



# Newsletter

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**Fort Worth Music Teachers Association**

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## **FWMTA Members Feted at Celebration Gala**



FWMTA members gathered at TCU's Ballroom in April of 2013 to mark the association's first celebration

Gala.

A little over five years later, on April 28<sup>th</sup> of 2018, FWMTA members gathered at the same location to attend a Gala at the invitation of co-presidents, Jennifer DeSantis and Sarah Alexander and Mandy Luckert, VP for Programs. This well organized event afforded members the opportunity to engage in lively conversation and enjoy dinner to music provided by guitarist, Chip Christ. The program for the evening promised much more...

Well known contemporary composer Timothy Brown's piece for piano, *Frontier Follies* which bears a dedication to FWMTA, was performed by Benjamin Pawlak – student of John Owings. Valse Sentimentale a Deux by Catherine Rollin was recreated by two youthful pianists, Angelina Lacey

and Simran Lapsiwala, students of Sarah Alexander. Helen Ye, student of Carolyn Gurley, brought the music presentation to a close with a polished performance of Rhapsody in G Minor opus 70, No. 2, by Brahms.

What followed was of tremendous interest to both new and long-standing members – a Video presentation of the history of FWMTA narrated by June Leondar, who served as president from 1981 – 1983.

June Leondar reminded us of some of FWMTA's illustrious past presidents: Grace Lankford, Brooks Morris (also the first conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra) and Dr. Clyde Whitlock. And to this list I add the names of Eleanor Morse Hall, Ruth Isbell Bunch, Lee Henrichs and June Leondar - all stalwarts of FWMTA. June Leondar in particular, has devoted a major part of her life to furthering the cause of young aspiring musicians. She has rightfully earned the admiration and respect of members of FWMTA and TMTA.

Listening to Leondar trace the association's journey through time, took my mind back to when Eleanor Morse Hall (president 1975 – 1977), a tall slender woman, gentle in her manner and ready to win your confidence through the warmth of her smile, took it upon herself to mentor me. The video presentation flooded my mind with memories as I am sure it did the minds of all other long-standing members. A special word of thanks to members Ilka Araujo - the video was her brainchild - and producer Jimmy Angeles, for making the video presentation a reality.

The Gala concluded with the special recognition of three members: Dr. Ann Gipson earned the MTNA Distinguished Service Award (see Dr. Gipson's article pg. 2); Maureda Travis was named Texas Distinguished Teacher and Patrick Behringer was the recipient of the National Certified Teacher of Music Award.

So concluded the 2018 FWMTA Celebration Gala.

Rosemary Solomons

## **EVENTS CALENDAR**

### **MAY 2018**

- 5** Open Recital at Texas Wesleyan University, Martin Hall
- 5** FWMTA Ensemble Rehearsal, Steinway Hall, Fort Worth - 9 A.M.
- 19** FWMTA Ensemble Rehearsal, Steinway Hall Fort Worth - 9 A.M.

### **JUNE 2018**

- 2** FWMTA Ensemble Rehearsal at Steinway Hall, Fort Worth – 9 A.M.
- 16** FWMTA Ensemble Rehearsal, Steinway Hall, Fort Worth
- 19** **FWMTA Honors Recital**, Fort Worth Steinway Hall, 6:30PM and 7:30PM
- 21-24** **TMTA State Convention, Waco Convention Center, Texas**

## MTNA News from Co-President Sarah Alexander

Dear Colleagues,



This past March, I had the privilege of going to the MTNA conference in Orlando, Florida.

One of the highlights of this trip was a presentation I gave

with my FWMTA colleague, Spring Seals, NCTM and a former classmate, Whitney Hawkins, NCTM.

The subject of our presentation, *The Struggle is Real: Building a Thriving Local Association* was well-received and provoked many discussions. These discussions confirmed the need for new and fresh ideas to rejuvenate local affiliates and the need for building up involved members. In conjunction with discussions related to our presentation, I was struck by the

questions considered at the Local Association Forum and Independent Music Teachers Forum. The main theme of the questions revolved as well on the lack of teacher involvement and on considering practical ways local associations can thrive by better serving its members, students, and communities. This seems to be a prevalent struggle with affiliates across the nation.

As a result of our presentation and the need for more practical discussion on the topic, MTNA asked us to present a 2-part webinar series based on our presentation. The webinars are planned on Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup> and Friday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, both at 10AM CST. As a member of MTNA, you will receive an email with information on how to register for and access the free webinar. Both webinars will be archived on MTNA.org to watch at a later time as well.

The webinars will provide applicable information to both leadership and the regular local member. We want to speak to both audiences because the strength of a

local association lies in committed and involved members who are led by leadership that facilitate professional growth, quality student opportunities, and community awareness.

This is where I make my pitch to you. Would you consider reserving the time and committing to making at least one meeting this upcoming year? (Watch the webinar to learn why you should consider this a business investment.) Would you consider serving on one committee or volunteering a couple of extra hours for one of our events? (Watch the webinar to learn why you should consider this a business investment.) Our organization, of course, runs on man/woman power. But, there is also a lot that we can learn from one another as we rub elbows, pool our resources, and network during activities.

Best of luck in your semester-end recitals! Looking forward to making plans for 2018-2019!

Respectfully,  
Sarah Alexander, NCTM  
Co-president, FWMTA  
VP of Business Activities, MCMTA

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## Detours and Opportunities: A Journey's Reward

By Ann M. Gipson



As teachers, we are goal-oriented people. We prepare students for recitals and tests, choose music for next year's festivals, revise documents and materials for the studio,

prepare for performances, and schedule events to attend. Summer plans may include a time to rest and relax, catch up on reading, complete

unfinished projects, or simply enjoy a break from the routine. While these goals are all worthwhile, I have often found more joy during the journey towards the goal. The process of revising a class lecture for next fall's semester, the process of selecting color schemes and fabrics to update a decorating project or exploring possible sights to see and things to do during a vacation often become as meaningful and enjoyable as the ultimate goal. As teachers, our immediate and long-term goals, both personally and professionally,

often can be so narrowly defined that we miss out on the detours and opportunities along the journey. My journey started out much like many of you. I chose to study music because there was nothing else I wanted to do; there was a passion, a drive, and a love of making music. My goal, my dream, my purpose was to teach music. I wanted to be an independent teacher. I viewed those years in college as a time to study, practice, develop skills as a teacher and musician, and learn the nuts and bolts of being a classically trained musician. I was quickly

reaching my goal of becoming a piano teacher! But little did I realize how narrowly I had defined my goals.

When I started teaching private piano while in high school, my plan was to complete a Bachelor of Music degree. But then someone encouraged me to pursue a graduate degree, and that chapter in my life eventually lead to a doctoral degree. My narrowly defined goal was gradually being altered. Growing up in Illinois, I had planned to remain close to home following the footsteps of my own piano teacher, Mrs. Lathrop. However, with the completion of advanced degrees, I had expanded my skill and ability to teach piano related courses, including group piano, music theory, and piano pedagogy which lead to positions at universities in Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas. These opportunities were certainly not a part of my original career plan and were definitely unexpected but have proven to be tremendously rewarding phases of my journey. Throughout my career, other occasions presented themselves in the form of service. Embracing those opportunities to serve in MTNA leadership positions in Illinois, Kentucky, and Mississippi, eventually lead to positions at the state level in Oklahoma, then at the national level. And although I have

received recognition for leadership in those areas, the recognition pales in comparison to the friendships that I have made and the personal growth that I have experienced along the way. I am so blessed to have developed dear friendships around the world because of these opportunities.

The end of this academic year marks over 40 years of teaching, including 25 years of full-time teaching positions in higher education. The successes, disappointments, challenges, and opportunities have all helped to shape my thinking, my actions, and my purpose, to result in a professional career and personal happiness beyond what I could have dreamt possible. I now have former students pursuing teaching careers throughout the United States, Mexico, China and Korea. I never dreamt I would play a part in a world-reaching impact through teaching.

Some might argue that my dreams as a teenager were not big enough. Perhaps this was true. But fortunately, my journey included great mentors and teachers who encouraged me to take chances, embrace opportunities, and fearlessly tackle challenges I encountered. So, while your goals and dreams are important, keep your options open. The surprises, challenges, and detours in my life

continue to this day, but I'm a better person for embracing all that life brings me and make the most of each experience. Whether a mountain requiring extra effort to climb or a valley of shadows to walk through, every day is a gift from God for which I am truly grateful. Welcome a new opportunity that comes your way, boldly embark on a challenge, and enjoy the journey. The next detour you encounter may be the one that changes your life or the life of your student.

**Ann Milliman Gipson** is serving her 13th year as Associate Professor of Music and Director of Piano Pedagogy Studies at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, TX. She holds the Bachelor of Music degree from Eastern Illinois University, the MM and Ph.D. in Music Education/Piano Pedagogy degrees from the University of Oklahoma, and is a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music. She served as MTNA President (2009-2011), received the 2017 Distinguished Teacher of the Year by the Oklahoma Music Teachers Association, and recently received MTNA's 2018 Distinguished Service Award.

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## Outreach Program Takes Early Childhood Specialist Beyond the Classroom

By Rosemary Solomons

Jennifer DeSantis has devoted her career to making very young children aware of the sense of movement and rhythm ever-present in music. DeSantis shares the duties of President of FWMMA with Sarah Alexander. Beyond this, there is

little I know of this petite and totally amiable woman.

I recall walking into the Amon Carter Museum of American Art on a cold, rainy Saturday morning this past February. I had to wake up earlier than usual, and skip a

leisurely-paced breakfast of scrumptious almond meal pancakes served with fresh homemade cinnamon apple-sauce and whipped butter... my husband's specialty. Breakfast had to wait if I was to be at the Amon Carter Museum on time

and witness a group of very young children and their parents in action. Being on time was imperative!

Putting my thoughts of breakfast behind me I found the area in which this interesting group of parents and their toddlers were to meet. Georgia O'Keefe's paintings graced the walls of that particular room. The parents spread their mats on the floor and made sure their children did not go beyond a parent-assigned area. And how did their instructor plan to keep these very little and very curious toddlers from wandering off... What I witnessed during the course of the hour that followed was altogether amazing! Yes, amazing.

Jennifer DeSantis greeted me and made sure I was comfortable before she began leading the class in song and rhythmic movement. I was convinced that the group of mothers, dads and their toddlers had gathered here on a previous occasion or two.

This impression arose from the fact that the adults in the group knew exactly what to do. Ah, was I mistaken, for I later learned that this was each child and parents first experience at the class offered by DeSantis. With guitar positioned across her body she led the class in song and simple actions that embraced the rhythmic pulse of music and lyrics.

The books handed out to the group of adults aided both children and parents. Words and actions were simple and quickly imitated. DeSantis was gentle in her manner and style, gaining and holding the attention of the little pairs of eyes that watched her as if mesmerized. Seldom did a child attempt to stray away.

Fascinated by it all, I chatted with DeSantis at the conclusion of the class. What I learned from our conversation made a strong

impression on my mind; it led me to want to share it with those of us who love music and see the importance of music's presence in the lives of children.

The Outreach Program presented by DeSantis at the Amon Carter Museum is called **Itty-Bitty Art: Music**. It caters to parents with infants 0 -11 months of age. Parents are encouraged to bring their very young children and engage with Jennifer DeSantis, early childhood music specialist, as she leads a developmentally appropriate session that includes music-making activities inspired by the museum's collection.

DeSantis started her own son in Early Childhood Music at 5 weeks of age; sessions continued through his 5<sup>th</sup> year. He now takes lessons in guitar.

*Where words fail, music speaks - Hans Christian Andersen*



Jennifer DeSantis in action at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art

## News of FWMTA Students

### **Nathaniel Castaneda**

finished 12th grade in 2016  
Now an University of Arkansas  
Sophomore. He is seeking a  
Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology.  
Continues studying piano in the  
Amateur division.  
Student of Dr. Ilka Araujo

### **Ashley Truong**

finished 12th grade in 2017.  
Now a Trinity University –  
Freshman seeking a  
Bachelor of Science in Biology.  
Continues studying piano in the  
Amateur division.  
Student of Dr. Ilka Araujo

### **Cai Olsen**

finished 12th grade in 2012.  
BYU - Bachelor of Arts in Duo-  
Lingual Program - spent 6 months  
in Brazil (graduated 2016).  
BYU - Master of Arts in Luso-  
Brazilian Literatures with Thesis:  
"Duas Tribos" - Contradictions of  
Political and Social (Des) esperanca  
in the Discography of Legiao  
Urbana - (will graduate May 2018).  
Owns a Private Piano Studio in Salt  
Lake City.  
Student of Dr. Ilka Araujo

### **Wyatt Ellison**

studied piano and theory for 12  
years. Graduated from High School  
in 2017. Wyatt enjoyed  
accompanying his violinist father  
throughout his High School years.  
They performed works for piano  
and violin at many a monthly  
student recital.  
Wyatt plans on graduating from the  
Colorado School of Mines in  
Golden, Colorado, with a degree in

Environmental Engineering. He  
made sure there was a piano on  
campus when he first arrived there!  
He continues to play piano as an  
avocation. His love of music was  
fostered by his father, a violinist,  
and his mother, a bassoonist.  
Student of Rosemary Solomons



### **Kylar Sprenger**

will be graduating  
from Fort Worth  
Academy of Fine  
Arts in June where  
he has been a  
member of the  
Texas Boys Choir  
and Academy Singers from 6th-12th  
grade. He will be attending the  
University of Montana studying for  
a Bachelor of Music Education in  
Choral Music with a concentration  
in voice and a Bachelor of Arts in  
Composition with a concentration in  
piano.  
Student of Jill Sprenger



### **Julia Murray**

studied piano at  
TCU's music  
Preparatory  
Division with  
Leanne  
Kirkham. Julia  
later continued  
her studies with Jose Cubela. She  
has participated and won many  
competitions and awards including  
placement in the FWMTA Solo  
Contest and Texas Wesleyan  
University Youth Duo-Piano  
Competition, and has earned many  
gold medals in the TMTA Whitlock  
Music Theory Award. Julia will  
attend Texas Christian University in  
the Fall as a Political Science

Major, but will continue playing the  
piano. She plans to join the Horned  
Frog Marching Band drumline.  
Julia will be presenting her senior  
recital Sunday, May 6 at 5PM at  
Texas Wesleyan University's  
Martin Hall



### **Ethan Koh**

began playing  
piano at age five  
and has been in  
love with it ever  
since. His studies began with Anne  
Brown at the Tarrant County  
College Piano Preparatory Program.  
After elementary school, he began  
lessons with Renetta Frisque. In  
tenth grade, Ethan started his  
studies with Jose Cubela, his current  
teacher. Ethan has performed piano  
throughout the State of Texas and  
has studied with multiple professors  
such as Dr. Bradley Bolen of Baylor  
University and Dr. Betty Mallard of  
UT Austin's Butler School of  
Music. Some of his achievements  
include being a semi-finalist in the  
TMTA Piano Performance Contest  
and winning the University of  
Texas at Arlington Keyboard  
Competition. In June, Ethan will  
graduate with high honors from  
Carroll Senior High School. In  
August he will attend Tufts  
University and intends to follow a  
Pre-Medical Track, majoring in  
Biochemistry with a minor in  
International Relations.  
Ethan will present his senior recital  
on Thursday, May 30 at TCCD-NE  
College Hall at 7:30.P.M.

## From the Desk of...

### Mary Ann Fritz

Chair, FWMTA Scholarship Committee

The FWMTA Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce recipients of the Senior Scholarship for 2018. Winners of the Senior Scholarship have demonstrated their dedication to music through participating in a variety of musical activities, including FWMTA-sponsored events (such as the Solo Cost and Fall Festival), TMTA events (including passing the Theory Test), and other musical endeavors (for example, participation in TMEA All-State Choir, UIL Solo and

Ensemble, etc.). Senior Scholarship (\$200) recipients for 2018 are Dominic Castaneda (student of Ilka Araujo), Sarah Clark (student of LeeAnn Kirkham and Linda Banfy), Anna Ernest (student of Laura Huffman), Kiana Fithian (student of Sara Doan), Westen Mulqueen (student of Jennifer DeSantis), Catie Pfeiffer (student of Lori Christ), and Ashley Simpson (student of Maureda Travis and Sara Doan).

A second category of scholarships goes to those students

who have participated in the same types of musical activities as Senior Scholarship winners, and who plan to continue their study of music in college. Recipients of the Memorial Scholarship (\$500) are Roscoe Bussell, who plans to study music at one of the major conservatories, and Kylar Sprenger, who will be a conducting major at the University of Montana.

We look forward to hearing of the wonderful things our students will accomplish in the world!

### Sara Doan

Solo Competition Co-Chair

The FWMTA Solo Competition held on April 14, 2018, was a great success. We had just under 350 students this year, with the String and Voice Divisions growing in numbers.

Our highly-esteemed line-up of judges were all very impressed with the wonderful display of musicianship from our students this year. Congratulations to all the students who participated and to their teachers!

This competition could not have run smoothly without the help of the FWMTA Solo Competition Committee, and the participating teachers who graciously volunteered their time monitoring and helping with the Honors Recitals.

A word of special thanks goes out to Ilka Araujo and Texas Wesleyan University for providing the space and the pianos for our students to perform on.

**FWMTA wishes to thank the 2018 Solo Competition Committee for their untiring efforts in making this Contest run seamlessly and efficiently.**

**Contest Chairs: Anne Smith and Sara Doan**

**Committee: Ilka Araujo, Patricia Tsai, Ethelyn Beck, Janis Felts and Natsuko Ejiri.**

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## THE 2018 GALA IN PICTURES





## Executive Board Members

Co-Presidents: Sarah Alexander  
and Jennifer DeSantis

VP for Programs: Mandy Luckert

VP for Membership: Christine Meng

VP for Student Activities: MaryAnn Fritz  
and Jennea Potter

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Treasurer: Linda Banfy

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Beck, Jill Sprenger

Parliamentarian: Reva Jean Beck

Historian: Catherine Lloyd

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