

# Decatur Music Teachers Association

Celebrating 70 years

1947 - 2017



## History Sketch

History of Decatur Music Teachers Association

1947 to 2017

The history that follows was written at three points of time by three different persons. The history of the first thirty years (1947 to 1977) was written by Nona Randall who joined the association a year or two after it was organized. Nona remained a member of the association - in later years, as an honorary member- until her death in September of 2005.

The years 1977 through 1997 were written by Don Larson, a long time member who taught in the music department at DeKalb College (now Perimeter College). Don was an accomplished organist and harpsichordist.

The history from 1997 to 2007 was compiled by Kay Brown who has been a member for the last twenty-five years. Through the years, Kay has held various offices in the association and served on several committees.

The decade 2007 to 2017 was recorded by David D'Ambrosio who joined DMTA in 1980. David has held offices in numerous capacities over the years.

## History of Decatur Music Teachers Association

December, 1977

Eight years before the Georgia Music Teachers Association met for its first convention, several teachers in Decatur, Georgia met in 1947 and organized what is known as Decatur Music Teachers Association (DMTA). Although we have no minutes of the meeting, we know that teachers included: Mrs. S. R. Christie, Mrs. J. G. Addy, Mrs. Irene Harris, and Mrs. J. L. Arnold all deceased, Miss Mildred Harding and Mrs. J. L. Parrish. The first few meetings were held in homes, but soon the group adopted a permanent meeting place at Mrs. Christie's large studio on Adams Street in Decatur.

The earliest year book available was 1948-49 which listed Mrs. Irene Leftwich Harris as president, and Miss Mildred Harding as past president. Members included Mrs. Sara Espy, Mrs. Myrtice Jacobs and former DMTA members Mrs. Parrish and Jeannette Gower. By the year 1950 membership had grown to 23 members and included Ann Boyd, Nona Randall, Edna Hall and Clara Cloudt. Mrs. Christie's studio boasted two grand pianos and as early as 1956 the last meeting of the year was devoted to a performance by the teachers. The group felt that in order to be good teachers, they should continually work on technique and discover new literature. A number of the teachers were in the piano ensemble which rehearsed weekly under the direction of Mrs. Lillian Gilbreath at Mrs. Christie's studio.

About 1966, we began to meet at Maud Burrus Library in Decatur, except for the last meeting of the year, which had grown into an ensemble program and was held at a member's home who could provide two pianos.

In 1955, the first meeting of the Junior Teenage Music Club, under the leadership of Myrtice Jacobs met on Sunday, October 2, at the Decatur First Methodist Church. Later, we met

at Pattillo Methodist Church and in 1962 the monthly programs were moved to Decatur Federal Sky Room where we met for several years. Each program featured a choir from some local church or a chorus from one of the schools. Needless to say, this format added to the attendance at each meeting. The Atlanta Boy Choir, under the direction of Don Robinson, appeared at the December, 1962 meeting. Mrs. Jacobs continued to be the director from several years and was featured along with some students in an article in the Atlanta Journal in 1959. The following quote is from the article: "To the Decatur Music Teachers Association goes honorable mention in the Journal's Club of the Year Contest."

It was in 1967 or '68 that the Sunday Student Recitals relocated to the Maud Burrus Library Auditorium where we remained until the rent forced us to find another meeting place. Through the influence of Jay Fuller, the association's president-elect, we settled on McLean Chapel at Agnes Scott College where we remain today for the Student Affiliate recitals.

The Decatur Music Teachers Association provides many opportunities for students of the members. In addition to student recitals, the winners in local auditions are given the opportunity to perform on the April program, and winners of the Decatur-DeKalb Junior League auditions , which were held for many years, performed at a regular meeting for the teachers.

A scholarship for summer study at Brevard Music Center was awarded to Christy Wilson, a pianist, in 1968 by DMTA.

Our workshops, from 1968 through 1972, were quite successful. Under the chairmanship of Ann Boyd, the club brought a brilliant array of clinicians and recitalists, who gave us the opportunity to get together, absorb new ideas, and discuss common problems. An added incentive was the superb lunch which was catered by Pritchett's Restaurants. Such highly

acclaimed musicians as Maurice Hinson, George Lucktenberg, John Kenneth Adams, and Jane and James Bastien conducted the workshops and recitals.

In 1972, Ann Boyd resigned as workshop chairman and Hedy King Robinson very capably handled the last one to be sponsored by DMTA. This was Marvin Blickenstaff from the University of North Carolina. The gripping ice storm of 1973 arrived at the same time as Mr. Blickenstaff's recital at Agnes Scott College. We all managed to slide home but the workshop was postponed until April 9-10, 1973. The "Metropolitan Atlanta Music Teachers Association", better known as MAMTA, was organized in 1973 by presidents of the local chapters, Jo Evans of Decatur; Anne Shepard of North DeKalb; Mary Brown of Marietta; and Elizabeth Carter of Atlanta. It is this organization that has sponsored the excellent workshops yearly since 1974.

In addition to the stimulating and informative programs presented through the year's, activities of DMTA included: An exchange library members, a concert by the internationally known folk singer , John Jacob Niles in 1962, a one day workshop in 1964 by Lucille Dworshak from the University of Tampa, Florida, a recital by Jeannine Romer Morrison in 1969, a recital by Vola Jacobs of Augusta in 1963, a trip to Milledgeville State Hospital in 1969 by 30 members and students to observe the Music Therapy Department, a lecture recital of 17 and 18th century keyboard music by William Weaver, organist, in 1966, a recital by Jeannine Morrison in 1975, sponsored by DMTA, and a student recital on April 25, 1976 featuring all American music, the day being designated as the date to celebrate the 100th anniversary of MTNA. Jay Fuller was the guest artist.

The organization began sending a monthly newsletter to members in 1974.

The highlight of 1977 was the hosting of the National Convention by the southern Division of MTNA, at the Mariott Hotel in Atlanta. Our own Anna Margaret Baxter, who is

president of MAMTA, was appointed as local chairman. Her contributions were significant. The attendance at the convention, and the pronounced success was due in part to the splendid way Anna Margaret Baxter, and many dedicated members of DMTA and MAMTA carried out the endless details. Others members of DMTA who served as convention chairmen were Sarah Martin, organist, and Fran Thrailkill, the banquet decorations committee, 64% of the membership of DMTA attended the convention.

In the interest of more participation in the Student Recitals, DMTA announced a new program, "Student Affiliate", for the year '77-78, the object being to provide a wide musical experience for the student and recognition for achievement in various phases of music education and activity. Under the capable direction of Jo Evans , as Chairman, we now have 175, members and plans call for five meetings yearly at Agnes Scott College. Students of all ages will be performing, and an invited artist or speaker will be featured on each program.

Listed are the names of the people who have served as president of DMTA:

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Mildred Harding     | William Weaver       |
| Irene Harris        | Hilda Gerver         |
| Mrs. Edwin Kirk     | Gail Tucker          |
| Mrs. Clay McConnell | Trudy Payne          |
| Ann Boyd            | Emmalee Blich        |
| Nona Randall        | Ann Gainey           |
| Myrtice Jacobs      | Jo Evans             |
| Jeanette Gower      | Sara Espy            |
| Sarah Westbrook     | Anna Margaret Baxter |
| Mrs. M.W. Watson    | Fran Thrailkill      |

Three of these have served as State President. They are: William Weaver, Hilda Gerver, and Nona Randall.

Two have served as members at large of the Southern Division of MTNA. They are : Nona Randall and Anna Margaret Baxter. Our total membership was 38 active members

beginning in 1977-78. We have four honorary members, and fourteen members are state certified. Many have given unselfishly of their time and talents and have worked diligently in the activities of the association for the past 30 years. It is to them and to our present officers that we should pledge our cooperation and involvement for the betterment of DMTA in the future.

Nona Randall

### **September, 1997**

The Decatur Music Teachers Association has continued to be a major force in our musical community since its beginning in 1947. It is the oldest chapter of our Georgia Music Teachers Association in the Atlanta area.

A study of the programming for the meetings shows a wide variety of performances, lectures on teaching techniques and music history, with a special emphasis on ensemble playing during monthly meetings. The beginning of the special ensemble program to close the year's activities dates back as early as 1956.

According to news notes from the GMTA Chapter reports, our membership has remained constant with numbers in the forties each year. Throughout the years, our members have not only been active in local and DMTA functions but on the state level as officers. Fran Thrailkill and Tommy Joe Anderson have served very successful terms as state presidents of GMTA. Many others have served as vice-presidents and committee chairpersons of the state organization. Members have been certified to bring their membership to a new higher standard.

In the last twenty years, DMTA has served as the host chapter for two state conventions held at DeKalb College. Members have been responsive to the call for assistance in other

neighboring conventions and in the work of GAMA through its sponsoring of workshops and scholarship recitals.

A library with many resource materials has been maintained for use of the members.

Two major activities of DMTA have enriched the students of our teachers. The “Student Affiliate” program begun during the presidency of Fran Thraikill, and after twenty years, it remains a high point in each year’s outreach with usually more than 100 students enrolled. Various programs by professional musicians are presented several times a year.

The “**Fall Music Fest**” has been on the yearly schedule for over a decade and continues to be a successful part of our program.

The students of our members continue to bring awards from auditions for GMTA, National Guild of Piano Teachers, GMEA, and the Georgia Federation of Music Clubs.

Notes from the year, 1987, tell us of a 40th Anniversary Banquet held at the Northlake Hilton. A closing celebration of that same year was a recital by 11 members of DMTA at Georgia State University.

Now our 50th year grand celebration in the year 1997 begins with a banquet honoring members and past presidents at Clairmont Presbyterian Church. This will be time of remembering and looking to the future for more opportunities in the music community for years to come.



## DMTA Past Presidents

Mildred Harding  
Irene Harris  
Mrs. Edwin Kirk  
Mrs. Clay McConnell  
Ann Boyd  
Nona Randall  
Myrtice Jacobs  
Jeanette Gower  
Sarah Westbrook  
Mrs. M.W. Watson  
Penny Whittington  
Jay Fuller  
Joanne Hill  
Carol Albert  
Carolyn Bradley

William Weaver  
Hilda Gerver  
Gail Tucker  
Trudy Payne  
Emmalee Blich  
Ann Gainsey  
Jo Evans  
Sara Espy  
Anna Margaret Baxter  
Fran Thrailkill  
Anna Margaret Baxter  
Kay Brown  
Linda Merrill  
Ellen Feibish  
Mary Jackson

1997 to 2007

Sixty years have passed since a small group of teachers interested in improving their teaching methods, working on technique and discovering new literature, gathered together in Decatur and organized the Decatur Music Teachers Association (DMTA). In October of 2007, members, former members, and friends of DMTA are gathered together to celebrate sixty years of service to the Decatur- area music community. If one reads the history of the association as written by Nona Randall (for the years 1947 to 1977) and Don Larson (1977 to 1997), it will be evident that the teachers during those first fifty years very capably filled the objectives of the association as set forth in its constitution; namely, the advancement of musical knowledge training. The last ten years- from 1997 to 2007- have brought some changes, but members continue to give unselfishly of their time and talents and support the activities of the association.

In recent years the number of members has remained at approximately fifty . From 1997 to 1999, Myrna Frazier served as President. In 1999, co-presidents were elected and DMTA has had co-presidents every term since then. Those serving were: Fran Thrailkill and Mary Jackson, Jeannine Morrison and Ellen Feibish, Mary Brown Hinely and Andrea Emmel, Kristi Helfen and Mozelle Cole, David D'Ambrosio and Andrea Emmel. Since October of 1991, most meetings have been held at Rehoboth Baptist Church on Lawrenceville Highway in Tucker. Traditionally, the August and December meetings are held in the home of a member as is the ensemble program in May.

The past ten years have seen a continuation of DMTA members serving in one capacity or another at the State Association level. DMTA co-hosted the Georgia Music Teachers Association (GMTA) convention held at Georgia Perimeter College (previously DeKalb College). Jeannine Morrison was named *Teacher of the Year* by GMTA in 2004. Carol Miri was recognized as a *Star Teacher* in the American College of Musicians magazine. Many members appear in recitals and concerts, locally and elsewhere. Several members belong to the Redeemer Piano Ensemble, eight pianists who perform in concert once or twice a year. Member, Mary Brown Hinely, is director.

A scholarship fund named for deceased member, Jo Evans, has been managed by Greater Atlanta Music Alliance (GAMA) in the past. In August of 1998, because GAMA was going to be dissolved, the GAMA membership voted to have all of the monies remaining in their treasury transferred to the Jo Evans Scholarship Fund and the money turned over to DMTA for administration. DMTA schedules a competitive audition every spring and monies from the scholarship fund are awarded, usually to three students.

The Student Affiliate (SA) program, in place for approximately thirty years , was discontinued in 1999. Busy teachers and busy students had difficulty fitting SA into their schedules and attendance was dropping considerably. At its zenith more than one hundred students attended the monthly Sunday afternoon programs to perform on their instrument and to attend a recital or lecture presented by a professional musician. Because Student Affiliate was a worthwhile and well regarded program, the membership hopes to reinstate it at some time in the future. **Fall Fest** continues to be held every year. In the Fall of 1998 a composition category was added to **Fall Fest** and duets may be performed, as well. DMTA also presents students with the opportunity to take part in a preliminary competition at which winners are chosen who proceed to the GMTA In-State Auditions. DMTA's newsletter goes out to most members via the internet now. Very soon a website will be up and running! These are changes the early members never could have envisioned!

Kay Brown

2007-2017

As Decatur Music Teachers reaches its landmark 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration there have been many noticeable achievements in the decade 2007-2017. The chapter is comprised of a dedicated group of teachers who strive to learn more about pedagogical methods as professional musicians. We have robust discussions at our monthly meetings seeking ways of both affording and heightening musical experiences for our students; mostly through participation in both competitive and noncompetitive auditions, teaching theory/ear-training and encouraging concert attendance. We have been fortunate to have a diverse array of musicians as guest speakers; from

vocalists to percussionists to pianists, who have inspired us with ideas about teaching rhythm, musical style, exploring new repertoire and programs discussing the issue of performance anxiety. Through the years our regular monthly meetings have been held at Rehoboth Baptist Church in Tucker, Georgia.

A dedicated core of the membership serves in different capacities-- as officers and volunteers as well. Regardless of the event or activity the members work together with camaraderie. The chapter has emphasized three main events for our students every year: the **Fall Fest Auditions, GMTA/DMTA Local Spring Auditions** and the **Jo Evans Scholarship Auditions**. Another performance opportunity for teachers and students alike was launched in February 2010; the **Piano Ensemble Extravaganza**. PEE is an event that strives to include students of all ages and abilities in a non-competitive atmosphere. Due to its success as an event, performances followed in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017. **Pam Martin** has served as the Piano Ensemble Extravaganza's chair since its inception. Her marvelous organizational skills have resulted in a rewarding experience for both teachers and students. Venues for the performances have included Cooper Music, Columbia Presbyterian Church and Lutheran Church of the Redeemer.

During 2009/10 our newsletter featured a section entitled: "**Highlights of a DMTA Teacher**". A biographical sketch of various members appeared in the monthly newsletter.

In November, 2010 it was announced that the new web link for our **DMTA website** would go live in a few weeks. The link was prepared by Natalie Feibish, daughter of our own

Ellie Feibish. In the February 2011 edition of “Notes and Quotes”, our monthly newsletter, the “Big News” was announced; that our own website was completed. In May 2011 it was decided that all audition forms, the constitution, bylaws, calendar and programs would be posted online.

Numerous members have been active at the annual Georgia Music Teachers Association conferences. In 2008 Pam Martin and her duo partner, Luann Latzanich were featured in two duo-piano works for “Georgia’s Own” showcase concert at the University of Georgia. David D’Ambrosio presented “The Vivid Life of Domenico Scarlatti” at North Georgia College in 2007. At the 2013 conference at the University of West Georgia, Charles Hutton presented the topic, “Music of Charles Alkan”. In 2015, Kristi Helfen presented “Stephen Heller: Beyond the Avalanche” at Agnes Scott College. Also, at the same conference, Pam Asberry’s topic was entitled “Taking Care of the Teacher”.

### **Noteworthy Member Accomplishments**

For many years, Jeannine Morrison has offered informative annual summer piano pedagogy classes in her home.

In the fall of 2013, Pam Martin received the GMTA Music Teacher Grant Award.

Keiko Ransom performed in recital at Emory University’s Schwartz Center in October of 2016.

Anniversaries among DMTA members were celebrated in recent years. In January of 2010, **William Ransom** celebrated his **25<sup>th</sup> anniversary** as Head of the Piano Division at Emory University with a faculty recital in Emerson Hall of the Schwartz Center.

The **Redeemer Piano Ensemble**, directed by Mary Brown Hinely, celebrated its **50<sup>th</sup>** **anniversary** in May, 2016. The ensemble is largely comprised of DMTA members: Pam Asberry, Ellen Feibish, Jane Frackenpohl, Kristi Helfen, Pamela Martin, and Fran Thrailkill.

Over the last decade some members have served as officers and chair persons in various capacities on a long-term basis. Among them is **Kay Brown** as treasurer; **Mary Lou Swann** as chair of Fall-Fest Auditions; **Keiko Ransom** as chair of the GMTA/DMTA Local Spring Auditions and **Rene Glaubitz**, as vice-president of programs.

Those who have served as Presidents of DMTA since 2007:

2007-2008 David D'Ambrosio

2008-2009 David D'Ambrosio/ Andrea Emmel

2009-2012 Glen Eckman

2012-2014 Pam Martin

2015-2016 Jane Frackenpohl

2016 to present Charles Hutton

Decatur Music Teachers Association constantly strives to provide its teachers and students alike rewarding and meaningful musical experiences. Diverse events such as conferences, seminars, workshops, master classes and opportunities such as auditions, competitions, and concert attendance are a means of achieving and maintaining the highest standards as music educators.