

OMTA MUSIC NEWS

Opus 80, No. 4 · March 2026

UPCOMING EVENTS

2026 MTNA National Conference

March 21-25, 2026
Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile, Chicago, IL

2026 OMTA State Conference

August 7-8, 2026
Mt. Hood Oregon Resort, Welches, OR



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CONTACT & CONNECT

office@oregonmta.org
www.oregonmta.org

PO Box 5335
Portland, Oregon 97228

@OregonMTA



PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Heidi Evans, NCTM
OMTA President

Happy March, everyone! What marches are you playing, teaching, or listening to right now? March has so many great avenues to expand students' musical awareness. From Gounod's humorous "Funeral March for the Marionette" to studying compound meter for an Irish jig, this month is a lot of fun for all music lovers.

We have two new additions to Regista, the OMTA online registration system. For the first time,

Composition Festival will be payable online. Also new in Regista, the OMTA Scholarship Auditions can be found on your teacher dashboard. The deadline is a bit later this spring, so we're hoping for good participation. A huge shout-out to Robin Ziari, Marla Hansen, Susan Todd, Irene Huang, and Leslie Chen for spearheading these two projects!

The Syllabus Repertoire database is still in production, but we expect to have these expanded lists available sometime soon this spring. It turns out that taking it from "shorthand list" to "recital program ready" was quite a lot of work for the newly expanded Syllabus Repertoire Committee.

Finally, I want to recognize all the district and state event chairs who have gone above and beyond, learning the new Regista system along with all of us, helping others along the way, and passing along great suggestions. Each one of you is a wonderful help to your colleagues and I thank you sincerely.



OREGON
MUSIC TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION

This month's *Music News* is full of important announcements, so be sure to check out the articles regarding Syllabus, Festivals, and Conference. I can't wait to see you all again in Mount Hood in August!

Heidi Evans, NCTM
OMTA President



The link below connects you to your local District Associations, OMTA Board of Directors, and Committee Chairs:
www.oregonmta.org/about/leadership

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Willamette University
Grace Goudy Distinguished Artists Series 2025-26 Season presents

MAHSA & MARJAN VAHDAT

PERSIAN CLASSICAL AND WORLD MUSIC SINGERS FROM IRAN.
WITH WILLAMETTE PIANIST JAMES MILEY AND GUEST ARTISTS.

Wednesday, April 8, 7:30 p.m.

Hudson Concert Hall, Mary Stuart Rogers Music Center

Marjan Vahdat *"Put all activities aside, keep out all disturbing sounds and immerse yourself one hundred percent in the singing of one of the strongest voices I have ever heard"*. —Rootstime



Mahsa and Marjan Vahdat, internationally acclaimed singers from Iran now residing in the San Francisco Bay area, are devoted to their musical careers and the cause of freedom of expression. Their work has provided global audiences with a deeper understanding of Iranian poetry and music. With voices rooted in their homeland's heritage, they have defied post-1979 bans on music and solo female singers by Iranian authorities.

Mahsa and Marjan have developed a highly personal style of musical expression, rooted in Iranian classical and regional music, a traditional and complex system of modes, melodic motives, and ornamentation infused with contemporary and innovative expressions and influences. Their musical expression transcends cultural and language boundaries, embracing the beauty of diversity and the universality of human sentiments.

In 2003, the sisters started a long-lasting collaboration with the Norwegian record label Kirkelig Kulturverksted (KKV) and producer and poet Erik Hillestad. This collaboration has led to a worldwide release of a series of award-winning and critically acclaimed albums.

Their performances and recording projects include collaborations with many of the world's most acclaimed musicians, including U.S. blues singer Mighty Sam McClain, the Kronos Quartet, Tord Gustavson, Teatr Zar and Grotowski institute, SKRUK Choir, Atabak Elyasi, and Bridget Kibbey.

The sisters continue to engage an international audience that deeply appreciates their art. Mahsa's awards include the Freemuse Award (Denmark 2010), Independent Music Award (USA 2013), German Critics Award (2016), Songlines Best Album for "Traces of an Old Vineyard" (England 2015), and the Transglobal Award for the album "Placeless" with the Kronos Quartet(2019).

In addition to Willamette pianist James Miley, this concert will feature several other guest artists.

Their public masterclass for WU students will be on Tuesday, April 7 at 11:20am in Hudson Hall. This is free and open to the public to observe.

<https://www.mahsavahdat.net/>

<https://marjanvahdat.com/>

CONCERT TICKETS — general admission seating.

Adults: \$25; Seniors \$5. Students and children: Free

Purchase tickets at [DAS Box Office](#)

[Grace Goudy Distinguished Artists Series Website](#)

For questions contact the Music Office: music-info@willamette.edu, 503-370-6255.

MEET OUR CONFERENCE PRESENTERS!

2026 OMTA State Conference: August 7-8 at Mt. Hood Resort



Amie Belisle, NCTM
OMTA President-Elect

Rodolfo Leone



Rodolfo Leone

Some of you may remember Rodolfo Leone when he filled in at the last minute for Portland Piano International in January of 2025, and stunned audiences with his magnificent performances. His playing has been described as having “impeccable style” and “absolute technical control” (*Il Nuovo Amico*) and has performed extensively throughout Europe, North America and China. He is a top-prize winner of several major piano competitions, including first-prize winner of the 2017 International Beethoven Piano Competition Vienna. We are so fortunate to have him with us at our conference, both as a concert artist on Saturday evening, and as a presenter and master class clinician on Friday.

Susan Bruckner

Susan’s book *The Whole Musician: A Multi-Sensory Guide to Practice, Performance, and Pedagogy* has had wide success and influence with music educators for over two decades. She is an active presenter of

music and brain-related topics, developmental learning stages and multi-sensory teaching strategies. Susan is currently the director of the piano program at Cabrillo College and holds degrees from Eastman School of Music, San Francisco Conservatory, and the New School for Music Study in Princeton, NJ, where she studied piano pedagogy with Frances Clark and Louise Goss.



Susan Bruckner

Sophia Pereyra-Johnson & Jessica Andrews, Seattle MTA Social Team

The SMTA Social Team was created in 2021 with the mission of creating social opportunities for members, to build friendships more seamlessly, in order to forge connections that go beyond just professional networking.





Sophia Pereyra-Johnston

Amid planning a robust social calendar and hosting excursions for SMTA members, Sophia is passionate about applying organizational science in new and innovative ways to maximize member motivation and satisfaction. She enjoys applying her

Master's in Industrial Organizational Psychology to help develop the organizational culture to one that fosters deep member connections and friendships, high engagement and commitment, and strengthens the sustainability of the association.

Jessica Evotia Andrews-Hall is an award-winning pianist, electrifying presenter, and visionary teaching



Jessica Evotia Andrews-Hall

artist whose work bridges performance, education, and community impact. Her engaging presentations—praised for their artistry, warmth, and innovation—have been featured at the MTNA National Conference in Minneapolis, MTNA's virtual T.E.M.P.O Conference, and the Japan–Seattle Suzuki Institute.

Trivia Night: Serious Laughter Planned for Trivial Event!

We're planning to kick off this summer's State Conference with a fun-filled, music-themed Trivia Night on Thursday night—"Conference Eve"! So get ready for laughter and some friendly competition. You won't need a doctorate in musicology to participate! There will be something for everyone, including some hilariously silly questions!

Teams may be composed of 1-8 players, with team sizes of 4-6 players recommended. Start organizing your teams now! Feel free to join up with members from OMTA districts other than your own. Family members and partners are also welcome to play on your team.

A no-host bar and snacks will also be available on site. Come join the merriment!

For more information on the state conference, visit our website: <https://oregonmta.org/teachers/conferences/omta-state-conference/>



CERTIFICATION

Newly Certified Teacher Spotlight



Anastasia Kitaev, NCTM
Certification Co-Chair



Sarah Barker Ball, NCTM
Certification Co-Chair



During this troubled time in the world, we can remind ourselves that one of the key missions of piano lessons (or any musical instrument) is to serve as a powerful tool for shaping character in the younger generation—helping students develop willpower, inner strength, stamina, and resilience in the face of life’s challenges. During their study of music, they learn to believe in success and happiness, to keep moving forward even when it is difficult, and to persevere without giving up. They learn not to be afraid of expanding their abilities, and to continue striving for their dreams, even when those dreams may at times seem out of reach. This is why so many parents entrust us with their children’s musical education.

Within OMTA we are incredibly fortunate to have many wonderful, inspiring, and highly professional teachers. We deeply appreciate your dedication, your high professional standards, and the seriousness with which you embrace your mission, dear colleagues.

Today, we are highlighting a brilliant teacher, founder of Forest Heights Piano Studio, and a valued OMTA member for more than 15 years: Lydia Andreeva-Vassileva. Last month, she successfully completed her MTNA Professional Certification and became a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music (NCTM). Despite being highly successful and well established in her studio, Lydia continues to seek opportunities to grow—to become an even more effective leader for her students, and a more inspiring presence in her community.



Lydia Andreeva-Vassileva

Lydia fully committed herself to the certification process. She navigated the requirements with very little assistance, prepared her Teacher Profile Projects independently, and completed the certification in a remarkably short time. Here are her reflections on the process:

“Becoming a nationally-certified piano teacher shows students and their parents that a teacher’s skills aren’t just passion-driven, but are validated against respected national standards. The certification not only boosts credibility, but also encourages deep personal and professional growth. To me, the process felt intellectually demanding. At first, I was confident: I had years of teaching experience, students who were growing and winning competitions, and a studio that worked. Then the



writing began, forcing me to slow down and translate my instincts into words. Watching myself teach, I felt vulnerable, but for the first time, I saw my teaching the way my students experience it. There were moments of doubt: I wondered if I was doing enough, thinking deeply enough, but in the end, I gained a better understanding of myself as a teacher. To me, national certification represents a commitment to growth, accountability, and professionalism. It is a promise to keep reflecting, learning, and improving my teaching so that my future students can benefit. I am also hoping to use it to contribute to professional communities and share my experience and what I have learned."

We look forward to Lydia serving as a Syllabus adjudicator in the future—a role she is now eligible for as an NCTM—and we wish her continued success.

If you are ready to challenge yourself and elevate both your professional level and your studio, we encourage you to take a closer look at the MTNA Professional Certification program. Simply email us to be included in our next monthly Zoom meeting on March 5 at 9:00 AM at certification@oregonmta.org, or explore detailed information about the process here: https://certification.mtna.org/Certification/Explore_Certification/Certification/Explore/Explore.aspx?

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We're expanding access to music lessons for students from low-income families throughout the state.

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Learn more at **OregonMusicLink.org**



COMPOSITION



Robin Ziari
OMTA Composition Festival
Chair

This spring, student Composition Festivals are under way in several districts throughout the state. By now, most participating districts should be open for registration, and some districts will have deadlines quickly approaching.

Students of all levels, from ages five to adult, are encouraged to enter. If you have a student with a composition to enter in this year's festival, now is the time to help them finish up those last pesky details of notation!

What's new for Composition Festival this year?

For the first time, the OMTA Composition Festival has statewide online registration, through the same Regista system that our students now use for Syllabus and Festivals. Until this year, nearly everything about running this festival has been built on the effort of festival chairs. We have always used paper forms and collected payment through the mail.

Here are some items that festival chairs had to collect, create, or fill out manually in the past, but are now available through Regista:

- Certificates
- Student Evaluation Forms (pre-filled)
- Entry details (names, ages, song titles, performer names & instruments)

- Recital Programs
- Recital Schedules
- Payments handled for you!

Reduced effort means savings in time, energy, and money for districts and festival chairs.

State Composition Festival & Recital

Students who qualify for and enter the State Composition Festival are featured in an online recital and receive customized medallions, certificates, and a booklet of their fellow Honored Composer's scores. ***The deadline for registration at the state level is May 16.***

The virtual recital for Honored Composers throughout the state is to be posted on the OMTA website by **June 8**.

Did you know?

Composition Festivals have one major difference from OMTA's other competitive festivals: students do not receive feedback on their performances! In fact, recitals at the district level are fully optional for both districts and individual students.

Students who enter District Composition Festivals will provide their written scores in advance, and entries are adjudicated on the merits of the submitted works only. It's a great opportunity for students to get written feedback on their creative work, from a professional composer, with no need for any anxiety about performing.

Read more about the Composition Festival on our state OMTA website:

<https://oregonmta.org/programs/festivals/composition-festival/>



EDUCATION AND FESTIVALS

Baroque Festival Honors Recital, Composition Honors Festival, and ESMAR

Dr. Janet Pollack, Education and State Festivals Chair

EDUCATION UPDATES:

Our president, Heidi Evans, NCTM, along with a small team, continue to refine OMTA's new online registration system, Regista. Their intent is to make possible the registration of all festivals through the online system. They have achieved amazing and welcome result so far, but it's important to bear in mind that the system is still being developed, and some things may not be ready on Regista in time for registration this year. I assure you there is much more thoughtful and careful development, testing, and fine-tuning going into this, and the outcome will be worth the wait! Please remember that there is now an **adult category** added to both the **Ensemble** and **Composition**.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Baroque Festival Honors Recital

The OMTA 2026 State event will take place **Saturday, March 14, 2026** at the Saint Mark's Lutheran Church in NE Salem. Natalya Klimov and Marla Hansen are co-chairing the event. Registration is through OMTA's new registration system, Regista, located on the OMTA website. Therefore, teachers and district chairs are no longer expected to mail in their entry fees.

Teachers, once you have been notified of the competition results from the District Baroque Festival chair, follow the guidelines for the new registration system to register your students for the State Baroque Honors Recital. Registration for this event **closes Friday, February 27, 2026**. Be aware that registration will turn **off** at midnight of the deadline date, and even the chair will not be able to add students after this time. Contact the co-chair, Natalya Klimov, at (805) 698-2583 or romanatalya@gmail.com for additional information or concerns.

Keep in mind there were changes to the rules for the State Baroque Festival Honors Recital set forth by the Education Committee in fall 2025. These changes will remain in place for the 2026 event. They are as follows:

1. The 3x winners' program is eliminated;
2. Last year's percentage of 30% selected winners in each division is reduced to 25% per division;
3. There will no longer be alternates selected;
4. No videoing will be permitted during adjudication (i.e., when an adjudicator is in the room); and
5. The state entry fee is now \$35 for OMTA members to bring it in line with other state festivals. Non-OMTA members pay an added fee.

Composition Honors Festival

The 2026 State Composition Honors Festival is now chaired by **Robin Ziari**. The virtual State Composition Festival will go live on the OMTA website on June 8; all festival reports and list of honored composers must be received by May 16. Adults are welcome to participate in this festival! For additional information concerning the upcoming 2026 festival, please see Robin's article in this issue, consult the OMTA website, and/or reach out to Robin Ziari at zremusicpdx@gmail.com.

ESMAR

ESMAR will take place June 13 in the Department of Music on the campus of Willamette University, Salem. Applications from those who intend to participate must be postmarked no later than April 15. For further information concerning requirements, consult the OMTA website at <https://oregonmta.org/programs/esmar-extended-study-of-musicianship-and-repertoire> or reach out to the chair, **Lorraine Alner**, NCTM, at esmar@oregonmta.org.



GRANT PROGRAMS

OMTA/OCF Nellie Tholen District Enrichment Project Programs: Teacher Enrichment for All!



Karen Huntsberger, NCTM
Nellie Tholen Grant Coordinator

With many opportunities to attend a free grant program in March and April, make a plan to attend one or more to hear outstanding presenters and topics of interest for all teachers.

Visit the Teacher Enrichment page for the latest program updates:
<https://oregonmta.org/teachers/enrichment-workshops>

Questions? Email me at grant.coordinator@oregonmta.org.



Umatilla-Morrow District

Saturday, March 7, 2026, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Location: Church of Jesus Christ or Latter Day Saints, 850 SW 11th St., Hermiston, OR 97838

Melissa Terrall, MM

Turning Performance Anxiety into a Super Power

How can music teachers help students face the daunting challenge of performance anxiety? In this practical workshop, we will discuss strategies to prepare students for successful performances, from mindset shifts to performance conditioning. Attendees will receive a digital packet of materials and activities for a fun and insightful studio group class on performance preparation!



Linn-Benton District

Tuesday, March 10, 2026, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM

Location: 2810 NW Skyline Dr., Corvallis, OR, 97330

Deborah Cleaver

The Taubman Approach to Keyboard Mastery

An examination of the technical tools needed for facile, fluid playing.





Hillsboro District

Thursday, March 12, 2026, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM

Location: Heart Strings Music Studio, 2230 Pacific Ave, Forest Grove, OR 97116

Emily Ross, BME, MCP

Fragile Folks: Working with Anxious Music Students

Does it seem like you are seeing more tears in the piano studio than you used to? or students just completely shutting down? You are not alone. Understanding anxiety on a neurological and on a cultural level can help you navigate these tricky waters. Anxiety is a particularly hairy concept as it is both a general descriptor and a diagnosis. Because we have all felt it, it can be uncomfortable to talk about. Emily Ross, board-certified music therapist, has your back. This workshop will focus on clarifying definitions and the cultural context of anxiety. It will also cover newer terminology such as Trauma-Informed Care and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). Finally, Emily will present concrete strategies to support a student without crossing into a therapist role.

Umatilla-Morrow District

Saturday, March 14, 2026, 1:30–3:30 PM

Location: Church of Jesus Christ or Latter Day Saints, 850 SW 11th St., Hermiston, OR 97838

Emily Ross, BME, MCP

Fragile Folks: Working with Anxious Music Students

See presentation description under March 12, above.



Eugene District

Monday, March 16, 2026, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Location: First Congregational Church, 1050 E 23rd Ave, Eugene, OR 97405

Dr. Lisa Neher

Burnout Prevention Kit for Music Teachers

Teaching one-on-one and managing your own studio can be rewarding, but it can also lead to exhaustion, overscheduled lives, and eventually the dreaded burnout. Meanwhile, “self care” and “wellness” have become products to buy and impossible images that we can never live up to, rather than ways to actually reclaim agency in our lives. We’ll discuss causes of burnout for music teachers and explore practical solutions, including time management during lessons, establishing and maintaining boundaries, holding time for recreation and a social life, and the balance of supporting your students’ musical goals with nurturing your own artistic growth.

Salem District

Friday, April 03, 2026, Friday, 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Location: Check with district president

Dr. Lisa Neher

Burnout Prevention Kit for Music Teachers

See presentation description under March 16, above.





Central Oregon District

Friday, April 10, 2026, 10:45 AM–12:15 PM

Location: Check with district president

Dr. Stephen Lewis, NCTM

The Mighty Wrist

This talk is an in-depth look at the wrist motions involved in piano playing (lateral, up-down, elliptical, rotational, drawer, and stationary) and how they help various techniques and textures we often teach or play. Dr. Lewis will explore how and why these motions are so crucial to piano playing, and provide knowledge and flexibility to the teachers present in how to make your own determinations regarding teaching using the wrists.



Linn-Benton District

Tuesday, April 14, 2026, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM

Location: Check with district president

Melissa Terrall, MM

Mexican Harmonies: Exploring Piano Repertoire from Mexico

From Tomás León and Guadalupe Olmeda to José Rolón, Melissa presents profiles and representative works of notable Mexican composers. Drawing on her experience as a Fulbright scholar in Mexico City, she will showcase the diversity of Mexican piano repertoire—from salon pieces to folkloric music—while also discussing common misconceptions about Mexican classical music. Attendees are sure to leave more knowledgeable about Mexican composers, as well as inspired to interact with their music in a culturally-robust way as teachers and performers.



Mid-Columbia District

Sunday, April 26, 2026, 1:30 - 3:00 PM and 3:15–4:45 PM

Location: Check with district president

Dr. Alex Tutunov, NCTM

Master Classes

Dr. Tutunov will work with piano students in a master class setting while the audience is invited to learn by observing.



MEMBERSHIP



Ayden Katterman
Membership Chair

Hello everyone! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Ayden Katterman, and I am the current membership chair for OMTA's Eugene district. I have the pleasure of stepping into the OMTA State Membership Chair for Andy as he is focused on being a new father! I am excited to get to work in this role alongside all of you.

We have three new members so far this year.

Central Oregon: Halle Phay, Collegiate Member
Eugene Oregon/UO: Evan Ney, Collegiate Member
Tualatin Valley: Rebekah Loechelt, Collegiate Member

Welcome to OMTA! We look forward to meeting and working with you.

SYLLABUS



Dr. Barbara Roberts, NCTM
OMTA Syllabus Chair

Dear Teachers,

As you enter your students in Spring Syllabus this year, please remember these important duties which are vital to maintaining the integrity our program:

- **Teacher Monitoring Responsibilities (In-Person Syllabus)**

Teachers are expected to act as monitors during all their students' Syllabus exams. On the day of the exam, the teacher monitor sets the tone by ensuring that students and their families act respectfully towards the location and all participants. Teachers need to arrive early with their students, organize their students' music, make sure repertoire is opened to the correct page, and stacked in the order of performance. The teacher will bring the student into the exam room and introduce each student to the Syllabus Adjudicator, re-affirm the level and tier being taken (e.g. "Jane Doe, this is Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith, this is Jane Doe, who will be taking her Level 5 Demonstration today"). If a teacher is absolutely unable to attend their students' Syllabus exams, the teacher must ask another individual to act as monitor instead for all their

students. This is not the duty of the host studio.

- **Virtual Syllabus Monitoring Requirements**

Virtual Syllabus also requires teachers to act as monitors by supervising the technical setup, arriving early, and introducing the students to the adjudicator. See the Teacher Instructions for Virtual Syllabus for further specifics.

- **Extenuating Circumstances Protocol**

Discreetly notify the adjudicator ahead of the exam time if there are behavioral challenges, a death in the family, or other information that potentially could affect how the exam is administered. An email ahead of time or a sticky note discreetly placed on the Student Evaluation sheet are both good ways to communicate this information.

- **Required Measure Numbering**

Measures must be numbered at the beginning of each line for all repertoire selections, as indicated on page iv of the Syllabus Manual.

Thank you!



CENTRAL OREGON DISTRICT

Grace King, Central Oregon District President Elect

The Central Oregon District gathered for our regular meeting on February 13, at the home of Kathy Gault, in Bend. We invited the informative and creative Leila Viss to present remotely to our group on introducing new pieces to elementary and intermediate piano students. Her presentation was titled *Un-Masterclass*, and demonstrated how to start from the very beginning rather than how to polish an already-mastered piece.

We are looking forward to our Winter Festival, “Música Latina” on March 7, which will feature students playing pieces by Latin American or Spanish composers, or music in Latin American or Spanish styles.

WEST PORTLAND DISTRICT

Anna Cosma, West Portland District President

Happy Spring! West Portland District had a great start in the new year. Our first two social events happened in January, ringing in the new year with a gathering at the home of one of our members, and a book reading group at a local bookstore. At our first district meeting this year, we had Dr. Barbara Baird with a presentation on *Performance Practice in*

Baroque Keyboard Music. The meeting was very well-attended and engaging.

Our next event will be the Romantic/Contemporary Festival during two weekends in April: those of 18–19, and 25–26.



EUGENE DISTRICT

Dr. Janet Pollack, Eugene District Corresponding Secretary

The Eugene District started the new year on January 19 with a business meeting via Zoom, followed by a thought-provoking presentation by Susan Bruckner titled *An Auditory Lifespan*. Professor Bruckner, who is Director of Piano Studies at Cabrillo College in Aptos, California, shared her extensive research on learning styles and brain research pertinent to musicians. What she discovered was that music at each life stage works in tandem with brain changes. Professor Bruckner's research included approximately twenty-four interviews with neuroscientists who study how music interacts with the brain in various ways: music's interaction with our brain's reward system; brain plasticity and the development of brain-mediated musical skills; music's integration with the brain's emotion and memories area in the prefrontal cortex and amygdala; and more. In fact, music lights up nearly all of the brain. As piano teachers, these findings are something to seriously consider.

Our Teacher's Showcase, a fundraiser for our scholarship program, was held February 1. District teachers played in duets, ensembles or solo pieces that embraced this year's theme of "Love." A photo of our members who performed is below. Another business meeting via Zoom was held on February 9.



Eugene Teachers Showcase

Upcoming events: Our district's Baroque Festival takes place February 21, and our District Spring Recital will be held March 15 at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Eugene. Following our March 16 business meeting will be a fascinating presentation by Portland composer Lisa Neher, singer-pianist-composer-teacher who was awarded Composer of the Year in 2025 by OMTA. The piece OMTA commissioned was a song cycle, *Love in a Time of Climate Change*. Like most musicians, Neher engages in multiple musical endeavors, and views music as a river, a living thing that is interconnected with itself and all who participate in it. Neher, a conservationist and philosophical thinker, is also known for quoting alchemical aphorisms in interviews such as:

The things that are above are like the things that are below

The things that are below are like the things that are above

For the perfection of the One Thing

On April 11 our District will hold its Composition Celebration. Students whose compositions show particular merit (including adult students) will be awarded *Honored Composer* status and are invited to participate in the State Composition Celebration held in June. Please note that there is a formal adult category for this event.

Members around town: Paul Safar begins his "First Thursdays Series" of concerts at Tsunami Book Store in Eugene on March 5 at 6:30. Paul joins Ted Clifford, David Jones, Theresa Koon and Kevin Lay from Portland in an evening of various types of improvisational music, featuring an unusual assortment of instruments. This "Composers at Play" event is a fundraiser for Cascadia Composers, the Northwest chapter of National Composers USA (NACUSA).

All our OMTA colleagues are welcome to join us at any of our upcoming programs. Please reach out to Brian Hsu at brianhsu@uoregon.edu for additional information.



HILLSBORO AREA DISTRICT



Sarah Ball, NCTM
Hillsboro Area District President

Five members of Hillsboro Area District recently stretched their creative wings at the district's first-ever painting event. Led by local artist Carolyn Walker, the group created wintery music-themed miniatures. Everyone had fun, and we all took home new paintings to decorate our studios with. Being creative in a different medium was challenging, yet refreshing.



Local Artist Carolyn Walker's Example Artwork



Hillsboro Paint and Sip: Holly Counts, Shogo Kodama, Cherise da Cunha, Susan Todd, and Kate Tseomashko.



Many smiles during the process.



LINCOLN COUNTY DISTRICT

Jessie Treon, Lincoln County District President

Spotlight on the Teachers: The Joy of Music was presented at the Newport Performing Arts Center, by the Lincoln County District, at 2 PM on Sunday, February 1.

After over twenty-five years on the music calendar for Lincoln County, *Spotlight on the Teachers* had a special event as part of this year's concert. The concert featured a world premiere of a new composition written by Nicole Buetti. Buetti is a composer, educator, educational content creator, songwriter and performing musician. Her chamber and orchestral music have been honored as the Washington State Music Teachers Association's Commissioned Composer of the Year for 2025. She also received two Telly Awards for her multimedia brass ensemble work "Walking With Giants". The title of the new piece is "Echo in the Void and Back to the Light". It is written for contrabass trombone and piano. John Ohnstad, guest performer from Portland, performed the piece with local pianist Milo Graamans, who is an OMTA alumnus. Ohnstad is the Principal Bass/Contrabass Trombonist of Orchestra Nova Northwest, Oregon Coast Music Festival, Siletz Bay Music Festival, Big Horn Brass, Portland Chamber Orchestra, Portland Choir & Orchestra, and Art Abrams Swing Machine Big Band, and is the founder of the Northwest Trombone Collective, an Oregon-based trombone choir. Graamans is the Church Organist and Choir Director at Yachats Community Presbyterian Church, and is a member of the Lincoln Pops. He has performed in multiple pit orchestras for musical productions, and performs as a soloist frequently here on the Coast.



Ramona Goddard



John Warton and John Ohnstad

Pianists in the concert included Ramona Goddard performing Sonata Op. 10 No. 3: I. Presto by Beethoven, and Cathy Champion-Predmore, guest, playing Chopin's Etude in E, Op. 10, No. 3. Pianists in this series often combine their talents in groups. On this program, Champion-Predmore joined Jessie Treon, OMTA member, in a two-piano rendition of "Malaguena" by Ernesto Lecuona, and Graamans joined them on one piano for a six-hand version of "Oblivion" by Astor Piazzolla. As always, the concert ended with a two-piano, eight-hand piece, "A Scott Joplin Rag Rhapsody" by Kevin R. Olson, performed by Graamans, Treon, Warton, and Wolfe.

Unfortunately, several vocal numbers had to be canceled owing to illness, but other performers in the concert picked up additional pieces, and the concert proceeded. Member Rita Warton, who always pleases our audience with her renditions of humorous songs, picked up an additional song, and her accompanist Carol Wolfe supported her for three numbers. Rita's son, John Warton, guest trombonist from Portland, performed two duets instead of one with Ohnstad, with Warton on tenor trombone and Ohnstad on alto trombone. We had one local vocalist, Alesha Orton, who brought a lovely solo, "Cossock Lullaby", to the dress rehearsal, and she and Treon performed it beautifully the next day.

All in all, it was a very successful concert despite the last-minute program changes. The *Spotlight* concerts are benefits for the Suzanne Brown Student Aid Fund, and the community supported the concert with their generous donations.



ROGUE VALLEY DISTRICT

Terri Horn, Rogue Valley District President

January and February continue to be productive and fun for members of our chapter. We hosted a master class with Artist in Residence at SOU, Dr. Alexander Tutunov, and twelve students of all ages and skill levels. It was a huge success, with record attendance and enthusiastic participation by everyone involved.

On February 7, we enjoyed another successful event, our annual Joyce Stevens scholarship recital, where local teachers and their more-advanced students perform for our community. I counted 120 attendees; we had concerns that with fourteen performers, the audience might consider our program too long. At the end, however, we heard comments from many stating they wished the performances would go on and on! A variety of musical styles were represented by mostly pianists, along with a trio of voice, piano and trumpet... every performance was unique and exceptional.

On February 28, we will learn about *Mexican Harmonies* and the repertoire of Mexico from Melissa Terrall, sponsored by the Tholen grant program. It is a subject that we all look forward to exploring. Thank you, Melissa, for coming, and thank you to Karen Huntsberger, NCTM, for coordinating these events!



Masterclass with Alexander Tutunov



Joyce Stevens Scholarship Recital

Our monthly meetings are now hosted by one of our members, Jen Davidson, who has a perfect home for welcoming guests. This is a treat for us, as we have drifted from one place to another in recent years. Thank you Jen!

Last but not least, Michele Alspach, who has been an active member for 25 years, was invited to become a "Lifetime Member" by unanimous vote of state board members of OMTA. We surprised her at our last meeting with an award ceremony, and special recognition by Fern McArthur. Michele was truly surprised and honored!

We look forward to our Sonatina Festival, Syllabus, and one more Tholen-funded presentation in the spring. Hopefully you'll see a few of us at summer conference as well!



Joyce Stevens Scholarship Recital



TUALATIN VALLEY DISTRICT



Mahroo Hamedani
Tualatin Valley
Co-President

January Highlights

We began the new year with our January monthly meeting at Rise Church. It was wonderful to gather after the holiday break and reconnect as a district. Following our meeting, we enjoyed a presentation by Deborah Cleaver on pedaling. Deborah shared thoughtful insights into effective pedaling techniques, and how intentional use of the pedal can enhance tone, clarity, and musical expression. Her presentation sparked great discussion and offered practical ideas that teachers could immediately apply in their studios.

We also held PLTL—Play Listen Teach Learn—on Friday, January 23. This event provided an opportunity for teachers to share and perform their music for one another, encouraging collaboration, inspiration, and continued musical growth. It was a meaningful time of musical exchange and connection.

February Highlights

Our February monthly meeting took place on Zoom on Friday, February 6. We were pleased to welcome Susan Bruckner, who presented *Learning Styles for Musicians: A Multi-Sensory Guide to Practice, Performance, and Pedagogy*. Her presentation explored how understanding and engaging multiple learning styles can enrich teaching, practice, and performance. It was an informative and engaging virtual meeting that offered practical strategies for reaching students more effectively.

Looking Ahead

Another PLTL session will take place Friday, March 13. We look forward to gathering again to share, listen, teach, and learn together.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Virginia Hawley Buhn, NCTM—Continuing to Inspire

Fern McArthur, NCTM, Eugene District

Last month, Virginia celebrated her 99th birthday at her home with friends from the Eugene District. She has been a special and long-time member of OMTA, and continues to stay informed of our activities and events.

For those who don't know Virginia, she has achieved a long-lasting legacy with OMTA, which has impacted and inspired our students and teachers. As a teacher, she taught and encouraged her students in theory but also artistry. In 1985, she was one of a committee to revise the OMTA Piano Syllabus, and brought us the manual which is still the basis of what we use today. Later, Virginia introduced

the Demonstration tier, allowing more students to participate. Of course, Virginia was active in leadership, serving top levels at State and Division and was chair of the MTNA National Certification Board. In 2014, Virginia received the inaugural OMTA Teaching Award.

We are blessed to have such inspirational models and mentors in our profession. You can find more information about Virginia in the Music News archives, October 2014.

Happy Birthday, Virginia, and thank you!



L to R 1st row: Fern McArthur, Virginia
L to R 2nd row: Carol White, Dr Dean Kramer, Dr
Claire Wachter, Christine Mirabella.



Playing Virginia's favorites



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight on Dr. Diane Baxter, NCTM and *Oregon Musician*

Jeremy Hatch, OMTA Publications Chair



Diane Baxter

After twelve years and fifteen issues, long-time member Dr. Diane Baxter, NCTM, has stepped down as editor of *Oregon Musician*. With this article, we'd like to share Diane's story, her aims for *Oregon Musician* and her experience of editing it over the years, and express our gratitude and appreciation for her creative and thoughtful work on this wonderful publication!

A Washington state native, Diane earned her master's at Boston University, and her doctorate at University of Oregon. Diane and her husband Paul, who had just earned his doctorate in Anthropology, remained in Oregon. Soon she found a position at Western Oregon University, where she remained for thirty-three years. Alongside her academic teaching career and raising two children, she has had a rich and continuing career as a performer, a festival and competition adjudicator, a speaker and presenter, writer, and workshop leader.

Many details can be found in her *Oregon Musician* bios, but here are a few. In 2023, she was invited to speak for the Music Faculty at the University of Oxford on the topic *How to Prepare for Just About Anything: The Pianist as Athlete*, a talk she counts as a major highlight of her career. And since 2018, she has been leading an annual workshop in the Scottish Highlands centered around performance anxiety. In a phone conversation with me, she recounted a moment when she reflected on the purpose of her work there. "What are we doing, why are we coming together here?" She and the participants, she felt, are "in pursuit of beauty, and how we can deliver what is within us. I feel like a musical midwife sometimes, helping the pianists express what is already inside them. They bring the beauty, I get to help access it."

Diane learned Japanese so she could teach her students from Japan in their language, and once gave a talk in Osaka—in Japanese! She is also grateful to be on the roster for the OMTA/OCF Nellie Tholen District Enrichment Project. "I've enjoyed traveling around Oregon and meeting with the various chapters to share some of my work."

In the end, Diane counts the years at Western University as one of her greatest career achievements. "The students at Western were amazing," she said. "I really loved teaching, and it remains so rewarding to see how my students have grown, those that have stayed in touch or reached out to me after a period. It's like watching your own kids grow up."

In her work on *Oregon Musician*, Diane was motivated by the desire to nurture and broaden our thinking about music, and by a spirit of generosity: "I know a lot of interesting people, whether from traveling, or work, and I wanted to be generous with my connections. I wanted the readers of *Oregon Musician* to know them!" In soliciting articles for the



publication, Diane cast her net wide. Each issue is organized around a theme (e.g., Healing, Listening, Transformation, Opportunity, etc.) that is broadly defined in order to leave ample room for human connection. "I always thought of this as a kaleidoscopic approach, hoping to reach as many readers as I could. In fact, the first edition I did was called *Transformation Through Music: A Kaleidoscopic View*. She wanted the articles to not only speak to the topic, but also be a true reflection of who the authors were at that moment in their lives. "I received so many astonishing pieces from contributors," she said. "I never wanted the issues to be about me; I wanted to give back."

She succeeded in all of that, but in reading *Oregon Musician* over the past several years, I certainly have always found her sensibility and critical intelligence perceptible in the choices made throughout, at every level. It's a unique publication, and we deeply appreciate all that Diane has done for it and for OMTA. We wish her the best in her continuing career endeavors!

Note: if you might be interested in helping to take *Oregon Musician* into its next chapter, please reach out to me, Jeremy Hatch, at musicnews@oregonmta.org.



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The submission deadline is always the 15th of the month preceding the date of publication.

September <i>Music News</i>	August 15
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January <i>Music News</i>	December 15
March <i>Music News</i>	February 15
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EDITED BY
 Jeremy Hatch
musicnews@oregonmta.org

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GRAPHIC DESIGN BY
 Samantha Yeung
www.samanthayeung.com

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS
 Robin Power & Caris Power
office@oregonmta.org

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office@oregonmta.org
www.oregonmta.org
 PO Box 5335
 Portland, Oregon 97228



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