

**From the desk of Beatrice Ellis, President**

This is the seventh of the eight contributions to the MMTA Newsletter that are part of the President's duties. So far, I have purposefully focused on bringing you up to speed about the organization itself: introducing up-coming board members, highlighting new initiatives and various achievements, acknowledging both MMTA strengths and weaknesses, and setting goals for the two years I was elected to lead. I always strove to convey energy and optimism. As best I could, I showed my support and appreciation to you - music educators - and applauded the positive impact you all have in your community, and particularly so as you faced the pandemic.

I am unable to hide my heart behind my role as President at this moment. As often is the case, poetry and music are the only means of expression that are able to slow down the incessant and incoherent thoughts that have kept invading my consciousness as the world is faced with the threat of war and outbreaks of violence. Yesterday I found a poem my husband wrote just a few days ago. His words will conclude my seventh MMTA newsletter contribution.

**Eclipse**

Children afraid of the dark  
are not grown up until  
they can usher themselves  
into sleep with nothing but  
a sliver of light peering in  
from the hallway.

Children risking their parents' wrath  
still open the door and run downstairs  
not wanting to face that darkness  
alone  
only to be carried up the stair  
back to their peaceable bedrooms  
and the taunting of  
unpredictable dreams,  
the nightly pedagogy of weaning off  
the lightless fear.

**Continued on pg. 3**

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**DEADLINE**  
**FOR THE**  
**SEPTEMBER**  
**2022 MMT:**  
**August 29**

All materials must be received by this date, no exceptions!

**ADDRESS OR E-MAIL CHANGE**  
 Send to:  
 David Keep  
 Membership Chair  
[mmtamembership@gmail.com](mailto:mmtamembership@gmail.com)



## President's message, continued from pg. 1

The daylight has become  
a sliver  
following our lunar stroll  
toward an eclipse that blanket  
Children who do not deserve  
the emergent day of darkness,  
the draping of the unwanted veil  
upon their heads,  
the prison we have designed for them,  
ranging freely toward the horizon like a  
nightmare.

Meanwhile, haunted by the tides  
we stand alert,  
we stand inert  
facing the blackened sun  
and the world it hides

calling out  
Where went the light?  
Where went the prayer?  
Where went the children  
to carry up the stair?

john ellis May 27-29, 2022



## 2022 MMTA Conference

Save the date for our 2022 MMTA Conference October 7 and 8 at Western Michigan University. This conference will be an excellent opportunity to network, to learn from our exceptional clinicians and hear world-class performances. Eric Zuber, Assistant Professor of Piano at Michigan State University, will be one of our clinicians. Additionally, we will hear from Karen Salvador, Assistant Professor of Music Education at Michigan State University, who will present on developmentally appropriate practices for young learners. Additional presenters will be announced in the coming months, including presentations from MMTA teachers. A call for proposals will be forthcoming.

College students and spouses can attend this year's conference free of charge. Registration for this event is \$100, and information about how to register will be forthcoming.

I'm excited for this event, and excited to meet you in Kalamazoo.

Derek Kealii Polischuk, Vice President



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## Call for 20-Minute Session Proposals

After the popularity of the 20-minute sessions at last year's state conference, we are planning to organize more again this year! We invite your proposal submissions for 20-minute presentations on a teaching topic of your choice for the 2022 MMTA State Conference to be held October 7-8 at Western Michigan University. We hope YOU will consider what ideas you might be able to share with us. Read more and submit your proposal by August 1st at the following link:

<https://bit.ly/22MMTAproposals>

Please email Joy Morin, MMTA Teacher Education Chair ([joymorinpiano@gmail.com](mailto:joymorinpiano@gmail.com)) with any questions.



## What's New in Student Achievement Testing?

The 2022 testing season is behind us, let's all give a big sigh of relief for another successful year! Thank you to all the test writers, proofers, and local SAT chairs and committees. This is a program run entirely by volunteers so remember to let them know they are appreciated.

The 2022 tests are now on the website. You can either go to the MMTA website and find them under Student Activities, SAT or use this link for quick access: <https://bit.ly/MMTAtests>

Many local chapters put all the old tests on their websites as well. And can I offer one tip that I've found helpful, download all the old tests on to one flash drive. Then when you want to print some for student practice, it's very quick and easy.

The Piano Handbook & Testing committee is already hard at work writing the 2023 tests. We will be writing, proofing, rewriting, proofing, proofing, proofing.... into the fall.

Thanks to all those who served on the test committee last year: Holly Bolthouse, Janice Derian, Debora DeWitt, Cheryl Ferrari, Rose Gifford, Michelle Good, David Husser, Diana Munch, Paulina Norder, Teresa Pash, Silvia Roederer, Mary Scanlan, Alisha Snyder, Judy VanderArk, Jeffery Wyckoff, and Michael Zutis.

The SAT Advisory Committee has also started meeting again via zoom. Our goal is to keep improving the SAT testing program through both big and small changes. We have several ideas we're working on so keep reading your emails and the MMT for updates. This committee has the same members as last year: Janice Derian, Sarah Hamilton, Jim Hohmeyer, Maria Lisowsky, Michelle Mitchum, Gaye Thomas, and Jacki VanderSlik. Feel free to contact any of us if you have opinions about the future of SAT in Michigan.

Submitted by  
Jacki VanderSlik  
SAT Piano Handbook & Testing chair  
SAT Advisory committee chair

## SAT Piano Finals May 7th, 2022; Michigan State University

### Intermediate Division

*Sheryl Iott and Justin Colwell, Adjudicators*

First Place: Ethan Mihaescu, student of Catherine Rollin

Second Place: Evelyn Cao, student of Catherine Rollin

Third Place: Nathan Mei, student of Irina Babina

### Junior Division

*Sheryl Iott and Justin Colwell, Adjudicators*

First Place: Bryna Sullivan, student of Marta Pietrzyk

Second Place: Claire Tong, student of Annie Leong

Third Place: Nathan McCoy, student of Jacki VanderSlik



### Senior Division

*Debora DeWitt and Laura Kolean, Adjudicators*

First Place: Aaron Wang, student of Catherine Rollin

Second Place: Alexandra Xu, student of Mary Siciliano

Third Place: Sunny Rong, student of Mary Siciliano

Honorable Mention: Fuka Somatomo, student of Sookkyung Cho

Submitted by Gerardo Ascheri on behalf of Michelle Mitchum, SAT Auditions Chairperson



## 2022 Concerto Competition Results May 21, 2022; Michigan State University

The judges were Dr. Sookkyung Cho and Dr. Tigran Shiganyan. They had a difficult time deciding the winners, so they had to share some prizes.

Here are the results:

### Division I

1st winner: #13 Evelyn Cao, Piano, Student of Catherine Rollin

2nd winner: #14 Violet Kang, Piano, Student of Yangwei Situ

### Division II

1st winner: #2 Jocelyn Wong, Cello, Student of Jeremy Crosmer

2nd winner: #3 Nathan Wen, Piano, Student of Mary Siciliano

3rd winners (tie): #1 Claire Kim, Cello, Student of Jeremy Crosmer

#4 Eliot Kim, Piano, Student of Mary Siciliano

### Division III

1st winner: #12 Brian Zhang, Piano, Student of Christopher Harding

2nd winners (tie): #6 Serafima Bezuglova, Violin, Student of Oleg Bezuglova

#10 Victor Zhong, Piano, Student of Mary Siciliano

3rd winners (tie): #7 Lang Ren, Cello, Student of Nathaniel Pierce

#11 Sunny Rong, Piano, Student of Mary Siciliano

### Division IV

1st winner: #25 Madeline Cha, Violin, Student of Hye-Jin Kim

2nd winner: #18 Shuya Zheng, Piano, Student of Mi-Eun Kim

3rd winner (tie): #22 Audrey Zhang, Piano, Student of Christopher Harding

#23 Minwoo (Brian) Kim, Cello, Student of Kunhee Koo



## **Music Teachers National Association Michigan Performance Competition**

Registration Deadline: Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 3:00 PM Eastern Time via the MTNA website.

Michigan Performance: Friday, October 21 – Sunday, October 23, 2022

Venue: Western Michigan University, School of Music, Dalton Center, Kalamazoo.

For additional coordinator, volunteer, teacher, and student information, contact Laurie M Marshall at [Laurie@TheChildrensAcademy.us](mailto:Laurie@TheChildrensAcademy.us) or [TCA.Laurie@gmail.com](mailto:TCA.Laurie@gmail.com).

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### **Jack Of All Trades**

**By Michael Zutis**

Like an ever increasing number of university students, the path to my degree was not straightforward. After four program changes, all within the field of music, I finally found myself in the Piano Performance track at Western Michigan University. I lasted two months into the summer after my hearing and formal acceptance before sustaining a still undiagnosed injury all down the right side of my body. It became extremely painful not only to play the piano, but to use a computer, or even to open doors. On my worst days, I was unable to walk without a severe limp. After numerous experiments with spatial positioning and repertoire choices (including an extremely informative left-hand semester), it became clear that I would have to take at least a semester off from the program in order to recover and progress as normal.

Semesters turned into years. I endured endless scans and pokes and prods before it became obvious that I would not be returning to the piano studio. At the ripe old age of 22, my body had told me loud and clear that it was not going to be participating in my career decisions. Moving forward, I pursued and finished my undergraduate work in composition, but for a long time this work was passionless for me. I viewed it solely as a path to finishing some kind of degree; a degree which, altogether, took me seven years to earn.

Throughout the degree, I tried to dress it up as something that was a part of me. Initially that took the form of an interest in music for video games, which had been a huge part of my life growing up. WMU was very supportive in this endeavor, going so far as to send me out west to various





game-sound conferences, and setting up lecture opportunities for me to share what I had learned about this rapidly growing field (ludomusicology). I met artists whose work I have known and loved my entire life and colleagues who I still remain in touch with, and who are doing an amazing job following in the footsteps of the still-active pioneers of game music. This all should have been very exciting for me, but I loathed every minute of it. In retrospect, it felt (and probably looked) like I was hanging on by a thread to a career that seemed not to have much of a place for me. There was a real desperation about it that was impossible to shake off.

After my graduation I continued to work with performers through small commissions and tried to enjoy the limited amount of piano that I can still play through my church position, weddings, lessons, etc. This was fine for a while and I became more used to the idea as a career composer, but it continued to be unfulfilling, and that was reflected in much of my creative output. My pianistic skillset was trimmed down immensely as well. Unable to practice as much as I needed to, I began making significant mistakes in performance; however, as I learned the repertoire of the church and played for their Mass, I began to learn how to improvise my way out of mistakes and sight-read music more accurately. The speed at which I successfully learn music began to increase, and after several years, the balance finally started to tip in such a way that I was able to lean on what many would call “core” musical abilities (analysis, sight-reading, aural skills, improvisation, etc.) to supplement my disability at work and avoid the stress of constant repetitive motion. This is when I really began to think critically about how a set of individual skills can synthesize and bleed into each other in order to create a robust and highly personalized toolbox. Every single pitstop I made during my undergraduate career added to an ever-growing list of particular skills and points of view that would become the building blocks of a freelancing career that is greater than the sum of its parts.

And after all, why not? I was never going to be a career pianist, but even those bound for the concert stage understand the low odds of building a career on performance alone without having to supplement their income with some kind of institutional or independent teaching. This is even more true for composers, almost universally so, and the faculty at Western wasted absolutely no time in expressing this. By Frankensteining my career together in this way (“It’s alive!”), I have been able to support my creative output with a living wage supplied solely through those varied musical means while remaining unchained to any single institution. This has given me an incredible amount of freedom to work on any projects that I choose at any given time, with gaps in funding filled in by independent grant writing. Often, this freedom realizes itself in extra-musical ways, including my positions with MMTA, my local board (KAMTA), and technical and academic research that expand on my skills as a composer and fuel the subject matter of my pieces. For most of us, the reality is that one tiny sliver of an already narrow and specialized field just isn’t going to cut it. The further I embraced this concept, the more I found my disadvantages becoming advantages.



As I continue to look back at my education and find new ways to bridge the courseless stations of my adult life, I have naturally spent a great deal of time reflecting on the decade, which was completely dominated by the maintenance and anxiety of chronic injury. The “what-if’s” have always been present, but recently the answers are different. If my injury never occurred, I probably would have ended up in some graduate pedagogy program somewhere. That would have been great too, but I’d be missing out on all of these other facets of music that I have grown to love, and that have become pillars of a career that I have found extremely fulfilling. I wouldn’t be able to write a grant, or balance a spreadsheet. I might not be in MMTA, and I certainly wouldn’t be writing music. I wouldn’t have even met my wife! I have a tremendous amount to be grateful for and seven years of utter chaos to thank for it, and so I say now what students, teachers, politicians, economists, hippies, and otherwise have been shouting from the rooftops for 30+ years:

The era of the four-year degree is over. Thank God.

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### **A Call to all Chapter Presidents:**



Please help us identify members of your chapter who would be interested in taking a more active role in MMTA!

The following positions are either vacant or need to be filled by October 2022.

- \* Media Communication Coordinators: contact Yelena Wells.
- \* MTNA Michigan Performance Division Coordinator: contact Laurie Marshall.

For the following positions, please contact Béatrice Ellis at [octbb47@sbcglobal.net](mailto:octbb47@sbcglobal.net):

- \* SAT Auditions Chair
- \* Awards Chair
- \* MMTA Secretary
- \* MMTA Historian
- \* SAT Voice Chair