



SPRING NEWSLETTER

May 2, 2016

HAPPY SPRING EVERYONE:

Musical note pins worn by hotel staff and warm sunshine on the Riverwalk and the Alamo welcomed conference attendees to the MTNA National Conference in San Antonio, Texas. The opening high energy performance by TIME FOR THREE premiered a mash-up (their term) of STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN with Dido's LAMENT. The members: Nikki Chooi, violin; Nicholas Kendall, violin and Ranaan Meyer, double bass carried a passion for improvisation, composing, and arranging. The trio repeatedly expressed great appreciation for music teachers in their lives and in the lives of young musicians worldwide. It was a shining moment.



Seymour Bernstein's great sense of humor and empathy highlighted his piano master class. Who could forget the smiling sixth grade boy who played BIRDS? Bernstein's parting advice was to use all the skills learned in music study in everyday life to develop a whole person capable of contributing to other people.

The closing concert featured famed pianist, Emmanuel Ax, performing an all-Beethoven program. The conference provided many shining moments to influence my teaching for many years to come. The brisket and spareribs were good too!

In between the shining moments were three days of enlightening workshops, visits to the exhibit halls to play new music (and sample free chocolate), the Eastern Division meeting, MTNA's Annual Meeting, the State President's Advisory Council Meeting, Distinguished Composer of the Year Recital, the MTNA student competitions, and the MTNA national winners at each level.

The Eastern Division had several shining moments with the following five MTNA national winners: Junior String Competition, Chamber Music Wind Competition, the Evelyn Linblad Folland Award, Young Artist Brass Competition and Young Artist Woodwind Competition. VMTA's commissioned composer, Pierre Jalbert, was awarded an honorable mention. I was so proud when he was recognized at the Commissioned Composer concert.

VMTA's members had shining moments just this past year. Our 50th Anniversary Celebration in October premiered Vermont's Commissioned Composer piano solo PRELUDE FOR PIANO. Who could forget pianist Brian Connelly performing this world premiere? A two day QUAD State Conference, carefully crafted by Patty Bergeron, was enthusiastically praised during the Eastern Division Meeting in San Antonio as a conference "well done".

Another shining moment was the biennial Play-a-Thon at the University Mall. Lynn Smith expertly planned three days of fun for our students while raising funds to support families at the Pediatric Oncology Unit at the University of Vermont Medical Center. Lynn's two clips on the evening's news (WPTZ) provided great publicity for VMTA.

Our local chapter, BBVMTA, is planning two enrichment opportunities for student recitals in the coming year. Susan Nicholas, our new conference chair, is eagerly planning VMTA's fall conference, and the BBVMTA is refining its biennial Monster Concert for 2017. Watch for upcoming details.

Your membership in BBVMTA and VMTA has unbelievable value! Add in the fun, the joy, the triumphs, the camaraderie and the satisfaction of supporting an organization that supports you! Please remember to renew your membership today.

Marie Johnson, President

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Spring Festival



The VMTA annual Spring Festival was held at St. Michael's College McCarthy Arts Center on Saturday, March 26th. 101 students from the studios of 15 member teachers from Northern Vermont and New Hampshire were registered. This was 31 more students than last year. It was a successful and fun-filled day for all. Since 1979, this event has provided a quality performance opportunity for our students. In addition to preparing students for the Festival, an enormous teacher effort goes into making this day successful. Thank you to all of the teachers who participated and worked a long day judging and monitoring. Thank you to VMTA members Art DeQuasie, Lynn Smith, Sarah Williams and Paul Orgel who volunteered to help with additional judging and monitoring. I am ever impressed with the spirit of positivity and collaboration our small, yet vibrant organization enjoys. We are especially grateful to Susan Summerfield, Chair of the Fine Arts Department at St. Michael's College, who sponsored us for the seventh consecutive year. Without her sponsorship this event would not have been possible. We hope to have even more students participate next year! Thanks to all!

Lilly Ramsey, Spring Festival Chair

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Composer Commissioning

Unfilled at this time.
Contact Marie Johnson if
interested in this position

2016 - 2017 VMTA Calendar

October 22, 2016	Fall Conference at Richmond Library featuring Gilles Comeau
November, 2016	VMTA State Competitive Auditions in Richmond
January 7-8, 2017	Eastern Division Competitive Auditions in Boston
January 20 & 21, 2017	BBVMTA Monster Concert at Essex High School
March/April, 2017	VMTA Spring Festival

Gilles Comeau

Vermont MTA is excited to welcome Gilles Comeau as our 2016 Fall Conference clinician. The meeting will take place on Saturday October 22 at 9 am at the Richmond Library. The details and topics of the day will follow. Gilles Comeau is a member of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in Music at the University of Ottawa. He is the director of the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory and the coordinator of the Music Education Sector at the School of Music. Gilles Comeau is also a faculty member of Health Sciences and Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. As the head of the research lab in piano pedagogy, Gilles has established partnerships with many other research institutes to study aspects of piano learning, piano teaching, music reading, motivation, physiological aspects of performance, piano related health issues, video mediated learning, and numerous brain-music studies. He has authored many books and written numerous publications including the 2015 MTNA E-JOURNAL ARTICLE OF THE YEAR.

Susan Nicholas, Conventions

Cynthia Huard has successfully completed the national certification process and is now Cynthia Huard, NCTM. Congratulations!

Sylvia, Certification Chair



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Vermont Commissioned Composer of the Year 2015

The Vermont Commissioned Composer for 2015, Pierre Jalbert, has been awarded an Honorable Mention in the MTNA Distinguished Composer of the Year.

Pierre Jalbert is Professor of Music at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. He has earned widespread notice for his richly crafted scores that are expressive, engaging, and deeply personal. Pierre grew up in South Burlington, VT where he studied piano and composition with Arlene Cleary.

VMTA commissioned Pierre to write a composition for 2015 to be premiered at the Quad State Convention and the VMTA 50th Anniversary Celebration. Pierre wrote PRELUDES FOR PIANO. The piano solo had four

- movements:
1. After Chopin
 2. Turning
 3. Chant
 4. Crab Motion.

Brian Connelly, also a teacher at Rice University, was the pianist to premier the work at the October convention.

The National Award for Distinguished Composer of the Year was awarded to David von Kampen for his composition, UNDER THE SILVER AND HOME AGAIN. He was commissioned by the Nebraska MTA. There were thirty two works entered for adjudication. The judges were Mr. Joseph Baber, University of Kentucky; Dr. Samuel O. Douglass, University of South Carolina; and Dr. Robert Kyr, from the University of Oregon.

Congratulations to Pierre! Please visit his website, <http://www.pierrejalbert.com/> to hear examples of his compositions and read more about Vermont's 2015 Commissioned Composer.

You can listen to his Preludes at: <https://www.eamdc.com/psny/composers/pierre-jalbert/works/preludes-2/>. Scroll down to solo works to hear the Preludes.

Susan Nicholas, Past Commissioned Composer Chair



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January 15th, 16th and 17th was an exciting weekend at University Mall. WAIT.....I thought this was about the VMTA? Yes! We partnered with the University Mall and hosted our biannual play-a-thon on those dates. Well, over 100 students played and sang during 13 hours of music in the mall. Several mall employees commented on how well the students were prepared and after observing and listening to almost all 13 hours, I'd have to agree! What a fun mix of all styles of music. Thank you to all the teachers who so ably prepared their students for this forum. During those 13 hours (and before and after) we raised over \$4000.00 to benefit both the VMTA and the Children's Oncology Unit at the UVM Medical Center. Because of our fundraising for children with cancer, we received coverage from WPTZ both on the Sunday of the event as well as in February when the presentation of over \$2000.00 in gift cards was made to the University of Vermont Medical Center. Wait.....WHY gift cards??? Why not a simple check and be done? Since the Oncology Unit does not have an "account" other than through the hospital, they asked for gift cards that could be distributed to families of patients. Since there would be a variety of reasons for the gift cards, they asked for a variety of cards. We gave Walmart gift cards for families who may not have been prepared for a stay in our area. We gave grocery gift cards to help families with the extra costs of having a child in the hospital. We gave Pizza Putt and Zachary's gift cards for those families and patients needing a brief respite to FUN and PIZZA. We gave Dunkin' Donuts and Starbucks gifts cards so that caregivers might be able to have some quiet time over a cup of coffee and we gave restaurant gift cards for all kinds of reasons!

The staff of the oncology unit was OVERWHELMED with the generosity and assured us that the gift cards would be used wisely. Each card was attached to a VMTA card and included a note from us to the caregivers/families. Each card was catalogued on a legend for accountability and was presented to several representatives (including both doctors) responsible for the unit. Marie Johnson and I made the presentation and to say it was gratifying would be an understatement.

We could not have hosted this event without the generous support of Hilbert Pianos and Josh at Green Mountain Piano Moving. What an absolute JOY to work with both of these fine businesses! Also, Hodgepodge Printing made some great signs and even though they were not a donation they made them on short notice! Please lend your support to all of these local businesses!

Thank you all again for your support of this event and hopefully, we can make it even BETTER in 2018!

Lynn Smith, Play-a-thon Coordinator



Lynn Smith and Marie Johnson presented over \$2000 worth of gift cards for area restaurants and grocery stores to doctors and patient care staff to be given to families at the Oncology Unit of the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington. Lynn coordinated the VMTA Play-a-thon held January 15-17, 2016 at the University Mall. Over 100 students played at this event which featured children helping children.

Students Performing in the Play-a-thon



Under the piano in the distance, note the mall shoppers listening to Robert Wimble playing a piece by David Kraehenbuehl. As for Robert, he would much rather play the piano than shop.



Peyton Cross performing Electronic Game by Lynn Freeman Olson.



Logan Cross and Peyton Cross playing CRADLE SONG by Elvina Pearce



Maeve Fairfax



Tyler Evarts playing a duet with teacher Ed Darling. You may be able to see the keyboard design on the suspenders of this maestro in the making.



Isaac Wood-Lewis



Maeve and Gillian Fairfax



From left: Isaac Wood-Lewis, Maeve Fairfax, Casey Brewer, Gillian Fairfax and Miles Romm

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2016 – 2018 VMTA Slate of Officers

VMTA would not exist without members volunteering their time, skills and expertise to help run all the programs and services that are offered. We'd like to give a very sincere thank you to all of our members who have volunteered below:

President: Marie Johnson

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Non-Competitive Auditions: Lilly Ramsey

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Newsletter: Jina Smith

Membership: Patrica Bergeron

Composer Commissioning: Vacant

Web Publicist: Arielle Hanudel

Music Notation Software...

Over the last 18 years, I have used various music notation programs: MusicTime, MusicTime Deluxe, Sibelius 3, MuseScore, Noteflight Basic, Noteflight Crescendo, and Finale Notepad. The variety, number, and quality of programs available continues to increase. I still use Sibelius 3 for more complicated projects - but meanwhile, I have also been looking for something that my students can use with ease and with little or no cost. To that end, different options have surfaced over time. Of the few I have tried, these are my favorites:

NOTEFLIGHT BASIC is a free cloud program that allows up to ten scores per account. Scores can be printed, shared, or exported as MusicXML or MIDI files. (Noteflight is associated with Music-COMP, formerly known as the VT MIDI Project.) Both MUSESCORE and FINALE NOTEPAD are free programs to install on your system. Of these two, I prefer MUSESCORE - it is versatile and has more features. I especially like being able to enter notes on the staff using the computer keyboard rather than the mouse. In addition to being print-able, MuseScore scores can be saved or exported in mscz, mscx, pdf, png, svg, wav, flac, ogg, mp3, mid, xml, and mxl formats. This program serves well for simple projects including quick production of worksheets. As for Noteflight, there is an ongoing online community and development team working to improve this program. If you haven't tried using notation software, these options could open new doors for you and your students.

Sarah Williams



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Notes from the Judge's Chair



It's Spring - the season of music competitions. I've already judged three within the last month (one piano-only, and two concerto competitions for all instruments) and they've been excellent reminders as to what the judges are looking for in the performances .

In each competition the overall level was very high. I wasn't surprised... after all, everyone prepared well and genuinely wanted to give the performance their best effort.

So, in a field of "very good" performances, who stands out?

HERE ARE THREE OF MY TOP CRITERIA FOR A WINNING PERFORMANCE:

1. CLEAN PLAYING: Mistakes are forgivable, *BUT* if someone else has a clean performance they will edge you out. The competitive circuit in music is at a high level that continues to elevate, and judges often feel that the easiest way to narrow down the field is to eliminate those who make mistakes. Strive for consistent clean playing in your practicing (after all, if it doesn't happen at home it won't happen in performance). I will take a musically engaging "imperfect" performance over a technically perfect but soul-less performance any day, but if two performers are neck-and-neck, judges tend to go with the cleaner and more convincing one.

2. CONVICTION: Play it like you mean it! This is not the time to be humble or shy or second-guess your interpretation. Decide what you are going to say and then convince us that this is the way it should be.

3. DYNAMIC RANGE: Lackluster fortés and moderately soft pianissimos won't draw us into a magical musical world. Many young performances stay in the "safe" range of mp-mf. If you want to truly get our attention, follow the dynamics in the music, and use a broad range of dynamics and explore a variety of sounds, colors, and articulations.

This poses a challenge for pianists especially, who don't get to take their own (or their teacher's) instruments with them for performances. Sometimes we luck out and get a beautiful instrument that is easy to play. Other times, we have to work **MUCH** harder to create an effective performance.

Do we give up when we get a piano that isn't up to our normal standards? No!

I liken our challenge to the process of a chemist analyzing a water sample: we must evaluate the instrument's strengths and weaknesses quickly (sometimes instantaneously, if we don't have a chance to try out the instrument before diving into the performance) and create a plan of action to make it sound as best as it possibly can. I have witnessed many a fine pianist turn a "bad" piano into a beautifully singing instrument through their expert voicing, determined expression, and careful avoidance of the piano's weaknesses. Thus, I believe whole-heartedly that it can be done. It's not easy... but we need to be ready to step it up a notch when the time calls for it.

THIS CHALLENGE CAN BE:

PHYSICAL: How can we play soft without the sound completely disappearing? How can we play loud without the piano shouting an ugly sound? How can we play forte on a "dead" register of the keyboard without excess tension?

MENTAL: How can we stay "in the zone" and lose ourselves in the performance when we really aren't sure

that it will make a difference?

ARTISTIC: Can we effectively evaluate the instrument and create a beautiful canvas of sound?

Last March, I interviewed pianist Reynaldo Reyes on the occasion of his retirement from Towson University at the age of 81. He was my teacher from my teens through college, and then became my mentor and role-model as I continued to come back to him for advice. Among the topics we spoke about were competitions and he shared this beautiful answer to my question on why he so strongly encourages his students to participate in competitions:"

"If you push someone to a competition, they will practice. It forces you to learn, whether you like it or not. Of course, it doesn't mean that you'll win first prize. It means you'll win first prize for you. Competition is important because it teaches you character. It makes you stronger as a person. When you lose, you accept it. After all, no one can win all the time. And, even if you go through life without winning anything, that's perfectly alright. You win according to how you accept what you are dealt. The real first prize is that you learn!"

Elizabeth B. Borowsky

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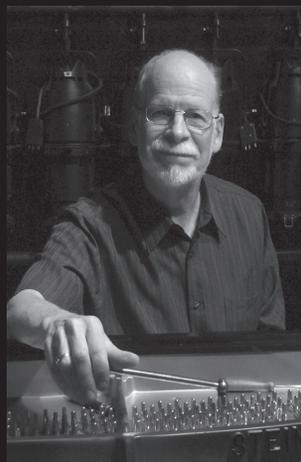
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*Photo taken by Saint Michael's student
Meredith Johnson '08 while studying abroad in
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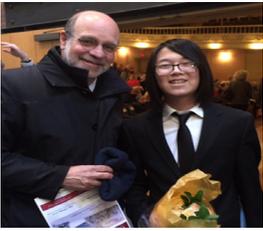


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Member News



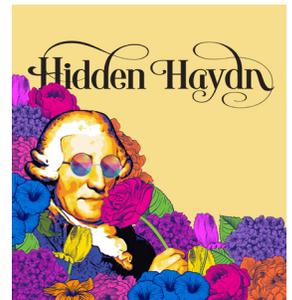
This has been a busy season for me, with many wonderful concerts. Several of my students have given fine performances, and won prizes, as well. But I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my long-time student Alan Chiang, a senior at South Burlington High, who will be leaving for college in the fall. At the moment, he is considering attending Columbia, or, more likely, Yale. But, the fact that he has been accepted into the studio of the legendary Leon Fleisher, possibly the most sought-after piano teacher in the US, is making the decision more complicated!

In the past year, Alan won the Vermont All-State Solo Scholarship contest and will perform his solo pieces at the All-State Festival this May. He also won the Vermont Philharmonic's BOROWICZ contest, resulting in two exciting performances of the BEETHOVEN 3RD CONCERTO with the orchestra, along with solo encores. As a long-time participant in the master classes of John O'Connor and Menahem Pressler at the Adamant School, Alan was invited to perform at WEILL HALL (Carnegie Hall's smaller hall) in New York City, where he played a Liszt TRANSCENDENTAL ETUDE. Thanks to Elaine Greenfield's support, Alan will play a full solo recital program at St. Paul's Cathedral in Burlington in May, as well as at Wake Robin in Shelburne.

During the many years that I have taught Alan (I have lost count), his dedication and musical accomplishments have raised the standard of my studio, and been an inspiration to me and my other students. You can all imagine how much I will miss Alan's weekly 90-minute lessons, but I know that he will stay in close contact with Vermont and the musical community here, and we all wish him the very best.

Paul Orgel

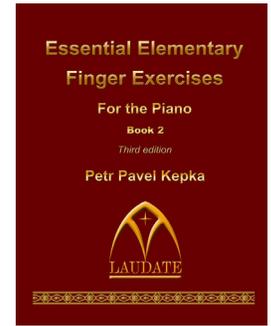
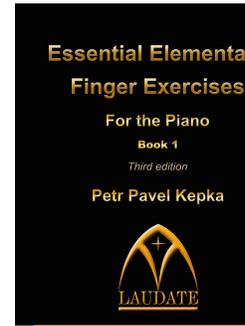
April 23rd, The Burlington Choral Society's, HIDDEN HAYDN, featured Richard Riley conducting the 80-voice chorus, with orchestra and soloists. Everyone enjoyed these Haydn gems that had not been performed in this area for many years. The performance included SPRING and SUMMER from THE SEASONS, as well as the shorter works: INSANAE ET VANAE CURAE and TE DEUM LAUDAMUS. Soloists Mary Bonhag, soprano; Adam Hall, tenor; Benjamin Dickerson, baritone; members of the Burlington Chamber Orchestra; and pianist Claire Black join this celebration of light and life.



Claire Black

Marilyn Taggart will be teaching a course at Green Mountain Suzuki Institute on July 10-15th in Rochester, Vermont called BEST BEGINNINGS. (It should be called *better beginnings*) This course will be 2 hours per day and is open to all piano teachers, not just Suzuki Teachers. You are all welcome to come and learn some things which will surprise you and hopefully re-invigorate your teaching with early year students. See the GMSI website for further details or contact Pam Reit; Vermont Violins, Piet Road, Hinesburg Vt.

As a piano teacher, I am always looking for new and more effective piano exercises for my students. I have tried a lot of finger exercises written by Bauer, Berens, Bertini, Brahms, Bergmüller, Concone, Cramer, Czerny, Dohnányi, Döring, Duvornoy, Gurlitt, Hanon, Heller, Herz, Hutcheson, Kohler, Kullak, Kovacs, Le Couppey, Busoni, MacFerren, Maylath Moszkowski, Philipp, Pischna, Plaity, Safonoff, Schmitt, Schulz, Stamaty, Streabbog, Wieck, Zoltan, and others. I have not been able to find an elementary finger exercises book for beginners that would suit my purpose. Hanon's or Schmitt's finger exercises are on white keys only, and if you modulate to other keys, they are still very static on selected keys. Dohnányi's, Pischna's and others are exercises for more advanced pianists, which are not suitable for elementary level students. After three weeks of hard work, I put all of my ideas on paper and used my forty years of experience to write ESSENTIAL ELEMENTARY FINGER EXERCISES BOOK 1. The purpose of this book is to teach Beginner Piano Students to



- 1) Keep their fingers inside the keyboard, just in front of the black keys.
- 2) Then reach with their fingers the black keys without any movement of the wrist or forearm.

Students will have an opportunity to explore 220 finger exercises, where the first and the fifth finger stay on the same keys, while allowing the other fingers to dynamically reach black and white keys in every measure. After one year of experience with my students, I created ESSENTIAL ELEMENTARY FINGER EXERCISES BOOK 2. If you are interested, please contact me for more information. The price for one book will be about \$14.00 and the price for the combo of both books will be about \$23.00. I hope that you will have as much fun with these essential elementary finger exercises as I had composing them.

Petr Kepka



As I'm sure many of you know, life with two little children can be kind of crazy at times...but life with two little ones who love music is nothing short of a sweet miracle every day. This past November I had my second child, Eleanor, and although my days are filled with naps, diapers, and teaching my first daughter her ABCs and colors, I still find time to enjoy teaching piano and voice as well (thanks to my wonderful husband watching our girls during my teaching times!). My little girls are my greatest

fans, asking me to play piano and sing to them often throughout the day, and smiling and laughing when I do. My student base is still fairly small compared to when I lived in NorthWestern Vermont but the students I do have are sweet, hard-working, and lots of fun, so I have no complaints. I am content to let my teaching studio grow naturally and to enjoy using the extra time in my schedule for increasing my own piano practice time and for spending with my children and husband. I enjoy reading our member newsletter and learning from all the great resources we have as teachers. Wishing you all a wonderful and productive Spring and Summer!

Keren Wheeler Johnson

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PIANO SERVICE

Jina Smith, VMTA's newly elected Newsletter Editor, will be publishing the Summer Newsletter. Please send your articles, pictures, and news to her at jws682@gmail.com or by mail at (802) 879-7225. If you have any contact information changes, want to use a different email, or know of any VMTA members not receiving their newsletters please contact Jina as soon as possible.

Teresa Miranda, Past VMTA Newsletter Editor

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