



# April Newsletter

1 of 10 pages

Fort Worth Music Teachers Association

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## Editorial Musings

The Fall Festival is an event that calls for piano students to refine and memorize a piece of music (Jazz or Classical or both, if they so desire) to be played before an adjudicator. The event can be viewed as a stepping stone to contests that demand a higher level of piano artistry and call for required repertoire.

FWMTA's numerous offerings throughout the academic year include monthly recitals – which provide a formal setting for the performance of a memorized piece of music; theory tests permit students to exhibit their knowledge of theoretical skills; the Original Composition Contest attempts to draw out the best in budding young composers as they create compositions they eventually premiere; those with a love of writing, express this love in the form of essays on topics pertaining to the music world, and ensemble playing lays the groundwork for an awareness unique to being a member of a group of instrumentalists.

The end of the academic year of our association is marked by a very special event – it heralds the season of Spring bringing students from numerous neighbouring cities to Fort Worth, where they mingle with young musicians of our own city to compete in the annual Piano Solo Contest.

This event, since its inception decades ago, has attracted many a fine young pianist to prove their prowess by playing first for an adjudicator, whose valued critique is the deciding factor in choosing the recitalists and winners in each category.

A week later, all recitalists and winners in their respective categories, perform one piece from among those played the previous week for the adjudicator, in a concert hall setting. This public

recital takes these young contestants to another level; now they are expected to perform before an audience that includes teachers - both independent music teachers and university faculty members - and well-wishers.

After numerous years of the Solo Piano Contest offered by the FWMTA being open solely to **pianists** (from kindergarten through grade twelve), the 'piano only' rule was cast aside extending an invitation to string instrumentalists and vocalists to be a part of this very fine annual event.

The 'surprises' were comparatively few this year (by this I refer to the small number of instrumentalists and singers that graced the stage), but ah, were they refreshing to hear and watch. A memorable moment in the **Elementary Vocal Division** was Sarah Kim's performance of *Castle on a Cloud* by A. Schoenberg.

Appropriately attired and a stage presence associated with seasoned singers, she beguiled us all with her rendition of the song. The instrumental playing was also remarkable and highly interesting in that, as with the singers, it called for an accompanist. Piano teachers listen intently as their students perform solo works for piano, but with solo singers and solo instrumentalists, the interaction between accompanist and student performer brought with it a heightened sense of musical awareness.

The Spring Contest promises to be an event of much interest in the years to come. Waiving the contest's pianists only rule has opened fresh, new musical vistas. We applaud the decision made by the FWMTA Executive Board.

*Rosemary Solomons*

## THE PIANIST AS COLLABORATOR

by

Dr. David Yeomans, NCTM



**Dr. David Yeomans** is Professor Emeritus of piano, Texas Woman's University. He studied with Emil Danenberg at the Oberlin Conservatory, with Irwin Freundlich at the Juilliard School, and with Gyorgy Sandor at

the University of Michigan. Prior to his TWU appointment, he taught piano at SUNY, Fredonia, Washington State University, and the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *Bartók for Piano* (Indiana U. Press, 1987, 2000) and *Piano Music of the Czech Romantics* (Indiana U. Press, 2006).

His collaborative experience has been extensive as pianist with a number of instrumental chamber ensembles. Since 1974, he and his wife, Dr. Sheila Allen-Yeomans, mezzo soprano and Professor Emeritus of Voice at Texas Christian University, have given numerous concert performances, workshops, and master classes across the U.S., Europe, and South Korea. They have spent the past six summers directing the Clear Creek Music Festival in the Pine Valley region of eastern Oregon, a classical music program that has involved students and faculty worldwide.

Since his retirement from TWU in 2001, Dr. Yeomans has been involved in arranging folk tunes from the Ramapo Mountain region of New Jersey for voice and piano, soon to be presented in a collection tentatively entitled "Country Eastern Music."



**In this age of political correctness, the piano "accompanist" has taken on a new identity, that of the "collaborator."** This is a positive trend, implying a greater importance to the pianist, and the promise of a unified and cooperative spirit essential to a successful musical outcome.

However, singers and pianists sometimes have a tenuous and even hostile working relationship, due perhaps to a misunderstanding of the responsibilities of each in the music making process. A singer may regard the pianist merely as simple background support; the pianist, with eyes set on competitions and recitals, could well regard the task of accompanying as forced labor. However, both singer and pianist must look upon themselves as a duo rather than a duel. Like a ballet *pas de deux*, neither partner can be effective without a close affinity to the other.

### THE TWELVE-STEP PROGRAM FOR PIANIST-COLLABORATORS

Having given multiple performances over four decades with my wife Dr. Sheila Allen-Yeomans, I've arrived at an organized step-by-step approach in my own preparations for our rehearsals and performances:

### **1. Learn the meaning of the sung text.**

Whether in English or a foreign-language translation, study and identify with the poetic or narrative text to help convey the meaning of the song or aria.

If it's in a foreign language, find a reliable English translation. A literal translation is usually more accurate and preferable to a poetic one, but either should get the point across.

**2. Know about the larger context.** If it's a song in a narrative cycle or an aria in an opera, be aware of the story line surrounding the specific example. Learn about the idiosyncrasies of the recitative and its function in enhancing the drama. Know that the aria is a reflection of the character's emotional reaction to the dramatic circumstance, and be able to identify with that emotion.

**3. Become familiar with the original setting of the accompaniment.** If the accompaniment is a piano arrangement from an opera or oratorio, be aware of the instrumentation. A pianist will never accurately match the timbre of an oboe or cello, but trying to approximate their sounds will influence the pianist's tonal color and spark his imagination. Also, listen to a recording of the piece in its original setting.

**4. Sing the vocal melody, not from the piano, but with the voice.** When piano students are asked to sing a vocal line, they are sometimes reluctant to do so. They would rather concentrate on the piano part, which in itself is meaningless if separated from the vocal melody and the text. Singing, even whistling the vocal line helps the pianist identify with the singer's sense of phrasing and breathing, and is preferable to plunking out the notes on the piano.

**5. Add all or part of the accompaniment to your singing.** Sing the vocal line while playing a countermelody in the piano part (preferably the all-important bass line), and then add other voices or chords as needed. This helps with an

understanding of the other elements in the ensemble.

**6. Determine the form.** There are four basic kinds of songs or arias: 1) strophic with repeat signs, where the accompaniment stays the same under a changing text; 2) strophic with varied written-out repeats in the accompaniment; 3) ternary, or ABA form, typical of many opera arias; and 4) through-composed, where the structure is determined by the dramatic flow. Each has its own challenges for the pianist, especially when the accompaniment remains the same with each verse, as in 1), or with the return of the A section in 3). Avoid playing "cut and paste" repetitions!

**7. Know the accommodations for the vocal part.** Be aware of the singer's breathing places, and adjust your playing accordingly. Remember that the pianist can physically breathe where he chooses, but the singer breathes from physical necessity, and phrasing delineations. Be sensitive to strengths or weaknesses of different pitch levels that vary with each singer, determine places requiring eye contact or memorization to maximize the ensemble, and make a pledge to constantly watch and listen.

**8. Know how the accompaniment can contribute to the mood and imagery of the song.** Most of the art songs of the Romantic and Impressionistic eras contain picturesque elements in the piano parts, such as Debussy's "La flute de Pan," Schubert's "Erlkönig," or Brahms's "Verzagen." It is up to the pianist to provide the imagery of a sensual flute, a galloping horse, or a raging ocean in these examples. If thoughtfully prepared, creating imageries such as these can be as challenging and rewarding as those implied in the pianist's solo repertoire.

**9. Know what is and is not important in the piano part.** The legendary vocal coach/pianist Warren Jones once remarked that it is not always a matter of the pianist's playing too loudly, but too thickly. Especially in orchestral arrangements, where the editor feels obligated to

include everything from the full score, the pianist is at liberty to judiciously cut down on some of the burdensome material, and to choose the appropriate countermelodies or harmonies that provide an essential complement to the singer's melody. If the piano part is written specifically for the piano, it should be played as written. Another factor that the pianist must take into consideration are instances where his melody doubles that of the voice, in which case the piano line is usually subdued.

**10. Listen to available recordings, performances.** This is good advice if not done to excess. We can easily become locked into only one interpretation if we listen to the same recording repeatedly. Listen to a variety of great artists, and consider them a musical smorgasbord, from which choices can be made to contribute to an individual interpretive style. This is as important to collaborative work as it is for the preparation of your solo music.

**11. Prepare the piano part as thoroughly as your solo repertoire.** Because the collaborator-pianist has an equal share in the musical result, he has a responsibility in the preparation of his part, requiring as much attention to detail as a solo piano piece.

**12. Begin rehearsing with your soloist.** The pianist might suggest that the vocalist sing the first couple of phrases to get a feel for her overall concept of the song. Then might follow a dry run to gather ideas such as tempo, balance, phrasing, breathing, and interpretation. It is assumed that pianist and singer know their parts thoroughly before their first rehearsal is even scheduled.

## **SOME THOUGHTS ON VOCAL COACHING**

The professional vocal coach has a thorough knowledge of operatic and art-song repertoire, is well versed in the proper pronunciation of foreign languages and poetic flow, and is a versatile pianist. The coach has a concept of vocal technique and skills at transposition and figured bass realization. The coach serves as a

mentor, complementing and expanding on the training provided by the singer's voice teacher. One may ask why singers need vocal coaching, while string and wind soloists can manage without such support. The answer lies in the fact that the vocal resonator is within the body, and the singer hears his/her tone quality and pronunciation differently from what is heard from others. Instrumentalists hear their tone more accurately, and do not have language and diction to contend with.

## **THE SINGER'S RESPONSIBILITY**

**1. Be prepared.** Do not assume that every pianist who comes through the rehearsal door is a vocal coach. But the pianist in any capacity should not be expected to teach the words and pitches to an unprepared singer during rehearsals. The same goes for the pianist. Have respect for each other's time!

**2. Be specific.** Rather than complaining that the tempo drags, that the piano is too loud, or that a rubato does not feel right, offer specific requests such as, "Let's take a little more time here," or "I need to breathe there" or "I'd like to pick up the tempo here because . . ." Feel free to ask your pianist for ideas, and work together to craft a joint interpretation.

**3. Never conduct.** Pianists can be annoyed when the singer beats time to move the tempo along. If the pianist's ear is directed to the singer's sense of momentum, the proper tempo will be implicit in the singing itself. Leave the conducting to a conductor!

**4. Please do not ask the pianist to transpose on short notice.** There are those who take great delight in transposing at sight in any key the singer requests, but for the rest of us, it is a laborious task. The singer must take the responsibility to decide on a specific key at the outset and be committed to it no matter what. If a change must be made, be sure to supply the pianist with an edition in the new key, or an electronically produced transposition—in plenty of time!

5. In an ensemble, everyone is a winner! Be diplomatic and respectful of each other, and leave your egos outside the rehearsal room. Remember that the most successful performances occur when there is agreement instead of conflict, and that patience, understanding, diplomacy and mutual encouragement are essential to a compatible and enjoyable musical relationship.

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## From The Desk of ...

### Sara Doan – Solo Competition Chair

The 2017 FWMTA Solo Competition was a great success on April 1, 2017! We had over 300 students and 67 teachers participating! It was an especially exciting year as the competition added two new Divisions: Instrumental and Vocal. The judges were all impressed with the wonderful display of musicianship of our students this year. Congratulations to all the students and their teachers!

This competition could not have run smoothly without the untiring efforts of the FWMTA Solo Competition Committee, and all the teachers who graciously volunteered their time monitoring and helping with the Honors

Recitals. A special thanks goes to Jill Sprenger and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for the use of their facilities and the grand pianos for our students to play on.

We are also indebted to Ilka Araujo and Texas Wesleyan University for the use of Martin Hall with its formal concert setting for the performance of the Honors Recitalists the following week.

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## Ilka Araujo

### Youth Duo-Competition Chairman

The 9th Youth Duo-Piano Competition and Amateur Festival, sponsored by Texas Wesleyan University and Fort Worth Piano Forum held on February 11th, 2017, was very successful.

Thirty-one duo teams were involved in the event with two of them participating at the post-12th Amateur division. Participating teachers represented the cities of Fort Worth, Arlington, Dallas, Aledo, Mansfield, Carrollton, Bedford, Waxahachie, Keller, Mesquite, Colleyville, Cleburne, Plano, and Southlake. Among the winners were several students from FWMTA teachers.

Dr. Mark Puckett, Professor of Piano, Steinway Artist, and Artist-in-Residence at Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, was the judge. An active duo-piano player together with his wife, Lauren Puckett, Dr. Puckett shared his ideas and expertise in his comments to the participating duo teams, who received them with enthusiasm.

### Winners of the 9<sup>th</sup> Duo-Piano Competition

#### Level 1

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Cindy Kao & Celine Chacon

Teacher: Siew-Lee Chin

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place** FuZhi Yang & Kairey Sutherland

Teacher: Siew-Lee Chin

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place** Grace Choate & Thomas Tran

Teacher: Sarah Alexander Honorable

#### Honorable Mention:

Valencia Bui & Vito Jovanović

Teacher: Ilka Araujo

#### Level 2

**1<sup>st</sup> Place** Naomi Garcia & Arin Domingue

Teacher: Sheila Turner  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Place** Johnathan Scoggins & Elise Stewart

Teacher: José Cubela  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Place** Lydia Wang & Edison Tsai

Teacher: Susan Fuchs

**Honorable Mention:**

Ellen Davidsver & Breanna Olivieri

Teacher: Maureda Travis

**Level 3**

**1<sup>st</sup> Place** Isabel Castañeda & Joseph Choi

Teacher: Ilka Araújo

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place** Ava Terrell & Gabriella Pfang

Teacher: Rosemary Solomons

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place** Grace Mitchell & Julie Hall

Teacher: Diane Stewart

**Level 4**

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Justin Nguyen & Westen Mulqueen

Teachers: Ilka Araujo/Jennifer DeSantis

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:** Karli Bouck & Ezra de La Garza

Teacher: Amanda Lee-Hing

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place:** Brianna Sttots & Daniel Puckett

Teacher: Sarah Alexander

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## Spring B. Seals

Director of Certification, TMTA



Left – Right: Whitney Hawker, Spring Seals and SarahAlexander

I had the privilege of co-presenting a lecture - demonstration at the MTNA National Convention in Baltimore, in April, with fellow member Sarah Alexander, and Whitney Hawker (former Arlington MTA member, now residing in Utah). Our session was titled "*The More the Merrier: Creating Collaborative Experiences for Students of All Ages.*"

## June Leondar Theory Co-Chair

### Fort Worth Music Teachers offer music theory study to large number of students.

The year 2016-2017 shows an increase in the number of students receiving Music Theory Study from their teachers.

In the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 testing period, 485 students from the Studios of 50 teachers participated in the testing. The music theory study program is sponsored by the Student Affiliate Program of TMTA.

Tests are created by a State Committee and presented locally by the cooperative effort of all teachers who enroll students for testing. Graders are selected by this State Committee and standards for grading are set by the State Chair.

A curriculum of 12 levels of musical concepts is published by the State Theory Committee. All students get Participation Certificates and students earning a score of 90 and above receive Medals issued by the State Committee.

Fort Worth students receiving Gold Medals for a score of 98-101 **numbered 134.**

**Ninety-Five** students scoring 94-97 received Silver Medals.

**Fifty-Nine** students scoring 90-93 received Bronze medals.

These medal winners will be recognized in the FWMTA Awards Recital on June 12th. Senior awards for students earning scores above 90 over a period of many years are given by the State Committee at the State Convention in June 2017. FWMTA Theory Chairs: June Leondar and Maureda Travis.

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## Bonnie Dove

### TMTA and MTNA Composition Winners Report

Our outstanding Ft. Worth Composition students have won several state awards this year, and will be performing and receiving their checks and certificates at the convention in Dallas, in June, 2017 The composition recital is Sunday June 18th at 8:00 AM in the Landmark D

Ballroom, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Dallas.

**Post 12th Grade Solo:**

**Angie Ntavyo, student of Hsinyi Wang,** won 2nd place with her original composition, *Marley's Lullaby*. In the same category, Kyoungmin Lee, also a student of Hsinyi Wang, earned Honorable Mention for his original composition, *Memories*.

**Ensemble, 8th-12th Grades:**

**W. Roscoe Bussell, student of Bonnie Dove and Timothy Brown,** won 2nd place with his original ensemble piece, *Heuristic*. **Demoyee Neroes, student of Jennea Potter,** won 3rd place for her composition, *The Willow Tree*. Lillian Rivas, student of Evan Mitchell, won Honorable Mention for her original ensemble piece, *Mission de Spy*. **Three of the four winners in the 8th-12th Grade Ensemble Division are from Ft. Worth.**

**Post-12th Ensemble:**

**Stephan Arce-Penedo, student of Hsinyi Wang,** won 2nd place with his ensemble piece, *Carousel*.

**W. Roscoe Bussell, student of Bonnie Dove and Timothy Brown,** entered the **MTNA Composition Contest** with his ensemble piece *Heuristics*. He won 1st place in Texas, and 1st place at Regionals. He was one of only seven National Finalists in the Senior Division. MTNA chooses only 1st and 2nd place winners, making the other five, unranked finalists.

**Roscoe** will be honored for his **MTNA wins** by playing on the Jo Ann Dunn Ferguson Memorial Concert, Thursday, June 15th, at 7:30 P.M. A reception will immediately follow.

Our talented Ft. Worth students and their teachers are to be commended for their outstanding accomplishments for 2017.

**Piano Concerto Division: Grades 8-10**

**Wendi Rivera, student of Bonnie Dove,** will play the first movement of the Kabalevsky Youth Concerto, Op. 50, No. 3. Her performance is set for Thursday morning along with 11 other finalists. The winners recital is scheduled for Friday, June 16th, at 3:30 PM.

**Piano Concerto Division: Grades 11-12**

**W. Roscoe Bussell, student of Bonnie Dove,** will play the first movement of the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, along with 9 other finalists. The winners recital for this division will be on Friday evening, June 16th at 7:30 PM.

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**NEWS IN BRIEF**



Texas Wesleyan University, Fort Worth, awarded Dr. Ilka Araujo with a plaque and cash prize in recognition of her accomplishments as a teacher.

The 2017 TWU Award for Excellence in Teaching was awarded Dr. Araujo on

Saturday, April 22, 2017.

For those who are unaware of the service she has rendered to FWMTA over the years, Dr. Araujo served as our association's president from 2013 – 2015. She also served as treasurer from 2008-2013. She has been on the piano solo committee since 2008 and been an ensemble director since 2009. She currently serves as Director of the FWMTA Board and is on the Board's search committee.



**UTA Symphony  
Orchestra Concert**

Sat Apr 29<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 - 9:00pm  
Irons Recital Hall

**Clifton Evans, conductor  
John Solomons,  
piano soloist**

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 5 "Emperor"  
RACHMANINOFF Symphony No. 2.

The concert will be held in Irons Recital Hall, located in the South Section of the Fine Arts Admission: \$9 for Adults and \$6 for students/Senior Citizens. Tickets can be purchased ahead of time at [www.utatickets.com](http://www.utatickets.com)

## Fort Worth Civic Orchestra Announces Winners Of Concerto Competition

All music students are encouraged to attend the **May 6, FW Civic Orchestra Concert**, which will showcase the performances of the winners of its recent Concerto Competition.

**First Place winner, Madison Hardick**, flute, will be the featured soloist in the Allegro Scherzando movement of the concerto for Flute and Orchestra, by Jacques Ibert.

**Second Place winner, Perren-Luc Thiessen**, will be the soloist in the Allegro con Brio 1<sup>st</sup> movement of the Concerto No.2 in B-flat by Beethoven.

Two other fine young musicians who received Honorable Mention are, Atlee Daniel and Wendi Rivera.

The FWCO Spring Concert free and open to the public, will take place at Truitt Auditorium, SWTBS, Fort Worth.

**Support our young musicians** by attending this wonderful opportunity that the Fort Worth Civic Orchestra provides annually. It is free of charge!

**Attending concerts** such as those of budding young musicians and others given by local musicians - particularly those offered by music faculty members, should be given top priority as enriching musical events we should attend.

TCU Music Faculty member and FWMTA member, **John Ownings**, performed J.S.Bach's Aria with diverse Variations, BWV 988, also known by its sobriquet - "Goldberg" Variations, on March 20; it was altogether a remarkable musical feat. **Ownings'** dexterity at the keyboard and his thorough understanding of Bach's polyphonic writing, astounded us all. There are nine (9) canons that display Bach's mastery of counterpoint. John Ownings was in complete control of all the demands made in this work by Bach. It was a thrilling experience to hear a live performance of the "Goldberg" Variations.

The recital was given at PepsiCo Recital Hall, TCU, on March 20, as part of a world-wide observance of the 332<sup>nd</sup> year of Bach's birth.

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## Jose Cubela FWMTA President Attends MTNA Conference



I had the privilege of attending the 2017 MTNA annual conference held in the historic city of Baltimore in March this year. The conference was held at the Baltimore Marriot Waterfront hotel, set on the city's famous Inner Harbor.

The Inner Harbor is home to renowned museums, attractions, award-winning restaurants and historic neighborhoods. From the moment I set foot in the hotel, I felt a subtle energy coming from different directions. At the distance, I heard the murmuring of vendors, music teachers from all over the country and pianos...lots of them!

Baltimore is a historic city home to John Hopkins Hospital, John Hopkins University's Peabody Institute and the great piano manufacturing company, unfortunately now defunct, Wm Knabe & Co. The National Aquarium and historic neighborhoods, like Fells Point and Little Italy, make Baltimore worth visiting. If you love seafood, as I do, you will love the cuisine all along the Inner Harbor. You cannot leave Baltimore without enjoying a soft-shell crab sandwich at the fish market in Fells Point, trying the mussels and crab cakes at Bertha's restaurant, or devouring a pastry... or three... from one of the many bakeries in Little Italy. "Gold

It was wonderful to see several of our own members at the convention. I had a chance to visit with: Hsinyi Wang (VP of Programs),

Jennifer DeSantis (VP of Membership), Jill Sprenger (Director), Sarah Alexander, Tamas Ungar, and many others. In addition to our



members, I had the honor of meeting and visiting with Kenneth Drake (an exponent of playing repertoire from the classical period on period instruments), Marvin Blickenstaff (editor for the Celebration Series and past president of the Frances Clark Center of Keyboard Pedagogy), Leon Fleisher (pianist, teacher and conductor), and others.

In addition to visiting and meeting new friends, I attended several stimulating classes including: "Advanced Piano Master Class," presented by Leon Fleisher; "A Closer Look at Collegiate Group piano Programs," presented by Martha F. Hilley, Cynthia Stephens-Himonides and Margaret Young; "The Art and Science Of Memorizing Music ," presented by Lois Svard, and "The Freakonomiks of Practice," presented by Peter Oehrtman and many other classes.

There were two high points to the MTNA Conference this year. First, Leon Fleisher's advanced piano master class. Mr. Fleisher is 88 years old and considered one of the greatest living musicians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the master class, three students performed for him. The first student played the first movement of the Beethoven Piano Sonata op. 53; the second performer played Scarbo from Ravel's Gaspard de la Nuit and the third student played the first movement of the third Chopin Sonata in B minor. All three students were very talented and technically solid. Mr. Fleisher listened to each student intently without moving. After each performer, he complimented them and asked what they felt they needed help with. In his usual manner, he explained musical ideas through metaphors. One of the most interesting, regarding musical interpretation and architecture is that "we must look at music like the human skeleton. The skeleton has bones, which are inflexible, and joints, which are flexible. You must look at music as having flexible and inflexible points. If the composer writes notes that succeed each other with a certain regularity as to establish a pulse, support that. When the composer stops that succession of tones, and breaks the regularity of that pulse, support that." Leon Fleisher always challenges us all to think

deeply about music... to find the color behind the notes on the page.

The second high point of the conference was husband and wife duo Leon Fleisher and Katherine Jacobson's piano recital. Mr. and Mrs. Fleisher's playing captivated the audience with their musicality and beautiful playing. For me, the 2017 MTNA conference was an informative and enriching experience!

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## **Janis Felts**

**Shares her experience of working with an autistic student.**

I would like you to meet Caleb, a fun-loving high school freshman, and his mom, Kathy. Caleb is an extraordinary young man who lives with the challenge of autism. However, as his mom would say, Caleb is a "Tigger" all of the time. He is diagnosed with Pervasive Development Disorder. Because Caleb's testing showed his inclination toward music, his mom asked me about piano instruction. In the spring of 2013, we began working together.

This was my first experience teaching a special needs student, but I was excited about the prospect. I began Caleb in *Succeeding at the Piano* by Helen Marlais in the Preparatory Level, and he is currently half way through Grade 2B. We have worked through Dr. Jill Sprenger's system of developing scales, triads, and arpeggios. He plays a scale for me each week in quarter notes, eighth notes, triplets, and sixteenth-note rhythms, as well as triads and arpeggios. To date, Caleb has cycled through the Circle of Fifths five times.

There are several factors to which I attribute Caleb's success. First, he has a very devoted mom who sits attentively through every lesson, helping Caleb stay focused. However, I must say that when Caleb has his music in front of him and playing what is asked, he is completely single-

minded. Secondly, Kathy and Caleb spend a dedicated amount of time each week at home practicing. Kathy and I are quick to give the Lord the ultimate glory in giving Caleb his aptitude, ability, and success. Caleb has participated in all of our recitals and two of the FWMTA Piano Solo Contests, scoring in the “1” levels.

There is more to this success story. This past spring, only two years into his study, Caleb’s teacher at school came to Kathy and reported, “Kathy, we do not know what has happened with Caleb, but something is different! We have decided to recommend that Caleb be streamlined in two of his ninth-grade classes next year – English and Art!” The teachers and Kathy are aware that the IQ of an autistic child, according to psychological standards, “never” changes. Contrarily, something with Caleb had changed.

Understandably, Caleb is not required to do everything required of his peers; however, this year his English teacher recognized Caleb’s affinity for art. When an assignment is beyond Caleb, the teacher asks him to design a cover page for the book the class is reading. Caleb’s story gets more interesting! He is doing so well in this area that he is now being considered for a Digital Graphics Design class.

May I encourage you to never discount a young person’s ability to appreciate and achieve success with this gift we call music! Scientific study has shown that music unlocks portions of the brain that might otherwise never be utilized. I anticipate more exciting news is yet to come for this young man! What has happened for Caleb can happen for many others if we are willing to give them the opportunity!

*Janice Felts received her BA in Music-Vocal Performance in 1977 from Cedarville University. She earned her MM in Church Music Piano Pedagogy from SWBT Seminary, May 2016.*

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**The FWMTA Newsletter goes out to members as an E-Publication three times during the course of the academic year. Any items of interest to members, can be sent to the editor throughout the course of the year.**

**The editor welcomes news from members of their 2017 summer musical experiences. Please remember to submit these articles by mid-August 2017. Thank you!**

The editor wishes to thank Ilka Araujo for proof-reading the Newsletter over the past six years.

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#### **FWMTA Executive Board:**

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