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The cover features a stylized illustration of a person with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a green long-sleeved shirt, playing a piano. The piano keyboard is depicted with yellow and black keys, curving upwards. The background is a mix of blue, white, and yellow, with abstract wavy lines and two yellow starburst shapes. The title 'AMT' is in large, bold, white letters at the top left.

American Music Teacher

June/July 2026 • mtna.org

THE SCIENCE OF PIANO
Sight-Reading

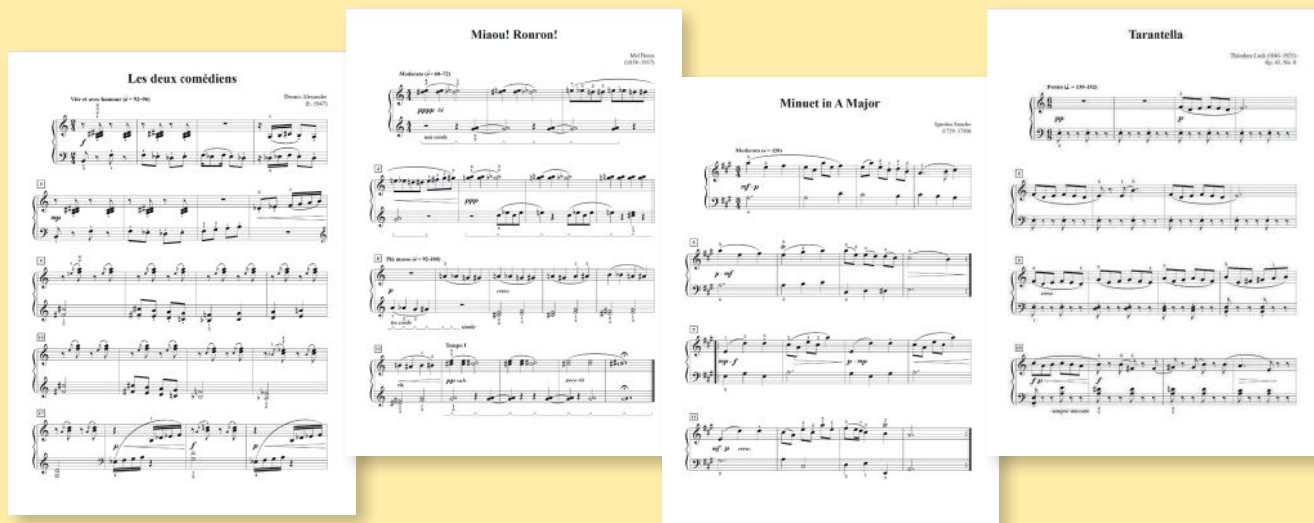
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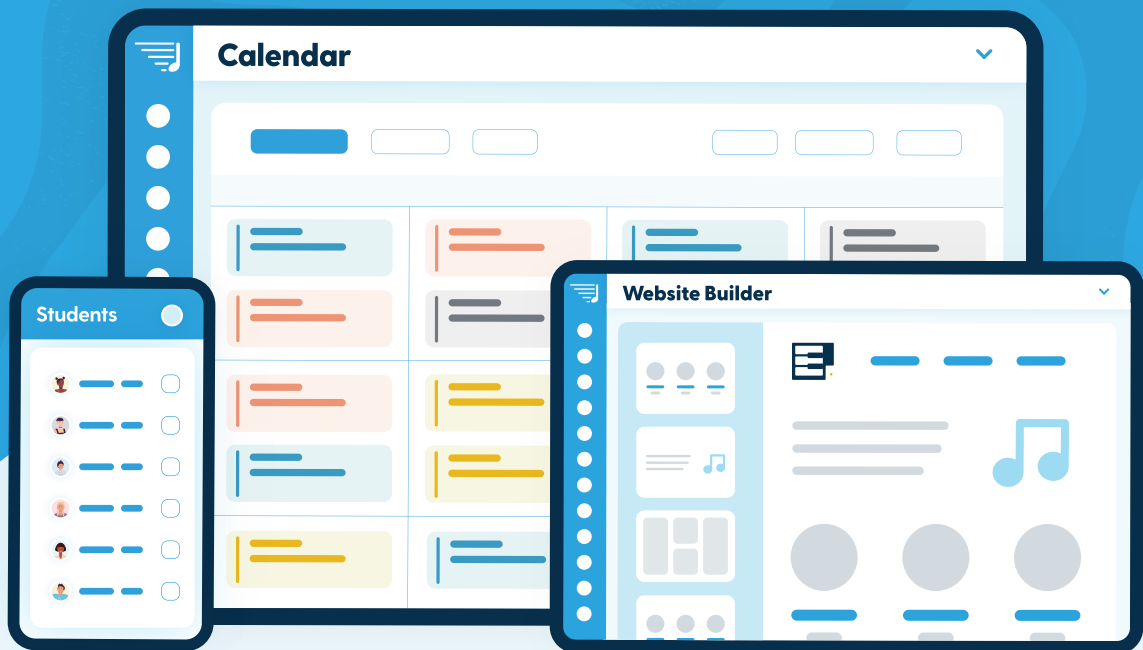


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DEAR READER

June/July 2026 | American Music Teacher

New Year's Resolutions

For many (probably all of you), the new year begins on January 1. But for MTNA, like many nonprofit organizations, the fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. That means we are just getting ready to start our own “New Year.” So, my question for you is: What are your resolutions for this MTNA year?

Perhaps this is the year you prioritize self-care. As teachers and association leaders, we spend so much of our time serving students and colleagues and not a whole lot of time on ourselves. As our Takeaway article at the end of this issue reminds us, building in time to rest, reflect, and recharge is not self-indulgent; it is essential. Or maybe your resolution is musical. Perhaps you want to practice more consistently, explore new repertoire, or revisit works that first inspired you to teach.

The start of a new fiscal year is also a perfect opportunity to refresh your studio. Over the summer, I encourage you to consider revising your studio policies, updating your website, or rethinking communication strategies with families. Seemingly small changes like these can not only improve studio operations and communications but also help alleviate stress during the coming teaching year.

This year, you might resolve to travel. Maybe it's to attend your state conference this summer or fall—and it's never too early to start your planning for the next MTNA

National Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, April 2–6, 2027 (note the slightly different Friday through Tuesday dates). Hearing new ideas and connecting with colleagues can reignite creativity and purpose, energizing you for the future.

And, of course, we hope one of your resolutions involves deeper engagement with MTNA. Make the most of your membership by volunteering for a committee, presenting a session, or mentoring a young professional. Invite a colleague who is not yet a member to join you. Personally follow up with new members in your local association and help them feel welcomed and valued. The new membership year is the ideal time to resolve to check all these items and more off your list.

Resolutions, however, are ultimately about growth. As we move through this MTNA year together, may your goals—both personal and professional—strengthen not only your studio but also our entire community.

Cheers and Happy New Year!



Brian Shepard
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bshepard@mtna.org



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AWARD

- Six recipients will be selected.
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ELIGIBILITY

- Applicant should not have an established studio/been a teaching professional for more than three years.
- Applicant must be a current active member of MTNA.
- Awards are open to teachers of all instruments and voice.

TIMELINE

Application Deadline

3:00 P.M. Eastern Time, November 5, 2026

Recipient Announced

January 2027

Recipient Recognized at MTNA Awards Brunch

April 6, 2027

APPLICATION PROCESS

All information below should be in one document (Word or PDF):

- A page containing current contact information
- A complete résumé, including length of time studio has been established (if currently teaching)
- Explanation of the importance of the award for the applicant's future
- A detailed plan for use of funds
- Small business plan (current or proposed)
- Studio policies and procedures (current or proposed)
- Teaching philosophy

Failure to follow directions or meet eligibility requirements may disqualify the applicant.

Deadline: 3:00 P.M. Eastern Time • November 5, 2026

MTNA

To apply, visit www.mtna.org

CONTENTS

June/July 2026 | American Music Teacher

FEATURES

20 *The Science of Piano Sight-Reading: Practical Applications for Teachers* By Jenny Jieun Park

Sight-reading is an essential skill for pianists, especially those trained in the Western classical tradition. Despite its importance, there is no single, widely accepted method for teaching sight-reading, leaving many piano teachers to navigate how best to develop this skill in their students. Over the past decade, research has increasingly shown that sight-reading is a teachable skill. This piece aims to provide piano teachers with an overview of the latest research findings, emphasizing practical strategies they can apply in their lessons.

25 *How to Create an Impactful Intensive Course for Your Music Studio* By Hsing-ay Hsu

As music educators, we are in a unique position to create group learning experiences that accelerate our students' growth and facilitate deeper musical meaning. Offering a cyclical concentrated time every year not only builds anticipation and amplifies our students' passion, but it also elevates our own musical growth as teachers. Creating an intensive course is also our chance to try out all the things we wish our teachers had taught us, systematically and within a structured context. Lastly, it is a great way to create more visibility for new students trying to find us.

28 *Keeping Up with Barbara Nissman* By Lucy Mauro

Pianist Barbara Nissman has had a remarkable international career over the past 50 years. From composer Alberto Ginastera dedicating his third piano sonata to her, to her "Barbara and Friends" classical music TV programs on the *BBC*, to more than 40 recordings—including being the first pianist to perform and record all of Prokofiev's sonatas—Nissman has brought her singular artistry to audiences around the world.



28



In This Issue

- 34** 2026 MTNA Conference Highlights
- 40** 2026 MTNA Awards
- 48** 2025–2026 National Competition Sponsors
- 50** National Officers Elections Results
- 52** 2025–2026 National Competition Winners

Columns

- 8** **How Do You...?**
Use Social Media to Promote Your Studio?
- 14** **What's New**
Neuroplasticity and Music
- 18** **Wellness**
How Nutrition and Fitness Affect Injury Risk

In Every Issue

- 2** Dear Reader
- 51** Did You Know?
- 58** Reviews
- 64** Items of Interest
- 66** MTNA Leadership
- 67** Advertising Index
- 68** The Takeaway

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American Music Teacher [ISSN0003-0112], a peer-reviewed periodical, is published by Music Teachers National Association, Inc., six times per year: Bimonthly in Aug./Sept., Oct./Nov., Dec./Jan., Feb./Mar., Apr./May, June/July. Periodicals postage paid in Cincinnati, OH, and additional mail offices. Annual subscription is included with MTNA membership dues. Nonmember/library subscription \$36, international \$48; single copy \$6. *American Music Teacher* is available in a variety of formats. For more information contact National Archive Publishing Company, info@napubco.com; EBSCOhost Research Databases, www.ebscohost.com; The Gale Group, www.galegroup.com; ProQuest LLC, www.proquest.com; Repertoire International de Literature Musicale, Inc., www.rilm.org; or JSTOR, www.jstor.org

Postmaster: Send address changes to *American Music Teacher*, 600 Vine St., Ste. 1710, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

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HOW DO YOU...?

Use Social Media to Promote Your Studio?



Social media continues to shape how music teachers connect, communicate, and share their work with the world. In this installment of *How Do You . . . ?*, five educators from across the nation offer practical ideas and creative inspiration for using online platforms to promote their studios. They explore how to foster authentic engagement, celebrate student success, and extend the reach of teaching beyond the studio walls.

As readers consider these ideas, it is also important to keep in mind the professional and ethical responsibilities that accompany online sharing, including obtaining appropriate parental permission before posting images or videos of students.

Representing a wide range of experience and teaching settings, these colleagues remind us that when used intentionally, social media becomes a powerful tool for artistry, growth, and community. Their insights show that meaningful connection lies at the heart of creative teaching and musical storytelling.

—Desirée González-Miller, DMA, NCTM

Jeanetta C. Powell

When I started promoting Bull City Music School, I didn't have a large marketing budget. What I did have was a passion for music education and a smartphone. By understanding each platform's audience, I organically built a community that continues to grow.

TikTok: Reach Diverse, Younger Audiences

TikTok thrives on short-form video (15–60 seconds) that informs and entertains. I post quick practice tips and student breakthrough moments. The algorithm pushes content beyond existing followers—no advertising budget needed—making it perfect for bringing in diverse clientele.

Instagram: Visual Storytelling for Parents

Instagram connects with parents aged 25–45 who value authenticity. I share recital highlights



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Challenges, Possibilities, and Purpose*

Digital Music

*"Modern Family":
How to Navigate Teaching in Today's Society*

*From Burnout to Sustainable Joy:
Embodied Studio Business Transformation for Music
Teachers*

Making a Living as a Music Educator

The Limitations of Once-A-Week Lessons

*From the Gym to the Keyboard Lab:
Rethinking Group Piano through Engagement
and Spiral Learning*

*Repertoire Review/Refinement:
Lessons from the Language Learning Model*

*Beyond Accommodations:
Taking a Positive Approach to Teaching
Neurodivergent Students*



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■ HOW DO YOU...?

and use Stories for real teaching moments. This genuine approach builds trust without expensive production.

Facebook: Community Building

Facebook users prioritize community connection. I share student journeys, respond to every comment, and engage in local parent groups. These conversations converted more students than any paid ad.

Stay Adaptable and Own Your Audience

New platforms emerge constantly. Rather than chasing every trend, discover where your specific market frequently visits. Test, observe, and focus your energy accordingly.

Most importantly, always drive followers to subscribe to your email list. Social media algorithms change, and platforms rise and fall, but your email list belongs to you.

Consistency and authenticity matter more than budget. By meeting families where they spend time, showing up genuinely, and building an email community, I've grown Bull City Music School one post, one connection, one student at a time.

—*Jeanetta C. Powell is a pianist, music educator, entrepreneur, and founder of the Bull City Music School and Brown Sugar Music Project located in Durham, North Carolina.*

Brandon Bascom

One of the most effective ways to promote my studio on social media is by turning parents and grandparents into “micro-influencers.” At recitals, I reserve a front-row seat for the parent of the current performer so they can film without obstructions. By establishing a studio hashtag

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and sharing my social media handle, I make it easy for families to tag the studio when posting. Their authentic posts naturally reach other parents and potential students.

YouTube is another powerful tool for both promotion and education. Creating and organizing content into playlists allows for easy sharing and long-term use. Links and QR codes to these videos can be included in emails, newsletters, or apps such as PracticeSpace, Canvas, and Google Classroom. This extends the studio's online reach while reinforcing learning outside of lessons.

I also use NFC (near-field communication) tags which are small, inexpensive stickers or repurposed hotel keycards that can be programmed with an app to share digital resources with a tap of a smartphone. A binder or laminated sheet with these tags can provide instant access to playlists or videos.

Possible playlist ideas include music history listening lists, technique tutorials, repertoire by level, or dictation and ear-training exercises. Each type of playlist not only supports student learning but also serves as an engaging, shareable piece of studio branding. By combining social media engagement, reusable digital content, and innovative sharing tools, I can promote my studio effectively while creating a connected and inspired community of learners.

—Brandon Bascom, DMA, NCTM, holds degrees from the University of Iowa, University of Michigan, Manhattan School of Music, and Brigham Young University and serves as a professor at Fresno City College in California.

Vedrana Subotić

In today's connected world, social media offers piano teachers a dynamic platform to expand their

studio's reach, engage meaningfully with students, and attract new learners. By thoughtfully integrating an online presence with the artistry of piano instruction, teachers can strengthen their professional identity while cultivating a thriving musical community.

Begin by defining your teaching style. Share glimpses of your philosophy, practice methods, and studio culture through short videos, lesson clips, or performance highlights. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook provide ideal spaces to demonstrate piano techniques and celebrate student progress—always with permission and a focus on education rather than self-promotion.

For me, engagement means authentic connection. I invite conversation through practice tips, repertoire ideas, and insights into creative problem-solving. I respond thoughtfully to questions and comments, aiming to build an audience that values growth and musical understanding.

When I use social media for recruitment, I emphasize results and community rather than advertising. I share testimonials, recital moments, and collaborative projects that reveal the enthusiasm and progress within my studio. Consistent tone, visuals, and messaging communicate professionalism and reliability—qualities families appreciate in a teacher.

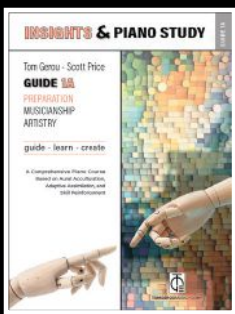
Ultimately, my goal is to make social media an extension of my teaching mission: to inspire musical excellence and lifelong enjoyment of the piano. Used intentionally, it transforms outreach into artistry and digital connection into genuine community.

—Vedrana Subotić, DMA, is a Steinway Artist and University of Utah professor who has performed worldwide, recorded for Sony and Centaur, and earned five performance degrees.

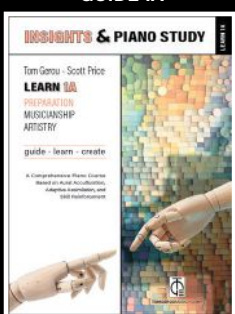
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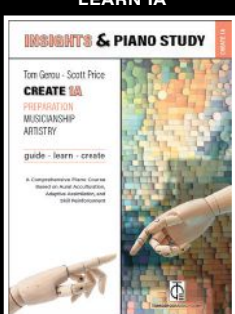
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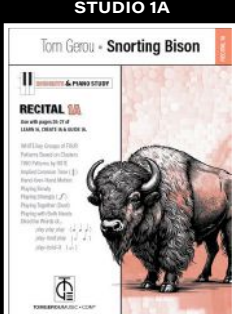
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■ Benjamin Wong

In today's world, social media is part of daily life, and when used well, it can be a powerful tool to promote a piano studio and connect with potential students. I primarily use Facebook and Instagram, which are conveniently linked, so one post reaches both platforms. My content falls into four categories: student performances, teaching tips, motivational quotes, and student highlights.

Student Performances: I record students preparing for recitals or competitions. Sharing polished performances not only showcases their hard work but also reflects the quality of teaching in the studio.

Teaching Tips: Short clips (around 30 seconds) with practical advice are engaging and easy to digest. These posts provide quick, useful insights that teachers, parents, and students appreciate.

Motivational Quotes: Everyone enjoys a moment of inspiration. I occasionally share uplifting quotes or words of wisdom to brighten someone's day.

Student Highlights: Not all students compete, so I assign meaningful projects tailored to their interests. For example, one student recorded five pieces by Elvis, her favorite rock star. I celebrated her project with a post, congratulating her achievement. These features make students feel special, and parents love to see their children recognized.

By combining these types of posts, social media becomes more than just promotion—it's a way to build community, inspire, and celebrate music-making. With creativity and consistency, social media can help any studio grow.

—Benjamin Wong, DMA, currently runs a private studio in Austin, Texas, teaching students who are frequent winners in local and international competitions.

■ Karali Hunter

Social media has become one of the most powerful tools for music teachers to promote their studios, build community, and attract new students. Platforms such as Instagram,

Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube allow teachers to showcase their expertise, highlight student success, and share in creative, authentic ways.

As a music school owner, social media is imperative. We post short performance clips, behind-the-scenes practice moments, and snippets from lessons that demonstrate teaching style. Sharing student achievements not only celebrates progress but also inspires prospective students and families. Educational posts, like practice tips or instrument care advice, help establish the teacher as a knowledgeable and generous professional voice in the community.

Consistency and personality are key. Teachers who post regularly and engage with followers create a sense of connection that extends beyond the studio walls. Social media stories and reels are especially effective for showing the human side of teaching: the laughter during lessons, the excitement of first performances, and the supportive environment that fosters growth.

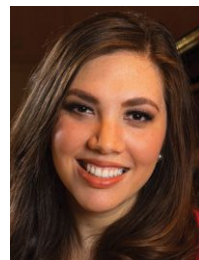
Paid promotions can also broaden reach, but they don't need to be your main focus. Ultimately, social media shouldn't be just about marketing—it's about storytelling. By sharing genuine moments and passion for music, you can transform your online presence into a vibrant extension of your studio's identity, attracting students who resonate with your teaching philosophy and artistic spirit!

—Karali Hunter, DMA, NCTM, is the owner and director of Hammer & Strings Conservatory in Gilbert, Arizona, and is an active performer and collaborator.

■ Desireé González-

Miller, DMA, NCTM, is an award-winning Mexican pianist and pedagogue. She frequently presents at national and international music conferences, where she advocates for Latin American piano repertoire.

González-Miller currently serves as adjunct piano faculty at Utah Valley University and is a co-founder of Premier Pianist.



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for more information and to apply.

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Neuroplasticity and Music

By Lesley McAllister, NCTM



After a few months of practicing on the Duolingo app, I stepped into a second-semester Portuguese class with high hopes and a healthy dose of fear. When the professor began teaching the whole class in Portuguese, I was so terrified that I nearly walked out of the class and never returned. Instead, I stayed—and surprised myself. To my amazement, I have now learned to understand and speak Portuguese (at least on an elementary level) with my much younger classmates. And the reason I was able to do this is because of *neuroplasticity*—the way the

brain rewires itself in response to how it is used.

It was previously believed that a midlife adult like me would not have the ability to learn a new skill or language. In the last half of the 20th century, scientists learned the brain is a work in progress that continues to remodel itself throughout our lives. Younger children are in the middle of a critical “neuroplastic window” when the brain is most plastic, but adult brains can also build new neural networks and improve cognitive functions. Music teachers who work with adults know firsthand

that older beginners can develop the bimanual coordination needed for the complex skill of playing an instrument.

When a neuron communicates with another cell, it creates a synapse. Synapses are strengthened when neurons continue to fire consecutively, improving skill and ensuring permanence. When networks are created between sensory, auditory, and motor areas, this forms a neural pathway. When William James proposed the term “plasticity” in the 1880s, he stated that the neural pathways become wider, deeper, and stronger as they are used repeatedly (Svard 2023, 59). Repeated actions and behaviors will eventually become automatic. This process is explained in a simple way by Hebb’s Law: “neurons that fire together, wire together” (Hebb 1949).

A series of experiments in the 1930s demonstrated that the skills one uses most take up a larger area of the brain. Wilder Penfield mapped the representative areas of the brain in the motor cortex (with highly coordinated motor skills) and the somatosensory cortex (which processes sensory information) in what he called a “homunculus” (1950). A 2001 study by Pascual-Leone demonstrated that in beginner pianists who practiced a right hand five-finger exercise every day, the size of the motor cortex corresponding to the fingers of the right hand grew (315–329).

Through functional neuroplasticity, or the brain’s ability to change how neurons function, musicians have been found to perceive pitch, timing, and timbre better; process auditory, motor, and visual information faster; and have better working memory than non-musicians.



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Because of structural neuroplasticity, musicians have more gray matter in the hippocampus and the cerebellum. Musicians also have a larger corpus callosum—the largest white matter structure in the brain that shares information between its two hemispheres (Svard 2023, 77).

The impact of musician-specific training is now being investigated through several types of imaging technology, including electroencephalography (EEG), which can identify areas of the brain that process musical elements. A recent study on EEG “microstates” showed trained musicians exhibit distinct brain activity patterns that facilitate tasks related to speech, vision, and attention regulation (Jiang and Zheng 2024).

Neuroplasticity is improved by exercise and movement activities, which help circulate blood flow (Savettiere et al. 2025), as well as play, which creates new neural pathways (Stewart, Field, and Echterling 2016). During play, mirror neurons build empathic attunement, and the secretion of oxytocin increases trust and reduces fear. Play engages social, emotional, and cognitive brain networks simultaneously, so students learn the material faster than they would with repetitive drills.

For those interested in learning more about neuroplasticity and music, Lois Svard’s book, *The Musical Brain*, has a chapter with even more detail about this subject (Svard 2023, 118–139). Neuroscientists often use musicians as research subjects because music is thought to be the most complex human activity. Furthermore, musicians’ neuroplasticity is driven by the intersection of cognitive, sensorimotor, and reward circuits in our brain that make us want to continue making music (Svard 2023, 78)—or learning a new language.

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How Nutrition and Fitness Affect Injury Risk

By Jennie Morton



Advising students to create good nutritional and fitness habits can sometimes be a tough sell. Yet when you can connect the dots of how doing so will not only improve performance but also reduce injury risk and improve general health, then students are often more encouraged to comply.

In the highly competitive world of the arts, musicians who have ongoing or recurrent injuries often find themselves hired less frequently. Health is currency, and time out for injuries is expensive for employers. So having a reputation as a healthy musician who shows up fit and ready is money in the bank!

Here are three key considerations for addressing dietary and fitness habits that can reduce health issues such as muscle soreness and injury risk.

Inflammation

You have probably heard the term “inflammatory foods,” but their effects are not localized to the gut. In my previous article

on stress, I mentioned that inflammation is a natural byproduct of the stress response. When you eat inflammatory foods (e.g., highly processed, acidic, etc.), then the body perceives them as a threat. Inflammation is produced as a means to neutralize this threat, but it is not confined to the gut. Rather, inflammation passes through the bloodstream to many parts of the body, including the muscles and joints. Inflammation is also a natural byproduct of exercise, so any additional inflammation from food intake adds to the mix, potentially increasing muscle soreness and exacerbating any pre-existing injuries. There is also a feedback loop between the gut and the brain (Carabotti, Scirocco, and Maselli 2015), so if an alarm goes off in the gut, the brain responds by initiating a stress response that produces (guess what . . . ?) more inflammation! This can create a vicious cycle of chronic pain that afflicts many musicians, but often they don’t look to gut health as part of the solution. Food is medicine, so eating lots of alkaline-producing

foods, such as dark green vegetables and blueberries, can reduce acidity and inflammation, and you will likely notice an improvement in any muscle and joint pain.

Cognition, Coordination, and Fatigue

Eating highly processed foods can also lead to issues such as brain fog and impaired cognition. If you can't think clearly, then it is also likely muscle coordination will be reduced—directly impacting the risk of injury. If the body is not given the fuel it needs from nutrient-dense foods, then fatigue will likely result, which can also increase injury risk (“Fatigue-Related Injuries” 2008). With the aforementioned gut-brain axis feedback in mind, a healthy gut is imperative for clear thinking and sharp senses, all of which are required for optimal performance.

Cardiovascular Fitness

I often ask musicians if they consider themselves to be athletes; their response is typically a look of bemusement. It has been said that musicians are the “athletes of the small muscles”—you may not be running a marathon, but the smaller muscle groups of the arms, shoulders, and neck are definitely undergoing their own endurance sport when playing an instrument. As mentioned in my previous article on body alignment, oxygen delivery to muscles is a key factor in reducing injury risk. The cardiovascular system is the pump that delivers this vital fuel to the muscles, so it also needs to be in good shape to do the job. Studies have shown that heart rate increases significantly during musical performance situations (Vellers, Irwin, and Lightfoot 2015), and there is a significant increase in cardiovascular demand between the rehearsal and performance environments (Iñesta et al. 2008). In performance, we have to take into account the effect of adrenaline due to nerves, which increases the heart rate before we have even begun playing. This means that simply practicing in the studio is not enough to meet the increased cardio demands of performance. Supplemental cardiovascular training is required to prepare the body for a stressful performance situation; otherwise there is a risk not only of injury, but also of greater health challenges from over-stressing the heart without adequate preparation. You wouldn't consider running a marathon without doing months

of training to increase your endurance, so the “athletes of the small muscles” need to apply this same level of rigor. Undertaking some form of aerobic endurance exercise will not only improve performance, but it will also increase muscle health while reducing fatigue, muscle soreness, and injury risk.

You now have some additional ways to encourage musicians to address their nutrition and fitness as a routine part of their music training. Remember: Health is wealth! ■

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THE SCIENCE OF PIANO Sight-Reading

Practical Applications for Teachers

By Jenny Jieun Park



Sight-reading is an essential skill for pianists, especially those trained in the Western classical tradition. Despite its importance, there is no single, widely accepted method for teaching sight-reading, leaving many piano teachers to navigate how best to develop this skill in their students. Over the past decade, research has increasingly shown that sight-reading is a teachable skill. Drawing from a recent article by Tarbet and Park (2023, 2–17), this piece aims to provide piano teachers with an overview of the latest research findings, emphasizing practical strategies they can apply in their lessons.

Overview of Past Decade of Sight-Reading Research

The past decade of research offers valuable insights into how sight-reading skills are developed and which teaching strategies are most effective. By examining 19 peer-reviewed studies, we can identify key patterns and best practices for fostering sight-reading ability. These studies can be grouped into three categories:

1. **Intervention Studies:** Focusing on how specific teaching methods affect sight-reading performance
2. **Cognitive Studies:** Exploring the mental processes involved in sight-reading
3. **Mixed-Method Studies:** Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand sight-reading development in pianists

This review presents key findings from each category, with a focus on how these insights can be applied in teaching practice to improve sight-reading skills in piano students.

Key Findings from Intervention Studies

Intervention studies often use a pre-test/post-test design to evaluate the effectiveness of different teaching approaches. These studies are particularly useful for teachers looking to introduce structured sight-reading curricula. Key findings from intervention studies include:

1. **The importance of regular practice and steady tempo:** A study by Hagen, Cremaschi, and Himonides (2012, 229–239) demonstrated that the use of technology, such as metronomes or specialized

sight-reading software, significantly improved students' sight-reading skills by helping them maintain a consistent tempo. A steady tempo is essential for fluent sight-reading, as it allows students to keep progressing through the music without hesitation. Piano educators are encouraged to incorporate daily sight-reading exercises into lessons, with the use of tools like metronomes to ensure students practice at a controlled, steady pace. Resources such as apps and online platforms can further facilitate structured practice, ensuring that students maintain consistent progress.

2. **Chunking musical information for cognitive efficiency:** Cognitive chunking, or the grouping of musical information into meaningful patterns, is a crucial strategy for improving sight-reading efficiency. Pike and Carter (2010, 231–246) found that students who were taught to recognize and internalize common rhythmic and melodic patterns performed better in sight-reading tasks. By teaching students to chunk information, such as recognizing intervals, chord shapes, or rhythmic patterns, teachers can reduce the cognitive load placed on students during sight-reading. For instance, students can learn to group notes by harmonic function (e.g., arpeggios or chord progressions) rather than processing each note individually. Educators might incorporate specific exercises that focus on pattern recognition to help students anticipate and quickly identify familiar structures in new pieces.
3. **Focusing on rhythm as a foundational skill:** Research conducted by Sampaio and Santiago (2020, 1–18) emphasized that rhythm is a critical element of sight-reading, with rhythm errors being more common than pitch errors. Their findings suggest that rhythm training should be a core component of sight-reading instruction. By isolating rhythm from pitch during sight-reading practice, students can develop a more solid rhythmic foundation, which will allow them to devote more cognitive resources to pitch accuracy and musicality. Teachers can also integrate rhythm-based sight-reading activities that challenge students to maintain a

steady pulse while navigating increasingly complex rhythmic patterns.

4. A hybrid approach to sight-reading

instruction: Zhukov et al. (2016, 155–167) demonstrated that a multifaceted approach to teaching sight-reading is more effective than focusing on a single skill area. In their study, students who practiced a combination of rhythm, harmonic analysis, and style achieved greater gains in sight-reading ability than those who focused on only one element. This hybrid approach recognizes that sight-reading involves multiple skills, including rhythmic accuracy, harmonic understanding, and the ability to maintain musical flow. In lessons, teachers might alternate between rhythm exercises, harmonic analysis of sight-reading passages, and hands-together playing, to ensure that students are developing all the necessary skills in tandem. This method not only addresses the complexity of sight-reading but also keeps lessons dynamic and engaging for students.

Cognitive Insights and Their Pedagogical Implications

Cognitive studies shed light on the mental processes behind sight-reading, offering useful information on how to tailor lessons to individual students' cognitive strengths. Themes from these studies include:

1. Enhancing the Eye-Hand Span (EHS): The Eye-Hand Span (EHS) refers to the distance between the notes a pianist is currently playing and the notes they are reading ahead in the score. Lim et al. (2019, 1–11) found that proficient sight-readers adjust their EHS according to the complexity of the music. In simpler passages, they read further ahead, while in more complex sections, their gaze is closer to where they are playing. Educators can help students develop a more effective EHS by encouraging them to practice looking ahead in the music while playing. One practical strategy involves using simpler sight-reading material to start, allowing students to develop the habit of scanning ahead without being overwhelmed by difficult passages. Gradually, as students become more comfortable, teachers can introduce more complex pieces to challenge their EHS

further. This practice builds the skill of anticipating upcoming notes and preparing mentally for shifts in rhythm or harmony.

2. Working memory capacity (WMC) and sight-reading proficiency: Studies by Arthur et al. (2021, 1006–1016) show that expert sight-readers have a significantly higher working memory capacity (WMC) than their less experienced counterparts. Working memory enables students to retain and process information simultaneously, which is essential for managing the multiple demands of sight-reading. Although WMC is a cognitive ability that varies among individuals, educators can enhance students' working memory through specific exercises. For instance, asking students to sight-read short passages and then play them from memory after one or two attempts can help strengthen their retention and recall abilities. Additionally, sight-reading tasks that involve gradually increasing the length or complexity of musical excerpts can further challenge and improve students' working memory.

3. Minimizing visual distractions for young learners: Research by Comeau (2014, 2–26) found that younger students are often distracted by colorful illustrations commonly included in beginner method books. This distraction can interfere with their ability to focus on the musical notation, thereby hindering their sight-reading progress. Teachers working with younger students should consider using materials that feature clear, uncluttered notation, allowing students to concentrate fully on the music. By removing unnecessary visual stimuli, educators can help young learners allocate their cognitive resources more effectively to the task of reading and interpreting the notes. Simplifying the visual field can be particularly beneficial in the early stages of sight-reading development, where students need to focus their attention on mastering fundamental skills.

Mixed-Method Studies and Their Practical Applications

Mixed-method studies combine surveys, interviews, and quantitative tests to explore

how personal experience and teaching environments influence sight-reading development. Findings from these studies centered on the following:

1. Collaborative playing and its impact on sight-reading: Several studies, including Zhukov (2014, 487–498), found that students who regularly engage in collaborative playing (e.g., duets or accompanying other musicians) tend to develop stronger sight-reading skills. Teachers can encourage this activity by incorporating duets into lessons or organizing group classes during which students sight-read together. Playing with others helps students maintain a steady tempo and avoid stopping to correct mistakes, building both fluency and confidence.

2. Fostering positive attitudes toward sight-reading: Özen, Eğilmez, and Engür (2017, 162–167) demonstrated that students with a positive attitude toward sight-reading and piano lessons tend to improve faster. To foster this positivity, teachers can create an encouraging environment where sight-reading is framed as an enjoyable and rewarding challenge, rather than a tedious exercise. By celebrating incremental progress and normalizing the learning process—including the inevitable mistakes—teachers can help students develop a growth mindset. A positive attitude toward sight-reading can increase students’ motivation to practice regularly, leading to sustained improvement over time.

Six Actionable Strategies for Teaching Sight-Reading

Drawing from the research discussed, these six strategies can help piano educators effectively teach sight-reading in a structured and engaging way:

1. Incorporate daily sight-reading into lessons: Regular sight-reading practice is essential for skill development. Assigning short, manageable pieces for daily practice allows students to build fluency incrementally. Teachers should aim to expose students to a variety of musical genres and styles, broadening their repertoire while keeping the material diverse and interesting.

2. Emphasize maintaining a steady tempo:

The ability to maintain a steady tempo is critical for sight-reading success. Teachers should encourage students to keep playing through mistakes rather than stopping to correct errors. Tools such as metronomes, tempo control apps, or playing along with recordings can help students internalize a consistent pulse, which is crucial for sight-reading fluency.

3. Develop chunking and pattern recognition skills:

By teaching students to recognize common musical patterns—such as scales, arpeggios, or harmonic progressions—teachers can help them process information more efficiently. These patterns become “chunks” that can be quickly recognized and processed during sight-reading, allowing students to focus on musicality and expression rather than deciphering individual notes.

4. Encourage collaborative music-making:

Collaborative playing, whether in duets, ensembles, or accompaniment, is a valuable tool for developing sight-reading skills. Teachers should incorporate duet repertoire into lessons or organize group classes where students can sight-read together. This approach not only develops sight-reading ability but also fosters musical interaction and ensemble skills.

5. Utilize technology for sight-reading practice:

Technology can be a powerful tool for improving sight-reading skills. Apps such as MakeMusic Cloud (formerly SmartMusic), Home Concert Xtreme, and Tempo SlowMo allow students to practice at a steady tempo, slow down complex passages, or play along with recorded accompaniments. These tools provide students with immediate feedback and can simulate real-world playing experiences, such as accompanying or ensemble work.

6. Develop positive attitudes toward sight-reading:

Foster a growth mindset in students, where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process. Praise their progress and focus on making sight-reading an enjoyable part of each lesson. Introducing

sight-reading as a fun challenge, rather than a test of skill, can boost their confidence and motivation.

Conclusion

Research from the last decade provides strong evidence that sight-reading is a skill that can be developed through targeted practice and effective teaching strategies. The studies suggest that a hybrid approach—focusing on rhythm, pattern recognition, collaborative playing, and the use of technology—offers the most promising results for building sight-reading ability.

For piano teachers, the key takeaway is to integrate sight-reading into regular lessons, use varied and engaging methods, and encourage students to see it as a rewarding skill they can improve over time. By doing so, teachers can help students not only become more proficient sight-readers but also more confident, well-rounded musicians.

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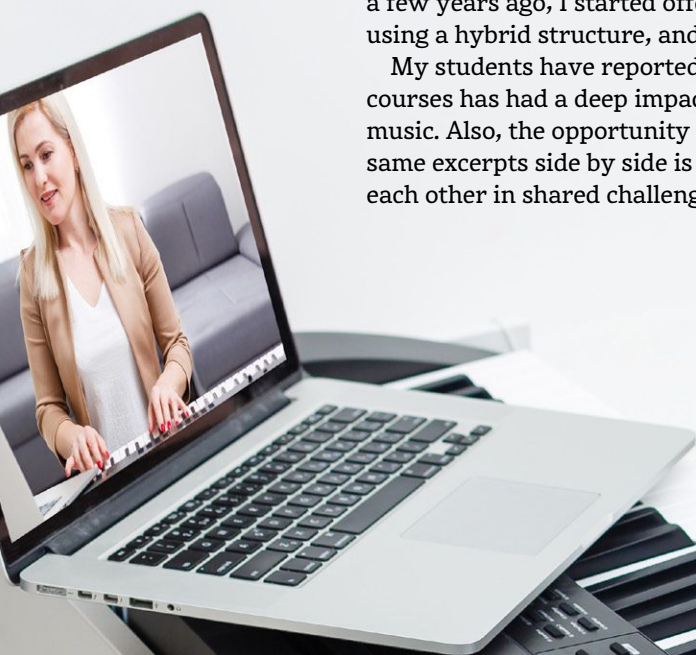
How to Create an **IMPACTFUL** **INTENSIVE COURSE** *for Your Music Studio*

By Hsing-ay Hsu

In a world where most people are practicing in isolation, the art of interactive, communal learning is increasingly desired (Columbia Center 2021). As music educators, we are in a unique position to create group learning experiences that accelerate our students' growth and facilitate deeper musical meaning.

Weekly lessons are rarely enough to explore any topic in depth. Students separated geographically from each other also need practical ways to form a community. These are some of the reasons why, a few years ago, I started offering annual intensive courses online or using a hybrid structure, and the results have been profound.

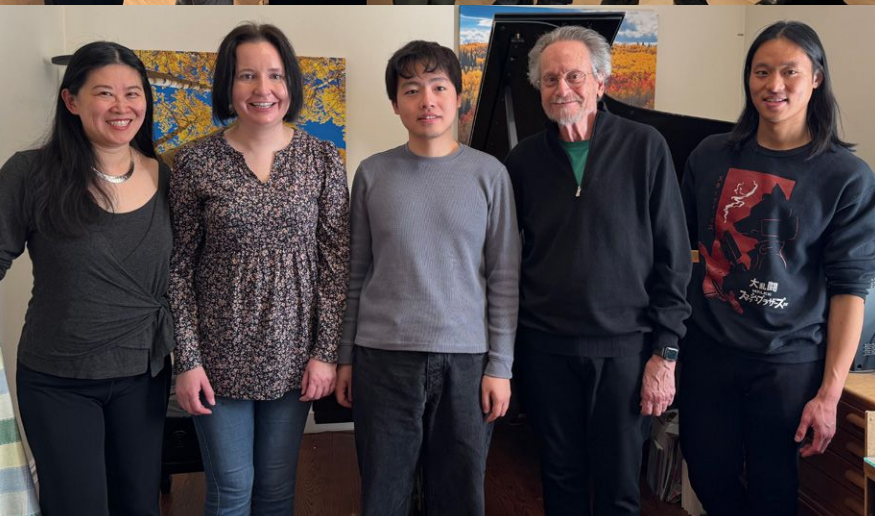
My students have reported that the in-depth approach of my courses has had a deep impact on how they practice and listen to music. Also, the opportunity to witness how their peers handle the same excerpts side by side is invigorating; they enjoy supporting each other in shared challenges.



How to Create an IMPACTFUL INTENSIVE COURSE for Your Music Studio

Offering a cyclical concentrated time every year not only creates anticipation and amplifies our students' passion, but it also elevates our own musical growth as teachers. Developing an intensive course is also our chance to try out all the things we wish our teachers had taught us, systematically and within a structured context. Lastly, it is a great way to create more visibility for new students trying to find us.

In this guide, I will first take you through the chronological steps to produce your own intensive course. Then in part 2, we will discuss how to make it more doable and meaningful for everyone—in three easy, practical steps.



The author, Hsing-ay Hsu, with her students

Part 1: The Life Cycle of Producing an Intensive Course

1. Pick Your Topic.

 About 10 months in advance, brainstorm potential topics with your students, focusing on what they would find most beneficial. Some of my intensives have been on “Harmonic Analysis for Performing,” “Orchestral Colors on the Piano,” “Artistic Practicing,” “Styles,” and this year, “Rubato.”

Using entrepreneurial principles, I employ five discovery skills to identify students' problem areas and find the most innovative solutions. These skills are:

- 1. Associating:** Start with students' personal interests to approach musical complexity.
- 2. Questioning:** Ask students direct questions to reveal their learning needs.
- 3. Observing:** Notice when students have trouble making progress.
- 4. Networking:** Consult other teachers on how to be of service.
- 5. Experimenting:** Instead of defaulting to familiar topics, focus on what students are most eager to learn.

Questions to consider:

- Do you want this program to be specifically for your students only, or do you want to open it to anyone who wants to participate?
- Do you have an age group in mind and a specific level of skill?

2. Choose the Frequency and Time of Year.

 Eight months in advance, identify a time frame that aligns well with your studio's schedule and avoids conflicts with any local events. Consider such questions as:

- Do you want weekly, biweekly, or monthly frequency?
- Do you want to space out these sessions so they don't distract from regular weekly lessons, or would they replace weekly lessons?

How to Create an IMPACTFUL INTENSIVE COURSE for Your Music Studio

3. Decide on the Format, Repertoire, and Pricing.



Six months in advance, finalize the topic to start finding suitable repertoire. Ask whether online or in-person format is easier for everyone. Technology can either connect or isolate us; the difference is in how and why it's used. Zoom has certainly enabled me to unite students across the country, and video homework allows me to check on progress mid-week.

You may want to determine an “early-bird pricing” that is low enough to be a motivator, while deciding on “regular pricing” that signals high value to the student demographic. I personally also offer a sliding scale to other educators with financial need. Remember to also communicate how you want students to register and pay.

4. Create a Landing Page and Syllabus, then Launch the Course.



Four months in advance, create an info page on your website and invite a core group to give feedback. Flush out a syllabus that organizes what you want to cover in each session. Then launch the course and start accepting registration and payment.

5. Promote and Refine the Content.



Two months in advance, engage in outreach and ensure a financial minimum is met. Promotion channels for students outside your studio might include Eventbrite and local community media. Schedule weekly time to research new teaching ideas, ensuring the content stays fresh and inspiring.

Part 2: Tips For Today's Lifestyles

1. Collaborate with Students to Motivate Them.

I cannot overstate how joyful it is to collaborate with students on choosing the topic and the repertoire. The matchmaking process not only improves the product, but more importantly, it facilitates teacher-student bonding and mutual respect. We live in a fragmented world, and you may be one of the few attentive adults in a student's life who genuinely wants to hear from them about what they need—a priceless gift.

2. Offer Flexible, Multi-Modal Engagement.

Everyone has their preferred learning modality, so I create multiple points of engagement with both synchronous and asynchronous feedback. I email score excerpts ahead of time, and we discuss everyone's point of view and may watch contrasting YouTube interpretations during the Zoom masterclasses. In case someone is too nervous or too busy, I also offer an independent study format for those students who don't feel ready for communal learning yet.

3. Embrace Modular Commitment.

Post-pandemic, students are less likely to commit to a whole course. So this year I made my intensive course modular, offering both a full-course discount and weekly drop-in options. This approach reduces commitment barriers and allows students to engage for the duration of time that best suits them. I also offer an add-on opportunity to perform in a masterclass in New York and the Denver area. This creates a hybrid experience for anyone who wants to perform live as well.

Ready to get started? Consider what topic would resonate most with your students and embark on a meaningful, immersive exploration.

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KEEPING UP WITH

Barbara Nissman

By Lucy Mauro

Pianist Barbara Nissman has had a remarkable international career over the past 50 years. From composer Alberto Ginastera dedicating his third piano sonata to her, to her “Barbara and Friends” classical music TV programs on the *BBC*, to more than 40 recordings—including being the first pianist to perform and record all of Prokofiev’s sonatas—Nissman has brought her singular artistry to audiences around the world.

Nissman is unique in being both a successful concert pianist and a respected scholar. She is the author of *Bartók and the Piano: A Performer’s View*, which contains a companion CD of excerpts of Bartók’s music performed by her, including the first performance of his 1898 Sonata that she discovered. She has also written numerous articles and created and produced a series of educational video masterclasses on Liszt, Ginastera, Prokofiev, and Rachmaninoff, documenting these composers’ lives and music in scrupulous detail.

Now in her sixth decade of performing, Nissman continues to bring her exuberance to concerts and scholarly work. As one audience member said recently, “Nissman’s performance of works by Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Beethoven, Chopin, and Liszt was superb . . . her love of music was experienced as manifestations of her soul” (Phillips 2024). Mark McCoy, a leader in academia and educating the 21st-century musician, described another performance by Nissman:

As I watched and listened in rapt joy and amazement, I came to realize that this is what the audience of today should expect: music, engagingly introduced and masterfully performed—performed with a conviction and passion reserved for only the very highest expressions of mankind . . . Hearing Barbara Nissman is a great treat; *watching* Barbara Nissman *while* hearing is a rare moment of musical bliss.” (McCoy 2014)

While the longevity of her career is in itself an inspiration, Nissman is committed to passing on her experience, sharing her encouragement and insights with students and teachers. The following interview was conducted over email and offers Nissman’s thoughts on her career, piano study, and teaching.

You have specialized in repertoire from the 19th and early 20th centuries—the Golden Age of piano music. How do we help young pianists interpret this music from an era that is so different from today?

Since I was a child, the piano has been my “secret” best friend, always transporting me to magical, faraway places. It was fun for me to imagine living long ago and personally knowing these great composers. That childhood fantasy became the inspiration for my “Barbara and Friends” TV series. I talked about the composers and humanized them, making their lives, their struggles and conflicts, and



their music relevant to any audience. These composers are writing about the universals of human existence, expressing emotions all of us share. By going back in time and trying to live in their world, the student can relate to their humanity, identify with their feelings, and learn to understand their language. They have stories to tell that go to the deepest part of our souls.

A knowledge of the past is essential. The student should venture beyond the notes to gain a deeper understanding of the composer's musical language. Become familiar with that historical period, its literature, its paintings. Explore the composer's writings—read the letters of the composers. To understand a Beethoven sonata, the student should also experience the greatness of his symphonies, become acquainted with his string quartets. An understanding of Beethoven's motivic language also aids in understanding what Prokofiev is doing in his music. Listen to Brahms's symphonies to understand his color sense at the keyboard and listen to Schubert's Lieder to uncover the purity of his melodic line. Immerse yourself completely in the period the composition was written.

When I was putting together the masterclass video about Liszt and his B Minor Sonata, I started by reading through all his letters; I also wanted to know what Liszt's contemporaries had to say about him. Doing so allowed me to go back to the 19th century and enter his world.

How can one understand the sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev if one has no knowledge of the man and his history, the culture in which he grew up, and the tragedies he endured in later life? Of course, it's all there within the music, but reading about the man gives us a road map of his musical journey—a window to observe his humanity. Prokofiev was a wonderful storyteller, and his diaries reveal his wit, his passion, and his unique character.

How has your practicing changed over the years? What advice do you have for teachers to encourage effective practicing for their students?

My first piano teacher strongly believed in repetition, which was how I practiced as a youngster. Looking back, I realize the danger of thwarting the student's natural musicality by only advocating rote practice and blind repetition. Attention to phrasing and musical line should always be emphasized, and of course, the joy of making music encouraged!

Only later did I acquire a knowledge of form and harmonic language. At the University of Michigan, I studied with György Sándor for seven years until receiving my doctorate. I arrived with a natural facility for the instrument but no knowledge of piano technique; everything was instinctive and played mainly using fingers. Sándor was able to logically explain every pianistic problem. To

my finger technique, use of the wrist and upper arm was added, as well as using gravity to produce a big tone. Forcing was always avoided. My university years were spent learning lots of repertoire and molding a personal and natural approach at the keyboard. I recall spending many hours trying to master those first measures of Ravel's "Ondine" and the difficult "Feux Follets" of Liszt.

A student should be encouraged to initially grasp the total structure of a composition before working out details. That is the way I work. Knowledge of form is essential to pace the dramatic climaxes, to shape the entire work. Then all the details can follow. Learning the notes and solving the technical problems represent only the beginning of our musical journey. After that, the fun can begin—peeling away all the layers to uncover musical meaning and arrive at a personal conception.

Pedaling in Prokofiev's music can be particularly challenging, with notes that need to be sustained through dissonant harmonies and articulations that are contrasting, to name a few issues. How do you handle these pedaling challenges?

The most important advice is always to listen, as what might work on one piano or in one hall might not be applicable to all situations. Pedaling should never be etched in stone.

Prokofiev is an excellent teacher for pedaling and using the middle sostenuto pedal. Even though he had long arms and a large span, it is impossible for pianists to physically sustain so many of the bass notes in his scores. Once learned, using the middle pedal is an extraordinary aid in sustaining sonority and clarifying harmonies. I love using it because it gives music the "bottom" that is often needed and provides wonderful color possibilities. Here again, we practice by listening so that technique becomes second nature and adaptable to any set of circumstances.

People have conflicting impressions about Liszt and his music, which can significantly influence how his works are performed. Was he just a showman? Did his religious devotion influence all of his music? What do you think are some of the biggest misconceptions about him and his music?

I created the video masterclass, *Franz Liszt: Portrait of the Man and his Masterwork*, mainly to undo so much of the misunderstanding that has surrounded this composer. Of course, Liszt was a showman, truly an artist who appealed to the masses and also one of the greatest virtuosos who ever lived; however, I believe Liszt has not been given his rightful place as a serious composer. So often his music is approached with attention only to

its technical bravura, which maligns its serious significance and promotes the circus-performer stereotype. Just listen to his masterwork, the *Sonata in B minor*. It's revolutionary because of its unique form and thematic structure, but it is also deeply spiritual. Liszt bares his religious soul in this confessional to his Maker and represents the struggle between Life and Death.

Liszt has also been frequently misjudged as a human being. Often forgotten is Liszt's generosity: A large portion of his earnings was given to the poor and various causes, and he was always championing fellow musicians and younger composers. Liszt was a religious man and a serious artist. His music deserves to be approached with reverence and respect.

You've started a foundation, Three Oranges, a name inspired by Prokofiev's opera. What is your intent with it?

I established Three Oranges in 2017 to spread the joys of classical music—making it accessible to a wider audience and relevant to all who listen. I believe that music is the most direct path to the heart and necessary for nurturing the human spirit. To feel the joy and magic of music is a gift that should be available to everyone. The Foundation is building a reference library of audio and visual materials of recordings and masterclasses for future generations to explore.

What have been some of the highlights of your career?

It was a huge thrill for me to play with the Philadelphia Orchestra, my hometown band, and make my professional debut with Eugene Ormandy conducting, at the Academy of Music. I went to concerts there as a young student and would sit way up in the amphitheater and dream of playing with that orchestra. I also remember the thrill of playing for the very first time in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, one of the most beautiful concert halls in Europe. I just returned to Amsterdam last summer as a special guest for the Prinsengracht summer concert. I am proud to say that more than 40 years ago, I helped initiate this city's summer tradition. It was a memorable evening back then: As they were lowering the piano onto the barge, they dropped it; the lid was fractured, but the piano was re-tuned, and the show went on!

What was it like as you built your career in Europe?

Eugene Ormandy took me to his European manager, who arranged my first concert tour in the 1970s with debut recitals in all the major capitals. My first concert was in Copenhagen with great success, and I was

immediately re-engaged for a second recital several months later. There were so many more opportunities than in America. A country like the Netherlands, the size of Kentucky, boasted 28 orchestras at the time. Imagine that! When an orchestra engaged you, you not only played the central city but also did additional run-out concerts to sold-out audiences—invaluable experience for a young performer. They didn't wait 10 years to re-engage you, either. They wanted to hear you in other repertoire, so there were many opportunities to build a following throughout all of Europe. That's why I stayed there for more than 10 years, based in Amsterdam and then in London.

What advice do you have for teachers preparing students for undergraduate and graduate study in piano performance?

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of advising students to learn as much repertoire as possible. So many young pianists are involved with competitions and keep playing the same repertoire. There is a definite advantage to learning difficult repertoire when you are young. I performed Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata on my senior recital. Only later, when I was more mature, did I realize what a monument it was. I find great joy in returning to repertoire that I learned or performed years ago. Fortunately, we grow and mature and enhance our experiences, and thus, bring new insights to a piece of music. We can always go deeper. There is no such thing as achieving perfection. There always remains more distance to be traveled!

AMT

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Lucy Mauro teaches at West Virginia University. Her publications include *Essential Keyboard Trios*, *Essential Two-Piano Repertoire*, *Essential Keyboard Duets*, Vols. 4 and 5 (*Alfred Publishing*), and *The Piano Proficiency Exam Review Book* (*Oxford University Press*).



DEC. 26, 1876

by William S. Mathis

**From Florida, MTNA's newest affiliate,
comes a survey of the parent
organization's first 75 years.**

FROM its humble beginnings, through difficult growing years, the Music Teachers National Association is now a fellowship of persons banded together by the common interests of the teaching and advancement of music in America. During its seventy-fifth year, with the founding of AMERICAN MUSIC TEACHER and the continuing affiliation of state organizations with the National Association, it is evident that the experience of age and the enthusiasm of youth are with MTNA.

Seventy-five years ago, on December 26, 1876, a small group of musicians from various parts of the United States met in Delaware, Ohio, on the invitation of Theodore Presser. The members of the group had one common interest, that of improving music teaching. What would be accomplished at this meeting in the small

mid-western city before the turn of the century could not be foreseen. However, a meeting of sixty-two teachers including such dignitaries as George W. Chadwick, Calvin B. Cady, Karl Merz, William H. Dana, Fenelon B. Rice, and George F. Root, each concerned with the future of music in the United States, could not fail to make a mark on musical America.

This was the beginning of the Music Teachers National Association. At the time, there were nine state organizations which affiliated with the association. Now MTNA has grown to include more than sixty organization members, both state and local, throughout the country.

The potential membership of MTNA is now more than 100,000, but the objectives of these founding fathers could not be calculated solely in numbers. Only those who

have experienced the "growing pains" of the organization: those who have attended the business sessions, the various programs; those who have served the organization as officers can fully appreciate the contributions of a group working to improve not only music teaching but all phases of life in which music plays a part.

Early Years

During the formative years, records of meetings, which were held at comparatively irregular intervals, were sketchy. Today there is scarcely a complete set of Proceedings. What records are available give account of meetings at which students were exploited for the glorification of their teachers. Indeed, the meetings were little more than series of concerts connected by papers dealing with musical subjects, usually pedagogical in nature.

Even with these weaknesses the organization made contributions. Discussions and consequent recommendations by MTNA influenced in no small way the establishing of an international standard pitch, an invaluable contribution. No doubt the

discussions and recommendations on the matter of international copyright laws were influential in the passing of copyright laws which offer more and more protection to the composer and the author. And what organist is not indebted to MTNA for the help it rendered in the establishing of the standard pedal keyboard for organs? These, which we take for granted every day, were once points for vital discussion at the meetings of MTNA.

In 1906 a movement, begun much earlier in the minds of far-sighted individuals, to increase the effectiveness of the meetings and the publications, showed definite action. It was at this meeting that Calvin B. Cady presented the new constitution and By-laws. At this time, it was decided that the Proceedings should take on their present character, the same as that of scholarly publications in other fields, and the 1906 edition of the Proceedings is an indication that MTNA had laid firm foundations. Articles on many phases of music, written by such men as Frank Damrosch, Peter C. Lutkin, and O. G. Sonneck, show scholarly study and thoughtful writing. From its purely pedagogical beginnings, the Association was now issuing a volume of scholarly papers aimed at the advancement of musical knowledge, not at personal exploitation.

By the time the 1920 edition of the Proceedings was published, articles had appeared on such subjects as American music, organ and

choral music, community music, history of music, libraries, public school music, music appreciation, and standardization and affiliation. Not only had articles appeared on all of these topics, but special conferences had been held in each, with additional conferences in piano, voice, theory, orchestra, college music, and church music, MTNA had come of age. It had become the organization that had been the vision of its founding fathers—an organization of music teachers serving all phases of music and study. It had matured with an attitude of mutual helpfulness, enlightenment, and cooperation.

One has only to take a glance at the imposing list of standing committees of the Association to realize the progress made through the wisdom of age and the daring of youth to venture.

The primary interest of MTNA has always been directed toward the private teacher. The importance of the private teacher in the musical life of America was realized at the beginning of the organization. This was self-evident in the fact that the improvement of private teaching brought serious consideration to the minds of some of the most illustrious musicians of the time. In the hands of the private teachers lies America's musical future: The concert artist, the composer, the arranger, the church musician, the musicologist, the music educator, and the person who performs in

his own home—all of these were once the responsibility of a private teacher. It is not surprising that the membership of MTNA includes musicians of every type and stature. Each is interested in improving his own teaching, and in the advancement of music teaching in general.

Another of the active interests of the Association during all the years has been the furthering of American music. One of the standing committees of the Association is the Committee on American Music. Concerts are presented at the annual meetings, giving American composers the opportunity to be heard by an august body of interested musicians.

From its beginnings, the Association has been actively interested in American Public School Music. Doubtless, much of the tremendous growth and success of this important movement can be attributed to members of the Music Teachers National Association, and this interest has been intensified by the activities of the standing Committee on Music Education.

The publications, the meetings, and the esprit de corps of the Music Teachers National Association have reflected a devotion to the purpose of the organization, "... the advancement of musical knowledge in the United States."

To the future of MTNA its history is the challenge.





CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



2026 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



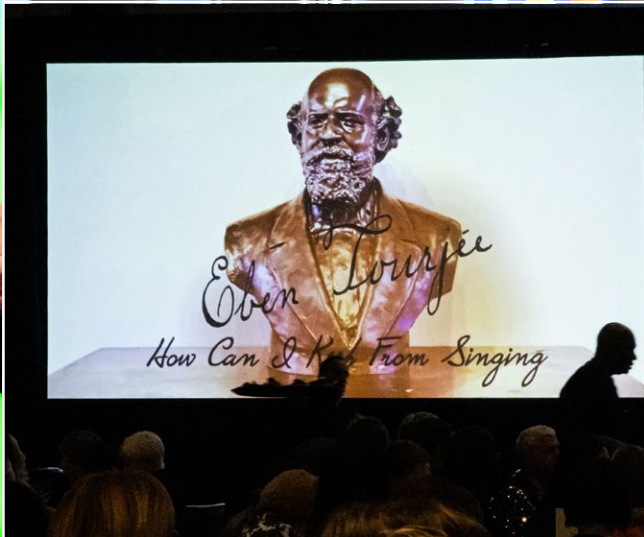
2026 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



2026 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



2026 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



2026 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS





CONFERENCE AWARDS

For more information about the 2026 award recipients, visit mtna.org.



Randall Faber, center, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard



Jane Magrath, NCTM, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard



Scott Price, NCTM, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard



Rebecca Grooms Johnson, NCTM, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard

2026 CONFERENCE AWARDS

MTNA Advocacy Award for Impact on the Music Teaching Profession | Judith Anne Still and Helen Walker-Hill

Judith Anne Still (unable to attend)
Helen Walker-Hill (posthumous)

Accepting the award on behalf of his mother, Helen, was Gregory Walker, center, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard.



Gary L. Ingle State Leadership Service Award | Mark Stevens

Mark Stevens, NCTM, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, MTNA CEO Emeritus Gary L. Ingle, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard

Local Association of the Year Award | Des Moines MTA



Des Moines MTA President Mary Beth Shaffer, NCTM, with fellow affiliate members and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard (left) and MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM (right)

State Affiliate of the Year | Maine MTA



MMTA President Amy Irish, NCTM, accepted the award from MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard.

2026 CONFERENCE AWARDS



Collegiate Chapter of the Year | Utah State University

President Ginny Bastian and advisor Cahill Smith with the Utah State University MTNA Collegiate Chapter, MTNA CEO Brian Shepard, and MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM



Stecher and Horowitz Power of Innovation Award | Brock Chart

Brock Chart with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard



Stecher and Horowitz Foundation—\$10,000 Melvin Stecher and Norman Horowitz Career Grant | Jacob Wang

Jacob Wang with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard



Stecher and Horowitz Foundation—MTNA \$10,000 Joyce B. Cowin Career Grant | Madeline Rogers

Madeline Rogers, NCTM, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard



Stecher and Horowitz Foundation—MTNA \$25,000 Gateway Prize for Advancement in the Arts | Katherine Benson

Katherine Benson, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, MTNA CEO Emeritus Gary L. Ingle, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard

2026 CONFERENCE AWARDS



Pamela D. Pike, NCTM, pictured with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard, won for her article "Fueling the Flame: Sustaining a Career in Music without Burning Out," published in the October/November 2025 AMT.



Karen Gerelus, pictured with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard, won for her article "Envisioning a Future Musical Self: Identities of Dropout and Continuing Adolescent Piano Students," published in the April 2025 eJournal.

MarySue Harris Studio Teacher Fellowship



Madelyn Morrell (unable to attend)

2026 CONFERENCE AWARDS



Frances Clark Keyboard Pedagogy Award | Teaching Piano Pedagogy

Teaching Piano Pedagogy: A Guidebook for Training Effective Teachers author Courtney Crappell, NCTM, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, Frances Clark Center President & CEO Jennifer Snow, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard



Thomas Ediger Distinguished Composer of the Year | Benjamin Krause

Spaces Real or Imagined, by Benjamin Krause, was commissioned by the Michigan Music Teachers Association. Composer Benjamin Krause, right, with MTNA Commissioned Composer Program Chair Ann Witherspoon, left

2026–2028 MTNA Board of Directors



Left to right: MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM; Michael Dean, NCTM; Victoria Fischer Faw, NCTM; Jason Sifford, NCTM; Yeeseon Kwon, NCTM; Peter Mack, NCTM; Beth Gigante Klingenstein, NCTM; Jeffery Kleinsorge, NCTM; Noreen Wenjen, NCTM; MTNA CEO Brian Shepard; Theresa Bogard, NCTM; Hendry Wijaya, NCTM.

Not pictured: Artina McCain and Paula Manwaring, NCTM

50-Year Members



Of the nearly 100 50-year members this year, 26 were in attendance and recognized at the Awards Brunch.

(Left to right) MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard with Carmen Hall, NCTM, State Presidents Advisory Council Chair; Luis Sanchez, 2026 Conference Planning Committee Chair; Siok Lian Tan, NCTM, East Central Division Certification Commissioner; Katie Levine, Young Professionals Advisory Council Chair; and Victoria Fischer Faw, NCTM, accepting on behalf of Diane Blanchard, NCTM, Southern Division Certification Commissioner

Not pictured: Lori Serr, NCTM, Southwest Division Certification Commissioner

Leadership Service Recognitions



Leadership Service Recognitions



MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM, and MTNA CEO Brian Shepard honored the seven outgoing Division Directors, left to right:

Alison Barr, NCTM, Eastern Division Director
Nicholas Phillips, NCTM, East Central Division Director
Steven Hesla, NCTM, Northwest Division Director
Courtney Crappell, NCTM, South Central Division Director
Joy Poole, Southern Division Director
Kassandra Weleck, NCTM, Southwest Division Director
Cyndie Caruth, NCTM, West Central Division Director

MTNA FOUNDATION Fellows



Thirty-four individuals were named MTNA FOUNDATION Fellows by their colleagues and honored at the MTNA Gala.

MTNA

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visit mtna.org/tempo for more details



2025–2026 MTNA NATIONAL COMPETITION SPONSORS



Lillian Tan, winner of the Junior Composition Competition,
pictured with Heath Mathews of Alfred Music



Isabel Feng, winner of the Chopin Prize for the Best Chopin
Performance by Junior Solo Piano, with Lee Clifford, of the Chopin
Foundation of the United States

2026 COMPETITION SPONSORS



Isabel Feng, winner of the MTNA-Kawai America Junior Piano Competition, with Cory Callies of Kawai America Corporation



Enzo Zhao, winner of the Senior Piano Performance Competition, with Jalissa Gascho and Heratch Touresian of Yamaha Corporation of America



Duo Callisto's Chelsea Ahn and Gloriana Wolf, winners of the MTNA-Stecher & Horowitz Two Piano Competition, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM.



Kaitlyn Ouyang and Lucas Pei, winners of the MTNA-Weekley & Arganbright Senior Piano Duet Competition, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM



Vitalii Khairutdinov, winner of the MTNA-Steinway & Sons Young Artist Piano Competition, with MTNA President Kevin T. Chance, NCTM

DIVISION DIRECTORS-ELECT

The ballots have been counted, and the results are in! Meet your 2026–2028 Division Directors-Elect, who will become Division Directors to serve on the MTNA Board of Directors for 2028–2030.

Northwest Division

Lynda Lybeck-Robinson, NCTM
(Alaska)



West Central Division

Andrew Cooperstock, NCTM
(Colorado)



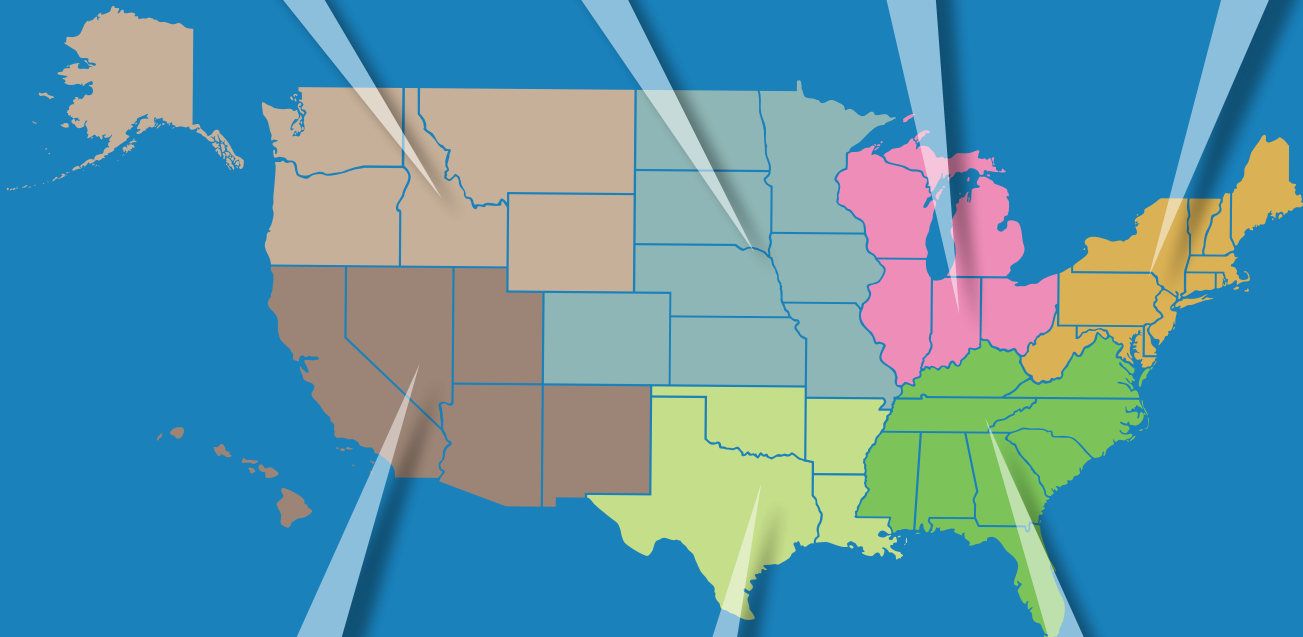
East Central Division

Lori Rhoden, NCTM
(Indiana)



Eastern Division

Junko Takahashi
(Maryland)



Southwest Division
Brandon Bascom, NCTM
(California)



South Central Division
Catharine Lysinger, NCTM
(Texas)



Southern Division
Amanda Montgomery, NCTM
(South Carolina)

DID YOU KNOW ... ?

MEMBERSHIP

The 2026–2027 MTNA Membership Year begins July 1. **Renew your membership** no later than June 30 to continue receiving all MTNA member benefits!

MTNA recently launched a new website! Informed by years of valuable member feedback, the new mtna.org improves the online member experience with a more attractive, user-friendly design, improved search functionalities, and many other features to better support you.

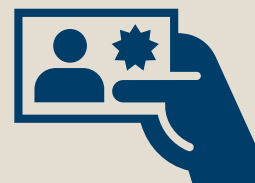


GP3, the **National Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Forum**, will be held August 7–8, 2026, at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio. Check the MTNA website for details.

TEMPO

MTNA hosts its second **TEMPO virtual conference** on Friday, June 26. Find schedule and registration details at mtna.org/TEMPO.

MTNA has **patron and retired membership categories**. Find the details in the Membership section of the website.



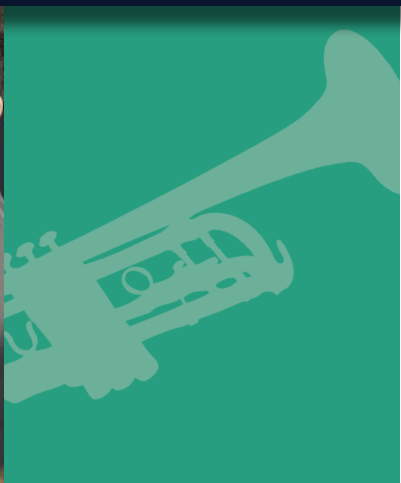
FROM THE ARCHIVES



The **current membership dues collection structure** of dues being paid to national then national reimbursing states and locals was first used for the 1989–1990 membership year.

AMT's first theme issue, June/July 1990, focused on the adult music student and featured five articles on the topic.

Effective with the 1992–1993 membership year, **MTNA student members** were able to receive 50% off active national membership dues.



2025–2026 NATIONAL WINNERS



* Denotes Division Winner not competing in National Finals.
** Denotes Division Alternate competing in National Finals.



COMPOSITION COMPETITIONS

MTNA–Alfred Elementary Composition Competition

Winner: Kevin Lou, Southwest Division, (California); Su-Shing Chiu, teacher

Kevin Lou, a 9-year-old student at Brywood Elementary School in Irvine, California, began his musical studies at age 5 at the Irvine Yamaha Music Center. He completed the Junior Music Course and graduated from the Junior Special Advanced Course under Ms. Su-Shing Chiu. Kevin earned the Outstanding Award at the Yamaha National Concerts in 2024 and 2025 and is a two-time MTAC Composers Today state winner. He also enjoys reading, swimming, and playing tennis.



Second Place: Claire Yang, Eastern Division (Massachusetts); David Ibbett, teacher

Third Place: Faith Eugenia Scott, West Central Division (Iowa); Rosa Scott, teacher

MTNA–Alfred Junior Composition Competition

Winner: Lillian Tan, Southwest Division (Arizona); Karalyn Schubring, teacher

Lillian Tan, age 12, lives in Chandler, Arizona. She has been composing as a student at East Valley Yamaha Music School for more than four years and is mentored by Ms. Karalyn Schubring. She loves piano, reading, and swimming.



Second Place: Alex Landry, South Central Division (Texas); Jessica Eubanks, teacher

Third Place: William Zelevinsky, Eastern Division (Massachusetts); Tanya Schwartzman, teacher

Senior Composition Competition

Winner: Grant Qu, South Central Division (Texas); Liang Liang, teacher

Grant Qu is a 16-year-old composer, pianist, and clarinetist from Austin, Texas. He began studying piano at age 5 and composition at 10, earning numerous awards in international, national, and state competitions. His honors include First Degree Winner of the Finland Jean Sibelius International Junior Composition Competition; First Place (two-time) in the National Federation of Music Clubs Composition Contest; Third Place (two-time) in



the MTNA Composition Competition; and multiple first-place prizes from the Texas MTA. Grant's compositions include solo works, chamber ensembles, and symphonic music, often inspired by nature—a ray of sunlight, a drop of rain, or a gust of wind.

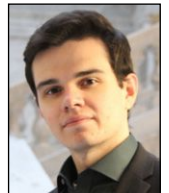
Second Place: Coby Kassner, West Central Division (Colorado); Aaron Stampfl, teacher

Third Place: Iris Li, Southwest Division (Arizona); Karalyn Schubring, teacher

Young Artist Composition Competition

Winner: Andreas Landstedt, West Central Division (Missouri); Sean Chen, teacher

Andreas Landstedt is a classical and jazz pianist and composer from Los Lunas, New Mexico. He has won state-level competitions in New Mexico and Missouri, attended international festivals in five countries, and performed four concertos as a soloist with orchestra. Cofounder of the award-winning AndEs Piano Duo and the Border Bones chamber ensemble, Andreas holds degrees from the University of New Mexico and UMKC Conservatory, where he is currently pursuing an Artist's Certificate under Sean Chen.



Second Place: GianCarlo Lay, Southwest Division (Arizona); Christopher Creviston, teacher

Third Place: Sylvia Wood, Northwest Division (Montana); Christopher Hahn, teacher

MTNA JUNIOR PERFORMANCE COMPETITIONS

MTNA–Kawai America Corporation Junior Piano Competition

Winner: Isabel Feng, Southwest Division (California); Yoshikazu Nagai, teacher

Isabel Feng studies under Yoshikazu Nagai at SFCM Pre-College. She is the first-prize winner of all three CAPMT California State Competitions and the MTAC Piano Concerto Solo State Competition. She has also won first prize at the San Jose International Piano Competition and grand prize at Xinghai Cup Piano Competition in China. Isabel has been featured as a soloist with Folsom Lake College Youth Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra Virtuosi Brunenses, and Florence Conservatory Orchestra.



2025–2026 COMPETITION WINNERS

Second Place: Ethan Mihaescu, East Central Division (Michigan); Catherine Rollin, teacher

Third Place: Yuzhe Chen, Southern Division (Virginia); Dmitri Nazarenko, teacher

Chopin Prize: Isabel Feng, Southwest Division (California); Yoshikazu Nagai, teacher

MTNA Junior String Competition

Winner: Daniel Liu, East Central Division (Michigan); Eun-song Koh and Malcolm Lowe, teachers

Daniel Liu began studying violin at age 4. He won the 2024 MTNA Junior String Competition (East Central Division) and the Detroit Civic Youth Ensemble Concerto Competition. As a member of the Slatkin Quartet, coached by Hai-Xin Wu, he won the 2025 MASTA Chamber Music Competition. Since 2023, Daniel has performed with the Detroit Symphony Youth Orchestra, serving twice as concertmaster. He studies violin with Malcolm Lowe, Eun-song Koh, and Kyoko Kashiwagi.



Second Place: Justin Lee, Southern Division (Virginia); Clara Kim, teacher

Third Place: Yosef Kogan, Eastern Division (New York); Viktor Basis, teacher

MTNA Junior Woodwind Competition

Winner: Annie Liu, Northwest Division (Washington); Bonnie Blanchard, teacher

Annie Liu, a sixth-grade student at Chinook Middle School, is the first chair flutist for the Debut of Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestra. She began her flute studies at age 8 and has been recognized with numerous awards in various competitions. Beyond her musical talents, Annie actively pursues other artistic and athletic interests, including dancing, singing, and cross-country running. Her diverse passions highlight her curiosity and creativity, contributing to her development as a well-rounded young artist.



Second Place: Lucy Kessler, Southern Division (Virginia); Kathleen Jacobi, teacher

Third Place: Mason Jeong, Southwest Division (California); Youngji Song, teacher

MTNA SENIOR PERFORMANCE COMPETITIONS

MTNA Senior Brass Competition

Winner: Keenan Reynolds (South Carolina); Jared Theismann, teacher

Keenan Reynolds was encouraged by his mother to play the horn for his sixth-grade band class. Skeptical at first, he quickly became captivated by the instrument's sound and role in the ensemble. That early spark grew into serious dedication, leading him to join chamber groups, philharmonic orchestras, and clinics such as All-State Band and Orchestra and USC Band Clinic. As he continues his education, Keenan hopes to stay active in performing groups, guided by his passion for music.



Second Place: Evan Zhang (Maryland); Ken Wolff, teacher

MTNA-Yamaha Corporation of America Senior Piano Competition

Winner: Enzo Zhao, Northwest Division (Washington); Oksana Ezhokina, teacher

Enzo Zhao is a 16-year-old pianist from Tacoma, Washington, currently studying with Dr. Oksana Ejokina. Enzo has competed in local and international events, including Washington State MTA, Chopin NW with the Seattle Symphony, and the PianoTexas Concerto Competition with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. Enzo has had the privilege of participating in masterclasses with distinguished artists, including Yefim Bronfman, Yakov Kasman, Boris Slutsky, Angela Cheng, Anton Nel, and Gil Kalish.



Second Place: Chris Hao, South Central Division (Texas); John Weems, teacher

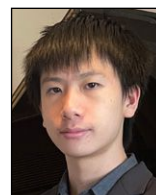
Third Place: Evelina Kleczek, Eastern Division (Washington, D.C.); Martin Labazevitch, teacher

Chopin Prize

Evelyn Linblad Folland Award

Winner: Chris Hao, South Central Division (Texas); John Weems, teacher

Chris Hao is a sophomore at Klein Cain High School. He began learning piano at age seven and currently studies under the guidance of John Weems. His musical accomplishments include recognition in several piano competitions, such as top prizes in the Denison University



2025–2026 COMPETITION WINNERS

International Piano Competition and the Oberlin Piano Festival Competition. Besides piano, he can regularly be found reading a novel or playing chess. He also plays the violin in his school's chamber orchestra.

MTNA–Weekley & Arganbright Senior Piano Duet Competition

Winner: Kaitlyn Ouyang and Lucas Pei, South Central Division (Texas); Alex and Marcy McDonald, teachers

Kaitlyn Ouyang is in the 11th grade at The Hockaday School in Dallas, Texas. She has won prizes at numerous competitions in many levels, notably a two-time TMTA state winner. In 2021, she made her orchestra debut as a soloist with the Fort Worth Symphony orchestra and in 2022 and 2023, she was featured as a soloist with the Central Texas Philharmonic. Outside of piano, she is a varsity rower, a nationally ranked debater, and an international Model UN prize winner.



Lucas Pei began his piano studies at the age of 4. He has earned top honors in numerous competitions, including First Prize at the 2024 Baylor/Waco Concerto Piano Competition and multiple First Prizes at DMTA Symphonic Festival Piano Competitions. Lucas also was the Winner of the South Central Division and National Finalist in the 2025 MTNA Junior Piano Competition, as well as a finalist in the 2025 Arthur Fraser Piano Competition. Lucas currently studies under Marcy McDonald and Alex McDonald.



Second Place: Conan Yang and Samuel Cronk, Eastern Division (New Jersey); Veda Zuponicic, teacher

Third Place: Megan Lai and Brandon Sang-Zheng, Southern Division (Virginia); Nancy O'Neill Breth, teacher

MTNA Senior String Competition

Winner: Jesse Krentz, Northwest Division (Washington); Kevin Krentz, teacher

Jesse Krentz, 17, is a Seattle native and studies cello with his father, Kevin Krentz. Jesse is an alumnus of From the Top and the Morningside Music Bridge program, and he has been featured live on Seattle's Classical KING-FM. He has earned numerous awards and prizes, including top honors in the Slava International Cello Competition, Central Oregon Symphony Concerto Competition, Seattle



Youth Symphony Concerto Competition, Radda Rise International String Competition, and second place at the 2022 MTNA National Junior Strings Competition among others.

Second Place: Emily Chen, East Central Division (Illinois); Almita Vamos, teacher

Third Place: Leila Warren, Southern Division (Florida); Shannon Thomas, teacher

MTNA Senior Voice Competition

Winner: Chimdindu "Chimdi" Nnamani (North Carolina); Ted Federle, teacher

Chimdindu "Chimdi" Nnamani, from Flower Mound, Texas, is an emerging classical singer. A student of Duke University instructor Ted Federle, he earned third place in the William Warfield Classical Vocal Competition and Outstanding High School Male at the 2025 NC NATS Auditions. He was named First Chair/Section Leader at the 47th Annual National Military Band and Chorus Festival and has performed as a soloist with the NBA G League and Virginia International Raceway.



Second Place: Olivia Xia (California); Hiroko Yoshinaga, teacher

Third Place: Mara Bryan (Florida); Jeanie Darnell, teacher

MTNA Woodwind Competition

Winner: Xueheng Wang, Northwest Division (Washington); Fred Winkler, teacher

Xueheng Wang, originally from Beijing, is currently a junior at Newport High School in Bellevue, Washington. She began studying saxophone at age 8 and served as the principal saxophonist and piano accompanist for the Beijing SHIJIA Wind Ensemble from 2017 to 2020. She is the winner of 2025–2026 Washington State MTNA Senior Woodwind Competition and 2025 WMEA/WIAA Solo Contest. She is currently studying with Professor Fred Winkler and previously studied with Mr. Dylan Hong.



Second Place: Soomin Oh, South Central Division (Texas); Monica Song, teacher

Third Place: Silas Gollnick, West Central Division (Iowa); Jae-Hyun Ryoo, teacher

2025–2026 COMPETITION WINNERS

MTNA YOUNG ARTIST PERFORMANCE COMPETITIONS

MTNA Young Artist Brass Competition

Winner: Jihong Son (Michigan); David Jackson, teacher

Jihong Son, a tenor trombonist, is currently pursuing his Doctor of Music Arts and Master of Chamber Music degrees at the University of Michigan under Professor David Jackson's guidance. His experience extends to teaching positions and performing in various summer music festivals, further emphasizing his commitment to both performance and education in the trombone community. He has had many opportunities to learn from and play for world-renowned trombonists in masterclass settings as well.



Second Place: Samuel Cooper (Idaho); Mark Thiele, teacher

Third Place: Jonah Hammett (Georgia); Jean Martin-Williams, teacher

MTNA–Steinway & Sons Young Artist Piano Competition

Winner: Vitalii Khairutdinov, Eastern Division (New Jersey); Veda Zuponic, teacher

Vitalii Khairutdinov began his musical journey in the Boys' Choir School in Perm. He later studied at the Central Music School in Moscow with N.N. Makarova and at the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory under Professors M.S. Voskresensky and Yu.V. Martynov. A laureate of international competitions, he has performed in major concert venues in Russia and abroad. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he left the country and now continues his development at Rowan University with Professor Veda Zuponic.



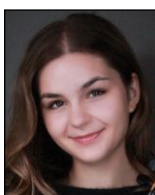
Second Place: Tang-Hsing Lien, West Central Division (Colorado); Stephanie Cheng, teacher

Third Place: Daae Kim, East Central Division (Indiana); Norman Krieger, teacher

MTNA Young Artist String Competition

Winner: Iris Shepherd, Southern Division (Tennessee); Cornelia Heard, teacher

Iris Shepherd, a student of Cornelia Heard, made her orchestral debut at age 12 with the Georgia Philharmonic and has since appeared as soloist with the Fairbanks Symphony, the Curb Youth Symphony, the Nashville Philharmonic,



and the Vanderbilt University Orchestra. No stranger to MTNA, she previously won the National Senior Strings Competition at age 15 and has earned top prizes in competitions sponsored by the Nashville Symphony, Delta Symphony, and the American String Teachers Association.

Second Place: Daria Oleinik, South Central Division (Texas); Alexander Sitkovetsky, teacher

Third Place: Pavlo Kyrlyuk, South Central Division (Illinois); Almita Vamos, teacher

MTNA Young Artist Voice Competition

Winner: Olivia Tice (Iowa); Leanne Freeman-Miller, teacher

Olivia Tice is a junior mezzo-soprano studying music education and vocal performance under Leanne Freeman-Miller. Olivia won third place in the Young Artist Voice Division at the Music Teachers National Association competition in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2025. She played Carmen in Drake University's performance of *Carmen* in 2026. She also performed as the Third Lady in Drake's performance of *Die Zauberflöte* and was the soloist for the world premiere of the symphonic choral work, "Los Pastores."



Second Place: Leah Mendelin (Iowa); Leanne Freeman-Miller, teacher

Third Place: Emilia Jurzyk (Iowa); Leanne Freeman-Miller, teacher

MTNA Young Artist Woodwind Competition

Winner: Matthew Hrinda, East Central Division (Indiana); Otis Murphy, teacher

Matthew Hrinda is a saxophonist pursuing graduate studies at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he was awarded the Performer's Certificate. He holds a Bachelor of Music and Performer's Certificate from the Eastman School of Music, performing with the Eastman Wind Ensemble, Eastman Saxophone Project, and Cypher Quartet. Matthew has earned awards in the NASA, Vandoren, Lima Symphony Orchestra, Fischhoff, NOLA, and Coltman competitions. His primary teachers are Otis Murphy and Chien-Kwan Lin.



Second Place: Preston Hernandez, South Central Division (Louisiana); Kendra Wheeler, teacher

Third Place: Cailin McGarry, Southern Division (Florida); Jeff Keesecker, teacher

MTNA CHAMBER MUSIC COMPETITIONS

MTNA–Allen I. McHose Scholarship Fund Chamber Music String Competition Oscar Raoul Iotti Award

Winner: Skyline Piano Quintet, of Columbus State University: Ruiqi Wang, violin; Yu-Tong Li, violin; Aurimar Hernandez, viola; Brian Cortes-Bofill, cello; Jerry Zhang, piano; Samuel Vargas, coach

The Skyline Piano Quintet, based at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University, was founded in Fall 2025 under the coaching of Professor Samuel Vargas.

The ensemble has performed in school chamber concerts as well as community events such as Music Under the Dome and programs at Spring Harbor. Skyline has also recently participated in a masterclass from the Bayberry String Quartet, enriching expressive and collaborative elements of their chamber performances.

Second Place: Canelé String Quartet, of the University of Texas at Austin: Zichuan (Kevin) Wang, violin; Summer Bradshaw, violin; Yusong Zhao, viola; Yilin (Selina) Xu, cello; William Fedkenheuer, coach

Third Place: Cantilène Trio, of the University of Georgia: Alexis Boylan, violin; Yun Qu Tan, saxophone; Aly Soriano, piano; Brandon Quarles, coach



MTNA–Allen I. McHose Scholarship Fund Chamber Music Wind Competition

Winner: Synchrony Quartet, of Northwestern University: Philip Kleutgens, soprano saxophone; Hudson O'Reilly, alto saxophone; Matthew Johnson, tenor saxophone; Haven Kahn, baritone saxophone; Taimur Sullivan, coach

The Synchrony Quartet, founded in 2025, comprises students from Professor Taimur Sullivan's studio at Northwestern University. The ensemble highlights the saxophone quartet's dynamic sound world, performing contemporary works and transcriptions of traditional repertoire. Winners of major chamber music competitions including Fischhoff, MTNA,



and NASA, Synchrony Quartet features Philip Kleutgens, Hudson O'Reilly, Matthew Johnson, and Haven Kahn. Their mission is to explore diverse styles, collaborate with living composers, and engage audiences through innovative programming.

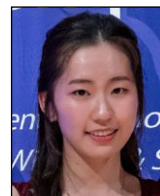
Second Place: Novus, of the University of Oklahoma: Jacob Bissonnette, soprano saxophone; Coleman Kading, alto saxophone; Kevin Barton, tenor saxophone; Matthew Dietrich, baritone saxophone; Myles Boothroyd, coach

Third Place: Bar Before Quintet, of the University of Colorado Boulder: Corva Graham, flute; Luka Vezmar, oboe; Nikhila Narayana, clarinet; Nathan Bonin, horn; David Guy, bassoon; Christina Jennings, coach

MTNA–STECHER AND HOROWITZ TWO PIANO COMPETITION

Winner: Duo Callisto: Chelsea Ahn and Gloriana Wolf

Chelsea Ahn recently performed concertos with the Elora Festival, the Niagara Symphony Orchestra, and the Royal Conservatory Orchestra. As part of Duo Callisto, she obtained second prize in the Glenn Gould School Chamber Competition. In the summer, she took part in the Music Academy of the West, Sarasota Festival, PianoTexas, Chautauqua, and the Aspen Festival. She has an Artist Diploma from the Glenn Gould School and is pursuing her Master of Music at the University of Michigan under Logan Skelton, where she is also a graduate student instructor.



Gloriana Wolf, a native of Minneapolis, earned her BM in piano performance from the University of Texas at Austin with Anton Nel and her MM from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music under the guidance of Sharon Mann. Currently, she is working toward her Artist Diploma at the Glenn Gould School of Music with James Anagnoson and Li Wang, where she was awarded the Dorothy Johnson Joyce Memorial Scholarship.



Second Place: Fei Chen and Benjamin Tran

Third Place: William Chiang and Valerie Narumi

REVIEWS

Review items may be available in additional formats; prices may vary.

PIANO SOLO

Solo Celebration Books 1–5

edited by Davis Dorrough

Alfred Music, 2025, alfred.com; 23–27 pp. each, \$9.99–\$10.99 each

Solo Celebration is a graded collection of original piano solos published in 2025 by Alfred. There are five volumes, each with 10 pieces by various composers. The bright cover designs reflect the colorful and characterful music found within. Ranging from Early Elementary to Intermediate, these anthologies offer engaging and inspiring repertoire to supplement core curricula.

The first two volumes feature pieces with child-like, imaginative titles. Pieces in Book 1 use almost entirely melodic writing with minimal hands-together playing, with many teacher duets provided. Book 2 is more adventurous tonally, as well as in the use of both

hands. In both volumes, many pieces feature lyrics, though the prosody of the text is not always aligned with the metrical stresses of the music. The moods of these pieces range from humorous (“My Sasquatch”) to serious (“Celestial Lullaby”). Pieces in these volumes would serve well as lateral material for students in methods at these levels.

Books 3 and 4 feature writing that is more pianistic and performance-appropriate. There are no lyrics, but the music uses sound imagery,

such as the effect of a cat walking across the piano in “Sassy Cat.” While key signatures are kept to a minimum, there are instances of adventurous tonalities throughout, such as the clusters in “Crash Toccata,” or the quartal harmonies in “4ths on the Run.” Catherine Rollin’s “Blues for Mr. Gershwin” is particularly delightful. Many of these pieces are etude-like and would be ideal for honing a specific concept or skill.

At the Intermediate level, the final volume showcases storytelling through use of titles

and creative compositional devices. The musical elements in this volume include compound meters, mixed meters, polyrhythms, and greater emphasis on syncopation. Key signatures through 3 sharps are used, as well as interval spans through an octave. Styles include contemporary-lyrical (“Song with No Words,” “Alone,” “Sun in the Clouds”), jazz and blues (“Lucy’s Groove”), as well as two waltzes that provide snippets of Chopin-esque melodies. These pieces would be ideal for advancing pianists in need of short, patterned pieces that provide just enough challenge.

This collection can be useful for students and teachers as a bridge to standard repertoire, or as lateral pieces for solidifying skills while engaging students’ creativity and imagination.

—Katie Ostrosky, NCTM
Baltimore, Maryland



Kanade

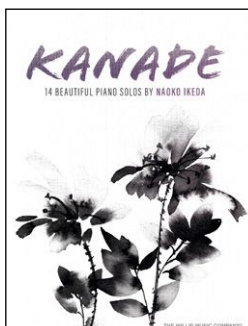
by Naoko Ikeda

The Willis Music Company, 2025, willispianomusic.com; 39 pp., \$14.99

I really enjoyed the opportunity to review *Kanade*, a new publication by Japanese composer Naoko Ikeda. For a few years, I have frequently incorporated music from another of Ikeda’s collections, *Miyabi: Five Japanese Impressions for Piano Solo*, into my teaching. *Kanade* includes compositions infused with various contemporary styles, including jazz, blues, and Broadway standards. I often look for appealing works that combine sound pedagogical writing with sophisticated music that is accessible to less advanced students. For adult students, it is difficult to find wonderful music that sounds “grown up” and can still be learned within a reasonable time frame. This collection provides a wealth of lovely

tunes and rich harmonies that appeal to all types of students and performers.

The writing is excellent, with interesting titles and a variety of moods. The overall feel for most of the repertoire is a lyrical, moderate tempo, with



a similar style throughout the collection. There are performance notes at the beginning of the book that give very helpful insights into the 14 pieces included in *Kanade*. Styles range from cool jazz, syncopated rhythms, blues, Latin, Broadway/standards, and contemporary/New Age.

Selections range from Easier/Intermediate to more Intermediate/Advanced. The collection would be very accessible for more musically sophisticated musicians who are not stretched by the limits of their level and technique. It is perfect for adult students! My only critique would be the lack of fingering in the edition. It would be a good project to use with students who are moving into more advanced repertoire and need to work on independent choices regarding fingering. I would recommend *Kanade* as a very nice addition to your current music library. Thank you, Naoko Ikeda, for such an appealing collection!

—Scott Donald, NCTM
Austin, Texas

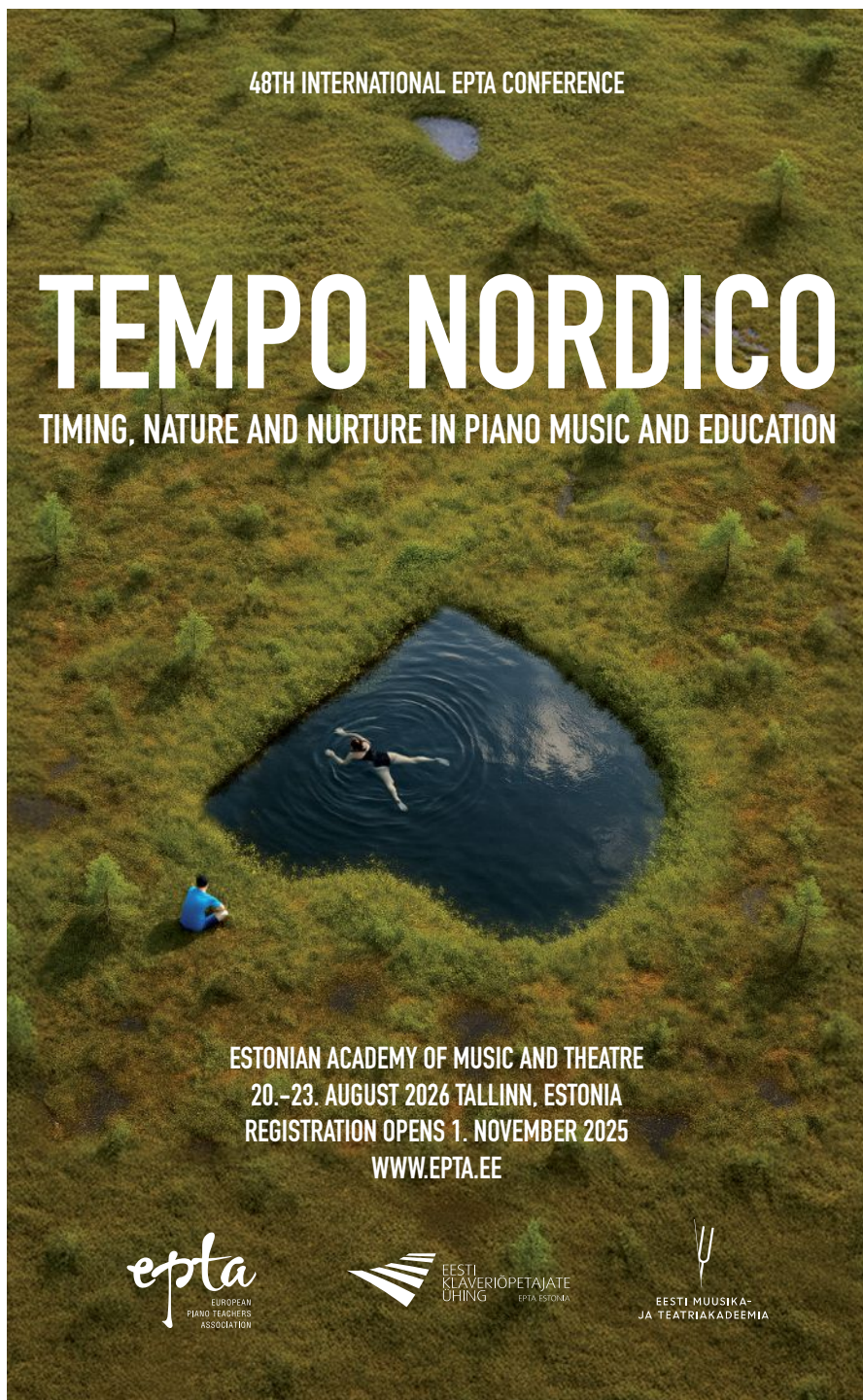
PIANO

Bluey: First Ever Piano Book **By Joff Bush**

Faber Music, Ltd., 2025,
fabermusic.com; 40 pp., £8.99

The popular TV show “Bluey” features relatable canine characters and a blend of classical music and original compositions in the soundtrack. *Bluey: First Ever Piano Book* combines the favorite characters and music with piano pedagogy to create an at-home book meant to be enjoyed by both children and their grown-ups.

This is not a traditional method book, nor is it simply a book of songs from the show; rather, it is a “shared experience for both grown-ups and kids” so they can “discover the magic of playing piano together.” Practical teaching tips help grown-ups of any



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experience level become their child's guide as they learn basic principles such as note values, keyboard layout, finger numbers, and how to read easy music on the grand staff. Games and activities reinforce musical concepts, and the book even includes stickers to accompany some of these games.

The pedagogy and sequencing are sound. Pieces include a mix of original compositions and classical works like "In the Hall of the Mountain King" and "Ode to Joy." The credits list Bluey composer Joff Bush as well as an early childhood music consultant and more than 20 official testers, many of whom are also music educators. The team has clearly



put care into helping children "learn to fall in love with music."

This is the most colorful piano book I've ever seen. Every page has margin-to-margin full-color illustrations. Activities and sheet music are beautifully integrated into scenes from

popular episodes of the TV show.

The final pages show how to play the "Bluey Theme Tune," an exciting end to the journey. This book is perfect for young children who show interest in piano but aren't quite ready for formal study. It is also a wonderful resource for anyone who wants to spend more time making music at home with their children.

—Angela Marshall, MME
Bethany, Oklahoma

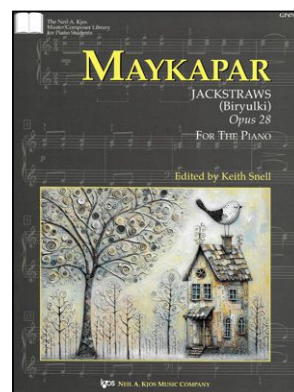


Maykapar: Jackstraws (Biryulki)**edited by Keith Snell**Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 2025, kjos.com;
57 pp., \$9.50

Part of the Neil A. Kjos Master Composer Library, and edited by Keith Snell, this volume presents a collection of 26 short character pieces by Samuel Maykapar (Op. 28, *Biryulki*). The pieces span from early to late intermediate, offering a wide range of musical styles and moods. Each piece is given a descriptive title, encouraging imaginative engagement and helping students connect musically to the character and narrative. While the first piece is quite accessible—roughly early intermediate—the collection is not sequenced progressively by difficulty; teachers should therefore assign pieces selectively rather than sequentially. Providing short recital pieces (many are one to two pages, with a few extending to

three pages), the collection offers musically rich works without the commitment of longer pieces.

In this edition, articulation and phrasing markings are clearly and thoughtfully notated. The volume includes helpful background information on the composer as well as context for the title *Biryulki*. The engraving is bold, spacious, and highly legible, benefiting both students and teachers (especially during long teaching days). The layout avoids visual clutter, making it easy to read and teach from. The thematic index includes the opening measures of each piece, allowing teachers and students



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to browse efficiently beyond titles alone. Currently, this collection is not included in the publisher's downloadable recording library—a valuable future project for the publisher.

While playing through the collection, No. 6 (“Worrying Moment”), No. 7 (“Polka”), No. 10 (“Fairy Tale”), No. 15 (“Lullaby”), No. 20 (“Gavotte”), and No. 25 (“Romance”) were our favorites for recital performance. In addition, No. 18 (“Fuguetta”) serves as an excellent early introduction to contrapuntal writing, at an easier level than J. S. Bach’s two-part inventions. Nos. 14 and 24, both written in a funeral-march style, are accessible at the early-intermediate level, yet offer surprising interpretative depth.

—Judith Jain and Juan Lopez
Tampa, Florida

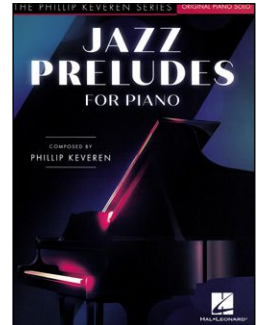
Jazz Preludes for Piano

By Phillip Keveren

Hal Leonard Corporation,
2025, halleonard.com; 37
pp., \$14.99

Phillip Keveren’s *Jazz Preludes for Piano* is an intermediate collection that gives students a taste of jazz styles and jazz piano greats. The styles included here are jazz ballad, waltz, Latin, blues, and fusion. In the performance notes, teachers are encouraged to seek out recordings for the specific styles, songs, and pianists listed as inspiration for each prelude.

Chord symbols are conveniently included in all but two of the pieces. I found all were fitting for intermediate levels—no big leaps in register—the widest interval is a seventh. Teachers will



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find plenty of moments to introduce different qualities of 7th and 9th chords. Prelude No. 11 gives students the perfect example with broken chords that move Fmaj7 -F7 -Fm7 -Fm7b5 -Fdim7. It's a creative, flowing piece for experiencing the flavor of each jazz chord.

I had some students sight-read a few pieces, and I also played some for them. A couple of the Preludes have very frequent chord changes that were challenging. A student favorite was No. 7, which has a breezy, happy jazz guitar left-hand "strum." I found No. 5, a 12-bar blues with a walking bass, to be the ideal introductory piece from the book.

Pieces referring to jazz greats include No. 3, a throw-back to Dave Brubeck's "Take Five." Prelude 4 is in the style of Brazilian composer Antônio Carlos Jobim, while No. 12 is a tango in tribute to Argentinian composer Astor Piazzolla. My favorite is Prelude No. 8 in the style of Dave Grusin's jazz fusion style. This is also the only four-page piece—others are two pages long. This introduction to the jazz piano world will give your students cool, refreshing performance and contest pieces. A Volume 2 would be welcome!

—Wendy Kyle McGee, NCTM
Athens, Alabama

National Library of Israel, as he had Ukrainian Jewish roots. Imagine the excitement of the editor, Natálie Krátká, to discover this unpublished gem when she visited that library!

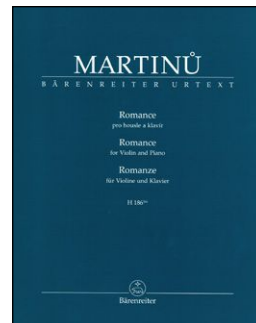
Romance is *Andante moderato* and about three minutes long. It is for intermediate to advanced violinists, using some 5th position. An expressive vibrato is needed for flowing phrases and intense peaks. There are unpredictable rhythms, including some five- and six-note beats, along with one meter change from 4/4 to 5/4, which stays for only one measure. Numerous accidentals require accurate intonation to match the piano.

The opening immediately reminded me of Gershwin. The piece travels through full and surprising piano harmonies, in Martinů fashion, with a singing melody in the violin. A series of sixteenth-note runs build to the peak of the piece, which is also the highest pitch (F#), marked *expressivo molto*. Then a beautiful descending line uses a repeated rhythmic pattern until the end, where the listener can no longer feel a beat, as a ritard is written out rhythmically. The peaceful ending has the violin sustaining a G, while the piano resolves underneath from mysterious chords to a simple B-flat chord, making a blue-sounding major 6 chord that made me smile.

This piece is perfect for a recital program or for someone seeking a short contemporary work required for a festival. The edition is urtext, with almost all notation from Martinů. His phrase marks are often too long for one bow stroke, so editing is necessary for practical slurs.

One can find a nice recording, performed by Leora Cohen and Paul Wingfield, on YouTube.

—Lily Li Burton, NCTM
Camas, Washington



■ PIANO & VIOLIN

Romance for Violin and Piano by Bohuslav Martinů

Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2025,
baerenreiter.com; 4 pp., € 10.50

Romance for Violin and Piano by Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959) was discovered in 2022. It belonged to a French photographer and violinist, Boris Lipnitski, who had photographed Martinů's wedding. The piece is dedicated to him. When Lipnitski passed away, some possessions were donated to the

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

■ NEWS

Fischhoff Award

The Fischhoff National Chamber Music Association announces Amo Brass as the winner of Fischhoff's 2026 Ann Divine Educator Award.

This national award recognizes the educational outreach work of Fischhoff Competition alumni who have demonstrated outstanding and imaginative programming for children and youth in the United States. It honors musicians who have established professional careers in chamber music and have proven their ability to successfully build a career in both chamber music performance and educational outreach.

Named in honor of longtime Fischhoff Executive Director Ann

Divine who retired in 2018, this award recognizes her visionary leadership in cultivating community outreach through chamber music. As winner of the Ann Divine Educator Award, Amo Brass will receive an endorsement from Fischhoff, a cash award, and a weeklong residency in St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties in November to conduct workshops and master classes and to perform interactive concerts in schools, community centers, and libraries.

Amo Brass is a quintet of Yale School of Music alumni who came together in 2020 as a group of friends wanting to safely make music outside during a pandemic. Featuring Connor Holland and Josh Bialkin on trumpet, Olivia Martinez on horn, David Seder on trombone, and Vivian Kung on tuba, Amo Brass received Fischhoff's American Brass Quintet Prize at Fischhoff's 50th Anniversary Competition in 2023.

■ EVENTS

Roomful of Pianos

For the second year, MTNA is partnering with Make Music Day to lead an initiative called "Roomful of Pianos." On Saturday, June 21, piano stores around the country will open their doors to MTNA local affiliates and host multi-piano performances. The events are completely free.

To learn about how your affiliate can get involved, contact MTNA Membership Development Director Ryan Greene at rgreene@mtna.org.

For details about other Make Music Day events in your area, visit makemusicday.org.

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JUNE 21

American Piano Awards 2027 Jazz Finalists

American Piano Awards has named five finalists for its 2027 jazz competition: Joe Block, Caelan



**AMERICAN
PIANO
AWARDS**

Cardello, Brandon Goldberg, Connor Rohrer, and Brahm Sasner. They were

selected through a blind audition process from nominations submitted by more than 300 piano educators, artists, and industry professionals nationwide.

The finalists will compete for the Cole Porter Fellowship and more than \$200,000 in prizes and career support, with the finals set for April 24, 2027, in Indianapolis.

Follow along at pianoawards.org.

59th NATS National Conference

The 2026 National Association for Teachers of Singing conference is set for July 3–7 in San Antonio. This biennial conference provides opportunities for NATS members, voice professionals, students, and others from around the

world to share in educational programs, demonstrations, lectures, masterclasses, and competitions.

Registration and more information is available at nats.org.

Virtual String Teachers Summit

MTNA has partnered with the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) to host the upcoming Virtual String Teachers Summit, a two-day online, synchronous event to build tools, develop techniques, and connect with colleagues from around the world. The theme of this event is *Expanding the Score: Amplifying opportunities for every string student, teacher, and performer*.

Held July 13–14, 2026, this fully virtual experience will bring together thousands of educators from around the world for inspiring keynotes, education sessions, and meaningful connections—all accessible from wherever you teach.

This global summit is hosted by the American String Teachers Association, College Music Society, European String Teachers Association, Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, Music Teachers National Association, National Association for Music Education, Suzuki Association of the Americas, and Tennessee Music Education Association.

MTNA members are eligible for discounted registration rates. Visit mtna.org/VSTS.html for more information and to register.

2026 CMS Conference

The College Music Society will hold its 69th National Conference at the Amway Grand Plaza in Grand Rapids, Michigan, November 12–14, 2026, in conjunction with the Association for Technology in Music Instruction (ATMI).

The 2026 CMS National Conference theme is “Adaptive Advocacy: Collegiate Music Training at a Crossroads.” The conference aims to envision what a vibrant future of music education, creation, performance, and scholarship might look like, in conversation with community-based action, coalition-building, advocacy, and innovative practice across all those realms.

Find more details at music.org.

■ COMPETITIONS

YCA Auditions



Applications for the 2026 Young Concert Artist Susan Wadsworth International Auditions are open, with a deadline of August 3.

YCA’s rigorous audition process identifies the most extraordinary musicians to become recipients of the YCA Jacobs Fellowship. This transformative three-year program takes artists to new levels of creative growth, offering a holistic combination of digital tools, mentorship, project development, performance opportunities, and training in education and community engagement.

YCA welcomes applications for a variety of instruments. More details can be found at yca.org/auditions.

Chicago Violin Competition

Applications are now open for the 2026 Chicago Violin Competition, with a deadline of August 31. The competition will be held November 22, 2026.

The Chicago Violin Competition (CVC), an international online video competition, is a platform for young artists to perform, learn, and grow on a world stage.

Learn more and apply at chicagoviolincompetition.org

Spotlight International Piano Competition

SPOTLIGHT



Arts & Culture
Foundation

Spotlight Arts & Culture Foundation announces its 2027 Spotlight International Piano Competition, with more than \$20,000 in cash prizes. Now in its fourth season, the competition welcomes pianists worldwide, ages 10 to 35, to participate in its two-stage journey: the global online competition and the live Grand Prize and Winner’s Concert, to be held June 2027.

Applications will be available at tsacf.org beginning October 15.

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The MTNA eFestival is an online-only performance opportunity where you receive a constructive critique from a highly qualified evaluator.

Evaluations are accepted for solo piano, brass, woodwind, strings, voice, guitar/mandolin, ukulele, organ, harp, percussion and chamber music (maximum six).

**For more information,
visit mtna.org or email
mtnaefestival@mtna.org.**

ADVERTISERS INDEX

Alfred Music	C-I
American Guild of Organists.....	60
CFMTA.....	9
Chopin Academy of Music Group	15
College Music Society	62
DS Standard Foundation	63
EPTA.....	59
Faber Piano Adventures	C-III
Frances Clark Center	61
Keys to Imagination	15
Modern Piano Moving.....	63
My Music Staff.....	1
National Federation of Music Clubs.....	67
Piano Marvel	6-7
Piano Technicians Guild	62
The Royal Conservatory of Music.....	C-IV
Seattle Piano Institute	10
Tom Gerou Music	11

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www.nfmc-music.org*

Quiet Space



The empty room sits at the end of a long hallway, tucked away in an isolated dead-end corridor, several floors above the bustle of conference activity. It is entirely bare, save for a couple of chairs and a folding table. There is no free food, no bar or coffee station, no couches, no monitors, just a view of a neighboring rooftop. Devices are required to be silenced, conversation forbidden. And it is my favorite feature of the 2026 MTNA Conference.

Referred to on the daily agenda as “Quiet Space,” this room is just that: a space “for anyone looking to unwind and reset.” This room’s absolute silence (punctuated, every now and then, by Chicago traffic) is the right place for me to gather my thoughts—and then slowly abandon them to focus on deep breathing with eyes closed. It’s day three of the conference and already my mind and heart are overflowing with all the wonderful things an event of this scope can deliver: rejuvenating sessions, amazing performances, networking, random elevator chats, exhibition booths, masterclasses . . . I could go on and on.

And yet, this brief time spent alone in this empty room just might be the most valuable and rewarding part of the conference because I get the chance to breathe deep, to reflect, to stretch, and—for a short while—forget about schedules, appointments, to-do lists, and “what’s up next.” For the moment, the main agenda and priority is solely me.

Of course, the sheer irony of finding the solace and quiet rejuvenation my mind and body has craved all year at a multi-day

conference in downtown Chicago, attended by thousands, crammed to the hilt with sessions, is not lost on me. Which, of course, begs the question: Why do I deprive myself of this solitude when I’m working? Why do we as musicians and educators so often fail to incorporate a “quiet space” into our own daily schedule? Why do we often equate “productivity” with “busyness”?

The biggest takeaway I have from the 2026 MTNA Conference is not musical, pedagogical, or social. It’s entirely selfish—in the best possible way. It’s realizing that I need this kind of “quiet space” in my personal and professional life. Incorporating a few minutes of absolute nothingness into my day can be just what my mind and body need to function at their best. And while a quiet space can be a planned part of the schedule, why can’t we as educators also find this space in the moment, whenever needed? I often ask my students to do things like stop and think, reflect, find their center, be aware of their breath, and enjoy silence; maybe it’s time for me to take my own advice.

I hope that as you read these words, you are in a similar state of mind and body as I was so fortunate to encounter. I hope that each of you has the means of enjoying your own “Quiet Space” each day—and to return from that space with a renewed love for the work we do.

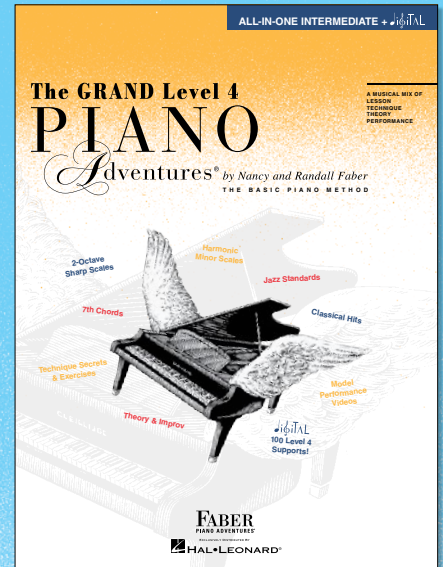
—Leonidas Lagrimas, NCTM
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Tell us about your Takeaway! Send 500 words or less to amt@mtna.org with “The Takeaway” in the subject line.



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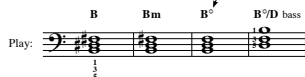
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New chord: B diminished



The small circle indicates **diminished**.
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Passacaglia
Key of ___ Major/minor

George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759, Germany-England)
adapted

THEME

Dignified march tempo

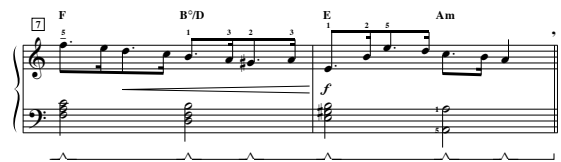


54 unit 2 continued *from Suite No. 7 in G minor

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