

Washington Music Teachers Association

Newsletter

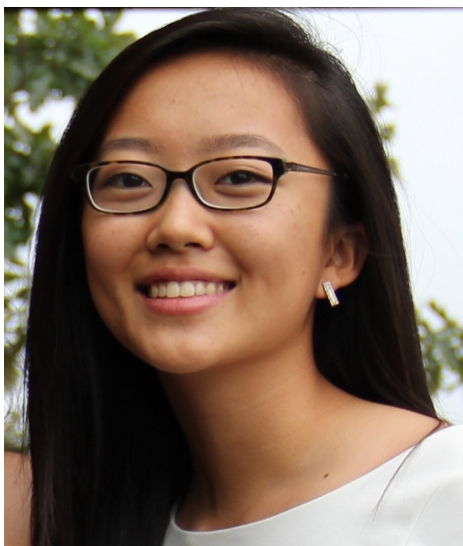
WNTA announces Essay Contest winner

For the first time in its history, Washington Music Teachers Association sponsored a Music Essay Contest for high school seniors. The winner was Christine Zhang, student of Yoon Huh, whose winning essay appears below.

WMTA received five entries for the inaugural Music Essay Award for High School Seniors. The committee met and was impressed with the thoughtfulness and expressiveness of the essays.

While it was tempting to recognize each one as a winner, we discussed the merits of each from the standpoint of relevance to the joy and value of music, persuasiveness of the essay and clarity of writing and agreed upon one that we felt best met the criteria. .

We will publish the non-winners in future newsletters this year. This is an event we hope to continue, so if you have high school juniors this year, please alert them to this new event and get them thinking about what they might write. The deadline is early in the year so that students can include the event on college applications.



Christine Zhang

Christine Zhang says that music “will forever be a part of her life, no matter where she goes.”

After learning she had won the WMTA Music Essay contest, Christine wrote to Lori McCarthy thanking her for “this great opportunity for me to reflect on my years of music playing.” And , she added : “I had fun while writing about my experience!”

Christine is student of Yoon Huh and has been studying piano since she was four. During these years, she has participated in festivals, competitions and recitals. In middle school she also played first flute in the school band.

Christine is a senior at Poolesville High School where she is part of the Global Ecology Studies program which emphasizes the importance of environmental study through courses in science and social studies. She is also involved in the track and field teams and National Honor Society.

Christine plans to attend college and and medical school and hopes to become a surgeon.

THE ESSAY

Music has made all the difference

By Christine Zhang

I was seven years old when I overheard my piano teacher joke how “music isn’t like a regular hobby, I can’t hang it up like a quilt when I’m finished and see what I’ve accomplished!” While her remark certainly gave my mom a good laugh, this moment still pops up in my mind from time to time.

Why do I work so hard at playing piano despite the lack of a tangible item to show for it? Every performance, every hour of practice, every piece I have played, is only remembered within my own brain. And let’s face it, a recording can never truly capture the entire piano playing experience. The feeling of frustration during practice, the feeling of anxiety when walking the books to the judge, or the feeling of relief as the last measure finishes. So if music doesn’t provide physical satisfaction, what does it provide?

Certainly when I was younger, I didn’t think music provided me much, if any at all. I played piano because as much as I cared, it was just another scheduled part of my day. Come home from school, finish homework, eat dinner, practice piano, take a shower, go to sleep. Piano was a mundane routine that I had to get through each day. I didn’t question why I played or if I even liked to play. I just kept playing the notes as the music said to.

As one paged preludes became 4-paged sonatas, I began to realize piano wasn’t just playing whatever notes were set in front of me. Real music requires arduous work. It takes hours upon hours to memorize and master pieces. Even then, a piece is nowhere near ready for performance.

I have learned that piano is a give and take relationship; there is always something

that the music is trying to tell and there is always something that I want to tell. The true task of perfecting a piece lies in finding a happy medium between the two.

To me, music is a chance to make something beautiful. It’s a chance to tell a story through a language that all people can understand. A story of a husband mourning his wife’s death. A story of a child playing in a sunny grassfield. Music may not be an object that can be held up to the light and be admired, but it provides an experience that is incomparable to the most breathtaking work of art. It’s always changing and always evolving, and we as musicians are given the opportunity to partake in this everlasting journey of music and if we are lucky enough, music just might leave its mark on us.

The President's Message



Music Mind Games graduating class from the left: Sarah Zentner, Lori McCarthy, Michiko Yurko, Karen Christensen, and Eric Davenport.

Dear WMTA Members,

Here we are with another teaching year ahead of us. We have added two new activities within the past few months: the *Modern Piano Music Celebration* and *Music Essay Award for High School Seniors*. Both of these events were born from ideas and sponsorship of two of our members: Nancy Breth and Barbara Wing respectively. WMTA is certainly lucky to have such dedicated members that not only volunteer their time and efforts but their

certainly lucky to have such dedicated members that not only volunteer their time and efforts but their financial support as well.

With the help of an MTNA Foundation Fund Grant, I had the opportunity to attend Unit 2 of Michiko Yurko's *Music Mind Games* workshop this summer. If there is some line of study you have been wanting to pursue, why not consider applying for an MTNA Teacher Enrichment Grant? All the information you need can be found on the

MTNA website.

In September, I attended the MTNA Leadership Summit in Cincinnati. Our own WMTA member Grace McFarlane had been the Eastern Division Chair and her term just expired, so this was the first year I did not get to see Grace at the Summit! But I did get to room again with neighboring state MSMTA president Connie Fischel. Our three days of meetings always give us inspiration to do the best we can for our members and the stu-

dents we serve.

As you may have noticed, we did not hold an Open House this year. Attendance has been light over the last couple of years and we are regrouping to see if we can come up with an event that would be most helpful and welcoming to our members. If you have any ideas, I would welcome suggestions! Feel free to email me with any ideas.

Lori McCarthy

Learn with our teachers

Talk About Teaching is held on the second Monday of every other month, September 2016 through May 2017 at Nancy Breth's studio, 1493 Chain Bridge Road, Suite 103, McLean VA 22101 from 10 a.m. until noon.

There is no charge, no structure, no agenda: the titles below are just for getting started. Any topic is welcome; anybody is welcome—teachers, parents, friends.. This

could offer more opportunities for professional growth to WMTA teachers and expand our offerings to Virginia.

Repertoire September 12.
Ensemble November 14.
Sightreading January 9.
Technique March 13.
Summer projects May 8.

Shop Talk is held six times per year at Barbara Wing's studio in

Bethesda, MD at no cost to teachers, which has seen an increase in attendance this past year.

Bonnie Kellert's "In Studio" will be held November 18, 2016. The topic, *Falling in Love with Mendelssohn – The Beauty of the "Songs without Words"* will explore Mendelssohn's dramatic devices for expression, with examples and detailed explanations.

examples that demonstrate Mendelssohn's dramatic devices for expression, including: Sudden Dynamic Changes/ Fortzandos/ Surprise Harmonies. Other examples explore: Pedaling/Coloring / Vocal melodic influences/ Counterpoint/ Rhythmic Complexities, and Technical Demands. The place: Bonnie's studio at 9140 Falls Chapel Way, Potomac, MD 20854. Fee is \$30.

Are you ready to retire from teaching?

By Lori McCarthy

Does a career as a piano teacher last longer than most professions?

I recently attended a commencement ceremony for a family friend earning her master's degree. The commencement speaker, who was a business mogul, talked about how people no longer stay in the same job for their entire career as they did years ago. The norm when he graduated in the 90s was "3-10": three jobs lasting 10 years each. Now it's more like "6-5". In other words, the average working career is 30 years.

As I sat in the audience listening, I calculated that I am already in the 39th year of my career as an independent piano teacher, having started teaching when I was a junior in college after my first pedagogy class. I taught through graduate school, marriage, moving, and rearing five

children. And frankly, I have no plans to retire anytime soon. If anything, I feel that I've become a better teacher with the experiences I have gained and the continuing education I have completed. It would seem premature to retire at this point. And of course, my husband is also self-employed and has no plans to retire any time soon either. At this stage in life, we have weddings to pay for and houses to help our children buy!

Now I suppose that I started my career a little earlier than most since I was able to begin while still in college, so that extended my career a little on the front end. By the commencement speaker's rule, I should have retired nine years ago. But enjoying relatively good health in my 50s, I must admit that I never even considered retiring. If I retired, would my days be as fulfilling? Yes, my kids

are now starting to get married and we may have grandchildren one day with whom I will want to spend time. But somehow, I think it's important to keep your mind engaged with higher thinking and teaching does that. In addition, although I have enjoyed the flexibility of being self-employed, especially when dealing with my own children and their activities, I don't have the same retirement package that working for an outside company would have offered. Therefore, I need to continue to work to pay the bills.

How many of our colleagues are well beyond the 30-year career mark? I suspect many. I would be curious to know the average number of years WMTA members have been teaching. Why not write to our newsletter editor with your thoughts?

*Does a career
as a piano teacher
last longer than
most professions?*

MSMTA teaches Baroque Dancing at conference



A session on Baroque dance was part of the MSMTA Conference on October at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, October 15. Among the members of WMTA who attended were Randy Reade, Junko Takahashi, Lori McCarthy, Hedy Bannon, Annie Hou. At another event at the conference, Randy Reade, WMTA member and legal counsel, received an honorary membership in MSMTA.

Classroom skills enhance practice room skills

By Barbara Kober

Barbara Wing has written an article in the current *Clavier Companion* magazine that turns around the old precept that students who study music do better in the academic classroom.

"Skills learned at school can also enhance what happens in the practice room," Barbara writes.

Just as in school, as students develop reading skills that go beyond learning

letters to focus on words and the meaning they confer, in the practice studio students move beyond notes to patterns that trigger expressive or emotional meaning.

As an example, Barbara quotes the first sentence of the children's favorite, *The Story of Babar*: "In the great forest a little elephant is born" and compares it to the ambiguous atmosphere of the opening of Debussy's *Reverie*. The words of the Babar story make the reader won-

der what is the forest like, what does the baby elephant look like? The cloudy atmosphere of the Debussy piece should lead the pianist to express a dream-like sound that foretells the coming atmosphere of the piece.

Barbara goes on to compare the feeling of intense pleasure a student experiences after receiving an A on a test to the inner pleasure a performer feels after a beautiful performance in a recital. In both cases, hard work was necessary to achieve the desired

In practices for extracurricular sports, skills to build muscles, develop speed and improve coordination are similar to scales, arpeggios and etudes that build strength and coordination for successful musical performances.

"If students were more aware of the similarity between the value of sports and musical drills, they might work at these more willingly."

Barbara concludes:

It is no surprise that young people who study music seriously also have great success in the classroom. In an ideal world, all students should study musical long with the other subjects in the curriculum."



STEINWAY & SONS

WASHINGTON PIANO COMPETITION

Saturday, March 4, 2017



Winners to perform at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland's "Chopin Showcase"

First Place Prizes:

- Level I- \$1000 • Level II- \$500 • Level III- \$250



Repertoire Requirements:

At least two pieces of contrasting style and period. One piece must be by Frédéric Chopin or Ignacy Paderewski.

- Level I ages 10 and under (max 7 minutes)
- Level II ages 11 - 14 (max 10 minutes)
- Level III ages 15 - 18 (max 15 minutes)

Application opens Thursday, Dec. 1, 2016 at steinwaypianodc.com Participants will receive a commemorative certificate. \$50 application fee The "Chopin Showcase" is sponsored by the Kosciuszko Foundation

Please direct questions to Melinda Baird mbaird@steinwaypianodc.com • 202.774.6277

Steinway Washington area locations: Tysons Corner Center, McLean, VA
11611 Old Georgetown Rd, Rockville, MD • 118 Shawan Rd, Cockeysville, MD

New WMTA members

Welcome new members Toku Kawata and Efi Hackmey.

Welcome back Holly Hamilton, Esperanza Berrocal and Donna Sweeney.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

December 5, 2016

BOB DEVINE PIANO TUNING & REPAIR

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Owner & President
Factory Trained
7 year Apprenticeship
38 Yrs in Business
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