

MISSISSIPPI MUSIC TEACHER

The Official Publication of the Mississippi Music Teachers Association



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Carol Mahler

Spring Recap & 2026 Pre-College Finals

Mississippi Christian University in Clinton—celebrating its historic bicentennial year—served as the scene of the 2026 Pre-College Finals on May 16, bringing our spring activities to a fantastic close. It was a true honor to be on campus during such a special milestone in the university's history. My sincere thanks go to MCU and Michael Rushing for their warm hospitality.

A huge thank you goes to Rebekah Schultz and Rebekah Lipscombe (Pre-College Performances Co-VPs) for spearheading the Finals. Of course, the Finals would not be possible without the preliminary Evaluations. Deep gratitude goes to Rosangela Sebba and Katie Johnson (Pre-College Evaluations Co-VPs), Janine Beasley (Membership & Web Management), Chris Ballard (Treasurer), and our local host institutions. Most of all, deep appreciation goes to every teacher who entered students and worked tirelessly through both rounds—your dedication is the heart of our success!

AFFILIATED WITH
THE MUSIC
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ASSOCIATION

MMTA State Conference & Call for Proposals

I am thrilled to announce that Mississippi Christian University will also host this year's State Conference on November 6–7, 2026. I truly appreciate all the tremendous work done by Michael Rushing, President-Elect and Conference Chair, for preparing and serving as host.

Music teachers, undergraduate students, and graduate students are invited to submit proposals for conference sessions:

- Proposal Deadline: Friday, September 18, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.
- Conference Details: Full information is available on the [MMTA Conference Page](#).

MTNA State Competitions

I invite you to enter your students in the MTNA national competitions, with state levels held during our State Conference on Friday, November 6, 2026.

- Categories & Divisions: Junior (11–14), Senior (15–18), and Young Artist (19–26) for piano, piano duet, strings, and woodwinds. Brass and voice categories (Senior and Young Artist only) will run as a two-tiered competition, with the first round conducted online.
- Registration Deadline: Wednesday, September 9, at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Guidelines are available on the [MTNA Competitions Page](#).

Upcoming Regional & National Events

- MTNA Leadership Summit: September 11–13, 2026, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Michael Rushing will attend in his capacity as MMTA's President-Elect, and I look forward to the fresh ideas he will bring home.
- 2027 MTNA National Conference: April 2–6, 2027, in St. Louis, Missouri.

Membership Reminder

If you have not yet renewed or registered your MTNA/MMTA membership, please take a moment to complete your registration on the MTNA website.

Governance Update & Final Season Remarks

As my presidency enters its final season, completing the update to our MMTA Constitution remains my primary focus. This initiative is fundamental to ensuring our governing framework reflects our current practice as an organization. Steering this project has brought personal growth and, above all, the joy of getting to know our membership on a much deeper level.

Please keep an eye out for recommendations from the Executive Committee and Board, and respond to the call for a vote on the final document so we can bring this crucial work home together. Continuous improvement is the mark of a healthy organization, and I trust future leaders will build upon this foundation as our needs evolve.

I hope each of you has a wonderful semester, and I look forward to seeing many of our members and students at upcoming MMTA events!

PRESIDENT-ELECT'S REPORT

Michael Rushing

The MMTA 2026 State Conference will be held November 6-7, 2026, at Mississippi Christian University. Leah Claiborne, nationally-recognized teacher and clinician, will serve as Guest Clinician. Internationally-acclaimed pianist Artina McCain will be our Guest Artist. We will premier



Devil in the Ditch by Commissioned Composer Benjamin Williams. Pamela Pike will be IMTF Luncheon speaker and piano judge for Pre-College Concerto Competitions.

Friday will begin with lectures and presentations running alongside MTNA National Competitions. Leah Claiborne will present a master class in the afternoon. Friday's performances include the Premiere Performance of Benjamin Williams's commissioned work and the Guest Artist Recital featuring Artina McCain.

On Saturday, Guest Artist Artina McCain will present a master class in the morning. The IMTF Luncheon features speaker Pamela Pike, who will also judge the Pre-College Concerto Competitions. Saturday performances include the Gold Medal Winners Recital and Pre-College Concerto Competition.

All performances are free and open to the public.

The 2026 Mississippi Arts Commission Project Grant was approved in July, supporting both the State Conference and Collegiate Competitions. The MMTA was awarded the full amount of \$5000. A call for conference proposals has been created and will be sent to members and posted on the MMTA website.

MMTA was awarded a \$750 grant by MTNA in support of updating the msmusicteachers.org website.

Thanks to the membership of the Conference Committee, Executive Committee, and MMTA Board for all of their assistance in preparing for this event.

MMTA 72ND ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

For more information and to register for the 72nd Annual Fall Conference, visit our conference website:

[MMTA 2026 Fall Conference Website.](#)



MISSISSIPPI ARTS COMMISSION

TREASURER'S REPORT

Chris Ballard

Our current balance is \$89,504.66. That Balance includes:

Checking Account: 26,627.22

Pay Pal Account: 34,253.91

12 Month CD: 28,623.53

As we begin this fiscal year our current total balance is \$89,504.66. The last fiscal year was financially successful as we ended with more total income than expenses. I want to commend you all for your wise and careful use of MMTA expenditures associated with your various responsibilities. We are on very solid

ground financially as we start this new fiscal year. During the year I plan to invest a portion of our current balance in a cd.

As I have said in the past, it is difficult to prepare a new budget proposal each year because of wide variances from year to year with various activity income/expenses. This year is no different. The new proposed budget is based on last year's actual income and expenses as well as my best educated guess from past experience. As I have stated in the past, when I make out a new budget, I consider the income/expenses from the previous fiscal year as well as my best educated guess for each category for the new fiscal year. I have attached the proposed budget for this fiscal year for your consideration and approval. I have also attached pre-college evaluations and finals reports as well as a report for the full fiscal year income and expenses. Thanks so much for your help and support.



MMTA 2026 Spring Pre-College Evaluations

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Profit</u>
Golden Triangle/Tupelo	1,860.00	873.76	986.24
Gulf Coast	1,610.00	603.40	1,006.60
Hattiesburg	1,080.00	550.70	529.30
Jackson	3,970.00	1,729.10	2,240.90
Jones County	1,775.00	762.75	1,012.25
Oxford	270.00	122.50	147.50
Vicksburg	1,640.00	701.85	938.15
Reimbursements		110.00	(110.00)
PayPal Charges		469.50	(469.50)
Tenuto Charges		610.25	(610.25)
<u>Totals</u>	<u>12,205.00</u>	<u>6,533.81</u>	<u>5,671.19</u>

MMTA 2026 Spring Pre-College Finals

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
Non-Work Fees	455.00	Judges Pay	1,654.20
Sales at Finals	429.00	Trophies/Awards	425.13
		Booklets	231.54
		Food (Newk's)	248.00
		Office Supplies	129.66
		Outstanding Achievement Awards	50.00
		Piano Tuning	342.40
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>884.00</u>	<u>Total Expenses</u>	<u>3,080.93</u>

Profit from Pre-College Evaluations and Finales combined is 3,474.26

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

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
Fall Conference	9,391.10	Fall Conference	9,230.69
Dues Rebate	4,489.62	Alejandro Cremaschi Honorarium	750.00
Foundation Fellow	1,585.00	GoDaddy Web Service	23.19
Interest from CD	1,174.57	Foundation Fellow	1,585.00
Collegiate Competition	205.00	Southern Division	292.72
Mac Grant – Payment #2	1,125.00	Collegiate	245.00
for 24/25 fiscal year		MTNA National Conference	2,118.83
Pre-College Evaluations	12,205.00	Pre-College Evaluations	6,533.81
Pre-College Finals	884.00	Pre-College Finals	3,080.93
Bank Adjustment	207.17	Office Expense	78.92
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>31,266.46</u>	<u>Total Expenses</u>	<u>23,939.09</u>

Mississippi Music Teachers Association
Proposed Budget

July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

Ordinary Income and Expense

Income:	<u>Proposed</u>
MMTA Member Dues Rebates	4,000.00
Fall Conference	9,000.00
Collegiate Competition	300.00
Pre-College Evaluations	12,250.00
Pre-College Finals	800.00
CD Interest	1,000.00
<u>Total Income:</u>	<u>27,350.00</u>

Expense:	<u>Proposed</u>
Office Supplies	150.00
Fall Conference	10,000.00
MTNA Summit	300.00
Southern Division Expense	300.00
Affiliate Grant	300.00
Collegiate Competitions	600.00
MTNA National Conference Expense	2,500.00
Web Page Hosting Fee	250.00
Pre-College Evaluations	7,000.00
Pre-College Finals	4,000.00
<u>Total Expenses:</u>	<u>25,400.00</u>

VICE PRESIDENT FOR MEMBERSHIP AND WEB MANAGEMENT

Janine Beasley

As of August 24, 2026, 109 members are listed for the 2026-2027 year (91 at this time last year). Of these 14 are collegiate members, 61 are active members (not senior), 1 is a corporate member, and 33 are active members (senior).

Website changes:

- Updated calendar per Carol
- Completed editing of Theory C and uploaded (there are still a few issues with sight reading) Updated history to add Sandra Polanski as Outstanding MMTA Teacher 2025, per Elizabeth Moak
- Updated history to add Alice Ballard as Mississippi's fifteenth MTNA Foundation Fellow, per Carol
- Updated Outstanding MMTA Teacher page to include a reference to the history page, per Elizabeth Moak
- Changed Vicksburg MTA president to Rachel Storey
- Changed HMTL president to Susan Smith Changed Music Forum of Jackson president to Carolina Whitfield-Smith
- Changed the link on Student Activities page, MTNA Competitions, to make it current with MTNA new website information
- Sent a list of current 2026-2027 members to Rebekah Schultz for Tenuto

Ongoing:

- Continuing to edit and upload 5 year plan documents
- Miscellaneous updates as needed
- Continue to send mass emails to members as requested
- Updating website with member information (Hannah)
- I will send an email to members who have not renewed to remind them to renew





CHAIR OF THEORY & COMPOSITION

Jonathan Mitchell

I am pleased to announce that our commissioned piece by [Dr. Ben Williams](#) is titled Devil in the Ditch. It's a chamber musical for 4 voices and piano.

MUSIC FORUM OF JACKSON

Carolina Whitfield-Smith



On June 19, Music Forum held a wonderful “Back to Bach” program. Thank you Rebekah Lipscomb for presenting, Carol Durham for hosting, and Alice Ballard for programming! We had great turnout, including at least one potential new member. Alice is working on a big guest artist event sometime 2027, plus a smaller pedagogy program before then, and we are keeping in mind how good the summer program turnout was!

On July 22, we gathered at Millsaps College for the memorial service of our last founding member, Sandra Polanski. She will be greatly missed, and her legacy continues on, through her many students, colleagues and mentees, and through her work with Music Forum, MMTA, MTNA, Jackson Public Schools (where she helped found the APAC music program), Millsaps College, MUW alumnae, Chaminade Music Club, Jr. MacDowell Music Club, St. Catherine’s memory care unit, and so much more.

We continue our First Friday luncheons- August at Primos on Lakeland, and September at Masa Mesa in Eastover. We are experimenting with rotating around the metro, vs central location. Non-Forum members are welcome, especially potential members and our MMTA/MTNA friends - just contact one of our officers to find out where the next luncheon will be. Our next luncheon will be Oct. 2.

Our November luncheon will be in Clinton, where many of us will be attending (if not helping run, like our own Michael Rushing, incoming MMTA president) the state conference.

We are thrilled to welcome Tyler Kemp as a new member, with several other area teachers hoping to join this Fall.

Sonata-Sonatina Festival will be Saturday, November 21, at Millsaps College. This is open to members' students only. (See us if you want to be a new member and qualify before the Oct.9 entry deadline!) Thank you to Patsy Simpson and Susie Cook for co-chairing this event, which has been a tradition since at least 1990.

The 58th Bach Festival will be held Saturday, February 13, 2027 at Reeves Hall, Hinds Community College in Raymond, with Kathie Lott as our continuing wonderful chair. Please respect her firm application deadline, December 1! Students of all teachers are welcome to enter (no membership requirement); please contact kclott@bellsouth.net for further information.

I have dusted off our facebook group and google calendar, which are both public:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/musicforumofjackson>

[https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0?](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0?cid=Y2x2dTc3Ym9iNXZtcu84Z2JmaTNwbGdubmNAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXIuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbQ)

[cid=Y2x2dTc3Ym9iNXZtcu84Z2JmaTNwbGdubmNAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXIuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbQ](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0?cid=Y2x2dTc3Ym9iNXZtcu84Z2JmaTNwbGdubmNAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXIuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbQ)

Many thanks to Jane Fox, now our Immediate Past President, for her term of service as President, which included constitutional revisions, successful programs, and more! See previous MMT issues for her reports.

HATTIESBURG MUSIC TEACHERS LEAGUE

Susan Smith



The Hattiesburg Music Teachers League is looking forward to an exciting fall season filled with opportunities for professional fellowship, student participation, and

continued support of music education in our community.

Upcoming Events

Our affiliate is preparing for several activities and events during the coming months. Members are encouraged to watch

for additional information regarding student auditions, performance opportunities, workshops, and other activities planned for the fall semester. We look forward to another successful season of recitals and competitions.

New Officers

We are pleased to welcome and recognize our new executive board members for the upcoming term:

- President: Susan Smith
- Vice President for Programs: Brian Murphy
- Vice President for Membership/Web Manager: Joanna Burnside
- Treasurer: Ellen Elder
- Secretary: Theresa Sanchez
- Immediate Past President: Elizabeth Moak

We appreciate these members for their willingness to serve and look forward to their leadership in the year ahead.

Fall Meeting

The HMTL fall meeting will be held on September 12, at the home of Dr. Victoria Johnson, and will provide an opportunity for members to reconnect, welcome new teachers, discuss plans for the coming year, and receive important information about upcoming events and deadlines. Our guest speaker will be Lauren Martinez, who will present a music therapy program for members and guests. New and prospective members are invited to learn more about HMTL and MMTA during a reception before the meeting. All members are encouraged to attend the fall meeting and participate as we begin another productive year together. The Hattiesburg Music Teachers League continues to value the dedication of its teachers and their commitment to providing quality musical experiences for students throughout our area. We look forward to a wonderful year of music, learning, and fellowship!

JONES COUNTY MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Janine Beasley



This summer we planned our year. Dates for Showcase Recital, Solo-Sonata Competition, and Ensemble Festival were determined. We also selected music for Solo and Sonata Competition, and for Ensemble

Festival. Michelle Howells has been working diligently again this year to get our yearbook ready. The yearbook consists of our calendar, membership information, and all other information that our organization needs to conduct our business and our events. This year, we conducted business via email/text, and we will meet in September for the yearbooks to be distributed.

All officers and committees are the same as the previous year.

The JCMTA annual Showcase Recital will be held on Sunday, November 8, 2026. Student performers and composers will be highlighted at this event.

The JCMTA annual Solo and Sonata Competition will be held on Saturday, January 23, 2027. The competition is for students sixth through twelfth grade.

JCMTA will hold its annual Ensemble Festival February 27, 2027, provided that this date is confirmed, at Jones College.

Business meetings will be held prior to the above events.

Jones County Music Teachers Association will participate in the Ellisville area MMTA Evaluations April 10, 2027, provided that this date is confirmed, at Jones College.

GULF COAST MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Jonathan Mitchell



Greetings from the Gulf Coast! We hope your fall term has gotten off to a great start.

We have had a productive summer and are looking forward to fall 2026.

Our Summer Luncheon was held on Friday July 17 at Coastal Harmony in Gautier, MS. Thanks to Kaitlyn Ross for providing a delicious lunch.

Three of our board members (Carol Mahler, Nelda Davis, and Jonathan Mitchell) convened at Nelda Davis's home in Vancleave to conduct an internal audit.

We have some important events to announce for the fall:

- 1) October 24-Joint Recital (St. John's Episcopal Church in Ocean Springs)
- 2) October 31-GCMTA Board Meeting (also at St. John's 10:30 am)

We look forward to seeing you at November 6-7 MMTA Conference at Mississippi Christian University.

VICKSBURG MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Rachel Storey



Rachel Storey has accepted the role of President and will continue as Treasurer also. Jeanne Evans will be Secretary, to take minutes and prepare recital programs. Barbara Tracy will continue as District Chair for Evaluations.

We developed a tentative calendar for the year ahead at our June meeting.

Sunday, November 1, 2026: Harvest/Halloween Festival, 2:30 pm. Costumes are encouraged.

Sunday, February 28: a new event, "Hymn Fest!"

MMTA Evaluations possible date of Saturday, April 3.

Honors Recital either April 18, or May 2: Another reboot from years past, giving our local non-competitive students who earn a Superior rating a chance to perform and be recognized along with the other Superior students.

Other Business: 1) We discussed creating a scholarship that would encourage more diversity in our studios. More planning will be necessary to iron out details. 2) We invited Cody Nelson, the director of the Conservatory of Music, to join VMTA. He plans to join, and we hope the other teachers at the Conservatory will join also.

We enjoyed making these plans, and have a fresh year ahead!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Event	Details
November 6-7, 2026	72 nd MMTA State Conference	Mississippi Christian University Clinton, MS
Date TBD 2027	MMTA Collegiate Competitions	Location TBD
April 2-6, 2027	MTNA National Conference 2027	St. Louis, MO
April 10, 2027	Pre-College Evaluations Group B: Columbus/Starkville/Tupelo, Ellisville, Gulf Coast, Vicksburg	
April 17, 2027	Pre-College Evaluations Group A: Cleveland, Goodman, Hattiesburg, Jackson, Oxford	
Date TBD 2027	Pre-College State Finals	Location TBD



For a list of current officers, visit
<https://msmusicteachers.org/officers.php>



Celebrating 40 years as an MMTA affiliate
<https://gcmusicteachers.com/>



FROM THE EDITOR

Stephanie McGee

Happy Fall!

Our Fall Conference is quickly approaching! We will at Mississippi Christian University this year. Michael Rushing has been instrumental in planning this year's conference. Be sure to thank him and the other MCU folks for all their hard work.

I hope your teaching year is off to a great start. Thank you for all you do to support music education in Mississippi!



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.