



# GEORGIA MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



WINTER NEWSLETTER 2021

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## GMTA TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2020

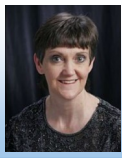
### PORTIA HAWKINS

As the recipient of the Georgia Music Teacher of the Year, Portia Shuler Hawkins wishes to pay special tribute to her remarkable parents; her father, Dr. J. Milton Shuler, a college professor at Claflin College, and her mother, Edna Williamson Shuler, an elementary school teacher.

Ms. Shuler Hawkins' early education started in Orangeburg, South Carolina, her hometown. She attended public elementary school and the Felton Laboratory School of South Carolina State College. Piano study was pursued with Mrs. Janie Jenkins, her church organist, and later with college instructors Dr. James George and Dr. Geneva Handy Southhall. Portia served as her high school choir accompanist and church accompanist for the children's choir.

After graduating from Wilkinson High School with second highest honors, she was accepted to Fisk University. At Fisk, she majored in piano, studying with Anne and Matthew Kennedy. She also served as a vocal accompanist and sang with the Fisk Jubilee Singers. After graduating from Fisk (Magna Cum Laude), Portia continued her studies at Yale University where she received her Master of Music degree in Piano Performance. While at Yale, she received the George Wellington Miles Award for Outstanding Piano Performance studying privately with Francis Whang and Ward Davenny. She later studied with Pulitzer Prize Winner George Walker, Betty Nolting and Virginia Hutchins.





## 2020 TEACHER OF THE YEAR, PORTIA HAWKINS, CONTINUED

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BY JAN ADAMS, NCTM, GMTA PRESIDENT

She returned to her hometown to begin her teaching career at Claflin College and South Carolina State College. From there Ms. Shuler Hawkins served in teaching positions at Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Virginia State College, Norfolk, Virginia; and in the Atlanta area at Emory University, Georgia Perimeter College, Agnes Scott College, Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University.

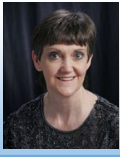
Portia Shuler Hawkins has had the honor of performing in several east coast venues, which included numerous colleges and universities. Being featured on NPR's Performance Today performing the music of Florence Price was truly one of her most memorable performances. Her CD, "African-American Sampler," was heard for many years on WABE-FM public radio and other public radio stations across the country. Her presentation of the music of Robert Nathaniel Dett and her Faculty Recital at Georgia Perimeter College were featured on the "Atlanta Music Scene," WABE-Radio Atlanta.

In June, 1992, Portia Hawkins was featured in the Atlanta Journal Constitution article, The Piano Lesson, written by AJC music critic Derrick Henry. Other performances in the Atlanta area have included The High Museum of Art, The Woodruff Mansion, The Wesley Woods, Renaissance, Lenbrook and Coventry Court Retirement Communities, Spelman College, Morehouse College, Georgia Perimeter College, Agnes Scott College, Georgia State University, Kennesaw University and Spivey Hall. She performed a collaborative lecture-recital with Dr. Oral Moses at Alpharetta Presbyterian Church in February 2020. She has performed several recitals at the Harriet Tubman Museum in Macon, Georgia.

Portia served as a consultant to BRAVO Music Camp in Savannah, Georgia for nine years and is presently a member of the Board of Diversitá Opera Arts Company in Dallas, Texas. Ms. Shuler Hawkins has been a member of GMTA for almost forty years and has served as State Certification Secretary and a GMTA Board Member-At-Large. She was President of North DeKalb Music Teachers Association and 2nd Vice-President for Membership of North Fulton Music Teachers Association. Last year she was awarded a GMTA Teacher Grant to assist in promoting and preserving piano music of classically-trained African-American composers. She is a member and past president of the Alumni Chapter of Mu Phi Epsilon and a member of the Atlanta Music Club, the National Federation of Music Clubs and the Metropolitan Atlanta Musicians Association. She has served as organist at First Church of Christ Scientist in Atlanta and Roswell, Georgia. She has also served as a guest musician at North Avenue Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia, and continues to be a frequent accompanist for professional singers and instrumentalists.

Today, Portia Shuler Hawkins teaches privately in her Roswell, Georgia piano studio and frequently serves as an adjudicator for the Georgia Music Teachers Association, the National Federation of Music Clubs, and the Metropolitan Atlanta Musicians Association.

Portia is married to William P. Hawkins, Jr. and they are the parents of John Hawkins of San Francisco, California.



2021 – Happy New Year! I think we are all glad 2020 is behind us! I never envisioned that this old dog would learn so many new tricks to teach music to my piano students and my college classes. GMTA had the perfect person as president for 2019-2020. Joy Poole has worn many hats as she has navigated GMTA through Virtual Region and State Auditions with a complete re-structuring of on-line auditions and Virtual MTNA Competitions. And finally she organized a fabulous virtual conference (which is still available on the GMTA website). We are indebted to her knowledge of technology which helped GMTA to sail through each of these events with expertise that even MTNA leaders would emulate. We owe much thanks to Joy Poole and Mandy Reynolds, GMTA Executive Director. They have worked tirelessly this past year to help GMTA to continue to make great strides in the music profession.

As your new president, I have big shoes to fill. I am excited that my Executive Board is chomping at the bit to get started in their new roles. Plans are already being made for the 2021 Fall Conference to be held at Piedmont College in the North Georgia Mountains! Our Regional and State Auditions will continue to be virtual this year, with the option for local associations to also hold virtual auditions. Check out the monthly constant contact, the GMTA website (Student Activities) and the GMTA Newsletter for further information regarding deadlines and dates. The Board has voted to bypass the GATE Theory Test for 2021 due to possible space restrictions; however, this may be the time to exempt GATE by taking the GMTA Theory Tests instead. Many associations have had record numbers of participants in competitions due to the virtual option. Let's continue to involve our students in music events offered by GMTA and other organizations.

Congratulations to Portia Hawkins who was chosen as our 2020 Teacher of the Year. Portia has served GMTA in many capacities and we are proud of all her accomplishments. We also want to congratulate all of our students and teachers who participated in the MTNA Competitions. They are listed on the GMTA Website and also in the GMTA Newsletter.

I am looking forward to an exciting year in 2021 and serving as your president for the next two years. All of us working together – Executive Board, Executive Director and members - will make GMTA an even greater music organization.

Jan Adams

GMTA President



Many thanks to Past President Joy Poole and GMTA Executive Director Mandy Reynolds for organizing our first ever virtual state conference! I must admit that initially I was less than thrilled about the prospect of online sessions, but I was quickly impressed with the variety of content and the star power of our Headliner.

**Dr. Kevin Chance** from the University of Alabama was our Master Class Clinician and our Pedagogy Headliner, and his programs were incredible! He opened the conference Thursday night with the Master Class. Ethan Bernhard, Rajath Prabhakar, both from the studio of Dr. Alexander Wasserman, and Anna Hu, from the studio of Lois Finlay, NCTM, were the featured performers. They all played beautifully, and Dr. Chance worked with them to finetune aspects of their performances. His style was extremely interactive; he asked the students questions to help them gain insight into the music and the technical challenges presented in each piece.

In his first pedagogical program on Friday entitled “Beyond Fur Elise,” Dr. Chance presented repertoire not typically performed from the major music periods. I immediately ordered some of the recommended music books and look forward to using them in my studio. Dr. Chance’s second program on Friday was “Paving the Road to Chopin: Developing Essential Elements of Romantic Style.” He covered various characteristics of piano music from the Romantic Period and presented us with a plethora of accessible options for our intermediate students. I came away with many wonderful ideas to use with my own students.

The afternoon business session recognized Portia Hawkins, NCTM, as GMTA’s 2020 Teacher of the Year. Two Steinway Grants and four GMTA Grants were given to various students and teachers.

Our Georgia’s Own sessions offered great variety in both subject matter and presenters. There was definitely something for everyone. Thank you to each presenter for your help in making the conference a success!

The Commissioned work, *loops.branches.nodes*, by Dr. Peter Van Zandt Lane premiered Friday afternoon, and it was amazing to listen to the Fuego Saxophone quartet play collaboratively but from separate venues. Other performances were given by GMTA Concerto Winners, Anna Hu on piano, and Zach Tseng on violin.

Numerous talented students were highlighted in the MTNA and GMTA Winners’ Recitals. Thank you to Ashley Craig-Diaz, NCTM, and Yien Wang for organizing these recitals.

The 2021 GMTA Conference is planned for November 4-6, 2021, at Piedmont College, in Demorest, Georgia. Mark it on your calendar to be there!



This year's conference offered a variety of sessions from our **Georgia's Own** presenters. Topics ranged from teaching preschoolers to the most advanced techniques. These sessions are available on the [GMTA Website](#). I hope you will take advantage of these very informative offerings.

This year the conference featured an **Online Teaching Forum** that included many experts in the field from across the United States. Many thanks to Melissa Slocum for her work in providing these outstanding sessions. The recorded sessions are available on the [GMTA Website](#) and include:

- Online Lesson Tech Set-Ups 101
- Online Lesson Tech Set-Ups 301
- Group Classes and Games for Online Teaching

The **2020 Commissioned Work performance**, composed by Dr. Peter Van Zandt Lane, was one not to be missed. GMTA is proud to have him represent us on the national level. The Fuego Quartet's performance was quite impressive! Bravo to our composer of the year and the performers! If you missed it, [Click Here](#) to view the recording of the performance.



Even though the conference was virtual, we tried to include as many of the aspects of our yearly conference as possible. We thank PianoWorks for serving as our conference music store and donating the artistry bench, the local associations who donated to make our raffles possible and Steinway Galleries for supporting GMTA through teacher grants. We were excited to offer the student concerto performances and student winner recitals through a video format. They were outstanding! Don't forget to check out the recorded sessions, and we hope you to see you this fall at the conference!





**Tell us about your musical background - do you have a primary instrument(s), when did you begin lessons? Why?**

*I began piano lessons at the age of five, guitar at eight, and began bassoon at the age of eleven when I joined my middle-school band. Bassoon was my main focus from then on and my instrument through college and beyond, though I've continued learning new instruments (probably mastering none)! Lately, I've been spending the most time with the bassoon (and contrabassoon), piano, and mandolin.*



**When did you start composing, and what drew you to composition?**

*I like to think we all start composing as toddlers. I was reminded of this the other day, when my two-year-old daughter made up a song while playing with mud (the lyrics were: "mud mud mud mud mud" ... and it was in 6/8 with a lilt). Improvisation was always a part of my piano playing from a young age, and was certainly a much needed outlet during those angsty teenage years!*

*But around the age of 13, two important things happened: my bassoon teacher gave me a bootleg copy of notation software on a burned CD, and my parents gave me a Korg keyboard with a 16-channel sequencer for my birthday. Almost immediately, I had composed a wind quintet for my youth orchestra's chamber group I played in every Monday, and also created several bad EDM songs on my keyboard's MIDI sequencer. It would be another decade before I realized these two worlds could be (and, for me, needed to be) brought together.*

**Were any particular composers influential in your development as a composer?**

*It's very hard to parse out all the influences! I try to let my music honestly flow from my overall musical experiences, which include as much rock and electronica as music in the "classical" tradition. I was fortunate to study with four composers in my higher-ed whose music I felt deeply connected to: Lansing McLoskey at the Frost School, and David Rakowski, Eric Chasalow, and Melinda Wagner at Brandeis University. They were (and continue to be) very influential. Otherwise, I would have to cite Thomas Adès's influence on my harmony/texture and David Lang on how I think about form and rhythmic process.*

**How would you describe your compositional style?**

*There's definitely a strong presence of post-minimal musical style, but I like to keep things fast-paced and quickly evolving. I feel that my natural impulses have led me to a place right between traditional and progressive styles, post-tonal with a lot of tonal ambiguities, and with rhythm, meter and pattern almost always in the focal point!*

**Do you have a routine or specific creative style when creating a new work (what is your process / how do you go about it)?**

*I tend to let some core musical ideas stew around in my head for some time before I put the ideas down on the page (or the hard drive!). I'll usually do a bit of sketching by hand in a notebook, getting some themes down and some preliminary ideas about overall form/narrative. But these sketches are usually abandoned at some point— though they are necessary to get the music initially flowing. I've done a couple pieces entirely by hand (including pieces in "old languages" like baroque and Renaissance styles, which I still do for practice and personal enjoyment), but mostly move into notation software fairly quickly into the process. Once a piece gets rolling, I'll do long stretches at a time and the work goes fast, since when I'm in the middle of a piece it's hard for me to focus on other things!*

**Do you compose in styles other than contemporary classical?**

*I used to do quite a bit of songwriting! I played in rock bands in South Florida in the early 2000s, and did a modern folk album in 2009. It's been several years since doing anything new in this vein, but I have been feeling the itch!*

**What was the inspiration behind your GMTA/MTNA commission (the music, instrumentation, title, etc.), "nodes.branches.loops"?**

*The initial idea of the piece was to compose movements "guided" by basic concepts in circuitry. I like to musically reflect on technology, as I think it's something that we all spend so much time engaged with, but have so little time to reflect on it in a humanistic way. From there, I decided to take a page from Stravinsky's playbook: begin each movement the same way, but have the music immediately move in different directions. Stravinsky does this in his violin concerto, and I've done it once before (in a chamber work called Impulse Control from 2011). It's tricky to make it musically satisfying, but draws the listener more immediately into transformation of musical material rather than only the material itself.*

**What was the most artistically-stretching (out of your comfort zone) project you have been involved with to date?**

*Probably a work entitled Glass (2017), which was purely electronic music created in collaboration with a dance company based in Brooklyn and a brilliant choreographer I've gotten to work with over the past eight years, Kate Ladenheim. We had done a previous modern dance piece, HackPolitik, that was for chamber ensemble and electronics and a 12-person cast of dancers, which was largely my own concept as a piece to begin with. This was the choreographer's turn to make the grand plan, and I was doing a lot of electronic composing to choreography she was sending me in the form of videos. It was a very different process for me! But we were both happy with the piece in the end, and were fortunate to have it featured on some festivals and get some recognition in the contemporary dance world.*

**What challenges have you faced as a composer?**

*I've been very privileged in my life and career with supportive family, mentors, and colleagues, and am grateful to have had the ability to do what I love with my most pressing challenges being mostly self-imposed creative aspirations. I think, for many of us, the pandemic has created some of our most challenging moments. I've been crushed to be away from concert halls and have several projects postponed, cancelled, or reimaged in less-than-ideal ways. At the same time, the state-of-things has also got me re-evaluating how my creative work fits into the "bigger picture" culturally. The hope is that we come out the other end with some added perspective.*

**What advice would you give to instrumental or voice teachers who would like to incorporate composition activities into their lessons but who do not have a composition background?**

*Encourage improvisation, and the writing-down of your favorite improvised moments. I think any music teacher is equipped to evaluate clarity of notation ("what more do I need to be on the page to play this and make this musical?"), and as a composition teacher in higher ed, this is a constant focus, from freshmen through doctoral students. We all mostly start writing by writing for our own instruments, and simply the process of trying to write a solo for ourselves to play makes us more connected to the nuances of how music is communicated on the page, and probably makes us more mindful as performers as well.*

**What advice would you give to young people who aspire to compose?**

*Dive in! Write for yourself, for your friends, get your own chamber music groups together in your school or community ensembles, and don't be afraid to try a piece-in-progress out with some real live players. It's so much more informative than playback features in the software. The best thing composers at all levels can do is to go back and revise after they've had a chance to try things out with real musicians.*

**Now that your GMTA/MTNA commission premiere has taken place, what's next?**

*I'm excited to be visiting The Hermitage Artist Retreat at the end of the year as a composer in residence, and am hoping to dive into an orchestra piece that has been "on pause" for a few years now. I also have a trio to write for a new summer chamber music festival in the Atlanta area, and am working on an exciting collaboration with a local hip-hop artist for a collaborative work for the Hodgson Wind Ensemble at UGA.*



Teaching piano brings me fulfillment and joy. My joy is heightened when I see the growth of my students and the satisfaction they express when they have learned to play a piece that they once found quite challenging. I love hearing from my students long after they are no longer studying with me and they share positive feedback about being one of my students. Nothing is more rewarding.

My goal as a teacher is to guide my students through this journey of discovery and efforts toward a successful outcome. Some of the most valuable tools that I utilize are:

1. When introducing new music to my students, I offer two or more choices for them to select from. I find that a student will work more successfully on a piece that appeals to them.
2. When the piece has been selected, we decide on a practice strategy to master passages that may present challenges. We determine style, a practice tempo, fingering, rhythm, identification of melody, structure and any unusual marks of expression. Slow and hands separate practice are highly recommended.
3. To further emphasize a certain style of music, I tell stories about the historical background of the music, showing pictures and describing trends of the period being discussed; thus embracing an all-around learning experience that encompasses more than just keyboard technique, but the making of music.
4. The student and I do a general analysis of the piece, looking for repeated notes, harmonic and rhythmic patterns, incorporating some basic tenets of music theory.
5. I always encourage students to work on newly-assigned pieces in sections rather than tackling the entire piece at once.
6. For challenging rhythmical and intricate finger passages, I suggest to the student to practice on a tabletop or the fallboard of the piano.
7. I record my students when they have a piece ready for performance. This allows them to hear themselves and possibly improve on areas of the piece that could use additional work.
8. Now that I am teaching remotely, I record a video showing my hands demonstrating technical passages that can be beneficial to their preparation.
9. And lastly, I always make every effort to be positive and encouraging, making positive comments during and at the end of each lesson. I try to teach my students not just how to play the piano, but lessons in self-confidence. At my recitals, I always recognize any special achievement that each student has accomplished.



## NORTH FULTON MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

[www.NFMTA.com](http://www.NFMTA.com)

Check out our opportunities for your Students -- Fall Festival,  
Celebrate With Music concert and Student Spotlight recital!

### President

**Debra Ramsey Dickensheets**  
[dickensheetsmusic@gmail.com](mailto:dickensheetsmusic@gmail.com)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Membership

**Esther Martin**  
[ecmstudio@gmail.com](mailto:ecmstudio@gmail.com)





**Welcome**

The Executive Board of Georgia Music Teachers Association met via a Zoom meeting on Saturday, November 7th, 2020. Joy Poole called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

**Business**

1. Agreement to raise GMTA dues by \$2 was approved. The motion to approve was by Cathy Thacker. Diane Boyd seconded the motion.
2. Move to remove former GMTA president Joy Poole off of the bank signature card and put our current GMTA president Jan Adams on it was approved by unanimous vote. The motion to approve was by Mason Conklin. Debra Hughes seconded.
3. The 2020-2022 GMTA Officers & Committee Chairs were approved by unanimous vote. A motion to approve was by Diane Boyd. Joy Poole seconded the motion.

**Executive Board**

President: Jan Adams  
 President Elect: Cathy Thacker  
 VP Competitions: Christina Toole  
 VP Programs: Kristi Helfen  
 VP Auditions: Huu Mai  
 VP Membership: BeiBei Lin  
 VP Newsletters: Amy Neal  
 Secretary: Amy Phillips  
 Member at Large: Mason Conklin  
 Member at Large: Dawn McCord

**Committee Chairs**

Commissioning: Jeri-Mae Astolfi  
 Collaboration: Donna Bailey  
 Arts Awareness & Advocacy: Debra Hughes  
 Certification: Robin Engleman  
 College Faculty: Tracy Xian  
 Collegiate Chapters: Jerico Vasquez  
 FAC Chair: Joy Poole  
 GMTA Awards: Mary Ann McTier  
 Independent Teachers Forum: Eric Clay  
 Judges List: Susan Andrews  
 MTNA Foundation: \*Not secured yet\*  
 Theory: Diane Boyd  
 Wellness: Debra Dickensheets

**Other Business**

GMTA Theory Tests will be emailed to local theory chairs this year rather than being mailed. Students can earn an exemption for next year by passing the GMTA theory test appropriate for their grade this year. The GATE theory test has been suspended for the 2020-2021 term.

**Adjourn**

President Jan Adams adjourned the meeting at 9:47 a.m.



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Dear friends and colleagues,

As I write this, I sit over 1000 miles away from my south Georgia home in Valdosta and am desperately trying to stay warm in my mother's old and drafty house in Kansas. "There is no place like home," and I'm especially fortunate to have found numerous places across the country to call 'home.' As I look at our list of new members, several of whom are transfers from other states, I reflect on the ways that I have been welcomed into the GMTA family in recent years, and how we can continue to extend this tradition of warmth and welcome to our new members, our future members, and even to current members, some of whom we might not have heard from in a while.

One of the simplest ways to welcome and extend friendship to a new member would be to send a simple email, or even initiate a friendship invitation on Facebook. The gesture might seem small, but the nature of social media offers the chance to find mutual friends and acquaintances in common that can be the starting point of conversations and friendships.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly complicated many lives, atomizing each of us into our smallest social bubbles. Nevertheless, the quickest way to make a new friend is to extend the hospitality of food, to chat over coffee or even a meal. Not everyone has the luxury of outdoor dining, but those of us living in the south can enjoy the warmth of a bright wintery day in a way that our northern neighbors cannot.

Lastly, a text, phone call, or even traditional snail mail, are tried-and-true, foolproof ways to welcome someone into your community. These small gestures might seem simple, modest, even trivial, but to a newcomer, the collective impact of these kindnesses can break the harshness of isolation during COVID-19 or the foreignness and loneliness of moving to a new community.

So it is with enthusiasm and joy that I welcome these new members: **Alex Avila, Matthew Brower, Jamie Butts, Alyssa Cagle, Zaira Castillo-Ramos, Sydney Chung, Anne Dicks, Matthew Edwards, Nan Gao, Zhiyuan He, Heather Henry, Joy Johnson, Sunha Kim, Daniel Laufer, Jieun Lee, Jennifer Luo, Michelle Nam, Catherine Owens-Herrmann, Sunyoung Park, Emma Pulium, Catherine Shatto, Tamara Stroup, Greer Thomison, Deborah Vess, Kyungmi Yang, Xavier Yoder, Jana Young, Sally Zervakos-Nicewander, and Yanyue Zhao.**

I hope you will find this community to be kind, helpful, generous, and open. Thank you for honoring us with your presence, and we look forward to learning from and fellowshiping with you in the year to come.

Until next time dear friends,

Beibei Lin



## CERTIFICATION REPORT

ROBIN ENGLEMAN, NCTM, GMTA CERTIFICATION CHAIR

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As of November 30, 2020, GMTA has a membership of 535 and of those, 89 are nationally certified. My goal as your state certification chair is to see the number of certified music teachers in our state increase. My hope is that you will explore the possibility of becoming certified in 2021 by visiting the [certification webpage](#) on the MTNA website.

Besides being GMTA's newest Vice President of Programs, **Kristi Helfen** is GMTA's most recent MTNA NCTM. Congratulations, Kristi!

There are two ways to become nationally certified: Teacher Profile Projects and Administrative Verification. Kristi applied and was certified by the later method, Administrative Verification. She describes her experience and the process below.

*I wanted to become certified so that prospective students could readily recognize they would receive solid, quality training in my piano studio and also to be able to join ranks with the many MTNA certified teachers for whom I have great respect. I heard about the Administration Verification path to certification about three years ago. I have been teaching piano at Oxford College of Emory University since 2010, so I contacted MTNA to see if I could begin the process. However, since my title at that time was "Applied Piano Instructor" and not "Adjunct Professor," I did not qualify. Then last spring I was hired as adjunct, so once I signed the contract, I realized the door was now open to try again for certification. The process was not difficult. I sent my \$200 fee to MTNA, and they mailed me forms to fill out. Included in the paperwork was a form I sent to the head of the music department at Oxford. She answered the questions on the form, wrote comments about her observations of my teaching, and sent it back to me in a sealed envelope. Then I mailed my form and hers together to MTNA. It took less than two weeks to receive the good news that I was now a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music! Not long after that I received my certificate in the mail and a \$50 check from GMTA. Oxford did not help me financially with the certification fee, but my experience there has proven to be invaluable for me in many ways, and I am very grateful for that.*

*Kristi Helfen, NCTM DMTA, GMTA, MTNA*

If you are full or part time faculty members, you, too, may become nationally certified through Administrative Verification. Use the [MTNA Certification link](#), click on "Apply", then click on "Administrative Verification".

Feel free to contact me should you have questions, and I'll do my best to find the answer or someone who can.

Kind regards,

Robin Engleman, NCTM

AMY PHILLIPS, PRESIDENT

Augusta MTA had our kickoff brunch for the 2020-2021 AMTA year in September at the home of one of our members. We had door prizes and yummy pastries, cheeses, and fruit. This meeting brought smiles and much needed laughter to our group!

AMTA launched our new, updated website!! [augustamusicteachers.com](http://augustamusicteachers.com)

In October we shared and played our favorite Christmas songs to teach our students. This worked remarkably well even though the meeting was done on Zoom!

In November, Diane Hidy presented via Zoom “All Cooped Up: How I’ve coped with online teaching, the products I’ve created and why I’ve created them”. We learned many practical teaching tips! She also shared several of the pieces that she has composed for students.

We have a Winter Workshop and Masterclass on the calendar for February. Our Piano Festival, which is our major fundraiser of the year, is scheduled for March 6, 2021. Our end of the year AMTA luncheon is scheduled for May 14.

Amy Phillips

President, Augusta MTA



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**Dr. Judith S. Siegel, NCTM, President**

**770-710-8537**

**[yourpianostudio@me.com](mailto:yourpianostudio@me.com)**

**[www.yourpianostudio.net](http://www.yourpianostudio.net)**

**Lou Lyon, NCTM, Membership**

**770-993-5504**

**[loulyon128@gmail.com](mailto:loulyon128@gmail.com)**

**For more information, visit**

**[www.gmmta.us](http://www.gmmta.us)**



I am excited to be the new Theory Chair after the many years Jason Bennett has served. Trudi Norman has stepped in as GMTA Theory Administrator, and Colette Keogh remains the GATE chairman. The GATE was not given this year, so it will not be a requirement for Auditions. Some local associations are finding ways to give the GMTA Theory Test safely so their students have the opportunity to exempt the GATE next year. Thank you to all who have or will be participating, and especially to Trudi for doing a great job of getting the tests to all of us this year!

MUSIC EDUCATOR GRANTS

**Steinway Piano Galleries Music Educator Grant Recipients**

Leigh Ann Bleichner  
Gina Harrell

**GMTA Music Educator Grant Recipients**

Angela Duncan  
Altry James  
Julia Soboleva  
Cathy Thacker



**AT YOUNG HARRIS COLLEGE, WE BELIEVE THE GREATEST RISK IS LETTING TRUE POTENTIAL REMAIN UNREALIZED.**

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## DOPAMINE - TEACHING MUSIC

Using fMRI technology, scientists are discovering why “Music affects deep emotional centers in the brain. “Valorie Salimpoor, a neuroscientist at McGill University who studies the brain on music hooked up participants to an fMRI machine and recorded their brain activity as they listened to a favorite piece of music. During peak emotional moments in the songs identified by the listeners, dopamine was released with positive biological rewards. “It’s also released with drugs that are very powerful and addictive, like cocaine or amphetamines.”

There’s another part of the brain that seeps dopamine, specifically just before those peak emotional moments in a song. It is involved in the anticipation of pleasure. Presumably, the anticipatory pleasure comes from familiarity with the song—you have a memory of the song you enjoyed in the past embedded in your brain, and you anticipate the high points that are coming. This pairing of anticipation and pleasure is a potent combination, one that suggests we are biologically-driven to listen to music we like.

But what happens in our brains when we like something we haven’t heard before? To find out, Salimpoor again hooked up people to fMRI machines. But this time she had participants listen to unfamiliar songs, and she gave them some money, instructing them to spend it on any music they liked.

When analyzing the brain scans of the participants, she found that when they enjoyed a new song enough to buy it, dopamine was again released. But she also found increased interaction in the brain involved in pattern recognition, musical memory, and emotional processing. This finding suggested to her that when people listen to unfamiliar music, their brains process the sounds through memory circuits, searching for recognizable patterns to help them make predictions about where the song is heading. If music is too foreign-sounding, it will be hard to anticipate the song’s structure, and people won’t like it—meaning, no dopamine hit. But, if the music has some recognizable features—maybe a familiar beat or melodic structure—people will more likely be able to anticipate the song’s emotional peaks and enjoy it more. The dopamine hit comes from having their predictions confirmed—or violated slightly, in intriguing ways.

Her findings also explain why people can hear the same song over and over again and still enjoy it. The emotional hit off of a familiar piece of music can be so intense, in fact, that it’s easily re-stimulated even years later. (Jill Sutte, Psy.D. “Greater Good Magazine”)

***Just like people desire a ‘heart language’ to speak they have ‘heart music’ they desire to hear and play. We GMTA teachers can help our students love music even more by knowing what they delight in and prefer. We can further use this by inquiring how they feel at new repertoire or discussing similarities with already beloved music. Being musically aware of the dopamine hit is useful to teachers.***



**The Nolting Award in Composition** was established in 1987 and initially funded by beloved GMTA member Betty Nolting. It is given at the GMTA Conference each year to first-place winners in the MTNA Student Composition Competitions for the state-level competitions in each age category.

**The Broadhurst Award in Piano** was established in 1992 by the Broadhurst family in commemoration of Joan Broadhurst. This award is presented annually at the GMTA conference to the winner of the MTNA Junior Performance Competition.

**The GMTA General Award Fund**, established in 1993, includes honorary and memorial gifts and is awarded at the discretion of the GMTA Finance Advisory Committee. Awards from this fund are given to senior string, vocal, and brass/woodwind winners of GMTA auditions. Donations not designated for a specific fund go into this fund.

**The Betty H. White Award Fund** was established in 2019 by the White family in commemoration of Betty H. White. This award will be given annually at the discretion of the FAC.

A raffle to support each of these funds was held at our virtual state conference. This year local associations made donations of gift cards to various businesses. Many conference attendees who made donations to the GMTA Award Fund and were present for the Saturday morning drawing, came away with valuable gift cards to places like Amazon, Target, Piano Works and even We're Nuts!

Donors for the 2020-2021 year are as follows:

**GMTA General Award Fund:**

Jan Adams  
Rebekah Boles  
Diane Boyd  
Robin Engleman  
Chenny Gan  
Kristi Helfen  
Martha Hilley  
Arietha Lockart  
Mary Ann McTier  
Amy Phillips  
Melissa Slocum  
Cathy Thacker  
Julie Vu

**The Broadhurst Award in Piano:**

Claire Berger  
Debra Ramsey Dickensheets  
Luka Marinkovic  
Arlene Martinides  
Joy Poole

**The Nolting Award in Composition:**

no new donations

**The Betty H. White Award Fund:**

Edith Sweatman

Presenter proposals for the 2021 GMTA Conference are now being accepted. Please submit the online form by April 1, 2021, to be considered for the 2021 GMTA Conference. The conference will be held Thursday-Saturday, November 4-6 at Piedmont College.

Questions? Contact the VP of Programs, Kristi Helfen at [programs.georgiamta@gmail.com](mailto:programs.georgiamta@gmail.com)

To submit a proposal, click here: <https://georgiamta.org/conference-proposal.php>



**DEPARTMENT OF  
MUSIC**

**PIANO FACULTY:**  
Dr. David Murray, Piano Area Head  
Dr. Karla Rucker, Coordinator of Collaborative Piano  
Dr. Pierce Dickens  
Mr. Jonathan Murphy  
Dr. Tom Pearsall  
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DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

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The GMTA Teacher of the Year Award is presented annually to a member of GMTA in recognition of lifetime achievement as a music teacher, with excellence in teaching, musicianship, professional activity, and service to the community and/or state. Any GMTA member may nominate any other GMTA member for the Teacher of the Year. The GMTA Teacher of the Year will be selected from nominated applicants and entered in the MTNA Teacher of the Year competition.

**The online submission form will require the following information:**

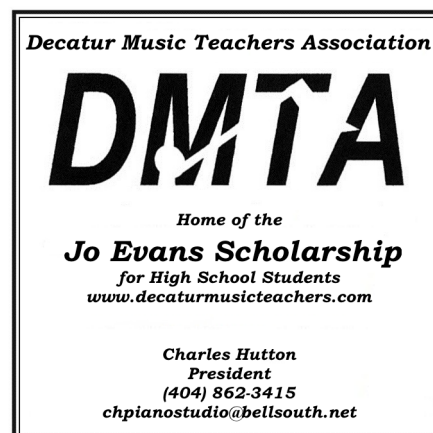
- Teaching/professional achievement
- Number of years of teaching experience
- Evidence of teaching excellence (i.e. students' successes)
- Accomplishments/contributions to MTNA
- Participation in local, state, and/or national MTNA programs
- Community involvement
- Former student and/or parent letter(s) of support
- Professional colleague letter(s) of support
- Nominating letter from the state organization

Nominations must be submitted by **Monday, September 13, 2021**. The online form is available here: <https://georgiamta.org/teacher-of-the-year.php>

The winner will be acknowledged at the 2021 GMTA Conference Banquet. With so many excellent teachers in Georgia, please consider nominating one of your favorites!

Nomination questions? [presidentelect.georgiamta@gmail.com](mailto:presidentelect.georgiamta@gmail.com)

For a list of past Teachers of the Year, and to read their Teaching Tips, visit <https://georgiamta.org/teacher-year-application.php>



## February 2021

22 Regional Auditions Registration Deadline

## March 2021

13-17 MTNA Virtual Conference

15 Deadline for completed GMTA Theory Tests to be mailed to Diane Boyd

20 GMTA Regional Auditions Video Submission Deadline

22 State Auditions Registration Deadline  
(voice, strings, woodwinds/brass, instrumental concerto, college piano)

## April 2021

17 State Auditions Video Submission Deadline

## May 2021

1 Graded GMTA Theory Achievement Tests (not GATE) & certificates mailed to participating teachers

1 Deadline for articles to be included in the GMTA Summer Newsletter

## June 2021

1 Deadline for GMTA Expense Reports to be submitted to the GMTA Executive Director for Reimbursement

30 Membership renewal deadline (membership runs July 1-June 30)

## August 2021

1 Deadline for articles to be included in the GMTA Fall Newsletter

## September 2021

1 Deadline to apply for GMTA Commissioned Composer Award

13 Application deadline for GMTA Teacher of the Year

13 Application deadline for Steinway Teacher Grants and GMTA Teacher Grants

30 Student Membership Renewal Deadline (student membership runs October 1-September 30)

## Executive Board:

GMTA President	Jan Adams, NCTM	<a href="mailto:president.georgiamta@gmail.com">president.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
President-Elect	Cathy Thacker, NCTM	<a href="mailto:presidentelect.georgiamta@gmail.com">presidentelect.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
VP of Programs	Kristi Helfen, NCTM	<a href="mailto:programs.georgiamta@gmail.com">programs.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
VP of Membership	Beibei Lin	<a href="mailto:membership.georgiamta@gmail.com">membership.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
VP of Newsletters	Amy Neal	<a href="mailto:newsletters.georgiamta@gmail.com">newsletters.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
VP of GMTA Auditions	Huu Mai, NCTM	<a href="mailto:auditions.georgiamta@gmail.com">auditions.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
VP of MTNA Competitions	Christina Toole	<a href="mailto:mtnacompetitions.georgiamta@gmail.com">mtnacompetitions.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Amy Phillips	<a href="mailto:secretary.georgiamta@gmail.com">secretary.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
Member-at-Large	Dawn McCord	<a href="mailto:dmccord@westga.edu">dmccord@westga.edu</a>
Member-at-Large	Mason Conklin, NCTM	<a href="mailto:nmc@reinhardt.edu">nmc@reinhardt.edu</a>
Immediate Past President	Joy Poole	<a href="mailto:FAC.georgiamta@gmail.com">FAC.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
Executive Director	Mandy Reynolds	<a href="mailto:georgiamta@gmail.com">georgiamta@gmail.com</a>

## Committee Chairs:

Arts Awareness & Advocacy	Debra Hughes, NCTM	<a href="mailto:bndhughes@comcast.net">bndhughes@comcast.net</a>
Certification	Robin Engelman, NCTM	<a href="mailto:englemanr@bellsouth.net">englemanr@bellsouth.net</a>
Collaborative Performance	Donna Bailey	<a href="mailto:dbaileypiano@gmail.com">dbaileypiano@gmail.com</a>
College Faculty	Tracy Xian	<a href="mailto:tracyxian9@gmail.com">tracyxian9@gmail.com</a>
Collegiate Chapters	Jerico Vasquez	<a href="mailto:jvasquez@shorter.edu">jvasquez@shorter.edu</a>
Commissioning	Jeri-Mae Astolfi, NCTM	<a href="mailto:commissioning.georgiamta@gmail.com">commissioning.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
Finance/Advisory	Joy Poole	<a href="mailto:FAC.georgiamta@gmail.com">FAC.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
GMTA Awards	Mary Ann McTier	<a href="mailto:mam0609@comcast.net">mam0609@comcast.net</a>
Independent Music Teachers Forum	Eric Clay	<a href="mailto:ericcranstonclay@gmail.com">ericcranstonclay@gmail.com</a>
Judges List	Susan Andrews, NCTM	<a href="mailto:pianosusan@comcast.net">pianosusan@comcast.net</a>
Theory	Diane Boyd, NCTM	<a href="mailto:dianelboyd@comcast.net">dianelboyd@comcast.net</a>
Wellness	Debra Ramsey Dickensheets	<a href="mailto:dickensheetsmusic@gmail.com">dickensheetsmusic@gmail.com</a>

## Local Association Presidents:

Athens	Nancy Robertson	<a href="mailto:nlpiano@bellsouth.net">nlpiano@bellsouth.net</a>
Atlanta	Elena Dorozhkina	<a href="mailto:elena.dorozhkina@gmail.com">elena.dorozhkina@gmail.com</a>
Augusta	Amy Phillips	<a href="mailto:secretary.georgiamta@gmail.com">secretary.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
Cherokee	Mason Conklin	<a href="mailto:nmc@reinhardt.edu">nmc@reinhardt.edu</a>
Cobb County	Leigh Anne Bleichner	<a href="mailto:orphanpianos@gmail.com">orphanpianos@gmail.com</a>
Columbus	Yien Wang	<a href="mailto:wang_yien@columbusstate.edu">wang_yien@columbusstate.edu</a>
Coweta-Fayette	Fernando Ramos	<a href="mailto:neverfall@peoplepc.com">neverfall@peoplepc.com</a>
Decatur	Charles Hutton	<a href="mailto:chpianostudio@bellsouth.net">chpianostudio@bellsouth.net</a>
Golden Isles	Donna Nilsson	<a href="mailto:nilsson.music@att.net">nilsson.music@att.net</a>
Greater Marietta	Pam Asberry	<a href="mailto:pam.asberry@gmail.com">pam.asberry@gmail.com</a>
Macon	Owen Lovell, NCTM	<a href="mailto:oven.lovell@gcsu.edu">oven.lovell@gcsu.edu</a>
North DeKalb	Julie Vu	<a href="mailto:julievannvu@gmail.com">julievannvu@gmail.com</a>
North Fulton	Debra Dickensheets	<a href="mailto:dickensheetsmusic@gmail.com">dickensheetsmusic@gmail.com</a>
Northeast Georgia	Diana Peoples	<a href="mailto:dp3peo@gmail.com">dp3peo@gmail.com</a>
Rome	Amy Neal	<a href="mailto:newsletters.georgiamta@gmail.com">newsletters.georgiamta@gmail.com</a>
Savannah	Diane Boyd	<a href="mailto:dianelboyd@comcast.net">dianelboyd@comcast.net</a>
South Georgia	Kendra Gannaway, NCTM	<a href="mailto:kendrag555@gmail.com">kendrag555@gmail.com</a>
South Metro Atlanta	Tracy Threlkeld	<a href="mailto:academy.threlkeld@gmail.com">academy.threlkeld@gmail.com</a>
Western Georgia	Dawn McCord	<a href="mailto:dmccord@westga.edu">dmccord@westga.edu</a>

The Georgia Music Teachers Association (GMTA) is a member of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) and memberships are jointly held in both organizations. Members receive subscriptions to *The American Music Teacher*. Membership is open to individuals professionally engaged in any field of musical activity and dues should be sent to MTNA, 1 W. 4th St., Ste. 1550 Cincinnati, OH 45202. MTNA is available toll-free at 1-888-512-5278 to answer your questions regarding membership dues or on the web at [www.mtna.org](http://www.mtna.org).

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### **Submittals**

GMTA publishes its online newsletter three times per year. Publication dates and their respective deadlines are as follows:

January 15th (Deadline: December 1st) June 15th (Deadline: May 1st) September 15th (Deadline August 1st)

### **Editors**

Amy Neal, VP of Newsletters [newsletters.georgiamta@gmail.com](mailto:newsletters.georgiamta@gmail.com)  
Jan Adams, NCTM, President [president.georgiamta@gmail.com](mailto:president.georgiamta@gmail.com)

### **Proofreaders**

Joy Poole, Immediate Past President  
Mandy Reynolds, GMTA Executive Director