



# Newsletter

1 of 9 pages

Fort Worth Music Teachers Association

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April 2020



## Music's Expressive Power

The state of turmoil the world is in today has in one sense made us aware of our own vulnerability - how swiftly and easily we can succumb to an intangible force called a virus. Corona, translated from the Italian means Crown. This regal-sounding name comes from the fact that under electron microscopic examination, each virion is surrounded by a halo or crown. It is ironic that a name such as this be given a virus that possess the ability to cause nothing but devastation in its path with no respect for age, rank or nationality. This thought entered my mind as I watched a Sunday service live-streamed from the Washington National Cathedral.

As a practicing Catholic, unable in the first days of live-streaming to find the service of my choice, I entered this historic Episcopal Cathedral (if only in spirit) and found the tranquility within comforting.

The gentle manner of the Celebrant as he preached his homily had me listen intently unburdened by straying thoughts. It was when the camera rested its lens on a starkly empty cathedral devoid of congregants that the *Crown's* path of destruction made its presence felt. The cold, grim silence served as a reminder of the power of the dreaded virus.

Hymnody and responsorial psalms, an integral part of Christian services, helped dissipate my personal sense of anger at what the world was forced to bear. The splendid rendition of hymns sung by a soprano from the pulpit were sung not to an empty Cathedral, but to numerous people who, through modern technology, were brought together by a common need for solace and an awakening of the courage within us - animus valet (courage prevails). My thoughts turned to the heroic deeds of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals who, risking their own

safety have devoted their time to caring for COVID-19 patients.

My despondent spirits rose triumphantly as I listened to the hymns being sung. As I dwelt on how uplifting the music was, I was drawn in a special way to the hymns that unceasingly serve to inspire in times of peace, and in times of turmoil and uncertainty. The hymn creations of our own composers came to mind... **Virgil Thomson's** *My Shepherd Will Supply My Need*; **Samuel Sebastian Wesley's** *I Want to Walk...Lead Me Lord*; *Blessed Assurance*, melody by **Phoebe Knapp**, text by **Fanny Crosby** and *Watchman Tell Us of the Night* by **Lowell Mason**.

As the day wore on, my mind turned from the current crisis - surreal at times - to the very tangible path of destruction created by war. The powerful statements made by classical music composers during these horrific times, will always serve to remind us of the repugnance of man's inhumanity to man.

In the early 1940s two of Hungary's cities, Buda and Pest, were in ruins. The eventual **German retreat** at that time was aided by the Russians. Zoltan Kodaly and his wife, like countless Hungarians, took shelter in cellars. When this savage battle ceased, the composer and his wife emerged from the cellar of the opera house which sheltered them, to find their city in nothing but ruins and the streets littered with corpses. They began life anew.

It was against this dark, ugly backdrop that Kodaly composed *Miss Brevis* in 1945. He dedicated the work to his wife of thirty-five years whom he called his best friend, critic and protagonist.

The **Symphonies Numbers 7, 8 and 9** of Dimitri Shostakovich are referred to as his **Symphonic "War Trilogy."** The No. 7 in C, Opus 60, subtitled, *Leningrad* was composed in 1942 in gratitude, mainly to the people of his homeland (Russia), for their incredible show of resistance to **Hitler's forces**. The No. 8, in c minor,

Opus 65 created in 1943, is a symphonic canvass of the composer's views of the senselessness of war. The 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony Opus 70, written in 1945, expresses the joy of being free of the shackles of WWII.

The Symphony No. 11 in g minor, Opus 103 composed in 1957, retraces the massacre of innocent Russian men, women and children who were mown down by Cossack troops gathered in St. Petersburg Square, January 9, 1905. The snow is said to have turned red with the blood that was spilled that day. The composer's father was among the survivors.

Napoleon's invasion of Austria in 1805 is closely associated with the well-known Piano Sonata, Opus 81 a, subtitled *Les Adieux*, by Beethoven. And the **Trilogy of War Sonatas for Piano**, Nos. 6, 7 and 8 of Prokofiev has WW II as its backdrop. This accounts for the at times barbaric tones found in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Sonatas. The No. 8 composed at the end of the war is more upbeat.

My thoughts returned once more to current crisis and to how the world has been forced to bow to the demands of a consequential pandemic. Those on the frontlines in this "war" being fought seek not artillery, but masks, gloves and ventilators. Freedom from our sequestered lives will come with the creation of a vaccine by scientists and medical experts. In the interim ingenuity can be a useful tool. This has already been displayed by our association in a major way. The Spring Solo Video Contest, the last BookNotes meeting and our individual attempts at long distance instruction, are examples of our use of modern technology to overcome the barriers we face.

May good health abide with us all.

Rosemary Solomons  
Newsletter Editor

## President's Column



Dear FWMTA Colleagues,

It's hard to believe how much has changed since our February Newsletter was published, or even since most schools began Spring break in the second week of March. In an unfathomably short period of time, our lives have been upended and we have all been forced to adjust to a new normal, one that is indefinite but ultimately temporary.

With all the rapid change and the issuing of social distancing guidelines, I have been thinking a lot lately about connection. What does it mean to connect with others? How does connectedness impact our relationships, our careers, our well-being?

I've struggled at times recently and suspect that many of you may also be feeling slightly lost. I've hung up more than one Facetime lesson with a kind of deflation, knowing I must not have given my student the same fulfilling experience as a lesson taken in my studio. I am perpetually frustrated not to be able to play along with students in real time or demonstrate technical principles easily.

But not only is this an unfair comparison – and moreover, the current situation will not last forever – there is in fact much to be learned through what we're doing now. For example, virtual lessons don't allow for a two-way input of sound and can quickly devolve into a noisy mess; through teaching online I've realized that I sometimes tend to interrupt more than I should. Most students' ability to digest what their teacher is saying is arguably more limited when it's coming out of a screen as opposed to a living, breathing human; I've learned to give one pointer at a time, and have found that many students respond well to this slower, methodical pace.

FWMTA, too, has been forced to adapt how we connect with our students, our members, and our community. Our Solo Competition received all its entries in a video format this year, an effort to allow

students to still show the fruits of their labor. We had an enlivening BookNotes discussion on April 19<sup>th</sup>, giving our members a much-needed chance to connect. And our Musical Outreach will engage the broader community in a new way this Spring, as our students submit video performances to brighten these bleak times for residents of the James L. West Center.

Just as computers have recontextualized terms that first referred to physical objects – like “file”, “folder”, “copy”, and “paste” – the true meaning of “connection” is easily overlooked, given how much we talk about the speed of our internet connections, or the quality of a video call. For those of us in a profession that relies on close physical proximity, connecting solely through an online platform may feel woefully inadequate. But even during this strange time we need to remind ourselves it is the people, not the platform, that drive connection. At the end of the day, whether they're squirming around your studio or squinting at you on their iPhone screens from home, the most important element in your students' musical lives is *you*.

Stay well and stay connected!

**Evan Mitchell**

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## Events Calendar 2020

### APRIL

#### **Solo Competition Honors Recital**

Texas Wesleyan University, Martin Hall **POSTPONED**

### MAY

#### **Open Recital**

Texas Wesleyan University, Martin Hall

**POSTPONED**

#### **Outreach performances**

James L West Alzheimer Center,  
1111 Summit Ave, FW, 76102

**VIA VIDEO SUBMISSION**

**DUE MAY 2nd**

### JUNE

Honors Recital, 6:30pm

Steinway Hall Fort Worth

TBD

#### **TMTA State Convention,**

Houston Hyatt Regency, TX

**CANCELLED**

## FWMTA AWARDS 2020 SCHOLARSHIPS

By **MaryAnn Fritz**

Chair -Senior Scholarship Program

Each year the Fort Worth Music Teachers Association awards scholarships to seniors who have demonstrated a dedication to musical endeavors through participation in Student Affiliate events, TMTA Theory Tests, Piano Guild auditions, National Federation of Music Clubs Junior Festival, Fort Worth Solo Contest, the Royal Conservatory of Music program, NATS and UIL competitions, choirs, orchestras, and various other activities. This year we had five students apply for and receive scholarships.

The Senior Scholarship of \$400 is awarded to Emilio Ahuactzin-Garcia, Taylor Henry, and Benjamin Larson. Emilio Ahuactzin-Garcia (student of Linda Banfy) attends Harmony School of Innovation. Emilio will major in physics at MIT or Harvard University. Taylor Henry (student of Jennifer DeSantis) is a student at Trinity Valley School and will be an engineering major at Colorado School of Mines. Benjamin Larson (student of Jennifer DeSantis) will soon graduate from Paschal High School and plans to major in theatre at USC, Northwestern, or TCU.

The Memorial Scholarship of \$600 is awarded to graduating high school students majoring in music. Our recipients this year are Allison Febinger and Bethany Martin. Allison Febinger (student of Diane Stewart) attends Cleburne High School. Allison plans to major in music education, with an emphasis on flute and piano, at the University of North Texas. Bethany Martin (student of Sara Doan) will graduate from Southwest High School and will attend West Texas A & M University as a music therapy major. Congratulations to each of these students and their teachers!

## FWMTA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

As a part of the FWMTA Senior Scholarship application, seniors are required to write a brief essay discussing their experience in music and its role in their lives. Here are excerpts from the essays of the 2020 scholarship recipients.



**Allison Febinger** “According to my mother, I’ve been musical since I was a toddler, banging on pots and pans in some way or another and singing along to the radio. At the ripe old age of 7, she decided it was time for me to pick up an instrument. She and her mother had been piano players in churches from very young ages, so she set me up with a piano teacher, Diane Stewart. I really liked all the music she gave to me to learn and have been her student ever since. My plans after high school are to be a double concentration music education major in flute and piano at the University of North Texas, then to become a high school band director.”  
Student of Diane Stewart



**Benjamin Larson** “Music has always been a great passion of mine. I started studying piano in TCU’s Music Preparatory Program when I was four years old. Inspired by the music I learned through my early study of piano; I began taking voice lessons in the sixth grade. I also became immersed in musical theatre. The knowledge and skills I learned from my musical training have been instrumental in my theatre and choir performances. Music has been such a significant aspect of my life. Music amazes me in its universal power to evoke the full range of human emotion and is an interest that I know will forever capture my imagination.”  
Student of Jennifer DeSantis



**Taylor Henry** “Music has been a huge part of my life from the time I was six months old. I started out in the TCU Early Childhood classes and progressed onto group piano classes and have continued private lessons for the past 13 years, all through the TCU Music Program. Along the way I tried dance, drama, choir, guitar, and drums. Piano and music theory have been an integral part in my excelling at math and science. Without even being aware, I have been doing fractions and other complicated calculations almost all my life by breaking apart measures into their different beats. It is very interesting to me that I learned all of this just by playing the piano or singing and enjoying every minute of it. I have been accepted into the Colorado School of Mines and have been invited to join their First Year Thorson Honors program. I applied to the honors program because it offers not just science, but a well-rounded approach. While I find the thought of being an engineer or computer scientist exciting, I am also looking forward to exploring the joining of art and science to see if there are fields where I can use my math and science background in the pursuit of the arts.” Student of Jennifer DeSantis



**Emilio Ahuactzin-Garcia** “I love to play the piano, but weeks and months of hard work, of vibrant Joplin rags and soulful Chopin masterworks, always ends up trapped at the tips of my fingers. What’s the point, if all this music is imprisoned by my anxiety, and only I know what I can play? But maybe that’s enough. To know that I can make this music. Despite my struggles, I keep on practicing, and I don’t let my love fade. I learn new works, polishing them until they gleam. I let myself be filled with the joy of my music, never worrying how my songs will finally be, but thinking only of how wonderful they can be. When I head off to college, my studies will be in physics, but I know that music will remain a way to push myself and to find solace in the stress of schoolwork. Maybe I’ll never be able to perform with effortless grace, but in tinny headphones during quiet practice, in my heart and soul, and in the rhythms that fill my very nerves, my music soars.”  
Student of Linda Banfy



**Bethany Martin** “I love music and the different ways to express music. I have been playing since I was in third grade. Piano was the first instrument that started my musical journey. I also enjoy playing the violin and singing in a choir. Throughout my life of music, I have improved significantly. I won many awards such as solo and ensemble awards, jazz festival, state awards, and awards through auditions. Aside from competing and performing, I also love to volunteer to perform for others. My neighbor, Ms. Peggy, was in a nursing home and many weeks I would play for her. During the Christmas season, I performed in nursing homes. It would mostly be a sing-along to give the residents joy and happiness. I volunteered on mission trips to play for others. I aim to continue doing so in college. I want to help the community and accompany more musicians. I plan to pursue a music therapy degree at West Texas A & M. With this degree, I wish to help those in hospitals, nursing homes, ones who need assistance with their education through music therapy in schools, or even those who need someone to listen to them. Student of Sara Doan

We also recognize the students of Jennea Potter, Jill Sprenger, Tanya Karyagina and Rosemary Solomons. As this column failed to feature Damoyee Neroes and publicize her accomplishments in the May 2019 issue of the Newsletter, we do so in this edition. Damoyee has just completed her Freshman year at Berklee College of Music.



**Damoyee Neroes** began early childhood music lessons with **Jennea Potter** at the age of 2. At the age of five, she transitioned to private piano, music theory and composition studies. Damoyee earned medals on TMTA theory tests for twelve years and participated in FWMTA/TMTA piano ensembles for twelve years. She received superior ratings in many Fall Festivals, Piano Solo Contests and Sonatina/Sonata Festivals throughout her years. During her years in piano studies, Damoyee participated in the NGPT Guild Auditions at the National or International level for 14 years, and she received the Paderewski award as well as earning a High School Diploma in Social Music through NGPT. In 2019, her original composition, *Stellar*, won 1<sup>st</sup> place in Division 11-12 in the TMTA Original Composition Contest.

Damoyee independently released and co-produced her first album, *Thankful*, at age 13. She wrote the music and lyrics, performed piano, vocals and harmonies. At 16, she independently produced and released a 12-track studio album, *From the Bottom of My Heart*. She wrote the music and lyrics, performed vocals, piano

and percussion. In 2019, Damoyee signed to Dallas-based Indie record label State Fair Records and released her third studio album, *The Whole Truth*. One of the album’s singles, *Independent*, is critically acclaimed and reached top 10 in Europe and top 100 worldwide on the digital airplay indie charts.

Damoyee has scored several independent films, one for which she was awarded Best Original Soundtrack by the International Online Web Fest Awards. In 2019, she composed an exclusive score for AT&T Performing Arts Center. Damoyee’s score, *The Lights Are Rising*, replaced one by renowned composer Philip Glass, and will indefinitely accompany the ascension of the iconic Moody Foundation Chandelier prior to every production at Winspear Opera House, Dallas, Texas.

Damoyee was awarded a full-tuition scholarship at Berklee College of Music where she is majoring in film scoring. Her future plans include scoring major motion pictures while still performing her original music on stages and at festivals around the world.

Student of Jeanna Potter



**Audrey Money** is a graduating senior from Colleyville Heritage High School and has spent 12 years studying piano and theory with **Jennea Potter**. Over the years, Audrey has participated in numerous Jazz and Sonatina Festivals, TMTA theory tests, and NGPT auditions. In school, Audrey is involved in jazz choir, chamber choir, and the varsity choir as well as the theatre program. She enjoys playing piano and singing around her community and hopes to continue with that in the future. Audrey plans on attending the University of Oregon where she will be majoring in Business and furthering her music education with a minor in Popular Music.

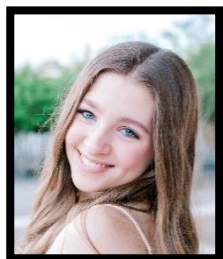
Student of Jennea Potter



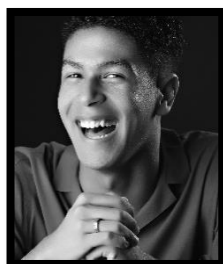
**Caroline Watkins** has been studying piano for 12 years. After moving to Fort Worth in 2009, she studied with Sheila Turner, Maureda Travis, and Jill Sprenger. Caroline has participated in FWMTA events such as Fall Festivals, Sonata Festivals, Solo Contests, and theory tests throughout Middle School and High School, and has also performed in several open recitals. She will graduate this Spring from University of Nebraska Online High School and will be attending TCU in the Fall as a music major and studying piano with Professor John Owings.  
Student of Jill Sprenger



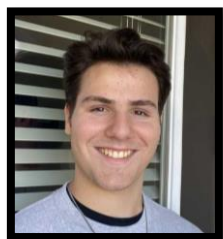
**Ben Rogers** has been studying piano for 10 years in Fort Worth, first with Dr. Kyoung Ah Mun and then Dr. Jill Sprenger. He has participated in the State Theory test receiving a Gold Medal in the 12th grade test this year. He has also completed through Level 6 exams of the Royal Conservatory Certificate Program. He is a senior at the Texas Academy of Biomedical Sciences and will be graduating as the Valedictorian. He will be attending The University of Texas at Austin next year as a neuroscience major and hopes to continue music study as well.  
Student of Jill Sprenger



**Vanessa Marie Silva** has attended Fort Worth Country Day for the past four years, after moving from Mexico City. I began studying piano at the age of 13 with Carlos Balám Vasquez (Mexico City), Mrs. Maureda Travis, and Dr. Jill Sprenger. I prepared to play in the FWMTA Fall Sonata and Jazz festivals where I was awarded Superior Pluses. I participated in the State Theory Tests for the past three years where I developed a strong background in music theory. In addition to my piano studies, I have received a formal training in painting and drawing. I have been awarded internships at the Kimbell and Modern at Museums of Fort Worth where I have further developed my education in art, curation, and museum management. I studied French as my third language in high school and had the privilege to travel to France where I was immersed in the language and culture. I am excited to start my college journey where I intend on majoring in International Relations and Art.  
Student of Jill Sprenger



**Samuel Aparicio** started his musical career as a newborn, attending early childhood music classes, and continuing during high school as a pianist privileged to study under Dr. Jill Sprenger. Samuel was principal clarinet for the Fort Worth Youth Orchestra Philharmonic, second chair clarinet in Wind Ensemble at TAFE, and a member of the Dorothy Shaw Bell Choir for 5 years. Samuel will graduate with the class of 2020 at Travis Academy of Fine Arts and will continue his studies at the University of North Texas in Denton, majoring in music and minoring in business.  
Student of Jill Sprenger



**Elijah Samlowski** was born in Fort Worth, Texas on May 26, 2001. His interest in music began at a young age. At six years old he began taking piano lessons under Mrs. Diane Stewart. At age nine he took interest in the organ; however, he only began taking lessons at age 14. At age sixteen he began private voice lessons. He currently studies piano under Dr. Tanya Karyagina, organ under Dr. Joseph Butler, and voice under Mrs. Carlene Wadley. Elijah has participated in various Piano Festivals and Guilds for at least ten years, where he scored many superior ratings. He has served as a substitute Church Organist of Dr. Joseph Butler at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church and St. Paul Lutheran Church for the past year and a half. Currently Elijah is finishing his senior year of High School. In the Fall, 2020 he will be attending Samford University in Homewood, Alabama where he will major in Organ Performance, studying under Dr. Fred Teardo on a Merit Scholarship. Music continues to be a major part of his life, and he cannot wait to see where it leads him in the future. Student of Dr. Tanya Karyagina



**Riley Knapp** I began piano in 1st grade with the program offered by TCU's Preparatory Division. In 4th grade my mother had me transition to private lessons in piano and theory with Mrs. Rosemary Solomons - a period of study that was to last nine years. All through Grade School, Middle School and High School, I worked on the little challenges my patient teacher put before me. This nine-year journey of learning to play the piano and understanding the scores I worked on each week, became increasingly more difficult as the years went by. My knowledge of theory and the practical application of it to each piece I learned, increased my understanding of what I played. Student Recitals, the Jazz Festivals and the Spring Piano Solo Contests acted as incentives for perfecting what I was to perform.

My mother had me attend the FWSO concerts (through the FWSO Student Passport program) through the past four years much to the delight of Ms. Solomons, who was always eager to hear what I had to say of the symphonic music and concertos I had heard at the concerts. As my lesson was the last for the afternoon, she made it a point to listen to my opinion on a variety of topics, from music to politics.

I thank my parents and Mrs. Solomons for being instrumental in enhancing my life with music. I will be attending the University of Colorado where I will major in Urban Planning and Design.

P.S. My husband and I had Riley study piano to help him learn to appreciate music, as well as to help him with a learning difference he has had to cope with. We are proud of how hard he worked, especially as it did not come easily to him. – Penni Askew Knapp  
Student of Rosemary Solomons

## BookNotes

By Lori Christ

*In this continuing series, Lori Christ offers her recommendations on books that we may find fulfilling as pianists.*



My reading suggestion for this newsletter will provide a hefty dose of history along with music. The choice is

### *Evening in the*

*Palace of Reason*, by James R. Gaines (Harper Perennial, 2005). Gaines writes about the lives of Frederick the Great and Johann Sebastian Bach, and their significance in their respective domains. While that may at first seem to be an odd juxtaposition, it must be noted that they both lived at the same time in present-day Germany, and their paths did actually intersect near the end of Bach's life. Their one face-to-face meeting was kicked off with the words of Frederick to his own musicians: "Gentlemen, old Bach is here."

This book provides an earthy historical context for the lives of both subjects. It would be considered a double biography; Gaines alternates between the two men, outlining events of their lives, and all the while bearing

in mind that Bach was approximately a generation older than Frederick. At first that seems like a lot to digest, but it easily becomes clear as one reads. Since I knew very little about Frederick previously, it was interesting to learn about this tormented and conflicted pillar of history, who also had a great love of music and was himself an accomplished musician. While I had more knowledge of Bach to begin with, I found it equally interesting to dig into his life further as well. Many musicians know the basics of Bach's existence and musical output, but this provides greater detail about his life, his personality, and truly displays his musical genius.

The meeting of Frederick and Bach in 1747 illustrates a point in history when the world was progressing from the effects of the Reformation toward the Enlightenment. In other words, moving from spiritual belief and mysticism to the domination of reason and science. In the sphere of music, this is reflected in the progression from the learned style of Baroque music to the gallant style, which came to full fruition in the Classical period. The contrasts are enormous between Bach, seen as arguably the greatest Baroque composer, and Frederick, who was eager for music which he considered to be simply "agreeable" entertainment.

At their meeting, Frederick provided a theme he had written and challenged

Bach to compose a three-part fugue based on it. Much to the astonishment of their audience of musicians, Bach was able to do so quickly and with great ingenuity. Upon which Frederick could not resist raising the bar and immediately asked Bach for a six-part fugue on the same subject! Bach conceded that he could not work out such a fugue on the spot. However, he accepted the task, returned to Leipzig, and within two weeks had produced the fugue as well as numerous other compositions based on the Royal Theme. This collection is what came to be known as the Musical Offering, a masterpiece of music and of Baroque music in particular.

An added and very agreeable benefit of reading *Evening in the Palace* is that it serves as an inspiration to listen anew to Bach's music. I enjoyed hearing music which I was not familiar with, such as the *Actus Tragicus*, and also re-listening to splendid masterpieces like the *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*. Lastly, I have parting thoughts for you if you enjoy fiction along with your music reading. In that case you may want to consider any of these choices:

*The Song of the Lark*, by Willa Cather

*Bel Canto*, by Ann Patchett

*The Time of Our Singing*, by Richard Powers

Happy Reading!

## Quarantine Reflections

By Ilka Araujo

*The following article was submitted by Dr. Ilka Araujo. Like the rest of us, deeply disturbed by the current crisis she felt compelled to express her feelings at the bleak turn of events the world over. I thank her for not having remained silent, but for having shared her innermost thoughts with us, her fellow members. May I add, that Ilka was in her native Brazil when COVID-19 reached fever-pitch in the U.S. She made her way back home to the U.S. under very stressful conditions.*  
The editor

As I was taking my daily walk around the neighborhood on Easter Sunday, I could not stop thinking about how much life has changed these past four weeks or even months, for some. It is interesting to see the discrepancies that our society has come to face: some get to enjoy some free time for themselves while figuring out new strategies to give continuity to their work with little stress, while numerous struggle to fight for their lives, and others feel uncertain about their future, especially those who have already lost their jobs and income instantaneously. In a way, the truth of the fragility of life has its chance to come to the surface so we become aware of it. Maybe this moment could be a call for all of us to stop and evaluate everything that surrounds us – even a moment for life to stop and our planet to heal and recover its own breath.

In the midst of this chaos, one can see the power that music can bring through the use of healing music (we

have already experienced some of that through our outreach performances last December) performed from the terraces of apartments all over the world, online concerts, musicians gathering at distance through the internet, and even the use of virtual music lessons. Suddenly, many things became possible. Some of us probably never believed that music lessons could be done through distance and so many of our teachers have broken the barrier of internet limitations and kept teaching their students through distance. It is so nice to see how much students have adapted and are enjoying their online music lessons and practicing even more, now that they have more free time!

Humans are very adaptable, and evolution has taken many unpredictable turns. Who thought music would ever be atonal one day or that mankind would be able to work on space stations outside the Earth?! Before the creation of Skype in 2003, no one ever imagined the possibilities of video conferences. Before YouTube was created in 2005, one had to carry CDs or recordings everywhere. Fifteen years ago, music lessons through the internet seemed to be a little bizarre and for many, whose internet connection was not so good, it was very frustrating and inefficient due to so much delay. Even for these past weeks one can see how much internet resources have improved and how much the lag has diminished. The first week of virtual lessons for young students must have been quite tiring and frustrating to most, but these students have improved and adapted to the new setting while teachers have learned efficient ways to communicate with them and make

ideas clearer. Despite all that, however, one thing we know for sure, online music lessons will never really be able to replace face-to-face lessons. There is a limit to what can be done through distance and one can deal with all this now because there is the certainty it is just temporary.

In conclusion, I wanted to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to all colleagues in this association for stepping up and taking the courage to overcome the obstacles. I also wanted to show my gratitude to the Board and Chairs for continuing their duties in facilitating activities and providing the best service and care for teachers and students. I know that things have not been entirely even; many of us have lost students, canceled activities, festivals, performances and lessons, but as a final message of faith and hope, I wish to convey my deepest respect and admiration through the example of one of our own members. Three years ago, Jill Sprenger was not sure of what lay ahead of her having lost her job of 28 years. Nevertheless, she knew she had a purpose. She was determined to find a path along with her students and just a year ago, she launched her own new school – The Fort Worth Conservatory of Music and Fine Arts. This week, she was able to invite guest musicians to provide four virtual successful masterclasses in voice, piano, and strings to the students from the conservatory. May this and many other models of prosperity serve as examples of strength, determination, and inspiration to all students and teachers, that no obstacle is invincible. Hope to see you all in person soon, again.

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## News Briefs

### 2020 Duo-Piano Competition

Submitted by Ilka Araujo

The 12<sup>th</sup> Youth-Duo Piano Competition and Amateur Festival, sponsored by Texas Wesleyan University and Fort Worth Piano Forum held on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, was highly successful.

Twenty-seven teams were involved in the event with two of them participating at the post-12<sup>th</sup> Amateur division. Thirteen representative teachers came from Fort Worth, Weatherford, Arlington, Keller, Carrollton, Southlake, Colleyville, Plano, and Mesquite. Among the winners were several students from FWMTA teachers.

Dallas-based composer and pianist, Mike Springer, was the judge. An active classical and jazz pianist, Mr. Springer shared his ideas and expertise with the duo-teams through his comments, which were received with enthusiasm.

## Zooming in on BookNotes Submitted by Gloria Lin

On April 19, Dr. Jill Sprenger lead an online BookNotes discussion on Etudes for Piano Teachers: *Reflections on the Teacher's Art* by Stewart Gordon. The members who participated included Sarah Alexander, Ilka Araujo, Siew-Lee Chin, Loreen Christ, Cricket Hackney, Evan Mitchell, Gloria Lin, Christine Pater, Keji Sanchez and Anne Smith. There were engaging conversations on teachers' backgrounds and learning experiences as well as sharing on pedagogy and methods.



**Arian Shamaei**, student of John Solomons, advanced to the **Regional Round of the TMTA Performance Contest in March**. His repertoire included the Sonata in c minor, K.475 by Mozart and the Rhapsody in G minor, op 79 by Brahms. An 11th grade student at Lamar High School in Arlington, Arian is an avid photographer who plans on pursuing a degree in piano performance at the college level.

## FWMTA Theory Test Program

Submitted by Christine Pater Co-Chair

FWMTA offers our students the opportunity to participate in the Texas Music Teacher's Association Student Affiliate Theory Test. According to the TMTA website, the purpose of the theory test is:

*to evaluate SA members' musical knowledge of and the ability to apply theory, aural, and musicianship concepts across a broad musical spectrum.*

In the Fall of 2019 and Spring of 2020 FWMTA had a total of 372 students take the theory test (142 in the fall, 230 in the spring). They came from the studios of 41 different teachers and were in the following grades:

1 <sup>st</sup> Grade = 27	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 37
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade = 34	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 42
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade = 43	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 29
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 45	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 18

5 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 35	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 13
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 45	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade = 23

Out of our 372 students, 251 earned medals. Congratulations teachers and students!

Medals earned by FWMTA students who scored 90 to 101 on the test:

**Gold medals:** 98-101 = **104**

**Silver medals:** 94-97 = **76**

**Bronze medals:** 90-93 = **48**

**Achievement medals** = **23**

(for students who scored 90 or above on a test below their school grade level)

The medals are currently at the home of June Leondar. Due to the current crisis, June will not be able to mail the medals to the teachers until approximately May 15. If you would like to retrieve your medals prior to May 15, please call June at 817-448-8559 to make pick-up arrangements.

The upcoming dates for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Theory Test are:

**Saturday, November 7, 2020**

**Saturday, February 6, 2021**

Sample theory tests and teacher's manuals are available on the TMTA website.

The organization of the theory test is a group effort. June Leondar is our faithful leader who works diligently to order the tests, compile lists of the teachers and students, and distribute the graded tests and medals. Maureda Travis kindly reserves and locates rooms with pianos for testing at Broadway Baptist Church. Jennea Potter creates the score sheets for state graders and Christine Pater types the labels for the tests.

We applaud all of our teachers who entered their students in the theory test!!



## Publication and Video Contests

Submitted by Jennea Potter

Excitingly, we had two students enter creative writing essays for the **FWMTA Publication Contest**. One of the essays by **Abigail Balson**, grade 10, was selected to move on to the TMTA Publication Contest. She received an excellent rating at the state level.

This year we had one entry for the **FWMTA Video Contest**, **Andrew Balson**, entering in the grades 4-8 division. Andrew moved on to the TMTA Video Contest, and he won first place for the 4-8 division with his Music and Storytelling video.

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## FWMTA Solo Video Competition 2020

Submitted by Anne Smith

Upon learning that our annual Solo Competition might have to be cancelled due to unfolding developments regarding the coronavirus, we decided that, rather than take the “easy” but disappointing approach of cancelling the event, we would move forward with a video competition instead. This, of course, meant new “opportunities” for interfacing with technology. The learning curve may have been greater for some than for others, but 41 teachers, 227 students, and 10 judges have stepped into the new format to make the 39<sup>th</sup> iteration of this event a reality. Great appreciation goes to Sara Doan who masterminded the plan and has once again accomplished an amazing feat of organization!

Deadlines were revised and new guidelines developed to make the Solo Video Competition 2020 as accessible as possible to all participants. As of this writing, teachers are submitting student information, PDF’s of students’ music, and video performances to Sara who will organize them by divisions and send to judges. Judges will write critique sheets and select winners as though it were a live adjudication. Winners are to be announced by Saturday, May 16, and critique sheets and ribbons will be mailed to teachers once received from the judges. We still hope to hold Honors Recitals. Details will be forthcoming as we know them.

Here is the line-up of this year’s judges.

Piano:

Dr. Brad Beckman,  
Mr. Patrick Behringer,  
Dr. Michael Bukhman,  
Dr. Fenia Chang,  
Dr. Liudmila Georgievskaya,  
Dr. Won Yong Lee,  
Ms. Marcy McDonald,  
Dr. John Solomons

Voice:

Ms. Corrie Donovan

Strings:

Ms. Karen Hall

Solo Competition Committee:

Sara Doan, Chair, Anne Smith, Co-chair  
Ilka Araujo, Patricia Tsai, Zoe House,  
Huan Yang, Suyoun Yi, Xiaomei Xu,  
Bradley Hetherington

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## Royal Conservatory Spring Exam

Submitted by Jill Sprenger

For those of you with students involved in the Royal Conservatory Certificate Program, you know by now that spring exams have been postponed until June 1 - July 31 and will be given remotely. Students also have the option to defer their exam until an in-person option is available. Please let me know if you have any questions about the exams or are interested in learning more about the Program. I'm here to help!

Jill Sprenger, DMA  
US Representative South-Central Region  
Member, College of Examiners  
RCM Certificate Program  
817-680-1611

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