Dr. John MacDonald served as head of the School of Music from 1967 to 1977, returning to the classroom to teach and conduct until 1993. When Dr. MacDonald arrived in Akron in 1959, he joined a faculty of four as the choral man with Dr. Farley Hutchins as the director of the department. At that time, a Bachelor of Arts in Music was offered by the College of Arts and Sciences, and a Bachelor of Science in Music Education was offered through the College of Education. There was no performance degree until, under Dr. Hutchins, Music Literature and Music Performance degrees were added. Dr. MacDonald became director in 1967 as Akron became a state university, and the College of Fine and Applied Arts was formed. The School of Music grew exponentially when it became a state university, to almost five hundred students by 1993 and thirty-eight full time faculty. The school initiated and completed membership in the National Association of Schools
of Music, and in 1977, Frank Bradshaw took the reins as director and was effective in growing the department.

The music department moved from the historic Firestone Conservatory of Music to the newly built Guzzetta Hall, dedicated on October 29, 1976. This was the second phase of the University’s long-range concept of a performing arts center, connected to E.J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall by a bridge spanning Hill Street. To this day, students trek across Hill Street to E.J. Thomas for classes on stage, and performances on stage in student concerts.

Some major events for the school include Collage; Music Careers Day; JazzFest; MonsterPianos; Marching Band bowl game appearances; and holiday concerts like Jingle Jazz, ‘Tis the Season, and Tuba Christmas. The University of Akron Choirs’ collaboration with the Munich Conservatory is an exceptional honor, as is being consistently invited to sing with the Cleveland Orchestra.