

GMTA TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2004

JEAN MANN

BIOGRAPHY

The recipient of the 2004 GMTA Teacher of the Year Award is Jean Mann of the Gwinnett County Music Teachers Association. Jean has touched the lives of countless students over her 45-year teaching career and established a reputation for her ability to motivate students. A GMTA member states, “Her relationships with her students are based on compassion, firm discipline, and high expectations—Jean challenges her students, stretching them to the fullest extent of their abilities. Her patience, caring, and enduring enthusiasm for teaching have resulted in a studio that produces superb, prize-winning students who are exceptional musicians.” A parent of one of her students writes, “She has an uncanny knack for bringing out the absolute best in a young musician...I have watched Jean go through serious medical situations with her husband and herself, take care of her mom during infirmed times, help with three of her grandchildren during her daughter’s surgery, and still continue to be the greatest teacher any young person could hope to have.” She goes on to share a story about how someone anonymously donated a piano to her studio; further testament no doubt to the positive impact Jean has on her students!

Jean has given generously of her time and talents over the years, having served a variety of organizations in numerous capacities. A longtime active member of MTNA and GMTA, she was a charter member of the Gwinnett County Music Teachers Association and served as President. She also served as the local GMTA Auditions Chair for 15 years, as well as Federated Chair and Festival Chair. At the state level she served as Secretary and Chair for Baldwin Competitions and Middle School Auditions. Besides GMTA, she was a member of the board and secretary for the Greater Atlanta Music Alliance, and member of the board and state piano chair for GMEA. She has also been a member of the National Federation of Music Clubs for many years. Beyond her years of selfless service to GMTA and various other music organizations, Jean has played piano for Westside Baptist Church for 10 years.

Her students have consistently done well in auditions and competitions, and have performed in recitals and master classes and been named to the Governor's Honors Program in music. Some have gone on to become division winners and a finalist at the MTNA national competitions. Numerous colleges and universities have offered scholarships to her students, including Shorter College, University of Georgia, Columbus State University, Mercer University, Wheaton College and Florida State University. They have gone on to establish successful careers in music as public school orchestra, band and choral directors, church choir directors and pianists, and a contemporary Christian music artist.

One of the distinct trademarks of Jean is her ability to motivate. *American Music Teacher* published an article by her on this topic, and she was a panelist for a session about motivation at the 2003 GMTA Conference.

Jean's teaching and service to the music profession and community has touched the lives of many over the years in a significant and enduring way. Congratulations to an exceptional teacher, Jean Mann, GMTA's 2004 Teacher of the Year!

JEAN MANN TEACHING TIPS

MOTIVATION, MOTIVATION, MOTIVATION

Motivation could be viewed as the catalyst for developing a successful studio. In addition to the usual ways teachers are motivated through workshops, conferences, master classes, and chapter meetings, try pushing the envelope with these ideas. Consider arranging for a master teacher to conduct a master class with your students. This can give you a new perspective as well as some ideas for different approaches to teaching. Do not be afraid to have your students evaluated in festivals and auditions. If two or more students get the same comments such as "too much pedal", "bad fingering", or "flat fingers", consider this as an opportunity to identify areas in your teaching that need rethinking. Don't be offended or embarrassed. Remember that the judge does not know who you are. Seek advice from other teachers. Ask questions and you will find they are more than willing to share their knowledge. Have working lunches with a music teacher friend where you each bring some music for advice or discussion.

As you motivate yourself, you in turn need to motivate your students. I like to consider this from three aspects: sharing, giving rewards, and setting goals.

Music is a performance art and has little value unless it is shared, yet many students never perform for anyone other than their teacher. Encourage the student's family to listen to their prac-

tice from time to time and to let them know they enjoy it. This can be as simple as a parent sitting in the practice room while reading the newspaper. Periodic group classes, small recitals or the master class mentioned above provide opportunities to share. Consider planning a small recital around four or five students who are either playing on a similar level, or whose families are friends.

One of the reward methods I use is a non-competitive reward system where students earn points based on ability, difficulty of assignment and the amount of effort involved. For every 100 points the student then gets a trophy. These trophies are presented at various recitals as they are earned rather than at the end of the year. I do this to reduce the chance of students and parents turning this into a competitive event.

Praise is a simple direct reward, but it must be earned to have any value. Always be honest with your students, even the little ones, and let them know that when they get praise they have earned it. I “relearned” this lesson recently when a precocious five year old charmer of a student told me that he was aware that I would give him points whether he practiced or not.

Setting goals gives the students a sense of control and a clear understanding of what is expected. You must first have an understanding of the student’s limitations as well as their abilities, then, work with the student to set clear and reasonable goals, and finally let students know that you expect them to meet these goals. I think you will find that they will rise to meet your expectations. Short-term goals might be identifying two or three specific items to practice for the next lesson. Long-term goals would include preparing for performances with specific shorter-term goals for learning and memorizing parts of the piece. I would pay special attention to setting an early goal for memorizing a piece to be performed in order to allow time to polish and secure the piece, or as with many of the finer things in life, to give it time to ripen or to breathe.

This is just a brief sampling of possibilities and I hope that I will encourage you to venture out, experiment and try different ideas.

Jean H. Mann

Private teaching studio
State certified
GMTA Teacher of the Year, 2004-2005