



WMTA Newsletter

April 2025

Greetings, WMTA Members!

Spring is finally here! We hope this season brings you renewed energy and inspiration. We're excited to share highlights from some of the amazing events we've had over the past few months. In this newsletter, you'll find updates from our board members, as well as announcements about the exciting events we have planned in the coming months. Below is a fun group photo of some of our WMTA members at our first members' meeting, hosted at the beautiful home of our President, Grace McFarlane!

Warm regards,

Rachel Chen

Newsletter Chair, WMTA Chapter





President's Message



“Where words leave off, music begins” – Heinrich Heine

“If music could be translated into human speech, it would no longer need to exist” – Ned Rorem

Happy Spring!

What a privilege we have as teachers to be able to make and share music freely, to teach and inspire our students to strive for their best, to help them develop the skills necessary to accomplish their musical goals, and to develop a love for music, a gift that lasts a lifetime.

I’ve chaired the Ylva Novik Concerto Competition for fifteen years now, and have observed with joy the musical growth of several students who competed at the junior level and returned for the senior competition. One such student, Sophia Lin, Junior winner in the 2018 Novik, returned in 2024 and won the Senior Division. She was featured on the March 23rd concert with the Capital City Symphony, performing the Mozart Concerto in D minor, K.466. Congratulations, Sophia! Best wishes as you head off to college and continue in your musical journey.

A great opportunity - WMTA offers Summer Scholarships, financial assistance to two middle- or high-school students, age 12-18, who wish to experience intensive music study in a summer program. Check the website for details.

We are heading into the busiest season for WMTA, with recitals, musicales and competitions. Please note the deadline dates and cooperate with the chairs to make these events a great success for our students.

As I write this column, the Spring Equinox has arrived and celebrations of Bach’s music grace the airwaves. The burst of colors and textures of the season in the new cycle of cherry blossoms and dogwoods are a reminder of renewal and hope. May the gift of music lift your spirits, feed your soul, and bring you joy and peace. I look forward to seeing you in person at one of our upcoming events.”

Grace McFarlane



Congratulations to Kenneth Liu! Kenneth Liu was selected to represent the District of Columbia in the MTNA Division Piano Competition. Kenneth is a student of Martin Labazevitch, and he was competing as the sole representative following the withdrawal of another participant. The competition took place at the Steinway Piano Gallery (11611 Old Georgetown Road, North Bethesda, MD 20852). Kenneth received valuable feedback from Professor Francesca Hurst and we are incredibly proud of his achievement! Also, a big thank you to our MTNA Auditions Chair, Esperanza Berrocal for organizing this event!



WMTA 2024-2025 Judged Recitals Results: As of March 18, 2025, WMTA has held two of its four Judged Recitals for the 2024-25 academic year, both of which were outstanding, showcasing high-level performances from all participants. The December 8th recital, for students 12 and under, featured nine students and six teachers. Selected for the Honors Recital in June were Grace Zhuang, Ryan Qin, Rose Li, and Ellie Jiang, with Honorable Mentions awarded to Oliver Zhang and Sarah Shen. The January 26th event included eleven students, two duet pairs, and seven teachers, with Lucas Liu, Caroline Su, Theodore Kim, and Erya Chai chosen for the Honors Recital, and Honorable Mentions going to Brian Xin and Emma Hou. The March 23rd recital is fully enrolled, promising another exciting program with ten students, seven teachers, and one piano duet. We are deeply grateful to our generous judges who make these events possible and thank you to our wonderful Judged Recitals Chair, Chris Kies!



WMTA Adult Musicale: Congratulations to our Chair, Elizabeth Lane, for both hosting and creating this event 18 years ago! She shares, “*the February Musicale 2025 Adult Musicale showcased music spanning from J.S. Bach to Charles Ives. Eight talented adult performers not only shared their music but also discussed their pieces before performing. The discussions continued during our post-recital reception, graciously hosted by Hedy Bannon. Some of our performers have been part of this event for nearly a decade, while our new performers were warmly welcomed!*”.

WMTA Baroque Festival: The Baroque Festival was held March 9 at the NOVA Alexandria Center for Design, Media, and the Arts. This is a new venue that WMTA has partnered up with. Students of six WMTA member teachers, aged 12-17, performed works of J.S. Bach ranging from Two-Part Inventions to Partitas and English Suites. Performers received detailed and constructive comments from the event judge, Dr. Ruriko Osawa, and participating teachers in attendance indicated that they, their students, and parents thought the venue and program delightful. Congratulations to all the performers!

General Meeting on April 25th at the residence of Hedy Bannon: Join us for a lecture-recital at our next General Membership Meeting on April 25th at 10:30 AM, presented by our newest member, Dr. Minji Kim. It will be at the residence of Hedy Hannon, 3812 Woodbine Street, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. The meeting will be followed by a potluck luncheon. Please RSVP to Hedy at hedybannon@comcast.net

Dr. Kim will explore the Arabesque in classical music—its origins, stylistic evolution, and pedagogical applications. The presentation will highlight various stylistic approaches to the arabesque, featuring works by Cécile Chaminade, William Gillock, Kirill Monorosi, Hugo Reinhold, and more. Dr. Kim, an active soloist and chamber musician, will share insights from her extensive performance experience across the U.S., South Korea, the Czech Republic, and Russia. She currently teaches at the Levine School of Music in Washington, D.C., and her research examines the connections between visual art and music. Dr. Kim holds degrees from Seoul National University and the University of Michigan, including a Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance.



Modern Piano Music Celebration Results and Reflections:

We are excited to share the results of the Modern Piano Music Celebration (MPMC), which was held at Calvary Lutheran Church. We were fortunate to have a distinguished panel of judges: Dr. Theresa Bogard from the University of Wyoming, Dr. Paulo Steinberg and Dr. Eric Ruple from James Madison University. A total of 63 students participated, showcasing their talents in both competitive and non-competitive sessions. All of the pieces performed were composed by artists born in 1905 or later, with many of these composers still actively contributing to the world of modern music. Thank you to Nancy Breth, the chair of the Modern Piano Music Celebration, for her leadership in organizing this meaningful event. She shared a particularly rewarding moment, which came from a heartfelt email she received from a student who had never played music more modern than Debussy. The student's words beautifully reflect the spirit of the celebration: *"I had a great time at the Modern Piano Music Celebration. The pieces that were performed were incredibly interesting and refreshing, especially after being used to classical music. I feel that I've learned to appreciate modern music more through this experience, and I'm excited for the next project!"* Nancy remarked, *"It's gratifying to see how this event has fostered a deeper appreciation for contemporary music among our participants."* First-place winners were awarded gift certificates to Foxes Music in Falls Church, VA, to support their continued musical growth and exploration. A big congratulations to the students who won and the teachers that put in the hard work to help prepare them!



1st Place Winners: Hanke Kang (student of Laura Bogart), Louis Xie (student of Laura Bogart), Theodore Kim (student of Marjorie Lee), Angelina Song-Ye (student of Marjorie Lee), and Minjae Jeon (student of Jinha Park); **1+ Benson Family Award:** Dakota Man (student of Marjorie Lee); **2nd Place Winners:** Daniel Du (student of Marjorie Lee), Daniel Liu (student of Silva Blazquez), Ellie Jiang (student of Marjorie Lee), Rose Li (student of Patricia Huff-Palumbo), Brandon Sang-Zheng (student of Nancy Breth), and Lucas Liu (student of Tzu-yi Chen); **3rd Place Winners:** Adam Lu (student of Yue Chen), Kaye Allen (student of Marjorie Lee), Ly-Ly Quy (student of Marjorie Lee), Lucas Zhang (student of Nancy Breth), John Samuel (student of Marjorie Lee), Jasmine Mao (student of Silva Blazquez); **Honorable Mention:** Ellie Zhao (student of Marjorie Lee), Valentina Song-Ye (student of Marjorie Lee), Ryan Qin (student of Marjorie Lee), and Samantha Ren (student of Marjorie Lee)





WMTA Music Essay Award for High School Seniors: Congratulations to Christopher Sweeney (student of Grace McFarlane), the recipient of the 2025 WMTA Music Essay Award for High School Seniors!

“My earliest memories are of my mom singing and playing the piano for me; listening to her often made me wonder if I could someday play music myself. I have always been willing to try new things and carry them out, so I was excited to start both piano and violin lessons at age seven. Although I initially resisted practicing, I now greatly appreciate that my mom encouraged me, because playing music has been a creative outlet to relieve stress. It has also provided opportunities for me to play in school orchestras and perform in recitals and concerts with other students. I have been inspired by my music teachers, peers, and professional musicians that I have heard perform. Music has truly made a difference in my life. My piano teacher Ms. Grace has inspired me by playing beautiful pieces for me, including Ravel’s *Gaspard de la Nuit*, one of the most technical piano pieces of all time. During her monthly group labs where students play for each other, I am exposed to different repertoire and musical styles. The labs help prepare me for recitals and competitions, because I hear talented musicians perform, motivating me to work harder. Ms. Grace has encouraged me to listen to classical music and attend concerts, including a recent one by the International Piano Competition winner, Dominic Doutney. She has challenged and pushed me to play a wide variety of pieces, such as Rachmaninoff’s *Prelude in c sharp minor*, Chopin’s *Nocturne in c sharp minor*, and Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue in C major*. Music has helped me persevere through long, tedious passages, such as in my current Bach *Fugue*. This perseverance and patience have helped me in other areas of life, including in school and sports. Communication, and understanding what I need to change and improve upon in a piece to convey an emotion or image, has helped me in the classroom. I frequently seek out my teachers after class to review topics for greater understanding. The hard work and grit it takes to finish and memorize a piece has helped me in athletics. It has given me discipline to stay longer in the gym and spend extra time on shooting reps in lacrosse and hitting in tennis. Music has ultimately taught me to not doubt myself and has developed my creative thinking and puzzle solving skills. As a Navy kid who has lived overseas in Japan and Germany and had to adjust to new schools, I could always count on music to relieve stress and give joy. Playing music made it easier to overcome cultural and language barriers and make new friends. During my busy senior year with college applications, I have appreciated taking breaks to learn new pieces, especially calming melodies that focus me. Because music has filled my heart and opened my creativity, I hope to continue studying piano in college. I am truly grateful for the gift of music lessons and how it continues to enrich my life.”





Specialty Competition 2025: Music of Eastern Europe: This event was a success! It was held on February 22nd at the St. Columbia's Church in Washington D.C.. Congratulations to the winners and the teachers who put in the hard work to help prepare these wonderful students!

Ages 7-8

1st Place: Ryan Ling, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
2nd Place: Fermi McChen, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
3rd Place: Daniel Liu, student of Silva Blazquez
Honorable Mention: Anna Yang, student of Jun Yang

Ages 9-10

1st Place: Elsa Tseng, student of Silva Blazquez
2nd Place: Grace Zhuang, student of Patricia Huff-Palumbo
3rd Place: Henry Cheng, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
No Honorable Mention awarded

Ages 11-12

1st Place: Gloria Ouyang, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
2nd Place: Yuchu Li, student of Junko Takahashi
3rd Place: Mindi Tang, student of Jun Yang
Honorable Mention: Lucas Zhang, student of Nancy Breth

Ages 13-14

1st Place: Andrew Lin, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
2nd Place: Elly Zhou, student of Tzu-yi Chen
3rd Place: Jingwei Zhao, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
Honorable Mention: Declain Gregory, student of Dmitri Nazarenko

Ages 15-16

1st Place: Caleb Wen, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
2nd Place: Melody Chen, student of Dmitri Nazarenko
3rd Place: Lucas Liu, student of Tzu-yi Chen
No Honorable Mention awarded

Ages 17-18

1st Place: Dylan Schenker, student of Mary Kading
2nd Place: Kana Puttkammer, student of Dmitri Nazarenko

