
MISSISSIPPI MUSIC TEACHER

The Official Publication of the Mississippi Music Teachers Association

Affiliated with the Music Teachers National Association

Message from the President



Carol Mahler

I am deeply honored to represent MMTA at the **MTNA National Conference** in Chicago (March 15-19). The highlight for me while I'm there will be celebrating **Alice Ballard** as our 2026 MTNA Foundation Fellow during the **Conference Gala**.

During **Southern Division's January Zoom meeting**, we discussed the **reception** our Division will host at the National Conference, as well as the **travel funds** to help support Southern Division winners as they compete at the national level. **Wins and concerns** were also discussed by the 4 state presidents who were in attendance.

Kudos to **Jenna Klein** for her leadership in organizing the **Collegiate Competitions**, which will be held on Saturday, February 28, at the University of Mississippi.

Thank you, also, **Rosângela Sebba, Katie Johnson, Rebekah Lipscombe, Rebekah Schultz, and the District Chairs** for your dedicated work toward this year's **Pre-College activities**.

Speaking of Pre-College activities, we are incredibly grateful to **Michael Rushing** for securing **Mississippi College** as host for our **Pre-College State Finals**.

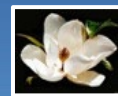
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Message from the President (continued)

More thanks go to Michael and to **Mississippi College** for hosting our State Conference on **November 6-7**, while also chairing this event. The **Mississippi Arts Commission grant** makes our State Conference possible, and Michael's developing the grant application is crucial to that support. Thank you, **Michael Rushing, Victoria Johnson, Hannah Adhikari, and Jonathan Mitchell** for securing the Conference's Guest Artist, Guest Clinician, Commissioned Composer, and the IMTF Speaker and piano concerto competitions judge.

Connecting with our vibrant community of students and educators at these events is a personal highlight. Be sure to take a moment to personally acknowledge and thank these leaders for their instrumental role in advancing the purpose and vision of MMTA.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Mahler President, MMTA



President-Elect's Report

Clinicians, guest artists and host institutions are being secured for the 2026 MMTA Conference. An application for a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission is in process.



*Michael
Rushing*

Fall Conference November 6-7, 2026

- Location: Mississippi College, Clinton, MS
- Conference Clinician: **Leah Claiborne** has agreed via email to be conference clinician. Leah Claiborne, faculty at the University of the District of Columbia promotes diversity in the arts by championing piano music by Black composers in her performances, research, and teaching. She was the first pianist at the University of Michigan to be awarded the Rackham Predoc fellowship which is the most prestigious fellowship awarded by the graduate school.

- Guest Artist: **Artina McCain** has agreed via email to be conference guest artist. Dr. McCain is Associate Professor of Piano and Coordinator of the Keyboard Area at the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music at the University of Memphis and Co-Founder/Director of the Memphis International Piano Festival and Competition.
- Commissioned Composer: **Benjamin Williams** has accepted the commission to compose a piece to be premiered at the conference. Dr. Williams is the Chair of the Department of Music and a Professor of Music at Mississippi College, where he teaches composition, theory, and aural skills.
- Independent Music Forum Presenter: **Pamela Pike** has agreed to be the IMTF presenter and concerto judge. Dr. Pike is the Herndon Spillman Professor of Piano Pedagogy and Associate Dean for Research, Creative Activity and Community Engagement in the College of Music and Dramatic Arts at Louisiana State University.

MMTA has sent contracts to each of these individuals and is awaiting a response.

Thanks to Victoria Johnson, Jonathan Mitchell, and Hannah Adhikari for their assistance in securing these clinicians and artists.

Collegiate Competition March 2027

- MMTA is working to secure a date/time for this event.

Michael Rushing
MMTA President-elect

Treasurer's Report



Chris Ballard

MMTA 2025 Fall Conference Income and Expense Report

Income

MTNA Competition Rebate	1030.00
Commissioned composer rebate	750.00
Attendee fees	1735.75
Pre-College Entrance Fees	920.64
MAC Grant	3,750.00
Steinway/Amro Contribution	300.00

Expenses

MTNA Judges	788.07
Commissioned Composer	1,500.00
IMTF Speaker	687.00
MMTA pre-college Judges	239.60
Guest Artist Exp	1,686.51
Guest Clinician Exp	2,567.81
Guest Artist Accompanist	500.00
Sodexo Catering	807.15
Past Presidents' Luncheon	204.69
Pre-College Exp	46.25
PayPal fees	39.36
TenutoWeb LLC	46.25
Teacher of the Year Plaque	118.00

Total Income **8,486.39**

Total Expenses **9,230.69**

MMTA Income and Expenses 7/1/25 – 1/31/26**Income**

Fall Conference	8,486.39
Dues Rebate	1,601.25
Foundation Fellow	1,585.00
Interest from CD	606.96
Mac Grant – Payment #2 for 24/25 fiscal year	1,125.00
Pre-College non-work fees	175.00

Expenses

Fall Conference	9,230.69
Alejandro Cremaschi Honorarium	750.00
GoDaddy Web Service	23.19
Foundation Fellow	1,585.00

Total Income **13,579.60****Total Expenses** **11,588.88**

MISSISSIPPI
ARTS COMMISSION

Vice Presidents for Pre-College Evaluations



Rosângela Sebba



Katie Johnson

An email was sent to the District Chairs with a step-by-step, tutorials and information about TenutoWeb. Nothing has changed; however, Dr. Cremaschi has implemented the use of MTNAID if your email address is not current. This link below also provides tutorials in case you do not remember the process from last year: <https://tutorials2.tenutoweb.com/book-page/tutorials>

Janine has uploaded Plans A and B to the website and the password distributed to the Chairs. Please do not share with members or parents.

We have the following District Chairs listed below according to the MMTA website. If you know of any changes, please let Janine and me know so we can update the website.

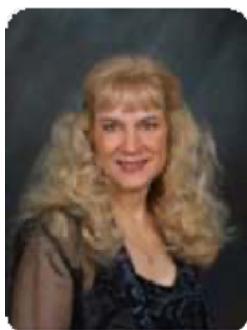
- Oxford Pre-College Evaluation District Chair: Adrienne Park, (662) 234-9573, apark@olemiss.edu
- Columbus/Starkville/Tupelo Pre-College Evaluation District Chair: Rosângela Yazbec Sebba, alternate cell phone (662) 312-7384, rys3@colled.msstate.edu
- Ellisville Pre-College Evaluation District Chair: Kelly Shows, (601) 517-8879, glassshows@att.net
- Gulf Coast Pre-College Evaluation District Chairs: Carol Mahler, (228) 586-1879, carolmahler@gmail.com
- Hattiesburg Pre-College Evaluation District Chairs: Victoria Johnson, (601) 320-2121, victoria.johnson@jcc.edu
- Jackson and Goodman Pre-College Evaluation District Chair: Donna Banks, (662) 402-1617, drdonnabanks@icloud.com
Jacquelyn Thornell, (601) 952-0060, jsthornell@bellsouth.net
- Vicksburg Pre-College Evaluation District Chair: Barbara Tracy, (601) 638-3453, barbara9872@att.net
- Cleveland Pre-College Evaluation District Chair:

Deceased Johnathan D. Williams, (662) 641-2383, jdwmusicstudio@gmail.com \ Interim Jung-Won Shin, (731) 803-1887, jshin@nmsu.edu (has moved to New Mexico)

The email sent to District Chairs included Word versions of the performance, sight-reading, ensemble, and evaluation forms for teachers who do not have Adobe or internet access. Teachers will still need to register their students and enter all evaluation results in Tenuto.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Johnson & Rosângela Sebba
Vice-Presidents for Pre-College Evaluations

Vice-President for Membership and Web Management



Janine Beasley

As of January 28, 2026, 136 members are listed for the 2025-2026 year (135 this time last year). Of these 1 is upgrading collegiate member, 8 are reinstating members, 1 is reinstating collegiate member /transfer from OH, 5 are new members, 7 are new collegiate members.

Website changes:

Uploaded May and August meeting minutes per Alice

Updated calendar per Carol

Updated member information as requested by various members

Uploaded a new headshot of Elizabeth Moak at her request

Uploaded Theory B except guitar technical (there were some questions)

Uploaded Music History Terminology to correct an error, per Carol and Rose

Updated the District Map on the student activities page to reflect current districts, and chairs

Updated the reference to changes in documents on the Student Activities page to January 2024

Added a reference to the common documents on Student Activities page for evaluation application/registration fees reference

Miscellaneous:

Sent current membership information for Tenuto

5 Year Plan:

Year B has been added to the auditions website (see website changes)

Continuing to review for C, D, E

Ongoing: miscellaneous updates as needed.

Continue to send mass emails to members as requested.

Continuing to add new members as I get information.

Sent renewal reminder to unpaid members, resulting in 4 renewals. Unpaid members have been deleted.

Respectfully submitted,
Janine Beasley

Vice President for Collegiate and National Competitions



Jenna Klein

Recent Events:

- MTNA State Round Competition was held at Jones College on October 31, 2025. Winners in the Senior Piano, Young Artist Piano, and Junior Strings categories advanced to the regional round.
- The piano competition judge was Dr. Kadisha Onalbayeva
- The string competition judge was Dr. Jeanne Jaubert
- Picture of the winners with the judges were taken.

Upcoming Events:

- The MMTA Collegiate Competition will be held on February 28th, 2026 at the University of Mississippi.
- The entrant deadline is February 15th, 2026.
- We are in the process of securing judges for the event.

Respectfully,

Jenna Klein, VP for Collegiate and National Competitions

Vice Presidents for Pre-College Performances



Rebekah Lipscombe

Upcoming Events:

2026 State Finals

- Saturday, May 16th, Mississippi College

2026 Concerto Competition

Saturday, November 7th, Mississippi College

- Piano Competition Judge, Dr. Pamela Pike

In Progress:

- Updating State Finals Guidelines
- Updating outdated working
- Updating General Guidelines Section IV. B – ribbon eligibility
- Updating State Finals Helper Roles (Announcer, Timekeeper, etc.)



Rebekah Schultz

Chair of Theory and Composition

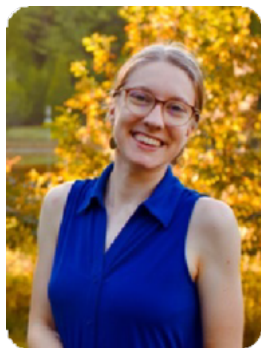


Jonathan Mitchell

I am pleased to announce that we have invited Dr. Ben Williams, a professor at Mississippi College, to be our commissioned composer for our Annual Conference.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jonathan Mitchell

Chair of Independent Music Teachers Forum



Hannah E. Adhikari

Hello all!

In my previous report, I mentioned that I had sent Pamela Pike from LSU an email about being IMTF speaker/judge. I followed up with her on Monday of this week, but still hadn't heard back when I sent my first report. I'm happy to announce that Dr. Pamela Pike has agreed to be our IMTF speaker! She emailed me just last night. She seems eager to give a presentation on teaching on performance and expression strategies, but she's still deciding a specific subject.

I will be sending Dr. Pike the reusable form I mentioned Michael Rushing had sent me, and follow up with having her and me the required information for the conference. Thank you all!

Hannah Adhikari,
IMTF Chair

2025 MMTA Outstanding Teacher: Sandra Polanski



A native of Grenada, Mississippi, Sandra got her start in piano by finding sounds on the Hobart M. Cable upright, which arrived by train from her Grandma Sanders in Ohio. Her Grandma Paschall was offered a college scholarship in music, but her father said that the scholarship should go to someone who would practice! Nonetheless, in her years as wife and mother in Tennessee, family lore has it that people would ride as much as twenty miles in their buggies “to hear Miss Ida play the piano.” Music came to Sandra from both sides of her heritage, including both grandfathers, who played fiddle. In first grade in Grenada her teacher, Eleanor Whyte, upon learning that piano lessons were in Sandra’s future, advised that lessons had best “start now, or she’s not going to want to learn to read music.” Miss Whyte had it right -- Sandra didn’t want lessons, let alone to read music. Her wise and dear parents simply rose above that, and her mother patiently eased her into reading music. Over time, the reading and the playing came together. Sandra later practice-taught under Miss Whyte.

Edith Rhyne, Sandra Jane’s first piano teacher, was succeeded by Margaret Oliver, Doris Burt, and Vivian Page, each change precipitated when the teacher moved from Grenada. Sandra holds degrees in piano from Mississippi State College for Women (now MUW) with Dr. Sigfred Matson as her major professor and from The University of Michigan, where she studied piano with Benning Dexter and György Sandor and collaborative piano with Eugene Bossart.

Mrs. Burt and Mrs. Page entered Sandra in the district Mississippi High School Activities Association’s annual district piano festivals at The University of Mississippi. At the recital in her sophomore year at the festival, Mrs. Page wrote in a quiet note to Sandra’s mother, “Sandra is not playing with her usual aplomb.” Sandra’s response to that back at home was, “What’s ‘aplomb’?” Sandra rated Excellent Plus that year and learned the importance of aplomb in performance.

Sandra first met MMTA when she played on a statewide student recital at the MMTA state conference at Belhaven in 1956. As a junior piano major at MSCW, she performed in 1960 with the Jackson Symphony as the winner of their first collegiate competition in partnership with MMTA and received her first review.

Upon completion of her Master of Music degree in piano from The University of Michigan in 1962, Sandra taught for two years at Michigan in the class piano department, teaching seven of the eight levels to university music majors in areas other than piano. Other teaching experience included studio teaching in Kenosha, Wisconsin, studio teaching and one year on the music faculty at Millsaps College, and twenty-nine years as chair of music and teacher of piano and music theory to students in the Jackson Public Schools Academic and Performing Arts Complex,

from which position she retired in 2012. Sandra's philosophy was to integrate making music and teaching music, each enriching the other.

A member of MMTA/MTNA since 1965, she consistently entered her students in their events. She served as the first pre-college auditions chair for MMTA, as Southern Division chair for MTNA in both high school and collegiate auditions, and as national chair of the MTNA Collegiate Artist Competition. She is a long-time member of Music Forum of Jackson, an MMTA/MTNA affiliate. She was selected by MMTA in 2017 as an MTNA Foundation Fellow.

The core of Sandra's adult life was with Frank, her late husband of sixty years, who taught in the Millsaps Music Department for thirty years. As duo-pianists their performances included recitals on the Millsaps Arts & Lecture Series and performances with The Mississippi Symphony in duo concerti by Mozart, Poulenc, and Mendelssohn. In retirement years, through The Chaminade Music Club, they coordinated and presented monthly interactive programs at the memory care unit at St. Catherine's Village and recitals at The Orchard Retirement Center.

Sandra practices the piano daily. Her COVID project of twelve Mozart piano sonatas gave her lots of music to play recently while in rehab. Knowing the value of music and of giving music, she rehearses regularly with vocal and instrumental ensemble partners toward making music with and for those who need music most.

Affiliate News

Gulf Coast Music Teachers Association

Greetings from the gulf coast! We hope everyone has had a productive (and warm) start to 2026. We have several very exciting events coming up this spring that we'd love to share with you.

First, we had a board meeting at January 24th at St. John's Episcopal Church in Ocean Springs. We enjoyed a wonderful presentation from our vice president Dan McElrath and Dr. Jennifer Bruton and enjoyed hearing information about Steinway's teacher programs from representative Christy Meyers.

As for other events this spring, we will be having two GCMTA-sponsored recitals at St. John's on March 7, our Pre-College evaluations on April 18 and our Senior Recital on April 26.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Mitchell, President.



JONES COUNTY MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Janine Beasley, President

January 31, 2026

The JCMTA annual Showcase Recital was held on Sunday, November 2, 2025, at Jones College. Student performers (both piano and voice) were highlighted at this event.

A business meeting was held prior to the above event.

The JCMTA annual Solo and Sonata Competition was held on Saturday, January 24, 2026. The competition is for students sixth through twelfth grade. 17 students were entered for this event, and all were present and participated. Many thanks to Theresa Sanchez for adjudicating.

JCMTA hosted the guest artist recital reception at our conference on October 31, 2025, with help from HMTL. Many thanks to those who stayed and helped clean up afterward. Thanks to Jones College for providing the very beautiful sheet cake.

Several JCMTA teachers had students participating in the Mississippi Baptist Keyboard Festival which was held on Thursday January 29, 2026.

JCMTA will hold its annual Ensemble Festival on Saturday, March 7, 2026.

Jones County Music Teachers Association will participate in the Ellisville area MMTA Evaluations April 18, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,
Janine Beasley

Music Forum of Jackson

On October 31, 2025, two members of Music Forum of Jackson were honored at the banquet of our State Conference held at Jones College. Congratulations to Sandra Polanski as the MMTA Outstanding Teacher and to Alice Ballard, who will represent Mississippi as its MTNA 2026 Foundation Fellow at MTNA's National Conference to be held in Chicago on March 21-25, 2026.

On November 22, at Millsaps College, MFJ held our Sonata-Sonatina Festival. Sixty-Four students participated from the studios of eleven MFJ teachers. Participating teachers were Donna Banks, Portia Davis, Carol Durham, Jane Fox, Rachel Heard, Paula Henderson, Barbara Hutchins, Donna Reed, Patsy Simpson, Judy Bain Suddeth and Brenda Sullivan. Students earned 34 Gold Medals, 12 Silver Medals, 8 Honorable Mentions and 1 Excellent. Judges were Dr. Alice Ballard, Terrance Evans, Dr. Lawrence Goldman and Steven Russell. Donna Reed chairs this event.

Our annual Christmas luncheon with a brief business meeting took place on December 5 at Anjou restaurant in Ridgeland, MS.

Our First Friday Luncheons will continue during the Spring semester. These luncheons are organized by Patsy Simpson who generously volunteers to be our appointed hostess.

On February 14, we will hold our 57th Bach Festival at Hinds Community College, Raymond Campus. We have 206 students from all over the state registered to play. This festival is chaired by Kathie Gunn Lott.

Our district MMTA Pre-College Evaluations will be held on April 11 at Millsaps College. Donna Banks is chairperson.

On May 1 we will gather for our annual spring luncheon with a brief business meeting where we will announce our new officers for the coming year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Duran Fox, President Music Forum of Jackson

Hattiesburg Music Teachers League

The Hattiesburg Music Teachers League (HMTL) met on Sat. Jan. 24, 2026, for our spring semester business meeting. We had lively discussions about Pre-College Finals and Collegiate Dues. For the first time, we did not need to hold the Annual Workday for the upcoming NFMF/MFMC Festival given that the registrations have moved online to the Vivace system.

Our Composer Festival with Catherine Rollin, organized by Festival Chair Laura Broughton and Assistant Chair Joanna Burnside, saw participation of 90 students from the studios of 11 teachers. 41 students submitted posters for the art contest. Catherine Rollin's workshop was attended by teachers from across the state.



(above) Winners of the Poster Competition



(above) Catherine Rollin with participants of one of the four recitals.

We were pleased that so many HMTL members participated in various ways at the MMTA Conference:

- as performers in the Guest Artist Recital, Members Recital, and Guest Artist Masterclass
- as teachers of student winners in the Pre-College Concerto Competition (Junior Level), and in Mississippi's MTNA Senior (String) and Young Artist (Piano) Competitions.
- as presenters (or as former teacher of a presenter)
- as conference on-site organizers.

We are happy to report that USM's new Collegiate MTNA Chapter was officially accepted by vote at the January 2026 MTNA Collegiate Symposium in South Carolina! Grégorio Oliveira is President and Ellen Elder, Advisor.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Moak
President

Golden Triangle Music Forum (Starkville/Columbus)

Greetings from Golden Triangle Music Forum!

This Spring, we have more events than we usually do, and a great delegation between the members to accomplish it all. We had a meeting on January 17 in Starkville with the teachers who were available: Dr. Sebba, Dr. Klein, Dr. Bill Harned, and Katie Johnson.

Our current membership is lower than last year's - 8 people - but we hope to have a few join in the coming months! We have not had any college students join GTMF this year, but they have their own collegiate group, so they don't need to join our group to be a member of MTNA. However, we plan to lower GTMF collegiate dues by next January to encourage them to be involved with the teachers.

GTMF recent decisions: We decided to bring a position back that we have not filled for a while: VP of Recitals. Bill Harned has volunteered and we are in the process of voting him in. We also finalized some changes to our bylaws.

Upcoming GTMF Events:

- January 31: The MSU Community Music School is hosting our free Piano Retreat for 7th-12th graders this Saturday morning January 31. Students will attend music classes and private lessons and perform in a recital at the end of the morning. We have doubled in attendance from last year, including some students from other towns. Sessions Include: It's Great to Collaborate! Keys for the Kingdom: Music as Ministry, Musical Creativity at the Keyboard, Exploring Sound through Technology, Mastering the Piano - Final Event: Student Recital
- February 3 at 5PM: GTMF Pre-College Masterclass with Victor Rosenbaum. He will be performing a piano trio concert with our member, Amy Catron, on February 5 and offered to do masterclasses- free of charge! Dr. Rosenbaum's accomplishments are more than I can
- list, but please look him up and consider attending one of these events if you are in the area!
- February 14 at 4PM: Piano Faculty Recital - "In the Key of Love" - Many of our members will be performing ensembles in our annual faculty recital This recital will feature works by composers who wrote letters and/or pieces on the theme of love.
- February 21: Several of our GTMF Members will have students participating in Federation with the National Federation of Music Clubs. This is possible through the Columbus Music Study Club with Marilyn Fields.
- March 21-25-: MTNA Conference - Several of our members will be attending or presenting at the National Conference this year so be on the lookout for them if you attend!
- March 28: Masterclass held at MSU with John Price (Assistant Professor of Piano and Piano Pedagogy at Northwestern State University)
- April 11: MSU Solo and Ensemble Festival - Just a reminder that you are invited to send

pre-college students to this event. *Students have the option to participate virtually.* We would like more participation! Students receive comments and a rating and may perform in multiple categories. Here is the link for information:

<https://www.music.msstate.edu/events/2025/01/2025-msu-solo-and-ensemble-festival>

- April 18: GTMF District Evaluations at MSU
- April 25 at 10:00 am – GTMF Annual Honors Recital with Ilka Araújo, performer and guest adjudicator -- MSU Music Building
- May 16 – State Finals – Mississippi College in Clinton – MS

Best wishes on the semester!

Katie Johnson, GTMF President

Upcoming Events

March 1, 2025 – 2025 MMTA State Collegiate Competitions – Jackson State University, Jackson, MS

April 5, 2025 – 2025 MMTA Pre-College Evaluations, Group B – Columbus/Starkville, Ellisville, Gulf Coast, Vicksburg

April 12, 2025 – 2025 MMTA Pre-College Evaluations, Group A – Goodman, Hattiesburg, Jackson, Oxford, Tupelo

May 17, 2025 – MMTA Pre-College Finals – Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS

Do you have an event you would like to be placed in the Mississippi Music Teacher? Contact Stephanie McGee at sholmes057@gmail.com.

Mississippi Music Teachers Association invites musical groups, publishers, businesses, schools, and institutions to advertise in our three online editions of the Mississippi Music Teacher (MMT) and the November Conference issue each year. For more information, including prices and deadlines for various sized ads, you may contact Stephanie McGee by mail at 378 Harmony Rd., Duck Hill, MS 38925, phone at (662) 417-1390, or email at sholmes057@gmail.com.

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Mississippi Music Teachers Association

Est. 1954

The purpose and goals of the Mississippi Music Teachers Association are to further the art of music, and promote the growth and professional development of its members by providing programs that encourage and support teaching, performance, composition and research. MMTA is a not-for-profit organization whose funds are used solely to accomplish these objectives.