

**From the Desk of Lia Jensen-Abbott, President**

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Greetings Colleagues!

It has not been a regular spring has it? Usually when I write these addresses, I have some idea that has germinated in my mind for a few weeks during a run, swim, or bike, or while practicing (yes, occasionally). This has been different. I have tried to start this message several times, to no avail. But then it hit me—the ramifications of what we do and its integral importance to our world. I know that you all believe that what you have been trained to do is of the greatest significance to our students' lives. Yet at this time, at this moment, I think it bears hearing yet again.

Music gives human beings their vitality, their empathy, their creativity, and their diversity. Music is not there to simply boost test cores or to add to a growing list of extra-curricular activities, although that's a tremendous byproduct. Music is there to give peace to the suffering, love to the forgotten, comfort to those who struggle, and joy to anyone who hears it. How profound. In times of uncertainty, humanity creates in order to express pain, uncertainty, fear, love, joy, and all of the rest of the spectrum of emotions that words fail to capture. And you, my friends and colleagues, are the ones teaching those gifts. I have heard remarkable uplifting vignettes from colleagues about how independent, primary and secondary education teachers, and collegiate faculty have all adapted and how students have flourished and responded to this new, temporary, learning paradigm. If nothing else, these positive themes underscore what was stated above. Our students need us. And we them. This quarantine has given students awareness of the importance of our face-to-face musical contact. And when the time allows, we will be overjoyed to return to that methodology for them.

Your membership in MTNA places you amongst fellow colleagues and peers who are here to support you and your students. MTNA National is working hard to provide online resources that will continue to serve its professional members in various regards. MTNA is one place where we can all find professional advice, information. It is also a place where we can be connected with our professional friends and colleagues, and to meet new ones. Now more than ever we need our professional community in order to give our students what they so desperately need: musical education as a part of the human experience. I wish you all continued health, safety, and peace.

With gratitude for each of your gifts to MMTA and MTNA,  
Lia Jensen-Abbott  
President, MMTA

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**DEADLINE**

FOR THE  
**SEPTEMBER 2020**

MMT:

**August 26**

All materials must be received by this date

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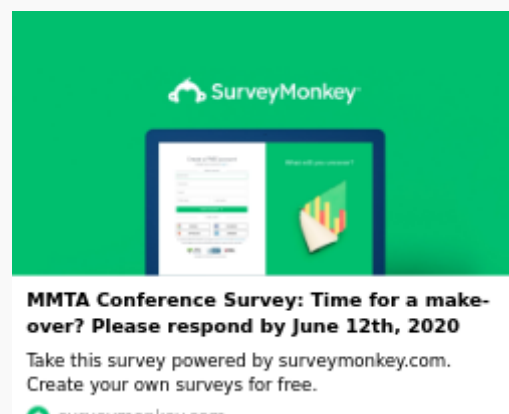
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## CONFERENCE: Present and Future

Detailed time lines are great to keep an eye on a goal but they rarely match the reality of unforeseen events that lead to the bending of such timelines. Looking back at emails I sent regarding conference matters via local presidents, I was planning to send the State survey before Memorial Day weekend. And it did not happen! Around the same time, the MMTA website was down for more than a few days and both MTNA's and Survey Monkey's websites were under construction. We needed information from all 3 websites before we could send the survey. Thankfully, the survey reached most of you by May 28, though about a week later than planned.

As of now, 71 MMTA members have filled out the survey, thank you! I urged now the other 471 members (or so!) to complete the survey as soon as possible. June 12 is the deadline. We need and appreciate your input regardless of previous attendance or if you have never attended a conference. [Here is the link to the MMTA Conference Survey.](#)



So what is next? A conference committee has been appointed.

It is composed of Janice Derian, current President of LPTF, Dr. Derek Polischuk from MSU, Dr. Yelena Wells, MMTA Webmaster, Michael Zutis, and myself. This committee will meet virtually starting in mid-June after being presented an analysis of the State survey. It will also consult with other members on particular aspects of the conference as necessary.

The goal is to make recommendations regarding the planning of future conferences in time for the next board meeting in July. These recommendations will include how to honor the winners of the MTNA/MMTA competitions (solo, chamber music and composition) and the "Teachers of the Year" who have been nominated by their chapters.

Let's all DREAM about what a conference could bring to all: Deconstruct, Rejuvenate, Encompass, Appeal and Move ahead! I could write a paragraph for each verb I chose but feel free to create your own anagram. Sometimes, it helps one's mind to focus on the goal!

Béatrice Ellis  
MMTA Vice President

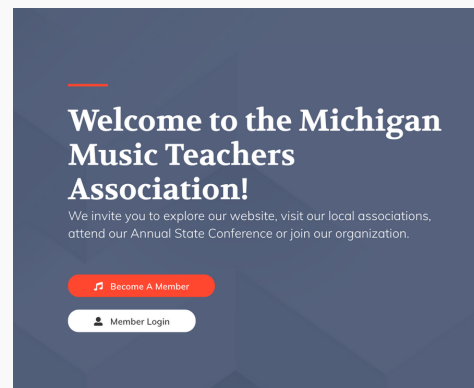


## New Website!

Thanks to Yelena Wells and [Elite One Media](#), we now have a brand new website at [michiganmusicteachers.org](http://michiganmusicteachers.org)! Please take some time to familiarize yourself with our website. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to Yelena at [support@michiganmusicteachers.org](mailto:support@michiganmusicteachers.org). If you have questions regarding specific events, please contact the appropriate coordinator via contact form on the event's page.

### Logging into Members Resources:

You should have received an email from WordPress with the subject "Welcome to Michigan Music Teachers Association". You will find credentials to log into the Members Only area of the website there. Please check your Spam Folder if you don't see it. This email was sent to all MMTA current members on Thursday, May 27th. We moved the website to a completely new platform, therefore new logins needed to be issued. Once you are logged in, you will be directed to Welcome Members page. Please scroll down to view Member Resources links on that page.



Technology is always a "work in progress" and we appreciate your patience with this new platform. We hope this website proves to be more effective for our organization!

## Musical Musings THE DESSERT ISLAND

By Louis Nagel

The title is not a misprint nor my inability to spell. We are into the third month (or is it year?) of lockdown. It is not unbearable but it is more than inconvenient and certainly so far as music and other performing arts are concerned a starvation diet. A live concert now would be wonderful—more than wonderful—it would be the delicious DESSERT that we could enjoy while marooned on this DESERT island. So what would be the menu? What would I like the waiter to bring to me on a silver platter (a pun if you recall what records were and what they were sometimes called!)?

Compositions I would love to hear live come in all sizes and forms. For starters, I would love to sit through a performance of the Berg Piano Sonata. "What?" you ask. "Marooned on a desert island don't you want the Rachmaninoff Second Piano Concerto to start off?" "No," I reply, "I want the intensity of the Berg, and the reminder at the end that the B Minor we hear seductively at the beginning then disappears through the thick textures of doubtful keys and DOES RETURN at the end. There is hope!!!!" And besides it is a magnificent composition whether you like my metaphor or not.

I'd like to hear the song cycle "Die Winterreise" of Schubert. I will list more than one work of Schubert as he is my favorite composer along with J.S. Bach both to hear and to perform. But why such a sad piece of music, long and relentlessly wandering? Does it reflect in some hyperbolic way the times in which we live?



## Nagel, cont. from p. 5

Maybe, maybe stretching a point melodramatically. But Schubert's musical settings of Mueller's poetry is so uplifting even if it is pervasively sad - the wanderer never finds his love but his sorrow is cloaked in unequaled musical beauty. Too, Schubert was dying as he wrote this cycle. He knew it, and he wrote with impassioned speed to put on paper what was in his mind. There is an intense purpose to his effort. Now just let your mind wander to the scientists who are working feverishly (no pun at all intended here) to find a vaccine that will arrest this horrific virus.

I would love to attend a performance of Don Giovanni. Don is an anti-hero of mine - just think about what he gets away as he lacerates society around him. With utter impunity he uses people and situations for his own purpose, aided and abetted with no argument from his obedient servant Leporello. Until -The Commendatore's return!! Don defies him and ultimately is dragged down unrepentant and disbelieving to hell. And then think about Mozart's miraculous musical portrayal of the characters in this opera -I cannot imagine Mozart's mind as he planned and wrote this opera of operas! I wonder how Mozart felt when he saw his creation (and prophecy perhaps) for the first time. Would the public endorse his music? The audiences in Prague recognized the greatness of the work and Mozart had his greatest success to date with the opera. Its theme was not comic nor was it an endorsement of the wanton libertine madness of the Don. (I cannot help it, that's his name: DON). And even though the critics and music presenters insisted that Mozart write a final scene which in effect is saying to the audience "this is all in fun, and everyone lives happily ever after" people knew that was not the case. The world of opera did change after Mozart, but in 1787 the world was not quite ready for an Aida ending!

Along with Bach's D Major Partita, Debussy's "Voiles", Brahms' "Intermezzo in E-flat Op.117/1" and Schoenberg's "Sechs Klavierstuecke Op.19" would hear and play (there is a Steinway Grand on my desert island, whether it would be among my just desserts or not I cannot say) Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy and final Sonata in B-flat Major. All of you who have read my columns or have heard my concerts know my love of both those large works, nothing in the piano literature more than the B-flat Sonata. With the Wanderer, it is famously uncharacteristic of the composer, fiendishly hard and unreasonably awkward at times, built on one tune but structured as a continuous work in four connected movements with truly wacky key relationships (C Major, C-sharp Minor, A-flat/D-flat Major and back to C Major) ending with a fugue of dubious technical mastery but unparalleled power. Schubert wrote this for a wealthy land owner hoping to please him into an opera commission.



## Nagel, cont. from p. 6

It seems not to have pleased, for he got no commission from this effort, and so far as performance he himself admitted he could not play it - "Let the Devil play this" he said after a failed attempt. "I can't"! But he knew it worked as a piece of music and eventually, though long after he died, Liszt popularized it as a recast piano concerto, and Rubinstein programmed it in the original.

Things can change is the message here! As for the Sonata, I can think of no greater tragedy, (and one that befell many composers,) than never hearing his/her music live. Schubert was within a couple of months of dying from tertiary syphilis and yet he composed the last three sonatas, all consummate masterworks, the aforementioned Winterreise, The Shepherd on the Rock, a lied of extended length for soprano, clarinet, and piano, and the Cello Quintet. All this while, according to his letter to his brother Ferdinand, he is bedridden, unable to keep food down, and when he tried to get up he "tottered" to the piano to compose. What a tragedy and out of that came such beauty. Such a redirection of the path of music, - Schubert is not given enough credit for his originality and creativity, possibly because he was not an advocate for himself. He hated public performance and because he was diminutive in size and clumsy socially he probably wasn't taken seriously. Goethe returned to Schubert an unopened packet of lied Schubert set to his poetry containing among other works "Erlking" and "Gretchen". Goethe probably did not even know who Schubert was, and certainly did not know the composer was all of eighteen years old when he penned these sublime masterworks. Rejection in one's own lifetime is a sad sad story indeed. And yet, from the pensive haunting opening movement to the joyful and brilliant finale of the B-flat Sonata, there is an assurance that it is all going to end well, just let it work through the process of transformation.

I assume by now you realize this column is a metaphor for THE AGE OF COVID. I cannot help but be aware of how we miss live concerts and plays and other public performance events. For performers and teachers it is what we do. For audiences it is what we appreciate. And for composers and writers, it is the forced silencing of our art. We can take some comfort believing this too shall pass, and hopefully before we all do!