

Michigan Music Teacher

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From the Desk of Lia Jensen-Abbott, President

Dear MMTA Colleagues and Friends,

I write this to you all after a wonderful State Conference organized by our Vice President Béatrice Ellis. What a great few days it was catching up with friends and colleagues, and cultivating new relationships as well. Furthermore, it was so refreshing to learn so many new things from our presenters—what an inspiring time it was! Now it's back to the daily grind, where I truly hope your students are progressing and you are feeling on top of all of the things that each of you balances.

Our state conference had so many fantastic sessions, and it was wonderful to be back in our state capitol. I went running early in the mornings, and it was quite powerful to see the capitol lit up in the morning darkness, and to feel the calmness. I had the chance to reflect upon how meaningful the state conference is professionally, personally, and musically. As many of you may have noticed, it has become more and more apparent over the last several years that conference attendance has declined, due to many factors, but at the same time, costs have (not shockingly) risen.

To that end, I wanted to inform all of our membership about some of the challenges MMTA faces when putting together a state conference. For instance, many of you might not know that negotiating reasonable room rates for our membership is often very difficult with hotels. Parking is another concern depending upon location.

Beyond that, there are matters of keeping costs down for our gala dinner for our members. The figures charged are after a great deal of negotiations concerning catering prices. Along with the gala dinner prices, there is the issue of the meals served during our committee meetings—food prices are an enormous part of MMTA's conference budget at these hotels. Many times, hotels additionally charge several thousand dollars for Audio Visual personnel and equipment. Essentially, costs are rising, attendance is declining, and like many other states, MMTA will begin revisiting the scope, timeline, and timeframe of future conferences as a way to lessen the burden financially on our organization, without sacrificing quality.

This is something that will be an ongoing future discussion with our Board of Directors, and after careful consideration, I wanted to bring it to our membership's attention so that if and when the conference profile changes in some way, you will all know why. For now, however, I want to again congratulate Béatrice Ellis and all of her team on a truly remarkable experience in every detail in Lansing.

As a final thought, we are moving into the holiday season, and I wish each and every one of you, your families, your students and their families, a joyous and peaceful time.

--Lia Jensen-Abbott, President

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Submit ads to the MMT editor with a check payable to MMTA. Fees are for one issue only. For multiple issue pricing, please contact the editor.

DEADLINE

FOR THE

MARCH 2020

MMT:

February 21

All materials must be received by this date

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~ or mail to: ~

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From Vice-President, Béatrice Ellis

It is hard to believe that six weeks have past since the MMTA conference in Lansing. It seems like it was a very long time ago in some ways and yet it also feels like it was yesterday.

Starting planning the next conference as early as the summer while working on the present conference is quite a challenge. I am still not done with closing the books on the 2019 conference and it took a while to settle on future dates because Ann Arbor can be a crazy place! Avoiding the Football home game on the first weekend of October, and the preparation for the Presidential Debate at UM starting on the second weekend, we settled on the third weekend in October.

Please SAVE the DATE for the next MMTA Conference:

October 18-20, 2020 @ Kensington Hotel in Ann Arbor.

Last fall, I witnessed how small changes could make an impact on creating a more cohesive experience, which in turns lends itself to more meaningful social and professional encounters. It was a real pleasure to greet many of you at the Radisson Hotel and I was very touched by the words of encouragement and the positive feedback I received both in person and via email or snail mail.

I will submit a full report about the conference so that every member can better understand the inner workings of conference planning and its financial scope and challenges. I believe this could be the start of a process aiming to evaluate what previous conferences have achieved in the past and how MMTA might consider changing its approach to adjust to today's musical landscape.

My goal for next year is to attract more participants. I am consulting as many music professionals as possible and inviting them to think of ways they and others could benefit from the conference.

I have started wonderful conversations with many colleagues from the Ann Arbor music community: the piano faculty of Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan, the Ann Arbor Community Music School, the Great Lakes Performing Artists Associates, the University Musical Society, the Liszt Society whose conference will concur with ours, and of course with my own Michigan chapter, the Ann Arbor Area Piano Teachers Guild. I am delighted to work again with Elena Tsai, Gaye Thomas and Lester Castellana, whose support last year was invaluable. I feel hopeful that between all the incredibly dedicated musicians, performers and educators I have been meeting in the past weeks, an irresistible program is destined to emerge for the next MMTA conference.

Please, feel free to contact me with any ideas or feedback you have. You can reach me via email at octbb47@sbcglobal.net.

SAT Updates

The 2020 tests are nearly ready! The sight reading and aural tests will be very similar to last year's tests. For technique, we have worked on using consistent wording through all levels and simplifying some language. On some levels, there are fewer questions. There's a lot of detailed information in some of the questions, but, hopefully it's a bit easier to follow now. Also, many people asked for shorter theory tests, and the 2020 tests all have fewer questions than the 2019! The 1A test is just 2 pages, all other levels are 3 pages. The lower levels could have fit on only 2 pages, but we felt it was easier for the students to read on a very clean looking page with lots of empty space between questions. Not all possible questions will be asked each year, the exact questions will vary from year to year.

Remember, all the original sample tests, the 2018 tests, and the 2019 tests are on the MMTA website for you to download and use in preparing for this year's testing.

Jacki VanderSlik, Piano Handbook & Testing Chair

SAT Semi-Finals and Finals

It's exciting to announce that the Eastern District has a new semi-finals chairperson. Mary Siciliano has volunteered to chair this important position. Mary will enlist the help of Alisha Snyder, who will be doing all the scheduling for the Eastern District semi-finals, as well as scheduling the Western District semi-finals. The Central District is chaired by James Hohmeyer and Susan Mercy, and they will be handling the scheduling for that district.

The date of the semi-finals is Saturday, April 25th, 2020 and the locations are:

Central District: Midland Memorial Presbyterian Church

Eastern District: University of Michigan School of Music, Ann Arbor

Western District: Jack H. Miller Center for Musical Arts, Hope College, Holland

State Student Day Finals will be held Saturday, May 2nd 2020 at Michigan State University College of Music.

Michelle Mitchum
Student Achievement Testing Chairperson

2019 MTNA Michigan Competitions

University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre & Dance

November 22-24, 2019

RESULTS

Junior Division

Composition:

Representative, Richard Shao Teacher, Arthur Greene

Piano:

Winner, Richard Shao Teacher, Arthur Greene

Alternate, Aaron Wang Teacher, Catherine Rollin

Honorable Mention, Salem Wang Teacher, Logan Skelton

Honorable Mention, Harry Wang Teacher, Faye Mao

String:

Winner, Madeline Cha, violin Teacher, Sunmi Chang

Alternate Richard Shao, violin Teacher, Solomia Soroka

Senior Division

Composition:

Winner, Jason Zhang Teacher, Amalia Kazaryan

Alternate, James Rose Teacher, Ezra Donner

Piano:

Winner, Luis Villa Teacher, Michael Coonrod

Alternate, Annie Tang Teacher, Faye Mao

Honorable Mention, Eric Yun Teacher, Derek Polischuk

Honorable Mention, Tejas Shivaraman Teacher, Catherine Rollin

Honorable Mention, Bright Xu Teacher, Faye Mao

Honorable Mention, Jackson Naglick Teacher, Catherine Rollin

Piano Duet:

Representatives, Tejas Shivaraman & Allyson Franklin Teacher, Catherine Rollin

String:

Winner, Sebastian Berofsky, cello Teacher, Richard Aaron

Alternate, Alex Logan, cello Teacher, Stephen Redmon

Woodwind:

Winner, Natalia Warthen, saxophone Teacher, Joseph Lulloff

Alternate, Megan Chow, saxophone Teacher, Timothy McAllister

Honorable Mention, Jacob Peery, saxophone Teacher, Michael Coonrod

Honorable Mention, Haruka Taguchi, saxophone Teacher, Timothy McAllister

Young Artist Division

Brass:

Winner, Colin Holstein, Tuba Teacher, Kenneth Kroesche

Alternate, Scott Voytuch, Trombone Teacher, Kenneth Kroesche

Piano:

Winner, Hyerim Lee	Teacher, Christopher Harding
Alternate, Robert Yan	Teacher, Logan Skelton
Honorable Mention, Vivian Chen	Teacher, Christopher Harding
Honorable Mention, Yuting Ma	Teacher, Arthur Greene

String:

Winner, Jacob Resendez, cello	Teacher, Bruce Uchimura
Alternate, Andrew Gagiui, cello	Teacher, Bruce Uchimura

Woodwind:

Winner, Andrei Mazanko, clarinet	Teacher, Arthur Campbell
Alternate, Philip Kleutgens, saxophone	Teacher, Timothy McAllister
Honorable Mention, Alex Toth, saxophone	Teacher, John Nichol
Honorable Mention, Eric Zheng, saxophone	Teacher, Joseph Lulloff
Honorable Mention, Evan Harris, saxophone	Teacher, Joseph Lulloff

Mary Ann Anschutz, Composition Coordinator
 Karen Feilla, Junior Division Coordinator
 Steven Mastrogiocomo, Senior Division Coordinator
 Ruth Goveia, Young Artist Division Coordinator
 Jordon Young, Collegiate Student, Event Assistant
 Laurie M. Marshall, Performance Competition Chair

Nagel, cont. from p. 8

Klezmer music he knew as a child growing up in a Jewish community) is haunting. Surely the finale with its soprano solo offering a child's vision of heaven will evoke both smiles and a tear or three.

Three more for this column, hundreds more for my appetite. These are tried and true choices: the Concerto for Orchestra by Bela Bartok, Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring and Shostakovich Symphony Number 5. All standard by now they had at their inception varying degrees of acceptance, the Rite being the most difficult for audiences to grasp. I believe they help to define much of what is magnificent (and in the case of the Shostakovich also painful beyond description) about the music of the 20th century. Yes there is some bite to the harmonies, and yes, the Rite sometimes tries our patience with orchestral effect and mercurial changes of mood (it is, after all, ballet music) but they are the essences (in my opinion) of the greatness of the three (quite different) composers. All three were masters of orchestration, and all three wrote accessible music in all forms. And all three I have listened to with wonderment every time I hear them.

One more inclusion, and I must confess it is my favorite of all: It is not a piece of music, but a book: If you have not read MANAGING STAGE FRIGHT; A Guide for Musicians and Music Teachers by my wonderful wife Julie Jaffee Nagel, it is an imperative!!! Not just a "must", an IMPERATIVE. Over the years I have seen, read, and heard much about stage fright, and I admit there are many ideas about it. Julie addresses it as a performer (two degrees in piano performance from Juilliard) a psychologist (three degrees including her doctorate from The University of Michigan, an analyst (a graduate of the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute) and a nationally/internationally recognized authority on the subject. And I proudly admit that she writes with eloquence and insight that I admire and confess to being envious of. She'd never end a sentence with a preposition, as I just did! My holiday present to all of you is to urge you to seek out this book if you have not already done so, and enjoy it to the utmost. Seasons greetings to all my readers!!!!

Musical Musings

DECEMBER DESERT ISLE

By Louis Nagel

'Tis the season to be jolly. With festive times already upon us and the holidays at the end of December start of January (covering a wide swath of celebratory customs) what better way for musicians to celebrate than with music? I would like to play the “desert island” game in this column and share with you some recordings, or in a couple of cases, works I would play as gifts. I suspect once you read this you would ask “how could have omitted such-and-such a piece, or this is not a gift, it’s an imposition!” Whatever your response might be, here is my desert island list:

Heading the list at this particular time of the year would be J.S.Bach's Christmas Oratorio. A celebration of the Christmas story, it is in six parts one section for each of the major feast days celebrating the story of the birth of Jesus. Lengthy, (about three hours for an average recording) it is inspired from beginning to end with some of Bach’s most exalted music. As was the case with so much of his music, it saw the light of day only once, in 1734 and was not performed again until 1857. It need not be heard all in one sitting, but it is hard to turn it off and return to ordinary daily activities!

Bach gets two entries on my list, as I would love to have the Brandenburg Concerti with me. Though my favorite among them is the Sixth, I happily soak up any one of them—they are sheer delight and genius. And, as the Oratorio afore mentioned, they were ignored in the composer’s lifetime!

Next, I would offer a Mozart Symphony —any (or all) of the last three, E-flat Major, G Minor, or C Major; all three should you want a particularly opulent dose of Mozart at his greatest. Familiar works to most of us I imagine, when one listens to them as if they were new discoveries rather than old friend, one can find endless beauties of formal design (E-flat Major) melodic invention, orchestration, tonal adventure (last movement of the G Minor in particular, fugal writing (last movement of the C Major) or just simply “I can’t believe how wonderful this music really is”!

For me the Schubert Sonata in B-flat Major, his last sonata, is special beyond words. And I admit that performing it is my greatest joy at the piano. Long, expressive of a variety of moods, it has become over the years for me something of “the story of a trill”! How Schubert uses and develops that almost unearthly sound in the bass at the beginning of the forty plus minute sonata is simply miraculous. He was dying when he wrote that sonata. It is his vision of eternity whether conscious or not.

We must include Beethoven on this list, but what? What of this composer would you like to take with you to your desert island? I am not sure, as I type these words, what I would want, but to leave him out is unthinkable. What flashed into my mind/ear as I wrote that sentence was the Eighth Symphony! Maybe not on your list, but I would like to be happy on this island, since I don’t know when I will have to return to Mundane City. And the Eighth is Beethoven, despite his physical tortures and his battles over his nephew’s custody and his isolation from society, in one of the happiest and rollicking pieces he wrote. Truly, when I hear this I laugh out loud at the ending of the last movement—listen for yourself if you don’t already know it, and see if you can keep a straight face.

But then there is the Sixth Symphony—or maybe the underrated Fourth—or what about the Second with its heavenly slow movement? Or the Kreutzer Sonata? Or Opus 109? Or the Violin Concerto as performed by Yehudi Menuhin? or————

I would like to take the Mahler Fourth Symphony with me on this trip. It is Mahler at his happiest, if that isn’t too close to being an oxymoron. And its second movement with its “fiddle” solo (perhaps reminiscent of the

Nagel, cont. on p. 7