



# Newsletter

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Fort Worth Music Teachers Association

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## Editorial Musings



Music criticism can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Among the first writer-musicians to make serious contributions to the world of music at that time were Jean Jacques Rousseau, (France) and Charles Burney, (England). Periodicals and newspapers also made their appearance in great numbers enhancing and nurturing the need for music criticism.

Sadly, the criticism of the early 1700s based its judgement firmly on the rules of music...was it theoretically correct. Johann Mattheson, founder of *Critica Musica* in 1722 – a journal devoted entirely to music criticism – wrote a scathing attack on J.S. Bach for having ignored the rules that dictated word settings in cantatas!!

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the obsessive interest in theoretical rules governing music fade away; it was supplanted by the power of observation. The contributions of writer-musicians to criticism since the 1700s, led to the music critic gaining an indispensable position in the musical milieu; criticism had gained a strong hold.

Among the notable musician-critics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are Robert Schuman, Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz. Schumann was the most influential critic of his time. He founded *The New Journal for Music* and remained its editor for a decade. The pages of this journal are

filled with the most perceptive insights into the music of the time and those who created it. Well known are Schumann's words of praise in his first major essay on the young Chopin: "Hats off, gentleman, a genius." (1834). And the last article (1853) introduces a very young Brahms to the world of music.

The Viennese music critic, Eduard Hanslick, considered the father of modern music criticism, was both revered and feared in the music world of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He based his criticism on a more analytical and less descriptive approach. His book *The Beautiful in Music* (1854), is considered a milestone in the history of music criticism.

Music critics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continued to base their writings on analysis, as did Hanslick. But a group of re-thinkers, among them Sir Donald Tovey and one of the most radical thinkers of the time, Arnold Schoenberg, questioned music's aesthetics, leading to music criticism itself being criticized and attempts made to evaluate its weaknesses.

Nothing can take the place of listening to a live performance of a piece of music - from solo piano to chamber to symphonic works. And while music lovers form their own opinions of what was heard in performance, reading the criticisms of a music critic in the local newspaper is an absolute *must*.

We may not always agree with the stance as taken by the critic, but we find ourselves eager to read an assessment of the previous evening's performance by

the local critic. The analytical mind behind the criticism gleans both the best, and at times the worst, from the performance presented. It is not a deliberate attempt by the critic to sway our opinions, but rather to challenge the opinion of erudite music lovers. How do we logically reconcile the joy we derive from listening to live music and forming our own opinions with being swayed (even minutely) by the scholarly criticisms of a critic? It is a thought I have toyed with for many years...

This edition of the FWMTA Newsletter has a pertinent article on *Why We Need Arts Critics*. It is by a guest writer – the notable music critic and Arts journalist, **Scott Cantrell**. I am sure you have read his numerous summations of performances given by the FWSO and the DSO as well as various other Arts groups.

The Newsletter also has other items of interest by **Jennifer DeSantis**, **Jose Cubela** and **Sarah Alexander**. And a new series recognizing FWMTA members who have volunteered their time over the years, spotlights **Dr. MaryAnn Fritz**.

And lastly, please make every attempt to give your copy of American Music Teacher (AMT) your attention as its articles particularly on: *How Do You Develop Grit*; *Performance Anxiety* and *Managing Music Performance Anxiety*, each provide insightful information.

Rosemary Solomons  
Editor

# WHY WE NEED ARTS CRITICS

By Scott Cantrell



Twenty-five years ago, there were about 65 full-time classical-music critics at North American newspapers. Today, I count nine, and some

also do other things.

Particularly since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cumulative effect of decades of declining readership and advertising has been drastic cuts to staffs and coverage. Arts coverage has been particularly hard hit.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram essentially no longer covers the arts at all—in a city with three important art museums, an accomplished symphony orchestra, an opera company that has drawn national attention and one of the world’s highest-profile piano competitions. When I arrived at The Dallas Morning News nearly 20 years ago, there were 16 full-time arts-and-entertainment critics and writers. After the most recent layoff there’s only an arts reporter and an architecture critic shared half-time with the University of Texas at Arlington. The news is as bad or worse in other cities.

I took a buyout three years ago, perfectly timed for me, but have been glad that editors have wanted me to continue covering classical music on a freelance basis. I’m doing about 75 percent of the same work for a lot less money than before, but it’s a good arrangement for me for now; I joke that I’m helping subsidize the Dallas Morning News.

Websites have sprung up all over the country to cover the arts, with varying degrees of authority. In Dallas-Fort Worth we have Theater Jones and Texas Classical, both carrying substantive articles and reviews. I’m always glad for other voices, and I like—and eagerly read—the other writers.

Fine as these media are, I do regret one thing. When arts coverage appeared regularly in daily newspapers, it was right

there alongside local political, business and sports news. It was seen as part of the life of the community. When it’s confined to specialist websites, it’s effectively ghettoized, as something of interest to—and to be seen by—only hard-core devotés. Those websites still have only fractions of the readership of newspapers, in both print and online formats.

All that said, why should we lament the loss of arts criticism? Critics, after all, probably range somewhere around used-car salesmen in public esteem. Everybody complains about them. “You never like anything,” we’re told. “You’re supposed to *support* the arts, not drive people away.” “You have it in for performer X.” The composer Jean Sibelius observed that no one ever erected a monument to a critic.

An orchestra executive, though, recently said that critics are part of the artistic ecosystem. As independent—and, we hope experienced and knowledgeable—observers, they ensure that the tree falling in the forest *is* heard—and noticed. They can praise and draw attention to great work being done, but also say, sometimes, “This isn’t as good as should be.”

I think critics serve six purposes:

1) They write reviews of performances, telling readers what happened, why it’s important, and how it fits into the cultural life of the community. They leave records of what was going on at a certain point in a city’s history. The best critical writing allows us to imagine what the performance actually looked and sounded like.

2) They serve as consumer advocates. Given all the competition for people’s time and money, is the soloist, or ensemble, or orchestral or operatic performance as good as it could and should be?

3) They are also composers’ advocates. In the case of classical music, which depends on performances to come alive, do performers really try to realize composers’ intentions, or do they disfigure the music with self-indulgences?

3) They are sources of news—who’s leaving and who’s coming to important jobs, how arts organizations are doing financially. Who are the hot new composers and performers?

4) Sometimes they are, if you will, program annotators, introducing and explaining new or unfamiliar works,

sometimes in conversations with composers and performers.

5) Sometimes they step back and consider bigger pictures. What could area arts organizations be doing better, or more imaginatively? Are there any new trends, positive or negative, either locally or on a larger scale?

I think these are all important functions, and the artistic life of a community is poorer without them.

But these functions also depend on *you*. Do you subscribe to your local newspaper, whether in print or online? You can’t really complain about declining arts coverage if you’re not helping support it.

One thing you absolutely must know. As newspapers increasingly migrate online, coverage is increasingly judged by the online clicks it gets. The more the clicks on Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra reviews, the greater likelihood they will continue. Things that don’t get many clicks aren’t likely to get much continuing coverage.

So I’ll close with a personal plea. Go to DallasNews.com. Click on “Arts,” then “Classical Music.” Click on my articles and reviews. Those clicks will be counted. They can even measure how long you spend with each review. (I know: Big Brother is watching.)

I like to think the arts need critics. Arts coverage also needs you.

*Scott Cantrell has been classical music critic of The Dallas Morning News since 1995, on a freelance basis since 2015. He previously served papers in Kansas City, and Rochester and Albany, New York. He has also written for The New York Times, numerous music magazines and Encyclopedia Britannica, and written program notes for concerts and recordings. A two-term president of the Music Critics Association of North America, he has twice served on the jury for the Pulitzer Prize in Music. Earlier in his career, he was also active as a classical-music broadcaster and church organist and choirmaster. He holds degrees from Southern Methodist University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.*



**MCMTA and FWMTA invite you to a joint meeting at  
The Fort Worth Womans' Club  
on Tuesday, February 12, 2019**

**Former FWMTA member, Dr. Jessica Koebbe will be the  
Guest speaker. See Event Calendar for more information**

**FWMTA UPDATES**

**By Jennifer DeSantis – Co President**



The Spring semester is in full swing and we have many wonderful performance opportunities for your students! In February: the

Local Performance Contest, Duo Piano Competition and Piano Ensemble Auditions. Open Recitals in March & May

and the Solo Competition in April. Please see our website [fwmta.org](http://fwmta.org) for student activity deadlines, instructions and forms.

Teacher activities to note include the joint meeting with MCMTA, featuring Dr. Jessica Koebbe on February 12, 2019 and the MTNA Convention, March 16-20, 2019 in Spokane, WA. We also plan to have a spring master class and association meeting in April. Details for these events will be sent to you soon!

Last year at this time, I invited our organization to implement an innovative music-making program for our community. My plan was to create an outreach program that allows our students

to have another space to perform besides the recital stage. The students would have performance opportunities in area retirement homes, hospitals, museums and libraries. Nothing has transpired for our younger students, but I have made contact with one local cancer center that is seeking adult musicians. They would like for our adult students (instrumental and voice) to provide therapeutic music for cancer patients receiving treatments. This may be an excellent opportunity for our adult students to perform and give back to the community. Please get in touch with me if you are interested in serving on an outreach committee.



**Piano Recitals**

José Cubela

Our association features monthly recitals at Texas Wesleyan's Martin Hall. Students, regardless of age and level are given the opportunity to perform on a Hamburg Steinway concert grand - the piano of choice for the 2017 International Cliburn Competition.

Recitals are an excellent goal setting tool for students, as it helps them develop discipline and time management skills with their practice. Performing builds our students' musical and personal confidence, as well as their love of music. Many studies have shown that preparing for musical performances helps build a stronger memory, sharpens concentration, fosters self-expression and creativity. Most importantly, performing on stage for others is fun! I look forward to seeing more of our talented students and teachers at upcoming recitals. Upcoming Recital dates: March 9, May 18, 2019.

## **FWMTA Senior Scholarship Applications are due April 1, 2019!**

MaryAnn Fritz, VP Student Activities

Now is the time to begin gathering information for applications for the Fort Worth Music Teachers Association Senior Scholarship Awards. We offer two types of scholarships to high school seniors. The Memorial Scholarship Award recognizes a talented high school senior who plans to major in music. The amount of this award will be determined by the Scholarship

Committee and approved by the Executive Board of FWMTA. The Senior Scholarship Award is available to students who have participated in various musical activities in grades 9 through 12.

Recipients of the Senior Scholarship Award need not plan to major in music. Any high school senior who studies with a teacher who is a member of FWMTA may apply.

Seniors who apply for the awards must pass a TMFTA Grade 12 theory test and write an essay explaining his/her interest in music. In the event we have a large number of applicants, students must be prepared to audition before the Scholarship Committee with two pieces by established composers from different eras of musical composition.

Contact MaryAnn Fritz at: [mafritz616@att.net](mailto:mafritz616@att.net) for application forms.

## **BookNotes**

Lori Christ

At our August meeting we made plans for the inauguration of BookNotes, an annual review and discussion of books, essays or articles which relate to our profession. After a vote we chose: **The Perfect Wrong Note: Learning to Trust Your Musical Self**, by William Westney, Amadeus Press, 2003. (The book is easily found on Amazon.) This book relates to both playing and teaching music, with the author's thoughts about practice and trusting our

musical instincts. Westney discusses in depth types of mistakes, how we view mistakes, and ways to deal with mistakes. He has provocative ideas about teaching and learning and describes in detail his popular "un-master class".

The plan is to discuss the book at the April FWMTA meeting, and we all still have plenty of time to read it by then. Enjoy!

## **Fall Festival**

Janis Felts – Festival Chair

The Fall and Jazz Festival, which took place in October of 2018 at TCU, invited students to play works from the Classical era and Jazz music selections of their choice. Three hundred and twenty-nine compositions were performed by a total of 265 students from music studios representing 37 teachers. Laura Barnett, Resa Carrell, Jennifer Clarkson, Darrell Crim, Dr. John Fisher, Dr Beth Quillian, Linda Secor, Mike Springer, Dr. Eunice Tavaglione, and Erica Vosburg were the adjudicators.

The judges ratings resulted in: Three hundred and fifteen (315) students earning *Superior*; Fourteen (14) earning *Excellent*.

FWMTA and the Fall Festival committee chaired by Janis Felts wish to thank TCU for the use of the Ed Landreth Building and for the pianos made available for this annual festival. A special word of thanks to technician James Williams, for making sure the pianos were ready to be performed on.

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## **Event Calendar 2019**

### **FEBRUARY**

- 12** Joint meeting with MCMTA featuring Dr. Jessica Koebbe ([www.mindfulmusicpedagogy.com](http://www.mindfulmusicpedagogy.com))  
Women's Club of Fort Worth  
1316 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Fort Worth, TX 76104
- 16** State and Local Piano Ensemble Team Auditions at Steinway H
- 25** World of Music Test Registration Deadline

### **MARCH**

- 4** Solo Contest Registration Deadline
- 8** World of Music Testing, Location TBA
- 9** Open Recital with Forum at TWU, Martin Hall
- 16-20** MTNA National Convention, Spokane, WA
- 18** Local Chamber Music Ensemble Contest registration postmark
- 25** Local Chamber Music Ensemble Contest, location TBD

## FWMTA Salutes Dr. MaryAnn Fritz for Her Many Years of Volunteer Service

The small group of highly involved members who form the core of our association cannot function as an independent entity; they require the assistance of committee members led by Chairpersons, Board members and others in leadership roles, to assist in the myriad duties FWMTA activities call for throughout the academic year.

FWMTA depends on its members to further its goals; this makes volunteerism the life-blood of our organization.

This column recognizes the first of a small group of members who have given generously of their time, knowledge and expertise over a sustained period of time in furthering those goals.

### Dr. MaryAnn Fritz



I have been a member of Fort Worth Music Teachers since I was a pedagogy student of

Elizabeth

McKinney.

Mrs. McKinney was such a proponent of

local music teacher organizations that I felt sure this would be an organization that would benefit my students.

What surprised me was just how much I, as a teacher, gained from being a part of FWMTA. The programs and master classes are all very informative, and I find it fascinating to see just how other teachers – now my friends – approach various aspects of teaching. My first foray into service in FWMTA was as a member of the Fall Festival committee. Jennifer DeSantis and Linda Banfy made the experience so enjoyable that I agreed to serve on the committee for several years. Eventually, I was asked to serve as co-chair of Student Affiliate with Jennea Potter. What a great partnership! Jennea and I each have our own tasks, but we also know that we each can call on the other one to help out in times of the craziness that goes with such a large job.

It seems to me that the best way to feel integrated into FWMTA is to volunteer in some capacity, whether it be as a member of a festival committee, as a part of the annual nominating committee, or as a member of the Executive Board.

When Rosemary Solomons asked me to speak about my involvement in the music world, my first thought was that there has never been a time when I wasn't making music! When our family was in the car, my mother sang folksongs to me and my brothers, encouraging us to sing along. We had an old upright piano – one of those HUGE old pianos! – and when I was 5 years old, I began teaching myself how to play it by reading the instructions in John Thompson's *Teaching Little Fingers to Play*. I was so proud that I could read the words, but honestly, I thought the "Middle C Song" was rather uninteresting!

Subsequent piano lessons yielded much more interesting music, and I studied through high school and college. After earning both BA and MA degrees in Educational Psychology, I realized that I really missed studying piano, and returned to school.

By the time I began doctoral work, I knew that I loved teaching, and so I made Piano Pedagogy my focus. Watching students discover something new about the music or about how to create the sounds

they desire is so gratifying to me. I currently teach group piano, applied piano, and piano pedagogy at Dallas Baptist University. In addition, I have a studio at home comprised of students from pre-K through retirement. I love the variety this affords. How exciting to watch a young student develop over the years! It is a gift to be able to affirm an older student as he or she begins making plans for the future, whether that means he will apply to a music program across the country, or whether she has discovered that the problem-solving she has learned in piano lessons fits perfectly into her desire to become an engineer. Supporting students through the process of finding where they fit in the larger world is such an important role and is a privilege I cherish.

Among my other interests are travel, both in the US and abroad, and spending time with friends. I also enjoy creating beauty around me, mostly in the form of interior design and gardening.

**I would encourage members of Fort Worth Music Teachers to find a way to integrate themselves into the business of our association. It is a rewarding endeavor that will benefit your teaching and enrich your life.**

## Young Artists from Fort Worth in the Limelight at MTNA Young Artist Competition

**Isaac Foreman** (student of Tamás Ungár) was named winner in the Young Artist category of the MTNA Young Artist Competition. Co-president Sarah Alexander's interview with Isaac Foreman elicited some highly interesting responses.

Sarah Alexander's interview with **Benjamin Pawlak** (student of John Owings) proved to be just as informative. Benjamin received an Honorable Mention in the MTNA Young Artist Competition. FWMTA applauds these two fine young pianists.



**Isaac Foreman**

*1) Who or what event inspired you to pursue piano studies beyond high school?*

I began studying with Dr. Tamás Ungár when I was 14, and in 2014 I presented a recital that included the complete three-part inventions (Sinfonias) of J.S. Bach. This was essentially the first full solo recital I had ever presented. During the intense period of preparation preceding the performance, I came to realize just how incredible and genius the 'great' composers really are. It occurred to me that we are extremely lucky, as musicians, to be able to study and share their creations. This was a turning point for me; I decided definitely that I wanted to pursue music.

*2) Most students do not continue with their study of music into college. What advice would you give teachers preparing students to be life-long supporters of classical music?*

As a pianist, it is very easy to sit at the keyboard and develop tunnel vision. We become so focused on our hands, wrists, and arms – the technical problems - yet we often forget to practice using the most important part of bodies: our ears. In my opinion, the most valuable skill a teacher can impart on a student is the ability to listen thoughtfully. Whether the student goes on to be a dentist, financial analyst, schoolteacher, athlete, or international concert artist, you name it, they will always know how to listen to music, and along with this they will always appreciate it.

*3) As a student who is involved in Texas Music Teachers Association, what are the top two or three benefits from your perspective for teacher and student involvement in state and local associations?*

First, I believe it is very important to hear how others play and teach. As a performer you can learn a lot from listening to others play. By determining what you like or dislike about another person's performance, you receive feedback and ideas that you can incorporate into your own playing. Similarly, by observing master classes or by hearing a student performance (which really is the result of countless hours of work on the part of the

student *and* teacher), teachers can learn what methods and practices are most effective. State and local music associations offer students and teachers these experiences and opportunities and allow them to grow together as musicians.

*4) Knowing what you know now about life as a piano student and performer, what advice would you give your 10-year old self?*

Take every opportunity to play for others. Performing in front of peers and friends has caused me to improve the most. It is very comfortable to sit at home or in a practice room and play only for ourselves. However, everything changes when we know that people are really listening. I have not found it easier to play in front of an audience the more I perform. Rather, I am learning how my mind and body reacts on stage, so that at the next performance I can better adapt to the situation.

*5) You've received national attention as a MTNA winner. What do you and your teacher have planned for the upcoming year?*

I am looking forward to competing in the finals of the MTNA competition in Spokane, Washington. I am also excited about attending a few international festivals this summer. As a junior at Texas Christian University, I am also beginning to look at potential options for graduate school in the U.S and in Europe.



## **Benjamin Pawlak**

### ***1) Who or what event inspired you to pursue piano studies beyond high school?***

I've been a musician since I was six, and, since my parents are both musicians, I've been around music since I was born. I can't remember a time when I didn't know I was going to study music beyond high school, so I would say that the inspiration came from years of pure enjoyment of the art form.

### ***2) Most students do not continue with their studies of music into college. What advice would you give teachers to prepare students to be life-long supporters of classical music?***

Be enthused about the type of music you teach. Even if your students don't end up loving classical music, they will always remember how much you did. I believe that this is enough to encourage appreciation. A more tangible answer that I would love to offer is to give your student a listening assignment every week. You can then discuss it for the first two minutes of the lesson while you're both getting books out and sitting down. It makes for a good transition into the lesson itself, and you get to hear their take and they get to have a discussion that is educated and un-intimidating with their teacher.

### ***3) As a student who is involved in Texas Music Teachers Association, what are the top two or three benefits from your perspective for teacher and student involvement in state and local associations?***

For students, I feel that it's a good way for them to know about each other's existence. Private lessons feel so isolating, but student involvement in conferences, competitions, and festivals has students see and play for each other. My thoughts on teachers are similar. I find that getting to know each other at events, swapping teaching stories and techniques, and improving each other by observation and discussion helps tremendously.

### ***4) Knowing what you know now about life as a piano student and performer, what advice would you give your 10-year old self?***

I would tell him to learn how to practice. My biggest goal with students is to teach them how to practice at home. Their lessons are so short and make up about 10% of the time they spend at the piano each week. The other 90% should be filled with good practice, and kids won't know exactly what that means at first. They progress so much faster and gain more confidence when they can see that they don't need me there all the time in order to get better. The sooner they know how to practice efficiently on their own, the more they will find it easy later on when time is short and homework is piled up.

### ***5) You've received national attention as a MTNA winner. What do you and your teacher have planned for the upcoming year?***

I'm in the middle of graduate audition preparations right now. I'm finishing up my MM in Piano Performance at TCU and am looking at MM in Collaborative Piano and Artist Diploma programs. I'm pleased to say that I've received invitations to audition at Rice University, University of Houston, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Michigan, and The Juilliard School this spring.

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## **Executive Board Members**

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