

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

The MMTA Collegiate Competitions took place on March 1, at Jackson State University in Jackson. Many thanks go to Jenna Klein, Vice President (VP) for Collegiate and National Competitions, for organizing the competitions. I would like to invite and encourage you to enter your college students in next year's competitions which will be held at the University of Mississippi in Oxford on March 26, 2026.

Huge thanks go to Rosângela Yazbec Sebba and Katie Johnson, VP's for Pre-College Evaluations, for not only completing and launching the Pre-College Evaluations' Five-Year Program, but also for initiating the TenutoWeb online registration system while also helping all of us to navigate it successfully. Much appreciation goes to Janine

Beasley, VP for Membership & Web Management, for adding numerous updates to our website upon various requests in a timely manner. We are grateful for Treasurer Christ Ballard, who managed and processed all necessary payments and expenses. I would also like to recognize all of our District Chairs and hosts who made last April's local Evaluations possible and successful.

Pre-College State Finals took place at Mississippi State University in Starkville on Saturday, May 17. I would like to extend my thanks to Rebekah Lipscombe and Rebekah Schultz, VP's for Pre-College Performances, and Rosângela Sebba, one of our liaisons for the event, as well as all of our members who not only worked themselves, but also enlisted parents to help at the Finals.

SUMMER 2025 VOL. 40 ISSUE 2

Table of Contents



Officer Reports

1



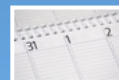
2024-2025 Competition Results

7



Affiliate Reports

8



Upcoming Events

12

I was very grateful to attend the MTNA 2025 National Conference held in Milwaukee, Minnesota last March. I attended the State Presidents Advisory Council meeting, the Southern Division meeting and lovely reception, the MTNA annual meeting, the Gala, and several conference sessions including inspiring master classes, presentations, guest recitals, and the national competitions. Congratulations to our MTNA 2025 Foundation Fellow, Barbara Tracy, who was recognized at the conference Gala. Several MMTA members attended the conference. Congratulations go to Jenna Klein, VP for Collegiate & National Competitions, and Rebekah Schultz, VP for Pre-College Performances, for presenting conference/poster sessions. The next MTNA National Conference will be held in Chicago, Illinois, on March 21-25, 2026.

Our 71st State Conference will be held at Jones College in Ellisville on October 31-November 1, 2025. I greatly appreciate Michael Rushing, President-Elect and Conference Chair, and Victoria Johnson, our liaison and host at Jones College, for organizing and hosting the conference, respectively.

I encourage you all to consider ways that you and your local affiliate can invite new members to join MTNA and MMTA. Keep an eye out for ways in which younger teachers can feel that they are a vital part of their organization. This can include implementing some of the helpful membership tools that MTNA sends out periodically.

I hope that each of you will have a nice summer. I look forward to seeing many of our members and students at the upcoming events.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Mahler

President-Elect

The 2025 Mississippi Music Teachers Association State Conference will take place on October 31-November 1, 2025 at Jones College in Ellisville, MS.



Michael Rushing

Beth Bauer, the conference clinician, is known for her work with children with disabilities. In addition to her presentations, she will present a master class to area piano students. On Friday evening, guest artist Johnnie Bankens will present a voice recital accompanied by our own Theresa Sanchez. Cindy St. Clair, Coordinator of Keyboard Studies at Samford University, will adjudicate the concerto competition following her presentation at the Independent Music Teachers Forum on Saturday. The conference commissioned composer will be Tae Young Hong of William Carey University.

The association's Mississippi Arts Commission Project Grant in support of the state conference and collegiate competitions was submitted in February. We await the decision of the panel.

MMTA collegiate competitions will be held on Saturday, February 28, 2026, at the University of Mississippi in Oxford.

Thanks to the members of the board and liaisons at this year's host institutions for their assistance in preparing for these upcoming events.

Michael Rushing,

President-Elect, MMTA

Treasurer's Report



Chris Ballard

Our current balance is \$78,788.45. That Balance includes:

Checking Account: 30,195.71

Pay Pal Account: 21,461.14

12 Month CD: 27,131.60

Below is the Pre-College Evaluations report. I have included the PayPal and Tenuto expenses. Since this is the first year we have used Tenuto/PayPal for the fall conference and Pre-College Evaluations, I thought it would be helpful to show the financial impact these charges have had on the MMTA budget.

As you can see, the added expense for the Pre-College evaluations is \$1,210.61. The added Tenuto/PayPal expense for the fall conference was \$882.09 for a total of \$2092.70 for the two events. Even with these extra expenses I anticipate that we will end up with an overall profit for this fiscal

year ending June 30, 2025. If this new registration/payment system has made it much easier on the MMTA membership to register and pay for events, then we should continue to use this system with improvements and updates as needed. However, we should revisit this subject at the end of each fiscal year in the future so that if we ever have unexpected expenses or unusual loss of revenue (for example, not receiving a Mac Grant) then we might re-evaluate the use of Tenuto/PayPal.

I am still processing the income and expenses for the pre-college finals, so at our August meeting I will give a full financial recap of the 2024-25 fiscal year along with the proposed budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year. Thank you for your help and support.

Respectfully Submitted: Chris Ballard, MMTA State Treasure

MMTA 2025 Spring Pre-College Evaluations

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Profit/Loss</u>
Cleveland	760.00	254.80	505.20
Golden Triangle	2205.00	870.50	1334.50
Gulf Coast	2300.00	907.49	1392.51
Hattiesburg	1260.00	596.10	663.90
Jackson	4250.00	1948.40	2301.60
Jones County	1355.00	533.62	821.38
Oxford	0	0	0
Vicksburg	1540.00	482.80	1057.20
PayPal Charges		531.61	531.61
Tenuto Charges		679.00	679.00
<u>Totals</u>	<u>13,670.00</u>	<u>6,804.32</u>	<u>6,865.68</u>

Non-PayPal Receipts 90.00

PayPal Receipts 13,580.00

PayPal Charges 531.61

Tenuto Charges 679.00

Without PayPal or Tenuto Charges the profit would have been \$8,076.29, a difference of \$1,210.61.

Respectfully Submitted: Chris Ballard, MMTA State Treasurer

Vice-President for Membership and Web Management



Janine Beasley

As of May 29, 2025, 41 members are listed for the 2025-2026 year. There were 141 at the end of March. MTNA resets membership on April 1.

Website changes:

Updated meeting minutes from Fall Conference (from Alice)

Updated Collegiate Competition and Chamber application deadline per Jenna

Continuing to edit/upload evaluation testing documents for 5 year plan

Updated officers and members information as necessary

Helped to coordinate members login information on Tenuto

Uploaded District Evaluations Report forms

Ongoing:

Miscellaneous updates as needed

Continue to send mass emails to members as requested

Respectfully submitted,

Janine Beasley

Vice Presidents for Pre-College Evaluations



Rosângela Sebba

We hope everyone had a fantastic semester! I want to extend my gratitude to Alejandro Cresmaschi for his outstanding work in assisting us before, during, and after the District Evaluations and State Finals. Thanks to his dedication, the website has been fine-tuned to meet our needs. While some districts experienced minor glitches, Alejandro promptly identified and resolved these issues.

I am currently gathering feedback on the use of Tenuto. If you have encountered any errors, please reach out to me, and I will ensure the information is forwarded to Alejandro.

Looking ahead, we hope for a more seamless experience next year, with the established theory and website running smoothly. Our goal remains to align Mississippi with the many states that have already adopted this system, significantly reducing manual work and paperwork.

Below is a collective report of all districts:



Katie Johnson

District	Audition Report		Finals Eligibility	Scores 270	Scores 360
	Registered	Participated			
Cleveland	16	15	5	3	3
Columbus/Starkville/Tupelo	47	43	43	10	22
Ellisville	29	28	18	24	11
Gulf Coast	45	42	40	10	22
Hattiesburg	26	26	22	2	21
Jackson	94	90	54	4	39
Vicksburg	36	34	13	1	3

Thank you for your commitment, perseverance, and patience throughout this transition. Adjusting long-standing procedures is never a simple task, but we are confident that this transformation will bring lasting benefits to our association, members, and students. By working together, we can continue to elevate music education and performance across our state.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Vice Presidents for Pre-College Performances



Rebekah Lipscombe

We want to thank everyone involved with assisting in making Pre-College Finals such a success on Saturday, May 17th in Starkville. We had fewer students participating this year (possibly due to the distance), but the students performed well and everyone was grateful to be in MSU's new music building. We are grateful to the judges for their excellent comments.

We have some thoughts to discuss with the board about revising district evaluations and state finals guidelines, outlined below:

1. Page 3, III. State Finals, B. Teacher Requirements – change wording “calculating judges’ scores” – seems to be used when we had more than one judge, change to something like “preparing awards”
2. V. A. State Finals - change wording “Score sheets will be collected at the conclusion of each recital and delivered to the workroom for ranking and record keeping” to reflect Tenuto scoring
3. We also need to update judging instructions to make it more clear that placing is calculated via scores alone, since the judges do not assign 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Some of the judges were unclear on this.
4. Page 7, IV. State Finals Awards and V. Judges’ Guidelines – wording seems to



Rebekah Shultz

contradict itself, "The student receiving the highest averaged score in each Grade/Division shall be declared winner" and "Ribbons shall be awarded to all students who receive an average of 95 or higher" – Should students have to get a 95 or higher to get an award? Can we give judges the option not to give a medal if there is only one student performing in the category? (the student would have to score 95 or high to get the gold medal)

- a. Discuss situation that happened at Finals and supporting our judges, unless they give us a reason not to. It does not happen often that one student performs in a category and they score lower, but when they do should we have the option to not declare a winner? Should we keep the 95 and above standard for all winners? This shouldn't discourage students, but it does make them work harder/prepare more.
5. Page 7, IV. State Finals Awards, D. 360 & 270 Certificates – Do we want to stop doing separate participation and high composite score certificates? Put a special seal on participation certificates for students who got a high composite score and mail the digital certificates to the rest? This would save on expenses and paper.

Upcoming Events and deadlines to note:

1. Pre-College Concerto Competition, Saturday, Nov. 1st 2025, JCJC - deadline: September 30th
2. Pre-College Gold Medal Winners Recital, Saturday, November 1st, 2025, JCJC - deadline: October 11th
3. Pre-College Finals, Saturday, May 16th 2026, potentially at Mississippi College (waiting on dept. chair approval)

Respectfully submitted,

Rebekah Schultz and Rebekah Lipscombe
VPs for Pre College Performances

2024-2025 Competition Results

MTNA State Round (Belhaven University on Friday, November 1, 2024)

Senior Strings

- Josiah Osula (1st place)
- Hadley Green (Alternate)

MMTA Collegiate Competition (Jackson State University on March 1st, 2025)

Junior/Senior Solo Piano

- Daniel Moraru (1st)
- Josue Valdez (2nd)
- Dominick Bellipanni (Honorable Mention)

Graduate Solo Piano

- Wenwen Che (1st place)
- Dantong Feng (2nd place)

Affiliate News

Gulf Coast Music Teachers Association

Greetings from the Gulf Coast! We have enjoyed an eventful spring, and we are eagerly anticipating the summer. Currently, we have 20 members.

On January 25th, our GCMTA secretary, Katlin Ross presented an informative program, "Employing Music Therapy Techniques in Music Lessons." We enjoyed visiting her studio, Coastal Harmony, in Gautier, MS.

Dr. Elizabeth Moak, Associate Professor of Piano at USM, conducted a fantastic masterclass at MGCCC-JC on March 29. We had five piano students perform-four soloists and a duo.

GCMTA's local MMTA Pre-College Evaluations took place on April 5 and 12, at Bible Fellowship Church in Pass Christian and MGCCC-Jackson County Campus in Gautier, respectively. Participating were 45 piano and string students representing 10 teachers. These students turned in a total of 58 performances, of which 40 qualified for State Finals. Thirty-two students received a High Composite Score. Sofia Escobedo, who is a student of Carol Mahler, received the Outstanding Student Achievement Award.

The piano judges were Dr. Robert Holm, Betty Hopkins, Dan McElrath, and Dr. Jonathan Mitchell. Dr. Gosia Leska served as strings adjudicator. Fifteen volunteers kept the Evaluations running smoothly, including teachers, parents, students, and former students of various members. GCMTA made a great showing at the State Finals!

Our GCMTA Summer Meeting will be held via Zoom on June 14th.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Mitchell, President.

Golden Triangle Music Forum

GTMF has twelve current teacher members and two collegiate members. It has been refreshing and helpful to have a few collegiate members who are excited to participate in meetings and events! We had a Spring meeting on April 12 with 7 members present.

On February 1st, MSU and their Community Music School hosted a one day "Piano Retreat" for students grades 7-12. Opportunities for the students ranged from playing pop chords and exploring rhythms and blues in the piano lab, to classes about church music and professional audio recording processes. At the end of the morning, students were able to work in masterclasses with 4 of our MSU piano faculty before performing in a recital for their parents. The feedback from students was extremely positive!! The retreat inspired students and our teachers to consider more class options in our studios in the future and to look forward to next year's retreat.

In our local MMTA auditions for Starkville/Columbus/Tupelo on April 5, we had 43 present students from our 8 participating teachers. 30 solo entries were accepted for State Finals as well as 13 students in other categories. Our Chairperson, Dr. Rose Sebba, always does a wonderful job coordinating this for us, and this year she was also helping coordinate Tenuto for the other groups! We appreciate all of the unseen work.

We then had our annual Honors Recital at the MSU Recital Hall that featured Dr. Kowoon Lee (from Tennessee State University) and our State Finals-eligible students (April 26). (Thank you to MMTA for the grant to go towards this event!) Dr. Lee performed several interesting pieces, including “Arari XII: Arirang Variation (2013) by Eunhye Kim (b. 1956)” that featured a familiar Korean tune that our students really enjoyed hearing! Then Dr. Lee gave grades and written critique to our students to help them prepare for State Finals. We highly suggest Dr. Lee for events with children as she was easy to work with and a fabulous pianist.

Lastly, Golden Triangle Music Forum was honored to be able to host State Finals on May 17 at our own MSU Music Department. Our own Dr. Rebekah Schultz along with Rebekah Lipscomb did an incredible job with the planning of the event and making things go smoothly that day.

Katie Johson, GTMF President

Music Forum of Jackson

Music Forum of Jackson hosted our fifty-sixth Bach Festival at Hinds Community College. Raymond Campus on February 8, 2025. Thirty-seven teachers participated with 272 students registered to play. This event was chaired by Kathie Gunn Lott. The festival, celebrating Baroque music, is open to all piano students grades one through twelve.

The MMTA Pre-College Evaluations were held on April 12, 2025 at Millsaps College with Donna Banks, chairperson. Ninety-four students registered and 90 participated. Fifty-four students were eligible to compete in the Pre-College Finals Competitions held on May 17 at Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi.

Our First Friday lunches continue to gain popularity with membership. These are informal gatherings on most first Fridays of the month where teachers can touch base and catch up.

MFJ members enjoyed our annual spring luncheon and business meeting on May 9, 2025 at Anjou in Ridgeland, Mississippi. The 2025-2026 slate of officers, having been voted on via email, was approved. Officers are these: President, Jane Duran Fox; President-Elect, Carolina Whitfield-Smith; Immediate Past Presidents(co-), Debbie Barnes, Susie Cook, Patsy Simpson; President for Programs, Alice Ballard; Vice-President for Membership/Treasurer, Brenda Sullivan; Chairperson for Sonata-Sonatina Festival, Donna Reed; Chairperson for Bach Festival, Kathie Gunn Lott; Chairperson for MMTA Local Evaluations, Donna Banks; Chairperson for Communications, Rhonda Armstrong; Chairperson for Certification, Jacquelyn Thornell; Chairperson for Social Events, Joy Parker Graves; and Historian, Debbie Barnes.

We have a summer board meeting scheduled for July 17 to plan our 2025-2026 year of events.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Duran Fox, President, Music Forum of Jackson

**JONES COUNTY MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Janine Beasley, President

May 30, 2025

The JCMTA annual Ensemble Festival was held on Marh 1, 2025. Participation was significant and the quality of the students' performances was exceptional.

Jones County Music Teachers Association participated in the Ellisville area MMTA Evaluations on April 5, 2025, at Jones College.

A business meeting was held prior to the events.

A meeting will be held during the summer to choose new officers and committee members, and to determine dates for Showcase Recital, Solo-Sonata Competition, and Ensemble Festival. Music for Solo-Sonata Competition and Ensemble Festival will also be selected.

Respectfully submitted,
Janine Beasley

Hattiesburg Music Teachers League Affiliate Report
May 29, 2025



In the academic year 2024-25, the **Hattiesburg Music Teachers League (HMTL)** benefitted from a guest program organized by Program Chair, Susan Smith. The guest presentation "Understanding and Recognizing Mental Health Issues in Musicians" by Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Janet McMillan followed our business meeting and was open to the public.

Our Saturday morning HMTL Student Recitals showed robust participation. On October 26, 2024, HMTL presented four student recitals in Marsh Auditorium at the University of Southern Mississippi. HMTL featured a student recital at William Carey University's Bass Memorial Chapel on February 8, 2025. Three HMTL student recitals were on March 29, 2025, at Main Street Baptist Church—a new location for our recitals, providing diversity of place. Each day of recitals featured HMTL members' students ranging from beginner level to doctoral students.

Additional events included:

- Our local Mississippi Federation of Music Clubs Festival (Anne Kathryn DeViney, Chair), Sat. Feb. 15, 2025, at William Carey.
- MMTA Pre-College District Evaluations and Camp Scholarship Auditions (Victoria Johnson, Chair), Sat. April 12, 2025, at USM.
- HMTL Spring Concert (Laura Broughton, Chair) on Sun. Apr. 27, 2025. William Carey's Bass Memorial Chapel.

Plans continue for the return of **HMTL's beloved Composer Festival** on November 14-15, 2025, at Parkway Heights United Methodist Church in Hattiesburg. The featured composer will be Catherine Rollin. A teacher workshop will take place on Friday morning, Nov. 14, 2025. More details will be announced later by the Composer Festival Chair Laura Broughton and Assistant Chair Joanna Burnside.

Our end-of-the-year General Meeting and Luncheon was held Thurs., May 15, 2025, at Tabella. Joanna Burnside shared copies of a 1987 history of our organization written by her mother, [Pat Tuley](#), a beloved longtime member. Theresa Sanchez has recognized the document as a speech dedicating the 1987 Spring Concert to Jan Mesrobian, HMTL's founder. Jan retired in Spring 2022 but joined us as a guest at our May 2025 luncheon. The valuable history has been added to our webpage: [HMTL About Us](#). Our membership now includes 20 teachers and 4 collegiates.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Moak
President

Mark Your Calendar

September 10, 2025, 3 pm EDT – Registration deadline for MTNA State Competitions
(Chair: Jenna Klein, jklein@colled.msstate.edu)

Oct. 31, 2025 – 2025 MTNA State Competitions– Jones College, Ellisville, MS

Oct. 31-Nov. 1, 2025 – 71st MMTA State Conference– Jones College, Ellisville, MS

December 3, 2025, 3 pm EST – Video deadline for MTNA Brass, Voice, and Chamber Music Competition (Registration available Nov. 1, 2025)

Feb. 28, 2026 – 2026 MMTA Collegiate Competitions– University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

April 11, 2026 – 2026 MMTA Pre-College Evaluations, Group A – Cleveland, Goodman, Hattiesburg, Jackson, Oxford, Tupelo

April 18, 2026 – 2026 MMTA Pre-College Evaluations, Group B – Columbus/Starkville, Ellisville, Gulf Coast, Vicksburg

May 16, 2026 – 2026 MMTA Pre-College Finals – Location TBA



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From the MMT Editor



Stephanie McGee

Editor

I hope everyone has had a restful summer and the new school year is off to a great start! We have such a rich, musical tradition in Mississippi, and we are blessed to have an impact on the future of Mississippi's music. I hope you all have an amazing school year!



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.