

# VIRGINIA MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

ORGANIZED AND AFFILIATED ON  
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TEACHERS NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

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# NewsNotes

## Passion Is More Than the Paper

Christy Tallamy

It happens like this. You slip quietly into the back row. You break out pen and paper—perhaps your iPad. As the speaker begins, you make lists of unfamiliar composers, phrases and ideas. You'll google them later. You avert your eyes at the phrase "Everyone knows this one..." as the speaker casually plays out an obscure melody on the shiny conference piano. People nod knowingly. You are certain they've noticed the blank look on your face. Because you have a secret. You are a Music Teacher with a Business Degree.

At our 2018 Virginia Music Teacher's Conference and after a near decade as a VMTA member, I came out as a Communications and Marketing Major. In my coming out, I found myself surrounded by other accomplished music educators with a variety of degrees. It was nearly comical. A high five from a Science Major and a side-eyed grin from a Health Studies major made me realize I was not alone in that back row. As music educators from all educational backgrounds, the group that gathered that morning fell into authentic conversation about a common goal—*how we, as qualified educators in the independent music studio, might more effectively collaborate using our unique backgrounds and experience.*

In 2016, over 26,000 music degrees were conferred with less than 5,000 of those being Music Teacher Education degrees (over 30% of those did not enter the workforce as music teachers). The majority of those with Music Degrees in any specialty who made their career in music entered the secondary and post-secondary education workforce. There is also a measurable percentage of business, biological science, engineering and mathematics majors who enter the workforce as music educators. There are countless independent teachers throughout the country who are unaccounted for in the demographic data—the BLS gives us some indication that this may be around 150,000 individuals.<sup>1</sup> Loosely analyzed, these numbers tell us that within the independent teacher population there is a kaleidoscope of educational backgrounds. Independent of the degree held, the successful music educator strives for excellence in the studio through continued education, empathetic connections to young student, self-motivated learning, instrument practice and networking.

What if in the communion of all dedicated music makers we find two halves of one whole? Those who've committed their academic years to the intricate study of music joined with those whose love of music has led them on a roundabout journey into teaching. To make

a safe generalization—the music academic will often end up in the hallowed halls of advanced study while the more eclectic sojourner opens the home studio and works with the tiny fingers of the elementary beginner. Through peer connection and support, these converging paths have the potential to support the profitable growth of quality music studios and a new generation of well-trained music makers.

The studies conducted of interdisciplinary teaching reinforce the idea that when educated individuals from multiple disciplines team together it enhances big picture thinking and allows the group to focus on a unified goal.<sup>2</sup> While interdisciplinary technique is usually applied to individuals working for the same education system, why couldn't we apply the philosophy to our associations and conferences on both state and national levels? Create an environment of authenticity where the Math Major is encouraged to share perspective on pattern teaching or the Psychology Major is willing to own her expertise on the emotional challenges of early adolescents. Moti Nissani draws an ideal picture of interdisciplinary interaction, referring to it as the intellectual equivalent of traveling to many different lands.<sup>3</sup>

When the non-music major feels valued for his unique contribution to the music education community, he will more actively engage in his own development, bringing his best self to both his studio and his peers. He begins to have more confidence to engage association offerings such as conferences and teacher certification. Thus, the circle is born—personal growth begets organizational growth. Our value as an organization does not stem from our individual abilities but in our commitment to understanding and learning from each other. Within our associations on both local and national levels, how might we bolster the quality and profitability of the independent studio if we actively interconnected the varied academic backgrounds of the independent teacher population?

Confidence to collaborate with our peers and community through our academic strengths is essential to maintaining vitality in our ever-changing world. Without the experience of a formal Music Degree Program, how does an IMT find that confidence? Teach from your musical strengths—and grow from there. Be open and honest about your own evolution. Join an association that supports your goals and philosophies. Attend conferences and ask questions. Identify a good method

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## Certification Profile: René Johnson, NCTM

by Anne James, NCTM



NVMTA President René Johnson is an enthusiastic proponent of the MTNA certification program. She has encouraged all NVMTA members, and especially the board members, to become certified. She herself has been MTNA certified since 2003. Shortly after achieving that distinction, she wrote an article for *The American Music Teacher* detailing the process she followed as a person whose college degree was not in music.

A native of the logging town of Sweet Home, Oregon, René was fortunate to live only three blocks away from Virginia Hawley Buhn NCTM, the only qualified piano teacher within thirty miles. In high school she began teaching piano under the tutelage of her teacher. She graduated with a degree in medical technology from Brigham Young University and worked as a toxicologist for a couple of years.

When she began raising her family, she knew that piano teaching would work well with her family responsibilities and was a career she had already found both enjoyable and fulfilling. She has greatly benefitted from her membership in the NVMTA since 1991 and has served in various capacities before her current role as President.

René believes that if she, as the mother of boys then ages 12, 10, 6 and 2, was able to attain certification without a music degree, anyone can do it. And there are resources to help. Many VMTA

chapters have mentors who assist in planning how to achieve the five required projects for certification. The VMTA offers a \$100 rebate to any member who achieves it. And there are grants available. René Johnson received one from Jordan Kitts Music Store which helped pay her tuition for lessons with NVMTA member Nancy O'Neill Breth NCTM as she prepared her performance. In addition to state and local grants, MTNA has a list of grants offered at the national level.

René Johnson teaches around twenty students ranging in age from six to 65. Most are young children. "I want students to enjoy music all their lives. We do a lot of theory and sight-reading so music is accessible to them. For the theory classes I went to Home Depot and had them cut a large whiteboard into eight smaller boards. My students love to do theory on their individual whiteboards using markers."

"Music is to share with other people, so our recitals are mostly at nursing homes. I try to prepare my kids to serve in church, no matter which church they go to, and to accompany other musicians. In their piano lessons, as they play I accompany them on my recorder. They listen for my breaths and my shaping and watch for my cue to end."

"The road to certification is not easy, but it is worthwhile and attainable. If it were easy, it would not provide the distinction that the title NCTM carries with it. My certificate is framed and hangs above my piano." ■

## Certification Profile: Aphrodite Mitsopoulou, NCTM

by Anne James, NCTM



NVMTA member Aphrodite Mitsopoulou became certified several years ago. "Certification is one more form of development, and one should never stop developing. It takes the form of a short course and makes you review what you already learned in music school. Going through the certification process made me more aware of how I was teaching. It also gave me a lot of insight into different styles of learning. I find being certified a very great asset."

A busy performer and teacher, Ms. Mitsopoulou decided to purchase a number of the textbooks recommended by the Certification Board and found them quite informative. She notes the certification process took a lot of time but the individual parts could be tackled and completed one at a time.

Aphrodite Mitsopoulou earned a Soloist's Diploma in Greece before receiving a U.S. O1 Visa awarded to artists for extraordinary ability. She earned her Master's degree at Boston University. Some of her notable teachers include Valery Sagaidachny, Janice Weber, Anna Ouspenskaya, Thomas Mastroianni and Nancy Breth.

"I love performing. It should be part of the life of an instruc-

tor." Mitsopoulou specializes in Greek contemporary compositions. In 2016 she gave a lecture-recital entitled "From Romanticism to Greek Composers of the 20th Century." For her 2017 lecture-recital at George Mason University she brought scores from Greece. An active accompanist, she performs with the Fairfax Saxophone Quartet, among others.

As a teacher, Mitsopoulou believes each child has his own unique potential, "I want always to teach without prejudice. I avoid labels. Every child is unique. I often see children who have a bad self-image. I really believe in the student. Our society has too many labels, and the children know that. It's important to discover their unique potential. It's a journey. We have to train the parents, too, sometimes even more than the children."

"The biggest problem today is that kids don't know a lot of classical music. What we do in this studio is require the students to attend a concert and bring back the program. I also have them listen to five performances of the same piece and say which performance they liked best."

The Co-Chair of NVMTA's Baroque Festival and Competition, Aphrodite Mitsopoulou formerly chaired the District Auditions. "I love having organizations like NVMTA. Participation in their events helps expose students to pieces they might enjoy. We focus on the experience, not the trophies." ■

# Certification Profile: Michelle Huang, NCTM

by Anne James, NCTM



Michelle Huang moved to Richmond in 2014 and immediately became active in the Richmond Music Teachers Association. Having served a two-year term as First Vice-President and Program Chairman, she is now RMTA's president.

An active recitalist, Michelle Huang received a faculty grant to commission ten paintings from students in VCU's School of the Arts to accompany her performances of Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition.

After playing the work in ten different venues, she has scheduled a final recital in Florence, South Carolina, before embarking on new music. Her next program is still brewing but may include music by a living Russian composer. Nicolai Kapustin has caught her ear with his jazz-inflected style and she contemplates pairing his Six Etudes with some of William Bolcom's Piano Rags.

Huang, a Taiwan native, came to San Francisco as a twelve-year-old and two years later moved to Raleigh, NC. In high school she accompanied choirs and played for musicals, "It really developed my sight-reading skills." At UNC-Chapel Hill she was the recipient of a music scholarship and studied with Barbara Rowan.

While at UNC she performed in a masterclass for David Northington, a professor at the University of Tennessee. She liked his approach and earned her Master's degree at UT under his tutelage. Her DMA studies were at Florida State with Read Gainsford. Her teaching assistantship at FSU was for private teaching. While there she took an independent study with Dr. Gainsford called "observed teaching," where she taught a 50-minute lesson to a student and received a ten-minute feedback.

Michelle Huang teaches 28 preparatory students at her home studio and has a number of collegiate students at VCU. She approaches her home studio in terms of three different levels: beginners, intermediates, and early advanced to advanced. With the beginners she tries to discover each student's learning style. "Intermediates eight to twelve years old need more organization. I will be teaching them how to practice." For the early advanced and advanced students, "I teach them the art of listening and how to manage their time, since they are so busy."

Certification is important to Michelle Huang. "It's a way to feel you are part of a group of professionals and feel confident and solid in your knowledge. Your students know their teacher is qualified and they can come to their teacher with questions that can be answered accurately and efficiently." ■

## Passion is more than Paper

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series and study it just as you ask your students to study. Find a performance outlet such as Spring Festival with the NFMCA to which you can hold yourself and your students accountable.

Self-doubt is a hurdle for us all—especially so for the dedicated music teacher whose academic history was not focused in music. At the VMTA conference, I said to a much more experienced professor, "I'm trying not to see my work at this early level as insignificant." The look on his face taught me the lesson I needed—his reply even more so. "What you do with your students is not insignificant. It is the beginning. It's the hardest part. It's when their passion begins."

My fellow music makers, whether you are among the ones who get them started or among the ones who polish them up—we are where passion begins. We learn from one another and grow our communities of music education by building on the strengths of each individual. A degree in music does not equate to the mastery of music nor does the lack of that same degree indicate inexperience. Our mastery comes in the search for our most authentic musical selves. We then use our own experiences, our successes and failures, our insecurities and our confidences, our knowledge and intuition to inspire music making in others.

### SOURCES

1. Data USA, 2016: Additional support data from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2017
2. Jones, Casey (2009) "Interdisciplinary Approach - Advantages, Disadvantages, and the Future Benefits of Interdisciplinary Studies," ESSAI: Vol. 7, Article 26.
3. Nissani, Moti (1997) "Ten Cheers for Interdisciplinarity: The Case for Interdisciplinary Knowledge and Research," The Social Science Journal: Vol. 34, Issue 2, p201-216

### AUTHOR BIO

Christy Tallamy is the proprietor of Little Ears Music Studio (LEMS) and the founder and editor of Conversations at the Piano Bench, an annual student-driven composition collection. Prior to opening her studio, she worked as a marketing and public relations officer for the business development firm Trexler & Company. She went on to work as a marketer and writer for Phillips Publishing, a Maryland-based Publishing House. She received her BA in Communications and Marketing from Lee University.

# Minutes .....

## VMTA GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING OCTOBER 27, 2019, 9:00 AM LIBERTY UNIVERSITY, LYNCHBURG, VA

*Respectfully submitted by Laura Cardin*

- a. Call to Order at 9:29 a.m.
- b. Minutes from October 28, 2017 were emailed on October 24th. Motion to approve made by Melissa Marion, second by Nancy Breth, approved.
- c. Agenda. Motion to approve made by Jeanette Winsor, Barbara Moore seconded, approved.
- d. Reports of officers, boards, and standing committees
  - a. Treasurer (Mun Lee Han)—Forwarded motion from the Executive Committee to approve the current budget, all in favor.
  - b. Membership (Becky Wallenborn): As of October 24, 2018 our current membership totals 726 with Active members totaling 523, Senior members totaling 167 and Collegiate/Student members numbering 36. Collegiate and Senior numbers have held consistent, but active status memberships have dropped from last year's total of 554—a decrease of 31 members, eleven more than last year's decline. New memberships also very slightly increased from 68 last year to 70 this year as of this date. Within that total, 38 are brand new members and 32 are reinstating members. 12 collegiate/student members are included in this new members group. These new members represent piano, string and voice teachers. Despite these decreased numbers, VMTA remains in fifth place nationwide for paid membership totals as of August 31, 2018.
  - c. Certification (Diane Perett, read by Elizabeth Caluda): As of July 1st, VA is 34th in the US in the percentage of nationally certified teachers. 12% of VMTA members are nationally certified by MTNA. Newly certified VMTA members: Michelle Huang of Richmond, Jacob Joseph of Appomattox, Yi Shan of Herndon
  - d. Local Associations (Roma Scriven): Chapter Presidents met for lunch October 26th. Shared recruitment ideas, finding new members, how to stop the "STP" (Same Ten People). Invite a friend to come to a meeting, reach out to local schools and music stores. Brochures for VMTA available. There is much value from being a VMTA member, attending the conferences and we need to share this with education and experience with other teachers in the area. **Suggestion for a YouTube VMTA account for interview videos—Melody Day to be Media Chair. melody@daysongstudio.com.** Instagram and Twitter might be good to look into as well. Recommendation that Instagram is a better choice than Twitter.
  - e. IMTF—Position needs to be filled—Christy Tallamy to Chair
  - f. Collegiate Chapters—position needs to be filled—Recommendation for Lori Piitz, David Berry. Please let Beth know if you would like to volunteer or have another recommendation.
- e. Reports of special committees
  - a. Leadership Summit—Held October 25, 2018. 18 were in attendance
    - i. *NewNotes* will continue as semi-annual publications in electronic printed form
    - ii. Yearbook will continue as annual publication in electronic and printed form.
      - 1. Yearbook to be available July 15.
        - a. Deadline for information June 15th.
      - 2. Membership roster available as a separate unit after Aug 15
      - 3. Updated as needed with notifications to membership
      - 4. Will include links to pages
      - 5. Application forms will follow description of events
      - 6. Old Yearbooks are archived on the website.
      - 7. When Yearbook is available, there will be a notification via email.
  - f. Special orders—None
  - g. General orders—None
  - h. Unfinished business—None
  - i. New business
    - a. Introduction of Gianne Zhu, new VMTA Theory Chair (Susan Atkins)—Current project: Test 1 (Test, Key, Listening and Sample Tests) Primary-2B will be re-written by January 1. Levels 3A-12 will be checked. Year 1 in odd numbered years, Year 2 in even numbered years.
      - Susan Atkins mentioned—Acalympics.com is a website where you can practice theory.
      - Nancy Breth—MD State has a theory program that is amazing. Recommendation to approach them for using or helping with their test.
    - b. Motions forwarded from the Executive Committee:
      - i. **Increase membership state fee for 2019–2020 to \$30. Motion carried.** (fees have not been raised in about 10 years).
      - ii. Any teacher who enters a student in a VMTA state event, must volunteer at the event, send a substitute, or pay a volunteer compensation fee of \$75. Volunteers will need to be approved by the chair of the event. (This is an attempt to help with increasing volunteers.)
        - Jeannette Winsor moves for an amendment that this be applied to just events that happen at the state conference. Revise to read "Must volunteer for the event." Seconded by Melissa Marrion. All in favor.  
**Revised motion: Any teacher who enters a student in a VMTA state conference event, must volunteer for the event, send a substitute, or pay a volunteer compensation fee of \$75. Volunteers will need to be approved by the chair of the event. Revised motion carried.**
- c. Northern District Auditions Division flexibility (René

## Minutes...

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Johnson)—Need for larger chapter to be split for length of judging purposes. Option: Two groups divided, have a play-off round and send one winner to the state. (Semi-final, final and one goes to state.) Other option to split geographically and send one or two winners to state. Other option limit slots, first come, first served. Or create a new level.

Need clarification in the Yearbook. Committee chair should have guidelines.

**Motion—Allow local chairman to have flexibility if needed. René Johnson, Jeanette Winsor seconded, motion carried.**

- d. IMSLP and photocopy/printing clarification regarding VMTA guidelines. The law is the law. If it is in Public Domain, a print out is ok.
- j. Announcements
  - a. After recent Hurricanes, North Carolina Association is in need of money, music books, etc. Lynn Kleisler to follow up and forward information to our members on how to donate.
  - b. Nominees for MTNA awards - Please send in your nominations and copy President, Elizabeth Caluda on email.
    - i. Local Association of the Year
    - ii. Collegiate Chapter of the Year
    - iii. State Affiliate of the Year
    - iv. Teacher of the Year
  - c. MTNA Conference in Spokane, WA. Beth Caluda and her daughter will be giving a presentation.
  - d. Michele Carragan, Historian: Please send her any information to be archived, email photos, programs, etc.
- k. Adjournment at 10:39 a.m. ■



# Reports .....

## FALL FESTIVAL RESULTS

Debbie Sacra, VMFA Fall Festival Coordinator

The number of students participating in the VMFA Fall Festivals has increased from 585 (2016) and 610 (2017) to 656 in 2018. Wonderful! The number of teachers has also increased from 87 (2016) to 90 in

2018. Although only piano solos were represented in the Festivals in 2017, we had 1 voice and 1 piano duet in 2018. Festivals were held in November, 2018 in Northern Virginia, Richmond, Roanoke and Winchester.

THANK YOU to all of the terrific chairmen and members who keep the VMFA Fall Festival going strong year after year! Your dedicated work is greatly appreciated! ■

### Northern Virginia (NVMFA) 11/10/2018

Registered: 57 teachers; 428 piano solo

Beginner	152	44	2	1	18	198	217
Intermediate	103	41	9	1	19	153	173
Advanced	29	4	0	0	5	33	38
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>284 Superior</b>	<b>89 Excellent</b>	<b>11 Very Good</b>	<b>2 Incomplete</b>	<b>42 Not Rated</b>	<b>384 Played</b>	<b>428 Registered</b>

### Richmond (RMTA) 11/17/2018

Registered: 22 teachers; 131 entries in piano solo; 1 voice entry; 1 piano duet entry (all 3 also entered solos)

Level I-A	28	14	1			43	44
Level I-B	26	5	2			33	34
Level II	26	8	2			36	38
Level III	10	6				16	17
Level IV	0	0	0			0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>90 Superior</b>	<b>33 Excellent</b>	<b>6 Very Good</b>			<b>128 Played</b>	<b>133 Registered</b>

### Roanoke (RVMFA) 11/17/2019

Registered: 10 teachers; 70 students in piano solo

Level I	25	5				30	32
Level II	23	3	2			28	29
Level III	5	4				9	9
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>53 Superior</b>	<b>12 Excellent</b>	<b>2 Very Good</b>			<b>67 Played</b>	<b>70 Registered</b>

### Shenandoah 11/17/2018

Registered: 1 teacher; 4 students in piano

Level II		1				1	1
Level III	1	2				3	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1 Superior</b>	<b>3 Excellent</b>				<b>4 Played</b>	<b>4 Registered</b>

### 2018 GRAND TOTALS (STATE)

Registered: 90 Teachers; 633 students in piano solo; 1 piano duet; 1 voice

<b>State Totals</b>	<b>428 Superior</b>	<b>137 Excellent</b>	<b>18 Very Good</b>			<b>583 Played</b>	<b>635 Registered</b>
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# ADVERTISING INFORMATION FOR VMTA'S *NEWSNOTES* AND YEARBOOK

Please send your electronically\* prepared ad, a check made payable to VMTA, and the completed form to: Agnes Wan, 219 River Point Drive, Suffolk, VA 23434, pianoatjubilee@gmail.com.

Ads may also be submitted via e-mail (stuffed or zipped if necessary) to Rose Brown, *NewsNotes* Graphic Artist, at design@rosebrown.com. Call Rose at 571-276-7577 (cell) if you have any questions about preparing your ad or submitting your ad electronically.

\*Any combination of QuarkXPress (preferred), Illustrator, InDesign, PhotoShop, and PDF files are accepted. **Do not send** Microsoft Word or Publisher files. **Include all fonts and imported graphics if you send native files.**

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SIZE (width x height)	<i>NewsNotes</i> One Issue	<i>NewsNotes</i> Two Issues	Yearbook Only	Yearbook & <i>NewsNotes</i> Combo 1 <sup>‡</sup> or Combo 2 <sup>‡</sup>
Full page (7.5" x 10") .....	\$165	\$300	\$200	\$350 .....\$450
3/4 page (7.5" x 7") .....	\$125	\$225	\$175	n/a.....n/a
1/2 page (7.5" x 4.5").....	\$110	\$200	\$140	\$225 .....\$290
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Business Cards (3.625" x 2").....	\$25	\$40	\$30	\$50.....\$65

<sup>‡</sup>Combo 1: Yearbook and one issue of *NewsNotes*; Combo 2: Yearbook and two issues of *NewsNotes*.

## AD DEADLINES

June 15—Fall Issue *NewsNotes* & Yearbook

March 1—Spring Issue *NewsNotes*

## VMTA ADVERTISING REQUEST FORM

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