music Academy of the West and the Banff Centre Festival Orchestra.

Originally from Virginia Beach, Virginia, **Sergeant First Class John Blair** holds a Master of Music degree from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from James Madison University. His principal teachers include Richie Hawley, Steve Cohen, Ron de Kant, Dr. Janice Minor, Dr. D. Ray McClellan, and Edward Knakel. As a member of The U.S. Army Field Band, SFC Blair has performed professionally with the Tidewater Winds Concert Band and the Penn's Woods Festival Orchestra. SFC Blair has performed as soloist with the Concert Band and on the Army Field Band Chamber Music Series, and is the clarinetist of the Woodwind Ambassadors.

Sergeant First Class Thaddeus Macaulay Crutcher, Jr. has been a member of The U.S. Army Field Band since 2007. He is a graduate of The Eastman School of Music where he studied bassoon, flute, and music education, and also received a Master of Arts degree from The Catholic University of America's Metropolitan School of Professional Studies. From 2005 to 2007, SFC Crutcher served as bassoonist and flutist with the Army Ground Forces Band stationed at Ft. McPherson, Georgia. While there, he was awarded the Army Commendation Medal as an outstanding soloist. He has given masterclasses and clinics of all levels across the United States and has performed with the Ludwig Symphony, New Atlanta Philharmonic, Gateway Symphony Orchestra, Manassas Ballet, the Gilded Flute and Harp Duo, Army Field Band Woodwind Quintet, and the Army Ground Forces Band Woodwind Quintet. SFC Crutcher's teachers include John Hunt, David van Hoesen, Dale Clark, David Conn, Carl Hall, Donna Shin, and Jim Zellers.

Staff Sergeant Jennifer Kempe is originally from Champaign, Illinois. She received her Bachelor of Music Education Degree from the University of Illinois, and her Master of Music degree from Western Michigan University. Prior to joining The U.S. Army Field Band, SSG Kempe performed as Principal Horn of the Battle Creek Symphony and 2nd Horn of the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed with numerous ensembles throughout the Midwest, including the Quad City Symphony Orchestra, Tallgrass Brass Band, Lansing Symphony Orchestra, Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra, and the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre Pit Orchestra. SSG Kempe has attended music festivals such as the Round Top Festival Institute, Rafael Méndez Brass Institute, and Le Domaine Forget International Academy of Music and Dance. SSG Kempe has taught students of all ages, maintaining a private horn studio and teaching brass lessons in local schools in the Quad City area. Her primary teachers include Bernhard Scully and Lin Foulk.