

DUET

newsletter

March 2026

**ROCHESTER PIANO TEACHERS GUILD, INC. &
GREATER ROCHESTER MUSIC TEACHERS ASSOC.**

A Note from the RPTG President

Dear RPTG Members,

Although winter in our region can be long and cold, I hope your studios are warm and filled with beautiful music. We recently concluded one of our largest events of the year, the Gold Cup Piano Festival, which was a tremendous success. With nearly 350 participants representing 34 piano studios, the festival was a wonderful celebration of student achievement and dedication. It was especially meaningful to see so many of our members come together in support of one another. Moments like these

truly reflect the strength and spirit of our community.

We are pleased to invite you to an upcoming program on February 27, presented by one of our own members. Dr. Beverly Smoker is an exceptionally dedicated pedagogue with a wealth of experience and insight to share. We hope you will join us for this engaging presentation, followed by our coffee-time soiree, which offers a great opportunity to connect with fellow RPTG members.

The coming months promise an exciting lineup

of programs featuring outstanding guest artists and pedagogues. Please be on the lookout for upcoming announcements and consider joining us. If you are interested in becoming more involved with RPTG, we encourage you to reach out to me or any member of the board. We are always grateful to welcome increased participation in our organization.

Thank you for your continued support. Stay warm and safe, and we hope to see you at one of our upcoming events.

Sincerely,
Sarah Rhee

Gold Cup Festival
Committee (left to right)

Ria Senebroto
Tasha George-Hinnant
Sarah Rhee
Beth Fischer
Jeanne Strong



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Special points of interest:

- American Composer Festival
Dennis Alexander
Saturday, April 18 at Linehan Chapel
- Junior All-Stars Piano Competition
May 30 & May 31 at Nazareth University
- NYSMTA 2026 State Conference
Saturday, October 17 at SUNY Onondaga
Community College in Syracuse

NYSMTA 2026 State Conference — Save the Date!



Dr. Logan Skelton

Mark your calendars for the NYSMTA 2026 State Conference, to be held on Saturday, October 17, 2026, at SUNY Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, NY. Join colleagues from across the state for a full day of inspiring performances, engaging presentations, and professional exchange.

This year's conference will feature guest artist Dr. Logan Skelton, an internationally acclaimed pianist, teacher, and composer. His performances have been heard throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia and broadcast on major public radio and television networks. A distinguished educator, Dr. Skelton holds the titles of

Artur Schnabel Collegiate Professor of Music in Piano, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Music, and Director of Doctoral Studies in Piano Performance at the University of Michigan. At the conference, he will share his latest insights into the music of George Gershwin, drawn from his work on the new Critical Edition and his forthcoming arrangements published by Schott Music.

We are also pleased to present a concert featuring our commissioned composer, Pamela Sklar, a composer and flutist known for imaginative chamber works and unusual instrumental combinations. Her multi-genre music has been performed

nationally and internationally and reflects influences ranging from poetry and history to science and cultural traditions. Of her new NYSMTA commission, Sklar writes: "This piece explores colorful sonorities created by two instruments made from wood... The composition is unfolding gradually, and its direction is becoming clearer with time." We look forward to hearing this new work come fully into focus.

The conference will also include Lecture Forum presentations and a Lightning Talk session, offering members opportunities to share ideas, research, and teaching strategies.

RPTG 2026-27 Slate of Officers Nominations

The Nominations Committee has announced its slate of officers for the coming year and, as our Constitution requires, it has been approved by the Board. The ballot will be in the May Duet and on the Website, also in May. It is as follows:

President:
Sarah Rhee-Tirré
Vice-President:
Teddy Carr
Recording Secretary:
Kathie Ross
Corresponding Secretary: Elier Suárez
Co-Treasurers:
Stephanie Mercer and Brian Preston

We are grateful to them for agreeing to continue their dedicated and effective service to our organization.

Dr. Beverly Smoker,
Nominating Committee
Chair

American Composer Festival: Dennis Alexander

**American
Composer Festival**

**with
Dennis Alexander**

**Saturday
April 18, 2026**

**Linehan Chapel
Nazareth University**

Hello Everyone,

The American Composer Festival is just around the corner. A few friendly reminders first. Students must bring original music for Dennis to autograph. We asked that they bow before and after their performance. The schedule for Saturday, April 18 at Linehan Chapel, Nazareth University is as follows.

Recitals are 10:00 and 11:00 am. Noon to 1pm, teachers gather in the Community Room opposite the Chapel. Bring your own lunch, coffee, tea and snacks will be provided. 1:00-2:00 pm, Dennis will spend time with teachers, students are also welcome.

Every year we include a door prize of a solo that is at the same level or

above. If you could let us know earlier than the deadline that would help greatly. Feel free to call either of us.

Thank you,

Teddy Carr and
Diane Habeeb —
Co-chairs

Gold Cup Festival and Honors Recital

The Gold Cup Festival committee is happy to report that the festival on January 31 and the three Honors Recitals on February 7 were successful. Students of all levels were well prepared to perform for the judges at the Nazareth University School of Music and for the recital audiences in Linehan Chapel. We are grateful for the use of those excellent facilities every year.

Congratulations to all the

students who participated in the festival and those who were selected by their judges to perform on the Honors Recitals! Thank you to all the teachers who thoughtfully chose their students' solos and guided their students to play their best. Thank you also to the judges who spent many hours at the festival and wrote detailed and encouraging comments on the students' rating sheets. We appreciate their contributions to make the festival

educational and motivating for all students.

Thanks to the fantastic festival committee for many months of meticulous planning, and to all the other teachers who volunteered to help in key positions on festival day, it ran smoothly for hundreds of students, their families, and teachers. The festival is the largest event organized by the RPTG.

Gold Cups, certificates,

and teacher reports should be available for teachers to pick up in mid-March from Jeanne Strong, the festival committee chair. You will be sent an email when your students' awards are ready.

The festival committee:
Jeanne Strong
Sarah Rhee-Tirre
Beth Fischer
Tasha George-Hinnant
Ria Senobroto

David Hochstein Recital Competition Results

Piano

Jasmine Wu – Winner (Student of Elier Suárez)
David Yang – Runner-Up (Student of Elier Suárez)
Walter Marshall – Honorable Mention (Student of E-Na Song)

Winds and Percussion

Michael Shi, clarinet – Winner (student of Andrew Brown)
Matthew Gleason, percussion – Runner-Up (student of Sammy DeAn-

gelis)

Steven Lowe, alto saxophone – Honorable Mention (student of Anne Kunkle)

Benjamin Watson, french horn – Honorable Mention (student of Maura Corvington)

Strings

Noah Busch, violin – Winner (student of Amanda Brin)
Rebecca Camilleri, cello – Runner-Up (student of

Kathleen Kemp)
Youyou Wu, violin – Honorable Mention (student of Katie Worley)

Congratulations to all of our participants and their teachers for their outstanding work! And thank you to our judging panel. Winds/percussion judges were John Dawson, Jeff Dunn, and Peggy Quackenbush. String judges were Jeremy Russo, Shana Stewart, and

Koki Tanaka. And piano judges were Huiping Cai, Kevin Nitsch, and Joseph Rackers.

There was an incredible amount of talent at this competition. Thanks to all who participated!

Carl Galland, DMA
Assistant Dean & Ensemble Coordinator
Clarinet Faculty

2026 Programs

Friday, Feb. 27 - 10 AM
Perinton Presbyterian Church at 6511 Pittsford Palmyra Rd. in Fairport
Beverly Smoker presents **Music theory — what is it and what to do with it?** She will illustrate through repertoire selected by you, how a basic understanding of harmony, rhythm, melody, notation, and style can help us and our students learn music and craft a pianistically solid and artistic performance.

Immediately following our member program we will hold a social hour with light refreshments. Please stay and connect with your fellow piano teachers.

Friday, May 15 - 10 AM
Center Park West Pavilion on Ayrault Rd.
Picnic lunch to follow.
Stephanie Mercer presents **Beyond Drumbeats and Open Fifths: Indigenous Compositions of the Americas for the Piano Studio.**

The Synopsis: Too often Indigenous music is represented in the method books with titles such as Drumbeats or Indian War Chant. Piano students are only shown a small glimpse of Indigenous culture through these stereotypical pieces often written by outsiders. Fortunately, within the past few years, Indigenous composers have created beautiful piano pieces that give a broader view of the diverse Indigenous cultures. Through

this program, you will be introduced to a few Indigenous composers and their works for the early elementary up to the advanced piano student.

GRMTA presents The Junior All-Stars Competition for Piano May 30 & May 31, 2026

About the competition

This event provides a forum to represent the very highest level of achievement of Rochester Area piano students. The auditions are scheduled for Saturday, May 30th at Nazareth University's Wilmot Recital Hall. Contestants will receive brief written comments from the judges. A Winners Recital is to be held on Sunday, May 31st at 3 PM, also in Wilmot Recital Hall.

Eligibility

Open to all young pianists who have not yet entered their senior year in high school and are residing or studying in Monroe, Genesee, Livingston, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, or Yates Counties.

Previous "First Prize" winners may not compete until eligible for the next level.

Repertoire requirements

Each contestant will perform three memorized pieces of contrasting styles. Concertos are not permitted. There is no time limit on a contestant's program, but the length of each audition will be strictly limited. Students playing longer pieces must expect to be stopped partway through.

Please remember that **photocopied music** not in the public domain is **illegal** and is not allowed during auditions.

Level	Time Allowed
I (born 2016 and after)	6 minutes
II (born 2014-2015)	7 minutes
III (born 2012-2013)	8 minutes
IV (born before 2012, not yet a high school senior)	10 minutes

Prizes

1st Prize	\$60
2nd Prize	\$45
3rd Prize	\$30
Classical Prize for Levels II and III	\$25

The Classical Prize may be awarded for a Sonatina/Sonata movement or shorter work by Beethoven, Clementi, Diabelli, Dussek, Haydn, Kuhlau, Lichner, Mozart, Reinecke or Spindler.

Prizes are awarded at the discretion of the judges who do sometimes withhold prizes. Prizewinners and Honorable Mentions must perform at the Winners Recital or forfeit their prize and certificate.

Judging

Two distinguished judges will evaluate each level based on polished performances regardless of the pieces' difficulty.

Deadline for Teacher sending fee and Student/Parent emailing application:

Thursday, April 30th, 2026

Fee: \$28.00

Parents: complete the application and **email** to the JASC chairperson. **The student or parent must email the application to beth@bethfischerpiano.com.** Please give the fee to your teacher. Do not send fees directly to the JASC chairperson. Include your teacher in the Cc line and remember the deadline is April 30th, 2026. No late applications will be accepted.

Teachers: Mail a check payable to NYSMTA (fee is non-refundable) to Beth Fischer, 333 Ayrault Road, Fairport, NY 14450, Attn: JASC Chair. The check will indicate your recommendation of the student participating. Checks are due by April 30th,

**GRMTA presents
The Junior All-Stars Competition for Piano
May 30 & May 31, 2026**

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Please email the following information as your application.

Be sure to Cc your teacher.

The email deadline is Thursday, April 30th, 2026.

Date of Birth:

Level number:

Name:

How to pronounce it:

Telephone number to use on the day of the competition in the event you are awarded recognition:

Teacher's name:

Teacher's phone number:

***Please remember to Cc your teacher so that the Chair has that teacher's email address.

Your application acknowledges review of all rules and regulations for the competition. It certifies that the information provided is correct and that you will accept the decision of the judges as final. You understand prizes might not be awarded and that refusal to accept the judges' decision will exclude you from further participation.

**ROCHESTER PIANO TEACHERS GUILD,
INC. & GREATER ROCHESTER MUSIC
TEACHERS ASSOC.**

Elier Suárez, Editor
158 Highland Parkway
Rochester, NY 14620

Phone: (585) 461-5359
E-mail: elier@elier.com

**DUET is also on the Web at:
rochesterpianoteachers.org**

Call for Proposals — NYSMTA Lecture Forum

The NYSMTA Lecture Forum invites members to submit proposals for professional presentations at the 2026 State Conference. Presentation formats may include **papers, lectures, lecture-recitals, or technique demonstrations**. Suggested topics include music literature, teaching techniques, teaching and performance psychology, improvisation, business aspects of the music profession, and historical performance practices.

Proposals should consist of a **detailed written description (maximum 250 words)** of the presentation as it will be delivered and must include any required equipment. Presentations will be **45 minutes**, followed by **5 minutes for questions and discussion**.

**Submission deadline:
April 1, 2026**

Send proposals to
Janice Nimetz at
jmnimetz15@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Sunday, February 22 - 3 PM
Jacob Ertl — Faculty Artist
Series — “The Dawn of
Modernism at the Turn of the
Century”. Wilmot Recital Hall,
Nazareth University

Monday, March 30 - 12:30 PM
Duo and Trio Recital with
Eastman and Nazareth Piano
Faculty. Wilmot Recital Hall,
Nazareth University.
Elinor Freer, Andrew Harley,
Jacob Ertl and Sarah Rhee