



Newsletter

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Fort Worth Music Teachers Association

Volume 7, No.9 April 2015

Editorial Musings...

The last recital for the Spring semester on May 2, 2015, provides each recitalist the opportunity to exhibit their pianistic prowess. Occasions of this nature are rewarding to students, teachers and parents. Without the patience and encouragement of parents, we teachers would be denied the chance to allow our students to blossom into aspiring young pianists. This is not all, for the years of tutoring, pave the path these youthful musicians traverse as they take their place as the next generation of supporters of the Arts. This makes our contribution as teachers invaluable.

This Newsletter's offerings range from items of interest concerning student accomplishments to thought-provoking and insightful articles submitted by FWMTA members

Take a few minutes to dwell on the ideas expressed **by Patrick Behringer** in his piece on **Post-Contest Reflections**; **Bonnie Dove**, who has had remarkable success in persuading her students to not only recreate the music of composers, but to be creators themselves, writes **on Motivating Students to Compose** and **Dr. David Yeomans** shares his findings on **The Discovery of the Ramapo Tunes**— a much neglected collection of folk music of the Northern Appalachians. Dr. Yeoman's research unearths a well-kept secret.

I hope your Summer proves to be a period of restful reflection, a time for family and friends, and the joy our life-long devotion to music provides. Until the Autumn ...

Rosemary Solomons

Editor

Post-Contest Reflections

By Patrick Behringer



Patrick Behringer is in his fourth year working as a private piano teacher and freelance accompanist out of Watauga, Texas. . Prior teaching experiences have included assistantships at Interlochen Arts Camp, Syracuse University, and the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music.

Studies have included BFA and MM degrees in Piano Performance from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Syracuse University, where he also earned a "Certificate in University Teaching." His primary Pedagogy teachers have been Margaret Otwell and Amy Giller Heyman.

He is currently working on his MTNA National Certification with mentor Dr. Ann Gipson, and will begin the Piano Performance Certificate program at University of Texas at Arlington with Dr. John Solomons, in the Fall.

.Post-Contest Reflections

Phew! It's over

Contest season can be stressful for a variety of reasons. The registrations, the scheduling, planning repertoire far enough in advance; dealing with students who are under-prepared or who have unrealistic expectations; competitive-minded "hovering" parents, or less-than-attentive

Behringer, cont. from pg. 1

parents ignoring your instructions; and finally – the judge’s grade.

These stressors are just part of our job as teachers, and in the end they are outweighed by the rewards contests offer; competitions provide a platform for achievement in piano that so many students crave. In turn, we often witness boosts in our students’ technique and accomplishment. Contests set a benchmark for parents or students to aspire to. Thank goodness, also, for our judges’ comments - they soften the blow of criticism and provide encouragement to all.

On the other hand, contests can potentially present pitfalls that we want to avoid. The first one being that they can easily stunt long-term musical development. For example, if you were to take a look at your student’s assignment notebook from the past 2 months, would you notice a divergence from your standard lesson plans? **Perhaps you gradually trimmed down theory assignments, cut out sight-reading and scales from lessons, or stopped smaller lesson pieces altogether.**

Regaining lost momentum of the day-to-day assignments can be difficult, which holds long-term implications. Do you have students who do well at a contest, only to “take it easy” the following month because they worked so hard in preparation for the contest? Whatever the reason, they might maintain their contest pieces until the end-of-year recital, without committed practice. Now the two months of sidelined progress have become 3 months, just in time for a three-month summer break, where many kids mentally check out since they are not in school.

There may also be philosophical objections to contests. Competitive events, you could argue,

diminish the value of the creative experience by appraising it, and by categorizing it by age instead of artistic maturity. Rather than validate a student for thinking, working, and learning, contests can create negative emotions for non-winners and can encourage egotistical ambition. In turn, the influence of today’s grading methods, forces judges not to give anyone a score lower than a “II” grade, as it will actually “degrade” that student.

As in anything, balance is the key. Contests are certainly wonderful events, to which many teachers and pianists can attest. **However, unless properly nurtured, the temporary achievements can overshadow the day-to-day practice and improvement. Or worse, the threat of failure may dampen his or her natural love of learning to play the piano.** If you or your students have experienced any of the pitfalls of competitions, it may be a good time to reconsider which students you enter in the next contest.

Alternatively, you may consider a variety of other activities to feed students’ curiosity. Through our organization, students can perform in a monthly recital, submit a composition, play for the Baroque and Jazz festival, or prepare for a *World of Music* exam. Create incentive programs in your studio to stabilize momentum swings. Give parents relevant articles about lessons, and take the time to persuade them on topics of practice management, investment in a quality instrument, and event participation. Organize a studio outing to Steinway Hall to learn how pianos are made, or coordinate a trip to the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra (in my experience, they are happy to offer a group rate

Behringer, cont. from pg. 2
for such an event). Take students to local recitals and master classes, where they can hear excellent pianists improve through constructive criticism. After all, the best way to learn about music is to study the art of the masters, which is as inspirational and informative as a high-level competition.

Recital Chair Bids the Position Adieu

It is most unusual for those of us who volunteer to be committee members; act as heads of committees and be on the executive board of FWMTA, to hold these positions (some of which are collaborative) for an indefinite period of time. Very few members have devoted themselves over the years to serving in a certain capacity for an extended period of time; one such member is **Lucy Yacante**.

Lucy volunteered to chair the recitals in the Spring of 2001. Since the start of the monthly recitals given in that year, Lucy has only on rare occasions been unable to be present in person to greet the students and reassure them with words of encouragement prior to performance time. She unfailingly greeted them in person, recognized teachers present and applauded parents for providing more than financial support.

Fourteen School years have sped by. Lucy will have put her last recital program together for the May 2, 2015 recital at TWU by the time this account is read. Ms. Yacante has handed the reins she held so well as recital chair to a new volunteer chairperson, but what will always remain with us is the memory of her “Pre-Recital” remarks, her love and admiration for the students who tried to provide us with meticulously-prepared performances, and the joy she obviously derived from her preparation of the recital programs she compiled.

Lucy Yacante made a niche for herself as recital chairperson. Her untiring efforts at organizing

the monthly recitals will long be remembered by us members
The Editor

On Motivating Our Piano Students to Compose:

By Bonnie Dove



Have you ever had a piano student who wanted to make a melodic or harmonic change in a piece, just to help it “sound better?” I’ve experienced this many times, and after assuring the student that the composer wrote the piece just the way it is for a very good reason, I go on to offer them the opportunity to create their own music. I tell them that they may have it exactly the way they want it, because they will be totally in charge and it will be their music.

Sometimes this works right from the start, and the student will go home, work out a composition and play it for me the very next week. More often, though, they return the following week with little or nothing to play. If they do have something, it’s usually just a few bars, after which they bog down and are unable to continue.

And let me be quick to mention that they almost never have anything on paper, or in a computer generated music notation program. It is almost always memorized notes that they play for me. But since I’m in the business of encouraging music composition, I take what I can get!

Dove, cont. on pg. 4

I love those students who come with the piece finished and all I really have to do is edit and “publish.” But it’s also very rewarding to work with those students who genuinely want to express themselves, but who have a more difficult time with the creative process.

First, I like to ask them what they want the piece to be about. Then I ask them if they can write a sentence about it. After we have the sentence, I ask them if they can set that sentence to music or write a melody that fits it, or failing that, I ask them for a rhythmic motif that fits either the sentence or their idea. If I can get both, that’s wonderful. If I only get one, then that’s still something we can work with.

Next, I work to develop either the melody or the rhythm that fits the original idea. Usually after just a few minutes, we have both rhythm and melody, and I can assign the student homework of extending what they already have memorized. I also like to bring out blank staff paper and help the student notate some of what they’ve created. (And I always keep a copy for myself. Loose staff paper has a way of getting lost between my house and theirs, so I make a copy to keep before they leave that first lesson.)

After they have a paper copy and can see their piece beginning to take shape, they are usually eager to go forward with their ideas, and I mention forms that the music can take, or if they’re very creative, or very headstrong, I let them have free rein, and then we edit later on. Most importantly, though, we have fun creating together and I get to experience the pure joy that comes from the process.

As a footnote, I’d like to mention the results of the State level 2015 TMTA Composition Contest as it relates to our Ft. Worth Students.

Entering 5th grade solo and winning 3rd place:
Mia Geist, student of Jennea Potter.

Entering 6th-7th grade solo and winning honorable mention: **Lillian Rivas, student of Bonnie Dove.**

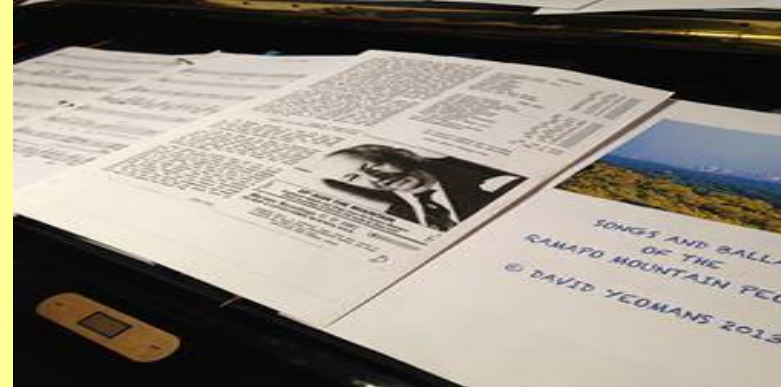
Entering 8th-9th grade solo and winning 1st place:
Roscoe Bussell, student of Bonnie Dove.

Entering 1st-12th grade large ensemble and winning 2nd place: **Caleb Fritz, student of Mary Ann Fritz.**

*FWMTA congratulates these students and their teachers.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE RAMAPO TUNES

By David Yeomans



David Yeomans *Professor Emeritus of Music at Texas Woman’s University, Dr. David Yeomans holds degrees in piano performance from the Oberlin Conservatory, the Juilliard School, and the University of Michigan. In addition to his fourteen-year tenure at TWU, he has taught piano and related music courses at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan, SUNY Fredonia, Washington State University, and the University of Texas at Austin. He has recently taught a graduate course on the music of Béla Bartók, as well as courses in music history, music appreciation, and piano literature at Texas Christian University.*

The Discovery Of The Ramapo Tunes

The folk tunes that come from the Ramapo Mountain people are not widely known, but are as pleasing to the ear as the Ramapo region is to the eye!

Yeomans, cont. from pg. 4

The music and texts of these songs and ballads originate from Scottish-Irish folklore, but have been adapted to American names and places, especially those from the mountainous region that crosses the border from southern New York State into northern New Jersey, about fifteen miles from my home town. Considered by some as a northern extension of the Appalachians, the Ramapos have a rural population, mostly isolated from the conformist world, largely uneducated, living off the land, and considered by many as marginalized from the mainstream of society. But like many similar societies around the world, their creative accomplishments are unsurpassed in their simplicity and uniqueness, similar to those worldwide that have served as the inspiration for many of the time-honored great masterworks in art and music.

A long-time devotee of musical folklore, having explored and written about the art-music adaptations of folk music by composers such as Béla Bartók and Leoš Janáček, I became acquainted with the Ramapo tunes through my brother and sister-in-law Bill and Kay Yeomans, both of whom have contributed immeasurably to their community in their untiring efforts to enhance public awareness of the historical and cultural treasures of the Saddle River Valley and outlying areas. They themselves developed an interest in the tunes when they happened to come upon a recording made in the late 1940s by Mr. Everett ("Ev") Pitt singing twenty-three regional folk songs and ballads handed down from his ancestors, reminding us of a time when spontaneous individual and communal singing was a way of life.

The recording, taken from a combination of tape and wire devices and sung without accompaniment, were researched, produced and recorded by Miss Anne Lutz, an amateur folklorist formerly on the English faculty at Ramsey, NJ High School. The document is now at the Library of Congress entitled "Up Agin' the

Mountain; traditional ballads and songs from the Eastern Ramapos." Little Ferry, NJ: Merimac Recordings, 1987.

Bill and Kay sent me a copy of the cassette in 2010 as a Christmas present, which was in reality a homework assignment, but a gift that has kept on giving many times over! They encouraged me to notate the melodies and to write down the texts, something never before attempted to our knowledge. But when I discovered the beauty of the melodies and the poignancy of the texts, I was prompted to come up with ideas for arrangements to some of them for piano with combinations of voice types and instrumental combinations. So now I am embarking on my first serious attempt at arranging and scoring, and finding much joy in the process!

Ev Pitt died in 1954 at the age of sixty-eight and I knew him when I was a kid. During the summers that he spent as a night watchman at my grandfather's and later my father's business at Anona Park in Upper Saddle River, NJ, I remember him as a pear-shaped man who would wear overalls over a checkered shirt, who would come to the Park late in the evening, sleep in the tool closet next to the office, and leave early in the morning. I had no idea that he knew and could sing this treasury of songs that he may have learned from his mother (whose maiden name, incidentally, was Yeomans, possibly a distant relative?). And I could not have predicted that this man, whom I once thought I had little in common with, would eventually change the course of my musical career and arouse my creativity in ways I never would have imagined!

The Ramapo songs and ballads, as most folk music sung worldwide, come from farmers, masons, mechanics, woodsmen, factory workers, housewives, school children, and others. For the most part, little is known from where the songs

Yeomans, cont. from pg. 5

originate or for how long they've been around. Like country western songs, they address a wide gamut of human emotions, and express joys and sorrows unrestrainedly. Some are hilariously funny, while others are painfully tragic. Some tell a story, while others reflect a given situation and personal reactions associated with it. Some are narratives, some in the first person singular, and others are set in dialogue fashion.

Dr. Angus K. Gillespie of Rutgers University, who wrote liner notes for the cassette, reflects on the environment from which this music flourished:

Today, most of us associate northern New Jersey with a dense network of superhighways, dotted with office parks and shopping malls, dominated by a sprawl of bedroom communities. Through the medium of Anne Lutz's collection we are taken back to the days of an earlier, more rural setting. [Although] the early history of the Anglo-American ballad collections [are normally associated] with the South . . . here we have a remarkable and comparable collection of folk song material from New Jersey and New York.

Having lived elsewhere for most of my adult life, I still consider Upper Saddle River, NJ my real home, and am grateful that I can not only return to my roots to visit Bill and Kay, but that I now have the opportunity to explore, arrange, and to have the opportunity to share and to preserve a rich musical heritage possibly doomed to extinction.

THEORY TESTING PROGRAM - ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

By June Leondar

Thirty-Nine teachers trained 336 students in the Texas Music Teachers Association's *Student*

Affiliate Music Theory Program this year. One Hundred Twenty one of these students earned Gold Medals for a score of 98 - 101 on the test. Eighty three earned Silver medals for a score of 94 - 97. Forty earned Bronze medals for a score of 90 - 93. Ninety -two students made a score of 70 - 89.

Awards are given to students who earn a medal on each of the three levels of the four Divisions of the tests. Thirty-Five students will receive these Certificates of Achievement.

A special Award of a Plaque and \$200.00 will be presented at the State Music Teachers Convention by the State Theory Chairman to student **Sydney Mulqueen** who has earned a gold medal on all tests from Level 4 to Level 12. Her teacher is Jennifer DeSantis.

The Theory Program is fully outlined in the Student Affiliate Handbook published by the Texas Music Teachers Association. This can be reviewed on line at tmta.org. A teacher's handbook is available for purchase.

*FWMTA extends its thanks and appreciation to Student-Affiliate Chairs June Leondar and Maureda Travis.

From the Desk of...

Ilka Araujo - Outgoing President

Having watched a documentary on Seymour Bernstein a few hours ago, I sat down to write this article. The experience made me change my thoughts completely on what I wished to write. At the end of the movie Seymour's last words were: "I never knew that with my own two hands I could touch the stars." In a little allusion to one of his best writings, he refers to the power of music and its importance to all beings independent of the culture they come from and of the music they listen to. Music is

Araujo, cont. from pg. 6

universal and shared by all. It communicates; it elevates the spirit; it expresses emotions; it helps to celebrate, to cry, and to meditate; it entertains; it educates; it develops the brain, the body, and disciplines the soul.

At the end of my term as President of the FWMTA I feel privileged to have been in a position that allowed me to see everything from a different perspective. It permitted me to see things from the top and as a whole. I learned a great deal about every one of our members, and how we connect with our students and colleagues in a variety of ways and impact each other's lives. No matter how many years of experience or titles acquired, each member of this organization, in his or her own capacity, has an important role to play and an unique way of touching the souls of their students. Each member is a genuine leader, and has in one way or another established a legacy within their studios and the formation of their students.

There is much I have learned about the many talents of my own board and committee members. It has been most rewarding to see how much commitment they have invested in their roles and how much they care. I learned that if something ended differently from what I had planned or envisioned, it could still work perfectly well.

The position enabled me to learn of the many different teaching strategies and approaches our teachers have, making me even more aware of the similar results that can be obtained through many different ways.

According to the Solo Contest Committee, last Saturday's recitals were among the best ever held. Each day I receive positive comment on how wonderful and important the Meet the Composer Meeting was. The Theory Report states that 336 students took the theory test this year and 246 of them received a grade of 90 or above. It was rewarding to see how seriously

teachers take their responsibilities and their desire to see their students improve – and they have!

I am proud and much honored to have served you as president of FWMTA. I am very aware that mistakes were made and things were not perfect. I thank you for your patience and for giving me the opportunity to continue this endless learning process and through it to constantly search for improvement.

Gloria Lin – Outgoing VP for Programs

As FWMTA VP for Programs for the past two years, I experienced working with a wonderful team, and received support from both the executive board as well as members in general. I learned that our association's dedication to a high standard of teaching is due to its being open-minded on new ideas.

Through the past two years, we discovered new ways of teaching students with special needs, shared thoughts on teaching intra and inter-culturally, and learned the truth behind myths on piano techniques. We witnessed insightful teaching in the master classes directed by John Owings, Sharon Boaz, and David Korevaar. Last but not least, I hope all the students, teachers and parents enjoyed an unique opportunity to meet and interact with contemporary composer, Timothy Brown.

It was truly a pleasure and a privilege to have served as FWMTA VP for Programs.



Spring Solo Contest 2015

The four recitals held at SWBTS on Saturday, May 18, were among the finest FWMTA has witnessed over the years. Our association has a right to be proud of the students we teachers are producing.

This annual event drew in 275 entries, out of which 98 were chosen to play in the honors recitals. The selections of music performed so well by our students, represented a variety of styles ranging from the 17th century to the present.

Fifty-two studios – mainly from Fort Worth - participated in the contest. The number of entries from studios other than the city of Fort Worth made us proud of the recognition this event has gained over the years.

It is not too early to start planning repertoire to be covered by students in the 2016 Spring Contest.

Our adjudicators were: Jennifer Clarkson, Arlington; Susan Geffen, Plano; Dr. Jane Andrews, Dr. Mary Ann Fritz and Dr. Rich Shuster, all of Fort Worth; Dr. Grace Long, Richardson/Plano and Gena Cannon, Dallas.

FWMTA wishes to thank Piano Solo Contest co-chairs, Maureda Travis and Echo Wilson and committee members Anne Smith, Patricia Tsai, Bonnie Dove, Sara Doan and Ilka Araujo, for their untiring efforts in making this event a rewarding and inspiring experience for participants, parents and teachers.

The Editor

TMTA Names Commissioned Composer

It is with much pleasure that we announce that Caleb Wenzel, FWMTA composer of the year nominee, has been named 2016 *TMTA Commissioned Composer*.

He will be introduced at the **TMTA Convention General Assembly at 5:00 p .m. on Sunday, June 14, 2015 at the Hyatt Regency in Houston, Texas.**

Mr. Wenzel has been commissioned to write a piece according to TMTA specifications to be premiered at the 2016 TMTA Convention. On that occasion he will be presented a check for \$1,500.00 for the commissioned work (jointly sponsored by TMTA and MTNA).

Caleb is a former student of Bonnie Dove. He holds a BA cum laude with distinction in music composition and piano performance from Saint John's University (Collegeville, MN); a Master of Music in Sacred Music from The Catholic University of America, (Washington, DC) and is currently a Doctor of Musical Arts student in choral conducting at the University of Notre Dame (South Bend, IN).

FWMTA President: Ilka Araujo

VP for Programs: Gloria Lin

Editor: Rosemary Solomons

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