



NEBRASKA musicteacher

NMTA Newsletter

Winter 2026

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From the President



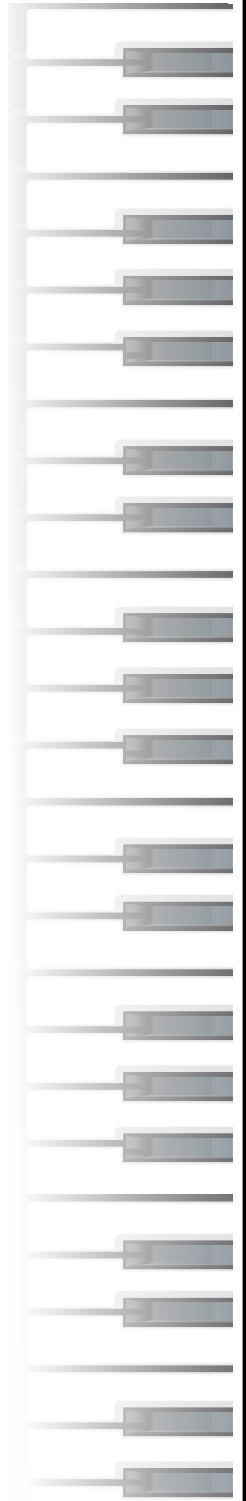
In our role as music educators, we find ourselves at midyear of our current school year. This point in time allows us to reflect on recent past successes and consider ideas for future improvement.

As an organization, NMTA has much to celebrate during this past year: successful District and State Festivals and Competitions, a fun and inspiring Summer Workshop, and an enjoyable and educational experience at our recent State Conference! In addition, numerous opportunities at the local level were offered to both teachers and students alike. MTNA, NMTA, and our local associations continue to provide opportunities and resources to support each of us in our profession.

As I consider our plans in my new leadership role, my focus is on continued improvements to our options for communication, as well as providing additional social situations to help build and strengthen relationships between colleagues. We have a wealth of experience and practical ideas to tap into among our fellow teachers!

New to our options starting in January will be our online “Coffee Chats.” Once a month during the school year, a volunteer host will initiate a 30–40-minute Zoom meeting to include all members who have requested a Zoom link. The host may choose a topic or simply opt to enjoy unstructured social time together. Consider dropping in for a short time if you can afford to take a “break” or stay the entire time. “See” members you may not frequently see due to the miles that can often separate us. Why not volunteer to host a chat scheduled for a future month? Updated details will be posted each month on the homepage of our website.

Another new concept giving all of us the opportunity to connect with each other will be our “News & Notes” emailed most months during the school year. These informal news briefs will contain short “bites” of information only two to three sentences long. Any member or local association is welcome to contribute an invitation, reminder, update, or notification by the first of the month. “Coffee Chats” details will be included in these emails. No advertising please! Simply email an attached Word doc to nebmta25@gmail.com with



From the President continued

“NEWS” in the subject line. Organizing our shared information in this way should reduce the number of necessary emails received through NMTA, improve communication within our organization, and promote inclusiveness.

As many of you are aware, MTNA is celebrating its 150th Anniversary. Each state has been challenged to honor this milestone with an event. I intend to appoint a Planning Committee to explore the possibilities for Nebraska. If you have ideas to share and are willing to be part of this Ad Hoc Committee, please let me know. Thanks!

All our volunteer efforts, either individually or collectively, have the potential to benefit each NMTA member and their students. Thanks in advance for the generosity of your time throughout our new year!

In closing, I would like to leave you with a meaningful quote that I shared previously at our State Conference:

Coming together is beginning

Keeping together is progress

Working together is success

----Henry Ford

Musically yours,
Jane Sonneland, NMTA President

NMTA extends a warm welcome to the following new and reinstating members.

Kaylee Barr, NCTM

New member/transfer from AL

**Bellevue, NE
Piano**

Elizabeth Grunin

Reinstating member

**Omaha, NE
Cello**

Sanda Masic

New member

**Lincoln, NE
Flute**

William Carnahan

New collegiate member

**Lincoln, NE
Band**

Karl Kolbeck, NCTM

Reinstating member

**Wayne, NE
Clarinet**

Cheryl Moore

Reinstating member

**Omaha, NE
Piano**

Samantha Carr

New member

**Lincoln, NE
Unknown**

Xinyi Lu

New collegiate member

**Lincoln, NE
Unknown**

Eva Nikolaidou

New collegiate member

**Lincoln, NE
Piano**

Sherri Dawson

Reinstating member/Transfer from MN

**Lincoln, NE
Piano**

Stefan Markovic

New collegiate member

**Lincoln, NE
Piano, Accompanying, Music
Education, Group Piano,
Music Literature**

Gabrielle Padilla Molina

New member

**Omaha, NE
Violin, Viola, Chamber Music**

Amy Flamminio

Reinstating member

**Lincoln, NE
Piano, Choral**

Fernando Martins

New member

**Lincoln, NE
Violin, Viola**

Lois Rood

New member

**Lincoln, NE
Unknown**

THE 2025 NMTA STATE CONFERENCE OCTOBER 17, 2025



Awards Luncheon,
Executive Committee Table



Stacey Barelos presenting
the 2025 Commissioned
Composition by Liz Gre



Incoming Officers
2025-26



Outgoing Officers
2025



Rhonda Fuelberth, 2025
Conference Featured Speaker



Kurt von Kampen,
Featured Speaker



Elizabeth Grimpo performing
in the Concordia recital

NEBRASKA MUSIC TEACHER ASSOCIATION



Angela Miller-Niles
Award for dedicated service as President-elect,
President, and Immediate Past President



Jonathan Sokasits
Award for dedicated service as Secretary



Posthumous acceptance tribute to Gail Dunning,
2025 NMTA Service Award winner



Gail Dunning
2025 NMTA Service Award

Online Festival 2025

We held an online state festival option as usual, to increase accessibility for students. Following the in-person state festival model, we included online theory and ear training testing along with performance videos. Twenty-two students entered, with nine teachers from across Nebraska (Bennington, Grand Island, Lincoln, Omaha, Papillion and Council Bluffs, IA). Twenty entrants were on piano and two on flute, ranging from levels 1A-4A. Judges were John Bailey, Jonathan Sokasits and Sarka Stehnova. 27% earned a I- rating, 27% earned a I, and 14% earned a I+ on their performances; 64% earned a Theory Excellence certificate by scoring above a 90%.

Angela Miller-Niles
Online State Festival Chair



Ediger Scholarships

Please encourage eligible students to apply for the NMTA Thomas Ediger Scholarships! These \$1000 awards recognize the winners' musical study, musical achievements, musical contributions, and good citizenship.

Those who are seniors in high school who are planning to graduate in 2026 are eligible to apply for the NMTA Thomas Ediger High School Scholarship, and those who are currently enrolled as music majors at a college or university in Nebraska who are planning to continue higher education toward a music degree in the summer or fall semester of 2026 may apply for the NMTA Thomas Ediger Collegiate Scholarship.

Applicants must be studying with a current member of NMTA whose dues were paid by September 1, 2025. The entry deadline is 11:59 pm on Sunday, March 1, 2026. Detailed information is available on our website at <https://nebmta.org/thomas-ediger-scholarships/>.

I hope many students will take advantage of this opportunity!
Anne Madison, Scholarship Coordinator

OMTA NEWS

Greetings Colleagues! OMTA organized three programs for this year. In September, we had a program, “Your Music Studio – Q & A Session” for members to share ideas and helpful ways dealing with studio setup, studio policies, teaching problems for difficult rhythms or problem spots in pieces. Teachers sent in their questions ahead and the program chairman then put the questions on a spinning wheel to randomly read the questions. With football season in the Fall, we all wore our favorite team T-shirts, and treated our members with treats at the end with a tailgate party! It was fun sharing great teaching ideas to take back to the studio!

The November program featured NEW MUSIC from two teachers: Former member, Candance Sutter, a composer, singer, music teacher, and choral director presented her new music from her Fall Collection, and Janet Acker, our former past president and longtime member presented music from female composers like Melody Bober, Catherine Rollin and Wynne Anne Rossi.

December is our annual Christmas Luncheon that was held at Jerico’s Restaurant for our members to relax and enjoy our special time together. Before our lunch, members discussed and planned our annual OMTA Fundamental Fair event in February. It is always a relaxing time for our members to socialize with one another along with delicious food.

Best wishes always,
Maria Rotella Jacobsen, OMTA President

LMTA NEWS

Free sheet music available from the LMTA Music Library

Lincoln Music Teachers Association is liquidating its music library, which is currently stored at the Unitarian Church of Lincoln, 6300 A Street, Lincoln, NE. If you would like to grab some music for yourself, your students, or pass on the message to someone else who might be interested, that would be great. Non-members are welcome to take music, as we would like it to be put to good use. If you are interested, please contact Petra Wahlqvist, LMTA Bookkeeper/Administrator at bookkeeping@lmta.info to make sure the church is open when you want to come by the library.

LMTA Music Outreach Program expansion and need for new avenues of support

Lincoln Music Teachers Association has recently learned that their grant support from the Hormel Harris Foundation will not continue, as the Harris family has relocated to Portland and launched their own non-profit in Oregon. LMTA is thankful for the generous support from the Harris Foundation over the past years, which has made a huge impact on the Music Outreach Program (MOP) and its students. With this loss of funding, LMTA is looking for new avenues of support and would welcome any suggestions. We are also having ongoing conversations about broadening the scope of MOP and increasing our focus on student and teacher recruitment. We welcome ideas for possible funding opportunities for MOP, as well as innovative ideas to include in the program expansion conversations. Please send ideas, thoughts or questions to Petra Wahlqvist at bookkeeping@lmta.info.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: TEACHER OF THE YEAR

In an effort to support outstanding teaching in music, NMTA presents the Teacher of the Year Award every other year at our state conference with the next award given in October 2026. Please consider nominating one of our outstanding teachers! Nominations need only contain a few sentences describing the qualifications of the nominee. (Nominees do not submit portfolios.) Please send nominations via email to Brenda Wristen at bwristen@unl.edu no later than February 15, 2026. The executive committee will select the recipient.

Requirements:

1. Member in good standing of NMTA/MTNA for the past five consecutive years
2. Demonstrated excellence in teaching as shown through festivals, competitions, student recitals, and other musical activities
3. The award recipient must not have received the award within any of the previous ten years
4. Nominee must have held at least one local or state-wide appointed or elected office
5. No one currently serving on the NMTA Executive Committee (elected officers) is eligible for this award.

Award:

The honor includes a plaque and cash award. The individual receiving the award must attend the state conference in the year in which the award is given and must be present at the awards ceremony. An article about the recipient will be published in the subsequent NMTA newsletter.

2026 CONFERENCE: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The 2026 NMTA State Conference will take place in October 2026. Location and dates are to be determined but will be announced soon. The State Conference Committee welcomes proposals on all aspects of music teaching, performance, literature, advocacy and other areas of interest to independent and college music teachers.

General Guidelines:

- Conference sessions are generally 55 minutes in length.
- Conference presenters are not compensated or reimbursed for expenses, and must pay the published conference registration fee.
- Electronic submissions are required with attached bio and jpeg photo of presenter.

Complete Proposals include the following:

1. Name, institutional affiliation, if applicable, e-mail, mailing address and telephone
2. Session title
3. One-page abstract describing your session
4. A brief biography of all involved persons
5. A list of Equipment/Technology needs

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Proposals must be submitted no later than March 15, 2025 to Krista Hafez Clark, NMTA President-elect at hafezpiano@gmail.com.

NMTA State Festival 2025

The NMTA State Festival was held on October 18 & 19, 2025, at Concordia University. It was fantastic to welcome 177 students, including one duet, from 47 teachers. 181 students were originally registered, 3 of whom moved to the E-Festival. The E-Festival had 22 participants. We had entries in piano, violin, viola, cello, flute, trumpet, and harp. We had students in all 8 levels: 1A-20, 1B-41, 2A-46, 2B-25, 3A-19, 3B-7, 4A-15, and 4B-4. 86% received a rating of I+, I, or I-! 72% received a Certificate of Theory Excellence.

Our adjudicators were Bridget Hill (flute), Elyse Jorgensen (harp, piano), Wanda Mandigo (piano), Angela Miller-Niles (piano), Clark Potter (strings, trumpet), and Nancy Schoen (piano). Thank you to all of them for their time, energy, and wonderful support of our students!

Spring district festivals will be coming up soon! The deadline to enter the in-person festivals will be March 2, 2026. Lincoln District Festival is April 11, 2026, Central District Festival is April 18, 2026, and Omaha District Festival is April 25, 2026. We hope to see everyone and their students at these events! There will be an E-Festival. Stay tuned for important dates related to the E-Festival.

Congratulations to all the participants for their hard work and diligence in preparation! Congratulations to all the teachers of these participants for your commitment to their music education! Thank you to all the volunteers for your hard work! These festivals are an inspiring opportunity, thanks to the fantastic collaboration of all the people involved!

Lisa Myers
NMTA Vice President



Consider the Use of Music

Liza Janel (University of Nebraska Omaha)

Have you ever considered the use of music? Think for just a moment of the places of business that you regularly visit that play music in the background. Why do they do it? What kind of music do they play while you wait, shop, or eat? What's their reason? What's their angle?

I sat in a Burger King once where classical music played over the sound system. I couldn't help but feel that it was an odd match, Beethoven and Fast Food, but maybe the employees needed some extra help managing their stress levels.

The same questions could be asked about media. Why do movies, shows, and commercials use background music? Have you ever considered how the message and overall experience would be vastly different without the selected musical score? Try watching a period piece, a horror film, or a romcom with no audio. Without the sound, particularly the music, the experience is less immersive, and you don't connect with the story as strongly. Music has a way of getting you more emotionally involved in whatever it is you are doing, learning, or watching. This truth has been known and discussed as early as the Ancient Greeks (4th century BCE). According to Burkholder, "Greek writers believed that music could affect ethos, one's ethical character or way of being and behaving."

The Use of Music in History

Throughout history, music has served as a powerful tool for advancing political, religious, and social agendas, often shaping societies for generations. Though music itself is neutral, its emotional appeal makes it highly influential. The following examples show how it has been used to sway populations and achieve specific goals.

Formation of an Empire

Pipin the Short, King of the Franks from 751–768 CE, sought to unify his diverse kingdom by allying with the Pope. To strengthen this bond, he imposed the Roman liturgy and chant throughout Frankia, even though his people did not understand Latin. As Burkholder notes, "Popes and secular rulers allied with them tried to consolidate their authority by attempting to standardize what was said and sung in church services. In this process liturgy and music were valued not only for their religious functions but also as means of asserting centralized control."

This decision had lasting political and religious consequences. Pipin's son Charlemagne was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III in 800 CE, launching the Holy Roman Empire. The medieval Catholic Mass, performed in Latin, remained central to daily worship for over 500 years before the Protestant Reformation. It also became a tool of war during the Crusades, used to inspire and unify soldiers. As Gaposchkin notes, "From the first crusade onward, there was an attempt to maintain a regular routine of liturgical ceremonies while on the march and in camp. When possible, the Franks venerated in local churches. Mass continued to be performed regularly, even in transit and during sieges, presumably on portable altars."

Conversion of the Americas

By the 17th century, the Americas had been discovered and colonized. Catholic missionaries traveled from Spain to the new world to convert the native people from their "Pagan" practices to Christianity. The native people already had their own musical traditions, instruments, and styles and the missionaries used this shared interest to their advantage.

Continued

The Catholic missionaries taught the native musicians to sing and play European style music and instruments but would keep the text of newly composed music in the native vernacular attempting to integrate while keeping a sense of the familiar (a successful tactic of the reformation). Thomas observes, “To aid in evangelization, composers frequently employed indigenous languages, rather than Latin, in their religious compositions.”

The first published vocal work in the Americas, *Hanacpachap cussicuinin* (1631), uses European four-voice polyphony but retains a Quechua text. A processional hymn to the Virgin Mary, it reflects the Catholic mission in colonial Peru. As Irving notes, “It is highly significant that the text of this earliest published polyphonic piece was in the Quechua language, as it points to the primacy of the evangelistic enterprise in colonial Peru (and in Latin America at large).” This is one of many historical examples of music used to convert and spread religion.

Venetian Image and Propaganda

In the 15th century, Venice thrived as a wealthy trading empire, but its political power declined in the 16th century. Even so, the government invested heavily in public entertainment, art, and especially music to project strength and stability. Burkholder describes St. Mark’s—the center of Venetian musical life—as a space whose “Byzantine domes, spacious interior, bright gold mosaics, and...altarpiece of solid gold and precious jewels, proclaimed the city’s wealth and close links to the Near East,” noting that the state “spared no expense” in overseeing its music. This lavish cultural display aimed both to inspire loyalty among Venetians and to deter potential enemies despite the state’s diminished political standing.

Music Today

With the age of technology, music can now be played almost anywhere and at any time. Consider how often throughout the day you hear music playing around you and from how many different sources. Consider the music you choose as well as the music that you are exposed to that someone else has chosen. Awareness is the first step. Question music’s use and purpose. Consider the power it can have to shape your environment and influence your decisions. Use this awareness to see the truth behind it, and when applicable, selectively choose your playlist.

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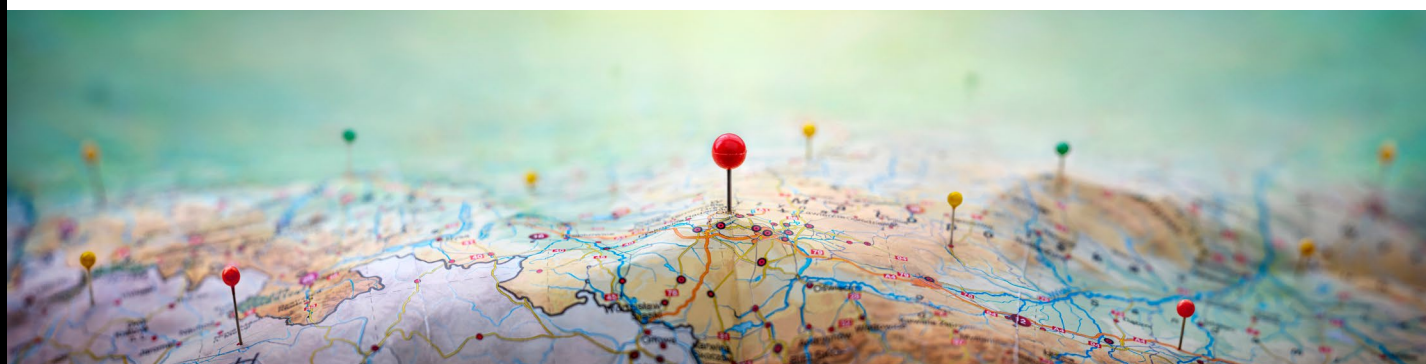
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Thomas, Susan. “Latin American Music.” *Grove Music Online*. 2 Jun. 2011; Accessed 27 Nov. 2025. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.leo.lib.unomaha.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002093315>.

2026 Travel Grant Winner

Congratulations to Sarka Stehnova, 2025 Travel Grant winner. Sarka earned her doctorate from UNL's Glenn Korff School of Music in 2022 and is a pianist, educator, and collaborative artist living and working in Lincoln. She currently serves as Foundation Chair on the NTMA Board and has served in additional capacities such as adjudicating online and in-person festivals. Sarka is committed to advancing piano pedagogy, supporting student success, and engaging with current music research, and she will be using the grant to attend her first MTNA conference in March 2026 in Chicago.



NMTA Travel Grant

A travel grant of \$1000.00 is available through NMTA to assist with travel expenses for a teacher attending an MTNA-affiliated conference. The applicant must be an NMTA/MTNA member in good standing during the year of application, and the travel must be completed in 2027. Teachers of all instruments and voice are eligible.

Include the following for your application:

- Conference location and dates
- How long you've been an NMTA member
- Whether you've received a grant in the past (and if so, when it was received)
- Any service to an MTNA-affiliated organization
- Any special awards or recognition from an MTNA-affiliated organization
- Brief resume

Recipients are required to write an article describing their conference experiences for the Nebraska Music Teacher issue that immediately follows the event as a final report.

Please submit all materials by **September 1, 2026** to Immediate Past President Brenda Wristen at bwristen@unl.edu.

2026 Workshop Grant Winner

Congratulations to the Lincoln Music Teachers Association!

They were awarded NMTA's \$1000 Workshop Grant for their Chamber Festival event, to be held January 31st 2026.



NMTA WORKSHOP GRANT

A Workshop Grant of up to \$1,000 is available to any NMTA member or NMTA-affiliated organization to assist with the expenses of a workshop for the purpose of teacher education and training and/or student activities. Applicants must be members or associations in good standing in the year of the application, and the workshop must be presented during the 2026-2027 membership year.

Workshop Proposal Requirements:

- Description of the workshop, including location and date.
- List of expected participants, including whether the grant is to be used by a local affiliate or an individual teacher
- Specific amount requested with a detailed budget: include costs like rental fees, judge/speaker fees, liability insurance, materials/equipment, piano tuning, etc. The grant is up to \$1,000 and will only cover specific costs listed.
- Contact information: name, address and phone number

Send Workshop Grant proposal to Immediate Past President Brenda Wristen at bwristen@unl.edu by **September 1, 2026**.

More details on the final report and additional requirements can be found at <https://nebmta.org/grants/>.



MTNA Composition Competition

The 2025 Nebraska Music Teachers Composition Competition is completed. Nancy Schoen was our only teacher participating. Her student, Braydon Fujan, was selected as Representative and has advanced to the West Central Division Competition. Those results will be available after December 1.

This year's judge was Valerie Cisler from Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

2025 Nebraska Performance Competition

The Nebraska Performance Competitions were held on Saturday, October 18th at Concordia University in Seward, NE. We received a total of 33 entries, including 3 Collegiate Piano, 10 Senior Piano, 11 Junior Piano, 5 Senior Strings, and 4 Junior Strings. Winners in each division were awarded cash prizes. Results are listed below (teacher's names in parentheses).

Collegiate Piano Division

Winner: William Carnahan (*Marina Fabrikant*)

2nd: Joshua Jurchen (*Elizabeth Grimpo*)

Honorable Mention: Elliot Maschka (*Jonathan Sokasits*)

Senior Piano Division

Winner: BingYi Wang (*Anne M. Madison*)

2nd: Advaith Namasivayam (*Momoro Ono*)

Junior Piano Division

Winner: Alan Zhuang (*Feifei Jiang*)

2nd: Claire Wang (*Kathy Knebel*)

Honorable Mention: Amy Song (*Svetlana Yashirin*)

Senior Strings Division

Winner: Lucas Li (*Ruth Meints*)

2nd: Asher Abuhl (*Ruth Meints*)

Junior Strings Division

Winner: Jonathan Zeng (*Tracy Sands*)

2nd: Valerio Forgiore (*Tracy Sands*)

Thank you to our wonderful judges: Dr. Madeline Rogers, Assistant Professor of Piano at Berea College in Berea, KY, and Dr. Ting-Lan Chen, Professor of Violin & Viola at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Congratulations to all participants and teachers for well-prepared performances—we look forward to welcoming you back again next year!

Krista Hafez Clark
Nebraska Performance Competitions Chair



Top Left: Collegiate Piano Winner-William Carnahan, Madeline Rogers, Marina Fabrikant



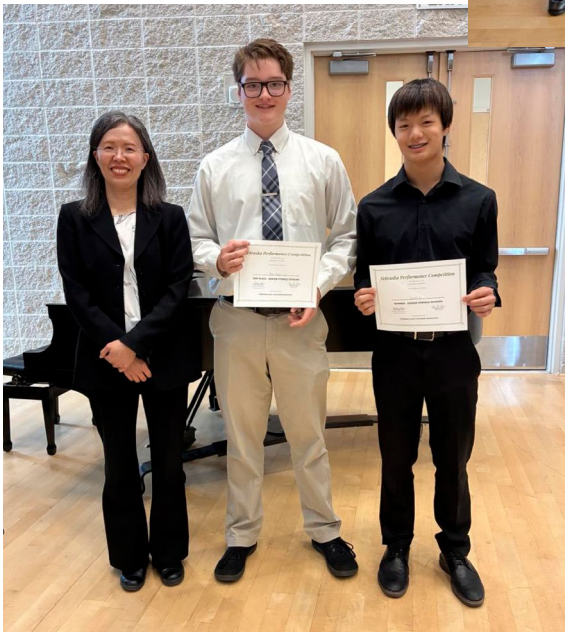
Top Right: Senior Piano Winner-BingYi Wang, 2nd place-Advait Namasivayam, Madeline Rogers

Center: Junior Piano Winner-Alan Zhuang, Madeline Rogers, 2nd place-Claire Wang



Bottom Left: Ting-Lan Chen, 2nd place-Asher Abuhl, Senior Winner-Lucas Li

Bottom Right: Ting-Lan Chen, Junior Winner-Jonathan Zeng, 2nd place-Valerio Forgione



2025 MTNA Performance Competition

The 2025 MTNA Performance Competitions for Nebraska were held at Concordia University, October 18th. There were fifteen contestants and \$950 in prize money awarded. Winners advanced to the West Central Division round of competition. Our judges were Dr. Michael Patterson (piano) of Indianola, Iowa; Dr. Nicholas Roth (piano) of Drake University; Dr. Melinda Westphalen (piano) of Grinnell College; and Dr. Ting-lan Chen (strings) of University of Nebraska Kearney. NMTA sends a special thanks to our performance coordinators Tammy Miller, Jules DeSalvo, and Yulia Kalashnikova; as well as our facilities coordinator Elizabeth Grimpo of Concordia University. The results were as follows:

Junior Piano:

Winner: Sarah Fernandes, student of Washington Garcia

Alternate: Olivia Yu, student of Feifei Jiang

Senior Piano

Winner: Sophie Yu- winner, student of Feifei Jiang

Alternate: Winston Schneider, student of Anne Madison

Honorable Mention: Jinyee Huang, student of Boban Martic

Honorable Mention: Bennett Lambelet, student of Kristín Taylor

Piano Young Artist

Winner: Khang Nguyen, student of Paul Barnes

Alternate: Duy Nguyen, student of Paul Barnes

Honorable Mention: Harmon Moss, student of Kristín Taylor

Junior Strings

Winner: Albert Gwon, student of Ahra Cho

Alternate: Jeremy Wang, student of William Wolcott

Senior Strings

Winner: Taryn Geiger, student of Ruth Meints

Alternate: Anna Suh, student of Ruth Meints

Young Artist Strings State Representative

Jennifer Lochhead, Cello, student of Karen Becker

Woodwinds Senior State Representative

Sebastian Aracena, student of Lindsay Bartlett

Bryan Stanley
MTNA Competitions Chair

NMTA State Festival 2025

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