



Newsletter

1 of 11 pages

Fort Worth Music Teachers Association

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April 2021



Remembering June Marie Leondar 1926-2021

President's Column



Dear FWMTA Colleagues,

With relief (and a great amount of exhaustion by now!) we are nearing the end of the spring semester and, it appears, a return to “normal” post-Covid life.

The enormity of all that has changed over the past 13 months – and all that we have lost – will take time to process. Many of us lost work, especially performers whose engagements were canceled. Many lost family, friends, or colleagues; the passing of June Leondar, who gave a lifetime of service to FWMTA and TMTA, leaves a substantial void for our Association. Many lost enriching opportunities and time spent together: children learning virtually, away from their friends in school; or parents and grandparents unable to visit. These losses will be felt for years to come.

But what about the changes wrought by the pandemic? Which of these will vanish, not to be missed, and which may

prove useful even once the virus has been subdued? I personally will not miss hearing students’ out-of-tune pianos over a choppy Zoom connection, or performing myself in a thick KN95 mask. But when students have an ill sibling or their parents are particularly crunched for time on one or two occasions a semester, the option to go virtual is a nice fallback, without having to bill for a missed lesson or trying to reschedule. The lack of in-person performances has hurt both students and professionals, but the self-awareness my students have gained through recording themselves for contests is a true silver lining.

Some virtual experiences at the professional level, too, may prove to be valuable innovations for other reasons. Nothing can replace, for example, the atmosphere of a state or national convention, and the opportunities to catch up with colleagues and friends who converge on the event. On the other hand, virtual conferences have given exposure to presenters who may not have the financial means to travel, and whose work can be viewed without time constraints or competition with other presenters. Perhaps this element can be preserved even after the return to large in-person gatherings.

In addition to all of our typical FWMTA spring events, March typically features

the MTNA National Conference. The conference would have been held this year in Atlanta but was converted to a virtual event. Our Association and Fort Worth in general were well-represented! Presenters included members Sarah Alexander, Dr. Michael Bukhman, and Spring Seals. Members of the TCU Collegiate Chapter (Bradley Hetherington, Jessie Welsh, and Huan Yang) gave a lecture on the four-hand works of Satie, and Jessie Welsh co-presented a music business lecture. The conference was easily navigable either via the MTNA website or the mobile app MTNA designed. The entire conference has been archived for viewing through June 1. If you are curious but didn’t register for the conference, members can still register through May 28.

Please mark your calendars for our upcoming events, in particular this year’s Meet the Composer on May 1, with special guest Mona Rejino. More information about this and other events can be found in this edition of the Newsletter and will be sent out to members in the coming days and weeks.

Wishing good health and beautiful music to you, your families, and your students!

Evan Mitchell, President

Editor's Column



Graduation ceremonies throughout America suffered a blow in 2020, thanks to the pandemic. This much-anticipated event which recognizes a major milestone in the lives of high school and university graduates played no part in the spring graduation seasons of 2020 and 2021.

Graduation ceremonies over the years have become a hallowed tradition in America and elsewhere in the world. Regalia for the occasion includes an academic cap with its stiff, flat, square top and tassel. Fashioned after the birettas worn by clergy who sported them as a sign of intelligence and superiority, caps date back to the 14th and 15th centuries. Birettas eventually came to be worn exclusively by artists, humanists, students, and other highly educated individuals. Caps generally red in color signified the power behind knowledge.

Gowns or robes date as far back as the 12th century. The purpose of wearing a robe grew more out of necessity than the need for a formal dress marking the rite of passage. Medieval scholars, as a rule, were members of the clergy and wore long brown or black robes with hoods to keep both bodies and shaved heads warm in the early unheated universities in Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries. Caps and robes eventually came to signify their status as highly educated individuals who stood apart from the townsfolk.

Caps, gowns of various colors, hoods, stoles, and lengthy speeches form an integral part of today's graduation ceremonies, but the event gets its luster and regality from a solitary piece of music. Here are the opening measures of this piece sans its introduction:



This orchestral work by Edward Elgar, titled *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 in D Major, Opus 39*, has for 113 years served as a processional at graduation ceremonies throughout America.

March No. 1, the first of five *Pomp and Circumstance Military Marches* composed by Elgar, saw fruition in 1901. Its Trio section, known as *Land of Hope and Glory* is traditionally used as a processional at graduations. This warm and stately-sounding

section stirs the emotions and lends a regal feel as graduates walk into the ceremony. Its tempo is perfect.

Elgar drew the title from a line from Act III, Scene 3, of Shakespeare's *Othello*: "Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!" Elgar had planned to write a set of six marches but completed only five. The most widely known and loved of the marches is the No. 1 composed in 1901.

Elgar's instrumentation, pulsating rhythmic beat and stately, yet simple themes, create a ceremonial mood. The march sounds pompous, yet dignified. The comparatively calmer, dignified lyric theme of the Trio section, is loved by everyone who hears it and has become a staple of this hallowed event.

The March No. 1 was so well received in 1901 in England, it led to Elgar being requested to incorporate it into the *Coronation Ode* he was composing for the coronation of Edward VII in 1902 (great grandfather of Elizabeth II). The English poet A.C. Benson stepped in and set the Trio section of the *Ode* to a patriotic text; from it emerged the hymn, *Land of Hope and Glory*-vivid and aglow.

Four years later (1906), Elgar's close friend, Yale University professor, Samuel Sanford, arranged to have Yale confer a doctoral degree on Britain's most prominent composer - Edward Elgar. To mark the occasion, sections of Elgar's Oratorios were performed, and the graduation ceremony concluded with a rousing performance of *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 in D Major* as Elgar walked off the stage.

Two years later (1908), Princeton and the University of Chicago used the March No. 1 at their graduation ceremonies. Columbia University followed suit in 1913, as did Vassar and Rutgers in 1916 and 1918, respectively. By the 1920s the music of the Trio section of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March* had earned a permanent place in graduation ceremonies throughout America. It is a pity the Trio section alone is often repeated as the march in its entirety deserves wider dissemination. It is interesting to note that Edward Elgar himself unwittingly contributed to his *Pomp and Circumstance March* being inextricably linked to the graduation ceremonies in America.

This hallowed tradition forced to take a hiatus will make a triumphant return. We wish our graduates at all levels every success.

Rosemary Solomons, Editor

FWMTA thanks our most recent sponsor-Collora Piano, Dallas, Texas

The Newsletter offers quarter-page announcements gratis to all members who wish to promote their private studios. The very first of our announcements is from the Pianists in Progress Music Studio. See page 7. The Editor

An Interview With Mona Rejino

The following interview featuring contemporary composer, arranger, and educator, Mona Rejino, was conducted by Anne Smith, FWMTA Co-Vice President for Programs. It provides us with an insightful look into the life and work of Ms. Rejino who will be with us in person on May 1, 2021.

FWMTA is honored to welcome local composer and arranger, Mona Rejino, as our featured presenter for “Meet the Composer” on May 1. Ms. Rejino is a life-long lover of music and has imparted that passion to hundreds of students throughout her career both in her independent studio in Carrollton since 1983 and at the Hockaday School in Dallas where she has taught since 2000. Her engaging compositions and appealing arrangements are published in the Hal Leonard Student Piano Library and catalog as is her course: Essential Elements Piano Theory. Ms. Rejino is an accomplished pianist, having earned her Master of Music in Piano Performance at the University of North Texas; a sought-after adjudicator for festivals and competitions, and a popular speaker at workshops, conferences and conventions in the US and Canada, at which she is often joined by her husband, Richard Rejino.

Ms. Rejino graciously agreed to answer a few questions posed by our teachers and students prior to the FWMTA presentation “Meet the Composer.” The following interview offers an up-close look into her life as a composer. She is delighted to share these insights with us and is eagerly anticipating interacting with our association in person, and virtually, on May 1. This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce students to a “real live” composer and to hear from a distinguished pedagogue.

Q: *Could you tell us about your music background? Do you come from a family of musicians?*

A: I have been a lifelong pianist. Around age four I began to try to pick out tunes by ear on my grandmother’s piano. They were simple nursery rhyme tunes, folk

songs, and Sunday school songs that I was familiar with. Luckily, my parents noticed my musical interest and bought an old upright from a farmer’s family who lived in our small hometown in west Texas. I can tell you even now that it was love at first sight for me and that clunker piano! Neither of my parents were musicians, but my granddad played piano, guitar, and “fiddle” by ear, as well as having a wonderful tenor singing voice. I spent many happy hours “jamming” with him on old standard songs and hymns. Our family and friends would often gather for what we called “sing-songs.” Anyone who could play a musical instrument of any kind or could carry a tune was invited to join us. In hindsight, I realize that this was great training for me as an accompanist, church musician, and even a jazz pianist – all musical pursuits I would encounter later on.

Q: *Did you enjoy playing by ear as a young student and was that encouraged by your teachers?*

A: My parents were able to find a good teacher who taught me how to read music. I have always felt that being a competent sight-reader and playing by ear has been a real blessing. The combination of the two has opened many doors, especially as a composer and arranger.

Q: *What is the first thing you do when you want to write a piece?*

A: Musical ideas may pop into my head at any time: while driving, showering, and even at bedtime. I always keep paper and pencil handy to jot down the basic melodic theme or harmonic structure that can be fleshed out later. Sometimes months go by without any inspirational ideas. That is when assignments from my publisher are welcome, and they give me a kickstart.

Q: *Are your pieces inspired by something specific? Please describe how you get your ideas.*

A: The ideas come from many different places, such as nature and travels. I will give you a couple of examples.

Over twenty years ago our family was hiking in Oregon on our summer vacation. It was a calm, quiet morning,

and the vistas were breathtaking. As we climbed higher and higher, a melody and Aaron Copland-style harmony flooded my brain. We stopped to rest, and I asked my husband if he happened to have paper and pencil in his backpack. Since he tends to carry everything but the kitchen sink on hikes, he did indeed! From that bit of sketchy notation, I was able to complete Mountain Splendor when we returned home.

In 2019 we took a fabulous two-week excursion through central and southern Spain. As we visited six different cities, I soaked up the culture, historical significance, sights and sounds of each. We witnessed many street musicians who shared their love of music with others, and it moved me to write a book titled Impresiones de Espana, featuring a piece dedicated to each city we toured. Even though travel has been restricted during COVID, students can experience the same fascination I had with Spain through this music.

Q: *Where and how do you write your pieces? Do you use a computer program?*

A: Believe it or not, once I have figured out 80-90% of a piece, I first sketch it out on a legal pad. After lots of tweaking, I transfer what was written on the pad onto staff paper, by hand.

Q: *What inspires you most when creating music for aspiring young pianists?*

A: Many years of teaching experience helps me know how to make particular thematic material accessible to piano students of all levels and ages. Being very familiar with the different levels from early elementary through late intermediate is a real plus when writing and arranging. You know how to tailor a piece into something playable for students on each level. Taking that basic initial idea and molding it into a final shape that works well for students is rewarding.

Q: *How did you get your first composition published? What led to your opportunity to write for Hal Leonard?*

A: I was incredibly fortunate in this regard. Richard and I used to present a session every July at the National Piano

Teachers Institute at SMU. One year, Barbara Kreader from Hal Leonard was a guest clinician. She knew Fred Kern well from their college days, and Richard and I had studied with Dr. Kern at UNT. Hal Leonard was looking for a couple to be involved in their new piano method, and all the stars aligned for us.

Other than college assignments, I had never composed anything until I was 35 years old. My colleagues and I were working on the Hal Leonard Student Piano Library method books and there were a few holes to fill with very early level compositions. I remember having a day when two sisters who studied with me canceled their lessons at the last minute. Having some unexpected free time, I decided to compose a few little pieces to send in. I was amazed that they were accepted, and that gave me the confidence to continue composing more. A couple of years after that I sent in a few arrangements of popular songs, and that began my career as an arranger, an equally rewarding musical task.

Q: How much time do you spend on composing and arranging in a week? Do you ever find it challenging to meet publisher deadlines?

A: It depends on what project I'm working on. It takes me about two months

to arrange eight pieces for a pop book, and each piece takes about five or six hours to complete. You also have to allow time for editing and proofing once they are turned in. Composing is a little different since you are starting from scratch. Some weeks I spend a good bit of time on this, and other weeks slip by without any time spent on composing. I am not a procrastinator, and my publisher is pretty flexible with deadlines, so that is never a problem for me.

Q: How long did it take you to compose all the pieces in "Color Wheel?"

A: I remember writing all of those pieces the year that our Fine Arts building was being renovated at the school where I teach, so they were all written within one school year. I often ask my husband, Richard, and a dear friend and colleague to listen to compositions before I send them into Hal Leonard, incorporating any suggestions they might have.

Q: Describe your favorite teacher and how he or she impacted you.

A: My teacher from age seven to eleven taught me all of the basics. Even back in the 1960s in a small town, she allowed me to bring pop music to my lessons. I have many Rodgers and Hammerstein scores from favorite musicals that have her

markings in them. The fact that she took the time to hear these and work on them with me was affirmation in my young eyes that this music was worthwhile. I still think that a good arrangement of a popular song can be a great teaching tool and a wonderful means of self-expression when that piece means a lot to the student. Another incredibly influential teacher was from my early college years. He opened up a world of possibilities of sounds from the piano that I had never imagined possible. I loved lessons with him and always left feeling inspired and energized as a musician.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say to teachers and students?

A: To Teachers: Remember, we teach our students musicianship skills, but they also learn life skills through the study of music.

To Students: The study of music provides skills and insights that will impact you for the rest of your life.

Thank you to all who submitted questions and to Mona Rejino for taking the time to give us insight into her life as a composer and arranger! Her publications can be found at www.HalLeonard.com



We invite you to join us as we welcome
Mona Rejino
local composer for Hal Leonard,
as she leads our masterclass and shares a presentation at
"Meet the Composer"
on Saturday, May 1, 2 P.M. at Texas Wesleyan University.
Looking forward to seeing you
and hearing our student performances
of Mona Rejino's music for piano.
Anne Smith and Gloria Lin, co-vice presidents for programs

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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Playing the Piano

Dr. James Aston, DO

Dr. Aston is a neuromusculoskeletal medicine specialist in Fort Worth, TX. He currently practices at the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

Dr. Aston was introduced to performing arts medicine through a serendipitous meeting and has grown to love caring for performers. His goal is to help performers preserve their health.

The Nerve! What happens when your wrist gets used and abused?

While you're playing the piano, have you ever noticed that your thumb or index finger starts to go numb? Or, do you ever need to briefly stop playing and shake your hands to get them to "wake up" again? Perhaps you've noticed that after playing a particularly long piece, your forearms or elbows hurt. This pain may have gone on for so long you don't even remember when it started. You try to think about any injury, and nothing comes to mind. There was no tripping or falling over something on the floor. No particularly grueling rehearsal that ended with finger or hand pain. Your hands have gradually become more troublesome for you over a period of months or years. The whole process seems so insidious that you've grown used to feeling this way. As a matter of fact, you don't remember the last time you didn't feel this way.

If this describes you, then you may be suffering from a very common neurological condition called carpal tunnel syndrome, and it is very treatable. But before we get into the treatment let's discuss what exactly is going on. Your hand is wired by three major nerves- the radial, median, and ulnar nerves. In this case, the likely culprit causing the mayhem is the median nerve. This nerve runs into the middle of your hand, then over to your thumb, index finger and half of your middle finger. Its pathway travels through a tunnel right in the middle of

your wrist called the carpal tunnel (it runs under the carpal bones). That channel is very narrow so you can imagine what swelling of the tendons surrounding the space does to anything running through it. The median nerve gets squished. Nerves don't like pressure, as a matter of fact, they hate it.

When nerves get smashed, they get angry and want to talk about it! How does this feel? Some folks describe a burning sensation that radiates away from the injury site. Others feel a prickly "pins and needles" feeling, especially in the hands. Sometimes, nerve injury shows up as weakness or loss of sensation. Finally, the results can be pain that radiates away from the injury site down the limb or up towards the body. Likewise, the pain from carpal tunnel syndrome can sometimes extend up the forearm, rather than just down to the hand.

Anyone who uses their hands regularly for repetitive work (i.e. pianists and organists) can develop carpal tunnel syndrome. Pianists and organists are particularly susceptible to this type of injury because they bend at the wrist so often while playing. Posture at the piano can exacerbate bending at the wrist if the arms are held too low or too high, thus increasing the risk for developing carpal tunnel syndrome. Overuse of the wrist then causes the tendons of the wrist to become swollen and inflamed, or the carpal bones themselves become displaced and pushed into the carpal tunnel. Either way, the carpal tunnel essentially collapses in on the median nerve and squashes it. And that's how you get carpal tunnel syndrome.

When you go to your physician to have your wrist evaluated, they will do a number of tests to figure out if the median nerve is hurt. Traditional office tests of the median nerve include Phalen's and Tinel's tests. Another group of tests that are often ordered include the electromyogram (EMG) and the nerve conduction study (NCS), and are done at a neurologist's office. These combine to

directly test the nerve and its associated muscles by sending an electrical impulse into the nerve. The results can tell the doctor about the health of the nerve. An ultrasound may also be used to look at the nerve itself. In addition to these specific tests, a general neurologic exam of the arm will be done including strength and reflexes. All of this will be examined to make sure nothing else is going on, especially something that could have its cause in the spinal cord.

Once your doctor has determined that you do have carpal tunnel syndrome, there are a number of ways to go about taking care of it. You may be prescribed a brace to wear at certain times throughout the day or be given anti-inflammatory medication. Osteopathic manipulative treatment, physical therapy, yoga, and steroid injections in the wrist may all be helpful. If all other treatments fail, there are even surgical options to think about. Ultimately, though, prevention is the best way to care for carpal tunnel syndrome. Using regular breaks during rehearsals, good posture with neutral wrist positions while at the keyboard, and daily stretches and exercises will help prevent the syndrome from even developing.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common injury of the median nerve that is very treatable and, more importantly, very preventable. Getting treatment at the earliest signs of injury can prevent long-term consequences from developing. Don't wait for it to go away, help it heal by getting care now rather than later!

Disclaimer: This article is for educational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice or used to diagnose or treat any conditions. It contains the opinions of the author, Dr. James Aston, DO, and does not reflect the opinions of the MTNA.

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PIP Studio is a place for anyone -- of all ages and levels -- who has a purposeful interest in improving at the piano. We believe in a meaningful connection with each student and a highly personalized approach to instruction. For pre-college students, we foster productive relationships with parents to create a supportive environment at home for success in both piano and other pursuits.

FWMTA Calendar for April – May 2021

May

1 “Meet the Composer”:
 Martin Hall at Texas Wesleyan University.
 2:00pm-4:00pm,
 Presentation and masterclass by Mona Rejino, composer

1, 15, 22 State and Local Piano Ensemble rehearsals
 Outreach performances TBA

JUNE

5 State and Local Piano Ensemble rehearsals
8 Honors Recital, 6:30pm at Steinway Hall Fort Worth

Please note: The TMTA State Convention has been cancelled, but certain events are open to students to participate in virtually. These include Awards, Ensemble, Performance Competition, and several other events. Visit the TMTA website for more information.

Recognizing FWMTA Treasurer and VPs for Programs



Linda Banfy has been on the TCU Music Preparatory Division faculty since 1987 where she teaches private piano lessons and is the Music Prep librarian. She has been a member of FWMTA, TMTA & AMTA since 1987 as well. Banfy served as co-chair of the annual FWMTA Fall & Jazz Festivals for over fifteen years. She has served as FWMTA treasurer since 2015. Linda Banfy will vacate this position when the current term --2019-2021-- concludes.

The Executive Board extends a sincere word of thanks to Linda Banfy for having generously given both time and knowledge to further the goals of FWMTA for over twenty years.



Anne Smith has been a member of FWMTA for many years. She maintains a thriving piano studio and finds working with students of all ages very gratifying. Smith has served on the Solo Competition committee since 2012. She took on the shared responsibility of organizing the Piano Solo Competition together with Sara Doane, in 2016. She has served as co-chair of this event since then. Anne Smith vacates her position as co-vice president for programs having served a two-year term (2019-2021) together with Gloria Lin.



Gloria Lin, a long-standing member of FWMTA, has served as VP for Programs in a solo capacity and more recently (2019 -2021), as co-vice president for programs together with Anne Smith. As an educator, Dr. Lin has imparted her knowledge to students at the university level as well as budding young pianists of varying ages, including her children. She is also in demand as an adjudicator at festivals and competitions.

The Executive Board thanks both Anne Smith and Gloria Lin for their untiring efforts as FWMTA officers over the years.

FWMTA 2021 Scholarship Award Winners

By Dr. MaryAnn Fritz

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 four students apply for and receive scholarships.

The Senior Scholarship of \$400 is awarded to **Valerie Bui** and **Kiera DiCesare**. Valerie Bui (student of Ilka Araujo) attends South Hills High School in Fort Worth. Valerie will major in nursing at the University of Texas at Arlington. Kiera DiCesare (student of Jennea Potter) is a student at Carroll Senior High School in Southlake. Kiera plans to attend the University of Texas at Austin, majoring in psychology as part of the Liberal Arts Honors Program.

The Memorial Scholarship of \$600 is awarded to graduating high school students majoring in music. Our recipients this year are **Andrew Altrock** and **Isabel Castañeda**. Andrew Altrock (student of Evan Mitchell) attends Fossil Ridge High School in Fort Worth. Andrew plans to major in piano performance and is considering options of schools to attend. Isabel Castañeda (student of Ilka Araujo) will graduate from Paschal High School and will major in music technology and business administration.

Congratulations to each of these students and their teachers!



Andrew Altrock



Isabel Castañeda



Kiera DiCesare



Valerie Bui

As a part of the FWMTA Senior Scholarship application, students are required to write a brief essay discussing their experience in music and its role in their lives. For excerpts from the essays of the 2021 scholarship recipients see page 11.

We Applaud the following High School Graduates



Andrew Altrock is a senior at Fossil Ridge High School in Keller. He studies piano under the guidance of Dr. Evan Mitchell and previously worked with Ms. Natsuko Ejiri. Andrew is the recipient of numerous honors such as first prizes at the UT Arlington Fall Piano Contest and the Fort Worth Music Teachers Association Solo Competition; he has been a finalist in the SMU Rising Stars Competition and the Texas Music Teachers Association Solo Competition; and a semifinalist in the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra Young Artists Competition. He has participated in masterclasses given by eminent artists including Pascal Rogé, Claire Huangci, William Wolfram, and Alex McDonald, at summer festivals including PianoTexas and the Eastern Music Festival. In addition to solo performances, he has had regular chamber and orchestral keyboard engagements. Aside from piano, Andrew is an active member of the Fort Worth Youth Orchestra as a

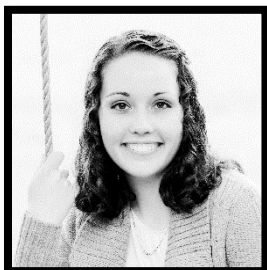
trombonist and an accomplished Academic Decathlete. He plans to study piano performance on a collegiate level beginning Fall 2021 and has been accepted to several top conservatories and university schools of music. Teacher: Dr. Evan Mitchell



My name is **Arian Shamaei**, and I am a senior at Lamar High. I will graduate as an IB candidate and will attend college at Southern Methodist University with a major in computer engineering and a minor in piano performance. I have been practicing piano for ten years, and I have learned so much! Among my favorite pieces that I've learned to play are Mozart's Fantasia in D minor and Chopin's Etude, Op. 10 No. 4.

I am involved in high school as the president of the college corps club and the social media manager for our National Honors Society club. In my freshman and sophomore years, I was involved in the tennis team. Some of the hobbies I enjoy (besides piano) are taking pictures and playing video games. My interest in photography initially led to blurry pictures, but with continued practice, I now take pleasant pictures. Architecture and light photography are among my favorite types.

Learning to play the piano was the best decision I made. I am glad I maintained this decision throughout my life, as I rarely get bored playing the piano. The concept of creating art through emotions and interpreting it on the keys amazes me. To conceptualize the concept of piano performance is just as amazing! I plan on continuing this passion in college, but only to a lesser extent since I will be majoring in the engineering field. Looking to the future, I plan on using my knowledge of piano to teach others how to play. Teacher: Dr. John Solomons



Homeschooler, **Edith Anne Bingham**, graduates from Summit Christian Academy, May 15th, 2021

Edith has pursued music theory and performance with the Alexander Piano Studio for 8 years. She enjoys playing the piano for pleasure, worship, and performance. Edith plans to continue her musical studies as well as working diligently on pursuing a Business Degree from Liberty University.

Many of Edith's pursuits have been focused on biblical studies and church activities which provide an opportunity for her to share her faith as well as grow in her ability to serve others. In addition to these activities, Edith has worked hard at earning college credits through Dual Credit at Home. She has earned almost 60 hours through online classes as well as CLEP and DSST Tests.

Her favorite subject is English, and her favorite pastime is reading. Edith also enjoys hiking, laughing, campfires, good music of all genres, playing the piano for the music team at church, and playing worship

music at home with her dad on the guitar. Her best friend is her brother, and they share a love for music. One of her favorite memories is climbing Mt. Elbert in Colorado, which is the highest mountain in Colorado. Edith also has a love for photography. She is continuing to learn new skills in this area and has even started doing some photoshoots. Teacher: Sarah Alexander



My name is **Victoria Gomez**. My mother had me begin piano lessons as a pre-schooler. My weekly meetings with my teacher were fun-filled, but as I reached first grade, she introduced me to the fundamentals of learning to read music and playing it in a meaningful way. When music theory was introduced, it was always applied to the pieces being learned. As I progressed the lessons became increasingly challenging! To accomplish anything in music, I found I had to work at it. I admit I didn't particularly care for the practice time I had to put in each day, but it had its rewards!! Playing at the Jazz Festivals, Spring Solo Contests, and Student Recitals will remain very pleasant memories for me. I now realize what patience teachers must have to get the best out of a student!

I thank Ms. Solomons for having introduced me to classical, jazz, and popular music, and for the patience and understanding she has shown through the years, in helping me develop an appreciation for music in general. I

thank my mother, who is in the medical field, for having given me the gift of music, which she believes stimulates the emotions as well as the brain. I now realize how learning to play the piano exercises our logical, auditory, emotional, and motor functions. I think I will be taking an electronic keyboard with me as I set off to school! I would also like to thank FWMTA for the activities they offer piano students.

I will graduate from Nolan Catholic High School where I have been a Varsity cheerleader. I enjoy volunteering and have worked at The Warm Place, Mission Arlington, and Catholic Charities of Fort Worth. I will be a pre-med student beginning Fall 2021.

Teacher: Rosemary Solomons



Simran Lapsiwala will graduate from Grapevine High School in May. She is an ambassador of the STEM Academy and in the top 5 percent. She has been playing piano since first grade and loves to play. Throughout high school, she was in Colorguard, which is part of the marching band during the fall semester, and Winterguard, which is in the spring. Along with that, she is involved in the Spanish Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, Science National Honor Society, National Technical Honor Society, and National Honor Society. Simran enjoys balancing her time between family, school, piano, volunteering, and working as a front-of-house worker at McAlister's Deli. Currently, she is committed to Trinity University in San Antonio. She is planning on going down the pre-med track but is still unsure of her major. During her free time, she likes to read, go hiking, and spend time with friends. She plans on continuing piano lessons throughout college. Teacher: Sarah Alexander



Emma Rush is a senior at Covenant Christian Academy and is graduating with honors this May. She has been a piano student of Sarah Alexander for 10 years and loves to express herself through music. Her senior thesis details the relationship between the study of music and academics and highlights the unique benefits offered by learning to play a musical instrument.
Teacher: Sarah Alexander

News Briefs

SA Theory Testing

By Co-Chair, Donna Hopson

The Spring 2021 Theory session was entirely different than in previous years. Testing dates had to be changed three times to accommodate unexpected events. But the graciousness and flexibility of the teachers allowed the testing to go on.

First, the loss of June Leondar broke the hearts of us all as we remembered her selfless service to our teachers through her leadership as the theory chairman. Her countless hours making sure the testing went well, right up to the end of her life, is a testament to her dedication to FWMTA and love for teaching music.

Secondly, who can talk about any event in the last year without mention of the ever-present Covid precautions? And the theory test logistics were not without effect. Though denied the use of a general location and an exact day and time, teachers stepped up to the plate to ensure the testing went on. Tests were sorted by the committee, given to teachers, taken by students, returned to the committee, resorted, sent to be graded, resorted again, and finally

given back to the teachers. We've all made many trips to Broadway Baptist!

Then, as if this logistical feat wasn't enough, Mother Nature wanted to see how Texans would handle a snowstorm on top of it all. No power, no water, and no students.

Theory testing has been quite the process this spring; much patience and understanding were required of both teachers and students. This year did bring us sickness, loss, relocation, and natural disasters. However, we are happy to report that the spring theory test was administered to 226 students resulting in 58 Golds, 31 Silvers, 34 Bronzes, and 22 Achievement medals being awarded.

The long process of this unpredictable session was worth the effort as it led to the ultimate success of our students! Keep up the great theory teaching, and we will see you again in the fall.

With great appreciation. Co-Chairs Maureda Travis and Donna Hopson.

Ensemble Entries

By Twila McCown, Local Ensemble Chair

We are pleased to announce we have three State teams and one Local team representing the FWMTA 2021 Ensembles.

The State and Local teams are comprised of the following students:

High School:

Kali Flores, grade 11 and Alexa Flores, grade 8
students of Pat Brown

William Bartell, grade 9 Hailey Pope, grade 11
and Ava Stubblefield, grade 9

students of Twila McCown

Performance piece: *Cortege from Petite Suite* by Claude Debussy.

Ensemble director: Twila McCown

Intermediate:

Kaitlynn Nguyen, grade 5 and Arianna Tran, grade 6
students of Reva Jean Beck

Anna Greenway, grade 6 and Avery Stubblefield, grade 7
students of Twila McCown

Performance piece: *Latin Nights* by Eugenie Rocherolle.

Ensemble director: Twila McCown

Ensemble Teams begin rehearsals at Texas Wesleyan Piano Lab, April 24 and will continue throughout May. A video will be submitted of all groups to the TMTA virtual Convention by June 1. I commend all teachers and directors and our enthusiastic students for participating in this event in such difficult times. We look forward to our Ensemble Teams being invited to perform at the local Honors Recital on June 8, 2021.

Elementary:

Luca Ferrara, grade 7 and Cameron Ferrara, grade 5
students of Cricket Hackney

Lacie Melton, grade 3 and Brooklyn Bahr, grade 5
students of Twila McCown

Performance piece: *Irish Jig from Dances for Two*
by Catherine Rollin

Ensemble director: Cricket Hackney

Local Team:

Annabelle Balson, grade 1
student of Jennea Potter

William Dun, grade 5 Azriel Dun, grade 2

Lucas Nguyen, grade 1 Grace Nguyen, grade 3
and Dylan Luong, grade 5

students of Reva Jean Beck

Eva Bahr, grade 3

student of Twila McCown

Performance Piece: *Dueling Pianos* by David Carr Glover

Ensemble director: Reva Jean Beck



Dr. Gloria Lin, concert pianist and former adjunct professor at TCU, and her husband, cellist **Dr. Jesus Castro-Balbi**, professor of cello at TCU, will be moving to Kennesaw, Georgia, with their three children over the Summer of 2021. Both Lin and Castro-Balbi have been faculty members at TCU's College of Music for numerous years.

Music lovers in Fort Worth will greatly miss the performances of the internationally acclaimed Lin/Castro-Balbi Duo and their numerous other appearances connected with TCU's College of Music. Lin and Castro-Balbi appear to have gained from their close relationship; being spouses has not deterred the excellence they have achieved as ensemble players.

We wish Gloria Lin and Jesus Castro-Balbi a fond farewell and success in the new adventures that await them in Georgia.

Excerpts from the essays of the 2021 scholarship recipients:

Andrew Altrock (student of Evan Mitchell): “My mission is to utilize my position as a performer in three ways. First, I have a goal of self-expression. Music allows me to grow continuously in my self-understanding and, in turn, it expands my understanding of others. Second, I want to present voices and ideas that people would likely not have otherwise considered. As part of this, I have committed myself to use my place of privilege to elevate the voices of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC composers and artists. Third, I intend to use this idea of burgeoning representation to bring greater vitality to the classical music scene. There seems to be an idea ingrained in peoples’ minds that classical music is a dull relic of the European patriarchy and that it has no relevance anymore. I wish to bring greater awareness to classical music as a relevant form of artistic expression, especially among young people.”

Valerie Bui (student of Ilka Araujo): “I first started playing the piano in second grade, when I was around 7 years old. At the time, I never really knew how music could play such a big role in my life. In fact, all I knew was that I was “cooler” than most of my peers because I knew how to play an instrument. As the years went on, I found a new respect for music – one that I didn’t quite have or understand before. Much like Keith Richards once said, “Music speaks in emotion,” and that is something I love most. Music has taught me focus, perseverance, and has helped me keep balance during the toughest of days. Music has been a way for me to relax and take a step into euphoria. It has been the connection between me and other people throughout my life and for that, I am eternally grateful.”

Isabel Castañeda (student of Ilka Araujo): “I have been playing piano since I was three years old and began private lessons at age five. Hopefully, one day I can incorporate my knowledge and skill in music into a career. I have played in numerous festivals and competitions, as well as participated in choir all four years of high school. Along with playing the piano and singing, I have picked up the bass guitar and guitar. This past year (before COVID-19), I joined a student-led club at my school called InTune. In this group, students like myself would go to an elementary school and teach kids how to play different musical instruments. I taught piano and enjoyed teaching the kids; they had a lot of fun learning. It was cool to watch them grow and get more comfortable with reading and playing music.”

Kiera DiCesare (student of Jennea Potter): “When I was younger, I viewed practicing piano as a chore. I reluctantly sat down at the bench to practice and counted down the minutes until I was finished. However, if my five-year-old self could see how lucky she was to have music in her life, and how far those piano lessons would take her, she would practice enthusiastically. After nearly thirteen years of piano lessons, I’ve gained an understanding of music theory, an appreciation for music history, and experience performing for audiences and judges. Additionally, my experience with music created a fascination with and appreciation of the arts as a whole. As a child, I loved drawing and painting, and that interest in visual art combined with my love of music made me curious about the intersections of music and art history. Another benefit of my music study is the community it has given me. I joined the concert band in sixth grade, playing the bassoon. This led to experience as a member of the Varsity Marching Band all four years of high school, participation in the All-Region band, and as principal bassoonist with the Fort Worth Youth Orchestra. The relationships I’ve built through concert band, marching band, and orchestra make the long rehearsals and challenging music enjoyable and have given me so many priceless memories.”

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