

Michigan Music Teacher

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**PUBLICATION OF
THE MICHIGAN MUSIC
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

*Affiliated with the Music Teachers
National Association*
www.mtna.org
www.michiganmusicteachers.org

Vol. LXIII No. 4 June 2017

President's Letter

Greetings Michigan Music Teachers!

As Count Basie once said: "Less is more....", thus my report will be "less"—not long reading.... I should reflect, only for a moment, when my husband, Scott, used to write long, long, l-l-o-o-n-n-g-g-Christmas letters... like pages upon pages.... Most of our family and friends told us they left them in the bathroom for extended reading purposes. Not the case here!

March found me, and several other MMTA members, attending the MTNA National Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. I enjoyed many sessions, of which should be noted that our own Lia Jensen-Abbott and Laurie Marshall presented a joint session honoring the piano music of William Gillock. Michigan was well-represented also in the MTNA National Competitions. In particular, congratulations are extended to Heather Gu, student of Logan Skelton, who took second place in the MTNA National Senior Performance Competitions! While attending and participating in the meeting for the National Committee for Certification, it came to my attention that most states have withdrawn their state certification. The MTNA National Certification process presents teachers with the opportunity to assemble materials that represents their teaching philosophy, their ability to teach standard literature, video segments of their teaching of specific pieces to students, and the assessment of their studio policies and procedures. It is a credible and worthwhile un-

dertaking to become certified nationally and I present this opportunity to ANY teacher in Michigan to do. You might be surprised to find that many of the applications are not all from a younger crowd: we have had many applications from well-seasoned and experienced teachers seeking the national certification credentials for their studio. Something to ponder?

While at MTNA, I had the pleasure to go to the Igudesmann and Joo concert—sold out, by the way, and it was AWESOME! If you don't know who they are, get going to You Tube and find out soon!

I had the honor and pleasure to work alongside Giuseppe Lupis and Gail Lytle Lira to plan and host the MMTA Concerto Competition. Held at MSU May 13, we had 47 entrants of which 3 were violinists (results on page 4). In addition, this past weekend, May 19-20, I attended the Michigan Youth Arts Festival in Kalamazoo, where I presented the Touchstone Award (teaching excellence) to our distinguished past president, Gary Pedersen at the MYAF Banquet. The next day, May 20, I taught a skills class for several students who were participating in the MMTA Piano Finals, also held in conjunction with the MYAF. Eighteen students participated that day, and the results may be found here in the MMT (page 5). Thanks to Michelle Mitchum for doing such a fine job of working with the MYA and getting the day set up for the finals.

Lastly, the new SAT Handbook is out on the website in a secured location, thanks to Yelena Wells. Teachers can go there to download and then print. Many thanks to the SAT Handbook Committee, chaired by Gail Davis Barnes, who spent over 6 years working on this project.

Summer is, I believe, finally here. I wish everyone a wonderful several months of relaxing, gardening, traveling, maybe some teaching and researching. In my spare time, I hope to be on the golf course with my son soaking in the nice weather and watching him golf! I am all *fore* it! (sorry about the pun....)

Best- Adrienne Wiley, President

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ADVERTISING FEES

Full page \$140

2/3 page \$120

1/2 page \$95

1/4 page \$70

Less than
1/4 page \$60

Submit ads to the MMT editor
with a check payable to MMTA.
Fees are for one issue only. For
multiple issue pricing, please
contact the editor.

DEADLINE

FOR THE
SEPTEMBER 2017

MMT:

August 15

All materials must be
received by this date

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR E-MAIL

Send to

Lester Castellana, Membership Chair: lestercastellana@gmail.com

~ or mail to: ~

Lester Castellana, 7164 Palmer St., Dexter, MI 48130

Conference Hotel Information:

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Holland (650 East 24th Street, Holland, MI 49423)



- Conference rate for Single or Double Rooms: \$109/night + taxes. Rooms have coffee makers, microwaves, refrigerators, and complimentary wi-fi access. Parking is complimentary.
- This rate is only available until **SEPTEMBER 15, 2017**. Rates cannot be changed at check-in or check-out.
- To receive this rate, you may call the hotel directly at 1-616-394-0111 and state that you are with the MMTA 2017 Annual Conference; or you can make your reservations online at: <http://group.doubletree.com/Michgian-Music-Teachers-Association>
- Please note that there are some rooms available at the DoubleTree hotel Saturday night, October 7 for MMTA members arriving a day early.
- Check-in time is 3:00 p.m. Early check-in may be available for those who call the morning they are checking in. Baggage storage is available.
- There is an available full breakfast buffet (\$10.99 adults/\$7.99 seniors), or there are nearby restaurants.

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Concerto Competition Results

The 2017 MMTA Concerto Competition was held at MSU on Saturday, May 13, and 47 entrants applied for the competition. In addition, we had three string players participate as well. The judges for this event were Deborah Moriarty and Claire Tang, Divisions I and II, and Mary Jo Cox and Gerardo Ascheri, for Divisions III and IV. Thanks to MSU for helping us to host this event. The following are the results of the competition.

Division I

First Place: #19 Spencer Sun, student of Izabella Vilensky

Division II

First Place: #1 Salem Wang, student of Mary Siciliano

Second Place: #7 Alexandra Xu, student of Mary Siciliano

Third Place: #5 Aaron Wang, student of Catherine Rollin

Division III

First Place: #9 Jubilee Wang, student of Mary Siciliano

Second Place: #16 Rosalyn LI, student of Mary Siciliano

Thirds Place: #11 Shuheng Zhang, student of Logan Skelton

Division IV

First Place: #40 Isabelle Lian, student of Arthur Greene

Second Place: #28 Yung-Yi-Chen, student of Michael Conrad

Third Place: #23 Soyoung Cho, student of Haewon Oh (strings)

Honorable Mentions:

#38 Meghan Rhoads, student of Christopher Harding; #26 Jia Rui Yu, student of Michael Conrad

Sincerely,

Adrienne Wiley, Gail Lytle Lira, and Giuseppe Lupis, Co-Chairs

Correction to the Directory:

Please note the following correction to the MMTA directory that was mailed in December 2016.

Page 85, Article 14, section 2 should read, "In the event of the dissolution of the Organization, any funds remaining in the treasury after the payment of any outstanding debts shall be turned over to the Music Teachers *National Association*."

June 2017

SAT Finals Results

State Student Day Finals were held Saturday, May 6 at Michigan State University for the Intermediate and Junior Divisions and at Western Michigan University on Saturday, May 20th for the Senior Division. The results are as follows:

Intermediate Division

First Place: Harold Wu Teacher: Logan Skelton
Second Place: Salem Wang Teacher: Mary Siciliano
Third Place: Christopher Shang Teacher: Victoria Sterzick
Honorable Mention: Roger Wang Teacher: Arthur Greene
Adjudicators: Gail Lytle Lira and Lisa Summers

Junior Division

First Place: Zhang Shuheng Teacher: Logan Skelton
Second Place: Jack Naglick Teacher: Catherine Rollin
Third Place: Emma Fu Teacher: Mary Siciliano
Honorable Mention: Jessica Wang Teacher: Claire Tang
Adjudicators: Dorothy Vogel and Sookkyung Cho

Senior Division

First Place: George Gotfredson Teacher: Mary Siciliano
Second Place: Natania Shi Teacher: Izabella Vilensky
Third Place: Eric Yu Teacher: Claire Tang
Honorable Mention: Isabelle Lian Teacher: Arthur Greene
Honorable Mention: Feng Jin Cui Teacher: Adrienne Wiley
Adjudicators: Gary Pedersen and Matthew Bengtson

Thank you to all who helped these two days run smoothly! Michelle Mitchum, SAT Auditions Chairperson

132nd MMTA State Conference Schedule

October 8-10, 2017

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel

650 East 24th Street • Holland, MI 49423

Sunday, October 8, 2017

8:30 a.m.: Executive Board Meeting (Centennial Room)

9:30 a.m.: Full Board Meeting (Centennial Room)

12:00 p.m. Registration Opens (Pre-Function)

Poster Session (Room TBA)

Vendors Open (Pointe West)

1:00 p.m. Opening Remarks (Ottawa/Macatawa)

NCTM Exam (Room TBA)

1:05 p.m. Session: Dr. Jody Graves (Ottawa/Macatawa)

“Over the Barline and Through the Notes”

2:30-2:45 BREAK

2:45-3:45 Session: Dr. Timothy Shafer (Ottawa/Macatawa)

“The Intermediate Piano Music of Franz Liszt”

3:45-4:00 p.m. BREAK

4:00-4:15 p.m.: Business Meeting I (Ottawa/Macatawa)

4:30 p.m. MMTA/MTNA Winners Recital (Ottawa/Macatawa)

6:30 p.m. Dinner On Your Own

Local Associations Presidents’ Dinner (Centennial Room)

7:45 p.m. Recital: Presented by Holland Piano Teachers Forum (Ottawa/Macatawa)

9:15 p.m. Reception Hosted by Holland Piano Teachers Forum

Monday, October 9, 2017 Schedule

7:30 a.m.: Local SAT Chairs Breakfast Meeting (Centennial Room)

8:00 a.m.: LOBBY: Registration Open

Vendors Open (Pointe West)

9:00 a.m.: Teacher Education Session: Genevieve McDonald (Ottawa/Macatawa)

“Playing a Different Tune: Students with Special Needs and the Private Piano Studio”

Teaching students with special needs is a rewarding experience for both the teacher and learner. However, there are often many challenges that educators face when presenting traditional piano techniques and curriculum to these students. This session highlights one teacher’s work with a piano student with Down syndrome and the accommodations, adaptations and modifications used in their lessons. Come explore various pedagogical approaches based on the techniques of Universal Design for Learning and see how you can use them to help your students succeed, especially those with special needs!

10:15 a.m. BREAK

10:30 a.m.: Masterclass Intermediate Students: Dr. Jody Graves (Ottawa/Macatawa)

11:45 a.m. Lunch On Your Own

Certification Meeting (Jenison Board Room)

1:00 p.m. General Session: Members of the SAT Handbook Committee (Ottawa/Macatawa)

2:15 p.m. BREAK

2:30 p.m.: Session: Dr. Jody Graves (Ottawa/Macatawa)

“The Heart of Performance”

5:00 p.m.: BREAK

5:30 p.m. CASH BAR (Side Bar)

6:15 p.m.: GALA DINNER (Great Lakes Ballroom)

8:15 p.m. CONFERENCE ARTIST RECITAL: Dr. Timothy Shafer (Ottawa/Macatawa)

9:45 p.m.: Reception Hosted By MMTA

Tuesday, October 10, 2017

7:30 a.m.: Advisory Council Breakfast Meeting (Jenison Board Room)

9:00 a.m.: General Session: Dr. Timothy Shafer (Ottawa/Macatawa)

“Principles of Interpretation”

10:00 a.m. Business Meeting 2 (Ottawa/Macatawa)

10:10 a.m. BREAK

10:30 a.m.: Advanced Student Master Class: Dr. Timothy Shafer (Ottawa/Macatawa)

12:00 p.m. Conference Ends

Michigan Music Teachers Association 132nd Annual State Conference

October 8-10, 2017 ~ Holland, MI

CONFERENCE AND MEAL REGISTRATION

(online registration at <http://michiganmusicteachers.org/2017-state-conference>)

(see page 3 for hotel registration information)

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Local Association: _____ Certification: State National

REGISTRATION FEES:

Advance Conference Registration: MMTA Member

(registration after September 16—\$90) \$75.00 _____

Advance Conference Registration: non-MMTA Member

(registration after September 16—\$100) \$85.00 _____

One Session/One Day Registration \$55.00 _____

Registration: MMTA Member's spouse

(registration after September 16—\$50) \$40.00 _____

College Student Registration \$10.00 _____

Monday Night Concert: non-Registrant \$20.00 _____

MEAL RESERVATIONS (Advance reservations only—not available after September 15):

Monday Evening Banquet, October 9 \$29.00 _____

Please select one Banquet entrée. Tax and gratuity are included in the price.

_____ Baked Tilapia

_____ Chicken Parmesan

_____ Pot Roast

_____ Sundried Tomato Tortellini with Alfredo sauce

* All entrees come with salad, rolls, coffee and tea, and dessert.

TOTAL ENCLOSED: _____

CONFERENCE AND MEAL ADVANCE REGISTRATION DEADLINE: September 15, 2017

Please mail this registration form and check (payable to MMTA) to:

Diana Spitnale Miller, MMTA Treasurer, 3352 W. River Dr., Gladwin, MI 48624-9730

For more information, contact Lia Jensen-Abbott, MMTA Vice President and Conference Chairperson:

Phone (517)554-1671 Email: ljensen@albion.edu

2017 Conference Artist



Dr. Timothy Shafer

Timothy Shafer has concertized extensively throughout the United States, performing, teaching, and discussing the rich heritage of piano repertoire. Shafer has appeared both as a soloist and a chamber musician in Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, maintains an active solo recital and chamber music schedule in the United States, and is a frequent soloist with regional orchestras, having appeared in more than 40 concerto performances in his career. As a member of Duo Concertant with violinist James Lyon, he has recorded "Outstanding in Our Field," a CD featuring works for piano and violin by Strauss, Debussy, and Stravinsky. He performs frequently in recital with his daughter, soprano Sarah Shafer, and has previously appeared as state and division artist for several MTNA organizations.

As Professor of Piano at Penn State University, Shafer has concertized, taught, and adjudicated in South America and Asia. He is also well-known as a frequent masterclass clinician and competition adjudicator throughout the United States for professional music organizations and colleges.

Shafer is the co-author of *Class Piano for Adult Beginners*, published by Prentice-Hall, and his articles on piano teaching and repertoire have appeared in the *Piano Pedagogy Forum*, *Keyboard Companion*, the *American Music Teacher*, and in both volumes of *The Pianist's Craft*. Shafer served for many years as the national chair for the National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy's Student Committee. Currently, he is serving as the senior music consultant for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in their joint psalter-hymnal project with the United Reformed Church. The volume is slated for publication later this year.

Among Shafer's projects for this year are soloist with the Centre Pennsylvania Orchestra in a performance of the Mendelssohn Double Concerto, and a recording of newly commissioned hymn arrangements for horn and piano with Penn State colleague Lisa Bontrager.

He is the recipient of Oberlin Conservatory's "Rudolf Serkin Outstanding Pianist Award," Indiana University School of Music's annual Concerto Competition, and the Pennsylvania Music Teachers Association "Teacher of the Year" award. Dr. Shafer earned degrees in piano performance from Oberlin Conservatory and Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music.

2017 Conference Clinician: Dr. Jody Graves

Jody Graves maintains an exciting, diverse and active performing career, and is recognized nationally as a distinguished artist and teacher of piano. She has performed concerts in Austria, Norway, France, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Japan, and has toured in the Persian Gulf serving as a Cultural Ambassador for the U.S. State Department. The Middle East Tour, with the nationally acclaimed Sapphire Trio (of which she is the pianist), included concerts in Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The press reviews have called their performances “**exciting...imaginative and compelling.**” Her work in the Middle East since then has continued and in April, 2010, she was a judge for the National Palestinian Piano Festival in Jerusalem, and following that event toured the West Bank region with the Sapphire Trio performing concerts and giving master classes. The Sapphire Trio returned to the Middle East for a concert tour and master classes in April, 2011, and Dr. Graves returned to the Middle East to perform concerts and give master classes and lectures in March 2012.



Dr. Graves is in great demand as an adjudicator for piano competitions and festivals. Each season takes her across the country as an MTA clinician, and she has an active schedule each year as a workshop presenter for teachers. Ms. Graves has been a presenter at the **National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy**, and in 2015 was a Keynote Speaker for NCKP in Chicago, IL. She has been a presenter and performer at numerous **State and National MTNA** conferences such as the National MTNA Conference (Kansas City, Milwaukee, L.A.) and was invited to present at the national MTNA Conference again in 2015 in Las Vegas. Dr. Graves has served as a judge for the **International Piano Competition** at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and also served on the faculty for the Eastman Summer Session titled ‘**Plays Well With Others**’, featuring sessions on collaborative arts performance. Additionally, Dr. Graves has authored articles for the **American Music Teacher** and **Clavier** magazines, and will join the editorial board for the AMT e-journal in 2017.

Dr. Graves offers her popular “Artists’ Retreat” seminars which focus on the “Heart of Performance” addressing everything from the issues of stage delivery, to living an artistic life. Graves is especially interested in promoting concert art music, creating unique and contemporary ways to foster a collaborative experience between artist and listener, and is dedicated to maintaining the life of music in our schools and culture. Ms. Graves is recognized for her creative ability to engage the audience during her concerts with anecdotes, historical perspectives and humor, and often uses multi-media to highlight the musical works. The press has referred to her as “**Victoria Borge**”.

She holds a Doctorate Degree in Piano Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York and is currently Professor of Piano at Eastern Washington University, in Cheney, WA. She was recently awarded the EWU Fosseen-Kusaka Distinguished International Exchange Scholar Award which took her to Japan as a solo artist and master class clinician in 2014.

Genevieve McDonald is a music teacher in the Metro-Detroit area. She holds a Bachelor of Music from Wayne State University, a Masters of Music Education from the University of Michigan, and a certification in Orff-Schulwerk. She is in her 6th year of teaching elementary general music and currently works with K-5 and self-contained ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) students in the Northville Public Schools. Along with her public school teaching, Genevieve is an accomplished pianist and vocalist. She teaches piano lessons to middle and high school students and especially enjoys teaching students with Down Syndrome and Autism. She is also the president of the Detroit Orff-Schulwerk chapter, as well as an active member of the Michigan Music Educators Association, and the National Association for Music Education.



Conference Session Descriptions

“Over the Barline and Through the Notes”

Dr. Jody Graves

“How do I foster good practicing through the week between lessons?” This workshop highlights specific practice techniques, and clear ways on how to guide your students in successful and creative practicing. It’s about developing musicians of integrity and ownership in all aspects of training. A fun, creative and productive approach to encouraging imagination and incentive for your students! Includes visuals, demonstrations and hand-out.

“The Intermediate Piano Music of Franz Liszt”

Dr. Timothy Shafer

The *intermediate* music of Franz Liszt? Is there such a thing? Though not specifically writing for students, Liszt composed many excellent works across his compositional span that are accessible at earlier levels than most of us suspect. We will investigate this wealth of repertoire that helps students become acquainted with the giant of the piano.

“The Heart of Performance”

Dr. Jody Graves

Do you ever hear a student or colleague say “I can’t wait until my recital is over!” Have you or your students ever approached a performance without any idea how to truly prepare for a joyful and successful experience? This workshop includes deep discussion on the pathway to successful performance, and how to foster that within ourselves as performers, and for our students. The presentation includes interactive discussion, visual and audio illustrations, and hand-out. Participants are invited to bring their questions and stories about performance as we explore the topic that seems to be the most elusive, and at times, the most mysterious. Performance is the result of our process, and clarity of intention within the process can effect powerful changes in how we and our students approach and navigate through every performance. Humor and perspective are included in this seminar, along with specific tools to employ that can give the energy, perspective and confidence required for a beautiful outcome.

The heart of performance is the ultimate pursuit of excellence within, and the ability to deliver that excellence in performance. It is a “communion” experience between the performer and the listener. The intersection of humanity vibrates between both participants, joining hearts that beat with the anticipation of a transforming experience. The performer with an open heart, pours out their talent and intention, and the heart of the receiver is flooded with possibility and hope. This unique experience treats the wounded spirit, and advances us a few steps further into enlightenment and joyous living. What could be more noble?

As you deepen your understanding of the miracle of you, the awareness of what you emit through words, attitudes and yes, your performance becomes clear and intentional. Your presence and energy has an impact on everyone and everything around you...how you mold and design your personhood is intimately tied to what comes from within you in performance...and you can change the world with that gift – one word, one gesture, one note at a time!

“Principles of Interpretation”

Dr. Timothy Shafer

In this session we will look at useful, overarching musical principles that, with regular application, can help our students become independent learners and interpreters of their music. Using a variety of intermediate repertoire, we will explore how to choose voicings, phrase shapes, inflections, rubati, and architectural dynamic plans to help students learn early on how to make wise musical decisions.

What Are the Parents Looking For?

April E-Note

Darlene Vlasek, NCTM

While attending the National Conference in Baltimore this March, I could not help noticing the many young people, obviously new, or soon-to-be college graduates. Of course, there were people of all ages and levels of experience, even some who looked quite elderly. In considering reasons for seeking certification, I thought about the teachers at both ends of the age categories.

For young people who are just launching their teaching careers, I wonder what parents think when they interview with these very youthful appearing people. Undoubtedly these teachers will have an impressive bio indicating all the competitions they have won, the awards they have received and the college degrees they have earned. But what about their teaching experience? What indications are there that these well-educated, well-trained teachers are knowledgeable about teaching, about transferring their knowledge and skills to another, about dealing with people of different backgrounds and learning styles, of having developed a practical teaching philosophy, of having established a professional approach to all aspects of their teaching experience? We all know about those who profess to be teachers, who have established illustrious performance careers, but who are clueless, or worse, very negative in their attempt at teaching. Being an excellent musician does not, by definition, mean being an excellent educator.

If these young teachers are nationally certified, they have a proven record of their knowledge and skill as teachers. Their pedagogical qualifications have been verified by the comprehensive certification process. Any parent seeking more details regarding the certification requirements can visit the MTNA website to confirm the teacher's qualifications as a professional educator, fully capable of successfully imparting to students what they need to learn and how to achieve desired results.

On the other end of the spectrum, I spoke with a person seated next to me at one of the Conference sessions and asked her about taking the steps towards certification. She informed me that she had thought about it, but since she planned to retire in several years, she felt it was not "worth it." At first I thought that sounded like a difficult position to counter. Then the next day, we were all treated to a dynamic speaker, David Cutler, who spoke about the Savvy Musician, and the Savvy Studio Shakeup. He indicated that to be "savvy", we need to be as, or more, inspired when we retire than when we started. He also stated that change is essential and not changing is suicidal. So, thinking back on my conversation the previous day, I realized that the points I should have presented were exactly along the lines of Mr. Cutler's statements. Close to retirement, are teachers as successful as they could be? Are they embracing new ideas, improving their methods, receiving fresh inspiration, advancing their own skills? Working through the five projects after years of teaching can open one's eyes to new possibilities, renew one's approach, improve one's methods, infuse new ideas into the studio, incorporate better teaching strategies. Long time teachers must progress to be effective. Without progress, there is stagnation or decline, both undesirable and irresponsible towards students and parents. For well-established teachers, the certification process can be an adventure and a discovery.

For more information on the national certification process, visit www.mtnacertification.org

Nagel, cont. from p. 14

As for teaching, I have to reflect on forty seven years at Michigan teaching piano and before that three years in New York, as a teaching assistant at Juilliard teaching basic theory and harmony, and our private students that Julie and I worked with in Huntington, Long Island. Sometimes I feel great pride, but other times I question the “merit” part of the word “emeritus” My goodness the mistakes I recall, like giving a young girl with no technique equal to the task the Prokofiev First Sonata! Or a young freshman whose repertoire did not in any way suggest he was ready to tackle it, the Appassionata. I wanted to “teach” those pieces. But what in blazes could I have taught at that time? Particularly with the Beethoven, which I have played often but had not at that time, I still have questions about what to say interpretively, or how to help a student effectively with the opening pattern of the last movement, a pattern I actually had little trouble learning. How can I help a young person learn that playing all the notes of such pieces is only the beginning of a process? They are light years away from my present understanding of that process and I am not certain of my own ideas! Teaching is a precarious profession, to be sure, and you realize it more the closer you get to “emeritus”.

Nerves! (Where is Julie when I need her now?!!!!) It is somewhat difficult to face this fact, but my own youthful arrogance and fearlessness is gradually giving way to a more circumspect approach to performing. I am not sure if I were invited to play the Tchaikovsky B-flat Minor Concerto now I would do it——this is a work I adore, have played a few times, taught a few times and admire the recorded performances by Horowitz, Rubinstein, Gilels, and many others. It is still for me one of the pinnacles of the Romantic concerto literature. But maybe it is a piece I should enjoy from the sidelines. I actually went to the piano a few days ago just for fun and began the first movement, my mind and memories fantasizing. Rude awakenings happened rather soon after I began this indulgence! And yet if I think about the Tchaikovsky, or the Brahms concerti or the late Beethoven sonatas, all towering masterworks, I realize I have different thoughts about them now than I did when I was studying them and when I had chances to perform them. Lest you think I am focusing only on the titanic repertoire, I recently resurrected two short Brahms Intermezzi, Op. 117/1 in E-flat Major and everyone’s favorite, Op.118/2 in A Major. It is DAUNTING to play pieces that you THINK you know and you KNOW everyone else does know. I spent a lot of time rediscovering the beauties of the A Major Intermezzo. It was less nerves than a powerful sense of responsibility that gave me pause as I contemplated performing those tributes to our dear friend Bradley Bloom. The “look at me” that fueled my thirteen-year-old performance of the Haydn E Minor Sonata has been joined (not replaced entirely——it never will be eliminated) by “listen to how wonderful this music is. Performance is not selfless. It is a fusion of ego and soul. I don’t know it my closing comment about nerves will read the way I hope it sounds when I speak it, but I have always advised students studying the “art/craft/ gamble” of performance: You have to be able to say the same words simultaneously in two different ways when you perform. One would be “ I (capital letters and accents) am playing beethoven”!!!! The other, same words, needs to be “i (small case letters and hesitantly) am playing BEETHOVEN????”

So a year later these are some thoughts. Stay tuned for retirement 2018 and hopefully years on past that. I hope to meet some new students, learn some new repertoire including music outside my comfort zone, and ruminate upon new insights that I can share with you!

Musical Musings

A Year Has Passed: Some Thoughts

By Louis Nagel

About a year ago, June 1 to be precise, I officially retired and became Professor Emeritus at the University of Michigan SMTD. I am asked always “how’s retirement?” and I have given endless variations on the same theme: it is a mixed experience. I don’t feel much different—I can still run a mile in under a day, I still drive my car in the right direction with the help of Julie or a navigator, and though I get more nervous, I still play the piano and teach with the same skills and visions I had in younger years. I am not passing judgment on the quality of those skills and vision, but they remain with me whatever they are!

I look forward to continuing to learn music. Just last week I had the great pleasure of collaborating with my friends Velda Kelly and Nadine Deleury in a concert at Detroit’s wonderful Scarab Club. The program was two Mozart Trios, the first of three programs that will present all of Mozart’s trios. For me the B-flat, K.254 was a brand new piece, and the E Major, K 542 I had played years ago—when it was closer to being contemporary music. I had a complete relearning to do and it was harder than I expected it would be. Of the remaining four, two I have performed and two will be new. And admittedly it takes longer to learn a piece when you have had the title “Emeritus” bestowed upon you. I plan to do my residency at Kerrytown this summer, and I will be comparing the styles of Mozart and Haydn, two composers who seem to be paired but in truth are often quite individual in their compositional approach. And I hope to learn new works to present at these concerts. As a young student I disliked falling back on old repertoire, when there was (and remains to this day) so much music I had not learned and performed. That habit stays with me now. But it takes longer to tackle a work as formidable as either Mozart’s or Haydn’s C Minor Sonatas, both of which I have learned but never polished for performance. And certainly it takes longer to gain the confidence that the learning process has prepared the music responsibly for public performance. Works such as the Haydn F Minor Variations, which I have played several times at Kerrytown (and often in concerts elsewhere) would still require my rethinking, relistening, and reevaluating past performances. One never finishes learning a piece of music!

I think back to an early experience with a Haydn Sonata, the marvelous E Minor gem that all of you who are reading this will recall with familiarity. If you want to take time out from my column to go play it for yourselves, feel free to do so! I’ll wait!———I was twelve or thirteen when I first played this sonata. As a youngster, I thought it was great fun to play the “PRESTO” first movement even though I remember some egregious mistakes at the mindless tempo I took, despite my teachers cautionary comments at lessons. I was having far too much fun playing this piece at MY tempo! And I also remember getting through the second movement ADAGIO somewhat impatiently—yes it was pretty, but adagios and thirteen-year-olds don’t always coexist happily! And I recall finally that my left hand got a little tired at the end of the VIVACE. But somehow the seeds were planted and they grew, hopefully into a more mature concept, and that sonata remains in my active repertoire to this day. It is a great composition by a composer who is still under appreciated. As I continue to rethink music that has lived with me a long time I continue to marvel at what I find new in it, that which I never saw before or see with new eyes and hear with new ears.

Nagel, cont. on p. 13