



WMTA Newsletter | July 2026

Welcome to July!

I hope everyone is staying cool, surviving the summer heat, and enjoying a wonderful Fourth of July weekend with family and friends. This year is especially meaningful as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation and the 150th anniversary of MTNA. We are thrilled to announce that the Washington Music Teacher Association will host its inaugural WMTA Conference on Sunday, September 27, from 10:00AM to 5:00PM at Howard University! Over the coming weeks and months, we will be sharing more details about this exciting event on Instagram and Facebook.

We encourage everyone to [RSVP](#) using the link or at the event information at the end of this newsletter. Whether you're a longtime member or new to WMTA, the conference will be a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our organization, connect with fellow music educators, and celebrate our shared passion for teaching. The day will feature engaging presentations from this year's guest speakers, fun networking opportunities, and will conclude with a special performance by our talented WMTA piano teachers alongside the U.S. Air Force Ceremonial Brass.

We look forward to seeing you there and celebrating this exciting new chapter for WMTA together!

Rachel Chen, Newsletter Editor





President's Message

Greetings, dear WMTA members! I hope you and your families have enjoyed the historic celebrations surrounding our nation's 250th birthday despite the soaring temperatures, heavy rains and lightning storms. As an international student, my first July 4th experience was the 1976 Bicentennial and now, as a naturalized citizen and proud American, I found myself reminiscing this past weekend on the intervening 50 years, grateful for this country which has afforded me so many wonderful opportunities to pursue a career in music, to meet and interact with many extraordinary musical colleagues and to share music with students in the private studio and classroom as well as giving performances in intimate chamber gatherings and concert halls.

It has been an honor to serve as the WMTA President these past 3 years and I am delighted that we now have a President-Elect, Rachel Chen, who will be stepping into the president's role next year, in the fall of 2027. The WMTA Board appointed an ad hoc committee, to arrange the WMTA Inaugural Conference on September 27th, celebrating not only the nation's semi-quincentennial but also MTNA's 150th birthday. The conference ad hoc committee [Karen Bartman, Rachel Chen, Ariel Nathanson, Junko Takahashi, Chelsea Wright and myself] has curated a day of enrichment and inspiration, with pedagogical presentations and a masterclass, as well as opportunities for networking and camaraderie. Keeping with the patriotic theme of the event, at the conclusion of the day's activities we will be treated to a special performance by the USAF Ceremonial Brass Quintet. I hope you will make an effort to come, meet with WMTA colleagues and invite your friends to join in this exciting celebratory day. A detailed program will be sent out soon.

We are in the process of finalizing the events and venues for the coming year and will post detailed information on the WMTA website ASAP. As you plan your students' curriculum, here's a heads-up listing the **biennial** events that will take place this year:

ConcertoFest (December/January)

Specialty Competition (February). The theme this year is Chamber Music - open to instrumental chamber music ensembles, including strings, wind and brass (with or without piano) and piano duets/duos.

Bach/Baroque Competition (March).

Baroque Festival (April)

Haydn Sonata Competition (May/June)

The *Modern Piano Music Celebration* will be on November 7th. Please note that the requirement this year has been changed to: "Any piece or group of pieces composed in 1905 or later." *MTNA Competitions, Student Musicales, Judged Recitals, Adult Musicales, Adult Recitals, Hartman, Lichtenberg, Music Essay and Young Composers competitions, Summer Scholarship Grant and Shop Talk* will all be offered as in previous years.

I look forward to seeing you on September 27th at Howard University and at some of our events throughout the year. In these waning days of summer, I hope that you will find refreshment, relaxation and recharged artistic energy for the new school year.

Grace McFarlane, President



Judged Recital

Chris Kies, Chair

Our four WMTA Judged Recitals during the 2025–2026 season were a wonderful success, providing students with meaningful performance opportunities and valuable educational experiences. Throughout the year, we were fortunate to have an exceptional panel of judges who offered thoughtful, encouraging, and insightful feedback to every performer. A heartfelt thank you to Dr. Minji Kim, Dr. Somruedi Suchitphanit (Kwan), Dr. Francesca Hurst, Dr. Tzuyi Zoe Chen, Lena Afanaseva, Patricia Huff-Palumbo, Ardita Statovci, and Nolan Alexander Ancil for generously sharing their expertise and supporting our students.

The **first Judged Recital**, featuring students ages 12 and under, displayed a high level of talent, and four students were chosen to perform at the WMTA Honors Recital on May 31, 2026. Those were Elsa Tseng (teacher: Silva Blazquez), Ly-Ly Ouy (teacher: Silva Blazquez), Caleb Ding (teacher: Marjorie Lee), and Benjamina Bolger (teacher: Yuan Bolger). Three students were awarded Honorable Mention: Jeffrey Zhang (teacher: Tzu-yi Chen), Amelia Barry (teacher: Patricia Huff-Palumbo), and Conor Kelley (teacher: Ardita Statovci). The winner for the **second Judged Recital** is Nina Sejd (teacher: Rachel Chen) who was selected to perform at the Honors Recital. Two students received Honorable Mention: Lucas Cho (teacher: Jeongseon Choi) and Stella Choi (teacher: Jeongseon Choi). The **third Judged Recital** was held on March 22, 2026 where nine students presented a diverse program ranging from J.S. Bach to Franz Liszt and Sergei Prokofiev. Yuchu Li (teacher: Junko Takahashi), and Bowen Wu (teacher: Marjorie Lee), were selected to perform at the Honors Recital. Honorable Mentions were awarded to Xinyu Gong (teacher: Silvia Blazquez), and Adelia Nam (teacher: Katerina Zaitseva). The **final Judged Recital** took place on April 26, 2026 and eleven students performed an impressive and varied program showcasing a high level of artistry. Brandon Zhang (teacher: Nancy Breth), and Theodore Kim (teacher: Marjorie Lee), were selected to perform at the Honors Recital. Honorable Mentions were awarded to Jaden Kooi-Szocs (teacher: Anastassia Ivanova), Marcus Yoon (teacher: Nancy Breth), Nora Wang (teacher: Patricia Huff-Palumbo), Jane Bridgeford (teacher: Minji Kim), and Jamshed Kalsi (teacher: Svetlana Kaplanskaya). Congratulations to all of our participants, Honors Recital performers, Honorable Mention recipients, and their teachers on an exceptional season. We encourage all WMTA members to register their students for future Judged Recitals.

These events provide invaluable opportunities to gain performance experience, receive personalized feedback from experienced adjudicators, and continue growing as confident, expressive musicians!



Hungarian Competition

Dr. Rachel Chen & Dr. Ariel Nathanson, Co-Chairs

On February 14, 2026, WMTA celebrated Valentine's Day with a wonderful afternoon of Hungarian music at Westmoreland Congregational Church. The competition showcased the artistry and dedication of 27 talented students, who impressed both the audience and judges with their thoughtful performances of works by Hungarian composers.

Congratulations to this year's prize winners!

Level 1: 1st Place – Arianna Wen; 2nd Place – Luna Shih

Level 2: 1st Place – Natalie Chen; 2nd Place – Aiden Che; 3rd Place – Talia Jin

Level 3: 1st Place – Jayden Sun; 2nd Place – Anne Tang; 3rd Place – Ethan Yang

Level 4: 1st Place – Mindi Tang; 2nd Place – Joshua Yeo; 3rd Place – Yuan Fu

Level 5: 1st Place – Yunbo Li; 2nd Place – Charles Zhao; 3rd Place – Emery Que



A heartfelt thank you to our outstanding judges Dr. Sean Cavanaugh, Dr. Leah Claiborne, and Ms. Kristina Ratcliffe for their expertise, thoughtful comments, and encouragement to each performer. We are also deeply grateful to our dedicated monitors Chenli Tzeng, Margarita Gramaticova, and Bok Hwa Kim! They ensured that the competition ran smoothly throughout the day!





A special thank you to our WMTA President, Grace McFarlane, for helping secure our beautiful venue at Westmoreland Congregational Church and for her continued support of this event. Finally, we would like to recognize our participating teachers whose dedication made this year's competition possible: Nancy Breth, Margarita Gramaticova, Patricia Huff-Palumbo, Anastassia Ivanova, Mary Kading, Bok Hwa Kim, Jaron Lee, Grace McFarlane, Junko Takahashi, Chenli Tzeng, and Jun Yang. Your commitment to your students and to WMTA is greatly appreciated.



Congratulations to all of our winners, participants, teachers, volunteers, and families for making the 2026 Hungarian Music Competition a memorable celebration of music, learning, and community. As this is a biennial event, we look forward to welcoming everyone back in 2028 for another inspiring celebration of Hungarian music!

Young Composers Competition

Chelsea Wright, Chair

This was an online event and we are so delighted to announce the winners of the 2026 WMTA Young Composers Competition! These students showcased their creativity and skill in their excellent submissions!

Elementary Division (Award of \$50)

Winner: Audrey Chung (5th grade), "Twirl of Jingles,"
for solo piano

Teacher: Livia Lai

Junior Division (Award of \$100)

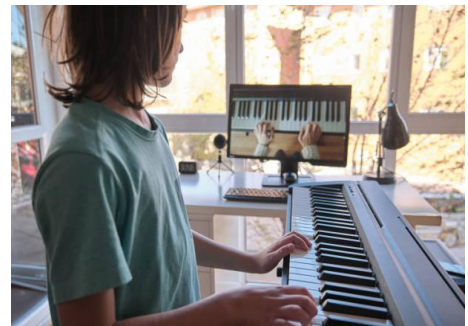
Winner: Wyatt Fotiades (8th grade), "Theme and
Variations for Piano"

Teacher: Christopher Kies

Senior Division (Award of \$150)

Jennifer Lu (9th grade), "Clockwork," for string quartet

Teacher: Junko Takahashi





Hartman Competition

Junko Takahashi, Chair

Chaired by Junko Takahashi, the 2026 Hartman Piano Competition was held on Mother's Day at The Catholic University of America, bringing together 97 talented students for a wonderful day filled with beautiful music and inspiring performances. We are incredibly grateful to The Catholic University of America for generously providing this beautiful venue each year. Thank you to all of our participating teachers, judges, students, and families for your continued support and dedication in making this event such a success.

Congratulations to this year's winners!

Group 7–8A

1st: Leonardo Amaral (Teacher: Ramilia Saubanova)

2nd: Grace Guo (Teacher: Laura Bogart)

3rd: Naomi Yu (Teacher: Junko Takahashi)

Honorable Mention: Luna Shih (Teacher: Jun Yang), Kalina Nam (Teacher: Katerina Zaitseva)

Group 9A

1st: Aiden Che (Teacher: Margarita Gramaticova)

2nd: Darius Lim (Teacher: Marjorie Lee)

3rd: Lailah Moore (Teacher: Faith Zuniga)

Honorable Mention: Carolyn Tang (Teacher: Jun Yang)

Group 9B

1st: Hanke Kang (Teacher: David Kosutic)

2nd: Ryan Ling (Teacher: Dmitri Nazarenko)

3rd: Sophia Lee (Teacher: Chenli Tzeng)

Honorable Mention: Humphries-do Wrienna (Teacher: Laura Bogart)

Group 10A

1st Place: Natalie Chen (Teacher: Chenli Tzeng)

2nd Place: Patrick Qu (Teacher: Chenli Tzeng)

3rd Place: Anna Yang (Teacher: Jun Yang)

Honorable Mention: Talia Jin (Teacher: Chenli Tzeng), Oliver Zhang (Teacher: Patricia Huff-Palumbo)



Group 11A

1st Place: Adriana Vera (Teacher: Faith Zuniga)
2nd Place (Tie): Elsa Tseng (Teacher: Silva Blazquez), Eddie Xie (Teacher: Yoon Huh)
3rd Place: Louis Xie (Teacher: Laura Bogart)
Honorable Mention: Grace Zhuang (Teacher: Patricia Huff-Palumbo)

Group 12–13A

1st Place: Jason Ding (Teacher: Katerina Zaitseva)
2nd Place: Mindi Tang (Teacher: Jun Yang)
3rd Place: Andrew Xia (Teacher: Chenli Tzeng)
Honorable Mention: Anne Tang (Teacher: Margarita Gramaticova)

Group 12–13B

1st Place: Nora Ma (Teacher: Dmitri Nazarenko)
2nd Place: Ethan Yang (Teacher: Margarita Gramaticova)
3rd Place: Sophia Lee (Teacher: Laura Bogart)
Honorable Mention: Joanna Wang (Teacher: Junko Takahashi), Avery Wen (Teacher: Jun Yang)

Group 14A

1st Place: Jinger Xu (Teacher: Margarita Gramaticova)
2nd Place: Gloria Ouyang (Teacher: Dmitri Nazarenko)
3rd Place: Ray Zuo (Teacher: Dmitri Nazarenko)

Group 15–17A

1st Place (Tie): Andrew Lin (Teacher: Dmitri Nazarenko), Yunbo Li (Teacher: Junko Takahashi)
2nd Place: Chelsea Zeng (Teacher: Margarita Gramaticova)
3rd Place: Eric Xie (Teacher: Yoon Huh)

Group 15–17B

1st Place: Bo-yuan Liang (Teacher: Dmitri Nazarenko)
2nd Place: Anastasia Fitenko (Teacher: Katerina Zaitseva)
3rd Place: Nancy Tzioumis (Teacher: Margarita Gramaticova)
Honorable Mention: Elaina Wang (Teacher: Patricia Huff-Palumbo)

Group 15–17C

1st Place: Charles Zhao (Teacher: Margarita Gramaticova)
2nd Place: Cameron Wang (Teacher: Silva Blazquez)
3rd Place: Kei Yasuda (Teacher: Junko Takahashi)
Honorable Mention: Sophia Y. Wang (Teacher: Silva Blazquez)





General Members Meeting

Hosted at Hedy Bannon's Residence



We had a wonderful time at our recent WMTA General Members Meeting! One of the highlights of the morning was making music together through collaborative performances, including both four-hand piano and two-piano repertoire. It was a fantastic musical morning of Debussy and Fauré to the rhythmic energy of Milhaud's Scaramouche for two pianos, the charm of Mozart, the timeless melodies of Lennon–McCartney, and the passionate tango of Piazzolla. One of the highlights was seeing members perform both piano four-hands and two-piano works, celebrating the joy of making music together.

It was even some of our first time playing together! Thank you to Chris for this wonderful idea and we look forward to many more performances like this! We love seeing people come together through music! Thank you Hedy for hosting this event at your place!





The Ylida Novik Memorial Piano Concerto Competition

Grace McFarlane and Nancy Breth, Co-Chairs

The 2026 Ylida Novik Memorial Piano Concerto Competition was held March 14th to the 15th at the Steinway Piano Gallery in North Bethesda, where competitors performed on a magnificent Steinway Model D. We extend our sincere thanks to Steinway for generously hosting this year's event. WMTA is also deeply grateful to Paul Sekhri and Neil Sekhri for their generous support of the competition. In memory of Betty Sekhri (1923–2026), additional special awards were presented this year to the first-place Senior and Junior winners. The judges for the Finals were Chad Bowles, Victoria Gau and Natalia Kazaryan. Semifinals Judges were Jay DeWire, Gabriel Dobner and Natalia Kazaryan. We are grateful for their time and their expertise!

SENIOR

1st prize: Caroline Su, *student of Martin Labazevitch*

- Caroline received \$1,750 monetary award, plus an invitation to perform as soloist with the Capital City Symphony, under the baton of Maestra Victoria Gau on Sunday, October 4, 2026
- Caroline also received The Betty Sekhri Special Award of \$1,000

2nd prize: Zack Lam, *student of Marjorie Lee*

- Zack received \$900 monetary award

Honorable Mention: Hiroki Matsui, *student of Marjorie Lee*

JUNIOR

1st prize: Neel Perdue, *student of Martin Labazevitch*

- Neel received \$900 monetary award, plus the Junior Trophy
- Neel also received The Betty Sekhri Special Award of \$500

2nd prize: Pietro Magistretti, *student of Martin Labazevitch*

- Pietro received \$500 monetary award

Honorable Mention: Grace Zhuang, *student of Patricia Huff-Palumbo*

Sincere thanks to all the teachers who participated and prepared their students so well for this year's competition: Laura Bogart, Nancy O'Neill Breth, Patricia Huff-Palumbo, Bok Hwa Kim, Martin Labazevitch, Jaewon Lee, Marjorie Lee, Grace McFarlane, Lisa Emenheiser Sarratt and Jun Yang. Thanks to all the wonderful accompanists who supported the students' concerto

performances: Victor Garcia, Yuniko Harada, Kyle Johnson, Robert Kraig, Sophia Liu, Serhii Morozov, Ruriko Osawa, and Jialin Tso. Congratulations to all the performers and we look forward to the next Ylida Novik Memorial Piano Concerto Competition in 2028!



Chanaka Festival

Karen Bartman, Chair

Congratulations to the ten outstanding students representing the studios of Silvia Blazquez, Nancy Breth, and Alice Ji who performed in the WMTA Chanaka Classical Festival on April 18, 2026. The festival was held at St. Columba's Episcopal Church on Albermarle St. NW in Washington, DC. Dr. Ariel Nathanson Bolinja was the judge and Dr. Karen Bartman the chair and coordinator of the event. The students presented beautiful performances of works by Mozart, Haydn, Clementi, and Beethoven, demonstrating thoughtful preparation and musical artistry before an appreciative audience of family and friends. In between each performance as Dr. Nathanson was writing comments, Dr. Bartman talked to the audience members and participating students by sharing fascinating insights into the Classical period, its composers and the stylistic characteristics of the era, making it an educational experience for everyone!



Scan the QR code on the next page or find the 2026 WMTA Conference registration link [**HERE**](#)



2026 WMTA Conference

WASHINGTON MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

— INAUGURAL CONFERENCE —

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SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 27,
2026

10:00 AM – 5:00 PM



HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Childers Hall
2445 6th St. NW
Washington, DC 20059

REGISTER TODAY!



REGISTRATION FEES

	BEFORE SEPT.15	AT THE DOOR
WMTA Members	\$25	\$30
Non-Members	\$35	\$40
Students	\$18	\$20



PRE-REGISTER BY SEPTEMBER 15

Make checks payable to WMTA and mail to:

Grace McFarlane Bottelier
5117 Chevy Chase Parkway NW
Washington, DC 20008

Cash or check accepted at the door.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS



DEADLINE
SEPTEMBER 2,
2026

- Lightning Sessions
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*Submit through the
registration form.*

QUESTIONS?



wmtadc@gmail.com



Rachel Chen
rchen@levinmusic.org

We look forward to seeing you there!