



Newsletter

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Fort Worth Music Teachers Association

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EDITORIAL MUSINGS

Have you found yourself reflecting from time to time on your dedication to music? We are only too well aware of the numerous perfunctory day-to-day matters that stand in the way of maintaining our skills as pianists, or augmenting our knowledge of keyboard literature. Musicians who devote themselves totally to pursuing a specific musical path are to be greatly admired, but as we know, this is often achieved with having to make sacrifices along this journey of personal accomplishment. As we approach the season of Summer and its promise of a brief respite from the usual routine, let's approach our own dedication to music and its study, with a determined push to new heights.

The editor wishes to thank Dr. David Yeomans for a informative and musically enriching article on the lesser known piano music of Bedrich Smetana.

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Rosemary Solomons
Editor

From the Desk of...

Ilka Araujo, President FWMTA -

The MTNA Annual meeting last March was such a positive experience that on my return from Chicago, I tried to think what it was that made the whole event so memorable. I definitely felt recharged and inspired; I returned home with many plans and ideas.

The city itself, the international atmosphere and cuisine, and the cold, but nice weather were definitely a plus, but since most of the time spent at the conference was indoors, I concluded that it was indeed the program and the people that made the difference. I had the chance to see and visit with some of our own members: Jennifer DeSantis, Lori Christ, Dr. Tamás Ungár, Sarah Alexander, Dr. Ann Gipson, and Dr. Jill Sprenger. Some of us gathered at the Texas Dinner and had a great time. It was also a wonderful opportunity to reunite with old friends and colleagues, and meet new ones. The competitions were fantastic: a high caliber of young musicians made me very proud of our own students who made it to the finals, and those who have earned prizes in past conventions. The Pedagogy Saturday was very informative and presented several attractive topics. The performances were among the finest and the remaining presentations were very interesting and generated much inspiration.

A high point was reached with "A Conversation with Janis Byron" and "Keys to Longevity As a Musician" also featuring pianist Byron. Listening to the wisdom, knowledge, experience, talent and modesty of such an incredible talent gave me new vision and direction. One revealing moment for me was getting to know and spending time with members of PAMA (Performing Arts Medicine Association). It was good to know of their existence and hear their presentations from a medicinal perspective. The group is formed by doctors, physical therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists, all with an instrumental performance background. They have branches everywhere. I thought I should share this information with you should you have the need for it.

These are some of the positive experiences I had at the MTNA Annual conference.. I hope you consider attending this event sometime in the future - it will be worth every penny spent.

THE PIANO POLKAS OF BEDRICH SMETANA: A GATEWAY TO THE WEALTH AND ABUNDANCE OF CZECH PIANO MUSIC

by David Yeomans

Among the endless array of piano music are masterworks that remain best-kept secrets. My interest in Czech piano music, probably the richest hidden treasure of the piano repertory, has been an attempt on my part to bridge the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

How did I first come upon this music? Back in 1989, while driving home on my daily commute from my teaching position at TWU, Denton, I tuned in to radio station KTCU and Rosemary Solomons' excellent radio program "Classical Excursions." This particular program gave a sampling of Bedrich Smetana's music, and it was then that I heard some of his piano polkas for the first time ever, soon to learn that these samplings were a part of his repertory of over 200 piano pieces! It was then that I started exploring more of Smetana's piano music, which then led to a discovery of other Czech composers for piano such as Benda, Dussek, Tomasek, Fibich, Martinu, Suk, Eben, and of course Dvorak (whose famous Humoresque in G-flat and the Slavonic Dances for four hands had been the extent of my knowledge of Czech piano music prior to my first encounter with the Smetana polkas). This further led to a three-month period of research in Prague (1998), followed by the publication of my anthology Piano Music of the Czech Romantics (Indiana University Press, 2006), showcasing piano music of eighteen composers from three centuries! Many of the examples in the anthology are in the style of the polka.

The origins of the polka go back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the popularity of the dance spread globally, similar to the jazz frenzy in the twentieth century. Although the polka is said to have originated in the Czech lands, its name literally means "Polish Girl," and the dance itself is associated with either the Polish *krakowiak* or the Czech term for heel-to-toe half steps, *půlka*. And Smetana actually grew up in a largely Germanic culture, his father a brewmaster for the German aristocracy, for whom the polka was a favored dance for festive occasions. And during the 1940's and 50's in the U.S., many examples of popular music reflected the polka

style: "Hoop-dee-doo," "Beer Barrel Polka," "Pennsylvania Polka," "Too Fat Polka," all with a bouncy duple meter with simple "um-pah, um-pah" rhythms, uncomplicated dance patterns, and jazzy accompaniments. Some of us can associate the polka with Oktoberfest, Westfest, beer, pretzels, accordions, dirndls, and lederhosen.

That so many national influences infiltrated the polka style, it has been incumbent upon the Czechs to bring it "back home" and to claim it as their own. There are very few Czech composers among Smetana's contemporaries and twentieth-century followers who did not draw upon the polka style for their compositions.

With his more than thirty polkas for piano, Smetana made his greatest contributions to the piano repertory. His transformations of the polka genre to a high form of art music show a consistent chain of development throughout his compositional career, and he himself drew parallels between his stylization of the polka to that of Chopin and the mazurka. He was able to transform this simple dance form from the ballroom to the parlor musicale to the concert hall, using a variety of compositional techniques, tempi and moods.

Despite sporadic musical training, the young Smetana was able to draw on his own resources, composing a number of characteristic pieces including dedicatory polkas. He taught and performed music as court composer in Prague, wrote a number of technical exercises, and at age twenty-four opened a music school in Prague's Old Town Square, representing a trend among the Czechs to establish a musical identity through education. At this time he composed polkas for practical purposes, as appropriate background music for dancing, an occupational necessity for his job as ballroom pianist:

Polka in E-flat, "Souvenir of Plzen" (1846)



As his compositional skill developed over more than three decades, Smetana exploited the full potential of the polka style through every conceivable compositional technique, often with technical challenges of Lisztian proportions: Polka No. 3 of Czech Dances, Vol. I (1879) from measures 25 to 34



Although the name Smetana brings to mind works such as the symphonic poem The Moldau, his opera The Bartered Bride, and his string quartet From My life, Smetana was first and foremost a pianist, and his youthful ambition as stated in his diary was to become a concert pianist, “a Liszt in technique.” Whether or not he may have achieved this goal, he was most successful in introducing to the world a true national Czech musical identity through his adaptations of its folk songs and dances, most of them through the medium of the piano.

Polka Op. 8, No. 2 in G minor, of Three Poetic Polkas of 1855, illustrates the extent to which a dance form can be stylized. Its multi-sectional structure gives it the appearance of a miniature ballade or tone poem, and its greatest challenge lies in interpretation and sensitivity to its changing moods, colors and textures.

The opening melody is quietly stated in octaves, with only the eighth-two sixteenth giving vague reference to the polka. Here the gaiety and festivity of the dance as we know it, with its almost mechanical accompaniment patterns and consistent tempi, are abandoned in favor of an improvisatory introduction of a contemplative nature.



This melody is then transformed to the relative major, with full chords and a boldly heroic mood, soon to dissolve into an imitative treatment of the opening melody.



Then a new melody appears with a more typical polka accompaniment, although the melancholy atmosphere is maintained.



A new section in the enharmonic major is presented, more intimate, more optimistic, but with a touch of nostalgia and dreamy reverie. A recapitulation of the first three sections follows, concluding with a short opening statement. The form ABC[a]DABC[a] is similar to many fantasy-like pieces of the nineteenth century.

Through the panorama of moods and pianistic colors found in examples such as this, Smetana joins the ranks of the great pianist-composers of the nineteenth century. He offers us many intermediate to advanced-level polkas of high pedagogical and performance value, as well as an abundance of characteristic pieces.

The following is a partial list of repertoire and editions:

Polkas (intermediate to early advanced level)

Polka, Souvenir of Pilsen (1843)

Louisa's Polka (1840) Dahlia's Polka (1841)

Polka, From the Student Life (1842)

Polka in E-flat major, "Souvenir of Plzen" (1846)

Polkas de salon, Op. 7 (1854-55)

Polkas poetiques, Op. 8 (1854-55)

Souvenirs of Bohemia in the Form of Polkas, Op. 12, 13 (1859-60)

Czech Dances Vol. I, Polkas Nos. 1, 2 (1879)

Editions

The Bärenreiter Praha edition offers a volume of Smetana's complete polkas, and one of the complete Czech Dances of 1879, edited by Jan Novotny. Masters Music Publications has issued a less expensive but equally reliable set of four volumes, edited by Vaclav Stepan, entitled Ten Czech Dances, Easier Pieces, A Polka Album, and Six Bohemian Dances. Other editions of Smetana's piano music are from Schott and Peters.

Recordings

Of my favorite living pianists, Andras Schiff ranks among the top; he has recorded the Smetana polkas Opp. 7, 8, 12, 13, and others on the Elektra label, and it would be difficult to find more penetrating interpretations. Older recordings are by specialists in Czech piano music, whose performances are no less enticing: Rudolf Firkusny (Ten Czech Dances, Vox 2/CDX 5058); Antonin Kubalek (Memories of Bohemia, Dorian/DOR 90122); and Radoslav Kvapil (Anthology of Czech Piano Music, Vol. 6, Alliance Publications, Inc. AP-014). Other recording artists are emerging with the growing popularity of Smetana's piano music.

References

I have used material from my own publications, both of which contain extensive bibliographies:

"Smetana's Piano Music Reflects Bohemian Culture."

Clavier, March 1996, 16-22.

Piano Music of the Czech Romantics. A Performers Guide. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, 62-77.

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.

Dr. Yeomans' interest in Czech piano music began in the early 1990s, and continues to develop as he explores this vast repertoire that spans a period of two and a half centuries. He has performed lecture recitals and written dramatic monologues on the piano music of Bedrich Smetana (Fort Worth Piano Teachers' Forum, Houston MTA) Zdenek Fibich (Denton, Fort Worth, London, UK), Petr Eben (Fort Worth, Czech Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa), and historical surveys of Czech piano literature.

A government-sponsored research grant for study in the Czech Republic led to Dr. Yeomans' article on Smetana's piano music in *Clavier*, and the publication by Indiana University Press in 2006 of his anthology *Piano Music of the Czech Romantics*.

Dr. Yeomans' long-time piano/voice collaboration with his wife, mezzo soprano Sheila Allen-Yeomans has culminated in a wealth of Czech vocal literature, as well as their presentation of Fibich's melodrama *Vodnik* for the Texoma NATS convention in 2011.

COMPOSITION CONTEST

By Bonnie Dove

Composition within the FWMT Association is really taking a turn for the best, judging from the most recent results at the state contest level. We have four compositions written by four different students that will be listed in the convention handbook, and two that are eligible to be performed on the composition recital there.

Two of our Ft. Worth Student Affiliates have won 2nd place in the state contest. They are: 5th grader Kyra Ullman, student of Bonnie Dove, winning for her composition for solo piano, *Summer Dreams*, and Isaac Foreman, winning for his composition, *Fifteen Variations on an Original Theme* for string quintet, or string orchestra and piano, in Ensemble 9- 12. He is the student of Tamas Ungar.

Both of these compositions are eligible to be performed on the state winner's recital at the convention, which will be held on Sunday, June 15th, from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

Additionally, two other Ft. Worth Student Affiliates won Honorable Mention in the same competition. They are Damoyee Neroes, student of Jennea Potter, whose composition for solo piano, 6th & 7th grade, is titled *Fallen Warrior*, and Roscoe Bussell whose composition for French Horn and Piano, in Ensemble 5th-8th grade, is titled *Sonata for Horn and Piano*. He is the student of Bonnie Dove.

All four of these students will have their names called after the recital to receive their state certificates, and the two 2nd place winners will also receive checks from the TMTA treasurer as prize money for their outstanding compositions.

If you are planning on attending the convention this year, please make plans to attend this very interesting and entertaining recital and support these students who have brought this high honor to our local FWMT Association. Also, if you teach composition in your studio, or are interested in teaching composition in your studio, this is a wonderful recital to attend for your own benefit. Not only will you hear beautiful music written by students from all over the state, you will also hear what level of compositions win at state, and what it takes to go on to the national contest.

Eddie Brown and Bonnie Dove, co-chairpersons, FWMTA Composition Contest

LEARNING WITH THE MASTERS

By Edward Brown

2014 saw the start of a new music education initiative by the Chamber Music Society of Fort Worth - *Learning with the Masters*, featuring artists from the society's regular concert series in an intimate personal setting. Students have the opportunity to hear the life story of famous musicians and better understand the journey from music student to music virtuoso through artist performances, interviews, and masterclasses. Recent guest artists have included Grammy Award-winning violinist, Andres Cardenes, and Vermeer String Quartet violist, Richard Young. The program occurs several times per year. FWMTA members Echo Wilson, Jennifer DeSantis and Edward Brown are actively involved in making this program a reality. For more information go to: chambermusicfw.org

FWMTA Teachers Complete Year of Music Theory Testing

By June Leondar

Thirty seven teacher members of the Fort Worth Music Teachers Association presented 353 students for testing in the Fall and Spring periods of *music theory testing*. The program is prepared by a committee from the Student Affiliate organization in the Texas Music Teachers Association. The 12 year program of music theory study features prose questions of music theory knowledge plus ear training questions.

Participation certificates are presented for all students who take and pass the test. Special award medals are earned by those students making a score of 90 and above. Congratulations to the 140 students earning Gold medals; the 54 earning Silver medals and the 57 earning Bronze medals, as well as the 102 who made a score 70 - 89.

All Fort Worth Association Teachers can take advantage of this important motivating program by reference to the theory manual and student glossary published by Texas Music Teachers Association. These can be purchased by going on line to TMTA. Available on this web site are sample tests for each of the 12 levels of theory concepts plus audio files of the Ear Training. These can be down

loaded for a teacher to use in the studio or the student can access these from their computers for their personal use. The music theory test is made available for students through the cooperative participation of all teachers who present students for testing. Additional important support for the program is the availability of rooms at Broadway Baptist Church. Much appreciation is given to Maureda Travis for these arrangements. Teachers seeking more information about this program are encouraged to contact these Theory Testing committee members: June Leondar (817-448-8559) or Maureda Travis (817-294-1447).

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Piano Texas 2014

<http://www.pianotexas.org/>

June 5-29 (TCU)

TMTA 2014 (Houston) -

http://www.tmta.org/assets/pdf/convention_brochure.pdf

June 12-15 (Hyatt Regency Houston)

Acquaint yourself with the Board -members of FWMTA



Gloria Lin is the Vice President of Programs for Fort Worth Music Teacher Association. As a concert pianist and chamber musician, she has performed around the world and collaborated with numerous musicians. Educated at The Juilliard School, the Interlochen Arts Academy, the University of Michigan -Ann Arbor and the Manhattan School of Music. She earned her Doctor of Musical Art at Indiana University-Bloomington. Dr. Lin serves on the piano faculty at TCU in Fort Worth and maintains an active private studio.



Jennifer DeSantis earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Piano Performance from Tarleton State University, where she was named Center Stage Performance Scholar through her senior year. She earned the Master of Music Degree in Piano Pedagogy from Texas Christian University where, upon graduation, she joined the faculty of the TCU Music Preparatory Division. From 2002-2012, she served as Coordinator of TCU Prep's Early Childhood Music Program. In 2012 she was appointed as the Assistant Director of the TCU Music Preparatory Division. DeSantis is a certified Music Together teacher, and has presented sessions for the organization's national Director's Weekend in Princeton, New Jersey. She is also a registered Musikgarten instructor.

Along with teaching Early Childhood Music classes, she is an instructor in private piano for the Prep Division and is also an adjunct faculty member in the TCU College of Fine Arts. As an active private piano instructor, she is frequently invited to adjudicate in area piano festivals and competitions. Professional memberships include Music Teacher's National Association, Texas Music Teacher's Association, and Fort Worth Music Teacher's Association, for whom she currently serves on the Board of Directors and as membership chair. DeSantis also serves on the advisory board for the Learning with the Masters series sponsored by the Chamber Music Society of Fort Worth.

Jennifer enjoys teaching children and aspires to provide her students with a first rate music education that also celebrates and builds community



Rita Hauck has been a piano teacher since 1959 and a Suzuki Piano Teacher since 1974. She has a Bachelor of Music Degree with a major in performance, a Bachelor of Music Education Degree in both Vocal and Instrumental Music K-12, a master of Music Degree in performance and two years of Doctoral work in keyboard studies, (piano, organ, harpsichord, and accompanying). Rita has taught at Suzuki Piano workshops and institutes in 43 states, including Alaska and Hawaii, as well as in Canada, Bermuda, New Zealand, and Australia. She has served on state and local committees for many music organizations during her career and currently has an active piano studio in her home in Ft Worth. Rita loves teaching music to children and is grateful to have a part in the positive impact upon them and their families.

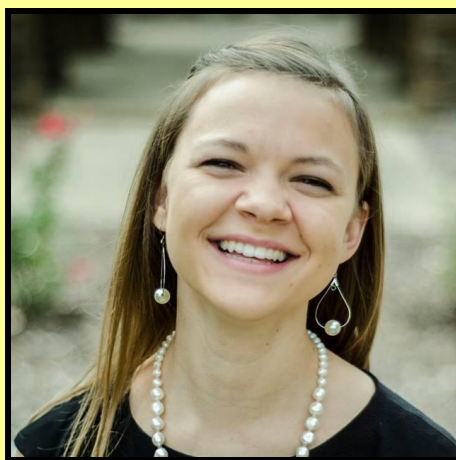


In 2001, **Jennea Potter** left her career as a Knowledge Management consultant at PwC to pursue her passion, teaching piano to children. She currently owns and teaches at Little MusicMaker – MusicMaker Conservatory of

Southlake along with two associate teachers. She has presented lectures for organizations such as the Texas Licensed Child Care Association and the Kauffman Foundation on the importance of early childhood music education.



MaryAnn Fritz (D.M.A. and M.M. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; M.A. University of Nebraska-Lincoln; B.A. Drury University) is Adjunct Professor of Piano at Dallas Baptist University, where she teaches private piano, group piano, and piano pedagogy. In addition, she serves as editor of *The Journal of Creative Motion*, as well as *Creative Motion*, 2nd ed. (2010). Dr. Fritz maintains a thriving private piano studio in Fort Worth and is active as a clinician, adjudicator, and conference leader in the areas of piano, creativity and the arts, and Creative Motion.



Robyn Meahl is a pianist and teacher in Fort Worth, Texas. Robyn hopes to inspire her students to love all forms of art and music, and that each student incorporates art into his or her lifelong pursuits. She also works to advance the field of music pedagogy by spreading awareness about pertinent scientific findings.

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FWMTA Members: Newsworthy items of musical interest that you wish to share with your fellow members can be published in the Newsletter. Send news items anytime **from now until mid-August 2014** to r.solomons@tcu.edu if you wish them to be included in the next E-Newsletter