

Subject: VMTA Spring/Summer Newsletter 2024

From: Vermont Music Teacher's Association <jina@vermontmusicteachersassociation.ccsend.com>

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To: sarah5432@gmail.com

spring_forest_sunrise.jpg

Spring/Summer Newsletter

June 10, 2024

President's Message

Summer: a time of rejuvenation

When end-of-year music recitals fill the calendar and schools begin to shoo students from their classrooms, music educators can usually look forward to a couple of months that feature a reduced teaching schedule. Summer typically means that our students will temporarily abandon their daily practice regimens in order to focus on family vacations or other non-scholastic diversions. It also means that our days contain a little more "free" time. For myself, I hope to organize my office, to catalogue recently received music and move it from its precariously leaning pile into my library, and also to spend time teaching myself!

My list includes listening to recordings, attending concerts and reading about performance and teaching techniques. After all, having the time to absorb the details of fine performances and consider the points of view of other musicians and music educators has become somewhat of a luxury in our busy lives.

VMTA CALENDAR

**Fall Conference
September 28, 2024**

**Ensemble Festival
Competitive
Auditions
BBVMTA Recital
General
Membership
Meeting
November 10, 2024**

**Monster Concert
January, 2025**

**MTNA Conference
March 15-19, 2025**

**Spring Festival
TBD**

spring_flowers_field.jpg

Fortunately, we have a wealth of resources from MTNA, our national organization. I encourage you to investigate the many webinars and articles on their website and in their publications.

At the time of this writing, your VMTA board is busy planning inspiring and enjoyable programs for next year, for both teachers and students.

Have a wonderful, diversion-filled summer and join us in the fall as we continue our educational journey!

-Laurel Ann Maurer

2024 VMTA Spring Festival

The VMTA held its annual Spring Festival on Saturday, March 16th, 2024, at Trinity Baptist Church. Member teachers Patty Bergeron, Linda Buermeyer, Lisa Goodrich, Peter Kepka, Lilly Ramsey, Michael Sitton and Jina Smith sent a total of 37 students.

The VMTA would like to thank members Lesley Becker, Patty Bergeron, Linda Buermeyer, Lisa Goodrich, Lilly Ramsey, Michael Sitton, Jina Smith, Art DeQuasie and Sarah Williams for judging and monitoring. Without them the day would not be possible.

Thanks to all who contributed to make it a successful day! We hope to have more participants next year!

sleepy_beagle_glasses.j Would **YOU** (or maybe a parent from your studio) like to create/publish this newsletter? The Newsletter goes out 3 times/year and it's a fun way to be creative and get the news out to our members!

I have enjoyed doing this for 8 years and it's time for me to step aside. I will happily provide training in using the Constant Contact tool. Please let me know if you have any interest at all, and I'll tell you more about it! [Click here to respond](#)

--Jina Smith

Choose to Teach Initiative

The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) offers a monthly 1-2

minute video series "designed specifically to help educators remain motivated through the sharing of words of encouragement and support from respected colleagues who have successfully navigated these last few, exceptionally challenging years."

"The goal of the Choose to Teach initiative is to help educators connect with the impact they have on their students, schools, and community, as well as reconnect with why they decided to become an educator. It's brought to you by the Music Achievement Council. Educators can receive more free content, just like this, and tips to recruit and retain more students at www.msfg.org/guide. "

<https://www.nammfoundation.org/educator-tips/supporting-music-education-choose-teach>

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A note from your friendly physical therapist...

“My hands are falling asleep while I play.” I hear this complaint often. You know the feeling... that tingly, numb, prickly feeling that drives you bonkers.

In general, the solution is to figure out where the nerve that serves that part of the skin is being compressed, why it's happening, and make a plan to change it. Most of the time, the compression of the nerve and the resulting symptoms are temporary. We have all woken up with an arm that has fallen asleep because we are lying on it. You take away the compression, and the feeling goes away within minutes. But for those who have this happen regularly or it's getting in the way of practicing as often or as long as we'd like, it's important to seek treatment for it.

There are three nerves that serve your hands for both sensory and motor information - meaning they can tell you what you're feeling and tell your hands to move. They all originate from your neck, pass by under your collarbone, and branch off to different parts of your arms and hands. Your hands have regions that are assigned to each nerve: Your pinky, half of your ring finger, and that side of your hand, both front and back, is ulnar nerve territory. The palm side of your thumb, pointer finger, middle finger, half of your ring finger, as well as that part of the palm of your hand, is median nerve territory. The back of your thumb, pointer, middle, and half of your ring finger, and the back of your hand in that region is radial nerve territory.

You don't need to memorize what the nerves are called. However it is important to know that the location of where you are feeling your symptoms matters. People very often only have that “falling asleep” feeling in one or two of those territories, sometimes all three. But it helps to know which nerves are involved so we can consider the whole pathway from neck to hand and find where the hang-up is.

There are a few common sites where movements or repetitive motion can bug your nerves. Each nerve comes from certain levels in your spine in your neck. For example, if it's your pinky that bothers you, we would look more carefully at the base of your neck, as the ulnar nerve is the area of transition between the base of your neck and your upper back.

The area under your collarbone is another one. This was true for an upright bassist I worked with a few months ago. She was primarily moving her bow arm with her shoulder blade. So every time her arm moved across her body as she played, her shoulder blade would swing forward and compress the front of her shoulder and ribs where the nerves lived. She was a talented bassist. I was not looking to mess up the strategies that were really working for her at this point in her career, but we had to give her some other options for how to play that wouldn't compress that spot every single time she used her bow.

The most famous site is the carpal tunnel at the wrist. I have actually only seen a handful of real carpal tunnel cases in my career. Most people come to me with a diagnosis of carpal tunnel, but the nerve is actually being bothered somewhere else in the pathway. The carpal tunnel is an anatomical structure - a literal tunnel that the nerves and blood vessels to your hand go through in the front of your wrist. If that tunnel gets squished or inflamed, the nerves get sensitized, too. True carpal tunnel

syndrome is when someone has symptoms only in their hand on the thumb side of the palm of their hand. Sometimes, it's only sensation symptoms, and sometimes it's motor symptoms like weakness or muscle atrophy. Surgery may be necessary to relieve the pressure there, which is why it's so well known, but a lot of people get better by relieving the pressure in other ways in physical therapy as well. There are other tunnels like this in the elbow and elsewhere; they are just not as well known.

Overall, the important takeaway is that this is common, most often not dangerous, and if you are having these symptoms - go see someone right away. It's important to rule out other reasons for the symptoms and of course, there is a chance it can get worse or longer-lasting if you put it off. But the best reason to get that treated is that these symptoms can often be handled with some straightforward changes, and you don't have to live with it. So, just go see a physical therapist about it. And if it's happening while you are practicing or performing, see a PT who knows something about music. It's helpful if you bring your instrument or a video of you playing to your appointment so the physical therapist can see how you're moving while you play (just like the bassist I told you about).

If you'd like to hear more about this in audio form, please check out the Play Life Loudly podcast.

If you have any questions or topics you'd like to hear more about, please contact me at abby@fortepformancecept.com.

Be well,

Abby Halpin

Forte Performance & Physical Therapy, PLC
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Noteflight Learn

Noteflight Learn Enrollment and Resources

One of the perks of VMTA membership is access to the Noteflight Learn online program for teachers to develop lesson content for composition, performance, and theory (for example), and for students to explore composing, sharing, and collaborating as part of their music study. More details and links can be found on the VMTA website under Teacher Resources. In addition, many interesting articles from the Noteflight BLOG (no login required) are available here. The most recent article is called "How

Backward Chaining Can Help Novice Composers.”

-- Sarah Williams

Look for details and resources at the following links:

[Noteflight Learn](#)

[Links for Noteflight Learn Tutuorials](#)

[Noteflight Learn Webinars](#)

Contact Sarah Williams or complete and send the Enrollment Form on the VMTA website page.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Marta Cambra is the coordinator of the Jon Borowicz Scholarship. Through auditions, the winner receives \$500 plus is a featured soloist with the Vermont Philharmonic. The auditions are for high school students, playing any instrument.

Click the link below for details!

Email: cambra1388@yahoo.com

[Vermont Philharmonic Scholarship](#)

Join us on **Facebook!** Please check out the latest VMTA programs and news on the Vermont Music Teachers Association Facebook page!" [click here](#)

Is your newsletter getting "lost" in your spam folder? You can fix that by following these helpful hints:

If yours is a GMAIL email address and this newsletter doesn't arrive in your primary INBOX, you can adjust your Gmail settings by following the steps shown [here](#) under "Create a filter" - or contact Sarah Williams for assistance.

SPONSORS

VMTA is always looking for new Sponsors or Donors. Anyone who cares about music education can be a Sponsor or Donor. VMTA has publicity brochures and postcards and business cards that provide contact information for prospective supporters. They are designed for distribution to students and their families, and to the public, and are suitable for display in your studio, at your recitals, or at your favorite willing public location. If you or your student families would like to help find new Sponsors or Donors by distributing these items, please ask Sarah Williams to send you a supply of the latest designs. Image files are also available on request. Suggestions for new designs are welcome. Meanwhile, these are the links for [becoming a Sponsor](#) or [making a Donation](#).

GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION!

Volunteers are needed to serve on the VMTA board! We currently need to fill the following positions:

President-Elect
Secretary
Conference Chair
Certification chair
Newsletter Editor

Come and join our wonderful group of board members and see how your organization works!

**Just a reminder to check out
MTNA eFestival opportunities!**

For more information,
[Click Here](#)

cello-closeup.jpg

MTNA National Conference 2024 Atlanta

4.5 days with 29 sessions in 4 strands - an amazing experience for a music teacher. Thanks to VMTA for making it possible for me to attend! The strands are my own designations: professionalism, repertoire/pedagogy, technology, composing/arranging.

Most of the sessions and presenters are included in the December-January issue of *American Music Teacher*, and if the presenters were googled and their contact information located, many of them would respond about their presentations. Below, I refer to some page numbers in THAT ISSUE. Out of four presentations on professionalism that I attended, I emphasize the one that showed how rural teachers in western NC have organized a virtual local chapter of about 25 teachers who meet monthly. Each year they offer 10 outstanding zoom presentations given by national speakers. See page 45. This made me think that VT might talk with them about how they set up their local group.

In the area of repertoire/pedagogy, many exhibitors sponsored show-case sessions. Piano teachers have an embarrassment of riches in this area. I was particularly interested in a new set of two books for adult beginners, written by Keith Snell.

Pedagogically, I heard several presentations that included the teaching of rhythm. All of them modeled enthusiastic, unabashed physical rhythmic movements, and clapping and chanting with students for teaching rhythm. I came away inspired to incorporate this in my own teaching.

Another pedagogical approach that impressed me was the use of solfege and extensive ear training for younger students. See Hoffman Academy, page 44. The role of rote teaching was presented by Tim Topham in his keynote—see page 33; and by Sara Ernst, see page 46. The interview of Tim Topham, pages 30-35, gives a good introduction to his keynote.

In technology, Yelena Wells, from Michigan, offered a comprehensive overview of how teachers can use what she calls “10 top social media tools.” See page 29.

The sessions about composing and arranging were for both our students, and us as teachers-players. There were several of these sessions showing how to be inclusive beyond traditional harmony. See Leila Viss, page 20. Noteflight was recommended for notation, and I recall our own Sarah Williams mentioning this to us not too long ago.

I came away impressed anew by what our colleagues are doing to improve teaching throughout the US.

-Ed Darling

piano-theater-sm.jpg

Distinguished Composer of the Year Nominations Welcomed

The 2025 Quad State Conference, where we will hear a new commissioned work by a Vermont Distinguished Composer, may seem far off, but we will be inviting our composer and securing the commission this fall as part of the award and commissioning timeline. I am grateful for a number of nominations that I have received but I encourage other VMTA members to contact me by the end of July with additional suggestions. I invite you to send potential composer name(s), a brief comment on the individual being nominated, and links to any additional information you may have, especially including examples of the composer’s work. Please send these to me at michael.sitton1@gmail.com – again please do so by the end of July. From those nominated I will be developing a short list of potential 2025 Distinguished Composers, to follow our wonderful 2023 composer Evan Premo and others before him, from which we will choose a composer for our invitation to accept the 2025 commission.

Thank you for your participation in this process!

Michael Sitton
Commissioned Composer chair

“Virtual” VMTA Chapter(s): a possibility?

As noted elsewhere in the Newsletter, my recent attendance representing Vermont at the annual MTNA Leadership Summit brought to my attention a growing trend in some other states toward the formation of “virtual” local chapters, something that has gained interest especially in states like ours where a dispersed rural population makes local chapters outside urban areas very challenging.

The MTNA Summit included an exciting presentation by Victoria Fischer Faw from North Carolina, who has led the way in creating the “VLMTA” (Virtual Local Music Teacher Association) of Western North Carolina. Victoria and some of her colleagues noticed that, while North Carolina has a number of very active local associations in and around its urban areas, there was no opportunity within a long travel distance for teachers in the mountainous and mostly rural western region of the state. So she and a small group of leaders worked to create what is now a way for teachers in the region to meet virtually, enjoy professional development sessions, connect with each other, and provide mutual support. This chapter, now in its second year, is up to 26 members, exceeding all expectations. The MTNA national office has worked supportively with them and is making it easier for this new kind of local association to form and affiliate.

Perhaps in some ways this is a lucky outgrowth of the potential we all realized during the pandemic for virtual connections, but its goals go beyond that, helping to connect teachers who are separated by geography but still would benefit from things that local groups traditionally offer. The Western NC group has been able to engage nationally-known presenters for workshops with members at a fraction of what it would cost to bring them to a session in person, for example, and regular meetings offer the member teachers the chance to share ideas and questions with each other.

In another session at the Summit where states with small populations met together, I learned that this idea is either in place or being explored by other states. Wyoming, as you likely know, has the lowest state population after Vermont in the country, and shares with us a predominantly rural population (although over a much, much larger geography). That state is now exploring the idea of a virtual chapter to better serve teachers separated by long distances.

All this made me wonder if there might be interest in a virtual chapter for Vermont teachers who live outside the one area currently served by a very active local chapter, Burlington. I wanted to share this with you, and invite you to contact Laurel or me if you have an interest in exploring the idea further, or if you have questions. I can also tell you that Victoria Fischer Faw, whom I heard

at the summit, offered generously to be in touch should there be interest in learning more from her experience, and I know that the MTNA national organization is willing to be helpful as well. Please consider this and let me know!

--Michael Sitton

"Music is to the soul what words are to the mind."

beach-chairs-header.jpg

Member News:

Paul Orgel:

The winner of the 2024 Vermont All-State Piano Scholarship Award was my student, Sophia Lu, a sophomore at Essex High School.

Back in 1999, my friend and colleague, Karen Kevra, started an outstanding classical concert series in Montpelier. I gave a solo recital for the first concert. This fall, I'll start off Capital City Concerts' 25th anniversary season on **September 21, 7:30 PM** at Montpelier's Unitarian Church with a solo program featuring Beethoven's "Eroica" Variations, a section of Liszt's "Transcendental Études" and more. I hope you'll save the date, and watch for other area performances of mine in September and October.

laptop-couple.jpg

**Wanted:
FRESH**

ENERGY for Website-Builder review and comparison so that VMTA is prepared for upcoming changes to the current plan and services. Do you have those skills? Or do you know someone who would be willing to help out? If we do nothing, we will be paying more and getting less. Can we do better for our students and teachers?

falling_leaves_hdr.jpg

VMTA Website: vermontmta.net

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