



Newsletter

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Fort Worth Music Teachers Association

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President's Column



Dear FWMTA Colleagues,

With beautiful spring weather upon us and the pandemic having receded somewhat locally (hopefully for a while longer...), the mood seems decidedly more optimistic than when our most recent Newsletter was published. We've had a full slate of spring events so far: Our Local Performance Contest took place at TCU in February; we enjoyed a fabulous and informative Joint Meeting with Mid-Cities MTA and Forum in the form of a Pedagogy Workshop at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and the Solo Competition plus two days of Honors Recitals returned to Texas Wesleyan earlier this month. What a great feeling that was!

Much more still lies ahead this semester, including another Open Recital, Meet the Composer with Dr. David Karp, an Outreach event at the James L. West Center, and our Ensembles preparing for the first in-person TMTA Convention in three years! (The Convention will be held June 16-19 at the Hyatt Regency in Dallas.) We have selected winners of our annual Senior Scholarship Awards, including our new Community Service Scholarship, and look forward to recognizing these young musicians as part of our Honors Recital in June (again, our first since 2019).

Not everything has been smooth sailing in recent months: Just when it seemed we would be able to hold another semester of Theory testing in-person, Mother Nature had other plans, and wintry weather forced the transition to in-studio testing. Thanks to quick work by our Theory Committee, this was highly successful! Another casualty of the uncertainty earlier in the semester (this time due to Covid concerns) was the MTNA National Conference, which would have taken place in Minneapolis in late March. This was converted to a virtual conference, and all content will be

archived for viewing through December 15 of this year.

On a personal note, this is (somewhat unexpectedly) my last column as President of FWMTA. I have accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of Florida School of Music, starting this August. While we will sorely miss everyone here, my family and I are excited for this new chapter. I will be returning to North Texas for a good number of performances in the coming year and beyond, and I know I will maintain a special connection with Fort Worth and its musical community after my 11 rewarding years spent here. Thank you all for your engagement with this wonderful Association, for keeping it vibrant and vital to our students' and our own musical lives; I have learned a lot by observing the great work going on all around me at FWMTA!

But first: I'll hope to see many of you at Meet the Composer, the Honors Recital, TMTA Convention, and any number of other events in the coming weeks!

Evan Mitchell, President

The FWMTA extends its thanks to Dr. Evan Mitchell for his outstanding leadership as president over the past three years. We wish him well as he transitions into the role of academician at the University of Florida School of Music. We wish Dr. Mitchell and his family farewell, and may the new adventures that await them in Florida be fulfilling.

Editor's Column



Piano competitions from the earliest of times have provided a public forum that recognized the finest performers. Keyboard skills showcased in this manner have also contributed in a major way to furthering the professional careers of competitors.

A few weeks from now the Bass Hall in Fort Worth will be filled with music drawn from the piano's vast repertoire as thirty pianists vie with one another for the coveted gold medal, monetary awards and concert engagements. The careers of the gold medalist and other top prize winners are assured through all the competition offers them as emerging performing artists.

The desire to display the competitive spirit in the world of music dates back to the earliest of times. Contests or competitions served as a source of entertainment in the courts of Europe and as a way of making music lovers aware of the finest pianists of the day.

Domenico Scarlatti and George F. Handel were brought together to display their skills as harpsichordist and organist at the palace of Cardinal Ottoboni in Rome, in 1709. Scarlatti, the exquisite harpsichordist, came out of this trial of skills awed by what Handel got out of his chosen instrument—the organ. Members of the Cardinal's audience preferred the artistry of the Italian harpsichordist to that of the German organist. But Scarlatti was the first to acknowledge the superiority of his antagonist and admitted that he had no knowledge of the instrument's powers until he heard Handel perform.

Seventy-two years later in 1781, Mozart and Muzio Clementi were brought together in Vienna in a dual of skills organized by Emperor Joseph II of Austria. Neither of the two "competitors" were notified of the contest or of an audience being present. Emperor Joseph II was joined by Grand Duke Paul of Russia and his Grand Duchess and other members of the aristocracy at the Imperial Court in Vienna.

Clementi was the first to display his skills. He is said to have astonished everyone with his Sonata in B-flat major, Op. 24, No. 2, a work filled with parallel octaves and thirds played with unprecedented force. Clementi brought his performance to a close with an improvised cadenza. Clementi displayed his virtuosity on the lighter-action Viennese fortepiano made available to him for the "contest."

Mozart chose to impress Emperor Joseph and his invitees by elaborating twelve virtuosic Variations in C major on the simple French children's song, *Ah! vous dirai-je, maman* (Ah! shall I tell you, Mama) the melody known to us as "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star." The Grand Duchess is then said to have given the two competitors some sonatas by Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816) who was *maestro di cappella* in Russia at that time. Mozart dutifully played the opening Allegros of the sonatas, Clementi played the Andantes and Rondos, after which the two performers selected a Paisiello theme and developed it on two pianofortes to the delight and amazement of the audience. Did the contest produce a winner? Joseph II used his better judgement and declared the competition a tie.

While Scarlatti openly admitted Handel's superiority as an organist, Mozart denounced Clementi's ability as a pianist and musician. He wrote to his father saying: "Clementi is an excellent keyboard player, but that is all. He has great facility with his right hand. His star passages are parallel thirds. Apart from this, he has not a kreutzer's worth of taste or feeling; he is a mere mechanicus." Clementi on the other hand, praised Mozart saying: "Until then, I had never heard anyone play with such spirit and grace."

The contests of centuries past which allowed contestants to display their prowess as keyboardists gained ground as a form of entertainment. Their skills as pianists were paired with their ability to improvise, as was seen in the contest between Mozart and Clementi. From it grew the Improvisation Contest, which was soon taken to another level among the aristocracy in Vienna. The contest held at a salon frequented by Vienna's elite had the contestants provide each other with a little melody that was to be improvised on, and then expected to sight-read each other's compositions.

The playing in the Improvisation Contest would grow in intensity between two pianists until a winner was declared. One such "dual" that brought German composer and virtuoso pianist, Daniel Steibelt, and Beethoven, the indisputable master of improvisation together, was held in the Palace of Count von Fries—supporter of the arts- in 1800.

The three-tiered contest had each of them play a technically challenging piece in the 1st round. Each pianist improvised on a theme provided by the rival competitor in the 2nd round.

The final decisive round demanded the sight-reading of a new piece composed by the competitor's rival.

Steibelt played Beethoven's Piano Sonata in B-flat major, Opus 22. Steibelt then altered the rules by handing Beethoven his sonata for cello and piano and not a piece for piano solo. Beethoven is said to have taken Steibelt's score, turned it upside-down, sight-read it backwards and improvised on one of its themes for many minutes. Steibelt, annoyed and humiliated left the concert room

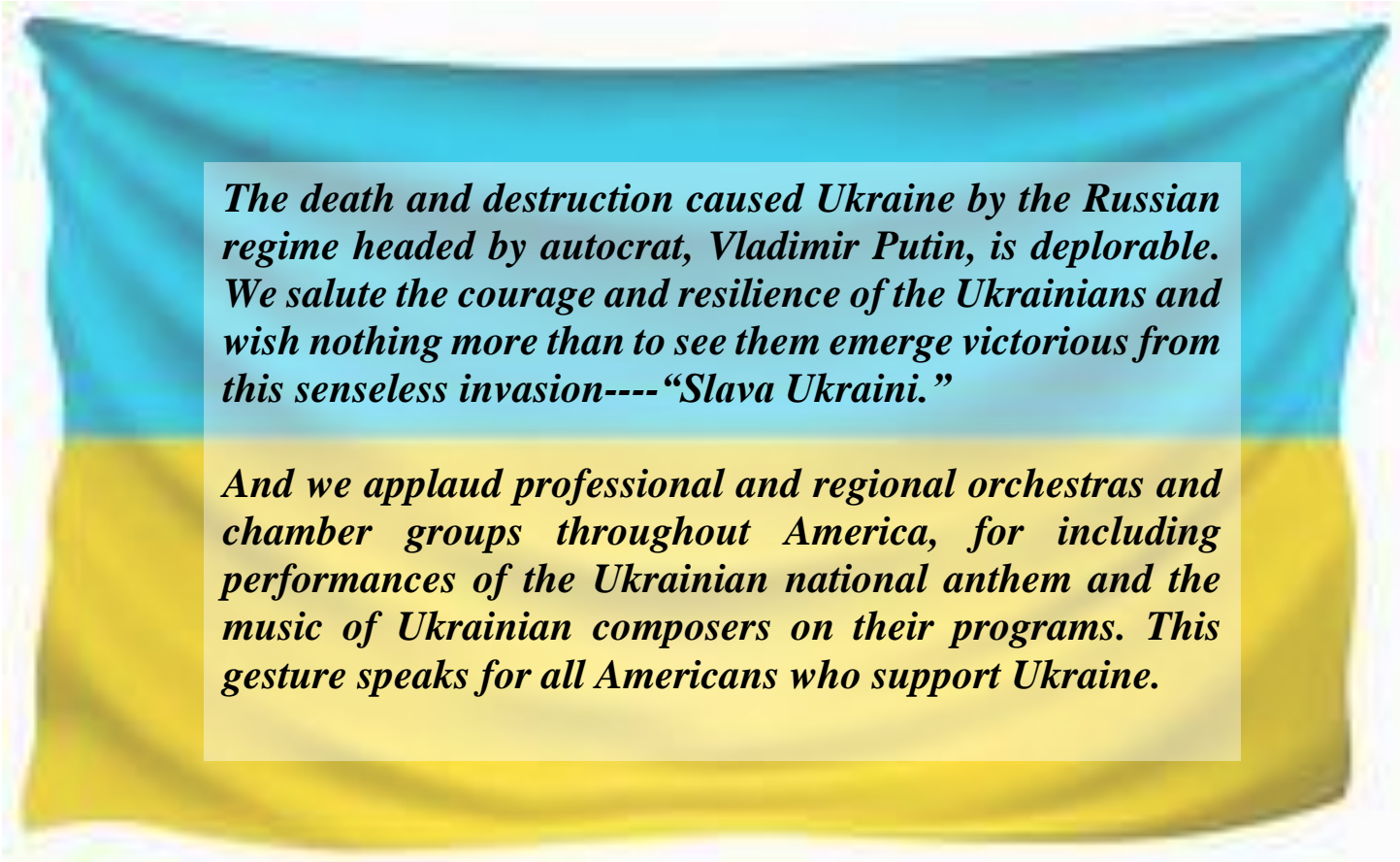
hurriedly never wanting to be in Beethoven's company again. It is obvious as to which virtuoso pianist was declared the winner! Seibelt is reported to have "made it a condition that Beethoven was not to be invited where his own company was desired."

The earliest piano competition to be held in the 20th century was organized in 1927 to honor the memory of Frederick Chopin. Since then, piano competitions have grown both in number and stature.

The 16th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition will take place in Fort Worth, Texas, June 2 – 18, 2022. Thirty pianists, selected from a total of 388 applicants, will present their programs to a live audience and viewers the world over in the first round of this three-tiered competition.

See you at the 16th Van Cliburn International Piano competition.

Rosemary Solomons, Editor



The death and destruction caused Ukraine by the Russian regime headed by autocrat, Vladimir Putin, is deplorable. We salute the courage and resilience of the Ukrainians and wish nothing more than to see them emerge victorious from this senseless invasion----“Slava Ukraini.”

And we applaud professional and regional orchestras and chamber groups throughout America, for including performances of the Ukrainian national anthem and the music of Ukrainian composers on their programs. This gesture speaks for all Americans who support Ukraine.



Congratulations to the winners of the FWCO Young Musicians Concerto Competition

First Prize Winner - Nachuan Tao, pianist



Scholarship recipient of the prestigious Chopin Foundation of the United States in 2021 as well as the Feltsman Piano Foundation in 2020,

Nachuan Tao is currently a junior at I.M. Terrell Academy for STEM and VPA and is studying piano with Professor John Owings at TCU. He will be pursuing his undergraduate

studies at Curtis Institute of Music in Fall 2022. He has won prizes in various competitions. In 2022, he won the first prize of FWCO Young Artist Competition and in 2021, he was the winner of the FWMTA Solo competition. He was also a prizewinner of Juanita Miller Concerto Competition in 2020 sponsored by the Texas Association for Symphony Orchestras. In addition, he has twice participated in Steinway Junior Piano Competition, which both yielded first

prize. Nachuan has participated in masterclasses given by such pianists as Yoheved Kaplinsky and Christopher O’Riley, among others. He has given recital in numerous concert halls, including Wuyuan Concert Hall and Bass Performance Hall. He also performed as a chamber musician and soloist with orchestra.

Nachuan will perform the third movement from Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30.

Second Prize Winner - Natalie Caldwell, violinist



Natalie Caldwell is a junior at North Crowley High School and currently studies with Kurt Sprenger. She has been in the Fort Worth Youth

Orchestra program since 2016 where she was a Young Performer’s Concerto Competition winner in 2016 and 2017. She placed first in the Fort Worth Music Teachers Association Soloist Competition in 2017, 2018 and 2019. For the past three years, she auditioned for and placed in the TMEA All-Region Symphony

Orchestra. She also placed in the TMEA All-State Symphony Orchestra in 2021 and 2022.

Natalie will perform the first movement from Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 4 in D Major, K. 218.

Fort Worth Civic Orchestra wishes to thank all the young musicians who participated in this year’s concerto competition and their teachers. Special thanks to the members of this year’s competition jury: Dr. Martin Blessinger (TCU), Dr. John Solomons (UTA) and Daniel Stevens (FWCO Concertmaster)

Calendar

MAY

- 7 “Meet the Composer” 2:00pm-4:00pm with special guest David Karp at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
- 7, 21 State and Local Piano Ensemble rehearsals, 9:00-11:00am at Steinway Hall, 510 Commerce St., FW
- 14 Open Recital, 4:30pm, Martin Hall at Texas Wesleyan University
- 15 Outreach Performances, 1:30pm, James L. West Center for Dementia Care, 1111 Summit Ave., FW

JUNE

- 4 State and Local Piano Ensemble rehearsals, 9:00-11:00am at Steinway Hall, 510 Commerce St., FW
- 12 Honors Recital, 7 pm at Steinway Hall Fort Worth

16-19 TMTA Convention at the Dallas Hyatt Regency

News Briefs

From Sara Doan

Chair - Solo Competition

The 2022 FWMTA Solo Competition on April 9 was a great success! After two years of a virtual competition, it was exciting to be back in person. Nearly 300 piano, strings, and voice students participated, representing 56 teachers from both within and outside of FWMTA. We had a wonderful line-up of judges who were each impressed with the excellent display of musicianship from our students. The 2022 judges were: Mr. Mikhail Berestnev, Ms. Natsuko Ejiri, Ms. Susan Geffen, Dr. Justin Gray, Dr. Terry Hudson, Dr. Heejung Kang, Mr. YiFan Liu, Dr. Daniel Milan, Mr. Adam Salas, Ms. Amy James (voice), Dr. Liz Lee (strings), and Ms. Laurielle Warren (strings).

This event could not have run so smoothly without the help of the wonderful FWMTA Solo Competition Committee and all the teachers who graciously volunteered their time monitoring and assisting with the Honors Recitals. A special thanks goes out to Dr. Ilka Araujo and Texas Wesleyan University for providing the space and pianos for the competition and Martin Hall for the Honors Recitals April 23 and 24.

A heartfelt “Congratulations!” to all the aspiring students and their excellent teachers! We look forward to even greater participation next year!

From Donna Hopson

Chair – SA Theory

Thank you to our wonderful teachers for sending their students to the Texas State Theory Test both in the fall and spring. Our participation numbers are on the rise as is our medal count! Congratulations on excellent teaching.

our sincerest appreciation for your understanding and help in that situation.

Remember, there are helpful test taking resources on the TMTA website. You can access past tests to print for students as mock tests, ear training recordings, and the latest syllabus to see what is tested at every level.

As you know, we had yet another ice storm necessitating all spring tests to be given by teachers in-studio. We express

Thanks again for your support of the theory test.
Donna Hopson and Maureda Travis

Medals earned in the Fall of 2021

Gold	33	28%
Silver	30	26%
Bronze	14	12%
Achievement	13	11%
total medals	90	77%
total tests	117	

Medals earned in the Spring of 2022

Gold	94	38%
Silver	32	13%
Bronze	21	9%
Achievement	43	17%
total medals	190	77%
total tests	247	

FWMTA Applauds its 2022 Scholarship Recipients

By MaryAnn Fritz

Chair - Senior Scholarship Awards

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

The Senior Scholarship of \$400 is awarded to five graduating seniors. **Abigail Balson** (student of Jennea Potter) attends Carroll Senior High School in Southlake. Abigail will major in public health at the University of Texas in Austin. **Faith Choate** (student of Sarah Alexander) is a student at Grapevine High School. Faith plans to attend Trinity University, majoring in political science. **Evelyn Vi DeLong** (student of Linda Banfy) is a senior at I. M. Terrell Academy for STEM and VPA in Fort Worth. Evelyn plans to major in writing or English, with a focus on creative writing, and is considering options of schools to attend. **Lia Hoang** (student of Linda Banfy) will graduate from Trinity Valley School and will major in journalism at the University of Texas in Austin. **Margaret Lambert** (student of Jennifer DeSantis) is a student at Trinity Valley School and plans to major in mechanical engineering at either Texas A&M or the University of Virginia.

This year Fort Worth Music Teachers Association established a new scholarship honoring a Fort Worth high school student engaged in community service through the medium of music. This inaugural Community Service Scholarship award of \$500 goes to Mackenzie Myers, a student at Bethesda Christian School. Mackenzie performs in many venues, from fine arts festivals to chapel services to leading the worship teams in Indonesia. She has also participated in projects recording generational hymns to provide to smaller churches. Mackenzie plans to attend Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, majoring in communications.

As a part of both the FWMTA Senior Scholarship and the Community Service Scholarship applications, students are required to write an essay discussing their experience in music and its role in their lives. Here are excerpts from the essays of the 2022 scholarship recipients.

Congratulations to all our scholarship recipients!



Abigail Balson (student of Jennea Potter): “At 3, I was singing on stage at church. At 5, I started playing piano. At 10, I picked up a saxophone for the first time. Now, at age 17, my planner is filled with all kinds of musical endeavors – concerts, rehearsals, sectionals, lessons, recitals. A typical week starts with playing piano for my church worship team on Sunday morning, then teaching vocal techniques and harmonies to younger students or working on original music. Monday brings piano lessons. Tuesday and Wednesday are filled with school a cappella and concert choir rehearsals, along with saxophone ensemble meetings. Thursday and Friday mean concert band rehearsals and voice lessons. Saturdays are a wild card, scheduled with competitions, friends’ performances, or extra practice time. However, the impact of music on my life isn’t just written into my schedule – over time, it’s been woven into my character. Being a musician has given me the incredible opportunity to

consistently set goals and passionately pursue them, even when I’m struggling, because I know what’s on the other side is worth it. Furthermore, I’ve learned the importance of music. A song – whether sung, played on a piano, or blown through a saxophone – is powerful. It lets performers express hidden stories of grief or elation or confusion. Songs create a beautiful gift to empower, energize, or empathize with the audience. It allows people to be together as one – something vital in our ever-polarized and fractured world.”



Faith Choate (student of Sarah Alexander): “Music is the most powerful medium of communication. It has the ability to transform the meaning and nuance behind movie scenes, it can breach cultural divides, and can reach even the most unreachable people. Where language fails, music steps in. When my grandpa was put in memory care, I could no longer even have a conversation with him; he was essentially unresponsive. But when I was given the opportunity to play Chopin for him, I saw him smile for the first time in months. I love the accessibility that music creates, and I am grateful that it is a way through which I can still connect with my grandpa.”



Evelyn Vi DeLong (student of Linda Banfy): “My interest in music extends to soundscapes, including foley sound effects and more, to create atmosphere in shows and animations. In my desire to use creative writing as a teaching tool, representation, for activism, and to create worlds and safe havens for others like they’ve done for me, I’ve entertained all mediums. And what I’ve found is that the more immersive an experience is, the more impactful. That is why I’ve taken an interest in creative writing in animation, or script writing, because it’s not only writing a story, it is creating an experience. My musical studies will hopefully help me conceptualize leitmotifs, themes, emotions, and other such musical tools to craft cohesive creations that will leave an imprint on those who watch it.”



Lia Hoang (student of Linda Banfy): “Any time I make an impact on someone through a piece that I am playing is what I see as a musical achievement. To me, it is not necessarily about the ribbons and the trophies, but it is how you share your musical passion with those around you and how you make them feel. In the ninth grade, I performed “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” at my holiday recital in December, and a kind man approached me, saying how he started to cry when he heard me play that song, because it was his favorite Christmas song to sing with his family. Having the ability to emotionally touch someone in that way meant the world to me because until that point, I did not completely comprehend the idea that music is a tool for unity and connection. This memory is one that I always hold onto every time I go on stage to perform.”



Margaret Lambert (student of Jennifer DeSantis): “My love for piano started around the age of 8 when my grandmother taught me and my sister how to play “Heart and Soul” on the piano. Shortly after this experience, I began taking piano lessons at my school and eventually with my current teacher at TCU. I have performed in festivals and competitions each year to push myself and develop my technical skills. However, my favorite parts about piano are getting to learn a variety of music, taking lessons with my teacher, and playing for friends or the elderly.”



Mackenzie Myers (recipient of the Community Service Scholarship): “Singing has naturally given me unspeakable joy for as long as I can remember. Singing speaks where my words fail, providing an outlet that allows me to unravel the jumble of emotions and fall captive to my deepest feelings. Singing is a refuge for contentment, confidence, security, and most importantly, it is a vital mark of my identity. Music is a calling of mine that I feel allows me to lead, guide, help, and connect with people to create real impact.”



FWMTA Congratulates Graduating High School Senior

Daniella Debenport, a senior at Christian Life Preparatory School, is a student of MaryAnn Fritz. In the fall, Dani will be a freshman at the University of Texas-Arlington, majoring in Linguistics, with an emphasis in Speech Pathology. Dani has participated in numerous FWMTA events over the course of 10 years of piano study, with the Jazz Festival being her favorite. Dani is a singer and loves being a part of musical theater. In addition to music, Dani enjoys basketball, softball, and soccer.

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